INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS TEXT

These tutorials have been designed to introduce teachers and student teachers to the essential functionality of the Microsoft *Office 2013* suite of software applications. The learning objectives of these tutorials are thus threefold:

- to help the pre-service and in-service teacher acquire the fundamental skills involved in using the Microsoft *Office 2013* suite of productivity programs;
- to help the pre-service and in-service teacher learn how to apply these skills in the context of the K-12 classroom;
- to motivate the pre-service and in-service teacher to go on to learn the more advanced features of Microsoft *Office 2013*.

1.2 WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT THIS TEXT?

This will not be the only set of Microsoft *Office 2013* tutorials available for the education marketplace. Why, then, will the pre-service or in-service teacher select this text rather than another? What features set it apart?

- The tutorials go beyond a cookbook approach to Microsoft *Office 2013*. It emphasizes the concepts behind the keystrokes. On completion of the tutorials, the student or practicing teacher will understand the fundamentals of managing a computer-integrated teaching environment. Students of education will also be made aware of methodologies for teaching their students essential computing concepts and skills that go beyond Facebook and Twitter.
- The scope of the material presented in ESSENTIAL Microsoft *Office 2013* is intentionally limited to what can be reasonably covered in 10-15 class hours, depending on the computing abilities of the students. It will thus fit nicely within the context of a course devoted either to the broader issues of computer literacy for teachers, or for a standalone, one credit, hands-on course for teachers that introduces Microsoft *Office 2013*.
- All the examples that are worked in the exercises are related to activities that might take place in K-12 classrooms. At the end of the tutorials, the pre-service or in-service teacher will take away a set of files that will have direct application in the classroom.
- Proficiency is promoted by frequent reinforcement of skills learned. Appropriate exercises at the end of each tutorial provide an opportunity for skill consolidation.
- Teachers are encouraged throughout the text to build on, and grow beyond, the skills learned in the tutorials.
- The author understands that there are still teachers out there who may not be naturally inclined to get excited about the latest technology. For more than 40 years, the author taught at all scholastic levels K through college, including experience teaching various disciplines in the Arts and Sciences in countries around the globe. He thus has worked extensively with

teachers from across the range of the technology spectrum and has written these tutorials with every teacher, no matter what their technology-savvy, in mind.

1.3 WHY MICROSOFT *OFFICE 2013?*

Microsoft *Office* is still among the most commonly used programs on today's computers. It incorporates a function-rich **Word Processor**, a **Relational Database**, a professional-strength **Spreadsheet**, sophisticated **Graphics**-manipulation tools, and a state-of-the art **Presentation** tool, along with other communications applications which need not concern us here. Aside from the look and feel of *Office 2013*, the functionality is not greatly different from *Office 2010*. But it *is* different, and any differences of note will be highlighted as we go along.

In *Office 2013* you have a computing environment which will help you handle most of the admin tasks expected of a teaching professional. Furthermore, when you teach *Office 2013* to your students—and integrate it into the curriculum—you will help them gain skills in the use of computer applications expected of the citizens of tomorrow's world.

The user of these tutorials should be aware that the goal is to learn the ESSENTIALS of the *Office 2013* software. It is beyond the scope of the tutorials to cover *all* the features of this function-rich software. Your task, as a teacher, is to become sufficiently familiar with *Office 2013* that you can use it to produce your own teaching and assessment materials, and, more to the point, to help your students learn.

It is the author's hope that students and teachers, on completion of the tutorials, will be motivated to venture forth on their own and become proficient in the many quality and productivity-enhancing aspects of this and other computer-based teaching and learning tools.

1.4 THE STATUS OF COMPUTING IN SCHOOLS

The question is no longer: "*Should* the computer be used in schools?" The question is: "*How* should the computer be used in schools?" It is now over 40 years (mid 1970s) since this tool for teaching and learning first became available amongst the grab-bag of tools for teachers and students in the K-12 curriculum. If you believe the hoopla—and everything you see and hear in the education media—you would think that most of the children in our schools are today soaking up a large proportion of their education from a computer.

The reality is that the majority of teachers—in the USA and even more so elsewhere—have not yet had a realistic opportunity to integrate computer-based activities into their K-12 classrooms. This may be because they do not have in their classrooms a sufficient number of institutionally and centrally-maintained online computers for their students to use. Even if they do, the time it takes for the teachers to prepare appropriate technology-integrated lessons is often too much to bear in school systems where the teachers are expected to teach 30-40 hours a week with inadequate allowance accommodated for preparation time.

In other words, integrating technology into any curriculum, let alone the K-12 curriculum, is *hard*. Let me say that again: It's *HARD*. It takes untold person hours of out-of-school time and effort and, above all, DEDICATION on the part of teachers at every level K-College.

Staff development and ongoing support are therefore key to successful integration of the computer as an aid routinely used by teachers to provide students with the best possible learning experience. Buchsbaum (1992) quotes the experience of Vera White, a Washington, DC, Jefferson Junior High principal: "Sometimes technology can be frightening to people who have

never had to use anything but a piece of chalk. But give them the time and space to work by themselves, and they can do it and they enjoy it." This is as true today in 2013 as it was in 1992. Hence these tutorials.

1.5 TEACHING IS A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR

No tutorial in and of itself can teach you anything unless you are committed to the learning process. Computing is a set of skills, rather than a body of knowledge. As such, it demands *practice* in order to foster and maintain proficiency. As Thomas Edison observed: "The most important method of education always has consisted of that in which the pupils were urged to actual performance."

You, the teacher, must be prepared to work at mastering Microsoft *Office 2013*, along with myriad other examples of educational software and hardware, and also the non-computer-based tools and techniques that have been developed, over the years, for your area of pedagogical expertise, if you are to ever feel comfortable integrating all these ancient and new technologies for teaching and learning.

All your efforts will yield abundant fruit when you thoughtfully incorporate computer-based instruction into your curriculum. Your students will partake in that fruitful harvest and you will touch their future even as you touch your own.

1.6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

They say good teachers are born, not made. Well, aside from my debt of gratitude to my mom and dad, neither of whom were teachers, but both of whom taught me so very much, I owe a debt of gratitude to the students at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, USA, especially those who, since the year 2000, class-tested the tutorials over the years since I first started to make them available free-of-charge online. Their feedback has been voluminous and invaluable.

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A final word for non-USA users of this text. I have used USA spellings for words along the way. For example, in the UK, and in most former UK colonies such as Zambia or Nigeria or Australia, “initialize” is spelled “initialise,” and so forth. Please adjust to this Americanization since, for the past number of years, as both a UK and USA citizen, I have adjusted to being Americanized, too.

REFERENCES

Buchsbaum, Herbert. *"Portrait of a Staff Development Program,"* in Electronic Learning, vol. 11, no. 7, April 1992.