

# Accelerated Service

# Yale Printing & Publishing Services

**MISSION:  
IMPOSSIBLE**

## MI: 1 - DIPLOMAS

**Covid-19 has struck.** Commencement has been cancelled. Your mission if you choose to accept it, is to assemble a team to mail out 3900 diplomas to the Graduates who would have received them in person at Commencement. You have a minimal team, they cannot work in the same area, and you need to coordinate with the Registrar's Office who has similar team restrictions located on the other side of campus. You have 2-weeks to complete your task. This message will self-destruct in 10-seconds.

When Covid-19 became a reality here at Yale, the University shut down all on-campus activities. Students were sent home, all campus events and gatherings were cancelled, and staff were requested to stay home. Those who could work from home did, only essential personnel were allowed on campus. This reduced our staff of 38 to 3 on campus members on two 4-hour shifts a week, basically to print payroll & AP checks and process medical office mail. As time went by, the possibility that commencement would not occur became reality. Virtual commencement was a success (see Impact WOW+ entry). But how would we get the students their diplomas?

In normal years, the printing of diplomas was already a tedious task. The Registrar staff would arrive at YPPS on the Friday before commencement with a stack of pizzas and an excel file to print, proof, update, reprint errors, proof, update, reprint errors, you get the idea. The Registrar team made up of staff and volunteer students would then assemble the diplomas over the weekend for commencement handout on Monday. With Covid-19 protocol in place, there were no volunteer students and minimal staff for assembly, no staff showing up for onsite proofing, and most importantly, no pizza! The printing and assembling of the diplomas was still going to happen but we also now had to ship the 3,900 hundred diplomas to the graduates rather than simply handing it to them.

The first step was to find a box that the diplomas would fit in for shipping. Luckily our paper supplier had the perfect box in stock. Next day delivery? Awesome. They need to be assembled? Not good!! We now had to assemble a team to make 3900 boxes. Staggered shifts were created so the minimal number of staff could work together but safely. 4 people in the morning, 2 people at night.



Within 3-days and 23 rolls of tape, we had assembled all the boxes. The shop looked like a Dominos' pizza box warehouse.

While the boxes were being assembled, proofing was being done on the diplomas. Files were sent directly to our printers but outside staff were not allowed in the office. Instead, I would bring cases of diploma proofs to the house of the designer (20 minutes away) on my way home from the shop. When I pulled up to the house, she would open her garage door, I would slide the boxes in and the door would close behind me. This would happen for 3 consecutive days. We still have never met. Social distancing at its best.



We now had to prep the boxes for delivery to the Registrar's office for assembly. The 9 pallets of generic boxes needed to be broken down into 14 groups, one for each college at the University. The boxes then had to be labeled with the students mailing addresses and kept in the exact order as the printed diplomas. The boxes were very bulky. How were we going to get those in a truck and delivered across town without them toppling over and falling out of order? Introducing our secret weapon, "The Cyklops". The Cyklops is a wonderful plastic band strapper that allowed us to wrap the boxes in groups of 20 and labeled according to each college. Wonderful!!! Plastic wrap each college onto its own pallet and onto the truck it went. Of course, our truck only holds 6 pallets, so this would be 3 separate trips. Our first trip is on Friday afternoon, just in time to get the Registrar team boxes and diplomas so they can work on them over the weekend. First pallet off, tight squeeze up the ramp, even tighter squeeze into the elevator. Now as many of you may have seen when ACUP was at Yale, the University has a lot of old buildings. The Registrar's office is one of them. As we got off the elevator, we ran into this long corridor which would easily handle a full pallet. Unfortunately, dividing the corridor every 20 feet or so were these single door entry ways. They were not pallet friendly. So, the plastic was cut off and the boxes were manually carried down the hall to the assembly conference room, stacked by college, in alpha order along with the matching diplomas and fancy folders for inserting. Registrar's team is happy and ready for processing. Everything is on schedule.

Our crew (all 3 of us) now had to work around the demolished hallway and share the elevator and building access with the construction crew. We are finally able to get the next round of diploma boxes off and first round of finished boxes on the truck. This would be our fate for the rest of the week. Back at the shop the US mail had meter strips placed on them and Fed Ex labels were printed to place on the International. Boy did our couriers love us. By Friday, the last of the diplomas came in and shipped out on time.



In an article from Yale News, YPPS was recognized for the hard work put into the diploma distribution process:

"The first batch for School of Architecture graduates went out. Since then, Yale Printing and Publishing Services (YPPS) vans have whisked away thousands of packages bound for destinations as near as the neighborhoods of New Haven and as far as Queensland, Australia."

"Carmen Cusmano and Stephen Taylor of YPPS have overseen the service's essential contribution — production of the diplomas and related documents at YPPS's Science Park plant."

With the hard work of a minimal crew working in Covid-19 restricted conditions and working with the Registrar's office, YPPS was able to ship out 3900 diplomas (3400 domestic 500 international) within the 2-week production deadline. GO TEAM!!! Hopefully we won't have to rush through that again... What's that? The Registrar just sent a Zoom request to discuss diploma shipping again??? Noooo! At least we have a few months rather than a couple weeks this year.



Monday morning arrives, and we get the call. The first batch of diplomas are ready for shipping. To be efficient, we set up to both pick up the processed diplomas and deliver the next round. Armed with narrower carts for the hallway, the crew heads out to the Registrar's office only to be met with a bunch of trucks and people in orange vests and hard hats. As we enter the building, the whole ground floor is torn apart. A reconstruction project has begun. Really??? That would have been some important information to pass along to us.

