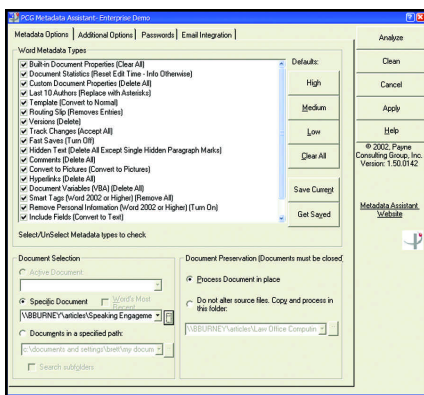


Disappearing Data

Metadata Assistant and Workshare Metawall can make metadata a thing of the past.

By Brett Burney

Metadata in electronic documents is one of those issues no one really wants to deal with until it's absolutely necessary. Since it's normally hidden from view, metadata seems harmless, even though many people know there is potential for danger if it's exposed. It's important to be informed about the risks involved with exposed metadata and to take action with programs, such as Workshare Metawall or Payne Consulting Group's Metadata Assistant.



Metadata Assistant allows you to select which pieces of metadata to search for as well as which documents you want to analyze.

What is it?

To the chagrin of purists, the word "metadata" is usually only brought up in a negative context, but not all metadata is bad. The word metadata literally means "data about data."

For example, the coding done on imaged documents for a litigation mat-

ter is actually metadata — it's data about the images. Microsoft Word and other products generate metadata for files so they can be found later. Metadata helps keep track of information about the author of the document, or what version of Word was used.

Metadata is a good thing when it's properly used and controlled. However, in today's world where we swap electronic documents back and forth without a second thought, it's prudent to clean up unnecessary and extraneous data. How many times have you "borrowed" a contract or model brief as a Word document and simply modified it to fit your needs? It's possible that information about the original author is still embedded in the document and even deleted text still could be lurking within the document.

Probably, the most infamous metadata story hit the *Wall Street Journal* back in October 2000. A Democrat running for the U.S. Senate in Minnesota started receiving e-mails with Word documents attached criticizing and attacking the candidate.

The e-mails and documents were anonymous so there was no recourse until one savvy aide looked at the properties of the document and discovered they were authored by the chief-of-staff of the Republican incumbent. Hidden metadata revealed the true source of the document.

The bad news is there is no way to completely remove all metadata by

Shootout Winner

June/July 2003



LAW OFFICE Computing

Program Information

Metadata Assistant

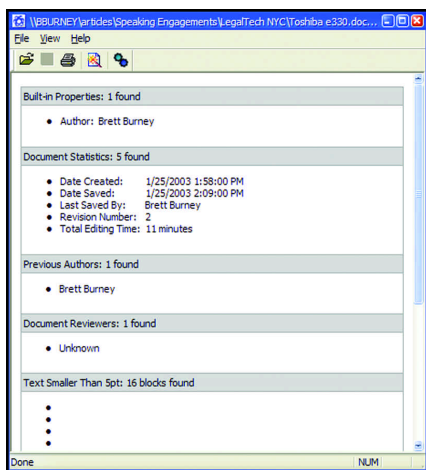
Payne Consulting Group
(888) GoPayne
www.payneconsulting.com
Price: \$79 per license; \$5,000 for one to 100 workstations. Contact Payne Consulting for other pricing options.
Windows 95/NT/2000/XP/2003

Workshare Metawall

Workshare
(888) 404-4246
www.workshare.com
Price: \$1,100 for Business Edition (up to 20 users); \$5,500 for Enterprise Edition (up to 250 users)*
Windows 98/NT/2000/XP

manual means. But the good news is there are tools to help do this for you. Such tools are the aforementioned Metadata Assistant or Workshare Metawall — the same company that produces Workshare DeltaView.

Both of these applications are similar and mainly concentrate on cleaning documents created in Word. Both applications are accessible from within Word, or through the "Start" menu. Both applications also integrate within Microsoft Outlook to scrub Word attachments on their way out of your computer.



Workshare Metawall finds and cleans "Document Statistics," such as the number of revisions and total editing time.

your document. For example, if you opened a Word document in Notepad (or from within Word as a file type of "Recover Text from Any File"), you would see a bunch of gibberish, the text of your document, more gibberish and the revealed metadata toward the end of the file.

When I asked Payne Consulting why they didn't elect to clean "Document Statistics," they stated they didn't have many requests for the function, and they were not comfortable with the method required (*i.e.*, cleaning at the binary file level). I could not see any performance issues after cleaning "Document Statistics" from a document with Workshare Metawall, but comparing the resulting binary files afterward, I noticed Workshare Metawall did some heavy re-arranging of the file. Still, I did appreciate the fact that Workshare Metawall took this extra step.

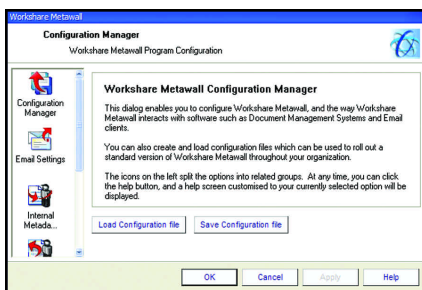
Within Outlook, either application can be triggered to appear when you send a message with an attached Word document. For Workshare Metawall, you set this option with the "Configuration" tool. With Metadata Assistant, you have an "E-mail Integration" tab where you can customize the integration with a few options. Both Metadata Assistant and

Workshare Metawall work the same with Outlook as they do with Word.

Version 1.50 of Metadata Assistant can clean metadata from Microsoft Excel files right out of the box, while Workshare Metawall 1.6 only works on Word documents. However, by the time you read this Shootout, both companies will have released some significant improvements to their products. The next version of Metadata Assistant will clean metadata from Microsoft PowerPoint files. Workshare will have launched a new suite of products that incorporates Workshare Metawall, Workshare DeltaView and Workshare Synergy products. Workshare 3.0 will clean metadata from both Excel and PowerPoint files.

And The Winner Is ...

Metadata Assistant from Payne Consulting. As you can surmise from the review above, these applications are very similar, but I have to go with Metadata Assistant for several reasons.



Using the "Configuration" tool, Workshare Metawall can be customized to check all Word documents attached to e-mails.

First, at a general level, Metadata Assistant has been around for a long time. It was one of the first products to address the metadata issue, and President Donna Payne and the rest of the folks at Payne Consulting really know their stuff when it comes to this whole issue (including from personal experience).

Second, Payne Consulting's Web site gives you information about its product in plain and simple terms. You

can visit the site and know exactly what you are going to get for how much and what comes with it. They are straight shooters, and they will customize Metadata Assistant to your needs. This customization comes included in their very reasonable annual maintenance fee if you decide to go with the Enterprise version.

Third, at the application level, I found Metadata Assistant to be more stable than Workshare Metawall. I didn't experience any major catastrophes with Workshare Metawall. However, I felt a little more comfortable working in Metadata Assistant after seeing it work within Word.

Lastly, you have everything you need from one window in Metadata Assistant, as opposed to a whole other "Configuration" tool with Workshare Metawall. Once you are familiar with the myriad of options available in Metadata Assistant, you can comfortably make changes on the fly. Workshare Metawall confusingly separates configuration options between "Internal" and "External" users. You can set different options as appropriate for different users, but I found this extraneous and unnecessary.

There should be no question that you need a metadata cleaning utility, especially if you e-mail Word documents outside of your office. While most of the products available today (including these two) will provide basically the same functionality, make sure you are comfortable with the product you choose and start cleaning some metadata.

** At press time, Workshare Metawall will no longer be sold as a standalone product. It will be available as part of the Workshare 3.0 suite, including Workshare DeltaView and Workshare Synergy. Contact Workshare for pricing and upgrade information. E:]*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BRETT BURNEY is a legal practice support coordinator at Thompson Hine (www.thompsonhine.com) in Cleveland. You can e-mail him at Brett.Burney@ThompsonHine.com.



Payne Consulting Group

Payne Consulting Group is a software training and development company headquartered in Seattle, WA. Payne has authored ten books on Microsoft products including: *Word 2002*, *Word 2000*, and *Word 97 for Law Firms*, *Essential Excel 97* and *Essential Excel 2000*, *Excel Expert Solutions*, *Office Expert Solutions*, and more. The company also specializes in developing software and includes the **Metadata Assistant**, featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal (Oct. 20, 2000), which removes embedded and often confidential information buried in documents, the Forms Assistant that automates the creation of letter, memo, fax, agreement and pleading documents, and the Numbering Assistant which simplifies the process of numbering. Payne offers high end training such as the Master Series and Visual Basic for Applications classes, and end-user training, courseware, essential project management, and custom development.

Customer Satisfaction: What Payne prides itself on most is that clients are satisfied and that they become return customers. When you become a client of Payne Consulting Group, your satisfaction is our top priority. Our goal is to ensure that not only are your needs met, but that you are treated with the respect and professionalism you deserve.

- **Migration Consulting** – Installation and Configuration Planning
- **Metadata Assistant** – Removes residual information from documents
- **Forms Assistant** – Automates the creation of letter, memo, fax, agreements and pleadings
- **Numbering Assistant** – Simplifies the process of numbering
- **Master Series Training** – Designed for IT Staff and focuses on troubleshooting
- **VBA Training** – Create your own macros and templates
- **Project Management** – Software migration or general (PMI member and certified)
- **End-User Training** – Worldwide training for attorney and staff
- **Courseware** – Authors of 10 books, courseware license available
- **Custom Development** – Case management, document id and more

Office Location

Seattle (Corporate Headquarters)
500 Union Street, Suite 801
Seattle, WA 98101
206-344-8966 Telephone
206-344-8268 Fax
www.payneconsulting.com

Contacts

General Information
Info@payneconsulting.com

Shirley Gorman, VP of Client Relations
ShirleyGorman@payneconsulting.com