

Mastering Mounting



by
Chris A. Paschke,
CPE, GCF, CMG

Two Halves Make a Whole

In today's progressive digital world of scanning and wide format printing, it may seem a little archaic to be writing about piecing images together. But even in today's high-tech world, there are still pockets of Old World reality. For example,

estate agent had a request to have a local map replicated so that copies could be mounted, laminated, and framed as an escrow-closing gift to new homebuyers. This detailed parcel map shows all roads and equestrian trails in the 25,000-acre gated community. The realtor was given a copy when she moved in five years ago. Now that she's a new upscale realtor, she wanted to carry on that same tradition.

There were a number of issues surrounding this simple-sounding project. First, the map was already a copy of an original. Second, the original had been signed by the mapmaker, dated in pencil, and copyrighted in the lower right hand corner. And third, this copy had been printed as two halves (Photo 1).



Photo 1: The right half of the original copy of the parcel map was slightly yellowed with age, and the left is not. They were in the same frame under the same regular clear glass.

in the mountains of Tehachapi, CA, where I live, there is still limited DSL availability, and there are no large-scale scanners for copying oversized maps and floor plans for printing. Printers are available if a large image has been scanned or shot digitally as a JPG, but that is also tough to come by here.

This issue arose when a local real

Copy of a Copy

A copy of a copy always has less definition than an original; each successive time a copy is printed more detail and line quality are lost. Though electrophotographic and electrostatic printers create decent copies, they are dry pigment toner machines that duplicate from an original hard copy and will always lack the clarity of a digitally scanned, high-resolution image. Also, electrophotographic copies are sensitive to heat, even at low dry mounting temperatures of 150°F. Smooth surface colors appear mottled or blotchy once mounted.

There is already a visible color differ-

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ence between the left and right halves of the master map copy, which needs to be corrected during replication (Photo 2). The color laser copier has been rather inconsistent in its ability to reproduce the same image each time. Copies may or may not match copies from previous days, and sometimes copies don't match even from the same run. Color and line quality often vary when new toner is placed in the machine. Since this is an on-going project, with multiple copies made each time, both halves must be verified for clarity and color match. In these copies the little brown bears, green common areas, and trail colors must all match exactly for the framed map to look like one piece when done.

Copyright

This map is probably a pirated copy of the original because it was made with two halves taped together and pressed against glass in an inexpensive ready-made frame. This practice of copying an original or even of copies is illegal without proper permission from the original mapmaker. I warned my client about the legalities of reprinting a copyrighted map and the possibility that no one would copy it. But a decision was made to research the reproduction options and continue if possible.

I had worked before with a wide-format digital reproduction company about two hours away in the Los Angeles area, but the cost would be \$75 for each high-resolution printout. Plus, an original scan or photo JPG would cost a

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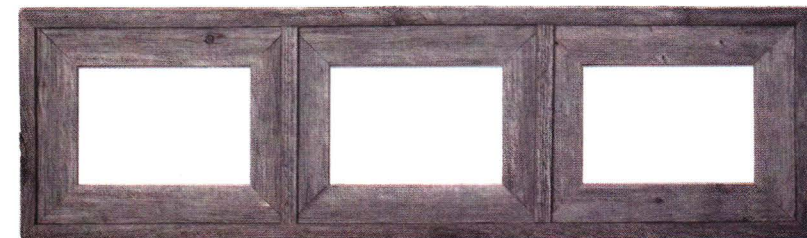
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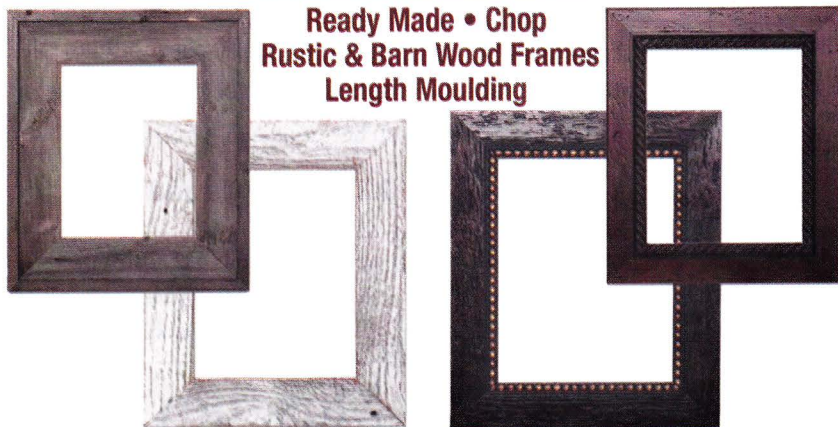
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Photo 2: Multiple copies were printed at one time, and both halves checked for matching color. The colors were fine in these copies, but line clarity was not as crisp as the last set printed.



Photo 3: The left half was cut at the exact edge of the text using a sharp blade and non-slip, cork-backed, metal ruler.

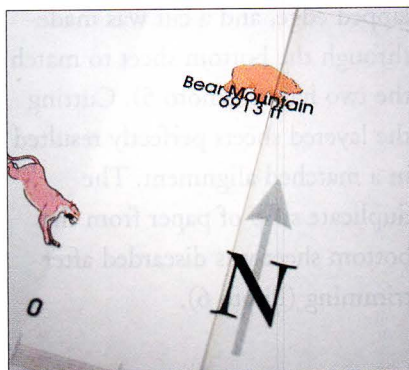


Photo 4: The small brown bear at the top of the map and the compass direction "N" were both split and made a good place to verify alignment.

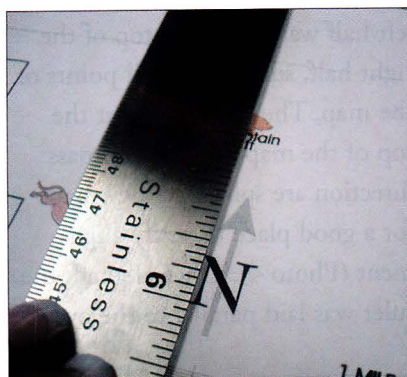


Photo 5: Once the halves were aligned, the ruler was laid on top of and parallel to the overlapped edge, which was then cut through the bottom sheet to match the two halves.

minimum of \$200 before any touch-ups and color corrections were made to the two halves. As this was meant to be a long-term proposal, my client needed to keep the copies under \$25 each so the entire framing project would cost less than \$150 each.

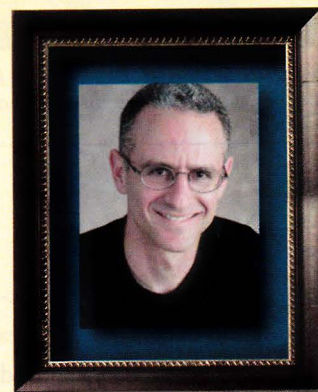
We were unable to locate the original artist for copyright permission. Since these maps were to be gifts and not made for profit, my Realtor client opted to proceed with the printing of replicas. We decided if the local office supply was willing to print them for her, we were meant to proceed. The bottom line was that the office

supply went ahead with the reprints regardless of the copyright as they had been reprinting them for local Realtors for years.

Two Halves

The original map would have been in one piece, but the only current copies were being printed in two pieces. This was probably due to the lack of local wide-format scanning capabilities. So piecing two halves together perfectly while aligning, trimming, mounting, and laminating them was extremely important to make them appear as a whole.

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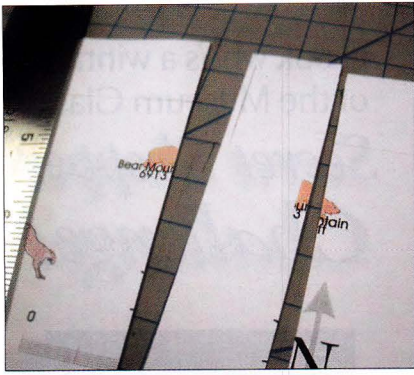


Photo 6: The duplicate strip of paper from the bottom sheet could be discarded once trimmed.



Photo 7: The two sides were then checked to make sure they aligned perfectly. If they didn't, they would have had to be rechecked to see if the slices were both cut straight and clean.



Photo 8: Clean Drytac single-sided release paper was used for this project, and the two halves of the map were aligned and tacked in place for the full length of the middle seam.

Trimming

A sharp blade; a non-slip, cork-backed metal ruler; and self-healing cutting board were required for absolutely straight, clean lines. The left half of the map needed to be trimmed at the exact edge of the text (Photo 3). The trimmed

left half was placed on top of the right half, squaring up all points of the map. The brown bear at the top of the map and the compass direction are split, but they made for a good place to verify alignment (Photo 4). Once aligned, the ruler was laid parallel to the over-

lapped edge, and a cut was made through the bottom sheet to match the two halves (Photo 5). Cutting the layered sheets perfectly resulted in a matched alignment. The duplicate strip of paper from the bottom sheet was discarded after trimming (Photo 6).

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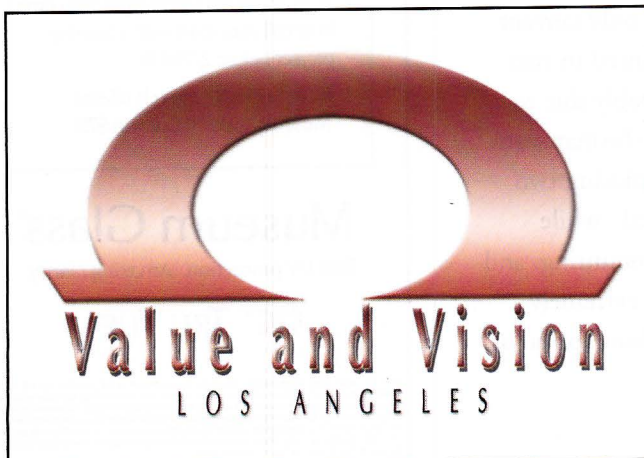




Photo 9: The ghosted arrow in the lower right corner and the reprint of the elevation numbers next to the name and numbers are a common problem when dry mounting laser prints.

Once trimmed, the two halves were rechecked to verify that everything aligned perfectly. Had they not, the cut edges of the halves would have needed to be examined to verify that the slices were cut straight and clean. A dull blade or a rough, uneven, or soft cutting surface could impact the clean fusion of the two sides (Photo 7).

Mounting and Release Materials

This map was dry mounted with a pure film adhesive. A $\frac{3}{16}$ " foam-board substrate and adhesive were cut a little larger than the finished map would require for more time efficiency during mounting. A clean sheet of Drytac single-sided release paper was selected for this project. The two halves of the map were aligned, covered with release material, and ironed in place the full length of the middle seam (Photo 8).

There were five maps completed at the same time during this project, so the system was to perform the same step for each of the five before progressing to the next step. This is normal production procedure, but release materials

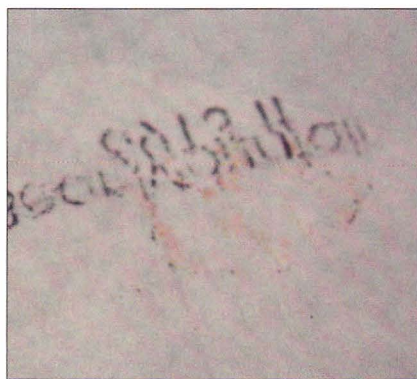


Photo 10: Examination of the release paper showed the ghosted image remaining on it, ready to attach to the next mounting if it weren't cleaned off with a soft, lint-free rag.

needed to be cleaned between mountings.

A common problem with laser prints is their tendency to transfer pigment or at least leave partial pigment residue on the surface of release materials (Photo 9). This can be seen in the ghosted arrow in the lower right corner and the reprint of elevation numbers when compared to the newly mounted map. They were transferred from the release paper of the last mount to the surface of this mounting. Examination of the release paper showed the ghosted image remaining on it, ready to attach to the next mounting—if it weren't cleaned off with a soft, lint free rag (Photo 10).

Preparation and Laminating

Once mounted, the map needed to be wiped clean to remove any surface dirt. A Kinetronics anti-static brush helped remove dust, dirt, and particles from the surface without creating additional static prior to covering with the laminate (Photo 11). Drytac ArtShield Matte UV heat-set overlaminating film was selected for this project. The sheet of vinyl laminating film

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Photo 11: A Kinetronics anti-static brush helped remove all dust, particles, and dirt from the surface without creating additional static prior to covering with the laminate.

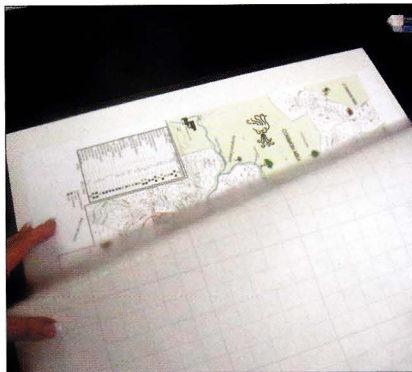


Photo 12: A sheet of vinyl laminating film was sized slightly larger than the board, peeled back at one end, squared up over substrate, and lightly laid onto mounted map surface. If this is pulled up, the light tack-positioning adhesive might lift toner from the map.

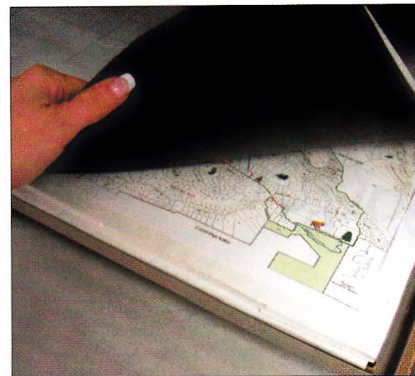


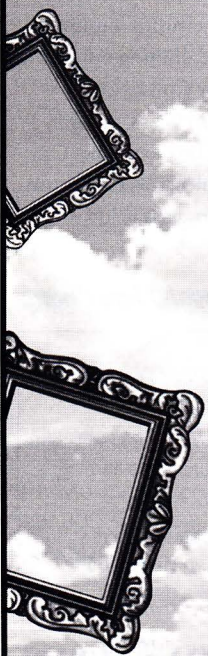
Photo 13: A 1/2" Drytac sponge overlay was positioned with release materials at the top and bottom of the mounting project.

was made slightly larger than the substrate. A few inches of the release liner are peeled from the back of the film and lightly stuck face up to the end of the art (Photo 12). The folded liner was grasped from under the laminate

and pulled to remove it from under the film. It cannot be pulled up to realign the film as the light tack-positioning adhesive might lift toner from the map.

Sponge overlay (a.k.a. overlay foam) is necessary for proper lami-

nation in any heat system. The mounted map was covered with matte laminate and 1/4" or 1/2" sponge foam and placed in a pre-heated 185°F to 210°F mechanical or hot vacuum press for 5 to 10 minutes. The release materials



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Photo 14: Once mounted and laminated, the completed map needed to be properly sized down and verified for square, then fitted into the selected metal frame.



Photo 15: The completed map was 20"x15 3/4" framed in a Nielsen #N34-21 Matte Black metal moulding. The laminated map was trimmed large enough so that the rabbit overlap wouldn't cover any of the actual map.

were used on top of and under the project to protect the platen and bottom of the press (Photo 13). The mounting sandwich (B to T) is: release paper, substrate with mounted map and aligned laminate, sponge overlay, and release paper.

Final Sizing

Once mounted and laminated, the completed map needed to be properly sized down, squared, and fitted into the selected metal frame (Photo 14). During final sizing, we had to accommodate for the rabbit overlap while leaving a little additional trim edge so none of the tiny map details were covered by the moulding. The completed map is 20"x15 3/4" framed with a Nielsen #N34-21 Matte Black metal frame (Photo 15). The matte finish of the moulding goes well with the matte laminate, and the narrow width yet deep visual recess of the moulding helps give an otherwise flat, unexciting map the pizzazz it needs to make the desired impact at each escrow closing. The seamed centerline was not visible where it had been

pieced, and the matte laminate helped deter any sign of a seam once completed.

Marketing Potential

Maps like this are common in developments and communities all over the country, and real estate agents are always looking for wonderful, innovative gifts for new buyers. Along with routinely mounting and laminating regional and town maps for real estate offices in my area, parcel maps like this one are a routine project. At \$125 per piece, both my client and I are happy. ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF, Mounting Editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring commercial custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and industry consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, design creativity, and fine art, she works with industry leaders and has taught for The National Conference. She has written two books on mounting: *The Mounting and Laminating Handbook* (now in its second edition) and *Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating* and can be contacted at www.designsinkart.com.

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