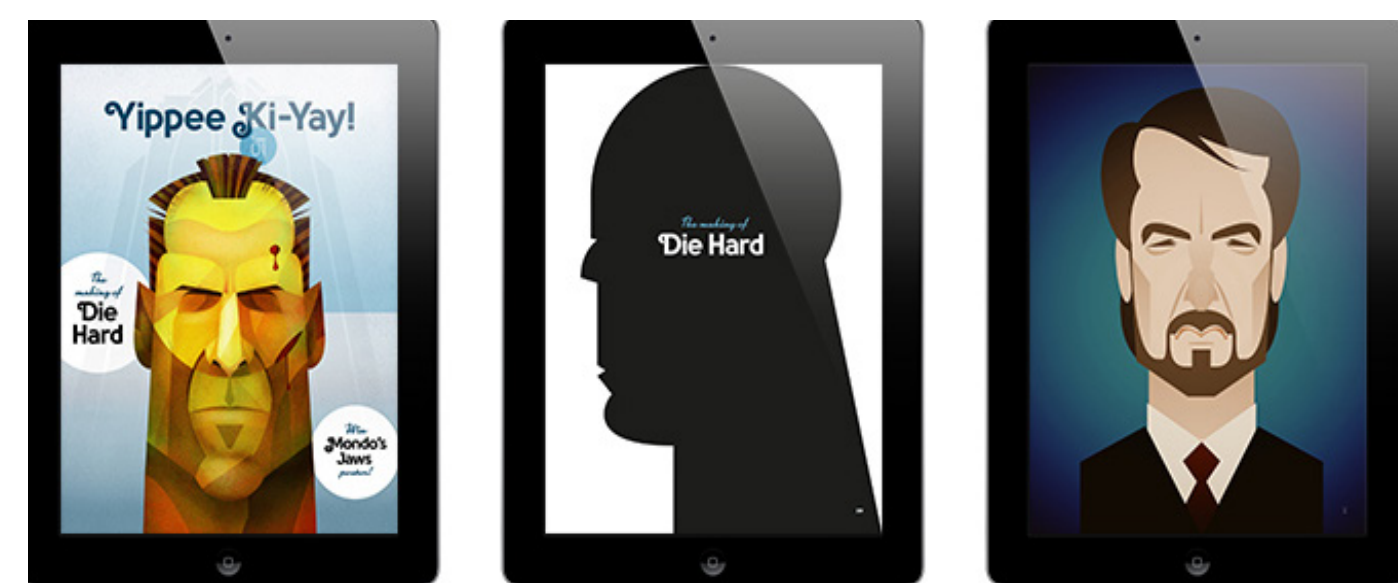




Linfield College

ABSTRACT

Optimists have long hoped that digital communication would diversify media, but the realization of this dream is far from certain today. This study investigates the emerging opportunities available to independent magazine publishers through digital publishing methods, such as distributing their magazines through the Apple Newsstand. These publishing methods have the potential to diversify magazine publishing beyond the currently dominant offerings of major multinational magazine publishers. However, at the same time, a variety of limitations — software and design expertise, public awareness and interest, and technology companies’ constraints on publishers — may have already limited the ways these independent publishers can reach audiences.



CONTEMPORARY MAGAZINE PUBLISHING

- 3 major publishing companies: Time, Inc., Advance, and Hearst
- Ad pages fell by 8.2% between 2011 and 2012 (Publishers Information Bureau)
- Distribution of digital magazines: Apple Newsstand, Google Play, Amazon, Zinio, Magzter, Issuu and others

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR INDEPENDENT DIGITAL MAGAZINE PUBLISHING

INDIE MAGS TODAY

- Editors’ priorities: personal curation, passion for topic, love of tangible, physical design experience
- “Graphic design is content”
- Low production and distribution costs; greater potential for global reach

METHOD

12 in-depth phone or Skype interviews with founders and/or editors of digital indie magazines in U.S. and Europe

Independent Digital Magazine Publishers Interviewed

| Magazine Title | Topic | Publishing Platform(s) | Web Address |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Astronaut | Art & music | iPad | astronautmagazine.com |
| Fan the Fire | Film | PDF, web | fanthefiremagazine.com |
| Green Child | Parenting | iPad | greenchildmagazine.com |
| Indie Lovely | DIY & crafts | Issuu | indielovely.com |
| Katachi | Design & lifestyle | iPad | katachimag.com |
| Outland Moto | Motorcycle travel | iPad | outlandmoto.com |
| Spenser | Food | Issuu | spensermag.com |
| Symbolia | Illustrated journalism | iPad, Kindle, PDF | symboliamag.com |
| The Magazine | Technology & culture | iPad, iPhone, web | the-magazine.org |
| Treehouse | Literary | Web | treehousemag.com |
| VIEW | Photo | iPad | fusionlab.com/viewmagazine/ |
| Yippee Ki-Yay! | Film | iPad | ykymag.com |



RESULTS

Motives for independent digital magazine publishing

- Express a personal interest and want to share that interest with others
- Advance their careers or businesses

Selection of publishing formats

- Digital publishing was only real option for both cost and creative expression
- Room for experimentation in visual appearance and interaction with content
- The more sophisticated the magazine, the more time and money required

Business strategies

- Distribution at low or no cost
- Revenue from other sources: advertising, sponsorships, or magazine-branded products ... or no revenue at all

Sponsorships, advertising, and subscriptions

- Currently no use of sponsorship
- Some advertising success; skepticism among advertisers
- Paid content difficult to sell
- Magazines in Apple’s App Store “not just up against other magazines, but also other apps”

Susan Currie Sivek, Ph.D.
Alyssa Townsend

- Niche audiences may help a magazine move from free to paid

Marketing and exposure

- Challenges in getting exposure
- Global marketing difficulty: highly visual magazines more successful than those reliant on text; digital publishing therefore not inherently more global
- Limited success with search engine optimization, press releases, and Facebook advertising

Creating multiple revenue streams

- Experiments: in-app shopping with commission; record label with same brand name; print collection of formerly digital-only content

Independent digital magazine publishers’ predictions for the future

- Varying levels of optimism about indie digital magazines’ future
- Need more powerful publishing tools and ability to publish across platforms/devices
- Address disconnect between the worlds of indie print and digital publishing

