

So,Are Zips Only Good For Compression?

By Neil Tarvin

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Let's talk about an email I got the other day. I received an email from someone who had visited my site stating the following...

"Its hard to believe that you are an expert in web publishing when you offer your free book in "zipped PDF" check the size, there is no advantage to compressing a PDF.

So now that we both know that we both are newbies..."

Me?? A newbie?? I've been on the Net since the early 90's - when web pages were few - and only contained text! But, let's not argue that point - let's look at the part where he talks about zipping pdf's, because that brings up a point that I feel you could benefit from.

It's a mistake to think that *any* given program - whether it's a zipping program, or graphics program, has only one function.

In the case he mentioned above, I used the zip program to allow easier downloads of the file. This file is linked to a number of other sites - it's simply easier to put it into a zip for downloading, rather than tell people "right-click to download...etc". The default behavior is for people to LEFT-click any downloadable file, but if you do that with a pdf, it will show up in your browser, not on your hard disk. So, I zipped it, simple, huh?

But that's not the only reason to zip a pdf file. Zip programs can also be used as "mini" installers. They can place the file wherever you want it on the reader's computer, create an icon on their desktop, and even start the file for you. They can make sure your ebook gets read!

Here's another example of how a program can be used for something other than what it's intended for. A program called "AutoPlay Menu Studio" was created to help the user create a menu for autoplay CD's - you know, the CD's that start automatically when you put it in the tray. But, if you look at the program, it has all kinds of "actions" that can be defined, so there's no limit to what you can do with it. You could use it to create an ebook, or a presentation that links to other programs or files. You could use it as an installer. You could even use it to write your own programs!

My own program, eBook Librarian, is for keeping track of ebooks. But it works with a database - what else can you use a database for? You could keep track of any downloaded software, or any files at all. You could use it to keep track of interesting articles. One teacher uses it to keep track of

her lesson plans. She just changes the categories to suit the subject matter!

The key is to look at what the program does - and how it does it. Now, how can you adapt it to what you want it to do?

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