

## Acrobat Unveils New Tools With 8 Professional

by Kevin Slimp, December 2006

**Can I actually be that old?** Can Adobe Acrobat really be up to version 8? Let's see, Adobe releases a new version of Acrobat every 18 months. That would be 8 times 1.5 years. Where did those twelve years go? It seems like only yesterday I reviewed version 7.

Adobe is very sneaky. With each upgrade, they seem to add at least one feature that publishing professionals must have. In Acrobat 5, it was the ability to convert gradients to smooth shades, thus ending the days of banding in gradient fills.

In version 6, Adobe added several important features. The **Separations Preview** made it possible to visually find color problems in a PDF file. The PDF Optimizer made it possible to correct problems right in Acrobat and save the file as a new PDF. The most important addition for newspaper folks, however, was the **Preflight** ability to create sets of standards by which all PDF files can be measured. Acrobat 7 Professional heralded the ability to convert spots to process colors, using the Ink Manager. To go a step further, version 7 made it easy to convert one color, spot or process, to another.

Now, with my 30th birthday a distant memory (no jokes about my age), could it really be that Acrobat is up to version 8? I've been involved in the beta testing for Acrobat 8 for several months now, so it was no surprise when the FedEx box arrived on my desk with the newly released Acrobat 8 Professional inside.

Have they done it again? Has Adobe added one or more new features that make Acrobat 8 Professional indispensable to the publishing professional? I'd like to string you along, but you probably already know the answer. Yes!

Before we get into that, let's look at several features available in Acrobat 8 Professional:

- **A cleaner user interface.** Adobe likes to tout the new, clean look of Acrobat when the application first opens. The user is greeted with a pretty screen that allows you to click on a button to begin a process. Most of us, however, will click on the "Do not show at startup" button to make this screen go away when the application begins.

- Adobe continues to improve the ability to easily create and combine files. **Combining multiple files into one PDF** gets easier all the time. And not just PDF files. To test this feature, I instructed Acrobat to combine a PDF file, an EPS file exported from QuarkXPress, a JPG file and an InDesign document. Surely, I thought, Acrobat would be stumped by the Quark EPS. But there it was, before my eyes. It worked perfectly.

- **Collaborate and share reviews with others.** Version 8 introduces the concept of shared reviews. By publishing comments to and retrieving comments from a server, separate from the PDF file, reviewers can see each other's comments.

- **Advanced print-based features.** In addition to the preflight and ink manager tools, Acrobat 8 Professional introduces improved advanced printing features. Acrobat now includes the ability to create watermarks, crop pages and set up pages in booklet form.

- The Ad Department is going to like this one (if they ever take the time to try it out). Acrobat Connect offers a way to **interact with clients and others in real time.** For a monthly subscription fee, Acrobat users can open their documents into personal meeting rooms, so they can be shared with others over the Web for live collaboration. Screen sharing, audio and video conferencing, whiteboarding and other features are possible with Connect.

- **OK. Here it is. The one feature we'll all come to depend on.** Acrobat 6 Professional offered the ability to create preflight profiles. This meant the user could have Acrobat search throughout a PDF file for any potential problems. In our business, we'd look for things



Kevin looks over the latest edition of the Nashville (Arkansas) High School newspaper with two staff members. They, along with 4,000 others, attended the National High School Journalism Convention in November. (Photo by John Schirmer)



like OPI comments, RGB color, fonts that weren't embedded and more. Acrobat 8 Professional has added the ability to fix certain problems when they arise during a preflight.

For instance, I created a preflight to look for various potential issues in a newspaper ad. One possible problem was the presence of OPI comments. These pesky little programming comments can play havoc when PDF files go to the press. Now, with Acrobat 8 Professional, I can create a profile that **1)** finds OPI comments and **2)** removes the comments after they're found!

Let me give you a moment to catch your breath. OK. You can correct such problems with a new feature called the "fixup." Basically, you instruct Acrobat to fixup a particular problem when it is found during a preflight. I could tell you more, but I dare not.

Yes, like many things, Acrobat gets better with age. It gets closer all the time to the magic standalone application we've dreamed of since its inception. There are still a few things Acrobat Professional can't do without the help of plug-ins, so don't throw away your copies of PitStop or Quite a Box of Tricks. But it's getting closer all the time.

Acrobat 8 Professional is available on the PC and Mac platforms. Upgrades are available from previous versions. For more information, visit <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat>.