

P^{to} ublisher

Scribus

Tips and tricks to help you move
from amateurish to professional looking publishing
... and all on free software.

Applications used:

MS Publisher 2000
Scribus 1.3.3.4
Inkscape 0.44.1
Gimp 2.2.11
Windows XP

Front page photo:

The Path
by midnightvelvet59
www.flickr.com

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FREE2CODE
ONLINE PROGRAMMING COMMUNITY

www.free2code.net

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Introduction

These tutorials are designed to assist MS Publisher users who are switching (or thinking of switching) to Scribus. Well developed Publisher skills are assumed as well as some basic Scribus skills through tutorials like:

Niyam Bhushan
Get Started With Scribus
docs.scribus.net

Scot Blades
Scribus Manual
www.scotsworld.net

My own experience stems from designing a 12-20 page greyscale newsletter for a community centre so I will start by exploring black-and-white possibilities. Each section will end, however, with an exploration of colourful extensions.

This set of tutorials will also come with online support: simply visit the free2code.net forums and ask Arizona for help with any specific problems you may be encountering.

last updated 2dec2006

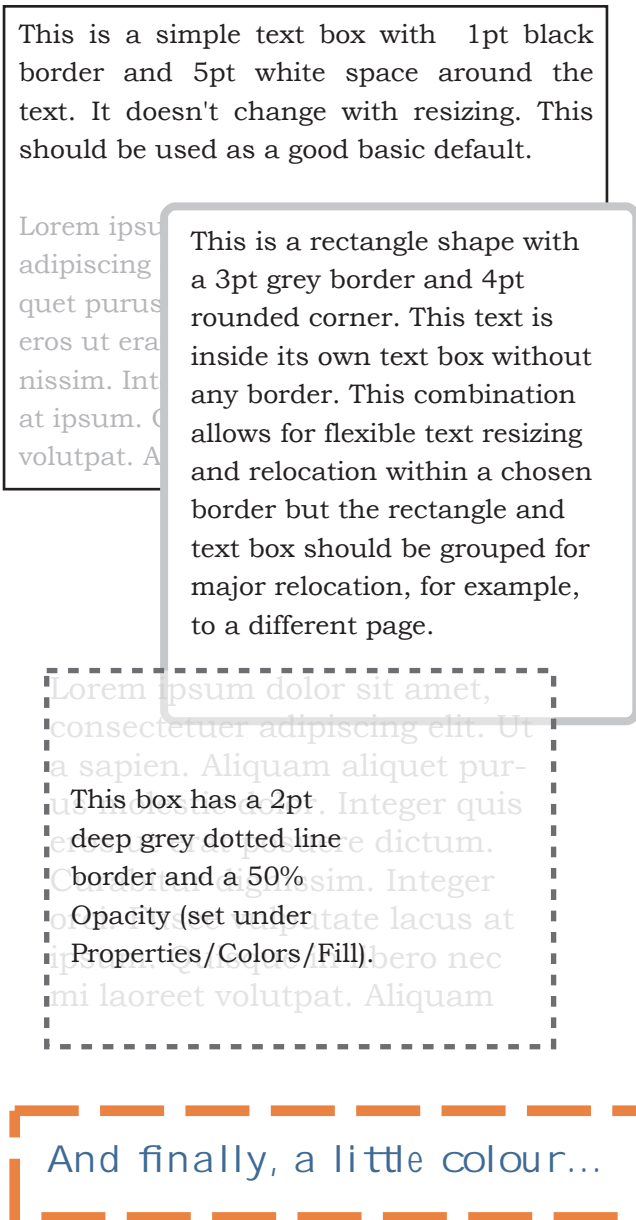


Fig 1 Basic borders in Scribus

Borders

We will explore 4 kinds of borders in Scribus, starting with greyscale versions:

- 1) basic borders using scribus tools with easy moving and resizing
- 2) more complex borders made to a given size
- 3) fancy borders with decorative elements
- 4) some colour versions of the above

Basic Borders

We will begin with the basic styles offered by Publisher before entering the BorderArt gallery. Some of these are displayed to the left (Fig 1). You achieve these in Scribus by setting the Line and Colors/Line parameters in the Properties (F2) dialogue box for each bordered item.

For the rounded corners, go to Properties/Shape/Round Corners and set a suitable point size (the default zero pt gives a square corner). These rounded corners are a nice feature in Scribus. In Publisher you must use a shape with text inserted but it is hard to refine the shape's roundedness.

As far as I can tell, Scribus does not offer the option of selecting which sides will have borders. I like this option in Publisher, especially for achieving an underline

effect with text headings. In Scribus, you can do this by drawing a separate line to place at the bottom of the text box, then group for relocation. See the MAJOR NEWS-LETTER HEADING in Fig 2. Care is needed, however, since grouping the text box and line and then resizing will result in the line thickening or narrowing as you increase or decrease the group's size. In Publisher, the border is part of the text frame and set to, say, 1pt and resizing the box will not affect the border thickness at all.

As you can see, there are some advantages to how Publisher does things and other advantages to how Scribus does them. I have found that the effort to understand the Scribus way does deliver better overall control of the final product. So stay patient and experiment a lot.

HOW TO place text inside a shape:

Start with a text box with some content. Go to Properties/Shape and select a new Shape from the ones that Scribus offers. (If you're comfortable with node editing, you can further alter that shape via Edit Shape...) Adjust the size, format and alignment so the text fits neatly.

MAJOR NEWSLETTER HEADING

HOW TO add a single border precisely:

Make your text box and insert the text. Format as desired. Get a rough idea of how much white space you want under the text by using the object handles. Go into Properties/X,Y,Z and set the Height precisely. For example, for this 16pt font setting I chose a 20pt Height.

Create a plain 1pt black straight line and position it on the bottom border of your text box.

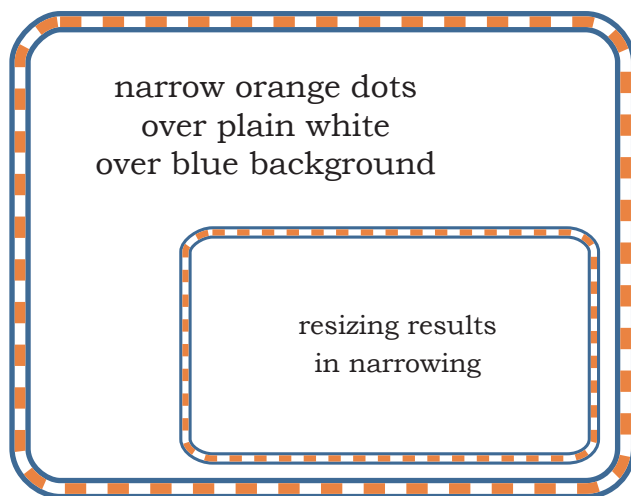
Using the handles, reduce the width of the text box so the text fits in neatly. In Properties/X,Y,Z, set an exact Width near the one that resulted from that resizing. Now use this exact Width setting for your straight line.

Group the text box and line for relocation (but avoid any further resizing).

To create another similar heading, I duplicate (copy-and-paste in Publisher) and relocate. You will need to ungroup to edit the text, then regroup. Resize only horizontally to fit the text neatly.

ANOTHER NEWSLETTER HEADING

Fig 2 Major Newsletter Heading



Complex Borders

This next set of borders needs a little ingenuity. Some are derived from Publisher's Basic borders in the BorderArt gallery, such as Basic...Thin Lines. When this border is created in Publisher you can resize the text frame or rectangle - BorderArt is not available in other shapes - and the border remains the same. This will not be the case for the similar borders created in Scribus.

There are two ways to proceed, each with different results. The first is to do the obvious: create a first regular single line border and then a smaller frame inside it, offset appropriately. The second method is described in the box below.

Variations on this theme of overlaying borders is shown in Fig 4.

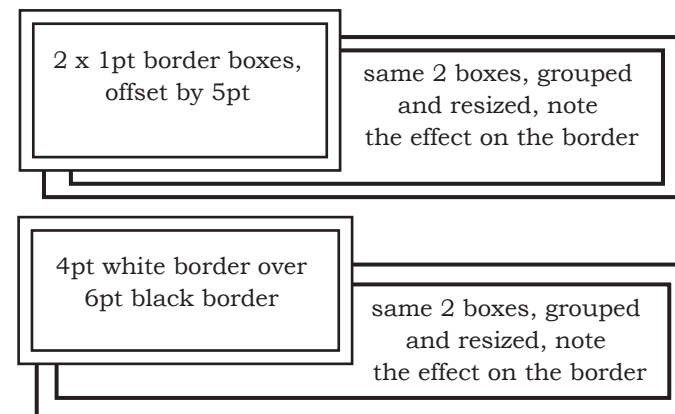


Fig 3 Basic...Thin Lines BorderArt

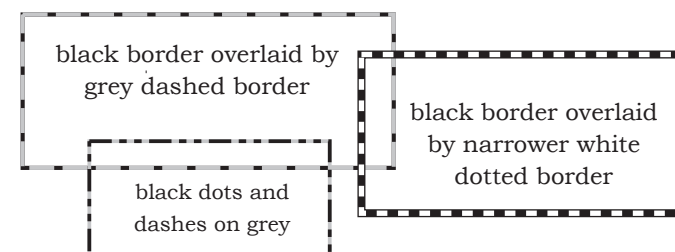


Fig 4 Some overlapping borders

HOW TO make Basic...Thin Lines border:

The default size for this border is 6pt. Both the outer and inner rectangles are 1pt thick with a 4pt separation. This is the setting we will use here.

In general you will want to border a box located at X,Y with size W,H. In this example we will border this rectangle placed at 295,363 and of size 517,202.

The technique we will use here is to create a 6pt black border with a 4pt white border placed at its centre, leaving the 1pt wide outer edges visible as two lines.

Because Scribus draws borders evenly both inwards and outwards from the baseline, and we want our border to be contained inside our

defined rectangular area, we will need to start 3 pts down from our eventual starting point. In general, this will mean starting with a rectangle at X+3,Y+3 of size W-6,H-6. So, in our case, we need to draw a rectangle and set its location to 298,366 and its size to 511,196.

Duplicate this rectangle but adjust the settings of the duplicate so that the Line is 4pt thick and coloured White. Reposition it at 298,366. Make sure the Fill colour is set to None so that the edge of the black border behind shows through.

Highlight both rectangles and Group them (Ctrl+G). You can now relocate this bordered box. However, to resize correctly you will need to ungroup the two boxes, resize the black one, and adjust the white one to match.

Challenge #1

In devising ways to reproduce Publisher effects in Scribus, I decided to challenge myself to reproduce a particular page of the community centre newsletter already created in Publisher. That page had a recipe box with BorderArt and Clip Art included (see Fig 5). The border is made with the BorderArt setting of Basic...White Dots, size 9pt, dark grey colour. The idea was to suggest the chickpeas contained among the recipe ingredients.

In fact, the Publisher result gave dots too small for a good effect and making them large enough to suggest chickpeas resulted in an overly thick border. Here is where Scribus comes into its own as fine settings and adjustments are possible. (Note that Publisher always produces white circles for the dots in BorderArt but this may be rendered on screen - or in a screenshot - as a cross or star when few pixels are involved in each circle.)

I found that the best way to reproduce this border was to start with a simple line of width 9pt. Next, make a long thin text box and insert a circle glyph: inside Story Editor, click on Insert/Insert Glyph. A dialogue box similar to the Windows Character Map will open up. I am

using Bookman Old Style Regular here and there is a nice circle at 25CF in its map. This may vary with different fonts, just look around for a suitable glyph in the font you are using. Once inserted, add a space, copy the glyph+space, then paste over and over to make multiple copies. Set the font colour to White and experiment with the font size to make smaller or larger white circles. Carefully place this text box over the straight line.

You can try different glyphs, of course, and different colour settings. Some results are shown in Fig 6. Prepare two lines each for the vertical and horizontal sides of your border and carefully place them together. Adjust so the glyphs are neat.

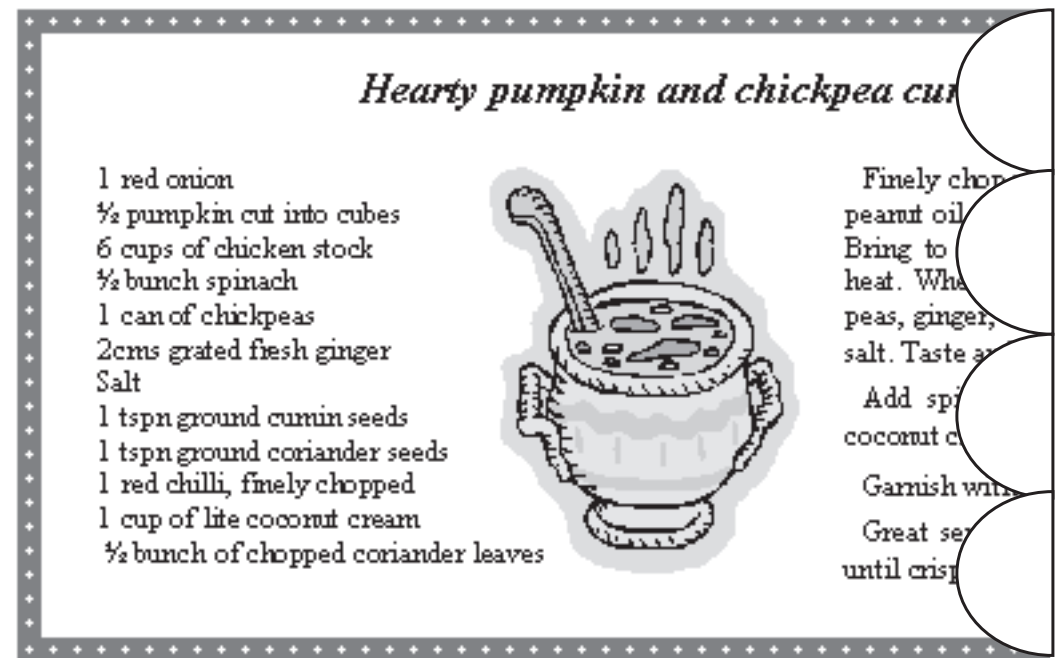


Fig 5 Screenshot of recipe box created in Publisher with Scribus petal cutoff

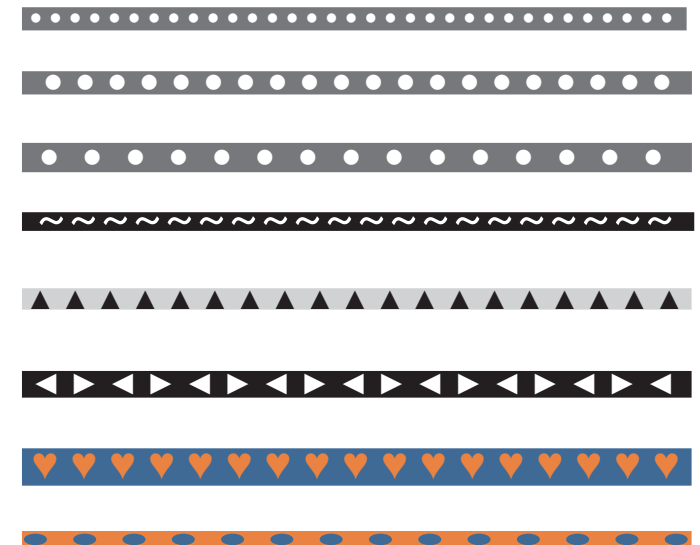


Fig 6 Rows of glyphs over straight lines

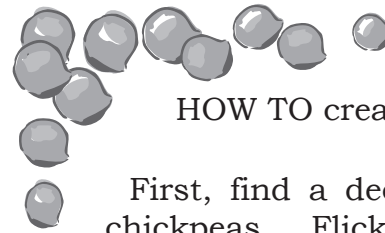
Fancy Borders

However pretty all these glyphs are, it remains tedious to create each of the 4 border sides and align them neatly. In the next technique we will explore Scribus' Attach Text To Path capability, starting with something similar to BorderArt's Flowers...Daisies, a border I like to use for announcements of children's parties and the like.

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* * * * *
*
* HOW TO make this star border:
*
* Start with a rectangle that will
* hold the text and graphics re-
* quired. Convert it to a path
* through Item/Convert To/Bezier
* Curve. Next make a text box with
* a line of spaced asterisks (*) in a
* bold font. Now highlight both this
* text box and the rectangle and
* click Item/Attach Text To Path.
*
* You should now have a star-
* bordered box. It has the advant-
* age of being readily resizable. The
* main problem is that there are no
* stars right in the corners. You can
* fix that with small added text
* boxes containing a single asterisk
* (bottom right) or use a specialized
* glyph for extra effect (top right).
*
* * * * *

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HOW TO create this corner frame of scattered chickpeas:

First, find a decent photo of chickpeas. Flickr.com is a good place to go: try an advanced search limited to Creative Commons-licensed photos.

Now open this photo in Gimp (or Paint) and isolate a single chickpea of characteristic shape, using the oval or a similar tool. Gently erase around the chickpea shape. Save as a .png file.

Import this into Inkscape and perform a simple monochrome bitmap trace (Path/Trace Bitmap on the menu), non-smooth, 6 layers .

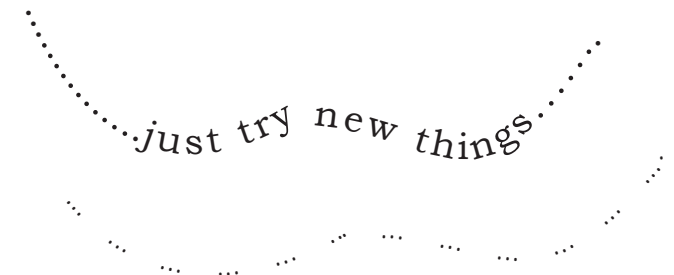
You should work on the resulting layers, simplifying them (by hand and also using CTRL-L twice in quick succession) and reducing them to just 3

simple layers, but retaining the characteristic shape. Most clip art has this simple structure.

Copy this chickpea to its own Inkscape file and save it as BWchickpea.svg. Now import a copy into your Scribus document and make multiple copies. Reduce some of them and rotate some of them to give a random effect. Then place them to look like a scattering in the top left hand corner of the rectangular area being used for text and perhaps other graphics.

Add some light grey dotted lines to extend the border effect and you now have an original and hopefully quite artistic border all of your own.

Rounded corners (this one is set to 10pt via Properties/Shape/Round Corners: before converting to Bezier) also help create smoother but not perfect corners.

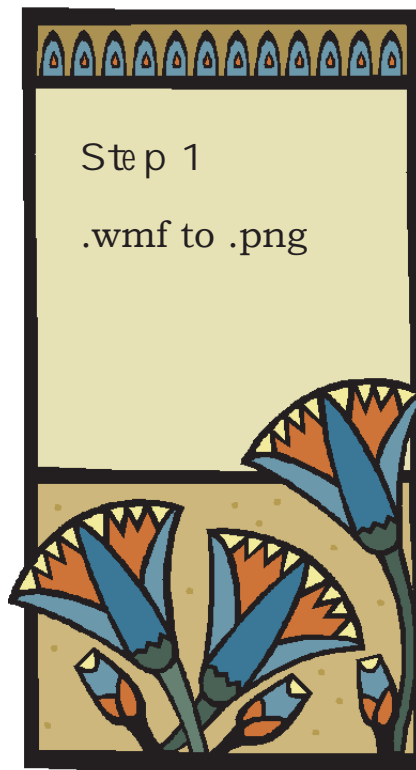


Clip Art

Most Publisher (or Microsoft) clip art comes in .wmf (Windows Metafile) format and is managed through a clip art gallery. First, it is hard to find these files as they are stored in obscure locations on your hard disk. Second, even if you do find them, Scribus will not recognize them.

I'm no legal expert but I believe that if you own a licensed copy of MS Publisher then you can use the associated clip art, even if you're inserting it into a different publishing software. There is an Open Clip Art Library (at www.openclipart.org) with free (Public Domain) artwork but I have found it difficult to search and I rarely find any clip art there that is suitable for my needs. I will therefore assume that you own a copy of Publisher and can use the clip art provided including the extra clip art that Microsoft provides online.

The problem remains: how to import this clip art into your Scribus document? I've not found a single simple solution to this. I have chosen a piece of border clip art and will explain 6 steps taken from simplest to more professional result. It is up to you how far you want to go with this.



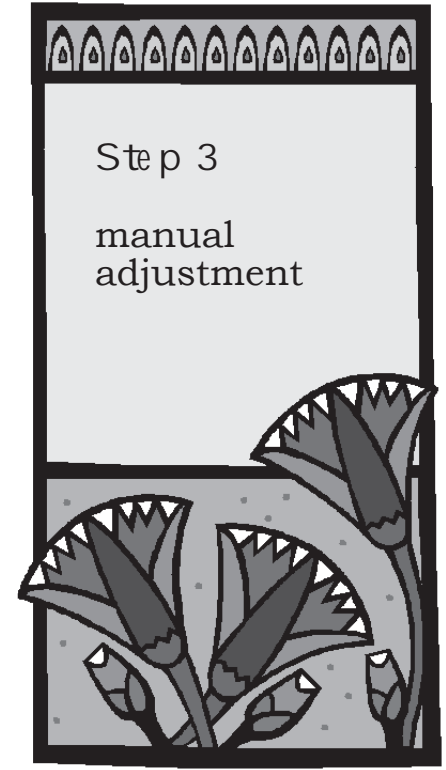
Step 1

This clip was obtained online (keyword "border", p21) and inserted into a blank Publisher page. (The filename is dd01902_.wmf if you want to access it that way.) Adjust zoom so it fits on screen, PrintScreen to clipboard, and copy into bitmap editing software, in this case Gimp (but Paint would do). Clip the screen image down to just the clip art and save this as a .png (Portable Network Graphics) file. In Scribus, open an Image Frame and insert this image file. In this case I scaled it to 40%, then Adjust Frame To Image.



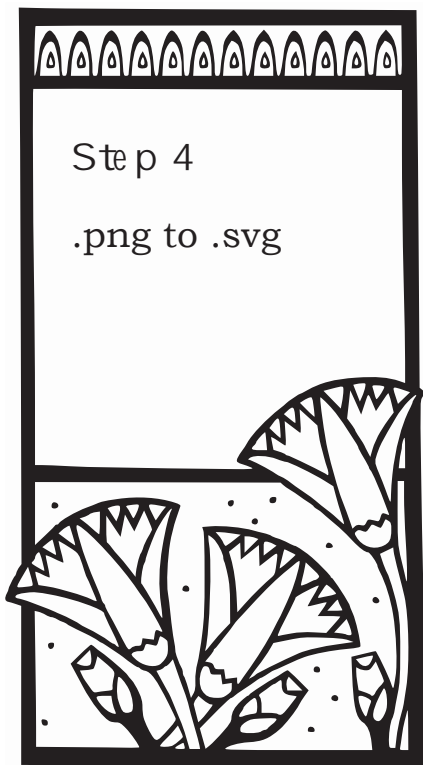
Step 2

Plain greyscale conversion in Scribus: right-click on the image, choose Image Effects/Grayscale/>> (apply).



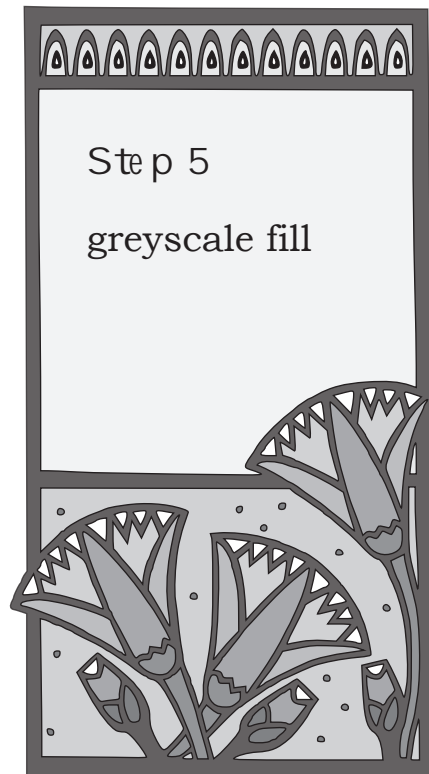
Step 3

I wanted a clearer top border, better contrasts on the flowers and dots, and some other changes, so I returned to the Gimp image, converted it to a greyscale version and adjusted the colouring by hand. Make sure to keep copies of each different version in Gimp.



Step 4

The 3 versions so far are all in bitmap image format which can never give the really crisp look of vector graphics. Here, I have converted an uncoloured version of the image to a .svg (Scalable Vector Graphics) format using Inkscape. Import the uncoloured (plain black-on-white) version into Inkscape and do a trace: Path/Trace Bitmap/Monochrome, 2 scans, non-Smooth.



Step 5

I then filled the vector graphics image in greyscale colours, using the Step 3 version as a guide. In Scribus, you need to use File/Import/Import SVG to insert this image, rather than an Image Frame. I scaled it down using the 161pt Width setting established in Steps 1-3.



Step 6

Finally, I did a coloured fill version, making sure to use the free2code blue, orange and white colours.



This Cat on Books clip art was obtained from the Publisher 2000 CD collection. The .wmf file (filename bd06375_.wmf) was converted to .svg directly using SVG Factory software (free to download from www.svgfactory.com). A main problem with this software is that it results in far more nodes than necessary, so I use the Inkscape simplification tool (CTR-L twice in quick succession). In this case the cat alone used 457 nodes, reduced to 206, then 175, then 158, after 3 simplifications.

The black cat was isolated from the books by grouping its elements (including eyes and nose as well as outer shape). This was then duplicated and shifted away from the composite image. The blue and orange cats were duplicated from the black, coloured, relocated, and rotated.

Challenge #2

We can now proceed to complete the challenge of reproducing the newsletter recipe box and then the whole page.

The soup tureen was converted directly from .wmf to .svg via SVG Factory but an error was evident (see Fig 7). This was corrected using node editing in Inkscape. If you are not comfortable with such node editing then stick with a simple .wmf to .png conversion and maybe a trace to .svg as well. For this particular example, the bitmap version is fine.

The full page reproduced in Scribus was page 16 and the two versions can be viewed at:

[page16publisher.pdf](#) Publisher version

[page16scribus.pdf](#) Scribus version

After completing this challenge and writing up what I've learnt in this tutorial I now feel confident enough to switch from Publisher to Scribus. I hope this will have helped you to do the same.

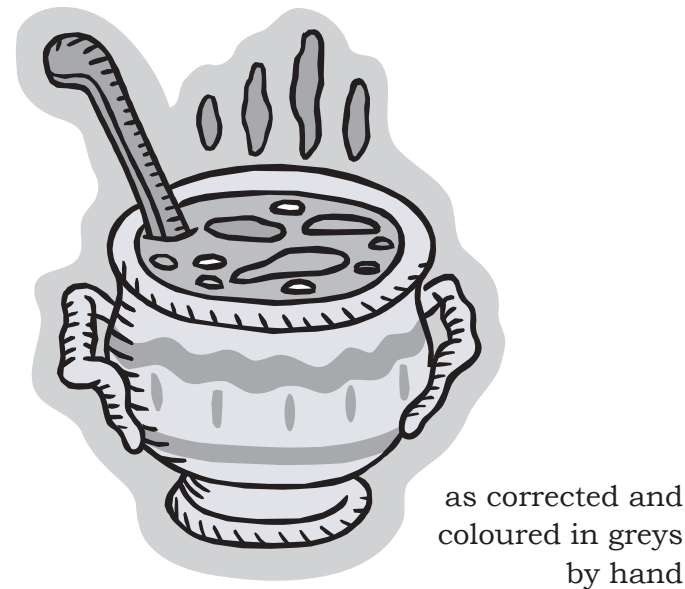
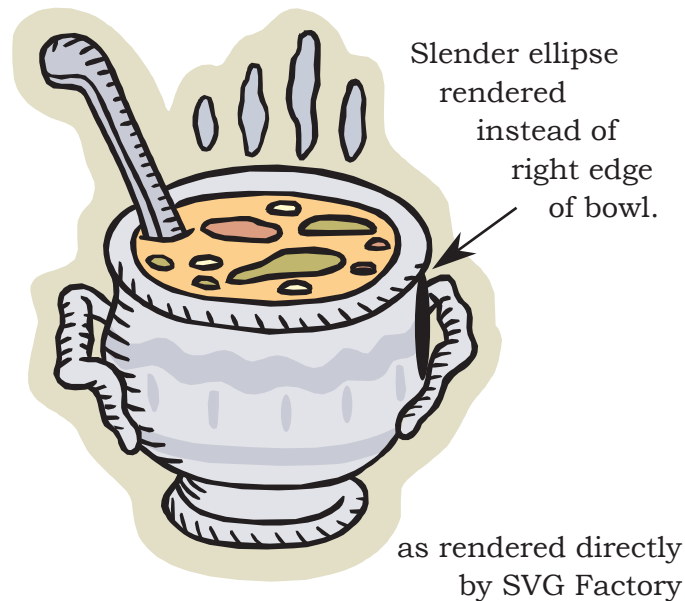


Fig 7 Soup tureen for newsletter recipe box: .svg, corrected, and .png versions