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Colour Targets

Aiming for shop-wide consistency



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Closing the Colour Loop

New solutions at Print 09 introduce added intelligence to colour management.

BY DOUG PICKLYK

Print 09 in Chicago was awash in new colour management tools introduced by vendors, all taking on the challenge of creating easy-to-use software that allows printers to output consistent colour across their shops regardless of how jobs are printed—using conventional printing ink, toner or digital inkjet devices.

New sheetfed offset presses and digital colour presses featuring inline spectrophotometers with automated feedback systems are now being introduced to the market and are removing some colour variability from press runs. But getting to the right colour and being consistent from job to job in all departments of a shop requires specialized colour tools upstream and post-production too.

The built-in expertise of new colour management software allows novice users to follow simple step-by-step onscreen wizards to calibrate output devices and ultimately achieve consistency and pressroom standardization. Colour tools are also being integrated into automated workflows to perform all of the work “under the hood,” while also generating feedback loops and reports to confirm that established pressroom standards are being maintained.



German-based CGS revealed its ORIS Press Matcher/Web solution at PRINT 09, a simple browser interface built on top of the company's successful ORIS Press Matcher (winner of the 2009 PIA InterTech Technology award). ORIS Press Matcher Pro

uses the colour management technology of ORIS Color Tuner to produce high-resolution files for calibrated output devices (CtP systems, digital presses, wide-format printers) for environments where it's necessary to match colour spaces to each other. ORIS Press Matcher



Pro includes a central colour management server extending out to devices across multiple locations. It's an example of very robust tools that are made simple for operators.

CGS also revealed its ORIS Color Tuner/Web version 1.1, now incorporating Adobe PDF Print Engine resulting in faster processing. Other new features include automatic certification of remote printers supporting inkjet printers with built-in spectrophotometers (a colour bar is created, printed and measured without any user intervention, compared against target values and a label is printed on the proof).

For GMG Color, Print 09 marked the launch of GMG PrintControl 2.0 and RapidCheck 2.0, user-friendly software that walks printers through the process of standardizing their printing presses in order to achieve predictable printing results, and then following up to ensure the operation is consistent. The user is led through the processes that are necessary to establish optimal and repeatable printing conditions. GMG PrintControl can be a G7 support tool for achieving GRACoL, SWOP or other

Illustration: Mike Byers



print standards, while RapidCheck notifies the user whether or not his press is operating within defined tolerances.

The company also introduced GMG ColorServer Plus, a colour management software specific to HP Indigo 5000, 5500 or 7000 presses, ensuring compliance to GRACoL printing specifications.

And GMG announced an agreement with BARBIERI (an Italian manufacturer of densitometers and spectrophotometers) whereby

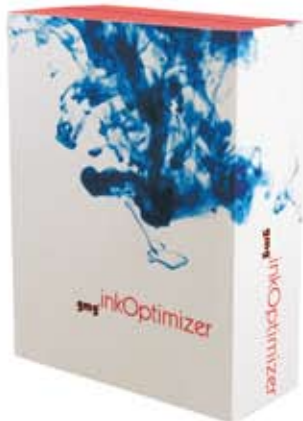
GMG is bundling its ColorServer 4.6 colour management solution with BARBIERI's Spectro LFP RT spectrophotometer, specifically for the digital wide format printing market.

INK OPTIMIZING SOLUTIONS

An important feature for shops using a high volume of printing ink, but also effective for reducing expensive colour toner and wide-format inkjet consumption as well, are the variety of ink optimization solutions being offered by most every company in the colour management field. These automated processes reduce the CMY components in files and replaces them with an optimized black, leading to savings in total ink consumption.

CGS has the ORIS Ink Saver while GMG calls theirs the InkOptimizer 4.6.

Within automated workflow solutions, Agfa has :Apogee InkSave, an integrated option in the Apogee Suite, and Kodak offers an Ink Optimizing Solution option within Colorflow, its shop-wide automated colour relationship management suite that resides within Prinergy.



"We took all the best of variety of colour tools in the Kodak family and placed them into Colorflow," says Jon Bracken, managing director of Kodak Canada. Colorflow syncs with everything in the workflow, where making corrections in one place automatically alters complementary elements.

At PRINT 09 Fujifilm was demonstrating various CGS colour matching solutions on its booth, but the company was also

featuring its Taskero Universe ColorPath Verified, a solution that allows customers to not only ensure their shop is keeping colour consistent, but they can verify it on any device, to ensure each job is staying within a specified standard. The system tracks hardware (including platesetters, presses, monitors and digital printing devices) and output, and it allows for controlling and maintaining consistent quality throughout the colour production process, locally and in remote locations.

BEYOND INK OPTIMIZATION

The Chicago show was the coming out party for the new Fine Eye Color Solutions (a new venture formed by the merger of Michigan-based Chromaticity and FineEye Color Solutions out of California). The company's core product is its ICEserver software application, built upon ICE (Intelligent Color Engine) technology.

"The ICE server is a technology that enhances quality, keeps to standards and saves money," says Ian McKenzie, vice president marketing with the company. [He also happens to be Canadian].

According to McKenzie, the inventor of ICE is Ernest Miller (the company's CTO) and he wrote an all-new algorithm for separating CMYK based on years of experience, and he developed a solution for optimizing the print output specific to the ink/paper relationship.

Unlike other ink optimization solutions, McKenzie says the ICE server is more about print quality optimization, with ink savings as a side benefit.

The company says printers can expect up to 25 percent average reduction in ink use, yet the colour gamut increases in saturated colours.

The company CEO, Steve McDonald (employee number three at Adobe, and one time Adobe COO, and also Canadian) is excited about the technology. The hot-folder-based solution integrates into existing workflows, just before the RIP, and he says it takes only one-day to set up, and it can be done remotely.

PROACTIVE DOT GAIN COMPENSATION

Alwan Color Expertise attracted attention at the show with its Print Standardizer solution. Matched up with X-Rite's press-

side measuring devices, the solution uses Alwan's Dynamic Press Calibration (DPC), an automated dot-gain compensation technology. The software controls and corrects production without any human intervention. Press sheets are read by an X-Rite device and the DPC tracks dot gain for every press/paper combination, and then it automatically compensates for any drift on press by sending revised dot-gain correction curves either to output files or exported directly to the shop's plate setter. The tool is valuable for shops aiming to conform to an established standard.



The Alwan Print Standardizer is used to continually assess the press calibration state and issues warnings if something is wrong in the process. Colour expert Dave Hunter of Pilot Marketing, a spokesperson for Alwan Color in North America, calls the system a pro-active as opposed to a re-active approach to pressroom standardization.

NEW ECONOMICAL PRESS-SIDE SCANNING

Complementary to the Alwan colour monitoring solution, X-Rite has unveiled an all-new semi-automated press-side colour control (scanning) system called EasyTrax, designed for 2-, 4- or 6-colour operations. The product is targeting smaller shops with presses from 20 inches up to 40 inches.

The EasyTrax allows pressrooms to regularly monitor print runs to ensure they are matching their customers' quality requirements and maintaining industry specifications.

"With EasyTrax, X-Rite now offers a colour control solution for every type of sheetfed printing workflow, regardless of the size of customer, their budget, or their level of colour process control expertise," notes Laura Pursley, senior product manager for pressroom solutions at X-Rite.

EasyTrax is partially automated and is designed for older presses and shops currently using handheld devices. The system offers easy set up, easy alignment and requires very little training.

It can be installed on existing press consoles. Available in spectral or density models, the new system software evaluates readings against set tolerances so users know if they need to make adjustments to ink density.

Just as sheetfed printers across North America are beginning to embrace Gracol print standards and the G7 calibrating methodology, Print 09 presented a number of automated colour software tools to help keep pressrooms hitting their targets. **CP**