PineSoft Newsletter : January 2001

New PineSoft Website and Contact Details

Please update your records for the new PineSoft Website & contact details as follows :

> Internet : www.pinesoft.net
> E-mail : s.donald@pinesoft.net   or   helpdesk@pinesoft.net

Millennium Edition : 32 bit (Time to Upgrade?)

With the increased specification of PC's in use by Placement Staff I believe that the time has come to move all users to the 32 bit version.

The Millennium Edition has been available as a 16 bit application which supports all Windows versions, 3.1 to NT, or a 32 bit version for Windows 95 or above. The versions are almost identical and share the same Millennium Edition User Manual. A 486 PC with 8MB of RAM under Windows 3.1 is sufficient to run the 16 bit version, whereas a Pentium PC with 32MB of RAM is required for the 32 bit version.

I propose to supply all new customers and existing customer renewals with the 32 bit application on a CD. The PineSoft CD also contains a copy of the latest PineSoft User Manual, in Adobe Acrobat format.

The additional features in the 32 bit version include a spell checker, the display of Help Text when you pass over PineSoft buttons with your mouse, an improved attachment manager for Network users and the ability to control the default "edit or read-only" behaviour of database forms. The 32 bit version also has direct E-mail and appointment links to Microsoft Outlook – users need to have Microsoft Outlook installed on their PC to make use of this feature.

New Version 3 for 2001

January 2001 sees the launch of a revised 32 bit version which incorporates many improvements as detailed below. **Users data files (pinedat.mdb) will need to be updated to take advantage of the new features.**

General Overview

- ❑ Student code and name fields increased from (20 & 24) to 30 characters

- ❑ Forms re-designed for optimum use with minimum SVGA 800 x 600 Screen resolutions

- ❑ Link fields automatically locked to prevent users inadvertently changing correctly linked details

- ❑ New E-mail and Website fields wide enough to cope with large addresses! Existing User-definable fields increased in width

- ❑ New Toggle fields to make it easier for users to select required sets of data. For example, which companies are present or past employers, which currently have vacancies etc.

- ❑ Find Drop-down fields cleared after search as in previous 16 bit version

Company Database

- Address fields increased in width from 40 to 50 characters
- New E-mail and Website fields (50 characters), plus new Report
- New toggle fields for current employer and current vacancy
- Five New User-definable Toggle fields

Student Database

- New E-mail and Mobile fields (50 & 40 character)
- Student ref number field changed to cope with leading zeros such as 00346758
- Five New User-definable Toggle fields

Placement Database

- New Status and E-mail fields for Supervisor and New E-mail and Telephone fields for the student on placement
- Automatic display of cumulative Training Duration for a number of placements, with a new report to list Total Training durations.

Applications Database

- Three New "optional" toggle fields to keep track of application forms etc handed to students, whether they are returned to the Placement Office and whether forwarded to prospective employers. Two modified reports to list Applications and the new fields (issue log), ordered by company or student.

Company Contacts Database

- New E-mail field added

Letters & Memos Databases

- New optional Centred Header field in Bold Italics added to PineSoft letters and memos

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Feedback, using the New PineSoft Website

The new PineSoft Website has an On-line request form which you may use to inform me of changes in contact details, improvements or additions you would like to see in the software etc. If you have more general comments that you wish to share with existing or potential users of the PineSoft application please complete an entry in the PineSoft Guestbook.

Documentation Downloads and Tips Available on PineSoft Website

The Adobe Acrobat pdf format is proving an increasingly popular method for distributing documents as they are easy to browse electronically or print should a hard copy be required. To view such files you require the Adobe Acrobat Reader which may be downloaded free of charge from Adobe's site at www.adobe.com See the PineSoft download page for details of available documents and please let me have any requests for additional documentation which you may find helpful. The latest addition explains how to Import Student Records into PineSoft. Download a pdf copy from the PineSoft Website.

Version 2.3c {Note : Version 3 incorporates these changes plus those listed earlier}

Version 2.3c launched in August 200 incorporated a number of minor revisions to the software following feedback from customers, with two new compact reports which list :

Student, Company, Location, Visiting Tutor, Course, Session, Year Placement, Supervisor, Start and Finish dates.

They are :

> Placement : Summary (All Courses)
> Placement : Summary (All Courses - Ordered by Start Date)

The "Export Placement Data for Word Merge" option was updated to include all placement, company and student fields, to give users greater flexibility when creating Customised Mail Merge reports.

Recent Queries from Customers {Note : all these issues are resolved in Version 3}

Query 1 :   Student name field too short?

The actual student name fields are 4 characters longer than the Student Code field entered using the SURNAME_FORENAME format. You may enter these extra characters manually.

Query 2 :   Student reference number does not accept leading zeros.

The Student reference number field is defined as a number, so entering 00453678, for example, displays and prints as 453678. To resolve this problem I would need to change the field to a text field in users pinedat database files. I have noted the point for the next upgrade of users data files.

Query 3 :   "Find" drop-down list doesn't clear

One difference in the 32 bit version which takes getting used to is the behaviour of the "Find" drop-down lists. These always display, the last record searched for, which is often different from the displayed Current Record.

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If you have any views on the above or any other queries please let me know, as I am in the business of trying to please my customers! A little positive feedback is not forbidden if I am generally getting things right and making your placement administration easier!

Best wishes for the New Year

Dr Stuart K Donald

Director