Desktop publishing with Scribus

Don't stop at word processing – use your imagination to create stunning documents for print or the web.

FOR MOST document tasks, *OpenOffice* will provide you with all the software you need. It is possible to create quite complex documents even using just *OOo's Writer*. However, if you need to go that little bit further, with tighter control of fonts or graphics, precise positioning of elements and more complicated, multi-page structures, you will need some page layout software. *Scribus* is currently the most feature-packed graphical desktop publishing (DTP) software that Linux has. The project is still quite new, but it has improved dramatically in its few short years.

On the next few pages we'll show you how to get up and running with *Scribus*, tackling basic layouts and using images and type. Most distributions come with plenty of fonts, covering the usual types you need for a well-designed document, but you might want to make sure you have some suitable images ready as well.

SCRIBUS AT A GLANCE

The toolbar holds all the tools you need. Hold the mouse pointer over them to see what they do.

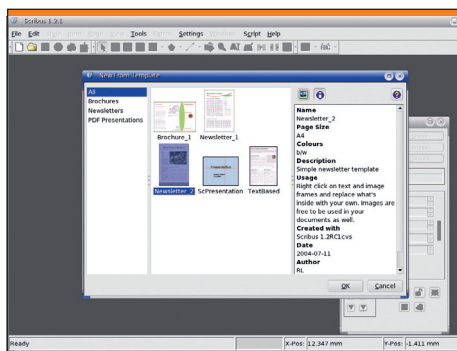**This document navigator helps you flip through the pages.**
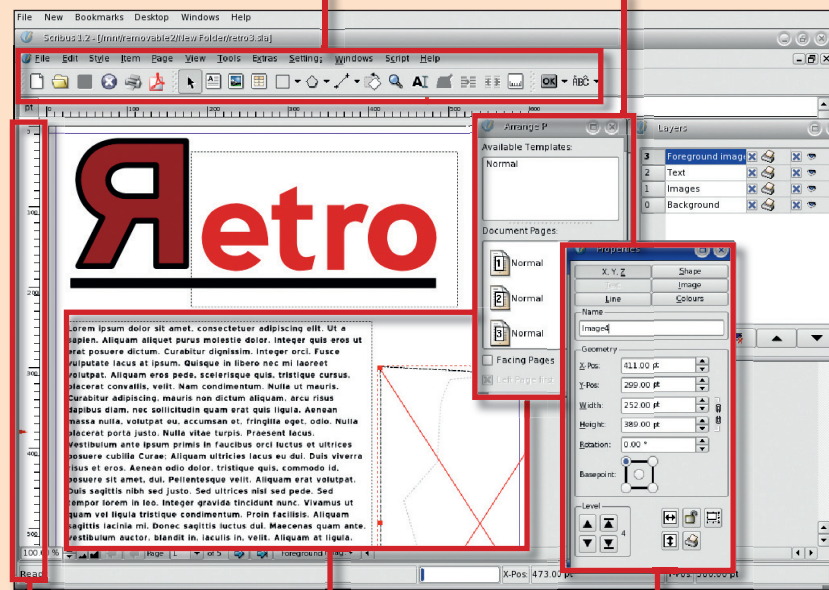
The rulers help position elements precisely.

Text and images all belong in boxes!

**The Properties window is a quick and easy way to alter objects on the page.**

## CREATE A DOCUMENT FROM A TEMPLATE

STEP 1 OPEN A DOCUMENT

When you open *Scribus*, you're faced with a rather uninspiring grey window. In order to get to work, you need to create a document! As with most DTP software, it is possible to create master documents or templates in *Scribus*, and some examples are included. Select File > New From Template.

STEP 2 CHOOSE THE STYLE
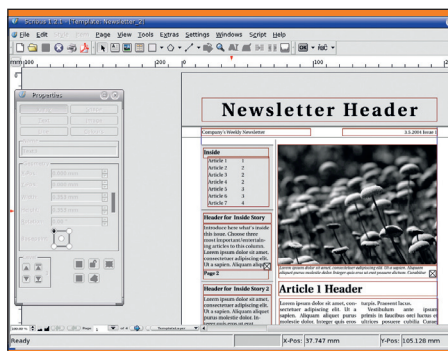
Choose the Newsletter 2 style. This doesn't use too many fonts and is pretty simple in terms of layout. Once you select it, the document is created, complete with dummy text and graphics. You should save (through File > Save or Ctrl+S) before you start making changes.
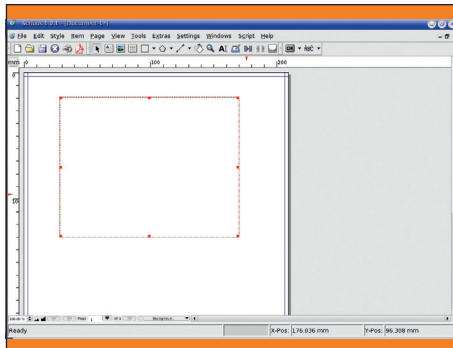
STEP 3 ADD YOUR TEXT
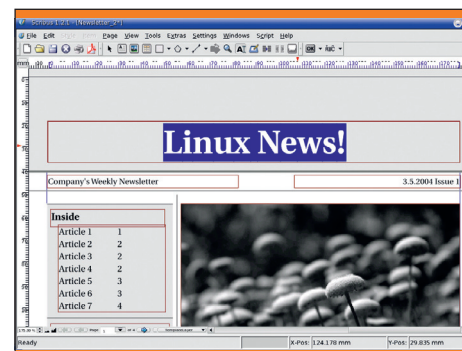
You can now get to work filling the newsletter with real stories. To change the text, simply double-click in one of the text boxes. Then click and drag the cursor to select the text, and type your own over the top. And that's it! Follow the rest of this tutorial for tips on graphics and text.
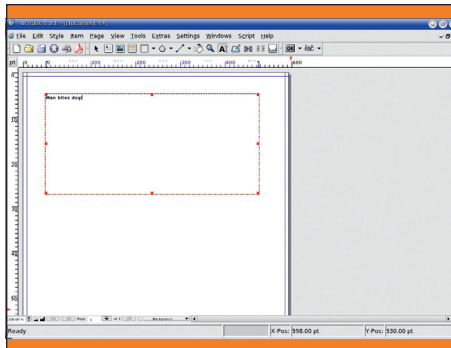
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GET CREATIVE WITH TEXT

STEP 1 MAKE A TEXT BOX

In any *Scribus* document, text is always contained in a text box. You can create a new text box by selecting the Text tool (the eighth icon along in the toolbar) and dragging out a rectangle.

STEP 2 FIND THE CURSOR

Once you've dragged out the shape to the right size, double-click inside the box to get the text cursor. You can then enter whatever text you like, and see it slowly fill out the text box you created.

STEP 3 EVALUATE THE STYLE
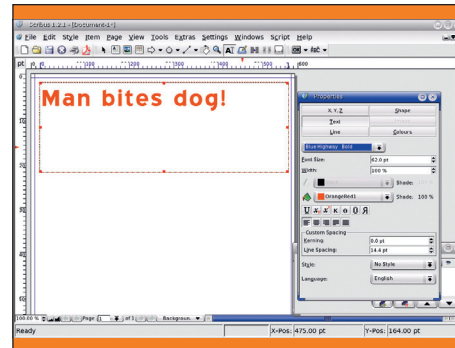
Of course, the default size, style and font may not be what you were after. For a document heading or a headline for a story, you'll probably want something much larger, and perhaps in a different font and colour from the main text.

STEP 4 ENLARGE YOUR TEXT
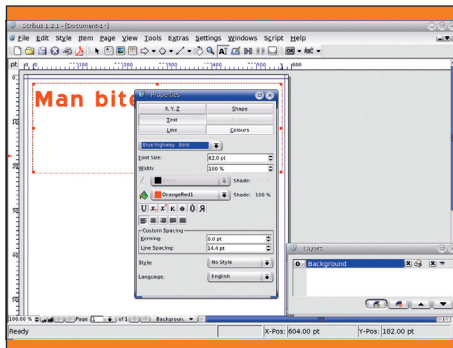
Select Tools > Properties to get the Properties window to appear. This controls various aspects of the selected object, and is an easy way to quickly change various attributes. Click on the Text button, select the text then enter something larger, such as 64pt, as the font size.

STEP 5 CONSULT STYLESHEETS
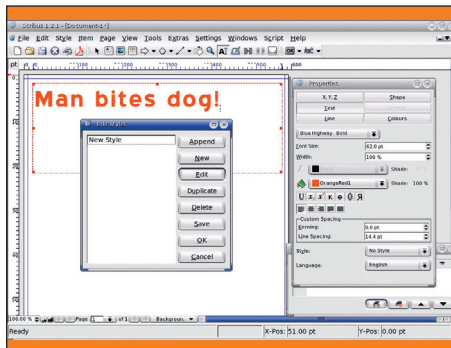
As is common in DTP software, *Scribus* lets you create stylesheets. It certainly makes things easier not having to remember all the properties you need to change for a headline, or body text. To create a paragraph style, select Edit > Paragraph Styles from the menu, and click on New.

STEP 6 ADD PREFERENCES
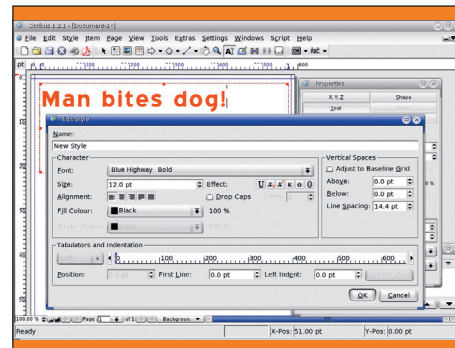
Here you can set up common character properties, such as colour, font, size, spacing and leading, making sure that your text is consistent throughout. You can also easily load and save styles from other documents. Note the spacing options at the bottom, which make it easy to set up indented paragraphs.

STEP 7 LINK COLUMNS
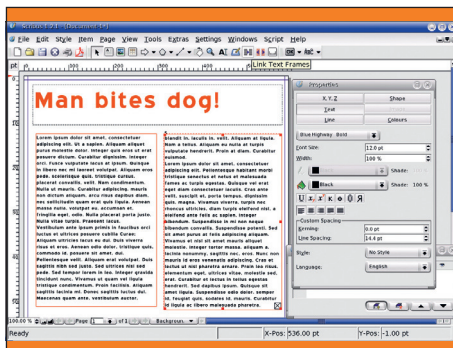
Most pages contain columns of text, where the text runs on from one column to the next. To achieve this in *Scribus*, drag out two text areas. Fill the first with text (try right-clicking and choosing Insert Sample Text). Then click on the Link tool (fifth from the right) and click on the next text box.

STEP 8 USE THE STORY EDITOR
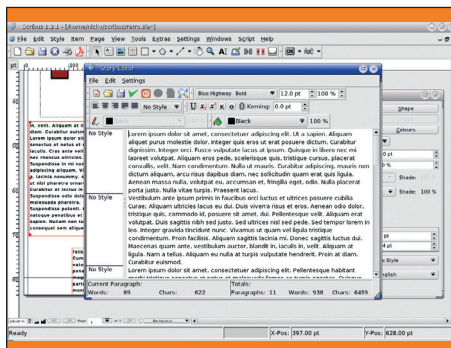
For editing large stories across many columns, you can edit the text in the easy-to-use Story Editor instead. Right-click on any column and choose Edit from the pop-up menu. The entire text will now appear in a new story editor window, where you can edit it as much as you like.
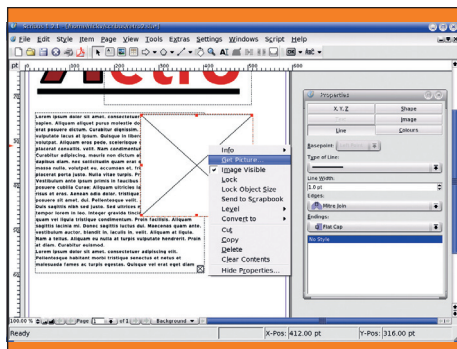
STEP 9 CONVERT TO OUTLINE
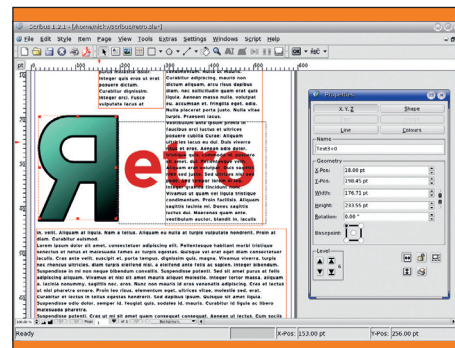
Although there are lots of text controls, it is sometimes easier to deal with text as a graphic. Select the text box and choose Item > Convert To Outlines. You won't be able to edit the words now; each letter is a separate graphic, and can be transformed as if it were an image.
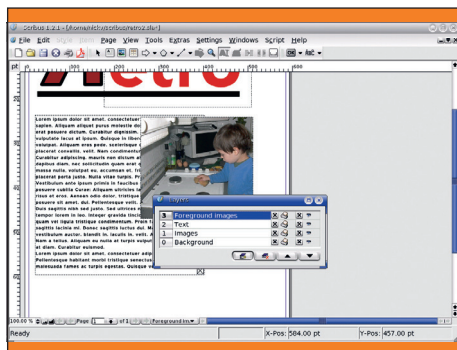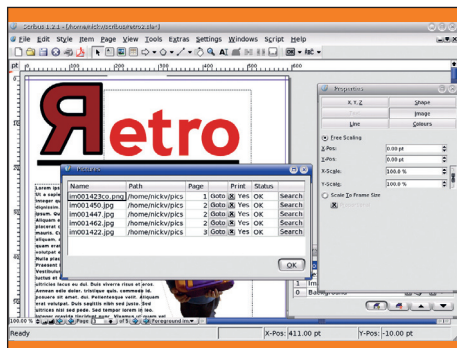
➡ WORKING WITH GRAPHICS

STEP 1 IMPORT YOUR IMAGE

To include an image in your document, you need to create an image box, then import a graphic. *Scribus* understands a number of file formats, but it's best to stick to PNG and JPEG images. Import graphics from the File > Import menu.

STEP 2 RESCALE IT

The chances that your graphics box and the image are exactly the right size for each other are a little remote. So you'll usually have to rescale the image. To quickly make the box fit the image, right-click and choose Adjust Frame To Picture.

STEP 3 BRING UP GIMP

If your imported images don't quite suit the pages, you can send them to an image editor for tidying up. Right-click and select Edit Picture. *Scribus* will open the picture with *Gimp*, and wait for you to save and exit before re-importing the graphic.
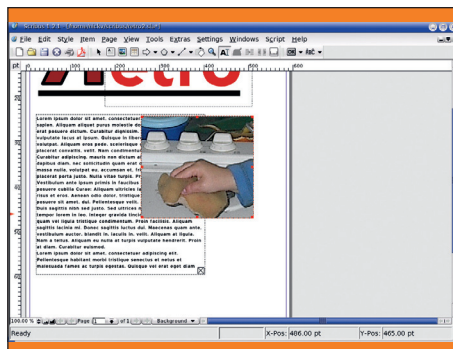
STEP 4 CREATE LAYERS

When dealing with lots of images (and text boxes), it may be easier to arrange the graphics in layers. Choose Tools > Layers from the menu to open the layer window. Here you can create new layers, and select which you want to edit. Objects can be moved between layers from the right-click menu.

STEP 5 WRAPAROUND

For many documents, you'll want the text to 'run' or 'wrap' around images and other graphics. In the Properties window, select Shape and then click on the button marked Text Flows Around Frame. The image must be brought to the front of any text (use the right-click menu to do Level > Raise).

STEP 6 FLOW TEXT CREATIVELY
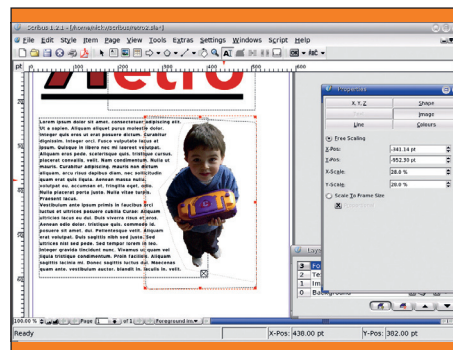
Go further with the contour path, which easily wraps text around irregular objects. Still in the Properties window, select Shape > Use Contour Line. Now click on Edit Shape and select Edit Contour Line in the new window. Drag the contour points to define the shape of the image.
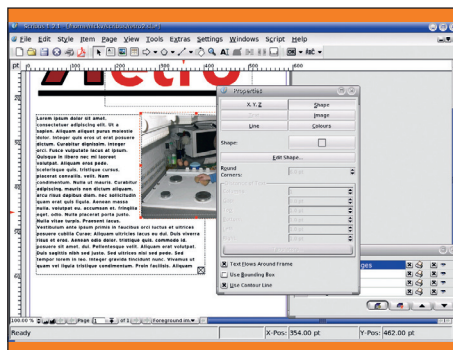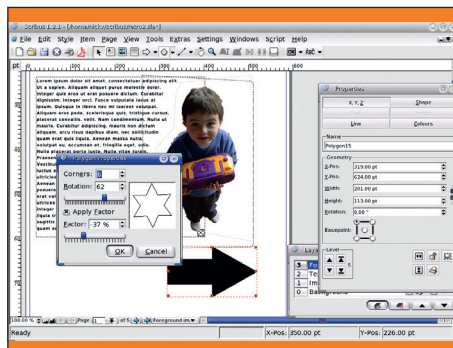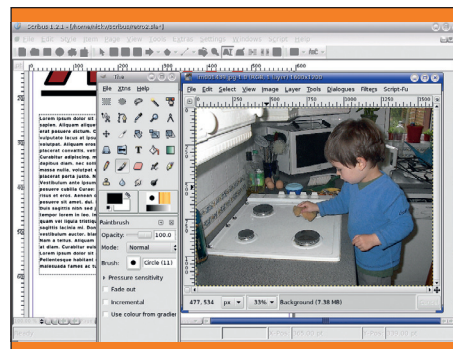
STEP 7 MANAGE IMAGES

Keeping track of all the images used in a document can be rather tricky. *Scribus* has a useful built-in image manager for this. Select Extras > Manage Pictures and a new window will pop up. This displays a table of all the linked images, whether they are available and if they are set to print.
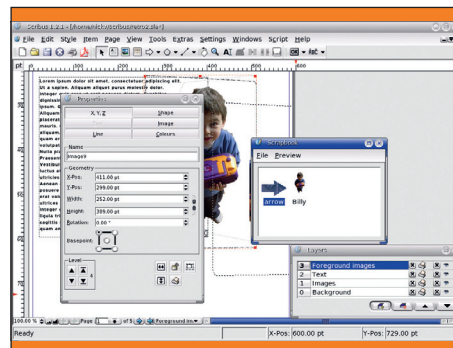
STEP 8 DRAW SHAPES

As well as images, you can use other graphical shapes in your layouts. Choose from one of the pre-defined shapes from the pulldown on the tool bar, or make your own polygon shapes with the Polygon tool.
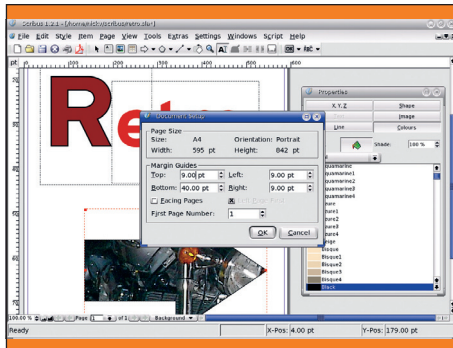
STEP 9 ADD TO SCRAPBOOK

Regular graphics or text can be saved to the Scrapbook (with the right-click menu), so that they can be kept and used whenever required. Choose Tools > Scrapbook from the menu to see the contents of the Scrapbook, and just drag elements on to the page.
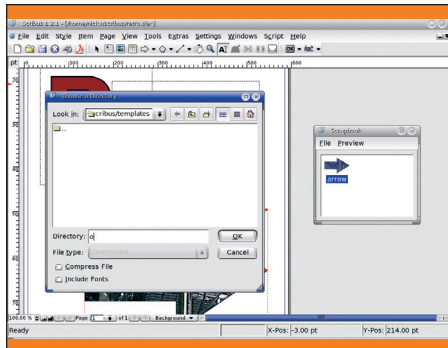
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DOCUMENTS, PRINTING AND PDF OUTPUT

STEP 1 CHECK THE SETUP

Before you think about printing, check the document setup. Choose this from the menu and make sure that the margins are compatible with the printer you will be using (the actual physical page size can't be changed at this point).

STEP 2 SAVE AS A TEMPLATE

If you are going to regularly create similar documents, it will be well worth saving a basic layout as a template before you go too far with the specific design. Choose File > Save As Template from the menu.
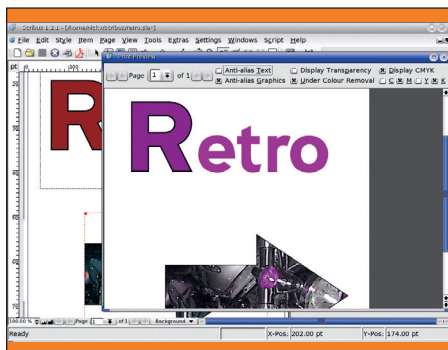
STEP 3 CHECK THE PRINTER
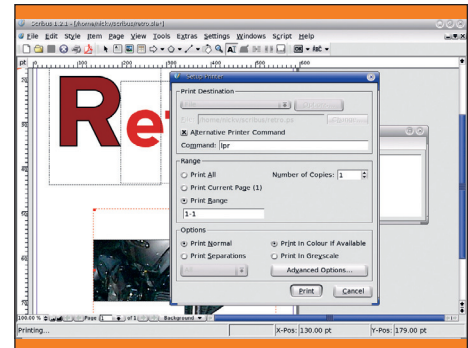
Scribus will use the CUPS or another printing system to output the document, so you don't need to worry about special printer setups. If you need to, you can output to a PostScript file for printing from a different computer.

### STEP 4 COLLECT FOR OUTPUT
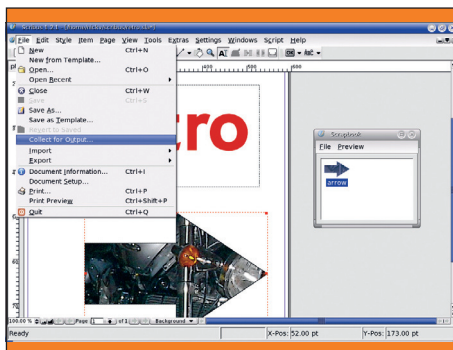
If you are printing from elsewhere, you may find the Collect For Output option in the File menu useful. This will gather the document, images and optionally the fonts into one directory, ready to be copied to disk or emailed.

STEP 5 VIEW COLOURS

For colour output, it's a good idea to check the preview first. Choose Print Preview from the File menu. The window that appears is the actual data that will be sent to the printer. You can check colour separations by toggling the CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow and 'key', or black) buttons.

STEP 6 SAVE AS...
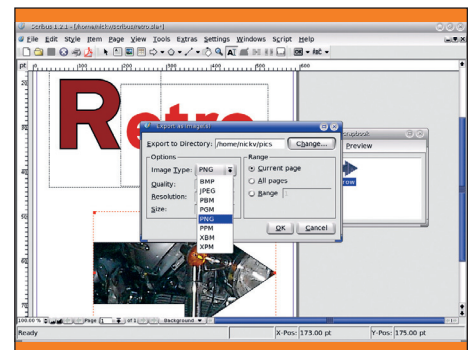
Use the File > Export menu to save out the document as an EPS, SVG or PDF file. It is also possible to output the whole document as a straightforward image, which can be useful for generating web graphics or thumbnails.

STEP 7 PDF SETTING
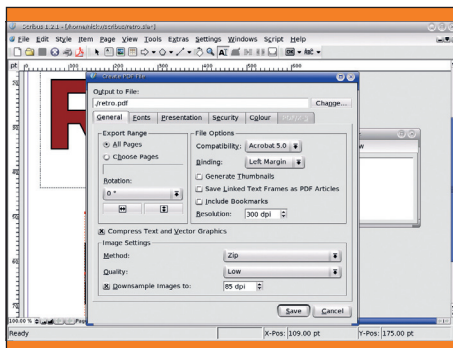
For PDF output, the requester covers a lot of additional options. The factors to consider here are file size and the final use of the document. Image compression can make the output file a lot smaller, particularly if you set the print quality as Low. But these PDFs won't print on to paper very well.

STEP 8 EXTRAS
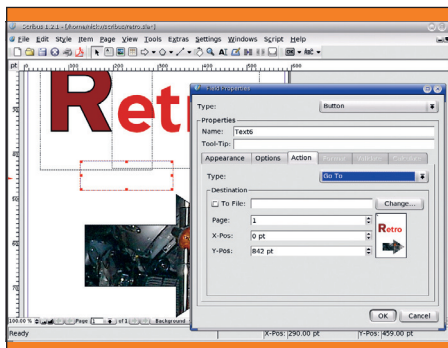
PDF output can contain interactive elements, such as links and buttons. You can insert PDF buttons with the PDF tool on the toolbar, second from the right. Other elements can be tagged as bookmarks for navigating the PDF files.

STEP 9 GET HELP!
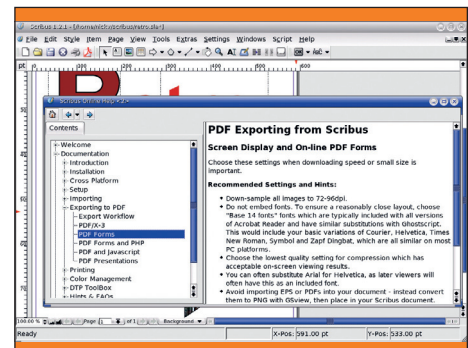
There is a lot of useful information included in the *Scribus* help files. Choose Help > Scribus Manual for more details on options in the software and further reading. Good luck! ●