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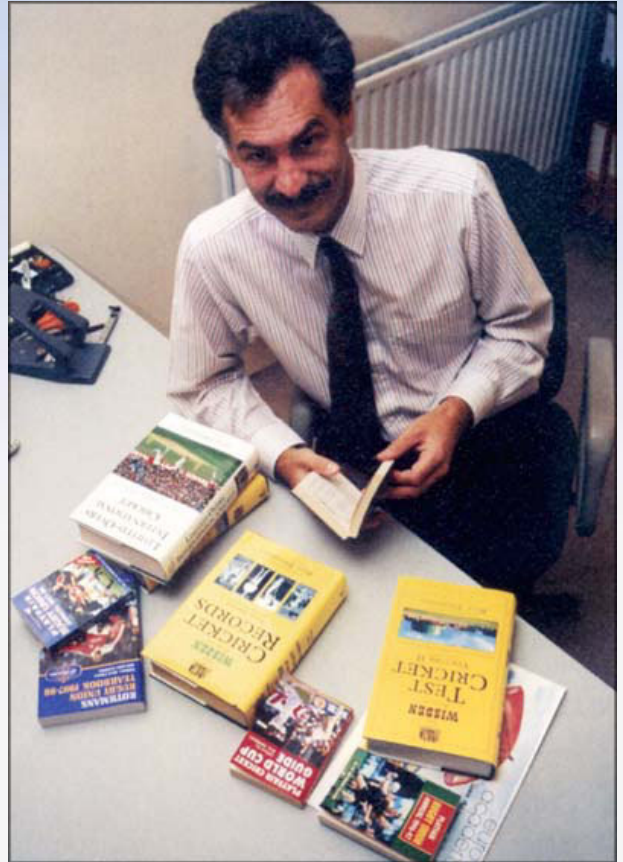
# What's your type?

Typesetting in the book publishing industry is perhaps the only area of repro to remain relatively unaffected by the digital revolution. This is probably due to the notoriously slow-moving, even retrogressive nature of the book publishing industry, which continues to put a high price on old skills at the expense of new and potentially more cost effective technologies such as on demand printing.

Reigate based Letterpart is one of the few typesetting companies to buck tradition by steering its core business away from the straightforward keying-in of data, and towards a more complex data management facility, which still uses the traditional typesetting skills but augments them with digital technology. "We are very much the oddballs," says Chris Leggett, co-founder (together with his wife Caroline) and managing director of the company.

Leggett uses Xyvision Production Publisher (XPP) to automate the typesetting process and provide a faster, more efficient service for his clients. Letterpart's core business is focused around XPP; although the company does some work for mainstream book publishers such as Hodder Headline, it specialises in the kind of complex, large volume publishing that really benefits from automation. "The system's main strength is in batch processing," says Leggett. He estimates that at least 30 per cent of his business comes through looseleaf publishing (his biggest client is legal and taxation publisher Tolley Publishing), and a further 30 per cent comes from directory publishing.

Leggett points out that many typesetting houses operating in this market (or publishers doing typesetting inhouse), are unaware that they could cut costs and improve productivity by investing in a system that is capable of automating such lengthy processes as pagination. Most still employ Mac operators working with QuarkXPress and AppleScript, to do this manually.



In contrast, XPP offers highly automated functions like pagination, table indexing, and cross-referencing, and Leggett claims "it can do in five hours what would take months with Quark and AppleScript." This means that updates and reprints can be done swiftly and efficiently without typesetting the entire print volume again. For Letterpart's clients the result is improved turnaround and productivity – and a better bottom line.

Leggett – who is, incidentally, chairman of the Xy User Group -warns that, to maximise the benefits of XPP, the data must be properly structured. It is also vital that the user understands the system – "it's so big that it's difficult to get to know everything" he says.

This means that publishers need to work closely with their suppliers – just as Leggett works with his clients – to ensure that both parties adjust their business practice to reap the maximum benefit from the system. According to Leggett, however, the payback should prove worthwhile: "Our turnover has doubled in the last four years because every year we get the machine to do more and more.

### About Letterpart



Chris and Caroline Leggett founded Letterpart together in 1991 as a fairly traditional typesetting house. Xyvision was on board right from the start -Leggett bought the XPP system from C. Leggett and Sons, the print business founded by his father. Today, the company has four employees in addition to the Leggetts, two working full time on XPP, and two concentrating on data preparation.

Letterpart's first client was taxation publisher Tolley Publishing, and the two companies have continued to work closely together following Tolley Publishing' merger with legal publisher Butterworths.

Today Letterpart's client list is diverse; it works with Hodder Headline and Famell (publisher of an industrial catalogues), amongst others. Leggat says the company is difficult to pigeon-hole: although the company's bread-and-butter business is in looseleaf and directory publishing, it also typesets around 10 novels per month, and does a lot of work for sports publishers.

Leggett has also tuned his knowledge of XPP into a profitable sideline to his core typesetting business, offering consultancy and set-up services to publishers looking to improve the production side of their businesses. He stresses, however, that this activity is very peripheral.

"The job has changed enormously over the last seven or eight years," says Leggett, explaining that it has moved from straightforward keying to a new focus on pagination, with editing undertaken directly on the page. That said, he believes Letterpart's success stems from the fact that it has remained focused on its core typesetting business and never attempted to diversify into print: "We're doing nothing else but what we're good at."

## About Xyvision

Following rumours that Xyvision was losing its way, the company announced last month that it is launching a subsidiary, Xyvision Enterprise Solutions, which will focus on providing publishing solutions to its clients.

XPP and Parlance Document Manager, Xyvision's document management system, will remain at the heart of its sales efforts, but will now be supported by consultancy and integration services.

Kevin Duffy, president of Xyvision, comments: "Our customers are looking for increasingly unified solutions that solve specialised departmental requirements as well as provide general information and knowledge management across the enterprise."

## Letterpart and XPP

Leggett says the decision — made back in 1991 - to opt for Xyvision Production Publisher as the core of his new typesetting business was based on the fact that, at the time, "it was the only piece of software that could handle the looseleaf publishing we were doing." He adds that while there are now other systems capable of handling this, they still do not feature the same degree of automation as XPP.

XPP is an open platform application, running from a Sun Microsystems server to DEC based 5000/200 workstations. Multi-user licences are available for all the software modules — Letterpart has a three user license. The system is particularly suited to the high volume, text-heavy work — such as catalogues, directories and of course looseleaf publishing — Letterpart's bread-and-butter business. It has limited graphics capabilities but real strengths in automated pagination, tables indexing and cross-referencing. It can also arrange contents pages and place fillers automatically, and Leggett says he doesn't know another system which does this as well.

Leggett rarely removes jobs permanently from the system, storing everything on disk (he has 15 Gb of disk space) backed up by tape and archived. 99 per cent of jobs are received by, and returned to the client as PostScript files on disk or via JSDN. Letterpart owns an Agfa Accuset 1500 imagesetter, but Leggett says that these days he is rarely required to supply work as film, as many printers now prefer digital files which allow them to go direct to plate.

## LBW with XPP

Letterpart used XPP to do the pagination for a 672 page sporting tome, *The Limited Overs International Cricket Records*, published by Hodder Headline.

This cricket encyclopaedia features the scorecard of every match played since the first international between Australia and England in 1971, right up to the most recent match prior to publication.

The data was collated by Somerset player Vic Jsaacs in Word Perfect, then supplied on disk to cricket guru Bill Frindall, who added a short description of each match before passing the disk to the publisher for checking. The disk was then supplied to Letterpart, who used XPP's automatic pagination programme to produce the pages. Finally, Mackays at Chatham output the digital files to plate using its computer-to-plate system.

Some manual insertion of data was required, for example, the number of balls faced and 4s or 6s hit had to be added to each batsman's scorecard. However, the production time for each page was approximately twenty minutes from start to finish, including input, correction cycles, and output to disk. There can be no doubt that this process is a great deal faster than using QuarkXPress and AppleScript.

## Multimedia publishing

One of the benefits of XPP is that it is as capable of outputting to CD-ROM or the Web as it is to paper. XPP supports HTML, and software enhancements which provide support for SGML and XML are also available. These enable XPP to be easily integrated with third party XML or SGML authoring tools and document management systems.

Leggett says that a number of his clients, including Tolley Publishing, are already involved, or are looking to become involved in multimedia publishing. It makes sense for looseleaf publishers like Tolley to look at delivering their content over the Web: as changes occur in taxation procedure, Tolley can simply publish the amended sections of its tax manuals over the Web; its clients can then download them, print them off, and replace the old sections with the new - with the minimum of fuss. This would make no difference to Letterpart's core business, as Tolley's typesetting requirements — particularly with regard to pagination — are the same whatever the chosen publishing medium.

## What they say

Chris Leggett, co-founder and managing director of Letterpart said "Our turnover has doubled in the last four years because every year we get the machine to do more and more... Keying in the data is the easy bit. Making it sing and dance is where the skill is."

