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STUPID TRICKS 2

by Charles Grover, *Rochester Computer Society, Inc.*

I have had a lot of appreciation for Microsoft's Excel program since I first ran an early version under Windows 3.1. Somewhere along the line I discovered the drawing features built into Excel. I became intrigued with the drawing capability and have used it for many things. There are limitations, but I have managed several projects. From the View menu select your drawing toolbar to use the drawing function.

One of the first things I attempted was doing floor plans for residences. I manipulate the row height and column width to get a grid of squares similar to graph paper. I have discovered that different computer /printer combinations require adjustments to the row height and column width numbers to get things as close as possible to an accurate square grid. Then with rectangles and lines I can do a scale floor plan.

Using the shapes available I have made representations of pieces of furniture and tried different floor plans. Colors help keep things sorted out.

Getting a little bolder, I have also made plans for hobby construction projects. Although they are approximate and rough, I have gotten useful results. Most recently I used the drawing tools to block out space in our back yard for a landscaper to plan a garden.

Sometimes I use the "group objects" feature (under the "draw" dropdown menu of the drawing toolbar) to build up an object from several lines and shapes. Then the object can be copied or moved as needed.

Of course, there are simpler uses of the drawing tools. For instance, I often add arrows and lines to spreadsheets to relate notes to particular items. All this is way beyond the pioneering text based spreadsheets such as Visicalc and Multiplan!

BRICK WALL

by Donald Rosenfield, *North Orange County (CA) Computer Club*

Hmm. Thunder just struck. Were this not a protected computer I would shut it down. But I have dual protection. First, it runs from a UPS with surge protection. Of course, surge protection only works for about a year and this UPS is older than that. Surge protectors have Metal Oxide Varistors (MOV)s inside, that is, sacrificial components. With every surge -- and we get hundreds of them a year in our homes -- the MOVs get a bit used up...

Whoops! I'm running on UPS! We just lost our power! More later!

The power was out for about 2.5 hours. When the MOVs are all used up there is **no** surge protection left in your device and there is no way to tell that has happened! The light on your protection device is now lying to you; it is on both when you have protection and when you don't. From then on you run unprotected. Backing up the protection in my UPS is a Brick Wall Series Mode Surge Filter. There are no MOVs in a Brick Wall, just a humungous series inductor coil.

UL has tested them to 1000 6000-volt, 3000-amp surges at the rate of one every 60

seconds. Nothing gets through it. I have one Brick Wall for my computer and another for my Home Theater setup. On my advice my audio adviser is recommending them for his customers even though Brick Wall only sells direct from the manufacturer and he can't make a penny on such sales. But his customers appreciate the protection, available in no other way save disconnecting the power cord when the equipment isn't in use.

I found out about Brick Wall from their ad in *Stereophile* in 1997. Their URL is www.brickwall.com and is well worth studying. Such a unit can save you thousands of dollars worth of equipment. Note that even a Brick Wall can't stop lightning. But to cover that you use your homeowner's or renter's insurance. Obviously the insurance won't save data but that's what backups and lightning rods are for.

The manufacturer is Price Wheeler Corporation, 2630 First Avenue, Suite 200, San Diego CA 92103. 1-800-528-0313. I bought mine on a sale but it doesn't matter whether it is a sale. The protection is worth what your system and data are worth.

Donald Rosenfield, NOCCC has had over 150 articles and reviews published in the *Orange Bytes*, not including meeting reports. An outstanding record, particularly now that he lives in Virginia. He can be reached at cardar@home.com.

YOU CAN LEARN TO PROGRAM - REALLY!

by Mike Kaltschnee, *Danbury Area Computer Society*

I know that some of you, being interested in computers, probably would want to know how to program. The hardest part of doing anything is knowing how to get started, and that's what I'd like to help you with in this article.

If you want to learn to program today you don't have to work with antiquated languages like Basic or Fortran. It would be hard, if not impossible, to create a Windows or Macintosh program using the languages of 10 years ago. So throw away your copy of DOS Basic (if it even came on your computer).

I spent my college years learning every programming language that Western offered: C, Lisp, Pascal, assembler, Prolog, and even Cobol. Each language has it's own strengths and weaknesses, but they all basically work the same. You type in a series of instructions, compile it, and then (if it works), you run it. You spent most of your time writing complex functions to do simple things, like draw a line on the screen or open a database. This made programming the realm of the serious programmer.

This has all changed with the invention of the Rapid Application Development tool, such as Visual Basic (Windows) or RealBasic (Macintosh). These tools are designed to let you prototype your program quickly, in a few hours or days. You work visually, spending most of your time designing the layout of your screen, using drag & drop to add buttons, list boxes, and other interface items. To add the code behind a button, you simply click on it and you will be automatically prompted for the code that the button is supposed to perform. It's a lot simpler than it sounds.

Microsoft used RealBasic to prototype their new browser, IE 5.5 for the Macintosh, saving development time by being able to see what a program would look and act like before they spent hundreds or thousands of hours programming in the C language. Most serious software today is prototyped in an RAD tool, and then sent through usability testing, sometimes before the programmers even write one line of code. This early testing makes sure the program is easy for customers to use before expensive development occurs.

There is a cost to using RAD tools. They are great for prototyping, but lack the execution speed of using normal programming tools. So while they're fine for writing a small program, quick application, or even a front-end to a database, if you're going to be writing a fully featured word processor, I would eventually

write the program in C or C++.

This doesn't mean that the majority of us, who will never write huge commercial software (such as Microsoft Word), should give up on programming! I believe that anyone who wants to learn to program can quickly get their first few programs up and running in a few days. You only need to get Visual Basic or RealBasic, a book, and spend some time playing with a project that interests you. I highly recommend a class where you can learn the basic concepts in just a few classes.

If you decide that you like programming, you can advance to C or C++, and even start writing commercial software. It's a lot easier than it was 10 years ago, and you can get started for as little as \$100. Not a bad investment in your future if you've always wanted to learn how to program. Next month I'm going to take a look at RealBasic. We'll create a simple program, and I'll show you how to do it yourself.

Reprinted from the November 2000 Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc. online newsletter *dac's.doc electric*. Mike is a DACS member who writes because he likes hearing the sound of his keyboard. You can contact him by e-mail at mikek@demorgan.com.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR INVISIBLE INK SAYS?

by Larry Anders, *Tampa PC Users Group*

As usual, when our newsletter editor started asking for articles for this month's newsletter, I went blank. I usually do better under pressure so ... I waited. While I was waiting ... and waiting ... I came across an article about invisible ink at work in the Wall Street Journal that caught my attention. I remember being the sly one when I was much younger using a mixture of white grapefruit and lemon juice to write secret messages to my friends, but this article was talking about a much more serious situation. So, after reading the article, which I will refer to from time to time (*The Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 2000), I decided to do a little more research on this matter.

Another name for today's high-tech invisible ink is "Metadata." It seems that software makers such as Microsoft created programs like Word (among others in the Office product line) that just happen to leave behind a lot of information that computer name, the name of the network server doesn't appear on your screen, such as the author's name and/or initials, company name, or hard drive where the file was saved, non-visible portions of embedded OLE objects, other file properties and information, the name of each subsequent person who has worked on the file and sometimes, if the correct options are not selected, deleted text and various other revisions and versions. And, you know the old saying, "out of sight -- out of mind." Well, maybe you should mind this!

Microsoft says Metadata is used for a variety of purposes to enhance the editing, viewing, filing, and retrieval of Office documents. But, this just may be something you don't want to share. Because Metadata is created in a variety of ways within Word documents, there is currently no single method that you can use to eliminate all such content from your documents. Microsoft says it hasn't had many complaints about this problem in the past but ... in late spring of next year, when the next version of Office is due to hit the shelves, there will be a "privacy option" that will allow a Word document author to "remove all personal information with the click of one button and also be warned if you're saving tracked changes and comments" (... and they haven't had many complaints).

Some Metadata is readily accessible through the Microsoft Word user interface; other Metadata is only accessible through extraordinary means, such as opening a document in a low-level binary file editor. But sometimes even a simple text editor like Notepad can be very revealing. Personally, I can't wait till someone sends me an email with a Word document attached. I'm nosy by nature!

The Wall Street Journal article talked about someone on the Democratic campaign trail continually

receiving slamming e-mails with Word documents attached and signed by someone that evidentially didn't exist. After three months of this finally some techy aide decided to do a little mouse-clicking investigating and uncovered hidden text that seemed to link the email to the campaign of the Republican incumbent. Fancy that! High-tech politics as usual? (And I'm not hitting on the Republicans. The roles could have just as easily been reversed.)

So, what can you do in the meantime, before Office 10 hits the stores, to make sure your invisible ink stays invisible? First of all, check your setting under Tools | Options and see what you allowed to go out in your last Word document. Then go to Microsoft's web site and search for the word Metadata. You should find article Q223790 in Microsoft's Product Support Services database entitled "How to Minimize Metadata in Microsoft Word Documents." I won't try to go into the fixes here. The document is quite lengthy so I'll leave that part to you. Also, notice that this problem isn't new to the latest version of Office. This document was published back in the Word 97 days.

There is also something else you can do. The kind people at Payne Consulting Group, after discovering some hidden text in some of their legal documents, devised security procedures for removing hidden text from its files. They developed a program called Metadata Assistant to purge any unseen or unwanted information from documents. The program can be downloaded free of charge at <http://www.payneconsulting.com/MetaDataAssistant/>. It's free because they can't guarantee that everything will be stripped out. But hey, it's a lot better than the alternatives ... and it's free!

From the November 2000 issue of *Bits of the Bytes of the Ocean* the newsletter of the Tampa PC Users Group, Tampa FL. He can be reached at larryanders@msn.com.

POSSIBLY THE WORLD'S BEST OCR PROGRAM!

by Cliff Millward

Several months ago I received Readiris Pro 5. I had much trouble with it as it kept freezing my computer. I called IRIS and postponed the review when they assured me that a new version was soon to be released. I did not want to give an extremely negative review.

I recently received Readiris pro 6 and it was well worth the wait. This OCR program is truly amazing!

I reviewed and compared TextBridge and OmniPage Pro in this magazine last year. This "new kid on the block" far exceeds the other programs in almost every capacity. Readiris 6.0 is an easy-to-use package which allows the conversion of everyday documents (letters, magazines, newspapers, scientific documents, xerox copies, faxes, etc.) into editable computer files. It recognizes 56 (that's right -- 56!) languages, supports color and greyscale, provides an OCR batch functionality and an adjust image option for better recognition.

It supports virtually all scanners and supports a large number of graphic formats such as TIFF, JPEG, PNG, Windows bitmaps (BMP), PCX (paintbrush) etc. It can even support image files generated by a fax application.

Davud Reeves, the IRIS representative, even sent me a separate CD with several pre-scanned pages with very difficult layouts. Many of these examples were in foreign languages. (Notice the raw image to the right with the French text below. Also the Russian and Greek articles on the next page.) When I told the program to recognize the image with the dog, it did so quickly and accurately even though some type was in differing shades of blue. I assume that the photo was also placed as it was in the original. (I will explain why I said "assume" later in this review.)

In order to have this program recognize foreign text, however, I had to install the Windows

multilanguage support located in the control panel under install/uninstall programs (4.2MB). This must be done so that the proper fonts are installed. At first I had trouble installing this support. My latest Windows 98 install disk did not have some of the fonts. I tried again with an older Windows 98 install disk and it installed properly. So, if you want this program to work, you will have to install the multilanguage support from an older Windows 98 install disk. Why Microsoft left some of the fonts off of the newer version, I cannot answer! This anomaly, however, is not IRIS's fault.

The program installed from a CD with no problems. The first time I run the program, I had to pick a scanner. This was more of a chore than I anticipated. This program really fine tunes everything --it offered me three different drivers for my HP ScanJet IICx. Couple this with the Corel scanner driver which installed with WordPerfect and CorelDraw, and I had four choices. The standard HP driver that came with the scanner seemed to work the best.

I quickly loaded in the examples sent me following the instructions. With these examples, the program had some serious hurdles to overcome. Not only were some of them in foreign languages, but some were skewed while others displayed colored backgrounds and/or speckled dots. Luckily this program has some elements that are usually only found in photo programs, so I was able to change the background, adjust contrast, despeckle them and come up with a product that was "scanable!" The program then did an excellent job of recognizing everything.

One problem, as I see it, is getting other programs you use to recognize the multitude of foreign fonts available. A quirky episode occurred when I attempted to place the Greek text into PageMaker. It kept giving me errors and would not import properly even though the Greek fonts were activated! The only way I succeeded was to open the .rtf file in WordPad and convert it into Word 6.0 with a .doc extension.

I believe this occurred because the program is geared (unfortunately) toward Microsoft products. When you install it, Readiris looks for MS Word, Excel, etc. and automatically installs a link to them. Since I do not use these programs, I must save the material as an .rtf file. It will not save as a .doc file unless you have MS Word! That is why I had to open the foreign files in WordPad and change them to a .doc extension.

All the files will open in WordPerfect, but WordPerfect uses their own superior foreign font files which are not licensed for use in some computer programs. WordPerfect fonts that display with a WP prefix, are not licensed to Adobe, so you cannot create a PDF file from Adobe PageMaker using these fonts (ex. Adobe Acrobat). I hope these companies get together and resolve these problems. It is a real pain to work around them!

Readiris did indicate that they are working with Corel and perhaps soon they will have a macro available which will work the Readiris and WordPerfect 7, 8 and 9. (They have one that works with Novell WordPerfect 6.0 believe it or not!).

The examples they gave me, of course, all worked well, so I decided to give it a real test. I used the program to scan in text for the story on page ++. I also used TextBridge to scan the same text for a comparison.

The text was taken from *PC News*, a publication of the Alaska Computer Society. They use a non-standard sans serif typeface, so recognition could be tricky. RI recognized it very quickly and immediately went into training mode. The questionable letters were displayed clearly on the screen and I had the option of accepting it, learning it, correcting it, or ignoring it. I must state that although the program stopped often, most of the time it recognized the text correctly. I had previously told the program to not save the page layout and formatting; just give me the plain text. The program accomplished this request easily.

With TextBridge, the story was quite different. I actually did four scans of the story using TextBridge;

the results were rather bizarre. TB always insisted upon trying to match type. The result of this action was a hodge-podge of fonts on the screen. Also, in all cases, TB put the headline at the bottom of the page! It also tried to match font size and was not always correct.

It is difficult to ascertain which had the most reading errors as Readiris went into learning mode immediately. I could have stopped this procedure, but I decided to let it run its course and view the final result. Of one fact I feel confident, the next scan of Readiris will have fewer errors due to this learning process.

Needless to say that Readiris far outperformed TextBridge, but, in all fairness, I must say that TextBridge has just come out with a new version. Perhaps this version will more closely challenge Readiris, but only time will tell. I do not believe, however, that TextBridge has anything close to the foreign recognition available in Readiris. The only thing TextBridge has going for it is that it imports directly into Corel WordPerfect and Lotus WordPro as well as Microsoft Word. It is, therefore, more adaptable to a wider audience (if you don't include foreign recognition).

Readiris has a novel way of making you register the product. I can understand why they chose this procedure, but it is awkward. When you run the program for the first time a window appears asking you to enter a specific number that you must obtain from their web site. You must go there, enter your serial number and wait for them to answer you with the additional number via e-mail. Fortunately, they send the number immediately, so the inconvenience is slight. Every company is trying to find a way to prevent piracy, so you can't blame them for trying to protect their interests.

If anyone can read the Russian or Greek text on the preceding page, you may find errors. I did not bother to try to correct these files because I do not read or speak either language. I guess I could have looked at the letters and judged somewhat accurately, but decided instead to let you view the raw results.

Conclusions

Readiris is an excellent program for accurately scanning text. If you have much exposure to foreign text, it is indispensable. The problems encountered by Readiris are mostly not their fault. Microsoft needs to supply better support for foreign text by including the necessary fonts on all their operating system CDs. However, I feel Readiris should work more closely with Corel and Lotus to insure that Readiris works automatically with WordPerfect and WordPro.

In talking with the Readiris representative, he informed me that Hewlett-Packard is now offering it with their scanners. Perhaps other scanner manufacturers are as well, but I cannot verify this.

Would I recommend Readiris? Unequivocally yes! It is a superb program for anyone who needs to put editable text into their computer from any paper hardcopy source.

In this review, I have not touched upon some features available in this program. I understand it will recognize tables and put them directly into Excel. Since I do not use Excel, I cannot comment on this.

Finally; try it, you'll like it!

Minimum Requirements: 486 PC, 16 MB RAM, 55MB free disk space, Windows, 2000, 98, 95 NT 4.0.
Manufacturer: I.R.I.S. Inc., 1600 N.W. Boca Raton Blvd., Boca Raton, FL 33432, Phone: (561) 395-7831,
Fax: (561) 397 6267, www.irislink.com.

COMPUTERISED QUACKERY - GENERAL PRACTICE AND IT

by David Ringelblum, *Melbourne Australia PC User Group*

(**Note:** Dr. Ringelblum does not believe the software is available in the US at this time but has heard the software maker intends to market it here soon.)

If you have visited your doctor in the past year, chances are that they have a new piece of medical equipment on their desk -- a computer. Through a combination carrot and stick approach the Federal Government has been pushing the medical profession -- which traditionally has been reluctant to embrace change -- into adopting information technology for both clinical and business applications.

The biggest incentive to doctors came last year with a payment of up to \$7,500 for doctors to throw away their script pads and take up computer prescribing. The incentive seems to have worked, for up to 60% of GPs now use computer generated scripts compared with 5% five years ago. Specialists still lag far behind.

The dominant software package in this quantum shift is an Australian designed program called Medical Director (MD) which holds over 90% of the market. Medical Director was designed in 1990 by a Queensland GP, Frank Pyfinch with additional development by a Melbourne GP, Andrew Magennis.

In 1999 MD was bought by Health Communications Network (HCN) which subsequently listed on the Australian Stock Exchange, and the product remains the cornerstone of that company's drive to be the leader in health knowledge resources in Australia.

MD comes in two flavours -- version 1.84 which is essentially a prescription writing program with extra bells and whistles, and version 2 which is a fully-fledged clinical records system that replaces all paper based recording of patient notes, test results, correspondence etc. The script writing module remains the keystone of the system but many doctors are now tasting the potential of paperless medical records. Product development of MD 1.84 has now ceased (though it is still supported) and since MD2 incorporates all the features of the older program, as well as many new ones, it is the version described here.

Program Design

When a patient's record is called up in the program, a multi-tabbed screen appears (see Figure 1). The top half of the screen provides most of the patients basic demographic data -- name, age, address, pension status and some essential medical information including smoking status, drug allergies and a reminder to the doctor whether the patient is pregnant, breastfeeding, an elite level athlete and so on.

The bottom half of the screen consists of a multi-tabbed document. The first of these

is a summary of most of the other pages and displays a few lines of the patients social history and family medical history; their past problems, current scripts, immunisations and a window that reminds the doctor which preventative health measures should be considered for this patient. The latter window is a nagging reminder to the doctor as to when they last measured the patient's height, weight, blood pressure, performed a Pap smear, gave a flu shot and so on. Some of these also flash up as soon as a patient's file is opened. Whilst these features can be turned off by the doctor, they are a valuable aid to optimising a patient's long-term health, by addressing issues which are often put aside in the urgency of dealing with the presenting problem.

The second tab is the patients current drug list, and in this MD excels over the old paper based summary where drugs were scratched on and off as medication changed till it became almost impossible to be sure what the current treatments were.

When a new prescription is written, MD immediately checks to see whether the patient is allergic to that drug, whether it will interact with any other medication they are on and whether they have any medical conditions that may respond badly to that medication. For example a patient with an ulcer shouldn't normally receive aspirin and MD will flag the doctor and ask if they really want to proceed.

Whilst the program has limited capacity to detect all drug-disease interactions, in the area of drug-drug interactions it excels. Up to 10% of hospital admissions are due to adverse drug effects. When some patients take up to 15 different medications a day, it is nearly impossible for a GP to be aware of all the potential interactions, especially with new drugs being released on the market monthly. MD is not foolproof, but most users will attest to having been given a gentle reminder that they are entering tiger country.

The next tab is the nerve centre of the new MD program and incorporates the progress notes made by the doctor at each visit. (see Figure 2). The right side has a window detailing a list of previous visits by date with a one or two word description of each one. The lower right window contains the notes of the visit highlighted above. A double click brings up all the details. There is also a search function to assist the doctor when a patient comes in and says "You remember that rash I happened to mention about a year ago".

The left side of the progress notes screen allows the doctor to freely type notes on history, examination, diagnosis, treatment and review plan for the current visit. However to encourage doctors who are not typists to use the program, a series of buttons for each of these areas brings up a succession of multi-tabbed windows (Figure 3) which allow the doctor to just check-box the common symptoms and signs associated with the major body systems. Whilst not exhaustive, the options offered are pretty comprehensive, and a slow typist would only have to add a few extra words of text after having clicked his or her way through the list. Indeed, most doctors find their medical notes are far more comprehensive than they used to be when hand written -- an important issue in an era when too many lawyers practice medicine.

To ease things further, most diagnoses can be chosen from a drop down pick list, and the choice of drug therapy works the same way with every form and strength of drug being given a separate line. A script such as "Penicillin 500 mg, 4 times a day, with meals, 50 tablets, 1 repeat" can be generated with no typing at all -- just 4 clicks and a mouse drag. Generating repeat scripts for current medications is even quicker -- a single click and press print. This feature more than any other has endeared the package to most doctors who no longer feel their heart sink when a patient comes in requesting repeats on 7 of their 10 drugs. Within 15 seconds the scripts are done and the consultation can turn to more important issues.

The subsequent tabs on the main MD window allow the doctor to examine and add notes to the patients past history, their immunisations, any letters they have written about the patient, a list of previously written scripts, and for females of the appropriate age a Pap smear register and obstetric history window. Letters received from specialists can also be scanned into the program.

MD also allows direct importation of patients pathology and x-ray results.

If the tests are actually ordered through MD itself, it keeps a register of investigations still outstanding which allows the doctor to chase up patients who may have neglected to carry out important tests.

MD also boasts a host of other useful features, including detailed drug information available just by pressing the F12 key. This means that all the official drug information can be found readily and accurately. Most users testify to looking up information far more often than they used to, and this can also only be to the patient's welfare. Doctors also have easy access to a wide range of up-to-date medical information built into the program and a portal into HCNs vast array of online medical resources.

Deficiencies

MD still has a number of shortcomings. The information a doctor gets out of their notes -- paper or electronic -- is only as good as the care with which they maintain them. MD can't force good record or summary keeping, though it does make the job easier -- if the doctor is committed to learning and using the package. Unfortunately in a group practice, not all doctors may be equally keen, and the stragglers can badly affect the value of the system for everyone.

The program has an extensive but deficient recall system, to allow patients to be contacted about routine follow-up like Pap smears and immunisations. This aspect of the program is actually quite poorly written, though there is the intention to improve it in forthcoming versions. The handling of abnormal test results also needs improving.

Another annoying failure of the package is the inability for the doctor to create short-term reminders for themselves. Consider a patient with a moderately high blood pressure noted for the first time. In a paper based system the doctor will just underline the result and this will remind them to recheck next time. Similarly if the patient mentions an issue in passing that needs follow up, but isn't to be dealt with at that visit. MD lacks the capacity to mark such issues for followup in a seamless manner. What is really needed is an inbuilt equivalent of a sticky note to remind the doctor of important issues to follow up at subsequent visits.

There is no doubt that MD is here to stay and almost certainly will continue to dominate the market. It is well written and the company is reasonably responsive to the requests of doctor users. The program is incredibly cheap -- \$200 per year per practice regardless of the number of users, and that includes four upgrades per year (necessary because the details of the government drug lists change that frequently). MD has a help desk that is the model for every other software company -- friendly, accurate and helpful; completely free and though based in Queensland, available on a 1800 number. A rumoured \$5 million dollars a year in advertising paid by pharmaceutical companies probably explains this. In return the companies get their product ads flashed up on the screen every time the doctor prints off a script. Whether such advertising is to the patient's benefit is another question the profession has grappled with for years.

The package is password protected so medical records are at least as secure as their handwritten equivalents. Nevertheless data corruption is always a possibility, and with it the loss of medical history. All doctors backup their data -- but do they do it as well as they should?

Benefits to Patients

It can be hoped that MD will lead to medical records being a little better organised than they often have been in the past. There is no doubt that this aspect of medical care makes a big difference to good outcomes over the long term -- particularly in patients with multiple illnesses and drugs.

MD is very good at picking up and preventing some basic medical mistakes and allowing the dedicated doctor to delve more deeply into the exponentially growing knowledge base of modern medicine in ways that paper-based doctoring does not allow. And if, as is hoped, the program saves doctors a bit of time, then more effort can be made in addressing preventative health issues and long-term medical goals.

It has been a long time coming but doctors are rapidly taking up IT in medicine. When MD is finally able to generate notes and prescriptions that are as illegible as doctor's handwriting, we will know that the era of medical computing has arrived.

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FROM THE DEALSGUY

by Bob Click, *Greater Orlando Computer Users Group*

The Old Disappearing Tech Support Trick

I found out the hard way that Symantec no longer offers free voice tech support on its products. Not even the 90 days they used to give. You must pay, or use the on-line knowledge base. You can also e-mail them and wait for an answer, hoping the answer solves the problem. I hope your luck is better than mine. I knew I should have gotten Zone Alarm, which is free. I wash my hands of Symantec's products.

I've had the same experience with Creative Labs and 3Com. I would like to see APCUG keep a database about vendors giving no tech support. Regardless of opinions regarding Microsoft, I have unlimited telephone tech support on my MS Office Professional and MS Money (not all MS products offer unlimited). I know tech support cost money, but without it, how do you solve your problems, or their bugs.

Microsoft Press 20% Discount Code

Use the code MCPC to receive a 20% book discount for user group members. Call 800-MSPRESS to order your books. Select a title from the Microsoft Press page: [[http:// mspress .microsoft.com/](http://mspress.microsoft.com/)]. Also, if you are interested in receiving the Mindshare newsletter, go to [[http:// www.microsoft com/ mindshare](http://www.microsoft.com/mindshare)]. (I found the discount on the Mindshare site, but not the newsletter info. You may be better at digging than I am.)

More Book Discounts

Louise Miller from Adobe called and asked me to remind you about the discounts on Adobe Press and PeachPit Press books of 20% to 40%. Go to the Adobe Web site [[http:// www.adobe.com/usergroups](http://www.adobe.com/usergroups)] and download the new form. Louise said it should be posted by the time this gets published.

How About Some Trivia (No deal here, I just liked it)

Lost your dog and can't seem to find it? You've looked all over and have given up. Don't give up just yet -- try [[http://www .ThePoop.com](http://www.ThePoop.com)] where you'll find data concerning some 5600 different dog rescue groups (I enjoyed the artwork). In this database, you can search for a rescued dog by the breed. Then narrow it down by city, state, zip code or even an organization. Originally, this site was meant to help owners find lost dogs, but more importantly, to help families adopt animals from various shelters around the country. Good luck!

On the other hand, if you lost your job instead of your dog, try [[http://www flipdog.com](http://www.flipdog.com)]. No connection as far as I know. How they connect " Flipdog" with jobs, I'll never know.

Other Office Suites of Distinction, Just A Reminder

How much did you pay for your Office Suite? I was lucky. I won Office '97 in a Raffle. We had a great deal on Corel Office 2000 in NY at the APCUG events, and my laptop came with SmartSuite installed. However, I've seen a couple of glowing reviews for StarOffice 5.2 from Sun Microsystems

[<http://www.Sun.com>], which is absolutely free and it is multiplatform. However, I did read a complaint about poor importing of WordArt files.

Another suite receiving complimentary reviews is Applixware 5.0 from [<http://www.vistasource.com>] selling for \$99. This one is for Linux and Unix, and their AnyWhere Office Suite is also for Windows. That one works with fewer resources. I read two complimentary reviews on Applixware that did include a couple of complaints. I'm only pointing out some other Office Suite choices. (Actually, you can sometimes buy Corel WordPerfect Suite for less than Applixware, which I feel is a better deal and would be my preference.)

If you are a full power user, these might not be for you, but it is a known fact that even most power users don't use more than 35% of the capabilities of the software they are using.

Handy Accessories

I was looking through the "Mobileplanet" catalog the other day and found some interesting things. Do you dig through your car's armrest or glove compartment for your cell phone when you make a call? Mobileplanet has a cell phone holder that fits in the cup holder. I also saw a holder to affix a cell phone to a laptop screen for better data transmission.

I saw the QuickLink Pen Optical Scanner listed for \$139.95, which is almost as good as the UG special offer I published last year. They also offer Palm accessories. Their phone is 1-800-675-2638. [<http://www.mobileplanet.com>]. Specialty catalogs are never cheap, but this one was not bad.

Corel Rebate Stuff

Dave Gerber from Sarasota User Group suggested I include the following item:

Many rebates and deals are available for a wide variety of Corel software. Visit <http://ri-r1.corel.com/servlet/click?9hkLsDZEikLlpKLgmFliJNnDhknE0Eikhthmpgl> to learn more about the following offers:

- Buy CorelDRAW(R) 9 Premium Color Edition and get \$150 US/\$200 Cdn cash back.
- Buy WordPerfect(R) Office 2000 Voice, WordPerfect Pro or WordPerfect Small Business and get a Logitech Cordless Wheel Mouse.
- Buy CorelDRAW(R) 9 Office Edition and Get \$30 cash back.
- Buy Corel(R) KnockOut 1.5 and get \$50 US/\$60 Cdn cash back.
- Buy Paradox(R) 9 and get \$50 cash back.
- Buy WordPerfect(R) Family Pack and get \$20 cash back.
- Buy WordPerfect(R) Office 2000 for Linux(R) Standard and get \$20 cash back.
- Buy WordPerfect(R) Office 2000 for Linux(R) Deluxe and get \$40 cash back.

Wow, Great Graphics For Nuthin'

Here is a graphics program that picks up the pieces and makes something out of them. Its called "Hotmedia 3.0" and is by IBM no less. I read a very positive review for this software and it would take too much room to adequately describe it. However, it will combine video, audio and 3D files and produce a great finished product. It runs on Windows 95/98/2000/NT or Macintosh. The best part is it's free just for the download, so point your browser to [<http://www6.software.ibm.com/dl/hotmedia/hmkt-pj>]. I have not tried it yet, but it sounded great. The panorama capability sure piques my interest.

According to the Web site, it looks like you may get the new 3.5 version now. I had problems with this URL, but it worked OK for friends.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. I hope to find some deals at Fall Comdex. If I find anything that can't wait, I'll post it on the Announcements page on my Web site. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [dealsguy@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [http://www.dealsguy.com] for past columns.

THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

by Alex Dumestre, *1960 PC Users Group of Houston, TX*

Christmas is drawing nigh and, for computer enthusiasts, the visions that dance in our heads are not sugar plums but computer hardware. If the timing is right, some of you may dream of new monster systems with GHz (gigahertz) processors, killer video cards, 80 GB hard disks and 21" monitors. But we are generally not a greedy bunch and most of us can get just as much pleasure dreaming of relatively inexpensive accessories and peripherals.

Here are several items that I have recently gotten or I am currently dreaming of. No, I'm not hinting or bragging, just listing some things that might trigger your own visions. I've set an arbitrary limit of about \$200, but many of these toys will be well under \$100 and some of them might even be in the stocking stuffer category.

Hint: Mark items that you particularly lust for with a big red check mark and leave this issue open where certain others in the house may see it.

Clutter busting

These first few items can help relieve some of the clutter and tangle at your computer desk:

Cordless keyboard and/or cordless mouse

It's nice to not have wires hooked to these two devices. You have more freedom of setup and less bother dragging a cord around with your mouse movements. These operate via infrared transmitters and receivers. I've been using a cordless keyboard for a while now and I love it.

Optical mouse

You've all experienced sticky and erratic pointer movement. You ignore it until it becomes so bad that you finally break down and clean the cursed thing. Optical mice have no moving parts and stay as smooth-operating as the day you first take them out of their box, and the glowing red light looks cool.

One problem, unless I missed it, is that you can't get a cordless optical mouse. The reason is that cordless mice use onboard batteries and optical mice are relatively power-hungry and must be fed through the cord. So, choose which you best like -- drag-free or maintenance-free.

USB

How does this contribute to less clutter? You will find that some peripherals no longer have to stay plugged into your system all the time and can be stored out of the way until you need them. An example: If you are short on desk space and don't use your scanner every day, unplug it and stick it out of the way. When you want to scan, just haul it into place, hot plug it and go to work.

The same applies to other peripherals. This isn't to imply that USB and all your peripherals can be had for under \$200, but a USB hub can be had for well under \$100. Just keep this in mind when replacing old peripherals -- get USB models, not serial or parallel port types. Still high on my "intend to buy soon" list.

CD-RW burner.

I don't know why I've delayed so long because every one who owns one seems to be enthusiastic about it. They can serve as your only CD drive if space or resources are limited, but mounting your CD- RW in addition to your current CD-ROM drive gives even more flexibility. In case you are not familiar with the terms, CD-R is a blank CD disk that you can write to once and then read like a regular CD-ROM (sometimes called a WORM for Write Once, Read Multiple), while the CD- RW is capable of writing over existing files on the disk just as you can with floppies, ZIPs or hard drives. The writing operation is called burning.

CD writers come spec'd with three numbers (a x / b x / c x) where the numbers -- a, b, and c -- indicate the speeds of writing to CD-R disk, writing to CD- RW disk and reading, respectively. As with most computer-related components, the faster (or bigger or more) the better. But what do the numbers mean? My first CD-ROM drive, about 6 or 7 years ago, proudly boasted of 2x speed! This implied that it was twice as fast as the first model that had been introduced a couple of years earlier. For some strange reason this style of speed specification has stuck. We now see drives rated 32x or 48x which means that they are that much faster than the original model. I am currently drooling over a 10x/4x/32x CD- RW model. Prices vary with speed and with bundled software.

Most computer components and peripherals are specified by certain hard numbers such as 700 MHz, 100 kbs, 12 GBytes, etc. It is interesting to think about the numbers we would be using now if processor speeds and hard disk sizes had adopted the 2x, relative, style of specs. My current processor speed might be advertised as 1250x and my hard drive size would be 1200x!

Other items that fall well within the price range I mentioned earlier, although not especially new, would certainly be of interest if you have not yet taken the plunge.

Home network.

These are a real plus for those with more than one computer in their house. They are getting easier and easier to install.

Broadband Internet connection

(DSL or Cable)

Here again, I'm behind the curve ... soon though.

Scanner.

There are some pretty good models out there for under \$100 if you are not yet convinced that you need the very best. Installation is easy with USB.

UPS. (Uninterruptable Power Supply)

These have really come down in price in the past year or so. They not only allow you to do a graceful shutdown of your system when a power failure occurs, but also do an excellent job of protecting your

system from power surges and spikes, etc.

The Software angle

All of the above has been about hardware, but let's not forget about new or updated software. Personal tastes come into play more strongly here than with hardware and therefore I can't get very specific. One thing to consider is that many of the hardware items mentioned above will just naturally create a need or at least a desire for some software to take full advantage of them. For example, if one of your reasons for buying a CD burner is so that you can make your own music CDs, you will probably want to buy some audio editing software, or upgrade the software that came bundled with it. If you get a broadband Internet connection, then you might want a firewall. One nice thing about software is that freeware and shareware are so common that you can generally get by real cheap, until you decide that the application is important enough to you that you really do want to spend some money to move up. Wouldn't it be nice if we could try out hardware that easily before deciding which model we wanted to buy?

Stocking Stuffers

Many of the hardware items mentioned above represent the tip of the iceberg. Don't think your expenses are behind you once you bring the new toy home and install it. There are often accessories. Got a CD burner? Then you'll probably discover that it sure would be nice to have a CD label stomper -- and some jewel case label software and card stock -- and a new rack to store all of the CDs you turn out -- and a stack of multicolored CD-R blanks -- etc., etc.

New scanner or printer? How about some specialty papers for glossy photos? How about some parchment paper or card stock for greeting cards? How about a rack to hold all of these papers? A scanner also opens up a whole field of possible software desires. It can snowball. But, hey, this is what a hobby is all about.

Happy Holidays.

Reprinted from the December 2000 issue of *PC News*, magazine of the 1960 PC Users Group of Houston, TX. Alex Dumestre has been associated with computers since the mid '60's, most of the time developing geophysical applications for use on mainframes, minicomputers, and work stations. He is a bit of a nut about graphics but is a perpetual novice on PC's. He is a member of the 1960 PC Users Group and can be contacted by e-mail at DumestreA@PDQ.net

Review

NORTON GHOST

by Hu Filleul, *Greater Victoria (BC) PC Users Association*

The problems I had with corrupted registries in my new Pentium III computer made me, once again, realize the value of a complete system backup. I had made CD or disk backups for all of my data that was of any importance but the intricacies of configuring software during each installation was too frustrating.

I looked at the solution using PowerQuest's Image 3 program as reviewed by Ron Kehn in the August 2000 issue. Running all those partitions and backing up to CDs seemed to require more thought and effort than I could carry out with any accuracy or frequency. So, what to do? Throw money at the problem? To do that I needed some rationalization. I had paid \$1,500 some years ago for a quality Tanberg tape backup system and thought the service it gave me was worth it, even though it was slow compared to today's technology.

We had tried changing the drives in our efforts to fix the corrupted registry problem so I eventually bought and installed a second drive with the intention of using it as a big backup. Now I have two 18 Gig drives, even though I got along nicely with about 4 Gigs for the last four years. I own a copy of Drive Image 1 and thought I should try their version 3. In the meantime, however, Symantec's Norton Ghost came highly recommended for speed and performance. There it was handy on the shelf and the deal was done. I couldn't wait to get home to clone my big drive in case we hadn't really solved the registry problem.

The Ghost program comes in a big yellow Norton box with a double corrugated cardboard liner containing one CD and two pieces of paper, no manuals. The box will be great for packing a Christmas present. An envelope would have done for packaging but I guess it wouldn't have any marketing value. In any event, there was little instruction required and there is a detailed 80 page PDF manual on the disk, which installs with the program. I had to do the graphics captures from the PDF as Ghost operates in a DOS box and Corel's Capture program wouldn't work there.

In order to get away from employing disk partitions, we used Power Quest's, Partition Magic to combine my original C and D drive partitions into one partition. I then put all of my working directories and files into a single directory called ADATA so it would appear at the top of the Windows Explorer menu. Now that have tried it I like that method better than using several partitions or searching for directories in a big stack. The exception was the "My Documents" directory, which seems to be a good default destination for a number of applications.

Installation of Ghost was standard. When loaded, a simple menu came up. The only trouble was that they numbered the drive selections instead of lettering them. I checked to make sure that Number 1 was C: and Number 2, D: which we had also formatted into a single partition.

Next, I just set the drives to clone from number 1 to 2 and kept hitting the OK buttons. About 7 minutes later it was all done. It used to take me ages with tapes. I only have 3.2 Gigs of stuff on that big drive because I have always taken time to clean out old files. That is probably still a good idea I will continue because it is sure nice to know where you put things.

The cost of setting up this method of backup was still less than half of what I had paid for the Tanberg, Adaptec backup software and tapes. Big drives are getting cheaper all the time and it seems to me that can be a viable solution to the backup problem.

While the only thing I will likely use Ghost for is cloning my main drive, it has a number of listed features which may be of use to others:

- You can also use multiple cloning methods (computer-to-computer, or clone to removable drives). I still use my old Syquest 135 MB removable drive for quick and temporary backup of individual files, just because it is there and I am used to it.
- Partition cloning allows you to clone one or more individual partitions rather than the entire hard drive so it would not be necessary to do away with partitions if that is the way you like to arrange your drive system.
- It has support for multiple operating systems, which makes in highly versatile.

According to the literature on the CD, the G-Disk standalone utility provides command-line partitioning with better functionality than FDISK.

Automatic sizing of destination partitions streamlines the cloning process.

Ghost Explorer standalone utility makes it easy to restore individual files, directories, or entire hard drives from image files. (I tried this feature and haven't yet figured out how it works. I just use Windows

Explorer to read or the imaged files on the cloned D: Drive)

The "no-frills" interface gives you precise control over cloning and imaging processes. (There are many good illustrations in the PDF manual.)

Built-in error checking and image comparison ensure that stored images exactly duplicate the original.

Limitations

- Multicasting is not available.
- Images cannot be saved to or restored from network drives.
- The -BATCH and -SURE switches are not functional.

Because of the above limitations, Norton Ghost Personal Edition is not suitable for rolling out multiple PCs or hard drives. If you want to roll out multiple PCs or hard drives, you will need to obtain the corporate edition of Norton Ghost to get those features.

For further information, please contact Symantec at (800) 745-6054 or visit their website at: www.symantec.com/ghost

I was asked to do a comparison between Power Quest's Drive Image 4 and Ghost but declined on the basis that I didn't need the complication of installing and uninstalling the two programs. I am sure that both programs will do the job they are designed for. The important thing is to make sure that you have a backup system that does a good job for you.

Review

ADOBE GOLIVE 5

by Paula Sanders

In most of my reviews, I like to give the reader a perspective on my approach. Up until GoLive 5, I had been using a competitor's product to construct my website. I had started using it before I had reviewed GoLive 4. Although I liked GoLive 4, I did not want to learn a new program. It was not until I wanted to incorporate the flash file format into my website, that I decided to completely redo my site and only use Adobe products to create it. These products were to consist of Photoshop 5.5/ ImageReady 2, Illustrator 9, and LiveMotion. As I used GoLive 5, I began to wonder why I had used anything else. Once the structure of the program gelled in my mind, it became easier to use and its scope became very impressive. However, I believe that the learning curve can be relatively steep because the relationship of some of the elements can be confusing. An example is found in the grid which can be used to place objects, tables, and text exactly. The relationship of its pixel size and the size of the site area, I found confusing. The documentation in the book was lacking. However, with the grid, I could put as many graphics and tables on the page as could fit if I was so inclined or wanted to clutter up my page. Again, while I spent time experimenting with the grid and various placeholders and the text box, it was time well spent.

Placing graphics on a page was incredibly easy. After I gathered the ones I wanted to use and copied them to the site, all I had to do was "point and shoot" to place them on the page. The same applied to designating images as links.

The Windows PC requirements for GoLive 5 are: Pentium 200 MHz or faster or

a compatible processor; Microsoft Windows 98, NT 4.0 with service pack 3, or Windows 2000; 48 MB of available RAM for win 98 or 64 MB for NT 4 or windows 2000; 60 MB of hard disk space; and, of course, a CD-ROM drive. The non-upgrade price for GoLive 5 is \$299.

I found out, as did others, that GoLive 5 needs a lot more RAM than suggested. Once GoLive was opened, my system dropped to 60% or 50% usage. When I exited from the program, RAM was restored. I, however, did not have any problems. While I did little multitasking, I opened and closed Photoshop a number of times keeping GoLive minimized.

While I will list some of the new features. A detailed description of them can be found in a 12 page document at <http://www.adobe.com/products/golive/topfeatures.html> GoLive 5 (GL) not only supports many file formats including Native Photoshop, Illustrator, and LiveMotion's Flash (SWF), but gives the user tools similar to those found in the above mentioned products for editing files. One, however, does not have to copy every graphic file to GL, with Smart Objects and Smart Links. These tools allow the user to modify any of the above mentioned files as well as files of other graphic types; these will then be automatically updated in GL. Smart tools can be accessed through the "object Palette" which is pictured.

GoLive 5 also has a "Save for Web" command that is similar to the one found in ImageReady. This is only one example of GL's tightened integration with other Adobe products. Another nice feature that GL provides is its capability of importing Photoshop layers as QuickTime sprites.

GoLive 5 also contains a host of options to increase productivity and work flow. Some of these are multiple undo, a history palette, table palettes and styles (which I used extensively in creating my website), floating box to Layout Grid conversions, and many more.

Site management and code design has also been strengthened in GL. Java script and HTML code can be optimized to present cleaner and leaner source code. Site design and reporting can also be accessed to improve an already created site or create a new one. Old sites can be imported into GoLive 5 as well as html pages from other programs.

In GL, one can rewrite code. One can also see the source code view and the layout view simultaneously. Thus, one can see immediately how the code will effect the particular design. WebDAV is also included for workgroup collaborative projects.

According to Adobe, "GoLive 5 is now an extensible and customizable application." It has a built in JavaScript editor and a built in debugger. Since I do not write code except for minor html code, I cannot comment on this section of the program. Again, more information can be found on the Adobe website.

GoLive 5 also offers a QuickTime layout and timeline editor for QuickTime Streaming. GL 5 offers a more robust movie menu, toolbar, and viewer. Thus, a lot of editing can be accomplished directly from inside of GL 5.

One feature that I particularly liked was the ability to add "instructive" Meta tags " from the Head tab on the Objects palette to the head section pane of the document window. One can add a tag to refresh the contents of a page at different intervals, to add keywords for search engines to pick up, etc. The mechanism for doing this is straightforward and easy.

As I stated earlier, I plan to redesign my website which I use as a gallery for my artwork, graphic tutorials, tips, and product reviews using only Adobe products. I have spent time exploring and using GoLive 5. While I could not evaluate all of it, I was very satisfied with its capabilities and its response to my needs. I was able to bring in jpegs, gifs, and swf files easily, control the grid and how the image would look on various size screens, and create by means of the layout grid, exactly what I wanted. I recommend this program for people who want "absolute" (if there is such a thing in software) control of

their websites. While it took me a little while to become comfortable navigating in the program, the time spent was defiantly worth it. The longer I use GoLive, the more I am impressed that I can design my website exactly as I choose without constraints dictated by software.

From the December 2000 issue of the *I/O Port*, newsletter of the Tulsa Computer Society.

Society News

From the President

Joe Varga

Happy Holiday's to all. We are near the end of another calendar year and we have survived. We have actually come through it pretty well. Our leadership, including myself, has successfully changed over and we are in good shape. I hope you all see the club in the same light and hope that you will offer suggestions if you see places where we can improve.

Our program content has been good. I have gotten rave reviews from a lot of you after the meetings. I know we have had some bad spots; we are working to ensure that we have the best programs possible for you and sometimes we have to acquiesce to the presenter on some areas of the presentation. In the future, I hope you can all enjoy every portion of our meetings.

Please remember that our December meeting is moved one night to the second Monday of the month (Dec. 11th). I only make this change to accommodate the presenter. During the winter months it is more difficult for us to get presenters; so we must sometimes make changes to meet their needs. This does / will not happen often; I hope you are all willing to accept the change as part of our continuing effort to provide you with excellent program content.

I will be the presenter for our January meeting. I will be doing my Tips & Tricks presentation as a refresher to those that have seen it before and I also think it is great timing for all those who received a new computer for Christmas. You can find more information on this presentation soon at <http://www.rcsi.org/progmtg.htm>.

We are currently low on fully paid members of the club. Our current income can barely cover the publishing of our newsletter, much less make up the other costs required in running the club. To that effect, I ask that if your dues are not paid, please make every effort to pay them as soon as possible. You can also help us out by recommending us to friends and family. Every member counts and we really do need the income.

I hope you are all looking forward to another great year as I am.

New User Group Meeting

Nov. 7, 2000

John McMillan

A recent memory upgrade has helped bring the New Users Meeting notes back. The new tape recorder captures the questions and discussion as they take place for later transcription. Seven regulars and two newcomers tested the process at the November New Users Group Meeting at the Monroe Developmental Center, 630 Westfall Rd. Instead of the usual conference room we met in an area where there were several computers available to illustrate some of the points made.

The meeting opened with a question from a Dell owner whose mouse frequently locked up. The cursor was visible but could not be moved. Bill Statt and Greg Sayre mentioned the sources of software that could be used and then described the process of uninstalling the mouse and then letting the computer find the device and reload the drivers.

Right click on My Computer and select properties which will present a screen with several tabs, one of which is device manager. Clicking that tab will bring up a screen that says mouse or pointing device or something similar which should be highlighted (selected) and then click remove to uninstall the mouse. Then shut off the computer by going start, shutdown and selecting restart. That will cause the computer to identify the mouse and reload the drivers for it.

Another possible cause could be a dirty mouse ball. This can be rectified by opening the back of the mouse, removing the ball and eliminating any lint on the internal rollers. The ball projects from the bottom of the mouse surrounded by a disk with a hole in the center. The disk will have arrows showing the direction to turn to open up the mouse.

With the ball out, check the three rollers inside the mouse and remove any lint or other deposits on the rollers. Some people use a cotton swab dampened with rubbing alcohol, others simply scrape away the deposits. This is probably the most frequent cause of erratic mouse behavior.

Another mentioned a problem in which, while using Works for Windows on a Window, positioning the cursor in the vertical scroll bar, caused the document to scroll to the end. When the cursor was repositioned any where in the bar it immediately scrolled to the end again. Cleaning the mouse rollers as described did not fix the problem nor did closing Works for Windows but shutting the machine down and then restarting fixed the problem.

A user preparing to install a new program used control-alt-delete to get to the list of programs running on his machine in order to shut down the virus checker. While there he attempted to close several other programs but wondered why he had to repeat the entire procedure for each program. Unfortunately that is the way it works.

Permanently removing unnecessary programs from the start up list should allow quicker startups. Go to start, programs, accessories, system tools, system information. The contents of the startup folder can be seen in the software environment group. Pressing Control-Alt-Delete simultaneously will also show the list of all programs running. If this is done immediately after startup, before starting any other activity, it will reflect the start up folder contents. Users with Windows 98 can go to Start, Run, and type in MSCONFIG.EXE That presents a screen with several tabs, the last of which is Startup. That provides a utility which lets you turn any startup file item on or off During the discussion, a Dell owner commented on the length of time required for start up. Dell and Hewlett Packard are reputed to have a number of proprietary programs that are included in the startup folder and cannot be removed. The number of icons on the desk top and the number of fonts that are loaded are other factors that slow down start up. Short cut icons can be right clicked and then deleted. Uninstaller by McAfee (\$19.00), was recommended as a good way of removing programs rather than just moving them to the recycle bin which leaves unidentified bits and pieces around memory.

One of the regulars described an experience he had in trying to get airline tickets. He started by going to Travelocity which allows you to enter a destination, day going, and day to return and then gives you several choices starting with the cheapest. He did not find anything to his liking so he went to Yahoo which is actually Travel-ocity but allows for the entry of departure or arrival time. They followed the registration procedures and then filed electronically for a choice that satisfied their needs and got a confirm button. That was followed by a message to return in four hours to download the ticket information. They responded about eleven hours later and received a message that the tickets were not confirmed and to call customer service at an 800 number. During the processing time prior to

confirmation there was a \$100.00 increase in the ticket price. A little investigation showed that prices vary depending in part on the time of day the reservation is placed and possibly other factors. The story did have a happy ending though because when the transaction documentation was shown to Frontiernet, they honored the originally quoted price.

At the October meeting, for which no notes are available, many of the pros and cons about the choice of papers and techniques for quality printing of digital photos were described. At this meeting a user commented that one picture occupies 1,000,000 bytes of space. Some digital cameras with the capacity to hold multiple pictures could fill the memory and even tax the hard drive of older computers. It was pointed out that photos could be stored on rewritable CD's until needed. This led to a question about CD readers.

The original CD's have increased reading speed by factors in excess of 24. CDR machines not only read but also write on blank disks. The more recent CDRW machines will rewrite on special reusable disks (although at somewhat slower speeds) in addition to reading and writing on one time media. This in effect lets them operate like super sized floppies or zip drives. CDRW machines are often described with by three sets of digits which identify its operating speed factors. For example; 4 x 2 x 24, means a speed factor of 4 while writing on one time media; a speed factor of 2 using rewritable media; and a speed factor 24 while reading. It was pointed out that rewritable CD's might not be readable in regular compact disk readers. Pacific Digital has been marketing a 4 x 4 x 24 which sells for about \$100.00 after rebate.

This evolved into hardware comments as one of the newcomers, in the market for a machine, had seen a Micron at Best Buys which did not even have a 3.5 inch floppy drive. While this is more common with portables, any machine without a 3.5 would be in real trouble if the hard drive crashed. Another user mentioned that Micron's can be purchased direct like Dell's and Gateway's which rekindled the comparison of custom constructed machines with proprietary mother boards. It was suggested that custom built was likely to cost up to 40% more than mass produced but offered simplified maintenance and much greater flexibility for expansion. Enright PC Management and Soyata Computers were mentioned as local places which custom build computers for those concerned with expansion, or discouraged by horror stories of service from large organizations. For people exploring the market, *Computer Link*, a free magazine distributed in Wegman's lobbies and other similar places, was also recommended as a source of information about a variety of machines by local builders. Machines not purchased locally often include shipping costs but may not include the 8% sales tax.

The next question concerned a message " CMOS/GPNU check sum bad." This was immediately diagnosed as a battery problem. The machine is only three months old and Dell has already been replaced the battery, on site, once. The problem is described as intermittent, happening about 10% of the time. With this additional information it was thought that the next most likely cause of the message was a faulty mother board which should be reported as soon as possible before the warranty runs out. A user asked why a battery is needed when the machine runs from a wall plug. When the power is off, the clock and a limited amount of memory, holding system settings, must be kept charged to allow the computer to start up when power is applied. These batteries may have a life of two years or more and are seldom rechargeable.

The last question of the night concerned parallel ports, serial ports and the new USB. Most ports (another term for male or female plugs) are located on the back of the computer and are usually different shapes for connecting joysticks, mouse, keyboard, monitor, and printer. The USB port, is about the size of a telephone jack but longer and thinner and as a newer technology, it is faster than parallel or serial ports and can be expanded, (a four hub costs about \$20.). Some machines will include a front mounted USB for convenience in changing attached devices.

"If you've got questions, we try to answer." Join us at our next meeting at the Monroe Developmental Center, 630 Westfall Rd.

PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

November 14, 2000

Charles Grover, Secretary

President Joe Varga called us to order at 7 p.m. for a brief business meeting. Joe announced that next month's meeting will be on Monday, rather than Tuesday, to accommodate a presenter from Belkin Products. Our guest will offer a presentation on USB. Door prizes are expected also.

In light of the fact that a presenter for one of our programs last month won a door prize from the other presenter, members raised the issue of door prizes. That prize was awarded by the presenter according to their own policies. Club policy is that only club members are eligible for club prizes.

After a short break we proceeded to questions, answers, and discussion with three of the SoundBytes regulars: Nick Francesco, Dave Enright, and Steve Rae. [**Note:** SoundBytes is broadcast live on WXXI-AM, Rochester, 1370 AM. It is carried on the second audio program (SAP) of WXXI-FM, both on broadcast and cable service -- helpful for those who want to record the program or who are beyond the signal of WXXI-AM. The program is available world-wide, live, on the web. Go to [http:// www.wxxi.org/](http://www.wxxi.org/) and look for the links to live broadcasts from the AM station. Archived programs, as well as a weekly poll, may be found at SoundBytes' own site: [http:// www.soundbytes.org/.](http://www.soundbytes.org/)]

Lively discussion continued until 9 P.M., when the meeting closed with the usual drawings.

PLANNING MEETING MINUTES

November 21, 2000

Charles Grover, Secretary

President Joe Varga convened the November 21, 2000, Planning Meeting of the RCSi Board shortly after 7 p.m. at the offices of Heveron & Heveron, Rochester. Also present were Larilyn Bauer, Sally Springett, Steve Staub, and Charles Grover, Secretary. Joe Pia arrived later.

We reviewed our October program meeting. The program, discussion with SoundBytes experts, was very successful. Helps Half Hour was omitted. We noted that if in the future activities are not to begin until 7 we might announce that in advance.

Joe Pia arrived as we began to consider next month's program meeting. A Belkin representative will be here Monday, December 11 (a day earlier than usual). The club policy on prizes was noted, as well as the fact that some presenters have their own policies on door prizes they furnish.

For January, Joe Varga will do another Tips and Tricks program, on Win 98. Win ME. Beyond that, doing more with digital photography was suggested.

Joe Pia reported that the Rochester Museum and Science Center has computer labs, two of which are at the Museum and at the Greece Y. He is exploring possibilities for their use for our proposed " Newbie" classes with RMSC staff member Jemuel Johnson. Joe expects to make a presentation in January to Museum people and that will lead to a decision.

Joe Baglin will be helping Joe Varga with the web page, in exchange for Joe's assisting Tom in setting up a web page for Tom's town.

Our software chair, Jim McGrath was absent. However, it was reported that two items are out for review.

Steve had some questions about newsletter production matters. He then told us we have 100 paid up members and about 35 to 40 whose dues are two or three months in arrears. These topics led to a discussion about possibilities for the newsletter, posters, handouts and other communications.

We adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Steve Staub

Balance as of 10/26/2000 \$1,460.43

Income

Membership \$159.00

Rent of equipment 190.00

Total income \$349.00

Expense

Mail boxes etc. \$ 90.00

New check printing 18.45

St. Stephen's 15.00

Heveron & Heveron 100.00

Total expense \$223.45

Balance as of 11/22/2000 \$1,585.98

The Lighter Side

The following was posted on comp.virus (VIRUS-L digest), attributed to John McAfee's (of the Computer Virus Industry Association) BBS.

To: All Users

From: John McAfee

Subject: Reported Possible Virus

I received a call from a Mr. Fred Hankel of Fargo, North Dakota this morning. Mr. Hankel was highly agitated and after hearing his long and involved story, I was moved to pass on this condensed summary

to all who might be interested: Mr. Hankel reports, and I have no grounds for doubting him, that a computer virus invaded his system from a bingo game he purchased in mid-October.

The virus activated at 11:00 a.m. yesterday and promptly melted his power supply and motherboard. As he reached for the power switch to turn off the machine, the virus blasted a perfectly circular hole in the front panel of his AT clone and left a three foot oval scorch mark on the back wall of his den.

I had not heard of this virus before and felt that an alert might be in order. Anyone experiencing similar symptoms should contact us immediately.

Thank you.

Not Just Any Key

Rule for software developers. Never stand over the shoulder of a beta tester. Once, I was watching Jane test the latest version of our software. When a message appeared on the screen, "Press any key to continue," Jane pressed the letter J.

I thought I was going to have heart failure.

"JANE!" I screamed, "Why did you press J?"

"It said any key."

"Yeah, but when programmers say any key, they mean the space bar!"

At which point my fellow programmer looked at me and said, "We do? I thought we meant enter."