



by Carol Lovelady

In a perfect world I wouldn't have to write this article, but as we all know, the world isn't perfect—especially the world of electronic publishing. I wonder if the traditional typesetters using lead type or in later years, typesetting machines, had the kind of controversy surrounding users today. The controversy I'm speaking of is the one regarding which publishing program should be used.

There is no one correct answer to this situation because there are numerous publishing programs, a wide variety of documents and publications that need to be produced, and a growing number of users. However, if the correct research is done a user can select a program to meet their needs knowing that they have the right tool for the job. Many times, however, users are persuaded, or instructed to change tools. The reasons for this change aren't always clear, and sometimes, the reasons are wrong.

Time and time again I'm asked for information about how to send Ventura files to a printer or service bureau. Since I've published thousands of pages by sending PRN files and have never sent native Ventura files, I know how easily this can be done. Many Ventura users, on the other hand, don't know how to create PostScript print files avoiding the need to send native files. The process is simple, but when a user doesn't know how to do it, they can be tempted by the protests of a service bureau or printer who claims

changing to QuarkXPress or PageMaker would make the users life easier. I'd like to help dispel some myths surrounding this issue, so let's examine what's wrong with this scenario after putting the printer/service bureau position into perspective.

First, a service bureau or printer is involved with the last part of the publishing process. If they are to help a user decide which tool is best for the job, they should be consulted before the job begins.

Second, without proper research, how would a service bureau or printer know which tool is best for a project? They can certainly see what types of publications are being processed, whether they are in color or black and white, whether they are all text, or contain many graphics and pictures. But, these are not usually the reasons for their recommendations to switch from Ventura to QuarkXPress or PageMaker.

Third, switching to another program is likely to make the service bureau or printer more comfortable because they're used to taking native files from QuarkXPress and PageMaker users, but will it make your life easier? Usually not.

Dispelling the Myths

While both QuarkXPress and PageMaker are excellent programs, they are not for everyone. For the publications that many of you are creating, QuarkXPress and PageMaker would fall short of providing the type of automation and flexibility needed to do the job quickly and consistently.

Without getting into specifics about how each program performs its tasks, there are some very real facts to consider regarding use of any program. Here are a few:

1. According to an article in a recent issue of Publish Magazine the reason that most QuarkXPress and PageMaker users turn over native files to the printer/service bureau is that the designer (user) doesn't know how, or doesn't want to be responsible for the final stages of the production, specifically trapping on color pieces. Even if the job doesn't contain color, or trapping issues, native files are still passed to the printer/service

bureau because that's the way it's always been done and users aren't usually taught how to create PostScript files from within Quark or PageMaker.

2. Passing native files involves a number of steps to make sure all of the components are transferred. For instance, not

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only is the native QuarkXPress or PageMaker file required, but also all pictures (even if they are embedded in the publication) and all fonts used in the publication. This requires that the user know where all of the components are stored, and in the case of fonts, the user must know where and how to copy fonts to send to the printer/service bureau. Macintosh users have always had to do this, so there are utilities for them that make this process easier, but on a PC, most users don't know where to find the font files, or what fonts to copy because font file names are not the same as the font names we see in our publications.

Ventura 8 helps make this job easier if you want to pass native files to the print shop because it creates a list of the file names to copy. It's still up to the user to

find the fonts and copy them to the disk, CD, or other media.

3. There is not a cost saving when sending native files over sending PostScript or PRN files. In fact, since the service bureau has to do more with native files to make sure they get printed correctly, they charge accordingly. On the other hand, when they can simply queue a PostScript file to the imagesetter and have it processed, it saves time and uses less of their resources which should result in a cost savings.

Of course, if you've been sending camera ready pages (laser printed pages) in the past, you'll recognize a cost savings immediately by sending PostScript files from Ventura.

4. The issue of cost is an important one when looking at the program being used. Ventura is a very powerful program and is capable of doing a lot of things that users of other programs can't do without resorting to an add-on or extension. Many of the things QuarkXPress and PageMaker users do require the purchase of these additional utility programs. For instance, to do tables, an extension or add-on is necessary. While using the extension/add-on the user is no longer within QuarkXPress or PageMaker, but instead is actually working on the text outside the main program. That means a lot of switching back and forth, even though the switching may be automatic.



Purchasing PageMaker or QuarkXPress is only the beginning. You need to identify which extension or add-on programs are required and purchase them separately, from other vendors. The purchase prices vary, but on the whole if you were to purchase add-ons or extensions to provide the same functionality found in Ventura you would spend an additional \$10,000 - \$14,000.

Another important point to remember is that many of the add-ons and extensions are only available on the Mac and are not and will not be available for the Windows platform.

Another factor to keep in mind regarding the purchase of add-ons and extensions, is that they come from someone other than the original vendor of the program. Adobe and Quark do not sell the majority of utility programs, so the issue of support becomes important.

Conversion of Files

One aspect to study when considering the change from one program to another is the amount of time and effort involved in either converting or recreating your current work. A few publishing programs can import publication files from another program. Adobe InDesign can take Adobe PageMaker files, but they come from the same company, so there's no problem exchanging code. I doubt whether Adobe has willingly turned over its code to Quark or vice versa so programmers there may have reverse engineered the code to allow PageMaker to import QuarkXPress files and vice versa. Corel certainly isn't giving its code to anyone else, so the automatic conversion of Ventura files to any other program is non-existent.

Since neither QuarkXPress or PageMaker can open or import a Ventura publication all projects will have to be recreated from scratch. Text and pictures can be imported and in some cases the tag names can be turned into style names for use in QuarkXPress or PageMaker, but stylesheets and their attributes cannot be carried over, so they have to be redefined in templates which aren't quite as flexible as Ventura stylesheets.

Who's Providing the Service?

The term "service bureau" refers to an organization that takes your native files or print files and sends them to an imagesetter to produce film or in some cases, go direct to plate. When they suggest you change programs for their convenience, you end up being the one providing the service.

If the service bureau or printer gives you a hard time when you give them PostScript, PRN, or PDF files you should educate them on how easily they will be able to process the files and assure them that you take the responsibility for making sure the files are correct. If there's a problem, font substitution, missing pictures, etc. it's up to you to fix it and send another PostScript file. If you use tools like Adobe Acrobat to create PDF files you can proof the print files and catch errors like this before it's too late.

Don't forget that they are human and, by nature, resistant to change or difference. If you still get resistance and you have a choice of who processes your files you can take your business elsewhere. If you don't have that choice, take the time to learn what needs to be done and have confidence in yourself and assure them the files will process.

You should always do a test file ahead of time to make sure you know how to do it and allow the

printer or service bureau to give you tips to make the process smoother. This also gives both of you an opportunity to work out any glitches before the final process begins.

Sometimes files don't process properly because the service bureau doesn't know how to send the files to the imagesetter without opening them in another application. For instance, opening a Ventura print file in Adobe Illustrator can introduce problems that don't occur when the file is sent directly. The printer may need to find out how to send them directly, but it's not your responsibility to teach them how to do this. If they want your business, they'll find a way to provide you with the services you require.

It's important for Windows users to be aware of and remember that QuarkXPress is the leader only on the Mac platform. It is not the leading program being used on the PC, where there are more publishing programs to choose from.

Training

Training is an issue that frequently comes up when talking about switching from one program to another. While this is an important consideration, this should not be the sole reason for switching programs. Even though it might be easier to find people trained in QuarkXPress or PageMaker, it could take them longer to publish your files because the programs don't contain the features you need. Is your turnover so high that this becomes a serious issue? If so, maybe your company needs to pay the users more or treat them better so they stick around longer. It may be easier to find plumbers than it is



to find roofers, but this doesn't help you when you need a new roof.

If you're satisfied that you're using the right tool for the job take the time to either find the right person with the skills you need, or take the responsibility for getting them trained properly. The money spent on training can easily be recouped when users are efficient and use the tools correctly. Users with PageMaker or QuarkXPress knowledge will often take the wrong approach to preparing files in Ventura because they aren't familiar with the difference in techniques. That doesn't mean they can't learn, and actually, if trained properly, they will learn Ventura very quickly compared to someone who has no previous publishing experience.

Conclusion

To recap the major points of this article, the decision to switch programs should be based on facts and research rather than on the say-so of friends, colleagues, or

outside organizations that are not familiar with your needs.

Some service bureaus and print shops are not knowledgeable on how easy it is to process Ventura print



files, so they may be resistant to taking your PostScript files. Also, keep in mind that they can charge more when they take native files, so they might resist taking your files because they won't make as much money. I don't think this is the reason in most cases, but I don't doubt that it happens at times.

While the process of creating clean PostScript print files is simple, it's your responsibility to learn how to do this properly so you get what you expect in return. If you want to be able to send native Ventura files to a printer shop or service bureau there are many to choose from. Corel has a very strong program whereby they work with service bureaus to help them properly process files from Corel programs. The service bureaus receive support directly from Corel and are kept up to date on patches and updates. Some service bureaus who have done their homework exploring Ventura deeply enough don't want anything else but files from Ventura in either native format or in PRN or PDF formats.

If you're happy using Ventura be assured that you and your native or PostScript files will be welcome at any number of knowledgeable, unbiased print shops or service bureaus. If you're still tempted to change programs, do so after you've done your homework, and for the right reasons.

Carol Lovelady is a publishing consultant and trainer who has been working with Ventura and other publishing programs on the PC since 1988. She was co-author of Corel Ventura 7: The Official Guide and is founder and Executive Director of Ventura User Exchange and publisher of VUEPOINT magazine.

