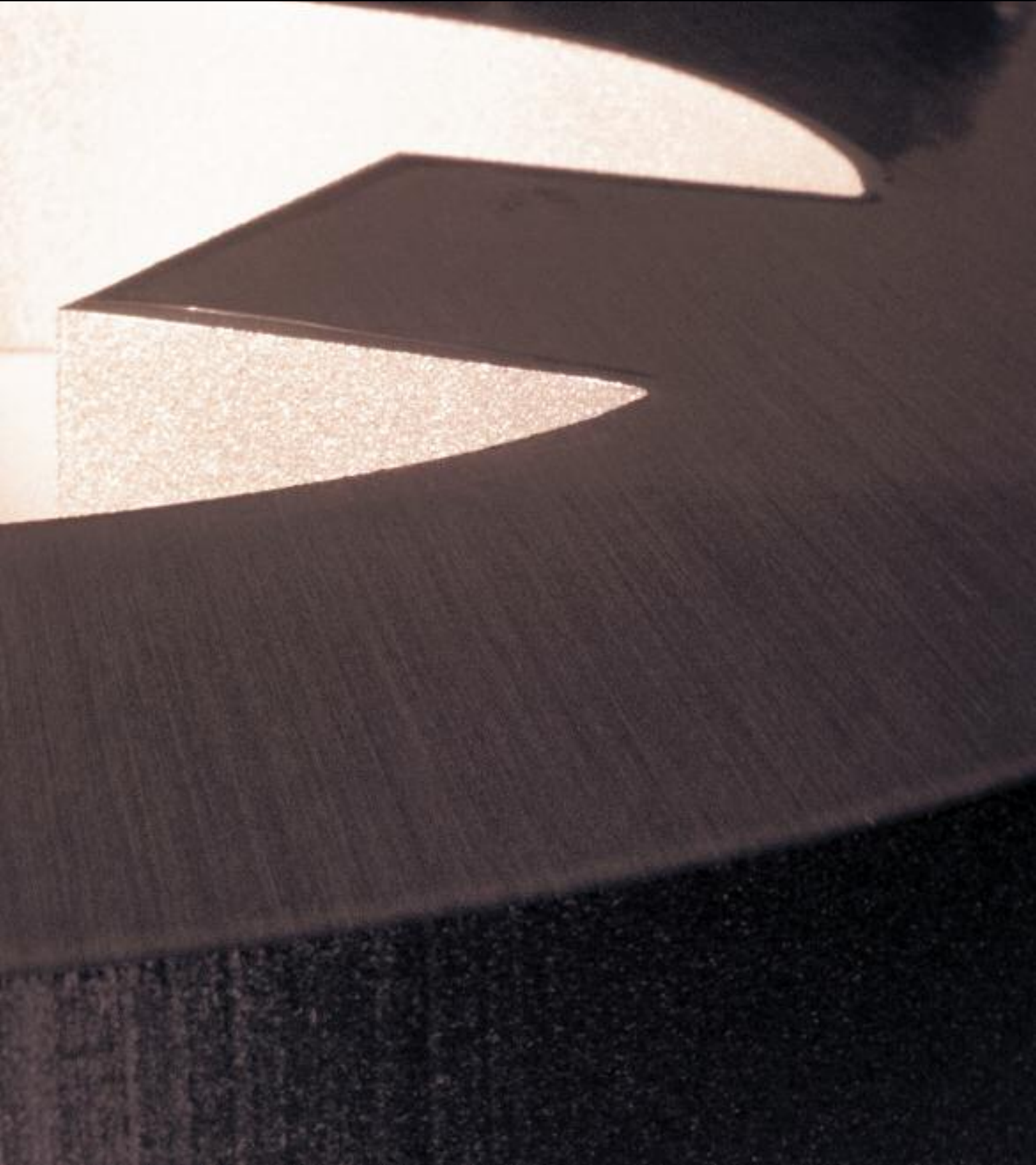


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Making the Most of Your Effort: Shared Content

BY JOE ROOT

The other day, I was creating a QuarkXPress 7 demo that I was going to deliver to some folks and I noticed that I repeatedly reused a text and picture box in several places. I also noticed that I was constantly manipulating that content over and over again in the different places I'd used it, and then it dawned on me...

Have you ever had that kind of experience where you know about something but then, for whatever reason, you don't actually use it in practice? It killed me; the same actions, over the same objects, over several layouts and, for whatever reason, I didn't think that maybe I should use shared content.

In an effort to punish myself, I have decided to write this article for all those like me who seem to make life harder for themselves. To begin, let's define shared content.

What is Shared Content?

Shared content actually started in QuarkXPress 6 as synchronized text. The idea was simple. There are occasions where text content is used multiple times in a single design or in several layouts within a project. With synchronized text, internally, that content is tagged and when multiple instances of it are used, an edit to a single instance would update every instance simultaneously.

Think of a QuarkXPress project file that has three layouts. One layout is a business card, the next layout

is the corresponding letterhead, and the last layout is the corresponding envelope. Each one of these layouts contains almost exactly the same content. Each layout, for example, contains exactly the same address. If I don't synchronize that address and I need to make a change, then I will have to change the content in all three of those layouts. If I do synchronize the content, then all I have to do, in this example, is change the address in one location and it changes in all locations automatically. The advantages here are obvious.

The limitation in QuarkXPress 6 was that you could only synchronize the text content. You could not synchronize the attributes of that text, such as font, point size, and so on. Further, you could not synchronize pictures at all. In QuarkXPress 7, you can synchronize text and pictures as well as all of the attributes of that content. In addition, you can synchronize the box that the content is in. To go even further, I'll give you a quick tip on synchronizing multiple objects as well.

Content Synchronization


Synchronizing objects is easy. Let's do something quick on a single page of a single layout. In QuarkXPress 7, choose **WINDOW**  **SHARED CONTENT** to open the shared content palette. Start a new project, draw a text box, and type the classic phrase, "Hello World." You should see something similar to figure 1.



Figure 1 I have opened the shared content palette, started a new project, and typed, "Hello World."

If you take a look at the shared content palette you'll notice that there are a number of buttons running horizontally across the top of the palette. Ensure that your text box is selected, and click the **NEW SHARED CONTENT ITEM** button (the first button from the left) to prompt the shared item properties dialogue box shown in figure 2.

In the name field, type a name for the item. From there, choose **SYNCHRONIZE CONTENT** and the **CONTENT ONLY** option as shown in figure 2. Choosing these options in this way essentially replicates the functionality that was available in QuarkXPress 6. We are choosing to synchronize only the content — just the words inside the box. Once you have the dialogue set up as in figure 2, click **OK**.

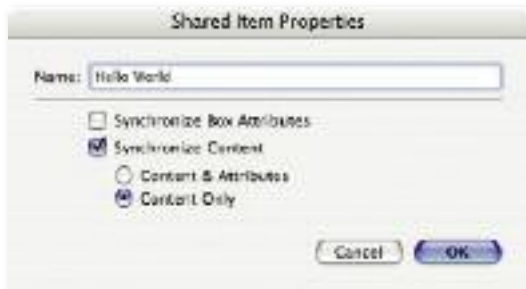


Figure 2 This is the shared item properties dialogue box that appears.

You'll notice that the text box you have selected now has blue handles with a squiggly S. This is a visual indicator of sorts that helps you to identify that the item has been synchronized.

Now, let's draw another text box below the first, and drag the hello world item from the shared content palette into the new text box. See figure 3.

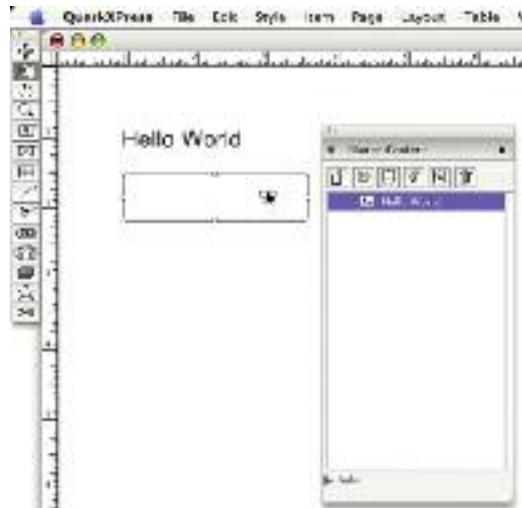


Figure 3 Drag the hello world item out of the palette and drop into the new text box.

Now if the text is edited in either of the text boxes, the text within both boxes will change right before your eyes. However, because we only synchronized the content, we can make changes to the attributes of one of the text items without affecting the other. Take a look at figure 4. Here I have changed the words and they updated appropriately, but I also changed the text formatting and only one of them changed.



Figure 4 When I change the text content, both text boxes change, but because I have only synchronized the content, if I change the attributes (such as the font) it doesn't change in both instances.



◀ **Figure 5**
Here we are going through the same process, but instead we are choosing **CONTENT & ATTRIBUTES**.

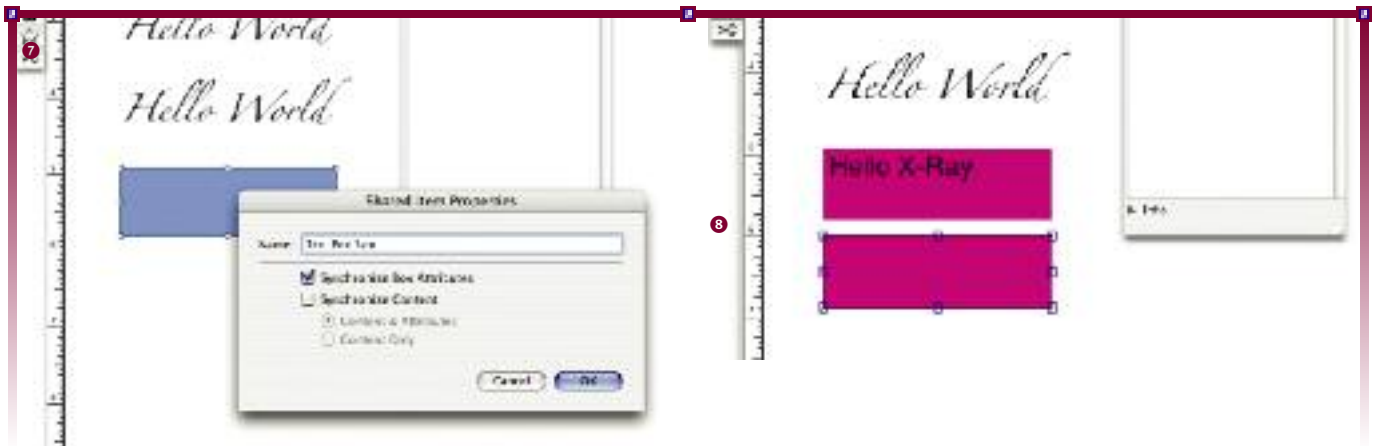


◀ **Figure 6**
Here we have created two new synchronized boxes that have attribute synchronization applied. Any changes we make to the content will happen in both boxes.

Attribute Synchronization

Synchronizing attributes is just as easy, but it allows you to work with the attributes of the content as well. Let's draw a new text box, type some text, and then synchronize the content too. This time though, let's name the item *New Hello World* and then select **CONTENT & ATTRIBUTES** option in the shared item properties dialogue box. See figure 5.

Draw a new text box below and drag the **NEW HELLO WORLD** item out of the palette and into the new text box. Now change the text in either of the text boxes to a different font or a different font size, or any other attribute change. You will see the change applied to the content of both boxes. See figure 6.



▲ **Figure 7**
All we've done here is simply synchronized the box.

▲▶ **Figure 8**
With box synchronization, we are synchronizing only the attributes of the box.

Box Synchronization

After doing this synchronization process twice, you have probably noticed the ability to synchronize box attributes. Having the option to synchronize box attributes means that you can keep placed boxes consistent too. Let's do a quick box-only synchronization just for the fun of it.

Draw a text box on the QuarkXPress page and give it a cyan background. Next, click the **NEW ITEM SYNCHRONIZE** button in the shared content palette. Finally, select the **SYNCHRONIZE BOX ATTRIBUTES** check box and uncheck the **SYNCHRONIZE CONTENT** check box. This will result in synchronization where only the box attributes are tracked. See figure 7.

Now here's a cool tip. Since we've synchronized only the box, we don't have to create a second box to synchronize with. All we need to do is drag the newly

created item onto the page. In my example, I named my new synchronized item *Text Box Sync*. Drag and drop this synchronized item from the shared content palette directly onto the page. To really show this correctly, we should do a few things to the box. In the first synchronize box, type, "Hi X-Ray". You'll notice nothing happens in the second box that you just dragged. However, change the size of either box, change the background, or even change the text inset and you'll see the changes occur (see figure 8).

You certainly have the ability to synchronize content and attributes while also synchronizing boxes. I showed them separately so that you can see the effects more clearly. Using different combinations of these synchronize options can result in a high degree of flexibility in your designs.



◀ **Figure 10**
Using synchronization, I have completed three different ads while working on just one ad.

Picture Synchronization

So far all we have worked with is text, but pictures work exactly the same way. Imagine you have to use the same picture in the same way in several locations, like you might with a logo. Depending on the situation you may choose to synchronize the picture itself, the attributes associated with the picture, and even the picture box when necessary. Here is a tip: If you synchronize the attributes of a picture, you can even use the XTensions module for picture effects and those effects will be carried to all instances of that picture.



◀ **Figure 9**
A complete synchronization of any item means that all attributes are tracked. In the case of a picture, that even includes picture effects.

Take a look at figure 9. I added a picture box and pulled in a picture. I synchronized that item. While synchronizing I chose to synchronize the box, content, and attributes. I called it *Cog*. I then dragged cog out of the shared content palette and placed it directly beneath the first one. I then added a Hue/Saturation adjustment to make the picture grayscale. Notice how the changes are reflected in both instances of the picture on the page.

Going Beyond the Basics

So those are the basic building blocks of synchronization, and I should probably make a statement about the use of such features. Let's go back to the business card, letterhead, and envelope example. Using varied degrees of synchronization, I can quickly set up a whole series of layouts and streamline further edits. Still, while a business card, letterhead, and envelope are an easy example of a good use of synchronization, it's a pretty small one. Let's look at something tougher.

In figure 10, I have three designs displaying in QuarkXPress 7. I am using split-screen view so that you can see all three designs at once. The top-left design is a two-page magazine spread. The bottom-left is a web design that I will send out as part of an email campaign. The right-most design is a half-page magazine ad.

I did a little extra setup here before I started designing. Take a look at the shared content palette. I have used synchronization to synchronize the background textures, the biker image, and the tagline *Hardcore Gear, Hardcore Sports*. As I worked on the two-page spread, synchronization updated instances of those synchronized items into the other designs. Once everything was placed via synchronization, all I had to do was tweak things a little. What you are seeing is much more complex than a business card, letterhead, and envelope. Here we are actually using synchronization to help us complete an entire series of designs simultaneously.



▲ **Figure 11**
This Launch 7 is a group that I want to synchronize and use multiple times.

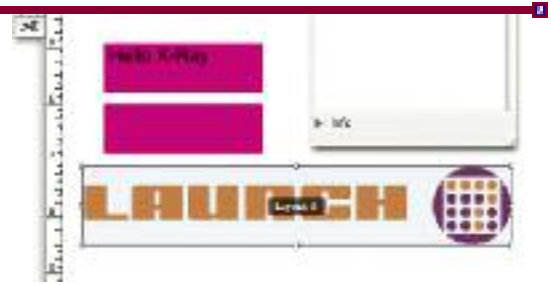
You may have noticed that I have more than just a few items in my shared content palette in figure 10. Good catch! That's because I didn't use just standard synchronization to help me with this design. I also used a new QuarkXPress 7 feature called composition zones.

Composition zones is a revolutionary new feature that allows multiple users to work on portions of a job simultaneously, but that's not all it does. With standard synchronization, you can pretty easily synchronize instances of text, pictures, and boxes, but what if you need to synchronize multiple groups of objects? It can be done—it just doesn't work in quite the same way. Synchronizing multiple objects requires the use of the composition zones feature.

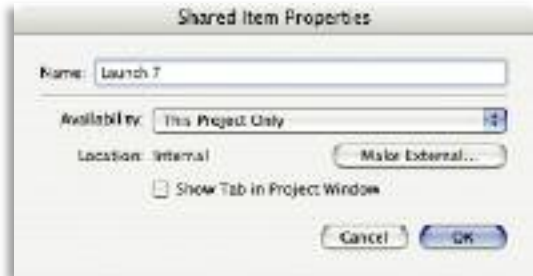
This is how it works. Take a look at figure 11. I have the *Launch 7* group selected. This is actually a bunch of objects. The dotted seven is a number of QuarkXPress vector objects grouped together. Then, I added the launch text to the left. For the sake of simplicity, I grouped launch and the dotted seven together. Of course, they don't need to be grouped in order to convert them to a composition zone. Grouping them makes it easier to select all of them at one time.

Select the group that you want to convert to a composition zone and choose **ITEM ▾ COMPOSITION ZONE ▾ CREATE**. Alternatively, you could also **CTRL ⌘ LEFT CLICK** or **RIGHT CLICK** on the mouse over the group you wish to convert. From the resulting contextual menu, choose **COMPOSITION ZONE ▾ CREATE**. Check out figure 12 to see what it looks like.

► **Figure 12**
This is a group of objects converted to a composition zone.



► **Figure 13**
This is a look at the shared item properties.



To actually use this new composition zone, I need to identify how it will be used. We do that by sharing it. Select the new composition zone, and choose **ITEM ▾ SHARE**. Alternatively, you could also **CTRL ⌘ LEFT CLICK** or **RIGHT CLICK** on the mouse over the new zone and choose **SHARE**. When you do that, a dialogue will appear called shared item properties. Quickly I'll explain the options here. For reference, take a look at figure 13.

Here's a quick run down of what the options in the shared item properties dialog mean.

NAME

This is simply what you wish to call the zone. This is just like when you named the synchronized items at the beginning of this exercise.

AVAILABILITY

There are two options here:

- **This Project Only** This means that a shared composition zone can only be used in this project; not other projects.
- **All Projects** This means that a shared composition zone can be used in other projects as well. These shared composition zones can be accessed by browsing to projects with shared items via the linked layouts tab under **FILE ▾ COLLABORATION SETUP**.

MAKE INTERNAL/EXTERNAL

This option determines how and where the new composition zone should be saved. The options are:



- **Internal** If the composition zone is stored internally, then it will be saved inside the current project almost like an additional layout.

- **External** If the composition zone is stored externally, then an entirely new project will be generated and saved wherever you indicate.

Note: If a composition zone is made external, then it is automatically shared for all projects.

SHOW TAB IN PROJECT WINDOW

Only available when saving internally only of course, and the options are:

- **Checked:** The new composition zone can be displayed as an extra layout in your project so that you can get to it in a single click.
- **Unchecked:** The new composition zone will be— for lack of a better phrase—hidden. To make edits to the composition zone, select the composition zone and choose **ITEM**  **COMPOSITION ZONE**  **EDIT**. This will open the composition zone in a new project.

For our purpose, to synchronize multiple objects, we will be setting up our composition zone as displayed in figure 13. That means that the new composition zone will be saved for use in this project only, internally, and not displayed as an additional layout.

The result is a new entry in our shared content palette, called Launch 7, that we can drag on to the page. Once I drag a new instance of Launch 7 on to the page, I now have two instances of this synchronized group. See figure 14.



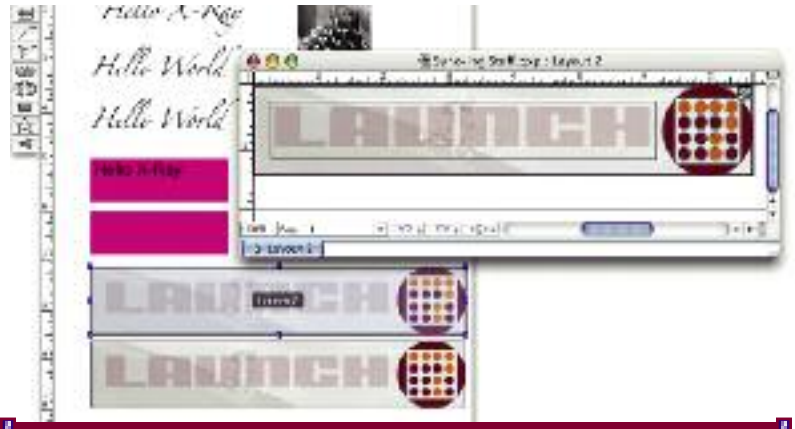
If I need to edit it, I simply select one of the Launch 7 composition zones and go to **ITEM**  **COMPOSITION ZONE**  **EDIT**. This will open a new project with a fully editable version of the zone (see figure 15). As I make changes to the synchronized items in the new window, both Launch 7 items update automatically in the original project.



Figure 14
I've created the composition zone, shared it, and then dragged a second instance of Launch 7 onto the page.


If you refer back to figure 10, you will see this very same Launch 7 concept. I converted it to a composition zone and used it in all three of the designs. This is a pretty impressive aspect of composition zones that often gets overlooked.



▲ Figure 15

I'm now editing the internal composition zone and, as I do so, the changes are made automatically in the original layout.

Unsynchronizing

Unsynchronizing is an important feature if you need to break the link between different instances of synchronized content. For example, let's say that I have some text synchronized and I need to break off one of those instances so that I can edit it separately from other objects. To break the link, simply select the item that you need to unsynchronize, and choose **ITEM**  **UNSYNCHRONIZE**. This will break that item away as a freestanding object that you can edit independently.

There may also be times when you want to completely unsynchronize all instances of a synchronized item. To do that, select the item that needs to be unsynchronized directly inside the shared content palette. Once selected, click the **UNSYNCHRONIZE ALL** button on the palette (fifth button from the left). This will leave the previously synchronized items on the pages, but there will no longer be a link between them.

Conclusion

The point here is that whether you are a designer, a layout artist, or any other person in the publication-production process, synchronization and composition zones can help you reuse and edit multiple portions of common designs quickly and easily. These features can dramatically increase your efficiency as well as distribute common design elements across one or even multiple projects.

Don't forget to have fun playing with different combinations of the synchronize options. Different combinations can give you different levels of flexibility, and in the case of the big Launch 7 design I mentioned earlier, you can actually streamline the production of complex designs. Whether synchronizing design elements, a legal notice, business card info, or more, you'll certainly have an adventure experimenting with the possibilities. 