

Grizzly Labs. Genius Scan and Genius Scan+

<http://www.thegrizzlylabs.com/> Accessed 12 February 2014.

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Genius Scan is an app for capturing and sharing images and documents. It is available for iOS, Android, and Windows Phone, with a free version and a premium version, “Genius Scan +” (\$4.99 iOS, \$2.99 Android, \$1.49 Windows Phone). The free version (iOS and Android) shares most features with the premium, which offers more options for sharing files, minus the ads in the free version. It will not replace one’s conventional scanner and software for digital preservation, but is useful for quick information sharing with much more user control than a standard camera app.

Genius Scan’s main priority is information portability and sharing, rather than digital preservation. The ability to share files seamlessly with numerous online services—e-mail, Facebook, and still others in the premium version (Dropbox, EverNote, Google Drive)—is certainly useful in field work, or while away from one’s main office space. For reference work, the app may facilitate communication among colleagues and with patrons in identifying and selecting materials by allowing the exchange of legible files of a reasonable size. The feature which most notably distinguishes Genius Scan from a conventional camera app is the option to save files in .pdf format. Better yet, the app is able to append multiple pages to an existing document.

For many users, the next logical question may be whether Genius Scan includes Optical Character Recognition (OCR); unfortunately, it does not. It is not clear, however, what technical obstacles may stand in the way of offering that feature in future versions.

Capturing images is straightforward, and the graphical interface is quite intuitive. It may be necessary to adjust how one holds a device to capture images, however, in order to reach the camera “button” in the app. Since the image is not in direct contact with the scanner, as with a flatbed scanner, glare poses an additional challenge on glossy photographs.

Once the image is captured, Genius Scan allows the user to crop the photo as needed and to rotate as needed in 90-degree increments. Users may also select a variety of pre-set options for the layout and orientation of PDF files (letter, A4, legal, business card, fit to image; portrait or landscape). The perspective correction tool is an additional distinctive feature, “flattening” images that may have been taken from an angle, albeit with mixed results. For larger numbers of scans, stability becomes an issue, though the app seemed able to save an image before closing, and then restarting itself.

Again, Genius Scan will not replace one’s main digital preservation tools. Limitations on resolution, file type, and fine-tuning of settings substantially limit its use for preservation purposes. Along with PDFs, image files are available as JPEGs of various sizes, underscoring the app’s emphasis on the portability of information. It is understood, of course, that uncompressed TIF image files would be prohibitively large; still, the highest-

quality jpeg that one may select in the settings is by nature not “preservation” quality according to archival best practices.

In addition, some of the pre-set alterations Genius Scan makes are problematic, and this reviewer promptly reset the defaults to avoid them. There is no “gray scale,” per sé, but a “black and white” enhancement that renders a flat, photocopy-like image. No appreciable difference was detectable in photographing monochrome images with the “color” enhancement, or with no enhancements. The “color” enhancement produced mixed results with color images, turning a photo of the reviewer’s hand hot pink. “Enhancing a” photo of green construction paper on a white desk produced a strange lighting/shadow effect in addition to altering the color inaccurately. The “frame auto-detection” feature may crop out unintended areas, and there is no “undo” button.

Metadata capabilities are certainly adequate for general, personal use, allowing users to create their own tags for images. Entering multiple tags is somewhat cumbersome, as one must save each one individually rather than, for example, simply separating them with commas. Higher-order description requires export to more robust platforms.

Support on the website is available through contact information, but the FAQs for each operating system are not consistent in their coverage. An email to the company for clarification about certain features was answered within a few hours.