

# **Using Your Digital Files in New Digital Media**

**By Roderick E. Craft, Jr. and Dr. Jerry Waite**

Today's printer should understand that new technologies are emerging as effective media for communicating. In order for printing and publishing companies to maintain competitiveness and profitability, they must be willing to accept and even embrace these new media. Visual forms of communication have evolved from primarily printed material to include new digital technologies such as web pages for the Internet and interactive multimedia presentations. These forms of communication are changing the way people communicate with one another and are gaining in popularity and acceptance worldwide on both the corporate and private levels. This evolution has created new avenues for sales and profit for the printer.

## ***Repurposing Files You Already Have***

The key to printers moving into the production of emerging forms of communication is the digital files you already have. The files typically used in prepress activities can be easily transferred and modified, called repurposing, for use in products that use alternate communication forms. The repurposing of files is a much easier task than you might expect. A significant amount of the hardware required to create products for these new forms of communication are the same as the hardware you probably already use for digital prepress operations. However, to be able to repurpose prepress files into web pages or multimedia presentations, you must purchase additional software packages.

### ***Interchanging Incompatible Files—Debabelizer***

To repurpose prepress files into web pages or other digital media, you must use and manipulate files of many different types. One immediate problem that you must face is file incompatibility. Software packages written for specific forms of communication have been somewhat slow in developing interchangeable file formats, primarily because they all use entirely different methods for creating files. However there has been a surge of intermediary software packages that bridge the gaps between and unify different file formats. Most problems that arise when repurposing files are due to incompatible graphic file formats. A program called **Debabelizer** can read nearly all of the graphic file types currently in use and export files to most other file types. This program also aids in the transfer of files from PC to Macintosh platform and vice-versa because there are certain file types that can only be used on one or the other of the platforms.

### ***Portable Document Files—Adobe Acrobat***

A second program that you must have is Adobe **Acrobat**. This program creates a portable document file (.pdf) that contains all the information contained in the original file without the need for accompanying fonts or linked images. PDF files can be created from documents produced using any application that allows you to print to disk (that is, print to PostScript code). After the PostScript print file has been created, **Acrobat Distiller** software is used to create the PDF file. Distiller creates very small files, at whatever resolution you require, by using very effective file compression in conjunction with PostScript code. Many software companies are recognizing the advantages that come with the use of Acrobat technology and are incorporating the ability to utilize PDF files in new versions of their software packages. Acrobat files can be read by Windows, Macintosh, and UNIX computers using Acrobat **Reader** software. PDF files can also be incorporated into web pages or saved on CD-ROMs. PDF files also show potential in the prepress field

because they eliminate many common problems including wrong, missing, or corrupt files and fonts. PDF files may also eliminate copyright violations that can occur if fonts or images are misused.

### ***Web Page Authoring Software***

Access to the Internet is currently in high demand because this form of communication is taking the world by storm. Corporations are now considering the use of the World Wide Web as an effective method of internal and external communication as well as a means to advertise to current or potential customers. Web pages can also promote corporate identity, which is crucial to the existence of a company. The manner in which the company promotes itself reflects tremendously on quality of work the company will perform, so its web site must be both informative and appealing.

The Internet uses "html" (hypertext markup language) as its programming language. Early web pages required hours of work to program the html code necessary to define a page and its links to other pages. As the Internet has grown, web page creation has been simplified through the use of programs such as **Fusion** by Net Objects and **Cyber Studio** by Go Live. These programs are almost completely visually oriented. Creating a web page, including any necessary links, can all be done by graphic representations of the coding. This simple advantage can speed up web page creation and improve the accuracy of all the functions within the page. Adobe **Page Mill** and Microsoft **Front Page** are two lower-end web page creation programs that require the use to write some html code. These programs also lack some of the more sophisticated options available in Fusion or Cyber Studio.

Digital illustrations and photographs can easily be integrated into web pages using any web authoring program. To repurpose existing digital files for use in web pages, open

the file in Photoshop, convert it to RGB mode (if necessary), change the resolution to 72 ppi, then save the image in the JPEG or GIF file format. Generally illustrations are saved in the GIF format while digital photographs are saved as JPEG files.

### ***Interactive Multimedia—Macromedia Director***

Interactive presentations are common as part of the sales and marketing strategies of many companies. A CD containing a self-running presentation can improve a firm's image and increase a sales team's ability to communicate. These presentations can be created and written to any number of CDs, then distributed to current clients to offer new goods and services. The same CDs can be sent to potential clients to highlight the firm's entire range of services. Multimedia presentations often contain the same photographs and illustrations that are contained in printed products. Once again, your existing digital files can be repurposed for use in an alternate communication media.

The computer industry has technologically advanced to a point that CD-ROM drives are easily included in computer production—indeed, most computers now come with a CD-ROM drive! Prices for CD-writing technology have dropped to a point that CDs are now a very economical media to use.

Macromedia **Director** has established itself as the *defacto* multimedia software. Director has an enormous amount of communication capability that can be used in many different ways. Director can be used to prepare interactive multimedia presentations and can also be used to create animations. Depending on the requirements for multimedia presentations, a hardware upgrade is usually needed. When considering the purchase of these upgrades, keep in mind that because multimedia presentations are created on the same hardware that is used for prepress, upgrades can usually be cost justified.

## ***Conclusion***

Developing the capability to create products for new alternate forms of communication allows the printer to increase the services it can provide for its clients. Increasing the scope of work from isolated product runs to producing total organizational communications packages is similar to the idea of one-stop shopping. The ability to create packages of printed brochures, web pages for the Internet, and CD-ROM's with interactive presentations will eliminate the need for your clients to find multiple vendors to complete their work. The client's communications needs will be solved under one roof—yours.

## ***About the Authors***

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