



Introduction to Limnforge

Detailed illustration, made deliberately.

A name with purpose. A story behind it.

The name is pronounced **LIM-forge**. “Limn” is an old word for drawing or painting in fine detail; “forge” is the act of making with heat, craft and intent. Together, Limnforge means **detailed illustration, made deliberately**.

Why I created Limnforge

After publishing my first three children’s picture books, I found myself facing a difficult reality. I loved the work of the professional illustrator I had collaborated with, but at nearly \$3,000 per book, commissioning illustrations for further titles was no longer commercially viable for me.

I had twenty to thirty more books either written or taking shape in my imagination. The stories were there. The desire to share them was there. What I lacked was an affordable way to bring them to life visually.

As AI image generation improved, I began experimenting with illustrations for my own picture books. Over time, the results became consistent enough for the characters, visual styles and manuscript-led scenes I wanted to create. But generating individual pictures was only part of the challenge. I needed a way to organise the process and carry the same visual world through an entire book.

What began as an interface for managing that workflow grew into Limnforge: a complete creative system connecting story development, character design, illustration direction, page composition and production files.

I did not create Limnforge to replace illustrators. I created it to make more stories possible, with creative control and continuity at the centre. For authors, it can open illustration workflows they could not otherwise commission. For illustrators, it can help explore variations, extend an original visual style and support a larger body of work.

Dominic Whitehand - Creator of Limnforge

What is Limnforge?

Limnforge Studio (the **Software**) is a desktop illustration and publishing workspace for macOS and Windows. It helps authors, illustrators and independent creators develop picture books, comic books, graphic novels, covers and eBook assets in one connected creative process.

A book needs more than a collection of attractive images. A character should remain recognisable from one page to the next. Clothing, locations, lighting and visual style need continuity. Each illustration must serve the story, and each page needs space for readable words. Comics add the rhythm of panels, dialogue and changing viewpoints.

Limnforge brings those decisions together. You develop a named project, build its cast and world, direct its illustrations, refine the results, add lettering and prepare files for publication. AI generation is one part of that process, not a replacement for your authorship or judgement.

Your story, taking shape

Imagine an illustrated story about a traveller boarding a night tram. You want dark timber interiors, brass lamps and blue rain outside the windows. The traveller must look like the same person throughout, while each scene advances the story.

In **Manuscript**, you keep the working story and character brief. This provides context for planning; entering a manuscript does not automatically turn it into a finished book or place all its words on the pages.

In **World Module**, you establish recurring locations, materials, lighting and details that belong in the story. You can also identify things that do not belong, such as modern vehicles in a period setting. These editable instructions help relevant illustration requests share a coherent world.

In **Character Studio**, you describe the cast through **Visual Description**, explore poses and expressions, and select a **Primary Reference** to establish visual identity. You review and refine the images rather than relying on a new description to recreate the character from scratch on every page.

In **Style Lab**, **Vision Brief**, **Palette Notes** and **Anchor Image** help establish the visual treatment. You might develop warm amber lamplight against cool blue rain, then carry that direction into later scenes. **Use for generation** distinguishes selected references sent with a request from images kept as **Reference only**.

From an illustration idea to a finished page

Direct the scene

In **Illustration Instructions** and **Spread Planning**, you decide who appears, what happens, which props matter and how the scene should be composed. You also plan where the page needs quieter space for text.

For the tram story, you might direct a side view of the traveller studying a ticket beneath a lamp, leaving the lower-left area suitable for narration. The request combines that scene-specific direction with relevant character, world and style decisions.

Compiled Prompt lets you inspect the assembled instructions before generation. When you select **Generate Illustration**, the relevant instructions and reference images are sent to OpenAI through your own API account. The returned artwork appears for you to inspect.

Refine with intention

An image can be close without being right. **Current Illustration Refinement - Correction Brief** lets you describe a targeted change to the current artwork: keep the traveller, carriage and lighting, for example, but correct the hand holding the ticket.

Previous Illustration Continuity serves a different purpose: a new composition that carries forward appearance from an approved project image. In a comic, **Refine Panel** lets you work on an individual panel rather than replacing the whole page. These tools support continuity; reviewing the results is still part of the creative process.

Give the story its words

With **Text Overlay**, you place narration, dialogue, titles and captions, choosing fonts, colour, position and speech-bubble treatments. Panel arrangements and lettering help control the pace of a comic or graphic novel. These layout operations happen locally; they do not ask the image engine to draw the finished book's dialogue into the artwork.

Prepare for publication

Export Commercial Package prepares selected production files, such as print PDFs and eBook image assets. You review the pages and covers, check the requirements of your chosen printer or publishing platform, and decide where to publish. Limnforge does not automatically upload or sell your book for you.

The aim is a practical path from concept to publication files, with you directing the work throughout. Final proofing, platform specifications and any additional production requirements remain part of publishing a book.

Where AI fits - and where it does not

Limnforge supplies the local planning, direction and production tools. OpenAI supplies the connected image-generation service. There is no image-generation model running inside Limnforge itself.

Your account. Your generation choices.

You add your own OpenAI API key in **Settings**. Image requests travel directly from the desktop to OpenAI; Limnforge does not supply a shared generation account. OpenAI usage is billed separately to your API account and is not included in the Software purchase.

Your total generation cost depends on the selected model and settings, reference inputs, edits and number of variations. You decide when to generate and whether another revision is worthwhile. Check OpenAI's current API pricing before planning a project budget.

Local projects, selected information sent for generation

Project files, references, artwork and exports are kept on your computer. When you request image generation or editing, the relevant prompt and selected reference inputs leave the device for OpenAI to process. The returned image becomes part of your local workflow.

Your saved API key uses operating-system-backed secure storage and is not included in project folders or export packages. Local project storage does not mean that every function is offline: image generation needs the external service, and licensing and other service functions have their own connections. The **Privacy Policy** explains those data flows.

Co-Pilot prepares a brief; you choose where to use it

Co-Pilot Work Orders help you choose the next creative task and prepare a copy-ready brief using relevant project context. You can copy that brief into an external assistant of your choice.

Preparing a work order does not itself call an AI service. You decide whether, where and when to paste it, under the separate account and terms of the service you choose. This is distinct from Limnforge's integrated OpenAI image-generation requests.

Creative control, used responsibly

In Limnforge, the strongest results begin with your own story and deliberate visual decisions. A scene draws on narrative, character appearance, setting, composition, style and subsequent revisions. The finished page adds your wording, lettering, arrangement and editorial choices. Limnforge helps you keep that work connected.

Choose references you are entitled to use

When using Limnforge, use material you own, have permission to use, or have another lawful basis to use. References selected for generation are sent to OpenAI, so consider whether your permission covers that processing as well as the finished publication. Import reminders help keep that decision visible.

Understand the agreement and provider safeguards

When using Limnforge, before integrated generation, the **Licence Agreement** explains the Software's terms and asks for explicit acceptance. You can read the full agreement by scrolling within its window and reopen it through **Help → Licence Agreement** or **Settings → Limnforge Licence → Licence Agreement**.

If OpenAI returns a recognised safety refusal, **OpenAI declined this image request** appears over your current workspace. Limnforge stops that request without automatically trying another model to get around the refusal. You can review your instructions and references, expand **Show technical details**, or choose **Copy details for support**. Existing artwork and instructions are retained.

Review before you publish

Inspect continuity, anatomy, composition and readability as well as permissions and the publishing platform's disclosure requirements. Keep original drafts, permitted references and project versions to document your creative process.

A project-specific workflow is not a guarantee that every generated image is unique or legally cleared. Copyright protection for AI-generated elements can vary by jurisdiction and by the human contribution involved. Neither generation nor export should be treated as automatic copyright clearance.

Begin with a story you want to tell

Start with a small project: a character, a visual direction and one scene. Review the result, refine it, add words and export a test page. That short cycle helps you learn the tools before taking on a complete book.

Explore the [Limnforge website and project examples](#), then use the [Quick Start Guide](#) and [User Guide](#) for practical instructions.

For the full terms, see the [Licence Agreement](#), [Website Terms](#), [Privacy Policy](#) and [Refund Policy](#). This introduction explains the experience; it does not replace those documents.