

GRAPHIC EXCHANGE



EXPERIENCE

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SHOW REPORT

Printing and publishing no longer joined at the hip

by GX Contributors

There are generally four business reasons why people go to trade shows: to check out new products, to renew established relationships, to look for new relationships—and to schmooze in quasi-business environments after hours.

Tripping the light fantastic in San

Francisco and Chicago at the September Seybold Conference and Exposition, followed a few weeks later by GraphExpo, added a fifth purpose for those of us who fill the roles of industry observers. It's more apparent than ever that the relationship between the publishing industry and the printing industry is closer to that of second cousins than the historic fraternal bond—at least, if the two largest American shows for (respectively) publishers and printers are any indication. So for us, showgazing is one of the best ways to watch the progress of this Great Divide.

Seybold was a colossal exhibition of publishing without paper (unless it came out of a laser or inkjet printer). As long as your definition of publishing included e-print procurement, e-workflows, and e-col-

or management, then you'd feel right at home. But if (heaven forbid) you were a traditional publisher using those old standards, ink and paper, then there was precious little to interest you at this Seybold. Indeed, there was nary a print-based vendor to be found on the show floor, and few meaningful print-oriented conference sessions that weren't rehashes from every Seybold for the last three or four years (right down to the conference session descriptions themselves).

Seybold has evolved beyond mundane concerns such as publishing in the traditional formats. It appears they have decided that in a paperless future, the only publishing medium will be electrons.

In contrast, GraphExpo was almost *all* about putting ink on paper. At least here a

Prepress Highlights from Seybold and GraphExpo BY LERRICK STARR

CREOSCITEX SEPS2COMP 1.5



CreoScitex has made some significant improvements to Seps2Comp since it was purchased less than a year ago. Seps2Comp is a PDF plug-in for Acrobat and is used to recombine a separated PDF that is the result of distilling PostScript, written by an application with color separations turned on—that is, one page per color. On the upside, XPress trapping is present in all four 'plates'. The downside is that the PDF is unviewable. The first version worked by comparing long lists of page objects, color by color and item by item, to determine the manner in which the separate objects were to be recomposed. Even objects which were far apart on the page were checked unnecessarily. The new version of Seps2Comp divides the PDF page into sixteen zones. The software then compares the smaller areas, thus eliminating unnecessary comparisons. Seps2Comp 1.5 has a preview window allowing a look at the effects of re-composition—including the inspection of overprints and knock outs—prior to compositing the PDF. It loads and saves custom inks, offers full access to the Pantone color libraries and allows users to maintain PostScript 2 compatibility. You can convert spot colors to process or leave them unchanged. A pretty useful PDF utility.

ENFOCUS PITSTOP PROFESSIONAL 4.5



Just when you think it's good, it gets better. Enfocus' PitStop Professional has long held sway as the most popular PDF editing plug-in available for Acrobat and it's newest version won't hurt that position. PitStop Professional 4.5 has more than one function. You can edit a PDF object-by-object with *Inspector* or make global changes with the *Global Change* dialogue. If every modification was described as an 'action' then the *Action List* control panel is the place to string 'actions' together into lists. These lists can apply corrective procedures to deficient PDFs, automating complex and time-consuming changes. The *Preflight* panel allows you to test the integrity of a PDF to preselected or user-defined criteria. The new stuff breaks out into three areas. Under color management and editing, we find a new 'Grab' tool, the ability to remap spot colors, and support for ICC profiles which can be applied to individual objects. New global or object changes include image resampling, page renumbering and page content, which can now be rescaled to the media size. OPI information for images can now be corrected and replaced. Download a 30-day fully-functional version of PitStop Professional 4.5 from www.enfocus.com.

DYNAGRAM DYNASTRIP



Someone in the imposition business has finally awakened to reality. There are lots of small shops that need a digital page imposition and stripping solution but are unwilling to pay the \$4-6000 cost of admission. Dynamagram now offers sized-defined versions of DynaStrip named S, M, L and VLF. For the owners of two-page devices, including imagesetters and platesetters, digital presses, any other small format PostScript or PDF output device, a fully-featured version of the software—DynaStrip S (output limited to 20" square)—comes in at \$900 and is available from their web site. Upgrades are only available from the dealers network. Seybold saw the official launch of Dynamagram's Macintosh version. A significant interface addition named 'DynaMo' simplifies the creation of imposition templates, making the learning curve much shorter for inexperienced operators. The advantageous output size-defined pricing instead of the 'lite' version approach, new Mac OS version, and interface improvements make this product worth at least a try. Yes, they did make me dress up like a mouse but I had such a good time, I'm going to forgive them. Download the fully-functional water-marked version from www.dynamagram.com.

print publisher could feel quite at home, and find plenty to look at—even without spending any time at the heavy metal pavilions (which, as one might expect, was dominated by the vast Heidelberg space).

GRAPHEXPO CATERS TO CREATIVES

In fact, it was interesting to observe that the show organizers were actually making a special effort to cater to the “creative” sector, highlighting “designer” areas on the floor, and attempting to group vendors together by product type, which made it easy to zero in on the booths that offered more for the content creator. Except for the fact that McCormick Place in Chicago feels like a giant air hangar—with no escape—GraphExpo was a trade show with a great number of products for publishers

who are still in the world of CMYK.

That’s not to say that there wasn’t the standard contingent of e-flogging to be found, but it wasn’t as all-pervasive as at Seybold San Francisco.

In truth, two of the most interesting items at GraphExpo were quite Internet-centric. Fuji Graphic debuted a preview of its *myfujifilm.com* Web print workflow system which looked quite promising. With some revamping of interface and tweaking of content, this should be a winner when it appears in final form sometime around next March.

Meanwhile Agfa is busily preparing Delano, another Web workflow setup for group project management and communication. This one looked extremely well-conceived, with an intuitive interface and

an intelligent job-oriented structure. Delano is not just for project planning and tracking but also acts as a communications centre and knowledge base, including information on team member profiles and provisions for different languages and currencies. It takes a CSR-centric approach, accommodating jobs moving through flat by flat, or even page by page—flexibility seems to be its most attractive feature.

Quebecor is currently testing and developing Delano in a number of its shops around the world. Agfa hopes to release it by Q1/2001.

FinalWord by Indocs is another new on-line workflow entry that may hold promise for collaborative workflows when it is released in final form next year. FinalWord works through a standard browser to

QUATRO AIR TECHNOLOGIES



Air purification seems a long way from my prepress rounds

but a few minutes with John Franty from Quatro Air Technologies had me recalling the lost hours I spent cleaning tiny particles of dust and lint out of drum imagesetters. John quickly pointed out all the places where dust exacts a high price, naming film and plate remakes as a primary consideration. The performance of the optical systems in scanners, CTP and film output devices degrades quickly as they accumulate dust affecting output quality. The overall work environment is improved when exposure to dust, powders and fumes generated in the production environment are minimized. In addition to dust control, Quatro offers humidification units and purifiers (standalone and for A/C units) and units designed specifically to handle air-borne pressroom spray powders. I recollect in my production past, lying on the floor of a darkened room, with the end covers off a ‘Largo’, and a roll of exposed imagesetter film stretched out into a long pointer. Adding double-sided tape to the tip and using one hand to hold a flashlight, I would use it to laboriously pick the dust off the 40” internal drum. A little filtration would have come in handy.

IMATION MATCHPRINT INKJET SYSTEM



On the digital proofing side, Imation’s Matchprint Inkjet System for the Hew-

lett Packard DesignJet ColorPro GA printer demonstrated impressive color capabilities. I’ve seen a stock unit, with the RIP running on an iMac, generate remarkably accurate proofs of a scanner target—better than I’ve ever seen without tweaking. It’s a pretty flexible system capable of accepting PostScript 2 and 3, PDF, CMYK and RGB TIFF, and Photoshop input as well as Scitex CT format. The system automatically recognizes Pantone colors and can proof up to 12 color separations. The RIP can spool, process and print files simultaneously and Imation claims the system shows traps and overprints. The Matchprint Inkjet System RIP software now drives a range of printers (including the Canon BJC8500, HP2000+ and the Epson 5000, 7000 and 9000 models) with a very high degree of color accuracy. However optimum results require the use of special stocks. Imation seems to be making significant advances at both ends of the digital proofing market by combining low-cost high-fidelity digital proofing with what appears to be the most flexible and accurate analog proofing methods ever. After a long stint in the wilderness—welcome back, Imation.

CRACKERJACK 3.1 & PDF IMAGEWORKS



CrackerJack by Lantana (www.lantana-rips.com) has led the way in bringing color-

separation abilities to Adobe Acrobat. This plug-in brings a wealth of output possibilities, including user-definable media sizes, rotations, X:Y scaling, negative and mirror options, printers marks, slug line with name, date, time and page number and color bars. Grayscale, CMYK and convert to CMYK options are available, along with spot color support. You can set line screens, screen angles and dot shapes (19 choices) and there is a force black to overprint option as well. Other output options include composite color and grayscale, pre-separated, In-RIP, and DCS 2.0 single or multiple file formats. You can choose any PostScript level up to 3 and you can control dot gain using built-in compensation curves. Also from Lantana is the **PDF ImageWorks** plug-in which allow you to perform basic image adjustments. PDFIW brings color space conversions, brightness, contrast, and simple color balance controls to Acrobat. Other features include subsample and downsampling options, resize, crop, despeckle, rotate, mirror and add or update OPI links. This is no substitute for Photoshop but against tight production deadlines a tool like this might save the bacon.

AGFA/CREOSCITEX LITESPEED PLATE DEMO



One of the most interesting technology demonstrations at GraphExpo was at the CreoScitex booth, where a spray-on plate was printing on a two-color Shinohara. This joint Agfa and CreoScitex project mounts a reusable chemically-grained anodized blank aluminum plate which is sprayed several times on-press by an aqueous (water-based) solution of fine thermo-plastic particles mixed with a dye. This sub-micron thick layer of liquid emulsion is exposed by a laser diode at a frequency of 830nm which selectively heats the dye/thermo-plastic solution. In the spots where local heating reaches about 100°C, the thermoplastic particles fuse together and stick to the anodized plate surface. The rest of the solution is removed leaving behind an imaged plate. Single color posters printed at the show at 150 lpi were, to my prepress eyeball, virtually indistinguishable from any other presswork. After use, the plate is cleaned with a water-based liquid containing small quantities of the organic components needed to solvate the ink. It is then ready for reuse. This technology is non-ablative and requires no additional chemical processing. According to Agfa, the emulsion is very forgiving of thickness variations and exposure latitude. Agfa's 'LiteSpeed' technology offers run lengths of 20-30,000 impressions, but further development will be necessary in order to use the technology. Its main advantages are straightforward. The 'plate' itself is reusable; the process eliminates the need for plate inventories; no chemistry is required other than the plate cleaner itself; and, there are no hazardous chemical disposal issues. CreoScitex, which worked with Agfa for about five months to produce this technology demonstration, has applied for a patent on its own 'Switchable Polymer' (SP) plate technology. Agfa's LiteSpeed product is not a switchable polymer but apparently has physical characteristics that make it compatible with the spray and imaging technology CreoScitex possesses. Perhaps this demo is just for practice as CreoScitex readies its switchable polymer product. In the meantime Agfa is continuing its efforts with Komori to develop a digital press in a similar configuration to the Shinohara shown. CreoScitex spokespersons at the show estimated that it would be one to two years before a product based on this technology would hit the market.

let editors, designers and publishers edit and approve Quark jobs and their corollary assets remotely.

Even Xerox has entered the e-workflow marketplace with the announcement of its new on-line initiative; they also introduced Pixography, a new desktop system for taking concept through to final color output that includes ready-made templates and designs.

A cool Web-based production system shown in preliminary form at the Markzware booth was RipFarm (www.ripfarm.com). This idea is, in our opinion, the right concept at the right time: an automated Web-based service bureau, open 24 hours a day, waiting to accept, preflight and send your job to film or digital print. Yes, it's a little dreamy, given the real world of absent fonts, RGB images and missing bleeds—but heck, what's prepress all about, if not to dream?

While we're discussing prepress futures, let us not forget Studion (www.studion.com) and its upcoming ColorBlade plug-in for Photoshop. This is a really fascinating piece of software that adjusts the black plate to optimize perceptual color values in order to maintain visual color consistency regardless of the light source. Check your Photoshop 6 CD for a demo.

THAT IRRESISTIBLE MOUSE

We can't complete our description of GraphExpo without mention of the Mouse, aka Lerrick Starr.

We'll let him tell his own story:

"On top of my usual Graphic Exchange prepress reviewer role I had the task of working a client's booth as a member of their team. Our theme was captured on the button shown here, so the mouse costume I wore throughout the show wasn't entirely arbitrary. Walking

around the aisles of the show was a treat. My favourite reaction to the cruel remarks of the salespeople was to stop,

slowly turn, drop my face with eyes down-cast, and slowly and resignedly shuffle over to them. I'd say haltingly, 'Last month—I didn't meet my sales quota. This is what the boss is making me do. Please kill me.'

"On students' day I was snapped arm-in-arm with a variety of tinted, pierced young folks in whose hands the future of the industry resides. I was the recipient of thumbs ups and tail yanks more times than I cared to count.

"After four days in costume I was starting to forget I had it on, until I happened to join a crowd at the Adobe booth who were listening to a presentation by Dave Kaufman of CreoScitex. Kaufman interrupted his amplified presentation to announce ringmaster style, 'Ladies and gentlemen, we've been joined by a mouse—please welcome Lerrick...'

"It was my turn to flush and retreat, literally tail between my legs! Dave may be the father of Prinergy, but at that moment I thought of him as the other parent!"

ON THE SEYBOLD SHOW FLOOR

In San Francisco, we were witness to the ongoing battle between Adobe and Macromedia, each attempting to drown the other out with microphones set to jet plane decibel level.

Adobe had its hot news about Photoshop 6 and the announcement of InScope, its new web-based workflow management system—and its not so hot news about the quiet passing of PressReady.

Macromedia had Flash 5 to crow about, but this is one company that doesn't seem to believe in sending product-savvy employees to trade shows.

Quark, more demure and unassuming than we ever remember, looked like it was making the obligatory Seybold appearance (although it gave us a chance to take in presentations by Jay Nelson of Design Tools Monthly, always a treat).

UScreative.com made its inaugural visit to Seybold with a flashy new web site and a plan to recruit graphic talent from every corner of the globe.



