

Print on demand (POD), sometimes called **publish on demand**, is a printing technology and business process in which new copies of a book (or other document) are not printed until an order has been received. "Print on Demand" developed only after digital printing began, because it was not economical to print single copies using traditional printing technology such as letterpress and offset printing.

Many traditional small presses have replaced their traditional printing equipment with POD equipment or contract their printing out to POD service providers. Many academic publishers, including university presses, use POD services to maintain a large backlist; some even use POD for all of their publications. Larger publishers may use POD in special circumstances, such as reprinting older titles that had been out of print or doing test marketing.

Print on demand with digital technology is used as a way of printing items for a fixed cost per copy, regardless of the size of the order. While the unit price of each physical copy printed is higher than with offset printing, the average cost is lower for very small print runs, because setup costs are much higher for offset printing.

POD has other business benefits besides lower costs (for small runs):

- Technical set-up is usually quicker than for offset printing.
- Large inventories of a book or print material do not need to be kept in stock, reducing storage, handling costs, and inventory accounting costs
- There is little or no waste from unsold products.
- Variable data printing .

These advantages reduce the risks associated with publishing books and prints and can lead to increased choice for consumers. However, the reduced risks for the publisher can also mean that quality control is less rigorous than usual.