

This is an article written by Kevin Karstedt for Boxboard Container Magazine. Mr. Karstedt has a monthly article titled "Digital Connections" which he discusses issues of importance to Packaging Printers and Converters related to Digital Pre-Press and related technologies. His firm consults with Consumer Product Companies, Packaging Converters/Printers and Graphic Service to execute package graphic development in the most efficient manner possible. They also provide marketing and product research for System Developers with products and services targeted at the Packaging Marketplace.

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CMM Preview

Two years ago at CMM'99 I met with editors of BCI and we discussed the needs and merits of a monthly column dedicated to the digital side of packaging prepress. Shortly after that meeting I began writing for the magazine and Digital Connections began a regular appearance in January 2000. To say there has been an explosion of innovation, technological advance and a change in the general landscape since that show would be a serious understatement. CMM'01, (www.cmmshow.com) held in Chicago April 23rd to 26th will showcase all these changes and a few that have not yet been unveiled.

In 1999 the biggest buzz at the show – as far as digital connections was concerned - was offset CTP. In hindsight there must have been a lot of offset folding carton manufactures looking seriously at the technology because the past six months has shown a number of key folding carton printers adopting widespread implementing of CTP technologies.

The offset CTP market has matured from phase II - proven technology, limited implementation - to phase III – improved technology, expanding implementation - in the past two years. With this acceptance CTP will be one of the largest interest points at CMM'01. The major packaging CTP players will all have their latest/greatest platesetters and workflows on display. CreoScitex (www.creoscitex.com) for one will be showing their Trendsetter VLFP platesetter which is specifically designed for package printers.

There have been enormous technical innovations on the Flexo side of the isle as well. Barco Graphics (www.barco.com), CreoScitex and Max Daetwyler (www.daetwyler.com) will be showing there latest flexo platesetters. These companies have new machines with sizes and capabilities targeted at the tag & label and flexible packaging markets. Barco's CDI Spark, Daetwyler's Digilas and CreoScitex's line of flexo platesetters are must sees for anyone looking at high quality flexo printing.

New flexo plate materials including DuPont (www.dupont.com/cyrel) Cyrel Fast and Cyrel Fast-Digital will be demonstrated at the show as well. This new plate material has the capability to be processed in about a quarter of the time as conventional Cyrel. In addition to the speed enhancements DuPont has developed this product to be processed in a dry solventless environment, need we say more.

The offset plate world is not without its share of innovations. Kodak Polychrome (www.kpgraphics.com) and AGFA (www.agfa.com) will be showing the latest in plate technologies. In addition to flexo and offset plate innovations Max Daetwyler will be showing it's new line of DLK Lightweight Polymer Cylinders for gravure converters. Image carrier media innovations have the potential to dramatically change the packaging prepress arena over the next five years and these companies and products will be leading the way.

Another buzz on the floor will be digital proofing. There has been a lot of activity in digital proofing and all the major vendors will demonstrate their capabilities. AGFA, Barco, CreoScitex, DuPont, Imation (www.imation.com), Artwork Systems (www.artworksystems.com) and Polaroid (www.polaroidgraphics.com) will have digital proofing systems and solutions. Each will talk about the use of digital proofing as part of an entire workflow. Many will discuss the role of digital proofing systems and their use in remote approval and collaboration between customer and converter. This is another area where changes are coming at light speed. The next 12 months will see some major adoptions of remote proofing systems that will be shown at CMM'01.

Innovation has also been happening in CAD and structural design. Barco, EngView (www.engview.com) and Genline Systems (www.genlinesystems.com) will be showing structural CAD systems some with prototyping and 3D rendering capabilities that can add value to that part of the production process.

All of the vendors mentioned in this article, in addition to 15 more, can be seen in a section of the show called the Digital Front End (DFE) Technology Center. The DFE Technology Center will also feature the DFE Presentation Theater. Misha Davida Sales Manager for CMM says "The DFE Presentation theater will run continuous educational presentations about topics important to attendees evaluating prepress technologies. Some of the topics will be Digital and Remote Proofing, CTP for offset, CTP for Flexo, Digital Asset Management and others".

A new feature of the theater will be Workflow Mornings. Tuesday and Wednesday mornings attendees will have an opportunity to see entire workflow demonstrations given by AGFA, Artwork Systems, Barco, CreoScitex and Max Daetwyler. Davida characterizes workflow mornings as "an unprecedented opportunity for anyone evaluating prepress solutions to see how they will work in a total workflow environment." CMM has created a suite of packages that each vendor will use in these workflow presentations. "This is the first show of it's kind to provide both the equipment vendors and attendees such a value added opportunity to present and see workflows presented on a level playing field" says Davida.

I look forward to seeing you at the show. You will know where to find me, I will be at the DFE Technology Center seeing all the things I will be writing about for the next 12 months.

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I invite calls and e-mails on this and all Digital Connections topics and will include your comments were possible. In the mean time....think digital.