Sorensen notes, Ancestry.com is already familiar with HP Indigo press capabilities because many of its own online products—from custom family history books to photo books—are printed on HP Indigo presses. The fact that My Name in History, if treated as a single title, would qualify in Amazon’s Top 10 best-selling titles during last year’s Christmas rush was gratifying, but not all that surprising, to Sorensen. “We knew it had potential. We just had to connect with a company like Amazon that possessed the technology to reach the market for it. We knew that Amazon had the ability to deliver a big success, and they certainly met that expectation.”

Another custom publishing success is the collection of VeggieTales Books. Personalized Products LLC has created six customized children’s books using 4,000 first name variations for each title. So a family with a child named John or Joanie or Steven can go to Amazon.com and order a VeggieTales book featuring the adventures of John or Joanie or Steven. In each story, children go on adventures with their favorite VeggieTales characters. Based on the initial success of the project, the company is working to increase the number of names that can be customized into a single volume.

Just Me Music, maker of customized books and CDs like the VeggieTales series, has experienced success with customization. “Working with Amazon and BookSurge has given us unlimited growth potential for our book series going forward. It’s one thing to talk to an on-demand publishing company, it’s another level entirely when you’re talking to the on-demand publishing company that has the unmatched web presence of Amazon,” says Paul LaRue, President and CEO of Just Me Music.

Where to next? Martin, meanwhile, is already looking to the next new opportunity. “Our mission is to provide tools and services to make it very easy for anyone who wants to make their books, DVDs, or CDs available to customers using an inventory-free model,” he says. “We are always asking the question, how can we remove the friction between the content owner and the customer?”

Print-on-demand is an important element of that vision, he notes. “From Amazon’s perspective, print-on-demand goes back to our core mission: serving Amazon customers better. It allows us to keep a very broad selection of low-volume titles in stock indefinitely. And it allows us to give those titles high availability.

Print on demand amazes online retailer behind “Earth’s Biggest Selection”

“A not only have we had great adoption of the platform by publishers, but the technology has presented opportunities beyond our expectations.”
—Aaron Martin, Director of Manufacturing, On-Demand and Self-Publishing, Amazon.com

Objective:
Offer print-on-demand capability for out-of-print books, unpublished authors, and customized publishing projects that might not otherwise get into print

Approach:
Amazon utilizes print-on-demand production centers designed to fulfill the needs of both retail customers and publishers. Retail customers can receive same-day production and overnight shipping.

IT improvements:
• Ability to print any kind of book content, including full-color photographs and graphics, on-demand
• Flexibility to print on a variety of papers and substrates, to fulfill the requirements of specialty projects
• Quality that virtually matches offset printing
• HP digital front end and RIP choices allow production flexibility, efficient growth.

Business benefits:
• Ability to fulfill book orders overnight for low-volume, previously out-of-print titles
• Access to new customized publishing niches
• Reinforcement of Amazon.com’s reputation as the place where customers can find virtually anything

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Amazon.com changed the world of book distribution forever beginning in 1995 and has increased its pace of innovation on behalf of customers. With the launch of its print-on-demand business using HP Indigo printing technology, Amazon promised to give its customers books that didn’t exist anywhere else, with one-click convenience and overnight delivery.

Print on demand hasn’t just proven to be successful for Amazon. It’s creating new and exciting business opportunities. “Not only have we had great adoption of the platform by publishers, but the technology has presented opportunities beyond our expectations,” says Aaron Martin, Director of Manufacturing On-Demand and Self-Publishing.

Among the success stories:
• A selection of 279,000 customized on-demand full-color editions of the book My Name in History from Ancestry.com—if treated as a single title—made Amazon’s Top 10 list of bestsellers last December.
• Thousands of parents are signing up to have a customized version of JustMeMusic.com’s VeggieTales “personalized book series” with their own child’s name woven into each of the 6 books.

To learn more, visit www.hp.com

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This customer’s results depended upon its unique business environment, the way it used HP products and services and other factors. These results may not be typical; your results may vary.
“The quality of the books is absolutely our top priority. We knew that for cover printing, as well as books with color illustrations, we needed a high-quality color print capability to satisfy publishers, authors, and our customers. We chose HP Indigo presses because the quality of the printing was superior.”

Aaron Martin, Director of Manufacturing, On-Demand and Self-Publishing, Amazon.com

The idea of print on demand has been floating around for years. But Amazon has brought it to millions of customers—offering out-of-print books and many that would never be published without print-on-demand technology. An Amazon customer can order a book, select next day delivery, and it will be printed, bound and shipped that night.

“That’s been our promise, especially to our Amazon Prime customers. We have to be able to manufacture and ship the item the same day or next day,” says Martin. “Amazon drives innovation for customers in three areas that they care about: price, selection and availability. Print-on-demand technology allows us great availability and expanded selection. It allows us to increase the selection of books we can carry without having to inventory printed books on shelves.”

The manufacturing muscle in these print-on-demand facilities is the HP Indigo press 5000. Each press can print up to 4000 8 1/2 x 11 four-color pages per hour, 8000 two-color pages, or 16,000 single-color pages. HP Indigo presses can print on a variety of papers and substrates, including cover-weight papers. HP Electrolink enables the Indigo presses to virtually match the look of traditional offset printing.

“We’ve been very pleased not just with the look and quality of the books produced on the HP Indigo presses, but with the turnaround they’re able to provide.”

Scott Sørensen, Vice President, Commerce, Ancestry.com

Thousands of publishers and authors now take advantage of Amazon’s print-on-demand platform. Now, many hundreds of thousands of titles are available to Amazon customers through this technology.

In August of 2007, CreateSpace, a member of the Amazon group of companies, launched its self-publishing/media creation service for authors, filmmakers and musicians. “On the CreateSpace site, an author, filmmaker or musician can upload their content at no charge. It will then be listed for sale within a matter of days on Amazon and other channels and manufactured as customers order the items,” Martin explains. That includes not just books, but CDs and DVDs as well. Filmmakers and musicians can also make their digital movie downloads and rentals available through Amazon’s Unbox service, and music MP3s through Amazon’s MP3 service. Authors don’t have to pay an upfront fee to work with CreateSpace. As long as the print file they submit meets CreateSpace’s specifications, they can upload it and make it available for sale. “CreateSpace is an easy-to-use self-publishing platform,” Martin says. “The CreateSpace service has allowed us to remove friction between getting self-published content from authors, filmmakers and musicians to customers for purchase.”

Custom publishing opens new doors
But the success of print on demand has reached beyond even Amazon’s original expectations. Custom publishing may eventually emerge as one of the most interesting results.

The team at Ancestry.com, the world’s largest online family history resource, had been trying to find ways to publish all of its data in a book format. What they came up with was My Name in History, a book that summarizes and presents interesting trivia about a given surname: the migration patterns of people with that surname, including where they came from, what ports they emigrated from and entered in the United States; a broad picture of the lifestyles they likely led; their record of military service; and how they migrated across the country.

“From Amazon’s perspective, print on demand goes back to our core mission: serving Amazon customers better. It allows us to keep a very broad selection of low-volume titles in stock indefinitely. And it allows us to give those titles high availability.”

Aaron Martin, Director of Manufacturing, On-Demand and Self-Publishing, Amazon.com

Mining its vast collection of historical records databases, Ancestry.com compiled books on 279,000 different surnames, which together account for more than 90 percent of the households in the United States. And now, all 279,000 versions of My Name in History are available on Amazon.com for sale. The books range in length from 80 to 120 pages and cost $29.95. They include colorful graphics summarizing the demographic data on a particular family name, as well as black-and-white period photos.

“We’ve been very pleased not just with the look and quality of the books produced on the HP Indigo presses, but with the turnaround they’re able to provide,” says Scott Sørensen, Vice President, Commerce for Ancestry.com. As a matter of fact,