Windows Tips for Genealogists (based on Windows XP)

Experienced genealogists consider their computer to be just another tool, albeit a very
expensive and powerful tool, in their bulging box of tools for helping with their research.
However, if one does not know how to use all the features of such a tool, it will be
seriously underutilized. This class is intended to be a basic operator's manual of the
features in Windows I find most useful for genealogists. It begins with some very basic
concepts in Windows and adds some great shortcuts and things to keep in mind while
doing your research.

1. Desk Top
    "Folder" for most often used files and programs

2. Explore (File manager) – [not to be confused with Internet Explorer]
    Utility program to maintain and organize the files and programs on your computer (right
    click on START button.- Fisheye button in Vista)
    Views
    Choose details
    Customize the tool bar (View>Toolbars>Customize)

3. File organization
    System of hierarchical folders within folders
    Desktop is the top folder
    Documents and Settings
    Creating folders

4. File names
    Naming rules (do not use < > : " / \ | ? * .) max length=260
    Renaming
    Renaming multiple files

5. File extensions
    3 letter codes to designate the type of file or the format of the contents of the file
    Be careful not to delete or change them (unless you know what you are doing)

6. File type assignments
    Method for assigning file types to programs
    Displaying file extensions My Computer>Tools>Folder Options> View>Hide Extensions
    Tools>Folder Options>File Types>extension>Change…

7. Read-Only flag
    Setting that prevents changes to the file
    Automatically set for non-writeable media
    Explore>File-name>right-click>Properties>General>Attributes>Read-only

8. File Descriptions
    Place to enter a description of the file (part of properties)
    Right-click on file name>Properties>Summary
    Displayed with Explore (right-click on column label bar and select items)

9. Zipped files (compressed)
    Method for reducing the storage space required for a file (sometimes)
    .zip file extension (often used for backup files)
    Pkzip, Winzip, PicoZip, Info-Zip, PeaZip, etc.

10. Navigation (files)
    Method for getting to the desired place in your filing system to get or save files

11. Task Bar and Start Menu (Classic vs Browser)
    Feature to make your computer easier and quicker to use
    Quick start menu

12. START Menu (button)
    Left-click - customize the view (New Windows format vs Classic Windows format)
    Right-click – Explore, Search, Properties

13. Task Manager (right-click empty space in Quick Start bar)
    View of running programs and processes
    Performance

14. Tool Bar
    Quick and easy access to common functions and tools (save, cut, paste, etc.)
    Customizeable

15. Search
    Utility to search for files or programs
    Left-click START button

16. Clipboard (cut and paste)
    Temporary space for cut or copy and paste feature
    My Computer>Local Disk>WINDOWS>System32>clipbrd.exe>right-click>Send
    To>Desktop

17. Accessories
    General purpose system utilities provided by Microsoft
    Programs>Accessories

18. Character Map
    Start>Programs>Accessories>System Tools>Character Map

19. Wordpad vs MS Word
    Difference between a text editor and a word processor (hidden characters)

20. Browser (Bookmarks, Favorites, Links)
    Utility for web surfing
    Internet Explorer (IE), Firefox, Google Chrome, Opera, Safari, Flock
    Full screen view (F11 key)
    Home page   (Tools>Internet Options>

21. Defragmentation
    Utility to improve the space allocated for files on your hard drive
    Right-click C drive>Properties>Tools>Defragmentation
    Should be performed periodically

22. Virus protection
    Programs that are designed to detect and remove viruses attacking your computer

23. Adware protection
    Programs that detect and remove "adware" infesting your system

24. Program downloads
    Concept of saving program installation files

25. Backups
    Concept of saving copies of files in case of loss or damage

26. Control panel
    Collection of utility programs to manage your computer's configuration
    (adding & removing software, configuring drivers and networks, setting passwords, etc.
    Left-click START button>Settings>Control Panel

27. User Accounts (Control Panel)
    Passwords
    User customizing

28. Registry
    Secret place for saving program parameters and settings
    Should only be modified by an expert

29. Cookies
    A form of registry for saving web based program parameters and settings
    Can be deleted (Tools>Internet Options>Browsing History>Delete
    Cookies are not all bad

30. Default printer
    START>Printers and Faxes>(Select default printer)>right-click>Set as default printer