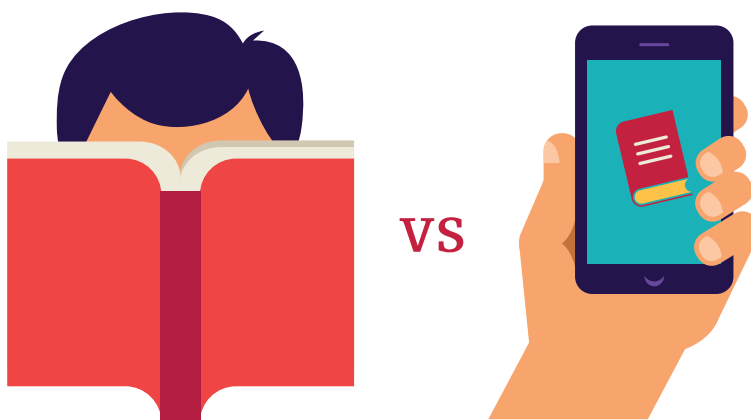


Hard Copy vs. Digital Publishing

As smart phones, tablets and e-readers have become a popular way to read books, the debate about which is better – hard copy vs. digital – has become an ongoing issue with no definitive answer. For authors, it's beneficial to take a look at the pros and cons of both when deciding on the format for your book.



E-book advantages include:

- high tech advantage = easier to access & instant gratification
- lower production cost for author
- lower purchase cost for reader
- privacy / people can't see what you're reading
- can access anytime, anywhere

Paper / hard copy book advantages include:

- higher perception of quality and value
- greater profit margin for author
- longer lasting / library effect
- easy to share
- back of rooms sales / book signings
- low tech advantages = not having to deal with dying batteries or hung up devices

If you can, it's best to reach out to people who are your target readers and ask their opinion. Some will wax poetic about loving the feel of an old-fashioned paper book. Others may cite devotion to their Kindle or Nook.

In a recent [interview with author Lyle McDonald](#), he shared how finding the right mix of both has benefitted his business: “We are moving to a digital age and a majority of my sales are digital only. However, I offer bundles on all of my books where the purchaser can get the hardcopy (for people who want physical books) and the immediately downloadable digital version.”

Aside from ease of access, price points and attitudes about technology, it is also important to consider the type of information you are sharing in your book, how your target reader absorbs that info, and the value or benefit they receive overall. Multiple studies have shown that readers are able to absorb information better when reading physical books.* If your book is graphic-heavy, though, the opposite may be the case. Again, talk to your readers, see how they feel.

Is your book filled with content that is evergreen and lasting? Or does it solve a particular problem that exists for your readers right now? [Author Jonathan Goodman](#), in an interview with Vervante, shared his thoughts about the value of physical books when it comes to long-term success.

“(I) realized that those who put things out in tangible, physical products were more successful in the long run. Their teachings and products were consumed more, they were taken more seriously, and those products ensured that they enjoyed great word of mouth and an increasing audience as they were passed along. Even though publishing products is expensive superficially, I decided due to those observations, that I would have physical products for everything I do. I want to be relevant in 10 years, and having physical products that last is key for that. ... I now offer both physical and digital versions as pricing strategies to allow me to position the products and pricing differently.”

Perceived value in the eye of the reader can also be affected by the format of a book. According to Goodman, “with a physical product, I’ve found, if you design a beautiful product and it looks and feels good to the person who bought it, the refund rate goes way down. Ordering a physical product means there is a wait to receive it, anticipation builds increasing the expectation and enjoyment of receiving the package and ripping the box open.”

Bottom line? It’s important to create the right kind of book that best fits your goals as well as the needs of the reader. What is the preferred format for your target audience? How do they best absorb information? And which format fits your budget and revenue needs? Addressing these issues will help you find the right formula and decide on the right format.