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Today's Tabloid

PERSONAL NEWS FOR rowan.hanna@debenu.com

4XPDF BLOG

Acrobat 9, ElcomSoft And Password Encryption

JAN 7, 2009 10:53PM

ElcomSoft has long been a thorn in Adobe's side. It all started way back in 2001 when Dmitry Sklyarov, an employee of Russian company ElcomSoft, was arrested in Las Vegas for distributing a product (Advanced eBook Processor) that Adobe alleged was designed to circumvent copyright protection measures in its e-book software. A full run down of the incident can be found here – the charges were later dropped.

Fast-forward a few years to this press release (*PDF, 593 KB*) from ElcomSoft, in which they claim that their Advanced PDF Password Recovery product can unlock password-protected PDF files created in Acrobat 9 using 256-bit AES encryption one hundred times faster than it could unlock PDF files created in Acrobat 8 using 128-bit AES encryption, and it's clear that ElcomSoft weren't intimidated by the 2001 incident.

Adobe has, for their part, acknowledged that in certain circumstances this is more or less true. If you use 256-bit AES encryption on a document and a short password that consists of common words which can be found in a dictionary ("turkey", "potato", etc) then it is potentially more susceptible to brute-force cracking tools than 128-bit AES encryption because of improved performance in the opening speed of 256-bit AES password protected documents.

The current specification for password-based 256-bit AES encryption in PDF provides greater performance than the previous 128-bit AES implementation. While this allows for 256-bit AES password protected documents to open faster in Acrobat 9, it can also allow external brute-force cracking tools to attempt to guess document passwords more rapidly because fewer processor cycles are required to test each password guess.

As one blogger pointed out, if you intend on using a password that is less than 32 characters in length, then you should consider using 128-bit AES encryption as it does not include the same performance improvements that make 256-bit AES encryption quicker to crack. Having said that, if you're willing to use a password that has over 32 characters then 256-bit AES encryption (which supports passwords of up to 127 Roman characters in length) is the much stronger option.

Of course, the strength of the encryption largely depends on the unusualness of the password. For example, if you happen to be using any of the passwords that belong to this list of the 500 worst passwords of all time, then you're off to a bad start. Adobe suggests that you pick a line or two from your favorite song or poem and add numbers or symbols if they aren't already there. Alternatively, you could use something like Password Safe that generates some really hard to remember (read: long and totally random) passwords.

In the event that you're looking for some really heavy duty protection for your PDF documents, Adobe has some additional recommendations:

For higher-assurance applications, Adobe continues to recommend using PKI-based encryption or Adobe LiveCycle Rights Management encryption - instead of user-generated document open passwords. Acrobat and Adobe Reader 9 now support 256-bit AES encryption for both of these environments. 256-bit AES encryption is widely known to be stronger than 128-bit AES. Document protection can also be increased with hardware tokens - including three-factor authentication with a smartcard, PIN and biometric.

What's the moral of this story? If you don't want your password-protected PDFs unlocked by Advanced PDF Password Recovery, choose a long and random password.

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4XPDF BLOG

Apago releases version 4.5 of PDF Shrink

JAN 7, 2009 3:06AM

Long-time player in the PDF game, Apago has released the latest update of their product, PDF Shrink. It has the ability to reduce the filesize of most PDFs, such as those from Mac OS X's iLife and iWork applications.

Apago are targetting this app specifically for those where bandwidth and storage capacity is a high priority, such as when using an iPhone or iPod touch.

How it works is to compress the images, text, fonts — as well remove unused clutter such as metadata and thumbnails. It also provides the option to encrypt your text as well.

Download a 10-day demo from the Apago website, or \$35 USD for a retail version.

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Pimp My PDF

JAN 6, 2009 12:34AM

PDF isn't a cool technology (from other peoples perspective!) to work with whichever way you look at it. The mere mention of its name doesn't get you any dates, for example. Instead, mentioning that you work with PDFs to someone is more likely to get the sort of response that is usually reserved for librarians: "Oh, I see... that must be... interesting... sorting all those... books."

But never fear, PDF just got a whole lot cooler with the first ever (as far as I know) PDF hip-hop video: Pimp My PDF by AcroJMan — aka Thom Parker from Windjack Solutions. Sit back, relax and enjoy:

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Merge PDFs Online For Free With PDFJoin!

JAN 5, 2009 11:52PM



If you visit the online PDF services category for 4xPDF you'll see that quite a few free online PDF related services have popped up over the past year. You can create PDFs, edit PDFs, convert PDFs to Word and search PDFs — all from the comfort of your browser.

In 2009, I anticipate that we will see a large increase in the number of new online PDF services, as well as enhancements to existing services, as the competition amongst PDF companies heats up online.

That brings me to the topic of this post. While it's possible to combine multiple PDFs using PDFHammer, there hasn't previously been an online service that was dedicated solely to the task, until now at least.

Launched a few days ago, PDFJoin! is singled-minded in its purpose: to joins your PDFs together and join them quickly. It lets you upload five documents, each with a maximum file size of 10 MB, and combine them with a quick click of a button. Hey presto, your new PDF is ready to go.

By the way, you might be confused by the various terms (combine/merge/join/append/etc) that people use when talking about making one PDF from two or more PDFs, but you shouldn't be, as they more or less mean the same thing.

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4XPDF BLOG

Get your PDFs converted and hand delivered to your iPhone

JAN 5, 2009 3:35PM

If you're looking to perform a quick document to PDF conversion on the run — BCL's new PDF Service for iPhone will be of interest. You take any document, attach it to an email and send it to "iPhone@PDFOnline.com".

Your documents will be sent back to you via email as PDF files...

PDF Online for iPhone supports:

- *Word (.doc and .docx)*
- *Excel (.xls)*
- *PowerPoint (.ppt)*
- *Publisher (.pub)*
- *Visio (.vsd)*
- *Rich Text Format (.rtf)*

They suggest it's useful for receiving copies of Travel Documents, PowerPoint presentations as well as Reading Materials (like eBooks, for example). Obviously it'll be perfect for any mobile device that has access to email with a PDF viewer.

Note: this is similar to their service, Doc2PDF Online, however, with Doc2PDF, you need to manually upload the files to their server, and also specify the target filename. Doc2PDF does allow a 2mb file to be converted whereas the iPhone service has a 1mb limit.

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4XPDF BLOG

Making PDFs more accessible...for everybody

JAN 5, 2009 7:34AM

The New York Times covers an unique individual, Mr. T. V. Raman, whose efforts have made significant inroads for accessibility across a number of tech companies (IBM, Adobe, and Google), the industry and community at large.

As it relates to PDF, back in the 1990s at Adobe Systems (prior to starting work at Google in 2005), Mr. T. V. Raman, helped to adapt the PDF format for screen readers. Dr John Warnock, founder and chairman of Adobe Systems said:

“It was incredibly important to us as a business, and to the blind,”

This was a big step forward for the blind in using PDF which was considered to be the defacto standard for electronic documents at that stage (not yet ratified).

These accessibility changes to PDF were required for use by the federal government, and also for support in ratifying PDF as a bona-fide global standard.

I'd encourage you to read the rest of his story...

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1. Google adds searching of image-based PDF files for free
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4XPDF BLOG

The Office Of The 21st Century

JAN 2, 2009 4:28PM

Over the years Adobe have been known to put together a funny video or two regarding their technology. A recent one posted on YouTube takes a humorous look at one of the ways PDF can make everyone's work life easier.

Perhaps the PDF security theme of the video is a little bit unfortunate given the recent bad press that Acrobat 9 and password-security has been receiving, but hey, it's still safer than sending a Word document to someone along with a verbal request not to share its contents because it contains "secret" information.

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4XPDF BLOG

BCL easyPDF SDK 6.0 Now Runs In 64-Bit And Supports PDF/A And PDF/X

DEC 30, 2008 9:17PM

The folk at BCL have long been proud of the “just 3 lines of code” required to integrate their SDK with your app to add a PDF conversion engine:

```
1| Set oPrinter =
CreateObject("easyPDF.Printer.6")
2| Set oPrintJob =
oPrinter.PrintJob
3| oPrintJob.PrintOut
"C:\input.doc",
"C:\output.pdf"
```

Well, the latest version of BCL's easyPDF SDK 6.0 now supports three “major capabilities“:

1. Support for 64-bit versions of Windows 2003/2008/Vista/XP
2. PDF/A Standard support for long term archiving of electronic documents
3. PDF/X Standard support for exchange of print-ready PDF files in printing/advertising industries

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2. New version of TX Text Control to include PDF/A support 

4XPDF BLOG

According to ZDNet's Zack Whittaker XPS is no PDF killer

DEC 30, 2008 1:14PM

In Zack's piece which covers “Some minor criticisms of the Windows 7 beta” he discusses XPS (“Metro”) which was once touted as being a PDF killer by Richard Doherty, research director at The Envisioneering Group in Seaford, N.Y.

Even though Windows 7 brings with it a standalone XPS viewer - he thinks that Microsoft should “Cut out the XPS nonsense” and acknowledge that PDF really is the document format of choice (disregarding device manufacturers).

He says:

Microsoft embarked on the XPS file type in Windows 2000 originally, but only really came to light with the release of Windows Internet Explorer 7, where functionality was integrated into the browser. With a standalone XPS viewer in Windows 7, I cannot foresee many people using it. It may be an open XML specification, but the PDF has a long way before it is knocked off the majority market share.

It has potential, and it works well, with many manufacturers taking the specification and using it in their hardware. But to see the XPS as a “PDF killer” is incredibly unlikely, and personally think Microsoft should drop it. Have you ever seen a document provided in an XPS format over a PDF file? I can't say that I have.

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2. New version of TX Text Control to include PDF/A support 

4XPDF BLOG

Don't Get Caught Out: Check Your PDFs For Metadata!

DEC 29, 2008 4:33PM

It's an easy mistake to make: you create a Word document, write a green paper, convert it to PDF and then publish it on your company's website. A customer then downloads the green paper and happens to have a look at the document's properties. Oops! In a moment of boredom, while writing the green paper, you had distracted yourself by writing a humorous comment in the properties section of the Word document, thinking that the comment would be removed when the Word document was converted to PDF. The customer, who coincidentally provides the company with a lot of business, doesn't find the comment particularly humorous — and neither does your (soon to be former) boss.

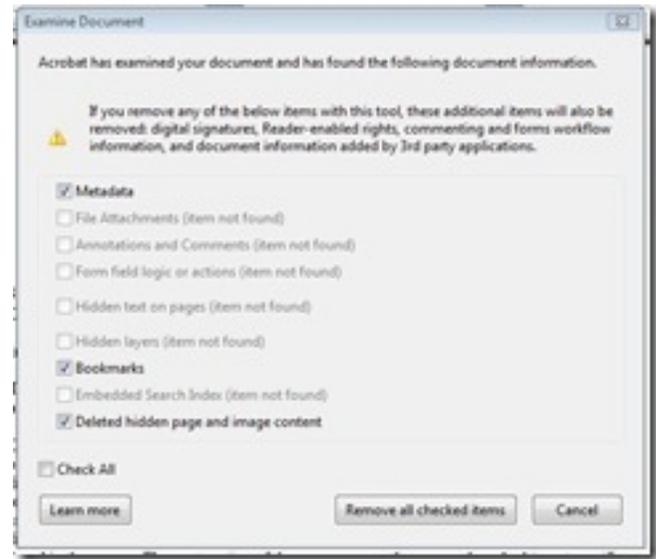
You're probably thinking a lot of things at the moment, but I hope that one of them is: how can I avoid being this person?



Well there is a few ways. Perhaps the best place to start when dealing with metadata is at the source: the Word document. The case might be that you have no need to include metadata in the PDF that's going to be published on your companies website, in which case, you should turn off the feature in your PDF conversion program that carries the metadata from the Word document into the PDF. Take note that not all PDF converters include the feature that copies the metadata from the Word document to the PDF document, so in some cases you don't have to worry about this. If you're an Acrobat user however, you do need to be vigilant as the feature is turned on by default. If you don't want the metadata converted with the Word document then you should go to the preferences section of the Acrobat add-on for Microsoft Word and disable the 'Convert Document Information' option under settings. This will ensure that any "humorous" comments won't be retained in a freshly converted PDF.

But what if you've already created the PDF, how do you remove the metadata? In Acrobat this is pretty easy. Simply open the PDF and either use the keyboard shortcut (*Ctrl + D*) or go to *File > Properties* and click on the *Description* tab to view the documents metadata (make sure you also click on the *Advanced Metadata* button to view any additional

hidden details). Remove the information from the metadata fields and click on the 'OK' button.



Removing the metadata by going into the document properties section and manually deleting it is pretty simple, but actually Acrobat provides an even easier, and more comprehensive, way of quickly removing all metadata from a document and also ensuring that other sensitive (and possibly hidden) information is not missed. All you need to do is click on the *Document* menu in Acrobat and then select the *Examine Document* item. Acrobat will then automatically examine your document for any document information and provide you with a list of potential problems (note: it's only a problem if you don't it to be there, some of the info that is picked up could have been intentionally placed there by you). After that all you have to decide is what information you would like to remove and then click on the *Remove all checked items* button and voila: your PDF is clean.

It's a little bit of extra work, sure, but it will keep your job safe.

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4 PDF