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Inside Imaging

TECHNOLOGY, TRENDS & BUSINESS NEWS

January 27, 2022



Epson SureLab Printer
Sales, Support & Connectivity



What's new in '22?

JANUARY 24, 2022

We asked Stuart Holmes, managing director of [Independent Photo Supplies](#), the leading Australian supplier of all things related to photographic printing, a question or two about the immediate past and Covid-impacted future of businesses with a focus on photographic output.

Inside Imaging: How do you think the industry has held up over the past two, especially photographic print services?

Stuart Holmes: The past 2 years under the Covid cloud has seen many businesses within the photographic industry re-evaluating their future, and indeed in all industries we have seen business closures on one hand and business upgrades on the other. For instance we have many Camera House Members such as Hornsby CH relocated into new purpose-built premises, and another brand new Camera House store open in Rouse Hill, NSW.

Other Camera House Members have also taken the opportunity of the all time low interest rate environment, combined with the changes in the Covid related working environment to upgrade their old technology wetlab printing equipment (and earlier generation drylabs too) including Echuca CH and Horsham CH in Victoria, Parramatta CH, Hornsby CH, Penrith CH, Spectrum CH & Rouse Hill in NSW, and Garrick's CH in Queensland add to the list of Camera House Members already using the IPS/ Epson Surelab D3000 drylab equipment supplied and installed by Independent Photographic Supplies (iPhoto).

We have also seen new businesses being created and re-imagined to cater for school photography and family portraits, and existing customers in this sphere upgrading both their minilab and wide format equipment, again taking advantage of the low interest rate environment and changed Covid working arrangements.

What we found in the first wave of Covid in 2020 was that when the lockdowns occurs, our customers who had (Dakis) online print facilities were easily able to incorporated it into the 'Click and Collect'

services offered. And those that weren't already online were quick to implement.

Other large shoot and print businesses were quick to flexibly reschedule the photography arm of their business scheduling new photo shoots when and as lockdowns eased, while conversely being able to fulfill in-house printing output when Covid lockdowns were enforced.



The new Rouse Hill Camera House opened during the 2020-21 lockdowns.

While the seasonality of their photo paper/ink/chemistry consumables purchases shifted from the pre-2019 levels, their overall business still thrived with flexible management of shoot and print timetables.

When the second wave of Covid hit (or, persisted) into 2021 our customers who were already fulfilling online printing simply just carried on, as if 2020 was a dress rehearsal. The shoot and print businesses that Independent Photo works with are now well-versed in escheduling their photography and print schedule seasonality. On the other hand, we actually saw businesses that failed to take up an online print presence close down.

In the retail photo specialty business area the Covid lockdowns have clearly adversely impacted picture taking opportunities such as social interaction and vacations. Some printing, such as travel photography has decreased but when lockdown restrictions decreased simple family picnics, and other happy moments found their way on t0 social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, and (in lockdown times) online photo books were curated and created. And more people had more time to review and curate their often huge backlog of pre-Covid photography – and print them!

What do you think 2022 holds for us?

World Container Index - 20 January 2022



Shipping costs have soared over the past two years, fuelling inflation. Back in 2020, they were on average just over \$1000.
(Source: Drewrys)

Expectations in early 2021 were bright as we thought the worst was behind us with Covid-19 in 2020, however unfortunately that hope was somewhat dashed, but we now look forward to 2022 eventually showing the type of bounceback we had hoped for in early 2021. The major area to bounce back is school photography and portrait businesses. Many of our customers' regular schedule of shoot, capture and print was interrupted in 2021, but by all accounts we are expecting these areas to return to levels approaching pre-Covid years. Our school photography customers are well prepared and ready.

While Covid-19 is predicted to become endemic, more like an annual flu, it may still restrict traditional social interaction and holiday travel, which may still impact photo specialty printing negatively. The 'new normal' has clearly changed to 'Click and Collect' for photo printing needs and is well and truly embedded in the psyche of photo specialty retailers.

What will 'go back to normal' (or thereabouts) and what is more likely to have changed permanently via the impact of the pandemic?

Online has well and truly become a part of everyone's retail experience across every area of the economy – from food to photo printing, and online and in-store eCommerce platforms are now highly developed and sophisticated enough to handle the shift in markets and consumer demands.

However, the Covid pandemic has created a massive impact on the global supply chain in all areas of the economy and created a range of manufacturing issues. This is evident in bespoke specialist raw materials suppliers and even silicon chip supply. Consumer demand for previously niche product areas such as silver halide film is extremely challenging, and in some cases cannot be met under current

circumstances. Supply chain impacts and the consequent uncertainties will inevitably see further price increases.

We expect this to continue for the remainder of 2022 while we work with all our manufacturing suppliers to attempt to meet our customers' demands by supplying more detailed and accurate forecasting and by ensuring we place our consumables supply orders even further in advance. We are now ordering some 6 to 8 months in advance of actual supply dates to overcome the inconsistencies of the global supply chain!

At Independent Photographic Supplies (iPhoto) we see the resilience of human spirit overcoming the trials and tribulations of the global pandemic.



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POLLS

Do you think professional quality silver halide photo printing is superior to professional quality inkjet printing?

- Silver is best (42% Votes)
- Inkjet is best (30% Votes)**
- It's the image, not the printing tech (28% Votes)

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