Creating a PDF for
Lightning Source Print-on-Demand
in Adobe InDesign CS4

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Part 1

Lightning Source (LSI) is my preferred vendor for [print on demand](#) digital book printing. Their quality is good, distribution options good for most books, and a technical staff that actually knows what they're doing. Combined with responsive customer service, it's easy to see why it's the default in its field.

LSI provides pretty adequate documentation but, as you might expect of a company that's part of a rather large corporate structure, (Ingram Industries is number 226 on *Forbes'* Largest Private Companies) the documentation is scattered and not as tightly integrated as we might like.

Like anyone else, I had to work out the exact steps LSI needed my book files to go through to guarantee that I wouldn't have holdups later on down the line. I also wanted to ensure that I was getting the best quality printing. Digital printing isn't quite up to the standards of [offset printing](#) yet, so it pays to make sure your book and cover come out as good as they possibly can.

> Keep in mind that when you upload your file to Lightning Source or any other printer, you are taking responsibility for the accuracy of the file. Re-dos and makeovers can be very costly.

Now You Too Can Make A Perfect File

Everyone who sends files to LSI for print-on-demand book production has to work out how to walk through the steps they outline in the documentation. There is no single thing that's particularly difficult to do, but after all the work that it takes to get a book to press, I certainly don't want any mistakes at this point.

Let's go step by step through the process. There are some good practices we'll encounter along the way.

Whoa, Are You Really Ready?

Before we get to creating your reproduction quality PDF file, we need to look at the two areas of InDesign files that cause the biggest problems in the process: linked graphics and fonts.

[Adobe InDesign CS4](#) provides great tools for dealing with both so, once you've saved what you consider to be your absolutely, positively, final, no more changes whatsoever, file, we'll examine both of these trouble spots.

First up is the Links palette, here's one from a recent project.
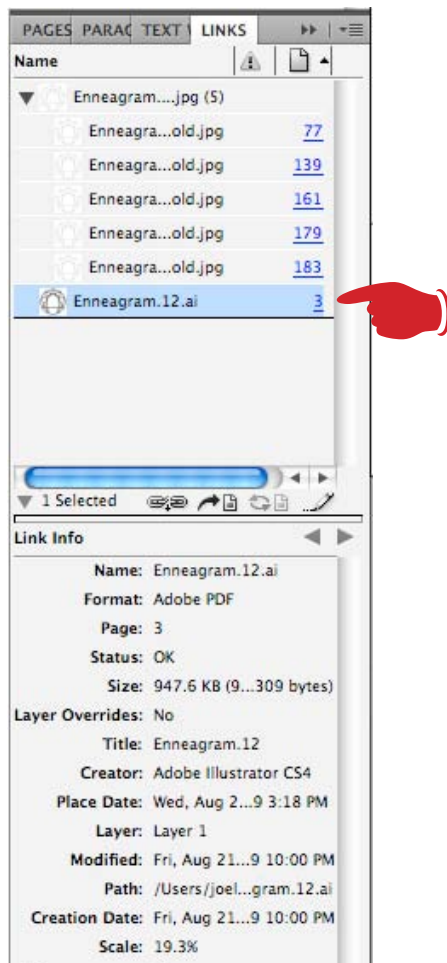
> The Links palette contains a great deal of information that's potentially very useful to you. Check your documentation and get familiar with this important part of InDesign's functions.

As you can see in the first example, the graphic "enneagram.12.ai" is highlighted in the upper half of the palette. The lower half shows information about the file and the state of the link: "OK". But what if a link is not "OK"? Here's another link from the same book:
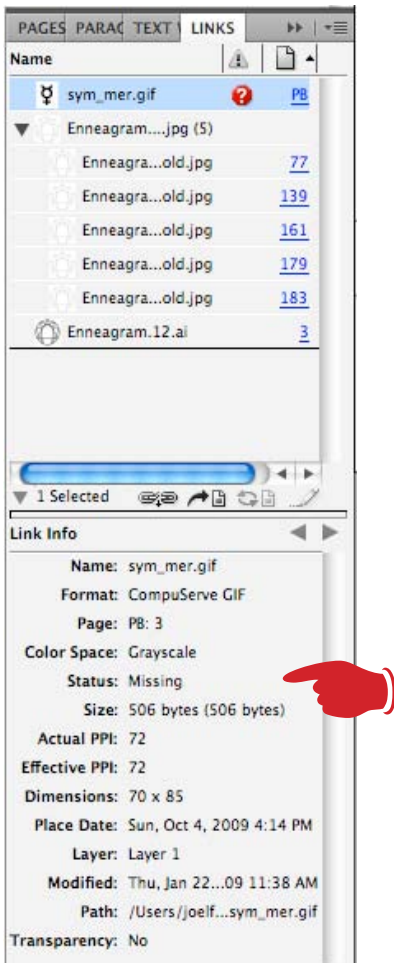
Here you can see the graphic "sym_mer.gif" highlighted but there's a big red question mark next to it. This alert means that InDesign cannot find the graphic; it's probably been moved since it was placed in the document, or it may have been accidentally deleted.

In the lower half of the palette the status shows as "missing." These are the kinds of problems you want to uncover before you get ready to produce your PDF. In this case you can use the "relink" button at the bottom of the Links palette to navigate to the file's new location and let InDesign know where to find it. Here you'll see the cursor on the button, which will open a finder window for navigating to the new location of the file.
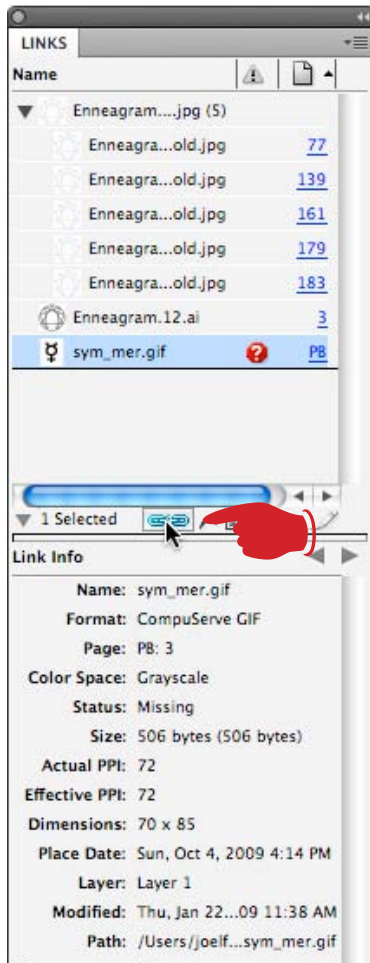
Check Every Graphic in Your Book File

You need to examine each graphic in your book to assure yourself all graphics are in place and ready to convert.

In the next image you'll see that "sym_mer.gif" has been located and re-linked to the file. It now shows a status "OK" in the bottom half of the dialog.
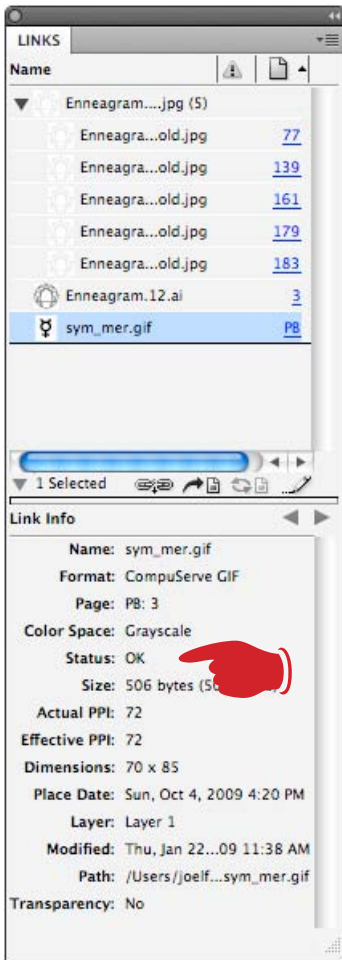
This kind of pre-checking is really the most efficient way to create PDFs or any other type of file you may be called on to produce for the printing of your book. Book designers deal with these issues constantly, since our clients use a wide variety of printers. Each printer has their own specifications and their own requirements. Some printers even detail the exact way you are supposed to name the files that you submit. Keeping up to date with these requirements, and making sure our files conform to each printer's needs is just part of the job of producing books today.

Now, having checked your links, you are ready to go, right?

But There's Another Check First

Well, almost ready. Equally important is checking the fonts in the book, and it's often surprising what you can find when you look. In Part 2 we'll take a look at how to quickly determine what fonts you're putting into your PDF file and the most efficient way to get your file ready for press.

Part 2

In Part 1 we looked at how to check the status of all linked graphics with the Link Palette, and how to re-link any missing files. The last check I make of my file before beginning the export process is to look at the book's fonts. This is a key step in making a book file for export.

InDesign has a powerful FindFont feature on the Type menu. This article isn't intended as a tutorial on FindFont—it's incredibly powerful and can manipulate text within the document in amazing ways. But I use it as a super quick way to clean up any font problems to bulletproof my file farther down the production stream.

Find Font Finds Problems

It takes me a while to put a book together. I might get files from the author and from an editor. There could be material that's been cut and pasted from other sources. I have to lay out the pages, tag the text and assign style tags throughout the document, insert graphics—all the different tasks that go into creating a book.

By the time I get to the very end of the process, the file has been worked on for many hours and contains material from lots of places. Usually I find traces of this history in the Find Font dialog. Here's one from a recent job:
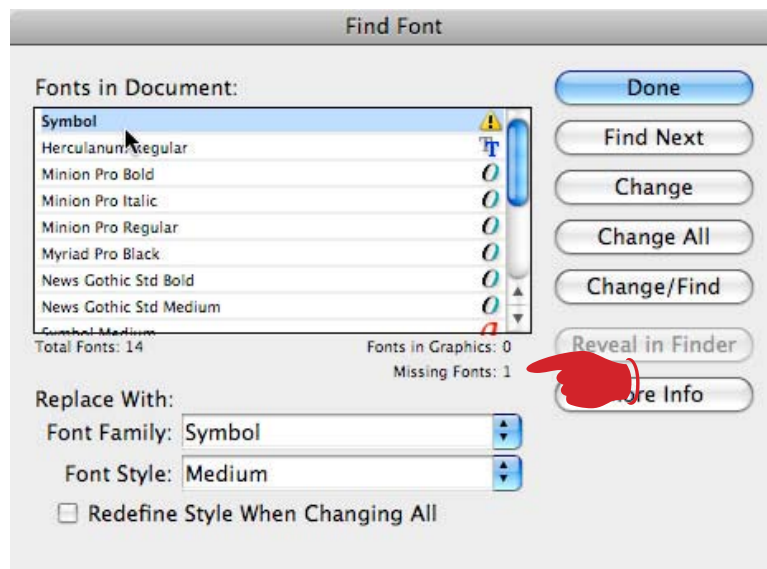
You'll see I've highlighted the Symbol font, which has an alert next to it and, below the window, you can see InDesign is reporting the font missing. Of course the font isn't missing, but InDesign is looking for a variation of the font that doesn't exist. Instead of Symbol [Medium] it's trying to find Symbol [Regular].

The solution is to supply the correct variation, which you can see I've done in the "Replace with" windows at the bottom. Clicking "Change All" will solve the problem throughout the file.

Where Did That Come From?
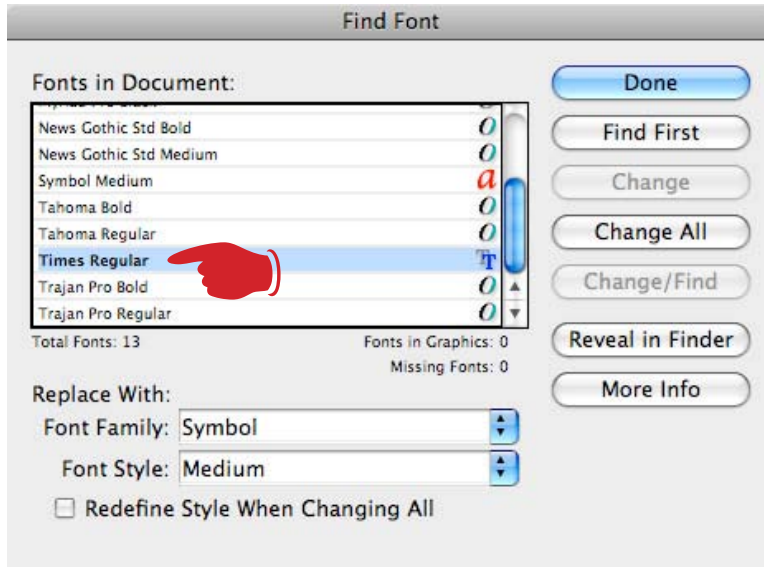
As I'm checking the FindFont dialogue to make sure my Symbol problem has been solved, and I see the font has dropped back into its normal alphabetical order, I also note two things: the "missing font" counter has reset to 0, which is exactly where I want it to be, but what's this? Times Roman? There is no Times Roman in my book project, so I'm surprised to find it here.

I call these fonts that appear out of nowhere "phantom" fonts. Undoubtedly this is left over from an earlier stage of the project, and might have been carried over from Microsoft Word or somewhere else in a cut and paste operation. To find the font and how it's used, I hit the "Find Next" button, and there it is:
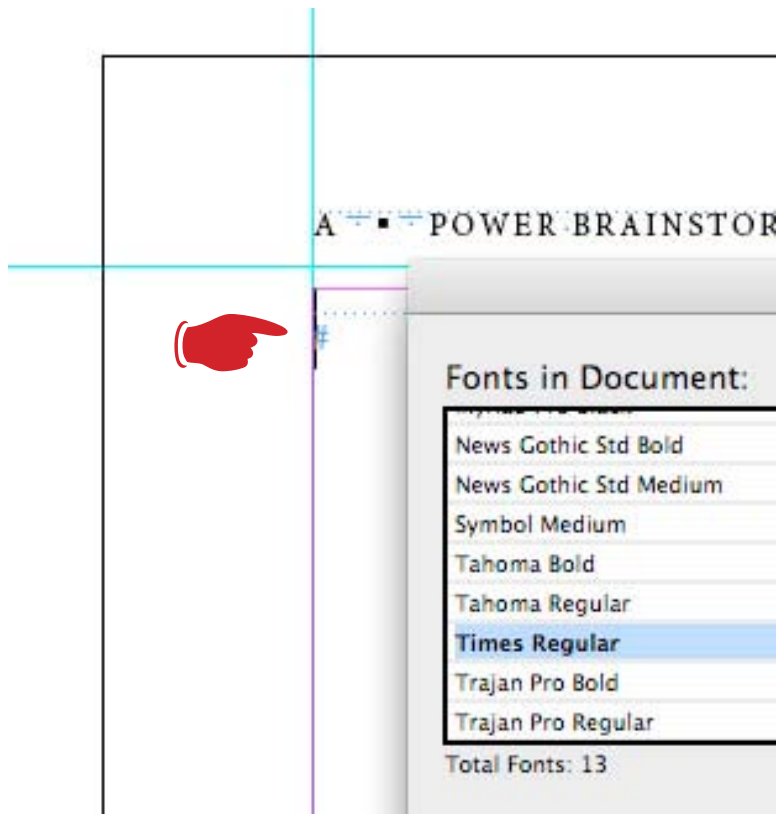
InDesign has found a space or an invisible character that's formatted for Times Roman Regular. Note that this wouldn't impact your book because it's invisible anyway. But I like to clean up these phantom fonts for a couple of reasons.

First of all, the PDF that I make at the end of the process will have all fonts embedded within it. There's no reason to unnecessarily bloat the file with fonts that aren't even needed for the job. Also, these fonts come from lots of places on the internet, and not all of them are well-behaved.

The last thing I want is for my client's book to get hung up at the printer because there's some trashy font embedded in the file that's not even necessary to the book. Like all experienced book designers, I make it a habit to only use high quality fully licensed fonts, for my own protection and for my client's well being.

Neat and Tidy at Last

I Find/Change the Times Roman and replace it with my base font for this book, Minion. Now I have a tight, fully functional font list. I know every one of these is used in the book, and they are all properly located for InDesign to find them.
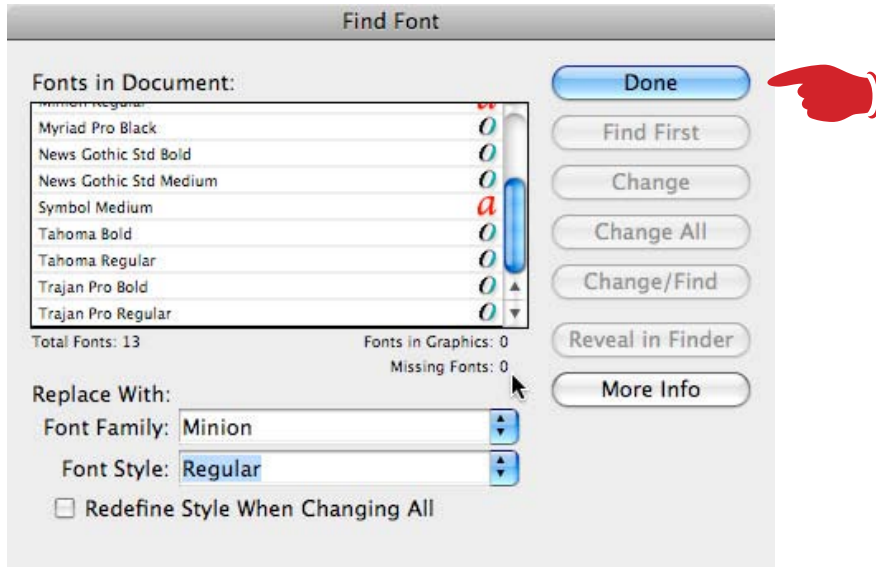
I'm finally ready to move forward with making my PDF files. I've reassured myself all graphics are present, properly linked, and the correct format for sending to the printer. The fonts are in order. Next, it's on to setting up for Lightning Source's specific output requirements.

Part 3

We're now ready to create our production-quality PDF files. When we use this process we have to go through each step twice for each book submitted to LSI; once for the interior (bookblock in LSI terms) and once for the cover.

It's essential that you get this right to avoid poor reproduction, hangups in production, or extra charges for repeated proofs to get the book right. By carefully following the procedures outlined by LSI, we can assure ourselves of fully compliant files.

The problem is that the instructions for this process are spread over the following documentation, all supplied on the LSI website:

- B&W_Int_Layout_Example(Explained).pdf
- B&W_Int_Template_Example.pdf
- DigitalFileSubmissions.pdf
- DistillerSettingsDoc.pdf
- FAQs.pdf
- FontEmbedding.pdf
- LSI_FileCreationGuide.pdf
- PSsettingsINDcs4_MAC_cov.pdf
- PSsettingsINDcs4_MAC_int.pdf
- ScanTitleSubmissions.pdf

Note that this set of files is specific to file creation on the Macintosh in Adobe InDesign CS4. Other files from LSI contain instructions for other programs and platforms.

Step-by-step instructions are available from the following LSI webpages:
Lightning Source - Digital Cover Creation
Lightning Source - Digital Bookblock Creation

Okay, Let's Dig In!

It's important to understand that the method outlined by LSI does not produce PDFs from InDesign. Instead, we'll be producing *postscript* files from InDesign. These files will be used by Adobe Distiller to create the PDF file.

Most of this process is controlled from within the Print dialog box. On seven successive screens, the specifications from LSI are entered in the appropriate places. Although it's a bit time-consuming to go through these settings, it's really worthwhile. And once you've finished with the setup, InDesign will let you save your customization so it can be re-used just by loading the entire set of specs at once.

Rather than go through each option, I've set up these dialog box options to match the specifications in LSI's documentation. All you have to do is make your options the same as these screenshots. Make the selections you see here and select or unselect the check boxes so that your dialog matches these screenshots.

When your file is ready to go, pull up the Print dialog and follow along with these screenshots.

Here's the first screen, the Print Dialog's General options:
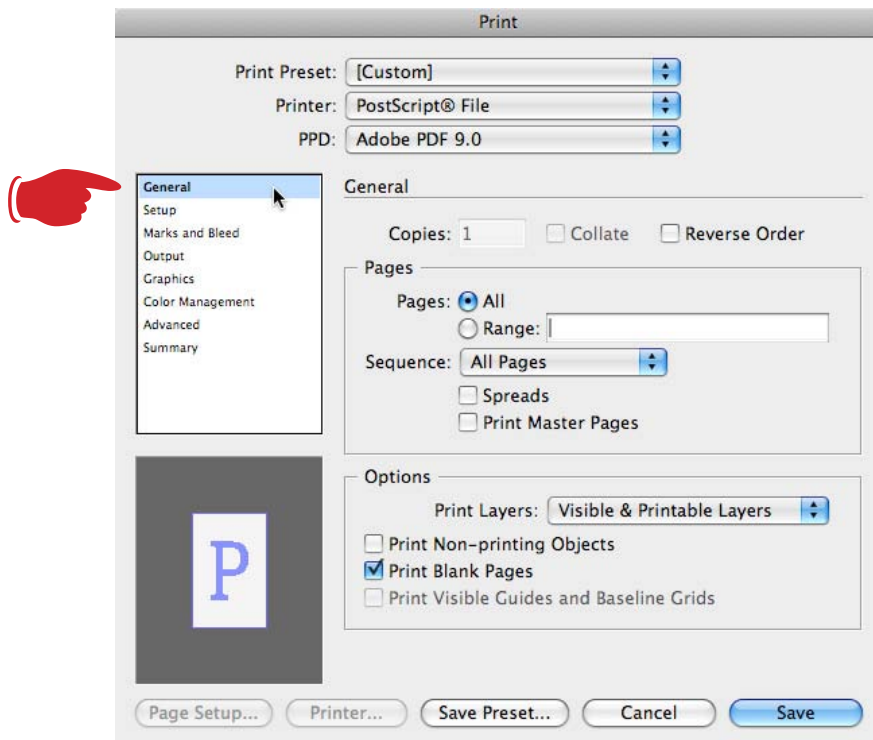
Note that your driver in the PPD dropdown may read "Adobe PDF" without the version number, and that's fine.
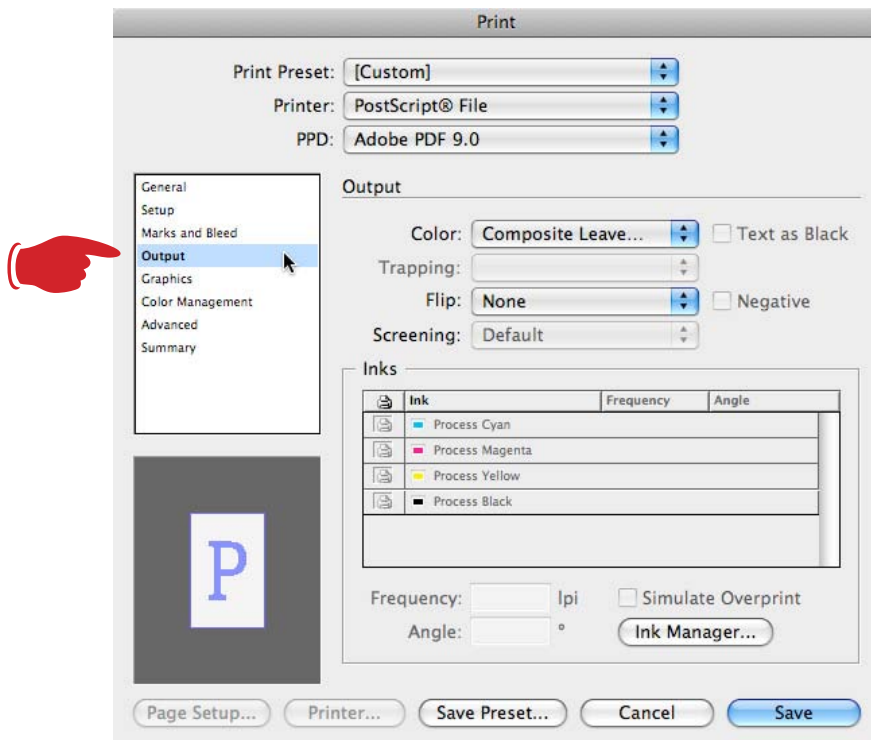
Here's the Print Dialog's Setup screen. Note that you will need the enter the actual trim size of your book in the "Paper Size" Width and Height boxes. In this case the book is 5-1/2″ x 8-1/2″:
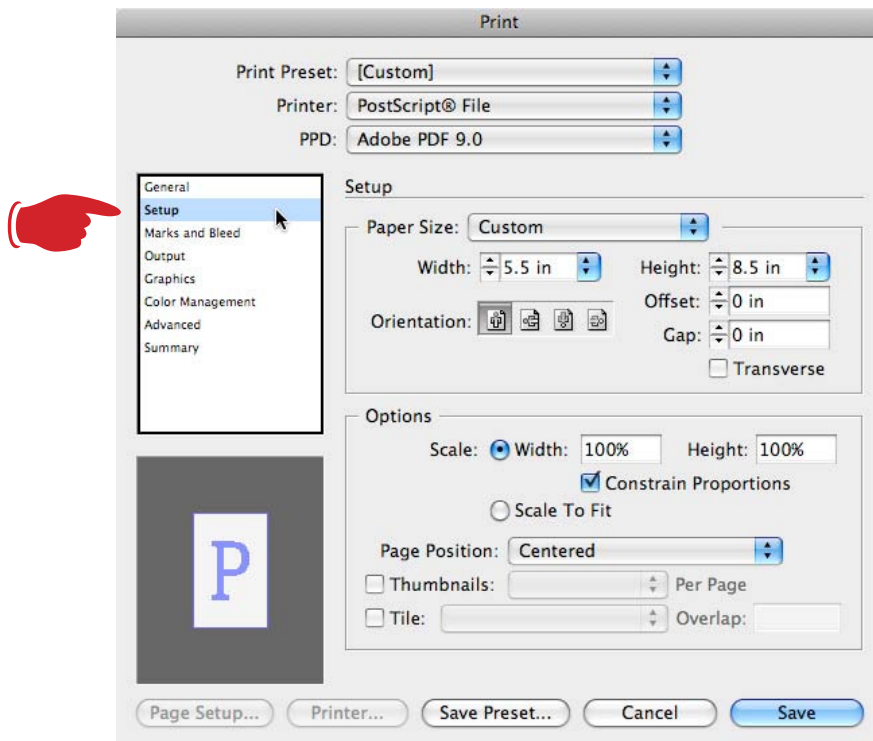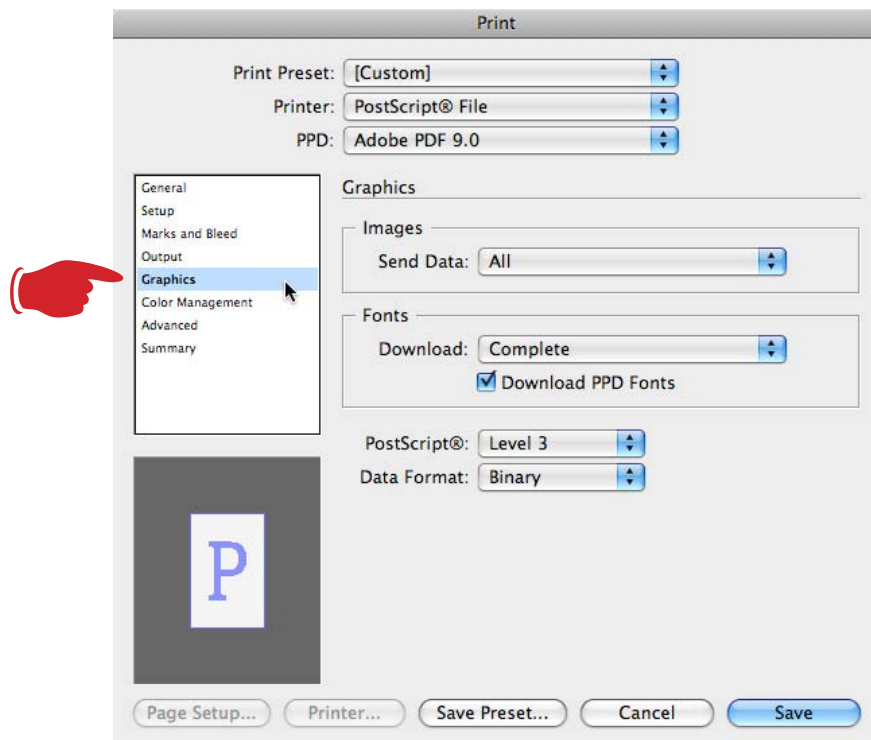

Here's the Marks and Bleeds screen. Note the unchecked boxes.
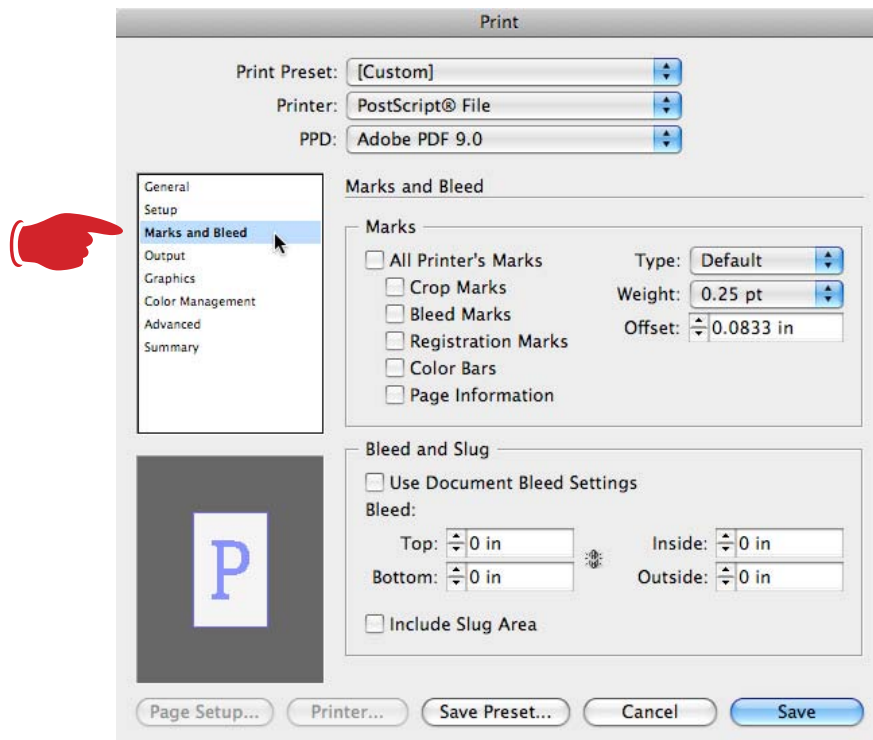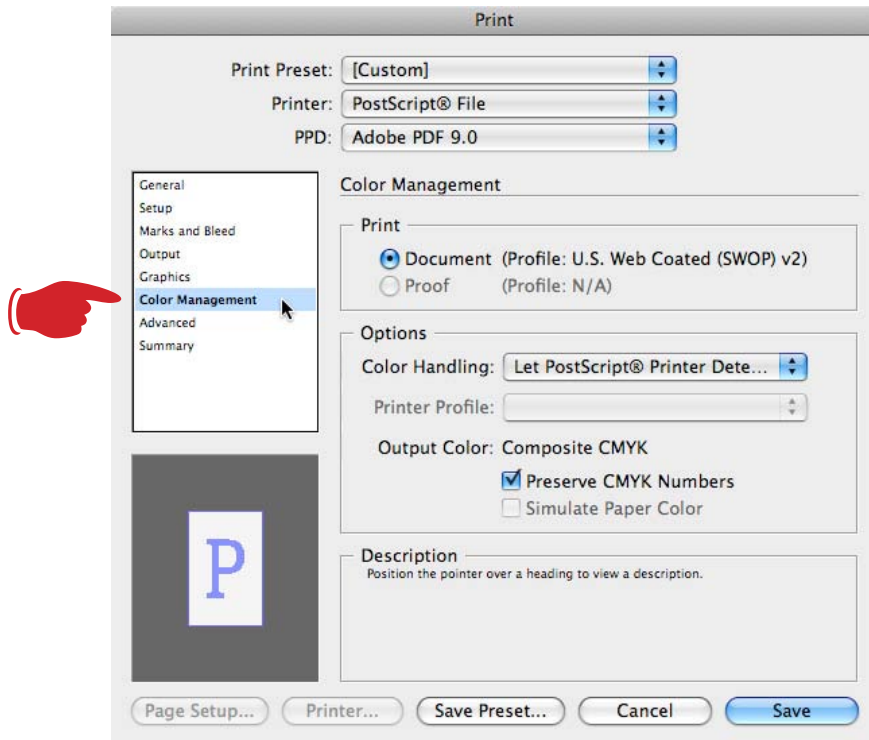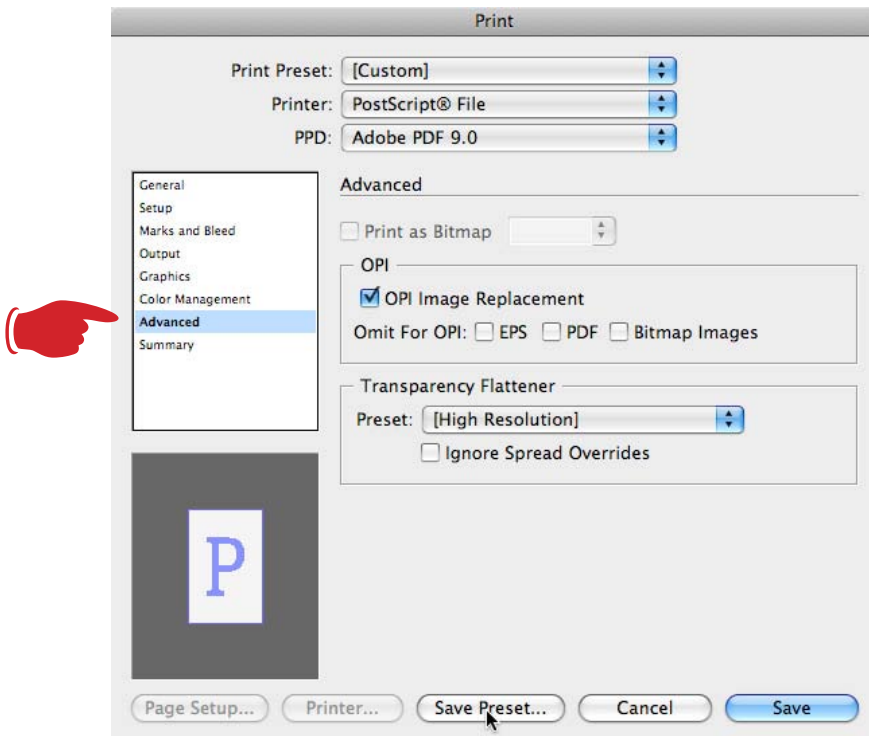
And here's the Output dialog.

Now we have the Graphics dialog.

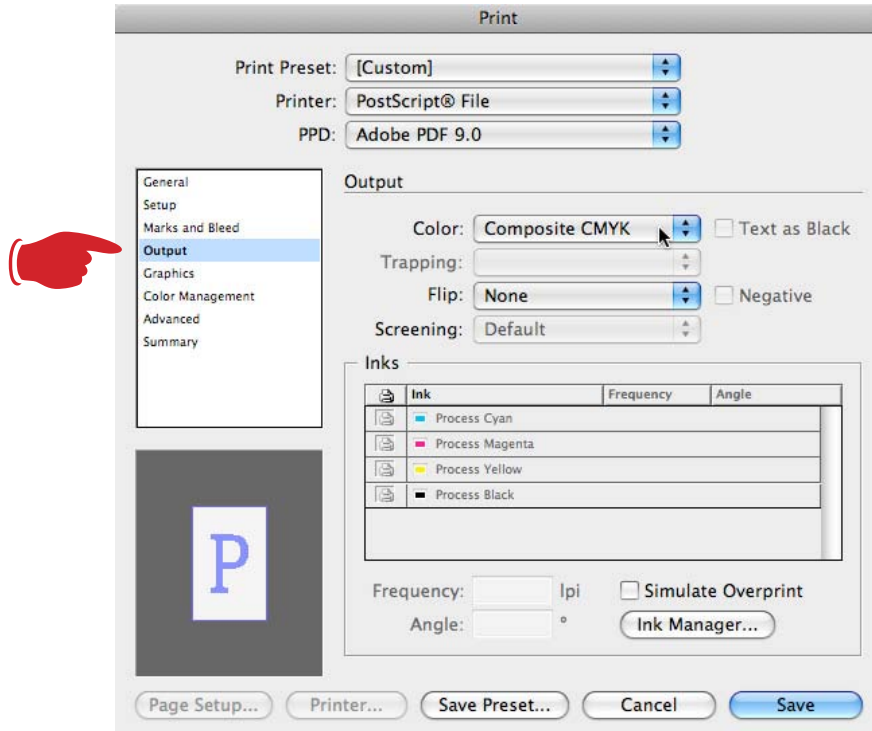Keep going! We're almost there. This is the Color Management dialog.

Last, but not least, the Print dialog's Advanced tab.

Changes for Color Covers

I follow the same procedure for the color cover of the book, since there are only two of these dialog boxes that change, the rest stay the same. First, the Output dialog gets a different treatment:

In this example for color postscript processing, under Output/Color, instead of "Composite Leave Unchanged" select "Composite CMYK."

The second difference is in the Color Management section:
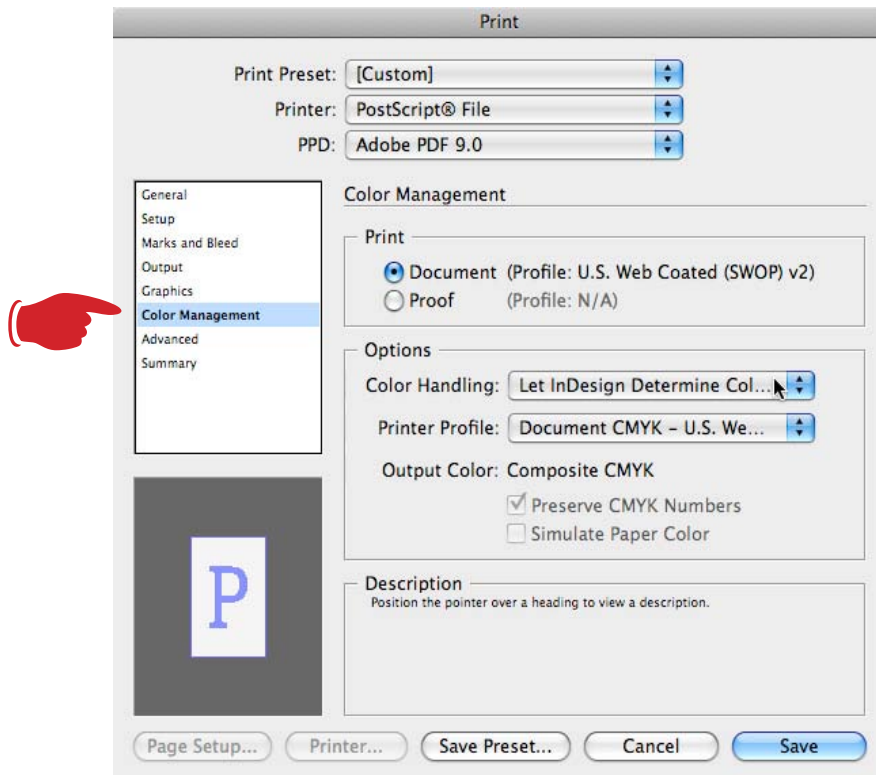
> Here, for the Color Management/Options/Color Handling selection, instead
> of "No color management" select "Let InDesign Determine Color" and the
> "Document CMYK – U.S. Web Coated (SWOP) v2" Printer profile.

Painstaking, but Reusable

At this point you could click on "Save" and let InDesign create your postscript
files, but before you do that, click instead on the "Save Preset" button, which will
give you an opportunity to save all the settings you just painstakingly adjusted.
Call the preset something you will remember, and when you are returned to the
Print dialog's Advanced screen, click on "Save."

> I save both presets. After setting up the interior, just before clicking
> "Save" I save the preset as "LSI Interior 11.09." Then I do the cover, and
> save that preset as "LSI Cover 11.09." With these saved I can go back and
> just pick the preset from the dropdown menu and I'm ready to go.

You'll be presented with a standard save dialog, but make note of the location the file will be saved to, as you'll need this information in a moment.
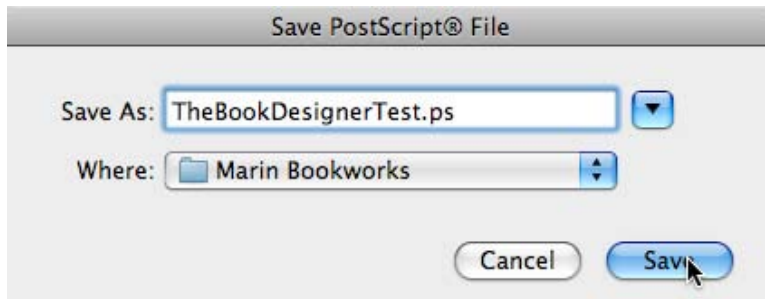

Heading for the Distiller

Our last task is to use the files created in InDesign to create our PDF file for submission to LSI. For this task we'll use Acrobat Distiller, a part of Adobe's Creative Suite. Here's the rather unhelpful main screen of Distiller:
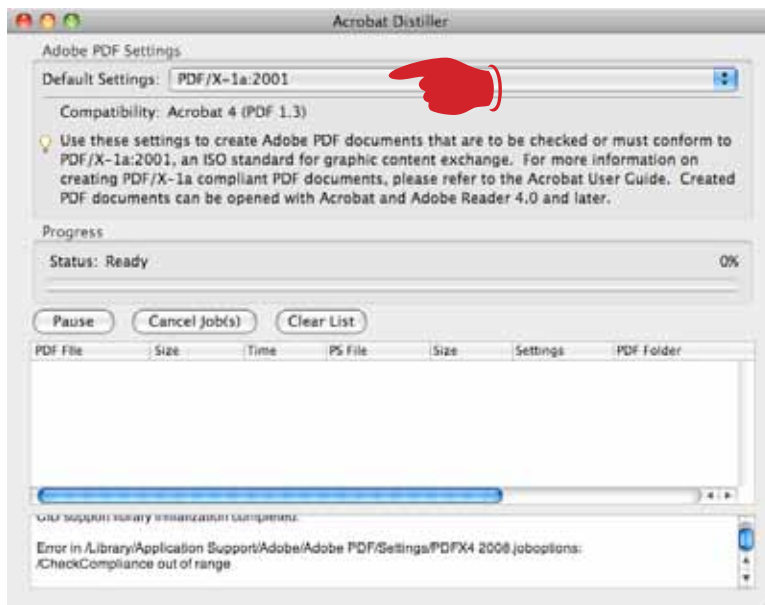
In the Default Settings dropdown near the top of the screen, select "PDF/X-1.a:2001″. Use the File/Open command and navigate to where you saved the postscript file just a moment ago. That's all the input you need with Distiller. As soon as you open the file you'll see a progress bar as Distiller works through the file creating your PDF.

At the end, Distiller will show, in the top window, the location of the PDF it created. You'll also notice a report in the bottom window of the Distiller screen. This is what you want to see:
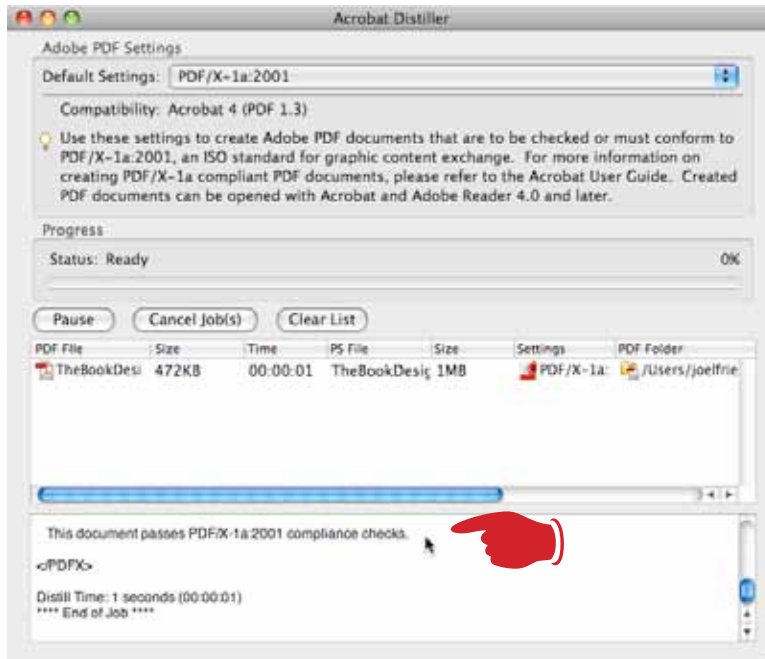

> Distiller has reported that "This document passes PDF/X-1.a:2001 compliance checks." Congratulations!

Checking it Twice

The last two checks you'll need to do are to make sure your file looks the way you expect the book to look, and that your fonts have embedded into the PDF file correctly.

Open the PDF you made in Distiller in Adobe Acrobat Reader or Acrobat Pro. Page through the entire file and look at the pages, running heads, chapter openings, page numbers and any elements outside the text stream like charts, graphs, tables with callouts, captions, and so on. Does the book look as you expected?

Next, select File/Properties and click on the "Fonts" tab. A window will open showing the fonts used in the document. Next to each font name you should see either the notation "(Embedded Subset)" or "(Embedded)." This is what you want to see. Here's an example:
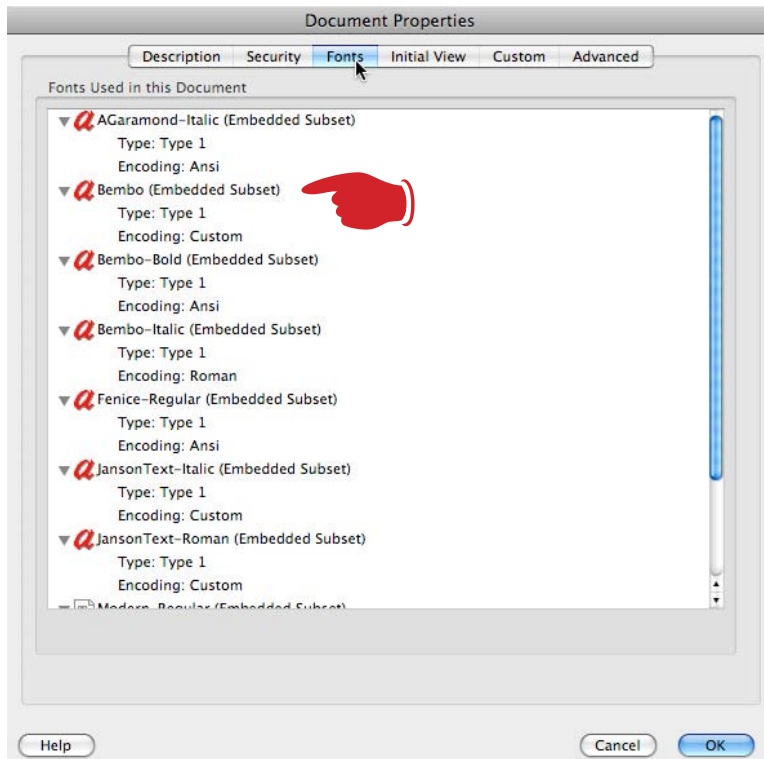
If for some reason "(Embedded Subset)" or "(Embedded)" isn't listed next to the font name, that font is not embedded and LSI will not be able to process your file. If you've followed these steps exactly, you should not have this problem.

One . . . Last . . . Thing

LSI also has strict guidelines about naming your files, and I have known them to reject a file simply because it was named incorrectly. They instruct you to name the PDF file we just created for your book interior with the ISBN number in this format: **isbn_txt.pdf** or **isbntxt.pdf**.

For a book with the ISBN 0-936385-40-5, the file should be named:

0936385405_txt.pdf or

0936385405txt.pdf.

The cover file would be:

0936385405_cov.pdf or

0936385405cov.pdf

You are now ready to go into your LSI account and upload your files. You should be confident that when your book proof arrives, it will be exactly as you expected.

For more step-by-step articles on book design and self-publishing, subscribe to:

www.TheBookDesigner.com

Note: This post is not intended to supply technical support for Adobe InDesign, Adobe Acrobat or Acrobat Distiller, or to replace the materials issued by LSI. It is a record of exactly the steps I take when I'm preparing a client's book to go to press at Lightning Source, and is solely based on the materials I cited at the beginning of the article.

LSI may change these requirements at any time, so it always pays to check whether their requirements are the same.