# Poster Printing Quick Checklist

The following checklist will ensure that you've completed all the steps necessary to successfully print your poster using Cook Library's Large Format Printing Service. Please read carefully and be sure to complete each step in order.

- Create a timeline (when do you need the poster in hand? when do you need to submit it? how long will it take to design?)
- Pick a size and style (use this [Sway](#) for best practices).
- Choose an appropriate template and design the poster from our [template library](#).
- Get help with design and preliminary review from a professor or peer.
- Proofread to ensure the following aspects of your poster are correct:
    - Spell check
    - Images check
- Save as a PDF
- Upload your file to the print submission form (link coming to the Cook Library website soon).
- Collect the poster when you have received an email confirming it is ready for pick up at the Ask Us Desk.

For more detailed guidance, read through the Poster Printing Guide below.

# Introduction

Creating documents for and printing to the HP DesignJet printers in Cook Library is not particularly difficult. But, due to the high cost of paper and ink and considering that Cook Library does not charge students for this service, trial-and-error printing is not something we can afford to do. We need to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the first print is acceptable. To that end, we have developed the following advice, guidelines and procedures.

Only academic posters in fulfillment of a class assignment or other faculty-supported projects may be printed.

# Start Fast with Templates

Soon, poster templates will be available on the Cook Library website. For Summer 2024, you can still find these on the SCS webpage. Templates are preconfigured for the Cook Library DesignJet printers and can help you fast focus on your content.

1. Open the SCS template page
2. Choose from any of the 10 templates
3. Download the template that will work best and save it using your last name in the filename.

The available templates are PowerPoint, Publisher and Adobe InDesign files. For many users, Microsoft PowerPoint makes a familiar and flexible design and layout tool for large documents; Microsoft Publisher is even more flexible if you know or are willing to learn it. Adobe InDesign is a high-end layout application available across campus as part of the Adobe Creative Cloud collection. Regardless of the format, using a template will allow you to bypass the set-up tedium. If your file is not in one of these formats and does not print satisfactorily the first time, Cook Library reserves the right to postpone reprinting until a professional staff member can be consulted.

If you want to mount your poster on a presentation board, acquire the board dimensions before you create the poster so that you can size your document appropriately. A popular three-panel presentation board composed of a 24"x36" center panel and two 12"x36" side panels is available at the University Store and local office supply shops. The Cook Library website includes a template for this type of board.

If you can't find the right size template for your project, email academiccommons@towson.edu with the details and we'll investigate creating a new template.

# Develop Your Poster

**Size**: The Cook Library DesignJet Z5400 prints to either a 24-inch or a 42-inch wide roll of paper. Posters narrower than 24 inches will require trimming; if you use a Cook Library template or otherwise set your width/height to 24 or 42 inches, trimming will be unnecessary. Whether height or width, the smaller dimension of your poster must be 42 inches or less, or you will have to print it in pieces (tiles) and assemble it for presentation.

**Design**: Regardless of its size, a page filled to overflowing with text content is hard to digest. Sometimes assignments do not allow for much design flexibility; nevertheless, good design should make effective use of negative space, the empty areas of the page. The following general steps may serve as a useful guide:

1.  Edit your text down to the essential information before composing your poster. The longer argument is not necessarily the stronger argument. Further, eleventh-hour text edits can wreak havoc with an otherwise solid design.

2.  Set page margins and column spacing to at least one inch. Margins of less than one inch will likely make your poster look overcrowded and you audience feel claustrophobic.

3.  If possible, increase the line spacing (leading) of your text. Often, smaller text with greater line spacing is easier to read the larger text with lesser line spacing. (Say that ten times fast!)

**Contrast is King**: If the color of your text is similar to the color of the background on which you place it, it may be difficult or impossible to read. As a rule, if your text is difficult to read on a computer display, it will be even more so on paper. Towson gold text on a white background is a bad idea.

**Resolution**: Image resolution is a measure of detail in the image. As a rule, the higher the resolution, the greater the available detail, the higher the image quality. High resolution images usually make for better looking posters. When selecting images, look for versions with pixel dimensions in the thousands. Images copied from web pages—typically 72-96 pixels per inch—will appear jagged and fuzzy when enlarged. Many clipart images, such as those available via PowerPoint's and Publisher's Insert> Pictures menu, are resolution-independent (vector graphics) and will remain sharp at any size.

**Protect Your Poster**: The DesignJet printer uses inkjet technology. Consequently, your poster will be particularly susceptible to the ravages of moisture. To play it safe, consider bringing a large plastic bag when you pick up your print so that you can safely transport your poster regardless of the weather conditions.

## Submit Your File to Cook Library

We prefer that you submit your poster file using the form to Cook Library in PDF format. If you are unable to do this, you may email the file to academiccommons@towson.edu.  Before you submit, you **must** confirm that:

- The dimensions of your poster are appropriate for the printer

- There is no critical content within the half-inch non-printing border region of the poster

- There are no graphical conflicts, such as obscured text or inadequate contrast between text and background

Cook Library may offer technical advice. While you are not obliged to revise your poster, Cook Library is likewise not obliged to reprint your poster if you do not proofread your file based on the above criteria and your print is unsatisfactory.

## Let's Roll!

Once we have addressed any potential problems, Cook Library will print your poster. Your poster will be printed, and you will receive an email from academiccommons@towson.edu when your poster is ready to be picked up from the Ask Us Desk. From this point on, the poster is in your hands. Keep it dry, avoid folding or creasing it, and enjoy the larger-than-life presentation of your hard work.