



Tech Notes

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More tips for running AIMS

By now, all officially recorded Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) users should have received an AIMS CD from us for upgrading to version 2.2. I'm happy to say this has been perhaps the smoothest upgrade yet, so I would encourage all of you to upgrade as soon as possible. You can also check out our Web site for more information at www.angus.org. If you have not received the CD (it's in a medium-sized brown envelope), be sure to let us know. And if you are the one who received the envelope, but someone else works with AIMS in your operation, please be sure to give it to them.

In a previous "Tech Notes" column, I wrote about several basic computer techniques. I only used part of my list, so let me continue with a few more.



Right-click

We often tell people to right-click on something in AIMS or Windows, and sometimes new users don't know what that means. If that's you, keep reading.

Since the beginning of Windows, the mouse has become an indispensable piece of hardware. The mouse has usually had at least two buttons — the left one and the right one. In older times there was one in the middle; now there are models with four or even five buttons that can be reprogrammed. But that's beyond this column.

For our purposes, we're talking about a mouse with just two buttons. Most of the time, you use the left mouse button. In fact, we generally just say, "click the mouse." We don't even specify the left mouse button — it's just assumed.

But there are a wealth of options available when you use the right mouse button, which we refer to as "right-clicking." AIMS doesn't use a lot of these, although we're planning to add more functions. But the ones we *do* have are very useful. For example, right-click on the tattoo of the sire on the General tab and you'll get a pop-up screen containing information about the sire.

Windows uses the right-click option a lot. For example, when I need people to start Windows Explorer (a program to manage files and folders), I tell them to "right-click on the Start button, then left-click on Explore." Translation: Move the cursor to the Start button, but instead of a click with the left mouse button, use the

right button. A small menu will pop up; then click on the Explore option with the left button.

I could have had them start Windows Explorer with normal clicks on Start, Programs and then find Windows Explorer, but Windows likes to put that option in different places on the menu, so it can be hard to find.

My recommendation is to try right-clicking *everywhere* and see what pops up. There are some great time-savers built into programs using the "other button" on the mouse.

Starting a program

Believe it or not, there are at least five ways to start any program on your computer. I think most users typically use a "shortcut" displayed on the desktop, but there are other ways.

First of all, a couple of basics: The actual file that starts a program is installed by the original software in a very specific place. For example, the AIMS program file is called `aims22.exe` and is stored in the `c:\aims20` folder. One way to start AIMS is to find this file (usually with Windows Explorer or My Computer) and double-click on it.

All of the other ways to start AIMS (and most programs) are with a shortcut. Shortcuts are actually just special files — albeit very small — that point to that `.exe` file for the purpose of starting the program when you double-click the shortcut file. You can recognize shortcuts in most places by the small arrow in the bottom-left of the

icon. If you use an icon on the desktop to start AIMS, it very likely is a shortcut.

But that's just the beginning. The "formal" way to start a program is through the Start button. While not every program will have a shortcut on the desktop, every program *can* be started through the Start button. Sticking with AIMS as our example, simply click on Start, Programs, then find the "group" for AIMS 2.2. Now you should see an icon for AIMS. That last click is actually a shortcut, even though you won't see the little arrow. We also installed a shortcut in the first level of items after you click Start, then Programs. We put another one in the list that is available after clicking only on Start.

Your computer may also be set up with a "Start Bar." This is a moveable tool bar that holds icons of frequently used programs. It is often docked (locked into place) at the top or right of the main screen. Shortcuts can be created and copied onto this tool bar simply by dragging and dropping. It's possible that the installation of

AIMS did not produce all of these shortcuts. The reason could have to do with the particular setup of your computer and your version of Windows. So, if a particular shortcut isn't available, you can create your own.

As an example, here's how to create a shortcut on the desktop. Go to AIMS by the Start, Programs method, but don't make that final click. Instead, right-click on the final icon. You will get a small pop-up menu with a Copy option. (Don't use the Create Shortcut option on this menu.) Then get back to the desktop and right-click anywhere in the open space; click on Paste Shortcut and you're done. You can move the icon by clicking and dragging it to other locations on the desktop, if you wish.

To wrap up, be flexible with how you start programs. We run into many users who insist on closing programs like Windows Explorer simply so they can see the AIMS shortcut on the desktop, when all they really need to do is to use a different method to start the program. For example, select Start, Programs, AIMS.

A final tip: Most Windows versions now have an icon in the task bar (where you find Start) that's labeled "Show Desktop" to minimize all currently open programs and to display the desktop.

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