

Anniversary of Computer Virus No Cause for Celebration

by Beverly Rosenbaum

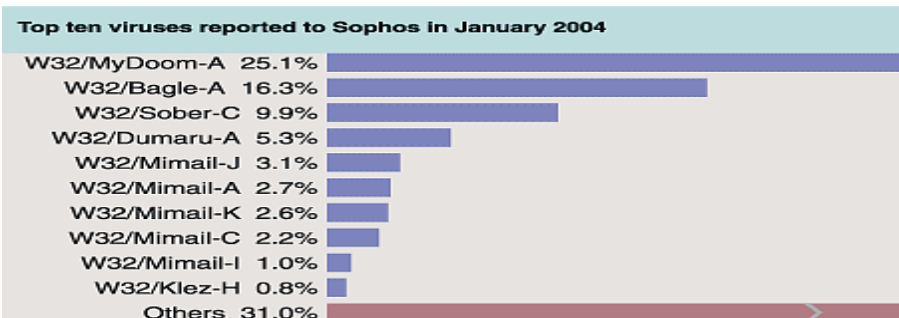
Houston Area League of Computer Users

Over several decades, viruses and worms have grown from academic exercises to online threats, wreaking havoc on millions of computers worldwide.

Not everyone agrees on their exact origin, but they date back at least 20 and maybe even 30 years. The idea of using the term “virus” to describe unwanted computer code was first published in 1970, and some accounts detail the spread of the first virus in 1975 as simply the distribution of a game on UNIVACs (Universal Automatic Calculators). The virus Elk Cloner that infected Apple IIs followed in 1982. In 1984 a professor at the University of New Haven wrote a research paper describing possible threats from self-propagating viruses and explored potential defenses against them. He wanted to further investigate antivirus countermeasures, but the National Science Foundation denied his request for funding.

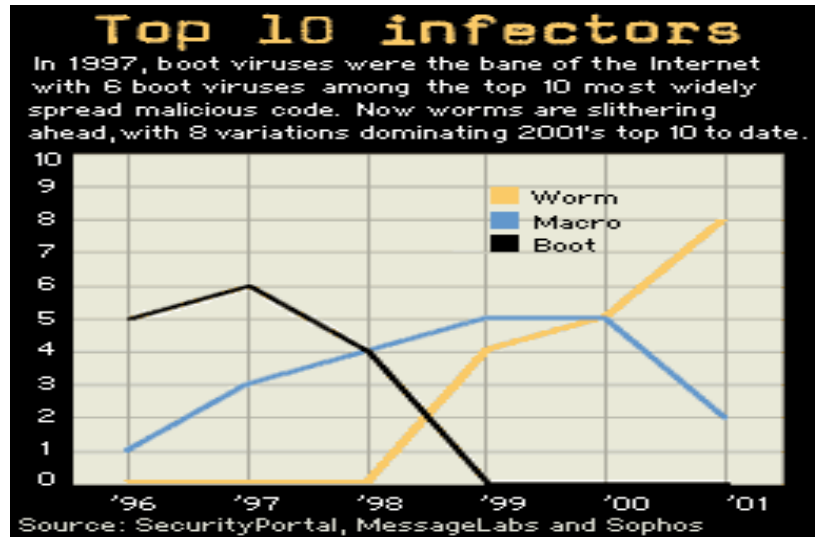
The term “worm” was first used in a 1982 paper by researchers at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center to describe the automated program they used to update an Ethernet performance-measuring application. However, a bug in the program eventually crashed all 100 of the experiment’s computers. The paper cited a 1972 science fiction novel describing a “tapeworm” program spreading around the global networks as the inspiration for the term.

Many virus historians believe that two Pakistani



brothers created the first IBM personal computer virus in 1986 as a way to advertise their company, Brain Computer Services. They programmed the Brain virus to overwrite the boot instructions found at the start of system disks, displaying the message “Beware of this VIRUS.... Contact us for vaccination...”

That was only the beginning of viruses that infected floppy disks, hard disks and files. Although viruses and worms took more than a decade to emerge in significant numbers, they soared in subsequent years. By the end of 1990, about 200 viruses had been identified. Today, that number has jumped to more than 70,000.



Even if viruses aren’t designed to be intentionally malicious or dangerous, there can be unexpected results if they get outside a controlled environment. The exponential doubling of viral code greatly magnifies minor errors and becomes the difference between a harmless prank and a devastating attack. The ability to propagate across the Internet has allowed this kind of malware to spread very quickly. Although many programs quickly fizzled out, others have far outgrown the intentions of their authors, and small modifications of the original code produced new variants that continued the attacks.

Later, worms evolved into two categories. Some camouflage themselves as interesting e-mail attachments, which execute when opened, infecting systems and mailing themselves to every name listed in the computer’s address book. Other worms need no human interaction, infecting computers that have certain security flaws and then using the new host to scan for more computers with the same flaw. These worms are modeled after the Cornell Internet Worm, which overloaded an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 servers, or about 5 percent of those connected to the early Internet, in November 1988.

The growth in popularity of computers and Internet use along with the vulnerability of the Windows platform and other Microsoft programs have allowed the rapid spread of viruses and worms. In 1995 Microsoft accidentally shipped the first macro virus that could infect Word documents. The Concept macro virus rewrote the rules for viruses and they began spreading via e-mail and the Internet. In the early days of viruses it would take months for a virus to spread into the wild. The first successful mass-mailing computer virus was Melissa, a macro virus that started spreading in March 1999, and contained a lot of code from previous viruses.

Today, a virus can spread around the world in a matter of minutes, and virus writers quickly pass techniques for creating the latest worms by posting their toolkits in the virus-exchange underground. Many worms are written in one of several scripting languages, which can be read by even semi-knowledgeable virus writers and changed to release variants in only hours after a major virus epidemic. For example, virus writers latched onto LoveLetter, which struck in May 2000, and cranked out more than 40 variants.

Boot viruses began to diminish in 1997 as macro viruses flourished until 2000, when they too declined as worms began a steady rise. Soon the worms dominated the top ten variants of malicious code. Two months after the major Code Red worm attack of July 2001, Nimda hit the financial industry hard, giving Microsoft a security wake-up call and illustrating the dangers of self-reproducing threats that used multiple vectors of attack. Nimda infected computers through the same flaw Code Red used but also infected shared hard drives, spread itself through e-mail, and created Web pages that spread the worm. Even after Microsoft issued patches for the vulnerabilities, most people were apathetic and failed to download and apply the patches.

To stave off future attacks, companies and Internet providers began filtering e-mail attachments at their gateways, the connections to the Internet. Antivirus software companies try to beat worms at their own game by distributing new virus detection faster than the viruses can spread. However, if a new virus doesn't match any of the types contained in the filtering software's definitions, the scanner won't flag the attachment as malicious code.

The latest Mydoom virus was effective because it initially passed the scanning software. It posed as a harmless text file containing an e-mail message

that claimed to be a failed mail transaction from a colleague or friend, offering the believable explanation that the original message had to be translated into a plain-text file for delivery. Even some savvy recipients were duped to open the attached file, which was really an executable file that included a malicious virus. The innocuous subject line of the infected e-mail was "Hello," "Server Report," "hi," "Mail Delivery System," "Mail Transaction Failed," "Status," or "Error."

The SCO Group, target of the original worm's denial of service attack scheduled for February 1 (its fourth in the past 10 months), offered a \$250,000 reward for information leading to the virus author's arrest. When a variant targeted Microsoft, they offered a similar reward.

MessageLabs reported that in the first 4 days it had trapped over 5.5 million copies of infected e-mail headed for its clients. At one point, one in every 12 e-mails was laced with this worm, compared to last year's SoBig virus outbreak, which peaked at an infection rate of 1 in 17 e-mails. Other antivirus companies reported that Mydoom (also known as Novarg) generated more traffic than any e-mail worm in history.

Viruses that have multiple vectors are the worst threat because they can send e-mail, perform a distributed denial of service attack and open a backdoor. The most problematic viruses have been the most recent. The SQL Slammer broke all records for the speed at which it was able to spread, to the point of disabling ATM machines and bringing Internet traffic to a halt. The SoBig Project employed spammed worms to infect PCs that could be used to install spyware, steal financial credentials, act as a front for spamming operations, launch DDoS (distributed Denial of Service) attacks on anti-spam sites, and allow spammers to be virtually untraceable.

Although many worms are benign, they demonstrate serious vulnerabilities, and the sheer volume of traffic can cause effective denial-of-service attacks because of bandwidth consumption. While IBM-compatible computers are the initial target, the network downtime and cleanup costs affect computers on all platforms. Mail servers are overloaded with the sheer volume of bogus messages, and automated responses from filtering software multiply the problem.

Once the latest threat has passed, the opportunity still remains for potential control of infected machines. So everyone should remain

vigilant to apply patches, maintain current virus signatures, and otherwise secure their systems. Whether the next attack comes from worms, e-mail spamming of Trojans, newsgroup postings, websites or other methods, one thing is for sure. This kind of malware has gone from being just a nuisance to a permanent menace.

From the February 2004 issue of HAL-PC, newsletter of the Houston Area League of Computer Users. Beverly Rosenbaum, is a 1999 and 2000 Houston Press Club "Excellence in Journalism" award winner. She can be reached at brosen@hal-pc.org.

The Lazy Webmaster

Background Images

by Susan Ives

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

A few months ago, while searching for background image tiles, I stumbled across a site that used to offer free tiles but no longer does. The Webmaster said, "The tiles are no longer available. There are enough ugly Web sites. White is the new black." She has a point

But before we get into a debate about the aesthetics of background images, let's define some terms.

! Background image:

HTML allows you to place a background image on a Web page. A pointer to the image is placed in the <BODY> Tag: <BODY background="filename.gif">. By default, the image will tile, or repeat until it fills up the screen.

! Seamless tile:

Many background images are tiles. Just like floor tiles, they repeat to form pattern. If you want a yellow burlap or green marble pattern, for example, you do not have to have a huge graphic to cover the screen. A relatively small patterned tile — sizes vary, but about 125x125 pixels is typical — will repeat until it fills the screen. They are called seamless because the images are manipulated so that you can see where the tiles are joined (more about that later.) Tiling is a good thing. It allows us to have small background graphics that do not hog bandwidth. Most importantly, they fill the screen. If you had to make a graphic to fill the highest screen resolution, it would have to be at least 1600 pixels wide. A 125 pixel-wide tile will repeat itself 13 times for the high resolution and about 5 times for a 640x480 screen. What a deal! The computer does the math for you.

! Fixed background:

Internet Explorer accepts a fixed background tag that looks like this: <BODY background="filename.gif" bgproperties="fixed">. This keeps the background image in a fixed position (although it will tile until it fills the opening screen) and then floats the text over it. The image will not scroll with the text. It can be a beautiful effect, but it doesn't work at all in Netscape Navigator. Before you use it, make sure it doesn't turn ugly in other browsers. You can also create a fixed background in CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). This will work on some versions of Netscape (ver 5 and above.) You cannot use a background image in the <BODY> tag if you use this code, but you can specify a background color. The code for this is:

```
<style type="text/css">
body
{
background-image:
url("filename.gif");
background-repeat:
no-repeat;
background-attachment:
fixed
}
</style></head><body>
```

! Background color:

You can also specify a background color for your page. If for some reason your background image fails (either because of browser incompatibility or because the user turned his or her autoloading images off) it's a good idea to have a similar bg color. If you have a dark background image and use white text, if the image doesn't appear you will end up with white text on a white background. There's a list of Web-safe color names at <www.w3schools.com/html/html_colornames.asp>. The code for a background color is:

```
<body bgcolor="#00FFFF">
or
<body bgcolor="MediumSpringGreen">
```

Making your own seamless tiles:

Here's the really lazy tip. Adding original tiles to a page can be elegant and appropriate. I did this with the SAVAE site, using a photo of a fragment from the Dead Sea scrolls as the base. If your tile isn't seamless you will see joints. You've seen that before- it's when you can see boxes in the background. To make a seamless tile by hand, you have to cut the graphic in equal quarters, flip them, rotate them 45 degrees – oh, I can never get it

straight and you won't, either. There are programs that will do this for you and also a free set of plugins that work with PaintShop Pro and Adobe Photoshop. Download the filters.

Looking good:

White is always tasteful and never gives anyone any trouble. Look at the big, expensive, professionally-designed sites. Most have a white background. Solid colors are also relatively safe. But safe can be boring. If you do use background graphics, make sure that they make your site more attractive and easier to navigate, not uglier and illegible. Keep in mind that backgrounds consume bandwidth and will make your site load slower. A compromise between a nifty background and legibility is to have your text on a solid-colored table with just a border of the background showing. You can specify the table background color in table, rows and cells just as you do in the <BODY> tag: for example,

```
<TABLE bgcolor="White">
```

or

```
<TR bgcolor="#EEE9CA">
```

Look at Web sites critically. Train your eye. Learn from the pros. The background sets the mood for the entire site. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright said, "Form follows function – that has been misunderstood. Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union."

I bet he would have made one heck of a Webmaster.

From the January 2004 issue of PCAlamode, newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization of San Antonio, TX. Susan Ives is past-president and past-webmaster of Alamo PC.



CAN- SPAM Act

by Bill Wood

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

One proposed tech law stalls, the other is on the way to the President.

It seems a funny thing happened in the Senate late last year. The ban on taxes on Internet access was expiring and an extension had breezed through the House of Representatives by voice vote. It was supposed to be a quick vote in the Senate then on to the President's desk. But it never passed the Senate. In the end, it appears that concerns that new definitions would expanded tax breaks for the telecommunications industry.

As noted in last month's column, a previous federal law had banned state and local governments from imposing new taxes on Internet access. That

ban expired last fall, but since most state legislatures were also on breaks. So, no states seem to have taken advantage of the expiration to actually impose new taxes.

Congress did get something accomplished however. It did adopt the comprehensive federal attempt to control unsolicited commercial and pornographic email. It is usually referred to as the CAN- SPAM Act. (Only a bureaucrat would give it the official 'short title' of "Controlling The Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003.") Although it has been criticized it may be better than nothing—that is what we've had at the federal level.

Most of the criticism of the bill centers around three aspects of the final bill.

- First, it incorporates an opt-out scheme instead of requiring that a person explicitly grant permission before receiving unsolicited email.
- Second, it pre-empts or invalidates stronger state laws. California, for instance, had recently adopted much tougher legislation that will not be enforceable after the effective date of the CAN- SPAM act.
- Third, it limits the right to enforce its provisions.

Of course there is also an overall complaint that many spammers will ignore it because they operate from foreign countries.

There is one unique aspect of the act that may actually do some good. In some instances the authorities can enforce the act against the spammer's clients. In other words if you hire a spammer to advertise your product or service, you may also be in trouble if there is a violation of the law.

Not all email or Internet use falls under the control of the act. It deals with commercial electronic mail messages. Those are defined as, "any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service (including content on and Internet website operated for a commercial purpose).

Section 5 of the act makes it unlawful if a person sends

4. a commercial electronic mail message that has a materially false or materially misleading message header,
5. a message that would be likely to mislead a recipient, acting reasonably under the circumstances, about a material fact regarding

the contents or subject matter of the message, or

6. sends a message without a valid, functioning return email address to which a person may submit a request to be removed from the list.

The legislation also directs the Federal Trade Commission to study the need for and feasibility of setting up a No-Spam list that would be similar in function to the better-known No-call list. The Federal Trade Commission is given six months to study the matter and make a recommendation.

The bill makes some common practices unlawful. Address harvesting on the Internet is now subject to the act. It also restricts the sale or exchange of a person's email address after the recipient does not want to receive further electronic mail from the sender. That attacks a common practice of selling the address for a higher price than before because it is then verified as a valid, current address. (In case you wondered, and I did, your personal email address is worth between six and ten cents for a one-time rental of legitimate opt-in lists. For a commercial address the rate is between ten and forty cents. I found those facts at a very informative article, *How to Comply with the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003* on the act by Dr. Ralph Wilson on the *Web Marketing Today* website.

What are the risks if someone violates the act? Good question that has a very complicated answer. In some cases it could get you five years in the federal penitentiary if you violate some of the provisions. In other cases you can be sued by the Federal Trade Commission, a state Attorney General or even an Internet Service provider. The act establishes a system of minimum penalties for each unlawful message. In some cases it is \$250 per addressee with a \$2 million dollar limit.

Clearly there is much more to learn about this new law. By all accounts the ultimate solution will require international action. In the meantime, we'll still be deleting all those pesky messages.

From the January 2004 issue of PCAlamode, newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization, Inc. 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.

Feeling Annoyed with Your PC?

Fight Back!

by Steve Bass

Contributing Editor, *PC World*
(and allegedly famous author)

My name is Steve Bass and I hunt down PC annoyances. What's funny is that it doesn't matter how many annoyances I fixed in *PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things About Your Personal Computer*. More sit-in-the-comer dumb things keep cropping up.

Admittedly, most annoying things are easy to find—just boot up your system, spend a few minutes with Windows, and blammo, you're annoyed. The challenging part, and the reason I wrote the book, is the thrill of finding fixes for the annoyances. I dug around and found solid solutions that work instantly and don't require a degree in computer science to understand.

Oddly enough, as I wrote the book, I bumped into even more Windows, Office, Internet, email, and hardware irritations. I didn't have time to include all of them in the book, but rather than waste them, I thought I'd share them with you. (Caution: shameless plug to follow.) And if you like what you see, well gosh, maybe you'll be motivated to buy the book. Several copies of the book. Maybe a case of books (you know they're ideal for gift giving). You can get a copy here: <http://snurl.com/annoyances>

By the way, you don't know me so this may come as a surprise, but I'm inherently lazy and will always find something to do other than meet a deadline. My favorite deadline avoidance trick is nothing new — I browse the Web; I'll share a few time-wasting, funny, and occasionally weird sites I've discovered.

Six Irritating Annoyances—and Six Fixes

These are actual annoyances contributed by annoyed *PC World* readers.

System Restore on Your Desktop

The Annoyance: I took the advice in your book about creating a Restore Point every time I install new software or fiddle with my PC's settings. The hassle is navigating through the Start menu to get to the buried System Restore dialog. There's gotta be a quicker way.

The Fix: It would be handy if Microsoft already had prefab desktop shortcuts for many of Windows' system functions. But it's pretty easy to do it yourself. Dig around and find the System Restore icon

and drag it onto the desktop and when the dialog appears, choose “Create Shortcuts Here.”)

As you might imagine, you can do the same for other items. For instance, open Control Panel, right click on any icon, and choose “Create Shortcut.” Then answer Yes to the following dialog.

This dialog appears when you drag and drop the System Restore icon onto the Desktop. Answer Yes.

If you want to create a shortcut directly from the desktop, right-click any empty spot on the desktop and select New-Shortcut. In the “Command Line” (98 and Me) or “location” (2000 and XP) field, type %System Root%\System32\restore\rstrui.exe. Click the Next button, give your shortcut a name-like SysRestore, and click the Finish button. Double-click the shortcut and up pops the System Restore dialog.

Kill Some Time: You thought duct tape was just for fixing leaky radiator hoses and covering wall holes under the kitchen sink? Wrong. It’s good for decorative wall hangings. See <<http://snipurl.com/walltapings>>

Remove Weird Lines in Word

The Annoyance: Whenever I enter underlines by themselves in a Word 2002 document, they’re automatically transformed into solid, thick horizontal lines. That’s not what I want. I think it’s a bug in Word and it’s driving me nuts.

The Fix: So you’re saying you don’t like Word’s overly ambitious AutoFormat feature that turns your lines into borders? Because that’s exactly what’s happening—every time you type more than three asterisks, hyphens, underscores, or equal signs, Word applies a character or paragraph border style. It’s an easy — dare I say, gratifying — fix. From Word’s toolbar, choose Tools — >AutoCorrect, click the AutoFormat As You Type tab, and uncheck the Border lines box. (In Word 2000, uncheck the Border box.)

If you uncheck Border lines, you won’t have to suffer with Word automatically turning your lines into borders.

Stop Annoying Crash Reports

The Annoyance: I’m getting really tired of XP asking me if I want to send an error report to Microsoft every time a program crashes. I think the company should spend its time reducing crashes, don’t you?

The Fix: I’ll bet Microsoft’s tired of taking all your reports, too, but that’s another story. Stopping these report prompts takes five minutes. From the

Start Menu, click the Control Panel, then double-click the System icon. If Windows XP is in the Category View, click Performance and Maintenance, then double-click the System icon. In the System Properties box, click the Advanced tab, then the Error Reporting button. If you want absolutely no notification about errors, check “Disable error reporting” and make sure the “But notify me when critical errors occur” box is unchecked. (FYI: I leave notification checked so I can see details of the crash, something that helps me troubleshoot system problems.) Click OK then OK again.

Eliminate annoying error reporting by marking “Disable error reporting.”

Kill Some Time: Looking for something to do besides worrying about underlining in Word? Try the Snarg site. After the first few images flash on screen, click the tiny pound sign on the right, then click the “squeee” or “framina” link (To exit either, just close the window.) Hint: Move your mouse around and click here and there until patterns emerge, or until your significant other walks in and asks how that defrag is going. <<http://snipurl.com/snarg>>

Big Hard Drive Corruption

The Annoyance: Ever since I upgraded my PC with a 160GB hard drive, hibernation has stopped working correctly. Every so often, my system annoyingly restarts rather than resuming from hibernation. I’ve run ScanDisk and defragged the drive, but the problem still occurs. What gives?

The Fix: Someone once said you can never have too much RAM or too big a hard drive. Unfortunately, without a fix from Microsoft, Windows XP will choke—and possibly corrupt data—on any drive that exceeds 137 GB. There’s a quick and easy downloadable fix at <<http://snipurl.com/atapil>>. And if you’re interested in the background, check out Microsoft’s Microsoft Knowledge Base Article: 331958 at <<http://snipurl.com/atapi2>>.

Kill Some Time: Almost everyone gripes about Windows. If you want to file a complaint, however, you’ll have to take a number: <<http://snipurl.com/complaint>>

Stop Quick Launch Pop-tips

The Annoyance: Whenever my cursor hovers over the Quick Launch toolbar, enormous yellow pop-ups appear with tons of text. It blocks the other icons, and besides, I already know what program the icon represents.

The Fix: The biggest offenders are-surprise, surprise-Microsoft applications. Word's descriptive pop-ups are billboard size, and definitely annoying.

Hover your mouse over Word's Quick Launch icon and it insists on providing a lengthy explanation of what it does for a living. Rather than eliminate the pop-up, shrink it down to size. Right-click the icon in the Quick Launch Toolbar, choose Properties, and change — or remove — the text in the Comment field. Easy, eh? Remove the text in the Comment field and you'll no longer see Word's built in advertising.

Ban Annoying Boot Logos

The Annoyance: I just bought a new PC. When the system boots, all I see is the manufacturer's irritating logo.

The Fix: IMHO, watching the logo screen is more than just annoying; it's depriving you of valuable troubleshooting and diagnostic information that's served up while the PC's booting. This annoyance is pretty easily dispensed with, provided your system's BIOS allows you to turn off the logo screen.

As you're booting up, tap the Delete or F1 key. (Pay attention during boot-up: The system usually displays the proper key on screen.) Browse through the various BIOS options until you find something similar to "disable the Logo Screen," and change the setting to not show the logo.

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Media Notes

by Bill Pettit

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

Here's a question that comes up every time I talk about working with digital photos. Will JPEG Images Degrade? (<http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,112941,pg,3,00.asp>)

Will a picture saved as a JPEG degrade in quality just by staying on my hard disk, even if I don't do anything to it? Will it degrade just by opening and viewing it? Or will it only degrade when I make changes to it? I am trying to figure out if I need to store all of my images as TIFF files.

First, let me assure you that a JPEG file will not degrade any more than a Word or Excel file will just by leaving it on your hard disk. Nor will it degrade just by viewing the image. Here's why JPEGs

degrade: The JPEG format uses a combination of compression and reduction techniques to make an approximation of the original image. When you snap a picture, you can preserve 100 percent of the original data by saving the image as a RAW or TIFF file — but those are big. A 6-megapixel camera creates 17MB TIFF files, for instance. A JPEG file, on the other hand, throws away some of the data that's on the very edge of human visual acuity and consequently shrinks the file down to just a few dozen kilobytes. The problem is that any time you resave a JPEG file, it's making yet another approximation. If you rotate, color correct, and resave an image, for instance, you're saving an approximation of the earlier approximation. Resave the JPEG too many times and you start to see very noticeable color artifacts and digital "noise." My advice is that if you plan to perform any editing you should save your JPEG images in TIFF format using your image editor's File, Save As menu option--that locks in the current level of image quality. But the JPEG format is fine to use if you don't plan to edit and resave a file.

Here's another frequently occurring question:

I run XP Home and use Windows Explorer many times daily to manage files. When I right-click the Start button and click Explorer, Windows Explorer defaults to C:\Documents and Settings\Stan\Start Menu\. I have to navigate to my stuff. Is there a way to make Windows Explorer open on something more useful?

I hear you, Stan. Windows Explorer started off as the simple and very useful File Manager in Windows 3.X. Over time, it has become more and more confusing. However, there is a way to do exactly what you want. This trick works in Windows XP, 98 and ME.

Start by creating a shortcut for Windows Explorer. You didn't say what folder you want to open to, so we'll use C:\My Documents. To set up a shortcut, right-click Start. Click Open>File>New>Folder.

Name the folder Explorer Shortcut. Double click the folder to open it. Right-click in the empty area, select New and click Shortcut. In the box, type "explorer.exe /e, c:\my documents" (without the quotation marks). Note that there is a space after "exe." Click Next and name the shortcut My Documents Shortcut. Click Finish.

Click Start>Programs or All Programs to access Explorer Shortcut. When you put the cursor on Explorer Shortcut, the My Documents Shortcut will appear. Right-click My Documents Shortcut, then

click Create Shortcut. Again click Start>Programs or All Programs and put the cursor on Explorer Shortcut. You should have a second My Documents Shortcut. This one will have a “[2]” after it.

Left-click My Documents Shortcut [2] and, holding the button down, drag it onto the desktop. Double click My Documents Shortcut [2]. It should open Windows Explorer, and the My Documents folder should be open. You can leave it on your desktop, and double click it any time you want Windows Explorer.

But I prefer to have it in my Quick Launch area. That is to the right of the Start button. If the Quick Launch area isn't visible, right-click Start and select Properties. Select the Taskbar tab. Check the box next to Show Quick Launch.

Click on the My Documents Shortcut [2] and drag it to the Quick Launch area. Now, when you want to open Windows Explorer, click once on that little icon. Windows Explorer will open to the My Documents folder.

Two interesting sites from Steve Bass (*PC World*) weekly column:

Hoax Alert: You may have seen the satellite image being sent through e-mail, the one showing the power blackout on the East Coast. It's a stunning picture — but it's a hoax: http://snipurl.com/blackout_hoax

Dig This: You have a brand-new car, still nice and shiny from the dealer. And this bird — a dumb pigeon, no less — is about to . . . well, I don't want to spoil the video. (If you're a birder, not to worry; it's only a pigeon.) http://snipurl.com/final_bird

PayPal Scam Spreads Mimail Worm

Virus writers are using spam and a Trojan horse program to deliver new worm. (<http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,114340,pg,1,00.asp>)

After releasing a new version of the Mimail e-mail worm in January, virus authors are using a new tool to help it spread: spam e-mail containing a Trojan horse program that, once installed, retrieves and installs the worm.

The new threat, which targets customers of EBay's PayPal online payment service, highlights a growing trend in which online criminals combine computer viruses, spam distribution techniques, Trojan horse programs, and “phishing” scams to circumvent security technology and fool Internet users, says Carole Theriault, security consultant at Sophos in Abingdon, England.

Antivirus companies including Sophos and Kaspersky Labs warned customers Thursday about the new threat, which arrives in e-mail in-boxes as a message purporting to come from online payment service PayPal.

The message subject line is “PAYPAL.COM NEW YEAR OFFER” and it reads, in part: “for a limited time only PayPal is offering to add 10 percent of the total balance in your PayPal account to your account and all you have to do is register yourself within the next five business days with our application (see attachment)!”

For their computers to be infected, users who open the compressed Zip file attached to the e-mail must then open a second file, which installs a Trojan horse program. That program connects to a Web site in Russia and retrieves the latest version of the Mimail worm, Mimail-N, Theriault says.

Once installed, Mimail-N alters the configuration of Microsoft Windows so that the worm is launched whenever Windows starts, harvests e-mail addresses from the computer's hard drive, and mails copies of itself out to those addresses. It also creates phony PayPal Web pages used to prompt the user to enter credit card numbers and other personal information, according to an alert issued by Kaspersky Labs.

Information that is harvested is sent to the same Russian Internet site from which the Mimail worm was retrieved, Theriault says.

New Strategy

The strategy of using a Trojan program to retrieve the new virus is unorthodox, and may be intended to circumvent antivirus products that have already been updated to spot the new versions of Mimail, she says.

Trojan horse programs cannot spread on their own, like e-mail or Internet worms, but they do provide a new way to infiltrate a computer on a network that is using antivirus protection at the e-mail gateway. If the antivirus product has not been updated to detect the new Trojan program, e-mail messages containing it can slip by those defenses and be opened by users, she says.

The biggest impact of the new worm will be on home Internet users who have not installed desktop antivirus or firewall products, she says.

Even if users end up falling for the ruse, organizations that use firewalls and desktop antivirus products should be able to spot the Trojan program once it is installed on the desktop or prevent it from

connecting to the outside server and retrieving a copy of the Mmail worm, she says.

LightScribe Simplifies CD/DVD Labeling

HP's invention, due in drives soon, lets users burn labels directly onto discs. (<http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,114211,00.asp>)

Tired of figuring out how to neatly and efficiently label your CDs and DVDs? Hewlett-Packard has come up with a simple solution: Use the same laser that burned the data to make the label for the other side of the disc.

A technology called LightScribe enables drives to burn a silk-screen-like, high-contrast label on the topside of CD or DVD media with a LightScribe dye coating. After completing a data burn, users are prompted to flip the disc over so they can burn a label onto it.

The first LightScribe-enabled drives and media are expected to be on the market sometime before the beginning of the 3rd quarter. A number of manufacturers have already licensed the technology to integrate into their DVD drives, media, and software. Among them are Hitachi-LG, Toshiba, Mitsubishi, MicroVision, Moser Baer India, and Sonic Solutions. HP estimates that a drive that supports the new technology will cost as little as an additional \$10, and a disc will cost about a dime more.

Inspired Invention

Announced at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the practical yet elegant LightScribe Direct Disc Labeling technology was developed in a joint effort by HP's Imaging and Printing group and the company's Personal Systems group.

"We actually got frustrated with putting labels on a disc, ourselves," says Kent Henscheid, LightScribe marketing manager, of the invention by project manager and engineer Daryl Anderson.

Any consumer who burns discs faces the problem of disc labeling, Henscheid notes. "Consumers told us over and over again that they were grabbing a felt pen or putting an adhesive label on. Daryl's brainchild was to come up with a way we could make a label using the laser on the optical drive," he says.

Anderson notes that the direct-burn method avoids label clutter. "There are no consumables like ink or ink jet cartridges; the only consumable is the disc itself," Anderson says. "The discs have a thin, laser-sensitive layer on the label side of the disc."

Safer Labels

Burning a label directly onto the disc has its advantages. The newest burners spin so fast that applying an adhesive label risks the disc's integrity. Plus, since the drive itself creates the label, this technology can be implemented in devices other than PC drives.

"LightScribe is not fixed to a desktop setting; it goes to the laptop or the DVD recorder in your living room," Henscheid says. By contrast, "printing an adhesive label is typically done in a desktop environment, where you're tethered to a printer." LightScribe differs from Yamaha's Disc T@2 technology, introduced over a year ago on the CRW-F1 CD-RW drive. In that case, the laser burns a label on the disc's underside, reducing the amount of data the disc can store. Also, to view the label, you must expose the disc's underside, making it easier to compromise the data it contains with accidental scratches or scuffs.

Other Applications

"No doubt, pens will continue to exist, and some people will keep scribbling labels on a disc or print on ink-jet-receptive media, Henscheid adds. But, he says, "we expect to see this technology show up as an embedded technology across all disciplines in the year to come."

Although PC peripherals will be first to use LightScribe, Henscheid expects it also to show up in consumer electronics products. Stereo component CD recording decks and set-top DVD recorders will be slower to follow, but can still use LightScribe's capabilities. "In our conversations with consumer electronics providers, they get it," Henscheid says. "The question is the manufacturing and integration process, since product preparation for next Christmas is already under way. I believe that by next CES, you'll see this technology integrated into the remote-control, 10-foot experience."

From the February 2004 issue of The Umbrella Online, newsletter of the Hampton Roads Virginia Computing Community.

Battle of the Browsers

I E May Lose

by Ira Wiisker

APCUG Region 8 Advisor

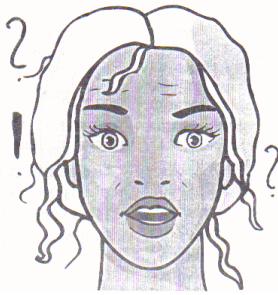
First, in 1993, there was Mosaic as the dominant web browser; it was clean, small, fast, efficient, and free for personal use. Then one of the creators of Mosaic struck out on his own, and opened a tiny company called Netscape, where he

intended to create an even better browser which he could hopefully sell for a profit. In the mid 90's Netscape was the dominant browser, easily pushing Mosaic aside, and approaching monopoly status. Netscape was having some small financial success until Bill Gates stated that Microsoft would become the internet powerhouse, and released Internet Explorer, which to this day is still based on Mosaic. Mass distribution of Internet Explorer started in 1995. Internet Explorer was integral with Windows 98, and subsequent operating systems, and included with virtually every Microsoft product since. While Netscape was dependent on sales to survive, Microsoft gave away millions of copies of Internet Explorer for free. Netscape entered a death spiral, with only 13% of the browser market in 1997, when as a slap at Microsoft for starting MSN as a competitor, AOL purchased Netscape, promising greatness again for the once-premier browser. The series of ubiquitous antitrust lawsuits against Microsoft followed, one of which cited Microsoft for "allegedly" trying to crush Netscape. A series of bloated and unstable versions of Netscape appeared, along with generally dour reviews, and Netscape continued its plunge in market share.

AOL slashed the Netscape budget, and laid off most of the Netscape staff, and Netscape was doomed. AOL generously released the source code, and helped to create a foundation to promote the "open source" code. With this freedom, Mozilla.org was officially born on February 23, 1998. Imagine a feature rich free browser, with well written code, an excellent email companion, address book, news reader, comprehensive web page creator, free support, and a variety of other benefits, including an integral popup blocker. Imagine a browser that is compatible with virtually all web pages and formats, freely available for Windows, Mac, Linux, and other operating systems, and available in over 50 languages "from Afrikaans to Zulu." You no longer have to imagine such a browser, because Mozilla 1.5 is here now, and version 1.6, currently in beta testing, is about to be released.

I recently downloaded Mozilla 1.5 from www.mozilla.org (also available on almost all other major download sites), installed it, and was very pleasantly surprised. Instead of the slow performance of AOL's Netscape 6 (which I had previously uninstalled), I was greeted with a clean interface reminiscent of the pre-AOL Netscape 4, and also

easily recognizable to Internet Explorer users. About the only difference I can see is that some web pages look slightly different than they do on IE, but this is to be expected. Mozilla is compliant with the international W3 standards, a recognized standard that virtually all Internet utilities, except IE, comply with. There was a "zero" learning curve with Mozilla, because it automatically imported my IE "favorites" or bookmarks into its bookmark list.



Not to stand on its laurels, which many computer publications have justly recognized, Mozilla is in a state of constant change. In the wings approaching final stages of development, is Firebird, a small but much faster new browser.

Along with browsers, Mozilla is also developing Thunderbird, described as "An e-mail and news-group client with powerful, new junk mail controls. "Mozilla, Thunderbird, and Firebird are multi-platform software, functional on Macs, Windows, and Linux machines. Mac users may also like Camino, Mozilla's specialty browser for Mac OS X, described by Mozilla as "a web browser optimized for Mac OS X with a Cocoa user interface, and powerful Gecko layout engine. It's the simple, secure, and fast browser for Mac OS X."

I tried the Mozilla email client, and it was fast and intuitive. It looks familiar, as it is organized similar to Outlook, but seemed faster. The email client includes an intelligent "junk mail control" function, which learns what is spam, and what is not. Safety and security was obviously important to the email developers, because Mozilla email will not allow executable code to run in an email, it prevents email from setting cookies, and it has other security benefits. At present, the Mozilla address book is not capable of being hijacked by the contemporary worms and viruses, thus not having the critical vulnerability plaguing Outlook users. Another feature of the Mozilla email client is the ability to access and manage the thousands of newsgroups available.

For users of Outlook, Outlook Express, and Eudora, migrating to Mozilla is easy, as it can import email and address books nondestructively from those programs, and be in full operation in an instant. AOL users can use a third party utility to migrate to Mozilla email. Creating web pages with Mozilla is very easy and intuitive, as the integral Composer looks like, and works as a common word

processor, but creates HTML code much cleaner than Microsoft's.

If you are tired of slow internet performance, bloated browsers, insecure email clients, pop-up ads, and other annoyances, give Mozilla a try, www.mozilla.org. Microsoft, take note; your near-monopoly of the browser market is again being threatened by a group of free-spirited geeks and nerds. The Mozilla dragon is about to take a bite of your market share.



From The DealsGuy

by Bob Click

Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

This Is No Hoax

This may sound like a broken record, but I find this stuff interesting. In the 12/22/03 issue of *InfoWorld*, columnist Ephraim Schwartz wrote an article about exploding batteries in cell phones and laptops. It concerns the change from nickel metal hydride to lithium-ion batteries. Seems the new technology can lead to "thermal runaway." He says it is not a frequent problem for a battery to explode, but it is certainly a distinct possibility and has happened, although he did not mention anything about gas stations. <g> His article should be posted at [http://www.infoworld.com/article/03/12/19/500Preality_1.html].

Two of my readers told me that gas stations in their area have signs posted forbidding cell phone use while pumping gas. I'm not the only one who wants to be careful. I've also had messages explaining to me that hydrogen power is *not* any safer than gas.

In other news of note, one of our favorite vendors is being bought. It was reported that VPN and firewall vendor "Check Point Software Technologies Ltd." acquired desktop firewall maker Zone Labs Inc. for \$205 million. It was said that Check Point must integrate more security into the desktop and that they plan to do that. I hope the free version of Zone Alarm remains free for home use.

You might be interested in knowing that Microsoft is reconfiguring the jobs of the managers in charge of operating system development. It is supposed to improve the product quality and a lot of other things. Haven't we heard that one before? I hope it works. I imagine it does become a big problem when you sell the most prolific operating system in the entire world and all the hackers lay awake nights trying to exploit it, and often succeed before it is even officially released.

In the category of old business, I've received only a couple of messages with comments about my possible plans for the monthly column. After doing it for over nine years each month without a miss, I have established an excellent network to many user groups and would hate to see it come tumbling down. I still have a little material so we'll see where it goes. Since I have tons of announcements for new products, I may start posting some of them on my Web site for the time being although so far I have heard little interest in these mostly unknown products.

Why Pay For Income Tax Preparation!!

If you have a simple income tax to make out, don't pay for the tax return prep because you just might qualify for the IRS's very own FREE File Service. Check further for that at [<http://www.irs.gov>] and if you feel its really not that simple, or you are a klutz with the computer, call 1-800-829-1040 to find the closest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance location. That free service is meant for the elderly, low-income people, disabled folks, or people with problems speaking English. My wife says I seem to qualify in all those ways when she has a honey-do job. Don't forget the free income tax service for uncomplicated tax returns by AARP volunteers, most of whom are actually specialists donating their time. Call your local AARP chapter for more information.

How's Your Credit These Days?

With identity theft so rampant today, people should do themselves a favor and occasionally check their own credit. You can't be too careful and a simple way to get the most information is to check with Equifax where you can get reports from all three credit-reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) for just \$29.95. Yes, I know they are working on a law for you to get your credit report at no cost, but don't hold your breath for that right now, even though it's in the works. Most people don't know that if you have a low score (around 600) for your credit rating, your interest rate will be higher than if your credit rating was near 800. That could mean thousands extra for a mortgage.

Free Phone Calls - Yup, All Over The Globe

My thanks to JB Hillard of Chautauqua Cyber Club who sent me this item for the DealsGuy column. Check out [http://ui.skype.com/help_faqs.html] where you can set up an account to make free phone calls all over the globe. It uses peer-to-peer technology and is presently available only to

Windows XP and 2000 operating systems. They say it may work with ME or Win98, but that is not promised. The download is free and right now you would be a beta tester. However, later when they are further along with the development, there may be a subscriber fee. Check it out.

This One Does it Better

I received a message the other day from Colleen Toumayan of Executive Software telling me they are offering Diskeeper Professional Edition 8.0 bundled with Undelete Home Edition for just \$49.95. [<http://consumer.execsoft.com/home.asp>] (Diskeeper will not install on Microsoft Windows Server Operating systems, although they do have a version that will for more money.) Colleen was kind enough to send me the software because I had never used it before. After trying it out, I became convinced. I am used to starting the defrag in Windows and leaving the room to do something else while it works, but Executive Software's Diskeeper has shown me there was a better way.

Undelete does what it says and can sure be handy in some cases. I often delete things by holding the shift key so it will bypass the Recycle Bin. Once in a while I regret doing that and Undelete helps with that problem. I'm not sure how long this special offer will last. By the way, if you delete something from a floppy or external drive, they don't normally end up in the Recycle Bin either.

It's interesting that Undelete replaces the Recycle Bin with a "Recovery Bin." What is the difference — too much for me to explain here, but it catches much more than the Windows Recycle Bin does, such as items I just described. Go to [<http://consumer.execsoft.com/home.asp>] for more information and to order this bundle at the special price.

Get Out Of Here You #@&% Spies!

Most of you know about spyware that sometimes finds its way on your computer, and some freeware to get rid of it such as AdAware and SpyBot. Here is something called Spyware Blaster that is said to prevent spyware from even being installed on your machine. I read about it in a users group newsletter, but neglected to make a note so I could credit the person who recommended it, but the concept sounds interesting. [<http://www.wilderssecurity.net/spywareblaster.html>] is the place to take a look and see what you think. Since it is free, trying it is cheap. However, the developer does ask for a small donation if you like it. Remember that sometimes trying to remove trial software can be a problem. I

have not tried this product so I cannot speak from experience. Try it at your own risk. If you read through the material on the Web site, it is said to also do other tasks.

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 past columns and many interesting articles I have taken from various users group newsletters.

Review

MemoriesOnTV

Version 2.0.10

by Marshall Straight
Northeast Ohio PC Club

MemoriesOnTV quickly creates exotic slideshows that may be burned as VCDs, SVCDs, and DVDs. Your digital pictures come to life as the Ken Burns effects of panning and zooming may be applied individually to every picture and to every slide transition. It downloaded very quickly as one executable that is 5,316,000 bytes. Installation was very fast and clean. Executing the .exe file installed the program with an icon. I ran it on a Windows XP, Pentium III 933 MHz, and 384MB of ram machine and a Windows XP, Pentium 4 3.0 MHz, and 2GB of ram machine. It wasn't really noticeably slow on the older machine until I ran the identical pictures, sounds, and burning on the newer machine. The newer machine seemed to be about ten times faster. Much of the savings was in the burning process. The authors claim that the required PC to run their software is a Windows 98, Pentium II CPU, and 64MB of ram machine.



There are three levels of MemoriesOnTV: MemoriesOnTV 2.0 Personal Edition (\$39.95), MemoriesOnTV 2.0 Personal Edition with Mpeg2 Plugin (\$49.95), and MemoriesOnTV 2.0 Business Edition (\$99.95). The lowest level version will create

only low resolution VCDs. The Mpeg2 Plugin is required to make higher resolution SVCDs and DVDs with mpeg files. The business edition allows you to customize the opening with a starting video or corporate logo.

MemoriesOnTV creates slideshows from most formats including .jpg and .tif. More importantly you may mix image files and video files such as .mpg and .avi. You may use .mp3 and .wav files to add the audio. All of the MemoriesOnTV Versions were released on November 26, 2003.

MemoriesOnTV is an amazingly user friendly, quick, clean, and efficient program. It contains its own CD and DVD disc burning engine. That makes the process seamless and eliminates having to use other burner software. It is so user friendly that I never used the "help." I visited "help" only to review it. The program is quick, clean, and efficient in that all of the options are obvious and the options are limited to the reasonable.

MemoriesOnTV does only one thing. All that it does is make slideshows. There are no wizards and only three options on the menu toolbar, file, edit, and help. The help file is extensive and indexed. There are screen captures for every indexed command and function. If anything the help is too detailed for most tasks. There is only a minimal set of tools to edit pictures, only crop and rotate. However, you may add text to each picture and you may add a Ken Burns effect to each picture. The "undo" command in the Edit menu has true Windows functionality.

The screen layout of MemoriesOnTV is very clean. The top two thirds of the screen is your work area. You may toggle between thumbnails and a file list to work with the files in your slideshow. The bottom third of the screen is your options area. A Windows Explorer type hierarchy allows you to find, preview, and drag and drop the files that you wish to use to create your slideshow. The on-screen icons guide you through the five steps of import, music, effects, disc menu, and burn. Each icon gives you its own set of options. Import gives the choice of importing your pictures and videos from your camera, hard drive, or CDs. Drag and drop importing may be done individually or in bulk. And rearranging is also just drag and drop. Music gives you a dynamic place to import your .mp3 and .wav files, time the sound length vs. the video length, and do fade in, out, or loop. Effects is where all of the Ken Burns magic is applied. There are dozens of effects options for individual pictures and for slideshow transitions.

The burn option is where you elect VCD, SVCD, or DVD, where to save the files before burning, and do you wish to archive the pictures on the same CD during the same burn. The preview option allows you to take a trial run before the burn.

It is very easy to edit and change a slideshow and you may use a previous MemoriesOnTV slideshow as the starting point for a new slideshow.

After having used and reviewed many other VCD burning programs I am still amazed at how easily and quickly MemoriesOnTV finishes the whole process. The entire process is so logical, obvious, and it works. I made VCDs, SVCDs, and DVDs. The increase in resolution is remarkable. The learning curve is very short and the entire process is very intuitive. My entire project of 206 pictures and eight audio files took only a few minutes.

MemoriesOnTV's strengths are the ability to easily and quickly create exotic slideshows that may be burned as VCDs, SVCDs, and DVDs, the ability to use music with slideshows, and the ability to use Ken Burns pan and zoom effects with individual pictures and as transitions.

MemoriesOnTV's weaknesses are very minor.

In conclusion, is MemoriesOnTV worth \$40? Yes, it is a very user friendly program.

Personal Edition	\$39.95	Download
Mpeg2 Plugin	\$14.95	Download
Both as Bundle	\$49.95	Download

PictureToTV.com Pte Ltd
<http://www.picturetotv.com>

From the January 2004 issue of Nybbles and Bytes.

Society News

Monthly Program/Business Meeting
February 10, 2004
by Jan Rothfuss

Helps Half Hour: 6:30 p.m.

Led by Bill Staat

Q: Why is email now coming through with an attachment on every one? Outlook Express using RoadRunner. When he tries to open the attachment, there is no one there.

A: Virus scan comes up with nothing. Recommended that he get rid of Outlook Express. Use of Eudora may be an option.. Firebird would be free. Also call RoadRunner and they can check to see if the attachments are really there. They may be removing a virus for you.

Q: I have a hardware firewall. Should I also add a software firewall as offered by RoadRunner?

A: May be helpful but not necessarily needed.

Q: I have Windows 98. Saturday show says to not use Internet Explorer.

A: Use Mozilla after download from Mozilla.com. Can also set the software to prevent popups. Also might prevent the loading of spyware. Be sure to download newest version of Adaware — it has a lot of new things.

Q: When I send an attachment to someone using an email, they users do not get them.

A: Many ISPs are worried about viruses. Depending on the ISP, they may be removing them before they get there.

Q: I still use Windows 95 and could not upgrade Internet Explorer. I have used Mozilla but may not get everything. Can I open a new window without seeing default first?

A: Most web sites will work just fine with Mozilla. One known problem with Mozilla is that it will direct all jpg files to be opened by Mozilla. Arpad did a quick demo.

Q: When I am on Ebay, I sometimes get script error message in small warning windows.

A: The browser is trying to run ActiveX scripts. Would need the latest versions. Best is to just say 'no'.

Q: Windows XP user now starts looking for programs in the wrong drive.

A: Check the properties to make sure that it is correct. "D" drive may have been the last drive to have been active. Try making the drive valid by adding the media, shut down the drive and then remove the media. One member suggested that it is related to QuickTime – it seemed to remember last use. Solution seemed to work by going in to the QuickTime and remove all recently used programs listed. Try a google search on the error message.

Q: I have Windows XP and it is auto-shutting down and restarts without a prompt.

A: Suspicious that there is a virus. Could also be a power problem, heat problem or a wire may be loose. Is Power Management turned on? This can cause the PC to go into sleep mode. Again, do not open an attachment, even if you know the person who sent it to you, without the sender confirming that they did send you an attachment. Maybe the processor fan is not running properly.

Q: Does anyone know how to convert OGM video files to any other format? Would like wave style.

A: There was an article in *PC World* about conversion software recently.

Business: Arpad

Please use the Yahoo Group at least once a month. Otherwise, it gets removed.

Next month's program: David Blair showing three dimensional photos from Japan. He will be using two projectors and will issue 3D classes.

Thanks to folks for bringing cookies, coffee, and hot water pot. Sign up for next meeting.

O'Reilly Books is working on feedback on the Excel product for them to place into their future book on "Excel Annoyances."

Anyone who could help: we have had ten people asking about having a program on using Quicken for basic home use.

Planning Meeting
February 17, 2004

Present: Bob Avery, Tony Delello, Arpad Kovacs, Ron Matteson, Dan Rothfuss, Sally Springett, Steve Staub, Bill Statt, and Tom Thompson.

The meeting started at 7:17 pm. The last program meeting was a good, thorough presentation by Ron Matteson on ActivePDF. There were, however some complaints with ActivePDF in regards to lack of documentation with the product. Our next meeting will be held at Brighton Library on March 7th. Presentation by David Boyer on 3D stereo Photography. Future tentative meetings scheduled are digital photography by Gordon Brown in April, Linux Install on desktop by LUGOR, and Scanners and OCR by Ron Matteson. Brighton has been booked through April. P.S. 50/50 next month will go to speaker as donation for projector bulbs.

Tom is going to be our new software chair. If a member wishes to try out a new program the software chair will try to contact the company and request a copy for review. All programs acquired through software chair require a review.

On roundtable, numerous topics were discussed. Ideas for Brochures and business cards for RCSi and SIGs to give out to Market Pro and other events were suggested for promoting the club. Also suggested was a folder for new members, complete with a copy of the monitor, membership form, By Laws, Door prize raffle tickets, and possibly a CD with various freeware utilities. Another idea for promotions was floated by John Necastro at last Market Pro for offering local computer vendors half off ad space in the Monitor in exchange for giving a copy of the Monitor with every computer they sell. A position for a promotion chairman may be needed. All plans are still tentative.

Unfortunately, the yahoo group is still not functional. Arpad will continue to work on it but is now keeping eyes open for alternative forum. A suggestion was made to host freeware utilities and possibly even Linux ISO files on the web site. This is depending of free space on server.

A suggestion for a different method of collecting membership dues was to change the beginning date of every membership to January (prorating as needed). Benefit to this is that the club will have a yearly budget which allows us to plan further ahead any needed expenditures.

Discussions concluded with the idea of creating a new logo for Rochester Computer Society Inc. A strong line drawing that would print better on the machine we use is needed. Submissions from the membership will be appreciated. This is still in planning.

Meeting ended at 8:21 pm.

New Users Notes by John McMillan

The February meeting began with a summary of the tribulations in correcting a font problem that had existed since last October. In Windows 98, when fonts from several folders were combined, Microsoft Works for Windows would not read hundreds of word processing, spreadsheet and database files, nor would it allow changes to the font or its size in those files it would read. Other software packages on the computer including Card Studio, File Snoop, Notepad, Picture Publisher, Print Shop, and Wordpad would read the files and often change the type face and size.

Considering Works for Windows to be corrupted, Works was deleted since it did not appear in the Add/Remove function of Control Panel nor was there a specific uninstall program. Works was then reinstalled but nothing changed. JvPower Tools was used to check the registry and remove any references to Works for Windows but this was not successful either. Finally, reading Works for Windows word processing files on a networked machine and storing them as .RTF files allowed them be read by Sun Office but this awkward work around involved a steep learning curve.

After the holiday season, reading the January *Monitor* article on Fonts by Rick Altman generated a different attack. The hard drive was searched for all files, including those with the hidden attribute, with suffixes .fon, .fot, and .ttf. A search of the same drive on a networked machine running Windows XP

unexplainably found more hits. There were over 1500 fonts involved, with a variety of names like Ariel, Courier, New Times Roman, etc. in either upper, lower or mixed case. Many were duplicated in different folders, with like or unlike file sizes and dates of origin.

A similar search of native files on the XP machine revealed the absence of the folder "WORKFONTS" and none of the several hundred fonts with names starting with "TT" followed by a four digit number that were found on the Windows 98 computer. With those fonts and the "WORKFONT" folder removed from the Windows 98 computer, Works for Windows worked fine, proving that there is a maximum (but as yet undetermined) number of fonts that can be used in Works for Windows. While Ricks article seemed to be based on Corel Draw, it would be nice to learn how other programs find font files. This might lead to further significant savings in storage.

The questions started when a user asked how to obtain Acrobat Reader. Bill recommended going to Adobe.com and downloading Acrobat Reader 6.0 which is free. Care should be taken not to download the Acrobat program, which both writes and reads PDF files, but is not free. If there was a need or desire to write .PDF files, he suggested downloading Open Office, a free office suite, that has an option for reading and writing .PDF files Any existing version of Acrobat Reader should be uninstalled before installing a new version, but Bill went on to point out that replacing an existing, working version might cause more problems than it solves.

Further discussion determined that the user wanted to transfer a PDF file to a laptop which did not have Adobe Reader installed. The user had purchased a scanner, that like many programs, included .PDF files for documentation and provided a free reader with the option of installing or not. He wondered if he could install it on the laptop from the scanner software disk. Since the Adobe Reader license is free, this would be legal.

The Startup topic was revisited when a user read a list of programs that appeared when he opened MSCONFIG and clicked the Startup tab. He had gone to the specialized Google site (<<http://labs.google.com/glossary>>) to find what they were and recognized the need for antivirus and firewall programs to run but did not know if others were necessary.

It was recommended that he uncheck Ghost, Ghost Start Services, Description of Shortcuts,

Media Manager Indexing, Microsoft Office Startup and Load Power profile but retain checks for Antivirus, Firewall and RUNDLL32. Unchecking an item does not remove it from the system, only from the start up process. A while back a rogue program sent e-mails to addresses from invaded computers claiming RUNDLL32 was a virus and recommending it's deletion.

This hoax caught many people who did not know that RUNDLL32 is essential to the operation of Windows and if removed disables Windows. Several users had duplicate entries in start up lists but no one knew why or how they got there. Bill thought there had been a reference to a Start Up Manager utility in a recent copy of the *Monitor* and suggested asking Arpad at the next Rochester Computer Society meeting.

Another problem was described in which photo files were being archived to CDs. Using an external burner and Roxio software, several years worth of pictures were successfully burned onto separate disks before the partially completed process hung on one file with an error message that identified the file in process. The machine had to be turned off; restarted and a new disk loaded to get back to the same point where it hung again. After removing the problem picture, he restarted and the situation repeated several pictures later. Pictures that would not burn could be opened and displayed. Although the user could remove pictures identified as problems and try to reburn until successful, Bill questioned whether both pictures had been taken the same day which might be a clue to the cause. He suggested removing all pictures taken that day and then reburning to see if that was successful. The user said the pictures in question were not significantly bigger than others being burned. He did not know if his software offered the ability to simulate a burn or if the speed of the burn could be lowered to avoid buffer underruns.

Program help screens should offer information about either action if they are available. Another corrective action might be to close all other programs to reduce memory usage and avoid contention for system resources. During the discussion the user mentioned that the generic file names from the camera download had been changed and it was not clear if a glitch in the renaming process might have left both the original and the renamed files on the hard drive. Our next meeting, will be March 2nd at the Monroe Developmental

Center, 620 Westfall Road. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Treasurer's Report
by Steve Staub

Balance 1/24/04	\$502.83
Income	
Dues and food	\$332.00
Expenses	
St. Stephen's	\$75.00
Postmaster	50.00
Paper	<u>7.99</u>
Total	\$132.99
Balance 2/17/04	\$701.84

The Lighter Side

Note that ten to the power of twelve is written as 10**(12) and equals 1,000,000,000, 000 in this handy conversion chart for all those confusing units of measurement:

- 10**(12) microphones = 1 megaphone
- 10**(12) pins = 1 terrapin
- 10**(21) piccolos = 1 gigolo
- 10 rations = 1 decoration
- 10 millipedes = 1 centipede
- 1 centipede/second = 1 velocipede
- 3+1/3 tridents = 1 decadent
- 10**(6) bicycles = 2 megacycles
- 10**(7) micrometers = 2 pentameters
- 10 monologues = 5 dialogues
- 5 x 10**(2) millenaries = 1 seminary
- 2 x 10**(3) millenaries = 1 binary
- 10**(-5) dollars = 1 Milicent
- 1 milli-Helen = beauty required to launch one ship
- nano-nano = a prefix designating 10**(18)
- 0.3 decals = 1 trial
- 5 grams = 1 pentagram
- 5 monocles = 1 pentacle
- 10 decimates = 1 mate
- 10 milliners = 1 centner
- 10 embers = 1 December
- 10 dents = 1 decadent
- 100 decides = 1 decade
- 3.0410 x 10**(6) microbes = 1 tribe
- 0.5410 x 10**(12) bibles = 1 terrible