

**OMNIPAGE PROFESSIONAL 16**  
**OCR SOFTWARE PLUS**  
**By Eli Spater**

OmniPage Professional 16 is a fast and precise way to convert paper and PDF files into files you can edit or archive in your various PC applications. OmniPage Professional 16 provides the speed, quality and features required to access and store information in all your documents.

Let me start by saying that I've been using OmniPage 11 for several years. This version is quite different and contains many new features. It is a shame that I only have use for about 40% of its capabilities. But the many features available mean that it will be useful to a large range of users.

The only negative thing I have to say about the program is its manual, which I found confusing at best. It is a good thing that the basic operation of the program is relatively simple to understand.

## **FEATURES**

Scan and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) pages to text files individually or in batches.

Convert (OCR) pdf files to text documents

Scan forms conversion

Automated data collection from forms

Batch conversion or batch create PDF files

Forms made easy - from start to finish

With OmniPage, you can turn paper forms into electronic forms and then collect the data. OmniPage batch processes all filled forms then creates a data file that can be opened in spreadsheets or database programs.

## **Optical Character Recognition**

Through the process of Optical Character Recognition, text graphics of the document or image are converted to text files that can be edited as if they had been typed into the original material. Images in your documents can be retained in a variety of image formats or discarded. It can even appropriately capture data in table format. Output can be converted to plain text, text with images retained, and text and images in as close to the original layout as possible. Output formats include Word, Excel, PowerPoint, text, WordPerfect, PDF, HTML, audio, XPF and others.

The source of the data can be a scanned document, a digital photo of a document, or a PDF file. Files that can be interpreted include: TIFF, PCX, DCX, BMP, JPEG, JB2, JP2, GIF, PNG, XIFF, MAX, PDF, XPS.

Of course, not all objects can be easily scanned. An object might be too big, attached to a wall, or in a location where there is no scanner. The advent of the digital camera means that all of these objects can now be easily captured thanks to OmniPage 16 digital camera technology. But being able to then extract text from images was only one technological hurdle to overcome. The other obstacle is that these images are taken in three dimensions, unlike a scanner that has only two dimensions. So OCR technology must be able to recognize text that is not aligned, or has been taken at an angle or from a curved surface. OmniPage 16 Pro can now compensate for these distortions and successfully extracts the required text using its new "3-D Capture for Digital Cameras."

## **Batch Manager**

OmniPage includes an additional program called Batch Manager. Although it is integrated with OmniPage, it can be run separately. What I particularly like about this program is that you can set it up to run workflows independently, and even unattended. First you define what you want the workflow to do. If it is to save files to disk, you can define the location of the folder in which you wish it to be saved. For example, you choose the workflow, and, when the program reaches the "Save Files" section, the type of file(s) and the location of those files have been predefined. I really like this capability, as it saves a lot of Explorer-clicking when you run one type of workflow and then a different one. It can also be set up to "watch" a folder. When an image file arrives in that folder, the Batch Manager can pick it up and process it according to the defined workflow.

## **Installation**

OmniPage 16 Professional requires a "clean slate" to install. This means that all previous versions of OmniPage must be uninstalled. I have other PDF creators installed but they didn't seem to be a problem. OmniPage16 Pro also seems to automatically set up your installed scanner.

## **Overview of Start-up**

When OmniPage16 Pro first starts up, it shows you three possible screen views: Classic, Flexible, and QuickConvert. The Classic view is similar to what was used in earlier versions. QuickConvert is designed for beginners and prominently shows the most important conversion options. Flexible view is designed for more advanced users and displays more options. If necessary, one can easily switch between views from the menu bar.

## **Zones**

OmniPage16 Pro can scan documents and detect "zones". These are areas that it detects that may require special handling. Zones define areas enclosed by borders drawn over a page image with a background that may be ignored. There are text, table, graphic and also process and ignore zones. Auto-zoning allows the program to detect

blocks of text, headings, tables, pictures and other elements on a page and draw zones to enclose them. It assigns text, table and graphic zone types to all zones and alphanumeric or numeric zone contents to text and table zones.

There are many possible uses for this feature. For example, if one has promotional material with graphics to be reused in other material, OmniPage16 Pro can be set to scan and only capture the selected zone and ignore everything else. The output will contain only the graphic selected which can then be used to create a new document with different text or added graphics, thus maintaining the "look and feel" in promotional materials while delivering a different message. Try as I might, I could not get this function to work properly. I scanned in a flyer that had text and graphics and different orientations. I then set "ignore" zones to eliminate some of the graphics and text I did not want. The output was basically the same except that the program mangled the OCR on several areas of the text. The graphics came out fine except nothing was "ignored" and everything was still there.

I personally find manual zoning to be of the greatest value. This is where you scan a page into the program and manually setup zones using your mouse. These zones set up in order of their creation. You can then OCR the zones and convert them into a text file for editing.

## **Conclusion**

OmniPage 16 at \$499 list (online at \$280) is not inexpensive, but the greater the number of its features you use, the greater the value of the program, and this program may pay for itself.

Overall, this is an excellent product. If you go with the Professional version reviewed here, you get PDF Creator (PDF generator) and PaperPort 11 (a digital document management and search tool). The Pro version also has advanced work-flow capabilities, powerful mark-up features, and the ability to process and create forms. Finally, it also works with FTP (File Transfer Protocol) sites. In fact, there are simply too many features to detail them all here. Unfortunately, OmniPage offers no trial version, so you will want to spend some time at the OmniPage Web site before getting started.

With a product as complex and as feature-rich as OmniPage16 Pro, it is important, if not imperative, to have top-notch support and Nuance does have a web site with all manner of support options one can access: a knowledge base system, a download section, a user guide section, and a forum-style community help section.

There is also phone support. Unfortunately, it is the type of over the phone support that has a fee. The technical phone support (and there is no email support) costs \$19.95 per call after the first "free" call.

As I stated before, this program at \$499 list (online at \$280) justifies its existence with its abundance of features. However, if you have a scanner and only wish to scan simple

clean sheet of typed text, there are a number of OCR programs available including a simpler form of OmniPage from Nuance for only \$149.99 and online for \$66.

## **Available Online Support**

Knowledge Base - <http://knowledgebase.nuance.com/>

Find answers to many technical questions for all our product families.

Downloads - <http://support.nuance.com/downloads/>

Find software updates, drivers, service packs and patches.

User's Guides - <http://support.nuance.com/usersguides/>

Get detailed information on product features, benefits and technical specifications.

Communities - <http://support.nuance.com/communities/>

Post questions in our online forums and share ideas with peers and experts.

Hardware Compatibility List - <http://support.nuance.com/compatibility/>

View a representative list of hardware devices that are compatible with Nuance products.

Product Activation - <http://support.nuance.com/productactivation/>

All about activation of Nuance software.

## **SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

An Intel® Pentium® III or higher processor or its equivalent. Intel Core Duo, Intel Core 2 Duo or AMD X2 Dual Core 3600+ recommended for advanced performance.

Windows 2000 (from Service Pack 2), Windows XP 32 bit (from Service Pack 2), Windows XP 64-bit, Windows Vista 32-bit, Windows Vista 64-bit

### **Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher – for Pro only**

256 MB of memory (RAM), 1GB recommended for advanced performance.

150 MB of free hard disk space for the application files and sample images, plus 70 MB working space during installation. An additional 245 MB for RealSpeak™ Solo speech modules (nine languages)

### **20 MB for ScanSoft PDF Create! and 250 MB for PaperPort – for Pro only**

1024x768 pixel color monitor with 16-bit color or greater video card

CD-ROM drive for installation

A compatible scanner with its own scanner driver software for scanning documents.

A sound card and speaker for reading text aloud

Web access needed for automatic product activation and Scanner Wizard database updating

To save DOCX, XLSX and PPTX files (Microsoft Office 2007 Word, Excel and PowerPoint file formats) or to load and save XPS files (XML Paper Specification files), you should install Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0 if you are not already running Windows Vista or have Office 2007 installed.

## **COMPANY**

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## **PRICES**

OmniPage Professional 16 = \$499.99 list, online \$280.00  
OmniPage 16 = \$149.99 list, online \$66.00