Was there life before Acrobat?

Inquiring minds want to know.

Life Before Acrobat

Once upon a time, there was a giant computer in a building on the university of a great campus. The computer ran on giant vacuum tubes and did such complex computations are figuring out square roots. There were few compatibility problems with rival software publishers. Everything was fine for about 30 years.

At the end of the '70s, the personal computer revolution began when two guys in a garage formed Apple Computer. Not long afterwards, other computer manufacturers hopped on the bandwagon. Suddenly, there were all sorts of PCs manufactured and there was proprietary software for each computer system.

By the '90s, there were two main survivors of the computer wars-Microsoft and Apple, with various UNIX system manufacturers taking up the remaining market share. One problem still remained-how could someone who used a PC send their files to someone who used a Macintosh? The only solution at that time was to print the file created on the PC and then recreate that file on the Macintosh. Not a good solution!

Acrobat to the Rescue

When Acrobat 1.0 appeared several years ago, Adobe thought they were solving the problem of having to recreate documents on one's own system with one's own software. Acrobat users could create Acrobat PDFs (Portable Document Files) out of any document and then send that document to any system regardless of its hardware or software. The only thing needed was the Acrobat software.

Acrobat Reader is the software that allows anyone to read PDFs. All PDFs are complete cross-platform - no matter what system was used to create the original PDF, it can be read on any other system. This was a major strength of Acrobat Reader. And to make sure everyone could read these PDFs, Adobe provided the software for free.

How Acrobat 4 Differs from its Predecessors

- Easier conversion of existing documents to PDF than ever before.
- "Exchange" is now just called Acrobat.
- Ability to capture Web pages and turn them into fully-linked PDFs.
- Advanced Distiller options, including the ability to save sets of options for later use.
- Annotations from graphical and text markup tools to recordings and files that can be appended to a specific location.
- Automatic bookmarking of Word and other application documents.
- Automatic comparison of two documents highlighting any differences between the two.

The Components of Acrobat

Acrobat consists of several parts:

- **Acrobat Reader** - software which allows you to view PDFs. This is a free software program that is available from Adobe at www.adobe.com.
- **Acrobat** - program used to customize PDFs by editing them and adding PDF-specific features.
- **Acrobat Distiller** - changes PostScript files into PDFs quickly and easily.
- **Acrobat PDF Writer** - print driver that generates PDFs within any application.
- **Acrobat Capture** - plug-in within Acrobat that lets desktop scanner users to scan in documents and convert them to PDFs on the fly.