



...It's how you say it

If your business involves publishing anything, you'll know that style is everything. Gordon Laing looks at ways DTP packages can make it easier and more efficient to project the image you want.

It's time for some long overdue DTP tips. I'm going to look at style and consistency in documents this month, using the facilities DTP has to offer.

Look at any regular publication, whether it's a newspaper, magazine, catalogue or even fax cover sheet, and, if it does what it's supposed to do, the person/product/company's image will be as clear as day. Their design and style is like a calling card, identifying them immediately and marking them out from the crowd.

It's not just a front page logo or a corporate typeface, but the smaller details which are consistently reproduced on every publication. Things like the style and positions of page numbers (also known as folios), headlines or sub-headings, smaller logos, even the traditional usage of illustrations and photography, are often strictly defined in the publication's official design. Not only do these guidelines make the product consistent and easily identifiable, but with the right set-up can significantly ease the lay-

out process. So how can doing it on your computer help?

The first thing to do before launching into any project of this kind is to work out how and where you're going to output it. Once you know that, you can work out what resolution to work in, whether full or specific colours are relevant, and most importantly, what physical size the document will be. Remember to make sure your document will fit any other physical requirements: a card will have to fit in an envelope, a record sleeve accommodate a 7in or 12in disc, an inlay snuggle into a cassette or CD case. Paranoia can creep in when you wonder whether your post-distributed publication will actually fit through the desired letterboxes.

Putting on the style

Once you've worked out the size, resolution, type of printing and media to use, you're ready to set a style. The simplest use of style is the letterhead, a logo which

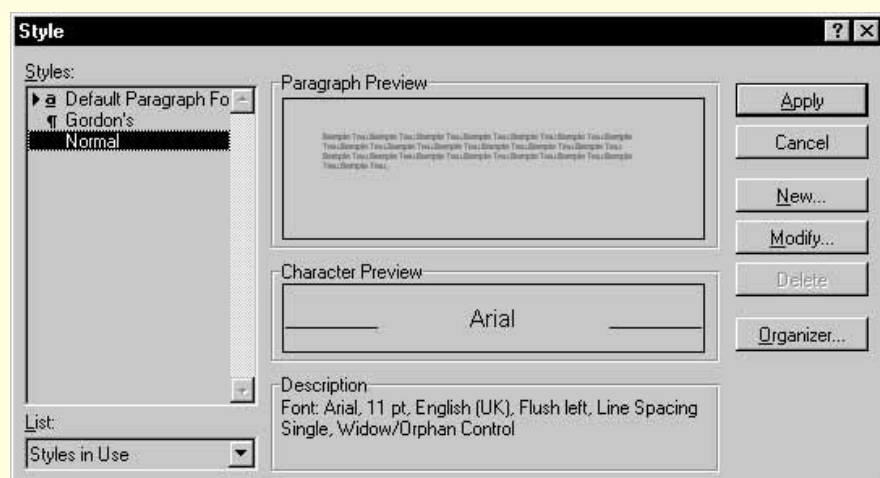
identifies you when consistently reproduced on your letters, fax cover sheets, business cards and compliment slips. Most sit the logo at the top and pop the contact details at the bottom.

Once designed, you could save it as a document and insert your desired text or graphics each time you use it, and therefore print to order. The advantage here is that you can see on-screen what the entire page looks like, and ensure nothing obscures anything else. The disadvantage is that the same printer will be used for everything, which may not suit your desire for, say, a vibrant red logo.

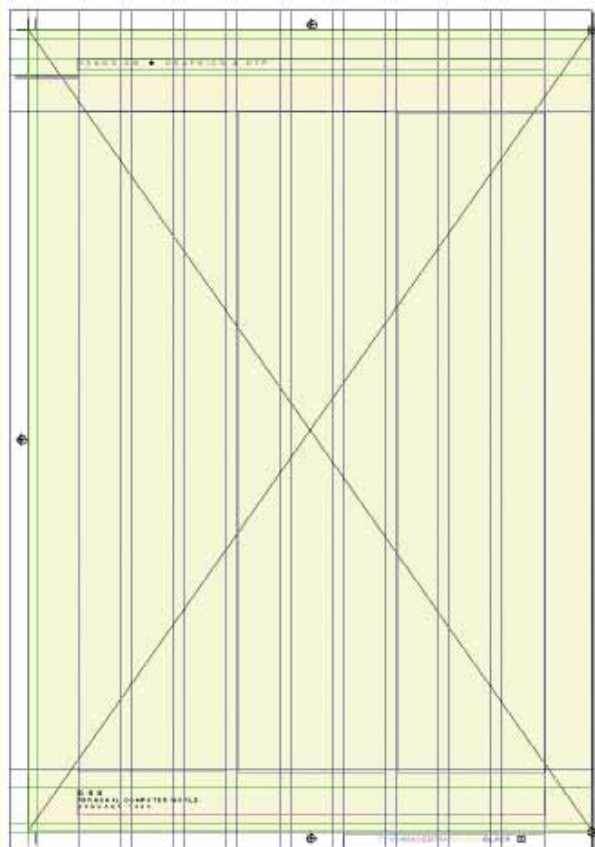
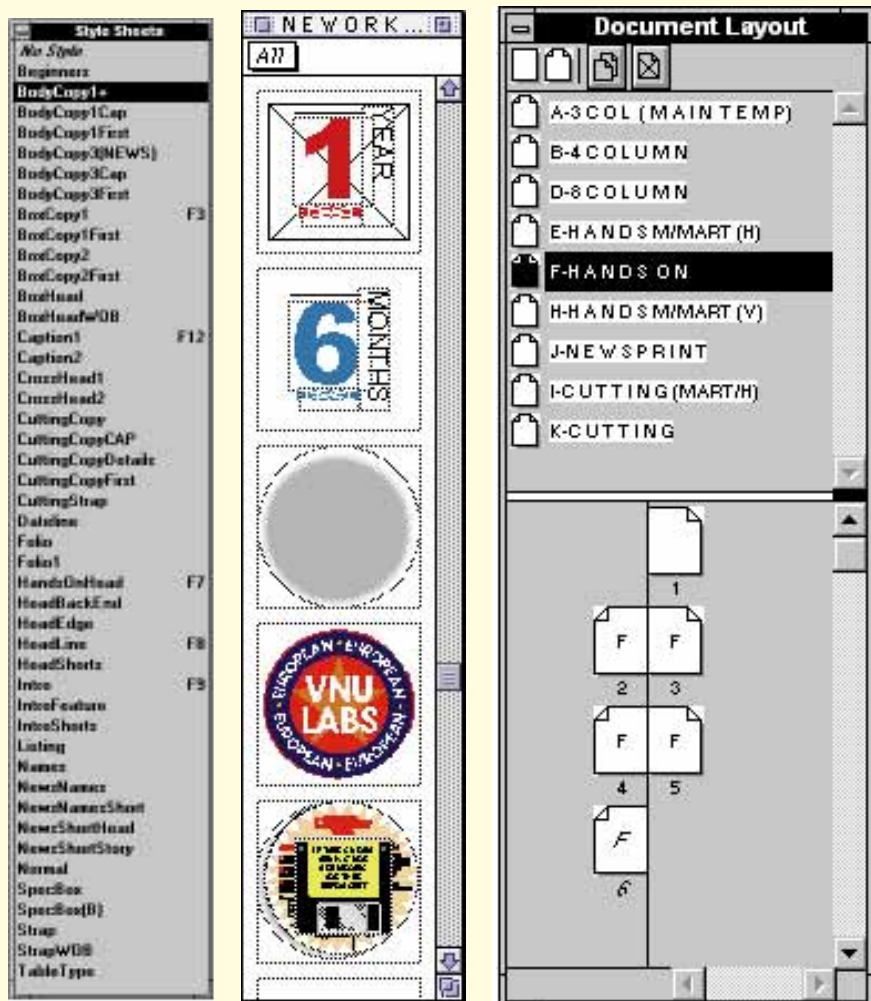
The common touch

The more common implementation is to have your basic stationery with the standard elements, logo and contacts printed in large quantities. This can be re-fed into your printer each time you want to add a message. The advantage of this route is that you can use two different printers — for instance a good colour one for the letterhead, then a mono laser for the text. There's also the opportunity to have a professional printer knock out a large quantity of good-looking coloured stationery ready for your high-quality lasered text, relieving you of the need for a colour printer.

The big disadvantage is that it's extremely easy to print over your precious logo, thus ruining the whole effect. To prevent this, you need to set up your applications to print *only* on the free area. Defining margins in a word processor is one step



A fascinating insight into the way I work at PCW: it's my very own redefined Normal style sheet in Word for Windows

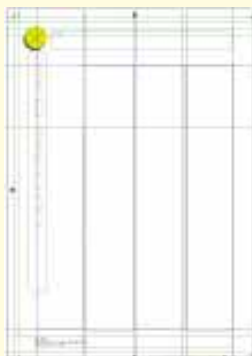


Above left *PCW's* very own style sheet, viewed in *Quark XPress*

Above middle *PCW's* very own *Quark XPress* library, full of handy logos and the like

Above *Quark XPress's* Document Layout Palette complete with, er, *PCW's* very own master pages

Left our master page for the *Hands On* section, and (below) our master page for the *Cutting Edge* section



Font of the Month

Perpetua

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz&

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

away from designing master pages in desktop publishing, which I'll do next. A final piece of advice on making stationery: make sure you can feed it through your printer. Check out any surface finish and weight, in case you end up invalidating your guarantee with the printer.

A master page is simply a template which contains regularly used elements. The letterhead on the top of company stationery is the most basic form of master page. Master pages really come into their own in a situation where each page always contains several consistent elements, such as chapter and author details in a book. Page numbers are also classic master page elements, always printed in the same place and type style. Some applications can number the pages automatically, although in magazine production, where pages tend to get swapped around at the eleventh hour, page numbering is normally entered by hand.

Regular features

Unless you are designing a very rigid page, it is not really practical to place spaces for photographs or illustrations on a master page, since they would always appear in the same place. Normally the master page would include "guides", which mark out the designer's grid, indicating where such elements should be sized and located in order to stay in style. *PCW's* Hands On master pages, for example, always include certain elements each month, such as the Hands On "strap" (the sub-heading in the top corners) and the pale yellow background.

When creating or adding new pages, you should be able to choose a master template as your starting point to speed up the process and add consistency. Many higher-end DTP applications allow you to define several master pages to choose from for each project. Publications which are physically bound together would normally have at least two, catering for left and right pages.

A quick word of warning: most templates look exactly like a normal page with some elements already placed. Make sure you work on pages created by the masters, rather than making the mistake of adding elements to the master itself. Remember, anything you place on the master pages will be reproduced on every new page that master creates.

Referring to the text

The next thing you need to decide is the text style or font you want to use. If you always set your letters in 12-point Times, it may not seem justifiable to define style sheets. *PCW's* main body copy throughout the magazine is Arial, set in 8.25 point on 11-point leading. In Hands On it's justified, whereas in the rest of the magazine it is ranged left.

We lay out *PCW* in Quark XPress, which allows you to fill text boxes directly from Word, which could include any kind of formatting — and that's just the main body copy. Captions, headlines, standfirsts and the rest all have different formatting styles, which to key in by hand would be both tedious and potentially inaccurate.

Our Art Editor defined our house styles in Quark XPress, saved them and made them available to all from XPress's Style Sheets palette. Simply select the block of text you wish to put in style and click on the desired style sheet. In a single step, any number of different formatting options are set without chance of error.

Style sheets exist in many applications. Almost every word processor allows styles to be set, along with templates. Microsoft Word's normal.dot template contains information about the paper size and margins, along with the default style used to format text. At work I have redefined my normal style in Word to 11-point Arial on A4 paper, which optimises the display and ensures our workgroup printer doesn't start demanding letter-sized food.

So now you've got your style sheets,

templates and master pages doing most of your work for you, what else can be done to free up valuable artistic time? The answer for now is to use libraries of frequently used elements. These can be certain logos or pictures which, although used often, do not turn up regularly enough to justify putting them on the master pages.

Look in the library

Enter the libraries, which in most guises consist of some kind of pasteboard area into which popular elements can be dragged after creation, then dragged back out again to order. In Quark XPress the library is opened from the file menu but appears on-screen as a palette. Simply drag any subsequently required elements in, and drag out as many copies as you'd like.

A library is a great place to store all those logos — ours contains, among other things, all the *PCW* award logos — but it can be used almost as a graphical style sheet. We have a house style for screenshots — a certain size, with a specific runaround and background. Rather than type this in every time, a Quark XPress picture box with typical attributes has been dragged into our library, and even if resizing is required, is a handy starting point.

Computers are great at tedious, repetitive processes like those mentioned above. So next time you're working with DTP, drawing, or even just word processing applications, leave the monotonous tasks to your PC and get on with the far more interesting and human job of design. By setting up libraries, styles and templates you'll save time and improve your overall look with consistency.

Font of the Month

Font of the Month for March is an old favourite of mine, Perpetua. Designed by Eric Gill between 1928 and 1935, this is a classic typeface. Not as stuffy or overused as Times and Garamond, Perpetua is nevertheless ideal for body text.

Eric Gill also designed Gill Sans, another classic and veteran Font of the Month. Contact the suppliers below if you're interested in buying a copy.



PCW Contacts

Anyone got any other great time-saving tricks or shortcuts? Write to me at the *PCW* address on Broadwick Street or email me as
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