

November 1996

## Nouvelle Cuisine-The Promise of PDF

Nancy K. Dennis

*University of New Mexico General Library*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Dennis, Nancy K. (1996) "Nouvelle Cuisine-The Promise of PDF," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 8: Iss. 5, Article 33.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1971>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.



## The Promise of PDF — Portable Document Format

by Nancy K. Dennis (Interim Director, Library Technology Dept., University of New Mexico General Library).  
Phone: 505-277-2585. Fax 505-277-1788 <ndennis@unm.edu>

What do you think of when you see SGML, HTML, DTD, PDF, ASCII, WYSIWYG? These are abbreviations for terms associated with files and documents that are produced and/or distributed electronically. For producers of academic, scientific and federal government information, these terms are equivalent to the tools (ink and bindings) of the paper publishing paradigm. From the library-as-information-distributor point of view, these emerging document types will help deliver the growing digital collections to the consumer's desktop.

**Adobe Acrobat's Portable Document Format**, or the more familiar PDF, has been proclaimed in computer trade magazines as the de facto leading open standard format for electronically published and transmitted documents. There is evidence of its dominance within library circles, as well. Visit the **IRS' Web site** for tax forms (<http://www.irs.ustreas.gov>) or the **Institute of Physics'** (<http://www.iop.org>) fulltext electronic journal collection or the **American Mathematical Society's** (<http://www.ams.org>)

**MathSciNet** electronic collections for a sampling of PDF documents. **Elsevier Science** (<http://www.elsevier.nl>) has selected PDF and HTML formats for its fulltext electronic product, **ScienceDirect**. PDF enables these publishers to electronically deliver documents and files that look identical to the print versions including all fonts, charts, illustrations and diagrams to the desktop of the user.

If you have not yet viewed PDF documents, take a look. They are quite impressive, especially when compared to their text-based ASCII cousins. Some make the analogy that PDF is to ASCII what Windows is to DOS or Web is to the gopher. The latest versions of PDF producing or writing software facilitate the adding of multimedia objects within PDF documents, so expect audio, video and animations to appear soon.

Both the producer and consumer of PDF files find the format easy to work with. PDF, based on the PostScript language, is relatively easy to produce or convert using a variety of readily available **Adobe Acrobat** tools. The read-only format protects the con-

tent from being edited and can be transmitted via email, LANs, WANs, cable, satellite, CD-ROM, floppy disks; any way that ASCII/binary files are transmitted. All text, fonts, graphical images and illustrations are distributed and displayed as a single document. They remain independent of the platform upon which they are produced, e.g. a PDF can be created within a Windows application and displayed on a MAC. Hypertext links can be embedded within the document.

Consumers of PDF documents find several features useful. Displayed and printed PDF documents have the look and feel of the print original. The Acrobat Reader program, required to view or print PDF documents (with the .pdf extension designation), is free and available for Windows, MAC, UNIX and DOS platforms. As a helper application, the Reader is readily configured within most Web browsers. Text within a PDF document can be searched, and zoomed in and out (displayed larger or smaller). Informative FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) are available at the Adobe Web site, <http://www.adobe.com/acrobat/acrofaq.html>.

Despite the glowing and deserved praise, there are some important limitations to PDF. It was designed for the user to view and print documents, not to replace word processor programs where text can be downloaded or edited. The Windows version of the Reader does allow for some cut-and-paste functionality, but it is only practical with short sections of text containing no images or graphics.





Adobe's recommended minimum hardware platform to run just the Reader is very optimistic. A real-world test of an Internet-connected 486 Windows 3.1 PC, running Netscape 2.02 with 4 MB RAM did not have enough system resources to even open the DOS version of the Reader program. To run the Acrobat software within a Web environment with low frustration and high resolution, plan on using a Pentium PC or Power MAC with at least 16 MB RAM, 1 MB video RAM and 15" color monitor. Any PostScript laser printer should print PDF documents quite well. Unfortunately, low-end inkjet and most dot matrix printers are not supported by the Acrobat software. However, patient testing of printer drivers may prove successful. The term "killer application" will take on new meaning for libraries that are planning to offer PDF-like electronic journal collections to their users. It will kill-off the ASCII text-based/DOS or "dumb terminal" hardware platforms as a

*continued on page 93*

**SOURCEONE™**  
**UNCOVER**



## The Article Access Solution that Delivers

-  Access to over 7 million articles from nearly 17,000 multidisciplinary periodicals worldwide.
-  Fax delivery of full text within 24 hours.
-  UnCover Reveal electronic current awareness service delivers tables of contents or results of pre-defined search strategies to your Internet account.
-  UnCover gateways offer options such as customized access to your library's holdings, dedicated access channels, customized reporting, and subsidized unmediated ordering.

Try it today— Dial-up: 303-756-3600

Internet: [database.carl.org](http://database.carl.org)

The UnCover Company  
3801 East Florida Ave.  
Suite 200  
Denver, Colorado 80210

Phone: 800-787-7979  
Fax: 303-758-5946  
E-mail: [uncover@carl.org](mailto:uncover@carl.org)  
WWW:  
[www.carl.org/uncover/unhome.html](http://www.carl.org/uncover/unhome.html)



# On the Road

Column Editor: **Don Jaeger** (Alfred Jaeger, Inc.) <jaeger@ajaeger.com>

## Two Hours in the Parking Deck

by **Forrest E. Link**

(Northeastern Regional Manager,  
Midwest Library Service,  
800-325-8833) <link@midwestls.com>

In a kinder and gentler time before madmen parked bomb-laden Rider trucks beneath landmarks, I made one of my regular day-trips to New York City. This was in the fall of 1990, shortly after the birth of my twins, and my father-in-law had traveled from Poland to attend their baptism. He had never been to New York.

Since he would be with us for a month or so, and I had business to do in the City, my wife and I devised a plan whereby she and her father would come along to do tourist things and meet up with me at the end of the day. And so it went, I dropped them off at Washington Square Park and they oohed and ahhed their way up Fifth Avenue while I visited libraries.


Late that afternoon, we met at (where else?) the lions at New York Public and I drove them down to the World Trade Center for more gawking and a five-dollar beer. When I arrived, I realized anew how hard it is to park in lower Manhattan and, with visions of my day's wages sailing away, turned reluctantly into the parking deck below the Trade Center.

I was pleasantly surprised, as I drove down the ramp, to see a police officer directing me into a spot. "Great security," I thought.

About a half-hour later, our appetites for overpriced drinks and hors-d'oeuvres sated, (and remembering, too late, that most of the time New York is too hazy for the view to be very good), we came back down the elevator to the parking deck only to find my car in the middle of several others behind a

### **Nouvelle Cuisine** from page 90

primary information delivery tool. If access to resources on the Web did not initiate major hardware upgrades, then these formatted document types will.

Just as the Web browser wars are being waged, PDF versus other document formats (SGML and HTML for example) are being debated. The consumer can expect to benefit from the battles as the best features of each will be incorporated into standard desktop tools. Wishful thinking? Absolutely! Reflect on the improvements that have been made in word processing programs over the last 5 years or so. It is not unrealistic to expect that a PDF reader/viewer and editor could be bundled into a desktop software suite in the not-too-distant future. 


yellow CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS ribbon. I found a nearby police officer (there were several around) and inquired as to the nature of my discomfiture. In typically laconic New York fashion, he pointed me to a line of people. "Talk to the detective," he said.

I excused myself from my visibly annoyed wife and nonplussed father-in-law and joined the well-dressed queue. There, in speaking with the man behind of me, I learned that a body had been discovered in a car parked just a few spots away from mine. The stiff in question had been a Long Island contractor who had somehow run afoul of local organized crime. Apparently, he had been rather neatly murdered elsewhere, driven to the City, and left in the parking deck behind the wheel of his new Cadillac. The detective wanted to see our tickets from the machine at the entrance to the deck, presumably to question those who arrived before the victim. I hadn't, which explained the directions I received at my entry.



As I left the detective, I overheard the man I had spoken with in line respond to the detective's question with a classic example of New York sangfroid: "I saw him when I came in, but I didn't think anything of it. I thought he was sleeping."

Coming home that evening, we looked for our adventure on the New York television news, as if seeing it would make the story more real and less fantastic. The coverage lasted maybe 15 seconds and was told in "other news of the day."

In the end, I was somewhat embarrassed that my guest's first exposure to New York had confirmed all of the worst stereotypes. My wife relayed this to her father who was remarkably philosophical about the whole thing. "It happens in Warsaw, too," he told her. 

## ADVERTISERS' INDEX

73	ACADEMIC PRESS	52	IBD
76	ALPER	91	INPUT CULTURE
7	AMBASSADOR	35	INSTITUTE OF PHYSICS
33	AIP	2	JAEGER
65	AM MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY	88	JOHN BENJAMINS
48,49	AM PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOC	68	KLUWER
95	AMERITECH	62	MAJORS
72	AMIGOS	55	MCGRAW-HILL
41	ANNUAL REVIEWS	96	MIDWEST LIBRARY SERVICE
21	ASHGATE	63	OAK KNOLL
5	ATG	59	PRIMARY SOURCE MEDIA
82	AUBREY BOOKS	30	PUVILL
85	AUX AMATEURS DE LIVRES	92	READMORE
69	BAKER & TAYLOR	17,57	REED REFERENCE
3	BLACKWELL NA	71	RESEARCH BOOKS
61	BOOK HOUSE	11	ROWECOM
27	BRODART	77	SPRINGER
58	CASALINI	13	SWETS
79	COGNIZANT COMMUNICATION CORP	90	UNCOVER
75	COUTTS	47	USC PRESS
23	EASTERN BOOK	66,67	VAN NOSTRAND REINHOLD
25	EBSCO INFORMATION SERVICES	37	WESTVIEW
15,29	ELSEVIER SCIENCE	9,19,51,89	WILEY
87	EMERY PRATT	53	YBP
31,81	HENRY HOLT		

Ads Manager: Edna Laughrey Internet: elaughey@aol.com  
phone: 313-429-1029, fax: 313-429-1711  
Executive Support Services, 740 Woodland Drive, Saline, MI 48176