



Publishing
Liber Digital

MEETING DEMAND FOR SHORT-RUN BOOK PRODUCTION WITH CANON

Company Name: Liber Digital, a Grupo Gómez Aparicio subsidiary
Industry: Publishing
Founded: Grupo Gómez Aparicio - 1958
Location: Madrid, Spain
Services: Book printing
Relationship with Canon: 2014

Objective

To transfer production from offset to digital for cost-effective and efficient short-run, on-demand, high-quality printing.

Challenges

- Reducing run lengths making offset technology inefficient
- A need to maintain ultra-high quality
- Customer demands for competitive prices in a low-cost market

Approach

Liber Digital invested in two high volume inkjet presses and business support from Canon, alongside Tecnaú and Muller Martini finishing solutions, to improve the company's short-run efficiencies, enter new markets and print on-demand.

Benefits

- Offset quality and media flexibility
- Deliver varying run lengths, from one copy to a thousand copies, in an efficient and profitable way
- Ongoing business support from a trusted partner

Canon

Liber Digital invests in its future as a digital print service provider

Madrid-based Grupo Gómez Aparicio was founded over 60 years ago as a modest, family-run, book finishing business. In 2013, the company was looking to develop new revenue streams by incorporating offset book printing into its offering. To support this new opportunity, in 2014, Grupo Gómez Aparicio founded Liber Digital. Today, the group includes three companies; Gómez Aparicio, Liber Digital and Gohegraf and employs over 110 people.

Serving a broad customer base, from self-publishers to large publishing companies, Liber Digital produces over 75,000 books a month. The company's production ranges from paperback to hardcover books, fiction and non-fiction, educational materials and, more recently, high-quality niche books, such as cookbooks and art portfolios.

With the goal of improving the book production supply chain, Liber Digital looked to expand its offset production line-up with a high-speed digital inkjet press that could profitably handle high volumes of short runs, while successfully integrating into the company's existing finishing workflows.

One of the business challenges Liber Digital faced when looking for a new press is that Spain is considered a low-cost market, where customers request the best quality at the same price as lower quality. Liber Digital needed a press with excellent workflow to minimise production costs and keep prices low, while maintaining its profit margin.

Luis Hedo, Managing Director of Liber Digital explains, "The printing market is highly competitive in Spain. Print service providers compete for incoming work and offer low prices to win the business. For us to be able to compete, we have to match these costs, while adding value, such as profitably printing shorter runs with efficient workflow solutions, that our competitors can't offer."



"Since 2014, it has been my mission to print a book on either offset or digital without customers being able to tell the difference. And with the ProStream, we can offer just that – offset quality with the added advantage of profitably producing low to medium run lengths. It's proved to be an essential investment for us as our customers can no longer distinguish between them. In my opinion, the ProStream is the best machine in this category."

Luis Hedo
Managing Director

Meeting market demand for short-run printing, Liber Digital installed a Canon ColorStream 3500 web-fed inkjet printer in 2014 and quickly began to migrate volumes from offset to the new press. Luis talks about the transition, "The ColorStream 3500 digital press allows us to produce print runs of 500, 800 or 1,000 books in record time and its efficiency means that we are able to offer low prices to our customers without compromising our profit margin. Thanks to this technology and our newfound ability to take on short-run work, we can create new business opportunities for our clients that, until now, could not be exploited because we didn't have the appropriate equipment in place."

With more and more volumes moving to digital, matched with the requirement for high quality output, in November 2018, Liber Digital invested in a Canon ProStream 1000. Achieving ultra-high-quality, Liber Digital could now compete with offset more than ever to enter new markets and win new business. In combination with this, the ProStream 1000's media handling capabilities allow Liber Digital to print on a wider range of offset coated and uncoated stocks.

New technology = new opportunities

The first company in Spain to install a ProStream 1000, Liber Digital was keen to see the results of the new press within the company's wider production workflow. Luis remarks "In 2018, we were looking to expand our business into new markets for applications such as art books and cookbooks, which were predominantly hardcover and required a very high level of quality. Our production line-up at that time didn't allow us to profitably produce shorter runs of these books. When we were exploring the market, the ProStream was the only press that could offer high speeds without compromising output quality.

Luis also highlighted the reliability and uptime of Canon's technology as an added value that boosted Liber Digital's confidence to take on more work and deliver it on time. He explains, "The machine is very stable, which significantly reduces our downtime, maximises productivity and ensures that from start to finish, quality is maintained. We're very impressed with the overall efficiency of this equipment, which has allowed us to take on more work and reduce operator intervention because they no longer have to worry about checking the quality or changing parts of the press. It is very easy to use and reliable."

Despite Liber Digital's ongoing challenge in the low-cost Spanish market, in recent years the company has positioned itself as a digital print provider with affordable prices and outstanding quality due to the investments in digital technology the company has made.

Running alongside the two Canon presses is a fleet of finishing technology, which includes a Libra One from Tecna for the nearline finishing of paperback books and a Kolbus BF 513 from Muller Martini for the nearline finishing of hardcover books. Dependant on the run-length and binding required, Liber Digital assigns one of the two workflows to optimise the print process.



"We're seeing more and more publishers moving to business models that rely on smaller orders, which in turn means that we're seeing more and more volumes being digitally printed. The ProStream enables us to speed up production and reduce costs, which in Spain, is essential for our profitability."

Luis Hedo
Managing Director

"We can print roll-to-roll on the ProStream and the output is automatically placed onto the Libra One for unwinding, cutting, folding and stacking before hardcover and softcover binding takes place on high-speed finishing lines, which significantly reduces production time. With this, we can now offer competitive turnaround times of four days."

Connecting the printing and finishing technology is Canon's PRISMA workflow solution, which operates alongside Liber Digital's own ERP software to minimise production costs and increase profit margins.

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On-demand printing: a new business model for Liber Digital

As he looks to the future, Luis explains that Liber Digital is emphasising its focus on small to medium customers and its print-on-demand offering: “Larger publishers, which represent 60% of our customer base, print more than 90% of their volumes on offset but are beginning to take advantage of digital inkjet printing for their short-run printing requirements. The remaining 40% are small to medium publishers and these are the customers that our digital print technology suits particularly well. With this shift towards higher volumes of short runs, we want to convert up to 80% of work for these customers to our Canon inkjet solutions because, whether we are printing one copy or a thousand copies, we can do it in an efficient and profitable way.”

Luis also added that book lifecycle management is being adopted by many of his customers to ensure that print runs for each book match the customer demands to reduce wasted stock or avoid unnecessary inventory storage. “Understanding the sales channel and the lifecycle of each book is essential to the supply chain. When titles are first published or marked as a ‘bestseller’, runs of over 2,000 prints are required. These are printed on offset because it is most profitable to do so. But as demand reduces and publishers don’t want to warehouse stock, we can switch to digital print technology. Combining this understanding of the sales channel with book lifecycle management, we can efficiently print actual demand based on feedback from the inventory detection technology.”



“Canon is focused on understanding the needs of us, the printer, the publishers and distributors in order to help improve the book supply chain. The team listens to our needs to guide us along the right track and, by working closely with them, we can focus on the future knowing that they will provide us with the best tools to achieve business growth.”

Luis Hedo
Managing Director

A reliable partner

In addition to the technology investment, Luis felt that it was important to be working with a partner who understood Liber Digital’s business. “The team at Canon is amazing and we are extremely happy with the support they offer us,” Luis explains. “When I compare Canon with previous partners we have worked with, Canon’s service team always comes out on top. Their support and training have enabled us to achieve the maximum uptime possible on the ColorStream and ProStream.”

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