

Sean Lahman: Kodak's research on right path

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Innovations for touch screens, printed electronics and other areas show promise.



Rich Beck with a sheet of film taken from the large printer at a production line at the Kingsbury/Kodak joint project at Eastman Business Park. / Shawn Dowd / / staff file photo

Go deeper on digital

For a list of patents issued to local inventors, go to RocDocs.com/patents. For more columns by Sean Lahman, go to on.rocne.ws/19TbfMz.

It has been an extraordinary year of transformations at the Eastman Kodak Co., as the company emerged from bankruptcy, spun off business units and dramatically reshaped itself after 125 years in Rochester.

Through it all, Kodak's research labs have remained prolific with employees receiving more

new patents than the year before. In 2013, they received 306 new patents, up from 273 a year ago and 167 in 2011. As far as overall output goes, the company ranks second only to Xerox Corp.

Some of the those patents have already been sold, [part of a \\$527-million deal that Kodak struck in Feb. 2013](#). These digital imaging patents were made by local researchers, but now belong to companies like Apple Inc., Google Inc. and holding companies like Intellectual Ventures and RPX Corp.

What's left shows a continued shift away from traditional photography into new technologies for Kodak. It's received a flurry of patents within the last few weeks related to printed [electronics](#)

, a field poised for explosive growth.

[Mitchell Burberry and David Levy received a patent just last week](#) for a method of printing electronic devices

on thin film, one of several that company researchers have received over the last few months.

Conductive inks are applied to a plastic or paper substrate to create an electronic [device](#)

, which can be used in an interactive greeting card or something more complex, like an animated movie poster. The ability to print circuits on flexible substrates is already in development as Ford Motor Co. produces vehicles with solar panels.

Another more common [application](#)

is touch screens, and Kodak's expertise bears significant promise. In June, [it announced an agreement with Kingsbury](#) to open a facility to manufacture touch screen sensors. Kodak announced [a similar agreement with Xymoc Technologies](#) in November.

Lahman's patents column appears in print on Sundays. Follow him on Twitter @SeanLahman, or reach him at (585) 258-2369.