

Law Libraries as Publishers Using Print-on-Demand

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Over the next year, three of the student-edited law journals at Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law will be ending print subscriptions and

[A] reasonable way to publish in digital format while still offering a print option ...

publishing in open access PDF. The law library is not the journals' publisher, but as the library liaison to the journals, I've helped the journals think through issues related to digital publishing, and I have arranged for our campus's University Library to provide long-term hosting of the journals' content. In planning for this transition, the journal editors and I agreed that there are some instances in which paper issues would be better. Using a print-on-demand vendor emerged as a reasonable way to publish in digital format while still offering a print option for readers preferring a paper copy.

In a print-on-demand system, the journal provides digital copy to the printing vendor. Readers who want print then order copies from the vendor, which prints and ships them directly to the reader. Since each copy is printed to order, there are no print runs or unsold copies to store. I expect the vast majority of readers will be satisfied with an open access PDF, but some libraries may prefer a print copy for their collections, lawyers may prefer a print copy for reference (especially the annual survey of Indiana law issue that one of our journals produces), and editors and authors may like print copies of issues or articles for their own records or for sharing. Print-on-demand copies are affordable and place the cost only on readers who want print.

Through some quick searching, I found two schools whose law journals offer print-on-demand copies. Eleven law journals published by the Georgetown University Law Center offer print-on-demand through [Cenveo Publisher Services](#). A single issue of the *Georgetown Law Journal* is \$35, and a copy of an article is \$8. The *John Marshall Law Review* offers print through [Documation](#). An issue is \$10, while an article is \$3.50. Both the Georgetown and John Marshall journals still

offer print subscriptions, so the print-on-demand option is a supplement.

I also looked for vendors that served individual authors, including CreateSpace (Amazon's self-publishing wing), Lulu and Lightning Source (part of Ingram). These vendors seem to market mostly to authors seeking to self-publish novels, so there are many options for royalty distributions. The editors and I agreed that accounting for the small royalties wasn't worth the trouble, so I wanted to make our print-on-demand option revenue-neutral.

Lulu ultimately provided the easiest print-on-demand process. I can upload PDFs of the articles and cover, add some basic metadata, and Lulu will handle orders, printing and shipping. Here is the [first print-on-demand issue](#) of the *Indiana International and Comparative Law Review*. A 165-page issue is \$6.35, plus shipping. Eventually each article will be added for individual purchase. Using Lulu results in some changes to the journal's appearance. I set the paper size at 8.5 inches by 11 inches (6 inches by 9 inches was an option, but it was easier to select a larger page than reconfigure the journal's Word template) so the margins on each page are a bit wider than usual. The cover will be glossy cardstock. The fonts and images are embedded in the PDF, so other than the page size, the appearance will be maintained.

Adding print-on-demand has brought up more issues than page size and paper weight. What avenues will the journals use to sell print copies? Lulu and other vendors can offer print issues through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other marketplaces. To do this, each issue needs an ISBN to track sales. Lulu offers free ISBNs, but then Lulu is recorded as the publisher in some bibliographic databases. This didn't appeal to us, and we didn't want to buy our own ISBNs, so for now we limit sales to Lulu's site.

Print-on-demand might present challenges for library acquisitions departments. Subscription management cannot be as easily delegated to vendors, and there will be no invoices. For the moment, we are alerting subscribers to this option and setting up an email list that will announce the publication of new

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issues and provide links to print-on-demand copies. We may experiment further with different vendors and distribution channels.

Print-on-demand offers greater flexibility than either a traditional subscription model or an online-only model, but also bring new issues to resolve. Law librarians advising journals or considering their own publications should investigate print-on-demand as a way to offer print copies with little overhead. 📖