

Reviews



Prizmo 1.5

by L. Davenport

Are there times when you wish you owned a scanner? Do you wonder, “I only need to scan something once in a while-is it worth buying a scanner?” If the answer is “NO”, but you do have a digital camera-you can have the next best thing.

Prizmo is a software package that turns your digital camera into a scanner (provided you have a USB cable to connect your camera to you computer).

“Why do I need to buy a program when I can import my photos into my Mac with Apple’s Image Capture” you ask? Good question. The answer is, Prizmo does so much more. For example, it can straighten your image, i.e correct the lens distortion and perspective. Say you took a picture of a sign or a portrait at an angle, but when you got home, you wished that you had taken it straight on? With a little help from you, Prizmo has the ability to correct the angle (Figures 2 & 3).

You start off by dragging a photo into the Prizmo Document window (or use Prizmo’s option to import a photo from a camera or

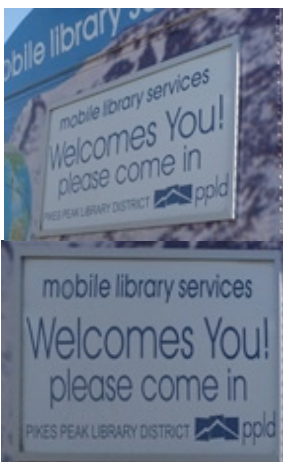


Figure 1 a scanner). Next, you click on the four corners of the photo or just the item within the photo that you want straightened. Immediately a box surrounds the photo or item. After tweaking it a little to be sure you have the exact corners selected, (if you take a close look at Figure 2 you will see a thin green line surrounding the For Sale sign), Prizmo shows you a preview of the straightened (perspective-corrected) version on the left side of the window.

Occasionally the preview looks a little squished (this is especially noticeable on images that are square). You can compensate for this by clicking and dragging the side of the preview. This was done in Figure 3 but not in Figure 2. Notice how Figure 2 looks a little narrower

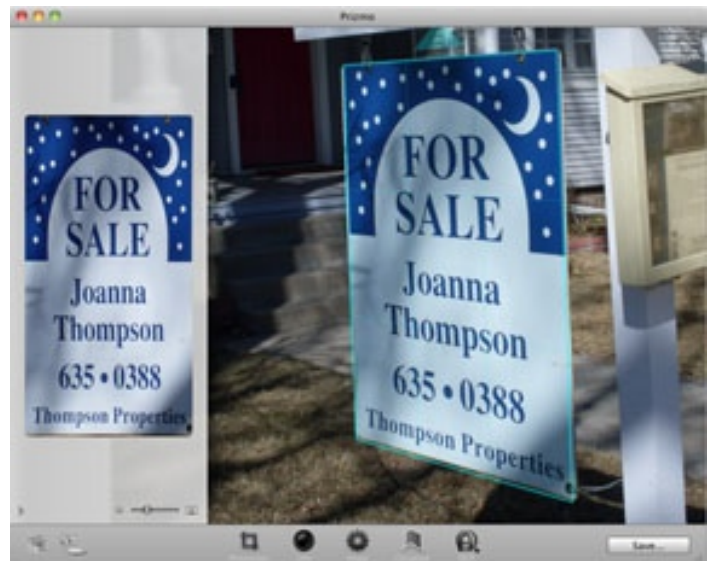


Figure 2: Prizmo’s Document window

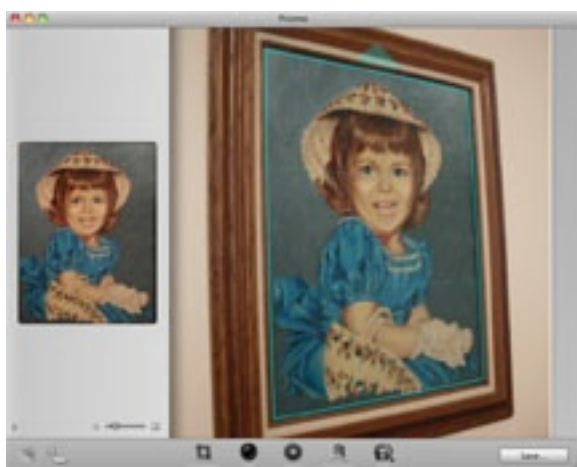


Figure 3: Straightening a portrait.

than it should be. But Figure 3 looks just right. When you are satisfied, you can save the modified picture as a JPG, PNG, or TIFF file.

Not convinced? Then know this, Prizmo has another trick up its sleeve: OCR (Optical Character Recognition). If your camera takes a sharp picture where the letters are readable, Prizmo will identify the text on a page (Figure 4) and then let you save it as a Text, RTF Text, PDF Text or PDF (Image + Hidden Text) file. Simply proof read the text in your word processor to catch any mistakes.

You’re still are not convinced? How about this: The new version of Prizmo now lets you tether your camera to your Mac. By letting Prizmo take the picture and immediately bring it in to Prizmo to be modified. Prizmo supports Full and Half Tethering. With Full tethering Prizmo takes the picture. With half tethering, you take the picture and it then shows up in Prizmo’s Document window. FYI: Half tethering is for the cameras that don’t support

full tethering [I don't know if this would work or not, but I was thinking that if a person had a portable Mac and a camera that allows tethering, they could take pictures on vacation and immediately know if the pictures turned out - the LCD is so small on my camera, I don't know until I return home whether or not the pictures I took were fuzzy].

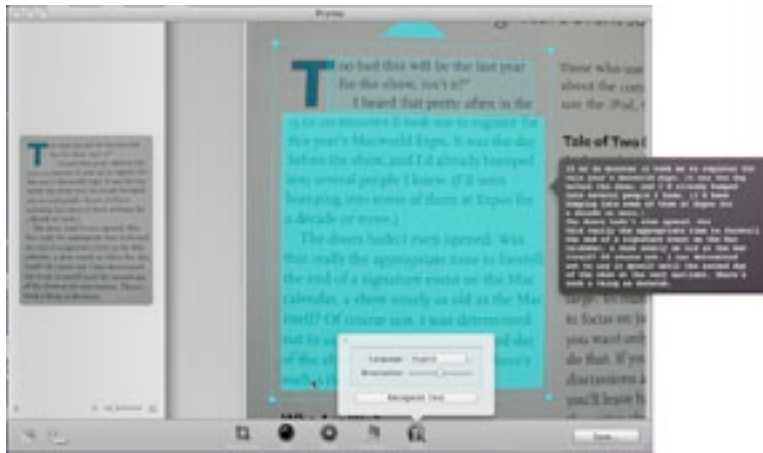


Figure 4: Prizmo's Optical Character Recognition function.

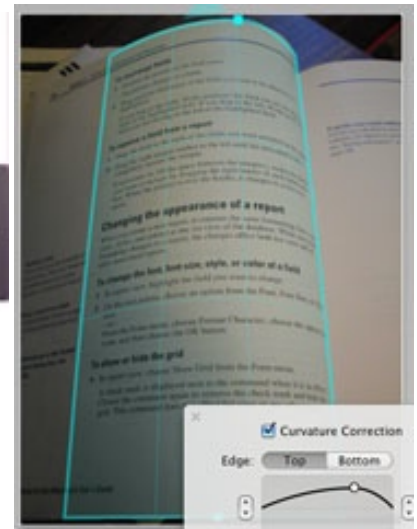


Figure 5: Prizmo's Curvature Correction for OCR for curved pages.

There are eight buttons that line the bottom of the Prizmo window. They are:

- Import a picture from the iPhoto/Aperture/Lightroom... library.
- Import an image from your camera or from your scanner (Prizmo uses Apple's Image Capture program to scan images).
- Zoom in/out the input photograph.
- Page Dimensions. This lets you change the size and resolution of your image.
- Lens Options. This lets you choose the best calibration model for your camera. It also lets you adjust the 1st and 2nd radial distortion (or curviness degrees) to fine tune the distortion. If your camera isn't listed, Prizmo tells you how to create a calibration model for your camera.
- Image Processing. This lets you adjust the brightness, sharpness, contrast, and saturation of your image
- The Curvature Correction pane button lets you fine tune the curvature correction of your image (Figure 5). This is a new feature in the 1.5 version of Prizmo. Not all pages are flat (as in a magazine or book) so Prizmo lets you make a selection box that conforms to the shape of the page to counteract the pages curvature).
- OCR Options. This lets you initiate the "Recognize Text" option, plus it lets you specify the language of the text that you want to scan (10 languages are available).

The Skinny

Evaluation:

Pros: When I first discovered this program, I was intrigued. The more I looked into what it could do, the more I wanted it - not for OCR but to straighten photos. Occasionally I will go to a museum or an art gallery where I like to take photos of paintings (where permissible). Problem is, most times you get a bounce back from the lighting if you take the photo straight-on. So a lot of times I have to take it at an angle-not my preference, but at least I have the photo of the painting. I don't have to worry about that any more. I can simply take my photos at an angle and then use Prizmo to straighten them when I get home. I am sold.

Cons: I had a little trouble with the OCR feature. Though it did fine on flat close-up photos (there were no mistakes in my first test run), it balked at distant or curved pages. But this could have been because of the limitations of my particular camera. My second "Con" has nothing to do with the running of the program, it is just a minor gripe that I have: Online Registration is required..

An added benefit: I know that the whole idea of this is to scan without a scanner, but if you do have a scanner, you can still benefit from this program. The OCR and Image Distortion correction functions worked perfectly on my scanned images.

I suggest you download the Demo to see if all of Prizmo's features work with your Camera, ie. I could bring in the pictures for processing, but the Tethering feature didn't work with my cheap-o digital camera (when my camera is connected to the Mac, its LCD turns off and it acts just like a flash drive).

Requires: Any Mac with OS 10.5.8 or higher (including 10.6x), at least 64 MB of video RAM.

Company: [Creaced](#)

Street Price: \$39.95

[Available Demo](#)