pdftex
Typesetting pdf annotations

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abstract
This article describes how to use **pdfTEX** to typeset annotations added to **pdf** documents. This method uses **ConTEXt** but can be applied to any valid **pdf** document.

The ACROBAT viewers support text annotations. These are small notes that popup when th euser opens them. There are several ways to add annotations to a document. For example, in CONTEXT you can say:

```
\startcomment
  Hello beautiful\\world!
\stopcomment
```

Annotations use the PDF document encoding. Fortunately, we can map most common accented characters onto this encoding vector. Therefore, the next sequence of characters will show up properly in viewers. As you can see, annotations can have certain properties, like titles (first argument), size and color.

```
\startcomment[accents][color=green,width=4cm,height=3cm]
  We love \'a\cc\cc\'e\~nt\SS
\stopcomment
```

In CONTEXT, annotations are automatically placed in the margin. Multiple annotations in the same line will be stacked in such a way that they are all visible.
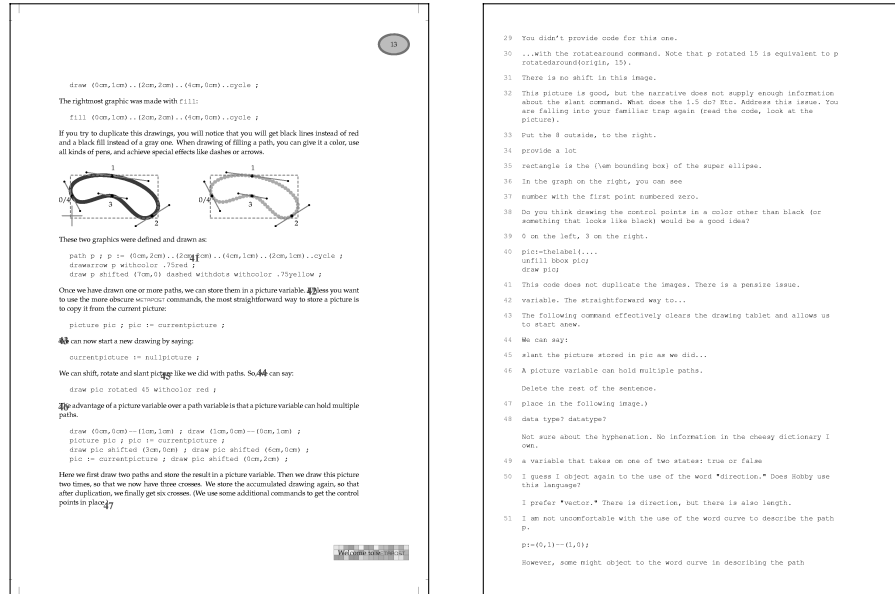
I must admit that until now I seldom used this mechanism, if only because annotations are not supported by GHOSTVIEW. On the other hand, one of my enthusiastic and dedicated proofreaders, David Arnold, always sends his comments as annotations.

Now, I may like to design documents for displays, but reading them from today's screens is not always a pleasure. Because I wanted to print the annotations, I decided to write a module to do that for me. We have been using this module for some time now, and this method of annotating text and printing that part of the original that is annotated along with its annotations works well. At this moment, the functionality is limited, but new options may be added in the future.

Given that you have a file with annotations, here is what we need to do:

- Export the annotations to a file with the same name as the PDF file, but use the suffix `fdf` instead. You may consider FDF to be the database format related to PDF.
- Run the PERL script `fdf2tan` with the filename as argument (no suffix).
- Process the resulting file `fdf-tan` with CONTEXT (TEXexec).
- You can now print (or view) the result in `fdf-tan.pdf`.

The resulting file has two parts. The first part contains pages of the original that have annotations. The annotated locations are marked with a number. The second part shows the text of the annotations. You can click on the number of the annotation and go to the place where it was attached. The numbers in the first part and those in the second part are cross linked.

Figure 1 The copied page and the annotations are typeset in one document and cross–linked to each other.

I already mentioned that encoding is an issue. Both the PERL script and the TEX macros try to make the best of whatever they may find in the annotation. Although I do have an FDF parser written in PERL, I prefer to use PERL for this purpose, if only because it is more tolerant to the unexpected. Of course we use PDFTEX to typeset it all nicely. You can process any PDF document, but you must have CONTEXT installed on your system in order to typeset the file `fdf-ann.tex`.