SmartSurf - Release 1.2

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SmartSurf is a free program designed to help you keep track of the time you spend using various online services such as CompuServe, the Internet, CIX, BBS's etc. It can be installed in a totally "seamless" way so that you don't even have to do anything to have it record the time (and money) you spend, and it's always there reminding you as the time ticks by!

Distribution Requirements

Getting Started - A quick overview

Installation
Introduction and general explanation
Recharging the batteries
Configuring the modem
Configuring service details and charges
Configuring your communications applications
Making SmartSurf start, stop and time automatically
Crossing a charging time boundary
Manual timing
Recording Additional Data
Editing Records
Zooming in on details
Reports
Exporting to a spreadsheet
Limitations
Release Notes
Support

Distribution Requirements

This program may be distributed in any manner whatsoever, provided all files from the original ZIP are included in their original unmodified state.

The individual rechargeable batteries which we post on our on-line services may not be distributed in any form whatsoever without our prior written agreement.

Getting Started - A Quick Overview

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You are probably seeing this because it is the first time you have run SmartSurf. Take a minute to read it - it will help you understand what is happening here, and give you a "step by step" guide to what to do. You might like to print it out, by using the "Print Topic" option of the "File" menu.

Once you get everything set up correctly you will find that having SmartSurf record your on line activity is totally automatic - you don't have to start and stop it or do anything complicated to have it keep track of the costs you are incurring.

What you will see first

When you first start up SmartSurf you will see a long, thin window with a few buttons and a couple of empty white boxes. It is probably on-screen now. This is SmartSurf in its "timing mode". When you are using SmartSurf to time your applications you can just stick this window on a caption bar or somewhere out of the way and it will display a running total of time and costs. You can grab this window with the little "hand" button and move it around to somewhere convenient. If you click on the little hand button and then move the mouse about over all the controls then hints will appear to explain the purpose each of them.

What you need to do

You need to configure SmartSurf to teach it what each of the services you use costs, and what comms application(s) you use to access those service(s). We have included some example definitions which you can certainly use to experiment with, but they probably won't match what your phone and service charges and applications really are, so you will need to set your own up or modify the ones we have supplied.

To configure the charges and applications you need to switch SmartSurf to its "standard mode", which you do by clicking on the third button in from the left (the one that looks like a little grid). You might want to try it now.

When "standard mode" appears you might also want to move the mouse over the tool bar buttons and read the little hints that appear to see what everything does. You might also like to open the "example.ssl" log file that we have provided to see the sorts of things SmartSurf records and what you can do with the records (print them, export them to a spreadsheet etc.).

You then need to configure your phone and service costs, and your on-line applications, according to your circumstances. To do this you need to select the buttons (or menu items) that configure your applications and your services. There are many more details in the

Configuring Service Details and Charges
and

Configuring Your Communications Applications
topics.

Once you have done that you need to review the section on

and change the command Program Manager (or it's replacement) uses to start your communications applications. And once you have done that you should be in a position to almost forget about SmartSurf, except when you want to review or analyze your on-line usage.

For further information you can jump to the

Configuring Service Details and Charges

Selecting the "Configure Service Details" command will present you with a dialog box where you can enter details of new services, modify details of existing services or delete services which are no longer required. You can also get a complete listing of your service definitions by pressing the "listing" button. The dialog box is "tabbed" because of the number of fields. Each field is described below after a brief overview of the basic concepts.

Basic Concept

You need to provide a separate record for each different service or charging structure. Where there is a common service but multiple different charges depending on time of day or day of week you should provide a separate record for each different "charge band", but give each of them a common "Service Id".

It is the "Service Id" that you refer to when you request SmartSurf to monitor a service, and SmartSurf works out which is the appropriate record to use based on the time of day and day of week

Example

Assume you use CompuServe, which has a consistent charge of (currently) $4.80 per hour, but your phone charges change depending on the time of day and the day of the week. Phone charge Monday to Friday 08:00 to 17:59 is 5 cents for every 24 seconds, at other times on Monday to Friday it is 5 cents per minute. All weekend is 5 cents for every 2 minutes.

You would need 4 service detail records, each with a common Service Id (suggest CIS). One record for the time 00:00 to 07:59 on Monday to Friday, one for 08:00 to 17:59 on Monday to Friday, one for 18:00 to 23:59 Monday to Friday, and one for 00:00 to 23:59 on Saturday and Sunday.

Dialog Box Fields:-

Service Name Tab

Service Name

This is a drop-down combo box where you can either type the name of a new service you wish to define, or select one of the existing services for modification or deletion.

Service Id

You must enter here a three letter acronym for this service. What you enter here will appear in the drop-down list you use to select services to time when in "timer mode", and is one of the parameters you will need to use if you choose to have SmartSurf automatically start with your online programs. For more information see the topic

Negotiation Delay

When connecting to an online service there is a delay between the telephone answering and the modems fully connecting, which is when SmartSurf starts timing. During this period the modems are "negotiating" the protocols they will use to communicate, like speed, compression etc.. This delay varies depending on a number of factors including modem speed. The figure you enter here will be added to the time SmartSurf actually "sees" the two modems connected. You need to determine this figure by trial and error.

Record Additional Data For This Service

If you check this box then every time SmartSurf finishes timing an event, either auomatically when a modem drops carrier or manually by using the "Stop" button, a dialog box will appear where you can enter any text you like to record with the details of the event. This date can be exported and printed and may be useful if you are recording time for charging purposes. If you don't check the box you won't be prompted for any additional data, although you can always enter it later by editting the record from the main display.

Telecom Charging Details Tab

Cost

This is the charge rate for the telephone connection for this service, and will obviously depend on whether it is a local or long-distance call, and also possibly on the time of day. This is entered in the format dd.ccth where the "th" are the tenths and hundreths of the main unit (dollar, pound etc.). So for example if the cost was 6.71 cents or pence per minute you would enter it as 000.0671

Per Minute/Per Hour/Per Unit Of/Per Call

Select the appropriate radio button depending on what the charge is based on. If the price is based on a particular unit of time, say 5 cents per 20 seconds or part thereof (i.e. 15 seconds costs you 5 cents, 25 seconds costs 10 cents), then you can specify the time that makes up a "unit" in the edit field to the right of the "Per Unit Of" radio button.

Charge by the minute

Check this box if your telephone charges are rounded up to the nearest minute rather than being charged by the second. This only applies if you select charging by the Hour or the Minute.

Minimum Charge Per Call

Some telephone companies have a minimum charge per call, no matter how short. If this applies to your telephone service you can enter the details here, otherwise just enter 0.

Service Cost Tab

Cost

This is the hourly charge for connection to this service. Please see the section on

for some important information.

Per Minute/Per Hour/Per Unit Of/Per Call

Select the appropriate radio button depending on what the charge is based on. If the price is based

on a particular unit of time, say 5 cents per 20 seconds or part thereof (i.e. 15 seconds costs you 5 cents, 25 seconds costs 10 cents), then you can specify the time that makes up a "unit" in the edit field to the right of the "Per Unit Of" radio button.

Charge by the minute
Check this box if your service charges are rounded up to the nearest minute rather than being charged by the second. This only applies if you select charging by the Hour or the Minute.

Free Monthly Allowance
Some services allow a free period of time each calendar month during which there are no charges. For example CompuServe (currently) offer 3 free hours Internet access before charging based on usage begins. If that applies to this particular service then check this box and specify the free time allowance in the adjacent edit field. You can also specify the day on which your billing cycle begins each month.

Validity Tab
Specify here the days and times during which this particular record is valid. Note that you need to cover all periods with a group of records for the same Service Id, otherwise there may be a time period that SmartSurf doesn't know how to charge for!

Making SmartSurf start and stop automatically

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Basic Concept

You can make SmartSurf start automatically when you wish to start another telecommunications program by replacing the start command for the other program with a command to start SmartSurf, passing as parameters to SmartSurf the Service Id of the service you wish to use for charging, followed by the Id of the application you want started.

For more information on configuring individual services charging records see the

Configuring the details of each online service
topic, and for configuring communications applications, see the

Configuring your communications applications
topic.

Step-By-Step

Assuming you start your online service using Program Manager, use the following steps:-

1   Switch to program manager, open the group with the icon you normally use to start your commmunications program, and select the Icon (Single-Click on it - don't double-click to start it).
2   Select the Properties command from the File Menu.
3   In the resulting dialog box replace the "Command Line" for the program with a command to start SmartSurf with as parameters the Id of the service you want charged followed by a space and then the Id of the application you want started.

   For example, if the application has an ID of "AGENT", the charging records for that service have an Id of "NET", and SmartSurf is in the C:\SMARTSRF directory, then the command should be

   C:\SMARTSRF\SMARTSRF.EXE NET AGENT

4   Select the "Change Icon" button, and then use the "Browse" button to find the original executable file and re-select the Icon for the original service.

Note that you must leave the "Working Directory" in Program Manager (or equivalent) as the one required by the communications application. Don't make it the SmartSurf directory, otherwise you may get "ShellExecute Failure Code 0" messages. This often happens with applications that access CompuServe.

When you close the monitored service

When the monitored service is closed SmartSurf may or may not close. If SmartSurf is in timing mode it will terminate itself, providing a completely seamless way of monitoring your online activity

without any additional interaction required.

If however SmartSurf is in "normal" display mode, then it will not terminate, assuming that you wish to undertake further work with it. You can of course close it normally.

If you try to start two SmartSurfs

SmartSurf will only allow one copy of itself to be active. If you try to start a second copy then the first copy will simply be re-activated. However if your attempt to start a second copy also included a request to start a particular service, that request will be honored, the service will start and the selected service in SmartSurf will switch to the Service Id of the newly started service.

IN THIS CASE IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THE CORRECT SERVICE IS BEING RECORDED.

Of course you can always edit the record if the wrong service is recorded. Note also that the service selected when timing stops is the one that is recorded in the log record, so you can reselect if you see the wrong service is being recorded during a session.

Note also that SmartSurf will not autoclose if it is switched to as the result of an attempt to start a second copy, and you will have to close it manually.

Configuring your comm's applications

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Selecting the "Configure Applications" command will present you with a dialog box where you can enter details of new communications application, modify details of existing applications, or delete applications which are no longer required.

Basic Concept

If you want SmartSurf to automatically start alongside your communications applications, time them, and automatically stop when the comm's application stops you need to tell SmartSurf what comm's applications you will be using and how you would like them to operate.

You define each application to SmartSurf including its executable file and whether you want it to start minimized, maximized or normalized, and then give it a simple "Id" which you will use as a parameter when starting SmartSurf which will cause SmartSurf to start it up.

For more details on how to make SmartSurf launch your comm's applications refer to the topic:-

Making SmartSurf start and stop automatically

Dialog Box Fields:-

Application Id

Enter here a simple acronym you can use to refer to this service. For example, for CompuServe you might choose to use "CIS", or for America Online you might use "AOL". This will be one of the parameters you specify when starting SmartSurf if you want SmartSurf to start this particular service.

Command

Enter here the command (including parameters) you would usually use to start the application. This will be the same command as you would enter in the "properties" in Program Manager. You can use the "Browse" button to the right to search for the application.

Normalized/Minimized/Maximized

Use these radio buttons to determine how the application should start up.

Limitations

SmartSurf is intended to provide a general guide to the costs you incur in your online activity, and Oakley Data Services do not warrant that it will be an accurate record.

Remember also that some online services have different service charges depending on the area of the service you are accessing. SmartSurf has no way of detecting the different areas of service that you visit, or the costs they incur.

We have also seen what appear to be amazing inconsistencies in the way some services time, so much so that we've got the stopwatch out. Sometimes they seem to under-read by a few seconds, and sometimes over-read.

Each log has a limit of 5120 entries, and exceeding this figure will produce unpredictable results. We would strongly suggest you do something like maintaining one log per month, perhaps with the name of the month as part of the filename.

And SmartSurf doesn't work in automatic timing mode under NT - sorry :-(

Installation

Just copy all the required files into a directory and away you go.

You will need a copy of the CTL3DV2.DLL library which is responsible for providing the 3D effects. You probably already have this library in your WINDOWS/SYSTEM directory, but if not you will get a message telling you that it is missing. We have put a copy in the Zip, but it has been renamed as CTL3DV2.XXX. If you need this library simply copy that to your WINDOWS/SYSTEM directory (it must go in there) and rename it as CTL3DV2.DLL.

Introduction and general explanation

General

SmartSurf basically operates in two modes, "timing" mode and "normal" mode.

Timing Mode

In timing mode SmartSurf appears as a long, thin "stay on top" window that you can fit neatly on the title bar of any application. It remembers its position from run to run. Timing can either be initiated automatically when a modem connection is detected, or manually by the use of two small start & stop buttons.

When SmartSurf detects a connection on the configured modem or when you press the start button it starts timing, and displays the elapsed time and the cost, which it calculates from details you supply when configuring each service.

When SmartSurf detects that the connection has terminated or you press the stop button it writes a log record with details of the date and time of the connection, the duration and the telephone and service costs incurred.

Normal Mode

In normal mode you can review details of the log, perform the usual file management functions such as opening a previous log, starting a new log, exporting to a spreasheet, printing reports and so on.

There are also options for deleting log records, adding manual log records, editing existing log records, configuring services, applications and modem connections, reporting, copying to the clipboard and "zooming in" to analyze particular types of records (i.e. with similar service names, or particular dates etc.).

The panel at the bottom provides totals of the entries in the log, and is selection sensitive. If none or one entry is selected then all the records are totalled. If two or more entries are selected then only the selected entries are totalled.

The columns are also adjustable - grab between the column headings with the mouse.

The toolbar provides easy access to the most often used commands, and each button has a hint to explain what they do.

Also at the right hand end of the toolbar is a battery gauge which displays the charge remaining in the batteries. See the section

Recharging the batteries
for more information.

Recharging the batteries

SmartSurf takes rechargeable "SmartCells", which run down as you use it. The amount of power left in the cells is displayed by the red gauge at the right hand end of the toolbar on the main window.

Periodically you will need to recharge the batteries, which you can do by visiting one of our "battery stores" and downloading a new set of batteries. The size of the download is approximately 2K, and should take only a few seconds.

The batteries are free.

Batteries come in different capacities, and we may occasionally have special offers including extra-powerful batteries. The capacity of the currently available batteries will be prominently displayed "in-store". The size of the file containing rechargeable batteries is very small, and full instructions for replacing the batteries will be in the download.

Battery stores are currently located at the following locations:-

- On the Internet at our World-Wide-Web site at http://www.smartcode.com. The battery store will usually be located at the end of the "Smart Range" page.
- In the "files" topic of our CIX conference called "oakley".

If you don't have access to either of those sites then maybe you can locate a friend or colleague who has. Or you may be able to access the Internet World-Wide-Web but simply aren't aware. For example full Internet access including access to the World-Wide-Web is now available via CompuServe. GO NETLAUNCH for further information.

Configuring the modem

To select the modem port you use, simply select the "Modem Details" command from the "Configure" drop down menu (or press the corresponding toolbar button).

Then select the modem required.

SmartSurf uses the following port addresses by default

- Com1 - 0x03F8
- Com2 - 0x02F8
- Com3 - 0x03E8
- Com4 - 0x02E8

If your configuration uses different addresses you can override these defaults by adding to the [Modem] section of the smartsrf.ini file a line such as:-

COM1=0x04B0

Which in this case would change the COM1 port address to 0x04B0

If you aren't sure which addresses your configuration uses then try the defaults - they are correct in the vast majority of cases.

Crossing a charging time boundary

SmartSurf consistently monitors the service it is timing. If the service crosses a charging boundary, SmartSurf will stop timing using the first charging record, and then restart timing with the second. The first record will have "Partial Record" in its data field.

Any additional data to be recorded for the service will only be requested at termination of the second record, and will only be recorded in the second record.

Manual timing

You can time manually by using the two left buttons on the strip display to start and stop the timer. You might want to do this if you want to record simple phone calls rather than data comnnections for instance. Note however that if a modem connection is present if you stop the timer it will automatically restart when it realises there is a connection. If you need to prevent this you can try configuring SmartSurf to look for a modem on a port where there isn't one!

Manually initiated timing does not add the "negotiation delay" to the recorded time.

Recording Additional Data

If you have defined the service currently being timed as one that "records additional data" when you configured the service, then an additional dialog box will appear when the timer stops.

You can add any text you like in the dialog box, and it will be recorded along with the other details of the event. You can export this additional data, and it appears on printouts and when copying to the clipboard. You might use the additional data to base client billing on for example.

If you don't want to record any additional data then simply press the ignore button. You can always go back and edit records to add additional data at a later date.

Editing Records

You can manually add records, or edit existing records, using the simple dialog box presented.

SmartSurf will automatically determine the correct charges based on the times and durations that you specify in the dialog box fields.

SmartSurf will also recalculate any later records that would be affected by the modification/addition of records (for example if they involve a service that has a free usage period per month).

Zooming in on details

You can automatically select a range of records, which will be totalled at the bottom of the main screen and will also be the records that are printed in reports, exported or copied to the clipboard when you select those commands.

You can fill in the fields on the dialog box with the first few characters of the service names you want to select, or if you are after details of one individual service you can select it from the drop down. Giving some thought to the way you name your services will provide utmost flexibility here.

You can fill in either, none or both of the date boxes to specify the range you require.

Reports

You can produce a report of the details recorded by SmartSurf by selecting the "Print" command from the File menu or by pressing the corresponding toolbar button.

Note that the "Print" command is selection sensitive. If you have none or one entry selected then all the entries in the log are printed. If you have multiple entries selected then only the selected entries will be printed. This can be useful to report on entries just for a particular service or date range.

Exporting to a spreadsheet

You can export the details recorded by SmartSurf to a comma delimited ASCII file, perhaps to use in a spreadsheet or to produce graphs with, by selecting the "Export" command from the File menu or by pressing the corresponding toolbar button.

The exported fields are in the following order:-

- Date
- Time
- Service Name
- Duration
- Telecom Cost
- Service Cost
- Total Cost
- Additional Data

Each field is enclosed in double-quotes, and the fields are separated by commas.

Note that the "Export" command is selection sensitive. If you have none or one entry selected then all the entries in the log are exported. If you have multiple entries selected then only the selected entries will be exported. This can be useful to export entries just for a particular service or date range.

Release Notes

Release 1.0
- Initial Release

Release 1.1
- Added option for minimum telephone call costs
- Minor internal changes.

Release 1.2
- Smaller timer window to accomodate people using Small Fonts
- Corrections to integer overflow problems with Italian Lira and also large free-per month allowances.
- Ignores connects of < 5 seconds to prevent double records with WinCim 1.4.
- Minor internal changes.

Support

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Support for this product is provided via our support areas on the following on-line services:-

- On CompuServe in our support area, section 4 of the UKSHARE forum.
- On CIX in the UK, in the "smartsurf" topic of our "oakley" conference.
- On the Internet in the comp.os.ms-windows.apps.comm newsgroup, which we monitor regularly. Leave a message with SmartSurf in the title and we will spot it and respond.

Sorry, but we don't provide direct support for this product via the mail, telephone, fax or E-Mail. We don't charge for this product and the cost of doing so would be prohibitive.