Outlook Annoyances

by Woody Leonhard, Lee Hudspeth
and T. J. Lee
O'Reilly & Associates (1998)
by Ron Matteson

Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

Outlook is a very sophisticated program. As part of the Microsoft Office suit, it takes care of a lot of the bookkeeping and administration of a small office/home office (SOHO). This book was written about Outlook 98, making it somewhat dated in 2003. However, since I won the book in a raffle at the RCSi Program Meeting a few months ago, I am obligated to do the review. Actually, Outlook has changed somewhat, but many of the comments in the book are still applicable. The Annoyances series of books by O'Reilly does a great service to Office users, alerting us to many potential problems in many of the packages, and enabling us to avoid many of the pitfalls. One example — Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access 98 use a macro language called Visual Basic, for Applications (VBA); Outlook 98, on the other hand, uses VBScript, which is different!

Outlook is considered to be a "desktop information manager" (DIM), not just an e-mail program. It is capable of performing the following functions for the SOHO:

- E-mail handling, filtering, categorizing, Personal Address Book (PAB)
- Contact list of names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- Journal, notes
- Calendar, reminders, recurring activities, to do list

It is easy to confuse Outlook with Outlook Express. Whereas Outlook Express comes free with Internet Express, the Outlook program comes bundled with Microsoft Office. They both do e-mail, but that's where the similarity ends. The address books are not even the same- Outlook uses Personal Address Book (PAB), and Outlook Express uses Windows Address Book (WAB). To add to the confusion, Outlook has the Outlook Contact List, which includes other information about your contacts which you may consider important and is separate from the PAB.

To tell you the truth, I'm not very high on Outlook. When I built my new computer in February, I decided to invest in Office XP, which as I said includes Outlook. I haven't used Office since 1995, when I wrote a textbook for one of my courses at RIT. I haven't really missed it, but since I now had the big bomber PC, I thought it would come in handy. I tried to use Outlook for a couple of weeks, but finally decided I didn't need all the garbage that comes with it, the inability to use my Windows Address Book, etc., and returned to Outlook Express. I really don't need all the bells and whistles that come with Outlook.

A lot of people, however, will find many of the features of Outlook useful, if not essential, for the business world. If you carry a Personal Information Manager (PIM), you will find it very helpful to be able to synchronize your PIM and your DIM (Outlook). This book discusses the trauma of going through the various possible versions of Outlook. It also discusses the problems of passing information back and forth between Outlook and Outlook Express, and between Outlook and your PIM. It's not a pretty picture. There is a wealth of information in the book about how to do these things, and how to get more information about solving these kinds of problems. The book also gives many details about how to run Outlook efficiently, customize it, and even get third-party add-ins to make it run more smoothly.

Since e-mail may be the biggest application for Outlook, many tips are given for setting up the e-mail part to run efficiently, and to avoid pitfalls such as spam and viruses. Rule #1- use plain text (*.txt) for all e-mail. Also, even though Word can be used to read and write e-mail messages, Word can cause additional instabilities, open up opportunities for virus attacks due to its macro capabilities, etc. It's better to stick with the plain text word processor built into Outlook. Using Word is like "swatting a fly with a sledgehammer" as the book's author says, because of its size and range of services.

Outlook 98 had many known problems, and much of the book is devoted to dealing with them. Chapter 3, for example, gives checklists for dealing with seven major problems in just the e-mail portion of Outlook 98. Many of these problems have undoubtedly been taken care of in later versions, so I would definitely buy an edition of this book that applies directly to your version of Outlook. The book was an interesting read, however, just from the standpoint of pointing out all of the things that can be wrong with a

"production" piece of software from Microsoft. Other chapters cover the following:

- Chapter 4- Journal entries
- Chapter 5- Calendar, Contacts, Tasks, and Notes
- Chapter 6- Importing data from other sources
- Chapter 7- Filtering, Categories, Reminders, Recurring Activities
- Chapter 8- VBScript
- Chapter 9- Where and how to get more help

The book is well-done, and has an amazing amount of information in it. I would surely want the Outlook XP version of the book, if I felt I needed or could use all of the capabilities of Outlook. However, I have abandoned it — it's too much for me.

Review

Quicken 2003 Deluxe

A Tale of Two Transitions

by Charles Grover
Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

I have used Quicken to keep track of family finances since an early MS-DOS version. I updated several times in the 1990"s, but until recently my last update had been Quicken 98 for Windows. I found a whole new look in Quicken 2003.

Quicken 2003 makes very good use of larger monitors. I keep my nominally 17 inch CRT monitor at 1024 x 768 pixels. (The screen actually measures about 15.7 inches diagonally). Into that, in addition to the register for a checkbook or other account, Quicken nicely fits a list of different kinds of account, a reminder display of upcoming scheduled bills and transactions, and tool and menu bars. Individual preferences can be set.

Each time I upgraded Quicken for Windows the conversion of my previous file of accounts was effortless and smooth. I give Intuit high marks for making the upgrade path easy. Quicken Deluxe offers many more features than the Quicken 98 Basic I had been using. I confess I have used or explored only a few of the Deluxe features, but found no problems. Many of the steps and features I do use, however, have been honed and polished. Prompts for setting up new accounts, choices for colors, and clever prompts for scheduling repeating transactions are some of the improved features I have come to appreciate.

The method for specifying the content of reports seemed to me to have changed a lot. This is a very subjective response on my part, but it is here that my re-learning curve presented some difficulty. But as I got used to the new system I had no problem churning out the annual reports I use for doing my income tax returns. Of course, if you use Intuit"s tax program, data feeds in directly.

My update was overdue. I am glad I updated. After two or three months everything I do with Quicken was going better. Maybe there is a moral here — don't wait five years to upgrade if you want to avoid big leaps.

An addendum: After having gotten used to Quicken 2003 for Windows I undertook to learn Quicken 2003 for Macintosh, including moving my large data file. My file contains about three dozen accounts, some of which are now closed. It dates back almost 12 years.

Some things I learned: the conversion process for a data file from Quicken for Windows to Quicken for Macintosh is not a simple straight-forward one as it is in upgrading from an earlier to a later Windows version. However, I got the help I needed from the Intuit web site. The Macintosh version seems to me more primitive –– or less developed –– than the Windows version. It lack some features or elements of features and provides less user control. However, it takes even better advantage of a large display. The smallest current Macintosh display for a desktop unit measures an actual 17 inches diagonally and I comfortably use it in 1280 x 1024 resolution. And it is a flat panel display –– no flicker. Quicken for Macintosh makes it easy to have registers for several accounts open and visible at once. Lists, registers, etc., open in their own windows and can be slid around and resized for great convenience.

I would like to see Intuit make the transition from Windows to Macintosh or vice versa easier. I would like to see Intuit make both versions equally rich in features. Nevertheless, after the learning curves and transitions, I am well pleased with Quicken on either platform, and happily continue to rely on it.

Novatix Send Photos

by David Thompson
Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

Price: $29.95
System Req: Win 98+
20 MB free Disk Space, 32 MB RAM
IE 5.0 or greater

User Interface — mimics standard Windows interface with an expanded view of My Pictures folder on the left and thumbnails of the selected photo file. However, if you keep pictures somewhere else, You can navigate there via my computer at the bottom of the screen.

Problems

Send Pictures works by creating an HTML e-mail (the default configuration for Outlook and Outlook express) However, not everyone has an e-mail client that accepts embedded HTML, nor does every PC user retain the default configuration. I don't, because much of my mail traffic is directed to e-mail lists that frown on HTML "baggage" and forbid attachments. If the recipient can't accept HTML, he will get an e-mail with disconnected text captions in the body plus attachments for each photo, the HTML tag and a SendPhotos logo. Similarly, if you don't configure your e-mail to send HTML, what you see is NOT what your addressee will get. HTML has to be enabled at both ends of the chain.

The Help pages state that the by default, the photo will be full size, but that isn't correct. The default format send photos about 280 x 220 pixels whilst the largest available format is about 680 x 520.

Features

Sendphotos can be integrated with Outlook Express or Outlook so that the sendphotos preparation tool appears on the e-mail message toolbar — very convenient.

If the user doesn't use Outlook or Outlook Express, Sendphotos provides their own E-mail client that enables embedded HTML.

A "Recent photos" icon triggers a routine to search for the most recent photos on the computer. At first glance, very handy if you've just down loaded your camera's photos and want to fire off an e-mail. However, it searches the entire C drive, including all the temporary Internet files — quite a lengthy process. The search would go much faster if the recent photos routine were restricted to the "My Photos" folder, which is where the MS wizard deposits camera downloads by default.

The ability to type in a caption to accompany a photo is a delight, It's kept simple by restricting text to just one font (Arial black). But it's possible to arrange text position relative to the photo(s), either to the side or beneath.

Similarly, dragging the mouse across the "Message" cue and replacing with your own text will accomplish adding a message header in the e-mail. Font is the same as the captions.

It's not something I use, but Sendphoto includes a step to add a clip art background to the e-mail. It's cute, I suppose, but it adds dubious content and more bandwidth to an already large file by virtue of the jpeg content. Your friend with the telephone modem is probably more interested in your photos and message than the clipart that adds to the download time.

Summary

Positives

- Simple and trouble free install
- Intuitive interface that's easy to learn and simple to use
- Automatic re-sizing (four size options ranging from 280 x 220 to 680 x 520 pixels.

Image rotation available if you need it.

Cautions

- Not every mail client accepts HTML e-mail. Be sure your addressee does.
- On the other hand, AOL limits attachments to 1 per e-mail, but allows embedded HTML up to 1+ MB! Go figure.

If the format is kept simple, the HTML "baggage" is about 4 KB — pretty reasonable. But beware the fancy wallpaper clip art which could easily add 20 KB to an already big message.

Would I buy? No, except that with this package, my wife who only accesses the Internet and e-mail can now re-size and mail her pictures, complete with captions, without my assistance. That makes it worth $29.95.

Urban Legends and Hoaxes
Making the Rounds

by Ira Wilsker
Golden Triangle PC Club

On one recent weekend alone, I received almost two dozen e-mails from area residents asking me to forward information to my address book, write about it in this column, or

announce the contents on my radio shows. The problem was that all of these urgent messages, many of them duplicates sent by different people, were all hoaxes and urban legends. While the intent of the senders was obviously good, some of these e-mails could actually lead to economic harm as innocent businesses are boycotted, commercial e-mail boxes flooded, and reputations ruined.

According to several of the major hoax tracking sites, the number one hoax currently being circulated is calling for a boycott of Shell, Chevron, Texaco, and Exxon-Mobil stations, since these oil companies are funding terrorists. The same e-mail also asks drivers to only purchase gasoline from several other companies listed, since they do not support terrorism by only refining and selling oil from non-mideastern sources. This misinformation could unfairly hurt local businesses and employees, has been totally debunked, and is grossly inaccurate, yet I am still receiving several copies of this hoax on a daily basis.

Some of the other recent appeals I have received claim that Cindy Williams, of Laverne and Shirley fame, wrote an op-ed editorial in a Washington, D.C., newspaper asking congress not to give the U.S. military much needed pay raises. Another is calling for a boycott of all Pepsi products because Pepsi refused to include "One nation under God" on its patriotic labeled beverage cans. Others are appeals for missing children that are either totally fictitious, or not missing, or soliciting business cards, baseball caps, teddy bears, or other gifts for a child recovering from cancer. Once again, I am receiving hoaxes that allege that by forwarding e-mails to my friends, an e-mail tracking program (there is no such thing), will automatically send me thousands of dollars in cash, gift certificates to Red Lobster, Old Navy, Outback, Olive Garden, and other local businesses. Some even claim that something magical in the e-mail itself will open a popup window as soon as I send 10 copies of the e-mail to my friends, providing printable high-value coupons. Some even include a fictitious statement from a non- existent lawyer or CPA that this is real, not a hoax, and really works. Let me assure you here and now that Bill Gates, Intel, AOL, and others are not paying individuals to forward e-mails to friends promoting a new product.

Several of the urban legends are actually humorous. One recent one includes several realistic looking images of Japanese women wearing a new fashion, supposedly opaque skirts with a printed image making them appear to be "see through". This has been proven to be a hoax.

There are also hoaxes circulating that may unnecessarily invoke fear in the recipient, and may also unjustly hurt local businesses. Hoaxes about slashers hiding under cars at the mall, thieves knocking out victims at major department stores by having them smell perfume samples, little girls abducted at a local discount store and then having their hair cut and being dressed in little boy's clothes, and other similar stories often cause undue alarm in shoppers.

Another sometimes-insidious type of hoax being widely circulated is the "virus warning" hoax. There are also e-mails being circulated telling users to create a dummy entry in their address books, such as "AAAAAA" or "!00000", claiming that this will provide immunity to the Klez worm, Bugbear, Yaha, and other e-mail stealing viruses and worms. Not just does this not work against any of the current crop of viruses and worms (although it could provide some minimal protection against some rare older viruses), it can also give the user a false sense of security. This falsehood can then encourage the user to open questionable e-mails, infecting his computer, and replicating the virus or worm to others. Another possibly damaging hoax warns users that a recent report on CNN and verified by IBM and Microsoft, claims that there is a dangerous virus that will destroy the data on a computer, and that it is undetectable by any anti-virus software, and must be manually deleted by the user before his computer is wiped out. Using "human engineering", the gullible user is then instructed to search his hard drive for the file "jbdgmgr.exe" and immediately delete it. The problem is that this file is a legitimate Windows file, and is often used by Windows; deleting it can lead to problems, and the file must be restored from the Windows CD.

Before forwarding any suspicious e-mails, even if they come from a reliable source, check them out first. There are several excellent websites that document hoaxes and urban legends, and will indicate if they are totally false (most are false), have some grain of truth that has been greatly exaggerated, or are indeed true. My

personal favorite site to check e-mails is urban legends .about .com. At the top of the page is a search box, and by entering a few key words in the box, and searching "in this topic", will usually provide accurate information on these messages. There are several links on this site to other hoax sites. Another excellent site, offering both a menu interface, and a search box is at www.snopes .com. Warnings about viruses can be easily verified at these sites, or on the websites of any of the major antivirus software publishers; all have current listings of virus hoaxes.

Please avoid the well-intentioned forwarding of these hoax and urban legend e-mails. While some of these messages may be harmless, others can cause serious damage.

From the April 2003 issue of the I/O Port Newsletter.

The User Interface
by Ron Fenley
Houston Area League of Computer Users

The user interface is any input/output device and an operating system that enables a user to interact with their computing device, whether it be the desktop, laptop, PDA or other mobile device. Not a lot of thought is given to the present day interface, except perhaps for the operating system, primarily because the hardware devices used today have become somewhat static and have not significantly changed over the last 20 or so years. Let's face it, there really isn't a whole lot that can be done with a keyboard or mouse; there have been some creative configurations and physical geometries that have occurred in the last couple of years that are interesting and may prove to be successful. But research-in-progress may very well change how we interact with our computing devices in the future.

So where is the user interface headed? How can we interact more efficiently and effectively with these devices? What kind of interface can we expect to see in the near future? How will we interact with computing devices in a more distant future?

To understand where the computer interface is headed, it may be beneficial to see where it has come from and to review where it is today. From there we can look at current research and see where the user interface might go in the future.

We all should be glad that we do not have to interface with the earliest computing devices like sliding sticks, abacus, rotary calculator, slide rules and early 4 function electronic calculators to compute an amortization schedule for a loan. However, trying to do the same type of work on the first personal computers like the Kenbak-1 or the Altair 8800 was basically the same. These first machines had a very primitive interface when compared to today's standards. The interface for these devices required the user to know how to convert regular numbers into binary and then input the binary equivalent into the machine with a set of on/off toggle switches for each calculation. The output was primitive as well, displaying the calculated results in a sequence of small lights representing the binary numeric value. There was no need for an operating system because there was no disk drive, no monitor, no keyboard and no saved programs that could be loaded into the device. So the user interface for data input and output of these early computers was you, binary code and the toggle switch.

A couple of years later, in 1977, Apple Computer, Commodore, and Radio Shack introduced mass-market computers. The interface for this next generation of computers had greatly improved over their predecessors, as the user was able to interface with the computer via a keyboard and TV screen. Hence, we see the beginning of the user interface pretty much as we see it today. Although this hardware provided a simpler interface for data input and output, the operating system was still lacking. The user of these systems could only interact with the computer using Basic programming language. A tape storage system came along a little bit later; programs and data could be stored and loaded from tape. Even with the shortcomings, the introduction of the keyboard, TV screen and tape system was a significant step forward for the user input /output interface.

The input/output side of the user interface saw a steady stream of improvements with the introduction of the 5 1/4" floppy disk. The 3 ½" floppy disk, introduced later, had a slightly different format with a significant improvement in data storage capacity. Later came the Zip disks, thereby increasing the capacity almost 100 fold. Currently, systems have almost moved away from the floppy disk media, preferring the higher capacity CD-ROMs and DVDs. Clearly, higher capacity drives have greatly improved the input/output side of the user interface.

With the ability to load larger programs and save higher volumes of data, we entered into the age of the graphical user interface (GUI). Apple first introduced the GUI operating system for public use with its Prodos for the Apple II. The first IBM PCs were loaded with the text-based DOS operating system, but later, they too, entered the GUI arena and would load their computers with Microsoft's Windows. At first, GUI drove the demand for better graphics. So there began a spiral of improved video systems and then better GUI operating system to take advantage of the improved graphics. Thus better displays and GUI operating systems were driving the improvements in the user interface for a few of years.

Although not formally considered part of the user interface, improvement in applications set the stage for the next round of interface improvements. Applications were becoming standardized in their look and feel, but more importantly, data could easily be transported between applications and into the application from external sources. This transport functionality opened up new avenues for data input for the user interface.

One of the best sources for external data is the Internet. Here the user can connect to a public wide area network and download reams of data like stock price histories into a spreadsheet. Or the user can download a program into the computer, install and run the program, and never touch a floppy disk or CD. And the user can even keep the hardware and software completely up to date by downloading updates and yet never leave the house. Entertainment also entered the scene where the user can download music and soon movies. Clearly the Internet provided a wealth of information that can be directly imported into the computer.

Automation provides another frontier for data input into the computer. Currently, several businesses utilize automation to import data directly into the computer and accounting system. A couple of examples would be automation sensors at oil wells, pipelines, refineries keep tally of product and processing operations. Phone lines and satellites help merchants make transactions in real time. Some businesses are now tracking sales and inventory in real time because automation can directly interface with their computer system. As you can see, getting data into the computer has gotten as fast as when the transaction or event occurs.

So how can the human interactivity achieve these levels of performance? One step in this direction would be full development and implementation of a voice recognition system. There are programs that have been available for years, but they have been limited in one fashion or other. If anyone has looked at a voice wave pattern, then they would know that voice recognition is a very difficult science. However, with increased processing power and continued research, these limitations should be overcome in the near future.

Parallel in the development of voice recognition and computer control will be developments in AI and 3D Graphics. As graphics continue to advance and processing power becomes cheaper, we will see broader utilization of Avatars, the graphical representation of a human. These systems will demonstrate self learning, adaptive and predictive responsive behaviors to the user's needs. These types of interfaces will reduce the effort the user spends in interacting with the computer. Currently there are a limited number of Avatars in service, but that number is expected to grow.

There is going to come a time when the hand movements in typing or mouse movements are going to be too slow, and the users are going to be looking for faster way to interact with their computers. Voice recognition will bridge the gap for a while, but even speech will have inadequate speed. An area that will pick up where voice recognition stops is the eye tracking system. Eye movements are very quick and these systems will track the eye movements and perform the desired function at a much greater speed than any previous interface system. A Google search indicates that Europe has done a lot of research in this area and we may see commercial hardware in the near future. The following link takes you to a BBC article addressing this subject news.bbc.co .uk/1/hi/sci/tech /2098030.stm. And more information can be found by performing an advanced Go-ogle search using the specific keyword "Eye Tracking".

The advance-ments in technology always yield interesting products never before contemplated. For example — the current research in human organ supplements has computer interface ramification in the more distant future.

Presently, medical scientists and doctors are routinely performing cochlear ear implants. www.acs.ohio-state.edu /researchnews /archive /midear1 .htm. With continued miniaturization of analog and digital circuits, it is not hard to believe that we could interface the audio directly to the implant. And with ID chip technology (www .wired.com/news/privacy/0,1848 ,50187 ,00 .html) we could discreetly receive specific information programmed just for the user.

There are other implant programs underway. One of the more promising is the retina eye implant. Here doctors place a photosensitive silicon chip on the damaged part of the retina. Although it is in the early stages of development, patients who have received the implant are able to distinguish objects that they could not see before. With continued research and development this technology could be adapted to a user interface in the distant future. For more information, the following link is a brief but objective review of the retina implant research. www.cheme .cornell .edu/~saltzman/Classes/ENGRI_120/Research_Papers /paper15 .PDF

The last interface to be described sounds a bit like science fiction. But then 25 years ago voice recognition would have seemed like science fiction if you were entering data into your Altair 8800 by flipping the on/off toggle switches. So keeping an open perspective is always helpful. The fastest possible interface to a computer would be a brain implant. Sounds bizarre. but researchers have implanted hundreds of miniature electrodes on the surface of the brain of a monkey. And with a little training, the monkey was able to control the actions of a robot simply by thinking about it. Can you imagine the ramifications if humans had this ability to interface with their computer with just their mind? The first link is an article that describes the research and test subject. www.sciam.com/article .cfm?articleID=00065FEA-DAEA-1D80-90FB809EC5880000& catID=2. The second link is to the ABC news report on brain implants and computer control. abcnews.go.com/sections /scitech/DailyNews/mindcontrol020313.html With the convergence of various technologies, we are starting to see an evolution in various user interface systems. A point mentioned in "The Future of the Microprocessor" article in the February 2003 issue of *HAL PC Magazine* indicated that in the next 20 years, it is very proba-

ble that a single processor would have the computational power of a human brain. It should not be hard to believe that as the advancement of technology quickens. we can expect the flow of information to overwhelm the human brain. Philosophers have debated what mankind can do to keep up, and many have suggested human augmentation. So today we may be switching the on/off toggle switches of our computer when compared to what the computer interface may look like in the future.

From the March 2003 issue of HAL PC Maga-zine*, the newsletter of the Houston Area League of Computer Users. All 'Baby Steps to our Future' articles are archived at www .hal-pc.org/~seeker /future. Ron worked as an engineer/analyst and retired in 1999. Ron can be reached at future @hal-pc.org.*

Farewell to the Floppy?

by Dennis Stacy
Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Did the dad thing today. Picked up the kid after school. Took him to McDonald's. Got the usual. Kid's Cheeseburger Happy Meal, no onions, Red Flash. "Will that be for a boy or girl?" the attendant asked. "Boy," I said.

Pulled up to the first window, paid, pulled up to the second window and got the food, which I handed to the kid in the back seat. The smell of French fries hung in the air between us. "What kind of toy are they giving away these days?" I asked. I heard the rustle of paper and then a long pause. "Dunno," the kid said, "here."

I reached back for it and brought it into view. And there, inside a sealed, plastic bag — was a shiny 3.5" floppy drive.

Well, it hasn't quite come to that, but it may be just around the bend. In early February, Dell Computer Corp. announced that it would discontinue the venerable floppy drive in its Dimension line of consumer desktop PCs, unless the customer specifically orders one. Apple first pulled the plug on the floppy back in August of 1998, with the introduction of the iMac.

It shouldn't be missed over here in the Wintel world, either. With its meager 1.44MB capacity, it's long been an anachronism in an exploding era of ever larger files. Much like buying a new SUV only to find an old-fashioned engine crank under the front seat. Back in the old days, Mac programmers could cram an entire program onto a single floppy, ditto AOL coders. Nowadays,

you'd be lucky to fit a day's worth of spam onto one.

In any event, it's been a remarkable run for what really isn't a floppy disk at all. "Floppy" was the description originally applied to its predecessors, the removable 8 and 5.25" recordable disks. All three formats were similar in that the read /write medium consisted of a disk of mylar coated with a magnetic oxide. But the bigger disks were sheathed in a thin, flexible plastic cover that gave rise to the name "floppy." "Flimsy" would have been equally descriptive, but might have scared off customers. Although the smaller sibling came in a thicker, rigid case, the floppy soubriquet stuck.

Sony seems to have come up with the non-floppy floppy first, in or around 1980, but best as I can determine it was another three, four, or maybe even five years before the 3.5" drive and disk became commonplace on computers. In May of 1983, Sony introduced an improved double-sided, double- density version of same, capable of holding up to a megabyte of data, later increased to the 1.44 MB we all know so well.

Along came the fixed hard and compact disk drives, and still the floppy refused to fold. For one thing, it was portable whereas the other two media weren't — or at least not then. The next floppy killer was supposed to be Iomega's Zip drive, introduced in late 1994 in 25 and 100 MB capacities. Vampire-like, the venerable floppy hung on. Even with the more recent advent of portable hard drives, rewritable CDs, and recordable DVDs, the now ancient floppy persists in sticking around, for reasons no one can readily discern.

Sure, you can stick it in a shirt pocket. Trouble is, you can't stick much on it to begin with, not in this age of massive music and video clips.

Despite their decision to try to phase it out, even Dell seems perplexed by the floppy's persistency. While their research reveals that nine out of ten customers want one, few admit to actually using them. And Hewlett-Packard, last year's No. 1 PC seller, plans to continue bundling the little floppy who could and did survive this long, despite Dell's pronouncement.

Both vendors would like to see consumers move onto something else more modern, such as the latest floppy-killer candidate, USB flash memory drives. The latter are PC and Mac compatible, and small enough to double, in some cases, as key chains. Plug them into a USB port in your laptop or desktop machine and they simply show up as another drive. Unlike floppies, and even CDs, they're immune to nicks, scratches and the usual wear and tear associated with a high-speed, revolving medium, and the drives themselves have no moving parts to fail. Plus, try plugging a floppy or CD drive into a digital camera.

The downside to the consumer, if there is one, is that prices aren't likely to plummet anytime soon, although you'll get increasing amounts of storage for the same buck. The low end of USB flash drives has already migrated from 8 MB to 16 MB, while the upper end now extends to a gigabyte.

Sales of the USB drives last year totaled 2.3 million units and brought in $104 million in income. Conservative estimates see sales of 46.3 million units worth $3.8 billion by the year 2006.

The floppy has had an unusually successful run, but it's time to say farewell and move onward. The future of storage is smaller and faster.

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Spring Cleaning for Dummies

by Dennis Stacy
Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Who wouldn't buy a book with a title like that, especially if it had the word "Computer" in front of it?

We all know the drill by now. Back up your hard drive, clean out your browser cache, and offload your data files to Zip disks or CDs. Shake out the sheets. Throw open the doors and windows, in other words, and let some fresh air in.

Well, as a Paid Professional Procrastinator or PPP, I'm here to tell you that it ain't necessarily that easy. My own lethargy and inertia no doubt add to my lackadaisicalness, but I'm not sure that Windows XP is all that much help, either.

Admittedly, I'm a relative newcomer to the new OS, having just burned my first CD in same, but if there's a Spring Cleanup icon on the task bar, I must have missed it.

The problem is, your hard drive is like a house: it doesn't get any bigger unless you add on. The only other alternative in the search for free space is to throw out. Fortunately, the analogy ends here. When you stick household items on the curb, they're gone for good. But with a computer you can endlessly shovel off stuff to

various storage media — if you can just figure out how.

The Windows XP Recycle Bin, for example, I know I need to flush. Before I do, though, just out of curiosity, I'd like to know how many kilobytes or megabytes of space are in there. How much real estate am I actually freeing up, in other words? If there's a way to ascertain that under XP, I couldn't find it, except roundaboutly by checking the Properties of my hard drive. After emptying my Recycle Bin and rechecking the hard drive Properties, the latter showed that .6GB of space had been freed up. A start, if nothing else.

Another place where dustballs had accumulated was the My Pictures folder. Here I was able to acquire some file information. Properties showed me that my pictures occupied only 335 MB of space, much less than I'd assumed, but enough to burn to CD anyway. Before I finally found the file size under Properties, I foolishly tried to copy my pictures folder to a 250 MB Zip disk. Fortunately, XP handled the problem with unexpected aplomb. It first informed me that the disk I was copying to didn't enough have enough space. I thought this might result in a major hang up, but I was easily able to end the copying process, delete the files that had been transferred to the Zip, and then resume copying the folder to a fresh CD.

Seriously, with its ability to move and copy files and folders via Drag and Drop, XP is as easy to use as Apple's new OS X. Once you've copied your files or folders to a new destination, you can free up the actual space either by clicking on Select All, or by using the mouse cursor to select the files you want to delete. Before doing that, it would be prudent, of course, to check the CD or Zip just to make sure the files you've transferred "work," that is, that they can actually be accessed.

The next thing I want to do is to go into Outlook Express and eliminate some of the growing weeds there. I haven't actually broken out the hoe and rake yet, but I'm assuming I can make copies of my Inbox (1788 items) and Deleted Items (2124), as described above, and then flush the files in those folders.

Another place to look for possible free space is in your computer's Programs folder. Most systems ship today with all sorts of stuff pre-installed that you may never or rarely use. My Toshiba Satellite, for example, came with a Lotus Suite that I never crack open, and America On Line 7.0, which I don't need. Use the XP Remove Program option, or, if you're particularly paranoid, copy the programs you want to remove to a CD first.

Finally, label all those new Zip drives or CDs you've just created. You'll be surprised how fast they stack up like the floppies of old. Then, when spring cleaning rolls around next year, assuming you have a DVD burner by then, you can start putting them all on DVDs.

Some things never end, whatever the season.

Reprinted from the April 2003 issue of PC Alamode*, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization, inc. Dennis Stacy is a free- lance writer living in San Antonio.*

Media Notes
by Bill Petitt
Southeast Virginia Computer Group

Holes found in RealPlayer, QuickTime

Just as streaming video and audio are hitting the mainstream, researchers have sounded the alarm about serious security holes in two popular digital media players.

The vulnerabilities have cropped up in RealNetworks' RealPlayer and Apple Computer's QuickTime. While unrelated, the weak spots could allow an intruder to execute damaging arbitrary code on a victim's computer. Security experts are increasingly concerned about hackers exploiting digital media players, which are designed to accept Web addresses and scripts--a key route for self-propagating, hostile code.

The current vulnerabilities come at a time when streaming content has gained momentum, providing news and entertainment to a growing number of people accessing the Internet via broadband connections.

RealNetworks has issued an advisory, (http://service.real.com/help/faq/security/securityupdate_march2003.html?tag=nl) warning that by creating a specifically corrupted Portable Network Graphics file, an attacker could cause "heap corruption." Doing so would allow the attacker to execute code on the victim's machine. The vulnerable software uses an older data-compression library within the RealPix component of the player, leaving the system vulnerable. The company said it has fixed the vulnerability by using an updated version of the

data-compression library. RealNetworks said it had not received any reports of anyone's computer actually being attacked via this exploit.

The vulnerability affected the following popular versions of its digital media players: RealOne Player, RealOne Player v2 for Windows, RealPlayer 8 for Windows, RealPlayer 8 for Mac OS 9, RealOne Player for Mac OS X, RealOne Enterprise Desktop Manager and RealOne Enterprise Desktop. The Helix DNA Client was not affected, RealNetworks noted.

Meanwhile, security firm iDefense warned this week that it has discovered an exploitable buffer overflow vulnerability in Apple's Quick-Time Player that could affect computers with Microsoft's Windows but not those with Apple's Macintosh OS.

Buffer overflows occur when an application is flooded with information and as a result cannot handle memory correctly. By causing a buffer overflow, attackers can insert their own code into the execution of the application.

In this case, a URL containing 400 characters will overrun the allocated space on the system, allowing the attacker to assume control of the system, iDefense said. All the attacker needs to do is to convince a Web surfer to click on a specially crafted URL.

iDefense said that QuickTime Player versions 5.x and 6.0 for Windows are vulnerable. The workaround suggested by iDefense is to remove the QuickTime handler from the Web browser or remove the registry key (HKEY_CLASSES_ ROOT /quicktime).

Another option is to download Apple's Quick-Time 6.1, (http://www.apple.com/quicktime /download/?tag=nl), which addresses this vulnerability, according to iDefense. Apple was not immediately available for comment.

DVD Copying: the Good, the Bad, the Rip-offs
DVD copying is a murky, controversial, and highly sought-after process.

No doubt you've been flooded in the past year with e-mail and advertisements touting a "remarkable" piece of software that backs up commercial DVD movies to CD or even to another DVD. Curious? DVD copying is a tricky but intriguing process; let's see if I can break it down.

First, consider the murky legal issues. The right to create copies of the media you've purchased for personal use is a long-accepted facet of the "fair use" doctrine in U.S. copyright laws — at least, it used to be. However, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) says it's illegal to break the copy protection employed by the vast majority of commercial DVD movies. What does that mean? Most fair-use advocates say that the policy directly contradicts U.S. copyright laws, but for now, it does seem to indicate that you cannot make a copy of a DVD, even for personal use, and you certainly cannot give a copied DVD to anyone or watch copied DVD files on your computer. I assume that fair use will eventually catch up and be established as a safety valve for consumers (which has been the pattern with previous technologies, such as VCR), but for now, the territory is undefined and a bit dangerous.

Nevertheless, commercial products aimed at DVD copying continue to appear. If you're willing to brave the DMCA, two of the most heavily promoted DVD-copying packages are 321 Studios' $49.99 DVD Copy Plus, and Internet Enterprises' $39.99 Replicant. Both work as advertised, but here's the catch: the DVD-copying portions of both packages consist solely of instructions and minor extra software slapped on top of free, public- domain software. Both apps use, primarily, a program called SmartRipper to rip movie files from DVD and DVDx for transcoding and squashing them for video CD. You can download both programs and use them to do exactly what DVD Copy Plus and Replicant do — for free.

Overall, I recommend a healthy dose of skepticism when dealing with any commercial DVD-to-CD backup package. In addition to DVD Copy Plus and Replicant, programs called DVD-Squeeze 3.0 and DVDCopyOne (the latter's Web site and offerings look suspiciously similar to Replicant's) reveal the same basic setup: public-domain software repackaged with some essentially useless instructions, selling for $39 and $49.99, respectively. Since these free programs all circumvent the copyright protection on DVDs, they arguably violate the DMCA.

I did, however, find one program, DVD X Copy, also from 321 Studios, that does not appear to rely on public-domain software. (And 321 Studios was the only company that responded to e-mail requesting more information on its products.) Because DVD X Copy preserves the copyright protection on DVDs, it appears to comply at least with the letter of the DMCA.

Something about Windows Xp
You May Not Know

As you know by now, Windows XP moves things around in the "adaptive" part of the Start menu — the box in the lower left corner — depending on how frequently you run a program.

If you start Word five times a day, sooner or later it'll float to the top of the most-recently-used programs list, there in the lower left corner.

Microsoft jimmies the numbers a bit ("salts" the list, if you will) because Windows Media Player and Windows Movie Maker stay on the list for a long time, even if you never run them.

But after a while, the programs you use most often appear automatically, and gradually float to the top of the most-recently-used list.

When you install Windows XP Service Pack 1, the top spot on the most-recently- used list goes to Set Program Access and Defaults, Microsoft's dialog box that makes it easy to hide Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, Windows Media Player, Windows Messenger, and/or Microsoft's Java Virtual Machine.

Many erroneous magazine articles that should know better called this "removing" IE, OE, WMP, WM, and/or JVM. Not True. The Set Program Access and Defaults dialog box doesn't remove anything; it only partially hides the main parts of the user interface of the programs. Nothing goes away, aside from a few menu entries.

The dialog box itself isn't very useful. In many cases, it doesn't even work — you can disable IE, say, but you can't enable a competing browser from the dialog, until the competitors decide to march to Microsoft's drum. You don't need the dialog box. If you install a competing product — say, Opera, Mozilla, Eudora, ICQ or Real Media — the new program will ask if you want it to become your default program for Internet access, email, media or messaging. Click Yes and you'll never need the Set Program Access and Defaults dialog. Microsoft only built the dialog to be able to point at it in court. "See, we give you the ability to disable Internet Explorer, right here!"

In addition to being positioned at the top of the most-recently-used list on the Start menu in Service Pack 1, Set Program Access and Defaults is also "pinned" to the top of the Start|All Programs menu. So anyone running a WinXP SP-1 machine will be able to get at it by clicking Start and looking at the "adaptive" menu in the lower-left corner, until it falls off that menu. They can always get at it by clicking Start|All Programs and looking up at the top, where the other pinned All Programs live. (You can also get to it by clicking Start|Control Panel|Add or Remove Programs, but you get the idea.)

Reuters reports that Microsoft has succumbed to arm-twisting from our own U.S. Department of Justice, and has decided to feature the nearly- useless icon "more prominently" on the Start menu itself. I've read a dozen or so variations of the story, and none of them say specifically where the icon will go, but chances are good it'll be pinned to the Start menu, in the upper left corner. Hey, that's a great way to use the most precious screen real estate in Windows XP.

All of this would fall to the bottom of my "incredibly stupid stuff" bin, "stupid user interface decision made by lawyers" pocket, if it weren't for one fact: Microsoft appears to be getting much closer to releasing Windows XP Service Pack 2. How else can you explain such a lame announcement?

Insiders tell me WinXP Service Pack 2 is ready to go into beta late this month - early next month at the latest - but everybody is waiting to hear what Judge Niemeyer has to say about the last Java ruling, a temporary injunction which required Microsoft to put Sun's Java into Windows XP.

I haven't heard any rumors about major changes for SP2, but the Windows team can play things pretty close to the chest. Stay tuned.

Let's wind up this issue with a reminder: prices are slowly declining for all of the major components of a PC. Memory, CPU, hard drives, even flat panel LCD's are getting more affordable. If a new PC is in your future, time is on your side.

Reprinted from the May 2003 issue of The Umbrella Online.

What's Safe to Remove
from Windows Startup?

This url displays a flagged list for disabling programs to enhance performance. http://www.pacs-portal.co.uk /startup_ index .htm The recommendations: entries highlighted with an '!' should be left active, those highlighted with a '?' should be disabled at your

discretion, and those marked with an 'X' can be disabled safely." All applications installed using the default installation procedure start when Windows starts. Too many of these programs running in the background may slow other programs down sufficiently to be unusable. Since all programs use a portion of the system memory and resources, this leaves a smaller percentage that can be used for other programs once they're opened.

PDF Files

Adobe has a great market share with it's .pdf files. In order to create the files one needs the Acrobat software at $250.00. New lower cost programs are now available. Both RoboPDF and PDF995 were faster than Acrobat, particularly with the large photo file. All three produced files of different sizes from the same document. None was consistently more efficient.

PDF995 is the least expensive and offers more features than RoboPDF, but its use of three separate modules — the editor and security program work only on existing files — made it awkward for anything but straight PDF creation.

The bottom line is that both of these inexpensive programs create basic PDF files without much fuss or expense. If you'd like to distribute portable electronic documents, either is worth a try. You'll find them at www.robopdf.com and www.pdf995 .com

YAHOO Search Engine a Great Addition

Yahoo seems determined to out-Google Google. Check out www.search.yahoo .com, Yahoo.com's new, turbocharged search engine. It weds Yahoo's storied, human-generated Web directories with Google's own globally revered searches.

–The Umbrella Online

From The DealsGuy

by Bob Click
*Greater Orlando
Computer Users Group*

Thanks for your messages about my income tax problems. At my reader's suggestions and my own curiosity, I returned to the AARP volunteers to see what was wrong. Since I took the printout of my TaxAct version, they quickly compared the numbers and found that the one prepared by their person was incorrect. She had miscalculated the ratio of income to Social Security received and we actually did have to pay on some of our SS income. I was glad to know I had made the right decision. Anybody can make a mistake and I'm just glad I checked it all out before I sent it in.

I've had great response from my doctor item. Two of them were PAs and it is unfortunate that they missed the entire point of the item, which was that I feel a patient should be completely informed about who they are going to see and be completely aware. I didn't mean that PAs and NPs are incompetent. They both did agreed that they are NOT doctors. Many readers completely agreed with my view, but surprisingly I also had many negative responses about doctors in general. A few were soured on doctors and preferred seeing their PAs, and knew the status. The messages have been very interesting.

Beware If You Remodel A Dell

I read this in the Macon Users Group's newsletter and thought you might like to know about it. Dell computer is a very popular choice and many people own them. What if you decide to upgrade your Dell's power supply or motherboard? You could easily fall into a trap if you are inexperienced since these parts in a Dell are proprietary. Seems that several wiring connections are reversed. You are advised to do your homework. Either get the parts from Dell, or replace "both" the motherboard and power supply if you use non-Dell parts. I hope this information prevents somebody from encountering a serious problem had they not known.

As for the deals, I have been busy this month and simply don't have much. Two vendors I tried to contact didn't respond. I've been working on my Web site a lot and my deadline crept up fast. I have a mixed bag thanks to my readers. Last month's deals from Gene and Linda Barlow are good indefinitely http://www.ugr.com/order/ and the Metlund hot water pump deal is still good this month http://www .gothotwater.com.

Need Memory? I Think I Do,

But Can't Remember

Lots of people purchase their memory on the Web and a very popular place is from Crucial. Did you know that they have a special deal just for user group people? Neither did I. Thanks to Russell Albach of The Alamo PC Organization, I can pass his information on to my readers. Head for [http://www.crucial.com/usergroups] and you'll

find yourself eligible for a 5% discount. However, if you took advantage of the exceptionally good user group special offer from Intel for APCUG Comdex attendees, you won't get any help from Crucial though because they do not carry RDRAM. If you need memory, many consider Crucial highest in quality. I checked with their sales department before writing this up and they said to go ahead. As far as I'm concerned, we need all the help we can get when making a purchase.

Plenty of Choices For An Office Suite

In the past, I have mentioned several office suites that were either free or low cost. This is just a reminder list for your perusal. I realize that they may not have all the features that you would get in MS Office, but you can save a lot over purchasing the big names. It is a known fact that most office suite users only know about 30% of a program's capabilities, so why be captive to a big name? Below are some alternative office suites:

http://www.gnome.org (Windows & Linux)
http://www.hancom.com (Windows & Linux)
http://www.gobe.com (Windows & Linux)
http://www.thinkfree.com (versions for Windows, Mac & Linux)
http://www.staroffice.com (not free any more, but not expensive) (Windows, Linux & Sun Solaris)

Fed Up With Doubleclick cookies?

I don't remember where I saw this, but some of you may have noticed that if you use AdAware or another spyware sniffer, it usually finds a cookie by Doubleclick on your machine. Take it off and it will be right back. They actually provide a way to opt out of that situation. Point your browser to http://www.doubleclick.com/us/corporate /privacy/privacy/ad-cookie/. One click at the bottom will do it, but be sure to read the caveat on their Web site. After opting out, it tells you which cookie NOT to delete; otherwise you have just defeated your objective.

Free Photo Editor

GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program), which boasts many of Photoshop's features without the high price tag will create layers, feather, manipulate text, and even animate. You'll find handy floating palettes just like in Photoshop as well. One drawback noted in the write-up I read is no support for GIF files. Download it at http://www.gimp.org/~tml/gimp /win32//downloads.html.

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 any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. B o b (T h e   C h e a p s k a t e)   C l i c k Bobclick@mindspring .com. Visit my Web site at http://www .dealsguy.com for past columns. I have also been busy putting up some interesting new articles on my Web site so take a look.

Old Time Radio

by Nancy Preffitt
Interactive Computer Owners Network

This is one of the best sites I've heard in a long time. Here's what it says at the site: "Before the days of video games, shopping malls, MTV, and the Internet, families used to sit in their living room each night to listen to radio shows such as Abbott and Costello, Amos and Andy, Superman, Groucho Marx, The Avenger, Gunsmoke, Sherlock Homes, and many others." Gather 'round the Net and enjoy some good old time radio. http://www.radiolovers.com

From the May 2003 issue of ICON*, newsletter of the Interactive Computer Owners Network of Springfield, MO.*

Society News

Planning Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2003
by Larilyn E. Bauer, Secretary

The Board of the Rochester Computer Society, Inc. met Tuesday, May 20, 2003, at Sally Springett's home, 335 Wilmot Road, at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were Arpad Kovacs (Vice President), Steve Staub (Treasurer), Bob Avery (Webmaster), Sally Springett (Monitor Editor), Dan Rothfuss (Member at Large), Warren Ganter, and Larilyn Bauer (Secretary).

Following the President's agenda, we began with old business. Last program meeting, Win4Lin was presented by Ed Evans who works on Linux projects for IBM, was well attended, and the suggestion was made that if there seemed to be an influx of questions or discussion that appear to be delaying the presentation, the presenter would ask that questions be held until an appropriate breaking time or till the end of the presentation. We will request Mr. Evans to present again at a future date.

Financial status: We are still solvent with $689.26 in the account. The annual audit will be completed shortly.

Bob Avery reported the website is still being updated regularly, so members should check the website often for complete information.

A Secretary nominee is still needed for our club to continue according to the by-laws.

It was suggested we should try to find a permanent site for our programs, so that we can attract more members. Steve has investigated Liability Insurance and has found two possibilities. This matter is still under investigation.

We are also in need of a software chairperson so that we have door prizes and software to be raffled off.

The June 10 program meeting will be a speaker from MCC. Topic will include "General PC Repair", at Brighton Library. Access our RCSI website for directions. Our members and guests should go to our website each month in case there is a change in location of our regular program meeting, and other news.

The By-Laws have been fine-tuned and ready to vote on at the June 10 meeting. Check the RCSI website and click on "Business Link". Members are requested to come to the June meeting to vote on these By-Laws. Thanks to Warren Ganter for all his hard work to fine-tune the By-Laws according to Roberts Rules.

May 30 through June 1 is the Ham and Computerfest at the Dome Arena. Arpad will arrange for RCSI equipment to be picked up to be sold at the Computerfest.

Monitor assembly will be this Saturday May 24 at St. Stephen's Church. Please come to help for as long as you can.

New Users SIG will meet June 3. See the website for location.

Digital Photography & Scanners SIG will meet on June 5 with the topic being "Tabletop Studio". See the website for location.

The MarketPro is scheduled for June 8, with tentative attendees Ron Matteson and Bill Statt.

Next planning meeting will be June 17. See the website for location.

Our August 12 meeting will be a Picnic for members and family, and suggested fee is $5.00 per person, for which the member's fee will be reimbursed when they attend the picnic. Meat and pop will be supplied. There will be a sign-up sheet for a dish to pass. Setup time is 5:30 p.m., and we will eat after a brief meeting at 6:00 p.m., with the picnic lasting until 9:00 p.m. Keep checking the RCSI website for changes /information about all RCSI events and meetings.

New Users Notes
by John MacMillan
May 7, 2003

A $200 computer advertised by Wal- Mart started a discussion about Linux and open code. Bill Statt brought up the Wal-Mart web page and pointed out that the advertised machine was a Microtel SYSMAR737 with a 1.1 ghz Duron processor, 128mb RAM, ten Gb hard drive, CD ROM drive, and ethernet connection plus monitor, keyboard, mouse and speakers; preloaded with the Linux operating system. It did not include a modem or floppy disk drive but could use ISP's like Juno for Internet connections with proper com-munication upgrades. Greg Wolfe mentioned that he saw 2 models on display at the same price, one with a 15 inch flat screen, the other with a 17 inch monitor.

Since the inception of Linux in 1993, many people have written code to perform either specific or multiple functions, often using parts of other Linux programs. Linux has been known to run crash free on servers for 2 or 3 years without system maintenance and is becoming in-creasingly popular with businesses that would need to purchase separate licenses for hundreds of machines using comparable Windows software. Bill cited Kodak, RIT and Xerox as major local users looking at the possible savings.

Linux code is free to anyone and all users are invited to modify, improve or supplement what is available provided they share their work without charge. Users must be aware of and load all required component parts. This is less expensive though somewhat more difficult than buying an assembled package such as Red Hat's Package Manager; SuSe's Personal or a free one, Bill Statt mentioned, called Apt - Get available from Debbian.

Bill downloaded Linux from the internet and burned a CD for backup before putting it on his new Medion machine as a dual boot operating system. Aldi advertised this $699 bargain computer again April 28, the same weekend that Best Buy offered a slightly slower Medion with more memory but a smaller hard drive plus 15

inch LCD flat monitor and HP color printer for $1150.

When asked the difference between putting a program icon or a shortcut on the desktop, Gregg Sayre responded that shortcuts look for a program in a particular location which might change as files and software are added and deleted or the hard disk is defragmented. Every icon on the desktop, whether a shortcut or not, increases startup time and resource usage. He suggested combining all graphics programs, all word processing files or all shortcuts in one folder to reduce the startup time and resource commitment.

It was noted that Nick Francesco had reprinted cautions about opening attachments. It seems as if 3 out of every 5 of questions in his Sunday Democrat column are from people who have gotten viruses. One wonders how often the message needs to be repeated before some people get the word. It is important to use a virus detection program to check incoming mail and files, and to keep its definitions up to date on a weekly basis. Bill pointed out that in Hotmail, files stay on the server and are not available for you to virus check.

It is equally important to avoid opening files that have not been checked even when they come from a known source who's system may have been compromised without their knowledge. There is often a symbol marking e-mails with attachments. In Juno, it is a paper clip in front of the senders name. In Juno's main window there is also a short button line that says "Show Attachments". You must click the button to see a list of the attachments; single click to select one; then choose between Open File Now, Save File or Cancel. If you choose Save File, a dialogue box opens so you can provide a name and location. It does not take long to note the sender; verify that an unexpected attachment is mentioned in the body of the E-mail or even check the file before opening it.

Gregg Sayre mentioned several highly suspect file type extensions: .scr. Exe, .bat, and .com. In post meeting communication he added .vbs, .pif, .reg and .wsf. He also provided the following list that one internet service provider strips out: .ade, .bas, .chm, .cmd, .cpl, .crt, .eml, .hlp, .hta, .inf, .ins, .isp, .jse, .lnk, .mdb, .mde, .msc, .msi, .msp, .mst, .pcd, .sct, .shs, .url, .vbs, .vbe, .wsh and .wsc. I found better descriptions

for a number of the lesser known extensions in the list "Almost Every File Format In The World", available at http://www.ace.net.nz/tech /TechFileFormat .html.

One attendee deletes all attachments while others check attachments before opening. Whatever your choice, it is better to spend a few seconds investigating than hours trying to recover. That said, virus developers are always trying to find new ways to spread their wares so try to stay abreast of the technology.

A user asked about the message "Do you want to delete all live content - yes or no?" received when he tried to delete offline temporary Internet files through Internet Explorer. A Juno user gets a similar question about saving E-mails that have been read. It was felt that scanned files no longer in use could be deleted. After deleting .TMP files there was a residue of folders labeled Kodak, History or Cookies (small files left on your machine when you visit Internet sites). Though small, collectively they take up a great deal of hard drive space. I checked Temp Files, properties on my machine and found over 2200 files occupying 17.67mb of disk. Be aware that some cookies contain information like an account relationship that you might want to keep.

Regular member Greg Wolfe missed last months meeting but read about Blue Frog in the Monitor notes. He did a free installation with a 5 month service contract for $24.95. Another frequent attendee, also absent last month, has been a happy user of Blue Frog's ad free environment for some time. Blue frog is reputed to be going national and is expected to issue new CD's with modified programs in the near future.

Another user asked how he could get rid of Spam for free. Bill demonstrated going to Download.com and using the advanced search feature that accepts arguments for Title, Author/Publisher, Description, Text Search, Categories, Operating Systems, Titles added in a time frame, Licenses, Number of downloads, or File Sizes. He often selects free licenses and his operating system to reduce the number of hits.

This site lists the hits, the date they were added to the site and includes number of downloads; a user rating column that indicates how many responses they have had plus percentage favorable. The entries can even be sorted based upon popularity. When a program is

double clicked, a new window opens showing the publishers description, file size, minimum requirements and restrictions. You can also read user opinions, either pro, con or both, recognizing that they may originate from competitors or shills. There are easy download buttons if you choose to proceed.

In the discussion that followed, Bill stated that some of the free and low cost Internet service providers improve their bottom line by selling address lists to potential spammers. He suggested searching the Internet for possible programs to al-leviate the situation. Avoiding such services or changing your e-mail address, as painful as that is, could be the best way to solve the spam problem. It was noted that there are increasing concerns over the growing amount of spam with the possibility of some legislative action to eliminate or reduce it.

Asked what the Gamma field in color correction did, Bill responded that Gamma sets the contrast to get neutral grey. Photoshop Essentials and some other graphics processors have mechanisms for adjusting the Gamma setting. Two of the most popular settings are 1.8 for color correction and 2.2 for black and white publishing. The same user found several downloaded programs listed as "downloaded ok" but one said "damaged, occupies null space." He thought this was an incomplete download and asked if it should be deleted to which the answer was yes. Another user asked if it was possible to know if an E-mail message has been read. Bill said that some services allow sending as read receipt but this option has not been found in Juno. Gregg Sayre cited Outlook Express as providing the recipient with a pop up dialogue box indicating the sender wants a receipt and asking if that is ok.

If you have put off joining us because of the name "New Users" consider the span of questions reported in the *Monitor*. Although there is a little less technical expertise, it often runs more than twice the length of Helps Half Hour. These summaries may not cover all of the points or topics discussed so why not attend a meeting for the complete story. Our next meeting will be held from 6:30 til 7:30 June 3rd at the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road.

Treasurer's Report
by Steve Staub

Balance as of 4/14/03 . . . . $775.98

Income
Dues $125.00
Total income $125.00
Expenses
St. Stephen's $75.00
Folding machine lease 86.72
APCUG 50.00
Total expenses $211.72
Balance as of 5/20/03 . . . . $689.26

The Lighter Side

First, Microsoft UK announced that the company is working on an Internet-ready toilet.

Then Microsoft denied it saying someone in the UK office created the story as a hoax.

Now Microsoft has changed its mind in what appears to be a compromise position. They now say that Microsoft UK was working on an Internet-ready toilet but the project got flushed.

Computer Blessing

Blessings on this fine machine,
May its data all be clean.
Let the files stay where they're put,
Away from disk drives keep all soot.
From its screen shall come no whines,
Let in no spikes on power lines.
As oaks were sacred to the Druids,
Let not the keyboard suffer fluids.
Disk full shall be no more than rarity,
The memory shall not miss its parity.
From the modem shall come wonders,
Without line noise making blunders.
May it never catch a virus,
And all its software stay desirous.
Oh let the printer never jam,
And turn my output into spam.
I ask of Eris, noble queen,
Keep Murphy far from this machine.