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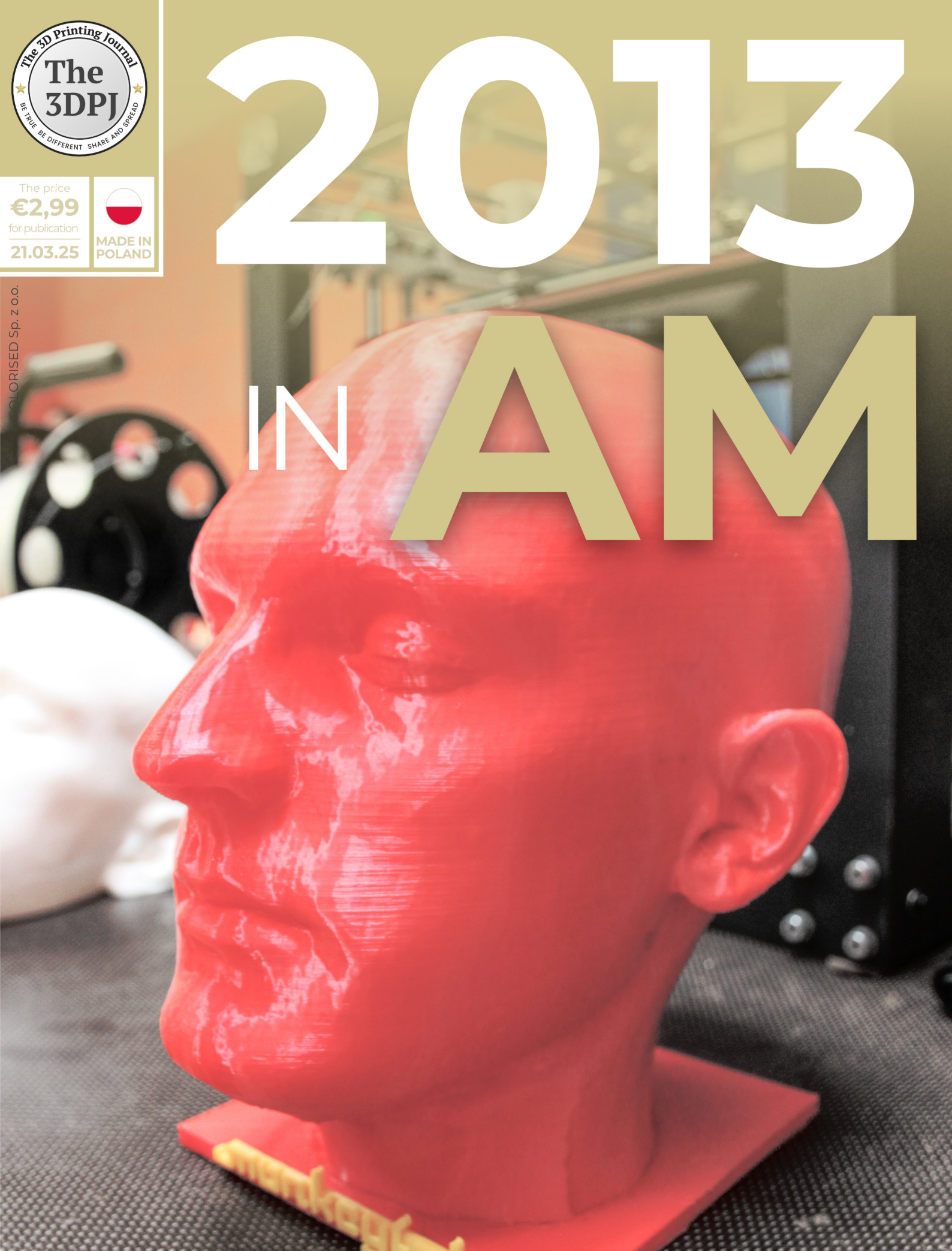


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#2

The History of Additive Manufacturing

Author's Note:

This publication was created in March 2025. It is based on publicly available sources, including archives of AM media outlets (3ders.org, 3dprintingindustry.com, centrumdruku3d.pl, among others), official press releases from the companies described, and archived web pages (web.archive.org).

All highlighted events (1-3) include URLs to their sources. For certain events, there may be slight discrepancies in the exact dates they occurred. Unfortunately, for companies that have long ceased to exist, the only available sources are media articles, which may not necessarily have been published on the exact day of the described event. There were also opposite situations, where information in the media preceded the official press release. However, this affects only a small percentage of cases, with any discrepancies typically limited to just a few days.

This publication was created in good faith and aims to preserve the memory of various companies, individuals, products, and events. At the same time, the absence of information about a particular company or event is solely due to a lack of relevant knowledge during the research process or the necessity of limiting the listing due to space constraints.

For any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact us via email: info@colorised.org.



3. Introduction

5. January

11. February

17. March

22. April

30. May

37. June

43. July

49. August

56. September

62. October

68. November

76. December

Welcome to 2013

In 2013, Additive Manufacturing technology had officially existed for 29 years, and the industry for about 26 years. Public awareness of 3D printing was skyrocketing, largely thanks to MakerBot and Formlabs—young startups that caused a massive stir in the market in 2012.

MakerBot's co-founder, Bre Pettis, became the new darling of tech media, which saw him as the next Steve Jobs, while 3D printing itself was hailed as a revolution comparable to the rise of personal computers in the late 1970s.

Additive Manufacturing—previously the domain of R&D departments in manufacturing companies, universities, and research institutions—was rapidly becoming mainstream. With the emergence of the first generation of desktop 3D printers, expectations were high that people would start buying them for home use and producing everyday objects. Mainstream media were overflowing with visions of how 3D printing would transform daily life.

Two major players—3D Systems and Stratasys—entered the race to win over this new generation of 3D printing consumers. 3D Systems caught acquisition fever, buying up smaller and larger companies in an attempt to become the biggest AM corporation of all time. Led by Avi Reichental, the company launched the consumer brand Cubify in 2012, channeling most of its marketing and sales efforts into it.

Stratasys took a different approach. Instead of developing its own consumer brand, in 2013, it acquired the market leader—MakerBot! However, what initially seemed like a major success turned out to be one of the biggest failures in the industry. But we'll get to that later...

3. Introduction

5. January

11. February

17. March

22. April

30. May

37. June

43. July

49. August

56. September

62. October

68. November

76. December

In 2013, some of the world's biggest tech and manufacturing companies also started entering the 3D printing space. Microsoft, Autodesk, and GE made their presence known, while HP increasingly hinted that the launch of its own 3D printer was only a matter of time.

At the same time, a wave of new companies emerged. XYZPrinting promised to sell millions of 3D printers, Zortrax developed low-cost, desktop-grade Stratasys alternative, and 3Doodler transformed the concept of a 3D printer into a pen!

Controversies were also part of the landscape. The DEFCAD project continued to spark heated debates, and the media kept the spotlight on the potential threat of uncontrolled 3D-printed firearms. Many new startups also debuted on Kickstarter, hoping to follow in the footsteps of Formlabs and B9 Creations from the previous year. Unfortunately, instead of success, they turned out to be some of the biggest flops in the history of both the platform and 3D printing. This includes the infamous Pirates 3D and Peachy Printer among others...

However, all of this was overshadowed by enormous enthusiasm and exaggerated expectations.

Soon, the great bubble of expectations would burst. But in 2013, Additive Manufacturing was the brightest star in the tech universe.

Pawel Slusarczyk

AM Writer | The 3D Printing Historian

3.	Introduction
5.	January
11.	February
17.	March
22.	April
30.	May
37.	June
43.	July
49.	August
56.	September
62.	October
68.	November
76.	December

January 2013

1. 3D Systems acquired Geomagic

On January 3, 2013, 3D Systems announced the acquisition of Geomagic—one of the longest-standing 3D software developers in the market. The transaction was finalized on February 21 of the same year after meeting the customary closing conditions.

The deal included the purchase of Geomagic, along with its Sensable Group division, for an undisclosed amount. This acquisition was part of 3D Systems' aggressive expansion strategy at the time, during which it systematically acquired innovative companies to strengthen its portfolio in 3D printing and scanning technologies.

Following the acquisition, Ping Fu, the founder and CEO of Geomagic, became Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer at 3D Systems while continuing to manage the company.

Raindrop Geomagic was founded in 1996 by Ping Fu and Herbert Edelsbrunner. Ping Fu, a computer scientist, had previously worked on the development of the Mosaic browser and focused on automating 3D design processes at Geomagic. Herbert Edelsbrunner, a mathematician specializing in computational geometry, provided the theoretical foundations for the technologies used in the company's products. During the 1990s, the company gained recognition for its innovative approach to digital reality replication, with its products widely adopted in industry and medicine.

Geomagic specialized in developing tools that transformed 3D scan data into editable CAD models, which were widely used in product design, quality inspection, and rapid prototyping.

3. Introduction
 5. January
 11. February
 17. March
 22. April
 30. May
 37. June
 43. July
 49. August
 56. September
 62. October
 68. November
 76. December

Geomagic's key products included Geomagic Studio (for editing point clouds and triangle meshes), Geomagic Design X (for reverse engineering), and Geomagic Freeform (for organic modeling with haptic devices).

In 2011, Geomagic acquired Sensable Group, adding haptic technology (e.g., Phantom), which expanded its offerings into interactive 3D design. Before the acquisition, Geomagic had already been collaborating with 3D Systems by providing software that supported the workflow from scanning to printing, laying the groundwork for the future merger.

The acquisition of Geomagic strengthened 3D Systems, leading to the formation of Geomagic Solutions—a unit integrating Geomagic's software with other acquired companies (such as Rapidform and Alibre). Over the next decade, Geomagic software continued to evolve and remained one of the most important solutions for 3D design and reverse engineering.

In December 2024, 3D Systems announced the sale of Geomagic to Hexagon AB, a Swedish leader in metrology technologies, for an undisclosed amount.

Source: www.3dsystems.com

3.	Introduction
5.	January
11.	February
17.	March
22.	April
30.	May
37.	June
43.	July
49.	August
56.	September
62.	October
68.	November
76.	December

January 2013

2. MakerBot unveiled ABS-friendly Replicator 2X 3D printer equipped with two extruders

On January 8, 2013, at the CES trade show in Las Vegas, MakerBot introduced the Replicator 2X—an enhanced version of the Replicator 2, which had been launched in September 2012. The new 3D printer featured dual extruders and was better optimized for ABS printing. It also included an enclosed build chamber to protect prints from external factors.

The launch conditions were both favorable and challenging. In 2013, the 3D printing market was experiencing rapid growth, driven by both enthusiasts and investors who saw the technology's potential to revolutionize manufacturing.

After the success of the Replicator 2, MakerBot had to quickly respond to consumer expectations and competitive pressure—just two days earlier, on January 6, 3D Systems announced the CubeX, highlighting the intensity of market competition.

While the Replicator 2X was first announced in September 2012, its full specifications and working prototype were revealed at CES. The company began taking orders on January 11, promising deliveries by mid-March.

The Replicator 2X featured a build volume of 24.6 x 15.2 x 15.5 cm, providing 37% more space than the Replicator 2, allowing for the creation of larger models. Its key innovation was the dual extruder system, enabling multi-material or dual-color printing. The heated build platform, made of anodized aluminum, was optimized for ABS printing. Additionally, its fully

- 3. Introduction
- 5. January
- 11. February
- 17. March
- 22. April
- 30. May
- 37. June
- 43. July
- 49. August
- 56. September
- 62. October
- 68. November
- 76. December

enclosed acrylic casing helped stabilize the internal temperature.

The differences between the Replicator 2X and Replicator 2 were significant and reflected a different approach to users. The Replicator 2, released just months earlier, was a single-extruder printer optimized for PLA. In contrast, the Replicator 2X was designed for more advanced projects.

The price of the Replicator 2X was \$2,799, compared to \$1,999 for the Replicator 2.

The MakerBot Replicator 2X is widely regarded as one of the company's best 3D printers, and alongside the Replicator 2, it was responsible for MakerBot's early global success. Its high quality and strong sales performance attracted serious interest from Stratasys, leading to an unexpected development less than six months later.

Source: www.wired.com

- 3. Introduction
- 5. January
- 11. February
- 17. March
- 22. April
- 30. May
- 37. June
- 43. July
- 49. August
- 56. September
- 62. October
- 68. November
- 76. December

January 2013

3. Nokia released 3D printing files for Lumia 820 cases

On January 18, 2013, Nokia released a set of files enabling 3D printing of custom cases for the Nokia Lumia 820 smartphone. This was the first initiative of its kind from such a major consumer electronics manufacturer.

Nokia published detailed design files (in STL and STEP formats) on its developer website, allowing users to design and 3D print personalized cases using their own 3D printers. The set, called the "3D Printing Development Kit" (3DK), included not only case templates but also technical specifications, printing guidelines, and best practices recommendations.

The Lumia 820, a mid-range smartphone running Windows Phone 8, featured interchangeable polycarbonate cases available in various colors and finishes. Nokia decided to leverage this feature by giving users the freedom to create their own unique designs.

Printing a case took a little over an hour using a MakerBot Replicator 2 3D printer. Nokia not only provided ready-made designs but actively encouraged modifications, opening the door to creativity and customization on a scale previously unseen in the mobile industry.

Nokia's January 18, 2013 initiative played a significant role in popularizing 3D printing, especially in the context of consumer applications.

Source: www.theverge.com

- 3. Introduction
- 5. January
- 11. February
- 17. March
- 22. April
- 30. May
- 37. June
- 43. July
- 49. August
- 56. September
- 62. October
- 68. November
- 76. December

January 2013

Other important events

01-01-13

The launch of Centrum Druku 3D – at the beginning of the year, Paweł Ślusarczyk (author of this publication) launched Centrum Druku 3D (*The 3D Printing Center*) – the largest AM media outlet in Poland and one of the longest-running in Europe.

01-07-13

3D Systems unveiled CubeX – at CES in Las Vegas, 3D Systems introduced a large desktop FFF 3D printer capable of printing in three colors. It supported PLA and ABS, with a starting price of \$2,499.

01-07-13

3D Systems unveiled Americana – a 3D-printed electric guitar designed by Olaf Diegel - a 3D-printed electric guitar made from Duraform nylon. It featured details from New York landmarks like the Statue of Liberty. It cost \$4,000 to combine technology with music.

01-18-13

Concept Laser released Mlab Cusing R – a metal 3D printer expanding the range of materials to titanium, and designed for dental applications and implant production.

- 3. Introduction
- 5. January
- 11. February
- 17. March
- 22. April
- 30. May
- 37. June
- 43. July
- 49. August
- 56. September
- 62. October
- 68. November
- 76. December

February 2013

1. ExOne completed its IPO and raised \$95.40 million from the stock market

On February 6, 2013, ExOne debuted on the Nasdaq stock exchange, offering 163,048 common shares at a price of \$18 per share. As a result of its initial public offering (IPO), the company raised approximately \$90.4 million net after deducting issuance costs. ExOne became the third AM company to enter the U.S. stock market, following 3D Systems and Stratasys (later followed by voxeljet and Materialise).

Based in North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, ExOne specialized in manufacturing industrial 3D printing machines and providing 3D printing services for industrial customers. The company's technology was based on the binder jetting method, which allowed for the rapid transformation of powder-based materials, such as metals, ceramics, and sand, into precise parts and tooling.

ExOne traces its roots back to 1995, when Extrude Hone established the "ProMetal" division, dedicated to developing metal 3D printing technology. The founder and owner of Extrude Hone, Larry Rhoades, recognized the potential of additive manufacturing for industrial applications. In 2005, ExOne was spun off as an independent company, continuing its work on innovative 3D printing solutions.

ExOne was a true pioneer in metal 3D printing and the only company that focused on binder jetting technology, while most other companies concentrated on PBF, or DED / WAAM methods.

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