



Everything your Wide Format Inkjet Printer can Do

Source of Profit
(If you intend to use your inkjet printer commercially)

Source of Enjoyment
(If you intend to use your printer for home, hobby or a second part-time business)



You can earn considerable profit with your large format printer. As one person told me, "I made lots of money with my ColorSpan." I have met other people who have earned a handsome living with their Encads, HP, Roland, Mutoh, Mimaki, Iris and all the grand format printers as well. We just got an email from another ColorSpan owner; he said he had earned over a million dollars Canadian in a single year due to the productivity of his printer.

FLAAR is non-profit, so we find different ways to get satisfaction in producing the best quality at the most reasonable cost. Many of the people who read our reports are looking for a printer as a second business to run from home (garage, basement, or attic) to pick up some extra income. Thousands of photographers and artists seek help selecting a printer to use in their hobby to print art or photographs. The nice thing about a wide format printer is that you can do both, have fun and also earn some money.

The majority of our readers run sign shops, quick-print or reprographic shops, do pre-press proofing, CAD or GIS printing; others have a commercial photo lab or fine art studio. They need to earn a living with their wide format printers.

Here are some of the many kinds of prints you can accomplish with inkjet printers. Each is a potential source of income.

3D renderings

Three-dimensional renderings come in many forms. Most can be reproduced in two dimensions at wide format sizes on inkjet printers.

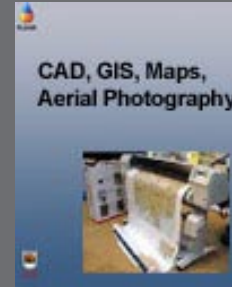
- graphics display,
- three-dimensional drawings,
- computer generated art,
- computer animation,
- computer games,
- fantasy scenes,
- science fiction such as outer space and astronomical scenes,
- fantasy landscapes,
- exotic machines,
- fractal art,
- digital collages,
- computer graphics,
- computer painting,
- computer enhanced photography (photo painting),
- vector drawing,
- computer generated cartoon cels,
- giclee (covered separately under giclée)
- architectural renderings (covered separately under CAD)



*FLAAR Report Series on
Fine Art Giclee*

CAD, engineering drawings, architectural drawings

- renderings,
- building graphics,
- project plans,
- AEC,
- CAD,
- architectural drawings
- interior design,
- fabrics



*FLAAR Report on Printers
for CAD and GIS*

Architectural use

There are now printers available to allow you to print directly on

- Brick
- Stone
- Wall board
- Laminates
- Doors
- Glass
- Window blinds

Even customized toilet seats (yes, there are printers you can run your toilet seat through and print on it directly. After all, this is America).

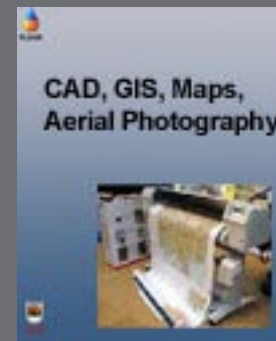
With UV curable inks, already with today's technology you can print on brick, stone, concrete, wallboard, laminates, doors, windows, glass, window blinds, and other thick or rigid materials.



*FLAAR Report Series on
Flatbed Printers and UV
curable ink printers*

GIS

- CAD,
- GIS, geological, geographical information systems,
- maps,
- mineral and other natural resources exploration
- land use planning,
- real estate, housing development,
- land surveyors, land surveying,

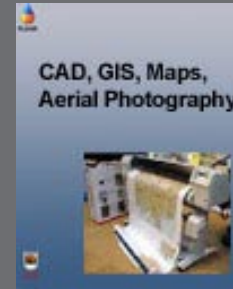


*FLAAR Report on Printers
for CAD and GIS*

**planning departments, city, county, state, federal:
see also CAD, GIS**

- Drawings of all kinds, architectural, engineering
- maps,
- Aerial photographs
- computer generated images
- artist's renderings

FLAAR Report on Inkjet Printers for CAD, GIS, and Computer Aided Design (includes comments on photo-realistic printers as well). We are considering adding lists of electrostatic and other reprographic technologies for CAD as well, but the current report is predominantly inkjet.



FLAAR Report on Printers for CAD, GIS and Computer Aided Design

Advertising agencies, graphic design

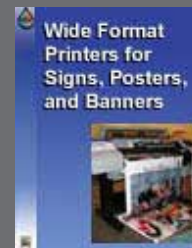
- Story boards,
- proofs
- Corporate creative output
- Corporate communications materials



FLAAR Report on Inkjet printers for proofing & FLAAR Report Series on Signs and Posters

Legal Graphics

- Courtroom graphics, charts, statistics
- Presentation posters
- Crime scene reconstructions
- Traffic accident reconstructions



FLAAR Report Series on Signs and Posters

Vehicle Graphics (solvent inks are best but you can do with pigmented water-based inks as well)

- bus wrap,
- vehicle wrap,
- fleet graphics
- truckside advertising
- Any and all signs and decorations on vehicles

See also under decals

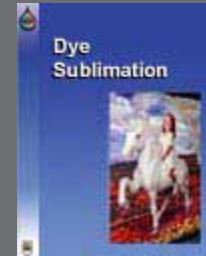
Not really part of "vehicle graphics" but a new market is printing specialized seat upholstery with inkjet printers.



FLAAR Report Series on Vehicle Wrap & FLAAR on Dye Sublimation printers

Decals, labels (see also vehicle graphics)

- decals,
- pressure sensitive,
- labels,
- stickers,
- tickets



FLAAR Report Series on Dye Sublimation printers

Building Graphics

- Billboards
- Building wrap, covering unsightly construction and scaffolding
- Banners



FLAAR Report Series on Solvent ink printers

Theater Graphics, TV backdrops

Theaters, television stations, and comparable locations can use inkjet prints in a variety of applications. See also under Event Signage.

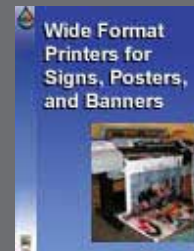
- theater backdrops,
- theater curtains,
- costumes,
- inkjet textiles,
- stage curtains,
- stage settings,
- backdrops for TV interviews,
- design,
- scenery,
- props
- theater marquee signage,
- soft signage (listed more under regular signage or under inkjet textiles)



FLAAR Report Series on Solvent ink printers & FLAAR Report on Inkjet Textiles

Hotels, Restaurants, Casinos, Cruise Ships

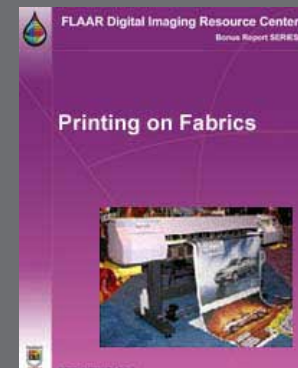
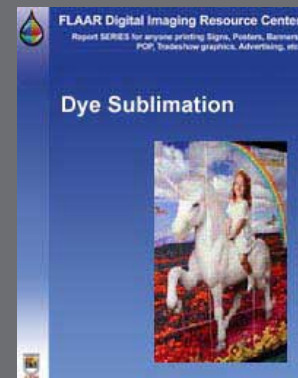
- All the traditional signs, backlit, floor graphics, promotions etc but also
- Surfacing of the gaming tables (now you can place ads everywhere)
- Menus
- Directories
- Awnings
- Swimming pool bottoms
- curtains, table cloths,
- Upholstery, pillows, bed sheets
- Plus all the same decor items you can print for home use, namely
 - o wallpaper, murals, curtains



FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners & FLAAR Report on Dye Sublimation printers

Home Use, both commercial production and hobby (see also décor)

- Custom wallpaper or murals
- Curtains, drapes (you can print directly onto textiles or also via dye sublimation)
- Sheets, pillow cases, blankets
- Floor covering (yes, you can even print on floor tiles of various material even rugs)
- Kitchen tiles (ceramic tiles via dye sublimation)
- Bathroom tiles
- Table cloths, table linens (custom designed napkins)
- Towels (via dye sublimation)
- Photos of all sizes
- Coffee mugs, via dye sublimation heat transfer paper
- Laminates for table tops (via dye sublimation) or directly via flatbed and UV curable inks
- Clothing, t-shirts, caps, and more, via dye sublimation or direct printing
 - Swim wear
 - Ties
 - Silk scarves
 - Dresses
 - Team wear
 - Corporate logo shirts, coats, etc.



FLAAR Report Series on Direct Printing on textiles & FLAAR Report Series on Dye Sublimation printers.

Hobby and Craft

- greeting cards,
- note cards,
- gift cards,
- post cards,
- invitations (such as wedding invitations)
- jigsaw puzzles
- game boards



FLAAR Report Series on 24" and entry level printers for home or hobby and FLAAR Report on 36" and above for Photographers

book covers, CD, video covers

- book covers,
- CD covers,
- video covers,
- proofs,

FLAAR Report Series on 24" and entry level budget printers for home or hobby and FLAAR Report on 36" and above for Photographers

fine art giclee

- fine art, paintings,
- computer generated art,
- watercolor paper,
- artists canvas,
- photographs on canvas
- photographs on watercolor paper
- old maps,
- vintage posters



FLAAR Report Series on Fine Art Giclee & FLAAR Report on 24" and entry level budget printers.

Décor (see also home, hotel-restaurant etc.)

- hotel decor decoration,
- house decor, home décor,
- cruse ship décor
- corporate office decoration,
- wall decorations, wall coverings, wallpaper,
- fine art decor,
- curtains
- awnings
- floor graphics,
- tiles



FLAAR Report Series on Fine Art Giclee

Publishing

You obviously can't produce books, magazines, or even much desktop publishing with a wide format printer. Here is one instance that desktop size printers are useful. But publishers do utilize wide format printers, for

- Proofing
- Imposition proofing
- Short run book covers
- portfolios

If you have a specialized RIP you can even proof directly on newsprint, the identical newsprint your offset press has to print onto.

May also include publishing greeting cards, note cards, gift cards, post cards. If in limited editions these can be produced by inkjet printers.



FLAAR Report on Inkjet Printers for Proofing.

Signs

Signs come in many sizes and shapes. Specialists distinguish between signs, banners, and posters.

You need to distinguish between indoor use and outdoor use because of the need for solvent ink, oil-based ink, or at least pigmented ink for outdoor use.

billboards, outdoor signs

- outdoor signs,
- Billboards
- Window displays and backdrops
- Banners, including for airplanes to tow (you can get two-sided banner material from IntelliCoat)
- Pole signs
- Directional signs
- Backlit (illuminated bus stop signs, etc)
- Point of purchase (POP) which is also known as POS, point of sale
- Floor graphics (be sure to have anti-slip lamination, and insurance...)
- Trade show displays
- Stadium signage
- Vending machines, gas pump wraps
- Inflatable graphics (which go across streets like an arch)
- Balloons, sails on sailboats

See also, banners, stadium signage



FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners.

Signs can be employed in the following situations

- Classroom Teaching, charts, flip charts
- Exhibits, displays
- Event signage, everything from advertising to directional help
- Safety notices
- Identification
- Recognition of achievement, such as “employee of the month”
- Display of mottoes, logos for brand identification
- In stores signs can help sales, specials, bargains, prices, promotions, aisle markers
- Concepts, seasonal and holiday themes (Christmas, Easter rabbits, etc).
- Sponsor signs at sports events
- Sails for sailboats or banners towed by airplanes

tradeshow graphics

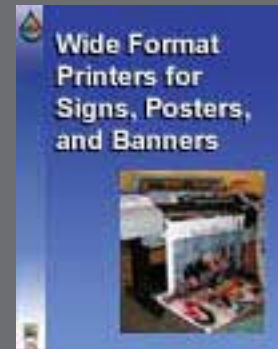
- tradeshow graphics,
- display signage,
- exhibit signage,
- exhibit graphics,
- exhibit display,
- soft signage,
- fabrics,

banners, signs

Not really any hard and fast rules any more of what distinguishes banners from signs. But I did remove “posters” and put them with signs. Traditionally the following items are printed by a “banner company.” In the past much of this was done with screen printing. Today short runs are being done with wide format inkjet.

- Banners
 - o Avenue banners
 - o Roll banners
 - o Message banners
 - o Car dealer banners
- Flags
 - o National flags, state or city flags
 - o Safety flags
 - o Corporate logo and/or corporate flags
 - o Promotion flags
- Pennants
- Signs
 - o Pole signs
 - o Auto sale slogans pricers (static-cling)
- streamers

Decals and tags we list separately elsewhere, even though



FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners.

many national banner companies include them. Decals and labels are actually more typically done by industrial inkjet printers

Use your Imagination

You can probably come up with all kinds of other potential and profitable uses for inkjet printing. Museums and art galleries, stores of every kind, car dealerships, travel agencies, airports, hotels, restaurants, real estate companies, sports arenas and even government offices such as the Post Office are ideal places for you to sell your signs. Temporary events and promotions are especially good venues for temporary signage. You can earn a profit practically everywhere.

One person wrote us asking for what printer was useful for doing "erotic life size cutouts." Hey, why not, after all, this is America.



Nicholas Hellmuth at a sign shop in Canada checking out a Roland printer. FLAAR inspects print shops to find out how printers actually function in real life. So when we write about pros and cons of a printer, ink, media, or RIP, it's based on first-hand experience.

This Roland print was beautiful but the surface scraped off just from rolling and unrolling, so we had to throw it away. Imagine if you had sold this print to your client for \$250, which is about what a print this size goes for.

Applications by classification of Industry or situation

In-house graphics department (for corporation or institution).

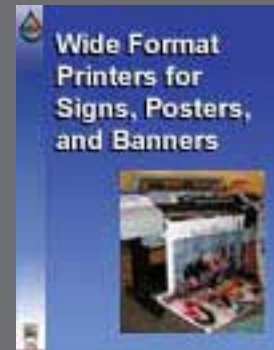
Analysts predict that in-plant use of wide format printers will continue to grow. But putting wide format printers in in-plant reprographic departments is only one aspect of the growth. The even larger increment in usage of wide format printers will come when wide format printers become as common as copiers. Every work group, every building area, every department nowadays has some form of copier, large or small.

Thus FLAAR has established working with expanding in-house corporate use of wide format printers as one of its goals during 2003-2004.

Instead of paying high prices outside with Kinkos, you can save money by putting your own wide format printer inside your own building and print things yourself.

- Visitor welcome notices, sign-in procedures
- Directional signs
- General notices
- Floor plans, locational maps of the building, campus or complex
- Facilities management
- Fire safety notices, evacuation maps and notices
- safety hazard warnings,
- health notices,
- elevator signs,
- In-house training: charts, flip-charts
- Business meetings, presentations to the Board, flip charts
- printing PowerPoint presentations,
- spreadsheets,

- sales statistics charts
- production goal achievements,
- motivational posters,
- “employee of the month” with photo
- **General announcements**
- **quality awareness,**
- achieving production goals
- customer appreciation (tips on how to accomplish)
- Decoration, fine art giclee or photo-realistic images
- Floor graphics
- Murals, especially entrance area and board room (make the boss happy)
- in-house training charts,
- Cafeteria menus, health notices
- Parking lot signs, notices “we are not responsible....”
- Promos, notices, in the elevators

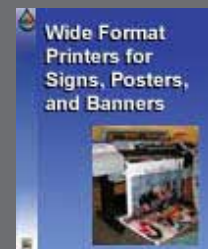
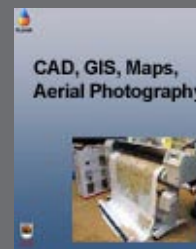


FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners.

Military, police, fire department

- aerial maps,
- GIS,
- aerospace,
- floor plans,
- building plans,
- emergency preparation,
- CAD drawings,
- training,
- recruitment posters

Military would also need many of the same kinds of wide format graphics as any in-house print facility. Training aspects of military, police, and fire department would also need the same kinds of graphics printing as a university, college, or training program.



FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners and FLAAR Report on Printers for CAD and GIS

Sports centers, events, state fairs, world fairs, expos

- placards,
- billboards,
- outdoor signs,
- banners,
- indoor signage,
- posters,

FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners.

Entertainment, special events

You can classify entertainment and special events in multiple ways. These classifications share many aspects of what theaters need, some aspects of what sports stadiums would display.

- Golf, ski regattas and a host of sports outside of a stadium
- promotional posters,
- theater marquee signs, theater backdrops, scenery backdrops
- backlit,
- floor graphics,
- promotional signs,
- surfacing gaming tables,
- menus,
- directories,
- awnings,
- wallpaper, murals, curtains, table cloths, upholstery,
- props, event graphics, musical, opera, golf, sports, sporting events, Olympics, race tracks, ski regattas

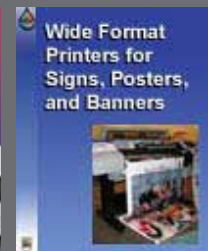


FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners.

Museum, library,

Zoo, botanical garden, park, planetarium

- Museum exhibits,
- Book exhibits
- art gallery,
- shows,
- posters,
- fine art giclée reproductions in book shop,
- dioramas,
- training for docents



FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners and FLAAR Report on 36" for Photographers

College, university, community college, High school, trade school, Training programs

- classroom teaching signs,
- training charts,
- flip charts,
- exhibits,
- displays
- recruitment posters

Plus everything that any in-house print facility would produce.

Art, photography, graphics communications and comparable departments also have many of the needs of photographers and artists.

FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners and FLAAR Report on 36" for Photographers

FLAAR Report Series on Fine Art Giclee.

Medical, health facility, home for aging, mental health, hospital, doctor's building

- classroom teaching signs,
- training charts,
- flip charts,
- exhibits,
- displays

Plus everything that any in-house print facility would produce.

FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners.

Organizations, non-profit, advocacy groups, churches, religions groups, charities

Everything that any in-house print facility would produce.

Some churches and other groups also have many of the needs of photographers and artists.

FLAAR Report Series on Fine Art Giclee

Retail, grocery, department store, distributor

- advertising signs,
 - directional signs,
 - safety notices,
 - identification,
 - promotional signs,
 - aisle markers,
 - seasonal,
 - display window, storefront
 - poster,
 - POP, point of purchase,
 - counter displays,
 - floor graphics
 - mobiles,
 - warehousing signs,
- see also, banners, labels, stickers



FLAAR Report Series on Signs, Posters and Banners.

Photography, photo labs

- Murals
- Displays, exhibits
- Reproductions of fine art
- Photographic enlargements of all kinds especially portraits, landscapes
- Photographs on canvas; photographs on water-color paper (see also giclee and décor)
- Black-and-white photographic prints

FLAAR Report on 24" and Entry Level Budget Printers for Home or Hobby. or FLAAR Report on 36" and Above for Photographers, Photo Studios, and other Professional uses.

Proofing

DuPont and other companies make special proofing media, but for merely proofing for position, layout and basics, you can proof on anything, including raw newsprint (if you have an HP 1050 or 1055 and SeeColor or ColorBus RIP).

- proofing,
- newspaper proofs,
- color proofing,
- imposition proofing



FLAAR Report on Inkjet Printers for Proofing

Packaging

- packaging proofs,
- actual packaging

FLAAR Report on Inkjet Printers for Proofing

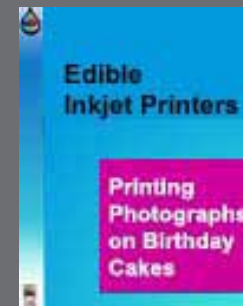
Printing on textiles

All of the textile printing in categories above in clothing, home use and signs, as well as flags

FLAAR Report Series Direct Printing on Textiles and Dye Sublimation Printers

Specialty Printing

- Magnets, yes, you can get magnetic material in 24” rolls for inkjet printing and/or dye sublimation heat transfer.
- Silk, yes, you can print on silk with many large format printers.
- Metal foil
- Solid metal
- Skis (via dye sublimation)
- Printing on birthday cakes. See new FLAAR Fast Facts report.



FLAAR Fast Fact printing on birthday cakes.

Applications by Kind of Media

Wrapping Material

Most inkjet media is too thick to be folded hence is not suitable for wrapping material. There are exceptions, however. The HP DesignJet 1050 and 1055 can print on wrapping paper (it can print on Kraft paper and on newsprint so I presume it can print on wrapping paper also). To get the best color matching, however, you



must generate your own ICC profiles (you need the report on "Color Management") and ideally you need coated media. You only get full colors if the paper you print on has an inkjet ink receptor coating (of powder affixed to the paper).

Stiff and/or rigid material

Every year new printers come out which allow you to print directly onto thick watercolor paper, onto foamcore (gatorboard), even onto solid metal, glass, leather.

FLAAR Report Series about printers for Stiff and/or Rigid Material

Printing on two sides

Most inkjet media can be printed solely on one side. Double-sided media is available, but rare. There are two printers which are retrofitted so they automatically turn the paper over and print on the other side. Usually these are a retrofitted HP DesignJet 1050 or 1055. Proofing is the usual area where double-sided media and printers are called for. It is not easy to fold inkjet media, since it tends to be thick.

Printing Images from PowerPoint

If you need to print images from a PowerPoint presentation, you first need:

A book on scanning from Peachpit Press
A book on digital photography from Peachpit press

Or (since they are free) ask for the *FLAAR report on scanning* and the *FLAAR syllabus on digital photography*.

Every week we get e-mails from people who want to take an illustration from a PowerPoint illustration and enlarge it to poster size. They want to know what printer can do this!

First you need the *FLAAR reports* and then a basic understanding of pixels, dpi vs print size.



FLAAR Report Series and then a basic understanding of pixels, dpi vs print size.

Reality Check

Your large format printer can do all kinds of things (presuming you opted for the appropriate kind of printer). Professional sign shops and large commercial companies may have rows of different printers each cranking out a particular kind of sign or other job. Naturally most people start off with just one easy to use printer and after the first year of gathering experience they acquire additional and/or other kinds of printer technology so they can handle a wider range of jobs.

The biggest mistake is to presume that one single printer can do all jobs. Of course this is what the printer ads try to lure you with, namely false promises.

The second error is to swallow the hype and misleading advertising claims of what a printer can accomplish. So when the printer ad shows a giant mural, or a naturalistic cactus plant life-size (15 feet tall) but does not warn you that it can take three to five hours to do a single print of those dimensions at the top dpi claimed in the specs, this is the definition of misleading advertising.

Because of these concerns we have prepared the entire FLAAR series on Survival. We hope you enjoy the results of our six years of research on wide format inkjet printers.

General Considerations

We still also offer other reports free, at no cost. Just fill out the inquiry-survey form to get these. We don't know what reports to send to you unless we know what your company needs to print, how often, how many, whether for indoor or outdoor? Is this for home or hobby?

Especially important is what other printers do you already know about? And what others do you need more information on?

Your e-mail can be as long as you wish? Don't worry about knowing how to spell the different printer names and models? We can figure out which ones you mean if you do it roughly phonetically.

The more you let us know about your needs and background, the easier it is for us to ascertain precisely what help you need.

Sorry, we are unable to answer in person unless you sign up for a consulting session. At this point we provide phone or fax. Besides, if we were on the phone all day long we wouldn't have time to be preparing the PDF format reports to send to you. Also, our editors are probably off somewhere attending a trade show or visiting a sign shop or photo studio to get more actual-factual end-user reports.

We don't believe the ads and PR hype either; we don't believe even what our sponsors say in their ad claims. The only yardstick is, "does this printer actually provide a solution for my needs, for my clients, and for my budget."

Our senior review editor serves as the "Ralph Nadar" or large format printers, inks, media, and RIPs. He is also the Johnny Appleseed, working to make it easier for first-time users to understand the advantages of entering the world of large format digital printing.



FLAAR staff answering mails from all over around the world.

Nicholas Hellmuth is also the “Ann Landers” of digital imaging, answering your questions on scanners, digital cameras, digital storage devices, as well as everything to do with large format printers.

Please tell other people about the FLAAR services. Being non-profit we have zero advertising budget. We depend entirely upon word-of-mouth.

We hope you enjoy all the information we have prepared for you. If you wish to see the complete range of FLAAR Reports, check out www.wide-format-printers.NET. This new site shows every single one of the almost 70 titles.

The purpose of FLAAR is to try to assist people before they made a decision. Please realize that FLAAR is a non-profit research institute at a university. Our web site attempts to indicate what topics we are able to cover. It's easy to overlook the notes on the topics that it's simply not realistic to handle.

Cheap desktop printers fall apart eventually; their software is generally inadequate. You gradually achieve the awareness that the printer you received was merely a machine for soaking up expensive ink and paper. Yet these printers serve a useful purpose, you get some training in digital imaging. Nonetheless you waste your money because you could get even better practice with a serious wide format printer.

When you wish to bury the past mistakes and move onward and upward to serious wide format printers, we will be glad to assist you. Wide format printers start at about \$3,000; a serious wide format printer start at about \$8,000 to \$15,000, such as HP 5500ps, ColorSpan Esprit, good enough for professional use yet easy on the budget. Commercial inkjet printers (such as ColorSpan Mach 12 or X-12) cost about \$25,000 but produce awesome quality and impressive quantity. Solvent ink printers begin at \$40,000. Good solvent ink printers such as Oce Arizona are \$64,000. Grand format (super-wide) solvent ink printers are \$150,000 to \$450,000.

We cover 24” wide format printers and upward. We can even suggest places you can order your printer for personal home delivery. That's right, an actual human being will bring the printer to your house, will unpack it, set everything up, connect it to your computer, and actually show you how to produce museum-quality photo-realistic prints.

Our reviews of flatbed scanners cover scanners for hobby photographers (circa \$2,000 and up) for professional photo labs and prepress shops (\$10,000 to \$54,000).

Do you need a drum scanner? You would be surprised how easy the new models are to use and how much their prices have dropped. Or, we can recommend plenty of medium priced flatbed scanners that will do a good job. But no, we do not review HP scanners or Epson scanners, nor do we recommend Microtek nor their clones (such as Agfa, which are manufactured by Microtek).

Due to the avalanche of requests, however, we ask you to fill out the provisional inquiry form now available on all three web sites so we can attend to your request for assistance (if you seek free reports). Please keep in mind, our sites are called wide format printer and large format printer for a good reason, this is the subject that we cover. We do not cover desktop printers.



We now have new reports series on: *RIPs for large format printers* and an enhanced version, *RIPs + basic help for first-time-users*. Although we can't repair a RIP you already have, we can suggest a better RIP that hopefully will not cause as many technical problems.

Just look for the complete list of all FLAAR titles at the back of the PDF reports, or return to www.wide-format-printers.NET.

We thank Epson USA, ColorSpan, Encad, Hewlett-Packard and Mimaki for providing printers that we could evaluate. All the other printers we evaluate by visiting all the leading trade shows in Germany and across the USA. We also listen to the comments of the almost a thousand people a month who send us e-mails out of the more than 20,000 people a month who read the FLAAR web sites.

FLAAR editors also visit sign shops, print shops, photo studios, and architectural studios to see what other users have to say about the printers they have selected.

The professors at Bowling Green State University also contribute evaluations based on their experiences. So overall you get quite a lot of information when you ask for any of the FLAAR reports.

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FLAAR Digital Imaging Resource Center.

Reports are distributed by the Francisco Marroquin University.

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