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Acrobat Insider for AEC Professionals

Tips and Tricks for Adobe Acrobat 7.0

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Create compelling PDF slide shows using Adobe Acrobat

Start the Show

Creating presentations with Acrobat 7.0 Professional

by Michael Dakan

Several years ago, my eyes were opened to the many things I could do with Adobe® Acrobat® software that I'd never previously considered. I was consulting with a firm about CAD-related issues and Windows® and Mac multiplatform interactivity. In a meeting, the firm's head designer showed me a client and public-approvals presentation he was putting together. The designer was a die-hard Mac person and consequently used a lot of Adobe software in his work. He told me that he was building the presentation with Adobe Acrobat, probably version 5 or 6 at the time.

I was amazed by all the things he could accomplish using Acrobat, things I had never even thought to try. His presentation featured photos, still renderings, large-format drawings, animations, and voice-over narration. And because it could be viewed using the free Adobe Reader® software, the presentation could be seen by everyone in the firm, which had a mixed environment of mostly Microsoft Windows workstations — their chosen platform for CAD and most other activities among the firm's professional staff — and several Apple Mac workstations — preferred among the firm's design and marketing staff.

Acrobat 7.0 Professional software is indeed a very good tool for creating presentations from a variety of different content types that can be viewed and manipulated regardless of the computer platform used by the viewer and irrespective of any other software that may be installed on the viewer's computer. You can use Acrobat presentations for all kinds of purposes — including proposals, contextual or detailed design reviews, and self-guided shows that can be downloaded from a Web site.

Any Adobe PDF Can Become a Slide Show

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IN THIS ISSUE

Creating presentations with Acrobat 7.0 Professional

This month's tips:
Multimedia file sizes; Help with downloading media players; and archiving multimedia files.

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SUBMIT A TIP

At *Cadalyst*, we welcome your tips for AEC-specific uses of Acrobat 7.0 Professional. If your tip is published, you'll receive a *Cadalyst*

It's easy to turn any Adobe® PDF file into a simple slide show. Just view it one page at a time in full-screen mode (View menu / Full Screen). Use the mouse buttons or arrow keys to advance one page at a time. You can also make pages fade, dissolve or do other special effects by applying page transitions to all or some of the pages in the file. In the Pages tab in the left side of the Acrobat window, click the page thumbnail (to select more than one, hold down the <Cntrl> key). Right-click and select Set Page Transitions, and select a transition effect from the list. To make the pages turn automatically, set AutoFlip to the time interval you want between pages.

But this is only the start of the tools available in Acrobat 7.0 Professional. To create professional presentations, you can add multimedia content, such as animation and movies, interactive 3D models, and sound files. You can add buttons to make it easy for the presenter to play the show. Or you can turn the show into a self-guided presentation that you can share with anyone who has a computer and the free Adobe Reader software.

To create a multimedia presentation, you follow these steps:

1. Add a multimedia file to your Adobe PDF.
2. Create buttons to play, pause, and stop the audio or video.
3. Specify actions for each button.

Adding Multimedia to Your Adobe PDF

The Advanced Editing menu (Tools menu/Advanced Editing) provides access to the Movie and Sound Tools and the Advanced Editing Toolbar. The Movie and Sound Tools occupy the same position on the Toolbar. You can toggle between them by clicking the arrow next to the button.

The Advanced Editing Toolbar includes tools for adding links, 3D content, action buttons, sound, movies, and other content to your Adobe PDF.

To add a video or animation clip, click the Movie Tool and drag the mouse to create a rectangle in your Adobe PDF document. When you release the mouse button, the Add Movie dialog box appears. Specify the multimedia file in the Location box. (Leave the Files of Type set to Most Common Formats to see the files most suitable for use as movie clips.)

t-shirt.*

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Have a question about Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Professional? A suggestion for a future edition of *Acrobat Insider*? Send it in; we'll address the most popular requests in upcoming issues.

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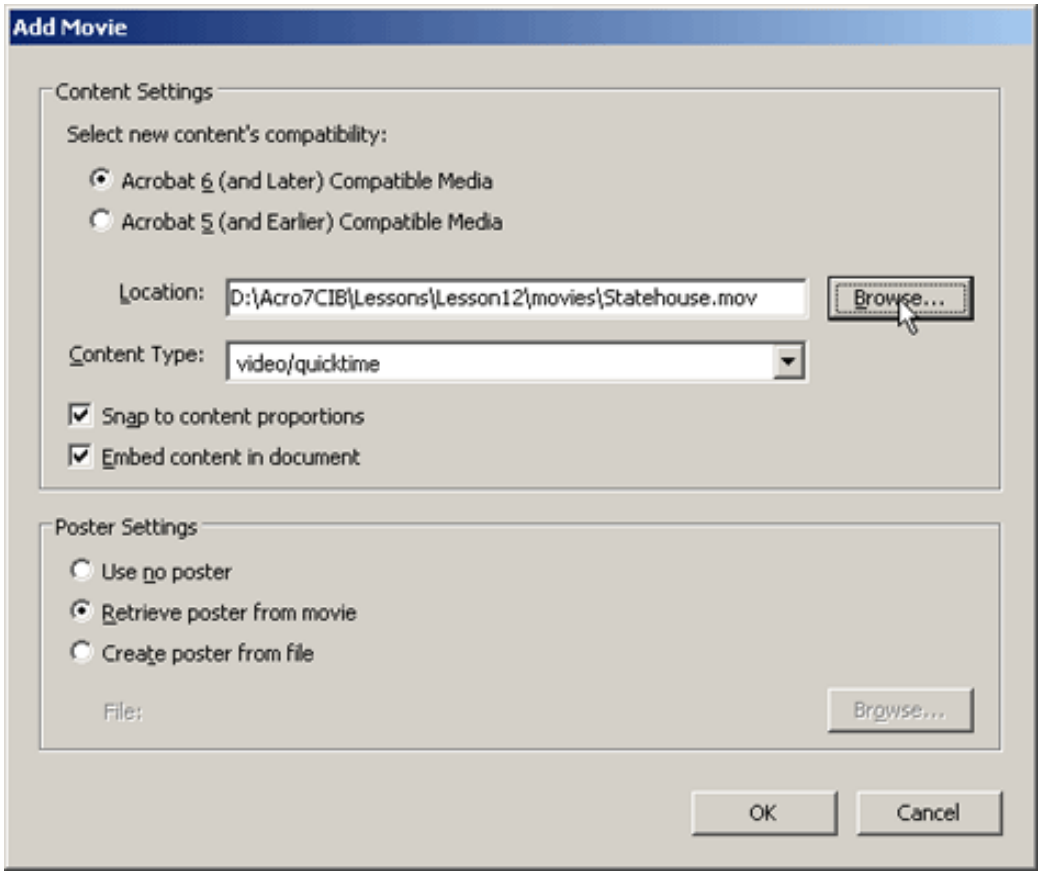
ACROBAT 3D

Learn more about Acrobat 3D, the brand-new addition to the Acrobat family. And download the latest whitepaper about how Acrobat 3D powers collaboration.



Use the Add Movie dialog to add video to your Adobe PDF.

You can also play media files in a separate window and specify the window size to be set by the media file size. This doesn't require you to create a space on the presentation pages of the proper size and aspect ratio to display an animation or movie.

To add sound to your Adobe PDF document, click the Sound Tool and drag the mouse to create a small rectangle in your Adobe PDF. The size and position of this rectangle is not critical, because you will probably set its Appearance property to Invisible Rectangle so it won't show up in the final document.

Creating Buttons to Play, Pause, and Stop Multimedia

You can add buttons that control a multimedia file by using the Button Tool on the Advanced Editing Toolbar. Drag the mouse to create a rectangle to indicate the size and location of the button. When you release the mouse button, the Button Properties dialog box appears. Here you specify what the button looks like and what it does when pressed. These are the properties you're most likely to set:

General Tab

- Name = Button name, which is invisible to viewers
- Tooltip = Text that appears when the mouse hovers over the button
- Form field (Common Properties) = Whether the button should be visible

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or hidden on screen and in print. If you set this to Invisible, you can temporarily show the outline of a button in Edit mode by selecting the Button Tool or by toggling the Select Objects Tool on the toolbar.

Appearance Tab

Use these properties to specify button color and the color, size, and font of the text label. You can also set the width and color of the border around the button or make it invisible for a sound file.

Options Tab

- Layout = Whether the button has a label and/or an icon and how these are oriented
- Behavior = What the button looks like when pushed
- Label = Text you want on the button — for example, “Play” or “Pause”

Action Tab

Specify what action occurs when the button is pressed; see below for details.

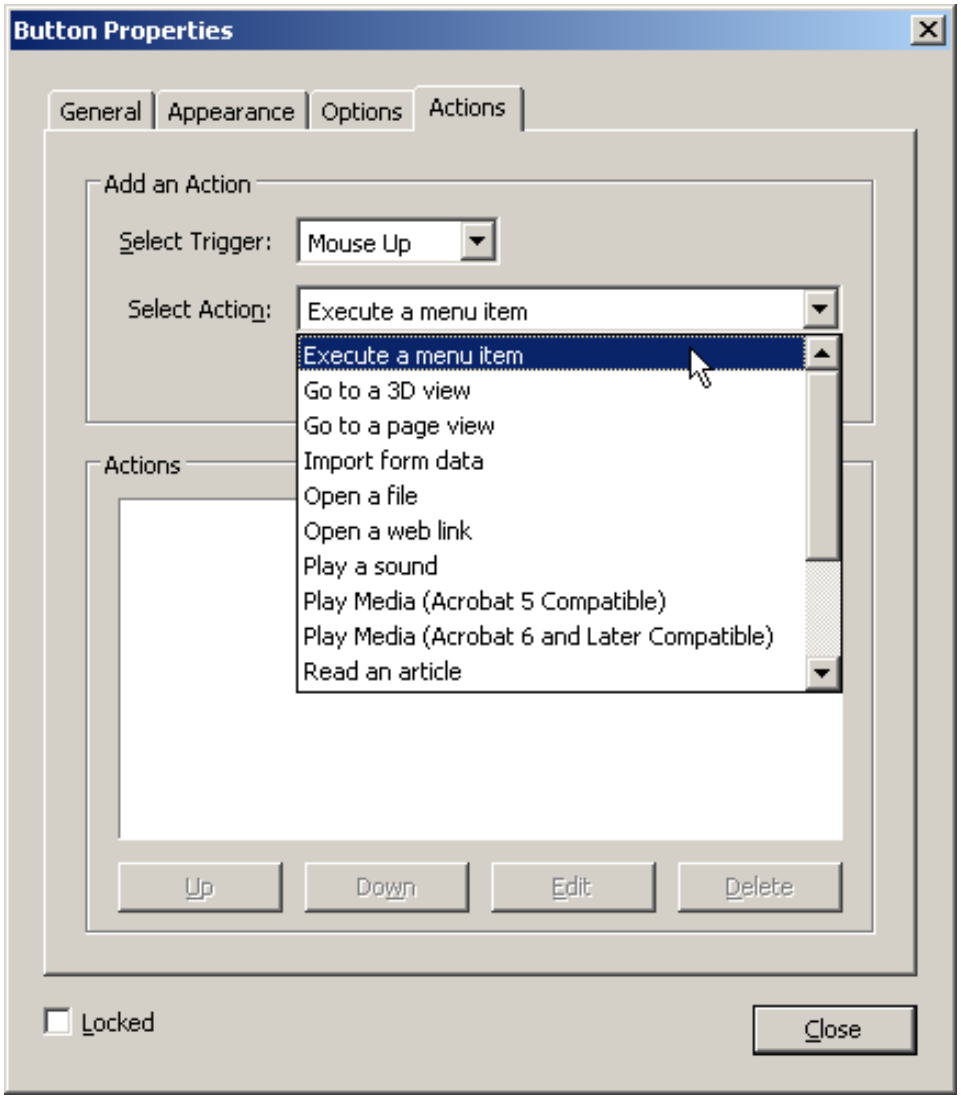
After you place and size a button, you can move it, resize it, or double-click the center to access the Button Properties. (Be sure to have the Button Tool selected in the Advanced Editing Toolbar.) You can also copy, align, and duplicate a button or group of buttons. Using the Duplicate command, you can put a group of buttons, such as page navigation arrow buttons, on every page or on a selected group of pages.

Also available by clicking the arrow next to the Button Tool are check boxes, radio buttons, list boxes, and other controls that we first looked at in *Acrobat Insider #5*. You can use these buttons and boxes to change the appearance of the page being viewed, turn layers on and off, provide presentation branch points, and more generally enhance the presentation by providing choices for the information and graphics viewed.

Specifying Actions for Buttons and More

The primary use for buttons is to trigger an action — in the case of presentations, to play, pause or stop a movie or sound file. You can also associate more than one action with a trigger — to stop playing a media file before going to a new page, for instance.

In the Button Properties dialog box, simply click the Actions tab, select the trigger and select Play Media for the action. (In the Operation to Perform box, specify what you want the button to do — play, stop or pause the file.) Then click the Add button and in the Associated Annotation box, click the name of the multimedia file. To change the sequence in which the actions occur, reorder the items in this list.



To create a button that starts or stops a movie or sound, use the Button Properties dialog box.

Actions can also be triggered by opening or closing a page. In a presentation, an animation or sound file can automatically start when a page is viewed. Click the Pages tab in the left side of the Acrobat window, scroll to find the thumbnail for the page you want, then right-click it and select Page Properties. Click the Actions tab, select Page Open or Page Close and select the Play Media action. Click the Add button to specify the multimedia file to play.

As we have seen in past issues of *Acrobat Insider*, the functional capabilities of Adobe Acrobat are wide-ranging and in many ways unique. If you haven't considered using Acrobat for presentations, it's time to give it a try. You can create most any kind of presentation, one that can be viewed on a variety of platforms by anyone with the free Adobe Reader. You might find that Acrobat can replace other dedicated presentation software on your desktop and make for one less application that must be purchased, learned, maintained, and supported.

Tips and Tricks

Beware Multimedia File Size

Adobe PDF files with embedded multimedia files can become quite large. Files as large as 15–20 MB or more are not uncommon. Potential viewers without fast Internet connections will have trouble downloading large files. You can help by keeping media files as small as possible in viewing size and resolution, limiting the duration of sound files, and reducing the size and resolution of photos and renderings.

Instead of embedding media files in the Adobe PDF, provide a button pointing to a URL on your Web site to access media files and play them in a separate window. (In the Action to Perform box, select Open a Web Link.) This doesn't affect the total download time needed to view the entire presentation. Instead, it spreads the download out in smaller increments and lets viewers decide what parts of a presentation they want download and view.

Make Downloading Media Players Easy

Keep in mind that certain media file types may require that your viewers download a free player if they don't already have it on their computer. These include Adobe Macromedia® Flash® files (.SWF) and Apple QuickTime Movies (.MOV). To assist viewers of self-guided presentations, add a "Download Player" button that goes to the Web site where they can download the player. Place the button early in the presentation, so they're not interrupted part way through.

Archiving Files with Multimedia

If you archive documents in standard Adobe PDF format, including presentations, you needn't be any more concerned about their future accessibility than you are about other file types supported by reputable companies. They will likely be backwards-compatible with future versions of the software.

However, if you want to archive in ISO-standard PDF/A archive format, be aware that multimedia files that require a third-party player are not allowed in PDF/A files. PDF/A is a long-term standard that does not rely on third-party vendors to be viewed. Media files in particular are subject to rapidly changing technology and their format may change in the future. If you want to archive presentation files that use multimedia formats, use standard PDF format instead of PDF/A.

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Details and Availability

For a full list of features and system requirements for Acrobat 7.0, visit Adobe's Web site. 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**.

For a full list of features and system requirements for Acrobat 3D, visit Adobe's Web site. Windows 2000 with Service Pack 2, Windows XP Professional or Home Edition, or Windows XP Tablet PC Edition is required for use with Acrobat 3D. Acrobat 3D for Windows, available on CD-ROM or by download, is $995.**

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