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NEWS RELEASE

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SWOP® to Modernize Specifications and Certification

IDEAlliance Research Projects Pave the Way for a New SWOP

Alexandria, VA, USA. April 7, 2006 ─ SWOP (Specifications for Web Offset Publications), one of the family of IDEAlliance print initiatives, today announces its strategy to modernize the SWOP Specification and the accompanying certification program to meet today's publication printing requirements.

The Requirement to Modernize

Jim Mikol, Senior Vice President of Technology, Leo Burnett USA and member of the SWOP Advisory Committee commented, "Direct participation with SWOP has enabled me to pose the hard questions that the industry is asking. The most significant question focuses on the ongoing relevancy of SWOP. Our industry has changed since SWOP first developed its specifications, yet SWOP has not. The vast majority of us produce proofs on non-SWOP paper stocks. We now demand tighter tolerances and greater assurance of a close visual match from proof to printed publication."

Another challenge for SWOP is to address the industry shift to virtual proofing workflows. According to Elaine Fry, Director of Manufacturing and Production, Forbes and member of the SWOP Advisory Committee, "We believe that in less than three years, hard-copy proofing will be obsolete. The rapid shift toward virtual proofing, means that SWOP must focus its attention on issues unique to emerging virtual proofing workflows. We need to develop specifications and best practices that will assure that monitor proofing can reliably and confidently match the visual appearance of an image on press."

Seeds of Progress

SWOP's merger with IDEAlliance in 2005 provided new resources to support SWOP modernization. In February 2006, IDEAlliance announced the adoption of a new #3 grade paper (such as Fortune Gloss) favored by many as their proofing stock of choice for monthly publications as an approved SWOP paper stock in addition to the traditional #5 grade groundwood publication printing paper. Errata, updating the SWOP Specifications to include the #3 grade paper, were published simultaneously. The inclusion of a brighter #3 grade paper was a significant move toward SWOP modernization.

At the same time, IDEAlliance announced that SWOP will adopt the new G7™ calibration, printing and proofing process control methods. The G7™ methodology grew out of the recent research and development efforts of the IDEAlliance GRACoL® Committee. It defines gray balance and target neutral print density curves for three-color gray and black as the primary method for color control as opposed to the current SWOP methods that focus on ink density and TVI (formerly known as dot gain) on a prescribed paper stock. This shift in digital calibration methodology represents a significant step toward SWOP modernization because it establishes a new foundation upon which to update the specification.

Ongoing Research

As part of IDEAlliance's commitment to support the update of SWOP specifications, the Print Properties Committee, has initiated a series of research and development efforts to provide a scientific basis for modernizing SWOP. These efforts include a series of press runs on web presses to develop an idealized characterization data set for both the #5 and #3 grade papers. These runs are noteworthy because for the first time publication press runs on web presses will serve as the basis for defining the specifications for both SWOP proofing and SWOP printing. Following the G7™ methods using spectrophotometry and CTP, the outcome will be a new visual-appearance-based SWOP specification designed to enable printers quickly and accurately replicate the visual appearance of imagery from proof to press.

The initial web press runs were conducted at Rochester Institute of Technology and Quad/Graphics in March 2006. At least two additional SWOP web press runs are scheduled in April and May. The final data from these press runs will be used to mathematically derive ideal neutral print density curves for three-color gray and black that will be published as the new SWOP 11 Specification later in 2006. It is likely that that the new characterization data will also be submitted through the IDEAlliance Print Properties Committee to CGATS for consideration as a new Technical Report which may be a revision to TR 001 or more likely an entirely new TR.

Additional research projects are being conducted that focus on producing high-end halftone proofs "to the numbers" that provide a close visual match to a press sheet and to one another. This work will be extended to inkjet and monitor proofing and will impact the next generation of SWOP proofing and will help SWOP develop best practices for virtual proofing workflows.

The Impact on SWOP Certification

The current SWOP Certification program combines a numeric evaluation of offset proofs based on target TVI values along with a human evaluation of visual similarity. But new factors demand that SWOP re-evaluate and update the certification program. One factor is SWOP's adoption of the G7™ methodology that strengthens our ability to determine the closeness of a visual match numerically. Another factor is the desire of proofing vendors to be certified to SWOP, GRACoL and SNAP simultaneously. All these factors demand a new look at certification procedures.

Altogether, these factors indicate that a new industry certification program be developed. As a result, SWOP is suspending new certifications until July 1, 2006 when a comprehensive industry certification program will be in place. According to Nubar Nakashian, Executive VP of Tanaseybert, LLC and Chairman of SWOP, "SWOP has undergone a great deal of change over the past year. SWOP Leadership is taking the initiative to move SWOP into 21st century technology. Initiating a new certification

program and expanding its industry education initiatives are examples of how SWOP is meeting the challenge."

About SWOP®
Specifications for Web Offset Publications (SWOP) was initiated in 1975 as a response to the printing industry's need for uniform specifications and tolerances to ensure consistency and quality of material in publications. In 2004, SWOP and IDEAlliance formed a coalition to support print media through the coordinated development of standardized specifications and guidelines, certification programs, software tools, educational seminars, and peer support networks. In 2005, SWOP, Inc. merged with IDEAlliance and now operates as a Program within IDEAlliance. SWOP is a registered trademark of IDEAlliance. Learn more at http://www.swop.org.

About Quad/Graphics
Headquartered in Sussex, Wis., Quad/Graphics is the world's largest privately held printer of magazines, catalogs, direct mail and other commercial products, and the third largest printer – public or private – in the Western Hemisphere. Through a network of print production facilities on three continents, Quad/Graphics offers services from front-end design and photography through digital imaging, printing, list management, finishing and distribution. The company employs 12,000 people worldwide and has annual sales of $1.9 billion.

About Rochester Institute of Technology
Founded in 1829, RIT is an internationally recognized leader in professional and career-oriented education enrolling more than 15,000 students in eight colleges. The School of Print Media is one of six schools within RIT's College of Imaging Arts and Sciences, which offers other professional programs in areas such as photography, film, animation, design, fine arts, and crafts. The School of Print Media has earned a reputation as being the premier institution for graphic arts education. Today, the School of Print Media continues that tradition of educating the future leaders of the printing and publishing industries.

About IDEAlliance
IDEAlliance (International Digital Enterprise Alliance) is a not-for-profit membership organization that has been a leader in information technology and publishing since 1966. IDEAlliance advances core information technology to develop standards and best practices to enhance efficiency and speed information all facets of publishing – creation, production, management, and delivery of knowledge-based content – digitally and in print. IDEAlliance members represent a unique convergence of the leading publishers, printers, and solution providers. IDEAlliance provides a user-driven, cross-industry, and open environment in which its members can strategize, innovate, standardize, and implement solutions to real business challenges in publishing. See http://www.idealliance.org for more information.

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