Navigating the Many Versions of Microsoft Office

For Windows and Mac Users

This presentation will give an overview of the three versions of Microsoft Office for Windows since 2003 and the three versions of Microsoft Office for Mac since 2004.
In 2003 Microsoft rolled out Office 2003 with many new features and improvements on previous versions. But the look and feel of its components were not dramatically different from previous versions. A year later came Office 2004 Mac, again with improvements and new features but no dramatic changes.
With much fanfare from Microsoft and an equal amount of anxiety from users, Office 2007 was introduced for Windows users. There were some dramatic changes in structure, work flow, and functionality that caused users to adopt it very reluctantly. When Office Mac 2008 was introduced, there was a good deal of relief from users as those same major changes were not reflected in the Mac version.
Office Windows 2010 was introduced with many new web enabled features as well as some user interface modifications that addressed the complaints from users of 2007. Office Mac came out in 2011 and introduced the new features that the Windows 2007 users had seen, but retained most of its legacy look and feel, which made transitioning to it from 2008 a fairly painless exercise.
So in ten years there have been 9 new releases of Microsoft Office. And they are all out there in use, in addition to the other office application software such as Apple’s Pages, Numbers and Keynote, and the Open Office Suite.
To see the primary difference users encounter, this is the view of the Word screen for Word 2003 and earlier. In involved dropdown menus and corresponding editable toolbars. Some of the locations and groupings were not terribly intuitive, but users got used to them.
In Office 2007 an new approach was taken. Instead of drop down menus, contextual menus revealed a ribbon of icons and additional sub menus. In some cases these ribbons were very similar to the drop down menus, but in other cases it was a completely new way of organizing the functions.
In Office Mac 2008 and earlier, the look and feel of Office programs were very much like their Windows counterparts. Dropdown menus coupled with editable toolbars.
When 2011 was designed, instead of completely replacing the old with the new as was done with the Windows version, there are still the familiar menus and toolbars (with some minor changes) in addition to the contextual ribbon as in Windows.
Fortunately Microsoft has invested a great deal of time and effort in developing a remarkably useful website for both Windows and Mac users. For the Windows users there are tutorials, web apps, templates, blogs, and countless other resources to help new and experience users get the help they need.
For Mac users it is a different website, but equally helpful in its user-friendly resources.