

CASE STUDY:

King County Library System – Bringing It In House

Company

King County Library System
Graphics Department,
Issaquah, Washington

Profile

In-house public relations team for 43 libraries in King County.

Challenge

The library system was looking for a way to reduce dependence on outsourcing in order to address an increasing demand for four-color printing.

Solution

A Presstek 34DI digital offset press

Results

- Eliminated nearly \$80,000 in annual outsourcing spent for four-color printing
- Doubled output from 125,000 two-color sheets to 250,000 four-color sheets per month without increasing staff
- More cost effective and higher quality four-color pieces with faster turnaround
- More control over schedules
- In-house production and flexibility of the DI press allows for more creativity in marketing, fund-raising and program support materials
- Reduced consumption and disposal of hazardous chemicals

Writing a New Chapter of Higher Quality and Control With a Presstek 34DI

The King County Library System, the second busiest in the nation, is comprised of all of the libraries in King County, Washington (except those in the cities of Seattle and Renton). As King County continues to grow and diversify, the library system is being called upon to expand their collection, reach out to underserved populations, and provide more resources in its 43 community libraries. With more than one million residents using its libraries, the need for high quality, eye-catching materials is at an all-time high.

Meeting the Changing Demands

J. Tarner manages the graphics department, part of the public relations team for the library system. The team develops concepts, creates graphic design and manages the print production for a wide range of promotional and program support materials used throughout the system.

“The DI press has enabled us to significantly improve our level of service to the system.”

The group had been using a small two-color press, as well as black-and-white copiers, to produce one- and two-color work, which historically had met the majority of the library system’s printing needs. But with an increasing demand for four-color publications, Tarner had to outsource a growing volume of printing. This created two problems: increased cost and long

turnaround times. Tarner says, “Outsourcing usually required two to four weeks. For special rush projects, we could get outsourced work done in a week, but there was often extra cost associated with those ‘rush’ jobs.”

Tarner believed that a Presstek 34DI digital offset press would solve the library system’s printing problems by allowing most printing to be done in-house.

As the volume of outsourced work continued to climb, Tarner and his team looked for alternatives that would allow them to bring work in house and reduce both cost and turnaround time. In February of 2006, they installed a Presstek 34DI digital offset press, replacing their two-color press. “As a result,” says Tarner, “we have virtually eliminated outsourcing



The King County Library System serves a growing population in and around metropolitan Seattle. A Presstek 34DI digital offset press helps it meet the need for more four-color printed communications with its constituents.

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and we now routinely deliver work with three-day turnaround, even though I have a small staff. The DI press has enabled us to significantly improve our level of service to the system.”

Turner reports that his previous annual outsourcing costs of \$80,000 or more has been reduced to a few thousand dollars.

The two-color to four-color transition was smooth, according to Turner. Presstek removed the old press, installed the 34DI, and had everything up and running in less than a week, including training. Turner adds, “Although there was a learning curve, we were using the press almost immediately.”

Now Turner has complete control over his press schedule. He says, “The press is so accurate and reliable that I can estimate exactly how long a job will take.” Under the previous process, he was producing an average of 125,000 two-color sheets a month and now is able to deliver 250,000 four-color sheets. “There are many jobs I would not have been able to produce in the past that we can easily handle now,” he adds.

One recent example was a brochure with a very tight schedule. Layout was completed on a Monday, and the piece

was printed, finished and shipped by Friday. Turner points out that while he could have done this job on his older two-color press, it could not have been done in that timeframe. He comments, “When we did four-color printing on the two-color press, we had difficulty with registration. It took a lot of time and skill to get it done, so we were not actively promoting our four-color capability. The DI press makes this type of work easy, and the quality is exceptional.”

Ease of Operation

Not only was the DI press up and operating quickly, it has proven to be extremely reliable and easy to use. Its high level of automation ensures color consistency both within a job and from job to job. As Turner points out, for jobs like the library “open hours” brochure, which is run three to four times a year to keep the necessary quantities in stock, color consistency from run to run is critical.

As for ease-of-use, Turner points out that Tamara Burke Crain, their DI press operator, had not been a professional press operator prior to taking on her current role, although she had occasionally operated the two-color press. “The DI is a different learning curve than a conventional press,” says Turner. “You have to know more about the computer. Someone who is computer savvy and willing to learn can operate the DI; and that is much different than it was ten years ago.”

New Capabilities, New Services

Now Turner’s group produces all of the Library System’s important branded and promotional work in four color. Letterhead is also produced on the DI press as a four-color job. “Letterhead just goes right into the DI workflow with other jobs, as well as envelopes.”

Four-color envelopes have been a boon for the Library System Foundation, which sends out requests

for donations several times per year. Turner says that changing the envelope design to full color makes it really pop in the recipient’s mailbox. He adds, “We will be doing our first full-color mailing for the foundation and we expect it to deliver improved fund-raising results.”

The system’s summer reading program has also benefited from the 34DI press. “We used to print 150,000 offset shells

for the summer reading program, and overprint each individual library’s schedule using the black-and-white copier. That took a tremendous amount of time and made the materials look generic. Now, we do a different layout for each library as a four-color job.”

The Environmental Card

Turner and his team have educated their customers about their new capabilities and to let them know how environmentally-friendly the DI press is. He says, “Our customers are as concerned about cost savings, sustainability and environmental friendliness as we are. Doubling our print capacity and discontinuing the use of chemicals associated with conventional printing has meant a huge cost saving for us.” In addition, there is much less makeready waste with the DI, since the press comes up to color in about 25 sheets. Turner reports that his customers want to know that the library is participating in “Keep it Green” initiatives in a meaningful way, and his team feels great about the contribution they are able to make with their DI press. ■



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