

# Key issues

While the details of the production process may vary across publishers, the core stages are often the same. The [NUP Toolkit](#) provides a good overview of these stages, from submission to the idealised point of 'handover' from a commissioning editor to a production manager, to the final author sign-off. Along the way it covers copy editing processes, typesetting and management of proofs.

Some smaller and scholar-led presses combine the roles of commissioning editor and production manager. If resources allow, considering dividing this work can help avoid all press members having to learn all the processes and skills involved in book production.

Many smaller and scholar-led presses outsource copyediting and typesetting to external companies or freelancers. As the NUP Toolkit notes "outsourcing the entire editorial and production workflow can be a very effective approach, as it means that in-house staff can be kept quite lean and they can focus on the overall press management tasks that cannot be outsourced".

It suggests that with these tasks outsourced, a full-time production manager usually oversees around 30-40 monographs per year. A task that often remains in-house is quality control including (a) formal quality control (checking references, typography, Digital Object Identifiers, etc.) by the editorial office and (b) content assessment by section editors and reviewers.

The [Cookbook](#) provides advice for publishers wishing to keep some or part of the production process in-house, outlining several production workflows that involve varying degrees of standardisation. Some may be useful for publishers to consult even if much of the production process is outsourced: for example, tasking authors with preparing manuscripts for print by providing them with guidelines, templates and/or access to online resources.

For typesetting, many publishers use InDesign by Adobe. In principle, this can be used by anyone, however, there is a relatively steep learning curve involved in becoming a proficient InDesign user, for someone without prior production experience. It is also a commercial piece of software, which comes with costs unless a publisher has access to an institutional subscription.

## Managing workflow

Many smaller and scholar-led presses produce a relatively small number of books per year. If publishing volumes remain low, then ad hoc tools to assist in the workflow management process can suffice – shared spreadsheets, documents or standard project management tools, for example.

However, if the press intends to publish more than a handful of books yearly, then managing the production workflow can become more challenging. There is no set tipping point, but if a publisher has a small team, publishing above say 10 books per year, then a more structured approach to

workflow management may be required.

In such cases, presses may wish to consider using software specifically designed to help coordinate the editorial, production and dissemination processes.

[Open Monograph Press \(OMP\)](#) is perhaps the most prominent workflow management tool within the Open Access book publishing community. It was created by the [Public Knowledge Project \(PKP\)](#), which also designed the widely used Open Journal Systems. It is an online publishing platform for monographs and edited volumes. It manages the editorial and production workflow: submissions, editor assignments, reviewers, indexers, etc. It also has a range of features to help publishers manage the wider metadata management process. As the authors of [Mind the Gap](#) report write, “[OMP](#) is one of very few open-source tools that produce the trade-industry standard ONIX metadata” (p. 60).

## Standardising and automating parts of the production process

Recent years have seen an increasing number of tools designed to enable publishers to standardise parts of the production process. The benefits of such tools can be significant, potentially reducing long-term costs and improving the efficiency of a publishing operation. Smaller and scholar-led presses should carefully consider the resources required to fully implement such processes and tools. These can range from skills that need to be acquired to developer support. The ultimate efficiency benefits may justify an initial investment of, both time and financial resources, however, it is vital that a new publisher, or publisher wishing to change its processes, has a realistic plan to implement such an approach.

Cookbook provides relevant resources in Section 3.6 on “Automation”. It discusses multiple options and approaches, such as presses accepting only camera-ready copies (CRC) or full in-house conversion of books from different editable formats such as Word to outputs such as PDF, EPUB etc. as well as using systems such as [LaTeX](#).

[Mind the Gap](#), an open source software guide and [Radical Open Access Collective](#) have an overview of useful tools that publishers may wish to consider. These include:

1. [Ketida](#) (formerly Editoria): an editing, reviewing and workflow system initially developed by [Coko](#) in partnership with the Editoria community. It is a web-based tool for producing scholarly monographs in both print and ebook forms. [Paged.js](#) (CSS-based typesetter) is available for print production.
2. [Electric Book](#): a typesetting and publishing tool for print PDF, digital PDF, EPUB, website, and app versions of books.
3. [Fulcrum](#): the University of Michigan Library’s ebook hosting, preservation, and media integration platform that allows integration of multimedia elements into a book. It is also a

platform for ebook collections.

4. **Manifold**: a publishing system designed by the University of Minnesota Press and the CUNY Graduate Center. It is a collaborative and web-based tool for commenting, annotating, and revising books.
5. **Pressbooks**: a web-based book editing and production system that exports in multiple formats: ebooks, webbooks, print-ready PDF, and various XML types mostly used for open textbooks and open educational resources.
6. **RUA**: a book publishing workflow management application developed by **Ubiquity Press**. It is a book workflow system handling submission of proposals and manuscripts, peer review, and the entire production and publication process.
7. **Scalar**: open source, web-based publishing software from the University of Southern California's Alliance for Networking Visual Culture that allows for creating multi-media online publications.

Another resource that has received increasing attention in recent years is **PubPub**, built and maintained by the **Knowledge Futures Group**. It is a platform particularly well suited to working with online versions of books and includes collaborative editing functionalities that make it a useful resource for communities or groups working together on publications. It also makes the management of Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) more straightforward than is often the case for publishers, providing books with a permanent stable link.

## Printing hard copies

There is sometimes an assumption that Open Access publishers only produce digital books. However, smaller and scholar-led presses are often keen to ensure that hard copies of their books are available, alongside digital versions. Often this is because of a commitment to the book as a form, as well as a recognition that many readers still prefer print over digital books. However, there are also pragmatic considerations: printing hard copies makes it possible to generate sales revenue which, **even if unlikely to wholly cover a publisher's costs**, can make up a substantial part of its revenue mix.

Many Open Access publishers use print-on-demand publishing services to produce hard copies of their books. In print-on-demand publishing, book copies are not printed until they are bought, at which point they are either shipped directly to the customer from the printer or sent rapidly by the printer to the seller to be shipped to the purchaser.

The major advantage of print-on-demand publishing is that it eliminates the need for large print runs, which not only involves high upfront costs but also risks that not all the books will be sold.

Two large, commercial players dominate the print-on-demand market: **Lightning Source/IngramSpark** (IngramSpark is, in effect, a simplified version of Lightning Source, although with less flexibility) and **Amazon Kindle Digital Publishing Platform**. Many existing smaller or scholar-led presses will use one of these providers (or in some cases both). However, there are other options that are worth considering.

[Lulu](#) is a smaller print-on-demand service that includes helpful features, such as direct integration with e-commerce plugins, such as WooCommerce and Shopify. It claims to enable global retail distribution via a range of intermediaries, including Amazon. It is a US-based B-corp, which requires the company to meet certain standards, in relation to issues such as transparency and sustainability.

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