



# That's entertainment

**Tim Nott shows how to brighten up your life, using the Office Assistant.**

**H**e's everybody's friend; everybody who uses Office 97, that is. He's smart enough to know when you are writing a letter (which you probably knew already) but seemingly never quite smart enough to pinpoint the help topic for which you're looking. I refer, of course, to the Office Assistant, commonly known as "that blasted paperclip", or robot, cat, bard, genius and so on.

Now, thanks to a pointer in the right direction from Akhil Shial, who wins a book token, you can get your revenge by putting words into the mouth of Clippit and his pals [Fig 1]. Akhil writes: "This will provide you and all the readers of your column with hours of entertainment and excitement as they make Clippit and his friends shout crude and vulgar statements." I'm sure PCW readers would never stoop to such behaviour.

**On a more serious front**, this does open the way to using the Assistant as an alternative to conventional message boxes in your VBA macros. If you look in

Remember, you read it first in PCW!



◀ **FIG 2 PUT YOUR OWN WORDS INTO THE MOUTH OF THE FRIENDLY OFFICE ASSISTANT**

factor, with lots of animations

from which to choose, but that the balloon can be used to get user input. For example, the Show method can be used to return which button has been pressed, and you can also have other controls, such as check boxes, in a balloon. Many thanks to fellow-columnist Tim Anderson (*Hands On*

**[FIG 1]**

## Macro to make the Assistant talk

```
Sub Speak()
    Set Balloon = Assistant.NewBalloon
    With Balloon
        .Button = msoButtonSetOK
        .Animation = msoAnimationBeginSpeaking
        .Text = InputBox$("Type a message")
        .Show
    End With
End Sub
```

**[FIG 3]**

## Clear MRU macro

```
Private Listsize As Long
Sub DelMRU()
    Application.DisplayRecentFiles = True
    Set Balloon = Assistant.NewBalloon
    With Balloon
        .Text = "This will delete your recently-used file list"
        .Button = msoButtonSetOkCancel
        .Animation = msoAnimationBeginSpeaking
    End With
    buttonpressed = Balloon.Show
    If buttonpressed = -2 Then
        Set Balloon = Assistant.NewBalloon
        With Balloon
            .Text = "Ok, we won't do that then"
            .Button = msoButtonSetOK
            .Animation = msoAnimationGoodbye
            .Show
        End With
        GoTo skipped
    End If
    Listsize = RecentFiles.Maximum
    RecentFiles.Maximum = 0
    RecentFiles.Maximum = Listsize
    Set Balloon = Assistant.NewBalloon
    With Balloon
        .Text = "Your recent file list has been cleared and reset to hold " & Str$(Listsize) & " files"
        .Button = msoButtonSetOK
        .Animation = msoAnimationGetAttentionMinor
        .Show
    End With
    skipped:
End Sub
Ends
```

*Visual Programming*), who pointed me at the correct help file for manipulating the Office Assistant: it's VBAOFF8.HLP. You'll also notice from the screenshot [Fig 2] that the Office 2000 beta version

has made a great leap forward in entertainment technology, in that the animated assistant breaks free of the confines of a window to exist as a free-range sprite.

## Questions & answers

**Q** I produce Word documents which contain a variety of symbols, for scientific text. I'd like to be able to find these and colour them red, say.

JEREMY ARDESLEY

**a** Amazingly enough, this is possible using some of the more esoteric options of Word's search and replace. If you enclose all the characters you want to find within square brackets, for example [~~☺~~%\$£], then click the More button, you'll get an option to "Use wildcards". Tick this, then click in the Replace box without typing anything. Click the Format button, select Font from the list and choose the replacement colour. Clicking Replace All will find all instances of each symbol and change its colour. This even works with symbols you have placed using the Insert Symbol command.

**Q** Is it possible to remove words from the Word custom dictionary? I think I've pressed the wrong button and added some misspelled words.

BRIAN COULSDEN

**a** Yes, the custom dictionary is a plain-text file which can be edited in Notepad or Word. If you have trouble locating it, go to Tools, Options, Spelling and Grammar, and click the Dictionaries button. This will show a list of any custom dictionaries you have, and their locations. You can also edit them from here. If you want to be really crafty, untick the dictionary before opening it. You'll then be able to use the main spelling checker on the contents. Although this will query every word, the suggestions should alert you to mistaken additions.

**Q** When I open a document with dates in Word 97, the field automatically updates to today's date and prints as such. In the previous version of Word for Office 95 there was a facility in Tools, Options, General (if I remember correctly) which enabled me to keep the original date. However, I cannot discover how to do this in Word 97.

ERIC ADLER

**a** It depends on how the date was originally inserted. If the "Update automatically" box is checked in the Insert Date and Time dialogue, then Word uses a

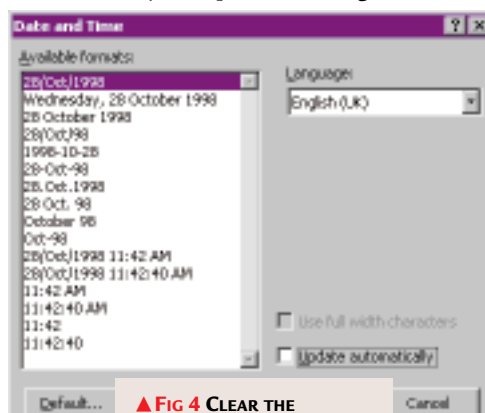
date field which is updated each time the document is opened or printed (or on demand). Unchecked [Fig 4], Word inserts the current date as text. Alt+F9 will toggle the display of field codes on and off so you can see which is which. You can lock a field (Ctrl+F11) to freeze it at the current value, which will stop existing dates from readjusting themselves.

**Q** We used to have only a few PCs and operators, but now there are over 70 of them. Sometimes we lose the information as to which PC/directory/user produced

but what I want is a suitable macro that would do this automatically when the user starts printing out the document.

MUSTAFA CAGATAYLI

**a** Why not use the document properties already built in to Word? Right-click, then Properties will show the name of the user who created the document, provided this information has been correctly entered in Tools, Options, User Information. If you want to add additional information, you can create custom properties which, again, can either be seen from



**▲ FIG 4 CLEAR THE 'UPDATE' BOX IF YOU WANT THE DATE TO STAY PUT**

Word itself or by right-clicking on the file in Windows Explorer. You say that you have some programming experience, so I won't go into great detail here, but the VBA help file does. You can thus

the Office 97 document at hand. I know that it is simple to include a field combination which would add these details (and more) to the end of the document,

easily create a custom document Property with Add Document Property, then assign the original path and filename to this with ActiveDocument.FullName.

### ➡ Cover your tracks

More VBA from Bruce Kirby in response to a past request for a quick way of clearing Word 97's recent file list, as seen in the File menu. The idea is to clear the MRU (most recently used) list without removing the feature itself, should you not want other users of the PC, say, to know what files you've been working on. Bruce recorded a macro while he changed the relevant settings from the Tools, Options dialogue, then edited out the irrelevant bits. I've modified his

original code to save the number of entries in the list and dragged in the Office Assistant to provide a little light-hearted help [Fig 3]. Both pieces of code are also on this month's PCW CD-ROM.

➡ **Annabel Cormack** offers a method of tidying text that has been pasted-in which contains carriage returns at the end of each line. Whereas my search-and-replace solution in November's column is handy for text that has been pasted into an existing document, Annabel's scores

better on long, free-standing texts. First, make sure the Tools, Options, General, "Confirm selection at open" option is ticked. Next, save the text as "Text Only with Line Breaks" and close the file. Finally, open the file again and, when prompted, open as "Text with Layout".

### PCW CONTACTS

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