

Beginner's guide to printing

Most community and voluntary groups need to produce printed material from time to time. Whether you are producing a monthly newsletter, a poster for a meeting or an information leaflet, it's worth thinking about how you will print it right from the start.

The Resource Centre has a Community Print Room, which is available for use by community groups in Sussex, mainly on a DIY basis. Look at our brochure or our website for more information about the print facilities available in the Centre.

Printing technologies

There are five main techniques you could use to print your information. To choose the one that is best for your job, you will need to think about how much money you have to spend, how many copies you need, the type of artwork you have, what kind of image you want to get across, and what kind of quality you want.

Black & white printing / photocopying

Best for small numbers of copies.

Colour printing / photocopying

Cost-effective if you are doing a small number of copies, rather than thousands. Quality varies depending on which type of technology – laser or inkjet.

Copyprinting

This is a very cheap and simple way to print larger numbers of copies in one or two colours. Uses wet ink. Single colour or spot-colour possible.

Digital print

Most commercial printers have colour digital presses, which are good for full colour work if you need hundreds or thousands of copies.

Offset litho

If you are doing a long run of a black & white document, you may want a commercial printer with an offset litho press. It is worth phoning round several printers to get

quotes. Search for printing services at www.resourcecentre.org.uk to get a list of local printers.

Design considerations

As well as the printing method you plan to use, think about these key issues when designing your printing:

Colour

- ◆ Full colour photocopying or printing is much more expensive than black & white copying or copyprinting.
- ◆ Is the image presented by a glossy or full colour leaflet the one you want for your event or group?
- ◆ With copyprinters, you can use spot colour to add coloured headings or graphics, for not much extra cost. If you are going to use this method, make sure the colours are clearly separate from each other on the page. See our **Printing at the Resource Centre: Artwork** for more advice on designing for spot colour.

Clarity

- ◆ Does the key information stand out clearly in your design? Very often, less is more when it comes to leaflet and poster design. Make sure pictures and decorations don't obscure the information about when and where your event is.
- ◆ Ask other members of your group to road-test and proofread your design before taking it to be printed.

Finishing

- ◆ If you are printing several small flyers on one page, make sure there is enough space between them to cut them after printing.
- ◆ If your leaflet will be folded, you will need twice as much space between the columns of text as you have at the edges.
- ◆ With printing and copyprinting, you can't print right to the edge of the paper.

Design and print: step by step

1. Think about what you want to say, and who your target audience is. Make sure all the essential information is easy to find for your reader
2. Think about how many copies you need, and decide how your work will be printed. Talk to several printers to get quotes. Make sure you discuss finishing – will your printing be folded, collated, stapled or bound? Is the cost of finishing included in the quote?
3. When you've chosen a print method and a printer, talk to them about the format they want the artwork to be in, and agree when they need it by and when they will get your printing back to you.
4. Produce your artwork in the format you have agreed with your printer. Allow time for it to be checked for clarity and for errors by other people in your group. Get the artwork to the printer on time.

Finding out more

The Resource Centre has a copy of "The Non-designer's Design Book" in our reference library. This is a clear and useful guide to basic design principles.

Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project (www.bucfp.org) run low-cost training courses on using Adobe InDesign and CSV Media Clubhouse (01273 720894) have courses on using Microsoft Publisher.

Resource Centre staff are always happy to help with advice and questions about using the Community Print Room or other printing issues. Do get in touch.