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Personal bookstore

By **Simon Barker-Benfield**

Times-Union business writer

When George Arnau looks at a map of the United States, he doesn't see the purple mountains majesty or the fruited plain.

He sees a landscape of colleges, universities and technical schools -- lots and lots of them -- that could use his print-on-demand technology to order textbooks from publishers, download them over the Internet or from a computer diskette and print out as many as they need -- whether single or multiple copies -- whenever they need them,

"There are 30,000 of those in the United States," said Arnau, president and chief executive of Jacksonville-based Titan Business Services Inc. The company is the distributor of the BookPrinter 2000, which combines software, printing and book-binding equipment in a technology package the printing industry calls "on-demand printing."

The BookPrinter is manufactured by InstaBook Corp. of Gainesville. InstaBook has been manufacturing books for Barnes & Noble Inc. of New York and others for about a year, Arnau said.

The equipment takes the material to be printed -- which could be a word-processed manuscript on a computer diskette or an out-of-print book scanned onto a diskette -- and prepares it for reproduction. The systems can produce hardback or paperback books up to four inches thick.

BookPrinter comes in four models that cost \$70,000 to \$95,000 each. The print-on-demand technology makes it possible for publishers and others to make money from printing a single copy or multiple copies, Arnau said.

"We are going after the academic market, independent publishers, independent book stores, libraries and Fortune 1000 companies," Arnau said.

Print-on-demand technology has burgeoned in the past two years, said Richard Tam, founder and president of iUniverse.com of Campbell,

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Calif., a 1999 publishing startup built around the technology. "It is changing the economics of the industry."

Tam should know. His company attracted the attention of giant book seller Barnes & Noble, which last November bought 49 percent of the company for an undisclosed amount.

Tam's company is targeting the self-publishing market, offering would-be authors printing and distribution help, as well as editing and marketing services.

Complete books, which are in paperback format, are available in about a month; by later this year, Tam hopes to have that down to two weeks. The completed book can be seen on the company's Web site, www.iUniverse.com, and if a buyer likes it, it can be printed out on demand by the company.

Electronic versions, or "e-books," which can be read on special electronic readers, are also available.

Publishing set-up fees range from \$99 to \$299.

Authors whose work is now out of print but who still retain the rights to their book can get their books set up for publishing at no cost.

Cost of ordering a book from the iUniverse system is typically \$10 to \$16 per copy. iUniverse.com makes its money from book sales, not from charging authors for printing their books, unlike most "vanity publishers" who cater to writers who want to get published.

Authors receive a 20 percent royalty on printed books, 50 percent on e-book versions.

All Barnes & Noble stores will have iUniverse.com displays containing publishing information and works by some of the writers using iUniverse.com's publishing service.

iUniverse.com also has alliances with Writers Digest; Ingram Book Group, a major book distributor; Lightning Print, which is Ingram Book Group's print-on-demand publishing service; Kinko's and the Authors Guild.

The company has republished about 1,500 out-of-print books for the Authors Guild and has another 400 in the pipeline, Tam said.

"This is a very high-growth area," said Tam, who is preparing to publish 15,000 to 25,000 new books this year.

As Tam is enjoying his success, the work is just beginning also for Arnau, who has already invested three years of his life in BookPrinter.

In addition to planning his marketing campaign, he is putting together a

national network of technical service and support staff -- who will have to be trained -- and a customer service call center that will be in Jacksonville.

"We are hoping to hire handicapped people who will be able to work out of their homes and be connected to the call center by voice and computer," Arnau said.

Is he intimidated by the mountain of work he faces?

"I had somebody this afternoon ask me how I was going to accomplish all this," Arnau said.

His answer?

"Through perseverance."



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