

# Upgrade to FrameMaker 6.0?

An Evaluation of New Features in Version 6.0



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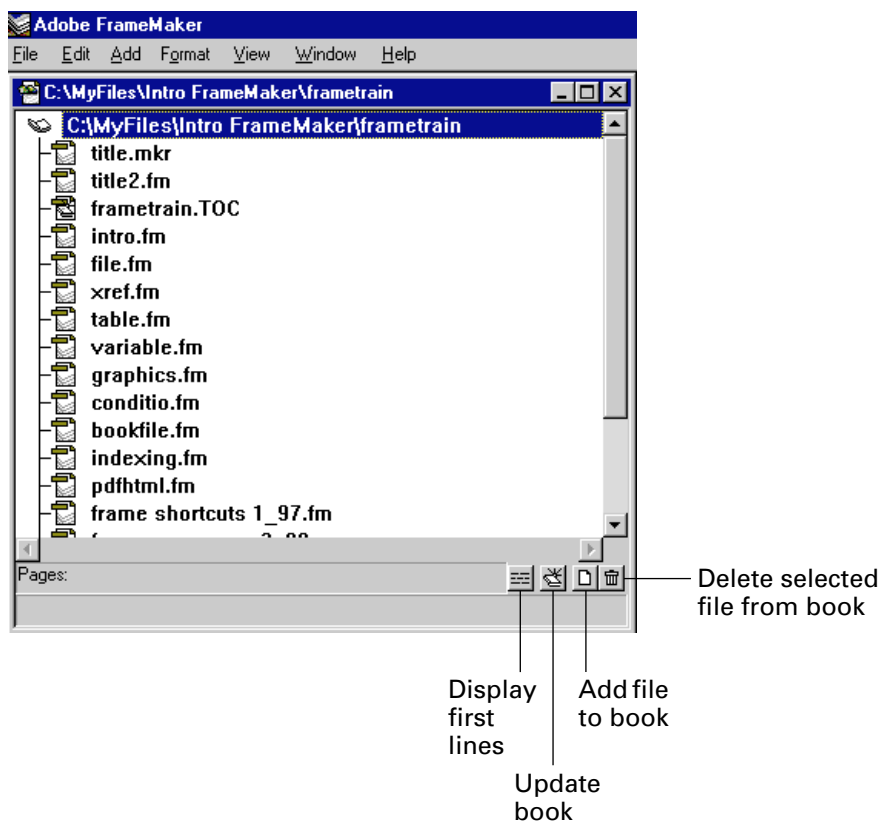
There's been a lively discussion within Scriptorium Publishing about the value of upgrading to FrameMaker 6.0—not just for our own use, but also for our publishing customers and training participants. Of course, I'll give you my opinion, but I'll try to provide a balanced view.

## How Version 6 looks to me

Version 3 was in service when I started using FrameMaker, and I've used every version since then—FrameMaker, FrameBuilder, and FrameMaker + SGML on Macintosh, Windows, and UNIX, and even the beta version of 5.5.6 for Linux. Here's my take on 6.0 on its new features:

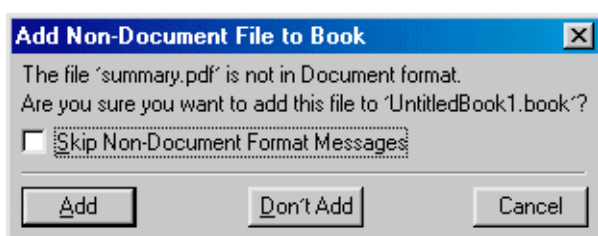
- The book window

The book window is indeed different from earlier releases. Drag-and-drop editing of the order of files, a button to display files' first lines instead of file names, an update button, an add file button, and a trash can for deleting files change the landscape considerably.



All buttons except the first are benign and useful. Accidentally selecting that first button and seeing the book file displaying first lines instead of file names was very disconcerting for

me—and perhaps amusing for Sarah, who knew what had happened. Using the **Next Page** button to go from an inside an open file to the next file in a book and the broader range of book-level commands for formatting are quite helpful. The Book Error Log makes locating and repairing errors such as unresolved cross-references far less time consuming. Renaming files in the book window will be handy for some users, but it's a serious threat to files used in multiple books—renaming a file in one book doesn't mean it's automatically renamed in other books. I'm still having difficulty accepting the implied advantage of including non-native files in a book, as the following screen shot shows.



I can do it, but it's a feature that's not yet a benefit.

- Bookwide spelling and searching

Useful, but also a little alarming. Repeatedly encountering the same word as “not found in the dictionary” underlines the fact that “Allow in Document” means just what it says—the word is saved in the file-level dictionary. (You can get around this problem by updating your personal or site dictionary; check FrameMaker's online help for more information.)

- Chapter and volume numbering

There are two new variables and related building blocks for running header/footer variables and cross-references, so it may be necessary to rethink the design of documents numbered folio by chapter. It's also important to know that **File > Set Up File** in 5.5 has been replaced by **Format > Document > Numbering** in 6.0.

- Exporting to XML and HTML

Quadralay's WebWorks Publisher Standard Edition is bundled with FrameMaker 6.0, and it provides a good route to HTML. It reminds me of Frame Technology's careful distinction between template *users* and template *designers*. The Standard Edition comes with some templates for conversion to HTML and XML, but it does not provide template creation

capabilities. If documentation departments want to create their own templates, they need a copy of Professional Edition for the template designer. Template users can then use the Standard Edition to generate output based on the template created in the Professional Edition. I much prefer using WebWorks Publisher (either edition) to produce XML or HTML rather than using FrameMaker's Save As XML or Save As HTML options.

- Importing and exporting PDF documents into a FrameMaker document

This is on Adobe's list of new features, not mine—you could do this in Version 5.5.6. Makes more sense to me than putting a PDF file in the book file, but it's not really new.

- Other marketing notes

I'm sure I've seen a statement that you can now set Character and Paragraph tag language to **None**. As with importing pages of PDF, this is old news and not a new feature. If you've been letting the spelling checker torment you through all the code snippets in your documents, help has been available long before the May 2000 release of 6.0. At the bottom of the Default Font sheet of the Paragraph Designer and on the Character Designer, selecting **None** from the Language drop-down list means that the spelling checker will skip the paragraph.

- Not on any list

In a book file window, you must now select the files you want to print before selecting **File > Print**. Earlier releases of FrameMaker allowed users to select a command such as Import Formats or Print and then specify which files were to be acted upon. Of course, the Version 6 requirement that I select the files *first* is no violation of general GUI principles, but it is a change that will take a moment's thought from long-time Framers.

## Other considerations

FrameMaker Version 6.0 handles long footnotes the same as FrameMaker Version 3 did—poorly. I'm not looking forward to explaining that to a friend who will write a physics text this summer and fall.

Version 6.0 also can't handle image maps with hyperlinks on master pages, but a patch is in the works. While I appreciate the plan to correct the problem, I'll be happier when I learn whether I'll need to reinstall WebWorks Publisher after any change in the FrameMaker installation.

## **In summary**

FrameMaker users who work entirely in single documents (for example, elaborate tables for reporting on clinical trials) will find little benefit in the release. However, the new book-level functions of FrameMaker 6.0—spelling check, find/replace, and multilevel document numbering—are very helpful to writers and editors of long, multichapter manuals that require book files. For those who need to convert the content of their FrameMaker files to HTML or XML, the addition of WebWorks Publisher Standard Edition is also worth the price of an upgrade.