

Bible Software's Best Kept Secret

You Bring the Content with Libronix Book Builder

By Rob Suggs

It happened sometime in the late nineties. As a Christian magazine editor, I attended a training session for a Bible study software program called Logos. Morris Proctor, our teacher, demonstrated the many pleasures of the Word Made Electronic. The only problem was that, as a publishing firm, we had an office full of Apple equipment, and Logos for the Mac was still on the drawing board.

However, Morris dropped a casual reference that hooked me. He mentioned, "One day Logos will offer a program that will allow you to bring your own content into the library system." I grasped the implications quickly. The idea of customized content made this a whole new ball game. For example, every magazine article and devotional we printed could become part of my Logos catalogue. I could search and reference them just as quickly as any other system task. Did we use this Scripture verse last year? A quick search would tell the tale. My mind spun with the possibilities, geek that I am.

The years passed, and I left the magazine world to become an independent Christian writer. As I was browsing the Logos Web site one day, I discovered that Morris had been a prophet with honor. At some point, Logos had quietly introduced the Personal Book Builder, and it was all that I dreamed it could be.

Now here's the question. Am I the only one that realizes the power (and, let's face it: coolness factor) of this program? Libronix PBB is a 'killer app' of the first order. Let me offer you the most obvious scenario: that of the pastor. (There's no shortage of that species in the Bible software user world.)

Pastor Power

Many pastors keep a written transcript of their weekly sermons. With a relatively small flourish of keystrokes, these sermons can make their home in the pastor's electronic library, where they will function happily and efficiently with his commentaries, Bible translations, and the other resources. The pastor wonders, "Have I used this sermon illustration recently?" Quickly he finds out. "Have I gone to the well too often when it comes to the fifteenth chapter of John's gospel?" See a report in

ten seconds. Might it even be helpful to put the weekly newsletter in the Logos Library, or the pastor's column from that periodical? What about the church's textual history? You get the idea. The Libronix system already had a good notes feature, and it was possible to stow away this or that short specimen that way. But PBB allows you and me to create something very close to a proper Logos "book." There are some limitations, and we'll get to those later. But I would imagine that any Logos user can think of great practical uses for the abilities that PBB offers.

Need you be a geek to use the PBB? Not at all. If you are functional with Microsoft Word or even a simple text program, you'll quickly be cataloguing your own customized Logos books. And as always, Logos offers great support documentation, including videos that show step-by-step procedures for starting your first project immediately. Let's take the example of a sermon you'd like to add to your library.

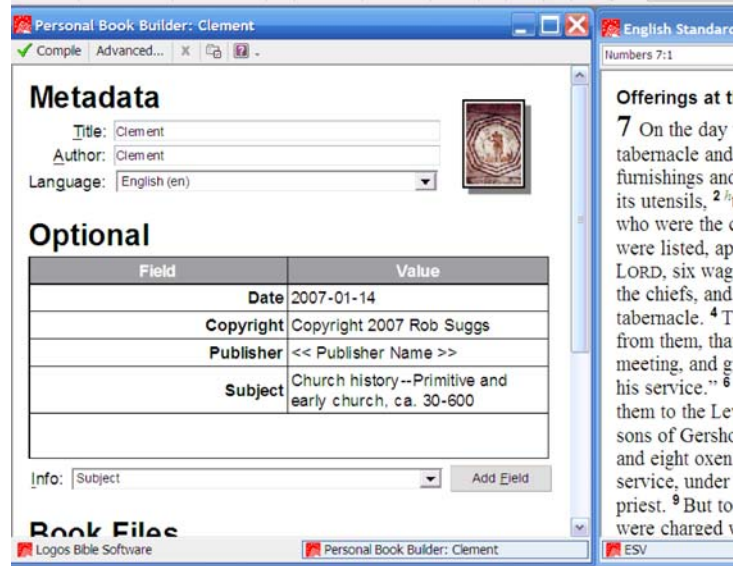
1. Save the document by its name, in the format of "Web document, filtered" in Word (.htm).

2. Retain it in the Libronix Personal Books folder. Then, open the Personal Book Builder from Libronix, give the book's name, and let Libronix find and compile the document.

That's the short answer. There are other steps you can take. It's easy to add a cover, illustrations, and maps, for example. Also, your file should be broken into smaller files if its size is much more than 100MB. I've converted several public domain classics from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org), and for these larger books, it's helpful to break the document down to bite-size chunks. You'll pick these things up quickly.

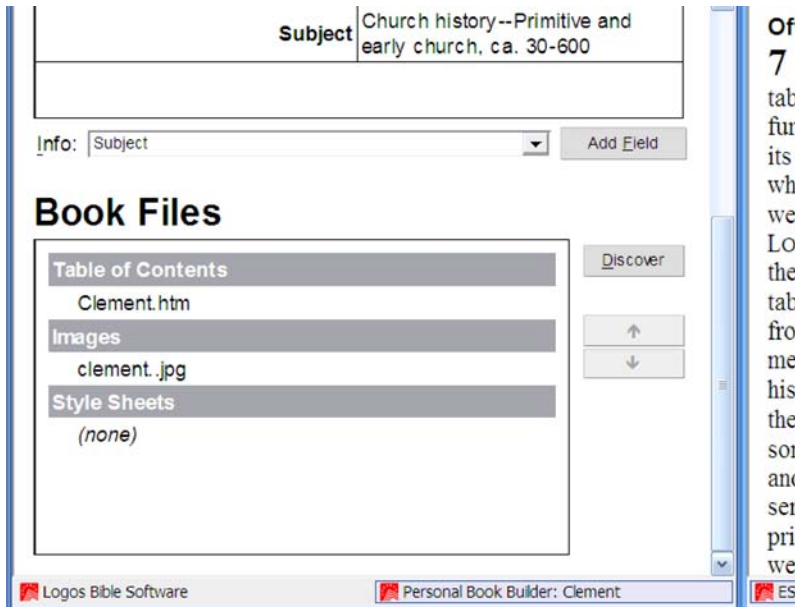
Always Room for Improvement

Limitations? Well, a few Libronix features don't apply to personal books. For example, I tried to use a highlighter pen and found that visual text markup wasn't available. In general, a personal book is unlikely to have the full efficiency and searchability of a resource that has been prepared by the Logos team. For example, if you want your book to be indexed by topic, such as "doctrine", "grace" or "stewardship," you'll have to make a few extra moves on your own. If you want its Scripture references to be hyperlinked to your Logos Bibles, that must be done by you as well. Thankfully, the PBB user community has created some simple executable files to hyperlink your document by reference or topic. Logos should probably have pre-installed that functionality for us, but we can look forward to future versions and new features for this program. The bottom line is that your Logos book project can be as detailed and useable as you take



PBB's Compile window is a simple and intuitive interface.

the time to make it.



The lower portion of the Compile window reviews the user files that will be assembled.

I should also mention that an annual license must be purchased from Logos if you want to continue using the program after a year. This requirement tends to chase away a few thrifty shoppers. But the fee is reasonable (\$25 for the Private Use edition) and seems well worth the investment, particularly if we can look forward to continued support and improvements on the product.

Meanwhile, as I said before, PBB creates a whole new ball game for your Bible study program. Bits and pieces from the Web, church information, assembled Bible studies, and anything else that can be saved as electronic text is now a potential Logos book for your library. And the user community works together to share other public domain or non-copyright-licensed material available. (Only books created by the Standard edition can be freely distributed.)

So again I ask: Am I the only one who realizes

what a great program this is? Personal Book Builder should be a runaway software hit for Logos Research Systems. I recommend it highly, and heartily encourage Logos to continue supporting this, another industry standard program for what has become the industry standard in Bible study software.

Rob Suggs is a writer and editor from Atlanta, GA. Visit his Web site at <http://www.robsuggs.com>

Links:

Information on Personal Book Builder: <http://www.logos.com/products/details/2463>

Demonstration video produced by Logos: http://www.logos.com/media/PBB_Demo.html