



# INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS

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## A real-time mail production environment

### On-line, real-time mail processing for absolute integrity management

What is real-time mail production?

And what is the need for on-line, real-time mail processing that provides absolute integrity management?

The modern mailing house environment has twin demands of maximising output (and its integrity) whilst containing cost pressures in a maturing, competitive marketplace.

These twin demands see most mailing houses exploring solutions based around an Automated Document Factory (ADF) concept. Integral to an ADF concept is full job tracking, integrity processing and auditable reporting.

In every ADF concept, the backbone of the mail production process remains with the individual mail processing inserting systems. A real-time mail production environment demands that individual mail processing systems be connected and on-line via a networked operating system - and it must be capable of meeting the exacting requirements and standards of modern mailing houses, processing many varied and complex applications, with maximum integrity. It must also be adaptable to frequent job changes and set-ups, and capable of processing on multiple inserters over multiple sites.

This real-time mail production environment means that documents can be checked and minor changes made before production commences, or during the actual processing of the mail run (right up until the individual document has been delivered to any output system).

With a real-time operating system an individual operator should have an on-screen display that provides total document information, including full details of the make-up of the document pack and the exact position of the mail piece as it travels through the inserting system. The integrity of a real-time operating system requires that:

- Every document set is accumulated without error
- Relevant, selectable inserts are assembled with the correct document mail pack
- All manual operator intervention during processing is recorded and any suspect mail pack diverted from the run for later inspection
- Reporting information is constantly compiled for each individual mail pack during processing, providing auditable reporting that the job was processed correctly.

The need for on-line, real-time mail processing is clearly service driven. This driver can be from within the business as an essential part of a mailing house's service delivery, or it can be external to meet the increasing integrity demands of sophisticated business, legal and community requirements.

An on-line, real-time mail processing system should be capable of adaptation to allow customer access to specified status reporting.

### Real-time mail production

Any real-time mail processing system should be based on a number of simple, essential factors:

**Reliability of processing** - An on-line, real-time mail processing system must ensure the absolute priority of processing. It should be capable of continuing production despite network or server problems. It should allow for elements of the network to continue production if the network itself is down, or inaccessible. The mail processing system should be capable of storing and holding a partially completed job on any particular inserting system. It should allow that job to be re-opened, with full integrity control, on that system. This capability covers the range of potential process issues with any job - for example delay in document/stock availability, or critical time pressure to process other jobs. And finally, the mail processing system should be capable of allocating or transferring an individual job to any networked system, even across multiple sites. This can cover the myriad of production issues associated with the modern mail house - by-passing an individual inserting system in need of unscheduled maintenance, efficient allocation and utilisation of capital

equipment, production capacity and labour, and disaster recovery planning.

**Absolute integrity** - An on-line, real-time mail processing system must ensure verifiable integrity for each individual mail pack. Every sheet of every document set should be capable of being verified to ensure accuracy and correct sequencing before the document set is accumulated, folded and delivered to the inserting system. The mail processing system should be capable of tracking a document set all the way through the inserting system, and be capable of adding verified, selective enclosures. The mail processing system should be capable of tracking filled envelopes through any finishing process prior to delivery to any output system. Suspect envelopes should be diverted for further attention, and reprocessing where necessary.

**Real-time document information** - An on-line, real-time mail processing system must ensure real-time document reporting. Real-time reporting should provide an accurate "in production" snapshot of job progress and status. It should also provide auditable reporting on each document, and detail exceptions that have been diverted for manual checking or re-processing. Final reporting should include usage and productivity statistics for each job and each inserting system.

**Maximum processing speed** - An on-line, real-time mail processing system must ensure maximum processing speed. Production output requires benchmark standards for the size, detail and complexity of an individual job. The mail processing system should be capable of maximising production output to benchmark standards.

**Compatibility and ability to upgrade** - An on-line, real time mail processing system must be compatible with existing mail house and customer systems. It must be capable of upgrade as technology and service standards change. Examples of recent applications that may be relevant for different service requirements include:

- Inkjet in-line addressing
- OCR reading
- invisible ink printing
- in-station barcode or OCR reading for insert integrity

- high page-count accumulation
- automatic metering and computerised weighing
- auto-traying and tray labelling

## **ILCOM exploreneT - an Australian developed technical solution**

Barcode identification and inTemail document tracking has for many years provided document integrity solutions.

ILCOM exploreneT 2000 was designed and developed in Australia to enable absolute document integrity, piece by piece tracking, comprehensive mail processing reporting and full network connection. All on-line and in real-time.

Developed in close partnership with the Australian mail house industry, inTemail exploreneT 2000 offers a real time integrity management solution that is a fully integrated part of the systems operating software. This is a mail processing system that offers input, output and production data verification and reconciliation with full circle accountability.

The flexibility of inTemail exploreneT 2000 allows for easy integration into suitable existing systems, and it has tiered and scalable options that allow entry at an introductory level, with capability for upgrade as required.

## **Basic Features of inTemail exploreneT 2000**

The following features of inTemail exploreneT 2000 all support on-line, real-time mail production:

**Networking** - inTemail exploreneT 2000 provides a complete network connection through a simple Production Console. The processing of an individual job is not dependent on the network, as the processing file can be held at inserting system level, allowing inTemail systems to operate if the network is down or not accessible.

**Real Time Processing** - all jobs being processed can be viewed on the network, and production statistics update automatically every second. Processing information is available on any network terminal, and can be configured for customer access through the internet or by external network access.

**Data Preparation** - the preparation of the control barcode and Matching File is accomplished simply using standard data formatting tools. inTemail use and recommend the Australian product, PrintSoft.

**Late Changes** - late changes to jobs in production can be received as late as 7 seconds before a document set is processed. Changes may include diverting a document set or changes to insert selection.

**Job Control** - allows easy allocation of production to inserting systems (across multiple sites if appropriate), with easy job holds on an individual inserter or a Global Hold, allowing transfer of a job in progress to any other exploreneT inserting system.

**Job Splitting** - easy splitting of large Job Files across several exploreneT inserting systems can be accomplished at production supervisor level.

**Integrity** - end to end tracking and reporting on each mail pack. An exception file of suspect mail pieces is created, with a configurable "Make Good" application allowing an operator to clear a suspect mail pack that does not need re-processing.

**Operator Simplicity** - a Windows operating system provides the operator with an easy to use application for job opening, processing, reviewing and closing. System functions are operable with mouse click simplicity.

**Detailed Reporting** - automatic Output Reporting and Document Re-Printing for completed jobs. Simple to understand report processing of completed jobs.

**Option Compatibility** - The use of exploreneT database processing does not prevent the use of other processing options, for example inkjet printing or multi-stream matching. These processing options are controlled by exploreneT and report back to exploreneT.

Database processing - how inTemail exploreneT 2000 works

## **inTemail exploreneT 2000 operates with database processing features.**

In database processing, each mail-piece is given a specific record number in a data file - the Matching file.

The Matching file has the purpose of providing the information required to process a specific job under specific instructions. The information is stored in a file rather than the traditional method of printing this information on the document itself. The document is then provided with the specific record number that links the pages of a job with the Matching file for processing instructions.

A Matching file is created from the host application containing all process and control information. The Matching file is then transferred to a control server, or in the case of stand-alone operation, directly to a server within the inTemail mailing system. The Matching file contains data relevant to a mail-out, and each job run on a system has its own dedicated Matching file.

When an operator opens an exploreneT job on an inserter, the Header Record of the job automatically sets up the particular processing requirements, such as input details, output options, document sequence and processing requirements. The information is stored within the Matching file, automatically configuring the inserter and providing set-up instructions to the operator.

An inTemail Feeder reads and writes data to the Matching file. Utilising the slim-line barcode containing only an ID number, every sheet of every document set is verified with the Matching file to ensure accuracy and correct sequencing before it is accumulated, folded and delivered to the inserter track. The inserter tracks document sets all the way through the system, while adding verified selective enclosures. Once a Matching file has been used and the job has been closed, it cannot be used again.

Using database processing features, inTemail exploreneT 2000 can positively identify any document set and its contents, point to the specific inserting system that is processing it, and indicate its precise position within the system, step-by-step.

All on-line and in real-time.

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