

Gerald's Column *by Gerald Fitton*

Over the last few months I have described the use of PipeDream, Fireworkz and Impression for writing letters. A couple of people have sent me example Ovation Pro letters but they have not explained to me how they've done it – I'll have to put in a bit of study before I can write an article about letters in Ovation!

So, no Ovation Pro this month. Instead I shall describe how to produce business cards using the Avery Label Sheet type L7413. Don't 'switch off'; my article will be of use if you want to use a different label sheet for a different purpose.

In passing, I shall explain why I don't use PipeDream or Fireworkz for this purpose.

Blank label sheets

On the Archive monthly disc, and elsewhere in the usual places, I have included template files for ten different Avery and Avery clone multi label sheets. Most of these were sent me by Roger M King (of Guernsey). I obtain my blank label sheets from Viking Direct. Many of them are available from stationers such as PC World and Office World but at slightly higher prices. Roger praises the Misco range of blank labels.

Warnings

In the letter from Roger's which has the templates attached he warns that "The Impression frame margins for some of the enclosed label templates are very critical. Do not try to adjust them unless absolutely necessary."

I have found that it is important that the printer is set up correctly before trying to print labels—if you don't do this then you'll find that your printing is misaligned relative to the blank labels. I have written an article in Archive about setting up a printer but, when I checked it out, I realised that it made references to an earlier version of Acorn's printer drivers and that it would be better to bring that article up to date before recommending it to you. For now let me emphasise just one point – the values which are most important are the X and Y offsets for your particular printer. If you have a printer clone then do not assume that the X and Y offsets are the same on your clone as on the proprietary printer.

Another warning from Roger:

"Beware of cheap laser labels on the market. Their price is usually very attractive but the quality of the printout leaves much to be desired. Avoid like the plague any labels that have square corners. If you feed these labels into your laser or DeskJet printer then you will find that some of the labels will become detached from the backing sheet while feeding through the printer's paper handling path. It usually is a major job to remove these labels from the printer rollers." I have noticed that Viking Direct's 'own brand' labels now have rounded corners whereas, previously they had square corners.

Comparison

For many of my Mail Merge labels I use either Fireworkz or, more often, PipeDream. I do this because I find the mail merge facilities of these two packages easier to use with my PipeDream database of names and addresses. However, both packages have one serious limitation and that is the difficulty of exactly positioning a frame so that it matches the blank label.

In PipeDream the horizontal spacing between labels has to be a multiple of about a tenth of an inch (2.5 mm) and in Fireworkz there is a 'hidden' grid to which all frames lock. Many of you have reported that this hidden grid is "too coarse" for your requirements. When I am using PipeDream or Fireworkz I use large blank margins within the frames to reduce the impact of this effect.

I use Impression for my business cards because it is much easier to fine tune the position of the frames. This allows me to centre my logo, address and pseudo signature in Impression with much more accuracy than I could possibly achieve in either PipeDream or Fireworkz. The result looks better because small errors in centring detract disproportionately from the professionalism which I wish to convey!

The Label Sheet

If you have access to the files of the monthly disc then load the file [BusLab_02a] into Impression. It will look rather like the screenshot below. To read the pseudo signature as I intend it to look then you will need the Allegro font.



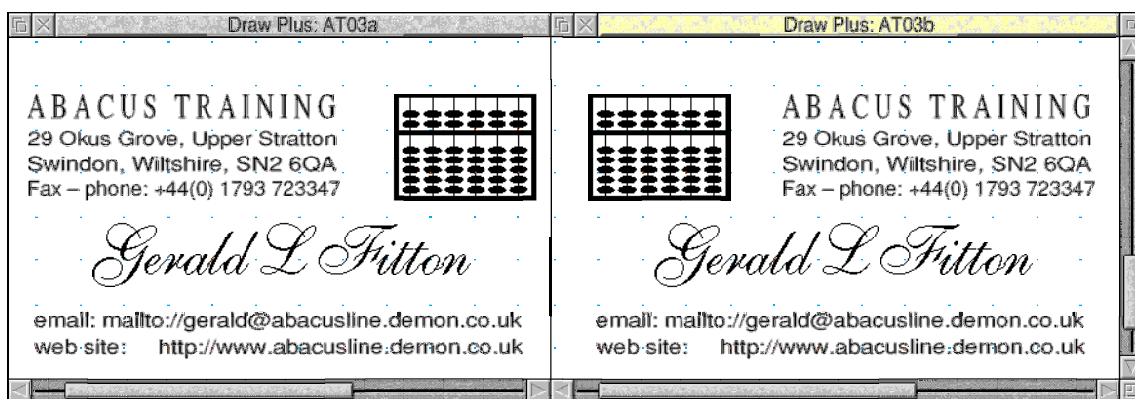
If you can not see the frame outlines (dotted lines as in the screenshot) then it may be that you have 'view frames' option turned OFF. If so then execute <Ctrl O> (hold down <Ctrl> and tap the <O> key) to toggle them ON.

The document [BusLab02a] is a single page containing ten copies of the same business card. The Avery blank label sheet L7413 consists of ten separate cards which are about 185 gsm (grammes per square metre). This is more than double the weight (thickness and stiffness) of 'standard' photocopying paper.

A single business card

If you have the file then you can use my document document as a template. I have tried to make it relatively easy for you to do so.

The screenshot below shows two versions of the single business card I have created in DrawPlus. These two files will load into Draw. The only difference between [AT03a] and [AT03b] is that the Abacus logo and the Abacus Training address have changed places!



Linked Frames

Creating the business card in DrawPlus has its advantages; it allows me to make changes to a single card in DrawPlus and then export the drawfile to Impression. The card used for the file [BusLab_02a] is [AT03a].

If you have the files then Load [BusLab02a], place the pointer over any of the ten frames and click the mouse <select> (left) button to select the frame. Now drag the DrawFile [AT03b] to the selected frame. If you do this correctly then you will see all ten 'cards' change from having the Abacus logo on the right to having it on the left. You can put it all back the way it was by dragging [AT03a] to the selected frame.

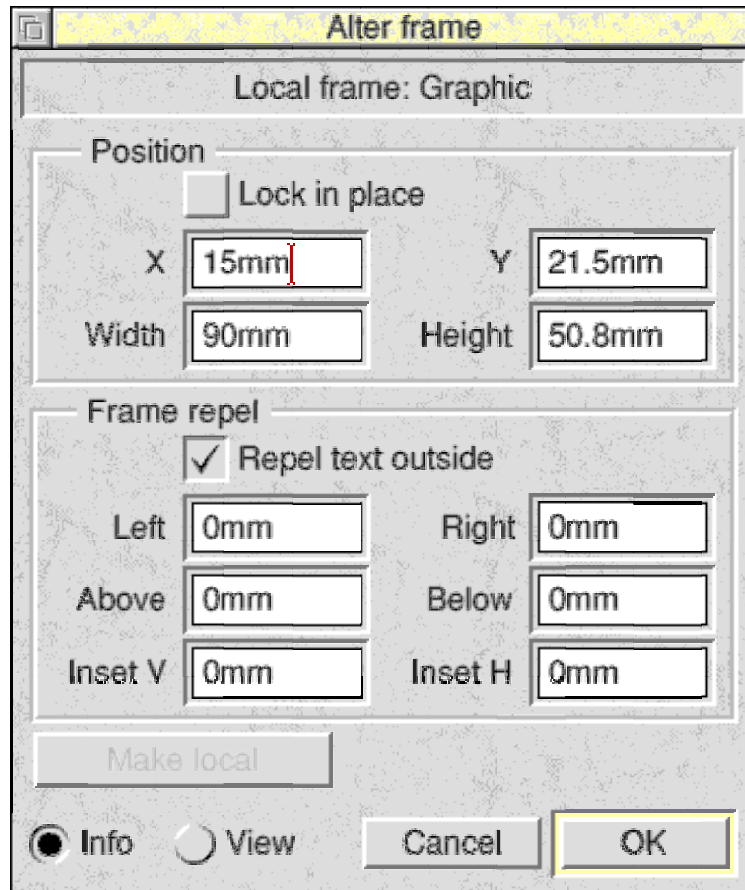
I have Saved the alternative form of the business card document as [BusLab_02b]. It is on the Archive monthly disc.

The reason why all the 'cards' in the document change at the same time is because all the frames are graphic frames and they have all been linked together. The drawfiles [AT03a] and [AT03b] are both 9 Kb. The documents [BusLab_02a] and [BusLab_02b] are both only 16 Kb long even though ten copies of the 9 Kb draw file appear to be contained within them. In fact only one copy of the drawfile is stored in the label sheet document; what is held are the ten different positions at which the (one) drawfile is to appear.

Copying Frames

Let me talk you through the construction of [BusLab_02a].

I constructed a single frame representing one card. Each card is 90.0 mm by 50.8 mm—it says so on the instruction sheet which comes with the blank labels. I used the Alter frame dialogue box shown in the screenshot below to fine tune my single label frame.



You will see from the screenshot that I have set $X = 15\text{mm}$ and $Y = 21.5\text{mm}$. These values are exactly the position of the top left corner of the top left label from the top left corner of the blank label sheet. Read it again if it sounds complicated!

I don't know why I left the Repel text outside switched ON. It could equally well be OFF.

If your printer has not been set up correctly, in particular if your X and Y offsets are incorrect, then the values of X and Y shown in the screenshot above will print the label in the wrong place! Do not be tempted to change the values in the 'Position X' and 'Position Y' boxes of the Alter frame dialogue. That will lead to other problems. Resolve to set up your X and Y offsets in the printer driver and get on with it!

Having positioned the first frame I then selected it and copied it to the clipboard. I used the Copy button (in the top button bar just to the right of the scissors) but you could equally well use $\langle\text{Ctrl C}\rangle$. Then I clicked on Paste frame (the next button along the button bar or $\langle\text{Ctrl V}\rangle$ can be used). When you do this you'll find that a pair of cross-hairs

appear at the mouse pointer. Place this carefully at the top right corner of the first frame and click <select>. A second frame will appear to the right of the first frame; it should be identical to the first frame.

If the frame does not lock into the exact place you want it to be then this is because you do not have 'Snap to all frames' selected in the Preferences – Misc menu. This menu is accessed by clicking <menu> in the Impression icon on the icon bar.

To add all the remaining frames you do not need to click on the Copy button again. Keep clicking on the Paste button and adding frames in the appropriate places.

Linking Graphics Frames

The next step is to link together all the frames. Many people have problems at this stage and, nearly always, the cause is the same. You can not link together graphics frames once they have been used. Do not use the frames before you try to link them. If you type in a single word or drag in a single graphic you will have lost your chance to link the frames! This is true even if you subsequently delete the text or graphic! You must delete completely the errant frame and replace it with a new, unused frame.

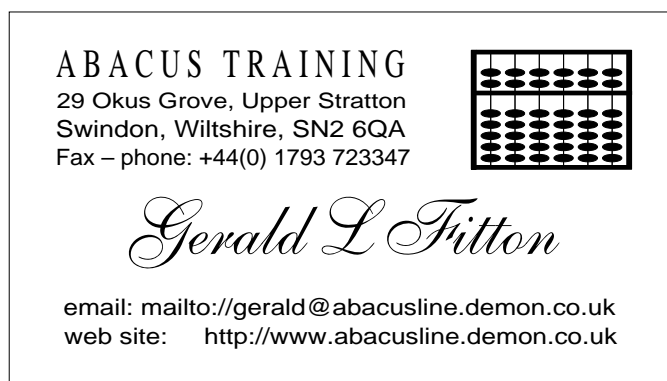
To link the frames you click <select> in the first frame and <adjust> (the right hand mouse button) in each of the other nine frames. All ten frames are now linked.

If you have successfully linked all ten frames then the following test will prove it to you. Click <select> on any one of the ten frames and then drag the drawfile [AT03a] into the selected frame. The graphic should appear in all ten frames. Check further by dragging [AT03b] into the selected frame and all ten should change to the [AT03b] graphic.

The DrawFile [AT03a]

I have constructed the DrawFile at 150% of the size of the business card. It could be argued that I should have used 'full scale'—or, to put it another way, 100%. I'm not sure why I didn't! The pseudo signature is in the Allegro font.

Load the DrawFile [AT03a] and click just above the word ABACUS. You will see a document which looks rather like the picture shown below.



There is one difference and that is the black line enclosing the card will be a red box with handles. What is shown in the screenshot as a black border will be invisible. In the original the colour of the black border is 'None' – I changed it to black just for this picture.

Let me explain in more detail. The red box which you will see when you load [AT03a] contains an invisible border. What I did was to draw a rectangle having the correct proportions (135mm by 76.2mm) and then change the line colour to 'None'. This invisible box ensures that the 'useful' contents of the business card (the address, the logo, the signature and the text at the bottom) are not jammed up against the edge of the card when Impression loads the graphic and scales it (automatically) to fit the graphic frame.

I know that you can change the scale of a graphic in Impression but, when using linked frames, it becomes tedious. You will find that if the graphic is not the right size for the frame by default then you will have to go around every frame adjusting the size; what is more, you will have to do this every time you drag in an alternative graphic.

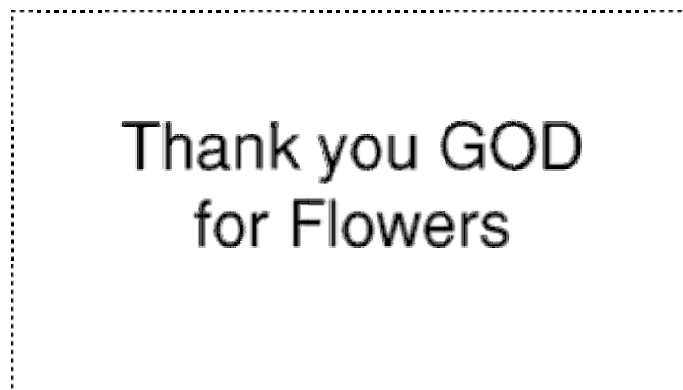
If you have the Archive disc then you'll find in the LabSheets subdirectory a drawfile [L7413g]. In this version of the drawfile I have deliberately left the rectangle visible—I have thickened the line and changed the line colour to blue.

You can use this template and, when you have finished entering all your text and logos, you can change the colour back to 'None'.

Copying Text Frames

One advantage of drawing up the business card in Draw or DrawPlus is that changing the card is easy. You change the drawfile and drag it any selected frame—all the linked frames change immediately.

The file [L7413a] shown in the screenshot below is something I was asked to do for a friend. She had to make up lots of cards for her Sunday School group. They were to stick the 'business card' onto a larger card and then stick some flowers above the caption!



I suppose I could have produced the caption in DrawPlus but I didn't! I worked directly in Impression. First I created all the blank frames but I didn't link them. Then in one of the frames (the top left frame) I typed the caption.

I selected all the text within that frame using <Ctrl A>. I find <Ctrl A> a most useful way of selecting all the text within a frame – the frame must not be linked to any other frame or else the text in the linked frame will be selected as well!

The next step is to Copy to the clipboard the text which has been marked with <Ctrl A>.

You have to paste into each frame separately. Click within a frame to <select> it. Then click on the Paste button (or use the command <Ctrl V>) to write the text into the frame. I'm sure you'll appreciate that Pasting the text into each frame separately this way is more tedious than the drawfile method – but by the time I realised this I was committed! It's a good job I didn't have to change the text too many times.

In Summary

I think that using a drawfile to create many identical copies of a label or business card has many advantages over the 'text into Impression' method. The drawfile needs an invisible border; this 'trick' will save you the tedious task of adjusting the scale of the graphic in every frame every time you change the drawfile.

Finally

Please write to me at the Abacus Training address which you'll find in Paul's Fact File at the back of Archive. That Fact File includes email and fax addresses. I would prefer that you don't telephone – you'll probably get an answering machine.

I am still getting long letters and emails without an example file of your problem. I am even getting faxes with long complex explanations – but, of course, no file. If you don't send me an example file I have to create one and that does take time that I could spend more usefully trying a few things with your file. Sometimes I produce a reply only to find that I have misunderstood exactly what you were trying to do.

So please, if you have anything of more substance than a few lines, then I would like a copy of the file on disc or as an email attachment. If you email me then pack the file or set of files in a zip archive created with SparkFS or something similar. ArcFS causes me a few minor problems because I make sure that it is not loaded to the icon bar unless I am told that I must do so. If you write rather than email me then please include return postage. A self addressed sticky label is always helpful.