

# Using DSCL

Ian Whiting - January 2012

## Introduction

DSCL are a digital photo printing company based in Manchester

[www.dscolourlabs.co.uk](http://www.dscolourlabs.co.uk)

I used DSCL for the first time in January 2012. I was pleasantly surprised by the speed and price. Also the quality was, to my untrained eye, very good.

I thought it worth mentioning a few things to help anyone else intending to use them.

## Printer Profiles

You may choose to use either the "autocorrected, standard service" or the "PreSized, pre-corrected (Pro Only)" option for each print.

If you do not wish to use their profiles save your images using standard sRGB and select the "autocorrected" option. *You can skip the rest of this paragraph.*

If you like to be in control of the colour and work with a calibrated screen use one of their downloadable profiles and select the second option "pre-sized".

They provide instructions on their web site but basically you have two or three profiles to choose from. I downloaded one for glossy and one for lustre paper.

The profiles are easily loaded into Photoshop and can be selected for proof view. Their chosen profile names are not that immediately obvious: **DS Colour frontier crystal archive is** for glossy and **DS Colour frontier DP2** is for lustre paper

I have calibrated my LCD screen and when I proofed using these profiles I did not notice any real change in the display. Your results may differ.

You should imbed the **appropriate** profile into your JPG image file and select the "pre-sized" option for that print. You can choose different options for each print in the same order.

For my work I selected to imbed and chose the "pre-sized" option. The printed results were as expected.

## Preparation

Prepare your image carefully.

Embed their appropriate profile for glossy or lustre and select "pre-sized" or set the profile to sRGB and select auto-adjust.

When imbedding a profile ensure it is for the paper type you are selecting

You can choose whether a print has white borders or not. If it has white borders the image will be reduced in size. I chose to add my white borders to the image in Photoshop and chose the "no white border" option.

### **IMPORTANT:**

I found that it is best to be careful how you size the image.

I used the "pre-sized" option and supplied an image 16 inches by 8 inches. I chose to print this on a 16 x 12 inch paper and expected it to have white top and bottom borders. However the short edge was resized to 12 inches and the long edge cropped both sides to fit.

I talked to them about this and they stressed it was important to ensure the canvas size of your image matched the paper size. This is easy to do in Photoshop. Select Image > Canvas size, set it to the appropriate size, e.g. for a 16 x 8 inch image set the canvas to be 16 x 12 inches, select white fill and click the "centre" button to centre the existing image in the centre of the new canvas.

They were friendly and quick to help me. I uploaded revised images resized to 16x12, they reprinted the "re-sized" images and waived the postage costs.

## Uploading Images

Your images are uploaded to their server using one of four methods selected from their web site. I tried options 1 and 2. Both worked well. Option 1 using a Javascript program which is in Beta release, it gave incorrect "time remaining" values, telling me I had 10 hours to wait for the upload to complete when it really only took about 20 minutes for 10 large JPG files.

You can choose size, paper and profile-mode before each image is added to the upload list or these can be easily changed after uploading but before final commitment.

There is a small "quality" warning if the image dpi is a bit low for your requested print size.

The form displayed after uploading included a thumbnail of each image. It was easy to see what had been ordered and make changes if required.

I was asked by one of the upload options whether I wished to optimize the image files before uploading. I chose not to optimize but to upload the full sized 100% quality JPG. The optimization may have been good, reduced the file size and reduced the upload time but I have had a poor experience with another printing company (Photoworld/CEWE) that over-optimized and I was not pleased with the result.

## **Payment**

Payment is by credit card. They add around £4 to the order for standard delivery and more for guaranteed delivery times

## **Speed**

The order was placed on a Sunday afternoon, printed and posted on Monday, I received my prints on Tuesday via normal mail delivery. Another order placed on Tuesday afternoon was received by me on Wednesday morning.

## **Packaging**

The prints included some 16x12 inch and some smaller sizes. They arrived in a flat pack (not cylinder roll) which was strong enough to prevent bending. Inside were some additional corrugated boards and the prints were in plastic bags.

## **Paper**

Neither glossy or lustre paper was what I would call heavy-weight stock. I don't think they offer any other paper types other than special surfaces like canvas and acrylic. The lustre is not as matt as some papers I am used to.

## **Prices**

I doubt I could print pictures as cheaply on my inkjet printer unless I were only wanting one or two images, when the fixed delivery costs would make my inkjet cheaper.

## **Service**

They were quick to answer both phone calls and emails. They were friendly and helpful. Printing and delivery by the cheapest "first class post" option could not have been better.

## **Why Use a Digital Printing Service**

DSCL may be cheaper than your own inkjet printer

If you do not have a profiled printer the DSCL results may be more predictable

They can print sizes larger than your own inkjet can manage

Higher volumes are quicker than using your own slower printer.

## **Why Not Use a Digital Printing Service**

Quicker to make changes (e.g. crop, colour adjustments) and re-print on your own inkjet.

More paper choice

## **Alternative Printing Services**

There are a lot of printing service companies around, e.g. Snapfish, Photobox, Jessops. I do not have any/much experience of any of these. Two local printers are

Bedford Gallery (Harpur Shopping Mall and High Street)  
[www.thepictureframingcreator.co.uk](http://www.thepictureframingcreator.co.uk)

Ouse Valley Processing, (Ridgmount Street)  
[www.picturesforever.co.uk](http://www.picturesforever.co.uk)

Please let me know of any more local specialised services that I can add to the list. I would especially like to learn of local high-quality printers that offer a good paper selection.