

# Online Manuscript Review Process: Using Adobe Acrobat Review and Comment Features

By Richard T. Hill

Indiana Geological Survey  
611 North Walnut Grove Ave.  
Bloomington, IN 47405  
Telephone: (812) 855-9583  
Fax: (812) 855-2862  
email: [hill2@indiana.edu](mailto:hill2@indiana.edu)

## Introduction

The Indiana Geological Survey (IGS) has added an online review component to its manuscript review policy and procedures. IGS staff can now submit documents to either the new online review process or to the traditional on-paper review paper. The IGS online peer review procedure makes use of a Shared Review application in Adobe Acrobat Professional, Version 8 and higher. Document types that can be reviewed online include manuscripts, abstracts, proposals, maps, metadata, posters, brochures, illustrations, spreadsheets, database tables, graphics, scanned images, Web pages, or any material that can be converted into a Portable Document Format (PDF) file.

technical, geologic, and other reviewers. Reviewers make their comments on the paper document. The reviewed copy is then returned to the author for revision. The author assesses the feedback and comments and makes the appropriate changes to the document. The author also responds in writing to each reviewer comment that he or she rejects. After the author makes the appropriate changes, the IGS Review Coordinator checks the document to make certain review comments were accepted or acknowledged.

The document is then forwarded to the editor, who edits the manuscript and returns it to the author. Again, the author assesses the comments and makes the appropriate changes and modifications. It then is forwarded to the Director for approval for final production.

## The Indiana Geological Survey Peer Review Process

The IGS peer review process is designed to assist authors by improving the content of their work, finding errors, and ensuring that documents conform to IGS guidelines for both internal and external publications. The review process is essentially the same for both online and paper review. Documents are checked by technical, geologic, editorial, and administrative personnel, who provide constructive feedback and comments to authors.

After preparing a document, the author first sends it to the immediate supervisor (the Section Head) for preliminary review. Upon the supervisor's approval, the document is forwarded to the IGS Review Coordinator who selects

## LGS Online Review

To submit their documents to the IGS Online Review, staff members convert their paper or digital documents to a PDF file. The IGS Review Coordinator adds an electronic routing sheet to this file and processes it using the Shared Review application in the Review and Comments feature of Adobe Acrobat Professional (Figure 1). To begin a review, the reviewer follows these steps:

1. Open Adobe Acrobat Professional, select *Review and Comments* feature, and select *Start a shared review*.
2. Select the PDF file to be reviewed and select or create a shared network folder where the application saves a copy of the PDF file (Figure 2).

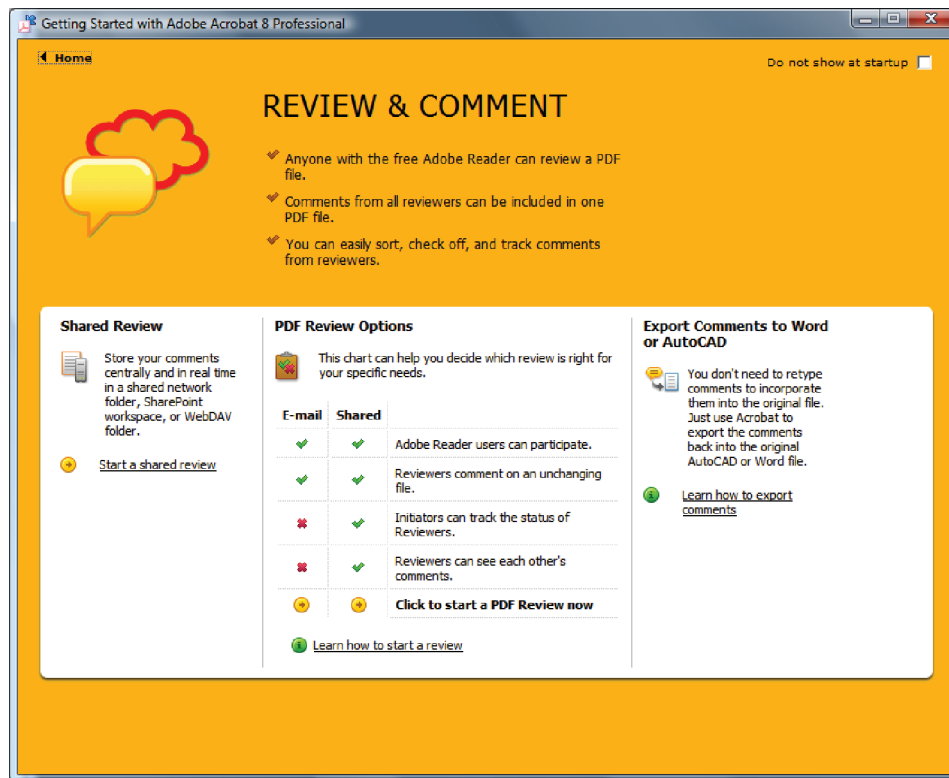


Figure 1. Adobe Acrobat's Review and Comment application.

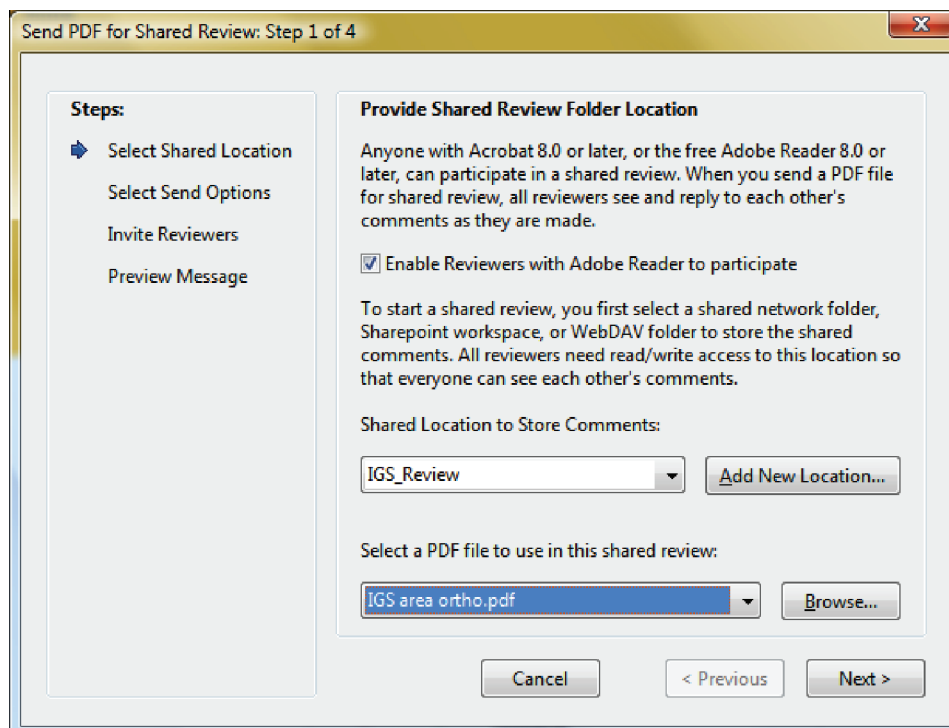


Figure 2. Select a Shared Location to Store the Comments and select the PDF file to review.

- a. The IGS Review Coordinator, author, and reviewers must all have read and write privileges to the shared network folder.
  - b. If any of the Reviewers use the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, Version 8 and above, select the *Enable Reviewers with Adobe Reader to participate* feature.
3. Select the PDF as an attachment or link to send in the e-mail message (Figure 3).
    - a. The *Attach PDF to the message and save a copy locally* feature is used by reviewers who do not have access to the shared network folder, namely, reviewers outside the organization. Upon completing the review, the reviewer returns the PDF file, via e-mail, to the IGS Review Coordinator who posts the reviewer's comments to the shared network folder.
    - b. The *Send a link to the PDF in the message* feature is used by reviewers with access to the shared network folder. This is the preferred method within the IGS.
  4. Enter the reviewer's e-mail addresses into the application (Figure 4).
    - a. Optional reviewers may also be entered.
    - b. A review deadline may be entered, following the specific format.
    - c. The e-mail address book may be activated, allowing the Review Coordinator to select the reviewers.

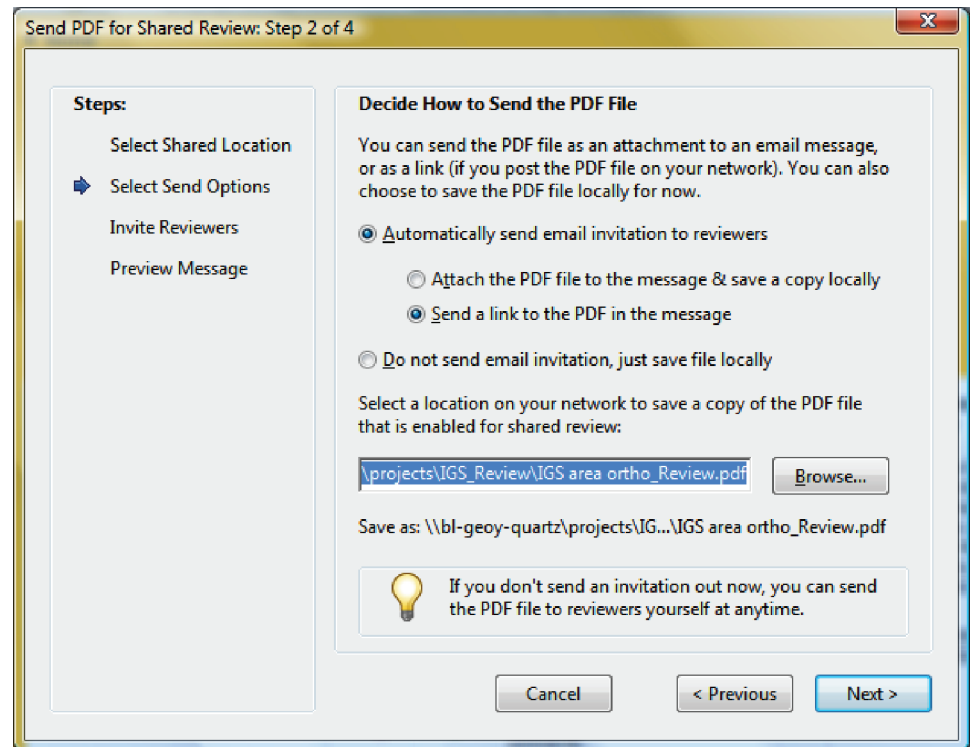


Figure 3. Send the PDF as an attachment or link in an e-mail message.

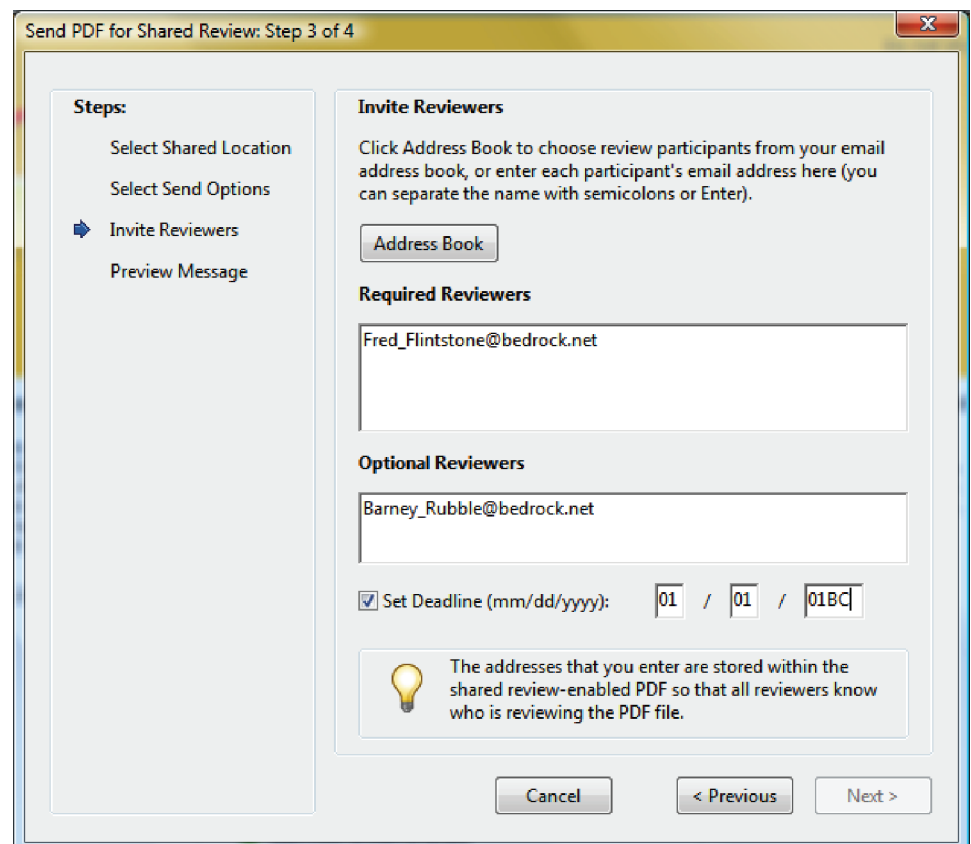


Figure 4. Invite reviewers and optional reviewers by entering their e-mail addresses; you can use the e-mail address book to enter your selections. A deadline also can be entered.

5. Preview the default e-mail message that will be sent to the reviewers (Figure 5). The message can be modified as necessary.

The online review is conducted simultaneously, whereby reviewers are sent an e-mail message containing either an attached PDF file, or a link pointing to the PDF file stored on a shared network folder, to be reviewed. As reviewers mark up the document and publish their comments using Acrobat's Review and Comment feature, the comments are stored in the shared network folder for the author, editor, IGS Review Coordinator, and other reviewers to view and examine. The author may begin making changes to the document before the last review has been completed, if they choose. The Review Coordinator is notified by the Adobe's Review Tracker alerts whenever any new comments have been made, and, thus, is able to track the review progress.

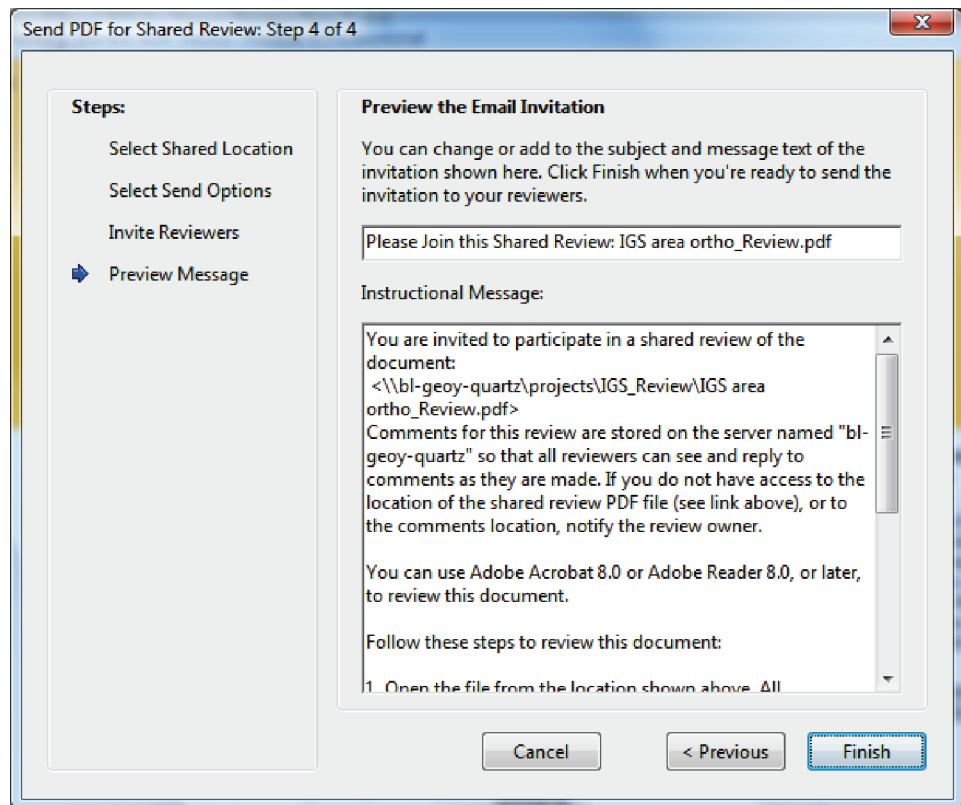


Figure 5. Preview the e-mail invitation and modify as necessary.

## Review Comments and Markups

Reviewers receive an e-mail invitation to review an online document (Figure 6). The message contains either the attached PDF file or a link to the PDF file. Opening the PDF file in Adobe Acrobat will also launch the Comment and Markup tools. These tools, such as the Sticky Note, Text Edits, Callout, and Drawing tools, are

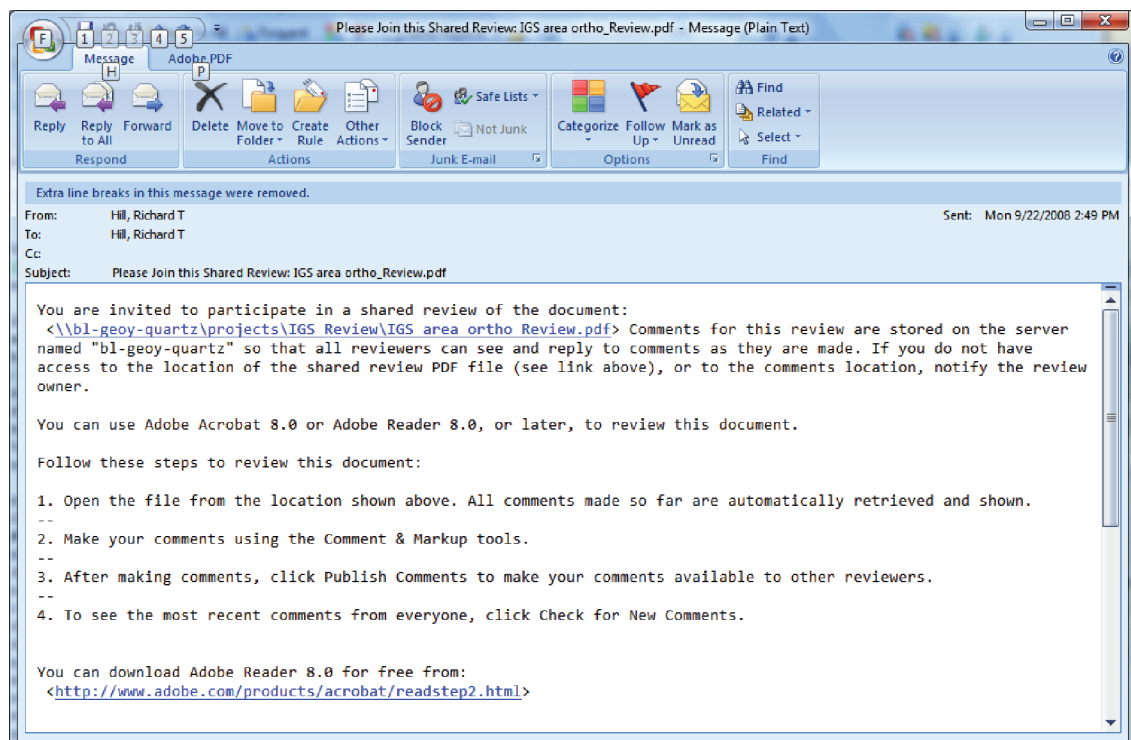


Figure 6. Sample of e-mail message reviewers receive.

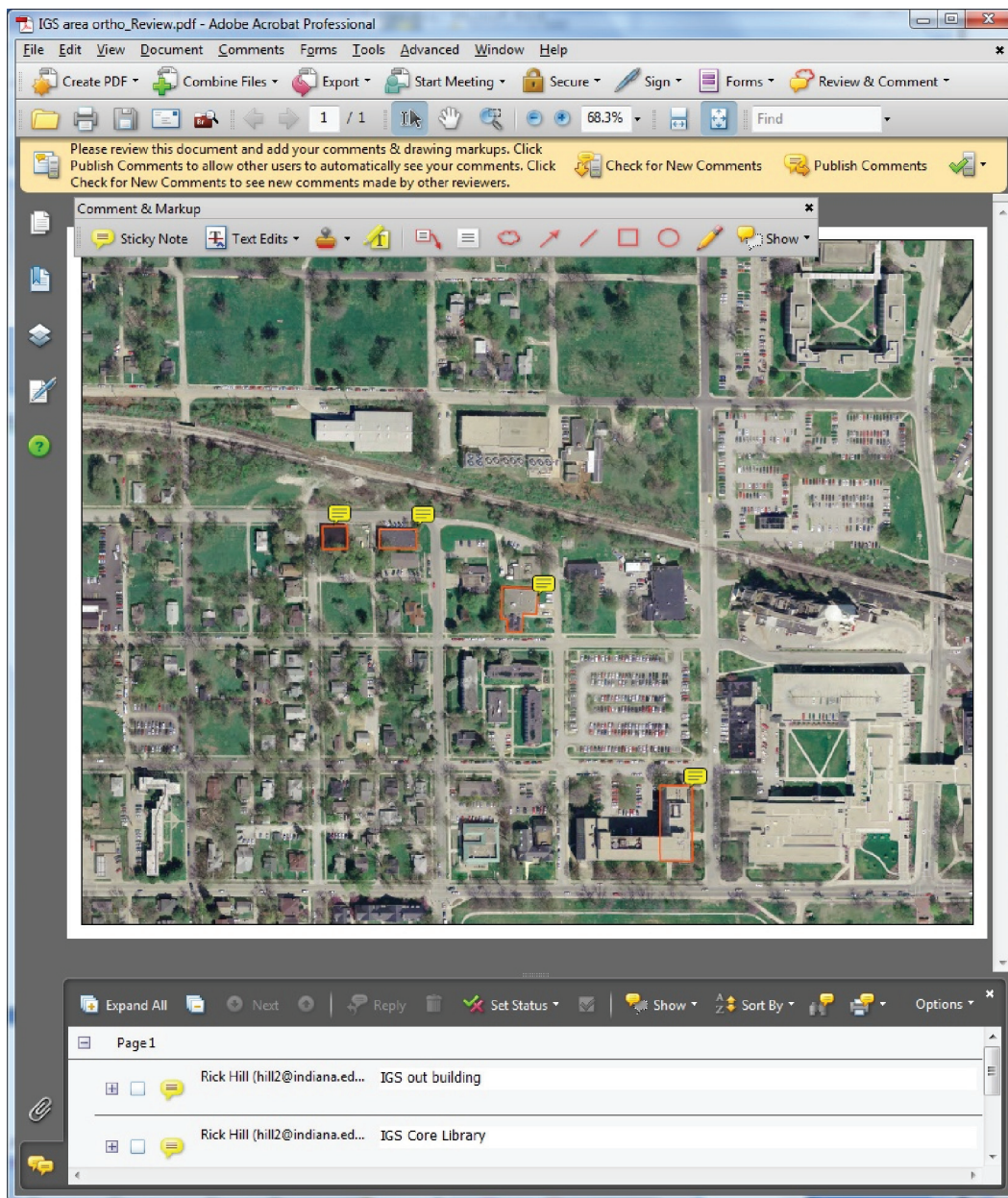


used to add comments and suggested edits to the document. The Show Comments List tool opens a window at the bottom of the PDF allowing reviewers to view all the comments and authors to respond to each comment (Figures 7 and 8).

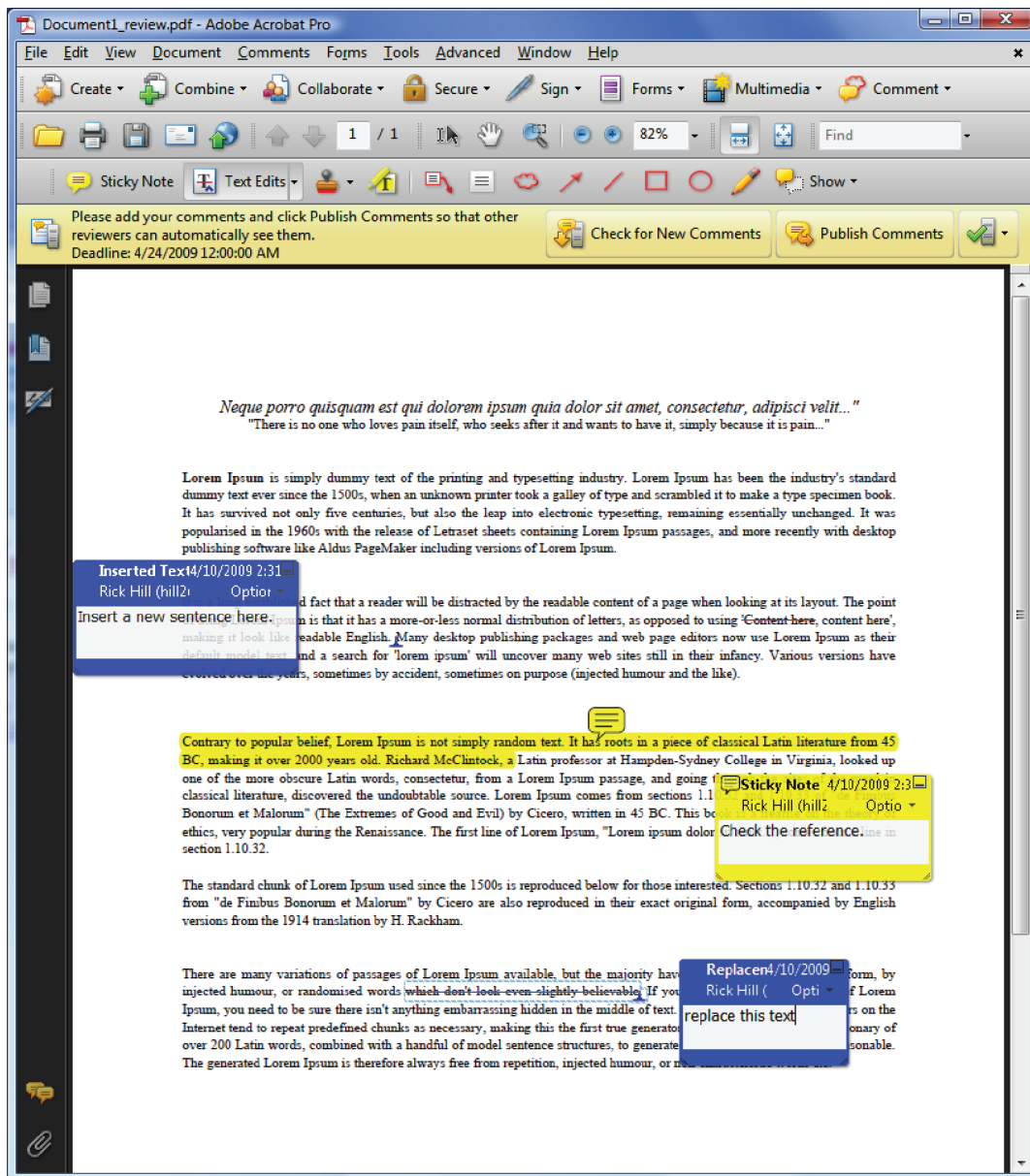
For author corrections of reviewed documents containing text, Adobe Acrobat Professional provides an Export Comments to Word function from within the Review and Comment toolbar. This feature converts the comments to the Microsoft Word Track Changes function, where authors can easily make the necessary updates. The updated Word document can easily be converted back to PDF if necessary.

## Author Assessment and Feedback

The author assesses the feedback and comments and makes the appropriate changes to the document. Additionally the author writes a response to each major review comment if he or she chooses not to make the suggested change. This task is easily accomplished using the Show Comments List tool. Each comment is displayed in the list. Selecting one comment will highlight it in the review document and allows the author to reply, sort, or set its status.



**Figure 7.** When reviewers receive the document, they click the Check for New Comments button to display the Comment and Markup toolbar.



**Figure 8.** This document shows examples of inserting, replacing, and deleting text and highlighting text to make comments.

## Comments and Feedback From IGS Staff Regarding the Online Review Process

- Experience has shown that the online review takes much less time to route a document through the review process compared with the traditional on-paper review. The quality of the online review is the same as the traditional on-paper review.
- A wide range of document types can be more easily reviewed using the online review process compared with the on-paper review process (namely, manuscripts, abstracts, proposals, maps, metadata, posters, brochures, illustrations, spreadsheets, database tables, graphics, scanned images, and Web pages).
- Some staff members prefer the traditional on-paper review process. Reading long manuscripts on a computer screen is not for everyone and may cause eye fatigue.

- The ability to review many types of documents in a single PDF file is a key benefit.
- The learning curve for the online review process is short. Many staff members have reported that they were reasonably comfortable with the online review process after completing several reviews.
- For Web page reviews, the Review Coordinator should include both a link to the PDF version of the Web page, and a link to the actual Web page on the development Web server. This will allow reviewers to view the Web content with all features enabled. Some Web content does not always translate well to the PDF format.

## For More Information

In Adobe Acrobat Professional you can learn more about the Review and Comment features by clicking on *Getting Started with Adobe Acrobat Professional* under the Help menu, then clicking on the *Review and Comment* button.