

Editorial

The year moves on faster as you get older, or is it that you slow down and everything appears to go faster, certainly a sign of old age I suppose. The next Swindon meeting is here once again, the anticipation of what will happen this time makes me quite excited, (yes this is my excited look). Every meeting we have had I have gained something from, ever since the very first meeting back in the Wiltshire Hotel days, someone has always suprised me with what they have learned to do, how to overcome or get around a problem, what they had discovered or developed, this has always been a great help to me, saved me hours of trying to do something or solved my problem, that for me is what keeps the meetings and the club alive.

All this blurb, what I am trying to say is, what do you think keeps a person wanting to come to our meetings? What makes you want to come? And more seriously for the people who don't come what stops you wanting to come? If I knew the answers to all these questions we would have even more attendees and fun at the Swindon Meetings.

That brings me on to the Dave Washford Memorial Award. I hope to have formulated a questionnaire to go with this newsletter, the answers that you give will help the Committee decide on the format and rules for the award. The overall aim of the award will be increase the interest and popularity of the club and ensure its future for many more years to come. Dave always wanted the club to thrive and for that reason was quite keen to see the NATGUG project progress. He could see the old values of being a club member returning and it was a challenge that could help people develop further ideas that would come out of the project, it also made some of the old grey matter start to activate again, and that's what keeps us all young and our minds fit.

I look forward to next Friday when I will arrive at the Hotel very early in the morning (the middle of the night for Roger) to make sure everything is ready for you all to arrive, set the tables up to make the most of the room we have, and importantly make sure there is plenty of tea, coffee and soft drinks for everyone.

Then I can relax a bit and look forward to you all arriving, setting up your equipment and having a laugh and joke with old friends and new members alike, until then best wishes and safe journey.

Bob Sparling (Editor)

Software Review:

RedBox Organizer

by Dick Robbins - SPCUG

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RedBox Organizer is a nifty little utility whose start-up icon sits on the Windows system tray. I would guess it contains many of the features of a Palm Pilot type handheld PID organiser, although I cannot make a direct comparison as my experience with a Palm is very limited. Though lacking the power of Goldmine or Act, the program could be very useful in personal planning for someone in business or sales.

RedBox contains a daily planner, calendar, a notes section, an address book, reminders of key dates and appointments and an expense register. When activated, the RedBox main menu appears. There are 10 boxes across the top of the menu: Reminder, Calendar, To Do, Planner, Address, Notes, Expenses, Anniversaries, Link, and Reports. In my view, it is best to start with the calendar and fill in the dates and times of known appointments. The calendar has a clock on the upper right side of the window and graphical calendar with dates on the other. After the date and time are selected, the user can indicate whether the appointment is recurring, in which case the program posts the appointment to the appropriate dates. You can also indicate whether a phone call is needed or an alarm should be sounded when the appointment is due. If the call is selected, a note in red highlights the need for a call. A call can be placed directly by modem, but as far as I can tell, a call isn't automatically made when a corresponding appointment appears on the

calendar. If the appointment will take some time, there is a little balloon on the right of the screen, which can be used to enter the duration of the appointment and when it will end. The calendar can be viewed daily, weekly or monthly.

The To Do section permits the user to list projects to be completed with appropriate priorities from 1 to 9. The projects on the list are continually shown until the projects are checked as complete. A checked project can always be reopened.

The Planner section permits the scheduling of longer-range activities extending over days or months. It also graphically presents the activities already scheduled by date with various user-selected colours to distinguish one from another similar to a Gantt chart. The program will not allow the same colour to be used on projects with conflicting time schedules. All the activities from the calendar and To Do list as well as the planner section are included. By focusing in on a particular day and double clicking with the mouse, the user is taken to the source of the particular item on the schedule. A useful tool! When using this portion of the program, I was amazed to find my days are more than completely occupied. I didn't know I was (or should be) so busy.

The address section can be used to store addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and URLs. The amount of data to be entered is completely selectable, and can be sorted by name, phone number or address and also by business or personal contact.

The next section is intended to hold notes which can be categorised by business topics, daily activities or private notes. Text can be imported and exported to other programs and can be placed in folders for easy reference. The expense section is used to collect business and other expenses. Each expense item can be entered in a different colour by date and expense category (i.e., auto, business meals, lodging, etc). Expenses can then be sorted and printed by category, date, etc.

The Anniversary section just highlights dates that can be forgotten only at your personal peril such as spouse's birthdays, anniversaries and the like. The link feature is one of the more interesting parts of the program. Names in the address book can be linked to appointments in the calendar or, for that matter, any other entry in the other sections. The program claims "RedBox can link anything with everything". There is a search function attached to the link creator that finds key words of activities so the activities can be linked.

Reports can be run summarising data in each of the sections, but the reports cannot be reformatted so the utility of this feature is limited. In short, RedBox Organizer is a light version of contact management program. It would be a handy addition to a laptop for those that travel on business.

The program requires a 486 or better, 8MB of Ram, 5MB of hard drive space and a CD drive to read the program. The list is \$39.95. I was unable to find RedBox for sale on the usual Internet software sites, but competing software products such as Rolodex and Day Tier sell for prices ranging from \$18 to \$78.

InKline Global, Inc. PO Box 5479, Reno, NV 89513, www.inKlineGlobal.com

Software Review:

Encarta Reference Suite 2001

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

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Probably the most useful piece of reference software you can either own or give as a gift is an encyclopedia. There are a few really good ones available, but of them all, Microsoft Encarta is the number one favourite among users. It also garners the most "first place" and "editor's choice" awards from all the computer magazines. It is literally a cornucopia of information of,

as Gilbert and Sullivan would say, "All information vegetable, and animal, and mineral."

I remember when encyclopedias came one volume at a time, the entire set in its day costing a small fortune. Today, an entire bookcase worth (and then some) fits on seven CD's that you could slip into your shirt pocket. Furthermore, they provide features you would not even dream of way back then, like full multimedia animation, sound, colour, and lots more.

The title of the software tells you that you are getting more than an encyclopedia alone, and indeed you do. The Encarta Reference Suite contains not only of a magnificent encyclopedia, it also includes a deluxe on-line reference, an interactive world atlas, English dictionary, thesaurus and book of quotations, a report creator and organiser, and the most recent addition of Encarta Africana Encyclopedia. Here's what you can look forward to:

1. ENCARTA ENCYCLOPEDIA DELUXE -- It is the first choice among encyclopedias in every magazine review we've seen. It includes more than 227,400 authoritative articles, 10,000 new historical archive articles, almost 25,300 photos, 290 videos and animations, 81,100 sound clips, 31,000 Web links, and more than 73 million words.

A new dynamic timeline brings world historical events into perspective that relate to the major events of their period. Archives provide fascinating first-hand accounts of many of them. References are made to relevant grade-level curriculums. You can keep up to date with regular update downloads from Microsoft's Web site.

2. ENCARTA INTERACTIVE WORLD ATLAS -- The world's most detailed atlas with more than 8 times the detail of any printed atlas. Maps, maps, and more maps of just about anyplace and everyplace in the world. Many different dynamic map styles including a dynamic multimedia map with images, videos, and fascinating facts that spring to life when selected from the map. Includes information on geographic phenomena like deserts and glaciers. New flat maps give a global perspective on climates, ecoregions and other world trends.

3. ENCARTA WORLD ENGLISH DICTIONARY -- The most up-to-date English dictionary published for world-wide use. Includes more than 400,000 authoritative references, 60,000+ audio pronunciations, 1,000+ usage notes. Also includes Original Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases, Encarta Book of Quotations, Encarta Manual of Style and Usage, and the Microsoft Press Computer and Internet Dictionary, and more than 17,000 audio word pronunciations.

4. ENCARTA ONLINE DELUXE -- Provides the latest and continuously updated, new and improved information to append to that provided in the other reference areas.

5. ENCARTA AFRICANA 3RD EDITION -- The award-winning encyclopedia of black history and culture.

6. REPORT WRITER -- Gathers information from all the above resources and assists in creating a report while automatically citing each source and creating an accurate bibliography. Can create multimedia presentations and reports.

The total package includes 7 CDs. The installation is quick and painless, and you will need to run the appropriate CD (you will be prompted) to access the various modules. Perhaps the only caveat to this magnificent package is the mandatory inclusion of Internet Explorer 5.5 in its installation. To avoid potential problems, be sure to upgrade 5.5 with Service Pack 1. This ultimate in reference suites sells for about \$70. It makes the ideal gift you will want to give to anyone who owns a computer, especially yourself. www.microsoft.com

Software Review:

Drive Image 4.0

by Brian K. Lewis - SPCUG

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This is the latest version of PowerQuest Corporation's Drive Image software. They produced this version to include support for Windows Millennium Edition (WinME). It also includes some major changes in that it can now write directly to CD-R or CD-RW disks. I installed this version on a computer running WinME.

I prepared the two "Rescue" Disks that the program recommended. A function I wanted to test was Drive Copy or as the manual calls it, Drive to Drive. I had a non-formatted drive that I wanted to install as the C drive after I copied all the files on the current C drive. The easiest way to do this was to set the jumpers on the drive so the new drive was selected as the Master. This also meant the system would not boot from the hard disk. Instead, I booted it from the floppy set. The floppy system installed a mouse driver and brought up the main screen, which looks very much like a Windows program screen. So although you are operating in a DOS mode, everything functions just like Windows.

I selected the Drive to Drive button. From then on, it was just a matter of following the on screen instructions. I selected the source drive, then the destination drive. The program then asked me if I wanted to expand the source partition to fill the destination partition. Since the source partition was 2.5GB and the destination was 7.5GB I said "yes".

The next step was to select the "copy type" as "replace", since the new drive was replacing the smaller drive. The final choice was to select the Write mode. I checked Safe Mode, check for bad sectors and verify disk writes. Although this slows the process slightly, it does provide some security by insuring that no errors exist on the new drive. Finally, clicking on Finish allowed the job to start. Please note, that I needed no reference to any manual. Drive Image does come with a well illustrated, clearly written manual. However, the program is so well done that it is not likely that you will make much use of the manual.

My next step was to use the Drive Image program to make an image file for backup purposes. This time I used the hard disk version of the program. Clicking on the program quickly brought up a window telling me, the program would have to reboot my computer into DOS mode. So I clicked the OK button. The computer then did a complete soft restart and ended in the same Drive Image main menu that I had seen when I booted from the floppy disks. The Drive Image software had loaded a version of WinME, and drivers for my ZIP drive. It also loaded a program that comes with Drive Image that allows you to write directly to a CD-R or a CD-RW disk. In this instance, I did not have a CD burner installed on this computer, so I used a second hard drive as the destination for the image file. This process was quite simple. I selected the main drive as the source partition, the second drive as the destination partition, named the image file, select high compression and that was it. The files were compressed and written to the hard disk at the rate of 123MB per minute. This process is far faster than any tape drive. In addition, the restore process is just as quick and easy.

This version of Drive Image has an improved Image file editor. The editor allows you to manage your Image files and it runs as a Windows program. Suppose you need to restore a single file. The Image file editor opens and looks just like the Windows Explorer program. In the left pane you have the directory tree. If you select the image file in this pane, the contents of the file are listed in the right pane. Now you can quickly find the file you need to restore. Click on the file to select it. Then you have three choices. You can go to the file menu and select Restore or you can right-click the file and select Restore from the pop-up menu. The third choice is to drag and drop the file into the desired location in the left-hand pane of the editor. In other words, restoring a file is just as easy as copying or moving a file in Windows Explorer. Try that with your tape drive and backup software. I restore several files in just seconds with this Image editor. I think you can get the idea from my comments that this version of Drive Image is impressive. It works very well with Win98/WinMe. It may not work with Win95A, but by now you really should have upgraded to 98 or ME. If you need a simple, reliable backup system, then Drive

Image 4.0 should be your choice.

DriveImage 4.0 is published by PowerQuest Corporation, P O Box 1911, Orem, UT. URL: www.powerquest.com. The list price is \$69.95 and the street price is \$59.95 to \$64.95.

Software Review:

Microsoft Greetings 2001

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

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There are many things that people do with computers. If you made a list of those most popular, you would have to include producing greeting cards among them, and it would probably be somewhere close to the top of the list. With that in mind, Microsoft has produced an excellent program for making greeting cards and a number of other associated projects that combine text and graphics to produce a variety of useful everyday items.

Using Microsoft Greetings 2001, you can produce greeting cards, post cards, business cards, stationery, labels, stickers, photo albums, and a passel of projects composed of words, artwork and pictures. It even contains a module to edit and correct the photos you want to use. To provide for all this, Greetings 2001 contains more than 12,000 high quality images and graphics, 500 animated greetings, and 125 fonts. You can produce a printed hard copy of your project, convey it to your scanner, or send it out over the Web.

Installation of the two component CDs is simple. A good precaution is to disable your antivirus software first. Unfortunately, Microsoft in its typical fashion, assumes that everyone is a novice and associates the program with some of your graphic files (like .jpg) without your permission or necessarily desire. As a QuickView Plus user, I had to re-associate my .jpg's with QuickView Plus after Greetings arbitrarily associated them with Greetings. Microsoft needs to get away from the mentality of assuming that their programs are the only ones on your computer, a problem that exists equally with a number of their other applications.

For the most part, the program runs smoothly and efficiently as advertised. It opens to a home page that permits you to choose your project, and then brings up numerous examples of your choice that you can edit to produce exactly what you have in mind. Alternatively, you can accept one of the many designs Greetings will offer you, changing nothing except possibly the text. You can perform a key-word search to pretty much find what you are looking for. Among greeting cards, you can select from a category of occasions, and then the design for that occasion that suits your preference. The results are completely professional looking and extremely impressive. You can also select a blank template and create your project from scratch using the graphics and text of your choice.

A common problem for many people is remembering the people, dates and occasions to send out greetings. The program solves the problem by offering reminders for each automatically. E-mailing your creation will even save you the cost of postage. The image creations in the program are exceptional. They are the product of an excellent alliance between Microsoft and the famous Madison Park Greetings Co.

The program is easy working and provides a movie tutorial and adequate help. No manual is provided, so you really need some previous experience with graphic software. An uninitiated novice would probably experience some degree of frustration, while it will be intuitive for almost anyone else. Microsoft has made an occasional glitch, as for example in its business card feature. If you elect to use the template that has all the cards in horizontal or landscape version, you will be presented with a design template of a card in portrait or vertical version. On the other hand, if you elect a portrait version, you will get a landscape template. Just pick the one you don't want and you will be O.K.

Greetings comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee. It is widely available both on the Web and at local stores that carry software. It carries a street price of around \$25. You will find the Greetings Website at <http://pictureit.msn.com>.

Book Review:

Microsoft Front Page 2000
Step By Step

by Dave Gerber - SPCUG

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It was almost two years ago when I first decided to develop an Internet Website for my business. I had registered my domain name (www.sarasotalease.com) and thought I was ready to just jump right in. Even though this was to be a business site, I initially created a personal site using the rationale that if I screw up a personal site ... who will care? I was a bit intimidated by Front Page even though it is probably the most popular and universally used Website creation program, especially for consumer use. Even though at that time I had Front Page 97, I decided, having a lot of experience, to create my site using Microsoft Publisher. I was happy with it, but felt that any business site that I could create wouldn't have the professional look I was hoping for. With that I installed Front Page 2000.

Before I continue, I should mention that it is a rare occasion when I actually break the binding on a computer book or manual. I have bookshelves full of computer books that have never been opened. I've found that I have the knack to poke around and experiment within a program and am usually successful in making it work. Now it's not that Front Page is such a complicated product, but for some reason I just wasn't getting it.

My first attempt at learning was Front Page for Dummies. Let's just say it offered me little help. So now I go to a local bookstore and find numerous books published by Microsoft and others on learning Front Page. I must have sat there for what seemed like hours, comparing them, assuring myself I was going to make the right choice. I chose Microsoft's Official Front Page 2000 Book. I began using some of the beginning techniques, but became pretty frustrated when I would do something to mess things up and then, because I really didn't understand many of the concepts, got frustrated and abandoned the project.

A few months later, I had access to a training video that covered Front Page. Sorry, uh, uh, not for me.

The instructor, with that monotonous robot-like voice could not even keep me interested. Perhaps I would just go back to using Microsoft Publisher for my Website and do the best that I can. Not too much after that decision was made, Dr Saul Lowitt opened my eyes. I was taking his Excel SIG and found that he was structuring his classes around the Microsoft Excel Step By Step book. Excel was another program that I simply could not absorb. Now I don't profess to be an Excel expert, but I know much more than I ever did before with this method of instruction. Some people learn best by reading, some by watching, some by listening, but it seems that "doing" works best for me. Along with the Step-By-Step books comes a CD that contains the practice files referred to in each lesson, so that along with reading each lesson, you actually get to use the techniques covered. For me, this was truly a self-study kit as opposed to a reference title. Each lesson is well planned in a logical order, that for me, made Front Page much easier to learn.

Each lesson tells you about how long it should take to complete so you really don't have to stop in the middle of a lesson, but simply make sure you can devote the approximate time given which means you can learn at your own pace. From Planning and Creating a Website to Formatting and Enhancing Web Pages, Understanding and Utilizing Advanced Techniques to the final step of publishing your Website. You do need to have Front Page 2000 installed on your computer in order to open all of the practice files contained on the accompanying CD. The installation of the practice files themselves is a cinch. Each lesson will have you open a real life practice example

associated with it. The CD also contains multimedia demos of common procedures. Following each lesson and working with the practice files made my learning of Front Page a productive experience. No other computer book that I have been exposed to could have been such an excellent substitute for a "live" instructor as the Step By Step Series.

Microsoft Front Page 2000 Step-By-Step is published by Microsoft Press and can either be purchased locally or on-line at mspress.microsoft.com with a retail price of \$29.99.

Software Review:

Partition Magic 6.0

by Brian K Lewis - SPCUG

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This version of Partition Magic (PM 6) was upgraded to work with Windows ME and 2000. Since I now have a Windows ME system, giving this version a trial seemed only logical. The installation was straightforward. First, select the location, then enter my name and the serial number of the software. A few seconds later, and it was complete.

However, this computer system has two hard drives, each with a different operating system. During the installation I was given the option of installing "Boot Magic". This is PowerQuest's optional software that allows you to select which system you want at boot time. I installed it to boot either the Windows ME or Linux operating systems. So now it brings up a boot menu that allows me to choose which system I want to work with. It also has Windows ME as the default system and will boot into that if I don't make a manual selection.

PowerQuest has changed the user interface for PM 6 slightly. With the new Windows interface, you can see all the drives on your computer. For example, on my system it listed the Windows ME drive and the Linux drive. It also had the details on the partitions on these drives. On the Windows drive I could determine how much space was used, free space, cluster size and wasted space. The information on the Linux drive included the total size, used space and free space. From this one window you can select the actions you wish to carry out such as add or remove a partition, resize partitions, or copy partitions. While you are selecting changes to be made, no physical changes are being made to your hard disk. Once you have selected the action(s) you want, then you click on "Apply Changes". This is the time when the program will make the actual changes to your hard disk. Usually, it will be necessary for PM 6 to exit Windows and restart your computer in DOS to carry out the changes. Even if you are using Windows ME, the program runs a special batch file at boot time to set up the DOS mode. The program will also verify the integrity of your hard disk before making any changes. Once the system is running in DOS, you can monitor the changes as they are being made. PM 6 writes progress information on the screen as it is working.

I have a system with a 15GB hard drive that I wanted to partition. The cluster size on a 15GB partition is 8K, whereas on a 7.5GB partition it is 4K. Why is this important? The bigger the cluster size, the more space that is wasted on your hard drive. Sure, I know, your drive is so big now that you will never use all of its capacity. That's the same thing I heard users say when 30MB drives first became available. Now you can't even fit the operating system into 30MB of space. Never presume that you won't be using the capacity of your hard drive, whatever its size. Both applications and data files keep increasing in size. So keeping the slack or wasted space on your hard drive to a minimum really is important.

To partition the hard drive, I selected the "Created New Partition" Wizard. This walked me through the entire process. At any point I could have cancelled the process or returned to the previous step. At the beginning of the process, the program warned me that creating a partition would change some drive letter assignments. In my case, this would apply specifically to the CD-ROM drive. PM 6 has a "Drive Mapper" utility that will automatically make the changes to the drive letter references. I strongly suggest that you use this utility any time you make changes to drive partitions.

Next, PM 6 ask me to select the drive I wanted to partition, which was the C drive. Then, it asked if I wanted to install an operating system on this partition, which I did not. Perhaps the most difficult part for most users is the selection of the file system type for the new partition. If you are using Windows 95B, 95C, 98, ME or 2000, then you want a FAT32 file system. Only if you are using Windows 3.1 or Windows 95A would you select the FAT system. Since I was not putting an operating system on the new partition, I selected a "logical" partition, instead of a primary partition. Then I selected the location and the size for the new partition. PM 6 then gave me a confirmation of the changes I wanted to make. Clicking on the "Finish" button took me back to the first window which now displayed the revised partitions for the C drive. However, the physical changes had not been made. At this point to carry out the final operation I had to click the "Apply Changes" button. There was also an "Undo Last" button which will remove the last change you set up.

The DOS operation took a few minutes to accomplish and then the system rebooted into Windows. As a result of this process I now have a 15 Gb drive with a C and D partition. Each partition is about 7.5 Gb and has 4K clusters.

Partition Magic 6 is the latest version in the series and shows some definite improvements in its function and its user interface. I have always found it to be very reliable and that hasn't changed. This is certainly a very useful application for anyone wishing to control the partitions on any large hard drive.

Partition Magic 6 is produced by PowerQuest Corporation. P O Box 1911, Orem, UT. URL: www.powerquest.com The list price is \$69.95 and the street price is \$59.95 to \$64.95.

Software Review:

Ontrack System Suite 3.0

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

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Look ... up on the screen ... it's a bird ... it's a plane ... no, it's supersuite! And, if ever there was a super-suite, Ontrack's System Suite 3 certainly fits the bill.

Our loyal readers know well that the king of utility software publishers is Ontrack. With a background of more than 25 years in hard drive installation, recovery and management utility publishing, they have more recently become the undisputed leaders of general PC utility software, blowing the former notables right out of the water. Their most recent contribution, System Suite 3 adds some nuances and is now fully compatible with Windows ME, as well as 2000, NT, 95 and 98.

The king pin of the suite is Ontrack's Fix-It Utilities. It is also available as a stand-alone program sold separately. It is designed to find, fix and prevent a broad range of problems on, as well as tune-up, your PC. It's your best insurance to keep your computer running optimally, efficiently and saving yourself considerable headaches, down time, and repair bills.

The first module in Fix-It Utilities is the FixWizard, the easy way to maintain and fix your system without worrying about the details. It can scan for viruses and hard drive errors, check and fix Year 2000 readiness issues, defragments your hard drives, clean and fix the system registry, find and fix broken or unused files, and fix broken registry entries. I have had my Windows 95 Pentium 100 system for nearly three years, and in that time my registry had many broken items that I was not aware of. When I ran the Wizard, it found and fixed 123 broken links in my registry. I have no idea where they came from, but they are no longer a problem.

The FixWizard performs its operations in a "safe" manner, meaning that it will fix or remove only those items or files that will not interfere with other normal operations. The remaining five modules in Fix-It Utilities 2000 are more powerful, and expand and amplify operations on your

computer hardware, system, applications and data. Because they are more powerful, they need a little more oversight on your part. Therefore, when they find errors they describe the error and give you the choice of removing, repairing, compressing or leaving them alone.

The Disk and Files module checks and repairs the hard disk, checks the partition and boot records, checks the files for directory structure, valid dates and times, proper file names and lost clusters. It performs many of the functions that Windows ScanDisk performs, but does it faster and more completely. It defrags the hard disk, and recovers disk space by finding files that are unnecessary, duplicate or unused for some time, allowing you the choice each time whether to remove them, or to zip them and move them to another part of the drive. It can make a copy of all your critical system files and any other files you wish to backup, and restore them when and if your system becomes corrupted. Finally, it checks individual disks or CDs to make sure that they can be read without errors.

The system registry is a critical set of files that Windows needs to be able to run. With use the registry can become fragmented, become corrupt or contain invalid links. All these errors interfere with proper operation of your applications. The System Registry module finds these errors, describes them, and with your approval attempts to repair them, or to replace them with previously backed-up copies. It cleans out unwanted or unnecessary items in the registry and edits and optimises the registry to increase speed. And it can customise Windows by changing the way it looks and works.

The System Diagnostics module checks your installed hardware for any problems, and gives you a complete report on how your computer's hardware is working. It covers system memory, hard drives, floppy and CD-ROM drives, serial and parallel ports, video, keyboard, mouse, modem, sound card, multimedia capabilities and system motherboard and central processing unit. Since my computer has one of the earliest Pentium processors, without MMX capability, I wondered whether the test would pick this up. Sure enough, everything else came out fine, but my multimedia capability showed up as deficient. The System Diagnostics module also finds and fixes Year 2000 problems, explores and describes in detail information about your system, and monitors your system resources, warning you when they are getting low.

The System Protection module includes CrashProof, an application that runs in the background. This application intercepts and interrupts system crashes, describes them, allows you to save your data, and then attempts to fix the problem. The module also contains an excellent virus scanner and repair program, which can be either run full-time in the background (Real Time Virus Scanner), run on demand or scheduled to run at preselected times. This module can also preschedule system Fix-It maintenance tasks, prepare the System Rescue Disk set, view a log of all Fix-It Utilities operations on your system, and allows you to undo any changes made by Fix-It Utilities.

The final module is called the Crisis Center, and this is where you go if your computer has real trouble. It will help you rescue and recover your data, and if possible isolate and repair the cause of the problem. It first offers free technical support and information, to help you recover from data loss problems. At extra cost you can have Ontrack's professional data recovery engineer attempt to diagnose and repair severe data loss corruption via modem and Internet connection. Finally, for the toughest data recovery service they offer an In-Lab service.

Several new features and some improved have been added to 3.0. Easy Recovery Professional Lite is a new data recovery software tool that will bring back 50 files at a time, even if the system won't boot, and saves files to a safe location.

Jet Defrag is an improved version of their defragmenting/optimising utility. It includes IntelliCluster technology that arranges the data on your drive for quicker access to your most frequently used software.

SMARTDefender is a new early warning system that alerts users to hard drive problems, allowing you to save data before drive failure.

A new multimedia tutorial guides you through use of all the tools contained in the suite. Bootable Rescue CD -- The suite CD can be used as an emergency rescue disk that will help you restore a system that won't boot-up, allowing you to save data and restore corrupted system files. A floppy rescue disk is also included.

Improved Diagnostics -- You can use a broad range of tools to troubleshoot your computer hardware. It now additionally tests your USB port and DVD drive.

Power Desk 4 Pro -- Here's the handiest and my most frequently used part of the suite. It's Windows Explorer on steroids! Perform a wide range of functions on your files and folders presented in a superb format with a wide range of useful functions you won't find in Explorer. This module alone is worth the cost of the suite, and is available as a stand-alone program.

Data Eraser Professional Edition -- Allows safe recycling of your hard drive by permanently erasing all the data contained thereon.

Easy Uninstall monitors your software installations so that you may remove all traces from whatever remote corners of your drive when you want to uninstall a program.

The antivirus scanner portion of the suite is non other than our favourite PC-Cillin that will do a super job keeping you virus free. All in all Ontrack's System Suite 3 is a classic program that belongs on everyone's computer. It has our whole-hearted and enthusiastic recommendation. At a street price of \$50, I can't think of a better investment you can make in your computer. You should have 64 MB of RAM or better and 60 MB of free drive space for a complete installation. www.ontrack.com (800) 872-2599

Shareware Review:

Visual Calendar Planner 5.0

by Larry Thomason - SPCUG.

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This program is meant for computer users like me. I never remember to look at the notes I have entered on my wall calendar. PC Magazine gave it a "Shareware Award Winning Program". The program provides monthly calendars, on your computer (which you may print, using colour or black and white). When you open the program, the current month is shown, beginning on the correct day of the week. You may then insert items in each date block. Each monthly calendar which you have prepared is saved with a file name you give it, so you may access it whenever you want it. The current month may be used as wallpaper for your desktop, and you will have your current calendar right in front of you each time you turn on your computer.

While I have been using computers since my first (IBM PCjr), and am now using Windows 98 II, I still cannot claim to be an expert. This is a simple, easy to run little program that will provide help so many of us can use. The program installed with ease, and in an hour's time, I had it running and producing calendars with notations wherever needed. Anyone who knows Word Perfect or Microsoft Word, or similar word processors, should be able to have this program up and running in a short time. You will not need an instruction manual; there are many pages of instructions under "Help".

This is a well-written program that does a wonderful job, quickly, easily and efficiently. To order a free copy for trial, go to <http://www.inKlineGlobal.com>. If you like the program, after trying it you may then register on-line, pay the Shareware cost of only \$29.95, and you will also get a free CD which includes a lot of fonts, pictures, icons and themes to personalise your windows.

Software Review:

QuicKeys 2.0

by Teresa Harris - SPCUG

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Every Windows user I know has always lamented that the utilities built into Windows since the beginning are not what they should be. Everyone wants the clipboard to hold more than one copy, to be able to check the spelling in any program, and to have the PrintScreen button actually print out the screen. Windows users want it to be easier to get to the programs they use, to be able to open several programs that they use together, or to be able to automate the steps that they perform all the time. Because of this lack of function in Windows, creating and selling utility programs has become a big business.

As Windows users pay out more money each year to buy utilities, there can be heard a great deal of moaning and groaning over the cost as well as over whether the programs purchased actually do the job. That is why the people at CE Software created QuicKeys. CE Software is trying to correct the deficiency in Windows by offering a collection of utilities in one package for the normal purchase cost of just one program. They have also increased the value of their program by including the ability to automate steps within any one or more programs by using macros, or as they call them, Sequences. These Sequences have the ability to work with several programs at the same time, automating the steps to open, enter information, and adjust the programs. Sequences are very useful. However, let us first look at the utilities of QuicKeys.

Each utility in QuicKeys is activated by use of what the program calls an Action. You choose which Actions you want to setup and use, and how you want to activate them. This means you go through the list and choose the utility, choose a toolbar or a hot key to start it, and then run the Setup Wizard for that Action. The main drawback in the utilities of QuicKeys is that these setup steps have to be done for each and every utility you want to use. However, QuicKeys uses Setup Wizards to make this as painless as possible. Anyone installing the program must spend some time and effort at the beginning in order to save more time and effort later. The good news is that the utilities included in this one program replace having to buy many other utility programs. Purchasers can also save the time it takes to choose the programs, to learn how to use all of them, and the frustration if the programs do not do the job needed.

There are 2 ways in QuicKeys to start Actions. One way is to use the toolbars included. Every toolbar in QuicKeys can be customised to work best for you. They can be resized, docked to any side of the screen, always in view or auto-hide them, set to Click-&-Go, to Pop-out, or to be Floating on the screen. You can choose to use the toolbars that are already setup in QuicKeys such as Spelling toolbar or you can choose the main toolbar to activate any program or utility.

The other way to use the utilities in QuicKeys is to assign hot keys to the different Actions. You can choose which keys to press to start any of the Actions. An example might be the Ctrl + Shift + C keys could be assigned to open the Clipbook copying Action. However, since some programs already have hot keys assigned for use, there can be problems with hot keys assignments. To solve this particular problem as well as for other uses, CE Software included on the main toolbar a QuicKeys Controller Action that enables you to turn the hot keys controls off and on.

Among the utilities included in QuicKeys, several are of particular interest. These are:

- + Typing - Put in text you often use and automate it with an Action.
- + Zip files - Compress and uncompress files in Zip format.
- + QuicKeys clipboard tool, editing them, and you can keep them there as long as you like.
- + Screen Capture - Print out any screen or any active window.

Clearly, you can see that QuicKeys can replace having to buy many different utility programs to get the functionality missing from Windows.

Sequences, or macros, are another ability that QuicKeys gives the user. Building Sequences to automate complex jobs can be done. One example is to start your e-mail program, type in the User Name and the password, click OK, and check for new mail can be one Sequence.

The problem with Sequences is that it can be difficult to set up the complex commands correctly. Some complex Sequences are recommended to be setup only by intermediate or advanced computer

users. However, even advanced users are encouraged in the manual to first clearly map out the multi-steps in your mind before attempting to create a Sequence.

QuicKeys does come with a printed manual. In a smart move, CE Software also included a copy of this manual on the installation CD. This provides a second layer of protection, as manuals do happen to disappear, especially when you need them most.

The conclusion is clear. If you are interested in purchasing one utility that replaces many, and if you do not mind spending the necessary time to set up the Actions correctly, QuicKeys 2.0 is for you. However, if you want something that just installs and is ready for use with little work, look elsewhere.

While I was not able to find QuicKeys 2.0 in any local store, it is easy to purchase it on-line from CE Software at their website www.cesoft.com, or you can call them at 515-221-1801. The price for a first time purchase is \$49.95. The price is the usual price for any good utility program. However, as you will just be purchasing one program instead of several, the savings make this a very good deal.

Software Review:

Encryption Plus CD

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

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During the past year, we have attempted to introduce you to a number of methods and products to create or restore privacy to your PC computing. A significant number of you have reported successfully taking various suggested measures to keep the snoops out of your personal business.

However, there has been one ongoing problem many of you have mentioned to me that we have been unable to address because no solution has existed. How do we safeguard the data you have placed on a CD-R? Well, there's good news today in the form of a new and unique application that will encrypt the data on a CD-R, a heretofore impossible task. It comes by way of a program entitled Encryption Plus CD-ROM (EPCD) from PC Guardian (pcguardian.com), a worldwide company famous for innovative data encryption products.

Many users currently backup various files to CD-Rs because of the increased volume of data storage they provide over other removable media. In addition, CDs provide easy portability if you need to deliver that data elsewhere. It can become a risky procedure though should you misplace or lose your CD. An additional risk exists from prying eyes that may come across your CD wherever you may happen to store it.

EPCD can be used either individually or on a network. Installation of the program calls for your electing a password protected "administrator" (yourself, if there is not a network of users), and a password for access to either the program itself or to a CD after you have placed encrypted files on it. A group of 8 small program files is placed in a folder of your choice for future access. You then create a second folder into which you can place files that you wish to encrypt before burning them on to a CD-R or CD-RW. Merely place the files to be encrypted into that folder, push the encryption button. And the program does the rest. In addition to the encrypted files, you need to burn the aforementioned small program files on to your CD.

The files are encrypted in a 192 bit Blowfish encryption, one that has never been broken. It

would take a few million years to break and is the strongest ever devised -- much stronger than any other in use today. Your data will be absolutely and completely assuredly safe! If you attempt to access your CD, you must provide your password for your files to be legible. Once you enter your password, your files are decrypted on the fly as you access them. That access is immediate, just as though they were never encrypted in the first place. If you click on an encrypted file, all you will get is gobbledegook. The protection is complete and absolute.

The program is easy to use, but I do not recommend any encryption application to novices. In the hands of an intermediate or advanced user, it should not be a problem. There are two deficiencies with EPCD that may or may not be a problem for you. Firstly, the program is not accompanied by a manual. However, a very complete set of instructions is provided on the program CD. The instructions are somewhat confusing in certain areas, but reasonable intelligence will prevail. Of greater concern perhaps to some people is that although the encrypted files themselves are fully and safely inaccessible to others, the list of files contained on the CD is still completely legible to anyone. That may or may not present a problem for you. In any event, to this writing, EPCD has a complete monopoly in the area of protecting your CD files.

PC Guardian has an excellent selection of encryption products for almost any protection modality. They have applications to protect e-mail, hard drives, folders, files, and more. For complete information, go to pcguardian.com, or telephone (800) 288-8126. EPCD and their other products are available directly from PC Guardian. The cost of EPCD is currently \$99, but the company has indicated they are coming out with a personal edition without network capabilities that would undoubtedly be preferable to most of you.

Software Review:

Paperport 7 Deluxe

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

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Of all the peripheral devices in computerdom there are few, if any, more frustrating than scanners. Hooking up a scanner to a serial port and then configuring it to work properly was never a job for a novice, and equally unwelcome even by the more experienced computerist. Half the problem was installing the scanner itself, while the other half was getting to make heads or tails out of the accompanying software.

With the advent of USB and plug and play, installing a scanner today has for the most part become relatively easy. There are still some pitfalls, one of the most common being the rotten directions provided by most scanner manufacturers. For instance, it is usually important to install the scanner software itself before connecting your scanner to your computer. Failure to do so will often result in funky operation, yet so many manufacturers fail to adequately inform you.

The next hurdle to overcome is using the scanner software. Some of it has instructions that came off the Rosetta Stone. Fortunately, the ScanSoft people have developed scanner software that has at last placed scanner operation within the realm of every computer user. With the development of their best-selling program, PaperPort, retrieving, modifying, filing, storing, printing, e-mailing and using scanned images easily and quickly has become a reality. It is currently the most widely used application of its kind, and with the advent of its latest and most powerful version, PaperPort 7.0 Deluxe, it is an absolute joy to use and is loaded with superb features.

Whether it is a text document, graphic image, or both that you are scanning, PaperPort will capture it and place it on the PaperPort desktop where it can be stored, modified, placed in your e-mail or in any of your other applications. The program easily establishes and provides direct linking of your scanned images to any of the applications on your computer. You can also adjust the colour, sharpness, enlargement, cropping, rotation, add special effects, and all the other attributes of a scanned image much the same as you would do in Photoshop, PhotoDeluxe, and all the

other good image editing software. When you have modified your scanned image so that it is exactly the way you want it to look, simply drag it to the icon of one of your favourite applications which you have placed on PaperPort's "link bar". It will then appear in that application, or you can drag it to your printer icon for easy printing. Alternatively and additionally, you can store it in a PaperPort folder for future use. PaperPort compresses scanned images to their most efficient size for more productive storage.

This latest version, 7.0 Deluxe, allows you to capture Web pages and drop them into your favourite program or retain them on PaperPort's desktop. You can also create links for printing, copying, or faxing your scanned images. One of its new features, BookmarkExpress, displays thumbnail views of bookmarked Websites which are automatically updated when you return to the site. It also places a Web Capture command directly in the favourites menu of your browser for capturing Web pages and placing them on your PaperPort desktop for off-line viewing.

PaperPort's OCR function will automatically convert scanned text to the format of your favourite word processor. You can also annotate photos, add sticky notes, highlights, drawings, and more. One of PaperPort's amazing features permits you to scan blank forms and then fill them in.

The program provides for easy and efficient storage of scanned images. The left side of its desktop contains a list of folders which you can name, and into which you can place and intelligently store any of your scanned images. You can create, label and colour-code your own folders and sub-folders on that list, and then search for any image contained therein by title, keyword, annotation, URL, and content.

PaperPort is published by ScanSoft, Inc. in Peabody, Mass. They have been around for a long time now and publish some of better known and respected software titles like Pagis Pro, TextBridge, OmniPage, OmniScan, Kai's SuperGoo, PowerShow and PhotoFactory. Most manufacturers incorporate PaperPort in with their scanners. It is the most widely used scanner software available and will work with virtually any twain compliant scanner or digital camera and occupies some 60MB on your hard drive. It is compatible with all versions of Windows.

PaperPort is top-notch software and has our highest recommendation. If you own a scanner, it's a must-have and is available at a street price of about \$54. Upgrades of prior versions are \$30. You can find it on the Net, at most software retailers, or obtain it by download direct from ScanSoft at www.scansoft.com, or by calling 888-345-6203.

Software Review:

ArtIcons

by Vinny La Bash - SPCUG

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Can you really say you have complete control of your desktop without personally customising your icons ? Why not create and edit your own icons in whatever size you want ? ArtIcons provides all the tools you need to do exactly that.

Wherever you stand in the expertise spectrum, ArtIcons was designed with you in mind. ArtIcons is an advanced icon utility for Windows that allows professional and amateur graphic artists alike to create and edit icon images and manage icon files and libraries.

Icon management can be a real pain if you have lots of icons in your PC and can't find the one you want when you want it. Finding and managing icon libraries has become a lot simpler with ArtIcons. You get to scan files and folders for icons, delete duplicate icons, and arrange icons into libraries using drag and drop.

ArtIcons opens by offering you a series of icon sizes to work with. You can start with an icon size 16 x 16 pixels and work your way up to 64 x 64 if you like to work with more detailed images.

You can roll your own custom size if the standard measurements don't meet your needs or approval. After selecting your icon's size, you get a blank canvas. ArtIcons contains a variety of paint tools and colour palettes to let you create and edit icons with image formats in either standard or custom sizes in colour depths up to 32-bit True Color. If you find a blank canvas intimidating, you can import icons not only from icon files, but from files of almost any format. If you're moving to Windows XP, have no fears.

The latest release of ArtIcons supports the XP icon format. You can take an image that was created in JPG, JPEG, GIF, BMP or almost any other icon format and transform it into an icon with ArtIcons by simply opening the file into the program. It even works with photographs, but a lot of detail is lost. Try it anyway. Sometimes the results are astounding. The program is incredibly easy to learn. The only difficulty you may have is tearing yourself away from it as you continually discover all the things it can do.

Many Websites allow you to download a trial version of the program. Before you do this, make sure that you are getting Version 3.0 or higher. This release has support for Windows XP as noted earlier. Drop shadow effects, a new user interface, and the ability to customise your default desktop icons are additional features.

The program is available from Aha-soft at <http://www.aha-soft.com/ArtIcons/reg.htm> For \$19.95. A companion program, ArtIcons Pro, is available for \$29.95. The Pro version has additional capabilities that will be of interest to professional graphic artists, or to those who wish to enhance their graphic skills. Both programs come with a 30 day money back guarantee.

Software Review:

Drive Copy 4.0

by Bill Hilbert - SWIPCC

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Introduction

A recent purchase of a 40 Gb hard drive to increase the storage capacity of my computer presented a challenge of how to use the new drive as the C: bootable, main drive without deleting everything and starting all over. Since I had a large number of programs installed and working perfectly, starting over was not desirable. It would take several days of work at a minimum with the risk of losing some data, not to speak of the problem of finding all my updated drivers again. Drive Copy solved my problem.

Program Capabilities

Drive Copy allows copying everything from your old drive to a new drive with ease and speed.

Partitions can be resized while copying if desired. Simple menus allow the choice of copying an entire drive or individual partitions to the same or another drive. The process could be used to make a complete backup.

Advanced options allow checking for file system errors to insure data integrity. Clusters which do not contain data can be ignored to speed up copying. Other features allow use with drive overlay software and compressed drives. It supports all partition types except NetWare and Unix.

After copying, the drives can be swapped to make the new, larger drive the main bootable drive. The old drive can then be discarded or used for other purposes, such as backup. Drive Copy is a DOS based system that can be run from your old hard drive as a virtual drive or from a set of floppy disks which are easily created. The program is easily installed from CD Rom, and a choice can be made to run from the hard drive or floppies.

A very nice feature is DriveCopy's fail safe capability. If the power or other hardware fails while copying, no data will be lost from the source drive. It is only necessary to start the process over after the failure is corrected.

Requirements

Hardware requirements are very modest. Even vintage 386 computers can run Drive Copy. RAM requirements are 16 MB minimum with 32 MB recommended. It is recommended that a disk utility such as ScanDisk be run before running DriveCopy. If file integrity is checked first, the file checking feature can be turned off to increase the speed of copying.

A caution: If the operating system partition is copied, you must remove the source drive or hide the partition before rebooting to avoid the presence of two bootable partitions when rebooting. A menu selection allows hiding the source partition.

Performance

Installation was simple and straight forward from my CD ROM drive. I chose to run from a virtual drive rather than create floppy disks. Simple menus allowed me the choice of copying the entire drive or individual partitions to the same or another drive. For maximum safety, disk write verification was turned on. The process of copying a 40 Gb drive took 1 hour and 30 minutes including installing Drive Copy and changing the drives. The manual states that it is not necessary to use write verification to obtain a good copy, and copying time can be reduced dramatically without it. The old drive was put to use as a second drive for backing up data. I elected to copy the entire C: drive partition to the new drive because I wanted to use the new drive as my primary drive.

After copying, I shut down the computer, partitioned and formatted the original drive, and installed it as a second drive to be used for data backup. The details of setting up the drives and running the program are covered very well in the literature supplied and are not covered here.

Summary

Drive Copy provides an easy method to add a second larger drive to a computer or to copy whole partitions to the same or another drive for backup. Menu driven choices make it very easy to accomplish a number of tasks. The simplicity of the main menu is particularly good allowing one to make intuitive choices. A pleasing result was that all of my windows settings remained exactly as I had set them even including turning off the auto insert function on my CD Rom drive. Several disabled startup menu items were also maintained as set originally. The copy to the new drive is exactly as it was on the original drive and I can't tell the difference.

Drive Copy 4.0 is available locally for \$49.99 and downloadable from several Internet sites for \$43.95.

Bill Hilbert is a long time SWIPCC member having joined the club in 1985, when it was only two years old. He served as club librarian for several years. Bill is a Research Physicist retired from White Sands Missile Range where his need to handle large quantities of research data sparked his interest in computers. He is active in personal computers and family history research. Computer hardware problems are one of his special interests. His initial interest in computers led to a fascination and long lasting interest in their almost unlimited capabilities. He recently put together an AMD 1.2 Ghz machine with 786 Mb memory and 145 Gb of hard disk storage. He can be reached at billh@elpn.com

Software Review:

MGI VideoWave 4.0

by John Bracey - SWIPCC

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PO Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937, U S of A]

When I purchased a digital video camcorder last year, I had several things in mind. Wouldn't it be great to take home videos that I could edit and put both sound and comments where there was no sound ? In general, spice up my home movies with titles, fades, and things that would give the movies a "professional" look ? After doing all of this, it would also be nice to save the edited video back to a media like cassettes or CD where I could make distribution to family and friends. Beautiful dream number ninety-nine!

Little did I realise at the time the additional equipment and software that I would have to purchase to do this. Let's start with VideoWave's minimum equipment requirements: (as with most programs, you get better results with better and more powerful computers)

+ OS: Windows 98, Windows 98SE*, Windows 2000*, Windows ME* (*Recommended for digital video editing)

+ Computer: Pentium 286 MHz, (Pentium II-350 MHz recommended for DV and MPEG-2 capture and edit), 45MB available hard drive space for program, 1 GB minimum workspace with 6 GB recommended), minimum ULTRA DMA but a SCSI-2 subsystem for best results. 64 MB RAM (128 minimum for DV and MPEG-2), capture and edit, SVGA video card that has at least 4 MB RAM on the card, and a minimum monitor display resolution of 1024x768 at 16 bit colour.

+ Accessories: Mouse, CD-ROM Drive, Video Capture or TV Tuner board for analogue capture (video or TV out required for output to tape or OHCI compliant IEEE-1394 (for use with DV camera), and 16-bit stereo sound card with speakers.

How's that for starters ? In other and more simple terms, you need a fairly new computer with lots of RAM memory and a large hard drive! A good video capture board and a quality sound card would be required to get optimum results for video editing period!

VideoWave 4 Software

MGI is well known for their video editing software. VideoWave 4 is MGI's latest product for the fast growing video-editing tools now on the market. VideoWave 4 lets you transfer video files from your camcorder or other source such as your TV or VCR to your hard drive. A capture card and a sound card is necessary to capture video and audio directly from your camcorder, TV tuner or VCR. On digital camcorders an IEEE 1395 (FireWire) board is used to capture both digital video and audio together. If your computer is newer and has a USB port, this port can be used to capture video from USB devices. VideoWave 4 will let you combine both of these formats in a seamless manner. Because raw video data is quite large, VideoWave 4 used with the analogue capture or IEEE 1395 (FireWire) cable and card compresses the video as it is saved to disk, significantly reducing the size of the file. For analogue capture, the compression ratio depends on the settings of the software driver while Digital Video is captured at a fixed compression ratio.

Standard MGI VideoWave 4 compression settings for AVI and MPEG offer a reasonable compromise between video quality, data rate and file storage size, but also allow you to adjust the settings to suit your needs. You have the capability to capture audio and video separately or simultaneously.

New features touted in MGI VideoWave 4

+ Scene Detection for automatic scene splitting of video clips.

+ TimeWarp your video by speeding up or slowing down the action.

+ New Video Templates including those for creating Real Video and MVW.

+ Publish or Upload your video to MGI services on the Web.

+ Brand New Content intro clips and matching keyable overlays on dozens of subjects.: home, business, kids, vacation, occasions, events and many more.

The main feature of VideoWave 4 is its StoryLine. This is the interface where you drag and drop video clips from the Library storage feature arranging them and linking them together with various transitions to produce your short video of several minutes. The digital audio extraction feature allows you to take your favourite song from a CD and add it to your video movie. If the pace of your video clip does not match the time of the song, you can utilise the TimeWarp function of the software to speed up or slow down the action in the clip. You get two CDs with VideoWave 4 that are loaded with sound and video clips. Sufficient editing tools are installed that will allow you to adjust the brightness, contrast, or colour of either a video or still image. Adding tinting and numerous special effect such as fade in, fade out, transition wipes and titles can add interest to your otherwise dull home movies. You can use the cutting and trimming features on long sequences breaking them down into easily usable short scenes.

VideoWave version 3 came with a 165 page reference manual while VideoWave 4 has a small overview manual of only 56 pages of which four are blank for notes. The new manual or "overview" as it is called, starts with a concise intro and product overview and then goes to the only other chapter which is a series of tutorials. The Help feature is a little slow in getting you to the contents index that covers things not in the manual. In very small print on the back of the manual you will find MGI Software Corp. Technical Support North America Telephone and FAX numbers (neither toll free) but I did find a toll free 1-888-644-7338 (1-888-MGI-SOFT) Customer Service number printed on the underside of the box containing the software. I didn't try calling it. Troubleshooting can also be done through the MGI Web site www.mgisoft.com.

Most software for video editing is rather pricey. VideoWave 4's list price is \$99.95 but you can find it for a few bucks cheaper at places on the Internet. After looking on the Internet to find out what other folks thought about VideoWave 4, I found about an equal numbers of people loving the product or hating it. I suspect that those disliking VideoWave 4 were trying to do things with an outdated computer and lacked the required equipment. If you have the proper equipment to include capture, sound cards, digital camcorder, fast and large hard disk, RAM and video card memory, VideoWave 4 could provide you hours of fun with its video, audio clips, and special effects features. Who knows, you might even produce a short Oscar winning home movie of sorts! :

John Bracey retired from the military after thirty years of service. During one of his tours of duty he established the Army Junior ROTC program for the high schools in the Ysleta Independent School District where he was Professor of Military Science for the district. Upon his retirement from the military he worked as an administrator with the YISD. A "charter" member of SWIPCC, he has served in most functions of the club and enjoys the meetings with the membership. His hobbies are photography, computers, and new software. He can be reached at jbracey@whc.net

Software Review:

PCStitch

by George M. Holloway - SWIPCC

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PCStitch is for all of you ladies and "Rosie Greers" who enjoy the hobby of counted cross-stitch. Now you can use you PC to create and personalise your own patterns. You can print the pattern along with the DMC thread list.

Although I purchased this for my wife, I found this program instructional and great fun to work with. It's easy to use and the documentation is good.

The Program will allow you to scan a photograph or use any .jpg or bit-map file.

PCStitch will then convert it to a pattern and you are ready to create your masterpiece.

This would be a great Christmas Gift for you significant other. The cost is \$39.95.

For further information you can visit the site <http://www.PCStitch.com/>. A free trial version may be downloaded without any time limits. You cannot save your work with the free version.

George is a former "Military Brat". His father was in the Air Force and he grew up on Air Bases in Greenville, SC; Del Rio, TX; Honolulu, HI; and El Paso, TX. He served four years in the U.S. Navy aboard the Submarine USS Greenfish (SS351). He was a Central Office Technician for Southwestern Bell for 28 years.

He joined SWIPCC in 1993, was elected Vice President in 2000 and elevated to President in 2001. He is currently attending a course of study leading to a MCSE in Windows 2000 with MCP in Windows 2000 Professional and Windows 2000 Server. He can be reached at gh6539@worldnet.att.net.

Software Review:

FrontPage 2002

by Jim Gaffney - SWIPCC

[Reprinted from the 2002 January issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2001 November issue of "Throughput", newsletter of the SouthWest International Personal Computer Club, PO Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937, U S of A]

There are generally two camps of thought when discussing Microsoft's FrontPage Web editing products -- either people love them or they hate them. I find myself somehow strangely in the middle. While I don't think that FrontPage is the ultimate Web authoring tool, I find myself using it a large percentage of the time because I find the user interface to be logical and quite easy to use. I do avoid use of the "bots" or so called "FrontPage extensions". They are handy and easy to use but my goal is to keep my work portable i.e., Web source that I can place on any Web server regardless of the operating system and extensions that it may be running.

The latest iteration of Microsoft's FrontPage, Version 2002, does have some intriguing new features and it is a worthy upgrade if you are already well acquainted with the product. On the other hand, many of the new features are "Microsoft-centric", aimed more and more toward pointing the user at the Magic Kingdom in Redmond. Let's look at a few of the differences from Version 2000.

The Photo Gallery allows a user to quickly assemble a page of photographs or illustrations while creating the associated files behind it. All the user need do is select the graphics files from local drive and optionally enter a title and description for each. FrontPage will create the gallery page as shown including thumbnails and the links to the full-sized images. The caveat is that not only must the host server have FrontPage extensions installed but also they must be the new 2002 version of the "Sharepoint" extensions that support photo gallery. If you plan on using this feature check with the site provider that you are using to make sure they either have or will shortly upgrade to the latest extensions.

A new set of "PowerPoint-like" Drawing Tools has been added to FrontPage. If you are a user of Microsoft's presentation package, then the toolbar shown should look very familiar to you. This particular screen capture, however, is from FrontPage 2002 rather than PowerPoint. AutoShapes, text boxes, WordArt, drop-shadows, arrows and all you can now use them to dress up your Web pages. The shapes are created in HTML so that your pages will be transportable, and HTML line-art will download faster than bitmapped graphics.

An addition to FrontPage 2002 is Automatic Web Content. The function of this feature is to insert links to news, weather forecasts, maps and business tools. Not surprisingly, all of the destinations for the links created are Microsoft related -- MSNBC, MSN search, Expedia Maps and Central small business tools. I think I can live without this one.

Browser Editable Lists is a nifty feature that allows the user to insert from a variety of list

templates such as Announcements, Events, Tasks, etc. These lists can be edited by authorised users. Any problems? The Web must be on a SharePoint Team Services installed host server (read "the new FrontPage Extensions").

Discussion Boards, while advertised as a new feature, have been supported in FP 2000, the previous version. True, they have been improved, but to reap the benefits of the improvements you again need "SharePoint Team Services" installed. (Am I beginning to see a trend here?)

Customisable Themes have been improved from the FP 2000 themes by allowing the user to make more changes to the "canned" themes provided by Microsoft. There are also more of them, with 67 themes to choose from in the new version.

One of the most useful updates included in the 2002 version is the incorporation of Page Tabs. These tabs appear above the editing window and display the filename for every file that is open. To switch between documents, the user simply clicks on the appropriate tab similar to switching between Excel spreadsheets. The old method required the user to click on "Window" on the Menu Toolbar and then scroll down the list to find the page you wanted to switch to. While this is a small timesaver, it is used frequently and will result in significant time savings while editing a multi-page Web.

Similarly, Microsoft has incorporated into what was formerly the File List panel a duality that includes both the File List and a Navigation Pane. Tabs at the bottom of the pane that display these two panels provide a quick way to easily switch between the two.

Table editing has been improved significantly. For those of you who dress up your word tables by applying a Table AutoFormat, you will now happily find that you are able to do the same thing in a FrontPage table. Just select the table, click "Table" on the Menu toolbar followed by AutoFormat and scroll through the list of available choices until you see a format that appeals to you.

I have mixed feelings about a Task Pane, which has been added to the right side of the editing window. It is, in sum, a shortcut bar to common tasks that are most valuable to a new user. In these days when larger monitor screens are the rule rather than the exception, I guess it can't hurt and you can shut it off if you decide you don't need to use it.

The Office Clip Board is now available from FrontPage 2002. Multiple clips from MS Office applications can now be transferred into FrontPage 2002 via the MS Office Clip Board that appeared starting with Office 2000. I would rather see the multiple clip on the clipboard capabilities implemented in the operating system but I guess I'll just have to wait and see what Windows XP brings.

There have been numerous additions and improvements. Management, formatting and reporting including Top 10 lists, "Smart Tags", and the ability to reformat HTML pages in XML format automatically. We are going to hear more and more about XML in the days to come. Web Publishing has also been significantly enhanced including the ability to publish a Web as a background operation while you continue your local work on your site.

As in all the Office 2002 products, facilities for speech and handwriting recognition have been incorporated. It does come at an extra hardware cost, no cheap microphones here, gain control is required. These facilities will improve over time. If you want to get in on the ground floor of the technology, FrontPage 2002 is one path.

The documentation that comes in the retail package is rather perfunctory and lean; it runs some 85 pages including a table of contents but no index. As has become today's unfortunate norm, the user is expected to browse through the help screens to learn to use the product. It is cost effective, but a program of instruction it is not. If you have not worked with a previous version, I would recommend that you also obtain a copy of "Microsoft FrontPage Version 2002 Step by Step" from MS Press (MSRP: \$29.99, Amazon.com: \$20.99, ISBN 0-7356-1300-1) or a similar third-party manual.

Overall, FrontPage 2002 is a well thought out and bug free package. Like all WYSIWYG HTML editors, it creates bloated source code but no worse than any other members of the genre. Some of the new features in this version are genuine improvements while a few are simply leaders to other

packages and services from Microsoft. For use on an intranet, it is particularly well adapted owing to its coordination features. Assuming that the user will be familiar with the Microsoft Office interface (it has the lion's share of the market, so who isn't?), using it to create an attractive Web is quick and easy. All it takes is a little imagination.

FrontPage 2002 MSRP \$169, Buy.com \$135, Buy.com upgrade version \$79 Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, WA

Jim Gaffney spent 25 years in the US Army. His last assignment prior to retirement was as Chief of a software center for automated command and control systems and digital data links. His first personal computer in 1989 was a Radio Shack TRS-80 with 16K RAM and cassette recorder storage. He holds Bachelors and Masters degrees in Mechanical Engineering and is currently a faculty member in Computer Information Systems at El Paso Community College.

Book Review:

Using Visual FOXPRO 6

by Pete Theisen - SPCUG

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Imagine yourself with the responsibility to outfit a thousand, or ten thousand representatives, or sales persons, or volunteers with a database package for a laptop or desktop. A package that can grab data off, and submit data to, your Website's active data page for use anywhere -- client's office, someone's home, on a plane -- anywhere. Now imagine that your budget is less than two hundred dollars for this, but you do have some time and you are computer literate. You might want to use Microsoft's Visual FOXPRO 6 to develop and distribute this application. You might. But after you start using VFP 6 you might also start tearing out chunks of your hair at the roots!

Visual FOXPRO 6 is ghastly difficult to learn!

Wait, doesn't Microsoft also have Access and Works database products? We (SPCUG) have an Access sig, for heaven's sake! Why not use these "easy" products? Because, of these three Microsoft products, only Visual FOXPRO can produce a distributable application. The others would require the database program itself to be installed on each user's computer. That less than two hundred dollar budget wouldn't do it! Visual FOXPRO 6 can produce the application in a runtime version. This runtime version runs directly under Windows and you can distribute it to as many users as there are without paying any royalty. Therefore, it costs you only the expense of one Visual FOXPRO 6 package (current Web price of VFP 6 is \$179) and your time to produce it. Remember that you would have to produce the application no matter which database package you used.

Your membership ID badges are printed by a FOXPRO application as you enter each of our monthly club meetings. This application was written several years ago by Ted McDuffie. Ted can tell you about FOXPRO! FOXPRO isn't easy, it isn't intuitive and the Microsoft manuals are in "Geek".

Actually, no database work is easy. Working with databases is a masochist heaven. Visual FOXPRO has a steep learning curve because it has so much capability. Using Visual FOXPRO 6 by Menachem Bazien, Jim Booth, Jeb Long, Vin Miller, Celia Silver and Robert A Byers is a third party user's manual. A third party manual that offers as much detail as the Microsoft manuals in a more user friendly package. You need both Using Visual FOXPRO 6 and the Microsoft manuals, though, because they address different issues, or sometimes, the same issue from a different angle.

When I went shopping for a Visual FOXPRO 6 manual, the nice lady at Barnes and Nobel told me that most of the books on Visual FOXPRO 6 were out of print. She said that the better a software book is, the longer it remains available. Well, this manual is copyrighted 1999. Version 7 of VFP should be out by the time you read this. It's in Beta 2 right now. So, this manual has survived the entire currency cycle of VFP 6! If the Barnes and Nobel lady's theory is correct

At 1002 pages, Using Visual FOXPRO 6 is a little smaller than three of the four Microsoft manuals that ship with VFP 6. Unless you have the academic version -- that version has no manuals! You would have to buy a third party manual! One manual this size is a heavy book, but not as heavy as the four Microsoft manuals and certainly more convenient. To my eyes, Using Visual FOXPRO 6 has a clearer and more contrasty format and type face, but there is not a great difference in this.

The convenience issue alone is enough to sell this book. Imagine yourself riding in a taxi from the airport trying to juggle four paperback books! One is definitely enough. Having used the four Microsoft manuals these two years I really appreciate having the whole subject between the same two covers. Four books are a hassle even on a table -- on your lap is just impossible, especially if the laptop is there too!

I tried to find something that they cover in the Microsoft manuals and not in Using Visual FOXPRO 6. Instead, the first twenty or so entries in the index were things that were not in the Microsoft manuals. However, then I started to find topics that were in the Microsoft manuals but not in Using Visual FOXPRO 6. You really need both! However, if you are going into a situation where you can't possibly manage the four books, of course you take this one.

Is Using Visual FOXPRO 6 easy? Certainly not, nothing about Visual FOXPRO 6 is easy. There was a Visual FOXPRO 5 for Dummies, believe it or not. It had terrible reviews and it is now unavailable, I haven't seen it. I doubt that anyone can make Visual FOXPRO easy. Nevertheless, Using Visual FOXPRO 6 is a more convenient book than the Microsoft manuals, offers topics not covered by the Microsoft manuals and is written in "Geek lite" instead of "Geek". The authors couldn't avoid using jargon because Visual FOXPRO 6 itself uses jargon. Generally, though, they either define these jargon words or they are made clear in the context in Using Visual FOXPRO 6, at least more so than in the Microsoft manuals. Often, the explanation takes the form of an illustration or a screen shot. The Using Visual FOXPRO 6 book gives more screen shots than the Microsoft manuals, especially more "result" screen shots, a definite plus.

The cover price of Using Visual FOXPRO 6 is \$49.95. You might find it at a lower price on the Web but then you must pay shipping and maybe long distance. After all of that you might just as well order it from Barnes and Nobel. When it comes you can look at it in the store and not be obligated to buy it if you don't like it, a convenience. Que Publishers publish Using Visual FOXPRO 6; www.quecorp.com; ISBN 0-7897-1808-1.

More information about Visual FOXPRO 6 is available at www.vfug.org. If you would like to be on the Tampa Bay FOXPRO User's Group e-mail list e-mail me at petet@gte.net with the words "FOXPRO User's Group" in the subject line. FPUG holds periodic meetings similar to our sigs about FOXPRO (all versions) and related issues.

Software Review:

Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

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CD-RW drives have become the hottest addition to computers today. They have become up to 16 times faster than they were just a short time back, and CD media can be purchased in quantity for peanuts! Little wonder that CD burning has become the path of choice for storing both data and audio CDs.

The best CD-RW drive is only as good as the software you select to create your own CDs. Almost every drive today is accompanied by a basic version of the most popular and ubiquitous program available, Roxio's (formerly Adaptec, the parent company) Easy CD Creator. When you get really serious about CD burning, however, you will want to step up to Roxio's top of the line, Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum, the latest and greatest, just released version.

Roxio's flagship CD creation product has every bell and whistle you will want or need for making your own audio or data CDs, and a brand new graphic interface makes it easy, enjoyable, yet extremely powerful. Here's just a few of the things this kind of CD creation software will readily do for you:

- + Automatically convert your favourite music CDs into high quality MP3 files.
- + Download and store your favourite music from the Internet.
- + Create CDs from your old LPs or cassettes while improving the sound quality by filtering out the scratchy hisses and pops.
- + safely store all your photos and pictures on CDs.
- + duplicate data, photos, graphics and audio to share with your friends and family.
- + Backup the data from your hard drive.
- + Create custom labels for all your CDs.

Version 5 has a brand new look and feel along with many usability improvements. They include the following:

- + A new MP3 encoder that will convert your audio CD tracks to MP3.
- + An MP3 playlist editor that allows you to play your selections in any order, not necessarily alphabetically.
- + A normaliser for balancing loudness between tracks.
- + A video encoder to permit conversion of your video files to an acceptable format for recording.
- + A bonus CD that includes many MP3s, video clips, and 4 movies from Atom Films.

To use this software properly, you will need a system with a minimum speed of 200 MHz. Although 32 MB of RAM is acceptable, it is barely so. You really should have at least 64. To copy a CD directly, a good CD ROM drive that supports audio digital extraction is necessary. Of course, you can always copy data directly from your hard drive.

Installing the program is effortless, and using it is equally so. Its beautiful graphic interface makes your choices clear and simple. An opening screen Project Selector permits you to choose the task you have in mind; making a music, data, photo, or video CD, or producing a CD label. A simple click on the appropriate button will bring you to a screen with all your operational sub-choices for your chosen category. Choices are simple, straightforward, and uncomplicated. Your sub choices are basically unique utilities within each category that combine to make Easy CD Creator the superb program it is. The most prominent of these utility modules are:

1. SoundStream 2: Quickly and easily create custom audio CDs. You can combine MP3s, WMAs, WAV files, tracks off other CDs, or analogue sources. Oppositely, you can rip audio CDs to separate these components. You can record from CD to CD, making an exact copy with perfect audio fidelity. Furthermore, you can combine your selections in the order of your choice. In both this and all other modules (data, photo, etc.), you can finalise your recording or leave it open for later further additions.
2. Music Library allows you to compile your music in compressed format on to your hard drive for later sorting and further placement.
3. Spin Doctor: Clean up and transfer music from another source such as an old vinyl LP. Eliminates hisses, scratches, pops, etc.
4. Music CD Project: Add special effects such as cross-fades and fade in and out between your musical selections to further customise the CD you are creating.
5. MP3 CD Project: Create your own MP3s. Holds around 100 songs in compressed format to keep you entertained for hours.
6. Direct CD: Use your CD like a floppy disk. Drag and drop data files directly.
7. Take Two: Back up your hard drive data in compressed format for complete or selective restoration later.
8. CD Copier: Easily copy the complete contents of another CD.

9. Video Postcards: Create personalised video postcards that combine text and video clips on a personalised background.

You will not need special talents to perform any of these tasks. All the utilities within the program are highly intuitive with superb graphical guidance. We tried each of the various modules and all performed like a champ without a single glitch. There is no competition for CD Creator 5 Platinum. It is, hands-down, the most comprehensive software of its kind available. If you have a CD-RW drive, it's a must-have!

The software lists at \$100 and has a street price of \$82. A special upgrade price of \$49 is available to version 4 owners. Roxio, (408) 934-7283. www.roxio.com :

Index

Editorial	Page	2
RedBox Organizer	Page	2
Encarta Ref Suite 2001	Page	3
Drive Image 4.0	Page	5
Microsoft Greetings 2001	Page	6
Microsoft Front Page 2000	Page	8
Partition Magic 6.0	Page	9
Ontrack System Suite 3.0	Page	10
Visual Calender Planner 5.0	Page	13
QuicKeys 2.0	Page	13
Encryption Plus CD	Page	15
Paperport 7 Delux	Page	16
Artlcons	Page	18
Drive Copy 4.0	Page	19
MGI VidioWave 4.0 review	Page	20
PC Stitch	Page	22
Front Page 2002	Page	23
Using Visual FOXPRO 6	Page	25
Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum	Page	27

