

## SOFTWARE REVIEW

*BibleWorks 7*. Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, 2006. Software. \$349.00.  
<http://www.BibleWorks.com>

Because I work in both biblical and technological fields, I have often been asked to review and/or recommend Bible software. Early on many of my reviews focused on two criteria: (1) number of resources in the ‘library’ packaged with the software, and (2) the software’s search capabilities. Over time, however, as the software and purposes for its use evolved, I added more criteria to help make better judgments. Here I will use six criteria for reviewing *BibleWorks 7* (BW7): (1) quantity and quality of resources packaged with the software (not including add-on modules); (2) search and research capabilities; (3) extensibility; (4) interactivity; (5) mobility; and (6) price.

### 1. *Quantity and Quality of Resources*

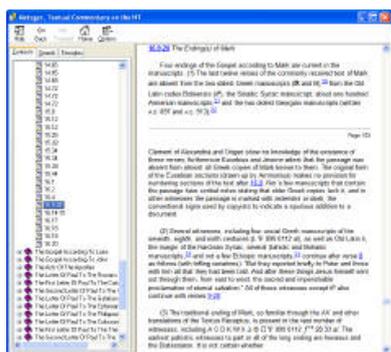
The first criterion is probably the most subjective because ultimately it has to do with why a person wants or needs to purchase Bible software. Further, it not only concerns quantity, but also quality. Thus, usually when someone asks me to review Bible software or to help them choose Bible software, I respond by asking, ‘What do you want to do with it?’ For this review, I will approach this criterion from the perspective of a person looking for Bible software to aid in studying the Bible in its original languages, which is primarily how I use the software.

BW7 comes packed with many resources that fill a critical role in studying the Bible in its original languages. First and foremost, the software comes with the standard texts used in Biblical studies, viz., 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Rahlfs’s Septuagint, and the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies 4<sup>th</sup> edition Greek New Testament. BW7 contains other important texts for critical study; here is a short list: Peshitta and Targumim; Scrivner’s/Stephanus Textus Receptus; Westcott-Hort Greek New Testament; Tischendorf’s

Greek New Testament with critical apparatus; Greek and Latin Apostolic Fathers; Works of Josephus (Greek, Latin and English); Works of Philo (Greek and English).

In terms of lexical and grammatical resources, BW7 is loaded with the standards, as well as a few extras (again, see the Web site for a full list): Holladay's *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*; the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon (abridged and unabridged); Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar; Conybeare and Stock's Grammar of the Septuagint; Liddell-Scott-Jones lexicon; Gingrich/Danker Shorter Lexicon (full BDAG lexicon is available as an 'unlockable' module); and Louw-Nida *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*.

Each of these resources is completely searchable (more below) and users may set their preferred Hebrew and Greek lexica as default resources for quick searches and mouse-over lookups.



Metzger Textual Commentary  
([click for larger image](#))

There are many new resources in BW7, not least of which are those related to text criticism. The new version boasts of the addition of Metzger's *Textual Commentary*, Tischendorf's critical apparatus, and Gregory's *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*.

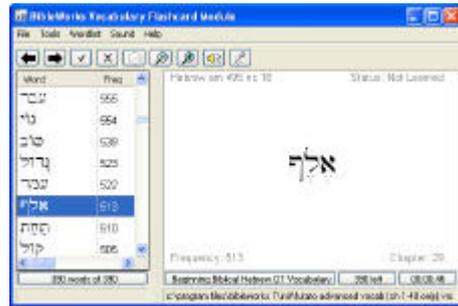
Since BW5, BibleWorks has added a significant number of resources to their system that either are or are quickly becoming 'standard' resources in Biblical studies.

There are still a few gaps I wish could be filled. For example, the BDAG lexicon ought not be an add-on module; it should be wrapped into the full program even if it means paying a bit more for the software. Further, BibleWorks should remove those resources which are becoming obsolete (e.g. Matthew Henry's commentary). That said, any one of these resources can be disabled so as not to 'clutter up' the program (or take up disk space).

BW7 also comes with other helpful tools for students of Biblical languages. For example, there is a flash card module which allows cards to be imported, exported, or printed. Further, users can record their own pronunciations or import pronunciations to be associated with each card. As an example, I purchased the Futato Biblical Hebrew grammar add-in modules to keep my Hebrew up-to-date (I've found, by the way, that simply buying the modules didn't automatically make my

Hebrew better; I've still had to put in the time. There are no shortcuts to learning a language!). Hebrew vocabulary flash cards came as part of the module, and each card has a pre-recorded audio file attached to it.

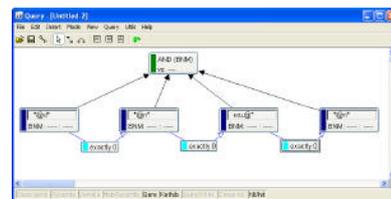
There are many other resources included in BW7 which are useful to scholars and students alike. Space does not allow a full list here; see the BibleWorks Web site for a [full list](#).



FlashCard Module  
([click for larger image](#))

## 2. Search and Research Capabilities

In my opinion, search ability is the chief component of any Bible software (it is second in my list only because one must first have quality resources to search). People, particularly Biblical scholars and students, purchase Bible software to help them do research, so having a robust, yet easy-to-use, search mechanism, as well as other helpful research tools is a must. BW7 does not disappoint in this regard.

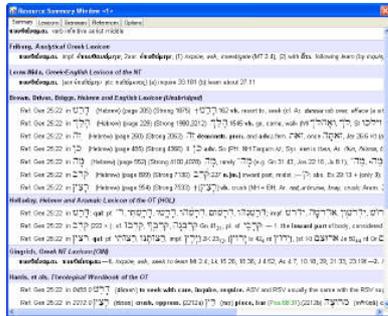


Graphical Search Engine  
([click for larger view](#))

In early versions of BibleWorks, the search engine was powerful, allowing all kinds of searches from very simple lexical searches to very sophisticated morphological searches. However, in those early versions, the more sophisticated searches required learning special search codes, which made the tool more difficult to use and less user-friendly. For example, if I wanted to find all verses with article-noun-καί-noun phrases, I would have entered the following into the command line: `*@d* *@n* και *@n*`, which would return 140 hits in 136 verses.

Things began to change with BW6 and the introduction of the graphical search engine (GSE, formerly ASE). While there were still some kinks to be worked out (and there was still a learning curve), more sophisticated searches became much easier. The same search is much easier to 'assemble' in the GSE, a thumbnail of which you can see to the right above (click the image for a larger view). There is still a small learning curve for using the GSE, but BW7 comes with context-sensitive help, written tutorials, video tutorials, and plenty of sample

searches that enable the user to learn to use the tool rather quickly. And, if you are still stumped, BibleWorks has started a [series of forums on their Web site](#) where you can find help (and give it, too!).



Resource Summary  
([click for larger view](#))

As mentioned, BW7 can perform simple or complex searches. I will give an example of each. Let's say I am reading Matthew's Gospel, and I come across a form I do not recognize, like ἐπυνθάνετο in Mt. 2.4. Instead of pulling my reader's lexicon off my shelf (and dusting it off!), I can very easily find out the lexical form of the item and how many times it appears in the LXX and NT—and all that by clicking my mouse a few times! Once I have pulled up the verse in BW7, I can hover my cursor over the lexical item in question and an information window pops up and displays the lexical form of the item, a simple one or two word definition, and the parsing information. So, without even clicking my mouse, I've learned that the form is an imperfect indicative verb, deponent, third person singular from πυνθάνομαι, 'inquire, ask, investigate, learn'. To find all places in the LXX and NT where *the same form* appears, I simply double-click the word, and in less than a second I have the following list of verse references displayed in my search results pane (along with the searched term highlighted within a bit of context from each verse): 2 Chron. 31.9; 2 Macc. 3.9; 3 Macc. 1.13; 5.18, 27; Dan. 2.15; Mt. 2.4; Lk. 15.26; 18.36; Acts 21.33; 23.19. If I wanted to find every instance in the LXX and NT where *this term* appeared in *any form*, I would right-click the word, and select 'Search on lemma.' In 0.06 seconds, I have the following verse references (and a bit of context) in my search results pane: Gen. 25.22; 2 Chron. 31.9; 32.31; 1 Esd. 6.10; Est. 3.13; 6.4; 2 Macc. 3.9; 3 Macc. 1.13; 5.18, 27; 4 Macc. 9.27; 11.13; Dan. 2.15; Mt. 2.4; Lk. 15.26; 18.36; Jn 4.52; 13.24; Acts 4.7; 10.18, 29; 21.33; 23.19-20, 34. I can also search for the term in the lexicons from the context menu (right-click) or view a summary of this term in all the pertinent resources (see image above), which even shows the Hebrew word(s) standing behind the use of this term in the LXX.

A more complex search might be finding all the places in the New Testament where Sharp's Rule might occur. Sharp's rule states:



### 3. Extensibility

Over the past decade alongside the increasing ubiquity of Internet access and the development of distributed computing technologies like [XML Web Services](#) and [remoting](#), a growing emphasis has been placed on creating desktop applications (or extending already existing ones) that take advantage of resources on the Web. BibleWorks began including ‘connections’ to some of these resources in previous versions, but it seems that with BW7 the concept of [extensibility](#) was taken more seriously, though some work still needs to be done.

One example of BW7’s extensibility is the ability to do morphology and dictionary lookups at the [Perseus Digital Library](#). By right-clicking on a Greek word and choosing ‘Lookup Morphology Index at Perseus,’ BW7 opens a Web browser, embeds the appropriate parameters (e.g. the Greek word converted to Unicode) in the URL (Web address),



External Links Manager  
([click for larger view](#))

thereby opening the Perseus Word Study Tool and displaying a morphological analysis of the word. A similar method opens the [Thesaurus Linguae Graecae \(TLG<sup>®</sup>\)](#), though at the time of writing this review, only the TLG Demo site worked (and terms must be manually entered into their search mechanism). I should note that BibleWorks

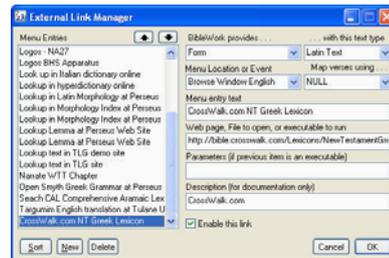
clearly states in their documentation that the pre-loaded link samples ‘are dependent on Web Sites that are beyond our control, so some of the links may or may not work’.

A wonderful addition to BW7 is the ability to easily manage (i.e., add, remove, modify) the links to these external resources with the ‘External Link Manager’ (see image). For example, if I should like to add a link to the Greek lexicon in CrossWalk.com’s Bible Study Tools site, I can do so rather easily using the external link manager. CrossWalk.com uses [Common Gateway Interface \(CGI\)](#) to provide a way for browsers to use Web pages to interact with their database. On the search page, a user types in the word s/he is searching for and clicks Submit. The code behind the Web page ‘grabs’ that term from the search box, adds it as a parameter to the URL (Web address), which calls the CGI script, looks up the word in the lexicon database, and returns the appropriate data to the user as a Web page. The URL displays the parameters that the CGI application expects to receive from the Web form.

They are:

- ‘search’: the term being searched for (in our case ‘light’);
- ‘version’: the version of the NT from which the word comes (options are New American Standard or King James Version);
- ‘type’: the language of the searcher (not the language being searched, so in our case ‘eng’ for English).

To add this to BW7’s external links, open the external link manager and click the ‘New’ button on the bottom left of the window. Perform a search of the Greek lexicon at CrossWalk.com and then copy the ugly URL from the browser (see above) and paste it into the ‘Web page, File to open, or executable to run’ field in the link manager



Adding CrossWalk.com’s Lexicon Search to BW7 External Links

(see image to right). Next, set the ‘BibleWorks provides...’ drop-down list to ‘Form,’ and the ‘...with this text type’ to ‘Latin Text’. Set the ‘Menu Location or Event’ drop-down menu to ‘Browse Window English’ (makes the link show up in the context menu when right-clicking words in English versions). Type ‘CrossWalk.com NT Greek Lexicon’ in the ‘Menu entry text’ field. Type ‘CrossWalk.com’ in the ‘Description’ field. Finally, in the ugly URL you pasted into the link manager, find the search term (in our example, ‘light’) and replace it with ‘<dummy>’ which acts as a place holder for the term BW7 will automatically fill in. Click ‘OK’, and choose to save the changes.



CrossWalk.com Search Results  
([click for larger view](#))

To test the newly added custom link, right-click on any word in an English version, and choose ‘CrossWalk.com NT Greek Lexicon’. A Web browser will open and display the results.

One thing I predict will happen over the next few years is the creation of new Web-based resources (or changes to current resources) that provide access to users via Web Services or some other distributed computing technology. As these services appear, it will be easier to add them to applications like BibleWorks. Further, rather than opening resources in external Web browsers or other application windows, programs like BW7 will be able to integrate the services into their own

application's user interface, giving more seamless access and appearance.

#### 4. Interactivity

There is tag line that was used to market a book on Web design: 'Your users are not stupid. Why does your Web site make them feel that way?' This same adage may be applied to software generally, and for our purposes, it captures well the thought behind criterion 4, 'interactivity'. So, how does BW7 fare? On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is 'makes the user feel really stupid' and 10 is 'makes the user feel competent', BW7 lands somewhere around a 7.5 or 8.

Now, lest you think I am being overly negative, let me note that anyone who is comfortable using a computer could purchase BW7 and begin using most of the basic features without reading any of the help documentation. However, if you really want to use the tools and resources to their fullest functional potential, you really need to read the manual packaged with the software. As an alternative, you can watch a number of excellent screen video demonstrations for step-by-step instructions. Any software—Bible software or not—will have its own set of challenges for different users because software is created to accomplish tasks that range from really simple to extremely complex. And, much as humans get frustrated when trying to make sense of utterances spoken in a language foreign to them, so too users will get a bit frustrated trying to use the more complex tools built in to a software package without first 'learning its language'. To extend the metaphor even further: there are no shortcuts in learning a language, and there are no shortcuts in learning to use this (or any) software. It takes time and use to become competent and comfortable with it.

BW7 boasts of a new interface, which amounts to a change in the look and feel. There are three good changes that I will focus on to finish this section. First, the screen is divided into vertical panes. This is an improvement which simplifies the interface and de-clutters it somewhat. Further, those who have wide-screen



BW7 Interface  
([click for larger view](#))

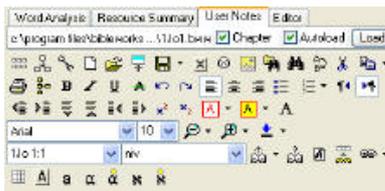
monitors (as I do) will appreciate this because the three panes are wide enough to display the information they contain without making the user

feel ‘claustrophobic’. In my setup, I have the search results pane on the left, the browser pane in the center, and the analysis pane on the right (see image). On the search pane, there is a noticeable improvement, which I *love*: search tabs. The help documentation describes the search tab functionality this way:

When you do a search or change the display verse, the current display context is stored in the currently active tab. This provides a convenient way of working on several different concepts or projects at the same time. If you want to work on something different for a while or follow some links without losing your place, just click on a new tab and work for a while. To return to your previous context, click on the original tab. Tab contexts are saved between sessions.

The ‘context’ that is saved includes:

- The display versions
- The current search version
- The Browse Mode (single or multiple versions)
- The current verse
- The positions of all list boxes in the search window
- Current search statistics and hit highlighting information
- The Command Line text
- Accent, vowel point and apostrophe options
- Search limits options
- Cross version search option



User Notes WYSIWYG Toolbar

The second interface change involves the analysis pane. In previous versions of BibleWorks, the notes feature was not that great and took up valuable screen space. In

BW7, it has become very useful and is now out of the way, but still easily accessible.

Across the top of the analysis pane are more tabs: word analysis (where results of mouse-over lookups are displayed), resource summary (a tab that displays summary of resources where a word is found), user notes, and editor. The user notes tab displays a WYSIWYG editor with a fully-featured toolbar (the user has the option to display all buttons or a ‘trimmed down’ version of the toolbar; image above shows all). Users can enter just about any kind of note—text, image, hyperlinks, and more (but no audio or video)—into the editor and it gets saved along with the verse reference. The only problem I found was when I pasted in text from Word that was wider than the notes pane, there was no

horizontal scrollbar that gave me the ability to see all the text I pasted (as of version BW7.0.014w).

There are many other changes to the interface. For a full list, see the [BibleWorks Website](#) and/or the documentation.

### *5. Mobility*

To my way of thinking, this is one area where BibleWorks needs to give attention. A couple of years ago, I asked the company if they would be coming out with a ‘pocket’ version of BW that would run on my handheld. The response I received initially indicated that they had not thought very much about the potential in this area, if they had thought about it at all. I can assure you that it is possible for decent Bible software to run on a handheld (although in a ‘trimmed down’ version). For example, I have the Nestle-Aland text with Gramcord Lite installed on my current handheld (see [www.OliveTree.com](http://www.OliveTree.com) or [www.Gramcord.org](http://www.Gramcord.org)) and there are similar tools available for the Hebrew Bible. Obviously, I do not do hard-core exegesis on my PDA, but I do use it at church (sometimes even when I am preaching) and have on many occasions been in conversations about biblical matters where I have been able to look at a text in Greek or do some minor searches.

Several factors make this area an important one to contemplate seriously. First, devices are getting smaller and more powerful. My current handheld has more processing power than the desktop computer I had just a few years ago. Moreover, advances in solid-state storage (SD Cards, CF Cards, memory sticks, etc.) are creating more storage space at lower cost. Second, technologies like telephony, email, and other types of office computing are converging and finding a comfortable home on mobile devices, particularly PDA-phones. I am not suggesting that laptops (or desktops) are going away any time soon, but I do think people are becoming more used to using their mobile devices to perform important tasks. Further, many Christian business people read the Bible on their mobile devices while at the local coffee shop waiting for their next meeting. Third, handheld devices are making an impact in the world of education. While laptops hold the lion’s share of the education market, handhelds do hold a considerable share. I know that BibleWorks is serious about breaking into the education market with their software, so they should at least consider

the possibilities. In addition to the user's favorite version of the Bible, the flash card module and grammar helps leap to mind as potential educational tools on a handheld.

### *6. Price*

Not too much needs to be said about the price of BW7. In fact, at \$349 USD (retail), BW7 is extremely competitively priced. What I refer to as the 'What-You-Get-To-What-You-Pay' ratio is clearly in the consumer's favor. Add-on modules start at \$15 USD and climb from there. For the most part, the modules are reasonably priced, but due to constraints imposed by publishers some of them are a bit pricey. For example, one can add Blass, DeBrunner, and Funk's Greek grammar for a reasonable \$55 USD. Adding Baur, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich's lexicon, however, will set a buyer back \$125 USD—which is still cheaper than purchasing the book itself (listed at \$140 USD at a respected online bookstore).

### *Summary*

There are too many features in BW7 to review them all, so I have chosen to review the software based on six criteria listed above. In sum, with the exception of mobility, BW7 is an excellent Bible research software on all fronts. It boasts of excellent resources and extremely powerful searching capabilities. Additionally, there are a number of super learning aids that come standard in the package. The user can extend the capabilities of the program by adding custom external links. The interface, though still somewhat 'crowded', has been markedly improved from previous versions, and with a little help from the manual and instructional videos users can quickly become comfortable getting around. Finally, the retail price of \$349 USD is, in my opinion, less than could have been charged for the product (but don't tell them!), though a few of the add-on modules are, perhaps, a bit overpriced.

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