

## **Print & packaging at Ryerson University, Canada**

Graphic Arts has always been a key feature of Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, ever since the Institute of Technology, as it was then, opened in 1948 as a training ground for the growing workforce to feed the booming post-war economy. At that time, it was one of 10 schools offering courses. Today, Graphic Communications Management (GCM) has over 630 full-time students enrolled in undergraduate courses.

School chair Jason Lisi states: “We are Canada’s only degree-granting programme for the printing industries, and one of the largest in North America.” Over the last four years, GCM has introduced a revised curriculum with an emphasis on flexography and packaging technologies. “Last summer, we converted a multi-purpose space into a packaging lab,” he says.

GCM moved into its own dedicated building, the Heidelberg Centre, in 2003. This three-storey block, constructed with funds donated from supporters in the printing industries, contains converting and packaging equipment including a Heidelberg PM74-4 flexo press. New equipment purchased in 2017 includes a Kongsberg digital cutting table for packaging, a TLA-1 labeller and a laminator. Thermal transfer print systems, a PFM Hawk Super filler/packager, a sleeve-maker and heat guns and an Epson P9000 ECG proofing system were also acquired recently.



“Thanks to generous industry support, our students have access to the full range of Esko packaging software, as well as the new HD CDI Spark Imaging System,” says Lisi.

Within the programme, hands-on technical learning sits alongside theory and business management. “Students can choose from an assortment of concentrations, one of which is specific to packaging,” says Lisi. “Within the curriculum, there are courses specifically covering areas such as consumer packaging, packaging prototyping, flexible packaging printing and sustainability & lifecycle.”

He adds: “Our students graduate with a bachelor of technology degree, which is highly-recognised within the print and packaging industries. Our graduate placement rate is exceptionally high, and a large proportion of our students will find careers in the print, packaging and allied fields.”

Currently, GCM only offers undergraduate courses, but is said to be in the early stages of exploring masters-level programming.

Inside the university, faculty members at the school have worked closely with other departments, including Retail Management and Chemical Engineering, on interdisciplinary research projects, and have also collaborated with other universities. “For example, a GCM faculty member conducted packaging research projects with members of the Department of Sustainable Biomaterials at Virginia

Tech in the US and the Department of Biosystems Engineering at Seoul National University in South Korea,” Lisi points out.

With industry partners, GCM also works closely carrying out research in the form of benchmarking, alpha and beta testing of software, materials testing and reporting.

When it comes to the environment, the school has a dedicated course called Sustainability in Print and Packaging, covering topics that include ‘green’ packaging material selection, waste management and lifecycle thinking. One faculty member has focused on packaging sustainability research using lifecycle assessment.

Print and packaging will continue to be at the heart of the GCM curriculum for the foreseeable future, says Lisi. “The courses will continue to grow and evolve to meet the changing dynamics of the industry, moving forward. Membership of IAPRI is an important component in our commitment to print and packaging, which allows us to interact and grow with leaders in industry.”

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