

Choosing the Right Printing Methods – There’s a Science to it!

**EDRA LSWR Examines the Benefits of Digitally Printed Publications
with the Help of Rotolito Lombarda**



EDRA LSWR® S.p.A.

EDRA LSWR SpA, based in Milan, has met the challenges of publishing head on and developed a practical production strategy based on both conventional and digital printing. In this transformation, it has worked closely with Rotolito Lombarda, which offers the latest technologies in offset as well as in digital web and sheet-fed printing.

Facing challenges and testing theories

EDRA LSWR publishes a wide range of scientific, technical and medical journals, books and electronic content for educational and professional applications. Its parent company, Casa Editrice La Tribuna (CELT) provides similar publications and services to the legal profession.

With strong, established specialist brands like The Pharmaceutical Informer, Medikey, Dica33, DoctorNews, Farmacista33, CODIFA, Dental Cadmos, EDRA LSWR is Italy’s major publisher in this sector. In addition, it provides databases and has an events unit.

“Since acquiring Elsevier’s Italian publishing, training and communications assets, we are able to market some of the company’s important international content in Italy, too,” said Walter Castiglione, Production Manager, Periodicals Division, EDRA

LSWR. “In addition to that, we publish original works in those categories by Italian authors.”

Apart from facing the challenges common to publishers, EDRA LSWR’s publications have relatively small audiences; are updated frequently; but often require robust bindings and colour pictures and graphics.

Faced with these challenges, EDRA LSWR explored the opportunities presented by digital print. In doing so, it began to work with Rotolito Lombarda, also in Milan, which has two HP inkjet web presses and a B2-format HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press with full finishing capabilities that meet EDRA LSWR’s needs. In addition, it has conventional press capabilities that can handle shorter runs cost-effectively through increased automation.

There were several key parts to EDRA LSWR’s strategy:

“We recognised that there were many new opportunities using digital print which we have been phasing in,” Castiglione explained. “We

liked the idea of on-demand printing, so we now print only copies that we plan to sell in one year.

“Secondly, we put into place a target of a 60% reduction of stock in our warehouse over a three-year period,” he said. “This will deliver a 50% savings in inventory management.

“Thirdly, since we can produce books digitally, it means we no longer need to hold stock, but we are always able to supply books! Rotolito Lombarda’s capabilities allowed us to put these realisations into practise.”

Experimenting with digital

Concerns about digital colour quality have been a major factor in the uptake of digital printing by publishers. Offset litho colour is still regarded as the gold standard, and the cost of digital colour has also been a deterrent.

“We decided that we should address this problem ourselves,” Castiglione said. “We decided to find out how individual digital presses are calibrated and not evaluate colour in relation to an offset standard.

“Upon experimentation and analysis with the digital presses at Rotolito’s production facility, we established that digital printing can reproduce colour images to the standard required.”

Establishing the cost-effectiveness of digital printing was more complex.

“Once we established that customers would be satisfied with digital print quality, we wanted to determine how to decide whether to print conventionally or digitally,” Castiglione continued. “There isn’t a finite break-even point - it’s a complicated picture which includes paper waste and stock management as well as print. Factors of flexibility, content updating and keeping our catalogues alive also influence overall cost. So, we decided to consider the requirements of each job before choosing how to print.”

Rotolito’s offset litho presses employ the latest technologies and automated workflow solutions that make conventional printing highly competitive in both time and cost. Nevertheless, EDRA LSWR has seen its production become increasingly digital.

“In the past year, we’ve made a big shift from traditional offset to printing digitally, even for colour runs,” Castiglione said. “Today, less than 30% of our books are printed offset and this will likely decrease in the future.

“We believe that digital colour printing picks up where traditional printing leaves off,” he said. “Projects that used to be too expensive, or would take too long to complete, can now be beautifully produced in a fraction of the time and at a reasonable price.”

Finding the right solution

“We began working with Rotolito Lombarda in March 2013,” Castiglione said. “We needed a supplier with technology and service offerings that could help us transition from traditional colour book printing to digital colour, and deliver products quickly to fulfil the fast e-commerce distribution.

“Rotolito manages order processing and proof-checking faster than the average printer. It also guarantees quicker packaging of book blocks from digital printing while assuring the same high standard of quality as traditional finishing,” he said.

Another attractive part of Rotolito’s service is in pricing and estimates.

“A commercial representative is always available for advice,” Castiglione explained. “He assists us with decisions that help us to stay within our budget. Secondly, the company does everything it can to accommodate our schedule. Rotolito even offers turnaround times of a few days when we need them.” An example of the combination of Rotolito’s technology and service can be seen in EDRA LSWR’s professional handbooks with drugs databases for veterinarians, *IF Veterinaria*¹. The book is a 170 x 240mm format with 1,560 pages, printed four-colours on 60g/m² paper. It is perfect bound and has a four-colour cover printed on coated 300g/m² stock.

While the basic economics of printing the book’s 1500 copies favoured offset printing, the frequent updates to the databases militated against an annual production and warehousing. At Rotolito’s suggestion, EDRA LSWR opted for several digital print runs of 200. Content was then updated and another digital run printed and shipped.

“One thousand copies is the minimum print run for break-even costs with web offset printing,” explained Castiglione. “Had this job been done offset, 400 copies would have gone into the warehouse. That represents 60% of the value of 1,000 copies.² Printing 600 copies digitally (in three runs of 200 copies) saved 36% on costs with zero warehouse costs.”³

As publishing houses continue to adjust to the radical changes brought by electronic media, EDRA LSWR continues to serve the demand for print from professional sectors.

“We’ve tested a number of printers that have both offset and digital capabilities,” Castiglione concluded. “Rotolito is one that puts out consistently high quality products on both systems – on time, and on budget.”

¹ *L'informatore Farmaceutico di Veterinaria e Zootecnica*

² Taking into account the cost-curve of litho printing.

³ The saving is 36% and not 40% because of the additional bindery set-up costs.