



Department of Information and Communication Services

June 2005

BITS & BYTES

Issue: 2005-06

Welcome Aboard! -- We would like to extend a hearty welcome to our three newest I-CS Department Team members:

George Engel is from D1SR and becomes our new DC-Id(s) (Department Deputy Chief). George has served as both an IS and CS officer, which will be a great help in addressing the needs of both important Department functions.

Ricardo Birmele from D13 will be our new BC-IsN(s) (Branch Chief - Department Newsletter). You might have read one of "Birm's" books, *Complete Idiot's Guide to Excel* and he will become Editor of Bits and Bytes

Daren Lewis joins us from D13 becoming our new BC-ICP(s) (Branch Chief – Special Projects). You might recognize some of Daren's work as webmaster of the new NACO site: <http://www.auxnaco.org/>

Jeff Mahl
[DC-I](#)

Local Unit Webmasters -- we have good news for Flotilla, Division and District webmasters currently hosted on the National server! We are in the process of installing a new, larger and faster server to host your unit website. We will be accomplishing this during the summer months and when complete we think you will be pleased with your new home.

As part of the process, we advise you of the following:

- 1) You should be sure you have your current site fully backed up, in the event there is any disruption in physically moving the old server or in migrating your site from the old server to the new one.
- 2) During this process, we will be making a physical move of the old server to a new facility. During the physical move, the old server and ALL local websites will be ***off line***. We expect this period to be several hours or longer. We will post the actual date of the move and estimated downtime on the CS Guide: <http://csguide.auxservices.org/news.php> when that information becomes available.
- 3) Once the physical move of the old server is complete, we will then begin the process of migrating your unit website from the old server to the new server. In that process, ***you*** will be republishing your site directly to the new server. You will have a new website address. There will be no more "~" (tilde) in the address!

The new server will provide additional space for your website, as well as new tools including Front Page 2003 extensions. You can publish either via MS Front Page or FTP. Additional details of the new service resources as well as the actual migration process itself will be posted on the CS Guide News Page, as they become available.

We are informing you now to give you as much lead time as possible. We suggest that you check in at:

CS NEWS

(button located at the CS Guide home page <http://csguide.auxservices.org/index.php>) on a frequent basis for the very latest information. You should do this at least until you have your new site established on the new server. That will be your best source of up to date information!

Jeff Mahl
[DC-I](#)

CITRIX has upgraded -- the Program Neighborhood Version to 9.0 that we use for AUXDATA and POMS. I have updated the instructions to agree with the new screens. The new information is on the AUX-10 web site: <http://cschool.auxservices.org/aux10/>

On the AUX-10 Web site, there is a separate item for CITRIX Guide but these pages are replacement pages for pages 65-67 of the AUXDATA User Guide. Please advise your members that there is a new version available which may help those that have had printing problems. Also advise them that they need to delete the old version in their computer prior to downloading the updated version.

Marilyn Mc Bain
[DVC-IS](#)

New Feature: Download Saved Searches -- There is a new feature to the Saved Searches functionality - the ability to download the current search as a "search definition file."

This gives you the ability to backup your search definitions, and send the files to others. Help out your fellow Auxiliarists by sending them a search definition file of that tough query they've been having trouble with!

Try it out today! After performing a search, click on [Saved Searches](#), and then "Download the current search as a definition file"

Rob Munroe
[BC-ICS](#)

CORRECTION - Adobe Acrobat Maintenance -- In the last edition of Bits & Bytes we mentioned that SoftChoice is offering Adobe Professional Maintenance Renewal. Effective 1 June, the program was changed for the Auxiliary from CLP to TLP pricing for members. This will mean a modest price increase for the various products available under the SoftChoice program. For complete details see: <http://www.uscgaux.org/~auxcen/auxcen/adobespecial.html>

For questions on this program, contact the Vendor SoftChoice at: 1-800-268-7638. There you may talk directly with a representative to place orders or ask questions for Adobe products under the USCG Auxiliary's new TLP program.

Jeff Mahl
[DC-I](#)

PDF Alternatives to Adobe Acrobat 7

Recent marketing decisions at Adobe Inc. have changed the usefulness of some of their products. Adobe recently retired *Adobe Approval* and has gone with a new product, *Adobe Element*. Unfortunately, this new product, unlike *Adobe Approval*, cannot save a PDF form with the filled-in form data, nor does it have e-signature capabilities; both items that the Auxiliary member needs. So a search was conducted to determine if there was a software vendor that offered the ability to fill-in forms, save the data within the form, create and read PDF files and had e-signature (digital signature) capabilities. Well, I found out that there are some non-Adobe products that do all the above.

The problem

Most everyone has been using Adobe Acrobat Reader for sometime now and Adobe has been improving

the Reader, but it still has its shortcomings. The Reader cannot convert documents to a PDF file or save form data and forget using e-signatures. More and more Auxiliary forms are now fill-in, and of course, keeping a copy for record purposes is a necessity. Try filling out that personal security form, all eight-pages in one sitting! So what are our options?

- Well we could buy Adobe Acrobat, not the reader, but the full Acrobat for our home computer. But who has \$300 lying around; and if you wanted the Professional version, that's about \$400.
- We could go through file gymnastics and try and save our form data separate from the PDF form and then hopefully bring the two together if we need a print-out copy.

PDF alternatives

Enterprising software writers have seen our dilemma and have recently written some pretty impressive products. This article isn't an endorsement of any particular product; its purpose is to inform the Auxiliarist. Search the internet for 'PDF alternatives' and you'll find numerous prospects. After reading various PDF forums, from the so-called "PDF experts", a list of three products were being talked about—these are CutePDF, NitroPDF and ScanSoft's PDF Converter 3. No doubt there are more. As this software niche gets more exposure, the number of vendors will probably grow.

Testing PDF Alternatives

The below table is a list of products and how they did while converting files to PDFs, filling out Auxiliary forms, both online and offline, and of course, saving the files and bring them back up in both Acrobat Reader or the alternative software. Here are the results.

PDF Product Table (notes taken during the product tests)

Software	Loading	Using the software	Other comments
CutePDF (Form Filler)	Ghostscript 8.14 loaded easily. Ghostscript Fonts must also be loaded as part of the installation.	Very Easy to use! First, save the PDF form to your PC's HD then run Form Filler and open the PDF form. The form is displayed within Form Filler and is ready to be filled in. When you're finished, click the save icon. Files are saved with a '.pdf' file extension. This form can be read <u>only</u> in Form Filler.	The files made and saved can only be brought up within Form Filler. If this file is e-mailed, the recipient must also have Form Filler. The '.pdf' file is printable within Form Filler only. A trial version was tested.
CutePDF Writer	Ghostscript 8.14 loaded easily. Ghostscript Fonts must also be loaded as part of the installation.	To use your PDF Writer , open the file that you would like to convert to a PDF. Select the Print option (usually found under File > Print), and select PDF Writer from the list of available printers. You will be prompted to select the destination directory and filename for your output file.	PDF Writer worked the first time after installation. All PDF files were viewed using Adobe Acrobat 7.0 and the latest Acrobat Reader.
NitroPDF	Loading was quick and no script software was loaded	Very Easy to use! NitroPDF was simple to load and took only a few minutes to install. PDF forms loaded and were ready to be filled in. After each form is completed, Nitro PDF saves the file as a 'PDF' file, so it can be immediately viewed by Acrobat Reader or e-mailed as an attached file. The system used to evaluate the software was a Dell laptop running at 900 MHz and during the process of filling out PDF forms, system slow-down was noticeable. The digital signature feature wasn't tested, but it is stated as a capability. It's recommend you load this on a computer running at least 2 GHz or faster.	Acrobat Reader 7.0 was used to view the files made by Nitro PDF. A trial version was loaded and tested. Nitro PDF can be set as your default PDF viewer, if so Acrobat Reader is not necessary.

ScanSoft	Loading was quick and no script software was loaded	<p>Very Easy to use!</p> <p>ScanSoft was quick to reply to my e-mail inquiry from their internet sight. Their sales representatives were helpful over the phone and made arrangements to send an evaluation copy. The system used to evaluate the software was a Dell laptop running at 900 MHz and during the process of filling out PDF forms, system slow-down was noticeable. The digital signature feature wasn't tested, but it is stated as a capability. It's recommend you load this on a computer running at least 2 GHz or faster.</p>	Acrobat Reader 7.0 and ScanSoft were used to view the files made by ScanSoft's PDF Converter 3. An evaluation version was loaded and tested. PDF Converter 3 can be set as your default PDF viewer, if so, Acrobat Reader is not necessary.
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How they worked

CutePDF (Form Filler) and CutePDF Writer (<http://www.cutepdf.com/>) \$49 (the shareware version was tested) – Both products were a free download off the internet. If the shareware version is used beyond normal testing a small registration fee is required. Form Filler did save the form and form data together, but in its own unique file format—that file has an extension of "PDL"; and of course, it takes CutePDF (Form Filler) to read the saved document. This is a limitation, but at least you have a copy of your filled-in form. The downside: if you e-mail your saved document to anyone, they will also need CutePDF (Form Filler) to read it. As for the CutePDF Writer, it worked the first time. CutePDF Writer becomes one of your available printers—to convert any file, you open the file, click print and scroll down the list of printers and choose CutePDF Writer. These files can be read by your Acrobat Reader.

NitroPDF (<http://www.nitropdf.com/>) \$99 – This product was offered as a free download (30-day trial version) and the size was 19.6Mb. Using a DSL connection, the download only took a few minutes and the install a few more. This product was easy to learn. It loaded and saved all Auxiliary forms tested. All Auxiliary forms with form data were saved in a '.PDF' file format. The forms were e-mailed back to the author and brought up as PDF Forms a number of times. NitroPDF also converts files to PDF and is available for file conversion as a separate printer. As with the other products, you open your document, choose Print and scroll down the printer list for NitroPDF. The document is converted to a PDF and can be read by Adobe Reader or NitroPDF. During the installation, you have the option to use NitroPDF as your default PDF reader. This software worked a bit slow on a 900MHz laptop, so a newer computer system is recommended.

ScanSoft PDF Converter 3 (<http://www.scansoft.com/pdfconverter/standard/>) \$49 – After contacting ScanSoft, they mailed a trail copy of their PDF Converter 3. The installation only took a few minutes and the software was easy to learn. Just like the NitroPDF, it loaded and saved all Auxiliary forms tested as PDFs. All forms were e-mailed back to the author and opened up a number of times as PDFs. Like the others tested, Converter 3 converts files to PDF and are available as a separate printer. Each document can be read by either the PDF Converter 3 or Adobe Reader. During the installation you are given the option to use Converter 3 as your default PDF reader. This software worked a bit slow on a 900MHz laptop, so a newer computer system is recommended.

In Conclusion: All PDF alternatives tested work as advertised. Both NitroPDF and ScanSoft's PDF Converter 3 saved all files (forms and converted documents) in the PDF format; a real convenience if you have to e-mail your documents. For the basic-bones route, CutePDF did work fine, but the unique file format limits file usefulness. If cost is an issue which it is in my book, then you'll go with what works and is the cheapest. I have no real data on how responsive the above vendors are to customer assistance or software issues, so you might want to do some research on your own.

Tom Miller, CWO4 USCG Ret.

[BA-IRT](#)

Factoid

With digital cameras becoming ever more common, the problem of being able to organize and find your new pictures is growing. Google has a **FREE** solution called Picasa 2: www.picasa.com

The user friendly interface is easy to use for organizing hundreds or thousands of photos by date, and comes with basic editing tools to crop, resize, etc.

Cyber Spot of the Month

If you are interested in any one of several Auxiliary C-Schools, you should check out the all new C-School Portal at: <http://cschool.auxservices.org/> This site not only explains the details offered at CG sponsored advanced training, but points you in the direction of specific Student Support websites created by the Departments that sponsor the various schools. Soon all of the Departments will have Student Support websites established for your convenience.

Did you know?

Vern Jansky submitted this Bluetooth story from National Public Radio, which you might find interesting:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4599106>

For anyone using Bluetooth equipped devices, it is a security issue you should be aware of.

Reminder:

This mail system is for use only for the distribution of Bits & Bytes, and other I-CS Department information. It is not to be used for any other purpose. Thanks for your cooperation.

Viewing problems?

Check the Bits & Bytes Archive for a complete list of *all* issues at:

<http://www.cgaux.org/cgauxweb/infoserv/BandB.htm>

Bits & Bytes

A resource of the Department of Information and Communication Services
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