Set my (pdf)pages free

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Experienced (LA)TEX users know that they can do many things with these systems. However, new users, for instance only having learned enough to typeset a thesis, may not think of some of the other possibilities. Below I describe one (admittedly trivial) use of LaTeX for something other than typesetting a document.

With fair frequency I receive PDF files from which I wish to extract pages or images but cannot (my collaborators may not know their word processors are creating protected files). Maybe if I knew more about such security settings, I could undo the protection in other ways. However, I do know that the following tiny LaTeX program has always "set my PDF pages free" in the way I wanted. The file for the following program is named `select-pages.tex`.

```
\documentclass{article}
\usepackage{pdfpages}
\begin{document}
\includepdf[pages=1-8]% omit for all pages
  {name-of-file-to-be-freed.pdf}
\end{document}
```

I put a copy of the file in the directory with the PDF I want to set free, and then change the file name in the `\includepdf` command to the name of the file I want to unlock. I compile this little LaTeX program, and rename the result (which initially is `select-pages.pdf`) to be whatever I want it to be. Now I have a file which is no longer protected. (I don't know why this works, but it does.)

All the work is done by the **pdfpages** package (`ctan.org/pkg/pdfpages`). In the above example, pages 1 to 8 of the original document are processed into the output file. If the optional argument in square brackets is left out, the entire input document is processed into the output file. Other options for the **pages** parameter are available, and the **pdfpages** package has lots of other options; read about it at the above noted url.

Once the desired "free" pages are in the new file, I have found I can now extract pages and copy images which Acrobat and other applications on my Windows computer previously would not let me touch except to read.

This is one minuscule example of how (LA)TEX can do miscellaneous things for you. *TUGboat* has published many articles on using (LA)TEX as a more general purpose computing tool than typesetting alone, and no doubt would welcome more.

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