

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS CENTRAL REPROGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION

When I was approached by the CRA Board to provide a history of the North Central Blueprint/Reprographic Association I was flattered until I realized that I am nearly the MOST Past-President who is still in the industry and alive to talk about it (thank you, Bill Edwards). All kidding aside, it is a sobering thought for me to realize that many of the familiar names that come to mind are no longer available on the other end of the phone to compare notes and stories. So, this meager effort is dedicated to those fine individuals who gave their time and talent to create and preserve a network of companies who gather annually to share wisdom, lies, family stories and gossip about the industry that has been our livelihood for so many years. – Cathleen Cushing Duff

Although the original minutes books for the first years of the North Central has apparently disappeared into the mists of history, I believe that in the winter of 1955 Rudy Steffan of Service Blueprint in St. Louis, Missouri and John R. Swanson from Standard Blueprint in Omaha, Nebraska had a serious conversation about creating a regional association of blue printers that could meet annually in the fall to compare notes about vendors and processes, and discuss the business in THEIR part of the country. Other regional groups had formed in what would be called the Mid-South (1930), Eastern (1949), and Southeastern (1940) regions. No doubt when they attended the IABPAI (International Association of Blue Printers and Allied Industries) meeting in the spring of 1955 in Washington, D.C. they discussed the “regional” meetings with their industry acquaintances from Texas and New York. The next IABPAI show would be in Los Angeles, California – that was a heck of a distance to travel, and some companies just couldn’t justify the expense. Why not schedule a smaller scale event for the companies in the Midwest in the fall? Surely the vendors would show up to promote their papers, machines, surveying equipment and drafting supplies. And it could be over a weekend so that even a small company could participate and not miss valuable time in the shop.

I know from stories that my father and his friends told that the early days of the North Central were very social events that were comfortably situated in affordable surroundings. I believe that although the first meeting in 1956 when Rudy Steffan was President was held in a city Hotel, the next meeting in Omaha (1957, John R. Swanson, President) was in a small hotel on the outskirts of town and the 1958 meeting in Des Moines (Palmer D. Lowry, President) was held in a lovely motel with a smallish meeting room but a great dining room and bar. Vendor exhibits tended to be focused on tabletop literature, and the events were pretty much socializing around meals together.

Although the region always included Michigan, Indiana, and North and South Dakota with few exceptions the first twenty years the officers were predominantly from Missouri, Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota. C. Kay Schutter, Tri-City Blueprint in Moline, Illinois was President in 1959, followed in 1960 by Hubert “Hub” Mueller from Mueller Reproductions in St. Cloud, Minnesota. In 1961 Gordon Lane served as President from Lane Blueprint in Kansas City, Missouri. Dale Brown from the H.A. Rogers Co. in Minneapolis, Minnesota was President in 1962. Kay Schutter’s brother Don from Tri-City in Moline, served as President in 1963. In 1964 Lloyd Ware, Jr. from New Blueprint in Kansas City, Missouri was President, followed by Carl

Collins in 1965 from Des Moines Star in Des Moines, Iowa. Lane Blueprint in Kansas City, Missouri sent Kenny Baker to the organization as President in 1966. Des Moines, Iowa resident Clyde Ainsworth served as President in 1967 from Des Moines Blue Print Co. Iowa neighbor L. E. Nicol from Mid-State Repro in Waterloo served as President in 1968 --the first member Company to have "Repro" in their company name in this list!

The New Blueprint office in St. Louis, Missouri was represented by Bob Burton at President in 1969. In a jump out of the farmland, Garry Carlson of Dakota Reprographics in Bismarck, North Dakota was president in 1970. Don Steffan from Service Blueprint in St. Louis, Missouri was President in 1971. Marv Merritt of Illinois Blueprint in Peoria, Illinois served in 1972 as President. Service Photoprint of Des Moines, Iowa sent Virgil Krager as President in 1973. The membership was treated to a Colorado vacation in 1974 as Will Hook served as President -- there would be ongoing debate for years to come about whether Colorado was really *in* the North Central region, but Will was a generous member for many years. Ralph Wasik, Sr. from Rapids Reproductions in Cedar Rapids, Iowa served as President in 1975. In 1976 Bill Edwards was President from The Copy Shop in Bloomington, Illinois. Jack Mueller, Hub's son, represented Mueller Reproduction as President from St. Cloud, Minnesota in 1977.

Minutes of the Association give us a better picture of the next thirty years of our history. In 1978 Gerald Lind of Kal-Blue & Supply in Kalamazoo, Michigan served as the first President from the state of Michigan. His Board included Bill Remick from Clearprint, Jerry Macaulay from H.A. Rogers in Minneapolis, Bill Furst from Huey Co., Mo O'Connor from Royal in Kansas City, Jack Abbot, Jerry Bobb from GMB and Past Presidents Don Schutter and Jack Mueller. This period was fondly remembers as the Jerry Years (thanks to Lind, Bobb, and Macaulay). That year the convention was held at the Holiday Inn in Traverse City Michigan and featured a Fishing Contest for the anglers in the group.

The following year Gerald Bobb served as President and the convention was held in the Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee. Vendor support for the North Central Blueprint Association had grown considerably, and a significant issue was trying to encourage vendor displays to remain "table top only" in scope to reduce the amount of space required to accommodate suppliers. This debate continued for a number of years. In 1980 M. V. "Mo" O'Connor from Royal Blueprint in Kansas City served as President at the convention held in the Lake of the Ozarks. Membership was a major concern, and it was decided to make a significant effort to recruit Directors with an eye to regional diversity to attract more members. Also during this year, Todd Anderson from Dunn Blue in Detroit, Cathie Cushing from Cushing and Company in Chicago, Fred Martin as Vendor Director, Larry Hagelund from Treetowns in Elmhurst, Illinois and Don Mathison from Mathison's in Fargo, North Dakota served on the Board.

Bill Furst from Huey Reprographics was President in 1981, and hosted the convention in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin at The Abbey Resort. Bill's focus that year was on educating better business people and to that end NCBPA hosted a day long training seminar. Probably the best remembered high point of the convention was the hypnotist who encouraged audience participation with hilarious results. In 1982 John Swanson, Jr. organized his convention as President in Colorado at the Broadmoor Resort. At that convention Cathleen Cushing Duff was elected President for the year 1983. At that time John Gross of Technigraphics in Iowa City, Glen Lane from Kansas, City, James Jaccaud from Summit in Akron, Ohio, Joe Marbaugh from

Marbaugh in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Bill Phipps from Phipps Blue in Cincinnati, Ohio were serving on the Board along with Mathison and Cushing Duff.

Downtown Chicago was the site of the 1983 convention at what was the Continental Plaza Hotel (now a Westin property). The city proved to be a great attraction (although the golfers weren't happy at being bused to the suburbs) and there was record attendance which reinvigorated the association for a number of years. And this was the year that the group took the plunge, and voted to rename themselves to the North Central REPROGRAPHIC Association. John Gross, President in 1984, held his convention in Delavan, Wisconsin at Lake Lawn Lodge in what many recall as perfect fall weather. John agreed, at the end of his term, to serve a three year term as Treasurer in accordance with the By-Laws to give more continuity to the record-keeping needs of the Association.

The 1985 convention was held in Indianapolis, Indiana with Joe Marbaugh as President. Bill Phipps invited the members to Cincinnati for the first ever North Central convention to be held in that state in 1986 when he was president. Jim Jaccaud from Akron Ohio selected Pheasant Run Resort in Illinois for the 1987 convention. In 1988 Glenn Lane served as President and the annual meeting was held at the Westin Crowne Center in Kansas City, Missouri. Attendance and building membership was once again a growing concern at the Board Meetings. Members of the board in 1988 were Les Schamens from GMB Engineering Equipment in Wisconsin, John Wilmsen from Service Reprographics in St. Louis, Dewey Ohlen from Engineering Graphics & Supply in Rockford, Illinois, Mike Tackett from Waukegan Blueprint (now FXRepro), Mike Duff from Cushing and Company, Jim Schultz from Design Products in New Berlin, Wisconsin, Len Ainsworth from Beeline and Blue in Des Moines, and Carolyn Gross from Technigraphics in Iowa City – in addition to Glenn Lane as Past President and John Leffer and Tom Carlson as Vendor Directors.

Les Schamens's convention as President was held in Milwaukee at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. It was this year that Norman Michlin of Michlin Products propose that the NCRA start a Charity Auction. Norm spearheaded the idea and solicited gifts and served as our first auctioneer. *

Going from an urban setting to a resort, NCRA returned to the Lodge at the Lake of the Ozarks in 1990 for John Wilmsen's Presidency. As President, Dewey Ohlen selected The Abbey in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin for the 1991 convention. On the agenda for that meeting were topics addressing the growing concern over the use of diazo equipment and supplies. Legislation regarding anhydrous ammonia was beginning to threatening the technology. Depressed business cycles continued to trouble the industry, and although attendance was down in Minneapolis at President Jim Schultz's convention in 1992 the convention topics had taken a decided spin into "non-traditional" reprographics – scanning, color imaging, plotting service bureaus. By the time our group reached Grand Traverse Resort in Michigan with Mike Tackett's 1993 Presidency, everyone was integrating or evaluating digital services – both black and white and color – for their shops.

North Central returned to one of it's earliest and familiar sites in 1994 when President Len Ainsworth hosted the convention in Des Moines, Iowa at the Marriott Hotel. Mike Duff's Presidency followed with a meeting in 1995 at Lake Lawn Lodge which marked the return of great interest in the Trade Show. Although paper and film suppliers and coaters continued to

make up the bulk of the vendors, there were computers, printers and plotters as well. In 1996 Carolyn Gross served as President and held her convention in the familiar surroundings of Lake Lawn Lodge in Delavan, Wisconsin. At that point in time the reprographics Board Members were: Don Akers from Michlin Chemical, Terri Albinson from Albinson's in Minneapolis, Rick Bosworth from St. Louis, Laura Percival from Detroit, Gary Davis from St. Louis, Kevin Rowe from Kansas City, Phil Shelton from Huey in Chicago, Steve Zawoyski from Interline Marketing in the Chicago suburbs, and past President Mike Duff. In 1997 Rick Bosworth served as President with a convention in St. Louis at the Hyatt Regency, Union Station. Phil Shelton chose Oak Brook Hills Resort in the Chicago suburbs for his 1998 meeting. In 1999 the group returned to Oak Brook Hills Resort in Chicago for President Terri Albinson's convention. It is worth noting that at this time the Board was expanded, and the members exchanged Email Addresses at the Board meeting. New names on the Board roster included Dann Nelson from Illinois, Joe Cushing from Chicago, Fred Gennerman from Milwaukee, and Jack Phipps from Cincinnati. Shirley Zawoyski was brought on board to help with Administrative duties.

At the beginning of Y2K, Kevin Rowe 2000 president, we found ourselves heading to Branson, Missouri with the first recorded interest of interactions with the Mid South Reprographics group. By now the topics of discussion were decidedly high-tech: How to improve bandwidth for file transmissions, scanning and archiving documents in the service bureau, digital imaging trends that are shaping the future. These themes reverberated in 2001 with Joe Cushing's Presidency and the meeting held in Cleveland, with the addition of plan rooms, pricing digital services, and how to effectively market bluelines and digital prints from the same shop. After the 2001 Convention, representatives from the NCRA approached the MSRA about the subject of consolidation of the two groups. Officers of the MSRA were invited to attend the Winter Board Meeting that President Steve Zawoyski held in 2002 to work out the details of a combined convention and the consolidation of the groups. We invited members of the MSRA to join us at the convention that year that was held in Lake Geneva at the Abbey Resort. The consolidation of the two reprographic associations was voted and approved by its members at the 2002 convention and the name of the new association was the Central Reprographic Association or CRA.

In 2003 Ralph Wasik served as President of the first convention of the newly formed CRA in St. Louis, MO at the Millennium Hotel. At this time the board consisted of Phil Hudson of Hudson Blueprint from Wichita Falls, TX, Chuck Wingard of Tree Towns Repro in Elmhurst, IL, Tracy Albinson of Albinson's Reprographics in Minneapolis, MN, Jeff Barthol of Western Blueprint Co in Kansas City, KS, Pat Gremillion of A&E -The Graphics Complex, in Houston, TX, Lisa Tipps of Dynamic Reprographics in Austin, TX, Andy Ziegler of Lakeside Copy and Blueprint (now e-Blueprint) in Cleveland, OH, Tom McNew of Digital ES in Oklahoma City, OK, Jeff Sproat of FDC Corp. in Elk Grove Village, IL, Connie Maxwell of Azon Corp. in Arlington, TX, Steve Zawoyski of IDM Group of Wheeling, IL as past president, and Shirley Zawoyski as Executive Administrator.

Under President Phil Hudson, the 2004 Convention took a more southern location and was held at the Addison Marriott Quorum in Dallas, TX... During the 2004 convention Past President Steve Zawoyski of IDM-Group in Wheeling, IL was elected to fill a void on the Executive Board as Vice President with intentions of being President in 2006 for a convention to be held in Austin, TX. In 2005, under the leadership of Chuck Wingard as President, the CRA celebrated its 50th Anniversary at the Marriott's Lincolnshire Resort in a suburb of Chicago, IL The 2005

board consisted of the following Steve Zawoyski, Vice President, Tracy Albinson, of ImageTech Services in Bloomington, MN, Jim Inzeo of A/E Graphics, Brookfield, WI, Pat Gremillion of A&E The Graphics Complex in Houston, TX, Steven Strooh of Beeline and Blue in Des Moines, IA, Kevin O’Hea of Academy Reprographics, Albuquerque, NM, Kip Young of Kal Blue Reprographics of Kalamazoo, MI, Kent Long of Thomas Reprographics, Gary Hosking, of Rapid Reproductions in Terre Haute, IN, Richard Scott of Michlin Products, Dearborn, MI, Cindy Hastings of Technical Image Products, Elk Grove Village, IL.

In 2006, as CRA President, Steve Zawoyski held the convention in Austin, TX at the Austin Marriott at the Capitol. Elected to the board for 2006 were Vince Pingel, of Western Blue Print, Kansas City, MO, Fred Riddell of Ridgway’s in Houston, TX.

Tracy Albinson of TechImage Services plans a convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Minneapolis, MN for 2007.

Before our “separateness” fades into memory, I would like to thank the families and companies who have provided more than one individual to the North Central group to maintain continuity: John Swanson, Sr. and Jr.; C. Kay and Don Schutter; Hub and Jack Mueller; Gordon and Glen Lane; Clyde and Len Ainsworth; Ralph Wasik, Sr., and Jr.; Cathleen Cushing Duff, Mike Duff and Joe Cushing; and John and Carolyn Gross. And we can recognize that North Central has provided a number of Presidents to the IRGA: Clarence F. Schutter 1941-43 (before NCRA was formed); Maurice V. O’Connor 1959-60; J. R. Swanson 1963-64; C. K. Schutter 1964-1965; Don Schutter 1973-74; Wilbur Hook 1976-77; John C. Wilmsen 1988-89; Cathleen Cushing Duff 1993-94; John A. Gross 1994-95; and Michael Tackett 2002-03.

*The CRA Charity Auction since its inception in 1989 has donated over \$60,000. to charity organizations. With John Gross as Auctioneer and Carolyn Gross as “Auction Accountant”, the auction has become a major feature of the convention’s Friday night activities and has proven to be enjoyed by both exhibitors and reprographers.

Contributors:

Cathie Cushing Duff (September 2005)

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