

## ProQuest deal back to future for UMI

Executives from microfilm unit start new venture

BY SCOTT ANDERSON  
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Old has become new as one of the original "information technology" businesses that nearly faded from local memory is getting a fresh start.

A group of investors and several publishing executives with what was known as University Microfilms International have bought three business groups from parent company ProQuest Co. and will start a new company in its place.

The newly formed business, called National Archive Publishing Co., has acquired:

- UMI Periodicals in Microform, a business producing microfilm of more than 18,000 periodicals for libraries and universities.

- XanEdu, a college course packets business.

- ProQuest's microfilm manufacturing and digitization services.

ProQuest has owned those entities, or their predecessors, for nearly 20 years, when it purchased UMI from then-owner Xerox Corp. Back then, ProQuest went by the name Bell & Howell.

The deal means 350 ProQuest employees at the affected divisions become NAPC workers, virtually overnight.

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## Arbour heads new company

"When we made the announcements on Friday there were a lot of smiles in the room," said Tina Creguer, marketing director for NAPC. "It seems like it's a really great thing for the community and for employees."

As part of the sale, NAPC also purchased the 300 Zeeb Road building in Scio Township – former headquarters of UMI and ProQuest's corporate headquarters for almost five years. ProQuest will lease space there until construction of its new headquarters off Eisenhower Parkway in Ann Arbor is complete next year, Creguer said.

NAPC will also take over portions of ProQuest operations in Boston; Wooster, Ohio; and Louisville, Ky. Those entities employ less than 100 people combined.

Financial details of the sale were not immediately available, and ProQuest, which was to make its announcement about the deal later today, did not return phone calls on Monday. Creguer said there had been other interested buyers, but referred specific questions to ProQuest.

Dan Arbour, former vice president of North American sales for ProQuest Information and Learning, led the acquisition deal. He will serve as president and chief executive of the new organization. He was not available for comment Monday evening. Arbour has been with the company for 31 years, Creguer said.

NAPC will provide many of the same services, including digitizing books and other reference materials – scanning them for use electronically. The firm expects to retain about 5,000 existing customers, including ProQuest. Under the deal, ProQuest will continue to act as a publisher of the materials, while retaining the copyrights.

"There's a shared customer base there and both companies will continue to serve both customers," Creguer said.

Last week, ProQuest Chairman and CEO Alan Aldworth said the firm planned to divest itself of the periodical microfilm and course pack business, saying the units had not lived up to profit expectations. The deal was announced by the privately held NAPC after the close of trading Monday. Stock in ProQuest went up 4 percent on the day to \$26.95 a share.

Creguer said the new company expects to hire new employees, particularly administrative and other operational workers.

Founded by Eugene Power to preserve scholarly materials, UMI was one of the original microfilm companies to take root with academics and librarians. Even in the digital age, when Internet companies such as Google Inc. are moving to transfer the written word to the online world, there is still demand for microfilm, according to Creguer.

"There is an ongoing need for microfilm in libraries for preservation purposes," she said.

Gretchen Couraud, executive director of Michigan Library Association, agreed.

"Things are in transition, but there is still a strong reliance on making sure information is still available and accurate," Couraud said.

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### From old to new

A group of executives within ProQuest Co. – including Dan Arbour, former vice president of North American sales for ProQuest Information and Learning – have purchased the periodical microfilm, college course packet and digitalization service entities to form a new company called National Archive Publishing Co.

Terms of the deal include:

- 350 ProQuest employees become employees of NAPC.

- NAPC purchases the 300 Zeeb Road building now occupied by ProQuest, which is building a new headquarters in Ann Arbor.

- NAPC will have a long-term contract to digitize various print content for ProQuest.