

DBXpress version 1.40

Product Review

By Linda Moore

This product review is both a tale of woe and a success story. First, I will tell you about my tale of woe. In 2002, I bought a Dell OptiPlex GX400, Dell's top of the line desktop computer at the time. I ordered it with the maximum amount of RAM (512 MB) at the time and two 40 GB hard drives with Windows 2000 Professional.

During the summer of 2004, I started to get a strange error message in Outlook Express (OE). The error message said something similar to "You are either running out of hard disk space or you have an insufficient amount of memory." I checked and I had over 20 GB of free space on both hard drives and with 512 MB that could not be the issue.

So, I ignored the message partly because I was very busy and the error message didn't make any sense to me at the time. I got the message two more times and proceeded to ignore it then as well.

Lesson #1 that I learned is that "***No matter how illogical the error message is, never ignore an error message.***" If possible, take a snapshot of the error message. This will be invaluable in your research to determine what is causing this error message to be displayed.

Then my OE Inbox locked up and I could no longer access any of the messages, which were previously in my Inbox. Instead Outlook Express created a new Inbox(1) for me. I did a considerable amount of research over the next few months and discovered that there are all kinds of chud holes related to OE. More about the chud holes later.

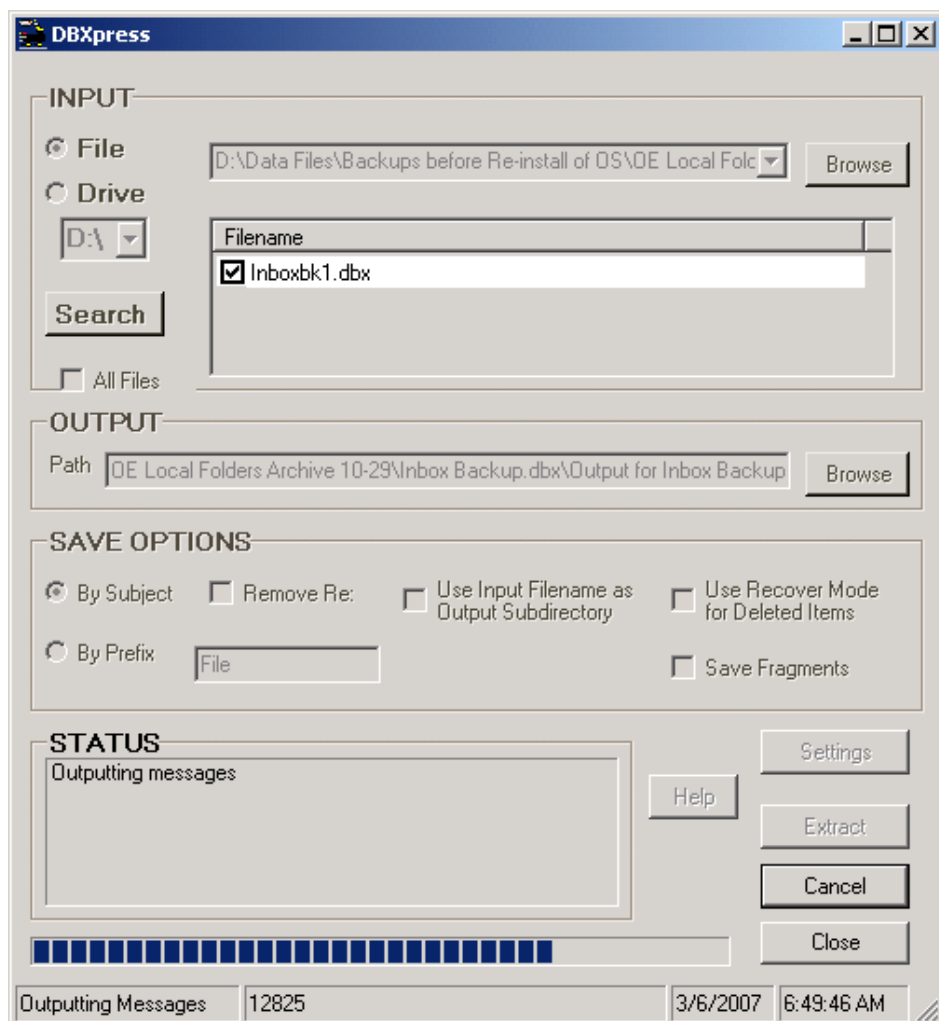
I discovered that there were several freeware programs, such as MailNavigator and Macallan and I discovered this website, <http://www.oehelp.com/default.aspx>, which has links to a lot of other excellent websites. For more detailed information on DBXpress, see <http://www.oehelp.com/DBXpress/Default.aspx>. One of the major recommendations on this site is to make a copy of the corrupt Inbox: so I copied the Inbox that I was locked out of and named it InboxBK1.dbx file.

This website is where I discovered Stephen L. Cochran's program, **DBXpress**, version 1.40 for \$24.95, which I ordered. Stephen provides free updates to any purchaser of DBXpress.

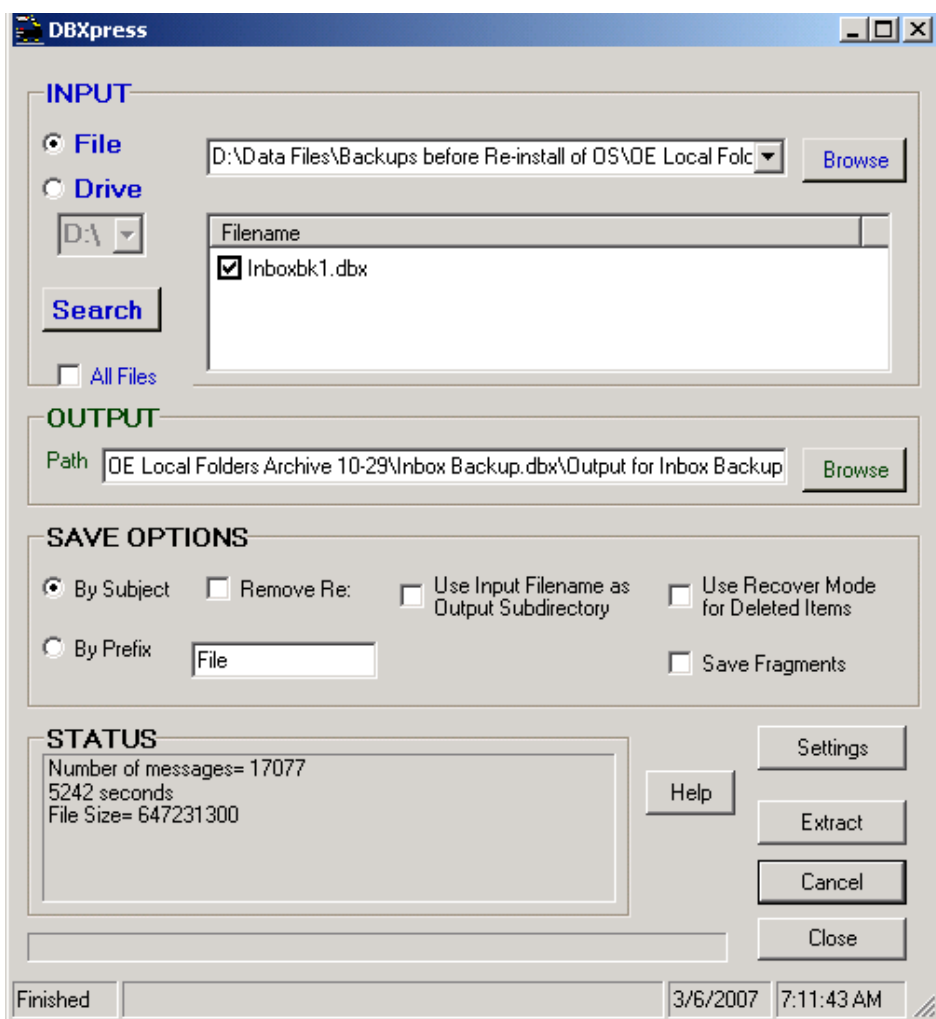
First, I tried to MailNavigator and then Macallan to see if these programs would work but neither would work. Then I tried DBXpress and it worked like a champ. but first I discovered that I needed to create an output file. So I created this output folder as a sub-folder under the folder, which contained InboxBK1.dbx.

Then I selected the path for InboxBK1 for Input file and then I selected the path for the output file. The next step was to click the extract button and the program started to hum.

It took about an hour to complete all of the steps but eventually, DBXpress saved every message that was in my InboxBK1 to the output file. all 17,077 messages. Here is a picture of DBXpress hard at work.



Here is the final snapshot of the final DBX screen.



Here are a few of the things that I learned about how to safely operate OE from this webpage. <http://www.oehelp.com/OETips.aspx#2>.

- The out of memory error means that the Inbox or OE subfolder has gotten too large for the folder to be loaded. The maximum size allowed by OE for any folder is 2 GB; however, my Inbox crashed at 634,000 KB.

The 2 GB maximum applies to every folder in OE.

- I set up lots of sub-folders under both my **Inbox** folder and my **Sent** folder.
- The rule of thumb that I use is that the maximum number of messages in any folder should not exceed contain is 2,000 messages. Using the "Find" command, you can still find any message that you need: no matter what sub-folder that it is in.

I use this rule of thumb because it is easier and faster to determine the size of the folder but this is a short cut. It is not the number of messages but the size of a folder and when it exceeds 100,000 KB, then sooner or later, this Inbox, Sent or other folder will wind up becoming corrupted eventually. However, the only way that a user can check the size of a folder is to search for *.dbx in Windows Explorer. This is time-consuming, which is why I use my rule of thumb of 2,000 messages per folder.

- Do not open attachments. Save the attachment in a separate folder setup just for this purpose and then scan it with your anti-virus program before opening it.
- Turn off email scanning of in your anti-virus software. This applies to both incoming and outgoing messages. It needs to be disabled to protect the OE message store because anti-virus software invades the Outlook Express program to try and intercept incoming and outgoing messages that might contain malware.

The problem with this approach is that the anti-virus software can trigger the destruction of an entire message folder or the entire message store, when it attempts to remove a message containing a potential virus.

- Compact "All Folders". Never compact single folders because sometimes this can cause your OE files to become corrupted. Fortunately, I did not have a corrupted Inbox, just an over-sized Inbox.
- Perform basic housekeeping at least every couple of months, where you sort your Inbox by subject and delete all of the email messages that you don't need to keep. I delete email messages from ZDNet, WordTips, Access, etc. Based on the quality of the content, I have even unsubscribed to a few of these listserves, which has also helped.
- Backup your message store on a regular basis, since OE is rather unstable. There is also the possibility that your hard drive could fail. I redirect my OE files to my data partition, which is on a separate hard drive. This makes the backup process a lot simpler, because all of my data files are in one place.
- According to Steve, "Based on the generic error message that I got, there was another way that I could have solved my problem. The error message that I got indicated that there was something the matter with the OE message store. The user could set up a new identity, which then sets up a new message store, which is NOT corrupt. Then by using the File I Import

to import the messages from the older identity with the corrupt message store.”

In the future, if I encounter any OE problems, the first place that I will check for clues will be Steve’s website. <http://www.oehelp.com/default.asp> WebPages.

OE has been updated in Vista and it is now called Windows Mail. There is a complete change in how Vista’s Windows Mail handles the message store, in that messages are individual files instead of being in a single file as in XP or W2K. This offers much greater protection to the message store, so that the user can lose the database but the messages will still be there. It is the same thing, as if you individually saved every email message in a folder on your hard drive.

Linda Moore
APCUG Director
Past President of North Texas PC Users Group
Linda.Moore@ntpcug.org

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