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## drupa 2020 – greet the future!

**It's that time again: 2020 is a drupa year. The international print industry will meet in Düsseldorf from June 16 to 26 for the 19th time. This is already the eighth drupa for me and slowly but surely I am one of the veterans of the industry. That also has its upsides. You takes a slightly calmer approach to it all, can better classify the developments and foresee which solutions will actually prevail.**

In the past, the trade fair was simply showered with superlatives. There was often talk of it being the "Olympic Games" of the print industry. True to the motto of "taking part is all that counts", applying to both visitors and exhibitors alike. [drupa](#) is still a magnet for visitors – with a high proportion of international attendees (75 percent). However, the number of visitors has fallen significantly since the turn of the millennium.

In the euphoria at the turn of the millennium, more than 420,000 visitors stormed the exhibition center and pushed their way through the corridors. However, at the latest with the global financial crisis in 2008, things started to go markedly downhill. In 2016, there were only 260,000 visitors to the 17 exhibition halls on the banks of the river Rhine. Yet it is interesting to note that despite all the mergers and bankruptcies among the suppliers, the number of exhibitors only fell by about 100 to around 1,800.

### A reflection of the industry

The decline in the number of visitors is not so much due to the trade fair format but is rather a reflection of the industry – in which no stone has been left unturned in terms of technology over the past 30 years. Entire work steps have been eliminated through rationalization and

increasing productivity has further fueled competitive pressures. These are things that also cannot be offset by new visitor groups from the creative industries. What is more, there has been a massive shift in media usage toward the internet and social media channels – which has also led to the advertising pie being divided up differently.

There's no need to delude ourselves – the figures paint a clear picture. Between 2005 and 2015, the turnover of the graphics industry in Europe fell by 20 percent from 100 to 80 billion euros, and the number of companies fell by 14 percent to 110,000 (source: [Intergraf](#)). By 2020, the industry's turnover is likely to be just over 70 billion euros and then, according to forecasts, plateau at this level. The figures from the U.S. do not paint a more positive picture either, with the volume of commercial printing falling by almost 50 percent since 1995. So much for the economic environment.

### **The focus has changed**

People used to go to drupa, order a new printing press (or whatever else was on their wish list), and the productivity gain would ensure economic success for the next few years. Technology was the business model, so to speak. Nowadays, things are not that simple. Exhibitors have reacted to this and are focusing on real applications. Entire workflows are acted out and so-called end-to-end solutions show what opportunities and options for differentiation this can open up.

In 2016, HP occupied an entire hall and, with a variety of applications, demonstrated where digital printing currently stands. And at [Muller Martini](#) too, different production scenarios were presented live under the trade fair motto of Finishing 4.0. I found the variable format production of softcover books particularly interesting – the machines were set up “on the fly” without manual intervention.

Then, during the [Hunkeler Innovationdays 2019](#), [Muller Martini](#) presented its new endsheet feeder to the public for the first time and demonstrated how the Vareo perfect binder/InfiniTrim three-knife trimmer duo can also be used to produce the highest quality hardcover book blocks industrially in runs of one.

### **What are the trends?**

Before every drupa, the question arises as to which topics will dominate the event. I am convinced that the degree of networking within the framework of Industry 4.0/Finishing 4.0 will increase even further and that it will be possible to implement completely automated solutions in the future. This is necessary to meet market requirements for print products with variable content, scope and formats – and to do so for small to medium-sized jobs. In printing, we have certainly reached a tipping point due to inkjet printing. Provided you have the prepress under control, offset-like quality can be achieved in inkjet printing, and economical production of up to several thousand copies is entirely realistic.

A trend that I have been following for some years now – and in a digital light – is the topic of finishing. This makes it possible to produce breathtaking printed materials in ultra-short runs with customized finishing and, for the first time, at economically justifiable costs. In addition, digital tools allow refinements to be tried and tested during the design process, allowing graphic designers to approach the desired result. These are precisely the things that have been missing so far, i.e. that print can play out its multi-sensory strengths even better in a digitally dominated world and that our customers can stand out better against their competitors in the market.

**drupa – a mandatory date**

Take one, two or three days off from your day-to-day business and come to drupa. Be inspired by the innovations and solutions I am sure you'll bring along one idea or the other on how to prepare your company for the future. But be prepared to think out of the box because so-called disruptive technologies are emerging on the periphery, which will have a massive impact on your existing business.

In this spirit: see you in Düsseldorf in June!

Your

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