Desktop Curtain, from Many Tricks: My single favorite Mac app
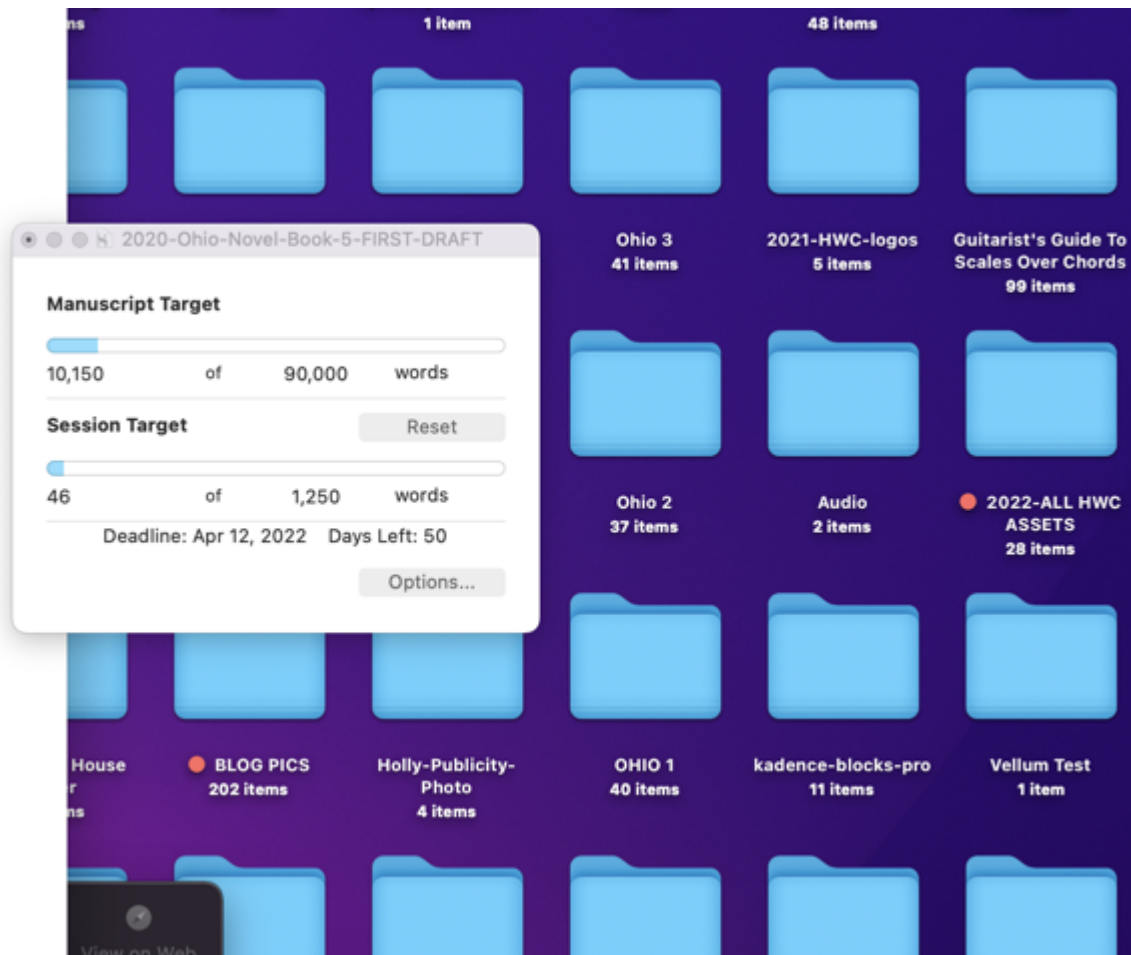
written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

Big fan that I am of GSD (getting shit done), I've found things over the years that have made GSD easier.

The screenshots below are Before and After on a TINY section of my very large desktop this morning. The white bar on the left isn't neatness. It's Scrivener below a 30-word PACTS Sentence that would give some massive spoilers on Book 5.
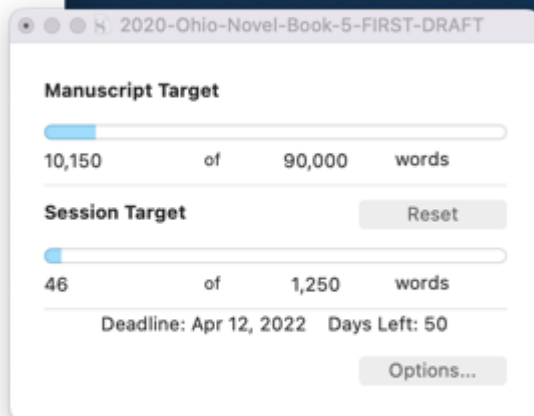
So…

HERE'S BEFORE…

And keep in mind this is a tiny section of a very large desktop screen, and that most of the right side of it is covered with folders.

Okay. NOW…

Here's AFTER one simple click…

Beautiful, right? Calm, soothing, beautifully damned invisible. It's like a massage for your brain.

I'm not an affiliate for the software or anything. I just love it — and this morning, starting in stressed about the upcoming HollysWritingClasses.com site overhaul, and the upcoming class debugs, and getting Ohio Five done so I can then do the <shudder> five-novel, 470,000+ word One-Pass Revision…

I felt that moment of peace as my chosen blue covered all the crap on my desk, and I wanted to say thanks to Many Tricks [NOT AN AFFILIATE LINK] for my favorite focus-to-get-shit-done app for the Mac.

Now… back to the words. I'm doing *mean* things to my characters today.
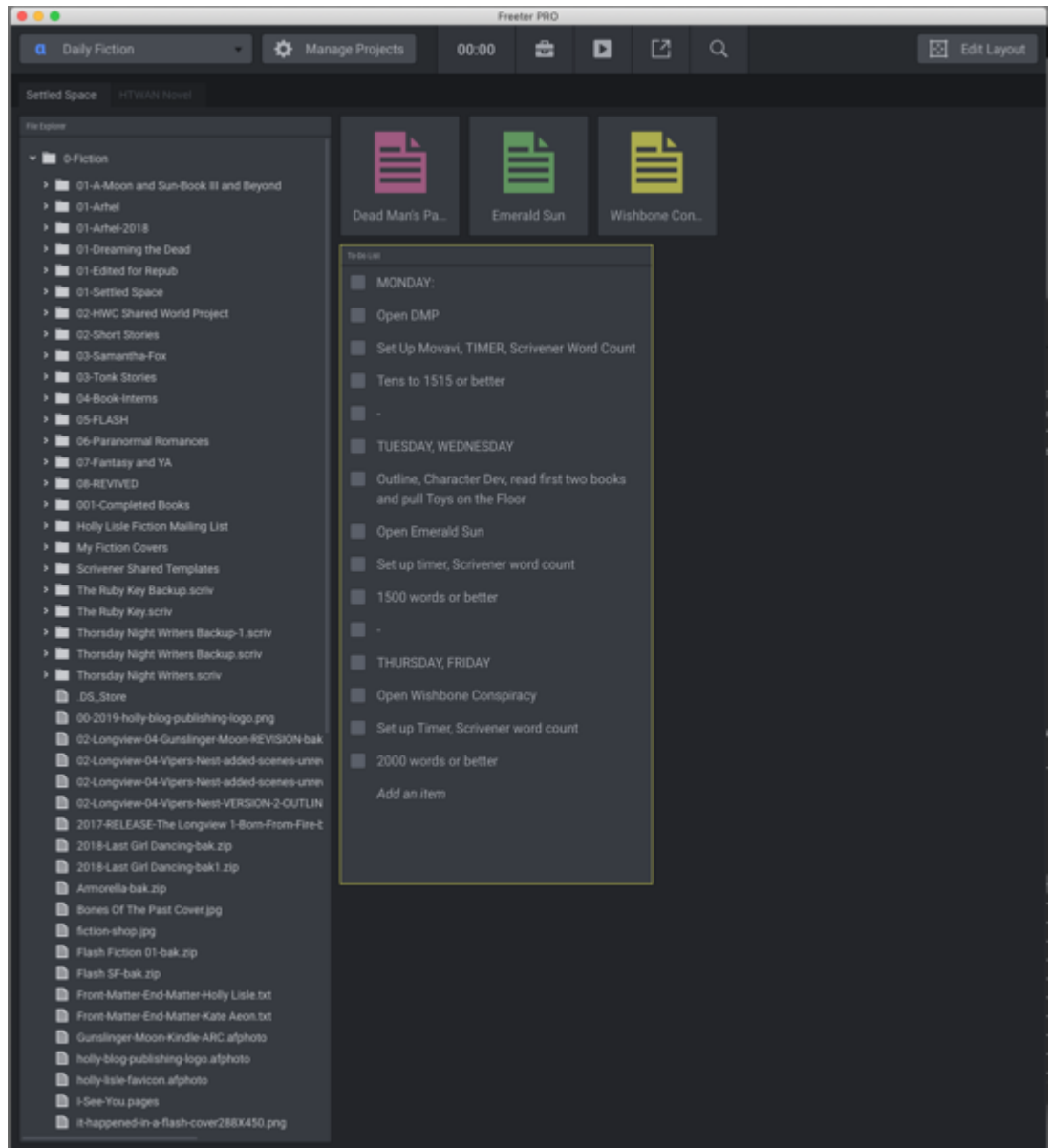
Big surprise, right?

Recommending some software: Freeter Pro

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

I think the last software I recommended was Scrivener, back when it first came out.

MAYBE Vellum (but that's Mac only).

So today I'm recommending some free-to-remarkably inexpensive software that has taken a helluva lot of the crazy out of my day.

Meet Freeter…

The Organizer for Folks Who DO

This is a free download, vailable for Mac & PC (and I think I read that they have a Linux version in the works). I got the paid version after trying out the free version for about fifteen minutes. INSTANTLY sold me.

Take a look at what I've got here.

Top left corner of the software, you have what I think of as the Process List.

Fiction is my first process of the day.

And in the first screenshot, you see DAILY FICTION.

This is pretty simple. I have access to my fiction folder (and all my project subfolders in the clickable list to the left.
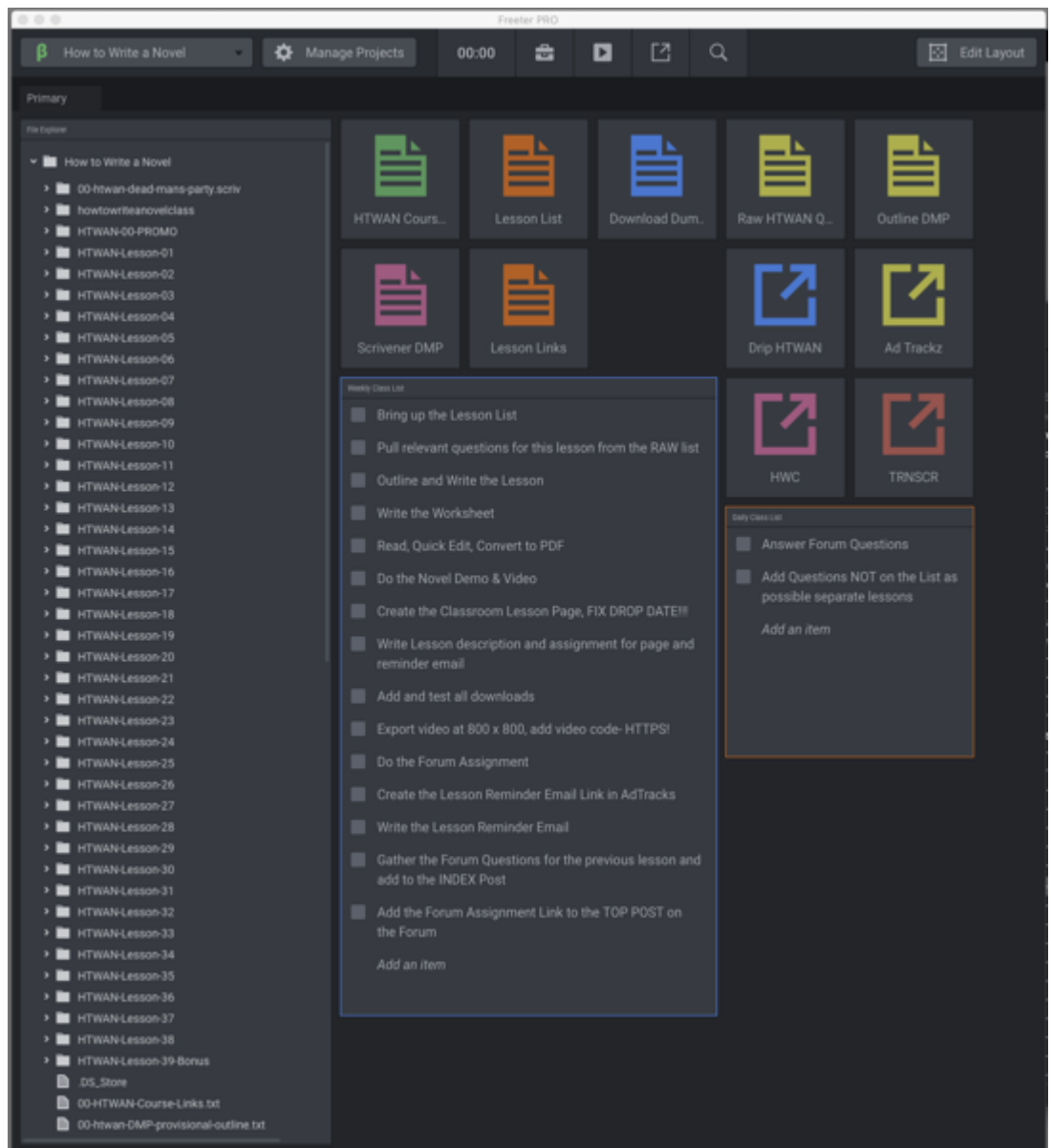
The three colored icons are my active projects.

And right below them is my schedule.

If I were just dealing with fiction, it wouldn't be so difficult.

But fiction, of course, is just a part of what I do each day.

So check out the top left corner of the next screenshot.

Right now the next Daily Process is **How to Write a Novel**, which is such a complicated build that it isn't just "Write Nonfiction."

Fleeter allows me to have JUST my *How to Write a Novel* folder loaded up, all the files and links I need added in the top three rows, my Weekly Per Lesson step-by-step checklist, and my daily class To Do list.

Sitting on the exact same desktop as my fiction stuff. No flipping between screen
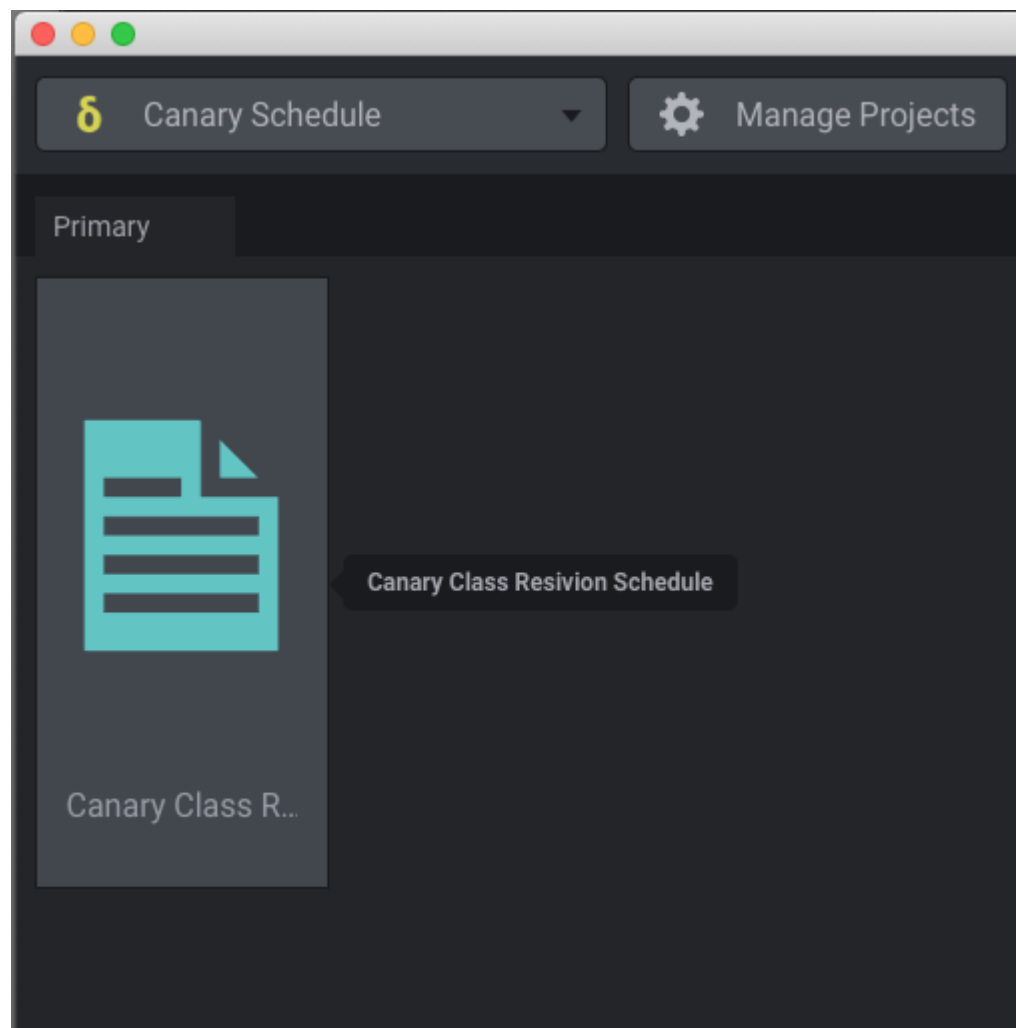
No trying to remember where I put X.

It took me about ten minutes to set up my fiction process.

Just not that much there, but it gets me started smoothly each morning.

Took me about two hours to hunt down everything and set up the Class process, but as you can see, building just one lesson is a BIG process, and I'm doing one of those per week, and some lessons require things I don't use all that often.

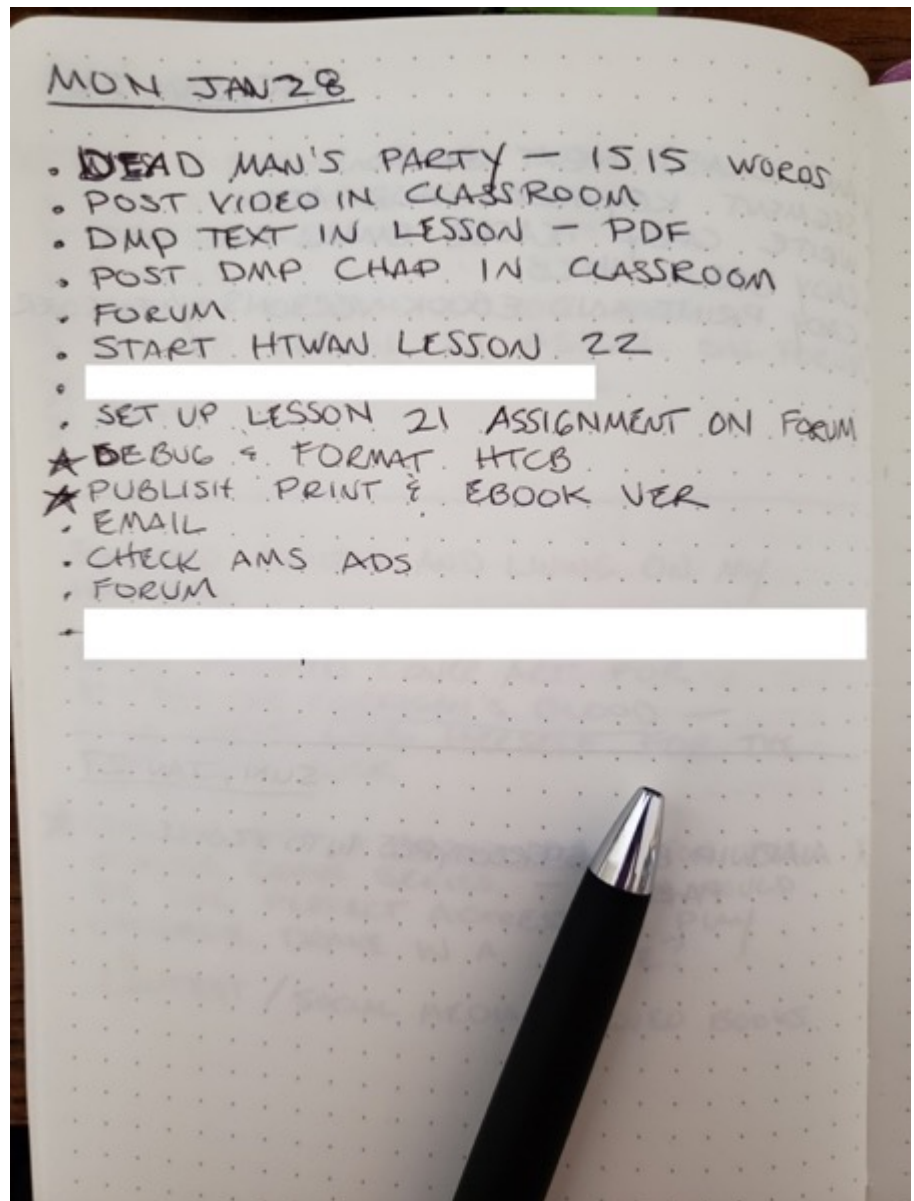When I get finished with *How to Write a Novel,* I have my next nonfiction project pending…

The Canary Revisions. Going through my classes that are in Spliters version, and methodically finding and fixing and upgrading and updating each one.

When I'm ready for that, The Canary Revisions will get a build-out that looks like my HTWAN build. But for now, it's just a list of the planned order in which I'm fixing things.

While writing a bunch more novels.

Freeter and my really ugly bullet journal are how I'm getting things done.

And you know what? Mondays are still a bitch. But I'm dealing with them. And I know I'll get the stuff I have to get done today done.

None of the links are affiliate links, by the way. They're just stuff I use, love, and recommend.

Oops — a brief tale of Social Media fail

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

So I'm working on the **TalysMana** revision. And because of the way I did the first draft of that story, I was looking for someone online.

By name. Had the WHOLE name. And the one place that name came up was in Linkedin.

Okay, I thought. *I have a Linkedin account. I don't use the damn thing, but I have one.*

So I logged in. (Three cheers for 1Password, or my 600+ unique passwords, some of which I haven't used in about a decade, would be impossible.)

And discovered that there was no more information on the person I was searching for when I logged in than there was from outside.

Which means I'm going to have to change the name and the character in **TalysMana**.

That's fine. That character wasn't fitting the story anyway.

But the other thing that I discovered, much to my horror, **was that people I DID know had been trying to reach me on Linkedin** — there are about a dozen post in there from 2012.

And those requests for help are in there now because?

Because I haven't been in there since…no clue. But I now have proof it was sometime before 2012.

So if you were asking me for help promoting you through Linkedin back in 2012, I'm very sorry I didn't.

I wasn't there, didn't know you asked.

And I don't see myself becoming a Linkedin user now. I don't have time for the stuff I'm doing as it is.

On the bright side, I might be overworked, but I don't suffer from all those new stresses and anxieties psychologists and psychiatrists are attributing to the overuse of social media.

Yay?

Trying Again: Sign-up for the Website Paper Test Version 1.1

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

Paper Testing ROUND 2

I'll be gone next week for another tongue biopsy/surgery (not sure how much he's going to need to do, but the recovery for both is the same).

After that, I'll set up the next paper tests. Parts of the site design look pretty close to ready. Parts of the site have proved to me that paper testing is the best thing since controllable fire.

When I'm done with ROUND 2, which people who did not sign up for ROUND ONE will be eligible for, I think I will for the first time ever have a site that is genuinely easy to use.

I only managed to get 1 person through the original paper test. It proved useful, however, because she conveyed a palpable sense of being underwhelmed by what was there.

So I rebuilt the entire front end of the paper test.

I'm now ready for volunteers for the new paper-test sessions.

Before you volunteer, **please go to the ZOOM site to make sure the software will work for you.**

You can use either the web login or login via free software the company provides. I've used both, and it's very good.

But if it doesn't work for you, don't sign up. This is the only option I'm going to have for paper testing in the first round.

If it does work for you, go to the

sign-up sheet:

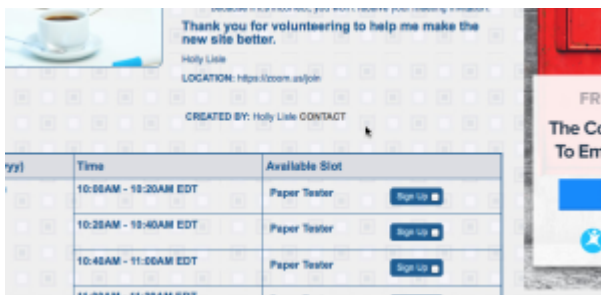# Instructions are on the sign-up sheet,

but I'm going to add a couple of important additional points here.

Pick any of the times and days that will work for you. Plan on coming to the meeting right on time. I've built in some padding to let us get your screen set up and make sure your sound is working.

By the way, you'll need a decent mic, whether built-in or stand-alone.

You do NOT need a webcam. You can use one, and I'll be glad to see you when I talk to you, but if you don't want to do this, that's fin.

When you sign up, **PLEASE SEND ME AN EMAIL from CONTACT link show in the image below:**

I'll need to send you the meeting link for the software we'll be using so you can join the meeting.

And thank you very much for volunteering. I have a much more professional system in place this time. If it works smoothly, this is going to be our new live chat system.

TIME ZONE CONVERTER

http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html

My time is New York / Miami time.

Round 1 Testing for New Holly Lisle Writing School Website: 39 Volunteers Requested Now

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

CANCELLED

WebinarJam has crashed every time but one on this, with people unable to reach rooms I'm in. I've checked my links, I've checked their links, and at this point, the only thing I can do to stop wasting people's time is give up.

I'm going to see if there's some way to do this same process with Skype. I'll set the testing back up again if there is.

———

CANCELLED

———

Today (Wednesday, September 9th) and tomorrow (Thursday, September 10th), I'm going to be doing what's called "Paper Testing" to find usability problems with the interface the new writing school site (**HollyLisleOnlineWritingSchool.com**, or **HLOWS.com** for short).

I need a maximum of **39** volunteers (already have one) for one-on-one testing with me in a video chat room.

Paper Testing is fun, and it will take each volunteer about fifteen minutes WORST case.

Here's how it works. I have five scripts prepared. They start with things like, "You're a first-time visitor to the site. Find something that interests you, and tell me why."

Or, "You're already a member. Log in."

Here are the instructions for doing a usability test:

Paper Test #1 for HLOWS.com

How To Do Your Usability Test

At the scheduled time, log into the web chat link I'll send you.

Make sure I'm already in chat with you. (Have your microphone on, and say "Hi." ☐ You'll be coming in as a presenter, and I might hear you before I see you.)

Find the screenshare button on the left, where I've highlighted it. Image below.

To help me test, all you have to do is talk while you work your way through the instructions I give you by clicking the places on the drawings where you think the necessary actions SHOULD take place, describing what you're trying and what you think your action will accomplish.

When you complete one instruction, I'll give you the next task. There are a MAXIMUM of six tasks in each test, and the whole test will take no more than about fifteen minutes if I've done a terrible job of laying out the site.

You do not need to hurry. **If you make mistakes, me seeing them happen will help me figure out where I've made mistakes in the design. Your mistakes will make the final site better.**

Take your time, think out loud, and let me know every time something doesn't make sense to you or you cannot figure out or find a way to accomplish the instruction on your script.

_____

Here's what you'll need to volunteer:

- **A microphone or mic headset that works with your computer**, or a built-in mic that you know has good volume.
- **The Chrome web browser and a Gmail email address.Reply to this post with your Gmail address** because that's the only way I can make you a presenter in the web app, and you must be a presenter to share your screen. You'll need Chrome because the controls I show above won't work if you're not using Chrome.I'll also use this address to schedule our session with you.
- A second browser that ISN'T Chrome. You'll be using that browser to share your screen. The Paper Test is very low tech, but does require that your browser process images.

This WILL NOT WORK with a cell phone because of the primitive nature of the test.When you have your second browser opened, you'll click the screenshare button, highlight that browser,
and click the share button.

- About fifteen minutes that you can block out of an hour or so of availability. If you post your response here and let me know today or tomorrow, and the time you could be available (any one-hour block from which I can pull 15 minutes, or something cool like "anytime between 10 AM and 3PM" will work, I'll set up a schedule with testing times and mail each volunteer with your fifteen-minute block, along with the login details. (The fifteen-minute block starting at noon tomorrow is already taken, but as I write this, everything else is wide open.
- I will be saving the screen test as a video, and Dan, the moderator, and I will be going over all of them looking for places where my initial design causes problems, and where we can make things better and easier to use, so if you volunteer, you automatically agree that I can save and use the video of your test.

Let me know you can help by posting your availability times below. NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY—if you can use your web browser, you can do this.

I'll give you the URL for the papertest site once you arrive and have your screenshare browser set up.

I'll be starting testing at 10 AM this morning if I have volunteers by then, and doing as many tests as I can before 3 PM. I'll be doing the same thing on Thursday.

Thank you in advance for volunteering. I want to make sure that when we build the front end for the new site (which will NOT be what we go live with, but which will follow soon after)

you'll have a site that is easy for you to use.

By the way…

This is a sneak peek of one of the test pages:

Holly Lisle

CANCELLED

WebinarJam has crashed every time but one on this, with people unable to reach rooms I'm in. I've checked my links, I've checked their links, and at this point, the only thing I can do to stop wasting people's time is give up.

I'm going to see if there's some way to do this same process with Skype. I'll set the testing back up again if there is.

———

CANCELLED

———

Apple is Fighting for YOUR Right to Privacy

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

I bitch about Apple being a pain in the ass for not keeping old document formats for me on new systems. I don't like the Apple store's "Walled Garden" approach. And I think the newest

iPhones are so ugly and crippled that I got a Samsung instead. I disagree rabidly with their "free tech to people in crappy countries" program—which is sending iPads and things like them to countries that don't have the infrastructure to support them.

But Apple was my first-EVER experience with technology that just worked. Mostly, it still "just works."

I still buy Apple. I still use Apple products. And when Apple gets something right, dammit, I want to say so, and say it loudly.

Apple is fighting for your right to privacy. For your freedom. Not Google. Not Facebook. Not just about everyone else.

Apple is right about individual privacy on the internet.

You will have the choice to make your life better if you read the link above.

Uncrippling the Lesson: The Aftermath

written by Holly
February 21, 2022

By Holly Lisle

Thanks to everyone who responded to the "Crippling a Lesson" post. You gave me some real data to work with, and I appreciate it.

I've decided to remove one link entirely as redundant, remove the other two with an explanation of why the links aren't with the demo, add a link to the website for a simple download, and be done with it.

My corrections are off to my ebook formatter, and the download page is already live.

You're welcome to take a look if you'd like.

http://howtothinksideways.com/lesson-six-missing-links/

Crippling A Lesson: An Apple iBookstore Ethical and Practical Issue

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

Decision Made: Thank you to everyone who commented.

BEFORE I START:

I'm going to ask for reader input ONLY from Mac product users who buy books from iBooks. If you don't have a dog in this fight, then no matter what you think about the ethics of this situation, <u>I don't need to know</u>. I am going to make a decision on the availability of one (or maybe more) lessons in this course that will affect **iBooks customers only** *based on what I learn here, and I ONLY need to hear from them.*

If you don't buy books from the iBookstore, please DO NOT answer the following question.

THE PROBLEM

I received an email from Apple's iBookstore that **How To Think Sideways—Lesson 6: How to Discover (or Create) Your Story's Market** has been pulled for containing links to a "Competing Website" and that in order to have the lesson put back on sale, I'll have to remove the offending links.

The problem with this, however, is that the links, which are to Amazon.com, are part of the content of the lesson, in which I demonstrate a technique for doing market research into other genres which might be reasonable places to attempt to sell your book along with your planned market (because in some cases your planned market won't pan out, but that doesn't mean there aren't other places that would buy what you've written).

Two examples of my own experience with cross-genre marketing came with the sales of TALYN (started as high fantasy, was sold as fantasy romance) and MIDNIGHT RAIN (started as urban fantasy, was sold as paranormal suspense). THIS IS A COOL TECHNIQUE.

There is NO other site upon which this technique will work. None. Anywhere. It is the combination of unique features and cross-references on the Amazon.com website that allowed me to

come up with this technique, and I have linked to the features and sections writers need to do this research.

If I remove the links, I cripple my iBooks reader's access to the technique, and make it more difficult for readers of the iBook version of the lesson to do research that will help them build and maintain their writing careers.

I have also noted, in my usual smartass fashion, that if you happen to be one of those folks who hates Amazon, you can always use their site to gain the knowledge you need to further your career, and then **not buy anything from their site**. Strangely, Amazon did not remove my lesson for that bit of obvious commentary. Fancy that.

ADDED INFORMATION

Neither Amazon.com nor BarnesAndNoble.com, the other two big distributors where I have placed my lessons, have demanded the removal of any "Competing Website" links from the lessons before they will publish them.

Such links are in the lessons, because I want to give my students meaningful options, and meaningful options require me to link to sources that compete with each other. That's what OPTIONS are. (Obviously, the lessons are available in their full versions directly from my shop, so writers who usually buy from iBooks, but who hate Amazon or B&N, are not stuck with buying from sites they hate.)

MY POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

I can remove the links from the iBookstore edition, and leave the reader to find his way to Amazon.com and the features it offers for research on his own.

I can remove the links, but add a link to a PDF the reader could download directly from my site that would include the

missing links, knowing when I do this that many readers will NOT download the PDF.

I can take a stand against the crippling of the lesson, leave the links in place, make the lesson unavailable on the iBookstore, and hope that iBookstore readers will download either a copy of the cross-platform Kindle app or the cross-platform Nook app, or will come to my site directly, and buy the missing lessons from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, or from my shop.

YOUR INPUT

ONLY IF YOU ARE A CURRENT IBOOKSTORE CUSTOMER: Please copy and paste the following text into the Reply box at the bottom of this page, and then answer the questions.

You don't need to be a potential or current student of the existing course, though if you are, please let me know. I want iBookstore customers' input on receiving iBooks content that is incomplete, crippled, or intentionally inconvenient compared to versions offered on other platforms.

Copy and paste the text between the lines:
====================================

APPLE DEVICE(S) ON WHICH I READ iBOOKS:

YEARS AS AN APPLE CUSTOMER:

WHAT I THINK YOU SHOULD DO:

WHY:
====================================
Thank you for taking the time to help me figure out my response on this issue.

ADDED SUNDAY, JULY 1, 11:30 AM: CENSORSHIP INFO

Guys, this is NOT a censorship issue. ONLY GOVERNMENTS can censor. They make it illegal for individuals to say certain things or present certain content, and if you do, you either:

- go to prison
- end up in a reeducation camp/concentration camp, or
- are killed

What Apple is doing is NOT CENSORSHIP. I have the option to work with the company, to work around the company, or to tell the company to go stick its head where the sun don't shine, and I will suffer no repercussions from doing this beyond minor financial ones. **I AM NOT BEING CENSORED.**

Apple is doing nothing more than requiring all products on its site to meet standards it sets. This is not illegal. This is not immoral. It's just business.

It IS bonehead stupid "Business By Idiots" business—and this process is **precisely** why iBooks has such thin content, and does so little business for me compared to Kindle, Nook, and even my personal shop—but Apple has as much right to be stupid and act against its own best interests as any other company.

(The fact that this topic has generated so only four responses in the 24 hours since it first aired—compared to topics like DRM which generated not only hundreds of replies to the site, but also hundreds more directly to my email—demonstrates to you how effectively Apple has made its iBookstore irrelevant.)

The ethical issue is MINE.

I am unwilling to sell a crippled product on one platform (compared to full working versions on other platforms) in order to make sales I cannot reach otherwise, but I know there

are some folks in some countries for whom the Apple iBooks store is their ONLY way to get these lessons. I'm looking for direction from iBooks customers on the issues of buying crippled products, and I'm waiting to hear back from the folks on my mailing list, many of whom will receive an email on this issue tomorrow.

The Apple iBooks Author Issue: Small things, and large principles

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

The short version: I have removed my books from sale on iBookstore because Apple has included a clause in software I don't use and wouldn't have used anyway a clause claiming the right to refuse publication on its platform of works created with this software (which is fine and I applaud their right) and further stating that if they reject your work you cannot sell it **in the format the software created** anywhere else.

THE LONG VERSION:

Here's the clause:

B. Distribution of your Work. As a condition of this License and provided you are in compliance with its terms, your Work may be distributed as follows:

(i) if your Work is provided for free (at no charge), you may distribute the Work by any available means;
(ii) if your Work is provided for a fee (including as part of any subscription-based product or service), you may only distribute the Work through Apple and such distribution is subject to the following limitations and conditions: (a) you will be required to enter into a separate written agreement with Apple (or an Apple affiliate or subsidiary) before any commercial distribution of your Work may take place; and (b) Apple may determine for any reason and in its sole discretion not to select your Work for distribution.

And then the next paragraph is bold-faced, just so you don't miss it:

Apple will not be responsible for any costs, expenses, damages, losses (including without limitation lost business opportunities or lost profits) or other liabilities you may incur as a result of your use of this Apple Software, including without limitation the fact that your Work may not be selected for distribution by Apple.

Here's the guy who found, dissected, and posted about it, along with his dissection, and it will save us a BUNCH of time if you read his article.

So what's the problem? You're not

going to use the damn software anyway!

Nope. I'm not. But I *had* ten books up on the iBookstore, which I put there using iTunes Producer, which is software. I do my epub versions of most of my books in iWorks Pages, which is software. And I work on Apple computers, an iPad, and an iPhone, all of which use Apple software. OS X and iOS 5 at the moment.

And the rule of software is this: Software does not get to dictate the use of output. Period. Software does not get to tell you WHERE you can sell what you've created, only that you have the right to sell it (in the cases where software requires a commercial license if you are producing for profit).

Software does not get to tell you, "If you create this work on our software and we don't want to distribute it, **we own the rights** to the version our software created, and if you want another version, you will have to disassemble this one, and rebuild it from scratch on other software."

The purpose of purchasing and/or using software is to make your work easier.

It is not to have the software claim ownership of any part of what you have created with it.

There is no difference—except in number of people affected—between a company claiming ownership of the rights to something you created

with its ebook publisher, and something you created with its OS.

The principle is identical.

(Apple is not claiming to own rights to your work if you work on OS X. My removal of my own work from their site is on principle, not because my own work is affected.)

And there is no number of people affected that is insignificant. The smallest minority is the individual, and minority rights protect the rights of the individual because those are the only rights there are.

So THAT is why I pulled all my books from distribution on the iBookstore, why none of my further books or any of my writing courses will be going to the iBookstore, and why I can no longer recommend the iBookstore to my students.

And this in spite of the fact that Apple makes my favorite products in the world, and I hate like hell having to do this.

And if they remove their damn clause and respect the purpose of creative software and the rights of the individual, I'll go back.

COMMENTS have now been closed on this post. Please read the follow-up post, and if you choose, comment there.

I'm trying again…[fingers crossed]

written by Holly
February 21, 2022
By Holly Lisle

The UPDATED updated front page is now…er…updated.

Please take a look and let me know here how this works for you.