

Practice Management eSource

December 2006 / January 2007

*Greetings of the Season and Best Wishes
for the coming New Year*

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Software Talk

Lots of changes are coming; and soon. With the advent of Microsoft Office 2007 and the new Vista operating system, there's more information than can be covered in one newsletter. We'll be breaking down the components over the next few editions to get you ready.

A Comprehensive Look At Microsoft Office 2007 – Part I, Word

With Word 2007, Microsoft has made the broadest and probably the most constructive set of changes to Word -- and Office -- since tear-off toolbars came along. Word is one of the most widely-used pieces of consumer software ever devised, so it's inevitable that the sheer depth and breadth of the changes made to Word are going to spawn at least as many opponents as adherents.

Longtime users and people who are fond of bending and shaping Office to fit their work habits may be deeply frustrated, because some of the things they did before are simply no longer possible in the new format/version. At the same time, and this should not be dismissed out of hand -- Word has introduced some new, genuinely useful ways of doing things. If you're a new user, or you approach the program as if it were a completely new creation from the ground up, you may like what you see, and find some of your old work habits were worth abandoning after all.



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Review: A Comprehensive Look At Microsoft Office 2007, continued

The single biggest change, as you've probably heard by now, is the new menu system. The old drop-down menus and toolbars are now gone; in their place is the "ribbon," a tab-like interface with all the most commonly-used commands placed right up front. The keyboard equivalents are available as well -- press the Alt key and all of the ribbon items are marked with their corresponding Alt key commands. The Alt commands are markedly different from what they were in 2003, but their Ctrl equivalents are still the same (Ctrl-F for Find and Replace, for instance).

The ribbon also changes with context: if you click on an image, for instance, a "Format" tab appears in the ribbon, and a context indicator appears above the ribbon. Switching focus to something else resets the tab. If you don't like seeing the whole ribbon all the time, you can set it to automatically minimize to something that resembles the old drop-down menu bar by double-clicking on it. The whole idea is to present the user with no more than what has to be at any given time, and in that sense the ribbon works beautifully.

There is, however, no "compatibility mode" or way to restore the old interface, and Microsoft has stood firm on this. Office gurus who loved to create their own toolbars and stick them anywhere they pleased will be less than happy. The only concessions to the old toolbar system are a single customizable toolbar that's more or less locked to the top of the Word window, and a customizable status bar at the bottom. It might be frustrating that we can't stick a toolbar with many of our most common commands (not the stuff Microsoft thinks is important) down at the bottom of the window where we can get to it with minimal mouse movements.

Perhaps in a future version, Microsoft will allow a little more flexibility in how you can handle the Quick Access bar, but as it stands now it will take a bit of getting used to. You can still assign custom to any command or macro, though.

As with any new product, over time, you will pay less attention to the program and more attention to your work.



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Review: A Comprehensive Look At Microsoft Office 2007, continued

Word 2007 will prove to be far less habitually intrusive on the whole. Clippy and all such related annoyances are completely gone; instead, the program uses subtle cues rather than overt ones to attract your attention. If you highlight a block of text, for instance, a text-formatting hover menu appears, but it's heavily faded out; you only use it if you actually hover over it, and if you don't want it, it vanishes as soon as you shift focus to something else.

Another genuinely useful new feature is "Live Preview," which allows people to see the results of a given action in real-time, such as changing the formatting of a table. Not everything works with Live Preview, though, so it's not always immediately obvious what will render with it and what won't. One element that uses Live Preview is "SmartArt" -- pre-designed graphics that are used to convey information, such as hierarchy charts or Venn diagrams. When you insert a SmartArt object, any changes are reflected in real time. In the past, it was necessary to use a third-party program to design such things, but Word 2007 drastically cuts down on the need to do this, and the results are attractive and useful.

Earlier versions of Word introduced styles for paragraphs; Word 2007 takes the idea a step further with document *themes*, a collection of font, color and layout choices that can be applied to a document instantly. This is another Live Preview function, so you can open up the Theme browser (Word 2007 comes packaged with about 20) and see the results of applying a particular theme to the whole document by simply hovering the mouse over your choice.

The under-the-hood changes to Word are also intriguing. Microsoft's new .DOCX document format treats each document as a .ZIP archive containing multiple files: an XML file for the document itself, copies of attached objects, and so on. The format is compressed, so it takes less space than its binary



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Review: A Comprehensive Look At Microsoft Office 2007, concluded

predecessors, and you can always unpack it manually by renaming the .DOCX file extension to .ZIP and using any ZIP-compatible archiving tool (including the archive wizard in Explorer). Older Word files can be edited as is, but Word also has a built-in compatibility checker to alert you if a file might pose a conversion problem *before* you convert it.

Word 2003 had blogging functions available through an add-on, but they're now native to 2007 and have been refined a great deal. This feature is essentially a version of the standalone Microsoft Live Writer application, so it also works as an impromptu generator for clean HTML. Most popular blogging services are directly supported -- Windows Live Spaces, Blogger, TypePad, plus any blogging system that supports a number of popular discoverability protocols.

External add-ons from Microsoft let you save directly to PDF or the new XPS (XML Paper Specification) portable-document formats. Word 2007 requires no more memory or CPU than Word 2003 did; it ran snappily enough on a 512MB Windows XP and didn't give me any noticeable performance problems even when dealing with a document heavy with images or other objects.

Word 2007 represents a radical departure from the old ways, especially for users who have spent a great deal of time customizing Word over the years. Then again, the fact that not having a whole clutter of toolbars and command options distracting you from Word itself will allow your mind go back to work. That alone is a huge step in the right direction for Word, and possibly for software as a whole. **Ω**

We'll review **Excel '07, Outlook '07 and PowerPoint '07** in our next Edition

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Marketing

Defining a Blog...

Though blogs can promote discussion of substantive legal issues, they can also be interpreted as marketing tools. There appears to be a thin line of separation regarding the blog as discussion tool or marketing tool. Our current Rules of Professional Conduct do not prohibit blogs, assuming they are merely discussion forums. On the other hand, if a blog is just a thinly disguised advertisement or a solicitation mechanism, Rules 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 would apply.

If you have further questions on this topic, please telephone the Ethics Hotline at 404-527-8741 or 800-682-9806. **Ω**

Life Away From Work

Fun things to do in the Georgia Mountains

www.funkychickenartproject.com - The Funky Chicken Art Project started off being a dilapidated chicken house out in the middle of nowhere. In January, 1995, transformation began to turn it into an art gallery and an outdoor sculpture garden for whimsical, contemporary, and quality works of art.

www.cabbagepatchkids.com - Birthplace of the original Cabbage Patch Kids, Housed in the former Neal Clinic (circa 1900), BabyLand General Hospital welcomes over a quarter of a million visitors each year. Some babies born in the late 70's and early 80's are on display in the father's waiting room. Lunch in the cafeteria is always a treat for the kids.

www.roselawnmuseum.com - This beautifully restored Victorian mansion was once the home of nationally renowned evangelist Samuel Porter Jones. The home was developed into a museum to house the writings and memorabilia of Sam Jones and Rebecca Latimer Felton, another Bartow Countian distinguished for her role in history as the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate.

We'll feature Metro Atlanta in our next edition. **Ω**

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Disaster Planning

Money Gets Funny, by Wells A. Anderson

Imagine that your local bank has been destroyed in a disaster. Where does that leave you and what can you do about it? More importantly, what steps can you take *ahead of time* to minimize the impact of such an event on your practice?

How to Cope if You Didn't Plan Ahead

- ◆ In all likelihood, your money is safe. You may not have anticipated the failure of your bank's financial systems, but your bank has.
- ◆ Expect your bank to try to contact you within a few days. If your phone number is down, call them.
- ◆ If the bank's phones are down, visit your bank's website. Expect it to be running even if power and internet service are not yet restored to your area.
- ◆ If you are forced to relocate, even temporarily, let your bank know your temporary address and phone number.
- ◆ If your bank's building is out of operation, expect to have service at a new, temporary location within days of a disaster.

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Money Gets Funny, continued

How to Plan Ahead in the First Place

- ◆ Weigh and pros and cons of large national banks versus local banks for your primary business accounts. A large bank may weather a local disaster more easily; however, a local bank may offer more responsive day-to-day services and execute its business continuation plan faster.
- ◆ Consider maintaining a contingency cash fund of three to six months' expenses in a bank other than your primary bank.
- ◆ Set up web access to your bank accounts. These systems are highly secure if you use a strong password or pass-phrase, 12 characters or longer.
- ◆ Set up a bill pay service with your bank. It will allow you to send electronic payments and mail checks through online access and/or automatically on a scheduled basis.
- ◆ Keep a record of user names, passwords, pass-phrases, account numbers, bank telephone numbers, and web page addresses in a secure, off-site location.
- ◆ Be sure to implement a backup system and redundant backup system for securely storing your financial data in one or two off-site locations.

Our thanks to Wells H. Anderson for permitting us to reprint this material, originally published in GPSolo, December 2006. Mr. Anderson is president of Active Practice LLC and can be reached at info@activepractice.com. Ω

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Casemaker Update

Casemaker announces a new look and expanded search abilities

By the end November 2006, the Casemaker website will contain legal libraries for all fifty states. Casemaker is enlarging its current selection of State Libraries to include all appellate case law, state constitutions, rules of court, current statutes, as well as other selected items.

Casemaker's state appellate decisional case law content will equal the content found in either Westlaw or LexisNexis back to 1950. And it will far exceed the state appellate case law content of any of the other legal publishers, world-wide. These developments make Casemaker the fastest growing on-line legal-research service in the country.

Casemaker will also enhance its Federal Library to include Federal Appellate decisional law that will have all decisions from the U.S. Supreme Court. The U.S. Circuit Court libraries will include all decisions post-1949.

Casemaker will also soon be sporting a brand-new look. The process of revamping the site's appearance has been designed to present a "cleaner" appearance. However, there are more important changes to the site. But the newest search enhancement will allow users to be able to search in multiple state and federal libraries *simultaneously*. This feature produces expanded results in an economical amount of time.

You can find dates for upcoming free Casemaker training sessions offered on page 10 of this newsletter.

For further information, please contact Jodi McKenzie, Member Benefits Coordinator at 404-526-8618 or jodi@gabar.org Ω

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New Materials in Our Library

How to Build and Manage a Family Law Practice (A must-read for any family lawyer, this book helps you understand the specialized skills and knowledge necessary to build and manage a successful and rewarding practice.)

E-Learning for Law Firms (By now, you've most likely heard about this concept and, more than likely, you've already e-learned something. This little book will explain the benefits of this emerging and ever more innovative knowledge-building tool.)

Lawyer's Guide to Records Management and Retention, The (This book is suitable for law offices of all sizes, and is written to be of use to both the techno-centric lawyer as well as the techno-phobic practitioner. An accompanying CD-ROM contains sample letters, memos, procedures, and more, useful in implementing an effective file management system.)

For a complete Resource Library listing, please visit
www.gabar.org/programs/law_practice_management/resource_library/

Please call Kim Henry at 404-527-8772 if you or someone on your staff would like to borrow a book or two from our Resource Library. Ω

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Vendor Spotlight



Looking for a court reporter, expert witness or process server? Check out the Vendor Directory link to find vendors offering special discounts to Bar members. Allison & Associates are offering a 20% discount off the first certified legal nurse consultation. They may be reached at

Allison & Associates Contact: Toni Calvard-Groover
741 Valleyside Drive
Dallas, GA 30157
404-314-1959 Email – legaltrn@bellsouth.net
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Upcoming Events

Out-of-Town Offerings:

January 18-20, 2007 State Bar of Georgia Mid-Year Meeting, Savannah, Georgia
January 31, 2007 Casemaker Training, Coastal Georgia Community College,
Brunswick, Georgia (9:00am-5:00pm)
February 6-10, 2007 NABE Mid-Year Meeting, Miami, Florida
February 7-13, 2007 ABA Midyear Meeting, Miami, Florida
March 15-18, 2007 NBA 12th Annual Solo and Small Firm Conference
San Juan, Puerto Rico



March 22 - 24, 2007
ABA TECHSHOW2007, Chicago, IL

Atlanta:

Casemaker Training (Trainer: Jodi McKenzie - only 10 seats available per session)

December 14, 2006 and December 21, 2006 Session 1, 10:00am – Noon **or**
Session 2, 2:30pm – 4:30pm Ω



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Want More Resources? More Articles? More Technology Advice? More Books to Check Out? Sample Forms?

You can interact directly with the Law Practice Management Program at www.gabar.org/ga_bar/lpm.html.

Practice Management eSource is a publication of the staff of the Law Practice Management Program of the State Bar of Georgia

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Look for our Next Issue in February 2007