



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(88) Date of publication A3:  
**19.12.2001 Bulletin 2001/51**

(51) Int Cl.7: **B41C 1/10, B41N 3/00**

(43) Date of publication A2:  
**10.10.2001 Bulletin 2001/41**

(21) Application number: **00203968.3**

(22) Date of filing: **14.11.2000**

(84) Designated Contracting States:  
**AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU  
MC NL PT SE TR**  
Designated Extension States:  
**AL LT LV MK RO SI**

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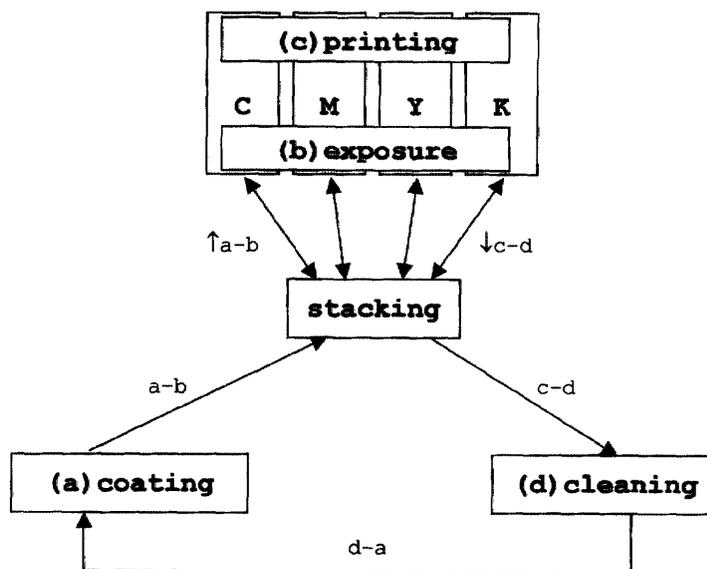
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(30) Priority: **18.01.2000 EP 00200178  
18.01.2000 EP 00200177  
18.01.2000 EP 00200176**

(54) **Direct-to-plate lithographic printing method using automatic plate-coating and -cleaning**

(57) A direct-to-plate method of lithographic printing is disclosed wherein a printing press is used that is coupled to a coating apparatus and to a cleaning apparatus; wherein the coating apparatus applies an image-recording layer on a substrate so as to obtain a printing plate, which is mechanically transferred to the printing press; and wherein, after the print job, the printing plate is me-

chanically transferred to the cleaning apparatus wherein the substrate is recycled, so that the recycled substrated can be reused in a next cycle of coating, printing and cleaning. The off-press coating and the off-press cleaning step provide a fully automated printing method wherein the press down-time is minimized. The method comprises also an off-press or an on-press exposure step.



**Fig. 1**



DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
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Y	---	3,5,8, 10,13, 15,18,19	
Y	US 5 623 877 A (MUTH BERNHARD W W) 29 April 1997 (1997-04-29)  * column 2, line 51 - line 59 * * column 1, line 24 - line 25 * * column 2, line 13 - line 22 *	3,5,8, 10,13, 15,18	
Y	EP 0 802 457 A (AGFA GEVAERT NV) 22 October 1997 (1997-10-22) * claims 13,14 *	19	
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A	US 5 449 474 A (HALAR ZELJKO E ET AL) 12 September 1995 (1995-09-12) * the whole document *	20-22	B41C B41F B41L
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search <b>THE HAGUE</b>		Date of completion of the search <b>26 October 2001</b>	Examiner <b>Martins Lopes, L</b>
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons ----- & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

EPO FORM 1503 03 82 (PAG01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT  
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on  
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