Meeting point for the trendsetters of print

The Drupa International Media Conference in Düsseldorf was a must-attend event for the worldwide graphic arts media and GRAPHIX editor Alison Job, reports back.

The event was addressed by representatives from 14 international vendors, a fraction of the number of exhibitors that will be spread out over 17 massive halls from 3 to 16 May. Approximately 1 800 exhibitors from over 50 countries will display the latest in technology, products, software and services at this year’s trade fair.

Consensus is that the main trends will be around automation, inkjet, web-to-print, cloud computing, packaging and the integration of litho and digital print workflows. In addition, the ability to turn work around quickly in response to customer demand was acknowledged as non-negotiable to success in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Senior representatives of Heidelberg; Kolbus; Canon/Océ; Ricoh; Komori; EFI; Pitney Bowes; Optimus; Fujifilm; Domino Printing Sciences; Epson; Goss; Screen and Hybrid Software all conveyed the same underlying message: the industry will have to adapt to changing market demands such as for shorter runs, quicker turnaround times and increased personalisation in order to survive. Companies like Kolbus are entering the packaging arena for the first time and traditional litho manufacturers are rebadging digital systems to expand their offering and target markets. For instance Heidelberg is offering Ricoh printers under its own name, Linoprint.

Exhibitors are collaborating to show that their offerings fit into a complete workflow – and even in developing new technology, as in the case of Komori launching prototype digital machines with Konica Minolta. Muller Martini finishing equipment will appear on HP and KBA’s stands, while Océ is introducing its first printer – the VarioPrintDP – since being acquired by Canon. Kolbus and Timson are joining forces to show a complete digital book printing and finishing line, and Fujifilm will introduce its B2 inkjet digital press for packaging.

Exhibitors will also show how working together with other media can create opportunities for print. The use of QR codes on packaging to divert people to relevant websites is just one example of how electronic and print can work in unison. Green is another prevailing trend, with companies like Heidelberg, Ricoh and Komori allocating sections on their stands to their environmentally friendly initiatives.

Electronic and print can work in unison

Opening the conference, Drupa president Berhard Schreier said one cannot ignore the growth of print in emerging and developing countries. This shift is reflected in the profile of exhibitors at the show, with an increased presence from countries in Eastern Europe, India and China, and it is expected that the visitor profile will also reflect this trend. Several of the companies presenting at the press conference (EFI, Canon/Océ) confirmed increased business in emerging markets and the allocation of resources to further growing this sector.

For a true insight into the future of print there is no show like Drupa. With just a few weeks to go, pre-show activity is buzzing.

Canon’s David Preskett addresses the media