qpdf PDF page surgery

CONCEPTS

qpdf never changes how pages look. It restructures the PDF: select, merge, split, rotate, encrypt, repair.

Input PDF or --empty
↓ --pages / --rotate
Transform pages, crypto, streams
↓ write
Output PDF or --replace-input

Output is always the last plain argument. Options may come before or after the input file.

Exit code 0 is clean, 2 is an error, 3 means warnings only (output was still written).

INSPECT AND REPAIR

qpdf --check *<in.pdf>*
Check structure and stream data

qpdf --show-npages *<in.pdf>*
Print the page count

qpdf --is-encrypted *<in.pdf>*
Exit status tells if encrypted

qpdf --requires-password *<in.pdf>*
Exit status tells if a password is needed

qpdf --show-encryption *<in.pdf>*
Show encryption and permissions

qpdf *<in.pdf> <out.pdf>*
Rewrite file, often repairs damage

PAGE SELECTION

qpdf *<in.pdf>* **--pages . <range> --** *<out.pdf>*
Keep only these pages

qpdf --empty --pages *<a.pdf> <b.pdf>* **--** *<out.pdf>*
Merge whole files

PAGE SELECTION (cont.)

--pages *<a.pdf>* **1-3** *<b.pdf>* **5,z --**
Mix ranges from several files

1-5,8,10-z
Range: list, span, to last page

r1 / z
Last page

r3-r1
Last three pages

5-1
Reversed range

1-z:odd / 1-z:even
Odd or even positions in a range

SPLIT AND ROTATE

qpdf --split-pages *<in.pdf> <out.pdf>*
One file per page

qpdf --split-pages=*<n>* *<in.pdf> <out.pdf>*
Groups of n pages

--rotate=+90:*<range>*
Turn pages clockwise

ENCRYPTION

qpdf --encrypt *<user-pw> <owner-pw>* **256 --** *<in> <out>*
Password-protect, AES-256

qpdf --decrypt --password=*<pw> <in> <out>*
Remove encryption

Passwords on the command line show up in history and ps. Prefer --password-file.

OPTIMIZE AND EDIT

qpdf --linearize *<in.pdf> <out.pdf>*
Fast web view layout