

Preparing Non-Vector Design Files for Letterpress Printing

Design Software Overview

- **Adobe Photoshop** is used to process **non-vector elements** like hand lettering and scanned illustrations, text, or design elements which are then embedded into the Adobe Illustrator (.ai) file. When *all of the elements* in a design are non-vector, the entire design file can be created in Photoshop and sent as a native Photoshop (.psd) file.
- **Adobe Illustrator (.ai)** files are best for producing letterpress plates when the design includes elements that are *not* hand drawn or hand written such as computer fonts, vector illustrations, etc. **All text that is not hand drawn should be created in Illustrator whenever possible.**
- **Adobe InDesign (.indd)** files can be used, but can be quirky and unreliable at times, so are not recommended.

To Prepare Non-Vector Imagery for Letterpress Plates

1. Make a high resolution (600 dpi min) grayscale scan as a TIFF. You can use a photo if you don't have a scanner, but you may see irregularities or lower overall quality
2. Open the file in Photoshop.
3. Do any necessary clean up (stray marks, adjustments to figures, etc.).
4. Make sure the **Image > Mode** is **Grayscale**.
5. Use Levels (Image > Adjustments > Levels) or Curves *with a live preview* to bring the image as close to black and white as you can without compromising the letter forms or overall appearance.
6. Convert **Image > Mode** to **Bitmap**.
Important: when prompted, choose **Resolution Output = 1200 ppi**, and **Method = 50% Threshold**.
7. Save as a native Photoshop (.psd) file.
8. When creating the overall design in Illustrator, **embed this file into your Illustrator design file** (if the entire design is non-vector, simply send the .psd file).