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A cheap way to get that novel published;  
Entrepreneur opens InstaBook shop  
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The Hamilton Spectator

They say there is at least one book in everyone. And now there is a way to economically print them. Dave Di Marcantonio of Hamilton has acquired the Canadian rights to InstaBook, a printing technology developed in Florida that allows books to be published one at a time at a low cost. It works like a photocopier, but arranges and binds the pages into a softcover book form. Unlike standard publishing, a large print run is not required. The cost -- for memoirs, or whatever the budding author might want to write -- is \$7 to \$14 a copy. The client can order one or six or a few hundred. The book comes with a basic paper cover, but if a full-coloured, laminated jacket is desired, that adds \$1 to \$4 for each copy.

Laser printing technology is used for that. Each black and white photo inside cost 10 cents each per copy. Currently, Di Marcantonio has three InstaBook Makers in production, one at his InstaBook Canada office on Arrowsmith Road in Hamilton, and others in Cambridge and Oakville. Di Marcantonio comes from a family of local entrepreneurs who sold injection mouldings for shoes and boots to the footwear industry. But now, so much of that production is done in Asia, Dave decided to chart a different entrepreneurial course.

He read that the book industry was difficult for publishers because of the space required for inventories and having to deal with returned books. "I come from manufacturing background, so I thought it would make sense to produce books only as they are needed. "I was going to try to develop the technology myself, but then I came across InstaBook Corp. in Florida." He met with company executives, and struck a deal to handle the Canadian market. He says he was amazed with the technology. "Seeing the pages come out of the printer. The pages get picked up and cut and bound.

"It's really quite remarkable. What especially fascinated me was that it could be done all within the size of a desk." He feels the print-on-demand book industry will take off over the next few years. Forrester Research predicts that by 2005, 17.5 per cent of the publishing industry will be using some form of print on demand.

That's a \$7.8 billion per year market in the U.S. alone. Di Marcantonio scoffs at those who suggest that e-publishing will take over from book publishing. He notes that same Forrester study expects electronic publishing will only reach \$251 million by 2005. Di Marcantonio believes bookstores will stock only best-sellers and use print-on-demand technology for more obscure titles. Someone who wants a shop manual for a 1967 Mustang, or Beowulf or a specialized cook book will have those titles printed off individually from a data bank. The problem now, he says, is building up that data bank. "You need to get enough machines out there so content providers see a sales outlet for their content."

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Illustration(s):

Photo: Gary Yokoyama, the Hamilton Spectator Dave Di Marcantonio with his InstaBook printing machine. It allows one copy of a book to be printed at a lower cost.

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