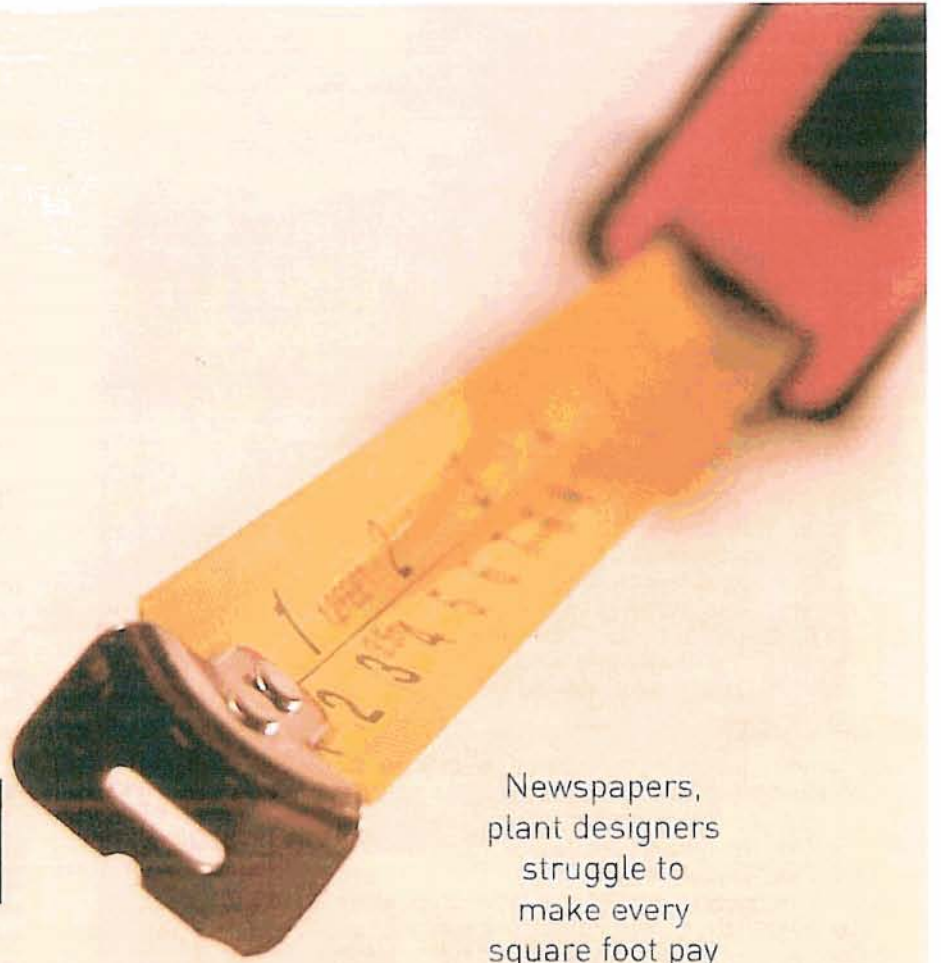


Space



Newspapers,
plant designers
struggle to
make every
square foot pay

Quest

Sunday is a day of rest at many companies. But for newspapers, it is the day of the week when the greatest number of preprints reach customers. U.S. newspapers distributed nearly 115 billion free-standing inserts in 2004, according to industry estimates, with the majority of those preprints running in Sunday editions. >>

by Alysha Sideman-Davidson



THE 'GREEN' NEWSPAPER PLANT

IT'S NOT EASY being green, as Kermit the Frog once sang. But, from a bottom-line standpoint being green can occasionally make sense.

In the next few months, The Chronicle-Telegram in Elyria, Ohio [morning, circulation 23,040], is scheduled to break ground on a \$10 million plant designed to meet some of the toughest environmental standards in the country. The project, started in 2003, is expected to be completed in 2007.

The 30,000-square-foot facility (pictured in an artist's rendering above), which will adjoin a preexisting office building, will be the first newspaper production facility to receive a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design designation from the U.S. Green Building Council in Washington.

The council—comprised of environmentally concerned builders, government agencies and universities—bestows the LEED designation on buildings that meet a number of criteria, ranging from water use reduction to the use of recyclable materials. Only 213 commercial buildings in the country have received the honor.

Initially, the Hudnutt family, which owns The Chronicle-Telegram and the neighboring Medina County Gazette, wanted to consolidate its two printing plants into a new facility somewhere between the two communities. However, the family later discovered, through the help of Forum Architects LLC in Cleveland, that it could expand the Elyria site for less money.

"I began thinking about how newspapers use up so much raw material and energy and became inspired," says Charles A. Rosati, a principal at Forum Architects.

The 47,000-square-foot office building and downtown site already was 40 percent compliant with LEED standards, which convinced the family to aim for further compliance with its new plant.

Meeting LEED standards promised to help the paper save money on energy costs, thanks to the use of smaller—and fewer—windows, and thicker glass, which will keep the plant warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer. Though states such as New York and Oregon offer tax incentives for LEED compliance, Ohio does not, according to the U.S. Green Building Council.

In addition to the cost savings that come from maximizing efficiency and minimizing waste, says Publisher Cooper Hudnutt, "we think it's the environmentally responsible thing to do."

The paper's goal, he adds, is to hit 80 percent LEED compliance with the new plant.

Such preprint volume, combined with advertisers' increasing demands for ZIP-code and sub-ZIP-code level zoning (PRESSTIME, November 2005, p. 26), not only is influencing purchasing decisions for inserting and other related equipment, but also is drastically influencing how newspapers design new facilities to house it all.

Presses Save Space, Inserts Consume It

With plant construction running anywhere from a hundred dollars per square foot to several thousand dollars per square foot, publishers today are more inclined to devote as much space as possible to storing, sorting and inserting moneymaking preprints.

Fortunately, some of the latest offset presses are designed to fit snugly into tight spaces, freeing up room for additional inserters and preprint packages. The Cortina from KBA, which has U.S. offices in York, Pa., for example, has one main operating level and a 12-foot-tall, four-high tower, making it compact enough to fit in a standard-size commercial building.

Also, "with more options due to shaft-less technology, we are seeing side-fed, end-fed, right-angle-fed and bottom-fed press options," says Dario D. DiMare, president of Dario Designs Inc. in Framingham, Mass., the largest designer of newspaper facilities in the United States. Changing the web feed orientation can offer several advantages, including the ability to squeeze a press into a building with a lower ceiling, DiMare says.

These are just some of the variables that today's architects keep in mind when they approach a new project.

"Thirty years ago, we were largely focused on facilities driven by printing technology enhancements," says Michael M. Pusich, newspaper group vice president at The Austin Co., an architectural consulting firm in Chicago. "The architect just asked how big [the press] was and where did it go."

With more newspapers looking for ways to offer advertisers slicker, more intricate preprint options, additional equipment such as quarter folding, stitching, trimming and labeling units are all being brought



The Bulletin's \$12 million, 87,000-square-foot plant in Bend, Ore., features the pressroom and mailroom on the same floor and a separate dock for receiving newsprint, which dramatically streamlined the newspaper's workflow.

into today's plants, and must be planned for by designers. Many of these devices don't just improve the quality of pre-prints, but offer ways to tailor products for specific geographic and demographic zones—something newspapers are keen to take advantage of.

"Focus has changed from distribution of a single product throughout a market area to the distribution of finely zoned products on a more granular basis," says Pusich.

Yet, the more newspapers move toward increased zoning, the more space is required to store the zoned editions, which adds to the cost of a plant.

Construction of a new facility, DiMare says, can range from \$100-per-square-foot to \$2500-per-square-foot, depending on variables such as location, climate and the size of the presslines that need to be accommodated.

Another change is who architects must now work with. Where once they were given some general guidelines and left to design a plant pretty much on

their own, architects today can expect to work side by side with several executives at the paper—from the publisher and general manager to the chief financial officer and members of the production and information technology departments—nearly every step of the way.

It's no longer just a matter of a publisher telling the design company that he has just purchased a press and needs "to have a building in 12 months to put it into," DiMare says.

From Patchwork to Proficient

Designing new plants to better handle rising zoning and preprint volumes isn't just about keeping square-foot costs down. It's also about streamlining longtime workflows that have evolved to address needs as they presented themselves over time. Often, this streamlining involves separating some parts of the production chain and unifying others.

"We are seeing folders and quiet rooms in the lower level with both the reel stands and the printing units," DiMare says. "We are also getting requests for [putting] platemaking on the second level or on the same level as the CMYK units."

In 1998, The Bulletin in Bend, Ore. (morning, circulation 29,308) was

finding production "very difficult" in its 33-year-old facility, says Publisher Gordon Black. The building had become a patchwork of structural additions by the time the paper hired Dario Designs to construct a \$12 million, 87,000-square-foot plant on 10 acres southwest of town.

The pressroom and mailroom in the old building were on different levels, which significantly impeded workflow, Black says. Workers, for example, were forced to haul newsprint rolls from the storage area into a tiny elevator—that only held one roll at a time—lowering each roll to the pressroom four feet below.

"We avoided all those inefficiencies when building the new plant," Black says.

The pressroom and mailroom in the new plant are on the same floor, along with a separate dock that was built specifically for receiving newsprint, Black says. "This gives us a short distance from where the paper is unloaded and the press conveyors."

Now, he says, "our opportunities are skyrocketing." And a good thing, too, because Sunday—the day when most of its 2 million weekly inserts are distributed—is always just around the corner.

Dario D. DiMare, Dario Designs Inc.
205 Walnut St., Framingham, Mass. 01702
(508) 877-4444
dario@dariodesigns.com

Michael M. Pusich, The Austin Co.
303 E. Wacker Drive, 12th Floor,
Chicago, Ill. 60601 (312) 373-7531
mike.pusich@theaustin.com

Gordon Black, The Bulletin
1777 S.W. Chandler Ave.
Bend, Ore. 97701 (541) 382-1811
gblack@bendbulletin.com