



Excellence in Paper Processing

Merrill Corporation, Ohio (USA)

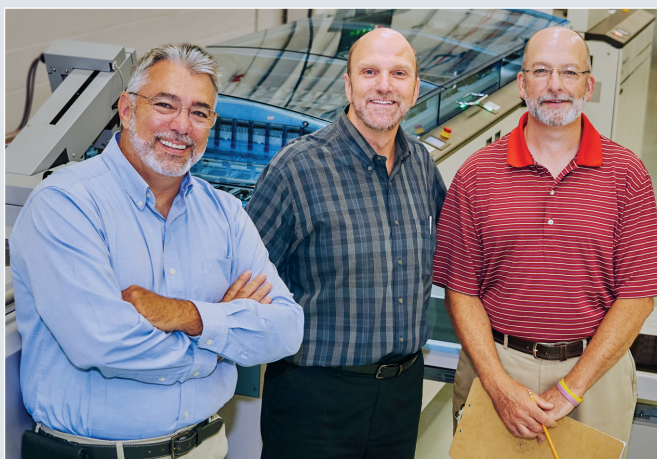


Merrill Corporation Chooses Hunkeler Finishing for New Digital Operation.

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"We digitally print personalized and confidential documents across our platform, which includes production facilities in Sartell and St. Cloud, Minnesota, and Grove City, Ohio," explains Pat Foley, Senior Vice President of Operations for Merrill. "We have chosen to extend this production capability into our Union, New Jersey location



The team at Merrill worked with Standard to develop a customized finishing solution for their Union, NJ facility. (L to R) JR (Harold) Raynor, Director of Print Operations; Michael O'Laughlin, Print Operations Manager; Tom MacDonald, Print Operations Manager.

which historically has offered offset print capabilities for financial and health insurance regulatory documents."

Offset-to-Digital Migration

JR Raynor, Director of Print Operations, adds, "We installed our first digital presses in this facility earlier this year to accommodate the need to move more volume from offset to digital. And we also, of course, needed new finishing lines to go along with them."

"We put together a roadmap that has been the foundation of our investment strategy with respect to print and finishing," he says. "The marketplace has

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Depending on the nature of the job, printed rolls are transferred to one of two combination lines for book block production or processing into finished booklets on the Horizon StitchLiner 6000 Digital Saddlestitcher.

changed – shorter run lengths and faster turn times drive a move to a digital environment. Offset is not going away, but we understand that our clients need a blended manufacturing platform, and that's what we are delivering."

Choosing the Best Partners

Merrill as a company is not new to the world of digital print. Foley comments, "Because of our familiarity with the digital environment, we were able to fairly quickly narrow the field of vendor partners for printing and finishing. We then did extensive testing to find the best solution, matching the quality expectations of our customers to the economic considerations of digital print and finishing capabilities. And the solutions had to be easy to use and flexible. We don't just produce one type of product. We need to be able to quickly and easily move to different sizes and page counts, and work with paper stocks ranging from 27 to 50 lbs."

The end result was the installation of two Ricoh InfoPrint 5000 production inkjet presses along with a full suite of finishing solutions from Hunkeler and Horizon. "As a company," Raynor says, "we have had a long-term relationship with Hunkeler and Standard Finishing here in North America, and we have been very pleased with the level of service and support they offer. The blend of Hunkeler and Horizon equipment gave us the finishing quality and flexibility we needed to

produce sheet-based applications, booklets and books using a roll-to-roll workflow with nearline finishing."

The Details

Merrill's new digital finishing configuration includes two Hunkeler Roll-to-Roll systems running inline with the Ricoh presses for unwinding, printing, and rewinding. Printed rolls can then be transferred to either of two Hunkeler/Horizon combination lines which have been customized as Roll-to-Booklet/ Roll-to-Stack in one system. This unique solution can stack and output fully separated book blocks for perfect binding, or cut sheets can bypass to the inline Horizon StitchLiner 6000 Digital Saddlestitcher to deliver finished saddlestitched booklets, depending on the nature of the print job. Merrill also houses a Horizon BQ-470 Perfect Binder and HT-80 Three-knife Trimmer to process the books blocks from the combination line into finished books.

"We went with a nearline solution in order to maximize the output of the print engines," Raynor adds. "The finishing line is literally four feet from the press. And that has turned out to be a successful strategy, with our printers running at maximum capacity."

Finishing setup is fast on the digital lines, Raynor says. "On the offset side, makeready on a saddlestitcher can be up to a half hour.

With our new digital finishing lines, we are already programmed for our most common sizes, so all we do is set up the roll and we quickly get to a finished book. And, we can easily switch from one size to another within the same roll."

The Importance of a Reliable Partner

"Our business is dynamic and fast-paced," Foley states. "We need a great relationship with our finishing partners, and Hunkeler and Standard Finishing provides that." A case in point was a construction delay at the Union site that pushed back implementation for a few weeks. "We were heading into peak season," he adds, "and any delay would have been a significant issue in our ability to meet service level agreements. Standard Finishing worked with us to get our operators fully trained before our equipment was even installed, and the result was a team that was ready to roll as soon as installation was complete."

Another example of the solid relationship, according to Raynor, was Standard Finishing's approach in responding to Merrill's needs. "We didn't have a specific configuration in mind," he says. "We explained what we were trying to accomplish and they came back with a spot-on recommendation that was neither more nor less than we required."

Photography by Dr. Johnny Sandaire PhD, PMP