# nLightened **Thoughts**

# New Year. New Name. New Design. New Capabilities.

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED A NEW NAME AND LOGO IN THE BANNER AT THE TOP OF THIS PAGE. ALTHOUGH I LIKED THE NAME *RANDOM THOUGHTS*, IT SEEMED NOT TO DESCRIBE ACCURATELY WHAT I DO OR HOW I DO IT. MY GOAL IS ENLIGHTENED COMMUNICATIONS. HENCE THE NEW NAME AND THE LIGHT BULB.

The light bulb seemed to be a natural outgrowth of the name and the new URL has the advantage of being pronounced "enlighten us". I like that. It fits. (Blinn.com still exists.)

This was also a good time to rework the template and typeface sets that I use for the newsletter.

The design tool is Adobe InDesign, which is the application I have been recommending for page layout since about 2004. InDesign is still missing some features that have been in Ventura Publisher for 20 years, Ventura hasn't been updated in a decade, it doesn't support Unicode type, and even Corel describes it as obsolete and unsupported.

The typefaces have changed, too. The banner consists of Adobe Sanvito Pro in 2 weights and sizes along with Frutiger for the dateline and contact information section.

Headlines are in Frutiger instead of Zurich and I'm using Adobe Text Pro for the body copy, replacing Palatino.

Because the design is now a 3-column layout, I've slightly reduced the typeface size (9 pt) and increased the line-spacing to 14 points, which should leave enough space for easy reading.

## The Advantages of InDesign

ANYONE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE for anything that will be printed, whether on a 5-color web press or an office printer should seriously consider learning about print design. Having done that, you'll soon realize that the de facto page layout program in many offices (Microsoft Word) is an inadequate tool for the job.

Consistency from one document to the next is important. If you maintain a library of documents that describe your company's products or services, each should look like it belongs with the others. All too often, the person who creates these documents doesn't remember the size of the type, the number of columns, or the color used for headlines.

As a result, a prospective client may receive a stack of pages that bear only a slight resemblance to each other.
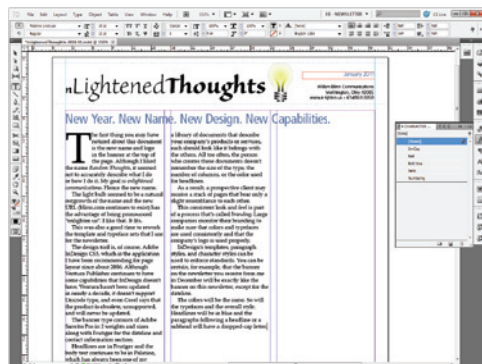


This consistent look and feel is part of a process that's called *branding*. Large companies monitor their branding to make sure that colors and typefaces are used consistently and that the company's logo is used properly.

InDesign's templates, paragraph styles, and character styles can be used to enforce standards. You can be certain, for example, that the banner on the newsletter you receive from me in December will be exactly like the banner on this newsletter, except for the dateline.

The colors, typefaces, and styles will be the same. Headlines will be blue and the paragraphs following a headline or a subhead will begin with small caps and an underline.

Adopting InDesign costs more than just buying the latest version of Word, both because of the cost of the software and because of the cost of learning how to use the software.

InDesign is not an application that you can install and start using immediately. It helps to have some understanding of typesetting and the terms used by typesetters (font size, line spacing, kerning, tracking, baseline shift, and such). Fortunately, the options for learning about these aspects of typesetting, layout, and design are considerably more numerous than in the past.

## Learning InDesign from Experts

ONE OF THE BEST RESOURCES for learning how to use software is the Lynda.com website. Both Ann-Marie Concepcion and David Blatner, two well-respected InDesign experts who conduct on-site training, have programs on Lynda.com to share their knowledge of the program.

Although Lynda.com divides training programs into chapters and divides the chapters into bite-size chunks, you'll need to make a significant time commitment to watch the videos and work through the exercises.

Blatner's *InDesign CS5 Essential Training* title is more than 10 hours long and Concepcion's *InDesign CS5 New Features* is nearly 3 hours.
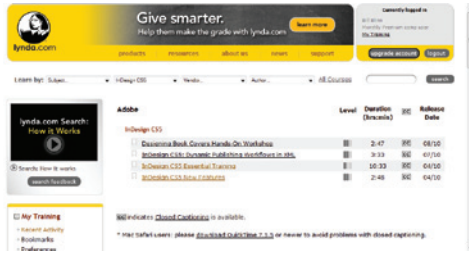


In addition, Jim Maivald has a 3.5-hour program on using XML in dynamic workflows and Nigel French offers a 3-hour program on designing book covers in InDesign. Titles are added frequently.

Other resources for learning how to operate InDesign include a website operated by Concepcion and Blatner, InDesignSecrets.com. Others, such as Deke McClelland, Sandee Cohen, Galen Gruman, and Olav Martin Kvern have written books on the subject.

In other words, there's no shortage of resources for learning about this powerful tool.

## No Longer Just The Future

Despite some shortcomings, InDesign has advanced from being the future of publishing to its position as the pre-eminent typesetting and layout application. InDesign is the program that you need today if you're responsible for any kind of print design.

Adobe's strengths have always been with page design. The limitations we've seen have been associated with features that are most essential to those who work with "long documents" such as books.

A graphic that's included in a column of text should probably be treated as an "in-line" object, meaning that it moves with the text. This is something that's new to InDesign although Ventura users have been able to anchor in-line objects since the early 1990s.

InDesign differentiates between in-line objects and achored objects. The differences are both profound and subtle. Selecting in-line when you need an anchored object (or vice versa) will simply lead to frustration.

But the Adobe software engineers have created a better system. Granted, it requires some study and some thought, but it's a better way of doing things. As a long-time user of Ventura Publisher, that's a sentence I never expected to write!

If you're using anything else to create newsletters, brochures, or any other business literature, it's time to take a look at Adobe InDesign. Ω

# Lotus Symphony, Open Office, or Microsoft Office?

Lotus 1-2-3 was the first "killer application" for PCs. After 1-2-3, Lotus released Symphony, but it never caught on. IBM is now offering Symphony under the Lotus name, but it has nothing to do with the earlier applications. Should you consider it?

Microsoft Office isn't the only office suite on the market. Corel offers the Wordperfect suite. Sun has the Star Office Suite, IBM has Symphony, and there's Open Office. The last three, in fact, are siblings that were separated at birth.

Oracle Office 8, Sun Star Office 3, and Symphony 3 are all based on Open Office 3. Each has its own look and feel but under the hood they're all essentially the same.

You might wonder whether one of the free applications is sufficient or whether one of the fee-based variants is better or whether you should stick with Microsoft Office 2003 or 2007 or whether you should upgrade to Office 2010.

This is not an easy yes/no question because the answer depends on the needs of the user. If you have basic needs, the answer clearly favors one of the free programs. But if you need a database system as part of your office suite or if you need some of Microsoft's advanced features, the answer clearly favors the Microsoft products. Between those extremes is a gigantic gray area.

The Microsoft Office 2010 feature set is a rich one and the missteps introduced in the 2007 version have been remedied.

The danger of selecting something other than Microsoft Office is that the application may not include a feature that's critically important to you. That's one of the reasons Microsoft includes so many features: Some of the esoteric features are needed by only a tiny fraction of users, but certain users consider each of the features to be indispensable.

Although the applications that are based on the Open Office suite are usually able to open Microsoft files, full interoperability isn't assured.

Opening an Excel 2007/2010 file in Symphony is successful, but it's not possible to save that file in Microsoft's native format.

IBM Lotus Symphony, Star Office, Oracle Office, or Open Office might be what you need if you don't need to create files that are 100% compatible with the Microsoft Office standard and if you don't need a relational database application. These applications do what they do very well, but for a lot of people that isn't enough. Ω



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