



c.p. bourg®

The Print Finishing Experts

50 Samuel Barnet Blvd
New Bedford Industrial Park
New Bedford, MA 02745
+1-508-998-2171

Lehmann Bookbinding Dives into Digital Production to Deliver Beautiful Books on Demand

Conventional wisdom says you should stick with what has worked in the past. But when your customers insist they want printing and self-publishing services that will propel you to the front lines of the books on demand revolution...well, it's best to tell them you're happy to oblige, and thank them very much for their business.

And that's exactly what Rob Lehmann is doing.

Lehmann is Production Manager of Lehmann Bookbinding, a successful, family-owned Canadian bookbinding business located 75 miles west of Toronto on the Isthmus between Lake Erie and Lake Huron that has borne the Lehmann name for 95 years. He also is a savvy entrepreneur who sees the future of book production, and knows it is high-tech and quick-turnaround.

Founded in 1913, Lehmann Bookbinding has grown through four generations to become Canada's largest bindery serving the library community. Owned by Rob, his father and company President William Lehmann, and sister Lisa Cvar, who manages the company's systems and customer service operations, the firm of 40 employees swells to a staff of 75 during the summer months to accommodate a traditional textbook refurbishing business.

During the past few years, the company had dabbled in digital printing technology with a couple of small Xerox machines on the factory floor. But the mainstays of their bookbinding business always had been traditional tools like their 9-clamp Muller Panda and 8-clamp Mekatronics Ultrabind for commercial PVA (Polyvinyl Acetate) case binding, a slew of industrial sewing machines, gatherers and case makers – and tons of skill and patience.

At Rob Lehman's direction, the bindery recently extended its trade and on-demand services to customers across southern Ontario, specializing in short to medium runs of self-published material like genealogy books in both soft cover and case-bound products.

Along with those changes came another: the goal of being able to print, produce and ship books of different sizes, formats and papers in hours, rather than days.

Changing Traditions

At the forefront of this new book-manufacturing frontier, websites and broadband connections are replacing customer windows, digital printing is replacing analog, and highly automated in-line and

near-line perfect binders capable of profitably producing short-runs and “books of one” are superseding lumbering multi-clamp machines.

“We had never done much printing, but last year we received requests constantly from our commercial and trade customers to offer both printing and binding,” Lehmann recalls. Rob and Lisa see no reason to go against that grain, especially when it coincides with the company’s strong customer service philosophy *and* plays into one of the most compelling trends the bookbinding industry has seen since Brother Dominic first starred in Xerox ads.

Breaking Out of the Old

In order to comply with customer requests for printing and self-publishing that were growing in number and intensity, Rob and Lisa realized they had to make some major changes.

“Between being asked to dive into digital production by our customers and all the research we’ve done, I was sure that producing short-run books on demand was where we needed to go, and that Internet order entry, digital printing and automated perfect binding was how we were going to get there.”

For Lehmann’s new business model to work, they needed the ability to make a lot of different books requiring different setups one after another. But prepping the 9-clamp Panda for a small job was a bear. And using conventional PVA adhesives that require 24 hours of drying without disturbing the book block made it even more onerous for short-run jobs.

“It was clear we had to break out of the old and into the new,” says Lehmann.

An Easy Choice

The bookbinder decided the first step would be to supplement its small printers with a new, larger-format Xerox color printer and a Xerox high-speed monochrome system.

Knowing that their labor-intensive conventional binding equipment couldn’t take the business where they wanted it to go, Rob Lehmann began researching a number of binders billed as on-demand capable that were roughly comparable in size and production capacity. But his initial search for the right binder left him largely unimpressed.

As part of his ongoing investigation, he visited a bindery in the States that had a BB3002 perfect binder made by C.P. Bourg, a leading manufacturer of binding and finishing equipment known for its innovative technology and efficient, quality products.

“That’s when I discovered that the Bourg BB3002 binder had a number of features that outdistanced its competition. The entire machine was impressive, and the touchscreen was the best I’ve seen. It allows a range of set-ups and it’s easier to control, right down to the amount of glue that’s applied just, by pushing a button. There are no screws to turn, no nozzles to fix, and it can be set up within seconds,” Lehmann marvels.

“The BB3002 would fit in nicely with our print-on-demand services,’ I thought at the time. ‘When customers place orders over the Internet, we can print and bind them all within minutes,’” he recalls.

“The Bourg binder was the easy choice because it does a quality job, easily and automatically.”

Innovations Galore

The BB3002 is a near-line binder that allows a single operator with minimal training and modest mechanical aptitude to set-up just about any perfect bind job – within one minute – and start producing even different titles one right after another.

Among its many advances, the BB3002 features an icon-driven operating system displayed on an 11-inch color touchscreen. This operator-friendly interface allows most functions – including milling, side gluing, scoring and suction cover-feeding – to be easily selected from a list of menu options and set digitally.

Another Bourg innovation called Symmetrical Cover Registration makes the most of the BB3002 onboard computer. As it clamps the book block, the BB3002 automatically measures thickness and calculates the centerline of the cover to fasten the spine perfectly, enabling books of the same size and different thickness to be bound one after another automatically, without operator intervention.

To that the BB3002 adds programmable milling with up to four notching tools and thickness bypass to speed set-up, operator programmed automatic side-gluing to eliminate manual adjustments and errors, and binding up to 600 books per hour from 3.5 x 3.9 inches to 12.59 x 15.15 inches to meet its full-rated cover spec of 27.9 x 15.5 inches.

Opening New Doors

The PUR (polyurethane reactive) version of the Bourg BB3002 binder with its Nordsen PUR application unit fits in well with Lehmann Bookbinding's foray to the frontiers of on-demand book publishing.

PUR adhesive forms an aggressive bond that holds onto virtually any type of stock – including the glossy coated stocks typically used for digital printing – even over heavy usage.

“As a commercial bookbinder, we offer every different kind of binding possible. There are seven or eight ways to sew a book, and two or three different ways to glue a book. PUR adds to our binding arsenal and opens new doors for us by giving us a lot more flexibility,” says Lehmann, who describes it as an “added bonus” to the binder's formidable list of features.

In early January, with customers and jobs lined up and waiting for the new system, Lehmann Bookbinding installed the Bourg BB3002 PUR binder. After just a few days of “tweaking and experimenting,” the company started producing live work.

The first job scheduled to run on the BB3002 PUR was a “perfect-binding nightmare,” says Lehmann. “The pages were printed on heavy, gloss stock and the customer ordered an ‘unreal’ weight cover stock. The first job we threw at it would have been extremely difficult to do on any other binder, but the Bourg got us right through it. That settled us down about trusting the machine, and from that point on, we had full faith in it.”

Making Beautiful Books – Fast

Lehmann now offers PUR perfect binding along with the other binding services on which the company built its reputation for quality and commitment to service, including sewing, hardcover case making, coil binding, trimming, case binding and hand binding.

And now that the Bourg BB3002 binder has been installed for a couple of months, Lehmann Bookbinding is really hitting their stride. "We're starting to offer production of 1-off to 5-off jobs, where we print the entire book, take it to the BB3002 and have full turnaround within a couple of hours.

"We typically do a lot of smaller jobs on the Bourg binder, although today we're running an order for 4,000, two-inch-wide 11 x 8-1/2-inch catalogs. The range is extraordinary," Lehmann explains. "And in the time it takes just to set up the 9-clamp, we can have the job finished on the Bourg!

"Books coming off the machine are nice and clean, square and solid. They're just beautiful books, and a pleasure to send out to our customers," says Lehmann.

An important part of Lehmann's new business model is the company's redesigned web site that will enable on-line ordering, scheduling, payment and tracking to accommodate business from a growing number of trade and on-demand customers.

"We're keeping our commercial business directed inside Canada," says Lehmann. "But for trade and on-demand business, our new printers, the Bourg PUR binder and the Internet have allowed us to become a one-stop shop. We can take orders from anywhere, confident we can produce quality-bound work quickly and efficiently.

"The Bourg BB3002 PUR binder is a big part of our ability to deliver that level of quality in that short amount of time," says Rob Lehmann.

"It's exactly what we wanted!"

###

Editorial contact:

John Hebert / Hebert Communications
+1-617-232-1161
john@hebertcomms.com