

## Editorial

Well we are fast approaching the next computer week-end at the Villiers Inn, The hotel has yet another new manager and staff, they asked me along to explain what we required for the week-end, how it worked, what they had to do etc etc.

Dave Washford was very keen on the new NATGUG project; he was convinced that it had rekindled interest in the club and the meetings. It was in some ways back to the old days when members would all be talking and thinking of different ways to solve the same problem, quite a lot of time was spent talking about ways to overcome the problems the project had presented at the last meeting in March. The added attraction of some reward offered by the club to the member who came up with the best way of solving the problem, just added a bit of spice to the whole thing. Dave had wanted the club to survive for years to come and increase in interest and popularity and he thought that this project had helped to do that.

Having talked to Roger Storres about Dave's interest in the club and the project, we decided that the NATGUG Project should become the Dave Washford Memorial Award.

The club would make this award to anyone who had enhanced interest in the club and/or club meetings, by solving or achieving the challenge presented by the club, by any action that would increase interest and membership in the club. We still have discuss the finer points for the award and will look forward to your comments about this, I think it will be discussed at in detail at the November meeting.

I am sure the thing that will keep the club running for years to come and increase interest in coming to meetings, will be to solving problems for others or having your problem sorted out, what do you think?.

Bob Sparling  
Editor

## Camcorder Problems

By Bob Sparling  
Expert Video Pratt

My bumblings into the world of camcorders and video. The computing world just got a whole lot bigger for me, I've played with music and sounds editing and enhancing the sounds, saving in MP3, Wav etc. Saving the results to CD to play in the stereo, this was a bit of a learning curve.

After music came scanners and digital photography high res. printers all with much of the above comments but in relation to visual rather than sound.

Now I've entered into video and the camcorder, Yet another big learning curve, Lots of jargon such as VHS, 8mm and Hi-8 (these are all analogue recorders,) DV is Digital and the best quality (broadcast quality or so they say).

I thought I would not buy the best, as I believe that I would not use it that much. I've lived this long without one so to spend too much money would...

After looking at a camcorder in the shop, zooming in and out etc I thought that on zoom the focus was a bit fuzzy, I think it was a Hi-8 camcorder, I then saw a digital DV camcorder on special offer at a lower cost than the Hi-8. What difference there was in the picture quality, the zoom was so clear I was sold there and then.

So very often when you buy something and get it home and really start to use it you find its not as good as you first thought. Well in this case I must say I am truly amazed and delighted with the performance of this little camera, the results are remarkable and clear.

Problems? Well yes there are. I thought I would like to make my own complete and professional looking videotape by editing the tape on the computer of course. I purchased one editing package from PC World, on trying it, the results, when put back on to VHS tape were really poor, the

picture quality was like you get on the internet. I returned this package to the store and pointed out the problem and told them what I was looking for. I was pointed towards their expert on graphics, He said the best package he used was VideoWave DV Suite, it came with a fire wire card and a cable to connect to the camera.

Great I can't wait to get started with this one. Another problem. I have pulled on to the computer my video clip, the quality looks good but what is it like when you put it back onto VHS? Lets try putting it back onto my VHS recorder. What no DV connection on the recorder, so no way of getting the clip off of the computer back on to tape, my camcorder cannot record from the DV socket only output from it.

I went to Dixons and enquired if they had a video recorder with a DV input, no they don't make one, so how do I get my clip off the computer on to video tape? Buy a camcorder with DV in and out. How much will that cost? What! That's serious money, I'm not prepared to spend that much buying another camcorder when I have only just bought one.

I was passing my local photographic shop, I thought I would have a look around as I would like a camera case to protect my new camera. I then thought I would see if they had a card or something I could put in my computer to output to my VHS video recorder, they said they had a gadget that would make most modern DV Camcorders input as well as output DV. (The camcorders with DV input are classed as recorders and additional tax is involved).

A quick trip back home to fetch my camcorder to take in to the shop to let them see if it would work. Yes it will work on your camcorder, great Ill buy it. Back home and I try to make this thing work with my camera connected to the computer. No the computer program will not talk to the camcorder.

All is not lost yet because I have found there are over a dozen different video editing programs around; the only problem now is which one will work for me?

There is a video editing program included with Windows ME called Movie Maker I have tried this and found the output quality only good enough to put a video on the net.

A quick word on picture quality. Movies on DVD are stored in MPEG-2 format with a resolution of 720x576 pixels for the PAL system and 720x480 in NTSC, which is nearly as good as broadcast quality (768x576) compare that with the VHS video recorder which could be assessed as having 280x240 so the output quality I would require should be at that resolution as minimum and when DVD recorders and DVD media become cheaper you would wish to have a comparable quality to DVD standards.

I hope the information in my ramblings is correct, I still a beginner in this field. Sorry no happy ending to this one yet, that's as far as I have got, I've spent around £100.00 on software and another £80.00 on additional hardware some several tens of hours and I still can't get video off of the computer back on to VHS tape, can anybody help before I take some really clear broadcast quality video of me jumping off the bridge?

OUT OF THE GATES?

A beginner's view of WinLinux

Given that some Natgug members are Unix professionals and many members have considerable experience with Linux systems it seemed presumptuous of me to offer to write something about my experiences of WinLinux, but Bob Sparling persuaded me that there might be some who would be interested. Whether they will benefit from my taking so long after the April Swindon meeting to get on with it is more doubtful! Apologies to Bob and all for the delay.

I'd been thinking for years of dipping my toe into the Linux water. I've about twelve years' experience as a very occasional ordinary user of office Unix (and more recently Linux) systems, and in 1993-4 I'd had to do some more serious work on a Unix box, installing first differently configured Lynx browsers for privileged and ordinary users, and then what was the first and for a good while the largest (in number of pages) humanities academic Web server in the UK. But that was straightforward; the instructions from Kansas for Lynx and from the W3C (or

future W3C) people at CERN for their server were impeccable and all I had to do was to follow them. I've forgotten almost all the know-how I had then, and am really starting again from scratch.

What had always put me off Linux at home was the need to repartition the hard disk of a Windows box (actually, successive Windows boxes) in daily use by four people, with gigabytes of software and data, and the fact that Linux doesn't work with a Winmodem; until recently I couldn't spare a com port for an external modem. Picking up a good 56K modem second hand allowed me to reconsider trying Linux.

Moreover I was increasingly fed up with the unreliability of successive versions of Windows; my ME system, with a huge increase in speed, RAM, and drive capacity over its Win-95 predecessor, invariably freezes from lack of system resources after about 2 hours. Even a very stripped down 'mini' user can only get just under 3 hours' work. Added to the regular BSODS and 10-minute SCANDISK crashes that seem to happen with every Windows system (yes, I know NT is better than 95/98/ME etc.), it was getting too much.

Was there a chance that I could go beyond investigating Linux to transferring my own work onto it, even if the rest of the family still swilled the Billg? That was a fairly demanding requirement: I need not only a reasonably good office suite, web browser, and email client, but reliable DOS, CP/M and TRS-80 emulation and a range of Internet tools and applications, as well as handheld PC synch, scanner recognition, and now digital camera interchange software.

I'd started, after reading various Linux HOWTOs on the web, by getting a shareware boot manager called MSTBOOT, assuming that I'd need to partition the disk without altering my Windows setup. MSTBOOT seems to work reliably, but the decision to try WinLinux made it redundant, and it's now simply an added time-wasting stage running Windows. I haven't yet had time to study the manual carefully enough to see if I can risk getting rid of it.

I had also had experience running the free Star Office 5.2 (and testing 6.0 beta) under Windows and knew that if the Linux versions were essentially the same I could rely on Star Office as a replacement for MS Office. Unfortunately Star Office 6 is no longer free; a pity, as the word processor is much improved from 5.2, on which I'm writing this.

By about February this year (2002) I was ready to take the plunge, and seeing someone offering a WinLinux CD on Ebay for less than a fiver was too tempting to resist.

WinLinux was claimed to be an extra easy way of testing Linux for Windows users, since it allowed Linux to use the Windows file system; you didn't need to repartition your disk, and could do the initial configuration from within Windows, and even boot Linux from within Windows. Recently, a new version, WinLinux 2003, has become available: I flag below, in the appropriate places, some of the advertised differences from WinLinux 2001. (Parts of the WinLinux 2001 blurb were apparently written by non-English speakers, although that for 2003 seems to have been largely translated into American.)

To quote the blurb:

"WinLinux 2001 is a Linux distribution created for Windows users. It was developed to be the easiest Linux system in the Windows world.

"It is based on graphical setup tools that turn installation and configuration processes a breeze. It also allows you to see Linux as another application installed on your Windows system, even starting it from your Start Menu. Please notice that Windows applications cannot run within Linux without third party software, like vmware ([www.vmware.com](http://www.vmware.com)) or wine ([www.winehq.com](http://www.winehq.com)).

"WinLinux is able to automatically detect and configure most of your hardware devices, including but not limited to: video card, network card, sound card and mouse. Several software configurations are also detected and set without user intervention, such as TCP/IP network and display settings and time zone information.

"WinLinux 2001 is fully compatible with Windows 95/98 and Millennium edition on the Windows side and it is fully compatible with Red Hat Linux 7.0 [WinLinux 2003 is compatible with Redhat 7.3] on the Linux side. WinLinux 2001 does not work on Windows NT or Windows 2000....

"Technically speaking, WinLinux has the same features you find in a full Linux system, the main

difference is that it is based on the UMSDOS file system, instead of EXT2 Linux file system. However that does not prevent you from using EXT2 partitions you already use..."

An advantage of WinLinux is that all your DOS files are available from within the Linux system, although it is unwise to write to a DOS directory from within Linux. Windows can read the Linux files but corrupts the file extensions, so transferring data between the two systems must be done with care.

The version which I bought initially from the UK dealer turned out to be the minimal version of WinLinux 2001. The vendor evidently got his dispatching process in a mess and then refused to admit that, so it took weeks to get the CD from him. The minimum version provides a working Linux operating system installable from Windows, an X-Windows interface on top of it, and the choice of Gnome (apparently version 1.1, though Gnome is rather coy about it) or KDE 2.1. as the desktop front-end and GUI. Both those are free software developed by open-source projects. WinLinux 2003 has KDE 3.0, which is supposed to be a great improvement on 2.1, but apparently omits Gnome (which has also been radically upgraded this year).

The Gnome interface came with an address book, calendar, text editor, image viewer, icon editor, PostScript file viewer, audio mixer, CD player, sound recorder, system utilities, calculator, a file browser and one or two other things. KDE came with a similar collection plus an office suite (Kword and Kspread), a mail client, a Usenet news client, an irc chat client, and the Konqueror combined file and web browser (which achieves a level of integration greater than Internet Explorer and Explorer under Windows). There are also many simple games. You can run Gnome programs from KDE and vice versa.

Installation was reasonably easy: the CD had a self-installing file, and then running it allowed me to configure WinLinux for my system. Unix systems (as most members will know) allow a root user and other users with limited privileges: WinLinux prevents your accidentally starting off running as root by first asking you to set your name, userid and password, and only then asks you for the root information. That's followed by a device configuration screen. It should recognize all your devices. But, it didn't recognize all the peripherals. I have beside mouse, floppy and hard drive, and keyboard, a CD-RW drive, a DVD drive, a USB port, and, daisy-chained from the parallel port, a ZIP drive, a Primax Colorado scanner, and an HP Deskjet 420 printer. The mouse installed OK but WinLinux only appeared to recognize one CD drive (the CD/RW, which it treated as read-only) and although it correctly picked up the printer as HP 400 series it didn't pick up the scanner or the Zip drive, or the USB port (or anything stuck on that). I've since solved some but not all of those problems.

Moreover booting Linux from Windows was impossible. "Windows Me is unable to start WinLinux 2001 from the Start menu icon. You must use WinLinux Startup Disk or install LILO (the Linux boot loader) to start WinLinux 2001.." You had to create the startup disk (a floppy). That wasn't difficult, but when I ran it it kept dumping me into console mode instead of loading X-Windows.

After I ran WinLinux configuration program (under Windows) again, reducing the screen resolution to 800 x 600, the startup disk got me into X-windows and the choice of KDE or Gnome. I couldn't install LILO because I already had another boot manager installed. At the April NATGUG meeting, however, I successfully installed WinLinux on my daughter's laptop and got LILO working, on it, so it's now a dual-boot system.

I have got into the habit of using the KDE interface, rather than Gnome, because although Gnome is said to be more stable KDE is much more complete. KDE is extremely customizable and personalizable but the font handling and rendering is poor compared to Windows. The Konqueror file manager is more flexible than Windows Explorer and, as a Web browser, it's serviceable, although operations such as clearing history and cache are not easily performed. The mailer and newsreader were easy to install. The office suite I haven't used. It can't import or import MSWord files, and it couldn't print to my printer (printing seems to be an Achilles heel of Linux systems).

WinLinux also provided links to the firm's website in the US ([www.winlinux.net](http://www.winlinux.net)), where a fuller, supported version was available. I thought I'd try this to see if it got round the drawbacks of the minimal version. A drawback was that you have to reinstall it completely, and I had to overwrite my previous installation and destroy all the work I'd done so far. That discourages me from upgrading to WinLinux 2003. The full system was self-installing from CD into

Windows, and the same installation and configuration programs ran from within Windows to set up the Linux side. I had to make a new floppy boot disk and start from that.

The full system had Netscape Navigator 4.7 (2003 has a later version), Star Office 5.20 (2003 Open office 1.0), Real Player, The Gimp graphics tool (which runs primarily under Gnome but can be accessed from KDE), and Xfree86; the 2003 version includes Adobe Acrobat reader 5.0.

Stupidly, having auto-installed from the WinLinux CD under Windows, I didn't check it again later in Linux mode to see if there was anything more on it. It in fact includes a big collection of RPMs (RedHat Package Manager files), including the c compiler (gcc), Xfree development software, Flex, an Apache server, a few games and utilities, multimedia tools (which didn't work on my system), and a large range of libraries which, as it turned out, are needed to support most of the software one is likely to download. Only discovering this cornucopia at a late stage, I kept having to identify the needed software by trial and error, and downloading from the Net versions of files and packages that I'd already got on CD.

Unix and Linux software installation is notoriously less user-friendly than Windows stuff. I was shocked to find how much of it still comes in the awkward gzipped TAR archives I'd had to use on Unix boxes ten years ago. You have to spend a lot of time studying the readme files, make sure you are running as root, put things in the right directory to start with, and if you get something to install and run at all first time you're doing well. Much software, though, can now be obtained in the RPM packages. KDE has a built-in package manager that Konqueror calls up automatically, though it is always necessary to test before installing to check dependencies -- other software that the package expects to be available. There are usually some unsatisfied dependencies, which means a search through the CD or failing that the Web to find and install the extras before you can install and run the software you wanted in the first place.

I now had two main objectives: to get the system to recognize and access all my hardware, and to install emulation software so that I could run the DOS and TRS-80 applications that are still essential to my work! On the way I also upgraded the Web browsing software. Netscape 6.2 proved very easy to install (a model of self-explanation), and I felt rather chuffed at getting it to run under Linux, wince I've never got Netscape 6 to install and run properly under Windows. I also installed the Mozilla open-source browser (now version 1) and Opera 5: Opera 6 has since become available for Linux but has some 'unsatisfied dependencies' on my system.

Effective printing was of course essential and proved a nightmare. Star Office 5.2 has its own printer interface and I was able to get it working correctly on my printer. Even so, printing is very slow. I couldn't print at all from any of the Web browsers, from a text editor, or from the supplied Kword word processor. Unix and Linux permit a wide range of completely different approaches to printing hard copy, confusing to the beginner. Eventually I bought Easysoftware's ESP Print Pro, which comes with drivers for many printers, and that solved the problem. Even so, I had severe difficulties, with the printer driver hanging, when I changed the cartridge in the printer back from colour to black. I now have two separate printer drivers, one for colour and one for B&W, and have to make sure the right one's selected before printing. It's still slow. Moreover many of the true-type and PostScript fonts that I have installed in Windows, and that WinLinux theoretically makes available to the Linux software, don't actually work.

I bought several Unix and Linux books through Ebay and that helped. In particular I discovered that the WinLinux installer had in fact recognized my second CD/DVD drive, it just hadn't linked it to a device that could be mounted. With a bit of fiddling I was able to mount the DVD drive and link it to the CD player, and swap things over so that the CD/RW drive is now CD2. I still haven't got the system to treat it as Read-Write though, so can't yet burn CDROMS. . WinLinux also recognizes my new second hard disk drive but hasn't made that mountable; at some point I must repeat the CD operation on that, but there's no hurry yet! Thanks to whoever suggested at the April meeting that the Iomega website should have Linux drivers for parallel-port Zip drives, I can now access my Zip drive too. The scanner and USB port are still inaccessible, though; it probably means a concentrated search for drivers. I don't understand why it won't recognize the USB port, as it's supposed to. At the moment that isn't an urgent problem. I also need software to enable me to backup my handheld PC through the serial port; I gather that some commercial tools are available but have not yet been able to check them out.

Progress on getting the emulators to work has also been slow. It was delayed by the (apparent!) need to download and install the C compiler from the Web, as well as other stuff. I tried Tim Mann's XTRS emulator, but couldn't install it. Thanks to Tim, I tracked down some Xfree86 libraries that it needed for installation; they also turned out to be required for Wine and other software. Although I eventually got XTRS to run, it was not as practical as Jeff Vavasour's emulator for MSDOS or Matthew Reed's Model III/IV emulators for MSDOS. Those allow you to have a large library of filedisks and point the emulator at them. XTRS requires the four accessible filedisks to have fixed names, so each time you use it you must rename the filedisks from your library to (e.g.) 'diskIII-0', and then remember to restore their informative names afterwards. I'd rather not have to work like that.

For DOS applications -- or even to run 8-bit emulators under DOS -- I have tried three approaches, so far without success, using free emulators. Bochs, for which there is an RPM that runs under WinLinux, which emulates a complete x86 PC, and is really designed for people using, e.g., Sun Sparcstations who want to run or develop Windows software, did install and does run. So far, however, I've only got it to demonstrate a Linux box within Linux --rather pointless! And haven't yet discovered how to get data or software from the DOS/Windows side into the Bochs box.

I've been even less successful with Dosemu, which as its name shows is an MSDOS emulator. Early attempts to install the RPM failed, though in theory it now has no unsatisfied dependencies. The configuration is complex and I still haven't got it right. A full couple of days' work, I think.

Wine, the windows emulator, is also a failure so far. An RPM version available from Codeweavers was defective, so I had to download a (more recent) tarfile and try to compile and install that. At first it failed because of the same missing Xfree headers that XTRS had got stuck on. I eventually got it to run, but it was still not configured correctly: it could only find Windows applications in a c directory below the Linux root, rather than in the main DOS root, so I had to copy over the entire Windows directory and subfolders to Linux. It was just as well it didn't run on the files in their native position, because it caused Linux to hang completely (the only app which has made Linux crash!) and messed up the file system somewhat. It can only be relied on to run programs which neither read nor write data. I'm not sure whether this is merely due to a configuration mistake, or whether the fact that WinLinux shares the same filesystem with Windows makes it uniquely vulnerable.

In any case, the overall effect of my efforts (spread over several months) so far is that, although I enjoy using Linux (and in particular use it to download large files, even of Windows software, because it doesn't crash or slow down from lack of resources) I can't yet abandon Windows, much as I hate it! More work would enable me to replace some more Windows applications with Linux ones, but there seems to be a hard core of things I need to do and can't do under WinLinux. It may be that another, more 'grown-up' Linux distribution would solve the problems, but I haven't got time and energy to reinstall all the software yet again.

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The Book Beat

by Jim Gaffney - SWIPCC

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Microsoft Office XP 8-in-1  
Habreken, Joe; Que Books, Indianapolis, IN  
ISBN 0-7897-2509-6, MSRP \$29.99

Well, having seen Microsoft's Allen Childress demonstrate the wonders of the recently released Office XP -- are you ready to run out and upgrade to the latest version? There are many nifty features in the suite and it certainly is attractive.

SWIPCC President George Holloway was lucky enough to win a copy of the suite at the Microsoft demonstration. In talking to George, I've learned that the package comes with documentation about the size of that which came with Office 2000 -- i.e., about 1/4 of an inch thick. I personally detest the "you can learn everything from the help file" philosophy, so George -- I've got a solution for you.

The good folks at Que have published Joe Habreken's Microsoft Office XP 8-in-1, a thorough (921 pages), well-illustrated, and well-written tome addressing Microsoft's latest suite. As the "volumes" displayed on the cover indicate, there are sections dedicated to each of the applications included in the suite. The first section is devoted to XP innovations such as "Smart Tags" and Speech Recognition. Subsequent sections, in turn, guide the reader through a series of successive lessons designed to walk the reader through mastery of each suite's application modules. The book is suitable for both the newcomer to Microsoft Office as well as the veteran who needs to be brought up to speed on the latest advancements from Redmond, WA.

Attractively priced, "8-in-1" is a recommended addition to the library of anyone moving to the latest generation of Microsoft Office.

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Special Edition -- Using JavaScript  
McFedries, Paul; Que Books, Indianapolis, IN

ISBN 0-7897-2576-2, MSRP \$39.99

Java and JavaScript -- the same thing, right ? Far from it! While you will find both employed in many Web pages, they are beasts of a different colour. Java is an applications programming language from Sun Microsystems; it can be used to create stand-alone applications for most operating systems. JavaScript, as the name implies, is a scripting language that is interpreted by the host machine.

One can do things in Java that can't be done in JavaScript -- principally Graphics manipulation. But there are many useful web functions that can be accomplished using JavaScript; and the interpreter for the scripts is built into most web browsers -- no add-ins are required and page download times are shorter.

If you want to increase the attractiveness of your Homepage, JavaScript is a good way to go. Paul McFedries has created both an excellent tutorial and an excellent reference in his Special Edition -- Using JavaScript.

Beginning with sections on script programming and objects, Mr McFedries leads his readers through an increasingly intricate series [of] techniques and examples. Code snippets and examples abound. And so you don't have to key in everything yourself, the author provides a URL where files containing all the book's examples may be downloaded.

Finally, the reader is introduced to DHTML (Dynamic HTML), a close relative of JavaScript and a method that is finding ever-wider presence on the Web. At 896 pages, this is a comprehensive way to learn a very useful language at a reasonable price.

Did you get the ANNAK worm yet ?

by Rod Ream - PIBMUG

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Here's a quick and easy way to trick the worm

Visual Basic Scripts (VBS) are popular with virus writers. That's because they're easy to create

and will launch if sent as an e-mail attachment. And the recipient double-clicks on them.

But there's an easy, free way for you to defeat Visual Basic Script viruses.

Every file type has a default action that takes place when we double click on a file. The default action for double clicking on a VBS (Visual Basic Script) file type is to open and execute the script file. That means double clicking on the attachment runs or launches the script. This default action is the mechanism that can result in system infection if a user unknowingly launches an infected attachment received in an e-mail message.

You can easily change this action and stop the accidental launch and execution of a VBS file by making it do something else when double-clicked on.

Some users have disabled or removed the capability of the system to run a VBS file out of fear of potential viral exposure. However, there's a relatively easy fix for this that will still permit a web page or other application to run a VB script when such function is actually needed, but will block the double click action. The fix is to change the default action to Edit, which causes the file to open in Notepad rather than execute.

Here's the Step-by-Step

In Windows Explorer (not Internet Explorer), open Folder Options under the View pull-down menu (moved to Tools in Windows Me). Select the "File Types" tab and scroll to VBScript Encoded File. Click on the "Edit" button ("Advanced" in Windows Me).

What happens is another window will open showing the possible file actions, with the default action indicated in boldface type. The default action is likely "Open". Highlight instead the word "Edit" and click on the "Set Default" button. "Edit" should now appear in bold face.

In some older systems the Edit function may not be listed. In such instances, click the NEW button and enter "Edit" in the action field and "NOTEPAD.EXE" in the application field. When "Edit" has been added make it the default action as shown above.

While in the file type screen, also make sure the boxes for "always show extension" and "enable quick view" are also checked. Click "OK" to close the open windows.

Windows usually has several example VBS files on the system, in a folder named "sample". Find one of them and double click on it. If the action caused Notepad to open and display the content of the file, you've done it correctly and are now safe from an accidental VBS infection.

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Windows ME and DOS

by Steve Bass - Pasadena IBM PC Users Group  
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When Microsoft released Windows ME, they decided to protect you from Real DOS-Mode. The truth may be that they didn't want to continue supporting DOS.

Actually, Windows ME architecture allows it if you know the trick.

Download a free patch (and back up your PC before you do, eh?) to modify "IO.SYS", "COMMAND.COM" and "REGENV32.EXE". The patch will unhide the Real DOS-Mode on Windows ME systems and let you boot just like you did in Windows 98. That means you'll be able to get to a startup menu and DOS by pressing "Shift-F8" at boot-up, use "CONFIG.SYS", and "AUTOEXEC.BAT" before Windows loads. The patch is here: [www.geocities.com/mfd4life\\_2000](http://www.geocities.com/mfd4life_2000)

2001 March President's Column

by Dale Oliver - NWA-PCUG

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The February meeting was another good learning experience, as those of you who attended will (hopefully!) agree. Allen Childress of Microsoft was unable to come, so we did a program on hard drives and file maintenance. The member participation was fantastic as always. This highly interactive style of forum is turning out to be a fun way to pick up pearls from everyone present. I was quite impressed with the interaction from the new members and guests as well. If you haven't been attending the meetings recently, you should be!

We discussed the physical features of internal fixed disk drives, what fragmentation is, how it occurs, and how to address this potentially significant performance-robbing issue. Much of our time was spent on the finer points of file system maintenance, how and when to do it, and what exactly can be done to keep your file system in top shape. Here's what we collectively decided after a lot of interactive discussion:

What should I do ? The system maintenance programs that should be run, and the most effective order in which to run them is:

- 1) Backup
- 2) Disk Cleanup
- 3) ScanDisk
- 4) Disk Defragmenter

These programs are part of your Windows system, and can be run by doing the following: Click the Start button, Programs, Accessories and then System Tools. You will see these programs listed in the System Tools program group.

It was generally agreed that aftermarket products do a superior job compared to the products that come bundled with Windows. In all fairness, the bundled products do a decent job and don't require you to install extra software or spend more money. Running these maintenance programs regularly is infinitely better than doing nothing.

Backup is a program that allows you to back up your hard drive files. The most common backup device is a tape drive. Today's hard drives are so large, it is no longer practical or possible to back up entire hard drives to floppy disks, zip disks, writeable CDs, etc. If you have a tape backup drive, I will assume you know how to use it. If you don't, belabouring this topic is unnecessary anyway, so we won't beat it to death. Several members asked about the wisdom of running disk maintenance programs without backing up. The answer to that question is this: If you have the ability to back up your hard drive before running the maintenance programs, then do so. If you don't, you should not let that deter you from running the remaining maintenance programs. Not running them is much more likely to cause you problems than the outside chance of having a problem because of running them regularly.

Disk Cleanup is a program that removes unnecessary clutter from your hard drive. As we discussed in the meeting, as you use Windows itself or visit Internet sites, surprisingly large amounts of temporary files are stored in multiple locations on your hard drive. Often, these "temporary" files are never cleaned up, so they tend to accumulate and waste a significant amount of disk space. Disk Cleanup comes with preset options regarding what is cleaned up, and it allows you to customise these options as you wish. The software is a breeze to use. Start it, select the drive you want to clean up, verify the options (or simply accept the defaults if you're not sure what to do at this point) and click the OK button. Disk Cleanup does the rest. Admittedly, I haven't run this for a while, and I literally ended up reclaiming about a half GB of disk space that was being wasted.

ScanDisk should be run after Disk Cleanup is finished. We discussed how ScanDisk checks your hard

drive for lost chains and clusters of data, checks your file allocation tables (FATs), directory structures and files for problems. It can automatically fix the errors it finds, and it can be set to optionally perform a thorough scan of the magnetic surface of your hard disk platters for bad sectors. This is important stuff! You should get into the habit of running these system maintenance programs regularly if you don't do so already. If some of this is like reading Greek to you, consider running the program with default options for now until you learn more.

Hint: If you select the "thorough" scan option, it will take significantly longer to run than the "standard" scan. You should not need to perform a thorough scan every time you run ScanDisk.

Disk Defragmenter is the final step in this stepwise approach to a healthier, happier file system. Be sure to run this after ScanDisk, because if disk errors are detected while running Disk Defragmenter, it will stop. Like the other maintenance programs, you have a number of options, but the default ones will give you good results. We talked about how Disk Defragmenter basically rearranges the data on your hard drive, taking items that have become scattered around in different locations and storing them in a much more efficient manner. You can watch the magic happen in detail by selecting the Show Details button from the Disk Defragmenter software if you'd like, but this tends to slow down processing significantly. Watch for awhile if you're curious, then switch back out of detail mode to keep from wasting time in an already time-intensive process.

Hint: Allow ScanDisk and Disk Defragmenter to run by themselves. Avoid using other programs while they are running. If you notice one of the programs continually starting over due to the disk contents changing, Doug MacDonald suggested unplugging all USB devices and trying again.

When should I do it ? Members generally agree that "more is better". Cliff Goeke suggested running file system maintenance no less than monthly. Other members mentioned that they run maintenance as often as weekly. Pat Kennedy mentioned that she defragments her hard drive daily, so that it is always in top shape. If you pick a time frame that works for you anywhere in this range, it will significantly help keep your computer's file system in good condition. As a general rule of thumb, the more you use your computer and the more diverse tasks you perform with it, the more often you should consider doing the file maintenance. For the average home user, running the file maintenance programs monthly should be sufficient.

An interesting discussion ensued regarding the best way to automate the process of file system maintenance so that you don't have to sit in front of the computer in a state of suspended animation while your system grinds away through these time-consuming processes. Expect that the first time you run through them will likely be the slowest, but you can generally expect shorter run times as your file system gets whipped into shape and stays more fit. We discussed using Windows' built-in Task Scheduler as well as aftermarket products to allow system maintenance to occur without user interaction, such as during the night or other times when you won't need the computer.

I have evaluated four of the more popular Windows scripting programs readily available for download from Internet sites such as CNET.com. Automating the maintenance process is a great idea and highly recommended. It only requires you to set it up once, and from there it effortlessly keeps your system humming, eliminating the need for you to perform these tasks manually. Please refer to the related article in this issue entitled Windows Scripting Software to learn more about this great time-saving idea.

What Has 42 Million Transistors and As Many Pins As An Acupuncturist ?

by Mike Regimenti

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If you answered the new Intel Pentium 4 (P-4) CPU chip, you must subscribe to at least one

computer magazine. Intel's newest offerings in the CPU speed race against AMD are the P-4 1.5, 1.4 and the 1.3 GHz chips.

These new chips are being built using the current .18-micron process technology; a 256K on die Advanced Transfer Cache and sport a 400 MHz front side bus. The P-4 is the first completely new 32-bit desktop processor design since the Pentium Pro in 1995. The foundation of these new CPUs is what Intel calls NetBurst micro-architecture. The P-4 uses the longest (10 stage) processing pipeline (tagged Hyper Pipelined Technology by Intel) of any mass-produced CPU. This compares to the P-III's 12-stage and AMD Athlon's 10-stage pipeline. This longer pipeline is more suited to faster chip speeds. The P-4 also uses what is called a trace cache instead of the more conventional L1 cache. The trace cache allows the processor to store instructions and data in a decoded format, eliminating the time necessary to decode the instructions. As if all this wasn't enough, the P-4 utilises Arithmetic Logic Units (ALUs) -- the part of the CPU that performs the integer math functions -- run at twice the clock speed of the CPU. Even though the P-4 has only two ALUs as compared to the three ALUs of the P-III, they run twice as fast. To add the finishing touch, INTEL added 144 new SSE2 instructions and will use the Internet streaming SIMD extensions. SSE2 is the latest and greatest in multimedia technology and the successor to Intel's MMX first seen in the Pentium 166 and 200 MHz CPUs. INTEL is banking on NetBurst to carry future P-4 chips to 2 GHz and beyond. The 1.7 GHz chip is expected sometime in the first quarter of 2001 with the 2 GHz toward the middle of this year. Intel thinks they can keep the P-4 line alive for at least the next 3 years.

What does all this new technology really mean to the average computer user ?

In everyday business type applications, the P-4 is actually a little bit slower than currently available P-IIIs and AMD Athlon powered boxes. Over the last 2-3 years, processor speed seems to have ruled the roost in determining performance, this may seem strange to most people. Most business apps aren't designed for and don't currently require the P-4s blazing speed.

The P-4 is a superior performer of floating-point operations, the very thing that 3-D graphics require. That means that games designed to utilise the SSE2 instruction set really show outstanding gains in performance and high frame rates in graphic intensive games like Quake 3. Any P-4 powered system will be guaranteed to keep your kids or grandchildren close at hand.

Before you rush out to buy a couple of these beauties, be prepared to fork over a large wad of cash. The 1.4 GHz chip goes for about \$730 plus \$20 for a new fan, add another \$240 for a new motherboard (850 chip set only), and of course you'll need at least 256MB of PC800 RDRAM, at a mere \$440. Don't forget to add \$65 for a new P-4 certified power supply (330 watts minimum) with the additional power connections for the 423 Socket motherboard. For a mere \$1500 you can have the fastest CPU setup on the block.

Software Review:

CD Stomper Click'N Burn

by Chuck Moery

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I purchased a CD-RW Recorder approximately two-and-a-half years ago primarily to use for backing up my hard drive. Unfortunately, the software that was included with the purchase of the CD was very unreliable and I quickly abandoned the recording feature and used it as a regular CD reader. I was only successful in making usable recordings about half of the time and frequently couldn't use a regular CD to reliably read my recorded disks. I recently was provided the opportunity to review the program Click'N Burn Pro which proclaims that it is "Premium CD Recording Software" and offers "Pre-Mastering, Recording and Duplication software for anyone who wants professional results." Due to procuring the Click'N Burn software and an increased interest in duplicating family photos and recorded music, I thought about reviving my use of my CD-RW. I will present an overview of the Click'N Burn program and hold my recommendations until the end of this review.

The program requires a 166 Mhz Pentium or faster PC computer, 32 MB of RAM, a minimum of 15 MB of free hard disk space, a CD-Recorder or CD-Rewritable drive, Microsoft Windows 95/98/2000 NT 4.0 (Service Pack 4 or Higher). Its primary features include:

- + Perform flawless CD-to-CD copies
- + Create custom music CDs
- + Create data CDs
- + Create mixed mode and extra CDs
- + Create video CDs
- + Exclusive WarpDrive feature

The program will create custom music CDs from MP3, WAV, or WMA files, your CD collection, Microphone or Tape Player through your Sound Card with DJ Burn. You can also add text information to your CDs about your recorded music and it is ideal for archiving your CD collection. You can ensure flawless copies by Bit-to-Bit verification and Create CDs in Single or Multi-sessions as well as having music and data on the same CD. For those who are interested in recording Video, the program has provisions to create Video CDs from standard MPEG-1 files and is playable on most DVD Video Players. You are able to record or duplicate up to four CD-R/RW drives at a time and run multiple projects concurrently. The software package also includes a CD Stomper Starter Kit with software and an applicator to professionally design, print and apply your own CD-R/DVD labels to the CDs that you burn. Anyone who is familiar with Window programs will readily be able to use the Click'N Burn software.

I have used the Click'N Burn program for approximately six weeks and have duplicated CD-to-CD copies, copied musical CDs, duplicated my personal data and combined various types of data and music on CDs, and, have been successful 100% of the time. In addition, I am able to read all the burnt copies on regular CDs. My recommendation: IT'S A KEEPER. (Ed. Note: website shows a \$29.95 pricetag).

Stomp, INC.  
1012 Brioso Drive #105  
Costa Mesa, CA 92627 USA  
1-949-250-6771, FAX 1-949-250-6775  
[www.cdstomper.com](http://www.cdstomper.com)

E-Bay ? I Love It!

by Becky White, Pasadena IBM Users Group

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I have been using e-bay to sell our antiques for about a month now. And I LOVE IT!

With e-bay, you are using them as a vehicle to sell or buy stuff, but the deals are worked out between the seller and the buyer directly. E-bay charges a very moderate listing fee for each item listed and a moderate percentage of the item sold, ONLY IF IT SELLS. If an item does not sell, you are only responsible for the listing fee, which is from \$0.25 to \$2.00, based on your starting value or your reserve price.

Did Your Item Sell Quickly ?

E-bay asks you to set a specified period of time for each item listed.

The choices are 3 days, 5 days, or 7 days. You may be able to ask for a few more days, but most people go with the 3, 5, or 7-day scenario. So, if you get any bids, items will sell as quickly as you choose.

Did it Sell for the Amount Asked ?

When listing an item, you (the seller) defines the opening bid required, so that no one can bid below your requested opening price. In addition, there is an option to set a "reserve" price for

each item, which sets a minimum bid that you are willing to accept. Unless an item is especially valuable, most people do not use the reserve option. For some reason, it turns people off!?

Do You Get Paid Right Away ?

Since e-bay is only a conduit, the money changes hands directly between the seller and the buyer. When an auction closes, the buyer and seller have three days to E-mail each other. E-mail addresses are supplied by e-bay. The seller tells the buyer how much shipping and insurance will be and what the total due is. In most transactions, the buyer pays shipping and insurance up front.

When the seller receives the cheque, then the item can be shipped, however, most sellers wait 10 days or so until the cheques clear the bank. A seller can request specific types of payments, like only money orders (safe to ship next day) or visa or cheques or COD or whatever works for the seller. The seller then packs and ships the item.

Any Hassles...Or was it Fun ?

I have had a blast selling and buying stuff this way! I have made many E-mail friends and even have an E-mail pal in England, because of some of the deals I have made. Many of the people are incredibly friendly and personable! All, so far, have been good about paying on time and pretty good about communicating through E-mail. A few times, I have had dealings with people who are not accustomed to using E-mail and they "forget" to check their mail. When they realise that they need to read their mail, then the money comes quickly.

Over all, I have LOVED every part of my e-bay experience with the possible exception of having to pack the darn stuff and take it to the post office! Stan helps out in that area a lot.

Becky White is known as "whitebear" on e-bay.

Future Perfect: Microsoft's Spec for Your Next PC

by David Coursey - Executive Editor, ZdNet AnchorDesk

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ANAHEIM, Calif.--What's the perfect PC for the "experiences" promised by Microsoft's forthcoming Windows XP operating system ? That's one of the topics Microsoft is talking about with hardware developers here at the company's annual Windows Hardware and Engineering Conference, which ends today.

Microsoft has developed a set of guidelines and recommendations for PC manufacturers seeking to label their machines with the Windows XP logo. These aren't finalised yet, but I want to share them with you so you can consider them when purchasing your next computer.

Some of the items I've listed are requirements and others are mere recommendations or best practices; for simplicity's sake, I have made no distinction between them. Interestingly, while the "PC Design Checklist for Windows XP" includes just about everything else, I see nothing about processor speed. I guess "faster is better" goes without saying.

The hardware design goals are to create a PC that excels in a number of areas, which give you some idea of the design goals for Windows XP itself. The guidelines and requirements are intended to create a PC:

You can live with: Always available.

For creating digital experiences: Photos and video.

That brings it all together: The hub for digital devices.

That makes it happen: The best appliance for entertainment.

That helps build stronger relationships: Real-time communications.

Following are the specifics of how Microsoft wants hardware manufacturers to help it accomplish these goals.

## MEMORY

At least 128MB of system memory, plus 32MB or 64MB (recommended) of video memory.  
START-UP and POWER

The system must not display any BIOS text during start-up and must meet these start-up times:

Cold boot to desktop in 30 seconds or less.

Resume from hibernate in 20 seconds or less.

Resume from standby in 5 seconds or less.

A sleep button on the keyboard suspends the PC.

An off button on the front of the PC that hibernates the PC.

A power-off button on the back of the PC.

Laptop battery life must support playing a feature-length DVD or three hours of typical application use.

## DEVICE CONNECTIVITY

The system includes at least four USB ports, with two on the front panel or keyboard for user convenience and two on the back of the PC. A built-in USB hub is recommended.

The system includes at least two, and preferably three, IEEE-1394 FireWire ports for high-speed devices. Mobile devices need only one. Three are recommended for desktops, however, with one port on the back of the system unit.

The system does not allow end-user access to expansion bus cards. This means users will no longer routinely open their PCs to add peripherals.

## GRAPHICS ADAPTER AND MONITOR

Supports 3D DirectX 8.0 features. Graphics subsystem includes a digital video interface (DVI) connector, allowing the user to add a flat-panel display with the assurance of a good upgrade experience.

Minimum 1024-by-768-pixel screen resolution; 1280 by 1024 is recommended. Monitor is a flat-panel display.

Flat-panel display cable integrates USB and 1394 connections at the monitor for an uncluttered desktop.

Monitor integrates other components, such as speakers, cameras, array microphone, USB hub, and so forth.

## NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The system includes a 10/100 Ethernet adapter that, for desktops, must include "Wake on LAN" capabilities.

Microsoft would like DSL or cable modems to be available as options on build-to-order systems.

## DISK DRIVES

High-performance hard drive, at least 40GB.

CD-RW and DVD playback devices included.

A combo drive is recommended. (I prefer systems with dual drives for easy dubbing.)

## ERGONOMICS

A quiet PC, never more than 37 decibels, so the machine is welcome in kitchen, bedroom, and living room.

No noise during any supported sleep state. Ultra-small enclosure.

## DIGITAL IMAGING

Many of these guidelines, like a powered USB hub, are included in other guidelines.

Here are some of the others:

Flatbed colour scanner included with system.

Photo-realistic printer included with system.

USB Webcam included with system.

#### AUDIO

System includes two speakers and a subwoofer.

System includes a microphone or headset for voice input.

#### TV AND VIDEO

HDTV tuner card included. Graphics subsystem includes TV-out capabilities.

Obviously, creating a system that meets all these specs will come at significant cost -- thus most of the really expensive items, like the HDTV tuner, are recommendations rather than requirements. Microsoft says the main obstacles in creating low-cost "value PCs" will be the 128MB memory requirement, improving power management to make the computer "always available", and complete support for plug-and-play devices.

Since Microsoft wants PCs to carry the Windows XP logo, there will be some give-and-take, and the requirements won't end up being so high-end as to create only high-dollar machines. But I thought you'd want to know what the ultimate Windows XP box would include.

#### Save Time When Typing

by Coco Johnston - F1 Computer Club

coco@mo-net.com

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For those of you who have to type a lot using Word or WordPerfect, and type the same phrases or titles over and over, here is a little trick that will save time and work.

Let's say you have to type the phrase F1 Computer Users' Club a lot. You can use your Spell Check dictionary to create a shortcut.

#### In WordPerfect:

In the Menu Bar at the top of your screen

Click on Tools

Select Quick Correct

In the box labelled Replace, type an abbreviation you want to use (example: F1)

In the box labelled With, type the full phrase you want to appear (example: F1 Computer Users' Club)

Make sure there is a check mark in the box marked Replace words as you type

Click OK

#### In Microsoft Word:

In the Menu Bar at the top of the screen

Click on Tools

Select AutoCorrect

Type the abbreviation in the box labelled Replace

Type the full phrase in the box labelled With

Now every time you type the abbreviation (F1) and hit the space bar, the entire phrase (F1 Computer Users' Club) will appear automatically.

Another good use for AutoCorrect and QuickCorrect is that if there is a word you always misspell, and that word is not in your computer's dictionary (like your mother-in-law's name), you can add the misspell and put the correct spelling into your dictionary.

You can also add words that don't appear in your dictionary, such as Cassville or Berryville, simply by clicking ADD in the dialogue box that comes up during Spell Check

Check your HELP files in other applications for similar features. Look up Spell Check, and see what your options are.

Coco Johnson is past President and current editor of the F1 Computer Club in Shell Knob Mo. Please let her know if you use this article. There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organisation to which SYDTRUG Inc. belongs.

## Protecting Your Computer from Viruses, Worms, and Trojans

by Ira Wilsker - GTPCC

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If you have been following the news recently, you have undoubtedly heard of viruses; "worms", programs that "eat" through your files; and "trojans", programs that hide under the guise of other more innocent looking programs.

Regular listeners to my radio show (KLVI 560AM, 6-7 p.m. Tuesdays) have heard warnings about these threats to computers, and a multitude of callers who have been the victims of these software creatures. A virus, worm, or trojan is a piece of software that was written to be mischievous, and loaded discreetly onto the victim's computer. According to some computer security publications, there are now over 60,000 identified viruses, worms, and trojans; new ones appear at a rate averaging 100 - 400 a week! It is imperative that all PC (and MAC) users have a modern antivirus installed, properly configured, and updated frequently, at least weekly. There is no good reason not to have an antivirus program installed, other than they slightly degrade performance as they scan incoming data for "signatures" of potential threats. They do this by comparing this data to a file of known threats.

Most antivirus programs can also identify some new threats, because they are often minor variations of existing threats, or use otherwise known code. Cost should not be a problem; a review of the Sunday sale books in most weeks will reveal that the local electronics or office supply stores have the top selling antivirus software titles (NAI's McAfee ViruScan, or Symantec's Norton Antivirus) on sale, often for as little as \$5 - \$10 after rebates. There are several dozen other publishers of quality software as well. For those who like "free", there is the excellent InoculateIT Personal Edition from Computer Associates Inc., one of the largest software publishers in the world. This can be downloaded from <http://antivirus.cai.com>. After a simple registration (free), a serial number is issued, and free updates and support become available. CAI posts frequent updates almost daily to the Net, and they can be downloaded and installed by opening the program, and clicking on TOOLS AUTO DOWNLOAD. In the past, most viruses were transmitted by the exchange of floppy disks, but now most are transmitted by e-mail, often as attachments. Some e-mail programs, especially the widely used Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express, are very vulnerable to attack. This vulnerability is often the target of virus authors, who create viruses to utilise the fact that the Outlook products are directly connected to a browser (Internet Explorer), the Windows operating system, and utilities that can execute viruses written in the popular Visual Basic (the recent Anna virus was a simple Visual Basic program), machine code, Microsoft Office scripts, or the Java language.

While the old adage "don't run an e-mail attachment from someone you don't know" may still be a good idea, the majority of newer viruses will be e-mail attachments from people you do know, maybe even with a message title replying to one you sent. This is because many of the new viruses, worms, and trojans actually hijack the Outlook address book and replicate themselves to the e-mail addresses in the address book. AOL mail is also another common target, simply due to the large number of AOL users. While still vulnerable, users of other popular e-mail programs such as Eudora and Pegasus are much less frequently the targets of the virus writers. Web based e-mail, such as Hotmail, Net Address, and Yahoo Mail are not immune, especially if attachments are run or downloaded. The modern rule of thumb is either do not open or download attachments, or be very suspicious. To get around the suspicion, many virus authors attempt to hide their evil within a nice or innocent looking name or extension. The recent Anna attacks were made to look like a common JPEG image, but with the otherwise unlikely file extension ".jpg.vbs". This looked at first like a typical JPEG image file, but the VBS indicated to the observant user that it was a program written in visual basic script.

While the antivirus software can typically detect and remove most viruses, worms, and trojans, there are also other threats that are now becoming more common. Any time users are on-line, or connected to a network, their computers are vulnerable to a variety of additional threats. In reality, with a Windows PC, there are about 65,000 "ports" or places of entry for the exchange of information. While on-line in any fashion, a PC can be a target of either someone trying to electronically break in, or a previously undetected "backdoor" secretly installed on the user's computer may attempt to send information from the computer to someone else. Trojans with the names of Back Orifice or Backdoor-G have become extremely common; there are hundreds of others as well. These programs allow someone else almost unrestricted access to anything on the user's computer any time they are on-line. Ranging from a simple irritant to industrial espionage or sabotage, these trojans are just one type of threat to the on-line user. Another surprisingly common threat is someone trying to break into the user's computer while it is on-line. If successful, then everything from keystrokes typing usernames and passwords, to data theft and manipulation become possible.

In order to minimise the chance of an outsider gaining access to a user's computer while on-line, a program generically called a "firewall" is often a necessity. Originally only used by large institutions on their networks, firewalls have become a security essential on millions of home or small business computers on a network or on-line. A firewall functions by either closing vulnerable ports, or monitoring incoming and outgoing data, issuing an alarm when a suspicious data transfer is found. While a lesser (but still common) problem with dial-up Internet access, a firewall may be a necessity on a computer with DSL or cable modem access. Being "always on-line" makes a computer an easily identifiable target. While there are some very good commercial firewalls for PCs, such as BlackIce, Norton Internet Security, and McAfee Firewall, one of the most popular is the top-rated Zone Alarm from Zone Labs. Zone Alarm is free for personal use, and available for download at [www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com). Just like the antivirus software, the firewall publishers often make updates available on the Internet. There are a variety of free websites that can identify on-line security breaches. One of the most popular is the Shields Up test available free at <http://grc.com>. To paraphrase a popular unrelated warning, all computer users "need to practice safe HEX".

Editor's note: Ira Wilsker is an Instructor IV of Management Development at Lamar Institute of Technology. Ira has been working with computers since 1965 when he took his first computer class at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Ira is a frequent guest on the local television news, and has lectured internationally on a variety of computer topics ranging from computer and Internet basics, to CyberCrime, and Community Oriented Policing. Ira is a member of the Golden Triangle PC Club and a member of APCUG's Board of Advisors. Please let him know if you publish his article. Email: [ira@apcug.org](mailto:ira@apcug.org)

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Basic E-mail Safety  
and Etiquette

by Dale Oliver - NWA-PCUG

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The mindset of the typical personal computer user regarding safety-related issues has gone from, "It can't happen to me!" to, "I wonder when it will happen•? Although paranoia isn't necessarily a good thing, a frank acceptance of the risks of on-line computing is. If you are connected to the Internet--especially with a broadband connection--you will definitely want to have some security measures in place, such as Zone Labs' ZoneAlarm. This Internet security software is a jewel, and it is available free to individuals for non-commercial use from [www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com). In addition to keeping you safe from snoops and hackers while you are connected to the Internet, two of the most popular virus detection and cleaning software products are Norton Antivirus ([www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com)) and McAfee VirusScan ([www.mcafee.com](http://www.mcafee.com)).

Even though computer security and virus software exists to save us from ourselves, there are some very simple and easy things that we can do every day to protect us, our friends, our family and colleagues from needless security risks. Hey, just because your car has airbags doesn't mean you can stop using the steering wheel!

Here are some simple pointers to take a substantial amount of risk out of your on-line computing activities, especially the growing e-mail related risks:

Just because you recognise the sender, it doesn't mean the e-mail is safe. Many newer viruses and e-mail worms spread like wildfire through e-mail. Once they are run on an unsuspecting person's computer, a worm will promptly mass-mail itself to everyone in the e-mail address book. Sometimes it will send replies to existing e-mail messages in your inbox. Sometimes it will create a new e-mail message with a subject line something like, "Check out this great new (fill in the blank) I just downloaded!" If you get an e-mail from a friend that seems suspicious, especially if it has any kind of file attachment, don't open the e-mail. Telephone that person and ask if they really sent the e-mail to you. If you get a suspicious e-mail message from someone you don't even know, delete it before you even open it.

Don't continually put your friends, family and colleagues at risk. Many unsuspecting users do this every day by sending their friends, family and colleagues' e-mail addresses all over the Internet. If you send an e-mail message to multiple recipients, for Pete's sake, don't simply CC the message to everyone. Use the BCC (blind carbon copy) option instead. Simply CC'ing the message does a number of bad things: (1) It creates larger e-mails because of the additional text included with all of the addresses displayed. (2) It clogs up e-mail servers and inboxes with bloated e-mails that take longer to download and more disk space to store due to the needless additional information. (3) It annoys people on the receiving end, especially if they get an e-mail that has been forwarded this way many times, which requires the recipient to scroll through reams of e-mail addresses in order to finally get to the message. (4) It's a wonderful "sucker list" source for potential hackers and miscreants who now have a growing list of potential targets to send their viruses and worms to.

Don't click on Internet links in unwanted or suspicious e-mails. Even (especially) if the e-mail says something to the tune of, "click here to be removed from our obnoxious e-mailing list that you didn't want to be part of in the first place." OK, so I'm being sarcastic. Still, this type of link can be a ploy to find out the "live" e-mail addresses from the "dead" ones in a mass-mailing campaign. No reply may mean that a particular e-mail address is no longer used or no longer exists. A reply, however, tells the sender that they have a live one on the hook. Why take the bait•?

Sometimes a file attachment isn't what you think it is. Sometimes, despite all your best efforts, you will still get stung. You're a moderately informed computer user. You run anti-virus software and keep it updated. You use an Internet security software such as ZoneAlarm. You utilise BCC when sending e-mails to multiple recipients. You strip out superfluous e-mail addresses before forwarding messages. You telephone someone if you are wary of an e-mail attachment before downloading or running it. By doing these things, you have removed about ninety-

nine percent of the chance of becoming a victim. But there's still the chance you could get stung now and then.

Here's an example: Let's say you telephoned Bob after receiving a suspicious e-mail from him, and you said, "Hey Bob, I just got an e-mail from you with an attachment that is supposed to be some kind of New Year's Eve fireworks display. Did you really send this•?" Bob says, "Yes, I sent it. It's really cool. Run it and see for yourself." You did your part, expended a minimal amount of time and effort to verify the file was sent legitimately, so you think you're safe. But what you don't know is that Bob infected his computer with a virus or e-mail worm when he ran the attached file, and he doesn't even know it yet. Oops. In the words of Billy Crystal, "I \*hate\* it when that happens!" All you can do at this point is fire up your virus software and get rid of that annoyance before it turns into a real problem.

Long story short: Implementing the simple but effective strategies in this article can help you and your friends avert most of the problems related to e-mailing, allowing you to have a safer and more enjoyable on-line computing experience.

You Did What ? Why ?

by Rod Ream - PIBMUG

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Read This!! It's a Hoax!!!

That was the start of a conversation with a client who'd just deleted a file from the \windows\command folder. That's because they'd received an urgent e-mail message from a friend, warning them of an unknown virus.

The message they received was quite clever and, as of this writing, is still being forwarded by darned near everyone without a second thought. The e-mail indicated that the file to be deleted contains a virus that will launch within a week and needs to be zapped without delay. The reader is warned in--what else?--LARGE SIZED TYPE with lots of exclamation points that if they do not act quickly they face destruction of all their files and folders. The message concludes by stating that none of the virus scanning programs can detect this viral threat.

My client had one machine with Internet access and 2 stand-alone systems without Internet access. They followed the instructions in the message and found that all 3 of their systems contained the supposedly dangerous file. They deleted it as instructed and then, wondering if they'd done the right thing, gave me a call.

In this case the filename was SULFNBK.EXE, but it could have been any file. If the hoax authors get away with this once, you can bet your bippy they'll be back with something else. (In case you are wondering, SULFNBK.EXE is used to backup long file names when you upgrade from one version of Windows to another. If you don't like the new version and want to go back, this file preserves those long file names for you)

To put things in perspective, my client had deleted a file they knew nothing about, based on the advice of some they didn't know well. The author of the hoax had accomplished the task of zapping a file on someone else's system as easily as if he'd written and launched a real virus.

Of course, by coming up with this scam, he'd caused the system owner to become his willing and unwitting agent. There are laws against damaging a computer system, if this ploy isn't included, perhaps it should be, as it could be just as destructive.

I thought it was time to take the client back to school, so I proceeded to explain how to avoid being taken in, the next time the hoaxers look for a sucker. Here are some things you can look for before you let panic set in:

- + Does the message indicate one of your messages contained a virus when it was received at the other end ? When I receive an infected message I always alert the sender by e-mail as well as by phone and I tell them specifically the name of the detected infection.
- + Is the sender someone that would be a knowledgeable person about virus detection ? (Is your brother-in-law really a knowledgeable source ? Really ?)
- + Big clue! The message said that the major anti-virus companies couldn't detect this thing. Hogwash! The hoaxer compounded the issue by confusing virus detection with virus activation - the date that the time bomb is supposed to trigger. If no one can detect it, then what makes anyone but a psychic know that it's going to go B-A-N-G!! on a certain date ?
- + Did the message look like it's been forwarded over and over ? If you've ever received chain letters from an AOL subscriber, then this shouldn't need an explanation.
- + Is this something that's currently being reported by the major news outlets ? Sorry folks, but Entertainment Tonight and the Springer Show don't qualify.
- + What does your own anti-virus software show, when you scan your system ? How long has it been since you updated your scanner's virus definitions ? You do have up-to-date antivirus software don't you ?

Producers of virus detection software (there's a couple of hundred companies doing this) compete with one another to be the first to not only detect a new threat, but to be able to neutralise it as well. Within a day or two of the initial discovery the major companies will have an update available -- that's how they make their money.

You see, viruses can be very difficult to detect if they are polymorphic (self masking), but there always has been something that's detectable. Any claim that these highly regarded companies can't detect something, but Uncle Bob can detect it, should be disregarded on its face.

With that in mind, your first line of defense is up-to-date virus detection software. If you can't recall the last time you downloaded a new set of detection definitions, then it's probably not. If you don't have anti-virus software on the system, there are several on-line detection sites with the best (in my opinion) being <http://www.housecall.antivirus.com> which is a free service of Trend Micro, publishers of PC-cillin and other AV products. Your second line of defense is obviously common sense. Use it, it's free!

Copyright Rod Ream 2001, Rod Ream PC Consulting. Rod Ream is senior tech support for the Pasadena IBM Users Group and president of PC Consulting. Reach him at 626/280-6850 or [RodReam@techie.com](mailto:RodReam@techie.com).  
Book Review:

Practical Windows Me

by Jack Whitney - SPCUG

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I have a question when I go into a bookstore for a book to help me navigate through a new or modified operating system; "Does the book cover items in a manner that is clearer and more complete than the help sections furnished with the program" ? As the Windows operating system has progressed through the years, the help sections have become bigger and better, and the printed manuals furnished with the operating system have become smaller or non-existent. Some of us would rather look up an item in a book no matter how complete the furnished or on-line help sections of a program may be.

As a new user of Windows Me this criterion has become very important to me. I was very pleased to be able to read this book and see if it was able to help me answer the questions I have had since I installed Win to Windows 98, 2nd Edition. In addition, I tried to put myself in the place of a person who has just purchased a new computer with Windows Me already installed and was new to the

Windows environment.

This book by Faith Wempen takes the new user of Windows Me by the hand and gently teaches you to get your feet wet. The book is written in a friendly, non-technical style. It is not written with the humour and cartoons used by the "Dummy" books. It covers all the components of Windows Me including use of digital cameras, laptop computers, and the use of the media player. You will not be an expert, but you will be able to turn on your computer with confidence. E-mail is one of the prime uses of a computer these days for a large percentage of computer users, so I paid particular attention to this part of the book. It walks you through the various steps of sending and receiving e-mail. I showed this section to my wife who is not comfortable using a computer, and she told me that the instructions were very clear, and she felt better about doing e-mail after reading and doing the examples in the book.

Another item in a Windows instruction book, that I feel is very important, are instructions for recovering from the crashes and computer lock-ups that happens to all of us. This book devotes a chapter to problems you might run into, and also includes in Appendix B, a list of on-line sites that you can access for help. I tried several of these and found them very good.

The reader who is familiar with Windows 98 will not find enough new information in this book to warrant buying it. You will find a fresh presentation of familiar topics that could be useful or you might find treatment of subjects you don't know about. On the whole, I wouldn't recommend it for experienced users. The book is definitely aimed at the new user of Windows. The listed retail price of \$24.99 is more attractive than the \$40.00 or more you would have to pay for a "complete" version of a Windows Me instruction book.

Practical Microsoft Windows Millennium, ISBN 0-7897-2405-7, from the QUE division of Macmillan Publishing Co.

Software Review:

Videowave 4

by Michele Chapman - SPCUG

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Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the computer can really be FUN! For example, the whole world of video editing is now easily done with the computer. Many years ago, when video cameras first hit the market, I couldn't wait to get involved with them. My father convinced me to start a video business taping the circus acts in the Sarasota area so they could send videos to agents for work.

I had to use the only equipment that was available to me to do the editing. And I had to do everything by the seat of my pants. I had several VCRs hooked up together, several monitors, a fade machine, a couple of stereos, and I even did some "adaptive engineering" on my little TI/99/4A computer to make my own computer graphics go on videotape. Now you can imagine how hard that would be to even make just one short video with all that old equipment. I sat there many times wishing that I had some sort of computer program that would automate the process. I knew even then that the day would come ... well, someday, anyway.

Guess what ? It's HERE! I am reviewing a program called VideoWave 4. Wow! I'll say it again ... WOW! My dreams have come true (well ... most of them .... I'm still waiting on that tall, dark and handsome one). At any rate, this program does all the things I dreamed about years ago for video editing. VideoWave 4's user interface is designed in such a way that I feel like I'm at the helm of a starship, with all the controls to do everything at my fingertips. Every time I see a program by MGI, I'm more impressed by their attention to ease of use.

I was able to get started editing my own videos in just a few hours, with very little training on the program. Their short and simple tutorial included with the book was all that was really needed. I do have to say that I had some trouble installing the program. First, the program insisted that I change my monitor resolution to 1024 x 768 with 16-bit colours. Now, I know how to do that, but a lot of new computer users might not know how. That would be a stumbling block right at the start. The next thing that happened on the reboot of my computer was that some of my system files were either missing or damaged. Again, I had to spend another hour getting my system files back in order. When I finally got around to starting the program, parts of it didn't function. No problem, I just reinstalled the software. It even gave me an option to repair the program or to do a reinstall. I choose repair, and surprise! It did it. Cool! My suggestion to you if you want to install this program, is to talk to someone first about the specific requirements of your computer and the steps for installation.

Once into the program, I followed the tutorial and was able to start editing the included video clips right off the bat. Then I went for the "Big Challenge". That is, capturing video of my own. First of all, in anticipation of reviewing this program, I figured that my 400 MHz/128 MB RAM computer would handle the workload that this would place on it, but I also knew my older, smaller hard drive wouldn't be up to the task, so it was a perfect excuse to upgrade to my lovely big 40 Gig hard drive.

I was able to play my videotape into my computer, capture it to the program and edit it all in one sitting! That would have taken me many hours to do in the past, but now it all happens in just a matter of minutes. I can also create special effects, colourise, change the speed of the video, clip out unwanted parts easily and do it all down to a split second of frame. WOW! Once I got my video finished and produced, I was able to save it to a CD-ROM to give to my sister to watch on her computer. The program also allows me to produce my masterpiece to the Web for all to see, and even gives me some Web space for that purpose.

Now the only thing that VideoWave 4 didn't give me is artistic ability. That is simply something I don't have. That probably explains why I dress the way I do. (I could put on chequered shorts and a polka-dot shirt and say "Gee, that looks pretty good"). So this means that you won't be seeing me accepting any Academy Awards for great film production. However, in the hands of someone who DOES have artistic ability, this program could go a long way for someone to produce their own videos.

The main interest I have in this program is to preserve my old family 8mm movie film. My father travelled the world and took many home movies of circuses all over America and Europe. Most of these are collector's items and quite valuable. However, they are getting ruined by age and drying. Years ago, I transferred most of them to videotape, but was not able to edit or enhance them at all. Now, finally, with VideoWave 4, I can capture the old films, edit them and produce them to CD to distribute to my family.

Once they are digital, they will stay there forever. I have been waiting twenty years for our technology to catch up to our needs. Now with VideoWave 4, it's here.

VideoWave 4 is published by MGI Software, [www.mgisoft.com](http://www.mgisoft.com). You will find it at a street price of about \$85.

Natgug Editors Note:

Sounds like I will have to try this one, I have just acquired a 60 day trial copy of Video Wave 5. I will let you know how I get on with it in a later newsletter.

Book Review:

Upgrading and Repairing  
PCS, 12th Edition

by Brian Lewis - SPCUG

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December issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

About two years ago I reviewed the previous edition of this book in the SPCUG Monitor. Then one of my comments was that it was a "really big" book. Well, this edition is even bigger. It's now up to more than 1600 pages. It is still one of the most informative and readable books on PCS that I have come across.

Although this edition has only one CD-ROM included instead of the two in the previous edition, it is very well organised and very useful. It has Web addresses for just about any company in the computer industry that you might need. The CD also has 90 minutes of video showing step-by-step procedures for upgrades and repairs. For those who have never looked inside their computer, but are curious, these pictures can be very informative. There are also complete printable versions of earlier editions of this book and technical references on older computer systems.

One other valuable item is the searchable hard drive specifications table. Complete specs for hundreds of current and older hard drives.

A problem for many people who attempt to use a text like this is the technical vocabulary. This edition has 48 pages of a glossary included to help the reader through the rough spots. Again, the definitions in the glossary are quite helpful.

Some material that I found of interest in this edition included an expanded section on setting up a network. This network section included accurate information on using a direct cable connection for a two-PC network. There was also an interesting discussion of the difference in speeds between the various buses found today's computers. This included the processor (or front-side bus), the AGP bus and the PCI bus. The discussion compared the now obsolete ISA bus to the newer buses. It also considered how these buses related to the L2 cache memory speed. Included with this was the best explanation I've seen of L1/L2 caching and the effect of cache speed on CPU performance.

We are all aware of the rapid increase in hard disk size that has occurred over the past several years. As this text says, this is due to an increase in data density on the hard disk surface. The density of the first PC hard drives was about 10 megabits per square inch. In today's drives, this has increased to 10 - 20 gigabits per square inch. Drive manufacturers have predicted that the density will be 100 gigabits within five years. The problem then becomes the instability of the magnetic surface at room temperature. There are some manufacturers working on cooling mechanisms for these larger hard disks.

Another interesting fact; consider that the distance from the read/write head to the rotating disk is 10 nanometres or 0.01 microns. To put that in perspective, a human hair is 8,000X thicker (80 microns)! Also, since current hard disks are rotating at speeds from 5,000 to 10,000 rpm, it is not hard to see how easy it would be to damage the surface. As another example, the book has a table of cluster sizes for various size disk partitions under both FAT 16 and FAT 32. It presents a logical argument for dividing your 10, 20, or 30 gigabyte hard disk into partitions. Otherwise, the amount of wasted space can be excessive.

The upgrade versions of this Windows software are not bootable.

The later chapters of the book have information on upgrading a computer. This includes information on why you might want to replace a motherboard and how to do it. There are pictures and detailed instructions on this and other hardware replacements. The final section covers troubleshooting computer problems.

The publisher says they have designed this book for the intermediate to advanced computer user. In general, I would have to agree with that. The major parts of the book are quite technical. However, there is information that could be informative to users who want to know more about the hardware in their computer system. This text is probably most appropriate for people who spend part of their time maintaining or upgrading their own or others computers. As a reference work it does provide a one-stop source for much information that is sometimes difficult to find anywhere

else. It is one that I will keep on my shelf for reference purposes and refer to often as I did the earlier edition.

Upgrading and Repair PCS, 12th edition by Scott Mueller is published by Que, (a division of Macmillan Publishing Co.) 201 W. 103rd St., Indianapolis, IN 46290. [www.quepublishing.com](http://www.quepublishing.com). The list price is \$49.99. It can be found on-line at Barnes & Noble ([www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com)) or Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) for \$39.99 plus shipping.

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