



From the Technology Trenches – Rick Bernauer, Senior Systems Consultant

Desktop scanners are easy to find these days. However, many of them are designed more for home photos than office document scanning. If you're planning to get a scanner, look for a flat-bed version (if you want to scan pages from a book) and a reliable automatic document feeder (ADF) option. As I mentioned last month, scanning an image of a document is easy, the real work comes when you try to perform optical character recognition (OCR) to convert the image into editable text.

OCR software like OmniPage, TextBridge, and ReadIris can all help with the conversion from a printed page to a Word document. Watch out for margins, tab spacing and other formatting that will make the document hard to edit. I recommend having the OCR and clean-up work done by someone who works with the software often so they learn and remember the tricks that help get the job done. Having someone trying to scan, OCR and edit a document under pressure of a deadline is not the time to learn.

OCR/Scanning Tips:

Start with a good original. Watch out for poor or faint text, handwritten notes or stamps which might confuse the OCR software. Ask if you can get the document in digital form and save yourself time and trouble.

Make sure the scanned image is aligned and clear. Text that isn't straight causes more recognition errors.

Try different settings on the scanning software to find the best configuration. Don't set your scan resolution higher than 300dpi when scanning a document. Higher resolution can actually confuse the OCR character recognition.

Make sure you have the latest updates and patches for the software.

Most importantly – always proofread everything.

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