

Assignment 5 Discussion - PDF vs HTML

Discuss the differences between the documents you view on screen when you use your web browser to view an HTML file as opposed to a PDF file. Under what circumstances is it better to use a PDF file than an HTML file? Give specific examples from your workplace.

I teach for an online school in which official documents that require my signature are e-mailed as PDF file attachments. I print the document, sign and fax it or e-mail a scanned image to the department who sent it. In addition, this school provides all the course readings and syllabi as PDF files, and these are posted in a section of the school's portal where students and faculty can easily access it from anywhere and at any time.

For onsite math courses, I post course assignments in Blackboard where my students can download, print, and submit by the due dates. Assignments were originally posted as Microsoft Word documents and contained math symbols. However, I decided to post these assignments as PDF files after receiving many students' assignments poorly formatted. I realized many of my students did not have Microsoft Word to print the assignment with the original format.

The above examples provide a sample of the many advantages of portable document format (PDF) files. A PDF file is convenient if I want to view or retain the original look of a document. However, an HTML document is convenient when I want to create or access interactive, animated, and easy loading documents. In general, I use PDF file for static documents and an HTML for dynamic documents.

Branzburg (2003) stated that PDF files are like an electronic photocopy of the original document; therefore, this file format has become a popular method for sharing documents regardless the computer platform that was used to create the documents. PDF files are good to retain the original look of the document since with HTML files is never certain how it will look in the web, as stated by Killoren (1996). He indicated the look of HTML files depends on the users' browser, the screen's size and resolution, and some limitations of HTML. One of the limitations of HTML is displaying special characters or symbols such as math and chemistry symbols. Another limitation of HTML is how easy someone can copy and paste copyrighted material. According to Killoren (1996), readers can be limited on what they can do with a PDF document, in particular copyrighted material.

Fiedeldey (2004) stated that PDF files are a valuable tool for educators who want to integrate technology to their classroom, and to work efficiently and productively sharing information. Teaching is all about sharing information using whatever means of communication. So why not use PDF files?

References:

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