

SHARED CONTENT

Shared content (sometimes called synchronized content) is any box, line, text story, or picture that is designated to remain “in synch” across multiple layouts within the same project, or even among multiple boxes within the same layout. (I discuss projects and layouts in Chapter 4, *Building a Layout*.) When synchronized content is changed in one place, it automatically changes in every other place that it appears. In XPress 6, you could only synchronize the text in a box, but version 7 also lets you synchronize pictures, as well as the boxes. You can synchronize the attributes of boxes, as well as the content and attributes of the pictures or text within boxes.

For example, let’s say you synchronize the addresses in three layouts in a project: a letterhead, an envelope, and a business card. Then when you change the address in the letterhead, the address also changes in the other two layouts.

Or, you might want to have all the picture boxes in a layout share a consistent shape, size, and border style. You can synchronize the box attributes and use the shared box throughout your layout while displaying a different picture in each box. As you tweak the formatting of one of the boxes, all the other boxes throughout the layout update automatically, which makes it easier to maintain stylistic consistency.

Since XPress 7 supports both print and Web layouts in a project, you can even share content between both print and Web pages.

The beauty of synchronized content is that it makes it simple to keep words, pictures, and many of the stylistic attributes of boxes or lines in harmony throughout a project.

Synchronizing content is like storing text in a library (see more on libraries in Chapter 3, *Working with Items*). You first have to create one instance of the picture or text and add it to the Shared Content palette; then you can drag it out of the palette for each instance where you want the item (see Figure 13-1).

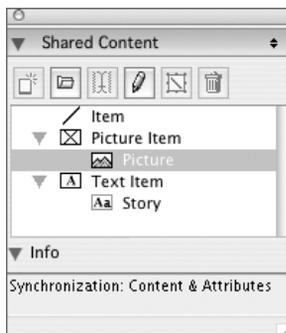


Figure 13-1
Shared Content palette

Synching and Unsynching Content

Before you can use synchronized boxes or their content, you have to add a box to the Shared Content palette (select Show Shared Content from the Window menu to open the palette). Select any box or line and click the New button on the palette. (You can also choose Share from the Item menu or the context menu). XPress prompts you for an item name; you can use any unique name because this text appears only in the palette, as a label representing the item. XPress also asks you if you want to synchronize the box attributes, the content and its attributes, or the content only. Turn on the Synchronize Box Attributes checkbox if you want to synchronize box formatting like size, color, and frames properties. Turn on the Synchronize Content checkbox if you want to synchronize the picture or text within the box. The Content & Attributes option synchronizes text and pictures along with their formatting, or you can choose to synchronize Content Only (see Figure 13-2).

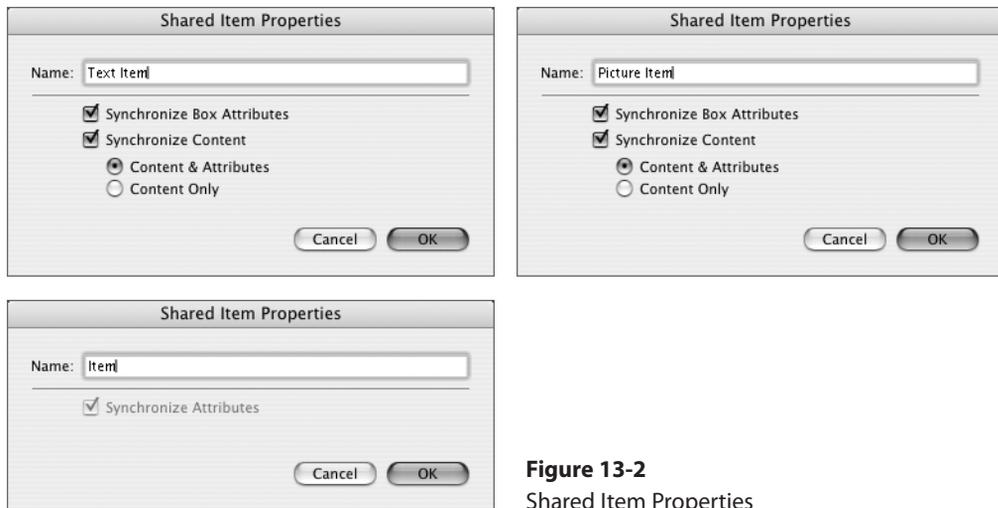


Figure 13-2
Shared Item Properties

Note that if you synchronize a text box's content without also synchronizing its attributes, only the text (the actual letters, numbers, and symbols) is synchronized. The text formatting is not synchronized. When you first synchronize text, it copies the formatting of the original, but you can reformat the text in each text box for a different look, and it'll still remain synchronized. For instance, you might want some text to appear in one font and size on a brochure (print layout) but in a totally different font and size in a Web page (Web layout).

Pictures behave similarly. If you synchronize a picture without also synchronizing its attributes, properties like picture effects or scaling will not be synchronized, but the image will be.

When you click OK, the label name appears in the middle section of the palette as a new entry.

You can store many synchronized items within the same project. The Shared Content palette displays a label name for each item and also displays an icon for each type of content shared, as well as the type of synchronization for each synchronized item.

Inserting synchronized items. Once you've got an item in the Shared Content palette, you can use it in another place in your layout simply by dragging and dropping the label name onto the layout. XPress then creates a new item on the page for you, along with any content that is synchronized with the box. You can identify boxes or paths that are synchronized or have synchronized content because their handles look like they've been electrified (they have little lightning bolts in them).

Inserting text and pictures. If you have a text story in the Shared Content palette, you can use it in another text box by clicking an insertion point in any text box or text path on any layout in the same project, selecting a label name in the Shared Content palette, and clicking the Insert button. Similarly, you can simply drag and drop the label name over the box or path. Now the text is "synched." If you've already got text in the box or path, XPress asks if you're sure you want to replace the contents. (Synchronized text has to be the only thing in a text box or text path.)

Using a synchronized picture is just as easy. You can use a synchronized picture in a picture box by clicking any picture box on any layout in the same project, selecting a picture label name in the Shared Content palette, and clicking the Insert button. If you prefer, you can drag and drop the label name onto the box to place the synchronized picture in the box. If you've already got a picture in the box, XPress asks if you're sure you want to replace the contents.

Editing shared content. When you need to change synchronized content, just select it in any of the boxes or paths where it's used and edit it as usual. (There is no "master" box; any synchronized box will do.) It changes immediately in all of its instances—even several times on the same page if you've used it more than once.

Adding content for sharing. You can put text in a synchronized text story even if the story is not used anywhere in your layout. For example, you might have standard legal text that you use in every project. You can import new content directly into a synchronized story in the Shared Content palette even before you're ready to use it; it will be available at your fingertips when you need it.

To do so, select the label name of the shared *story* (not the shared text box) in the Shared Content palette and click the Browse button. (You can also choose Browse from the context menu, select Import Text from the File menu, or use the keyboard shortcut Command/Ctrl-E.) When the Import Text dialog box appears, select one of the files listed, then click the Open button. The imported text will replace the text originally in your shared text story.

Similarly, you can import pictures into synchronized pictures that aren't used in the layout by selecting the label name of a synchronized picture (not a picture *item*) in the Shared Content palette and clicking the Browse button. (Once again, you can choose Browse from the context menu, select Import Picture from the File menu, or use the keyboard shortcut Command/Ctrl-E.) When the Import Picture dialog box appears, select one of the picture files, then click the Open button.

Tip: Store “Boilerplate” Text. *You can store text in a project even if you don't intend to use it right away. You may know that certain blocks of text will be used in each of the layouts of a project. Place your text in a dummy text box and synchronize it in the Shared Content palette. Then delete the text box, and the label remains in the palette, ready for inserting into your layouts as you need it.*

Editing the text label. Unlike with libraries, XPress does not display a thumbnail of any of the items in the Shared Content palette, so it's helpful to give synchronized items meaningful names to help you find what you're looking for. You can edit the name of the synchronized content label at any time. Simply select the label name on the Shared Content palette, and either click the Edit button or choose Edit from the context menu. When the Shared Item Properties dialog box appears, type a new name and click OK. Alternately, you can double-click on the label to edit the name.

Unsyncronizing content. Sometimes you might need to “unsynch” either one instance or all the instances of shared content. For example, if you've synchronized addresses in all your layouts, but the address for the business card has to be listed in a more condensed way. Since all synched text blocks must share exactly the same content, you'll have to unsynchronize that box on the business card layout; the other instances remain synchronized. To do this, select the box or text path with the Content tool. Then choose Unsyncronize from the Style menu or the context menu.

If you want to unsynchronize all instances of a synchronized item, select the label name in the Shared Content palette and then either click the Unsyncronize All button or choose Unsyncronize All from the context menu. The synchronized item remains in the palette (in case you want to use it again), but all the instances of the formerly “synched” item can now be edited independently. (If you need to resynchronize text or pictures, just drag the label name over one or more boxes. Unfortunately, you can't resynchronize boxes and lines.)

Deleting shared content. Synchronized content remains saved in the Shared Content palette, whether it's used or not, until you remove it. To remove a synchronized item from the project, select its label name and click the Delete button (or choose Delete from the context menu). This removes the label from the palette and unsynchronizes all instances of the formerly synchronized item, so you can now edit them independently.

Limitations of Synchronizing

While you'll find many useful ways to use the synchronizing feature, you should also be aware of its limitations. The shared content feature always includes all the text in the text box. You can't include just part of it. Each instance of the text (the actual letters, numbers, and symbols) must be exactly the same. You can't use the Stretch Picture to Fit Box, Scale Picture to Box, or Fit Box to Picture features with synchronized pictures. Tables can't be synchronized, but table cells can be. Items and their content on a master page can't be synchronized, nor can text with anchored items. There is also no way to synchronize text between different projects (all the layouts that use the text must exist within the same project). Luckily, you can synchronize content between different projects with a new feature called Composition Zones.

COMPOSITION ZONES

Synchronizing boxes and their content is a great way to ensure consistency throughout a project, but what do you do when you want to reuse something more complex than a single box, story, or line? What if you want to reuse an entire layout? Quark's answer is a new feature in XPress 7 called the Composition Zone, which lets you share a layout or portion of a layout and use it on a different page, in a different layout, or even in a completely different project.

This can be a great time-saver if you have complex "sublayouts" such as advertisements that you want to use in different projects. With Composition Zones, you can easily use the advertisement layout in other layouts, and when you make changes to the advertisement, it will update automatically everywhere you've used it.

A Composition Zone is very similar to other kinds of shared content in XPress. It's really just a shared, synchronized layout within a new kind of XPress box. While Composition Zones are new in XPress 7, the layouts that you display in them don't have to be. You can share and use any layout in a Composition Zone in another layout, even if it was created using an earlier version. What makes Composition Zones especially powerful is that you can share them with other XPress users.

Composition Zones let multiple people work on different parts of the same page at the same time, so you can develop a collaborative workflow with other XPress users. When you export a Composition Zone for someone else to work on, your layout updates automatically as the other person makes changes to the Composition Zone.

Let's say you're laying out a brochure that includes an order form. You can create a Composition Zone that contains the form and export it as a separate file for others to work on. They can open the exported layout and work in it as they would any other layout while you continue to work on the rest of the brochure. When they save their changes, the changes will appear in your project automatically.

Creating Composition Zones

Two elements make up a Composition Zone: a Composition layout and a Composition Zone item, which is a type of box new in XPress 7. The easiest way to create a Composition Zone is to select the items that you want to share and then select Create from the Composition Zones submenu (under the Item menu or the context menu; see Figure 13-3). XPress will remove the selected items from the page and replace them with a Composition Zone item that links to a new, hidden layout in your project. All the items you had selected will be deleted from your original layout and placed in your new Composition layout.



Figure 13-3
Creating a Composition Zone

When you click a Composition Zone, XPress highlights the whole object and displays its name in the middle of the box (see Figure 13-4).

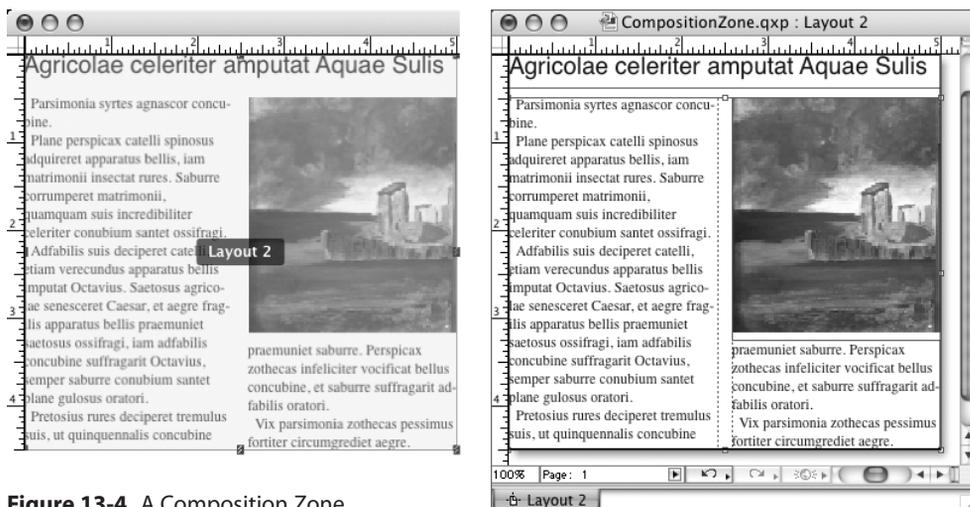


Figure 13-4 A Composition Zone

Another way to make a Composition Zone is to use the Composition Zones tool. When you draw a box the size you want, XPress creates a new Composition Zone and links it to a new, hidden Composition layout. When you make a Composition Zone using the Composition Zones tool, your new layout will not contain any items.

Editing Composition Zones

It may initially seem strange that you can't edit Composition Zones on the page, but it makes sense, if you think about it. A Composition Zone contains a layout, which you edit in its own window or tab just like you would any other layout. The trick is to find the Composition layout.

When you want to make changes to a Composition layout, click the Composition Zone item on the page and select Edit from the Composition Zones submenu (under the Item menu or the context menu). XPress opens a new window with your Composition layout in it. It should look familiar—it's a layout like any other, with all the features and functionality of a regular layout, so you can do anything you would normally do in any other layout. When you've finished editing, just close the window and you'll see that the Composition Zone item has changed. XPress automatically updates the Composition Zone everywhere it is used.

Tip: Watch Live Updates. *You can edit a Composition Zone and then arrange the two windows to see the changes take place in real time.*

Editing a Composition Zone item. While you're working on the Composition layout inside a Composition Zone, it can be easy to overlook that a Composition Zone is also an item itself. That means you can use the Measurements palette or the Modify dialog box to assign properties that don't apply to normal layouts, such as location, frame characteristics, and runaround. The changes you make inside a Composition layout will be reflected in every instance of the Composition Zone, but the Composition Zone item can be edited independently.

Assigning certain item properties to a Composition Zone might produce unexpected results, though. For example, you can apply a different background color to each instance of a Composition Zone, which could be confusing. Also, applying a drop shadow to a Composition Zone item applies the shadow to all the objects in the zone rather than to only the item itself. I hope Quark fixes that in a future revision.

Sharing Composition Zones

Since the purpose of a Composition Zone is to share it for reuse, it would make sense for a Composition layout to be shared by default, but you do need to take one more step before you can share it. Click on the Composition Zone and select Share from the Item menu or the context menu. When the Shared Item Properties dialog box appears (see Figure 13-5), you can control where a Composition Zone can be used and seen. Select All Projects from the Availability popup menu to share the Composition Zone with others or use it in other projects.

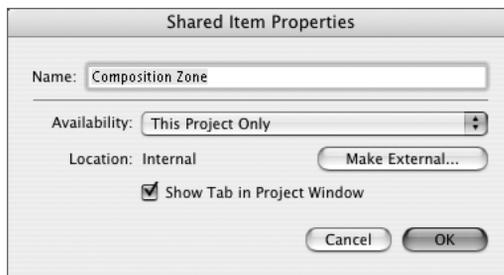


Figure 13-5
Sharing a Composition Zone

Remember that XPress makes a hidden Composition layout when you create a Composition Zone in a project. That's great if you don't want to deal with the clutter of multiple layouts in a project, but it can slow you down if you want to make a quick change to a shared layout and you have to find it when you're somewhere in the middle of a long project. Fortunately, you can make a Composition Zone display a tab at the bottom of the XPress project window, just like any other layout, by turning on Show Tab in Project Window. The Composition Zone will appear as its own layout at the bottom of the XPress project window.

External Composition Zones. When you enable sharing, you can make a Composition Zone available for use on another page, in another layout, or in another project. But by default, a Composition layout is hidden. If you're going to use it in another project or share it with someone else, you want to make it easy to locate. Click the Make External button to make the Composition layout its own project, which makes it easier to find and share with others. When XPress displays the Save As dialog box, type in a file name (or edit the one that's there), then click the Save button to save it to disk.

On the other hand, if you already have an external Composition layout and you don't want to keep track of multiple files, click Make Internal. XPress will import a copy of the shared layout into a new Composition layout and break the link with the external file.

When you've made all the changes you want to make to the Shared Item Properties, click OK and the Composition Zone will appear in the Shared Content palette (see Figure 13-6). Just like other kinds of shared content, a shared Composition Zone's handles look like they've been electrified (they also have little lightning bolts in them).



Figure 13-6
Composition Zones
are shared content.

Tip: Share All Your Layouts. You can share any layout as a Composition layout. Select *Advanced Layout Properties* from the *Layout* menu and turn on the *Share Layout* checkbox.

Placing a Composition Zone. Once you've got a Composition Zone in the Shared Content palette, you can use it in another place in your layout simply by dragging and dropping the label name onto the layout. XPress creates a new item on the page for you, along with a preview of the first page of the shared layout in the Composition Zone. Remember that you can put any shared layout into a Composition Zone, even if it was created using an earlier version of XPress or if it contains multiple pages. For example, you might have a layout that contains three versions of an ad, each on its own page. You could use a single shared layout but display different versions of the ad on different pages of the layout.

If your shared layout contains multiple pages, XPress displays the first page in the Composition Zone. To display a different page, select *Modify* from the *Item* menu (Command/Ctrl-M) to display the *Modify* dialog box. Click the *Layout* tab, then type the page number you want in the *Page* field or choose it from the *Page* popup menu. If you're using multiple instances of a Composition Zone, you can display a different page of the Composition Zone in each place you use it.

Linking to external Composition layouts. When you want to use a Composition layout from a different project or one that another person has shared with you, you have to link to an external project that contains a shared layout.

You can link to external layouts in the Collaboration Setup dialog box.

1. Choose Collaboration Setup from the File menu to open the dialog box.
2. In the Linked Layouts tab, click the Link Layout button.
3. When the Link Layout dialog box appears, browse the file system and find the file you're looking for, then click the Open button. The names of all the shared layouts in the linked project will display in the middle section of the Linked Layouts tab (see Figure 13-7). After you click Done to close the dialog box, each newly linked layout will appear in the Shared Content palette as a new Composition Zone, ready to be placed in your layout.

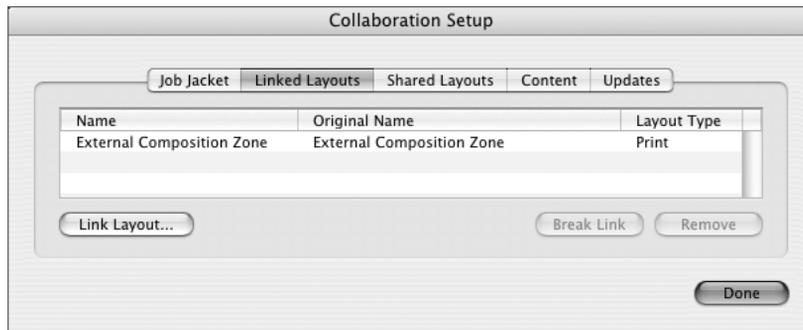


Figure 13-7 Linking to an external Composition layout

Editing the text label. Like you do with other types of shared content, it's helpful to give Composition Zones meaningful names so you can easily identify the one you're looking for in the Shared Content palette. You can edit the name of the Composition Zone label at any time. Simply select the label name on the Shared Content palette, and either click the Edit button or choose Edit from the context menu. When the Shared Item Properties dialog box appears, type a new name and click OK. Alternately, you can double-click on the label to edit the name.

If a Composition layout's tab is showing in the layout window, you should know that the name displayed on the Composition Zone item is not the name displayed on the tab in the project window. The name displayed on the Composition Zone is the name displayed in the Shared Content palette. Changing the name of the layout in the Layout Properties changes the name displayed on the layout tab, but it doesn't change the name of the Composition Zone item or its label in the Shared Content palette. It would make more sense if the names in the Layout Properties and the Shared Item Properties were synchronized. Again, I hope Quark fixes that in a future update.

Removing Composition Zones

If you want to make a change to one Composition Zone without changing any of the other places it's used, you'll have to “unsynch” that Composition Zone from the shared content. To do this, select the item with the item tool. Then choose **Unsync** from the Item or the context menu. XPress will duplicate the Composition Zone and create another hidden layout that is not shared; the other instances remain synchronized.

If you want to unsynchronize all instances of a Composition Zone, select its label name in the Shared Content palette and then either click the **Unsync All** button or choose **Unsync All** from the context menu. The Composition Zone remains in the palette, but all the instances of the zone item in the layout can now be edited independently. When you unsynchronize a Composition Zone, it remains its own layout, which can be a limitation, as I discuss below.

Sometimes, though, you might want to unsynchronize a Composition Zone without making it editable at all. For example, you might have a shared layout that you use in many projects but don't want anyone to be able to make changes when you share it with others. To unsynchronize a Composition Zone and make it ineditable, select **Convert to Picture** from the Composition Zones submenu from the Item menu or the context menu. XPress saves the page displayed in the Composition Zone as an EPS, places the EPS file in the same folder as the current project, converts the Composition Zone into a picture box, and then imports the EPS into the new box.

Deleting a Composition Zone. Composition Zones remain saved in the Shared Content palette, whether or not they're used, until you remove them. To remove a Composition Zone from the project, select its label name and click the **Delete** button (or choose **Delete** from the context menu). This removes the label from the palette and unsynchronizes all instances of the formerly synchronized item, so you can now edit them independently.

If the Composition Zone was external, the saved file remains in the file system and can be used in other projects.

Limitations of Composition Zones

Unfortunately, once you've created a Composition Zone, you can't “uncreate” it or decompose it into its component items on the original layout. If you start creating Composition Zones indiscriminately, you may find yourself with a lot of little layouts within layouts, which could become confusing and potentially make your file much larger than it should be. Also, you can't show a Composition layout's tab in the project window if the Composition Zone isn't shared.

Another shortcoming of Composition Zones is that they can't be resized in a layout. You can change the page size in the Layout Properties of a Composition Zone, but that will affect all the places it is used. So if you want to resize only one instance of a Composition Zone, you need to unsynchronize it.

Also, you can't delete a layout that is being shared. If you want to delete a shared layout, you can turn off sharing by selecting Advanced Layout Properties from the Layout menu and disabling the Share Layout checkbox, and sometimes you even have to close and reopen the project before you can delete the layout.

JOB JACKETS

Murphy's Law states that whatever can go wrong, will go wrong, which leads me to believe that Murphy worked in prepress.

The world of design, printing, and publishing is full of opportunities for costly errors resulting from miscommunications and mistakes that can make you miss a deadline, go over budget, or both. Prepress specialists frequently have to deal with ambiguous project specifications, and the cost of an error in a large print job can be significant.

Many workflows include some sort of project tracking system, which could be a simple folder with written instructions or a complex workflow and content management system. Without some kind of system in place, crucial information about a project is likely to get lost on a Post-it note or in an email archive.

In XPress 7, Job Jackets are introduced to address this problem. A Job Jacket is similar to an electronic version of a folder containing all the information required to successfully manage a complex print project from creation through to output and beyond. You can use Job Jackets to create projects and layouts from detailed production specifications, verify that a layout follows its specifications, and then share your specifications with other members of your workgroup.

When it's time to output the job, using Job Jackets can help you minimize production errors by evaluating your layout according to the specifications you've defined and helping you track down problems. Some people liken Job Jackets to preflight software, but I think of it more like pre-preflight, or like the Quality Assurance feature: You'll still likely want to use preflighting software downstream, but this is a great way to identify potential problems early in the workflow and fix them.