AVG Anti-virus System, An Alternative to McAfee and Norton, and It*s Free

by J. Joseph Pia
Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

Here's the answer to your frustrations with the McAfee and Norton anti-virus programs. It's called AVG 6.0 Anti-Virus System. And it's free if you're an individual, not a company, and you want the program for your own private use. Go to www.grisoft.com to download this wonderful piece of programming.

All God's chillun what gots computers needs an anti-virus program. If you've never had any experience with an infection by a virus, perhaps you may feel that somehow you're immune from the virus wars. I felt that way for awhile, figuring that I was much too small a fish for anyone to be interested in me or my computer. Guess what! There ain't nobody too small to be overlooked by the vermin who create and distribute virus programs.

One widely held view is that people who use Outlook or Outlook Express to download their mail from a server are more vulnerable to most viruses. I suspect that is true. I use Eudora and therefore encounter fewer virus attacks than other folks, including my spouse. But Eudora itself is not immune.

I'm sure that many readers could share with is their own stories of viral infections. Mostly a virus is a nuisance. Now and then the virus is really nasty and does all sorts of unpleasant things to and with our computers, making it necessary sometimes to have to start over, reinstalling the hard drive and all the stuff one has so carefully put on it. The stories range from just plain funny to sorrowful tales of disasters too awful to contemplate.

It's no fun to have to reinstall lots of programs to your hard drive. Especially since we each have made our own little modifications to the way we've got the programs lined up on our hard disks. You know, this goes before that; this one does a number on anything else I try to run during the same session. All kinds of diddly that make our computing lives more complicated than they need to be. Then, to add the mess a virus can create can ruin a whole day, to say nothing of what it does to our blood pressure.

But why AVG instead of the two main players? Aside from the fact that it's free?

I have purchased each of the major commercial products is from time to time. I used to use McAfee all the time for several years. More recently people have been pushing Norton. So, I've bought and used that one.

Theoretically, when we buy either McAfee or Norton, we are entitled to updates for a year. It's possible to buy extensions of the service for about what it costs for the original program. Since that arrangement has become the case, it's just as easy and no more expensive to buy the next year's version than to buy an extension agreement. If in fact an extension agreement is still available.

My experience with the updates during a year has not been good. Perhaps other users have had a better time than I have, in that case what I have to say here may be irrelevant. But for me, getting updates has been impossible. Not nearly impossible, not difficult, but just plain impossible.

In both cases even though I sent in my registration card, the update center claimed it couldn't recognize me, had never seen my registration before, and would probably call the Web cops if I didn't just leave. So, no updates were available to me. A phone call got the message from a live person that I should send in my registration card as soon as possible. They simply didn't believe that I had already done so. Bah and humbug.

In contrast, AVG simply sends each registered user a dollop of updates about the end of each month. The download is quick, and it installs itself. Then it goes about protecting your machine from viruses downloaded from the Web.

I've never had any program tell me that an application program I had bought on a disk was infected. So, I can't say anything about that.

Just as for the McAfee and Norton, a user can specify a time when he or she would like AVG to run in each twenty-four hour period. Mine is set up for 2300 hours, or 11:00 pm. If I'm working on something, AVG runs in the background. If it finds something unwholesome, AVG calls the virus to my attention and waifs for me to direct AVG what to do next with the filthy, slimy thing it found. Removal from the hard disk is the option I use most frequently.

Another wonderful feature is that AVG will tell me immediately upon downloading that the data are corrupted by a virus. It allows me to decide whether I want the file to be opened. And, if I forget and start to open it, AVG will remind me of the danger and recommend no mercy. Thereafter, if I follow the recommendation, the virus infected file has no chance of getting open on my machine.

As has become usual, AVG will put an icon in the tray, allowing you to run the program with a mere click of the mouse. You can also bring up the "Control Center," which makes all the possibilities both plain and simple to use.

The Control Center brings to mind another point. Both Norton, well, really Symantec, and McAfee, and its current owner, over the years have bought a number of utilities. Now those utilities are packaged with the anti-virus programs. The idea is to make available to the customer a range of tools to keep his or her machine in tip top shape and good running condition. I had bought some of those utilities in their pre-Norton or pre-McAfee forms. They weren't very good then. By and large they didn't get any better when they became part of the anti-virus package. For me this arrangement was a reason not to buy those packages.

One of the good things about AVD is that everything included is a product of Grisoft, Inc. Further, there are no extraneous programs in the package. It deals with viruses and with keeping one's machine clean. That in itself is just one more of the attractive features.

While this piece is not really a review in the technical sense no references to really technical features or facts, it nonetheless tells the non-technical reader something of the nature of the beast. Trying out AVG seems simple enough, and it doesn't cost anything. If it seems to work for the reader, putting away more or less forever both McAfee and Norton seems like a pleasant possibility.

Try AVG. My guess is that you will like it. And the price is right.

For Inveterate XP Tweakers Only

by Carl Siechert, Co-Author, *Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out*

One of the fun things about Windows XP and Windows 2000 is that there is so much tweaking you can do if you want to. You don't *need* to do any of the things that I described at a recent Pasadena IBM User Group presentation, but if you like peeking under the hood and making a few adjustments so things run just the way you like, you can. Here's a little more information about some of the topics I discussed:

Group Policy

Group Policy lets you make all manner of settings — everything from configuring the desktop to hiding certain drives to preventing the creation of scheduled tasks. These settings (and hundreds more) are stored in the registry, which you can edit directly.

But Group Policy is much easier to use than a registry editor. A few notes before you dive in:

*To use Group Policy, you must have Windows XP Professional or Windows 2000; it's not available in Windows XP Home Edition.

*To use Group Policy, you must be logged on using an account that's a member of the Adminstrators group.

*If your computer is not a member of a Windows 2000 Server domain, any settings you make in Group Policy affect everyone who uses your computer. (There is a crude workaround that lets you set up two groups of users-those who are affected by Group Policy settings and those who are not. For details, check out pp. 1074-5 in *Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out*. [Caution: this is the first of several plugs for my books.])

Ready, Set Go...

Start Group Policy by choosing Start, Run and typing "gpedit.msc". (If you end up using Group Policy very much, you'll want to make a shortcut to gpedit.msc.) The next two folders and their subfolders house the most interesting policies, although you might want to check out the others as well.

Then, in the left pane, select a subfolder of Computer Configuration \Administrative Templates or User Configuration \Administrative Templates. Select a useful sounding policy in the right pane, and an explanation of the policy appears. Keep poking around until you find something that interests you. To make a setting, double-click the policy name and then choose an option in the dialog box that appears.

Pretty easy stuff, but you're exploring where few Windows users dare to tread.

Unless you work hard to enable policies that, for example, prevent you from logging on, the settings under Administrative Templates are pretty safe. Nonetheless, you should read the explanation carefully before you make a policy setting.

Want more information? For a complete reference to Group Policy in Windows2000, visit http://www.microsoft.com /windows2000/techinfo/reskit/enus /default.asp.

Look for Windows 2000 Group Policy Reference in the contents pane. Nearly all the information in this reference applies to Windows XP Professional as well, although it doesn't include the policies that are available only in Windows XP. Another good resource is the Group Policy Object Settings spreadsheet, which you can download from http://www.microsoft.com/WindowsXP/pro/ techinfo/productdoc/gpss.asp"

Although the spreadsheet doesn't explain the settings, it lists all Administrative Templates policies and shows which ones apply to each operating system; it also provides a convenient way to record your own settings. You'll also find more information in *Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out* (Chapter 34) and in our new book, *Microsoft Windows Security Inside Out for Windows XP and Windows 2000* (Chapter 19). The latter book includes a number of specific recommendations about policies you can set to better secure your system.

It's At Your Service

I also mentioned the Services snap-in, which is included in the Computer Management console. To open Computer Management, right-click My Computer (on the Start menu or in an Explorer window) and choose Manage. In the left pane of Computer Management, select Computer Management (Local)\Services and Applications\Services. (Tip of the day: You can open the Services snap-in within its own console. You can find a shortcut to Services in the Administrative Tools folder, or you can simply choose Start, Run and type "services.msc".)

So which services should you turn off by changing their startup type to Manual or Disable? This Web site offers some good advice: http://www.blkviper.com/WinXP /servicecfg.htm

And (time for another plug) *Microsoft Windows Security Inside Out for Windows XP and Windows 2000* provides a brief description of every service included with Windows XP and Windows 2000 and offers recommended settings.

Practicing the Black Art

Drag and Drop

with the *Right* Mouse Button

by Vinny La Bash

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

Once you learn how to "Drag & Drop" objects, it doesn't take long to discover that "Drag & Drop" performs different functions depending on what kind of object you're dragging and dropping.

If you drag a program, Windows creates a shortcut to it. That's because physically moving a program can be a really bad idea. Since all kinds of processes depend on the location of a program, don't jerk your system

around by moving applications unless you have a good reason.

If you drag a file, Windows assumes you want to move it. Moving a file won't cause any system problems, so Windows has no objections. However, if you do start moving files around, note where you are moving the file from and what folder you are moving it to. It may help the next time you try to access the file and it's not where you expect it to be. (It's always a good idea to know how to use the Find tool.)

Finally, if you drag an object from one drive to another, Windows logically assumes you want to copy it.

How can you tell which operation Windows is performing when you 'Drag & Drop'? You need to pay attention to the "shadow icon" that Windows displays while you hold your left mouse button down and drag. Look at the bottom right portion of the "shadow icon":

1. If you see a + sign, you are performing a copy operation.

2. If you see a curved arrow, you will create a shortcut.

3. If there is only the "shadow icon" visible, you are moving the object.

If all this comes as a surprise to you, take comfort in the fact that you are not alone. If you want to specify the kind of drag-and-drop operation, try dragging and d r o p p i n g while holding down the right mouse button instead of the left.

When you release the mouse button, a pop- up menu will appear (see illustration). You're then given the choices of Move Here,

Copy Here, or Create Shortcut(s) Here. Select one of the three, or choose Cancel to abort the operation.

Undoubtedly, it's faster to "Drag & Drop" using the left mouse button. Using the right mouse button ensures that you are making the right choice. The pop-up menu even provides a convenient escape hatch with the "Cancel" option. It's up to you to choose speed or accuracy.

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TIPS

The Windows Keyboard Icon

Just to prove that your mouse can't do everything, here are a few keyboard tips:

* Find files fast. Open Explorer and click on a folder to highlight it. Then, press the Windows Logo key together with F3 (denoted as "W+F3"). Type in a search string. A search string is just a bunch of characters typed in by you. For example, if you type the character string "housephoto.jpg" the specified drive or folder would be searched for that file. It would then be displayed if it were found. You could then double click the file to open it.

* Make System Properties pop up immediately. Use W+Pause (Break) to reveal the System Properties window. From there you can click the various tabs to see what you need to see. You'll find stuff there that shows who the computer is registered to, how much memory is installed, the processor type, and the version of Windows you've got installed. Various tabs let you manage hardware devices, check your system's performance, and more. Take a look sometime. It's quite revealing.

* Explore your hard drive. W+E starts exploring your hard drive. It opens Windows

Explorer quicker than clicking, as long as your desktop is the focus of activity. You manage your files and folders with Explorer. Just don't confuse Windows Explorer with Internet Explorer, which is your web browser.

* Instant Control Panel. W+C activates the Control Panel. That's where you take control of lots of features of Windows. Try it now. See what's in the Control Panel.

* Check your mouse's properties. W+I opens the Mouse Properties dialog box.

* Access the Keyboard Properties. W+K opens the Keyboard Properties dialog box.

* Instantly access your desktop. W+D equals "take me to your desktop." Now, what did you want to do on the desktop? That's the fastest way to minimize all open windows, making the desktop available to read the new e-book you just downloaded.

Media Notes

Bill Petitt
Southwest Virginia Computer Group

We're back after a month's downtime. Things haven't changed much – hackers are still hacking – virus writers are still writing – software still has bugs and gotcha's. Then you see something like the first tidbit and you just want to scream.

Don't you just love an information article that really doesn't adequately inform? Take a look at the one below about virus laden .jpg's.

Veracity of JPEG Virus Questioned

Users, competitors say McAfee unnecessarily raised concern about theoretical threat.
Users and antivirus vendors are questioning the seriousness of a virus described in mid-June by McAfee Security, a division of Network Associates, as well as the manner

in which McAfee proffered details about the virus.

On June 13, McAfee issued a press release about the W32/Perrun virus, which is the first virus to infect JPEGs (a type of image file), McAfee claimed. Perrun, which McAfee received from its author, uses an executable file to infect image files and then tries to spread the infection to other image files in the same directory, according to McAfee. The virus requires the presence of the executable and cannot work without it, the company said.

The discovery of the virus could lead to the redesign of antivirus programs, as well as possible mutations that could see the virus executable embedded in image files and on the Web, Vincent Gullotto, senior director for the McAfee Anti-Virus Emergency Response Team, said at the time.

Claims Disputed
Since McAfee's original announcement of the virus, users on Web pages and e-mail lists have disputed Gullotto's statement that executable files could be embedded in JPEGs. "Viruses are more than just pieces of self-replicating code, they need to be delivered in such a way that [it] causes them to be executed," said Kevin Austin, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Fitchburg State University in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. "JPEG files are never executed. They are instead opened as data files by application programs." Applications do not look for executable code in data files and therefore would not run it, he added.

Images that contained executable code either would appear damaged or would not open at all when double-clicked, said David Stidolph, a programmer and consultant based in Austin, Texas. "Images may or may not appear 'damaged', but in no case will any

of the picture code be executed, so you could never replicate a virus this way," Stidolph said.

Even some of Gullotto's colleagues in the antivirus field disagree with the McAfee claim. Sophos, an antivirus firm that competes with McAfee, issued a statement discounting the seriousness of the virus.

Sophos had the virus in its labs two days before McAfee announced its existence, but chose not to say anything because the virus was "really just a proof-of-concept ... a real nonevent," said Chris Wraight, technology consultant at Sophos.

McAfee's Defense
However, Gullotto isn't backing down from McAfee's original warning. McAfee "still [stands] behind what it was we said," he insisted. The original virus warning was not about the immediate threat posed by Perrun, which is tiny, but rather about the possibility that future changes in software and technology could cause greater problems, he said.

Gullotto allowed that embedding an executable file into a JPEG "probably wouldn't work today, as things are," but stressed that McAfee's "concerns are still more so for the future." Because of the changes made to software and file types, the capability could be added to image and other data files to run executables, which could make this virus a problem, he asserted.

"I'm only saying what possibly may exist if the technology moves in that direction," he said, adding that McAfee has to keep an eye on possible developments in order to keep its customers apprised of potential vulnerabilities.

McAfee's method of warning users – saying that a large number of data types

could eventually be unsafe – was a problem, said Sophos's Wraight.

"The other companies have been more prone to hype viruses to get attention and sales" than Sophos, he said. It is "an approach we don't subscribe to," he added. Gullotto reaffirmed his support for McAfee's handling of the matter, but acknowledged that "there are clearly some disagreements in the antivirus industry."

The disagreements can run deep and have serious consequences, Wraight noted. Hyping viruses unnecessarily "hurts the industry as a whole," he suggested, because users may become complacent and not pay attention during serious outbreaks.

And from Woodie's Office Watch newsletter, we get the word that this really is a tempest in a teapot: The W32/Perrun "virus" only exists in the lab, and it's so fragile you have to spoon-feed it. There doesn't appear to be any way that it'll ever become a real, reproducing virus. So, take this one off your worry bead list.

It is unfortunate that virus non-events like Perrun draw coverage in the mainstream press, when really bad viruses like KLEZ infect zillions of computers, and you rarely hear a peep about them.

Is Windows XP meeting your expectations or causing more exasperation than you bargained for?
Microsoft's latest operating system just turned six months old, and most would say that it's neither a failure nor a raging success. While XP promised the latest and greatest multimedia, security, and ease-of-use features available, many users have not yet upgraded, fearing the hefty system requirements and potential compatibility disasters inherent in a major OS upgrade.

At the end of the day, some 17 million of us chose the XP route. Did we really get what we paid (quite a lot) for? Is XP really more stable and more secure? Does it support all of our hardware and software?

Does it really have cool, new features we can't live without? In honor of its half anniversary, I checked in on XP to see what major issues linger, if any, and what features you might be missing.

The system requirements swamp
Windows XP seems to come with two sets of system requirements, confusing many would-be upgraders. Microsoft issued a minimum requirement for hardware performance and capabilities; if you don't meet that requirement, XP simply refuses to install. But the company also issued a minimum recommendation–a set of far more stringent specs that should result in optimum performance. So, which set applies to you?

I've spent some time over the last six months to play around with various hardware configurations and found that you need worry only about the minimum requirements. You can run XP on any system that meets or exceeds those specs–namely a 233MHz CPU with 64MB of RAM memory, 1.5GB free drive space, 800x600 display capability, and a CD-ROM drive. But if you want XP to run fast and crash-free, the minimum recommendation offers a sort of best practices target point.

More is better
During that time, I've determined that XP runs just fine on a Pentium III-500 with 128MB of RAM. As expected, however, boosting both hard drive speed and RAM makes a significant difference in XP's performance. For best results, choose a hard drive that spins at 7,200 or 10,000RPM (vs. a

5,400RPM drive), a fast enough processor to feed it (400, 600, or 800MHz vs. 233' or 266MHz), and generous amounts of RAM (256 or 512MB vs. 64 or 128MB). You should probably avoid 8- or 16-bit ISA or legacy I/O cards for sound and video, and we highly recommend PCI or AGP video cards, too, in order to enjoy XP's nifty video effects, such as menus that fade in and out and drop shadows on windows and desktop icons.

Many complaints on Help.com's XP message board indicate that several system-board and hardware vendors have not and do not plan to provide XP drivers, but I've found that most hardware works well using Windows 2000 drivers. For example, you can't install Windows XP if your motherboard contains the HighPoint Technologies HPT-366 chipset (Highpoint's tech-support personnel confirm this); XP just doesn't have the drivers to support the chipset. To get XP to work on that hardware, you can download and use Windows 2000 drivers for the chipset or contact HighPoint Technologies' help desk and ask for XP-specific drivers, which you must load early in the XP setup process.

Oh, driver, my driver
Many new users spent the past few months muddling through XP's seemingly complicated driver requirements. Most of the questions I've seen were about signed drivers. Here's the deal. In an effort to protect us from crashes related to conflicting versions of drivers and DLL files, Windows XP automatically checks incoming drivers to see whether they contain a digital signature, which indicates that the file is uncorrupted and originates from the vendor that it claims to. (Microsoft strongly encourages vendors to abide by its voluntary driver-signing process.)

Computer RENAISSANCE

has a weekly listener call-in computer talk show featuring news, product reviews, helpful tips, and special guests. It's broad-cast live on Monday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 with a taped replay on Saturday mornings from 8 to 9. It's simulcast live on the web at www .wysl1040.com

Currently, XP won't prevent you from installing an unsigned driver but warns you that the file is not signed and cannot be verified to be from the claimed source. Then, the system offers to continue the installation or let you cancel. Most of us simply click the Continue Anyway button, go on about the installation, and have no trouble at all. This method works fine as long as you're downloading from a well-known vendor.

XP's driver airbags

But XP offers driver protection beyond signed drivers. If you run across a problem with a driver once you've installed it--unexplained crashes, for example, or a kaput device--the OS can get you out of trouble in several ways. The first is the Driver Rollback feature, which allows you to replace your current troublesome driver with a previous working version. To access Driver Rollback, see below paragraph for details.

Driving while under XP

Windows XP claims to handle drivers–even bad ones–without a touch of road rage, and

it does so by tossing in a few extras. Here are the most important changes.

Backseat driving

One driver-safety feature is XP's Driver Rollback option, which provides some peace of mind if you're downloading and installing new drivers for a working device. After all, you don't want to crash while you're trying to be safe!

If you install a new driver and it causes problems, XP lets you roll back to a preinstallation state.

Here's how: Open the Device Manager, expand the device tree for the problem device, and right-click that device. Next, select Properties, choose the Driver tab, and click the Roll Back Driver button, which will restore the old, working driver.

Of course, if new hardware and software take your healthy Windows XP system and turn it into oatmeal, don't forget that Windows XP, like Windows Me, ships with a System Restore utility. As long as you remember to take a snapshot of your system before installation, it will be possible to restore your computer to its previous state.

Sign me up

If a new driver is so bad that it threatens to decimate your PC, Windows XP may stop you in your tracks. The new OSs, such as Windows 2000 and Me, rely on signed drivers. Microsoft digitally signs, or approves, drivers after they survive compatibility testing in the Windows Hardware Quality Lab (WHQL). This is something like Underwriters Laboratories, whose UL label shows that electrical devices have been safety tested. In Microsoft's words, "signed drivers are typically more robust and reliable."

If you encounter an unsigned driver, Windows XP offers three ways to deal with it. First, right-click My Computer, then

select Properties. Under the Hardware tab, click Driver Signings. By default, XP will warn you about an unsigned driver, but it allows installation anyway. The most stringent setting is Block, which will prevent installation of an unsigned driver. The most lenient setting is Ignore. Under Ignore, XP will install an unsigned driver without any warning, but the OS tracks it and keeps information about it in a log file in case you need to roll back to an earlier driver.

Should you avoid unsigned drivers? While some may cause problems, others should work fine. Windows XP gives some unsigned drivers the benefit of the doubt, but Microsoft also maintains a driver blacklist. When you install a new device or driver, XP consults a database of "known problem drivers." If a device shows up in that list, it won't be doing any of its dirty work on your XP machine: the OS will refuse to install it.

Service pack, anyone?

Every operating system has glitches and gotchas; the key to an OS's success is how quickly they are discovered and fixed. So far, Microsoft has released approximately 30 critical and recommended updates for XP, including 9 patches covering security problems.

Of course, all that constant tweaking can be a pain. Perhaps you're wondering if your OS just isn't ready for prime time. If you're holding out for a second edition of XP, dig in for a few more months. Microsoft plans to release its first service pack in the second half of this year. The company won't tell us exactly what Service Pack 1 will include, but we expect it to have many of the updates you can already get via Windows Update, such as USB 2.0 and Bluetooth support.

Microsoft belatedly released USB 2.0 drivers for Windows XP in February, and

recently announced that it will include both Bluetooth support and a line of Bluetooth peripherals, such as keyboards and mice, in the service pack. Microsoft also announced that, in addition to the usual fixes, this service pack will include support for new smart displays such as Mira, new tablet-style PCs, and Freestyle digital-media devices for consumers.

The help you need

So, after six months, you're still having trouble figuring out how to use XP properly and running into compatibility problems at every turn? I've hardly seen any buzz about a feature that could save your tail, so I thought I'd offer some friendly advice to those in search of tech help.

XP's Remote Assistance feature lets you seek help from your corporate IT department or PC-savvy pal online–in real time. Here's how. If you're online with XP or XP Pro and need a little tech support, simply press the F1 key to access XP's Help And Support screen. On that screen, select "Invite a friend to connect to your computer with Remote Assistance," and XP sends e-mail requesting help to your company's IT department or a friend. You can even send the request via Windows XP Messenger, XP's built-in IM client. Note: Your IT department or tech-savvy friend must be running XP Pro; only the Pro version can view or control another XP Pro or Home system.

Once your chosen helper receives and accepts your request, he or she can view your onscreen movements and offer advice via Messenger or over the phone. You can also hand off control of your PC, complete with keyboard and mouse activity, but you must give additional permission first.

Remote Assistance also lets you transfer files between PCs so that you can install

necessary driver and configuration files to repair a problem.

Because Windows is so graphically intense, Remote Assistance works best over a fast Internet connection, such as DSL or cable. But you can scale down the screen resolution and visual features to make the performance tolerable on slower DSL or dial-up connection.

Programs to watch out for

Microsoft claims that XP can run more apps for Windows or DOS, including games, than any prior version of Windows. This assertion actually holds true for most applications, which you can run in one of two ways. First, you can rely on XP's built-in compatibility database, which automatically configures memory, video, and other necessary parameters to allow certain known programs to run under XP. If that doesn't work, you can use the Program Compatibility Wizard to configure programs that the compatibility database doesn't know about. Some apps and software types have known problems with XP. For example, users reported that most utility and virus-protection apps designed for DOS, Windows 95/98/Me would not run correctly under XP since their driver files differ significantly because of XP's NT-based structure.

The Norton nightmare

Norton SystemWorks users reported the most glaring example of what can happen when software vendors must rebuild products for a new operating system. SystemWorks 2001 just isn't compatible, though the company said that a Windows 2000 patch could make it work, and the first release of SystemWorks 2002 conflicted badly, causing fits and starts and even full-blown crashes. But don't give up on SystemWorks 2002 just yet. Symantec's tech support can help clean up the mess and will ship you a free, new version of the product that works very well, though differently, under XP. It's different because XP keeps a tight rein on itself and locks its system files when it's running Norton Disk Doctor. This often requires you to restart your PC so that Disk Doctor can run before the entire OS loads up. Norton SpeedDisk and other disk-defragmenting products, such as Executive Software's Diskeeper, also cannot defragment all of the files on the hard drive because of XP's system file locking.

You can address potential compatibility woes early by running Microsoft's Windows XP Upgrade Advisor, which is included on the Windows XP installation CD and available for download here. (http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/upgrading/advisor.asp) The Upgrade Advisor sports an online database of applications and hardware information, checks the components of your system, and produces a no-go report if an application or piece of hardware is not currently supported by XP. The software even displays any known remedies, though these "fixes" usually just point you to the Web site of the offending product's manufacturer.

Don't rely on Microsoft alone. Check your hardware and software makers' Web sites for specific and probably more current information than that of Upgrade Advisor.

The bugs crawl in

Microsoft would have us believe that XP is the most secure operating system it's released to date. But the dozen or so security updates the company has released since XP's launch belie the claim.

Your buffer overrunneth

In fact, one problem–buffer overrun vulnerabilities in Internet Explorer and Universal Plug and Play (UPnP)–poses such a severe threat that the FBI got involved. Microsoft says a hole in the Plug and Play software could conceivably allow a malicious hacker to take complete control of your PC. Worse, the security hole applied to every XP user – the OS ships with Universal Plug and Play turned on by default. Don't have the patch yet? Get it now.

JVM fix and more

Additional new security patches include a fix for the Microsoft Java Virtual Machine, which, if left unpatched, can let Java applets from Web sites silently reroute all browser traffic to the applet's host without the user's knowledge. Yet another patch fixes an "Unchecked buffer in the Multiple UNC Provider," a problem that allows a hacker to send a malformed data request to a PC to either run programs at will or cause the computer to restart. (Click Start Programs and run Windows Update to access all the available patches.) So far, the most secure aspect of Windows XP's networking lies in the built-in software firewall. Unfortunately, though, that firewall can prevent some Microsoft online services, particularly Windows Update and even XP Pro's Remote Assistance tool, from working properly. I prefer a third-party product such as ZoneAlarm or Norton Internet Security.

Interestingly, none of XP's security updates have anything to do with the once-feared raw sockets support included in XP's TCP/IP network protocol drivers. Many skeptics believed that XP's raw sockets support posed a security threat because it allows programmers to generate data transmissions from one computer and make them appear to come from a different one--a technique used in distributed denial-of-service attacks.

Here's a question I received not long ago: How do I open .p01, .p02 etc. files? I received several files from my friend with the file extensions .p01, .p02, pxx. I can tell the files have been split by some software, but what kind of software will give a file extension like that?

I told him that his friend may have compressed and split files, using a utility such as WinRAR or WinAce, to create RAR files (or he forwarded files from someone else who did). In general, RAR files can compress data smaller than ZIP files, a quality that has helped make this format quite popular among Usenet posters. Just in case files get lost or damaged during transmission, many posters choose to create PAR files to accompany the RAR files. PAR files (with extensions such as .p01 and .p02) contain redundant information that lets them re-create any missing or corrupted RAR files and thereby recover lost data. Unless you're a techie, you'll need a program such as SmartPAR. For some info look here http://www.disc-chord.com/smartpar/, and even WinRAR 3.0 itself http://www.rarlab.com to create PAR files and to re-create the missing RAR files.

New Tiered Pricing Comes to Broadband

As cable companies roll out tiered pricing some customers complain they're stuck paying more for less.

Looking to win over cost-conscious consumers, cable broadband providers are rolling out tiered pricing plans that offer faster-than-dialup connections for as little as $25 a month. But while cheaper broadband sounds great for those who have never had broadband, many longtime cable customers who are used to extremely high speeds complain the move means slower connections at higher prices, and they're not happy.

Listen at 12:20 pm every Saturday on 1180 am. Call 295-1180 to ask your question.

Cable broadband providers insist that tiered pricing can be good for everyone.

Offering lower-priced packages with slower speeds means more people can afford an always-on connection. Besides, DSL providers have successfully offered tiered pricing for years.

Plus, they argue, cable users who demand the best Internet performance often have the option to pay more and get even faster speeds than are available under one-price-fits-all packages.

Luring Cheapskates

"We want to make that first step to broadband much easier," says David Pugliese, vice president of sales and new-product marketing at cable provider Cox Communication.

Cox currently offers its standard cable Internet service at $34.95 a month for 3-megabit-per-second downloads and 256-kilobits-per-second uploads. The company is now testing in several markets a service that offers scaled back performance: $26 a month for 256kbps downloads and 64kbps uploads.

The test service is selling well, Pugliese says, likely in part because it is just $3 more than what America Online charges for its standard 56kbps dialup service.

Another executive sees the low-priced broadband market as a sure-fire success for service providers. "There is a segment of people out there that just want always-on reliable service and are not interested in high-speed access," says Herb Shiery, vice president at Adelphia Communications, which already offers a slower-speed $25 package.

Bandwith Hogs

Altering a service's download speeds, however, can greatly irritate current cable customers, a fact Comcast and AT&T Broadband learned earlier this year. When the companies moved millions of orphaned Excite@Home customers onto their broadband networks they also cut download speeds from 3.5mbps to 1.5mbps, and a vocal minority cried foul. These outspoken users became further enraged when the companies went on to increase their rates from $40 to $45 a month.

AT&T downplays the impact of its bandwith cut, and says the reduction affected only about one percent of its 1.6 million customers. Plus, that small group of users was actually using about 16 percent of the company's network bandwith.

"If one person is downloading gigabytes of movies and music, then neighbors on the same network will suffer," says Sara Eder, company spokesperson. By paring back bandwidth speeds, AT&T Broadband saves money by managing bandwidth more efficiently, she says.

Currently those AT&T customers can't get back their 3.5mbps download speeds at any price. But the company does plan to roll out tiered pricing as soon as July, Eder says.

Comcast customers seeking their former download speeds can purchase the High Speed-Internet Pro service for speeds of 3.5mbps downloads and 384kbps uploads – for $95 a month.

Tiered Pricing for All?

One thing is clear: Broadband providers need to do something to spur adoption. Despite faster connection speeds, people haven't been signing up for broadband service at the rate many expected.

Today only about 9 percent of households that can subscribe to high-speed Internet service actually do, according to research from the Consumer Electronics Association. The challenge for providers is getting the 68 percent of U.S. homes that have access to broadband connections to sign up for service.

Tiered pricing could play a large role in winning skeptics over. And by next fall one-size-fits-all pricing may become the exception rather than the rule, says Dylan Brooks, senior broadband analyst at Jupiter Media Metrix. Broadband cable provider Rogers Communications of Canada took the tiered plunge earlier this year, scrapping its flat $40 fee. It now has a $25 High Speed Light service that offers 128kbps downloads and 64kbps uploads. Its $45 High Speed Internet offers downloads at 1.5mbps and uploads at 192kbps (the speeds of its former $40 service). Charter Communications also has moved its cable service to three price tiers. Its entry level service has three levels of service starting with a 256kbps downstream speed for about $29.95; its 512kbps to 768kbps downstream service is about $39.95;

and its 1mbps to 1.5mbps service is about $75.95.

Time Warner Resists

You may have to wait for tiered pricing if you're one of 2.2 million Time Warner Cable customers. Like a handful of other providers, Time Warner Cable says it has no immediate plans to offer consumers a choice in bandwidth speeds and prices, according to spokesperson Mark Harrod.

"We still see a great demand for the packages that we offer," Harrod says of Time Warner's $45 monthly fee. One problem with switching to tiered pricing is the chance that some customers will opt for the lower-priced service, says one analyst.

Dropping prices is never easy, says Imran Khan, broadband analyst with the Yankee Group. Providers are terrified of losing money to customers who move to lower-priced plans, Khan says.

"Nobody wants to migrate a $45 a month customer to a $29 bill," he says. However, many providers report that when they introduced tiered pricing, new customer signups offset penny-pinchers that moved to slower speeds and prices.

Cox said when it introduced lower speeds and prices to business customers a handful of companies did opt for the least expensive tier. However, Cox says it doubled its customer base through the move.

DSL Strikes Back

Offering higher speeds at higher prices is old hat for many DSL providers--many of which had the technology to do so long before the cable companies. However, as cable companies roll out tiered pricing, some DSL companies are increasing the number of options they offer, too. SpeakEasy DSL, for example, will combat the cable companies by rolling out a new economy package for $39 that

offers 200kbps downloads and 64kbps uploads.

Speakeasy already offers four tiers of service catering to everyone from light to power users. "Broadband isn't about replacing dialup, it's about tailoring service to the needs of everyone from casual Web surfers to serious gamers," says Mike Apgar, Speakeasy chief executive officer and founder. This is another verse in that old Cable Company song: Let's raise prices – what can they do about it?

Broadband Gets Cheap

Tiered broadband pricing gives new users inexpensive options, but others complain they're paying more for less.

In an attempt to win cost-conscious consumers, cable broadband service providers are beginning to offer tiered pricing plans with faster-than-dial-up connections for as little as $25 a month.

But while cheaper service for people who have never had broadband sounds appealing, some longtime cable customers who are used to surfing at extremely high speeds complain that the move means slower connections at higher prices.

They're not happy

Cable companies are following in the footsteps of DSL providers, which have successfully offered tiered pricing for some time. Cable vendors hope their new services will lure skeptics and drive up demand for broadband, which has been weaker than many in the industry had expected.

Luring Cheapskates

"We want to make that first step to broadband much easier," says David Pugliese, cable provider Cox Communications' vice president of sales and new-product marketing. Today, Cox offers its standard cable

Internet service – with 3-mbps downloads and 256-kbps uploads – for about $35 a month. The company is now testing a $26-a-month service that offers scaled-back performance: 256-kbps downloads and 64-kbps uploads.

The test service is selling well, Pugliese says, likely in part because it costs just $2 more than standard 56-kbps dial-up service from America Online and many others.

Not every cable company will offer 256-kbps downloads for $26 – providers are still working out their plans, and prices will vary widely by area. For example, Canadian broadband provider Rogers Cable took the tiered plunge earlier this year. Its High Speed Light service runs $25 a month, but with 128-kbps downloads and 64-kbps uploads.

Bandwidth Hogs (again)

Those prices may attract newcomers, but when a service alters its speeds, it risks aggravating current users – as Comcast and AT&T Broadband learned earlier this year. The millions of orphaned Excite@Home users who were shifted to the two companies' networks found their download speeds, which were up to 3 mbps, reduced to 1.5 mbps. A vocal minority cried foul. Soon after, the companies also raised rates by several dollars per month.

AT&T says the bandwidth cut impacted about 850,000 former Excite users. Speeds were dropped to match services offered in other markets, as well as to help AT&T better manage its network and ready itself for tiered services, according to Sarah Eder, a spokesperson for AT&T.

For now, AT&T users can't get 3-mbps downloads. But the company plans to roll out tiered services as soon as this summer, Eder says. Comcast customers have an

ultrafast option – with speeds of 3.5 mbps down and 384 kbps up – for $95 a month.

Gotchas

Tiered pricing doesn't offer a wholly rosy picture, even for new users. Some providers introduce additional costs for those choosing a lower broadband tier, by charging for modem rental or for a mandatory subscription to cable TV. Cable companies will probably try to lure users into paying more by adding new services, just as DSL providers have done. If they follow the DSL model, they may push subscription-based antivirus and firewall protection, special gaming packages, and other deals that could add $10 or more to the monthly bill.

In any case, tiered pricing is here to stay. As early as this fall, one-size-fits-all pricing may become the exception rather than the rule, according to Dylan Brooks, senior broadband analyst at Jupiter Media Metrix. In fact, Time Warner Cable is the only major broadband cable company that says it has no immediate plans to offer tiered pricing.

Areas with competition in broadband service should have the best prices. If you don't live in such an area, shop wisely and look out for hidden costs before taking the plunge.

Product Review

Lexmark Z53 Inkjet Printer

by Herb Goldstein

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

There is nothing in the way of computer hardware that prompts your questions to me more frequently than inkjet printers. The reasons are understandable. They are the most frequently purchased and replaced computer peripheral hardware items. Inkjet printers are by far the type most commonly owned by home and small

office users. Choices are relatively plentiful, inexpensive, and they do a very creditable job in producing impressive copies of anything and everything from simple documents to spectacular color photographs.

Buying an inkjet printer can be quite confusing, The number of different brands and models within each brand makes choosing a tough job. With this in mind and with the cooperation of some of our local vendors, we did some applied investigating, hands-on evaluations, and reached some interesting conclusions. We did not include the more expensive and slower photo quality printers which are in a class by themselves, and whose output on photo inkjet paper was incomparable.

It would be very difficult for the average user to distinguish between inkjet printers based on test prints on plain paper. They all appear acceptable and quite similar. That leaves a considerable number of other features to consider, all of which collectively add up to one word - value! Which of the lot offers the best bang for the buck? After all was said and done our choice was the Lexmark Z53 at a street price of $120. Here's why we consider it the best value in a home user inkjet printer today: recommendations and experience counts. All the major magazine and other reviewing entities place the Z53 among their very top choices. Lexmark's claim to fame was well established long ago by their classic and highly respected laser printer, the well known Optra.

Let's look at how the Z53 shapes up in areas that really count. Few things are as frustrating as printer paper jams. The Z53 uses a patented "Accu-Feed" gravity system that delivers paper to the printer in a straight through path. There is no lifter common in other printers that first elevate

the paper to the rollers, pull it in via one direction and then expell it in the other during the print procedure offering the common problems of jamming and paper skewing. Clearing a paper jam on one of these bottom-feed machines can be a hazard to both your frustration level and blood pressure, not to mention possible damage to the printer.

The Z53 is a speed demon. Draft copies will spew out at 16 pages per minute in black, and 8 pages in color. You can change the print quality settings for each document, but even at highest quality printer speed is very respectable.

The printer can communicate with your computer via your choice of either parallel port or USB connection. An unusual and completely, exclusively graphic setup instruction document is provided where the quick and easy job is done using a text-free instruction sheet containing just 7 illustrations. Installation of both the printer and its two ink cartridges is the essence of simplicity by simply following the pictures. A setup CD is provided that readily installs the printer drivers and software. This is literally the only area in which you might want to take a special precaution. For an accurate and trouble-free installation of any printer's software, your system resources should be adequate. You can assure this by closing out any other programs you may have running at the time. The easiest way is to close anything else you have running in your system tray, or by doing a ctrl-alt-del and end-task on everything running in your close program box except explorer and systray.

The ink nozzles in the Z53 are contained on each cartridge, avoiding a costly separate print head replacement which can result from clogging. The problem is further pre-vented by the type of ink Lexmark uses and the manner it is applied to the paper. The ink is dispelled in a very small 7 picoliter droplets with a highly reduced tendency for bleeding between the black and color ink. On the downside and similar to most other inkjet printers, the color cartridge is an all-in-one design that calls for the replacement of the entire cartridge if you run out of one color. Three separate color cartridges rather than an all-in-one is the way some manufacturers are going today.

When you activate your print command in any program and select the Z53 as the active printer, a print control box opens that graphically animates your print job to even showing the paper coming through your printer. This print control program also displays the amount of ink left in each cartridge and reminds you when you need replacements. Several tabs in this dialogue box also permit you to choose from various options in the way your printer works. It permits you to clean and align your print cartridges, among other options.

Select the Z53 to print in any program, click on properties, and you are provided with many additional choices and options such as a document and paper type, print quality, print mode, two-sided printing, poster, duplex, booklet and N-up job finishing, special artistic color effects, image quality. and lots more. The Z53 will readily handle a wide variety of paper sizes and types - plain, inkjet and photo paper, banners, transparencies, iron-on transfers, envelopes, index cards, and greeting cards.

You can choose from four print quality settings:

Maximum - 2400x1200 dpi
High - 1200x1200 dpi
Normal - 600x600 dpi
Quick print - 600x300 dpi

You will very likely find that the Normal setting is an excellent rival for laser printing. The higher settings will produce photo-realistic graphics, especially on photo quality inkjet paper, that you will swear came straight from a photo lab. About the only thing missing in our examination was the ability to do reverse printing (last page first) to collate a set of multiple pages.

A small 42 page manual is provided that outlines basic functions and procedures. A much more extensive help file and users manual which you can print out is also available. Speaking of help, we now come to one of the most impressive and important factors that make the Z53 a wise choice - Lexmark's superb service and support. Lexmark combines toll-free tech support with a year's exchange warranty in which they will without hesitation replace in one business day a printer with a problem that tech support can't resolve. Lexmark has a top-notch unsurpassed reputation for service and support on their equipment. I can't impress upon you too strongly the vital importance of buying a product whose manufacturer stands solidly behind.

The Z53 is fully compatible with all versions of Windows including XP. A 133 MHz minimum processor is recommended, with 16 MB or more of RAM. In the case of XP, 299 MHz and 64 MB minimums apply.

The Lexmark Z53 is an all-around superb inkjet printer that provides the very best value in its class. It offers speed, quality of output, design and construction. It is the least expensive inkjet printer in its class. The combination of all factors spells V-A-L-U-E, in capital letters! In every way, it is our top choice for small office, home office users. Visit their Website at http://www.lexmark.com for further info.

Just as we have, you too can convince yourself of the Z53's merits. Most of the local vendors in our investigation offer a 14 day trial period, during which you can return it for full refund if not satisfied. Be sure to ascertain this from the dealer of your choice. Chances are that once you try it you won't be bringing it back.

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From The DealsGuy
by Bob Click
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

How much do you concern yourself about buying American to help American jobs? I saw an interesting excerpt from a write-up by a *Washington Post* writer concerning a typical routine on an average day by a couple he rode with to observe. His theme was US brands owned by European Companies. The couple drove a foreign car with an American name and gassed up at Amoco, owned by British Petroneum. They enjoyed lunch at Burger King, owned by a British Company, Diageo. The husband bought a book published by a french company, Vivendi, and a cassette to play in his car, also produced by Vivendi. In defense, the wife later purchased more gas at a Shell station only to learn it was Dutch owned. She also picked up a bottle of Snapple, made by a British company, Cadbury Schweppes. At home they had coffee, Tasters Choice, made by Nestle SA of Switzerland.

There is more, but I found it interesting. With all the mergers and acquisitions, most of us hardly know who we are buying from. Perhaps foreign entities need not engage us

in war to take us over, but will simply buy us up while many American companies are moving operations to foreign sites, but I still try to help American jobs. A friend cringes at my "buy-American" attitude telling me he never buys American. He says foreign products are superior to American products because American workers are lazy, conceited, overpaid people always looking for a free handout. Maybe I shouldn't say I was ever an American worker, but I live in America and I am what I am. My American friend also worked for an American company and, I think, enjoys an American pension.

Don't Have Acrobat?

Then Get Your PDF Files FREE

When I reformatted my HD, I had misplaced my copy of Acrobat and needed to convert a file to PDF. Sometimes when I get stuck, I call one of my best local resources, which is Hewie Poplock. He told me to go to http://www.gobcl.com and get it done there for free. By golly, he was right. goBCL is a free online document publishing service by BCL Technologies, the maker of plug-ins for Adobe Acrobat. They can publish your documents into either PDF or HTML.

Not everything is free, but for occasional use, they offer a free service. They also have paid services, but the free one was just what I wanted. I have since found my Acrobat copy, but that service would have been handy.

Hewie also has a Web site where he posts all kinds of information and publishes a newsletter called "Hewie's Favorites," consisting of good URLs he finds. You can get on the list to receive "Hewie's Favorites" each time he sends them out, and it always includes other good information. http://www.hewie.net

Hey, Clean Up That E-mail

I printed a similar item a few months ago (Stripmail), but some readers have since sent me this information. Since it's their favorite, I'm passing it on. Some people always feel compelled to forward all kinds of stuff. Most, especially newbies, include the >>>, hard returns and whatever junk there is. These readers recommend using "The Cleaner" on those messages. It gets rid of all those >>> and the unwanted hard returns creating a dreadful looking message. It also offers other features to help.

If you are a "forwarder,"get "eCleaner" V.2.01 at [http://pcworld.com/downloads /file_description/0,fid,6492,00.asp] at no cost and help your fellow humans. There is a later version at [http://ecleaner.tripod.com] but this page may have moved by the time you read this. It's only for a PC, but the article's author, Steve Chin, mentions "SpellTools" that is meant for a Mac. He did not say where to find it.

Everything Under One Roof,

and Cheap Too (for Linux)

How much did you pay for your Office Suite? Or are you still using an older version because you didn't want to pay that much? If you are using Linux, you could be saving a lot of money with Hancom Office 2.0.2 just released. I don't know if it will do everything you are doing now, but how much of your present office suite are you *really* using?

I didn't take the time to check out this new offering from Hancom because I don't have a Linux machine yet, but it offers word processing, spreadsheet, graphics, and presentation applications. It has many improvements including foreign language support and is compatible with Microsoft Word format (their words).

It now has Unicode support which has to do with foreign language special characters.

They fixed problems affecting Mandrake and SuSE users who had upgraded to KDE 3.0. Fixed bugs when exporting text documents in HTML format.

This suite appears to be only Linux based, but if you own a previous version, your upgrade is free for the download. New users may purchase the software for $49.95 (CD Case or download edition) or the boxed version with documentation for $59.95 (regular prices). If you just want to check it out, a free 30-day trial version is available for downloading at http://en.hancom.com. Some features aren't included in the trial version. I'm not sure I understood the above information on their Web site so take a look. For a dialup connection, this large download may not be very practical, but the trial version is much smaller. See their solution.

Hey, Give Me Back That File, Ya Hear!!

In Windows 9x, deleted files are normally sent to the recycle bin so that it's easy to get them back if you change your mind. However, not everybody sticks to that method of deleting files. For instance, if you delete a file while holding the shift key down, you can forget about getting it back from the recycle bin. The same is true if you delete it from a Zip Drive.

A short write-up by Ken Marple of Space Coast PC Users Group recommends software called "Drive Rescue," A Hard Disk Recovery Tool. The Web site says it will find any lost and deleted data on your drive (e.g. hard disk) even if the partition table is lost or the drive has been quick-formatted. Also recovers lost data that is the result of a system crash. But if the disk has been physically damaged, it cannot recover that data.

Supported file systems are FAT 12/16/32 (used by hard disks, disks, Smartmedia, Compact Flash, Memory Stick and other)

and NTFS (incomplete). Supported operating systems are Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000 or XP, and a second hard disk (or network drive) is recommended for recovery. Other amazing capabilities can be seen on their Web site.

The best part is that it's freeware. However, if it helps you, the programmer would like a donation. That's not too much to ask for a good product. The URL is http:// home .arcor.de/christian_grau/rescue/index.html. Remember though, if you write to the disk after deleting the data, there is a good chance you would overwrite the deleted data, thus making recovery difficult to impossible.

Will The REAL File Manager

Please Stand Out!

Also written up in the same Space Coast PC UG's Journal is a report by Jack Davidson about a great replacement for Windows Explorer. Many people would rather Microsoft had kept the old file manager instead of its Windows Explorer because of the way it works. How would you like to check out a REAL file manager that was originally said to be "a file manager on steroids" when it was created? Power Desk is just such a program. Originally, it was a product of Mijenix, but now belongs to OnTrack.

I can't adequately describe the many features of PowerDesk so go to [http:// www.ontrack.com/freesoftware] and look for it. There are two free programs and two evaluation programs for downloading, including the standard version of Power Desk. If you click on download for the free version of PowerDesk, you will have to sign in and create a password. You may wish to upgrade to the Pro version for $29.95. I had a problem finding the list of features in the free version. I don't know how many of

PowerDesk Pro's features are contained in the free version.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. 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, or disgruntled, I might sound.

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick @dealsguy .com]. Visit my Web site at [http://www .dealsguy.com] for past columns. There are also interesting articles from user group newsletters on my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

Society News

President's Column
by Ron Matteson

Here we are – vacations are almost over, the kids will be going back to school in a couple of days, and the RCSi Fall schedule is about to begin. the New Users SIG and the Digital Photography and Scanning SIG will have meetings on the first Tuesday and first Thursday of September, respectively. Our regular program meeting will be on September 10th, meeting in a new location. The subject will be disk storage trends, and the speaker will be Mark Maio of Seagate, a long-time manufacturer of hard drives for consumer and commercial use. Unfortunately, I'm going to miss the meeting; but I'll see you next month.

We had our annual Picnic, and something new–a computer flea market. The attendance at the picnic/flea market was not exactly outstanding, but those in attendance enjoyed socializing and good food. A little money was made on the flea market to add to the treasury, but a lot of stuff was left over (currently residing in my garage, making my car very unhappy). We will try to make you aware of the items available via the Monitor, so you can order specific items. We have books, software games and utility programs, adapters, modems, PC cases, and even complete systems. There are also keyboards, cables, and connectors. Even a 100-foot roll of EtherNet cable (Category 5) for only $15. We also have over 100 books, from Windows 95 back to DOS 3, and their applications. Prices on books range from $1 to $4.

Don't forget to extend your membership for one more year for only $20. That offer will end soon.

Goals for the next year:

More Special Interest Groups:

Web design, Internet usage, home networking, Windows XP, database software, Linux, build your own PC, genealogy to name a few possibilities.

One or more short courses on a topic of interest.

A community service project.

Increased membership.

If you feel qualified and/or motivated to work in any of the above areas, fell free to speak to any of the Board members about volunteering.

Planning Meeting Minutes
July 16, 2002
by Charles Grover, Secretary

The Board of the Rochester Computer Society, Inc., met Tuesday, July 16, 2002, at 7:06 PM in the library of Christ Episcopal Church, Pittsford. Present were Ron Matteson (President), Arpad Kovacs (Vice President), Bob Avery, Stephen Staub (Treasurer), Dan Rothfuss, and Charles Grover (Secretary). Sally Springett (*Monitor* Editor) and Elliott Walls arrived at 7:11 PM. Ron followed his prepared agenda.

We began Old Business by reviewing the Program Meeting of the preceding week. A good crowd was attracted. The cafeteria at Element K worked well. Three visitors came who had attended the recent Market Pro Show, two of whom joined. Larilyn has informed Ron that for auditing, two people are required to review our financial data and prepare a form 990 each year. We plan to do so for the current year and have a report at the annual meeting (May, 2003). Larilyn also informed Ron that she does not yet know whether the folding machine may be included under the insurance policy of St. Stephen's Church, where the machine is kept.

Under Finances, Steve reported details of the newsletter costs, including the increase of $.10 cents for mailing each out of state piece to $.189 and the increase for other pieces to $.14 each. In the last mailing, for instance, 225 were posted at a total charge of $41.26. Costs for paper are $4.69 per ream for white; $6.19 for colors. We felt these were favorable prices for paper. The account balance was $888.18, up slightly. The special dues arrangement has brought in 10 or 12 two year memberships.

In considering the Web Site we learned that Joe Varga had sent an e-mail to Ron about costs for site hosting. Bob is having the site storage space increased to 50 MB beginning August 15. The current allotment of 25 MB on the server is virtually full. Bob provided Steve with payment information for site hosting. Bill Statt has some ideas for the site which Bob may implement later. Bob will add some links on web site design. When expanded, there will be room for Power Point presentations of programs.

We reviewed plans for the Picnic and Flea Market. 11 people have signed up. SoundBytes and the Computer Renaissance radio program should be asked to announce the flea market. Details of organizing and running the flea market were discussed. Another year, the Henrietta Town Park may be considered as a picnic site.

Taking up the matter of future Programs, we learned Ralph Squire may do a presentation on Desk Top Publishing in October. Ron is trying to set up a program on mass data storage by a Seagate representative (Mark Mayo). Ron will check on the availability of the seminar room at Element K. Bob plans to put advance information about programs on the web site.

Our Software Chairperson, Jim McGrath could not attend. He has had no request for software to request for review. Jim asked that when requests are made, the brand name, software title and version be supplied to him. Jim also suggested we might have a program by an ISP. Members mentioned broad band also. We have yet to buy the replacement (spare) bulb for our projector authorized some time ago. Steve will check with Bill Statt on the research he was going to do.

We will be represented at the Market Pro show next weekend. Both Arpad and Steve are planning to attend.

Thought was again given to Community Service Projects. WXXI will welcome a group from the club to answer telephones during a fund raiser. Ron suggested we start publicizing the opportunity to work on the December drive beginning at our picnic. Bob pointed out we need to promote our own program meetings. Links to our web site may be developed. We learned the Open Door Mission is collecting empty printer ink cartridges for recycling. Ron has begun collecting them at our program meetings.

Interest in Special Interest Groups was gathered at the recent Program Meeting. About five people signed up. Games and Linux drew the most interest. Bob can add information about this to the web site. Elliott is interested in helping organize a Linux SIG. Arpad is interested in a gaming SIG. Charles opined that a SIG focusing on introducing people to Linux could complement the Linux Users Group of Rochester, whose own Newbies SIG has not met in many months. Elliott will explore possibilities for space with Annexa. Ron has been thinking of trying meetings with a main program and time to split up into SIGs or discussion groups. Perhaps a format of Helps Half Hour, then business, and then interest groups could be tried. Perhaps this could be done once to introduce SIGs to the entire membership. Or, a SIG could be an alternative to something else in the schedule. Or, the program could be a series of brief presentations by the SIGs. We might have a yearly update from the SIGs. Steve urged SIG reports in the *Monitor* and on the web site. Bob told us about forum capabilities on the web site.

Ron gave us a few details from the calendar for the future. The Digital Photography SIG will not meet in August. Our Flea Market and Picnic is August 11. The next Program Meeting is September 10. We still plan to have a Planning Meeting in August only if a need arises, and are

on call from the President. There will be a Market Pro show September 1. Because I will be away, if Larilyn is not at the September 10 Program Meeting an acting secretary will be needed to take minutes. I will try to be at the September 17 Planning Meeting and take minutes if Larilyn is still away.

Ron suggested the need for a Membership Committee. Dan stressed the importance of good programs to building up membership. Wolfe Publications might be open to printing announcements of meetings as community news. Ron invited volunteers or suggestions for people to work on a membership committee.

We adjourned at 8:40 PM.

New User Group Notes

by John McMillan

Two newcomers joined six others at the August 6th New Users meeting. As usual, the topics were varied and interesting. Poor memory and lack of a recorder combined to prevent a summary of the proceedings.

Everyone is welcome to join us at the next meeting; 6:30 pm, Sept. 3rd, at the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Rd.

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 6/24/02	$839.17
Income	
Dues and picnic sales	$284.00
Expenses	
St Stephens	$100.00
Web site (5 dollaring) housing	120.00
Lease	86.72
Total	$306.72
Balance as of 8/19/02	$816.45

The Lighter Side

Tales

Tech Support: "Do you have any windows open right now?"
Customer: "Are you crazy woman, it's twenty below outside...."

My kids love surfing the Web and they keep track of their passwords by writing them on sticky notes. When I noticed their password was "BatmanSupermanRobinJoker." I asked why it was so long. "Because," my son explained, "they say it has to have at least four characters."☺

Police in Norfolk, Neb., are still trying to find Curtis Boyd, 23, after he skipped out on bail after allegedly trying to pass a check for $22 million at the Bank of Norfolk drive-through in May. Boyd had purchased a computer software check-writing program and apparently figured all he had to do to get the bank to give him money was to present a realistic-looking check with certain Federal Reserve code numbers.

When the teller declined to take it, Boyd took the check back, decided apparently that the one imperfection in the check was the lack of an "issuing bank," and thus returned to the Bank of Norfolk after hand-writing the name "Reality Perspective Bank" at the top of the check. This time, bank employees called the police. [*Lincoln Journal Star*, 6-7-02]☺

Overheard in a computer store:
Woman 1: "What is that little trash can on the screen?"
Woman 2: "My son says that is call the 'recycle bin.' He tells me when I don't want a Word document anymore and I delete it, it really goes in there."
Woman 1: "Why in the recycle thingy? Can't you just erase it?"
Woman 2: "Oh no, Word wouldn't work for very long if I did that, I would run out of blank pages."
Woman 1: "Why?"
Woman 2: "Because it cleans the words off the pages, then sends the blank sheets back to Word so they can be used again. That's why it's called the recycle bin."☺