

# Book on Demand Publishing

*David Byram-Wigfield*

*I gravely doubt the value of a literary middleman . . . The essential trinity is the author, the printer-binder, and a vendor with a cash register. Anthony Burgess*

I have always thought it peculiar that whether an author's work is printed or not should depend on the editorial caprice of a publisher. After all, theatres and recording studios do not reject their prospective hirers on the grounds of incompetence, lack of artistic merit, nor unprofitability, although I can imagine some purists wishing the contrary. Frequently, an author's work may involve several years of research and it is only right and proper that it should be published, however arcane or mundane the subject.

On the other hand, neither should an author expect a publisher to be an unholy trinity of money lender, literary midwife, and spin doctor; nor require three thousand copies to be scattered like grapeshot to the four Sale or Return trade winds of chance, in the expectation of selling one third of that number over two years, for a royalty which is usually less than ten percent.

A Book on Demand Limited Edition is a method of producing good quality editions for authors whose work might otherwise never be read. It must not be confused with Vanity Publishing, which is a sniffy condescending term used by the publishing trade to describe those writers with enough faith in their own endeavours to finance an entire print run.

Even so, Jane Austen paid for the publication of 'Mansfield Park' and Charles Dickens for 'A Christmas Carol'. More recently, Jill Paton Walsh, after fourteen rejections by commercial publishers, set up her own publishing company to produce her 1994 Booker Prize winning 'Knowledge of Angels', and Timothy Mo similarly produced 'Brunmout in Breadfruit Boulevard'. (See 'The Writer's Companion' by Barry Turner for more examples.)

Accordingly, Cappella Archive typesets an author's word-processed text into a chosen format of page, text and typeface. An initial ISBN edition of up to thirty copies is produced, six of which are required by law for the United Kingdom copyright libraries. The edition is registered in Whitaker's 'Books in Print' and subsequent copies are Printed on Demand as they are ordered, at no additional cost to the author.

It is an economical method of publishing for authors who wish to sell their books directly to the public without the expense of large print runs or seller's commission. It may provide more than five times the financial return per copy, by comparison with those sold through bookshops. The advantages of A Book on Demand Edition are:

- the typeset book file is archived in the PostScript universal printing language.
- the Archive is independent of commercial software and operating systems.
- the book is never out of print and may be ordered or re-edited at any time.
- there are no remaindered copies, as the book is only printed on demand.
- the author has personal choice of cover, typeface, paper and format.
- the quality typesetting follows traditional letterpress principles.
- the Archive can be mastered directly onto printing plates or film.

*Cappella Archive offers similar production facilities for writers that a recording studio provides for musicians. Please note, however, that it is neither a literary agency nor a book distribution service*

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