

The Federal Lawyer in Cyberia

MICHAEL J. TONSING

Improve Your Vista™ Experience, Upgrade Your Style, and Preserve Your Uniqueness

This column provides you with two new ideas. One may improve your sanity. The other may improve your image. You can thank me later.

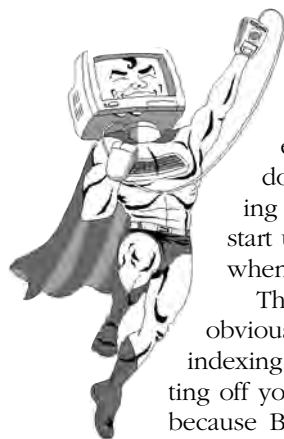
Improve Your Vista Experience

If you purchased a computer that was not a Macintosh™ in the last couple of years, it probably came with a preloaded version of Windows Vista™. Though zip-pier in appearance than Windows XP™, Vista—in my experience—leaves a lot to be desired in terms of performance. (As this column is being submitted for publication, Windows 7™ is just days from its formal debut—so some of you may have found an alternative solution for the performance lag encountered when using Vista by upgrading. Or maybe not.)



I myself may soon choose to leave Vista in my rearview mirror, even though I generally counsel against moving to a new operating system before it has gone through several months' worth of tweaks and upgrades. But Vista has been such an annoyance! Vista seems to perversely engage in its own frolics when I am hunkering down with a deadline approaching. I can hear my operating system performing tasks in the background instead of focusing on my needs. Frustrated, I visit the system processes screen and discover that the Vista indexing system is hogging an awful lot of memory.

Having your files indexed most assuredly accelerates *your* performance when you're searching for content on your hard drive—especially when you're searching within Outlook™. But, how often do you do that over the course of a day? Perhaps all you really need is a burst of search capacity for a few milliseconds each day when you're looking for a certain document or a special e-mail. Other than during that little burst, we just want "Old Betsy" to start up and run as rapidly as she can, especially when we users are facing a time crunch.



The solution to this particular problem seems obvious. Just shut down the system's proprietary indexing service altogether. However, you're "cutting off your nose" (as well as Betsy's) if you do that, because Betsy isn't getting indexed during the shutdown. No problem, you say. Just install another brand of indexer. But, if you really do want to simply boost the performance of your indexer rather than disabling and replacing it, you should be aware that, indeed, that option is available to you: Vista has a gadget that can

ameliorate or solve your grinding, frustrating problem.

Enter, stage left, BrandonTools, the company that invented the Windows Indexer Status Gadget (WIS Gadget). (Go to www.brandontools.com.) The BrandonTools WIS Gadget allows you to easily intervene, stop the incessant background whirring, and proceed with the following:

- stop and start the indexing service;
- view how many items are in the queue and waiting to be indexed;
- monitor the current state of Windows Indexer; and
- open the hatch on the Indexing Options control panel, reach in, and perform various tweaks.

Just so you're aware, if you're running your computer as a standard user account in Vista (which you should for security reasons), you'll need to enter an administrator password when starting or stopping the indexer service (via the Play and Pause buttons on the gadget). This is a trivial annoyance—a "nag" that you can put up with—that allows you to eliminate a much bigger annoyance.

To manipulate your WIS Gadget, you'll need to be running a Vista Windows Sidebar. That in itself is not a particularly good thing, but it is another tolerable compromise, I submit. One thing that *is* good—you'll only have to run the Windows Sidebar when starting or stopping the Windows Indexer Service. If you do not need to be ready to manipulate the Sidebar, you can close it and, serendipitously, you will thereby free up memory and increase wheezing Betsy's performance even further. What could be nicer? (Maybe Windows 7?)

Upgrade Your Style and Preserve Your Uniqueness

A while back, I made the (at the time) astounding prediction that e-mail might be overtaken by instant messaging and text messaging—not as means of social intercourse but as a means of professional communication. So far, this change has not yet occurred. (More about that in a later column—I'm not yet ready to concede.) Whether or not this changeover ever occurs, it is surely true that e-mail has largely replaced stamped "snail mail." And it is equally true that word-processed letters have all but replaced handwritten letters. (Alas, what has become of the handwritten note to a client or another professional? Parenthetically, what has become of "alas"? Alas, what has become of India ink?)

A compromise with the past is now available. (Take that, you old fonts like Times New Roman and Arial!) Let me introduce YourFonts (www.yourfonts.com)—

a inexpensive online service that converts your own handwriting into a unique font. To get your own font, you download two worksheets, fill them in with exemplars of your scrawl, scan the exemplars, and send them back to YourFonts. Voilà! A unique font is created that emulates your own handwriting style! You can then add your unique font to the pedestrian fonts already installed on your computer and use it to create and print out letters that you'll send via snail mail that look more personal and have more—well—style. You also can use your new font to “sign” letters and documents that you produce using other fonts and, yes, you can use your own font to “sign” your e-mails.

Unfortunately, readers of e-mails that have been sent by means of a Cyberian transmission rather than via hard copy cannot read your unique font unless you send them a copy of your unique font to install on their machines. Admittedly, that drastically limits the use of your unique font in attachments. The only “work-around” for this snag is to take the document you'd like the recipient to be able to read in your unique font and convert it to a PDF file. Given the ease with which such a conversion can now be made, that is not a bad solution. (Maybe penmanship will make a comeback. Alas and alack, I suspect that this will not happen.)

For those readers who might want to send e-mails using standard fonts, but with their unique signature in a style that does not look like a crude cut-and-paste job, there is an alternative. You can use your unique signature by turning to the original Windows Mail™. First, scan or (using a digital camera) photograph your signature, then paste the resulting digital file into a Windows Mail message. View and copy the HTML gibberish you've created, using Windows Notepad™ as your viewer. Name the resulting Notepad gibberish file “mysignature.” Then, in Windows Live Mail, go to Tools, Options, Signatures and embed your unique “mysignature” file by importing it there. Resulting e-mails will then automatically bear your unique signature.

Conclusion

Sometimes, you'll find that there are ways to improve Vista's annoying characteristics. You can keep this operating system's useful indexing capability while overcoming its accompanying tendency to slow down other functions by using a simple downloadable add-on WIS Gadget described above. Try it.

Alas and alack, India ink is dead, and the demise of e-mail may not be far behind. However, there are at least a few alternatives to sterile fonts and look-alike e-mails and letters. Try them. See you next year in Cyberia. **TFL**

Michael J. Tonsing practices law in San Francisco. He is a member of the FBA editorial board and has served on the Executive Committee of Law Practice Management and Technology Section of the State Bar of California. He also mentors less-experienced litigators by serving as a “second chair” to their trials (www.Your-Second-Chair.com). He can be reached at mtonsing@lawyer.com.

MESSAGE *continued from page 3*

Endnotes

¹Press Release, Mary G. Wilson, available at www.lwv.org/fairandimpartialcourts.

²See the Federal Judicial Center Web site www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf at Milestones of Judicial Service.

³The same judge had previously served as a federal district judge in 1937 in the Virgin Islands, but that appointment had a two-year term limit.

⁴Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, Monique Chase, and Emma Greenman, *Improving Judicial Diversity*, BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE REPORT 11 (2008).

⁵*Safford Unified School District v. Redding*, 557 U.S. ___, 2009 (slip op.).

⁶As a matter of law, the Court ruled by an 8-1 vote, with Justice Ginsberg in the majority, that the search had gone too far.

⁷*Virginia v. Black et al.*, 538 U.S. 343 (2003).

⁸“... [A]ren't you understating the effects of the burning cross? Now, it's my understanding that we had almost 100 years of lynching and activity in the South by the Knights of Camellia ... and the Ku Klux Klan, and this was a reign of terror and the cross was a symbol of that reign of terror. ... It was in-

MESSAGE *continued on page 13*

FEDERAL APPEALS

SHANE P. RALEY

**CIVIL, CRIMINAL, AND AGENCY CASES
IN THE FEDERAL COURTS OF APPEALS**

EXPERIENCE INCLUDES:

**BRIEF-WRITER FOR CLASS-ACTION
PRACTICE GROUP OF GLOBAL LAW FIRM**

**FIVE-YEAR LAW CLERK TO CHIEF JUDGE,
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT**

**EXTENSIVE LEGAL ANALYSIS AND WRITING
IN BROAD RANGE OF CASES**

**201 WEST STONE AVENUE
GREENVILLE, SC 29609
(864) 335-9210**

WWW.CIRCUITAPPEALS.COM