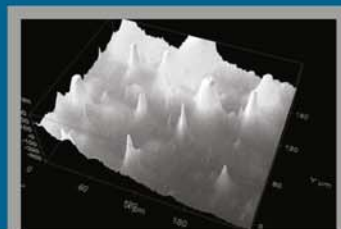


Printing on Polymers

Fundamentals and Applications



Edited by:
Joanna Izdebska
Sabu Thomas



PRINTING ON POLYMERS



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PRINTING ON POLYMERS

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Joanna Izdebska

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Contents

Contributors	xvii
Preface	xix
1 Printing on Polymers: Theory and Practice	1
<i>Joanna Izdebska</i>	
1.1 Introduction—The Impact of Printing.....	1
1.2 Printing Techniques	2
1.2.1 Flat Printing	3
1.2.2 Relief Printing.....	4
1.2.3 Gravure Printing.....	5
1.2.4 Stencil Printing	5
1.2.5 Digital Printing	6
1.2.6 Three-Dimensional Printing	7
1.2.7 Hybrid Printing	7
1.2.8 Various Printing Techniques for Polymer Decoration	7
1.3 Printing Bases	7
1.3.1 Films.....	9
1.3.2 Multilayer Films	10
1.3.3 Semirigid and Rigid Plastic Sheets	10
1.3.4 Injection Molded Products.....	11
1.3.5 Synthetic Papers and Polymer-Coated Boards.....	11
1.4 Printability.....	11
1.5 Surface Wettability	12
1.5.1 Surface Tension of Inks	12
1.5.2 Surface Free Energy of Printing Substrates	13
1.5.2.1 Devices for Measurement of the Contact Angle.....	13
1.5.2.2 Measurement Liquid, Pens, etc.	14
1.6 Print Quality.....	15
1.6.1 Factors of Printing Processes Influencing the Print Quality.....	15
1.6.2 Impact of Ink and Substrate Properties on the Print Quality	15
1.6.3 Parameters Used in Quality Assessment.....	16
1.7 Plastic Printing Industry	17
References.....	18
2 Polymeric Materials—Structure, Properties, and Applications.....	21
<i>C.V. Pious and Sabu Thomas</i>	
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Structure of a Polymer.....	25
Configuration.....	25
Conformation.....	26

2.2.1	Classification of Polymers	26
2.2.1.1	Crystalline and Amorphous Polymers.....	26
2.2.1.2	Thermoplastics and Thermosetting Plastics	26
2.2.1.3	Homopolymers and Copolymers	27
2.2.2	Designing the Structure of Polymers	27
2.3	Properties of Polymers.....	28
2.3.1	Thermal Properties.....	28
2.3.1.1	Thermal Transitions of Polymers	28
2.3.1.2	Thermal Stability of Polymers	29
2.3.1.3	Coefficient of Thermal Expansion and Thermal Conductivity.....	29
2.3.2	Mechanical Properties.....	31
2.3.3	Electrical Properties of Polymers	32
2.3.4	Polymer Blends.....	32
2.3.5	Polymer Composites	33
2.3.6	Polymer Nanocomposites	33
2.4	Application of Polymers	33
2.4.1	Application of Commodity Polymers.....	33
2.4.1.1	Polyethylene.....	34
2.4.1.2	Polypropylene	34
2.4.1.3	Polyvinylchloride	35
2.4.1.4	Polystyrene.....	35
2.4.2	Applications of Engineering Polymers.....	35
2.4.2.1	Polyamides	35
2.4.2.2	Polybutylene Terephthalate.....	35
2.4.2.3	Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene	36
2.4.2.4	Polyoxymethylene or Polyacetals.....	36
2.4.3	Polymers for Specialty Applications.....	36
2.4.3.1	Polymers in Electronic Applications.....	37
2.4.3.2	Biomedical Applications	37
2.4.3.3	Polymers in Sensor Applications.....	37
2.5	Conclusion	37
	References.....	37
3	Printing Ink Formulations	41
	<i>Alexandra Pekarovicova and Veronika Husovska</i>	
3.1	Introduction.....	41
3.2	Individual Ink Components	42
3.2.1	Pigments.....	42
3.2.2	Polymers/Resins.....	44
3.2.3	Solvents.....	46
3.2.4	Additives	47
3.3	Inks Manufacture	47
3.4	Selected Inks for Individual Printing Processes.....	48
3.4.1	Inkjet Ink.....	48
3.4.2	Flexographic Inks.....	49
3.5	Functional Inks	50
3.6	Summary	52
	References.....	52

4 Additives for Ink Manufacture.....	57
<i>Zuzanna Żółek-Tryznowska</i>	
4.1 Definition of an Additive.....	57
4.2 Surfactants: Wetting and Dispersing Agents.....	58
4.2.1 Antifoaming Agents.....	59
4.3 Adhesion Promoters.....	59
4.4 Waxes.....	60
4.5 Driers.....	61
4.6 Rheology Modifier.....	61
4.7 Other Additives.....	61
4.7.1 Antioxidants and Antiskinning Agents.....	62
4.7.2 Alkalis.....	62
4.7.3 Biocides and Fungicides.....	62
4.7.4 Chelating Agents.....	62
4.7.5 Deodorants.....	62
4.8 Additives for Radiation-Curing Inks.....	62
4.9 Performance Additives.....	63
4.9.1 Ionic Liquids.....	63
4.9.2 Hyperbranched Polymers.....	63
References.....	65
5 Advanced Nanoscale Materials for Ink Manufacture	67
<i>Bin Bao, Fengyu Li and Yanlin Song</i>	
5.1 Introduction.....	67
5.2 Nanoscale Materials for Ink Manufacture.....	68
5.2.1 Functional Polymer Inks.....	68
5.2.1.1 Monodispersed Polymer Nanoparticle Latexes.....	68
5.2.1.2 Semiconductive and Conductive Polymer Suspensions.....	70
5.2.2 Inorganic Nonmetallic Inks.....	72
5.2.2.1 Ceramic Nano-Inks.....	73
5.2.2.2 Semiconductor Quantum Dot Inks.....	74
5.2.2.3 MOF Inks.....	76
5.2.2.4 Carbon Family Nano-Inks.....	76
5.2.3 Metal Nanomaterials.....	80
5.2.3.1 Metal Nanoparticle Inks.....	80
5.2.3.2 Metal Nanowire Inks.....	81
5.3 Conclusions and Outlook.....	82
References.....	82
6 Rheology of Printing Inks.....	87
<i>Zuzanna Żółek-Tryznowska</i>	
6.1 Newtonian and Non-Newtonian Fluids.....	87
6.1.1 Newtonian Fluids.....	87
6.1.2 Non-Newtonian Fluids.....	88
6.1.2.1 Shear-Thinning Flow Behavior.....	88
6.1.2.2 Shear-Thickening Flow Behavior.....	89

6.1.2.3	Power-Law Model.....	89
6.1.2.4	Shear Viscosity	89
6.1.2.5	Thixotropy.....	89
6.1.2.6	Viscoelasticity	90
6.1.3	Measurements of Flow Behavior.....	90
6.1.3.1	Flow Time	91
6.1.3.2	Flow Curve.....	91
6.1.3.3	Rational Rheometers with Concentric Cylinder Geometry	92
6.1.3.4	Rational Rheometers with Cone to Plate Geometry.....	92
6.1.4	Tack of Paste Inks.....	93
6.1.5	Low-Viscosity Printing Inks	93
6.1.5.1	Flexographic Printing Inks	93
6.1.5.2	Gravure Printing Inks	96
6.1.5.3	Inkjet Printing Inks	97
6.1.6	Paste Inks	97
6.1.6.1	Offset Printing Inks.....	97
6.1.6.2	Screen Printing Inks.....	97
6.1.6.3	Pad Printing Inks.....	98
6.1.7	Flow Behavior and Printability	98
	References.....	98
7	Low-Pressure Plasma-Assisted Polymer Surface Modifications.....	101
	<i>Alenka Vesel and Miran Mozetič</i>	
7.1	Low-Pressure Oxygen Plasma.....	101
7.2	Reactive Plasma Species and their Interaction with Polymers for Printing.....	104
7.2.1	UV Radiation	104
7.2.2	Free Electrons and Negatively Charged Ions.....	105
7.2.3	Positively Charged Molecular and Atomic Ions	105
7.2.4	Neutral Oxygen Atoms	105
7.2.5	Metastables and Ozone	105
7.2.6	Fluxes or Reactive Particles onto Polymer Surface.....	106
7.3	Flowing Afterglow	107
7.4	Peculiarities of Particular Polymers	108
7.4.1	Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET).....	109
7.4.2	Polystyrene (PS).....	112
7.4.3	Polypropylene (PP) and Polyethylene (PE)	113
7.4.4	Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)	114
7.4.5	Polyamide (PA6)	115
7.5	Etching, Nanostructuring, and Wettability	116
7.6	Concluding Remarks.....	118
	References.....	118
8	Corona Treatment.....	123
	<i>Joanna Izdebska</i>	
8.1	Corona Discharge Treatment: Introduction.....	123
8.1.1	Treatment	125
8.1.2	Factors Influencing the Course and Effectiveness of Treatment	126

8.1.3	Changes in the Upper Layer.....	127
8.1.4	Methods Controlling the Correctness of the Upper Layer Modification	128
8.2	Surface Changes, Film Wettability, and Printability.....	129
8.2.1	Topography and Morphology	129
8.2.2	Surface Chemistry.....	130
8.2.3	Contact Angle	130
8.2.4	Printability.....	132
8.3	Peculiarities of Particular Polymers	133
8.3.1	Polypropylene	133
8.3.2	Polyethylene.....	135
8.3.3	Polyethylene Terephthalate.....	136
8.3.4	Polyvinyl Chloride.....	136
8.3.5	Ethylene Vinyl Acetate.....	137
8.3.6	Polystyrene.....	137
8.3.7	Poly lactide.....	137
8.4	Aging Process of Corona-Treated Films	138
8.5	Concluding Remarks.....	139
	References.....	139
9	Polymer Surface Modifications by Coating	143
	<i>Kazuhisa Tsuji, Tomoki Maeda and Atsushi Hotta</i>	
9.1	Organic Modifications of Polymer Surface.....	143
9.1.1	Photo-Grafting Polymerizations by Photo-Initiators.....	144
9.1.2	Initiated Chemical Vapor Deposition	146
9.1.3	UV-Curable Polymer Coating.....	146
9.1.4	Photo-Grafting Polymerization from the Layer of Photo-Iniferters	147
9.1.5	Applications of Organic Modifications	148
9.2	Inorganic Coating	149
9.2.1	Plasma-Enhanced Chemical Vapor Deposition.....	149
9.2.2	Magnetron Sputtering	150
9.2.3	Diamond-Like Carbon, SiO _x , and Oxide Coatings.....	150
9.2.4	Wettability and Other Properties for the Industrial Applications.....	151
9.3	Metallurgical Coating	153
9.3.1	Chemical Electro-Less Plating Techniques.....	153
9.3.2	Vapor Plating Techniques	153
9.3.3	Additional Properties by Metallurgical Coatings on Polymers	153
	References.....	154
10	Other Methods of Polymer Surface Modifications	161
	<i>H.Y. Zheng, Y.C. Guan, K. Liu, Z.K. Wang and S.M. Yuan</i>	
10.1	Introduction.....	161
10.2	Laser Beam Processing for Polymer Surface Modifications	162
10.2.1	Femtosecond Laser Textured PMMA Surfaces for Wettability Modification.....	162
10.2.1.1	Laser-Induced Surface Hydrophilicity and Hydrophobicity.....	162
10.2.1.2	Laser-Induced Wettability Modification of Microfluidic Channels for Fluid Flow Control.....	164
10.2.2	Ar ⁺ Laser-Induced Surface Relief Gratings on Azo-Polymers.....	166
10.2.3	Laser Micromachining Silicon Surface for Replication on Polymer Surface.....	168

10.3	Micromachining	169
10.3.1	Conventional CNC Micromachining	170
10.3.2	Ultra-Precision Micromachining	171
10.4	Other Energy Beam Processing Techniques	176
	References.....	177
11	Flexographic Printing.....	179
	<i>Joanna Izdebska</i>	
11.1	Fundamentals of Flexographic Printing	179
11.1.1	Basic Principle	179
11.1.2	Printing Plates	179
11.1.3	Anilox Rollers.....	183
11.1.4	Printing Units	186
11.1.5	Printing Machines	187
11.2	Production Materials.....	189
11.2.1	Inks.....	189
11.2.1.1	Water-Based Ink.....	190
11.2.1.2	Solvent-Based Ink.....	190
11.2.1.3	UV-Curable Ink.....	191
11.2.2	Plastic Substrates	191
11.2.2.1	Films.....	192
11.2.2.2	Laminates	192
11.2.3	Requirements for the Plastic Substrate	193
11.3	Flexographic Printing Benefits	193
11.4	Flexographic Market and its Future	194
	References.....	195
12	Gravure Printing.....	199
	<i>Rozalia Szentgyörgyvölgyi</i>	
12.1	Market of Gravure Printing	199
12.2	Printing Process	200
12.3	Gravure Printing Inks	202
12.4	Gravure Cylinder Manufacturing	204
12.4.1	Electromechanical Engraving	206
12.4.2	Direct Processing of Copper with a Pulsed Laser	208
12.4.3	Direct Laser System with a Zinc Layer	209
12.4.4	Cylinder Manufacturing with Etching, with Laser-Made Masks	210
12.5	Structure of Gravure Printing Presses	210
12.6	Applications and Further Developments	213
	References.....	215
13	Offset Printing.....	217
	<i>Živko Pavlović, Sandra Dedijer, Srđan Draganov, Igor Karlović and Ivana Jurić</i>	
13.1	Fundamentals of Offset Printing	217
13.1.1	Basic Principle	217
13.1.2	Conventional Wet Offset Printing	218
13.1.3	Waterless Offset Printing	218

13.1.4	Offset Printing Plates	219
13.1.4.1	Structure of Offset Printing Plates	219
13.1.4.2	CtP Technology.....	219
13.2	Offset Inks.....	220
13.2.1	Oxidation Dried Inks and Drying Method	221
13.2.2	UV Wet Offset and Waterless Offset Inks and Drying Method	222
13.3	Construction of Printing Presses for Offset Printing	223
13.3.1	Sheet-Fed Printing Presses	224
13.3.1.1	Feeding Unit, Transport of Substrate, and Delivery Unit.....	224
13.3.1.2	Inking Unit.....	224
13.3.1.3	UV-Curing Systems	225
13.3.1.4	Waterless Offset Presses	225
13.3.2	Web-Fed Offset Printing Presses	226
13.4	Print Quality Control in Waterless Offset on Polymer Materials.....	226
	References.....	228
14	Inkjet Printing.....	231
	<i>Atasheh Soleimani-Gorgani</i>	
14.1	Fundamentals of Inkjet Printing Technology	231
14.1.1	CIJ Printing Systems.....	232
14.1.2	Drop on Demand Inkjet Printing Systems	232
14.1.2.1	Thermal Inkjet Printing	233
14.1.2.2	Piezoelectric Inkjet Printing	233
14.1.2.3	Electrostatic Inkjet Printing.....	234
14.1.2.4	Acoustic Inkjet Printing.....	236
14.2	Physical and Chemical Properties of Inkjet Printing Inks.....	236
14.2.1	Viscosity.....	236
14.2.2	Surface Tension.....	237
14.2.3	Particle Size	237
14.2.4	Solute Properties	238
14.3	Droplet Ink Behavior on the Substrate.....	239
14.4	Polymer in Inkjet Ink Formulation.....	240
14.5	Polymers as Inkjet Printing Substrate	240
14.6	Future in Inkjet Printing	241
	References.....	241
15	Screen Printing.....	247
	<i>Dragoljub Novaković, Nemanja Kašiković, Gojko Vladić and Magdolna Pál</i>	
15.1	Fundamentals of Screen Printing	247
15.2	Stencil/Plate Making.....	249
15.2.1	Screen Printing Mesh.....	249
15.2.2	Screen Printing Frame	251
15.2.2.1	Screen Printing Frame Materials.....	251
15.2.3	Screen Printing Squeegee	252
15.2.3.1	Squeegee Types.....	252
15.2.4	Screen Printing Emulsion	254

15.3	Imaging, Hand-Cut Stencils, Photostencils, Computer to Screen Systems.....	254
15.3.1	Hand-Cut Stencils	255
15.3.2	Photostencils	255
15.3.3	“Computer to Screen” Systems	257
15.4	Printing Process	258
15.4.1	Flatbed Screen Printing	258
15.4.2	Rotary Screen Printing.....	259
15.4.2.1	Drying Equipment.....	259
15.4.3	Polymer Substrates and Inks	260
15.5	Screen Printing Industry	260
	References.....	261
16	Pad Printing.....	263
	<i>Raša Urbas, Urška Stankovič Elesini, Tomislav Cigula and Sanja Mahović Poljaček</i>	
16.1	History.....	263
16.2	Basics of Pad Printing	264
16.2.1	Printing Form.....	264
16.2.2	Pad.....	264
16.2.3	Printing Ink	264
16.2.4	Pad Printing Machines.....	265
16.3	Basic Elements of Pad Printing.....	265
16.3.1	Printing Form	265
16.3.1.1	Engraving of Printing Forms	265
16.3.1.2	Use of Screen Ruling.....	266
16.3.1.3	Types of Printing Forms	267
16.3.2	Printing Pad.....	270
16.3.2.1	Characteristics of a Printing Pad	270
16.3.3	Printing Inks.....	271
16.3.3.1	Composition of Pad Printing Inks	272
16.3.3.2	Types of Pad Printing Inks	272
16.3.4	Technology of Printing Machines	273
16.3.4.1	Drive Type of Printing Machines	274
16.3.4.2	Inking System of Printing Machines.....	274
16.3.4.3	Multicolor Pad Printing Machines.....	275
16.3.4.4	Special Machine Designs.....	276
16.3.4.5	Accessories of Pad Printing Machines	277
16.4	Application of the Pad Printing.....	277
	References.....	278
17	Embossing Process.....	279
	<i>Shiwei Lin</i>	
17.1	Fundamentals of Embossing.....	279
17.2	Hot Embossing Modes.....	280
17.2.1	P2P Hot Embossing	280
17.2.2	R2P Hot Embossing.....	281
17.2.3	R2R Hot Embossing	282

17.3	Influence of Polymer Performance on Embossing Features.....	282
17.3.1	Thermal Behavior of Polymeric Materials.....	282
17.3.2	Polymer Deformation under Embossing.....	283
17.4	Application Example: R2R Hot Embossing Holographic Images on BOPP Shrink Film.....	284
17.5	Outlook.....	289
	References.....	289
18	3-D Printing.....	293
	<i>Daniel J. Thomas and Timothy C. Claypole</i>	
18.1	Introduction.....	293
18.2	Fundamentals of 3-D Printing.....	295
18.2.1	Fused Deposition Manufacturing.....	295
18.2.2	Stereo Lithography.....	296
18.2.3	Selective Laser Sintering.....	298
18.3	Applications.....	299
18.4	3-D-Printing Process.....	300
18.5	3-D Printable Materials.....	301
18.5	Electrically Conductive Polymers.....	302
18.6	3-D Bioprinting.....	302
18.7	Conclusions.....	305
	References.....	305
19	Theory, Modeling, and Simulation of Printing.....	307
	<i>Ludovic G. Coppel</i>	
19.1	Introduction.....	307
19.2	Measuring and Modeling Reflection Properties for Color Prediction.....	308
19.3	Light Scattering and Absorption.....	308
19.3.1	Surface Scattering.....	309
19.3.2	Bulk Scattering.....	310
19.3.3	Fluorescence.....	312
19.3.4	Monte Carlo Methods.....	314
19.4	Spectral Reflectance Prediction Models for Colored Halftones.....	314
19.4.1	Murray–Davis Model.....	314
19.4.2	Yule–Nielsen Model.....	315
19.4.3	Spectral Neugebauer Model.....	315
19.4.4	Probabilistic Models.....	316
19.4.5	Cellular Implementation.....	317
19.4.6	Fluorescence.....	318
19.4.7	Dot Surface Coverage and Ink Spreading.....	319
19.5	Multilayer Constructions.....	320
19.6	Surface and Interface Reflections.....	321
19.7	Transparent and Translucent Substrates.....	322
19.8	Conclusions.....	324
	Acknowledgment.....	324
	References.....	324

20	Characterization of Print Quality in Terms of Colorimetric Aspects	329
	<i>Michael Dattner and Daniel Bohn</i>	
20.1	Colorimetric Aspects	329
20.1.1	Color Perception	329
20.1.2	Color Measurement.....	333
20.1.3	Spectral Data to CIE Lab Data.....	335
20.1.4	Color Deviation Formulas	336
20.2	Characterization of Print Quality	337
20.2.1	Homogeneity of Unprinted Substrate.....	338
20.2.2	Influence of Ink Transfer	338
20.2.3	Different Materials, Different Perception.....	343
20.2.4	Inline Spectral Measurements for Continuous Quality Control in Terms of Color.....	343
	References.....	344
21	Characterization of Mechanical Properties of Prints.....	347
	<i>Marta Gajadhur</i>	
21.1	Introduction.....	347
21.2	Ink Abrasion Resistance of Polymer Substrates	347
21.2.1	Different Methods of Polymers Abrasion Resistance Testing.....	348
21.2.2	Evaluation Methodology of Printed Polymers Abrasion Resistance.....	349
21.3	Scratch Resistance of Polymer Substrates	351
21.4	Summary	352
	References.....	352
22	Aging and Degradation of Printed Materials	353
	<i>Joanna Izdebska</i>	
22.1	Aging and Degradation: Definitions.....	353
22.2	Models of Artificial Aging	354
22.2.1	Radiation	355
22.2.2	Thermal Aging	356
22.2.3	Chemical Aging	356
22.2.4	Complex Aging.....	356
22.3	Degradation of Polymer Materials	356
22.3.1	Radiation Degradation	356
22.3.2	Chemical Degradation	357
22.3.3	Oxidative Degradation	357
22.3.4	Thermal Degradation	358
22.3.5	Mechanical Degradation	358
22.3.6	Biodegradation	358
22.4	Methods of Testing the Aging Process and Degradation	359
22.4.1	Tests of Polymeric Materials	359
22.4.2	Prints Tests.....	361
22.5	Polymeric Substrate Degradation	362
22.5.1	Polyethylene.....	362
22.5.2	Polypropylene	363
22.5.3	Poly(ethylene terephthalate)	364

22.5.4 Polyamide.....	364
22.5.5 Polystyrene.....	364
22.5.6 Poly(vinyl chloride).....	365
22.5.7 Poly(ethylene-co-vinyl acetate) Copolymer.....	365
22.5.8 Biodegradable Polymers.....	365
22.6 Impact of Radiation Artificial Aging on Print.....	366
22.7 Summary.....	368
References.....	368
23 Applications of Printed Materials.....	371
<i>Joanna Izdebska</i>	
23.1 Introduction.....	371
23.2 Packaging.....	372
23.2.1 Flexible Packaging.....	372
23.2.2 Rigid Packaging.....	375
23.2.3 Food Packaging.....	376
23.2.4 Pharmacy and Personal Care Packaging.....	377
23.2.5 Industrial Packaging.....	379
23.2.6 Packaging Trends.....	379
23.3 Labels.....	380
23.3.1 Glue Applied.....	381
23.3.2 Pressure Sensitive.....	381
23.3.3 In-Mold Labels.....	381
23.3.4 Sleeve Labels.....	382
23.4 Printed Electronics.....	382
23.5 Household Equipment.....	384
23.6 Promotional Gifts and Materials.....	384
23.7 Others.....	384
References.....	385
24 Microcapsules in Printing.....	389
<i>Urška Stankovič Elesini and Raša Urbas</i>	
24.1 Introduction.....	389
24.2 Microcapsules and Microspheres.....	389
24.3 Types of Release Mechanism.....	391
24.4 Microencapsulation.....	392
24.5 Application of Microcapsules in Graphic and Paper Industry.....	393
References.....	395
25 Environmental and Safety Issues of Polymers and Polymeric Material in the Printing Industry.....	397
<i>Kirsten Radermacher</i>	
25.1 Introduction.....	397
25.2 Sustainable Development.....	398
25.2.1 Model of Sustainable Development.....	398
25.2.2 Methods of Ecological, Economic, and Social Sustainability.....	399
25.2.3 Complex or Simple Information.....	401

25.3	Life-Cycle Assessment	401
25.3.1	Structure of the LCA	401
25.3.2	Opportunities and Limitations of LCA	403
25.4	LCA and Toxic Risk Assessment	403
25.4.1	Toxic Risk Assessment Methods	404
25.4.2	Opportunities and Limitations of Risk Assessment within LCA	405
25.5	Printing Industry and Sustainability	406
25.5.1	Energy	406
25.5.2	Materials	407
25.5.3	Hazardous Waste	408
25.6	Assessment of Polymers and Polymeric Materials	408
25.6.1	Example: LCA of Polymeric Films	408
25.6.2	Example: Risk Assessment of UV Printing Varnishes	410
25.7	Summary	411
	References	411
	Index	417

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Preface

The purpose of this book is to prepare a comprehensive, structured publication gathering together both scattered knowledge and the results of studies in the field of polymeric materials conducted in the research centers all around the world.

I met Prof. Sabu Thomas during the Third International Multicomponent Polymer Conference (Third IMPC) in India in 2012. From the beginning, we knew that the areas of our interests complement each other very well. We immediately understood each other well and felt that by combining mutual knowledge and interests we can establish a successful and long-lasting cooperation.

Last year, Prof. Sabu Thomas as a visiting professor lectured at the Warsaw University of Technology, Faculty of Engineering, where I am currently working. It was then when we have decided to coauthor a book. Professor's experience in the field of polymeric materials in combination with my knowledge in printing and inks enabled us to outline the book, which just came to your hands. With the help of our scientist friends from around the world, working in the field of printing, materials science and physical–chemical processes, we were able to prepare this publication. We would like to thank all of them for the excellent cooperation and the knowledge that they wanted to share.

There are books about printing available on the market, but ours is exceptional in a sense that it is entirely dedicated to printing on plastics, both classic and biodegradable. These materials are becoming increasingly important as printing substrates, and their application is growing in the recent years. Furthermore, polymers are replacing other materials

used so far in many different areas, such as packaging, agriculture, or automotive industry. Properly selected plastics can substitute other materials such as metal, paper, and glass.

Modern printing industry is very interdisciplinary and draws knowledge from multitude of disciplines. High-quality printing requires employment of knowledge of material science, physical–chemical phenomena, printing techniques, preparation of the polymers surface before printing, and factors affecting the printing process, among others. Print quality is today a key aspect of aesthetics and marketing, testifies to the quality of the product, distinguishes it, and may decide about its attractiveness or contribute to its individual character.

Authors and editors have made every effort to create a compendium of knowledge on application of polymer materials in printing that is at the same time practical, comprehensive, exhaustive, yet remains an accessible publication. Furthermore, the aim of the book is to be the source of the current information and latest developments in the field for the moment of publication. We have designed the book so that the reader may acquire not only broad and deep knowledge, but also find fundamentals and explanations of the basic phenomena that many times are difficult to explain and often overlooked. This book should become an invaluable help not only for students and lecturers, but also for printers, manufacturers of printing materials, and other industries associated with the use of printed plastics.

Joanna Izdebska
Warsaw, June 2015

15 Screen Printing

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OUTLINE

15.1 Fundamentals of Screen Printing	247	<i>15.3.1 Hand-Cut Stencils</i>	255
15.2 Stencil/Plate Making	249	<i>15.3.2 Photostencils</i>	255
<i>15.2.1 Screen Printing Mesh</i>	249	<i>15.3.3 “Computer to Screen” Systems</i>	257
<i>15.2.2 Screen Printing Frame</i>	251	15.4 Printing Process	258
15.2.2.1 Screen Printing Frame		<i>15.4.1 Flatbed Screen Printing</i>	258
Materials	251	<i>15.4.2 Rotary Screen Printing</i>	259
<i>15.2.3 Screen Printing Squeegee</i>	252	15.4.2.1 Drying Equipment	259
15.2.3.1 Squeegee Types	252	<i>15.4.3 Polymer Substrates and Inks</i>	260
<i>15.2.4 Screen Printing Emulsion</i>	254	15.5 Screen Printing Industry	260
15.3 Imaging, Hand-Cut Stencils, Photostencils, Computer to Screen Systems	254	References	261

15.1 Fundamentals of Screen Printing

Screen printing is a stencil process where the printing involves closed nonimage areas and open-image areas. In screen printing, ink is forced through a screen by resilient squeegee (Figure 15.1). Also, we can say that the screen printing consists of the screen, the frame covered with the screen fabric, and the stencil containing the printed information. The stencil/plate is most commonly made from a light-sensitive emulsion, photographically imaged, so the printing areas are washed away, while the nonimage areas are made permanent. The stencil is processed on a fine fabric, which holds the parts of the design in place. The screen is a fine fabric made of natural silk, plastic, or metal fibers/threads. Ink is transferred through the open mesh that is not covered with the stencil. The screen printing plate is, therefore, a combination of screen and stencil (Kipphan, 2001).

The stencil on the fabric defines the actual print image. The stencil is on the side of the screen opposite to the side on which the squeegee (blade) works, to avoid damage and wear of the stencil

(Kipphan, 2001). Combination of stencil, screen, and printed image in screen printing is shown in Figure 15.2.

Also, an important parameter in platemaking is frame. Today, screen frames are usually made of aluminum, although we can find in some companies wood and steel frames. When a screen printing frame is selected, its characteristics to be considered include the frame size, durability, stability, cost, and stretching method (Ingram, 1999).

A squeegee is a tool used to push the ink through the stencil produced on the screen. They are usually made from rubber or polymer and have a wooden or plastic handle in the case of manual printing. A squeegee should be an inch or two shorter than the width of the screen (Novaković & Kašiković, 2013).

The basic elements of screen printing are shown in Figure 15.3.

In practice, three methods are used for screen printing (Figure 15.4):

- *The flat-to-flat method (flatbed):* the printing plate and the printing substrate are both