

## Outsourcing vs. In-House for the Press Database

A partial checklist from Chris Cosner, Systems Manager, Stanford University Press

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- Develop and Refine Specifications
  - Wish-list (fun)
  - General system requirements (main details)
  - System Requirements Specification (exhaustive detail)
- Will you have a developer(s) on staff?
  - existing IT person (part-time)
  - full-time database administrator
  - part-time from another department
  - outside consultant
  - no dedicated technical person on staff
- Extent of legacy data
  - Have you created a list of legacy data?
    - databases
    - spreadsheets
    - files
    - hard drives
    - gray matter
  - Do you understand who creates and maintains current systems?
  - Are parts already integrated with other systems?
  - Are existing systems working successfully in a limited context?
  - Do you want to replicate any existing interfaces in the new system?
  - What data sources do you want to combine?
- Your IT staff and infrastructure
  - IT staff preferences based on expertise and experience
  - Currently installed / maintained systems
  - Is IT interested in developing from scratch?
  - Are you prepared to manage a software development project?
- Budget
  - Understand the software, hardware, and staff requirements of the options you are considering.
  - Is it easier to find funding for hardware and software licenses than for additional staff or vice versa?
  - Easier to get funding for one-time purchase than ongoing costs?
  - Do you fully understand the maintenance costs of the options you are considering?
  - All software will have direct and indirect maintenance costs.
- Integration
  - Do you have internal systems already generating data that are unlikely to be replaced soon?
  - How will you get data to your website?
  - How will you get data to retailers?
  - How will you generate new reports and views of data for unforeseen business needs?
  - How will power-users on staff get data into local spreadsheets and databases for their own purposes?
  - Do you need to integrate any systems with your parent institution?

### Steps toward a good system

1. needs assessment
2. use cases
3. specifications
4. budget
5. hardware specs, purchase, installation
6. development
7. testing of use cases
8. re-evaluate and re-write specifications
9. test hardware, load, operating systems
10. introduce to staff
11. train staff
12. rollout (staged, or all at once)
13. periodic evaluation
14. maintenance and monitoring