

## COLOUR INKJETS

When inkjet printers first came on the market in about 1988, they could only print black and cost \$1000. The cartridges could go 500-1000 pages and cost \$27. Over the years, as printer prices dropped because of manufacturer competition, it became clear that cartridges were the real source of profits, particularly since they generated a continuous revenue stream. Today, one can purchase a new colour inkjet printer for a mere \$60 and we see ads trumpeting “free printers” given away with even the least expensive computers. How can manufacturers afford to give these printers away? They know they will recoup the costs through the sale of inkjet cartridges.

So, is it worth it? Does it make sense to buy a colour inkjet these days? I think not, particularly with respect to photo printing. Admittedly, for school reports that need a picture, or birthday and greeting cards, the colour inkjet printer is a handy item to have. But for any other purpose they are extremely pricey to operate.

Inexpensive laser printers cost \$2-300, print only black, and cost pennies per page to operate. We print approximately 5,000 pages per month here in the shop, at a cost of about \$85. This works out to 1.7 cents per page. If we attempted to do the same thing with an inkjet, and only in black, it would cost me well over \$400, which works out to 8 cents per page. The cost goes way up for colour printing, up in the 17 cent per page range. If I were to print a full-page high quality photo, it could easily cost \$3-4 worth of ink and paper, plus I have the ability to screw it up and have to do it again. It is my belief that the manufacturers sell the printers at or below cost just so they can really rake us over the coals on the supplies. It seems prudent to find alternatives.

At home, we use a laser printer for all normal research, accounting, and homework tasks. The colour printer only gets used for greeting cards and the very occasional custom job. Even our children know to ask before attempting a colour print off of the net, they know that it costs a great deal of money for that picture of Piglet.

Refilling is a somewhat cheaper option, and we do sell selected do-it-yourself refill kits here in the store, but it is my experience that the quality of print is not as good, and the capacity of the cartridge decreases over time. Add to that the mess and inconvenience, and I never actually refill anymore.

For digital pictures, I rarely want an actual photo because I like the convenience of data, I can view it anytime on my TV, PC or laptop without it taking up space in my house. If we actually do want a printout of a photo, all the photo places in town do digital printing for 25-30 cents per shot. What a great deal! In my experience, it is not worth the time, effort or money required to do good home photo printing; it is a huge waste.

If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email [sean@intrex.ca](mailto:sean@intrex.ca) or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.