Review: OmniPage Pro 11
Vendor: Scansoft, Inc. (http://www.scansoft.com/)
Author: Steve Weinberg

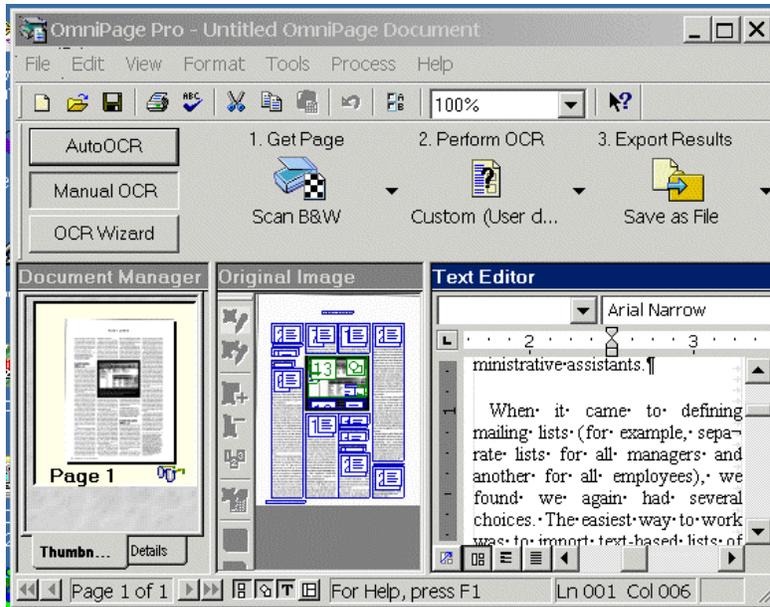| <u>**Software That Sings at 95**</u>	

A friend once said of his high-powered sporty sedan, "It sings at 95." *OmniPage Pro 11* OCR software sings at 95. This elegant software truly has a user interface that is "intuitively obvious." Everything makes sense and works smoothly. Surprisingly, too, it comes with an excellent, "just the right size," printed manual. The details of the program's usage and other supplementary materials are installed with the software.

This is more than just OCR software. But, let's start with the basics. For those who don't know, OCR (Optical Character Recognition) takes printed documents from your scanner and converts them to editable documents for your word processor or other text or graphics application software. The biggest hurdles that needed conquering have been "reading" the text accurately enough to be able to use it in your word processor without much worry about incorrect text and maintaining, as much as possible, the original document format. *OmniPage Pro 11* accomplishes both and much more.

As a computer junkie, OCR software has always intrigued me with the promise of converting images to text. I've been disappointed by several products over the years. After simple installation, I scanned a flyer and found results somewhat disappointing. I followed the instructions and with a little tune up. I got superior results. Some more tuning and I was reliably scanning documents with drop caps, multiple, flowing columns and embedded graphics. All this performance at super speed even though my old parallel port scanner was not on the supported scanner list in either OmniPage or Windows 2000.

The results are fantastic accuracy. I scanned a page of *PC Magazine* that has small 8-point type in multiple columns with a graphic in the middle of the page. There was hardly an error in the text conversion to a *MS Word* document. (See graphic) This is the basic function of OCR software, recognize each letter from the scanner (really a graphic image made up of a pattern of dots) and convert it to a letter that a word processor is used to handling. Further, groups of letters should form recognizable words. True, this is a high-end software package that not everybody can afford for his or her OCR needs. But, should you need it, this is the one to look at. There is an impressive array of additional features that is included. Here are some of my explorations that may intrigue you with the level of sophistication that has been reached.

OmniPage Pro - Untitled OmniPage Document

File   Edit   View   Format   Tools   Process   Help

100%

AutoOCR   1. Get Page   2. Perform OCR   3. Export Results

Manual OCR

OCR Wizard   Scan B&W   Custom (User d...   Save as File

Document Manager | Original Image | Text Editor

Arial Narrow

ministrative·assistants.¶

When· it· came· to· defining·
mailing· lists·(for· example,· sepa¬
rate· lists· for· all· managers· and·
another· for· all· employees),· we·
found· we· again· had· several·
choices.·The·easiest·way·to·work·
was· to· import· text-based· lists· of·

Page 1

Thumbn...   Details

Page 1 of 1   For Help, press F1   Ln 001 Col 006

Direct OCR is an innovative way to hook directly into other applications that you would like to import scanner output to. I started MS Word and then started *OmniPage Pro 11*. Click *Direct OCR* and there is *MS Word* in the window that shows running applications. I clicked *Add* and that was all there was to do. This is referred to as registering the software application with *OmniPage Pro 11*. From this point on, any time I am using *MS Word*, two additional menu items are there to "acquire text" and "acquire text settings." Click it and scanned documents are brought directly into *Word*. It worked flawlessly. OCR'ed, proofed and placed right at the cursor location. There's hardly a need to edit the text or the format.

PDF files are those usually produced by *Adobe Acrobat*. The idea is that they are universally readable and remain unchanged for one computing platform to another. Along with this great format is the down side of not being able to reverse engineer the document such that it can be edited and modified and, potentially, re-published as a new PDF file. For example, let's say you downloaded a tax form from some Federal or state website. Most of these are in PDF format. Using *OmniPage Pro 11*, you could download the PDF file, convert it to a word processor format of your choice and edit it to insert your personal information which could then be printed and filed. As a bonus, you can save any document in PDF format without having *Adobe Acrobat Writer* to do it. It tried it and it worked beautifully.

Suppose you have documents to scan in a language other than English. No problem! The program "understands" over 100 languages. You can use only one language a time, but the switch between languages is easy to do.

The program has a street price of $469 and an upgrade price of $149. Windows 95, 98, Me, NT 4.0, 2000 – a Pentium Processor or equivalent and 32 megabytes of memory are all that is required. However, on my Pentium, 1 gigahertz with 256 megabytes of memory, *OmniPage Pro 11* sings at 95.