



# **Publish or Perish**

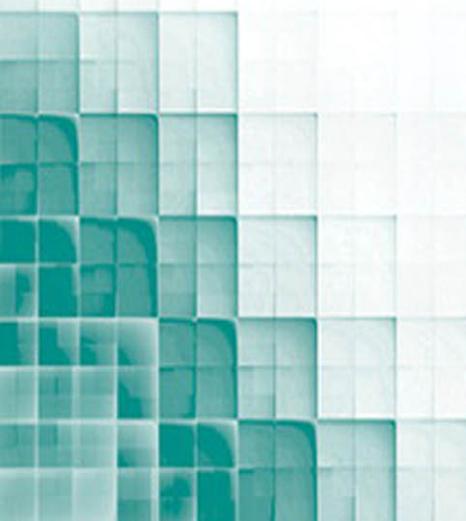
## Scheduling Challenges in the Publishing Industry

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**MATTHEW J. DRAKE**  
*with* Beate Klingenberg  
and David Gavin, Marist College

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**PEARSON CASES IN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT AND ANALYTICS**



The case is reprinted from  
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Matthew J. Drake  
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David Gavin, Marist College

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# Publish or Perish: Scheduling Challenges in the Publishing Industry

Beate Klingenberg and David Gavin, Marist College

## Introduction

Imagine yourself seated at a desk with a pen and a blank piece of paper. After a time, possibly as short as a few weeks, using ordinary words and your imagination, you craft a story that touches the hearts of millions. As a result, you become a millionaire many times over. If this scenario sounds impossible, then realize that it is exactly what J.K. Rowling accomplished with the Harry Potter series. Of course, if the author becomes a multi-millionaire, just think how profitable this project was for the publisher. It seems so easy, doesn't it? If it were that easy, everybody could get rich writing books. However, not all manuscripts make it to print, and not all printed books really appeal to the public.

Now imagine that J.K. Rowling's last book is getting ready for release, and a problem occurs during printing. Eager fans are lining up at the booksellers on the release date—and the books are not there. What a disaster for the author, the publisher, and the bookstores. Fortunately, this did not happen—all customers walked away happy on the release date! So what does it take to make a book release

happen smoothly? Who is working behind the scenes? The following is a case of a small publishing firm, struggling daily to keep projects on time. Unfortunately, things do not go smoothly all the time.

## The Book Publishing Industry

The U.S. book publishing industry consisted of approximately 3,100 publishers<sup>1</sup> in 2008 and around 87,000 (mostly small ones) in 2013.<sup>2</sup> Industry revenue expanded 6.9% in 2012 to \$15.05 billion.<sup>3</sup> Although e-books had an approximately 22.6% market share in 2012,<sup>4</sup> the printed book market remains healthy.<sup>5</sup> The top four publishers for trade books in 2013 are Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, and Time Warner.<sup>6</sup> The industry published approximately 329,000 books in 2012.<sup>7</sup>

There are a few basic realities required to understand the book publishing business. The first reality is that quality manuscripts are paramount. A quality manuscript starts with a concept or idea that appeals to a large segment of the population. Then, the idea is crafted into a story that makes the finished product hard or impossible to put down, and when people read the story, they can't wait to tell others about it. Finally, the manuscript is delivered on time to the publisher, needing minimal development or revision.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Standard & Poor's NetAdvantage Database, 2013, [www.netadvantage.standardpoor.com](http://www.netadvantage.standardpoor.com), accessed July 7, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Association of American Publishers, [www.publishers.org](http://www.publishers.org), accessed July 7, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> J. Lilliot. "Top Five Pubs Take Half of Sales," *Publishers Weekly*, 2005, 252(17), 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Bowker, "Publishing Market Shows Steady Title Growth in 2011 Fueled Largely by Self-Publishing Sector," [http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press\\_room/2012/pr\\_06052012.shtml](http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press_room/2012/pr_06052012.shtml), accessed July 7, 2013.