

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Proto Labs buys more ARBURG machines as part of European growth strategy

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Proto Labs, the rapid prototyping and contract manufacturer for 3D printing, CNC machining and injection moulding services, will invest in six ARBURG moulding machines in its latest phase of expansion.



Proto Labs UK, the company's European headquarters, is growing in 3D printing, injection moulding and CNC machining of low volume production parts

Proto Labs in Telford will purchase a further six ARBURG Golden Edition and 'S' machines between 50 and 250 tonnes, and a large order of new machining centres as part of the continuing growth of its European operations to service demand.

The company, the world's fastest digital manufacturing source for custom prototypes and low to mid-volume production parts, produces its injection moulded parts for its customers across

Europe from its Telford site. Proto Labs uses industrial 3D printing, CNC machining and injection moulding technologies to produce parts within days, where competing services can take many days or weeks.

Originating in the US, Proto Labs started its UK operation in 2005 with a handful of moulding machines, and the company is making this investment to meet customer demand across Europe for an extensive variety of thermoplastic and liquid silicon rubber (LSR) parts, from virtually every industry sector; aerospace, medical, automotive, computing and CE, general industrial and more.

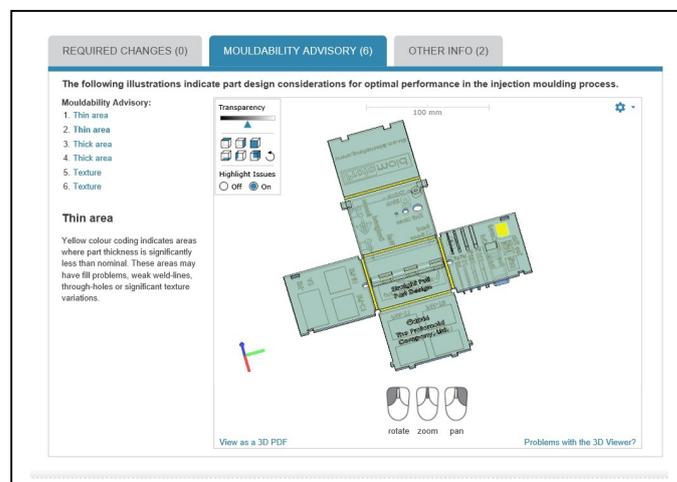
“We have been doing this since 2005 so we have deep experience – serving every sector, at every size from very large companies and OEMs to the entrepreneurial one-off inventors who have the next big idea,” said Director of Operations, Lee Ball. “Our success is built on speed and scale, where we respond quickly using proprietary software that automates the design-to-quote process. With this investment in ARBURG machines, we can massively scale capacity to support the growth and increased requirements of our customers..

One of ARBURG’s Ltd’s largest UK customers, Proto Labs currently has 35 ARBURG machines installed, including all hydraulic Golden Edition and ‘S’ machines, with clamping forces from 40 to 500 tonnes. The new order will take the total to 41 ARBURG machines. Proto Labs installed three ARBURG liquid silicon machines in 2013 and has been steadily growing its moulding portfolio including a huge number of CNC machines.

“We are delighted that Proto Labs has chosen to invest further in ARBURG and we want to learn with and help the company in the next phase of their digital manufacturing development,” said ARBURG Ltd. managing director Colin Tirel.

“Service and support from ARBURG has been excellent,” said Lee. “It makes sense to continue with ARBURG and have a common technology platform. We require excellent service as a 24/7 international business.”

Proto Labs’ proprietary automated quoting system – ProtoQuote® – translates 3D CAD



Proto Labs’ software reveals potential weaknesses in a 3D design before providing a quote, saving costly redesigns

models into instructions for high-speed manufacturing equipment. The result is big reductions in development time by providing parts that are shipped in between 1 - 15 days.

The company can make a tool from a 3D CAD, assemble the tool and mould the customers part in as little as one day. In a world that wants everything now, this model both retains customers and attracts new enquiries.

### **Proto Labs speed-to-market value model**

“We have developed leading software that drives the front end for designing and quoting parts accurately, automating the process from quote to production,” said Stephen Dyson, Product Marketing Manager Europe. “Our automated software is supported by a team of skilled engineers located in our different office locations across Europe, who can provide fast and accurate design for manufacturability feedback, and solutions to challenges.”

The software’s Manufacturability Analysis tool allows the 3D component to be rotated in all axes, revealing potential problem areas in the design. Such errors could be wall thinness, thickness, unusual texture or weakness in a fold for a foldable design, for example.

### **Liquid silicon rubber, complex parts**

Liquid silicone rubber products have been growing strongly within the Proto Labs portfolio.“ Customers with LSR designs that are perceived as difficult to engineer are surprised at how quickly we return the product, and with high accuracy,” said Lee.



Proto Labs UK is buying six more ARBURG Golden Edition and ‘S’ machines. Pictured is a 470 C 1500 400, 150 tonne Golden Edition

“This is also down to the robustness of the software which deals equally well with LSR as thermoplastics”.

The variation in order types at Proto Labs is diverse, from very simple thermoplastic moulds, to complex multi-cavity parts, over mouldings, insert mouldings and multi material designs.

With a heavy focus today on connected factory technology, Proto Labs says it has first mover advantage in the fourth industrial revolution. Founder Larry Lukis, who was driven to start predecessor company Proto Mold in 1999 because he was “fed up with traditional manufacturing cycles”, developed the automated quoting with design analysis software in 2002. Today Proto Labs is embracing new aspects of digital technology and is a key enabler in the fourth industrial revolution.

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**About Arburg**

A German family-owned company, Arburg is one of the leading global manufacturers of plastic processing machines. The product portfolio encompasses Allrounder injection moulding machines with clamping forces of between 125 and 6,500 kN, the Freeformer for industrial additive manufacturing and robotic systems, customer and industry-specific turnkey solutions and further peripheral equipment.

The company places the topic of production efficiency at the centre of all its activities, taking into account the entire value-added chain. The objective is to enable Arburg customers to manufacture their plastic products, whether one-off parts or high-volume batches, with optimal quality and at minimum unit costs – e.g. for the automotive and packaging industries, communication and entertainment electronics, medical technology or the white goods sector.

An international sales and service network ensures first-class customer support at the local level: Arburg is represented by its own organisations at 33 locations in 25 countries and by trading partners in more than 50 countries. The machines are produced exclusively at the parent factory in Lossburg, Germany. Of a total of around 2,700 employees, about 2,200 work in Germany. About 500 further employees work in Arburg's organisations around the world. In 2012, Arburg became one of the first companies to gain triple certification: in accordance with ISO 9001 (Quality), ISO 14001 (Environment) and ISO 50001 (Energy).

Further information about Arburg can be found at [www.arburg.com](http://www.arburg.com)