

Microsoft Picture It! –

Digital Image Pro 7.0

by Charles Grover

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I have been using such digital photography programs as Adobe's PhotoDeluxe, The Gimp, Hewlett-Packard Photo Printing Software (bundled with a scanner), software bundled with my Olympus camera, and Irfan-View, an amazing freeware viewer/manipulator that now handles audio and video files. When *Microsoft Picture It! - Digital Image Pro 7.0* came up for a door prize/review drawing, I put all my tickets on it, even though the blurbs on the box don't quite tell me what to expect. So here goes.

Installation was straightforward. The default choice makes a smaller installation and requires using a second CD to get to resources for projects such as scrapbooks. I chose that rather than a complete installation. I was allowed to choose drive as well as path and installed the software on my D: drive. I recently had gone from Windows 98SE to Windows 2000, which had installed Internet Explorer 5.5. *Digital Image Pro 7.0* requires IE 6, and installed it. Before running *Digital Image Pro* I went to the Microsoft web site to update the version of Internet Explorer 6 installed by *Digital Image Pro*.

During installation and updating I examined the included *Companion Guide*. These days, it is a treat to find printed documentation longer than the EULA. The printed manual runs 285 pages. It includes an index as well as a useful table of contents. The manual (in .pdf) is also on the CD and was installed on the hard drive. I searched for .pdf files to find it; its location was not obvious to me, nor had I seen mention of it during installation or my first exploration of the program.

I like the manual. It has nice sections introducing digital and film photography and offering information on using cameras, scanners, video cards and monitors. The only drawback I have discovered is that in neither the print nor .pdf version are the photos in color. That is disappointing when you get a caption such as, "Although vivid colors are good, you can go too far. For example, this image is unnaturally blue." Next to that is another where the color balance has purportedly been corrected. The black and white reproduction just doesn't do it! The longest chapter in the manual is "The Best of Tips & Tricks" from the MSN Photos Web Site. More good stuff to increase one's knowledge of photography. I also explored the Web Site a little and found some interesting Tips & Tricks articles there.

My own first project with the newly installed software was to play with a photo I had taken last summer of a baby rabbit in my garden. The original was cute, but slightly out of focus. Quick fixes for color balance and contrast helped just a bit; they were quite good on the original. I had not been pleased with attempts to sharpen photos with other software. On this picture, the bunny's

fur was obviously fuzzy. I applied the "Sharpen tool" by dragging a slider with the mouse. The most pleasing effect can be selected readily. One can return to the original and start again. I like the result. The fur looks much better. The leaves and mulch surrounding the rabbit are sharper, too. Finally I used a cropping tool. I was delighted to find this cropping tool allows you to fix proportions for standard print sizes. I cropped the photo to 3.5 x 5 and printed it. Then I went back to the original photo and printed it to 3.5 x 5 — another possibility with this software. I am very pleased with the result.

Next I played with scanned images of 2.25" square photos from 1939 (black & white, of course). I was pleased with how adjustments to black and white levels and using a Dodge and Burn Tool, and finally, sharpening the images, resulted in nice improvements. Now, 4" square prints look as good as the original contact prints.

From there, I tried doing cutouts and playing with adjustments to a color photograph. This led me into work (play) that requires the build up of some skill. I feel I got pretty far with quick fixes and adjustments that relied on my earlier experience and ease of use of this software. As with almost every program, there is lots more to explore and learn. For now, I can conclude:

1. *Microsoft Picture It! - Digital Image Pro 7.0* is simple to install.
2. The manual is very useful and should greatly help someone new to manipulating photos.
3. There are some simple but inclusive tutorials and demonstrations that help one get started.
4. Features for preparing photos for printing are very good.
5. There are advanced features that will allow for exploration and discovery and creative expression.

I like this software and look forward to using it. The program is available alone, or as part of the Microsoft Works Suite, a real bargain.

Book Review:

Windows XP Home Edition-The Missing Manual-

The book that should have been in the box

by David Pogue

Pogue Press/O'Reilly (2002)

ISBN# 0-596-00260-2; 572 pp.

by Ron Matteson

President, Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

Introduction: This indeed is the book which should come with the box containing Windows XP Home Edition (referred to in this report as "XP"). This software and every other piece of software should have a manual that explains everything you need to know about it. You can look at Help files in the software, but they usually are very brief; you cannot "hold your finger" in

one section while looking at another; and you generally cannot try out what you are studying while looking at it. As mentioned in the books Introduction, "...help screens are tersely written, offer very little technical depth, and lack examples and illustrations. You can't even mark your place, underline, or read them in the bathroom." Many of the XP Home help screens are even located on Microsoft's web site.

One thing I liked about the book, is that it does not require you to know and understand previous versions of Windows. In other words, it does not repeatedly say "This works just like Windows 98 Second Edition, except...". In fact, a lot of the menus, capabilities, etc. described in the book apply to Windows 98 SE, but are explained as if you have not previously been exposed to Windows in any form.

The book contains 18 chapters, divided into 5 parts. There is also an appendix with two sections: Installing Windows XP Home Edition, and Windows XP, Menu by Menu.

Part 1: The Windows XP Desktop:

Includes chapters on 1. A Welcome to Windows XP; 2. The Desktop and Start Menu; 3. Windows, Folders, and the Taskbar; 4. Organizing Your Stuff; and 5. Getting Help.

Chapter 1 emphasizes the importance of the right mouse button, "The right mouse button is king." The resulting shortcut menus give you the capability of doing lots of things much more quickly than getting to them any other way. Incidentally, this is true in earlier versions of Windows- Win98SE, WinMe, etc., but is even more true in XP. By the way, the book does not refer to these earlier versions of Windows very often, but many of the things discussed apply to earlier versions, and for example I have learned a lot about Win95SE by reading this book. Microsoft has provided five or six ways of doing everything, and this applies to all versions of Windows. You can use the keyboard and/or the mouse; and the keyboarding has some new wrinkles to make it more powerful.

There are several other new features in XP. Stability has been greatly improved by having user accounts and an administrative account; system file protection; a restore feature to roll the system back to an earlier configuration; more careful driver management; and an AutoUpdate feature.

Some cosmetic changes have been made to the Taskbar, Start menu, Control Panel, and Desktop. Lots of new picture, music, and movie features have been added to XP. Other new features include a firewall, and a remote assistance capability, whereby a Microsoft technician can actually take over your PC remotely, and check it out (at your request).

An area which is not going over too well with XP installers, is the activation process. Microsoft learns what

is on your PC during this process, and if you change too much, you have to reactivate.

In Chapter 2, the Desktop, and particularly the Startup menu is described. The Startup menu has several new wrinkles in it that are different from previous Windows versions. The features of the new Startup menu are described in detail in the book, along with the various shutdown options, which includes a "hibernate" feature. This feature allows shutting down most PC functions, including the hard drive, but still allowing you to start up rapidly, with everything back where it was before you hibernated. How to start a program or look at a file contents, etc. using Start-Run is also explained. The Start-Find capability is much enhanced, and well-explained (and renamed to Start-Search). As usual, there are several ways to start the Search function—seven, to be exact. And when you find a list of files, you can manipulate them right there in the Search window. XP will also index all your documents (this takes a long time), so that if you search for something by its contents, it will be very fast. The indexing only has to be done once. Also, My Computer, My Recent Documents, My Documents, My Music, My Pictures, and My Network Places are all found from the Start button in XP, instead of from the Desktop. The Desktop has a neater appearance, if you can get used to the new way. Items can be added or deleted to the Start menu, but you can even revert to the old (Win98) way, if you really want to. Chapter 2 tells you how to do all these things, with great clarity.

Chapter 3 describes desktop icons for folders and programs; and the new very useful Taskbar feature in XP which is at the left side of all program windows. It allows you to perform most common tasks that exist in shortcut menus, without actually having to find the shortcut menu you want. This is all explained in the book, along with the new Explore pane you can bring up to replace the Taskbar. Ways to maximize the efficiency of your toolbars are also explained in the book.

Chapter 4 describes how to organize your files, pictures, music, etc. The My Computer icon is the key to unlocking all these things, and looks different in XP than it did in previous versions of Windows. When opened, it makes it much easier to find things. This chapter also starts to get into the subject of Accounts, how the system prevents people from getting into each others files, and getting into systems stuff that might hurt the machine.

New software added to XP allows you to burn CD's without having to buy a new program, like those available from Roxio and others.

Chapter 5 describes the Help system. There are several ways to get help that are described in the book:

- Start-Help from the Start button
- Search Help from any Help Taskbar button
- Help Index from any Help Taskbar button
- "What's This"– Help for Dialog Boxes
- Remote Assistance– MS technician controls your PC

- Microsoft Help Web Pages (www.microsoft.com/support)

Part 2: The Components of

Windows XP:

Part 2 contains chapters 6-9, covering Programs and Documents; The Freebie Software; Pictures, Sounds, and Movies; and The Control Panel.

Chapter 6 describes the various ways to launch programs in XP (seven ways, again); and how to exit them (only five ways). If a program crashes, you are much more likely to close the program without adverse effect on everything else in XP, than you were in previous versions of Windows. Ctl-Alt-Del will usually take care of the problem. This chapter also explains, among other things, how to change file extensions to work with a different default program.

Installing new software is discussed in this chapter. Since XP is compatible with somewhat fewer programs than Win98, WinMe, etc., a program's compatibility with XP should be checked at the Microsoft web site. There is a menu item under Help and Support on the Start menu which will take you to the right location. When ready to install, turn off all running programs as usual, and use the System restore feature to take a snapshot of the system in case anything goes wrong. Add or Remove Software is the other approach to adding new stuff.

Incidentally, there are scads of programs available on the Windows CD which are not automatically installed. You can check the list of everything available from the Control Panel, and install anything else that you think you might need. Incidentally, 16-bit programs and DOS programs can also be run under XP.

Chapter 7 gives information about "bonus" software that comes with XP. These extra programs are divided into three categories- Accessories, Windows XP Games, and Everything Else. The Accessories, in turn, are divided into Accessibility Features, Communications Menu (HyperTerminal, and a shortcut to the Network Connections control panel), Entertainment Menu (primarily multimedia items described in Chapter 8), System Tools Menu, Address Book, Calculator, Command Prompt (DOS window), Notepad, Paint, Program Compatibility Wizard (Use with Win95 or Win98 programs that don't want to run in XP), Scanner and Camera Wizard (see Chapter 8), Synchronize (updates web pages you've "subscribed" to), Tour Windows (for thrills), Windows Explorer, Windows Movie Editor (see Chapter 8), and WordPad.

XP Games includes eleven games. Several of these can even be played against other people on the Internet. The programs included in the Everything Else category are covered elsewhere in the book: Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, Remote Assistance, and Windows Media Player.

Chapter 8 describes the multimedia capabilities of XP- Digital Photos in XP, Windows Media Player, and

Making WAV's with Sound Recorder. XP has all sorts of capabilities built-in without resorting to programs from other sources for handling your digital camera, scanner, playing movies and sound, and even playing radio stations from all over the world. (A "Power Users' Clinic" box on Color Management is given on page 391, in Chapter 13, which will be found useful for users of digital cameras, scanners, etc.)

The book explains the process of downloading photos from your digital camera, printing them, using them on the web or e-mailing them, and editing them. The Windows Media Player can play music CD's, copy CD's to your hard drive, and burn CD's. WMP is also the tool to use for listening to Internet radio. A new feature of XP allows you to play DVD movies on your PC, assuming you have a DVD reader, of course.

Windows Movie Maker can be used to edit your camcorder shots. The book describes how to use the features of WMM.

Chapter 9 explains all the new features in the XP Control Panel. It has been reorganized into categories-

- Appearance and themes
- Network and Internet connections
- Add or Remove programs
- Sounds, speech, and Audio Devices
- Performance and Maintenance
- Printers and other hardware
- User accounts
- Date, time, language, and regional options
- Accessibility options

The book explains the capabilities and usage in each of these categories.

Part 3: Windows Online:

Part 3 contains chapters 10-12- Hooking up to the Internet; Web and chat; and Outlook Express. Chapter 10 informs you how to get ready to hook up, and how to do it. Establishing a new account via dial-up, cable, DSL, etc. are all explained. Modem settings are described, and ways of modifying the settings are discussed. Chapter 11 starts with explaining the use of Internet Explorer 6.0, which of course is the same one most people use with Win98. Some tricks are discussed for faster browsing without graphics, eliminating pop-up windows, turning off animations, and setting various IE6 options. Windows Messenger for chatting with your buddies is also described in this chapter. Using the PC as a telephone and a videophone is also described. Interesting capabilities in XP include the sharing of your programs by the person you are chatting with; and the Whiteboard capability, whereby you can draw or paste into a window, and the contents show up in the chat window of the person you are chatting with.

Chapter 12 describes setting up Outlook Express, sending e-mail, using the address book, reading e-mail, replying and forwarding e-mail, and printing messages. The book also explains attachments, rules you can set up

for messages, and other ways of configuring Outlook Express. The use of newsgroups is also discussed.

Part Four: Plugging In to Windows XP:

This part of the book includes chapters 13-15: Printing, Fonts, and Faxing; Plug and Play (hardware); and PC Health and Troubleshooting. In Chapter 13 the installation of printers to your XP system is described. Also, sending and receiving faxes are described; although the use of faxes seems to me to be on the decline.

Chapter 14 is about hardware and the software drivers that control it. XP does not run all the hardware that Win95 runs. When adding hardware, it is important to check the “Hardware Compatibility List”, or HCL, if there is any doubt about the capability of XP operating with that particular hardware. If your hardware is “plug and play” and WinXP compatible, it should be a piece of cake to install it. The book describes the addition of “adapters” (plug-in cards”), as well as “peripherals”, equipment which connects by means of a cable to a USB port, FireWire port, etc. Steps to take if plug-and-play doesn’t work are described. There are wizards for helping you along the way, if the steps are not obvious. Use of the Device Manager in resolving conflicts, turning components off, updating profiles, etc. are discussed.

Chapter 15 is an important chapter covering maintenance, backups, and troubleshooting. The System Restore feature is described (“the mother of all Undo commands”). Restore points are taken periodically, and if the system stops working it can be rolled back to a point when it was working. When installing new software, for example, it is wise to force a restore point before the installation, so if things go sour, the machine can be rolled back to a recent well-behaved state.

Disk defragmentation, hard drive checkups, and disk management are also discussed. A Microsoft program for backing up your system is included on the XP CD, but is not installed automatically with the rest of the XP software. The book explains how to find it and install it, so that you can create and carry out the running of backup jobs. The book describes Safe mode, Startup mode, and the Registry.

Part 5: Building a Network:

Part Five includes chapters 16-18, the final three chapters of the book. Chapter 18 covers Accounts, Security, and Logging On. The ability to assign a different account, including password, is a strong feature of XP. The ability of a user to use the PC without affecting other potential users is a strong security measure. Each user has his own Desktop, Start Menu, My Documents folder, E-mail, Favorites, Control Panel, etc. The book explains how to set up user accounts, and the powerful Administrator Account. The Administrator Account is the only one allowed to change passwords, create or delete user accounts, install new programs and certain hardware components, change some Control Panel programs, and see any file on the PC. The book explains how to add user

accounts, modify account parameters, set up the log-on procedures, etc.

Chapter 17 explains how to set up a network. Ethernet networks are the most popular (I have one between my laptop and my desktop). Components for an Ethernet network include the cable, network adapters in each PC, and a hub (not required for a two-PC network). Other kinds of networks include a phone line network (works over your normal phone lines in your home), power line network (uses your power lines instead of phone lines), wireless (IEEE 802.11) network, and FireWire (IEEE-1394) network. The latter is the easiest and fastest, if all your PC’s have FireWire capability and you don’t want more than one PC to share an Internet connection. The book tells you how to install all these various types of networks, using the Network Setup Wizard, including sharing an Internet connection.

Chapter 18 tells how to set up your files, folders, printers and other peripherals, Internet connection, etc. for *sharing*. It also tells you how to get on-line when you’re away from home. You can even label PC’s or folders on another PC with a “drive” letter, causing that PC or folder to show up in your My Computer window as a virtual drive. This saves you from going through the Network Neighborhood window to access the PC or folder, etc. This chapter also explains setting up your home PC to serve as a remote desktop while you’re on the road. You can then look at your home PC desktop on your *remote laptop*, and use the stuff on your home PC as if you were actually there. How cool is that?

Part 6: Appendixes:

Appendix A of the book is a very helpful explanation of the XP installation process. You can upgrade; or do a clean install, erasing your drive completely before installation. Hardware requirements, and hardware compatibility are two important things to check before either form of installation. Hardware compatibility can be checked on the Microsoft HCL at www.microsoft.com/hcl. The book tells you how you can download the whole list if you want. Software compatibility is another issue which must be investigated. An Upgrade Advisor built into XP will assist you in the software compatibility investigation. The book describes dual-booting, NTFS or FAT file systems, and using the Setup Wizard. It also describes the very useful Files and Settings Transfer Wizard. With this wizard, you can transfer all your files and settings from your old system to your new system. Very helpful.

Appendix B is a handy list of the menus in the menu bars in XP.

Conclusion:

This is one of the best computer books I have ever read. I found very few typos, and as far as I can tell with my limited knowledge of XP, the information included is accurate. There were a couple of issues brought up on the web site for the book that some people complained about,

including some problems with activation, but there were relatively few concerns with the accuracy of the information. (see www.missingmanuals.com, and check the errata page.) I did have a problem reading some of the screen shots, when the type font was quite small; and some of the highlight boxes have white print on a gray background, which I found hard to read in some cases.

Why Linux?

by J. Joseph Pia

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Every once in a while Windows users are treated to a presentation, discussion or piece in a publication about Linux. At each of these events or in each of the articles Linux users talk about the wonders of Linux and of the community of Linux users.

In a program about Linux at our Society meeting in December 2002, the presenter went about showing all us Windows users what Linux looks like on the screen and how it can do everything Windows can do but do it better. Or without the risk of our machines crashing. In fact the stability of the Linux platform is one of its selling points. Another is that it is not from Microsoft. I'll get to that point later.

Even though Linux is stable, it is also devilishly hard for a relatively naive Windows user to snuggle up to. For example, when the presenter booted up the Linux box, a couple of screens' worth of program lines appeared. The gasp from the Windows users in the audience was barely audible, but it was there.

What the presenter did not point out was that that couple of screens' worth of program lines was only making visible what Windows does each time it boots up. But we Windows users are not permitted to see those lines of program roll up and off our screens. Instead we spend a lot of time staring at the Windows logo and twiddling our thumbs while we wait. To be sure Microsoft has put signs onto the screen to make sure that we know that the machine is alive and booting. But we are not allowed to watch it do so.

The disadvantage inherent in Windows is that we do not have much control over the booting or any other process. We get what the Microsoft programmers give us, and there is no opportunity for us to talk back to them. Nor do we have the same measure of control over the process that Linux gives its users.

Of course, the Microsoft people, in their patronizing manner, tell us this is a benefit. We users, especially those of us elementary level users, cannot screw up the process by responding to lines of program that we don't know much about. Instead, our hands are figuratively tied and held while the guys who know what they are doing provide us with what we need. The undeniable fact is that for many users the Microsoft guys are exactly right. Most of us Windows users don't want to have to make all those decisions, especially when we're not sure what we are being required to decide about.

In other words, with Linux we would have to learn a whole lot more about the inner workings of an operating system than we have so far cared to know. For some users, going down this path brings us lots of opportunities that we've never had before. But those opportunities require more of us.

There is a sense, then, that going with Linux is a next step, one toward more and better control over our computing. Maybe once we get past the intermediate level of working with Windows, we should be ready to spread our wings and try flying on our own. Sounds attractive—up to a point.

When we put this idea in a larger context, maybe we want to think again. Maybe we don't, but let's consider the possibilities. I'm thinking of automobiles and the automatic transmission. Most people who have them swear by them. They place many fewer demands on the driver. All the driver has to do is push on the accelerator pedal and all the good things happen thereafter. Drivers can then focus their attention on where they and their car are going. Or where they would like to go. They don't have to think about how their car works to get them there.

Automatic transmissions, in the minds of the auto manufacturers, are the best thing that has happened to the automobile. They bring freedom to the driver, and the auto repair people don't have to worry with servicing transmissions that the driver might have mined in his or her ignorance.

This argument is similar to what we hear in the gag arguments about books in a library. Books belong on shelves, according to this theory. Readers should not be allowed to take them off shelves because they make a mess of things. Remember Woody Hayes' arguments against the forward pass: Only three things can happen, and two of them are bad. Sounds like that kind of librarians, doesn't it? (We all know that most librarians don't share such goofy ideas.) Also like the people who want to put automatic transmissions in all cars lest the drivers ruin standard shifts out of ignorance or malice.

The people pushing Windows are pushing arguments that are parallel to those against standard transmissions. Is this a sensible way to go? Or should we go with the idea that once we can operate with Windows, we need then to learn how to use Linux?

With Linux we can do a lot of things that Windows would never be able to do, or do as easily or neatly. Obviously, if we are quite satisfied with what we can do with Windows, then maybe we should sit tight and slick with that operating system. On the other hand, if we're tired of machines that quit on us and require rebooting in the middle of something important, then maybe the option is to go with Linux. This from a user who is primarily a writer and an avid user of WordPerfect, period.

The other reason to go with Linux is essentially political. Each Linux user of a desktop machine is a soldier in the fight against the overweening power of Microsoft. Let's say that we believe that many flowers should be allowed or encouraged to bloom, as Mao used to say. Considering Linux as our operating system of choice, then, is one way of getting another flower in bloom. It seems to me that when all is said and done, this is the argument for going with Linux.

I personally find it annoying to have to work with a program that is inherently much more difficult to use than Windows unless one is really into programming. On the other hand, it's nice to know that if we are using Linux Microsoft can't require us to pay for another version of our operating system any time soon. Or that we won't have to pay every couple of years just to keep our operating system going or to buy an update.

It's worth pointing out that this state of affairs and the antagonism toward Microsoft is really all Microsoft's own doing. If the people in the company weren't so patronizing toward us users, they wouldn't lock up their operating system and make sure we users could never get the key. Instead they would work with users to modify Windows or whatever operating system or systems they sell. Modifying them to make sure that users could see how the program works and thus do what they need to do or want to do would be the smart move.

It would be in Microsoft's best interests to help users, even elementary level users, acquire the moxie, if not the expertise, to figure out how to adapt, adopt and otherwise get out of the operating system whatever they want or need to do. That approach would increase the level of program literacy in the universe of users without requiring that everyone become a programmer. But all of us in such circumstances would become much more sophisticated users who would know what our computers could do and how to make them do it. Without tears. Without having to get all that grease and transmission oil on our hands. I think that would be a Good Thing. So, until Microsoft comes around, it seems like Linux, troublesome as it is, is the way to go.

PC Chat

by Don Edrington

Free Spell Checker

All the major word-processing programs have built-in spell-checkers; but WordPad, the no-frills text-editor that comes with Windows, has no such tool. My suggestion? Pick up a free AOL CD at any computer store. Installing the program doesn't mean you need to sign up for the service.

Once installed, the AOL "Write" function lets you compose a document just as you would with any other text-editor. And you don't have to be online to do it.

Type in your text — or copy and paste it in from another source, such as WordPad — and then click the

ABC spell-check icon. AOL's spelling tool is very comprehensive and allows for being fine-tuned to one's own specifications, including the addition of one's own personal dictionary. You can also highlight a word or a phrase for selective spell-checking.

Furthermore, you can opt to begin your document by clicking on File, New, whereupon your workspace will look more like a regular word processing area (i.e. without the "Send To" and "Copy To" boxes displayed). Your creation can be given a filename by clicking on File, Save As and choosing to save it as "plain text" or as an "RTX" (Rich Text Format) document.

If you choose to save it as an RTX/HTML file, you can use all kinds of fancy formatting, such as different font sizes and colors, along with inserting a picture and/or choosing a special background color or image. You can even copy and paste your colorful creation into an outgoing Outlook Express e-mail.

Yes, you can also do this fancy formatting directly into OE, but OE doesn't come with a spell-checker — it uses the one that comes with MSWord/Office. No MS programs, no OE spell-checking!

Alphabetizing a List

All the major word-processors have a built-in "Sort" command. In MSWord go to Table, Sort and follow the prompts. If the text to be sorted is a simple one-column list, the options will just be "Ascending" or "Descending." If you have a multi-column list you'll want to start by creating a Word "Table."

Go to Table, Insert Table and type in the number of rows and columns needed. Normally, it's known how many columns are needed (First Name, Last Name, Address, etc.) but the number of rows is often indeterminate. So just guess at the number — more rows can be easily added at any time.

Once you have the data typed in, click on Table, Sort. You'll be asked which column should be sorted first (often "Last Name" or "Company Name"). Then you'll be asked if any other columns need to be "sub-sorted" relative to the main column. You'll also be asked if the top row should be a "Header" row.

The end result should look very much like a spreadsheet, but without the alpha/numeric headings along the top and left edges.

Speaking of spreadsheets, they are great for sorting. Use columns and rows as described above to enter your data, using Row #1 as a Header Row. When ready to sort, Excel users will go to Data, Sort, while MSWorks spreadsheet users will click on Tools, Sort. You'll then be prompted through the other options.

If you want to sort a list created with the MSWorks word processor, simply copy and paste it into an MSWorks spreadsheet. After it's been sorted, copy and paste it back into the word processor. It's easy. Converting a Foreign Language Webpage into English

Regarding the free online language translation service I recently mentioned, Flo Gates wrote to say she uses it to translate foreign-language Web pages into English. The translation is not 100% perfect, of course, but Flo says it's accurate enough for the genealogy work she does.

More PC tips can be found at www.pcdon.com along with all PC Chats from 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 (not to mention all kinds of free downloadable music, cartoons, and some vintage jokes).



The DealsGuy

by Bob Click

Greater Orlando Computer

Users Group

I've added a user group to the distribution page on my Web site. Blair Jones, editor for "National Capitol Tandy Computer Users Group" said he has been using the column from time to time, but wanted to get it direct instead of reprinting it. You'll find them listed with their information on my Web site. Check them out.

Greetings Folks, Ya'll Soon Have A Virus, If Ya Follow Instructions

Did you receive one of those eCards? I did, and obviously from a name I knew, but when I found I had to download something to view it, I chose to delete it because I didn't want to be bothered. Little did I know that I did myself a favor. I read in Ed Foster's Gripe Line column (InfoWorld) about the eCard, which is, in reality, a virus that goes into your address book and sends itself out to your friends. According to Ed's column though, antivirus companies didn't treat it as a virus at first because you had to read the EULA (End User License Agreement), then a second EULA to install it and actually get the virus. In other words, the virus would be on your machine with "your" permission if you agreed to the EULA, so it was your own problem. The EULA actually states that it will use your Outlook address book to send the "eCard" to your friends. He writes that the AV companies now have information posted about it and admit that it is a virus in reality. What's next! Read those EULAs before simply agreeing just so you can do a quick installation.

By the way, the camera I bought at Comdex stopped working when I was trying to install the downloader and I am trying to get an exchange. It won't even stay on now. Since I didn't have a memory board in it yet, I lost all the pictures I took in LV. I hope things go better when I get my replacement. Trying to get a replacement hasn't been easy. I learn everything the hard way.

Still Good

The Viralock deal is good until Feb. 28. I noticed they sent out a special to user groups, but my deal is better. However, I just heard from one person who had big problems and he said it took two days, with the help of Earthlink Tech support, to get rid of Viralock and get his machine back to normal, so be aware. I hope I hear from someone who had better luck. [<http://www.viralock.com>

/dealsguy]. The SpamNet is a beta right now so it is ongoing for the time being. Download at [<http://www.cloudmark.com>].

Tax Time

I forgot to remind everyone last month about where to obtain free software to do your income tax. If you want to do your own taxes free, go to [<http://www.2ndstorysoftware.com>] and download their free standard version of Tax Act. Many use Tax Act and say it works well, but if you want, they have an upgraded version that you pay for. In fact, last year, my own taxman did my taxes with the professional version of Tax Act. I think I'll try doing them myself this year as they are less complicated now. If my next column asks for somebody to bail me out, you'll know I made a mistake, somehow. Hmm — can you take your laptop to prison, and get your e-mail there? From the DealsGuy Incorporated, er I mean incarcerated — Hmm.

Can't Afford Acrobat?

I realize there have been ways published lately to make up a PDF file free, but there is another solution at low cost. Here is the description sent to me:

“Jaws PDF Creator provides an affordable and reliable means of creating PDF documents and it now generates PDF 1.4 files as its standard. Ideal for corporations, graphic artists, print publishers, Web publishers and government organizations. Jaws PDF Creator is widely used in corporate and other markets, and as the core technology for Internet printing services. Jaws PDF Creator works in two modes. It installs as a printer in the Windows or Macintosh Printing System allowing you to print to a PDF file directly from any application, or it appears as an icon on the desktop enabling drag-and-drop conversion of PostScript, or EPS files, directly to PDF. Jaws PDF Editor enables you to view, edit and save PDF files on computers using Windows NT, Windows 2000 and Windows XP.

“Another product, Jaws PDF Editor, has many viewing and navigation features. You can navigate via bookmarks, the page list, thumbnails, or links. Reviewer/mark up tools include comments, highlight, strike-through, and underline, each with an associated pop-up comment window to add additional information. Search for words or phrases in a PDF. Select text with the text and paragraph-select tools and copy into other applications. Auto-rotate while printing so files containing both portrait and landscape pages print in the correct orientation. Other page manipulation tools include insert, delete, reorder, and extract pages. Jaws PDF Editor can be a companion application to Jaws PDF Creator, or can be used as a standalone application.”

Until February 15, 2003 (perhaps longer), Jaws PDF Creator V2.11 can be purchased at a 75% discount for just \$25.00 (US funds) by calling 1-800-927-9921 or going to [<http://www.insight.com/jaws>]. It is a download (4.8 meg). V2.11 is not the latest version, V3.0 of Jaws PDF Creator is now out and would be available at an additional \$30.00. However the V2.11 does almost as much.

Jaws PDF Editor (the companion software) is also available for just \$25.00 (1/3 off the list price) (3.9 meg download). They are available separately because not everyone needs both products. For more description, visit [<http://www.jawspdf.com>]. You can even sign up for the free on-line WebX tutorials there. They say the advantage of the Jaws product over free ones is the many features and the quality of the PDF. You can also get \$100 off any Jaws PDF server. So far, I have not had the time to try this product. Many of us received it at Comdex.

Sort Of A Swiss Army Knife

For Your Computer

A few columns ago I wrote about Power Desk for your file management needs because several readers recommended it. Paul Witheridge from Sarnia PC UG in Sarnia, Ontario, tells me he much prefers a file management program called Total Commander, formerly Windows Commander. He feels it is superior to them all, so you might want to take a look, although it is shareware, not freeware. It is a Swiss company (hence Paul's Swiss army knife comment) and their ordering procedure is a bit confusing, but I think you'll figure it out. No cost to give it a try and see what you think.

Total Commander, version 5.5, and the features are listed below:

1. Two file windows side by side
2. Multiple language support
3. Enhanced search function
4. Compare files / synchronize directories
5. Quick View panel with bitmap display
6. ZIP, ARJ, LZH, RAR, UC2, TAR, GZ, CAB, ACE archive handling + plugins
7. Built-in FTP client with FXP (server to server) and HTTP proxy support
8. Parallel port link, multi-rename tool
9. New: WinXP support, background transfer manager, TAR+ GZ packer
10. And many more!

If you like it after your trial, the price is \$28.00 American and they take your CC. You'll find the download at [<http://www.ghisler.com>]. I didn't try it, but I would like something better than Windows Explorer. I checked into a deal, but they declined. I'm passing this one on because some others also say it's a good product.

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 I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. Also, I keep adding interesting articles (taken from user group newsletters) to my “Articles of Interest” page for viewing or downloading.

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt
Southeast Virginia Computer Group
Sure It's Past
The Holiday Season,
But What About Easter?

Ever hear about “Easter eggs?” Easter eggs are secrets left by a product’s creators. By pressing a combination of keys, you get a surprise. Perhaps you see pictures of the developers. Or you can play a game such as Spy Hunter, which is hidden within Microsoft Excel. Easter eggs are not limited to software. You’ll also find them in movies, music, art, books and watches. There’s even one in the new BMW M3. You’ll find the steps to uncover over 6,000 Easter eggs at [Eeggs: http://www.eeggs.com](http://www.eeggs.com)

Flaws?

Microsoft flaws could hit music traders— In late December, a security firm warned that people using Windows XP or popular music player WinAmp could fall prey to a vulnerability, enabling a modified music file to take control of a person’s PC.

Flaws in both pieces of software could introduce malicious MP3 or Windows Media files—which sound identical to unmodified music—into the file-swapping systems, said George Kurtz, CEO of Foundstone.

“These particular vulnerabilities are definitely attack vectors for any people or entity that is looking to go after those that are taking part in file-swapping activities,” he said. The music industry and Hollywood are eyeing such hacking tactics as a way to stop file swappers from trading copyrighted music in the future. A bill sponsored by Rep. Howard Berman, D-Calif., and Howard Coble, R-N.C., and introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives in July, would allow copyright owners limited rights to hack into peer-to-peer networks.

Such attacks could take advantage of flaws similar to the two found by Mission Viejo, Calif.-based Foundstone.

The flaw in Windows XP can force the operating system to run code when a music file is played by Windows Explorer, the operating system’s file-browsing application. Even placing the mouse pointer over a file icon—opening a preview of the file—could trigger the file’s payload, if it has one. The vulnerability does not affect the Windows Media Player, according to details posted by Microsoft in its advisory (<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/treeview/?url=/technet/security/bulletin/MS02-072.asp>).

The vulnerability occurs because certain attributes of the files can be loaded with bad data that affect the amount of memory that Microsoft’s Windows allocates for the information. Known as a buffer overflow, such problems are a common software security problem.

People who use NullSoft’s popular WinAmp software also have to watch out, said Foundstone’s Kurtz.

WinAmp has a similar flaw that allows code to run when certain multimedia tags in MP3 and WMA files are loaded with too much data. Kurtz said that the company has notified NullSoft and has a patch prepared. A representative for the software maker couldn’t be reached for comment.

This is the second time in recent months that Microsoft has had a problem with a common multimedia format. In November, the company warned that its operating system’s mishandling of the PNG (portable network graphics) image format could allow a malicious program to compromise a person’s computer. Microsoft later upgraded the severity of that vulnerability to “critical.”

Other multimedia formats are also becoming targets for Internet attacks. Web software maker Macromedia warned last week that a flaw in its Shockwave Flash Player, a popular browser plug-in for animating Web graphics, could leave Internet users open to attack. The patch for Windows XP is available through Microsoft’s Windows Update service. The newest version of NullSoft’s WinAmp is available on the company’s WinAmp site (<http://www.winamp.com/>)

Faster For Free

Want to get more from your megahertz? These slick tips and tools are like a no-cost PC upgrade.

Who says there’s no such thing as a free lunch? Windows is full of settings and utilities that, if properly applied, can boost your system’s performance without costing you a dime. And the Internet is chock-full of free and inexpensive utilities that can help you squeeze out a little more juice from your system.

Of course, I’m not talking about a full-fledged banquet. A budget Celeron-based system with its graphics integrated on the motherboard rather than handled by a separate card will never be able to comfortably run the latest digital death-match games or demanding graphics applications, for example. But if you carefully optimize all the components in your PC, you’ll probably see a noticeable improvement in its performance. Let’s take a look under Windows’ hood to tweak your hard drive, memory settings, CD-R and CD-RW options, monitor, and network connections. You’ll also get a wide-ranging crash course in Drivers 101, and you’ll learn about some great freeware, shareware, and Web-based tools to help make your PC purr.

Refresh Your Memory:

Your PC’s performance drops dramatically when you load and run more apps and data files than your PC has the memory to hold. That’s because when your PC has insufficient RAM (the memory on the motherboard) to accommodate a request to load more code or data, it stores the contents of some of your RAM in a swap file on your much-slower-to-access hard disk, thereby freeing up memory for the new task. When previous tasks need code or data that is now in the swap file, your computer saves

other RAM contents to the swap file (called the paging file in XP/2000) and loads the previously saved data into the newly freed memory. The more times your PC has to save and load swap file data, the slower its performance becomes. That's why increasing the amount of RAM in your system can improve its performance. Memory does, of course, cost money. Here are a few free memory-enhancement alternatives.

Another trick that can speed up virtual memory is to freeze the size of the swap file. By default, Windows shrinks and expands the swap file to suit its needs. By fixing the file's size, you save Windows from this computational hassle. Return to your Virtual Memory settings and enter the same value in the Minimum and Maximum boxes (384MB is recommended for both). If you have a second hard drive, put your swap file on that drive for an additional boost.

To find your virtual memory settings, right-click My Computer, select Properties, and choose the Advanced tab. In Windows 2000, click the Performance Options button under 'Performance'. In XP, click the Settings button under 'Performance', and then select the Performance Options' Advanced tab.

Stop unwanted starts: In Windows XP, Me, and 9x, users can free up memory by removing unwanted applications that automatically launch when Windows starts. To find out just how many of these programs reside on your system, click Start, Run, type msconfig, and press Enter; this will bring up the System Configuration Utility. Click the Startup tab to see a list of all the programs that automatically launch when Windows starts.

To prevent a program from launching at start-up, uncheck the box next to its name. If you're unsure what a particular program does, look at the name of the folder that the file is stored in; this information, which you'll find to the right of the box, usually provides a clue.

Windows 2000 users have some control over start-up apps, too: Select Start, Settings, Taskbar & Start Menu; click the Advanced tab; click the Advanced button; double-click Programs in the Explorer window that subsequently opens; and then open the Startup folder to view, add, or delete shortcuts that run when you start Windows.

Look for leaks: Poorly written software can monopolize your PC's memory even when it's not running. Track down such leaks by checking your memory's behavior via Windows' System Monitor and with FreeMem, a handy memory management utility that's available at http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,8091,00.asp

Spend your cache wisely: Windows allocates small amounts of memory, called caches, as storage buffers for your hard disk, CD-ROM drive, and other storage devices. Reducing the cache allocated to a seldom-used device such as a CD-ROM drive frees memory that may be used more effectively as system RAM. Conversely, increasing the

cache size of a frequently used device can speed that device's performance.

Finding the balance that works best for you is matter of trial and error. To simplify the task, go <http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/filedescription/0,fid,5267,00.asp> to get a copy of Cacheman 5, an excellent utility that consolidates the cache and memory settings Microsoft scatters throughout Windows.

Another good method of minimizing disk clutter is to remove files that you don't need and uninstall old software that you no longer use. Your first choice for handling this task should be the uninstall program that comes with the software. For those programs that lack an uninstall utility, use the Add/Remove Software applet in Control Panel. Deleting old programs any other way may leave unwanted, hard-to-find files or Registry settings that could cause your PC to have trouble later on.

Microsoft's Tweak UI is an indispensable tool for, among other tasks, disabling annoying animations, useless sounds, and other cosmetic Windows features that eat up CPU cycles. Go to http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,2803,00.asp to download the appropriate version of Tweak UI for the version of Windows you use (the link to the XP version of Tweak UI is near the bottom of that page).

Better Burning:

If you can't get your CD-RW and CD-R drives to burn discs at their optimum speed, it usually means that your PC isn't feeding your CD burners a constant stream of data. Here are a few suggestions to rectify that situation.

Crush the competition: Before attempting to burn a CD, you should disable any virus software, screen savers, or other programs that compete for your PC's resources. If your PC is connected to a busy network, try logging off before burning; at least disable File and Print Sharing under Network Properties. To do so in Windows 2000 and XP, right-click My Network Places, choose Properties, select Advanced, Advanced Settings on the menu, and uncheck File and Printer Sharing for Microsoft Networks. In Windows 98 and Me, right-click Network Neighborhood or My Network Places (depending on your version of Windows), and choose Properties. Select the Configuration tab, click File and Print Sharing, and uncheck both options.

Master your domain: Many new CD-RW drives support bus mastering, a technology that creates an express lane for CD-RW-bound data. If you use Windows 2000 or XP and your CD-R/RW drive came with your system, bus mastering is likely enabled on the drive by default. If you use Windows 98 or Me, bus mastering may not be enabled. To find out whether it is, right-click My Computer, select Properties, click the Device Manager tab, double-click your CD-RW drive, and under the Settings tab, confirm that the box labeled DMA is checked; this setting means that bus mastering is enabled.

Buy the right CDs: Some brands of CD-RW and CD-R media work better with specific drives. A CD that records easily at 8X on one CD-RW drive may work at only 4X on another. Check for any recommendations from the manufacturer of your CD-RW drive.

Improve Your View:

With PCs, what you see is what you get. And if what you see is a blurry image or jumpy video, then what you get is a headache. Here are some tips for enhancing your viewing pleasure.

Get the right DirectX files: Short of purchasing a new graphics card, the best way to improve your computer's graphics performance--and all of its multimedia performance, for that matter--is to get the latest DirectX drivers. Head to <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/directx/downloads/drx90.asp> to download them.

Show fewer colors: You can improve your PC's graphics speed by reducing the system's color depth--the number of colors your graphics card can display. Right-click your desktop, click Properties, and choose the Settings tab. Dropping the settings under 'Color quality' from 'True Color (32-bit color)' to 'High Color (16-bit color)' will get you slightly faster graphics with a tolerable drop in image quality. You can get even more graphics speed by going a notch lower to '256 colors (8-bit color)', but the results won't be much to look at--literally.

Re-allocate your memory: If you have a budget system that has graphics integrated on the motherboard--meaning that both graphics and standard computing functions share the main system memory--you may be able to increase graphics performance by dedicating more system memory to graphics functions. Check your CMOS setup program to see whether this is possible on your system. To access the program, enter F1, Esc, Del or whatever key the screen prompts you to hit while your system starts up but before Windows loads.

Touch that dial: Don't be afraid to fiddle with your monitor's settings to find what's most pleasing. Note that a too-bright screen can cause your peepers to tucker out more quickly, however. And be sure to hit the degauss button every now and then; if your monitor has been on for a long time, degaussing can sharpen your image considerably.

Quicker Connections:

Ever get e-mail from vendors offering to double the speed of your Internet access? Be skeptical: These invitations are usually in a class with e-mail messages that promise easy money, hair restoration, or anatomical enlargements. Usually, speeding up your Net access requires moving to a faster technology; however, you may be able to achieve a modest but noticeable improvement by tweaking Windows' modem and network settings.

Tweak like a geek: Buried deep in the Windows Registry are numerous arcane settings that control the way your PC sends and receives data. Most of these settings aren't worth changing. Two of them, how-

ever--the MaxMTU and the Receive Window (RWIN) settings--are worth the effort. Windows' default setting for MaxMTU is 1500--a level that is appropriate for high-speed cable or DSL connections. If you are using a dial-up modem, however, we recommend lowering this value to 576. To find the optimum RWIN settings for your connection and additional technical detail on other network-related Registry settings, consult the Navas Cable Modem/DSL Tuning Guide (<http://cable-dsl.home.att.net/>) and DSLreports' Tweak Tester II (<http://www.dslreports.com/tweaks>)

If you're feeling adventurous, you could use Windows' Registry Editor utility to change your settings manually. But be warned: The manual route can prove to be a time-consuming and dangerous process. A much safer and easier way is to use Hagel Technologies' \$20 TweakMaster, a handy utility that will automatically change MaxMTU, RWIN, and other settings for you.

String up your modem:

You can control your analog modem by modifying its initialization string in Windows. Some modems need a specific string to enable special features and optimize performance. If you've installed the latest version of your modem's driver, you shouldn't have to worry about altering the string--it is added automatically. To check your modem's driver version and initialization string (if any) in Windows 98 and Me, first right-click My Computer, select Properties, and click the Device Manager tab. To get to Device Manager in Windows 2000 and XP, choose the Hardware tab and click Device Manager. Now double-click Modem (98/Me) or Modems (XP/2000), and double-click the entry for your modem. You'll find the version number on the Driver tab of your modem's Properties dialog box, and the initialization string in the Extra Settings box (in Windows 98 and Me) or under the Advanced button on the Connections tab (in Windows XP/2000).

Pump up the pulse:

You can shorten the time it takes to dial your ISP by adding the string `ats11=50` to the Extra Settings box. This shortens the dial tone pulse to 50 milliseconds.

Raise the speed limit:

While you're in the Modem Properties dialog box, check the Maximum Port Speed setting under the Modem tab. Too low a number can inhibit data flowing into your PC and slow your connection speed. If Maximum Port Speed isn't already set to 115200, try increasing it one setting at a time and looking for a change in performance. You can also experiment with the modem's buffer sizes for receiving and transmitting data. To find them, choose the Advanced button on either the Connections tab (in Windows 98 and Me) or the Advanced tab (in Windows 2000 and XP). Start by setting both receiving and transmitting to their maximum value (14 and 16, respectively), and then back them off until you find the optimum settings for your PC.

Web accelerators that work:

A number of Web accelerator services actually do speed up connections. For some information about these utilities, take a look here:

<http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,107372,00.asp>

I Wanna Be Your Clawhammer

AMD's successful Athlon CPU line is in for some big changes in 2003. In its ongoing race with Intel (see News and Trends, page 26), AMD has built a new hot-rod—an entirely new chip called Clawhammer that will replace the Athlon XP in early 2003. Besides the usual improvements—higher clock speeds, better memory access, and faster overall performance—Clawhammer has something extra in store: It's the first 64-bit processor you'll find in desktop PCs. Why does AMD think you need 64 bits? Memory is one reason: A 32-bit CPU can address up to 4GB of memory—more than enough for current desktop PCs. But servers are already pushing past that limit, and AMD is betting that today's 1GB desktops will soon become tomorrow's 4GB systems.

Still, most of the benefits of 32-bit CPUs came after they could run a 32-bit operating system, with drivers and applications to match. Microsoft hasn't announced plans to release a 64-bit OS designed for Clawhammer, so no one knows when that transition will occur. Fortunately, Clawhammer is compatible with existing 32-bit applications.

LCDs Take Center Stage

Look out, big, beige CRT—your days are numbered. According to DisplaySearch's Annual LCD Monitor Strategy Report, last year, for the first time, LCDs topped CRTs in total sales revenue; and LCDs are expected to eclipse CRTs in unit sales in 2004. LCD prices will keep dropping this year: 15-inch units should reach a low price of \$300, while 17-inch models—predicted to be the most popular LCD size—should drop to about \$450. Prices on 19- to 23-inch models will fall as well, but large LCDs will continue to cost more than their smaller siblings. Some LCD manufacturers place the image processor and all other electronics directly on the glass, allowing for sleeker profiles and thinner bezels. More vendors are expected to do likewise with their new models. Most LCDs will continue to have both analog and digital (DVI) interfaces, because many graphics cards don't include DVI-out.

Serving Up Your Home Media

If you have a large MP3 collection on your PC, you know how convenient it is to have all your music in one place. In 2003 a group of devices called home media servers will attempt to bring digital music, photos, and video into your living room. You'll see high-end PCs designed to work with your TV, inexpensive specialized PCs running custom Linux-based operating systems, and consumer-electronics devices that combine personal video recorder functions with a DVD burner. Sorting out the winners

among such a mixed bag of products is going to be tough, however. PCs based on Microsoft's Windows XP Media Center Edition hit the market just in time for the 2002 holidays. HP's Media Center PC was a capable machine, but at \$2,749 it's expensive. InteractTV's \$699 Telly combines a Via C3 processor, a 60GB hard drive, and a custom Linux-based OS in an attractive package for recording TV and playing MP3s.

Society News

President's Message

by Ron Matteson

Volunteers needed—people to serve on an advertising committee; soliciting ads from the various PC shops around town.

I had a bad thought the other day, when I was trying to decide whether or not to switch to Windows XP when I build my new computer on February 28, at our BYOPC Workshop. (BTW, I'm not going to be a leader at this affair, I'm going to be a follower.) I use Windows 98 Second Edition now, and am reasonably happy with it. WinXP does offer some advantages, with a lot of new features built in for handling photos, music, movies, etc., as well as being more robust, supposedly.

The bad thought I had was in connection with the Microsoft "Product Activation" procedure. This has to be done in the first 30 days of installing WinXP, or it stops working. At the time of activation, your system configuration is recorded, and any "major change" later will require re-activation, or WinXP stops working then also. What worries me, is that if Microsoft has the technology built into WinXP to stop it from working if you make major changes, what is to keep them from shutting it down for other reasons? For example, suppose Microsoft comes out with the next version of Windows, Windows YQ? They may decide not to support WinXP any longer, like they have done with Win95, and will do with Win98 in a year or so. They could just shut down WinXP in everybody's' PC's, unless they upgraded to WinYQ.

So is this something we should worry about? I guess it depends on how paranoid we are. Personally, I like to think that I own software that I buy, and can do anything I want to do with it. I guess we have to go along with the rules about buying a copy of software for each computer that it will be used on. However, it seems like I should at least be allowed to have it on one desktop and one laptop, since it is unlikely that both will be in operation at the same time, except to coordinate files, back up one on the other, etc.

Getting back to WinXP, I would recommend a fallback. I will keep my Win98 CD's, so that I could revert to that in necessary. This may not be too helpful if I use all the new capabilities of WinXP, but at least I could get a working system up and running. The other possibility is to prepare for a Linux configuration. Perhaps the installation of a dual-boot system, with WinXP and Linux

on the system, would be a good idea. Then if WinXP stops working, we could use Linux.

Enough of my paranoia. Next month, RCSi member Ralph Squire will give a background talk on desktop publishing, with emphasis on basic typography. Ralph is a retired RIT professor who taught courses and did research in the printing and publishing field.

The Build Your Own PC Workshop, is set for February 28, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM in Room 126 at B&S. Let me know if you are interested in the Workshop (see the box ad in this issue). Keep posted at our web site at <<http://www.rcsi.org/>>, to find out more information about our coming events.

Planning Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2003

by Larilyn E. Bauer, Secretary

The Board of the Rochester Computer Society, Inc. met Tuesday, January 21, 2003 at Sally Springett's home, 335 Wilmot Road, at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were Ron Matteson (President), Steve Staub (Treasurer), Bob Avery (Webmaster), Sally Springett (*Monitor* Editor), Dan Rothfuss (Member at Large), Warren Ganter, Joe Pia, and Larilyn Bauer (Secretary).

Following the President's agenda, we began with old business. Last program meeting, a DSL presentation was well attended. Help's Half Hour rendered many questions and answers in a wide gamut of areas.

Financial status: 4 new members, 2 renewals and we are still solvent.

Bob Avery reported the website and SoundBytes calendar have been updated.

Ron Matteson is in the process of making an application for a donation of a Xerox copier to our club. Ron has received some raffle items, and some cables for the next business meeting. The program will be led by Ralph Squire who will present Typography and Desktop printing. We will meet in the same room as January's meeting.

Future possible programs suggested are Video Card, Hard Drive manufacturers, Norton, PowerQuest, and Investment software, Tablet PC's and Translation software.

February 28 is set for the Building Your Own PC. MarketPro is scheduled for February 23.

A proposal was made to present to the membership at the February business meeting for discussion and voting, the following change in the By-Laws as follows:

III. MEMBERSHIP

B. An Associate Membership in RCS shall be open to anyone willing to abide by the objectives of the organization, whose legal residence is more than 50 miles from Rochester or who is unable to drive at night to attend meetings. Such a person paying the annual associate dues shall be considered an associate member, with no voting privileges.

Also, at the February meeting, a Nominating Committee must be elected to produce a slate of regular members

willing to run for office. The slate will be presented by this committee at the April business meeting and candidates will be nominated. Candidates must accept the nomination and their names will be posted in the *May Monitor*. At the May business meeting, voting will be done by secret ballot. Please keep in mind that there have to be officers for the Rochester Computer Society or we will have to dissolve the corporation.

The annual audit of our financial records will be done next month, after which the proper IRS form(s) will be filed. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

New Users Notes

January 7, 2003

by John McMillan

The opening discussion centered around determining what version of the operating system was installed on a machine. The user's machine came with Windows preloaded but the accompanying manual did not state whether it was 98 or 98SE. The software includes support for Universal Serial Bus 1, which was not included in 98, might have been downloaded at a later date. Right clicking on My Computer and then clicking on properties opens a window naming the operating system and the hardware configuration. As an alternative, opening Windows explorer and clicking the help menu and then clicking About Windows gives a similar window.

In the past, attendees have occasionally questioned the meaning and use of file name suffixes. The web site <http://www.ace.net.nz/tech/TechFileFormat.html> provides a stylized, alphabetic 15 page listing of "Almost Every file format in the world". Not all formats are listed, but the 3 character suffixes with an associated source program are still a great help in determining the source of files.

One user installed a graphics program called AC DC that changed graphics records to type ACDC. Double clicking on a graphic file in Windows Explorer, displayed the file using AC DC until the relationship was inadvertently changed to Paint Shop Pro. To change the association of a single file, single click the file in Windows Explorer, then right click and choose Open With to get a dialogue window that lets you assign a program to open the file on either a one time or permanent basis. To change the relationship for all files of the same type, open Windows Explorer, click the View menu and select Details. After noting the File Type, click FolderOptions, and click the File Types tab. This will show file types in the upper portion of the window with a vertical scroll bar to allow access to the entire list. The extension and program it opens are shown below. Existing relationships can be changed for a selected File Type by using the Edit button or they can be deleted with the remove button. New types can also be added. The Tech File Format listing mentioned above might be helpful for this process.

An E-mail from Smiley Burnett suggested downloading Startup Control Panel from

<http://www.mlin.net/StartupCPL.shtml>. Although tips (contributions) are welcomed, this is a free download of a 59kb program that works with Windows versions from 95 to XP to allow easy configuration of programs that run when your system starts.

Internet users were reminded that in order to maintain performance, it is necessary to routinely delete temporary Internet files. As you browse, these files are accumulated for faster retrieval without returning to the net, but they must be searched. As the number of files builds up, the searching time increases, slowing down the process. Also many sites leave small cookies on your machine, which can take up significant amounts of disk space. File Allocation Table minimums increase as the hard drives get bigger.

A Juno user found that recently the search engine appeared to change to Overture which frequently could not find a hit but that if the same search was conducted in Google the requested site was found. No one else reported the same experience but Bill Statt suggested looking in preferences or tools for a place to change the default search engine.

Recording problems and poor memory combined to prevent reconstituting the remainder of the meeting. If you don't want to miss out, join us at the next session to be held at 6:30, Tuesday February 4th at the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road. Everyone is welcome. Will we see you there?

The Lighter Side

The Song of Failing Disks

Ten little gigabytes, waiting on line
one caught a virus, then there were nine.

Nine little gigabytes, holding just the date,
someone jammed a write protect, then there were eight.

Eight little gigabytes, should have been eleven, then they
cut the budget, now there are seven.

Seven little gigabytes, involved in mathematics stored an
even larger prime, now there are six.

Six little gigabytes, working like a hive,
one died of overwork, now there are five.

Five little gigabytes, trying to add more
plugged in the wrong lead, now there are four.

Four little gigabytes, failing frequently,
one used for spare parts, now there are three.

Three little gigabytes, have too much to do
service man on holiday, now there are two.

Two little gigabytes, badly overrun,
took the work elsewhere, now just need one.

One little gigabyte, systems far too small

shut the whole thing down, now there's none at all.

The Writer

There was once a young man who, in his youth, professed his desire to become a great writer.

When asked to define "great" he said, "I want to write stuff that the whole world will read, stuff that people will react to on a truly emotional level, stuff that will make them scream, cry, and howl in pain and anger!"

He now works for Microsoft, writing error messages.