ACT! 2005

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Some six years ago I wrote[1] that keeping track of colleagues used to be an easy task. A Rolodex file with some notes scribbled down or a business card stapled to a blank page worked well for years. Today, with changing phones numbers, changing city and area phone numbers, fax numbers, cell phone numbers, e-mail addresses, URL addresses, and so on, the simple Rolodex is no longer adequate for most needs. At that time I reviewed the contact managing software package ACT! 4.0. While I updated to ACT! 2000 a few years ago and continue to use this software, it seemed time to review the latest version, ACT! 2005, as many new features have been added.

As many of my colleagues have a need for keeping track of people, either friends, possible journal manuscript reviewers, clients, and customers, or their favorite restaurants, I was eager to see what new features have been added ACT! 2005. ACT! 2005 is also referred to as ACT 7.0, so there have been a number of major revisions over the past few years. With ACT! 2005 there are now two versions, the basic contact and customer manager version and a Premium version for Workgroups. The latter allows for one to install the software on a Microsoft server and allow for data sharing for up to 50 users.

Installation of the ACT! 2005 software was straightforward but took considerably longer than previous installations of ACT. As I do not have a Microsoft server but rather just a regular workstation (running Windows 2000), I did not install the entire package that comes with the ACT! 2005 Premium for Workgroups. The Premium package allows a group or team to easily access, update, and share information. As a sales manager or group leader this is useful. For an individual like myself—and most of the people I know who use ACT, this is overkill. The many useful enhancements to ACT! 2005 are for teams, not individuals. Purchase of either version of ACT! 2005 allows one to install and run the software on just two computers, plus a server if you have the Premium package. In the past it was possible to have one copy in your office, one at home, and one on your portable to use when traveling. To do this now requires the purchase of two licenses.

This version requires a completely new file structure, so once you convert you cannot go back to older versions. This version also requires large amounts of disk space. My list of 3000 contacts took up about 8 MB in previous versions of ACT!. In ACT! 7.0/2005 it took about 50 MB.

In past versions of ACT!, just clicking on the ACT! Icon on my desktop started the program in seconds. Now it takes almost a minute to start up. All together the ACT! 2005 program and files take up some 140 MB of disk space.

The new features include enhanced database synchronization, useful if you are part of a group or have additional devices to connect to, such as a PDA. Up to 50 users can share the database, but each requires a separate license. While the system now allows for up to 100 000 contacts, it would seem that is more than most people might normally need. There is a calendar built into the package. Reports are more flexible and easier to create. The Premium package includes a license for the Microsoft SQL Server 2000.

In summary, while there are many new and useful features, for most individuals ACT! 2005 is not worth the upgrade[2] and relearning curve. The slow response and excessive increase in disk storage have led me to keep my old version of ACT.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

(1) Heller, S. R. *J. Chem. Inf. Comput. Sci.* **1998**, *38*(4), 772−772.
(2) To upgrade from a previous version cost from $150 to $260. New version costs from $230 to $400. The URL for the ACT! 2005 products is www.act.com.

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