

Preparing an Electronic File for Print Media Services

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If you've ever ordered anything from Print Media Services (also referred to as printing services or the UACES print shop), you were asked to supply two things: an electronic file (PDF) and a completed MISC-300X form. This fact sheet deals with the preparation of your electronic print file.

What is an electronic file?

In the case of Print Media Services, an electronic file is the "artwork" which is used to print your job. The printing term "artwork" means all of the copy (including text, photos and other graphics) in your print file. If your electronic file is improperly prepared or submitted, your job may not meet your expectations or deadline.

There are many different computer programs you can use to create your electronic print file. Print Media Services has access to most of them; however, you will be asked to send your file as a print-ready PDF. PDF stands for Portable Document Format. It's an easy-to-use format that eliminates all of the extra files you'd have to send with a "traditional" print job. It bundles all of your pictures, fonts and other print data together in one handy file. By supplying a print-ready PDF you create a simple workflow

between you and us, enabling a hassle-free transition from design through to print and delivery.

A print-ready PDF must meet certain criteria for your file to print without problems. All print-ready PDFs must adhere to the following criteria for color, size and resolution. If you are unfamiliar with this, we suggest checking with Communications.

What are the color criteria for electronic print files?

If your job will print in full color, it must be set for CMYK color space and not RGB color space. Most Microsoft Office products (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc.) use RGB color for pictures and graphics rather than CMYK. Print Media Services can convert your file for you, though some colors may look washed out or not print as you would expect.

We suggest you request a proof to see what your final job will look like before we print the entire order.

Color Spaces

- **CMYK:** Stands for Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black – the inks a printer mixes together to make colors on printed material.

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- **RGB:** Stands for Red, Green and Blue – the colors of light a computer screen mixes together to make colors on screen.

So what's the difference? RGB is used for viewing colors on a computer screen, like a website. CMYK is used for viewing printed material.

All of our presses, big and small, use Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black inks to transform your digital file to printed media. Please ensure your artwork is set up as CMYK. If you use RGB images or colors, we will convert these to CMYK for you, but the color of your printed file may appear washed out when printed.

What are the size criteria?

The document's page size is the finished trim size. For instance, if you are setting up a 4" x 6" postcard, this means your page size should be set up as 4" x 6" and not as a letter-size page.

If your document bleeds (see Bleed below), be sure your layout is adjusted to accommodate this, as well as your PDF. When a bleed is needed, we request that your files are supplied with a minimum of a 1/8" (.125") bleed.

Any trim, score or fold marks should be indicated and outside the live print area.

Artwork (all text and graphics) should be at least .25" from the edge of the page; this is regarded as a safe or quiet area.

What is a "bleed"?

Ink that prints beyond the trim edge of the page to ensure it extends to the edge of the page after trimming is called a "bleed." As there is a degree of movement when printing on any press, you should always create a .125" bleed on all edges where bleed is needed. Supplying your job without bleed may result in white lines when we trim it.

How to apply a bleed: The concept of applying bleed is the same for all desktop publishing programs. You need to extend the object box, whether

picture or color, out past the edge of your page. Then, when creating the PDF, you need to set your bleed margins to .125".

With Microsoft Word, PowerPoint or Adobe Photoshop you do not have the ability to add bleed when creating a PDF. You need to make your page/image size 1/2" bigger at the start. You will then treat the extra 1/2" (1/4" all round) as bleed, which will be removed when we trim your job. For example, Letter is 8.5" x 11", but your page with the bleed will be 9" x 11.5".

What are the resolution criteria?

All images should be 300 dpi. DPI is the amount of ink dots per inch; 300 dots per inch is the required standard for printed material. Images should also be placed at 100% size in your final document. For example, if your image is 2" x 2" at 300 dpi, then it is also that size when placed in your document. Lower resolution compromises image quality and may result in pixilation (where the pixels, tiny squares or dots that make up the image, are apparent when printed).

Please note that opening a 72 dpi image in Photoshop and simply changing the dpi to 300 will not increase the quality of the image.

Other considerations for electronic print files

Using fonts at small sizes

Be careful when using small font sizes. We don't recommend smaller than 6 point for small format work up to A3 and 10 point for large format above A3. Remember, the smaller the text, the harder it is to keep in register. If you have to use small text, we recommend you use 100% Black to eliminate any registration problems. If possible, fonts should be embedded or converted to outlines so no fonts are needed.

Borders and artwork

As there is always a small degree of movement when printing and finishing a job, it is recommended that your artwork be at least .25" from the edge of the page if it is not meant to bleed off. This is known as the "safe area."

Printed borders placed too close to the edge of a page, or on a folded panel, may look uneven when the job is trimmed.

Overprint

Please check your overprint settings carefully. All overprinting must be correct in a print-ready PDF as it is not always obvious to the printer, especially in larger files with many pages.

Using overprint preview in Acrobat will give you a guide as to which colors will overprint and which will remain unchanged.

White text is not set to overprint.

White text

Do not set white text to overprint. Setting a color to overprint lays a color over the top of another color. White in CMYK terms is 0%, so if you overprint zero ink on top of another color, it will disappear.

Multiple-page PDF

Do not impose the pages or save them as reader's spreads; this is not print ready. We require a PDF consisting of single pages running from the front cover through to the back cover. If blank pages are needed in the final book, they need to be included in the document.

For saddle-stitched books please remember that the number of pages in a book must be divisible by 4 (24 pages, 32, 40, etc.). For instance, if your PDF has 10 pages, you will need to add 2 blank pages to make it work.

Why is it important to give us pages in their running order? Instead of supplying, for example, the front and back covers first, followed by the inner pages, it's important to supply pages in numerical order, with the cover being the front page and the back page being the last. This ensures your document is printed correctly in the order you want.

Difference between pages and sheets

A "sheet" is a sheet of paper, and a "page" is typically a side of paper. So, a sheet of paper could be

two printed pages (2 pp) if double sided or just one printed page (1 pp) if single sided.

Checking that your folding is correct

If the document is to be folded, such as an invitation or leaflet, the folding will need to be checked before supplying us the PDF. It's always a good idea to first print a copy on your desktop printer. Check that the pages back up correctly and the text doesn't run into the folds, unless intended.

Avoid rich black text

Rich Black is a CMYK mix. No registration is absolutely perfect; there is always a little shift or stretch. Make sure that all black text is set at 100% Black. This means the text is only printed once with the black plate, eliminating registration problems. Black text should always be 100% Black and not a mix of CMYK.

Solid black areas of color

With digital printing you don't need as much ink to achieve a good black solid. In fact, if you use too much ink your print will suffer in quality. If you want a rich black solid, use these values:

30% Cyan
30% Magenta
30% Yellow
100% Black

This gives you an overall ink coverage of 190%.

Checklist for your print-ready file

Before submitting your print-ready file with your MISC-300X, please ensure the following:

- The file is supplied as four-color process CMYK and not RGB color space. If you are unfamiliar with this terminology, don't worry – we will convert it for you, though some colors may look washed out.
- The document's page size is the finished trim size.

- Fonts are embedded or converted to outlines so no fonts are needed.
- The resolution of all scans is 300 dpi at 100% of the final image size.
- Images are embedded in the file.
- Files are supplied with at least 1/8" of bleed.
- Any trim, score or fold marks are indicated and outside the live print area.
- Artwork is at least .25" from the edge of the page.
- Black text is 100% Black and not a mix of CMYK.
- White text is not set to overprint.
- Any multiple-page PDF consists of single pages running from the front cover through to the back cover, including blank pages if needed.
- If folded, check artwork is set up correctly for these folds.

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