

Deaf Printer Leaves Her Mark on the Work GPO Does for America



Stacia Barron inspects the U.S. Code of the Federal Register plate she made.

“I’m from a fifth-generation Deaf family where several family members, including my parents and my brother, all worked in printing,” says GPO Digital Prepress Journeyperson Stacia Barron. “My job at GPO isn’t just a job. It represents so much more than that—family, history, and community. I love that I get to be a part of continuing that tradition.”

Barron has continued the tradition of Deaf Printing in America, a story steeped in history, for the past 13 years at GPO. But her love for printing began way before then.

As a high school student at the Iowa School for the Deaf, Barron worked in the print shop.

She continued to work

in printing throughout college. In the 1980s, Barron attended Gallaudet University, a university for the education of the Deaf in Washington DC. Gallaudet required an internship, so Barron went to work at Times Journal Co., which offered her a job before she had even graduated.

Her experience working at five different private printing companies paid off in 2006 when she began her career at GPO as a Digital Prepress Journeyperson. In this role Barron imposes, paginates, makes color proofs and plates, scans, and reviews copy before production, among other tasks.

“I knew GPO was one of the most important print shops in the world,” says Barron. “I remember being excited to work

somewhere so important to the Nation. Thirteen years later, it still makes me excited.”

Barron has played a significant role in making sure Federal jobs such as the President’s Budget, The Congressional Record, the Public Papers of the Presidents, the Trafficking in Persons Report, and the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction Report, are perfect before they go into production. She says her favorite project that

she has worked on was the GPO history book, Keeping America Informed.

“The book had a lot of interesting little details that we had to fix up,” says Barron. “I enjoy all the four-color jobs.”

Her coworkers describe Barron as the shining star of Prepress, which consists of preflighting customer files, troubleshooting for design issues, imposing jobs for different bindery processes, and plating.

“Imposing is one of the most difficult parts



Stacia Barron operates a press at the Iowa School for the Deaf in 1979.

of our job,” says GPO Digital Prepress Journeyperson Linda Kidd. “Stacia never cuts corners. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that if I have made a mistake, she’s going to catch it. That’s just how good she is.”

Prepress Supervisor Dave Cannon agrees, emphasizing the benefits of a diverse workforce.

“I consider Stacia’s Deafness a great attribute,” says Cannon. “Most of us have the distractions of sounds. Stacia has amazing concentration.”

Though her coworkers describe her as a quiet worker, Barron lets her work, which she completes with undeniable diligence, speak for itself.

Barron says GPO values inclusion. Every Wednesday, GPO provides her with an interpreter for staff meetings, training, Town Hall meetings,

and other special events. However, Barron says she completes her work, which is independent, well without needing someone to interpret for her.

“When conversations become too quick to follow, my coworkers are usually there with a pen and paper to write down what everyone has been saying,” says Barron. “Even though sometimes

I receive information on a delay, I’ve learned to be patient at work.”

Over her 13 years at GPO, Barron has established different methods of communicating with her coworkers.

Cannon has learned that the best way to get Barron’s attention is with a simple flickering of the lights. Her coworkers have also learned that it’s considered rude to tap Barron on the shoulder. To a Deaf person, this tap is sort of like the

Deaf Printing in America

The Deaf community has been an integral part of the printing industry in the United States for about 125 years. In the first half of the 20th century, the “silent” press, which refers to newspapers and magazines published by Deaf people, flourished. By 1959, GPO employed about 150 Deaf workers. At that time and up until the mid-1970s, printing was the occupation of choice for Deaf people. Reserved for the most advanced students, it paid better than nearly any other trade. But more so than that, printing offered a way for people to maintain close ties to the Deaf community.



Stacia Barron communicates with Prepress Supervisor Dave Cannon.



Stacia Barron signs with coworker Michelle Jackson.

equivalent of yelling. Some of her coworkers, including Kidd, have even learned sign language to better communicate with her.

“Stacia has taught me signs for phrases, and we can lip read at times,” says Kidd. “If you take the time to talk to her and engage with her, she has a lot to say.”

Kidd also describes Barron’s inherent knack for reading body language.

“Stacia might not be able to hear, but she can see things most people aren’t able to,” says Kidd. “She can easily tell if those around her are angry, frustrated, or hurt.”

One sign Barron’s coworkers recognize best? “It’s Friday!” Fitting to its meaning, this phrase is represented with enthusiastic hands signing

“F” and circling in the air, as though to say, “Woohoo!”



Michael Duley writes down a message for Stacia Barron to communicate about their work.



Stacia Barron signs “It’s Friday” with coworkers.