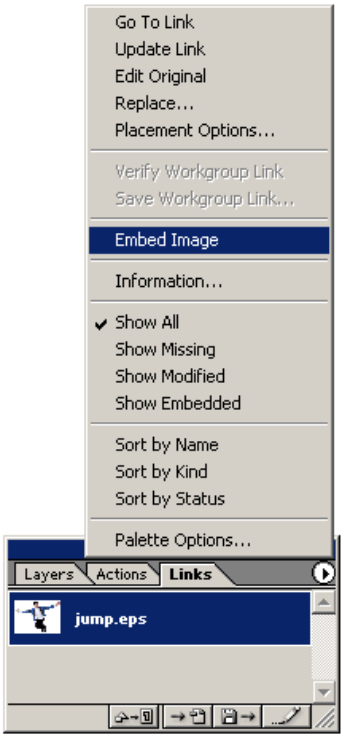
Working with Images in Illustrator

Adobe Illustrator is the software of choice for many faculty, staff and students that produce scholarly posters. It allows the user to create a file that is the same size as the intended printout whereas some other programs that are being used on campus have limitations as to how large a print out it will print on one continuous sheet of paper. An example of this is MS Publisher. This software will appear to design in the larger custom format but is limited to 45 inches square for printable area; therefore, if the poster extends beyond that size it will print it in two passes and will have to be spliced together even though the paper is on a continuous roll.

Illustrator does have some drawbacks that can frustrate even the experienced user. One of these quirks is how the software handles the insertion of images. Images are "linked" to the file but not embedded, as some other software will commonly do. This means that the user will have to present both the Illustrator file and all other files associated with the document to the printer/plotter. This is not a problem if the poster is created on the same computer that is connected to the printer/plotter, however is not the norm. The poster file is usually created on a computer remote to the printer/plotter and the files are presented on a storage medium, such as a zip disk or CD. This document will present a few hints for working with images in Illustrator.

Embedding Images

Adding images to an Illustrator document is achieved by going to the upper menu area **File/Place**. The user navigates to the desired file on the computer and the image is placed on the selected layer. At this point, the program is merely pointing to where the file is on the computer. It has not been added to the file. Most Illustrator files are rather small, this is one of the reasons, and therefore file management is key when working with Illustrator. First, create a folder that will contain all of the working files for the poster. This will make it easier at the end to move all files to the medium of choice. A way around this juggling of image files is to embed each file into the Illustrator document. Once the user has placed the file, while it is still highlighted, go to the **Links** tab on the right hand side-floating palette *(see menu right).* The file will appear as a thumbnail in the list, e.g. jump.eps. Use the ***arrowhead*** on the upper right hand corner to open the corresponding dialog box and select the Embed Image selection. This image is now part of the file. The size of the file has now gained the memory of the image. This can force the question, "how big an image should I use?"

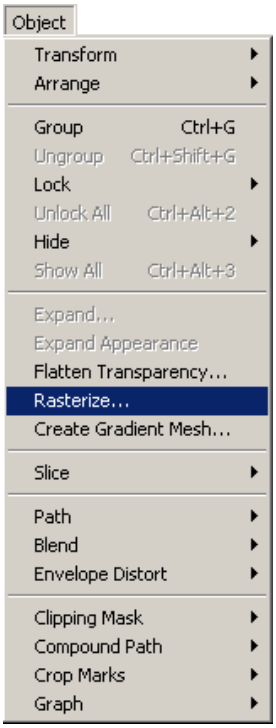


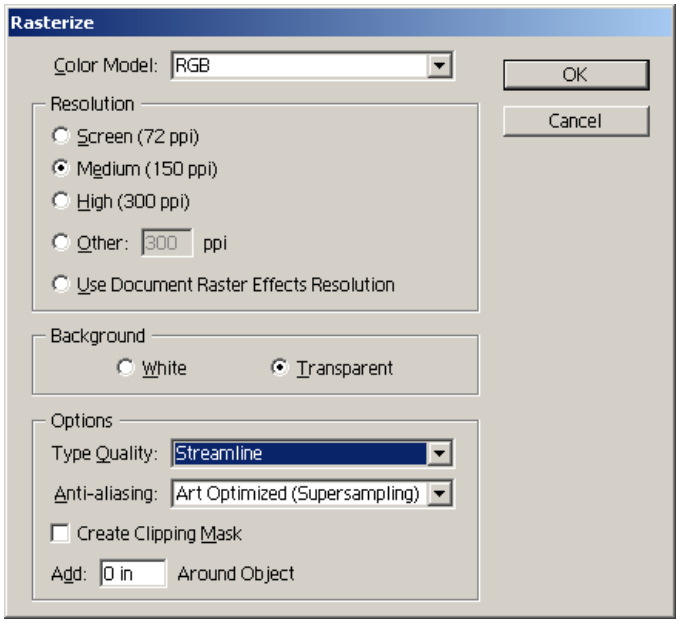
Optimal Image Size

The bigger, the better! This is not necessarily the case in Illustrator, especially when you consider the purpose of a scholarly poster. The nature of a poster is to communicate scholarly information for a finite period to an audience that is viewing the information from a distance of a few feet. Images, at that distance can communicate satisfactorily even if they appear slightly pixilated when viewed up close. Images scanned at a resolution of 150 dpi/ppi do a fine job for this purpose and do not choke the printer/plotter. Remember, however, that you will want to scan at the physical size that you want the image to present in the poster. Stretching any images may cause it to degrade in quality and usability.

Rasterizing, Beyond Embedding

Another way to make an image part of an Illustrator file is to rasterize it. To do this: Highlight the image again by selecting it. Go to upper menu area, Object/Rasterize… and you will be presented with the following dialog box.



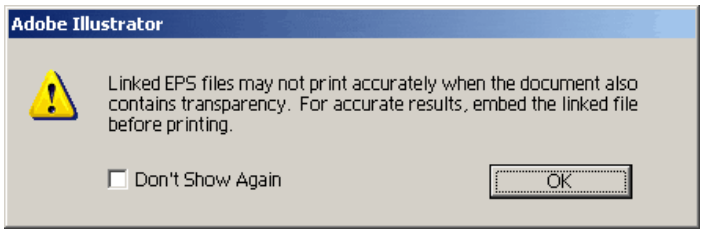


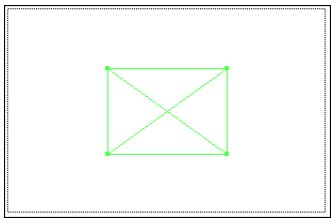
The Medium Resolution should work fine for most poster presentations. Be aware of the Background area of this menu; if you are dealing with a transparent image choose the appropriate radial button! I have noticed that if I have not done this step a transparent GIF may be printed in a white background box unexpectantly, even when saved as a PDF.

Transparency and Images

It is very easy to create images that have areas that are transparent using this feature in Adobe Photoshop. It is located in the upper menu area **Help/Export Transparent Image…**. When using this wizard to create the transparent image file you will be asked if it is for use in print or online. I have found that both resulting images will work in

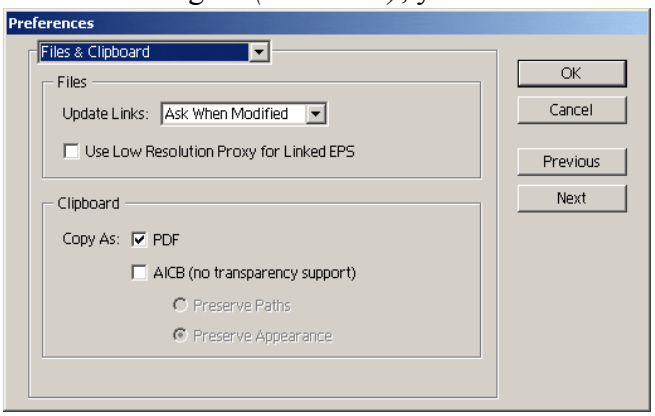
Illustrator, however if you use the obvious "print" selection the file type will be an EPS. When you place the EPS you may get the following dialog box. It is important to embed





this file or rasterize the image as indicated in the warning.

If the inserted image appears as a box with an "x" through it *(see above)*, you will want to go to the Illustrator Preferences and change how EPS files are presented onscreen. To change the associated preferences go to the upper menu area, **Edit/Preferences/Files & Clipboard** *(pull down selection)*. Uncheck the "Use Low Resolution Proxy for Linked EPS" check box. Select OK to address the changes. The image should now appear.



Working with Fonts

Not all computers have the same fonts loaded. If you are using a font that may not be on the host printer computer the text will appear differently than you expect when the file is printed. The way around this is to convert the text in this font style to a graphic. Once you do this, you will not be able to change the text, so you will want the text to be in its final state. At this point, highlight the textbox. Go to the upper menu area **Type/Create Outlines…**. The text is now a graphic and not dependent on the font software.

This is an example of text that was converted to outlines.
It has a one-pixel stroke and an **Effect/Drop Shadow.**