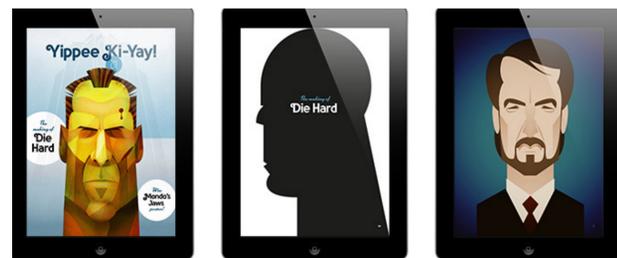




# Linfield College

## 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

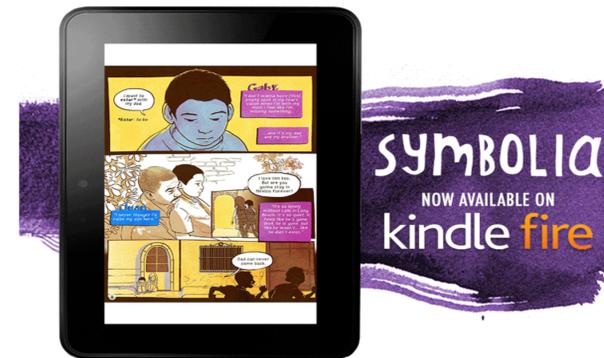
- Editors’ priorities: personal curation, passion for topic, love of tangible, physical design experience
- “Graphic design is content”
- Low production and distribution costs; greater potential for global reach

## 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

