

Plot, Plan & Scheme: Storyboarding for Genealogy (RT2003)

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Session Summary

Learn about the latest outlining, mind mapping and storyboarding tools to help you plan, prepare, and publish a “can’t put down” family history.

Do you suffer from family history writer’s block? Have you struggled to tell the stories that exist behind those names, dates, places, and citations you have meticulously record about your ancestors? Getting started is often the hardest part of preparing a family narrative. Through examples, this session will show you the latest outlining, organizing, and mind mapping tools to help you plan and prepare a family history your relatives will want to read. This session will cover:

- Outlining tools
- Timeline programs
- Mind Mapping tools
- Virtual index cards/storyboards

Attendees will learn about the latest outlining, organizing, and mind mapping tools to help plan and prepare a family history. In addition, attendees will learn tips for overcoming the proverbial "writer's block" that often keep us from recording and sharing our ancestors' stories, and about websites and courses that can help with the writing process.

Key Questions This Session Will Address

- How can I get over the "writer's block" that prevents me from starting the process of writing my family history?
- What is storyboarding? How can it help me in the writing process?
- What tools and apps exist to help make the process of outlining and writing easier?
- How can I generate ideas or decide what to include in my family history book or blog?
- What websites or classes exist to help me work through the writing process?

Storyboard for Success

A storyboard is a way to visually outline or map out your writing project. In this assignment you will plot out your family history writing project using index cards or an online software program or app. The objective is to jot down the main events of the story you are telling, then arrange them in chronological order (first to last).

If you need to, you can then move them around to into another structure that makes sense for the story, such as flashback, flashforward, etc. “Virtual index cards” make this task much easier.

Skill Development

- Learn the basic concepts of storyboarding (a visual map or outline) for writing.
- Identify key points, ideas, scenes etc. you want to convey or include in your book, profile, short story, etc.
- Learn what tools and apps are available to help with the writing process

Take-away Exercise

This exercise is designed to help you clearly take your ideas and writing goals and put them in an outline or storyboard format. The storyboard gives you a “bird’s eye view” of your project so you can build a structure that works, see the holes in your content, and have a place to store notes, ideas, source information, and more. You can use the storyboard as your guidepost to start writing, or as chapter or section titles to take you through the writing process.

1. Choose a software program or app to create virtual index cards or a digital outline. (See pages 3 and 4).
2. Use the index cards or outline to describe your scenes or write down key points you want to include. The index cards should **not** be used to write your manuscript or contain long sections of text.
3. Try to stick to one scene, event, or major point per card.

For those who like to plot “old school” style: Get a stack (about 60 blank index cards) and write one or two points or scenes on each card.

Resources: Articles, Books, and Blogs

- “Plot Like a Pro: Three Simple Steps to Creating a Compelling Family History Narrative” (Lisa Alzo)
<http://www.archives.com/experts/alzo-lisa/plot-like-a-pro-three-simple-steps-to-creating-a-compelling-family-his.html> by Lisa Alzo
- “Break That Writer's Block: Ten Tips To Tap Into Your Creative Muse” (Lisa Alzo)
<http://www.archives.com/experts/alzo-lisa/writers-block.html>
- Six More Ways to Find Your Family History Muse (Lisa Alzo)
<http://www.archives.com/experts/alzo-lisa/six-more-ways-to-find-your-family-history-muse.html>
- “Scrivener: Your Family History Story Board” (Lisa Alzo) *Internet Genealogy* February/March 2012
- “Scapple: Your Virtual Family History Sketchpad” (Lisa Alzo), *Internet Genealogy*, December 2013/January 2014

- “Say “Hello” to Trello!” (Lisa Alzo) *Internet Genealogy* April/May 2013
- Structure: Beyond the Picnic-Table Crisis,” by John McPhee, *The New Yorker*, January 14, 2013 issue: <http://nyr.kr/1tO48lb>
- “The Habits of Highly Productive Writers” by Rachel Toor, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, <http://m.chronicle.com/article/The-Habits-of-Highly/150053>
- How to Write a Book Now: *Index Cards: A Low-Tech Writer's Tool That Makes Book Planning Much Easier*
<http://www.how-to-write-a-book-now.com/index-cards.html>
- “Life Stories Writing Guide” by Lisa A. Alzo, <http://www.lisaalzo.com/lifestories>
- “Scrivener for Genealogists” (Mac, Windows)
<http://www.lisaalzo.com/ScrivenerQG>
- “Writing Your Family History” <http://www.lisaalzo.com/writingfamilyhistory>
- Book: *Mindmapping for Genealogists* by Ron Arons
<http://www.ronarons.com/product/mind-maps-for-genealogy>

Videos

- “Your Book Starts Here - Storyboarding for Writers”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMhLvMJ_r0Y
- “Storyboard Your Family History with Scrivener” by Lisa A. Alzo
http://www.lisaalzo.com/assets/files/Storyboard_Scrivener_08_09_14.mp4
- “The Write Stuff: Using Nonfiction Writing Techniques to Write a Better Family History,” by Lisa A. Alzo
http://www.lisaalzo.com/assets/files/Write_Stuff_Nonfiction.mp4
- “Storyboard Your Family History” Legacy Family Tree
<http://www.lisaalzo.com/Storyboard>

MindMapping Tools

- **Bubbl.us** (Online)
<https://bubbl.us>
- **Edraw freeware** (PC; free)
<http://www.edrawsoft.com/freemind.php>
- **Freemind** (PC & Mac; free)
http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page
- **MindJet** (PC, Mac, iOS, Android; free and paid)
<https://www.mindjet.com/home>
- **MindMeister** (Android, iOS and Web)
<https://www.mindmeister.com>
- **Popplet**
<http://popplet.com>
- **Scapple** (\$14.99)
<http://www.literatureandlatte.com/scapple.php>

- **SchematicMind Free** (Android; free)
<http://play.google.com>
- **SimpleMind+** (iOS; free)
<https://www.apple.com/itunes>
- **XMind** (PC & Mac)
<http://www.xmind.net>

Timelines

- **Aeon Timeline** (Mac/Windows \$40)
<http://www.scribblecode.com>
- **Genelines** (Progeny, \$29.95)
<https://progenygenealogy.com/products/timeline-charts.aspx>
- **History Lines**
<https://historylines.com>
- **TimeGlider**
<http://timeglider.com>
- **TimeToast**
<http://timetoast.com>
- **Treelines**
<https://www.treelines.com>

Outlining and Storyboarding Tools and Apps

- **Evernote** (free, premium version available)
<http://www.evernote.com>
- **Scrivener** (\$40/\$45) (Free 30-day trial available)
<http://www.lisaalzo.com/ScrivenerMac>; <http://www.lisaalzo.com/ScrivenerWin>
- **StorySkeleton** (\$8.99 iOS)
<http://www.storyskeleton.com>
- **StoryShop** (launching in Spring 2016)
<https://sterlingandstone.net/storyshop>
- **StoryToolz** (free idea and book title generator tools)
<http://www.storytoolz.com>
- **IndexCard App** (\$2.99 iPhone; \$4.99 iPad)
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/index-card/id389358786?mt=8>
- **CardBoard Index Cards** (Android; free from Google Play Store)
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.woinowski.cardboard&hl=en>
- **DayOne Journal App**
<http://dayoneapp.com>
- **Trello**
<https://trello.com>
- **Workflowy**
<http://www.workflowy.com>