

Creating a Successful eBook

Tuesday, May 24 (9:50am – 10:10am)

Take a document from InDesign to EPUB and Kindle mobi format in 20 minutes flat. Learn tips and tricks earned in the forges of converting hundreds of books at O'Reilly Press.

Ron Bilodeau

www.oreilly.com

ron@oreilly.com

blog: <http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/au/3771>

twitter: @biladew



Items to be Prepped Ahead of Time

Our Print and Digital workflows at O'Reilly Media are designed to be as efficient as possible.

With this in mind, here is a list of the eBook-related elements that are prepared ahead of time:

ePub and Mobi stylesheets

Fine-tuning the stylesheets can take hours (if not days). So, based on our specific series design templates, we first create the ePub stylesheet. From there, we then create a modified version of that stylesheet to be used when converting the final ePub file to Mobi (for the Kindle).

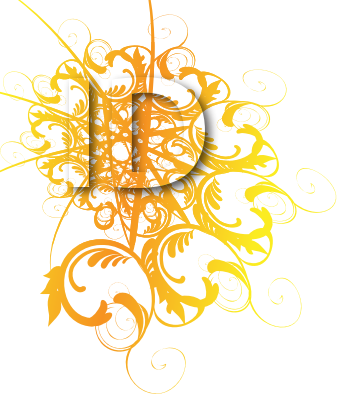
Pre-Optimized Cover and figure files (if necessary)

InDesign can generate a cover for you, if the first page of your document is set up as such. But the other very good option is to create the cover, ahead of time, as a JPG or PNG file.

Also, some of the ePub images that InDesign generates for you may not be the preferred size. So it is beneficial to proactively create a correctly sized set of these images. Then you can quickly swap them into the final ePub file.

Pre-Defined XSLT or GREP expressions (if necessary)

It is rare that InDesign (or any other ePub-creating program for that matter) will generate perfect code right out of the box. So creating the necessary XSLT or GREP in order to clean up the code, can potentially save you tons of time on the back end.



Export Your ePub (CS5.5)

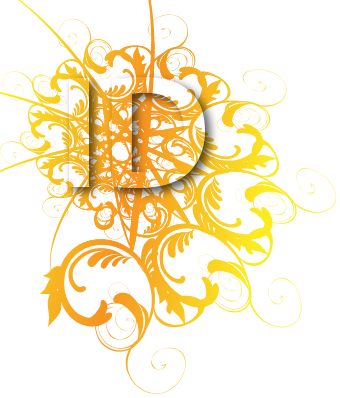
General Settings

The screenshot shows the 'EPUB Export Options' dialog box with the 'General' tab selected. The settings are as follows:

- General**
 - Include Document Metadata
 - Add Publisher Entry: O'Reilly Media, Inc.
 - Unique Identifier: (empty field)
- EPUB Cover**
 - No Cover Image
 - Rasterize First Page
 - Use Existing Image File
 - Choose (button)
- Ordering**
 - Based on Page Layout
 - Same as XML Structure
 - Same as Articles Panel
- Formatting Options**
 - Book Margin: 0.5 Ems
 - Bullets: Map to Unordered Lists
 - Numbers: Map to Ordered Lists
 - View EPUB after Exporting

Annotations with red lines point to specific settings:

- 'Grabs metadata from File Info' points to the 'Include Document Metadata' checkbox.
- 'ePub cover rendering options' points to the 'EPUB Cover' section.
- 'ePub Ordering based on XML Structure or Articles Panel' points to the 'Ordering' section.
- 'ePub Margin settings for readers that allow this option' points to the 'Book Margin' field.
- 'Bulleted List options: (Map to Unordered Lists) (Convert to Text)' points to the 'Bullets' dropdown.
- 'This field will auto-populate on export if left empty' points to the 'Unique Identifier' field.
- 'This option will order page elements from Left to Right and then Top to Bottom' points to the 'Same as Articles Panel' radio button.
- 'Numbered List options: (Map to Ordered Lists) (Map to Static Ordered Lists) (Convert to Text)' points to the 'Numbers' dropdown.

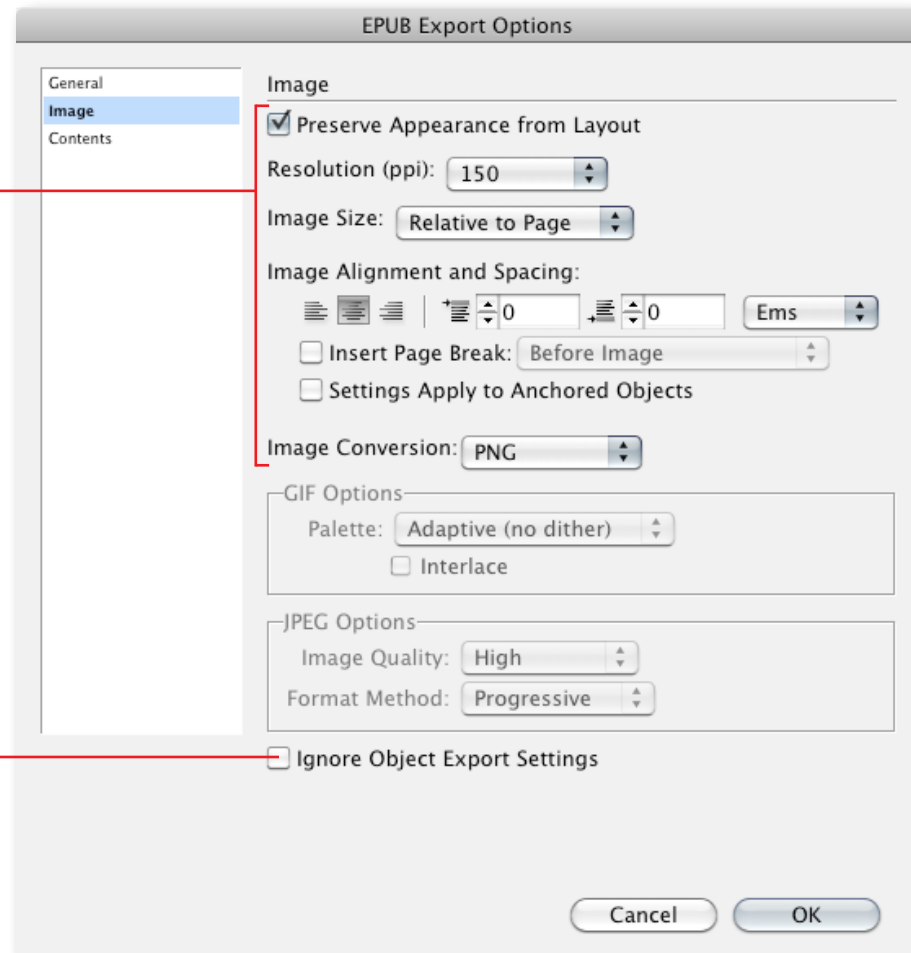


Export Your ePub (CS5.5) (cont.)

Image Settings

These Image options are similar to the Object Export Options, but will be applied to any objects with no individual Object Export Options selected

Check this option only if you wish to ignore individual Object Export Options settings and use the above settings for all objects in your document(s)





Export Your ePub (CS5.5) (cont.)

Contents Settings

Select DTBook (DAISY Digital Talking Book) only if you are creating a book intended for visually impaired readers

Footnotes will be placed at the end of each section if this is not checked

This option will build a stylesheet based on document Paragraph and Character styling

Select this option if you would like InDesign to create a stylesheet with names only (no definitions)

Drop down menu to select pre-defined ePub TOC information

Drop down menu to select Paragraph Style that will indicate a new ePub page break

This option will create extra stylesheet elements to account for Style overrides

Select this option if you have a pre-existing stylesheet

EPUB Export Options

General
Image
Contents

Contents

Format for EPUB Content

XHTML
 DTBook

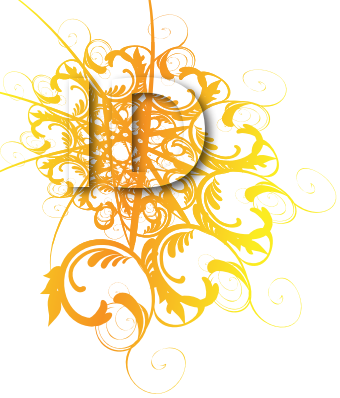
Contents

Use InDesign TOC Style : ePub T...
 Break Document at Paragraph Style: Ch Title
 Place Footnote After Paragraph
 Remove Forced Line Breaks

CSS Options

Generate CSS
 Include Style Definitions
 Preserve Local Overrides
 Include Embeddable Fonts
 Style Names Only
 Use Existing CSS File
Choose template.css

Cancel OK



Make your post-export changes

If you need to make post-export changes to your ePub file (which is most likely the case), there are lots of ways to accomplish this task.

Below, I highlight 2 common ways that I find very useful:

1. Use a program like Oxygen

Oxygen is my preferred program to use for editing my ePub files. It allows you to access and update all of the internal files within your ePub without the need to crack open and then re-package.

The newest version (currently 12.2) also includes ePubcheck validation and the ability to drag/drop files (including images)

<http://www.oxygenxml.com/>

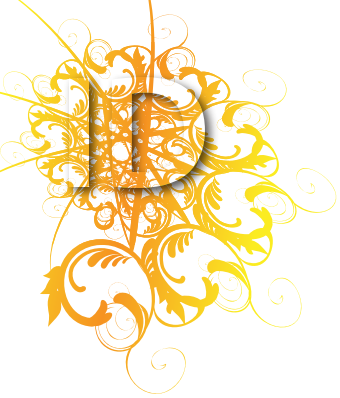
2. Crack open and edit your ePub file

Another common method of editing ePub files is to unzip the file so that I have access to all of its contents.

Then I use either TextWrangler or Dreamweaver to update and clean up the code. (There are lots of other text and wysiwyg programs out there to choose from. These are just my preferred.)

When I am done with my cleanup, I simply re-package my ePub using a great script, written by Dan Rodney, that you can download here:

http://code.google.com/p/epub-applescripts/downloads/detail?name=ePub_Zip_1.0.3.zip&can=2&q=



Validate your final ePub file

Once you have finished cleaning up your ePub file, you need to validate it using ePubCheck.

<http://code.google.com/p/epubcheck/>

If you are using the latest version of Oxygen (12.2), it will run ePubCheck for you.

However, if you need to check your final ePub separately, there is a very user-friendly web-based tool provided by ThreePress that will run the latest versions of ePubCheck and ePubPreflight:

<http://www.threepress.org/document/epub-validate/>

If you need to validate large batches of EPubs, there are also other versions of ePubCheck that can be run locally or on server machines. More information about those can be found here:

<http://code.google.com/p/epubcheck/>



Converting your ePub file to Mobi (for Kindle)

Below, I list the 2 best ways (in my opinion) to convert your ePub file to Mobi so that it can be read on an Amazon Kindle.

Calibre

<http://calibre-ebook.com/>

Calibre is a fantastic tool for creating, editing, and converting eBooks to and from a variety of formats including ePub and Mobi.

In my opinion, Calibre is the best way to convert ePub to Mobi while allowing the user to make intelligent decisions about look and feel when read on a Kindle. It also offers an easy-to-use option to create the Kindle-specific TOC (which can be very tricky).

The only downfall is that Amazon tends to reject files that were created with Calibre because it does not like some of the inner workings of the final Mobi files.

KindleGen (via Kindle Previewer)

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?ie=UTF8&docId=1000234621>

There are a few different ways to run KindleGen, but I find that the easiest way is to simply drag an ePub into the Kindle Previewer window and let it run its conversion automatically. It does not give you the control over look and feel that you get by using Calibre, but it is an easy, 1-step process.

The main benefit of using KindleGen is if you plan to sell your converted Mobi file through Amazon directly. Because KindleGen is an Amazon product, it produces the Mobi file exactly the way they want it to be set up, which means that you will most likely have no problems submitting the file to the Amazon Marketplace.

However, if you plan to sell your Mobi file elsewhere and do not care about submitting to Amazon Marketplace, then I would opt to use Calibre over KindleGen because of its ease of use and level of control.

All of our O'Reilly Mobi files are sold through the Amazon Marketplace (in addition to our other distribution channels. So it makes sense for us to use KindleGen for our Mobi conversions.