

review by John Brochu

.5 Stars — 1 Star Poor, 5 Stars Excellent

Product: Myrmidon

Version: 2.01

Distributor: Terry Morse Software, Inc.

List Price: \$99 MRP; \$69 (limited time at the Terry Morse website)

Contact Info: <http://www.terrymorse.com/>

Genre: Internet Publishing Tool

System Requirements: System 7.1 or greater

review

"Turn any Mac file into a Web page with one click" is the claim of this newly-updated web publishing tool from Terry Morse Software. Is it a valid claim? Well... yes, and no. If you're looking for a perfect translation, you'll be disappointed. But given the current state of the HTML markup language, to expect anything more than what Myrmidon comes up with is frankly expecting too much. Given that, this utility does an amazing job.

In several days of testing, Terry Morse Myrmidon proved itself to be a stable, easy to use and easy to configure (an important point — read on) utility. Since it's a printer driver, or more correctly a Chooser extension, it's compatible with virtually any application that can print. Myrmidon's Page Setup and Print dialogs replace your application's normal dialogs when printing.

nstallation is a snap; just run the installer provided on disk and select Myrmidon in the Chooser. Conversion is accomplished by simply selecting the "Print" command in the File menu of your word processor, page layout program, or any other application. You then click the "Publish" button and you're asked to select the desired location and filename of the new HTML file. Any graphics produced are automatically placed in a folder called "Imgs" which is created for you in the selected folder. Images can be output in either GIF or JPEG format.

onverting to HTML

Although you could certainly get right to work producing web pages without changing any of the settings, to get the best results, you must read through the manual and familiarize yourself with how Myrmidon operates. It also helps if you have at least a basic understanding of HTML. Terry was very thoughtful in providing full balloon help in the Print and Page Setup dialogs, something that is all-too-often overlooked.

Myrmidon works by analyzing the printer data sent from your application when you print. Using this data, it applies certain rules, which are configurable in the Page Setup dialog, to recognize and convert blank spaces and other visual cues to the proper HTML formatting tags. It uses the common webmeister's trick of using an invisible image (sized using the

width and height image tags), and invisible tables to emulate the spacing of your document. Typefaces, sizes, colors, and styles are all properly converted, within the limitations of the current HTML specification. Important recommendations are made in the manual which should be well heeded if you want to get an accurate translation. For instance, it recommends you use specific font sizes that are commonly used by web browsers to represent the 7 standard font sizes of HTML. Using a size that is significantly larger or smaller than those used in your browser can throw off the formatting.

There are two main uses for Myrmidon. One is to convert existing documents for publication on the web, and the other is to use it with your word processor or layout program as a web design tool. Although programs like ClarisWorks and Word have limited HTML output capability, Myrmidon does a much better job of producing a close rendition of your document.

Changing the Conversion Settings

Selecting the Page Setup command in the File menu brings up the Myrmidon Settings dialog. This allows you to customize how Myrmidon converts the file. This can be an important step, especially if you want to get a close approximation of your document. Myrmidon usually does a decent job with the default configuration (entitled "Wizzy-Web Conversion"), but if you are converting a file with a lot of graphics it tends to just convert the whole page into one large image file, rather than mixed text and graphics. Although this does produce an excellent rendition of the original document, and this indeed can be a useful tool in itself, it produces rather large files for a web document. This is explained thoroughly in the manual, and can easily be corrected by telling Myrmidon to not convert rectangles and text to images.

onversion settings can be edited by selecting the "Edit..." button in the Settings dialog, which brings up the configuration dialog. This dialog allows you to configure how Myrmidon interprets the print data sent to it for conversion into the appropriate HTML elements. Almost any aspect of the conversion process can be tailored to fit your document to get as close a rendition as possible. It may take some experimentation to get the optimum settings, and this is where having some knowledge of HTML may help. Alternatively, you can also choose to modify your document slightly to help Myrmidon along.

verall

Terry Morse Myrmidon is a well-thought-out, well-designed, and polished product that continues to evolve, with frequent updates available from the Terry Morse website at <http://www.terrymorse.com/> . There is also a demo version available so you can try it out for yourself. It is a commercial product, available from most mail order companies for around \$60 - certainly well worth it if you need to quickly convert a lot of documents for publication on the web, or if you're a casual or new web publisher who wants to put up a simple website. Even web design pros will find a use for it, and even find it indispensable in producing rough drafts of their web pages for later tweaking in their favorite web editor. Indeed, the HTML code produced by Myrmidon is nicely formatted and easy to read, which makes it perfect for this use.

All in all, Myrmidon is an indispensable tool for web designers that successfully bridges the gap between the print and online publishing worlds. Any limitations in its design are the fault of the HTML standard, which itself continues to evolve.

Watch for some sample pages produced by Myrmidon on the Apple Wizards website at <http://www.applewizards.net/myrmidon/> .

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