IBM

Lightning Source Electrifies the Book Publishing Industry

IBM Infoprint 4100

Overview

- **The Challenge**
  To economically print single copies of books while avoiding the warehousing costs and waste associated with large-volume offset printing

- **The Solution**
  Lightning Source creates and catalogs digital book files from publishers, and prints books on demand in response to orders from publishers, retailers and wholesalers

- **The Benefit**
  Books never go out of print, inventory is better managed and financial risk is minimized

Consumers get frustrated when a book they want is out of print. Publishers get frustrated with annual waste and book returns of up to 40% due to changing customer tastes. Authors and publishers get frustrated by being unable to economically accommodate the demand from booksellers for only a few dozen copies of a particular book. Lightning Source, Inc. sought a way to relieve the book community's frustrations and created a sound, robust, quality alternative for low-volume book publishing.

Lightning Source, a division of Ingram Book Group that was established in late 1997, is a provider of e-publishing solutions. With facilities in LaVergne,

Tennessee and the United Kingdom, Lightning Source is the partner of choice to over 1,600 publishers around the globe. Using an IBM Infoprint solution, Lightning Source has revamped the traditional publishing business model and has helped print-on-demand become a widely adopted print method for the publishing community. With print-on-demand technology, single copies of books can be printed economically, as customer need dictates, while avoiding the warehousing costs and waste associated with large-volume output using traditional offset printing methods. And now, a book never goes out of print, as its life cycle is extended indefinitely by storing it electronically for printing at any time.

"With our distribution network and strong publisher relationships, we knew we were uniquely positioned to benefit from this technology," said Larry Brewster, Chief Operating Officer, Lightning Source. "Lightning Source fulfills more book orders than any other distributor today through partnerships with tens of thousands of worldwide book stores and online stores. In fact, we have already printed more than 5 million books, which is evidence that consumers have embraced our print-on-demand solution."

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Why IBM?

To handle its printing needs, Lightning Source had originally installed IBM Infoprint 4000 digital printing systems, which print at up to 464 impressions-per-minute (ipm).

The Infoprint 4000's speed enabled the printing of a typical book in less than one minute. According to Brewster, "Not only are we very pleased with the IBM technology, but everyone is most impressed that we went from the idea phase to a working system in less than 90 days."

As part of an aggressive move to enhance the print quality in print-on-demand and continue to be the finest global print-on-demand provider in the industry, Lightning Source has taken the lead and installed IBM's Infoprint 4100 Advanced Function Printing Systems. The latest in the leading IBM print technology, the Infoprint 4100 digital printing system is a next generation high-speed digital publishing solution that offers the highest image and text quality in its speed class, producing three-up 6x9-inch documents at up to 1,400 ipm, or two-up 8x11.5-inch documents at up to 762 ipm.

The IBM Infoprint 4100's hardware enhancements over the Infoprint 4000 include technological advancements in print-head, developer and fusing mechanisms, plus an integrated optical density feedback system.

With industry-leading 600-dpi image quality from IBM, Lightning Source will print sharp, clear images and text day after day, job after job. For full-color covers, Lightning Source uses an IBM Infoprint Color Solution, which offers high speed offset-quality color printing and digital direct-to-paper capability.

"Our print solutions are continually evaluated to provide our customers the finest quality print-on-demand product on the market. Technological advances and sheer determination have made Lightning Source into what we are today —a solid organization with an exceptional product that others benchmark against," said Tyler Miller, Senior Vice President, Operations, Lightning Source.

The future of POD is now

The Lightning Source print-on-demand program is at the forefront of the growing print-on-demand market with products and services that match the requirements the book industry needs. Their new print quality standards pave the way for even more successful and profitable print-on-demand programs for our customers.

Lightning Source leads the way in print-on-demand publishing with high-quality products and unrivaled distribution networks, including the largest book distributors and retailers in the world. "Lightning Source strives to continually improve upon its print quality, and our new equipment installation has created an enhanced print solution that is not only sound and robust, but customer-centric," said Brewster. "Our customers told us what they wanted in a print solution, and we listened."

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