

## The Desktop Toolbox: Software for Document Creation

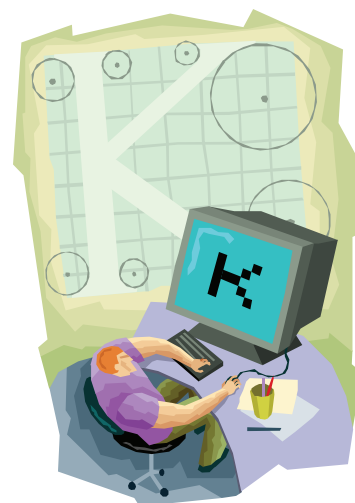
The term *desktop publishing* is generally agreed to have been coined in 1985 by Paul Brainerd, founder of Aldus Corporation, following the development of Aldus PageMaker (later purchased by Adobe). In its original usage, *desktop publishing* meant the ability of one person to use a computer to perform what had previously been many separate functions – design, typesetting, pasteup and preparation of camera ready artwork. Thus desktop publishing combined several disciplines (graphic design, writing, editing, typography and page composition) into one.

*Word processing*, a term invented by IBM in the 1960s, predates desktop publishing by more than a decade. Early word processors were typewriters with some form of electronic editing and correction capability; later machines incorporated CRT screens (as exemplified by the Wang word processor). Eventually, dedicated word processing equipment was replaced by software applications running on personal computers. The most popular word processing program in use today is Microsoft Word.

### Desktop publishing versus word processing

Although some may use the terms interchangeably, there is a difference between word processing and desktop publishing. Broadly speaking, word processing consists of assigning style characteristics to the page (margins, line length, indents, space between paragraphs, page numbers, etc.) and the text itself (fonts, point size, and font characteristics); and editing text (cut-and-paste, search-and-replace, spell check, grammar check, etc.). Desktop publishing includes most of these functions along with *page layout* – arranging text and graphics on the page. (*Page layout* is sometimes called *page composition* or *document design*.)

Word processing was developed to make typing with a typewriter more efficient; desktop publishing was developed to make typesetting and pasteup more efficient. The original users of word processing software were secretaries, and the original users of desktop publishing software were graphic designers.



### The distinction is blurred

Today the distinction between high-end word processors and low-end desktop publishing software is blurred. Lower-cost alternatives to established desktop publishing programs like Quark XPress and Adobe InDesign are now available, while word processing software like Word and WordPerfect are adding page layout features. And two programs – Microsoft Publisher and Adobe PageMaker – are positioned between the two groups.

### Using Microsoft Word effectively for desktop publishing

If the document you want to create is primarily text, Word may be able to serve a desktop publishing role. Use this checklist:

1. Is the document primarily text?
2. Is the finished size of the document a standard page size (letter or legal)?

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3. Will the document be flat when finished or have only a single fold?
4. Is the entire document printing in one ink color? If not, is it being printed on our digital equipment?

If your document meets all these criteria, then you can use Word to create it. Some documents that might meet these criteria include letterheads, FAX sheets, forms, flyers, reports, manuals, product bulletins and newsletters.

However, when the finished size of your document is not the standard letter (8 ½ x 11) or legal (8 ½ x 14) because it needs to be cut or folded more than once, then Word is not the best choice for page layout. Whereas, page layout software can easily divide a page into three areas of different sizes to take into account the compensation for folding when creating a trifold brochure, Word is clumsy at this task. Even though experienced Word users may use workarounds such as creating three columns, this technique does not allow sufficient control over column width or text flow to ensure a layout that will both print and fold correctly.

There are some other, more technical reasons for not using Word:

- *Word is not a standard graphics file format.* Although we will accept a Word file that meets the criteria just mentioned, we may refuse the file if it does not.
- *Word sometimes has trouble handling EPS graphics.* Encapsulated Postscript (EPS) and Tagged Image File Format (TIFF) are standard file formats for graphics. Word sometimes has trouble handling EPS, meaning you may be tempted to substitute another format that may cause problems during raster image processing.
- *Word does not support color separations.* Word lacks the ability to separate type or graphics into more than one color – a requirement for offset printing, since each ink color requires its own press plate. Word cannot specify standard PMS colors (commonly used for spot colors). It cannot properly interpret the embedded color information in TIFF and EPS images so the colors you see on-screen are likely not to match what prints.

## Desktop publishing software

If you want to be a qualified desktop publisher, you will need a software program from each of four desktop publishing groups:

- *Word processor.* Use a word processor to type and edit text and apply some formatting. Do not attempt to fully format a document in the word processor. The most popular word processing programs are Microsoft Word and Corel WordPerfect.

- *Page layout.* Page layout software allows you to easily integrate text and images on the page; easily manipulate page elements, and create artistic layouts. You will have superior control over type, including kerning and tracking, and tools for supporting prepress (color separations, imposition). The leading page layout programs are Adobe InDesign and Quark XPress; Microsoft Publisher and Adobe PageMaker are also choices.

- *Graphics software.* You will need separate programs to handle illustrations and photographs. Illustrations are handled by drawing programs such as Adobe Illustrator, CorelDRAW and Macromedia Freehand and work with vector images.

Photo image editors, sometimes called paint programs, work with bitmap images. Popular programs are Adobe Photoshop and Jasc Paint Shop Pro.

- *Electronic publishing.* Portable Document Format (PDF) is increasingly becoming a standard in print publishing. In fact, we prefer receiving files in PDF format rather than the native application. Adobe Acrobat is the standard for producing print ready PDF files.

## More than hardware and software

Before we leave this topic, we'd like to remind you that hardware and software are necessary but not sufficient to produce professional-looking documents. You must also become proficient at using the tools and learn the principals of graphic design.

A good desktop publisher has a base of knowledge of color, typography, grids, halftones, raster image processing, offset and digital printing processes and bindery. Desktop publishing tools give the user precise control over all the elements of design and production art, leading to the desired printed product.



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