



Spindrift

News Focus • Opinion • Reviews
Techno-Babble • Attitude

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...Surviving The Graphic Arts Industry Since April 2003

transition • *noun* 1 the process of changing from one state or condition to another. 2 a period of such change.

From the Concise Oxford English Dictionary

Dear Reader,

This month marks an important event for all of us involved in Spindrift – the completion of our second volume. It's important too because it marks the beginning of an important transition for us towards a new business model. That sort of sentence usually heralds an intention of nasty price increases, but fear not, we are not out to shaft our subscribers! If anything, we are bringing the cost of subscription down for our clients.

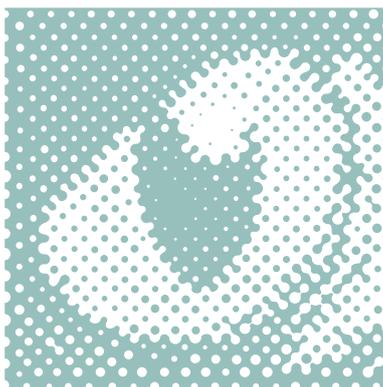
We have put together new service packages for our readers and consulting clients. The idea is to bring together our various activities, so that our readers can sign up for a menu of services, paid for with a single, quarterly fee. In addition to our single and multiple subscription rates, the three new Spindrift Client Services options provide multiple subscriptions to Spindrift, a number of days of consulting services, up to five proprietary research reports, plus complementary copies of the next edition of the Buyer's Guide series, due to be published at Ipx next April.

Several brave souls have already signed up, so if you're interested do get in touch!

Enjoy!

Cheers from the Spindrift crew,

Laurel, Cecilia, Paul and Todd



In This Issue

Cost of Living

Are platesetters like cars? Well platesetters don't look much like cars, but when it comes to buying and working out the cost of ownership there may be many similarities. Both are selected on their ability to do the job required and to meet anticipated performance expectations. Both have to be affordable, relative to the contribution they make, and both have to have a suitable upgrade path. And then there are the consumables to consider. With a car it's a simple matter of oil, fuel, tyres, and maybe the windshield washer stuff, but that's about it, so it's at this point that any similarities between cars and platesetters come to an end. Evaluating consumables costs for platesetters is way more difficult. Difficult, but maybe not impossible. Laurel Brunner points you in the right direction...

see page 7

Server Based Proofing

Slowly but steadily the Internet is becoming the base for most communications, including proofing. And it's not just about sending the odd PDF file attached to an email. A growing number of vendors offer web based collaborative proofing, with or without colour accurate monitor based soft proofing. But while much of the publishing workflow is today fully digitised, there are still processes that, for diverse reasons, remain paper based. Proof reading is one of them and checking and signing off final proofs for colour accuracy is another. But sending paper around is time consuming, and not very easy if many people are involved in the cycle, so there is a growing need for server based proofing systems. Paul Lindström has taken a closer look at a few of these...

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News Focus

Canon Getting Closer

Canon is continuing to demonstrate its commitment to the graphic arts with the announcement of its strategy for tackling the professional print market and upgrades to its ColorPass controllers. Like HP, Océ and Xerox, Canon recognises the need for hardware, software and process management. All of these megacorps are blending consulting with equipment combos that provide the best support for a company's internal and external print strategy, assuming they have one. And if they don't, Canon (or HP, Océ or Xerox) can fill in the gaps. Clearly Canon means business, but the company needs to find a unique space in which to gain some clearer differentiation to the competition.

The new controller upgrades provide increased job management functions and faster document processing. The controllers have also been renamed. The ColorPass Z6000 is compatible with Canon's top of the line CLC4000 and the Z7000 with both the CLC4000 and CLC5100 printers. Canon is claiming the engines now have improved colour and data accuracy, plus increased editing and proofing tools for greater productivity.

The new controllers work with Fiery System 6 software and include other features such as variable data printing options, improved colour management and security options.

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Canon has also added four monochrome engines to its range. These printers are especially interesting in that they include Canon's Java platform MEAP (Multifunctional Embedded Application Platform). MEAPs are a means of supporting bespoke applications that run inside the machines, rather than on a server driving the engines. The idea is that software can be managed at and for the printer, bypassing networks and management servers.

Sansui Launches Publishnow

Sansui Software has announced the European launch of Publishnow, its latest version of the Sansui web based solution for automated and self-service publishing applications. Publishnow is designed to simplify versioned advertising, direct marketing and promotions, as well as localised ads, signage, labelling and flyers. At the heart of Publishnow is a web server which hosts both the Adobe Indesign composition engine and the Sansui software components to manage data, templates and versioning. Templates for catalogues, ads, signage and flyers are originated in Adobe Indesign, via the server. The Publishnow http plug-in manages communication to the web server plus access to one or several digital asset management systems connected in the workflow.

Inversed Dot Gain? Eh?

Yes, it's as intriguing as it sounds. UK based Hamillroad Software have added a tool to calculate the final look of 1-bit raster data in its First Proof softproofing software. Normally it's impossible to know what dot gain compensation has been applied to the 1-bit data to create a correct printed result, so it's impossible to simulate it on screen. The Inverse Dot Gain (IDG) tool in First Proof emulates the dot gain characteristics of a particular output device, and is thus able to correctly simulate the final printed result on a monitor. The IDG tool is included in the new version 2.1 of the First Proof softproofing system, and works with both Harlequin and Adobe RIPs. More info is available at www.hamillroad.com.

Get a Life

According to the readers of Deutscher Drucker, the leading German printing trade title, Agfa's Azura, chemistry-free plate, is the "Most Innovative Prepress Product launched at Drupa 2004". Azura is undoubtedly an impressive technology, and it will have a significant influence on the consumables business, but maybe those Deutscher Drucker readers should think about getting out a little more often.

Creo's First Order for Something Warm, Wide, Flexible and with Sleeves

Nothing to do with clothes, but Creo has taken its first order for the company's Thermoflex Wide II thermal flexo computer-to-plate device with sleeve option. For Volk-ers, a Dutch supplier of flexographic consumables to the

▼ packaging industry, sleeve production is very important. Volkers sells its sleeves under the quite marvellous name of FLAG, which stands for Fits Like A Glove. And there was us thinking there wasn't enough humour in the industry! According to Volkers, the sleeve option on the Creo Thermoflex delivers quality, reliability and speed, and it makes the loading and unloading of sleeves easy. They could almost be talking about longjohns with fingertip control.

Creo CTP for USA Today

Kodak will be pleased about this. Gannett Newspapers has opted to install Creo's Trendsetter News platesetter at thirteen of its sites in the USA. Gannett publishes well over one hundred daily newspapers with a combined circulation of around 7.6 million. There are about 350 Trendsetter News platesetters installed worldwide and this order seriously strengthens Creo's position in the US newspaper business, an area that has somewhat lagged behind its other markets.

The first site to print USA Today is the Honolulu Advertiser in Hawaii where the newspaper has a circulation of 2.3 million, but an estimated readership of more than twice that figure.

Kodak will also be pleased about the certification for quality management of Creo's South African operations. The manufacturing operations in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, are now certified to ISO 9001:2000 standards for quality management. The facility includes a modern, recently installed plate manufacturing line that has been producing the Creo Positive Thermal Plate (PTP) for some time since its acquisition in September 2003.

The ISO 9001: 2000 certification for quality management covers quality standards for the design and delivery of products and services, manufacturing quality processes and service provisions for Creo customers.

Esko-Graphics Closes Successful 2004

Esko-Graphics reports that it has more than met its business targets for 2004, with record sales in its key product lines. This includes Esko-Graphics' range of workflow software components, CTP systems for small format offset, flexo plate systems, copydot scanners, sample-making tables and flexible digital converting systems.

The company is seeing revitalized growth in packaging markets, following recent restructuring, and has started to benefit from its improved operational efficiency. Kim Graven-Nielsen, President and CEO of Esko-Graphics said: "Esko-Graphics has made exceptional progress towards the goals we set out following the merger in 2001-2002. Despite the continued difficult business climate in the overall graphics industry, we have been able to grow our core businesses at rates well above the industry aver-

age. Our packaging sales have increased by more than 6% year-over-year, with growth in all regions around the world – even over 50% in Japan. We have completed optimizing and restructuring our processes throughout the company, including in our regional sales and service organisations. We are ready to engage in a strong, profitable and fast growing business performance in 2005, with a clear focus on packaging and small format offset." No mention was made of what this means in terms of income realities or expectations, however 60 Scope workflow systems were sold during Drupa last, and "many more have been ordered and installed afterwards".

Esko-Graphics also had record sales of its Kongsberg sample-making tables in 2004, with a 25% increase over the previous year. Also, at the end of 2004 some 550 CDI platemakers were installed and operating around the world and the company estimates that over 90% of all flexo plates imaged digitally are produced on a CDI.

For 2005, Esko-Graphics is focused on workflow solutions for packaging and commercial printing, digital flexo platemaking, sample-making and short run converting, and small format CTP for offset. As part of this strategy the company has launched the DPX 4 polyester platesetter for worldwide distribution. There are over 100 of these engines installed and 4-up polyester CTP is clearly growing solidly, hence the decision to make it available worldwide. According to Helge Johansen, Esko-Graphics Quick PrePress Solutions product manager: "There is strong interest in the system, not least in the Asian markets, and our global distribution strategy is to tap into this growing demand."

UK First for Screen Platerite Ultima 16000

Fulmar Group in the UK is investing wholesale into thermal platesetting with the acquisition of Screen's Platerite Ultima 16000 VLF platesetter. Fulmar now has eight Screen Platerites. The new 16-up beast is producing plates for Bookmarque, Fulmar's mass market A and B format paperback book printing operation.

The new machine is the first Ultima 16000 to be installed in the UK and is capable of imaging up to 23 plates an hour, in order to feed an even larger beast, Bookmarque's third Timson book press.

Azerbaijan Calling

Screen has appointed its first distributor for Azerbaijan and Georgia. Halal Company based in Baku, Azerbaijan has been selling graphic arts equipment in the region since 1996 and has clients in all sectors of the market, including government departments, printers and general commercial clients. Halal also distributes equipment and consumables from KBA, CP Bourg, Indigo, Adast, Riso, Sun Chemical and Lastra, i.e. Agfa, so it will be more

than capable of putting together complete solutions for its clients. There are 40 people working for Halal, plus a network of three wholesale and retail outlets in the same city, and the first CTP system has already been sold.

Lebanon on the Up

Tera Digital Publishing has appointed the Lebanese company Dynagraph its exclusive distributor for the Middle East region for all Tera products. Dynagraph has 80 employees and is recognised as one of the best distributors in the area for graphic arts technologies. The company is MAN Roland's exclusive distributor and this deal adds an important new element to Tera's sales network.

Tera has also been busy in the UK, where the company is installing its largest system yet, replacing a DTI editorial system with Tera's GN3 content management system. The Liverpool Daily Post & Echo is installing GN3 for over 200 users at its offices on Merseyside. The Daily Post has a readership of around 177,000 and the four-edition evening title, the Liverpool Echo, has a readership of over 376,000, an evening circulation second only to that of the London Evening Standard.

Seefile Cheap & Cheerful Online Catalogue Software

Seefile is a US start-up that has developed a Mac based software package for posting photos, artwork, text files and PDFs online. It is available as a ten user version that runs on Apple's new Mac mini and it costs \$995, including hardware.

This software looks pretty clever, since it simplifies the creation of online catalogues, especially for photographers, designers, and smaller graphic arts companies. It's of interest to anyone who wants to promote their work and interact with customers on the Internet, so given its low price for software that generally costs far more, it should be even more attractive. Once the Mac mini is plugged into a network, Seefile provides instant Web access for any images stored on the system, with an easy pathway to online catalogues. Images can be dragged and dropped on the user's desktop, immediately appearing on the website, with access controlled by image and file groups. There are messaging options so that service providers can stay in touch with clients for job status, recommendations or advise them of new updates. The search features extend to an entire website and the software can be expanded to support larger workgroups.

Multilingual Markzware

Markzware Software has announced that Flightcheck Studio is now available in five new languages, in addition to the English version introduced in October. Besides English, Flightcheck Studio is available in German, Dutch, French, Italian and Spanish.

Flightcheck Studio is a quality control software for digital workflows, providing preflight checking and repair for documents during their creation. The software can find virtually any digital file problem that might plague a printing and publishing workflow. Flightcheck finds and corrects design and production problems, comparing the file's parameters to specifications in an associated file that can also be distributed amongst users.

Fujifilm Launches Colormanager Proof-report

Proofreport is a tool for checking the consistency and quality of proofs. It includes software, a label printer and a spectrophotometer. Each proof carries a control strip that is measured and the values compared to target criteria, with a simple pass or fail evaluation. Evaluation summaries can be printed out on the label printer, for sticking onto the proof. The system costs around €3000.

CIP4 Implementations Information

CIP4, the organisation responsible for JDF development and evangelising, has published a series of recommendations for JDF implementation. The new publications provide instructions for building JDF compliant interfaces between system components, including everything required for them to pass CIP4's interoperability conformance tests.

There are seven papers altogether and they are available from the CIP4 website, www.cip4.org.

Digital Dots in a Spin?

This is dreadful. Digital Dots, publishers of Spindrift, is blowing its own trumpet in the worst possible way. After dedicating the last two years to smugly poking fun at excessive hype and self-aggrandisement, we're doing the very same thing! It's not that we're hypocrites, truly it isn't, honestly! It's just that we've come up with a better way of serving our market.

Well, here goes.

Over the last wonderful two years we have developed our worldwide Spindrift readership, various publishing projects, and consulting activities, without much thought for making things easy for our clients.

In order to fix this, in addition to our multiple reader rates, we are introducing new levels of Spindrift Client Services. There are now tracks of service, based on various areas of interest, and these broadly follow the topics covered in the Buyer's Guide series published last year at Drupa. Each track brings with it multiple

subscriptions to Spindrift, a number of days of consulting services, private research reports, publishing rights to selected content in the Buyer's Guide series, plus printed copies of the next edition due to be published at Ipex in 2006.

Several clients have already signed up for our new Client Services, so if this is of interest to you, please do contact us.



Driftwood

(Useful stuff washin' in on our shores)

Virtual printing plants

When developing JDF compatible software, one of the challenges is to make it work in complex production processes. If the software doesn't fully comply to the specification, it may be wise not to try it out in real life production too early in the development cycle.

A possible answer to the problem may lie in a research project to develop a simulation model of one or several output devices. Started at Linköping University in Sweden, the project's quite marvellous name is ELK and it was introduced at the CIP4 interoperability tests hosted by Heidelberg earlier this year. Scientist Claes Buckwalter at Linköping University's department of Technology and Natural Science is the ELK project leader, and the equally marvellously named Dr. Buckwalter drew his inspiration from the simulating models used when IfraTrack, JDF's equivalent for newspaper production, was first developed some ten years ago.

IFRATrack facilitates the management and supervision of the entire process of preparing, printing and distributing a newspaper. Version 3.0 of was published in 2002 and like JDF, uses JMF for transferring messages within the system. Much of the research for IfraTrack was done by research teams at The Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden and whether ELK will be as successful as the IfraTrack simulator, remains to be seen. The basic idea, to simulate complex processes in order to develop efficient management systems, is in any event a very good one.

More information about ELK is at <http://elk.itn.liu.se>.

Spindocs

(Where the spinner gets spun!)

This little gem appeared in the UK's Printing World a short while ago, it isn't really a classic bit of Spindocs, but it isn't far off:

"Breaking up is hard to do

Remember that Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon film, *The Odd Couple* about two middle aged men sharing an apartment? Well the industry's own 'Odd Couple' are [sic] breaking up. For the last nine years, Screen's pairing of Brian Forsdike, president of Screen Europe, and Phil Eaves have shared a flat in Holland, spending the week nights close to the office and the weekends in the UK. With tennis ace Phil Eaves heading to Xaar to take up the sales and marketing role, Forsdike is going to be alone in the flat.

One commented that he would not miss the other's snoring, while Brian will now have to cook for himself. Send in the food parcels."

Actually they've only shared a flat for five years, and Xaar are developers of digital print heads, and not tennis equipment, so what does Phil's tennis acery have to do with it?

This one, which appeared in Ifra's Newspaper Techniques, is pretty good as well:

"The sophisticated aspect of the game is that there are sometimes situations in which there will not be a winner or a loser. Some tactics are globally more beneficial or detrimental for all. One finds the influence of these strategic games in the emergence of the "coopetition" [sic] concept in some business sectors. Competitors find it advantageous to collaborate (e.g. technological cooperation), while at the same time continuing to engage in a pitiless commercial war. A major classic of the IT industry."

... a major classic indeed.

Letter From... Santa Maria

Dear Spinzos,

Well here I am sitting in the jury box in sunny Santa Maria, trying to figure out what these guys are on about. It's creepy sneaky stuff, but it's kinda hard to follow the lawyer speak. Poor Wacko Jacko doesn't look too happy though!



Seems to me it's a lose-lose situation all around except for the lawyers and the press of course. My cousin's a printer over there in Santa Barbara and he says printing and publishing are booming because of this trial.

My cousin's a reader of yours and he told me the celebrity industry just loves print and most of them just love sensational law suits too.

We all know that when the papers and magazines cover the final decision, Jacko's face will look either extra-super weird or just regular weird, depending on how things go and how sympathetic they're feeling. Only publishers and printers can make an original match the pitch like that.

I better pay attention here, but guess it's true – the medium really is the message!

Have a great day.

Xeleste Eelbody

Acrobites

(Something to get your teeth into)

PERT

Program Evaluation and Review Technique is a tool for managing complicated projects. It lets you build planning models that incorporate sequential activities as well as things that can be performed in parallel. Serial and parallel tasks are modeled as a network of activities.

Although it is pretty long in the tooth, having been developed in the fifties, PERT is attractive because it allows for randomness in the times allotted for the completion of tasks. Unlike other project management models which use fixed time estimates for activities, PERT has the potential to reduce the time and cost involved in completing a project. It really hasn't had much to do with the graphic arts, however PERT could be an interesting model to look at when planning workflows, particularly in businesses where there are lots of people involved and where variables cannot always be easily identified.

This is how PERT planning works:

1. Identify the specific activities and milestones involved.
2. Determine the sequence of those activities.

3. Draw a diagram with all activities and milestones numbered.
4. Estimate how long each activity will take.
5. Work out the critical path (this is the tricky bit).
6. Revise your PERT chart as the project develops.

RSS

Rich Site Summary is fast becoming the dominant data format for web based news distribution. RSS used to stand for RDF Site Summary, but that Rich Document Format Site Summary was a bit of a gobfull so it's recently been shortened to Rich Site Summary.

Webgeeks write Perl scripts that retrieve XML RSS files and convert them to HTML. Add a pinch of news headline to the web-ready mix and serve on the target website, for further delectation.

As with so many data formats, RSS is XML based, adding content rich elements so that news stories appear on the site looking just as lovely as they did when they left home. RSS headlines can be had for a range of newsites, but the idea is also popular for other sites, since it seems to be a good way of getting repeat traffic.

Say What?

(Iffy Writing Award Presented in the Ether for Obfuscation, Confusion, Misinformation or All Out Pretentiousness)

Once again it's the Brian & Phil show, and once again the UK's Printing World has got overexcited. In the news item reporting Phil Eaves' move to Xaar, Printing World reported that:

"Mr. Eaves has left Screen on good terms and the search for a successor is underway. 'He has left a good marketing team in place.' said Scitex Europe managing director Brian Forsdike 'though I'm clearly disappointed he's going.'"

Scitex Europe? The name conjures up a shedload of fond memories, but none of them have much to do with Screen Europe, the company Brian so ably leads.



The Cost of Computer to Plate

There has been much written about the desirability of computer-to-plate (CTP) output, most of it eminently cogent, sensible and relevant. There has been almost as much written about the cost of ownership of CTP, much of it largely incoherent, senseless and irrelevant, but then, it's a slippery subject. The argument for shifting to CTP production may be clear, but evaluating the cost of ownership for CTP is not: what is meaningful for one sector is unlikely to have equal weight elsewhere, and there are both hard and soft costs to take into account. But it's not hopeless, so this article is written for printers who are still struggling to come up with clear justifications, not for the CTP investment, but for selecting one device over another in a market flush with choice.

It Starts with the Shopping

In these days of pinched margins, cost of ownership evaluations are obviously key to CTP investment. More than ever they should be based on a piece of capital equipment's worth and contribution to the business, tangible or otherwise. Most accountants measure CTP investment values in terms of capital cost, repayment schedules, reducing balance depreciation and resale value. They treat capital equipment as an asset, spreading the cost of the equipment in a straight line over five or ten years, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter. They may also re-evaluate the worth of an asset as they go along, so that it's depreciation value reflects its contribution to the business over a shorter or longer life. Establishing numbers for this kind of calculation isn't necessarily simple, but the process can be a useful basis for establishing the real cost of ownership for capital equipment. It's particularly helpful when that equipment's worth is subject to many variables, as is the case with platesetters.

Unlike accountants, most printers measure CTP investment values on the basis of speed, quality, competitiveness, press up-time and customer satisfaction. These driving factors also shape cost of ownership, so cost of ownership calculations should really begin even before the capital investment is made.

Dangerous Driving

Perhaps the most powerful driver for the shift to CTP is awareness of the rising use of colour and shorter runs, both of which require more plates, more often. Runs may be shorter, but jobs are getting more complex, with more colour than was the norm in the past. We need more plates per job, and more jobs per shift to pay for the latest generation presses. Presses have become incredibly sophisticated of late, with multiple coaters and varnishing units as well as colour units, so every hour they stand idle costs money. Efficient platesetting is key to their revenue generating capacity, as well as their investment pay back. Production speed gains result in higher throughput and increased revenues, but greater diversity in throughput may also be possible. This broadens the revenue base and so strengthens the business, as well as helping maximise investment returns. All of it has to be measured however.

For most CTP investments, people are the source of both the most costs and the most savings, either through training, or redeployment and redundancy.

▼ The Basics

Platesetter investment planning starts with the press and the required plate's format, processing requirements, run length expectations and cost. It is virtually impossible to generalise about specific plate prices and costs, because to get an idea of how plate costs contribute to the cost of ownership, numerous other related factors have to be included in the equation. These include processing costs and consistency of plate quality to minimise wastage. The rat's nest of processing costs includes everything from chemistry to the time it takes to clean the processor and it's too tangled for us to un-muddle here. There are also differences in how processor factors can be measured, so we are planning something more in-depth for a future issue. Plate quality consistency is however fairly straightforward and can be based on the percentage of duff plates in a given batch. Establish data for this, and worry next about establishing what those duff plates have cost in addition to replacement costs.

Speed & Quality

Speed and improved make-ready time is one of the primary benefits of CTP, and often assumed but not measured. Speed improvements contribute to more uptime on presses, so a platesetter has an investment leveraging effect which should also be taken into account. However, unless tests are run and production throughput timed, speed improvements are intangible and cannot be qualified.

Like speed, quality improvements should also be measured. It's not enough to check that a plate can hold the dot range required, or support the right sort of screening. Output quality must be objectively tested, measured and compared with existing work. It's another driver for CTP investment, but evaluating quality is highly subjective. Of course, measuring quality is something that printers do extremely well, but measuring the cost of achieving it may not be so well understood. On the plus side, keep in mind that quality improvements may not always be reflected in higher prices, but may result in winning or protecting jobs from the competition.

Workflow management and efficiencies shape improved quality and speed, so these evaluations have also to be factored into the equation, particularly in relation to a platesetter's compatibility with existing equipment and existing workflows as additional investment may be necessary. Measure such things as the time available from file retrieval to getting on press, and the cost of managing peaks and troughs in the workload. Further investment may be needed for ancillary equipment such as proofers and copydot scanners, as well as people.

People Who Need People

Of course the people piece is probably one of the trickiest in the cost of ownership puzzle. Doing away with filmsetting is all well and good, but there are new skill requirements for digital workflow management, such as colour management, calibration of proofing systems and platesetters, platesetter and press profile management, and training. For most CTP investments, people are the source of both the most costs and the most savings, either through training, or redeployment and redundancy.

However fewer staff means a narrower knowledge based and increased vulnerability to personnel changes and illness. Also, new processes require different skills, procedures and quality control mechanisms, all ►

Speed and improved make-ready time is one of the primary benefits of CTP, and often assumed but not measured. Speed improvements contribute to more uptime on presses, so a platesetter has an investment leveraging effect which should also be taken into account.

of which have personnel implications. In addition to the obvious needs for prepress and platemakers' training, customer service reps, sales staff, purchasing, and customers have to get to grips with the new workflow.

Overheads must also be factored in, particularly if the machine needs its own minder and room. Other considerations are keeping the platesetter's environment to the correct temperature, humidity and even noise levels in some markets. And then there are the environmental issues relating to a particular type of plate and the related processing. Some systems have been found to have lower maintenance requirements than others, or result in more or less waste, and that waste may be disposable in water or need to be removed by subcontractors. It might all add up to a strong argument for going chemistry-free or processless. For all of these factors, and more, there should be a value.

Customer Squeeze

Besides the host of internal factors affecting cost of ownership, customer considerations must be included in the calculation. These range from the value of a digital workflow, with customers happy and keen to deliver digital files, through to more easily achieving customer quality/price performance expectations, the perceived benefits of faster turnaround, and even design considerations if the platesetter can support stochastic screening. But how do you put a meaningful value on 350 lpi screening? And how do you convince customers to pay for it? Working out the charge to make for the former is rather easier than the latter!

Consuming Desire

Investment used to be simply about buying a machine that did the job and working out how to pay for it, but things have changed dramatically. Now many suppliers are willing to finance CTP investment on the basis of consumables deals, especially in the short run B3 market where money is available in crumbs, not slices. Of course suppliers recognise that investment is fundamental to development and growth so they are willing to underwrite the capital cost in view of potential growth. Growth means more plates and the possibility of upgrades for larger formats, automation or speed, and many consumables contracts will also include servicing and repair costs such as laser replacements, as well as plates and processing chemistry. Whatever the terms, it's important to know precisely what is contracted and what services beyond those contracted will cost.

Production and manufacturing driven businesses depend on adroit capital equipment investment, and the bigger the potential return, the bigger the investment should be. In any business, investment and maximising the return on capital deployed determines success or failure, but ultimately it's about the relationship between buyer and seller. Fortunately sellers are aware that investment is generally harder for smaller businesses which are more immediately vulnerable to market whimsies, bad debts and technology shifts. Bigger businesses have more padding, both in terms of risk exposure and decision making processes, but either way suppliers offers attractive deals so no longer can printers afford to ignore cost of ownership for CTP.

– Laurel Brunner

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Collaborative proofing

Managing a stream of different PDF files, all with notes and comments, from different proof readers (and maybe some of them have contradicting opinions and instructions) is far from an ideal situation, but it is the reality for many proofing workflows. Far better to place the PDF files on some kind of server and to use a specialised web interface, which is the approach many developers have taken, and which is the approach taken with all the proofing systems reviewed here.

There are three primary functions that one could wish for in a server based, collaborative digital proofing system. First of all, the interface should be easy to use and accessible over the Internet. There should be a comprehensive toolbox, with annotation functions as well as alternative presentation views of the documents. Secondly, the proofs should really be colour accurate on screen, so that what we see on the monitor should be a faithful simulation of the final print. To achieve this is more tricky than it might sound, since most web browsers are pretty rubbish when it comes to supporting colour management. There are different options available though, from special plug-ins for the browser, to standalone clients for the web interface.

The third requirement we might have is to want the documents preflighted for printability, before we approve and sign them off. This preflight process can be more or less sophisticated, but there is a clear trend towards JDF-driven workflows where the preflight specification sits safe and cosy in the electronic job bag. For those who plan to head for the JDF frontier, such wonders as automated impositioning are just around the corner. Preflighted and approved proofs can be moved directly to a predefined impositioning queue in the RIP. Well organised print customers should be able to ultimately drive the platesetter, without human intervention on the printers side. Really cool, or plain scary, depending on what perspective you take, and probably how old/brave you are!

One of the pioneers striding forth into web based collaborative proofing is a Danish company, Web Proof, and its eponymous software. For some while, Web Proof was more or less alone with its PDF-centric system. Other early entrants to this market were Realtime Image (now KPG Matchprint Virtual Proofing) and the US based ICS with Remote Director. A key function in the kind of high resolution web based proofing these developers offer, is fast pixel transfer, even at low bandwidths. Realtime is more than happy to license their pixel streaming technology to other vendors, such as Heidelberg which uses it in Printready Remote Access. Other developers, such as Creo and the German company Cyan Soft, Dalim and Rampage, have come up with pixel streaming technologies.

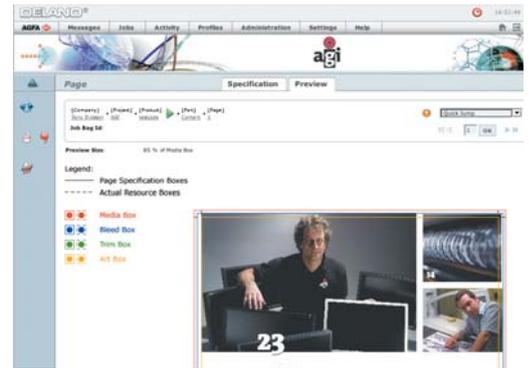
We have looked closely and tested systems from Agfa (Delano), Creo (Insite), Cyan Soft (Eproof), Dalim (Dialogue), ICS (Remote Director), KPG (Matchprint Virtual Proofing) and Web Proof (Web Proof) and looked into the specifications of the coming systems from Heidelberg (Remote Access) and Screen (Riteapprove). It's clear that many vendors have identified a need amongst publishers and media agencies for these kinds of proofing solutions, and introduced a range of solutions.

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▼ **Agfa Delano**

Agfa presented Delano at Drupa 2000, and at that point had taken over its development from the developers, Image Building, which had developed Delano for international printers Quebecor. Soon after this, Agfa realised that Delano had to be fully JDF compatible, and started a total rewrite. In a way the Delano of today is already the second generation, with a well tested and thought through user interface, and the structure and spirit of JDF shining through in the way things are organised. In the early days, Delano was supposed to handle all kinds of workflows, including creative production, photo and design. Today the main focus is on the processes starting with nearly finished and designed documents, to print and distribution of jobs.

The colour coding of processes is the same for all jobs and users of the system. Delano can work standalone or connected to an MIS system. By nature it's supposed to be connected to a RIP system, either to Agfa Apogee X or another Postscript Extreme (i.e. PDF based) RIP system. Delano uses a standard web browser, so colour accuracy for the pages isn't automatically assured, but there is an option to present high resolution PDF files with embedded ICC profiles. When viewed in Acrobat the user can then also approve the documents for colour accuracy.

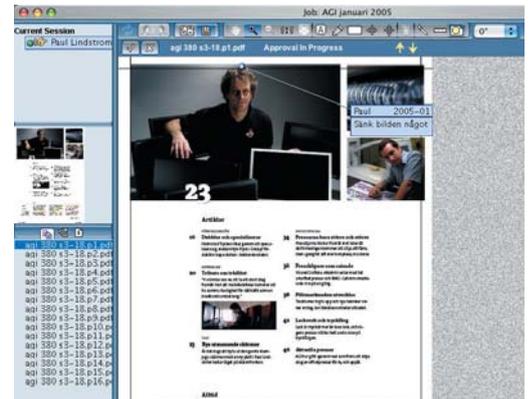


Agfa Delano – this project management system also offers on-line preflight and proofing. For fully colour managed proofing the PDF-files must be opened in Adobe Acrobat.

Creo Insite

All workflow components from Creo are part of the Synapse family, so the full name for Creo's collaborative proofing solution is Synapse Insite. It's fully possible to integrate Insite to any RIP system, but a natural choice is to pair it with a Prinergy system, or possibly Brisque.

All incoming jobs are preflight checked and if the customer has already done an early preflight through Synapse Prepare, this second check is a quick verification that the correct preflight profile has been used. Creo Insite uses a standard web browser as the interface to the system, so here too perfect colour accuracy on screen isn't guaranteed, although colour separation is done correctly according to the job order. The pages that are displayed are processed in the same RIP as will be used for plate making but for more accurate softproofing, the high resolution PDF files are opened in Acrobat. With Creo's own streaming technology the user can zoom into the pages and add annotations and comments. A built-in densitometer shows the CMYK colour values.



Creo InSite – preflight can be made on the incoming files and then they can be imposed automatically. InSite offers a range of annotation tools for remote proofing.

Cyan Soft Eproof

Cyan Soft bought the source code to the Color Central OPI system from Aldus (rest in peace), and calls its version Opium. This system works in the background of Eproof and what's a little special about Eproof is that it can open several types of native documents, such as MS Word documents. This makes possible team work based collaborative proofing not only for images or pages, but also the copy if it's done in MS Word. The Eproof system can display colours accurately as long as the user makes sure the monitor profile is updated in the system and the proofing parameters are correctly set up. This has to be done manually and here there is perhaps room for improvement. Streaming technology called RIV (Rapid Image View) makes sure the rendering of high resolution images is fast .



Cyansoft eProof – incoming files go through basic preflighting and are displayed fast through streaming technology. Colour accuracy is achieved if the user uploads the monitor ICC-profile to the server.

Dalim Dialogue

This proofing system can work standalone or connected to a RIP system, either a Dalim RIP such as Twist or Printempo, or any other modern ▶

▼
RIP. Inside Dialogue resides the same Postscript interpreter as is used in Twist, making it possible for Dialogue to preflight and RIP incoming documents.

Dialogue renders the documents colour accurately, as long as you have specified the ICC profiles involved. This is a manual process, and possibly there is some room for improvements here. Dalim is a strong enforcer of JDF based impositioning and this is reflected also in Dialogue. The user is presented with the impositioning scheme and can move the pages around until they are all in the right order. After final approval the flats are immediately ready for platemaking.

Heidelberg Remote Access

All workflow systems from Heidelberg are part of the Prinect family, and the different components have Prinect as prefix in their full name. As of today, when Heidelberg's Prinect Ready RIP system is coupled with the Prinect MIS system, the users are automatically notified via email when proofs are ready. Proofs can be attached as PDF files, and all correspondence is logged on the server. To complement this procedure Heidelberg is about to launch Remote Access, an add-on module to Prinect Ready. Documents are preflighted and when they are ready for approval, the client is notified by email that there are proofs to check. The user interface is through a standard web browser and Adobe Acrobat. Instead of sending out documents attached to emails, the files now reside on a server. Through the license from Kodak/KPG/Realtime (!!) the high resolution documents can be displayed fast on screen through streaming technology. Annotations, correction instructions and finally approval can be made through the user interface. We haven't tested this system first hand, but what we have seen in demonstration looks promising, especially regarding the security features.

ICS Remote Director

Although still best known in the US, ICS is about to distribute the Remote Director system in Europe as well. The system accepts any ICC profiles as the basis for colour accurate rendering on screen, so the system as such is not US-centric. Remote Director has a built in monitor profiling tool that works with any CRT or LCD monitor. The best and most accurate colour rendering is achieved if the monitor is equipped with a special USB cable to control gamma (see last issue), besides the digital (DCC/CI) cable. ICS takes colour accuracy seriously – any member of the proofing team who tries to work with an uncalibrated monitor gets a red dot beside their user name in the team list as a warning for all to see! Remote Director has a Jaws Postscript interpreter built in, which performs a basic preflight. The user interface has various annotation tools, including a freehand writing tool for those using a pen tablet instead of an ordinary mouse. All the colour settings are shared based on what the administrator sets up for the job, which makes this application easy to use even for people without in-depth knowledge of colour management.

Kodak/KPG Matchprint Virtual Proofing

Based on the former Realtime Image solution Realtime Proof Kodak/KPG has added a proper calibration module to the Matchprint Virtual Proofing system. To ensure accurate colour display as well as the streaming pixel capacity, the web browser needs some special plug-ins. Monitor calibration should be done with the KPG software which only accepts the latest Apple Cinema Displays and the Eizo CG-21 monitor. If the ▶



Dalim Dialogue – this proofing system can run either stand-alone or connected to a Twist or Prinect RIP system. Preflight and automatic impositioning are among its features.

For those who plan to head for the JDF frontier, such wonders as automated impositioning are just around the corner. Preflighted and approved proofs can be moved directly to a predefined impositioning queue in the RIP.



ICS Remote Director – after a basic preflight, using Jaws rip technology, the images or pages can be proofed on-line with colour accuracy. The calibration status on the monitor is checked every time a team member logs on to the system.

monitor calibration is wrong or out of date, this is indicated in the lower corner of the user interface. Users can annotate the pages or images, and zoom in to have a closer look at the high resolution images, even at low bandwidth. There is no preflight check for incoming files and they are uploaded as is.

Rampage Remote

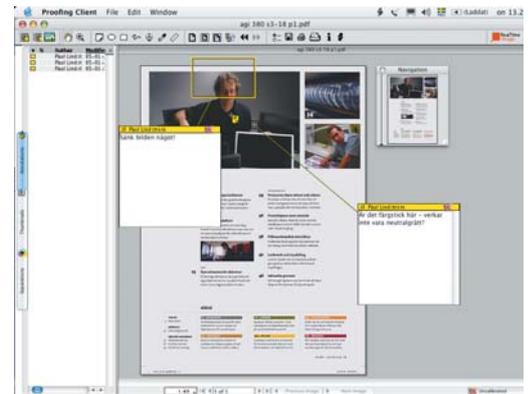
Besides selling its own CelebrantRIP system, Fujifilm also distributes the Rampage system. Rampage Remote is a Java based addition to the RIP for remote and collaborative proofing via the Internet. Rampage Remote has annotation and approval tools and logs all user activity in the server. The Rampage Remote system has built in streaming technology similar to that of RealtimeImage’s. We haven’t yet actually tested this product.

Screen Riteapprove

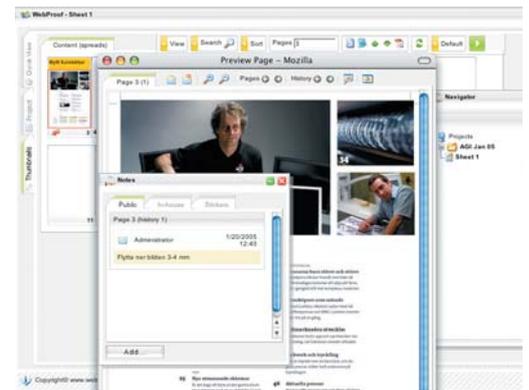
Screen’s RIP system is called Trueflow, and Riteapprove is a add-on module to Trueflow. The user interface is based on a standard web browser coupled with Java plugins. Riteapprove has already been launched in Japan and will be introduced worldwide shortly, but we haven’t yet actually tested this product.

Web Proof

This Danish software vendor saw early on the need for an online proofing solution. Web Proof is already in version 4.0, so the user interface is well established and thought through. The focus is on collaborative PDF proofing, so functions for colour managed softproofing have to be made via Adobe Acrobat. There is no preflight as such in Web Proof, but incoming documents can be preflighted through third party solutions. Web Proof (the company) offers such ready to use packages within their workflow solutions products. The administrator sets up different levels of user rights depending on peoples’ roles. Some users can only read annotations, while others can write and edit annotations. It’s possible to set up rights for a sub contractor, for example the binder, so that they only see the status of the job and are notified when proofs or prints are approved. All changes to the documents are logged and it is possible to compare one version to another. Any changes are marked with a box around the area where there is a difference between the documents.



KPG Matchprint Virtual Proofing – images and pages are displayed fast to the screen using streaming technology. Colour accuracy is guaranteed through KPG software and hardware.



WebProof – on-line, collaborative proofing using PDF-files. WebProof offers a range of annotation tools and special features, such as quickly comparing two documents. Any changes are marked by a coloured box.

– Paul Lindström



Product	Vendor	Web address
Delano	Agfa	www.agfa.com
Synapse In Site	Creo	ww.creo.com
eProof	Cyan Soft	www.cyansoftware.com
Dialogue	Dalim	www.dalim.com
PrintReady Remote Proof	Heidelberg	www.heidelberg.com
Remote Director	ICS	www.icscolor.com
Matchprint Virtual Proofing	Kodak /KPG	www.kpggraphics.com
Rampage Remote	Rampage	www.rampageinc.com
Riteapprove	Screen	www.screen.com
Web Proof	Web Proof	www.webproof.com

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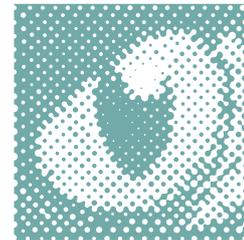
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