

Removing pdf restrictions

John C Nash

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Motivation

I find it very useful to take pdf files of bills and statements such as those for credit cards and utility accounts that are available to me online and merge them with the pdf “printout” of a payment confirmation. In the process, I can often delete common boilerplate pages or advertisements and reduce the number of sheets of paper printed, especially with 2-sided printing. The tool I use to do this is the program **pdfshuffler** (<https://sourceforge.net/projects/pdfshuffler/>)

Unfortunately, in 2017, one bank (TD) has started to put restrictions on the pdf files, and pdfshuffler is often unable to write the edited file. Typically I save the edited file to a temporary one, t.pdf, print it and then delete it, while the original bill and payment record are archived (and encrypted too, as I do not want bill information unprotected).

Command line solution

It turns out that the program **qpdf** (<http://qpdf.sourceforge.net/>) can remove these content restrictions. This is a command line program, and the syntax of the command to remove restrictions is

```
qpdf --decrypt restricted_pdf_file.pdf open_pdf_file.pdf
```

Scripted command

The command above can be placed in a script that is on the PATH of a user system. I have a directory **\$HOME/bin** where I put such commands, which are given execute permission (“chmod +x cmdfile”). Here is my script.

```
#!/bin/bash
## fixpdrstn.sh -- remove restrictions from pdf file
## so pdfshuffler can work
qpdf --decrypt $1 tempfile.pdf
mv tempfile.pdf $1
```

File manager solution

In my Linux Mint 18 system, I opened the file browser (caja; other systems may use Nautilus or similar browser) and chose Properties / Open_With. I then selected Add / Use_custom_command and browsed for fixpdrstn.sh in the ~/bin/ directory. I did NOT make this the default tool to open pdf files, but chose the Document_Viewer.

In a file browser (I happen to like Double Commander), I can then point to a pdf file, Right_click, and select Open_With and choose fixpdrstn.sh to remove pdf file restrictions.