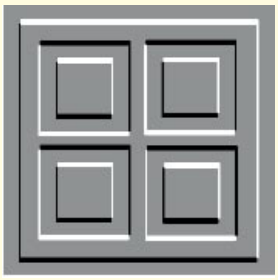


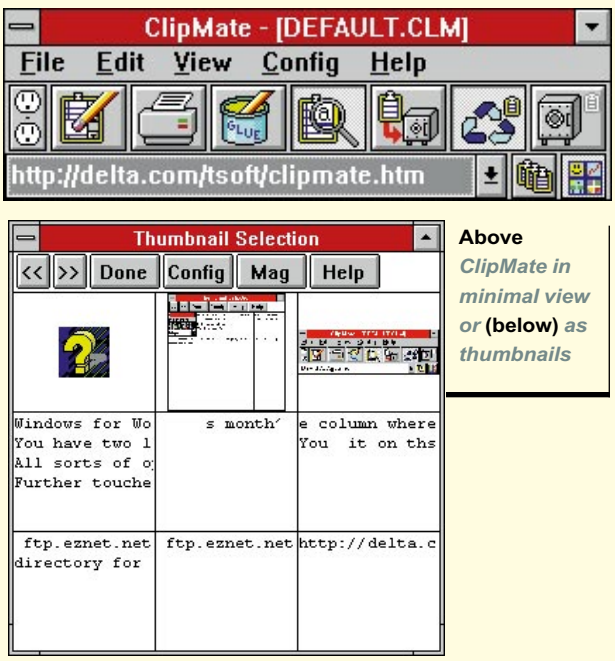
Stick with your **Mates**

If you want to get ahead, you'd better get a ClipMate. Tim Nott extols the virtues of a piece of Windows Shareware which turns the good old clipboard into the ultimate writer's (or artist's) tool.

Welcome back to the column in which we're still allowed to say "directory". Last month we took an in-depth look at the Windows clipboard, and the month before at Xboard, a neat five-barrelled enhancement on the standard product. This month, reader David Agbamu has pointed me in the direction of something even better. ClipMate 3.1 works alongside the Windows native clipboard. Every time you copy something to the Windows Clipboard, Clipmate takes a copy of the item for itself. ClipItems are then available either from a dropdown list, or from a grid of thumbnail views — click on one and it's loaded back into the Windows clipboard ready for pasting.

You have two lists of ClipItems with buttons to switch between them — the "recyclable" list maintains a fixed number of items (default 100) on a first-in first-out basis. The "safe" list keeps items until you delete them, so you could use it for "boilerplate" text, names and addresses, logos or anything you want to use regularly. A "load on demand" feature offloads anything over a kilobyte to disk, so large images or .OLE objects won't eat up all your memory.

Clipmate comes equipped with all sorts of options and extras such as the Glue button, which lets you append text to the previous clip, rather than keep it as a new item. You can magnify the thumbnails — and if the clip is text, edit it. Further touches of luxury include a Flow Text button. Have you ever pasted text from an ASCII file, an online source or an Off-Line Reader into a word processor and had to remove all the surplus line breaks? Even with a macro to automate the process, it's a pain in the neck, is it not? This button does it before you paste, and also removes surplus spaces. The only fault I could find with it — apart from being slow on my system — was that it didn't recognise grabbed screenshots. It's on this month's cover disk and you can also find it online from http://delta.com/tsoft/clipmate.htm, or by anonymous ftp from ftp.eznet.net /pub/tsoft. Search the directory for clipmt*.zip, as the version (last two digits) can change. Clipmate is shareware — you can try it out for 30 days for free before deciding if you want to register for $25.



Above *ClipMate in minimal view or* **(below)** *as thumbnails*

Trick shots

On the subject of screenshots, George Mucho wrote from St Clement's Dane School, asking how the shots for this column were produced. Well, there's no big secret — pressing the Print Screen key captures the entire display to the Clipboard, and if you hold down the Alt key while doing this, just the active window or dialogue box is grabbed. You can then paste this into your favourite bitmap editor. I use PaintShop Pro, because I can have several images loaded at once, and I can save them in the .GIF format which compresses the data. This way it takes up less space on my disk — and those of the *PCW* production team — and also takes less time to transmit by modem. You can, however, use Windows Paintbrush if you're happy with the .BMP or .PCX format — the latter is also compressed, but not quite as efficiently as .GIF.

There is, however, a way to cheat. Sometimes I want to capture the application's main window with a dialogue box open; Alt + Print Screen will only capture one or the other, not both. The trick is to capture the main window first, and paste it into Paintbrush or PaintShop Pro as a "new image". Then activate the dialogue box and capture that. In PaintShop Pro, I then paste the second image as a "new selection" — ie, on top of the existing image — then drag the selection to position it artistically over the main shot. Clicking outside the selection anchors it. Paintbrush will paste the second image over the first by default, but you need to use the right mouse button to drag it into position, otherwise parts of the overlaid image will become transparent.

Tips & Tricks: cracking walnuts

Shane Devenshire sent a whole sheaf of tips from Walnut Creek, California. Many of these were for Windows applications rather than Windows itself, but I think we can stretch a point in favour of the Microsoft Office toolbar. Double click on the title bar (or anywhere that isn't a button) and it will toggle between floating and docked at the edge of the screen. Another of Shane's tips — and another trick I'd never noticed — is that you don't have to target checkboxes or those tiny round "radio buttons" seen in dialogue boxes exactly. The "hot" zone — that is, the area that will respond to a mouse click — usually extends to include the text alongside. To complete the hat trick, Shane points out that if you're in a hurry, or have a slow PC, you often don't have to wait for a dialogue box or application to load completely before you start typing. Try double-clicking on Word or Excel then immediately start typing, and you'll see what he means.

A case of corruption

Dejan Stojnic came up with an interesting problem. Since Doublespacing his disk, none of his associations would work any more. Doubleclicking on a .TXT file in File Manager failed to produce Notepad, instead he'd get some limp excuse saying: "File Manager cannot open or print the specified file. Start the application used to create this file, and open or print it from there." He checked the entries under File/Associate… and all seemed to be as it should. He tried recreating the associations, but still no joy.

If this happens to you, the most likely culprit is a corrupt Registry — find REG.DAT in the main Windows directory, back it up somewhere safe, then delete the original. If you restart Windows, it will build a new REG.DAT from the entries in WIN.INI, and you should find that the associations will work again. You may have to redefine some associations, or even reinstall some applications, but often just running them again will restore the necessary information.

Regular readers of this column will be aware of the Windows Paintbrush bug in which Paintbrush is unable to accept anything bigger than its own window pasted in. Alan Salmon came up with a much neater solution than the one I'd suggested. Paste the bitmap as normal, without worrying about the image attributes or window size. Go immediately to the Edit menu, choose Copy to... and enter a file name at the prompt. The image will be saved — you can check by clicking on the Info... button. You can then discard the contents of Paintbrush and open the file you've just created — you should find you have the entire image intact.

Short and sweet

Jim Josefsson from Sweden remarks that I've never mentioned the Short Cut Key feature in Program Manager. In fact I have, but it was a long time ago — August 1993 to be precise — so maybe it's time for a refresher.

You can assign a keystroke combination to a Program Item by selecting the item with a single click, then pressing Alt + Enter to summon the Program Item Properties box. You'll see a box labelled Shortcut Key, with the default contents as None. Click anywhere in this box, don't try to delete the contents, but just type a suitable key — W for Write, perhaps. Windows will preface your choice with "Ctrl + Alt +". Whenever you type Ctrl + Alt + W, Write will leap into action.

There is a snag — as Jim writes: "The shortcuts don't work all the time (perhaps you can explain why). It's seems that Program Manager must be active in some way for the shortcuts to function. When I press a combination of keys and nothing happens, I just give the ProgMan Icon a light click to wake it up and everything works fine." Well, Jim answers his own question there — Program Manager must be the active Window, or have its minimised icon selected, for the shortcuts to work. If the application is already running, however, the same shortcut will bring it to the fore without having to "wake up" Program Manager first. So, deploying a little cunning, you could add an icon for Program Manager to Program Manager itself. This is perfectly legal, and has the interesting side-effect that whatever you type as the Description will replace Program Manager in its title bar. Give it a shortcut — say Ctrl + Alt + P — then wherever you are, Ctrl + Alt + P followed by Ctrl + Alt + W (you don't need to release the Ctrl and Alt keys between these) will launch Write. This won't work, of course, if the current application uses Ctrl + Alt + P for its own purposes.

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