

Scrivener: A great writing tool



For a few months now, I've used the authoring software, [Scrivener](#) [available for Mac and Windows. I use the \$40 Windows version] for writing fiction and non-fiction, whenever my task requires more than a short piece. The program has proven to be a terrific authoring tool. Let me tell you why.

Though the program came highly recommended by writers whose blog posts I read, at first, I was skeptical about it. Early advice as I began to learn to write fiction was, essentially, just get to the writing, don't chase all sorts of tools for the work, just do it.

I tried it anyway. I started with a trial version, and quickly saw its advantages.

I started using it for fiction writing I was doing for a class. I was writing a short story with about five scenes in it. The program allowed me to build the story and its scenes as I cared to, dropping in and out of different parts while maintaining the ability to view and work on the whole story, if I liked. Some writers focus on word count, and I could keep close track of that, too.

Realizing Scrivener's power and convenience, I then tried the program for building a transcribed collection of letters from 1906 and 07, and compiling the associated research and annotations for that work. Scrivener was terrific for that, allowing me to take each old letter from its an archive box and transcribe it, edit it, and chase down some of the details in the letter through research, and even collect images to publish with the letters. Putting the letters into their chronological order was a since.

For now, that collection of letters is part of a digital archive for my family, whose forebear wrote the letters. I am well set up, however, to turn the collection into a book manuscript.

I also used the program for client work for my business, setting up a complex and long report based on big forces of change shaping global society. Scrivener let me add and arrange sections at will, and work on ones I was ready to develop, as I saw fit.

Now I am also using Scrivener to write a novel, and the program's ability to let me develop scenes and chapters, and to work on the ones I am ready to, when I am ready to, and to add detail, annotation, etc. to any and all parts, is a

powerful and convenient feature.

Finally, in all these examples, the program has a great benefit to someone like me. I tend to want to perfect, refine, and decorate my written work, choosing fonts, aligning text, setting margins and line spacing, etc. before I've actually gotten the thing written. I can make MS Word jump through hoops—I am quite good at manipulating format in Word, but that's a total distraction from the actual work of writing.

Scrivener strips away that distraction. It's about the simple task of writing a body of prose—you fix it up visually, later. Getting things written with the bare bones font on screen is superb discipline for me. MS Word too easily lets me design a document before I've really written it.

I've not tested all the features of the program, and truth be told, I've not yet compiled a draft work for anyone other than a small group of writing colleagues in a class, or a draft report for my client project. I've yet to truly put a written piece of any large size to bed as a compiled work. But when I do, I've seen, I can choose the format for the given purpose: manuscript, magazine subscription, and so on. Those templates are part of the program. I look forward to taking things to the next step.