

# Print on demand (POD) from a publisher's viewpoint: the case of Taylor & Francis journals

Print on demand (POD) has been gathering momentum in all areas of book production, most notably over the past five years. Increased use of POD is the result of significant improvements: first, in technology (file supply, content management and data quality) and, second, in the quality of what is being produced. These two factors, combined with the increasing market penetration of digital printing for journals and the relatively low numbers of print subscribers, make POD a very relevant consideration for journal publishers. The question for journal publishers has been: how do we make it work for journals? Taylor & Francis answered this question by developing over the past two years an initiative termed 'Distributed Print on Demand' (DPOD) where journal issues are printed and despatched simultaneously from three global locations (USA, UK and Singapore), near to the subscriber.



**MATTHEW HOWELLS**

Global Production and Distribution Director, Journals, Taylor & Francis

## Introduction

Over the past few years, POD has enjoyed increased usage throughout the book publishing industry. However, there has been less take-up for journals due to two factors: first, the nature of a subscription product (where many subscriptions are taken in advance of the publishing programme and a few come through later, during the subscription year) and, second, the added complexity of introducing POD to a subscription product workflow. However, the use of digital equipment to print journals has continued to grow as digital print engines improve in quality and as print runs for journals decrease. This increase in use of digital equipment, along with the recent increased use of content management systems and improved sales order processing systems, has led to the POD workflow for journals becoming a realistic option. This convergence of technologies has led to the development of a variation of the POD workflow for Taylor & Francis journals, which has been in use since the beginning of 2008.

## How does POD work at Taylor & Francis and what are its benefits?

Taylor & Francis has, for a considerable time, been practising a policy of printing most of its journals

near the location of the majority of its journal subscribers, a practice we have termed 'local printing'. As part of the implementation of this policy, we have regularly analysed the geographical subscription bases of our journals. We discovered that many of our titles were truly international in nature and had significant proportions of their subscribers based around the globe. During 2008, 'Distributed Print on Demand' (DPOD) was intensively trialled for 15 titles and, after successful completion of the trial, DPOD was extended to 115 titles for 2009. For these titles, DPOD works by digital printing on identical equipment (with standard 4-colour CMYK cover settings) from three global supplier locations. Taylor & Francis made this arrangement function efficiently through improved automation of the workflow and the creation of three efficient new interfaces:

- Central article tracking system (CATS – Taylor & Francis' production content management system) links with sales order processing system (SAP – Taylor & Francis' sales order processing system) and generates print orders based on the subscription data from SAP
- CATS delivers print files to our global suppliers simultaneously with the completion of the print order

- SAP delivers labels to our global suppliers based on the region of the customer's address when it is triggered for release by CATS.

This workflow is illustrated in Figure 1.

The automated workflow, in combination with: print file, label file and materials consistency; equipment standardization; online approval systems; and efficient administrative processes allowed Taylor & Francis to successfully implement DPOD. The benefits of DPOD can be summarized as follows:

- *improved speed of delivery*: no longer does an international subscriber have to wait weeks for his/her copy to arrive from our 'local printing' method with a single point of despatch. Copies are usually delivered to wherever the subscriber is in the world within a week of despatch, from the print and despatch location closest to him/her
- *reduced environmental impact*: this is, of course, a key driver for any business in the 21st century. The number of air miles flown by the despatched copies is much lower than was previously the case since copies are despatched from locations much nearer the subscriber
- *reduced wastage of materials*: this is achieved through more widespread use of digital

printing (splitting and thereby lowering print runs in three locations generates much lower waste than a single print run of conventional lithographic 'local printing') and through improved stock control/management processes (from more regular subscription data interrogation as each issue is published).

**Next steps**

As POD gains further penetration into the world of academic book publishing, it is inevitable that it will also find applications in journal publishing. To that end, Taylor & Francis has embraced POD in the form of our DPOD workflow and, after a successful trial of DPOD during 2008 and an expanded trial in 2009, we have not received any complaints from our customers and therefore plan to extend this model further. Beginning in 2010 there will be over 300 titles published using the approach of printing and despatching from our three global locations. We expect to continue to develop our systems and thereby to take advantage of the evolving POD models.

In addition, during 2010 we will be trialling print on demand for single copies (catch-ups and claims) with a view to further reducing delays to

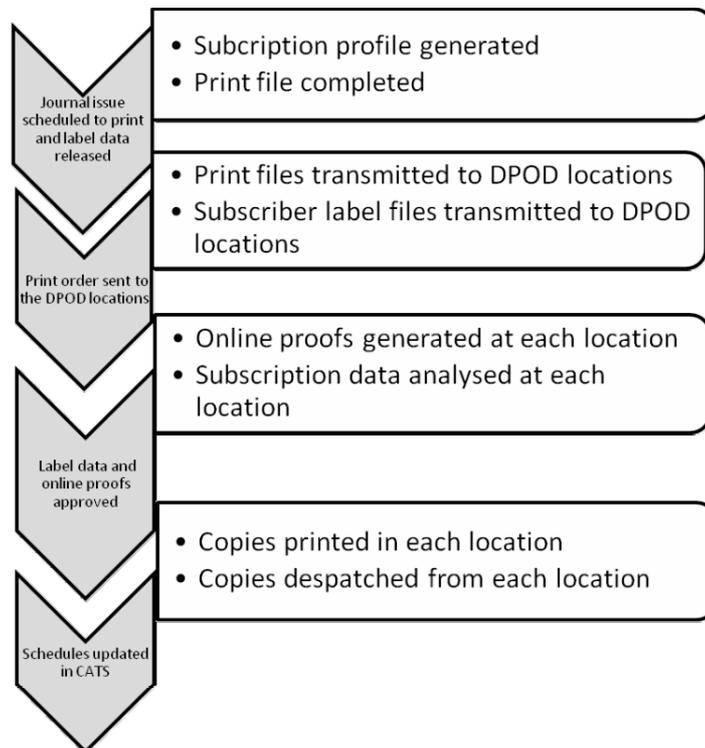


Figure 1. Distributed print-on-demand (DPOD) automated workflow

subscribers. The implementation of DPOD has established workflows and new processes that will allow us to trial this single POD approach, which is designed to further improve our inventory management processes. Beyond 2010 Taylor & Francis plans to produce more titles using DPOD and, after further analysis of subscriber locations and numbers, we may expand the number of supplier locations to include Australia, South Africa and India. This plan will further reduce the 'air miles' our journals travel and allow us to

continue to improve the service we provide to our customers through improving speed of delivery.

Article © Matthew Howells

---

■ **Matthew Howells**  
**Global Production and Distribution Director, Journals**  
**Taylor & Francis**  
**E-mail: [Matthew.Howells@tandf.co.uk](mailto:Matthew.Howells@tandf.co.uk)**

---

To view the original copy of this article, published in *Serials*, the journal of the UKSG, click here:

<http://serials.uksg.org/openurl.asp?genre=article&issn=0953-0460&volume=22&issue=3&page=230>

The DOI for this article is 10.1629/22230. Click here to access via DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/22230>

For a link to the full table of contents for the issue of *Serials* in which this article first appeared, click here:

<http://serials.uksg.org/openurl.asp?genre=issue&issn=0953-0460&volume=22&issue=3>