e-Tips Newsletter

Google Your Transcripts

He taught me housekeeping; when I divorce I keep the house.

—Zsa Zsa Gabo

I call everyone 'Darling' because I can't remember their names.

—Zsa Zsa Gabo

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This month I'm doing a follow-up article on Google Desktop Search on what's new in Google Desktop 2. In November 2004 I first reported that Google, the company with the best Internet search engine also has the best software for searching your local hard drive as well. Now Google Desktop 2 gives you a search bar that searches the contents of your local hard drive just as easily as searching the Web. With the EclipseGDSsetup plug-in, you are able to search your Eclipse transcripts as well.

When you first install Google Desktop it indexes all the files on your computer. It may take an hour or two to build the index. Then Google Desktop updates this index in the background as you're working. So searching e-mails, Web sites visited and transcripts will yield almost instant results. The search results are displayed in your Web browser.

What's new in Google Desktop 2 is the Sidebar feature. You could compare it visually to the vertical notebar on the side of your transcripts. The Sidebar contains little boxes showing new e-mails received, news from the Internet, a Google Search Bar, weather, photos and more. You can reorder, resize, minimize and remove any of these little boxes. Type the words Eclipse into the Google Search Bar, and then click on the Total Eclipse – start menu item that appears on the list will even launch Total Eclipse. I just love that.

Besides the convenient Search Bar, my favorite feature of the SideBar is the ScratchPad. I often compile a spelling list of words for transcripts I'm working on. That way when the word comes up again as you're editing, you can just look at the word list and find it right there. I've minimized most of the little boxes in the sidebar, leaving much more room for the ScratchPad.

The Scratch Pad is automatically saved with every letter that you type, a HUGE benefit over using Windows Notepad. You don't need to worry about ever losing your important notes or spellings. It also includes an option to save your notes to a file which I love to do. Just right click on the Scratch Pad and select save to file. I save these in the same folder my transcripts are located in and give it the same file name as my transcript with the letters sp, for spellings at the end, so it doesn't get confused with ASCIIs since they will both be saved as .txt files. Each time after saving it to a file, just right click on the ScratchPad window to clear it and start again with the next job. Then when I look at my jobs in the Eclipse File Manager or Windows Explorer, the contents of the Scratch Pad are listed right along with my transcript, steno notes, job dictionaries and ASCII files.

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Using the Speex CODEC for Audio Recording/Playback
By Keith Vincent

For synchronized audio recording and playback, Total Eclipse simply takes advantage of what your computer has to offer. So if you go to the Realtime page of your User Settings and select "Compression," you'll see that for audio recording you can use any compression/decompression format that's installed on your computer. You can also install new audio CODECs that become available, such as Speex (which was specifically developed for recording speech.)

The default recording format uses PCM (pulse code modulation), 11.025 kHz, 8 Bit, Mono. This takes about 10 kb per second, which is at least 30 megabytes of disk space for each hour of recording. As a freelance reporter, I transcribe most jobs that I take. After transcribing, I delete the sound file to free up disk space. So it doesn't bother me if an audio file is large; it just has to sound clear.

PCM is certainly not the only audio game in town. Some Eclipse users prefer GSM 6.10. This can take as little as 1 kb per second. A lot depends on your computer's sound system, so you should experiment. If a recording method produces much smaller sound files that are harder to understand, it's not worth considering.

The Speex audio CODEC is a new option worth considering because it was developed specifically for recording speech (as opposed to music). This CODEC installs automatically from the new Total Eclipse IV disk that is now being sent to all Eclipse users with current support. The Speex CODEC can also be downloaded from the Updates area of CR-Net. I used Speex in producing the new Visualizers. The result was that in about the same amount of space previously taken by 100 old movies, I was able to squeeze 180 new ones.

If the Speex CODEC is installed on your computer, it will appear as a "Compression" format in the Realtime section of your Total Eclipse user settings. If you then open the "Attributes" list, you'll see a large number of choices. You might want to try 20.6 kBit/s, 16.0 kHz, Mono, Q6. That takes only 2 kb per second for quite high sound quality. Even if you select the highest sound quality from the "Attributes" list, your sound files will be much smaller than what you might expect. Of course, you'll want to experiment at home before using any setting on your next job.

One small word of warning. Version 4.0 of Total Eclipse has no problem using the Speex CODEC. Total Eclipse 3.2 can use the Speex CODEC, but you'll need to take one extra step to avoid getting an "Incorrect parameter" error when you start realtime translation with audio recording.

Frankly, there's no need to stay with Total Eclipse 3.2 because Version 4.0 works beautifully. However, out of caution, I'll describe what you can do to avoid audio problems if you've installed the Speex CODEC and want to return to Version 3.2 for a realtime job.

After installing Total Eclipse 4.0, open the program and go to the "Realtime" page of user settings. Select or re-select the audio compression method that you want to use. Then go to the "User" page of user settings to "Export Settings." Here you only need to export your "Translation setup." Once you've done this, you can close Version 4.0 and open Version 3.2. There you'd use "Import Settings" to bring in your translation setup.

That's it. Enjoy!

{W:Spell} - Dictionary Entries to Play Sound Files
By Keith Vincent

Ever wish your computer could speak up for you and say "Would you spell that, please" or "One at a time, please"? With Total Eclipse, it can. Here's how:

Let's create a dictionary entry to play a "Spell" sound file. Ctrl D will open the steno emulator where you can indicate the stroke(s) you'll write – for example, SPEL SPEL. Press the Enter key and define your steno like this: {W:Spell}   In an entry like this, the "W" stands for WAV file.

To go with this particular dictionary entry, you'll need a WAV file that has the name "Spell". Eclipse will look for this sound file in the same folder that contains the Eclipse program file (Ecl.exe or EclDev.exe). That's typically the EclipseNT folder in the Advantage Software folder of the Program Files folder on your computer's C drive.

I've created a few sound files for you, if you'd like to try this. You can download them from the e-Tips page of my website: www.KVincent.com. Look for e-Tip 49. You should see that it says "To install sound files for 'Spell,' 'Repeat,' and 'Individually', click here and 'Run' the WinZip Self-Extractor." That will place these files in the EclipseNT folder for you. Then you'll have the sound files to support the following dictionary entries:

{W:Spell}   plays "Would you spell that, please."

{W:Repeat}   plays "Would you repeat that, please."

{W:Individually)   plays "One at a time, please."

Just one more note. The sound file will be played on the computer that is doing realtime translation. These dictionary entries and sound files won't do you any good if the translating computer is not in the same room where you are writing on your steno machine. Likewise, the computer would need to have speakers attached, as opposed to earphones. Having said that, I'm sure there are many reporters who can use sound files like these. Just don't get carried away. I'd hate to hear of anyone getting in trouble for creating dictionary entries and sound files for "Back off, Buster!" or "You expect me to write that?"

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by Wil Wilcox

When the SideBar is displayed it will automatically shift the program window you're working in over to the left, making room for it on the right-hand side of your screen. Minimize the sidebar, and your application window will move back over. If you don't want to give up any screen real estate, even temporarily, the SideBar also will autohide. If this feature is enabled, Sidebar will slide onto your screen when your mouse is near the right edge. Sidebar will disappear again once your mouse is no longer above Sidebar. However, if you don't like it to autohide, you can simply minimize it when you're not using it. You will have a Google Search box on your Windows taskbar. Then to bring the SideBar back up again all you need to do is maximize it from the taskbar.

Download the file called eclipsegdssetup.exe and Google Desktop 2 from the Eclipse updates area of the CR-Net and see for yourself what I'm talking about. Google Desktop 2 with the new SideBar makes navigating through the contents of the Internet and/or your computer a breeze and as a bonus gives you a wonderful tool for notes and spellings.

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California Eclipse Users Group

Contact: Steve Kosmata, San Diego Superior Court
Email: eclipse-sd@att.net

This group has been meeting about once a month in San Diego. If you are interested in becoming a part of this group or would like to help expand this group, please email Steve for meeting dates, time and location.

Advantage Software Inc.

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