



## A Time for Reflection

by Bill Wood  
Alamo PC Organization

It's that time of year when we wonder where the time went and maybe take a second look at things. Three recent examples illustrate the value or reconsidering past events.

Bret McDanel may have gained the most in reflection. McDanel was convicted under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act for intentionally causing harm to the computers at his former employer, Tornado Development, Inc. I've practiced law for more than twenty years and I was stunned when I read that the US Attorney's office that had been responsible for convicting McDanel had gone back into court and asked that the conviction be overturned. The Associated Press quoted Assistant US Attorney Ronald Cheng as saying,

*It is on principal that the government confesses error in this case.*

Law.com quotes another representative of the US Attorney's office, as saying the motion by the government to overturn a conviction is "pretty damn rare."

The facts of the story are pretty simple. The legal interpretation of those facts is where things get sticky. Does someone have the protected right to tell people about security flaws in computer systems? *The LA Times* quoted Stanford Law School professor Larry Lessig in an October 16th story,

*Because the guy was doing something with computers, all rational thought got turned off.*

That may have been a gross understatement.

The original FBI press release about McDanel's capture in 2001 makes it seem like he was a candidate for the Ten Most Wanted.

*As an ex-employee of Tornado, Bret McDanel spammed Tornado's system by sending disparaging email to thousands of Tornado's customers, causing a denial-of-service attack and forcing Tornado to shut down its system. McDanel accessed Tornado's system five times between August 17, 2000, and September 5, 2000, twice gaining unauthorized access to Tornado's mail server, then spamming approximately 11,000 of Tornado's customers on three occasions.*

McDanel was convicted and served his sixteen-month prison sentence before his case made it to the US Court of Appeals in San Francisco. It was during that appeal that the government moved to overturn the conviction because it now appears that what he did was never a crime. More recent evidence indicates he used an authorized password to warn users of the system that the company had not fixed a security hole he had discovered before he quit his job.

The appellate court has not yet released its order as I write this piece. I'll follow-up on this case in a future article.

Congress has also been rethinking things. Is it time to extend the ban on local taxes on Internet access? Is it time to repeal state privacy laws that conflict with some new, federal law? One side of the argument in both cases is that the Internet is still in its infancy. So laws passed by individual states and the taxes they may impose on access would stifle the growth of the net as a means of commerce. They argue that the Constitution gives the federal government, not the states, the right to regulate interstate commerce.

The tax issue gets a bit confusing but clearly involves huge amounts of money and disputes between telecommunications giants such as SBC and Time Warner over what is covered by regulations on cable access and voice communications. Back in 1998 Congress passed a ban on new state and local taxes on Internet access. It did not affect the sales taxes on products and services purchased over the Internet. Rather, it only affected taxes on the bills we pay to get on the net through our Internet Service Provider.

Collecting taxes on the Internet access would not have the same problems associated with retail sales. Vendors complain they would have to keep track of thousands of tax rates in communities throughout the country. On the other hand Internet access providers are already in those local markets. So figuring out which taxes apply to different areas should not be a problem.

Just as a point of reference, sales tax collections make up about fourteen percent of the revenue collected by the City of San Antonio. I've seen one estimate that the current ban removes up to nine billion dollars from state and local government receipts. Clearly, that amount is significant in the current economic climate for states and cities.

Finally, should Congress pass a bill that would repeal stronger privacy protections in the various states to promote a uniform system that would make it easier for businesses to conduct electronic transactions? You may remember that California recently passed a privacy law that requires individual notice to California citizens if a company suffers a computer security breach that compromises certain personal information. Other states have various privacy laws. So it is not surprising that even security conscious companies are concerned that they may be responsible under fifty sets of laws. Add to that federal laws such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and the Gramm-Leach Bliley Act (Pub Law 106- 102) and they may have a point.

But, does that justify taking away a state's right to provide additional protection to its citizens? The state and local governments are the ones that will have to clean up the mess if things go wrong.

Congress is set to complete action on both bills by the end of the year. So, we may have to reconsider these topics in a future column.

*From the December 2003 issue of PCAlamode, newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization of San Antonio, TX. Bill Wood is an Assistant City Attorney, in the San Antonio City Attorney's Office. He practices real estate and technology law for the city.*

## JavaScripts

### Your Web site on Caffeine

by Susan Ives  
*Alamo PC Organization*

**J**avaScript is a scripting language developed by Netscape, used to create interactive Web sites. It holds two main attractions for lazy Webmasters.

- It can be used client-side. In layman's terms, this means that you can type the code right into your HTML document. You don't always have to upload it separately to your server as you do with CGI (Common Gateway Interface) scripts. If this is gobbledygook to you, read on — JavaScript is perfect for people who find CGI confusing.
- There are hundreds of free JavaScripts on the Internet. All you have to do is find one you like and cut-and-paste it into your HTML document. They frequently come with instructions and are relatively idiot-proof.

So what is JavaScript used for? Here are three examples:

#### Popup windows:

If you have been reading this column and referring to the companion Web site, you will have seen the popup windows I use for some of the examples. These are created with JavaScript. The code that will open a link in a popup window:

```
<A href="http://www.susanives.com/lazy/index.html"
onClick="window.open('','popup','height=300,
width=200, toolbar=yes, scrollbars=yes')"
target="popup">Your link here</A>
```

If you deconstruct this, you'll see several options. First, see that it starts out with a normal link tag, <A HREF>. Here, of course, you put the URL of the HTML document you want to appear in the popup window. It can be a page on your own site (in which case you don't need the http://) or a remote site, as illustrated here. Next, note that you can change the width and height of the popup window. If you delete one or both of these parameters, it will default to your browser size.

You can also omit the toolbar or the scrollbar by changing the "yes" to "no". I always keep the scrollbar. You never know what screen resolution your user will have and there's nothing worse than not being able to access content that slopped down below the screen. The toolbar is optional; I often leave it off. However, I've found that many people can't figure out how to print a page if they don't have a toolbar (they can right-click and select print), so if you expect the page to be printed, the toolbar is a useful courtesy.

#### Close Window:

Often, if I use a popup, I will include a button to close the window when the user is done with it. If they don't close the window, they end up with a bunch of little

windows open. It's confusing. Here's a little script that will create a button that will close a popup window:

```
<form>
<input type="button" style="background-color:
#000080; color: #FFFFFF; font-weight: bold; font-size:
10pt;" value="Close Window" onClick="window.close()">
</form>
```

The code in bold is CSS (Cascading Style Sheet) and is optional. If you leave this off, you will get a plain gray button. This code changes the button background to navy blue and the button text to white.

Not all JavaScripts are this straightforward. Some require you to put some of the code nested in the <HEAD> tag, some within the <Body> tag and the rest under the <BODY> tag. A few require that you upload graphics or other files to your server. The instructions for most of them are quite clear, however — just follow them carefully.

Many JavaScripts are long and would take pages and pages to reproduce. Here are some examples, with links to obtain the code:

#### Trailing Cursor:

The starburst trailing cursor will insert a little trail of starbursts that follow the mouse cursor around. There are complete instructions for integrating it into your site at webmoments.com. This involves inserting code in three places and uploading six graphic files to your server. It's not as hard as it looks. There are also other tiny images you can use instead of the starburst: hearts, dust, and bubble, for example. You can even make custom graphics.

#### Flying objects:

This will take a transparent gif image and fly it around on your screen. You can have the code mailed to you by going to aljascripts.com. You can use any image you want: I used a butterfly.

#### Mouse image rollovers:

This is one of the most popular uses for JavaScripts. Many Web design programs, such as Dreamweaver, will create them automatically for you. There are also online utilities that let you fill in the blanks to create a script with your own images. Try the one at internet.com. This utility makes up to six images, so it's useful for navigation buttons. Before you start, have your images ready. For each rollover you will need two images of the same size. I will often use a navigation button that changes the text color when the mouse rolls over it.

#### For more scripts:

This is just the tip of the iceberg. For more scripts, try these sites. Most of them also have tutorials to help you learn more.

- \* The JavaScript Source
- \* JavaScript Kit
- \* A1 JavaScripts
- \* CGI Scriptnet

## The catch:

There's always a catch. JavaScripts may not work with all browsers, or may not work in consistently. Some people disable Java in their browsers. More than one script per page may confuse browsers. Some scripts are evil (like ones that won't let you leave a page until you click a sponsor's link) and some are cute the first time, irritating with repeated exposure. Use them judiciously; test them thoroughly.

*From the December 2003 issue of PCAlamode. Susan Ives is a past-president and past-webmaster of Alamo PC.*



## The DealsGuy

by Bob Click

*Greater Orlando Computer Users Group*

**M**y Webmaster abilities leave much to be desired, in fact, I barely get the job done, but at least my Web site does the job I wanted it to do for my readers and editors. In spite of my lack of expertise, I often get e-mail from readers and editors who visited my Web site and acknowledge the visit. Sometimes they even tell me they liked the way it is set up and that they think it is easy to navigate. That always makes my day considering my lack of ability and I'm happy it is doing the job satisfactorily. When I originally built it, the people I asked to critique it ripped it apart as I asked them to do, but said it would probably work, and after a few changes, it is doing that. My thanks to the readers and editors for living with my creation.

I also noticed a couple of newsletters that carried articles their editor downloaded from my Web site and even credited my Web site, which is unnecessary, but good. I was excited to see that because it tells me somebody is using some of the articles I posted and that at least I chose something that people liked. My thanks to all the authors (some actually told me they felt flattered) that I had asked for their article and for contributing for my readers.

## The Beginning of the End

I am just about ready to put the DealsGuy column to bed permanently because of the lack of new content availability. Lately, much of what I publish is taken from user group newsletters because vendors often ignore my requests and leave me with nothing for the column at deadline time. I may yet have a couple things that are not something you would buy, but mixing those with some other things from newsletters that I read will keep it going briefly. These will probably not be items suitable for many of my readers, but they may find them interesting anyway. Even with limited sales potential I liked them because they are unique.

On the other hand, I often get announcements for new products that are from unknown companies (several per month) and perhaps you would like to know about those. I assumed that most user groups have somebody who gets the same announcements and may, or may not,

make it known to their members. Let me know since it would be something to write about rather than nothing.

## Interesting Trade Show

I recently worked the "International Training and Simulator Association" trade show. This was a military show and mostly defense contractors had displays there. There was just about any type of simulator you could imagine, including training for a fire situation. In another booth I saw a concave mirror about five feet wide by three feet high (costing about \$12,000) that made me look larger but inverted when I looked at it. Everything also looked 3-D when I approached it. Another large mirror costing about \$7,000 was flatter and enlarged everything, even my money, but the numbers on it were still the same. Bummer! One of the uses was in a training simulator for mid-air refueling so the pilot could see the nozzle when trying to connect it to the fill tube, although I understand it is not necessary for the real experience.

Another interesting item was a visor you wear on your head that has lenses to look through attached. Above the lenses at a 90-degree angle were mini screens and you could feed TV or whatever you wanted into them. The lenses would not only let you see what was projected on the mini screens above them, but you could also see right through the lenses. It was an interesting item at about \$32,000. I'm not sure what its uses are.

Another interesting exhibit was a semi-transparent world globe about six feet in diameter on a pedestal that seemed to be illuminated and had lines projecting all around it that moved all the time. I wondered if it was for a tactical planning room. There were even tanks and some of the latest guns being shown in the show and I am not at liberty to talk about much of what I saw and asked questions about. After all, I was part of their security. The displays took about 500,000 square feet of exhibit space and attracted about 12,000 attendees. It was interesting that several people were caught during show hours around the show floor trying to film the exhibits with hidden cameras. There was lots of security around the show.

## A Ho-Hum Column

I was unable to get a couple of things to come together that I am working on by deadline time, but I'm still working on them. Most of you won't need them, but will like them. The holidays presented a problem for the people I am dealing with so I hope to have something next month, but for this month I have some items you may already know about.

## Dear IRS, Please take it easy on me - Yeah Right!

I should have written about Tax Act last month, but it's still not too late. It's a free product to use for your personal income tax. You can go to [<http://www.taxact.com>] and do your taxes at no cost in two ways. If you have a dialup connection, you may like the method where you do not have to download anything, but instead, do your taxes right on their web site for free as you answer

questions for the information. You can also download their free software and go ahead and fill it in at home. It interviews you as you go through it, asking you questions of all types trying to get your information and data for computing your income tax. It takes a bit of getting used to and I made mistakes last year that I had to go back and fix because of assumptions, but it does work.

I used it last year and was a bit agitated by its constantly bugging me to buy their better version. Actually, I did eventually purchase the \$9.95 upgrade, but mostly because it included one free electronic tax filing. Taking that into consideration, the upgrade also has some comparison features included among other things and would actually only cost me \$2.00 after doing the e-file since an e-file cost you \$7.95 using the free version. One shortcoming I felt it had was if you had any complicated stock transactions. I finished mine after a couple of e-mails back and forth with the tech people at Tax Act. They answered my questions the next day and didn't quite understand my question the first time. When I finally was satisfied and sent my e-filing, they responded by telling me it had been received and letting me know the approximate date my refund would be deposited to my account. They were correct; it took ten days. I sent them a complaint and they may have improved the stock transaction part. It's free so what could it hurt if you don't like it. Remember that my review for Tax Act on my Web site is a year old and I assume there are improvements by now.

### Free Antivirus Software

AVG antivirus software by Grisoft has a free version and I understand it is pretty good. I have seen it recommended in several user group newsletters, but I've not tried it myself. You can get it at [<http://www.grisoft.com>]. A word of warning though — don't try to have more than one AV working at the same time because they often tend to clash.



### Print Your Screen, Or Any Part, OK?

PrintScreen by Gadwin lets you capture any part, or your entire screen for printing, copying to the clipboard or saving it into a file. This is a very handy utility and can be had at [<http://www.gadwin.com/download>]. You can choose from six different image formats and they can be resized. Their Web site says PrintScreen 2.0 is an easy-to-use *freeware* utility.

That's it for this month. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies 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. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [[Bobclick@mindspring.com](mailto:Bobclick@mindspring.com)]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns and many interesting

articles I have taken from various users group newsletters.

## Archiving Genealogy Information in a Generic Fashion

by Richard T. Robusto  
*Las Vegas PC User's Group*

Most of us in the genealogy field find ourselves with large amounts of information on our relatives. It challenges us to find a way to preserve it in a manner that in the future, near and distant, our descendants will be able to access this data in a timely and understandable manner.

When I first started my genealogy project, I had the mistaken idea that I could put away the program and all the data files so that it could be accessed years from now. Boy, was I naive. I was using Windows 98 at the time. Later I upgraded to Windows ME and then to Windows 2000. At this point the program would not work at all with the new system. Of course, I got the updates and finally got it working, but it really got me to thinking that there had to be a better way to preserve information so that it can be used in years to come without difficulties.

Of course, the first thing that comes to mind is that you should have a printed copy of everything. This I did on good acid-free paper. There are different results that can be achieved. For instance, you can print out a fan type chart. I did that first. It took close to 65 pages of standard letterhead size paper. Then these had to be meticulously trimmed and taped together making a large five foot square. Another method was to print out a horizontal "format" chart. This involved the same number of sheets and after assembling them together, made a chart that was three feet wide by twelve feet long. This requires an empty wall in order to display it. As far as preserving them, it poses quite a problem. How long would something of this nature last rolled up and packaged? As we all realize, time is our enemy.

In 1999, My wife and I took a trip to Italy with my son and his wife. We went to the mountaintop village that my parents came from in the early 1900s. We went into the commune (town hall) to get information about the family, birth and death dates, etc. It turned out to be quite interesting in the information that we were able to acquire. When we went into the commune and asked, they took down a ledger about 10 by 18 inches with about 20 pages of paper inside. When they opened the book and turned the yellowed pages, you could hear the sheets crinkling, almost as if they were leaves from a tree. The thought that went through my mind is that we didn't get there any too soon. I am sure that in a few more years, those sheets will deteriorate and be unreadable. On top of it all, I was not able to find any digital or photographic record of the information that was in that ledger. Coming away from this experience left me with the resolve that records need to be digitized and photographed as much

as possible. I know that this is happening in some parts of Italy, but in this rural area, it is a long ways away.

So the problem of archiving has to be faced. Sure, we could leave all the information on an individual hard drive with the program itself. But the future holds many uncertainties. Will this drive be able to be accessed with Windows 4000 or Linux Extradense 4500? Sure, everyone says that it can always be brought up to date with current technology. But what if this item were to be put in a safe place where no one saw it for a long time. It would become a relic and probably unusable.

In trying to solve this dilemma, I have tried one or two things which I would like to discuss. The first is the FlipAlbum which can be used to produce what is called an "E" book. This can be any number of pages and can be put in the order desired. To set this up, I captured the pages out of my genealogy database converting them into bitmaps. I also added all the necessary photos, being able to superimpose descriptions over any part of the photos.

When they were finalized and put in the proper order, then the FlipAlbum can be shown on any computer. The program puts a small file in the beginning of the book so that it can be shown on any computer without the necessity of having the program installed. The pages can be set and automatically timed to be seen as a slide show or can be turned manually as desired. The advantages are that it can be viewed on any computer and there is no limit to the number of pages that can be inserted. There is also a provision to add MP3 music playlist, plus it will accept most standard images and multimedia formats. The pages can be viewed in center-fold and double page mode to view photos better. Included also is the ability to print the entire album or individual pages or photos.

I have constructed a couple of FlipAlbums with the first and second generation of my genealogy. Next I intend to revisit the project and add every page from the genealogy that I have and make a complete FlipAlbum. When this is complete, then it is an easy matter to copy the discs so that the members of the family can have their own copy, assuring the permanence of availability of the information.

The second idea that I had was to take the same sheets that I had used in the FlipAlbum, and use them as individual files. Then, using a program such as Ulead DVD Picture Show, set them up as a slide show which can be shown on any TV using a DVD player. The files are big enough to fill the TV screen and, that allows you to read the text on the data sheets. The photos come out well as they fill the screen also. The only drawback with this is that the timing of the files has to be set for approximately 15 seconds so as to have enough time to read the data. Unlike the FlipAlbum, the timing cannot be changed once the disc is made. This program will also allow audio tracks to be added. I have an idea of narrating all the information as it is shown, but I haven't got that far yet. I found out that I do have to sleep somewhat at night. For the first ones I made I added a music

background. I also made a cover sheet that is shown first with the name of the families and the author's name. The only disadvantage to this is that you are limited to the capacity of the disc which is 700 MB. But as soon as I acquire a DVD writer, then I will be able to incorporate the whole genealogy section into one disc.

I like the idea of making my own slide show with this DVD program. This can be shown a lot more universally without having the use of a computer. Plus the viewing is much more pleasant on a TV. And with the advent of HDTV, the views can only-get better. And let's face it, the DVD image will be with us a lot longer than the current operating systems. So hopefully, many years in the future, our descendents will be able to see all this information and will appreciate the efforts that went into making these things as permanent as we could in this day and age.

## Hardware Review

### Olympus Digital Voice Recorder

by Marshall Straight  
*Northeast Ohio PC Club*

The Olympus DW-90 Digital Voice Recorder is different from most recorders in that its recordings are saved directly as .wav files. This means that they may be played by most Windows players and inserted directly into many digital image album and slideshow programs and even Microsoft PowerPoint.

Included with the DW-90 kit are a USB cable, an earphone, a microphone stand, and Digital Wave Player software. Both the recorder and software require a PC with Windows 98SE and a USB port. Even though the recorder is smaller than a floppy disk and weighs 65 grams including the batteries it has a lot of features. It has three microphones, three qualities of recording modes, two modes of microphone sensitivity (Omni-directional for dictation and Unidirectional for meetings), and a variable volume control for automatic voice activation.

The DW-90 records up to 90 minutes depending on the quality level selected. Each time that you start and stop recording it creates a unique .wav file. You may record up to 300 .wav files on the built in flash memory. You may create folders and sub-folders to record into if you wish.

The Digital Wave Player software installs easily and works well, it has many features including transferring the .wav files from the recorder to the PC through the USB cable, playing a five second preview of each .wav file, playing the entire .wav file, renaming the files, recording sounds directly to the PC, and doing recorder maintenance from the PC.

I have recorded hundreds of files of sounds from birds to airplanes. Having the files saved directly into digital .wav format makes it very simple to use the files as inserts into many programs and keeps the files clean.

The sound quality is rather impressive. We use some of the files most months at the Dig Sig meetings.

Olympus DW-90 – Digital Voice Recorder List Price \$80, Street Price \$53 [http:// www.olympusamerica.com/](http://www.olympusamerica.com/)

*From Nybbles & Bytes, the newsletter of the Northeast Ohio PC Club.*

## Inhuman Computers

by Elizabeth B. Wright  
*Oklahoma City PCUG*

**O**lder-model automobiles, airplanes, and boats could be cajoled, sweet-talked, and occasionally reasoned with. That's why many people gave their cars, aircraft, and water craft names (usually women's) and made them part of the family. But that is mostly because they operate by virtue of the internal combustion engine principle. (I'm talking about the days before computer chips replaced some of the mechanical functions of vehicle operations.) Also cars often take on the personality of the owner, much like pets do.

Computers, on the other hand, have no soul, no compassion, and certainly no desire to please. The computer is amoral (not immoral, except in the hands of some people), totally insensitive to invective or other forms of oral communication, cannot be humiliated by ridicule or strengthened by praise, and most certainly doesn't respond to human reasoning. The occasional kick only makes them more intransigent (and they break easily).

But your computer can sometimes be tricked. Since they have no sense of humor or sense of belonging, they do not understand that they can be replaced easily, usually by a superior, yet cheaper, machine. So they are not really trying to cooperate when you succeed in outsmarting them, they just honestly don't know any better.

Computers crash in ways that lead you to believe there is absolutely no way to recover any of your most valuable information. But one of the best tricks of the trade is to just (in the words of a long ago Oklahoma City weatherman) "turn the d\_\_n thing off." Given an overnight rest, many computer crashes can be mitigated, at least for the short term, long enough to move your stored data to some other media, or even to another computer. Along with giving the machine an overnight rest, it is often advisable to unplug it from the electrical outlet after turning it off, to further enhance the rest period. I am not suggesting that this is an infallible procedure, but I personally have had it help more than once, and have talked with a lot of other people who have had similar luck.

Another trick, and this one is rather obvious, is to have more than one hard drive. Storing your important documents on both drives helps with recovery should one drive fail. Again, the computer doesn't care whether it has one hard drive or a dozen. As long as it knows the drives are there, you can pretty much do your own thing. You wouldn't necessarily have two engines in your car,

but two or more hard drives is a good idea. Help is out there to recover your data if one of the drives is still functioning, even if it isn't the boot drive.

Trick number three: Although the computer doesn't tell you so, it does like a cool and hopefully dust-free environment. It doesn't know it needs this, but when it decides to roll over and play dead, it is often because it is suffering from heat exhaustion. The newer the computer, the hotter it will get while it is on. Since many people now leave their machines running 24/7, the heat problem can become critical. Internal fans are the beginning, but keeping the computer in a relatively cool part of the room is also important. Keeping it in the vicinity of the heat ducts during cold weather is not a good idea. That just causes the internal cooling equipment to perhaps not be able to handle the job adequately.

Trick number four: Dirt and other stuff (bugs for example) can get into the computer case; it doesn't hurt to have someone who knows how to do it clean out the insides of the shell. I don't advise doing this if you aren't really technically adept as those small parts are so sensitive that you could do a lot more damage than just leaving it dirty.

Trick number five: In spite of how you might think you are communicating with your computer with fancy screen icons, word commands and pictures, the computer only knows two commands. They are "on" and "off." Most of the on/off switches are in those tiny chips, but the more you can think in terms of how little the computer actually understands, the more you can see why confusing it with conflicting programs can overwhelm its ability to function. More and more of us are wanting to use the latest and most sophisticated programs on the market, but just be aware that each new addition has the potential to cause your computer to become unstable. *Plan Ahead! Back up Your Work!*

*Elizabeth Wright is a member of the OKCPCUG and a regular writer for the eMonitor. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.*

## Windows Up-Grade Options

by Michael Horowitz

**W**hen considering installing a new version of Windows on a computer, the first issue is whether your computer is fast enough for the new operating system. Microsoft and others publish both minimum and recommended horsepower (cpu speed, installed ram and available hard disk spare). You can learn about the horsepower requirements for Windows XP at [www.microsoft.com/windowsXP](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsXP).

The second issue is whether your computer and surrounding hardware is supported by the new version of Windows. Microsoft publishes a Hardware Compatibility List ([www.microsoft.com/windows.hcl](http://www.microsoft.com/windows.hcl)) where you can see if Windows is supported on your computer. In addition, you should check your printer, scanner, and other

hardware to see if there are drivers for the new version of Windows. This is especially of concern when moving from a Windows 9x family OS to an NT class version of Windows (NT-4, 2000, XP).

Software also has compatibility issues. Not all software runs on all flavors of Windows. Any software that you want to continue to use should be checked to make sure it is compatible with the new version of Windows. Windows XP was the first version of Windows to address this issue. It has a feature that attempts to fake out a program so that it thinks it is running under an older version of Windows.

If you decide to install a new version of Windows, the next issue is how. Most people discuss two options. There are actually four ways to run a new version of Windows on your computer.

A new version of Windows can be installed as either an upgrade of an older existing copy of Windows or on a new empty hard disk. An upgrade install places the new copy of Windows on top of the old copy. A clean install puts the new copy of Windows on your computer as if the old copy never existed. There are pros and cons to each approach

### **Upgrade Installation**

**Con:** You lose the old copy of Windows, it is clobbered by the new copy being installed over it. Should there be any problems with the new copy of Windows, you can't fall back to your tried and true old copy.

**Con:** Compared to a clean installation an upgrade install is more likely to cause problems in the future. It's complicated, in a world where simpler is better.

**Pro:** Your existing applications, data and settings remain more or less unchanged.

### **Clean Installation**

**Con:** You lose not only the old copy of Windows, but everything that was previously on your computer. All your data and all your applications. Obviously this requires that, you first back up all your data files. Don't forget any files, if you fail to back up a file it is lost forever. It is easy to forget that email or an address book also needs to be backed up.

**Pro:** From a technical perspective, a clean installation is simpler and less likely to cause problems in the future compared to an upgrade installation.

**Con:** It requires re-installing all applications and customizing things from scratch.

An upgrade installation is not always an option. It depends on the old and new versions of Windows. The rules for Windows XP are presented later.

Also, you should not do an upgrade installation if the old version of Windows is having problems. If your motivation for a new copy of Windows is to fix problems with the old version, then do a clean installation of either your current version of Windows or a new version.

Further complicating this is the fact that many (most?) copies of Windows that you buy in a retail store are not designed for a clean install. They are referred to

as "upgrade" copies. Upgrade versions of Windows are much cheaper than "full" versions but are only for people who already own a prior copy of Windows. For example, the upgrade version of Windows XP Home Edition is under \$100. the full version is \$200 (as of February 2003). The upgrade version of Windows XP Professional sells for about \$200, the full version is about \$400. Upgrade versions of Windows are intended to be used to upgrade an old version of Windows. They require proof of ownership of a previous version of Windows.

When you do an upgrade installation, the proof of ownership comes from the old version of Windows found on your computer. For a clean installation, you need to provide a CD-ROM from the earlier version of Windows as proof of ownership. Even though you own a previous version of Windows, you may not have a CD-ROM to provide, as proof. Many computer manufacturers stopped providing this years ago. Instead they provide only a recovery CD-ROM.

It is safe to say that both upgrade installations and clean installations are poor choices. There are two other options that offer none of the downsides previously mentioned. These next two options let you run both the old and the new version of Windows on the same computer. In effect, you can have your cake and eat it too.

The downside to these alternative approaches is that they require some technical skill and additional software.

The third alternative lets you run either the old or the new-version of Windows, but only one at a time. When the computer starts up (boots) you are presented with a choice of which version of Windows to run. The fourth alternative lets you run both the old and new versions of Windows concurrently!

Installing two versions of Windows on one computer is done by giving each its own dedicated partition. The old copy of Windows remains where it is, but its partition will likely have to be shrunk. The new copy of Windows is installed in a different, and new, partition.

The vast majority of personal computers have a single partition whose size is the full size of the hard disk. In this case, this single partition has to be shrunk and a new partition created in the space freed up.

This approach is referred to a multi-boot or dual-boot or side-by side installation. The terms refer to the fact that you can boot (techie speak for "start up") either of two versions of Windows.

No version of Windows comes with software that can non-destructively resize a partition. This requires a commercial product, known generically as partitioning software. Among the available software is Partition Magic from PowerQuest. Partition Commander from V Communications, Partition Expert from Acronis and Partition Manager from Paragon Software. There is also a free program, Ranish Partition Manager but the user interface is said to be very difficult and for a job like this, it is better to have technical support available. Note that resizing a partition is potentially a dangerous thing.



Always back up your most important files first and run a full disk check beforehand.

Also, this approach requires more hard disk space than either a clean install or an upgrade install. After all, two separate and independent versions of Windows reside on the computer. Be sure to check the amount of available space on the hard disk before even considering this approach. In general, figure on two gigabytes of disk space as a minimum amount for installing an NT class version of Windows and one gigabyte for a version of Windows in the 9x family.

It is also possible to add a second hard disk to a computer and have each hard disk dedicated to one version of Windows. The advantage to this approach is that it can save the cost of partitioning software. In fact, a large enough hard disk can be had for roughly the same price as the partitioning software. Choosing an OS at start up time could be handled by either the new version of Windows (if it is an NT class), the system BIOS or commercial software such as System Commander or Boot Commander. Nonetheless, you may opt for purchasing partitioning software for reasons explained below. The general approach of having different versions of Windows installed in different partitions can be used with any two versions of Windows. If done correctly, it does not matter which version of Windows is installed first or second.

The advantages of this are many. You can fall back and use the old OS if the new version of Windows causes trouble. You can migrate to the new version of Windows gradually rather than in a big bang. Software and/or hardware that is not supported in the new version of Windows can be run from the old one. Also, the new version of Windows is installed cleanly which means, it is less likely to experience problems.

The down side is that it requires a reasonable amount of technical skill to set up.

However, if the old version of Windows is from the Windows 9x family and the new version is from the Windows NT family, and there is an available empty partition for the new version of Windows, then the new version of Windows has some crude, but usable features for managing the two versions of Windows.

During installation of the new version of Windows, the old version will be detected. Thereafter, the new version of Windows offers a list (menu) of Windows instances on the computer at start-up time. You get to choose which copy of Windows to run every time the computer starts up. I am not a big fan of this approach however.

For one thing, the description of the older version of Windows is sometimes wrong. Also, files get installed in the partition where the older version of Windows resides. If the time ever comes that you want to get rid of the old version of Windows, it is very difficult. Finally, one copy of Windows sees the files that constitute the other copy, an accident, just waiting to happen.

A far better approach is keep each copy of Windows totally separate, distinct and unaware of the other copy

of Windows. This way, a problem in one copy of Windows cannot affect the other one. Also, each copy of Windows can be re-installed, removed, or upgraded with no effect on the other copy. On their own, the NT class versions of Windows cannot keep two copies of Windows totally isolated from each other.

There are also software programs that manage multiple copies of Windows on a single computer. The most popular such program is System Commander from V Communications, it offers a list of operating systems that you can chose from each time you start the computer. The software is easier to deal with than the corresponding features in the NT class versions of Windows.

However, multi-boot software such as System Commander costs money and can be confusing to install. Also, it gets in the way of the normal Windows startup process, so if Windows fails to boot, debugging is all the more difficult. I'm not sure if it can keep each copy of Windows totally separate. Total isolation of each copy of Windows requires up-front planning to hide the partition with the old version of Windows. At the time the new version of Windows is installed, the computer thus appears to have an empty hard disk. This worked better with the 9x versions of Windows. Windows 2000 and XP will see the hidden partition at install time, but they can be directed to ignore it both at install time and after the fact.

You can have total isolation each OS, a 100% normal boot process (i.e. no multi-boot software) and still run either OS. The trick is a program called pqboot included with Partition Magic which has to be installed in each copy of Windows. The computer will always boot the last used OS. If this is not the OS you want to run, pqboot can be run to shut down the current OS, hide its partition, and boot the other OS. There are DOS and Windows versions of pqboot. The DOS version supports command line switches. In the best case scenario, there can be an icon on the desktop that invokes the DOS version of pqboot to shut down the current version of Windows and start up the other version. This automated OS switching requires only that the user double-click.

Data files can be made visible to each OS by placing them in a logical partition within an extended partition. Pqboot makes no changes to logical partitions. Of course, this data partition has to be formatted with a file system (FAT 16, FAT32, NTFS) supported by both versions of Windows.

Finally, there is yet another totally different approach. Providing the best of all possible worlds, this approach lets you run both the old and the new version of Windows at the same time. You start up Windows, in the same manner you start any other application, such as Word or Excel.

This is done using virtual machine software. Two companies offer this software for home use VMware ([www.vmware.com](http://www.vmware.com)) and Connetix ([www.connectix.com](http://www.connectix.com)). They vary in the flavors of Windows they support and in cost. VMware costs \$330. Virtual PC from Connectix is



\$230. Connectix was acquired by Microsoft in March 2003.

These products are installed on the old version of Windows (known as the host OS), just, like any other software. When you run them initially, you create a Virtual Machine with a virtual hard disk and virtual RAM. You install a new copy of Windows (known as a guest OS) inside a Virtual Machine. Virtual machines are logically powered on and off, simulating a real computer. Powering a Virtual Machine on/off is somewhat akin to opening and closing a document with a word processing program.

There is no limit to the number of Virtual Machines you can define and use other than the hard disk space on your computer. The speed of your CPU and the amount of RAM in your computer, limit the number of Virtual Machines that be run concurrently. When a Virtual Machine is running, the interface to it is a normal Windows window, which can be minimized and maximized. The virtual machine is just another running application. You can switch between a virtual machine and other applications in the usual way (task bar, alt-Tab, etc). VMware offers a full screen mode, running a virtual machine in full screen mode makes it really look like a real computer.

### Downside

VMware and Virtual PC have limitations on the versions of Windows they can be installed onto and the versions of Windows (and Linux) that can be installed in a Virtual Machine. In addition, the guest OS may have limitations that prevent it from running inside a Virtual Machine. Two examples are BIOS locked copies of Windows and the product activation feature of Windows XP.

One caution with VMware, the thirty days of technical support starts the day you get the software, whether you install it or not.

Note again, these final two approaches require a non-trivial amount of technical expertise.

Most likely, the new version of Windows you will be installing is XP. Many programs originally written for Windows 95, 98 or Me will not run correctly under XP. For the most part, the burden of researching this falls to you. For every program you care about, go to the web site of the vendor to see if it is supported under Windows XP. Be especially sure to check your anti-virus and firewall programs.

As for an upgrade install (XP on top of an older version of Windows), the Home Edition of XP can be installed on top of only Windows 98 and Windows Me. The Professional Edition of XP can be installed on top of Windows 98, Me, NT4 (only SP6) and 2000. If you are running Windows 95 (or 3.1 for that matter) you cannot upgrade to XP, instead you will have to opt for one of the other three approaches.

If you are installing XP on top of an older version of Windows, then you can use a program on the Windows XP CD-ROM called the upgrade advisor. It checks for

some programs known to be incompatible with Windows XP. You can run it from the XP CD (assuming it is the D disk) with D:\i386\winnt32 — check upgrade only. This program is very limited in its scope however.

These articles offer some advice specific to XP upgrades:

HOW TO Troubleshoot Windows XP Problems During Installation When You Upgrade from Windows 98 or Windows Me ([support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb](http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb))

Last Call for Windows XP Upgrades. *PC World Magazine*. May 2002. Tips on how to do an upgrade installation of Windows XP. ([www.pcworld.com/resource/article/0,aid,96827,00,asp](http://www.pcworld.com/resource/article/0,aid,96827,00,asp))

Windows XP Professional Upgrade Center Information from Microsoft on the four steps to upgrading to Windows XP ([www.microsoft.com/windowssxp/pro/howtobuy/upgrading/defaults.asp](http://www.microsoft.com/windowssxp/pro/howtobuy/upgrading/defaults.asp))

The *New York Times* October 24, 2002 By Sarah Milstein The horrors of upgrading from Windows 98 to XP. The article contains a number of technical mistakes.

**A note from Fred Langa** (his LangaList can be found at <http://langa.com>): This is a change of pace — a letter so complete and detailed, it's almost an entire feature in itself. It's from Plus! Subscriber — and computing instructor — Michael Horowitz (thanks, Michael!), and contains a wealth of great info, especially on two lesser-known upgrade options.

I'm personally more in favor of clean installs than Michael is. As Michael says, a clean install can be a good choice if the version of Windows you're upgrading has problems, because a clean install is a fresh start — none of those problems get carried over to the new setup. I like clean installs because, in my experience, almost all versions of Windows that have been in use any significant length of time do have problems. Even if your current version of Windows seems to be OK; there's a good chance that something isn't right, somewhere in the system. A clean install gives you a fresh start; no matter what.

But if you followed Michael's wonderfully-detailed advice, you'll see that there's more than one way to accomplish a clean install; and that clean installs are just one of several options.

*Article distributed for use in user group newsletters by permission of Fred Langa and Michael Horowitz. You can see more of Michael's worthwhile material at [www.DefensiveComputing.us](http://www.DefensiveComputing.us) and at his personal site [MichaelHorowitz.com](http://MichaelHorowitz.com).*



# Msconfig Secrets to Your Computer Startup

by Bruce Cramer  
*Alamo PC Organization, Inc.*

**D**o you ever wonder what takes your computer so long to start up? In most cases the reason for that is that computer manufacturers and software developers think you need or want all those programs and the accompanying little icons to startup every time that you turn on your computer. By the time Microsoft, Compaq, or whoever your computer manufacturer is, and a few software companies are done with your computer, you probably have 10 or more different programs running into each other every time your computer starts. Most of the programs that startup when your computer starts up are being shoved in there, vying for room for no reason at all, but you can prevent that. I used to work as a computer technician at a national computer chain store where they charged a pretty penny for this little operation, but you can do it at home armed with a little knowledge.

First of all, msconfig stands for Microsoft Configuration Utility. If you click on Start, Run, then type msconfig you will see 6 tabs. On the far right you will see Startup.

Click on the Startup tab where you see what loads up when your computer starts. Many applications put items in your startup group that are absolutely unnecessary, such as Real Player streaming audio, calendar birthday reminder, bill payer reminder, to name a few. Even if you have 512 megabytes or more of RAM, I don't recommend that you load any unnecessary applications on startup. Hopefully you will know about aunt Jenny's birthday before your computer tells you. Its like the guy who is unpacking the family car at the beach. He dropped the family off near the water so they are there ready to have fun, but dad has to park the car a half mile away, then walk through the hot sand loaded down with the sun tan lotion, towels and ice chest. Do you really think he needs to carry any more? Even without the beach balls and rafts, he's lucky if he doesn't fall and spill the sun tan lotion all over the towels — yes, that would be a mess.

After you turn your computer on, it has to wake everything up (BIOS, network card, ports, etc.) — load all its drivers, the bare essential applications, and the fonts. The only startup items you absolutely need are:

- ScanRegistry
- TaskMonitor
- SystemTray
- LoadPowerProfile
- Your antivirus software

Go to <http://www.sysinfo.org/startupinfo.php> to see an extensive and regularly updated list of startup files and what they do. As of February 27, 2003, this guy had 2,277 files listed. I applaud his enthusiasm, but he really should get out more often.

Uncheck all the unneeded startup files. However, the general rule of thumb is — if in doubt, leave it alone.

After you uncheck the boxes of unneeded items and click Apply, then OK, you will be asked if you want to restart or exit without restarting. You can do either, but you will not reap the benefits of unloading the items until after you restart. After you restart your computer, Microsoft gives you a message that says you have run the msconfig utility and wants to know if you are satisfied with the results. If you do not want to see this message again, check the box. You should notice an immediate improvement in performance and stability — all for free — and you did it yourself the all natural way, without adding more programs such as Ram Booster or an “optimizer” program which only leads to more memory use and possible software conflicts.

Msconfig is not available for Windows 95, NT, or 2000. However, there is a free “Startup Control Panel” at [www.Mlin.net](http://www.Mlin.net) that will work just as well for Windows 95. And if you are using Windows NT or 2000, you can download the official Windows XP version of msconfig on the Tech Guide Web site.

*This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which we are a member. Bruce Cramer is recently retired from the Army and a regular Alamo PC Organization volunteer. He is A+, Network+, and I-Net certified, as well as a Microsoft Certified Professional in Windows XP.*

## Software Review

### Driveimage 7.0

by Ray Isenson  
*Central Coast Computer Club*

**W**ith the introduction of Drive Image 7.0 (DI7), PowerQuest adds several capabilities to an already powerful utility. Useable only in Windows XP and Windows 2000 operating systems, DI7 retains the ability to create a backup image of an entire partition or hard drive, restore files or folders from a backup image to the original source drive, do a total restore of a drive from its image or copy one drive to another, facilitating the replacing of a failing drive or installing a new and larger drive. In addition to being able to store the image to a different partition on the source drive or to another drive in the same computer, DI7 will store the image directly to a recordable CD or DVD, spanning to multiple CDs or DVDs if the image is too large to fit on a single disk. Where a computer is part of a network, DI7 can be directed to store the image in a folder on the server.

Although DI7 will not function in a Windows 9X or ME system, it can be used on a multiboot system if one of the operating systems is XP and the program is installed into the XP partition. (Note: A copy of Drive Image 2002, which will work in systems using earlier versions of

Windows, is included as a second CD with the purchase of DI7.)

Installation of DI7 is fully automated, requiring user input in only a very few instances; for example, entering a serial number found on the envelope containing the CD or accepting a boiler plate agreement. Functioning of DI7 requires the presence of Microsoft's .NET Framework. If Microsoft's .NET Framework isn't already present on the computer the full installation takes almost 70 MBytes of hard drive space; of which about 45 MBytes is used by DI7 itself. (Note: the .NET Framework is a set of software technologies for connecting information, people, systems and devices. It is based on small building-block applications that can connect to each other as well as to larger applications over the Internet.)

A Windows XP system CD as sold by Microsoft contains a utility called the Recovery Console. This utility will, in principle, allow a user who has had a system failure boot from the CD and repair the damage. Unfortunately this utility may or may not be included with whatever backup software package accompanies a newly delivered PC. Further, the Recovery Console is not easily installed or used by the typical computer user. The DI7 program includes a system restore wizard called the PowerQuest Recovery Environment (PQRE) on the bootable PowerQuest CD. Booting on the DI7 CD, when Windows is so badly damaged that a normal boot is impossible, will enable restoring the system from a previously made system backup. Thus obviating the need for the Microsoft CD.

I must admit that I did have a problem with the installation; one of my own making. Good practice dictates that all other programs should be closed during an installation. I neglected to turn off several programs including my antivirus, firewall, and CD burning programs. One of these caused an interference. On the second try I turned all off and had no further trouble.

The only true pitfall noted during installation had to do with the .NET Framework. If the installation software determines that the Framework is not already present it will start loading it and then ask whether the user wants it to be loaded. Should the user, for any reason, click the "No" box, a message will appear stating that DI7 will not run. The user is not given an opportunity to step back to correct the input but must terminate the installation and start all over.

Once DI7 is installed and a backup is made, your computer is protected against the disaster that can strike at any time. Every computer is vulnerable to data loss caused by viruses, faulty software or hard drive failure. DI7 provides a complete backup solution. By saving the operating system, programs and settings as part of one backup file, the computer can be restored completely to proper functioning with a minimum of effort. Where only one or more files or folders are damaged, DI7 offers very easy selective restoration.

The test computer was multiboot, Windows 98SE and Windows XP. A third partition is used for applications.

DI7 was installed in the latter. When DI7 was invoked from the Program Menu and "Backup" was selected, a window opened that offered the opportunity to select for backup any-one, two or all of the partitions. A backup was made of the XP partition. The five GBytes of data in that partition were backed up to four CD-RW disks in an hour and ten minutes. As a test, a single file, my Juno address book, was restored,. There was no problem.

User group members may purchase Drive Image 7 at a special price of \$39 by ordering from the secure web site at [www.ugr.com/order/](http://www.ugr.com/order/). Indicate the special price code of UGEVAL0903 with your order.

Drive Image 7, PowerQuest Corp., PO Box 1911, Orem, UT 84059 Phone: 801.437.8900. List Price \$69.95

*From the October 2003 issue of the newsletter of the Central Coast Computer Club, Santa Maria, California.*

## A Third of Spam Spread by Rat-infested PCs

by Bill Petitt

*Southeast Virginia Computer Group*

Nearly one-third of all spam circulating the Web is relayed through PCs that have been compromised by malicious programs known as Remote Access Trojans, according to Sophos, an antispam and antivirus company.

Graham Cluley, a senior technology consultant for Sophos, said last month that the increasing use of broadband Internet connections and a general lack of security awareness have resulted in about one in three spam e-mails being redirected through the computers of unsuspecting users.

"There are lots of people on cable modems and broadband connections that haven't properly secured their computer," he said. "They don't know it, but their PC is being used as a relay for sending spam to thousands and thousands of other people. We believe that 30 percent of all spam" — or unsolicited commercial e-mail messages — "is being sent from compromised computers."

Cluley said that if a Remote Access Trojan (RAT), a type of Trojan horse program, is able to get into a PC, an attacker could take full control of that PC, as long as it is connected to the Internet. "They can steal information, read files, write files, send e-mails from that user's name — it is as though the attacker has broken into the office or home and is sitting in front of that computer," he said.

There is also a very small chance that PC owners will have any idea their system is being used by a third party, said Cluley, who warned that attackers could remove any traces of their activity so that there would be no obvious record: "It is really just network and Internet bandwidth that is suffering — there is no permanent record left on the PC that you can look up--you wouldn't see anything if you checked your Outlook 'Sent Items' folder," he said.

Sophos is also concerned that there may be a connection between virus writers and spammers. Cluley pointed

out that the groups have similar interests, and he said he knows of worms that have attacked antispam Web sites.

"Antispam Web sites have been knocked out by these viruses," he said. "Why is that? We all suffer from spam. Virus writers are either working with spammers or they are the spammers."

## Society News

13 January, 2004 Meeting

by Dan Rothfuss

Help's Half Hour Led by: Bill Statt

**Q**: Laptop with Win 2000Pro. Attempted to recover, installed Me. When putting in Win2000, display appeared in a reduced size.

A: Those who installed Win2000 must have updated the video driver for you.

Q: Which operating system is better? XP or Win2K?

A: XP is best for photograph work. Best for games but Win2K is less resource hungry.

Q: Does close up photo work to capture coin collection. He is getting glare off of the plastic cases and white holders.

Q: How about adding a polarizing filter to your camera? Make sure that you get a circularly polarized filter that is less dependant on the angle of the light.

Q: Any suggestion for a low cost ISP?

A: Juno is free/\$10 for unlimited use. Blue Frog is \$5 per month/\$10 unlimited. Blue Light might still be around.

Q: I have Windows98 but can get a message about scanning. Then got a message about finding a problem and asked to fix it. But there is no 'ok' button to push.

A: Push the arrow on the keyboard to select one of the three choices shown. If you upgrade to 98SE that may help. Suggested that scandisk be run in safe mode. Run from the DOS mode if interruptions are still occurring. Go to Nick's website [ask Nick.com] and locate the fast shutdown patch; this might help. FSC command from the run command will check your files. This situation may be a warning that a hardware failure is possible.

Q: I have a laptop originally Me upgraded to XP. Have added a wireless network card but cannot find a driver for the audio.

A: Go to HP for the model laptop or try the website for the audio card, looking for XP drivers. There may be a site that folks have added comments/problems/solutions, too.

Q: Running XP Pro on his desktop. When they logoff, screen goes black. It sounds like it is going into hibernation. Desktops are noted for going into this mode with no way to recover. Suggest shutting down, not simply logging off.

Q: When logging off his 98SE, illegal operation message — close causes another message. Request to terminate, gets a fatal error. Problem started when he switched to Road runner.

A: Only solution is to manually reboot. Probably a memory stack issue. Usually means there is a corrupted file. My be indicating a hard disk problem.

## Program

Paint Shop Pro 8

Presented by Bill Statt

**B**ill talked about Paint Shop Pro, using notes prepared by the manufacturer. He also distributed a handout. Photo Impact is less expensive (\$69) and does a fairly good job. Price at Comp USA includes a 64 mg digital card for your camera. Elements program is often on sale with rebate offers as low as \$30. Sometimes found bundled with Album software to \$60.

## New Users Notes

by John McMillan

**I**t's a New Year but to no surprise, there are still many unanswered questions about the use of computers so the January meeting began before 6:30 and continued beyond the normal 7:30 closing time. It started with a description of a recent very narrow court ruling regarding enforcement the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. In addition to the moral implications, there are still many unresolved legal questions in the field of peer to peer file sharing.

A Blue Frog/Internet Explorer user gets screens that are two thirds size when Internet browsing. Clicking a box in the upper right corner expands the screen to full size but the next site reverts to the smaller size so he wondered if there was a way to make the full screen size permanent. Gregg Sayre suggested opening the browser; clicking and holding a corner; and dragging it to enlarge the window. He thought this new size would be remembered in the future. Bill Statt recommended using Internet Explorer version 6.1 or later and went on to say that versions ending in .0 frequently have bugs that are subsequently corrected.

Next a sporadic startup problem was described that resulted in a message "You have performed an illegal operation" superimposed on the Desktop before the machine froze. The power had to be shut off to unlock the machine but when restarted, everything worked ok. Gregg indicated that the illegal operation message is often caused by a program stepping on another programs allocated memory. He suggested clicking the Start button in the lower left corner and then going to All Programs and then the Start Up folder. Bill said you could also get there by going to My Computer and clicking on Properties and the Start Up tab. There was no mention of which operating system they were describing. Simultaneously hitting Control + Alt + Del gives a list of currently active programs and if done immediately after startup, should indicate which programs are in the startup list.

Bill also mentioned clicking the Start button, clicking Run, typing MSconfig and clicking enter. In Windows 98, this opens a System Configuration Window with multiple tabs. Clicking the Startup tab gives a list of programs with check marks in front of those activated at startup that are will be running in the background all of the time. Removing check marks from non critical programs speeds the startup process and might correct the prob-

lem; or they could be unchecked, one at a time, to find the offending program. It was pointed out that having an icon on the desktop did not activate the program but only facilitated starting it when needed.

Not all program identities are intuitively obvious so Bill suggested using a specialized Google site (<http://labs.google.com/glossary>) to search for acronyms. Another web site that cross references many programs and suffixes can be found at [ace.net.nz/tech/TechFileFormat.html](http://ace.net.nz/tech/TechFileFormat.html). While using his laptop to demonstrate opening MSconfig, Bill discovered that Open Office; which like Linux, uses open code, was in his Start Up list so he unchecked it. This free code includes calculation, data base, drawing, presentation, spread sheet, word processing, and other office functions. It is the basis for a commercial version, Star Office, that includes documentation not supplied with Open Office. Star Office can read and write many, though not all, types of text files. Its proprietary files are large and cannot be read by other programs including Filesnoop, Notepad, or Wordpad. However, Star Office can read and write .rtf files that are the choice of this writer.

Bill stressed the importance of keeping anti virus software and definitions up to date through weekly downloads. New definitions are usually posted early on Wednesdays and updates can be scheduled automatically or done manually. The purchase of McAfee or Norton Anti Virus includes 1 year of updates. After that an annual contract should be purchased or judicious shopping for discounts or refunds may yield a newer program, plus another year of updates at a lower cost.

Opinion was divided on the question of whether to update from Windows 98 to XP. The user had problems which required professional corrective work and while his machine was currently working, he was concerned about Microsoft's position on support for 98. Gregg favors XP for its robustness but Bill would not recommend updating to it. He experienced problems with: some hardware that was not compatible and had to be replaced; new drivers that were required for other hardware; and some software that would not work in the new environment. Microsoft specifies 128Mb of RAM for XP, while most people say 256 and the gurus opt for 512 for effective operation. Bill suggested shopping the ads from Best Buy, Circuit City and similar suppliers before purchasing a new larger computer to use with the existing keyboard, monitor, mouse, and speakers. He pointed out that because hardware costs have been driven down and with XP installed this might cost less than upgrading and have far fewer headaches. His advice would be different for someone whose machine was currently operating without problems.

If this summary whets your interest, why not join us at our next meeting, February 3rd at the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road.

## Planning Meeting Minutes

by Steve Staub

Present: Bob Avery, Arpad Kovacs, Tony Dellelo, Sally Springett, Bill Statt, Steve Staub

This months program was one of the best. We have programs planned and the room reserved through April.

### Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance 12/21/03 .....	\$517.46
<b>Income</b>	
Dues .....	\$165.00
<b>Expenses</b>	
St. Stephen's .....	\$75.00
Postmaster .....	50.00
Paper and labels .....	<u>108.63</u>
Total .....	\$140.99
Balance 1/24/04 .....	\$502.83

### The Lighter Side

If you've enjoyed the poem floating around the Internet under the title *If Dr. Seuss Were a Technical Writer* beginning:

"If your cursor finds a menu item  
followed by a dash,  
and the double-clicking icon puts your  
window in the trash,"

you'll be interested in the rest of the story. It can be found at: <http://www.people.cornell.edu/pages/elz1/clocktower>

### If Microsoft had invented books

1. Before you can open the cover of your new book, you must obtain a book activation code by phoning Microsoft.
2. Sorry, only one person may ever read your book.
3. It's full of spelling mistakes and typos.
4. When you're reading your book, the type can mysteriously disappear.
5. Libraries, which are for sharing books, are illegal.
6. You must acknowledge you have read and understood the Book License Agreement Hype (BLAH) before you can read your book.
7. Microsoft has the right to enter your premises to conduct book inspections to make sure your book is being read in accordance with the BLAH.
8. The Book Users' Group General Alliance (BUGGA) calculates that the annual loss of revenues to Microsoft arising from BLAH violations in 2001 was \$10.97 billion.
9. There are two versions of your book — the "Standard" and the "Pro" versions. In the standard version, those pages containing the most useful information have been stuck together.
10. Confidential information is inexplicably in bigger type that can be easily read by anyone glancing over your shoulder.