



Turn Firefox into an archiving and research tool with ScrapBook

WORKSPACE

A handy Firefox extension called ScrapBook lets you save, manage, and annotate web pages. **BY DMITRI POPOV**

Often hear readers ask, “What’s all this fuss about Firefox? It’s just a web browser.” Well, not quite. Firefox supports some powerful extensions that make it more than just a browser. One extension that deserves a closer look is ScrapBook [1]. ScrapBook is a convenient tool for saving, managing, and editing html pages. If you dig a little deeper, you’ll discover some practical features that make ScrapBook a useful aide for archiving and research.

Getting Started

To install ScrapBook, point your browser to ScrapBook’s website [1] and click the download link. Then restart the browser, and you are ready to go. You can access all ScrapBook’s features via the ScrapBook menu, but you might also want to add a button to Firefox’s main toolbar. To do this, right-click somewhere on the toolbar, select *Customize*, then drag the ScrapBook button onto the toolbar and press *Done*. Now you are ready to capture web pages.

ScrapBook offers several ways of archiving the page you are currently viewing. Probably the easiest way is to drag the page’s URL from the *Address* field

onto the ScrapBook’s sidebar. You can also choose *Capture Page* from the ScrapBook menu. This option captures the entire page using the default settings. If you need more control over the capturing process, choose *ScrapBook | Capture Page As*. The *Capture Detail* dialog box allows you to specify several capturing options. By default, ScrapBook doesn’t

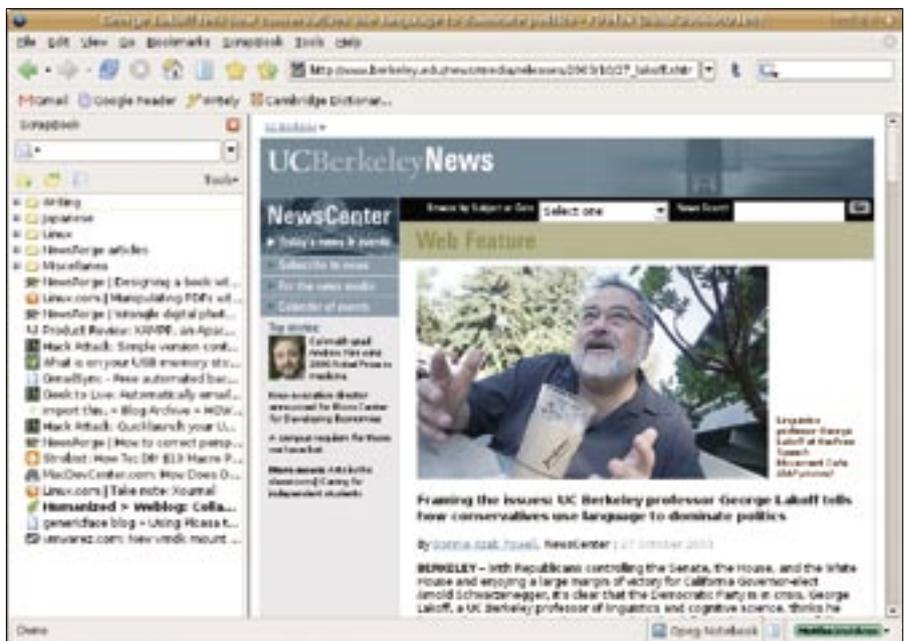


Figure 1: ScrapBook installs as an unobtrusive sidebar.



Figure 4: ScrapBook features powerful search capabilities.

bar contains the *Comment* area, which allows you to add comments to the page, as well as four tool buttons: *Highlight*, *Pencil*, *Eraser*, and *DOM Eraser*. There are also self-explanatory *Undo* and *Save* buttons. As the name suggests, the *Highlight* tool highlights selections in the text, and you can choose between four different highlight colors. The *Pencil* button contains several handy tools. The default tool is *Sticky Annotation*, which allows you to add sticky notes anywhere on the page. Using the *Inline Comments* tool, you can add notes to selected text fragments. For example, you can add a definition of a term or a translation of an unknown word. When you add an inline comment, the selected text is marked with a dotted line, and you can see the

comment by hovering the mouse over the marked text.

You can also attach a file to a selected text snippet using the *Attach File to Selection* tool. Last but not least, you can use the *Eraser* and *DOM Eraser* buttons to remove unwanted tags and text fragments from the page. The latest version of ScrapBook even offers the ability to perform all the described operations before capturing the page. To do this, press the ScrapBook button in the status bar in the right lower corner of the browser window and select *Edit Before Capture*.

Extending ScrapBook

You can extend ScrapBook's already impressive functionality using add-ons. While there are only a handful of add-ons available on ScrapBook's website, one of them, ScrapBox.net, is worth mentioning. If you have a Box.net account [2], you can turn it into a ScrapBook repository using the ScrapBox.net add-on. (You can get a 1GB Box.net account free of charge). This feature allows you to exchange ScrapBook data

with other users and maintain online backup copies of the captured material. Once you've installed ScrapBox.net, you can access the tool via *Tools | Add-on Functions | Box.net Transporter*. Enter your Box.net account information, and the add-on creates a separate repository for your ScrapBook data. To upload captured pages or notes, simply drag them onto the window to the right. To import pages into ScrapBook, connect to your

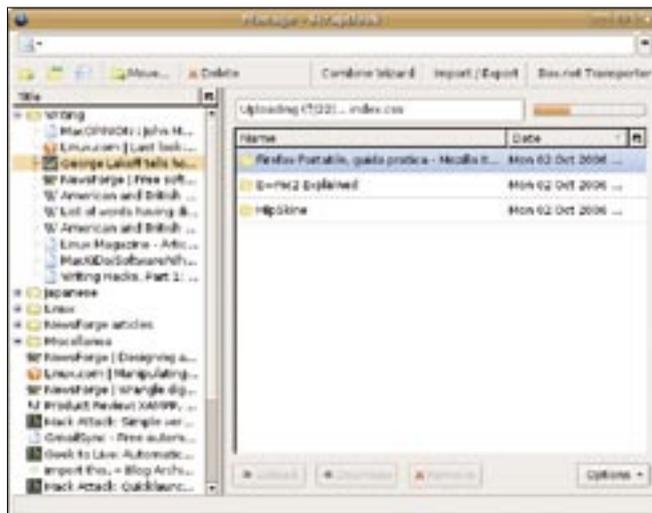


Figure 6: Use your Box.net account as an online ScrapBook repository.

Box.net account, select the pages you want, and press *Download*.

Final word

To call ScrapBook an extension is a bit of an understatement: this little software gem turns Firefox into a full-blown archiving tool. If you just want to keep web pages for off-line reading, or even if you are doing online research, ScrapBook can be an indispensable tool. ■

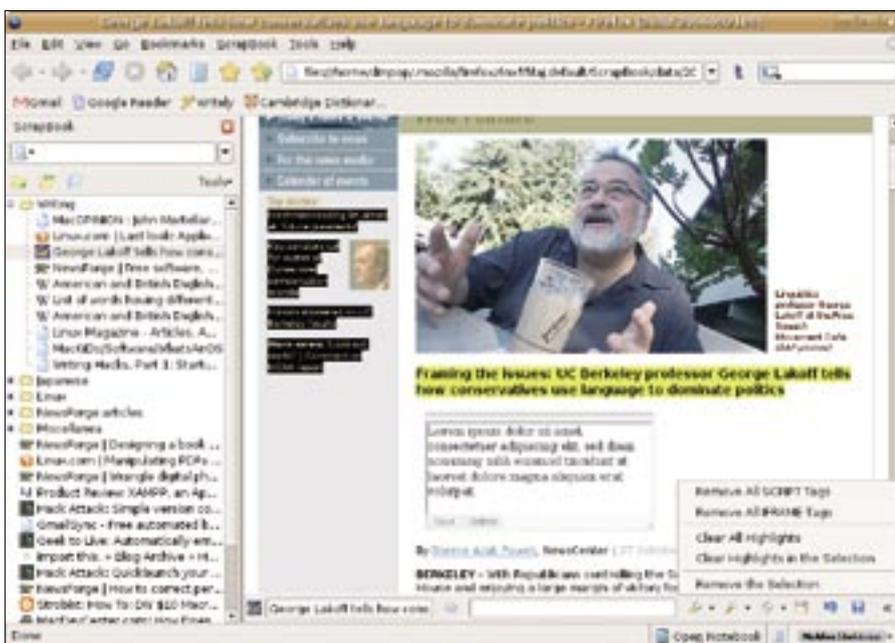


Figure 5: Edit captured pages using ScrapBook's editing tools.

INFO

- [1] Scrapbook: <http://amb.vis.ne.jp/mozilla/scrapbook/>
- [2] Box.net: <http://www.box.net>

THE AUTHOR

Dmitri Popov holds a degree in Russian language and computer linguistics. He has been working as a technical translator and freelancer contributor for several years. He has published over 500 articles covering productivity software, mobile computing, web applications, and other computer-related topics. His articles have appeared in Danish, British, US, and Russian magazines and websites.