

Capturing Screen Shots with SnagIt

One of the most frequently asked questions on CompuServe is “How can I capture my FoxPro screen shots so I can include them in a proposal (or training manual)?” This month’s Cool Tool is SnagIt - a shareware utility that provides Windows users with an easy way to capture and print Windows screens. Unlike virtually every other Cool Tool featured in this column (with the exception of Visual Compare over a year ago), SnagIt isn’t written in FoxPro, but it should be a part of every developer’s toolkit. And with the “model year changeover” that we’re experiencing, I figured this would be a good time to roll this one out.

What’s Wrong with Paintbrush?

You may be thinking, “What’s wrong with Paintbrush? I just press Print-Screen and Boom! my screen is on the clipboard. Then I bring up Paintbrush, press Ctrl-V, and I’ve got my screen ready to crop.” First of all, that’s still a lot of steps if you have to grab a number of screen shots. Second, SnagIt can be configured to capture a variety of Windows objects, including the entire screen, selected windows, or a user-selected area. And you can direct SnagIt to place your captured image in one of several locations automatically.

can be Paintbrush only captures the entire screen, and it’s only SnagIt has a wide variety of options that make it easier to use and more flexible in many situations. First, you can choose from seven input options, four output options, three format options, and set a hot-key and a default printer. In addition, you can keep SnagIt running in the background and have it automatically load when you start Windows.

Using SnagIt

Installing SnagIt is as simple as telling it what directory to place the files, and whether or not to load SnagIt when Windows is started. The program is self-contained, creating just one icon, so if you like, you can add SnagIt to your Accessories or another program group without fear of having a half dozen assorted “Read Me” and applet type icons show up in the group as well.

[Ss: Snag01.BMP: The SnagIt Window]

Once installed, selecting the SnagIt icon will bring forward a small window with five menu options. Input allows you to select where the image to be captured is coming from. You can select from the screen, an entire window, the “client area” of a window, the last active window, a region on the screen, a BMP file, or the Windows clipboard. Most of these are obvious, but the term “client area” may be foreign. It simply means the main body of the window inside the window borders, not including the window borders, title bar, menu bar, scroll bars or caption line.

With several of these options, you can specify which window to operate on. First, minimize SnagIt if it is interfering with the window you want to grab. Next, press the SnagIt hot-key (Ctrl-Shift-P by default), and then select the window. This technique also works when selecting a region.

Before you start snagging images, you’ll want to tell SnagIt where to place the result. The default destination is the printer, but you can choose clipboard, BMP file or TIFF file (for monochrome) from the Output menu pad as well. And you can a format for the captured image - either black and white, color, or dithered grey scale.

Additional Options

You can specify the hot-key to use when capturing images, and a second hot key to use to hide the SnagIt window (by default, Ctrl-Shift-X). And you can choose to have SnagIt automatically loaded when you start Windows, either through the LOAD= command in your WIN.INI file or by placing the SnagIt icon in your Startup group.

You can also install a default printer for SnagIt. Most printers (except plotters) that work with Windows will function nicely as SnagIt output devices. And since processing some images can take a while, you can set an alarm in SnagIt to tell you when it’s done with a particular image.

Finally, you can adjust the scale of the image. By default, the scale is set to 1.00, which means that SnagIt will create a resultant image at the same pixel size as it appears on the Windows screen. If you want to change the size, you can adjust the scale by increments of 0.01%.

My favorite “nice touch” is the default SnagIt screen. As you change the Input, Output, and Format options, the SnagIt screen changes as well. Watch carefully - the change may not be obvious at first!

Where to Find SnagIt

SnagIt can be found on this month’s Companion Diskette and on CompuServe’s WINSHARE forum, library 6. The latest version, 2.2, is found under the name of SNAG22.ZIP. It is shareware, so if you use the program past the 30 day evaluation period, you must register it. The fee is \$59 and can be mailed or paid via credit card over CompuServe. By registering, you will receive the latest version of SnagIt with the shareware reminder removed, a printed SnagIt manual, notification of upgrades, and telephone support.