

Windows 7 - Installing Application Programs

by Clark Anderson

I have created many useful applications and installed them quite successfully for use on Windows NT, 2k and XP.

I shied away from VISTA, but my initial attempts with Windows 7, well ... Where is my data?

With VISTA and Windows 7, Microsoft has tightened up the security for the storage of Application Data. I develop my applications to keep everything pretty close together. They are much less likely to interfere with any other applications and much less likely to be interfered with. They are also easy to uninstall, update and reinstall.

The application program and all of its support files (e.g.: .DLL, .OCX) are installed in the 'Install Directory'. The Data is stored in Folders attached to it. For many versions of Windows (e.g.: 95, 98, NT, 2k and XP) this has been the 'Program Files' folder.

I tried this with Windows 7. The installation went fine, because the Installation package has special privileges. Running the application program was another matter! Data files were not showing up in their expected places.

I modified a version of one of my applications to create small text files in a bunch of the different folders that have been somewhat standard with the earlier versions of Windows. I also tried some of the places suggested in discussions I found on the web. None of these really worked.

I discovered in the Windows Explorer, provided by Windows 7, a 'Compatibility files' (button) near the top. It gives the appearance of the data files being in the folder I had planned, but in a 'hidden state'. I learned, later, that they are actually in a 'Virtual Store' folder and not really very useful there.

(e.g.: C:\Users\clark\AppData\Local\VirtualStore\Program Files\Clark_Anderson\GastroZ)

I also learned a neat trick in Windows 7: Right Click on the file icon or name and select menu item: 'Open file location'. This is a big improvement over selecting 'Properties' and then 'Open file location'.

Another neat trick, for finding files in Windows 7, is: Click 'start' then, in the Search programs and files field, type the name of the file and it will begin a search.

My 'experimentation' was able to create folders that are uncharacteristic to Windows 7. These can really cloud the issue.

Some real help came from lengthy phone conversations with very patient Microsoft Windows 7 Customer Support agents. They were not programmers, but I learned enough from them to figure the rest out.

Starting with a fresh install of Windows 7, the Users folder is in the C:\ root directory. Here is part of the structure:

```
C:\PerfLogs
C:\Program Files
C:\Users\{PCsOwner}
C:\Users\Public\Public Documents
C:\Users\Public\Public Downloads
C:\Users\Public\Public Music
C:\Users\Public\Public Pictures
C:\Users\Public\Public Recorded TV
C:\Users\Public\Public Videos
C:\Windows
```

I have discovered where I was meant to be! Additional testing has proven this approach also works with VISTA!

I download my application install files to:

```
C:\Users\Public\Public Downloads\SOFTWARE\ClarkAnderson
```

I created the subfolders SOFTWARE and ClarkAnderson.

I do my installations in:

```
C:\Users\Public\Clark_Anderson\...
```

The installation program created the subfolders. e.g.:

```
C:\Users\Public\Clark_Anderson\Gastro
C:\Users\Public\Clark_Anderson\TktMgr02
```