InDesign
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ADOBE INDESIGN CS4

Plus:

Powerful Find/Change automation

New ways to use anchored objects

Always-on preflighting

Go from InDesign to Flash in minutes

See What's Inside InDesign CS4

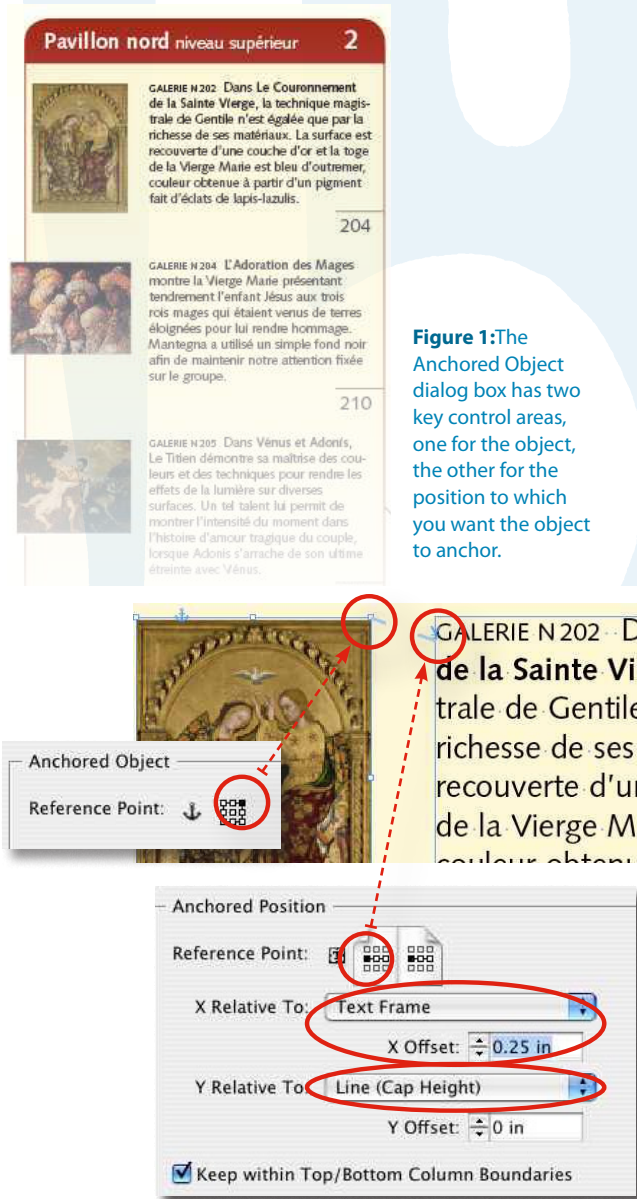## Get the scoop on the hot new features!

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Figure 1: The Anchored Object dialog box has two key control areas, one for the object, the other for the position to which you want the object to anchor.

Anchored Objects: More Than Meets the Eye

Anchored Objects can be used in ways that aren't always so obvious

By DIANE BURNS

We all know that InDesign's Anchored Object feature can be useful. After all, the ability to position objects that move with text is essential in certain layouts, and can save hours of manual re-positioning. And since InDesign CS2, anchored objects can be the more familiar inline object, anchored to the baseline of text, or can be moved anywhere on a page with custom positioning.

Anchored objects are easy to create. Simply click on any object using the Selection Tool. Cut or Copy the object to the Clipboard, then click your text cursor next to the text you wish to associate the object with, and Paste. You can then use the controls in the Anchored Objects dialog box to position the object (**Object > Anchored Object > Options**).

The dialog box for custom positioning of anchored objects can be a little intimidating at first, but it's really pretty straightforward (Figure 1). In the top section of the dialog box, choose the point on the object you wish to use as a reference point. In the bottom section of the dialog box, choose where you want the object to be anchored, relative to the text *or* the page itself. Also, take into consideration whether or not you have Relative to Spine checked or not.

You can also just grab the object after it's pasted and position it visually. However, we've found this doesn't always set up the most efficient relationship in the dialog box. It can be better to position the object visually, and then open the Anchored Objects dialog box to make sure the correct side of the object, and where you're anchoring it, is chosen.

Once you've set up the position of the anchored object, the information can be stored as part of an Object Style, making it easy to re-apply the settings. And, if you lose track of where the object is anchored to, simply turn on Show Text Threads; a dashed line will appear from the Anchored Object to its anchor point.

The ability to anchor objects in a custom position can be a very powerful production tool. Most of us, though, think of this feature only in its classic application, where images that need to run in a margin alongside text are anchored to the appropriate word, most commonly used in books and reference publications of various kinds. However, there are other, less obvious situations where the feature can come in handy. We've whipped up a few examples of these in the next pages to give you some ideas of new ways to use this oft-forgotten feature.

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Lil' Bits 'o Fun
Ingredients
1 headline
1 set of Paragraph Rules, above & below
2 anchored shapes
1 chair to sit in, after viewing results!

This real-world recipe involves a trick with both paragraph rules and anchored objects. The publication has a heading at the top of every page, and every couple of pages the heading changes. The heading contains a box drawn around the text, with two small dingbat squares on either side.

The box around the word is drawn with two paragraph rules, of course, using the settings shown here. Since InDesign allows the Rule Below to slide under the text, but on top of the Rule Above, the two can be combined to appear to draw a box around the text (see Volume 1, Issue 4, February/March 2005 for more cool tricks with Paragraph Rules). But the magic that keeps the small dingbat characters attached is achieved by making them Anchored Objects. The dingbat characters are cut or copied into the Clipboard, then pasted immediately in front of and behind the text, thus anchoring them on either side of the word. Once the dingbats are positioned correctly you can double-click the word, edit it, and everything is still perfectly lined up. Delicious!
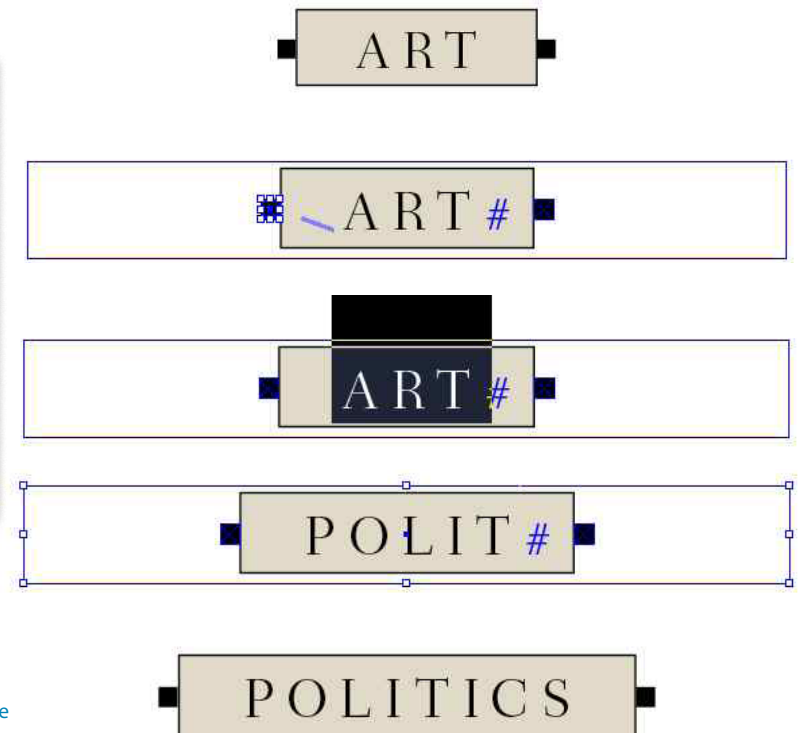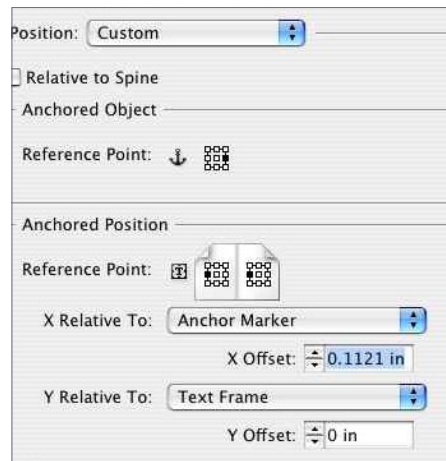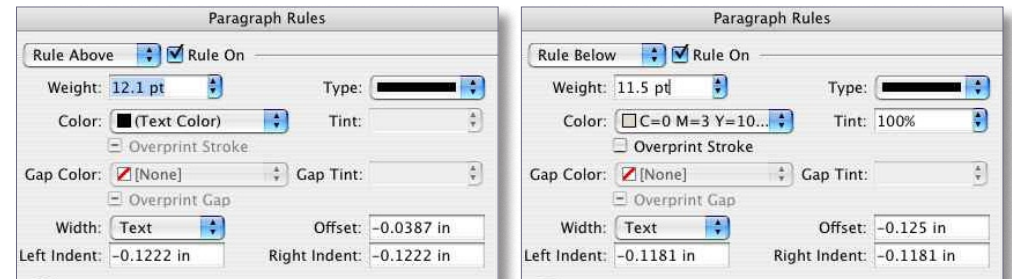
Figure 2: Paragraph rules and anchored objects are used to make this heading easy to edit.

Setting a Splendid Table

Ingredients

Your favorite table of text or images, or both

Anchored object

Imagination to taste

This recipe comes from Michael Murphy, creator of the excellent podcast, *The InDesigner*. It uses anchored objects to give a really nice finish to tables. In the example above, small triangles are created that are the color of the adjacent cell. They're then anchored to the beginning of the first word in the next cell, and positioned to the left of the word. This way, it appears the triangle is part of the previous cell.

In the second example, a similar technique is used, this time employing a circle, again anchored to the beginning of the first word in the cell, but positioned down and to the left of the word, so it falls in the intersection of the cells. In both of these examples, an object style can be created that sets the positioning correctly, or you can simply select the object once it's anchored and copy and paste throughout the table. Try different shapes to give the look you like best. Simply delectable!

In the final example, images are anchored to the text in table headings. The nice thing about this technique is if this row is set as a table heading (**Table > Convert Rows > To Header**), the images repeat, too, along with the text headings as the table runs from frame to frame or page to page.

Column Topper

Ingredients
An alphabetic list
Letters for column topping
Anchored Object options

The real key to thinking outside the box—or frame—when working with anchored objects is to understand the different orientations of your layout an object can be anchored to. Most of us think of anchoring an object to the edge of a text frame, but you can also anchor an object relative to a specific column, margin or even the page itself.

Because the settings give a lot of flexibility, it's easy to set up all kinds of anchor relationships that can be big time savers. Here we show a simple alphabetic list with headings at the top of each column where name in the next letter begin. Because the heading letters are anchored to a specific name, the letter will travel appropriately, regardless of how the list is edited (assuming, of course, the name to which the heading letter is anchored is not deleted).

Even if the list is changed to a different number of columns, the headings still line up, right where they're supposed to be. A tasty little topper, indeed!

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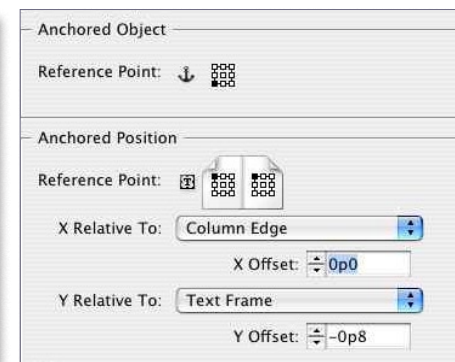
Figure 3: Anchoring the column headings keeps them in the correct position, even when the number of columns is changed.