

Sisters of St. Joseph

HP Indigo press buoys 'leap of faith' into printing



St. Joseph
Press

"A big part of our mission is to care for the Earth. When we discovered the HP Indigo press, we saw it was an environmentally responsible product. It doesn't use harmful solvents. The oil is recycled over and over within the press. The amount of leftover oil at the end of the day fits in a cup."
—Sister Marianne Race, Press Operator, St. Joseph Press, LaGrange Park, Ill.

HP customer case study: Sisters of St. Joseph runs successful printing business with HP Indigo press

Industry: Printing

Objective:

Create print shop for congregation artwork and jobs for not-for-profit and religious organizations

Approach:

Deploy HP Indigo press in central-office basement

IT improvements:

- Press fits within basement space, cooling and ventilation constraints
- Operational ease enables staffing by retiree volunteers
- Economical high quality short run color, variable print match customer demand

Business benefits:

- Bring outsourced printing in-house
- Raise funds for service programs
- Provide venue for congregation artists



The central office building of The Sisters of St. Joseph in LaGrange Park, Ill., is home to a wealth of ministry activities: a hospitality center, artist studios, even an assisted-living residence for retired Sisters. At the foundation of this lively buzz, in the basement, runs one of the most unusual printing businesses in the United States. St. Joseph Press runs largely on the volunteer labor of retired Sisters, making greeting cards, newsletters and other material for the congregation of St. Joseph and for service-organization customers. Profits support ministry



programs such as literacy education. The business is the brainchild of entrepreneurial nuns. However, when first investigating the possibilities, the nuns knew only about offset—and almost despaired; the presses were costly, difficult to operate and environmentally out of step with the Sisters’ “eco-spiritual” commitment. Then the nuns found a solution that changed everything: The HP Indigo press.

“We revere the environment as part of creation,” says Press Operator Sister Marianne Race. “The HP Indigo press not only makes St. Joseph Press feasible as a business, it also improves the entire printing process from an environmental point of view: It’s energy efficient. It uses no nasty solvents. The oil is recycled over and over within the machine. You can run this press all day and the amount of imaging oil left over fits in a cup.”

Some of the recycled paper the Sisters print on is manufactured by wind power by Mohawk Fine Papers Inc. They even donated their 2008 economic stimulus checks to support Mohawk’s wind power paper purchases.

A press for the Ministry of the Arts

The Sisters of St. Joseph was founded in 1650 when six women in war-ravaged LePuy, France, sought “something more” in their lives. These women worked among their neighbors, many of whom were desperately poor. In the 21st century the Sisters pursue a global vision of reconciling love, running everything from women’s shelters to healthcare systems. In 2004,

the Sisters founded the Ministry of the Arts to support the work of congregation artists and musicians. Out of that came the idea to start St. Joseph Press, an in-house plant for work that previously had been outsourced to commercial printers.

“We were going to give up on the whole print-shop idea when we realized just how involved the offset process was—environmental considerations, lots of specialized experience required to operate the machine, and we’d have to build a separate facility to house the press. Then we discovered the HP Indigo press and everything became possible.”

Sister Marianne Race, Press Operator, St. Joseph Press, LaGrange Park, Ill.

The Sisters wrote up a list of requirements and went shopping for a press. The machine had to economically produce high-quality color in short-run lengths. It had to operate within the space and ventilation constraints of the available basement area. It had to be quiet and odor-free, since many people live and work in the building. It had to be environmentally responsible and easy to operate. “Those of us running the press are in our upper 60s,” Sister Marianne explains. “We couldn’t use a press that required brute strength.”

The Sisters researched offset presses and found nothing suitable. They were about to give up on the whole idea when one day, a Sister walked past an HP Deskjet

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Sister Marianne Race, Press Operator, St. Joseph Press, LaGrange Park, Ill.

printer—the entire office building is outfitted with HP printers—and wondered whether there might exist a similar digital device, only bigger. That led them to the world of digital presses. After researching the offerings of three major manufacturers, they chose the HP Indigo press. Why HP? Quality of output and ease of operation were critical. So was affordability. The Sisters’ HP sales representative devised a strategy in which the Sisters started with an entry-level press, and upgraded when print volume rose. “We’ve had the same HP rep from the beginning, and he’s always been there for us,” Sister Marianne says. “He came up with a solution that was half the cost of any other press on the market at the time.”

Then there was the issue of training. None of the Sisters had ever run a press before, and all of the four press operators do double duty in the bindery. They took HP Education Services Certified Operator Training on-site, and Operations Manager Sister Judy Sikorski also took HP Education Services Self-Maintainer Training out of state. “She was the only woman there but that didn’t bother her or them,” Sister Marianne recalls. “We Sisters are used to those kinds of challenges.”

Running the press, however, proved relatively simple. The HP Indigo press is highly automated to reduce operator involvement while on-press diagnostics maximize uptime. “Running an offset press is a trade; it takes years to learn,” Sister Marianne says. “The HP Indigo press significantly lowers the learning curve. You’ve basically got a computer with a press wrapped around it. If something needs attention, you get a message on-screen. If we need help beyond that, our HP technician has always been great about talking us through on the phone or coming over if we need it.”

They run the press just one shift a day, averaging 400,000 to 600,000 impressions a month, with peaks up to 900,000. Jobs include greeting cards, CD covers and other work designed by congregation artists, sold on the Ministry of the Arts website. They use the press’s substrate flexibility to make plastic bookmarks and nametags. They use its variable-print capabilities to print names and addresses directly onto newsletters, made typically in runs of 1,000 to 3,000. The Sisters also print personalized Christmas card sets to raise funds for Chicago (Catholic) schools. The print quality, with the HP Indigo press’s precision technology and ElectroInk liquid inks, is superb, Sister Marianne says. What’s more, the press runs so efficiently the Sisters can pass cost savings onto their customers. To avoid undercutting commercial printers, St. Joseph Press takes work only from religious and not-for-profit organizations.

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Business is booming. St. Joseph Press has been featured in the Wall Street Journal and American Printer. It recently was named the preferred printer for the Archdiocese of Chicago—a development that stands to double its business volume. To accommodate that, the Sisters are looking at the bigger HP Indigo

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

Greeting cards, prayer cards, CD covers, newsletters, bookmarks, name tags

Primary hardware

- HP Indigo press

HP Services

- HP Education Services Certified Operator Training
- HP Education Services Self-Maintainer Training



Customer at a glance

For more information on St Joseph Press or the Sisters of St. Joseph, please visit:

- Ministry of the Arts:
www.ministryofthearts.org/
- St. Joseph Press:
www.stjosephpress.org/
- Congregation of St. Joseph:
www.csjoseph.org/

7000 Digital Press, which delivers fast production speed of 120 four-color letter-size pages per minute, with offset and photo quality. St. Joseph easily could more than quadruple its business if it took on printing for the congregation's healthcare system, Sister Marianne says. At this point, the challenge is not fostering growth—it's controlling it.

"We are a real printing business. With the HP Indigo press, we print out quality product at a very affordable price—and by buying it people also support services for people in need," Sister Marianne says. "We have to be careful now because demand could create a tsunami of growth. To take these next steps—it takes a leap of faith."

To learn more, visit www.hp.com

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