The History of Modern Printing

Print technology has evolved dramatically in the last decade, but where did it all begin, and what is next for the print industry?

1950s

Ah, the good old 1950s. The decade that saw Queen Elizabeth II take the throne, Marilyn Monroe's rise to fame, and the invention of Lego.

1951

Technology is developed for inkjet printers - a method of printing that propels droplets of ink to recreate an image.

1953

In 1953, the first high-speed printer was developed by Remington-Rand for use on the UNIVAC computer - the second commercial computer made in the USA.

1958

10 years after American student, Chester Carlson, invented the process of 'xerography', the first ever commercial photocopier was made available, and Xerox was founded as a result.

1960s

The swinging 60's were a groovy time to be alive. The music, the fashion and the art, the sixties were a time of chaos, discovery and self expression.

1968

The dot matrix printer is invented in Japan by electronics and telecoms giant, OKI.

1969

At Xerox's research facility in New York, Gary Starkweather first demonstrated a printing technique using a laser beam with the xerography process – and the laser printer was born.

1970s

The decade where everyone caught disco fever, wore ridiculous flares, and chose Space Hoppers as a method of transport.

1976

The first commercial laser printer was the IBM model 3800, which was designed for high-volume printing and capable of printing 20,000 lines per minute.

1977

Although dot matrix, inkjet, and laser printers were becoming more popular, the first successful color printout didn't occur until 1977.

Late 1970's

Commercial inkjet printers capable of reproducing digital images generated by computers increase in popularity.

1980s

Power dressing! Power lunches! Power ballads!
Everything was rad in the 80s.

1980

The first laser printer for business, the Xerox Star is released, but high costs limit its commercial potential.

1984

Chuck Hall invents 'stereolithography' – the origin of 3D printing technologies.

1985

Color printers becoming more consumer-friendly in both their cost and technology.

1988

The first laser printer for business, the Xerox Star is released, but high costs limit its commercial appeal.

1990s

The 90s saw huge advances in technology. The birth of Internet and the rising popularity of mobile phones changed the way we communicate forever.

1993

With computers becoming more widely used, digital printing is invented, which enables printing from a computer file directly onto paper.

1994

The first multifunction device (MFP) combining print, scan, and copy technology is manufactured by Brother.

2000s

Innovation and changes in the way we print shaped the print industry during the Noughties. People became more aware of paper waste as more and more documents became digital and the sharing of documents in the cloud increased.

2006

Matthew Whitten invents "Wireless Printing Using a Mobile Computing Device" enabling the wireless printing of documents or images from a smartphone on any printer without a printer driver.

2007

Inkless printing, known as ZINK (Zero Ink) is a process based on the idea behind Polaroid that allows colour digital images to be printed without the use of ink cartridges or ribbons. ZINK paper is embedded with dye crystals which are activated by the heat of a ZINK printer.

2007

In the same year, Xerox begin working on an inkless printer that uses reusable paper which is covered in a couple of micrometres of UV light senstive chemicals.

2007

The first iPhone is released – and the start of the smartphone era begins.

2010 & beyond

Technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Connecting devices via wires and cables becomes a thing of the past, and the 'Internet of Things' is born.

2010

The first iPad is released, kicking off the trend for connected tablet devices.

2010

The majority of printing companies stop creating plates and move to a digital printing format. The digital print market is valued at $85.2bn.

2010

AirPrint is launched in the Apple iOS v4.2 update providing a wireless mobile printing solution for users of iPads, iPhones and iPod touches.

2010

Google Cloud Print is launched, allowing users to access documents saved on Google Drive to be printed on any compatible device.

2012

OfficeJet 150 Mobile All-in-One portable printer, the world's first mobile multifunction device is launched by HP. It prints, copies and scans on the go.

2014

The first 3D printer is laucnhed into space by NASA to be tested on the International Space Station.

2014

The trend for 3D printing continues - even food is being 3D printed!

2015

Print security comes into question as hackers user drones with phones attached to steal wireless printing jobs.

2015

Secure biometric printing is a solution as a part of a full secure printing system. A finger print and password combination is now seen as the most practical form of printer security available for secure biometric printing.

2015

Developments in 3D printing leads to development in surgery, prosthetics and medicine, providing healthcare professionals with more alternatives for treatments.

2019

The global market for wireless printing is predicted to reach $73bn in revenue by 2019.

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EBM Ltd is a specialist in managed print services and a supplier of print hardware solutions across the South East of England, including Essex, Suffolk, London, and Kent.

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