

Comment 29 Aug 03

Tribute sticks to Heidelberg story

Andrew Tribute continues to suggest that Heidelberg should give up on making digital presses. Articles in *Printweek* have become increasingly blunt. The latest Opinion article (*Printweek* 21 August) is prompted by an article from Frank Romano on the future of printing. Earlier articles on Heidelberg are available from the Andrew Tribute website. Some of the material in the Frank Romano article is currently available on the Seybold website as an indication of future content in San Francisco.

Frank Romano sees print as part of something else, described by Andrew Tribute as "communications technologies". Current estimates are that 45bn PDF files move over the internet annually, part of the equivalent of 300 billion pages in all. Romano estimates that electronic communication will overtake printed formats by 2010.

There are major implications for the litho print industry and suppliers such as Heidelberg. Companies such as Hewlett Packard and Xerox have an IT base and can supply a range of equipment. Some is used directly by companies that used to buy litho print. (By the way, IBM is not always mentioned in these sort of articles. They have been involved in transaction black on white for a while now.)

Andrew Tribute concludes that Heidelberg and MAN Roland will not be able to market digital equipment. "The "new business of printing" is largely bypassing the "old business of printing".'

Possibly someone at *Printweek* chose the headline "The new must replace the old to survive". This implies that the print industry can evolve into something that includes digital technology although Andrew Tribute points out that 'the printing industry has no exclusivity in this area'.

Even before Drupa, it will be interesting to find out how Heidelberg policy will be presented at Digital Print World. This event was once presented as if the content on digital would not pose any threat for established litho printing. The discussion seems to move on. The Digital Solutions show may demonstrate the extent to which UK print buyers have appreciated the possibilities with digital print. The slogan 'wide open workflow' may include the internet. So far it has not been well explained. Maybe you have to be at Excel to find out what it means.

During September some of the material from Seybold may become available and add at least a few dozen to the PDF download statistics. The stream on the future of print will be relevant for the UK. Some of the issues will be covered in Amsterdam next April.

Will Pollard

will@exetreme.com

Attributes <http://www.attributes.co.uk>