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Guidelines for Preparing PDF Documents

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Guidelines for Preparing PDF Documents

PDF (Portable Document Format) has become a standard file format for sharing and publishing electronic materials. Text and graphic elements are incorporated and displayed as pages. PDF files can be opened and viewed (but not altered) with the free-downloadable Adobe **Reader**.

Creating PDF files usually involves taking a file from an application program (such as MS Word, WordPerfect, Excel, PowerPoint, Photoshop, InDesign, QuarkXpress, Illustrator, etc.) and using Adobe **Acrobat** to generate a PDF version that can be opened and viewed with the Adobe **Reader**. (There are other PDF-generating softwares that also work, including one that comes standard on an Apple Macintosh).

While PDF documents can be created by scanning pages of “hard copy” and mashing them together into a single file, such documents are much larger, clumsier, and less useful than PDF documents generated from their native applications. Such mashed-up documents are also not searchable or excerptable, making them far less attractive in a digital environment. These guidelines describe how to create clean, efficient, and reasonably-sized PDFs from your Word or InDesign or other document.

1. Set up your document as you normally would.
2. Take your document file to a computer that has Adobe Acrobat installed. (There is 1 in the Architecture Library, and 3 in Love Library public use areas—in the 2nd floor Link, across from the Reference Desk.)
3. Open your document file and choose “Print.” For “printer,” select “Adobe PDF”. This will print your document to a PDF file; you will be prompted for a file name and location to save it. The resultant file will have “.pdf” as its suffix.

Text and graphics in a PDF file cannot be edited. To make corrections or revisions, go back to the original application document, then re-generate a new PDF. You can use Adobe **Acrobat** to delete or insert whole pages or ranges of pages. This is useful for eliminating unwanted blanks, combining chapters, adding different-sized pages, etc.

General guidelines for application documents, artwork, graphics, etc.

1. **Color and grayscale images** should be adjusted to final size (or near-final size) before you place them. Resolution above 300 dpi is wasted for electronic display

and/or laser printing. JPG compression (on “high” accuracy) will reduce TIFF file sizes by half or more without deterioration of image quality. GIF files do not perform well in documents, but can be used if there are no alternatives.

2. **Line-art/bitmap/black&white art** uses only black and white (no gray). It should be scanned as “line art” or “bitmap” at up to 600 dpi and saved as TIFF or eps or bmp format. JPG compression cannot be used on these file types. If you place a line-art tiff in an InDesign document, you will get a red line on the right-hand side; convert the file from tiff to eps and the problem will disappear.

3. **Tables:** The easiest way to do tables for a MS Word document is to do them in Excel and then copy/paste the cells into the Word file.

4. **Page numbering:** MS Word makes it difficult to switch from roman numerals to Arabic characters and re-start numbering at 1. Just treat the roman numeral section as a separate file, and combine (insert) it with Adobe Acrobat after the PDFs are generated.

5. **File sizes:** A PDF file will generally be 30% to 50% smaller than the Word or InDesign file that it was generated from. A text-only PDF file should average about 10kB per page. Bitmap images reduce a great deal, and jpg’s also reduce to a lesser extent.

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