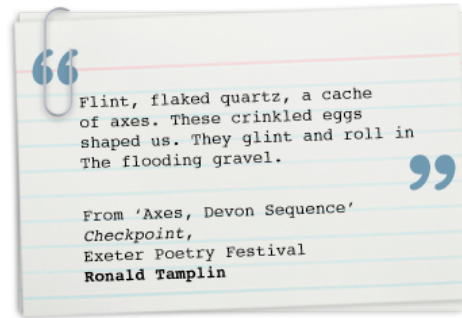




Good Afternoon! It's Thursday on April 07, 2011.

Literature for everyone in the South West



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Keith Blount, Literature & Latte

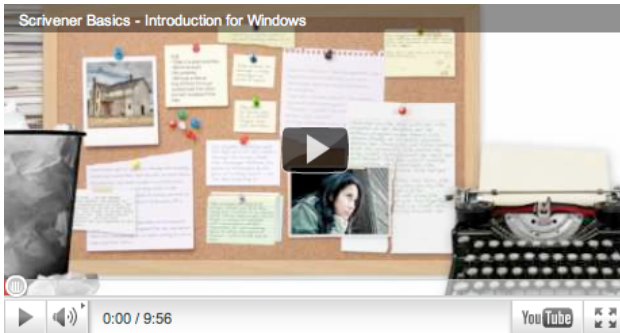


Cyprus Well is delighted to catch up this week with Keith Blount, creator of the brilliant writing software, Scrivener.

"Writing a novel, research paper, script or any long-form text involves more than hammering away at the keys until you're done. Collecting research, ordering fragmented ideas, shuffling index cards in search of that elusive structure—most writing software is fired up only after much of the hard work is done. Enter Scrivener: a word processor and project management tool that stays with you from that first, unformed idea all the

way through to the final draft. Outline and structure your ideas, take notes, view research alongside your writing and compose the constituent pieces of your text in isolation or in context. Scrivener won't tell you how to write - it just makes all the tools you have scattered around your desk available in one application."

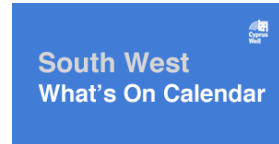
Literature & Latte's headquarters are in Truro in Cornwall, England.



Hi Keith, can you tell us a bit of the history of Scrivener – the how and why, the origin story, so to speak!

Scrivener has its roots in my own disorganisation and attempts at writing a novel, really. I used to use a combination of different tools for my writing: I would write in Microsoft Word, but I'd have different documents for different ideas, scenes and chapters, and they would be scattered about the file system of my computer. Whenever I wanted to get an overview, I'd end up writing synopses in Microsoft Excel or on index cards, and any rearrangements I made I would have to replicate in the original text, moving things around by using copy and paste and so on. And then I had various research files, images and suchlike, that I'd have in front of me or open in other programs. Eventually I thought, "There must be a software solution for this." Something that would allow me to write haphazardly and keep it all in one place; something that would allow me to move synopses around and automatically update the order of my text as I did so; something that would allow me easily to navigate between the different parts of my text; something that would allow me to view research alongside my documents, or to view two different documents alongside one another in a single window.

So, I went searching for software that would do all these things, but I came up short. I discovered a lot of decent software aimed at writers of all kinds, but nothing that did the



Literature Clips

M.R. Hall *The Disappeared*



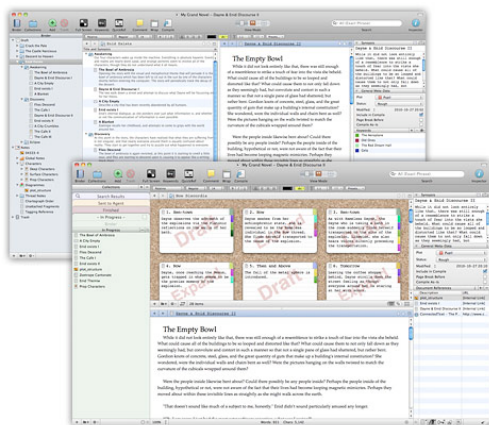
John Haynes and You (courtesy **Seren Books**)



main things I wanted it to do. So I drew up a design of how my ideal writing software would work and bought some books on programming... But I was on Windows at the time - this was about ten years ago - and the books I bought were doorstoppers that made no sense to me; after all, I studied history and medieval literature at university, not computer science. So I gave up on that idea until I bought a Mac. Ironically, I bought a Mac partly so that I would stop tinkering with the hardware components (it being much more difficult to do that on a Mac) - that is, stop procrastinating. But the Mac comes with all the development tools you need (whereas with Windows you have to buy them separately), so I thought I'd give it another shot and bought some books again. And this time things clicked - I found the programming libraries and language that Macs use much more comprehensible, and the programming books I bought more lucid than the Windows ones.

From there, I spent a couple of months teaching myself coding basics and then a year putting Scrivener together. I released it as a beta to writers participating in National Novel Writing Month in 2005. I wasn't entirely happy with it, though, so I spent another year completely rebuilding it and redesigning the entire interface, until it eventually went on sale in January 2007. Last November, we released version 2.0.

Which is all a long-winded way of saying that it was the tool I wanted for myself, so I taught myself to code in order to create it.



One of the great things about Scrivener is the sense that its designers created it to use themselves. What are your favourite Scrivener features yourself?

There's only one designer - me! (Although that's probably not fair on the other members of Literature & Latte, come to think of it. Until 2009 I was a one-man team, but now there are five of us. I'm still the sole Mac developer, but Ioa - who was one of

the first users - gives me a lot of feedback on user interface and comes up with some great ideas. The Windows version is being built based on the design of the Mac version.)

So yes, I definitely use Scrivener myself. It started out as a hobby and I never expected it to become my main job, but even now that it has, it would seem pointless to me were I never to use it for my own writing. My favourite features are its core features, the reasons I built it in the first place, naturally enough. My absolute favourite feature is probably the simplest: just being able to create a text document anywhere in a project, dump ideas into it, and then jump back to whatever else I was working on - so I can work on things in any order I want - using the binder (the source list on the left of the window) to navigate between my documents, and to structure and order them however I wish. I also like being able to split the editor to work on different documents alongside one another, or refer to research documents, and using the corkboard and outliner views to get an overview of the whole. And the Scrivenings feature, which allows you to view multiple text documents as though they were a single document (so you can, for instance, work on individual scenes in isolation or as part of the greater whole). But this is starting to sound like a sales pitch now!

Scrivener is constantly evolving – you now have a Windows version for example – without giving away trade secrets, what features can we look forward to in the future?

Well, we've just released version 2.0, and I've been working on that almost solidly for two years. I've redesigned many aspects of the interface and introduced a lot of the most frequently-requested features (those that fit the program, at least). So at the moment, I'm mainly concerned with all the minor refinements that need making to 2.0 - the inevitable bugs and glitches that crop up after a major release, despite your efforts and over-optimistic belief that you'd got everything perfect. But we've got a busy year ahead, all the same. Apple have just released the Mac App Store, so the next thing for me is to get the Mac version ready for that (which involves some changes to the code for the App Store version) and go through the submission process. After that, we have the Windows version coming out, a boxed product to plan (we're currently download-only) and we hope to get Scrivener translated into other languages. Later in the year, Apple are releasing their new operating system, Lion, so I'll need to get it ready for that, too. All in all this means there won't be much time for any major new features this year, but then I don't really believe in piling on features just for the sake of it - Scrivener already has the main features I want in it so I'm more interested in refining it, making more templates available and so on.

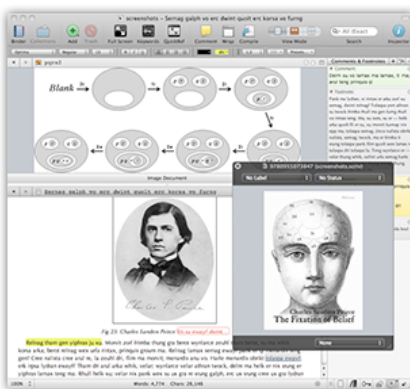
Literature and Latte is based in Truro – how easy is it to run what must be a very fast growing worldwide software success from Cornwall?

We only moved to Truro two-and-a-half years ago, although my partner grew up in Cornwall and went to school in Truro. Before that we were based in London. On the whole, running a business here is great. Although L&L is worldwide and its customer-base is growing every day, we're still a fairly small company and we all work from home - we are scattered about somewhat, with our Windows developer in Australia and our support person in the US. Working from home is certainly much easier here than it was in London because it's possible to get some quiet (although as I write this, I can see construction workers preparing to turn the fields opposite into a housing estate, so I may not be saying this for long).

The main problem I have, though - which is a problem in Cornwall in general - is internet speed. I can't believe we don't even have cable down here yet! That's the only real drawback - sadly it means that it's not as ideal as it could be for running an internet-based company. Apple release the updates to their developer software as downloads only, and the files are a gigabyte apiece. I recently had to get my friend in Norwich to download some such files for me and post them to me, because that worked out quicker than trying to download them here. So, the internet speeds down here are certainly a source of frustration and I really hope they are improved over the next few years, as I'm sure it will become more and more of an issue for companies as time goes by. But that's the only complaint I have. I love Cornwall and Truro is a fantastic place to live - you can't beat a company lunch at the One-Eyed Cat.

As Scrivener changes the way writers write, the digital revolution for publishing spells change too. What do you feel the future holds for the whole chain – writer, publisher, consumer?

There's been a lot written about this over the past couple of years and everyone seems to have a different opinion on the evils (or not) of digital publishing, so I'm rather tentative about making speculations - but I will anyway. I think books will increasingly be consumed as digital media, just as has happened with music, but I hope that there will continue to be a place for books made of paper and ink and glue. I received a Kindle for Christmas and I'm already half in love with it - it's lighter than a paperback and the screen and e-ink is just as readable.



I'm still trained to prefer the feel of a book in my hand, but my kids - in primary school - already know their way around an iPad, so I do wonder how attached they will be to physical books in twenty odd years' time. They may feel the same way about books as I do about music - I appreciate those music-lovers who swear by their vinyl and can tell the difference in sound quality, but my tin ears are just as happy with listening to music via iTunes.

Although the music industry isn't entirely comparable, I think that just as the internet has allowed many musicians who would never have got a music deal to share their compositions with the world, ultimately e-publishing will mean that a lot of writers who might never have been published find a readership. We already hear about self-published authors becoming professional authors because their books have been recommended by word-of-mouth; that may happen more frequently because it costs nothing at all to publish a book electronically (Scrivener 2.0 in fact allows you to generate your book as an .epub or Kindle file if you want, as do several other programs). The flipside, of course, is that there will also be much, much more terrible writing "out there". But that's already the case with the internet, and you learn to ignore it and how to find the good stuff - mostly, at least. It may be that publishers eventually act as a sort of "filter".

The main concern is what it will mean for professional writers. The internet is a wonderful thing, but it has unfortunately made a lot of people expect to get all content for free. As has already happened with musicians (and software developers!), authors are now starting to find their work pirated and distributed as free e-books via the internet, and this will inevitably only get worse. I've heard some authors worry that the era of authors getting paid for their work might be coming to a close. I hope that's not true, but it's a legitimate concern.

You're a writer as well – has Scrivener taken over all your writing time, or do you still intend to write that novel?

Scrivener has been the most elaborate procrastination project of my life, but in a way it's given me more time to write. The past year or so, with getting 2.0 ready, it definitely took up not only my writing time but also a lot of my family time - hopefully by the time we do 3.0 I'll be able to afford another developer to help out. But that manic period aside, it has allowed me to give up my day job (not that I hated my day job - I used to be a teacher) and set my own hours. So I set a chunk of every morning aside for writing, and the rest of

the day to supporting and enhancing Scrivener. That said, I am incredibly talented at procrastination, and I'm also very good at throwing out what I write and starting again, so although I intend to write the novel, whether it ever gets finished is another matter entirely.

Scrivener has testimonials from all over the world, and from many successful writers (I heard about it via a Joe Hill tweet!). If you could pick a couple of testimonials that really inspired you, which would they be?

That's a tough one! I suppose one of the most inspiring was the first one I got, the one from Michael Marshall Smith. It was inspiring simply because I'd read his books and really liked them, so receiving an e-mail from a real, published author calling my program "the biggest software advance for writers since the word processor" just blew me away; I was slightly star-struck, and it was the first time I became aware that published authors were starting to use Scrivener. Since then we've been very lucky in getting testimonials from numerous authors and scriptwriters. For me, though, just as amazing as the testimonials has been the opportunity to talk to "real" authors via e-mail and pick their brains (i.e., take advantage) - Neil Cross, for instance (we have an interview with Neil and a couple of other writers on our "Case Studies" page, in fact: <http://www.literatureandlatte.com/casestudies.php>). Or David Hewson, who writes about how he uses Scrivener regularly on his blog. It's impossible to pick out any in particular beyond that, though, because I'm grateful to everyone who has taken the time to write us a testimonial.

Thank you Keith!



Interview Archive

June 2010: Katy Guest

July 2010: Susanna Jones

August 2010: John Haynes

September 2010: Candy Neubert

October/November 2010: M.R. Hall

December 2010 Waterstone's Exeter Roman Gate

January 2011 Dave Bradley Editor in Chief, SFX

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