

DESKTOP PUBLISHING

**CHOOSING THE RIGHT
APPLICATION**

Introduction

The objective of this presentation: to offer some thoughts on how to match a desktop publishing application to the type of document—or documents—desired.

Introduction (continued)

This presentation has been prepared for those who are not familiar with the current choices.

It is not a class on using any particular application, nor is it intended to be an introductory graphic design class.

You can find this presentation on the FRPCUG website at <http://frpcug.org/presentations/DesktopPublishing.pdf>.

Introduction (continued)

This presentation offers two approaches to choosing the right Desktop Publishing application:

- The first approach examines briefly three applications and demonstrates a few of the key differences.
- The second approach analyzes different document types and attempts to match document complexity to the type of application needed.

Definitions

There are many definitions of Desktop Publishing. For the best definition, and a little bit of history, connect to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desktop_publishing.

Today, the questions usually are:

- “What is the difference between word processing and desktop publishing (DTP)?”
- “How much money do I have to spend for a desktop publishing application?”
- “How difficult is it to learn a desktop publishing application?”

A Brief History of . . .

The word processor:

The original word processor applications were dedicated to . . .

words—text.

They usually included such features as tables of contents, indexes and spell checkers. Graphics capability, if any, was very limited.

A Brief History of . . .

The page layout (or page assembly) application:

In 1985, the first desktop publishing application was introduced. For the first time, text and graphics could be assembled into a single document on a PC.

The desktop publishing application included the capability, among other things, to manipulate graphic images within the application, and new font technology that allowed fonts to be scaled in size. A new computer language, PostScript (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PostScript>), was developed to reliably convert the electronic file into a printable page.

And Now . . . Back to the Present

A slightly blurred distinction

A word processor offers some capability

A DTP application offers capability for printing, greater controls and features, and much greater graphics capability.

Comparing Applications

There are probably hundreds of word processor applications available. They range in price from freeware to shareware to expensiveware. The best known of the “full featured” word processor applications are Microsoft Word, Corel Word Perfect, and Open Office Writer. The last is free. The other two range in price from \$200 up.

Comparing Applications (continued)

There are at least 20 (probably more) desktop publishing applications available. The best known of these applications are Microsoft Publisher, Adobe InDesign, QuarkXPress, and although less well known but still available, Ventura Publisher, now owned by Corel. Publisher sells for around \$170, while the other three are in the \$700 to \$800 range. There are two free desktop publishing applications—more on those in a few moments.

Guidelines

Here are some guidelines for selecting an application. And I do mean guidelines. What follows is not a list of physical laws. These guidelines are based on a combination of complexity of the application, complexity of the document, and the cost of creating and distributing the document. You must apply your own judgment.

First, start by asking yourself a few key questions (the list that follows is by no means an exhaustive list):

Guidelines (continued)

What is the purpose of the document/who is the audience?

- A newsletter for a non-profit, religious, or hobby organization?
- A sales promotion item or ad for a business?
- A fund raising announcement for a non-profit organization or a political campaign?

How will the document be distributed?

- Sent via email
- Posted on a website
- Printed and sent via snail mail
- A combination of the above

Guidelines (continued)

Will the document contain:

- Text only
- Text and graphics
- Text and color graphics

If the document is to be printed

- What size is the document to be?
- What quantity is desired?

What is my current knowledge level/interest in expanding that level?

- Beginner, intermediate, expert?
- Can I afford the time (and perhaps money) for training?

Examine the Applications The Word Processor

A word processor has the advantage that it is the simplest of all the choices. A word processor is a familiar application to a large segment of the population, even if the more complex desktop publishing features are not.

Start with the purpose of the document.

If you need a simple flyer or single page newsletter that is mostly text, a word processor can be the best choice. It is relatively inexpensive—even free if you use Open Office Writer—and easy to learn.

Word w/col

Examine the Applications

The Word Processor (continued)

You can send a small number of copies to recipients via email, if they have the same application (and version) on their computer, or convert it to the Portable Document Format (PDF) for universal readability. There are free and reliable converters and readers for the PDF.

If you stick with the standard 8.5 x 11 page size and black ink, you can print out one copy on your home ink jet or laser printer, then take that copy to a copy shop and buy up to several hundred copies inexpensively.

Examine the Applications

The Word Processor (continued)

One very important issue that needs attention if you want to add color to your flyer or newsletter is cost. If you take your word processor file to a copy shop for color copies, plan to spend about a dollar for each side of an 8.5 x 11 page.

Somewhere in the 500 to 1000 quantity range for a document with color, a commercial printer may offer you better unit pricing. Remember the PostScript computer language? Commercial printing equipment is based on receiving PostScript compatible files. Unfortunately, no word processor is PostScript compatible.

Examine the Applications The Word Processor (continued)

Perhaps I have stressed the negative more than the positive. As I said earlier, you can do a lot with a word processor—at least with current versions of word processors. Here are several samples:

User Guide

Multiple pages, graphics, table of contents, figure numbers, mixed portrait and landscape pages.

Examine the Applications The Word Processor (continued)

Class handout using Word

Multiple pages, graphics. Delivered a PDF version to the Senior Center, which “prints” (copies) up to 6 copies for each class (black ink only).

Class handout using Open Office Writer (work in progress)

Multiple pages, graphics. Expect small quantities to be copied (black ink only) for each class. Deliveries will include the Open Office file and perhaps a PDF version.

Examine the Applications

The Word Processor—Summary

Word processor advantages

- Relatively easy to learn; perhaps a little extra effort for the DTP features
- Relatively inexpensive (or even free)
- Suitable for simple documents; primarily text but with some graphics
- Hard copies without color are inexpensive

Examine the Applications The Word Processor—Summary

Word processor disadvantages

- Not PostScript compatible (a hard copy printing issue—especially with color)
- Relatively limited graphics capability
- Not a good choice for documents that are color graphics intensive and need high quality printing in large quantities, such as product or service sales and marketing flyers, or ads.

Examine the Applications

The Intermediate DTP Application

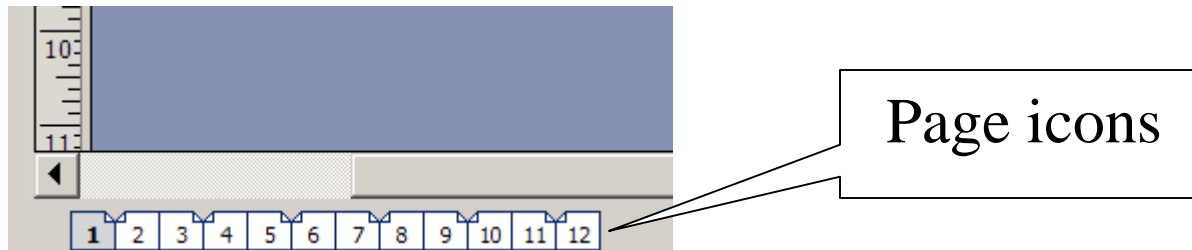
Need more capability? The next step is an “intermediate” DTP application. Intermediate is defined in terms of capability and price. Probably the best known application of this type is Microsoft Publisher. It is the application used to create the FRPCUG newsletter.

How is it different from Word? The key is more features and more control—over everything.

Let’s look at the latest issue of k-Byte, an example that will help identify the differences.

Examine the Applications The Intermediate DTP Application

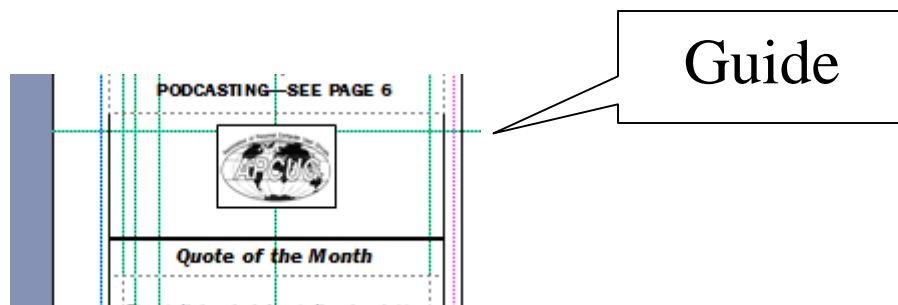
First, look at the bottom left side of the display:



What you see are small icons indicating this document has 12 pages. This is the “booklet” feature—a basic feature of any DTP application. It is very useful for multi-page newsletters, among other things. And it is not a feature of word processors.

Examine the Applications The Intermediate DTP Application (Continued)

Second, look at all those green lines, which are guides:

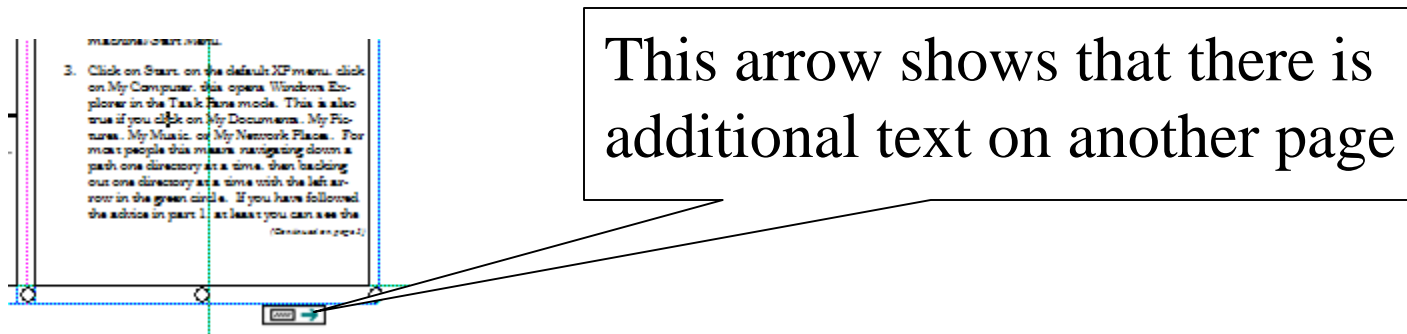


Another basic DTP feature (and not a word processor feature), the guides can be very precisely positioned, which means text and graphics can be very precisely positioned.

Examine the Applications

The Intermediate DTP Application (Continued)

Third, with a DTP application you can automatically thread text among several pages:



That small arrow shows that there is more text for this article on another page. If I click on that arrow, the display moves to that additional text.

Examine the Applications

The Intermediate DTP Application (Continued)

Is Publisher PostScript compatible? Recent versions allow you to save a document as a PostScript file—although I haven't tested this feature.

Is it better to save the document as a PostScript file or convert it to a PDF file? If you need to print the document and you want color in that document, and you need several hundred copies—or more—talk to the printer! (The business, not the hardware).

You will also need to do a little study on the Commercial Printing tools of Publisher.

Examine the Applications

The DTP Application—Summary

Advantages of a DTP application:

- Regarding Microsoft Publisher, knowledge of Microsoft Word will make it easier to learn
- Suitable for complex documents with multiple pages and a lot of graphics, such as business documents for sales and marketing.
- PostScript compatible
- Necessary for volume printing

Examine the Applications

The DTP Application—Summary

Disadvantages of a DTP application:

- Can be very expensive
- Requires a lot of study to learn how to use all of the features—compared to a word processor. The more complex the application, the steeper the learning curve.

Free DTP Applications

I mentioned earlier that there are two free DTP applications available. One is open source and relatively new (2003), called Scribus. Another is a free version of a proprietary application called PagePlus. I have not tested either application—in fact, I haven't even downloaded them.

If you are interested in either application, here are the links:

For Page Plus:

<http://www.freeserifsoftware.com/> (Windows only)

Free DTP Applications

For Scribus:

For info: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scribus> and
<http://www.scribus.net/> (Linux/Unix, MacOS X, OS/2
and Windows)

To download:

http://sourceforge.net/project/showfiles.php?group_id=125235

If you *are* interested in either application, let's talk. I would like to see these applications in action. Maybe a DTP SIG?

Examine the Applications A Final Comment

OK, one final demonstration. If personal interests or business needs demand the ultimate in DTP capabilities, you probably will need to invest in one of the professional applications such as InDesign or QuarkXPress (or maybe Scribus?).

Here is a two page spread from an InDesign sample document:

Examine the Applications A Final Comment

Lots of
tools
here

Lots of controls
here



Lots of
features
here

All that capability justifies the price.

Analyzing Documents

So far, the discussion has focused on comparing applications.

Another way to approach the decision is to analyze the intended use of the document (or documents). There are a number of important factors that can affect your choice of a DTP application.

I have attempted to capture the most important of those factors in a series of tables called “Charting the Choices,” also available on the website at:

(<http://www.frpcug.org/presentations/ChartingtheChoices.pdf>). I will show you some of those results.

Analyzing Documents

The general conclusions from this analysis are:

- For simple documents, no color, small quantities, and 8.5 x 11 page size, there is no need to spend money on a true DTP application. Even if you want printed copies, they are inexpensive.
- For simple documents with color but no printing (that is, distribution via a website or email), a word processor can still be a workable choice, especially in combination with a free PDF converter. *The key here is simplicity.* No word processor provides the same set of features and controls that are available in a true DTP application.

Analyzing Documents

- Once you decide to add color to printed (on paper) copies, the true DTP application not only offers greater capability to create the document, it includes PostScript capability that allows volume reproduction of the document at economical prices. For example, suppose:
 - You have a document that is one side of one 8.5 x 11 page with color.
 - You print it out on your ink jet printer.
 - You take it to a local copy shop for reproduction on one of their self service color copiers

Analyzing Documents

- At roughly \$1 per copy,
 - 10 copies = \$10.00
 - 100 copies = \$100.00
 - 1000 copies = \$1000
- At the \$500 to \$1000 range, other printing technologies (e.g., offset printing) are likely to save you money. The higher the quantity, the greater the savings compared to using copier technology.
- But, to achieve those savings, your document must be PostScript compatible. For that, you need a true DTP application.

Analyzing Documents

- For volume printing, perhaps quantity 2500 or more (and depending on the complexity of the document, the changeover quantity may be as low as 1000), PostScript compatibility is essential, and a true DTP application is required.
- A true DTP application is also required for large size (>11 x 17) printing.

For More Information

In addition to the links identified above, for a brief (one and one-half pages) non-technical description of the processes applied to an electronic file when it is submitted to a commercial printer, see “From Brain to Book: The Journey of Words From Thought to Print,” located on the FRPCUG website at

<http://frpcug.org/presentations/FromBraintoBook.pdf>.

That document also has two photographs of medium to large offset presses. This description was originally prepared for the participants in the Advanced Word class, but is relevant to Desktop Publishing.

That concludes the presentation. Are there any questions?