



New Acrobatics

The PDF is so solidly embedded in today's electronic culture that we forget the days when the only way to make one was by buying Adobe's Acrobat program. PDFs took off once Adobe started giving away Acrobat Reader, which became (and remains) the **document viewer of choice**. But the free program couldn't *make* PDFs, and Adobe continued to charge for the authoring program.

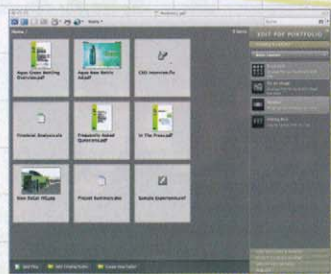
The PDF is now an open standard; Adobe retains patents but allows third-party programs to make PDFs if they stick to the proper specs. So why do we still need Acrobat? To keep us interested, Adobe has improved and simplified areas such as security, form-making and data compression, and created some pretty special extras for the latest release.

To cover everything new would require one of those door-stop instruction manuals — but here are just five highlights we've enjoyed...

Combining PDFs. Combining long collections of PDFs into one multi-page document can now be achieved in what is technically known as a jiffy, simply by dragging your PDFs into a list, reordering them, and hitting Combine. No more 'Insert after' and 'Insert before' tedium.

3D PDFs. PDFs have always been two-dimensional and flat — that was their beauty: you knew whatever you created was 'fixed', with embedded fonts and images. But you can now import a 3D CAD diagram into the Extended version of Acrobat Pro, retaining the ability to rotate the image within the final PDF.

There are three versions of the new Adobe Acrobat, from Standard (\$549 new, \$179 as upgrade) to Pro Extended (\$999/\$329); it is also integrated into Creative Suite 3.3. Visit www.adobe.com.au for full details of inclusions.



PDF portfolios. Portfolios allow you to create a PDF 'suitcase' for other documents, including Word, Excel and other Office files, FLV video files, flash .swf files and more. Although the 'skin' options are surprisingly dull and the collection hard to organise (you can't reorder documents at will; they have to be ordered alphabetical or by some other attribute), you can at least snazz things up with an introductory header page of information. The recipient will still need the relevant programs to open non-PDF documents within the Portfolio.

Adobe Presenter. At first we thought Presenter was merely an attempt to steal customers away from Microsoft Powerpoint, but in fact Presenter operates as a plug-in to Powerpoint, enabling you to add video to slides, record and edit audio to follow transitions, then publish as a PDF or as an automatic online/CD-based piece of e-learning. It's big on quizzes, as well, allowing you to embed questions that will be randomised for any given user, and mark their performance as they go.

ADOBE ACROBAT 9
PRO

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ADOBE ACROBAT 9
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Object Inspector. Instead of a full flight check to spot any heebies in your PDF prior to professional printing, you can check any individual element within the PDF using the versatile Object Inspector. With images this will display information such as the colour space, dimensions, resolution and any attached metadata. If anything seems amiss, use the improved **Compare Documents** functionality to isolate recent changes and fix any problems. **Output Preview** has also been expanded to provide additional information and options.

Cool running

We seem to have passed through the alarming exploding laptop experiences of last year, but there's plenty of heat left in the old notebook yet. We've seen cooling platforms before, but this **\$59.95 COOLdock** raises the bar — literally — by including a hinge for angled viewing, aiming to overcome the poor hand/wrist posture adopted by laptop users. Here the eight levels of adjustable screen height mean you should find ergonomic comfort, while a pair of powered fans blow soothing coolness over your incendiary device (potentially increasing battery life — though reducing it again by powering those fans). Still, no more pants-on-fire scenarios, and you get a bonus 4-port USB 2.0 hub included. More info: www.badbacks.com.au

