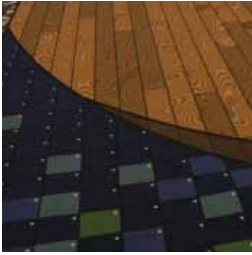




# Imaging In Action



## Digital Printing Brings Brilliance to Your Floor

In the past decade, digital technologies have exploded onto the specialty imaging scene, wrapping cars and buildings with graphic images. Now digital printers are dropping down to the floor level to bring custom printing to carpeting.

Often done on solvent-based output devices, digitally printing on carpet provides a new avenue for advertising, and can bring greater authenticity and realism to a stage setting.



In SGIA's case, customized carpeting amazed attendees at SGIA '06 (Las Vegas; September 26–29, 2006) with its brilliant colors, realistic images and endless opportunities. The carpeting, on display at the SGIA membership booth, featured floor textures that appeared to be anything but polyester carpet. The floor ranged from a rocky terrain and marble slate to wooden planks and a sandy beach.



To get the realistic effect seen at the booth carpet, SGIA staff put together an image file with the highest resolution possible. Low-resolution files typically don't translate into vibrant colors during the printing process. Once the image file was sent to a digital printing shop, the booth carpet was printed on a solvent inkjet device.



The printing company used the "textile mode" on the roll-to-roll printer in four colors with 800 percent saturation, which allowed the carpet images to pop.

The carpet that was selected for the application is one of the more expensive substrates on the market. But its material was better suited for high-quality digital printing. The tight, finely-looped nature of the carpet kept stray fibers from clogging up the print heads, which generally is the most expensive component of a digital printer. To avoid clogging the print heads, specialty imagers may pull the print heads higher up from the carpet. However, this process produces an overspray and ends up failing to achieve the image definition found in the SGIA booth carpet.



Another advantage of the carpet SGIA used was its low profile, light weight and coated back, which allowed flexibility in the material and an ability to be loaded onto the printer in a roll. It's similar to the way banner material is loaded onto a printer, but the rolled carpet takes up significantly more space than banner material would. The benefit of using a roll rather than hand-feeding the carpet is the image can be printed on one carpet piece, thus reducing the chance of material waste.

The roll also better handles large carpet orders, such as the one for the SGIA booth. These jobs are difficult — if not impossible — to do on devices other than a roll-to-roll printer. The SGIA booth carpet was a total 6.09 meters (20 feet) long and 15.24 meters (50 feet) wide.

Because of the printing process, digitally printed carpets don't last long, which is why they are marketed primarily to the special events and trade show markets. Print shops have found internally the carpets can hold up to heavy customer traffic for six months to a year with extra protection from coatings, such as Scotchgard™ by 3M. But they advise customers not to plan any long-term uses for the carpet.

With customized carpet being used at trade shows and special events such as the Grammy's, the substrate is just one more way specialty imagers can provide an exciting advertising or decorating media to consumers.

SGIA's carpet was provided by Ultraflex Systems Inc. (Randolph, New Jersey), a manufacturer of seamless fabrics and accessories for sign, billboard, awning, banner and architectural applications.



For more information, visit the company's Web site at [www.ultraflex.com](http://www.ultraflex.com), or call 800.368.7858.

**SGIA.org**