

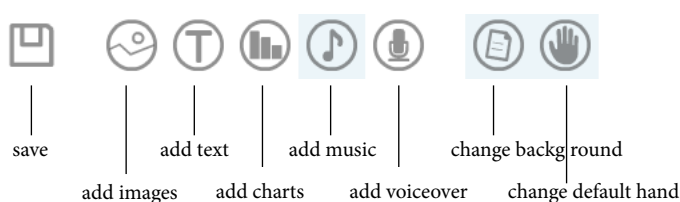
The subject of my multimedia exploration was to learn how to create scribes, also known as whiteboard animations. At first, I tried a program called PowToon, but was not impressed with the interface and ease of use. I also looked into Storyboard Pro which seemed a bit too complex and not quite what I needed for whiteboard animations, especially as a beginner to the process.

Ultimately I explored and reviewed a software program called Videoscribe, by Sparkol. I consider it a storytelling medium. It clearly has avid users in Education, Entertainment, Business and Industry scribing everything from children's books to training videos. Videoscribe allows you to make animated whiteboard videos with very little prior knowledge. I considered 3 major features/categories in my review: Interface, Images, and Tutorials.

Interface

Videoscribe's interface is exceptional. I was beginning to create my first animation before I even watched a tutorial. The look of the interface is clean, simple and functionally sound. It has the feel of an Apple product interface understated, intuitive and well designed. Some of the tools are shown here.

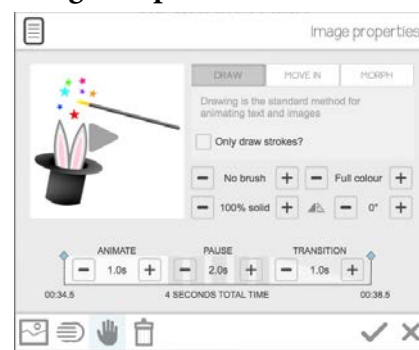
Toolbar



Timeline

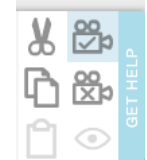


Image Properties



Help Tab

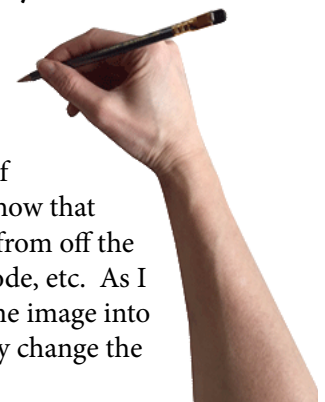
Camera Controls



One feature I wish Videoscribe had is the ability to do is to allow digital drawing directly in the program. As it functions now, you must do your illustrations in a secondary program such as Flash, Photoshop, Illustrator, or any program that allows you to save your file as an svg file. Svg is preferred, but Videoscribe will also accept jpgs and pngs. The inability to use a tablet directly in the program creates a bit of disconnect in an otherwise very intuitive space. I tried all the features, including adding voiceover. I ultimately left out the narration in my sample, because I think reading this piece draws the viewer in and creates a point of interaction that is otherwise unavailable with voiceover. I even added my own hand holding my own favorite pencil-the Blackwing 602. I ultimately edited it out, as the video scribe hands seemed to move more believably.

My own hand!

I was impressed with the amount of control available in the time line and and image properties areas. Videoscribe allows you to easily move things on the timeliness. Unlike some of the other video editing programs I've tried, it seems one image next to another with no space in between. This can be a blessing and a curse depending on what you need at the time. A simple timing adjustment is found right in the time line, which makes for quick edits and very fast mock ups of entire videos. On a second edit you can move into each image's properties dialog and fine tune how that image plays. You can edit animation time, pause time, transition time, how or if things move in from off the canvas, which hands and markers are used, degree of rotation, percent of transparency, color mode, etc. As I experimented with the morph tool, I realized I could achieve simple animations by morphing one image into the next, not unlike the flip book method. Adjustments to timing and transitions can completely change the overall feel of the piece. In the same vein a simple pause can add an element of anticipation.



Images

The next area of review concerned the images available for use in the Videoscribe library. The free library had a somewhat limited amount of images, yet absolutely plenty to get one started with a basic scribe. It seemed that it was made available precisely for learning how to scribe, but sparse enough to motivate the purchase of more images. The image portal takes you to svgstudio.com where you can browse and purchase thousands of images as well as designer created image packages that might be suitable to a specific theme or style you are trying to achieve.

They sell the entire Sparkol image bundle for \$499 (3000 images). I am somewhat skeptical of how useful all of those would be. You can of course add your own images which I think is what makes this tool amazing. It allows you to have complete creative control of the drawn images. The only drawback is the time commitment to create a drawing for each segment of your story or video. So for my first scribe, I used 90% library imagery. The people did not have faces, so I had some fun drawing those in. I also noted that the images I made in illustrator or scanned in generated an unusual drawing effect. Only illustrator images drawn with the pencil tool (not the brush tool) allowed a believable video draw. An example of this is the red tomato in the scribe (AI pencil tool) VS the colorful brush strokes (AI brush tool). Overall the images and access to images was very reasonable and workable.



Image Collections

ranging in price from \$24-49

Tutorials

Videoscribe's tutorials were fantastic. I like that the first few "getting started" tutorial videos got you up and running with enough information to start a scribe immediately and with confidence. The help videos also come with pdf workbooks taking into consideration different learning styles. The workbooks are not just dry text, they are rich with imagery and easy to follow. Videoscribe's extended community of support is also quite broad.

Extended Help Options



It has a variety of avenues to seek and receive answers to your questions. The community encourages sharing and blogging so that users learn from one another. Somewhere in the middle of my project on a Sunday night I had a saving issue and contacted support. The answer arrived the next morning at 10:00 am with prompt, genuine and personal appeal. I hold high regard for their customer service efforts.

Click on the icon to review the project I created to highlight my findings.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-vedEnAntF-SlIIMINPQINnYmc/view?usp=sharing>



In Summary

Videoscribe rocks. I'm in trial mode, so my save out options are limited, but overall I had a very positive exploratory adventure into the world of whiteboard animations. I want to learn more about them, test alternative software, do more of my own drawings and tell more stories with this wonderful medium.