

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT
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production

JOURNAL



All things to all newspapers

A variety of newspapers, both regionals and nationals, have installed IPA's PrintExpress digital workflow software. **CARYL HOLLAND** looks at why

END to end control of production is the aim of all modern newspaper plants from keying in the editorial and handling the advertising through to making the plates, printing and even into the mail-room. When everything is produced on one site, though it might be an onerous task, it is a comparatively simple one to achieve particularly as there is control over what equipment is used.

Things become a little more complicated when more than one site is involved. However, if to this scenario is added the fact that some editions of the newspaper are produced by contract printers then the complexity increases even further, especially if the contract printers are not only in this country but are also scattered around the world.

Hence the development by IPA Systems of PrintExpress digital workflow software. Basically, this is a system that manages the output of pages from pagination systems to film or plate. It has a distributed client/server architecture making it suitable for complex multi-site operations involving remote transmission as well as simpler single site systems. It can handle both PDF and bitmap workflows and is available for both Sun/Solaris and PC/Windows platforms.

Being modular and scalable, it offers flexibility, power and resilience. The Java clients provide access for monitoring and control anywhere on the network, while publication tracking and soft proofing are available using a Web browser. IPA says that the latter is particularly suited to contract printers dealing with publications originating in several remote editorial sites since Internet access, together with password protection, make it possible for the editorial sites to view the status of their own products at the print site.

There are over 100 installations of PrintExpress around the globe. One of the latest orders for the system came from the CN Group in Carlisle which is installing the software at its new print site in

Barrow in Furness where in-house newspapers as well as a variety of contract print work will be produced. As was reported in November's issue of PJ, PrintExpress will allow the receipt of both single page and paired bitmap and PDF files, and will load level across two imagesetters.

It will also automatically generate ink pre-setting information and pass it to the press controls of Barrow's new Solna D400 press which is currently being commissioned. As the Group's Carlisle printing site already has

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PrintExpress, it will be possible automatically to switch print jobs between the two PrintExpress systems enabling CNG to use both presses fully and have a high degree of resilience. This is despite the Carlisle system running on Sun hardware and the Barrow system on a Dell PC server.

At the other end of the spectrum, another recent PrintExpress order came from the Telegraph Group, publisher of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph*. In this instance, paired PDF files will be created at Canary Wharf and distributed to the various print centres used by *The Telegraph* in the UK and overseas.

The appropriate page furniture required for the specific print centre will be added automatically prior to transmission. Browser-based soft proofing will be used to check the pages and PrintExpress Tracker software will be used to monitor the progress of the various publications in production.

The new system will replace the existing bitmap transmission system in which RipExpresses at Canary Wharf drive a TelePress transmission system that outputs to Pressfax recorders at Westferry and Trafford Park printing sites. Under the new arrangement, PrintExpress will output directly to the Pressfax recorders by way of IPA's Monofax laserbus interfaces.

Peter Green, technical director of the Telegraph Group gives some of

the reasons for choosing PrintExpress.

"The Telegraph Group have had a long and successful business relationship with IPA Systems and alfaQuest Technologies (formerly Monotype Systems) who have consistently responded quickly and efficiently to both support and development issues. The new output solution that is being provided in PrintExpress meets our demands for better and more consistent colour, the automation of some of the transmission systems, the increase in the number of pages to transmit, page tracking and a reduction in telecommunication bandwidth. Overall, this is a good solution to solving numerous issues and will make the Telegraph Group more efficient".

Guardian and Observer Newspapers also has a long standing relationship with IPA Systems or Monotype as everyone still tends to call the company, having been a user of Monotype's MGS3 OPI and RipExpress for a number of years. Again, this is one of the reasons why this year it replaced its TelePress/ProImage fax transmission system at its offices in Farringdon Road, London, with PrintExpress. As is explained by Matt Saul, IT projects manager at the Guardian: "A key thing for us in buying the Monotype product was that we had the expertise in-house to support it and develop it, which is very important to us."

As with the Telegraph, West Ferry and Trafford Park Printers are involved as contract sites, as well as Yorkshire Post Newspapers in Leeds and three overseas print sites



● Peter Green, technical director of the Telegraph Group: "The new output solution that is being provided in PrintExpress meets our demands for better and more consistent colour"



● West Ferry Printers: will soon be receiving digital information directly from The Guardian

– in Roubaix in northern France, Frankfurt in Germany and Madrid in Spain – all of which have different output devices, there being Pressfax at West Ferry and Trafford Park, an Agfa SelectSet imagesetter at the Yorkshire Post, an Autologic 3850 imagesetter in Roubaix and Frankfurt, and an ECRM Marlin imagesetter in Madrid. Added to which, TIFF files have to be sent to Madrid while all the others accept bitmap ripped files.

In fact, as Saul points out: "Previously, in effect we had two different transmission systems, one for the international and another for the domestic sites. As a result, 37 different pieces of hardware were used to output the newspaper".

In other words, not only were the systems complex but they also took up a considerable amount of space and were expensive to maintain.

"Now, not only do we use the same technology but we also have only one maintenance contract. In fact, we have been able to halve our annual maintenance costs", says Saul. He continues: "The installation of PrintExpress was very easy and simple though we did do a lot of planning. Monotype delivered the equipment when they said they would and the software has been incredibly reliable. Nor has it involved any significant retraining of the production staff involved in the transmission of pages.

"We did go out in the marketplace and talk to a number of suppliers, as well as do the costings, but for us PrintExpress was the answer".

However, he is looking forward to receiving the latest version of the software which includes a number of improvements, many of which have been suggested by *The Guardian*. One of these is message functionality enabling digital information to be sent directly to the print sites rather than faxing it over, as occurs now.

Then there are the better compression rates. These will speed up transmission times, something which is particularly important to *The Guardian* having just increased the number of broadsheet colour pages to 24 following the expansion of press capacity at Trafford Park and West Ferry.

"When you do the number of pre-prints that we do, managing their flow to the printer used to be a juggling act and was quite labour intensive," adds Saul. "Now we can send all the pages whenever they are ready and the automatic priority routing table means that the broadsheet pages are always automatically pushed to the top. In other words, the system works for the people rather than the people having to work around the system".

Apart from those already mentioned, another important reason why PrintExpress was chosen by *The Guardian* was its ability to integrate easily into *The Guardian's* existing systems particularly its sophisticated, in-house developed, database system for production planning and management.

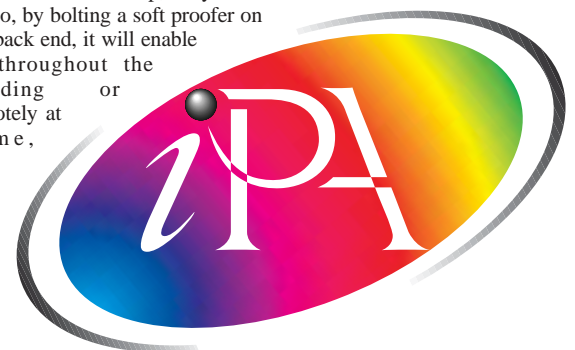
"By bolting this on to the front-end of PrintExpress, it will give us much more management of production from the desktop," says Saul. "Also, by bolting a soft proofer on the back end, it will enable us throughout the building or remotely at home,

to look at the paper, see the pages as they come in and look at the different editions, all from the desktop and using one central interface.

"In fact, the PrintExpress software and the way we use it has reduced the day to day task load, giving the staff time to manage the other products more effectively. Ultimately, it will mean that the products will get sent to the print sites in a more timely fashion.

"Already we have been able to bring the production of more magazines in-house so we now only have two produced outside. Basically, what it means is that there can be a much better central management of the entire production process".

Next steps in the development of the system will include grabbing information from the press sites and integration with the company's financial system. There are also discussions going on concerning using PrintExpress for full page pairing and using PDF, rather than bitmap, transmission to the print sites is being investigated. In addition, *The Guardian* is looking into the possibility of monitoring and managing page flow from other areas of the building or even from home.



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