



So you're having trouble printing PDFs...

Last April in this column I discussed how to make the perfect PDF. This month let's talk about what to do those problematic PDFs you receive from someone else.

Problems with PDFs can occur even when the person creating it is trying their best to make sure it's going to work for everyone. I've seen PDFs that appear to be perfect fall apart right before my eyes when it's sent to the rip.

When you're making a PDF for others, make sure all fonts are embedded and that art files are linked and of good quality. However, things can still go wrong in the work flow and that PDF that looks perfect on your screen may not work on the other end.

There are now so many programs that create PDFs that you can't be sure which one to use. Apple's operating programs let you make a PDF of any page from any program you can print from. On the Windows side, there are lots of PDF makers – and fewer standards.

What does this all mean to you? Unfortunately, it means you may be getting more and more PDFs that cause problems.

There's no way to know how many times a file has been re-PDFed before you receive it. And every time a file is re-PDFed, it loses quality and is less likely to work for you. In a perfect world, you would always receive PDFs from the person who created it. But I don't know anyone who's living in a perfect world.

And we can't put all the blame on the people building the PDFs. Let's face it – some newspapers (gasp) have outdated equipment. I know it's shocking, but there are some papers that don't even own a copy of the full version of Acrobat.

But let's not dwell on that. Let's figure out what to do with PDFs that don't work on your end.

First of all, re-download the PDF. I always suspect a corrupt download when files don't work. Besides, it's one of the easiest things to try and if it works – great. I recommend downloading it in another Web browser than the one you originally used. For instance, if you used Internet Explorer, re-download the file using Netscape. For those of you using OSX or Windows, Firefox and Opera are good alternative Web browsers. Having lots of programs in your arsenal is always a good thing.



by WILMA MELOT

computer notes
from the road

- Windows users need to make sure they do not have two firewalls running at the same time. Use either Norton or Windows, but not both.

- Make sure the person sending the PDF is on your Internet provider's good (white) list.

Your best friend in this war is a good copy of Acrobat Professional. Photoshop can be linked to Acrobat in the full version (note: this does not work in Acrobat Reader). This feature allows you to manipulate photos in the PDF. You can lead Acrobat to Photoshop under the 'Preferences' touch-up menu. To use Photoshop in Acrobat, locate the advanced editing touch-up object tool. Right click (or hold down the control key on a Mac) and select 'Edit Object' from the pop-up menu. Now you can change the format (for instance, from RGB to grayscale) or lighten the photo.

I can just hear some of you saying,



"That's good to know but my ad still won't print." So let's move on to the next step. For

those of you who own version 6 or later of Acrobat Pro, try reducing the file size. Just go to File>Reduce file size and save the PDF back to an Acrobat 4.0 document. This often works.

Several people are just re-PDFing the ad with Acrobat Distiller to make it printable. To redistill a PDF, go to File>Save As and select "PostScript." Run this file through Distiller with your own settings and try printing the new ad.

Some papers directly place the PostScript file on paginated pages. This only works if all fonts and art have been embedded so check closely before sending it to the rip.

If you've tried all these suggestions and

your ad still won't print there is one last-ditch effort you can try. Save the file as a Tiff from either Acrobat or Photoshop. This generally works but you lose print quality in the process so it's always the method of last resort.

When saving the file as a Tiff, make sure to check settings. Turn off compression since the file has already been compressed once.

Set the resolution to at least 300dpi; if the ad contains small print, increase the resolution to 600 or 1200dpi.

Photoshop opens most PDFs, which can then be saved as a Tiff file. Just be sure to check the resolution before saving.

Again, I urge you to use caution when saving a PDF as a Tiff file. I don't think it should be used unless you're on deadline and desperate.

If you have the time, contact whoever sent you the PDF and ask them to resend it in a format that works for you.

Protect yourself from summer surges and brownouts

This is the time of year I sing the praises of battery backups. I write about them after seeing several hard drives fail in a row and hearing people ask, "What happened?"

What may have happened is a power spike or brownout, which do more harm to our newer, faster drives because they spin faster.

Even if you're in an old building, there are some things you can do to protect yourself.

If you want to keep hard drives and phone lines that go to your DSL ports in good shape, get a good UPS. Yes, they do cost anywhere from \$30 to \$100 and up, but that's a lot

cheaper than getting a new hard disk drive every other year – as some people are doing.

Belkin and APC have been the leaders in this area for years. Belkin Components has the Home Office 550VA 300W UPS. This is the less expensive model but it can save your computer.

Here are the specs: Four power outlets that are both surge and battery backed up, and two that are only surge protected. Built-in phone/fax/modem line (DSL compatible) protection and easy-to-install safe system shutdown software. Retail for \$29.95.

APC's model is the Back-UPS ES 8 Outlet, 500VA 120, which sells for \$58.95.

Specs: Surge energy rating, 365 Joules; four surge and battery backup outlets, four surge protected only. Built-in phone-fax-modem line (DSL compatible) RJ11 protection. Alarm when on battery, distinctive low battery alarm and an overload continuous tone alarm.

Most surge protectors only last, at most, a couple of years so if that one your foot rests on under your desk is 10 years old, it's no longer protecting your system.



Mail Tracker 3.0 with Postage Saver

I've been helping Melissa Grace, publisher of the Ringling Eagle, get up and running on her new mail program, Mail Tracker with Postage Saver.

Mail Tracker's Import Wizard brought her old mail list in easily, after we turned it into a tag delimited text file.

You are limited to a built-in list of field headers, but it does include four custom fields, which turned out to be enough for Melissa's database.

The menu system is easy to understand. Postage Saver is activated from within Mail Tracker prior to printing so you don't have to load a new program.

And it sorts to one or more fields.

The automatic locate and delete duplicate mailing addresses works well but also will allow you to ignore it.

It's PAVE-GOLD certified for accuracy by the U.S. Postal Service, including all new rates and sorting changes.

With Mail Tracker you can sort a maximum of 100,000 addresses at one time. Plus, it created a great postal report with a good description for handling the sack tags and it printed bar codes on the labels.

Additional print options allow Mail Tracker + Postage Saver to export a presorted list.

The software requires a 486DX33 or better running Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, XP, or NT 4.0 with Service Pack 2.0 or greater. MailTracker v3 requires a minimum of 64MB of RAM to operate at adequate speed. If you are managing lists greater than 100K you would benefit from a greater amount of RAM.

MailTracker + Postage Saver is more affordable than other bulk mail software packages because it does not include a built-in CASS address correction service. This means the software can be sold for one low price, no subscriptions and free MailTracker updates. Postage Saver updates are free for the first year, then only \$20 for 18 months.

If you do require CASS address correction Mail Tracker partnered with listcleanup.com to make CASS an easy and affordable option. Pay when and if you need it.

For more information and a free online demo, go to www.idatasoft.com.

MailTracker + Postage Saver Pro 3.0 is available online for \$179.95.

