

## Why inkjet will have an essential role in digital technology's rapid growth

*By Tim Taylor, Director Inkjet Production Solutions, Global Marketing, Ricoh*

**Ricoh Europe, London, July 4 2025** – The advance of digital print technology over the next ten years will be rapid Smithers research has confirmed.

The upbeat [The Future of Digital Printing to 2035](#) stated the market value will increase from \$167.5 billion in 2025 to \$251.1 billion in 2035 (constant pricing).

This positive outlook comes at a time when digital press lines will this year consume over 304,000 metric tons of ink and toner worldwide, costing \$14.5 billion. Investment in new digital print machinery will be \$5.75 billion.

It was interesting to see the Smithers report confirm:

### **1 Inkjet is increasingly the preferred digital technology.**

It is absorbing most of the research and development investment. It already accounts for 72% of the value of contemporary new equipment sales and this continued focus will be reflected in future machine sales. By 2035, inkjet's share of new equipment sales will reach about 82%, equivalent to \$6.49 billion. Demand for electrophotography machines will continue to grow through to 2030, but then revenue will fall. There will be a shift towards larger, higher productivity, machines as digital increasingly becomes a mainstream option for many printed goods. This trend is mutually supportive - lowering the unit cost of printing on digital makes it more competitive on medium and long runs, encouraging the switch from legacy analogue technologies.

### **2 High speed webfed presses are the most promising format for inkjet print.**

The segment has matured rapidly. In 2025, Smithers estimates that there will be over 650 high speed webfed engines sold worldwide, for \$1.6 billion. This is approaching double the depressed 2020 market in value terms. There have been a range of installations from 420mm up to 3m wide printing in single pass. Multiple OEMs are offering machines tailored

to the speeds, media, and quality levels required in a wide range of publishing, security, graphics, and different packaging markets.

It was fascinating to see how the predictions by Smithers align with our own experience of the huge interest in inkjet technology.

We recognise the business model for printing is changing. Fewer pages are being printed due to rising print costs and declining economies of scale and we have to acknowledge that if pages do not have more value than other forms of communication they will not be printed in the future. This means that the lowest cost per thousand business model needs to be replaced by a consultative approach focusing on how to get the best value from print.

Inkjet responds to this evolution by enabling:

- Print on demand with a supply chain where 5 x 1,000 copies instead of 1 x 5,000 is offered and, while cost per copy can be higher, this can work out to be lower over the life of a product, especially as it is more likely to end up being 3 x 1,000 and then a few even shorter runs. Nothing need ever be out of stock.
- Supply chain benefits where tying capital up in stock is avoided and waste reduced. This means engaging with the finance director rather than having a price discussion with the print buyer.
- Finishing integration where steps are saved in the end to end process, labour and other costs are reduced, and production streamlined with a finished product created inline.
- Labour assistance with highly automated systems that reduce operator skill required, and one person can run a complete print and bind production line. This means there is no need for an operator for folding machines, loading hoppers on a binding line, or for moving paper from process to process.

These combine with other advantages that include quick time to market, reduced paper waste through the elimination of makeready for inline processes, production flexibility of odd sections and odd sizes. Plus, not being limited to fixed pagination, no need for additional handling of any combination of pages, and ease of making up additional copies if too much is lost through the finishing process.

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We saw these market insights being explored at drupa and Hunkeler Innovationdays as visitors investigated how they could respond with our newest portfolio additions - the [RICOH Pro™ Z75](#) B2 sheetfed inkjet press that accelerates the shift of high quality commercial print from offset to digital with elevated printed results and the [RICOH Pro™ VC80000](#) high speed inkjet webfed press that enables commercial, book, and direct mail printers to enjoy efficient operation and application agility.

To discuss how digital inkjet can help your operation adopt the changing business model and successfully evolve from analogue to digital talk to our team of experts.

## **| About Ricoh |**

Ricoh is a leading provider of integrated digital services and print and imaging solutions designed to support digital transformation of workplaces, workspaces and optimise business performance.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh's global operation reaches customers in approximately 200 countries and regions, supported by cultivated knowledge, technologies, and organisational capabilities nurtured over its 85-year history. In the financial year ended March 2025, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 2,527 billion yen (approx. 16.8 billion USD).

It is Ricoh's mission and vision to empower individuals to find Fulfillment through Work by understanding and transforming how people work so we can unleash their potential and creativity to realise a sustainable future.

For further information, please visit [www.ricoh.com](http://www.ricoh.com)

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