Pro

Automator Workflow Techniques

Individually Processing Files Through an Automator Workflow

By Ben Waldie

Automator makes it easy to create drag-and-drop workflow applications to process batches of files all at once. Simply save any Automator workflow as an application, and it will automatically become a drag-and-drop application.

This method of processing may work fine for workflows that process only a handful of files. But what if you need to process hundreds or thousands of files? It may not be practical to process an entire set of files as a single batch. Instead, it may make more sense to process the files through the workflow individually, one after another. The Automator Multi-Item Processing Utility, available for free from Automated Workflows, LLC, makes this type of processing possible.

The following steps will walk you through the process of individually processing files through an Automator workflow using the Automator Multi-Item Processing Utility. This particular workflow will open InDesign documents and export them to an output folder in PDF format.

Note: This example workflow makes use of third-party InDesign actions, which are available from Automated Workflows, LLC. To use this workflow, you will need to download the Open Documents in InDesign and Export InDesign Documents to PDF actions, which are available for in demo form, along with dozens of other great actions.

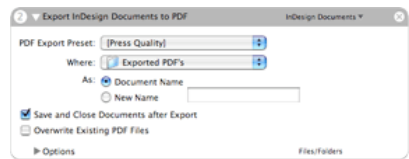
Step 1: Create a new folder named "Exported PDFs" on your desktop.

Step 2: Launch Automator, located in the Applications folder, and create a new workflow window.
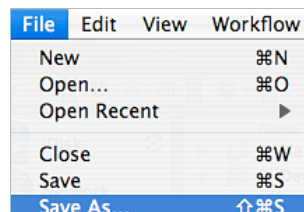
Step 3: Select the Adobe InDesign CS2 category, located in the Library list in Automator. Select the Open Documents in InDesign action in the Action list and drag it into the workflow area on the right side of the Automator window.
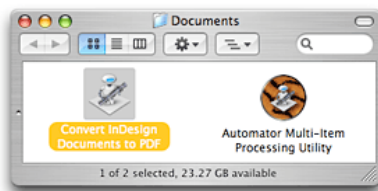

Step 4: Locate and select the Export InDesign Documents to PDF action in the Adobe InDesign CS2 category, and drag it into the workflow area. Select the desired PDF export preset, and choose to export the PDF files into the Exported PDF's folder you created on your desktop. Choose to save the PDF's as the original document name, and select the Save and Close Documents after Export checkbox.
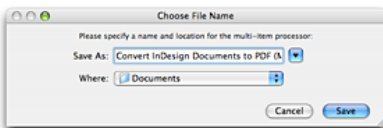

Step 5: Select Save As… from the File menu in Automator.

Step 7: To convert the workflow application to a multi-item processor, drag and drop the workflow application onto the Automator Multi-Item Processing Utility application.

Step 8: When prompted, specify a name for the converted multi-item processing workflow.

Step 9: To begin processing, drag and drop multiple InDesign documents onto the converted multi-item processing workflow.

Each dropped file should be processed individually through the Automator workflow, and the resulting PDF files should be saved into the Exported PDF's folder on your desktop.

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Creating a Scheduled Automator Workflow ▶

Individually Processing Files Through an Automator Workflow

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Creating an iWeb Photo Preview Page ▶

Downloads and Useful Links

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- Learn more about Automator
- Download more Actions and Workflows
- Learn about AppleScript
- Download the Automator Multi-Item Processing Utility
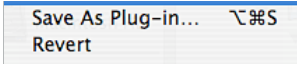- Download Adobe InDesign Actions for Automator
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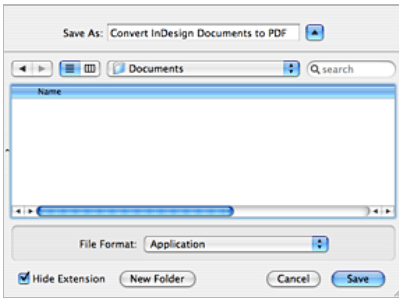- Xserve Technology Overview

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Step 6: Name the workflow Convert InDesign Documents to PDF, set the File Format popup to Application, and save the workflow into the desired folder.

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