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.

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, and what kind of image you want to get across.

- **Photocopying:** this is best for small numbers of copies. At the Resource Centre, the photocopier is the cheapest way to print if you need less than 60 black & white copies.

- **Colour photocopying:** some photocopiers can also do colour copies – again, this is only cost-effective if you are doing a small number of copies (up to about 100). A4 colour copies at the Resource Centre cost 20p each.

- **Copyprinting:** this is a very cheap and simple way to print larger numbers of copies. The Resource Centre has three copyprinters, which community groups are welcome to use for black & white or spot colour printing. See our Printing FAQ for more information about the facilities in our community print room.

- **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/beachcomber 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 FAQ 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 proof read 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 photocopying 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.

5. If you are using the community print room at the Resource Centre, you can do the printing and finishing yourself. This is much cheaper than paying a commercial printer to do it.

Finding out more

n 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.

n 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

n Resource Centre staff are always happy to help with advice about using the Community Print Room or other printing issues. Call us on 01273 606160

What's available in the Community Print Room

Colour photocopier

n Black & white copies from 5p each, colour copies from 20p each (more for A3, thick or glossy paper)

n Banner printing (297mm x 1200mm): £1.50 black & white, £5 colour

n Up to A3 colour scanning – free

n Collating and stapling of copied documents – 3p per 10 staples

Copy printers

n Cheapest printing for more than 60 copies. Contact the Centre for a quote or work it out yourself at www.resourcecentre.org.uk/printing/printquote

n Spot colour inks available: red, green, blue, maroon, purple

n Do your own printing or pay extra for our print service

Booklet maker

n Folds, collates and staples booklets – 3p per 10 stapled documents

Other finishing equipment

n Guillotine – free

n Stapler – free

n Folding machine – free

n Binding machine – 22p per document, plastic covers 10p each

n Laminator – 32p for A4, 60p for A3