

## Printing at the RCAH Language and Media Center

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The Language and Media Center aims to support proficiency across a wide range of media, including print media. Our workstations are equipped with professional desktop-publishing and graphics-editing software such as InDesign and Photoshop, and we have two printers for outputting a wide range high-quality print compositions: a color laser printer and a large-format photo printer.

### **Color Laser Printer**

Our color laser printer generates high quality color prints on standard paper sizes (8½"X11" and 11"X17"). Prints made on this machine have excellent detail and color saturation and are suitable for most purposes. Posters, brochures, flyers made on this printer look great. The LMC usually stocks semi-gloss paper, which is available by request. When large items or museum quality prints are desired, the **large-format photo printer** is more appropriate.

Members of the RCAH community can use the color laser printer at no cost when making a small number (1-3) of prints. We charge \$0.20/copy for copies beyond three.

### **Large-Format Photo Printer**

The large-format photo printer is a specialty ink-jet printer that is appropriate for printing posters, banners, and other large items up to 41" wide (note: this maximum width is not available for all paper types). This printer is also appropriate for printing photographs of **any** size when museum quality is desired. The printer can print on a variety of papers, including glossy, matte, and adhesive papers.

As of Spring 2010, we charge \$5 per linear foot for prints. The LMC accepts cash and personal checks. We are not able to make change, so users should expect to provide the exact amount. We can also bill a university account number.

The large-format printer is more complicated than typical ink-jet printers, requiring attention to a number of settings, variables, and features. Users should allow plenty of planning time for print jobs, as desired results are not always achievable immediately.

The LMC processes print jobs on a first-come-first-served basis during our regular hours. Our goal is to print jobs while you wait. However, consultants need to attend to the needs of all users of the lab. There may be times of intense usage, especially in the last few weeks of the semester, when consultants will not be able to get to a large-format print job right away.

Users should know that other units on campus also handle large-format printing, including the Main Library Copy Center:

[http://guides.lib.msu.edu/page.phtml?page\\_id=1164](http://guides.lib.msu.edu/page.phtml?page_id=1164)

## Tips for Preparing Large-Format Images

- Start big! When you enlarge a smaller image, quality can degrade. A typical image on a website will look pixelated when printed in an 8"X10" or larger format. You are more likely to get better results if you begin with a larger image.
- Use the right settings at the start of the process. When creating something yourself, such as a poster in Photoshop, make sure you adopt the right settings at the beginning of the process. If you're making a poster that is slated to be 24"X36", make sure that your image size is 24"X36" and your resolution is 300 dpi or higher. Don't make a small, low-res version and then blow-it up at the end of the process. Quality will degrade.
- Print smaller mock-ups to gauge your progress. Sometimes you can learn important things about your design and content even when you print a smaller, black-and-white version. This can save time and money. You don't want to spend \$20 printing a poster only to discover that prominent words are misspelled!
- Allow ample time. Most of us are used to writing a paper and printing it out the minute we need it. Complex visual compositions like posters, banners, and brochures don't work this way. There are many more opportunities for problems to arise: problems of quality, color matching, and design. Additionally, the LMC cannot promise to print large-format jobs immediately. We are only open certain hours and our consultants often need to balance multiple demands made on their time.
- Consider making a PDF version of your file. In many cases, a PDF file will help ensure that your final result is close to your original design. A PDF file may not be best for every situation. For instance, when printing museum-quality art photographs you may want to print directly from Photoshop. But in many cases, a PDF will be easiest and most effective.
- Be aware that a single project (such as a poster) may be more than just a single file on your computer. Let's say that you design a fancy poster in Photoshop. You use a special font that you've downloaded from the Internet. The LMC will not necessarily have that font. When you go to print, Photoshop will substitute another font for your special choice and your result will not match your original design. Or, let's say you design a banner using InDesign and your design includes several photos. Unlike what happens when you embed photos in a PowerPoint presentation, photos in InDesign remain separate files. If you bring only your InDesign file to the LMC, it will not contain the original photo files and the quality of your banner will degrade. There are solutions to all of these problems (such as making a PDF version of the file), but they require attention and planning.