The Wharton School

Top business program leverages Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF technology through the years to educate future leaders

Computer technology has advanced dramatically since the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania put then-new Adobe Acrobat software and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) to work in 1993. The school first used the technology to disseminate information to students and faculty over local area networks. It was an innovative step at the time, the kind the school is known for. Over the years, Wharton not only has continued to use Acrobat and Adobe PDF, but also has greatly expanded their role across campus and beyond.

Wharton is one of the world's leading business schools for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students. Founded in 1881, it was the first collegiate business school in the United States. With 75,000 alumni in 130 countries, Wharton today enrolls nearly 4,600 students and has more than 250 faculty members across 11 academic departments and 17 research centers. Adobe PDF files created with Acrobat software have become the standard mechanism for delivering all kinds of information to this diverse, widespread audience.

A "many-to-many" approach
"We routinely distribute all school publications—including course catalogs, promotional brochures, and periodicals—as well as course materials and faculty research papers in Adobe PDF over the Web and other electronic media," says Kendall Whitehouse, Wharton's director

of advanced technology. "What began as a 'one-to-many' distribution model has become a 'many-to-many' way for everyone associated with Wharton to share information."
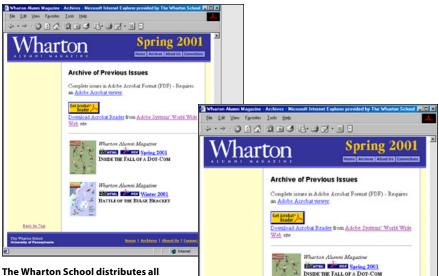
Adobe PDF is a popular delivery format for reasons that have been true since its inception: anyone can open, view, and print documents that look just like the originals, regardless of their visual complexity or the application initially used to create them. But according to Whitehouse, efficiency is merely the beginning of Acrobat technology's benefit to Wharton.

The archive surprise
"Our Adobe PDF files have become increasingly valuable over time," says Whitehouse. "Without any additional effort, we've created a historical document archive that has outlived original artwork files and printed copies. With what other document format would that be true? Most application files are incompatible from version to version. But Adobe PDF files created in Acrobat 1.0 in 1993 look just as good in Acrobat 5.0 today."

As a result, departments and individuals throughout Wharton have been able to preserve whatever documents they need, including hundreds of back issues of Wharton's "State of the School" annual reports, alumni magazines, and other school publications, in a way that makes

The Wharton School distributes all school publications—including course catalogs, promotional brochures, and periodicals—as well as course materials and faculty research papers in Adobe PDF over the Web and other electronic media. Adobe PDF files maintain visual integrity across platforms and from desktop and laptop computers to hand-held devices. A historical document archive that has outlived original artwork files and printed copies gives departments and individuals easy access to whatever documents they need, including hundreds of back issues of Wharton's "State of the School" annual reports, alumni magazines, and other school publications.

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Kendall Whitehouse
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The Wharton School

them easy to use. Through Wharton's dozens of internal and external Web sites, students, faculty, researchers, administrators, alumni, prospects, and the public worldwide have instant access to relevant information.

The visually rich Adobe PDF files download quickly. They retain the exact look the authors intended and are comfortable to view onscreen because they contain navigational elements such as thumbnail previews, bookmarks, links, and article threads that help readers intuitively scan multicolumn and multipage layouts. Viewers can then print pages true to the documents' appearance. "Most formats are optimized for either screen or print," says Whitehouse, "but Adobe PDF files render beautifully on monitors and on paper."

An investment that keeps paying off

Moreover, Adobe PDF files maintain their visual integrity across platforms and from desktop and laptop computers to handheld devices, which weren't even invented when Wharton began using

Acrobat. Says Whitehouse, "The Adobe PDF architecture is forward- and backward-compatible. We keep finding new uses for Adobe PDF as computer technology changes around it."

Wharton faculty members, for example, now regularly use Acrobat software to generate course materials as press-ready Adobe PDF files, which they submit electronically to Xerox DocuTech print-on-demand systems in the school's off-campus reprographics center. To ensure that all students could create as well as view and print Adobe PDF files, Wharton installed Acrobat 5.0 software on all the PCs in its computer labs campus-wide. Whitehouse predicts that soon students will submit papers and other assignments as Adobe PDF files, and that instructors will use Acrobat software's rich commenting tools to add grades, comments, and corrections electronically, without altering the original document.

"Our Acrobat investment all those years ago keeps paying off," says Whitehouse. "The technology enables us to share high-quality documents on any media—paper, CDs, floppy disks, Web servers, e-mail, handheld devices, you name it. That gives us tremendous flexibility in how we work and richness in what we offer. It's still hard to believe that we can do so much with just one file format."

TOOLBOX

Adobe Acrobat

Adobe Acrobat Reader®

Microsoft® Windows® based PCs in computer labs campus-wide and for many faculty and staff members

Windows, Macintosh, and UNIX® desktop systems for Adobe PDF file creation

Desktop, laptop, and handheld systems with Internet access for Adobe PDF file delivery and viewing