

## Welcome!

Welcome to the 'lucky 13th' issue of the CyberText Newsletter, and the final one for 2004. Thanks to all of you who have contributed your pet peeves and other snippets of information - and who have shared your delight and appreciation with me when you've learnt a new trick from the Newsletter. We now have more than 250 subscribers from all corners of the globe. If you know someone who could benefit from this Newsletter, email them your copy, or get them to view the archived copies on the CyberText website then sign up to be notified when the next issue is released.

Have a wonderful festive season however you spend it (I'm hoping for a white Christmas in Michigan!) and a healthy and happy 2005.

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## More book recommendations...

I seem to have read a lot of Bill Bryson books over the past few months, each of which I've recommended. Since the last newsletter, I've read another two...

*Made in America: An informal history of the English language in the United States* is a fascinating layperson's analysis of the English used in the US and how those words and phrases came to be. Interestingly, I was surprised by how many words are part of Australian English, including many I had assumed originated in the United Kingdom.

*A short history of nearly everything* is Bryson's latest book. Despite the title, this book contains little about the inventions of humankind, or even the time that humans have been on Earth. It is a rollicking good read of the scientific origins of our cosmos, our planet, and our biological systems. And it is all done in an effortless style that has you nodding with understanding as he explains concepts such as Einstein's theory of relativity in plain English. Science at high school should have been this enjoyable!

Don't be fooled by Bryson's easy reading style - he references all his claims, and a full bibliography of these references takes up a large section of both books.

**Late news:** Bill Bryson is speaking at the Festival of Perth in Feb 2005! Details: <http://www.perthfestival.com.au>

## Hmmmm....

There's a kernel of truth in here somewhere...

### Implementation Time Calculator

1. Ask the engineer/developer/whatever how long it will take. (e.g. 2 days)
2. Double the estimated time. (e.g. 4)
3. Move up to the next higher time unit. (e.g. weeks)

Using this formula, if the engineer says "2 days", it will actually take "4 weeks"...

## Windows shortcuts

More Windows keyboard shortcuts (see *Issue 8, Sept 2003* for others):

- Maximise or restore a window: Double-click its title bar.
- Minimise the current window: Click its taskbar button.
- Close a minimised window: Right-click its taskbar button then select **Close**.
- Switch between open documents in a single program: Press **Ctrl+F6**. To go in the other direction if you have three or more documents open: Press **Ctrl+Shift+F6**.
- Open the Start menu: Press **Ctrl+Esc** or the Windows "flag" key.
- Shut down your computer: Press **Ctrl+Esc+U** then **Enter**.
- Display Windows Task Manager: Press **Ctrl+Shift+Esc**.
- Close an application: Press **Alt+F4**.
- Return to where you were working last in Word: Press **Shift+F5**. (Handy when you open the document next morning and need to continue on from where you were.)

## Highly addictive website!

This site is highly addictive if you like doing jigsaws: <http://www.jigzone.com>

## Cool PDA software

A friend showed me a couple of neat little programs for my PocketPC. Both are fairly cheap and are downloadable from the internet.

1. **Passwords Plus:** A password database that synchronises with your desktop and PocketPC. And it's password protected so you can keep prying eyes out. In addition to passwords, you can store all sorts of other information such as Frequent Flyer numbers, bank account numbers, as well as all those website registrations you have to keep track of. Available from <http://www.dataviz.com>; cost: \$29.99 US.
2. **CityTime:** A great companion for travellers or anyone needing to know the time in another city quickly. You can have up to 16 cities pre-defined, and can click on a world map to see the current time at many more locations. Also gives you the distance between cities, international telephone dialling codes, sunrise and sunset times, and 'at the minute' time zone shading to tell you whether it's day or night in the city you need to contact. And daylight saving time in all locations is automatically updated on changeover. Available from <http://www.codecity.net>; cost \$14.95 US, though I got it for \$11.95 on sale from their website.

## Language resources...

In my internet meanderings I've come across a few websites that you may find as interesting as I have:

**Plain English word alternatives:** <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/A-Z.html>

**Introducing Plain Language:** <http://www.web.net/~plain/PlainTrain/Digest.html>

**English Usage in the UK and USA:** <http://www.krysstal.com/ukandusa.html> (very handy if you're travelling!)

**Naming your business, product or website:** <http://www.rhymer.com/naming.html>

## SnagIt 7.x features

*SnagIt*, the great screen capture program, has lots of new goodies in its version 7, including the ability to capture 'video' of a screen, text, and all graphics on a web page/site. Not bad for a piece of software under \$40 US. Details: <http://www.techsmith.com>

## Free online training from Microsoft

Microsoft has a wealth of resources on its website - but you have to know they're there. One little-known resource I came across a few weeks back was their online training courses for Office applications. Each is targeted at a specific "how to" - and they are all free. Take a look at: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-au/training/default.aspx> to see the range of mini-courses available. Each only takes a few minutes (the estimated times are listed before you start) and there are no tests or exams.

## Pet Peeves

The Olympics came and went, but STILL the commentators couldn't stop putting extra letters into words such as "athlete" and "triathlon", so we heard "ath-a-lete" and "tri-ath-a-lon" far too many times.

And now some more terrific contributions from readers:

- Double negatives, such as "I don't know nothing".
- Substituting "k" for "g" at the end of words such as "something" so that it sounds like "somethink".
- "It's a mute point". No it's not... it's a "moot point".

Finally, another on the subject of telephone manners (thanks Ed):

"A guy I used to work with went to see his bank manager about a loan. Each time my friend began to explain the purpose of his visit the phone rang and the manager would answer it. This happened three times. The third time my friend got up to walk out, the manager cupped his hand over the phone and said, "Where are you going?"

My friend replied "I'm going to ring you up".

The bank manager hung up the phone, directed his secretary to hold all calls, as he should have done in the first place and got on with the meeting.

This happened over 30 years ago, so bad manners are not new..."

## Tricks with Word's tables

To quickly duplicate a table cell in *Word*:

- Copy the cell or its contents, select the range of target cells, then Paste. All the selected cells are filled with the contents of the cell you copied.
- And to go even further, you can select non-adjacent cells using **Ctrl+click**, then paste the copied cell's contents into all the selected cells, no matter where they are in the table.

(These tricks work in *Word 2003*, and possibly in earlier versions.)

## Need help getting organized?

Here are some checklists for almost everything you need to organise your life: <http://www.onlineorganizing.com/ExpertAdviceToolbox.asp>

## Acrobat: PDF back to Word?

Quite a few times I have been asked if you can convert a PDF document back to *Word*. In the words of someone on one of my discussion lists "PDF is an end-result delivery format. What you're asking is akin to asking for someone to take a 2x4 and make it into a tree again, complete with leaves and roots."

The best option you have with *Acrobat* is to export the images and save the PDF text as RTF using *Acrobat*, and then piece the document back together again in *Word*. But the original formatting is lost. For long documents or complex documents with lots of formatting or tables, this can become a time-consuming nightmare.

There is some software around that purports to do a much cleaner conversion. One that has been recommended (though I haven't used it yet) is ScanSoft's *PDF Converter*. (ScanSoft are the *OmniPage* people). It's relatively cheap at around \$50 US. Details available from: <http://www.scansoft.com/pdfconverter/overview/>

## News

**New Clients:** Mortgage Free Australia, Pursue-IT, Fractal Technologies

**STC:** I attained Senior Member status in Sept 2004; am a judge for the Australian Chapter competition; and had an article published in the Sept 2004 issue of *Intercom* ("Training away from your comfort zone").

**WritersUA:** I've been accepted to speak at this annual conference in Las Vegas in March 2005. Topic: "Time-saving techniques using AuthorIT".

**Christmas:** We're off to the US to spend Christmas with family in Michigan and to catch up with friends and family in Chicago and California. See you next year!



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