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New Commander CT at Badische Neueste Nachrichten

Traditional and modern no contradiction in Karlsruhe

Newspaper publishers think long term. This is largely because they invest in heavy plant that must be capable of handling production needs over a period of fifteen years or more. When it comes to the long horizon and stability, Badische Neueste Nachrichten (BNN) sets a benchmark among regional German titles. But the Karlsruhe media house and the conditions under which the company's most recent production technology was installed, are anything but ordinary.

Heading north to Linkenheim from Karlsruhe, which has been dubbed "fan city" from its architectural layout, BNN Badendruck's publishing and printing complex is hard to miss. One of the leading daily titles for southwest Germany has been printed here since the early 1970s, and in 1986 the editorial and administrative staff were also relocated to the outskirts of the city. BNN projects an image somewhere "between traditional and modern", and the interior of the publishing house gives the impression of being a rock in turbulent waters.

Continuity is a must

Hans Wilhelm Baur is only the second publisher to head the Karlsruhe newspaper – although the third generation, in the person of Klaus Michael Baur, has already taken over day-to-day management as publisher and editor-in-chief. At 86 Hans Wilhelm Baur still spends every day at "his" firm. Continuity and predictability are the Karlsruhe company's most distinctive qualities. To ensure that this will remain unchanged in the future, in 1994 Baur and his wife Brunhilde, who died

in 2004, transferred their company to the not-for-profit Wilhelm Baur Foundation with the aim of safeguarding the media house's independence on a sustained basis while at the same time expressing its social approach. Whereas financial controlling dictates corporate policy in many print media enterprises, it is Hans Wilhelm Baur's belief that no-one should lose his or her job just because new, more highly automated technology has been installed.

Since production started in 1946, after the title was licensed from the Americans, the *BNN* has been printed on six in-house web presses. Five of them were supplied by Koenig & Bauer. But over the past eleven years production has run on two double-wide press lines from different vendors – a 1996 KBA Commander and a Colorman installed in 2000. Both presses were engineered for the *BNN*'s distinctive wide format – 400 x 520mm (15.75 x 20.47in) – which was not changed to the 350 x 510mm (13.78 x 20in) Rhine format until a new Commander CT went live in spring 2012.

However complex it may have been to print on two different presses with two different automation packages over the years plant manager Georg Siepmann, who has been with the company since 2002, was able to make a direct comparison between the two vendors, their production kit and their service organisations. The most recent investment package bears Siepmann's signature. Along with the new press it also included supplementary and new technology for ctp pre-press, the plate workflow and the mailroom. For the new press a number of criteria applied: it had to fit in the existing building, be installed without disrupting production and the switch had to be completed from one day to the next.

The new press was a splendid fit

BNN's planning and selection procedure was implemented in-house without recourse to external consultants. Looking back, Georg Siepmann says: "With our motivated team we achieved some excellent results." Six months later, in summer 2010, the process culminated in a contract for a

six-wide KBA Commander CT, a configuration which at that time was only in operation at the *New York Daily News* in the USA.

Measuring 29.4m (96ft 5in) long, 6.45m (21ft 2in) wide (excluding steps) and just 10.6m (34.8in) high, the compact substructure press was inserted neatly in the available space (Siepmann: “It was a splendid fit!”). Its four printing towers and two folders allow the press to deliver 96-page broadsheet copies or – which is more common in Karlsruhe – two parallel streams of copies with up to 48 pages apiece.

The two legacy presses at either side of the production hall were controlled from consoles located in a common enclosure halfway along the hall. During the conversion phase the desks were relocated to their respective presses, the enclosure dismantled and the third access door at this point used to bring the Commander CT inside. With just 40cm (15.4in) of clearance between the superstructure and the ceiling, this posed a real challenge.

The new press is configured to accommodate 5/12, 7/12 and 11/12 ribbons, enabling it to deliver innovative ad forms such as spadias, half-covers and (glued) four-page centre spreads. The four reelstands are supplied with paper via a KBA Patras A automated reel-logistics system complete with stripping station. The dimensions of the daily store, however, did necessitate some modification to the logistics system because reels measuring the full 2.10m (82.7in) wide cannot stand upright so must be stored horizontally.

New pre-press, printing and mailroom technology

The printing towers, which split down the centre for maintenance access, have PlateTronic automatic plate changers, RollerTronic automatic roller locks, NipTronic bearers, fan-out compensation, blanket and inking-unit washing systems and central ink pumping.

Other features include four double turner-bar assemblies, two folder superstructures with three formers apiece, two KBA KF 5 folders, cut-off

register controls and gluing units for four-page centre spreads. The Commander CT 6/2 is controlled from three ErgoTronic consoles and is integrated in an EAE Print 5 production scheduling and press presetting system. The total package, according to Siepmann, swung the decision in favour of KBA.

The change of format in Karlsruhe meant that it was no longer possible to split editions between the old presses and the new. Ctp pre-press is the only area where the transition was made progressively, by adding an Agfa Advantage platesetter for the Rhine format alongside the two Agfa Polaris platesetters installed in 2003, and then modifying these for the new plate size. A Barenscree plate-punching and bending device with two buffer stations for 128 unbent plates is another new piece of kit. A conveyor section linking the three platesetters and the two punching and bending devices leads to a plate station in the spacious, restored control enclosure. The press operators' workstations each have three monitors – a portrait-format one for displaying soft proofs, a touch screen for press controls and a screen for checking registration using Q.I. press controls.

Following a series of test prints, BNN threw the switch on the new press in the night from 11 to 12 March this year. It has been a great success. "The *BNN* has appeared every day and we have never experienced a critical situation," affirms Georg Siepmann. After the first five months he is happy with his product, the quality of which he believes has perceptibly improved. The Karlsruhe plant manager is also confident he made the right choice in opting for a blanket-to-blanket press: "This technology definitely has the edge in solids reproduction."

New section structure in parallel with format change

The *Badische Neueste Nachrichten*, which according to the IVW (the German equivalent of the UK's ABC) had a circulation of 143,305 copies in February 2012, is printed in nine local editions, the smallest of which is just 1,700 copies. The change of format was accompanied by a

change in the signature structure to simplify the newspaper's layout and the production workflow.

Much shorter makeready times allow the newspaper to be distributed sooner – all subscription copies must be delivered by 6am. But they also offer the option of including late-breaking sports news in the main edition. The three front, cover sections are not proof printed until almost 11.30pm, once the fourth, local section with its numerous pagination changes has gone through the press. This streamlining further reduces down times and was made possible by consistently utilising offline production in the mailroom. All the copies are first wound and subsequently collated.

BNN has also changed its vendor in the mailroom and installed Ferag finishing equipment comprising two virtually identical lines.

Active in the market

The Karlsruhe plant still basically prints the company's three in-house titles: alongside the *BNN*, which appears six days a week, there is a new-look Sunday title, *Der Sonntag* (circulation around 240,000 copies), and a weekly free, *Kurier*, with a circulation of some 400,000 copies. Following the switch to the more widespread Rhine format the publishing house is actively seeking contract work.

In Georg Siepmann's opinion, the Karlsruhe media house has gone through a process of complete renewal while maintaining a careful balance between the traditional and the modern. BNN is seriously committed to the principle of continuous improvement: in 2013 production methods will be scrutinised once again.

Photo 1: Herr Siepmann_4c

BNN decided not to install a plate transport system right up to the printing couples, instead opting for carriers holding sets of sorted plates, as demonstrated here by plant manager Georg Siepmann

Photo 2: P1110477

BNN publisher Hans Wilhelm Baur (86) has made his mark on the Karlsruhe printing and publishing house over the past four decades

Photo 3: P1110557F

BNN press operators like the easy access via lifts to the slide-apart printing couples

Photo 4: P1110585K

Contented BNN plant manager Georg Siepmann (l) with press operators at the console

Photo 5: P1110589

A perfect fit: there is just 40 centimetres clearance between the Commander CT's superstructure and the hall ceiling

Photo 6: P1110554K

One of three ErgoTronic consoles for the Commander CT: on the left the screen for monitoring registration, in the centre the soft-proof monitor, on the right the touch screen for press operation

Photo 7: P1110635

Sub-level reelroom: the weighing station pictured here is part of the KBA Patras A reel-logistics system

Photo 8: P1110647

BNN's printing and publishing plant on the road to Linkenheim

Photo 9: P1110777

Climbing stairs is a thing of the past, the printing couples in the four-high, only 4.5m tall Commander CT can be accessed via lifts