Alternative Word Processing Programs

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Why consider another word processing program?

While Microsoft Word is still useful to writers, there are a handful of programs available that have been developed with the creative writer in mind.

The majority of the word processing programs reviewed here:

- Are intuitive for people accustomed to using Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, etc.)
- Are customizable and sensitive to the needs of writers, with hierarchical section breakdowns, character development aids, and timeline organization.
- Organize files using tabs within one window- no need to switch between windows.
- Allow writers to create and review their notes without inserting the text into the body of the work.
- Allow the option of simplified writing stripped of unused options.

Features similar to Word found in these alternative programs:

- copying, cutting, pasting text between files and from text outside the program
- importing and exporting of text files
- font size/style and paragraph customization
- find and find/replace word search options
- spell check and thesauri

File types

.txt – Plaintext file extension: consists of very basic text without formatting (no bold, italics, underline)

.rtf – Rich Text Format: offers text with more formatting capabilities. Most word processing software implementations support RTF format import and export, often making it a "common" format between otherwise incompatible word processing software. The WordPad editor in Microsoft Windows creates RTF files by default. It is also compatible with Mac text editors, such as TextEdit.

.doc – proprietary Microsoft Word word processing file extension with more text formatting information.

PAGE FOUR

http://www.softwareforwriting.com
The free unlicensed version comes with a limit of 3 Notebooks, and a total of 20 Pages per Notebook. Unlimited notebooks and page access costs $34.95.

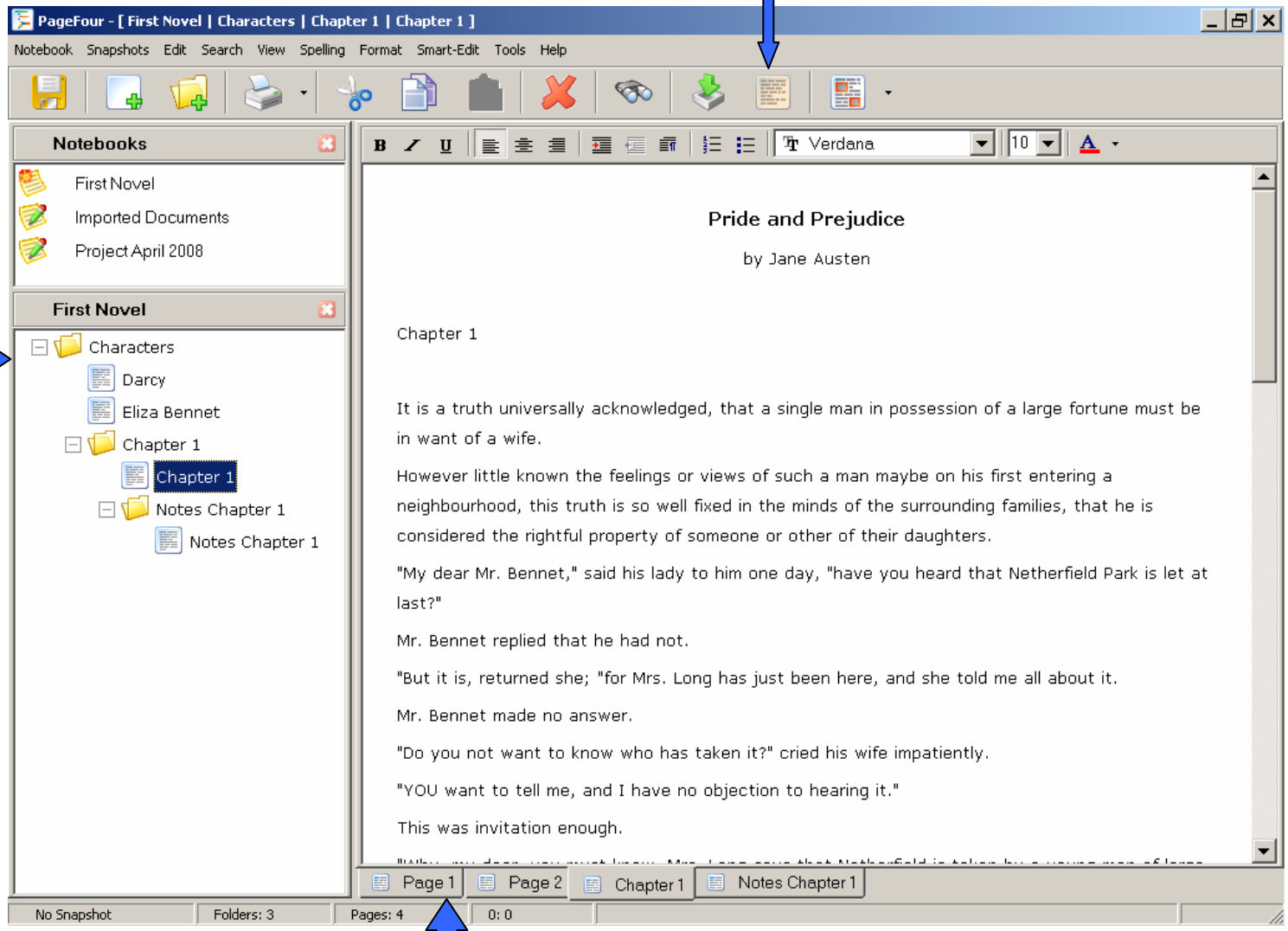
Document output type: .txt, .rtf, .doc
Side-by-side file viewing: No
Outlining: No
Storyboard: No
Timeline: No
Full Screen: No
Spell Checker: Yes, with British, Australian, and American English auto-correction options, and over 15 foreign language dictionaries available for download.
Thesaurus: Yes
Search text option: Yes
Password Protection: Yes, as well as a lock/unlock program feature

- Tabbed pages allow users to easily switch between files.
- Automatic archiving, including the ability to roll back or extract pages from the archive
- Take a snapshot of a page you're working on before making changes, and automatically save it for later reference, without having to create a new file.
- Lock your files while you're away from your computer, unlock them when you get back.
- Smart-Scan offers users textual statistics in over to avoid overused words or phrases.

What you cannot do in Page Four: create tables, charts and macros.

Buttons, pull-down menu, and text formatting options similar to Microsoft Word

Snapshot button lets users save ideas for further reference without having to create a new file



Hierarchical folder and page file breakdowns, can be reorganized at any time

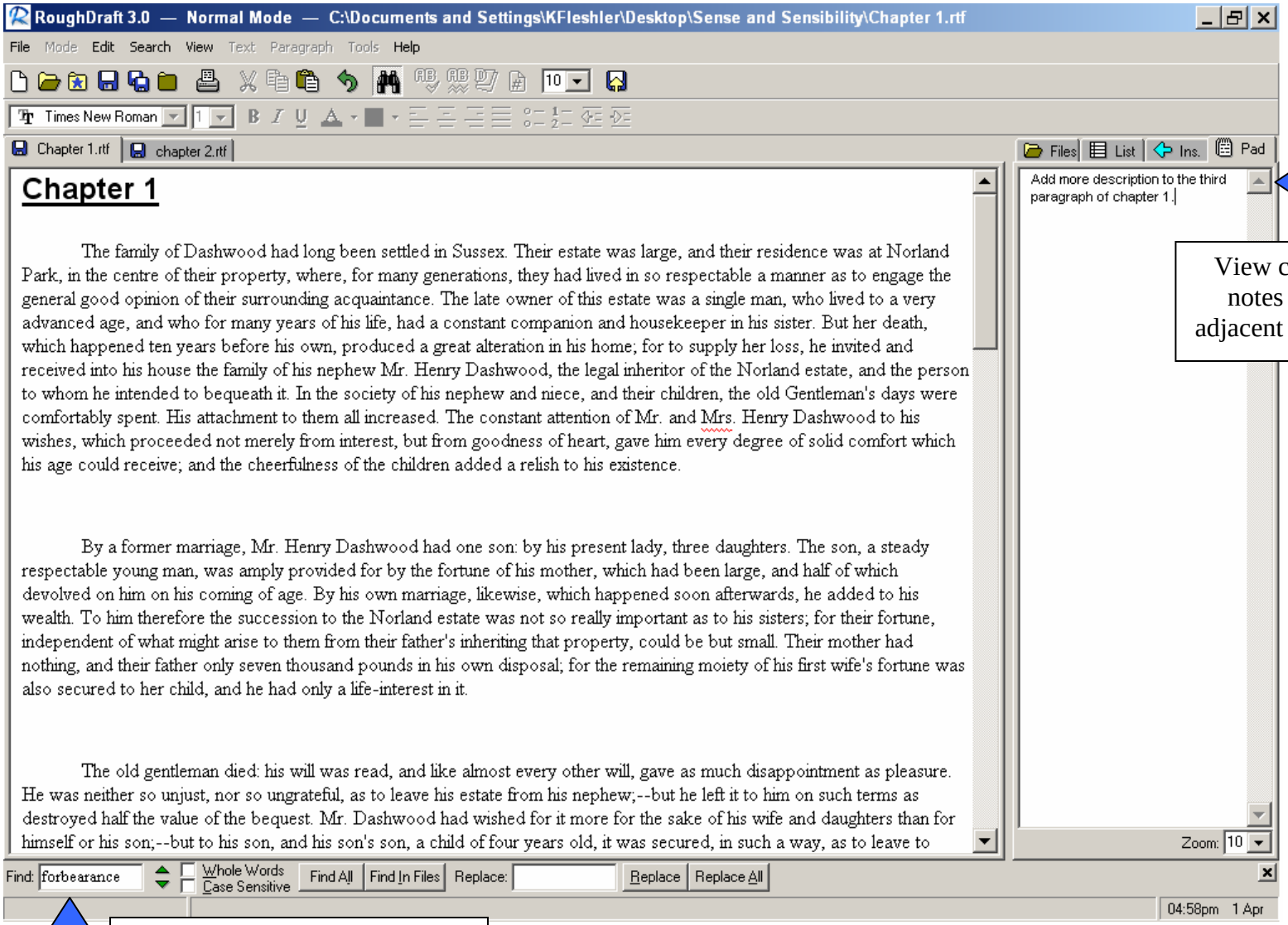
Tabbed pages for easy switching between files

ROUGH DRAFT 3.0
http://www.salsbury.f2s.com
Free

Document output type: .txt, .rtf
Side-by-side file viewing: Yes, for single text file and related notes only.
Outlining: No
Storyboard: No
Timeline: No
Full Screen: No
Spell Checker: Yes, with British, Australian, and American English auto-correction options, and other downloadable dictionaries.
Thesaurus: Yes
Search text option: Yes
Password Protection: No

- Tabbed interface.
- Notes in a panel to the right for easy viewing
- Special mode for plays and screenplays for easier formatting
- A side panel that makes common operations quicker and more convenient
- Instant backup of all open files to the device of your choice
- Automatic creation of cover pages for manuscript submissions with word and page counts.

Again, Microsoft Word-like features and tabbed file viewing



View chapter notes in an adjacent window

Find words in any RoughDraft documents and replace them

LIQUID STORY BINDER XE

http://www.blackobelisksoftware.com

Document output type: .txt, .rtf, .zip
Side-by-side file viewing: Yes, including image files
Outlining: Yes
Storyboard: Yes
Timeline: Yes
Full Screen: Yes
Spell Checker: Yes
Thesaurus: Yes
Search text option: Yes
Password Protection: Yes, at the individual book level only, not at file level

- View text files and images simultaneously to aid visual referencing
- Add and sort mp3s to help writing mood
- Record yourself reading your own writing using a microphone
- Keep up with writing goals by reviewing your words per day counts, words left to write, days remaining, etc.
- Combine multiple chapters into single manuscript automatically

I should not have liked to have been in Mr. Baggins' place, all the same. The tunnel seemed to have no end. All he knew was that it was still going down pretty steadily and keeping in the same direction in spite of a twist and a turn or two. There were passages leading off to the side every now and then, as he knew by the glimmer of his sword, or could feel with his hand on the wall. Of these he took no notice, except to hurry past for fear of goblins or half-imagined dark things coming out of them. On and on he went, and down and down; and still he heard no sound of anything except the occasional whirr of a bat by his ears, which startled him at first, till it became too frequent to bother about. I do not know how long he kept on like this, hating to go on, not daring to stop, on, on, until he was tireder than tired. It seemed like all the way to tomorrow and over it to the days beyond.

Suddenly without any warning he trotted splash into water! Ugh! it was icy cold. That pulled him up sharp and short. He did not know whether it was just a pool in the path, or the edge of an underground stream that crossed the passage, or the brink of a deep dark subterranean lake. The sword was hardly shining at all. He stopped, and he could hear, when he listened hard, drops drip-drip- dripping from an unseen roof into the water below; but there seemed no other sort of sound.

"So it is a pool or a lake, and not an underground river," he thought. Still he did not dare to wade out into the darkness. He could not swim; and he thought, too, of nasty slimy things, with big bulging blind eyes, wriggling in the water. There are strange things living in the pools and lakes in the hearts of mountains: fish whose fathers swam in, goodness only knows how many years ago, and never swam out again, while their eyes grew bigger and bigger and bigger from trying to see in the blackness; also there are other things more slimy than fish. Even in the tunnels and caves the goblins have made for themselves there are other things living unbeknown to them that have sneaked in from outside to lie up in the dark. Some of these caves, too, go back in their beginnings to ages before the goblins, who only widened them and joined them up with passages, and the original owners are still there in odd corners, slinking and nosing about.

Deep down here by the dark water lived old Gollum, a small slimy creature. I don't know where he came from, nor who or what he was. He was Gollum - as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face. He had a little boat, and he rowed about quite quietly on the lake; for lake it was, wide and deep and deadly cold. He paddled it with large feet dangling over the side, but never a ripple did he make. Not he. He was looking out of his pale lamp-like eyes for blind fish, which he grabbed with his long fingers as quick as thinking. He liked meat too. Goblin he thought good, when he could get it; but he took care they never found him out. He just throttled them from behind, if they ever came down alone anywhere near the edge of the water, while he was prowling about. They very seldom did, for they had a feeling that something unpleasant was lurking down there, down at the very roots of the mountain. They had come on the lake, when they were tunnelling down long ago, and they found they could go no further; so there their road ended in that direction, and there was no reason to go that way- unless the Great Goblin sent them. Sometimes he took a fancy for fish from the lake, and sometimes neither goblin nor fish came back.

Actually Gollum lived on a slimy island of rock in the middle of the lake. He was watching Bilbo now from the distance with his pale eyes like telescopes. Bilbo could not see him, but he was wondering a lot about Bilbo, for he could see that he was no goblin at all.

Gollum got into his boat and shot off from the island, while Bilbo was sitting on the brink altogether flummoxed and at the end of his way and his wits. Suddenly up came Gollum and whispered and hissed:

"Bless us and splash us, my preciousssss! I guess it's a choice feast; at least a tasty morsel it'd make us, gollum!" And when he said gollum he made a horrible swallowing noise in his throat. That is how he got his name, though he always called himself 'my precious.'

The hobbit jumped nearly out of his skin when the hiss came in his ears, and he suddenly saw the pale eyes sticking out at him.

"Who are you?" he said, thrusting his dagger in front of him.

"What iss he, my preciouss?" whispered Gollum (who always spoke to himself through never having anyone else to speak to). This is what he had come to find out, for he was not really very hungry at the moment, only curious; otherwise he would have grabbed first and whispered afterwards.

"I am Mr. Bilbo Baggins. I have lost the dwarves and I have lost the wizard, and I don't know where I am; and "I don't want to know, if only I can get ,away."

"What's he got in his handses?" said Gollum, looking at the sword, which he did not quite like.

"A sword, a blade which came out of Gondolin!"

"Sssss," said Gollum, and became quite polite. "Praps ye sits here and chats with it a bitsy, my preciousss. It like riddles, praps it does, does it?" He was anxious to appear friendly, at any rate for the moment, and until he found out more about the sword and the hobbit, whether he was quite alone really, whether he was good to eat, and whether Gollum was really hungry. Riddles were all he could think of. Asking them, and sometimes guessing them, had been the only game he had ever played with other funny creatures sitting in their holes in the long, long ago, before he lost all his friends and was driven away, alone, and crept down, down, into the dark under the mountains.

"Very well," said Bilbo, who was anxious to agree, until he found out more about the creature, whether he was quite alone, whether he was fierce or hungry, and whether he was a friend of the goblins.

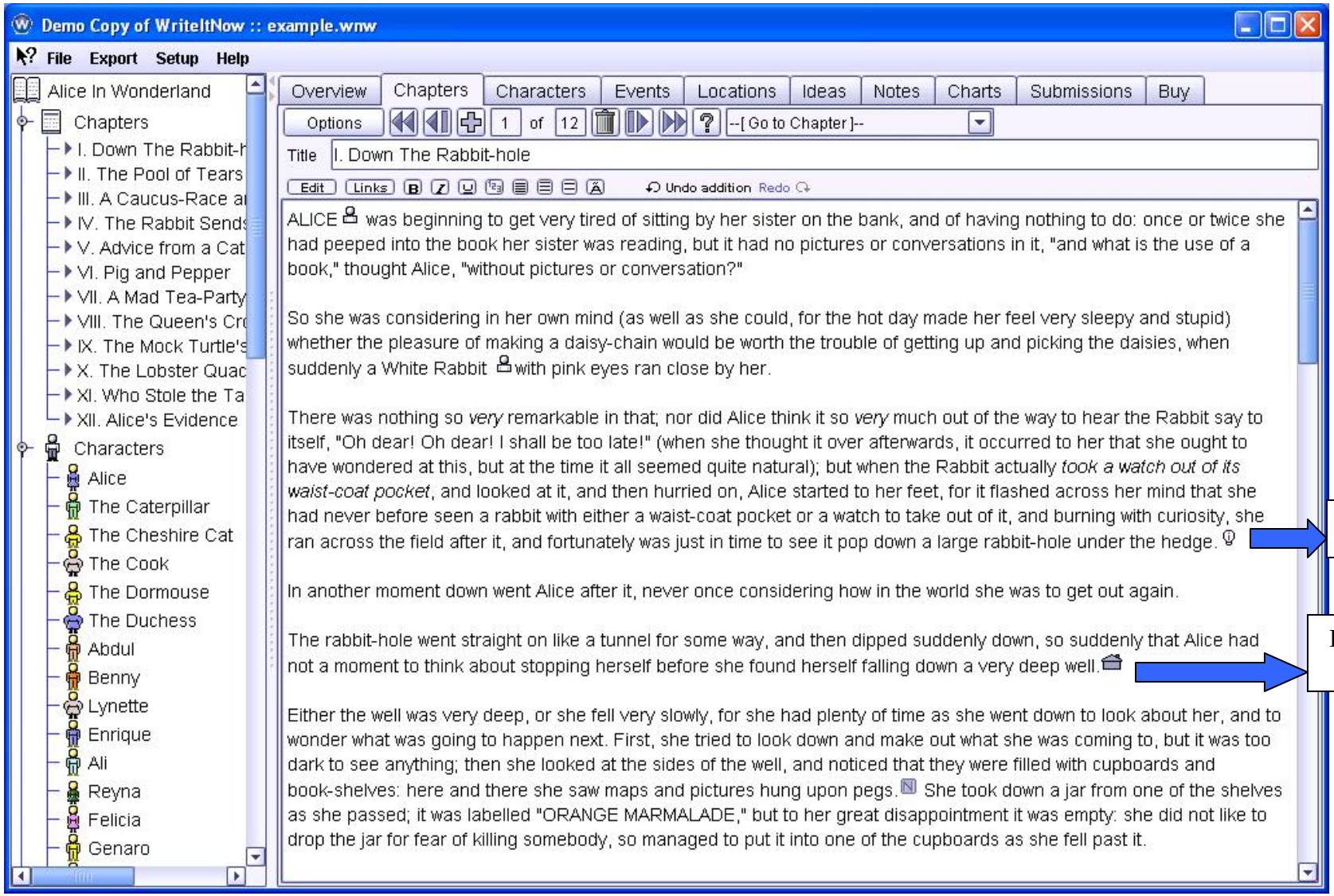
"You ask first," he said, because he had not had time to think of a riddle.

Full-screen with no distractions, with customizable background and font colors

WRITE-IT-NOW
http://www.ravensheadservices.com
Free demo, $49.95-$59.95 to purchase

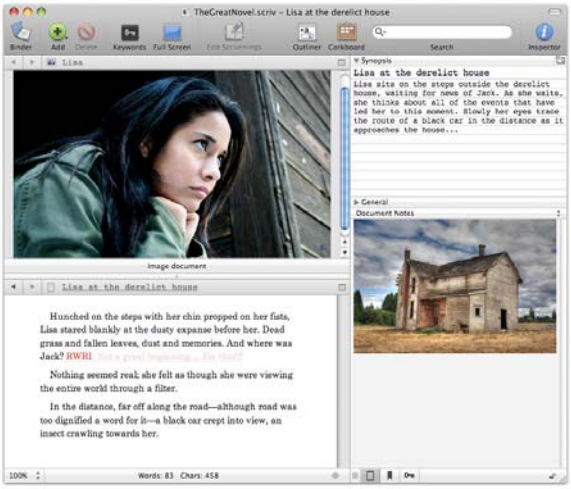
Document output type: .txt, .rtf
Side-by-side file viewing: No
Outlining: Yes, with event summaries
Storyboard: No, but story charts are available
Timeline: Yes
Full Screen: No
Spell Checker: Yes, with British, US, and Canadian spellings.
Thesaurus: Yes, with wildcard word search options
Search text option: Yes
Password Protection: Yes

- Provides a hierarchical organization of the work, with focus on organization of characters, locations, and events.
- Relationship links track characters throughout the work.
- Hotlinks to notes for easier referencing.
- Manuscript submission tracker.


Demo Copy of WriteItNow :: example.wnw
File
Export
Setup
Help
Alice In Wonderland
Chapters
I. Down The Rabbit-h
II. The Pool of Tears
III. A Caucus-Race a
IV. The Rabbit Send
V. Advice from a Cat
VI. Pig and Pepper
VII. A Mad Tea-Party
VIII. The Queen's Cr
IX. The Mock Turtle's
X. The Lobster Quac
XI. Who Stole the Ta
XII. Alice's Evidence
Characters
Alice
The Caterpillar
The Cheshire Cat
The Cook
The Dormouse
The Duchess
Abdul
Benny
Lynette
Enrique
Ali
Reyna
Felicia
Genaro
Overview
Chapters
Characters
Events
Locations
Ideas
Notes
Charts
Submissions
Buy
Options
1
of
12
--[Go to Chapter]--
Title
I. Down The Rabbit-hole
Edit
Links
Undo addition
Redo
ALICE was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversation?"
So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid) whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.
There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waist-coat pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waist-coat pocket or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.
In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.
The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down a very deep well.
Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves: here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labelled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.
Idea link
Location link

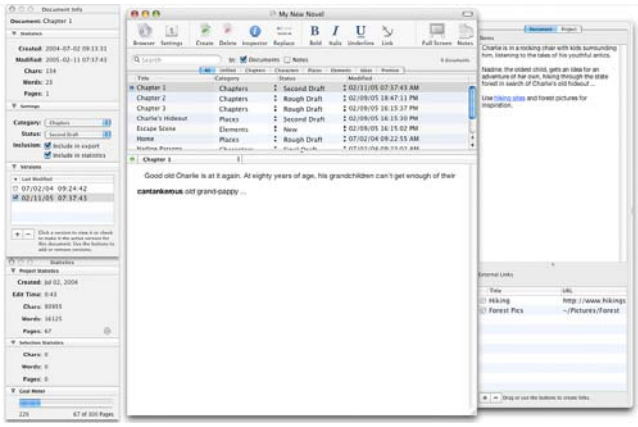
MAC-Only Programs

Scrivener
http://www.literatureandlatte.com
Scrivener allows you to edit two documents side-by side, split either horizontally or vertically, and keeps your research files all on one screen.

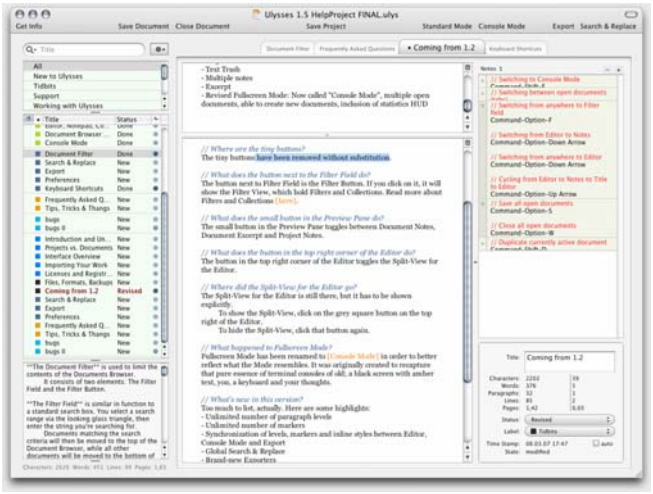


WriteRoom
http://hogbaysoftware.com
Basic-to-basics full-screen mode using customizable backgrounds
and font colors, intended for undisturbed writing.

CopyRight
http://bartastechnologies.com/products/copywrite
Create and edit chapters alongside notes, built-in automatic backup, clean interface, full screen option.



Ulysses
http://www.blue-tec.com
One of the first writing programs geared towards creative writing; offers plain-text editing only; text elements have two editing levels: the "standard" text and a "note pad".



For more information on these programs and others like them, from the maker of the Scrivener program:
http://www.literatureandlatte.com/links.html

OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO WORD:

Microsoft Wordpad
Basic text processor included with Windows packages, allows for basic formatting, such as fonts, resizing, and paragraph formatting.

OpenOffice.org
http://www.openoffice.org
Open-source office software suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases, etc.

Google Docs
http://docs.google.com
Use your Google account to access a free word processor you can access whenever you are online.