Adobe InDesign CS3 Scripting: Working with Transformations in VBScript

Operations that change the geometry of items on an InDesign page are called transformations. Transformations include scaling, rotation, shearing (skewing), and movement (or translation). In Adobe InDesign CS3 scripting, you apply transformations using the transform method. This one method replaces the resize, rotate, and shear methods used in previous versions of InDesign.

This document shows you how to transform objects in InDesign CS3 and discusses some of the technical details behind the new transformation architecture.

This document assumes you have a basic working knowledge of InDesign scripting.

Using the Transform Method

The transform method requires a transformation matrix (TransformationMatrix) object that defines the transformation or series of transformations to apply to the object. A transformation matrix can contain any combination of scale, rotate, shear, or translate operations, in any order.

The order in which transformations are applied to an object is important. Applying transformations in differing orders can produce very different results.

To transform an object, you follow two steps:
1. Create a transformation matrix.
2. Apply the transformation matrix to the object using the transform method. When you do this, you also specify the coordinate system in which the transformation is to take place. For more on coordinate systems, see "Coordinate Spaces" on page 6. In addition, you specify the center of transformation, or transformation origin. For more on specifying the transformation origin, see "Transformation Origin" on page 7.

The following scripting example demonstrates the basic process of transforming a page item. (For the complete script, see TransformExamples.)

Rem Rotate a rectangle "myRectangle" around its center point.
set myRotateMatrix = myInDesign.transformations.add(, , , 27)
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates,
idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myRotateMatrix
Rem Scale a rectangle "myRectangle" around its center point.
set myScaleMatrix = myInDesign.transformations.Add(.5, .5)
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates,
idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myScaleMatrix
Rem Shear a rectangle "myRectangle" around its center point.
set myShearMatrix = myInDesign.transformations.Add(, , 30)
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates,
idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myShearMatrix
Rem Rotate a rectangle "myRectangle" around a specified ruler point ([72, 72]).
Set myRotateMatrix = myInDesign.transformations.add(, , 27)
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, Array(Array(72, 72), idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor), myRotateMatrix, , True
Rem Scale a rectangle "myRectangle" around a specified ruler point ([72, 72]).
set myScaleMatrix = myInDesign.transformations.add(.5, .5)
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, Array(Array(72, 72), idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor), myScaleMatrix, , True

For a script that "wraps" transformation routines in a series of easy-to-use functions, refer to the Transform script.

Working with Transformation Matrices

A transformation matrix cannot be changed once it has been created, but a variety of methods can interact with the transformation matrix to create a new transformation matrix based on the existing transformation matrix. In the following examples, we show how to apply transformations to a transformation matrix and replace the original matrix. (For the complete script, see TransformMatrix.)

Rem Scale a transformation matrix by 50% in both horizontal and vertical dimensions.
var myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.scaleMatrix(.5, .5);
var myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.scaleMatrix(.5, .5);

//Rotate a transformation matrix by 45 degrees.
myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.rotateMatrix(45);

//Shear a transformation matrix by 15 degrees.
myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.shearMatrix(15);

When you use the RotateMatrix method, you can use a sine or cosine value to transform the matrix, rather than an angle in degrees, as shown in the RotateMatrix script.

Rem The following statements are equivalent
Rem (0.25881904510252 is the sine of 15 degrees; 0.96592582628907, the cosine).
Set myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.RotateMatrix(15)
Set myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.RotateMatrix(, 0.96592582628907);
Set myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.RotateMatrix(, , 0.25881904510252);

When you use the shearMatrix method, you can provide a slope, rather than an angle in degrees, as shown in the ShearMatrix script.

Set myRectangle = myInDesign/Documents.Item(1).Pages.Item(1).Rectangles.Item(1)
Set myTransformationMatrix = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add(, , , 30, 12, 12)
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
Set myNewRectangle = myRectangle.Duplicate

You can get the inverse of a transformation matrix using the InvertMatrix method, as shown in the following example. (For the complete script, see InvertMatrix.) You can use the inverted transformation matrix to undo the effect of the matrix.

Set myRectangle = myInDesign/Documents.Item(1).Pages.Item(1).Rectangles.Item(1)
Set myTransformationMatrix = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add(, , , 30, 12, 12)
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
Set myNewRectangle = myRectangle.Duplicate
Rem Move the duplicated rectangle to the location of the original rectangle by inverting, then applying the transformation matrix.
Set myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrix.InvertMatrix
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix

You can add transformation matrices using the CatenateMatrix method, as shown in the following example. (For the complete script, see CatenateMatrix.)

Rem Transformation matrix with counterclockwise rotation angle = 30.
Set myTransformationMatrixA = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add(, , , 30)
Rem Transformation matrix with horizontal translation = 12, vertical translation = 12.
Set myTransformationMatrixB = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add(, , , , 12, 12)
Set myRectangle = myInDesign.Documents.Item(1).Pages.Item(1).Rectangles.Item(1)
Set myNewRectangle = myRectangle.Duplicate
Rem Rotate the duplicated rectangle.
myNewRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrixA
Set myNewRectangle = myRectangle.Duplicate
Rem Move the duplicate (unrotated) rectangle.
myNewRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrixB
Rem Merge the two transformation matrices.
Set myTransformationMatrix = myTransformationMatrixA.CatenateMatrix(myTransformationMatrixB)
Set myNewRectangle = myRectangle.Duplicate
Rem The duplicated rectangle will be both moved and rotated.
myNewRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix

When an object is transformed, you can get the transformation matrix that was applied to it, using the TransformValuesOf method, as shown in the following script fragment. (For the complete script, see TransformValuesOf.)

Set myRectangle = myInDesign.Documents.Item(1).Pages.Item(1).Rectangles.Item(1)
Rem Note that transformValuesOf() always returns an array containing a single transformationMatrix.
Set myTransformArray = myRectangle.TransformValuesOf(idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates)
Set myTransformationMatrix = myTransformArray.Item(1)
myRotationAngle = myTransformationMatrix.CounterclockwiseRotationAngle
myShearAngle = myTransformationMatrix.ClockwiseShearAngle
myXScale = myTransformationMatrix.HorizontalScaleFactor
myYScale = myTransformationMatrix.VerticalScaleFactor
myXTranslate = myTransformationMatrix.HorizontalTranslation
myYTranslate = myTransformationMatrix.VerticalTranslation
myString = "Rotation Angle: " & myRotationAngle & vbCr
myString = myString & "Shear Angle: " & myShearAngle & vbCr
myString = myString & "Horizontal Scale Factor: " & myXScale & vbCr
myString = myString & "Vertical Scale Factor: " & myYScale & vbCr
myString = myString & "Horizontal Translation: " & myXTranslate & vbCr
myString = myString & "Vertical Translation: " & myYTranslate & vbCr
myString = myString & "Note that the Horizontal Translation and Vertical Translation values are the location of the center anchor in pasteboard coordinates."
MsgBox myString
Note: The values in the horizontal- and vertical-translation fields of the transformation matrix returned by this method are the location of the upper-left anchor of the object, in pasteboard coordinates.

Coordinate Spaces

In the transformation scripts we presented earlier, you might have noticed the CoordinateSpaces.pasteboardCoordinates enumeration provided as a parameter for the transform method. This parameter determines the system of coordinates, or coordinate space, in which the transform operation occurs. The coordinate space can be one of three values:

- **CoordinateSpaces.pasteboardCoordinates** is a coordinate space that uses points as units and extends across all spreads in a document. It does not correspond to InDesign's rulers or zero point. Transformations applied to objects have no effect on this coordinate space (e.g., the angle of the horizontal and vertical axes do not change).

- **CoordinateSpaces.parentCoordinates** is the coordinate space of the parent of the object. Any transformations applied to the parent affect the parent coordinates; for example, rotating the parent object changes the angle of the horizontal and vertical axes of this coordinate space. In this case, the parent object refers to the group or page item containing the object; if the parent of the object is a page or spread, parent coordinates are the same as pasteboard coordinates.

- **CoordinateSpaces.innerCoordinates** is a coordinate space based on the object itself.

The following script shows the differences between the three coordinate spaces. (For the complete script, see CoordinateSpaces.)

```vbscript
Set myRectangle =
myString = "The page contains a group which has been" & vbCr
myString = myString & "rotated 45 degrees (counterclockwise)." & vbCr
myString = myString & "The rectangle inside the group was" & vbCr
myString = myString & "rotated 45 degrees counterclockwise" & vbCr
myString = myString & "before it was added to the group." & vbCr & vbCrlf
myString = myString & "Watch as we apply a series of scaling" & vbCr
myString = myString & "operations in different coordinate spaces." & vbCr & vbCrlf
myString = myString & "(You might need to move the alert aside" & vbCr
myString = myString & "to see the effect of the transformations.)" & vbCr
MsgBox myString
Rem Create a transformation matrix with horizontal scale factor = 2.
Set myTransformationMatrix = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add(2)
Rem Transform the rectangle using inner coordinates.
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idInnerCoordinates,
idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
Rem Select the rectangle and display an alert.
myInDesign.Select myRectangle
MsgBox "Transformed by inner coordinates."
Rem Undo the transformation.
myInDesign.Documents.Item(1).Undo
Rem Transform using parent coordinates.
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idParentCoordinates,
idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
myInDesign.Select myRectangle
MsgBox "Transformed by parent coordinates."
myInDesign.Documents.Item(1).Undo
Rem Transform using pasteboard coordinates.
myRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates,
idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
```
myInDesign.Select myRectangle
MsgBox "Transformed by pasteboard coordinates."
myInDesign.Documents.Item(1).Undo

Transformation Origin

The transformation origin is the center point of the transformation. The transformation origin can be specified in several ways:

- **Bounds space:**
  - anchor — An anchor point on the object itself.
    
    ```
    AnchorPoint.CenterAnchor
    ```
  - anchor, bounds type — An anchor point specified relative to the geometric bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.GeometricPathBounds) or the visible bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.OuterStrokeBounds).
    
    ```
    Array(idAnchorPoint.idBottomLeftAnchor, idBoundingBoxLimits.idOuterStrokeBounds)
    ```
  - anchor, bounds type, coordinate system — An anchor point specified as the geometric bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.GeometricPathBounds) or the visible bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.OuterStrokeBounds) in a given coordinate space.
    
    ```
    Array(idAnchorPoint.idBottomLeftAnchor, idBoundingBoxLimits.idOuterStrokeBounds, idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates)
    ```
  - (x, y), bounds type — A point specified relative to the geometric bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.GeometricPathBounds) or the visible bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.OuterStrokeBounds). In this case, the top-left corner of the bounding box is (0, 0); the bottom-right corner, (1, 1). The center anchor is located at (.5, .5).
    
    ```
    Array(Array(.5, .5), idBoundingBoxLimits.idOuterStrokeBounds)
    ```
  - (x, y), bounds type, coordinate space — A point specified relative to the geometric bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.GeometricPathBounds) or the visible bounds of the object (BoundingBoxLimits.OuterStrokeBounds) in a given coordinate space. In this case, the top-left corner of the bounding box is (0, 0); the bottom-right corner, (1, 1). The center anchor is located at (.5, .5).
    
    ```
    Array(Array(.5, .5), idBoundingBoxLimits.idOuterStrokeBounds, idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates)
    ```
- **Ruler space:**
  - (x, y), page index — A point, relative to the ruler origin on a specified page of a spread.
    
    ```
    Array([72, 144], 1)
    ```
  - (x, y), location — A point, relative to the parent page of the specified location of the object. Location can be specified as an anchor point or a coordinate pair. It can be specified relative to the object's geometric or visible bounds, and it can be specified in a given coordinate space.
    
    ```
    Array([72, 144], idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor)
    ```
- **Transform space:**
  - (x, y) — A point in the pasteboard coordinate space.
    
    ```
    Array(72, 72)
    ```
  - (x, y), coordinate system — A point in the specified coordinate space.
Array(Array(72, 72), idCoordinateSpaces.idParentCoordinates)

- \((x, y)\) — A point in the coordinate space given as the \texttt{in} parameter of the \texttt{transform} method.
  
  Array(Array(72, 72))

The following script example shows how to use some of the transformation origin options. (For the complete script, see TransformationOrigin.)

```vbscript
Set myPage = myInDesign.Documents.Item(1).Pages.Item(1)
Set myRectangle = myPage.Rectangles.Item(1)
myString = "Watch as we rotate the rectangle using different anchor points," & vbCrLf
myString = myString & "bounds types, and coordinate spaces." & vbCrLf & vbCrLf
myString = myString & "(You might need to move the alert aside" & vbCrLf
myString = myString & "to see the effect of the transformations.)"
MsgBox myString
Set myNewRectangle = myRectangle.Duplicate
Rem Create a transformation matrix with counterclockwise rotation angle = 30.
Set myTransformationMatrix = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add(, , , 30)
Rem Rotate around the duplicated rectangle's center point.
myNewRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
Rem Select the rectangle and display an alert.
myInDesign.Select myNewRectangle
MsgBox "Transformed around center anchor."
Rem Undo the transformation.
myInDesign.Documents.Item(1).Undo
Rem Rotate the rectangle around the ruler location [-100, -100].
Rem Note that the anchor point specified here specifies the page
Rem containing the point--**not** that transformation point itself.
Rem The transformation gets the ruler coordinate [-100, -100] based
Rem on that page. Setting the considerRulerUnits parameter to true
Rem makes certain that the transformation uses the current
Rem ruler units.
myNewRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, Array(Array(-100, -100), idAnchorPoint.idTopLeftAnchor), myTransformationMatrix, , True
Rem Move the page guides to reflect the transformation point.
myPage.Guides.Item(1).Location = -100
myPage.Guides.Item(2).Location = -100
Rem Select the rectangle and display an alert.
myInDesign.Select myNewRectangle
MsgBox "Rotated around -100x, -100y."
Rem Undo the transformation and the guide moves.
myInDesign. Documents.Item(1).Undo
myInDesign. Documents.Item(1).Undo
myInDesign. Documents.Item(1).Undo
myNewRectangle.StrokeWeight = 12
myBounds = myNewRectangle.visibleBounds
Rem Move the page guides to reflect the transformation point.
myPage.Guides.Item(1).Location = myBounds(1)
myPage.Guides.Item(2).Location = myBounds(2)
Rem Rotate the rectangle around the outer edge of the lower left corner.
myNewRectangle.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, Array(idAnchorPoint.idBottomLeftAnchor, idBoundingBoxLimits.idOuterStrokeBounds), myTransformationMatrix, idMatrixContent.idRotationValue, True
Rem Select the rectangle and display an alert.
myInDesign.Select myNewRectangle
MsgBox "Rotated around the outside edge of the bottom left corner."
```
Resolving Locations

Sometimes, you need to get the location of a point specified in one coordinate space in the context of another coordinate space. To do this, you use the resolve method, as shown in the following script example. (For the complete script, see ResolveLocation.)

Set myPage = myInDesign/Documents/Item(1)/Pages/Item(1)
Set myRectangle = myPage/Groups/Item(1)/Rectangles/Item(1)
Rem Template for resolve():
Rem PageItem.resolve (Location: any, in: CoordinateSpaces,
Rem ConsideringRulerUnits: boolean)
Rem Get a ruler coordinate in pasteboard coordinates.
Rem The following should work, but, due to a bug in InDesign CS3,
Rem it does not work in VBScript. It does work in VB6.
'myPageLocation = myRectangle.Resolve(Array(Array(72, 72),
idAnchorPoint.idTopRightAnchor), idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, True)
Rem resolve() returns an array (in this case, the array containins a single item).
'myPageLocation = myPageLocation(0)
'myPageLocationX = myPageLocation(0)
'myPageLocationY = myPageLocation(1)
'MsgBox "X: " & CStr(myPageLocation(0)) & vbCr & "Y: " & CStr(myPageLocation(1))
Rem Because of the above bug, here's a workaround using JavaScript.
myString = "var myRectangle =
app/documents/item(0)/pages/item(0)/groups/item(0)/rectangles/item(0);" & vbCr
myString = myString & "var myPageLocation = myRectangle.resolve([[72, 72],
AnchorPoint.topRightAnchor], CoordinateSpaces.pasteboardCoordinates, true);" & vbCr
myString = myString & "alert(""X: "" + myPageLocation[0][0] + ", " + myPageLocation[0][1])"
myInDesign.DoScript myString, idScriptLanguage.idJavaScript

Transforming Points

You can transform points as well as objects, which means scripts can perform a variety of mathematical operations without having to include the calculations in the script itself. The ChangeCoordinates sample script shows how to draw a series of regular polygons using this approach:

Rem General purpose routine for drawing regular polygons from their center point.
Function myDrawPolygon(myInDesign, myParent, myCenterPoint, myNumberOfPoints, myRadius, myStarPolygon, myStarInset)
  ReDim myPathPoints(0)
  myPoint = Array(0, 0)
  If myStarPolygon = True Then
    myNumberOfPoints = myNumberOfPoints * 2
  End If
  myInnerRadius = myRadius * myStarInset
  myAngle = 360 / myNumberOfPoints
  Set myRotateMatrix = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add(, , , myAngle)
  Set myOuterTranslateMatrix = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.Add
Transforming Again

Just as you can apply a transformation or sequence of transformations again in the user interface, you can do so using scripting. There are four methods for applying transformations again:

- **TransformAgain**

You also can use the `ChangeCoordinate` method to change the positions of curve control points, as shown in the FunWithTransformations sample script.
• TransformAgainIndividually
• TransformSequenceAgain
• TransformSequenceAgainIndividually

The following script fragment shows how to use TransformAgain. (For the complete script, see TransformAgain.)

```vbscript
set myRectangle = myPage.Rectangles.Item(1)
myBounds = myRectangle.GeometricBounds
myX1 = myBounds(1)
myY1 = myBounds(0)
Set myRectangleA = myPage.Rectangles.Add
myRectangleA.GeometricBounds = Array(myY1-12, myX1-12, myY1+12, myX1+12)
Set myTransformationMatrix = myInDesign.TransformationMatrices.add(, , , 45)
myRectangleA.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
myRectangleB = myRectangleA.Duplicate
myRectangleB.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, Array(Array(0,0), idAnchorPoint.idTopLeftAnchor), myTransformationMatrix, , True
myRectangleC = myRectangleB.Duplicate
myRectangleC.TransformAgain
myRectangleD = myRectangleC.Duplicate
myRectangleD.TransformAgain
myRectangleE = myRectangleD.Duplicate
myRectangleE.TransformAgain
myRectangleF = myRectangleE.Duplicate
myRectangleF.TransformAgain
myRectangleG = myRectangleF.Duplicate
myRectangleG.TransformAgain
myRectangleH = myRectangleG.Duplicate
myRectangleH.TransformAgain
myRectangleA.Transform idCoordinateSpaces.idPasteboardCoordinates, idAnchorPoint.idCenterAnchor, myTransformationMatrix
myRectangleD.TransformAgain
myRectangleF.TransformAgain
myRectangleH.TransformAgain
```