

ADOBE ACROBAT 8 <DEVELOPER TIPS>

JAVASCRIPT



Working with Dates in Adobe Acrobat 8: Understanding Field Values, Appearances and the Date object

How many forms have you seen that don't have a date field? Not too many I imagine. JavaScript has a rich set of functions to work with dates but Adobe Acrobat 8 extends those functions even further. With Acrobat, virtually any grammatically correct date expression can be converted into a JavaScript date object that can be used for calculations. In the Date field below, I used the Acrobat user interface to set the format of the field to be a date and selected "mm/dd/yyyy" as the date option or mask. You'll see that if you copy any of the example date strings and paste them into the date field (or make up your own), the field will display the date in the format "mm/dd/yyyy".

Example date strings:

10/11/1963

October 11th, 1963

The 11th of October, 1963

Date:

If you click back into the field to edit it, you'll see that the original string that you pasted is still there. This string is the actual value of the field, what you see when you commit the field is the field "appearance". If you want to calculate another date based on this field, you cannot use `this.getField("myDate").value` because the value of the field is a string, not a date object. This is where the Acrobat method `util.scand()` comes in. This method will allow you to convert a string to a date object. The two parameters for `util.scand()` are a string representing the anticipated pattern of the date string to be examined and the input string itself. See page 723 of the JavaScript™ for Acrobat® API Reference for details.

The beauty of this method is that the pattern parameter is just a "hint" to help Acrobat guess the order of the year, month, and day in the input string; you can even set that parameter to an empty string if you want.

The example field below demonstrates how to convert a string to a date object that can be used to do calculations and then back to a string again for display purposes. You can enter a date as a string then press the "Show Delta" button and the number of years between then and now will be displayed. The JavaScript to do this can be seen inside the annotation to the left or in the Mouse Up event of the button.



Date: