

Case Study

British Library
Government
Production Print

Ricoh helps British Library reduce costs and transform its world-leading document delivery service



The British Library operates one of the world's largest and most trusted document delivery services, reproducing and distributing millions of high quality document copies to researchers around the world. With demand for ever more complex and refined reproduction, and print facilities that were slow, inflexible and out dated, the Library needed to

redesign the process. It turned to Ricoh to provide a high-quality, high performance production press, which integrated seamlessly into the existing document records system and has transformed the Library's document reproduction capability.

Executive summary

Name: British Library
Location: London and Boston Spa, Yorkshire
Size: 2,000 staff
Activity: National library service

Challenges

- Improve quality and efficiency of fulfilment for one of the world's largest document delivery services
- Increasing customer demand for complex and high-quality document reproduction, more frequently in colour
- Existing print room equipment old, slow and only capable of mono print

Solution

- Ricoh Production Print

Benefits

- Transforms the way paper surrogate copies of research documents are reproduced every year
- Increases efficiency and reduces the cost of print operations through more flexible and economic print capabilities
- Enables the Library to meet demand for increasingly refined and complex document reproduction
- Further reduces costs by enabling the Library to bring outsourced print jobs in-house



Challenges

The British Library is the national library for the UK. It collects on behalf of the nation large numbers of publications produced in the UK and Ireland which, as well as books, includes manuscripts, maps, newspapers, magazines, prints and drawings, music scores and patents. The collection comprises 150 million items, with three million new items added every year. The collections range from documents like the Magna Carta and Lindisfarne Gospels, to the first edition of The Times and Beatles manuscripts. As well as periodicals and journals, the Library holds a complete audio archive and a collection of eight million stamps. All this requires over 600 kilometres (km) of shelving, which is expanding at a rate of 12km a year.

The British Library is used every day by 16,000 businesses and organisations, researchers, academics, students and other members of the public from the UK and abroad, either in person or online.

Because of the breadth and quality of the British Library archives and the huge number of people and organisations that need to access them, the British Library has become one of the world's largest document delivery services. So far the Library has provided over 100 million copies of its archive items to people all over the world.

The growing use of the Internet and greater access to electronic media – for example British Library archives being available online – has actually seen a reduction in demand for printed material, however it has also been instrumental in driving an increase in demand for higher quality and colour reproduction. As the global market changes, the British Library is still providing millions of documents worldwide in ways that provide choice for its valued range of customers.

The document delivery service and print facility is run out of the British Library's West Yorkshire location. The Library's

existing print equipment, which was nearing end of life, was not able to meet the need for high-volume, high-quality printing. Articles were manually scanned with black and white scanners and printed using five, seven-year-old, black and white printers. This was slow, inefficient and the quality of print was not keeping up with customer expectations. The Library needed to modernise its print facility and find a more efficient and cost effective way to service demand for printed documents.

The British Library has implemented a document management system that automates the process of scanning, storing and emailing or printing documents. The system also manages charging for the document reproduction service.

To improve the printing element of the service, the British Library put out a public authority tender and received submissions from six different suppliers.

Mike Glew, Logistics Manager at the British Library, says, "We already had an idea of how good the service from Ricoh was because we have used Ricoh equipment in other parts of the organisation. Among the six suppliers that tendered, it was Ricoh's ability to listen and anticipate what we needed in order for the proposed equipment to seamlessly integrate with our overall document system on implementation."

Solution

The British Library is using a Ricoh high-speed, high-quality production press to fulfil its document printing requirement. As well as its ability to deliver 90 prints per minute and high resolution colour output, the Ricoh press also incorporates a booklet making attachment.

The Ricoh press forms an integral part of the Library's automated document records system. When a customer requests a document, the original is copied and the image is then either sent to the customer electronically, or routed to the Ricoh press, where it is printed and then posted to the customer.

"The British Library dispatches thousands of document copies every year to users all over the world. When it comes to the type of material we reproduce the job is complex and our customers have exacting requirements. Not even black and white copies are straightforward. Some customers prefer these to be crisply contrasted and for that you need a pure black and white print. Others prefer a softer shade, which you can only achieve with a colour printer. It is the capability and flexibility of the Ricoh press to be able to meet the varying requirements of our differing customer needs that makes the new process so beneficial," says Glew.

continued overleaf

Case Study British Library

The service and support supplied by Ricoh formed a crucial part of the solution. The Ricoh press has replaced the Library's existing five mono printers and downtime, should it be required, needs to be minimal. With its nationwide network of highly experienced print equipment and print process experts, support and advice for any aspect of the Library's print operation is less than an hour away.

Benefits

The British Library is unusual in being one of the world's largest document delivery services. The introduction of the Ricoh production press has been critical in enabling the Library to improve a key element of the service - document reproduction. Although electronic document distribution has reduced the growth in volume, the demand for high-quality document reproduction has increased.

"There are few organisations around the world that can provide the range, the type and convenience that the British Library document delivery service provides. We are often faced with a challenge in terms of the type, quality and reproduction refinement required by customers. Alongside the capability of the Ricoh press itself, what has also impressed us is the advice and support we get from Ricoh in understanding the unique printing challenges we face and in helping us fine-tune our printing operation to meet these challenges," says Glew.

The Ricoh press is also helping the Library increase efficiency and reduce costs. For example, the Ricoh press is able to handle large-format A3 paper, which is more economical than small formats. This can then be folded, using the add-on module to the Ricoh press, into A5 booklets which cost less to post.

The Ricoh press can also schedule print jobs, so that the Library can print jobs in batches. This optimises staff time and reduces energy and associated costs as the printer is not being turned on and off all the time.

Besides helping the Library to improve its main print operation, the Ricoh solution also provided an unexpected benefit. The Library produces a wide range of booklets and leaflets, as well as an in-house newspaper for its 2,000 staff and associated partner organisations.

"A benefit that we certainly didn't anticipate is that the Ricoh press now enables our own print department to compete for the Library's internal print jobs. Previously this was all outsourced, and but now we are able to produce it cost effectively in-house, which has provided additional benefit," says Glew.

By bringing its own printing in-house, job turnaround time is faster and also more flexible because the Library's print unit can often schedule an internal job quicker than an external provider. The Library can also be much more accurate and less wasteful in terms of print runs. The digital print capability of the Ricoh press means print run volumes are very accurate and extra copies, even small numbers, can be produced at low cost.

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Pro C901S Production printer

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