

Libri's Books On Demand Gets Rave Reviews from Publishers, Retailers and Readers All Over Europe



The Industry:

- Graphic Arts

The Challenge:

- Increase selection of book titles without adding to physical storage.
- Enable efficient production of books ordered in quantities of one or two at a time.

The Xerox Solution:

- Introducing a new Xerox Digital Books solution, to economically print books one-at-a-time, just-in-time.
- An entire book—including binding and cover—can be produced within 48 hours, allowing many more book titles to be “in stock” without carrying physical inventory.

The Results:

- Positive responses from publishers, retailers, and customers.
- For the first time in history, supply and demand can now be balanced in the publishing industry.



Libri

Founded in 1928, Georg Lingenbrink GmbH & Co. (Libri), is a privately owned book wholesaler based in Hamburg, Germany that serves 40 percent of the German wholesale book market. Libri carries more than 300,000 titles from 600 publishing houses and self-published authors. As a producer of books, Libri fulfills orders to nearly 3,000 bookstores and on-line booksellers, like Amazon.com. For every retail order received before 6 p.m., Libri guarantees delivery to bookstores anywhere in Germany before opening hours of the following day.

THE CHALLENGE

The economics of the book business are fundamentally changing. More titles are being produced today than at any other time in history, yet with less demand per individual title—consumers are demanding ever more choices. Dr. Markus Conrad, CEO of Libri, saw that too many titles of significant value were not getting published. Offset printing was not a profitable way to produce books in ultra short runs on highly specific topics, such as academic fields like science or public policy. Dr. Conrad's hope was that Libri could contribute significantly to intellectual and scientific discourse all over the world by making those books available on demand.

As a wholesaler, Libri's core competency is to fulfill small orders, particularly for special customer orders that retailers cannot fulfill from their stock. Although Libri carries more than 300,000 titles, it still could not fulfill all the orders it received, since it could not financially justify stocking and warehousing the remaining 400,000 German book titles in print. Even if Libri could stock every German book, regardless of the level of customer demand, there would still be titles that publishers had let go out of print, leaving customers disappointed.

Libri sought a partner who could help them fulfill each customer request, regardless of whether or not the book was currently in print or in Libri's stock. It was a "one book per customer request" model. But all the available short-run publishing schemes operated with minimum print runs, so that dozens of copies of a book would have to be created in answer to a single request, leaving Libri with unsold and likely unsalable inventory.

“It was a brilliant idea to combine the on-demand publication of a single copy of a book with the just-in-time logistical and distribution network of Libri.”

Dr. Heineken
Professor of Psychology
at the University of Duisburg
Germany

THE XEROX SOLUTION



The Xerox team worked with Libri to install a Xerox Digital Books production system, integrating the Xerox solution with Libri's proprietary wholesaler information system. The on-site facility allows Libri to perform all the tasks that a traditional printer would perform, including mastering the titles from pre-press to book-block files, producing color covers, and printing and binding finished books.

The Libri facility is experiencing exploding growth. It uses two Xerox DocuImage scanners, Xerox DigiPath production software, and OneVision PostScript preflight/imposition software. Personal computers and Macintoshes are used in the mastering department, which are manned by three pre-press technicians. The production area has a manager and two operators with a Xerox 6135, a Xerox 6180 digital printer, a DocuColor 40 printer for covers, a GBC laminator, a Horizon perfect binder and a Polar 66 guillotine trimmer. The system is run by the Xerox DocuXenter production management software, developed by Xerox Limited, Germany.



Currently, Libri can produce 50–100 books per day. With the Xerox Digital Books solution, Libri now has the capacity to produce up to 300,000 just-in-time books per year and deliver any just-in-time title within 48 hours of a customer's order. Books produced on demand are then combined with other orders for books on hand in the Libri facilities. This is a huge improvement in service for books that previously were simply not available.

“I was very much impressed by the quality of the sample copy I received. Books On Demand is a very compelling concept for our publishing house to offer our customers the service which because of economic reasons could not be realized with traditional means.”

Bemd Engel
Director of Productions
at Verlag Klett Cotta



Publishers now see Libri as an even more valuable partner in the publishing supply chain. It saves publishers the expense of warehousing low-demand titles and creates additional revenue for out-of-print titles. Libri notes that under the traditional system, these titles are cost-prohibitive to keep in print. Finally, with the inventory risk now under control, Libri creates an opportunity for new titles that otherwise never would have been published.

The **Xerox Digital Books** solution has enabled Libri to move from “just in case” to “just in time” and from “make then sell” to “sell then make.” The company currently has over 100 “Books On Demand” in its catalogue, with an additional 150 titles in various stages of progress and an average of 10 orders a day. As of April 1999, publishers had already placed commitments for another 500 titles. Xerox Digital Books has resulted in such staggering growth that Libri has assigned four marketing account executives to the business.

