

Penn State Press gets more traffic, bigger margins and new sales with Google Print.



“Since our titles became active on Google Print, visits to our website have gone up 124 percent. The converted POD titles averaged 19 sales per month before Google Print – and 74 copies in the first month after we joined. Clearly, people are finally finding these titles. As a result, we’ve also started a relationship with the Library at Penn State. We are beginning to offer printed versions of some of their unique digital content.”

Tony Sanfilippo
Marketing and Sales Director

penn state press

ABOUT GOOGLE PRINT

Google Print enables publishers to promote their books on Google. Google scans the full text of participating publishers’ titles so that Google users can see books that match the topics that they are searching on. When users click on a book search result, they’re taken to a Google-hosted web page displaying a scanned image of the relevant page from the book. Each page also contains multiple ‘Buy This Book’ links, which enable users to purchase the book from online retailers. Users may also see contextually targeted Google AdWords ads on these pages. Publishers receive a share of the revenue generated from ads appearing on their content.

For more information, visit
<http://print.google.com>

Over nearly 50 years, Penn State Press has steadily grown in its mission to publish scholarly and regional books for “citizens of Pennsylvania and the world.” Based in University Park, Pa., the staff of 21 publishes up to 55 books and 11 journals each year. Areas of specialty include art history, literary criticism, philosophy, history, political science and sociology. The current catalog numbers 1,056. Today, yearly revenue from sales and subscriptions is more than \$2 million.

Challenge

In the spring of 2004, Penn State University asked the Press to reduce its inventory in order to eliminate the use of a warehouse. “Rather than just doing a blanket reduction of overstock or cutting our list,” recalls Penn State Press Marketing and Sales Director Tony Sanfilippo, “we decided to convert the bottom portion of the list to print on demand (POD) titles – mostly older hardcover monographs priced between \$25 to \$70 that were selling less than 25 copies a year.” Having a print-on-demand component is important for publishers like Penn State because it makes publishing small runs affordable, and can revive out-of-print titles for limited markets. “It affordably converts hardcovers to paperbacks, it changes the status of those titles at other online retailers from ‘Ships in 1 to 2 months’ to ‘Ships in 1 – 2 days,’ and it puts those books back on the active list at the chains,” he explains.

For a previously canceled PSU series on Romance language literature, Sanfilippo says “The inclusion of a print element [POD] was crucial to its return. This isn’t as much for revenue as it is a selling point of the series to authors and tenure committees. The parties involved knew that submission to an electronic series would be much more tenable if tenure committee members could hold a book in their hands during the evaluation.”

But even with POD, the challenge remains how to advertise and sell these titles. “We needed a way to market our POD backlist, and definitely not with a ‘new in paperback’ catalog,” Sanfilippo says. He found an answer to this dilemma at BEA, when a Google Print staffer stopped by the PSU booth. As a result of that conversation, the Press signed up 972 of about a thousand active titles on its list. The launch also included the 209 backlist titles that were converted to Lightning Source POD paperbacks.

This partnership provided a marketing solution for Sanfilippo’s team: “Google Print was how we would tell people about these titles – this was how people would find them.”

“When I came to the Press, a long-term goal of mine was never see any of our books go out of print again. With Google Print, we make more content available – forever – and we sell more books.”

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Solution

“Obviously, it’s most profitable to sell the book ourselves through our own website,” Sanfilippo says. “So when we look at a web page on one of our books in the Google Print program, our logo is linked to our site’s homepage, and the first ‘buy the book’ link goes to that book’s buy page on our site. Since our titles became active on Google Print, visits to our website have gone up 124 percent. The converted POD titles averaged 19 sales per month before Google Print – and 74 copies in the first month after we joined. Clearly, people are finally finding these titles. As a result, we’ve also started a relationship with the Library at Penn State. We are beginning to offer printed versions of some of their unique digital content.”

The Press’s costs for marketing through Google Print include converting the backlist to POD. “Digitizing 200 titles at approximately \$100 per book adds up,” says Sanfilippo, who also notes that they were able to “spend a little less by taking advantage of quantity discounts and seasonal specials.” Another investment is a copy of each book for Google Print. Penn State Press drop-shipped a copy of each POD title to Google’s scanning facility in California, and bulk-shipped a copy of each offset title from its warehouse.

Today, as the Press publishes new titles, says Sanfilippo, “we’re including those in Google Print as well. New titles have digital files, so we are currently looking to integrate digital submission into our workflow, thus saving both shipping and books.”

In converting a good portion of its backlist to POD for Google Print, Sanfilippo says, “We’re quite happy with the results. We recognize that this model won’t work for all of our books – for example, Penn State has a wonderful art history list, and POD has limitations in reproducing images in a quality sufficient for scholarship. But for most of the rest of our list, this model works well for the end of a book’s lifecycle. POD plus Google Print allows the scholarship to remain available indefinitely, affordably, and accessibly.”

Finally, Sanfilippo notes that Penn State Press’s mission is not just sales, but the dissemination of knowledge. “When I came to the Press, a long-term goal of mine was never see any of our books go out of print again,” he recalls. “With Google Print, we make more content available – forever – and we sell more books.”

