

# PDF Creation for the Masses

## Four programs to create PDF files without Adobe Acrobat.

By Brett Burney

Who can dispute the importance of the Portable Document Format (PDF) in today's legal environment? Most courts that accept electronic filings require them to be in PDF format, and it's gaining popularity with the evolution of electronic signatures and the need for document security.

While the Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded for free to view a PDF, the full, costly version of Adobe Acrobat has historically been required to actually create a PDF. Fortunately, the full version of Acrobat is overkill, and today there are other programs that allow you to create a PDF. This PDF Software Shootout examines four alternative programs to Adobe Acrobat.

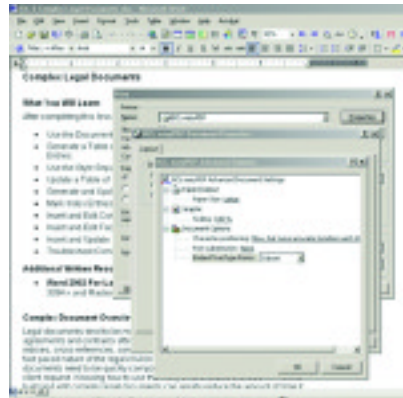
### BCL easyPDF

The first program I used was BCL easyPDF from BCL Technologies. I tested the printer driver version of easyPDF, but it also offers an easyPDF COM Object and an easyPDF Workflow System for those who might be interested.

BCL easyPDF installed without a problem, but I was instructed to reboot at the end of the process. I know this might sound petty, but I never like to reboot unless it's absolutely necessary. Plus, none of the other programs I reviewed required a reboot. The installation also created a folder for storing PDFs in my root drive. I am very picky about applications creating folders on their own because it usually will be the

default folder where files get stored. Only one other program — pdfFactory Pro — automatically created a folder for storage purposes.

The BCL easyPDF printer driver had the barest of bones of the four programs. I simply selected the BCL easyPDF printer driver from any application that allowed me to print (Word, Excel, Internet Explorer, etc.).



Of the four products, BCL easyPDF offered the most basic program for creating PDF files.

To access the options for the BCL easyPDF printer driver, I had to click the "Properties" button from my "Print" dialog box, then click the "Advanced" button. From the "Advanced Options" dialog box, I could select only from a handful of options, such as whether or not to embed the fonts (just a "yes" and "no," I could not actually select which fonts to embed). If I selected "no," the PDF file used the fonts installed on the

### Shootout Winner

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## LAW OFFICE Computing

### Program Information

#### PdfFactory Pro, Version 1.52

FinePrint Software  
(415) 989-2722  
www.fineprint.com  
Price: \$99.95  
Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP

#### Win2PDF Pro

Dane Prairie Systems  
sales@win2pdf.net  
www.danprairie.com  
Price: \$69  
Windows NT/2000/XP

#### Jaws PDF Creator

Global Graphics Software  
(781) 392-1600  
www.jawspdf.com  
Price: \$100  
Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/XP and  
Mac OS 8.5 to 9.x

#### BCL easyPDF, Version 2.0

BCL Technologies  
(408) 557-2080  
www.bcltechnologies.com  
Price: \$49  
Windows 98/Me/2000/XP

computer on which it was opened. If I selected "yes," the PDF file was a little larger since it bundles and embeds the fonts in the PDF that I actually used when I created the PDF file.

If you are looking for the most basic option for creating PDF files, and you are not concerned about adding security or other options, this program will work for you.

### Win2PDF Pro

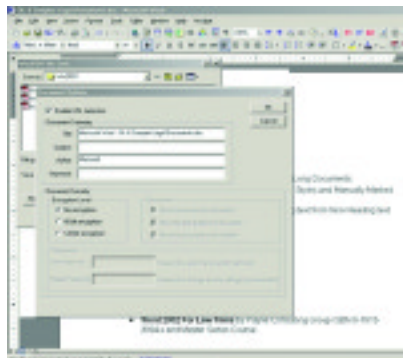
The next step up the ladder is Win2PDF Pro from Dane Prairie Systems. While you can purchase the regular version of Win2PDF, the Win2PDF Pro version adds security and a couple other options for PDF creation.

Installation of Win2PDF Pro went smoothly, and there was a friendly message at the end that instructed me to print to the Win2PDF printer driver to create a PDF file.

The only way to get to the PDF creation options in Win2PDF Pro is to actually print a document using the Win2PDF print driver. Once you click "OK" on the print dialog box, the "File Save" box appears, asking you where you want to save the file. At the bottom of the "File Save" box, you will find checkboxes for 1) "View PDF," 2) "Send e-mail," and 3) "Send to Palm."

You also will find a button at the bottom called "PDF Options," which will conveniently open a second dialog box. In this dialog box, you can add docu-

ment summary information about the PDF, such as title, subject and author. Most importantly, this dialog box allows you to add security to the PDF. Until Adobe Acrobat 5.0, PDF files used 40-bit encryption to prohibit people from performing certain actions with the file. Now PDF files can be secured with 128-bit encryption, which is much stronger



Win2PDF's File Save box allows you to select options for creating your PDF.

and harder to break. Win2PDF allows you to encrypt at either level; however, the you will need Adobe Acrobat 5.0 (the free version) to view a PDF secured at 128-bit encryption level.

With Win2PDF, you can elect to add security and determine whether readers of the PDF can: a) print the document, b) copy text or graphics from the

document, or c) modify the document. You also can provide a backdoor password that will allow someone (such as yourself) to change these security settings at a later time.

If you are a minimalist at heart, and prefer small, functional programs over bloated applications, then Win2PDF is perfect, although you might find yourself wishing for some extra PDF options in the future.

### pdfFactory Pro

After the first two programs, more advanced options for creating PDF files become available using a program such as pdfFactory Pro from FinePrint Software. The biggest difference with pdfFactory Pro over the other programs is once you print to the pdfFactory printer driver, a "Preview" window opens to provide a wealth of information about the PDF you are creating, and gives you the ability to select many options for PDF creation bliss.

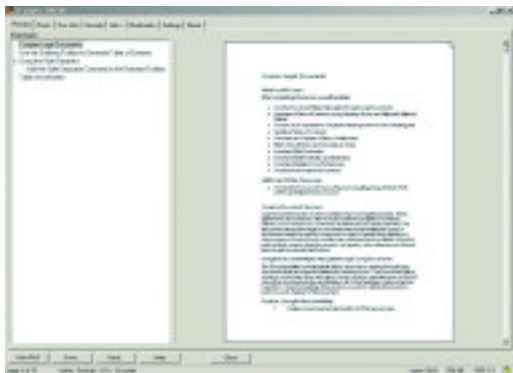
While it's possible to access these same options from the "Properties" button on your "Print" dialog box, I preferred to work in the "Preview" window because I felt I had more control over what happened to my PDF.

The pdfFactory "Preview" window launches automatically when you hit

PDF Shootout				
	pdfFactory Pro	Win2PDF Pro	Jaws PDF Creator	BCL easyPDF
<b>Price</b>				
<b>Full</b>	\$99.95 (discounts with multiple copies)	\$69 (discounts with multiple copies)	\$100 (discount with a 10-user license purchase)	\$49
<b>Upgrade</b>	Upgrade from pdfFactory to pdfFactory Pro for \$50	Upgrade from Win2PDF to Win2PDF Pro for \$34	Upgrade for \$36	Free upgrade (excludes product purchases prior to Jan. 1, 2002)
<b>Installs as ...</b>				
<b>Printer Driver</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Desktop Icon</b>	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Word Macro</b>	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Operating Systems Supported</b>				
<b>Windows 95</b>	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Windows 98</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Windows Me</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Windows NT</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Windows 2000</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Windows XP</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>PDF Creation Options</b>				
<b>Add Security</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Bookmarks</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Convert Hyperlinks/URLs</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Combine Multiple Documents into one PDF</b>	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Preview Window</b>	Yes	No	No	No

“OK” on your “Print” dialog box. You immediately see what your PDF will look like before you save it to disk. Above the document are the various tabs for selecting options, and there are several buttons below the previewed PDF including: “View PDF,” “Save,” “Send,” “Help” and “Close.”

I appreciated the information pdfFactory included about the PDF in the “Preview” window in the title bar and at the bottom. The title bar displays how many pages were in the PDF and the file size. This information automati-



pdfFactory Pro offers a Preview Window to view and edit your PDF before saving and sending the file.

cally recalculates if you add pages to the PDF or change options. The bottom of the “Preview” window displays page number, zoom level and security level.

One quirk of pdfFactory is it automatically saves the PDF file as soon as you preview it. I first thought this was extraneous, but after further consideration, I felt this feature would come in handy if I needed to recover the PDF after an unexpected computer shutdown. Besides, under the “Settings” tab in the “Preview” window, you can delete all auto-saved files with the touch of a button, or turn the feature off by setting the auto-save option to zero.

The other tabs in the “Preview” window include: “Fonts,” “Doc Info,” “Security,” “Links” and “Bookmarks.” The “Fonts” tab has a simple layout where you can choose which font(s) you want to embed into the PDF document.

The “Doc Info” tab allows you to include title, author and subject information to the document. The “Security” tab lets you select either 40- or 128-bit encryption, and allows you to add a password for opening the document, or to change the security settings. The “Links” tab lets you define how URLs will appear in your PDF file.

The “Bookmarks” tab in pdfFactory Pro is invaluable for adding bookmarks

to the left side of the PDF for easy navigation. As you preview the PDF, you can right-click on any page and create a bookmark. Bookmarks are like a clickable table of contents that can help readers navigate large documents.

The best feature of pdfFactory is the ability to combine several documents into one PDF file. Once you print your document using pdfFactory and you have the “Preview” window open, you can continue to print any document to the pdfFactory printer driver, and it automatically will be added to the current PDF in the “Preview” window. If you did this with any other PDF creation program, including Adobe Acrobat, you would have to create each individual PDF file, then insert each PDF in its proper place until you created the file you desired.

All in all, I found the “Preview” window to be the perfect way to view the PDF and to select options before I committed to creating the actual PDF file. You can delete and insert blank pages while in the preview mode, and you can e-mail the file straight from the “Preview” window rather than having to manually attach the file otherwise. If you are looking for a good, solid, effective replacement for Adobe PDFWriter and Distiller, I think pdfFactory Pro is your best bet.

### Jaws PDF Creator

The program with the most options for creating PDF files is Jaws PDF Creator from Global Graphics Software Ltd. With Jaws PDF Creator, the majority of PDF creation options are configured from an icon in your Control Panel. Double-clicking on the icon brings up a dialog box that looks very similar to Adobe Distiller.

First, under the “Settings” tab, you can select among certain configurations such as “Press Ready” and “Web.” Settings are already preset to optimize the PDF for the selected configuration. You can customize your own settings and create a specialized configuration. I found this very helpful and liked having this ability. When you “print” a document using the Jaws PDF Creator printer driver, you can select among these pre-set configurations.

Under the “General” tab from the dialog box, I found several options that seemed unnecessary. I don’t believe many users in the legal environment

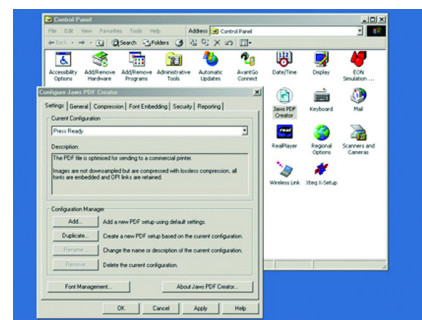
will need to worry about setting color options or generating thumbnails.

The “Compression” tab gives you several options for how graphics and images will be compressed within the PDF file. Again, not something you will need very often in a legal environment.

The “Font Embedding” and “Security” tabs offer the same functionalities of the other programs reviewed. The last tab is called “Reporting” and gives you a few options for how error messages are logged or discarded.

A bonus feature of Jaws PDF Creator is the Microsoft Word macro, similar to Adobe PDFMaker. Once installed, you will find a “Jaws PDF Creator” item under the “File” menu in Word where you can click “Create PDF File.” The Word macro also gives you the ability to select several settings involving links, bookmarks and document information. I found this macro to be the smoothest way to create a PDF file through Jaws PDF Creator.

One of the most advertised features of Jaws PDF Creator is the desktop icon



Numerous options for creating PDF files are found under the Control Panel in JawsPDF.

that is automatically installed. If you have PostScript or Encapsulated PostScript (EPS) files, you can drag them onto the Desktop icon to automatically create PDF files.

Jaws PDF Creator offers just about everything Adobe Distiller does, but I think many of the functions are unnecessary in a legal environment.

### And the Winner Is ...

pdfFactory Pro. The “Preview” window is great for finalizing the PDF before you commit to saving or sending it. The ability to seamlessly combine several documents into one PDF file is a huge advantage. The simple tools for adding bookmarks to the file are a bonus. **E.I.**

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