

Inner Circuits

A Technology Newsletter for Extension Specialists

July 14, 2008

Volume 24, Number 2

The Dog Days of ETCS

by Steve Giesel

It's that time of year again—the [Dog Days of Summer](#)—when this poor westerner can't wait for Summer to be over. That's not to say I don't enjoy Summer I do, but having grown up in the Western U.S. and spent most of my adult life there; these sultry, humid days and nights leave me pining for Idaho. But then 105° in the dry Boise climate is still 105°.

If you read the brief Wikipedia article referenced above, you might think I'm implying ETCS is in a stagnant or unproductive period. Nothing could be further from the truth. We're all working hard to continue supporting your efforts in Extension... and I just needed a suitable attention-getter. This month's articles detail a few of the things going on at ETCS right now such as the Quick Tips movies I continue to develop along with an upcoming Centra upgrade, plus a second look at Adobe's Acrobat Connect desktop conferencing software.

I'm including information reviewing the microphone feedback problem some of you have experienced recently. The fix is simple so if you're encountering problems be sure to read the article. You'll also find a how-to article for streamlining data entry into an Excel spreadsheet.

And finally look for two computer maintenance articles from Charlie Baerwald; and a brief description of what I intended to accomplish when I first began putting announcements on the ETCS home page. I hope you'll keep up with them as I believe it's a good way to bring important information to your attention.

More Quick Tips!

By Steve Giesel

I'm a big believer in finding ways to help people help themselves. That's one of the main reasons I'm continuing to develop a body of Help Desk documentation in the form of Quick Tips movies. In our Website's [Help Desk](#) section you'll find eight new Quick Tips, four for general [Sharepoint](#) sites and four for the [WebApps](#) reporting system.

Plus I've included an updated feature some of you have requested. There are now periodic stopping points built into the movies where you can choose; "Continue," or "Repeat Sequence" if you need to replay the steps you've just viewed. I'll be adding the **Continue/Repeat Sequence** controls to the other movies as I have time. This should make them more usable in terms of learning procedural steps.

In the meantime please feel free to peruse the existing movies, and let me know if there are additional topics—general or specific—you'd like to see covered in the Help Desk documentation.

Special points of interest:

- See the New and Improved Quick Tips movies
- Read about Acrobat Connect, Adobe's version of Centra
- Fix your microphone feedback problem
- Use a form to enter data into Excel
- Get some Vista maintenance tips

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Important Centra Upgrade

by Steve Giesel

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If you've been watching the ETCS Website, you may have noticed a recent news item outlining a major upgrade to the Centra servers maintained by Saba Learning, our Centra host.

Centra will be unavailable for the days of Friday July 25th through Sunday the 27th. The new environment will be available for use Monday July 28th at 8 AM Central time. If all goes well, the changeover should be transparent to us. Saba has informed us that the upgrade is needed to improve reliability and capacity for their users. Hopefully the upgrade will improve speed as well, but that remains to be seen.

We've just concluded a Centra Event in the Sandbox environment available to us this week, and all went remarkably well. Login was swift and trouble free, sound and text messaging performed as expected. We didn't have a chance to test the Appshare feature so we don't yet know if that's more robust. We do have another event later in the week and we will test Appshare then. ETCS will keep you up to date as we learn more.

Finally as a side note, elsewhere in this issue is an article about another desktop conferencing package, Adobe Connect. We are experimenting with Connect and would like to have volunteers for conference events with this software. Please contact Carol Palo at palo@missouri.edu, or me at giesels@missouri.edu if you would like to help us out. Thanks.

Would You Like to Try a New Desktop Conferencing Product?

by Steve Giesel

If so, read on.

ETCS is investigating Adobe Acrobat Connect as a possible replacement for Centra when our renewal comes up at the end of 2008. The licensing model we are reviewing is a little different from Centra. It allows unlimited seats in a conference room where each room is managed by one "Host." Only one Event can be held at a time in a room, so concurrent sessions are not possible, but days and times are unlimited.

This model may make more sense for the way many of our active users currently employ Centra. Let's say someone has a weekly need for a conference event. He or she could set

up and populate their event, add content, and invite users to the event without needing to go through ETCS each time for setup. Even though only one "Host" is allowed, it's still possible to have multiple presenters, or co-leaders.

Such an approach would allow ETCS to purchase "rooms" for the most active users, but still allow us to host additional rooms for less active ones. We have yet to develop guidelines as to what constitutes an "active user," so we'll probably base them on feedback we get from you all.

Many of the tools and controls are similar although the interface is quite different. Subjectively speaking, our initial tests indicate that voice quality and server turnaround times are superior to Centra. If you have an existing PowerPoint that you use for a Centra Agenda, you may use it with Adobe Connect as well. No re-creation is necessary.

*"Centra will be
unavailable Friday
July 25th. Through
Sunday the 27th.*

...Try a New Desktop Conferencing Product?

cont'd

If you feel adventurous and would like to try Adobe Connect for your next conference event, please contact me. Go ahead and use the current scheduling form found at <http://etcs.ext.missouri.edu/Documents/Centra%207%20Scheduling%20Form.doc>, then attach the form in an email to me at giesels@missouri.edu. In the subject lines on the form and your email please write ADOBE ACROBAT CONNECT TEST to alert me to your interest.

We are interested in hearing from you and would like feedback about having your own “room” to host as well as what you think after you actually use Adobe Connect.

Centra Microphone Feedback

by Steve Giesel

Some of you have been experiencing feedback problems with your new laptops when participating in a Centra conference. I had a News & Notes item about this issue on the ETCS home page for a time, and I've reprinted the instructions below. Look for a Quick Tips item for future reference as well.

I know the problem can be aggravating, but fortunately the fix as outlined is simple. Be sure to test your existing microphone on another computer, and/or try a working mic on your machine when tracking down the problem. This will quickly eliminate the microphone as the problem.

I know of at least one instance where no microphone could be made to work at all. It turned out this was a hardware failure in the laptop sound card. If you've made sure you have a working mic and have completed the fix instructions but still can't make it work, it may be time to call ETCS. You can contact Charlie Baerwald at baerwaldc@missouri.edu, or Chris Pfingsten at pfingstenc@missouri.edu if your efforts have failed in this regard.

ETCS is happy to assist you, but we do handle a high volume of call traffic—so please be sure to exhaust all avenues prior to calling, thank you.

“Some of you have been experiencing feedback problems with your new laptops...”

1. Go to **Start » Control Panel » Sound**.
2. In the window that opens, click the **Recording** tab. You should see icons for your built-in and external mic, as well as icons for "Line In" and "Phone Line."
3. Right-click the built-in microphone icon.
4. Click **Disable**. The icon should disappear or be marked with a red "X."
5. If both of your microphone icons disappear, right-click one of the remaining icons and choose, **Show Disabled Devices**. Both microphone icons should reappear.
6. Right-click the *external* microphone icon and choose **Enable**. This should take care of your problem.

Use the Data Entry Form in Excel

by Steve Giesel


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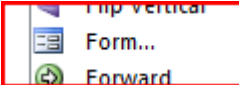

If you're like me, occasionally you need to create a Comma Delimited (.CSV) file. You know the type, these are files typically created in Microsoft Office Excel and then saved in .csv format. The first row is usually used for column header titles such as FirstName, LastName, email address, etc. and subsequent rows are filled out with the actual data, one dataset per line. We use this type of file to create and populate students into course management software such as BlackBoard or Moodle. You can also *import* data into Excel via the .csv file.

Data entry into Excel cells can get tedious, but Microsoft includes a form entry tool that speeds up this process. It's been around a long time but doesn't receive much notice. The command button for launching this data entry form is not available on the Ribbon, so you'll need to add it to your Quick Access Toolbar. For a review of the [Quick Access Toolbar](#) and how to customize it, please see the Quick Tips movie.

I'll briefly describe and illustrate the steps below so you can get started. Be sure to watch for a Quick Tips movie in the near future.

PLACE THE FORM BUTTON ON YOUR QUICK ACCESS TOOLBAR

1. Click the Customize Quick Access Toolbar drop-down to open the menu. This arrow is just to the right of the Quick Access Toolbar found in the upper left corner of the Excel Window shown at right. 
2. From the menu, select the **More Commands...** link towards the bottom of the list. The Excel Options dialog window opens.
3. The drop-down list at the top left of the window ("Choose commands from:") provides access to groups of commands. Click the down arrow and select, **Commands not in the Ribbon**.

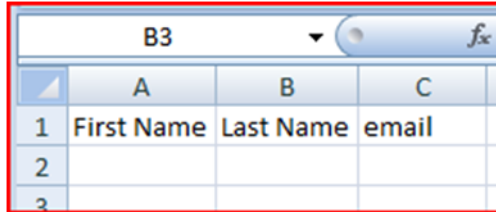
4. Scroll 1/3 of the way down and highlight the **Form...** command. 
5. Click the **Add >>** button between the two main columns on the page. The **Form...** command will appear in the right-hand column now as a part of the Quick Access Toolbar. 
6. Click **OK**.
The image in #1 above shows the **Form...** command button already in my Quick Access Toolbar.

7. You are now ready to begin.

“Data entry into Excel cells can get tedious, but Microsoft includes a form entry tool...”

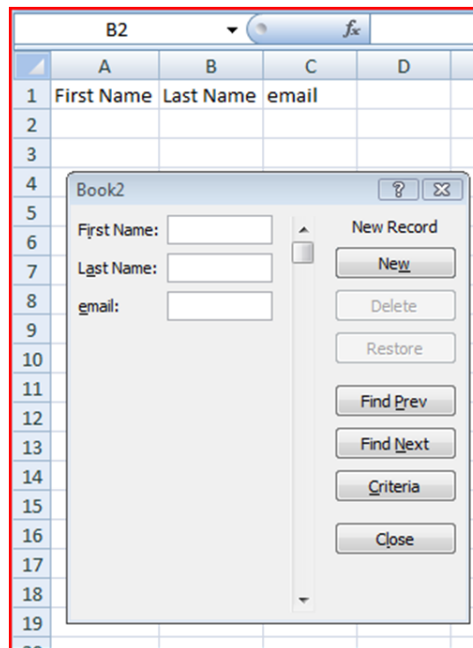
SET UP YOUR COLUMNS AND START ENTERING DATA

1. Open a new, blank workbook in Excel.
2. Enter the column headers as needed in the first row as shown here.



3. **Highlight** any cell you just entered data into.
4. Click the **Form...** button you just added to your Quick Access Toolbar.
5. A dialog asking if you wish to use the first row as labels appears, click **OK**.

6. The Data Entry form appears. Notice how the three data fields are labeled with the first-row data.
7. Click in the first field and begin entering data.
8. Press **Tab** to go to the next field and enter data. Repeat.
9. When finished entering data in the last field, press **Enter** or click the **New** button to enter that data into the spreadsheet and go to a new line.
10. You'll be ready to enter data in the first field on a new line, **repeat** steps 8 & 9.
11. Click **Close** when finished.

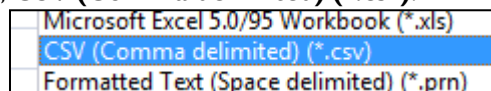


“Notice how the three data fields are labeled with the first-row data.”

12. Click the Microsoft Office Button
13. Mouse down to **Save As**, then click **Other Formats**.



14. Give the file an appropriate name.
15. In the **Save as type:** drop-down choose, **CSV (Comma delimited) (*.csv)**.
16. Click **Save**.



17. You'll receive a dialog telling you that some formatting can't be saved in the .csv format. Just click **OK** and you're finished.

You now have a comma delimited file you created in Excel. If you need to enter more data later, just open the file in Excel and click the **Form...** button on the Quick Access Toolbar. The data entry form will open ready to add additional data.

I've been quietly doing something since mid 2004, can you guess what that is? If you are a regular visitor to the ETCS Website, you probably know.

I always felt like we could do a better job of communicating timely information to our users, but I was at a loss about how to proceed. So what I've done for the last 4 years is use the ETCS Home Page as a forum for making brief, relevant announcements to our Extension users.

Periodically I place a dated announcement of one or two lines with a link to more information about the news item. Anytime Joe Lear sends a mass email to you, I usually duplicate his information there as well. You can also view all the previous news items from links on that sub-page in our Website. Predictably, I call this page, News & Notes—and it's available from the main navigation bar in our Website.

I encourage you to bookmark the ETCS Website if for no other reason than to keep up with current items pertaining to Extension. Besides, that way you'll be that much closer to the Help Desk documentation we continue to develop.

Training Options for UM Extension

by Charlie Baerwald

The deployment of new computers with Microsoft Windows Vista and Office 2007 left computer users wondering how to accomplish second-nature tasks with Windows XP and Office 2003.

Though there is no training offered specifically by ETCS, there are good online training options available for students, faculty, and staff of the University of Missouri to help familiarize them with the new system.

For the Microsoft Windows Vista operating system, there's a walkthrough of features on the computer itself - click **Start » Help and Support**. There you can check out **Windows Basics**, **What's New**, and other categories.

There's more on the **Microsoft Windows Help and How-to** web site
(you may have to copy these web links and paste them into your browser address bar)
<http://windowshelp.microsoft.com/Windows/en-US/default.mspx>.

For Office 2007, there are free self-paced training courses on the Microsoft web site:
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/getstarted/FX101923361033.aspx> and
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/FX100565001033.aspx>.

The University of Missouri also has a few online resources specific to Office 2007:
<http://doit.missouri.edu/training/office07.html>.

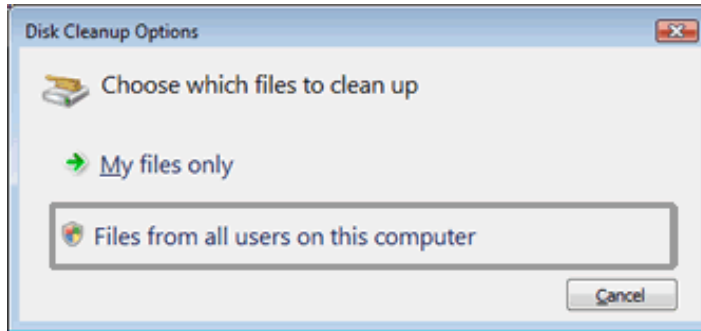
General training options through the MU Campus <http://doit.missouri.edu/training/> include info on free classroom courses in Columbia for UM students, faculty, and staff.

*“Periodically I place
a dated
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information...”*

This document describes maintenance procedures for Windows Vista. Before performing these steps please close all programs, including Outlook and Internet Explorer.

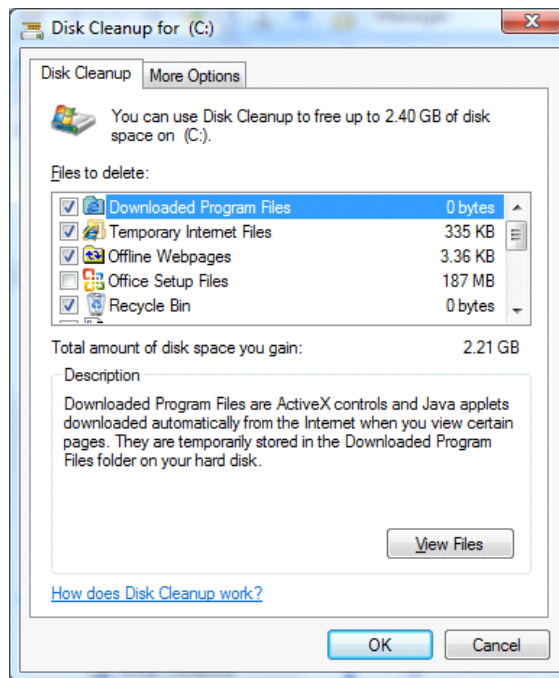
DISK CLEANUP

1. (Click: **Start » All Programs » Accessories » System Tools**).
2. You'll be asked to choose which files to clean up – click: **Files from all users on this computer**.

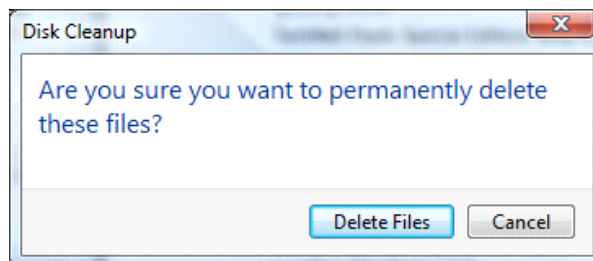


3. Click **Continue**.
The computer will search the hard drive (for a couple of minutes sometimes) for files to be cleaned up then present disk cleanup options.

4. You can check all boxes EXCEPT **Office Setup Files** (these are needed for some Office Updates). Click **OK**.



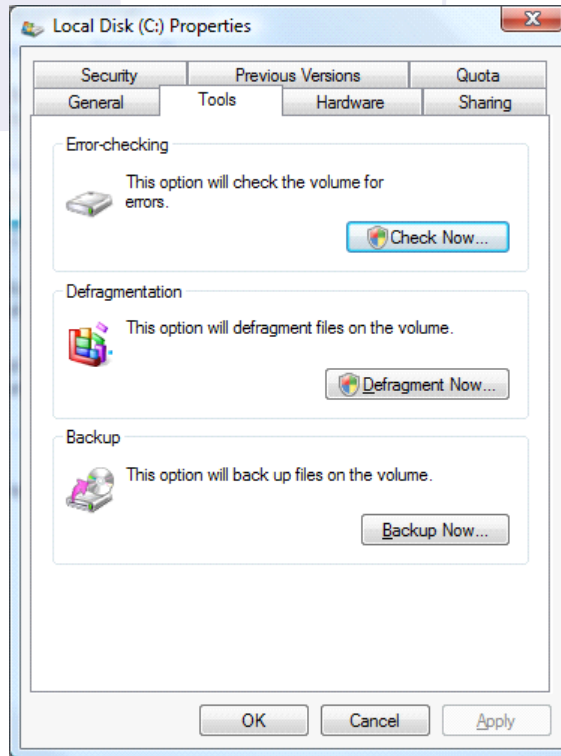
5. Click **Delete Files**
6. Files will be deleted and the window will close.
7. I would perform this task once a month or whenever you feel the computer is not behaving.



“The computer will search the hard drive...for files to be cleaned up, then present disk cleanup options.”

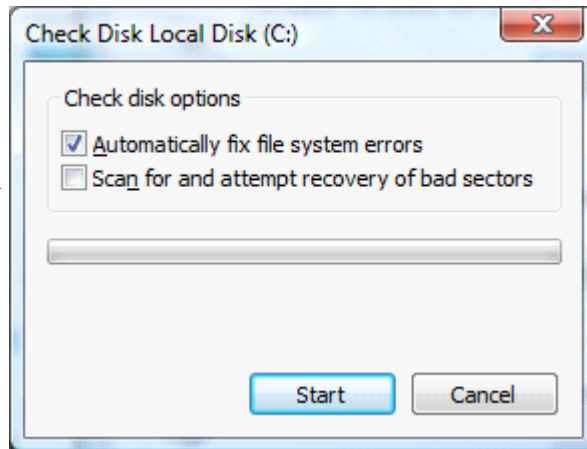
CHECK FOR DISK ERRORS

1. Double click the desktop **Computer** icon.
2. **Right click C:** and choose **Properties**
3. Click the **Tools** tab
4. Under Error-checking click the **Check Now** button.
5. Click **Continue**

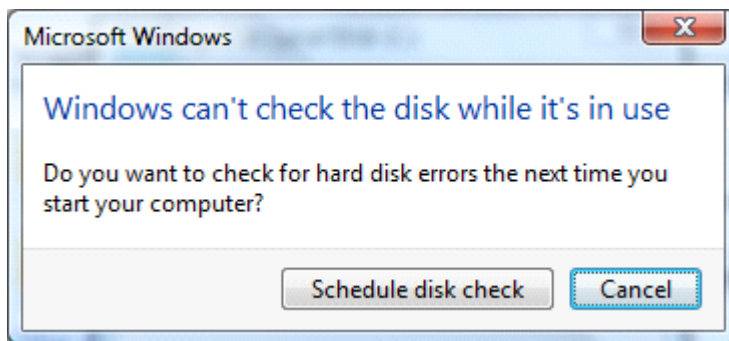


“The disk check occurs the next time the computer reboots”

6. Click the **Start** button to “Automatically fix file system errors”. If you have an older computer, or if you have the time for a more thorough check (takes up to 40 minutes), click the second box.
7. Click **Start**. Choosing the first option only takes about two minutes. The disk check occurs the next time the computer reboots.



8. Click **Schedule disk check**
9. Click **OK**, and close the Computer window.
10. **Restart the computer** at your convenience.



The third procedure that will help speed up things on your computer is to **uninstall the Google and/or Yahoo toolbars**. They embed themselves in Internet Explorer and slow things down, send usage information to third parties, and take up IE window real estate.

Whenever Adobe Reader, Java and many other programs install updates they try to automatically install one or the other toolbar – if you don't uncheck the box to install, it gets installed automatically. Most people don't even notice that it's there.

UNINSTALL 3RD. PARTY TOOLBARS

1. Close all open Internet Explorer windows.
2. Click **Start, Control Panel**.
3. Double click **Programs and Features**.
4. Look for **Google and/or Yahoo Toolbar**.
5. **Right click** and choose **Uninstall**.

Disk Defragmenter is now scheduled to occur automatically, at night, if you leave the computer on. No other steps are necessary to defragment your drive.

*“Google and/or
Yahoo
toolbars...embed
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Internet Explorer
and slow things
down...”*



Mission:

The mission of Extension Technology and Computer Services (ETCS) is to provide leadership in the application of information technology for Extension faculty and staff both in the field and on the MU campus.

Vision:

The vision of ETCS is to empower University of Missouri Extension faculty and staff with information technology appropriate to their needs, within the necessary funding constraints. We want to lead Extension into the use of appropriate information technology.

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July Training in the TCRC's

by Meridith Berry

It is time to sign up for the July session of Extension training. Paula Hudson will be answering questions and discussing the reporting system. The WebApps program has powerful and useful tools you can use to tell your story, find out which programs are being offered around the state and in your area. WebApps can help you present a more complete report to the county councils, your commissioners and other stakeholders. This session is an opportunity for you to learn how to use these tools and to ask Paula about other possibilities.

If you are new to the system or you just want to understand how better to report with the system, sign up at your local Telecenter Network. Class will be held from 10 AM to 12:00PM, Tuesday, July 22. These sessions are free to Extension personnel, a \$10 fee is charged to the home county for people who sign up but do not attend. You must cancel 24 hours in advance.

Jefferson City:	573-638-9646	Poplar Bluff:	573-840-9450
Kirksville:	660-785-2530	Portageville:	573-379-5609
Mexico:	573-581-4874	Reeds Spring:	417-272-8707
Nevada:	417-448-1212	Salem:	573-729-8163
Park Hills:	573-518-2324	St Joseph/Albany:	816-279-1691
Cape Girardeau:	573-243-3581		