

Dum Spiro, Sperry

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I've always had complaints about Microsoft Outlook's user interface. For example, I sent in a suggestion for Outlook 2007 years ago complaining about the user interface for e-mail rules: there was no way to select all the rules! Every time a user wanted to run rules, (s)he had to manually check all the rules one by one. There must have been enough identical complaints, because the 2010 version of Outlook includes SELECT ALL and UNSELECT ALL buttons in the RUN RULES pop-up box.

One problem that Outlook users face is duplicate entries. These can occur because a sender has something wrong with their e-mail configuration (e.g., one of my colleagues simply cannot stop his system from sending a copy of every e-mail as he is sending the original), or it may happen when a user imports messages from a different Outlook OST<<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/create-an-offline-folder-file-ost-HP005242261.aspx>> or PST<<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/create-and-use-pst-data-files-in-different-versions-of-outlook-HP001231987.aspx?CTT=1>>file that may have been created at a different time or on a different computer.

Similar problems can occur with contacts and calendars; improper synchronization of one computer's Outlook data with, say, the data on a smart phone or tablet can result in duplicate entries. Microsoft's advice for eliminating duplicate messages or contacts<<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/resolve-or-delete-duplicate-contacts-HP010355041.aspx?CTT=1>> is really simple: locate the duplicates, highlight them, and delete them by pressing DELETE. Unfortunately, if you have thousands of entries, the manual method is tedious and prone to error (such as not highlighting a duplicate or highlighting unique entries).

For some years, I used a free tool called Outlook Duplicate Items Remover (ODIR)<<http://www.vaita.com/ODIR.asp>> which can locate duplicates in a single folder and move them to a subfolder. For 32-bit versions of Outlook, it worked well, although having to run it over and over for every folder was a nuisance when there were lots of folders (I keep hundreds). However, when I installed 64-bit Outlook 2010 on my 64-bit Windows 7 computer, the current version of ODIR failed and there's no 64-bit version available.

In looking for replacements, I came across the Outlook Add-Ins created and sold by Sperry Software<<http://www.sperrysoftware.com/Outlook/default.asp>>. The list of add-in utilities<<http://www.sperrysoftware.com/Outlook/downloads.asp>> is impressive and includes functions many of which I have always wanted:

- **Add Email Address:** remembers to create a new contact record for any e-mail you use in a reply or a send.
- **Always BCC:** pops specified e-mail addresses into your CC or BCC field automatically. Never again fail include your boss on your distribution list – if that's what (s)he wants.
- **Appointments by Email:** allow text e-mail messages to generate appointments for you.
- **Attachment Forget-Me-Not:** How many times have we forgotten to include an attachment in our e-mail message? I got so embarrassed about it that I created a text

macro for that situation:

<slap> [hits forehead with palm of hand]

<thud> [falls off ergonomic chair]

<scrabble, scrabble > [clammers back on chair]

The add-in lets us define words that trigger a reminder; e.g., “attached,” “see document,” “see file” and so on. If it sees a keyword but the sender doesn’t need an attachment, it’s a single click to ignore the reminder.

- **Attachment Save:** converts all attachments into files stored in a specified folder and puts a link to the file into the top or bottom of each message affected. When I applied this tool to my current PST file, the volume of the file went from 800MB to 400MB after compaction. Be careful, though: once the files have been moved to a folder, there is no easy way to change the location of the folder. However, the Undo Now function in the Utilities sub-menu for this tool will reintegrate the attachments so one can redo the move. There is also a function that changes the storage location and automatically modifies the links in all affected messages so that they are corrected. Why does this function matter to me? Because I define yearly archives (e.g., *archive2011.pst*) which are the renamed archive.pst file for that year.
- **Auto Print:** automatically print every e-mail on arrival (don’t do that unless you absolutely have to: I strongly disapprove of putting messages on compressed plant fibres using pigments sprayed or fused on the fibre sheets unless absolutely necessary).
- **Compliance Copies:** use conditions to determine who should automatically be added to CC or BCC lists as a function of message content.
- **Contacts Sort Order:** ensure that all the contacts in Outlook follow a single format: < last,first > or < first,last >.
- **Distribution List Manager:** create a list from the TO or CC fields of a message with a single click. Also, “You can also easily see which DLs [distribution lists] a given contact belongs to.”
- **Duplicate Appointments Eliminator.**
- **Duplicate Contacts Eliminator.**
- **Duplicate Email Eliminator:** works on one folder at a time to locate and remove duplicates.
- **Duplicate Email Eliminator Across Folders:** allows the user to compare the contents of a number of folders in a source list with a number of folders in a target list and eliminate the duplicates that are in the target folders. This single-pass function compares every message in the source folders with every message in the target folders. The process can lead to a combinatorial explosion and long run-times; for example, even with only 100 e-mail messages in two folders, we’d end up with $(100*100) = 10,000$ comparisons. Mind you, if one makes a mistake and discovers the system wandering off into 100% CPU and disk I/O because of an error in the comparison lists, a simple click of the mouse interrupts the process so one can be more restrictive in defining the comparisons.
- Other duplicate remove add-ins cover journals, notes, posts to an Exchange folder and tasks. All the duplicate removers provide extensive options for defining what constitutes a duplicate; e.g., one can select any combination of characteristics such as Subject, Body, Attachments Count, Recipients Name, Sender Name, Importance, Received Time and Sent Time. One can also move the duplicates to a special folder or just delete them.
- **E-mail Reminders:** have appointments pop up in e-mail – suitable for those who routinely access their e-mail on a mobile device.
- **File Fetch:** “With this add-in, you can retrieve a file from any of your Windows folders

using just email.”

- **Follow Up Reminder:** alerts when people fail to respond to e-mail messages.
- **Global Search And Replace:** ensures that changes to names are propagated throughout Outlook.
- **Help Desk Email Templates:** defines standard formats for submitting requests to the Help Desk for support.
- **Hide Fax Numbers:** prevents Outlook from tricking one into loading a fax number into a destination field.
- **Incoming Mail Organizer:** avoids crashing into the limit on the number of rules for sorting incoming e-mail into folders.
- **Insert Date/Time:** adds a button that inserts information such as current date, time and author into any element of Outlook.
- **Mobile Email Redirect:** sends important e-mail automatically to mobile device and allows the user to reply to the original sender(s).
- **Power Rules Manager:** manage Outlook e-mail-processing rules without being limited by the tiny window of the native program.
- **Reply To All Monitor:** removes user’s own e-mail address from the REPLY ALL list – and more important, asks the user if (s)he *really* wants to REPLY ALL!
- **Safeguard Send:** user can define keywords that will spark a prompt if a message seems to be violating confidentiality rules.
- **Save as PDF:** automatically converts any e-mail into a storable PDF file, including conversion of many types of attachments.
- **Schedule Recurring Email:** regular reminders at a click of a button.
- **Secure Email Forward:** control the content of e-mail forwarded outside the organization.
- **Send Individually:** converts a distribution list into individual e-mail messages.
- **Sent Items Organizer:** defines where send e-mail should be stored – by keyword or using a prompt.
- **Think Green:** the opposite of Auto Print – asks the user if (s)he *really* needs to print an item.
- **Time Date Signature:** add the date and time at the moment of pressing SEND rather than relying on system-generated time-stamps that may mislead the recipient by using a later time in the e-mail headers.
- **Vcard Converter:** converts all contacts to individual vCards.
- **Watch Folders:** sends an alert “whenever an item in a public folder or mailbox is changed” in an Outlook shared folder.

Whew! I’ve already installed and bought licenses for Attachment Forget-Me-Not, Attachment Save, Contacts Sort Order and Eliminate Duplicates Across Folders. I may very well buy some more!

By the way, the title of today’s column is a joke based on the Latin motto “Dum spiro, spero,” which means “While I breathe, I hope.”

[Note: I have no financial association with this company and have not received free software or payment for this review. I did have a very nice chat with the founder, Mike Sperry <<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/mike-sperry/2/5a8/90>> who happened to answer the tech support phone when I called with a question.]

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