

Lesson 5 Digital Tools for Story Bibles

In the last lesson, I briefly covered several digital storage methods that could serve as complete story bibles. However, there is no rule you only have to use one single way to organize your novel's metadata.

Today, we will examine some digital tools, which while they may not do everything, can do a lot of interesting things that may help you organize or store parts of your data.

DIGITAL STORY BOARDS

If you love visuals, then you may want to supplement your main story bible with photographs. Remember, I discussed making a "paper" story board/wall in Lesson 2. A physical story board is creative and fun to make, but involves clipping and collecting and perhaps copying photos off the web. If you don't have the time or space or want something quicker and easier to store, you may want to consider a digital storyboard.

You probably already have photographs you have saved to illustrate things in your book. One big problem with storing photographs (and videos) on your computer is that they take up gads of space. If you are writing a historical or a series or numerous romances of any kind, you are going to eventually fill up your computer.

So let's look at some digital ways to create story boards online.

Pinterest <https://www.pinterest.com/>

A number of you mentioned using Pinterest. Pinterest is probably the closest approximation to a physical storyboard you can create online. You can collect photos, arrange them anyway you like under as many categories as you like. Instead of Tabs, in Pinterest, you have boards. To create your Story Board, set up a board for each of your categories. Now as you do research or as you find a photo needed for a category, pin it or upload it to the appropriate board.

PROS

1. Setting up a Pinterest site for your book/series is easy and free.
2. The pin tool makes copying a photo off the Internet a breeze.
3. You can keep boards private or make all or some of them public.
4. You can share your board with selected other Pinterest members – great if you are collaborating with another author.

5. Boards can serve a promo function – keeping readers informed about an upcoming book (good for series writers) or can be kept private and then “unveiled” as part of your book release.
6. If you don’t want to mix book boards, you can set up numerous Pinterest sites. This is handy if you write under different names or in different genres. However, you will need to use a different e-mail for each. I have 4 Pinterest sites. Here’s one of them <https://www.pinterest.com/zarawest0221/> This is for my Skin Quartet series)
7. You can upload your own photos or capture pretty much any photo on the web. This is possible because Pinterest automatically links to the url so you are not violating copywrite laws.
8. All the photos are on Pinterest, so you aren’t filling up your computer.

CONS

1. Pinned photos often come with odd or irrelevant labels so you need to take time to relabel them.
2. You can’t see all the pictures at the same time.
3. It can be a major time suck if you get lost collecting photos and visiting other people’s boards.
4. On a physical board, you can group photos together in infinite ways -overlapping, stacking, radiating, etc. You can also add drawings, symbols, colors, and other visual elements. In Pinterest, all you have are columns of photos to work with.
5. You have to be online and sign into Pinterest to get to your story board.
6. Not all browsers support Pinterest.

Pinterest is probably the best and most well-known of photo storage options. Here are some other possibilities that can do some similar things, although they do not have all the pin feature of Pinterest.

Presentation Software as a Story Board

Presentation software can do a lot more than illustrate boring classroom lectures. One **Powerpoint** slide, for example, can become a story board. It could represent the whole story or just a part – You can make a slide for a character or a setting. Unlike Pinterest, with Presentation software you can add colors, shapes, arrows, and text along with your photos. You can overlap and arrange photos anyway you wish.

Don’t have Powerpoint? Try **Prezi** <https://prezi.com> It’s free and easy to learn and work with. **Visme** <https://www.visme.co/presentation-software/> is another free presentation builder.

If you have g-mail, you can use Google Drive to store your photos and **Google Slides** to make the storyboard

These are just a few of what's out there. If you are really into using presentation software to make a story board and want to investigate other options. Here is a review with Pros and Cons of 40 other options. <https://www.customshow.com/best-powerpoint-alternatives-presentation-programs/>

If all you want to do is store your story photo somewhere other than on your computer, but keep them organized in some way, there are many photo gallery type options out there. Yahoo's **Flickr** <https://www.flickr.com> and **Google Photos (formerly Picasa** – note you have to sign in with your gmail account) are probably the best examples of this type of storage system.

A NOTE ON USING PHOTOGRAPHS

You may have noted I mentioned copywrite in discussing Pinterest. If you are creating your storyboard for personal use, and don't intend to make your visual materials ever public then you don't have to worry about the source.

But if you are collecting photos that will eventually go public, such as in advertising your finished novel, (and this will apply to all your promo materials so it's good to start out right) – be sure to use photos that are either free use or purchased.

***Free photo sources**

Wikimedia commons photos are one such source.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

You can get great free photos from Unsplash. <https://unsplash.com/> *But these have to be changed in some way like cropped. They explain this on the site.*

Pixabay is another free source for beautiful photographs.

And of course, you can take your own photos.

TIMELINE BUILDERS

A timeline or two or three can be really handy when writing a novel, as I have already mentioned. Luckily, novelists are not the only ones who use timelines. This means there are several good choices online.

Aeon <https://www.aeontimeline.com>

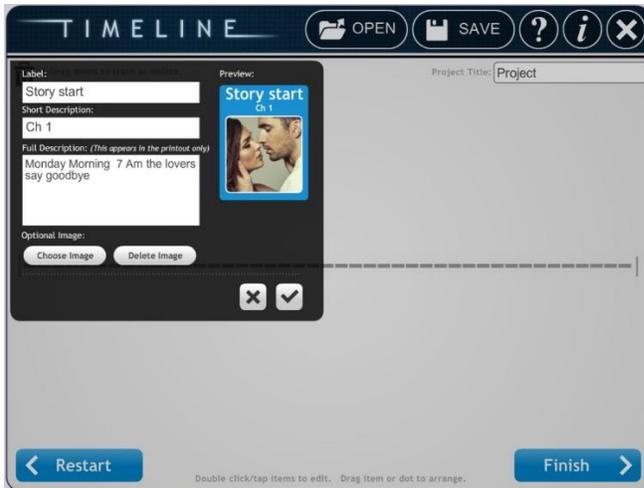
Aeon is a timeline builder designed for novelists. Here is a glowing review by a best-selling historical romance author. <http://rosinalippi.com/weblog/software-for-the-historical-novelist-and-little-birds/> The problem is it costs money and can be only used on one computer. (I had it on my computer that died so I no longer have it) Once upon a time it was cheap. Now you get a 20 day free trial. However, I could not find the actual cost anywhere without signing up for a free trial. If you are interested in how it works, I suggest watching some of the informational videos here <https://www.aeontimeline.com/videos/> One big pro for Aeon is that it can be synced with Scrivener. I also know that if you participate in NaNoWri, they give out discount coupons for it.

TimeGlider <https://timeglider.com>

TimeGlider is another timeline builder. Intended for historical timelines, it can incorporate photographs as well as text entries. It has a free trial and then a \$5 a month fee. (But totally free if you are a student) Hint: You may find you can build the timelines needed using the free trial.

ReadWriteThink http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline_2/

This is a totally free timeline builder. It is very simple and plain, but quick to use. You can add date, time, text, and photos. It has several nice elements: You can move items around on the timeline, and you can print it out. You can go back and edit each entry.



Time Graphics <https://time.graphics> A totally free timeline builder with an easy-to-use interface and lots of bold graphics to play around with.

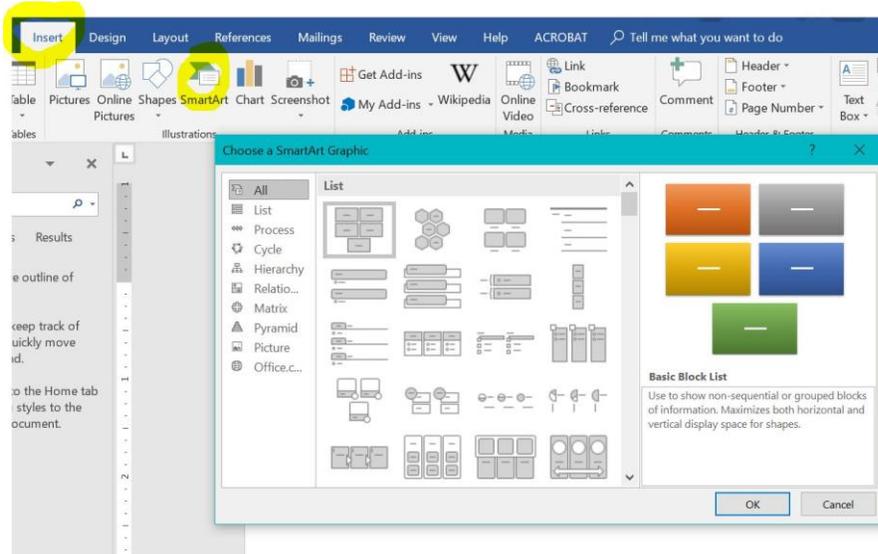
Pincello <https://www.officetimeline.com/pincello> A timeline builder for Powerpoint, Pincello has a totally free version. When you download it, it adds a timeline tab to your Powerpoint program.

MINDMAPPING TOOLS

Mindmapping is a creative way of interrelating data. Mindmaps are useful for writers because they can tie story elements together and help you see interrelationships you might have missed. However, digital mindmapping isn't for everyone. They work best for people who are visual and think fluidly rather than linearly (like in a timeline) Then again, many people prefer to use pen and paper to make them rather than a digital program as they feel they can brainstorm better that way.

Want to mindmap digitally? Try these:

Microsoft Word/Powerpoint You may not know this, but Word contains the building blocks for making a mindmap. Click on Insert and choose Smart Art. It provides a choice of layouts and shapes. I find that it works better in Powerpoint than Word, but both can be used. This is the simplest level of mindmapping.



However, there are tons of choices out there, if mindmapping is something you are really curious about. Rather than me going into them all, here are two great review articles that both explain how to mindmap and then detail what's out there.

<https://lifehacker.com/five-best-mind-mapping-tools-476534555>

<https://thesweetsetup.com/apps/best-mind-mapping-app/>

Scapple <https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scapple/overview>

I want to make special note of Scapple as this is a mindmapper that can be synchronized with Scrivener for those who are interested.

Here is a great overview of how to use scapple effectively for writers.

<https://writingcooperative.com/tk-partner-how-to-use-scapple-effectively-5d48870d5afe>

and another <https://hollowlands.com/2014/09/creating-a-book-series-bible-using-scrivener-scapple-and-aeon-timeline/>

There are many tools you can use to create parts of your story bible. Today we looked at story board tools, timeline builders, mindmappers, and genealogy tools. You may or may not feel the need for any of these. However, knowing they are available can be very helpful when creating your story bible.

Assignment 5: Which of these digital tools are you most likely to use?