Radio Days – 2013-11-16

Tip of the Week – When Copying Does Not Work!

Two clients this week had problems while copying computer files from computer to another, backup, device. The first client could not print a photograph copied onto a USB stick and the second could not perform his backup.

USB Stick Not Working

The client who could not copy photographs from one computer to another for printing was becoming more and more frustrated. Each time he opened a copied photograph Photoshop told him that the photograph was not a legal .jpeg file, despite the fact that the photograph was in Photoshop's internal format. This meant that he was unable to print his photograph, and the print was needed for an exhibition in a few days' time. He became more desperate by the minute.

There was only one thing to do: I flew to his rescue. Trying to copy the photographs as he had done I reached the same result. Fortunately he had another computer that he could copy the photographs to, so I tried copying them to this computer. The result was the same!

The next step was to use another USB stick to do the copying. This proved successful and the photographs were printed without any further ado. This showed that the USB stick itself had died an unnatural death and needed to be formatted or replaced.

This test, swapping one device for another, is a good way to check to see if a device is causing the problem: it often is. Another thing to note is that, while USB sticks are much more robust and reliable than floppy discs or even optical discs (CDs or DVDs), they still have a failure rate. I remember buying a USB stick only to find that it did not work. After taking it back to the shop the assistant checked that it was not working and replaced it. This new USB stick worked well, so please ask for a replacement device if a new one fails.

Backup Not Working

Another client had what appeared at first blush to be a similar problem: so similar, in fact, that I fused the two events in my mind and forgot to ask her the obvious question. The obvious question is "Please unplug your backup hard disc from the mains power then plug it back in". After I suggested that she ring the computer's manufacturer and ask for help she rang back and stated that she had unplugged the backup disc then, when she plugged the power back in, the disc started doing a normal backup.

Sometimes what appears to be a complex problem is, in reality, so simple that it makes you weep!

Writing The Wrong Way

A new client rang during the week to complain that his nearly-finished book was not working correctly. I wondered just why, or how, a book was not working so went to his office and asked how this could be. He showed me a series of folders, each for a chapter of his book, and now he was trying to put the book together. The problem was that, while the book was divided into chapters by the organisation of the folders, the contents of each chapter were in random order.

Each folder of his book contained a snippet, perhaps only a paragraph long, perhaps a few pages long, with a heading, but the heading was not differentiated in any way.

This whole saga demanded that we started to use Word's styles to make sense of the mess.

Copyright © 2013 Toby Bainbridge

What Are Styles?

Styles are Word's method of keeping each type of content uniform in how it is formatted and displayed. For instance, chapter headings in a book could be set with a larger font with a page-break (a skip to a new page) just before the heading. Each chapter would have headings to show which level the heading occupied.

Using styles has a number of advantages:

- It keeps the layout of a document uniform. All normal text looks the same, all chapter headings look the same, and so on.
- It is easy to look at some text and see where it belongs in the hierarchy of a document.
- It is easy to rearrange the order of the parts of a book so that they are in a more logical order. This ease of rearranging was improved in Word 2010.
- It is easy to change to look of a whole document with just changes to the styles. This is much easier than changing every paragraph to match the required new style.
- It is easy to create a *Table of Contents* from the styles.

So, how do you go about setting styles?

This is the easy part. When you open Word, you will see a number of styles. I am now going to use examples from Word 2007 (when the ribbon interface was introduced) and later versions to show you what I mean. Unfortunately, as with many things to do with computers (and other parts of life), it is easier to see what is happening if you are shown how to do something instead of being told.

In the *Home* part of the ribbon you will see a number of styles with names like *Normal*, *Heading 1*, *Heading 2*, etc. These are styles, and many people do not like using them because they are not set out just the way that they want to see them. This is where the fun starts.

Changing Styles

If you want to change how text in a certain a style looks you just right-click on the style name in the ribbon, select *Modify* then change each of the details that you want to change so that the style looks just as you want it to look. The main items that you would change in a style are:

- **Font:** this changes the *typeface* (Arial, Georgia, etc), the *style* (normal, italic), the *weight* (normal, bold), the *size* (11 point, etc) and the *colour*.
- **Paragraph:** this changes the spacing before and after the paragraph, the spacing between the lines in a paragraph, the left and right indent amount and the way the first line is indented or not. It also changes the alignment of a paragraph: left, centre, right or justified.
- **Tabs:** the position and alignment of tabs stops in a paragraph. This is useful for aligning text in, say, a menu with text left-aligned and prices right-aligned.
- **Border:** any border to the left, right, top or bottom of a paragraph. You will notice that, in this document, I have put a border underneath all the headings and that lower-level headings are indented.
- **Shortcut key:** this a set of keys that you can press to set a style for a paragraph quickly and easily. This is useful when you need to set a paragraph to the correct style. For instance, I set the shortcut key for the *Normal* paragraph style to be *Alt+Ctrl+N* and the shortcut key for the *Heading 1* style to be *Alt+Ctrl+1*.

Once you have set each style up as you want it (and please remember that styles are not set in concrete: you can change a style at any time) it is time to start creating your document. In this case it was a matter of placing all the text from each chapter's folder into a single document and arranging everything in order.

Organising the Document

For my client, the next step was to insert every part of each chapter into the document, then get the order of each part in that chapter correct. The first step was to create a new document then open each of the parts of the first chapter into the document, set each paragraph to the needed style then arrange the whole chapter in the correct order.

To start off this appeared to be a simple task.

I started by typing *Chapter One* as a *Heading 1* style (because this was the first chapter and I had no idea what the chapter's title should be and my client could not remember). This is the great advantage of using a word processor rather than a typewriter or pen and paper: it is so easy to change things around.

Then I opened the first part of chapter 1's folder in another window then copied and pasted the text to the end of Chapter One. The next step was to set the first paragraph of the inserted text to the *Heading 2* style and the rest of the inserted text to *Normal* style. Now repeat this for all the other documents in the chapter 1 folder. Now, with the *Navigation* pane open, it is easy to rearrange the order of the parts and, perhaps, change some of the headings to another style (perhaps *Heading* 3) to show the levels in the document.

At this stage it is wise to save your document so that it should be available if something happens to your computer or your power supply. I have witnessed too many situations where someone has gone berserk after losing a document over which they has slaved for hours. Please don't let this happen to you!

The result of all this is that you have all the parts for Chapter One in the one document and all of these parts are, as nearly as possible, in the correct order and the document is saved.

Now repeat this entire process for each of the chapters in order. When you have finished this process for each chapter you will have a single document containing everything that you started with, all in one saved document. Now would be a good time to do a backup.

Once you have the parts of each chapter's folder in the one document, arranged as logically as you can, it is time to look at the document as a whole. In this case it was obvious that the document would need a lot of work to bring it up to scratch. The parts did not have any really good flow from one section to the next and there was no real cohesion to the document. It is one thing to get each part (each small file in a chapter's folder) working but it is another level of work to get the sections to work together as a chapter and yet another level to get each chapter to look like a whole, coherent, document.

My client has a lot of work still ahead to complete this work but it will now be easier to do.

Creating a New Book

If all this seems to be really daunting, it is. It is so much easier to write a book in the correct way to start with. This will save you much time and anguish and also result in a better book because there will be fewer corrections to make as you go through the process.

Further Information

Nothing this week.