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HISD McCarty Printing Facility

The class took a fieldtrip to HISD McCarty Printing Facility located 228 MacCarty Rd, Houston, TX 77029 from 9:00 AM to 12: PM on February 7, 2013. Our tour guide was none other than our professor Charlotte Holden, a.k.a. Charlie, who is the director of administrative services for this print shop. Thomas, whom I believe is the manager, assisted Charlie in showing us how each machine functioned. The experience was very insightful, showing us the process of how our everyday documents are made.

The first stop was at the very front left of the warehouse starting with the copiers and booklet makers. The selection of paper for these machines especially the OCE – Booklet Maker 6160 must be perfect. If the paper is so much as slightly curved it will jam the machine. The reason paper gets curls is the same reason wood warps, as it dries it shrinks. Air conditioning was originally invented for this very reason and serves not only as a source of cool air but also as a dehumidifier.

Seeing as paper is the bread and butter of this facility it is very important to them that they recycle. They have set aside a huge recycling bin used to collect unusable paper of which amounts to around sixty percent of paper used. Paper can be recycled up to seven times and folded eight. When paper is recycled it goes through a de-inking process so that the output is clean white paper. Cardboard on the other hand is brown in color, because it is made from recycled paper that was not de-inked.

Hole punching paper seems easy enough but when it comes to wire binding you will not find yourself operating a machine. All of the wire binding at HISD Print Shop is done by hand. Punching square holes also calls for a special procedure. For all other binding needs such as collated, saddle stitching, fold and trim, shrink wrapping, and laminating there are bindery equipment ready to use. When printing, remember “proof then print” many mistakes can be avoided if you follow these printing words of wisdom. The print machine that prints, stitches, and folds also gives you a time estimate for the job. File readers convert the documents so that the printer understands how to print it.

When it comes to cutting nothing is better than the powerful Provano 50 cutter or guillotine cutter. This machine is semi-programmable and can be very dangerous. There have been people who lost their hands to this machine. To safely use it place both hands on the indicated buttons and press the pedal with your foot, almost like you would a sewing machine except standing. Tabs are placed in what is called a bank. Buying a custom number of tabs is tricky. If for example you want three tabs you must still buy five because that is how they come. The Large Format area has a 60 inch printer. This printer is used for large posters and even car graphics. There next to these printers is a laminating machine, a scanner, and a grommet machine. A grommet is the metal hole supporter used when hanging banners.

The carbon paper press prints its pages with the three cylinder printing roles. It is a 28 year old machine and the simplest press that uses non-alcoholic ink. The papers are then stacked by a worker and glued together using a special glue. The three papers will stick together because of a chemical reaction. The yellow paper has the chemical on both sides and the outer white and red pages have it on one. This makes the gluing process

easier because the forms can be done all at once and not individually. The Model 975 Perfector impressions paper on both sides at one time. It has the same mechanism as the carbon form printer except that It has two blanket rollers and many more paper feeder rollers to let the ink warm up and even out on the blanket. Next we move to a small two color 11 x 17 inch press that brings us back to one-sided printers. This printer is web fed and allows you to print with a bleed proficiently. It has its own blade installed to cut the paper.

Digital presses have no plates they are all computer operated. The computer separates color into 4 colors. This printer can print 7 pounds of paper an hour. Someone pulls every 1 out of 100 printed products from the line and inspects it with a densitometer which measures how thick the ink is. One can manually decrease the ink on the paper if necessary. The ink for this printer comes in a bucket and is very viscous.

The giant web fed press is a sight to be seen. It is a four tower 2 over 2 divide 2 colors on each side. The middle of the press is where the paper is turned. The initial rollers are to give the paper correct tension. This tension must be kept up all throughout the printing job otherwise the paper will tear and the paper has to be manually re-fed through the entire machine all over again.

The mail center has a place for almost every school of the region. They use what is called "Intelligent mail" which is a printed code that carries the mailing information when scanned. Their rates for sending mail is much better than having to send by post office but one must be sending in bulk to use this service.

Finally we come to prepress. Prepress is proofing the document. Printing is basically a whole bunch of tiny dots of ink the employee who works in this area makes sure these

dots are in order. How you can tell that these dots are in order is if they create what is seen as a rosette pattern, this is perfect printing.

I would choose to have a product printed by HISD Printing Facility because they know their equipment and have a great working environment. All throughout the warehouse the machines were at work creating documents. If you were to look at any one of those products they would be well done and professional looking. The fact that all products and machines are always double checked shows they will guarantee top quality work at all times.

This trip impacted me by showing me how a very successful large printing firm runs its business. It showed me an area of my field of which I could possibly work for. To be honest I would not mind working for a printing company though I probably would not have thought this before. It definitely was a neat experience and I will hold onto forever.

My ultimate career plan is to become an animator for Pixar, but before I get there I do want to explore and experience other graphic communication jobs. When it comes to designing documents for print it is important to know your printer. Visiting the HISD Printing Facility has shown me the atmosphere of a large successful printing firm. It has definitely changed my mind on print, and has made me want to consider taking on a job in print on my path to my dream.