# The Seybold<sup>SM</sup> REPORT

**Books on Demand**

## 17 Years Later                                          *6*

AFTER NEARLY TWO DECADES, BOOK PUBLISHING CONTINUES TO be an enticing market for digital printing — and a difficult one to penetrate. While the proponents of digital printing have been focusing on publishers and manufacturers, the drivers for books on demand are at the retail end of the channel, closer to the consumer. Mark Fleming analyzes the market.

**Ipex**

## CtP Plates from Both Ends of the Spectrum

THE PROPONENTS OF THERMAL ... entry-level systems at Ipex in Bur... moting violet technology, which d... thermal and violet any easier. Printer... technologies could choose conve... Basysprint or from Lüscher. Corres... offerings of the major players in de...

**Workflow**

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AT THE NATIONAL POSTAL FORUM, held in Orlando, Fla., the strategic marketing and product development ideas presented by some of the leading practitioners on the continent was the big payoff.

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Don't miss this detailed review!

Read about the HELIOS Unbreakable Server Solutions in action.

# Helios: "Unbreakable" High-Speed Workflow for Prepress Professionals

By Bernd Zipper

**The "UB" version represents a new release of Helios' solid server products for the prepress market. Bernd Zipper provides an initial overview for The Seybold Report.**

Helios is legendary in the prepress industry. In the early 1990s, the software developer from Garbsen (near Hanover, Germany) was among the first to make OPI a commercially acceptable technology. For many users, Helios OPI is practically synonymous with solid server-based workflow technology.

The company has chosen to brand this fifth version of the Helios software as "UB" (for "unbreakable") and has overhauled its entire software portfolio. In addition, Helios also changed the payment options. Soon, all Helios products will also available on a lease basis. But Helios has still more surprises in store for prepress production users.

### New Framework

Just as Helios required the Helios Ethershare package as the foundation for implementing previous Helios products, the company will require the Helios Base UB package starting with the "UB" version. This software provides the framework for additional Helios soft-

ware. It is an extension of the operating system being used and is always part of the system. At the same time, this package guarantees a high level of failure protection, since all processes are consistently kept separate from one another. In Base UB, Helios combines the Service Controller (a monitoring tool for Helios processes on the individual server), the Helios printing system, and the authorization system for LDAP, AD/PDC and NIS.
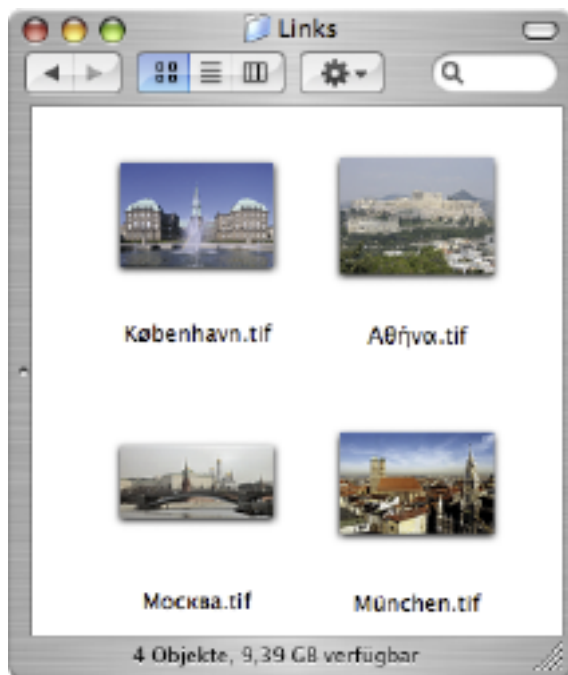
Atop this easy-to-install framework sit the applications: PCShare UB, Ethershare UB and Webshare UB. PC Share and Ethershare provide file-sharing and output management, while Webshare serves as an interface between the server and the Internet. In Helios' world, the actual work of automatic picture replacement, ICC color management and OPI replacement is done by the Imageserver UB package. PDF Handshake UB manages the creation of PDF files using Adobe Acrobat Distiller, handles OPI in the context of PDF files, and performs preflight and printing of PDFs. The final element of the software suite is PrintPreview UB, the remote proofing/soft-proofing tool for PDF and PostScript files. All in all, it is a well-rounded offering that has been solving critical prepress problems for years.

### Free Choice of Platform

Since Helios runs on multiple operating systems (Windows, Linux, Mac OS), it supports activities in a multi-platform network. Users are protected from possible crashes and can exchange data easily and securely. Problems that arise, for example, with the Samba server tool are unknown with Helios. Icons, previews embedded in files and source information are all platform-independent. Helios users also can choose from among most of the available server platforms. It runs on O/S X servers just as it does on Linux or Unix servers, and a Windows server version is expected in 2006.

The licensing model of the UB version is practically identical to earlier versions. Users can specify a number of "simultaneous users per day," who are not tied to specific CPUs. Helios offers a file-server bundle that is specially designed for smaller companies. It includes a 10-user Ethershare license, a 10-user PCShare license and a five-user WebShare license. You can add users in

This is how a Mac OS X User would see a folder on the Helios Fileserver.

increments of 10 or 100 to any of the file-server products. An "unlimited" license is also available for Web-Share, which is ideal for companies that must frequently switch between Macs and Windows PCs. But at a price of 14,500 euros, the complete Helios product suite isn't exactly cheap.
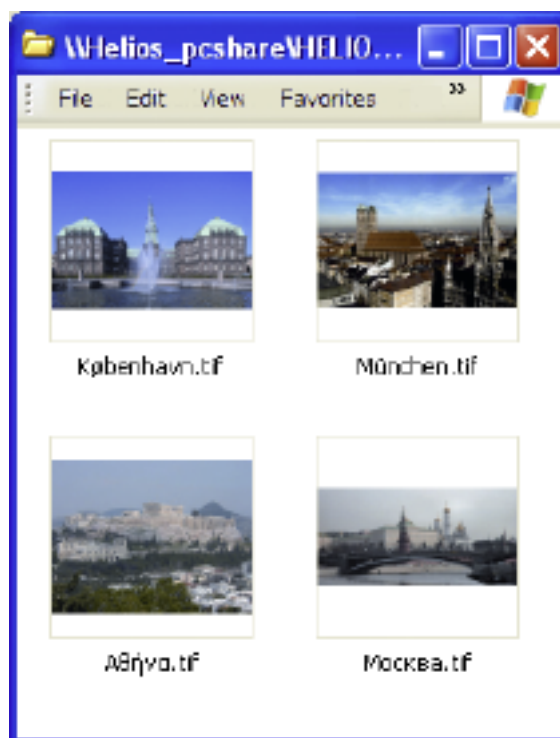
## New Functions

Along with the new version comes a new administrative tool. Using Helios Admin UB (the successor product to Ethershare Admin), the system administrator can continuously monitor the flow of jobs in the various queues. It is also possible to drag-and-drop jobs to reposition them within a queue. There are comparable tools for the management of users and groups. Here, too, a user can be quickly selected and transferred from one group to another. Since Helios uses a Java application for this function, the administrator can control the system over the Internet.

With the Java interface, all the normal operating system features are also available. The authentication server built into Helios Base UB helps with all the usual login procedures and makes it easier to integrate Helios into a large network. To simplify platform-independent production, support for NTFS filestreams has been added. This means that Macintosh metadata is no longer misappropriated by the operating system. Windows users can work on files that were created on a Macintosh, store them locally and save them back to the Helios server — and all Macintosh resources are preserved in the NTFS filestream.

An SMTP server handles communication over e-mail (important for notification and for integration with users). Another nice touch is that in Ethershare UB, file and folder names can now be up to 255 characters long. The comprehensive Unicode integration guarantees that each file shows up in the same way on all systems. PCShare UB now supports Unicode SMB, which provides better integration with OS X. Even Windows attributes for files and folders (read-only/archive/system/creation-date) are fully supported.

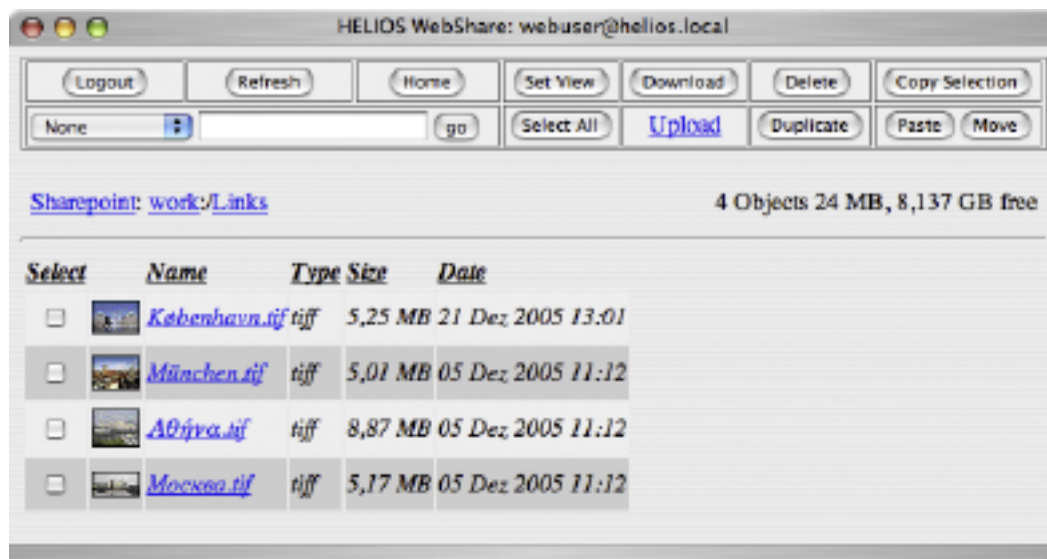## Imageserver UB: Increased Functionality

The key component of a sophisticated workflow is typically Imageserver UB. A lot of changes have been made here, too. In addition to supporting JPEG200, JBIG and 16-bit TIFF, it also supports XMP and Exif. Multiple paths and spot/alpha channels are also recognized, as well as clipping paths for PNG preview files that are automatically subjected to anti-aliasing.
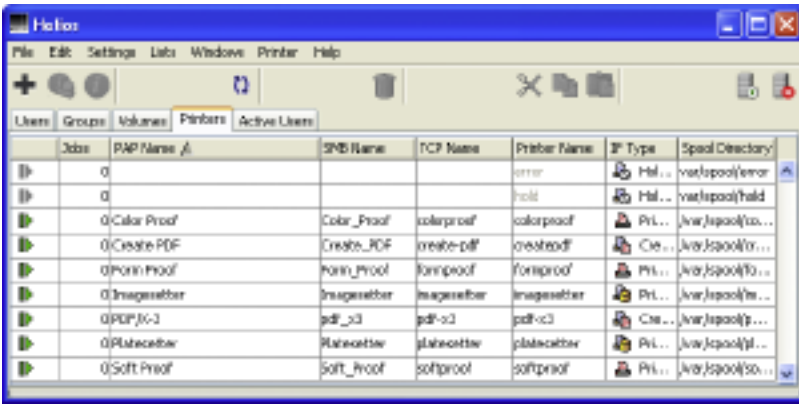


Just to compare it: The Windows-XP Explorer view into a Helios Fileserver Folder.

The integrated ICC color management system was recently brought up to date with the latest CMM tools from Heidelberg. This has resulted in a noticeable increase in conversion speed. New plug-ins for QuarkXpress and Adobe InDesign guarantee fluid integration with both layout packages. The preview plug-in for InDesign is responsible for creating previews of the individual pages of the InDesign document, each of which is stored in its own file (with the extension .xpv). These files also contain links to all the images on the page (screen resolution as well as full resolution), as well as to fonts, text files and colors. This means that they can be used for collecting metadata for databases or digital asset management systems, or for functions such as "collect all images" or "extract all text."

The user can browse the Helios Fileserver via WebShare and explore his server via the Internet.

**Good overview:** All printers are listed on the Helios Server and can be shown via the new Helios Admin tool.

PDF-Documents, stored on the Helios Server, can be viewed via internal Document preview. The server comes with a own PDF-Rendering Service to provide a fast viewing result even of bigger documents via the Internet.



The same is true for the preview Xtension for QuarkXpress. Using the "OPI Tuneup XT" Xtension, gray-scale images can be converted to spot-color images ("DeviceN" for composite output) either in the foreground or the background and can be correctly output using Helios UB and ImageServer. PrintPreview UB now also supports DeviceN (using in-RIP separation) and passed the Altona Test Suite with flying colors.
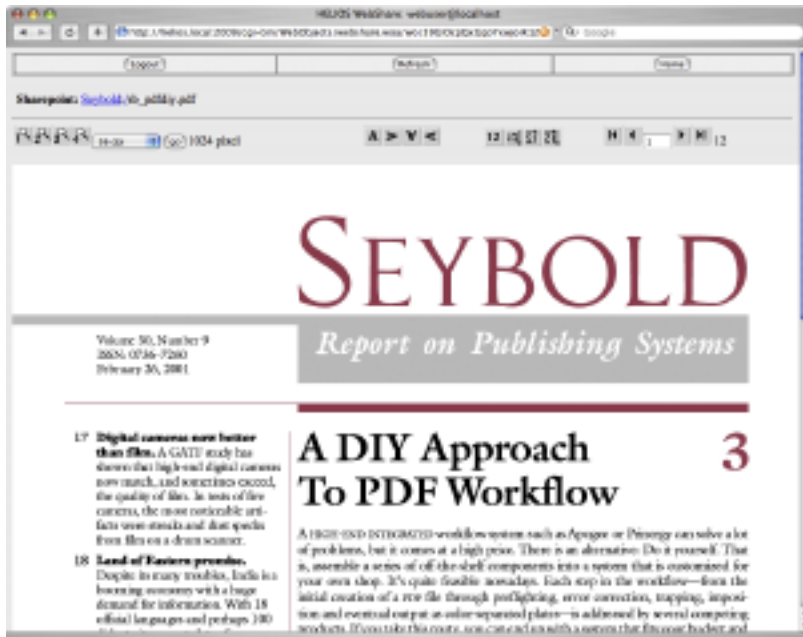
### PDF Workflow, Helios Style

Like Imageserver UB, PDF Handshake UB has been newly updated. Unfortunately, Helios supports only PDF 1.5; users of 1.6 will have to wait a bit longer for support. Still, in conjunction with Imageserver, Helios provides full OPI support, automatically replacing low-resolution images in PDF files with the corresponding high-resolution images. File attributes and job tickets are retained during this process. PDF Handshake also provides PDF creation across a network. Adobe's Acrobat Distiller Professional is used for this.

For Create PDF server, the versions in question are:

• Acrobat Distiller 4.0.5 Mac OS 9/Windows (this was once distributed as part of the PageMaker package),

• Acrobat Distiller 5 Mac OS 9/Windows (this also was once distributed with PageMaker),

• Acrobat Distiller 6 Standard Mac OS 9/Windows,

• Acrobat Distiller 6 Professional Mac OS 9/Windows,

• Acrobat Distiller 7 Standard Mac OS 9/Windows, and

• Acrobat Distiller 7 Professional Mac OS 9/Windows.

One advantage of the "Professional" versions of Acrobat 6 and 7 is that a PDF/X file can be generated directly, using the appropriate Distiller settings. But this is also possible with PDF Handshake UB, along with any other Distiller version, using the appropriate Action in pdfInspector.

Still, an Acrobat license for the current CPU is a prerequisite for installation. MS Office users can use the built-in Ghostscript engine as a fallback. A new feature is password provision for PDF files and automatic PDF preflighting via hot folders, queue actions or Webshare Actionscripts.

### Webshare: The Gateway

Helios users connect with their customers via Webshare UB. The interface of the Web application can be adapted to the company's standard customer interface. Webshare supports file uploading and downloading, and many services are available, ranging from preflighting to Perl support. Files can be quickly transferred into individual workflows. To keep everything orderly, a forms editor for online forms has been added.

Functionality has also been refined in the area of security. For example, the login process now uses RSA 1,024-bit encryption, and the login is not retransmitted as text as part of every request (as is the case with some other competitive systems). The architecture of the system does not make things easy for hackers. Helios uses two servers working together. One handles logins and keeps its files in its unique, secure format, while the second server does the actual work. If data compression is required, this server has its own ZIP-engine, providing a choice of ZIP or ZIP Streaming.

### Our Perspective

All of this sounds almost too good to be true. Of course, there are also points of criticism. For example, it would have been desirable for Helios to make the graphical user interface of the various products a bit more contemporary. Also, some users find inexplicable the fact that the GUI of Webshare UB is not yet customizable for each client, and that the OPI functionality of PDF Native exchanges only raster graphics (and not vector graphics). Even the "flatten" function for PDF files is missing from Helios in the UB version. There is, however, a way of coping with this: This flatten function can readily be provided using Calas'

# Interview: Helmut Tschemernjak, CEO of Helios

**Bernd Zipper:** *Is OPI still relevant in an era of PDF workflows and fast servers?*

**Helmut Tschemernjak:** Yes, absolutely. But the role of OPI has changed for Helios and our customers. In the 1990s, OPI was used mainly to speed up printing. More recently, OPI has become important for server-based image re-purposing with automatic ICC color management for printing and proofing; for integrating modern file formats, such as JPEG2000, PhotoShop and PDF; for supporting newer technologies like XMP metadata and multiple clipping paths; and for overcoming composite printing problems. In addition, OPI is essential for remote workflow support. OPI-based image replacement is the vehicle for all of this.

**BZ:** *You have now added the PDF HandShake tool to your product portfolio. Is this an effort to counteract the trend away from OPI?*

**HT:** No, we moved all our PDF development and support into PDF HandShake. PDF is a very powerful document format, and our features include server-based automated PDF generation, PDF composite and separation printing with smart ICC color management, PDF preflight, PDF-native OPI for InDesign, and more. All this is part of our PDF HandShake product. With ImageServer we address mainly single bitmap images; PDF is a different world.

**BZ:** *In the new UB version, PDF HandShake includes its own preflighting. What does that include and why should the user depend on it? Doesn't the Distiller take care of this?*

**HT:** The PDF HandShake PDF-preflight utilizes the Callas pdfInspektor. We decided to partner with Callas because their preflight offers very precise checking and handles even the most complex PDF files. We have integrated PDF-preflight into our printer queues, hot folders and WebShare actions, or manually via pdfInspektor CLI tools. Adobe Acrobat Professional's PDF-Preflight engine is based on Callas pdfInspektor for interactive user preflighting. Our PDF-Preflight is an automated server solution for intranet and Internet users.

**BZ:** *Fair enough. You proudly call your new software version "unbreakable," but shouldn't we be able to assume that all server systems are unbreakable?*

**HT:** This is exactly the point. Many vendors promise fast and reliable solutions. With glossy marketing messages, they overpromise their solutions without having a long-term record. The reliability of Helios' products has been proved by customers for over a decade. We have been selling server solutions for 15 years, the same period that it took Microsoft to move from DOS to Windows.

**BZ:** *When a German user acquires your software suite, he has to invest a total of 14,500 euros. What added value are you providing for that investment?*

**HT:** Helios customers receive a file and print server solution for Macintosh, Windows and remote Web users, as well as an ImageServer solution, PDF workflow and print proofing, providing the most versatile prepress server solution available. The server software robustness, automation of tasks, ICC color management and integration of Web-based customers will pay back the investment.

**BZ:** *Let's take a look ahead. What can Helios' users expect in the future?*

**HT:** Our R&D team continues to focus on server-based color management, remote workflow support, cross-platform file management, workflow automation, and state-of-the-art PDF technologies. We will support our customers with the migration to the Helios UB Unbreakable Server Solutions, which just shipped. Our products are being ported to the Windows Server platform, and Mac OS X Intel is coming too. Support for remote Web users via our WebShare product will be given a big boost. **TSR**

pdfAutoOptimizer tool.

On the plus side, Helios quickly resolves problems by issuing software updates. More than 114 updates (for expanding the functionality, as well as for fixing bugs) were made available for the preceding version. Even problems in the recently released UB version, such as image placement shifts (with large file sizes) and a severe OPI problem with Adobe InDesign, have already been fixed.

Overall, Helios' "Unbreakable" suite makes a good impression. Module by module, Helios has improved its applications and finally, with the current version, has added some very effective improvements. Helios believes in "security first." In contrast to some of its competitors, Helios prefers to take a conservative approach, based on reliable production.

This is not to say that the competition doesn't emphasize production reliability, but rather that Helios intentionally proceeds very cautiously when updating its software. Some users have strongly criticized this part of Helios' philosophy. Nonetheless, Helmut Tschemernjak, Helios' founder and CEO, has a reputation for not jumping on the latest bandwagon. Longtime customers such as USA Today appreciate Helios' cautious approach.

If you accept this philosophy, the only thing most Helios users would wish for is a good designer to overhaul the GUI of some of the Helios' products. Helios "Unbreakable" is an evolutionary step for any publisher, even if the investment (especially for large operations) is enough to be noticeable in any budget.

**TSR**