

# Computer-to-Plate: *Automating the Printing Industry*

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by

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PRINTING INDUSTRIES OF AMERICA  
EXHIBIT 1110

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Library of Congress Card Catalog Number: 96-78325  
International Standard Book Number: 0-88362-191-6

Printed in the United States of America

Order No. 1435

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## Factoid Foreword

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- The first computer-to-plate system was the Lasergraph in 1974. It used two high-powered lasers to burn off nonrelief areas of a solid block of plastic to produce a letterpress plate. It almost printed a newspaper in Utica, NY.
- Computer-to-plate technology has been applied since the early 1980s for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. A pasteup of the pages was scanned to produce the data for exposing plates. The *Journal* and *Monitor* used satellites to send pages across the U.S. The *Times* sent them across the river to New Jersey.
- The EOCOM flatbed platesetter was demonstrated in 1984 and later sold to Gerber. It was part of the Autologic APPS-1 system, which was the first system to assemble a newspaper digitally and expose the plate from that data. It was installed briefly in Morristown, N.J., on its way to obscurity.
- Polyester plates were introduced in the mid-1980s and exposed in early versions of photographic imagesetters.
- As of 1990 almost all printing plates were exposed in vacuum frames.
- In 1991, Presstek and Heidelberg introduced the first on-press platemaking system with the introduction of the GTO-DI. The system is now used for two-up and four-up presses as well as off-line platemaking for wet or dry plates.
- The first publication produced completely computer-to-plate was *Sports Car International* in May 1994. Publisher's Press in Florence, Ky., used an Optronics platesetter for the glossy four-color edition. Publisher's Press now uses Gerber platesetters and scans ad films to produce digital files.
- The first publication with advertising supplied digitally and produced computer-to-plate was the April 1995 *The Computer in the 21st Century* from *Scientific American*. Apple Computer was the only advertiser and their agency, BBDO, supplied digital ads for printer R.R. Donnelley's Creo platesetters.
- In May 1995 there were more CTP systems installed at DRUPA (42) than in user plants around the world. As of May 1996 over 400 systems are installed worldwide.
- There are now almost 20 digital plates and over 32 models of CTP platemakers.

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