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**Printing on demand-providers in Germany. Market analysis and business models**

Until a few years ago a high number of copies have been the usual way of book production and distribution. But in 1998 the German intermediate book trade *Libri* attracted attention by developing a business model for books on demand. With the help of the digital printing technology an electronic saved document can be printed just-in-time, that means it is only produced when a customer is asking for. While the unit cost of an offset printed book rises with the decrease of its edition, the unit cost of a digitally printed book stays constant. Because of that the economic printing of a small number of copies can be guaranteed and a sensible use by publishing houses is possible.

During the last seven years a lot of companies saw a chance in printing on demand and worked on further business models. Today the printing on demand-providers in Germany can be distinguished in the following groups: First there is a service model for authors who want to publish and sell books on their own. The companies provide a multitude of services, reaching from publisher's jobs like rereading, setting of layout to marketing and distribution. The customer may choose which and how many services he wants to call on. Since the company isn't responsible for the contents the quality of the books may vary. For leisure-time writers this model is a cheap opportunity to make the dream of the own published novel come true, but for those who hope to become popular it generally won't work.

The last-mentioned topic possibly increases their chance to be successful if they chose a provider that cares for the content of texts. The condition to be published is a professional rereading and layout, that's why the minimum price is higher. Although the author may be included in the publisher's catalogue, he has to pay for the services. This type of printing on demand-provider is especially suitable for scientific writers, because their treatises must be produced fast, cheap and in a low number of copies. Besides that, the quality of the contents should be guaranteed.

*Buch & Media* is the first printing on demand-provider in Germany so far. It just uses digital printing for the production of its books and it created publishing companies that offer their authors professional publisher's work without any contribution. A disadvantage is that advertisement and marketing politics are missing. The writer has to manage the costs and the work-time by himself.

Furthermore there are companies which mainly cooperate with publishing houses. They usually expect fair copies which they produce without any check-up in content. Their services are exactly coordinated with the needs of the publishing firms, and as a media provider they are able to prepare the content cross-medially. Usually they are equipped with the most modern printing techniques so that they can offer the widest range of get-up.

Digital printing allows the mass production of personalised and individualised documents because the printing image can be changed during every printing process.

These days most of the providers of individual books offer a variety of texts on their homepage, which they have the copyrights for, and address end customers who combine the contents of their books on their own. But this use of individualised products appeals to a flighty public. However, true chances for individualization need companies which offer a wide range of extracts from different rights providers. But today this is not possible yet: because of a missing law there may be legal problems. The individual book will only gain acceptance if a general workflow forms the basics of the whole process so that every step from the internet order on to the delivery happens automatically.

Digitally saved dates can be printed at the same time in different places. Decentralised printing is being used by newspaper publishers in Germany so far. For books it isn't worth yet: the technologies must become cheaper and more efficient.