

Excerpt from

# Desktop Publishing: An Introduction

By

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## About the Author

Eric Swanson is the author of the novel *The Greenhouse Effect*, published by Little, Brown & Company, as well as numerous pieces of short fiction. He has also completed a set of 35 essays on the lives of composers of classical music for the LaserLight CDplusROM label. Mr. Swanson is a graduate of Yale University and the Juilliard School of Music.

# Preview

The following is a sample excerpt from a study unit converted into the Adobe Acrobat format. A sample online exam is available for this excerpt.

Get ready for one of the greatest learning adventures you'll ever experience. In *Desktop Publishing: An Introduction*, you'll discover the incredible opportunities that exist for a creative, energetic desktop publisher. This study unit includes a glimpse back at the history of publishing and a look at the ever-expanding horizon of the desktop publishing industry.

Before getting carried away by all the possibilities ahead, let's make sure that you understand a few basic ideas. It's great to get excited over a new career opportunity, but what exactly is desktop publishing? According to *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, desktop publishing is "the process of using a computer to write, design, and assemble publications." In other words, a desktop publishing system allows you to produce attractive, professional-looking documents with your personal computer easily and at a relatively low cost.

What is a professional-looking document? Think for a moment about all the printed material you see every day. You're more than likely to come across some sort of document—be it a letter, brochure, newsletter, poster, printed form, newspaper, or magazine. The list goes on and on.

Technology now allows just about any properly trained individual to create eye-catching documents on a personal computer. Combine this technology with the unending need for printed materials and you have a huge market just waiting to be tapped. Soon, you'll be ready to take advantage of the growing demand for professional-quality material.

After reading through the following material, feel free to take the [sample exam](#) based on this excerpt.

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# Desktop Publishing: An Introduction

## WHAT IS DESKTOP PUBLISHING?

The desktop publishing revolution was launched in the early 1980s with the introduction of full-featured software programs. Desktop publishing programs gave personal computer users the tools they needed to combine text and graphics on a page. Before that time, the capacity to design interesting, eye-catching, or persuasive printed materials was the sole province of highly trained professionals. The equipment needed to create such documents was often quite expensive and complicated to operate.

All that changed with the advent of affordable personal computers, high-quality printers, and easy-to-use software. Affordable, high-quality hardware and software have fueled the expansion of desktop publishing (Figure 1). Advances in computer and software design continue to expand the potential of desktop publishing. Recent years have witnessed a dramatic growth in the field of electronic publishing. *Electronic publishing* uses traditional desktop publishing techniques to create documents to be viewed on a computer screen rather than read from a printed document.



FIGURE 1—Personal computers and easy-to-use software allow people to publish professional-quality documents.

Many electronic documents combine text and graphics with video, sound, and computer-generated animation. The combination of various visual, textual, and audible elements is known as *multimedia*. Multimedia documents can be stored on various types of computer disks, or distributed across a computer network. If you work in an office, you may already know that a *network* is made up of two or more computers connected to each other through cables and other types of hardware. Computers attached to the same network can exchange files and other information, as well as share devices such as printers.

## A Different Kind of Desktop

Simply put, the term *desktop publishing* refers to the process of using a personal computer to create and produce high-quality electronic documents that combine text, graphics, and other elements. At first glance, the field of desktop publishing may seem complicated. Let's take a moment to look at some of the essential terms used to describe desktop publishing.

**Desktop.** This term can be a little misleading, since you probably won't be using an actual desk, other than the one your computer sits on. (Your computer may even be a tower model, which won't necessarily sit on your desk at all.) As far as desktop publishing is concerned, the desktop is your computer screen. Instead of having to grope around for glue, exacto knives, and drawing pencils, all the tools you need are represented by small pictures, called *icons*.

**Personal computer.** The personal computer, designed to be used by one person at a time, is the heart of any desktop publishing system. With a personal computer, an individual desktop publisher can perform tasks that only a decade ago required heavy equipment and years of technical training. The personal computer makes it possible for individuals and small businesses to compete in the desktop publishing marketplace. With the aid of desktop publishing software and a quality printer, any personal computer user can design effective, professional-quality documents.

**Create and produce.** Desktop publishing is a creative process that involves attractively arranging individual elements, such as text, illustrations, photos, and artwork on a page. The term *produce* means that there will be some sort of *output*, or finished product, at the end of the desktop publishing process. This output is generally referred to as a *document*. In desktop publishing terms, a document can be anything from a one-page flier to a thousand-page novel. As you'll see a little later on, documents don't even have to be printed on paper!

**High-quality.** The aim of desktop publishing is to produce attractive documents that rival the output of expensive, professional publishing systems. To produce professional publications, the personal computer and the desktop publisher become a dynamic team. The computer and software provide all the power and the tools needed to create high-quality output, while the individual publisher provides the skills and imagination that guarantee attractive, effective results.

**Electronic.** Technically speaking, any document created on a personal computer is an electronic document. Desktop publishing allows publishers to combine text and graphics on a computer screen instead of using traditional cut-and-paste methods to manually create documents. For this reason, the term *desktop publishing* is often used interchangeably with *electronic publishing*. More specifically, though, the growing appeal of multimedia and network communications has contributed to the development of a wide range of paperless documents (that is, documents that are intended primarily for on-screen viewing). Throughout this course, you'll see the terms *electronic publishing* and *desktop publishing* used interchangeably.

**Text and graphics.** In some ways, a document is like a song, which usually contains both music and lyrics. In the case of a document, the "lyrics" are the verbal part of the message—that is, the words used to communicate a specific idea. Graphics, which can include photos, illustrations, and other artwork, are a document's "music." They support and enhance the verbal message in a direct, often emotional, manner. Together, text and graphics are the basic building blocks of a published document (Figure 2).

**Other elements.** Features such as video, sound, and animation can be combined in documents specifically designed for on-screen viewing. These special effects serve to hold the viewer's attention for a longer period of time than an ordinary paper document might. Special effects can be especially useful if a lot of information has to be communicated, or if the ideas are somewhat complex.

Another way to look at desktop publishing may be by considering its results. As mentioned earlier, desktop publishing allows users to create elegant, eye-catching documents. For example, you could type out a plain, simple-looking memo using a word processing program (Figure 3), or you could "publish" it, adding emphasis, style, and a sense of urgency or importance (Figure 4).

Even though the message in both documents is the same, the document created using desktop publishing is easier to understand and more pleasant to read. Different effects, such as bolding, italics, and raised paragraph headings, guide readers through the document. Graphical flourishes, such as lines, arrows, or business logos, can be creatively employed to build a sense of anticipation. Such creativity can also be used to compel prompt, professional consideration.

As you can see by comparing these two memos, the style of a document is just as important as the content. Desktop publishing can influence the reader's emotional response to what you have to say. A birth announcement, for example, may create a sense of happiness by combining whimsical lettering and light-hearted graphical elements. In contrast, a letter from the telephone company may use a plainer style of type and boldface lettering to emphasize the seriousness or urgency of its message (Figure 5). Desktop publishing allows you to set the tone of your document as you create it.

# Publishing News

## Easy Graphic Handling!

With *PageMaker*, you can easily import both EPS and CGM graphic formats with no problem at all. You can preview these images *before* you load them – an excellent tool for making sure you're pulling in the image you want. What's more, both cropping and wrapping text around them can be completed easily with a few simple keystrokes.

## Awesome in Print!

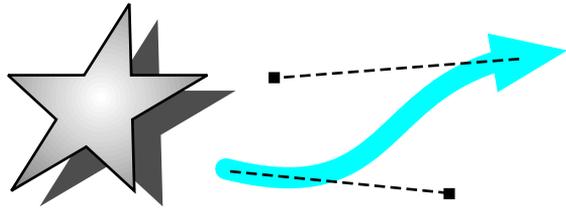
*PageMaker* provides professional output rivaled only by the most expensive high-end publishing programs. *PageMaker's* preview feature makes it possible to see exactly what your document will look like when it's printed.

Rotate  
Text 360°

FIT TEXT TO ANY PATH!

Stretch Text!

15 NEW  
TYPE  
Faces



## Publishing's a Snap with PageMaker!

Do you want to create exciting, polished designs without difficulty? Well, your dream is about to come true with *PageMaker*. This easy-to-use program takes the hassle out of document design without diminishing quality. Need a customized calendar, newsletter, business card, or paper airplane? With *PageMaker*, it's no problem! Just enter *PageMaker's* Template Wizard, answer a few simple questions and watch the program create your design for you!



FIGURE 2—Text and graphics work together to communicate a memorable message.

D.A.S. Enterprises  
Oak Industrial Park  
Scranton, PA 18500  
(570) 555-8034

TO: Research & Development Staff

FROM: Deborah Kane

DATE: July 15, 20\_\_

RE: New Electronic Publishing Specialist

On August 1, Lesley Stanton will join our staff as our newest Electronic Publishing Specialist. Lesley has completed an intense correspondence course in desktop publishing and is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree at City College.

Lesley's wide variety of publishing experience makes her an excellent addition to our staff. Please make her feel welcome.

cc: N. Barnes  
L. Dempsey  
D. Silvestrini



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D. Silvestrini

**FIGURE 3**—This memo was created using very basic word processing features.

**FIGURE 4**—The same memo created through desktop publishing commands the reader's attention.

## Look in Your Mailbox

How extensive is the desktop publishing industry? You probably see at least one electronically produced document every day without even being aware of it. Just take a look at what you find in your mailbox on a typical day.

Perhaps the first thing you see is an envelope full of coupons from local businesses. Some people refer to this type of item as "junk mail." Local merchants—from your hairdresser to your real estate broker—see things a little differently. They understand that coupons represent one of the best ways to attract consumer attention and increase business. Using desktop publishing, these items can be attractively produced at a relatively low cost.

Local merchants aren't the only business owners that have benefited by the desktop publishing revolution. Perhaps the next piece of mail you open is your life insurance company's annual report to policyholders. This classy-looking document includes multicolor graphs, diagrams, and tables. There's even a picture of the CEO. It's a glossy, professional piece in every way, and chances are it was produced on a desktop publishing system.

BRIGHT POWER & LIGHT COMPANY		Your Customer Number	
		132 4532100	
<b>Electric Service</b>		Use when calling or writing	
	<b>Prior Billing</b>		
	Total from Last Bill	\$142.00	
<b>For:</b> James Jones 214 Elm Street Lakeville, NY 27665	Payment Received Sep 12—Thank You	\$142.00	
	Balance as of September 24		\$0.00
	<b>Current Charges</b>	\$135.64	
	Basic Service	\$138.22	
<b>Customer Service</b> P.O. Box 766 Waynesburg, NY 27555			
	Tax Adjustment	-0.29	
	Energy Charge	-2.29	
	Charges for Electric Service		\$135.64
<b>Pay This Amount No Later Than October 14</b>			

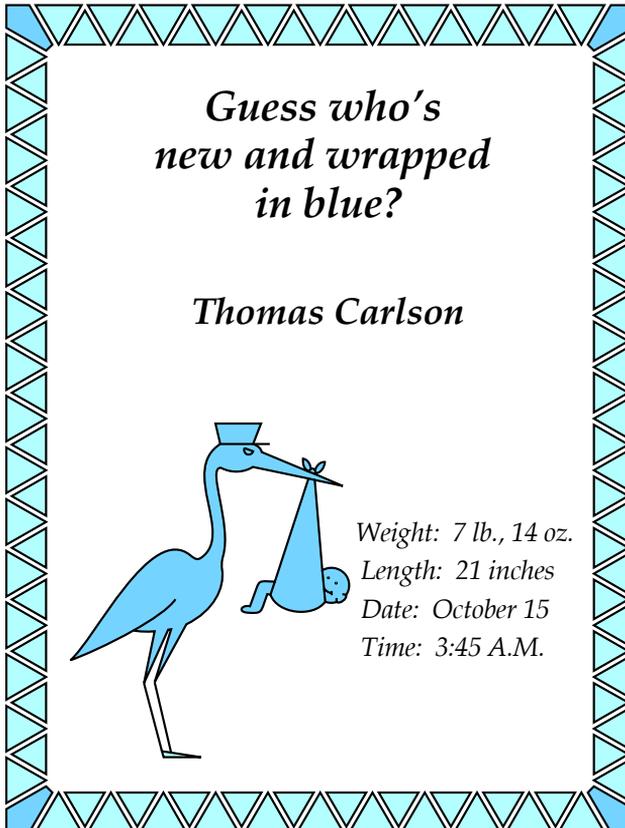


FIGURE 5—The appearance of a document can influence the reader's response.

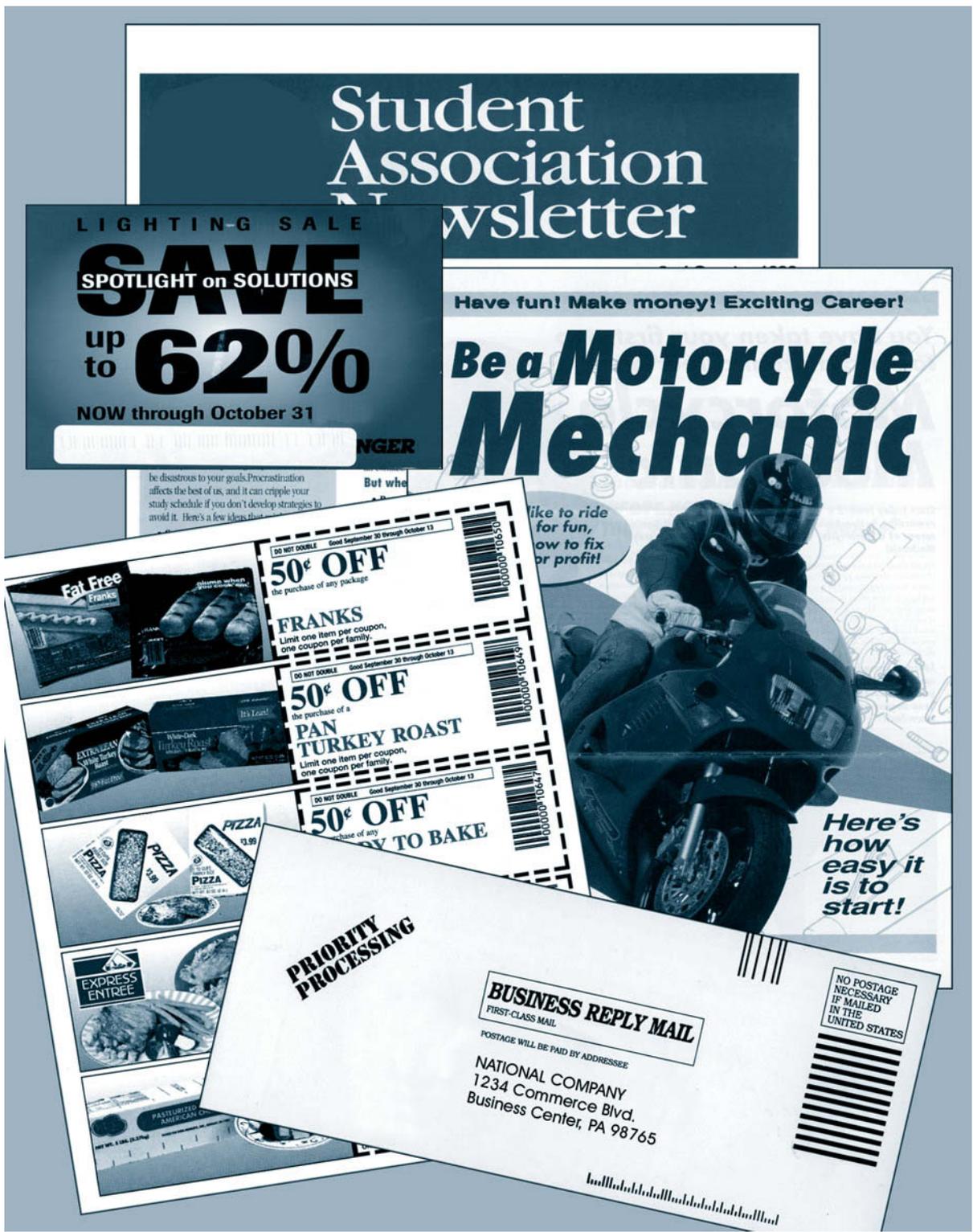


FIGURE 6—On any given day, your mailbox probably contains documents produced on a desktop publishing system.

As you go through the rest of your mail, you'll probably find billing statements, newsletters, magazines, and fliers announcing sales or community events. More than likely, each and every one was created through desktop publishing (Figure 6). Essentially, there's no limit to the kind of documents that can be produced on a desktop publishing system.

Obviously, all this material doesn't magically appear in your mailbox. Every piece was designed by creative, enterprising individuals. Whether you choose to operate out of your own home, or work in the desktop publishing center of a large corporation, opportunities abound for you to build a desktop publishing career. You'll have many exciting opportunities to serve the rapidly expanding publishing needs of organizations and businesses of all sizes.

## You're onto Something Really Big!

Since the early 1980s, desktop publishing has transformed the publishing industry. Documents that once required hours of labor and specialized equipment can now be created much more quickly on a personal computer. Today's personal computers and desktop publishing software

- Enable desktop publishers to produce professional-quality documents in a cost-effective way
- Allow rapid preview of a finished product
- Surpass even the impressive power of word processing software in the creation of more vivid and effective documents
- Offer cutting-edge tools to express ideas through text, graphics, sound, and animation

Desktop publishing is changing the way people think about communication. Today's computers and desktop publishing software packages enable users to convey their message with startling effectiveness. As you'll discover in the next section, desktop publishing is used by many industries and organizations to inform, inspire, and instruct people in a variety of ways.