2004 is going to be an exciting year for our industry, in large part due to what is happening with JDF. While a few products have been on the market for 12-18 months, drupa has been the target for all of the manufacturers to roll out their JDF-enabled systems and software. I’m already aware of over a hundred JDF-enabled products that will be seen at drupa from 50+ major graphic arts vendors … and the list keeps growing.

2000-2003 were the development years for JDF. There was lot of action, but it was all done by the programmers and developers behind the scenes. This year we are seeing an increase in demand from printers, prepress professionals, and others for better technical training, more information resources, and more management information. CIP4 has put together programs and services to address each of these needs including:

1.) Publishing the JDF Marketplace — a catalog of JDF-enabled products and services.
2.) JDF Expert Certificate Program — 13-session technical training targeted to print and prepress CTO’s and technical leaders.
3.) Creating a series of management “webinars”

CIP4 is also introducing “Interoperability Conformance Specifications” (ICS) and product certification in 2004. No single device (i.e., printer, press, imagesetter, etc.) is likely to implement all that the JDF specification provides for. For instance, if you are in the digital printing business, you may not care to facilitate data on hard case binding. A RIP need not facilitate JDF preflighting. A Stitcher probably doesn’t need to handle image rendering data.

ICS documents will provide the standard for individual classes of devices. ICS documents will be used as the basis for certification testing, and CIP4 has signed on GATF as the first certification testing facility and others will later be added in Europe and Asia. ICS documents will be freely available to the public and will become an important part of your buying practices.

The big underlying news to all these changes and developments is that JDF is making the move from R&D to the printer’s shop floor … and the printing industry will never be the same!