

The Beautiful Plan

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Booksellers' Worst Nightmare?

Kinko's: Bookstore of the Future

By Steve O'Keefe

Coming soon to a bookstore near you: a digital book-building machine that spits out a single copy of a trade paperback book — bound in a four-color cover and indistinguishable from a conventionally-printed copy — in a matter of minutes.

What that means for bookstores is that, for the majority of backlist titles on their shelves, they will pay to download and print one copy of the book for display, and customers will take a barcoded ticket to the checkout counter to purchase a freshly-minted copy, just as they now take barcoded tickets to the checkout counter at Office Depot to buy toner cartridges for their laser printers.



The bookstore of the future is a display case of books, with piles of conventionally-printed frontlist prominently displayed and sold by the dozen, and shelves and shelves of backlist — one copy of each book — with barcoded tickets inside the front cover for anyone who cares to purchase a copy.

Can't find what you're looking for on the shelf or don't have time to browse? No problem! Just step up to one of the many self-service kiosks, search through a database of millions of titles, swipe your debit card, and your books or journals or white papers will be waiting at the pick-up desk faster than you can say "skinny grande decaf double cappuccino."



The bookstore of the future will have a meeting room that is, well, *booked* most hours of the day and night with presentations. At night, it's used by touring authors giving a reading or talk. During the day, it's a classroom where teachers plug their laptops into an overhead projector and instruct on every subject under the sun — with the bookstore providing the training materials (software, books, manuals, forms, and so on). Sometimes the room will be used as a meeting place by local reading groups, political groups, non-profit associations, or other organizations. Sometimes it will be used for cooking demonstrations.

Scattered throughout the bookstore will be comfortable chairs for sitting and reading. If you'd rather do your homework, get some work done, or check your e-mail, the bookstore of the future will rent you a computerized cubicle. Just swipe your debit card into the reader on the side of the machine. If you want to print anything you find online, no problem! You can

gather your printing at the pick-up desk faster than you can say, "How could I possibly have been online for an hour and forty-five minutes?"



The bookstore of the future will offer free delivery — and pick-up. Choose from the morning run, the afternoon run, or tomorrow. The bookstore of the future will give you a two-dollar credit for every book you turn in, because the bookstore of the future will have auction sites on eBay and Amazon where it unloads (er, sells) used inventory, shopworn display copies, and any overstock it's stuck with when frontlist was purchased non-returnable or when auctioning the overstock is more profitable than returning it for credit.

The bookstore of the future will be part of a giant global network of bookstores of the future (also known as BookSense) which manages a database of titles available for printing, an auction database, and a database of booksellers. Online shoppers will be able to choose any book they like, and either have it mailed to them, held at the nearest bookstore for pick-up, or delivered by the nearest bookstore or copy shop offering free delivery.

The bookstore of the future is part library, part school, part restaurant, part print shop, part meet market, part delivery service. And it's coming soon to a shopping district near you!

