



Fujifilm limits A / NZ print options

August 17, 2017

The June issue of Don Franz' *Photo Imaging News International* featured coverage of a presentation which focussed on Fujifilm Europe's range of silver halide papers. From an Australian perspective, it starkly illustrates the paucity of choice offered to labs and photo specialists by Fujifilm Australia.

The report was part of the newsletter's coverage of the 2017 Business Forum Imaging conference in Cologne, in which Anthony Pieters (Fujifilm Europe, pictured right) and Rainer Bauer (Imaging Solutions) delivered a presentation called 'Moving Beyond the Limits – More Profit with the Right Print Offerings'.

The presentation looked at the rich choice Fujifilm is making available to European photo stores and labs. Unfortunately, local Fujifilm customers are ill-served by comparison, as the following table, based on Anthony's presentation and Fujifilm Australia's website, shows:



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'Sharing' papers (all purpose applications):

- Crystal Archive paper - Basic high image quality photo paper (220 gsm)
- Supreme paper - A thicker base, providing the same image quality (220 gsm)
- Supreme HD paper - Also a thicker base, providing a higher image quality
- Writable paper - The basic photo paper with a soft touch surface for postcard applications.

'Creative' papers (Expanding the possibilities to differentiate and create best quality products):

- Canvas paper - Also available in Album paper thickness (165 gsm)
- Linen paper
- Leather paper
- Velvet paper - Deep matte surface, also available as Album paper thickness (165 gsm)

'Professional' papers (Professional applications as wedding books and art galleries):

- DP II professional paper - Thick base, high quality image, 4 different surface structures
- Pearl paper - Thick base, high quality image, pearlescent reflection

'Album' papers (specifically for photobooks):

- Album paper - Crystal Archive+ quality, thinner base (165 gsm)
- Album paper HD - HD quality, thinner base (165 gsm), surface protection
- Premium HDX - HD quality, CA base thickness (220 gsm), designed for minilab usage
- Album paper XS (new) - Crystal Archive+ quality, extra thin base (135 gsm), surface protection

- Fujifilm Crystal Archive Paper Type II
- Fujifilm Crystal Archive Professional Paper
- Fujifilm Crystal Archive Printing Material (polyester base)

– In addition, Fujifilm Europe is considering expanding the range next year with:

- Calendar paper – High quality, no curling of the paper with low temperature and dry/low humidity;
- Gallery paper – Super quality Dmax, high image permanence to preserve expensive and rare artworks.

We asked Fujifilm Australia on behalf of our photo specialist readership why it was that paper options were so limited in Australia and New Zealand compared to Europe and North America. A month went by. When we followed up the response was:

'Just to let you know that Fujifilm has no comment to make.'

The lack of options means that local labs and photo retailers can't 'move beyond the limits' as they simply don't have 'the right print offerings' – if they are sourcing from Fujifilm.

Digital press problems

Anthony Pieters went on to explain that the new thin-base Album XS paper has been developed to drive high speed industrial/central lab photobook (CLP) production, with some of the major photo book companies which were exclusively using digital presses now installing minilab equipment to produce 'premium' layflat photobooks:

AlbumPrinter/Albelli (Netherlands); MonAlbum Photo (France); eCenter (France); GotPrint

He said that with double-sided printing on high-speed equipment (Indigo, Nexpress, etc), true layflat books cannot be achieved and that based on discussions with top Western European photo book producers, he expected that 75 percent of all online (CLP) photobook production will be layflat by 2020 and 50 percent of that will be on silver halide photographic paper, split between Album HD and Album XS type papers.

The thinner Album XS paper enables 50 percent more pages to be produced for photo books without compromising quality, and research is focusing on developing even thinner-base paper ($130\mu\text{m} > 110\mu\text{m} > 90\mu\text{m}$) that will be less expensive (printing cost similar to digital presses) and more robust (blocking/fingerprints/waterproof) for more extensive adoption by CLP companies.

The initial 'external' steps will involve sharpening the image (higher text resolution) and faster production (layflat binding speed should approach Perfect binding speed). Silver halide book production is also expected to enter the graphic arts market.

Imaging Solution's Rainer Bauer said that layflat technology (offering double-page spreads in large format), XXL formats (18x18-inch), thinner (more pages per book) and more robust photo paper with sharper images, and the high value add of photo paper is driving market growth.

Fujifilm estimates that the total number of photo books produced worldwide in 2016 was 108.4 million.

A breakdown of the consumer markets into the various age groups followed: Generation Y and Z, having grown up with digital images, are considered 'non-printing'. To attract them, simple, fast-to-use software must be available for printing photo products. The success of Instax cameras was used to demonstrate how this approach has expanded output of prints and booklets.

It's critical for the future of photo printing to steer consumer behaviour among these people from Instax and booklets to photo books.

Generation Z (15-25 years old) are mainly aware of digital photos from their smartphones and other devices, and their first contact with prints may come through Instax. They may start printing booklets (quick, inexpensive, easy, real photo, and Instagram format) and graduate to the higher quality photobooks, eventually to Layflat formats.

Generation Y (26-35 years old) are familiar with photo products from their childhood / youth, want to remember their experiences for various occasions such as weddings, family, travel, or consumption, and have income to afford photo products. They love a full life (look for their status) with leisure activities, parties, travel, weddings, and family and want to share those experiences.

The Quality Group (>35 years old) are familiar with photo products as a print; in the photo album; as a photo book. They have an established lifestyle with a good income, and focus on quality instead of quantity.

What can the industry do to expand the market? Take advantage of the potential of layflat formats to expand layflat offerings; introduce new products like booklets and new sizes like the XXL 18x18-inch size. Utilize new materials like the new 'real' photo papers which are thinner (more pages in the same binding) and more robust, as well as new digital papers.

High-speed production solutions, such as the fastBooklet, fastBook Professional and the fastBlock 4/90/ 2300 are automating manufacture, and the ZBE Chromira 5x ProLab (local distributor, IPS) offers printing on photo paper in more compact facilities.

For more on the Fujifilm Europe range of AgX papers, [click here](#).

– Abridged from *Photo Imaging News*, June 2017 <http://photo-news.com>



ONE THOUGHT ON "FUJIFILM LIMITS A / NZ PRINT OPTIONS"



Stuart Holmes on August 18, 2017 at 1:28 pm said:

It is clear that Fujifilm's local core competence is simply supermarkets & mass merchants over the last 15 years with only one main Ag-x paper generally available – I.e. Cheap & Cheerful. This is diametrically opposed to the core competencies of Independent Photo (IPS), who supports a broad spectrum of Photo Specialty Lab business from Minilab, Prolab, Commercial, Government and Specialty School Labs in Australia & New Zealand with a veritable smorgasbord offering of Kodak Professional Ag-x Papers – Kodak Royal, Premier Digital PD, Endura, Metallic, even Duratrans display films, as well as an ever growing range of Kodak Professional Drylab & Wide Format Medias – Gloss, Lustre, Pro Matte, Metallic and even Canvas Paper.

See <https://www.iphoto.net.au/kodak-endura.aspx>

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