MAN Roland Technology Symposium in Luxembourg:
Focus on the first shaftless satellite newspaper rotary press

On 27th May 1998, MAN Roland welcomed about 120 guests (mainly customers and distribution partners) to a “Technology Symposium” in Luxembourg, to which IFRA was also invited, followed by a visit to the Imprimerie Saint Paul printing company. The daily newspaper, Luxemburger Wort, which celebrated its 150th anniversary on 23rd March, is the first and only newspaper worldwide to work with a shaftless rotary press equipped with satellite printing units (see newspaper techniques, June 1996, Page 64).

The Luxemburger Wort is published with a circulation of about 89,000 copies, 92 percent are subscription copies. The newspaper is produced at the Imprimerie Saint Paul (ISP) in Gasperich, a suburb of the capital city, on a Colorman rotary press that was installed in spring of this year and features a configuration tailored especially to suit the requirements there. The event was chaired by Martin Lange, Member of the Board at MAN Roland.

ISP General Director, Paul Zimmer, welcomed the participants to Luxembourg, a small country located in the heart of Europe with an especially high degree of cultural diversity – the share of foreigners among the working populace is 30 percent, and as high as 50 percent in the capital – and three official languages. Naturally, a newspaper must take due account of these conditions. The Luxemburger Wort is published mainly in German and – to a much smaller degree – in French in the editorial section. The situation is different, however, in relation to business advertising, where French dominates. The third language, Lëtzebuergesch, is mainly spoken, less written; it is only seldom encountered in the newspaper, e.g. in personal ads.

From press manufacturer to system supplier

The symposium preceding the visit to the printing company provided the information basis, a sort of “theoretical preconditioning,” for the printing installations realised at the Luxemburger Wort. A general report concerning the situation of the newspaper medium – complemented by current market research data – as well as the role of MAN Roland as a “global system partner to the newspaper” (MAN Roland Member of the Board, Gerd Finkbeiner) led into the technical presentations. These covered nearly the entire company offer for the newspaper industry, from material logistics (AUROSYS, presented by Anton Hamm, Head of the Automatic Roll and Material Handling Division) and production control (PECOM, Rudolf Nägele, Head of Software Development/Newspaper Automation Systems), up to the actual heart of every newspaper printing operation, the rotary press (DriveSys and Dynachange, Hans Mamberer, Head of the Newspaper Press Division; see also newspaper techniques, October 1997, Page 18.)

A presentation was given also of the MAN Roland subsidiary, Eurografica, a consultancy company specialising in planning printing plants and whose offer ranges “from concept development up to production start-up.” Eurografica was not, however, involved in the project for the Luxemburger Wort. On this occasion, two organisational changes were announced: firstly, the pending move of Eurografica from Munich to Augsburg, and secondly the move of Peter Kuisle, Eurografica Director, with effect from 1st July 1998 to the parent company as Sales Director for MAN Roland Web Offset Presses.

To fulfil its duties as the aforementioned “system partner to the newspaper” in the sense of a total supplier of machines, software, and services (especially system integration) for newspaper production, MAN Roland is enter-
ing into partnership arrangements with other companies, such as Ferag in the finishing sector in Luxembourg. Accordingly, the technical lecture describing the Ferag PPM system was oriented towards the application at ISP in conjunction with DynaChange. It becomes immediately apparent that the increased flexibility in printing with “flying” product change also makes increasing demands on the mailroom installations, or production planning and control, respectively (Matthias Dürr, Vice President Technology, Ferag).

A tailored Colorman: the “Luxembourg” press

Contributions from Bertrand Felly (Consultant and ISP Project Coordinator) and François Petry (Production Manager at Imprimerie Saint Paul) brought this part of the event to a conclusion. They reported on experiences gained during the planning and realisation of this highly complex project, as well as about the difficulties that were encountered not, as was feared, as a result of the electronics required by the single-drive technique, but that were of a more technical nature and sometimes involved such trivial things as missing screws.

According to Felly, it was the specifications for the new press that gave the impetus for the first realisation of the 10-cylinder satellite concept in conjunction with the shaftless drive technique. Petry cited further points from the specifications: no reversal of the direction of cylinder rotation (for simple web lead) and no switch from blanket/blanket to blanket/steel cylinder printing (for consistent printing quality). For this reason, the Colorman press built in accordance with the customer’s wishes has become known as the “Luxembourg press”. Basically, however, MAN Roland emphasises, this is just one of many possible configurations that can be realised by the MAN Roland components strategy.

The production manager praised the “super-exact register” that surprised the printers. One advantage of the drive technique, he continued, is that the register precision is not lost at every reel change, as used to be the case in the past. Interesting from the organisational point of view is the fact that the main responsibility for the installation is no longer with the printer, but with an electrician. This enables the responsible printer to concentrate fully on the printing quality. The most controversial decision at the ISP concerned the PECOM control system, but today the company is confident that it made the correct decision.

But the successful commissioning by no means marks the conclusion of the project: the process optimisation stage is now beginning.

DynaChange demonstration at the ISP

The visitors were given the opportunity, via a large video screen installed on the front side of the Colorman press of the Imprimerie Saint Paul, to follow what a cameraman was able to capture with his mobile video camera at and in the press during the production run of a 12-page, newspaper-format special print. The demonstration comprised the following stages: start-up, run-up to production speed, print run product 1, flying plate change of pages 2 and 11, print run product 2, reel change and press stop at full speed.

Even if the protective shields on the printing units or the head of the person standing in front prevented some of the visitors from having an unhindered view, the copies removed directly from the folder delivery could be used for checking purposes: in product 2 – which at first glance did not appear any different from product 1 – the pages 2 and 11, the jacket pages, had been exchanged. Reel change and emergency stop were conducted without incident.

– Charlotte Janischewski