What to Expect if You Upgrade to Acrobat X

In my recent post, The Best of Acrobat, I mentioned that I had taken the plunge and upgraded to Acrobat X. I am still acquainting myself with it's features, but wanted to share my initial observations.

Performance
Acrobat X is fast! Saving to PDF seems almost instantaneous. Printing to PDF takes only slightly longer. Overall: very impressive!

Converting to Word or Excel
Saving from PDF to Word or Excel is vastly improved. The functionality has been there a while, but was so mediocre in past versions I rarely used it (or was prepared to completely reformat my document if I did).

This is one of the best new features of Acrobat X. I took a PDF created from a scanned letter, selected File, Save As… Microsoft Word and the resulting document was nearly perfect. The letterhead graphics came across flawlessly, as did the formatting of the letter, and the signature. The content was accurate and the fonts were pretty darn good. The only glitch in the entire document was one word – the font selected during conversion was slightly off.   This was quickly remedied and the resulting document truly looked like it was created in the native application. (OCR is now built into the PDF to Word conversion process. Previously it was an extra step.) Bottom line: This is a definite two thumbs up!

 PDF Portfolios
"PDF Portfolios created in Acrobat 9 can be opened in Acrobat X and Reader X. However, layouts, color schemes, and other PDF Portfolio elements differ significantly between Acrobat 9 and Acrobat X." *Adobe Acrobat Pro Help*
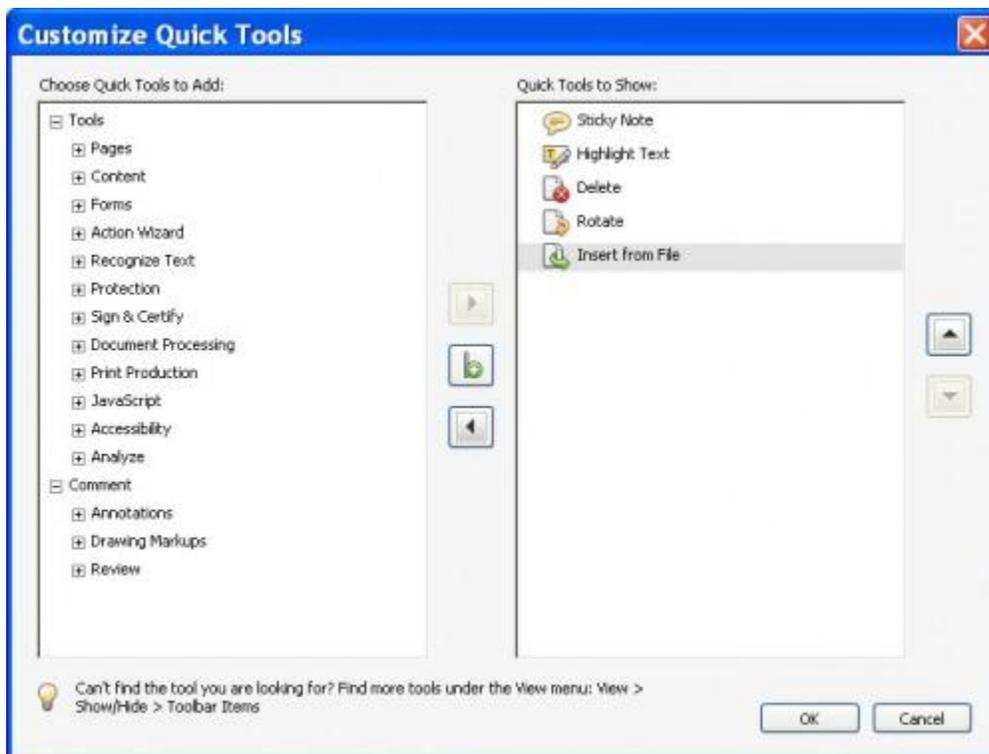No kidding. If you created portfolios in Acrobat 9, be prepared to spend some time updating them in Acrobat X. One of my favorite features – the "Welcome Page" – is gone. A real shame in my opinion. The Welcome Page allowed portfolio creators to add a message or letter preceding the PDF documents. My Welcome Page included my photo and contact information.

The online comments about this change are not favorable, and to some extent I agree. I am annoyed that my old portfolios are not supported as created. I also miss the Welcome Page. On the up side, there are some cool new design options. The jury is still out on this one.

A New Look
The overall look of Acrobat X is greatly streamlined. The default view includes a handful of icons in a "Quick Tools" toolbar, very similar to Microsoft's "Quick Access Toolbar."
Like it's Microsoft counterpart, Quick Tools can be customized, and this is probably one of the first things you'll want to do. Click on the gear icon (Customize Quick Tools) and add the buttons or menu commands you use most frequently:

Preferences
Like Quick Tools, this is another area where you may want to spend some time customizing Acrobat X for your specific use. For example, selecting the number of recently opened documents to display. To set preferences, select Edit > Preferences…
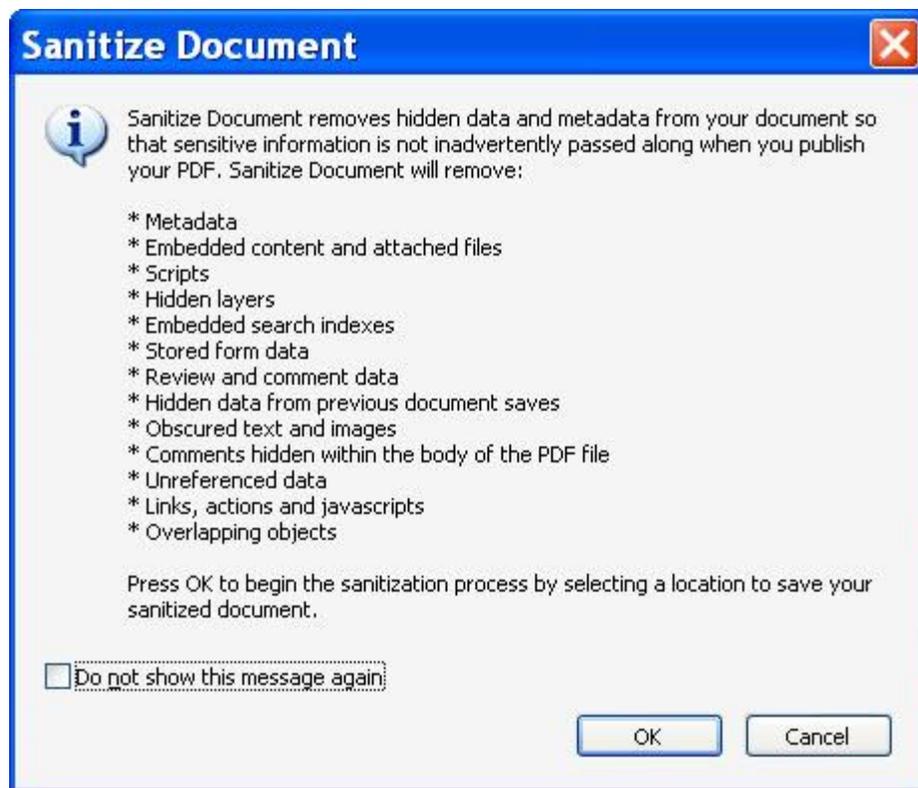
Metadata
The options for removing metadata and other hidden content have changed. Acrobat X supports two choices:
- Remove Hidden Information
- Sanitize Document

Removing hidden information searches for metadata, file attachments, annotations, comments, form fields, hidden text, hidden layers, bookmarks, embedded search indices, and deleted hidden page and image content.
Sanitizing a document is "advanced removal of sensitive information:"

To remove hidden information, select View > Tools > Protection > Remove Hidden Information.
To sanitize a document, select View > Tools > Protection > Sanitize Document.
Caution: Removing hidden information or sanitizing a document is permanent! Read up on both features before preceding and consider keeping a "before and after" copy of your document. As was true in earlier versions, metadata removal can produce unexpected results.

Creating PDFs from Web Pages
This is another area of improvement for Acrobat X and I'm glad to see it. Use the toolbar buttons placed in your browser when Acrobat X is installed or launch Acrobat X and select Create > Create PDF from Web Page. Acrobat X does a significantly better job preserving HTML formatting, fields, and functionality. If you want to convert only a part of a Web page (selected text or images) use the Select button in your browser (supported for Internet Explorer only).

Conclusion
So, much like any software upgrade there are positives: improved performance, conversion, metadata removal, and creation of PDFs from Web pages – and negatives: failure to support existing portfolio formats and the loss of the Welcome Page. The Quick Tools toolbar will also take some getting used to.

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