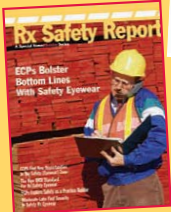


■ VM publishes first OLA Show Daily, the *Grapevine Gazette*.



■ VM publishes *Rx Safety Series*.

■ Pope John Paul II dies on April 2 after 26 years as head of the Roman Catholic church. Benedict XVI succeeds him on April 24.

■ As a Category 4 storm, Hurricane Katrina hits along the Central Gulf Coast near New Orleans, as a Category 4 storm on Aug. 29. Total damage to the coastal regions of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama makes Katrina the most destructive and costliest natural disaster in the history of the U.S.

■ Rosa Parks, "the mother of the Civil Rights movement," dies.



■ "Brangelina" and "Tomkat" dominate celebrity news.

2006

■ Refac acquires U.S. Vision chain, OptiCare Health Systems.



■ Oakley acquires Oliver Peoples, later Buys Optical Shop of Aspen stores.

■ Highmark buys ECCA chain.

■ Following demise of China's Moulin, Metzler International files Chapter 7.

■ Bausch & Lomb permanently recalls ReNu with Moisture Loc contact lens solution from worldwide markets after large numbers of infection cases occur.

■ Luxottica to acquire D.O.C., deal to close in '07.

■ 'Give the Gift of Sight' helps five millionth recipient.

■ Nouveau founders sell firm to current management.

In-office Lens Finishing Evolves from Art to Science

Finishing lenses once required not only a skilled hand, but a skilled eye. Although frame makers provided patterns for making the lenses, the patterns were often available only for a particular style, not necessarily for every model in that style. In addition, frame production was not always consistent. The measurements for the same model frame from the same supplier could vary from one lot or shipment to another. In the pre-digital era, that meant opticians had to use their judgment when edging the lens to get it to fit it snugly in the frame.



Gerard Santinelli
President,
Santinelli
International

"In-office edging was unequivocally more of an art in 1987," recalled Gerard Santinelli, president of Santinelli International, a leading supplier of finishing equipment. "Part of that art was measuring the distance between the pattern and the frame. There was a big interpretation of that differential, and that lent itself to a pretty laborious process."

Often, the person operating the edger would cut a lens too large or too small for the frame. "There was a lot of hand edging and guesswork," noted Santinelli. "Retouching was a gamble. Most retailers cringed because they didn't know what was going to happen to the original quality of the lens. A lot of jobs got ruined."

1987 was a pivotal year in evolution of finishing technology. That was when equipment makers began introducing pattern making machines that enabled in-office lab to make their own patterns using blanks instead of relying the ones supplied by the frame manufacturers.

Retailers embraced the concept for making a pattern for every specific frame because they realized the efficiency gains," explained Santinelli, adding that his company would sell more pattern makers than edgers in those days.

The concept of tracing every frame to make a pattern soon evolved into patternless edging. "Manufacturers wanted to take the art out of it," noted Santinelli. "When CNC technology came in, we got rid of patterns. In the late '80s, you saw an explosion in patternless edging. Manufacturers such as Briot, AIT and Weco were introducing new products every year."

In '91, Japanese manufacturer Nidek entered the market with a patternless edger featuring a voice-driven menu. The machine, distributed in North America by Santinelli International, made the patternless technology more user-friendly than ever.

By the mid-'90s, edger sales were climbing, with ODs and MDs were leading the pack. One reason for the trend, Santinelli noted, was that the federal government had set limits on reimbursements for cataract procedures, leading more MDs to look at dispensing eyeglass as a new form of revenue. Ironically, many opticians still clung to their pattern-driven edgers.

Throughout the mid to late '90s, patternless edger manufacturers continued to add features

to their machines, such as the ability to cut polycarbonate and the various high-index lens materials that were being introduced. This led to some large retail chains, particularly those promoting polycarbonate lenses, to also embrace patternless edging.

The next step for equipment manufacturers was to further computerize the edging process with features such as automatic safety beveling, grooving and decentering lenses.

"All of sudden you had multitasking finishing systems," said Santinelli. "You needed fewer instruments. The all-in-one-system took the place of several machines. And that further diminished the art of finishing by making the process more scientific."

The emergence of the Internet in the past decade, coupled with remote tracing technology, has taken in-office finishing to a new level.

"The marriage of these two technologies didn't replace in-office patternless edging, it has augmented it," Santinelli observed. "Some dispensers continue to use patternless edging and use remote tracing for certain jobs, such as the

"The emergence of the Internet, coupled with remote tracing technology, has taken in-office finishing to a new level."

—Gerard Santinelli

more expensive ones. For those who never did own edging, now remote tracing has become a viable solution to improve their process flow."

Manufacturers continue to push the envelope of patternless edging technology, incorporating automated lensometry, auto-blocking process as well as drills for rimless and three-piece mounted frames.

"Now the old school optician is leading the way," said Santinelli. "The master opticians are embracing the technology because it allows them to demonstrate their craftsmanship. Sales of luxury eyewear are growing because of the opticians have the confidence and capability to process all different substrates, coatings and materials. The technology is at point now where it is assisting in the fabrication and creativity in the production of luxury eyewear as never before. The art has returned."

—Andrew Karp