

My presentation for NH Writers' Project Writers' Week 2015.

The One Thing You Need to Finish the First Draft of Your Book:

Workflow

Time & Place, Tools, Tactics -- What Works Best for You?

Time & Place

Regular schedule or grab time where you can?

Private or public?

Keep a log: Date, Time, Place, word-count, comments

Tactics

Outline or improvise?

Write from front to back or random order?

Use a timeline?

Edit as you go or just keep going?

Tools

Scrivener

Aeon Timeline

Instant Text

Scapple

FreePlane

TIP:

Don't try to learn a complicated new tool like Scrivener when working under a deadline.

Summary

A workflow gives you something to rely on -- or to deviate from

Be flexible, adjust as you learn

I'll elaborate a bit on each point.

Time & Place, Tools, Tactics -- What Works Best for You?

Time & Place

Regular schedule or grab time where you can?

Most writers agree that a regularly scheduled writing time is best. Make an appointment with yourself; put it on your calendar; show up, sit down, and write.

But that may not work for you. You may have to grab time whenever you can: riding the bus, waiting for a meeting to start, after the kids are in bed.

Private or public? Quiet or noisy?

Some writers like peace and quiet, others like a noisy public place. I have a quiet office at home, but I have found that I am sometimes more productive in a coffee shop or pub. However, I need to block out the house music (which I usually abhor), and block out the conversations of people sitting near me, so I use earbuds. I've found that the only music I can write to is Baroque music.

Keep a log: Date, Time, Place, word-count, comments

You can keep this on paper, in a spreadsheet, or a database. I prefer a database, because that allows me to run reports on my productivity.

Tactics

Outline or improvise?

The terms often used are *plotter* and *pantser* - the latter meaning flying by the seat of the pants. I do a bit of each. For over 40 years I made notes and sketched scenes for my novel. A couple of years ago I organized those, using Scrivener, and created an outline. But I'm still developing the plot by the seat of my pants.

Write from front to back or random order?

Most writers recommend starting with the first chapter and working through to the last. I work on whatever chapter interests me at the moment. But every few days I go back to the outline and try to complete a first draft of incomplete chapters, starting at the front of the book.

Use a timeline?

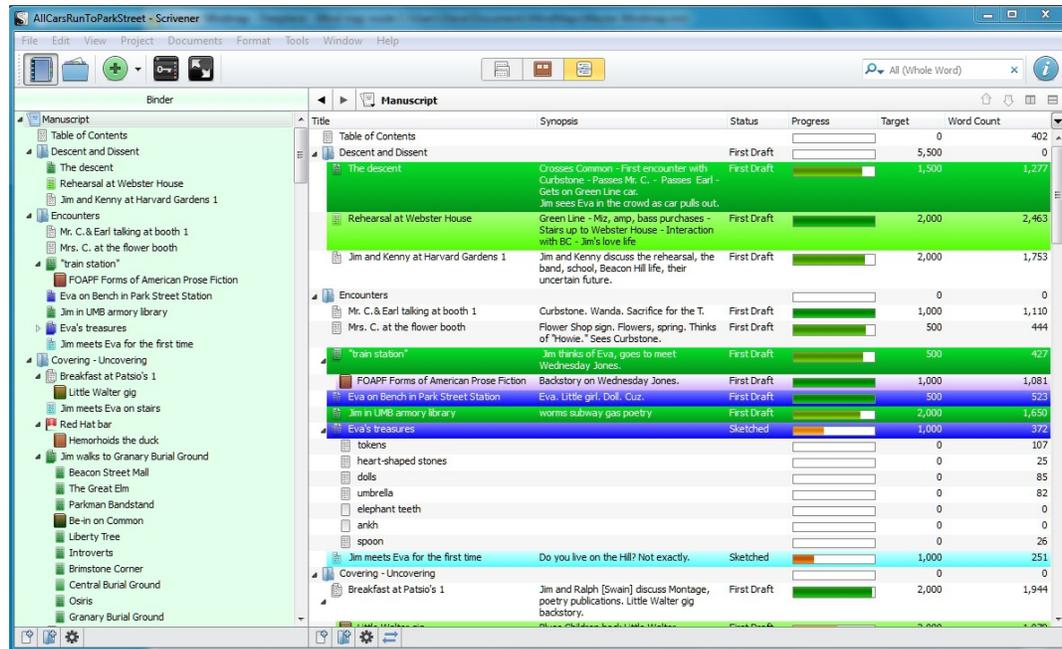
If you are writing historical fiction or a memoir, a timeline can be helpful. The action in my novel covers a very limited timespan -- late 1968 to early 1969 -- but alludes back to the American Revolution, and even as far back as Ancient Egypt. So I find Aeon Timeline very helpful.

Edit as you go or just keep going?

Many writers recommend plowing on and completing the first draft, and then going back to edit. But some have great success starting each writing session by editing the previous day's writing.

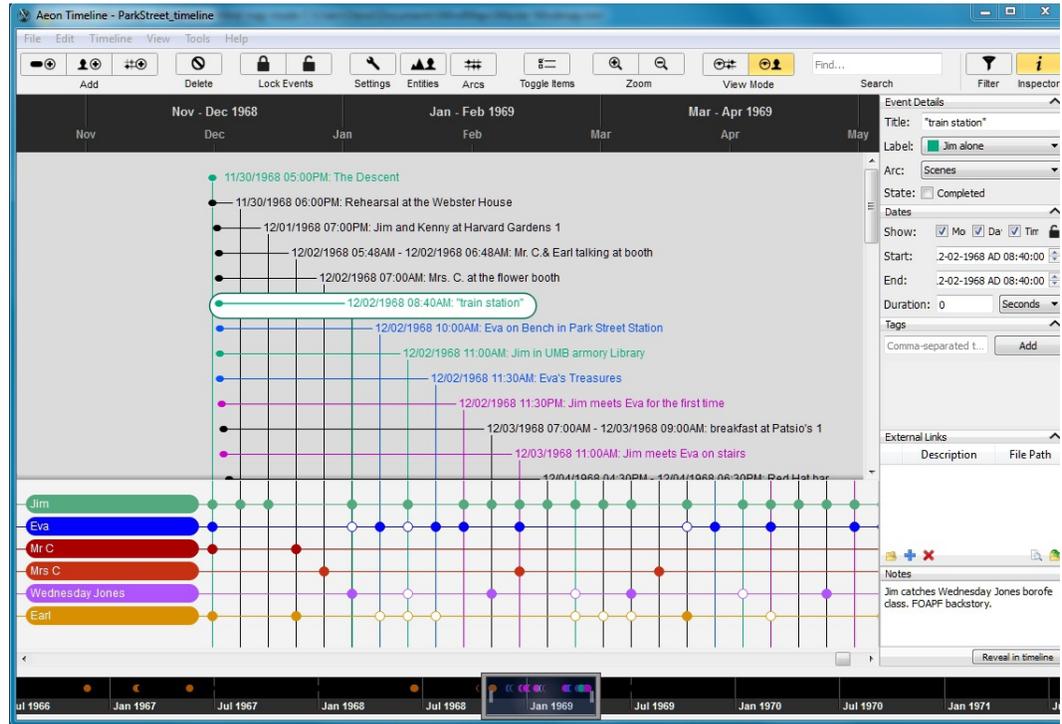
Tools

Scrivener (literatureandlatte.com)



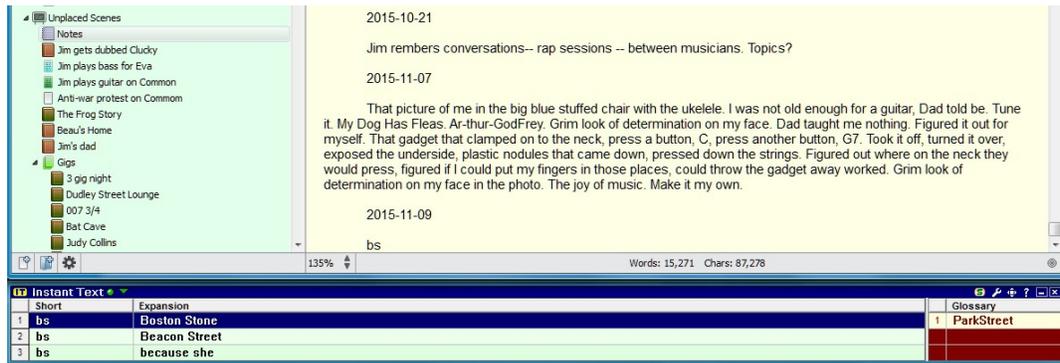
Great for outlining, organizing chapters and scenes. You tag scenes with keywords and metadata, search and sort. Compile to Word for your readers and editors, PDF for your printer, EPUB and MOBI for your ebook -- and much more.

Aeon Timeline (www.scribblecode.com)



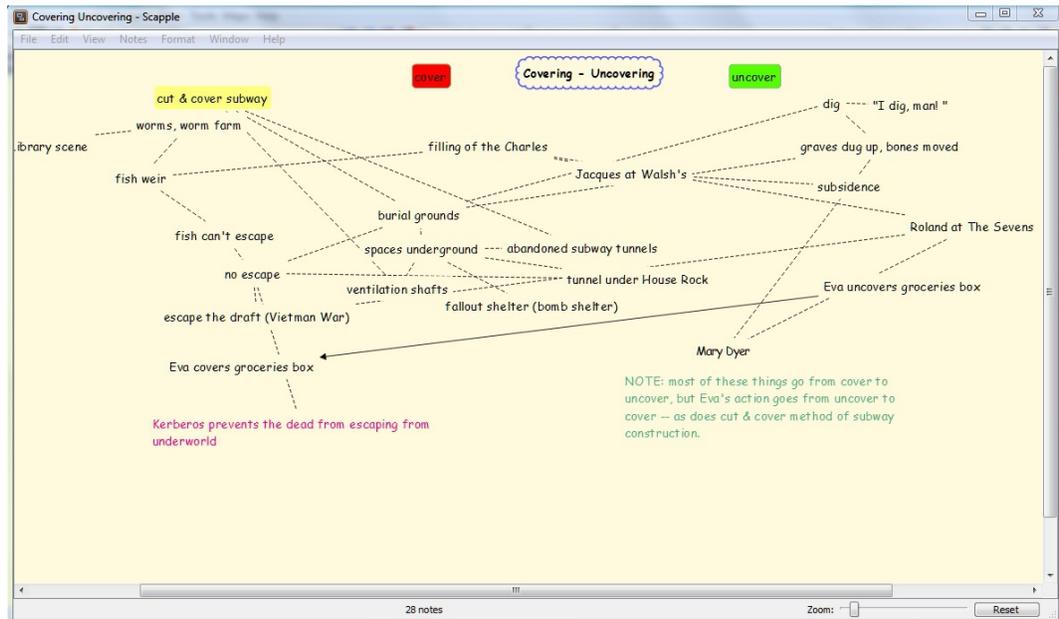
You can track your story timeline & backstory, filter by story arc or characters, and more. Syncs with Scrivener.

Instant Text (www.textware.com)



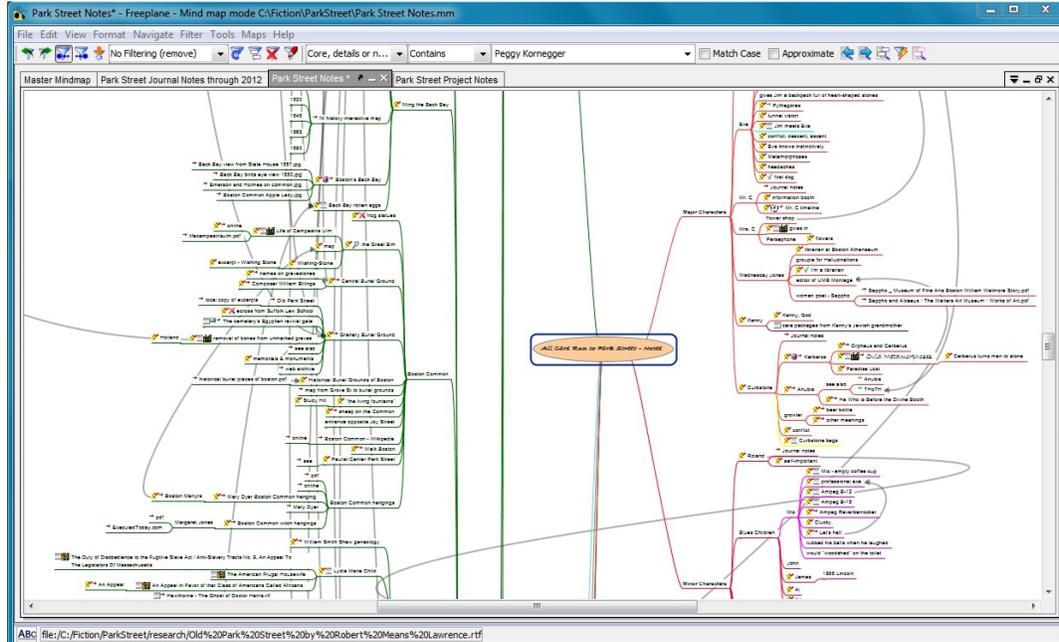
Text expansion -- type a few letters and get a whole phrase or a whole paragraph. Reads your documents from disk and builds a glossary for you, so your most-often-used words and phrases can be entered with a few keystrokes.

Scapple (www.literatureandlatte.com/scapple.php)

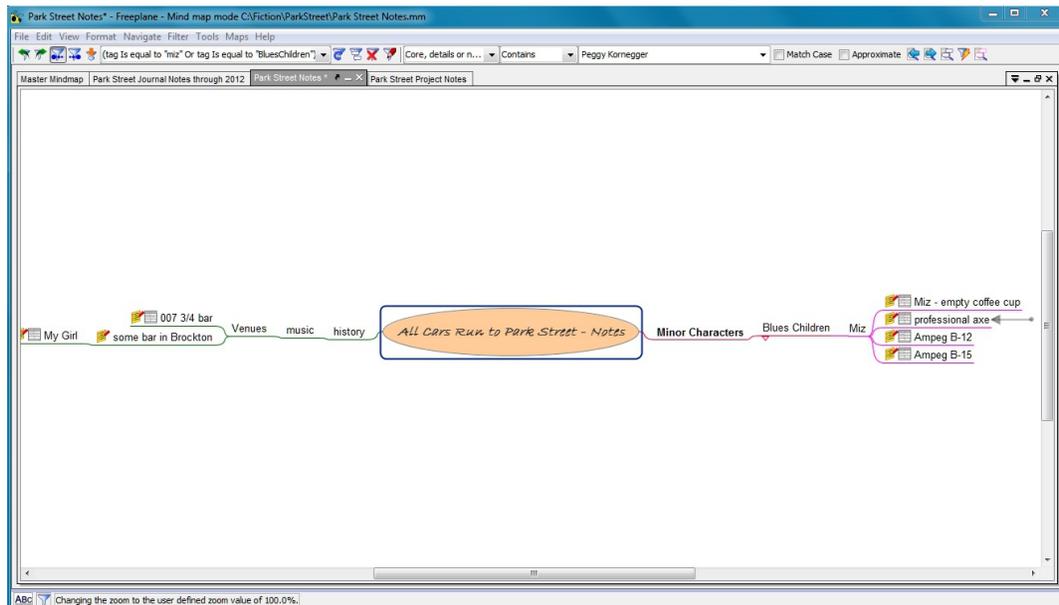


Brainstorming tool. Enter words and phrases as you would on a whiteboard. Connect them and group them. Integrates well with Scrivener.

FreePlane (freeplane.sourceforge.net)



Powerful mindmapping tool. Great for organizing research. Don't let the complexity of this screenshot intimidate you -- you can collect your research spontaneously, and impose order on it later, or just use the powerful searching, sorting, and filtering to focus on what you need at the moment.



This is the previous screenshot, filtered.

Summary

A workflow gives you something you can rely on -- or deviate from!

Be flexible, adjust as you learn what works best for you.