

Guest View

Reiner Mittelbach

Reiner Mittelbach is Chief Executive Officer of IFRA, the world's leading association for the news publishing industry. He has held this position since November 2001, when he took over the helm at IFRA headquarters in Darmstadt, Germany, including the worldwide network of IFRA affiliates and representatives.

Mr. Mittelbach began his career in 1986 with Unilever, in their packaging group. After several positions in sales and marketing, he joined Menshen GmbH & Co KG, another packaging company, as their Marketing and Sales Director. He first became involved in the graphic arts industry in 1996 as Sales Director, and then Marketing and Sales Director at Polar-Mohr, a cutting systems manufacturer.

Moving to Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG, he became Speedmaster Sales Director for Europe and North America, before joining the management team of Heidelberg's Finishing business unit as Senior Vice President marketing.

ISO Focus: A search for "ISO" on the IFRA Web site brings up dozens of references. Can you put a figure on the number of ISO standards in common use by the sector? Which are the most utilized? Just how important are ISO standards for the sector? Has IFRA or its members carried out any cost-benefit studies on the use of ISO standards?



“Standards are important for our industry in order to reduce costs and effort.”

Reiner Mittelbach : Whenever possible, we promote and also support the development of ISO International Standards.

Standards are important for the newspaper industry in order to reduce costs and effort. Also – and probably most importantly – standards are helping to improve relations between newspaper publishers and their customers. In fact, standards assist customer relations because they clarify expectations on both sides.

Since IFRA was founded in 1961, the articles of the corporation describe that it is a duty to develop and maintain

standards, which we do in close cooperation with DIN and other ISO national members.

Among the standards with the greatest relevance for the newspaper industry is the coldset offset standard ISO 12647-3:2005. In fact, the entire series of ISO 12647 standards on process control for the production of half-tone colour separations, proof and production prints is important, as well as anything related to PDF/X (ISO 15930 series) and the ISO 2846-2:2007 ink standard.

Many more standards are used on a daily basis in the newspaper industry. Among these are standards for energy supply, light, buildings, machines, safety and so on. The entire list of relevant standards is rather long !

And of course, they bring important benefits. A large German publisher reported a reduction in the cost of dealing with complaints by 62.73 % in three years following the introduction of the ISO 12647-3 newspaper printing standard at his publishing houses. This is a remarkable figure.

We know from our practical consulting work that the application of standards can save up to 7.5 % of total production cost. Newspaper printing paper (newsprint) can account for up to 50 % of total production cost. If you do not observe standards that are related to the purchasing, storing, handling and printing of paper and ink, you can easily create excess production costs, as well as the cost of complaints that affect your competitiveness.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel, and without standards we would have to do so – every company on its

own. Newspapers act in a global market. They publish advertisements for global brands aimed at an international market, and the use of worldwide-accepted standards is the only way to be able to do this and to obtain consistent results, globally and locally.

ISO Focus: *One standard, ISO 12647 (graphic technology, process control for the production of half-tone colour separations, proof and production prints) is actually being used as the principal criterion for judging entries to IFRA's 8th Asia Media Awards, as well as for IFRA's worldwide-recognized competition for Club membership in the International Color Quality Club, carried out at two-year intervals. What does this say about the place of ISO standards in the industry?*

Reiner Mittelbach: The level of appreciation of ISO 12647 in the newspaper industry is very high. We strongly promote the use of this standard. IFRA has developed and distributed a generic colour profile based on it, which has been and continues to be downloaded by thousands of users worldwide, and is successfully used by the majority of advertisers and also for the colour separation of editorial pictures.

“The level of appreciation of ISO 12647 in the newspaper industry is very high.”

New members of the International Newspaper Color Quality Club with representatives of IFRA and the Newspaper Association of America in Washington DC, USA (2008).

To be able to print within the tolerances of the newspaper coldset standard is the challenge for all participants in IFRA's quality benchmark competition, the International Newspaper Color Quality Club, which is the only global print quality contest in the newspaper market.

Any newspaper having participated with success in this challenging competition, and having been a member of the International Newspaper Color Quality Club for two years, has a powerful argument in its efforts to convince customers, advertisers and readers that its newspaper is a consistently high-quality carrier of valuable content.

Also the IFRA press acceptance test, IFRA training, regional IFRA standardization projects, and IFRA consulting services are based on worldwide-accepted ISO standards.



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ISO Focus: Can you describe how IFRA participates within ISO/TC 130, Graphic technology, in the development of ISO standards that are important to its members? Are there individual members that participate in national delegations in addition to IFRA's presence as a liaison organization? In the current global financial crisis, is there a temptation to reduce participation?

Reiner Mittelbach: We have participated continuously in ISO standardization work since the second half of the 1980s. We contribute in many ways, but mainly with our technical expertise. One of our experts acts as the main contact person to ISO and all others support her or him in creating input and solutions for the standardization issues under discussion.



Proud members of the International Newspaper Color Quality Club 2008–2010 (centre) are honoured by Reiner Mittelbach (far left) IFRA and Tom Croteau Newspaper Association of America (far right) at the National Press Club in Washington DC, USA (2008).

Representatives from publishing houses are not usually active in ISO/TC 130 directly. They like to delegate representation to their associations, which are formed in order to do this job. The press and equipment manufacturers participate to a certain extent in the work of the standardization committees, but are also mainly represented by their specific associations.

Twenty years ago, IFRA consolidated all available national newspaper

Worldwide research and services for the news publishing industry

With headquarters in Darmstadt, Germany, IFRA has acted as the platform for decision-makers from the newspaper industry since 1961. The organization offers its services primarily to its more than 3100 members in nearly 80 countries. A board, comprising publishers as well as central, regional and specialized committees drawn from IFRA member companies, steers the work of the international newspaper community.

IFRA conducts extensive research work, and promotes standardization projects, as well as organizing international and regional exhibitions, conferences, workshops, study tours, training events, Newsplex consulting and international competitions.

The IFRA Expo – the annual event of the news publishing industry, held at major European venues – is the world's most important trade exhibition for newspaper companies and their partners. IFRA Expo 2009 will be held from 12 to 15 October in Vienna, Austria.

IFRA Magazine, the international magazine of newspaper business, strategy and technology, is published in several languages in both print and online versions. IFRA also runs IFRA Search, a vertical search engine for the news publishing industry.

printing standards and – together with other associations from Switzerland and Germany – initiated the process towards creation of the first international newspaper offset coldset printing standard. It took about ten years for the standard to be published.

“We have participated in ISO standardization work since the 1980s.”

Since then, IFRA has been actively promoting practical implementation of ISO 12647-3. We work with national and regional initiatives to establish standardized processes. In this way, starting in the year 2000, we have supported quality standardization projects in a number of countries: QUIZ in Germany, KWIK in the Netherlands, CINCO in Spain, CQ² in Italy, SINCOL in Croatia, ACER in Latin America and ICONS in India.

In addition, we have developed a process standard for semi-commercial printing, which is heatset or UV drying in a newspaper offset press. We are also active in preparing for the next revision and improvement of the coldset standard ISO 12647-3, and we monitor the development of ISO soft-proofing and PDF/X standards.

ISO Focus: IFRA has been encouraging its members to implement ISO 9001 (quality management systems) since the early 1990s, and many printers also implement ISO 14001 (environmental management systems). Do you have any figures on the extent of the use of these standards in the industry? What made IFRA such an early supporter of ISO management systems and what benefits have they brought to the sector?

Reiner Mittelbach: IFRA has been an early adapter in many cases. Quite early on, we had already observed that quality management, safety and environmental protection – or green publishing, as they say today – should be combined in an integrated approach.



www.ifra.com

www.ifraexpo.com

www.ifrasearch.com

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ISO 12647-3 implementation projects

Germany	QUIZ		
Spain	CINCO		
South America	ACER		
Netherlands	KWIK		
India	ICONS		
Italy	CQ ²		
Croatia	SINCOL		

industry. And IFRA is actively helping to turn this wheel round with its research work, regional standardization implementation projects, and with its support of ISO standardization, together with all the other international experts.

Standards are important whenever they help reduce costs and effort, improve customer relations and ease or streamline processes. Standardization must never become over-zealous, constraining innovation and improvement. We always try to observe the borderlines. We can only be successful in standardization through the knowledge and support of our thousands of members. ■

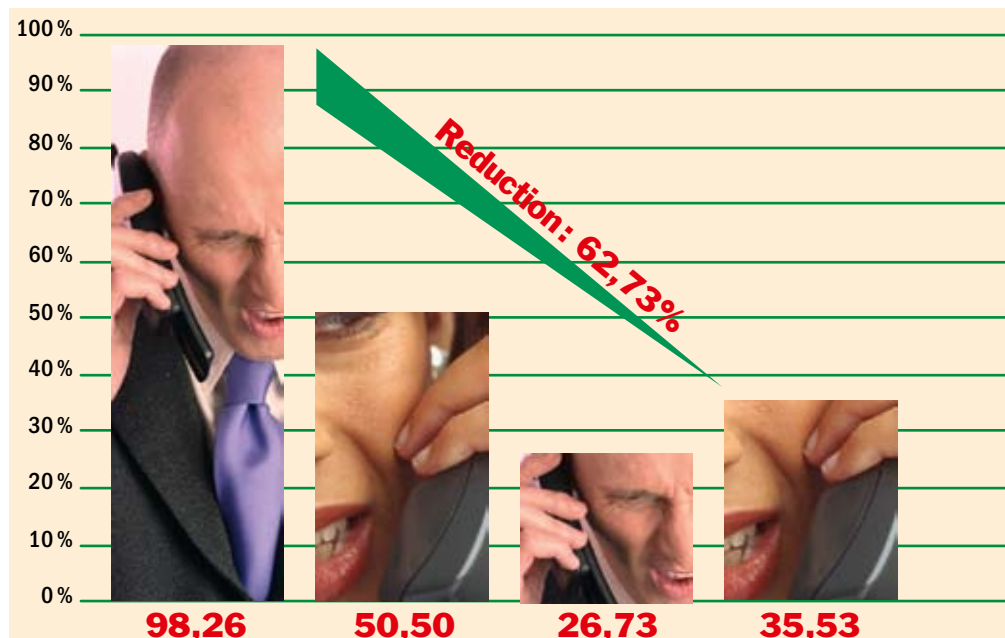
IFRA has initiated and supported a number of regional ISO 12647-3 implementation projects with newspaper groups in different countries.

Some of the large and mostly the international publishing houses are already going this way. We think it will be even more important in the future to pursue an integrated approach in order to ensure international competitiveness and acceptance.

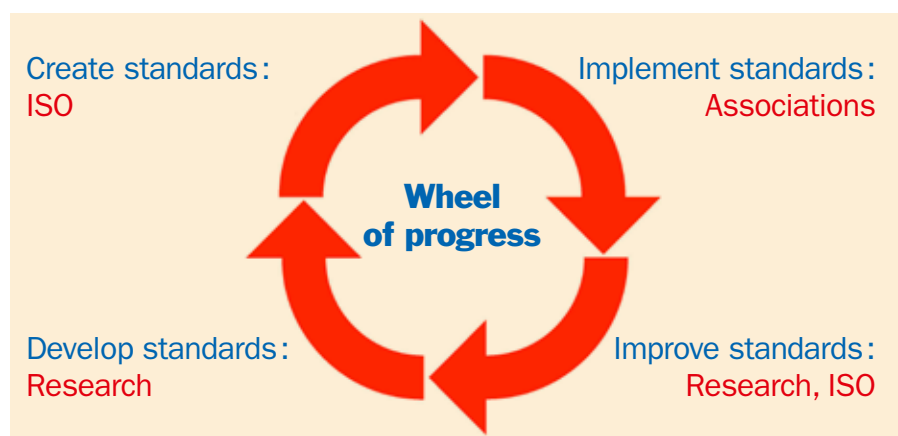
Future customers will not only ask for consistently high quality but also for sustainable products made from sustainable resources and produced in a healthy environment. You can already see today that book publishers are competing in the use of paper from certified forests. Newspapers have an advantage here because newsprint can be made from 100 % recycled paper without quality limitations.

ISO Focus: Does IFRA have a standardization strategy? What developments would you like to see in ISO in the future? Given your experience of both ISO technical standards and management-oriented good practice standards, how would you sum up what ISO and its standards mean to the print industry?

Reiner Mittelbach: Standardization is an integral part of our general approach in the area of newspaper technology. For us, as a global newspaper association, research, standards, implementation and improvement are firmly linked to each other. They form, as we like to point out, a “wheel of progress” for our



Implementation of ISO 12647-3 reduced costs of complaints by 62.73 % over 3 years, for a large German publisher.



IFRA's research helps in the development of standards; IFRA's consulting and training implement standards in practice; real-life experience and user feedback are the basis for improving standards.