

How to Color-Manage Your Offset Printer

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Back in the old days, photographers shot film and submitted transparencies to clients who in turn sent them off to the printer. The printer had separations made. That's where a set of four CMYK color-separation negatives were made

responsible for the quality, and at big shops, the printer did color separations in-house. Color management meant always using the same scanner operator or separation house so the results were consistent. There was no such thing as "out of gamut" because the image was always in

CMYK. Printers just did the best they could with what they were given. If the image wouldn't print well because, for example, the red dots plugged up, responsibility fell on the separation house and the printer. It certainly didn't fall on the photographer who submitted the beautiful chrome!



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This Green Iguana image was digitally captured in Costa Rica as a RAW file, then output as a high-resolution 16-bit TIFF in the Adobe RGB (1998) color space. The TIFF was resized and downsampled to 350 ppi, then sharpened with PixelGenius Photokit using the 175 lpi Coated 350 ppi Halftone Output Sharpener. The image was then flattened and converted to CMYK using the U.S. Sheetfed Coated v2 profile with relative colorimetric rendering intent and black point compensation, then saved as an 8-bit TIFF. It was printed using a 175 lpi line screen on a sheetfed press. Image © Richard Wagner 2004.

for the printer to make (positive) cyan, magenta, yellow and black printing plates. Making color separations involved projecting the image onto black-and-white film through various color filters and screens to give the correct dot pattern on the film. The separation house talked with the printer to find out what kind of paper the job would be printed on, image size and other important details necessary to make good separations.

As technology evolved, high-end scanners and skilled scanner operators replaced pure film techniques, and transparencies were scanned directly into CMYK. The separation house was

the default color settings, it is very likely that this command will produce an inferior CMYK conversion that will not produce the best printed image possible.

The secret to producing good CMYK conversions is in communication, combined with an extension of your ICC color management skills. First, talk to the printer or the person purchasing your image as there is a lot of information that you will need to know. A good conversion depends on the specifics of the job. Will the piece be printed on uncoated or coated stock? Is it for a magazine or a fine-art book, and what kind of printing process will be used?

Convert to Profile command, you can select the correct CMYK destination profile and toggle the preview checkbox using different “rendering intents” to see which causes the least amount of change in your image colors on conversion. This will usually be perceptual or relative colorimetric. Converting your image to CMYK will re-map the image colors from within a large-gamut color space like Adobe RGB (1998) to a smaller gamut CMYK color space. This may necessitate minor or even major color corrections after you make the color mode conversion. Save the image with the profile embedded so that it won't look like generic CMYK “mystery meat” to anyone looking at the file later. (Use a new file name so you don't destroy your RGB original!) And, make a proof print to submit with the image.

Lastly, communicate with the printer or art buyer how the image was converted, and instruct them not to ignore the embedded profile. If your printer or agent insists on “no embedded profiles,” try to educate them. Many printers are now color-management savvy, but many others have not yet made the transition. You can remove the profile (or save the image without embedding it) if they insist, but make sure that they—not you—are ultimately responsible for accurate color. ICC-based color management is not perfect, but it's a tremendous help to photographers in this new digital era.

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Use the NANPA Website in Your Photo Business

by John Lock

Photographers who want to augment their current website marketing have many opportunities available to them via NANPA membership and the NANPA website (www.nanpa.org). The following features are available to NANPA members only.

- Publish your workshop, seminar or tour on the NANPA Event Calendar. A form for posting your information is located in the Members Area. Don't forget to include your links!
- Enter your images in the NANPA Showcase for 2006. Showcase photos enjoy front-page exposure and linkage on NANPA's website. (Details for 2006 coming soon.)

- Consider a corporate membership in NANPA. Corporate members enjoy full website listings with contact information, email and web addresses.
- Submit your book titles for the online Book Store listings. Member books are listed with a link to Amazon.com for direct purchase. A form for book submissions is located in the Members Area.
- Submit some of your images to NANPA's Member Gallery. These photos are used to decorate NANPA's web pages, and full credits (contacts and links) accompany each photo.
- Participate in the NANPA Forum in your field of expertise. Many topic areas are available and your opinions and advice are literally “free advertising.”

Aside from being NANPA's webmaster, John Lock is chair of the Communications—Web Committee. He and his partner, Cindy Svec, own Relevant Arts, a graphic design and web development firm, www.relevantarts.com.

New on the Website

- Forum login changes: When you go the NANPA Forum at www.nanpa.org/forum you'll get the login screen right away, rather than having to click “login” to get it. Also, when you log out of the forum, you are returned to the member's menu, rather than just a “logged out” screen.
- Photo Submissions Are Back Online! We finally have member photo submissions integrated with our online member database, so members can manage their own photo submissions. Just go to the Members Area and click “Photo Submissions.” If you had previously submitted photos, you should see them there. If not, what are you waiting for?! Members can submit up to three photos for use on NANPA's website and now you can change them as often as you like!
- Please check out the new public discussion forum for “Students and Young Photographers” on the NANPA website. There is also a new private forum for the Youth Action Committee. If you want to be involved, please contact Gabby Salazar, email: gabbysalazar@bellsouth.net.

Pay too much in taxes this year? Make a donation to the NANPA Foundation. They need your support, and your donation is fully tax-deductible!

For details, go to:

<http://www.nanpafoundation.org/donations.html>