

Heading SOUTH

Printers are wooing U.S. buyers. Here's how to get some exporting action

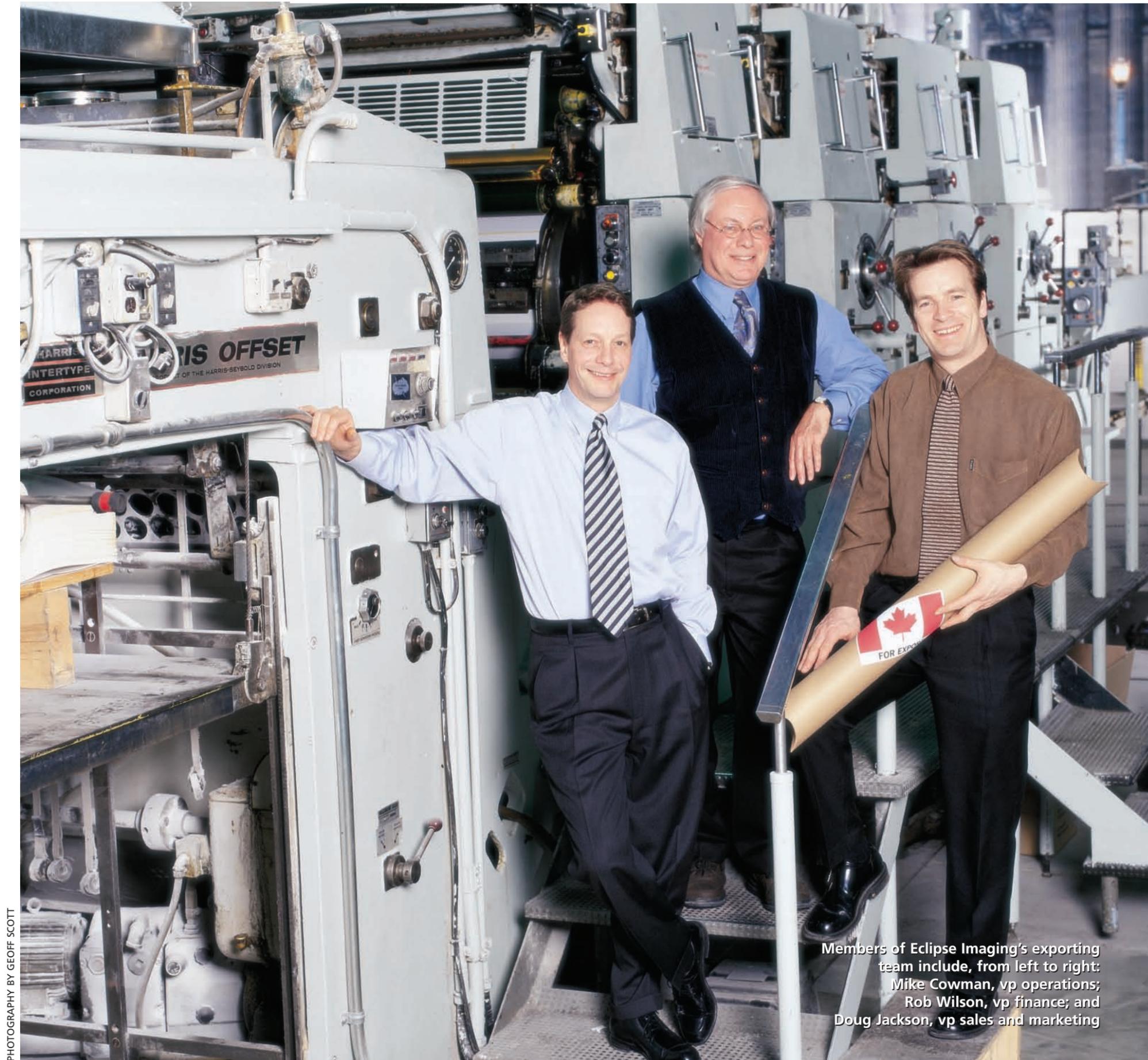
The United States. A land brimming with opportunity. A nation where a few smarts combined with a liberal application of elbow grease are all that's needed to become ragingly successful. Sound familiar? Sure, these are the kind of images that make up a large part of the great republic's national mythology, but if you've looked at Canadian printing exports to our southern neighbour in the past 10 years, calling America the land of opportunity might not seem so far-fetched.

In 1989, Canada exported just \$300 million or so worth of printing to a U.S. market that generated US\$52 billion in printing shipments. Dick Kouwenhoven, president of Hemlock Printers, which generates 40% of its \$36 million in annual revenue from the U.S., says that before the NAFTA deal was struck in the early '90s and the requirements for country of origin markings had been eased up, there were "slim pickings" in the U.S. for Canadian printers. Now, the requirements state that only the ultimate purchaser of the printed material

must be able to determine the country of origin. The general rule of thumb here is, if it's a product meant for individual retail sale, a book or magazine, for example, "Printed in Canada" must appear on each unit. If it's a brochure being distributed by a company like Ford (the ultimate purchaser in this case), then only the boxes containing the product need to be marked. So once the "Printed in Canada" stumbling block was removed, Kouwenhoven says, American print buyers began to succumb to Canadian charms.

And it's true. NAFTA and a weak Canadian dollar, combined with the advent of electronic file submission and remote soft proofing—which are helping to make mincemeat of shipping distance as an issue by shortening production cycles and speeding up turn-around times—are making this country's printers quite sexy suitors. In fact, exports to the U.S. have skyrocketed in the last decade or so. By 2000, printers in Canada shipped \$1.1 billion worth of product. In 2001, that figure rose to \$1.8 billion—that's a 64% increase from the previous year and a whopping 500% increase since 1989. And the thing is, our \$1.8

By Lana Castleman



PHOTOGRAPH BY GEOFF SCOTT

Members of Eclipse Imaging's exporting team include, from left to right: Mike Cowman, vp operations; Rob Wilson, vp finance; and Doug Jackson, vp sales and marketing