

MDL: Always one step ahead

Print on Demand

Print on Demand is revolutionising the book publishing industry and MDL is working with key suppliers to allow its clients to fully exploit this technology.

Publishers can:

- extend the range of titles available for customers to order
- keep any title available at minimum cost
- manage stock levels so that selected titles rarely go out-of-stock.

MDL has over 20,000 titles set up with Lightning Source, Antony Rowe (part of the CPI group) Martins the Printers and TJ International. On average they print over 13,000 individual copies per month.

How does Print on Demand work?

As the order comes in from the customer, a requisition file is generated for the title with the appropriate printer. Once the book is ready, the printer sends it back to MDL with other PoD titles, which could be those of other publishers. The printer records all the details about the books and the delivery carton in an Advance Shipping Notification (ASN) message. The message contents are integrated back into Vista and MDL's warehouse management system. When the carton is delivered to MDL, we scan the carton barcode and the contents are automatically added onto the Vista stock file. An appropriate picking location is scanned for the carton, and the backorders for the titles are automatically released.

We currently find that around 80% of PoD units merge with subsequent orders from our customers, and only 20% are sent out as separate despatches.

The **stock trigger level process** allows an order for a pre-set reprint quantity to be automatically placed with the printer when stocks drop below an agreed level. As a result, MDL can cater for slow selling titles that do not justify sizeable reprints, but which sell too many to justify true print on demand.

The result is that a wider range of product is available to the customer.

The Future

- continued improvement and streamlining of the processes, working together with the Printers
- supply of the product direct to customers from the Printer when the volumes are appropriate and cost-effective
- potential globalisation of print-on-demand by using a variety of print on demand Printers in different countries round the world.

