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Missed metaphors



David Schubert

Next Meeting
Wednesday
1st June 2005
**7 PM Show Planning and
Scheduling**
**8 PM More Problem
solving**

Newstream Articles

Deadline : 10 Days before Meeting

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Ron's Ramblings

We are having a Show!!!! Keep the 8th & 9th of July clear on your Calendar!!!
 On Wednesday 2nd July (our meeting night) we will be asking people to put their hand up for helping at the Setting up on Friday the 8th to set up the Show, measuring out Stall spaces, moving tables and chairs and putting out electrical cords.
 Our LCG and OPEN stalls need to be set up with Tables, Cloths, Posters etc.
 On Saturday the 9th July we will need people to man the stalls for both OPEN and LCG. Take entry fees etc. You need not volunteer for the whole day, stints of four hours can be arranged.
 Don't worry if you are a beginner, your inexperience may be just what the enquirer needs, and could be put off if an experienced person happens to drop into too technical language.
 After 5PM we need to clean up the site, put tables away, fold up table clothe, sweep floors, roll up cords etc. If you can't attend on Wednesday night but wish to volunteer tell one of the Committee PLEASE

Ron Baker

Launceston Computer Group
SOFTWARE LIBRARY
 Dated 1st June 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

opencomputingtas@hotmail.com

LAUNCESTON

Julie Hjort Phone 6344 5686

Flat 2, 115 Penquite Road, Newstead

Email: ihjort@intas.net.au

Monthly Workshops

Graphics – Advanced

Paint Shop Pro 7

Next class

Wednesday June 15th

1pm – 3.30 pm

\$4.00 fee - Numbers limited to 8 please register on

noticeboard or call **OPEN** on

0413 698.610

Family History Online

Next Classes

Wednesday June 8th

1 pm to 3.30 pm

Wednesday June 22nd

9 am to 12 noon

\$4.00 fee Numbers limited to 8 people

Please register on noticeboard

Family History Software Special Class

Wednesday June 8th

9 am to 12 noon

This class will cover special topics including how to create a Family Chart, Printing a Pedigree Chart and how to upload your information to the Internet for others to share.

Bring your family photos.

Embroidery Class

The computerised Embroidery Class has finished its first 'season', but will be resuming on Friday, June 24 at 1.00 pm

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

OPEN Session Times

All sessions are held at the venue at Studioworks, 1 Pipeworks Rd, L'ton

Standard Sessions (All sessions \$4.00)

Wednesday 1 st June	10 am	Tutors Meeting General Discussion
Wednesday 1 st June	1 pm onwards	OPEN Monthly meeting
Wednesday 8 th June	9 am – 12 pm	Family History Software Apps
Wednesday 8 th June	1 pm – 3.30 pm	Family History (regular class)
Wednesday 15 th June	9 am – 12 pm	Scanning Photos Part 2
Wednesday 15 th June	1 pm – 3.30 pm	Graphics PSP7 (Advanced)
Wednesday 22 nd June	9 am – 12 pm	Family History
Wednesday 22 nd June	1 pm – 3.30 pm	Print Artist
Wednesday 29 th June	9 am-12 1 - 3.30	Free Rip LP Recorder

Special May Sessions

Monday	10 am -12	E-Learn & Beginners
Monday	1pm – 3pm	Basics & Beyond
Tuesday	10am – 12	PC & Mac Support for Beginners
Tuesday	1pm – 3pm	E-Learn & Beginners
Wednesday	9am – 12	Special sessions or Meetings)
Wednesday	1 pm – 3.30 pm	As for mornings (see rosters)
Thursday	10 am – 12	Beginners or E-Learn (Mac p.m.)
Thursday	1pm - 3pm	
Friday	10am -12	E-Learn & Beginners
Friday	1pm – 3pm	Specialty Classes
2nd Sat	9 am - 12	NT Camera Club

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What's Happening at OPEN Next Monthly Meeting 1st June 2005 at 1 p.m.

FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

Please note that the next OPEN general meeting on June 1 will be at the usual time of 1.00 pm. The proposed Windows XP training session for tutors has been CANCELLED.

A tutors meeting is scheduled for the morning of June 1st for tutors to discuss any issues that may have arisen from their classes.

Subsequent to Rob Tierney's resignation Celia King has kindly offered to take on the role as Secretary of OPEN Computing.

We welcome Celia to the committee and hope that she will enjoy her time with us.

“VICTOR”

Members are reminded that the **Volunteer ICT Outreach** program is available to assist members who may be having computer problems that can't be solved in the classroom.

For a donation of \$5 per hour one of our tutors will come to your home to help you with problems, such as virus detection and removal, or installing a new program.

VICTOR cannot undertake major equipment repairs but we may be able to assess problems and recommend how you can overcome them.

Dennis Murray

SPECIAL EVENING SESSION IN CONJUNCTION WITH L.C.G. Get-Together Wednesday May 4th. 7 pm – 9.30 pm

For June the meeting will involve planning for the Computer Show to be held on July 9. We are looking for volunteers to assist us with setting up the stands on Friday, July 8, or helping perform a variety of functions on the actual show day, Saturday, July 9.

OPEN's Monthly Meetings

We remind members that the meetings held on the first Wednesday of each month are for **ALL MEMBERS** to attend to contribute their ideas and suggestions on how the club should operate. **Next Meeting June 1st 2005 – 1 pm.**

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

Its good to see our E-Learn participants contacting each other via 'Discussion Board'. Networking isn't just about connecting computers together with cables. Sharing information and experiences with each other is equally important. As a tutor I can confirm that I too learn from the comments and questions posed by 'student-members'.

ADDITIONAL SPECIAL CLASSES

June is one of those months when we have a 'fifth' Wednesday, and that means some extra classes. We have decided to make Wednesday June 29 "AUDIO DAY".

In the morning session from 9.00am to 12 noon we will be demonstrating FreeRip which is a program that enables you to copy a music file from a CD, convert it to the MP3 format and load it on your computer. You can then play the song (or songs) as background music for your computing tasks.

The afternoon session from 1.00 pm to 3.30 will be devoted to LPRecorder another free program that enables you to convert the music on your vinyl records and cassette tapes to a format that can be 'backed up' on to a CD. The session will provide details of all the equipment required and all the procedures involved in the conversion process.

NORTHERN TASMANIAN CAMERA CLUB

The next meeting of the Camera Club will be held at the OPEN clubrooms on Saturday, June 11th .

If you are interested in learning more about digital cameras and related subjects contact Kai Johnson on 6326 2358.

Processing RAW images

The RAW format provides better digital images, says Chris Schmidt, but only if you know how to use Photoshop's Camera Raw plug-in.

With the boom in digital photography still booming, more people are taking advantage of the benefits of spending a little more on their first (or second) digital camera.

Not only can you preview your images through the camera seconds after taking it, you can also download your images and appreciate them straight away without having to take a roll of film down to Boots and cross your fingers that the results areas you'd hoped.

The manual approach

With such immediacy comes a level of reliance on the camera itself. Although more people are taking to the medium, it doesn't necessarily follow that they're capable of configuring their equipment like a professional. Most snappers will leave their cameras on automated settings, which will tend to save images in the JPEG format. This is fine for the average snapshot, but if you really want to push the boundaries, you need to think about making manual adjustments to the film speed, aperture and shutter speed.

Another crucial factor in achieving the best quality images is to abandon the JPEG format which, by its very nature, will introduce compression and all the noise and artefacts associated with it. The alternative is your camera's RAW format.

Not all cameras provide access to non-compressed formats but, as technologies develop, we're beginning to see more consumer models offer this option.

Update your software After you've downloaded RAW images to your computer, you'll be keen to view them. However, as the format isn't a universal standard, you may have some problems doing so. The good news is that, since Photoshop 7, the software has provided specific controls for the import and configuration of such files through the Camera Raw plug-in.

Unlike other plug-ins, you won't find a menu reference for it, though it will automatically load whenever you attempt to open a RAW image. Before you jump in to check out its features, bear in mind that the rapid rate of digital camera development will mean that even Photoshop CS users will be running an outdated version of the plug-in.

For the most comprehensive support, the Adobe website has the latest 2.3 update (you can update from Photoshop using the Help | Updates option). This weighs in at just 1.7MB, though we'd recommend you opt for the 2.8MB package that also includes the Adobe DNG converter.

Once the plug-in has been installed, you'll find that Photoshop supports a wider range of RAW formats, making it less likely that you'll experience any compatibility issues.

Raw settings You can now open a RAW file. The plug-in's interface makes itself quite apparent, being dominated by the preview of the image being opened. To the right of this, you have a histogram of the RGB channels (indicated by their appropriate colours), with white reflecting the composite. Below the histogram are primary controls for the plug-in,

with tabs providing access to the grouped options. The number of tabs increases depending on whether you're working in 'Basic' or 'Advanced' modes, which can be selected using the radio buttons below the 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons.

In 'Basic' mode, you have access to the 'Adjust' tab, which provides controls over white balance. You can also adjust the exposure, shadows, brightness and contrast to bring out details based around light qualities, while the saturation slider provide a boost to colour balance. The 'Detail' tab provides controls over sharpness, as well as basic options for reducing noise or luminance anomalies your image may suffer from.

'Advanced' mode extends the number of available tabs, with options for correcting lens issues that may occur with digital SLR cameras. 'Chromatic Aberration' controls are available for reducing coloured fringing that sometimes occurs around high contrast areas, while 'Vignetting' options cater for distortion around borders. The 'Calibrate' tab presents a number of refined controls over channel content, though any changes here must be made in the confidence that your camera and monitor's ICC profiles are correctly adjusted to gauge more accurate results.

Tools and dimensions A selection of tools is included, with the familiar 'Zoom' and 'Hand' providing magnification and movement controls. The 'White Balance' tool is particularly powerful as it enables you to click on points within your preview that match your image's highlights. Although you have access to a variety of white balance settings through the right-hand options, it's often easier to make use of the tool rather than manually adjust the sliders.

With a larger monitor, it's recommended to make changes with the preview at 100 per cent, though this often leads to imbalanced localised adjustment. Toggling between 'full size' and 'fit to view' is essential. You also have access to options for colour space and bit-depth towards the foot of the interface. Most image applications work comprehensively with 8-bit images.

Photoshop CS has a number of improvements that allow for the greater detail contained within 16-bit images to be a realistic option. The size and resolution options will, by default, be determined by the capabilities of the camera, though it's possible to change these to suit.

Bear in mind that increasing bit-depth will risk degradation in quality, as interpolation and pixelation come into effect.

Post plug-in Once you've made some changes, you'll be ready to 'OK' the plug-in and leave Photoshop to apply the configured settings to your image prior to giving you access to the primary Photoshop interface. You could continue to make subsequent adjustments using Photoshop's regular tools, but each adjustment will end up altering pixel content and degrading the image. An image is only as good as its source and the most important aspect to get right is the original shoot. If you're confident about making the necessary settings to your camera, there'll be minimal changes necessary through the Camera Raw

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plug-in. But using the plug-in to correct any marginal imbalances will result in a much higher quality image than would be possible were you to edit a JPEG using Photoshop's primary adjustment tools. [See below for tips on correcting white balance].

Chris Schmidt

Correcting white balance

Run a few basic adjustments to an image using the Camera Raw plug-in.

- 1) Open the CRW_2331.crw file from the Super Disc (which can be downloaded at the start of this tutorial) for a typical RAW image straight from the camera. A truer light balance will often bring out colour, contrast and texture that maybe lacking. Turn to the 'Adjust' tab and try out a few white balance presets. If none are satisfactory, you'll need to make some manual adjustments.
- 2) However, this approach takes a little experience to configure accurately. An alternative approach is to make use of the 'White Balance' tool available to the right of the 'Preview'. Select it and click on a point of the image that appears to be the brightest. In this image, we found this to be the highlight on the background branch.
- 3) You'll need to gauge whether this has created the best settings but the method generally provides a reasonable estimate of the light balances that you can subsequently edit (if necessary). We found that, by raising the white balance 'Temperature' while increasing the 'Exposure and Shadows settings', we achieved a satisfactory result.

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Please note that the information contained within this article is correct at the time of creation. Information may have changed since the appearance of this article in the magazine or website.

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Newbie Club Tutorials

Windows Tutorial Part 1

Your computer just sits there. So what does it take for you to understand it? Just a little insight is all. Let's dive into the some of the most fundamental aspects of Windows, and see if you can apply what you read here to your everyday computer use.

Now, the fundamental basics.

New PC users should play Solitaire. Really. It's the card game included with Windows, and it will give you skills that you just won't learn any easier anywhere else. Why not learn and have fun at the same time?

Here's the path to Solitaire:

Click Start,
All Programs,
Accessories,
Games,
Solitaire.

Solitaire is an excellent tool for basic mouse training. Clicking, double-clicking, dragging, dropping. Those are the fundamentals. Without them, you're a lost child at the amusement park. Everything becomes terrifying instead of thrilling.

Files and Folders are your friends.

Your hard drive contains thousands of files. Your files make up programs, as well as "stand-alone" bits of information.

A file can be a document you've typed to a friend, a scanned image of a photograph, or a web page you download from the Web. It can be a graphic on a web page, or a spreadsheet.

Folders are used to organize files.

They may contain lots of different files, and may contain other folders as well.

Folders are also called Directories. Just like the phone book is a directory of names and numbers, so a folder may be a directory of information about a particular subject or topic.

You can give folders long names including spaces.

In the old days, you could only name a folder with 8 characters. Pretty limiting.

Now, you can stretch that to well over 200 characters.

Instead of "Ltr2mom.doc" you can have "My plea to mom for more money for my gas guzzling BMW.doc."

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Objects are not confusing unless you've been exposed to techie- speak without a proper introduction.

The word "object" is meaningless unless you put it in the proper context. Within the Windows context, an object is something that can be expected to behave in a particular manner. The icons on your desktop are objects, and you know how they behave. You double click, and a program loads. Every time. You know what to expect when you perform the double click.

Objects are representations of other programs or parts of programs. For example, an object may be an icon, folder, file, a disk drive, a printer, or even a network connection. When you double click on an object, you can expect a certain response from it.

Objects generally have properties associated with them. You can modify many of the characteristics of an object. Just use the Properties sheet for behaviour modification. Freud never had it so good!

Windows Tutorial Part 2

A "property sheet" is just another way of telling you that you can make changes to an objects behavior. Many objects, when right clicked, will display a menu with the word "Properties" on it. Click the Properties item and you'll be treated with some customisation options for the object under scrutiny.

Mouse cursors number in the millions and you can make yours uniquely yours.

Oh, and the cursor tells you what's happening, too!

The cursor, as you move it around the screen, doesn't remain a plain white arrow. It may change to a double headed arrow, an "I" beam, or even an hourglass. You may want to change your cursor from a plain white arrow to a bumblebee or a flea. Or to a big black arrow. It doesn't matter. Windows can do that.

For a look at the various cursor options, just visit your local Control Panel (Start, Control Panel)

and double click the Mouse object.

Depending your own unique setup, you'll find a lot of cool information.

Shortcuts are excellent if you know where they lead. Never take a shortcut that hasn't been proven.

If you feel lost in the land of gee-whiz, that's ok. Everyone enters, but only a few exit without first going through the infernal frustration zone. If you knew of a shortcut that would bypass that zone, you'd take it, right?

Well, shortcuts in Windows are similar.

Instead of digging through lists looking for a file or program you use all the time,

you can create a shortcut to it that circumvents the search.

Your desktop is the location of choice for shortcut creation, as it's readily accessible by you. Shortcuts can be created to any file, folder, or even your hard disk.

Create a shortcut by right dragging an object to a new location.

To right drag, just right click on the object, hold the button down while dragging, then release over your target drop zone (your desktop in this case). When you release the mouse button, you'll see a little menu with questions. Answer "Create shortcut" and you've done it. Try it now. It's easy.

You need a driver if you want to go anywhere with your computer.

A driver is a software program that's used to help your PC work with its hardware. Just like a driver in a car who helps the car get from home to the shopping mall.

Your printer needs a driver. So does your soundcard, scanner, and even your digital camera's PC connection. If you have a buggy driver, you may encounter unexplainable error messages. If your buggy driver is outdated, you may also experience problems. No, the buggy driver doesn't whip the horses.

Note: A software bug is simply a problem with the code that makes up the software. Thus, a "buggy driver" would have a problem communicating with the hardware device it was written for.

A lot of files on the Net are obtained in a particular format known as a zipped file. A file with the extension of .zip will contain multiple files, often thousands.

The .zip file requires a special software program to unzip it.

On the opposite side of the fence, the same software can compress or "zip" the group of files into a smaller single file or object. Hey, a paperclip is an object, as is a pen or a dollar bill. Just so, a zipped file is an object. Just a wee bit more insight for you.

A utility is a program that works in a specific manner on a specific task, such as the programs WinZip

From Newbie Club Newsletter 10th May 2005

(Editors Note: I have edited out some of this article which recommends downloading specific programmes from the Newbie Club Website. Members may wish to look at the Site at www.newbieclub.com)

Technical overview...

Inside Portable Document Format

PDF and variations

Peter Carter

When Adobe Acrobat and its Portable Document Format (PDF) appeared in 1993 there was a general feeling that the 'paperless office' was almost upon us. At that stage Acrobat had competitors, with Common Ground perhaps the best known. The paperless office turned out to be a myth, but Acrobat continues, and now reigns supreme.

There are two main reasons for this. One was that Adobe decided to make the Acrobat Reader available for free, instead of charging US \$50. The other was the underlying technology: PostScript.

Acrobat was designed to reproduce on screen the exact appearance of documents, whatever the original application, and whatever the operating system. A PC user could read a PageMaker document from a Macintosh, and a Unix machine could display the same document.

As with most things, features have been added, so that PDF is not only used for reading documents, it has become part of systems to prepare documents for archive and printing: the so-called PDF workflow. For that, PDF is now an ISO Standard format.

Interactivity has been added, so that PDFs such as the one you are now reading have links between pages and to the Web, bookmarks and search facilities, and can include animation and rollovers, movies and sounds. A truly useful system.

There are three applications to Acrobat. The one seen by most users is Reader, which does just that, although version 7 now allows annotation for review of some files. (OS X Preview can also display PDFs, but without all the interactive features.)

Distiller, discussed below, is the application for translation from PostScript to PDF. Acrobat itself, formerly called Exchange, is a complex application with tools to edit PDF files, add interactivity and annotations, manage security (e.g. printing may be allowed or disallowed), and options on opening (visibility of Bookmarks, etc). It is also able to generate PDF documents by capturing Web and paper documents. (It can be used as an OCR utility.)

PostScript

PostScript was Adobe's first product, and is a page description language (PDL). In other words, it is a way of describing, mathematically, all the elements of a page, both text and graphics. PostScript fonts describe each character as a curve, or set of curves, and graphic objects are likewise described as sets of curves. A PostScript file is a text file, like that of any other programming language, and the interpreter in a printer translates and then rasterises the file into the dots that will appear on paper.

Apple's LaserWriter was the first affordable printer with PostScript, and set the standard for the others. When you print from a Mac to a LaserWriter or other PostScript printer the print driver generates a PostScript file and sends it to the printer. If you wish, you can save the file on disk for later use.

As Display PostScript the language was used to generate screen display for the NeXT computer, to evolve into Quartz in OS X. With Quartz has come PDF as a standard file format on the Mac, and it's possible to produce a PDF from any application that can print, via the print driver.

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A character transformed to outline with Illustrator, showing the points on the curves. The topmost point is selected and has its handles visible



often smaller than an application's native file.

Distiller has a wide range of settings controlling graphic resolution, font embedding, and so on, and for best results, especially for files for colour printing, they must be understood.

In the past users interacted directly with Distiller, but from version 6 the interaction is often indirect, through the export facilities of applications. *AppleSauce*, for example, is exported from InDesign as a PDF, with settings to reduce bitmap graphics to screen

resolution, include links and Bookmarks, and so on. *Exporting AppleSauce from InDesign: one of five panes of settings, plus summary*

Acrobat

As noted earlier, Acrobat itself is the application for editing, annotating, and adding interactivity to PDF files. It comes in three levels: Elements, Standard, and Professional. Elements is for Windows only, and you're not missing anything: you can do better with what's built in to OS X. Standard is intended for business users, Professional for people working in pre-press and multimedia.

Further reading

Acrobat comes with comprehensive electronic documentation, and there is more information on the Adobe Web site <www.adobe.com/> and in its user forums. Adobe publishes a book in the *Classroom in a book series*, and there are third party books from beginner to highly technical levels.

There are also numerous Web sites, with former Adelaidean and Mini (the car) fan Nick Hodge's being only one: <www.nickhodge.com/>.

Should you buy Acrobat?

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```
%!  
% Produce Figure 1  
/preSloan {gsave currentpoint  
translate 0.2 0.2 scale newpath 0  
0 moveto 0 5 lineto 5 5 lineto 5  
0 lineto closepath clip newpath  
1 setlinewidth 2 setlinecap 0  
setlinejoin} def  
/postSloan {stroke grestore 2 0  
rmoveto} def  
/R {preSloan 0.5 0.5 moveto 0 4  
rlineto 3.5 3.5 1 90 270 arcn -3 0  
rlineto 4.44370 0 moveto -0.97547  
2 rlineto postSloan} def  
/V {preSloan 0 6.34629 moveto 2.5  
-6.25 rlineto 2.5 6.25 rlineto  
postSloan} def  
50 700 moveto  
40 40 scale  
R  
V  
showpage  
A PostScript file, and its output  
There was a time when hackers wrote  
PostScript by hand: this one is by D Pelli.  
(The Sloan font is used on eye test charts)
```

Distiller

Since a PostScript file describes all the objects on a page, it is only a small step to displaying it on a screen. Acrobat Distiller produces a PDF file from PostScript by removing unnecessary elements, leaving a file that is much more compact than the original, and

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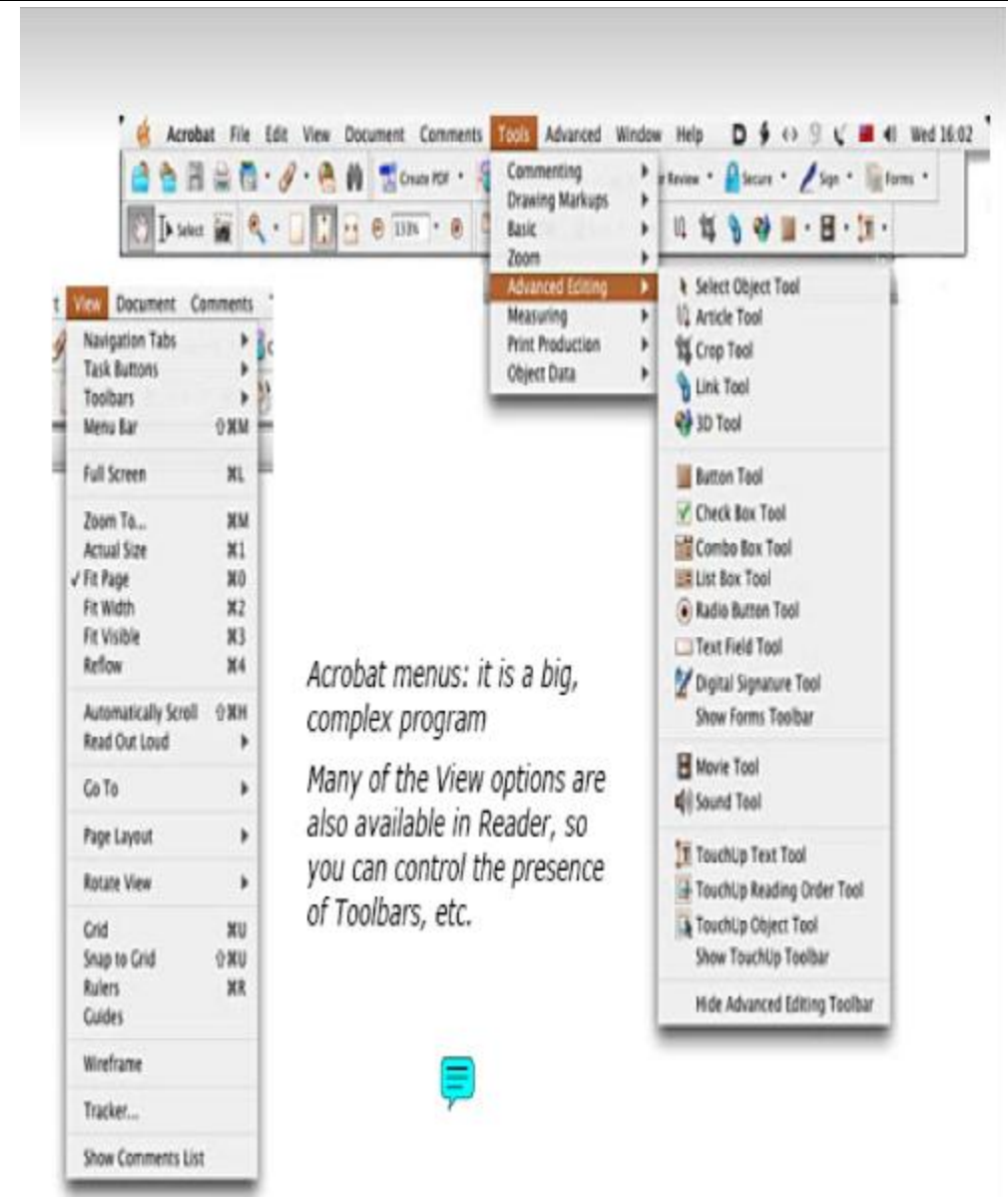
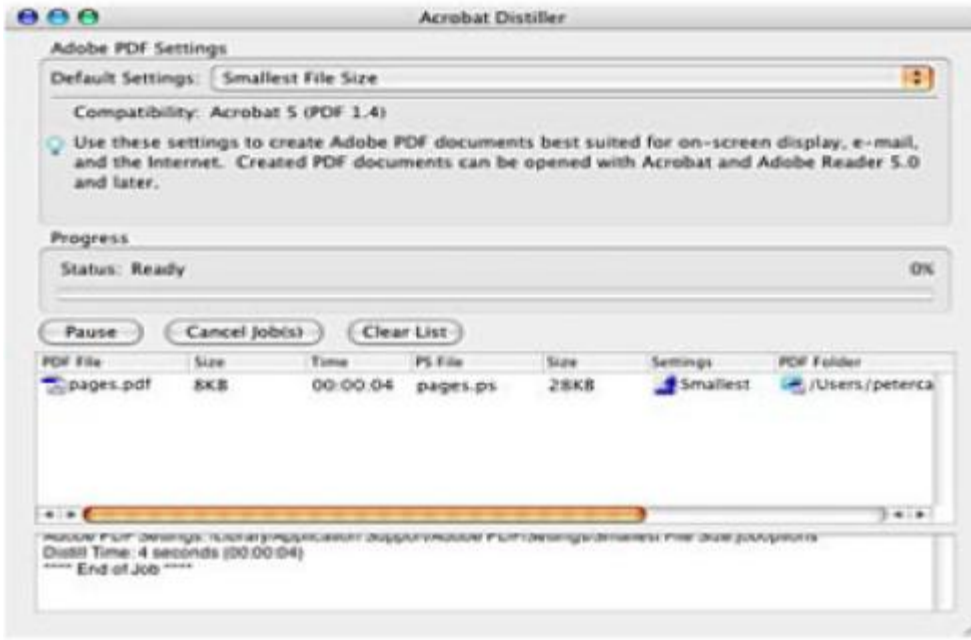
Only if you need to generate PDF documents for serious business and publishing. For most Mac users the PDF features in OS X and Reader will be adequate.

From AppleSauce May 2005



Above: Printing to a PostScript file

Below: Distiller at work



Acrobat menus: it is a big, complex program

Many of the View options are also available in Reader, so you can control the presence of Toolbars, etc.



@ Split Personalities

Many people share email programs with one or more members of a family all running on the one computer but don't realize they can have the one email client with separate settings for each person.

This can be done with Outlook and Outlook Express. In addition there's a way to do it for all email clients whether they have this feature or not.

As is often the case, each program has a different name for a similar feature but the main idea is the same. When you start the program you're given the choice of personal settings to use – select your own settings and only that email setup will appear.

@ Outlook Express

In Outlook Express this feature is called **Identities**. Under the File menu you'll see options to 'Switch Identities' and 'Manage Identities'.

Each Identity has separate mail / news configuration. Your messages are stored independently (under \Documents and Settings\\Local Settings\Application Data\Identities)

To create a new identity, start Outlook Express then choose File | Add New Identity. Give the new identity a name and it will be created. There's an option to create a password for each identity – this prevents accidental access to your email. Finally setup your mail and news settings as normal under the new identity.

.@ Outlook

Over in Microsoft Office, the Outlook program has **Profiles** which also let you have separate email and personal settings but operate differently.

You can configure profiles from Control Panel | Mail | Show Profiles.

Click on Add, give the profile a name then start the usual Outlook setup.

Your data is stored in a single PST (or OST file for Exchange Server users) usually under \Documents and Settings\\Local Settings\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook\ but you can change that location if you wish.

To change the way Outlook switches profiles go to Control Panel | Mail. You can choose a default profile that is always loaded or 'Prompt for Profile to be used'. In

Outlook the only way to choose a profile is to select from the list during startup – there is no 'switch profile' option as there is in Outlook Express. Therefore you must choose 'Prompt for profile to be used' if you want to use multiple profiles. Tip: If you have one profile that is commonly used you can make it the default profile by going to Control Panel | Mail, choose 'Always use this profile' and select the preferred profile. Then click on 'Prompt for Profile to be used' – the selected profile will be greyed out but still visible. When starting Outlook the profile selection list will appear with the 'Always use this profile' selection listed immediately – you can proceed with loading Outlook but just pressing Enter.

Outlook Profiles are more secure – it is harder to break into a PST file though not impossible. You can password protect the Outlook data file (and therefore your profile) by going to Control Panel | Mail | Show Profiles | Properties | Data Files | Settings | Change Password

.@ Using Windows Login

You can also use Windows itself to create totally separate login accounts. Each login can run the same programs with different settings (in most cases).

This is an option worth considering if you are sharing a computer among several people. Each login gets their own personalized world within the computer.

Looking just at email, if you use Windows login then you don't have to mess around with identities or profiles.

You can choose any email program you wish, whether it has multiple profile/identity support or not.

This isn't the place for a full discussion of Windows and the multiple user options. To setup in Windows XP go to Control Panel | User Accounts. Windows XP has Fast User Switching which makes it easier to move between different user profiles.

From Email Essentials 3.08

@ Bulk Joke woes

In the early days of the Internet, harmless fun could be had passing along a fun joke but these days it is generally considered a nuisance. And it can be more than a nuisance.

Part of the problem is that the 'jokes' are often forwarded without any editing.

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There's often many, nested quote marks from having been forwarded so many times. This makes the humor content much harder to read.

Worse still, each forwarding often includes the email addresses of all the previous recipients. If this message is seen on an infected computer all those addresses can be 'farmed' and become targets for virus infection.

A sure sign of a novice email user is the unedited subject line that has lots of Re: and Fw: tags in the front.

If you do send on jokes via email, be considerate to your fellow emailers.

- Change the subject line to just the original heading.
- Consider prefacing the subject with a word like JOKE: or FUNNY: some companies insist on staff doing this for non-business related messages and it seems a good way to distinguish these messages from 'normal' email.
- Edit the message down so only the main text of the joke remains.
- Remove all quote marks > etc
- Remove all mentions of previous senders and receivers.

And finally, be aware that some of these jokes are less than tasteful and might not be appreciated by some people who get your forwarded attempt at humour.

@ How to delete message excess

In the last issue we talked about trimming the older excess from a long email conversations. This can make a message unnecessarily long.

Some readers asked how to remove that excess when replying – it's really simple. After hitting reply, the edit window appears with the message. Then you can not only add your own text but trim the rest of text in the window.

Scroll down the old message text to the place where you want to delete from. That can be anywhere you like – say, half way down a long set of messages (look on the scroll bar as a guide).

From the point you choose, select from there to the end of the message (ie you select the oldest parts of the message thread) then hit the delete button. Presto! now you can reply with a much shorter message containing only the most recent exchanges as a reference.

From Email Essentials 3.07

LangaList Advice

FireFox Pros And Cons

For an industry built on logic--- at their deepest level, computers are logic circuits--- blatant illogic somehow manages to cloud many issues.

Take FireFox <http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/> , for example, a very nice browser from Mozilla.Org <http://www.mozilla.org/> . It's free, Open Source, and the result of literally years of development. It's also a cross-platform application, available for Windows, Mac, and Linux--- a huge plus in computationally diverse environments because the configuration and training/learning curve is basically the same, no matter what platform the browser's installed on. Its human language support also is extensive, with versions in everything from Afrikaans to Welsh. No question: it's impressive software.

Some also like it simply because it's not from Microsoft. I think this approach has some merit: Whenever Microsoft loses serious competition in any software category, it grows complacent, and the pace of innovation slackens. IE6, for example, came out in 2001; an eternity ago, in computing terms. Except for a boatload of security updates and patches, it's still basically the same browser it was then.

But, US-CERT (United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team), a partnership between the Department of Homeland Security and the public and private sectors that impartially tracks all manner of security issues in operating systems and major applications, shows that the list of IE's current vulnerabilities is shorter than those for FireFox, Mozilla, and the other alternate browsers. Likewise, it also lists fewer Windows' vulnerabilities than for the other OSes.

The last time I mentioned a similar US-CERT finding, by the way, Linux partisans leapt up to tell me that US-CERT didn't know what it was doing. Linux **couldn't** have more security flaws than Windows! Everyone **knows** that Open Source software is so much better than anything from Microsoft-- - right?

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Well, to the dismay the more rabid anti-Microsoft partisans, reports from other independent observers corroborated CERT's findings. For example, between July 1 and December 31, 2004, Symantec documented 13 serious vulnerabilities affecting Microsoft Internet Explorer, but found 21 vulnerabilities affecting each of the Mozilla-based browsers. But don't take my word for it--- read the reports for yourself, see the methodologies for yourself, and decide for yourself: The article posted now (free!) at <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=160900911> has all the details and links you'll need.

I wrote that article to try to help readers interested in FireFox in particular and Open Source in general to make an informed decision. There are many, many excellent, proven, objective benefits to switching to Open Source software--- but there's also a lot of misinformation, and some very, very *bad* reasons to switch.

For example, the "common knowledge" that FireFox is "more secure than IE" simply is false. Switching to FireFox for that particular reason--- in the belief that you'll magically and automatically be more secure--- is just plain wrong.

But again, don't trust me, or any third party: Come see the source material for yourself, and make up your own mind. It'll only take a few minutes, and one way or the other--- whether you agree or disagree with me-- you'll have the facts at hand, and so can make an informed judgment, rather than one based on "common knowledge."

Click on over to <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=160900911>

Using The "Event Viewer"

Fred: Picture this... your XP box crashes (maybe not as often as other MS OS's, but it will happen sooner or later). As it comes up, it says it is highly recommended that the C: disk be checked for problems, yada yada, nothing we haven't seen before, no doubt. So, it's doing its thing, when all of a sudden, it displays "file x truncated, file y cross linked with file z, Danger Will Robinson, danger!"

Unfortunately for those of us without eidetic memory, the results do not

stay on screen for more than a second or two. Hitting the pause key does *nothing* and all those pithy messages disappear. You can do a file keyword search through the entire system and still not find that log. You can look in the Event Viewer - System and no errors appear. Whoa! If that wasn't a system error event, what was it?

In point of fact, it is an Application Event, and not even an error, just a plain informational event, given by the service "winlogon". Armed with these salient details, it is short work to call up the event in the Event Viewer (My Computer -> Manage -> Event Viewer -> Application) and retrieve the text that had been displayed on the startup screen.

Of course, that leads up to the more interesting question... are the problems with files x, y, and z real problems or something that doesn't really matter. If there's an easy way of doing that, it would be great to know!

Best Regards, Joseph Maddison Thanks, Joseph. With luck, most of the event data stored in that log will indeed be merely informational--- FYI sorts of things. But anything flagged with a yellow "Warning" icon or a red "Error" icon deserves very close inspection: Click on the suspect items for more info, and for links to the appropriate section of the help file. You also can use a key word or phrase from the warning/error title or description to do a Google search or a search of the Knowledgebase at Microsoft.com

As for, "are the problems with files x, y, and z real problems or something that doesn't really matter?" It's quite rare for files in NTFS actually to become scrambled, even when such errors are reported. Alas, it's somewhat more common with FAT32 formats. One simple test is to examine the files; open them with the application that created them (eg DOC, XLW, PPT files, etc) , or run the program associated with them (for EXE, DLL, etc files). When in doubt, you can always reach into your most- recent backup and replace the suspect file with a known-good copy
From LangaListb 18/4/2005

More FireFox Pros And Cons

In the current article on Firefox (<http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=160900911>) my opening argument was "FireFox is a good browser, but not at all the panacea its most ardent fans

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think it is." My closing argument was "It's great that there are open-source alternatives to try, and it's smart to proactively explore all your options. But go in with your eyes open: All software has flaws. There are no panaceas!"

To me, it's hard to imagine less inflammatory statements. I mean: "All software has flaws." How can anyone disagree with that? But the froth-on-the-lips crowd is out in force, claiming I'm shilling for Microsoft, or have my head far up a nether orifice. If members of the rabid pro-Firefox crowd admit to any flaws in that software at all, they say that the numbers of flaws are tiny, and the security holes insignificant.

This view, however appealing, is totally false. There is no objective evidence--- zero, zip, nada, nil--- to support that view. Instead, there is a large and growing body of evidence that indeed and of course, there are problems in Mozilla/Firefox, and some of them are quite severe, opening the door to data theft, backdoor infections of your PC, and so on-- exactly the same kinds of problems that Internet Explorer is reviled for!

In fact, in addition to the information originally cited in <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=160900911>, some new info came out this past weekend, after my article was already written: The folks at Mozilla posted advisories on 9 newly-discovered flaws in Mozilla and its offspring (including FireFox):

"Mozilla flaws could allow attacks, data access...Multiple vulnerabilities that could allow an attacker to install malicious code or steal personal data have been discovered in the Mozilla Suite and the Firefox open-source browser." (Full story: http://news.zdnet.com/2100-1009_22-5674883.html?tag=nl.e589)

Again, these are **exactly** the same types of problems that IE is rightly criticized for.

Does all this mean that Firefox is a bad browser? Not at all. It means it's a normal browser, and will require vigilance to use safely. Does this mean that Internet Explorer is wonderful? Not at all. It's a normal browser, and requires vigilance to use safely.

If you keep either browser patched, and use the other security tools we

discuss here issue after issue, you'll be fine using either IE or Firefox. In point of fact, most of the actual real-life exploits in IE have affected out-of-date, unpatched, and/or unprotected systems. If you keep your software up to date and protected, you'll be fine.

Bottom line: Firefox is a fine tool. If you like it, by all means use it. But don't think that using it will automatically make you safe from serious browser security issues--- in fact, cold, hard facts prove exactly the opposite. So, once again: "It's great that there are open-source alternatives to try, and it's smart to proactively explore all your options. But go in with your eyes open: All software has flaws. There are no panaceas!"

Drive Size Issues

Hi Fred: Why is there a discrepancy between the size of a 120 Gb. hard disk and the size reported by Windows Pro that claims 111.8 Gb.? What has happened to the other 8.2 Gb.?

The explanation is that hard drive manufacturers calculate hard disk size in 'base 10' notation while Windows does the calculation in 'base 2' (binary) format. This is applicable, both the manufacturer and Windows are right, OK?

But I have read information about something different, for example: hard disk manufacturers use a 160 Gb. drive that has errors on it and sell it like a brand new 120 Gb., because in their line of products they don't have a 140 Gb. You can compare it with chip makers and their processors: you buy a 1800 Mhz. but with overclocking you maybe can reach 2000 Mhz. or more. They guarantee that the processor works well at 1800 Mhz.

Using the same example, can one access the other "good" parts of the remaining 40 Gb. that are hidden with special software or tools that people can't reach? What is the truth? Thanks in advance for your reply. ---

Enrique Paff

All the factors you mention can come into play, Enrique, and we'll discuss them in a moment. But there's one more that has an even larger effect: Drives are sold by "raw" or unformatted capacity. When you partition and format a drive, some of the space on the drive is occupied by the partitioning and formatting data structures.

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By analogy: think of a filing cabinet. As sold, it can hold a certain number of pages per drawer. But when you add hanging folders, the frames for the folders, index pages, and so on, you actually lose a little space, but can then organize and find your papers more easily. It's the same with hard drives: The partitioning and formatting takes up some space on the drive, but is necessary to organize and find your files.

Older drive formats (FAT, FAT16, the early Linux formats, etc), were created in the days when drives were tiny compared to today's. The older formats are not very efficient, and can waste a huge amount of space on a large drive. Those formats also can have severe, built-in limits to the size of the drives or partitions they can "see;" today's drives can simply be beyond the ability of these older formats to handle well.

Newer formats (FAT32, ext2, etc.) do better with larger drives; and some formats (NTFS, ext3, ReiserFS, etc.) were specifically designed with very large drives in mind. These latter formats help you to make the most of your disk space, with minimal wastage and no practical limits on disk or partition size. (Yes, there are limits--- e.g. 2 terabytes for NTFS--- but most of us won't reach them anytime soon. <g>)

More info on formatting and drive capacity: <http://langa.com/u/9e.htm>
<http://langa.com/u/9f.htm> <http://langa.com/u/9g.htm>

Next, there are indeed marketing factors, where base10 and base2 numbers get intermingled confusingly. You can even see this confusion in a simple Google definition search on the word "gigabyte:" <http://www.google.com/search?q=define%3A+gigabyte> Some of the sites say a gigabyte is "A billion bytes. A thousand megabytes." This is correct in what we might call "casual techspeak," but it is mathematically imprecise. Other sites say "2 to the 30th power (1,073,741,824) bytes.... one gigabyte is equal to 1,024 megabytes." This is the more precise definition. In fact, a purist would say it's the only "correct" answer. But again, in informal speech, many, many people round off and use the simpler definition. The problem comes when a drive maker labels a drive the casual-speech way, and you're expecting the mathematical way: Then, there'll be a discrepancy of 24MB per GB, which really adds up in the larger drive sizes. (There were even lawsuits

about this a couple years back.) So, you have to know how a drive maker defines his terms before you trust the capacity numbers. And then there are the sector-relocation areas. It's not at all unusual for a huge drive to have an uncorrectable manufacturing defect or three somewhere on its surface, so many drives ship with a low-level "remapping" tool that automatically substitutes a good location somewhere else on the disk for the bad location(s). Your software may know nothing of this remapping--- it can address the moved location by its original address, and the drive's firmware handles the translation to the new address. In this way, a few bad sectors don't cost you any net drive space; and your end-user software doesn't waste time trying to correct uncorrectable manufacturing defects (it never even sees the bad sectors). I've never heard of a case where a sector-relocation area significantly affects a drive's total capacity. I suppose it could happen, but I think this is not a likely thing. The first two issues, though--- raw versus formatted capacity, and base10 versus base2--- are *huge* factors affecting how much usable space you end up with on any given drive. You'd think drive size would be simple, wouldn't you? <g>

Virus Warning for MSN Messenger Users

New Worms, spreading through MSN via links to a malicious site, are infecting users and leaving their P.C's open to hacker hijack. The new worms, tagged Kelvir.a and Kelvir.b. both include a link in the instant message. That link, in turn, downloads a malicious file - the actual worm, a variant of the long running Spybot - which opens a backdoor to the compromised machine. Kelvir spreads by sending itself to all the MSN/Windows Messenger contacts on the effected PC, and poses as cryptic messages such as "lol! see it! U'll likeit" and "omg this is funny". The link opens a PIF-formatted file. IM and P2P (file sharing) virus and worms are currently estimated to be growing by about 50% each month.

From the May 2005 issue of NetGuide (thanks Westlakes)

Is Firefox still safer than IE?

By Brian Livingston

The popular Firefox browser received a security upgrade, known as version 1.0.4, when the Mozilla Foundation released the new code on May 11. This upgrade closes a security hole that could allow a hacker Web site to install software without a visitors' knowledge or approval.

This is the fourth minor update to Firefox since the open-source browser's 1.0 release on Nov. 9, 2004. That doesn't seem like very many patches to me, compared with Firefox's dominant competition, Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE), which is included in every copy of Windows. But I've heard a surprising amount of comment that Firefox might no longer be as secure as IE.

At Microsoft's Windows Hardware Engineering Conference (WinHEC), held in Seattle April 25-27, for example, an IE product manager made this case explicitly. Firefox had had (at that time) "three major releases," she said, while Internet Explorer 6.0 had had none. This statement was presented as though a lack of upgrades to IE was a benefit.

In fact, Microsoft has released at least 20 major security patches for Windows or Internet Explorer since November 2004. Most of these patches were rated "Critical," Microsoft's most severe security alert level.

The evidence I've seen so far indicates that Firefox remains much more secure than IE. But it's worth our time to take a closer look.

IE users were exposed for 200 days in 2004

Some remarkable statistics comparing the major Web browsers have been developed by Scanit NV, an international security firm with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The company painstakingly researched the dates when vulnerabilities were first discovered in various browsers, and the dates when the holes were subsequently patched.

The firm found that IE was wide open for a total of 200 days in 2004, or 54% of the year, to exploits that were "in the wild" on the Internet.

The Firefox browser and its older sibling Mozilla had no periods in 2004 when a security flaw went unpatched before exploits started circulating on the Net. With the latest 1.0.4 upgrade, Firefox has retained its "patch-before-hackers-can-strike" record so far in 2005, as well.

These statistics are so important to understanding the "attack surface" of the major browsers that we should break down this study into its individual findings:

- **IE suffered from unpatched security holes for 359 days in 2004.** According to Scanit, there were only 7 days out of 366 in 2004 during which IE had no unpatched security holes. This means IE had no official patch available against well-publicized vulnerabilities for 98% of the year.

- **Attacks on IE weaknesses circulated "in the wild" for 200 of those days.** Scanit records the first sighting of actual working hacker code on the Internet. In this way, the firm was able to determine how many days an IE user was exposed to possible harm. When Microsoft released a patch for an IE problem, Scanit "stopped the clock" on the period of vulnerability.

- **Mozilla and Firefox patched all vulnerabilities before hacker code circulated.** Scanit found that the Mozilla family of browsers, which share the same code base, went only 26 days in 2004 during which a Windows user was using a browser with a known security hole. Another 30 days involved a weakness that was only in the Mac OS version. Scanit reports that each vulnerability was patched before exploits were running on the Web. This resulted in zero days when a Mozilla or Firefox user could have been infected.

The Opera browser also experienced no days during which unpatched holes faced actual exploits, but Scanit began keeping statistics on Opera only since September 2004.

To see Scanit's visual timeline of these holes, exploits, and fixes, visit the firm's Internet Explorer page. On that page, click "Next Page" to see the timelines for Mozilla, Firefox, and Opera.

Firefox fixes take days, IE takes months

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>From the record to date, the Mozilla/Firefox team has shown that new security discoveries typically result in a patch being released in only a week or so.

This was certainly true in the case of Firefox version 1.0.4. The primary security hole that was closed by that version was unexpectedly publicized by the French Security Incident Response Team (FrSIRT) on May 5. The Firefox patch was released only six days later. (The apparent discoverer of the flaw, the Greyhats Security Group, had been working responsibly with Firefox's development team and criticized the leak.)

Perhaps the responsiveness of the Mozilla development group will shame Microsoft into fixing security holes much faster in the future. The situation has become so bad that eEye Digital Security, a respected consulting service, maintains an "upcoming advisories" page showing how much time Microsoft is allowing critical problems that are reported to the Redmond company to go uncorrected.

At present, eEye's count reveals that three critical unpatched issues currently affect Microsoft's products. None of these have gone unpatched longer than 60 days, the period after which eEye considers a patch to be "overdue." But some critical, widely-known security holes went as long as six months in 2003 and 2004 without an official fix being made available by Microsoft.

Another security firm that tracks security holes in IE, Firefox, and many other applications is Secunia, based in Copenhagen, Denmark. As of today, Secunia reports that there are still 19 unpatched security flaws in IE, the most severe of which is rated "highly critical." Firefox has only 4 unpatched flaws, all of which are rated "less critical" or "not critical," the lowest severity rating. Opera has none.

Microsoft officials often excuse their tardiness in fixing security holes in IE by saying that the code is so complex that any fix has a high likelihood of breaking something else. Well, who integrated IE so tightly into the operating system that the browser is so delicate? It's Microsoft's own poor programming that causes much of the software giant's very visible problems.

Microsoft employs some of the best software developers in the world. The company enjoys a cash reserve of \$35 billion and is highly profitable. Yet a tiny company that builds open-source browser software is making the Redmond giant look foolish and incompetent in securing its products.

I have no particular attachment to the Mozilla Foundation or its products. If the foundation's browser software was a threat to Windows users, I'd say so. At the present time, several serious unpatched holes are known to exist in IE, while few or none plague Firefox. This isn't a religious issue, it's just a fact.

The foundation announced two weeks ago that they'd surpassed 50 million downloads of the free Firefox browser. The application is largely responsible for knocking down IE from a 94% market share in May 2004 to 87% in April 2005, according to OneStat. That's a remarkable accomplishment, considering that IE is free and comes preinstalled with Windows. Sites with a base of expert Windows users report much higher levels of Firefox usage.

How to keep Firefox upgraded

No matter how fast Firefox's developers update it, it doesn't do you any good unless you've got the browser configured to notify you of updates. This is a simple matter, but it's worth making sure you have it right:

- **Enable update checking.** In Firefox, click Tools, Options, Advanced. Ensure that the selection for **Periodically check for updates** is on, both for **Firefox** and for **My Extensions and Themes**. This is the default setting, so most Firefox users will automatically get notices of updates.

- **Check for upgrades manually, if desired.** You should see a dialog box informing you of new updates as the Mozilla Foundation releases them. There's a random delay, however, so every user doesn't try to download a new version on the same day. To check whether there's an update that applies to you, click the red up-arrow that's in the upper-right toolbar of the Firefox menu area.

- **Download the latest version.** If a dialog box tells you an update is available, close the window, then open Firefox's download page. If you want a version other than Windows U.S. English, click the **Other Systems and Languages** link and select your preferred version. Download the executable file to a temporary area of your hard disk, then close all apps (including Firefox itself) and run the installer.

It's no longer necessary or recommended that you uninstall Firefox before upgrading to a new version. A few glitches affected upgrades to versions 1.0.1 and 1.0.2, but this has been corrected since 1.0.3.

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It's unfortunate that hackers are so attracted to browsers as a way to take over users' computers. But that's where the money is, as bank robber Willie Sutton once said. We have to accept a certain amount of upgrading as the price of using complex Windows applications. But we can reduce the threat to ourselves and others by using browsers that have a proven record of rapid, responsible development.

I'd like to thank reader Terry Engles for his help researching this topic. To send us more information about the browser wars, or to send us a tip on any other subject, visit WindowsSecrets.com/contact. You'll receive a gift certificate for a book, CD, or DVD of your choice if you send us a comment that we print.

Brian Livingston is editor of the Windows Secrets Newsletter and the coauthor of Windows 2000 Secrets, Windows Me Secrets, and eight other books.

Geek Speak Busters

Attachment; A file hooked to an e-mail message that gets sent to a recipient.

Bandwidth; A measure of the amount of stuff that can get shoved through a limited transmission medium such as a cable or a phone line.

Blind courtesy (or carbon) copy (bcc); A copy of e-mail that gets sent to a recipient without the primary recipient's knowledge.

Bounce; The error message you read when your mail gets returned as undeliverable. Also, what happens to email that can't be delivered, causing the "undeliverable" message that's sent to you by the postmaster.

Filter; A part of your e-mail program that scans incoming messages for predefined character strings (also known as words or sentences). You can set up a filter to automatically delete e-mail from a particular address.

From Newbie Club Newsletter 10th May 2005

TAKE GRAMMATICAL RESPONSIBILITY

That's the plea from a University of Washington professor, Sandeep Krishnamurthy who says that if "you think grammar check has completely checked your paper, I have news for you -- it really hasn't "

He's absolutely right, and even Microsoft will admit that their grammar tools are not perfect. It's understandable that busy people on deadlines will rely on the absence of green and red squiggly lines in their document but it is really not enough.

The English language is pretty complex. It is not so much the rules that are complicated but all the exceptions to those rules. Programming software to check for grammar is a complex task - what we have in Word is the result of decades of development and brainpower. But it's not perfect and it probably never will be perfect.

Here we have a resident proof-reader, Phil, who checks over most issues. He not only changes things that Word thinks are OK - he also alerts us when sentences or sections don't make sense or could be clearer.

That's not to say that errors don't get through and there are plenty of readers who'll jump on us with any grammatical grievance. And in some cases my personal writing style knowingly breaks the rules. Phil paid attention in English at school as opposed to Peter who probably spent his time dreaming in Basic or Fortran.

Even if you're not lucky enough to have your own 'Phil' you should try to step back and re-read a document with fresh eyes (I often print the document out and edit the old fashioned way). If you still get complaints then you can try blaming Word anyway <g>.

From Office Watch 10.12

Streamline Windows XP

Clear the clutter and improve the performance of your system with a spring clean, says Paul Townsend.

There's no doubting that Windows XP is packed with all manner of useful tools and settings. However, take a moment to think how many of these you actually use, and you'll probably discover that you're surviving happily without quite a few of them.

With this in mind you can set about stripping back your system so that only those items you need and use remain installed. You'll reap the benefits because a leaner Windows installation will help improve the overall performance of your system. As well as getting rid of unwanted applications, you can use Add or Remove Programs in Control Panel to delete specific features within Windows. Click Add/Remove Windows Components and you'll be able to choose which items to remove from your system. Highlight a component then click Details to see all the sub components it contains.

The likes of Paint, the Clipboard Viewer and Games will be listed here and removal of a particular item is straightforward. If an item is installed its checkbox will have a tick in it. To delete a component all you have to do is clear the checkbox. If you later find that a particular item is required, retick its box. However, at this point you may require your Windows XP CD for reinstallation.

Hidden components

As you scroll down the list you'll also see Windows Media Player, Internet Explorer and Windows Messenger. However, you won't be able to uninstall any of these items because unchecking their corresponding boxes will simply remove any shortcut links from the desktop and Start menu. Full application uninstallation for these items isn't possible from within Add or Remove Programs. This is deliberate to prevent inexperienced users removing the programs in error. For more experienced users it's possible to make a change to a system file that will make these so-called hidden programs visible. Use My Computer or Windows Explorer to browse to C:\Windows\inf. Locate the file sysoc.inf and double-click to open it. Here you'll see a list of various items together with program names. Alongside some of them will be the word 'hide'. It's this entry that's preventing these programs being displayed fully in Add or Remove Programs. To make them visible all you need to do is delete the word 'hide' and save the changes that are made to the file sysoc.inf. Having made the alterations to the file, open Add or Remove Programs again to see the bigger picture.

Cleaning up

Further streamlining is available via some of the other tools built into Windows XP. Right-click your hard drive in My Computer, choose Properties and select Disk Cleanup. This will provide you with a list of files which can be safely deleted from your system. Some of them, such as files in the Recycle Bin and downloaded program files, are easy to remove normally. However, this tool is useful for listing items such as Office Setup Files, which may be awkward to locate manually.

One option that's particularly useful here is Compress old files. While it won't remove anything from your system, it can save you a great deal of disk space. This option will give you the opportunity to compress all files (other than system files) that haven't been accessed for a long period of time. However, this will include the likes of MP3 and WMA files. Unfortunately, these may not play correctly having been subjected to compression; it may be necessary to decompress them first.

Desktop tidying

You can extend your spring clean to include the appearance of your system. Do away with the mass of icons that appear on your desktop in an instant by right-clicking the desktop and choosing Arrange Icons By -> Show Desktop Icons. This is only a quick fix; streamlining with the Desktop Cleanup Wizard is a more preferable method. This utility will list all the program shortcuts that appear on the desktop together with details of the date they were last used. Put a tick in the box alongside those shortcuts you don't need any more and they'll be placed in an automatically created folder called Unused Desktop Shortcuts. If you wish to use them again, you can reinstate them at a later date.

Finally, turn your attention to the System Tray, which you'll be able to clear of unwanted icons. In order to do this right-click Start and choose Properties. Select the Taskbar tab, check the 'Hide inactive icons' box and click Customize. Your current icons will be listed along with their individual settings. You'll be able to control the display behaviour for each one. For example, your anti-virus and firewall software will be marked as 'Hide when inactive' but you can change the notification behaviour by clicking next to an item. From the drop-down box that appears, choose one of these three options:

Hide when inactive, Always hide or Always show.

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Subject: 38 Famous Lines

1. "Frankly, Scallop, I Don't Give a Clam." (Seen on Cape Cod)
2. "That's It! I'm Calling Grandma!" (Seen on an 8 year old)
3. "Wrinkled Was Not One of the Things I Wanted to Be When I Grew Up"
4. "Procrastinate Now."
5. "Rehab Is for Quitters."
6. "My Dog Can Lick Anyone."
7. "I Have a Degree in Liberal Arts - Do You Want Fries With That?"
8. "Party - My Crib - Two A.M." (On a baby-size shirt)
9. "Finally 21, and Legally Able to Do Everything I've Been Doing Since 15."
10. "ALL MEN ARE IDIOTS, AND I MARRIED THEIR KING."
11. "Tasmania": 500,00 people, and 15 last names."
12. "FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION. It comes bundled with the software."
13. "I'M OUT OF ESTROGEN AND I'VE GOT A GUN."
14. "A hangover is the wrath of grapes."
15. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a cash advance."
16. "STUPIDITY IS NOT A HANDICAP. Park elsewhere!"
17. "DISCOURAGE INBREEDING - Ban Country Music."
18. "They call it 'PMS' because 'Mad Cow Disease' was already taken."
19. "He who dies with the most toys is nonetheless dead."
20. "Time's fun when you're having flies...Kermit the Frog."
21. "POLICE STATION TOILET STOLEN.... Cops have nothing to go on."
22. "FOR SALE: Iraqi rifle. Never fired. Dropped once."
23. "HECK IS WHERE PEOPLE GO WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN GOSH."
24. "A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS, but it uses up a thousand times the memory."
25. "The Meek shall inherit the earth.... after we're through with it."
26. "Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana."
27. "HAM AND EGGS - A day's work for a chicken; A lifetime commitment for a pig."
28. "WELCOME TO Queensland - Set your watch back 20 years."
29. "The trouble with life is there's no background music."
30. "IF THERE IS NO GOD, WHO POPS UP THE NEXT KLEENEX?"
31. "Suicidal Twin Kills Sister By Mistake!"
32. "The original point-and-click interface was a Smith Wesson."
33. "MY WILD OATS HAVE TURNED TO SHREDDED WHEAT."
34. "Computer programmers don't byte, they nibble a bit."
35. "Computer programmers know how to use their hardware."
36. "Nyquil - The stuffy, sneezy, why-the-hell-is-the-room-spinning medicine."
37. "Quoting one is plagiarism. Quoting many is research."
38. "My husband and I divorced over religious differences. He thought he was God, and I didn't."

From who else??