

Quicken 2002 Deluxe

Review by Bruce Wilkinson

This latest version of the popular Quicken financial program was the subject of a recent SIG presentation. It is available for a price of about \$30 from various sources (including a PC Users Group discount) and is available on CD ROM. Installation is essentially uneventful and the new version appears to occupy about 20 MB more disc space than the 2001 version. The Quicken 2002 occupies about 65 MB on my hard disc but some of this space is data files and will, obviously, vary with the user. As usual, when updating from a previous version of Quicken, all files and critical information are automatically transferred to the new version. Technical support is available on the web from www.intuit.com/support/quicken.

The Quicken 2002 program presents a broad range of financial options and enables the user to keep track of many investment and financial options and to track (on line with a one step update of brokerage, credit card and bank transactions) the performance of portfolios via Quicken.com. The most common feature is the checkbook register and reconciliation, which can be coordinated (and automatically reconciled) with your bank (sometimes subject to an additional fee). Similarly, tax preparations can be handled by coordination with (and transfer to) TurboTax (sold separately by the mutual developer, Intuit, Inc.).

When Quicken 2002 is opened, it displays a "my finances" page which summarizes the assets that you have listed with the program. This version has added a number of graphical displays to the previous program, which enable the user to better visualize the extent and breakdown of his/her portfolio. Similarly, expenses can be broken down by categories and displayed graphically. In order to get detailed numeric information, a simple mouse click connects directly to a spreadsheet showing the details for each entry. Bill paying by electronic means is also available on line with an alert mode (which applies to bank accounts, too) to warn you of bills you normally pay and that should be considered immediately to avoid penalties.

As is common with Quicken products, there are a number of "perks" available on line with information such as Credit Reports, mortgage options, electronic bill payments, on-line banking (with dollar bonuses for sign-up) etc. Suggestion for these options appear regularly on the bottom of the screen to prompt you to take advantage of them as you wish.

Budget preparation and tracking is possible by a step-by-step tool (from scratch) or based on prior expenditures. This is helpful in avoiding overspending as identified by alerts shown by Quicken.

The tax planner helps to keep track of income and tax payments to assure the user that sufficient tax payments have been made and to explore the tax implications of income and expense options (including capital gains) being considered. Quicken 2002 automatically updates to new tax laws as they are published.

As with Quicken 2001 (reviewed in the April, 2001 PPCUG Gazette) the backup storage of data is more complete (and time consuming) than with earlier versions of Quicken. This makes startup of the program a little slow but assures the user that all the important data is saved on a storage disc in case of computer failure. Data can also be exported to Quicken.com (if desired) from which it can be accessed via another computer if the user is away from his home computer.

The latest version of Quicken, thus, continues to present "bells and whistles" to make the tracking your financial picture easier, faster, and more convenient. It takes some time to learn all the ropes and you are constantly amazed at the options that are presented to you.