



About Publishing Assistant

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What is Publishing Assistant?

For those of you who may not be familiar with the United Bible Societies' Publishing Assistant project, Publishing Assistant is the name of a set of software tools developed with the goal of assisting Bible typesetters by automating many of the cumbersome and time-consuming tasks involved in the complex process of laying out Bible pages in preparation for publication. The project was started in 2005, initially in response to the need for a new typesetting tool/system that would handle Paratext translation projects that were based on Unicode encoding.

The initial release of the Publishing Assistant (PA) toolset was distributed in 2006 and targeted basic Bible typesetting. Since the original release, PA has been enhanced to support diglots, concordances, names indexes, Chinese, Japanese and Korean texts in both horizontal and vertical layout styles, Middle Eastern, right-to-left layouts, and pre-designed templates. The currently-released version (3.0), is in use throughout the world by typesetters within UBS, SIL, and other similar agencies.

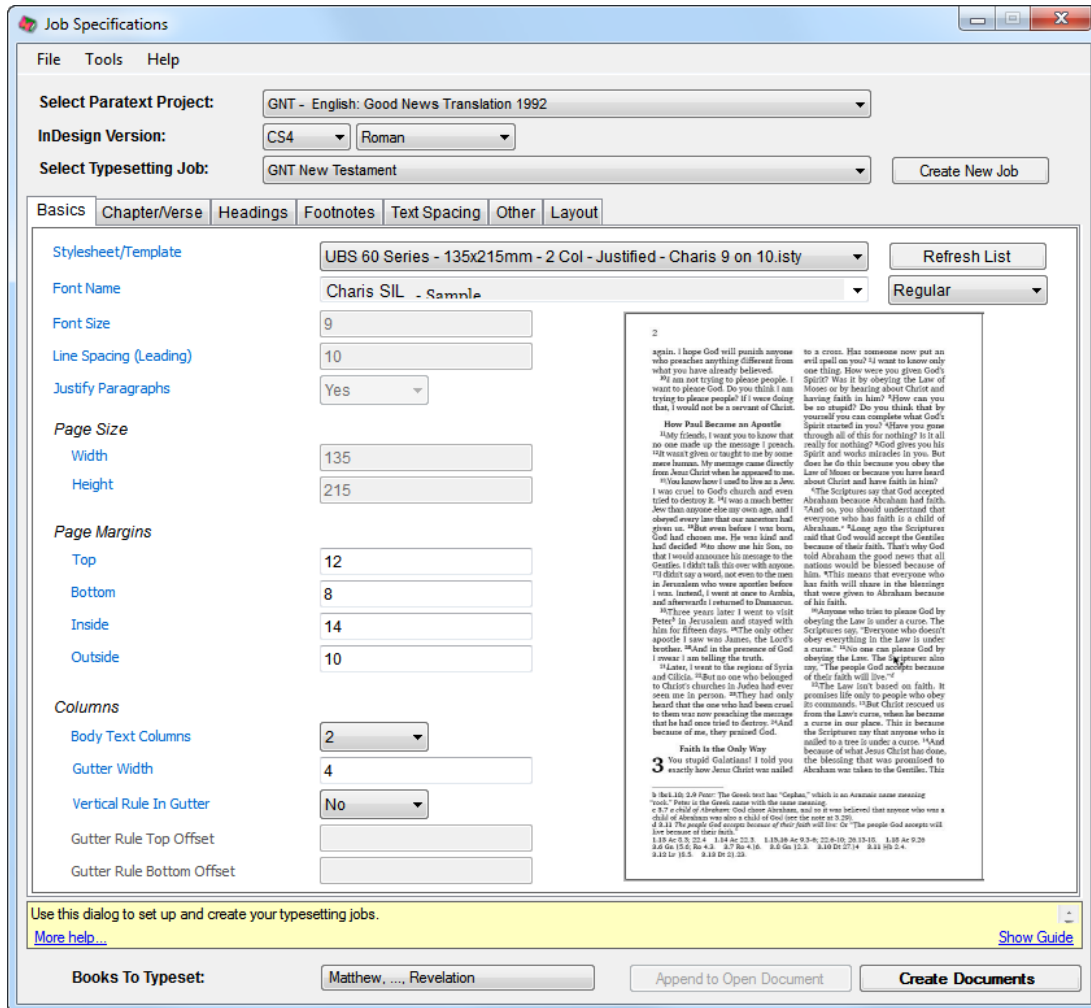
What are the benefits of Publishing Assistant?

To date, more than 90 Bibles, 250 New Testaments and 120 other publications (Portions, Concordances etc.) have been produced using the product. The benefits of the software have been realized in higher productivity, resulting in lower costs, and in higher quality of the final product.

How does Publishing Assistant work?

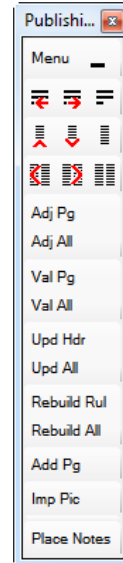
PA does not actually typeset Bibles itself – rather, it works in partnership with Adobe InDesign versions CS2–CS5. PA controls InDesign through a scripting “interface” which Adobe has provided within InDesign. Through this interface, PA can send instructions to InDesign and automate nearly all of the layout operations in that were previously done manually by the typesetter.

PA begins a typesetting project by prompting the typesetter to make a number of basic decisions about the page metrics and the general style of the Bible.



PA uses InDesign to create the document and begins laying out the pages making decisions along the way about things like footnotes/cross references placement, header information, and column balancing.

PA then provides the typesetter with manual tools for making adjustments to the various elements on the page. At any point the typesetter may make more advanced formatting decisions via the options provided by InDesign's powerful styles capability. PA can save these decisions to be used as the basis for the creation of additional books



How do users learn to use Publishing Assistant?

Publishing Assistant development, delivery, and support is a part of the UBS ICAP (Institute for Computer Assisted Publishing). On a two year schedule ICAP provides training seminars to each of the UBS areas. Publishing Assistant is included in this training. These seminars target the area support personnel and are intended to bring them up to speed on the newest features of the product. Additional training is provided through work camps, apprenticeships, and even one-on-one training/help via screen sharing over long distance.

What is the current state of the project?

PA 4.0 is due for release in mid-2011. This release is targeted at publishing custom layouts such as complex study Bibles which may include content from multiple Paratext note projects, or simpler Bibles which require a different layout than those provided by the default PA layout options. For example, PA normally places cross references at the bottom of the page, but some layouts require cross references in a vertical column down the center of the page, or on the inside or outside of each page. The custom layout feature allows the typesetter to specify these and other layouts and the program will draw and fill these frames with the appropriate text.

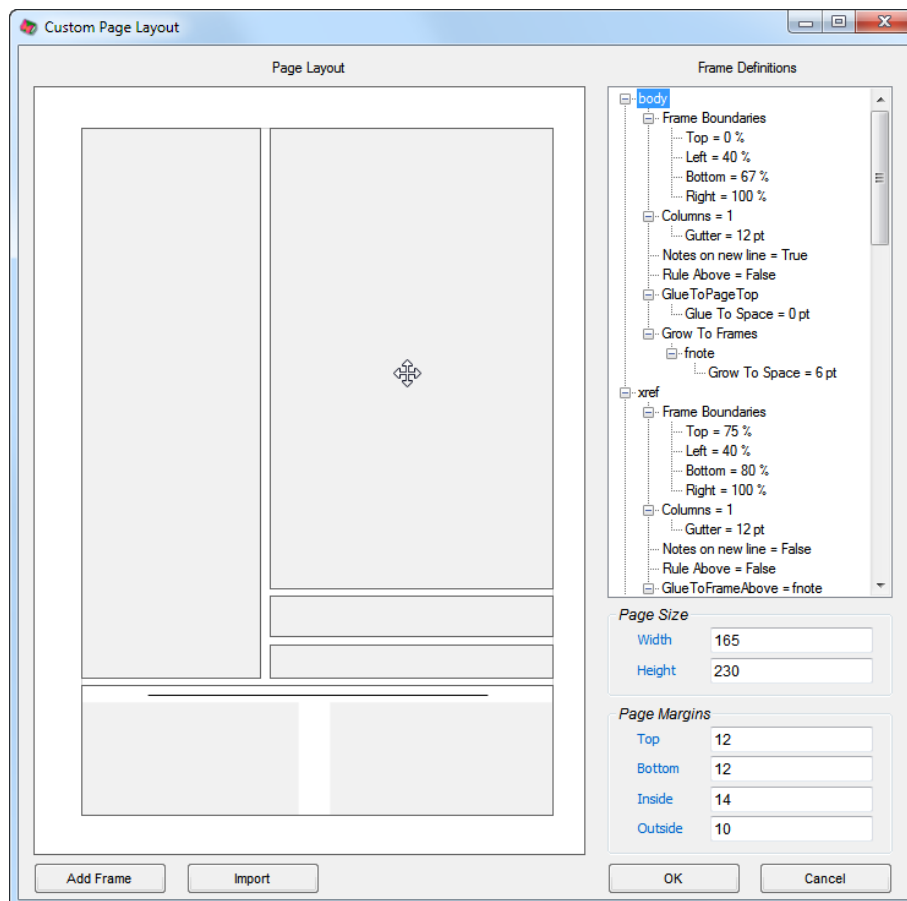
Much of the PA team's time is spent providing support to the 200+ users in the field. Some of the more difficult issues arise when trying to typeset Bibles that use non-roman scripts. Other challenges arise when cultural issues require special layouts or text handling. For example, Bibles in Islamic areas are sometimes expected to have decorative trim around the holy text on the page.

The team also spends time resolving software bugs and processing enhancement requests.

What are some of the ongoing plans for Publishing Assistant

Version 4.0 release (mid-2011):

- In-depth testing with selected study Bible projects.
- Extend the custom layout function needs to the CJK and Middle Eastern versions of InDesign.
- Localization of software messages and dialogs.
- Extend advanced CS5 support to – Basic Bible, Diglot, and Concordance & Names Index outputs.
- Enhance (and simplify) the custom page layout dialog by supporting drag & drop frames and making the frames more interactive.
- Support the ability to reset note caller sequence at the start of each chapter or each page.



4.1

- Provide an interactive preview for the Job Specifications dialog that will allow the user to immediately see the results of his decisions.
- Convert the python code to .NET. Currently the majority of the code is written in .NET but the text conversion code is written in Python. This adds an unnecessary level of complexity that makes it difficult to support and limits feature improvement.

Plus

- Support, support, support! As long as PA is used, users will need support.

Who is involved in the project?

- Members of the UBS software development team collaborate in the development/support of the code. These members include dedicated programmers and area support personnel.
- The Canadian Bible Society (CBS):
 - CBS has graciously provided support to the fellowship by facilitating the development of the ICAP community.
 - CBS handles product registration and distribution.
 - CBS staff screen every support request and when a training issue is evident the issue is fielded by one of their local staff who is a highly skilled typesetter, trainer and developer. Bugs and feature requests are normally forwarded to the project leader for scheduling and resolution.
 - CBS has provided resources to produce the Publishing Assistant documentation for each major release. This documentation is incorporated into the product in the form of help.
- SIL has contributed resources to develop a plug-in for InDesign that supports some of the more exotic non-roman composer issues. Currently SIL has a dedicated typesetter who also serves as the first-level supporter for SIL typesetters. He works closely with the project leader.
- The user community: PA is very much a user-driven product. Users help to set the direction of development as well as providing user-to-user support via publishing-specific distribution lists and forums.

The project leader has over 30 years' experience working in the publishing field, initially as a software developer/manager in the commercial publishing industry before leaving to work in the area of Bible publication in 1982, where he has served as a Bible typesetter, typesetting center manager/supporter, and Bible typesetting software developer.

