

Standing with Virginia Tech Printing Services' Standard Horizon StitchLiner are John Fleming (left), of Consolidated Marketing, the dealer that provided the equipment, and Charles Tyree, director of Printing Services.



Stitcher Upgrade Boosts Quality of Books

Virginia Tech Printing Services wasn't happy with the quality of the books coming off of its old saddle stitcher. Here's how the in-plant turned things around.

By Bob Neubauer

"Puffy."

That's how Charles Tyree describes the books produced by his in-plant's previous saddle stitcher. Without a score on the folds, the pages of thick books bulged outward—not a very professional look for Virginia Tech's publications.

Tyree, director of Printing Services for the past 13 years at the Blacksburg, Va., university, says his staff was never quite satisfied with that stitcher, which it added in 1999 to replace a four-pocket Macy stitcher.

"It didn't trim three sides, it didn't give us tight enough folds and it didn't have vacuum feed in the pockets," he says.

Plus it was slow.

"We wanted a better quality job, we wanted more dependable feeding on it and we wanted a little more speed," he says.

The Search Begins

So he and his staff started researching available stitchers on the Internet. One model quickly grabbed their attention: The Standard Horizon StitchLiner. It was a collator, folder, stitcher and trimmer all in one. Tyree took some of his operators and foremen to visit another print shop with a StitchLiner.

"My people that do the binding were thoroughly impressed with the machine," Tyree says.

Not only was it sturdy, it boasted vacuum feeding, three-side trimming and scoring.

"It was really what we were looking for," he says.

So Tyree wrote up bid specs to fit the StitchLiner. He faced a few questions from the university (why was scoring necessary, for example), but eventually it went out for bid.

The in-plant purchased the saddle stitcher from Consolidated Marketing, of Richmond, trading in its old stitcher for \$20,000. Tyree says the installation in July 2006 went well—with one little complication: Consolidated somehow forgot to mention that the machine would require a compressor. He had to quickly get one. And because the stitcher would be installed in the middle of the room, he had to buy a special compressor that was not as loud, at additional cost.

Up and Running

Aside from that, installation was smooth, he says, and the StitchLiner was up and running within two days. Standard Horizon provided training, but Tyree didn't feel it was enough, so he asked the trainers to come back. The additional visit provided operators with all their answers.

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trained now," Tyree says.

The first job run by the StitchLiner was an eight-page newsletter.

"It ran beautiful," he says. The shop is now doing close to a half million saddle stitched booklets a year. The most complicated has been a 96-page book.

"The machine so far has been relatively trouble free," Tyree says. "It makes a fairly tight fold for a saddle-bound book, because it does score."

That scoring capability has allowed the 35-employee operation to run thank you cards through the device for just scoring, folding and trimming, bypassing the stitcher. Stocks of different thicknesses are no problem due to the scorer, he says.

"The binder is just good quality; it's fast and it's reliable," Tyree lauds. "It gives us a higher-quality product, and it gives it to us quicker."

Called Into Action

April's tragic shooting incident at Virginia Tech, which left 32 people dead, impacted the in-plant as well, giving it a chance to contribute to the recovery process. The university ordered a memorial book (16 pages plus cover), which the in-plant produced very quickly.

"We got a lot of compliments on the job," says Tyree.

The in-plant also did a lot of other emergency printing for various departments in the days that followed. Tyree came in on a Saturday night to run some of those jobs.

"We got a lot of compliments on how we responded," he says. **IPG**