

Introduction

ISO 32000 specifies a digital form for representing documents called the Portable Document Format or usually referred to as PDF. PDF was developed and specified by Adobe Systems Incorporated beginning in 1993 and continuing until 2007 when this ISO standard was prepared. The Adobe Systems version PDF 1.7 is the basis for this ISO 32000 edition. The specifications for PDF are backward inclusive, meaning that PDF 1.7 includes all of the functionality previously documented in the Adobe PDF Specifications for versions 1.0 through 1.6. It should be noted that where Adobe removed certain features of PDF from their standard, they too are not contained herein.

The goal of PDF is to enable users to exchange and view electronic documents easily and reliably, independent of the environment in which they were created or the environment in which they are viewed or printed. At the core of PDF is an advanced imaging model derived from the PostScript® page description language. This PDF Imaging Model enables the description of text and graphics in a device-independent and resolution-independent manner. To improve performance for interactive viewing, PDF defines a more structured format than that used by most PostScript language programs. Unlike Postscript, which is a programming language, PDF is based on a structured binary file format that is optimized for high performance in interactive viewing. PDF also includes objects, such as annotations and hypertext links, that are not part of the page content itself but are useful for interactive viewing and document interchange.

PDF files may be created natively in PDF form, converted from other electronic formats or digitized from paper, microform, or other hard copy format. Businesses, governments, libraries, archives and other institutions and individuals around the world use PDF to represent considerable bodies of important information.

Over the past fourteen years, aided by the explosive growth of the Internet, PDF has become widely used for the electronic exchange of documents. There are several specific applications of PDF that have evolved where limiting the use of some features of PDF and requiring the use of others, enhances the usefulness of PDF. ISO 32000 is an ISO standard for the full function PDF; the following standards are for more specialized uses. PDF/X (ISO 15930) is now the industry standard for the intermediate representation of printed material in electronic prepress systems for conventional printing applications. PDF/A (ISO 19005) is now the industry standard for the archiving of digital documents. PDF/E (ISO 24517) provides a mechanism for representing engineering documents and exchange of engineering data. As major corporations, government agencies, and educational institutions streamline their operations by replacing paper-based workflow with electronic exchange of information, the impact and opportunity for the application of PDF will continue to grow at a rapid pace.

PDF, together with software for creating, viewing, printing and processing PDF files in a variety of ways, fulfills a set of requirements for electronic documents including:

- preservation of document fidelity independent of the device, platform, and software,
- merging of content from diverse sources—Web sites, word processing and spreadsheet programs, scanned documents, photos, and graphics—into one self-contained document while maintaining the integrity of all original source documents,
- collaborative editing of documents from multiple locations or platforms,
- digital signatures to certify authenticity,
- security and permissions to allow the creator to retain control of the document and associated rights,
- accessibility of content to those with disabilities,
- extraction and reuse of content for use with other file formats and applications, and
- electronic forms to gather data and integrate it with business systems.