PRINTips

Taking Stock: How to Find and Use Stock Photos

One of the best ways to enliven your sales, marketing or instructional material is to incorporate photographs with the text. A well-composed and correctly-lit photograph can effectively augment the text message by creating an emotional connection to the reader. And readers can more quickly comprehend what is being said if a visual image is added to the words.

One of our objectives as your printer is to make your photographs always look their best – good color fidelity, sharp image and fine definition. To accomplish this, we must begin with photographs that have been taken for use in printed material. Luckily there is a ready source for such photographs – libraries of stock photography available on the Internet.

A stock photography library is a collection, sometimes very large, of images taken by a professional photographer who is generally not working on an assignment from a client. A stock photographer takes his photos speculatively, hoping to sell them to an agency that assembles photographs into a library. A good stock photographer produces graphically powerful and commercially useful images, often on a theme. This practice makes it possible to assemble photographs from different photographers into collections that can be offered for sale.

Stock Photography and the Internet

One of the many benefits of the Internet is to provide ready access to stock photo libraries for study, research and personal enjoyment as well as commercial use in printed materials. Finding images on the worldwide web can be quick and easy because of the web's powerful search engines. Merely by typing a few key words, an Internet user can dispatch an image search engine to match the keywords to sites with corresponding images.

Many image search engines are available. Some work by searching the web for images, then archiving thumbnails of the photographs. Others partner with commercial stock photography agencies to offer pictures for sale. Some services maintain collections whose use is governed by stated terms and conditions.

In general, using an image search engine will give you access to a broad spectrum of images, ranging from well-cataloged commercial-grade collections to images that have been casually incorporated into web sites. Many will display thumbnails and provide links directly to the source site. Most show the file name, file size and key words used to index the image. Others will allow you to specify color or black and white as you search for images.

Some image search engines that you may recognize are *AltaVista: Image Search **www.altavista.com**); Ditto (**www.ditto.com**); Excite (**www.excite.com**); FAST Multimedia Search (**http://multimedia.alltheweb.com**); Google Image Search (**http://images.google.com**); HotBot (**http://hotbot.lycos.com**); Ithaki Image and Photo Metasearch (**http://www.todalanet.com**); IXQUICK (**http://www.ixquick.com**);*

*Lycos Multimedia Search (**http://multimedia.lycos.com**); Picsearch (**www.picsearch.com**); and Yahoo! Picture Gallery (**http://gallery.yahoo.com**).*

One image search engine – *Big Search Engine Index to Images (**www.search-engine-index.co.uk/Images_Search**)* — links to 19 other engines including many previously mentioned and others like PhotoDisc and the Animation Factory.

Limitations of Image Search Engines

Having access to millions of images on the Internet does not necessarily translate into the ability to download and use the images in your publications.
For one thing, not all photographs located by an image search engine are of sufficient technical quality to use in print. Also, many photographs are copyrighted or have stated terms and conditions for use.

If you find an image you like, you may be tempted to download it to use in a presentation, to illustrate a report or to add it to a brochure. But beware – a strict interpretation of United States copyright law is that these activities are illegal. Without express permission from the originator or owner of the image, including payment or licensing, you may be guilty of copyright infringement. The ease with which downloads can be accomplished, coupled with an admittedly remote likelihood that the infringement will be detected, still does not make the action acceptable.

A Review of Copyright for Images

The standard defense for a case of copyright infringement is the *doctrine of fair use*. Fair use allows the reproduction of an image for specific purposes such as criticism, satire, news reporting, teaching and research. Copyright was augmented in 1998 when President Clinton signed the *Digital Millennium Copyright Act* into law. That law extended a number of copyright issues to relate to new technologies.

To emphasize the importance of copyright, most image search engines post an overall disclaimer or provide a notice with each image that reminds the potential user to obtain copyright permission before using the image. It is not always easy or even possible to gain permission to use copyrighted images.

Image File Types Found on the Internet

To make the best use of images you find on the Internet and have permission to use, you should become familiar with image file formats, including their strengths and limitations. Some file formats we can reproduce for you in high quality images; others have been altered to reduce file size and in the process been rendered unsuitable for print applications.

GIF (Graphics Interchange Format)
The GIF file format was developed by CompuServe in the mid-1980s to speed up electronic transfer of highly compressed raster graphic files. GIF files are made small in part by limiting the color palette and are generally not recommended for print applications.

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group)
JPEG is both a file format and a file compression technology that can be used on other file formats. JPEG files are extremely common on the Internet because of the relatively high compression (ranging from 5:1 to 15:1) that supports both small file size and acceptable quality for viewing on a computer screen. Despite the high quality for web viewing, some JPEG files will not reproduce well in print.

TIFF (Tagged Image File Format)
TIFF was developed by Aldus Corporation in the mid 1980s to serve as a standard file format for saving and transmitting high quality images from scanners and paint and photo-editing software applications. TIFF files are platform-independent and come compressed or uncompressed.

TIFF has become an industry standard and is capable of saving high quality images in color or gray scale. TIFF files reproduce well in print.

Confused? We'll Help

As we mentioned when we started this article, we want to help you find and use photographs that will do everything you intended to enhance your printed piece. We are eager to help you select photographs in a file format that will work best for the reproduction method you are using. We may also be able to help you obtain needed copyright permission. Just call us and we'll set up a time to review these issues.

Stock Photo Sites

Although there are many sites on the web where you can view and download free photographs, we find that these are generally intended for use on the web. The files are commonly in JPEG format with a resolution of 300 dpi – too low to reproduce well in print.

We recommend that when you are selecting images to appear in print, you limit your search to fee-based sites known to have high-resolution forms of their images. Some of the sites we think you will enjoy visiting are:

Corbis (www.corbis.com)
Corbis has acquired the rights to over 23 million images and photographs. You can browse in the gallery for free and download comping images with the Corbis watermark. When you have selected an image, you can access the high resolution version by paying a fee and proceeding to download.

Getty Images (www.gettyone.com)
Getty provides you with access to over 200,000 images. Some are royalty-free while others are rights-protected. Prices tend to be higher than for Corbis images.

Imagestate (www.imagestate.com)
ImageState provides photographs to the professional business user. Images are sold to customers on two bases: royalty free and rights protected. *Royalty free images* are typically sold for a low price for either an individual image or as a collection of images on a CD-rom, with few restrictions on the use of the image. *Rights protected images* are sold for limited and specific uses on an exclusive basis. The price charged for an image is individually negotiated and is at a premium compared to royalty free rates.

We are always looking for new stock photography sites; call us for a more comprehensive list.

a vocabulary of the graphic arts

Comping Image: Short for *comprehensive rendering.* Comping images are medium to low resolution that can be used as *for position only* placements to see whether the image works in your layout as you intended when you selected it. Many fee-based image sites provide comping images, often with a large, noticeable watermark.

Royalty-free Image: Refers to images that can be purchased outright, then used in any way you wish. Royalty-free images may be priced based on file size – the smaller the file, the lower the fee. However, this often means that you will be limited graphically in the uses – for example, a small, low resolution file may not be suitable for print.

Rights-Protected Image: The use of rights-protected images are strictly controlled by the copyright holder and conceptually are only "rented" for specific use. The terms and conditions of use will be clearly delineated; in general, the broader the intended use, the higher the use fee. Any use of a rights-protected image that is outside the stated terms and conditions means that the use is subject to an additional fee.

Image Download Tips

If you are browsing for comping images or want to show us examples of the kind of photos you'd like to include in your printed piece, follow these directions to download the image. Do remember that you will probably be downloading a 72 dpi image – something that looks fine on your computer screen but is insufficient to reproduce well in print.

For PC users:
1. Click the right mouse button.
2. Click "save image as" (Netscape) or "save picture as" (Explorer).
3. You will be prompted with a default file name and (usually) a default file type with the appropriate file extension. Accept the default file name or change it if you wish.
4. Select the destination for the image file, and click SAVE.

For Macintosh users:
1. Point your cursor over the image.
2. Click and hold the mouse button and wait for options.
3. Select "save this image as"
4. Release the mouse button; a dialog box will open.
5. Select the destination for the image file; rename (if desired).
6. Click SAVE.

Q. *I understand the arguments about copyright, but I really don't think the Copyright Police will find me. Can you explain why I need to worry about copyright compliance?*

A. Copyright compliance is somewhat akin to software licensing – it is both the right thing to do, and it may be illegal not to comply. As your printer, we are obliged to respect copyright and licensing restrictions. If you have failed to gain permission to reproduce an image, or if you bring us a file containing a comping image, we cannot reproduce your piece until permission has been obtained or you have paid the fee to use a print-quality image.

We will provide all the assistance we can to help you gain copyright permission or even to find royalty-free images, but we will not print from your file if there are copyright or licensing violations.