

Adobe Responds With a More User-Friendly CS

By RON ROSKIEWICZ

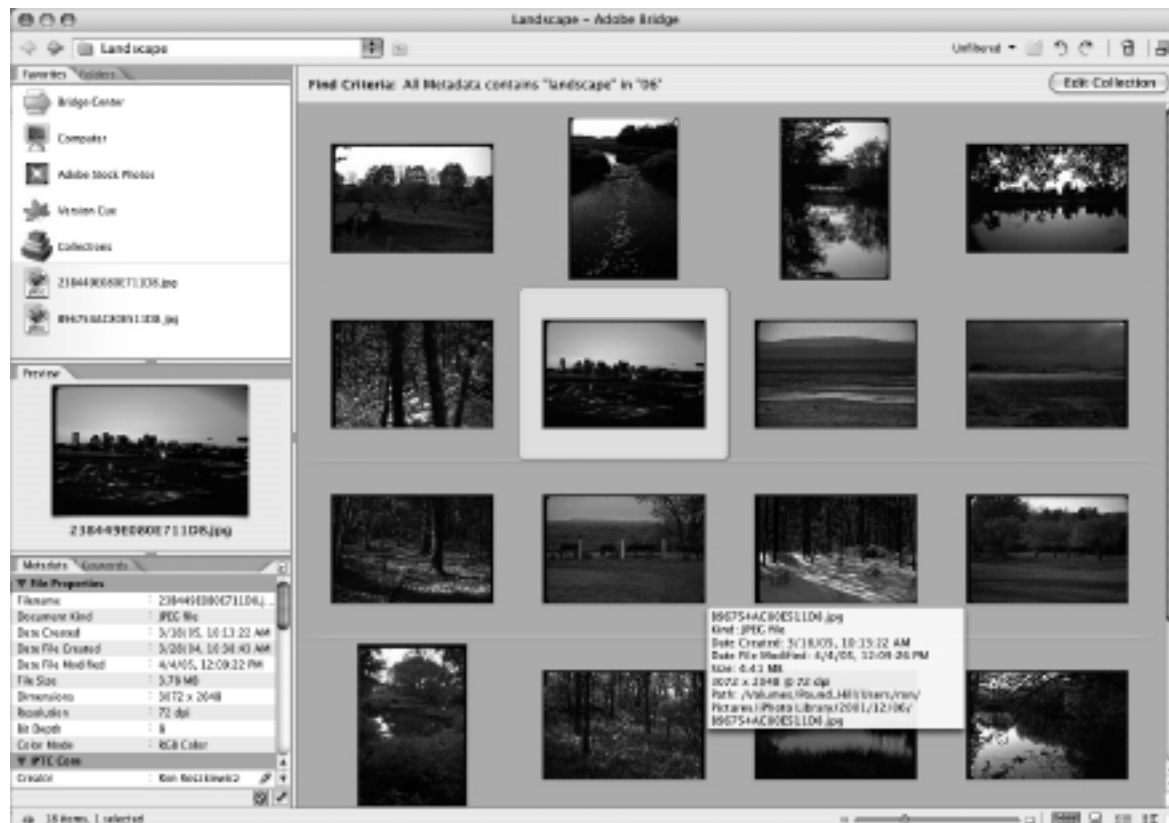
With its release of Creative Suite 2.0 in early April, Adobe introduced a level of application interoperability, customization and collaboration unlike any other previously seen on the desktop. As a co-creator of the desktop publishing idiom, Adobe awakens us to the fact that the revolution is not over; it's now delivered on a firm 18-month schedule.

In a word, this release of Creative Suite is all about control. Control over assets and how to view and characterize them; control over how assets move from one work environment to the next; and control over the integrity and fitness for output of the final content. In many ways, it's also about tying together many smaller initiatives created over the years into a rationalized set of interrelated applications.

The press briefings and documentation have all stressed a specific set of initiatives: the power of Bridge with Version Cue 2.0; Live Trace and Live Paint functionality in Illustrator; compliance with new formats such as SVG-t (t for "tiny") in Illustrator and GoLive

to work in mobile device environments; and a new eCommerce distribution model in Adobe Stock Photos. All of these initiatives definitely have the sizzle *and* the steak. And while these are all important advancements, improvements made to backend workflow and implementation with emerging standards are at least as important.

Bridge & Version Cue. It's impossible to begin this review without first talking about Bridge, the new application included with Creative Suite 2 (CS2) (below). When we first encountered Bridge, it was a File menu function in Photoshop and either an interesting tool when used in combination with a simple homegrown direc-



Bridge collection browser and metadata pane.

tory file management structure or useless if we already use a digital asset management system. It was clearly a work in progress. In its first iteration, it also seemed curiously unconnected to Version Cue, a repository for collaborative sharing of assets.

With the release of CS2, the Photoshop File Browser emerges as Bridge, a standalone application for browsing files and file collections, managing standard and custom metadata, and transforming files. Adobe

One of the most talked about transformations involves Adobe's handling of Camera Raw files.

characterizes it as a “design process management tool.” Of course, DPMT doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, and the inevitable comparisons will be made with digital asset management (DAM).

Bridge is library-oriented and characterized as a workflow hub. Version Cue, relieved of file management duties, is now clearly a project-oriented application. Communications between Bridge and Version Cue keep us up to date at all times about the status of an asset and a project. An image can be identified as an alternate during a Save As operation in Photoshop, and Bridge will display the original with alternates in one of its many browser views. To extend the usefulness of Version Cue project collaboration, it is possible to administer both users and permissions via a Web interface.

In the original File Browser, support for batch processing and metadata was nominal. Custom metadata wasn't supported, nor was it possible to search on the metadata that was identified and displayed. That, too, has changed, and Bridge can now batch-process incoming files to any of the supplied or custom color presets. Supplied with Bridge are four settings, including Monitor Color, North American General Purpose 2, North American Prepress 2 and North American Web/Internet. These presets are intended to act as universal Creative Suite preferences and can be overridden application by application.

It's also possible to batch-process metadata changes. Using templates created in Bridge of one of the suite applications and saved through a File Info fly-out panel, Bridge will allow customers to use this template for batch embedding of standard and custom metadata values into a file or selection of files.

Interactivity with other suite applications has been enhanced, too. The linking between Bridge and InDesign is excellent. Assets can be dragged and dropped onto InDesign layouts with ease. If the asset has any associated alternates saved in Bridge, these will be identified as such, and a designer can also make alternate versions of the InDesign file before saving and viewing in Bridge. Micro icons identify that alternates are available in InDesign and Bridge. It's also possible to initiate some actions without opening an asset in the originating application. For example, you can create contact sheets of Photoshop and InDesign assets, view video and export Illustrator files to Macromedia Flash.

Adobe Stock Photo portal.

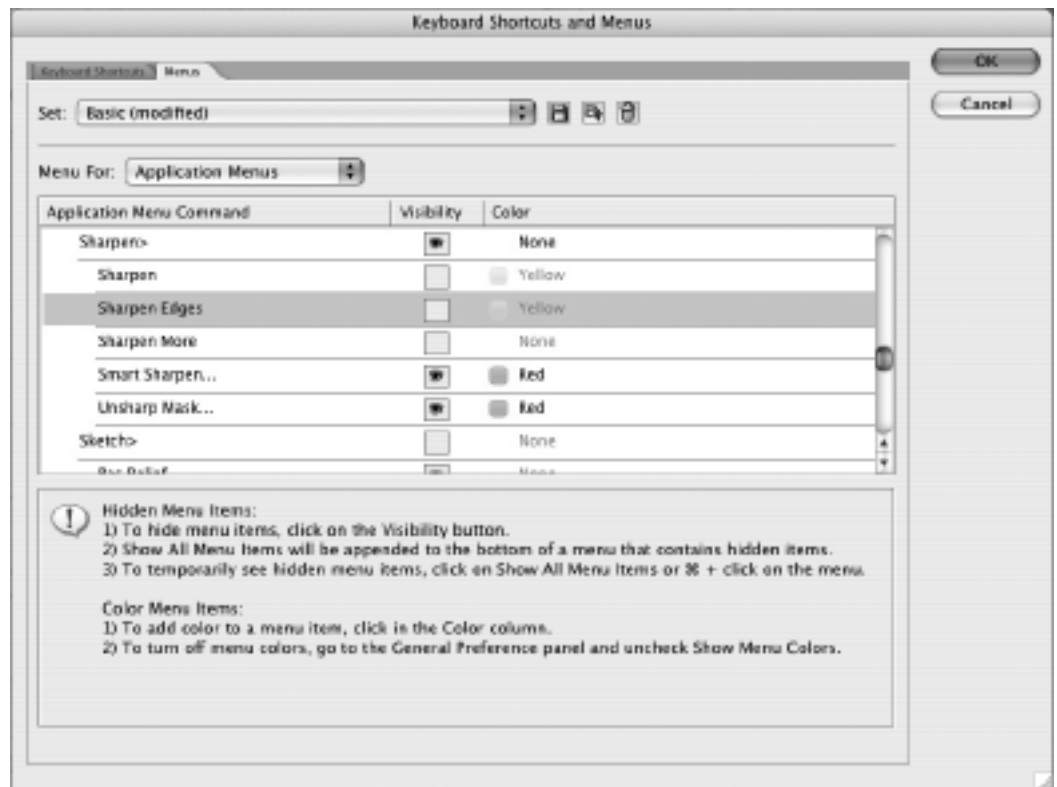


Many additional transformations are possible, including: batch renaming, altering the quality level of JPEGs, and changing files from RGB to CMYK. One of the most talked about transformations involves Adobe's handling of Camera Raw files created by many digital cameras and its support for a new digital master file, called Adobe Digital Negative (DNG). The problem is that every camera manufacturer creates a different camera raw file format. To preserve the unmanipulated nature of the raw file, provide a standard for raw files and allow for the addition of metadata, Adobe introduced the Adobe Digital Negative (DNG) file format. Camera Raw was introduced prior to CS2 as a plug-in to Photoshop CS and has been well received. Bridge can process and display Camera Raw images and allows for the addition and editing of XMP metadata, either embedded or as a sidecar file.

Today, many DAM solutions claim to be design process management tools. The tight integration with content creation tools in Creative Suite 2 places Bridge and Version Cue head and shoulders above most DAM solutions. But managing a design process in most enterprises involves more than what Bridge provides. Robust security, real-time distributed data and metadata synchronization, and a mature software developer's kit (SDK) for extending the application to other systems and uses are missing from the Bridge solution. Adobe has laid the groundwork for some of this functionality in the box. Architecturally, it will use Web services (XML) and is currently programmable with JavaScript and AppleScript. We'll have to wait and see whether Adobe provides an SDK for Bridge.

The introduction of Bridge will raise a few questions: Will Adobe scale Bridge itself to an enterprise DAM solution or will third-party DAM developers extend Bridge. Given Adobe's commitment to release new versions every 18 months and only release full updates as part of the suite, we might not know the answer for a few more years. Whether DAM developers make use of Bridge as a front-end remains to be seen.

For users without a DAM solution, it's clear there is immediate payback for taking the time to transfer or initiate jobs in Version Cue, build collections in Bridge and begin inputting metadata in images. For workgroups with users not using CS applications, such as sales departments using only Acrobat Reader and an existing database, the change might not be worth it.



Individuals and groups with an existing management tool have little incentive to make the switch.

Adobe Stock Photos. Integrated into Bridge is a new directory called Adobe Stock Photos. This iTunes-style stock photo gateway makes downloading and using comp and high-resolution versions of images easy. With all participating stock companies presented through a familiar (at least to iTunes users) interface and rich metadata to search on, images can be found quickly and easily (page 4). Comp images are free to use for design purposes and can be renamed, altered, and cropped and used in layouts. An internal link to the original image means that the link will still be there when it comes time to license it. Preflighting documents in Adobe applications will also flag comp images in their report.

The other advantage to this approach to buying is that all the usage terms are the same for all of the vendors. It will be interesting to see when and if new stock photo agencies jump on this new platform and if there will be room for independent and under-the-radar stock organizations. Currently, images are available from Photodisc by Getty Images, Comstock Images, DigitalVision, imageshop by zefa images and amana. Currently, 230,000 royalty-free images are available. At this time Adobe Stock Photos supports transactions in 27 different countries and four different currencies.

Photoshop CS2. It's easy to see that this version of Photoshop is friendlier and smarter. It's also clear that Adobe is attuned to the needs of its market like few other vendors. With the continuous addition of filters,

Keyboard shortcuts allow users to assign command key combinations to menu items.

plug-ins, effects and features over the years, things were getting out of hand. Almost everything we've been given has been of use, so wasn't a case of superfluous feature bloat; it's just turning into a case of click and drag contortionism. Photoshop CS helps by providing the ability to save workspaces. We've also had the ability to assign command key combinations to menu items that did not have them (page 5). In Photoshop CS2, we can highlight menu items with color or hide infrequently used interface items (below). This control is provided through a Keyboard Shortcuts and Menus item under Window > Workspace. In a curious twist you can also find these menu items under the File menu, so one or the other menu item might actually be the first item you hide.

Among the new user interface items in Photoshop CS2 are a WYSIWYG font menu and customizable palettes. The text size in the tool bar, layer style dialog and palettes can also be changed. The result of all of these changes is a much friendlier work environment. Of course, that begs the question of why this wonderful control over our work environment is not available in all Creative Suite applications. But why quibble? In another sense, Mac users who reduce the size of their menus will now see the new Show All Menu Items menu item at the bottom of each menu. Some in the Windows world love this approach to menu manageability and others hate it.

High Dynamic Range photographs (HDR, 32-bit-per-channel) are now supported. These images, though not commonly used in day-to-day photography, allow you to make adjustments to the differences between light and dark the same way a photographer does when setting the exposure through the camera originally. Any corrections applied through HDR have a more "normal" look to them than those processed after the fact.

Additional tools are now provided for correcting in-camera problems, such as optical aberrations, including vignetting, chromatic aberration, barrel effect and pincushion distortion. A new Photoshop fil-

Pricing & Activation

Adobe Direct Pricing: Premium Edition USD\$1,199

- Estimated street price \$1,119 (often with free shipping)
- Premium includes GoLive and Acrobat Professional 7.0
- Similar discounts apply when upgrading from Photoshop to Premium or Standard editions and so on.

Adobe Direct Pricing: Standard Edition USD\$899

- Estimated street price: USD\$840 (often with free shipping)
- Does not include GoLive CS2 or Acrobat Professional 7.0

Activation for the Creative Suite CS2 is done with one serial number online.

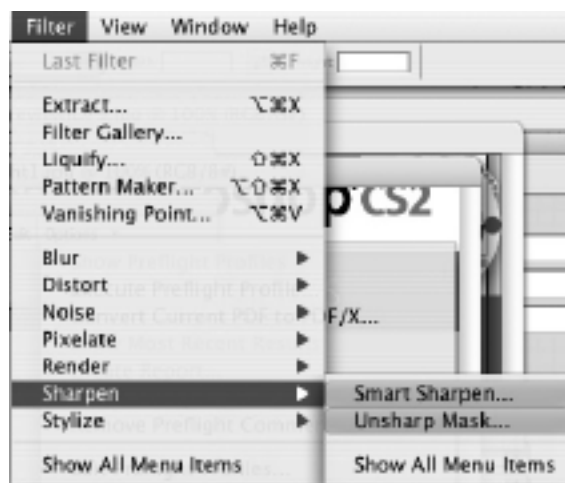
ter supports noise reduction, which happens when camera vendors apply noise reduction in their firmware to compensate for images taken with a high ISO setting or are under-exposed or have long exposure times. The red-eye tool has also changed, and we can now change the size of the pupil to be changed and the level of darkness that will be applied.

A new Smart Sharpen filter, based on new algorithms, reduces halos by providing better edge detection. Another smart feature, Smart Guides, means we can now align items on different layers by activating Smart Guide to help. They can be turned on or off in the View menu.

Photoshop provides a number of ways to automate the actions of the program internally and externally. In Windows, any scripting language that supports COM automation, such as Visual Basic, will work; on the Mac, AppleScript or any environment that allows you to send Apple events will do. JavaScript can be used as a cross-platform environment for controlling actions on either platform. For the user, actions can be recorded and saved as a droplet. Drag an image or images onto a droplet and the actions will be applied to them. Droplets can be created in both ImageReady and Photoshop but cannot be used to move between the two for image transformations.

Some of the new functionality seems to be a work in progress. For example, Photoshop has a bit of a Rube Goldberg relationship with Bridge when it comes to Camera Raw files. While Camera Raw files can be viewed in Bridge with the default color settings applied and metadata can be added and edited, images cannot be transformed to different formats without Photoshop and the Camera Raw plug-in available. The expectation is, it seems, that representative images from a shoot will be opened in Photoshop and that settings for white balance, bit depth, resolution and so on will be saved as a setting for the group. Once this is

Keyboard shortcuts and menu items in Photoshop CS2.



done in Photoshop, it can be applied to batches of files in Bridge.

On the one hand, it makes sense not to duplicate all of the functionality in the Photoshop Camera Raw plug-in in Bridge; on the other hand, the functionality is obvious by its omission in Bridge. These must still be opened in Photoshop and saved as DNG before they can be sent to Bridge for storage and tracking. Culling images in Photoshop with Version Cue will more closely resemble how it is done in the analog world. Images can be saved as originals and alternates. Similar images also can be saved as collections. It's not necessary to own the complete CS2 to do this, either. Anyone using Photoshop CS can tap into the power of Version Cue.

As far as digital magic is concerned, the real sizzle in this release of Photoshop CS2 is Vanishing Point, Smart Objects and Image Warp. Vanishing point is a way to edit an image with additional elements and have Photoshop alter them to conform to the correct perspective of the image. The Vanishing Point dialog box is an environment of its own, with tools similar to those on the main Photoshop tool palette. In this dialog, one defines the perspective plane by applying a grid to an image. With a grid applied to an image, functions such as pasting, copying, cloning or painting take on the perspective of the grid. Of course, the marquee, stamp, eyedropper, zoom and brush tools are also available.

Smart Objects allows for non-destructive editing of Illustrator artwork in Photoshop. A Smart Object is a container made up of one or more layers. You can scale, rotate or warp these layers (but not change perspective or distort) without losing the original image data used on the layer. This Smart Object can be another Photoshop file or an Illustrator vector file.

Image Warp is a command that allows warping according to predefined objects (Warp Modes) or by changing the position of control points (Free Transform).

Illustrator CS2. Illustrator CS2 includes two major functions that have been a long time coming. Live Trace converts scanned line-art or bitmap images to scalable, editable vector drawings (top left). Live Paint can be used to "ink" Live Traced images.

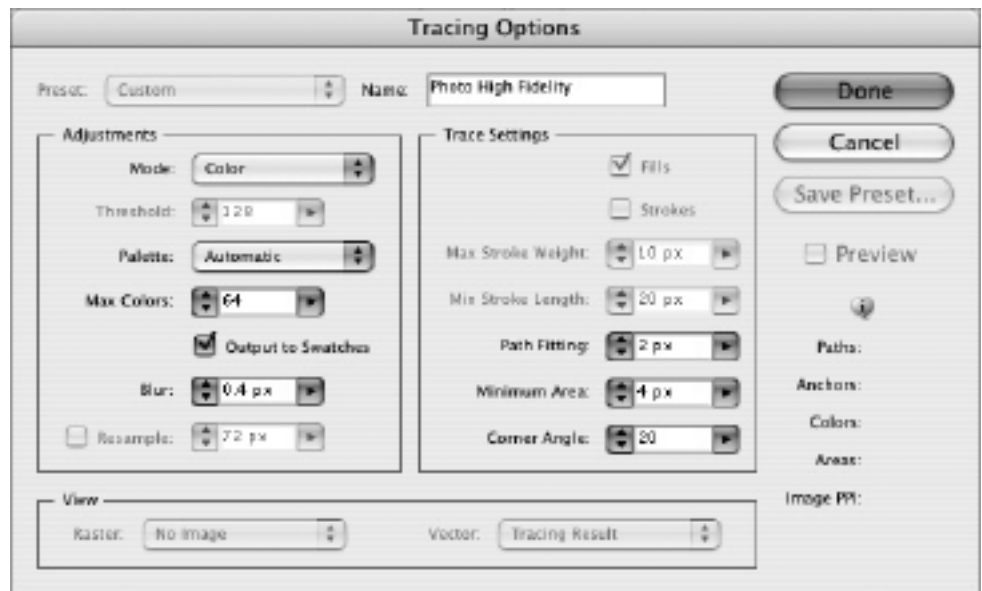
When I say these features have been a long time coming, it's only because after having struggled with magnetic marquees and a previous Adobe application called Streamline, I've earned the right to cast an envious leer at a power tool now available. The problem in the past was configuring sensitivity to trace anti-aliased pixels. Tedious manual editing of control points was always required. Using lines and beziers and manual tracing was the only alternative — but one often taken.

The other problem occurred when inking the trac-

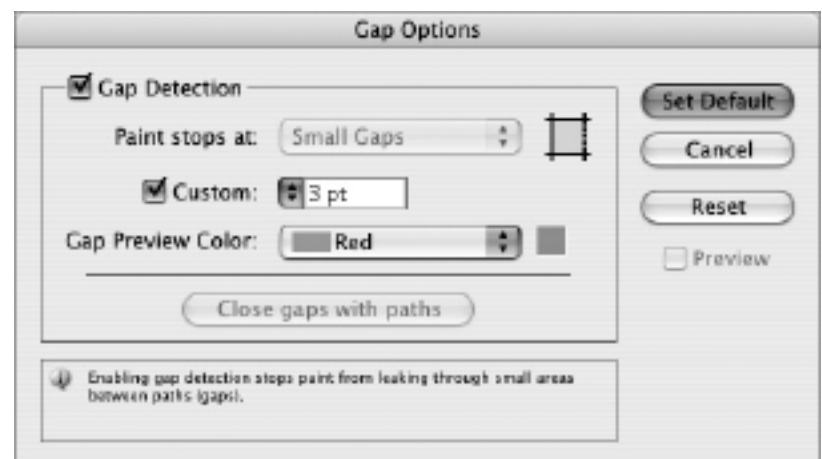
ing. There was always a gap where one object didn't quite intersect another and the ink would bleed through to another, inappropriate section. With Live Trace, you now can place any EPS, PDF or raster image file into Illustrator CS2 and with minimal pre-configuration of the controls get a great result. Configurable options include a threshold for what is white and black; a color palette for generating a color or grayscale tracing from an original; Output to Swatches, to add to your color table colors from the original being traced; and so much more. Obviously, anyone digitizing corporate logos or clip art can get the results they want from this highly configurable tool.

Live Paint is the companion tool to Live trace. Ink the digitized tracing with Live Paint by taking colors from swatches generated from the original that was traced or from another source or palette. The most important feature of Live Paint is the ability to control or eliminate gaps in the tracings (below). A number of different approaches are provided in the Gap Options selection in Live Paint. Of course, many options reflect approaches over the years now formalized in the dialog box.

Live Trace tracing options.



Live Paint gap options settings.



Other important new features and functions in Illustrator CS2 include Export of Illustrator text, artwork or 3-D animations to Macromedia Flash (SWF files); expanding the text styles with underline and strikethrough characters; and the ability to colorize grayscale images by simply dropping a color from the palette onto a grayscale image or onto a drop shadow.

InDesign CS2. InDesign features more than 300 new features, according to Adobe. Perhaps no other Adobe CS2 application displays the extent of interoperability between applications as InDesign does. It should. By its nature, InDesign is a container for composite elements,

GoLive CS2 embodies two of the main themes of this Creative Suite release: enhanced user experience and compliance with new media.

and one could argue that the success of Version Cue and Bridge rests on how well it works with InDesign. As with any workflow that involves digital asset management, Bridge and InDesign work hand in glove.

Images can be dragged from Bridge to InDesign, and alternates can be managed through a new, improved Links palette. Create alternate versions of a layout and save the result to Bridge. If an image is a Photoshop-layered file or a PDF, the visibility of the individual layers can be controlled independently. Users of InCopy can take advantage of increased integration through assignments and graphics support. The story list now appears in InDesign as well as in InCopy. Assignments are collections of InCopy stories and InCopy graphics. This assignment scheme is provided as an alternative to using the entire InDesign document for editing.

A new type of asset is now available in InDesign. You can save selected text and graphics on a page as a snippet for use later in a layout. Snippets even include relative positioning on the original layout. Snippets are

Acrobat Reader review options.

saved as XML files. Snippets can even have previews, which are viewable in Bridge's browser. This new functionality might be the biggest sleeper in the entire CS2 release. Handling these layout elements as descriptive and transformable content in XML (inside or outside of Bridge), in contrast to storing them in Bridge as objects might open up some content management opportunities.

As far as compatibility is concerned, InDesign CS2 documents can be saved as InDesign CS documents. InDesign can now convert multilanguage QuarkX-Press 3.3 and 4.1 templates and document files. Microsoft Word imported styles can now be retained and used to map to styles in InDesign. InCopy itself features a new file format called INX, which allows it to store graphics and geometry. However, files can still be saved as 3.x format for backward compatibility.

New features for designers include the ability to save drop shadows, fill, stroke and text attributes as object styles that can be applied elsewhere in documents. Anchored objects are now supported for creating sidebars and callouts that travel as the text flow changes. In addition, anchored objects in an original Microsoft Word retain the anchor characteristic in InDesign.

Finally, InDesign adds new XML integration throughout the program. With tables, this integration includes tagging tables and table cells; tagging content within table cells; and exporting and re-importing tables while retaining table structure. You can now create a link for the XML file and have that link appear in the Links palette.

Styling information can be embedded in the XML file and the styling information can be applied during import. Enhanced scripting support is now available for XMP. InDesign provides scripting-level access to XMP data in placed images. You can also collect the list of fonts and colors used in a publication and write that list into the XMP data for the publication. Enhanced XML options also include the previously mentioned snippets functions.

GoLive CS2. GoLive CS2 embodies two of the main themes of this Creative Suite release: enhanced user experience and compliance with new media. GoLive has always suffered from comparisons with Dreamweaver as a serious Web development tool. While Dreamweaver might have been more coder friendly in its past incarnations, it's not the clear leader anymore. Adobe has made inroads into making GoLive a serious tool. With this latest version Adobe provides a mix of new features that embrace mobile formats as a media to design for through small screen rendering, cascading style sheets for mobile users, transforming Web HTML to mobile-compatible XHTML and support for SVG-t.

A lot of this new power, including the user-friendly ability to drag and drop formatting information, is



built around cascading style sheets (CSS). Sites can now be managed through CSS. A default CSS file can be applied to new files and HTML styles can be automatically converted to CSS styles.

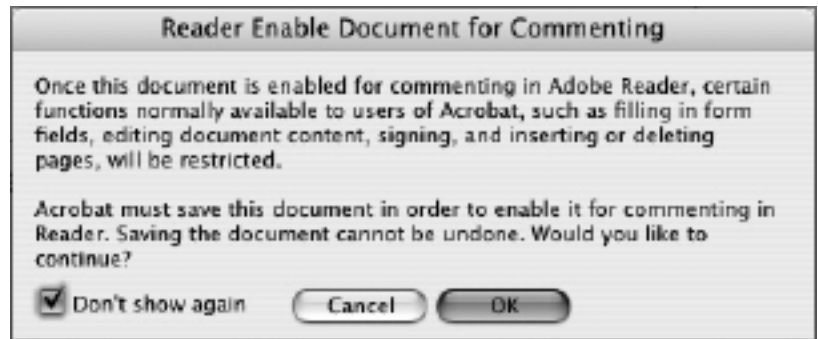
Version Cue is particularly important with GoLive because it provides a way to manage versions in workgroups building a site.

Certainly one of the coolest new features of GoLive CS2 is the ability to view pages formatted for mobile devices while creating the site. GoLive provides phone emulators with skins for popular phones, a built-in Live Rendering browser utilizing Opera technology, and communications via Bluetooth between a Bluetooth-enabled development machine and a Bluetooth-enabled phone. Even MMS-formatted messages appear in any of these formats in the right screen size and colors.

Adobe Acrobat. The Acrobat family consists of Acrobat 7.0 Professional, Acrobat 7.0 Standard and Acrobat Reader 7.0 (free). Acrobat 7.0 Professional is supplied as part of the Premium Creative Suite package. Acrobat 7.0 Professional is supplied with Acrobat 7.0 Distiller, a key element of the overall Creative Suite PDF generation and output preference management. The main focus of this release is to extend the reach of Acrobat as a review tool (page 8 and top left); generate better PDF files for commercial quality print; and provide new tools for fixing common errors in PDFs that are found with the built-in preflight utility.

PDF files initiated from Acrobat 7.0 Professional can be reviewed and marked up in Acrobat 6 or 7 Reader. This review also includes overprint preview, which is enabled by the click of a couple of Pro preferences.

For prepress users, Acrobat 7.0 Professional is becoming more and more an application for managing output and standards. The new Submissions Manager supports Job Definition Format (JDF) Version 1.2 and allows a print service provider to create a single JDF template file that can be sent to a customer for use with their Distiller to generate properly ripped files for output. (bottom left) There is now a JDF tool for creating custom print job definitions. The new JDF environment features a window listing available JDF profiles. These profiles can be defined in the Media Manager, linked to contacts in the Contact Manager, and output in a PSD/X or other pre-con-

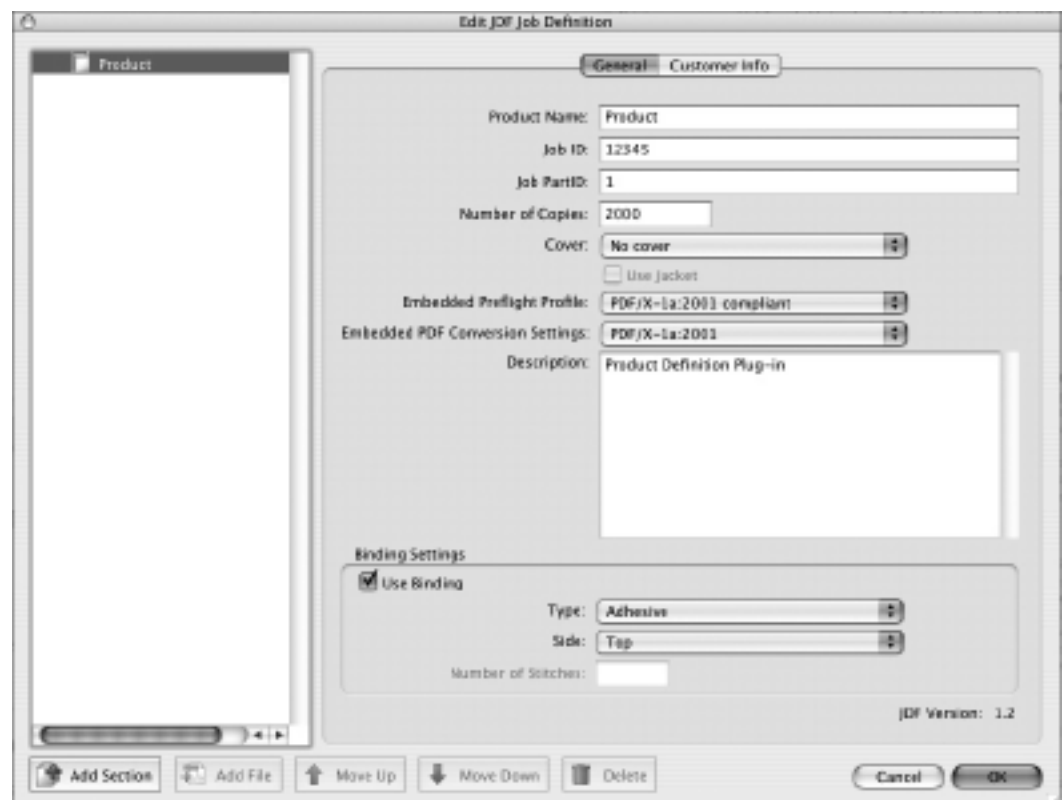


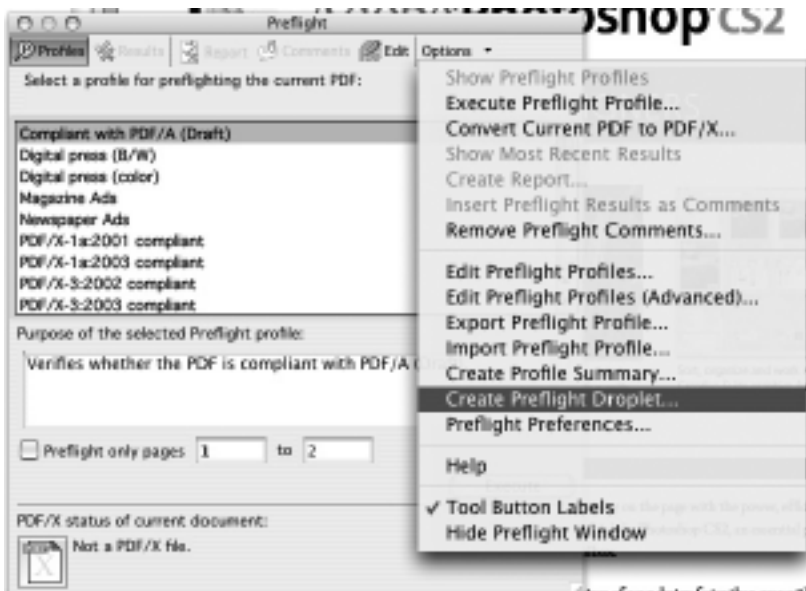
figured output PDF format in the Submissions Manager. The JDF file can also be used to verify the job ticket, preflight the file, and package it all together into a Multipurpose Mail Extensions (MIME) file for delivery. Preflight is built in and enhanced from Version 6.0, and includes preflighting for PDF/X (page 10). Another application supplied as part of Acrobat 7.0 is PDF Optimizer. PDF Optimizer inspects and analyzes PDF files, reduces file size and makes backward-compatible PDFs when necessary.

Similar to Photoshop CS2, Acrobat provides a way to create droplets to automate processes. These droplets are used with preflighting presets and can control the pass/fail parameters for any file, including what to do with the file after either occurs. These droplets are based on standards or custom configurations. For example, if your workflow is built on PDF/X-1a standard, you can drop a PDF file on the droplet to receive a report on whether it meets or fails to meet that standard. A prepress shop customer could also perform the same test before submitting the job.

Enabling Acrobat Reader review functionality.

JDF job definition editor window.





Create Preflight droplet option.

Our take. The success of Adobe as a company since the introduction of Creative Suite Version 1.0 belies the success of its strategy. Sales and profits are soaring. Market share for products such as InDesign is growing. The release of CS2 shows no sign of complacency. Obviously, Adobe's objective is to churn up some upgrade dollars and increase market share. The good news is that the company is aggressively seeking these objectives with the customer in mind and values input from the marketplace as any successful developer must.

Adobe's philosophy goes beyond respecting the needs of the market and involves a top-down corporate mind shift. To achieve the interoperability that CS2 reflects and bring functional consistency to all of the applications in the suite required re-engineering the development process for different departments to work together. Interoperability between Bridge and InDesign, integration of a new PDF engine, consistent suite-wide color management and consistent Print functionality can only happen when teams talk to each other. And that can only happen through strong leadership.

Every user will have a favorite new tool or function, but in terms of overall impact, the introduction of Bridge has to be the most revolutionary component of the suite. When Creative Suite Version 1.0 was originally reviewed in this journal (*THE SEYBOLD REPORT*, Volume 3, Number 12), Version Cue got a lot of the ink because it introduced collaborative asset management with controlled access from each of the CS applications. Mention was made then of the difficulty in characterizing this new application. In CS2, Version Cue and Bridge resolve this difficulty. Version Cue does projects and Bridge is a library. Both are now part of a design process management suite.

All of the point applications that make up the suite — Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, GoLive and Acrobat — have benefited from major advances in workflow control and user environment control over the previous version. Each application has also hinted at things to come in the future through functionality introduced in CS2.

- **Workspace Control.** Being able to create a custom user experience in Photoshop begs the question, why can't users control the environment to the same extent in Illustrator or InDesign?
- **Metadata.** JDF control should probably be available in Bridge and not just through the Acrobat PDF workflow. The Contacts panel in the Customer Info window of the JDF function in Acrobat requires all contacts to be put in by hand. Why can't a set be imported via .CSV or tab-delimited format?
- **Bridge and File Management.** Why doesn't Bridge maintain directories of assets stored on removable media for offline storage or provide automated backups? I encountered performance issues making preview images with Bridge. While I could continue to add metadata, rename files and perform other functions while previews were being created, it was a bit slow and distracting. Conversion to black and white is not available in Bridge, and catalogs created in Bridge cannot be exported with a (free) viewer. There is also no way to inject controlled vocabularies without keying them in.

Creative Suite 2 is a major software introduction. Of course, it seems that its success will depend in large measure on whether or not a more customizable and accessible user interface leads to incremental productivity gains; whether the enhanced Acrobat-based review, annotation and soft proofing workflow is adopted in its current state; whether the packaging, preflighting and fixing of PDFs stands up to day-to-day production; and lastly, whether the tying of JDF settings, PDF/X output settings and the packaging of composite layout elements leads to reliable, controlled output.

So far, according to beta forums, the testers seem happy with the functionality and stability of this release. Of course, basing new features on what users said they needed rather than what Adobe thought they needed wasn't a bad place to start, either. **TSR**

About the Author

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