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PRINT ON DEMAND (BURN ON DEMAND) AND ON LINE PUBLISHING

Dear colleagues and friends,

We all know what print-on-demand is, so we are not re-inventing the wheel, but to start I would like just to recall here a simple formulation from a Julie Duffie's article that I read recently and with which I fully agree.: you see it on the slide, so I will not quote, but just comment.

...“At its simplest, print on-demand publishing means that whenever a book is demanded (ordered, bought, requested), a copy of the book is printed. To anyone who knows anything about traditional printing methods, this sounds ridiculous. Setting up a book on a traditional printing press is a long, costly process and to print one copy of a book would cost thousands of euro. The advent of digital technologies, however, has brought changes.”

Julie Duffie

Those, who are acquainted with the classic offset book printing process, know well how expensive is the publishing of **one single copy of a book** - since its cost would have to cover all used films, plaques, layouts, inks, paper and manpower... THIS IS WHY a dozen of years ago it was a pure utopia to think about printing one single copy of a book on a client's request. But since 1990, after the digital printing machines, which successfully compete both in quality and productivity with the classic offset ones have been invented, printing a single copy is not unthinkable anymore. On the opposite, it is established as a more and more strengthened practice by many publishers around the world, including those who destine the books they print to the mass book market.

What the digital printing is saving to the publishers?

First of all – **the risk of producing more copies** of a given title than the market could consume or afford. And what the consumer – reader and buyer of the book - gains? Well, they gain a **never ending total print**; a “print on demand copy” is always “in print”, namely all the customer needs to do is to order, and in hours, a day or two at the most, it will be “available” and supplied.

I am aiming with this short introduction on the print-on-demand at making us imagine how in reality this service would contribute to and complement the Hyper-Learning objectives. Let's take that we have already built the entire Hyper Learning platform... It allows an “**as quick as thought**” access through internet to all documents, facsimiles, critical works etc. needed to our research. HOWEVER, as it is rightly stated in our project: “It is virtually impossible to read 400 pages on philosophy on a computer screen, and e-books are still imperfect devices.” It is TRUE, books still remain the ideal medium for actual reading.

Print-on-demand services are becoming increasingly competitive, especially for the small print runs typical of scholarly essays, relative to traditional publishing and distribution mechanisms, and they are a natural complement to the intensive use of the internet for scholarly research. The Hyper-Learning Platforms assemble the scholarly material, structure it, and provide quality control; the internet serves as an excellent means of dissemination; **and the print-on-demand system would complete the picture by furnishing the appropriate medium for reading.**

While using a Hyper-Learning system, the researcher will be able to select and save to a personal electronic folder a collection of texts and essays that are of particular interest - just like

one sets aside articles for photocopying during a visit to the library. For example, a HyperNietzsche user interested in the concept of the ‘free spirit’ might select facsimiles of the manuscript pages in which this expression appears for the first time, passages from published books in which the free spirit is thematized, facsimiles accompanied by transcriptions of a series of letters from the period, and perhaps a selection of articles or parts of monographs that offer relevant philosophical commentary.

At the end of the session, the user would be able to convert the folder into a **pdf** file that can be easily printed and then freely download the file and print it on a local printer. Alternatively, the user could choose to have the anthology of texts sent to a commercial print on demand service that has informed HyperNietzsche of its availability. The **pdf** file will then be sent automatically to the print service, and after having paid the established fee, the user will receive at home a bound volume containing the selected texts.

Thus the Hyper-Learning Platforms, which are dedicated exclusively to research and learning, act only as intermediaries between their users and the print on demand services. They have nothing to do with the commercial transaction and they are not permitted to grant a monopoly to any one service provider. On the contrary, the Hyper-Learning Platforms will identify multiple printing services based in different countries in order to stimulate demand and to satisfy the demands of users in different geographical regions. I believe one of these countries could be Bulgaria, where my publishing house PERO intends to invest in building the print-on-demand system for our project’s needs, in the hope, of course, of attracting demands from the country and abroad in order to justify the investment.

At a first glance, the opportunity to create “authors’ anthologies” meeting the specific research tasks of the author, seems to restrain the possibility of using such editions for commercial purposes. BUT in fact it is very likely the development of **wide in content anthologies**, including larger amount of documents and/or critical essays and building connections between the authors presented in the project, to attract a wider public interest, which on its side would provoke respective commercial interest of publishers and distributors. In this case, after settling the author rights, the edition may become “commercial”, namely sold through regular or on-line bookshops.

The *Copyleft* licenses of the Hyper-Learning Platforms specify that the authors retain the rights for all commercial use of their texts. Naturally, even if a text appears in a commercial venue, it would continue to be available at no cost in the hypertext. Therefore one team within the Hyper-Learning will work to develop a standard model for the interface between Hyper-Learning Platforms and commercial print on demand companies.

ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

Summarized this way, everything related to print-on-demand seems quite simple and easily achievable: one is sitting in front of the PC home or in the office; gathers the needed research materials; turns them into a PDF file; sends all with a click of the mouse to a print-on-demand service company and here it comes on the next day the copy one wants to leaf through... BUT in fact there is a long troublesome and challenging way to go before all this becomes true!

The challenge and the burden of establishing the system to a large extent will fall on our IT experts’ shoulders. They will have to consider each and every detail relating to the eventual print-on-demand service and the professional digital printing equipment’s requirements – from **the resolution and the size** of the digital facsimiles to be printed **to the fonts and the size of** the print-on-demand books to be offered through HyperLearning.

SOLUTIONS

To this end it is ultimate to establish a print-on-demand standard, which needs to be developed in consultation with existing print-on-demand printing houses possessing last generation digital equipment. Last, but not least, there is a need of a peer study of the print-on-demand market prices so that the print-on-demand service provided by Hyper Learning would be affordable enough for customers, while NOT jeopardizing the investments made by the publisher providing this service.

Vast prospects lie also before the implementation of the Burn On Demand service through Hyper Learning. For the first time such a large amount of audio-visual materials relating to the life and work of the presented authors will be available at one spot on internet. In the last years the multimedia applications have turned into an indispensable part of each educational process. Multimedia however is used relatively less in the field of humanities, primarily where it is relevant to the traditional notion of cultural heritage, namely in photoarchives and facsimiles, and rather rarely in audio and video applications. With the development of the new technologies this is not only possible, but indispensable in any serious research and presentation of an author, a problem or a time period in the historic-cultural space. From my perspective our ambitions in Hyper Learning are focused namely on such a versatile presentation of the authors, time and perception in historical context, which would unavoidably involve various multimedia applications, including those that would suggest new opportunities for comparative studies on the interpenetration and interaction between the various cultures in Europe in the past and at present. In other words, TO ME, **the expectation** for part or most of these multimedia applications to be subject of Burn On Demand requests by scientists and scholars, as well as by a larger circle of HyperLearning users with interest in the humanities, **is completely justified**.

Finally, we will not only provide the necessary software programmes and legal framework for commercial print and burn on demand services, but also demonstrate the practicability of this new approach to the book market and its use for Learning Communities. Due to the difficulties in the academic book market and the poor situation of publishing in languages with a small national market (as in all European countries with the exception of England and Spain), print on demand represents an important resource for the restructuring of the economies of scale in book production.

To conclude, consider a service – *print and burn on demand* – that may seem to be purely an accessory. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is commonplace to juxtapose the paper world and the digital world. But in reality, without a close integration of older learning technologies, e-learning can never succeed on a broad scale. We should recognize that new media cannot thrive except by working in cooperation with older media. Print and burn on demand represent the reconciliation of on-line learning with off-line learning, the book with the hypertext. If our system were not to offer the option of output on paper, the break with current practices of reading, studying and researching would be too jarring. At least during this interim stage, **when many people do not have fast internet connections** and screens that can rival the resolution of a printed page, a more gradual transition is necessary. Articles, facsimiles, various sorts of educational materials published on paper, learning paths, conference, and documentary films burned on CD or DVD – all these taken together form an indispensable complement to our system and help to insure that the Hyper-Learning Project will have a substantial and lasting impact on society.

An *on-line-publishing* platform will be also developed for the most attractive and most valuable parts of the Hyper-Learning Platform output. An on-line *Hyper-Learning Magazine* will be established, where the most interesting output from the different Hyper-Learning Platforms and their Virtual learning Communities will be published and promoted. The output to be published in the Magazine would be selected and recommended by the respective editorial boards assigned for each Hyper Learning Platforms. The online *Hyper-Learning Magazine* would thus provide the opportunity for people not familiar with the project, to read the most interesting and original contribute from each Hyper Learning Platforms and to go into details surfing through them. The online Magazine would provide the opportunity each *Hyper-Learning* author to be thematically represented in a collection of articles selected and presented by a leading scientist working on the specific author, and published in one of the Magazine's editions as a focus theme. On the other hand the on-line publishing will be an open platform for other publications in the humanistic field, related or not to the project's themes, inserting the contributes of the Hyper-Learning Platforms in to a broader cultural debate.

I am aware, dear colleagues, that my intervention here can not fully exhaust the multiple questions regarding these two important features of our project, but I hope that at least to some extent it would help us to assemble the complex puzzle, which is the essence of HyperLearning.

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