

WordsFlow

Link and magic-merge Word/Excel files for production bliss

- What if you could have a time machine to speed up your Microsoft Word-based editorial production in InDesign?
- What if you could Place Word and Excel documents with live links, and proceed with production, while your authors and editors continued working on the placed documents?
- What if, when your authors and editors had updates, you could magically merge their work into yours with a click (as a link update), without losing any work on either side?
- What if you could push your content changes back to the linked Word document at any time, staying synchronized with your authors and editors?
- What if you could export original InDesign content to allow editors to work on it in Word, and then re-import their changes with a click, using the same magic merge?



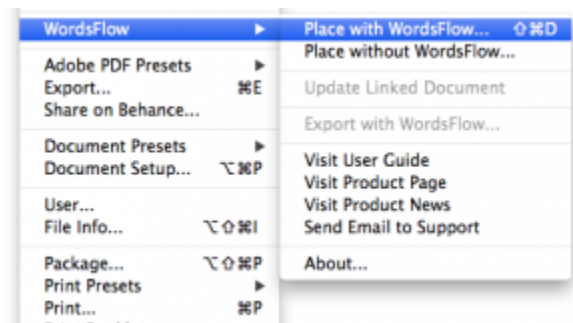
You can, with WordsFlow, your Word-based time machine.

Word editorial + InDesign layout

WordsFlow, a plug-in for InDesign, combines the editing power of Word and Excel with the layout power of InDesign, adding its own dynamic linking and sophisticated merge technologies to supercharge your editorial and production workflows.

With WordsFlow, you place Word documents and (Pro version) Excel spreadsheets as InDesign story contents normally, using the familiar place dialog.

But, behind the scenes, WordsFlow maintains a dynamic link so it can intelligently merge external document changes into the InDesign story contents on each link update, rather than just replacing the story. The Pro version provides a two-way link so you can push your InDesign story changes back to Word format.



So you can format, layout, and edit in InDesign, while your authors and editors continue creating and

editing story content in Word and Excel, all without ever losing work.

What's your biggest headache?

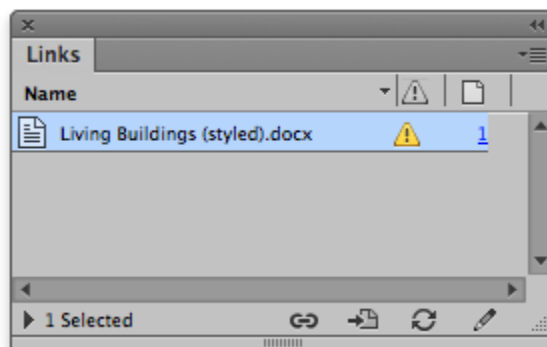
If you use InDesign for production, you already know the pain point: an author sends you a story via email or file-sharing, and you've placed it in your InDesign publication, fixing typos, changing formatting, adding and deleting text, etc. Then, the author or your editor sends you another version of the file, and expects you to figure out what changed, and weave those changes into what you hoped was the final story.

In the past, you might bite your tongue and simply re-place the story, losing all your hard work, then go through and manually make all the same changes you made before, hoping you're not forgetting something (and likely losing that bet). Or, if you're more sophisticated, you might use a file-difference utility, going through each change, manually editing the InDesign story to match, and scratching your head a lot. In either case, you end up wasting a lot of time in a highly error-prone process.

Magic merge-update removes the pain

WordsFlow ends the headaches. When you place the original Word or Excel file (or any text file), WordsFlow asks InDesign to keep a special kind of dynamic link to the file.

When you or anyone else makes to changes that file (locally or in a shared-file situation), InDesign will notice that the link's source has changed, and change the link's status to "modified" in the Links panel (a yellow alert icon, as shown here). You can update the story when you're ready, using the normal link-update invocations, such as a double-click on the modified icon.



As the link update starts, WordsFlow kicks in. Instead of letting InDesign replace the linked story wholesale, it applies a complex algorithm behind the scenes to merge the changes made to the external document since the last update into the current InDesign story contents (and to detect any conflicts). We call this the "magic merge-update," since it seems like magic the first times you see it working. It's this magic that saves you from endless error-prone manual merging.

With WordsFlow building on the standard file linking mechanisms you already know for graphics, there are no learning pains.

And there is no pain of extra setup to using its power—just install the plug-in, select Place with WordsFlow... and proceed using the normal place dialog. Your collaborators don't need any special software, and can continue to work exactly as they always have. But now their last-minute or even ongoing changes won't slow you down.

About that time machine

WordsFlow not only ends these last-minute just-one-more-little-update kinds of headaches, it enables entirely new and powerful workflows.

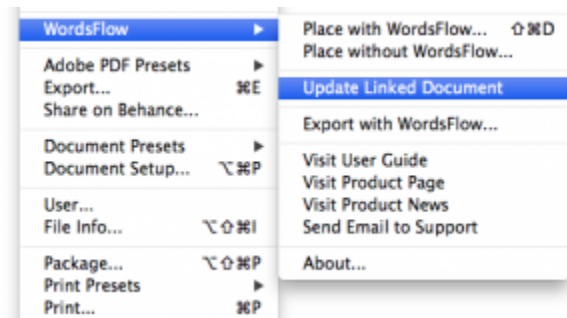
You can now have authors maintaining their story content in Word, with the layout and production people keeping story links to the shared Word files in InDesign (or getting new copies and relinking to them when changed). When authors make changes to the source files, the production folks can merge-update via the WordsFlow links to bring in the changes. That way, authors can stay working in their comfort zone, using Word, and production can maintain the overall document in InDesign, without worrying about hand-merging in the changes that happen over time. So authors and editors can work in parallel with production layout and formatting, giving you a virtual “time machine.”

For examples, think of a newspaper or magazine on deadline dealing with fast-breaking story updates, or, more long-term, a corporate or educational publication with multiple departments updating their respective sections regularly, or a quarterly financial prospectus assembling reports from various departments.

Pro is two-way

The Pro version of WordsFlow adds two major features to give you a fully two-way workflow.

With WordsFlow Pro, you can push updates from any InDesign story to its linked Word document. This way, you can keep your collaborators working with the latest InDesign content, in their own editing environment.



Additionally, the Pro version can export original InDesign story content in Word DOCX format, auto-linking to the result. So you can now take existing InDesign content—however it was produced—and push it out in Word format for further editing and revision, to be shared with your collaborators. As they make additions and changes to the exported document, you can pull them in with a normal WordsFlow story update, usually with just a double-click.

One happy side-effect of WordsFlow Pro’s two-way capabilities is the availability for the first time of full, modern DOCX export for InDesign stories. Before, your export options were limited to using RTF or other half-way solutions.

Pro works with Excel

The Pro version of WordsFlow also works with imported Excel spreadsheet files as well as Word files. You can place a spreadsheet file, then format columns/rows or individual cells, etc. in InDesign. Later, if you or someone else makes changes to the original spreadsheet, including moving around rows or columns, WordsFlow will figure out what changed, and merge in the changes without losing the formatting and edits you’ve made in InDesign.

WordsFlow Pro doesn’t support two-way workflow with Excel documents, for now. But we call it a “one and a half-way workflow,” since you can work on both sides simultaneously.

Press reviews

David Blatner of InDesign Secrets was very excited about even the early initial release of WordsFlow in October 2012.

I'm trying hard not to type phrases like "Most useful plug-in ever," but I have to tell you: I'm sitting here with my mouth agape, heart beating faster, and thinking "This is what I've wanted for 20 years."

In short, I'm playing with WordsFlow, a plug-in from Em Software that fundamentally changes the way you'll work with Word documents.

Jamie McKee of InDesign Magazine gave WordsFlow 2.0 a positive review in September 2014. His conclusion:

WordsFlow already offered InDesign users a solution to the Microsoft Word/Excel-to-InDesign workflow problem we've all been wrestling with for years—updating linked files without losing formatting. WordsFlow Pro 2.0 takes the final step, offering full two-way capabilities so you can send the changes you've made in InDesign back to your original Word documents. If you regularly work with text files that are likely to be edited (and who doesn't?), you need to take a look at WordsFlow Pro 2.0!

WordsFlow Pro 2.0

Em Software

<http://www.emsoftware.com>

WordsFlow: US\$200

WordsFlow Pro: US\$300

Mac and Windows, CS5–CC 2014

Rating: 🍌🍌🍌🍌🍌