Considerations *for* Self-Publishing

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Abstract

This study asks the question: what has contributed to the rise of self-publishing and what are the major considerations needed in order to print on-demand limited edition books.

By closely evaluating various media this study hopes to reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of the current on-demand book market and an overall rise in self-publishing.

Print-on-demand technology promises to prolong the life of the book. Although it has not received nearly as much attention as electronic readers or touch-screen tablets: the printing of books on demand has seen rapid growth over the past years.

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Ch 1. Introduction

The implications of the printed word are vast. For centuries, books have been written in an attempt to disseminate knowledge, to inspire and to discover.

Initially, book production began with religious ties. The process involved constructing religious manuscripts entirely by hand, the act itself a form of worship. Later, books began to shed their role as strictly objects of sacred worship. Rather, these books had profound impact on areas such as science and art, changing the way in which readers viewed the world (Jones, pars. 3-4).

More recently, rather than religious entities, the process by which books have been produced has been controlled by publishers. Publishers largely decide which documents are to be manufactured and for what purposes. The publisher's role is to develop, market, produce, print and distribute books. Financially, the publisher negotiates with authors over intellectual property rights and royalties.

Today, cultural influences such as the rise of desktop publishing, new forms of digital word formatting, the Internet, blogging, and the do it yourself (DIY) movement have changed and challenged conventional publishing methods.

Due to these external influences, traditional publishers are looking for ways to prune their book lists and are relying more on titles that are blockbuster best sellers. In contrast, where traditional publishers are downsizing with fewer books and more popular commercial titles, self-publishing companies are ramping up their title counts, in turn making money on books that sell fewer copies. With self-publishing the author, rather than the publisher, pays for aspects like cover design and printing costs.

Self-publishing is defined as the publication of any book or other media by the author of the work and without the involvement of an established third-party publisher (Allen, par. 1).

At a time when many mainstream publishers are losing ground, other companies are capitalizing on the dream of would-be authors to see their work between covers. The key distinguishing characteristic of self-publishing is the absence of a traditional publisher. The technology enabling these self-publishing companies success is print-on-demand publishing.

In particular, this study asks the question: What has contributed to the rise of self-publishing and what are the major considerations needed in order to print on-demand limited edition hard cover books?

By closely evaluating the various media this study hopes to reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of the current on-demand book market and an overall rise in self-publishing. It is speculated that the rise of self-publishing is due to increased quality in product, wider use and distribution, and a more affordable medium.

Defined, on-demand publishing is a relatively new technical process whereby printing of the book is done entirely with a digital workflow that makes it possible to print any number of copies at a given time. With traditional printing, and ultimately traditional publishing, it is necessary to produce large quantities of a book in order to lower the price to where it is possible sell through a retail channel. With on-demand printing, it is possible to produce shorter production runs of books at a cost that still enables sales through the retail channel.

The purpose of this study is to explore the trends and various available methods to print on-demand limited edition books. To answer this question this study will examine the on-demand publishing industry, going into detail on the history of self-publishing and what factors have contributed to the rise of on-demand printing companies currently. By examining the various case studies this study will reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of the current on-demand book market, what options are available for print-on-demand authors and an overall rise in self-publishing.

Ch. 2 Literature Review

Publishing has continually grown and cultivated change. From small beginnings it has disseminated into all manners of cultural material—its impact upon civilization unquantifiable.

The history of publishing is characterized by a close interplay with three monumental inventions: writing, paper and printing. These inventions coupled with technology have been crucial for social development and the spread of literacy across the world.

Before the invention of writing, information was only spread through word of mouth. Writing was originally regarded not as a means of distributing information but as a way to fix religious formulations, which had previously only been committed to memory. (Tucker, par. 1)

Publishing began after the monopoly of literature, most often held by a priestly caste, had been broken. Still, book production was confined largely to religious centers of learning. (Tucker, par. 1)

Further, the invention of block printing in China transformed the possibilities of the written word. The Chinese invented both movable type and paper. The invention of printing in Europe is attributed to Johannes Gutenberg, although block printing had been carried out from about 1400. Largely German printers had carried printing through most of Europe in less than 50 years (Lechêne, par 3).

Although printing was thought of at first merely as a means of avoiding copying errors, its possibilities for mass-producing written matter soon became evident. The church, the state, universities, reformers, and radicals were all quick to use the printing press. However in 1498 18,000 letters were printed in Barcelona by average residents (Tucker, par. 3). This meant that

literacy had spread beyond religious entities and had reached the emerging middle classes. Attempts were still made to control the press as it was deemed a "dangerous" mode of communication (Tucker, par. 4).

As advances in technology sped up production time and reduced printing cost, the printed word became accessible to more people. In turn, the publication market became a more prominent business. The Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th century furthered the mechanization of printing, finally bringing the printed word to its powerful position as a means of influencing the general public.

Publishing is in the business of ideas, and ideas are created by people. With shifts in technology aiding the production of content, a simultaneous change in how people get these ideas have followed.

The traditional functions peculiar to the publisher—selecting, editing and designing the material; arranging its production and distribution; and bearing the financial risk or the responsibility for the whole operation—often merged in the past with those of the author, the printer and the bookseller (Tucker, par. 6).

The Internet has radically changing and continues to change the printed word. In the 21st century, ideas, evidence, and knowledge have become more transitory and temporary as people have access to producing and publishing their own work online. Gone are the days when self-publishing meant paying a printer to produce hundreds of copies that could ultimately languished in storage.

While many lament the impersonal, cyber aspects of the new information age, some see the empowering access to free thought the Internet provides.

Print-on-demand, a printing technology and business process in which new copies of a book or document are printed by order, developed after the digital printing age and through the popularity of the Internet. Previously it was not economical to print one or a low number of copies of a document by letterpress or offset methods.

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Companies like AuthorHouse, Xlibris, iUniverse and others have pushed themselves as new models of publishing. They aim at customers looking for someone to edit a manuscript, lay out the book and bring it to market, (Wayner, par 2).

According to the *New York Times* article Technology Rewrites the Book, "The print-on-demand business is gradually moving toward the center of the marketplace. What began as a way for publishers to reduce their inventory and stop wasting paper is becoming a tool for anyone who needs a bound document. Short-run presses can turn out books economically in small quantities," (Wayner, par. 4).

The technology behind the market is increasingly simple. The workflow involves sending a digital manuscript to a digital printer, where the book is then printed, bound and shipped. This has enabled the print-on-demand market to expand beyond authors to the average public. "The trend is also driven by professionals who want to use a book as it enhances a business card as well as by people who are creating books as gifts for family and friends," (Motoko, par. 12).

Similar to when print first spread to the middle class and was quickly adopted by the church, universities and reformers, initially when print-on-demand technology was made first available it was adopted by an elite few. Like the evolution of literacy, with print-on-demand "now anyone can make a book, and it looks just like a book that you buy at the bookstore,' said Eileen Gittins, chief executive of Blurb, a print-on-demand company whose revenue has gone from $1 million to $30 million in just two years and which published more than 300,000 titles last year (Wayner, par 6)."

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Ch. 3 Research Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore and examine the trends and various available methods to print on-demand books. This study focuses on Historical and Descriptive Research and Case Studies to examine both the trends and various production variables.

According to Dr. Levenson, Historical and Descriptive Research is an attempt to establish facts and arrive at conclusions concerning past events. The historical researcher must systematically and objectively locate, evaluate, and interpret evidence available for understanding the past. From this evidence the researcher hopes to show what may be contributed by past experience to a greater understanding of present situations and what might happen in the future, (Levenson, 28).

In a general sense within Historical and Descriptive Research, I first focused on past events to formulate on publishing's future. I started by examining the "History of Publishing," article in the Encyclopedia Brittanica. This section is brief, describing how book publishers have evolved from family houses to international media corporations, dealing separately with general (or trade) and other types of book publishing. The Historical and Descriptive research also examined past production techniques that relied more heavily on craftsmanship.

With this article I then defined the publishing process, the different sectors of publishing and how they respond to their own markets. By describing how each book goes through the various stages of the publishing process—such as copyright, contracts, author's agents, design, production, rights and sales—lead into the impact of the Internet and how books are responding with on-demand publishing.

On-demand publishing largely skips many of the processes involved traditionally, with many do-it-yourself alternatives for design, production and sales.

The sum of my Historical and Descriptive research focusing on documentary and trend analysis, lead into the second component of my Historical and Descriptive research: Case Studies. According to Levenson, the typical Case Study is an intensive investigation of one individual or of a single unit, such as a small group, a department within a company, or a company itself. The emphasis is on understanding the reasons that an individual or a group does what it does and how behavior changes in response to the environment, (Levenson, 29).

Bowker, a bibliographic information provider, has provided quantifiable information on the rise of print-on-demand. According to a Bowker article, 2008 was the first year that print-on-demand book production surpassed that of the traditional book distrubution processes.

The first case study I examined titled "Salem Author Self-Publishes Herself into a Novel $2M Payday," was written by David Mehegan for the *Boston Globe*. The article examines a success story in print-on-demand, where a author self-publishers a novel that eventually is noticed by traditional publishing companies and becomes extremely popular commercially.

The second case study I examined titled "Google lets you custom-print millions of books," was written by Ryan Singel of *Wired Magazine*. The article expounds on Google Book Search partnering with On Demand Books, to introduce the Espresso Book Machine which produces a 300 page book with a color cover in four minutes, at a cost to the bookstore of about $3 for materials.

The third case study I examined titled "BookPrep: POD in the Cloud," was written by Judith Rosen for *Publishers Weekly* in 2010. The article examines a particular publishing solution offered by Hewlett-Packard called BookPrep. The Internet platform lets visitors to the site read an entire book for free online before purchasing it in print.

The last case study I examined titled "Blurb Sponsors the Obama Time Capsule, a Book as Unique as the Events it Commemorates," was produced by Marketing Weekly News in 2009. The study highlights how personalized print-on-demand can be when Blurb partners with a diverse celebrity clientele.

I then analyzed print-on-demand services that were mentioned in some of the case studies with Content Analysis. Content Analysis is applied to examine any piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication. Content Analysis collects qualitative data from Historical and Descriptive Research (Levenson). The data is then analyzed systematically and reliably. Data collected through content analysis will help map out the trends and available methods of print-on-demand for books.

I made a table to evaluate some of the main features that make print-on-demand services valuabe. The main characteristics include: the cost, time, shipping, impact of revisions, distrubution options, profitibility, perceived quality and cover options available for two of the largest print-on-demand options, Lulu and CreateSpace.

Conclusions can be drawn from this table on which option is best for pursuing self-publishing based on the authors needs.

Ch. 4 Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the trends and various available methods to print on-demand books. To do this, research was garnered from Historical and Descriptive Research tactics as well as separate Case Studies that highlighted different facets of the industry.

To help answer these questions, the traditional publishing workflow was first examined. A decade ago, the only way to be a published author was either signed by a publishing company with royalties sold per copy, or to print a minimum of 1,000 books, and try to sell them yourself via direct sales or into local bookshops. Still, the road into bookshops wasn't easy, as typical terms were to sell the book to stores at 60-70 percent of the retail price, and accept returns of the book if it didn't sell. The economies of scale dictated that less popular books weren't worth the effort. In contrast, the publishers job was to select the text, edit the material and arrange for its production and distribution. This made the publisher bear the financial risk and responsibility for the operation rather than the author.

With the author bearing the brunt of the work, print-on-demand publishing has become easy for the novice to use. The user interface technology behind print-on-demand is simple, and is becoming even easier. For example, Blurb.com's design software comes with a number of templates based on genre. Once chosen, it automatically formats the layout and lets the author or designer fill in the photographs and text by cutting and pasting. (Wayner, par. 7) Although less capable than specific design applications such as Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress, these templates are much easier for the first time or less versed designer.

The most successful print-on-demand publishing companies are catering to highly niche markets. One company is SharedInk.com, which emphasizes its traditional production techniques

and quality. The company promotes attributes such as that each one of their books are printed and stitched together by bookbinders with years of industry experience.

Another print-on-demand company, Lulu.com has a different approach. Lulu works with a portable document format (PDF) file, an approach that makes users rely on their own layout and design skills. Still, Lulu offers a marketplace where book designers offer their expertise.

The culmination of websites like Lulu, SharedInk and Blurb have stretched the concept of a book, in some cases undermining the permanent, fixed nature that has been part of a book's enduring appeal.

Traditionally, if a book falls out of print, authors are allowed to ask their publishers for the right to their book back, in an effort to get it republished somewhere else. With the advent of print-on-demand, publishers have been able to reduce the number of back copies that they keep in warehouses.

One of the first companies to offer superior options than the traditional publishing model was Lighting Source. Lighting Source offers a distribution into online outlets such as Barnes and Noble and Amazon at a short discount, much less than the 65 percent of retail and as low as 20 to 25 percent. Models like Lighting Source took much of the risk of publishing out of the equation, and books could be easily updated when needed rather than waiting until the print run sold out.

Prices for print-on-demand books range based on quality, length and company. In general, Blurb.com's prices start at $29.95 for books one to 40 pages and rise to $79.95 for books of 301 to 440 pages in length.

Bowker, the world's leading provider of bliblographic information management solutions, published a report validating the extraordinary growth of non-traditional books. These books, marketed almost exclusively on the Web are largely on-demand titles produced by reprint houses specializing in public domain works and presses catering to self-publishers and micro-niche publications.

Bowker projects that 764,448 titles were produced that fall outside Bowker's traditional publishing and classification definitions. This number is a 181 percent increase over 2008 which doubled 2007's output, driving total book production over one million units for the first time, (Bowker, page 1). Bowker attributes a significant proportion of that rise to an increase in the number of print-on-demand books.

"The data surrounding traditional publishing suggests that the weak economy is still having an adverse effect in what and how much consumers are willing to purchase," said Kelly Gallagher, vice president of publishing services for Bowker. "However, looking at the overall picture, we're seeing that the face of publishing itself is changing. Non-traditional publishing, especially related to print-on-demand, continues to offer new avenues and opportunities to grow the publishing industry. Given the exponential growth over the past three years, it's showing no signs of abating," (Bowker, page 1).

In 2008 the production of print-on-demand books surpassed traditional book publishing for the first time and since then has experienced exponential growth. (Bowker, page 1)

Print-on-demand has enabled the publishing market not to be dominated by a handful of entities. In fact, the top 10 publishers overall accounted for 74 percent of the total titles produced in 2009.

With the Internet changing the operation, print-on-demand has enabled small publishers. Now, a book can be printed for around the same price per unit as it would from an offset print run of 1000 copies. The result enabled excellent projects benefiting readers, contributors, publisher and retailers. In a 2008 issue of *The Boston Globe*, an article titled "Salem Author Self-Publishes Herself Into A Novel $2M Payday," an author had a draft of her novel, "The Lace Reader," but couldn't find an audience. Instead, she relied on self-publishing with print-on-demand. In turn, the publishers came to her.

After self-publishing, the book got buzz online and in stores, and mainstream publishers took note. A literary auction was held, and the book was sold for more than $2 million.

The "Lace Reader," is an example of how old publishing norms have changed. Today, it is possible for writers and designers to score lucrative contracts with self-publishing and print-on-demand once their books have been proved.

In 2008, Amazon, a significant influence in the print-on-demand model, announced a hardline policy for publishers—if you wanted a print-on-demand book to be stocked on Amazon.com, self-publishers needed to leave their current printer and sign up with the Amazon-owned printer Booksurge, currently operating under the banner 'CreateSpace.'

Previously, Lighting Source Inc., held the market share because they offered a superior profit margin, better quality control and service. However, the most important outlet in print-on-demand is Amazon as self publishers are reliant on Amazon for sales.

Another answer to the print-on-demand model is the Espresso Book Machine. The machine can turn a digital file into a perfect-bound, library-quality paperback in about four minutes. The Espresso Book Machine was introduced in 2006 by Jason Epstein and Dane Neller, cofounders of On Demand Books. Epstein calls digitization of books "the threshold not only of a new way of publishing books but of a cultural revolution orders of magnitude greater than Gutenberg's."

The Espresso Machine is being compared to an "ATM for books," and is currently installed in twenty-eight locations throughout North America, and Europe. The machine benefits self-publishers because it may be difficult to get their books into bookstores but with the Espresso, books are available even if they aren't on the shelf. With the success of Redbox for movies, the Espresso may be the equivalent answer for the self-publishing industry.

Beyond self-publishers, academics have been the earliest adopters of print-on-demand systems as shown by the University of Alberta. The college now prints around a hundred books a day, including replacement library volumes, course readings, collections of conference proceedings and other materials custom-created on-site with the Espresso Book Machine.

Without the Espresso Book Machine, the average reader is far more likely to encounter print-on-demand titles online than at the local bookstore. One of the most-established companies in this field is Lulu, an eight-year-old publishing platform that uses efficient outsourcing to convert uploaded files into bound volumes within days.

Ongoing, the *Publishers Weekly* article BookPrep: POD In the Cloud mentions another service launched by Hewlett-Packard called BookPrep. BookPrep is similar to the previously mentioned Espresso Book Machine but differs in its approach. Instead, BookPrep is working in the cloud. Visitors to the BookPrep site can read an entire book for free online before purchasing it in print.

Lastly, in the article "Blurb Sponsors the Obama Time Capsule, A Book As Unique As The Events it Commemorates," illustrates some of the possibilities of book production with Blurb. The article explains the print-on-demand title, The Obama Time Capsule, which features images from more than 140 professional photographers, graphics by Nigel Homes and essays from General Colin Powell and Arianna Huffington. The book captures Obama's journey to the White House and offers interactive features such as adding personal photographs to a page of key Obama supporters, a personalized dedication, and your name inscribed in the dedication page. Production time is less than 10 days, Blurb promoting the service "so you can become apart of Obama's story."

Another example noted in the article was when Blurb partnered with iconic rock band The Dead. To create professional-quality concert books to commemorate the bands 2009 U.S. tour Blurb enabled fans to make personal covers for each book by using their own photographs for a cover image in place of the standard cover. Books were available in the Blurb Bookstore within 72 hours following each concert on the tour. With a breadth of print-on-demand options available to self-publishers, authors now have the choice to pick services based on their needs rather than that of the publisher. Examples like the Blurb and Obama book and the article on BookPrep, print-on-demand continues to improve with technology the trends leaning towards increased inter-action and cloud computing for file storage.

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Two popular print-on-demand options mentioned above are Lulu and CreateSpace. Using content analysis, this table analyzes some of the main attributes of both services:

Characteristic	Description	Lulu	CreateSpace
Cost	Lulu is best for one to a few books. CreateSpace is best for wholesale. EX: 250 page book would be $4.15 at CreateSpace and $9.50 at Lulu		X
Time	Lulu has faster turnaround times averaging 3-5 business days for a standard book. CreateSpace takes at least a day just for approval.	X	
Shipping	Lulu offers faster and lower shipping costs. However, once a CreateSpace book is in the Amazon system, you can take advtange of fast Amazon Prime shipping	X	X
Revisions	CreateSpace requires a proof for every revision. Which means Lulu would be better if you didn't have much revisions	X	
Amazon	CreateSpace is owned by Amazon=free ISBN and your book is in the Amazon system, the greatest distribution system in the world for nothing.		X
Distribution	Lulu charges $300 to get your book into the Amazon system.		X
Profitability	CreateSpace is better for profitability. For the same retail price, the author keeps more money.		X
Quality	Lulu has more options and freedom available for design than CreateSpace.	X	
Cover Options	Lulu offers softcover, hardcover and spiral bound (great for editors manuscripts). CreateSpace only has trade paperback.	X	

Based on the above figure, one can reason that print-on-demand services such as Lulu and Blurb are better for users interested in one-of-a-kind artists books that care more about quality and control than profitability. Services such as CreateSpace and Lighting Source are better for authors looking to sell their books with mainstream methods. The value of having Amazon at your fingertips makes CreateSpace an important print-on-demand option over Lulu. However Lulu has more options and freedom for design and binding methods. These attributes would be more important for those looking to make personal or artist quality hard cover books.

In conclusion, books earned their place in civilization due to brave entrepreneurs and innovators. Today, companies and systems like Lulu, CreateSpace, Lighting Source, the Espresso Book Machine, and Blurb and success stories like that of "The Lace Reader," and "The Obama Time Capsule," continue to implement new ways to read and disseminate knowledge into the future.

Ch. 5 Conclusion

Print-on-demand has led to an explosion of self-publishing. The current avatar of self-publishing is closely tied to the maturation of two technologies: the increasing affordability of print-on-demand technology and the Internet. Where print-on-demand technology has made it economical to digitally print books one at a time, the Web has enabled self-publishers to read and write eclectic content, and connect with others interested in the same niche topics.

Websites such as iUniverse, CreateSpace and Lulu have allowed authors to bypass traditional publishers. Where Lulu offers authors to upload their work free of charge and pay only when they sell a book, other print-on-demand options such as the Espresso machines, allow users to download and print any of the two million out of copyright books scanned by Google and a few thousand from conventional publishers.

Despite all of its advantages and success, print-on-demand is still unlikely to take over the publishing industry. David Davis of InterQuest list one reason: "in contrast to digital printing, whose per-unit costs stay pretty much the same, traditional offset printing exhibits strong economies of scale. As long as you have bestsellers with hundreds of thousands of copies, on-demand printing is not going to displace the conventional sort."

From an international scope there is also regulation. In some countries, such as China, a license is needed to publish books; others, such as Germany and France, have price controls for books. Still with an open view authors in the United States benefit from accessibility and low costs; and readers benefit from greater variety of printed material to read.

Richard Curtis, a leading New York literary agent, predicts several changes in book publishing in the next ten years. First, he predicts that the size and price of Espresso print-on-demand will reduce so that print-on-demand kiosks will be installed outside of bookstores in places such as supermarkets, libraries and pharmacies.

Dane Neller, owner of On Demand Books which makes the Espresso, wants to put a machine wherever people might feel the urge to read, from cruise ships to train stations. To Neller, the most exciting prospect is taking the devices to poor countries, noting that the potential to democratize knowledge would be huge.

Print-on-demand has great potential for education. In edition to spreading knowledge in less fortunate areas, teachers will be able to collate the best of freely available online resources into one cohesive book for their classes.

Ironically, it could turn out that the spread of digital publishing is precisely what ensures the survival of printed books for a long time to come. Sales volume f printed books can still increase with the rise of e-books.

Print is not going away; instead it is becoming a more efficient niche, simultaneously more focused and more accessible. This all means, more books in the future, not fewer. However, most of these books will be highly targeted and looking for imaginative means of support. The primary goal of publishing since its inception has been simple: to spread ideas. There has been no better way to achieve this than through print-on-demand.

The sum of this research has indicated that print-on-demands and self-publishing rise and success is due to such factors as: it eliminates shipping, warehousing, returns and pulping of unsold books. It also allows simultaneous global availability of millions of new and backlist titles. These characters have lowered prices for consumers and libraries and allowed greater royalties and profits to authors and publishers.

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