

Automating Distiller with hot folders

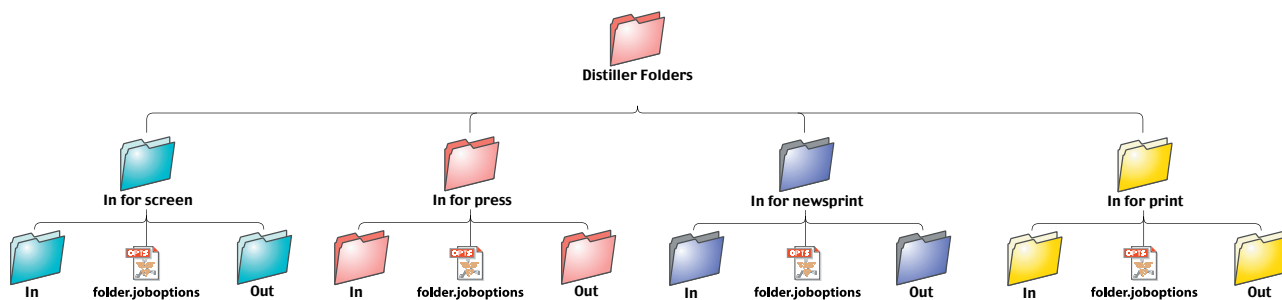
A little-documented feature can improve your productivity

by Brian P. Lawler

As a person who makes PDF files all day – every day, controlling the settings in Acrobat Distiller can be a real problem. At last count there were 1,239,864 variables in Distiller* and if you set one

pre-defined settings.

Being the evangelist that I am, I have created this folder arrangement on a variety of friends' and colleagues' computers, and since I never hear to the



This is a diagram of my Distiller folders. There are folders for Screen (display), Sheet-fed offset printing, Newsprint and Proofing. In each folder are an In and Out folder, and a *folder.joboptions* file created by Distiller, which contains the settings for distilling files destined to those printing processes. To use a folder, I simply save a PostScript or EPS file to the appropriate In folder – or drag the file into the folder. When Distiller runs, it will automatically distill any file it discovers in an In folder according to the settings in the accompanying *joboptions* file.

incorrectly, the resulting files are not useful.

The available default settings in Distiller 7.0 (*High Quality, PDFX1a, PDFX3, Press Quality, Standard*) are usually not acceptable to me. For example, I find myself changing the percentage for the subsetting embedded fonts, or changing the compression values or compression method for images in PDF files. I also do a fair amount of work that is printed in newspapers, so I made *joboptions* for newsprint (with 100 lpi halftones).

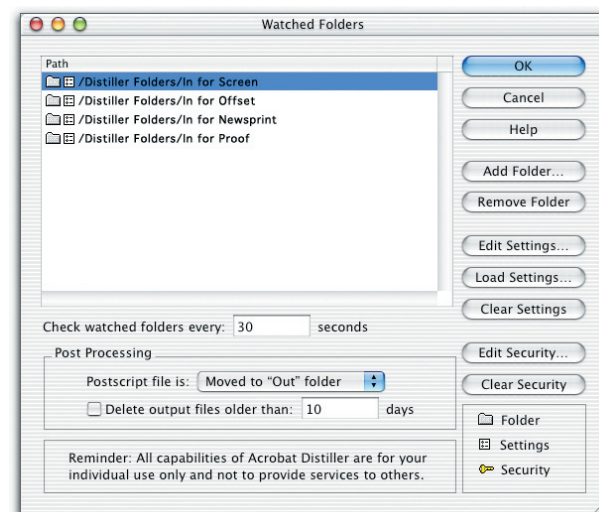
I am aware that *joboptions* settings can be saved, and shared, and used again, and that method held me over for years. But there is another technique that works well, and which simplifies the making of PDFs to various specifications.

The set-up is diagrammed here. You create and save custom *jobptions* inside the *Watched Folders* you have asked Acrobat Distiller to monitor. Whenever you save a .ps (or EPS) file to one of those folders, Distiller will distill the file to PDF according to the *jobptions* file located in the same folder. This means that you can perfect your *jobptions* over time, and Distiller will always use the correct one for the job, according to the folder in which you save your PostScript file.

This arrangement looks complicated, but the effectiveness of this method is solid. If you save or move a .ps (or EPS) file to the right folder, the resulting PDF will be created according to these

contrary, I assume that it is working successfully.

This technique is tested thoroughly with Distiller 5, 6 and 7. With 6 and 7, you can even update the *joboptions* files from the *Watched Folders* palette.



Adobe Acrobat Distiller's *Watched Folders* menu. From this menu you can add, and specify preferences for a number of Watched Folders. By clicking on *Edit Settings*, at right, you can modify existing settings, or create a new folder and apply settings to that new folder. Watched folders can also be aliases of networked folders, and Out folders can be published as shared folders, so others can access them.

*perhaps a conservative count – experts cannot agree on the actual number