Another Trick with “Hot-Keys”

In previous columns, we have highlighted using “hotkeys” in several GIS software programs including the Esri suite, Global Mapper, and Intergraph. Hotkeys are sometimes referred to as shortcut keys because of their ability to easily trigger an action. Most people are familiar with a few basic shortcut commands such as Ctrl+C to copy and Ctrl+V to paste that have become ubiquitous in most Windows-based software. While we have discussed the “built-in” hotkeys, those that the software vendor thinks you need, one great feature about hotkeys that many people do not realize is that they, too, are customizable. Setting your own hotkeys is quick, easy and a great way to streamline common processes.

In the Esri ArcGIS Desktop suite, it is as simple as:

1. Click the Customize menu and click Customize Mode.
2. In the Customize window (Figure 1) that appears, click the Keyboard button on the customize dialog box.
3. From the Customize Keyboard dialog (Figure 2) click the category in the left-hand side panel containing the command you want to modify. You can also search for commands from the ‘Show Commands Containing box’.
4. Click the command to which you want to add a keyboard shortcut.
5. Click in the Press new shortcut key text box and press the keys on the keyboard that you want to use for a shortcut. Once that command is pressed, in will appear in the Press New Shortcut Key box. For this example, to assign Ctrl+M to the Merge features tool on the editor toolbar; press the Ctrl key and the M key at the same time to make that appear in the dialogue box. One tool can have multiple shortcuts, but a shortcut command can only be assigned to a single tool. If those keys have been assigned to another command, that command’s name will appear below under the Currently Assigned to dialogue area.
6. Click Assign if the keys aren’t currently assigned to another command (Figure 3). The new shortcut appears in the Current Key/s list. If the shortcut key you typed for the selected command is currently assigned to a different command and you press the Assign button, the original command/key assignment will be overridden. When you use that shortcut key, the new command will be executed instead of the command to which this shortcut was previously assigned.

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7. Click Close on the Customize Keyboard dialog box (Figure 3). Click Close on the Customize dialog box (you will be returned to Figure 1). Once you have assigned a shortcut to a tool, that shortcut will appear to the right of the tool if the tool appears in a menu (Figure 4).

Remember that you can also assign shortcuts to key combinations for when you run out of options. And that is all there is to making custom hotkeys.

Please feel free to share your Tips & Tricks with us. Send your questions, comments, and tips to GISTT@ASPRS.org.

Sara Hedrick is a geospatial analyst with the Dewberry Office in Denver. She works extensively with the Esri suite of software. Al Karlin, Ph.D., CMS-L, GISP, as a senior geospatial scientist in the Dewberry – Tampa office, works with all aspects of lidar, remote sensing, photogrammetry, and GIS-related projects.

Reference

Jenny Murphy (BSc Physics 1966, MSc Radioastronomy 1967, UK) specialized in the radiometric correction of Landsat satellite data at the Canada Centre for Remote Sensing and was later the Science Policy Advisor in Natural Resources Canada. In retirement she has taught English in Nepal to female trainee trekking guides and is the Founder of the Canada Nepal Geomatics Advancement Foundation registered charity. She anticipates completing her Bachelor of Humanities at Carleton University in 2023.

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