

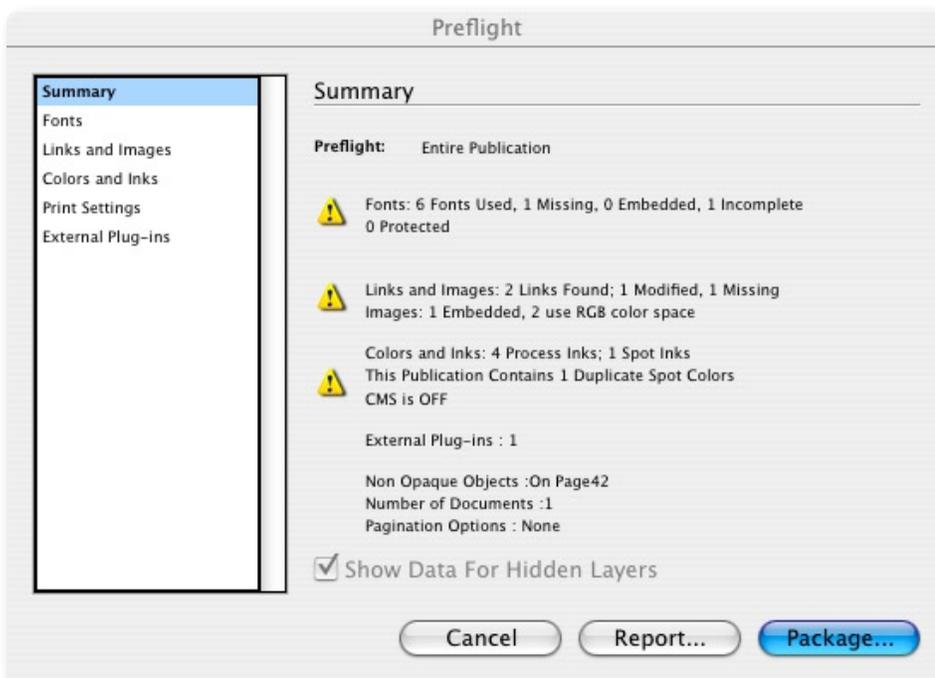
# Be a Production Hero without Breaking a Sweat

Use InDesign's Preflight command to save money, save time, and save you from the hassle of botched print jobs.

By **KATHY SANDLER**

It used to be that designers relied on production folks to prepare files for the print shop. Now that everyone can create print-ready files in InDesign, bean counter bosses want to consign all production experts to the trash heap. However, successful file production still requires special skills, including a deep knowledge of color, prepress, and printing. But even if you're lacking that wisdom, you can still save money, time, and trouble

by taking advantage of the preflighting tools built into InDesign CS and CS2. I'll show you how to use them to spot common and not-so-common trouble spots.



**FIGURE 1:** Don't bypass this Summary screen—read it!

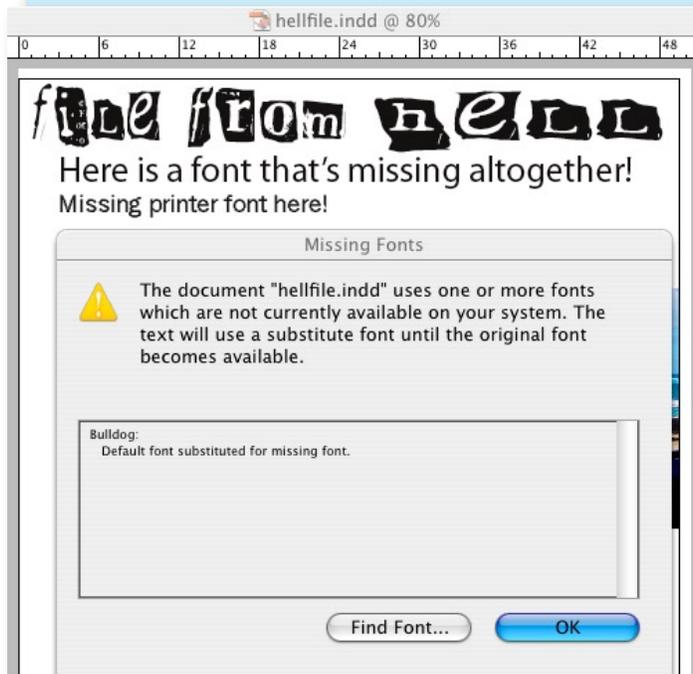
### Start with a Summary

*Preflighting*, according to Chuck Weger who coined the term almost two decades ago, is the pre-output analysis process. You preflight files to make sure that WYWIWRG (what you want is what readers get).

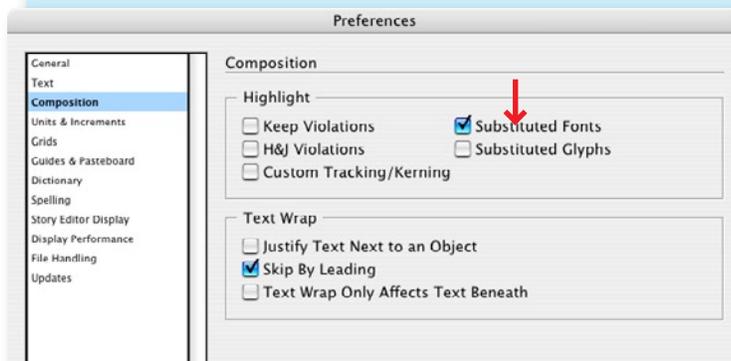
The easiest way to preflight in InDesign without investing in another application is to choose **File>Preflight**. The Preflight feature checks your file and reports problems with fonts, links and images, colors and inks, print settings, and external plug-ins. It also alerts you when there's transparency in the file. The errors (or warnings) show up as a big yellow caution symbol

(**Figure 1**). Here's a rundown of each of the panels in the Preflight dialog box.

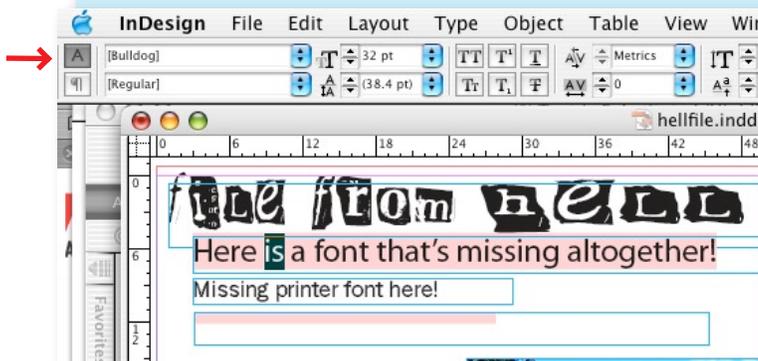
- **Check Hidden Layers.** If you see Show Data for Hidden Layers in the Preflight Summary pane, the visibility of one or more layers is off. Since those layers might be turned on later, check this box so InDesign preflights them, too.
- **Fonts.** Preflight's Summary shows you the number of fonts used and whether they are missing, embedded, incomplete, or protected, any of which can cause



**FIGURE 2:** You'd never say "OK" without at least pausing first, right?



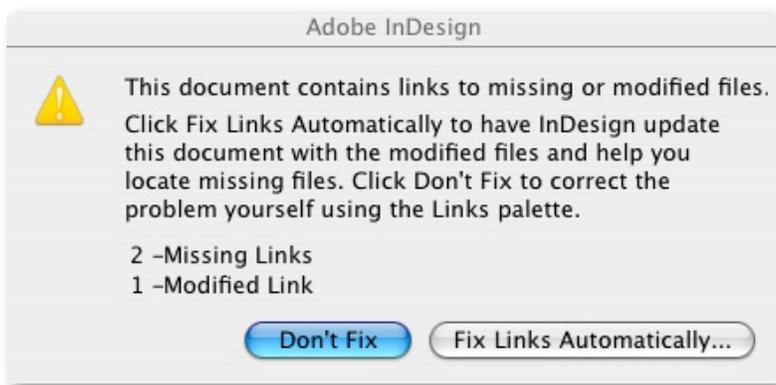
**FIGURE 3:** Don't ignore the pink. Don't uncheck this preference. And don't change to Preview Mode just to continue working when you're missing fonts or you'll be sorry!



**FIGURE 4:** Brackets around the font in the palette: a telltale sign you're missing a font.

## Missing Fonts

Even before you choose Preflight, InDesign offers some clues about how your fonts will (or won't) be handled. When you open a document that includes a font not currently loaded on your system, the program alerts you (**Figure 2**). If you use the Find Font feature, remember that this can change fonts on your document and master pages, but it will *not* change the definitions of paragraph and character styles. If you go ahead and open the document without changing the fonts, you'll see the dreaded pink, as long as Substituted Fonts is enabled in the Preferences dialog box (**Figure 3**). If you place the cursor in the text, you'll see the font name surrounded by square brackets (**Figure 4**).



**FIGURE 5:** Instead of pressing Fix Links Automatically, I suggest you click Don't Fix. That way you can fix each link one at a time in the Links palette. This lets you watch the new or revised image come in and make sure you're not harming the design or copyfit.

font substitution on output (which means bitmapped text or worse—the dreaded Courier).

There's a lot of information within the Fonts section of the Summary screen. **Number** displays at a glance if you've got the right number of fonts. If you see you're **Missing** a font, open it or change to another font that's open.

And when a font shows up as

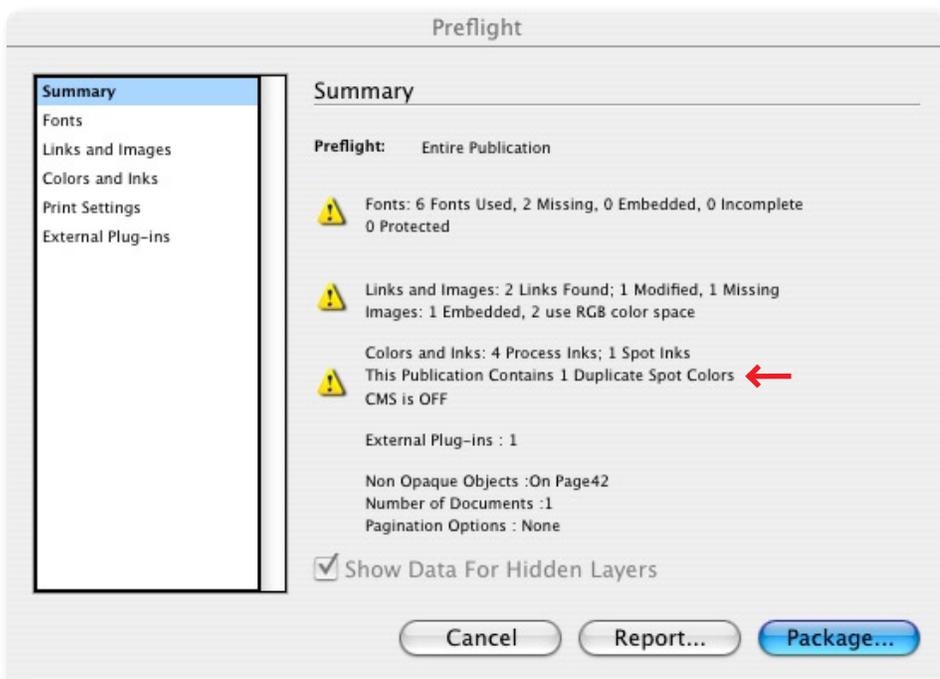
**Incomplete**, you're missing screen or printer fonts. You'll have to find the original disks or change to a different font. I recommend checking all your fonts with a utility such as FontDoctor (\$69.99, [www.morrisonsoftdesign.com](http://www.morrisonsoftdesign.com)) or FontAgent Pro (see review on [page 55](#)) before you load them so you don't run into this problem. Before you bellyache about shelling out for yet another product, note that a full version of FontDoctor comes with Extensis Suitcase, so you might already have this utility.

Also in the Fonts section, **Protected** indicates that you can't embed a font in a PDF because a font foundry has protected the font. If you have a PDF workflow, the only remedy is to substitute another font that isn't protected.

- **Links and Images.** The Summary screen shows the total number of linked images, whether any have been modified (which could result in the wrong version of the image), missing (which can cause a pixilated image to appear), embedded (which could bloat your InDesign file and make it harder to update the image later), or RGB (which could cause color shifts). Note that InDesign marks RGB images with a “warning” icon, but using RGB images is completely reasonable if you're in a color-managed workflow (for more information on color management, see “Get Better Color” on [page 6](#)).
- **Colors and Inks.** You can see the number of process and spot colors and whether color management is on or off. For most magazine editorial work, you don't want spot colors. For promotion and ad work, compare the number of colors to the number you expect to pay the printer for. If you use a color-managed workflow, you should see the message “CMS is on.”

The Summary screen also alerts you to duplicate spot colors (**Figure 6**). You can alias one to the other using Ink Manager in the fly-out menu of the Swatches palette or Output pane of the Print dialog box. However, it is better to change objects to one of the two colors (and delete the other) or your Swatches palette still shows both.

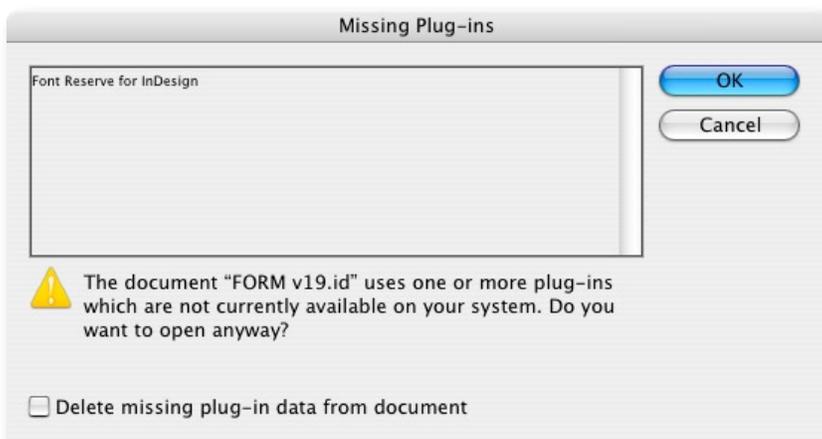
Don't be fooled by differing results in the Preflight Summary, the Separations Preview palette, and the Output pane of the Print dialog box. Only the Preflight Summary shows the correct color information. The other two show all four process colors and all spot colors defined in your file, even when



**FIGURE 6:** The Summary screen reports if you have duplicate spot colors in the file. These are colors that are defined the same, but named differently, which will cost you extra money in wasted plates.

easily scroll through and look for the telltale circles that denote a spot color.

- **External Plug-ins.** If you're missing a third-party plug-in that someone used to create a file, InDesign may tell you when you open the file (**Figure 7**), but it may not. For example, I got a message when opening a file that someone had created with the Extensis Font Reserve plug-in for InDesign. But I didn't get a message when I opened a file with Triple Triangle's Mechanical Cubed plug-in



**FIGURE 7:** It may not really be a problem, but it's good to know.

just in case you need an untouched original of the document).

- **Troubleshooting Transparency.** Non-Opaque Objects is a helpful item in Preflight's Summary screen that's easily missed. It tells you if you've used transparency, which is important because text and strokes can become rasterized if transparency is not used properly when output to older RIPs.

they're not used. Say you're working in a file in which someone has defined every color under the sun, and you want to see whether they're spot colors. Pick Select All Unused in the fly-out menu of the Swatches palette, then click on the trash can to delete them. (Do save a version first so you can bring those colors into other files later if necessary.) The Swatches palette will display a shorter list so you can

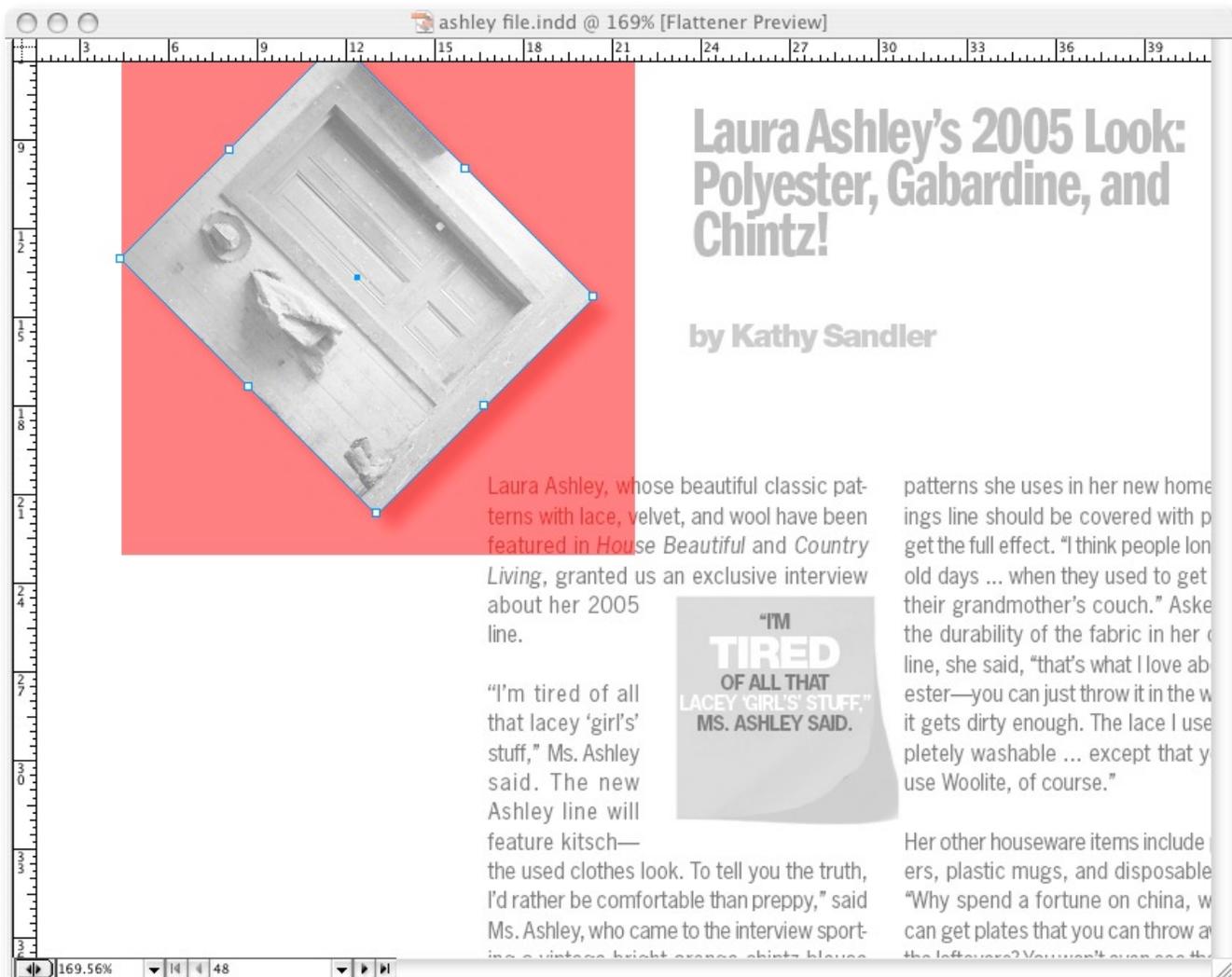
missing. Strangely, other plug-ins don't show up with an error message or in preflight, such as Sansui Software's Fraction 'N' Prices. If you get an error message about a missing plug-in, find out what the plug-in does and whether you need it. If the plug-in is unnecessary (for example, you don't need Font Reserve to work on a file someone else created using that plug-in), you can usually safely check Delete Missing Plug-in Data from Document (but make a copy



**FIGURE 8:** If you pick Highlight: Raster-Fill Text and Strokes in the Transparency palette and then see red text in your document, the red text will bitmap at print time. In the example above, there's a drop shadow on the image, but it's not even touching this text.

Transparency can be a drop shadow, feather, transparency mode, or transparency opacity in InDesign; it can also be in a link if you used any of those effects in Photoshop or Illustrator, including an alpha channel or transparent background in Photoshop. If you see anything other than None after Non-Opaque Objects, go to the Pages palette and look for the checkerboard pattern. That shows you which spreads have transparency. Select **Window>Output Preview>Flattener** and check each of those pages for transparency problems.

To determine whether transparency will be a problem at print time, open the Flattener Preview palette and pick Raster-fill Text and Strokes after Highlight from the Highlight popup menu. This displays in red the areas of concern (**Figure 8**). Red text will bitmap. If it's part of a text block, then the red text could look heavier and bitmapped compared to the rest of the text. Sometimes it's only part of a letter, which would look awful in print. To find

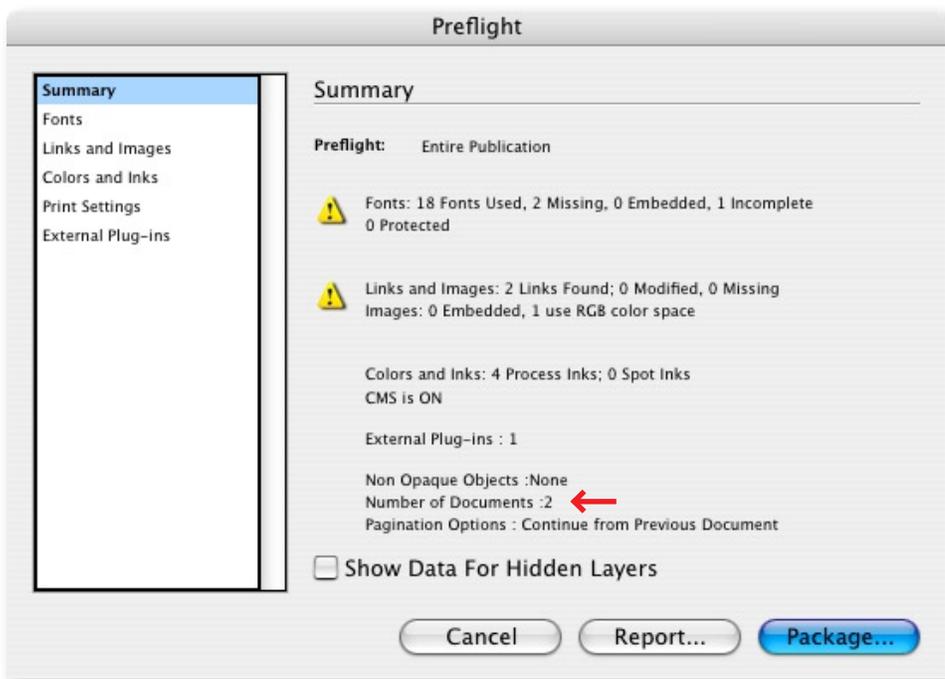


**FIGURE 9:** When you change to Highlight: Transparent Objects, you can see why the text was bitmapping in Figure 8—the image with the drop shadow was rotated, and InDesign sees this red area as the bounding box for the transparency. The fix is to bring the text to front or put it on a layer above the layer with the image.

where transparency is used on the page, pick Highlight: Transparent Objects in the Flattener palette (**Figure 9**).

Luckily, there's an easy fix for this—just make sure your text is on top of the transparent object. To do this, first check Auto Refresh Highlight in the Flattener palette so you can see whether your changes fix the problem. Then select the text frame that has red highlighting and pick **Object > Arrange > Bring to front**.

Bringing the text to the front one time won't solve the problem when the transparent object is on a layer above the text. In this case, you must move the text to the same layer as the transparent object and bring it to the front, or put it on a layer above the layer with the image. Once you do this, examine the file to make sure that the layering still appears as the designer intended. If text doesn't wrap correctly, turn off Text Wrap Only Affects Text Beneath in **InDesign > Preferences > Composition** (Mac) or **Edit > Preferences > Composition** (PC). Then examine the file carefully to make sure this change



**FIGURE 10:** Make a Book (an easy thing to do) and then you can preflight multiple files (and Package, Print, and save the multiple files to PDF).

doesn't affect the design in the rest of the file.

If bringing the text to the front would ruin the design, another alternative is to specify a custom flattener setting for this spread (by choosing Custom from the Spread Flattening submenu, in the Pages palette menu) and turn on the Convert All Text to Outlines option. Then it will all be uniformly thicker. However, this is not a recommended workaround because the

text may not match text on other pages.

I almost always recommend that text be on a layer by itself on top of all other art objects. This will avoid transparency problems (and provide an easy way for you to lock all non-text objects before giving a file to editors to copyfit and edit).

You may not be able to reposition strokes that the Flattener Preview shows are in front without changing the design. If the design has a shadow behind and an image with transparency on top, then the rasterization of the stroke on top of the shadow may not look offensive. Pull a high-end proof to see. If it looks OK, flag it for your printer so they know you signed off on it.

- **Number of Documents.** You may wonder why InDesign reports the Number of Documents in the Summary screen of Preflight when it seems that you can preflight only one at a time. It has to do with books: If you combine documents together in a book palette, you can preflight multiple files at the same time (**Figure 10**). To preflight files from the book, pick Preflight Book from the flyout menu in the Book palette. The pagination options you see here refer to the Book pagination. The only drawback to preflighting multiple documents is that it doesn't always show you which file has the problem, so you'll have to hunt down this information manually.

### File Intervention: Using the Preflight Panes

While the Preflight Summary screen gives you a lot of information, there's more to find. First, after you run the Preflight command, click on each area to see more information.



**TIP A BETTER SPREAD:**

If you choose View>Fit Page in Window or any view other than Fit Spread in Window, the previous and next buttons in the lower-left corner of the document window (they look like little left and right triangles) act as previous page and next page buttons. However, if you choose Fit Spread in Window (Command-Option-zero), then these buttons move one spread backward or forward at a time.

Don't check Show Problems Only because you'll miss many problems that InDesign doesn't classify as errors.

- **TrueType Fonts.** InDesign won't list the presence of TrueType fonts as errors, but a few printers say these fonts cause text reflow on older RIPs and different operating systems. If your printer frowns on TrueType, take the following steps: First find TrueType fonts by opening the Preflight window and click on Fonts on the left pane. Click on Find Font in the Preflight Fonts pane (or go to **Type > Find Font**) and click on the TrueType font. Then click on More Info to see where a font appears and how many characters are set in it. This tells you whether the font is only on the pasteboard, or if it's one character, which might be a space. If you don't need that font, you can change it. One tip regarding the Find Font dialog box: first pick the font you want to change at the top, then pick the font you want to replace it with at the bottom, then select Find First or Find, Change, or Change All. If you simply select Done, InDesign won't make the change.

You might think you're safe from font trouble if you use only OpenType, but that may not be true. There's a flavor of OpenType called OpenType TrueType, and you have to click on Fonts in the Preflight pane (or in Find Font under the Type menu with More Info showing) to see whether it appears in the file. Also note that Apple created havoc for print professionals when it shipped Mac OS X with a new font technology called *.dfonts*. They are essentially TrueType fonts—but I don't recommend you use them for prepress work.

I suggest you deactivate all fonts that come with your operating system, except those required for the OS. It's not for the faint of heart, though, as you need Administrator privileges to your computer, and you can actually damage the machine if you delete either of the two required system fonts. For how-to details for deactivating system fonts on the Macintosh, download whitepapers from Apple (go to [www.apple.com/pro](http://www.apple.com/pro) and click on "Advanced Typography with Mac OSX"), Extensis (go to [www.extensis.com](http://www.extensis.com) and click on Creative Group Solutions, then "Best Practices for Managing Fonts in Mac OSX"), and Chuck Weger on creativepro.com ([www.creativepro.com/story/feature/19593.html](http://www.creativepro.com/story/feature/19593.html) and [www.creativepro.com/story/feature/20000.html](http://www.creativepro.com/story/feature/20000.html)).

- **Links and Images Pane.** There are more options in the Links and Images pane to check and fix your images. There are buttons labeled Relink (for Missing images), Update (for Modified images), and Repair All (for either). Relink is generally safe—it lets you find images if the folder or files were moved to another volume. Avoid Update. As I noted earlier, it's usually better to go to the Links palette, click on the image, and pick Go To Link, then pick Update Link. Watch the screen to be sure the design didn't change after the linked image updates.

**Effective Resolution** is also reported in the Links and Images pane. You need to know each image's effective resolution (resolution after scaling), which you can see by clicking on the Links and Images pane. This will show if you scaled up an image too much, causing pixelization. For example, a 300 DPI image that was to be a full-page image at 100% size will be only 150 DPI when scaled to 200% to accommodate a spread.

**File Type** is the final item in the Links and Images pane. Make sure there are no GIF or PICT images, or any in the indexed color mode. If you expected images to be in CMYK mode, check here that none are in RGB mode. If the file came from InDesign 2, or has the wrong preference set, the imported text files may be linked. Unlink them.

- **Which Colors?** Make sure to click on Colors and Inks and check it because while the Summary screen tells you the number of process and spot colors used, the Colors and Inks pane lists them so you can be sure the right ones are used.
- **Required Plug-ins.** The only external plug-ins that cause printing problems are required plug-ins. If the Preflight command indicates an external plug-in, cancel the process and hold down Command on Mac and pick About InDesign from the InDesign menu. On a PC, hold down Control and pick About InDesign from the Help menu. You'll get a wealth of information about your file, including a list of required plug-ins. Most of the required plug-ins are from Adobe, but look for one in the External Plug-ins pane in Preflight, and you'll know that no one can open the file without this plug-in.
- **Report.** The text in the Preflight pane is quite small, so Olav Martin Kvern and David Blatner in *Real World Adobe InDesign CS* recommend you click on the button that says "Report" to generate a file you can open the file in a word processor. In that document, you can easily increase the font size.

### The Smart Thing to Do

The bean counters are wrong — there's still a place for production experts. But if you use InDesign's built-in preflighting tools, you'll deliver a cleaner file that won't cause problems at the printer.

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