Advanced Layout Tools

General Pack

v.4.0

for ACT! 2005

Another efficient and affordable ACT! Add-On by

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Purpose of the add-on

Advanced Layout Tools – General Pack is a set of ten controls that are designed to enhance your ACT! experience.

Installation procedure

Download the program file from our download page and double-click it to start the installation.

Due to the nature of the add-on, there is no interface nor icons added to your toolbar: it consists of a set of tools for your layouts.

Note that contrarily to versions supporting previous ACT! versions and because of the changes in ACT!, add-ons are now DLL files and not executable files. This means that they are automatically initialized by ACT! when placed in ACT! plugin folder (a subfolder of the main ACT! directory) and cannot be started from the Windows Start menu anymore. This is why you are not given a choice of installation directory during the installation process.

GENERAL INFORMATION
REGARDING ADVANCED LAYOUT TOOLS

This section applies to all Advanced Layout Tools packs.

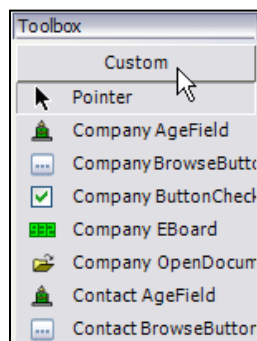## How to add a tool to your layout toolbar

When in ACT! Design Layout mode, if the toolbox is not visible, go to the *View* menu and click *Toolbar*.
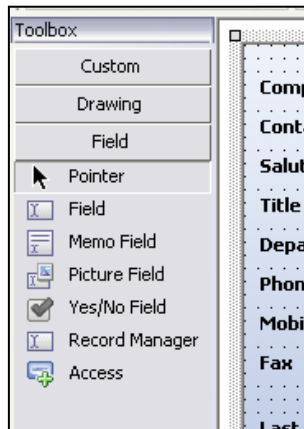
Do a right-click on the toolbox and choose *Customize…* A list of available tools is displayed. Check the ones you want to add to the toolbar.
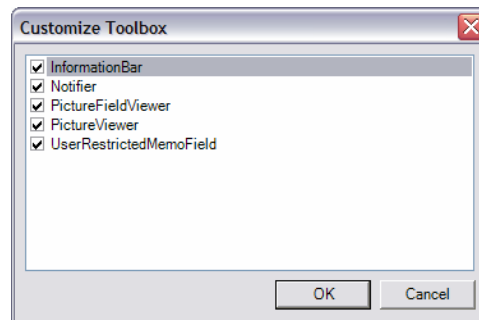
They will be added under the *Custom* tab. To view them click on *Custom*.

How to add a control to your layout

The tools you add to the *Custom* tab of your toolbar allow you to add controls to your layouts. To add a control, use the same method you use to add regular ACT! fields:
- Click the tool in the toolbar
- Then click somewhere in the layout and drag to expand.
- When you release the button of your mouse, the control is inserted in your layout.
- For controls that are bound to a field, a *Select field* window will popup. Choose a field then click OK.

IMPORTANT!
If a tool name starts with Contact_, Group_ or Company_, it means that it is specific to a type of layout. Inserting a specific control to the wrong layout will generate errors when using it.

Editing the properties of your controls

In ACT! Layout designer window, if you right-click a control, the pop-up menu lists a *Properties* command which opens a window giving you the ability to edit very few properties.

To really access all properties of a control, select the control then press F4. The property editor will open giving you the ability to fully control the appearance and behavior of your control.
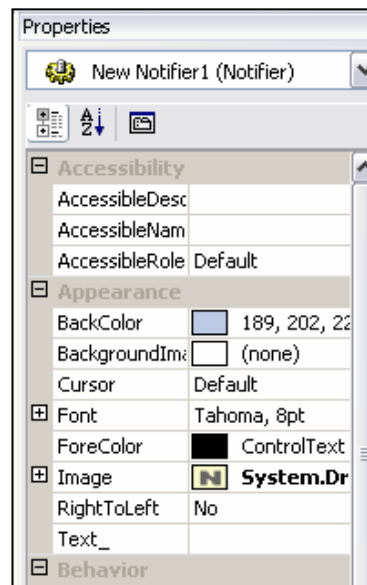
There are many properties you can tweak. If you do not know what a property does, select it then look at the bottom of the properties widow for the description.
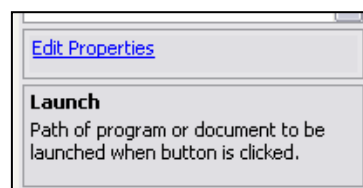
THE TOOLS INCLUDED IN THIS PACK

The LaunchButton

The Launch button allows to launch a program, open a file or a folder by clicking a button in your layout. The launch button, contrarily to the *OpenDocument* control (see below) is not bound to a field. Therefore it would open the same program, file or folder whatever the record you are in.

Once you add a Launch button to your layout, click F4 to see the properties window.

The button will launch the program or open the file which path is set as the Launch property.

So you can either type the path manually or set the EditLaunchPath property to true (or double-click on the EditLaunchPath label) to open a browse window allowing you to select a file.
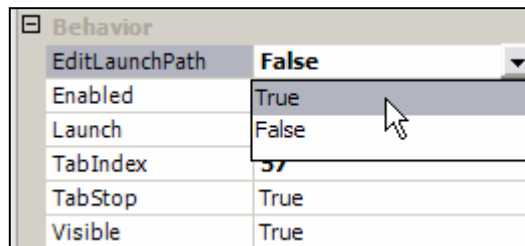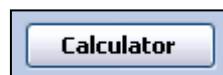

The caption of your button is the *Text* property under Appearance.

Here is an example of a button which text is set to "Calculator":
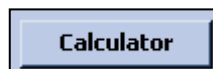
You can change the backcolor, font of the caption, etc. If you want to give it a XP look, set the *FlatStyle* property to *System* (under *Appearance*):

The OpenDocument button

The *OpenDocument* button is very similar to the *Launch* button except that it is bound to a text field and will open the document which path is in the text field. This way you have the ability to open a document (or program or folder) specific to the record.

When you insert the *OpenDocument* control in your layout, you are prompted to select a character field. This is the field which will be bound to the button.

The DefaultFolder property

The *OpenDocument* button has a *DefaultFolder* property (under the Misc category) which is the path to the folder which will be used by default. If you want to use the OpenDocument button to open documents always located in the same folder, this default path property allows you to only enter the name of the file in your field.

Let's see an example.

Some of your records have contracts and you would like to be able to open the contract directly from your layout. You have a text field named Contract. Add an *OpenDocument* button next to your contract field and tie it to the Contract field.. If all your contracts are in the same folder, enter the path of this folder in the Default folder property of the button (for example: *C:\Documents and Settings\John\My Documents\Contracts*) . In the field, simply type the name of the document (for example: *Contract for HLC Consulting.doc*) . When clicking the button, the control will automatically add the folder's path to the contract name and open the contract.
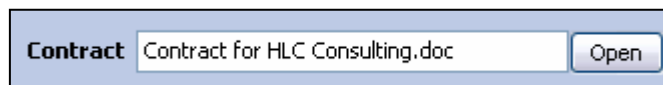
Here is how the control deals with the *DefaultFolder* property.

It starts by reading the content of the associated field. If it contains a valid path, it will open the document (so if the content of the field is the full path of your document, it never looks at the *DefaultFolder* property and opens it directly).
If the field does not contain a valid path, it will look for a file with the name of the field content in the default folder.

So even if you decide to use a *DefaultFolder* property, you still can bypass it by specifying the full path of a document.

The Browse Button

The *BrowseButton* often works in tandem with the *OpenDocument* button. It is also bound to a field. It allows to select a document and automatically sets the value of the field bound to the control to the path of the selected file.

The DefaultFolder property

Like the *OpenDocument* button, it also features a *DefaultFolder* property. It has 2 goals:

- If no document is specified in the associated field, the Browse button will automatically open the Open file window in the default folder.

- If you select a document in the folder specified in the *DefaultFolder* property, only the name of the file is written into the associated field. Therefore if you set up an *OpenDocument* and a *BrowseButton* button with the same *DefaultFolder* property, you will be able to select and open documents without ever writing the full path to the database.

Here we have added a *BrowseButton* to our last example. We have used the same *DefaultFolder* property, so that when we click the browse button, we are automatically taken to our contract folder and we select a document only the name of the document is written in the field, not the whole path. Since the Open button has the same folder set as default, it will open the contract without any problem.
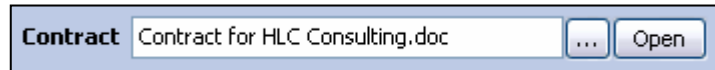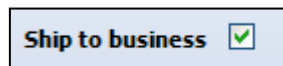

The CheckBox

The CheckBox control is to be bound to a Yes/No field and acts as a replacement for the standard Checkbox control used by ACT!. It displays a set of 2 buttons which you can toggle on and off. So instead of the regular checkbox, you could have something more visual like:
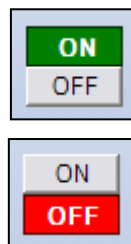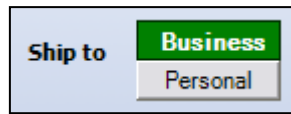

It can be customized to be more user-friendly than a regular checkbox.
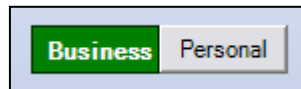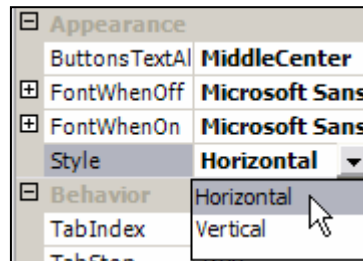
Replace the typical:

With the more visually attractive and significant:

The 2 buttons can be completely customized (color, font, etc.). See the Button1 and Button2 sections in the Properties window.

The 2 buttons can also be next to each other. For this, set the *Style* property to *Horizontal* under the *Appearance* section.
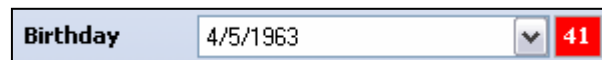

The Age field

The Age Field is a textbox bound to a numeric field. It is also bound to an annual event, date or character field.

The Age Field returns the age of the date contained in the associated field and automatically writes it to the numeric field.

When adding the Age Field control to the layout, you will be prompted to select first the field containing the date you want to monitor then the numeric field which will hold the age value.

Here is an example (the textbox does not have to have a red background. You have full control over the look of the textbox).
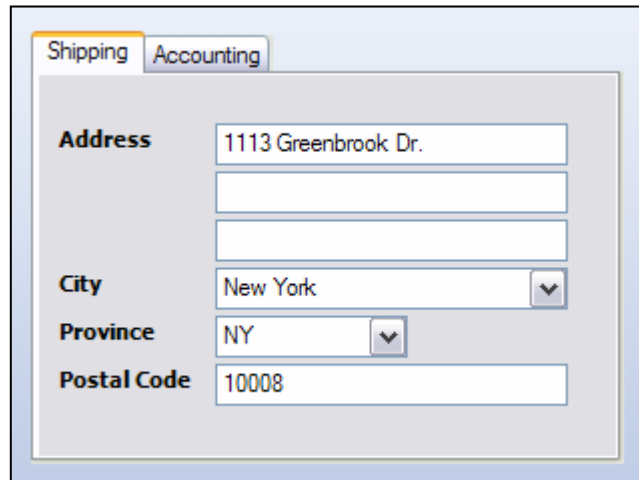

If the field contains no value or if the value is not a date, the Age field remains empty.
The Age Field automatically updates itself when you display a record.

NOTE: If you make a change to the date field, the Age Field is updated the next time the record is displayed (in other words, you need to switch to another record and come back to see any changes made to the associated field).
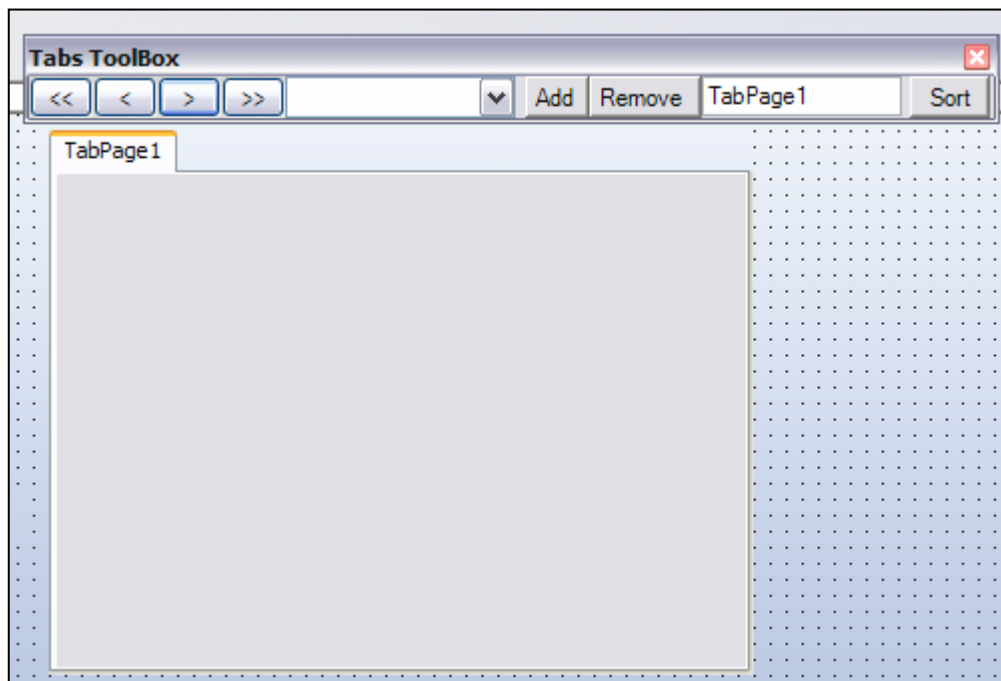
The Tabs

The Tabs is a tab control that allows to group fields under tabs.


Once you have inserted the control to your layout, the Tabs toolbox should appear automatically. If you close it and want to reopen it, simply put your mouse on top of the tab strip to make re-appear.

The Tabs toolbox allows you to navigate between tabs (the first four buttons and the drop-down list), add or remove tabs, rename them (see the textbox above where the name of the tab is displayed).

You can move or drop any field and label you want in any of the tabs. Remember to use the navigation buttons to make a tab active.

If you wish to change the background color of the pages and see more options, open the properties window (F4) and go to the *TapPages* property. Click the Browse button and you will be able to access more properties for each page
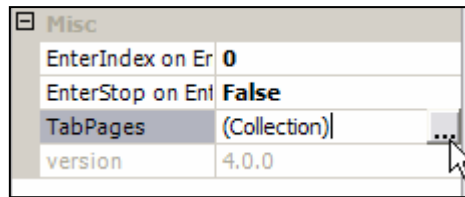

Docking the tabs

If you want the tabs to be docked to the top, bottom, sides of the pane, this can be accomplished by changing the *Dock* property under the *Layout* section of the *Properties* window.
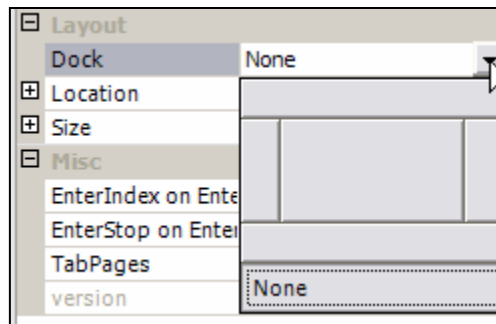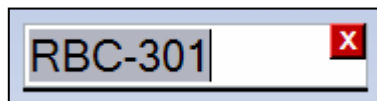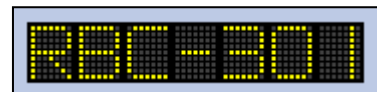

The E-Board

The E-Board is a control bound to a character of numeric field which displays it in an original, appealing format. There is nothing wrong with adding fantasy to your layouts! It ideally displays short and fixed length fields like a customer number.
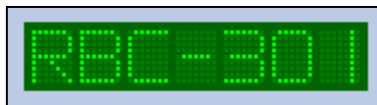
To edit the content of the field, simply double-click the E-Board control and this window will appear.

As with any of our controls, a lot of properties are accessible through the properties window. One of the most important one is the number of character the field displays (under the *Content* section). You can change the colors of the board. The more classic and readable look would be this one:
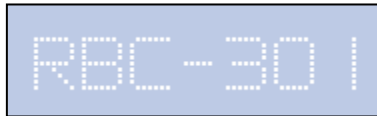
Here are the properties for the above:

You may also set the *UnlitSegmentColor* to transparent, which makes it even more readable

Anything is possible, including making it very discreet by matching the backcolor with the background of your layout.

You may also want to reduce/increase the size of the control. For this change the *SegmentSize*, *SegmentSpacing, CharacterSpacing* and *SurroundSize* properties, all under the *Appearance* section.

For example, setting the *SegmentSize* to 1 reduces the size of each point of the board to one.
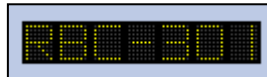
NOTE: the E_Board can only be associated with a character field without dropdown list associated to it.

The MonthCalendar

The MonthCalendar is not bound to any field and is used for information purposes. Because it is in your layout, you always have it under your eyes.

It may be set to display more than one month either horizontally or vertically. See the *CalendarDimension* property under *Appearance*: If you choose 2 as width and 1 as height, you will see this month's calendar next to next month's calendar.
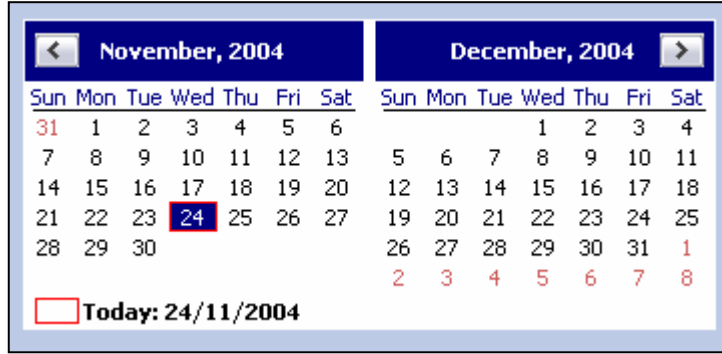
The Groupbox

The Groupbox is a frame that you can use to visually group fields. Its purpose is solely aesthetic. When you add the control to you layout, it might be on top of your existing fields. Right-click it and choose "Send to back" to make your fields appear on top of it.

Here is an example:
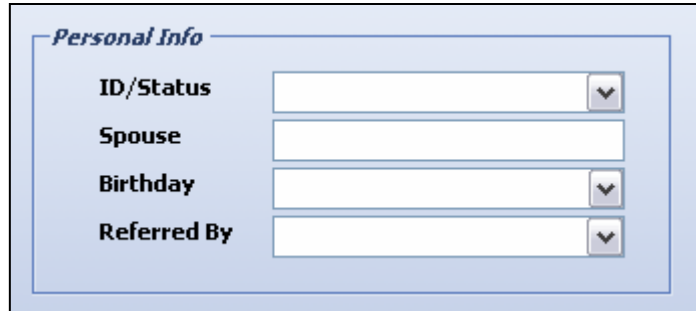
The Line

ACT! does not provide any line control. This could be a useful control to improve the look of your layouts.

This is a very simple control to use. Just insert and resize using the resize handles.

Note that when resizing with the resize handles the minimum height which can be achieved is 8 pixels. To further reduce the height, use the height property in the Properties window.
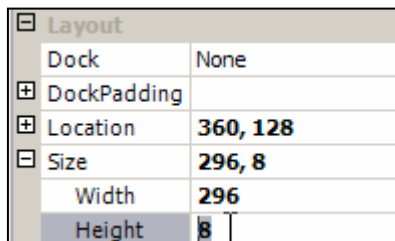
Registering your product

To continue using this product passed the trial period, please buy a license at www.exponenciel.com. Licenses are issued for one ACT! username and will only work for that username.

Once you get a license code, right-click one of the controls of the pack in your layout and select *About.*. Once the *About* screen is open, type the registration code in the appropriate box and click OK. You might need to close and restart ACT! to complete the registration process.

Support

For support, contact support@exponenciel.com.

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