

Trends in the Field of Non-impact Printers

Minoru Mizutani

Printers have come to be terminal devices for computers, but since the ease of reading information from paper is difficult to replace, printers are in wide use in everything from personal applications to business applications. Printers are broadly broken down into two groups: impact printers and non-impact printers (NIP). Of these, non-impact ink jet printers and electronic photograph printers are currently in the mainstream, thanks to their ability to print in color or to print in fine detail. Electronic photograph printers handle print processing in page units, so they are called page printers. (Below, we refer to them simply as page printers.) This article describes recent trends in non-impact printers and how Oki Data will address those trends.

Trends in the Non-impact Printer Market

Many ink jet printers are serial printers that print a line at a time. These printers process print jobs slowly. However, since they are so affordable, they are in wide use in the home. Page printers process print jobs quickly, so they are mainly used in businesses. Page printers generally cost more than ink jet printers, so a lower percentage of individual people use them.

The number of color printers sold is gradually increasing. The change of low-cost, home use ink jet printers from monochrome to color is accelerating just like the change from black and white to color televisions did years ago. It has already reached the point that you can no longer find monochrome ink jet printers in stores. An increasing number of color printers is also being used in businesses. Color printers are also being used in areas other than the printing of indispensable production materials. The processing speed of ink jet printers is not suitable for the market demand, so color page printers are gradually becoming more necessary.

Fig. 1 shows the estimated world market by printer type.¹⁾ The figures for years up to 2001 are the actual values while the figures for 2002 and later are estimates. MFP (Multi-Function Product/Printer/Peripheral) indicates printers that have multiple functions (printer, fax, copier). The values for Page include monochrome page printers and color page printers. Looking at the worldwide market trend, estimated sales in fiscal 2002 were 64 million color ink jet printers, 11 million monochrome page printers, and 700-800 thousand color page printers. In fiscal 2005, it is forecasted that ink jet and monochrome page printer sales will remain flat while sales of color page printers will double to 1.5 million units.

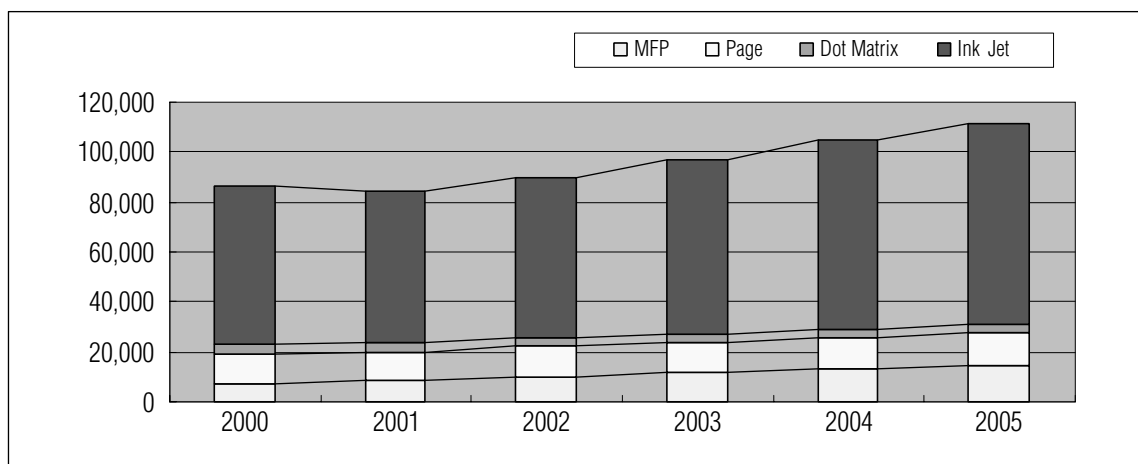


Fig. 1 Estimated World Printer Market by Printer Type

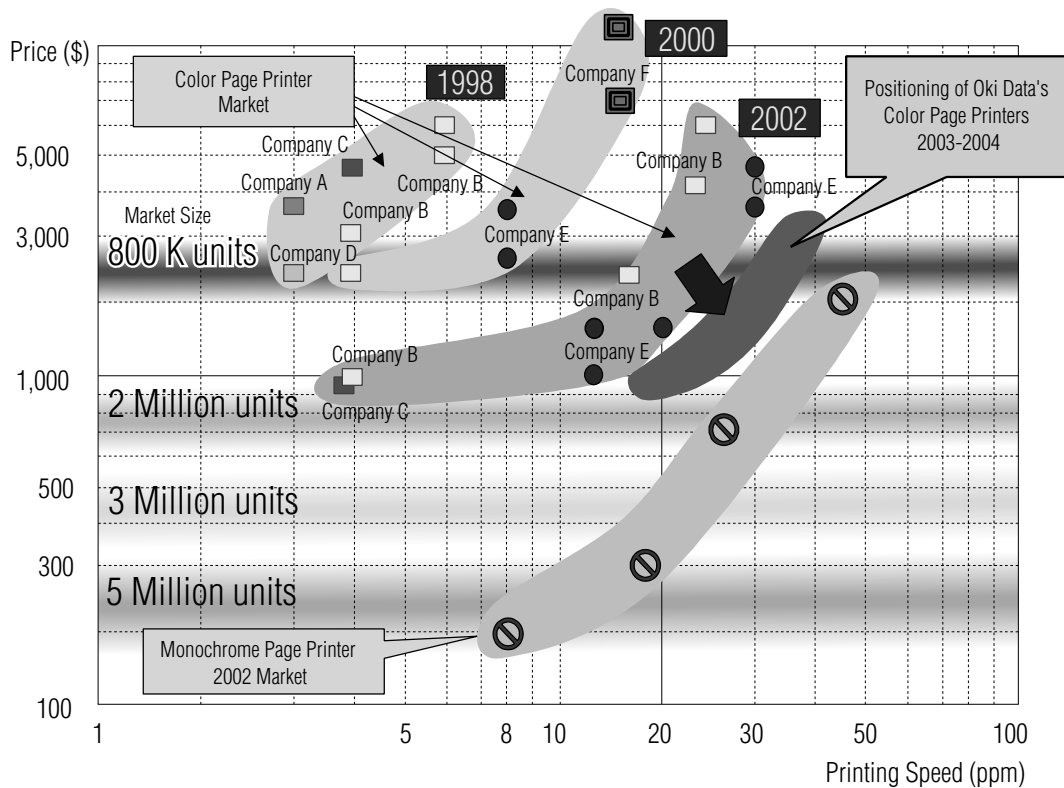


Fig. 2 Trend of the Color Page Printer Market

Oki Data Non-impact Printers

Oki Data started selling non-impact monochrome page printers with a digital LED head as the light source worldwide, starting in the 1980's. We have sold a total of 3.5 million small, light-weight, fast printers that take particular advantage of the digital LED head's strengths.

In 1995, we shipped out the world's first Single Pass Color® *1) type color page printer with a digital LED head. Since entering the market, this printer has been favored for its fast full-color printing, excellent performance, and flexibility of media support. An ever-increasing number of units is sold each year, making this printer the main wing of our business. Last year, we also sold the world's fastest A3 and A4 printers and were also able to sell the world's smallest and lightest (portable enough to be carried by a single person, and easy to set up) color page printer.

Fig. 2 uses regions to show the printing speed and price of color page printers and monochrome page printers shipped worldwide. The Oki Data color page printers shipped in fiscal 2002 have come quite close to the monochrome printer region, in terms of both faster speed and lower cost.

For business use, the demand for monochrome page printers remains unexpectedly high. The necessity of

changing to color printers still has not arrived, but color page printers are used in important indispensable document printing applications such as materials for presentations, conditions proposals for customer insurance, POP (shop advertising), and comprehensive layouts (pre-printing proofreading). As the feelings of these printers and consumables being more expensive subsidies, we project a rapidly accelerating change from monochrome to color page printers.

Therefore, we will continue to concentrate on color page printers, and will resolutely press forward in providing products with low cost, high speed, high printing quality, small size, and can support multiple media types.

References

- 1) Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association (JEITA): Investigation Report on Printers, "Part I Investigating the Trend of the Printer Market", pp.17-29, March 2002.

Authors

Minoru Mizutani: Oki Data Corp., NIP Div., General Manager.

*1) Single Pass Color is a registered trademark of Oki Data Corporation.