## Open Data - PDF Beyond Final Form Visual Content

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The Challenge - Combating Ignorance \& Misconceptions


## The Challenge - Combating Ignorance \& Misconceptions

- The "PDFs are where data goes to die" mantra is mindlessly echoed around the internet
- Great clickboit for attracting on-line attention
- Most often parroted by persons with "issues" both real and imagined
- Experienced difficulty in getting data requested, both in terms of availability and method of delivery
- Undue attention to Tim Berners-Lee's 5-star ranking system for Open Data in which he gives PDF 1 out of 5 stars
- User confusion \& "know it alls" who don't
- The PDF versus "Web Formats" bogeyman
- Mistaken beliefs that PDF is a proprietary file format; Irrational hatred of PDF and/or Adobe


## The Challenge - Combating Ignorance \& Misconceptions

- Tim Berners-Lee's 5-star ranking system for Open Data (2010)
* Make your stuff available on the Web (whatever format) under an open license
$\star \star$ Make it available as structured data (e.g., Excel instead of image scan of a table)
$\star \star \star$ Make it available in a non-proprietary open format (e.g., CSV instead of Excel)
$\star \star \star \star$ Use URIs to denote things, so that people can point at your stuff
* $\star \star \star \star$ Link your data to other data to provide context
- Ignores reality that PDF may indeed contain data files; it's not just for "scraping"
- Questionable value judgments; XLS may be more appropriate
 than CSV (hint: he hates Microsoft?)
- Our challenge is to tease apart the issues and provide data access solutions appropriate to one's needs


## Open Data

- The concept of Open Data is that some data should be freely available to everyone to use and republish as they wish, without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control.
- Some contexts in which Open Data is of vital importance:
- Functioning of governance in a free society;
laws supporting data access
(e.g., United States Freedom of Information Act and similar laws worldwide)
- STEM Research;
access to full underlying data of experiments is necessary for result validation and peer review
- Finance;
certain financial data, especially of public companies
fits under the category of Open Data


## Open Data

## - Issues

- Exactly which data qualifies as Open Data?
- Intentional delays in releasing data (i.e., roadblocks)
- Release of data in inappropriate formats requiring onerous and error-prone OCR, export, and "scraping" processes
- Database or spreadsheet data output to a PDF file
- Statistical data or even text as a PDF file created by scanning nth generation photocopies
- Recipient needs "source document" and not "final form file format" for republishing content
- Recipient doesn't know how to use data provided
- Recipient wants / needs more than entitled to
- Dynamic access versus static, blind exchange archival access


## The PDF versus "Web Formats" Bogeyman

## - Web Formats

(HTML, CSS, Javascript, et.al.)

- Potential to provide great dynamic access to data
- Great for dashboard applications
- Requires on-line access and availability of all assets
- Results may vary by browser (HTML \& CSS are not standards, much less ISO standards,
but rather, W3C "recommendations")
- May change underneath you!
- Not archival!



## The PDF versus "Web Formats" Bogeyman

## - PDF

- A "container" file format primarily used as a final form file format supporting compressed file attachments and metadata
- May be fully self-contained ("blind exchange")
- Potential to provide great static access to data (doesn't change and may be offline)
- International standards
(not "recommendations"):
- ISO 32000-1, PDF 1.7 \&

ISO 32000-1, PDF 2.0

- ISO 19005, PDF/A (for archiving) subset standards



## The PDF versus "Web Formats" Bogeyman

## - Hybrid Solutions

(Web Formats \& PDF)

- Initial access of data-laden PDF file via the internet
- Perfectly reasonable
- Once you've downloaded the PDF file, you are totally self-sufficient
- PDF file accesses external data via hyperlinks
- Not recommended
- Defeats the purpose of using PDF



## Using PDF for (Open) Data

## - Available techniques and approaches

- Embedded files
- Easier to implement
- Independent of PDF viewer (no "context issues"); data extracted and operated on by program associated with particular file type
- Metadata \& Tagging
- Generally requires more complex programming
- Requires PDF viewer that is cognizant of particular metadata / tagging usage to access underlying data and pass on to program that should process that data


## Using PDF for (Open) Data

- Best practices for use of PDF for any data, much less Open Data:
- Use PDF/A-3 (PDF/A-4 when standard is available)
- Embed data files using PDF/A-3 associated files feature in conjunction with attachment annotations (providing direct access to data from within PDF graphical content)
- Use "standard formats" for embedded data files wherever possible or practical
- Do not embed "executable" files
- Check files for viruses and exploits prior to embedding
- Do not use hyperlinks to reference data external to the PDF file
- Digitally sign PDF file to assure no modifications are made


## A Simple Example - ZUGFeRD

- Specification and implementation rules for the cross-industry core invoice format of the Forum for Electronic Invoicing in Germany (FeRD - Forum elektronische Rechnung Deutschland)
- Combines a Visual Representation (ISO 19005-3-2012 PDF/A-3) with an XML-based Structured Representation (ISO 15000-5:2014, the UN/CEFACT Cross Industry Invoice [CII] Standard plus the European Core Invoice Data Model MUG) of the invoice
- ZUGFeRD 2.0 specification recently released



## A Simple Example - ZUGFeRD

- PDF/A-3 is the format used for ZUGFeRD
- It is able to meet all the requirements made of an electronic invoice in a single file.
- It is able to embed all data used for automated further processing.
- Invoicees who do not carry out any automatic further processing are not irritated by additional files.
- PDF is already the most widely used data format for exchanging documents. (Invoices can be viewed using the free tools which come preinstalled on virtually all PCs, smart phones and other end devices.)
- PDF/A ensures that an invoice file can be viewed permanently in a form that remains identical.
- Other supporting documents/data may also be attached
- 1 PDF/A-3 file = 1 invoice


## A Simple Example - ZUGFeRD

- A sample ZUGFeRD File:



## Consumer Utility Statements

## Pacific Gas \& Electric Company (PG\&E)

- Customers receive monthly printed statements.

The envelope also includes advertisements and regulatory information (notices of rate increases usually) on separate sheets plus a return envelope.

- PDF copy of the statement

This may be downloaded by customer from the company's website for a limited period of time.

- The statement contains current billing information plus some limited historical information in graphical form.
- If you know where to look

You can also download historical data associated with your account and other useful information from elsewhere on the PG\&E website!

## Consumer Utility Statements



## Consumer Utility Statements

## - Stage 1 Fixups:

- Downloaded all the "goodies" from the PG\&E website
- Simply attach these files to the base PDF file?

Don't waste your time! Not very usefu!!

- Embedded the downloaded files via attachment annotations at appropriate locations within the statement's PDF file
- Create a PDF/A-3b file via Acrobat Pro DC Preflight profile Convert to PDF/A-3b (without fallbock conversion)


## Consumer Utility Statements

## - Stage 2 Fixups:

- Add explanatory text to indicate what those paper clips signify!
- Save file after validating that the file still conforms to PDF/A-3b
- Digitally sign and lock file
- Again, validate PDF/A-3b conformance



## Consumer Utility Statements

- All this can readily be done with current tools and standards
- There is no good reason why these techniques cannot and should not be utilized by utilities and other vendors now
- More secure
- Lower cost of customer support
(especially if receipts attached)
- In the future, such files may concurrently be tagged as complying with both PDF/A-4 (for archiving) and PDF/X-6 (for printing)


## STEM Document Equations

... It started off as an innocuous e-mail from an RIT graphic arts professor who passed along a request to me from an RIT computer science professor querying about heuristics for recognizing and extracting equations from an existing PDF file ...

- Demonstrated need to be able to extract equations (mathematical expressions) from PDF files for repurposing including indexing, experimentation, etc.
- Scraping is particularly difficult given the many methods of representing the "final form" of mathematical expressions
- Text, vector, raster, or combinations of same
- Symbols synthesized with multiple glyphs
- Non-standard font encodings
- Interesting spacing and scaling considerations


## STEM Document Equations

- Better to create PDF with data embedded representing these equations
- But what and how?
- Attached file
- Each equation's representation is relatively small
- Potentially very many such objects in a document
- Metadata
- Requires PDF viewer that is equation metadata-aware


## STEM Document Equations

- Competing formats
- MathML - another W3C recommendation
- TeX - a favorite of mathematicians using TeX for layout
- Proprietary formats (Word, MathType, etc.)
- Multiple files or a file with multiple formats for each equation
- Presentation versus Context;

MathML provides both forms

- Can we get a consensus?
- What is really needed and actually useful?
- What format(s) should be used?


## STEM Document Equations

- Example using similar techniques utilized with PG\&E statement
- Microsoft Word document with MathType-style equations
- Created PDF file via Acrobat PDFMaker (including source file)
- Embedded the files representing multiple formats available for equations (copied from MathType editor) via attachment annotations at appropriate locations within the document's PDF file
- TeX
- MathML 2.0
(both "m namespace" and "namespace attr" variants)
- Manually attached .EPS files saved from MathType for equations 1 and 5
- Created a PDF/A-3b file via Acrobat Pro DC Preflight profile Convert to PDF/A-3b (without fallback conversion)


## STEM Document Equations



## Summary

- PDF offers excellent opportunities and features to contain, represent, and deliver final form not only visual content, but also underlying data in readily-accessible usable / processable formats
- PDF open data solutions are available now!
- PDF is absolutely not where data goes to die!



## Q\&A



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## Adobe

## electronic

CONFERENCE
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