



OPI White Paper

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Contents

Executive Summary 5

Content review.....6

OPI: The first step toward client/server prepress 7

OPI servers7
What happens when you click Print8
OPI function 1: Print serving.....8
OPI function 2: Image swapping10
Extending OPI with additional services.....13
Extending OPI with database production management13
Extending OPI with client/server image manipulation14
Summary14

The Supply Side of the OPI Market: OPI developers and vendors 15

The basic facts15
Why the Mac OS platform dominates in OPI environments16
Product profiles17
Other OPI products25

The Demand Side of the OPI Market: Market size, composition, and user profiles 27

The ROI of OPI.....27
The market size.....28
OPI market potential 1995–2000.....29
User profiles30
Summary and conclusion.....37

Glossary 39

Executive Summary

This document covers a category of applications known in the printing and publishing industries as “OPI servers.” With an estimated installed base of about 10,000 sites, this is a distinct and important category of productivity solutions for publishing.

The installed base of OPI servers to date just scratches the surface of the total market potential. Estimates developed for this document indicate that the incremental market opportunity for 1995 is about 20,000 sites worldwide. Over the next five years, as more of the worldwide publishing industry moves away from proprietary systems and OPI products decrease their prices and increase their feature set, the total number of installations is expected to expand to more than 200,000 sites worldwide. In hardware alone, the OPI market represents an opportunity of close to a billion dollars.

“OPI” literally means Open Prepress Interface, a name given to a specification developed in 1989 by Aldus Corporation. The goal of the specification was to establish a structure for linking existing high-end color systems to desktop publishing systems.

Today, OPI has assumed a much broader role than the narrow focus of the original Aldus specification. OPI now refers to a general image-swapping procedure for page layout. Low-resolution image files—called “proxies,” “previews,” or “FPOs”—are used for page design. Subsequently, at print time, the low-resolution images are replaced by corresponding high-resolution files needed to obtain quality reproduction on press.

Image swapping then opened the door to what has become a second important function of OPI—managing high-resolution output with print services. Print services physically separate layout from output: the output can be in a different room, a different department, or miles away. It also enables layout and output be to scheduled independently.

The two components—print services and image swapping—are bound tightly in the informal understanding of the term OPI. An “OPI server” has become synonymous with a client/server solution that offers this mix of functionality. Virtually all of these OPI products target Macintosh clients. The most successful, Color Central from Adobe™ Systems, is identified primarily with a Mac OS server application. However, Color Central is available for Windows NT servers and their competitors support Macintosh clients from UNIX® and NetWare servers as well. The Mac OS applications have succeeded on the basis of ease-of-use and total system economics, but are challenged by what the industry views as “industrial strength” server technology.

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