The Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

MONITOR

Next Meeting
Tuesday, October 12 at the Brighton Library

Software Defined Radio with Jajiv Dewan
Gifts and Gadgets with Arpad Kovacs

Contents

Free Online Scanners Detect and Remove Malware
by Ira Wilsker

In recent weeks I have written about a variety of utilities that can detect and remove malware from an infected computer. Some of the utilities can be downloaded and installed, and run as necessary to detect and remove any malware that may have penetrated the primary security software that was installed on that computer. Other utilities discussed previously in this column are portable and could be run from a flash drive to detect and remove malware, while still others are intended to remove stubborn malware by utilizing a bootable CD that has the anti-malware software installed on it. One of the simplest and most popular ways to detect any malware that may have infected a computer is the free online scan, provided by several of the security companies. For many years I have been using TrendMicro's Housecall (housecall. trendmicro. com) as a tool to check if a computer is infected, but like all other online scanners, Housecall requires a functional internet connection.

TrendMicro recently released Housecall version 7.1, which will run on most browsers, including

Internet Explorer and Firefox, and on any Windows system with at least Windows XP installed. While 32 bit versions of Housecall have been available for years, Housecall now has versions explicitly for 64 bit systems running Windows 7-64 or Vista-64. When using Housecall, the user needs to select a build by clicking on "Download HouseCall 7.1 (32-bit)" or " Download HouseCall 7.1 (64-bit)". Housecall will download and install a small web based launcher (1.4 mb) that is a "Stand-alone, browser-independent implementation (which) eliminates compatibility issues associated with browser-activated scanners."

The user can select a quick scan which utilizes a "targeted scanning of critical system areas and active threats, reducing scan times to within a few minutes." I typically do a quick scan as one of my first tasks when cleaning a computer. A full scan will be much more comprehensive, but take much longer; a recent scan I performed on a Vista laptop took over an hour, but most recent full scans I performed were completed in as little as 15 minutes. The new version 7.1 of Housecall also allows the user to selectively scan chosen folders (Custom Scan), which may be a time saver, but will only check the selected folders, possibly missing some malware; this is precisely why I prefer the slower full scan.

As is the current technological rage, Housecall uses cloud computing as the source of malware signatures, greatly improving download times and processing speed, while always using the absolute latest malware information. In addition to detecting and removing viruses, Trojans, keyloggers, and other common threats, Housecall can even detect and remove the difficult to find rootkits, as well as other sophisticated threats. The well respected security vendor BitDefender offers one of the fastest online scanners, that will detect, but not remove active malware. It is often important to quickly know if a computer is infected or not, and that is precisely the service offered by BitDefender. The scanner offered is BitDefender Quick Scan which runs from the browser, and is compatible with most major browsers, including Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. Quick Scan will run on Microsoft Windows 2000, XP SP2, Vista, and Windows 7.

This Quick Scan is very fast, often completing a scan in about one minute. One major advantage of BitDefender Quick Scan is that you can use it without having to uninstall your existing data security product." The online scan engine is always up to date, as it is updated automatically each time it is run. The BitDefender Quick Scan is invoked simply by clicking on the "Start Scan" button, which connects the computer to the "cloud" where other very fast computers do much of the work. There are no malware signatures to download, as they are maintained and constantly updated in the cloud, and all actual scanning is done by the remote servers in the cloud; this is why BitDefender Quick Scan does not drain system resources on the computer, and can run so quickly. One other reason for the speed is that, "QuickScan only detects viruses which are active in memory or present in files that are run at system startup. Inactive virus bodies are not scanned for and therefore not detected."

To perform a thorough scan, and remove both the active and inactive malware components will require a scan with another scanner. I use the Quick Scan as a very fast check to determine if a computer is infected, and if so, then I determine the subsequent action. ESET has a complete free online scanner and malware remover " ESET Online Scanner" at www. eset. com/online-scanner. It is browser based, and will run on Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or later, Firefox, Opera, Netscape, and Safari, and is implemented with a single mouse click. Only requiring a paltry 32mb of memory, ESET Online Scanner will run on Microsoft Windows 7, Vista, XP, 2000, and NT, and supports both 32 bit and 64 bit platforms.

ESET Online Scanner uses a graphical user interface (GUI) that is intuitive and easy to use, and detects both known and unknown forms of malware, viruses, worms, Trojans, phishing and spyware. ESET performs a deep scan which also looks inside archived and packed files for malware. The user can select a full scan, or only selected files or folders. This scanner can detect and neutralize hidden rootkits, one of the

latest and most difficult to detect types of threats. Rather than deleting infected files, all compromised files are moved to a quarantine folder where they no longer can threaten the security of the computer, but can be later repaired, restored, or deleted permanently. For those concerned with privacy, the scanner is used anonymously, and does not require any registration in order to use the free service.

I have used the ESET Online Scanner several times, and found it to be a capable and effective free online scanner; it would be a good choice for anyone who wants to check his computer for all forms of malware, and remove anything that may have penetrated his existing security. Microsoft also offers a free online scanner, and being a Microsoft product, has a large and loyal following. Windows Live OneCare Safety Scanner is available at onecare. live. com/site/en-us/default. htm. This online scanner uses many features that are in common with Microsoft's free full time security product, Microsoft Security Essentials. Windows Live OneCare Safety Scanner is a multi-function utility that can detect and remove malware, but also clean junk files on the hard drive, and tune up the computer, improving PC performance. Initiated by clicking on the "Full Service Scan" button, this utility it designed to "... help ensure the health of your PC."

While intended to be used with Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser, Microsoft has posted special instructions for using it with Firefox. Users of Firefox must install the free Firefox add-on " IETAB add-on" (link provided by Microsoft) which adds an Internet Explorer tab to Firefox that allows utilities designed explicitly for Internet Explorer to run on Firefox. There are also special versions of the Safety Scanner that are required for Vista and Windows 7, which are also linked from the Safety Scanner website. For those who do not want to clean their hard drive, or tune up their computer, the Safety Scanner can selectively perform scans, including the "Protection Scan". To scan the computer for malware using the Safety Scanner, the user should go to onecare. live. com/site/en-us/center/howsafe. htm and click on "Protection Scan". The other scanners can also be individually selected from the menu on the left margin of the page. While not as sophisticated or as fast as some of the competing online scanners, Microsoft's Windows Live OneCare Safety Scanner is capable of detecting and removing most malware, and is a useful utility to check a computer for infection and clean whatever malware is detected.

Other free online scanners are available from Kaspersky, F-Secure, Panda Software, a-squared (Emsisoft), SUPERAntispyware, McAfee, Computer Associates (CA), and Comodo. While free, the Kaspersky and McAfee online scanners do not remove malware, only detect it, and require their respective paid versions to remove the malware so detected. The other products listed will all do a credible job of detecting and removing malware, and are viable alternatives to those discussed here. An online scan is by no means a substitute for having a comprehensive, full-time, on demand security utility installed and frequently updated, which provides continuous security. The online scanners should be used to frequently check to see if security has been breached by malware, which is a good practice since the installed utilities can only detect about one-half of the total threats in circulation, but are typically quite good at protecting from the most common threats.

Still, many of the contemporary threats are designed to penetrate traditional security defenses, or are so called "zero-day" threats that spread faster than the security companies can update their software. Since most online scanners utilize always updated cloud systems, they can provide a level of detection lacking in the installed scanners, and are a valuable adjunct to any security system. Personally, I perform an online security scan with a variety of online scanners from providers other than the publisher of my installed security suite on a regular basis. I do this just to provide that little bit of an edge searching for threats that may have penetrated my layered and redundant security system. It would be a good idea for you to do the same. A little time invested now may save a lot of grief later.

Internet Speed Tests

by Bob Rankin

H ow can I know my net speed" is a common question. There are quite a few definitions of "net speed" and several free ways to test it. Here's the scoop on Internet speed tests, and why you definitely should check your speed every once in a while...

What is My Internet Speed?

Internet Speed Test By "net speed" most people mean, "how fast I can download things" like Web pages, music and movie files, shareware programs, etc. Internet service providers tune their connections so that most of their available bandwidth is devoted to downloading and far less to uploading (sending) things. ISPs do this because a) they know fast downloads are of greater importance to most consumers, and b) they want to discourage people from running high-traffic business Web sites from their consumer priced accounts.

Uploading or downloading, the Internet is "bursty." That means your file transfer will go very fast one instant and very slowly the next. "Net speed" is generally measured as an average, dividing the time it takes to transfer a file of a given size into the file size. If it takes 1 second to transfer a file of 1 MB, your Net speed is 1 MB/s - at that particular time, and between the two particular points.

If you have a DSL connection, your max download speed will be 1.5 - 3 Mb/s. Most cable internet connections will be in the 3-6 Mb/s range, and a fiber optic connection will get you between 10 and 50 Mb/s. The higher speeds in each range usually correspond to a higher price point.

Note that in the two paragraphs above, I used both "MB" and "Mb." The distinction is important, because most downloads are measured in megabytes (MB), while Internet service providers offer plans with the speed listed in megabits (Mb) per second. A megabyte is equal to 8 megabits, so if you're cruising the Net at 30 Mb/s, that's about 3.75 MB/sec. Why do ISPs list their speeds in megaBITS and not megabytes? It's probably just a marketing gimmick - bigger numbers look better.

Net speed is not something you can measure and take for granted forever thereafter. Internet traffic may be heavier between different points and between the same points at different times. Local outages on the Internet may force traffic to take detours, lengthening their trips and slowing Net speed temporarily. It's just like a real road system.

How To Test Your Internet Speed

Now that you understand that there is no cut-and-dried, final "knowing" of your Net speed, let's see how to measure it.

Speakeasy and Speedtest.net are two of the most popular Net speed testing sites online. Both have been around for over a decade, and have evolved with changing technology. But using either is simple: At SpeedTest, just click "Begin Test," select the recommended test site location, and watch the odometers spin up. Speedtest will give you several measurements to ponder.

"Download speed" is the rate at which a file of known size was transferred from the test site to your computer. It depends on the location of the test site selected; the amount of traffic on the route between you

and the test site; the traffic load on the test site at the time of your test; and so on. But it's a number.

"Upload speed" is the same as download speed, in reverse. A file of known size is generated temporarily on your computer and transferred to the test site. The same caveats apply.

"Latency" is a significant number that most users don't understand. Latency is the delay between sending a request for data to a remote computer and receiving a reply. The latency reported by Speedtest.net is the sum of the latencies between all of the computers that relay your requests and data between you and the test site. To see how many intermediate "hops" there are and their individual latencies, do a traceroute report:

Click Start, Run, and enter "cmd" to open a command-line window. Type "tracert yahoo.com" and hit Enter. (You can use any domain name you like, instead of Yahoo.com.) Something like this will slowly appear: Tracing route to yahoo.com [98.137.149.56] over a maximum of 30 hops:

1 <1 ms <1 ms <1 ms Wireless_Broadband_Router.home [192.168.1.1]

2 5 ms 4 ms 4 ms L100.NYCMNY-VFTTP-179.verizon-gni.net [173.52.217.1]

3 6 ms 7 ms 7 ms G1-0-3-1379.NYCMNY-LCR-13.verizon-gni.net [130.81.140.244]

4 23 ms 9 ms 9 ms so-6-3-0-0.BB-RTR1.SEA01.verizon-gni.net [130.81.28.52]

5 13 ms 14 ms 14 ms so-10-0-0-0.LCC1-RES-BB-RTR1-RE1.verizon-gni.net [130.81.19.111]

6 16 ms 17 ms 17 ms so-6-0-0-0.ASH-PEER-RTR1-re1.verizon-gni.net [130.81.10.90]

7 16 ms 17 ms 17 ms 130.81.15.174

8 13 ms 17 ms 17 ms ae-6.pat2.dce.yahoo.com [216.115.102.176]

9 64 ms 64 ms 72 ms as-0.pat2.dax.yahoo.com [216.115.96.21]

10 106 ms 112 ms 164 ms as-1.pat2.pao.yahoo.com [216.115.101.130]

11 108 ms 107 ms 107 ms ae-0-d151.msr2.sp1.yahoo.com [216.115.107.75]

12 106 ms 107 ms 107 ms te-8-1.bas1-1-prd.sp2.yahoo.com [67.195.128.247]

13 105 ms 107 ms 107 ms ir1.fp.vip.sp2.yahoo.com [98.137.149.56]

Here's another good reason to occasionally run an internet speed test. Your ISP may throttle your internet speed without telling you. At my home, I have Verizon FIOS for Internet service, and I'm supposed to get a blazing 20Mb/s download speed. But twice in the last few years, I ran a speed test and found that it was mysteriously maxing out at 10Mb/s. When I contacted Support, they made some lame excuses, and set me back to the higher 20Mb/sec speed. So run a speed test every once in a while, and make sure you're getting the level of service you're paying for.

www.MrModem.net

Ask Mr. Modem

Music to Email By

Q. With Windows Mail, I occasionally get a message in which the font is so small, I can't read it. What can I do?

A. Click View Text Size. This will allow you to increase the size of fonts displayed in just about any email received. This works with most email programs, by the way.

Q. When I click Start Programs in Windows XP, there are so many programs listed, I can't see all of them. Is there some way to change that so they all appear? I love your newsletter (www. MrModem. com) and read

it from beginning to end every week.

A. There sure is. First, make the font and icons for the Programs list smaller by right-clicking a blank area of your Taskbar (at the bottom of your screen), then selecting Properties Start Menu tab, followed by the Customize button. Under "Advanced Start menu options" (if you are using the Classic Start Menu), select "Show Small Icons in Start Menu," then click OK twice.

Next, make the Programs menu display in two or more columns instead of having to scroll through one lonnnnnng column. To do this, retrace the above steps and click the Customize button again, then the Advanced tab, or if you are using the Classic Start Menu, look in the "Advanced Start menu options" section near the bottom.

Scroll through the list until you find "Scroll Programs." Click to remove the check mark beside it and click OK twice to save and exit.

Q. How can I have background music when sending email? I'm using Outlook Express.

A. Have you tried the radio? Okay, okay, just a little audio humor there. Click Create Mail, then compose your message. Click Format Background Sound. In the Background Sound window, click Browse, then navigate to the folder that contains the sound file that you want to add to the message. Double-click the sound file, click OK, then send your message.

Keep in mind that your recipient's system must have the ability to play whatever file type is incorporated with your message, and that's something that is beyond your control. One additional caveat: Use audio sparingly. Not every recipient is going to appreciate your inclusion of a sound track.

Q. Sometimes I receive messages that contain the word "snip" where text has apparently been removed. Many times when I reply to mail, I don't want to send all of it, so I'd like to do that, too. How is that done?

A. You are correct, that "snip" designates where text is removed, but that method is a relic from years ago. In years past, we would primarily see four variations of snip styles: ...[snip]..., or <snip<, or [snip], < or ---[SNIP]---.

I never got into the habit of inserting "snip" because most people aren't familiar with it. On the rare occasions that I delete text, I usually insert parenthetically (text removed for brevity), or words to that effect. That lets the reader know something has been removed and saves me from having to answer the question, "What does the word 'snip' mean in your last message?"

Q. I accidentally closed my contacts list that used to appear on the left side of the Outlook Express screen. How can I get it back?

A. Very easily: Click View Layout, and place a check mark in front of Contacts, then click OK. Your Contacts list will reappear. If you would like to make it disappear again in the future, click the little "X" in the upper right-hand corner of the Contacts list window.

Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month

Recipes Back-of-the-Box

Recipes are compiled from the back of boxes, cans and packages of some of the finest food providers. They are designed to be used with the brand name products listed in the ingredients, such as Sirloin Chili made with Land-O-Lakes butter, or Chicken Nuggets using Corn Chex. Included recipes encompass everything from appetizers to beverages, one-dish meals to sandwiches, with specialty cooking needs like Crockpot cooking and diabetes-friendly recipes. www.backofthebox. com

Catalog Choice

Tired of your snail mailbox being stuffed with annoying catalogs that end up in the trash or the recycle bin? Catalog Choice is a free service that helps you avoid catalogs (from more than 2200 companies) that you no longer wish to receive.

www. catalogchoice.org

Phone Arena

Everything you could possibly want to know about cell phones, including reviews, tests, top-selling brands, plus an active message board where you can communicate or commiserate with other individuals who are either enjoying or enduring the same phone or service plan that you're using. "Can you hear me now?" www. phonearena.com

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From The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

I finally posted my article about "Creating a Trade Show" on my Web site, but it is a bit lengthy for newsletters. You can read it there or download it. It's in MS Word format. If you want it in another format, let me know.

Lets Talk Drive Letters

Last month I told you about the problem I had with a flash drive that kept coming up as E for its drive-letter, in spite of there being no D-drive at the time, but I finally ended up going to the Control Panel to change its drive-letter to the one I needed. I had simply retrieved a file from it the night before, but since D was in use at the time so, that flash drive was temporarily E while I retrieved the file. Was it just some type of coincidence?

The drive letter assignment procedure I wrote about in my column was mentioned as a show-and-tell at the user group meeting here and I wondered about using that same procedure to get a flash drive to always be a certain drive letter without other drive letters next to it being in use. I'd like that when I'm backing up data. I tried using the drive letter assignment steps in the Control Panel to give a completely different flash drive the letter F to see what it would do. I don't normally have a D-drive because I set up my DVD/CD ROM drive as Z so it doesn't interfere with other drive letter assignments for whatever I'm doing, such as installing software.

After going through the drive-letter assignment with the new flash drive, I removed the flash drive from its USB plug, waited a minute, then plugged it back in to see. Even with no D, E, or G drive, that flash drive appeared as F, just what I had assigned it. However, the member who mentioned doing the show-and-tell also told me that when that same thing happened to him, the flash drive he was working with somehow adopted a drive letter out of sequence, but only on that certain computer, so I took the one I had just designated as F to another desktop machine and plugged it into the USB slot. It came up as D and not the F I had assigned it on the other computer. There is a thought for being creative with your flash drive. Rebooting the computer I assigned the drive-letter on had no affect and the flash drive still came up as F. Using a different USB plug also made no difference, it still came up as F.

My curiosity was satisfied by my proofreader who proceeded to explain it better. He said that when the computer's user inserts a flash drive, the machine tries to assign it the next available drive-letter. However, in my case, I deliberately assigned that drive a specific drive-letter. In this case, my machine will remember the drive and the assignment. It will try to give it that drive-letter and also try to reserve that letter for that drive in the event of other drive-letter assignments; in other words, it would skip that letter.

He said many computer users prefer that method of flash drive-letter assignment. He also stated that the same scenario applies for other types of plug-in drives. When you plug a flash drive into the USB port without the drive-letter having been manually assigned, the machine might try to remember that drive letter automatically assigned when you use that flash drive again, thus the incidental drive-letter assignment.

Still No Information

I have not heard from the guy about a special offer on learning courses so I think its time to give up on it, even though he sent a message saying he would get back with me. I have some other items you might like so let's get on with it.

Use Your Smartphone For A Good Cause

Check around and you'll find there are many apps for your smartphone that can be capable of getting you just about any information you want. A guy mentioned some interesting apps at a user group meeting the other night. I wrote about some of these smartphone apps a year ago, including this most important one, where are the closest restroom facilities? There is an app called Sit or Squat that will obtain that information for you using an intersection, address, or zip code, and perhaps your GPS information. It gives you maps and sometimes even a rating or review, and the app is free. It's available for iPhone, Android, iPod Touch, or Blackberry. <http://www.sitorsquat.com/sitorsquat/home/map>

Where Can I Find Lots of Smartphone Apps?

<http://libguides.huntingdon.edu/content.php?pid=114069&sid=1110744> has many smartphone apps on it. The apps are listed and the name is the link to get it, and there are plenty of them. I ran across it while looking for an app called Mo's Nose and saw plenty of apps for many categories. Mo's Nose was there, but no link to get it. It is a good app to help a person who travels with a pet. At any rate, that site will keep you busy checking things out.

Where's The Wi-Fi?

Many people want to check the Net for E-mail or something, so why not use Wi-Fi Finder's online database to get connected? You can start checking the Web site to find out more information. It tells you whether they are free or paid services. This database by JiWire will include maps with its listings. The app is free and runs on iPhone, iPod Touch, and Android.
<http://www.jiwire.com/iphone>.

What If You're Sick?

MPassport should be good for that. It will help you find the closest medical help in any category you might need. Want a doctor, MPassport will find one. Got a toothache, it knows about dentists too. How about a hospital, or just a pharmacy, MPassport will help. It also gives you medical translations. It's useful in over 20 cities worldwide, not exactly an impressive number, but its growing. It's free and runs on the iPhone, iPod Touch, or iPad. Find out more at <http://www .mpassport.com/>.

I know there are tons of other Smartphone Apps for just about anything you need. I can't vouch for any of them because I'm not smart enough to have a Smartphone. How smart is that? However, before I change to another topic, here is one that Mike Ungerman mentioned to the user group members here that might interest you if you like to tinker. If you're creative and tired of playing someone else's creations on your phone, go to <http://makeownringtone.com/> where you can make your own ring-tone free. Thanks Mike, I think many of my readers would love to create their own personalized ring-tone, although I don't recommend any cussing in your creation.

Actually, I personalized my own cell phone with the use of its own voice recognition feature. Now when my wife calls me on my cell, my phone announces "It's Joann." I can't see inside of my flip phone before I open it and take the call. However, I know who it is before I take if off my belt and you know I always

answer with a "happy" voice when she calls. Don't tell anybody, but I discovered how to do it accidentally. That item was not in the manual.

Archive Your Computer Drivers To Be Sure You Have Them

If you find it necessary to reformat your hard drive and reinstall everything, you did well if you thought ahead to have a backup of your drivers. DriverMax is a free program that allows you to archive your currently installed drivers, and if you ever need to reinstall them, you can do the installations all at once. No need trying to find the version you "were" using before you wiped your drive. A friend said this is the program to have if you like to reinstall Windows occasionally, or tweak your installed drivers, however, that's not my bag. <http://www.innovative-sol.com/drivermax/> is where to find it and they also have a pay version.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. 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 at bellsouth dot net>. Visit my Web site at <http://wwwdealsguy.com>.

October is National
Cyber Security Awareness Month
by Ira Wilsker

O rganizations, employers, school teachers, computer clubs, senior citizen centers, and a variety of other institutions are often in search of some type of topic or event that they can use as a theme for meetings and presentations. For those looking for an October topic (but can really be done during any month), October has been declared by the president as National Cyber Security Awareness Month. Someone may ask, "Why even have a National Cyber Security Awareness Month?" We all need to be aware of the risks involving our computers, and how those risks can impact us personally. The news is rife with stories about viruses and malware, such as the recent massive attack by the "Here You Have" trojan that wreaked havoc on millions of computers in a single day. Identity theft and other economic cyber crimes are depriving individuals and businesses of billions of dollars every year.

Social networking websites are being utilized by pedophiles to lure thousands of children into dangerous, and even life threatening, liaisons with miscreants. Hackers and crackers will frequently try to break into our home and office computers for malicious purposes, trying to steal our private information, or otherwise hijack our computers to send out spam email or launch coordinated cyber attacks on other computers. Fraud of many types is rampant online, from phishing schemes designed to trick the user into giving his username and password to the crooks, to counterfeit products, get-rich-quick scams, political misinformation, and medical quackery. According to several cyber security companies, spam emails constitute over 90% of all email hitting our servers.

As I type this, one security website has catalogued over 14 million different viruses, worms, trojans, and other forms of malware just waiting to infect our computers, with literally tens of thousands of new threats appearing every day. The average computer is unaware that we are currently engaged in an active cyber war, with foreign nationals hammering our government, military, and industrial computers looking for that hole that will grant them access to valuable information. Cyber espionage, the obtaining of military secrets or classified industrial projects, is rampant.

So, why have a National Cyber Security Awareness Month? While many of us are complacent, and

compute with blissful ignorance, we are also all soldiers in the front lines of this battle, so we must first be aware of the threats, and then take appropriate actions to mitigate them. National Cyber Security Awareness Month was first implemented by a Presidential Order from President Bush in 2001. The president declared that every October be National Cyber Security Awareness Month, a declaration recently ratified by President Obama.

For 2010, the program is under the auspices of "The National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA), a public-private partnership focused on educating a digital citizenry to stay safe and secure online. ... NCSA, along with the U. S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center, sponsors National Cyber Security Awareness Month." While the Department of Homeland Security is the primary public agency promoting this activity, several private companies provide much of the funding and manpower used for this project. These private companies include AT&T, Cisco, General Dynamics, Google, Lockheed-Martin, Microsoft, Symantec, McAfee, Verizon, and Visa. Dozens of other companies, organizations, governmental agencies, and colleges have publically endorsed the project, and are actively participating in its promotion. The NCSA has a "Get Involved!" website at www.staysafeonline .org /content/get-involved-1 where different groups can get information on how to promote the event.

Specific resources and instructions are available for home users, educators, businesses, college students, college administrators, libraries, local law enforcement, and local government. With the resources provided, these and other groups can easily present an audience appropriate presentation. Posters, flyers, pamphlets, brochures, bookmarks, and other printed materials are available in both PDF and Word formats, such that the presenter will have little original work to prepare.

Customized examples of the content for each constituency are freely provided, and easy to use on the "Get Involved!" website. For example, the home users are instructed to use a comprehensive security suite that provides frequent automatic updates, update their operating systems and browsers as soon as patches are released, use complex passwords, be cynical about giving others your personal information online, turn off your computer when not in use, know that security applies to mobile devices (such as smart phones) just as much as it does to a computer, know the symptoms of a compromised computer, teach his children about online safety, backup his data frequently, lookup himself and family members on the major search engines to see what is posted about them, and maintain vigilance and awareness of contemporary threats.

Teachers and college faculty should encourage good cyber security practices every time their students are online, as well as integrate cyber security and safety into lesson plans and course content; arrange for a competent cyber security professional to speak to classes and parents; incorporate cyber security and safety into faculty in-service training; require all students to change their password in October to one that is long, complex and not easy to guess. It should not only be the teachers that should be involved, but administration needs to also be involved. The NCSA has resources for administrators as well, at www.staysafeonline.org /content/what-college-administrators-can-do. Local law enforcement needs to be involved, as our citizens are often victimized by online criminals.

There is no net difference in the pain or loss suffered by a victim who has been robbed locally, or one robbed online. Too many of our children are victimized by pedophiles who troll for naive children online. Law enforcement should get on board with the program. Local law enforcement are looked to for security guidance and protection from criminal activity; that protection should not just be the traditional protection from street crime, but should also include community education on protection from cyber crime. Local law enforcement agencies should present cyber security topics at external community events, and internal training, including at roll call.

The distribution of cyber security literature should occur along with other crime prevention literature.

Departments should implement a written policy on dealing with citizens who have been cyber victimized (such as Internet fraud or identity theft), and encourage them to report it to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (www. ic3. gov). Appropriately trained and skilled officers should speak at local schools, businesses, religious institutions, and other organizations on cyber crime and cyber security; a police officer (or deputy sheriff) has a cache' of authority that many other speakers may lack.

Businesses, both small and large, have become the primary targets for many cyber thieves. These crooks are utilizing a variety of ingenious online tricks and tools to defraud businesses, many of which can be mitigated if only the employees (and management) are appropriately trained, and proper policies are implemented. Cyber security policies and procedures need to be reviewed frequently, and updated as appropriate, as the threats are dynamic and constantly changing. The NCSA and Symantec published a small business cyber security study which shows what businesses are doing (staysafeonline.org/content /2009-smb-security-study). Hold periodic employee meetings, such as brown-bag lunches, where cyber security practices can be openly discussed. Post security tips in break rooms, work rooms, and company newsletters, as well as distribute handouts to employees.

Businesses need to create an environment where employees can freely raise security concerns. Make sure that your customers and clients, including online customers, know that you are adequately protecting their personal and private information. Make it a policy that computers should be shut down at night and at other down times.

Managers need to be kept informed in a timely manner of any evolving security threats that can impact the business. Whatever the event or group, there is an abundance of educational and training materials freely available for cyber security training. There is a large assortment of cyber security "Tip Sheets" available from staysafeonline.org/content/ncsam-tip-sheets. These Tip Sheets, available for free in both PDF and Word formats, include documents about gaming safety for kids and parents, Internet Safety and Security Tips For Parents, Mobile Safety Tips, and Social Networking Tips 2010. Under each of the groups listed at staysafeonline.org/content/get- involved-1 (home users, businesses, law enforcement, etc.) are links to additional resources.

Still more resources are available online at staysafeonline.org/content/additional-awareness-resources-2010. While October is indeed National Cyber Security Awareness Month, we need to make every day a security awareness day. We lock our cars, and we lock the doors to our homes; we need to lock our computers as well to prevent others from accessing them and doing harm to us and others.

WEBSITES: http://www.microsoft.com/protect/promotions/us/cybersecurity.aspx

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/events

http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc_1158611596104.shtm

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/about-ncsam-2010

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/ncsam-tip-sheets

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/additional-awareness-resources-2010

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/get-involved-1

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/banners-posters-more

http://www.staysafeonline.org/files/NCSAM/PalmCard_FINAL.pdf

http://www. www.ic3.gov

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/additional-awareness-resou rces-2010

http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/resources-smallmed-sized- businesses

Speed-Dating Portable Scanners

They're small, sleek, and sexy—
but would I really fall for one

by Tekla S. Perry
ieee Spectrum

I love the idea of a portable scanner. I picture myself quickly scanning receipts, business cards, and clippings when traveling instead of shoving them, crumpled, into a suitcase pocket. http://www.getdoxie.com

So I was sure I was going to love at least one of these three portable scanners, which came out this year: the US $299 DocuPen X05 from PlanOn, the $129 Doxie from Apparent, or the $269 MobileOffice AD450 from Plustek. All scan in color and black and white, at resolutions of up to 600 dots per inch.

http://plustek.com/product/ad450.asp

The MobileOffice and I didn't get past "hello." For one, it's a PC-only device, and I'm a Macintosh gal; this match was not meant to be. But frankly, even if it had worked brilliantly, at 10 by 29 by 7.5 centimeters and 1300 grams it's a little too big for my computer bag (or even my crowded desk).

The DocuPen sits at the other end of the size scale. It's just 22.6 by 1.5 by 2.0 cm and 50 grams, sleek and futuristic, designed to inspire gadget lust. I could immediately see a future with this sweet gizmo. I'd pull it out of my purse for a quick scan and conversation would stop—it's that cool. It could even come with me when my computer stayed home; it scans on its own and stores documents for you to download later.

Unfortunately, to make the DocuPen Mac-compatible, I needed a little something extra—a microSD card of 2 gigabytes or less. That size isn't easy to track down these days. Then I had to call customer service to find out where to insert it.

http://planon.com/products/docupen/xseries

I scanned the first thing I could reach—a FedEx shipping label. It worked pretty well, creating a legible document. And the process was indeed magical—turn it on, roll it gently over the document, stop, and the device stores the scan. Plug it into the computer, and drag the document over to the desktop. Done.

Unfortunately, this love affair was short-lived—I could never repeat that first, magical experience. All my subsequent attempts to scan were frustrating—either I went too fast, earning a warning flashed on the tiny screen, or too slow. Often, I didn't move from "on" to "scan" quickly enough, and the DocuPen automatically powered off. At one point it choked entirely, going into an automatic "save" halfway through my attempt to scan a magazine page; as I could find no way to reset, I simply had to wait for the battery to run down (because battery life isn't great, it didn't take long). Photos were a disaster. Sadly, I set the DocuPen aside; I wanted the relationship to work, but we clearly weren't even going to get to the second date.

Already disappointed by DocuPen and frankly put off by the toylike appearance of Doxie, my third and final suitor—its styling leans heavily on pink and hearts—my expectations were low. I was pleasantly surprised.

How to use the Doxie is obvious. It has just one button (identified, of course, with a heart) to scan; you select resolution and color or black and white on the screen of whatever computer you've attached it to. It saves documents to the computer or to cloud accounts like Google Docs or Flickr. I tested that FedEx receipt—perfect. It also did well with business cards, smaller receipts, and standard printed documents; it had a little more trouble with a portrait on thick photo paper and a thin page ripped from a magazine—both resulted in slightly stretched images.

For most purposes, Doxie works just fine. And at 29 by 5 by 4 cm and 309 grams, it's easily slipped into my laptop bag.

So while Doxie and I may not be entering a long-term relationship, it's been the perfect summer romance.

Heading For a Hard Drive Crash?

by Bob Rankin

A hard drive may crash, literally, in a high-speed collision between moving mechanical parts within the drive. Inside a typical consumer hard drive, you have a stack of magnetic platters spinning at 5600 or 7200 rpms. Between the platters, needle-like read-write heads twitch from one sector of a platter to another faster than the eye can see. If head meets platter, both can be severely damaged.

Sudden shocks, such as falling a few feet, can cause a head to crash into a platter. So can electrical malfunctions that cause the head to drop suddenly onto the platter. If a speck of dust gets into the hard drive case through a filtered air-intake port, the head may crash into it because heads hover just a fraction of a millimeter above the rapidly spinning platters.

Of course, modern hard drives are designed with shock-absorbing materials and other technologies to minimize the occurrences of physical crashes. Laptops, especially, are heavily protected against shock or head displacement due to sudden movement. Physical crashes happen randomly and with no warning, except sometimes for the "electrical malfunctions."

Signs of growing electrical malfunctions preceding a crash include slow or erratic read/write times; odd noises coming from the drive intermittently; or unusual delays in the drive's power-up cycle. You should be sensitive to such signals of an impending hard drive crash.

A more common cause of hard drive crashes is simple wear and tear on the electromechanical parts of the drive. The metal bearings upon which platters spin and the read/write head moves may burn out. Metal fatigue may cause a part of the read/write head mechanism to snap. Intermittent grating noises may or may not precede such failures.

That's why I always emphasize the importance of backing up the files on your hard drive. See my related articles dealing with Backup Storage Devices and Backup Software for help getting started with a backup plan. You may also want to consider Online Backup Services for secure offsite backups.

Hard Drive Maintenance Is Important
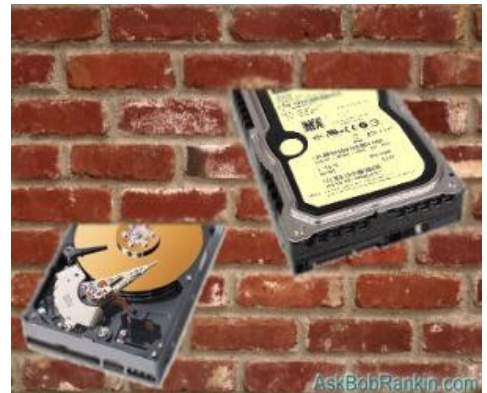
Defragmenting and optimizing the data files stored on a hard drive can extend the life of electromechanical parts. When a file is fragmented, with parts of it stored on different areas of the drive, the read/write head must move around excessively to collect all of its pieces. Corrupted files make the head work harder, too. So run your favorite disk optimizer utility, such as Advanced System Care Pro, at least once a week to prolong your hard drive's life.

Software glitches can also cause hard drive crashes. Software guides and commands the read/write head, telling it exactly where to write data. If there's a bug in the software some data may be written a bit "off track," not where it's supposed to go. Then it's unreadable; the place where it is written becomes a "bad sector," a spot on the hard drive that cannot be used. Microsoft Windows and other operating systems have built-in utilities that can test an entire hard drive for bad sectors and label them "do not use." Also, modern hard drives come with extra sectors that are activated for use when bad sectors are labeled off-limits.

So it's a lot like taking care of a car. Routine preventive maintenance will help to extend the life of your drive, and attentive listening for any signs of trouble will help you avoid any losses.

Diskeeper 2010 Professional

Reviewed by Tom Feeley
North Orange County Computer Club, CA.

Summary

The Diskeeper program is aimed at maintaining hard drive file systems in top condition by automatically defragmenting files without the computer users ever having to concern themselves with hard drive status. Many computer users never even think about defragging drives anyway, and this program should let them continue to do so, since defragging is done in the background without user participation.

In evaluating this program, I exercised many of the program features and found that there is a wealth of info provided (enough to satisfy even the most ardent hard-drive geeks), along with simple info for the average user.

Basically, the user can manually Analyze and Defrag drive partitions (ala normal Windows Defrag Program), and then enable Automatic Defrag, which will then continually work to eventually reduce fragmentation to the zero level.

There is exhaustive Documentation provided, which includes descriptions of all modes, technical data, and a very good Glossary to help unscramble some of the Acronyms used.

Installation

The program is installed using the CD provided, and is stated to work on all Windows versions up to and including Windows 7. Installation is automatic, and has the usual 3D-day period for the user to activate the program, or it will no longer work on the computer. An activation code is provided along with the CD, and licenses for use on other computers are available for an extra fee.

I installed the program on three computers at home, which use either WIN XP or XP Pro, and the program worked fme on each.

On installation, the original Windows Defrag program is replaced by the Diskeeper Defrag system, so you no longer can run the original Windows Defrag program. If you want to compare the performance of the two, run Windows Defrag before installing Diskeeper. You could, of course uninstall the Diskeeper program, run Windows Defrag for comparison, and then reinstall Diskeeper.

Program Operation

When the program is run, the main screen displays information on all partitions on each physical

hard drive in the computer. This includes size, free space, file system (e.g. FAT 32 or NTFS), along with which of the Diskeeper operating modes are activated on each partition.

Each operating mode, when activated, provides certain functions which help keep that partition operating in optimum form. Modes are: IntelliWrite, Automatic Defrag, I-F AAST, and Boot Time Defrag.

IntelliWrite defrags files as they are being written to the disk, while Automatic Defrag works while the computer is idle, and continually reduces file fragmentation on the partition. IF AAST maximizes performance of commonly used files, and Boot Time Defrag works on files which cannot be moved while Windows is running.

The main screen also displays tabs which allow selection of Dashboard, Log, or History information for any of the partitions selected.

Dashboard shows how well IntelliWrite and Automatic Defrag are performing, and the Log tab displays when various operations were performed and how many fragments were eliminated. The History tab displays several detailed daily time line plots which show fragments prevented, eliminated, and file read times.

In addition to the above, the main screen allows selection of Manual Analysis and/or Defragmentation of any of the selected partitions. These functions are similar to those of the Windows Defrag program, with much more detail provided as to partition status. Normally, Manual Defrag need only be performed once on a partition, and enabling Automatic Defrag will keep the partition clean thereafter.

Diskeeper vs. Windows Defrag Program

Comparing the performance of Windows defrag program to that of the Diskeeper program reveals some very significant differences.

A.) Windows Program- On selecting Analyze, the display shows a single horizontal bar which shows blue sections (contiguous unfragmented files), red (fragmented files), green (unmovable files), white (open space), along with a tabulation of details showing drive parameters. A message advises you as to whether you need to defrag the drive.

If you do Defragment the drive, the user is left somewhat in limbo, since there may still be fragmented files showing, and you are not sure if you should repeat the process to eliminate file fragments. If you do repeat the Defrag several times, eventually you can remove all fragmented files.

Sometime later if you check, you find that files are fragmented in areas formerly clear, since data files are removed and saved in a somewhat haphazardly way, and the drive is fragmented again.

B.) Diskeeper Program (Manual Mode) - On selecting Analyze, the display shows several horizontal bars rather than the single bar (expanding the disk view) with blue, red, green, etc sections.

There are two display modes: File Performance and File Structure.

File Performance indicates fragmented files which affect computer performance, whereas File Structure indicates those files which may be fragmented but do not affect performance.

After selecting Defragment, the display shows that most files are defragmented, but some may still remain. At this point you can enable the Automatic Mode of operation, and the system will operate in the background to further reduce fragmentation.

C. Diskeeper Program (Automatic Mode) - After you enable Automatic Defrag and IntelliWrite, the system will operate in the background from that point onward. If the History tab is selected, performance timelines are shown for various parameters for either daily or weekly time samples.

Some Problems Encountered

While I exercised most of the Diskeeper capabilities with no real problems, I did have some concerns.

One FAT 32 C:\ (root) partition on one computer indicated the Page file was badly fragmented and

recommended running Boot Defrag to correct the problem. I did so several times but the Page file remained steadfastly fragmented. After some helpful advice from Jeremy Buck of the Diskeeper support group, I converted the FAT 32 volume to NTFS, and the problem was solved.

Not a problem as such, but a program constraint, is that partitions which have Acronis True Image files (.tib files) stored on them, should not be defragged by Diskeeper. Something to do with file storage methods or thereabouts.

Other than the one minor FAT 32 incident, I only had Manual Defrag problems on partitions with low «15%) free space, which was to be expected.

Conclusions

Based on what I was able to do with this extremely powerful program, it seems like a pretty good tool to verify hard drive performance without any user intervention. Of course, the old adage that what you don't know might not hurt you may prevail, since many people don't concern themselves about fragmentation problems anyway, and they live OK lives.

Support from the Diskeeper group has been excellent, and a trial copy of the program is available at http://www.diskeeper .comldiskeeper/diskeeper.aspx. There are numerous versions available (pro, Pro Premier, Server, Enterprise Server, Administrator, etc.). The MSRP of Pro, the least expensive one, is $60. It sells for $52 at amazon.com.

From the Sept. 2010 issue of Orange Bytes*, newsletter of the North Orange County Computer Club, CA.*

CrimeReports.com: The National Crime Map

by Ira Wilsker
Golden Triangle PC Club

At present, over 600 law enforcement agencies are participating in an online service, CrimeReports.com. Claiming to be the largest crime mapping network in North America, CrimeReports.com gives people the information they need to help protect them from crime, and also offers crime prevention information. Seamlessly integrated with Google Maps, CrimeReports.com displays up-to-date crime information from any of the 600 participating jurisdictions located in 44 states and the District of Columbia. In addition to crime information, this service also displays the locations of registered sex offenders in all 50 states. Being internet based, the service can be accessed by anyone for free, and does not display any advertising banners or other commercial information. While viewing the service is available to anyone at no charge, CrimeReports.com is funded on a subscription basis by the participating law enforcement agencies, with monthly rates of $49 for college and university police departments, $99 for small towns (under 50 thousand population), and $199 for larger towns and cities.

Upon accessing the website, the user is greeted with a clean interface, displaying a U.S. map and a Google search bar. Clicking on an active state will display a scrolling list of the participating jurisdictions. Clicking on a jurisdiction will display a Google street map. The user can select a time period to display (3, 7, 14, 30 days, a specific date, or range of dates), types of crime, or distance from a specific address. The display of registered sex offender residences can be turned on or off as desired. Alternatively, a street address, city and state, or zip code can be entered in the Google search bar, and the map will be centered on that location. If the location selected is not in a jurisdiction that subscribes to CrimeReports.com, then only registered sex offenders will be displayed; but if the location is in a participating jurisdiction, then a detailed crime map will be displayed.

As with all Google Maps, the user may choose to display a conventional street map (the default display), a high resolution satellite image, a hybrid map (satellite image with street names overlaid), or a

terrain map. The Google Maps display can also be zoomed in or out by manipulating the slider bar in the top-left corner of the map, while options are displayed on the bottom-right margin of the map to show a "printer friendly" display, a "distance guide" that displays distances as a series of concentric circles from the given address, and a "legend" which defines the types of crimes based on the icons shown.

From the CrimeReports.com front page, I clicked on Texas on the national map, and a listing of 37 Texas subscribing cities was displayed. Scrolling through the list, I found that my home city was not listed, but does display local registered sex offenders. The closest participating city to my home is Jasper, Texas, so I clicked on the Jasper link on the pull down menu. I zoomed in centering on the center of town, and the crime map was very easy to read. I selected the most recent 14 day period, and the incidents were clearly displayed. On the left margin of the map was a listing of offenses, which I sorted by date. Alternatively, clicking on one of the displayed icons displayed the type of crime, the date, the address, time, and reporting agency.

There is much more information available than just displaying a crime map.
Clicking on the "Analytics" tab on the top of the web page opens up a detailed crime analysis graphing utility. On the top of the display the user first clicks on a state from the pull down menu, and then in the adjacent column clicks on a participating jurisdiction. As with the maps, specific time periods can be easily selected. The first graph displays the type and number of crimes as a bar graph. The second chart shows a pie chart showing types of crimes as a percentage of total crime. The bottom of the web page shows crime trends, color coded by type of crime, and charted by date and number. With the maps and analytical information, residents and businesses can be better aware of the criminal risks throughout an area.

While all of the information on CrimeReports.com is freely available for anyone to access and use, it also offers several advantages to those law enforcement agencies that subscribe to the service. The analytics can be used by neighborhood watch and community oriented policing activities to identify problem areas, allocate resources, set goals, and measure progress. City councils may find the information very useful in terms of ordinances and budgetary planning. The law enforcement agencies themselves may make use of the service with several non-public analysis tools called "Command Central". This service integrates with any existing CAD or RMS systems, and supports CompStat-style analysis. While secured, authorized users can access the information online using any web browser. The integral "Roll Call" feature can display crime maps and statistics on a precinct or district basis, alerting officers to potential crime patterns. In researching this column, I found several complementary reviews by law enforcement personnel that explained how the system is used to maintain and disseminate crime reporting information. A "TrendCaster" function "… can be used to evaluate policy changes, beat assignments, and overall crime trends with a heat map that highlights areas where crime is on the rise and decline."

Agencies can also use CrimeReports.com as a public information tool alerting residents of potential situations. The website offers free email alerts which will deliver contemporary crime maps directly to the subscribers' inbox.

"Residents can sign up for automated emails that let them know where crime has happened near their home or place of work. All alerts are customizable by location and area. In addition, citizens can choose to receive daily, weekly, or monthly alerts, and they have the freedom to choose which crime types they want to track." There is also a free iPhone application available for download that offers great functionality. The iPhone app will display crimes by location or address, crime type, and customizable date range; display data on the crime map or in a list view; show national sex offender data alongside crime in your neighborhood; and provide free, automated, email crime alerts. Crime Reports.com also disseminates information in real-time on social networking services such as Twitter and Facebook. There is also a free widget which can

be installed on the agency website to give residents access to a local crime map without having to leave the agency website.

Crime is something we all must be aware of and deal with. By using the capabilities of CrimeReports.com residents and law enforcement alike may benefit through increased information about local threats and trends. It is a very worthwhile service.

WEBSITES:

www.crimereports.com

www.crimereports.com/iphone

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtvKb4bEN9Y

www.youtube.com/user/CrimeReportsVideos

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNX1YTOeU8U

www.crimereports.com/files/CrimeReportsBrochure.pdf

www.crimereports.com/files/CommandCentralBrochure.pdf

Netted by the Webbys:

Get Free Things From People Near You (And Give Away Stuff You Don't Need)

Throwing household items away means they'll end up in a landfill somewhere, which, as Al Gore would tell you, is bad.

To help do the right thing with your stuff try Yoink, a site that allows you to donate (and accept) free items from people in your area.

Start by clicking the interactive map to see what items are being given away in your locale. Everything from kitchenware to writing desks is up for grabs.

If you find something that you want, click "Yoink" and set up a free account. From there, Yoink will act as an intermediary and relay messages between you and the person donating the object so that you can arrange for a pickup.

If you have items that you'd like to give away, just fill in a description that's 140 characters or less (you can also attach photos) along with your location. Yoink will contact you whenever someone voices interest in your item.

There's also a free iPhone app that allows you to search for free things in your area, get directions to people who are giving you things and interact with community members. It also features something called "generosity stats," which rank the most generous cities on a worldwide scale.

Finally, some truth that's also convenient. http://www.yoink.com/

Scheduled Programming--An Easy Way To Save Videos For Future Viewing Pleasure

According to current statistics you're watching a hell of a lot of video on the web. We're also guessing most of it isn't exactly job-related.

To stay on top of your viewing there's RadBox, a service that allows you to store a queue of online videos to watch whenever you want to (e. g. when you're off duty).

Start by signing up for a free account and dragging the "Add to RadBox" button to your browser's bookmark bar. Then go about surfing the web for video entertainment as you usually do.

Whenever you come across an item you want to watch, just click the button and the video will be added to a bookmark queue. Watch it when you have time.

You can save video from all the sources you normally browse—YouTube, Hulu, Vimeo, College Humor, etc. There's even a mobile app in the works.

Think of it as TiVo for your browser. http://radbox.me/

Society News

Help's Half Hour Led by Bill Statt

by Jan Rothfuss

Q: A member had a question about an attachment that was an MS Word file. It would not open, giving a message about a run time error.

A: It was suggested that perhaps it was from a newer version of WORD (docx). There is a conversion program that would allow the file to be viewed.

Q: If a phone call is received from Area Code 908….

A: It is a hoax, keeping you online long distance and you will be charged. Do not take the call.

The Lighter Side

The lady was using a power strip to plug her computer and other devices into. Windows was completely frozen, and she was unable to shut down the machine by using the power button. She mentioned the power strip, so I told her to flip it off. She said, "Ok, I gave it the finger. I feel better."

A lady struck up a conversation with me on an airplane.

Her: "And where are you going?"

Me: "I'm going to San Francisco to a UNIX convention."

Her: "Eunuchs convention? I didn't know there were that many of you."

Computer problems?
Have you checked the loose nut in front of the keyboard?