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Heartland Printing ahead of curve using soy-based ink

By **Bob Holliday**
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BLOOMINGTON -- Printer Don Leventhal, an innovator in the use of soy ink, still remembers when he first got the idea.

"It was in 1989 and I was working on a Saturday and reading about soy ink in a trade journal," he said. After some investigation, Leventhal discovered that he could use soy ink in his operations.

"I believe I was the first printer in the Midwest to use soy ink in a sheet-fed press," said Leventhal, who has owned Bloomington's Heartland Printing since 2003.

Twenty years later, as many of today's businesses are rushing to jump on the environmental bandwagon, Leventhal remains proud that he was ahead of the trend.

"I was a dreamer then (1989)," he said, adding that soy ink and Central Illinois are a natural combination because of all the soybeans grown in the area.

Leventhal said soy ink, made of soybeans and linseed, has a number of advantages over petroleum-based ink. In addition to its green benefits, it also has a faster drying time and offers more vibrant colors.

"My customers like it and realize that they are using a renewable resource," he said. He noted that paper printed with soy ink can also be "de-inked" easier than petroleum-based ink, helpful in recycling.

The Bloomington-based Illinois Soybean Association is happy with attention to soy ink, said Director of Marketing Mark Albertson, but said it's difficult to track what portion of Central Illinois soybeans end up as ink.

Leventhal pays about \$8 a pound for soy ink, about the same as he'd pay for petroleum-based ink, he said. He estimated that he uses about 15 pounds of soy ink monthly. "There are four basic colors, black, red, yellow and blue," said Leventhal, who operated a national brand print store prior to Heartland Printing.

And while he was on the cutting edge two decades ago, today use of soy ink is increasingly common. David Porter, director of communications for the Illinois Press Association, said he doesn't know of any newspaper not using soy ink. "It's well-suited to newsprint," he said.

And Rockie Zeigler, president of Original Smith Printing in Bloomington, has used soy ink for about 15 years and said it is common among commercial job printers.

Leventhal, meanwhile, thought of one more advantage of soy ink over petroleum-based ink. He opened a can, took a whiff and said: "It even smells better."

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Don Leventhal, owner of Heartland Printing, 606 IAA Drive, Bloomington, shows a stock of soy based printing inks in the printers area of the business on Wednesday morning, Feb 25, 2009. The Pantagraph/STEVE SMEDLEY [Buy reprint](#)

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