

Time Union to get new facility

Move to offset signals end of Albany's paper's letterpress era. New infrastructure will allow daily to improve printing and court commercial accounts.

By Chuck Moozakis
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Hearst Corp. last month said it will equip the Times Union in Albany, N.Y., with new press, postpress and computer-to-plate equipment in a project to be completed by the end of 2011. The publisher will expand the newspaper's existing Colonie, N.Y., production facility by 70,000 square feet to house the new offset press and postpress equipment. The Times Union said Hearst is spending up to \$60 million for the facility.

Decisions on selecting the press, postpress and CTP vendors to equip the plant are expected in the next few months, said Allison Lauenstein, the paper's director of marketing. Hearst said the new press will enable the paper to print color on every page. The machine, expected to have a capacity of at least 85,000 copies per hour, will replace the Times Union's existing letterpress, which has been in operation for decades. The Times Union is among the last papers in the United States to rely on letterpress technology.

Dario Designs tapped to coordinate

The publisher tapped Dario Designs Inc. to provide architectural, engineering and equipment selection services in support of the expansion. DDI President Dario DiMare told Newspapers & Technology that presses from four vendors will be considered: TKS (USA), Koenig & Bauer AG, MAN Roland and Goss International Corp.

Hearst evaluated, but ultimately rejected, buying a reconditioned press to anchor the facility, DiMare said. The new machine will enable Hearst and Times

Union executives to investigate different format sizes for the paper. Currently, the broadsheet Times Union has a web width of 54 inches, a size that will undoubtedly be reduced once the final press configuration has been made.

"This plant will be state-of-the-art," DiMare said. "We've already performed a lot of analysis prior to Hearst's decision to go forward with this project. A lot of legwork was already done."

In addition to giving a boost to the Times Union, the new press is expected to allow the paper to court commercial accounts and to print other newspapers, said Mark E. Aldam, publisher and chief executive officer of the Times Union.

Commitment to future

George B. Irish, president of Hearst Newspapers, said the project reflects Hearst's commitment to the printed page. "While much of the newspaper industry is contracting, this announcement reaffirms Hearst's and the Times Union's commitment to a printed newspaper."

The press and plant expansion come only three months after Hearst said it would upgrade the Times Union's editorial software. The paper will deploy software from Digital Technology International in a project to be completed later this summer. The DTI apps will also enable the Times Union to share content more easily with other Hearst papers, including The Houston Chronicle, the San Francisco Chronicle and San Antonio Express-News. ■