



THE SEVENTH ANNUAL CANADIAN PRINTING AWARDS

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Inside University In-plants



The student population of York University is 55,000, the same size as the city of Grande Prairie, Alberta. Whether or not all these students realize it, their education literally depends on materials produced by the university's specialized Publishing and Printing Operations, as do many of the activities of York's 10,000 faculty and staff. I spoke with the management of the in-plant printing facility serving this huge Toronto academic institution, as well as the management of two other university in-plants in different parts of the country, to learn what it takes to provide a foundation of print for post-secondary education in Canada.

York printing

Steve Glassman is York University's Director of Bookstore, Printing and Mailing Services. Chris Panagopoulos manages two of Glassman's departments, Publishing and Printing Operations, with a combined staff of 14 whose main activity is producing course kits – spiral-Cerlox-bound books, each one containing all the required readings for a particular course.

"When I first started in 2008, Printing Operations had just acquired four new toner-based units that bumped our production speed up from 110 to 640 pages per minute. Back then we were printing between 30- to 40-million impressions annually. The new equipment allowed us to increase efficiencies, decrease overtime, and outsource less, when previously we had been outsourcing 2-million impressions," says Panagopoulos.

The Publishing department's gargantuan task is to apply and arrange payment for the reproduction rights from each publisher of each copyrighted item in the course kits – up to 2,000 copyright-protected items a year. Instead of dealing with each publisher and title individually,

some academic in-plants elect instead to hire Access Copyright, a Canadian copyright licensing agency that charges high fees to obtain all their copyrights for them.

Besides course kits, other typical jobs for Printing Operations include diplomas on preprinted shells; marketing collateral; large-format printing, posters, and banners; York's branded stationery and business cards (they are the only vendor of record and quality watchdogs for York's branded material); and print-on-demand books.

Security printing also forms part of their watch. When diploma forgery became a concern, Panagopoulos collaborated with their supplier of diploma shells to devise a hologram as a security feature on the back of each diploma. They store the diplomas in locked areas for which only a limited number of personnel have keys. Exams can be submitted digitally via a secure FTP site or password-protected e-mail, but 75 percent arrive as hard copies. Both printed diplomas and hard copies of exams must be delivered to and from the in-plant in tamper-evident bags with numbered seals. The task of printing confidential transcripts of student grades, however, takes place in the Registrar's Office.

The equipment arsenal in Printing Operations currently comprises seven black-and-white toner-based presses, including: One Kodak 9110, three Canons (two 5000s and one 8070) and three Océ (a VP 6250 with punch, a VP 6200 with booklet maker, and a VP 6160 in-line perfect binder). Additionally, they run three toner-based colour presses, including two Konica Minoltas (one BHC

252 and one BHC 352), and one Xerox DC 700, plus an Epson Stylus Pro 9800 for large-format printing, a Graphic Wizard UV coater, and full bindery. They also have two two-colour offset presses, a Ryobi and an AB Dick. "But we don't use them," says Glassman. "Our off-set operator retired a couple of months ago. Now we simply outsource the small volume of two-colour offset that we were doing in-house, because it didn't add up to 2,000 impressions a month."

Print-on-demand books

Among Glassman's proudest accomplishments are the print-on-demand books. Although for years the university's bookstore has operated a small custom publishing service, in the last five years he has initiated toner-based book printing through Printing Operations. He swears by the Océ VP 6160 with in-line perfect binder for book production, which they do in runs from 10 to 2,000 copies.

"I have held the authors' hands and worked with a graphic designer to produce 67 books, many of which are absolutely gorgeous. One or two are now selling online at Chapters Indigo. For example, a book called *Creating Memory* by John Warkentin, documents public sculptures around Toronto. Frank Barrett, the author of another book with all-colour illustrations, *Earnest Ibbetson*, spent 20 years writing about a commercial postcard artist who drew military postcards. I really don't think these authors would have got the help they needed elsewhere to put these books together. Although many of them are not big enough sellers to attract the attention of mainstream publishers, they're perfect for print on demand.

"While some booksellers may be closing, I believe there will always be a market for fine books made with creativity and craftsmanship. Booksellers will continue to thrive if they specialize in promoting and selling these kinds of products," Glassman affirms.

Staff staying motivated

Panagopoulos says one of the more satisfying aspects of his job is hiring as many as 40 to 60 students a year, especially during crunch times. "One who is now studying for his Masters degree worked with me during all four years of his undergraduate studies. When they are ready to move on, they use me as a reference and coach to prepare them for job interviews."

The students provide clients with the exceptional service of delivering printing door-to-door around York's main campus – where Printing Operations is located. They perform their deliveries on foot using dolly carts. This method of transportation has proven preferable to cars, partly because the campus can be challenging for drivers (especially with construction for the new Pan American Games stadium now in progress), and partly because delivery by dolly does not pollute the environment. Deliveries to the university's second, smaller Toronto campus are handled by the university's internal bus system.

Panagopoulos explains: "In hiring interviews, I ask the students if they are prepared to do the same repetitive job over and over, like working in an automobile factory, because that's what the job requires. To relieve the monotony, I let them listen to music while they work – but they are only allowed to use one earphone, so they can hear instructions and won't hurt themselves.

"Sometimes we turn the task of inserting Cerlox coils by hand into a game to see how many they can do in a minute, or have competitions between teams to see who can produce more. Since I adopted this playful approach, everyone wants to do hand coiling, rather than carry 20 to 30 pounds of printing around the campus on dollies."

Distinguished careers

Panagopoulos remembers people who invested in him when he was a student, so championing York students is his way

Continued on page 24

Gaitskell

Continued from page 15

of giving back. He graduated with a B'Tech degree in Graphic Communications Business Management from Ryerson University in 1995, ran a small design agency briefly, then spent five-and-a-half years as a Senior Project Manager at Cott Beverages before joining York. Soon after his arrival, he achieved FSC certification for York, making it the first and only Canadian university in-plant with this designation. In November 2010, Panagopoulos was recognized as one of *In-plant Graphics* magazine's Top 15 Managers Under 40.

Glassman holds an MBA and became a biologist before he eventually gravitated to printing as a second career. He worked previously for a web offset company, then a sheetfed offset company specializing in direct mail.

His father, Alex Glassman, was a chemical engineer who began his career in the paper industry in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, then worked in quality control for R.R. Donnelly in Chicago, where he promoted offset printing at a time when it was considered second-rate and helped paper companies improve paper for offset printing. Later, Alex worked for paper companies in New York and Toronto. In 1985, he wrote a book called *Printing Fundamentals*, published by TAPPI (Technical Association of Pulp and Paper Industries) Press, to teach paper manufacturers all they needed to know about printing. For years Alex edited the classic graphic arts production handbook *Pocket Pal*, until Michael H. Bruno took over as editor. (The current editor of *Pocket Pal* is Frank Romano.) Alex passed away in 2010.

When Steve Glassman arrived at York eight years ago, he was given charge of Printing Operations alone. Among his first priorities was devoting two to three years to building a unique digital workflow allowing information to be exchanged seamlessly between Publishing, Printing Operations, and the university's accounting department. He wanted not only to facilitate billing and transfer payments to and from other departments but also to keep a sharp eye on finances: "Our job is to be profitable, and even though the operation was already good, we became more efficient and produced great returns that we contributed back to the university to be used for buildings and student projects. We have kept our prices the same or lower to give our customers more value for their dollar."

All-important customer relations

Panagopoulos explains: "We don't have the right of first refusal on the university's jobs, and there are a lot of copy shops in the neighbourhood, so we have to gain our business and prove our worth and knowledge to our customers. We also work hard to keep them happy with a high level of service."

Glassman continues: "Our hands are tied, because it's a small market limited to one institution. I've tried to get positive messages out there saying, 'If there was something you didn't like 10 years ago, we've changed now, so give us another try.'" He has circulated printed showpieces to demonstrate his in-plant's

Continued on page 26

Gaitskell

Continued from page 24

capabilities and staged presentations at one of the campus' prestigious venues on how to make the best use of printing services and save money. Like any selling commercial-business owner, he has also traveled from building to building, knocking on doors to promote his printing services.

Glassman still feels that he needs to market even more proactively, especially to attract more direct-mail jobs from university departments that historically have tended to hoard their databases or outsource. At present Printing Operations performs only a limited number of direct-mail jobs, including mailings for faculty research, welcome letters for students, and parking statements. "I want to create a business case that fills the facility better and teach staff to handle direct mail better. It's frustrating to see potential clients developing wonderful relations with outside printers and ad agencies, when some of that work could be done proficiently in-house."

Resources from CUPMAC

Academic in-plants in Canada vary greatly in size and complexity, says Heather Hersemeyer, President of the College and University Print Management Association of Canada (CUPMAC, established 1968), to which Glassman and Panagopoulos both belong. CUPMAC's current membership comprises 39 schools and 88 individuals from most provinces of Canada. The association's main services include a three-and-a-half-day annual managers conference and a list serve to facilitate networking during the rest of the year.

Since 2001, Hersemeyer has been Manager, Technology and Printing Services at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario (population 5,000 students). She says one shop in northern British Columbia consists of a single operator and a single black-and-white press. Others in larger institutions may consist of as many as 20 staff; offset, toner-based, and large-format presses; full-service binderies; and fleets of thousands of copiers scattered around their campus. Her own operation has four staff, two main toner-based presses, and under 10 fleet copiers.

Peter Klit, Secretary/Treasurer of CUPMAC, spent 25 years working his way up from the bottom to become Manager, Printing Services at the University of Victoria, British Columbia in 2004. His operation serves a student population of 19,000 with 11 staff, four-colour and two-colour offset presses, and colour and large black-and-white toner-based presses.

Common characteristics of in-plants

The busiest times for academic in-plants, determined by the demands of new terms starting and exams, include August and September, followed by December, March, and April.

One thing that distinguishes academic in-plants from most other printers is that they all have unionized shops, although their management is not unionized. Both Hersemeyer and Klit say they receive plenty of outside orders from local unions and union-friendly political candidates who prefer to deal with unionized shops.

Another common characteristic of academic in-plants is their constant fear that facility-management companies will take over their operations. For this reason, facility-management companies are no longer eligible for CUPMAC membership. "We're always in a position where we feel we need to prove our worth," says Klit.

Academic in-plants also find themselves in a unique financial situation compared to other printers. Klit explains: "We don't follow the same economic pattern as the rest of the world, since our funding is established by the government a few years in advance. When our institution is struggling with budget cuts, it becomes difficult for us to get new equipment or staff."

Klit continues: "Private printing companies can make their own purchasing selections, but because we are public institutions, a lot of our purchases are dictated by strict university policies. For example, we often have to request three quotes and choose the vendor with the lowest price or participate in a master agreement for paper supplies. These days when accepting bids, all universities expect vendors to throw in a value-added offer, such as funding for certain parts of the university or a scholarship."

He and Hersemeyer agree these requirements can squelch their critical business relationships with vendors who may not provide the cheapest products or largest corporate donations but offer more consultative, more dependable or faster service. During crunch periods, they can hardly afford to have a press down for even half a day.

Future academic in-plants

The increasing popularity of e-readers and iPads has resulted in more course kits being posted online now instead of as a printed reproduction. "As course kits went digital, we have been reinventing ourselves and have expanded into other value-added products, including wide-format printing, banners, signage, calendars, and books," reports Hersemeyer. She is in the process of implementing Braille printing to make her institution more physically accessible and reports that the introduction of wide-format printing has re-energized her operation's image in the eyes of both staff and customers.

"Our print shops may become smaller but they are still relevant. In the future a lot of what we print, what we print on, and the purposes we serve are going to be more complex than just putting black dots on a white piece of paper," predicts Hersemeyer.

"We have to ensure our offerings stay relevant to faculty, staff, and students, whether it's printing from a mobile device or using QR codes," agrees Klit. "But I don't believe printing on paper will ever die. In spite of alternative technologies, there will always be a need for printed books, essays, maps, and exams – things people have to sit down with and figure out. Facility-management companies wouldn't be so interested in taking us over if they didn't see a future in our operations." ☐

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