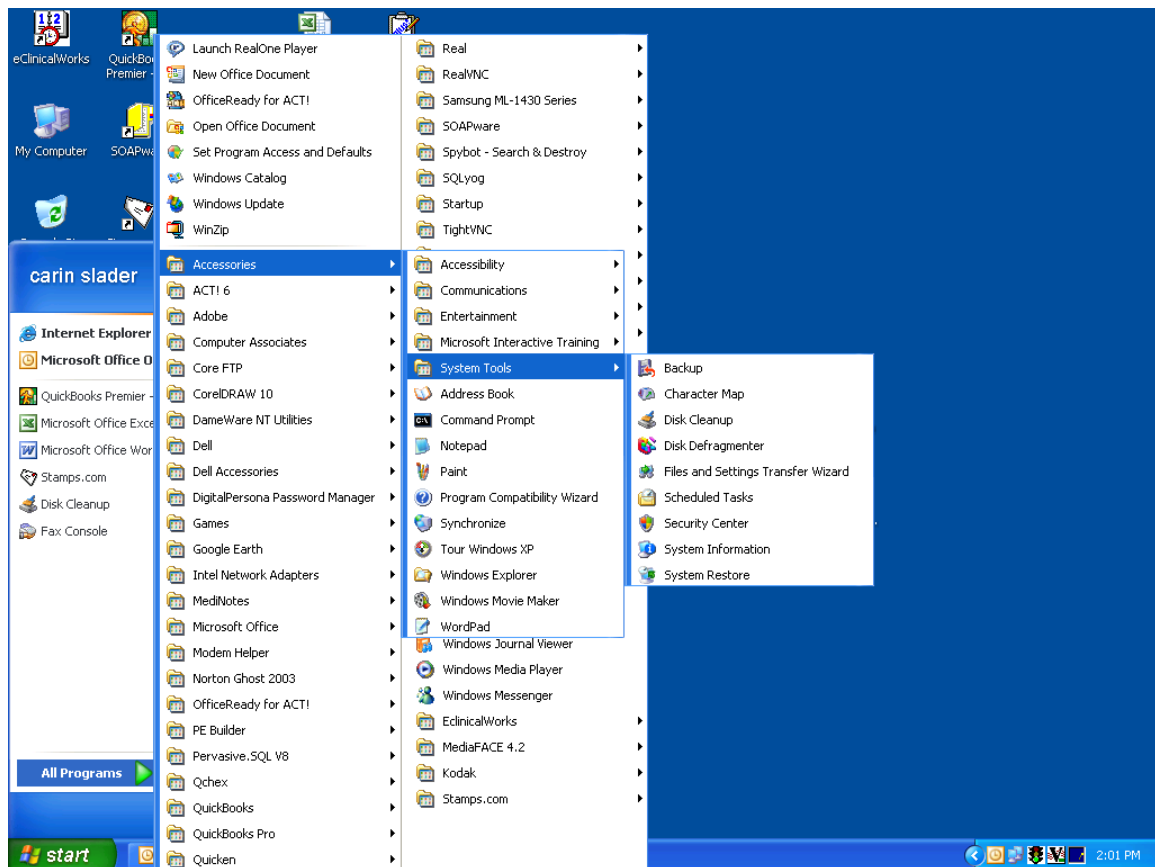


As the year draws to a close, it is a good time to start thinking about your office's server and whether or not it could use some preventative maintenance to keep it purring along for the coming new year. There are several simple things you can do to improve its performance and storage that can also be applied to every other workstation or home PC as well.

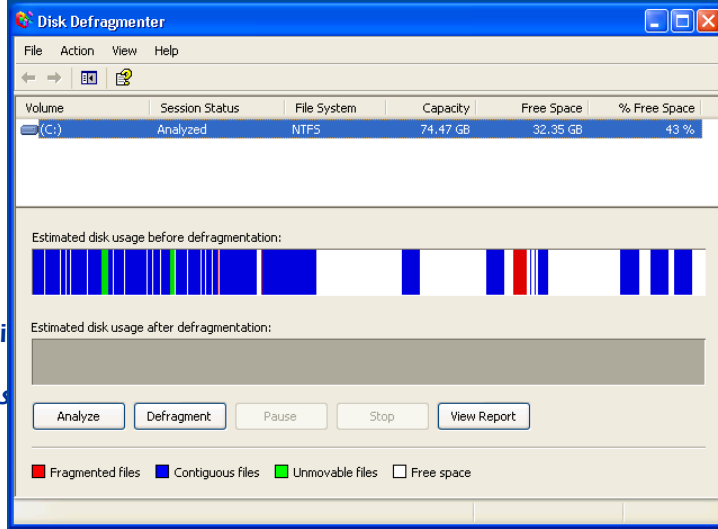
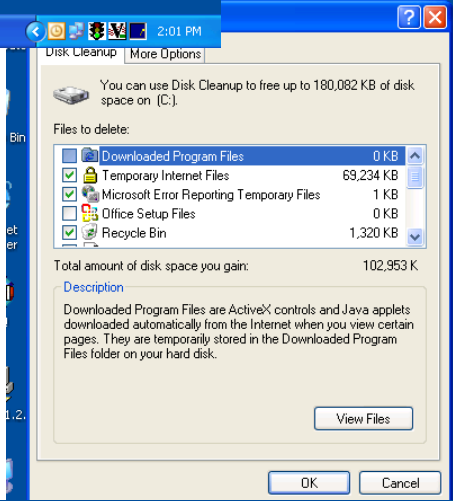
Keep in mind that some of these steps have permanent repercussions to your data, so please make a full system backup before beginning any updates. If you are not comfortable with making changes to the server or do not understand any of the tips provided do not attempt without consulting an IT professional first. If you are governed by an existing IT service contract make sure it is not voided by your changes or have your IT service provider perform the updates.

One of the most important and simplest measures is to run your Windows updates. Every Microsoft product, Windows, MS Office, etc., has a Software Update section, System Tools. The most frequent Windows update is the Security Updates, System Tools. Microsoft website to fix software bugs that have come to light after the product was released. In the case of operating systems, i.e. any Windows product, there are hundreds of updates per year that fix security holes, compatibility issues, and other functionality. Microsoft has a tool called Automatic Updates that it wants you to leave on all the time. As a rule of thumb we set this tool to download updates but not run them automatically. The reason we don't just set it to 'ON' is because it will restart the PC after running the update, even at times when it is not convenient. The other reason we do not set it to 'ON' is because every once in a while an update will cause problems, like not being able to boot the PC anymore, or not allowing certain hardware drivers to work anymore. This generally causes more problems than the update actually fixed, but the good news is that newer updates will usually overwrite the problem update. If your PC has gone for a year without any Windows updates, it will usually take a few hours to download them, install them and then restart.



Disk Cleanup will show you how much space is being used by areas designated as 'Temporary' by default. When it starts up a dialog box appears that is scanning the entire drive for temporary files and it tells you that 'this could take a few minutes'. That is an understatement, it could take anywhere from five minutes to twenty minutes, and sometimes it never finishes. If it doesn't finish in one hour chances are that your machine is old and you will not be able to use this utility at all. It is pretty safe to delete the files displayed, with the exception that I always uncheck the Recycle Bin. The 'More Options' tab will allow you to install and uninstall additional Windows features, but I would not bother with that unless you absolutely know what you are doing. There are many quirks with Windows and sometimes uninstalling one seemingly innocent feature will cause another product to no longer work - I have seen it happen many times. Plus, the amount of disk space reclaimed by additional Windows features tends to be minimal as compared to what is used by temporary files.

Disk Defragmenter will physically move data on the hard drive from where it is 'fragmented'. Fragmentation occurs when things are written and removed from the PC, such as pictures, software programs, presentations, etc. As the amount of



fragmentation increases it takes the hard drive more and more time to find the data, thus slowing down performance. It is a good idea to delete temporary files before defragmenting, and also a good idea to defragment multiple times. This process takes on average half an hour or more and you cannot use your computer while it is defragmenting.

These are just a few of the tools available at all times to keep your computer in good shape, but you must have a couple of hours of computer down time to perform them and if, for any reason, you do not understand what a dialog box is asking – Cancel out of the screen instead of guessing which choice you might want. Also, consider starting one of these tasks each lunch time for a few days in a row to keep your PC's running smoothly.