Tracks – Giving something back …

After a lot of searching for a GTD tool, I finally found Tracks and since it seems to do what it needs to in a proper and nice way and … since it's free, I thought I'd test and install that.

Since I'm mostly a Windows user, I tried to follow the Installation guide but found it too cumbersome. I tried the Bitnami downloads which worked fine but were a bit too much for me because a full Apache and MySQL and other unnecessary stuff were included.

I wanted to keep it fast and simple and I wanted to be able to take it with me on a USB stick. Not especially to run it from the stick all the time, but mostly I wanted to be able to take the database from home to work and back.

I searched and tested somewhat yesterday and when it all worked last night I thought I'd give something back to the nice people of Tracks who must have spent a lot of time in this fine product …

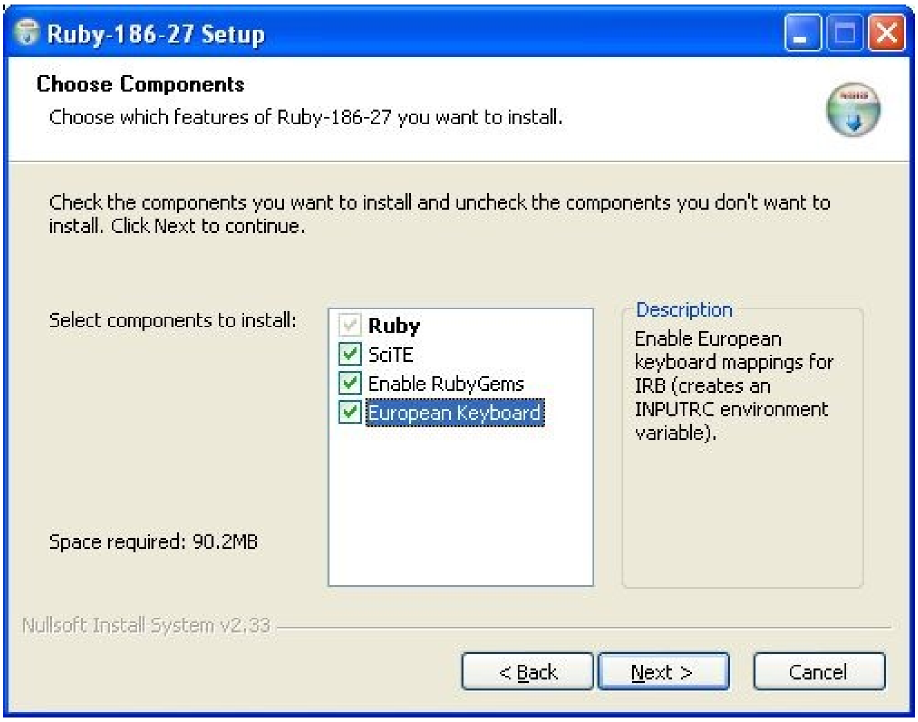
The idiot proof Tracks on Windows (USB) install guide

First download the tracks_current.zip file from the main page.

Unzip it in the directory you want. Although you can choose whichever, because I'll explain how you can put it on a USB stick later. It might not be a good idea to install directly onto the USB.
In my example, I unzipped it to D:\Data which created a sub-directory D:\Data\tracks-1.7.

Now download Ruby as explained on the Installation page from http://rubyforge.org/frs/?group_id=167; I took the Release Candidate 2 One Click Installer 1.8.6-27 because the 26 Final Release has this annoying bug which makes recurring task management fail in Tracks. Then run it.

It first requests to select the components; choose all if you wish (and have a European keyboard).[1]



Ruby-186-27 Setup

Choose Components

Choose which features of Ruby-186-27 you want to install.

Check the components you want to install and uncheck the components you don't want to install. Click Next to continue.

Select components to install:

☑ Ruby
☑ SciTE
☑ Enable RubyGems
☑ European Keyboard

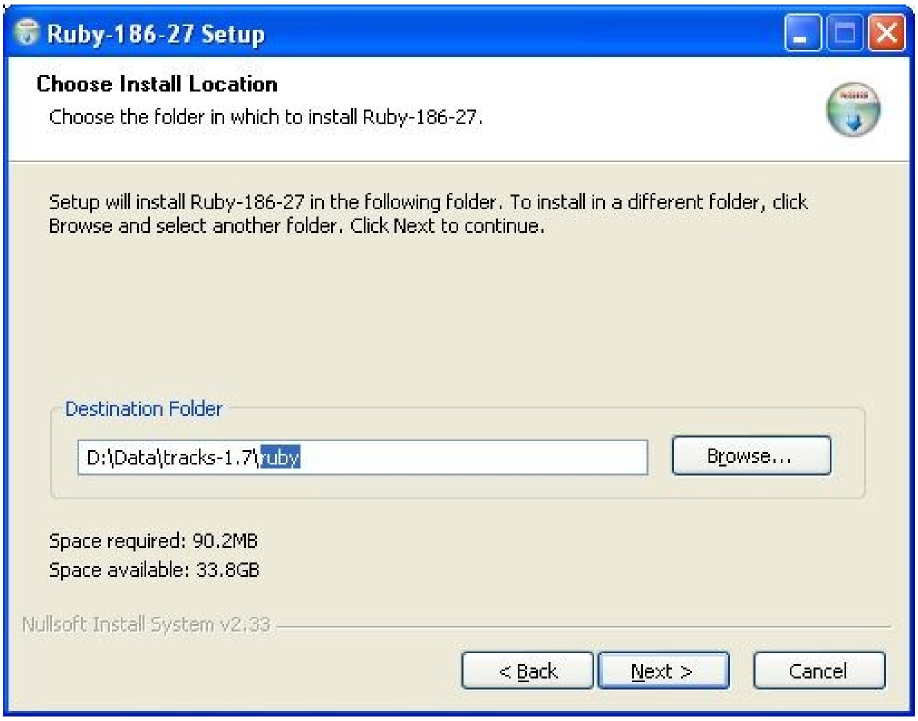
Description
Enable European keyboard mappings for IRB (creates an INPUTRC environment variable).

Space required: 90.2MB

Nullsoft Install System v2.33

[1] About SciTE, this will only work on separate machines if you install the complete Ruby package on each.

Next it'll request where to install. If you want to put it on a USB stick later, it might be best to install in the same directory as Tracks itself: browse to your Tracks directory and select it, then add *ruby* manually at the end.[2]



Ruby-186-27 Setup

Choose Install Location

Choose the folder in which to install Ruby-186-27.

Setup will install Ruby-186-27 in the following folder. To install in a different folder, click Browse and select another folder. Click Next to continue.

Destination Folder: D:\Data\tracks-1.7\ruby

Space required: 90.2MB
Space available: 33.8GB

Nullsoft Install System v2.33

Continue the installation; grab a coffee in the mean time :).

The Ruby package includes RubyGems so you don't need to download and install that any more.

You can test this by opening a Command Prompt window and type:

```
C:\> gem env
```

Some gem packages are already included in the Ruby package, you can see which ones, type:

```
C:\> gem q --local
```

As you can see, Rake gem package is already there so that part of the installation doesn't need to be done any more either.

Now, to install SQLite3[3], we'll need the SQLite3 dll file [and optionally the executable; it's not really needed]. Download the first or both two ZIP files and unpack them into the ruby\bin sub-directory you just installed (marked Executable Directory in the above gem env result).

We also need the gem package. If you have an Internet connection, you can simply type:

```
C:\> gem install sqlite3-ruby
```

If you don't or if you have errors like:

```
ERROR:  http://gems.rubyforge.org/ does not appear to be a repository
ERROR:  could not find gem sqlite3-ruby locally or in a repository
```

… download it from here. then copy it onto your machine and from the directory where you put it,

[2] Ruby wants to create the directory itself so even if you use the 'Make New Folder' from the Browse window to create it, it will first be deleted by the installation anyway.

[3] Be sure to type/select *sqlite3*, not *sqlite*!

type the above command.[4] As far as I can tell, you can ignore the 'No definition for' warnings.

You could now start ruby and run Tracks, but let's put it in a Windows Command file. Open your favourite text file editor (Notepad, PSPad, etc. but NOT WordPad!) and create a new file ***startTracks.cmd*** in the top tracks-1.7 directory (D:\Data\tracks-1.7 in my example) and type:

```
@echo off
SET PATH=ruby\bin;%PATH%
SET RUBYOPT=rubygems
SET INPUTRC=ruby\bin\inputrc.euro
start /b rubyw script/server webrick -eproduction -p3000 2>err.txt 1>out.txt
```

Be sure not to type any mistakes here (better yet, use copy/paste): there are NO spaces before nor after the = signs.

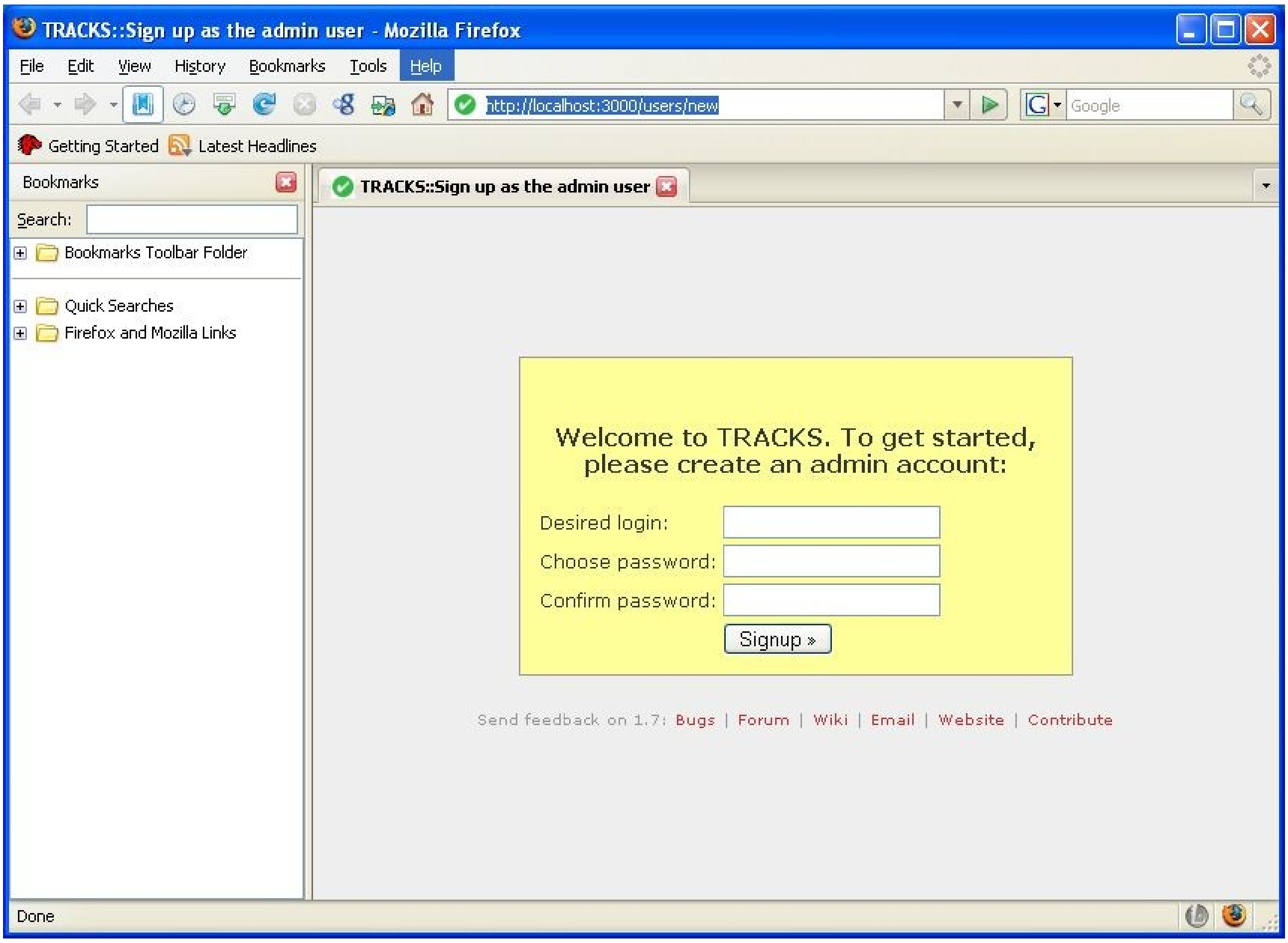
Create a second file ***stopTracks.cmd*** next to the previous with these lines:

```
@echo off
taskkill /f /im rubyw.exe
```

Ready?

Double click the startTracks.cmd file; a black window briefly appears, then disappears.

On slow/old computers, you may now need to wait a while for ruby to do it's magic (sometimes even 60 seconds or so), then point your favourite browser to http://localhost:3000/ or just click here.


TRACKS::Sign up as the admin user - Mozilla Firefox
File
Edit
View
History
Bookmarks
Tools
Help
http://localhost:3000/users/new
Google
Getting Started
Latest Headlines
Bookmarks
Search:
Bookmarks Toolbar Folder
Quick Searches
Firefox and Mozilla Links
TRACKS::Sign up as the admin user
Done

Welcome to TRACKS. To get started, please create an admin account:

Desired login:

Choose password:

Confirm password:

Signup »

Send feedback on 1.7: Bugs | Forum | Wiki | Email | Website | Contribute

[4] The gem command works from any directory and when it finds a gem file that starts with 'sqlite3-ruby', it will install it into the correct ruby location.

The first thing to do is create an account. Be sure not to take anything too easy because everyone in your local network can browse to that port 3000 on your computer to access your Tracks. Mind you: both login name and password are case sensitive, so *Patrick* is not the same as *patrick*.

For those of you who want to use Mongrel rather than Webrick, you can simple install that using:

```
    C:\> gem install mongrel
```

It will retrieve three packages from the Ruby web server and install those.

In the above startTracks.cmd file, change webrick to mongrel like so:

```
    start /b rubyw script/server mongrel -eproduction -p3000 2>err.txt 1>out.txt
```

Frankly I didn't see a lot of difference between the two, Ruby really is your speed bottleneck on Windows! But once started, performance is more than acceptable, even on Windows.

That's all there is to it!

If you now copy the complete ***tracks-1.7*** directory onto your USB stick, you can just run it from that. Be sure to run ***stopTracks*** first. As you may have noticed, the startTracks.cmd file uses relative path names in the environment variables which is why it can be copied to any disk or directory or USB and work from there!

Some more tech stuff

On the Installation page of the Tracks site, the configure variables # 4 talks about the 'shebang' lines in the scripts. This isn't necessary at all because Windows doesn't use these lines.

That's why the people who created the Ruby package for Windows needed to write separate .bat files next to each command: Windows cannot simply execute a file without an extension the way *nix (UNIX, Linux, Mac OS X) can. So e.g. it doesn't 'run' the ruby/bin/gem file if you execute the 'gem' command, it finds the next best thing with an executable extension (according to the PATHEXT environment variable) and finds the gem.bat file which actually tells Windows to execute *ruby gem [args]*. This is the equivalent of the shebang line.

Someone should tell the people at Ruby that they shouldn't bother changing these lines in all files on Windows because they are confusing and serve no purpose.

Don't believe me? Why does *gem* command work if it still has #!D:/Users/Luis/projects/oss/oci/installer2-trunk/ruby/bin/ruby.exe in it?

Still not certain: go ahead and change it into #!C:/whatever/ruby ;-)

So there isn't any need to go and change all these files after copying them to your USB either.

Transfer database only

If you have the tracks-1.7 directory sitting on both your home and work computer, you don't want to copy the whole thing every time.

Simply stop Tracks, and copy the tracks-1.7\db\tracks-17-blank.db file over.

That's' what's containing all your valuable GTD data!

And for now: wish me luck in using Tracks, I'll need it!

Patrick