HandyWork Newsletter

Goodbye HW2000/3

End of an Era

Joining our extinct versions of HandyWorks, HW-DOS, HW2 and HW97 are HW2000 and HW2003. And this is a good thing!

For us, maintaining compatability across platforms that are 17 years apart hinders growth since newer features in more recent versions cannot be implemented in the older versions. So dropping the older versions releases constraints on where we can go and what we can do.

Another very important reason is that newer versions of the Windows OS are dropping their support for older versions of office. This is not just a security risk, but a technical issue as well. We have to maintain older computers with an older OS just to support legacy software. And old is slow, and slow is no fun when it comes to computers.

Going forward into 2018, there will be no updates to HW2000 or HW2003. We will still offer technical support, but will strongly advise these users to upgrade. Fortunately for us, there's only a handful of users who use the legacy versions.

If you are running a relatively recent version of HandyWorks, and see a nag "Upgrade Version", or "Version Mismatch" message on your Main Switchboard, be sure to contact us right away so we can get you updated ASAP. The newer systems are better for both of us.

TeamViewer 12

As many of you know, when calling for tech support, we almost always ask you to run TeamViewer. This program is an essential support tool for us because it lets us connect directly to your computer so we can see what is going on without having you try to explain it. From Team Viewer, we can take over your mouse and keyboard and directly solve your problem. Problems are solved faster, teaching is easier, and troubleshooting becomes a breeze. If you need a copy, we post a link to TV-12 on the HandyWorks website.

TeamViewer recently came out with an update (TV-13), which we've just upgraded to. We do not yet have enough experience to give you advice on whether or not you should upgrade yet.

Office 365?

The most recent version of MS Office, Office 365 comes with an automatic update function. Usually that's a good thing. However, a recent upgrade by MicroSoft broke the mouse scrollbar function. This has been well documented in the tech literature, and it affected all MS Access users, not just HandyWorker users.

We suggest you disable automatic updates for Office 365. This won't effect how Windows works or updates, but it will protect you from a non-functioning scrollbar.

What's New?

We've had number of modest changes this year, starting with our new WordPress powered website. It presents a streamlined, clutter free site where our most important things: our blog and our downloads are one click away. For those nostalgic for the old website, we do include a link to the "Legacy" site.

Here are some of the more public facing changes in HandyWorks. Let's start with the patient data screen.

Our old DOS program had a pretty cool demographic statistics analyis of your patients. Now, and only 20 years later, it finally has made it into the Windows version. Find out your highest paying patients along with age and sex distribution. Click Statistics!

De-duplicate patients! We were never sure why users created multiple patient accounts when the reality was one patient with multiple cases. We saw some users with hundreds of duplicate patients. Our "handy" routine lets you merge duplicate patients into one patient account, and adding any duplicates as additional cases. All of your info is preserved and nothing is ever lost.

Did you ever want to print out the patient data screen? Older windows systems allowed you to do this, but newer versions broke this feature. So we added it back with an explicit option from the printer button, to print the screen.

What's New...

When the calendar isn't working, the best solution is to repair the data. But on networked systems, that was often hard to do. The new Repair HWDATA option on the switchboard Utility menu is the solution! Please note that all users must exit HandyWorks for the repair to succeed.

We added an interface to handle specific report margin settings. But the nicest feature of this new interface is that when it detects a new version of HandyWorks, it has a record of the margins from the prior version and loads it automatically.

Data Archiving

As time rolls by, data from a busy practice accumulates a large number of records, making your HWDATA very bloated. Believe it or not, some users have over 25 years of records with data files approaching 800 megs!

Storing this much info is not necessary, and drags down system performance. So while you might feel reluctant to get rid of old data, there is actually a very safe way to preserve older records. It's called data archiving.

At the end of each year, we make a copy of the HWDATA file and save it under a new name with the year appended to the name, e.g. HWDATA2017. This file has the entire data set as it existed at the end of 2017. Next, we open up HandyWorks and go to the Patient Data screen. There's a button on the bottom of the screen labeled Inactives. To delete patients who have not been in for 7 years, we put in dates of 1/1/1980 and 12/31/2009. We click the Trash Can to actually do the deletion. This removes patients who have not been in after 2009. To finish up the task, we need one more step, which is to compact-repair the HWDATA.

Should there ever be a reason that you need to find something that was deleted, simply reattach to your HWDATA2017, and all the older records can be viewed.

For your tech!

Many users hire outside tech support to handle routine computer tasks. But this can go wrong if you are not careful. Most techies are good at their job, but very few of them understand the dynamics of relational shared databases.

There are some simple guidelines that your tech needs to follow when modifying your system. The most important thing to understand is that each computer workstation runs it's own copy of HandyWorks. This means that each computer workstation must have it's own copy of Microsoft Access. The data is what gets shared, not the program! If you try to share the program across your network, your program will malfunction.

There are also version issues to consider. In 2007, Microsoft changed the type of database from an MDB (Microsoft Database) to an ACCDB (Access Data Base). So if you were running HW2000 or HW2003, and your computer got upgraded to Office 2007 or 2010, you probably started running HW2007 or HW2010. But there's a problem here.

While the new versions (ACCDB) of Access could connect to older data sets (MDB), the connection is less than ideal. What needs to be done is the older MDB must be upgraded to the newer ACCDB. That's not a job for the routine tech. Please call us to do the conversion for you.

Backup Joy!

It's been a good year! Many users have been using our internal backup routines to backup to USB drives, and we have not had any horror stories this year. Way to go folks!

As a reminder, all users need to understand that you need to both backup and verify that your backup worked. Only then can you be certain that you have your data, as something bad will certainly happen at some point.

Under the hood

At this point in HandyWorks evolution, it can be considered a mature project. As such, all of its major features have been fleshed out, it is substantially bug free, and it maintains a level of stable functionality.

That means that you will not be seeing major changes, but rather, expansion along the edges. This will manifest as reports with more options, faster data entry and minor tweaks and improvements driven by user questions, comments and suggestions.

Our goal is to always make HandyWorks easier and safer to use. Bad data can't get into the system as database structural integrity is tested every time you start HandyWorks, and reports grow more sophisticated. Overall, we seek to create an easier and more efficient system.

Why Upgrade?

We are constantly evolving the HandyWorks program. While many changes are subtle, they do accumulate! For your own well-being, you don't want to fall too far behind the current version.

If you are not having any problems, then there's no pressing need to run our routine monthly upgrades. But if you are having a problem, an upgrade may fix it. Issues with features are handled by upgrades. Issues with bugs, maybe not. That's what Tech support is for.

Doing an upgrade is easy. We provide an express link to our upgrade webpage that is accessed from the menubar on your main switchboard. Just click add-ins, and follow the link to the Upgrade.

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