

Smart Access

Solutions for Microsoft® Access™ Developers

From Zoom Box to Custom Dialog

Mike Toole



For some applications you just can't get enough screen real-estate, especially when you have fields that display a large amount of text. Mike Toole describes an alternative to the Zoom box that not only looks and works better but avoids the Zoom box's spurious updates. His design can be used for creating any sophisticated custom dialog.

YOU never have enough screen space. As a result, you often are forced to set TextBoxes to their minimum size—only the amount of space required for a “typical” entry. However, when an unusually large entry does appear, your TextBox doesn't display all of the data and users find it difficult to see their information. On the other hand, making a TextBox big enough to display its largest entry doesn't seem like a reasonable solution because most of the time that extra space will never be used.

One solution is to use the built-in Access Zoom box. The Zoom box, opened using Shift+F2, provides a larger viewing space for text data from a control and doesn't take up any extra space on your form. The Zoom box has been with Access, unchanged, since at least version 2 and is showing its age. Among other issues, when the user closes the Zoom box, the box automatically updates the value in the control whose text it was displaying, even if the user didn't make a change.

Recently, when I needed a Zoom box for an application, I decided to build a new, improved model. What I had in mind was something that:

- Looks a whole lot better.
- Locates itself on the control being zoomed.
- Can be customized.
- Doesn't update the original control when the user chooses Save unless data has been changed.

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