Files & Fonts

What are the correct formats for the web?

Layout of documents for print contrasts with a web page layout. There are differences. One of the main differences is the choices of fonts and the file types that are used for the web.

For more information on types of files used for print see my printing brochure on that topic.

Fonts

When a client creates a document for print in a layout program such as Microsoft Word or Adobe InDesign certain fonts are chosen. They might be Times Roman, Bickham Script, or Helvetica. When the document is complete you go to your print dialog box, adjust settings, embed your fonts, create a PDF with Acrobat Distiller and the document is emailed to the print house. This same PDF can be linked to a web page and the text looks the same for anyone who downloads the file and prints it. However, if you copy this same text onto a web page and view it online, you'll notice that your script font and maybe other fonts will not match your original document. As a result you may ask:

- Why did this occur?
- Why are the fonts in my print document not the same as a web page?
- How do I ensure that my clients see the same fonts on their computer?

Types of Fonts Issues

As mentioned, fonts that are used in your Microsoft Word document are linked to the font files on your computer. When you send a document to a print company you either include these fonts on the DVD with the document or you create a PDF and embed the font's information about the lettering in the file. However, on a web page there is no real link to a font, only a reference. Every visitor's computer that views your website must find a font with a similar name to view the same page layout as you. If you use unique script fonts or special characters this presents a problem. When a client's computer cannot locate this font, it chooses whatever font it considers a default, which could be Times Roman or Arial. While this might be fine for the body text, it may not be the style you were trying to achieve for your headings. How do you ensure that everyone is seeing the same font?

Possible Solutions for Fonts

One thing you can't expect is every viewer to search for a font file on your website and copy it into their computer's fonts folder. A visitor to your website will not spend time doing this. So ask yourself when you choose a company font for web page.,"How important is this specialized font?" Then review these options:

1. If it's not important, ask your designer to choose two to five common default fonts that closely match the text you're trying to achieve. Make sure they are easy to read on your web page. It's important to choose the widest range of fonts that most computers would have.

2. If the font is important to the look and feel of the website, ask the designer to create a graphic of that section of font text. Remember that a graphic is not editable or selectable like text so if there is a spelling error in the text it may take time to change.

3. Another option is to choose a Web Open Font Format. Web fonts are relatively new technology beginning in 2009. You can take your specialized fonts, upload them to a specific site and then link the fonts to your page. This process allows all your clients to view your specialized font on their screen. Because this is a relatively new technology, it's important to make sure that the clients that view your site have an updated web browser that can handle this. If you are interested in using Web Fonts, talk to your web designer about this.

For more information on this topic check out http://www.w3.org/Fonts/WOFF-FAQ

Website Files

While fonts and lettering styles may be one concern, another is, "What are the correct image files to submit to a web designer?". In some cases you may not have all the graphics you require and the designer may have to create some for you. At the start of your project you may have organized your images in a folder labeled Images. Inside are TIFFs. JPEGs, AI and EPS files. Which ones are appropriate to include on the DVD? Should they be in another format? The following information explains file formats to make the choice easier:

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts)

A file format with a compression algorithm that reduces the file sizes of bit-mapped images using a "lossy" compression method. (See Lossy) This file is ideal for pictures on the web or to send as email attachments. Example: Myfile.jpg
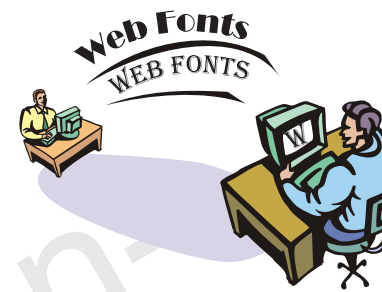
gif (Graphic Interchange Format)

A bit-mapped file format that is found on the Web. It displays a maximum of 256 colours which is ideal for websites and solid colored logos and can be partly transparent. It can also be used to create simple animations for banners. Example: Myfile.gif

PNG (Portable Network Graphics)

A bit-mapped image format that employs lossless data compression. It is sometimes used instead of gif files. It can support a wider range of colours like a jpeg. However, unlike a jpeg it can also support transparency and its compression for the web is sometimes cleaner than a jpeg. It cannot be used for animation. This file has lately been found more often on the web then in the past. Example: Myfile.png

PDF (Portable Document Format)

Developed by Adobe systems and read by Adobe Acrobat Reader. This file has become the standard used by most print houses and web sites. It's able to have text, colour, vector and bitmap images and contain multiple pages. This document can be viewed independently from the original layout program (Microsoft Word, InDesign) it was created in. Its file size is also relatively low. If you have the program Adobe Acrobat Distiller you can convert most files to a PDF. Example: Myfile. pdf.

BMP (Bitmap)

Not to be confused with a file that is a bitmap colour format. This file will look similar to a jpeg. It's OK to submit it to a web designer, but it is generally not used as an image on the web due to it's larger file size. Example: Myfile.bmp

Other times you or your company's Graphic Designer may have created your own designs in a Program like Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator or Flash. High resolution files are best to submit to the web designer because they can edit these files, format and scale them for the web. If you have these, here are file formats you should send to a designer:

Concept art or original designs in these formats
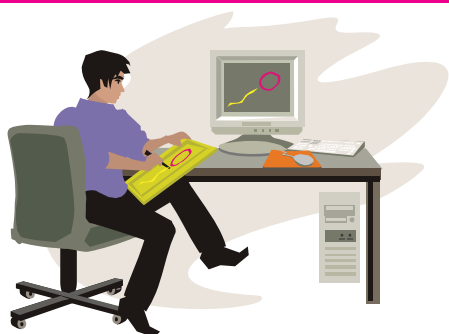
.ai (Adobe Illustrator or AI)

A file that can be opened in the Adobe Illustrator program. Its program tools allow you to create drawings or graphics with your hand on the computer mouse or a digital stylus. Example: Myfile.ai

.eps (Encapsulated PostScript)

A file that is used to transfer data within compatible applications. It is similar to an AI file and a PDF file. The file contains a preview image and contains vector art work (scalable artwork), text, and colour information. This artwork is made up of smooth lines and curves. It's not bit-mapped or rasterized. Example: Myfile.eps

PhotoShop Document (.psd) or PhotoShop Big (.psb for files over 2 gigabytes)

File formats used by Adobe Photoshop. They are often used in the creation of complicated photographic images which appear as surreal imagery or for the restoration of recently scanned photographs. This type of file stores a lot more information than any other image file. In most cases it is used only by the Photoshop program or a legacy program like Adobe ImageReady. This file format is good for image creation, it cannot be viewed on the web and its file size is too large. A copy needs to be flattened and saved as a JPEG (.jpg) file to create a smaller format.

.tif or TIFF (Tagged Image File Format)

A commonly used format for scanning or creation of bit-mapped images. It has lossless compression and file stability and maintains good colour quality. (See Lossless Compression). It can be used with a number of platforms and programs. Example: Myfile.tif

Levels of compression

Lossless

Refers to a level of data compression in which no information is lost. These files are generally larger than a lossy file, and quality is preserved. A lossless file is a good choice to send to your designer.

Lossy

A data compression method characterized by the loss of some data. It is usually used to make the file smaller and eliminate unnecessary information. However, some valuable image information may be lost in the process and cause unwanted dots to appear in the file. Lossy files are commonly used on the Web.

Final Thoughts

As mentioned in the ICCW brochure, there are other files that you should submit if you have them and require them on the website. They include:

- Video and sound clips - consult your designer on which formats are appropriate

- Animations created in Adobe Flash such as Flash files ending in .fla, .swf, .as . The files are small and ideal for viewing animated procedures. However, they are not ideal for an entire website because not all tablets or computers support flash coding or actionscript.

- Text for Web Pages (Microsoft Word or Notepad)

- Database files (xml or excel)

In addition, if you have any HTML documents from a former website on a CD that you think might be helpful, check with your web designer if they could be used for the purpose of copying out text or comparison of layouts.

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Use & Understand the Correct Formats

Web Fonts
WEB FONTS

**Font Solutions
Web File Formats
&
Levels of Compression**

Produced by The Ink Rag