

Technology

Tiny Time-Savers to Help Today's Busy Attorney

BY DANIEL J. SIEGEL

For computer users, whether novices or technologically savvy, there are many ways to improve the computer experience. This article highlights four innovations, which are either free or inexpensive, that can make your life at the keyboard easier.

THE GOOGLE TOOLBAR

The most popular Internet search engine is Google (www.google.com), which has become the starting point for the majority of Internet surfers. Most Google users either type in the Google Web address or find it among their Internet "Favorites," load the Google page and begin their searches. There is no need to do this.

Instead, every Google user should install the Google Toolbar, a free add-on to Internet Explorer available at <http://toolbar.google.com>. The Google Toolbar is a wonderful timesaving addition.

Installation is simple. Go to <http://toolbar.google.com> and click on "Get the Google Toolbar!" A prompt appears, asking you to accept the toolbar "Terms of Use." After you agree, you are directed to a page that offers the option of installing the Toolbar with or without advanced features. I recommend installing the advanced features, which allow Google to update its page rank information, one of its more useful options.

The Google Toolbar installs on your Internet Explorer toolbar. After you install it, there is a Google logo and adjacent box into which you type your search terms, without ever having to go to the Google Web site. Depending upon your settings, your search results appear in the same or a new window. But the Google Toolbar is more than just a

way to avoid going to the Google page. For example, it has an option that allows you to search all the pages on the Web site at which you are currently located. All you have to do is type in the search terms, click on "Search Site" and up comes a list of all of the pages on that Web site containing the results of your query. Although the "Search Site" option is not compatible with every Web site, when it does work, it is very helpful.

The Google Toolbar is also versatile. You

can use its dropdown feature to go directly to some of Google's specialized sites, such as Google News and Google Groups, or you can easily customize the Toolbar to your liking.

CROSSEYES

Microsoft Word has become the default word processor in many law offices, regardless of whether WordPerfect is "better." Word users continue to complain, rightfully so, that Word lacks "Reveal Codes," one of WordPerfect's most popular and most helpful features. With the advent of CrossEyes, Word users can now have "Reveal Codes" in an easy-to-use and inexpensive way. At \$75 or less per license, CrossEyes is a great product that allows Word users to see all the codes in a document, go directly to the dialogue boxes to which the codes relate and easily make the necessary changes. Word users no longer have to guess which formats



or styles are plaguing their documents.

Just click on the CrossEyes button that installs automatically on the Word toolbar and look at the customizable split screen. CrossEyes displays the document, including the Word formatting codes, in an easy-to-see way. Then, all it takes is a mouse click to bring up the appropriate dialogue box in order to make the necessary changes. CrossEyes Version 2.1 is a marvelous improvement on earlier versions, which were slow and cumbersome. The program is available with a free fifteen-day trial, from www.levitjames.com, and there are discounts for purchases of multiple licenses. The company also sells other programs that can customize or improve upon Word, but they have hit a home run with CrossEyes. Everyone I know who has used CrossEyes loves it.

THUMB DRIVES

First there were 5-1/4 inch floppy disks, then came 3-1/2 inch floppies. Technology leaped, and we had CDs that we could actually "write" on. But each of these technologies was limited. Floppies held a small amount of information and were easy to damage. CDs were great, but you cannot write over the data on most CDs. With CDs and floppy disks, you always need to have a supply on hand because you have to keep making new ones and throw out the old ones. All that has changed, however, with the advent of the "thumb drive."

Designed to work in any USB port (if your computer is so old that it does not have a USB port, it may be time to upgrade), thumb drives are itchy-bitsy hard drives, aptly named because they are smaller than most people's thumbs. Depending upon their capacity, thumb drives can store up to 256 megabytes of information—and are completely rewritable—because they are actually tiny computer hard drives. Thumb drives sell for as little as \$50 for a 64 mb size, to under \$150 for 256 mb, a little less than one half the capacity of an average CD, yet the drive is so small it can fit on your key ring.

Thumb drives are better than floppies and CDs. They are tiny, can be reused infinitely and require no installation software on most computers. Instead, after you plug in the thumb drive, it appears in "My Computer" as another drive, with a new drive letter (e.g., E: or F:). With a thumb drive, you take your documents, spreadsheets and presentations with you, plug the drive into another computer's USB port, and you have full access to all of your work. If you change your document or other item, the changes are saved automatically. It's

that easy

CORDLESS OPTICAL MICE

Traditional computer mice are clunky. The mouse ball always seems to attract every piece of dirt and dust on your desktop, and the mouse itself needs a special extra-smooth pad and a dedicated region of your crowded desk. Plus, if your computer is not right next to the mouse, the cord connecting the mouse to the PC may be a little short, and you may have to push and pull the mouse to get it to work where and how you want. Not anymore.

Mouse technology has dramatically advanced over the past few years. First, manufacturers introduced the scroll wheel, a time-saver whose ease is matched by its simplicity; in fact, mice are no longer sold without a scroll wheel.

More recently, mice have become "optical," which means that they are sealed units, without an interior ball, and are less likely to get dirty and stop working. In addition, optical mice do not demand a special spot on your desk, and you can use them on almost any surface.

Like phones and remotes, more and more mice are cordless, another innovation that seems as though it should have been invented years ago. Cordless mice operate on batteries and generally work up to six feet away from the transmitter attached to the computer. With a cordless optical mouse, you no longer have to keep your mouse right next to the computer; you can actually position it where it is most comfortable and most convenient for you. Cordless optical mice are an especially nice add-on for laptops, where space is generally at a premium. Costing anywhere from about \$10 to \$100, cordless mice are an innovation you will wonder how you lived without.

CONCLUSION

It takes a few minor adjustments to make your computer more user-friendly. Take the time, install the Google Toolbar using your cordless optical mouse. Then save your latest brief on a thumb drive and take it home to review and revise. When you cannot figure out why the margins look bizarre, use CrossEyes to fix them, and you will wonder how you ever used your computer without all of these practical innovations. ■

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Tech BRIEFS

Looking for Legal Tech Info

Where do lawyers go to find information about legal technology? Results of the recently issued *ABA Legal Technology Survey* show that 58% of respondents

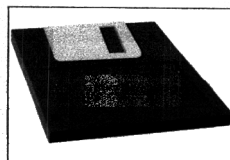


receive most of their legal technology information from print publications; followed by 9% from Web sites; 7% from educational conferences/CLE; 4%

from online discussion groups/e-mail discussion lists; and 2% from trade shows. About one-fifth of respondents answered "none of the above." Small firms (2 to 9 lawyers) led the pack in using print publications, with 67% relying on print resources. Go to www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/surveys for more about the *ABA Legal Technology Survey*.

Download Background Data

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Search Engine Anniversary

Thirty years ago, a little-known technology concern owned by a pulp and paper giant revolutionized the field of legal research by launching the world's first full-text commercial search engine. With refinements made over the years, that search engine serves as the foundation for the LexisNexis™ service



today used by 97% of Fortune 500 companies. With access to a few thousand documents in 1973, today's LexisNexis™ customers have access to more

than 4 billion documents and conduct as many as 2 million searches a day.