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GPO ACQUIRING COMPUTER-TO-PLATE TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE COSTS, IMPROVE QUALITY

The Government Printing Office (GPO) is acquiring state-of-the-art computer-to-plate technology that will dramatically reduce costs, improve press-ready plate quality, and expedite the processing of prepress work. The acquisition of the two computer-to-plate (CTP) systems for \$1.4 million from Krause America of Branford, CT, will generate savings to the taxpayer of \$7.3 million in just 3 years. The new systems are scheduled to be operational later this year.

With the recent development of large-format laser imaging devices that transfer imposed image computer files onto metal offset printing plates, and with the achievement of increased imaging speeds, CTP systems have evolved to the point where they are now cost-effective, time-saving, and reliable devices for the demanding work performed by GPO. The new equipment will accept electronic input for platemaking directly from GPO's automated composition systems.

Establishing networked, high-speed, fully automated platemaking capabilities saves substantial labor costs. CTP technology makes it possible to send electronic text and image files directly to automated platemaking devices, eliminating the need for film negatives and the additional labor-intensive manual processes of stripping and imposing those negatives onto goldenrod for conventional platemaking. It will also ensure consistently high quality plates. As a result, GPO will be able to deliver the same volume of quality print products to Congress and Federal agency customers at a significantly reduced labor cost.

CTP technology saves in other ways as well. For example, it reduces the material costs for film and associated chemicals. And, by reducing the disposal and/or recycling of film and associated processing chemicals, it reduces hazards to the environment. Savings will be achieved by reducing the operating and maintenance costs of current film-processing and platemaking equipment. Total space requirements will also be reduced with the new equipment. In addition, the new equipment will give GPO the capability for electronic storage of imposed signatures.

The new CTP equipment will be used to process the Congressional Record, the Federal Register, the Code of Federal Regulations, the U.S. Code, the Budget of the United States, and patents-related publications, as well as most congressional bills, reports, and documents. The devices will include the capability to automatically process at least three different plate sizes, making them suitable for use on a wide variety of GPO products. The acquisition of this equipment means that GPO's prepress processes will be totally electronic from submission of the information to the creation of the offset plate.

Commenting on the acquisition of CTP technology, Public Printer Michael F. DiMario said, "This is yet another example of GPO's continuing effort to meet the information product needs of Congress, Federal agencies, and the American public with the best technology available, and cut the cost of our operations to the taxpayers." In a recent management audit of the GPO, Booz-Allen & Hamilton, Inc., also praised GPO's move to acquire CTP technology, stating that "the lessons learned in moving to CTP can be used to create a smoother path for future acquisitions of new technologies."