Walsworth Publishing Company

Adobe workflow dramatically increases productivity for Walsworth Publishing

Founded in 1937 by three brothers, Walsworth Publishing Company has become one of the largest family-owned printers in the United States. It is also one of the few publishers boasting a complete line of in-house services: prepress, printing, bindery, and specialty finishing, including embossing, debossing, and foil stamping. In fact, Walsworth's complement of equipment and expertise is so complete that it does trade work for some of the largest publishing companies in the United States.

Walsworth added yearbooks to its product line in 1947. This part of the business evolved and grew over time to become the cornerstone of the company's success. By definition, the yearbook business is fraught with all the difficulties and challenges facing every printer—times ten.

It goes without saying that the yearbook business is cyclical in nature. And when crunch time comes at the end of the school year, it comes with a vengeance. Enter Grant Fritch, Director of Technology/R&D, whom Walsworth recruited to lead the effort toward prepress automation with the aim of alleviating the chief bottleneck during heavy production cycles.

"The first item on my agenda," says Fritch, "was to implement an Adobe PDF workflow at Walsworth. I knew that a PDF workflow would streamline the entire process and provide tremendous benefits," continues Fritch, "not only for our prepress department but also for our customers." Fritch eventually decided on Apogee, Agfa's implementation of the Adobe PDF workflow.

"When we installed Apogee," continues Fritch, "I sat people down in a classroom and taught them how to use it. One day later, they were sending fully imposed jobs from Apogee Pilot to the Agfa Avantra 44. Most of them had never used a mouse before!"

Since 1999, Walsworth has made tremendous strides in automating its prepress workflow. Walsworth processed more than one million PDF pages last year and ran over 115 miles of film through its four Avantra 44s. In March 2001, Walsworth made the leap to computer-to-plate publishing when it installed an Agfa Galileo system.

Walsworth takes full advantage of Adobe PostScript 3, the underlying technology of the Agfa PDF RIP that drives both the Agfa Avantra 44 and the Agfa Galileo. A scalable printing architecture, PostScript 3 has been integrated into a wide range of devices and technologies while still maintaining the high quality and performance Adobe is known for. Printing devices equipped with PostScript 3 impose no limits on the use of color, text, graphics, and images. PostScript 3 translates those great ideas into print—exactly as intended.

According to Walsworth management, the number one advantage of the Adobe PDF workflow is a dramatic increase in throughput. "What used to take us weeks now takes days," says a Walsworth executive. "We have been 100%

Adobe PDF for about two years, and it has substantially shortened our lead times for new customers; we can provide books in much shorter turnaround times."

Adobe PDF has also played an important role in Walsworth's implementation of a growing trend: remote production. The Walsworth plant in Marceline, Missouri, acts as a remote production site for the subsidiary in Edinburgh, Scotland. PDF files are prepared in Edinburgh and sent via FTP to Marceline, where the books are printed and bound. Then the books are shipped to Scotland.

An additional benefit, however, is noted as one of the most important: "PDF workflow has actually changed the quality of life for people at the plant," says Walsworth's production supervisor. "We have had a tremendous reduction in overtime, which used to be a yearly, stressful ritual. We are much less affected by the cyclical nature of yearbook printing now; the pace of our work has evened."

Walsworth has also taken on the task of helping its customers become more productive. 50% of Walsworth's files come from its yearbook clients, enthusiastic and dedicated 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds who volunteer part-time as yearbook copywriters, photographers, layout artists, and editors. To help them produce high-quality, correctly prepared work, Walsworth has developed a full suite of tools for automating submissions and streamlining the entire creative process. Fritch summarizes the effort: "We encourage PDF submission, particularly as we move towards more and more full-color work. We offer training classes, we write articles, and we've also developed a complete package of software tools and step-by-step instructions."

Walsworth's yearbook customers submit their files mostly in Adobe PageMaker format, though the proportion of PDF submissions is growing. "Our yearbook customers benefit tremendously

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Grant Fritch
Director of Technology/R&D
Walsworth Publishing Company

from the technology we've implemented to automate the process," says Fritch, "and Adobe products form the core of that technology."

The Walsworth yearbook Web site (*www.walsworthyearbooks.com*) is full of articles, design ideas, and ready-made templates and graphic elements. Prominent on the Web site is an article on "the future of yearbooks" that discusses how Adobe InDesign software provides "superior control over type, more graphic and design options, multiple undos and redos, easy preflighting, and compatibility/similarity to other Adobe products (like PageMaker and Photoshop®)."

Walsworth has seen a marked increase in InDesign use in its Commercial Printing division over the past year. Formed in 1970 to handle specialty short-run hardcover and softcover books, the division caters to university publishers, medical publishers, technical and scientific publishers, and other high-profile clients that require the typographic control and graphic design abilities offered by InDesign. Having invested in a good deal of internal training on InDesign, Walsworth is indeed in a strong position to continue serving the needs of its most treasured asset: its customers.

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