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Print On Demand — A Dot-Com Era Promise That Won't Die

found on [Electronic Publishing](#)
written by [thefadd](#), edited by [George \(Plastic\)](#) [[read unedited](#)]
posted Thu 10 Jun 8:49am



A recent [market estimate](#) projects a doubling of the Print On Demand publishing industry by 2008 — from \$30 billion to \$60 billion. Among the economic deliriums of the late '90s, the promise of POD publishing seemed to burst with the dot-com bubble, despite [early successes](#). Technically speaking, it allows a book printer the economic viability to print just one book at a time — after a low initial set-up cost — unthinkable under usual printing circumstances. Though [overstated](#), the breathless talk of revolution was understandable.

This projected increase can be attributed in part to a broadening of the technology's application -- from fiction and non-fiction books to newspapers and textbooks. World leaders at the 2004 G8 Summit had their hometown newspapers [printed on demand locally](#). The current issue of *Reason* came with a [custom cover](#) that showed an aerial view of each subscriber's neighborhood. Also, Edulink, Inc. hopes to use the technology to make [textbooks more accessible](#) around the world.

Major players in the traditional book publishing markets have hedged their bets by sinking capital into existing companies but not jumping into the market outright -- Random House has money in [Xlibris](#), Barnes & Noble in [iUniverse](#).

The enterprising and artistic bunch that plasticians are, surely we have some self-publishers among us. What [war stories](#) or other lessons might those individuals impart on [would be self-publishers](#)? Is the one-time "[paroxysm of electronic-enabled self-publishing](#)" due for a rebound?

[[more plastic...](#)]

show by

Member Login

When you're logged in, you can view the submission queue - everything that's being considered for publication on Plastic.

member name

password

You can [create an account](#) if you don't have one, or, if you've forgotten it, [have your password sent to you](#).

Audio Site Aims For Unboring

(Thu 26 May 8:35am) -----o-----
Apparently the Netflix model is contagious, and now that Audible has made audio books cool, different services are trying to stand out. [Desperate or delightful?](#) - [Miss Vicious](#)

Clear Channel Fights Itself

(Thu 26 May 4:10am) -----o-----
A [pirate station](#) in Ohio [disrupts Clear Channel stations](#) with messages about how they suck. The catch? It's a fake pirate station [owned and run by Clear Channel](#). - [derumi](#)

Sinclair As Fox News Redux

(Wed 25 May 6:50pm) -----o-----
Sinclair Broadcasting, the 62-station TV giant made famous by its attempt to force its stations to air an attack on Kerry just before the 2004 election, has become [Fox News's cruder but equally zealous acolyte](#), airing a mix of fluff and conservative talking points on all its stations -- and it runs 2 or 3 stations in each of its cities. - [NH4](#)

'We...Oh I Meant You'

(Wed 25 May 6:02pm) -----o-----
Can we finally call Fox News just a little [biased](#) now. - [sacnuggets](#)

RIP Ismail Merchant 1936-2005

(Wed 25 May 4:24pm) -----o-----
Ismael Merchant, the producer of famed Merchant-Ivory Productions [died today](#). As he put it "I am an Indian Muslim, Ruth (writer) is a German Jew, and Jim (Ivory, director) is a Protestant American. Someone once described us as a three-headed god. Maybe they should have called us a three-headed monster!" - [Thalia](#)

Forum Murder - Hoax

1. Demand needs to be backed by a lot of cash

by [Dvandom](#)



at Thu 10 Jun 9:39am

score of 2.5
interesting

Background: I've written a couple of roleplaying games, each about 144 pages long in a common printing format. They exist as PDFs for sale online, but my publisher has never managed to get together the cash to do a print run.

My publisher has attempted many times to get them printed via various Print On Demand companies, but the breathless "anyone can be published" claims aren't exactly true. Those with quality above the level of taking it to Kinko's and doing it yourself tend to have high setup fees and large (for a small publisher) minimum print runs. Those we can afford have proven themselves to be lower quality, lower reliability, and incapable of some pretty basic things (for instance, some can't do a nice cardstock perfect bound paperback, just stapled or glue-and-tape binding).

Print On Demand does seem to be a cheaper alternative to traditional publishing, but it's not at the "anyone can get published" level. And may never get there.

---Dave, has seen stuff that should probably never be published, so this is not necessarily a bad thing.

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2. Quality Control Is a Problem

by [goofyoo](#)



at Thu 10 Jun 9:41am

score of 3.5
astute

I work with a POD publisher who makes manuals for my company. He showed me some of the titles he's produced for an unnamed major book company. I could hardly turn a page without spotting a grammar, spelling, or punctuation error.

I read one of the books through, and the information in it was horribly assembled. The writer appeared to have no experience in book-writing — over-dramatic presentation, cheesy graphics ganked from the Web, and repetitive information.

From this I concluded that the publisher saw POD as a nothing-to-lose venture. If a book is a hit, great, the

(Wed 25 May 2:59pm) -----o
That, or [google news](#) is a little slow on the draw. Anyhow, the BBC story's URL isn't right. The forum lost me when the administrator used the phrase "pump shotty to their grill" when he was supposed to be acting horrified. - [Tbola](#)

Blog Solves Murder

(Wed 25 May 8:15am) -----o
Police [solved the double-murder](#) of Simon and Sharon Ng based on Simon's [last entry](#) in his blog which identified the killer as his sister's ex-boyfriend. GAFFB indeed! - [Bartholomew Roberts](#)

Media Mistake Bad/Govt Lies Eh?

(Wed 25 May 8:14am) -----o
Where, in the week after the Great Newsweek Error, is the comparable outrage in the press, in the blogosphere, and at the White House over the military's outright lying in the coverup of the death of former NFL star Pat Tillman? [Where are the calls for apologies to the public and the firing of those responsible?](#) Is Gov't exempt in this new "era of accountability."
- [Catch22](#)

Faith, Hope, Charity, These 3

(Wed 25 May 8:05am) -----o
A respected scholar from the conservatively Christian Hope College in Western Michigan will release a [stirring defense of gay marriage](#) later this week. However, one of his [colleagues](#) recently resigned over fallout from an [essay](#) in which he mocked James Dobson's SpongeBob fixation. - [MandaX](#)

Bill Maher Targeted Again

(Tue 24 May 11:02am) -----o
This time, though, it's "[treason](#)" - according to a Republican Congressman from Alabama. (Man. Remember back when "treason" involved selling nuclear secrets to the enemy, directing forces under your control to fight your own side, outing CIA operatives or shooting your presidential opponent in a duel?)
- [n29 w95](#)

publisher makes money. If not, there's only a small loss in formatting costs and commissioning cover art.

On the contrary, IMO, everyone suffers with POD. There are more bad books for readers to slog through in search of gems; writers produce junk that doesn't sell and get disappointed and discouraged; and an editor who could have helped the situation goes without employment.

I am grateful that amazon.com allows customers to look at individual pages before buying. I wouldn't have bought anything I saw at the POD's shop if I could have perused it first.

Goofy Roo

Calling someone judgmental makes you judgmental.

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8. Re: Quality Control Is a Problem

by [bitflip](#)



at Thu 10 Jun 11:35am

score of 1

in reply to [comment 2](#)

I read one of the books through, and the information in it was horribly assembled. The writer appeared to have no experience in book-writing — over-dramatic presentation, cheesy graphics ganked from the Web, and repetitive information.

So, what you're saying is that POD brings the web to the real world? (apologies to Soviet Russia)

I'm not psychotic. I'm disturbed.

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16. Re: Quality Control Is a Problem

by [wrestler](#)



at Thu 10 Jun 4:16pm

score of 1.5
brilliant

in reply to [comment 2](#)

On the contrary, IMO, everyone suffers with POD. There are more bad books for readers to slog through in search of gems...

I'll bet that the same effect was noticed when Gutenberg's printing press became available. Books that weren't quite worth copying out by hand suddenly became worth making. Let's dub it Goofyroo's Law: The average quality of publications is inversely proportional to the cost of publishing. So obviously we'd be better off if all books had to be handwritten and illuminated by monks on parchment.

I'll be looking forward to your response in the next edition of Plastic.com, which, now that we understand this principle, should be written in longhand on a goatskin scroll and delivered by a courier on horseback.

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17. Re: Quality Control Is a Problem

by [wrestler](#)



at Thu 10 Jun 4:23pm

score of 1.5
clever

in reply to [comment 16](#)

Let's dub it Goofyroo's Law: The average quality of publications is inversely proportional to the cost of publishing.

Dang, I ganked it. I meant that the average quality of publications is directly proportional to the cost of publishing.

See what happens to quality when the cost of publishing approaches zero? If it had cost me more to post that comment, I would have proof-read it.

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21. Re: Quality Control Is a Problem

by [Daemonik](#)



at Fri 11 Jun 6:46am

score of 1

in reply to [comment 16](#)

I'll be looking forward to your response in the next edition of Plastic.com, which, now that

we understand this principle, should be written in longhand on a goatskin scroll and delivered by a courier on horseback.

I'll wait for the "stone tablet inscribed by the flaming finger of God" version.

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26. Re: Quality Control Is a Problem

by [mberan 42](#)



at Mon 14 Jun 8:03am

score of 1.5
clever

in reply to [comment 16](#)

So obviously we'd be better off if all books had to be handwritten and illuminated by monks on parchment.

A novitiate monk, on his first day at the abbey, was charged with copying by hand various sacred texts and documents as his first assignment. He was to copy them onto parchment, using fancy colours and inks. After only a few hours, he approaches the head monk with a very troubled look in his face. "Father," he tells the head monk, "I'm very worried."
"About what, my young novitiate?" The head monk replies.
"Well, I'm worried about copying all of these documents. I'm making a copy of a copy. What if there is a mistake in it? What if someone before me made a mistake and it was repeated? We could never know!"
"What document are you copying now, my son?" The head monk asks.
"The rules of our brotherhood."
The head monk smiles, puts his hand on the novitiate's shoulder, and tells him, "I'm sure there are no mistakes in that. You and all before you were trained with the utmost detail in copying these documents exactly. But, to alleviate your fears, I will personally go to the sacred vault and check the

original. I will return within one hour."
"Thank you, Father."

Well, one hour comes and goes, and the head monk had not returned. Two hours passes, as does three. On the fourth hour, nervous beyond hope, the young novitiate goes down to the sacred vault in search of the head monk.
"Father?" he calls out. "Are you there?"
The young novitiate can hear sobbing, and walks in the direction of the noise, where he sees the head monk, on his knees, tears streaming down his face.
"Father? Are you all right?" He asks.
"Dear God," the head monk wails, "it says 'celebrate.'"

If there's anything more important than my ego around, I want it caught and shot now.

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20. Re: Quality Control Is a Problem

by

[TRACKYOURPOSITION](#) 

at Fri 11 Jun 6:26am

score of 2
astute

in reply to [comment 17](#)

But this raises the question--why should I care about the average quality of publications? We should simply rely on reviewers and peer networks to point us toward the best works--and while the average quality may drop, the outliers on both ends (are there outliers on the bad end, or are we talking about a single-tailed distribution of quality?) should become even more... umm ... outlierish. [This](#) is worth bringing up.

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by [MAYORBOB](#)

at Thu 10 Jun 10:14am



score of 1.5
informative

Here's a look at POD for budding authors [from the perspective of the NY Times](#). Costs to get your great American novel published could range as high as \$500 to \$700 if you use AuthorHouse, Xlibris, or iUniverse. If you know of a place near you that has [one of these InstaBook machines](#), you can cut the cost to about \$150. Of course, if you live in an area where you think there might be some demand for it, perhaps buying an InstaBook might be a worthwhile investment.

"Illegitimi Non Carborundum"

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15. Re: The Grey Lady has something to say.

by [projectpaperclip](#)

at Thu 10 Jun 2:15pm



score of 1

in reply to [comment 3](#)

Having almost no experience with this technology (a friend of mine is an artist who wants to publish short runs of comic books, that's about all I know), I have to say that if the quality of the InstaBook final product (either the production equipment, or the books produced) comes anywhere near the quality of their website, then they've got a LOT of work to do. For the cost of a couple of their machines, they need to get somebody to design a well laid out site that clearly conveys information, and doesn't have a bunch of broken images... (I can see it now: oops, broken images printed in your instabook, sorry!)

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4. Still Too Pricey to Be Taken Seriously?

by [Notyou](#)

at Thu 10 Jun 10:45am



score of 2.5
informative

The 'overstated' link (and the links buried within it) cover the limitations of POD pretty well. It's an option for self-publishers and small chap-book publishers.

For larger publishers, POD works well for galleys and review copies (because it's fast), but for bigger runs POD is just too expensive (\$4-\$6 per copy POD versus \$.85-\$2.00 for traditional print copies).

POD faces barriers to wider acceptance indirectly related to cost per unit. Since all the retail channels are set-up to manage the shuffling of lots of books from warehouse to shelf, and all the 'ancillary' stuff like marketing and promotion is arranged to accommodate the logistics trail, POD titles can't catch the attention of bookstore buyers (not consumers — the buyers who decide what gets placed on the shelves). Chains and distributors don't buy a couple dozen books at a time — they need to buy hundreds in order to stock shelves. Bookstores don't market and promote books (much), and they won't relish the opportunity to carry a book that isn't backed with a marketing effort. For traditional publishers, the cost of POD books eats into marketing budgets and for tiny publishers who choose POD because they can't afford a big traditional print run (and a warehouse), *there is no* marketing budget. The oxygen supply will continue to diminish as the influence of big box retailers such as WalMart and Costco, with their demands for steep discounts and need for 1000s of units to fill their shelves, grows. POD publishers can't meet the price demands and they can't effectively market their titles to generate the sales volume those stores expect. Until unit costs can come down far enough to force the retailers to change their ways, POD will remain an option only for niche publishers of various stripes.

So, self-publishers and small publishers shouldn't count on POD as a way onto the the bestseller list, but POD is an affordable way to get a book into print, provided the publisher's goals are modest. In fact, local chain bookstores will be happy to carry quality books by local authors — I've sold literally *several* chapbooks (of other people's poems) through the local B&N and Borders stores. As for POD printers, finding a market for their service isn't easy, either (unless they're marketing to vanity). This [attempt](#) is an interesting angle. (A self-link that leads eventually to [this](#).)

Me neither.

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24. Re: Still Too Pricey to Be Taken Seriously?

by [KristenA](#)



at Sun 13 Jun 12:31pm

score of 1

in reply to [comment 4](#)

I've sold literally several chapbooks (of other people's poems) through the local B&N and Borders stores. As for POD printers, finding a market for their service isn't easy, either (unless they're marketing to vanity).

Several different books or several copies of one book? Either way, you are my inspiration. Just this week I made [my first attempt](#) using POD.

I'm using [Cafe Press](#) which I don't think anybody here has mentioned. For perfect bound there is a \$7 flat binding fee and then 3 cents per page. It didn't cost me anything up front, and because I only expect to sell a dozen copies to my frequent web site visitors, why not? I don't plan to make a fortune or end up on the NY Times best seller list.... just make a few bucks which will probably go right back into my web site.

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5. Money should go toward the author, not away from.

by [akiko](#)

at Thu 10 Jun 11:09am



score of 1.5
informative

[Teresa Nielsen Hayden](#) recently discussed POD and vanity presses in her blog.

POD as a vanity press is outrageous and quite a scam, frankly. I thought there was something sketchy about paying a large fee for the privilege of getting someone to print your book, and Ms. Nielsen Hayden's article there confirmed it.

On the other end of things, Cafepress apparently has a POD service, and their fees seem reasonable (from what I saw when I looked.)

Money, power, sex ... and elephants.

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6. The 'Net Changes Everything

by [Anonymouse Savant](#)



score of 3.5
clever

at Thu 10 Jun 11:26am

No. Seriously. I am a hugely avid reader and a lover of books. When I first learned of POD I was thrilled at the concept.

But in the intervening years lots of things have happened. Among them are increasingly ubiquitous web access, much of it wireless, blogs where lots of great writers I want to read provide their stuff to me, and lately, my Samsung cell-phone/palm-pilot/web-connected phone which not only accesses those pesky .pdf files online but which I now use regularly to download entire books — many free from my local library.

Remember when computers were supposed to lead to the "paperless office" but instead led to more paper than we could ever imagine? This time, I think that the promise of more paper that print-on-demand provided is actually going to generate the opposite result, less paper, as we get our information when and where we need it and print really does finally become less and less important.

Little girls, like butterflies, need no excuses. (R. Heinlein)

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9. publishing experiment

by [Seven Six](#)



score of 2
clever

at Thu 10 Jun 12:59pm

Hello, my name is 76. I am a writer — not just any writer, but *the most awesome* writer. I thought I would take the next step in publishing, away from the subservient paradism of the physical world, and publish my writings virtually, in cyber-space. If you can't pay for genius, close your eyes now. The rest of you are on the honor system to mail me \$10.00 after reading my original debut novella below. If you like, you can clip it and put it into Word with a nice font, if you promise not to copy. Message me for a payment plan.

Bobby was a trucker. Bobby was your mother. You grew up eating grilled-cheese sandwiches and polishing her engine block. You fell in love, grew a mustache, and breathed. Then the apocalypse came, flatulent and hot. Jesus was the President; you were

pregnant. You became a zombie in the Wal-Mart wasteland, a pistol in one hand, a brain in the other, a vanilla ice cream of intelligence. Then you died, on a leap year, like your sister, the crazy promiscuous bitch! Skeletor played checkers with your femur. Before you lost consciousness, you had a dream, a dream that was unlike every other dream, a dream that was the most beautiful dream in Africa...

Roses.

Dolphins.

Love.

Everybody, open your eyes. I expect payment promptly.

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11. Re: publishing experiment

by [thefadd](#)



score of 2
brilliant

at Thu 10 Jun 1:10pm

in reply to [comment 9](#)

Everybody, open your eyes. I expect payment promptly.

So does Carl. Now pay up.

On ne dit pas Carambar

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18. Re: publishing experiment

by [pushall](#)



score of 0.5
obnoxious

at Fri 11 Jun 5:47am

in reply to [comment 9](#)

Just wait 76 I am sure after reading the above the people at Ballantine books and Baen Press are beating a path to your door with offers of monetary support while you write your next book. No? Then maybe like me you can't write. Get over it and get on with your life or prove me wrong and try again, until you do attract some ones attention.

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10. My P.O.D. Experience

by [thefadd](#)



score of 2
informative

at Thu 10 Jun 1:03pm

As part of my senior thesis as an undergrad, I wrote a novel and self-published it using the print on demand company, iUniverse.com. I think they were maybe a year old at the time and overall it was a positive "learning" experience. My advisor and thesis board essentially functioned as my editors, so I plunked down the \$99 for iUniverse's most basic service. For my money, iUniverse's \$99 service provided more than Xlibris's considerably more expensive services. I believe they've hiked their rates to \$199 or \$149 but they still email me about special discounts all the time so don't pay full price.

For my \$99, I got one 6x9 trade paper copy of my novel, the novel listed on Ingram, B&N, amazon, borders.com, etc. and also a rather [strange cover design](#). Whoever did the cover obviously didn't understand the book but in retrospect, this was understandable since it was an undergrad's attempt to mock post-modernism through the use of the post-modernist genre. Very post-modern.

The book was "published" in September of 2000, however it wasn't actually available through any of those online channels until December. You could order it through iUniverse.com directly but none of the orders placed in September were fulfilled until Thanksgiving. This pretty much fucked what marketing plan I did have but at this point I'd already graduated and gotten an A so it was basically time to move on. Though it was "published" there was no way for anyone to actually "buy" it for some time or even get a basic review copy. One thing I learned: reviewers want copies of the book before the general public and basically before the publication date. POD publishers (not the technology but the publishers) do **not** help in this regard **if** you're using them as your main publication route.

After those initial obstacles, though, things were rather smooth from iUniverse's end. The book stayed "in print" for three years and future orders were turned around in days not months. I got about \$100 in royalties over the three years so I basically recouped my iUniverse fees. They were paid reasonably on time and matched up with the sales I knew I made. (Another thing I found out: the POD publishers actually hedge their bets and print a few copies of the POD books. Ingram stores them in a massive warehouse in Tennessee. They don't necessarily

follow the "take an order, print a book" formula.) Since the three years is up, if I wanted another print run of any consequence, I'd have to pay their fee again. (But there are still a few copies floating around amazon and I've got *several* unsold copies of my own — hint, hint.)

I do feel like I knew what I was getting and that the access they provided to me as a self-publisher was worth the price they asked me to pay for it. If I ever felt inclined to publish another novel I would certainly seriously consider going the print on demand route again. The \$100-\$200 range is a fair price for what I got in return. Any of the things I've seen offered over that strike me as fluff and padding. For example, I'm not going to go to a Print On Demand publishing company for PR advice. I'm going to go to a PR specialist. The real learning experience in the whole process was on the marketing and PR end. Having learned some lessons there and gained a few PR friends, I'd certainly go about *that* process very differently.

On ne dit pas Carambar

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12. Print Monograph Dead; Invent New Publishing Model

by [stet](#)



score of 1.5
informative

at Thu 10 Jun 1:28pm

...by Marshall Poe, Journal of Electronic Publishing is a rather thoughtful article about the author's publication of a "wildly esoteric" book on literature. In the article he discusses the economics of academic publishing and the process of getting a self-published work peer-reviewed.

The interesting thing about the article is that the author engaged the editorial processes of traditional publishing (the crap filters) yet sidestepped the economic barriers.

The article is [here](#).

I meant to mention the link in the SubQ but didn't get to it in time.

"All of the juice had been sucked out/ Before Mel Bay taught us children to play"

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13. Adobe killed POD

by [semonyenko](#)



at Thu 10 Jun 1:31pm

score of 2
interesting

Maybe I missed this in the article*, but hasn't the Adobe corporation effectively cut the legs out from under Print-on-demand with it's Acrobat product? Writers don't even need a publisher anymore — they just convert their magnum opus to .pdf format and send it out as an email attachment (or a CD, if they're high-end). The purchaser then has the option of printing it "on-demand" if they want.

I know a couple of people who do this. Most of them write pseudo-technical stuff with small target audiences (e.g., miniature wargame rules), so cutting out the expense of a publisher adds considerably to their bottom-line. It probably doesn't work as well for those seeking mass audiences, but then those seeking mass audiences don't want to POD either — they want stacks of their books for sale at B&N.

* Actually, I missed the whole article — it comes up blank when I try to load the page.

"We liberals will dis-arm when the right-wing conservatives dis-arm" - Wynn Quantrill

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19. Economic democratization in action

by [plutocracywatch](#)



at Fri 11 Jun 6:01am

score of 1

This vanity-published writer, who ranks 2,211,727th on the Amazon list as of earlier this week, I say: Bring it on. For less than a thousand bucks, one can publish his epistle to the Earthlings. What's your story?

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22. Re: Economic democratization in action

by [thefadd](#)



at Fri 11 Jun 1:07pm

score of 1

in reply to [comment 19](#)

This vanity-published writer, who ranks 2,211,727th on the Amazon list as of earlier this week, I say: Bring it on. For less than a thousand bucks, one can publish his epistle to the Earthlings. What's your story?

My first novel's current amazon rank is 949,501. Two observations: I'm always amazed when I see relatively main stream stuff with a lower rank. It doesn't happen everyday but it happens. That and it's amazing how quickly one moves up when you're talking about so few sales. I think my second sale jumped me about a million spots — sort of the silver lining in a low sales cloud. Anyway, you should see a bump in yours as I plan to check it out.

On ne dit pas Carambar

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23. One of the reasons print on demand died

by [Black Art](#)



at Fri 11 Jun 9:48pm

score of 2.5
informative

I worked on one of the original print on demand projects for Xerox.

We had the printing plant, the truck route for the west coast worked out, and the corporate backing and cash to make it work.

I was tasked with specing out the servers and making sure we had the storage to hold all the books.

This was not a vanity press sort of thing. The idea was to have on disk a 100,000 or more out of print books. You would go to a chain book store and order what you wanted. It would be printed, bound and delivered within a couple of days and you would pick it up at the book store you ordered it.

It was a great plan and would have worked.

Then politics got involved.

Every branch office had to get a piece of the action. No matter how remote or how implausible or useless, every politically connected manager within Xerox had to get involved,

It died a horrible death due to a management pigpile.

"But Hercules -- I thought you wanted a stable job!"

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25. A novelist's experience

by [Ormolov](#)



score of 1.5
compelling

at Mon 14 Jun 12:29am

So I have two novels out to different agents right now. One of my critically and financially successful stage plays was just rejected by Samuel French. My Hollywood agent will only pay attention to clones of my previous successes. I've realized that every time I write in a new genre or style I have to find an entirely new support network of agents and executives to represent each project since their own respective purviews are so narrow.

But I am a storyteller and not a salesman. To promote my writing is to change my own perspective so fundamentally that I become a marketer instead of what I started as--a poet. My solution was to start a website and post my writing online as .pdfs. And, frankly, I am quite satisfied with the results. Of course no one is reading my material, but I am doing my part. I am telling my stories and uploading them to an inexpensive worldwide distribution network. I'm not winning any awards or making big bucks this way, but I've learned that such supposed rewards take away from the purity of the writer's experience almost entirely.

This culture is awash with entertainment and art. And that is a good thing. I am one of a million shouting voices (especially since the advent of the blogs...). I am not needed, so I write now for myself and those who love my work. There is an ossified and inflexible entertainment industry who stand as gatekeepers of our stories. I want no more of it. What I desire more than anything is to be true to the damn voices in my head and to share my unadulterated stories with whatever audience may end up hearing them. When I sold a feature film to New Line a few years ago, by the end of the first contracted rewrite I had rewritten my script 58 times, changing every word at least twice. The story is the thing, not the success of it, not its profit, not the reputation one derives from it.

Publishing On Demand allows us writers to stay true to the art, releasing our ideas and imaginations into the wider world in a way that does not contradict the act of creation.

So... if I build it they will come. I'm Creative Commons licensing all of my novels, stories, essays, screenplays, and plays and posting them online. Some day there will be e-books, even if it takes another ten or twenty years. Some day what happened to the music industry will certainly happen to writing, and then I'll be in the position I always wanted: to freely share my words without the incessant interference of an army of executives, agents, lawyers, and producers, who know absolutely zero about the written word and why we love it.

Of course, my online novel is over 500 pages. Ain't nobody going to be printing it out for fun anytime soon. But I have already had the magic happen: more than one person has read it and told me that it changed their life. So my work is already a success.

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