

PDF as a Standard for Managing and Archiving Documents and Forms

The challenge of sharing, exchanging, and archiving documents

Enterprises today face the challenge of managing enormous amounts of business-critical information, both within their organizations and throughout their network of business partners and affiliates. In the past, paper was the standard and final form for official documents, and management systems were developed primarily in a paper-based environment. Today, electronic documents and interactive forms are replacing paper as the common media for disseminating information and completing transactions, and new standards need to be adopted to accommodate this transition.

Because electronic documents are created in a wide variety of software applications and formats, sharing, exchanging, and archiving documents on an organizational level can be complex. Questions may arise about document integrity, security, or the actual look and format of an official document. Data entered into electronic forms needs to be secure and unalterable, and official signatures cannot be compromised.

PDF, a proven standard for electronic documents and forms

With more than 20 million Portable Document Format (PDF) files available on the Internet today, PDF is a de facto standard for online documents and forms. PDF is also a publicly available file format specification. It is openly published and available to anyone who wants to develop tools to create, view, or manipulate PDF documents. More than 1,800 vendors offer PDF-based solutions today, and standards organizations such as ISO and ANSI use it as a basis for developing open standards. As a result, organizations that adopt PDF as a standard can be assured that creating and viewing PDF documents will always be possible and that the file format will be updated and maintained into the future.

The benefits of PDF

• Document fidelity and integrity

Document fidelity is a key consideration in selecting a standard. Documents can lose meaning and value if the layout or visual emphasis is altered. In legal or regulated environments, retaining fidelity may be a requirement for official communications or legally binding transactions. PDF documents look just like the original when viewed online or in print, can include information that controls editing and printing functions, and provide authentication options to ensure the validity of the user and document.

• Ease of implementation

PDF documents can be created from any source, including a paper scan, electronic document, or Web page. This ensures that current work processes are not disrupted and that new ones can be easily added. Document creators can select the document creation application that best meets their needs and publish documents to the common PDF standard. And because free Adobe® Reader® software is installed on virtually every Internet-connected PC and comes bundled with 60% of all PDAs, anyone on any platform can read PDF files that look and print just like familiar paper documents.



• **Integration with electronic work processes**

In many ways, PDF is a digital replacement for paper—but better. Like paper, PDF files can represent both content and layout with full fidelity. But PDF is also an intelligent document format that supports XML data exchange, interactive forms, digital signatures, electronic comments, and more. This layer of digital services enables the automation of document-based processes and integration with core, transaction-driven business systems. Because these services are contained within the PDF file, they travel with the document wherever it goes.

For more information on PDF as a standard, visit www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/adobe.pdf.html

• **Archiving and long-term preservation**

Unlike native application file formats, PDF provides a common document format that organizations can rely on to preserve and archive documents for the long term. The fact that PDF is a publicly available specification ensures backward compatibility, meaning that future versions of software will be able to reproduce documents created under earlier specifications. By adopting PDF as a standard, an organization ensures the long-term security of its electronic assets.

Conclusion

Government and commercial organizations worldwide are looking to adopt electronic document standards in order to streamline document management, increase productivity, and reduce the need for paper documents and archives. Hundreds of organizations have already adopted PDF as a standard. Organizations such as AIIM and NPES are actively developing an ISO standard for archiving called PDF/A. Adobe is committed to bringing the best technology to the development of document standards.

Examples of PDF in use today

Organization	PDF use
ISO CGATS Committee PDF/X Standard	Advertisement exchange
Government of Germany	Electronic document exchange
Government of Taiwan	Electronic document exchange
Government of the United Kingdom	Electronic document exchange
Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands	Archiving
Australian Government's Record Office of Victoria	Archiving
U.S. Food and Drug Administration	Electronic drug submissions
U.S. Internal Revenue Service	Electronic fillable forms
U.S. Federal Courts	Electronic case filing system
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	Official report publication
Government of Brazil	Publication of legislative activities
Federal Aviation Administration	Publication of safety inspector handbooks
United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization	Publication of agricultural data

