

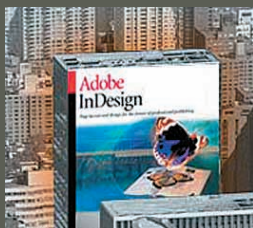
An excellent set of creative tools but it's a Quark-biter, not a killer — yet

Adobe InDesign 1.0

BY DAN BRILL

IN THE ADOBE FAMILY, *PAGEMAKER* AND *ILLUSTRATOR* HAVE BEEN the longtime brother-sister of page layout and design. Now (at last) along comes little brother *InDesign*, who's learned an awful lot of tricks from his big sister and a little bit from his big brother and has popped out smarter and more powerful than either of his siblings, ready to pick a fight with that bully down the block (aka *QuarkXPress*).

We wrote a detailed description of virtually all *InDesign's* features a few months ago (see *Quark-Killer*, GRAPHIC EXCHANGE Feb/Mar), so now let's focus on how it compares with *QuarkXPress*, the characteristics that set it apart from *Quark*, and how well it delivers on what it promised.



ADOBE INDESIGN 1.0

System requirements

Windows

Minimum Requirements

Pentium II processor; Windows NT 4.0 Workstation with Service Pack 4, or Windows 98; 48 MB of RAM installed, 75 MB or more of available hard disk space for installation

Recommended

Pentium II Intel processor, 300Mhz or higher; 64 MB or more of RAM installed

Macintosh

Minimum Requirements

PowerPC 604 processor, Mac OS 8.5; 48 MB of installed RAM with virtual memory on, 96 MB with virtual memory off; 120 MB or more of available hard disk space for installation

Recommended

Power PC G3; 128 MB RAM

Price until 12/31/99 \$299 (US)

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ARCHITECTURE AND SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Adobe says *InDesign's* minimum processor requirement is a PowerPC 604 or Pentium 2, but let's be real. This app requires all the horsepower it can get and anything less than a G3 or Pentium 3 and you'll be grinding along all day.

InDesign's basic RAM requirement is 20MB, but again, that won't get you far; Adobe calls for a minimum of 96MB of installed RAM (48MB with virtual memory on), but recommends 128MB or more (64MB with virtual memory on) for real world speed and functionality.

Adobe has made much of the fact that *InDesign's* core kernel weighs in at a tiny 1.8 MB. But they neglect to mention that the full install occupies just over 100 MB, which includes 32 MB worth of plug-ins (compared to a total of 36 MB for *QuarkXPress* on my system, which includes 23 MB in XTensions).

However, we shouldn't be surprised that a heavy duty application like this carries equally heavy system demands, so let's tread gently around that one.

Adding a third party plug-in is as simple as adding a plug-in to *Photoshop*: just drop it into *InDesign's* plug-ins folder. One feature still to come is a plug-ins manager, but Adobe is promising that soon (hopefully in the next rev).

INTERFACE, UTILITIES AND SUPPORT

Now let's start getting into *InDesign's* look and feel.

Right away, you can't help but notice the *PageMaker*-like look to the interface. But dig a little deeper and you soon realize that *InDesign* demonstrates a lot more of big sister *Illustrator's* functionality. Frames, loaded cursors, and multiple reference points for objects' x and y coordinates are pure PM, but after that what you find is a wholesale transfer of *Illustrator* tools and palettes.

Speaking of palettes, there sure are plenty of them, and they tend to be much larger than *Quark's*. Fortunately they're adjustable; and of course, just as in *Photoshop*, they can be hidden with one click of the Tab key. Still, it might have been a little tidier if a few of them had been built into the drop-down menus.

While we're discussing general functionality, it might be a good time to mention *InDesign's* almost unlimited undos ("hundreds" according to the manual), something *Quark* sorely needs. But again, there's a catch.

As with *Illustrator*, undos are only possible if you haven't saved. And unlike *Photoshop*, *InDesign* has no History palette, so you can't undo an action unless you also undo all the actions that followed it.

It's not too soon to rave about *InDesign's* ability to perform an automatic recovery after a crash. Not only does it save the document, it saves it right up to the last keystroke — and, unlike *Quark's* feeble Auto-Save, it *really* works!

In terms of getting started and referencing the fine points of operation, *InDesign's* 465-page user manual is well-written, detailed, and easy to understand (although, curiously, there is no manual in PDF format included on the disk).

And *InDesign's* online help seems quite comprehensive and well cross-referenced. Adobe also provides an extensive Appendix for *Quark* users in the back of the user manual, with a side by side comparison of functions. It's pretty obvious they know who they want to sell this software to.

Now let's plow ahead into the meat of the program and talk about working with pages in *InDesign*.

PAGE SETUP

InDesign's Master Page controls are quite extensive and intuitive. They also go beyond *Quark's* in that, once you have a master, you may create "children" masters based on your "parent". The nifty aspect to that is that if the parent is revised, the children will also be updated automatically.

Unlike *Quark*, *InDesign* allows you to set up pages with unequal column widths simply by dragging column guides back and forth (while the gutters remain the same).

You can also select and move multiple guides together, and hide guides for individual layers.

Control over resizing your pages on-screen is definitely superior to *XPress*. Not only do you have Fit Page in Window, but also Fit Spread in Window and Entire Pasteboard (but, unlike *Quark*, all items remain editable).

The inclusion of *Photoshop's* Navigator palette is another useful tool for locating your cursor on an open spread.

And *InDesign* lets you open additional windows for the same document, allowing you to see how edits are affecting the document, or how changes to master pages affect pages based on that master.

Zoom works right up to 4000%, or right down to 5%, a big jump from *Quark's* 800% and 10% thresholds.

Here's one other clever idea. Through Paper color in the Swatches palette, *InDesign* lets you change the on-screen color of your pages to simulate non-white paper. That means you can actually see a simulation of how colors and type will look on a colored stock without having to guess.

TEXT AND GRAPHICS HANDLING

When you Place text or graphics, a new frame is automatically created. *InDesign* frames are essentially "vector containers"; frames can contain text or graphics, but, just like paths, they can also be stroked, filled, colored or edited in shape.

Every text frame has an "in port" and an "out port"; text can be threaded from frame to frame in any order. An empty in port indicates the beginning of a thread, while an arrow in an in port or out port indicates the continuation of a text thread to or from another frame. A text thread can be broken, rearranged or redirected just by double clicking on the desired in port or out port; if a frame is deleted from the middle of a text thread, InD will automatically flow text to the next frame in the chain.

If your text has been Placed into a frame from an external document, *InDesign* can also update that text through the Links palette if changes are to be made to the original. The bad news is that if you choose to update, any new formatting done in *InDesign* is lost.

Formatting, kerning, leading and all the text handling abilities which *Quark* has made standard are present in *InDesign*. However I suspect that the optical margin alignment and optical kerning features for, respectively, hanging punctuation and kerning visually is something *Quark* users with an appreciation for typography would welcome in *XPress*.

InDesign's style sheets are simpler to set up than in *Quark*. But we still couldn't find any way to create a Character style sheet from a Paragraph style sheet (or vice versa)

Also, the Character palette separates font families and their individual fonts into two dropdown menus, which turns

font selection into a more awkward two-step process.

InDesign's text wrap works much like *Quark's*. However we discovered that even if type is sitting on top of an item, it still wraps. So how do you make *InDesign* ignore text wrap when you want to place text over an object? You go into Text Frame Options and click Ignore Text Wrap. It works, but it's not especially intuitive. Wouldn't you expect that to be in the Text Wrap palette?

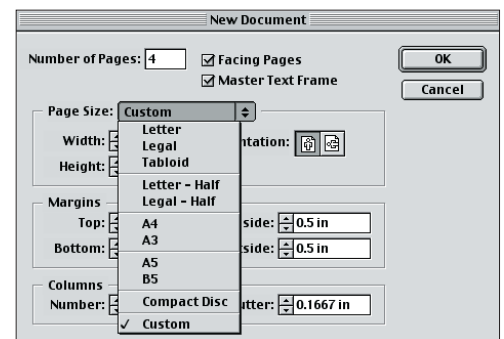
InDesign's precise measurements make creating exact layouts much easier. Accuracy to .0001 of a unit for custom cursors, type size, leading, baseline shift, and kerning should satisfy even the ultimate perfectionist.

A layers palette in *InDesign*, yet another feature lacking in *QuarkXPress* (except through third party XTensions) lets you add, delete, hide, group, reorder, or merge layers quickly and simply. Options for each layer include name, color, show layer, show guides, lock objects, lock guides.

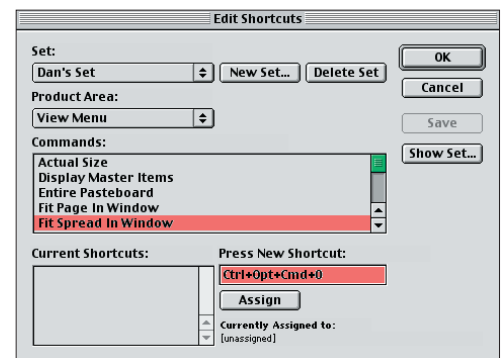
The Paste Remembers Layers command lets you copy and paste objects from different layers to another document and retain the layering order; otherwise they fall onto the same target layer.

Illustrator users will be pleased to find most but not all of *Illustrator's* drawing functions built into *InDesign*, including Create Outlines for text. One notable exception: *InDesign* doesn't have the ability to put text on a path.

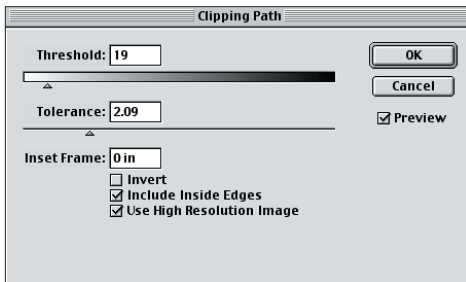
Unlike *Quark*, *InDesign's* bezier pen is a usable tool. Our major complaint is an apparent inability to use the direct selection tool to select and move more than one point at a time.



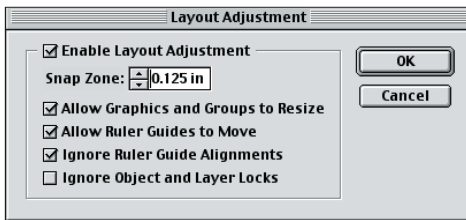
Creating a New Document. Creating a new document in *InDesign* has a similar look to opening a *Quark* file. The main differences are that *InDesign* gives you the option of creating a Master Text Frame, more or less the equivalent of *Quark's* Automatic Text Box. A bonus when setting up your *InDesign* document is being able to specify the number of pages (up to a maximum of 9,999). The setup dialog box also has more page size options than *Quark* (including CD page size).



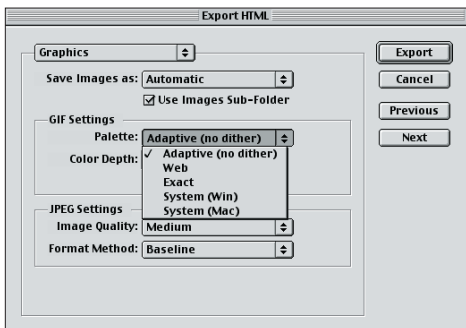
Keyboard Shortcuts. *InDesign* lets you set up and edit keyboard shortcuts for virtually any command. If you decide to change a shortcut to a keystroke combination that's already in use, the program notifies you that you're trying to create a duplicate shortcut. Not only that, but you can store multiple sets of shortcuts, a very handy feature if more than one person uses a workstation. Of course, one of the default sets is *QuarkXPress* shortcuts.



Automatic Clipping Path. InDesign's automatic clipping path dialog box with live preview has excellent controls, letting you adjust the threshold and tolerance with slider bars, and offering options to include inside edges, or invert the clipping path. However it's only useful if you have lots of contrast between the background and the image.



Layout Adjustment. What if you need to rework a certain layout for a different page format? Enabling Layout>Layout Adjustment makes InDesign attempt to rearrange objects to fit a new page size or orientation, beginning with repositioning the margin and column guides. Options include resizing graphics and groups to fit the new page size, repositioning the ruler guides, and whether locked objects are to be repositioned. Not only that, but text columns can be set to remain at a fixed width, or resized proportionally (under Object>Text Frame Options). But in order for InDesign to make the most intelligent decisions about reconfiguring your pages, it needs objects to conform to guides, columns and margins, and it likes objects to be snapped to guides with no extraneous guides on the page.



Export to HTML. Results from this export filter ranged from almost acceptable to poor, but that was to be expected, due more to the limitations of HTML itself than anything else. On occasion it failed to convert fonts properly and made the wrong file format choices, turning Photoshop images into GIFs instead of JPEGs. However InDesign does provide the ability to check pages in a browser with a simple click. Navigational links can be added between the next and previous pages of a file from within InD, but not hypertext links.

MANIPULATING OBJECTS

InDesign's tool set includes scaling, rotating, flipping or shearing objects, either by click and drag or by using exact measurements. The dazzling aspect about shearing text is that it remains editable.

Skewing or shearing multiple objects is easier than in *Quark*. Just select what you want, take a skewing tool (another item borrowed from *Illustrator*), and voilà — it's done! There's no need to group them. Just select and transform.

It has good image fitting tools under Object>Fitting: Fit Frame to Content (reduces or enlarges frame to fit image), Fit Content Proportionally (like *Quark*'s fit image to picture box command), Fit Content to Frame (which skews the image to fit the frame), and Center Content (centres image in frame).

InDesign's color palettes are almost identical to *Illustrator*. However, unlike *Illustrator*, you can apply gradients to strokes or directly to type. On the other hand, *Illustrator* supports patterns, which InDesign doesn't.

InDesign's Swatches palette only lets you display process, spot and tint swatches. We're also not fussy about the fact that tints and gradients are treated as individual colors. Adding a new color based on a fill or stroke color just means choosing New Swatch, double clicking and naming it. You can delete colors by dragging swatches to the Swatches Trash.

IMPORTING TEXT & GRAPHICS

InDesign supports text drag-and-drop from other applications that support that function. When Placing text, a loaded text icon shows that you have text ready to be placed in a frame. Text can then be loaded one frame at a time or autoflowed through the required number of frames and pages.

If you're pulling text off the Web that's, for example, full of paragraph returns, Text Import Options lets you remove extra carriage returns on lines or between paragraphs, while saving tables, lists and indents. This is a real

time-saver compared to taking text into BBEdit or some other word program and hand editing.

InDesign works hand-in-hand with *Illustrator*, letting you drag and drop from an *Illustrator* file or right from the Mac desktop.

Unfortunately, *Photoshop* images cannot be dragged, they must be Placed. They're also flattened (losing layer information), and transparency in alpha channels is not preserved.

This means that *Photoshop* files with a clipping path must be saved as EPS or TIFF. Clipping paths are automatically imported, unless you turn off Create Frame from Clipping Path.

InDesign doesn't support OLE or *Quark* XTensions, so graphics created with XTensions will not appear.

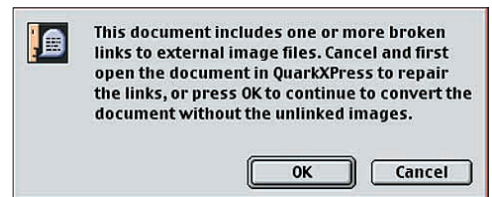
PageMaker 6.5 HLS colors and *Quark* HSB & LAB colors are always converted to RGB.

OPENING QUARK AND PAGEMAKER FILES

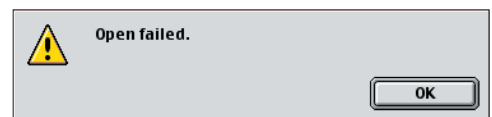
One of InDesign's big selling features is a filter for opening *Quark* 3.3-4.04 and *PageMaker* 6.5 files.

According to the manual, *PageMaker* layers are honoured when brought into InDesign, and PM guides are placed on a separate Guides layer.

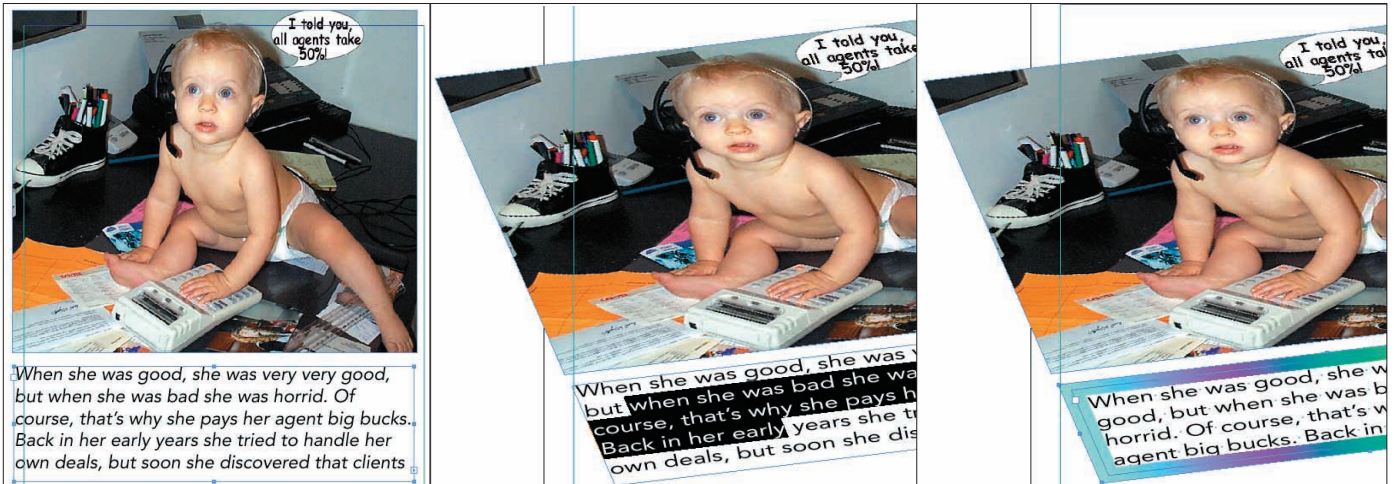
But the big question is how well InDesign handles *Quark* pages. In our testing we confirmed that InDesign respected *XPress* master pages, including objects on those pages, as well as style



In order to recognize images or graphics on a *Quark* page, those files must reside in the same folder as the *Quark* file.



Then there were the *Quark* documents which simply wouldn't open at all. InDesign simply reported "Open Failed".



An image is Placed in InDesign and a text frame added below...

...then picture and type are sheared together, although the text remains editable...

...and a multi-colored gradient is applied to the text frame.

sheets and grouped objects.

We were not surprised to find that *InDesign* reflows text, but we *were* disappointed to see that *InDesign* did not know what to do with *Quark* run-arounds or simple indents, and that gradients turned to black.

InDesign will Place PDFs (but not open them with editability, as was originally suggested). Exporting *InDesign* to PDF is handled nicely by a Distiller-like interface.

PRINTING

Probably the single largest obstacle *InDesign* has in gaining acceptance in service bureaus is its lack of automatic application-based trapping (which *Quark* has). Manual trapping by overprinting fills or strokes using the Attributes dialog is possible, though laborious; otherwise Adobe hopes the trade will use InRip Trapping, setting trap zones through *InDesign's* IRT dialog box.

In our minds, there is no doubt that the lack of one-step trapping will greatly impede *InDesign's* penetration into the *QuarkXPRESS* market. Add to that the fact that imposition solutions for *InDesign* jobs are, at best, equivalent to *Quark's*, and at worst, uncharted (especially in the context of a PDF workflow).

A similar impediment may be *InDe-*

sign's inability to be output on non-PostScript printers. Whether Adobe likes it or not, there are many designers who employ non-PostScript printers for outputting comps and preliminary proofs. In our opinion, this part of the market will resist using a software product that they can't print directly without adding extra steps such as converting to PDF.

CONCLUSION

InDesign may be the most ambitious 1.0 software release in history. There is no question that Adobe has not only broken new ground in terms of *InDesign's* creative tools but it has produced a heavyweight application with almost unlimited extensibility which, over time, could be the most all-encompassing, feature-rich application for printing and publishing in the history of the desktop.

Yes, *InDesign* has the potential to be a *Quark*-killer — but in its initial release that potential still remains unfulfilled.

In any workflow, there is a beginning, a middle and an end. The *InDesign* workflow is unquestionably superior to *QuarkXPRESS* in the middle — the creative zone.

But its beginning — importing text and graphics, and particularly converting the vast body of legacy *Quark* documents — is only adequate. And its

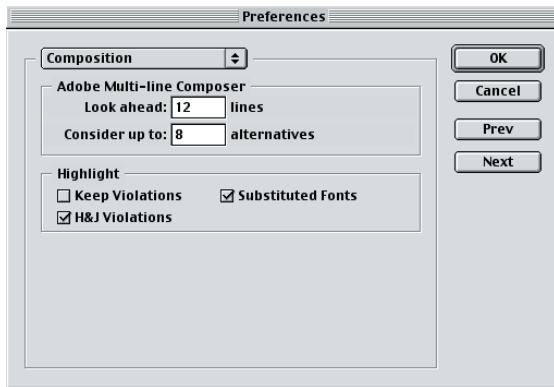
end — color separations, trapping, imposition, OPI options, and printing, with a dependence on in-RIP functions — is largely unresolved and/or unimplemented (particularly until PostScript 3 RIPs are ubiquitous).

QuarkXPRESS, on the other hand is an established, entrenched tool which represents a virtually one-stop workflow in itself; it has demonstrated itself to be a print production workhorse over many years of testing, and it is a known quantity, with no serious missing links.

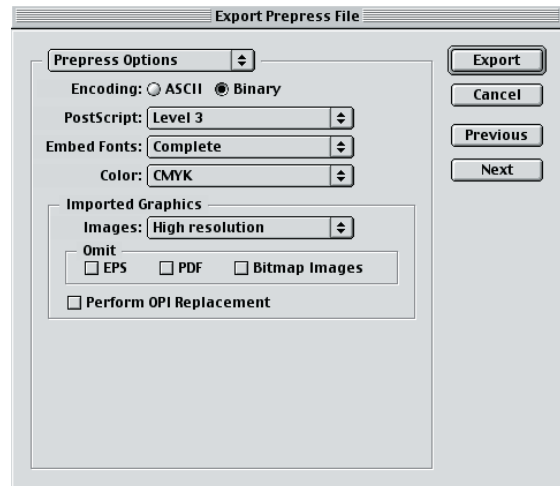
So our perception of things as they stand is that Adobe *InDesign* is definitely a *Quark*-biter, but not the killer app everyone dreamed of. On the other hand, it's probably only a couple steps away from living up to its hype.

InDesign's success will depend on how quickly third party developers climb aboard with the missing ingredients, how quickly and completely *Quark* matches *InDesign's* perceived strengths, how well Adobe responds to real world input from end users, and how successful Adobe and its partners are in implementing and supporting a complete PDF workflow. *

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Multi-line Composer. Adobe is also enthusiastic about InDesign's multi-line composer, which optimizes line breaks up to any number of lines set by the user. And to a point, they're right to be excited. InDesign's line composer does a wonderful job of finding just the right hyphenation and line breaks. But here's where features fight with functionality. Depending on which machine you're on and how much RAM you can spare (even on a G3), this feature can slow your redraws down to the point that you'll be resetting the line editor to single line just to regain operating speed.



Export to Prepress. We didn't get a chance to test the Export for Prepress option, but presumably it produces PostScript like any other application. Postscript files can be either composite or separated. One added feature is InDesign's ability to automatically convert RGB images to CMYK, either color managed or not.

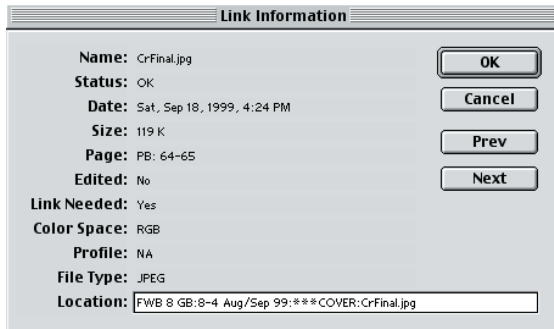


Image Links. Images in InDesign are catalogued by the Links palette, similar to Quark's Usage dialog. Just like Quark, original images must accompany the layout file — unless they're Embedded, as one can do in Page-Maker. But then you lose the link, and consequently any subsequent changes to the image file won't be updated.

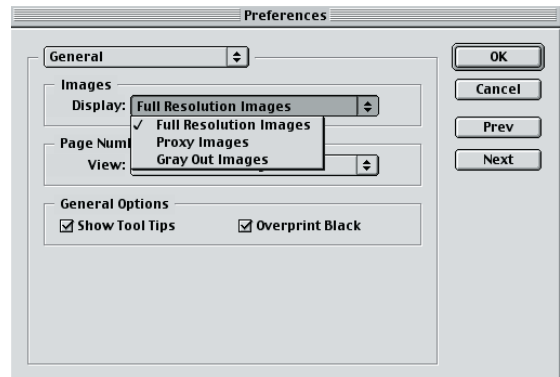
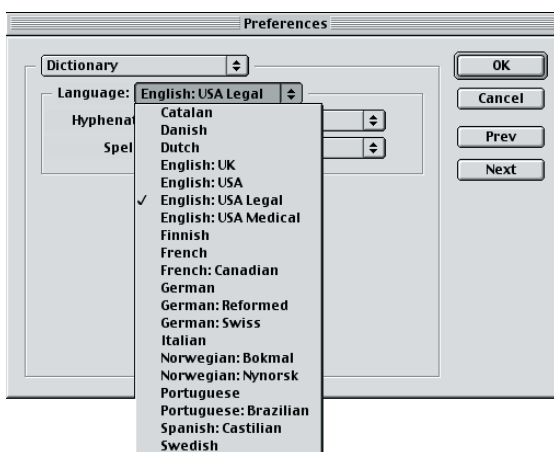
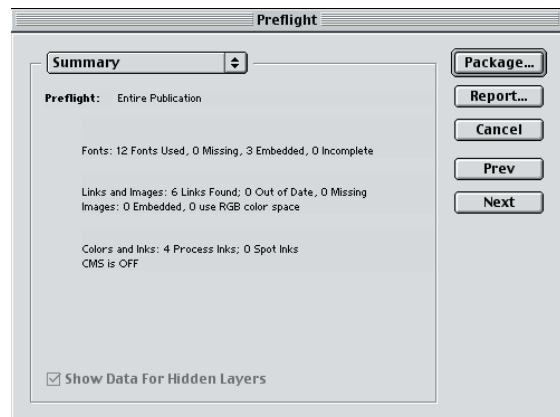


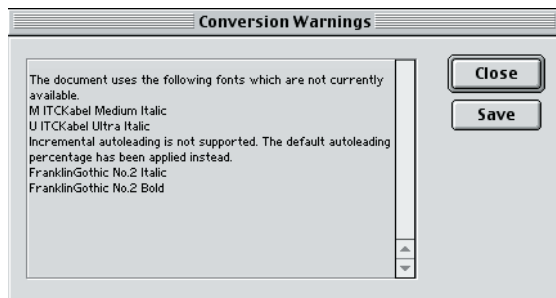
Image Resolution. It's absolutely marvelous to be able to choose at which resolution you want to view your graphics. InDesign offers high resolution views or screen resolution.



Dictionaries. Dictionaries are very powerful and very broad; InDesign comes standard with twenty different languages and dialects (including French-Canadian). And its spellcheck function is great. The Find/Change command includes using "wildcard" characters, e.g. searching for "b^?d" will locate "bad", "bed", "bid" or "bud".



Preflight. InDesign's Preflight and Package tools provide basic preflighting and collection of both images and fonts (with the appropriate warning about copyrights). However the limited scope of the preflight function (both Markzware FlightCheck and Extensis Preflight Pro offer far more sophisticated preflight tools) means that users will still be looking to rely on a third party utility for this functionality.



Font issues when opening Quark files. InDesign may not recognize certain fonts — even if they're open.



Memory demands. InDesign needs RAM. I got this particular error message even though "About This Computer" said my system still had 200MB RAM free (out of 288 MB plus 289 VM).