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Your Publishing Choices

by Dan Poynter

YOUR PRINTING CHOICES. One method does not fit all. Each title has a unique audience, the author may be an introvert or extrovert and the author's plans for the future can be varied. There are many things to consider such as the size of the market, the cost to print and truck, etc. Here are your Four choices.

A. Print-on-demand (POD) Publishers.



Print-on-demand is a way of doing business not a method of printing. POD means receiving an order (and payment), manufacturing the book and then delivering the book. Most POD books are produced with digital printing but they could be produced with other methods.

Hundreds of years ago, those monks in the abbeys were POD publishers. They received an order, manufactured one book and delivered it. The only difference from today's POD publishers was that the monks hand-lettered the pages while today most POD books are manufactured on laser printers.

POD publishers supply some extra services for their relatively low price. They may take care of the cover, editing, ISBN, Library of Congress number, etc. However, the cover may be pedestrian, the editing may be minimal and the customer service may be close to non-existent. You get what you pay for.

Most POD publishers sell more books to their authors than to the public. If you take the number of books published and divide by the number of titles, you will find that less than 100 books for each title are sold.

Deal with a POD publisher when you need just a few copies of a book. For example, if you have written a family history, have a very limited budget and need up to 30 copies for your relatives, the deal offered by most POD publishers is hard to beat.

The cost per copy may be \$5-10 depending upon the number of pages and the trim size. POD publishers offer an economical service when you want one to 50 copies of the book, only.

POD publishers are relatively new so their businesses are evolving. See their web sites for information on how they conduct business. For example, some require an exclusive right to use your material and some will not put your ISBN on the back cover.

Two things about subsidy (AKA POD) publishers.
They make the easy part, publishing, easier.
They make the hard part, selling books, harder.
-- John R. Culleton, <http://wexfordpress.com>

See the list of POD publishers in *The Self-Publishing Manual*.

B. Print-on-demand (POD) Printers.

POD printers, like all printers, are in the book manufacturing business and do not invest in the product.

The cost per copy may be \$5-10 per copy depending upon the number of pages and the trim size.

A POD printer is a good option when a book has run its course, your inventory is exhausted and you still receive orders for a couple of copies a month. Rather than invest in inventory, you can have books made one-at-a-time as needed. Don't eat the last print run.

Some of our books are produced by LightningSource, a POD printer. See Writing Nonfiction in LARGE PRINT at http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/1568601166/ref=lpr_g

And

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/1568601158/>

This book is being produce one-at-a-time on demand for Amazon orders. But the book is being promoted by sending the regular-print edition to writing, publishing, etc. magazines. There is no need to send them the LARGE PRINT edition.

POD printers offer an economical service when you want one copy of the book, only.

POD printers do not own an exclusive on your book or supply the ISBN, They just supply a printing service.

The best known are Lightningsource (LSI), a division of Ingram the largest wholesaler, and Replica Books, part of Baker & Taylor.

Can we stop calling subsidies POD companies?

Any publisher, even a traditional publisher, can use POD technology.

It is the subsidy arrangement that is the kiss of death, and not the use of digital printing.

--John Culleton, <http://wexfordpress.com>

See the list of POD printers in *The Self-Publishing Manual*.

C. Digital Printers--Print Quantity Needed (PQN). Laser printing with toner.

Putting a lot of ink on paper is now just an option; a good one if there is large prepublication demand such as advanced sales to bookstores and/or a sale to a book club. Today, with digital (toner) printing, there is no longer a requirement to print 3,000 or more copies of your book "on spec".

The digital process is cost effective for quantities from 100 to 2,500 copies.

THE QUALITY of the toner-based printing is actually better. There are no light and dark pages as in ink-on-paper printing. The softcover or hardcover books look just like traditional books. Excellent, crisp color covers are usually done with the same toner process.

AUTHORS may send printed copies to agents and publishers. If an agent or publisher responds, you can entertain the offer. If not, no matter, the book is launched and you are on your way. If you send a finished book to agents and publishers, they will treat you like an author. If you send a manuscript, you will be treated like a writer.

PUBLISHERS may send copies of the book to major reviewers, distributors, catalogs, specialty stores, associations, book clubs, premium prospects, foreign publishers suggesting translations and various opinion molders. After 2-3 months, you will go back to press for more. At that point, you will be able to make an educated decision on the

print run based on the sales rate of the book. Therefore, PQN digital printing is the best way to start.

HARDCOVER. Most books are manufactured with soft covers, called “perfect binding.” In offset (ink) printing, hard or “case” binding runs about \$1.00 extra per book. That includes the hard covers and the dust jackets. For PQN/digital production, the cost for case binding is \$2 to \$4 each, depending on the page count (thickness) of the book. Case binding requires a lot of setup time. Therefore, it rarely pays to put hard covers on a short run of books.

TIME. Delivery for PQN digitally-printed books is normally five days from press proofs and reprints take three to four days. With your disk on file, reprints can be initiated with an email message and the books may be shipped directly to your buyer. The press proof is usually a single softcover book printed on the same paper stock you propose for the finished book.

THE SIGNATURES of a digitally-printed book are just two pages because the print engines print cut sheets, two pages (both sides) at a time instead of 32 or 48. Now you do not have to design your book’s page count in large signature increments.

MASS CUSTOMIZATION. Since the print engines are computer-driven and because your books can be printed two pages at a time, you may customize your book for your customer. If you make a premium sale to a company, it will cost just pennies to bind in a letter from the CEO or to add the company logo to the cover. You can send the insert or logo to your printer as an email attachment to save time and money.

HOW MUCH? What does it cost to manufacture a book? That is like asking how much is a car? (smile) Each book is unique. Prices will vary with the current cost of paper and labor so use the quoted numbers for comparison only.

For digital printing, the cost may be \$3.50 per copy for 500 books. [Softcover (perfect bound) 144 page 5.375 x 8.375 book with black text and a four-color cover]. The per-unit price is higher than for offset printing but you are investing in a smaller number of books and the invoice will be lower.

Digital printers offer an economical service when you want a small inventory of books.

See the list of digital printers below.

D. Offset printers. Ink printing with plates.

Deal with an offset printer when you need 2,500 books or more.

For offset printing, the cost may be \$1.25 per copy for 3,000 books. [Softcover (perfect bound) 144 page 5.375 x 8.375 book with black text and a four-color cover.] Offset printers offer an economical service when you want a larger inventory of books.

See the list of offset printers in *The Self-Publishing Manual*.

THE BEST AND SAFEST ANSWER is to print a small quantity of books. You are more likely to hear a publisher complain he or she printed too many books than too few. See <http://parapub.com/sites/para/resources/newbook.cfm>. And listen at <http://www.jackstreet.com/jackstreet/RR.Newbookmodel.cfm>. (Wait for the sound to load)

RUN THE NUMBERS/Do the math. There is no right answer because every book and situation is unique. Consider the number needed, the trim size, the page count, the costs, etc. Select the method of printing that best fits your situation. Remember that publishing involves printing and printing is a quantity game: the more you print, the lower the per-unit cost.

To help you decide on a quantity to print, total the copies you plan to send to reviewers, opinion-molders, people who sent you stories for the book and an estimate of what you might sell in the next 2-3 months.

For a list of directories and important review publications, see Document 112 (free) at <http://parapub.com/sites/para/resources/allproducts.cfm>. For a list of specialized review publications, see <http://parapub.com/sites/para/resources/maillist.cfm>

Print around 500 to start, send out promotional (review, etc.) copies, sell some books and then, in a couple of months, you can make an educated decision on the size of the next print run. You need a small stock of books for promotion and sale. For inventory, printing one-at-a-time is too expensive. See <http://parapub.com/sites/para/information/produce.cfm>

OTHER COSTS. Then there is editing, typesetting (that could be done on your computer), book cover design and other pre-press expenses. After the book is printed, it

has to be promoted with book reviews, news releases and some direct email advertising. For a book like the one described above, you *used* to have to budget about \$10,000 to get started. Today, with the new writing, production and promoting techniques described in *Writing Nonfiction*, you need just \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Your book could sell for \$14.95 or \$19.95 depending upon the audience. With this spread between production costs and selling price, you won't even mind giving the bookstore or other quantity-buyer a 40 percent discount.

Think about your future, get bids on printing and run the numbers. Your decision may not be the same as another author/publisher. Each of us has a different set of circumstances.

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Writing periodicals:

Dan Poynter does not want you to die with a book still inside you. You have the ingredients and he has your recipe. Dan has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. For more help on book writing, see <http://ParaPub.com>.

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Book Publishing periodicals:

Dan Poynter, the Voice of Self-Publishing, has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. Dan is a past vice-president of the Publishers Marketing Association. For more help on book publishing and promoting, see <http://ParaPub.com>.

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Professional Speaking periodicals:

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