

Digital Technology Trends

by Howie Fenton, GATF

In This Issue

- **Print: The Original IT campaign debuts**
- **Tech Alert Show: PDF, large format inkjet, pressroom issues**
- **Study Documents Branding Impact of Online Ads**
- **Quark 5 Ships, Photoshop 7 announced**
- **Comparing Features and Functions of CTP Equipment**
- **Finally, Answers about Typical Run Lengths in Digital Printing**
- **Innovative Press monitoring systems: NexPress & MAN Roland**
- **Time Shocks Advertisers / Printers with PDF/X-1a endorsement**



▶▶ **“Print: The Original IT” ad campaign debuts**

Internet gurus and industry pundits have spoken of the demise of print for years. These predictions, combined with excitement about alternative communication mediums, like the Internet, have eroded the perceived value of print. In an attempt to counteract this deterioration the PIA and GATF launched an ad campaign to champion the value of print in our society.

If you're a fan of the ad campaigns such as “Got milk” or “Beef - it's what's for dinner”, then you will mostly likely approve of the new ad campaign for print called “Print: The Original Information Technology” (or IT). Obviously not as short and sweet as some its more commercial counterparts, this print campaign is designed to increase awareness and maintain, even rejuvenate, the value of print. In addition, the PIA/GATF have called on 26 other printing-related industries and their associations to join forces in this effort.

<http://www.gain.org/servlet/gateway/printIT/main.html>

Experts describe this type of ad campaign as generic advertising, in other words, not tied to any particular manufacturer. Some experts claim that this type of awareness campaign is more successful than ads from specific companies. The generic approach tends to promote the overall awareness, health and perceived value of an industry.

In the book “Commodity Advertising: The Economics and Measurement of Generic Programs,” the authors conclude that the milk campaign in the mid-'80s helped to reverse a trend toward declining consumption, the campaign for Washington state apples increased demand by 14.5 percent, and the beef campaign reversed a 25% decline over 10 years.

<http://www.news.cornell.edu/general/PRESS93/PR05269305.html>

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▶▶ Highlights of the Tech Alert Show

Every year original research on products, technologies and market trends are presented at the GATF Tech Alert show. At this years show (January 27-29, 2002) attendees learned about PDF workflows, large format inkjet proofing systems, ink key presetting, press plates and blankets and new toners.

In a nutshell attendees learned that:

- Contrary to popular belief, PDF is not a panacea. Many clients don't make PDF files properly, and while PDF has much to offer the graphic arts industry, the file format alone does not offer a solution to some of the problems inherent in the exchange of digital data.
- Several large format inkjet-proofing systems can produce very high-quality color proofs, many fall within the specifications considered SWOP certified. However, the dimensional accuracy for front-to-back alignment for most systems did not achieve graphic arts industry requirements.
- New toners such as the emulsion aggregation (growing toner) process developed by Xerox results in smaller and more uniform toner size particles that enhance the quality of digital printing.
- Everyone who does ink key presetting loves it, learning curves are rapid, and savings stay in the company.
- The study revealed only slight differences in printability over the relatively short test run of the 12 different blankets, but did reveal sheet movement differences between blankets and differences in the ink lay of solids and dots.
- Pressroom automation does increase productivity.

Although availability dates have not been announced, most research projects from GATF result in publications called RTR's (research and technology reports) and become available through the publications section of the GAIN web page.

http://www.gain.org/servlet/gateway/shop/shop.html?store=PIA_GATF

▶▶ Study Documents Branding Impact of Online Ads

The first study to analyze the combined effects of online, print and TV advertising in a single ad campaign, found that the online component significantly increased the campaign's measurable brand awareness impact, according to Forrester Research. The study - a six-week analysis of a Unilever mixed-media campaign for Dove Nutrium bar soap, concluded that spending 15% of the campaign's TV/print/online budget on the Web resulted in a 24% lift in branding impact.

<http://www.adage.com/news.cms?newsId=34071>

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► **Photoshop 7 announced, Skuttlebut, and Quark 5 Ships,**

Photoshop 7

Just when you were feeling comfortable mastering the new tools in Photoshop 6 Adobe announces that Photoshop 7 will be available in Q2 for Mac OS 9.x, OS X native, and Windows 98 through XP.

This is good news for Apple that acknowledges that many of the professional customers who buy more the powerful machines have avoided upgrading to OS X because some of the most-used professional applications -- notably Photoshop and XPress - are not available running natively on OS X. Photoshop 7 does run natively in OS X, and like previous versions it also takes advantage of the two G4 processors, one of the few applications that will.

Adobe is adding features that target professional digital designers, photographers and prepress pros. Highlights include a menu for browsing through several images, the ability to quickly rename layers, and a new tool called the Healing Tool, which uses complex math to cover blemishes in a photograph.

The File Browser lets you view your thumbnails and image metadata — like color profile, date modified, and the Exchangeable Image File (EXIF) information generated by digital cameras — to make sure the images are what you're looking for before you open them.

Of all the new features, perhaps the most exciting is the Healing Brush. The Healing Brush is designed to clean-up images by removing dust, scratches, blemishes and wrinkles often found in images. What's different about the Healing Brush is that it will automatically preserve shading, lighting, texture and other attributes when cloning within one image or from one image to another. The Patch Tool lets you be more precise by working with selections.

You can use any of the basic selection tools, including Channel Operations, to first define your selection. Photoshop will then automatically heal the area defined by that selection while matching the lighting and shading of the sampled pixels to the source pixels.

There's also a spell-checker that lets you perform search-and-replace operations, correcting the spelling on one text layer or across all text layers in the same document. Photoshop 7 will cost \$609 for new buyers, \$149 for those upgrading from an earlier version.

<http://maccentral.macworld.com/news/0202/24.photoshop.php>

<http://www.apple.com/macosx/applications/photoshop/>

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Skuttlebut

Some industry pundits are saying the new features announced for the next version do not warrant a major upgrade and that this should really be called Photoshop 6.1. John Parsons, Senior West Coast Editor for Seybold Publications in the 9/00 Seybold Bulletin wrote a commentary about the dilemma software manufacturers face when an application already contains most of the features people really want. Parsons called this the "version 27 syndrome" meaning what would be in Photoshop version 27.

QuarkXPress 5.0

QuarkXPress 5.0 is available. The long awaited update combines tools for print and Web design in a single application but it's not Carbonized for Mac OS X yet. Not carbonized means it does not take advantage of the features in Mac OS X. According to the XPress Web site, Quark says that the company is "firmly committed" to Mac OS X, and will be available after QuarkXPress 5.0 is out the door.

Version 5.0 includes new table functions to create rich tables for print or the web. The new table feature lets you create structured designs. Table cells in QuarkXPress can contain either text or graphics, so you can use tables as design elements. You could, for example, create a table consisting of two large picture cells as an alternative to creating and positing individual picture boxes.

A new Layers feature lets you isolate items and is designed to facilitate the management of large numbers of documents, something that's important in complex projects like targeted marketing materials and versioned projects.

The new Web page tools rely on the same palettes, menus, and dialog boxes that power the software's print design tools which should reduce the learning curve for those transitioning from print design to web design.

QuarkXPress 5.0 is available for both Mac OS and Windows, and can be purchased online for \$899. The upgrade price for users of QuarkXPress 3.x is \$299.

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► Comparing Features and Functions of CTP Equipment

Moderating a panel on cost savings in prepress magazine production at the recent Seybold show in New York reminded me of a two CTP (computer to plate) panel presentations for Seybold in 1999. The first was entitled “RFP for CTP: 4-up Platesetters”, the second “RFP for CTP: 4-up Platesetters” (RFP means request for proposal). I was only scheduled to moderate the first but the second moderator was late and Thad McIlroy became a recruiter.

One goal for a moderator is to create a framework for the issues. Therefore, the issues that should be considered when researching CTP were introduced first. The details of those presentations are available on the link below the chart. I have a distinct memory of walking away with two hands filled with business cards and requests for the list. For anyone interested, here is the list.

Price range (minimum to maximum)	Visible light or darkroom loading
In -RIP OPI, trapping, ROOM	Punching the plate
Longevity of the company	Return on investment
Open vs. closed systems	Upgraded network
Local, regional and national support	Worldwide number of installations
Internal Vs external technology	CIP & ability to set ink keys
What RIP is used, can you use others?	Ripping time and exposure time,

Laser beam type, visible Vs thermal, and the how many plates
Cost for equipment, consumables or service contract
Unix vs. NT server, additional storage and archiving options & cost
Laser beans, upgradability, mean time between failures & replacement cost
Manual or automatic plate loading & costs
Plate processing options & costs and benefits
Selectable resolutions and variable dot sizes
Digital contract proofing and digital blueline proofing options
What media can be handled: aluminum, polyester, film, proofing material?
Elapsed time from inserting, to mounted, to exposure

For the transcript of the 2 RFP CTP Seybold sessions go to:

http://seminars.seyboldreports.com/seminars/1999_boston/65/65_transcript.html

http://seminars.seyboldreports.com/seminars/1999_boston/68/68_transcript.html

Digital Technology Trends

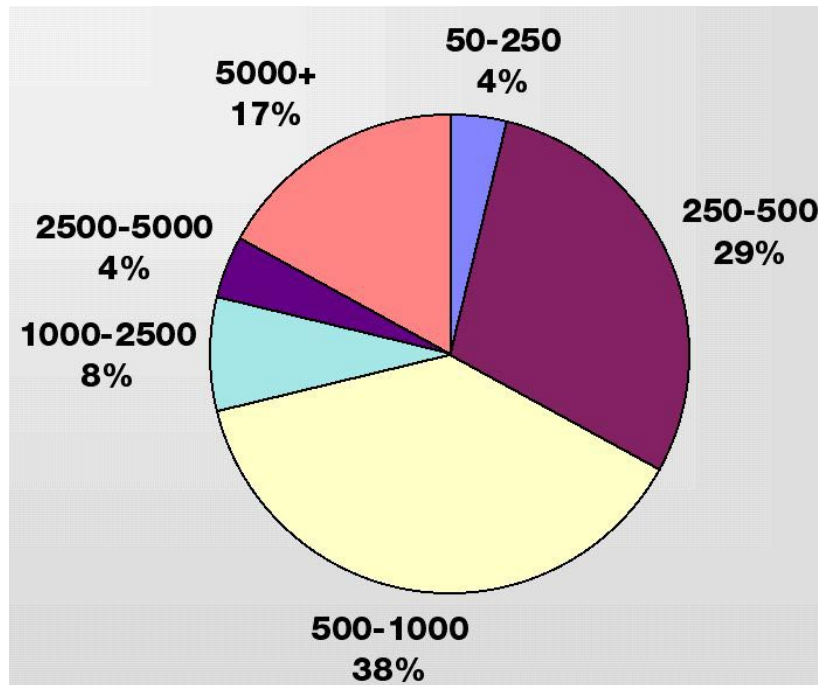
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▶ Typical Run Lengths in Digital Printing

In January GAMIS published a landmark research project entitled “Digital Printing Market Potential”. An abbreviated version of this 500-page study became “The Digital Printing Council White Paper #7” (available only to DPC members).

http://www.gain.org/servlet/gateway/PIA_GATF/DPC/main.html

This research answered many controversial questions about digital printing.



For example, it finally answers the controversial question about the typical run lengths used with digital presses.

For years some people said that electro-photographic (toner) printing is best used for short runs while others said that there is no clear reason why it should be restricted to short runs.

The research found that 71% of digital printing is done in run lengths of less than 1000.

▶ Innovative Press monitoring systems: NexPress & MAN Roland

Many manufactures are using innovative monitoring systems to reduce press downtime. The NexPress 2100 digital press introduced the Nex Quality Control system for real-time diagnostics and process control management. MAN Roland is beta testing their ServiceVision. ServiceVision combines data from diagnostic sensors with a view from a digital camera inside the press. The images and sensor readings are transmitted to the service center, where technicians can interpret the measurements and recommend an adjustment, or suggest which part to replace.

http://www.nexpress.com/power_press.jsp

http://www.manroland.com/news/news_display.asp?ID=211

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▶ Time Shocks Advertisers / Printers with PDF/X-1a endorsement

Time Inc., one of the largest magazine publishers, shocked the advertising and print production committees recently, when they announced that all digital ads sent and received for its 56 titles must be in the PDF/X-1a format by June 1st of this year.

At the Seybold New York show last week Time's Director of Digital Development, Kin Wah Lam, said that the move away from TIFF/IT-P1, PostScript and DCS 2 file formats was intended to enhance and simplify Time's workflow, reduce their file sizes, and facilitate future cross-media publishing initiatives.

Time is requesting that all ads should be submitted as PDF/X-1a files. Upon arrival they will be preflighted for issues not covered by the current specs (i.e. low-res images) and then forwarded to the printer. In the editorial workflow, files are first converted to DCS 2 files then output as PDF/X-1a, by Artwork Systems' Nexus system.

<http://www.artwork-systems.com/Frames/ProductFrame.html>

Due to ongoing issues with output, Time will upgrade their seven major printing facilities to PostScript 3 RIPs. At this point, only the Merced facility has done so. Kin Lam also informed attendees that advertisers and agencies had already begun to work with PDF tools made by companies such as Enfocus, Apago, and Callas to create and preflight PDF files.

The Dark Side

This is a huge endorsement for the PDF/X-1a compared to the previous TIFF/IT and DCS file formats. The Time titles account for about 25 percent of all magazine ads. This endorsement could create a cascade effect and momentum of adoption among both advertisers and printers.

However, the PDF/X-1a is not fool proof. As discussed at the GATF Tech Alert show, files made incorrectly can still result in output problems such as font and colorspace mistakes. The industry, especially the advertisers, publishers and magazine printers, need to research, develop and publish specs for the standard creation of PDF/X-1a files and preflight to insure that a mistake does not result in a lost advertiser.

The Seybold Bulletin first reported this story. For more information go to:
<http://www.seyboldreports.com/index.html>

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  In the Works  

- Digital Printing – B/W & Variable Growth
- Ricoh AP3800C
- Negotiated Postal Rate Increase
- Debate over Remote Proofing
- GATF's 12-Step Plan for Adopting a CTP Workflow
- Color management - Test your color tolerance

▶▶ Schedule

Interested in a chat or a visit - here is a travel schedule.

Date	City	Purpose
3/14-16	Scottsdale, AR	PIA Presidents Conference
3/18-19	Chicago, IL	Banta Technovation Seminar
3/20	Minneapolis, MN	Banta Technovation Seminar
3/21-22	Columbus, OH	PDF Print Ed Seminars
3/27	Denver, CO	PIA Mountain States Awards
4/17-18	Phila, PA	GAA Presentations
4/23-26	Rochester, NY	Computer to Plate Workshop RIT
5/15-18	Dallas, TX	Southwest Graphics show

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To be added to the list simple email the address above and write "add to list" in the subject line

To be removed simple email the address above and write "remove from list" in the subject line