Does the PDF icon render pictures and special characters?

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Yes! Prior to Joomla! 1.5, only the text values of an Article and only for ISO-8859-1 encoding was allowed in the PDF rendition. With the new PDF library in place, the complete Article including images is rendered and applied to the PDF. The PDF generator also handles the UTF-8 texts and can handle any character sets from any language. The appropriate fonts must be installed but this is done automatically during a language pack installation.