



Despite the eruption of digital reading materials and media, Lakeside Book Company is still flourishing and remains one of the largest employers in Montgomery County.

LAKESIDE BOOK COMPANY

Continued Investment, Pride in Craftsmanship Fuels Growth

By Anthony Schoettle

Even in a world racing toward digital, Lakeside Book Company is proving that great print still has real momentum.

Headquartered in Warrenville, Illinois, the print book manufacturer and distributor employs nearly 1,000 at its massive Crawfordsville complex – two facilities totaling 1.75 million square feet. (There are more than 1,850 employees in seven facilities across Indiana.)

Besides being one of the largest employers in Montgomery County, Lakeside Book is North America's leading book printing, fulfillment and distribution platform.

The business traces its origins back to R.R. Donnelley, which started in printing more than 160 years ago, laying the foundation for what would eventually evolve into today's Lakeside Book Company.

In 2016, LSC Communications was formed as a spin-off from R.R. Donnelley and four years later, it was acquired by Atlas Holdings, a global industrial holding company. The 2021 rebrand to Lakeside Book Company was designed to reflect its heritage and focus on book manufacturing, fulfillment and publisher services. The "Lakeside" name is a nod to Lakeside Classics, the longest-running continuously published book series in the United States, first produced in 1903 by Donnelley.

The Crawfordsville location, which opened in 1921, was Donnelley's first printing facility outside Chicago and is still a pillar of the company.

"Our business is solid, and it's stable. And we're resilient," emphasizes Kimberly Keeling, senior HR manager at Lakeside Book Company in Crawfordsville. "We have a great team of employees here, and the future looks bright."

Still a page-turner

While the migration to digital has put a dent in things like reference and phone books, it's had a much smaller impact in other areas, including religious material and those read for entertainment and education.

That's good news for Lakeside Book Company, which has a huge foothold in those sectors. For example, it is – by far – the largest producer of Bibles in North America.

"People still like to hold a book, especially in areas like education," Keeling conveys. "Books are still the best

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way to learn. Go to any beach or any airport, and you're going to find people holding an open book."

In Crawfordsville, Lakeside Books prints predominantly leisure reading books, including children's books, romance novels, self-help books, biographies and autobiographies – as well as religious books, texts for higher education and even coloring books. Lakeside Book's primary customers are various book publishers, and its sales footprint is global.

"We print the kind of books you would find at Wal-Mart, Amazon and Barnes & Noble," relays Chris Moody, platform customer account specialist. "If you've been inside a retail book seller, you've seen our products."

Progress and pride

Indeed, the Crawfordsville plant has come a long way since it started primarily as a phone book printer all those years ago.

"We don't just print and bind," Keeling expresses. "We have a triple play. We not only print, but we store, and we sell the books that we make. So, it's a 360-degree solution for publishers that we at Lakeside Book Company offer."

Those core functions include offset and digital printing; binding and finishing; distribution and fulfillment; inventory management; print-on-demand services; production of jackets, covers and specialty components; and logistical support for publishers.

Frank Szendrey, vice president of operations, joined Lakeside Book Company's Crawfordsville facilities in 2022 with a vision to guide the transformation of the Crawfordsville plants into world-class operations, firmly prioritizing safety with the mindset of "zero (injuries) is possible" and high quality with a goal of zero customer complaints.

Szendrey ensures these operational targets are met by fostering a culture committed to continuous improvement and a powerful bias for action, where effective leaders use data to solve systemic problems and drive measurable results.

"We continue to reinvent and reinvest in our employees, in our capabilities and in our infrastructure," Keeling notes.

Among the many enhancements over the last five years, Lakeside Book has refurbished its north plant in Crawfordsville. The company also has invested in retention and personal growth for its employees.

The company budgets capital each year for upgrades to the facilities – as well as development of the people who work there.

"We're investing in training and we're investing in recognition of the things that our employees do day in and day out," Keeling says.

The company also has made a major commitment toward keeping employees safe,

including participating in the Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (IOSHA) Voluntary Protection Program.

"Safety here is a core value, and we believe that zero (injuries) is possible," Keeling states. "And when we say zero is possible, we mean that no employee is going to go home hurt when they leave. We believe to our core that we can do that if we are focused on safety."

"We want to ensure our employees are safe and they take pride in what they do, because the result of that is certainly the quality of the product they make satisfies our customers and makes them happy," she adds.

One of the things that has kept Lakeside Book growing year-over-year despite industry challenges, including the move to digital and competitors in China and Mexico, is the pride

for families and children for various holidays.

Lakeside Book also has its Inspire Program, which can be peer-to-peer or top-down recognition. The recognized employee gets a monetary award plus credit that can be used to acquire Lakeside Book swag.

"What we do to build a positive culture is far-reaching, and it creates an atmosphere that makes this a great place to work," Keeling emphasizes.

Lakeside Book is not just inwardly focused. It's also intent on having a positive impact – even beyond the jobs it provides – on the communities where it operates.

More than 20 different non-profit organizations in Montgomery County alone have a Lakeside Book manager or executive on its board of directors. And employees at all



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Lakeside Book's employees take in the products they make.

"Each book that we print is different, and it takes real craftsmanship to put them together," Moody says. "Our employees have a lot of pride knowing the impact they have on a broad scope of people's lives. When they go to the bookstores, they're seeing the products they make, and that's an awesome feeling."

Fun, caring and community

The investment in its employees extends to Lakeside Book making time for fun activities.

In addition to lunch-and-learn sessions and wellness events, the Crawfordsville plant has pizza parties and other food-related events for employees for recognition of a job well done or just to show employee appreciation.

The Lakeside Book Employee Club is an employee-run social and recreational association that puts together such things as bingo nights, bowling events, fishing tournaments and parties

levels are involved with a wide range of non-profit organizations and charitable initiatives.

"Our employees are very invested in our community," Keeling remarks. "They're intent on donating their time, talents and treasures. Giving back is something we all feel very strongly about and something we emphasize as a company."

The employees too bring charitable causes to the company, which Lakeside Book readily supports, including causes in animal welfare, support for homeless organizations and the local food pantry, area youth sports initiatives and school projects and events.

"Community involvement is critical because we are not only engaging where we live and work," Keeling begins, "but we're also engaging young people so that we're preparing the youth to enter into the workforce in years to come, which is going to help us sustain our business and help us build a strong community." ■