

HandyWork Newsletter

Winter 2020

Microsoft Breaks Access!

All versions

On November 11-13, 2019, Microsoft rolled out comprehensive updates for Office and Windows. The updates contained dozens of security patches. The unintended result was that a critical component of Access called the Update Query stopped working. In other words, broken. Not just for us, but for millions of installations all around the globe.

How a patch of this significance was released without adequate testing has been debated on many forums, chat boards and help centers. No one knew why. When the problem was discovered, the response from Microsoft was weak as they issued a tedious, bogus workaround and a timetable to fix the problem in about a month. The outcry from the technical community was loud and clear - fix this now!

Within a few days, independent techies isolated the problem to very specific updates. When these updates were uninstalled, Access began working again although sometimes a full rollback to a restore point was needed.

We fielded hundreds of calls from our users, helping them one by one, to get their systems working. We thought we were clear. In some cases this was true.

For a small number of users, we had to remove the patch a second time. And hopefully we have seen the last of this problem, at least for 2020!

Goodbye 2007

When we modify and improve HandyWorks, we can't always use the latest technology because older systems don't support the newer code. So, as we have done in the past, we are phasing out support for the older systems. We did this for Access 2.0, 97 and 2003. Now, Access 2007 is on the chopping block!

If you use Access 2007 to run HandyWorks, please upgrade to a higher version of Access. Office 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019.all work fine with HandyWorks.

Office 365?

The promise that you will always be current with the latest version of Office is behind the subscription based Office 365 system. Unfortunately, we've had some users have problems with Office 365 after the Microsoft update problem in November and December. Not all, but some.

One workaround solution we have found effective is to uninstall 365. Then, on Ebay, pick up a copy of Office Profession 2016. We've seen these older versions on sale for about \$10-\$20. They all seem to be a bulk license purchase and need to be activated through a 5 minute phone call. But once activated, everything works well.

Best of all, no longer will you be forced into a yearly subscription payment.

TeamViewer

As many of you know, when calling for tech support, we almost always ask you to run TeamViewer. This program is an essential tool for us. It lets us connect directly to your computer. We can see exactly what is on your screen without having you try to explain it. Even better, we can take over your mouse and keyboard and then directly investigate what might be going on. The best part is that this tool helps us eliminate any chance of frustration for either of us.

Please make sure you are running TeamViewer 14. For convenience, if you need a copy, we post a link to TV-14 on the HandyWorks website.

Auto-Update?

The Microsoft Office auto-update function is a dual edged sword, occasionally adding new features, but sometimes breaking others. Twice we have had the pleasure of Microsoft updates breaking some feature in HandyWorks. We suggest that you turn-off the auto-update feature for Office products. Because each operating system is different, we can't provide specific instructions on how to do this. But if you Google "disable office auto update", you will find exact instructions for your OS. Follow the instructions closely to find the setting that disables auto-updates.

Data Archive

As time rolls by, data from a busy practice accumulates a large number of records making your HWDATA very bloated. Believe it or not, some users have over 25 years of records with data files approaching a gigabyte!

Storing this much info is not necessary and drags down system performance. So while you might feel reluctant to get rid of old data, there is actually a very safe way to preserve older records. It's called data archiving.

At the end of each year, we make a copy of the HWDATA file and save it under a new name with the year appended to the name, e.g. HWDATA2019. This file is our archive file and it has the entire data set as it existed at the end of 2019. Next, we open up HandyWorks and go to the Patient Data screen. There's a command button on the bottom of the screen labeled Inactives. Click it.

You are now in the inactive handling screen for Handyworks. To delete patients who are inactive and have not been in for 7 years, we put in a start date of 1/1/1980 (to catch everything old) and an end date of 12/31/2012. We click the Trash-Can to start the delete. This can take several passes. Patients who owe money or are referenced by another patient won't be deleted. To finish up the task, we need one more step, which is to compact-repair the HWDATA, which can be done from the add-ins menu.

Should there ever be a reason that you need to find something that was deleted, simply reattach to your HWDATA2019, and all the older records can be viewed.

What's New...

On newer versions of Office, you can now output reports to Excel, Word or save directly to a PDF. In HandyWorks, we have rebuilt our add-ins menu for higher functionality. And behind the scenes are countless improvements to stability and speed.

Backup Issues

Occasionally, users move their data from one location to another. Sometimes its to the desktop, other times to a shared documents folder. Regardless of why the data location changed, the user needs to update their backup routine to specify the new location.

When backing up, be sure that no users have the program open. Only when the program closes are the data tables secured and locked for copying.

Backup!!

When we speak with our users, we almost always ask if they made a recent backup. More than not, we are met with a profound silence followed by a statement of "I don't know". That is not the right answer! Having a backup is critical. And having more than 1 just as important.

All too often, if there is a problem, you might be tempted to make a backup and in error overwrite your only good backup. We backup EVERY DAY. We have 5 folders on a flash drive called Mon, Tue, Wed, Thur, Fri. On Monday, we backup to the Mon folder.

To make this easier, we semi-automated the procedure by creating batch files called bu_mon, bu_tue, etc. Put these files on your flash drive. When you click on the bu_monday program, it copies the data from your \hww folder to the appropriate folder on the flash drive.

If you need help in setting this up, please contact us. We will be glad to help. Also, if your data is in some other folder besides \hww, we will help you modify the backup routines to backup from the current location.

If you don't want to bother with backing up yourself, many of our users run Carbonite, an internet based backup system. From our experience, Carbonite does a great job and should be considered if you find that backing up is hard to do.

Status Messages

Many of you have commented on how much you enjoy the status messages that show up on the bottom line of the HandyWorks screen. Did you know that they are shuffled and re-arranged randomly everytime you start HandyWorks? Did you know that you can get a complete list of them? Simply use the Add-Ins menu and click on Status Messages. And speaking of Add-Ins, this menubar is being completely reorganized for 2020.

Nagging is good

In the past, unless you checked our website, or tech support checked for you, you might not have known if there was a new update with enhanced features and other cool stuff. With our latest versions, the program does the checking for you, everytime you start it up. And if there is a new update, you will see a gentle notice in the middle of your Main Switchboard. Click on the notice, HandyWorks will close and a browser window will open to our download page. Simply click the latest update to download it.

There is no need to worry about saved margin settings for your statements and insurance forms since the all current versions of Handyworks saves and automatically retrieves your saved settings.

New Partner

We are pleased to announce that we now partner with PNC Bank for credit card processing. Their fees are low and they integrate easily with HandyWorks. Contact Sean McDonald at PNC (914) 222-3762 sean.mcdonald@pnc.com

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