

# Unit 21 Desktop publishing

## 1 What is desktop publishing?

**A**  In pairs, discuss these questions.

- 1 What kind of documents can be produced with a desktop publishing system?
- 2 Page layout software is the key component of a desktop publishing system. Which file types can be imported into a page layout program?

**B** Read the text and check your answers to A.

### What is desktop publishing?

**Desktop publishing (DTP)** refers to the use of computers to design and publish books, brochures, newsletters, magazines and other printed pieces. DTP is really a combination of several different processes including word processing, graphic design, information design, output and pre-press technologies, and sometimes image manipulation.

DTP centres around a **page layout program**. Typically, a layout program is used to import texts created in word processing programs; charts and graphs from spreadsheet programs; drawings and illustrations created in CAD, drawing or paint programs; and photographs. The program is then used to combine and arrange them all on a page. It is this ability to manipulate so many different items and control how they are used that makes layout software so popular and useful. However, modern word processors also have publishing capabilities, meaning the line separating such programs from DTP software is becoming less clear. In general, though, powerful new publishing systems use high-quality scalable **fonts** and give you control over typographic features such as  **Kerning** (adjusting the spaces between letters to achieve even, consistent spacing). Another key feature of DTP software is **text flow** – the ability to put text around graphic objects in a variety of ways.

Once composed, DTP documents are printed on a laser printer or on a high-resolution imagesetter (see Unit 8). For transfer to a commercial printer, the documents are generally saved in their native page layout format (such as Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress) or as **PDF** files. PDF stands for **P**ortable **D**ocument **F**ormat and allows people to view, search and print documents exactly as the publisher intended – you don't need to have the software and fonts used to create it. PDF files can be published and distributed anywhere: in print, attached to email, posted on websites, or on DVD. To open a PDF file, only the Adobe Acrobat Reader (a free download) is required.

In modern commercial printing, DTP files are output directly to the **printing plates** without using film as an intermediate step. This new technology is known as **Computer-To-Plate (CTP)** or **direct to plate**, and the machine that generates plates for a printing press is called a **platesetter**. CTP machines are expensive, so most people take their files to a **service bureau**, a company that specializes in printing other people's files. Service bureaux offer a full range of scanning and printing solutions.

**C** Read the text again and answer these questions.

- 1 What type of software is used for the creation of DTP documents?
- 2 What are three differences between DTP software and word processors?
- 3 What is a PDF and what can it do?
- 4 Which program do you need to view a PDF document?
- 5 Why do people send their DTP files to service bureaux?