

Banta Corporation

Banta's Book Group Rides "Wave of the Future" By Exploring Adobe Acrobat for Efficient Electronic Workflow

Adobe® Acrobat®

The Banta Book Group, a division of the \$1.3 billion printing and prepress service company Banta Corporation, sometimes spends days fixing problems with customer created files before final output to film or computer-to-plate (CTP). To help eliminate these delays, the company is exploring ways to establish a state-of-the-art electronic workflow that streamlines the exchange of information between Banta and its customers and also among Banta employees.

"Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) are the wave of the future for print publishing," explains Tom Clifford, electronic technology specialist for Banta's Book Group. "It's one of the only universal file formats that can handle in a single file all the components—graphics, fonts, and photos—that our customers deal with daily. And now, new capabilities in Acrobat 4.0, such as enhanced color support and the ability to edit PDF files using Photoshop or Illustrator, offer the potential of processing more jobs better and faster than ever before."

Banta Corporation's Book Group oversees the prepress and print production of a wide range of titles, from educational books to fiction. The division also prints large, complex industrial catalogs for companies such as Rockwell International, Ingram Micro D, and Lockheed Martin. Most jobs are four-color and range from 500 to 1,500 pages.

PDF Workflow to Speed Production

In receiving files for printing from a wide variety of customers, Banta's Book Group often discovers problems with the materials. "It's not uncommon for customers to submit print jobs with missing fonts, or as extremely large files that are difficult to manage," says Clifford. "We even run into trouble getting some of the files through our imagesetters, resulting in lengthy delays and extra expense for us and our customers."

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—Tom Clifford,
Electronic Technology Specialist,
Banta Book Group

These problems prompted Banta to begin looking for alternatives to better share and manage information—a move that led the company to the very real benefits of Adobe Acrobat and PDF. Banta sees two options for a PDF-based workflow: customers submit all print work as platform- and application-independent PDF files or Banta converts the files that customers submit in native formats such as Adobe PageMaker®, Microsoft Word, or QuarkXPress to PDF. Regardless of the approach, the goal is the same—pinpoint potential problems and compress files before they cause bottlenecks.

Key Benefits

- Acrobat 4.0 and PDF can help Banta knock days off the cycle time and reduce printing costs all around.
- Adobe and its partners are enabling PDF-based composite color workflows, something Banta says will make color work far faster and easier.
- Converting jobs to PDF simplifies finding potential problems and compresses large files before they jam the network.
- Acrobat 4.0 enables Banta to correct customer PDF files using Adobe Illustrator® or Adobe Photoshop®, so problems can be fixed in-house without returning files to customers.
- The ability to optimize jobs easily for the Web using Acrobat 4.0 greatly simplifies the process of repurposing files for different media.



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Compact Files Help Make Light Work of Tough Jobs

As Banta is discovering, converting files to PDF also enables faster print processing by cropping out unnecessary data. For example, a customer might take a high-resolution image, reduce it by ten times, and place it in a page. During conversion to PDF, Acrobat automatically optimizes the information in the image to exactly what is needed for high-quality printing. “Acrobat provides a streamlined file, without any more or less information than is needed,” explains Clifford. “This means faster processing and less network traffic between operators and file servers, and file servers and output devices. It can speed up everything across the board.”

Any Problem Handled On-Site

Specifically, late-stage editing capabilities in Acrobat 4.0 can allow Banta to edit potentially problematic PDF files using Adobe Illustrator or Adobe Photoshop. The alternative—returning files to customers for corrections—often ends up delaying the prepress process by a week or more. “Photoshop or Illustrator make it possible to handle virtually any problem on-site and reduce cycle time and costs—not to mention frustrations,” Clifford says. In addition, Acrobat 4.0 can be used to better serve customers who want their content efficiently prepared for publication to a variety of media. Materials can be optimized easily for print or the Web using Acrobat 4.0.

Previously this process required multiple steps and highly specialized expertise. “Many customers don’t know that a file needs to be 72 dpi and RGB color format for the Web,” explains Clifford. “With the Screen Optimize and Press Optimize features of Acrobat 4.0, they don’t have to. Adobe is giving customers the tools they need to submit an accurate file on the first try. For Banta that means we spend more time creating high-quality output and less time fixing customer errors.”

“Customers want to prepare files correctly the first time, without spending a lot of time or money learning new hardware and software applications. Adobe PDF makes this possible. It’s likely that someday most people will preflight jobs using Acrobat and submit print-ready files to us in PDF—a development that would benefit our customers and us equally.”

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Color Work, Minus the Plates

With its enhanced support for independent color models, Acrobat 4.0 makes progress toward enabling a composite color workflow, a capability that Adobe and its partners anticipate will be widely available soon. Instead of using the traditional color-

separation process that requires sending jobs through a raster image processor (RIP) multiple times to create four-color plates, Banta could send a single file with composite color data to its RIP. “Our RIP could do the CMYK color separations on the fly, and we could focus on other, more critical issues, like completing jobs on schedule and on budget,” Clifford explains. “Moving to a composite PDF workflow could greatly simplify the way we do our color work.”

In evaluating many electronic workflow solutions, Clifford cites the most important factor as improved customer service. “Look at it from our customers’ perspective. They want to be able to prepare files correctly the first time, without spending a lot of time learning new hardware and software applications,” says Clifford. “Adobe PDF makes this viable. It’s likely that someday most people will preflight jobs using Acrobat and submit print-ready files to us in PDF—a development that would benefit our customers and us equally.”

Banta Corporation Systems At-A-Glance

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Adobe Illustrator
Adobe PageMaker
Adobe Font Folio™
Adobe FrameMaker®
Adobe Photoshop
QuarkXPress
Scenicsoft Preps
Mac OS
Microsoft® Windows® 95 and Windows NT® Server

Hardware

Creo PlateMaster Server
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Pentium® II-based PCs

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