USING ACTIVEWORDS
A Utility to Make Your Desktop Dynamic

By Stephen Bird, Contributing Editor

ActiveWords (AW) is a potentially very useful multipurpose utility program that I've been using for a few weeks. Of course, like many of the programs I use (and probably you, too), I've only scratched the surface of its potential. So, what is (are?) ActiveWords?

Briefly, here is part of what AW does: "You enter or select any words in any context at any time, and are directly connected with services related to the meaning of those words."[1] For example, I use Agent as my e-mail/news reader. If I want to launch this program in the old way, I can go to Start, Programs, etc., or I can look for its shortcut on the Desktop. Now, with ActiveWords running, I type "ag" (just the two characters, no quotes) and hit the spacebar. Agent is launched or, if it already is running, I immediately am switched over to it.

> *AW helps you launch programs, address e-mail, zoom in on specific Web pages, make fast text substitutions and employ other short-cuts.*

At the Web site, **www .activewords.com**, you can read: "With ActiveWords, *every word* on a computer is a gateway to all the information and resources available to you. We call this new attribute of words the Universal Hypertext Link (UHL). UHLs are *always present* and are seamlessly integrated with the existing features and mechanisms of today's user interface."

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In other words, "With ActiveWords, you simply select or type the word(s) related to what you want—and press the ActiveWords key."

The potential of AW includes the shortcuts/functions already in the AW WordBase or those you create yourself for the same functions. For example, AW uses "gg" (no quotes) while I choose "Google" to quickly jump to the Google Web site[2].

An obvious strength of the ActiveWords program is the ease of customizing the AW WordBase to your own language preference . . . and it seems much faster than choosing a browser Favorite.

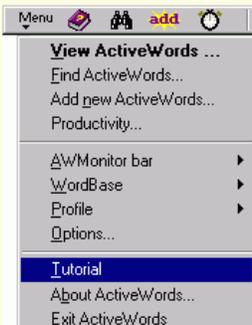| Description	ActiveWord	Confirm
· ActiveWords Controls ·	awcontrols	☑
· ActiveWords for MICROSOFT OUTLOOK ·	outlook	☑
· ASCII characters (e.g., ¥) ·	ascii	☑
· Capitalizations ·	capitalizations	☑
· Contractions (e.g., can't) ·	contractions	☑
· InPlace Functions (date, time, math, etc.) ·	inplace	☑
· Letters (e.g., A.) ·	letters	☑
· Microsoft Windows (managing windows, etc.) ·	windows	☑
· Web Solution (News, Sports, Search, etc.) ·	web	☑
Agent2	ag2	☐
AWControls - ActiveWords PLUS! QuickStart and Help	help	☑
AWControls - Add new items using the Add Wizard	add	☑
AWControls - Find items in your WordBase	find	☑
Execute - Close Window	close	☑
Google	gg	☐
Launch - agent	ag	☐
Launch - Internet Explorer	ie	☐
Launch - Microsoft Word	wd	☐
Launch - My word processor	write	☑
Launch - PowerDesk Pro	pd	☐
Launch - ql_pro	ql	☐
Launch - Streets & Trips	St.	☑
Launch - wpwin10	wp	☐
MyFiles	MyFiles	☑
Navigate to - Google	google	☐
Navigate to - The Weather Network - Weather Forecast -	pw	☐
Send Email to - buzz@activewords.com	ebuzz	☐

An AW Description/Abbreviation List

Consider this list of ActiveWords features:

* UHLs to Web sites and pages—including simple navigations to specific pages and more complex look-ups
* UHLs to automatically create and address e-mail messages
* UHLs to launch applications
* UHLs to open documents and files of any sort
* UHLs for text substitutions
* UHLs for a large variety of Windows short-cuts
* UHLs that call scripts and macros—using the AW scripts, third-party scripts and macros, agents and middleware, as well as any callable OS resources and functions
* UHLs to a variety of software agents via a variety of interface protocols (*e.g.*, OCX)

As you see, there is a nice mix of my shortforms, which are nonword abbreviations of commonly used text and programs such as "ag" "ie" "pd" "ql" and "wp" for Agent, Internet Explorer, PowerDesk and QuickLaw (and which usually do not require confirmation or activation via a hot-key), as well as AW shortforms such as "write," "name," "close," etc. (which may require further user input). There are a few examples (so far) of my text substitutions, such as "sb" for "Stephen Bird, Lawyer," which some users will see as similar to WordPerfect's QuickCorrect/QuickWords or to Word's AutoCorrect.

The AW Tutorial

LEARNING ABOUT AW

How does one learn to use ActiveWords? Well, there are a few ways. First, there is a very good tutorial that clearly explains the AW operation. Second, there is helpful technical support[3]. Third, a Yahoo! group[4] is devoted to AW. And, fourth, it's an easy program to use with a variety of options. For example, I've chosen to hide the AWmonitor Bar (because it was in the way of other WinXP program menus[5]) and access AW functions from the Windows Taskbar at the bottom right side of my screen.

AW provides for both "confirmation" as well as "hot-key" activation in its functionality. The confirmation feature is useful when the same ActiveWord is used for a variety of actions. For example, "st" (no quotes) could be an abbreviation for "Street" or it could launch the Microsoft Streets and Trips program. However, the original AW set-up didn't provide for the "st" (*i.e.*, "Saint") in "St. Lawrence River." Since I didn't yet understand how to add/edit commands or do the work-around, I just deleted the two AW "st" choices.
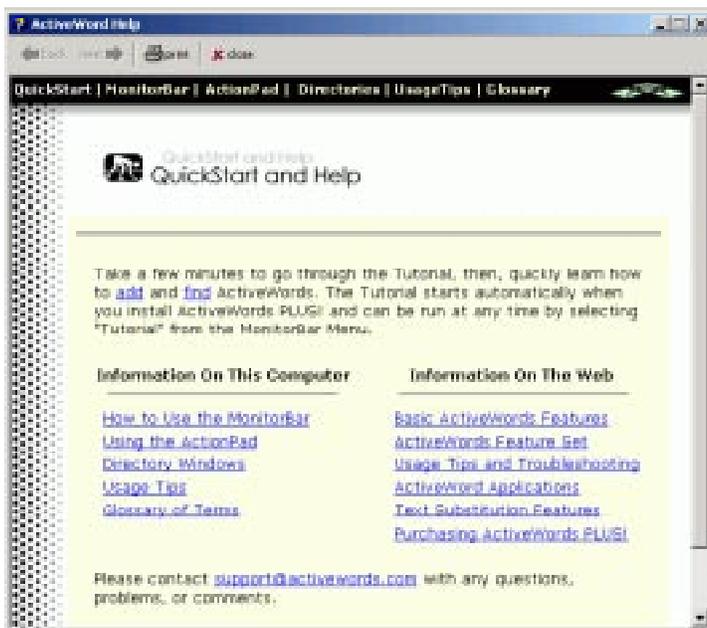
A Sample ActiveWords Suggestion

Fortunately, it is easy to add (or return) any ActiveWords through the Add function. Now "St. Lawrence" can appear in a document without being bothered by other programs or words being inserted without regard to context.

Sometimes confirmation may be offered but may not be the default action (such as the name "Frank" versus the adjective "frank"). Users, however, always can set a particular action for confirmation. Users also can use an activation "hot key" to change a word in a document (*e.g.*, "date") to an action (insertion of the actual date). In addition, it is possible to change the default AW hot key <F8> to another function key such as <F2>. For example, I often use <F8> to "block text" in WordPerfect because it is more precise than a mouse, especially across a number of pages. Conversely, I only occasionally use WordPerfect's Find-and-Replace function under the Edit menu, and never use it with <F2>. The AW hot key disables the same <F> key in whatever other application you happen to be using, so for me, it made more sense to have <F2> as the AW hot key instead of <F8>.

ACTIVEWORDS APPLICATIONS

A number of add-in functions are available for ActiveWords. If you ask why these apps weren't included in the main program, then a simple answer might be that if you don't want them, then why clutter your computer's hard drive or programs with extra, unwanted files? (Novel idea. Good idea.) You simply get what you want. So download, install (very easy) and use some or all of these free applications: Web, InPlace[6], Outlook, ABACodes[7], ASCII[8], Capitalizations[9], Contractions[10], Misspellings[11] and Windows[12].

An AW Help Screen

FINAL THOUGHTS

A s noted in the Features list, AW can automatically suggest new ActiveWords based on one's use of Internet URLs, files, folders and programs. I've chosen to have these suggestions occur when I restart my system rather than while I work. Users also can choose (through ActiveWords Options, Assistants) how often something has to happen before being presented with the following choices: "Add an ActiveWord for this action now" or "Do not suggest this action again" or

"Remind me later." Impatient users who can't wait for Autosensing to pick up on favorites can use the Add Wizard to create personal ActiveWords. And if you change your mind, then Edit is always available.

ActiveWords has an annual license fee of $29.95, which is partially designed to ensure that users update—thus focusing technical support on the most recent versions of the program. If you choose not to renew the license fee, then the program no longer will be available. A free 60-day trial version of ActiveWords is available for download at the Web site.

Overall, I've been very pleased with how well this program works. The future (vision) of ActiveWords looks very interesting as products are developed for a variety of related devices. ❖

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ARTICLE NOTES

[1] When I proposed this article to my editor, he said: "It looks interesting, although I'm not clear what it does or why lawyers would use it." The simple answer is to use AW to increase productivity by saving time/keystrokes. The program further addresses this concern by including a Productivity Center where users can generate reports showing how much has been saved by using ActiveWords. Finally, users may be able to use it to automate some repetitive functions (*e.g.*, security access) in law office programs such as Time Matters.

[2] For those who need speed, there is another option to quickly get to Google or another search engine: Dave's Quick Search Deskbar is available via **www.dqsd.net**.

[3] In response to my inquiry about the logging of keystrokes with the potential for discovery of confidential information, I'm told AW uses the Microsoft Jet Engine database and that each user's personal database (WordBase) is capable of being password-protected (run AWAdministrator.exe, then select Change Password from the User menu). However, given that AW is not a security software company, users may wish to consider broader data protection at the operating system and/or hardware level through, for example, a product from **www.pcguardian.com**.

[4] To learn more about the ActiveWords group, visit **http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ActiveWords**.

[5] AW tech support folks tell me they are aware of this problem, which will be fixed in the next release.

[6] This is a sample list of applications, with the complete list available for download on the AW website. The following application descriptions comes from the AW Web site.

[7] Intended for lawyers in the U.S., this ActiveWord application delivers an ABA Litigation Code in response to an ActiveWord. For example, the ActiveWord "depositions" will be substituted with "L300," the ABA billing code for discovery depositions.

[8] Assign words to standard ASCII symbols. For example, enter "copyright" and receive ©; enter "yen" and receive ¥.

[9] Contains common capitalizations. Words like "august" will be converted to "August," "arnold" to "Arnold."

[10] Don't worry anymore about mis-typed contractions. Let ActiveWords do it for you! If you type "dont," you will always get "don't."

[11] NEW—more than 1,800 common English misspellings. Misspellings like "beleive" automatically will be converted to "believe" in all text entry contexts. Again, some users will see this as a variation on WordPerfect's Spell-As-You-Go or the equivalent function in Word.

[12] Use ActiveWords to control most of the common actions in MS Windows. For example, type "min" and the current window will be minimized; type "close" and the current window will be closed.