

The Trial Area provides a way to test your filters with sample text

addresses. By default, the example email extracting filter set removes all duplicates, strips the common text and displays each email on the same line, separated by a space and a semi-colon. HTML filtering allows you to perform a wide range of tasks, from optimising your HTML documents to removing specific tags and even converting poorly exported Microsoft application generated web pages into platform-independent page text.

Some of the niftier filter sets include the addition of banners to the beginning or end of web pages, the insertion of copyright information and removal or replacement of a wide variety of information that gets inadvertently imbedded in most web pages. The HTML optimising filter set can reduce web page text to 20 per cent of the original size and with additional filters you can remove non-unique keywords and irrelevant tags. With TextPipe you can change the way you alter your website files by utilising its easy-to-learn filtering system to get your website back in working order quickly and without fuss.

One of the most common problems encountered when running a website is when you need to change directory structures or filenames to keep track of changes. Normally this would mean you have to wade through all of your files and manually change each and every reference to a file or directory. Sure, you could do this with an application such as Microsoft's WordPad but you have to make certain you don't miss any files along the way as you perform a search and replace on the individual files one at a time.

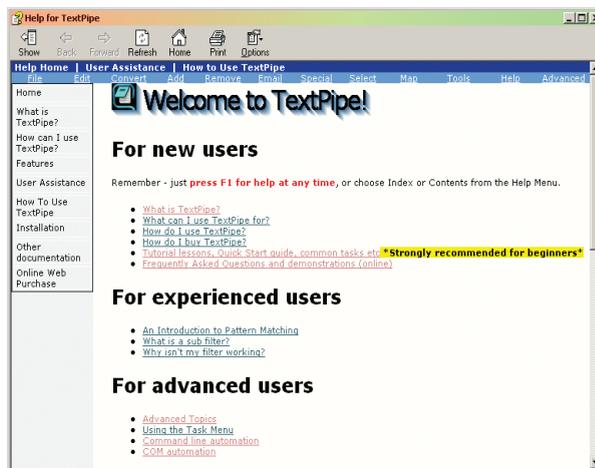
With TextPipe you can process an entire directory structure with a single click of your mouse, after you set up the filtering options. Once you have used TextPipe to perform a task like this, you will wonder why you ever wasted all that time and effort changing the files individually. The answer will be because you just cannot do it without an application like TextPipe.

As you can see, TextPipe is extremely versatile

and can perform far beyond any normal search and replace application on the market. The list of sample filter sets goes on and on, including the Coding sets that allow you to easily convert between different programming language formats as well as the powerful direct Conversion filter sets that quickly and easily convert text from platform-specific formats to other platform-specific formats.

The power of TextPipe doesn't end there however, because with the Pro version you can even integrate TextPipe with other applications. By using the TextPipe automation COM object, you can call the application from any application that allows you to write scripts. Some of the script types are VBScript, JScript, VBA, PerlScript, Python, Lisp and REXX, so any application that uses one of these can easily implement the TextPipe framework.

For example, you can use a Microsoft Word VBA scripted macro to create a button on your custom toolbar to execute a conversion of selected text in the document. What this means is that you get the power of TextPipe in your favourite text



Using TextPipe Pro is quick and easy for new users

applications. You can even run TextPipe from the command line without needing to open the TextPipe application itself, as long as you have set up the filter you need.

TextPipe comes with extensive help files and access to online FAQs as well as newsgroups to get the answers you need quickly. The help files are well laid out and include speed menus for quickly finding information about specific aspects of the application. This means that even if you don't know exactly what you need, you can look in a general area for a list of topics that are related to the section you select. At first glance, we found the application to be a little overwhelming but once we had gone through the tutorials, I was confident with the entire interface. There could have been a few more advanced tutorials to show how to set up complex

filters that require the use of variables, but there are plentiful examples to show, in practical terms, how to use them.

There are a few things we didn't like about the project, including a few sample filters that generate errors and halt the process. All the errors with the filters we encountered were related to TextPipe variables, so fixing them wasn't really all that hard, but when things go wrong with examples, it really stands out like a sore thumb. When you are trying to understand how a specific aspect of a product works and there are errors, you are left to your own methods of deductive logic, which defeats the point of this particular application.

Another thing to note is that TextPipe can only be obtained, at the time of this publication, by downloading it. The product is reasonably priced but without an option to receive it on an official, licensed CD-ROM, some people might be deterred from purchasing.

All Crystal Software products come with sixty days of free email support as well as sixty days of free software upgrades. After that sixty-day period is up, you will have to purchase annual support and upgrade subscriptions. This is not so bad, but you would expect to receive a little more than sixty days for a full product purchase. ❖❖

SUMMARY

PRICE:

TextPipe Pro
Single User Licence \$274.82 (for a limited time, usually \$323.60)
10-Day Licence \$48.78
1 Year Support \$81.30

COMPANY: Crystal Software

WEBSITE:

<http://www.crystalsoftware.com.au/textpipe.html>

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

Windows 95/98/2000/NT/ME
16MB RAM (5MB when running)
3.5MB disk space

PROS:

Lightning fast text manipulation
Supports automation and integration
Easy to learn, no programming skills required

CONS:

Errors in some example filter sets
No CD for price
Annual support subscription

IN BRIEF

TextPipe Pro is a text manipulation utility that is lightning fast in operation with no major drawbacks. It slices, it dices and provides results with powerful sample filters as well as automation and integration support. Anyone who works with text files will be able to use TextPipe for their work. Whether converting data formats, data mining or changing filenames within webpage texts that span multiple directories, TextPipe can be customised to do the job. Sub-filters cascaded within other filters can be used to add extended processes to the entire task. It is the most powerful text alteration utility available.