



# Open Textbook Network

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So You Want to  
Print and Sell Your  
Open Textbooks?

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First, let's go over some terms



# Conventional printing & distribution

- Print runs
- Distributors: sales and order fulfillment
- Sale on consignment to wholesalers and bookstores at varying discounts off retail price; unsold inventory is refunded (and often returned to distributor)



# Digital printing (short-run & print-on-demand)

- Allows replenishing inventory in small increments
- Facilitates the “long tail” of publishing books for niche audiences
- Available in the supply chain (for publishing houses) and direct to consumer (set up & purchase online)

A note about versions of open books



# Continuous updating

Even though tools like Pressbooks let you continually update a book and its print-ready PDF, there aren't really workflows for readers to order the current version on demand.

It's confusing for students to update a book mid-semester anyway.



# Implications for new editions

- Readers expect that all copies of an edition will be identical.
- If you make changes beyond fixing errata, you really should:
  - Update title page to clearly identify the new edition
  - Assign a new ISBN
  - Stop selling the old edition (?)

Questions to consider





# Will you sell books at cost or aim to generate revenue?

## **Sell at cost**

- No tax implications
- No ethical implications about profiting from students

## **Generate revenue**

- Will it go to author, to institution, or be split? Flow through institution to author? (If institution owns copyright, does author even have right to any revenue?)
- Accounting & tax implications for institution & author
- Institutional policies about instructors assigning their own books? And ethical considerations?



# Print run vs. POD?

## Print run

- Requires upfront investment, but you get a lower unit cost
- Need to store unsold copies, receive orders & payment, and ship to whatever countries you are taking orders from.
  - You can pay a distributor to do these things. They charge by storage volume!

## POD only

- No upfront investment, but unit cost is higher
- POD printers handle all fulfillment (receiving orders & payment and shipping to customers)
- Will bookstores stock? Does it matter?
  - Financial aid and scholarships tied to a bookstore
  - Requirement to refer students to campus bookstore?



# Color printing?

## Interior in grayscale

- Cheaper to print

## Interior in color

- More expensive to print
- POD printers usually require that the whole interior be in color even if only a few pages take advantage of it.
- Photo-quality paper is more expensive than paper that is sufficient for simple color diagrams.



## Binding type?

- Covers are always in color!
- Hardcover bindings (case binding and cloth binding) are more expensive than paperback.
  - You cannot print less than 500 copies at a time with a color interior and hardcover binding and sell for a reasonable price. Trust me.



# Where are your customers? (1)

- Lots of options if you are willing to sell only to domestic customers
- Shipping abroad raises extra complications – are customs and mail/parcel services reliable?
  - Distributors will ship overseas but only with traceable shipping (more expensive)
  - Largest POD vendors have printing locations around the world to speed things up, but even they won't ship to certain countries.
- Keep in mind online students in other countries taking courses at US institutions



## Where are your customers? (2)

If you are printing mostly for the benefit of users in a region of the world with poor connectivity, consider printing there rather than trying to ship from here to there!

Have you considered distribution options with a connection to your institution?



# Connections at your institution

- Campus bookstore?
- University press?

*They might even be willing to work directly with your authors!*



If the author owns the copyright and will receive all revenue

Let them set up the book directly with a POD service so you don't have to be in the middle!

Questions?