

I'm In Love

By Holly Lisle

Since I left DOS behind in 1993 (I was a holdout) and lost my beloved Spinnaker outliner, I've been looking for a program that would let me brainstorm novels the way I actually think. This is not a neat process – I come up with story ideas the way Jackson Pollock paints. I throw stuff against a wall until I start seeing patterns.

Needless to say, it's not easy to find software that makes this easier, rather than harder. But I did – and oh boy, is it cool.

Inspiration Software makes **Inspiration**, which is a wonderful tool if you're a nonlinear thinker who needs to work in a linear fashion to meet deadlines.

It does a lot more than what I use it for, but here's how I use it.

✘ The toolbar offers outlining, lightning idea generation (my favorite), linear webbing, linking, and other goodies. I click "Lightning" and start tossing ideas down. Every time I hit enter, a new bubble pops up, and I throw the next idea in. Everything ends up in a scrambled spiderweb, which I can then drag around and cross-link to my hearts content.

✘ A fifteen-minute session of just trying to find my way to something I want to write about looks like this.

✘ Except that when I click the little outline button (shown in my picture of the image bar) it suddenly looks like this.

From this point, I can add notes directly to the bubbles, which will then translate into details beneath each heading and subheading in the outline. I can drag things around as I

find new connections.

And I can throw away the stacks of paper that I have been using to do all of this. Oh. Other endlessly cool point? I can, with the click of a single button, drop the whole thing, with image map, outline, details and all, into Word, where it will cease being a messy brain map and a neat outline and start becoming a book.

If ever there was a reason to toss Windows out the window and jump to a Mac, Inspiration is it.

(Late note: Apparently you don't even have to toss Windows out the window ... Thanks to Khadres, who pointed out that Inspiration works for Windows users, too. Here are the specs...

Macintosh^{1/2}

Macintosh or Power Macintosh

System 7.1, 8.0, 9.0, OS X

2 MB available RAM

640×480 display, 256-color display

5 MB available hard drive minimum, 30 MB for full install

CD-ROM drive (for installation)

Optional:

Macintosh compatible printer

Internet browser

Microphone

Windows^{1/2}

486 processor or higher

Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT 4.0, ME, XP

8 MB RAM

640×480 display, 256-color display

5 MB available hard drive; 20 MB for full instal

CD-ROM drive (for installation)

Optional:

Windows compatible printer

Internet browser

Sound card and speakers

Microphone

And you can try the thing for free for one month, to find out whether you, too, might fall in love.)

Contents © Holly Lisle. <https://hollylisle.com> All Rights Reserved