

Acrobat Insider for AEC Professionals

Tips and Tricks for Adobe Acrobat 7.0

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Create more intelligent documents with Adobe Acrobat 7.0.

The Right Data, In the Right Hands

Adobe PDFs maintain intelligent information from CAD drawings and other files so you can easily share it with the project team

by Michael Dakan

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How to Create an Intelligent PDF

When you install Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Professional, several direct plug-ins called PDF Makers are added to existing applications on your computer, including Microsoft® Office productivity suite applications, Internet Explorer, Microsoft Project, Microsoft Visio and AutoCAD®.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Create more intelligent documents from technical applications

This month's tips:

Easily compare two versions of a PDF document; use Acrobat instead of a typewriter to complete noninteractive forms

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Next month, *Acrobat Insider* will cover how to increase document control and confidentiality using Acrobat 7.0 Professional.

SUBMIT A TIP

We welcome your tips for AEC-specific uses of Acrobat 7.0 Professional. If we publish your tip, we'll send you a *Cadalyst* t-shirt.

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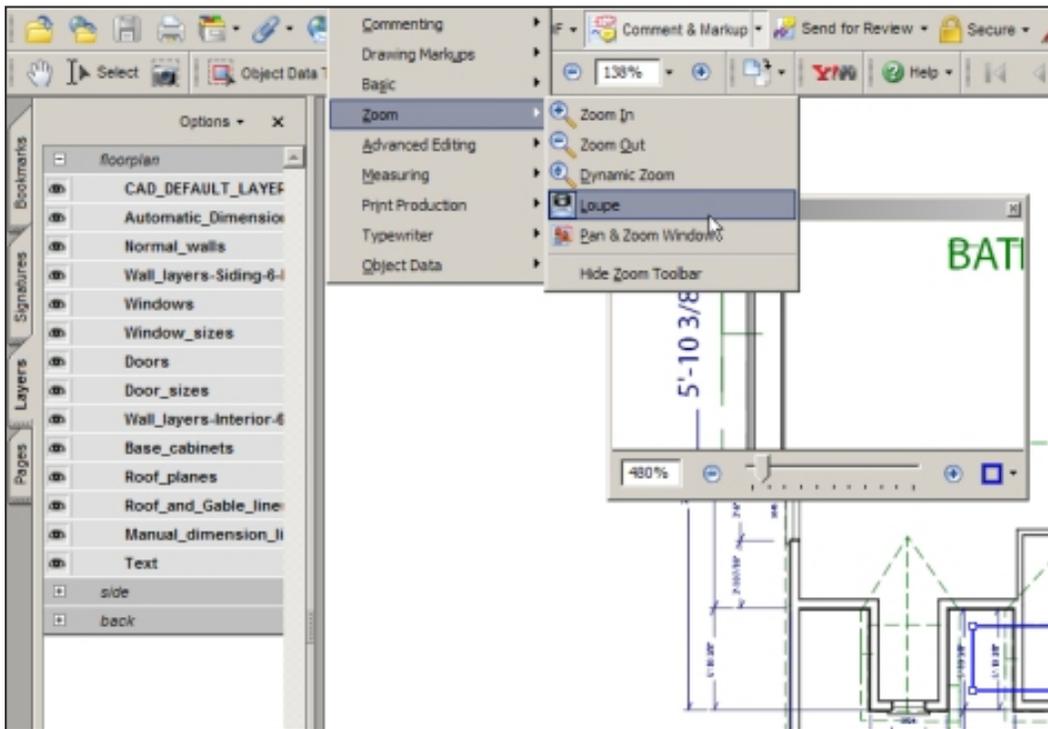
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Using AutoCAD's PDF Maker will transfer AutoCAD layers to the Adobe PDF, then recipients using Acrobat or Reader can manipulate layers to control visibility, layer color, whether or not the layer prints to hard copy and so forth. The PDF also maintains AutoCAD page layouts and a bookmark for each, and you can set the default layer visibility characteristics for each bookmark in the PDF.

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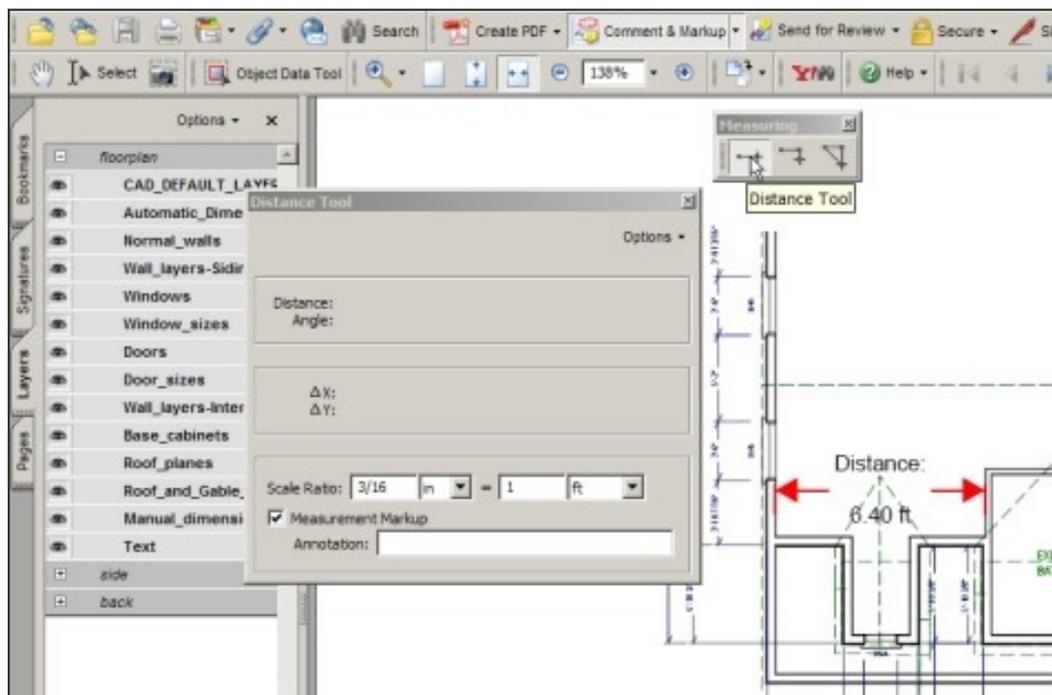
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Another CAD application that includes PDF functionality is Bentley Systems' MicroStation®. Bentley developers created their PDF export utility using programming interface libraries provided by Adobe to offer tools that the company felt were most applicable to its users. Other software developers will likely take a similar approach in the future.

Measuring Tools

Adobe PDFs created from AutoCAD and MicroStation drawings maintain drawing scale information, so PDF recipients can determine distance, perimeter and area from the drawing. This is important for many users, including contractors, subcontractors and material suppliers doing take-offs for cost estimating; building authorities; and many others. In the past, performing these functions required that everyone on the building team had access to the same CAD program, word-processing application and other software. Using Adobe PDF as your common file format virtually eliminates concerns about file-translation fidelity and application interoperability, allowing all team members to get their jobs done without added expense and delay.



An example of Acrobat's measuring capabilities. Measurement annotation is activated, showing the distance just examined. The Layers navigation tab is docked along the left side of the screen, and the Measurement toolbar is at the upper right.

File recipients who open an Adobe PDF in Acrobat 7.0 Professional can take measurements and export them to a CSV (comma-separated values) file to use directly in Microsoft Excel and other spreadsheet applications to perform calculations based on those measurements — saving even more time when completing construction cost estimates, project schedules and other routine tasks.

PDF Review and Comment Cycles for Drawing Files

When you use Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Professional to initiate a PDF-based review and commenting cycle, you can turn on document-markup tools so they automatically become available to the file recipient viewing the PDF with Acrobat or Reader 7.0. When reviewers send back comments, you can incorporate the comments into the original authoring document in many applications, including Microsoft Word and AutoCAD. Comments added back to an AutoCAD file are maintained on their own layer. Bringing review comments into the original document makes it easy to incorporate changes using the original authoring application. (See *Acrobat Insider #2* — [click here](#) to view archives — for details.)

Adobe PDF files are very flexible and useful for many aspects of AEC work that involve technical documents. As you explore the expanded capabilities of Acrobat 7.0 Professional, you're sure to discover your own uses for this versatile desktop tool, improving workflow throughout your organization and extended project team.

Tips and Tricks

Easily Compare Two Versions of a PDF Document

Acrobat 7.0 Professional includes a great tool called Document Compare. Use it to compare changes in two different versions of an Adobe PDF file, either side-by-side or in a report format. Simply click on the Document menu, then Compare Documents. The Compare Documents window opens. Click the Compare window, enter the name of the older file version, then enter the newer version of the PDF in the To window.

Use Acrobat Instead of a Typewriter to Complete Noninteractive Forms

In *Acrobat Insider #5* ([click here](#) to view archives), we discussed how to use Acrobat 7.0 Professional to create interactive PDF forms to help streamline AEC processes. Have you ever encountered a form on the Web or sent to you via e-mail that was conveniently saved as an Adobe PDF, but then were frustrated to find that it wasn't created with interactive form fields that allowed you to simply fill in the blank fields using your computer and submit it online? The form, perhaps simply scanned from a paper copy, required that you print it and complete it manually or using that old typewriter stored in the basement. Well, with Adobe Acrobat 7.0, you can forget all those old-fashioned notions. Here's a tip that lets you fill out noninteractive forms using your computer.

- Open the PDF in Adobe Acrobat and navigate to the first form field that you'd like to complete. (Note that you must be using the 7.0.5 update to access this tool: Click on the Help menu / Check for Updates Now. ...)
- In Acrobat, select Tools / Typewriter / Typewriter. The cursor will turn into the Typewriter tool.
- Place the cursor anywhere on the form and start typing!
- When you've completed the form, print it or send it to your fax software to

submit it, or save the file and send it as an e-mail attachment.

With Acrobat, you can fill in the form blanks with the built-in typewriter, saving you time and a trip to the basement!

About the Author

Michael L. Dakan, AIA, is an architect, author and independent AEC technology consultant. Twice monthly he writes Cadalyst's [AEC Tech News](#) e-mail newsletter. Contact him at michael.dakan@cadalyst.com.

Details and Availability

For a full list of features and system requirements, visit [Adobe's Web site](#). Microsoft Windows 2000 with Service Pack 2, Windows XP® Professional or Home Edition, or Windows XP Tablet PC Edition is required for use with Acrobat 7.0. Acrobat 7.0 Professional for Windows, available on CD-ROM or by download, is US\$449*.

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