

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [Ask the CEO](#)

► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/
Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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With the new press in the background, David Fuentes and Rob Hartert check the look of the machine's output. *Photos by Ned Racine.*

Print Shop's New Best Friend is Very Fast and . . .Very Heavy

By NED RACINE, Editor

(June 5, 2008) When Rob Hartert, Printing Services supervisor, speaks of his new staff member, it's clear he has a new best friend.

Hartert would certainly buy his new friend a cup of coffee in appreciation, but where could he take a buddy who weighs 73,377 pounds?

Last month, after three weeks of assembly and a week of testing, Hartert added a new Heidelberg press to his staff. It replaced an old press that served Metro for 25 years, totaling 262 million impressions (basically 262 million sheets through the press).

To put that number in perspective, in Fiscal Year 2007 the Print Shop required 7,827,000 impressions just to print the Metro timetables.

"It was getting old like the rest of us," Hartert said, adding that the old press required frequent adjustments

to print accurate colors and tints. He had been campaigning for the 38-foot-long piece of equipment since he became Printing Services supervisor seven years ago.

There are several reasons for Hartert's devotion to the new equipment. The new press is considerably faster than the old one, uses less space and is quieter, for example. But Hartert most appreciates the greater automation built into the new machine.

"[It's] all digital, all electronic; we don't use film anymore; we don't touch the plates until they come out the other end of the press," Hartert said. You don't get dirty anymore."

"It's amazing to watch the speed of this one compared to the old one," he said. "We could only do 8,500 (impressions an hour), and I thought the press was going to fall apart. Right now we're running at 12,500 an hour, and it's just as smooth as can be. I feel like a little kid with a new toy. It's an amazing thing."

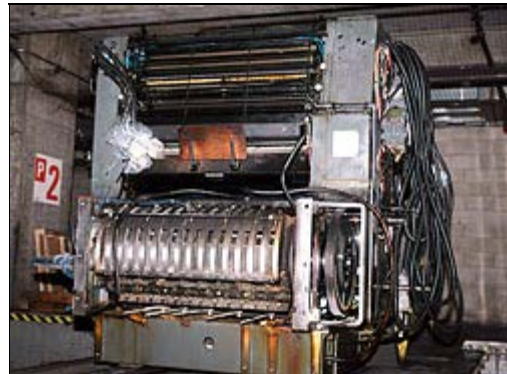
Another advantage of the new machine is its ability to deliver printed sheets almost dry, reducing the time Print Shop staff must wait for ink on its brochures, forms and posters to dry.

"Last shake up we printed 1.5 million timetables," Hartert said. "We do a massive amount of timetables and brochures down here."

Because the new press can print two colors on both sides of a sheet at the same time, printing Metro Monthly, for example, will require four to five hours, rather than one and one-half to two days.



New Heidelberg press, above, replaces 25-year-old Heidelberg, below.





Print Shop staff members Eluid Castellanos, David Fuentes, Rob Hartert and Rene Lozano check copies produced by the new Heidelberg press, both in paper and digital form.

The press also allows Hartert to do more projects in-house, meaning reduced costs. By reducing guesswork and human error, the new system also saves paper as well as time.

Hartert, who has worked in printing for 30 years, 21 of those with Metro, believes the new system is also greener. Because he no longer uses film to create printing plates, he uses fewer chemicals.

Rob has another large staff member arriving soon. The new web press—used almost exclusively for printing timetables—replaces another 25-year-old press."

But for now, the Heidelberg is the new kid on the block. How do Hartert's nine staff members feel about the new press? "Very happy," Hartert said—repeating his comment three times. "They smile every time they push the buttons."