

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 150. Too Many Icons? Consolidate!

- by Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR
 715 N. Dries Street
 Saukville, WI 53080-1664
 (262) 268-1949
skaplan@mcw.edu

Another landmark has arrived. This makes the 150th article I have written since the first one in July 1993. That is roughly 17 years! Most of my articles during that time covered topics that could be gleaned by some practical experience with computers, plus reading books, magazines and articles on the individual topics covered in each topic. My own practical experience has come from three major activities: 1. Working with computers during my professional life (as a biomedical scientist, not as a computer technician). 2. Building my own computers, both at work and at home. 3. Rebuilding computers for ARES/RACES use throughout the State of Wisconsin (I rebuilt and distributed 105 machines to our 72 counties during 2008 and 62 in 2009). And I do a fair amount of reading about computers. Anyway, to celebrate the 150th, here is an article that you cannot really get by reading books (at least insofar as I am aware). Practical experience is the only source. But it is not a hardware topic.

If you are like many (including me), it does not take long for your Windows desktop to become cluttered with icons. Icons usually represent shortcuts to programs – for burning, editing pictures, playing games or a myriad of other activities you do on your computer. Lets face it. Clicking an icon on the desktop is a lot faster than clicking Start, Programs, and selecting what you want from a long list, so it is indeed handy to have the icons at hand on the desktop. On the other hand, desktop icon clutter is the result after awhile. Here is my approach to the problem, which is essentially to make *shortcuts to the shortcuts*.

Aside from the usual icons on my desktop (IE, Firefox, Thunderbird, etc), there are five special ones. 1. Cleaning and Security. 2. Info and Tweak. 3. Burn, PDF and Zip. 4. Graphics and Media. 5. Games. Together, they represent 41 different programs, and 41 different icons! Here is what is in two:

	Cleaning & Security	Info and Tweak
1	CCleaner	CPUID - CPU-Z
2	Defraggler defragmenter	Disk Checkup
3	Glary Utilities	Driver Magician Lite
4	Hosts Manager	NetResView
5	Microsoft Security Essentials	NISTime
6		SIW
7		Startup Delayer

So, for example, if I click just one icon, Cleaning and Security, a window appears with five icons, one for each of the programs listed above. Clicking Info and Tweak reveals the seven listed above. Handy! A total of 41 icons reduced to five, but all 41 are quickly accessed without searching for them in a long list.

Now, how does one do that? My description that follows is for Windows XP, but it will be the same for Windows 2000 or Vista or Windows 7. I personally have used the method for 2000, XP and Windows 7, all of which I have on one or the other of my machines.

Open **C:\Programs Files** (or **D:** if you keep your programs as I do, on my D: drive). Right click and select **New, Folder**. A new folder icon will appear, and its name should be highlighted. Type in: Cleaning & Security. If its name was not highlighted, right click the name **New Folder** and select **Rename**. Then type in Cleaning & Security and press the **Enter** key.

So far, we have created a properly labeled new empty folder, ready to hold our icons, but we need access to it on the desktop. Go up one level (to **C:\Programs**, or **D:**) so that you can see the folder but not what might be in it (which is nothing, at this point). If you can't seem to go up one level, just close everything and go find the folder again. Right click it, and select **Create Shortcut**. A new folder icon will appear labeled **Shortcut to Cleaning & Security**. Now resize everything so you can see part of your desktop if it was not visible before. Left click the Shortcut to Security & Cleaning icon and hold the button down. At the same time, press and hold the left **Shift** key, and drag the icon to the desktop. Let everything go. That should move the shortcut icon to the desktop and erase it from the **C:\Programs** (or **D:**) directory. If you succeeded in getting it to the desktop but a copy of the shortcut icon still resides in the **C:\Programs** (or **D:**) directory, simply erase that shortcut.

OK, the Shortcut to Cleaning & Security folder is on the desktop, but empty. Click it to open it. Now, select and drag (while holding down the left **Shift** key) an icon of your choice such as Microsoft Security Essentials from the desktop into the open Shortcut to Cleaning and Security folder. It should be in that folder now, but gone from the desktop. If it is not gone from the desktop, just erase the desktop copy once it is in the new folder. Remember, erasing a shortcut does not remove the program from your computer. Do that with all the icons that fit into that category. Close the folder and open it again. All the icons you moved into it should be there. Close the folder.

Now for cleanup and pretty up. On the desktop, right click the closed folder and select **Rename**. Delete the Shortcut to part of the name and press the **Enter** key. You know it is a shortcut because it has a little curved arrow in the icon and you don't need the extra words. Next, let's get rid of the boring folder icon. Right click the icon and select **Properties**. Click the **Shortcut** tab and on it, click **Change Icon**. A window will come up with about 100 different icons. Find one you like for that category and highlight it by clicking. Click OK and Apply. After closing everything, your boring old folder icon should change to the one you selected.

After you have done one like this, the others should be easy. And, you certainly do not need to use the organization that I have suggested. You might want a WP folder for word processing and associated programs, or HAM for ham programs, or whatever. However you want to do it, do it. It will make your desktop less cluttered, and your work easier.

By the way, anything you put into that desktop shortcut will also appear back in the **C:\Programs** (or **D:**) folder. If you should ever inadvertently lose the desktop icon, just follow the instructions above to put a copy back. Use care, though, to put a shortcut back on the desktop. Leave the original where it is.

Happy Computing!