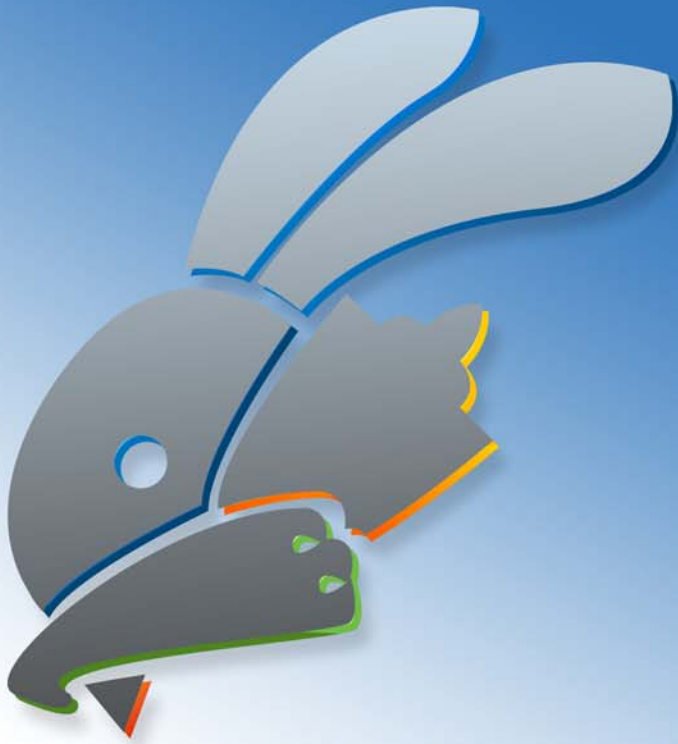


ShoWorks™ noús

Arrives 2011



www.fairsoftware.com

Creative Arts

Livestock

Premiums

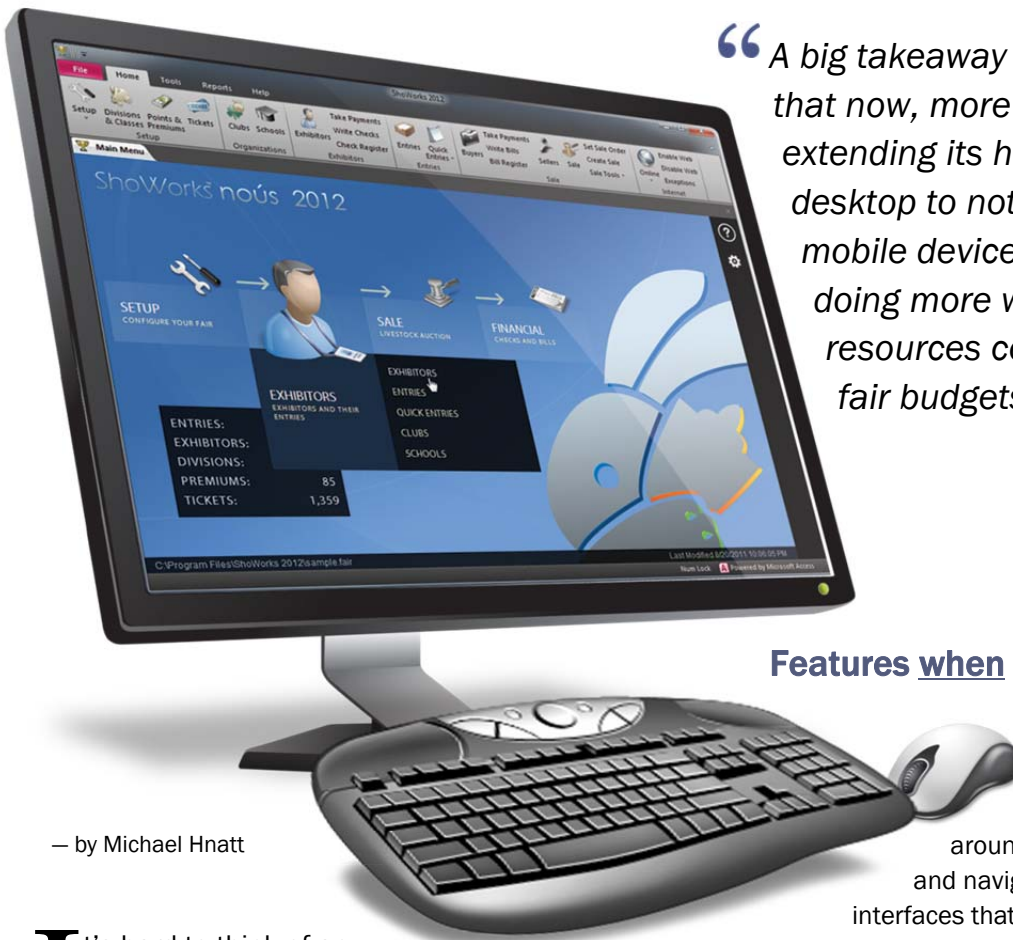
ShoWorks

Online Entries



The intelligence of fair management software starts this year.

A quick glance inside the new ShoWorks 2012



— by Michael Hnatt

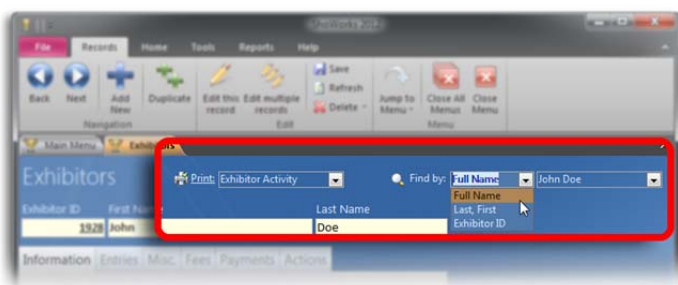
“A big takeaway here for fair managers is that now, more than ever, computing is extending its helping arms beyond the desktop to not only the online world but to mobile devices. This will be a key factor in doing more work with fewer personnel resources constrained by today’s tight fair budgets.”

Features when and where you need them

It’s hard to think of any other release which enjoyed the level of exposure and success that Gladstone found in the prior version of ShoWorks, launched in the fall of 2008. Even those not directly responsible for data entry were able to recognize the value that this version would bring to the fair office. But ShoWorks 2009 was far from perfect and furthermore, the technology playing field has underwent some momentous developments since then that affect the way we use computers in our everyday life – and the next version of ShoWorks stands poised to capitalize on these improvements.

Enter ShoWorks *Nous* (Greek for “intuition” or “common sense”): Code name for the new ShoWorks 2012 and the seventh generation of the fair management software that has processed exhibitor entries across the majority of the nation’s largest and most successful fairs for almost two decades. The program still has its grass roots embedded in the same approach that has served the industry well from the beginning – desktop fair management, yet for those eager to expand efficiency beyond the fair office, this new version unleashes lots of time and cost saving features that will not disappoint.

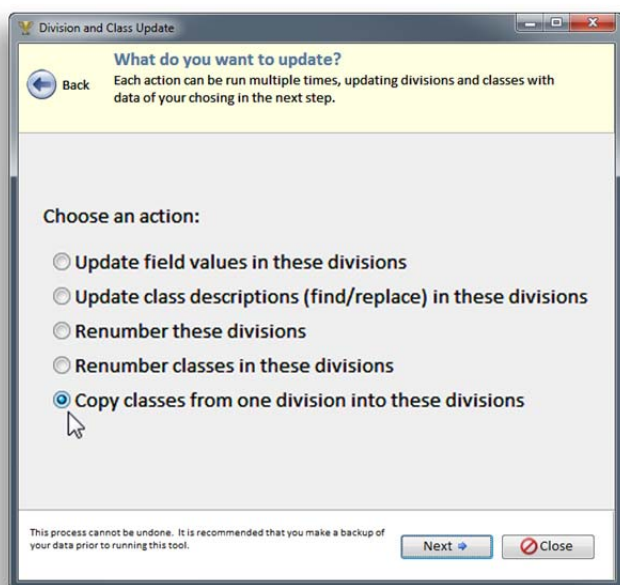
Those already familiar with ShoWorks will not have any trouble recognizing the new version from its predecessor and will feel right at home navigating around the program. However, the “motion” and navigation has been updated to match those interfaces that we now have come expect and enjoy in our everyday lives via smart phones and the Metro feel of the forthcoming Windows 8. Once cluttered parts of the program are now tucked away and “glide” out only when needed, leaving a clean, non-intimidating interface for those less impressed with noisy icons and more concerned with substance. Accessibility to reports is now closer to areas where they are more frequently needed, which has the added benefit of context sensitive reporting. For example, if one is looking at a particular exhibitor of interest, the “print point” in that menu allows access to all exhibitor related reports and prints or previews information (exhibitor activity, entry tags, checks, etc.) specific only for that one exhibitor; or if viewing a club, for all exhibitors belonging to that club. This same technique applies across other menus, like divisions, where one can quickly generate reports like division and class statistics, premium and ribbon summaries, and entry tags only for that particular division. Searching for records has finally been expanded to allow users to find records based on any field, but unlike the prior version, they now can permanently change the drop-down “find” box to search by their field of choice.



Print content sensitive reports directly from menus and find records based on the field of your choice.

Update divisions and classes with ease

Probably one of the most helpful new features is the very powerful Division Update wizard. This new tool began with a simple concept in mind; assisting clerks in updating frequently changing fields such as Entry Deadline, Entry Fee, or online entry field configurations across many divisions, all with one click.



Update many divisions and classes at once.

But ShoWorks does not stop there and expands on this “mass update” concept by enabling users to quickly perform common tasks like copying classes from one division to many others, renumbering divisions and classes (even starting the sequence over for each division), and a nice way to “bump all years” in descriptive fields. For example, a class description of “Heifers born between 6/15/2009 and 12/31/2009” would automatically be bumped to “Heifers born between 6/15/2010 and 12/31/2010”. With one click, classes across the entire database can be updated at once. This Division Update tool is sure to be a favorite when setting up one’s fair with ShoWorks. More importantly, beginners will appreciate the intuitive guidance of this tool.

Online entries, photos, and tickets

Online entry and exhibitor registration has long been a signature option for ShoWorks users since 1997. The new ShoWorks version continues this tradition by introducing easier control of this activity with new features such as restricting entries by class limits per exhibitor. Some are just now recognizing that the new generation of exhibitors are affectionate towards digital entries, which take the form of photography, videos, and music – all made popular by the accessibility of today’s camera phones and personal devices. In order for fairs to survive the transition of today’s interest from traditional exhibits to the ever growing multimedia trend, online photo and digital media uploading as well as judging is a natural progression into a partnership with the Internet. With native integration of Fair Judge™, fairs can now invite more of these trendy exhibits and even stream the winning photos via a slide show from their own website or live throughout the fairgrounds – generating more buzz for next year’s participation.

Continuing with the importance of online integration, some may know that ShoWorks has already provided a cheap alternative in the online ticketing arena for several years (for fairs wishing to sell general admission tickets, RV and gate passes, etc. to the general public). Ticketing setup is now more obvious and available from the main menu of ShoWorks.

iPad “tablet” judging and check-ins

Where prior releases have had their scope limited to new features directly in the program which enhanced the overall user experience, this new version breaks ground by venturing out into new territory previously not practical for entry management. Those with a keen eye on trends may recognize this shift to mobile devices – tablet computing ala the iPad.

The demand for a detached means of recording judging results or check-ins has been prevalent for many years, however this could only be achieved at best via Palm or handheld PDA devices that were far too small and cumbersome for any practical benefit. The idea was noble: to allow superintendents or judges the freedom to navigate and update data which could be directly downloaded into the main system, bypassing the time consuming and often error prone means of manual data entry through paper print outs. The reality was that these older, smaller devices required fumbling with a tiny stylus and a magnifying glass to view the limited amount of information on their 3” screen.

It’s been less than two years since the release of the now well-known, iPad – the first “practical” tablet computer produced by Apple. Since then, the floodgates for tablets have opened with an adoption rate doubling every six months. In just over one year, almost 1 in 10 adults in the nation purchased a

tablet, with Apple's iPad making up the majority of these. While this number may seem small, consider the same adoption rate for the Personal Computer which took almost 10 years to achieve. And the age of the tablet has only begun!



iPad™ integration for judges and superintendents.

So just how does ShoWorks integrate with the tablet? Imagine virtual judging sheets where a single swipe of the finger can drag ribbons or place values onto entries, or even rearrange the order of entries to match the judge's opinion on the relative quality of entries. Livestock superintendents can also take advantage of the tablet by remotely updating weights at check-in. Best yet, an Internet connection is not required except when syncing the tablet to the desktop. As always, digital scales that generate their own files to update ShoWorks are still supported via the new and improved spreadsheet wizard with multi-column support, in addition to the old familiar keyboard method for those more comfortable with traditional data entry.

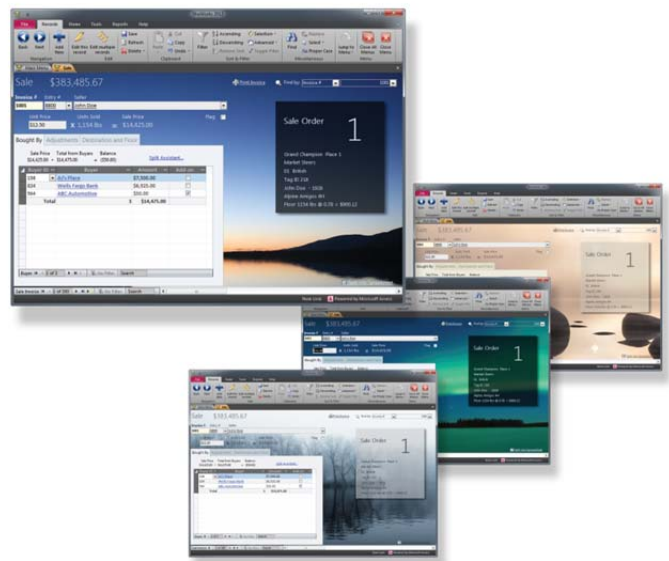
Stability...stability...stability

If there were any wish list item from current users that they would not want overlooked, it would be improvements in the stability of the software. Part of the problem that plagued the prior version of ShoWorks was the fact that it was built on top of a ground-up rewrite of Microsoft's Access platform (Access 2007). Even non-techies will know that first generation software will have its burden of above average bugs and shortcomings. Combine this with the fact that the prior version of ShoWorks relied heavily on third-party components such as navigation menus that, behind the scenes only compounded the install and configuration complexity, and you have a less than ideal scenario. The new version is not only built on Microsoft's most stable release of Access to date

(Access 2010 – which by the way, is not required for users), but thankfully all third-party components have been removed and replaced with native controls providing a more stable and pleasurable experience for both the user and support staff of ShoWorks.

Themes

And finally, for the first time ever, Gladstone has dedicated a reasonable amount of effort that serves a purpose for none other than aesthetics, giving users the ability to personalize their ShoWorks interface in the form of themes. Twelve available themes are preloaded allowing the user to revitalize their experience to an otherwise monotonous workspace during a long fair season. Peaceful Morning, Tranquil Evening, Winter Solace, and Fall Solitude are just a few of the environments one can choose to engage in, should they venture beyond the longtime default blue signature of ShoWorks. Who said that business software had to be boring?



Themes add a personal touch to ShoWorks.

Get ready for launch!

A big takeaway here for fair managers is that now, more than ever, computing is extending its helping arms beyond the desktop to not only the online world but to mobile devices. This will be a key factor in doing more work with fewer personnel resources constrained by today's tight fair budgets. Still not convinced? Take a walk through the new ShoWorks Nous at its debut at the IAFE Convention this November in Las Vegas! We hope to see you there!

Michael Hnatt is the president of Gladstone, makers of the ShoWorks software which has been providing software to fairs since 1994. He taught business programming at Texas A&M University for 11 years and holds an MBA from the University of Houston, including 3 years doctoral work in the field of Information Management.

