Marking Up And Adding Comments To PDF Documents

Increasingly, busy professionals receive various types of written content in the form of Portable Document Format (PDF) files. This content might be in the form of contracts, financial statements, reports, and even manuals associated with Continuing Professional Education (CPE) events. Often, recipients of this content would like to add notes, highlights, comments, and other markups to these PDF documents. In this tip, you will learn how to markup and add comments to PDF documents on various devices, including your computer and tablet.

Marking Up a PDF Document on a Personal Computer

If you have downloaded the PDF document onto your PC and if you have Adobe Acrobat Standard, Professional, or Suite[1] installed on the PC, marking up and adding comments to a PDF document is a simple and straightforward process. Additionally, if the author of the document has enabled this feature in the document, you can even use Acrobat Reader to mark up and comment on a PDF document.

Assuming the author of the document has not secured the document to prevent such markups, you can edit, markup, and add your comments to a PDF document by opening the document and clicking **Comments** to open the **Comment Pane**, as shown in **Figure 1**.
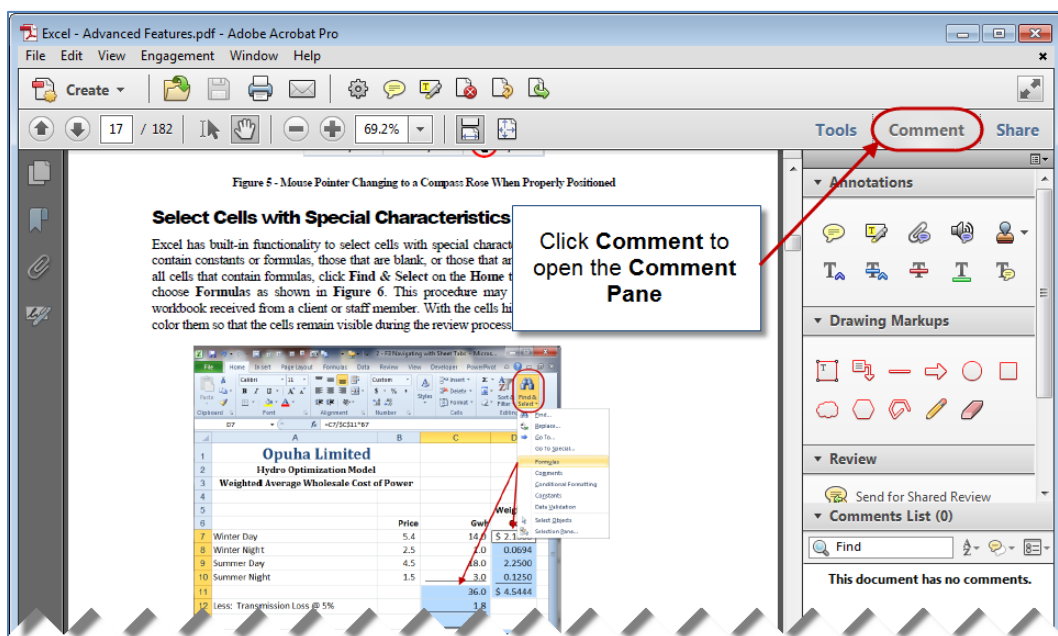

Figure 1 - Opening the Comment Pane in Adobe Acrobat Pro X

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[1] We have chosen to use the Adobe X family of products in this discussion because of their market-leading position. However, many other options exist for editing PDF documents on a PC, including PDF995, NitroPDF, and CutePDF.

With the Comments Pane open, you can easily select from the different types of markups and edits you would like to add to the document. Two of the more popular options are the **Highlight text** tool and the **Add sticky note** tool. As shown in **Figure 2**, upon clicking the **Highlight text** tool in the Comment Pane, you simply click and drag your mouse over the text you wish to highlight.
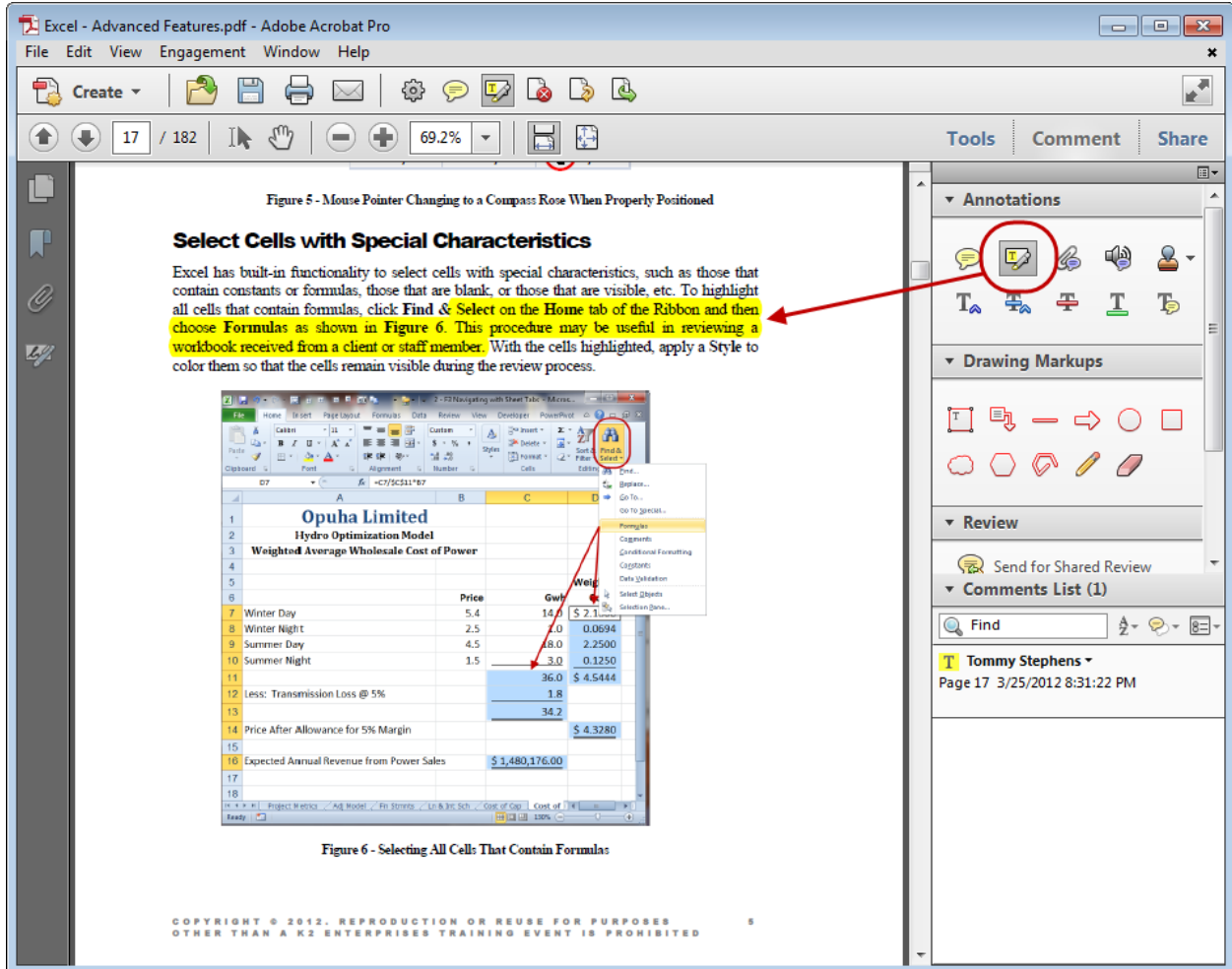
Figure 2 - Using the Highlight Text Tool in Acrobat X

Likewise, upon clicking the **Add sticky note** tool in the Comment Pane, you can add a note to the document, as shown in **Figure 3**. Once you have added the sticky note, you can minimize its appearance by clicking the minimize button in the upper right corner of the note.
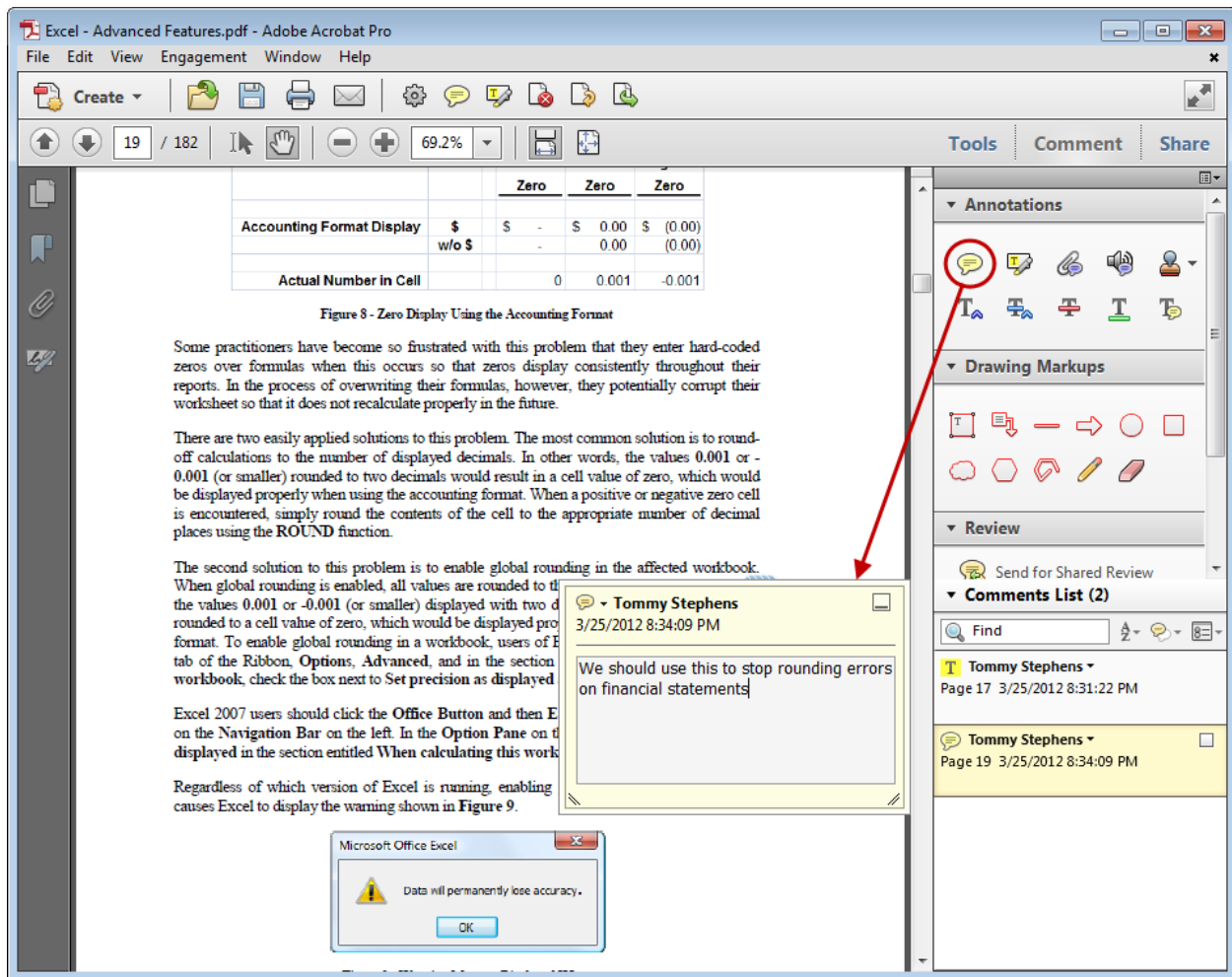
Figure 3 - Adding a Comment to a PDF in Acrobat X

These tools, in addition to the others available in the Commenting Pane, provide users with the ability to markup and comment on a PDF document on their PC just as if the document was paper-based and the user had a yellow highlighter in hand.

Marking Up a PDF Document on a Tablet Device

Apple iPads, Motorola Xooms, and countless other tablet devices are re-shaping how many people collaborate, communicate, and compute. In a growing number of cases, owners of these devices choose to receive and open documents – including PDF documents, such as those described previously – on their tablets. Since users interact with tablets in a much different way than they interact with their PC, many are unaware of their options to markup and comment on PDF documents on their tablets. In this section, we examine some of the many options for doing so, using the iPad as the foundation of the discussion.

Of course, before you can markup or comment on a PDF document on your tablet, you must first download and install an appropriate app that provides the functionality. Numerous quality options exist for this task, including **Adobe Reader** (free), **GoodReader for iPad** ($4.99), and **iAnnotate PDF** ($9.99).

For a complete list of the PDF apps available for your tablet, visit your device's app store and search for "PDF."

Adobe Reader

Our first illustration will use the free **Adobe Reader** app for the iPad as the demonstration vehicle. If you choose to open a PDF using this app, your mark up and commenting options are virtually non-existent. As shown in **Figure 4**, available options are limited to switching between Reading Modes; Forwarding, Printing, and Opening in another app; Searching the PDF; and Adding a Bookmark. Given this dearth of functionality, it is all but a requirement to utilize a more robust app for this task.
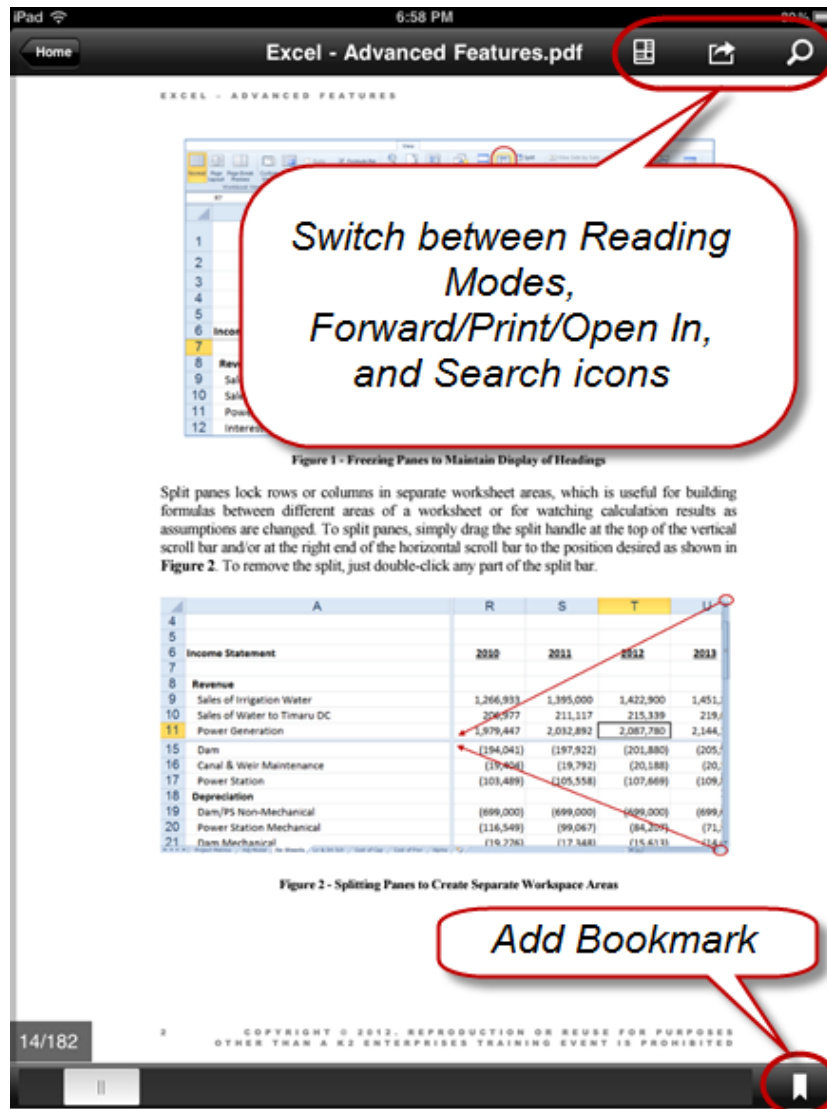

Figure 4 - Opening a PDF Document in Adobe Reader for iPad App

GoodReader for iPad

One of the more popular PDF tools for the iPad is **GoodReader for iPad**. GoodReader provides numerous mark up and commenting tools. As shown in **Figure 5**, GoodReader docks a toolbar to the right side of the window.
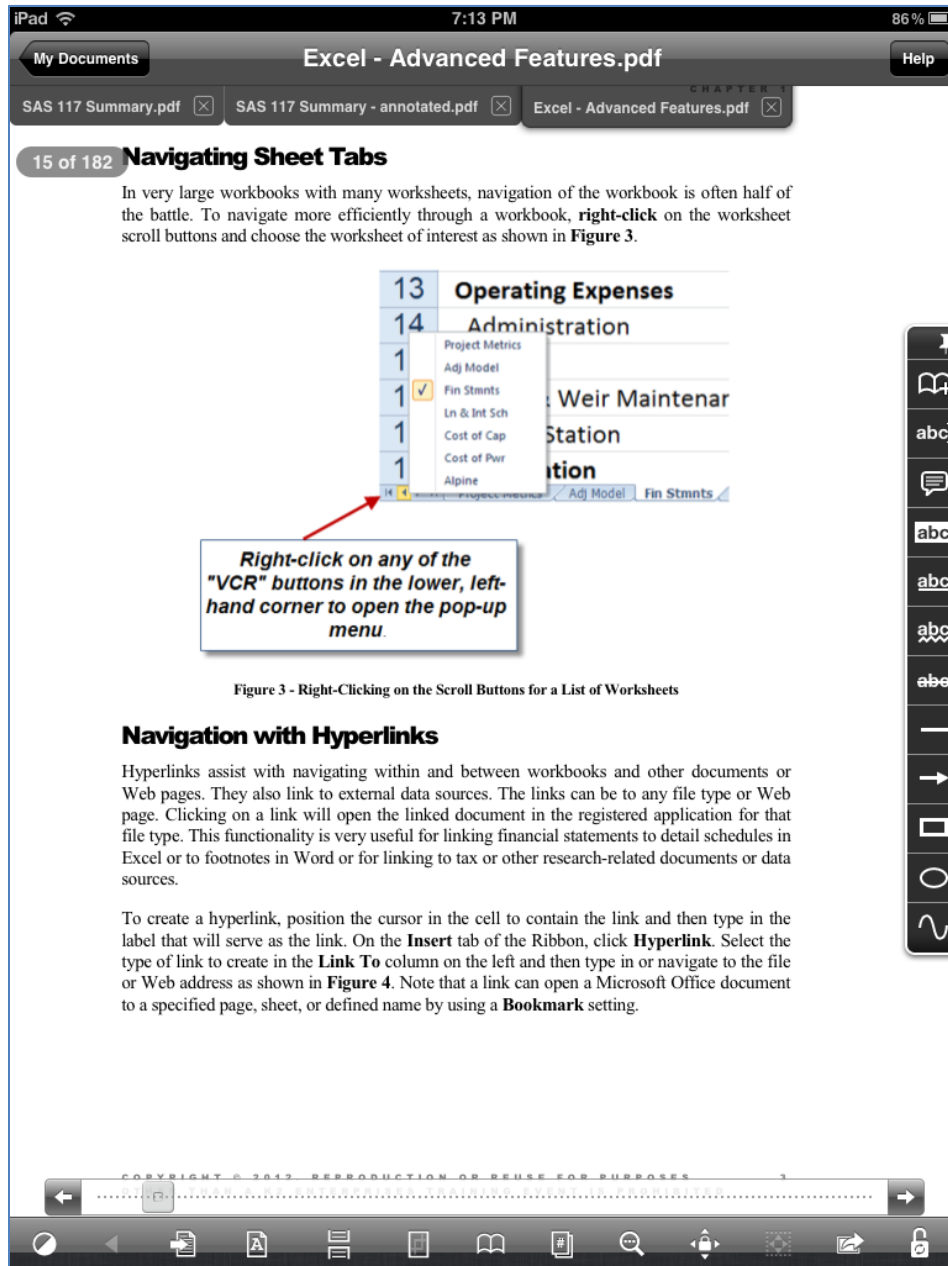
Figure 5 - Editing Toolbar in GoodReader

The GoodReader toolbar contains options for marking up a document, including a comment tool, a highlighter tool, the ability to add free-form drawings and text. Using these tools, you can markup a document to achieve a result very similar to that obtained when marking up on a PC, as shown in **Figure 6**.
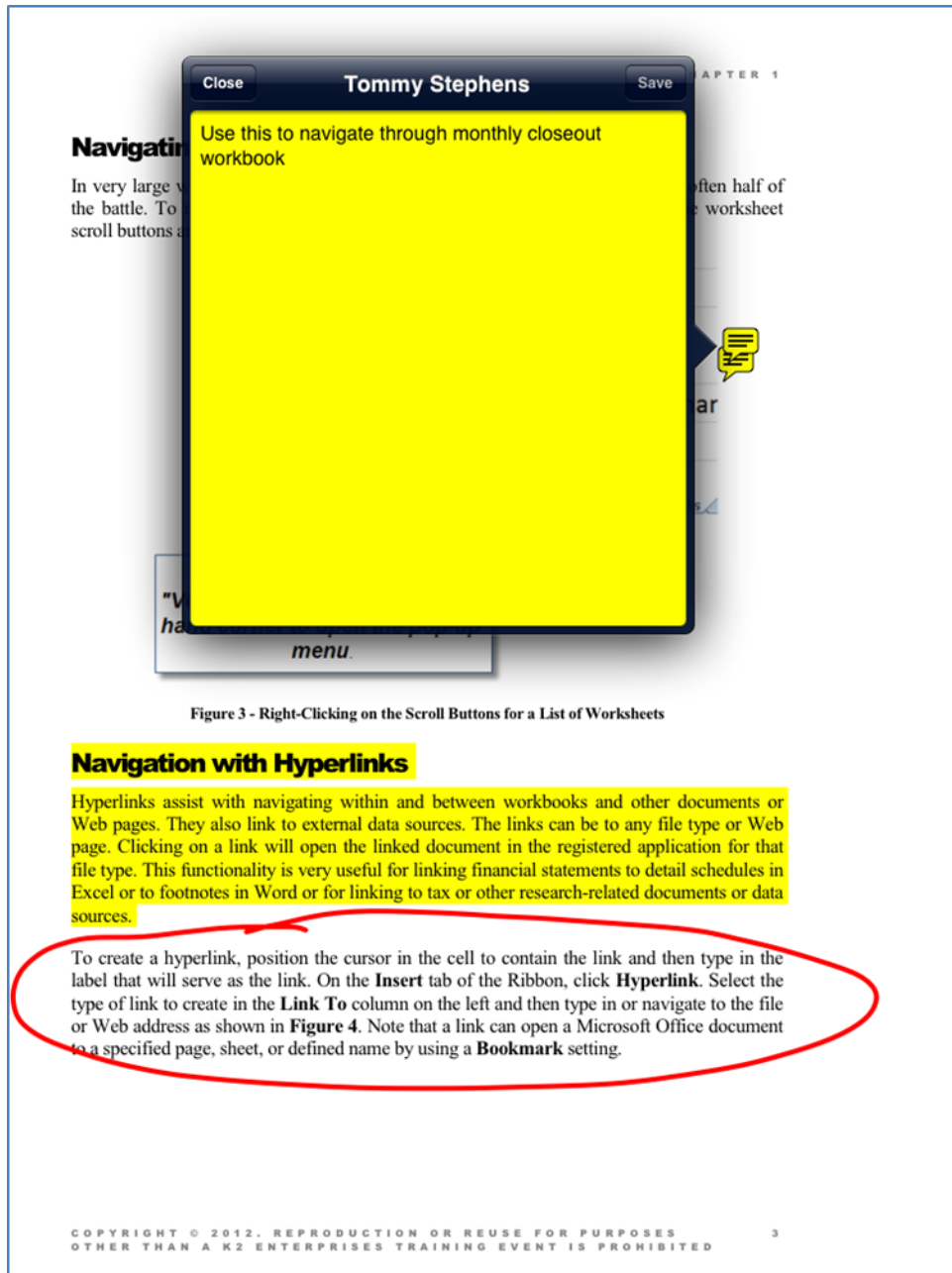
Figure 6 - Marking Up a Document in GoodReader

iAnnotate PDF

iAnnotate PDF is a PDF app with a very deep and robust feature set designed to allow you not only to read PDF documents but also to annotate these documents using highlighting, a pen tool, notes, bookmarks, and other options. iAnnotate PDF also provides a tabbed browser that allows you to work with multiple PDFs simultaneously and the ability to sync your documents to other devices using Dropbox. **Figure 7** provides an example of the iAnnotate PDF user interface with a marked up document.
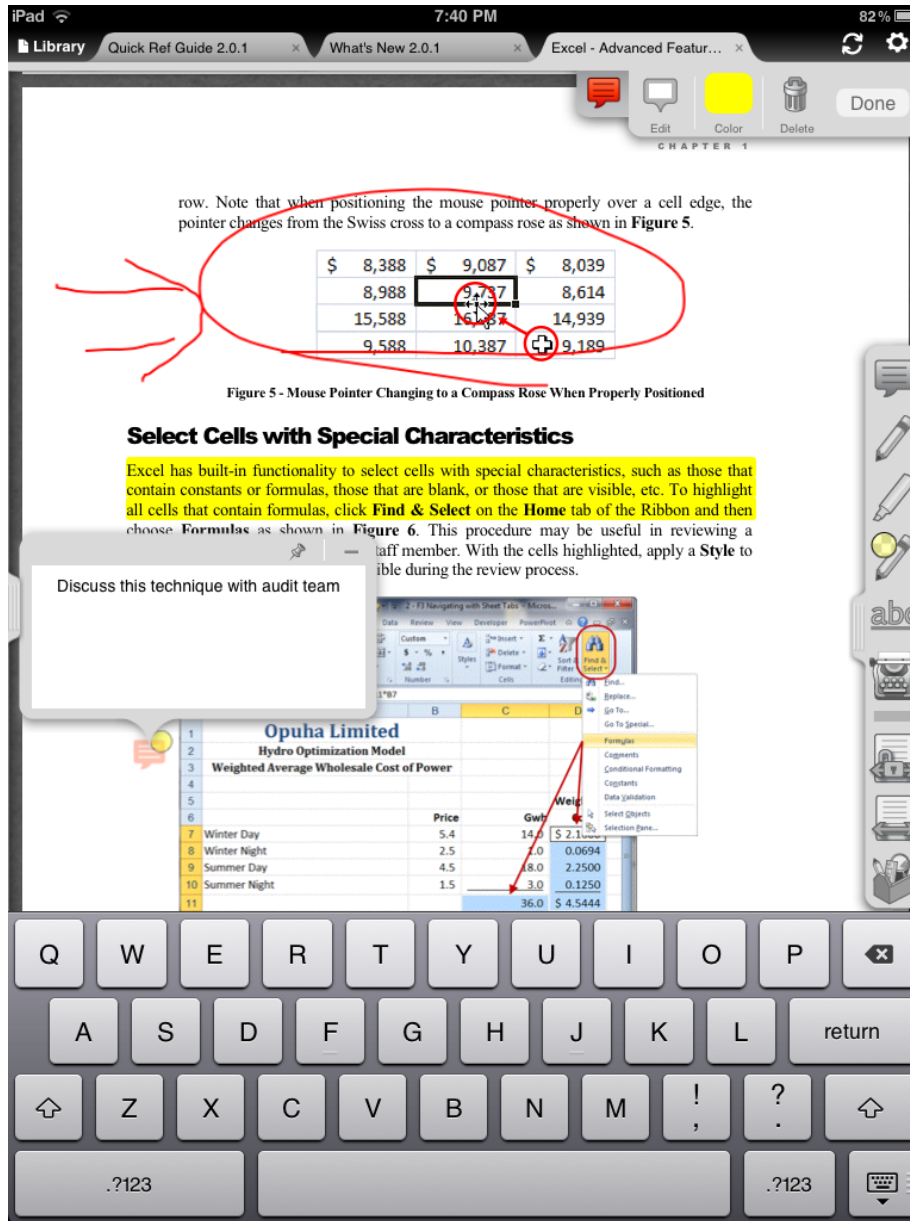
Figure 7 – Marking Up a PDF Using iAnnotate PDF

Summary

The march toward electronic documents continues, but that does not mean that you will give up the ability to edit these documents, nor does it mean you have to print the documents to paper and then markup and comment on the documents using traditional methods. Rather, if you will invest a few minutes to explore some of the electronic options for marking up and editing documents, you will be pleasantly surprised that most, if not all, of your familiar markup tools are available from within your software or app of choice.

For a video demonstration of this tip, please visit www.tinyurl.com/k2tips114.