

by Chelan David



A glimpse of history

CONTACTS

XL Prints
Santa Clara, Calif.
www.xlprints.com

The project. To create large format banners embossed with historical photos from the Stanford University Library archives. The banners drape fences surrounding a construction site located at one edge of campus.

The company. Designed by XL Prints, Santa Clara, Calif., for Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

The task. Stanford University was looking for an outdoor product to withstand the elements and last for several years. Historical photos that grace the banners are black and white images from the late 1800s.

Challenges. The material needed to be aesthetically pleasing, withstand heavy wind and avoid wrinkles and creases. Proper color was crucial. Turnaround time was short.

The solution. To combat the windy conditions, XL Prints selected mesh vinyl. The tiny air channels are not visible from a distance but they let wind pass through to prevent ripping. The university liked the idea of using mesh vinyl because it gave the banners a vintage look.

A number of color proofs were run before the banners were printed. The university wanted classic black and white color for the final print. XL Prints tried several approaches—including changing the printer temperature and ripping the file in a different profile—to get the appropriate color tone. UV solvent-based ink was used with a Vutek 5330 printer.

Each banner is 93.5 inches wide and 69 inches high. The plan called for hem, nylon webbing and grammets on top of the banners, but this led to creases and puckering. The decision was made not to hem the banner on the edges, but to sew the nylon webbing on the back side and put grammets on top.

The result. Normal turnaround for a project with such a large quantity—30 banners in the initial batch—is three weeks. By the time the appropriate color and finishing was determined, however, the banners needed to be completed in four days, or the project would have been canceled. The production crew agreed to work overtime, and the project was completed by the deadline. The first banners went up in April 2008. The project is expected to be in place for three to four years. ■■

Chelan David is a freelance writer based in Seattle, Wash.

