



## Which Conferences and Seminars are best for learning about Digital Imaging and Wide Format Printers





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Caption for front cover: A conference held by the Tiara Group.

## Introduction

We tend to list conferences and training programs that we have attended personally. This way we know from our own experience what these conferences are like.

## The Tiara Group

Two years ago I attended my first Tiara Group program, organized by Art Diamond and his experienced team which includes Terry Gorka and Dorothy Bacchilega. They have been hosting wide format inkjet seminars for many years. The giants in the industry attend these.

The Tiara Group conferences share many of the best traits of the IMI meetings: you get 50 to 80 managers, CEOs, and/or top technical people of the leading digital imaging companies. A few end-users attend but the primary purpose for the Tiara Group are industry technical and managerial level sharing information among themselves. However end-users are welcome; none of these are private clubs whatsoever.



Tiara Group conferences tend to be at luxury hotels with a corresponding price tag. Las Vegas is thus naturally a favored location. However you usually receive a group discount which helps moderate the hotel cost.

This particular conference was on inkjet inks. Definitely informative and a learning experience. There is a mini-trade show of perhaps a dozen companies. But the main action is during the lunch and cocktail hour: namely quality networking time.

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If you want to see, and be seen, now you know where to appear. I recently attended the he Tiara Group Specialty Papers & Media 2005. It was ideal for networking and meeting product managers, company presidents and CEOs.

Since many of our readers have asked where and how to meet FLAAR, the upcoming March 12th conference is an opportunity. Dr Nicholas Hellmuth will be giving the Keynote address in Savannah, Georgia.

The advantages of attending an industry conference of this nature are multiple. At these industry conferences there is actually time to meet key inkjet printer personalities when they are not tied down by being in a trade show booth. The atmosphere at these conferences is relaxed, and the industry managers are not busy selling products. They are at the conferences to network.

## IMI, Information Management Institute

IMI holds quite a wide variety of educational conferences. About a dozen exhibits are in the foyer, so that aspect could be considered a mini-trade-show.

The lectures at their 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Digital Printing of Textiles Conference (Oct 2001) were outstanding. The speakers were key people at their respective inkjet printing manufacturing companies. Speakers were also from the ink and textile companies. Several end-users provided some real-life perspective.

The kind of presentations tended to be factual. In other words, not many of the “used car salesman” type of gung-ho motivational talks about how to increase sales (I don’t bother to attend or review that kind of presentation). It’s obvious how to increase sales, get really good printers, the latest inks, high quality media and trained people to run them.



This particular IMI program was dedicated to inkjet printing of textiles. IMI also offers an outstanding program, “Inkjet Printing Conference,” “Digital, Industrial & Decorative Printing Conference,” and their “Ink Jet Academy.” FLAAR attended all three in Lisbon, Portugal, Nov. 4-9<sup>th</sup>. We liked these so much we returned in November 2005.

Full details/registration are available from pertinent web sites

- For IMI Europe visit: [www.imieurope.com](http://www.imieurope.com)
- For USA Programs visit IMI Inc: [www.imiconf.com](http://www.imiconf.com)

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We find all IMI conferences well worth attending.

You can get information on the IMI programs directly from Alvin Keene, e-mail is new since 2003, [imi@imiconf.com](mailto:imi@imiconf.com), tel: 207-235-2225, fax: 207-235-2226.

IMI also has a summer programs. Check out their web site [www.imiconf.com](http://www.imiconf.com)

## Inkjet Textiles

IMI is also a leader in seminars on inkjet textiles.

I attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual predecessor and liked it; very informative lectures. Outstanding opportunity for networking.

## Ink Jet Academy

The Ink Jet Academy is organized by Pivotal Resources and Xennia Technology and offered via IMI. The course is expertly led by Alan Hudd of [Xennia Technology](http://Xennia Technology), and Mike Willis of Pivotal Resources, [www.pivotal.co.uk](http://www.pivotal.co.uk).

This excellent program is described on [www.pivotal.co.uk/pivotal/pivpages/front.htm](http://www.pivotal.co.uk/pivotal/pivpages/front.htm). Or check out [www.imieurope.com](http://www.imieurope.com) and [www.imiconf.com](http://www.imiconf.com).

## Other Programs

I am gradually learning of other seminars such as offered by Lyra Research, Society for Imaging Science and Technology, and others. But I have not had the opportunity to attend any of those others. Thus so far, the courses by IMI including the Ink Jet Academy are the best available worldwide which I have attended. Kind of tough to write a description unless I attend. Just experienced my first Tiara Group-Art Diamond conference. As we gain more knowledge of their programs we will be able to increase our coverage. The first event was definitely well worth the long flight to Las Vegas, even though I had zero interest to waste money gambling or attending some topless show. You get that free on most any beach nowadays, especially in Europe or Mexico.



What is especially useful about both the Tiara conferences and the Ink Jet Academy is that participants get the entire program all nicely printed out and professionally organized in a binder. Every lecture is available in PowerPoint version in hard copy. It would be useful to have an option to obtain the illustrations in color, especially for lecture topics that pertain to color management.

In today's world recession it is understandable that businesses are cutting travel and training costs. However it would be false savings to cut out something as educational as this. In the long run, either from lost business opportunities (from the networking) or from lack of information on the inkjet industry, cutting out this travel is not really saving your company any money. These IMI and Tiara conferences are well worth the investment.

## Who Attends these Conferences?

About 95% of the people who attend IMI and Tiara Group conferences are from industry. End-users are welcome, but tend not to be a main component of the audience. This is unfortunate, because you can learn a huge amount in these conferences.

Where end-users tend to congregate are the lectures at trade shows. However these tend to be either

- Sales pitches by one company after the other
- Evangelical presentations on whatever topic is popular at the moment
- “how to make profits in your business” “sales secrets for success” type of motivational lecture

So far, Graph Expo and its sister exhibit, “Print,” have been unique in offering presentations that are more realistic. There are also some good presentations at DPI (held in conjunction with SGIA trade show).

## General Comments

As anywhere, occasionally a product manager would put people to sleep with corporate hype about the world’s fastest printer which somehow miraculously prints at top quality while zooming across the media. However at IMI conferences such presentations are so obviously out of place that people look down on such speakers and the companies they are so obviously hyping.

The other trend that I notice in some conferences are the “prophets of unending profit.” During 2001 through 2004 you could count on at least one, sometimes two, and occasionally three speakers per conference who promised billions of dollars for inkjet printing of textiles. “Mass customization” was their mantra.

During these years there were other prophets of rosy statistics that promised billions of increased sales in inkjet media, inks, and printers. So companies such as International Paper paid big money for the statistics and launched “Panorama” line of paper. The only millions of dollars that happened were losses from hemorrhaging money based on totally unrealistic statistics. This is not the fault of the seminar organizers (other than giving such predictions such prominent voice), but we mention it because we have had to sit through all to many of these presentations of hopelessly misleading statistics.



## Trade Magazines

We cover trade magazines in a separate FLAAR Report. You can order the trade magazine report from [www.wide-format-printers.net](http://www.wide-format-printers.net). We are in the process of making this a bonus report.

## Summary on Training Programs

So far the best all-round training programs were those sponsored by IMI Maine and the Tiara Group. IMI conferences are held in various cities across the USA. In Europe IMI teams up with comparable organizations there, namely Pivotal Resources Ltd and Xennia Technology Ltd.

The food and drinks at IMI programs can't be beat anywhere. Furthermore, the hotels are a fair price yet first class (generally a Sheraton-type of hotel). The hotel in Lisbon was especially reasonably priced.

The lecture program of The Big Picture Show was excellent, but attendance had been disappointing. As a result the Big Picture conferences no longer exist. DPI also folded as a trade show. Now their conferences have been reborn at the SGIA trade show. We will report back once we attend and can take notes.

Conferences of The Tiara Group are comparable but not identical to the IMI programs. We attend both and find them worthwhile. One person at a recent Tiara Group conference told me, "the networking here is better than at any trade show. I meet more influential people in industry and close more deals at these conferences than at any trade show."

Recently a manager of an inkjet company came to BGSU for consulting. We were able to provide what they needed. We suggested that as a follow up they attend the IMI Conferences (which happened to be in Lisbon that month). They did, and we got the reply back: "I picked up a lot of good business ideas and contacts in Lisbon. Thanks for the hint to go. Hoping to make it to St Pete as well." So he liked the first IMI Conference so much he was already deciding to go to the next one.



## Appendix A

### Conferences and Courses: FLAAR at Bowling Green State University

BGSU + FLAAR is offering a program in mid-level to advanced digital photography as input for large format inkjet printing every year. You do **not** have to be a student at BGSU; nor a student anywhere. This course is offered via the Internet so you can take it from the comfort of your home or office anywhere in the world. In the present course are people from Chile, Mexico, England, and across the USA. Program information is on [www.digital-photography.org](http://www.digital-photography.org), in the link under training courses.

If you prefer to take a comparable course in person, these we offer in the summer at our university partner in Guatemala. This is an introductory course in digital photography (in Spanish).

If you wish to send a fax, number is 419 372-8283.

FLAAR and Dr Nicholas Hellmuth also offer lecture programs for universities and museums. Other lectures are available for end-users, especially on digital photography and UV-curable inkjet printers.

FLAAR and BGSU also can provide customized lecture programs, workshops, and seminars for manufacturers, distributors, re-sellers, and other companies in the industry.

FLAAR+BGSU also offer consulting, both to manufacturers as well as to end-users (screenprinting shops, photo labs, digital print shops, sign shops, giclee ateliers, etc). Our services are available to everyone, large and small, beginner, intermediate, or advanced.

We can lecture in Spanish, German, and English.

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