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**Next meeting
Wednesday 1st
December 2004
7 PM
PIZZA NIGHT
(There will also be help for
your problems)**

Newstream Articles

Deadline : 10 Days before Meeting

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Ron's Ramblings

The Australian Seniors' Computer Clubs Association ran a competition this year for Newsletters, Web pages and Digital photography.

On behalf of the Launceston Computer Group and its Special Interest Group OPEN, I submitted three copies of our June Newsletter "Newstream". I am happy to announce that we were placed Second in Australia for our Newsletter.

The Certificate states

"Newstream is one of the most consistent newsletters in terms of the number and quality of technical articles. Rich in graphics and in an original format it stands out in both presentation and content. With more than 24 editions available on line it also has one of the largest online libraries"

I was invited to the AGM of ASCCA to receive the award but I was not able to attend due to distance and financial constraints.(I was not going to ask that the Group pay for the trip!!!!)

I have been having problems with my email!!!

It turns out that I had set up my account on another members computer when checking out their email problems, and **I FORGOT TO TAKE IT OFF!!!!!!**. As a result when the other member opened Outlook express it downloaded my stuff also.

Also a couple of times my computer went down in the middle of downloading emails, and Outlook express considered the files downloaded and removed them from the ISP.

To ensure that you do not lose emails in this fashion, go to Outlook Express, Open Tools, Go to accounts, Mail/ Properties/Advanced and then down the bottom "Leave a copy on my server" set the number of days to anything you like, I leave them on the server for 15 days but remove them if they have been deleted from my computer. Experience is a great teacher

Ron Baker

Fun Article Revisited . "Now The Phone Techies Are At It!" By Joe Robson <http://joerobson.com>

First Published in 'Joe's Place' Jan 11th 2001

Hi name%. Wanna buy a 'nearly new' mobile phone?

It's been a while since I owned a mobile phone. Ever since I sold my off-line businesses I've somehow managed to do without one.

But the constant barrage of TV advertising, and the sight of so many 8 year olds dumping their Walkmans for a cellular comforter, finally convinced me I was wrong... I DID need one!

Off to the store, bought a 'phone-in-a-box' and rushed home at 80 miles per hour in case someone rang me before I had the battery charged. Well, you can't take chances can you?

Cup of coffee, comfortable seat, reading glasses, 30 foot power extension for the phone charger tucked (almost) under the carpet, and I was ready to enter the 21st century...

----- Then The Saga Began.

First thing I had to do was change my reading glasses for some cool sunshades. The psychedelic neon blue case was just a bit of an eye strainer, but hey - this will look great on the beach!

Then after my wife tripped over the rumpled carpet, she demanded I arrange for a carpet fitter to refit it. "No problem," said I - "I'll try out my new mobile". She smiled, shook her head, and mumbled something about some 'urgent' shopping.

Inside the box were THREE instruction booklets.

"Man this phone can do ANYTHING" I shouted. Text messages, FM radio, road traffic reports, email, 1006 memorized numbers. Once you learn how to use 13 fingers at once, the combination of buttons can achieve just about anything an 8 year old could ever wish for. Now then....

How do I switch it on? The 3 manuals didn't say, and it didn't have an obvious 'On/Off' button. S'pose that's not cool these days, but that's progress. But, 5 minutes of trial and error and I'd sussed it.

As you would expect with such a cool piece of gear, the manuals didn't tell me which button to press to make a call either. That's because all 8 year olds already know. But you can't keep a good man down though, and 4 minutes

later I'd sussed that too.

"Why won't it call out" I muttered.

"Why the **** won't it call out", I shouted.

This stoopid machine must be b*%@&y faulty" I screamed.

That's when I learned how robust it was. It bounced off two walls without so much as a scratch!

I retrieved it 5 minutes later from behind the settee and looked despairingly into the box for help. "Hello, what's in this plastic bag" I wondered.

Hmmmm ... a battery! That also explains why the darn thing isn't charging. So my expensive education wasn't wasted after all.

----- Time out for a coffee break, and 200 pushups.

I phoned the carpet fitter on my old fashioned land line - I have 6 to choose from around the house. Well, you have to be prepared don't you. I gave him my contact home phone number and he said "Do you have a mobile."

"Of course" I smirked, feeling thoroughly modern.

"Better give me the number, just in case"...

"Ermmmm". And for some reason the phone slipped back onto the hook and cut me off.

10 minutes into manual 3, and I finally discovered I had to press 273 buttons all at the same time whilst standing on my head, and I would be given my new mobile number.

Eventually I went 'live' and was greeted by a female robot. I curled my toes and listened intently while she took me through a 'simple' 37 button sequence which explained just how brilliant my phone was. Then before I had a chance to grab a pen she read out my number. I managed to scribble down the last 3 digits before she thanked me and hung up....

Stoopid robot!

Anyway, the phone survived another flight across the room and bounced safely at my wife's feet. She ignored it and went to do some 'urgent' gardening..

The next day, my wife and I had to take a trip by car, and even though I'd bought the phone for 'emergency' use, I decided not to take it with us.

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After all, how can I drive at 70 miles an hour, grip the steering wheel, flick through 3 manuals, punch in 354 buttons and grip the phone under my chin, all at the same time!

"The techies never thought of that" I said to my wife. She gave me that 'knowing' look, nodded, and muttered something about Homer Simpson. Sigh ... That's love for you:-)

When I got back from the trip, guess what I found in the box?...

A 'Hands-Free' kit for a motor car. What, for 8 year olds?

Still, seeing it was built in Japan, I'll bet it only works in Toyotas!

Techies? ... gimme a break!

Keep smilin'

Joe.

Article by Joe Robson

Beware.... There is a new virus.

The code name is "WORK".

If you receive WORK from your colleagues, your boss, via e-mail, or from anyone else - do not touch WORK under any circumstances.

The virus wipes out your personal life completely. If you should happen to come in contact with this virus, take two friends and go straight to the nearest bar. Order drinks and after three rounds, you will find that WORK has been completely deleted from your brain.

Forward this virus warning immediately to at least five friends.

Should you realize you do not have five friends, this means you are already infected by this virus and WORK already controls your whole life.

If this is the case, go to the bar and stay until you make at least five friends. Then retry. I think I have five friends, but am not entirely positive.....so I'm headed for the bar anyway.



Brewster the Rooster

Zebediah was in the fertilized egg business. He had several hundred young layers, called pullets, and eight or ten roosters, whose job was to fertilize the eggs. Zeb kept records, and any rooster that didn't perform well went into the soup pot and was replaced.

That took an awful lot of Zeb's time, so, Zeb got a set of tiny bells and attached them to his roosters. Each bell had a different tone so that Zeb could tell, from a distance, which rooster was performing. Now he could sit on the porch and fill out an efficiency report simply by listening to the bells.

Zeb's favorite rooster was old Brewster. A very fine specimen he was, too. But on this particular morning, Zeb noticed that Brewster's bell had not rung at all!!

Zeb went to investigate. The other roosters were chasing pullets, bells a-ringing!

The pullets, hearing the roosters coming, would run for cover. BUT, to Zeb's amazement, Brewster had his bell in his beak, so it couldn't ring.

He'd sneak up on a pullet, do his job and walk on to the next one.

Zeb was so proud of Brewster that he entered him in the county fair. Brewster was an overnight sensation.

The judges not only awarded him the No Bell Piece Prize but also the Pulletsurprise.

(From Don Hevey by email)

Getting there with Google

Suchitra Govindarajan This article originally appeared in *Southern Communicator* <www.astcvic.org.au> and is reprinted here with permission from the author. (I hope)

My dad sincerely believes that Google is the Internet. This is completely my fault. As a technical communicator, I'm patient enough to explain technology to everyone except my own family. So when my dad got his first Internet connection a few years back, I set his browser's start page to Google and told him he could do everything from there. And he has.

From magazines in our native language (Tamil) to articles about banking (he works with the Reserve Bank of India) and even egosurfing, my dad navigates the Internet with ease. And all this without bothering about cumbersome things like URLs.

At the other end of the user spectrum, the geeks in my office rave about Google's technology and the fact that it is powered by one of the world's largest commercial Linux clusters. When I told them I was writing an article about Google, they enthusiastically informed me that they too loved using Google. (They also told me that Google's inventors were recently featured in *Playboy* magazine!) In this article, I'll look at some of the reasons for this popularity of Google among all kinds of internet users. I'll also describe some of Google's advanced features that can help improve the relevancy of your search results.

Why Google is king Not only is Google the world's favourite search engine, it's also one of the top global brands and a leader of what Nielson//NetRatings calls the Digital Media Universe. Here are some reasons for Google's success:



Volume Google has the largest number of indexed Web pages, currently 3 billion. As a result of Google acquiring Deja.com's Usenet archive in 2001, Google Groups also has an archive of over 800 million Usenet messages. **Usability** I know technical communicators love this one! Google's uncluttered and focussed user interface was one of the first things that set Google apart from the rest. When all the other search majors were busy becoming portals, Google quietly decided to focus on search. Admirably, even though the number of Google features has increased, the basic idea of the interface remains untouched.

Speed Google returns search results in less than half a second. The speed is a result of not only the software, but also the hardware supporting it. **Relevancy** of search results Google uses the PageRank™ algorithm and HyperText Matching Analysis techniques to generate accurate and relevant search results. While HyperText matching is used to analyse the content of a Webpage, PageRank is an objective measurement that determines which Web pages are more important.

Branding Google has a very clearly defined and successful branding strategy. Google is very careful about always appearing as the nice guy—for example, one of Google's tenets is "You can make money without doing evil". To most of Google's fans, the way that the company works is evidence of this attitude. Of course, Google has, of late, come under fire for alleged privacy problems with Gmail, its new e-mail service.

How Google works Google's software uses two techniques to determine exactly which Web page appears at the top of your search results.

Google uses HyperText Matching to analyse the content of a Web page and ascertain the relevancy of the Web page for the search terms. Google looks at the size of the search terms on a Web page, the content of neighbouring pages and outgoing links to decide if

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they are related to the search term.

But at the heart of Google's software is the PageRank algorithm that was developed by Sergey Brin and Larry Page, the founders of Google.

PageRank uses what Google calls the democratic nature of the Web to determine which Web page should appear first in the search results. Google decides the importance of a Web page by looking at how many pages link to it. Google also looks at how important these linking pages are. The more important the pages are that link to a specific page, the higher the page rank.

What do these techniques mean to you? Most traditional search engines use some form of HyperText Matching. However, reliance on only this technique would mean that someone could manipulate their Web page to make it seem relevant. That's the reason why, in the early ages of the Internet, you could have searched for say, chocolate cake, and found the Web page of an Elbonian (Elbonia is a mythical "foreign" country that attained fame in Scott Adams' Dilbert comics) company who published children's books.

A quick look at their HTML source file would have revealed that they had added keywords relating to all the things that kids love (chocolate cake, candy, toys, balloons, etc). With Google, all such obscure Web pages that don't have useful information are banished to the lower ranks of the search results, simply because few good Web sites would link to them.

Even if the Elbonian company managed to get 30 sites to link to its page, Google would look very closely at the popularity and value of these 30 sites. Overall, Google would give first place to a Web page devoted to chocolate cake that scored on both points: good, relevant content and votes from important Web pages. In the world of Google, you can't come first just because you want to: you have to do it the hard way. Make a Web site with content good enough to have other good Web sites link to you.

When PageRank is too much of a good thing Google's magic is not always what you need. Only the other day, I typed in "single source" into Google and was nonplussed to find that my first stop was FedEx! And all because FedEx calls itself the "single source" for all kinds of shipments, and is obviously linked to by many important Web sites. In such cases, you're not really looking for the most popular Web site for the term, and you'd rather that Google used PageRank as the second priority. But this is more my fault than Google's. If I'd added "technical communication" or even "documents" along with "single source",

I might have arrived at that TechWr-L article that I was really looking for. To get the best out of Google, we need to fine-tune our searches.

And in the next section, I'll cover some techniques to do just that.

Better searches with Google If you're like my dad, you just type in your search terms into Google and trust in its magic. It works for my dad because he's a leisure surfer. As technical communicators, we use the internet to understand and uncover information about a variety of subjects. The more familiar we are with the vast array of tools Google provides us, the easier it is to get where we want. Using special operators Google has a host of syntaxes and operators that you can use in Google's main interface. These are a useful arsenal when you need to find something quickly. In this section, we look at some useful operators that you can use.

Including terms By default, Google searches for all the terms that you enter, but it ignores common words like a, to, of, and the. These words are called stop words, and you'll need to specifically tell Google if you want these included. To include a stop word in your search, use a + sign just before the word. Remember *not* to leave a space after the sign. For example, you could search for: +the elements +of style Google will now search for all the words, including the and of.

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Excluding terms

To exclude a term from your search, use either a – sign or the Boolean NOT operator. If you use the – sign, remember not to leave a space after it.

For example, you could search for: +the elements of style -fashion

Google will now exclude all content dealing with the fashion industry.

Searching for synonyms One of the biggest problems with finding relevant Web pages is that people use different words to express the same idea. My favourite Google trick is to use a ~ (tilde) sign before a word that could have synonyms. Again, remember not to leave a space after the sign. For example, you could search for:

framemaker ~tips Google will look not only for FrameMaker tips, but also tutorials, techniques, guides and help.

Using a wildcard Google lets you use a wildcard in place of a search term. You can enter a * symbol in place of a term. This kind of wildcard search is best used within a phrase search (using double quotes). For example, you could search for: "editing * documents" Google will find pages on editing online documents, editing technical documents, editing historical documents, and many such variations. Note that you cannot use a wildcard in place of a character. However, keep in mind that Google automatically looks for plural forms of a word.

Searching within HTML titles You can use the intitle: and allintitle: operators to restrict your search terms to the HTML title of the Web page. Remember not to leave a space after the operator. For example, you could search for: intitle: editing This will restrict your search to only those Web pages that have the word editing in their titles.

You could also search for: allintitle:editing writing proofreading This will restrict your search to only those Web

pages that have all three words in their titles.

Searching within a specific Web site or top-level domain You can use the site: operator to search within a specific Web site. This is usually a quicker way than using the site's own search facility. Again, remember not to leave a space after the operator. For example, you could search for: editing site:www.techwr-1.com – sign, remember not to leave a space after it. For example, you could search for: +the elements of style -fashion Google will now exclude all content dealing with the fashion industry.

Searching for phrases Using double quotes around your search terms will tell Google that you want to search for a complete phrase. For example, the best way to search for the classic book by Strunk and White would be: "the elements of style" Notice that we don't need the + sign now.

Searching for a choice of terms You can also search for a choice of terms using the Boolean OR operator. For example, you could search for: grammar OR punctuation Google will get you the top Web pages that have either of these terms

Searching within a specific Web site or top-level domain

You can use the site: operator to search within a specific Web site. This is usually a quicker way than using the site's own search facility. Again, remember not to leave a space after the operator. For example, you could search for: editing site:www.techwr-1.com

Google will look only within the TechWr- L site. You can also use the site: operator to restrict searches to top-level domains. While searching for travel advice to Elbonia, for example, you could use: elbonia travel advice site:gov Google gets you results from government sites only (those sites that end in .gov), and disregards all commercial attempts to entice you to Elbonia.

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Searching within URLs The `inurl:` and `allinurl:` operators are useful for restricting your search to terms that appear in the URL of the Web page. Use these operators without a space after them. For example, you could search for résumés of graphic designers using: "graphic designer" `inurl:resume` Google will only look for those Web pages that have the word resume somewhere in the URL. So you could find pages like: <www.designoz.com/resume.html> or <www.resume.html/johndoe/> You could also search for: "graphic designer" `inurl:resume design` Google will look for both the words (resume and design) in the URL. The first example above may surface, but not the second one.

Using number ranges Google lets you use an ellipsis (...) to specify a number range. This is useful when you want to find a product within a certain price range. Be careful though, if the information you're searching for has more than one kind of number associated with it. For example, I was recently searching for used cars between \$10000 and \$15000: "toyota camry" 10000...15000 However, this brought up cars that had either the price or the distance within this range. A little tweaking and I got it right: "toyota camry" \$10000...\$15000

Searching for glossary definitions I use Google's `define:` operator (again, without a space after it) extensively to find out how people on the Internet have defined certain terms. I've used searches like these to broaden my knowledge: `define: philistine` Google shows me a list of definitions from glossaries on the Internet that inform me that a philistine is someone ignorant of the arts and culture. I am not one.

Searching for different types of files Many articles on search engine technology talk about the Invisible Web, which consists of information that lies hidden from search engines. Files other than HTML form part of this Invisible Web. However, Google, being

Google, now has the capability to look for files other than HTML. Most times, Google will automatically bring up these files if they are related to your search.

You can also restrict your search to a particular file by using the `filetype:` operator. Here are some of the major filetype operators you can use:

```
filetype:pdf
filetype:doc
filetype:ppt
filetype:xls
filetype:ps
```

I find this useful when I'm looking for information that is usually tied to a specific kind of file. A tax calculator, for example, is most likely to be in a spreadsheet format, and a presentation will most definitely be a PowerPoint or PDF file. Again, most document templates are in Word format. For example, you could search for presentations about the role of XML in technical communication: `technical communication xml filetype:ppt`

Combining special operators As you may have noticed with many of the examples, you can get excellent results if you combine one or more syntaxes. For example, you could search for résumés of graphic designers in Elbonia or Antarctica using something like: "graphic designer" (elbonia OR antarctica) (`inurl: resume OR intitle:resume`)

However, this kind of search will definitely get you scores of job sites. So you could refine it to something like: "graphic designer" (elbonia OR antarctica) (`inurl:resume OR intitle:resume`) `--jobs`

Google now ignores Web pages that mention jobs or employment. While combining search operators can be very useful, keep in mind that Google will not let you combine operators like `allintitle:` and `allinurl:` with other operators.

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Using Google accessories While refining your search using special operators can be useful, at other times you may need to use Google's tools and specialized searches.

- **Google Images** <images.google.com> Ever wondered what an armadillo looks like? Instead of wading through strange descriptions, see it for yourself by doing a search on Google Images.
- **Google Groups** <groups.google.com> Often the best information, especially for troubleshooting, lies in posts to newsgroups. Google Groups has a 20 year archive of Usenet messages that can be a goldmine of information.
- **Google News** <news.google.com> If you're looking for news articles, head straight to Google News.
- **Google Answers** <answers.google.com> Even the best of us can't always find what we're looking for. You can post a question on Google Answers and have professional researchers do the hard work for you. While the minimum fee to post a question is US\$2.50, you can also quote what you'd be willing to pay if you got a satisfactory answer.
- **Froogle** <froogle.google.com> Retail therapy on the Web? Use Froogle to decide on the best way to spend your money.
- **Google Toolbar** <toolbar.google.com> Finally, what's a browser without a Google Toolbar?
- Installing the Google toolbar can save you the trouble of going to Google's Web site every time you want to do a search. I personally like the fact that the Google Toolbar keeps a history of the searches I perform.

Be careful about enabling advanced features on the toolbar, as this means that the toolbar will send information about the site you're visiting to Google. If you're worried about your privacy, simply disable these features.

In the labs The people at Google use Google Labs <labs.google.com> as an incubator for all the new ideas they come up with. Google Labs is a great site to watch. Right now, you can have a go at the Personalized Web Search, or try Google Sets. If you're adventurous and prosperous enough, try Froogle Wireless as well.

Life beyond Google Google is not the only search engine that's got it right. New contenders like Teoma, Wisenut, Vivisimo and a host of others are threatening to invade Google territory. While I was amused to note that most of these search engines look a lot like Google, I was also impressed with their capabilities. Teoma, for example, offers suggestions for refining your search, and also lists information resources separately. And Vivisimo's idea of clustering the results into different categories is a delight. In summary, there is intelligent life beyond Google. And Google, for all its wonderful features, is not perfect. Someday, we may be using a completely new search engine to meet our needs. Until then, I hope the tools described in this article save you time and effort.

As for my dad, I promise I'll have a talk with him one of these days.

* The Google Toolbar works only with Windows Internet Explorer. However, Safari has Google searching built in.



Suchitra Govindarajan works for an accounting software company in Melbourne, having moved to Australia last year from Chennai in the south of India. She has about four years experience in technical communication, and has worked in domains as diverse as oil-trading and gaming. Suchitra previously worked in Tech Support for the DTP industry. In her spare time, Suchitra writes poetry and reads Dilbert.

(From Apple Sauce November 2004)

Woody's Office Watch News

GO BACK, JACK

The Undo function has become especially important over the years as Microsoft puts more 'intelligence' into their products. Sometimes it 'corrects' your spelling or re-formats something you were quite happy with, thank you very much.

Whenever that happens just press

Ctrl + Z

(handily down in the bottom left of most keyboards) and whatever was just done is removed. This includes any automatic changes by the software.

FUNCTION KEY DISPLAY

If you want to seem really wizardly with Word then try turning on the function key display. This is an extra bar at the bottom of the Word window.

It shows all the available Function Key options available at that time - they change depending on what you are doing at that moment. Both the Fn key name and the action are displayed.

You can mouse click on a button to get that action or faster, press the Fn button on your keyboard.

This feature is in Office 2003 and perhaps some earlier versions but it's somewhat hiding. Go to Tools | Customize | Toolbars and scroll down the list to look for Function Key Display - if it is there then check the box next to it to make it appear. Note: this toolbar doesn't appear in the list you see when right-clicking on any empty part of the word toolbar - even when the Function Key Display is being used it doesn't appear!

WORDPERFECT LIVES!

You might have thought that the once dominant word processor,

WordPerfect has long since gone but it's still out there.

Corel have just released WordPerfect Office 12 Home Edition which is squarely pitched against Microsoft Works for the home users.

Priced at just US\$90 it compares favourably with MS Works at US\$95-99 though in both cases there are better prices to be had in the real world.

In both cases there's extras beyond the core program.

MS Works 2004 and 2005 come with Microsoft Word 2002 plus very cut-down spreadsheets and other Office-like features. Depending on the Works bundle you choose there are copies of MS Money and Encarta Standard. Works Suite 2005 has Word 2002, Encarta Standard 2005, Picture It Premium 10, Streets and Trips. Works Suite 2005 retails for \$100 though Amazon discounts that to \$89. There's also one of those dreaded mail-in rebates which I personally ignore due to the slow and often nonexistent arrival of the check.

WordPerfect Office Home Edition costs less with Amazon selling it for \$75 with no pesky and fanciful rebates to bother with, though the Corel web site www.corel.com has it for US\$69 with a rebate.

(We do wonder why Corel hassles its customers with a mail-in rebate when you are buying from them direct? There's no middle-man so the rebate could be given at the time of purchase. Yes, we understand why there are mail-in rebates but examples like this show why it's a bit of a scam).

As well as the word-processor there's Quattro Pro 12 as a spreadsheet.

Corel has included some impressive security products in their bundle -

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Norton's AntiVirus, Personal Firewall, Privacy Control, AntiSpam and Parental Control are in the box as is Corel's own Photobook and PhotoAlbum. Important to note that the Norton products only come with 90 days of Live Update support to get virus and other updates, compared with the one year you get with the stand-alone package.

Pinnacle's Instant CD/DVD is yet another piece of burning software. The Encyclopedia Britannica Ready Reference 2005 is there as well.

Neither bundle has an email client or PIM, though surely that has to be on the marketing radar for the future. But any Windows user has the perfectly adequate Outlook Express for their email.

If all you want is a word processor and some of the extras appeal then WordPerfect's Office 12 Home bundle is worth a look. The price is sharp and the package might suit a new computer owner with no previous experience. If you're wondering about WordPerfect then you can download a trial edition (152MB) from the Corel web site www.corel.com and go to Downloads.

Of course, Microsoft is betting that you'll stick with the devil you know and get MS Works with Word rather than some other package. Works comes with the option to upgrade to MS Office later, which doesn't apply to non-Microsoft products these days.

(from Woody's Office Watch 9.22)



Ramblings of a Retired Mind -

I was thinking about how a status symbol of today is those cell phones that everyone has clipped on. I can't afford one. So, I'm wearing my garage door opener.

You know, I spent a fortune on deodorant before I realized that people didn't like me anyway.

I was thinking that women should put pictures of missing husbands on beer cans!

I was thinking about old age and decided that it is 'when you still have something on the ball, but you are just too tired to bounce it'.

I thought about making a fitness movie, for folks my age, and call it "Pumping Rust."

I have gotten that dreaded furniture disease. That's when your chest is falling into your drawers!

I know, when people see a cat's litter box, they always say, "Oh, have you got a cat?" Just once I want to say, "No, it's for company!"

Employment application blanks always ask 'who is to be notified in case of an emergency.' I think you should write, "A Good Doctor!"

Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do -- write to these men? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the mailmen could look for them while they deliver the mail? Or better yet, arrest them while they are taking their pictures!

I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older. Then, it dawned on me, they were cramming for their finals. As for me, I'm just hoping God grades on the curve.

(Yes he sent me this one too—That Cousin of mine)

@ A new variety of Bagel

by Peter Deegan

Yes, there's a new type of Bagel out there, but sadly not the type you can eat. It's called Bagel.BB and while there's little truly new about this mass mailing worm but it's getting a lot of press coverage.

This issue of WEE will try to give you the information you need or hopefully least reassure you that the protections you have in place are sufficient. If you've followed the broad advice in WEE or Woody's Office Watch over the years then you should be in good shape:

- Install and maintain a good anti-virus software product - any of the major packages are OK. The important thing is to keep the virus information up to date by installing any updates or patches. Symantec has LiveUpdate to do this for Norton brand products and other manufacturers have similar systems.
- Be careful of ANY email attachments you receive, regardless of who they seem to come from (remember that the senders address can be faked so you can't rely on it).
 - Recent versions of Outlook will block most attachments anyway, however virus writers are getting used to that so you can't rely on attachment blocking over an up-to-date anti-virus package.
 - If you must open an email attachment, don't double-click on the file. Instead save it to your hard drive then use your anti-virus software to check it before opening.

@ How to get a Bagel

This worm arrives as an email attachment and if you execute (click on) the attachment then your computer will be infected. This particular worm is only transmitted by email unlike some others that also spread across shared network drives. It can only run on Windows computers, other operating systems aren't affected (though the infected attachment could conceivably be forwarded by someone with a non-Windows computer).

Once infected Bagel.BB will try to shut off many anti-virus programs, change or delete some registry entries and open a port to the Internet (81) to listen for commands from the virus maker. Interestingly it also tries to disable the Netsky virus as part of some battle between two virus making factions.

It then tries to spread itself by searching through many files on your computer looking for email addresses. It searches not only address books but cached Internet pages, saved email messages and more.

Tip: we still get questions about the silly AAAAA address book rumour - see one of our back issues for a full explanation of why it is, as the English would say 'bollocks'. It certainly won't stop Bagel.BB

Bagel.BB sends a copy of itself to most of the addresses its finds on your computer (there's some names and domains it won't email to). It uses it's own SMTP server so it is independent of any email setup you have.

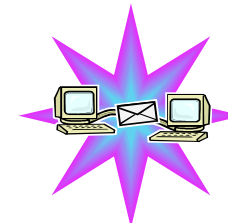
The FROM and TO address of the infected messages are from the addresses on your computer. That's why you get infected messages from people you know AND they seem to get infected messages from you. When someone gets an infected message that appears to come from your email address, chances are it's really coming from a third-party.

The infected messages have innocent subjects like *Hello*, *Thank you* or *Thanks* :) and the attachment comes in varying sizes to make it harder for anti-virus software to easily detect it. The attachment will have a name like *Price*, *price* or *Joke* with a file extension of com cpl or scr -- all of which are blocked attachment extensions by recent versions of Microsoft Outlook

@ Do I have a Bagel?

If you think you might be infected then make sure your anti-virus software is up to date then do a full scan of your computer. Don't panic -- most of the time people think a computer is infected it really some glitch in software or Windows itself. Bagel.BB is a good example of this. It doesn't do any direct harm to your computer (though it could in the future) instead it uses your computer and internet connection to spread itself around. Many computers could be infected with no outward sign of the problem

From Woody's Email Essentials #2.11



A brief history of computing...

'Programs are for people to read, and only incidentally for machines to execute¹'

Software: the languages of computation

Peter Carter (From Apple Sauce November 2004)

We looked last time at the first stored-program computers, but without describing those programs². The picture shows the first program for the Manchester Mark 1, the first stored program ever written and run: apart from comments, all binary numbers. The first programs for all machines were written in machine code, that is the binary numbers interpreted by the machine as instructions. The processor of any computer has a set of instructions specific to that type of processor, its instruction set. Those instructions are primitive, that is, they deal with tasks one tiny step at a time. For instance, to add two numbers the processor has first to fetch the addend from wherever it is in the machine's memory, bring in the augend and add the two, and then put the result somewhere in memory. It might look something like this... 10101101 address1 01101101 address2 10001101 address3 ...and those addresses would also be binary numbers. (And you might wonder how those numbers came to be at their memory addresses.)

Tedious. No wonder it was only proficient mathematicians who were the first programmers. The difficulty of programming did hold back the progress of computing in the early years. It wasn't long before the machines themselves were doing some of the work. Assemblers, which translated from mnemonics to instructions, were soon developed. In assembly code³, our program might look like this: LDA address1 ; load accumulator ADC address2 ; add with carry STA address3 ; store accumulator in memory

Assembly code would be loaded into the machine and the assembler would translate to machine code, which in turn would be loaded for execution. Note that assembler code is still working one machine instruction at a time.

1947/48 - *Manchester Mark 1 Program (annotated)*

Address	Instruction	Binary Code
0		01101101
1		00011010
2		01011010
3		01011010
4		11011010
5		11011010
6		11011010
7		11011010
8		11011010
9		11011010
10		11011010
11		11011010
12		11011010
13		11011010
14		11011010
15		11011010
16		11011010
17		11011010
18		11011010
19		11011010

20	-3	10111010
21	1	10001101
22	4	00100100

of 10100

There had to be a better way, so that programmers could write something like... sum := addend + augend ; ...without regard for what the instruction set was, or where things were stored in memory (and ':=' is pronounced 'becomes').

Several people (and their teams) conceived and implemented the ideas. (If this were a programming text, I would give you sample programs, but it isn't, so I won't.)

Grace Murray Hopper: COBOL

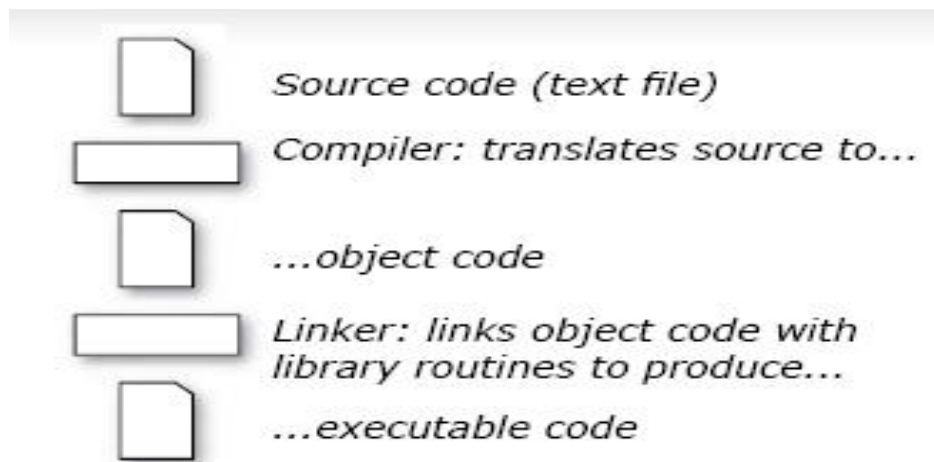
Grace Hopper joined the US Navy in WW 2 and was posted to Aiken's Harvard Mark 1 team, where she developed a library of subroutines that could be reused. In 1949 she joined Eckert and Mauchly to work on UNIVAC, and stayed with it when Eckert and Mauchly sold out to Rand. Despite the doubts of others, she began work on the first compiler, a program to translate a human-read-able programming language into machine code. The first, for a language named, A-0 appeared in 1952, and

(Continued on page 14)

was followed by B-0 in 1957. B-0 was renamed FlowMatic in 1957, and was the first computer language to use words rather than cryptic codes. Hopper became a leading member of the team that developed COBOL (Common Business Oriented Language), a language intended for use on a variety of machines, each with its own machine-specific compiler. COBOL was derived from FlowMatic, and is still in use. (It was the use of legacy COBOL code that was behind many of the Y2K fears.)

John Backus: FORTRAN

Backus joined IBM in 1950 to work on the SSEC, and there developed an assembler: Speedcoding. He and his team began work on FORTRAN (FORmula Translator) in 1953. As with Hopper's efforts, there were doubters that machines could translate programs to efficient code, and there were numerous unforeseen problems. However, FORTRAN was released in 1957 and found its main use in mathematical and scientific programming.



ALGOL

ALGOarithmic Language was developed by a committee, mainly European, but including John Backus, that first met in 1958. The main feature was that it had a block structure, that is, statements were grouped together: BEGIN statement1 ; statement2 ; statement3 ; etc... ; END; There could be blocks within blocks, and blocks (procedures and functions) could be named. The structure made writing, and more

importantly, verifying programs easier. ALGOL was deficient in a number of respects, and was never widely used. However its descendants are another story. Niklaus Wirth: Pascal, Modula, Oberon Wirth (a Swiss) developed ALGOL into a language intended for teaching. Pascal therefore enforced several rules (some would call them restrictions), and appeared in 1971. For general use, the language needed some extensions, and a good example of a general-purpose Pascal was the UCSD Pascal on the Apple II. Wirth continued to develop his ideas, with Modula and Modula-2, Pascal derivatives with an additional level of structure, the module. Oberon further develops the ideas. Jean Ichbiah, US DOD: Ada

Ada, named for Babbage's companion Ada Lovelace, is another Pascal derivative, originally intended (and mandated) for US defence projects. It dates from 1979. Kernighan and Ritchie:

C BCPL was an ALGOL derivative developed in the UK.

Brian Kernighan and Dennis Ritchie of the Bell Laboratories developed it into B, and then further into C in 1972.

C was used to implement Unix (Ritchie was one of the developers of Unix), and became the main language in computer science in the US.

From it has come

C++, a version with object-oriented features (an extra level of structure), and in turn Objective-C, the language for Mac OS X programming, and Java.

John McCarthy: LISP

The idea of intelligent machines has been around for a long time. John McCarthy designed LISP (LIST Processor) in 1958, basing much of it on Church's lambda calculus. LISP programs can manipulate symbolic data, even themselves, and the language has always been the language of choice in the artificial intelligence community. Logo, a language for young students, was derived from it.

Kemeny and Kurtz: BASIC

John Kemeny and Thomas Kurtz needed a programming language for their Dartmouth College students, one that was easy to learn and use.

BASIC (Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) was the result, first appearing in 1964. BASIC was implemented as an interpreted language, that is, it was translated to machine code line by line as the

program ran, not all at once as by a compiler. Interpreted languages are easier to use, since fragments of code can be easily tested, but run more slowly.

Kemeny and Kurtz's BASIC borrowed a number of features from FORTRAN, and had, for its time, reasonable control structures. Their later versions, influenced by structured programming ideas, were better in that regard. Unfortunately that was not true of all BASICs. In 1975 one William Gates abandoned his legal studies, and with Paul Allen wrote a BASIC interpreter for the first 'hobby' microcomputer, the MITS Altair. Other microcomputers followed—the Apple][, Radio Shack TRS-80, Commodore PET—and MicroSoft, as Gates and Allen had named their company, supplied BASIC interpreters for them also. The problem was that the BASICs had to fit into very small amounts of memory, 4K of ROM for the Altair, and not much more for the others.

That meant that the good control structures were lacking, leading to 'spaghetti code', programs with numerous jumps, and very hard to follow, and with many features accessible only by direct reference to the machine's memory. Kemeny and Kurtz, along with others in the computer science community, were horrified.

After being brought up on DEC BASIC on the PDP-11 I bought an Apple][, looked at AppleSoft BASIC and went out and bought Apple Pascal.

Whenever I had something serious to develop I wrote it in Pascal, not BASIC, and I later taught Pascal for a couple of years. I was always thankful I didn't have to program the Commodore 64 in BASIC.

Today's BASICs, such as RealBasic for the Mac, are a far cry from those crude implementations.

Others

Hundreds of programming languages have been written, some for specific purposes, others intended for general use: PL/1, APL, FORTH, Smalltalk... Many languages have had a number of dialects, often specific to particular machines, and that made transferring programs from one machine to another difficult. Today, languages often have their own ISO standards, and are portable.

Bugs

Programming errors range from the irritating to life threatening, and an essential part of programming has always been dealing with bugs. Typing

errors are usually easily found and corrected (they will often be shown up as errors in compiling), but faulty logic can be subtle in its effects. The hard part of programming is not language syntax, but logic. Designing algorithms for complicated tasks is difficult, and dangers can lie in that complexity. Programs must therefore be written in ways that are easy for people to read, understand and verify. Modular structure, in which each module can be independently tested and verified, makes that easier.

Pre-Macintosh days

All the early personal computers — Apple][, Radio Shack TRS-80, Commodore PET and so on — came with a version of BASIC built in. The Apple][in fact had two, Integer and AppleSoft (floating point), and it was also an easy machine to program with assembly code. Computer magazines of the day, including SAAUC newsletters, featured programs for games and useful tasks to be keyed in by readers. There was software available off the shelf, but to be a user usually involved some programming. The Macintosh was the first personal computer to be sold without a programming language, although versions of BASIC, Pascal and others were available. Today, you can program the Mac with Objective-C and Java through Project Builder, an integrated development environment (IDE), with Cocoa, the application environment.

Further reading

Searches for people named in this article will reveal information about them and their work. For a cautionary tale on what can happen with insufficiently tested software, see courses.cs.vt.edu/~cs3604/lib/Therac_25/Therac_1.html.

Auto Correct Photos For years we have advised people who want fast and easy tonal and color corrections to try Photoshop's Levels and Auto Levels commands. Auto Levels can instantly neutralize color casts and can greatly enhance the contrast of images (even grayscale images). It works by finding the darkest and lightest pixels in a picture and then "forces" those pixels to neutral black and white. Unfortunately, Auto Levels has never been able to neutralize the midtone gray, and so some images didn't get much benefit. The Auto Color Correction command has some ability to affect midtones and the result is that in almost every case we have tested, it beats Auto Levels in making the image "better." This is why we've "switched" to Auto Color Correction.

Avondalemedia via Mac-tips&hints.com From ACT Apple November 2004

LangaList Advice**Burning Files To CD In One Step**

Whenever I try to run the Backup program that is part of Windows XP Professional, I get an error message saying that the backup file name can not be used and to be sure I have access.

I am trying to back up to a CDR. I am otherwise able to make CDRs. Any ideas what's going on here?

Thanks! --- Barbara Juknialis

On its own, the backup program in XP (and Win2K) doesn't know how to talk directly to a CDR. As a backup tool, it's actually not bad; and is worlds better than the lame backup tools in earlier versions of Windows. But it only knows how to make a backup file, period; not how to write the file to a CDR.

You see, CDs use a different file system than hard drives. What's more, burning files directly to CDR in one step usually requires special "packet writing" software, which allows data to be dribbled to a CDR in intermittent clumps, or packets, as opposed to the standard "burn the whole thing in an unbroken data stream" of normal CD burning. For example, Roxio includes its separate "Drag to disc" or "Direct CD" packet-writing software with its burner software; Nero ships its separate "InCD" software; and so on.

You don't say what software you have, but if you check your burner software's helpfile, you may find a way to enable packet-writing to a blank CDR (roughly analogous to formatting a floppy). Once that's done, the Backup software may be able to write to the CDR: Backup will think it's talking directly to the CDR, but in reality, the packet writing software will be working as an invisible mediator, taking data from Backup, and dribbling it out to the CDR in the correct format.

Some packet-writing software is notoriously fussy and hard to use, so you may be glad to know there's a simpler way. <g> Let Backup do its thing; store the backup file wherever you want on your hard drive; and then simply burn the backup file to a blank CD using normal CD burning tools. In fact, XP comes with everything you need, built-in: Use XP's backup

tool to create the backup file, then pop a blank CDR into the drive, and drag the newly-created backup file to the CDR: XP will burn the CD for you with no additional software needed--- a free/no-extra-cost way to backup your system to CDR.

As an aside, although my systems have packet-writing available, I almost never use it. I find it simpler, faster, and more reliable to use normal CD burning tools when I need to put something on CD. But, your mileage may vary.

From LangaList

COMPUTER TIPS AND HINTS**Keystrokes and Message Boxes**

Save yourself some mouse movement: When a message box appears on the screen asking you to click on "OK" to continue, just make sure the current window is the active one and press the "ENTER" key. If it is asking for a click to "CANCEL," press the ESCAPE key.

Test Out Keyboards!

Make sure to test several keyboards before you purchase one. Different keyboards have varying 'feels,' and some people like 'clicky' keyboards - while others detest them. If you are going to buy keyboards via mail-order, try to test them out beforehand at a local computer store.

Failing Installation Programs

Have you ever downloaded a program off of the Internet, only to try installing the software but the installation fails? If so, here are some things to consider.

1. Did you read the instructions (if any) for installing the software on the webpage? There may be some software or hardware required in order to install the program. Perhaps the installation instructions are complicated, and if you do not follow them carefully, the install will fail. Always check the webpage for such instructions.
2. Do you have plenty of free hard drive space? Many installation programs create and use temporary files during the install, so you need to have plenty of free space in order to get the program working. A good rule of thumb is to have, if possible, at least twice the amount of hard drive room required by the program.

From SeniorLink Sentinel November 2004

Newbie Club Tutorials

Tutorial... "How To Drag And Drop"

Part of computing is knowing how to transfer files from one location to another. There are many ways to accomplish this task each with its own level of complication. Dragging and dropping is by far the easiest way to accomplish the transfer of a file to a new folder.

Sooooo

Hover (hold) your mouse cursor over an object.

Your cursor is the flashing thingy on your screen that appears when you left click your mouse on the screen. An object is a file, folder, icon, or groups of files, folders and icons. It can even be a highlighted bunch of words or a paragraph.

Once the cursor is located, press and HOLD DOWN your left mouse button.

Now, without letting go of the button, slide your mouse. The object will be dragged along with the cursor.

Drag (move) the object to its new location and release the left mouse button to drop the object. The object will be moved from its old location to its new location.

You have just performed the "drag and drop" operation. Well done! Apply the drag and drop principle to all your file maintenance chores.

As long as you have open windows, dragging and dropping files between them is a real no-brainer.

And that suits my li'l ol' brain perfectly!

Hey ho and on we go. This is fun:-)

Hmmmmmm.

Don't knock it babe coz we've ALL bin there:-)

Kwik Tip "Use Plain White Emails"

1. Don't send emails with coloured backgrounds and fancy fonts. They may look cool on your PC screen but not on mine - or anyone else's.

Many times they are impossible to read because Computers have many different settings and YOUR fancy font can look AWFUL on someone else's machine.

Your beautiful mauve background colour may look an awful shade of yucky brown on someone else's.

Your marvellous animated butterfly may be your best friend. But to me it's just a major distraction when I'm trying to read what you have to tell me.

And that wonderfully crafted handwritten font is almost unreadable to those who are not used to seeing it.

And as for those variations of animated smilies ...

Gimme us all a break - please! Email is for communicating.

And good 'old' fashioned plain text on a white background has worked well for centuries when writing letters.

It's been proven that it takes an average 20% LONGER to read on a screen than on paper. So why make it even more difficult for those you email?

Of course, you're in love with your design and believe I'm wrong because YOU like it.

Fair enough:-)

Tutorial... "How To Print Out Your Address Book"

Your OE address book is great for looking up details of your contacts at the click of a button. But it can be time consuming copying them by hand in to your 'old fashioned' diary. Here's how to print it out ...

Open your Address book (This is similar for MS Outlook too).

Click File.

Print.

A screen opens up with a variety of options and selections. You can choose to print your whole address book, or just selected parts of it. Just experiment to see the results.

Business card; Prints out the info you would normally find on a business card such as name, company, phone number, email address.

Memo; All of the stored information will be printed.

Phone list; Home, business, fax numbers etc will be printed.

----- **How To Customize.**

There's also a very handy facility for customizing the style of printout you can produce.

Click Properties.

Select paper size, orientation etc to suit the style of the permanent paper file you wish to produce.

----- Additional Help;

Anything you're not sure about on these screens can be explained by ...

Clicking on the Question mark (?) in the top right of the window.

Then click on the instruction you're not sure about.

A small window opens up with an explanation of what that particular function will achieve. As I said, it's just a question of experimenting until you achieve the results you want. You can't break anything and all it costs is a little paper and ink.

@ Some Mysterious Messages Explained

by Peter Deegan

This weeks WEE was inspired by a question from one of you dear readers. Steve K writes:

“It appears that my computer is sending emails out for someone. There is no evidence other than that periodically it is sending something out when I have not sent anything and I receive Cannot Deliver notices for people I have not sent anything to and whose addresses are not in my Outlook mailing list.”

Many people now get emails that are responses to messages that you're sure you never sent – non-delivery messages, out of office reminders, subscription confirmations and more.

Worse, you get automated messages saying that you sent an infected email message!

What's going on?

@ Nothing wrong with your computer

In Steve's case and in most cases there is nothing wrong with your computer.

Your machine is probably NOT sending out emails

even though you are getting replies as if you were.

That's the most important point – don't panic. If you want to make sure that you're not to blame – simply run any decent and up-to-date anti-virus package over your entire computer. This will detect and remove anything that might be sending emails on the sly.

But chances are that you'll find nothing --- so again – what's going on?

@ Worm Collateral Damage

In recent years there has been a series of nasties that spread themselves via email. They have their own mail system so they don't need Outlook, Outlook Express or any other specific email client to operate.

These worms scour a computer's hard drive for email addresses. Anything with a valid looking email address (ie <something>@<some domain>). It looks in various email program address books (Contacts in Outlook etc) and it also scans documents and text files to copy any email address it can find.

It also looks in the web pages you have visited that are saved in the cached web history.

Once it has collected email addresses it starts putting them together and sending out infected messages. Both the From and To address can be any of the email addresses it has harvested from your hard drive.

Lots of messages go out to a random combination of addresses used in both the From and To fields.

Not only will an infected message be sent to an address found on your computer but the **sender's address is also faked**.

An infected message could include your own email address, because it has been harvested from your computer along with all the others. But to the worm, it is just another email address to use and it will mix your email address in with all the others.

Most of these messages get trapped, deleted by the receiver and don't get a chance to infect a new host.

The nuisance is that these bogus messages trigger various necessary automatic responders. The content of the message is irrelevant and just the From and To matter to the robot.

It is those automatic responses that you are getting – responses to messages that you never sent but were faked using your email address. Sadly all the media attention has been on the infected messages themselves – this 'collateral damage' in the form of responses to faked messages rarely gets a mention.

Example:

You have the email address Dino@dagg.com A worm infects someone's computer then scans the hard drive and finds the following addresses:

- Dino@dagg.com
- Fred@dagg.com

- Barney@dagg.com
- Betty@dagg.com
- Wilma@Dagg.com
- BedrockTimes@dagg.com

It will then send out infected messages to various combinations such as

From: Fred@dagg.com To: Betty@dagg.com

From: Betty@dagg.com To: BedrockTimes@dagg.com

And so on

The message to Betty is caught by her anti-virus software, deleted and a warning returned to the apparent sender, in this case Fred.

Fred receives a message warning about an infected email he is supposed to have sent. Of course, he never sent the message – it came from Dino. But there's no way to know that. Even if you looked at the original infected message there's no way to trace it back to Dino. It says it came from Fred and the other information in the message header has been faked to hide the true origin.

Betty gets a message asking her to confirm a subscription to the Bedrock Times email edition. That's because another infected message was apparently sent from Betty to the BedrockTimes address. The paper's mailing list robot responds automatically with a confirmation request to the address given (Betty's).

Multiply that example millions of times and you get some idea of the amount of email being generated. Not just the original message but all the responses as well.

While most of the responses are automatic you might get some messages from real humans. These mostly come in the form of accusations of sending viruses.

@ What can you do?

Sadly there's not a lot you can do except be aware of the problem and ignore the messages that come in.

Some people try to automatically delete all non delivery reports (NDR) that come to them but that has the risk of removing a legitimate NDR ie notice that a message you did send has not been delivered. On the other hand, one Woody's Watch team member gets over 500 NDR's each day so such drastic action can be necessary.

There's no point complaining to anyone – the automatic response or NDR is doing what it's supposed to do. There's no way to trace the real sender. Just delete the annoying message and get on with your life.

@ What is being done.

The anti-virus companies have been strangely slow to respond to this problem. Despite knowing that the infected message has a faked >From address, the anti-virus software stills sends a warning message. Really silly and shortsighted but the mail software is being slowly updated to abate this nuisance.

Most reputable email newsletters (including Woody's Watch, naturally) will check incoming subscription requests and delete any that look bogus. The problem is that it is hard to reliably identify the real from the bogus automatically. We get hundreds of thousands of bogus messages every day and inevitably some slip through the net.

Faked messages are one reason why any reputable newsletter will require a confirmation or 'opt-in' before adding someone to the subscriber list. It's a nuisance for everyone, publisher and reader, but necessary.

Out of Office or Vacation responses are usually setup to only respond once to each email address. So if multiple messages arrive from one email address, only the first one gets an automatic response.

Ideally most of the infected email messages are trapped and deleted by corporate email systems or ISP's before they reach any automatic responder, however as with newsletters, the volume and changing nature of the messages means that not everything is detected.

In the longer term, some widely accepted form of email security is necessary to secure against both spam and these accidental responses.

There are various systems in the works that would reliably identify the source of an email message (not necessarily the individual user but the domain it is coming from). With such a system broadly accepted you could conceivably refuse to accept any email message that is not properly identified. Worm driven infected messages and untraceable spam could be refused much more easily. At least that's the theory – the reality may be quite different.

But any broadly accepted system (it has to be used by the vast majority in order to work effectively) has to be better than what we have now. Alas the various companies involved are battling among themselves with various standards and corporate machinations. Meantime their customers have to wait even longer for an answer

From Woody's Email Essentials (WEE) #2.12

PowerPoint corrupts

Peter Carter

It seems inevitable that no sooner has one finished writing¹ something that more information will turn up. In this case it was discovering, a couple of days after the non-PowerPoint presentation at the November meeting, the latest book by Don Watson: *Watson's Dictionary of Weasel Words, contemporary clichés, cant and management jargon* (Knopf, 2004).

Among the definitions of words that have lost all real meaning in modern usage is this one (p 255):

'PowerPoint

Microsoft's presentation software; hundreds of millions sold and mainly used to present slide nights with intellectual pretensions, sales pitches dressed up as analysis and argument. Also used in schools as a substitute for writing essays.

Colin Powell used PowerPoint to present the case for invading Iraq at the United Nations. But Edward R. Tufte says it is possible that the misuse of PowerPoint is diminishing cognitive ability. It is certain that it has done nothing for writing.

"PowerPoint allows speakers to pretend that they are giving a real talk and audiences to pretend that they are listening. This prankish conspiracy against substance and thought should always provoke the question, Why are we having this meeting?"

Edward R. Tufte, *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*, 2003

"As we see in the organisational overview slide, four score and seven years ago brought forth on this continent a new nation . Next slide please ... and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, next slide please, shall not perish from the earth." Peter Norvig (after Abraham Lincoln) www.norvig.com. Even the cover image of Tufte's book is telling, as you can see at www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/books_pp. I must get a copy. Tufte was highly critical of a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Boeing engineers to present information to investigators following the Columbia accident. The Board itself stated: 'The Board views the endemic use of PowerPoint briefing slides instead of technical papers as an illustration of the problematic methods of technical communication at NASA.' (Report of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board, Vol 1, Ch 7, p 191) Norvig's Web site has a PowerPoint presentation of Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Alas, few speakers these days can match Lincoln, and certainly no PowerPoint users. Elsewhere in the book Watson takes aim at bullet points: 'Bullets are believed to make an argument easier to follow. Because they represent the argument boiled down, they are also supposed to represent the truth distilled. Bullet points are child-like statements of the obvious and in combination suggest relationships that do not exist.' Two articles from *Wired* are also worth looking at: Learning to love PowerPoint: www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt1.html PowerPoint is evil: www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt2.html It turns out that I missed a PowerPoint presentation ('The Life of a Development Officer') the other week because I was instructing a group on the water instead of being at a meeting. From the handout I don't think I missed much: paddling is always more interesting anyway. Do buy Watson's book. His earlier book, *Death Sentence*, is now in paperback.

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