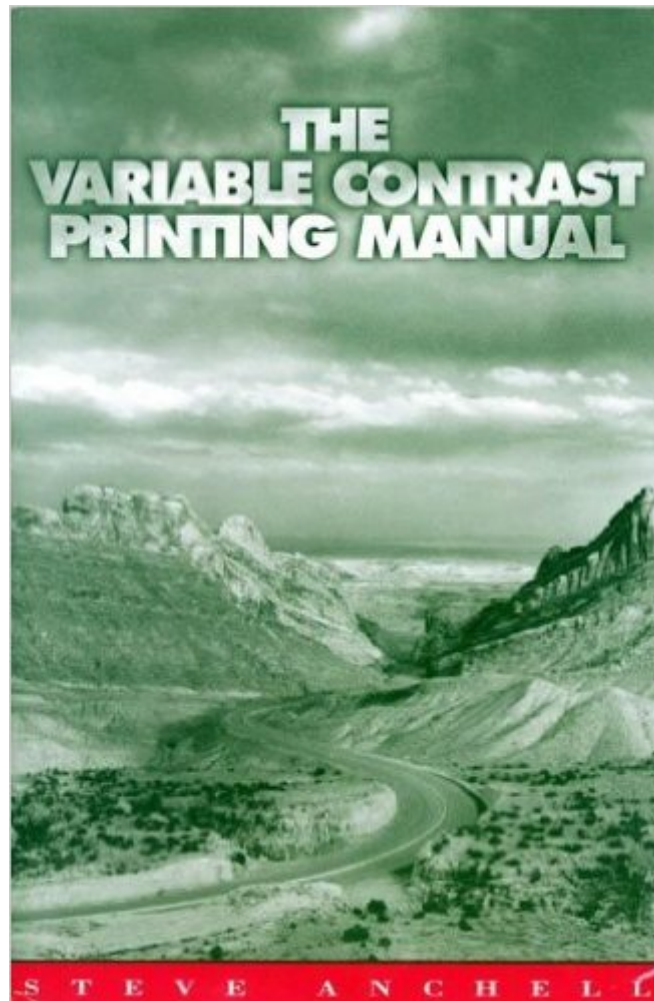


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# The Variable Contrast Printing Manual



## Synopsis

The Variable Contrast Printing Manual is the only comprehensive resource for photographers printing with variable contrast papers. Anchell provides a wealth of techniques and information to enable photographers to achieve the best possible results, and express their unique personal vision. As in his best-selling *The Darkroom Cookbook* (Focal Press), Anchell has provided the reader with an easy-to-follow approach to a medium that now dominates black-and-white printing. Stephen G. Anchell has been a freelance and commercial photographer, writer, and instructor for over 25 years. His fine-art black-and-white photography has been internationally exhibited and collected. He teaches workshops and seminars privately, at universities, and for companies such as Agfa, Cachet Fine Art Paper Company, and Sinar-Bron. His writing on photography has appeared in *View Camera*, *Shutterbug*, *PIC* (Great Britain), and *PhotoPro* magazines. He was a contributing editor to the former *Camera* and *Darkroom* magazine, and is a current contributing editor to *PhotoWork* and *Outdoor Photographer* magazines.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As an intermediate beginner in photography, and having now read many books on the subject, I rate this publication as excellent. Even for a novice it is clearly written, well explained and gives some good sources for shopping. Until reading this book I was unaware of filter compatibility and the ease of using charts for plus or minus filtration. Many books on photography are a repeat of others,

but not this one.

Variable contrast paper has long been looked down upon by photographers. That has been changing over the last few years and this book should finally convince everyone of VC's role in the printer's toolbox. Everything is covered--from printing techniques to currently available paper brands and VC enlarging heads. The text is informative, accurate and readable. A winning combination.

I bought and read every page of all three of Steve Anchell's black and white photo information books: The Variable Contrast Printing Manual, The Film Developing Cookbook, and The Darkroom Cookbook. Why? Because he gives a mix of an historical view plus tells what to pick of the best current chemistries. He does this without bogging down in the actual complexities of a college chemistry course keeping it at a usable technicians level. Since he also tells you why you are using various chemicals or paper his books do not dumb down but instead give you fascinating useful information. Anyone serious about darkroom work will appreciate his insights and commentary about chemistry use. He lists so many historical and current B&W chemical formulas and their use that any B&W experimenter will find the books useful.

I could have written this book, but I am glad Anchell did it and did it so well. There is an introduction for beginners here that is just enough to set them off on the big adventure. There is some well presented thought on advanced techniques that will keep the advanced cases focused on the essentials and help expand their skill. The author touches on how and why various approaches to Variable Contrast work and why you need to know. He compares the most readily available materials and suggests where they should be used. He gives some direct and pragmatic recommendations about development and fixing. He also presents some practical examples of how to use multiple filter techniques where appropriate. He discusses pre-exposure and some other tried and true techniques that help manage contrast. This book is a very good top-down, goal oriented approach. It is easy to read and remember because it never gets wound up in technique for its own sake. If you are already competent this book will keep you moving in the right direction. If you are not yet competent you will have no excuses after you read this book. This author needs a better publisher. I'd like to have an edition with test negatives and a coupon for a discount on the next edition. A better publisher could make this book a classic, must have.

The Variable Contrast Printing Manual is a wonderful reference book for those photographers that

want to control the photographic process from exposure to printing. It explains the main features of variable contrast print materials and describes the best processes to get great results from the material. I especially like the chapter on split printing. Mr. Anchell has taken a rather complex subject and made it very comprehensible. Definitely a must have for every darkroom enthusiast.

The book is not as nicely produced and printed as other books on the market, such as Tim Rudman's "Master printing course," (which is so pretty that I use it as a coffee-table book!). Anchell gives only a few examples of his prints, and the prints are very poorly reproduced. I did learn a few useful things from this book, though I could probably summarize them in a few pages.

This is a GREAT reference and guide for old fashioned photography. While I have a few digital camera's and a iMac Computer, Film photography has a certain warmth and feel to it that cannot be duplicated on any computer screen. I've set up my own Darkroom many times over the years and have really enjoyed the time spent developing and enlarging film and prints. I suppose it's hard to understand for those who are in a rush to get a print, or who take the time to learn the hobby, or craft. It may be a lost craft soon, as the digital age is here to stay. The old black and white negatives I have saved up and been given by family members over the years are a real treasure to me. I have cleaned them up and even scanned them on my computer to work with them in Aperture, or iPhoto on my Mac. But, getting back into the Darkroom is a pleasure and more of a true art form to me.

I am returning to darkroom work after a hiatus of about 20 years. This book was very helpful in bringing me up to date on the newer printing techniques. The one thing that would have been helpful is Internet addresses for the suppliers in Appendix III.

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