

Quicken SIG Notes - September 27, 2005

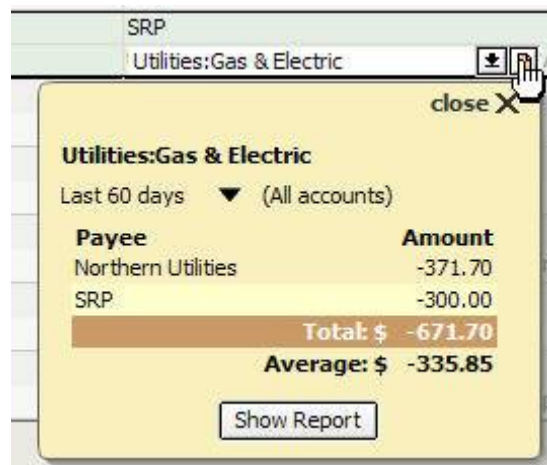
Quicken 2006

Quicken 2006 comes in several versions: Quicken Basic, Deluxe, Premier, and Premier Home and Business. Most people will settle for the Quicken Deluxe or Premier versions. With those, you can track your normal financial transactions with banks, credit card companies, and investment houses. Quicken Premier gives you some added capabilities to track investments and get special reports on stock and mutual fund activity. You can certainly track a basic set of investments with Deluxe, but you get some added report features with Premier. I don't recommend Quicken Basic, since you can not track any investments at all, such as stocks and mutual funds. Quicken Premier Home and Business is good for keeping up with your home business, including creating and tracking invoices. But most people won't need Premier Home and Business. If you would like a comparison of these products go to <http://quicken.intuit.com/> and click on Considering Quicken.

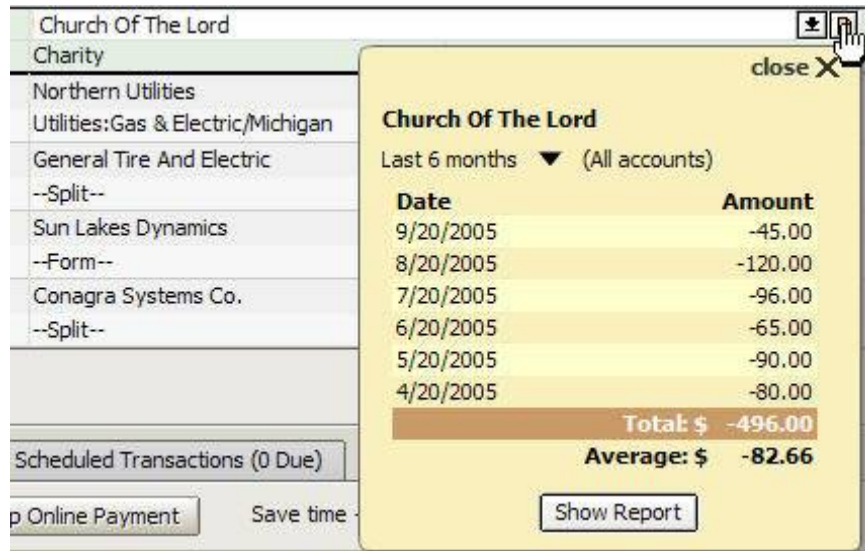
PC Magazine gives Quicken 2006 a 5 Star Rating and says, "It's our favorite personal finance program this year." For the full review, go to <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,1841722,00.asp>. PC Magazine also recommends that users with versions Quicken 2004 and older consider upgrading this year. The current price for Quicken 2006 Deluxe through the quicken.intuit.com site is \$49.99, for either direct download or CD.

Changes in Quicken 2006

Intuit claims that they have integrated 121 customer recommended improvements into the 2006 versions. Many of the most important changes deal with what you can see from a transaction register. For example, you can click on the note icon

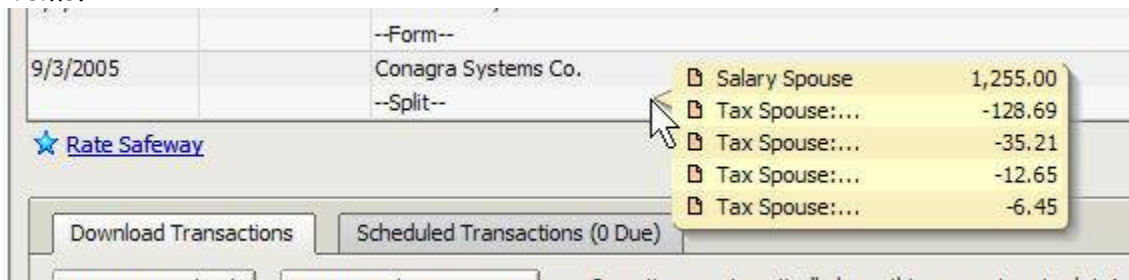


next to the Category and see a quick report on recent transactions. You can also do the same thing for the Payee. Click on the nearby note icon and see a listing of all transactions involving that Payee in the immediate past.



The time frame is adjustable for these mini-reports. To see the large, regular, report, just click on the Show Report icon.

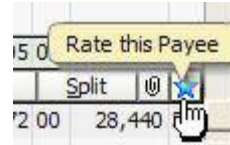
Another thing that is very handy is the ability to quickly check what is in a Split without having to open the Split screen. To see this, just hover your mouse over any Split indicator in the Category box and you will get a mini-report of all split items.



We will look at the new report center format in just a moment, but first let's review what, in my opinion, never should have made the cut in the new items list.

They Could Have Left this One Out

Intuit has apparently made an arrangement with a company called Zipingo to allow them to collect ratings on Payees from Quicken customers. So if you want to rate any of your Payees on a scale of 1 star to 5 stars you can either go to the zipingo.com site or click on the Payee's name with the Blue Star next to it.



If you click on the Blue Star, your rating and evaluation will be collected by Zipingo and added to their database. I checked their database for ratings for Air Conditioning repair companies in the Chandler, AZ area and only found one company rated. So I added a rating on the company I used this summer. It was the only fair thing to do. Ha... This new feature is a waste of time.

New Reports and Graphs Center

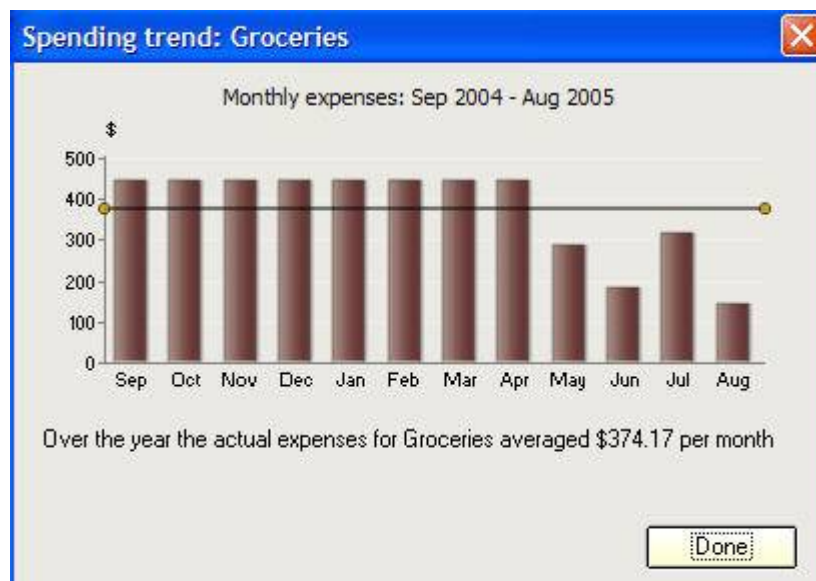
Intuit has made some very nice changes to the Reports and Graphs Center that makes it much more usable. You can adjust the report parameters very quickly in the Center.



The report has some interesting new features, as seen below.

Category Description	1/1/2005-9/23/2005
Uncategorized	140.90
Charity	736.00
Groceries	2,840.00
Interest Exp	3,753.18
Mortgage Int	11,083.32
Bank	11,083.32
Tax	3,424.59
Fed	1,928.88
Medicare	270.00
SDI	94.50
Soc Sec	450.00
State	681.21

When you click on the small graph icon, such as the one beside the Groceries category, you will view a very handy graph that gives the spending profile as a function of time and an average amount for that category.



I found this particular addition extremely useful in approximating what I had been spending on certain categories without going to the trouble of starting a totally new budget. Quicken has also added an EasyAnswer section to the Reports and Graphs Center that makes your data a lot more accessible.

Summary Evaluation

Once again, Intuit has produced an upgrade to Quicken for 2006 that makes the program easier to use. Reports on categories and payees and how you are spending your money can be seen very quickly. I agree with PC Magazine. If you have not upgraded since 2004 or before, you should take a serious look at Quicken 2006.

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