Launceston Computer Group INCORPORATED

NEWSTREAM

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Next Meeting

WEDNESDAY 2ND FEBRUARY 2005

BEGINNERS 7 PM

NEW MACS 8 PM

(TO BE CONFIRMED)

Newstream Articles

Deadline : 10 Days before Meeting
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Single $10, Family $15 (Includes Email edition Newstream)
Printed & Posted Newsletter $20 extra

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Ron's Ramblings

Happy new year to All!!

With the start of a new year we welcome any new members of OPEN or LCG.

It is almost certain that we will run a Computer Show on the 9th July, at Archer's Manor. Judy will be the Coordinator, but she will need the assistance of members. Not only just the Committee but all members .

We need confirmation from exhibitors, not just the Computer Sellers, but users like Sewknit, Police and any other possible exhibitors that members can think of.

We urgently need a design for Posters and Handouts.

Another nee is to involve the youth of Launceston, so if anyone knows of young people that might like to run a game stall, especially if they would consider forming a Gamers Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Launceston Computer Group.

In other news I have put the Launceston Computer Group and the OPEN SIG on the Microsoft Mindshare Web Site. Other than access to Microsoft Newsletter presentations (one of which appears in this edition) there doesn't appear to be much of interest for us.

I did request programmes to review but found that they were not available outside of USA & Canada.

Oh well it was worth a try!!

I've had no luck in reviving the User Group donations of Goodies from Microsoft that we commenced in 1999 and which pegged out with the donation of Windows XP. I'll still give them a nudge now and then.

If anyone would like to contribute an article or so,or would like information about a particular topic, contact editor@lcg.org.au

Ron Baker

Launceston Computer Group

SOFTWARE LIBRARY

Dated 1st Feb 2005

DISK 1000 - Your Library on Disk

*Have you received your copy of Disk 1000? The disk holds a complete listing of programs available in our PC shareware library. This disk is free of charge to all new members. (***will be available on CD soon***!)*

DISK COPY PRICES - CLUB MEMBERS *$1.00 per disk*

Disk Prices - Box of 25 = $12.00 Members Only

CD Prices – Box of 10 = $10.00 Members Only

Julie Hjort ,Shareware Librarian

AVAILABILITY OF LIBRARY

The Shareware Library is available in-between meetings from the following person. Please telephone first to arrange a suitable time.

The library is also available at the venue - Studioworks most Wednesdays 9am to 3pm. Email: opencomputingtas@hotmail.com

LAUNCESTON

Julie Hjort Phone 6344 5686

Flat 2, 115 Penquite Road, Newstead

Email: jhjort@intas.net.au

Monthly Workshops

Graphics – 2nd Step

Paint Shop Pro 7

Next class

Wednesday Feb 16

1pm – 3.30pm

$4.00 fee - Numbers limited to 8 please register on noticeboard or call **OPEN** on **0413 698.610**

Family History Online

Next Classes

Wednesday Jan 26th 2005

10 am to 3 pm

Wednesday Feb 9th 2005

1 pm to 3.30 pm

$4.00 fee Numbers limited to 8 people

Please register on noticeboard

Microsoft Publisher

Due to low attendances these classes will be postponed until further notice

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Graphics – Level 1

This class will be held every second month and is aimed at those people who are new or know little about manipulating graphics.

$6.00 Fee Includes programs and cost of printing tutorials.

Next Class Wednesday Feb 9 *(9 am to noon)*

VENUE TELEPHONE NUMBER

Mobile Phone Number is now available to all those wishing to contact OPEN during working hours. The number is

0413 698 610

Please pay for private calls made *from* this phone

OPEN Session Times

All sessions are held at the venue at

Studioworks, 1 Pipeworks Rd, L'ton

Standard Sessions (All sessions $4.00)

Monday	10am -12	Intro to ELearn
Monday	1pm – 3pm	Basics & Beyond
Tuesday	10am – 12	PC & Mac Support for Beginners
Tuesday	1pm – 3pm	Intro to ELearn & Beginners
Wednesday	9am –12	2nd Step Tuition (see special sessions)
Wednesday	1 pm – 3.30 pm	2nd Step Tuition (see special sessions)
Thursday	10 am – 12	Intro to ELearn & Beginners
Thursday	1pm - 3pm	PC & Mac, Revision
Friday	10am -12	Intro to ELearn
3rd Saturday	9 am - 12	NT Camera Club

Special February Sessions

Wednedsay 2nd Feb	9 am –12 pm	**Tutor Tuition**
Wednesday 2nd Feb	1 pm onwards	**OPEN Meeting**
Wednesday 9th Feb	9 am –12 pm	**Graphics Level 1**
Wednesday 9th Feb	1 pm – 3.30 pm	Family History
Wednesday 16th Feb	9 am –12 pm	**Create Brochures Using MS Word**
Wednesday 16th Feb	1 pm – 3.30 pm	**Graphics Paint Shop Pro 7**
Wednesday 23rd Feb	**9 am –12 pm**	**Launceston Cup (club closed)**
Wednesday 23rd Feb	**1 pm – 3.30 pm**	**Launceston Cup (club closed)**

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What's Happening at OPEN

Next Monthly Meeting
2nd FEBRUARY 2005 at 1.00 pm

FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

Welcome to 2005! I hope everyone is well rested and ready for an interesting year of computing at OPEN.

Please take a few minutes to check out the new roster – you will note that all of the **'special sessions'** (e.g. Graphics, Family History etc) **will be held on Wednesdays** this year. Some sessions will also change from afternoons to mornings.

For members planning to take part in the **E-Learn** classes that OPEN conducts in conjunction with TAFE, we will be running Introduction sessions until the 'formal' courses begin. Please note that limited places are available for these sessions so please book early if you have a preference for a particular day.

LAUNCESTON CUP DAY – FEB 23

Family History and Print Artist classes **will not** be held on Wednesday February 23rd.

Unless otherwise advised the club will be closed on this day.

Dennis Murray

SPECIAL EVENING SESSION
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
L.C.G. MEETING
Wednesday Feb 2
7 pm – 9.30 pm

Demonstration of the new Mac G5, courtesy of the Mac Shop. (to be confirmed)

Waiting Lists

A waiting list for OPEN classes has been drawn up in the back of the daybook. Please enter the names and preferred sessions and contact numbers in the list.

Induction Packs

The new induction packs are now available.
These packs include all the information a new member requires to begin their course.

Free Copy of Newsletter

Don't forget to submit your Email address if you wish to receive the LCG/OPEN newsletter via Email. If you have not yet received the newsletter via Email tell your tutor.

E-Learn

Starting dates and schedule for **2005 e-Learn classes** will be advised after consultation with TAFE. Please keep in contact with OPEN if you intend enrolling.

TUTOR PROFILE :

Robert Tierney

Robert is the current Secretary of OPEN and co-ordinator of the newly-formed Volunteer ICT Outreach group (VICTOR). Rob began his service as a voluntary tutor at OPEN early in 2004.

First Computer Experience
came as part of his high school studies 'several' years ago (on DOS-based systems) and Robert admits that Computing wasn't his favourite subject at the time.

First Home Computer
was an Amstrad CPC464 (mid 1980s) that had a cassette drive, rather than the floppy discs that most of us are familiar with. Each game or piece of software had to be loaded from an individual cassette.

First Windows Experience
came in 1995 when Rob bought his first 'real' computer, a Pentium 2 running Windows 95 naturally.

Current Computing Interests
Rob is involved in tuition for beginners at OPEN, and is interested in all aspects of Microsoft Office and basic trouble-shooting in regard to virus detection and removal.

How to Protect Your Computer from Spyware and Adware

Published: April 20, 2004 By Jerry Honeycutt

As if spam, viruses, and worms aren't bad enough. Adware and spyware are here to sap the remaining life out of your productivity and privacy. Cookies are harmless in comparison!

Adware is software that displays advertisements on your computer. These are ads that inexplicably pop up on your display screen, even if you're not browsing the Internet. Some companies provide "free" software in exchange for advertising on your display. It's how they make their money.

Spyware is software that sends your personal information to a third party without your permission or knowledge. This can include information about Web sites you visit or something more sensitive like your user name and password. Unscrupulous companies often use this data to send you unsolicited targeted advertisements.

I've noticed more postings in the Microsoft Windows XP newsgroups about these threats. Many of the postings ask how they can tell if they have spyware on their systems and how to remove spyware if they find it. A small handful asks how to fix problems left over after removing spyware. I'm glad to see a lot of the advice offered from other enthusiasts and I'm going to share some of that advice with you in this month's column.

Windows Media Player 9 Series Questions

Now I know that a small number of you think of Windows XP, Windows Media Player, or Windows Messenger as spyware. The reason I disagree is that Microsoft provides a good combination of privacy notice and choice to users regarding the use of Web services and the sharing of information. For example, when you first run Windows Media Player 9 Series, you're given a chance to review the privacy options and make changes as you see fit. To further preserve your privacy, the default value of the player ID is set to "anonymous."

Is Your PC Affected by Spyware?

The main problem that most people notice with either kind of program is that they cause performance issues with their computers. For example, Internet Explorer might not work properly any more, your computer might hang more frequently, or your computer might slow down significantly. Removing spyware successfully is difficult enough to make preventing it in the first place a priority.

Unauthorized adware and spyware usually install on your computer covertly by using one of two methods

- Tricking you into clicking a link that installs it. Links to spyware can be deceptive. For example, a Web site that's trying to push spyware onto your computer might open a window that looks like a Windows dialog box, and then trick you by installing when you click a Cancel button to close the dialog box. Sometimes, spyware pushers will put a fake title bar in an empty window, and then install spyware when you try closing the window.
- Installing freeware that includes it. For example, you might install a free file-sharing program that surreptitiously installs spyware on your computer. File-sharing programs can be a major conveyor of adware.

Protect against Spyware and Adware

Without help, you have no way to prevent adware or spyware. Old antivirus programs don't even prevent adware, since they didn't consider them viruses or worms. First, you usually give permission to install adware, although you do so unwittingly because adware and spyware pushers are deceptive. Second, adware doesn't behave like a typical virus or worm. They don't usually do actual damage to your computer, other than wrecking its performance, and they don't spread themselves using your address book. (Although some kinds of adware can break your anti-

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spyware tools.)

Things are changing for the better, though. Most popular antivirus products now include adware and spyware scanning. For example, the latest versions of McAfee VirusScan, Norton AntiVirus 2004, and Trend Micro PC-Cillin 2004 now scan for some adware and spyware.

Also, some Internet service providers (ISPs) are introducing protection from adware and spyware. For example, America Online (AOL) announced in January spyware protection as an enhancement for AOL 9.0 Optimized. EarthLink also provides adware and spyware protection through the latest version of its software. Of course, to take advantage of the built-in protection that antivirus products and ISPs provide, you have to update to the latest versions, and keep the anti-spyware/adware signatures current.

.Prevent Unwanted Installation

Companies pushing adware and spyware are relying on two things: your desire for free software and your gullibility. I've had two friends bring me their computers after they were seriously infected with adware. In one case, the culprit was my friend's craving for free file-sharing software. His desktop was a mess with countless icons for programs that he downloaded from the Internet. I was aghast. What he didn't realize is that he gave implicit permission to install adware. He knows better now.

My other friend isn't a freeware glutton. Instead, she has a habit of clicking the Yes or OK buttons on every dialog box she sees. Even suspicious-looking dialog boxes that don't pass close scrutiny. Of course, when a dialog box pops up asking if it's OK to install a new program, she clicks the Yes button.

The lesson that you can learn from my friends will help you prevent the installation of most adware and spyware•

Make sure the programs you install don't contain adware. Many freeware programs do include adware. It's how the publishers make their money. If you're not sure, read the license agreement carefully (these are usually shown directly or through links as part of the installation process). Also, check the publisher's Web site very carefully. If you're still not sure, search Google Groups for the name of the program and the keywords *adware* or *spyware*. If you don't find any postings about it, then you're probably OK.

• **Install a pop-up blocker to prevent adware and spyware pop-up windows.** Much spyware installs after you click a deceptive link in a pop-up browser window. Install a pop-up blocker, and you won't even be tempted to click those links. My two favorite pop-up blockers are completely free. The first is the Google Toolbar. The second is the new MSN Toolbar. Pop-up windows are annoying time wasters anyway, so you'll thank yourself later. If you're a Windows XP user, look for a service pack this summer (Service Pack 2) that will include a number of great security features, as well as a pop-up blocker for Internet Explorer.

• **Don't unwittingly install adware or software.** If you do click what seems like a innocuous link, and then you see a dialog box similar to the one shown in Figure 1, *don't click the Yes button to install the software*. In this example, I was expecting to install a program from Microsoft so I feel safe. If in doubt, however, do not proceed. This dialog box is your last line of defense, and you should only install programs from the Internet that you chose to install. This is akin to giving someone your credit card number who calls you at home. It's a different story if you called them. Installing Windows XP SP 2 (when it's available later this summer) will also provide some help by suppressing unsolicited downloads of ActiveX controls (a

Just For Grins

With all the sadness and trauma going on in the world today, it is worth reflecting on the death of a very important person, which almost went unnoticed last week. Larry La Prise, the man who wrote "The Hokey Pokey", died peacefully at age 93. The most traumatic part for his family was getting him into the coffin. They put his left leg in, and then the trouble started.

--- Steve/Roger Lamm

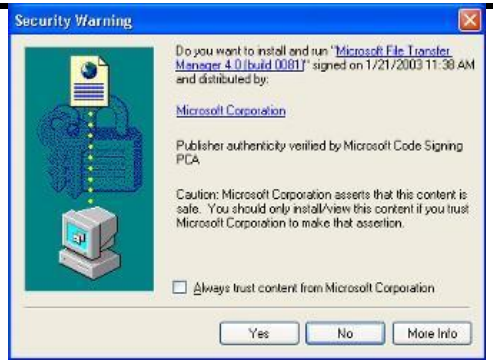

Figure 1: Only click Yes if you trust the publisher and want the software.

Spyware scanners and some virus scanners with spyware signatures can help combat spyware. However, the best strategy is to be discriminating about what you choose to download and install

Check Your Computer

If you're even thinking about scanning your computer for adware and spyware, then you're probably experiencing some of the symptoms I described earlier in this article. Those include instability, performance problems, or possibly a hijacked Web browser.

There is software specifically designed for detecting spyware and adware, and helping you remove it. The one with which I'm most familiar is Ad-aware from Lavasoft. This is the program that I recommend to most of my friends. A freeware version is available for use by individuals at home. A commercial version is also available for use in corporate environments. A program like Ad-aware finds adware and spyware on your computer and then removes them.

You can find more adware and spyware removal tools at the Spyware Protection and Removal guide. This Web page includes links to popular spyware removal programs, as well as a number of useful articles. If you're not going to use a popular program like Ad-aware, however, search Google Groups for the name of the program you do choose. Some spyware removal software can cause as many problems as it fixes, and you want to find out about these problems before using unproven software.

Tip: Malke, a Microsoft MVP, offers this tip in the Windows XP Newsgroups: "It's best to run antivirus and spyware removal tools in Safe Mode." This is because removal tools sometimes can't remove spyware from your computer while it's running.

Get More Help

The best place to ask questions about adware if you suspect your computer is infested is in the newsgroups. Specifically, the Windows XP Security and Administration and the Windows XP General newsgroups tend to be where most users post and answer these types of questions. Rather than wait for an answer to your question, however, I suggest that you search the Windows XP newsgroups at Google Groups.

When you do post your questions, make sure you give a thorough description of the symptoms you're experiencing. The more information you give, the easier it will be for other people to help you. For example, you'll want to describe your hardware configuration as much as possible. It is also important to describe any software that you've recently installed, since unwanted software often comes bundled with other applications. Be sure to describe any pop-up windows that have suddenly started appearing on your desktop and, if possible, include a screenshot of them.

Remember not to post anything in a newsgroup that you'd have a problem with millions of people seeing—particularly malicious people who would take advantage of personal information. So don't provide account names, IP addresses, or passwords.

Even after posting your question, don't be disappointed if someone tells you to run a scanner like Ad-aware. Generally, if you suspect that your computer is infested with adware or spyware, this is the best advice.

Expert Zone Columnist Jerry Honeycutt is a writer, speaker, and technologist who has written over 25 books, including Microsoft Windows XP Registry Guide *(Microsoft Press, 2002). He frequently writes about*

Newbie Club Tutorials (Old & New)

Tutorial; ----- "Windows Tips"

Minimize, Maximize, and Close buttons are used more than any other - apparently:-)

These little buttons are found on every window in the right side of the Title Bar. The minimize button is commonly referred to as the "minus sign" but that's a kind of symbolic reduction of the item's significance. The Close button is called the "X" button by some, and could be correlated with the X-File if you want to be imaginative. The buttons reside in order: Minimize, Maximize, and Close.

Clicking the minimize button will fold up the window into a neat little package that resides in the taskbar in button format. Try it. Click the minimize button on this e-book right now, and watch it transform itself via the magic of animation.

The Maximize button is next to minimize, and its sole purpose is expand the window to full screen. No matter how small or to what size you've adjusted a window, clicking this button will dramatically increase your view.

After expansion, the button looks like a double set of maximize buttons, one layered on top of the other. Click again, and the window returns to its previously un maximized state.

Tip: Double click the Title Bar to maximize or return a window to its previous size.

The close button will terminate your program or application. If you haven't saved work, you'll be prompted with a message, so don't worry about losing your valuables. If you see two sets of "X" buttons, such as are common to word processing programs, the lower set will close the document without exiting the word processing program.

Tutorial ------- "More Windows Tips"

The Resize Handle is special.

What? What's a resize handle? It's that little area in the lower right corner of a window that lets you, well, resize the window! Vertical and horizontal dimensions can be changed simultaneously using this handle. Pass your mouse cursor over the resize handle, and it turns into a double-headed arrow. Left click and drag the window to the size you desire.

Check your status with the Status Bar.

This is an overlooked part of a window that displays statistical and other information. Things like the time, the size of a selected file, and any other detail oriented info the designers want to include can be found here.

Turn the Status Bar on if you want to see it. The bar makes up the bottom portion of an active window.

Windows comes out of the box with the status bar turned off. Seems someone thought you'd be overwhelmed with information, and decided to make Windows as plain as possible. There are a lot of nice features that are turned off by default. The Status Bar is one of them.

Check any window's View menu to see if an option for using the Status Bar exists. Also, try right clicking the status bar itself to see if any user configurable options exist.

Still confused? Don't worry it's not as difficult as it looks. Just take your time and go through these actions one step at a time. Pretty soon it will become second nature to you.

Tutorial ------ "How To Make A Screen Capture"

Okay, you've seen screen captures. You know, those windows pictures we use so extensively in our Newbie Club Ebooks and Website tutorials.

How is this accomplished?

Ctrl + Print Screen is the key

This is where the Print Screen key on your keyboard comes in handy. It may be called PrntScn on your keyboard, or some other variant. But it's purpose is to make a copy of whatever is on your screen. It copies the info to the Windows clipboard. Then you can paste into another document that will accept it, such as Word, or a graphics program.

But what if you want to capture only the active window - the actual window that you may have just brought up on your screen?

That's when you use two keys together. The Alt and the Print Screen keys. Hold down the Alt key. Press the Print Screen key. That's it! You've just

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made a copy of the active window, placing it on the clipboard, ready to insert wherever you want to insert it.

I use a graphics program called Paint. It comes with your computer. You can try it now. It's really cool! Or you can use some other graphics programs that are far more robust. However, nothing too fancy is required to make these screen captures.

And now you know how it works. Here's an idea factory for you. Use this skill to illustrate anything that requires a picture. Use it to help people "get the picture." It's the driving force behind The Newbie ClubT Learning System. we use it for all of our tutorials, ebooks, and anything else requiring a picture to help you understand your computer. And you can do the same!

Tutorial --- "What Do You Mean - Open With?"

Ever tried to open a file, and get that box that shouts, "You're an idiot! You can't open that file! What program do you want me to use?"

It's called the "Open With" dialog box.

Try this. Open Notepad... (Start, Programs, Accessories, Notepad).

Type a few letters... then click File, Save As, and give it a name: "test. abc".

Save it to your Desktop for easy retrieval.

Now, go to your Desktop and you'll see a new icon that looks like a little Microsoft Window Logo flying on a white box.

Try double clicking that icon. No the file won't open, but you will open the "Open With" dialog box.

Here's why. Windows didn't recognize the ".abc" file extension and didn't know which program to use to open the file. So it asks you. Like you're some kind of guru, right?

If you had saved that file you created in Notepad and given it a ".txt" extension, it would have opened up in Notepad when you double clicked the icon. Because Windows knows that Notepad will read any file with the .txt extension.

So... what do you do when trying to open a file that's real, but you don't have the necessary program? The "Open With" dialog box will do you no good.

You must install the program needed.

For example, you receive a file by email attachment that's a Microsoft Word document. You don't have Word installed on your computer, but do have Microsoft Works.

You can't open a Word document with Works. Sorry. You'll have to install MS Word. If you receive a file with a ".ppt" extension, you need Power Point in order to open that file.

Where you can find a list of file extensions, and the programs needed to open those files? Easy. Just jump over to http://www.google.com and type "file extensions" into the search box.

The web is crammed full of resources. And you only need a couple of tools to find links to all the other tools you need to build your home on the web.

File extensions are the key. Once you understand how they work, you've de-mystified another corner of your computer.

Tutorial; ----- "How To Forward Your Email"

Let's say you decide to share the Insider with a friend. What's the easiest way to do this? Just forward it. But how do you make it happen?

Well, you could just click the forward button on your email client. ("Client" is the techie-speak name for your email program - you're using it right now to read this mail.) But simply clicking and filling in an email address and punching the Send button may cause problems.

Here's why.

If you include a short note to your friend, at least it's obvious who the letter is from, and why. I mean, what if they don't recognize your email address? Not saying they won't, of course. It's just good manners. Plus, you may want to include WHY you're sending the email.

When you forward an email to someone without an explanation, it's like getting junk mail. At least that's the way I see it!

Hey, let's try something. Right now, click your forward button. You'll see the subject line is filled in for you.

Good.

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Now type your own email address in the "To:" line.
Drop down to the body of the message, where you'll see this letter. Click your mouse cursor on the first line in front of the first character.
Now press the Enter key a couple of times to give yourself some typing space, and type a short message. Like "Testing." Or, "I'm forwarding this to myself."
When you're through, send the email. Then check your mail. Some great voice will chime, "You've got mail!"
Very good. You've just tested your own email, and you know you're able to forward. Now try forwarding to a friend

Tutorial ------ "Stand By Mode Freezing Your PC?"

Using standby mode, is supposed to save energy when your PC is unattended, and help your Monitor last longer.
How valuable this function is, I don't know.
However, this facility can cause problems, because sometimes when you try to bring back your 'normal' screen you find your PC is frozen. No mouse, no alt/ctrl/delete function ...
Zilch!
Then you have to switch off your computer (even that doesn't work sometimes), reboot and run scan disk, just to get back to where you were before you took time off for that cup of coffee.
If this has happened to you, the answer is to disable the standby mode.
Here's how ...
RIGHT Click on a blank area of your desktop.
LEFT Click on
Properties
Screen saver
Settings (or Power)
Check everything in there to 'Never'.
Click OK and OK again.
Job done.
Now you can have a cup of coffee with peace of mind:-)

Tutorial --- "Give Yourself More Elbow Room"

Want to give yourself a little more elbow room when using Internet Explorer?If you see a text description next to your icons in the top toolbar, here's how to get rid of them ...
Click on 'View'
Click on 'Toolbars'
Click on 'Customize'
Go down to the 'Text Options' drop down box
Select 'No Text Labels'
Then open the 'Icon Options' drop down box
Select 'Small Icons'
Click 'Close'
Now you'll see that you have a little more screen space available for viewing.
---------- "Want even MORE space?"
OK, how about using the WHOLE screen for viewing a Web page?
Open a Web page.
Click on F11 key on your keyboard ...
Now you'll have more space than a skunk in a Supermarket!
To return to normal screen, just click F11 again.
OR go to view,
'Toolbars'
'Customize'
In the left window click on 'Full Screen'
Click 'Add' and 'Close'.
Now you'll have a 'Full Screen' button in your top toolbar. Just click on it to go Full Screen and click again for Normal Screen
From "The Insider" E Zine of the Newbie Club

A brief history of computing...

CSIRAC, SILLIAC, UTECOM, WREDAC

Australian firsts

Computing in Australia is another of those tantalising 'what ifs', because Australia's first computer, the fourth stored-program computer in the world, was designed and built in in this country, and there were plans to build others based on it. In the event, commercial machines from elsewhere were brought in, and we've been buying from overseas ever since.

CSIRAC

Australia's first computer, the CSIR Mark 1, later CSIRAC, was designed by Trevor Pearcey, assisted by Maston Beard. Pearcy had worked on radar during WW 2 in the UK, and joined the Radio physics department of CSIRO in 1946. On his way to Australia he visited university calculating projects in the US, and met Howard Aiken. He convinced his managers that a computing project should be begun.

Their logical design was complete in 1948, and Pearcy went to the UK to see Turing's ACE, EDSAC and other projects, a visit which confirmed their decisions.
Some time in November 1949 the machine ran its first simple program, becoming the world's fourth stored-program machine. It was complete in June 1951, when it was demonstrated at a conference, playing what was probably the first computer-generated music, Colonel Bogey.

During the next few years, the machine's mercury delay-line memory was increased, a magnetic drum memory was added, and a large library of programs developed. It was used for a number of projects, including astronomical, aeronautical and chemical tables, meteorological analysis, and design of parts of the Snowy Mountains Project.

By 1954 it was clear that no one was interested in developing the machine commercially, so it was moved to the University of Melbourne as CSIRAC in 1956. There it was used for more academic and commercial work until it was replaced by a machine from the US in 1964.

CSIRAC is now on museum display, the only complete machine of its era still in existence.

Trevor Pearcy continued as a leading figure in Australian computing for many years, and the Aus Computer Society's principal award is named in his honour.

SILLIAC

Sydney University built itself a version of ILLIAC, the machine based on von Neumann's ideas, and named it SILLIAC. The machine entered service in July 1955, and was modified in following years with an extended instruction set and magnetic tape drives. It remained in use, serving academic and industrial users, until July 1968 when it was replaced by an English Electric KDF9.

Part of the funding to build the machine, some £100 000, came from Melbourne cup winnings, donated by jeweller Adolph Basser. The Basser Department of Computer Science was named in his honour.

UTECOM

UTECOM (University of Technology Electronic COMputer) was an English Electric DEUCE (Digital Electronic Universal Computing Engine). It was built in the UK and installed at Sydney's University of Technology at about the same time as SILLIAC was being built,

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indeed the two were officially opened within a day of each other in September 1956.

The DEUCE machine was based on Pilot ACE, designed by Alan Turing. It had mercury delay line and magnetic drum storage, and input by punched cards. A paper tape reader and punch was added later.

UTECOM was intended for work in the design of nuclear reactors. One of its programmers, CL Hamblin, developed a programming environment named GEORGE, based on reverse Polish notation that was to influence machine design elsewhere.

WREDAC

The Weapons Research Establishment at Salisbury was faced with the problem of analysing the data from missile launches at Woomera. The original methods were labour-intensive and time consuming, and there were thoughts of building a version of CSIRAC to do the work.

In the event, John Ovenstone, who had used EDSAC in his studies at Cambridge, designed a system based on a modified Elliott 403, a commercial machine from the UK.

WREDAC was installed at Salisbury in 1955, although it took some time for the machine to be working reliably. Its working memory was based on acoustic delay lines, but unlike the mercury tubes used in other machines, WREDAC's were nickel springs. There was also a large disk memory, 46 cm diameter, with a separate head for each track. The heads were fixed, not flying as in current magnetic devices, and were difficult to adjust with temperature changes.

Input of programs and some data was by paper tape, with most data, converted to digital form from the original analogue radio and radar data, was by magnetic tape. Output was also to magnetic tape, and the tapes were then read by separate plotting machines for final output.

The machine was an attraction at the second Australian Computer Conference, held at WRE in June 1957. It continued in operation until replaced by an IBM 7090/1401 combination in 1962.

Trevor Pearcey with CSIR Mark 1

LangaList Advice

RAM Questions:

Hi, Fred - thanks for a great newsletter! I am even more confused about RAM since the latest issue. If Windows is designed to work best with most of its ram in use, then why does my machine get unstable when my "System Resources" gets below 50%? Or am I confusing ram with system resources? If so, then what ARE system resources? I run Win98 SE with 512 mb ram and generally don't have instability on my system unless I have programs running for a long time that I know are memory hogs (like Paint Shop Pro 8 or 9). Regards, Stephanie Staker

In Win98/ME, RAM and System Resources are totally unrelated. You could have an infinite amount of RAM but still run into System Resource issues. That's because the amount of available System Resources is hard-coded into the OS, and does not increase when you add RAM.

What are "System Resources?" In this context, it's some very specific memory areas inside Windows: User Resources and GDI (Graphics Device Interface) Resources. You can think of these areas as scratchpads -- actually, internal tables and pointers -- that Windows uses to keep track of running applications.

The User area contains information about all the apps and windows currently running, including dialog boxes, the controls in dialog boxes, and so on. Every DLL, in fact, your apps use gets its own data area in the User section.

Loosely speaking, the more things you ask your computer to do at once, the more heavily used your User area becomes.

The GDI area keeps track of the things Windows uses to draw what you see on screen: there are things called pens, brushes, fonts, bitmaps, regions, and palettes, for example. Roughly speaking, the more graphical objects you have on-screen -- windows, icons, wallpapers, etc. -- the more heavily used your GDI area becomes.

In Win98/ME, both resource areas are of a fixed size regardless of how much RAM you have -- and that's the problem. If you run too many things at once or have too many graphical objects displayed at once, or if a program consumes some resources but then doesn't give them back when it's done, you can deplete the User or GDI area. When that happens, you get error messages, weird behavior or a crash. And again; this has nothing at all to do with how much RAM you have--- these are fixed-size areas coded right into the OS.

Win2K and XP handle System Resources differently; there, the total memory in your system--- RAM and virtual memory (the swapfile/pagefile)--- *does* affect the total available System Resources. In those OSes, it's much, much harder to run into Resource issues. In fact, it's normally something you don't have to worry about at all.

But Win98/ME users do have to worry about Resource issues. Fortunately, those OSes have been around so long, they hold no further surprises: System Resource problems--- and solutions--- are all well known. These articles can help a lot:

http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=17200587

http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=17200581

http://langa.com/u/7a.htm

Optimal Drive Partitioning

Dear Fred; Thank you for your fine newsletter and all the great information you provide. I will definitely renew my Plus subscription.

Now I have a question that I would like to see discussed. I have read in one or two different publications that if you're formatting a new hard drive or reformatting an older one for some reason, that it is well to set the drive up in three [3] different partitions. One for your O/S and Drivers, one for your Applications and one for your Data.

Now I can see the advantages of having a separate partition for the data, but how about the one for the applications? Do you do this? How does it help you? Do all the applications that would normally expect to be on C:\ drive run O.K. when they find themselves on D:\ or E;\ or wherever?

What do you recommend? ---Jon W. Spead

Actually, I've found it best to work this question backwards: Start with the backup method you're going to use, and let that determine how you set up your hard drive. That way, your backups will "fit" whatever backup method you've chosen, and you won't be in the awkward position of having to back up a gigantic hard drive all at once, feeding in dozens of blank CDs one after the other. Full explanation: http://langa.com/backups/backups.htm

Best of all, the above article also works even if your PC is already set up! You'll see how to modify things, nondestructively and without having to reformat, so you can benefit from a better optimal hard drive partitioning, too!

Win98/ME Systray Cleanup

Fred, As you know, there are many times when it is desirable to shut down all running programs, except Explorer. It's pretty cumbersome to use the CTRL-ALT-DEL combo over and over to shut down each component, one at a time.

(Continued on page 14)

So, why not just use the "RUN" command, and create a shortcut to do this with one double-click? Such as:
C:\WINDOWS\RUNDLL32.EXE SHELL32.DLL,SHExitWindowsEx -1
Could call the shortcut anything that seems appropriate-like SYSTRAY CLEAN for example.
Maybe I am missing something here, but it seems like a pretty good idea to me.
Alan, PLUS subscriber
Thanks, Alan. Often, the stuff in the "Tray" (by the clock) is OK to leave running: When new software says "Close all programs" it normally means all top level programs that open a window on your desktop or leave themselves as an icon on the taskbar. But if you truly want to close everything, you can use Alan's suggestion. You can copy/paste the command (above) into the Start/Run line, as he suggests; or paste it into a NotePad text document, and save the one-line document on your desktop, named something like "SYSTRAY_CLEAN" as he suggests or any other name you wish. It will initially be saved as a TXT file (eg "SYSTRAY_CLEAN.TXT"); rename it to .BAT eg "SYSTRAY_CLEAN.BAT" to make it a batch file that will run automatically when you click it.
For Win2K and XP (as well as 98/ME) and for greater control over what shuts down and what's left running, you can try a tool like "EndItAll" (http://www.docsdownloads.com/Tier1/enditall.htm) which can either close everything, or let you selectively close programs and processes, sometimes with more control than Task Manager gives you (which is yet another way to accomplish the same thing).
Lots of options. Thanks Alan!

DOS on XP Ever tried to run a DOS command using RUN from the Windows XP Start menu, only to have the DOS box close before you could read the result? There is a simple way to open the DOS box and make it stay open. Instead of typing the DOS command in the RUN box, type CMD instead. This will lock the box open and you will then be able to type as many, or as few, DOS commands as you wish without the box closing.
To see this in action, if you have a network or a broadband modem, try typing IPCONFIG in the RUN box. After a brief pause, pages of white writing on black will scroll up the screen and the box will close. Type CMD and the box will open, then type IPCONFIG and the box will stay open at the end of the scrolling. You can use the Windows XP scroll bar to move up and down the box to read the results. Alternatively, you can type IPCONFIG|MORE and the scrolling will pause at the end of each page.

Will it work with your computer? A friend of mine went out and bought a Hewlett Packard Multifunction Centre – you know the sort of thing that prints, scans, photocopies, faxes and almost makes cups of tea – for use with his somewhat older computer. The major retailer he bought it from reckoned it would work okay, but it would “be a bit slow”. In fact, it would not work at all. At this point he read the minimum specifications and got in touch with me to upgrade his computer! Fortunately I was able to arrange something affordable, but there is a moral to this story – read those minimum specifications before you buy any hardware or software for your computer. I
f you are not sure what your computer's actual specifications are, then get hold of a copy of *Everest Home Editio*n (formerly known as *Aida32*) and it will tell you all you need to know. Main factors to make a note of are CPU, amount of RAM, available hard drive space and video (graphics) card details. If you must have something, be it the Trainz simulator or the aforementioned multiwidget and it won't run on your computer, talk Robert Crombie or Peter Campbell about upgrading. It may not be as expensive as you think. For example, you may need a new CPU, motherboard, 256 MB DDR memory and a case to rebuild your computer in. Such a rebuild using an AMD Sempron 2400+ (based on the Athlon XP); a Foxconn motherboard with inbuilt VGA, sound and LAN; 256 MB DDR; and a new Hairong mini-tower case would come in at less than $300 (parts only). A Celeron-based solution would cost around the same. Pentium 4 and Athlon 64 rebuilds, while costing a bit more, are also excellent value at the moment. Hard drives, video cards, DVD burners and other components can be included in the upgrade at prices that have never been cheaper, so now might be a good time to give it some thought.
From Bits & Bytes the Newsletter of the Hobart Computer Users Group

OUR UNSTABLE LAN
An original ditty by Patrick Kingsley
(To the tune of "Winter Wonderland")

Phone bells ring,
Are you listening?
In IT,
Neck hair's bristling,
A server just died,
We'll be working through the night,
Trying to keep up our unstable LAN.

Print server spazzed,
It's horrific,
A million pages,
of hieroglyphics,
A proposal's due at 8,
Looks like we'll be working late,
Trying to keep up our unstable LAN.

User downloads pornos on the internet,
Gets a virus, brings our servers down,
We'll ask if he's the culprit, he'll say, "No, man!,
So you guys must have broke it; fix it now!".

Error logs,
Looking dire,
Our mail server,
Just caught fire,
Got paged at 1 a.m.,
Time to head back in again,
Trying to keep up our unstable LAN.

User emails 10-meg file attachments,
Our network quickly slows down to a crawl,
Four thousand users working for our company,
And she sent "dancing babies" to them all,

When it snows,
We're all chilling,
All IT's,
Gone snowmobiling,
The backbone's gone away,
LET THEM USE PAPER AND PEN TODAY!,
"To Hell," we say, "with our unstable LAN!"

Repeat to fade:
"To Hell," we say, "with our unstable LAN!"
"To Hell," we say, "with our unstable LAN!"….
From LangaList 23/12/2004

Subject: Mile High Club

Two voices, one male and one female, overheard on a plane:
"I think everyone's asleep, lets go"
"This one's empty ... no-ones looking... you go in first"
"It's a bit cramped - let me sit down"
"Have you got the condom? Quick - put it on"
Sniff sniff
"Ah perfume - you think of everything"
"This is great....." (long sigh)
Static on the loud speaker then a new voice.
"This is the captain speaking, to those two people in the rear toilet. We know what you're doing and it is expressly forbidden by airline regulations...Now put those cigarettes out and take the condom off the smoke detector!"

More From LangaList

CD/DVD Printers OK?

Fred, A while back you wrote of discovering the degradation to disk media caused by stick-on printed labels (see http://langa.com/newsletters/2004/2004-05-20.htm#5). I wonder if you've seen/heard/tested for similar problems with printing directly on the discs? Printers handling such a task are now affordable (I saw one today for $100), but while it would be much nicer than my handwriting it's not worth anything if it causes bits to drop a couple years down the line. Thanks for all your work! Mark Leahy

Indeed, the worst problem was stick-on, print-it-yourself labels, Mark--- they have a history of ruining the CDs or DVDs they're stuck on--- but they weren't the only problem: The real problem is solvents, and they can be in the glue on stick-on labels, or in the liquid "carrier" of inks. But not all solvents are equally bad. Some, like the solvents used in felt-tip "Sharpie" permanent markers, seem to flash off almost instantly, leaving behind only mostly-inert dyes or pigments. I would guess that water-based inks, used in moderation, also wouldn't pose much of a problem.

Whatever harm a solvent may do is exaggerated if the solvent is trapped against the data-carrying top surface of the CD (as with stick-on labels) or slathered on in heavy application directly to the CD surface.

That leads me to use two rules of thumb: Use no stick-on labels, ever; and don't put a lot of ink on any CD or DVD.

If I want to label a backup, for example, I'll use a fine- or medium- point felt-tip Sharpie to write the machine name (in shorthand form) and the date on the CD. Thus, I'll label today's overnight backup for my Systemax 3.2GHZ PC as "S32-20041220." If I need to record more information about what's on a CD, I'll write it on a paper or Tyvek CD storage envelope (they only cost about a penny or two apiece, in bulk). While I have had problems with CDs being ruined by stick-on labels, I've never had *any* problems caused by this simple manual labeling method.

So, because the above works so easily and inexpensively, I see no reason to try a more elaborate, expensive, and potentially dangerous labeling method. Why take a chance with your data?

On the other hand, if you really want to print right on your CDs and DVDs, buy the more expensive brands of blank discs: These often have a protective plastic top coat to help preserve the data-carrying layers. In contrast, cheap CDs usually have naked foil as the top surface; these are OK for the simple labelling method described above, but I'd never trust them to any kind of label-printer.

Spyware Hype Vs real Threats

Fred, How come when I go to Informationweek.com, they set off my Spybot S&D for Avenue A and DoubleClick? I would think that an honourable publication like Information Week would not use these spyware programs to monitor their users, but they do, and quite often! --- The Good Doctor and long time reader

In most cases, when a banner ad triggers a spyware alert, it's more that your spyware is trying hard to impress you, than actually protecting you from any real harm.

You see, most so-called "tracking cookies" and "web bugs" are 100%, totally, utterly harmless. They function mostly as a turnstile, counting the number of people who have viewed an ad, so the advertiser knows he's gotten his money's worth. It's an anonymous head counting device; that's all. In most cases, the security risk is approximately zero! And in fact, these cookies and such actually benefit you by paying for the "free" page you're viewing!

But anti-spyware vendors give these simple counters scary names ("tracking cookies" and "web bugs") so you'll feel like their software's doing something useful.

Ironically, when overeager security tools block these counters, they lower the revenue to the web site owner, making it more likely that the free content will go away, or will be available by subscription only. So, blocking these simple counters can actually backfire, and cause you to lose access to free content.

Anyone who's read this newsletter for more than an issue or two knows that I'm slightly nuts about security--- there *are* real and imminent dangers out there, and you have to keep your guard up. But not all threats are equal, and in the grand scheme of online security, "tracking cookies" and "web bugs" are about the least important thing you need to worry about. Most times, they're utterly harmless; no more a threat to you than those hoses that highway engineers lay across highways to count how many cars drive past. *From LangaList 24/1/2005*

Even More Stuff From LangaList
Memory Optimizer" Confusion

Dear Fred From a very grateful subscriber to your Plus edition...
I refer to your http://langa.com/newsletters/2004/2004-11- 29.htm#9 edition and the subject of Memory Optimizers, which you suggest are scams etc. I use FreeRam XP Pro - which is a totally free utility - hardly a scam to start with ! I have a full 1024 MB of ram fitted and when I first start using the computer daily, it usually shows between 695 and 710 MB i.e. 68% Ram free.
After two or three hours of general use, with regular software such as Word, Paint Shop Pro and the like, and especially after I use the "torrent" system to download a file, my available Ram drops right down to well below 300 MB.
Running FreeRam XP Pro indicates that it is fixing this, and brings it back up to the usual level. Does this indicate that my system has a major fault, or that my software is somehow "faulty" or that using torrents is bad for my system?
Needless to say, after running FreeRam XP Pro, my system runs like a bird, and all the software seems to work just fine. So WHY exactly do you say Ram optimizers are a scam - with my lack of knowledge then the only way I know of to bring my available Ram up to par would be to re-boot.
I would really appreciate your comments. Regards, Geoff Lacey
It's a confusing subject, Geoff--- one made more so by the purveyors of "memory optimizers," some of whom are themselves confused, and others of whom *want* you to be confused so you'll use their products.
Here's the problem: With most computer things that can be "used up" (hard drive space, bandwidth, etc.) you want as much to be *un*used as possible. But it's just the opposite with RAM, because unused RAM is wasted RAM.
That's worth repeating, because it's the central point: Unused RAM is wasted RAM.
Thus, any tool that "frees up" RAM or "creates holes in RAM" or any similar thing is really creating a pool of unused--- wasted!--- RAM.
You see, your RAM is the fastest memory your PC has. Memory operations in RAM operate at nanosecond speeds (billionths of a second), six orders of magnitude faster than the millisecond speeds (thousandths of a second) of memory operations written to a hard drive, as "virtual memory" in the PC's swapfile.
"Freeing RAM" means you're taking data and code out of the fastest memory your system has and transferring it to the swapfile on disk, which is the *slowest* memory your system normally has. That doesn't help you. In fact, it slows you down!
Windows does a pretty good job of keeping your RAM more or less optimally full, *which is the way you want it* because you WANT as much stuff as possible kept in the fastest-available storage. When RAM gets too full, Windows correctly dribbles out the least-used and least-important code and data to the slower hard-drive storage of virtual memory; and that too is just what you want.
"Memory optimizers" can actually reverse this process so that you end up with unused areas in your best and fastest memory; and tons of code and data shifted to your worst and slowest memory (on the hard drive). In other words, they can do the exact opposite of what they claim; slowing you down, not speeding you up!
There's still more to the topic, but to save space, let me point you to a fuller explanation, including the possible rare exceptions to the above: http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=17200583 But for the overwhelming majority of users, for the overwhelming majority of the time, memory optimizers are junk.
Just remember: Empty RAM is wasted RAM. Any tool that promises to keep areas of your RAM empty is working *against* you!

Add More RAM?

I have 512MB in my system... With memory as cheap as it is I'm tempted to add another 512MB for an even gigabyte of ram. Would I see any benefit? ---Brett Schulte
As we discussed in the previous item (above), RAM is enormously faster

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than hard drive storage, so by having a lot of RAM, and letting Windows use it, you can see better system performance.

But some of this depends on how you use your system: A person who runs one modest app at a time, or opens one window at a time (don't laugh--- millions do just that) probably would see little benefit from having a ton of RAM. They're not doing anything that needs much RAM in the first place. On the other hand, a power-user who routinely has multiple mainline apps open--- especially graphics- or video-intense apps--- has myriad tasks bubbling in the background, who does a lot of task-switching, and whose screen is plastered with overlapping windows may very well benefit from more RAM.

(I fall closer to the latter category; I've put a gig of RAM in all my newer systems; and I'll probably go for 2GB with my next major PC purchase, sometime next year.)

But once you have a lot of RAM, you want to ensure it gets used (see previous item). Windows actually has decent default settings for RAM, but there's a tweak for WinME/98 systems that you may want to experiment with.

In WinME/98, the key setting is "conservativeswapfile," which (as you might guess) tells Windows to be conservative in its use of the swap file. This has the effect of making Windows be *more* aggressive in its use of RAM; letting RAM "fill up" more before anything is swapped out to the hard drive. With more code and data in your system's fast RAM, memory performance may improve. Naturally, the more RAM you have, the greater the potential difference.

But it is only a *potential* difference: The exact results will depend on a host of factors, with no good way to predict in advance whether your specific system will benefit. You just have to try it and see. Plus, there's a potential downside: while RAM-intense activity may improve, overall system performance may actually decrease because of the way Win98 handles swap file writes. There's lots more info and how-to for WinME/98 users on "conservativeswapfile" and other tweaks:

http://aumha.org/win4/a/memmgmt.htm
http://www.dslreports.com/forum/remark,735738;root=winme;mode=flat
http://support.microsoft.com/kb/q223294/
http://www.google.com/search?q=conservativeswapfile

You can try the "conservativeswapfile" tweak on *any* Windows system, but it has no effect in XP and 2K. For good advice on what memory tweaks really do work in XP/2K, see:
http://aumha.org/win5/a/xpvm.htm

And: If you're looking for a "bottom line," it's this: (

1) In general, more RAM is better; and the harder you push your system, the more benefit you'll see.
2) Most memory-use tweaks have the biggest impact only in special cases. For ordinary use, you'll probably do just fine by letting Windows handle your system RAM on its own.

@ The Subject is not the message

Some emailers try to make their messages as short as possible by putting their entire message into the subject line and leave the body of the message entirely blank.

I received an email the other day that seemed to be blank, just before deleting the message I noticed the subject line was very long it said: *Your last email to me was put in the spam folder, please fix this immediately.* (Let's leave aside the fact that the sender of an email message can't do much, if anything, to effect the spam filters at the receivers end and there was no indication of what message was classified as spam.)

Many modern email clients, Outlook and Outlook Express especially only show the first characters of a subject -- all I saw was 'your email to me' and the rest wasn't on the screen at all. In web-based email the subject also gets cut-off, especially if the receiver uses a portable device like a Blackberry or WAP based email.

It's a cute trick but sadly not practical. Using only the subject doesn't save much, if any, in the size of the message and you run the risk that your email won't be read. *From Email Essentials 3.01*

Who Is Best?

Jesus and Satan were having an on-going argument about who was better on the computer. They had been going at it for days, and frankly God was tired of hearing all the bickering. Finally fed up, God said, THAT'S IT!

I have had enough. I am going to set up a test that will run for two hours, and from those results, I will judge who does the better job."

Satan and Jesus sat down at the keyboards and typed away. They moused. They faxed. They e-mailed. They e-mailed with attachments. They downloaded. They did spreadsheets. They wrote reports. They created labels and cards. They created charts and graphs. They did some genealogy reports. They did every job known to man.

Jesus worked with heavenly efficiency and Satan was faster than hell.

Then, ten minutes before their time was up, lightning suddenly flashed across the sky, thunder rolled, rain poured, and, of course, the power went off. Satan stared at his blank screen and screamed every curse word known in the underworld. Jesus just sighed.

Finally the electricity came back on, and each of them restarted their computers. Satan started searching frantically, screaming: "It's gone! It's all GONE! I lost everything when the power went out!"

Meanwhile, Jesus quietly started printing out all of his files from the past two hours of work Satan observed this and became irate. Wait!" he screamed. That's not fair! He cheated! How come he has all his work and I don't have any?"

God just shrugged and said,

"Jesus saves"

@ Not so Merry Christmas

We hate to do this again, but there's a new email worm going the rounds. It has some tricky aspects and we thought that you, dear WEE reader, should know about it quickly. This guide has been put together at short notice by *Claudia Almer*.

It's a mass-mailing worm disguised as a Christmas card, and interesting because it comes in 15 different European languages depending on the domain of the receivers email. Depending on which expert you talk to the nastie has either 'run its course' or is generating about 10% of the worlds email!

It will attempt to lower your security settings, terminate certain processes (such as anti-virus programs) and open a back door for remote attacks. 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.
        - In this case the payload can appear to be a .zip file

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and is not blocked by Outlook.

- 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.

@ What's in a name?

This worm has a few aliases at present, including Erkez.D@mm and Zafi. D. There have been different versions of Zafi in the past, but this is their first Christmas card hoax.
The Christmas greetings themselves are determined by the country code of the recipient, eg '.fr' will get French language or '.de' will get German. It is this multi-lingual approach that, in part, has let the worm spread further and faster than others of the type.

@ How to get it?

If you open an infected attachment it will start on your computer and try to infect others. It is possible to get the nastie by other means like a Shared Folder or peer-to-peer networking but email is the most common method of infection.
This email worm sends itself from an infected computer to email addresses it finds on that computer. These email addresses are found not only in address books but in Internet cached pages as well. It runs on Windows operating systems only and does NOT need Outlook to run.
It has subjects like "Merry Christmas!", "Joyeux Noel!" or equivalent in each language. that seem innocent enough, though messages in the body like 'Happy Hollydays' are a bit of a warning.
The subject can be prefixed with RE or FW as in RE: Merry Christmas or FW: Joyeux Noel!" Most but not all the phrases used have an exclamation mark at the end.
All messages in the body end with a Smiley face, followed by the (forged) sender's name.
Running the attachment of these Christmas cards will cause the worm to run and infect your computer. The worm can have the following extension names: .bat .cmd .com .pif or .zip

@ Do I have it?

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.
If you are truly infected, Symantec Security Response has created a removal tool, which is the easiest way to remove the worm. http://securityresponse.symantec.com/avcenter/venc/data/w32.erkez@mm.removal.tool.html
Thankfully this worm doesn't destroy any files or documents, its main aim is to spread itself around. To this end it

- Creates a registry key so the worm executes every time Windows starts
- Terminates security related processes like various anti-virus programs
- Sends a copy of the worm to email addresses gathered from the computer, using its own SMTP engine
- Creates exe files in folders with 'shar' in the name (like Shared folders)

It also opens a TCP/IP port and listens for commands from a remote attacker and displays Error Message "**Title**: CRC: 04F7Bh **Message**: Error in packed file!".
From Woody's Email Essentials 2.14