How to reuse objects

As a designer, you'll often find yourself reusing the same graphics, headlines, and pages. After all, one of your design goals is probably consistency or uniformity, and such uniformity helps readers use your documents. With Adobe InDesign CS6, you can save frequently used graphics, text, and pages in two ways: using a panel called the Conveyor or special files called object libraries.

The *Conveyor* is an easy way to quickly repurpose content between pages and layouts. If you have content that you want to reuse, you can use the Content Collector tool to load it into the Conveyor, and then use the Content Placer tool to place any content from the Conveyor into other pages or other layouts in your document.

Object libraries are special files that you save independent of your documents. You can create as many libraries as you need. For example, you can create an object library for each project or client. Libraries are stored as separate files with an .indl filename extension. Once you add an object to a library, it remains there until you delete it from the library, even if you delete the original object. You can also add ruler guides, grids, drawn shapes, and grouped images to a library. For more information on adding these objects, see InDesign Help.

When you add a page element, such as a graphic, to an object library, InDesign preserves all of the attributes you previously applied to the graphic (or, in the case of Adobe files such as Photoshop PSDs and Acrobat PDFs, attributes you imported with the graphic). In other words, if you add a graphic from an InDesign document to the library, InDesign essentially makes an exact copy of the graphic that you can later reuse.

Note: You cannot open objects from the library and change them so these changes are updated in InDesign documents. Objects in the library can be added, placed, or deleted only.

Library graphics and links

As you'll recall, InDesign graphics are actually links to other files. When you add a graphic to a library, the library copy duplicates the original graphic, including the original's link information, so you can update the graphic when the linked file changes. If you move or delete the linked file, the object will appear dark gray (with the same shape frame) next time you try to place it in your document from the Library panel. You can resolve broken links through the Links panel (Window > Links).

InDesign also allows you to link text and articles across documents, so that when you make a change in the original that change will be made to each instance of that text or article in all the linked InDesign documents. Linked text and articles allow you to only update once for content that is used in multiple layouts, rather than having to make the changes in every INDD document where the content is, reducing the likelihood of errors and making management of multiple layouts more efficient. (For more information linking across documents, see InDesign Help.)

Sharing libraries

You can share libraries among your design team (even among users with different operating systems). However, only one user at a time can have a shared library open.

Using the Conveyor

An easy way to reuse content across pages and layouts is to use the Conveyor (**Figure 1**).

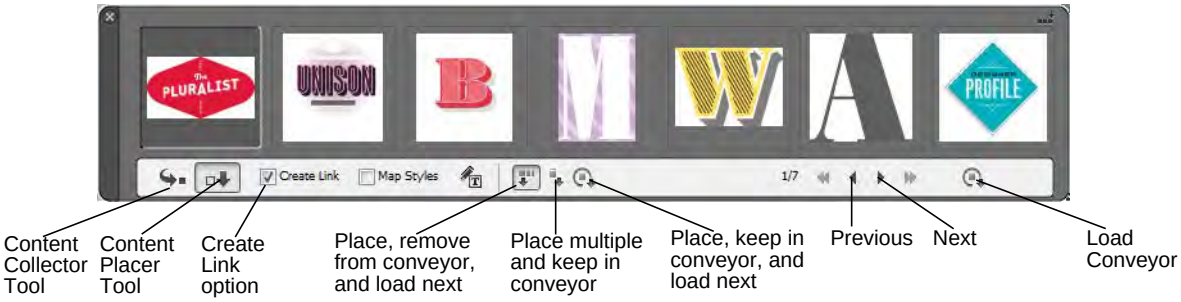

Figure 1 Conveyor with collected items

To use the Conveyor:

1. Open a document in InDesign.
2. Choose the Content Collector tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 2**).

   The Conveyor opens at the bottom of the workspace (**Figure 1**). The pointer changes to a magnet icon (**Figure 3**).
3. Click a text or graphic frame on the page to select it.

   The selected item appears in the Conveyor.
4. Continue clicking text or graphic frames with the Content Collector tool to save additional items to the Conveyor.

   Note: You can also use the Load Conveyor button (**Figure 1**) as an alternative for putting content items into the Conveyor. The *Load Conveyor* saves a specific Selection, Pages content, or All Pages Including Pasteboard Objects to the Conveyor.
5. Once you have collected all the items you wish to reuse, navigate to the page or layout where you want to place the saved content.
6. Click the Content Placer tool in the Conveyor (**Figure 1**).

   The pointer is converted to a thumbnail icon of the first item from the Conveyor to be placed (**Figure 4**). The thumbnail icon displays the type of content that is being placed. In the example, the letter B is accompanied by a small Acrobat PDF icon.

   Note: You can also find the Content Placer tool in the Tools panel. Click and hold down the Content Collector tool, and select the Content Placer tool from the pop-up menu that appears.
7. (Optional) Select the Create Link option if you want to be able to update the placed content.

   If a change is made to the source content, you will have to open the Links panel and locate the broken linked item with the corresponding warning icon. Double-click the warning icon to update the linked content.
8. Use the Previous and Next buttons in the Conveyor to select the first content item you want to place.

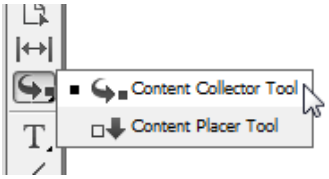

Figure 2 Tools panel

Figure 3 Content Collector tool pointer

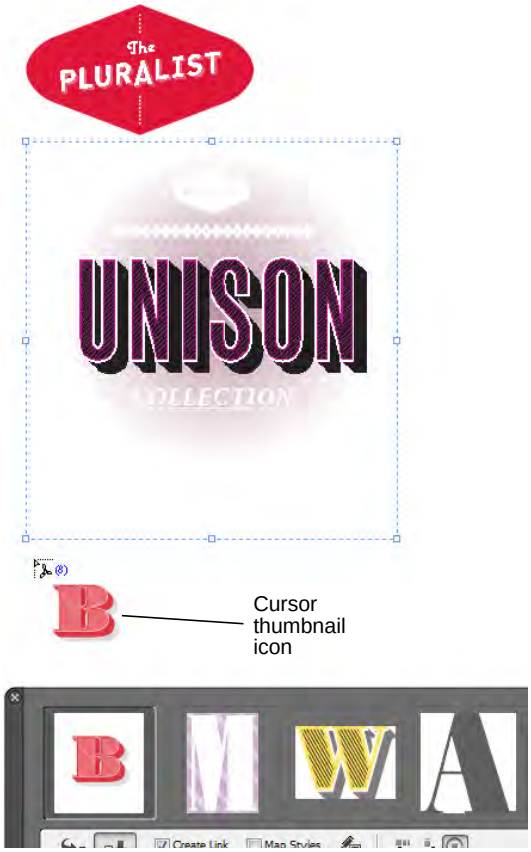

Figure 4 Placing saved content on the page

 © 2012 Adobe Systems Incorporated

9. Select one of the following options for placing the saved content:
   - *Place, removes from conveyor, and load next* Place the selected item on the page, delete it from the Conveyor, and select the next content item for placement.
   - *Place multiple and keep in conveyor* Place a copy of the selected item on the page, preserve the content in Conveyor, and retain the selection of the current item for placement.
   - *Place, keep in conveyor, and load next* Place a copy of the selected item on the page, and select the next saved content item for placement (**Figure 4**).
10. Click the Content Placer tool in the page to place the selected content (**Figure 4**).

    The selected content item is placed in the page.

    Depending on the option you selected in the preceding step, either the next item or the same item is loaded and ready to be placed when you click the Content Placer tool again.

Creating a new library

In the following steps, you create a new library and save it on your system.

To crete a new library:

1. Start InDesign.
2. Choose File > New > Library.

   The New Library dialog box appears.
3. Type a name for the library, specify a location, and then click Save.

   The library file is saved with an .indl filename extension.

   The Library panel appears (**Figure 5**).

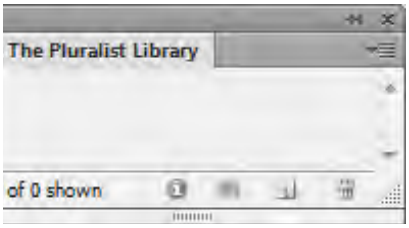

Figure 5 Library panel

Adding an object to the library

You add objects to a library by dragging them from the pasteboard into the Library panel.

To add an object to the library:

1. Open a library in InDesign (File > Open).
2. Open a page in InDesign.
3. Choose the Selection tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 6**).
4. Click a text or graphic frame on the page to select it.
5. Drag the frame from the pasteboard into the Library panel (**Figure 7**).
6. When you release the mouse, the item appears in the library.

   A thumbnail of the item appears above its name (**Figure 8**).

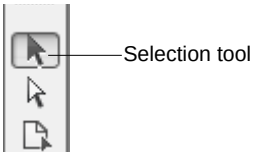

Figure 6 Tool panel

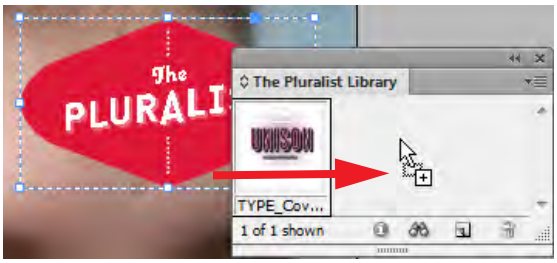

Figure 7 Dragging object into library

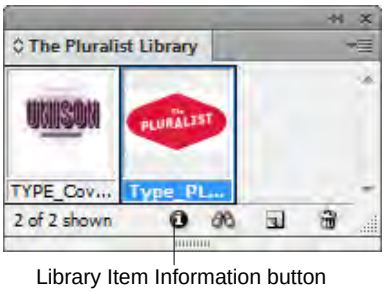

Figure 8 Item added to library

Adding information to a library item

After you add an object to a library, you can give the object a name and a short description. Adding information to library objects makes your library more usable for other members of your design team.

To add information to a library item:

1. Display a Library panel.
2. Click a library item to select it (**Figure 8**).
3. Click the Library Item Information button.

   The Item Information dialog box appears (**Figure 9**).
4. Enter a name for the item, such as Logo.

   Remember, these names will be most useful to other team members if you make them meaningful.

   Note: Often, only the first 8–10 letters of the name are visible in the Library panel.

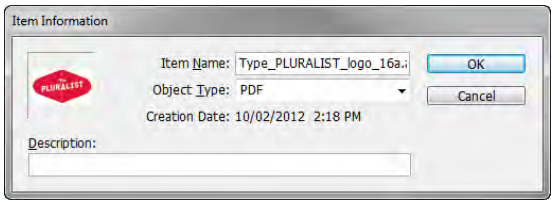

Figure 9 The Item Information dialog box

 © 2012 Adobe Systems Incorporated

5. Make sure the object type—such as Text—is correctly identified. If it is not, choose an object type from the Object Type menu.

   Other object types include Image, PDF, Page, and InDesign File.

6. Enter a description for the item, such as “standard caption for newsletter.”

   This description is visible when you select a library item and click the Library Item Information button.

7. Click OK.

   Observe that the library item appears with its new name (**Figure 10**).

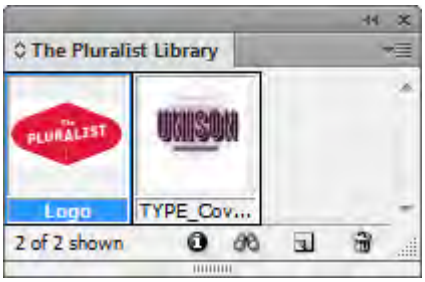

Figure 10 Library item renamed

Reusing a library item

To use a library item any number of times, simply drag it from the library onto the pasteboard.

To reuse a library item:

1. Open a library in InDesign.
2. Click a library item to select it.
3. Drag the item onto the pasteboard (**Figure 11**).

   X and Y coordinates appear, helping you place the object precisely in the page layout.

4. Release the mouse button.

   The item appears on the pasteboard.

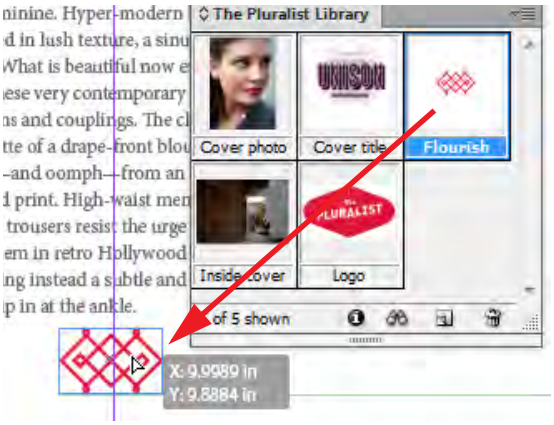

Figure 11 Dragging item from the library