

Using Photoshop (6 or higher) Background Eraser Tool

by Irwin Wiener
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Objective: To remove a person's head from a background in a photo (A) and move it into a new file photo (B).

1. Choose the Background Eraser Tool. This gives you a circle with a + (plus) sign inside. You can increase or decrease the circle size by using the bracket keys on the keyboard. Set tolerance in the options bar at the top of the screen between 10-15.
2. Go around person's head in (A) keeping the + sign in the circle outside the head; this results in a checkerboard pattern around the head. (Use Edit-Step backward or undo when needed to make necessary corrections as you work). If checkerboard pattern does not appear, increase the tolerance. When the checkerboard pattern is all around the head, you can brighten and widen it using the regular eraser tool
3. Select the Lasso Tool and make selection around the head staying inside the checkerboard pattern. Lasso must be made in one loop and the ends connected. Marching ants appear around the head.
4. Choose Select-Inverse. Marching ants also appear around the outer edge of the entire photo.
5. Press Delete key.
6. Choose File -New (you can change dimensions of the new file in Box)
7. Choose Window-Document. Click on the highlighted document name, (in Photoshop 6, click on the file name) Click O.K. in the new file window.
8. Using the move tool, move the head into the new file (B).
9. X out the old window (A).
10. Clean up the "dirt" around the photo using the regular Eraser Tool.

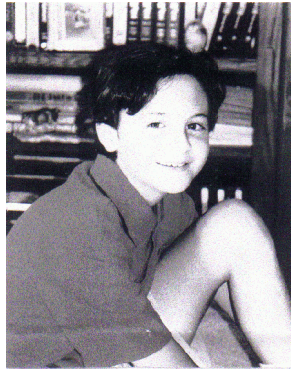


Figure A



Figure B

Suggestions:

Crop the opening image if it is more than you need to work with.

It is easier if you enlarge the photo you are working with.

When moving one photo into another make sure the resolution of both are the same (adjustments> image size> adjust Resolution).

Adventures Buying a Camera Online

by Bill Statt
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Let tell you a short summary of a bad online buying experience. I like to buy older versions of cameras to save money. I went to PriceGrabber and a site said a specific camera was in stock. They had over 1400 reviews, only 7 bad. Needless to say I did not get the camera right away. I ordered it on March 28. They billed on March 30. They changed the status of the order from Processing to Shipping on April 14. What does "shipping" mean? They didn't ship it until May 8th. Aren't Internet sites supposed to wait until they ship before they bill?

I called many times. I wanted to know if they even had it in stock. The salespeople said they could not get that information from their computer. I asked them where the information was. I was told the warehouse had the information. I asked if they could contact the warehouse. Three of the times I called, I had them call their warehouse to see if they even had it in stock. I found out it was not in stock. I wanted to cancel the order. They said they would take a 15% restocking fee. Even on a camera that was not in stock. They said that was in their policy and I should read it. I went to the vendor's web site and searched for the camera. It did not come up.

I called and asked to speak to Michael. He said he was the president of their company on answers he gave explaining bad reports on PriceGrabber. Later, a supervisor told me he was not the president of the company. I asked him to make some offer because of the problems I had been having. I asked for an extended warranty (refurbished cameras only have a 90 day warranty. I didn't see that in their policy.) He agreed to send me a three year warranty. I finally received the camera on May 14th. It didn't work.

A salesperson said to send it back and put in a copy of the shipping bill so they could re-imburse me for the shipping. They did not re-imburse me for the shipping. I again talked to the same supervisor and she said they don't do that, read their policy. She said the salesperson had no authority to make that offer and had been fired. She said they had spent a lot of time training her and she just couldn't learn. These were refurbished cameras.

While the camera was in transit back to their site, I called and asked another salesperson if there were new ones in stock. He said he couldn't get that information from his computer. I told he could get the information if he called the warehouse. He called and said that they didn't have any new ones in stock. On PriceGrabber, this vendor said they did have new ones in stock. I asked to pay for an upgrade to a brand new one. The salesperson said that wasn't in their policy. A half hour later, he

called back and said he was wrong they did have new ones in stock and would bill me for the difference and ship out a new one on Monday.

The camera I got was a re-furbished one. I did not get an extended warranty. I called back and spoke to the supervisor. She said Michael did not have the authority to give me a warranty. She said he was not the president of the company as he had written in his answers to bad reviews in PriceGrabber. She said he had another title but could not tell me what it was. We haggled for over an hour on the phone and finally she said she would send me an extended Warranty. Try to read the extended warranty before you buy. It is not from the manufacturer. And, there are so many outs, it reads like Swiss cheese. They only have an obligation to replace the camera with a camera of equal value when you make your claim. They don't have an obligation to fix yours. Prices constantly go down. Also, who decides what is equal value?

They could send you something with a cost equaling one on the day you make your claim, but it probably won't have near the features. Also, I'll bet that they use a manufacture's suggested retail price. I wrote a very bad review and sent it to PriceGrabber and PriceGrabber never published it. I went to other low price sites that advertised on PriceGrabber that claimed this camera was in stock. When I searched their web page, they did not have it. I had to go to the 8th price up before I found one on the vendor's web page.

CAVEAT: I don't trust PriceGrabber. The site I used was a 4 star. Do the vendor sites salt the reviews at PriceGrabber? Search the vendor site for any camera you want to order. Call and make the vendor's salespeople look in their inventory. Look at the policies for the sites before you order. I don't believe the rating list at PriceGrabber any more. Don't let a vendor string you along when you are buying Online. Write down every call you make to the vendor and the exchange and name of the person you talk to. Write down a summary of what you talk about. When I got the second re-furbished camera, I called back and complained that I was supposed to get a new one. The sales person couldn't find any records of my calls. After I started reading off the dates, times, exchange numbers, names and summaries, he suddenly found the information. But he said it was against their policy to change and original order without a 15% restocking fee. I had to accept the refurbished camera. I called the supervisor back and she said the sales people did not have the authority to make the deals they made with me.

Media Notes

by Bill Pettit

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Here's one for you to ponder. A fellow was running Windows XP and always had shortcuts to his disc drives on his desktop. But the shortcut to the CD

drive no longer works. He called Gateway and they can't help. Can you? His other shortcuts work.

It looks like he has been snagged by the Law of Unintended Consequences. Microsoft issued a security update (821557) last July that knocked out CD shortcuts. For what it's worth, it did the same to shortcuts to the floppy drive.

Here's information on the update:
[http:// snipurl.com/windowsshell](http://snipurl.com/windowsshell)

The problem apparently does not occur on every machine. I have XP Home installed on a test box, and the CD shortcut works fine there. But it will not work on my XP Professional installation. Go figure! Microsoft has a fix available. You'll have to call the company to get it. According to Microsoft, the fix is still being tested. That tells me you might be a guinea pig if you install it. The fix will be included in Service Pack 2, which is due out this summer. The service pack will include all security updates, both those already released and anything new. Personally, I'd wait for the service pack. Let somebody else expose their computer to experimental code. You'll find a little information on the fix at:

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;EN-US;824143>

Shortcuts to individual drives are easy to create. First, click the Windows key and the letter D to close all windows. Then click Start>>My Computer. In the upper right corner of the window, click the middle button so the window is reduced to half size. Click the drive for which you want the shortcut. Hold the mouse button down and drag it to the desktop.

Another Q & A

Q. I want to scan our family pictures and put them on CDs so they can be shared and won't be lost. What should I be looking for in a scanner?

A. Scanners are excellent tools. And they are inexpensive. You should be able to get a good one for less than \$100. Assuming you're scanning pictures – not slides – you'll want a flatbed scanner. These scanners have a horizontal glass bed, covered by a lid. You lay the picture on the glass face-down and close the lid. The picture is scanned when light from a fixture below the glass is bounced off it. It is captured by a charge-coupled device, where the image is stored. The scanner digitizes (changes into 1's and 0's) the picture and moves it to the computer's hard drive.

If you are also scanning slides or negatives, you'll need an adapter. The adapter will shine a light from above, through the slide or negative. Adapters are awkward, which means the scanning process will be slow. If you have lots of slides or negatives, consider getting a film/slide scanner. If you have tons of them, take them to a photo shop.

Prints should be scanned at 300 dots per inch, if they're going to be printed. If you plan to crop the picture and then enlarge it, scan it at 600 dpi. However, you need only scan it at 72 dpi if it will be viewed only on a monitor or sent via email. The greater the resolution, the

larger the file. Larger files take longer to download in e-mail and are slower to open on a computer. So keep the resolution as low as possible.

A scanner can be used to input text into a computer, too. When you scan text--for instance, a newspaper story -- the scanner takes a picture of the clip. You can change that to a word processing document using optical character recognition software. Try to get OCR software with your scanner.

Here's another question I get quite often:

I'm ready to buy a new computer. What do I need to: burn CDs, convert home videos to DVDs, and convert cassette tapes to CDs? The latter is the most important issue for me.

For starters, a run-of-the-mill computer should be able to handle this. If you are editing your videos, in addition to converting them, you may need more memory. Let's go through some of the finer points.

Burning CDs is routine today. There are so many programs available that will do this, including the software that comes with your burner. Since you also want to make DVDs, buy a DVD burner, rather than a CD-R. Most DVD burners will make CD-Rs and CD-RWs, in addition to DVDs. CD burners will not make DVDs. When buying a DVD burner, you'll run into different standards -- DVD -R/RW, DVD+R/RW and DVD-RAM. If you are going to run your DVDs through the DVD player and television, check to see what formats the player can handle. Generally, DVD-R and DVD+R are the most compatible with players. Base your choice of a DVD burner format on what the player can handle.

If your home videos are analog, you will need converter equipment to change them to digital. There is a wide selection of such equipment available. For instance, the Dazzle Fusion system includes an external box that connects to the computer. It does the conversion, and includes software to help in editing movies. Fusion is \$100. Another good product is Adaptec's VideOh! DVD. Also external, it lists for \$150. There is more information on these products at:

<http://www.pinnaclesys.com>

<http://www.adaptec.com> .

None of this is very taxing for modern computers. If you do a lot of editing, get a large hard drive and 1 gigabyte of memory.

Converting cassette tapes is not difficult. You will need an audio system in your computer, something almost all new machines have. Run a cable from the line-out port of your tape player or receiver to the line-in port of your computer's sound system.

I would use the free Audacity software to convert the sound to digital and clean up any pops or hisses. You can download Audacity at:

[http://audacity.sourceforge.net/about .php](http://audacity.sourceforge.net/about.php)

Once you have your music on your hard drive, you can export it to CDs. The software that comes with your DVD/CD burner will do that, as will many free programs.

All of the things you want to do are mainstream issues today. Just about any modern computer will do fine.

Distance calculator

Have you ever wondered how far it is to Peru or Paris? Here's a site that calculates the distance between two cities. You can enter just about any city in the world. It provides the latitude and longitude of the two cities, plus the distance in miles.

<http://www.indo.com/distance/>

Did you know that it is possible to make a CD recovery disk?

Unlike the software in the manufacturer's CD, this CD would restore the computer to its condition when the CD was produced. Yes, you can do this.

Imaging software can restore an exact image of your hard drive. This is especially helpful if your old hard drive fails, and you have to start over with a new one. There are several programs that do this. Two good ones are made by Symantec -- Norton Ghost and Drive Image. Another is Image Commander, part of the DriveWorks package made by V Communications. All are \$70.

To use them, you burn an image of the hard drive to a CD or DVD. This can be a lengthy process, given the size of today's hard drives. A DVD is preferable to a CD, because the DVD can hold much more data. You can also burn an image to a spare hard drive. Then, if the worst happens, you can simply replace the bad drive with the spare.

A hard drive image is much preferable to a manufacturer's restore disk. A restore disk will return the computer to what it looked like when new. That means you lose all of the files you created, and all of the programs you installed.

Because imaging is a fairly lengthy process, you will probably want to create an image only occasionally. Remember that any files you create after doing the image will not be protected. So it is best to institute a backup schedule along with the imaging.

Verbatim Spins Out Dual-Layer DVD+R Discs

Discs pack almost twice the capacity of predecessors, work with most current drives.

The first dual-layer DVD+R recording media are set to go on sale in Japan at the end of this month and in the U.S. in June, says disc maker Mitsubishi Kagaku Media.

The discs were developed jointly by Mitsubishi Kagaku, which uses the Verbatim brand name, and Koninklijke Philips Electronics NV. The discs offer 8.5GB of recording space compared to the 4.7GB of space available on a standard DVD+R disc. They will cost around \$13.30 per disc in Japan, said a spokeswoman for the company.

How It Works

As the name suggests, the extra recording capacity is made possible through the addition of a second recording layer inside the disc. To make it possible for a single laser to access both recording layers, one behind the other, the top layer has been made semi-transparent. That allows

enough reflectivity for data storage and playback while also allowing light to pass through to the second layer.

Similar technology is already in use in commercial DVD-Video discs and so is supported by almost all DVD drives currently on the market. The dual-layer discs should be compatible with any drive that supports these discs, according to Mitsubishi Kagaku.

Going for Drives

Recording drives supporting the new media are already on sale.

Sony launched both the internal DRU-700A and external DRX-700UL drives in Japan, the United States, and Europe in May. The drives support dual-layer DVD+R recording at 2.4X and also writing of single-layer DVD+/-R at 8X, DVD+/-RW at 4X, CD-R at 40X, and CD-RW at 24X. Philips also showed a drive at the Cebit electronics fair in Hanover, Germany, in March. The DVDR1640K drive supports up to 16X recording on single-layer DVD+R discs and 4X recording on DVD+RW discs.

An alternative to dual-layer technology is double-sided discs. These offer double the storage space at 9.4GB but require the user to take out and flip over the disc to gain access to the second side. Such discs are already on the market.

If you've ever been stuck for a solution to a problem that probably is related to Windows XP, take a look at this site. Our editor, Ann Harney was kind enough to pass this on after another hair-pulling experience with one of her machines.

http://www.webtree.ca/windowsxp/repair_xp.htm

Browser Hijacking & How to Stop It

If you thought Pop-ups were annoying, just wait until your web browser is hijacked! Here's how to regain control and kick out the hijackers, kung-fu style.

Browser hijacking is one of the web's constant dangers. Whether it arrives in the form of a flood of obscene pop-up windows assaulting you after a mistyped URL, or malicious code taking over your browser completely, chances are good that every Internet user will be subjected to this practice in some form.

Fortunately, avoiding a browser hijacking is not impossible if you stay aware, and take a few simple precautions. Take the metaphor of locking your car doors while you are out for a drive as an example. If your browser keeps redirecting you to www.somerandomsite.com and you are here looking for ways to cure what ails you, I'll cover that too.

To sum it up, I'll show you how to avoid and defeat these annoying and potentially embarrassing attacks on your computer, starting with seven preventative measures;

Use common sense

Use and update an anti-virus program regularly

Use antivirus 'auto protection'

Keep an anti-hijack 'toolkit' for emergencies

Change your Internet Explorer security settings

Try an alternate browser

What's a browser Hijacker?

This term covers a range of malicious software. The most generally accepted description for browser hijacking software is external code that changes your Internet Explorer settings. Generally your home page will be changed and new favorites will be added that point to sites of dubious content. In most cases, the hijacker will have made registry changes to your system, causing the home page to revert back to the unwanted destination even if you change it manually. A browser Hijacker may also disallow access to certain web pages, for example the site of an anti-spyware software manufacturer like Lavasoft. These programs have also been known to disable Antivirus and anti-spyware software. Most browser hijackers take advantage of Internet Explorer's ability to run ActiveX scripts straight from a web page. Generally, these programs will request permission to install themselves via a popup that loads when you visit a certain site. If you accidentally give them permission to install, IE will execute the program on your computer, changing your settings. Others may use security holes within Internet Explorer to install themselves automatically without any user interaction at all. Worse, these can be launched from popup ad windows which the user has not even intended to view.

As well as making changes to your home page and other Internet Explorer settings, a hijacker may also make entries to the HOSTS file on your system. This special file directly maps DNS addresses (web URLs) to IP addresses, so every time you typed 'www.pcstats.com' (as an example) you might be redirected to the IP address of a sponsored search or porn site instead.

Some browser hijackers may also install themselves onto your computer system as legitimate programs, leaving an entry in the 'add-remove programs' list in the control panel. There are many faces of browser hijacking, and to combat the situation, you have to be aware of all the tricks and loopholes that make this scourge possible. Browser hijacking isn't necessarily a virus, and isn't necessarily adware, so stopping it isn't necessarily best left to software monitoring programs either.

The worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, a browser hijacker can make the Internet almost impossible to use, popping up legions of advertising windows and directing you helplessly to sites of its choosing. These programs often use a combination of hidden files and registry settings to reinstall themselves after removal, so deleting them or changing your IE settings back may well not work.

A much older practice that some shady websites use is to bombard you with advertising popups, some spawning new popup ads when closed, and some lacking any close controls at all, rendering them difficult to get rid of. While this is not technically browser hijacking – it does not affect the functioning of your web browser – it still has the effect of disrupting your surfing experience.

Part 1: preparation and precautions

You can massively reduce the risk of your browser being taken over by a hijacker by taking a few simple precautions. First and foremost is to update Windows by going to <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>.

Microsoft, whatever people might say, is very active in the area of security and is constantly patching and updating program vulnerabilities which allow things like browser hijacking.

By keeping your machine up to date with the latest service packs and patches, you can eliminate a whole range of potential trouble. Many browser hijackers are geared to attack areas of vulnerability in Windows and Internet Explorer which have since been patched. Provided you are up to date, you avoid a raft of potential trouble.

The automatic update function included in Windows XP (and Windows 2000 service pack 3) is a convenient way to make sure you are up to date. To enable this feature, right click on 'my computer' and select properties, then choose the 'automatic updates' tab.

If it is not already, check the 'keep my computer up to date...' checkbox to enable automatic updating.

Now run Windows update from 'start\all programs\windows update' to make sure you are correctly patched for now.

Use common sense

A majority of browser hijacking programs will actually request your permission before installing themselves. If only real hijackers were so polite... Anyhow, the point is if anything requests permission to install on your system while you are browsing the 'net, say NO unless you are absolutely darn sure you know what it is, and what it does.

This excellent surfing habit will also protect you from many forms of spyware and adware such as the omnipresent Gain\Gator\Claria Corporation software.

Funny how many of the same street -proofing techniques you learned as a kid apply on today's Internet... "Kids, just say NO to spyware!"

Use and update an anti-spyware program regularly

Ad-aware and Spybot S&D are the two anti-spyware programs that I recommend using. Since browser hijackers are considered an offshoot of the whole spyware \adware\malware phenomenon, both these programs are capable of detecting and often eliminating our current subject. Keep them updated and scan with them often to keep your PC clear of unwanted 'marketing initiatives' as well as browser hijackers.

Use Anti-virus programs regularly

Many browser hijackers are also identified and stopped by anti-virus software packages. Running Norton Antivirus with 'auto-protect' enabled is a good idea as a security measure, and there are many other equivalent antivirus programs that can help.

Use antivirus 'auto protection'

Many AV programs come with a program that constantly scans information entering and leaving your computer for viruses and malware. Norton's 'auto-protect'

is one example of this. While they can occasionally cause trouble with installing and running software, these programs are your friends when it comes to protecting your PC from browser hijackers and Trojan horse viruses contracted from websites. Make sure your antivirus package has an equivalent feature up and running.

Keep an anti-hijack 'toolkit' for emergencies

There are several free programs available which will help you recover your system in the event of a hijacked browser. Ad-aware and Spybot, which I covered above, are two of them. In addition, download and store Hijackthis and CWSshredder. Both of these programs can help you recover in the case of an emergency. I will detail their use in the second part of this article. A reputable Antivirus program like those provided by Norton, McAfee or Panda is also essential, as many browser hijackers are considered to be 'Trojan horse' viruses and can be detected and removed by antivirus software.

Change your Internet Explorer security settings

IE contains some security features which can be used to ward off annoying malware like browser hijackers. Open Internet Explorer, go to the 'tools' menu and select 'Internet options.'

Now select the 'security' tab.

If you want the highest degree of protection against browser hijackers and other malicious online code, set your Internet zone to the 'high' security setting. This will ensure that IE does not run activeX instructions, the means by which most browser hijackers get access to your computer.

Note that this may also cause problems and missing content in some legitimate web pages.

To get around this, you can place trusted websites that you regularly visit into the 'trusted sites' Internet zone.

Site addresses that you enter here will be mostly unrestricted, allowing them to display their content properly.

Try an alternate browser

The best way to defend against many browser hijackers is to stop using Internet Explorer altogether. Since a majority of these programs are coded specifically for IE, switching browsers will render them harmless. Consider Mozilla as one alternative.

Repairing a browser hijack

So your browser is sending you to www.youbuynowdammit.com every time you open it? Can't seem to change it, and obscene ads are popping up all over?

Quick note: Dealing with popup overload

Have you ever mistyped a URL and ended up with a never-ending tide of filthy pop up ads which you frantically attempt to close before your spouse/boss/grandma walks in? If so, you'll be relieved to hear that there is a quick and dirty way to stop this without shutting off the computer or the monitor. On Windows XP or 2000, simply press CTRL+ALT+DEL and go to the 'processes' tab. From here, highlight 'IEXPLORE.EXE' and hit 'end

pro-cess.' This will close all open IE windows. Now you can reopen the browser in peace.

Fixing a reset Homepage

First of all, try changing your homepage back to its normal setting. This will likely not work, but it's worth a try and will help us to gauge the severity of the problem. From Internet Explorer, go to 'tools\internet options' and change the home page address back to your normal site.

If you have noticed that new entries have been added to your 'favorites' list, remove them by going to 'favorites\organize favorites' and deleting the offending entries. Now restart your computer and reload IE. Are things back to normal? If so, great. If not, read on.

Using Ad-aware

First things first. If you have not already, download and run Ad-aware. Make sure you update the program first via its built in procedure so that you know you are up-to-date. Do a full system scan and make note of any findings, especially processes and registry changes.

Delete all items found by the program, then make sure to empty the recycling bin.

Now restart your computer and run Ad-aware again, with the same procedure. Hopefully you will get a clean bill of health. If so, try your browser again. If everything is back to normal, great.

If not, try setting the home page and deleting any new favourites manually, as detailed above, then restart your system again.

If your browser is not back to normal by this point, or if Ad-aware is still picking up nasty processes and registry entries, it's time to move to the next step.

Antivirus Scan in safe mode

To start an Antivirus scan in safe mode, you first have to ensure that the software has been recently updated with the latest antivirus patch. If that is the case, then restart your system in safe mode.

To do this: Press 'F8' repeatedly immediately after the POST screen, the first screen you see when your computer starts up. This will bring up the Windows boot menu. Select 'boot in safe mode' or the equivalent. Once Windows has loaded in safe mode, do a full system scan with your antivirus software and delete or quarantine any infected files.

Reboot in normal mode and recheck your browser. If all is not well, proceed to the next step.

Using Hijackthis and CWShredder

These two free utilities are excellent tools to use in any case of browser hijacking. Hijackthis assembles a list of unusual or changed registry and startup entries on your system and allows you to delete them if you so desire. CWShredder is specifically intended to remove the various varieties of the "Coolwebsearch" browser hijacker/Trojan program, currently the most prolific (and difficult to remove) hijacker on the Internet.

To use Hijackthis, start the program and make sure you have the latest version by going to 'configuration/misc tools/check for updates online.' In the

main program window, click 'scan' to check your computer for suspicious registry and startup entries.

The program will produce a list of items it considers suspicious. You can use the 'info on selected item' button to see more details on specific lines. The checkbox at the beginning of each line marks that item for fixing or deletion.

Look the list over carefully. If there are any words or lines you recognize here from the symptoms of your browser problems, delete the offending lines. For a brief reference to entries that should be deleted, look here and (<http://www.spywareinfo.com/~merijn/htlogtutorial.html>).

Note that the majority of the things that Hijackthis finds will be harmless customization that you have made. For example, changing your homepage from MSN to Google would generate a line in Hijackthis. For this reason, the makers of the program recommend that you post your results to the forum here (<http://forums.spywareinfo.com/>), where you can find assistance. To do this, hit the 'save log' button, then copy and paste the contents of the log file into your forum topic.

To use CWShredder, simply start the program, use 'check for update' to make sure you have the latest version, then hit 'fix.' It will check your system against a list of current CWS variants, and fix any infections it finds.

Run both programs as described above, then empty the recycling bin, restart your computer, rerun both programs and then check to see if your problem has been fixed. If not, proceed to the next step below.

Manual system search; HOSTS file

If none of the above methods have eliminated your problem, the next step is a manual search through several areas of your system, looking for signs of the offending program. To do this: First go to the control panel and open 'add or remove programs.' Look for any suspicious entries here (software you don't recognize, or which is named oddly or contains links to the problems you are experiencing.) and remove them.

Empty the recycling bin.

Open the HOSTS file by launching a Notepad window and opening the 'C:\WINDOWS SYSTEM 32 DRIVERS \ETC \HOSTS' file. Note that the HOSTS file has no extension, so it will not appear as a text file. You will need to change the 'files of type' dropdown box to 'all files' in order to see it.

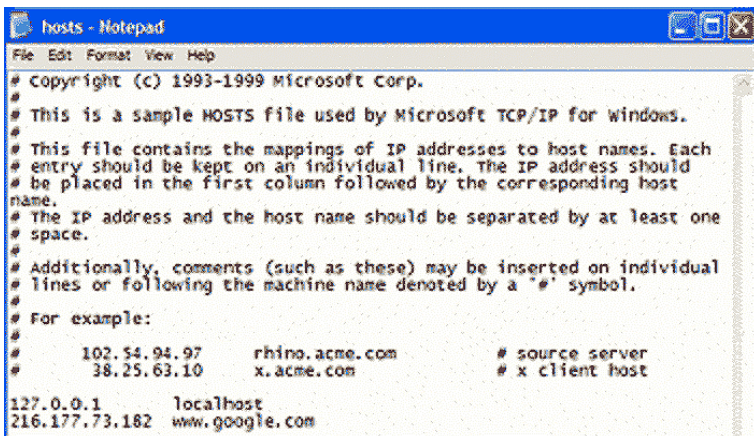
The HOSTS file provides a means for your system to resolve DNS addresses (like www.abc.com) into IP addresses for transferring data across a network or the Internet.

Typing the addresses from the right hand column into your browser will result in it being directed to the IP address to the left of that address. In this way, a browser hijacker can divert traffic automatically from legitimate pages to those of its own choosing, since your computer will check its own HOSTS file for data on an address you

enter before it asks your Internet Service Provider's DNS server for information.

The only entry in a normal HOSTS file should be '127.0.0.1 localhost'

Unless you have customized it yourself or your computer is part of a network which is managed by someone else. Note that in some cases, other programs such as Norton's email protection software may insert their own entries into the hosts file. What you are looking for is a diversion of commonly used websites or Internet Explorer search functions to a specific valid IP address.



The picture above shows a HOSTS file with a foreign entry which would redirect a browser to the IP address '216.177.73.182' if 'www.google.com' was requested. Eliminate any foreign entries and save the file.

Manually Checking the registry

Now let's check the Windows registry .Open the registry editor by going to 'start /run' and typing 'regedit.'

From here, open the 'edit' menu and click 'find.' Now type in the URL of the web page you are redirected to by the browser hijacker. If you find an entry, delete it and press F3 to continue searching through the registry. Delete all matching registry entries, but first make a note of their contents, looking for any keywords. You can do successive registry searches on these words if your problem is not fixed.

Now empty the recycling bin again for luck and restart the computer. Check to see if your problem has gone. If it has not, there are likely settings in the registry which you missed. Try all three manual searches again. Using the above methods should quickly make your browser hijacking a thing of the past.

Now that your computer is clean again, please be careful. Increasingly, the dark corners of the Internet are a dangerous place to surf. Be sensible, follow our tips and keep your guard up. Note that browser- hijacking programs are constantly emerging and changing, just like computer viruses, so it pays to keep your scanning programs updated. Scanning your computer weekly for spyware and viruses is always a great idea too.

Most of the tools used in this article are provided free of charge by individuals who have made wiping out browser hijackers and other spyware a personal crusade. If they worked for you, show your appreciation.

<http://www.pcstats.com/articleview.cfm?articleID=1579>

Wow, that was a long one, wasn't it? I'll be back next month with some more useful info. Stay well.

Don't Be a Victim of Health Scare Stories

by Alicia King Padgett
APCUG Advisor for Region 9

Health scare artists are utilizing the Internet as a medium for terrorizing the public, and unfortunately many adults are taking the stories seriously. These tall tales are often written citing evidence and research that sounds legitimate. Frequently an e-mail is sent to you from a reliable friend who had received it from another acquaintance who had "personal knowledge or personal experience" with the alleged dangerous item. The health scare messages are always the same — whatever it is will make you sick or even cause death.

If you try to research accurate health information about the topic sent, you may literally become caught in the Web, where health hoaxes and urban medical myths run rampant. Many of these Websites appear to have valid researched data.

Before you decide to believe or, worse forward e-mail with serious health claims, do a little checking. Start on the Web with www.urbanlegends.com or www.snopes.com that catalogue the more persistent rumors. These two sites also detail persistent legends on other topics in addition to health scare stories.

Then go to reliable health sites, like:

www.mayohealth.org for general health

www.medhelp.org (especially good for cardiology)

www.oncolink.org for cancer

www.cancer.gov for cancer

www.navigator.tufts.edu for nutrition

www.fda.gov for latest updates on food /drugs as well as extensive archives

So keep yourself informed and don't become one of the individuals caught in a web of confusion by believing the stories and passing them on to others.

Many of us have been victim of health-related frauds, myths, and fallacies. We have to make many decisions about our health and care and want to make them will informed. This site will keep you up-to-date on the latest findings on health care frauds.

QuackWatch is an informative site that deals with such issues like growth hormone scams, coral calcium, and acupuncture. It has a section on allergies and alternative medicine. You might want to start with *Tips for Navigating our Web Sites*. In the "Quackery" section you will find the following sections: Seven Warning Signs

of Bogus Science, Ten Ways to Avoid Being Quacked, Signs of a “Quacky” web site.

Always seek a second opinion, but please see www.quackwatch.org.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. 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.



The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando CUG

Some Rebates Aren't So Bad

We've all heard horror stories about rebates and I seldom purchase anything with a rebate unless it's a good deal even without the rebate. I recently purchased an 80-gig external Western Digital hard drive for \$110 that had two rebates, one for \$30 and another for \$20. After mailing them, I noticed I had mailed the wrong barcode. A month later I received a postcard telling me I had not included the UPC barcode and offering the opportunity to resubmit it, which I did for the \$30 rebate. Several days later, I received the same notice for the \$20 rebate, but misplaced that card. Since I had only seven days to resubmit it, I thought all was lost when I finally found it too late.

I gave up on that rebate, but was filing another for a free telephone and was confused about something. I called the 800 number they provided for questions, and got my answer. Before she hung-up, she asked if she could be of any further help and I laughingly told her about the one I had misplaced and the time had expired. She said it was no problem and after giving her my information, she fixed it and got it back in the process. It was an OfficeMax rebate, which I have since received.

Since then, I called the OfficeMax rebate center about another one I hadn't received after almost a year. I was told the Seattle rebate center it was mailed to was closed, but he would fix it. I received the acknowledgment by e-mail the next day, and the check a week later. Fortunately, I have not lost any rebates so far.

Ain't Technology Grand?

Trade shows often have magazine stands with interesting ones to read. At the Home Electronics Expo I found ElectronicHouse [<http://www.electronichouse.com>] which I enjoyed, and this item caught my eye. We have often looked in our bathroom vanity's mirror. What about one that may seem like it morphs? Royal Phillips Electronics has developed a new twist for the bathroom vanity called Mirror TV, and it might be looking back at you, sort of. It will turn into a TV screen that could be showing your favorite news broadcast or stock reports. How about that — turned off, it's a mirror, or on, it's a TV! When offered, it will first appear in hotels, then to home users sometime in 2005. If the news is interesting

though, how long might those BMs take? What about if your stock is dropping? Don't watch it too long or you may shut off the circulation to your legs. Can they be sued for that? Probably!

ElectronicHouse also had an article about putting your audio system on IP. Giving your speakers their own IP address properly can make amazing improvements to the sound. I was also looking through an issue of *FlatPanel World* that had interesting articles. It is a new publication by CE-Pro. One article offers explanations about various types of flat panel displays. I didn't see a Web site except for the parent magazine's [<http://www.ce-pro.com>] Author Robert Archer stresses that dealers should know the difference between LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) and LCOS (Liquid Crystal On Silicon) as well as plasma display technologies when giving their sales pitch. He explains them all including DLP (Digital Light Processing) and explains the importance of calibration on a thin screen, which can cost upward of \$300. He discusses some technologies of plasma displays. I saw several great articles about FPDs (Flat Panel Displays) and audio techniques.

In *Digital Connect Magazine's* March issue [<http://www.digitalconnectmag.com>], I read an article concerning the licensing of low voltage integrators (installers). I'll bet many of you didn't know that in some states, integrators who work with low voltage systems, such as remote controlled lighting, audio /video or telephone systems, must be licensed. Their license presently specifies 50 volts or less. One state is considering a bill requiring home installers performing electrical work at more than 50 volts to obtain high voltage licenses. CEDA (Consumer Electronic Design and Installation Assoc.) is lobbying the state to classify high-voltage projects as starting at 100 volts, a level that would not shut out integrators with a low voltage license from working with audio, video and home telephone systems. You might think that anybody could pull in some low voltage cables and hook them up according to the color code, but an experienced integrator for that type of wiring would know the importance of the proper wire and routing to eliminate interference and other problems. From my own experience installing auto audio, wire placement is extremely important. Not just anybody is capable of always installing a successful integrated digital system without experience.

With home wiring turning toward IT more and more, appliances and controls are also changing. For example, you are all familiar with your AC/heat thermostat, which originally had only the ability to turn the system on or off. Times are changing — new controls are capable of talking to the appliances as well as controlling them. Other appliances will become the same way in the future. New technologies pretty much lets your home think for itself. I hope mine doesn't get mad at me for neglecting it!

Last Minute Changes

Two vendors pulled out at the last minute because their material suppliers are raising prices at a dramatic

rate and they want that to stabilize, so here are some things I have kept in reserve. Also, if you forgot to take advantage of the great Executive Software Deal, I think they will still honor it, but act soon [<http://consumer.execsoft.com/home.asp>]. Don't forget also the Mail-Washer deal from last month. [<http://www.firetrust.com/products/pro/>].

A Nice Tool for Teaching about Computers

This item has limited interest at best for my readers, but since we have teachers in our user groups, I am including it. Some larger user groups also have hardware SIGs, some of which are structured and might be interested in this product, although it may be too costly for a SIG. While browsing through the "Association For Technical And Education Show" I saw many types of training stations and this one caught my eye. It is a "Personal Computer Training Station" with the motherboard, keyboard and some other components mounted on the top, easily accessible right before your eyes. Pull out a drawer and you will find the drives, which can be snapped out of their respective holders and quickly unplugged. It has a custom-built 350-watt UL power supply and supports AT/ATX/P4 motherboards. It also offers high-speed hard drive duplication capability.

This is a sort of breadbox type workstation and everything is very handy. Go to [<http://www.atp-p51.com>] where you can get more information and pictures of the product. The guy said he was unable to offer a deal because he depends on distributors.

Opt Out of Spyware

According to Kim Komando, the Network Advertising Initiative, [<http://www.networkadvertising.org>] helps you drop both DoubleClick and Avenue A Inc., known for spyware. I haven't tried it yet.

Accidentally Deleted Those Pictures?

Don't worry, if you were using your digital camera and, with a slip of the finger, you deleted something from your Smart Media or Compact Flash Card that you later want, here is the answer. Just go to [http://www.z-a-recovery.com/digital_image_recovery.htm] and download Zero Assumption Digital Image Recovery at no cost to you. Even though it says no image is there, if it used to be there, this program will recover it. Thank God for freebies, and for Bob Schuchman of San Diego PC UG who wrote about this one some time ago in their newsletter.

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 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]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for interesting articles from user group newsletters. I also



posted some interesting NEW Web site pages for your viewing. They contain new product announcements that I received over a period of time. More will be forthcoming.

The Lazy Webmaster

Adding Function to Your Site Remotely

by Susan Ives
Alamo PC Users Group

"Interactive" is good, or so the Internet pundits tell us. Visitors to your site get a kick out of chatting, joining a discussion board, being a part of your little world on the Web. They want to talk to you, forward articles to friends – they want to be a part of it.

But not all Web hosting services offer pre-packaged interactivity and contracting for custom services can be prohibitively expensive. Lazy Webmasters get it for free. E-cards:

You may have visited sites that let you send electronic greeting cards to your friends. Services such as Kangaroo Cards put free greeting cards on your site, and even allow you to create your own custom cards that your visitors can send. On the Lazy Webmaster site you can see and send cards for Alamo PC and the Lazy Webmaster. Custom cards are designed in a graphics program; I used PhotoShop, but any graphics program will work.

Discussion Boards:

I'm ambivalent about discussion boards, especially for lazy Webmasters. You must monitor them, or they will get out of control. Weird, often nasty, people can take over your board and post truly vile things. When I must use a discussion board I usually create one in MS Front-Page. This has the advantages of being ad-free and not requiring registration. However, there are several sites that offer free ready-made discussion boards. If you go to the Lazy Webmaster Web site, I have created one using EZBoard. Make sure that the board you choose uses threaded messages: one that groups messages and their replies together. Most do. Do visit the PC Alamo discussion board

Chat Rooms:

While discussion boards are asynchronous (people post messages that can be read at any time) chat happens in real time. They seem to work best when chats are scheduled and advertised in advance. The free chat rooms available from Internet services use Java Script and integrate right into your web page. Look for chat rooms at

- * www.parachat.com
- * www.quickchat.com
- * chatroomweb.com.

Tell-a-friend:

When you ask people how they hear about their favorite Web sites, many will tell you that a friend

referred them. Tell-a-Friend utilities streamline the referral process. Your visitor's just fill out a short form and the Web site URL is forwarded. BraveNet offers a nice service

E-mail lists:

If you are just e-mailing a few people you can do it efficiently through your regular e-mail program. When the list gets large – or when you are inviting the public to join your list – it makes sense to use list management software. This allows people to sign up automatically, doesn't tick off your ISP and generally makes the process run a lot smoother. Yahoo groups host mailing lists (called groups; you get other features, such as an online calendar.) Topica is another popular list manager.

Guest Books:

I've never seen the point of guest books but I suspect they could be useful for a tourist-oriented business, such as a B&B. You can get free guest books at sites such as

- * www.theguestbook.com
- * www.guestpage.com
- * www.bravenet.com
- * guest.onecenter.com

Hit counters:

If you don't have other options, a web counter is a good way of keeping track of the number of visitors to your site. Most Web hosts offer more sophisticated tracking as part of the hosting package, and for a business site it is more professional to be circumspect about hits. A good free counter is at freelogs.com. It has dozens of number formats and the advertising link is discreet. Another is [Fast Counter](http://FastCounter.com).

Searching:

Creating a custom search engine would be prohibitively expensive but there are free options.

Search this site:

AtomZ offers a wonderful free search engine for sites that need fewer than 500 pages indexed. It's easy to set up, discreet and best of all, free. I have an example on the [Lazy Webmaster page](#). AtomZ will send you a weekly list of the search terms that people used on your site, which can help you add new features or refine your site navigation.

Search the Web:

Google is, in my opinion, the finest search engine on the Web, and you can put their search box on your Web site. You can elect to have it search the entire Web, or the entire Web plus your domain. I also have an example on the [Lazy Webmaster page](#).

So what's the down side?

Many of the tools are customizable – you can often change the colors and even add your own graphics and text. Some are not. You may end up with a big ugly box that clashes with your site. Second, the service you choose may go out of business, start charging a fee, or go down for an hour, a day, a week. You forfeit control.

Third, in most cases the service will want something in return, usually a link, sometimes a big button. This

sends people off your site onto theirs. Fourth, I worry a little about the integrity of my user's information. Utilities like chat rooms, message boards, e-mail lists and "tell-a-friend" forms collect e-mail addresses. What does the service do with these? You could be exposing your users to spam from the service. Read the privacy agreements carefully.

Finally, mailing lists have to be maintained. Chat rooms and discussions boards should be monitored. If the Webmaster is not an active participant, these features tend to disintegrate and can cause more ill will than good.

From the May 2004 issue of PC Alamode, newsletter of Alamo PC Users Group of San Antonio, TX. Susan Ives is a past-president and past-webmaster of Alamo PC.

Deleting Information from Hard Drives

by Gene Barlow
User Group Relations

The early hard drives on mainframe computers were not considered very reliable. Information stored on these early devices would often not record properly or may become contaminated easily. Programmers using these drives would write the data in two separate locations on the drive. Then, when the data was needed later, it would be read from both locations and compared in memory to make sure it was still the same. If differences were detected, then the program could not continue until the data was corrected and rewritten to the hard drive.

As technology advanced, special mathematical checking codes were stored with the data that could detect if the information retrieved from a hard drive was still valid. These codes eliminated the need to record the data twice, but did nothing to clean up any errors found. It wasn't long before more sophisticated checking codes were introduced that could not only detect errors, but would also actually correct most single and double character errors. Still, the recording of information on hard drives was not considered real reliable and frequent backup copies of the drives were necessary.

When the IBM PC was introduced with hard drives, the designers of these drives were still very concerned about loosing data on these devices. So, everything was done to make sure the data written to the drive remained on the hard drive and could not be accidentally deleted or lost. Today, it is almost impossible to permanently delete information, once it is written to a hard drive. Who would have thought that this retention of information would become a problem for computer users?

In today's world, privacy and security of information are major concerns. Identity theft is a major problem that we all face. With just a few pieces of information about us, dishonest individuals can steal large sums of money from us and ruin our credit ratings. At the same time, computers and the Internet have made information much more widely available not only to us, but to these dishonest individuals. Unless we are careful, our private information can get into the hands of these

dishonest individuals and they will certainly take advantage of the situation.

Recent studies have shown that hard drives on PCs contain a wealth of private information that most users thought they had removed from the drive months or years earlier. What these users do not understand is that simply deleting a file from the hard drive does not permanently remove it from the drive. In fact, all that deleting a file does is to flag that file space for future reuse. It may be years before that space is reused with another file or it may never be reused. So, the deleted information remains on the hard drive, hidden from the user, but still there. Dishonest individuals using commonly available software can find and access all of these deleted files.

Users that are knowledgeable enough to know that deleted files remain on the hard drive are often surprised to learn that formatting the hard drive does not get rid of these deleted files either. All the formatting function does is to create a few tables at the beginning of the partition. The deleted information on the hard drive is not removed or changed during a format. Operations such as defragging a hard drive only cause your private information to be copied and spread across the entire hard drive. So, how can you permanently remove private information once it is written to a hard drive?

The only effective way to permanently remove information from a hard drive is to write blanks or zeros over the top of the deleted information. This obliterates the information that was written there earlier. To do this, special hard drive wiping utilities must be used. Two of the best hard drive wiping utilities were developed by WhiteCanyon Software. I have come to know and rely on these excellent products. One or both of them could make your job of keeping your hard drive clean of hidden private or personal information easy to do.

The first of these two products is called WipeDrive. This is the bulldozer of the two products. When you use it to wipe your hard drive, it starts at the beginning of the drive and writes blanks on top of everything on the drive. It continues to wipe the drive until it reaches the end of the hard drive. When it is done, the entire drive is totally clean and empty. Nothing remains on the hard drive that a dishonest person could see or use against you. Everyone should use this utility before they sell or give their old computer or hard drive away. Otherwise, you are giving away all of your private information with your old computer. WipeDrive boots from a diskette or CD and can wipe all PC type hard drives. WipeDrive sells for up to \$45 in computer stores, but user group members can obtain a copy from our User Group Store for just \$24.

The second of these two products is called SecureClean. This is more like a vacuum cleaner, than a bulldozer. It vacuums the dirt out of the carpet, but does not knock over the furniture or the walls. In other words, it can clean the deleted information off your hard drive, but does not disturb the actively used files on the drive. The selective ability of SecureClean to wipe your hard

drive, but not disturbing your current files, makes it the ideal tool to use on your current hard drives to keep them clean of deleted information. I recommend that you run SecureClean about once a month on your computer to permanently wipe over all deleted information on the drive.

Packaged with SecureClean is a bonus utility called SecureScan. This product will scan your hard drive and show you all of the deleted information that is hidden on the drive. You will be surprised at what you'll find still on your hard drive. You may find personal files that you deleted months or years ago that are still on the drive. You may even find some files that were accidentally deleted and you thought they were forever lost. If a deleted file is still complete, SecureScan can even bring this file back to life and make it available again on your hard drive. This un-delete function of SecureScan is not the main purpose of this program, but a nice additional feature that you may want to use. SecureClean and SecureScan install on any Windows operating system. SecureClean sells for \$40, but user group members can obtain a copy from our User Group Store for just \$24. Buy both WipeDrive and SecureClean /Scan for just \$39, a \$60 value.

To order either or both of these excellent hard drive wiping utilities, go to the User Group Store at <http://www.usergroupstore.com>. (or <http://www.ugr.com/store>) You can read more about these two products in the security department of the store. Click on any of the Buy Now buttons to get to our secure web order form. Complete the form including the special code of UGWCM04. You will be given the chance to verify and correct your order before it is submitted. Once you submit it, we will receive it shortly and normally we ship all orders the following morning. You should have your products in just a few days. While you are at the User Group Store, check out the many other products we offer, all at great user group discounts.

Preventing personal and private information from building up on your hard drive is important for all of us to do. Get the tools you need to keep your drive clean today. If you have any questions about these products or this technical newsletter, please contact me at gene@ugr.com. I look forward to helping you.

Unmountable_Boot_Volume or "Yet Another Horror Story..."

by Charlie Prohaska
TUG

This error message showed up on the computer running Windows XP Home. I couldn't find anyone who had seen it before. I couldn't access the hard drive. The computer was dead. I used a Western Digital hard drive diagnostics disk and it reported the drive had no errors. I used a 98SE startup disk to check the other functions of the computer and everything seemed OK. Fdisk showed that there was a drive with a single

partition and it was "active".

When I did a search for "unmountable boot _volume" on the Internet, I got dozens of hits. (Try it yourself) It is a common problem with some XP upgrades and certain hard drive installations. Several files are corrupted. The cure is to use your XP install disk and select "repair." Then type chkdsk /r at the prompt. It takes a while but it fixes the problem. The error can also be caused by an accumulation of corrupted files. One posting stated that the error is a design bug designed to protect the computer from further damage. If you don't have an install disk (HP, Gateway, Dell owners) you can download the "repair console" from Microsoft. See website. I think the repair console is a 6 floppy download or you can download and copy to a CD.

I used an XP install disk to boot the computer and reach a menu that included the repair option. You would have to be able to boot from a CD but most computers running XP can do that.

Of course if your computer is not working, you must use a friend to download the file for you. I am going to keep a copy on hand.

Society News

Program Meeting

Tuesday, June 8, 2004

by Jan Rothfuss

Helps Half Hour

Led by: Bill Statt

Q: Trouble burning a CD using his HP burner. Asks him to format the disk - is that usual? Could not drag and drop the pictures into the screen for copying.

A: There is a format screen in the software. No real answer about drag and drop problem. May have to try to browse using the Explorer window. He may find that the pictures are there as it may be waiting for the CD to be 'closed' so they cannot be read by another computer. Check the final window as there is an area about closing there.

Q: How do you send out a jpg file? Using Outlook express but cannot open the file? Uses AT&T net as his web browser. Also cannot view the jpg file when in mail.

A: What size was it? Originally 3 mg. There may be an issue with the file being too large for her account to accept. Be sure to right click and then associate the reading software to the jpg format. Also go into My Computer, look for the help then look for associations. Could set PaintShop Pro or Paint to be the software to open it. AOL may be having an issue with attachments so, if they are received, you may need to open them manually.

Q: Cannot seem to get rid of ICQ messaging software.

A: Check out the add/remove program but may not take it from the registry. Check this month's Monitor as there is an article. Also do a google search and you may find a 'how to remove' section. Could go to the registry but beware.

Comment: Software that was suggested at last month's meeting to stop your home page from being hijacked does not work on HP Professional. Beware that it takes away the sharing capabilities. One of our members had to uninstall it.

Comment: PC World has a new issue - Top Tips for your PC. Is really worthwhile

Q: I have an Epson 1200 scanner with a scuzi connection. Problem is that my newest computer does not have an available IRQ.

A: Suggested taking off the PS2 mouse IRQ. Then use your parallel or usb mouse. Create a second hardware profile and, when you want to use the scanner, choose this second one.

Q: What is C-R-C? Trying to load Adaware.

A: CRC is a check code to verify that communication worked. You probably need to try to reload AdAware.

Q: Always gets an 'enter network password' when staring up Win 98.

A: Solution is to go into Network Neighborhood =>Windows Networking, change feature of family login to none.

Q: Wants to use fax feature in Windows XP using a calling card (800)

A: May be hard to work it but, by adding a series of commas that will pause the connecting sequence while the verbal confirmation is given. Also check for a setting that might be used by 800 numbers.

Q: I am using my digital camera to take pictures. Can I put them on to a CD?

A: Add to your hard drive and then drag and drop them to burning software. Can do directly from the camera but will be a slower transfer.

Q: How do you manage your power controls for my desktop? Running Win98 SE.

A: Control Panel-Power Manager. Disable screen saver. Go into the bios and turn them off. Be sure to select 'never' option for each option - they all must be set. Best way is to simply turn off your monitor as a manual power management.

Picnic Details:

Election:

Slate of Officers:

President	Arpad Kovacs
Vice Pres.	Dan Rothfuss
Secretary	still looking
Treasurer	Steve Staub

Board Member at Large: Tony Dellelo

All officers elected as presented on the slate.

Program: (43 members present) *The Magic of OCR* by Ron Matteson

Ron walked the group through a well-prepared PowerPoint presentation, covering many points of interest relative to OCR and SOHO. His topics included both some technical 'how does it work?' as well as 'what do you do it?' Software varies from \$99.00 to \$149 to \$199. TextBridge is often included with scanners but it is not the full version. Scan Soft Omni Page Pro is perhaps the best as it gives fewer errors. These can go up to \$400-

\$500 if you want OCR and PDF files as input. More information <http://www.sohotechnology.info>
SOHO = Small Office/Home Office
OCR = Optical Character Recognition

New Users Notes

by John McMillan

The June New Users Meeting opened to some tunes that Bill Statt had recorded on his laptop. He apologized for the sound quality since the speakers were not ideal. He also commented on several of the Jazz performances scheduled to take place in the city early this month.

In the April meeting the group had no answer for why a mouse did not consistently change shape from an I Beam to an Arrow when boundaries were crossed and this annoying behavior has continued. It was a regular trackball mouse but the manufacturer was not known. The general thinking was that the mouse software had somehow been corrupted. The easiest solution would be to check software disks and CD's for those that contained drivers and use Microsoft Explorer to check their contents for mouse drivers. If found, going to Control Panel > Add/Remove Programs would let the existing programs be removed so they could be reentered. Clicking the mouse icon in the Control Panel might also provide helpful information.

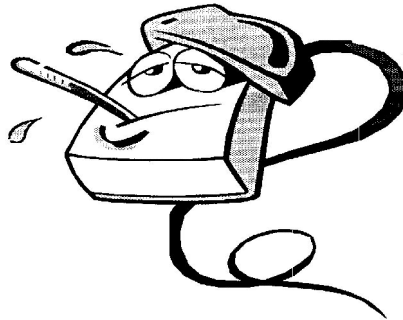
Next it was suggested that he open Windows Explorer and scan the left pane for a folder associated with the mouse. As an alternative, the argument "mouse," could be used with Find in Windows 98 or Search in Windows XP to try to locate a folder dealing with the mouse. Once there he would have to look for the manufacturer's name or other identification clues to see if it could be downloaded from the manufacturer's website. Then the existing code could be deleted and reentered from the web or disk.

Shutting down the machine, removing the mouse and restarting the machine might let Windows establish generic drivers for the mouse when it was reattached. Another alternative was just to buy an inexpensive mouse and install it after physically disconnecting the original mouse.

Many of those present had seen The "Illegal Operation" message without understanding what caused it. This message stems from the operating system being unable to perform some combinations of instructions rather than breaking the law. Most users turned the machine off and then restarted it to clear up the problem. Bill felt that when this happened frequently, Windows might be corrupted and might need to be reinstalled. He indicated that when the Windows CD is first loaded, you will be asked if you want to repair. That rewrites the hard drive and resets 98 to its default settings. You

should take the other choice and when the "repair" question is repeated, choose yes to just change the system files without rewriting the hard drive. It is also possible that the message might be caused by some sort of hardware problem but that would be more difficult to trouble shoot.

For one user, the most consistent source of the "Illegal Operation" message was when he tried to get mail through Yahoo. Bill recommended reexamining the Yahoo account information or even perhaps setting up a 2nd account to resolve the problem. When the user mentioned also getting it when he tried Hot-mail, Bill asked if he was using Outlook Express and said that Microsoft likes to be proprietary so there might be a clash between Outlook and the other vendors software. The discussion turned to why someone would want two e-mail accounts. Bill suggested that a 2nd address could be used for product registrations and other valid requests for an E-mail address. This would reduce the clutter and possibly avoid spamming and advertising mail at the primary E-mail address since Hotmail and Yahoo sell addresses to spammers.



The owner of a new laptop asked if they could duplicate a desktop system onto the laptop. The license for the vast majority of systems and application programs restricts their use to a single machine. This means that a separate copy of the software has to be purchased for use on each machine. Software with free licensing allows a user to have multiple copies without purchasing separate licenses, one of the reasons for the growing popularity of the Linux operating system. Zone Alarm's fire wall; AVG 6.0 Antivirus; Open Office suite, an integrated set of office functions; Adaware; and Spybot are a few examples of excellent free software. Bill said that only One Blue Frog account would be needed to install the software on both machines as long as they were not accessing Blue Frog simultaneously.

The talk returned to Adaware when a user mentioned that when he ran the program it found two new objects that were quarantined so he did not worry about them. When asked why they were quarantined the user said they could be retrieved if their absence effected any other desirable program. After several weeks of successful operation, they could be deleted.

Spybot has also been run, resulting in many "h-key" messages identifying registry entries. When "fix problems" was clicked and the program rerun, there were other messages but no action was taken. Since Zone alarm is always running, the user felt that any spyware was not accomplishing its desired goal. Bill said the Zone Alarm does not stop cookies and that the tracking was probably being done at the Internet sites not within the home computer. Clicking immunize would block that item from sending anything out. He recommended running Spybot again with immunize selected then

rerunning Spybot with repair selected.

In April, a Juno user with Windows 98; Norton Anti Virus, updated weekly; and Zone Alarm fire wall reported consistently getting a message "Your current security settings prohibit running ActiveX controls on this page. As a result, the page may not display correctly." Bill had suggested using Mozilla's Firefox as a browser to avoid Internet Explorers security leaks. This caused a number of unexpected changes and did not appear to be working effectively so it was removed. To shed further light on the problem, the user opened Juno, clicked on Options, then Web Preferences and in the Juno Web Preferences window, clicked Internet Options to open a multi tabbed Internet properties window. The Security tab identified Internet sites; Local intranet sites; Trusted sites; and Restricted sites defining each and providing the ability to add sites to any grouping. They also allowed Disable and Enable settings to be established for over 20 different action categories. Additional settings of Prompt, High Safety, Medium Safety, Low Safety were available for some action categories. After reviewing the settings, Bill described Microsoft's Java software which is embedded in Windows and is not 100% compatible with Sun Java. Depending upon the Java choice of the site being visited, there could be proprietary conflicts but since they did not obviously effect most sites he suggested ignoring the message.

Another user wondered how to insert tables into documents that he would open in Word Perfect. Bill was unable to demonstrate this because he uses Microsoft Word. Since the method can vary depending upon the word processing software it was recommended that he open his Word Processor and go to help to see how to build and insert tables. Help would also be a source of information about establishing hyper links.

Be aware that these notes are a summary of the discussions and that you can only get the full story by attending a meeting. The next one will be July 6th at 6:30 in the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road.

The Lighter Side

Remember the bookkeeper
Perched on his stool,
Green eye-shade tilted,
Quill for a tool?

It wasn't too fast,
But nowhere in town
Did you hear the excuse
"Our computer is down."
-R.S. Sullivan

How To Tell Someone Learned to Cook Online

10. They've been all over town trying to find a stove with Ctrl-Alt-Del keys.
9. They complain that their office oven cooks four times as fast.
8. They won't open the top of the new \$3000 fridge combo because they're afraid of screen freezes.
7. They thinks AOL 9.0 with High Speed technology is just a fancy term for a new microwave.
6. They keep interrupting your meal with suggestions for other things you might want to eat *but you have to do it right now!*
5. "These sausage links are broken. Nothing happens when I click on them."
4. They can enter the kitchen and do simple tasks but need help from their 15-year-old son to make any of the appliances work.
3. Every 10 minutes they throw everything away and start over (Windows users only).
2. You get to taste the first course for free, but to continue eating you need to provide a credit card number.
1. Step one of every recipe is "Log onto <http://www.worldwiderecipes.com> and type help."



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