



InReview: MadeToTag

Extension for Adobe InDesign accelerates and simplifies the process of creating accessible PDF files.

MadeToTag

Axaio Software gmbh

<http://www.axaio.com>

Full Version: €149,00 (\$206.68)

Mac and Windows, InDesign CS 5.5–CC

Rating: 

Demand for accessible PDF files (often referred to as Section 508 PDF files) has increased significantly over the past several years, especially in sectors of the market such as government, education, and non-profit organizations. Accessible PDF files provide access to the content of a PDF file for users with visual and mobility impairments by defining logical structure and identification of content to screen-reading devices.

InDesign CS 5.5 made a huge leap forward in streamlining the process of creating accessible PDF files. In that version, we were given the ability to define an appropriate tag that gets applied when formatting content using paragraph

and character styles; an Articles panel to define reading order; and an easy way to add alternative text to images within an InDesign file. Although some minor improvements have been made in successive versions of InDesign, creating an accessible PDF file is still a process-oriented task that leaves room for human error.

MadeToTag by Axaio Software in Germany has created an InDesign add-on that promises to streamline the accessible PDF creation process, and it picks up where InDesign's feature set falls short in that area. MadeToTag is targeted specifically to users who create accessible PDF files on a regular basis, and offers unique features not available in InDesign.



Installation

After you download the MadeToTag installer for CS 5.5, CS 6, or CC (your choice) from the Axaio website, it walks you through the setup process and installs the InDesign plug-in. The process runs smoothly and worked like I'd expect any other installer to work—easy.

Once the extension is installed, you'll be able to access the MadeToTag panel from the Window menu. The extent of the MadeToTag interface is found entirely within this one panel. The panel itself has the look and feel of any other panel in InDesign, but it's been set up as more of a wizard than a static panel. Because of this, it's actually seven panels in one (Figure 1).

The Process

Creating an accessible PDF file with InDesign alone is a process-oriented task. It involves a series of steps that need to be performed in a somewhat meticulous

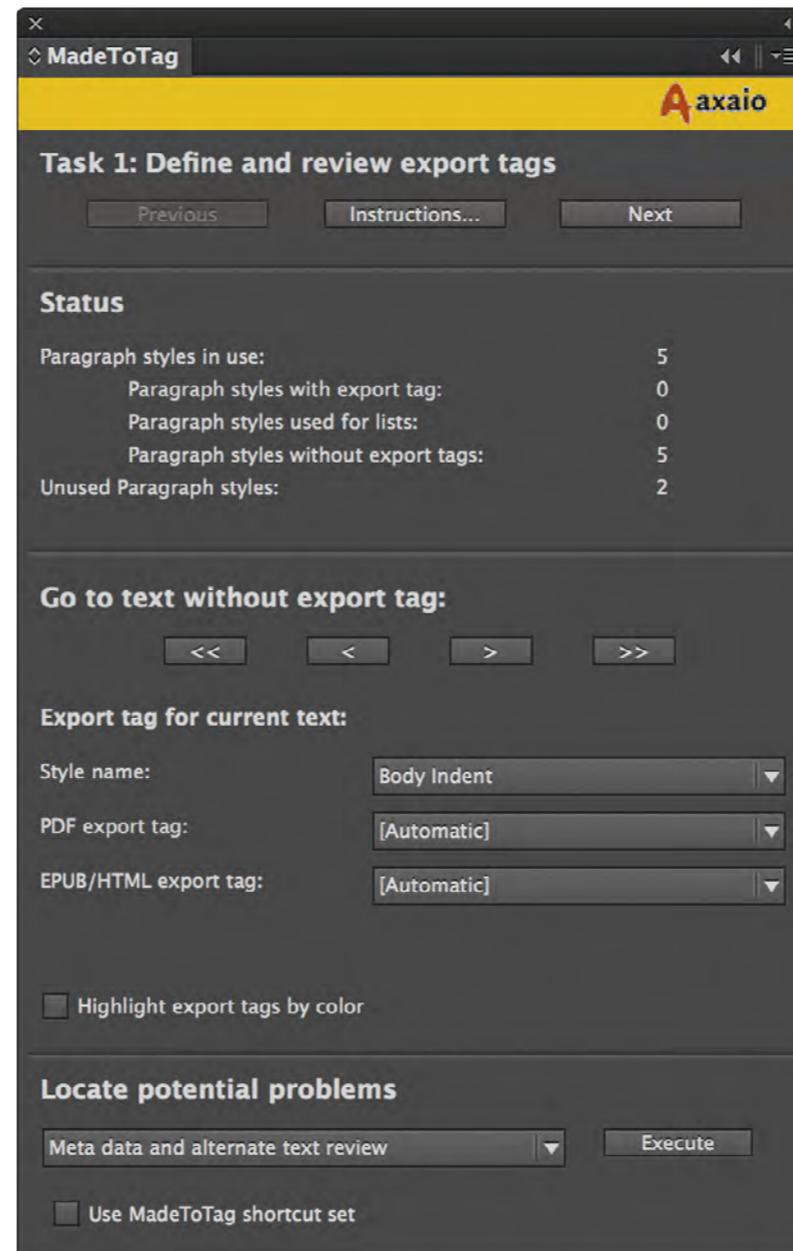


Figure 1: The MadeToTag panel is a wizard of sorts that guides you through the process step by step.

manner. Done correctly, life is good: you've got an accessible PDF file. An incorrect PDF file, however, is discovered only after it's been created, in which case you need to go back to InDesign, tweak, and then re-export the PDF.

MadeToTag puts the entire accessible PDF process inside of the MadeToTag panel, ultimately taking you through seven separate tasks. Task 1 is to guide you through applying export tags to the paragraph styles in your document and, if necessary, creating paragraph styles for text that is not styled. Although it's easy enough to apply export tags to styles in InDesign, it's not apparent when you've forgotten to do so. The MadeToTag panel, however, displays a status report for your document, letting you know how many styles have export tags, how many don't have export tags, and how many styles have been used for lists.

To begin assigning export tags, click the forward button (>) in the "Go to text

without export tag” section; MadeToTag will then highlight the first instance of the text, allowing you to choose the appropriate export tag for PDF and for EPub/HTML, if desired. Repeat this process until all styles have export tags.

A great feature that I appreciate in the MadeToTag panel is called “Highlight export tags by color.” This option provides a visual indicator of what tag is assigned to each piece of text (Figure 2); these visual cues even appear when viewing the document in Preview Mode. This alone was a huge selling point for me in my testing.

In Task 2, you are guided through organizing the content of the document into articles. You access this “Task 2” panel by clicking the Next button at the top of the panel. This defines the order of objects for screen-reading devices. Frames that are linked together within InDesign already have the order defined logically; however, if there are several unlinked frames in the document, an implicit order needs to be

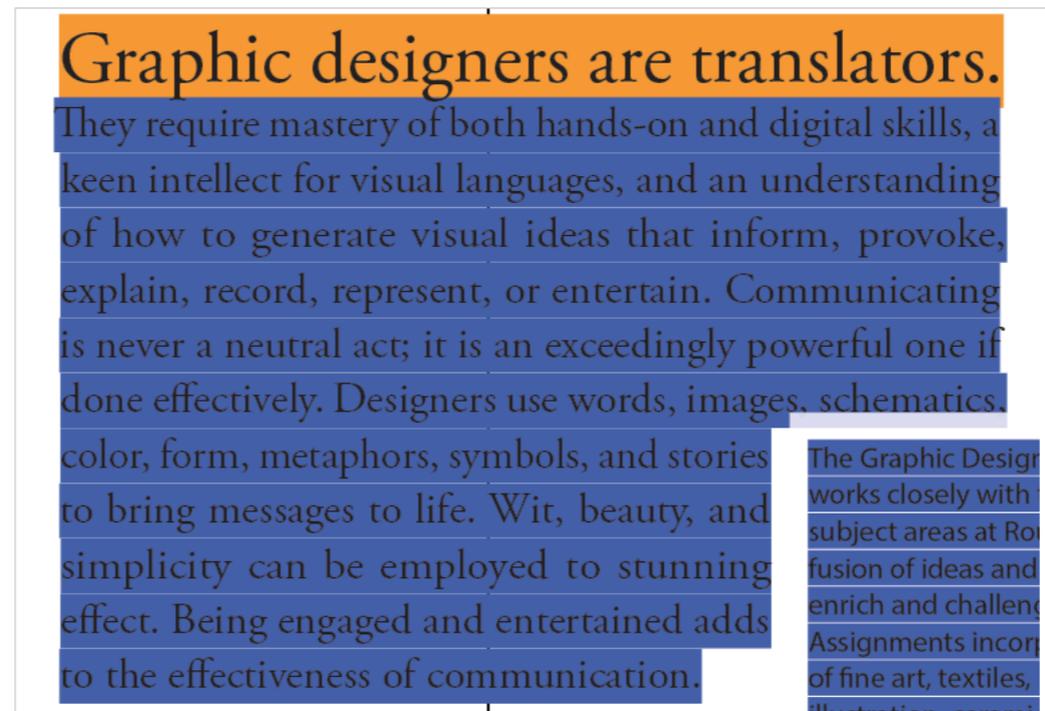


Figure 2: Text highlighting provides a visual cue to what tags are assigned to text.

defined using the Articles panel in InDesign. Task 2 of the MadeToTag panel walks you through this process. Again, a status at the top of the panel indicates the number of stories and images, along with how many of those stories are linked or are not linked to an article. Again, the bottom portion of the panel navigates you to the first frame that is not in an article and allows you to assign it to an existing article or create a new one.

Task 3: Alternate text and Task 4: Review Document Metadata are both easily

accomplished in InDesign, but again, these items are easy to miss in the process, so it’s nice to have them as part of the MadeToTag panel to ensure that you don’t forget to perform these steps.

Setting the Language

In Task 5 of the MadeToTag panel, you define the language for the document. Now this might seem like a basic task, but believe it or not, there’s no way to do this directly in InDesign. Normally—meaning,



when you create your accessible PDF using only InDesign—you have to set this in Acrobat after the PDF export. So if at any point you need to go back to InDesign and re-export the PDF, you have to remember to set the language in Acrobat for the new file. So when I saw the ability to define the language in the MadeToTag panel, I was pleased, to say the least!

Not only can you define the primary language for the document with MadeToTag, but you can also define the language for selected text. Then there's also the handy "Highlight languages by color" checkbox that provides a visual cue for the languages assigned to text in the document, as well as a statistical display of the percentages of other languages assigned to text in the document. This is a great feature for users who deal with multi-lingual documents.

Tables

Task 6 of the MadeToTag process is defining proper structure for tables. InDesign is

limited in its ability to tag table content for accessibility purposes: limited, that is, to column headers. Beyond that, you need to dive into the Table Editor in Acrobat to perform more complex tagging, and once again, if you ever need to re-export the PDF, you need to re-tag from scratch. MadeToTag adds the ability to easily define logical headers for rows and tag the row headers. In addition, MadeToTag adds a Smart Headers feature (Figure 3) that provides an editing mode that allows you to tag more complex tables for PDF output.

For example, let's say you have a table with two or more column headers. Using the Smart Headers feature in the MadeToTag panel, you can highlight certain cells and define a parent/child relationship between them. I have to admit, I had a little bit of trouble figuring out the methodology of how this Smart Headers edit mode worked, but after a little trial and error, you get the hang of it. Essentially, you click once on the cell that you want to become the header,

2013					
Q2			Q3		
April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
201	98	114	57	275	189

Figure 3: The Smart Headers edit mode allows you to tag complex tables easily.

and then you Command/Ctrl-click on the children for that header cell. A quick PDF generation revealed that the table was tagged appropriately.

Generating the PDF file

Task 7 (the final step) is generating the PDF file. At first I was curious why it was made a step in the panel when you could just choose **File > Export** in InDesign to create the PDF file. However, after some testing, I realized that some of the components that are added with the MadeToTag interface (namely the Smart Table Headers) will not export using **File > Export** in InDesign. You have to use the Create PDF button in the MadeToTag panel for the features of





MadeToTag to be incorporated into the final PDF file. Certainly not a deal-breaker, but definitely worth noting.

Added Efficiencies

At the bottom of the MadeToTag panel in every task of the process, there's a feature called Locate Potential Problems. This feature allows you to search for common tripping points encountered with accessible PDF generation, including Locate Insufficient Visual Contrast, Locate Paragraphs Without Style, Locate Uses of Basic Paragraph Style, and many others. You simply choose the problem that you want to locate and click the Execute button, and MadeToTag will locate these items in your document.

From the MadeToTag panel menu, or from a checkbox in the lower left corner of the panel, you can also choose Use MadeToTag Shortcut Set, which enables the use of keyboard shortcuts to execute many of the MadeToTag commands for further

efficiencies. I wasn't quite sure why these shortcuts weren't always enabled by default, but I found the shortcut set to be quite useful nonetheless.

Summary

I'd like to see the Smart Headers feature become a little more stable, but it's definitely usable as is. I'd also like to see a feature that would allow me to artifact text at the character level in addition to the paragraph level. This would be great for elements such as a Table of Contents in PDF files. I thought that the ability to search for content that had low visual contrast was a great feature. In my testing, MadeToTag did a great job of finding these elements; however, when I chose to fix them, there was no visible change. So I'd like to see this feature work as expected.

All in all, I was impressed with the features that MadeToTag brought to the table and equally impressed by the interface. I create accessible PDF files and

teach the process of creating accessible PDF files as part of my job, and I like how MadeToTag built their workflow around this same process. I found it logical and feel like it can save significant time for users who create accessible PDF files on a regular basis.



Chad Chelius is the author of the "[Creating Accessible PDFs](#)" course from lynda.com and is the author of the InDesign and Illustrator CC *Learn by Video* titles from [Peachpit Press](#).

