

Art book publisher, RVB Books, accelerates growth and reduces financial risk by printing titles on HP Indigo Digital Presses



At a glance

Industry: Publishing

Business name: RVB Books

Headquarters: Paris, France

Website: rvb-books.com



Challenge

- Gain strong recognition for a new publishing house by releasing multiple high-quality titles in a short timeframe.
- Meet evolving market demand without sinking capital in large inventories of printed titles.
- Publish unique and creative books as art pieces, with perfect colour and image quality to meet artists' uncompromising standards.

Solution

- HP Indigo digital printing for initial runs and special editions of high-quality art books.
- HP Indigo digital printing for short-run and reprints of successful titles.
- Develop a new sales and distribution strategy for specialised books to secure profitable margins for the publishing house.

Results

- Exceptional image quality of HP Indigo digital printing and widest choice of special papers enable stunning books that are themselves art.
- Cost-effective HP Indigo digital production enabled RVB Books to expand its list faster than it could with only offset printing, boosting the newborn company's reputation.
- RVB Books is able to pursue creative projects with minimal financial risk and fast profitability. Initial market success of digitally printed work by an unknown artist gave RVB Books the confidence to later produce a new book in larger quantities.
- Overall financial performance boosted by 'top-up' print-runs of successful titles.

“With the quality and the choice of paper, HP Indigo digital printing is totally perfect for our art books.”

– Rémi Faucheux, co-founder, RVB Books

At RVB Books ‘the art of the book’ is far more than a catchphrase – it’s the focal point of the business. As both an independent publisher of unique fine arts books and a Parisian gallery that mounts exhibitions on new editorial practices, RVB Books works on the cutting edge of both publishing and art.

“We work with artists for whom the book is the final purpose rather than just being a monograph,” explains RVB Books co-founder Rémi Faucheux. “The book is the piece of art, and we also produce some supporting art pieces, which we exhibit and sell via our gallery and online.”

In its publishing work, RVB Books has been blazing new trails by using HP Indigo digital printing to expand its catalogue at little financial risk, improve profitability by reprinting small quantities, and deliver highly creative projects that would be impractical or impossible using conventional print technologies.

Digital printing helps drive early success

On opening in 2011, RVB Books planned five titles, all offset-printed. The founders were eager to make a bigger name for the company, but realised they had limited available capital for additional titles.

Then, “we discovered HP Indigo digital printing and we jumped on the opportunity to produce three more titles with a minimum financial investment,” recalls Faucheux. The company started with just 50 copies of its first three digitally printed titles, produced by Buchbinderei Burkhardt (BUBU). Best known for its bookbinding, BUBU also has HP Indigo Digital Presses and can provide a full book production service.

Being able to afford eight initial titles gave RVB Books a safer, yet stronger, start than it would have achieved with a more limited list. “Using HP Indigo, we could start with a small number of copies, so at first it was not a big investment to print a new title,” says Faucheux. “It has allowed us to make some very specialised books and limited editions for collectors. With these small quantities, the cost is extremely cheap compared to offset.”

Market testing, limited editions and reprints

The initial success of the digitally printed books opened the way to reprints and new projects, while still limiting the publishing house’s exposure. RVB Books has now done several print runs of 50 copies of each digitally printed title, including some collectors’ editions, and it has added an additional three digitally printed titles to its list.

The early experiences with HP Indigo printing gave RVB Books an opportunity to test the works of a new artist, laying the groundwork for expanded collaboration and success. Faucheux recalls: “The Hibernators by Ruth van Beek, who at the time was a totally unknown artist, sold very quickly and got excellent reviews, which raised our confidence with this artist. As a result, we recently created another book with her, using offset for a large print run.”

HP Indigo quality and versatility hit the mark

“We are super happy about the quality of our HP Indigo books,” enthuses Faucheux. “The reproduction is superb, very close to the original. The colours are amazing. And the printing on uncoated paper is really spectacular compared to offset. The details on uncoated paper are wonderful.”



The freedom to choose almost any paper and binding and to use creative formats is another major advantage of HP Indigo digital printing, according to Faucheux. With all that freedom, RVB Books’ artists are not even limited to a traditional book shape or format. One book is triangular; and another combines HP Indigo-printed pages with a silkscreen print varnish and hot stamping.

RVB Books’ digitally printed titles have drawn wide recognition, testament to their creativity and quality. Reviews in leading art magazines, blogs and national newspapers, have boosted the reputations of RVB Books and the artists. ‘Sans Titre M. Bertillon’ by Stéphanie Solinos, one of RVB Books’ first HP Indigo-printed books, has been exhibited at prestigious museums and was short-listed for a Paris Photo-Aperture Foundation PhotoBook Award.

Leveraging creative business strategies

Because the economics of selling creative books in small quantities are different to selling mass-market books, RVB Books applies a novel approach to sales and distribution for some digitally printed titles.

For example, with ‘The Hibernators’, production costs came to around €20 (\$28) per book; but, a retail price high enough to generate profits for all the usual intermediaries in the distribution chain would have priced the book out of the market. So, RVB Books sold the book directly, allowing a reasonable, but still profitable, price of €38 (\$52) per book. It also placed 50 copies in specialised bookstores. Although the bookstore sales were less profitable for RVB Books, they drew the attention of collectors and media, raising the profile of the book and the artist. A limited edition of 30 numbered and signed books is now selling at a much more profitable €130 (\$180) per book.

Success through the best of two worlds

Looking forward, Faucheux is confident that HP Indigo digital printing will continue to factor in RVB Books’ success. “We plan to continue with both offset and HP Indigo printing. We’ll go on with specialised and limited editions in digitally printed short runs. For us, HP Indigo is simply a perfect match.”

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