

Bridgeport National Bindery, Agawam USA



Bridgeport National Bindery Boosts Capacity with New Inkjet Press

Operating as a family-owned business since 1947, Bridgeport National Bindery in Agawam, MA, has a rich heritage creating high-quality case- and library-bound books as well as library book and textbook rebinding. The company began to shift its traditional business model with the acquisition of its first production inkjet printer in 2014, and subsequently spun off its library book rebinding business.

The shift paid off for the company. "In fact," says Bruce Jacobsen, Executive Vice President and a 56-year veteran of the company, "we needed more capacity, so we set out in early 2020 to evaluate all of the various production inkjet solutions on the market, including not only the printers but the supporting software as well. We have a unique workflow we are in the process of launching that will take advantage of some of these software capabilities."

New investment

Bridgeport settled on the Screen Truepress Jet520HD to meet its increased printing requirements. At the same time, the company evaluated finishing solutions to



Bruce Jacobsen and Ibis Boria-Gomez stand alongside the Hunkeler Roll-to-Plowfold Signature Book Block Line.

complement the press and optimize book production throughput.

"A large portion of what we do is one-off books of varying sizes and thicknesses," Jacobsen explains. "We needed a system

that would allow us to print them effectively but also to efficiently finish them. We determined that a roll-to-roll workflow would best meet our needs with this new printer and give us more flexibility."

With that in mind, Bridgeport worked closely with the experts at Standard Finishing and ultimately chose the Hunkeler Roll-to-Roll solution featuring high-speed unwinding and rewinding technology that could keep pace with the printer. Both the Unwinder and Rewinder maintain constant web tension for uniformly tight and straight rolls – important for effectively processing rolls post-print.

"The next step," Jacobsen notes, "is to create book blocks from the

Bridgeport National Bindery , Agawam (Marietta)



Jose Valdes readies the Hunkeler Roll-to-Roll Solution.



Robert Martinez gathers signature book blocks for perfect binding.

printed rolls. We again chose a Hunkeler solution, the Hunkeler Roll-to-Plowfold Signature Book Block Line. Not only is it very robust and reliable as you would expect from Hunkeler equipment, but it runs faster than the printer so we don't have to worry about finishing being a bottleneck."

Wide range of products

The combined solution offers several important benefits, according to Jacobsen. Books are printed on the Screen press with a minimal amount of space between one book and the next, and the Hunkeler line is set to fold and finish them in that sequence and with negligible paper waste. The Screen press also prints a 2D barcode with each job that can be read by the Hunkeler line for quick, automatic setup, even for one-off books of different sizes.

"Another thing that's unique in what we do," Jacobsen adds, "is we run eight different paper types on a daily basis to get the work out. Our first production inkjet system had finishing in-line, and it required a lot of time to switch between paper types. With the Screen/Hunkeler configuration, it's less than five minutes to put in a new roll of a different paper type. We print about 160 feet of lead that contains a grid we can use to position the fold on the Hunkeler Plowfold system, and it's also easy to switch in and out the perf wheels for 2-up and 3-up fold setups. That was one of the things that impressed us, that setups were much easier than what we had been used to. In a 10- to 12-hour pro-

duction day, we might lose five to 10 minutes per hour changing paper. Otherwise the system just runs!"

Jacobsen also appreciates the Hunkeler Plowfold system's ability to spot glue the book spines. "It gives you a more solid book block that is easier to feed into a perfect or case binder. All of this works really well together, and we have had many days where we have printed thousands of books." For perfect binding, Bridgeport has several



Horizon PUR perfect binders including a BQ-280, a BQ-470 and a BQ-480. Additionally, a Horizon BQ-160 is used for perfect binding thin books smaller than 16 pages.

Good prospects

Fortunately, Jacobsen reports that Bridgeport's business has not been affected too drastically by the pandemic. "We had one case here," he says, "and we closed for a week for a deep cleaning and reconfiguration to ensure safety for our employees. While employees are justifiably concerned about their safety, so are we. And I walk

around the plant every morning to make sure people are feeling good about the work environment and their safety here. We are actually doing a little better than this time last year from a revenue perspective, so I would say we are weathering COVID fairly well."

Bridgeport receives work from traditional publishers as well as Blurb and other online portals for both paperback and casebound books - including one-off casebound books for academics. "One reason for our performance," Jacobsen explains, "is a shift in the way some of the educational and academic publishers are working in light of the pandemic. They don't want runs of hundreds; they want 10's or 20's and we are perfectly set up for that now."

Jacobsen has also been pleased with the level of support Standard Finishing has provided for the solutions. "We're lucky in that they are only two hours away, and we have had no problems getting parts that our expert on-site maintenance staff can replace, or their on-site technicians if needed. They have also been very supportive of my push to take equipment capabilities beyond what the manufacturer imagined or foresaw."

