

The New Print Publishing Technology

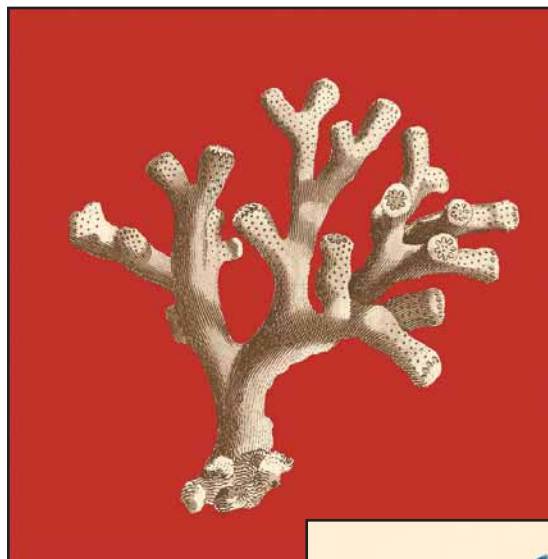
By Patrick Sarver

To meet the needs of the wall art industry, print publishers are increasingly offering a range of digital art services, from print-on-demand sizes and digitally customized imagery to alternative substrates and images for use in presentations

In response to the ever-increasing demands of the wall art market, print publishers are developing new technical capabilities designed to help wall art companies compete. Not only are there more new images than ever, but many publishers are also offering faster turnaround times and customized images by using the latest technology. Compared to the past, when a publisher typically supplied a single large catalog per year, wall art companies can now receive images regularly via e-mail, order print-on-demand (POD) images with custom sizes and colors, and be able to specify the substrate and print finish for virtually any quantity. Print publishers are also working closely with wall art companies in other ways, such as providing images electronically for client presentations and having artists work collaboratively with wall art companies via e-mail.

Expanded Printing Capabilities

As the requirements of wall art companies change, publishers have expanded their printing capabilities. The most common is the ability to order images in custom



An image of a piece of coral is available from World Art Group with a variety of different background colors along with a range of colors for the coral itself.



sizes and colors and in far smaller print runs than in the past. In some cases, prints are available in a range of standard sizes. Others have the capacity to print to the dimensions specified by the production-framing house. Most of these POD images are available in a variety of paper and canvas substrates.

For example, Lonnie Lemco of World Art Group says, “We have

been providing POD services since 2002. Virtually any image in our collection of 15,000-plus prints can be printed at any size, up to 59” wide by any length, on canvas or paper, matte or gloss, with a white or gallery-

wrap border. There are no minimums. We are also always looking to add new printers and equipment that will improve print and color quality and printing speed. For example, a company could have a 12”x12” poster print enlarged to a 48”x48” canvas embellished with gel media,

gold leaf, texturing, crackle, paint, or various other finishes.”

Kathy Benton of Penny Lane says, “Our state-of-the-art digital presses provide fast turnaround. All our print sizes are available for POD images. Print sizes up to size 12”x18” have a minimum quantity of 50 prints. For larger prints, minimums vary with size. We also offer additional sizes for images in our standard print line and have thousands of unpublished images available for POD

orders in all sizes. A line of personalized prints is also available without minimums that can be personalized to include a specific client's name.”

For some publishers, print size is not an issue no matter the type of paper or canvas. Katie Tedford of Gango Editions says, “With in-house digital and giclee printers, we are able to provide our customers with high-quality, rapid fulfillment of custom prints in any quantity and size up to 58”x100” on velvet paper, matte paper, photo paper, gloss canvas, and matte canvas.”

Likewise, Nick Virgilio of McGaw Graphics says, “We offer a comprehensive, sophisticated POD system in up to eight standard sizes, petite to billboard, with complete customization in any quantity on four substrates—canvas, fine art giclée paper, matte poster paper, and a semi-matte poster paper.”

To facilitate ease of ordering, many publishers have set up a POD ordering system online. Erich Fellingner of Eurographics says, “Prints are shown on-screen with an option to choose either canvas, arch paper, or photo paper.



This painting by Penny Lane artist Jill Ankrom had the door and bench altered from blue to red and reversed to form a complementary set of prints.

Once you click on the canvas option, let's say, the size and price options come up. You enter the quantity and you're all set.”

In addition to custom sizes, publishers are also providing prints with colors altered within images to meet wall art company requests. Craig Skeen of Haddad's Fine Arts says, “In this color-driven business, we routinely modify hues and color in order to meet customer needs, turning cool tones into warm ones, altering flowers to a certain shade, or creating a more brilliant sunset in a photo.”

In similar fashion, Lemco says that World Art Group custom colors and modifies prints every day. “That includes changing colors in the subject matter or the background and adding or removing borders, type, or other parts of an image,” he says. “Our wall art customers send us pantone colors, fabric swatches, or paint chips, and we match the color in the print as specified. Our large staff of designers and graphic artists is always re-coloring, re-sizing, cropping, or otherwise modifying images for our customers' upcoming presentations or projects. Proofs get sent

The Tree of Life, detail 8

Category People
Artist Klimt, Gustav
Product Code: 1400-0145
Art Print
Item Size: 19.5 x 19.5 in
Image size: 19.5 x 19.5 in

Retail: \$ 32.00
[Add to Order](#)

All sizes for: ART PRINTS	
Size	Price
19.5 x 19.5	\$ 32.00

Also Available as:
 :: Art Prints
 :: Canvas
 :: Giclee Arch Paper
 :: Giclee Photo Paper
 :: See all available

[Zoom in](#)

At the Eurographics website, wall art companies can specify the dimensions, substrate, and quantity of any print they want to order.



Prints with text, such as this image from Penny Lane, can be ordered that include the name of the end user.



This image of elephants, published by Wesley Prints, is available not only with different colors in the water but also with much different backgrounds.

via e-mail, and feedback from customers gets implemented accordingly.”

Nor are image changes limited to one type of alteration at a time. Benton says, for example, that Penny Lane’s graphic design department regularly modifies artwork to meet specific customer requests. For example, the color of a door and bench in one porch setting was altered from blue to red and the image was reversed to make a complementary image as part of a set of prints for a client.

In addition to POD printing and altered images, a number of print publishers are also branching out into printing on alternative substrates. Many are printing on specialty canvases and papers, but the choices for some publishers extend far beyond. Laurie Downing of Poems Art Publishing says, “In addition to offering custom giclees of select imagery from our poster collection on fine art paper and cotton canvas, we are also printing on brushed aluminum, acrylic (3/8” standard), and bamboo.”

Elsewhere, World Art Group is currently able to print any image in its collection on acrylic and is testing other new print media and substrates, and McGaw Graphics is currently working on printing on repositionable vinyl, lenticular 3D, and glow-in-the-dark products.



A number of publishers can print images on non-traditional substrates. This image, “Glasses” by Nina Farrell, is published by Poems Art Publishing and was printed on acrylic and comes with stand-off hardware.

Rapid Communication of Images

At the same time that publishers are providing customizable imagery, they are also helping wall art companies adapt to today’s sales methods. They are regularly sending them new images electronically to present their latest images for faster selection. While there are still yearly and seasonal catalogs that offer high print quality, the increased turnaround times needed by the wall art industry are placing increased emphasis on regular e-mailing of images. Most of these e-mail blasts are made on a weekly or monthly schedule, although a few publishers send e-mails on request. Most all e-mails are accompanied by regular updating of a more complete selection on publisher websites, and the e-mails typically highlight the most notable images and a link to the website.

At Image Conscious, John Munnerlyn says, “We send all customers a monthly e-mail update named Image Conscious Spotlight that highlights a new image, a featured artist, or any newsworthy item. There is always an automatic link to our website to view more of what we are highlighting. Our e-commerce customers receive all our new images and updates through our digital support site. At the same time all of our account reps are constantly updating their customers as soon as new images become available. This is a “right now” business world we are in, and today’s electronic technology allows us to present and sell our images much faster than in the past.”

Not all wall art companies receive the same selection of images from a publisher. “We send out one to two e-mails to wall art companies with PDF attachments every week, says Lemco. “We segment our customers by channel and send relevant communications based on their business--hospitality, licensing, OEM, international, etc. We try to limit the file size to 1 MB, which translates to about a 15- to 20-page PDF document holding up to 100 images.”

Some companies, such as McGaw Graphics, also make their latest images available via Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, which are typically used to communicate the latest trends, news, and company imagery. Others have created separate websites to provide rapid access to new images. Gango Editions, for example, has responded to the growing popularity in photography by creating a new photo site (www.gangoeditions.com/photosite) that features over 1,500 photographs available for custom printing. “We are currently working on website updates that will increase our custom capabilities even further,” says Tedford.

Electronic Marketing Support

Responding to a growing trend among wall art companies to create and present new designs to clients electronically, print publishers are working with them by providing digital images to use with visualization and other software for creating electronic client presentations.

Lemco says, “We send jpegs out daily to customers via email, upload to FTP sites, via yousendit, etc., depending on the number of images sent and the size of the files. We also offer our services to put together PDF presentations and e-mail them to our customers. All we need is a company logo and contact information. In January, our website will have a PDF builder tool where customers can drag and drop images from our site onto blank pages to create their own private label presentations in minutes.”

Virgilio says, “McGaw provides a quick paper prototype turnaround and provides hi-resolution jpegs for product mockups. Our website allows users to create a wish list and share it with colleagues or clients. The next step in development will turn any wish list into a professional PDF presentation. We run a 500GB FTP site, which is used to transfer files between artists, our company, and our customers. This provides nearly instant “files in hand” anywhere in the world. We are currently building a digital download asset system through our website so that approved customers can access images on their own. All such services are password and rights managed so the artist's work is protected.”

In fact, the one limiting factor in publishers sending images to wall art companies is the danger of copyright infringement. In some cases, it has caused publishers to shy away from such arrangements. Wesley says, “We provide digital images to wall art framers with a clear understanding that the images may not be independently printed or changed in any way by the framer. We have had a major problem with unauthorized printing and sale of our copyrighted works by a specific framer this past year. This kind of



Gango Editions' Photosite has more than 1,500 images available for custom printing. Images can be cropped, resized up to 58"x100", and redesigned to customer specifications.



The Image Conscious website details the new line of on-demand giclee prints and canvases called “SoMa Editions.” In addition to different sizes and substrates, you can specify type of canvas wrap, size of stretcher bars, and edge color on museum wrapped canvases.

counterfeiting problem has restricted our interest in a number of otherwise great marketing ideas.”

This scenario has led a number of publishers to have wall art companies sign agreements to protect copyrighted artwork. Gango Editions, for example, creates temporary use contracts for framers who require high-resolution digital files for presentation purposes.

Creating Customized Images

Print publishers are also working with wall art companies by creating more customized images to meet specific needs.

In many instances, their artists create customized images based on production framers' requests, sometimes

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with electronic feedback directly between the commercial framer and artist during the creative process. Other publishers have all communications go through them. No matter the communication channel, the goal is to meet client needs by providing individualized imagery that goes beyond altering the color and other minor details of existing artwork. Here's a sampling of how various publishers operate:

- “When our artists are creating customized images based on production framers' requests, project details and sketches and painting previews are e-mailed back and forth between framer and artist during the creative process,” says Benton.
- “We welcome feedback, requests, and suggestions from framers. We then act as a mediator between the framers and our artists to create work that meets the needs of the market,” Tedford says.
- “We work with artists who create customized images. Compositions in progress might be sent to the customer for in-progress review, depending upon the project,” Skeen says.
- “Our publishing and licensing teams work directly with framers and manufacturers, reviewing their needs for subject matter, color, composition, and product format. The art director works directly with our artists to create customized images and programs,” Virgilio says.
- “When we are given specific direction, especially regarding color palettes, we work with the artists to develop new imagery. In these cases, there is no direct contact between the artist and framer,” Downing says.
- “We have several artists that we suggest color, style, and subject to when creating new images. We highly value our customers' opinions and feedback; they have a keen sense up upcoming color palettes and trends,” Munnerlyn says.

The working style of each publisher varies, but the goal is the same: to provide wall art companies with more input early in the creative process to help develop wall art products that will sell. While some publishers have provided this for years, the level of interaction today is greater than ever, and the electronic back and forth has led to a much faster turnaround time from artistic concept to finished product.

The bottom line is that creating wall art designs that sell in today's competitive market is a challenge for both wall art companies and print publishers. As the need for rapid turnaround, electronic presentations, and customized art increases, publishers have incorporated the changing needs of their wall art clients into how they do business. By using technology to provide more customization and rapid turnaround, they are adapting to help their clients succeed in the future. ■