Buzz words

Once upon a time in the world of printing there was galley type and photo half tones and stats of line art, and Exacto knives and waxers and brayers, and mechanical pasteup and cameras for making negatives. And then along came desktop publishing, and everything changed.

Today, even though mechanical layout and art boards have largely been replaced by digital page creation and electronic files, one thing remains constant: the need to check each page of a document to be sure it will reproduce as intended. This is the process known as preflighting.

WHY PREFLIGHT?

The purpose of preflighting an electronic file is to determine whether there are any problems in the way the file was constructed or submitted that will prevent it from printing correctly to the intended output device. Without preflighting, the only way to determine if a file will print is trial-and-error – certainly not an efficient or convenient method.

Preflighting consists of three phases: inspection, reporting and correction. The inspection phase checks for the presence of all items that will be necessary for the file to print – things like screen fonts, printer fonts and linked graphic images files. It also determines if colors have been

PREFLIGHT: The Path to Output Success

correctly and consistently specified (that, for example, there are no RGB colors in the file) and whether special conditions such as bleeds and traps have been set properly.

After information gathering is complete, a preflight report gives the results of the inspection for each element that was checked. Based on this report, the file may have to be corrected before it can move on to actual output.

In this issue we'll share some tips for preflighting your electronic documents so that C&M receives files from you that are problem free and print as you expect. ■

Buzzy's Corner

Q. *Who Is Responsible for Preflighting?*

A. *Both the file creator (you) and the printer (us) are responsible for preflighting. You need to preflight files prior to submission to us to catch "fatal flaws" – things about the file that are impossible for us to correct for you.*

If, for example, there is a font imbedded in a linked graphic file that is not part of the font group you include as part of file submission, we will be unable to output your file as intended. The missing font will likely print as Courier, the default substitution for a missing font.

Even though you submit a file to us that has passed your preflight, C&M must still perform a second preflight to check settings and other indicators such as the resolution of scans to be sure the file will print as intended on our equipment.

If we find problems at this point, it may be possible for us to repair the file, or we may have to return the file to you for repair. Depending on the size and complexity of the file, it may take us as little as 20 minutes or over an hour to preflight your file.

Before you submit a file to us, including documents created in Microsoft Word or in Publisher, be sure to use the checklist in this issue of Buzzwords to make sure everything is "fatal flaw free" and ready to print. ■

Buzzy

THE PREFLIGHT

By preflighting your files inhouse you can prevent printing delays and reduce pre-press costs by correcting your files BEFORE you send them to C&M.

WHAT TO CHECK PRIOR TO FILE SUBMISSION:

- *Software Compatibility* – C&M supports QuarkXpress, Pagemaker, Photoshop, Illustrator, Publisher and Word. If you are submitting a file created in some other program, you will need to submit it as a Portable Document Format (PDF) or PostScript (PS) file.

- *Fonts* – You must include all fonts used in the document as well as all fonts used in embedded graphics files. If you are providing PostScript Type 1 fonts, you will need to include both screen and printer versions.

  Open all bezier (vector) artwork and check that you have included these fonts also.

- *Graphics files* – If your document includes any graphic images such as clip art or a photo scan from another program (Photoshop or Illustrator, for example), include a copy of each graphic file when you submit the document file to us.

- *Document Layout* - Check that the size of the document to be printed is the same as the size of the document in the electronic file.

  In a multi-page document, check for page ordering (reader spreads vs. printer spreads) and page creep.

  Check panel sizes in folded documents.

- *Bleeds* - Check that bleeds are set up properly and extend a minimum of $\frac{1}{16}$".

- *Color* - Check that the colors used in the document and all images (both raster and bezier) in the document are set up correctly.

  Check for inappropriate color spaces (RGB for all documents; CMYK in spot color documents; spot color in process documents).

CHECKLIST

- *Photos* - Check photos for color cast, dust and scratches. Evaluate overall quality of the image and touch-up as necessary.

- *Resolution* - Check resolution of raster images, both before and after scaling in layout program. Be sure raster artwork is sized properly and file resolution is set properly.

  Remember this rule of thumb for resolution: the number of pixels per inch at the output size should be between 1.5 and 2 times the line screen. Thus, a 133-line halftone screen requires a resolution between 200 and 266 ppi. (Many people round this up to 300 ppi.)

- *Trapping* - Confirm that trapping is active in the document, and set-up properly. In general set dark colors to overprint and light colors to knockout.

Using this checklist will help prevent delays in printing your job. If you give us a file in a program we do not support; if you fail to include all fonts and linked graphics files; we cannot proceed. We must return the file to you for correction.

If you have any questions about any of these preflight checks, our graphics professionals at C&M will be glad to discuss them with you. ■

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Tips Corner

FILE SUBMISSION TIPS

When your file has passed preflight and you are ready to submit it, please follow these simple steps:

1. Make a copy of the file for us and keep the original for yourself. Things can sometimes go wrong, and we don't want to have the only copy of the file that exists.

2. Print a hard copy for us from the file you are submitting. Remember, if you can't print from the file, neither can we.

   If your file is more than one color, print hard copy separations of your file. This will help confirm proper color set up and highlight any trapping issues.

3. Label the disk with your company's name, the date, the software application used to create the file and the name of the file. Also, remove any other files from the disk so it is clear what file you are submitting.

4. Provide a copy of your preflight checklist. This lets us know that the file has been cleared for submission and does not contain any fatal flaws.

5. Provide the names of all fonts used and the names of all linked graphics. This will assist our preflight task.

6. Provide the name and contact information for the file creator. If we can talk to the file creator, we may be able to repair small file problems or obtain necessary clarification.

Sometimes no matter how carefully a file is prepared and preflighted, there may be some element that compromises the file's ability to print. To check for this possibility, we print a proof copy of the preflighted file and compare it to the hard copy you provided to us when you submitted the file. ■

Check Booklets For Page Creep

HOW TO GET THAT "PROFESSIONAL LOOK" FOR YOUR BOOKLETS

If you are preparing a file that will be made into a booklet after printing, you may have to account for "page creep" when building the individual booklet pages. Page creep is the characteristic of the middle pages in a folded signature to extend beyond the outside pages before the signature is trimmed. To adjust for creep, pages can be shingled to slightly different page widths.

To determine whether creep affects your booklet, make a dummy of the booklet using the exact paper it will be printed on and the same number of pages as will be in the final booklet. Fold the pages, gather them into the booklet and staple it exactly as it will be finished.

With the booklet closed, use a new razor blade to make a vertical cut through all the booklet pages along the side of the booklet opposite the spine. (The spine is where the staples are.) Open the booklet and measure the distance between the cut on the center sheet and the cut on the cover sheet. This distance is the creep.

If the distance is insignificant, then you do not have to take creep into account. However, if the distance is substantial, you will need to adjust the "live" or print area of each page to accommodate the creep.

ONE LAST STEP – A FINAL PROOF

As a last step before we print your job, we like to provide you with a final proof- a representation of what the finished product will look like. This proof shows you how we executed the instructions you gave us: material in intended positions, designation of color, finishing. The final proof is not for proofreading - that step was accomplished in previous proofs.

The final proof is a *copy check* — a last look to make sure all pages are in order, no graphic elements were omitted, and photos are placed correctly. If you are providing a print-ready file to us, you will have to make your own final proof and copy check it. Here is a checklist for basic copy checking.

1. *Pagination* - Quickly page through the proof, examining it for correct numeric sequence.

2. *Page Position* - Check the position of each page in relation to others. Confirm there is consistency throughout the document.

3. *Copy* - Be sure that all elements are on each page in their entirety. Perform a "four corners" check by scanning from corner to corner around the perimeter of the copy area looking for irregularities.

4. *Photos* - Check each photo to make sure it is the right one; right reading (not flopped or upside down); cropped as you intended; and satisfactorily filling the space intended for it.

5. *Size* - If the proof has been trimmed to size, check its dimensions. If it has visible trim marks, compare them with your specifications.

When you have completed the copy check, initial and date the final proof. At C&M our policy is to require a signed proof as part of what is submitted to the pressroom. This is important. It proves you've seen and checked the proof and released it for print. ■