

Glossary of Printing Terms

A

acid-free paper Paper made from pulp containing little or no acid so it resists deterioration from age. Also called alkaline paper, archival paper, neutral pH paper, permanent paper and thesis paper.

against the grain At right angles to the grain direction of the paper being used, as compared to with the grain. Also called across the grain and cross grain. See also Grain direction.

airbrush Pen-shaped tool that sprays a fine mist of ink or paint to retouch photos and create continuous-tone illustrations.

antique paper Roughest finish offered on offset paper.

aqueous coating Coating in a water base and applied like ink by a printing press to protect and enhance the printing underneath.

artwork All original copy, including type, photos and illustrations, intended for printing. Also called art.

B

blank Category of paperboard ranging in thickness from 15 to 48 points.

blanket Rubber-coated pad, mounted on a cylinder of an offset press, that receives the inked image from the plate and transfers it to the surface to be printed.

bleed Printing that extends to the edge of a sheet or page after trimming.

board paper General term for paper over 110# index, 80# cover, or 200 gsm that is commonly used for products such as file folders, displays, and post cards. Also called paperboard.

bond paper Category of paper commonly used for writing, printing and photocopying. Also called business paper, communication paper, correspondence paper and writing paper.

book block Folded signatures gathered, sewn and trimmed, but not yet covered.

book paper Category of paper suitable for books, magazines, catalogs, advertising and general printing needs. Book paper is divided into uncoated paper (also called offset paper), coated paper (also called art paper, enamel paper, gloss paper and slick paper) and text paper.

broken carton Carton of paper from which some of the sheets have been sold. Also called less carton.

bulk Thickness of paper relative to its basis weight.

C

CIS and C2S Abbreviations for coated one side and coated two sides.

calender To make the surface of paper smooth by pressing it between rollers during manufacture.

caliper 1) Thickness of paper or other substrate expressed in thousandths of an inch (mils or points), pages per inch (ppi), thousandths of a millimeter (microns) or pages per centimeter (ppc). 2) Device on a sheetfed press that detects double sheets or on a binding machine that detects missing signatures or inserts.

case Covers and spine that, as a unit, enclose the pages of a casebound book.

case bind To bind using glue to hold signatures to a case made of binder board covered with fabric, plastic or leather. Also called cloth bind, edition bind, hard bind and hard cover.

catalog paper Coated paper rated #4 or #5 with basis weight from 35# to 50# (50 to 75 gsm) commonly used for catalogs and magazines.

CMYK Abbreviation for cyan, magenta, yellow, and key (black), the four process colors.

coated paper Paper with a coating of clay and other substances that improves reflectivity and ink holdout. Mills produce coated paper in the four major categories cast, gloss, dull and matte.

color control bar Strip of small blocks of color on a proof or press sheet to help evaluate features such as density and dot gain. Also called color bar, color guide and standard offset color bar.

color correct To adjust the relationship among the process colors to achieve desirable colors.

comb bind To bind by inserting the teeth of a flexible plastic comb through holes punched along the edge of a stack of paper. Also called plastic bind and GBC bind (a brand name).

commercial printer Printer producing a wide range of products such as announcements, brochures, posters, booklets, stationery, business forms, books and magazines. Also called job printer because each job is different.

composite proof Proof of color separations in position with graphics and type. Also called final proof, imposition proof and stripping proof.

cover Thick paper that protects a publication and advertises its title. Parts of covers are often described as follows: Cover 1 = outside front; Cover 2 = inside front; Cover 3 = inside back; Cover 4 = outside back.

cover paper Category of thick paper used for products such as posters, menus, folders and covers of paperback books.

crash Coarse cloth embedded in the glue along the spine of a book to increase strength of binding. Also called gauze, mull and scrim.

creep Phenomenon of middle pages of a folded signature extending slightly beyond outside pages. Also called feathering, outpush, push out and thrust. See also Shingling.

crossover Type or art that continues from one page of a book or magazine across the gutter to the opposite page. Also called bridge, gutter bleed and gutter jump.

cutoff Circumference of the impression cylinder of a web press, therefore also the length of the printed sheet that the press cuts from the roll of paper.

CWT Abbreviation for hundredweight using the Roman numeral C=100.

cyan One of the four process colors. Also known as process blue.

D

deboss To press an image into paper so it lies below the surface. Also called tool.

deckle edge Edge of paper left ragged as it comes from the papermaking machine instead of being cleanly cut. Also called feather edge.

die Device for cutting, scoring, stamping, embossing and debossing.

die cut To cut irregular shapes in paper or paperboard using a die.

digital printing Any type of print reproduction method that utilizes electronic files to produce a printed piece from spots and dots of ink, toner, or dye. Applying it to the print workflow has eliminated most of the manual steps involved with conventional print processes.

Digital printing technology can be divided into two main classifications: Variable Imaging and Direct Imaging. Variable imaging, also known as Computer-to-Print, is a totally digital workflow, including the design process, prepress functions, and print output. Direct imaging uses electronic files to create films or plates for conventional printing methods such as offset lithography.

dry trap To print over dry ink, as compared to wet trap.

dummy Simulation of the final product. Also called mockup.

dust jacket Printed cover for case bound books. Usually printed on 100# text stock.

E

emboss To press an image into paper so it lies above the surface. Also called cameo and tool.

encapsulated PostScript file Computer file containing both images and PostScript commands. Abbreviated EPS file.

end sheet Sheet that attaches the inside pages of a case bound book to its cover. Also called pastedown.

F

face Edge of a bound publication opposite the spine. Also called foreedge.

film laminate Thin sheet of plastic bonded to a printed product for protection or increased gloss.

fine papers Papers made specifically for writing or commercial printing, as compared to coarse papers and industrial papers. Also called cultural papers and graphic papers.

finish 1) Surface characteristics of paper. 2) General term for trimming, folding, binding, and all other post press operations.

finished size Size of product after production is complete, as compared to flat size. Also called trim size.

flat color 1) Any color created by printing only one ink, as compared to a color created by printing four-color process. Also called block color and spot color. 2) Color that seems weak or lifeless.

Flat size Size of product after printing and trimming, but before folding, as compared to finished size.

flyleaf Leaf at the front and back of a casebound book that is the one side of the end paper not glued to the case.

foil stamping/emboss To foil stamp and emboss an image. Also called heat stamp. foil stamp method of printing that releases foil from its backing when stamped with the heated die. Also called block print, hot foil stamp and stamp.

G

grain direction Predominant direction in which fibers in paper become aligned during manufacturing. Also called machine direction.

grain long paper Paper whose fibers run parallel to the long dimension of the sheet. Also called long grain paper and narrow web paper.

grain short paper Paper whose fibers run parallel to the short dimension of the sheet. Also called short grain paper and wide web paper.

grindoff Approximately 1/8 inch (3 mm) along the spine that is ground off gathered signatures before perfect binding.

gripper edge Edge of a sheet held by grippers on a sheetfed press, thus going first through the press. Also called feeding edge and leading edge.

groundwood paper Newsprint and other inexpensive paper made from pulp created when wood chips are ground mechanically rather than refined chemically.

H

head-to-tail Imposition with heads (tops) of pages facing tails (bottoms) of other pages.

heat-set web Web press equipped with an oven to dry ink, thus able to print coated paper.

hinged cover Perfect bound cover scored 1/8 inch (3mm) from the spine so it folds at the hinge instead of along the edge of the spine.

house sheet Paper kept in stock by a printer and suitable for a wide variety of printing jobs. Also called floor sheet.

ink balance Relationship of the densities and dot gains of process inks to each other and to a standard density of neutral gray.

K

kiss die cut To die cut the top layer, but not the backing layer, of self-adhesive paper. Also called face cut.

letter fold Two folds creating three panels that allow a sheet of letterhead to fit a business envelope. Also called barrel fold and wrap around fold.

lightweight paper Book paper with basis weight less than 40# (60 gsm).

linen finish Embossed finish on text paper that simulates the pattern of linen cloth.

M

magenta One of the four process colors.

matte finish Flat (not glossy) finish on photographic paper or coated printing paper.

mechanical bind To bind using a comb, coil, ring binder, post, or any other technique not requiring gluing, sewing or stitching.

metallic ink Ink containing powdered metal or pigments that simulate metal.

metallic paper Paper coated with a thin film of plastic or pigment whose color and gloss simulate metal.

mil 1/1000 inch. The thickness of plastic films as printing substrates is expressed in mils.

M weight Weight of 1,000 sheets of paper in any specific size.

N

nested Signatures assembled inside one another in the proper sequence for binding, as compared to gathered. Also called inset.

O

offset printing Printing technique that transfers ink from a plate to a blanket to paper instead of directly from a plate to paper.

opacity 1) Characteristic of paper or other substrate that prevents printing on one side from showing through to the other. 2) Characteristic of ink that prevents the substrate from showing through.

opaque 1) Not transparent. 2) To cover flaws in negatives with tape or opaquing paint. Also called block out and spot.

open prepress interface Hardware and software that link desktop publishing systems with color electronic prepress systems.

P

page count Total number of pages that a publication has. Also called extent.

page proof Proof of type and graphics as they will look on the finished page complete with elements such as headings, rules, and folios.

perfect bind To bind sheets that have been ground at the spine and are held to the cover by glue. Also called adhesive bind, cut-back bind, glue bind, paper bind, patent bind, perfecting bind, soft bind and soft cover. See also Burst perfect bind.

point 1) Regarding paper, a unit of thickness equaling 1/1000 inch. 2) Regarding type, a unit of measure equaling 1/12 pica and .013875 inch (.351mm).

prepress proof Any color proof made using ink jet, toner, dyes or overlays, as compared to a press proof printed using ink. Also called dry proof and off-press proof.

press check Event at which makeready sheets from the press are examined before authorizing full production to begin.

process colors The colors used for four-color process printing: yellow, magenta, cyan and black.

proof Test sheet made to reveal errors or flaws, predict results on press, and record how a printing job is intended to appear when finished.

publishing paper Paper made in weights, colors, and surfaces suited to books, magazines, catalogs and free-standing inserts.

R

recycled paper New paper made entirely or in part from old paper.

register marks Cross-hair lines on mechanicals and film that help keep flats, plates, and printing in register. Also called crossmarks and position marks.

resolution Sharpness of an image on film, paper, computer screen, disc, tape or other medium.

resolution target An image, such as the GATF Star Target, that permits evaluation of resolution on films, proofs or plates. *We print to GATF Gracol 3 standards.*

RGB Abbreviation for red, green, blue, the additive color primaries.

round back bind To case bind with a rounded (convex) spine, as compared to flat back bind.

S

saddle stitch To bind by stapling sheets together where they fold at the spine, as compared to side stitch. Also called pamphlet stitch, saddle wire, and stitch bind.

satin finish Alternate term for dull finish on coated paper.

score To compress paper along a straight line so it folds more easily and accurately. Also called crease.

screen printing Method of printing by using a squeegee to force ink through an assembly of mesh fabric and a stencil.

sheet fed press Press that prints sheets of paper, as compared to a web press.

shingling Allowance, made during pasteup or stripping, to compensate for creep. Creep is the problem; shingling is the solution. Also called stair stepping and progressive margins.

side stitch To bind by stapling through sheets along one edge, as compared to saddle stitch. Also called cleat stitch and side wire.

signature Printed sheet folded at least once, possibly many times, to become part of a book, magazine or other publication.

Smythe sewn Using thread to first sew the backbone of each folded signature. The stacked group of signatures are then sewn together. Finally, the spine is glued to the cover materials to attach it and make the book.

soy-based inks Inks using vegetable oils instead of petroleum products as pigment vehicles, thus are easier on the environment.

spiral bind To bind using a spiral of continuous wire or plastic looped through holes. Also called coil bind.

spot color or varnish One ink or varnish applied to portions of a sheet, as compared to flood or painted sheet.

SWOP Abbreviation for specifications for web offset publications, specifications recommended for web printing of publications.

T

tagged image file format Computer file format used to store images from scanners and video devices. Abbreviated TIFF.

text paper Designation for printing papers with textured surfaces such as laid or linen. Some mills also use 'text' to refer to any paper they consider top-of-the-line, whether or not its surface has a texture.

U

uncoated paper Paper that has not been coated with clay. Also called offset paper.

UV coating Liquid applied to a printed sheet, then bonded and cured with ultraviolet light.

varnish Liquid applied as a coating for protection and appearance.

vellum finish Somewhat rough, toothy finish.

W

web press Press that prints from rolls of paper, usually cutting it into sheets after printing. Also called reel-fed press. Web presses come in many sizes, the most common being mini, half, three quarter (also called 8-page), and full (also called 16-page).