

Britannica's halt of print edition triggers sales

April 5 2012, By DON BABWIN , Associated Press



This undated photo provided April 5, 2012, by Chicago-based Encyclopaedia Britannica, shows the 2010 32-volume final print edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Three weeks after announcing it will discontinue its print editions after 244 years, people have been scrambling to buy the last edition. A spokesman says all but 800 of the last 4,000 sets have been sold. (AP Photo/Courtesy Encyclopaedia Britannica)

(AP) -- It turns out all Encyclopaedia Britannica had to do to breathe new life into the sale of its print edition was to kill it.

Since Britannica announced last month that it was discontinuing its [print editions](#), the Chicago-based [company](#) said sales have skyrocketed. It has sold all but 800 of the 4,000 sets of the 32-volume 2010 edition it had left at a Kentucky warehouse, the company said.

"We were averaging about 60 sets a week and the next thing we knew, we were selling 1,050 a week," Britannica spokesman Peter Duckler said Thursday. "When people thought they were going to be around forever

there was no rush to buy one and then suddenly, boom, and now there is a scarcity and it's a collector's item."

Britannica announced March 13 that it would stop publishing print editions of its flagship encyclopedia for the first time in 244 years and instead focus on its [online encyclopedia](#).

Duckler said business got so busy after that - Britannica at one point was selling the print editions at a clip of about two sets per minute - that a [senior vice president](#) and chief marketing officer jumped in and started taking orders over the phone.

The company will likely sell out by the end of the month, Duckler said. He added that Britannica - which first published its book form encyclopedia in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1768 - will hold onto a few sets so they can be displayed somehow or donated to museums.

As they did before the announcement, the sets are selling for \$1,395. If that sounds like a lot of [money](#), secondary sellers online are asking more than \$3,200 a set for the 2010 edition - and that's before the company has run out of the ones it has.

Duckler said the sudden spike in sales hasn't prompted anyone at Britannica to rethink the decision to discontinue selling the print edition. Though the scarcity of the 2010 edition may be making it popular, the company has long known that the print [sales](#) were never going to come back to anything approaching the peak year of 1990 when 120,000 were sold.

Britannica, which published the first CD-ROM edition in 1989, introduced an online version in 1994. Online versions of the encyclopedia now serve more than 100 million people around the world and are available on mobile devices, the company said.

"It just makes sense to embrace our digital products," he said.

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