



'Stitching' photos together for a cohesive product

I'm often asked how to "stitch" artwork that was scanned in two pieces back together. It isn't hard to do, but it can be tricky.

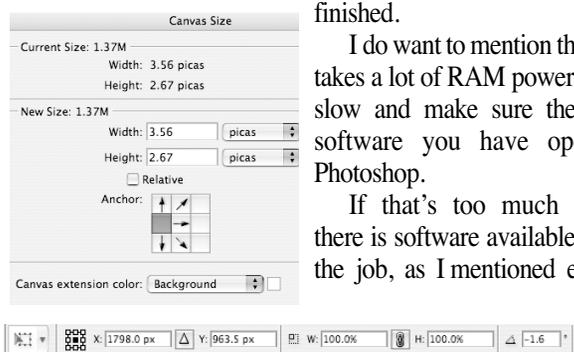
Let's say you have a photo that's larger than your scanner. You're going to have to scan it in two pieces. Start by making sure the photo is as straight and flat as possible. This will save you a lot of work later on.

There is software available that makes putting a photo together easier, but let's look at how to do it with a piece of software most of you already own – Photoshop.

Imagine your photo in two pieces. Now open the piece of the photo that will appear on the far left side. Once it's open, go to the 'Image' menu and pull down to 'Canvas Size.' In the box with the 'anchor' arrows, check the one to the left and in the center and change the canvas width to a little more than twice the width of your current photo. Increase the height a little in case you need a little wiggle room.

Now, open the second image – the one that will appear on the right side of the finished photo. Use your rectangle tool to select the entire photo, then copy and paste into the first file. The right-hand side of the photo will come in as a new layer.

Using the 'Move' tool, located next to the rectangle tool, move the right side until it aligns with the left side. If one side of the scanned photo appears tilted, you're going to need to use the 'Rotate' tool to



by WILMA MELOT

computer notes
from the road

make the two sides align. To use the Rotate tool, go to Edit, Free Transform and rotate the second file to line up with the first one.

You might find it's easier to use the 'Rotate' function in the options bar across the top of your screen.

When the two photos are lined up to your satisfaction, go to the 'Layers' menu and select Flatten Image. This combines the two photos together and your work is finished.

I do want to mention that this takes a lot of RAM power so go slow and make sure the only software you have open is Photoshop.

If that's too much work, there is software available to do the job, as I mentioned earlier.

Rob Curley, who spoke at the recent Mid-Winter Convention, suggested going to www.download.com and searching for photo stitching software. I decided to give it a try to see what was available. Although there are several packages that work with Macs, one that received high marks was IPIX Interactive Studio. Although you can download a free trial version, the retail price is \$899.

This software includes automated batch functionality for stitching, capping, scaling, compressing and converting output in order to maximize production efficiency. It also includes broad support for multiple output formats – Macromedia Shockwave, VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language), X3D, and QuickTime cubic – with added control over scaling and resolution. This one works on Mac OSX.

IPIX can be used with Web sites, which is why all the output formats are Web-related.

A smaller and less expensive program is available from ulead.com. This software offers automated photo warping, alignment and color blending as well as manual image alignment via drag and drop or keyboard nudging. Good adjustment tools allow users to correct differences in color balance, camera tilt and camera angle.

You also can create and save panoramas in popular file formats including MOV as well as output HTML files for posting panoramas to the Web. This software requires Windows 98 or NT 4.0 and retails for \$39.

Resolving duplicate fonts in Font Book

I learned a lot about Font Book lately working with James John at the Sulphur Times-Democrat. This little tool can be very useful – after you learn to control it.

To find Font Book on a Mac OSX computer go to the "Applications" folder.

This little utility allows you to preview all the fonts on your computer as well as tell you where each font is located and if you have duplicate fonts. You can even resolve conflicts with Font Book.

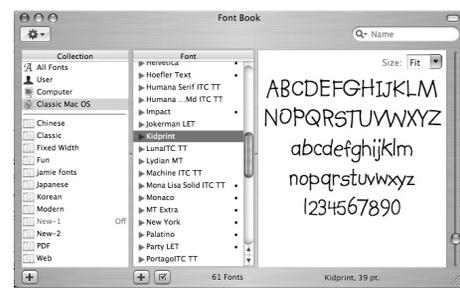
Font Book gives you complete control of fonts, letting you enable and disable fonts – individually or in groups – to customize which fonts you see in an application. Font Book lets you shorten the list of fonts to the ones you want to use, and if you're working with many fonts, you can specify the right fonts for any project.

To install new fonts, just double click the font file and Font Book will prompt you to install the font.

To see what a font looks like, simply click on the name in the second column and it displays a sample in the third column. You may need to click on the disclosure triangle to see what's available in that font family.

If you want to see how the font will look in a specific size, choose the size from the pop-up menu or drag the font size slider. (If you don't see the preview area, choose 'Preview > Show Preview'.)

If some or all of the characters appear gray in the preview, it means those characters are not available in the font you selected.



You may come across a situation in Font Book where the 'User' collection appears dimmed with the word 'Off' next to it and you can't enable 'User' from the 'Edit' menu. This can happen after reinstalling Mac OSX 10.4 Tiger, or after manually removing items from the Fonts folder within your home folder's Library folder.

To resolve this issue, manually add a font

to your Fonts folder (Library/Fonts), then restart your computer. The User collection should then be available in Font Book.

While this works for OSX, it does not affect the fonts in OS9 or the Classic font folders. This is confusing since Font Book has folders named Classic. However, those are just the fonts OS9 is able to use and not all fonts available in OS9.

I often see fonts in an OS9 folder that are actually aliases of a font and not the real file. When you move an alias to an OS9 environment, it can create problems in the new system. It's a good idea to clean up the font folder you plan on moving to a new machine. If you own Font Doctor, use it to look for corrupt fonts. Font Doctor will look for duplicate fonts but will not remove corrupt fonts from your system.

Font Book also lets you export fonts to send to another user. To export, open Font Book and select the fonts you want to send. (To select fonts that are not adjacent to one another, press the Command key and click.) Choose File, Export Fonts. Type in a name for the folder, choose where you want to place it and click save.

plugged IN

Photoshop plug-ins

Neat Image is a filter designed to reduce visible noise and grain in photographic images produced by digital cameras and scanners. This tool is indispensable in low-light (indoors, night) and high-speed (sport, action) photography. It's a good tool for both professional photographers and digital image processing enthusiasts.

<http://www.neatimage.com/mac/index.html>

Converting photos

There are many ways to convert a photo to black and white. Here is a look at three methods you may not have tried.

For photos that turn into gray blobs when you go to Image > Mode > Grayscale, try looking at the channels of the color photo. It may be that the red or blue channel makes a great black and white photo.

To use one of the color channels, select the channel in the 'Channels' palette, then go to grayscale under Image > Mode. When asked if you want to discard the extra channels, click yes.

Another method to try starts by going to Image > Adjustment > Desaturate. This leaves the photo in RGB but takes out the color info. You still have to go to Image > Mode > Grayscale to finish but you can lighten or darken the separate channels before you finish.

This works well on some photos. For instance, you could eliminate the grainiest channel before converting to gray scale. This method seems to hold a little more detail.

The final method begins by making a new layer in the color photo by going to Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation. Now you can desaturate the entire photo and still adjust the gamma colors if needed. For instance, if the red is off, go to that layer and work with the sliders to adjust the hue and saturation to see if you can improve your toughest photos.

Best books for color correction

A good overall book for learning to correct photos is the Photoshop CS/CS2 Retouching Cookbook for Digital Photographers by Barry Huggins.

Commercial Photoshop Retouching in the Studio, by Glenn Honiball, has a great section on working with newsprint photos.

