



SHELF LIFE

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A NEWSLETTER FROM THE LIBRARY BINDING INSTITUTE

You Ought to Be In Pictures: The Expanding Photo Book Industry

What do wireless Internet access, DVD players, portable mp3 players and digital cameras have in common?

A mere decade ago, few people had even heard of these items, much less owned them. Today, they're not only commonplace, but have completely changed the way we work, take pictures, and are entertained.

This is good news for the library binding industry.

Digital Photography Explosion Fueling New Markets In Photo Books

When Kodak introduced the first consumer mega pixel digital camera in 1997 (the DC210), it revolutionized the way the world not only took photos, but how photos are stored and shared. By 2003, more than 23 million American households (20%) owned a digital camera, and five years later, the numbers have continued to skyrocket.

"We now have so many new ways to interact with our memories," says Chad Munce, the Photo Marketing Association's (PMA) Group Executive for Digital Imaging Markets. He adds that as a result of this growth in digital photography, the market for customized photo products to share and showcase images has grown as well. "From soccer moms to professional photographers, making customized photo products is limited only to the imagination of the photographer."

At the forefront of these products are customized photo books. While already popular with event portrait and group customers (weddings, reunions, corporate events), last year nearly ten percent of retail customers ordered photo books in addition to digital image prints. A 2008 PMA study reported that the value of the photo book business went from \$81 million in 2005 to an estimated \$267 in 2007 and a projected \$389 million for 2008.

"The expansion we've seen in photography products just in our business alone is huge," says John Jacobson, Jr. of On Demand Machinery. "I'm a photographer myself and the options we now have



PMA head of market research, Dimitrios Delis, to speak at Fall Conference and Digital Print Seminar, September 25-28, 2008

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for printing and showcasing personal and business photos are so much more than what we had a few years ago. It's exciting."

Many industry experts are expecting the growth in the photo book market to continue, which is where hardcover binding expertise enters the picture.

Hardcover Binding & The Photo Book Market

"At the PMA08 International Convention, I attended a Digital Image Marketing Association (DIMA) session

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THE ORIGINAL
HARDCOVER
BOOK BINDERS

You Ought to Be In Pictures

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breakout where one of the speakers said that the photo book industry is expected to grow 400% over the next four years," Wallaceburg Bookbinding's Suzanne Wiersma says. "When you're talking about the majority of this being one photo book at a time for one consumer, and considering the projected \$389 million in photo book business for the current year, that is a significant amount of binding." Wiersma herself has gone online to create and order photo books from several companies in pursuit of finding the best software and quality product. Price, options, software, binding quality and time to process the order all vary.

The problem for the photo book industry is that many of its manufacturers have never before produced high quality, one-at-a-time binding – something the market is now demanding. "We're experts at binding books one at a time, matching various unique books with their covers," says Mark Hancock, CEO of Utah Bookbinding and vice president of the Library Binding Institute (LBI). "(As a result of this new demand), the photo book industry is clamoring for solutions to this new problem of binding and matching unique personalized covers to the corresponding books."

Wiersma concurs. "In talking with a supplier to the library binding and photo book industry, I've learned that many photo book manufacturers need help in binding," she explains. "I've seen finished photo books with endsheets detaching from the cover, head bands that wrap around to the front and back rather than just the spine, bindings falling apart with loose photo pages, not enough margin, and worst of all, cross grain paper and the resulting 'mouse trap' binding. Since the photo book industry isn't held to the ANSI/NISO/LBI standard for library binding, the hardcover binding expertise and resources of LBI and its members can specifically address this void."

Addressing The Void Via Diversification & Education

Some are addressing the void directly. For example, several years ago Utah Bookbinding started a new division, X-press-N Digital, after the acquisition of a

"The photo book industry is expected to grow 400 percent over the next four years."

Suzanne Wiersma
Wallaceburg Bookbinding

high quality digital offset printing press. Since then, it has been expanding to accommodate market changes in the publishing industry. One of the most recent developments is www.treasured-ink.com, a division exclusively devoted to photo books that offers online custom photo printing and publishing solutions directly to consumers.

Hancock sees these expansions as a bellwether for the future of bookbinding in general, and that expansion into markets such as photo books is inevitable for certified library binders.

"Where library binding was once at least 95% of our business, it now represents a third as other markets have grown," he says. "It's the future of Utah Bookbinding and X-Press-N Digital. All new growth will be in these new markets and that's where my company's attention is focused."

In addition to diversifying directly into photo books themselves, hardcover binding expertise is becoming sought after by photo book manufacturers themselves. Some have hired certified library binders for consultation.

"There was a DIMA Photo Book showcase at the PMA08 International Convention," Wiersma says. Entries from many companies were evaluated by regular consumers, and evaluated categories included cover quality and strength/reliability of binding. I wondered if DIMA or PMA was aware of LBI and its resources, so I made a point of approaching PMA President Brian Ainsworth and asking him. He was pleasantly surprised to learn about us and thought LBI definitely held resources that would be

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Photo Books *By Werner Rebsamen*

As a bookbinder, this writer has had the pleasure of restoring many old family keepsakes, a number of which were photographic relics. Some of the albums had thick, padded covers; others had elaborate cut-out windows and other features. The photographs featured all those well-dressed relatives who went to a great deal of work to look good in their photographs. The men were often shown in uniform and, almost without exception, had a big moustache, a sword, and several medals on their chest. The ladies wore fancy dresses and hair-dos that could be considered works of art. While most of the pictures have turned somewhat brown, we must give credit to these early photographers for using chemicals and darkroom processes that created durable photographs that continue to be loved and treasured by family members and researchers. Best of all, today's historians no longer have to acquire various darkroom skills to make copies or prints from old negatives. Computers, scanners and printers have made this process easier than ever.

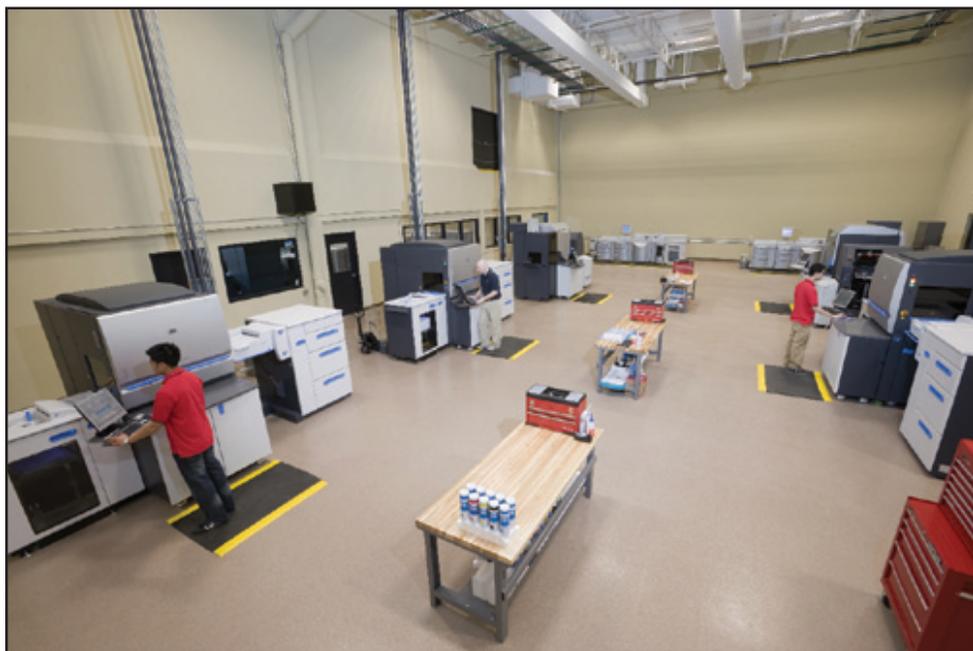
Photo Albums

Until about the year 2000, film and prints dominated the photography market. I remember one of our friends who worked for Kodak showing us his first digital camera and prints in the mid-1990s – the results were simply of an unacceptable quality! That may have been why many at Kodak, and elsewhere, believed that the conventional film and print business would

be here for a long time to come. Times have certainly changed, and fast!

During my career days as a bookbinding expert, the photo album business was thriving. Back in Switzerland we produced them in large quantities. We developed special techniques, scoring the sheets, using a small 1/2 inch wide flap in the bind-edge as a “filler-strip” and double fan adhesive bound the albums together. We typically tipped a so-called spider-web tissue sheet onto every sheet to protect the photographs from sticking together. Luxury albums often featured gilded edges with leather covers. In the 1990s, this writer accepted a part-time position as a non-executive director of a large, 5000 employee photo album company located in China, near Hong Kong. Here we produced the majority of photo albums you see at stores like Kmart, Target, and others. Those albums were produced in all varieties, from low-cost vinyl inserts to luxury, gilded and imitation leather bound binding styles. Those days of selling photo albums by the millions must now be over. Sure, there are still many kinds of photo albums

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The modern photo book print facility at Proven / Direct in Milwaukee, WI. These Indigo HP presses provide an exceptional color quality and consistency, resulting in image reproductions professional photographers can appreciate.

Photo Books

(continued from page 3)

available, but the trend these days is clearly toward digital print photo books. Why? It is simple to explain. Purchase a roll of film for 24 exposures at a cost of \$4; have the film developed and printed for an additional \$8. Each photograph costs you 50 cents whether or not it is a quality photo. While many of us will discard the bad photos, we all have friends and relatives who will bore us with their pictures—good or bad.

Even professional photographers discard many pictures in search of the perfect shot. Do you have any idea how many pictures a professional photographer will take for one average National Geographic story? I posed that question while visiting their headquarters. An average article includes 10 to 15 photographs. To get those shots, a photographer takes approximately 35,000 pictures. Another staffer narrows the choices to about 300, and editors select the 10 to 15 that will appear in the magazine. With digital photography, there are no costs for film or developing, and computer technology has made sorting through thousands of shots a much easier task. We always admire our daughter, who, with a master in computer graphics, is now a free-lance creative director for TV stations. It is amazing how she is able to sort out and arrange her pictures on a laptop computer. Yes, the world of photography has changed tremendously, and we have to adapt. Even for us amateur photographers, it is an easy task to take our disks or cards to a kiosk, select only the pictures we want, and print them out. While costs for digital prints vary, we have seen them for a low as 9 cents. Digital photography is here to stay.

Digital Printing

Remember the first DocuTech units in the mid 1980s? We looked at them as an improved copier and asked ourselves, where is the color? When we look at today's printing capability, digital color printing seems to be



Photo books come in all dimensions and in many different hard cover binding styles. The wedding picture shown in the front is a lay-flat binding. It offers an uninterrupted image across the bind fold.

everywhere, and has changed the entire printing industry. It should be noted, however, that the digital process does not replace conventional offset printing, but complements it. For example, if you need labels for certain wine bottles, you would need large quantities to justify the cost of offset printing. With digital printing, you can alternate every label and print just as many as you need on-demand. Even the printing of books has changed. We now can economically print just one book at a time. Lightning Source in Tennessee prints 1 1/2 million books every month, averaging just 1.8 books per title. Such an endeavor is only possible with sophisticated, digital printing.

Over the last few years digital printing made great inroads. It became a new business enterprise for many printing and binding establishments who now offer beautifully executed digital printed photo books. As one professional friend recently stated, the markets for digital printed photo albums are not growing, they are exploding! Although that

segment is relatively small when compared to all others, digital printing is expected to produce an impressive 175 million books worldwide by 2010. That is three times more than today. The majority of these books (83 percent) will be consumer photo books, while professional photo books, which will likely feature weddings and other events, represent 17 percent. Additional markets for items such as restoration, gift items, posters, greeting cards, and personalized calendars already exist and are expected to grow. In this article, we shall concentrate on the manufacture of photo books.

Image qualities and longevity

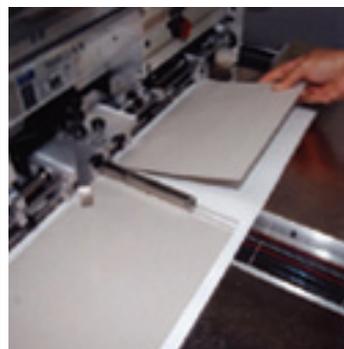
This bookbinding expert had the pleasure recently to consult and/or analyze various bindings for photo book printers and binders. As an amateur photographer with darkroom skills, I am trained to see a difference between good and bad prints. One of these companies visited, www.provendirect.com, serves professional photographers almost exclusively. The quality they expect from a printer is exceptionally high. The printed pages must be equal to those of the very best prints. Judging those digital prints compared with earlier attempts is a true pleasure. Paper companies have spent large amounts of money for research and testing, the latter most likely being done at our university. RIT has a Print-Application laboratory for such research (<http://print.rit.edu>). Great strides have been made

with digital print machinery, toners and ink-jet. The final results are exceptionally high print quality that equals the very best usually reserved for offset lithography.

The experts in this industry have developed sophisticated software which we as consumers can download on our computers. Want a book with 48 or 96 pages? Pick your layout and format, choose a picture for the cover, and get started. The images and texts are then arranged in various ways and transferred via internet to the printer. Various front-ends transform the given information into standardized formats and convert them into the language required by the particular printing unit.

Now let us get somewhat technical and discuss the differences between digital printing and true photo prints. Imaging Solutions is a new Swiss based company, which promotes pure photo quality photo books. Look up www.imagingsolutions.ch or www.purephoto.ch. In their brochure they describe the differences as follows: "If you take a color picture with your camera and print it onto a photo paper, no conversion is needed. The results are the highest quality of colors (gamut). Electrostatical systems use the CMYK color model and therefore have to convert the RGB files, reducing the color space and with it, experts point out, the overall quality. That loss of information is visible especially in saturated images

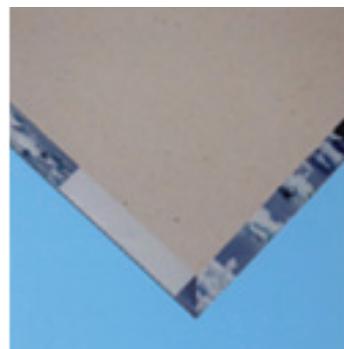
with blue and green colors. A layer concept of true photo paper can display approximately 16.7 million different colors per pixel. This fact together with a print resolution of 300 ppi results in smooth gradients and skin tones which are perfectly rendered. The difference between photo and



Hardcover production



Specific cover spine



Finished book cover edges

Hardcover binding can be efficient with well-designed machinery furnished by GP2. Note the double back strip, a technique used for lay-flat books. Pictures compliments of Imaging Solutions.

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Photo Books

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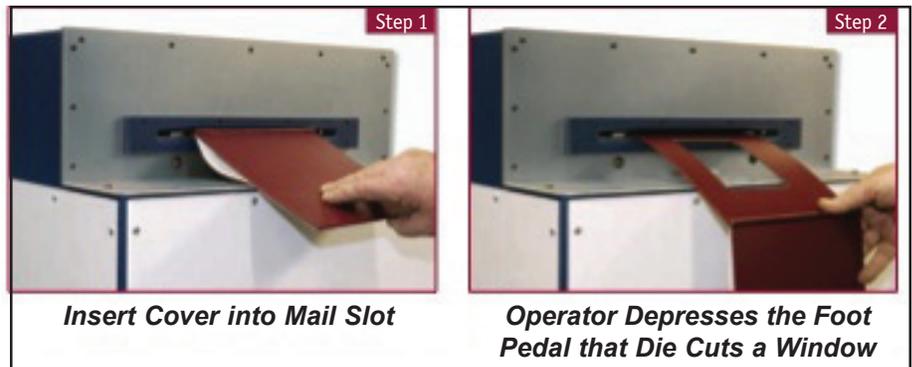
electrostatic printing becomes evident. While photo paper can reproduce the brown of the eye naturally, the brown in the printed eye is a mixture from several colors. As to the aspects of stability, photo paper has already a built-in protective layer which avoids mechanical damage and provides an excellent long term stability. The light stability of exposed and processed photo paper is more than 15 years. The storage stability is 70 to 200 years."

Now those of us who have researched preservation know that those figures and estimates are meaningless. It all depends on the storage conditions. Wrap the items into a foil and put them into a freezer, they will last forever. Leave them open and expose them to the sun; the images will be gone in no time. My Swiss colleague, Dr. Franziska S. Frey, teaching at RIT's School of Print Media and traveling the world consulting on aspects of photo and image permanence, recently published a valuable document "Permanence of Toner on Paper – Based on the Life Cycle of Documents." You can download this document at <http://print.rit.edu/research/>.

Photo Book Bindings

As stated earlier, the images printed can be presented in various forms. While there are many different binding styles available, we will concentrate on hard cover bound photo books. The various printing systems furnish printed sheets in variable dimensions. One big advantage of digital printing is that there is no collating necessary. Images can be repeated as desired. In other words, there is virtually no cutting or folding necessary. With some exceptions, the book blocks are complete when taken out of the printing unit.

Now we must consider binding. Photo images most often feature solid colors, all the way into the binding edge. Toners and ink-jet particles are placed on top of specially coated papers – not an ideal prerequisite for an adhesive binding. Binding with conventional hotmelts could be an invitation for a disaster. The new



Windows can easily be cut on finished, hardcover bound books, using the ODM's "Separator."

PUR (Poly Urethane Reactive) glues are ideal but complex to apply. PUR sticks to virtually anything and forms a very strong bond and best of all, if applied correctly, such a binding features great flexibility. The bound book block will open easily, a most important factor for photo books.

Photo books we have examined in our book-testing laboratory come in all dimensions. Some thinner books are simply stapled together with wires. Others, up to 1/2 inch thick are side-sewn with thread. If we must analyze and judge the quality of these bindings, stapling with wires is a no-no as the staples will rust in time. Side sewing is recommended as long as openability is not a critical factor. When using these methods, images across the binding edge will be interrupted. In addition, the paper weight and grain direction may also play an important role when selecting the side-sewing method.

Adhesive binding is and should be done, as described only with PUR. We have on hand one-inch thick books with hundreds of photos—travel logs, weddings, events and more. They are aesthetically pleasing bindings and look like a regular picture book. But unfortunately, there are others bound with hotmelt on desk-top binding systems that are of questionable quality. If you want to judge the quality of an adhesive bound binding, just look between pages two and three—a split indicates that the binding will not last. There are other factors which create such problems and, ultimately, a

weakness in the binding. Many times, a single sheet endpaper is used. Not knowing better, they simply bind the book block like a soft-cover binding and worse, use side-gluing or let the adhesive run-up onto the sides. The unfortunate result is that there is no flexing in the joint areas. When lifting the cover, stress is exerted onto the binding and soon, that binding will come apart. To solve such problems, LBS (www.lbsbind.com), a major supplier of book components, developed a "Universal" endpaper. Instead of a stiff paper, a flexible cloth is used across the spine and in the critical joint areas. The cloth has several advantages. It is flexible. The bindings can be sold as "reinforced with cloth." Best of all, that cloth showing represents a more expensive binding style of the past.

Lay-flat or panoramic style bindings are much different from the ones we described—book blocks which are printed on flexible paper with images on both sides. When producing a lay-flat photo book, think about a children's board book. The images are printed only onto one side of a rigid, coated paper. After printing, these double sheets are scored and folded. A special machine then glues these folded sheets together into one single book block. A new system offered by Imaging Solutions processes its pure photo quality prints on photo paper directly off a roll. Sheeting, scoring, folding, and gluing are all part of a very special process you can look up on their web site. The digital printed or pure photo-quality lay-flat examples we have on hand are stunning. What a great way to show pictures without any interruptions in the bindfold. The book opens up completely flat. There are basically two different binding structures—one with a single spine strip

that requires a joint area and another with two spine strips that do not require a joint area and seem to open somewhat better.

Many photo books require a cut window through the front cover and often through the endpaper. Windows are cut after all binding is done on a special machine furnished to this industry by ODM (www.ODMachinery.com). Why do we cut a window? People love to see an image "showing through the cover." Most likely, a photo album with a die-cut window does not require a title imprint.

Knowledge and Craftsmanship

As with any new industry endeavors, there are many start-up digital print companies who are searching for the necessary know-how and skills. The recent on-demand show in Boston featured several suppliers who offered binding systems using double stick tapes and methods that caused this binding expert to take a deep breath. Those who are serious about learning more about binding books joined us at the LBI 2007 Fall Conference and Hardcover Binding Seminar in Springfield, Massachusetts, where participation exceeded all expectations. What we now try to do is to organize all those on-demand and photo printers and conduct regular binding seminars. Perhaps down the road we should discuss minimum requirements for photo books and publish them similar to the standard for library binding. To have library binders and all those who print and bind small amounts of on-demand and photo books under one umbrella will benefit our industries. We all can learn from each other. In this regard, may I end with my favorite slogan I used as a teacher – "Those who give learn the most." 

Werner Rebsamen is Professor Emeritus at the Rochester Institute of Technology and the technical consultant to the Library Binding Institute. He can be reached at wtrebs@localnet.com.

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helpful for the photo book industry.” Consequently Hancock and Wiersma are in the planning stages of developing a program on hardcover binding for DIMA at the PMA09 International Convention.

Chad Munce agrees that the collaboration is a good idea for his industry. “We’re confident that DIMA and LBI can work together to provide the most relevant hardcover binding program for our members.”

Evolution of the Markets

Given the photo book market’s rapid evolution and expansion, the potential impact of hardcover binder expertise is staggering. The new Hardcover Binders International (HBI) trade association has evolved at an opportune time to grow and unite binding resources with those manufacturing hardcover bound

photo books. No matter how digital the content, it’s clear that the need for high quality binding will continue to grow. After all, who would have thought, just ten years ago, that one could take and distribute pictures on anything other than 35 mm film?

On February 28, 2008, the LBI Board of Directors voted to adopt the assumed name of Hardcover Binders International (HBI) for the Library Binding Institute. In doing so, the membership of the corporation will consist of two divisions - the Certified Library Binders Division (LBI) and the Hardcover Binders Division.



HBI Presents - The 2008 Fall Conference and Digital Print Binding Opportunities Seminar

September 25 – 28, 2008

Pasadena, CA

The Langham, Huntington Hotel and Spa

<http://pasadena.langhamhotels.com/>

- Tour Bridge Publications and Kater-Crafts Bindery.
- Attend the Digital Print Binding Opportunities Seminar, facilitated by Professor Werner Rebsamen, which includes keynote remarks by Dimitrios Delis, Market Research Head of the Digital Image Marketing Association (DIMA), a division of the Photo Marketing Association (PMA). Delis will speak on photo book trends and market opportunities.
- Network with others in the book binding and book manufacturing industries.

For more information, go to www.hardcoverbinders.org or call HBI at 561-745-6821.