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# New OCR Model — Chandra by Datalab — I tested Ramanujan's handwritten letter from 1913.

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Last week, I came across something wild. An open-source OCR model developed by Datalab, called **Chandra**. It barely made any noise on social media, but it *quietly outperformed every major OCR system* in independent benchmarks — even dots-ocr.

And the crazy part? It's entirely open-source.

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## Why I Even Bothered Testing It

I've used various OCR tools — from Tesseract to GPT-4's vision API — and they all have their limitations. They often make mistakes with handwritten text or ruin the layout when parsing PDFs with tables and formulas.

So when I saw that Chandra claims to handle *handwriting, tables, math*, and even *multi-column layouts* while maintaining the original structure, I had to try it.

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## I Fed It Raw

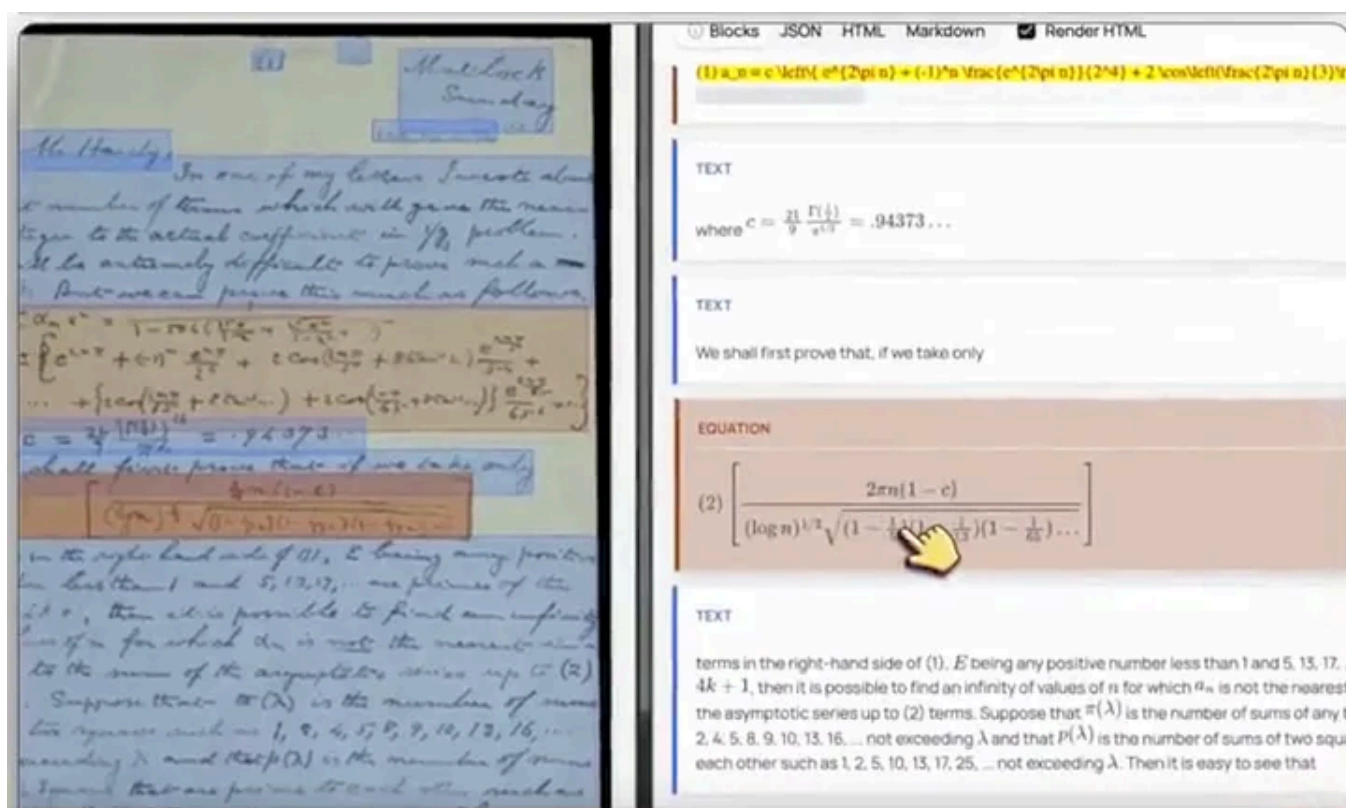
To evaluate  
through Chandra.

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ers

Most OCR tools... give up.

But Chandra managed to read it clearly. It preserved the layout, math notation, and even the faint ink details. It didn't feel like OCR — it felt like document reconstruction.



...

## What Makes Chandra Different

Here's what you get right out of the box:

- Works with 40+ languages
- Understands handwriting, tables, and math
- Reconstructs forms and checkboxes
- Outputs Markdown, HTML, or JSON

- Extracts ~~images and captions~~

- Can run

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It's one of those tools that *gets* how messy real documents can be.

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## How I Got It Running

You can install it straight from pip:

```
pip install chandra-ocr
```

Then point it at any PDF or image:

```
chandra input.pdf ./output
```

If you want to run it locally (no vLLM), add:

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```
chandra input.pdf ./output --method hf
```

It spits out:

- a Markdown version
- an HTML version
- metadata as JSON
- and a folder of extracted images

That's it — no weird setup, no login.

. . .

## Prefer a UI? There's a Streamlit App

If command-line tools make your head spin, just run:

```
chandra_app
```

It opens a simple web app where you can drop a PDF and preview everything in your browser.

. . .

## Running It in Production

For heavy workloads or batch processing, you can spin up a vLLM server:

```
chandra_vllm
```

You can tweak things like GPU IDs or token limits with environment variables:

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```
VLLM_API_BASE=http://localhost:8000/v1
VLLM_MODEL_NAME=chandra
VLLM_GPUS=0
```

That’s how Datalab optimised it for high-throughput OCR tasks.

. . .

The Numbers Don’t Lie

I’m not the only one impressed. In the *olmocr* benchmark, **Chandra v0.1.0** scored **83.1 overall**, surpassing every other model tested — including dots-ocr (79.1), olmOCR (78.5), and even GPT-4o (69.9).

Model	Overall	Source
Chandra v0.1.0	83.1 ± 0.9	Datalab
dots.ocr	79.1 ± 1.0	dots.ocr repo
olmOCR v0.3.0	78.5 ± 1.1	olmocr repo
GPT-4o (Anchored)	69.9 ± 1.1	olmocr repo

It also excels in math and table recognition — two areas where most models struggle.

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## For Tinkerers and Researchers

If you prefer not to install anything, there's a **free online playground** where you can upload files and test them instantly.

The model is licensed under Apache 2.0, while the weights are licensed under OpenRAIL-M, which is suitable for research, personal projects, and small startups. A commercial license is required if you intend to use it in a competing product.

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## Final Thoughts

Honestly, I believe most people missed this release.

OCR hasn't felt exciting for years, but **Chandra** makes it so. It's accurate, fast, and genuinely respects the structure of your documents.

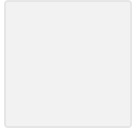
If you work with research papers, scanned forms, or anything involving math, give it a try.

You can find it here — [github.com/datalab-to/chandra](https://github.com/datalab-to/chandra)

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