

Print cannot be replaced, but digital has an important place too

Koenig & Bauer AG celebrated its 200th anniversary in style, in Würzburg, Germany. What the company release termed “the festive week”, drew more than 13000 visitors at the Open Day on 23rd September, a remarkable number by any standard. The official ceremony with former Federal President Horst Köhler as main speaker saw about 700 guests from across the world in attendance. The main factory in Würzburg was spruced up, complete with the objective of providing an experience of the historical and the modern. The commemorative publication, *People - Machines - Ideas*, was “a printed declaration of love for the past, present and future of print”. KBA CEO Claus Bolza-Schünemann couldn't have said it better: “Print has been keeping our company and its employees moving for 200 years now.” Today, KBA products, wherever they are sold, keep people company morning to evening – the directly printed perfume bottle in the bathroom, the newspaper at the breakfast table, banknotes, credit cards and a wide range of packaging when going shopping, to books or magazines. The best thing about this is that most of the print products cannot be replaced by online media or computer screens, and the demand is continuing to rise, says Bolza-Schünemann, and this is what makes him and his company optimistic about the future.

At the IFRA World Expo in Berlin, the KBA booth saw a new corporate design and a new slogan, ‘We're on it’. An indication perhaps that they are at the top of their game or getting close to it. Also, perhaps, reflective of the challenging times the print industry is in, as mentioned in their press release – generally reduced number of new press projects, more users seeking upgrades to expand their production options and improve press utilisation.

So, what does the sector need today? What is the perception of modern newspaper production? And what do service and future security mean for newspaper printers? manroland provides some answers – the requirements of today's modern rapidly changing market demand continuity, stability

and security with regard to the lifecycle of the system, and the market also demands creative new business models. And that is what their Colorman e:line and the Geoman e:line offer – higher throughput, diversity of printed products, reduced waste and lower manning levels on the press. Very few will disagree with the manroland viewpoint – service is now key for printing companies, printing houses are hesitant to invest, it has become hard to predict the market, and additional challenges will keep arising. To maintain the competitive edge, manroland says a search has begun for solutions that offer more quality, flexibility and productivity, while also increasing the life cycle of the machine.

And that is what successful companies usually do. They constantly reflect, think out-of-the-box, innovate and, above all, remain optimistic.

A panel discussion at the inaugural of the WAN-IFRA India Conference recently (see page 6 for the story), which had some of the leaders in the news publishing business speak, saw some interesting points being thrown up. Here are some of them:

- Newspapers are moving from reach to loyal communities – people, especially the younger generation, are willing to pay and become paid subscribers.
- With all the current developments, trust is the new currency; gaining the reader's trust has become the primary objective.
- One of the biggest concerns is that there is a reluctance to innovate.
- Print or digital – there is a role for each medium to play.
- It's time cover prices of newspapers are raised (readers haven't abandoned *The Hindu* after it raised its price; *The Hindu* Sunday edition at Rs 15, in north India, is perhaps the highest priced newspaper to sell in the country).

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