

TechLines

Technical Information Sheet

EPP5

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Some call it “shingling” or “progressive margins” or “feathering,” – we call it “creep”

But no matter what you call it, it is an undeniable fact that pages in a saddle stitch printed piece are not all the same width. Grab a ruler and a saddle stitched magazine or catalog. Open the piece to the centerspread and measure how wide each page is – or the full 2-page spread edge-to-edge. Then flip the piece over and do the same measurements on the cover pages.

This difference in width is caused by the thickness of the paper the piece is printed on. The thickness of the stock caliper in combination with the number of pages forces the innermost pages away from the spine and closer to the face trim, reducing the width of the pages. We have seen 64 page projects printed on 70# uncoated offset paper creep out 3/16”.

So what printers do is tweak the position of each page applying a **creep allowance** so there is a more consistent margin at the face. Either manually or through a software program, each page – or group of pages – is being positioned a little farther away or a little closer to, the gutter edge of the page to achieve that constant margin.

A project with few pages and wide margins might not need a creep allowance because the difference after trimming is not really noticeable. With more pages, smaller margins or bulkier paper, the creep becomes more noticeable and can result in minimal face margins or even loss of text or unattractive design sense if no adjustment is made. A creep allowance is applied in tiny increments that are determined by the page count and stock caliper.

Digital blueline proofs are a great way to see creep. Even though the proofing paper might not be the same caliper as the stock your job will print on, you can still see the effect of creep as the interior pages of the proof are sticking out past the outer pages. When we have applied a creep allowance to a job, the face is trimmed flush so we can check on the allowance.

So when and how does “creep” affect you and your project?

Crossovers: When we find that images cross between two facing pages, more often than not we can not use creep allowance as the continuity of those images would be compromised – gapped at the outer pages and crossed into each other at the gutter.

Minimal margin allowance: Printers ask *and plead* for 1/4” margins from copy to face trim for just situations such as this. If your design has 1/8” margins and maybe there are crossovers, there is a real



risk of copy getting dangerously close to the face trim. We might need to suggest reducing your copy to ensure a workable margin.

Use master pages: It's critical to have a consistent design and consistent margins on a saddle stitch piece. As noted above, imposition software works with the corner marks/final trim size of the supplied PDFs or page files. Any photo or art element – even body text – could get in danger in an inconsistent layout even with or without a creep allowance.

Gutter bleeds: Besides extending art elements or images to a .25" face bleed, it is also extremely helpful if you could extend those same elements at least .125" into the gutter. Having this extra image gives us great flexibility if a set of pages would need to be incrementally moved toward the face.

Just being sensitive and alert to this should sound warning bells when you are designing the world's greatest wall-to-wall centerspread that just happens to be going into an 80-page saddle stitch piece on 60# offset stock! Something's going to have to give – whether reducing the copy [but there isn't enough height], acknowledging some of your great art will be trimmed at the face or maybe having to start over. Or maybe you must smush way more copy onto each page than you can. Just keep the "creep" in mind so you can react before completing your design work.

Source: **Jackie Howard Bear**, About.com, *Guide to Desktop Publishing*