

Lesson 6 Search Methods for Story Bibles

Today's lesson is about how to make accessing your book data easier and more efficient. One of the biggest complaints about any of the systems and tools I have covered is getting quick, efficient access to the data in the Story Bible.

Note: Some of the directions may get a bit technical. To help, I have put numerous illustrations in the PDF to help you out.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SEARCH TOOL?

A good search tool lets you pinpoint a needed piece of information with a minimum of time and effort. If you find yourself shuffling papers or opening folder after folder, then you need a better system.

A better search system starts with those specific categories we have already thought about creating. The next step is making those categories stand out in some way. If you are using analog story bible methods, this would mean logically and visually. If you are using digital story bible methods, this would mean a logical click away.

ANALOG SEARCH TOOLS

Most everyone will be familiar with these. But it never hurts to review. You might just find something on this list that you haven't tried yet or thought about using in quite this way.

Indexes – We have already discussed these a bit. If you have the patience to create an index, it can be the most efficient search tool for analog materials. It is logical and with a little creativity can be eye-catching too. Indexes can be created for journals, notebooks, binders, and even file folders.

Creating an index – An index requires page numbers. If you are using simple notebooks or binders, you will have to number the pages yourself. But if you want, you can number the pages as you go along which is not too arduous. Then in the back of a journal or in a section of your binder or on the inside of the folder you list the page number and the topic.

Technically, an index should be alphabetical by category. But that is really hard to do by hand. One way around this is to highlight entries about the same topic in a similar color or symbol. See photo in PDF.

~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>

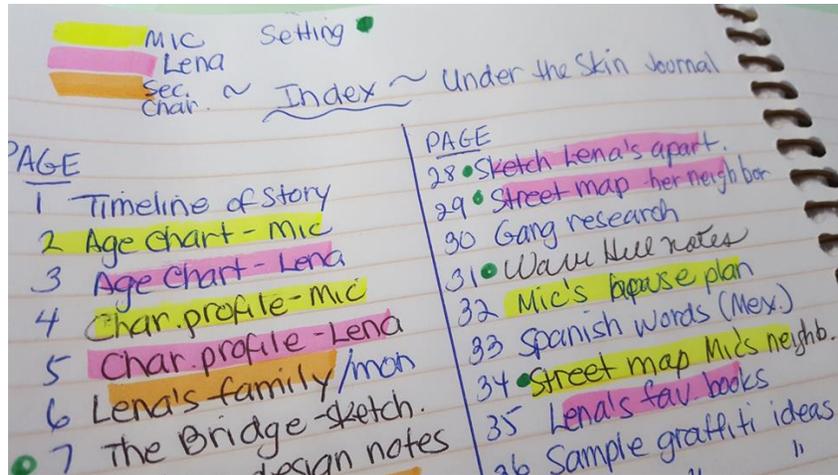
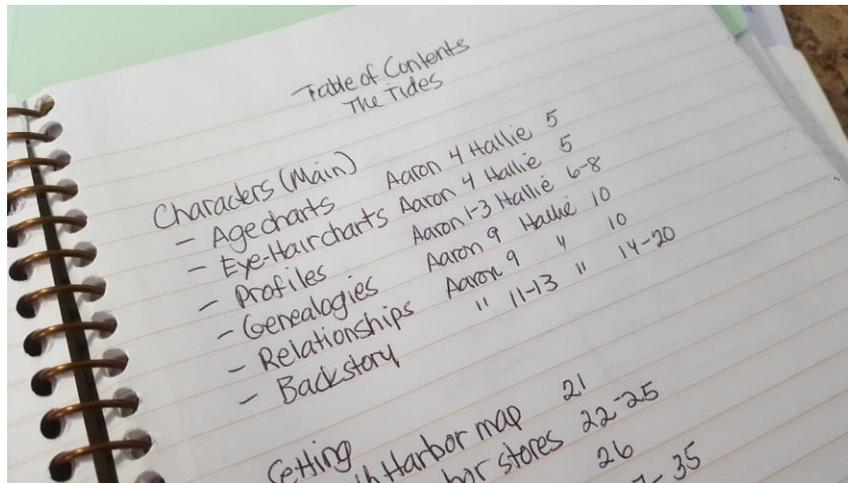


Table of Contents or Category List- This is a listing of all your categories at the front of your journal/binder/file folder front. Each category is listed and beside it, place the page number(s) and if you want, a code, color, or symbol you use to mark the page or page tab that discusses that category. It is like a very general index at the front of your story bible, but instead of listing the page first, you list the topic and add page numbers to that topic as you go along. See Photo in PDF



Alphabetical Order I have already touched on this, but I cannot emphasize enough how much faster it is to search using the ABCs than any other method. If you are not inclined or don't have the time to index, filing materials in alphabetical order is the next best thing.

Codes, Colors, Symbols These can be used instead of page numbers or to cross-sort. For example, the hero could be assigned one color, code, or symbol, the heroine another. Any page that has something about one or the other gets either a tab (small post it or folded over stickers

work well) in that color or marked with the designated symbol. Alternatively, it can be highlighted at the top or edge of the page in that color or with that marking. Secondary characters can each get their own color or mark. If they have a relationship with the hero, for example, their color or mark could be noted on the hero's pages. The same with setting or other categories. To be effective, you will need to make a key for the assigned colors/symbols, etc. There is a sample key in the photo of the Index above.

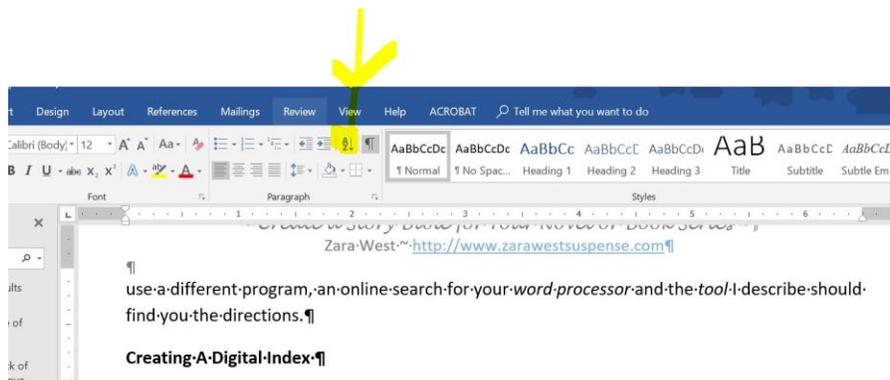
DIGITAL SEARCH TOOLS

The difference between digital search tools and analog ones is that digital ones are going to be a faster way to search, because that is what computers are designed to do best. And just because you have an all analog story bible doesn't mean you can't use some of these ideas as well.

Note – My examples below are drawn from Word, but almost all full-fledged word processors have the following tools. They may just look different or be located in a different spot. If you do use a different program, an online search for your *word processor* and the *tool* I describe should find you the directions.

Creating A Digital Index

A true index is ordered by topics in ABC order rather than page numbers. Most word processors come with an alphabetizing tool. On the Home page in Word, for example, you will see an A-Z icon in the paragraph section. If you highlight a list, and click this icon it will order it alphabetically for you.



So if you type the category and the page number (or code or location) next to it, you can then alphabetize the list which will end up grouping all the same categories together. This can make searching through a journal or assorted Story Bible materials much easier.

~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>

Note for those with analog systems or for those pesky paper items that don't work in a digital story bible, you can put a reference to where the item is stored instead of a page number.

EXAMPLE

As entered & typed

Portland Ferry 1
Lobstering 2-3
Gene age 5
Helen Eye Color 4
Eye Color Chart 4
Helen age 5
Age Chart 5
Boat design 6-7
South Harbor map in file folder MAPs
South Harbor businesses 8
Gene genealogy 9
Helen genealogy 10
Gene past occupations 11-3
Gene Family relationships 14-20

Alphabetized

Age Chart 5
Boat design 6-7
Eye Color Chart 4
Gene age 5
Gene Family relationships 14-20
Gene genealogy 9
Gene past occupations 11-13
Helen age 5
Helen Eye Color 4
Helen genealogy 10
Lobstering 2-3
Portland Ferry 1
South Harbor businesses 8
South Harbor map in file folder MAPS

Headings

If you tried out the alphabetizing tool, you may have noticed you can ABC sort by headings. Word-processing programs come with another handy tool called Headings. In Word, you will find Headings on the Home Page under Styles. They look like they are for making your writing look pretty or for outlining. They are far more useful than that.

I, personally, couldn't live without them. (Here is an article I wrote on how I use headings when I fast draft <https://www.zarawestsuspense.com/fast-drafting/> and another on creating an Author Metadata sheet.

So how do they help you search a Story Bible? What headings do is create a marker on your page. Say you have a 6 page character profile with tons of characteristics on it. If you go through and highlight the category titles or a keyword and then click on Heading 1 or 2, you will see a little carat appear and depending on your settings the font and color will change. (See PDF for illustrations)

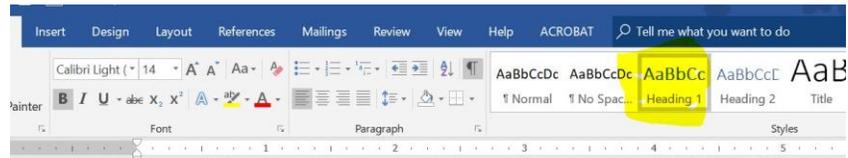
Once you have Headings in your document, you can now go to FIND on the Home page and click it open. Under the Navigation sidebar you will see the search box and below that three words *Headings ~ Pages ~ Results*. If you choose Headings, a list of all the headings in your

~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>

document will appear with Heading 1 being the largest. Just click and voila you will be at that place in the profile.

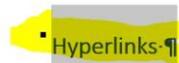
You can alphabetize these headings using the alphabetizing tool. See illustrations of this process in the PDF.



Once you have Headings in your document, you can now go to FIND on the Home tab. Click it open. Under the Navigation sidebar you will see the search box and below words Headings ~ Pages ~ Results. If you choose Headings, a list of all the heading document will appear with Heading 1 being the largest. Just click and voila you will be in the profile.

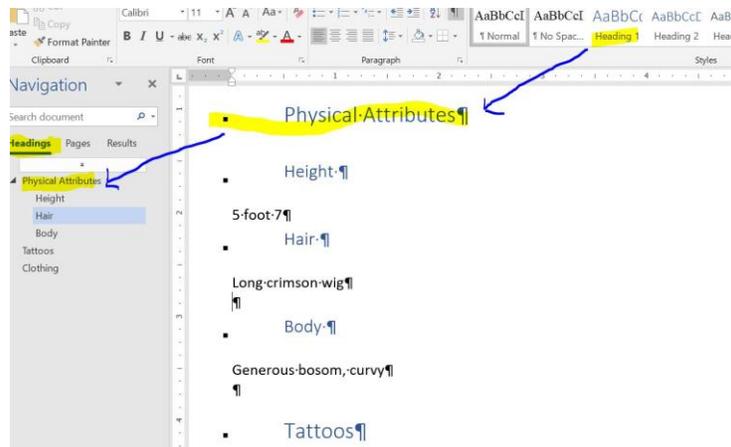
You can alphabetize these headings using the alphabetizing tool. See illustrations in the PDF.

¶



Hyperlinks allow you to link info together from one document to another.

You will find hyperlinks on the INSERT tab in the LINKS section. If you click on the icon of the world, a box will open up. On the far left, you will see Existing File/Webpage.



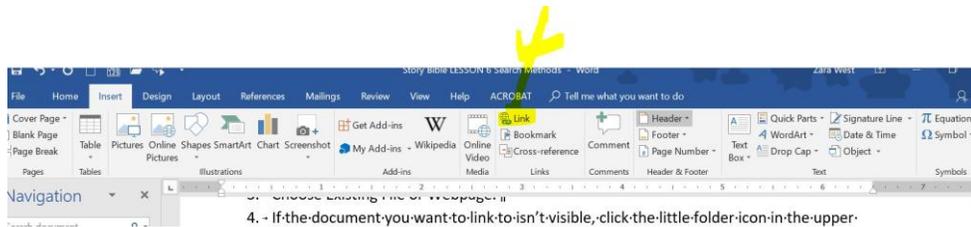
Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks allow you to link info together from one document to another.

You will find hyperlinks on the INSERT tab in the LINKS section. If you click on the icon of the world, a box will open up. On the far left, you will see Existing File/Webpage

~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>

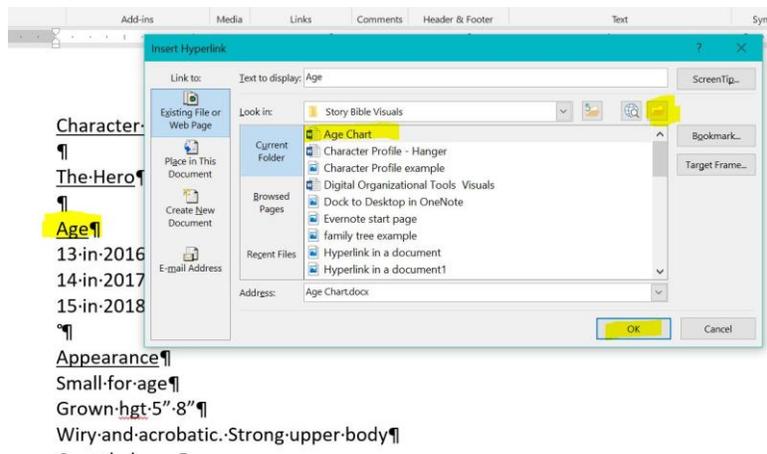


Now to make it work.

AN EXAMPLE You want to link your age chart to a character profile.

1. In your character profile highlight the character's AGE
2. Open the Link Box
3. Choose Existing File or Webpage.
4. If the document you want to link to isn't visible, click the little folder icon in the upper right corner of the Link box.
5. Search through your folders and documents and find the document you want to link to.
6. Select it and click okay. You can now click on the word Age in the character profile and immediately be taken to your age chart to check out relative ages, for example.

Note: For those of you using Powerpoint as a visual Story Bible, hyperlinks work magnificently in that program. If you make a list of categories for your first slide, you can link each related slide to that link.



Docking

I am using the term docking to refer to having a link or visual of another document available while writing. We have already established that having two monitors is ideal for doing this, and you may want to seriously consider this option.

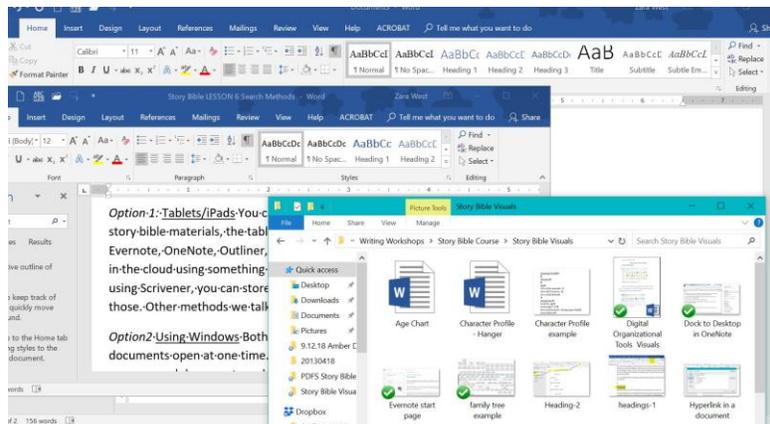
~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>

But not everyone has two monitors or has space for two monitors or maybe you are on the road?

Option 1: Tablets/iPads You can use a tablet (or a phone if your vision is strong) for accessing your story bible data. To reach digital story bible materials, the tablet will require an app to whatever storage method you are using - Evernote, OneNote, Outliner, etc. If you are using digital file folders, they will need to be stored in the cloud using something like Dropbox, or Google Drive. If you are using Scrivener, you can store your files in Dropbox or something similar to get online access to those. Other methods, such as Evernote, OneNote and Outliner, are already online.

Option2 Using Windows Both Macs and PCs use “windows” as a way to have multiple documents open at one time. (I think there was a lawsuit over that) With windows, you can open several documents and move between them. However, unless you open the window to full screen or you have a huge monitor, you will be able to see only a small part of the documents.



Option 3 Using the task tray: Macs and PCs automatically put all open documents in the task tray (that’s the bar running along the bottom of your computer screen). However, if you hover over the Word program icon or the Open Folder in Mac, you can see all the open documents and click between them.



Option 4 Pinning To save search time, you can pin programs to the task tray by right clicking the icon in the tray when the program is open. If you prefer the Tablet view, you can pin a program there in the same way. So if you are using Evernote and Word, you can keep each pinned,

~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

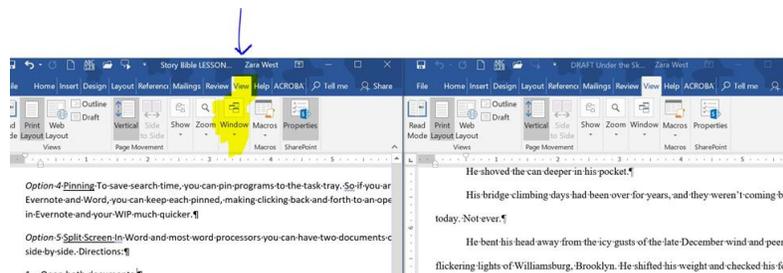
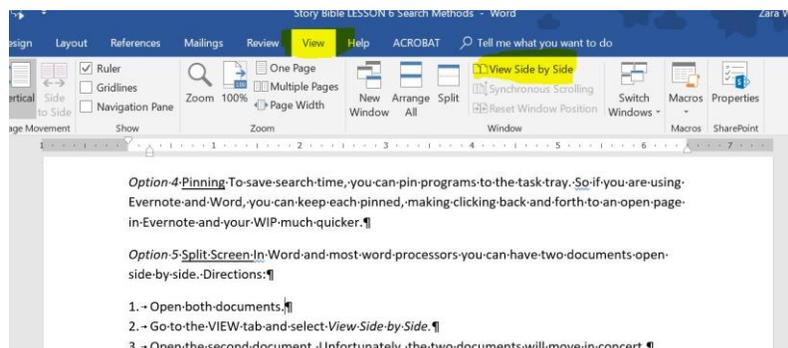
Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>

making clicking back and forth to an open page in Evernote and your WIP ready-to-go when you start up your computer.

Option 5 Split Screen In Word and most word processors you can have two documents open side by side.

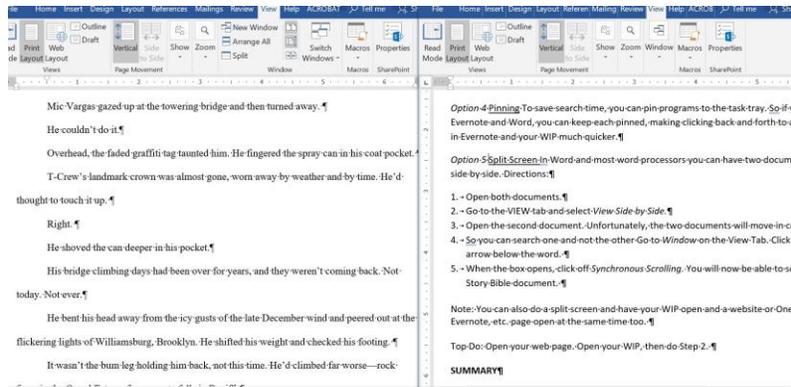
Directions:

1. Open both documents.
2. Go to the VIEW tab and select *View Side by Side*.
3. Open the second document. Unfortunately, the two documents will move in concert as that seems to be the default.
4. To search through one, while staying at the same place in the other, go to *Window* on the VIEW TAB.
5. Click the down arrow below the word.
6. When the box opens, click off *Synchronous Scrolling*. You will now be able to search the Story Bible document independently.



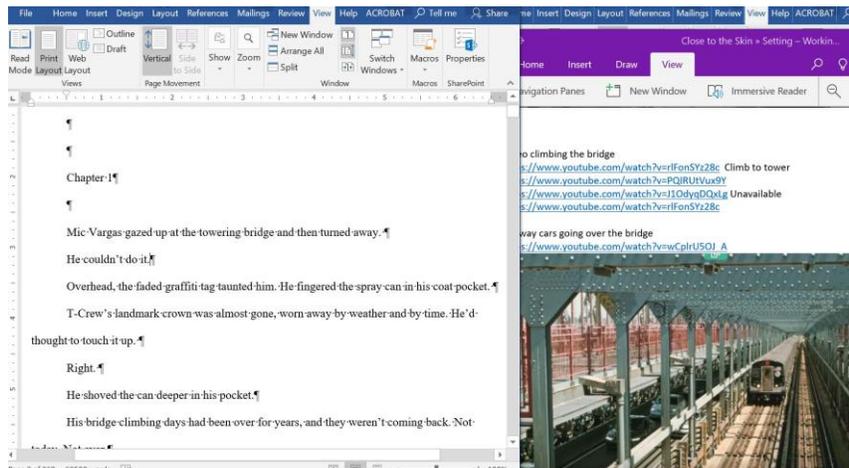
~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>



Note: You can also do a split screen and have your WIP and a website or OneNote or Evernote, etc. page open at the same time too.

To Do: Open your web page. Open your WIP, then do only Step 2 above.



SUMMARY

All of the above—indexing, alphabetizing, sorting by category, linking, and docking—are not an exhaustive review of potential search mechanisms, but simple work arounds using the basics most of us already have. As you probably know by now, I do try to keep an eye on cost.

One advantage they have is that all of them involve only a small bit of organizational set up. Indexing, alphabetizing, adding headings and hyperlinks can all be done at the time a bit of information is added to a category.

~ Create a Story Bible for Your Novel or Book Series ~

Zara West ~ <http://www.zarawestsuspense.com>

Are any of these search methods perfect? No. But I have found them helpful and hope you do to.

Maybe someday, someone will invent that perfect-for-you Story Bible search system. Might even be you.

We have now covered the basic ways to organize and search your story bible materials. In our final lesson, we will be looking ways to combine all these systems into one huge exciting mash up. I also have a bundle of Extras for you too.

Assignment 6: Have you used any of these search methods? What were the pros and cons for you. Do you know of any I did not include? Please share.