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Okular – A Multi-Platform PDF Reader

by Alan German

For some time, on my Linux box, I have been using Okular as a PDF viewer. Given that the program is developed by the KDE community, I had thought that this was exclusively a Linux app; however, I recently discovered that the utility is available for Windows as a download from the Microsoft Store. So, this review is of my recently-installed Windows version of Okular.

This software is free and open source and, as already noted, it is multi-platform so that I can use essentially the same program in both Linux and Windows. The user interface is clean and highly configurable. By default, the menu bar includes controls to toggle the display of page thumbnails, modify the page display, scroll through the pages of a PDF file, select text on a page, and provide a variety of annotations.

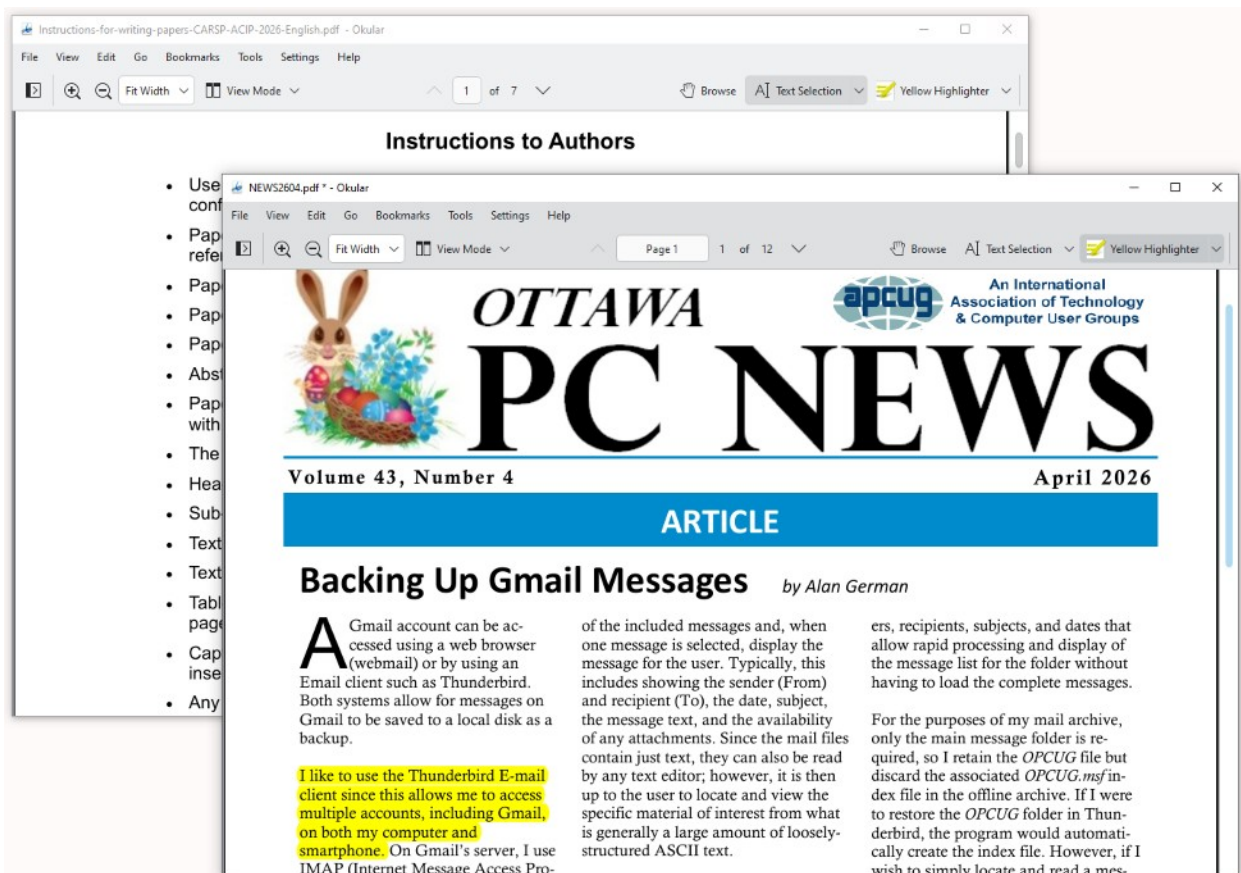


Figure 1. Okular displaying two PDF files in separate windows with a sentence in one file highlighted in yellow

Many more options can be activated through the *Tools* and *Settings* items in the menu bar. One interesting accessibility tool is the program's ability to read and speak the text of the document. This feature depends on a speech service being available and I found it necessary to switch from the default winrt to sapi. The program will read a single page or the entire document, with controls in the *Tools* menu to stop or pause/resume the narrative. The text-to-speech engine does a good job of enunciating individual words with a choice of female and male voices. One slightly-jarring feature is that the narrative is delivered one line at a time as though the underlying engine (mistakenly) believes that each line is a sentence. Nevertheless, I am sure that this is a useful tool for the visually impaired, and may even be useful for sighted individuals as a "live" proofreading tool.

Multiple PDF files can be opened by Okular at the same time and, by default, such files are opened in separate windows. This makes it very easy to compare the contents of two similar files. However, the settings also allow files to use separate tabs inside the main program window. Other options include the ability to display annotation-specific toolbars, set the default parameters for viewing documents, and configuring any of the program's toolbars through the addition or removal of control buttons to suit the user's preferences.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that the main toolbar already featured page navigation controls (forward and back arrows) when browsing through a document, and that the slider controls and scroll bars had good colour contrast. In the Linux version of the software, I had to add the page navigation controls to the main toolbar and create a special style-sheet file to change the colours used on the scroll bars (see: [Changing the Colour of Scrollbars in Okular](#)).

In addition to being an exceptionally capable PDF reader, Okular has two important features for my use of the program. First is its ability to easily annotate PDF files using a coloured highlighter. By default, pressing the *Yellow Highlighter* control button on the right end of the main toolbar highlights any text that is subsequently selected. I use this function to annotate certain records in financial documents to note that the entries have been processed. The second feature that I use extensively is the *Text Selection* control button that allows me to cut and paste specific content from a PDF file into, for example, a Word document.

If you want a highly capable PDF reader, with limited editing capabilities, that is both free and open source, and almost certainly does not attract hackers due to its limited market share, give Okular a try. It's easy to install, configurable to your preferences, and has several features that you may find really useful.

Bottom Line:

Okular - The Universal Document Viewer (Open-source)
Version 25.08.1
KDE-community project
<https://okular.kde.org>

