

Excerpted from
Real World InDesign CS2

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Customizing Printers' Marks

If there's one thing we've learned about our fellow desktop publishers over the years, it's that you're picky about printer's marks. You want to control the offset of the crop marks and bleed marks from the edge of the page. You want to use star targets instead of, or in addition to, the standard registration marks. You want the color bars to print at the top, the bottom, the left, or the right of the page.

There is utterly no way for a page layout program to provide for all of your individual preferences—what's right for one person is not just wrong, but is probably offensive to another.

InDesign, in recognition of this fact, provides a way for you to define your own printer's marks. The trouble is—no one knows how to do it. Until now.

InDesign uses printer's marks definition (also known as PMD) files to customize the way the program prints printer's marks. They're text files that can be edited with any text editor (BBEdit and Notepad work quite well). Once you've saved a PMD file to a specific folder on your system, a new entry will appear in the Type pop-up menu in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box. Choose the option, and InDesign will print using the marks defined in the file.

Most previous attempts to provide custom printer's marks were based on hacking the PostScript output stream of a program—Ole wrote custom files to provide this feature for FreeHand and PageMaker. InDesign's PMD files are not only easier to create (they're not PostScript), but they'll also print on non-PostScript printers. For that matter, the custom marks will also appear in exported PDFs, if you want them to.

Inside a PMD File InDesign PMD files have a fairly forgiving set of rules, but they have rules all the same. First, an InDesign PMD file must begin with the following line:

```
//pgmk.v02.00
```

Inside the printer's marks definition file, “//” indicates a comment—apart from the comment in the first line, all other comments are ignored by InDesign.

The body of the file is surrounded by “<”, which opens a printer's mark “dictionary,” and it's closed by “>”. Inside the angle brackets, you set global values (if any) and then create a set of custom printer's marks with the following line:

```
MarksArray
```

Following this line, square brackets (“[” and “]”) enclose the actual printer's mark definitions. The skeleton of the file, therefore, looks like this:

```
//pgmk.v02.00
<
//Global definitions go here.
MarksArray
[
//printer's mark definitions go here.
]
>
```

There are currently four global definitions you can add. They're all optional, one of them is not used, and most of them are overridden by settings in the InDesign Print dialog box. We never use them, but, just in case you do, for some reason, Table 11-3 shows the global definitions you can use.

Once you're inside the angle brackets, however, things get much more exciting (if you're as easily excited about printer's marks as we are). This is the place where you define the appearance and location of the marks that will appear when you print.

Most of the mark definitions inside the file look like this:

```
<
Type FourCropMarks
Length 24
>
```

An entry for a custom registration mark is a little bit more complicated, as shown in the following:

```
<
Type RegistrationMark
Count 4
InnerRadius 3 // no inner black-filled circle
OuterRadius 6 // radius of outer circle
OutLength 12 // half of the length of the crosshair mark
                // perpendicular to the closest edge of the page
AlongLength 24 // half of the length of the crosshair parallel
                // to the closest edge of the page
Location <
  Side [Top Bottom Left Right]
  OutAnchor MidCropMark
  OverAnchor Center
  MarkCorner MarkCenter
>
>
```

The PMD file can support a variety of predefined mark types, and can place the marks in a variety of locations. The mark types are shown in Table 11-4, the location keywords can be found in Table 11-5, and a list of the keywords you can add to a page (date, time, separation name, and so forth) appears in figures 11-9 and 11-10.

Note: Many of the measurements in the PMD file are based on the Length and Offset settings for the FourCropMarks mark type and on the Length and BleedMarkOffset settings for the FourBleedMarks mark type, so you should define these marks at the beginning of the Marks Array section of the file.

Note: If you're using the JCornerMarks mark type, the distances will be based on the Length setting. In addition, JCornerMarks overrides

TABLE 11-3
Global Settings

Mark Type Name:	What It Means:
Style	The name of the printers' marks file. Optional.
DefaultWeight	The default stroke weight, in points. Not used by InDesign.
DefaultCrop-MarkOffset	The default offset for crop marks. Overridden by the corresponding field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.
DefaultBleed-MarkOffset	The default offset for bleed marks. Overridden by the corresponding field in InDesign. Can be overridden by using the BleedMarkOffset parameter.

both FourCropMarks and FourBleedMarks, so omit those marks in files using JCornerMarks. Finally, add the IgnoreMarkOffsets value in the Globals section of the file and set it to true if you're using JCornerMarks.

Disclaimer: Fiddling with PMD files is something that you do entirely at your own risk. Adobe does not support this practice (in fact, we're not completely certain we should be telling you about it), and is in no way responsible for any problems you might run into during the course of experimentation. That said, the authors will try to help you if you run into trouble—just drop us a line!

Saving a PMD File

Save the PMD file as a text-only file with the file extension “.mrk” to the PrintSpt folder. The location of this folder varies—the best thing to do is to search your system for a folder with this name. Once you've done this, the name of your custom printer's marks file will appear on the Type pop-up menu in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box (see Figure 11-11).

You can also select your custom printer's marks when exporting files to PDF using the Type pop-up menu in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Export PDF dialog box.

If you want to print your custom printer's marks on another system, you'll have to take your PMD file with you and install it on that machine.

Example PMD Files

The PMD file shown in Figure 11-12 adds printer's marks in an arrangement similar to that used by QuarkXPress. Figure 11-13 shows a sleazy way to get page information for a page to print on the page itself, rather than in the bleed area. This is handy when you're printing letter-size pages on letter-size paper.

TABLE 11-4
Mark Types

Mark Type Name:	What It Means:								
FourCropMarks	<p>Draws a vertical and horizontal crop mark at each of the four corners of the page.</p> <p>Parameters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name:</th> <th>What it is:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Length</td> <td>Length of the crop marks, in points.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weight</td> <td>Stroke weight of the crop marks, in points. Overridden by the Weight field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CropMarkOffset</td> <td>Distance from the edge of the page, in points. Overridden by the Offset field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name:	What it is:	Length	Length of the crop marks, in points.	Weight	Stroke weight of the crop marks, in points. Overridden by the Weight field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.	CropMarkOffset	Distance from the edge of the page, in points. Overridden by the Offset field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.
Name:	What it is:								
Length	Length of the crop marks, in points.								
Weight	Stroke weight of the crop marks, in points. Overridden by the Weight field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.								
CropMarkOffset	Distance from the edge of the page, in points. Overridden by the Offset field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.								
FourBleedMarks	<p>Draws a vertical and horizontal bleed mark at each of the four corners of the bleed area.</p> <p>Parameters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name:</th> <th>What it is:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Length</td> <td>Length of the crop marks, in points.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weight</td> <td>Stroke weight of the crop marks, in points. Overridden by the Weight field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CropMarkOffset</td> <td>Distance from the edge of the page, in points. Overridden by the Offset field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name:	What it is:	Length	Length of the crop marks, in points.	Weight	Stroke weight of the crop marks, in points. Overridden by the Weight field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.	CropMarkOffset	Distance from the edge of the page, in points. Overridden by the Offset field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.
Name:	What it is:								
Length	Length of the crop marks, in points.								
Weight	Stroke weight of the crop marks, in points. Overridden by the Weight field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.								
CropMarkOffset	Distance from the edge of the page, in points. Overridden by the Offset field in the Marks and Bleed panel of the Print dialog box.								

TABLE 11-4
Mark Types (continued)

Mark Type Name:	What It Means:																		
JCornerMarks	<p>Draws Japanese-style corner marks (a combination of crop and bleed marks) at the corners of the page.</p> <p>Parameters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name:</th> <th>What it is:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Length</td> <td>Length of the marks, in points.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weight</td> <td>Stroke weight of the marks, in points.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name:	What it is:	Length	Length of the marks, in points.	Weight	Stroke weight of the marks, in points.												
Name:	What it is:																		
Length	Length of the marks, in points.																		
Weight	Stroke weight of the marks, in points.																		
RegistrationMark	<p>Draws a registration mark at a specified location.</p> <p>Parameters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name:</th> <th>What it is:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Count</td> <td>The number of registration marks to draw.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>InnerRadius</td> <td>The radius of the filled circle at the center of the registration mark.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>OuterRadius</td> <td>The radius of the unfilled outer circle of the registration mark.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>OutLength</td> <td>Half the length of the crosshair mark perpendicular to the edge of the page.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AlongLength</td> <td>Half the length of the crosshair mark parallel to the edge of the page.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>KnockoutWeight</td> <td>The weight of the crosshair mark inside the inner circle of the registration mark.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weight</td> <td>Stroke weight of the mark, in points.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Location</td> <td>Location of the registration marks. See Table 11-5 for a list of locations.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name:	What it is:	Count	The number of registration marks to draw.	InnerRadius	The radius of the filled circle at the center of the registration mark.	OuterRadius	The radius of the unfilled outer circle of the registration mark.	OutLength	Half the length of the crosshair mark perpendicular to the edge of the page.	AlongLength	Half the length of the crosshair mark parallel to the edge of the page.	KnockoutWeight	The weight of the crosshair mark inside the inner circle of the registration mark.	Weight	Stroke weight of the mark, in points.	Location	Location of the registration marks. See Table 11-5 for a list of locations.
Name:	What it is:																		
Count	The number of registration marks to draw.																		
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OuterRadius	The radius of the unfilled outer circle of the registration mark.																		
OutLength	Half the length of the crosshair mark perpendicular to the edge of the page.																		
AlongLength	Half the length of the crosshair mark parallel to the edge of the page.																		
KnockoutWeight	The weight of the crosshair mark inside the inner circle of the registration mark.																		
Weight	Stroke weight of the mark, in points.																		
Location	Location of the registration marks. See Table 11-5 for a list of locations.																		

TABLE 11-4
Mark Types (continued)

Mark Type Name:	What It Means:												
StarTarget	<p>Draws a star registration mark.</p> <p>Parameters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name:</th> <th>What it is:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>InnerRadius</td> <td>The radius of the filled circle at the center of the registration mark.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>OuterRadius</td> <td>The radius of the unfilled outer circle of the registration mark.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spokes</td> <td>Number of spokes in the star target.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Location</td> <td>Location of the registration marks. See Table 11-5 for a list of locations.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weight</td> <td>Stroke weight of the marks, in points.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name:	What it is:	InnerRadius	The radius of the filled circle at the center of the registration mark.	OuterRadius	The radius of the unfilled outer circle of the registration mark.	Spokes	Number of spokes in the star target.	Location	Location of the registration marks. See Table 11-5 for a list of locations.	Weight	Stroke weight of the marks, in points.
Name:	What it is:												
InnerRadius	The radius of the filled circle at the center of the registration mark.												
OuterRadius	The radius of the unfilled outer circle of the registration mark.												
Spokes	Number of spokes in the star target.												
Location	Location of the registration marks. See Table 11-5 for a list of locations.												
Weight	Stroke weight of the marks, in points.												
ColorBar	<p>Draws a range of color/gray swatches.</p> <p>Parameters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name:</th> <th>What it is:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>NumberOfCells</td> <td>Sets the number of cells in the bar.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CellSize</td> <td>The size of each cell.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CMYKValues</td> <td>An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains an array of four values. See the example files.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RegistrationValues</td> <td>An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains a single value between 1 (solid) and 0 (white). See the example files.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NumberOfCells</td> <td>Sets the number of cells in the bar.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name:	What it is:	NumberOfCells	Sets the number of cells in the bar.	CellSize	The size of each cell.	CMYKValues	An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains an array of four values. See the example files.	RegistrationValues	An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains a single value between 1 (solid) and 0 (white). See the example files.	NumberOfCells	Sets the number of cells in the bar.
Name:	What it is:												
NumberOfCells	Sets the number of cells in the bar.												
CellSize	The size of each cell.												
CMYKValues	An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains an array of four values. See the example files.												
RegistrationValues	An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains a single value between 1 (solid) and 0 (white). See the example files.												
NumberOfCells	Sets the number of cells in the bar.												

TABLE 11-4
Mark Types (continued)

Mark Type Name:	What It Means:
ColorBar	<i>Continued from previous page.</i>
Parameters	
Name:	What it is:
CellSize	The size of each cell.
CMYKValues	An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains an array of four values. See the example files.
RegistrationValues	An array whose length is equal to the NumberOfCells parameter. Each array element contains a single value between 1 (solid) and 0 (white). See the example files.
Weight	Stroke weight of the marks, in points.
Location	Location of the color bars. See Table 11-5 for a list of locations.
CMYKStrokeValue	The color of the stroke surrounding the cells in the color bar, as an array of four values.
Registration-StrokeValue	The color of the stroke surrounding the cells in the color bar, as a value from 1 (solid) to 0 (white).
Count	The number of color bars to draw.
SeparationsOnly	If true, draw color bars; if false, omit color bars.

TABLE 11-4
Mark Types (continued)

Mark Type Name:	What It Means:
MarkText	Informational text, such as the date and time a page was printed.
Parameters	
Name:	What it is:
TextSize	The size of the text, in points.
Registration- TextColor	A value between 1 (solid) and 0 (white) defining the color of the text.
CMYKTextColor	An array of four values defining the color of the text.
AllPlates	Prints the text in a solid color on all plates; changes the location of the text on each plate.
SamePositionOn- AllPlates	Set this value to true to print the text in the same position on all plates when you are using the AllPlates color.
FormatString	The text to print. This can be a string ("From the Desk of") or "%s", which is a placeholder for an InfoValue. Each string must be enclosed in parentheses.
InfoValues	An array of predefined page information. You can use Date, Time, PubName, PageLabel, Screen Frequency, ScreenAngle, and Plate Color.

TABLE 11-5
Locations

Name:	What It Means:
Side	The side of the page on which to draw the mark. You can use Top, Bottom, Left, or Right. The position of the mark on the defined side of the page is set by the OutAnchor parameter.
OverAnchor	Sets the position of the mark along the edge of the page. You can use Center, EdgeOfPage, InnerCropMark, MidCropMark, OuterCropMark, Bleed, MidBleedMark, or OuterBleedMark (see Figure 11-9). In addition, you can adjust the location of the mark, relative to the location you specify, using the OverDirection and/or OverOffset modifiers. OverDirection moves the mark relative to the the side of the page (as defined by the Side parameter)—if the Side parameter is Top or Bottom, OverDirection can be either Left or Right; if the Side parameter is Left or Right, OverDirection can be either Top or Bottom. OverOffset moves the mark relative to the OverAnchor position. Negative values move the mark away from the center of the page; positive values move it toward the center of the page.
OutAnchor	Defines the distance of the mark from the edge of the page using a range of predefined positions. You can use EdgeOfPage, InnerCropMark, MidCropMark, OuterCropMark, Bleed, InnerBleedMark, MidBleedMark, or OuterBleedMark (see Figure 11-10). You can adjust the position of the mark using the OutOffset parameter.
MarkCorner	Specifies the alignment of the mark relative to the location you've defined. You can use MarkCenter, MarkRight, MarkUR (upper right), MarkTop, MarkUL (upper left), MarkLeft, MarkLL (lower left), MarkBottom, or MarkLR (lower right).

FIGURE 11-9
OverAnchor Positions

You can think of OverAnchor positions as being on the horizontal axis of the page.

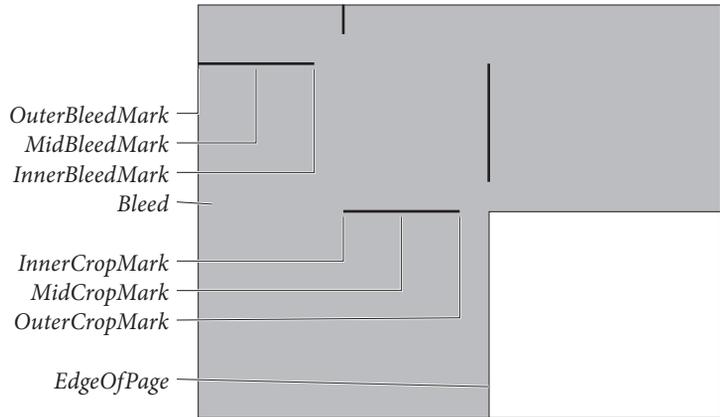


FIGURE 11-10
OutAnchor Positions

You can think of OutAnchor positions as being on the vertical axis of the page.

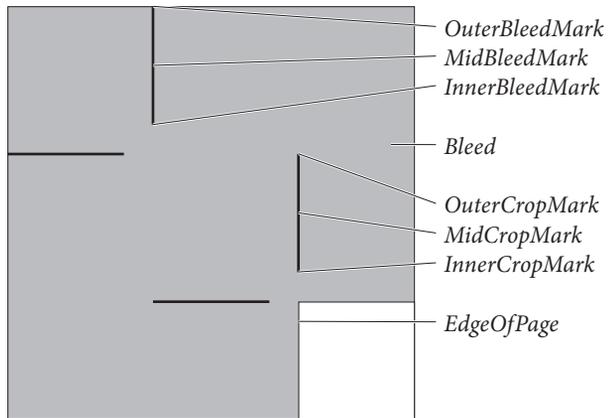
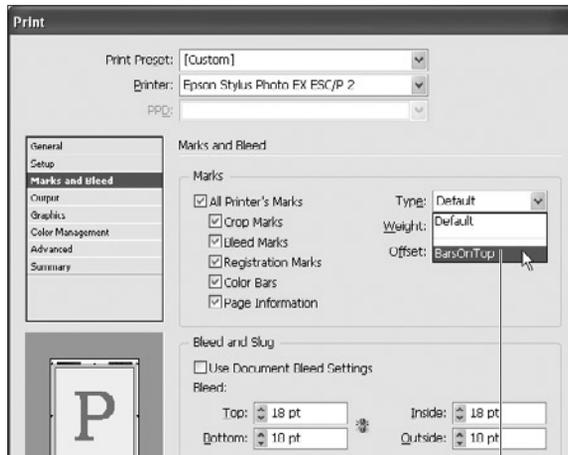


FIGURE 11-11
Choosing Custom Printer's Marks



Once you've created a PMD file and have saved it to the PrintSpt folder, the new mark type will appear on the Type pop-up menu.

FIGURE 11-12
QuarkXPress-Style
Printer's Marks

*You can download
 this text from
 David's Web site:
www.blatner.com/rwid/mrk.zip*

```
//pgmk.v02.00
<
Style (BarsOnTop)
MarksArray
[
  <
  Type FourCropMarks
  Length 24
  >
  <
  Type RegistrationMark
  Count 4
  InnerRadius 0 // Omit the inner target.
  OuterRadius 6 // Radius of outer circle.
  OutLength 12
  AlongLength 24
  Location <
    Side [Top Bottom Left Right]
    OutAnchor MidCropMark
    OverAnchor Center
    MarkCorner MarkCenter
  >
  >
  // Color bar, on the upper left.
  <
  Type ColorBar
  NumberOfCells 12
  CellSize 16
  CMYKValues [0 0 0 1 // black
    0 0 1 0 // yellow
    0 1 1 0 // magenta + yellow
    0 1 0 0 // magenta
    1 1 0 0 // cyan + magenta
    1 0 0 0 // cyan
    1 0 1 0 // cyan + yellow
    1 1 1 0 // cyan + magenta + yellow
    .5 0 0 0 // 50% cyan
    0 .5 0 0 // 50% magenta
    0 0 .5 0 // 50% yellow
    0 0 0 .5] // 50% black
  Weight 2 // Width of the stroke around each cell
  CMYKStrokeValue [0 0 0 0] // Color of the stroke (white)
  Location <
    Side Left
    OutAnchor MidCropMark
    OverAnchor EdgeOfPage
    OverDirection Top
    OverOffset 4
    MarkCorner MarkTop
  >
  //Threshold and AltMarkDefinition tell InDesign
  //what to do with the marks when the page size becomes
  //too small to fit the marks along the top/bottom
  //or left/right side of the page.
  ThreshHold <
```

FIGURE 11-12
QuarkXPress-Style
Printer's Marks
(continued)

```

MinPageHeight 448
>
AltMarkDefinition <
  Location <
    Side Left
    OutAnchor OuterCropMark
    OutOffset 2
    OverAnchor Center
    MarkCorner MarkRight
  >
>
>
//End of color bar definition.
//Gray bar, at the bottom left.
<
  Type ColorBar
  NumberOfCells 10
  CellSize 16
  //The array of tints printed in the cells:
  RegistrationValues [1 .9 .8 .7 .6 .5 .4 .3 .2 .1]
  Weight 2 // Stroke width the cells.
  RegistrationStrokeValue 0 // Stroke color of the cells (white).
  Location <
    Side Bottom
    OutAnchor MidCropMark
    OverAnchor EdgeOfPage
    OverDirection Left
    OverOffset 4
    MarkCorner MarkLeft
  >
  Threshold <
    MinPageWidth 448
  >
  AltMarkDefinition <
    Location <
      Side Bottom
      OutAnchor OuterCropMark
      OutOffset 2
      OverAnchor Center
      MarkCorner MarkTop
    >
  >
>
//End of gray bar definition.
// Page information, at the top of the page.
<
  Type MarkText
  TextSize 7
  AllPlates true
  SamePositionOnAllPlates true
  FormatString (%s %s %s - %s - (%s\))
  InfoValues [PubName Date Time PageLabel PlateColor]
  Location <
    Side Top
    OutAnchor MidCropMark

```

FIGURE 11-12
QuarkXPress-Style
Printer's Marks
(continued)

```

OutOffset 4
OverAnchor EdgeOfPage
OverDirection Left
OverOffset 3
MarkCorner MarkLL
>
>
//End of page information definition.
]
//End of MarksArray
>
//End of custom printer's marks file.

```

FIGURE 11-13
Printing Page
Information
on the Page

*You can download
this text from
David's Web site:
www.blatner.com/rwid/mrk.zip*

```

//pgmk.v02.00
//Prints page information inside the page area.
//Not useful for prepress work, but quite useful
//when you're printing letter-size drafts on a
//laser printer. Make sure that this PMD file is NOT
//selected when you create your final printout!
<
Style (PageInfoOnPage)
MarksArray
[
<
Type FourCropMarks
Length 15
>
//Page information.
<
Type MarkText
Count 2
TextSize 6
RegistrationTextColor 1.0
//Feel free to replace our shameless advertising with
//your own shameless advertising.
FormatString [(%s %s * Real World Adobe InDesign)(%s %s)]
InfoValues [PubName PageLabel Date Time]
Location <
Side Bottom
OutAnchor InnerCropMark
//Move info up--36 points is enough to
//get it onto the page for most printers.
//Adjust this value as you see fit.
OutOffset -36
OverAnchor EdgeOfPage
OverDirection [Left Right]
OverOffset [10 0]
MarkCorner [MarkLL MarkLR]
>
>
]
>

```