Creating a PDF Picture Book Dummy

By

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More and more publishers are open to receiving electronic book dummy submissions these days. That means PDFs. Once you have the process down, they're not that hard to create. Here's a step-by-step:

1) Scan all of your artwork into your computer.
2) Create a template master file:
    a. Create a new document to the exact dimensions of your open book (double page spread). For instance, an 8"x10" book would be a 16"x10" document.
    b. Create a new layer and "select all."
    c. Apply a thin black outline to the inside of the selection (about 3 pts should be fine).
    d. Drag a guideline from the side ruler (if they're not showing, look under "view") to the exact middle of your spread. Then, using your brush tool, draw a thin black line down the middle. (Holding down the "shift" key on a Mac will keep your line straight.)
    e. Go back to your base layer and make sure your color swatches are set with white on the bottom.
    f. Go to "Image>Canvas Size." Make sure the center square is selected, then add 1/8th to 1/4th inch bleed to your canvas on each side. In our example the dimensions would be 16.5"x10.5" with a quarter inch bleed. (Standard is 1/8th, but I like to give myself some wiggle room too.)
3) Drop each piece of art into your template, just above the base layer (so that the template shows on top) and save the file in a folder called "BW-spreads" or some such in the ordered number sequence of your spreads, i.e. 00-00-

cover.psd or 02-03-copyright-titlepage.psd all the way to the last endpaper. *Numbering in order is vital.*

Once you have all your pages created, then you can move to an optional next step. This step will give you full-sized pages to use for a *print* dummy. Only use the flattening portion if you're going straight to a digital PDF.

1) Open each file and flatten it (under layers). Save as a "for print" PDF into a new folder labeled "BW-PDFsForPring" or some such.
2) Print these out "fit to page" onto 11"x17" paper and you're ready to cut out and tape together your physical dummy!

To create a digital PDF dummy, you will still need to flatten your files, but your process will be slightly different after that…

1) Open each file and flatten it (under layers).
2) Under "Image>Image Size" reduce the physical size of each file to no wider than 1000 pixels.
3) Click "Save for Web" and choose a "high" JPG setting.
4) Save each file into a new folder called "BW-JPGs" or some such.
5) If you're brave, you can try to automate this process by recording the downsizing action under "Window>Actions>New Action>Record (round button), stop (square button)." Then using "File>Automate>Batch" to let the computer do this work for you. Be sure to select the appropriate folder from which the work comes from and a separate folder for the work to go to.

Once you have all your files prepared, you are ready to create your PDF. You can do this two ways:

1) In Photoshop, go to "File>Automate>PDF Presentation." It will prompt you to add all your files into the window. Select "Multi-page document" then save. VOILA!
2) In Adobe Acrobat, go to "File>Create>Combine Files Into a Single PDF." It will prompt you in a similar fashion to add your files and

save. (If your files are appropriately numbered, you can also select them all and drag them onto the Acrobat icon. It will prompt you to collate the file. Say "yes" then "Save as Other>Reduced sized PDF." It will prompt you to save the larger file first, then to name a smaller version.)

Do check your file size once you're finished. You should never send a PDF that is over 8mb, and I'd be more inclined to say 5mb. If your file is larger, reduce the pixel size of your image and/or the resolution when you're saving for the web. Each selection can reduce the size of your document.

That's it! Once you have your PDF created, you have a file you can send to editors and art directors who have requested to see your dummy! Best of luck!