PBS Tips and Tricks #18 – PDF's instead of printing

Isn't creating a PDF like printing? Yes, it is *similar* to printing but since the PDF is a file that is generated onscreen and easy to print to paper as well, PDF files can also be emailed, copied, and stored in an organized fashion on a business server and backed-up for safety.

Tips and Tricks #18 introduces some of the aspects of PDF printing in PBS which you may or may not know about. Many people using PBS are familiar with RealWorld where the printer, frequently a dot matrix printer, was king. Basically, if you wanted a permanent record of a computer run, be it a report or a posting journal, you printed a hard copy to the printer.

For many people, this habit persists today. If you entered a batch of AP vouchers, when you finish the entry of the batch, you would typically run an edit list by printing it to a printer and, if everything looked OK, you would then post and print (on paper) the posting journal. The edit list would be thrown away and the posting journal, depending on your business policies and paper flow, would be filed with the original documents as the permanent validation of the entry.

In addition to wasting paper, there is a finite chance that the printing will fail e.g. the printer will jam, and if this is a posting, you have basically lost your posting record. Losing the piece of paper with the posting at a later point has the same effect. Plus, you can't make multiple copies of the report or the journal for the boss, client or auditor without a copier.

RealWorld Classic provided a Print-to-Disk function which did satisfy some of these features – it provided a potentially permanent record of the report or posting and was a file. However, print-to-disk documents are text files with no formatting thus, without printing or viewing them in RealWorld or PBS, they were not very useful.

Over the last several releases, Passport has increasingly added PDF features and integrated them into PBS, but also integrated into PBS the use of whatever PDF rendering tool you choose to use. Whether you are familiar with Adobe or Foxit Reader or the current web browsers that support displaying PDF's – it doesn't matter, PBS will use your designated default and thus what you are familiar with. As a bonus, this feature creates an independent task/screen displaying the PDF so once the PDF has been displayed you can go back to work in PBS with the PDF still open – using the open PDF as reference material for your work.

With the introduction of the Graphical User Interface (GUI) of the Print-from-Disk screen, rendering a Print-to-Disk saved print file, is literally one click away. Simply selecting a report you want and clicking the PDF button at the top produces a PDF version of the desired report:

There are possibly a half dozen to a dozen screens throughout PBS where the advantage of using the Graphical version is absolutely unequivocal. This is one of them. Besides the preview option at the bottom so you can check which report you will be viewing, you have the sorting options highlighted in red at the top and the immediate printing options including PDF just discussed.

Besides saving time and paper, "printing" both an edit list and a posting report can be advantageous. The edit list is important because, for the few seconds it takes to check it out, it can save many minutes of diagnosing and correcting an error. And the saving of a permanent copy of the posting journal is pretty much mandatory. But using the PDF functionality can smooth the whole process making it more efficient:

After entering that batch of vouchers (or whatever data entry you are doing) you "print" an edit list. Instead of sending this to a printer, use the View as PDF option in the print options menu:
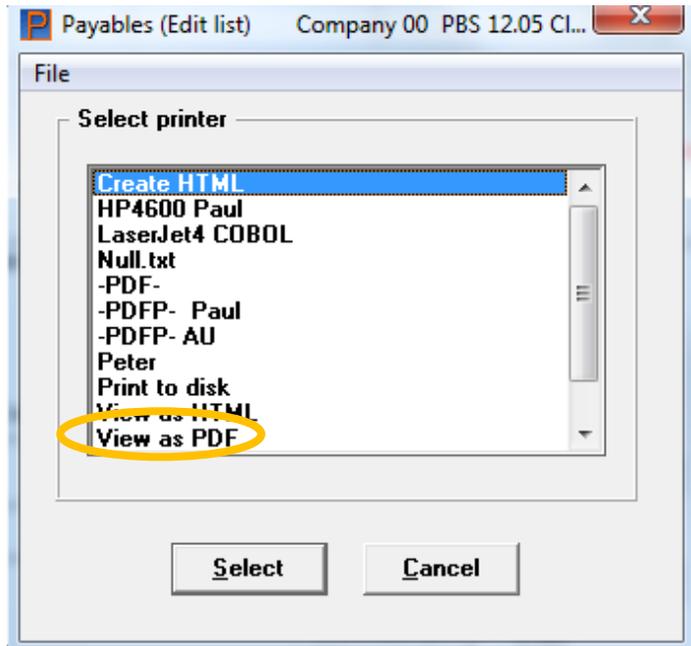
Clearly this is going to save paper and once you get used to looking at edit lists on the screen it will also become "natural". But what if there is something there that you need to investigate and want to have a paper copy of the edit list? All PDF rendering programs – Adobe, Foxit etc. – have a print option and since PBS uses your default PDF rendering program, one more keystroke given to the rendering program gives you a printout. Most of the time looking at the edit list on the screen is fine but in case it is not – one quick step more provides you with the paper copy.

When you are ready to post, our advice is you should *always* post by Printing-to Disk. This gives you a guaranteed permanent copy of the posting and the posted data. But the print to disk is text and therefore not convenient for printing or viewing without using the accounting system. You also may want to store your posting reports by application and/or by date somewhere other than in the area in PBS set aside for Print-to-Disk files. Looking at the above Print-from-Disk graphical screen, a press of the PDF button gives you a PDF which you can then save anywhere you want (using the Save-As function in the PDF rendering program). Many people simply want to view the posting journal to confirm the numbers, and the View PDF button shown above in the Print-from-Disk screen, gives you that option – saving paper but also knowing there is a permanent copy there if you want it.


Some additional tips:

You can print an edit list from most graphical screens simply by selecting:
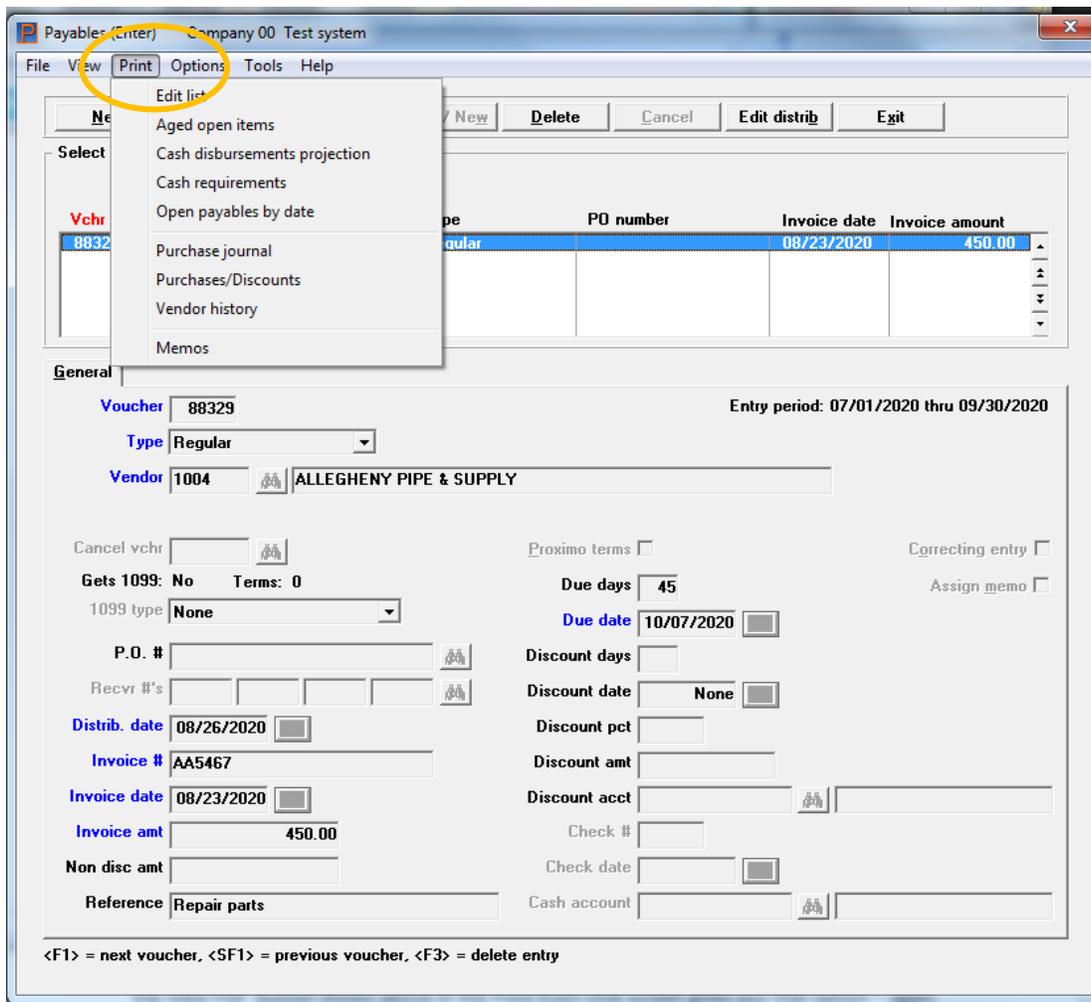
This means you can print/view the edit list without leaving the application.

In the same way, if the edit list here looks OK you can go and directly post the transaction(s):
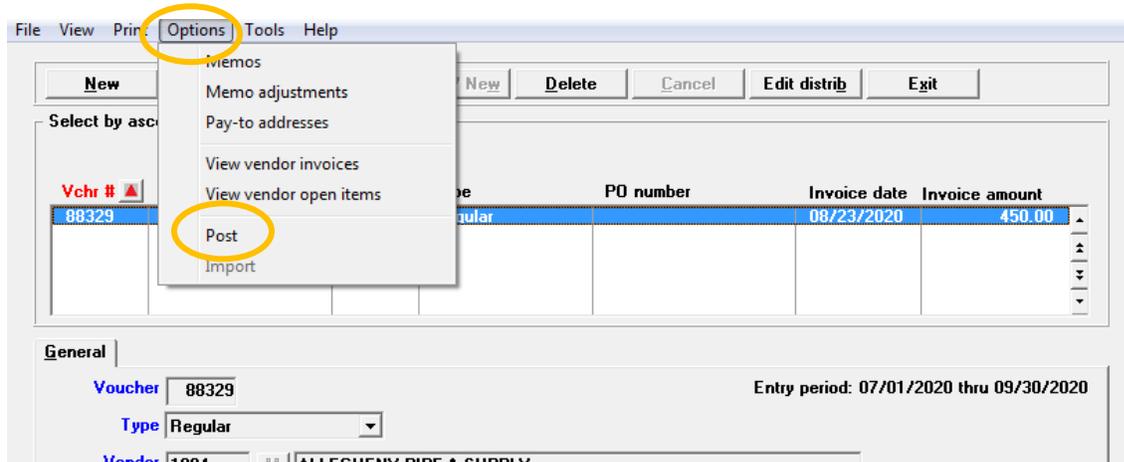
All without leaving the data entry screen.