DesignStudio Tips
Old Tricks and New Shortcuts

Of the "Big Three" page layout programs, DesignStudio is favored by many for its combination of precision and ease-of-use. I've watched it grow from its humble beginnings as Ready,Set,Go into a real powerhouse. Many times Letraset was the first to offer new features. Version 2.0 continues the trend.

During the time I've used DesignStudio, I've discovered many tricks and timesavers. Although most of these are in the excellent manual, you've probably overlooked some of them. I hope they'll help you with your documents.

One very useful, but often overlooked keyboard shortcut toggles you between "Size To Fit" and "Actual Size." Simply hold down the Option and Command keys and click with any tool. When zooming in, your view will center over the spot you clicked on.

I almost always use Guidelines in my DesignStudio projects. Remember that those Guidelines which are the result of the Guides Setup command are on the Master pages; you won't be able to make adjustments to them on individual pages. You can, of course, add new guides to Master Pages or individual pages by simply dragging them out of the ruler. Once you've got the Guides where you want them, you might want to lock them in place in order to prevent accidentally moving them. Don't be afraid of using lots of Guides—they're free.

Duplicating Elements

The Duplicate command has the equivalent of "step and repeat." This can be very handy for creating evenly spaced lines for forms, but you can also use it creatively. For instance, to create striped display text, first draw a rule (horizontal line) just below the top of the display text and select white as its pen pattern. With the rule still selected, choose the Duplicate command. In the dialog box, set the horizontal offset to zero and the vertical offset to the distance which is desired. When you click OK, DesignStudio will do the rest. (See the word "Design" in the illustration.)

And don't forget that there are other things you can do with a few simple lines. In the next example ("Studio"), white lines have been added along the side of the I to produce an entirely different feeling in the typeface. The letters were heavily kerned first to produce the overlapping of the individual forms.

Of course, you can do all of this visually—the effects are fully visible on the screen.

Stretching Text

DesignStudio now has a Horizontal Scaling command for text which allows for either fine tuning of text for copyfitting or for more extreme effects to grab attention. If you use condensed text, you might feel that the resulting word spacing is too loose. To tighten it up, select the text and set the word spacing to something less than 100% in the Horizontal Spacing dialog box.

The Tint choices in the Format menu let you choose from many different gray levels for text. Note that this can be combined with the Colors commands—you can choose Red for text and then a 50% tint of that red.

If you want colors and grays applied to other elements in your document, go straight to the Draw menu where you'll find a selection of custom colors, Pantone colors, percentage fills, and patterns.

Be wary of the "Automatic" leading setting. Often the leading will change subtly when you switch to bold or italic. Automatic settings are mindless. Avoid them for more consistent results.

Search and Replace Styles and Fonts

If you click on "Use Format" while while in the Find dialog, you'll be able to search for and replace fonts, styles, and even stylesheets in the current block, chain, or in the entire document. To do this, simply leave the Find and Change To text fields blank.

Incidentally, you can search for invisible characters, too. To search for a tab, type ∂t (Option-d followed by a t) in either the Find or Change To fields. To search for or replace a return character, type ∂r or ∂n (Option-d followed by either r or n).

Locating Graphics Files

Remember that TIFF and EPS files must be accessible to the program when loading and printing. These files do NOT become a part of the DesignStudio file as Paint and PICT files do. This actually helps, since TIFF and EPS files can be quite large. If they were incorporated into the DesignStudio file, it could get huge rather quickly; and your files would not fit on floppies for backup or transportation.

By the way, if you've misplaced a graphics file and can't remember its name, select the picture block and press Command-M. (Double-clicking the box with the selection arrow accomplishes the same thing.) The Specifications dialog box which appears will list the name (and format) of the file under the File Info button.

Another way to check on this is to use the "Pictures Used" annex under the Document menu. This will give you a list of all "linked" graphic files used in the document.

Many graphic files (such as clip art) have several images on a page. Usually you will only want one of them. Whenever possible crop out unwanted material from graphic files BEFORE importing or pasting them into your document. This saves file space and keeps DesignStudio from slowing down. A desk accessory such as DeskPaint can help with this. Be especially careful of PICT files from MacDraw or SuperPaint. Parts of these files which are cropped out of a picture box (and do not show on screen) are likely to appear on your printout. Go back to the original graphic file and delete unwanted elements.

Don't depend on pasting graphic files into DesignStudio. The Mac's Clipboard is likely to "simplify" your art work, robbing it of resolution or tones. Use the "Get Picture" command instead, especially for high resolution TIFF, RIFF, or EPS files.

Hidden Tools

In case you hadn't noticed, there are some extra tools hidden in the tool palette. To access them, press and hold on the two rightmost tools in that palette—more choices will pop out.

Don't Print

The Don't Print option (in the Specifications dialog box) can be helpful in several ways. You can use it for fold lines or for notes to your printer, your editor, or yourself.

You can also use non-printing elements to push text blocks into odd shapes or angled margins. Draw a line and get its Specifications box. Check the Runaround and Don't Print options. (See illustration.)

Smart Copy

Objects copied from one page to another always paste into precisely the same position as on the source page. The contents of entire pages can thus be cut (using the Select All command) and pasted onto another page without further alignment.

Styles

Styles, or stylesheets, are valuable for two main reasons. First, they offer a shortcut to get the same font, size, indents, etc. that you use several times in a document. Second, stylesheets can help you achieve a consistent look throughout your document, or in successive issues of a newsletter. Nothing shouts "amateur" so much as a mismatch of inconsistent styles.

DesignStudio's Styles are the most flexible in the page layout world because they are not rigidly tied to paragraphs. They can do everything that paragraph-based style sheets can and more. Want a special Style to emphasize members' names in your newsletter? Nothing to it with DesignStudio, but just try it in PageMaker or QuarkXPress.

You might covet the floating Style palettes in the competition, but remember that you can use a keyboard shortcut for quick access to styles in DesignStudio. Just append a "/" and a single character to its name. For instance, define a style as Body/b. Then select the text and press Command-G and Command-B in quick succession. The style will be applied. I have a number of styles set up for my various newsletters: Headline, subhead, article breaks, captions, bylines, credit lines, and so forth. You can also "Apply Style" from the Edit menu.

For quick one-of-a-kind projects, it might not be worthwhile to set up new Styles, but remember that you can import a set of styles from another document. Another option is to use the Copy Format/Apply Format commands to quickly "pick up" the attributes of one selection of text and apply it to another. These last commands are so handy that I've programmed them as function keys on my extended keyboard with QuicKeys.

Glossary Shortcuts

 Glossaries can be very handy as a shortcut for phrases that you use often, but another use for them is for bullets and dingbats from various fonts. The Glossary remembers the particular font used, so press Command-G followed by Command-S, for instance, to get a Zapf Dingbats star.

 DesignStudio also lets you set up object Glossaries for quick access to logos or other graphic elements. This lets you define "libraries" of elements that you use regularly. How about a text box with the word "continued" appearing at the bottom of a page with a simple keyboard sequence?

Macros

 If you have a macro tool like QuicKeys, you can add all sorts of shortcuts. For instance, if I select a graphic and press Control-5, my graphic gets scaled to 50% size. Control-7 gives 75%, etc. Pressing Control left arrow moves all selected items 1/4" to the left. Pressing F-9 brings another document window to the front. You get the picture.

 You've probably noticed that Command-Shift-Y toggles the Guidelines off and on. Did you also know that Option-P causes block outlines to disappear? I've used QuicKeys to link these two into a sequence; now, when I press Control-B, I get a preview without block outlines *or* guides.

Other Goodies

Earlier I mentioned DesignStudio's Pictures Used annex. There's also a Fonts Used annex which will give you a list of every font used in your document. This feature can be invaluable when you're preparing for a trip to the service bureau. Another annex lets you customize the kerning table for any fonts you use.

Select an object (or group) and press the left arrow key. The object will move one pixel to the left. If the Caps Lock key is down, the distance will be 10 pixels.

Finally, don't forget DesignStudio's consistent interface; you can double-click on any object in order to get at its specifications dialog box, where you can control all of its aspects—its angle, line ruling, exact placement and size, and much more. Picture blocks and text blocks can be shaped and/or have borders. Photos can have their brightness and contrast adjusted. The newest version of DesignStudio even does color separations of any kind of graphic file you import.

DesignStudio has a wealth of features. After you've explored those I've listed here, don't be afraid to experiment. If you find any nifty new tricks or shortcuts, be sure to let the rest of us know.

by Jim Alley
Professor of Computer Art
The Savannah College of Art and Design

_____

The article above is reprinted from Mac Monitor, the newsletter of The Savannah Macintosh Users Group. It may be reprinted in a single issue of newsletters published by non-profit user groups. Payment shall consist of a single issue of the newsletter in which the article appears, sent to the following address:

Jim Alley
320 East 54th Street
Savannah, GA 31405