

Don Lancaster's

# RESOURCE BIN

number sixty six

## Useful tools for Book-on-demand publishing.

**O**ur usual reminder here that the *Resource Bin* is now a two-way column. You can get tech help, consultant referrals and off-the-wall networking on nearly any electronic, *tinaja questing*, personal publishing, money machine, or computer topic by calling me at (520) 428-4073 weekdays 8-5 Mountain Standard Time.

I'm now in the process of setting up my new *Guru's Lair* web site you will find at (where else?) [www.tinaja.com](http://www.tinaja.com) This is the place you go for instant tech answers. Among the many files in our library, you will find complete reprint sets for all of the *Resource Bin* and other columns. Plus a brand new [Synergetics Consultant's Newtwork](#).

You will get the best results if you have both [Netscape Gold](#) and [Acrobat Reader 3.0](#) installed

### Book-on-demand Publishing

There's now a new *Book-on-demand* opportunity. With BOD, books will be produced only *when and as ordered*.

There is no inventory and nothing ever gets out of date. Author royalties can go as high as 90 percent and be paid *hourly*. A backlist can continue forever. There is rarely a return and never a shopworn copy. Products are easily customized for each and every buyer. The time from manuscript to product can be measured in minutes, rather than months. Corrections are trivially made at any time.

Most BOD can be done at home or as a small scale tech startup. For smaller quantities or unknown sales, costs are far lower than traditional publishing. At least up to 3000 certain sales in a short time period.

BOD also circumvents most of the hassles of traditional publishing. Such as that wonderful IRS *Thor Decision* that *pays publishers to shred books* and decimates backlists. Or the notorious *publisher's committees* that sit on your manuscript for a year and then reject

it because it is "not timely".

Or "reserves against returns" which blatantly rip off authors. Or the recent publisher merger mania. Which has clearly replaced normal incompetence with acute rectocrainial inversion.

Or chain bookstores which replace 60,000 different Mom-and-Pop titles with 10 copies each of only 6000 "best selling" books. Most of which will get pulled and shredded after a mere 22 weeks on the shelf.

Let's see what's involved in setting up your own BOD operation...

### Adobe Acrobat

You can use most any software to create BOD files. So long as it does a good job of generating PostScript that is clean and compact. Obvious choices are *Pagemaker* or *Illustrator*.

PostScript is an outstanding general purpose computer language that is now *the* standard way to publish.

PostScript's strong points include high speed, total device independence and a stunning variety of incredibly high quality fonts.

A new web friendly "RISC" variant of PostScript is called *Adobe Acrobat*. Acrobat's .PDF files are by far your best way to communicate with a BOD printer. Many apps directly generate .PDF files. Otherwise, any PostScript

**NEXT MONTH: Don looks at useful resources for amateur astronomy.**

file or any .EPS file can be converted to .PDF using either Adobe's *Acrobat Distiller* or *GhostScript* shareware.

Free Acrobat readers are available from [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) See that Acrobat Library shelf of [www.tinaja.com](http://www.tinaja.com) Access to a free online version of *Distiller* is also provided for you.

As are *GhostScript* access links.

### Which Printer?

Until recently, you absolutely had to have a PostScript printer for BOD. Between host *Acrobat* and *GhostScript*, non-PostScript printers could now at least theoretically be used for some BOD work. But they will usually be slower and may present other major problems. Thus, I strongly feel that a PostScript printer remains the most reasonable way to go. And because of speed and quality, a laser printer is often your best choice.

An ideal BOD laser printer would speak genuine Adobe PostScript level II, version 2017 or higher. Offering an *enhanced* 600 DPI resolution. Along with improved halftones. Which most people cannot tell from unenhanced 1200 DPI or anything higher. Much of traditional ink printing will not end up remotely near this quality. Owing to press and operator variables.

A minimum speed of fifteen pages per minute. With an 11 x 17 option for covers or multi-page work.

A bolt-on or slide-in *duplexer* is a must. A duplexer lets you print both sides of a sheet in one trip. Duplexing is just plain wonderful. Mess up a duplexed page in any large book, and you have to fix a single page. Without duplexing, you lose the whole job.

Duplexing nicely self-collates.

A companion *printer* hard disk is a must. To store lots of fonts, to speed up operation, for photos, for patterns and forms, and to archive your entire job. But mostly to permit unattended overnight operation.

You'll also want your toner carts to be readily rechargeable with per-page toner costs in the 0.2 cents range. The *real* service manuals should be readily available, as should all parts.

The obvious choice for heavy duty and high volume BOD is that superb *Hewlett-Packard 5SiMX*. This 24 PPM, duplexing 11 x 17 laser printer meets

all of my goals for a mid range BOD printer. Street prices are approaching \$3400 or so. To put this in perspective, eight of these in parallel could easily blow away a \$240,000 *Docutech*.

HP's new *Mopier* software can fully automate unattended BOD printing. Carts are good for 15,000 pages. All of the high wear parts snap in and out.

Their 5M+ printer is a lot cheaper and somewhat slower. But this meets all of my ideal printer goals *except* for that essential hard disk. When your BOD budget is really limited, check a used 4M+, which you should find for \$1199 plus the duplexer.

I've recently tested an interesting niche printer. One I'll use exclusively for covers, table tents, and business cards. Or for those few pages where photorealistic color is a must.

This is the *Alps MD2010*. Its street price is under \$390. *Micro-dry* ribbons get used. Special foil ribbons are also available for *Kroy Color* hot stamping effects. Heavier stocks are supported in their "cardboard" mode. The largest sheet size is 8-1/2 x 14 legal, which translates to a wrap around cover of 8 inches high by 6-1/2 wide.

The machine can't speak PostScript. But it does work fine with Acrobat or GhostScript. Their printer driver even does its own color separations. It sure is fascinating to watch the buildup of one color at a time.

Speed? Uh, calling it *glacial* would be a compliment. Further details are in [MUSE113.PDF](#) on [www.tinaja.com](#)

One trick I am currently exploring: Using this printer to print color blobs and boxes overnight. Then feeding the intermediate results to a 5SiMX for a final overprinting.

## Papers

Not all papers are laser or inkjet compatible, so it is super important to test what you use. It is often best to stick with "laser rated" stocks.

The older wholesale paper outfits are frustratingly impossible to deal with. But they are great sources for paper samples and swatch books.

Note that colored paper is one easy way to liven up your products. Note also that there are lots of shades of "white". Superbright premium papers have a *brightness* above 91. Use these for first quality or any time that you are doing camera ready work.

The *basis weight* of any paper is a totally misleading number purposely intended to confuse and confound. A paper's basis weight has nothing to

do with how much any sheet of paper weighs. Or how thick it is.

For instance, a 20 pound paper is heavier than a 50 pound paper but lighter than a 60 pound paper. Paper basis weight depends only upon how big your printing press is. Got it?

Fortunately, we're finally getting away from this utterly absurd system. Newer suppliers directly express their paper weight in *grams per square meter*. Which is a true measure of how heavy your sheet is. Thickness is something else again, depending upon a paper's *bulk*. High bulk papers are useful to thicken up thinner books.

My favorite paper source is the 75 store national *Paper Plus* chain. You can buy quality papers by the ream or by the case at reasonable prices. Plus bunches of related stuff. You can find your nearest store by visiting the web site at [www.paperplus.com](#) For plain old grunt paper, though, it is hard to beat the warehouse stores such as *Costco* or whoever. Typically, their retail case lot price is *lower* than paper house quantity wholesale.

There are lots of newer direct mail paper sources. These outfits are great for specialty letterheads and matching envelopes, business card blanks, and such. But their prices are otherwise way too high for serious BOD tasks. Typical firms include *Technique*, *Great Papers*, *Paper Access*, *On Paper*, *Paper Direct*, and *Premier Papers*.

A new glossy *LaserCast* from *Darcy Paper* is offered in lots of bright colors. I use their *Champagne* for my catalog covers, with *Simpson* offset ivory for the insides. By playing games with those 4M+ trays and duplexer, I print and custom address the cover and collate it to three inside signatures.

All automated in one pass.

Humidity can totally trash a BOD operation, so a good wall mounted hygrometer is a must. The optimum humidity range is 25 to 45 percent. Cheap hygrometers come from, of all places, *Klockit*, while really good ones are available at *Abbeon Cal*.

## Bound and Determined

There is no "best" Book-on-demand binding system. Instead, there are a few intelligent choices and potentially useful alternatives. Because a decent small scale binding solution is the last remaining hurdle for BOD, there are tremendous opportunities here.

A *perfect* binding is one that lays flat. Ideally, you'd want a low cost lay flat perfect binding system which can

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## BOOK-ON-DEMAND PUBLISHING RESOURCES

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deliver a quality cover for less than fifty cents total cost. With less than \$400 in machinery and a one minute processing time. You want the ability to apply any cover materials in any combination and any thickness. You want to be able to print on the spine. You'll want full color and total scuff resistance. Plus foil options. And, oh yeah, you'll want the pages to never come loose or fall out.

Above all, you'll want to produce a home or small scale product that is as good as or better than anything you see today on a bookstore's shelves. I call this the *Turing Test*, where your own product is either comparable or superior to traditional mass produced commercial bookbinding.

Plain old *saddle bound* staples are an obvious starting point. Print in four page signatures. Then fold up your sheets. Long-throw staplers are finally dropping to sane prices.

An interesting non-perfect solution

is that *Personal Velobinder*. Which is great for proposals or reports. When on sale, you can get the machines for \$29 each and the bindings at a quarter each. One hint: Be *extremely* careful when punching. The small holes near the edge can trash your job with only the slightest misalignment.

Four hands are best for punching.

While plastic comb binding systems are readily available, these are *always* a gross and demeaning insult to your customers. You are better off stapling a used diaper to your product.

There's some interesting wire bind systems that are more user appealing. Some even can use the plastic comb punches. Wire binding's big thing is a true lay-flat. Which is handy for user manuals, calanders, and cookbooks.

*Wire-O* is one source.

I currently use the *Unibind* thermal perfect binding system. Their original covers had a pre-applied glue strip of varying thicknesses. You'd jog your

pages and drop the in the cover into a toaster-like beastie for half a minute. The books then get solidly whumped on a forming plate and then set aside to cool. Around a buck for the cover. Toasters are free if you buy enough covers and \$200 otherwise.

Newer Unibind products include their *Pelsaer* and *Pentabind* offerings. These are basically a positionable hot glue that you use with your unlimited choice of cover materials.

For any hot glue system, a jogger is essential. *Martin-Yale* has useful ones which list for \$300. Otherwise you can make up your own from a \$19 orbital jitter sander from *Wal Mart*.

For modest cover protection, you can use *Laser Buddy* blackening spray overlain with artist's fixative. Klutzy peel-and-stick acetate is also available at an office supply house.

Better yet, pick a true laminating system that locks in your toner. *USI* is one low cost source. Note that there

are gloss or matte laminates. New "lay flat" options are also available.

Another lamination supply source is *GBC*. These folks also have a wide variety of binding products.

But their prices are often high.

I feel that by far your best route to home BOD is a simple peel-and-stick strip full of perforated hot glue. Which you'd place between your "anything goes" custom covers and your jogged inside pages. Then pop these into the *Unibind* toaster. There's no reason the strips could not be retailed for a nickel per binding.

It is just that nobody, but nobody, has yet picked up on how big *low end user cost* binding options can be.

*Planax North America* has all sorts of interesting binding solutions. Besides peel-and-stick strips, they've got high tech *cold glue* binding systems that are ultra strong and set up fast; *Otabind* lay-flat binding schemes; and bunches of other innovative systems. Sadly, I feel their prices are excessive.

Slipped a decimal point, even.

The smallest useful "real" prinshop perfect binder is a *Standard Bindfast 5*. I've been meaning to pick one of these up. Sometimes these can be found at an auction for as little as \$500. Lots of ads for pricier alternatives appear in the print shop magazines.

Trimming makes nearly any BOD item appear more professional. Your best bet early on is to try and gain an access to someone else's shear. For a while, I set up this deal with a college where I'd keep the blade sharp on an ancient guillotine cutter.

In exchange for unlimited access.

Forget about that \$500 *Martin-Yale* trimmer. I have never heard anybody report anything nice about it. Instead, look at a used *Triumph 14* inch power shear or a *Challenge 18* inch manual.

There's one last binding alternative. One that can be very cheap and easily personalized. But is rather time and labor intensive. This method is to use classic hand bookbinding techniques. Check a large library for info. Both on the shelves and behind the desk.

A newer text here is *The Art of the Handmade Book* by a Flora Fenimore. *Lindsay* has a *Basic Bookbinding*. Which he feels holds all you really need for a home BOD. *Bookbinder's Warehouse*, *Gane* and *Gaylord* are all traditional suppliers here. Two useful web sites on binding are [www.redmark.co.nz](http://www.redmark.co.nz) and [holly.colostate.edu/~sheilas/](http://holly.colostate.edu/~sheilas/)

Lots more on binding solutions in BOUNDET.PDF on [www.tinaja.com](http://www.tinaja.com)

## Useful BOD Publications

*Recharger* is your leading magazine for toner cart refills and most printer repair parts. I now use *Static Control* as my toner source. Bargains in both new and used printers often appear in *Comp-U-Mart* and *Computer Reseller*.

Printer servicing secrets, rebuilding kits, parts, and repair videos are all available from *Don Thompson*.

*Hewlett-Packard Manuals* is the place to go for official service info. These manuals also apply to older *Apple* and *QMS* printers. But on any really dated machine, the manuals may cost more than the printer itself.

That *Desktop Publishers Journal* is probably your leading BOD resource. *Publish* is a slick offering with useful BOD content. Another good candidate is *Electronic Publishing*. Who are big on reviews of high end printers and typesetters. Frank Romero's columns here are always interesting.

By far your finest and most bizarre typography magazine is *U&Ic*, short for *Upper and lower case*. And *Dynamic Graphics* is a useful layout pub.

Traditional printshop mags include *Quick Printing* and *Instant Printer*. The *Helene's Hotline* over in *Quick Printing* is useful to pin down oddball supply items. *Printer's Shopper* is a catalog of bits and pieces required to run a jiffy print shop operation.

Used print machinery gets sold in regional trading shoppers. Because of old-boy networks and the "multi-tier" prices, it's real easy to get very badly burned on used gear. Even if you are an industry insider.

At any rate, two useful California mags are *HorseTrader* and *California Printer*. Two national shoppers are *Print Mart* and that *Printer's Hot Line*. Useful software comes from *Printer's Shareware*. There's several net based printing equipment services, but they charge more than they're worth.

At least for me.

There's lots of BOD opportunities just beyond the bounds of plain old books. Custom community stuff such as badges or bumperstickers, tickets, menus, tags, door hangers, catalogs, coupons, printed circuits, resumes, mugs, or political stuff.

One pub I have newly discovered here is *A&E*, and short for *Awards and Engraving*. Included are incredible sources of suppliers for all sorts of oddball emerging BOD possibilities. Another in the oddball but useful category is *POP&Sign Design*. The

"pop" is short for *Point of Purchase*.

Printed circuits and direct transfer solutions are available through *Dyna Art Designs* or *Techniks*. *Andrews* and *Labco* are two decal sources.

Old line sign magazines do include *Signcraft* and *Sign Business*. Thermal transfer and T-shirt info often appears in *Screen Printing*, *Impressions* or in *PrintWear*. And *Inside Finishing* is big on hot stamp foil applications.

So is *Foiled Again*.

## For More Info

Much more on BOD appears on the *Book-on-demand Library Shelf* of my *Guru's Lair* website you should find at <http://www.tinaja.com> Especially check out [REV1001.PDF](#) on book distribution and promotion options.

Alternate BOD approaches appear in *Midnight Engineering* magazine. I've got one example up as [PUBALTS.PDF](#) on my <http://www.tinaja.com>

I have also got my *Book-on-demand Resource Kit*. Which is mostly a reprint collection of all my earlier BOD stuff, along with several samples and such. Details per my nearby *Synergetics* ad. Or email me at [don@tinaja.com](mailto:don@tinaja.com).

## This Month's Contest

For this month's contest, just solve that low end perfect lay flat binding problem once and for all. Or else tell me about a Book-on-demand resource that I don't already know about.

There will be a largish pile of my new *Incredible Secret Money Machine II* books going to the dozen or so better entries, plus an all-expense-paid (FOB Thatcher, AZ) [tinaja quest](#) for two that will go to the very best of all.

Send all your *written* entries to me here at *Synergetics*, rather than to *Nuts & Volts* editorial. ♦

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*Microcomputer pioneer and guru Don Lancaster is the author of 33 books and countless tech articles. Don maintains his no-charge US tech helpline found at (520) 428-4073, besides offering all of his own books, reprints, and consulting services. Don also offers a free catalog full of his unique products and resource secrets. The best calling times are 8-5 on weekdays, Mountain Standard Time.*

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