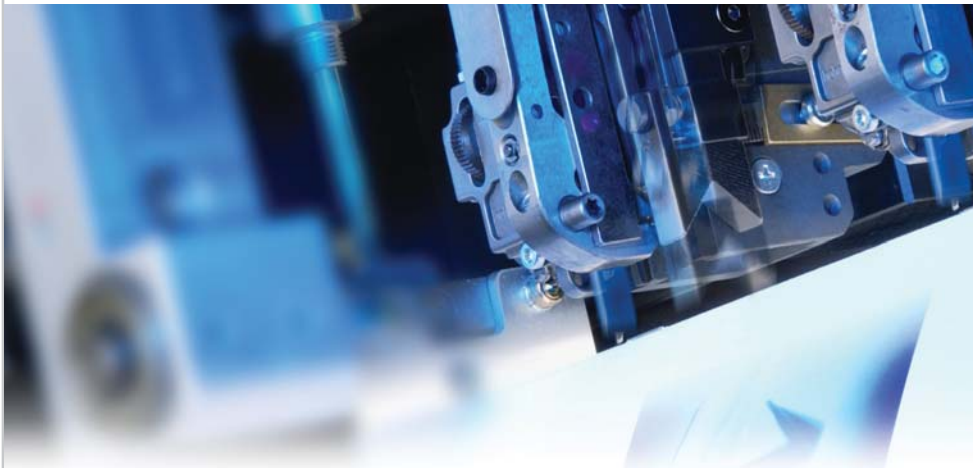


INNOVATE

THE KEY TO IMPROVING BUSINESS RESULTS

■ blending digital and conventional offset presses

A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO TRADITIONAL



Blending digital, offset—and a whole host of binding and finishing solutions—to accommodate a growing workload | By Gretchen Peck

Cadmus Communications, a Cenveo company, purchased its thriving Easton, MD plant from Waverly Press back in the early '90s. The predecessor had been focused entirely on the scholarly publishing market. Today, all work flowing through the busy operation is from the STM (scholarly, technical, and medical) publishing community. "The customer base at our Easton facility is the most focused plant I've ever seen during my almost 40 years in the print industry," explains Allen Nelson, Easton's Vice President and General Manager. "Quite simply, we service the scholarly publishing community."

For decades, journal printing had been tied to offset print. But the market is changing, prompting Cadmus Easton to adapt its business model and technological strategy. While not long ago, the Easton printing operation was driven exclusively by its slick offset operations. Today, it's the company's digital capabilities that show the greatest promise for rapid growth.

Introducing Digital

It wasn't full-run journal jobs that inspired the company to buy into digital. Rather, it was the ever-increasing volumes of reprint work that piqued the company's interest in digital printing, according to Nelson. Before digital, creating a reprint was labor-intensive and time-consuming. "We'd have to overrun the signature at press, and then take that signature and cut out the pages they wanted, and side-staple them together. That was how we used to produce a reprint,"

Nelson recalls. "But nobody cared. That's just the way it was done, and the customers were happy to pay the cost. But, eventually, we had to step back and say, 'Hey, this is crazy! There's got to be a better way to do it!' And that's when we started to take a hard look at digital."

That was eight years ago, and Easton installed its first digital print engine soon after. "Our first machine was a Xerox DocuTech, a black-only printer that we used to do line work," Nelson recalls. "Approximately six years ago, we decided that we wanted to make the move to color and started looking at the Xerox DocuColors. We really felt that the Xerox DocuColor 2045 was the best solution out there for reproduction color. So, we installed one of those and began to do some of our author reprints on that device. "We pushed that machine way past its recommended limits," Nelson adds. "So, we added a Xerox DocuColor 6060—which was rated for 300,000 pages per month—and we quickly began producing approximately 900,000 pages a month on that device."

Today, Easton's digital pressroom is better equipped to manage the growing volumes of jobs better-suited to digital. "We have two Xerox iGen3s, two Xerox DocuColor 6060s, and two Xerox Nuveras," Nelson notes. Cadmus Easton now digitally prints more than four million pages a month.

Finishing the Digital Job

"When we first made the decision to bring in the digital presses, we fully expected that we would take the same approach to binding and finishing that we'd always followed in the offset operations. That is, we wanted to integrate as many in-line tools as we could," Nelson explains. "And by 'in-line,' I mean, we'll collate, bind, trim, and then go into a polybag, as is the case with most of our offset jobs. And then, we inkjet directly on the poly, all in-line."

And, initially, that's what the Easton facility did, by complementing its digital printers with in-line stitchers. "Understand, this venture into digital has been an evolution for us," Nelson notes. "With our offset workflow, everything had been done in-line. And it still makes sense to me to stay in-line as much as you can, because you reduce the hand-off time, and it's simply a smoother workflow. So, it was that logic that drove us to put in-line finishing on each of the digital presses. The DocuColor 6060s were the first; we added automated, in-line Standard Horizon ColorWorks Bookletmakers, with bleed trimming and scoring.

"Cadmus was an early adopter of the ColorWorks program," recalls Mark Hunt, Director of Marketing, Standard Finishing Systems. "All of the ColorWorks machines perform full-bleed trimming and scoring. Scoring is important because you need to score the sheet before it's folded, regardless of the type of digital press you're printing on. Scoring helps you avoid image cracking, and finished booklets lie flatter because the crease prepares each sheet for a crisp fold. The Horizon ColorWorks is the only bookletmaker in its class that performs integrated bleed trimming and scoring."

To say that Cadmus Easton taxed its DocuColors would be an understatement. As the digital jobs continued to roll in, the workload demanded a more robust approach to digital printing. That's when the Xerox iGen3s were purchased, each equipped with bookletmakers (without bleed trimming). Besides a spike in digital sales, Easton began to see a few other trends unfold. Cadmus' customers wanted more from digital than reprints. Their run lengths were beginning to decline—a result of e-media influence—and they needed a cost-effective solution for producing full-run journals on a smaller scale.

Though Cadmus Easton has both perfect and stitching capabilities, saddle-stitched print continues to represent the bulk of the jobs the company is printing digitally. And the volumes continue to climb. "Because the in-line bookletmakers paired with the iGens don't enable bleed trimming, we ran into a dilemma. We could continue to print those full-bleed jobs on one of the DocuColor 6060s; or we could add a near-line stitching solution that would allow us greater flexibility," he explains.

The printer chose the Horizon StitchLiner 5500 from Standard Finishing Systems. Defined by the manufacturer as a solution best suited to "demanding" printing and publishing operations, it performs flat-sheet collating, scoring, folding, stitching, and true three-knife trimming. And it boasts some impressive make ready times; it can be changed over and set up for a job in less than 30 seconds. The StitchLiner saddle-stitching system is centrally controlled with an icon-based, color touchscreen and includes high-tech error sensors throughout, automated book thickness detection (which adjusts the stitch wire length accordingly), and a memory that stores up to 100 preset jobs for quick and easy recall.

While the Horizon StitchLiner has been commissioned to support the growing digital department at Cadmus Easton, Nelson says that it's also come in handy for a few offset-printed jobs. "Cadmus is not unlike many of our customers that have been conventional offset printers but are now stepping into the digital arena," Standard's Mark Hunt explains. "The StitchLiner is designed to straddle those two worlds. Use it for digital print, for offset print, or a combination of the two.

Nelson says the installation of the new binding system went smoothly. "We staffed the StitchLiner with folks who had very little bindery experience. The learning curve has been very reasonable. Xerox spoke highly of the Horizon, and as we researched the various options, we felt that this represented the best investment. We've had it for a few months, and it has definitely increased our throughput," he enthusiastically states.

Easton's operators are particularly fond of the system's automation capabilities and "user-friendly" nature, according to Nelson, who adds, "I noticed that the operators are already learning ways in which they can use its features to gain even faster throughput. Since having made the decision [to purchase the Horizon StitchLiner], each step along the way has given us the reassurance that we made the right decision. The real proof? I'd do it again."

Cadmus Easton's digital and conventional offset presses will continue to work hand-in-hand well into the future. "We see the two processes as complements to one another, rather than competing with one another," Nelson predicts.

The "on-demand" concept hasn't eluded Cadmus Easton, either. It's very much on the company's radar. One day, Nelson envisions a seamless, entirely digital process by which a print order is custom-designed via the web, the sale triggering its on-the-fly production. This is a complicated endeavor, however, with much to consider about the front-end of the process and how best to manage fulfillment. But the team at Cadmus Easton is up for the challenge.

For more information, call Standard Finishing Systems at 877-404-4460 or visit www.standardfinishing.com.