Creating a digital dummy

By Anne-Marie Perks
(excerpts that I agree with have been taken from article by Bonnie Adamson- shown in italics)

Please note: For the Dummy Makeover workshop, we have created a digital dropbox which you will be invited to load up your dummies to in July. It is a straightforward process with one very important proviso! **Dropbox does not make a copy of your file, so please remember to save a copy of your dummy to the dropbox so you do not loose your original file!**

Creating the files
Essential to producing your digital dummy are:
*   1) a way to scan sketches and final art (if you work traditionally), to create digital files;*
*   2) a way to add text to image files; and*
*   3) a way to combine the resulting files into a multi-page pdf.*

When scanning or having your images scanned, specify a file format other than jpeg, which compresses the information in the scan and re-compresses with every editing session, resulting in a progressive loss of quality. Bitmap or tiff formats are safer choices. A suggestion: scan and process at print resolution (300 pixels per inch) if possible. It's a good idea to think of this as a print project from the start so that you retain as much information as possible in your native files—including converting color images to CMYK. That way you can use your digital dummy to produce a more polished print dummy if asked.

The easiest way to combine images and text into a multi-page pdf is with layout software such as Adobe InDesign or Adobe Illustrator. (There is also a way with Photoshop which I will cover below.) Set up your document to the dimensions of the finished page size, "Place" scanned images, create text, and save. Once saved, you can export the document as a pdf. Be sure to check "Spreads" in the Export dialog window under Pages so that each panel of the pdf is a spread rather than a single page.

With Adobe Illustrator you will need to use the 'SAVE AS' operation to create a pdf document.

Please note: Both Adobe InDesign and Illustrator 'link' files that you 'Place' into your multipage document. You will need to be sure that you set up a folder first for the name of your book with a folder inside labeled Images. If you keep it all together you won't have any problems later on and it's easier to edit when you need to. InDesign will work with pages and Illustrator with multiple artboards if you have CS 5 and above.

The next easiest method is to set up a spread-sized template in Photoshop and proceed as above, dropping in art and adding text. There are two ways to tackle this:
*   1. You create a new document for each spread and save as a separate file. (Tedious!) Name each pdf file to reflect the order in which you want the files seen: Dummy 1 for the cover image, Dummy 2 for the title page spread, etc. (There are excellent resources online that explore the many permutations of the standard 32-page picture book format. For dummy purposes, I generally disregard endpapers: page one is the title page, page two is designated for copyright information, and the story spans pages 3-32.) Be sure to have a guide noting where the gutter is! That's the line between two pages that make up the spread. Once you have your spread files saved, you can use a pdf converter such as Adobe Acrobat Pro or one of its less costly clones (google "pdf converter software") to combine the individual pdfs into one multi-page file. Next:*

*   2. (This way really is easier if you can get your head around creating **layer comps**!) A website to help on this - http://twosixcode.com/notes/view/how-to-use-photoshop-*

. Or if you prefer to watch a video - go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQ7BXHGGJ5k .

You begin by creating a a psd document at the correct spread size - you will need to put in crop marks or just a guide for the gutter (midline between two pages that make up the spread). Build each spread on a layer - you can turn off and on eyeballs to keep things from getting really complicated. You will need to remember to either combine text and image layers for each spread (can get complicated in Photoshop) so that each spread takes up only one layer. The other way is group layers that make up each spread though to be safe, I would combine. Then, very important - open up the Layer Comp Window under Window and choose your first spread layer - make a new comp in the Layer Comp Window and name it spread 1. Continue in this way until you have turned each of your layers or group of layers into a layer comp. You can scroll through your spreads in the layer comp window by selecting the button for each spread.

3. When you are happy with them - go to File > Scripts and choose 'Layer Comps to PDF'. That will create a multi page document for you!

Please note: if you go this route, you will need to be aware of your final size as Photoshop documents can get very large. The PDF engine will give you the option to save as a reduced size document (try to keep final no larger than 10 megabites - tricky).

Another route is to go through either Pages on the Mac or Microsoft Word. You can set up a custom page size to reflect your book format; place images and text and then export out as a PDF. You don't have as many fun text options as in Photoshop, InDesign or Illustrator, but lacking the software, you can do it.

Don't be seduced by fancy page-turn technology for your dummy. It's very cool but unnecessary—and may even get in the way of the primary objective, which is to showcase your work. If this is a piece you want to put on your tablet to show off your mad skills to colleagues, however, there are free options (google "page-turn software"). Be sure to keep that pdf spread dummy in reserve for submissions.

Sizing the files
As a rule of thumb, try to get the size below 10 MB, in case you need to e-mail as an attachment. There are ways to play with pdf compression: start with "Smallest File Size" as the pdf Preset option in InDesign. (If you've already exported, you must open the original InDesign file and export again.) Experiment with different settings (renaming your file each time) to determine a workable balance between size and quality. If you're using Photoshop to create spreads, choose "Low" or "Medium" Quality as your pdf option. You can also try the "Reduced-size pdf" option under "Save As Other" in Adobe Acrobat Pro's drop-down "File" menu.

Some tips:
Always check "Optimize for fast web view," which controls how your file will load. Choosing the highest available version of Acrobat in the "Compatibility" menu can have a dramatic effect on file size—just be sure the person viewing has upgraded to the latest version of Adobe Reader.
Standard screen resolution is 72 ppi. You can down-sample your images to this resolution without worry for on-screen viewing.
If you've created your dummy at full print size—say, 11" x 9" page size—try scaling down proportionately: resize pages to 8.25" x 6.75" (75%) or 5.5" x 4.5" (50%).
If you're including finished color art samples, consider storing and sending them as separate files to keep your dummy in grayscale.

Good luck!