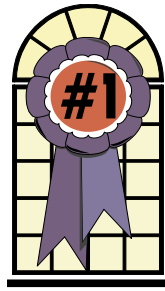


WINNERS

Vote pad

WINdows usERS March 2002



Shopping Tips for Internet Shopaholics

By Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group

Last month I described my experience spending over \$150 to save about \$4 on vitamins I bought on the Internet. This column takes care of the other side of the story: Tips on tackling the problems of Internet buying.



Fighting the Free Syndrome

How much do you make an hour? If you're clocking more than, say, \$5 an hour, don't waste your time
Continued on page 3

In This Issue

Bits & Bytes & Xp	1
Shpping Tips	1
President's Message	4
Nostromo n45	5
WindowBlinds	5
Street Atlas.	6
Upgrade to XP?	8
Quicken 2002	10
General Meeting	12

Bits & Bytes & Xp

By Siles Bazerman



Over the last six or seven weeks I have been encountering spontaneous close down and reboot in Windows Xp. All signs indicated a hardware problem. This type of shutdown and restart is almost always a problem with hardware and virtually never a software problem. It could, however, be caused by a virus.

A virus scan showed nothing, so I started troubleshooting the problem. In Windows Xp, under Administrative Tools in the control panel, is an Event Viewer. Checking the log for System events only showed an ACPI error. However, a close check of the time factor showed that this was not related to the shutdown, but to another problem. A careful watch on what I was doing at the time of the shutdown and reboot indicated that the problem was related to the video card, an AGP ATI All-In-Wonder Rage 128. Every shutdown occurred when I was in Outlook Express and tried to also start a graphics program or Internet Explorer, logging onto a graphics rich page. The card functioned perfectly on another computer, Barbie.

I check of the BIOS revealed that I had never reset the settings for AGP from those used in Windows Me. I had set them very aggressively. I was using an AGP of 4x and a aperture of

128. Resetting these to the motherboard defaults of AGP of 2x and aperture of 64 cured this problem. Tracking it down was the time consuming part.

I also had a related problem involving the video card and some 3D software. In particular HAL would periodically lock up when a 3D fish Screen Saver would run for an extended period of time. It appears that the seven fish, sound and bubble effects were too much for the video card chipset. New drivers only made the problem worse, so I reverted to the three fish Aquarium screen saver from Plus and have had no more problems. I will investigate this one further and have rolled back the drivers to the Windows Xp default drivers rather than the latest ones from ATI. I may even cut back the AGP to 1x and aperture to 32 to see what happens.

Another thing I am doing is trying out firewalls. Windows Xp's built-in firewall works fine for incoming protection, but does nothing to stop outgoing calls or transmittals. These can be caused by Trojans and by Spyware. Zone Alarm scans and protects against both incoming and outgoing communications and the latest version works well with Windows Xp. I have had reports of some systems having problems with Zone Alarm loading automatically on startup, and of it having to be started

Continued on page 3

Telephone Help Line

PROGRAM/SOFTWARE	NAME	PHONE	TIME
CompuServe	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
CorelDraw 5	George Margolin	949-645-5950	Most times
CorelDraw & Ventura & PhotoPaint	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends
Hardware	Jonathan Means	714-542-2204	6-9 p.m.
Internet	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Novell, NT & Networking	Jonathan Means	714-542-2204	6-9 p.m.
Quicken & Quickbooks	Max Lockie	949-720-8170	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Windows 95,98,Me,Xp	Siles Bazerman	714-897-2868	9 a.m.-8 p.m.
Word for Windows	Cathy Grammar-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
WordPerfect Windows	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends

General Meeting March 9 Orange Coast College 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon in Science Room #149 **Rudy Wolf**

***Pig Sig at China Olive
on Bristol in Costa Mesa***

WINNERS Notepad is published monthly by WINNERS, PO Box 9274, Newport Beach, CA, 92658. A subscription is included with all paid memberships in WINNERS. Other non-profit user groups may reprint *WINNERS Notepad* articles without prior permission, provided proper author, title and publication credits are given.

WINNERS, contributors and editors of *Notepad* do not assume liability for damages arising from the publication or non-publication of any advertisement, article, editorial, or other item in this newsletter. All opinions expressed are those of the individual authors only and do not necessarily represent the opinions of WINNERS, its Board of Directors, the *WINNERS Notepad*, or its editors.

PURPOSE

WINNERS, a computer association, is a volunteer organization providing a forum for sharing information and experiences related to Windows-based software, encouraging ethical use of computers and software, and offering service to our communities.

MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership is \$20.00 for individuals; \$5.00 each additional family member.

MEETINGS

WINNERS generally meets the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Orange Coast College in the Science Building, Room #149, 2701 Fairview, Costa Mesa.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Terry Currier 714-774-2018
tcurrier@aol.com

Vice President

Jonathan Means 714-542-2204
jmeans@pobox.com

Secretary

Ken Kamber 714-637-4496
kkamber@bigfoot.com

Treasurer

Rudy Wolf 714-528-3715
rudywolf@pobox.com

Membership

Louise McCain 714-964-8031
swpghmom@aol.com

Publicity

Steve Dela 714-775-8373
stevede@aol.com

Programs

Terry Currier 714-774-2018
tcurrier@aol.com

By-Laws

Max Lockie 949-644-0103
mlockie@pobox.com

Editor/Publisher

Sunny Lockie 949-644-0103
sundesigns@pobox.com

Board Members

George Margolin 949-645-5950
inventor@pobox.com
Cathy Grammer-Margolin 645-5950
inventor00@pobox.com
Ken Kamber 714-637-4496
Kkamber@bigfoot.com
Ed Koran 562-427-2560
edk246@aol.com

Info/Message Line 949-644-0295

Website:

<http://members.aol.com/ocwinners>

FUTURE MEETING DATES

- ★ March 9
- ★ April 13
- ★ May 11
- ★ June 8

manually. Investigation has shown that it hangs while loading True Vector Service and fails to completely install. This has turned out to be a timing problem of when in the boot sequence Zone Alarm is started. The faster the CPU and the more memory available the more likely the problem is to occur.

I have found a freeware utility that solves the problem. It is Startup Delayer from R2 Studios. This utility, which is fully configurable, will remove a program from the startup group. It then starts it with an adjustable delay and thus gets around the Zone Alarm or similar problems. I have found that a delay of from 15 to 20 seconds works best on my P III 600 machine. Other delays may work better on your machine. The program is free and downloadable from <http://r2.com.au/>.

One firewall I like, and it is free to home users, is Sygate Personal Firewall. It works well, and the GRC site reports my computer is in stealth mode on all ports. It is slightly harder to configure than Zone Alarm, but much easier than Norton Personal Firewall (also Norton is commercial). Black Ice Defender seems to have numerous problems with Windows Xp as reported on usenet, and so I did not try it.

Lately there have been more new virus strains developed than ever. Be sure to frequently update your virus definitions. Symantec has been updating NAV about every two to three days for the last month. Also, there have been a number of updates to System Works 2002 available through Live Update. All the other anti-virus programs, free or fee, are doing the same. There are several good free anti-virus programs out there. Just do a google search for anti-virus.

hunting for discounts that come and go. The worst ones to try finding are free shipping or \$10 off with your first order. A better strategy? If you bump into an offer from Half.com, say, and you're in the market for a bunch of used books, it's a slam-dunk. Otherwise, don't bother tracking them down.

Factor in Shipping

Paying attention to shipping costs may seem obvious, but there are variables to consider. You might think you'll save on shipping by choosing a site that charges a flat fee for shipping no matter how many items you purchase. That's likely true unless the site's products are inflated to cover the shipping costs. With some items—vitamins, for instance—that's not such a big deal as most sites charge a flat \$4.95 for standard shipping. (One exception, though, is AdvanceRX; they charge a flat fee of \$3 for the entire order, and the product pricing is lower than other drug sites.)

Listen to Users

The wealth of opinions on the Net is overwhelming and you need to tap into it before making any major purchase. There are two spots I listen in on, are useful in its own way. First try the newsgroups and do it using the Google.com search engine. When I was interested in a camcorder, I typed "Panasonic Camcorder" into the Google search field and clicked on Groups. Goggle will provide a list of groups that contain the two words. It's a little daunting from here because you'll face at least 10 groups. Choose the one that's closest to your search. For instance, "Humanities" (Fine art, literature, philosophy) and "Misc" (Employment, health) won't fit while "Comp" (Hardware, software, consumer info) sure will.

You'll then see a dozen or more sub-groups belonging to Comp, each

with a green bar showing the likely hits in the groups. Type "Panasonic Camcorder" into the field again and choose "Search only in comp."

The dilemma, as you'll soon find out, is there's a lot to sort through in order to find the recommendations and discussion you're looking to read.

The other spot I really like is Epinions.com. It's filled with people like us providing their observations and experiences with products. Don't be put off by thinking these are just willy-nilly opinions. Granted, some are, but most people are careful and thorough in their reports, few seem to have an ulterior motive, and those that do are easy to spot.

Try Epinions by typing, "Choosing an Air Conditioner" into the search field. Scroll down to "Member Advice" and you'll get a sense of what Epinions offers. Better, search for an item you're very familiar with and see what others have to say.

Make those Comparisons

You're crazy if you shop on the Internet without using a price comparison site. There are many available, and here's a sampling:

- Mysimon.com
- Dealttime.com
- Pricingcentral.com
- Bizrate.com
- Smartshop.com
- BuyBuddy.com

If you're wondering which sites I use regularly, take a gander at some of my favorites:

- Pricescan.com: A neat site with an assortment of ways to search for products and spots to purchase the item. The site does an exemplary job at digging up pricing for a myriad of products including for books, com-

puters, office equipment, home and garden, and other categories.

- DestinationRX.com: Does a remarkable job at neatly displaying a grid with product, vendor, price, estimated shipping, and total cost. Great: Sorting by column—cost or price—is easy, and getting details about the vendor is a click away. Not so hot: “Total Cost field” doesn’t take into account price per unit, so comparing a bottle of 100 60milligram vitamins with the same bottle of 100mg vitamins isn’t accurate.
- Canada.rx: A member of another user group told me about Canada.rx. She said, “I thought you might be interested in this solution for prescription drugs. A friend is diabetic and has who knows what else. His doctor faxes his prescriptions and he receives a package a few days later with no hassle from the post office. (His only real difficulty lay in convincing his doctor to send the fax and that only had to be done once.) His credit card is charged approximately one-third the price he’d pay locally. I asked him for the URL and this is his response:

“It’s CanadaRx. No www, no .com, nothing but CanadaRx. They keep changing the entry screens, making it sometimes difficult to find the screen one wants. But it’s all there. All that’s needed in patience. Persistence helps some too.”

I checked and the prices really are substantially lower than most discount pharmacies.

- Pricewatch.com: This site has been around the longest and provides a fast, convenient way to find the best prices on computing hardware.
- Addall.com: Think Amazon has the best prices in town? Nope. Half.com, BooksAMillion.com, and others often beat Amazon.

The saving are enough that it makes using Addall.com a must every time you shop for books.

- PCworld.pricegrabber.com: I’m a little biased here, so pardon my conflict-of-interest for a minute, and try *PCWorld’s* Product Finder. Primarily hardware, software, and electronics, it gives you a way to find products, and check and compare their prices. Three things I like better here than the other sites: I can easily track a product, watching for price changes, just by supplying my e-mail address. Next, if the product’s been reviewed by *PC World*, one click gets me to the article. Finally, the site gives me access to the full spec sheet of the product, something I find invaluable.
- Cnet’s shopper.cnet.com: Does a decent job with hardware and software but only so-so for consumer electronics. It’s sometimes difficult separating ads from product reviews.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He’s also a founding member of APCUG Write to him at Steve_bass@pcworld.com.

Check PCW’s current edition at <http://www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at http://www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.



Presidents Message

I do get a lot of email—some I want and others I don’t. Just to keep up with news from the tech world I subscribe to Anchor Desk from *PC Magazine*. Ken Rutkowski’s Daily Tech News is a collection from all over the world. Sign up at

<http://www.kenradio.com>

Finally, Steve Bass from *PC World* gives us a collection of tips collected from experience and *PC World*.

I’ve been working with a webeditor called Namu from Jasc. I’ve updated the WINNERS webpage with it. Is it not perfect, and there is still work to be done on it, but it is up to date now. I even put my Comdex review on it. Take a look at

<http://members.aol.com/ocwinners>

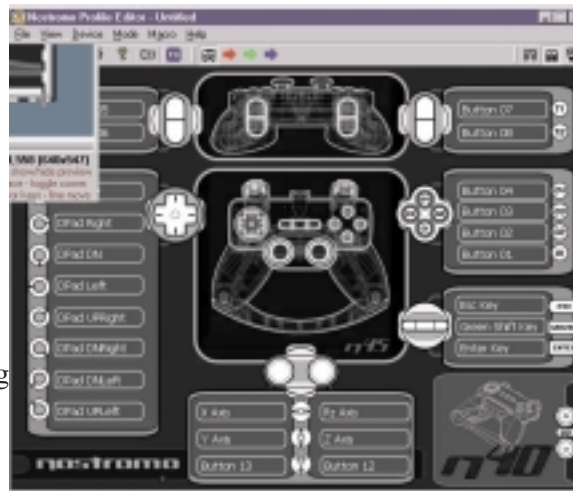
This is actually my first time doing/reworking a webpage. It does take a long time to do. I put about 20 hours into it. I have to admit that it’s kind of cool. I am wondering, though, with all the other things I do, if someone would be willing to take over the software library. The job would consist of collecting/looking at different programs out there and then copying them to disk/CDs to sell at the meetings. I would give that person the Shareware and Freeware software I have collected already to get them going. If interested, please contact me at the meeting or through email.

Terry

Nostromo n45

By Terry Currier

If you're a gamer than you probably have tried joysticks, or gamepads. Belkin is now making gamepads. With gamepads you are more versatile in a game compared to using just the keyboard. There are more than the simple directional and shooting buttons. The Nostromo is a comfortable fit easy to hold in the hands. With games such as aerial combat they are much easier and quicker to get use to. Belkin handily put buttons in the center for Enter/ESC/Mouse. That way you don't have to release it to do other functions. On the top it has dual analog controllers, four trigger buttons, and a eight-way directional pad. The front has four more trigger buttons. What is great about the



Nostromo is the buttons are programmable. In fact with a total of thirteen action buttons, you can have up to 70 programmable functions. With the Profile Editor you can easily program each button to do a specific function and save it for a specific game. Load it when you need it and you are ready to rock.



It plugs into the USB port and works with Windows 98, 2000, ME, XP and Apple Mac OS 9 or later. Cost direct from Belkin is \$25.

<http://www.belkin.com>

You might also look at the Nostromo n50 SpeedPad for \$35. Fitting on one hand it features ten keypad action buttons that can be programmed to offer a total of 56 functions. A programmable eight-way directional pad, and throttle wheel. It uses TouchSense™ technology from Immersion to transform digital information into physical sensations for realistic responses during game play. Gamers can feel gun blasts, the contours of a racetrack or the impact of a car crash as the action happens.

REVIEW

WindowBlinds 3.1

By Terry Currier

Stardock WindowBlinds will not speed up your computer, can't recover lost memory, and it won't defrag your hard drive. What it will do however is put a "skin" layer over your Windows desktop and applications. The term skin means that it works with the Windows GUI (Graphic User Interface) to alter the look of every title bar, push button, taskbar and other parts of the Windows interface. It works on all versions of Windows, and especially well on Windows XP. Different users

can sign on with Windows XP and have completely different looks.

It is a program that can make your desktop a little cooler looking and actually easier on the eyes. Its fun to go through all the different skins that come with the program to see which you like the most. Then, if you want even more you can go to their web site and look at a few hundred more. It has the ability to add additional GUI effects such as transparent icon



text, and apply wallpapers. If you don't want the skin effect on every application you can choose which to skin, or even to have a specific skin.

Continued on page 11

Delorme Street Atlas USA Deluxe 2001

By Terry Currier

I last reviewed and liked the Delorme map version 6.0 two years ago, so I looked forward to reviewing their latest.

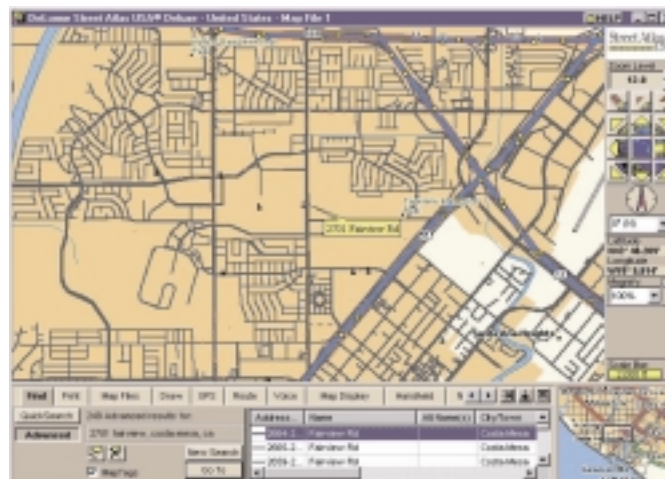
Installation

It comes on a two-CD set, one for installation and one is the map data. Minimum installation uses about 100Mb of disk space—it will not load points of interest and other things. The typical install is 380Mb, and if you want to use voice navigation, it takes 400Mb. They recommend 530Mb, Windows® 95, 98, 2000, Me, XP, or Windows NT® 4.0 with service pack 4 or later. They want 48Mb of RAM, but really you should have 64Mb (minimum) for Windows anyway. For the voice you will need sound card, microphone, speakers, and Pentium II 233Mhz or faster processor. In the past version, you could load onto your hard drive sections of map data so you would not always need the CD ROM in the drive. I could have installed by state, or even by county area. Now it will only let you install all of the data. Even though it takes about 590Mb, it's worth it in my opinion.

Interface

DeLorme includes a tutorial to help you learn it quickly. It is easy to use on its own, with a good clean appearance. Click on a toolbar button and the setup below changes to what you need. Good use of height adjustment arrows to give you more map area when you want it. One place it stepped down, however, is street information. It

used to be if you passed the crosshair (cursor in the program) it would display the street name and even the address. Now to get the address or street name, if not displayed, you have to right click



and then choose info. It then displays the street name and numbering of the spot you clicked on and the length of the street (a little bonus). I've always liked the way it comes back to the last map you were looking at. Now it asks if you want to save the last viewed map to be the first to come up, which is the best choice. When loading, the program looks at the most recently saved map to load. Zoom capabilities are outstanding. Zoom in/out up to 9 steps, and still magnify up to 200%.

Appearance

In version 6.0 from two years ago the street names were within the street lines themselves, which made it easy to read and reference. Now the names are beside the streets and in a larger font, so it's easier to read, but you don't have the as many street names on the screen. You cannot change any of the toolbar or

sidebar setup. Personally, I have no need for the Longitude and Latitude constantly being displayed. I'm sure some people would like to see street addresses, or business information in the right side panel all the time, rather than the overview map. With the deluxe version you can bring up the drawing tools and easily add a new street. Save it, or print it out just like it came with the program. You can go online to get updated road construction, events, and weather

by clicking on the net button. You can present the map in any direction, not just North on top.

Find (Search)

In the past, the search capabilities left me wanting. If I had it open on Anaheim and I tried to search for an address in Florida it would not find it. You had to have it within the open view to find it. If you had the full address, including Zip Code, it could, but you don't always have that. In this version they have fixed it so I can search from anywhere and find it. Search is easy with a quick-find box where you just type in the address. It will take you right there and, in a box below, display the street address and other choices. For example, 800 Main street, Orange, CA takes you there and in the box it will list 1000, 2000, 3000 section of Main Street. That way you can quickly switch to another section if what you wanted is not

there. You can also search by a business name, if it is in the points of interest. For example, look up Brea Mall and find it. It saves a record of your searches, so you can easily scroll back to one you did in the past.

Marking or pushpins

It comes with a few types of markers for you to flag a location. The drawing tools will also let you add notes. You cannot, however, import an address list and have it mark those off. They have another mapping program that will do that.

Panning

Left click anywhere on the map and it will center on that spot. You can also move the cursor to the side of the map and an arrow will appear. You can then move in the direction you are pointed. It has an overview map of the area you are looking at. This way you can be zoomed in looking at where you live in Costa Mesa and quickly click over Irvine. Click on the center piece of the global map and it takes you back to where you last looked.

Print

For displaying on the monitor they use a tan background. This looks great, easy on the eyes and all that. For printing, however, I wish they would make the background white and not use the tan like they do on the display. This takes longer to print out, uses more ink, and it's especially bad on a laser printer. Black street lines and names, with a gray background is what it looks like. Still, the printouts do look good, especially in color. You can even have it print poster size maps. Choose to have it print 2x2 and you get it blown up to a four-sheet size, what was on only one. The program divides it up into sections and prints each. You then cut and

paste the sheets together. You may also choose 3x3 size. There is no print preview feature.

Routing

Could not be much easier. Click on the Route button, type in starting and ending addresses, and tell it to calculate. You can put in interim stops, change a route by telling it to go via another way and it redoes the route for you. You can also right click on the map and tell it to create or end a route at that spot. It will give you the distance, time, and an estimated place for needing fuel (planned rest stop).

Business

It comes with over 6.2 million miles of routable roads and over four million points of interest. The points of interest are ATMs, gas stations, hotels, restaurants, and more. Right click on a POI and it will give you the



type of business it is, phone number, the city, and zip code. You can personalize the selection of POIs. Choose from four categories of Business, Education, Government, and Religious. From there, break it down even further. Business is very extensive. You can have it look for lodging, food, health, transportation, and more. Restaurants being my favorite things to see, there are 16 choices of restaurants types. You can have it look from American to Italian, or from Mexican to Thai.

Extras

It works with GPS units giving directional displays with oversized turn arrows. It works with voice commands. You know what was best about this? It actually worked. Granted it only does a limited number of commands, but I have seen others that would not work on fewer commands. If you have a Palm OS, or Windows CE unit you can upload maps to them. For the Palm OS unit you need Solus Basic which you can download for free. It gives users the ability to upload single maps and route directions to a Palm OS handheld. Users can go to the DeLorme Web site to access Solus MapMaker®, (<http://solus.delorme.com>), where they can create routes, zoom in and out, and search by placename, or street and then download a single map with Route Directions.

The short

A great map program which easy to use. If you don't need the extras you can save money and get the Street Atlas USA version 9.0 at ESP of \$45. Deluxe estimated street price is \$60. My advice, though, would be to shop and find the Travel Pack Deluxe for \$70. For \$10 more you get the Deluxe version and their AAA Map'n'Go 7.0 which I really like a lot, because it has all the street map information and the most recent AAA ratings for restaurants, accommodations and attractions.

Rating from 1-10 10 being the best

- 10 Installation
- 9 Interface
- 8.5 Appearance
- 9 Find
- 7.5 Printing
- 9.5 Panning
- 8 Marking
- 9 Routing
- 8 Business
- 10 Extras – GPS, Palm, voice



Windows XP: Why You Oughta Upgrade

By Carl Siechert, Co-Author,
Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out

At a recent meeting of the Pasadena IBM Users Group, Ed Bott and Carl Siechert, co-authors of Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out, explained why Windows XP is such an important upgrade for most users. Carl did a follow up which included the key parts of the presentation, and graciously allowed the user group community to reprint it in their newsletters.

Why upgrade? At the meeting, several people commented that we didn't show the killer feature or the clear benefits of upgrading, especially from Windows 2000.

That's because, IMO, there isn't a distinct knock-your-socks-off feature/benefit. Instead, there are a number of minor enhancements that, collectively, make Windows XP a compelling upgrade for me. We tried to dash through them but perhaps didn't adequately demonstrate the benefit. Here's a brief summary of my favorites:

- **Stability.** Windows XP has the ability to run a large number of apps without running out of resources, without crashing. (If you're running Windows 2000, you already have this, so there's no gain.)
- **Security.** This is a huge topic that I can't adequately cover in a few sentences; suffice to say that security of your data and your privacy in Windows XP is leaps and bounds beyond anything available in Windows 9x. (Again, if you have Windows 2000, you already have most of the security capabilities of Windows XP.)

- **UI enhancements.** A variety of changes in Start menu, taskbar, Windows Explorer, and Control Panel make everyday tasks such as launching programs, switching between windows, and managing files just a little bit faster, easier, and more convenient. These features can each be customized, so you can use the ones you like and change others back to Windows 9x/2000 style. (Similarly, you can banish the new look of Windows XP while still enjoying its other benefits.)
- **Fast User Switching.** Great for shared computers, FUS lets someone else log on without requiring you to first close all your documents and applications.
- **Power management.** Standby and hibernation let me save power (on desktop PCs as well as portables) yet still have fast boot time, bringing me right back to where I left off. (That is, all the windows that I left open when the system powers down are already open when I power up.)
- **Digital photo support.** I was never a fan of digital photography until I got XP because it was such a hassle before. But the support for cameras and scanners, as well as the features built in to Windows Explorer for viewing, printing, e-mailing, and manipulating images have actually made it fun and practical to work with photos in new ways.
- **Remote Assistance.** The ability to actually see and work with someone else's screen while conversing with them through text, voice, and video chat is a killer feature for anyone who's looked upon as a computer guru and gets calls for

support from relatives, friends, and neighbors. (I suspect that includes most PIBMUG members!)

- **Remote Desktop.** The ability to connect with my home computer from the office (or vice versa) is awesome. It looks and acts exactly as if I'm at that computer five miles away, and I have access to all its files, printers, and other resources. And like remote assistance, it's acceptably fast if you have broadband Internet access. I also use it to work with other computers on my own LAN; that's sometimes easier than hopping back and forth between two computers.
- **Better help.** It's easier to navigate, integrates information from the Microsoft Knowledge Base, and includes links to a number of diagnostic tools. (Of course, it doesn't have all the answers. You still need our book!)

There are dozens of other enhancements—built-in CD burning, built-in ZIP file support, Windows Media Player, Movie Maker, etc. etc.—but those listed above are the ones that I personally find useful.

What's Wrong with XP? Not Much

What's wrong with Windows XP; we promised to talk about "what bites," but some felt we didn't deliver. That's because there really isn't much I don't like; here's my full list:

- **Windows product activation (WPA).** I dislike it on principle, but in practice it's not a problem for me or for most users. It's anonymous, and it's a one-time

operation that involves clicking Next a few times to get through a wizard—and then you never think about it again. Windows does NOT phone home on its own at any time to confirm your activation status, as has been reported. But as Ed mentioned, it's a classic Microsoft version 1.0 product.

If you want to avoid activation altogether, get XP preinstalled on your next computer from a major OEM vendor like Dell. Those versions of XP do not have product activation, so it'll never kick in when you change a number of components in your system—one of the major flaws in the current implementation. You should be aware, however, that Windows XP versions from major manufacturers are linked to the system BIOS—which means, for example, that you can't take the Windows XP CD that comes with your Dell and install it on a Gateway or a white box system.

- Price. Now that MS is enforcing the one copy/one machine limitation (it's always been part of the license agreement, but they've never had a way to prevent people from copying to all machines until WPA), I think the price—at least for copies after the first one—should be significantly lower, say \$50-75 for Home, twice that for Pro. OTOH, it is a pretty good value, even at \$100/\$200.
- Messenger and Passport in your face. I use them constantly, so it doesn't bother me that they always start. But I'd be frustrated if I *didn't* want to use them and discovered how difficult it is to vanquish them.
- UI is too chummy in some respects. Wizards have replaced some dialog boxes, advanced options are now further buried, etc. As a power user who knows his way around, these slow me down. Fortunately,

there aren't many of these impediments in the areas that I use frequently.

- Support for "legacy" hardware. Some people mentioned HP products in particular, but there are a number of unsupported products that are not that old. Microsoft has always left device driver development to hardware manufacturers, and it supplies plenty of support to manufacturers. It's clearly in Microsoft's best interest to have all hardware supported.

Manufacturers, however, don't have any incentive (other than the



wrath heaped on them by disgruntled customers) to provide drivers for discontinued products; they'd prefer that you buy their latest and greatest. Regardless of whose fault it is, it's a real problem that affects all of us consumers.

- Networking. It's a little difficult to set up a mixed network—one with Windows XP and Windows 9x workstations. (But it's not impossible, and the steps to successful networking are fully documented in our book!) Windows XP Home Edition uses only the Simple File Sharing model, which is indeed simple, but also somewhat inflexible. You can set up a folder to be private (so that only your user account can access it, either when logged on locally or over the network) or you can share it with everyone. But you can't, for example, easily set up a shared folder that you and your spouse can

access but your kids cannot. (As we mentioned, there is a workaround—detailed in the book—that lets you set up more complex security arrangements using Safe Mode.)

Which Version is Best for You?

Home Edition or Professional? The essential differences are these:

- You can't use Remote Desktop to connect to a computer running Home Edition. (Btw, the computer you connect from can be running any version of Windows 9x/NT/2000/XP.) You can, however, use Remote Assistance to connect to a Home Edition computer.
- You can't use Home Edition on a multiprocessor system.
- With Home Edition, your computer can't join a Windows NT/2000 domain. (You can, however, use all domain resources if you have a domain user account.)
- With Home Edition, you're essentially stuck with Simple File Sharing. You can share/protect only at the folder level, and you can only make a folder private or share it with everyone. The Windows 2000 security model that's available in Professional offers granular security control that lets you assign specific types of access to specific users for specific files. (Most home user won't need this level of control.)
- If you install Professional now, you won't be able to upgrade to the Home Edition of the next version of Windows, so you'll pay an extra \$100 now and again the next time you upgrade Windows.

Pro includes everything that's in Home. If you're unsure about which to get (that is, the points above don't seem to apply to you), try Home Edition. Worst case: you later decide

to upgrade to Pro. The Home Edition-to-Professional upgrade is \$125, so you're only out an additional \$25 compared to purchasing Pro initially.

You can find Microsoft's advice on this choice at

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/choosing.asp>

What's the Bottom line?

If you're buying a new computer, get XP. (Before you do that, however, run the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor on your current system. Be sure that any software or peripherals you plan to use with your new system will work with XP, or can be inexpensively upgraded.) Don't fret too much about the learning curve for a new OS and its new features; nearly everything you know about your current system can be applied to Windows XP, and you can learn about the new features as you need them.

If you're using Windows 9x AND if your computer has the horsepower (practical minimum: 300 MHz processor, 128 MB RAM, 1.5 GB

free disk space) and is compatible (run the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor), strongly consider upgrading to XP.

If you're using Windows 2000 and you're happy with it, hold off on upgrading until you get your next computer. If one of the nifty features like Remote Desktop, Remote Assistance, or digital photo support would make your life easier, pop for XP now.

I've decided that XP Professional is right for my newest systems (the rest run Windows 2000), but I don't mean to suggest that it's right for everyone. Besides, Ed and I have written books about earlier versions of Windows too. We'd be just as happy if you bought one of those books. :-)

Get Some Help

Here are a few URLs that'll help you with the upgrade:

Microsoft Product Lifecycle: This site tells you when support dries up for each version of Windows.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/lifecycle.asp>

Windows XP Upgrade Advisor: The program available at this site checks your computer for hardware and software that may be incompatible with Windows XP. When available, it includes links to upgrade information for the incompatible components.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/upgrading/advisor.asp>

Copyright © 2001 by Carl Siechert. Reproduced with permission. Article reproduction coordinated by Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group. Reaching Ed Bott and Carl Siechert is easy. Ed's site is

<http://www.bott.com>

and Carl's company site is

<http://www.swdocs.com>

Discussions, links, tips, and other good things are at

<http://communities.msn.com/WindowsXPInsideOut>

and, as you'd expect, at each site you'll find links for ordering the book online.

REVIEW

What's this? Quicken 2002 Deluxe?

By Max Lockie

You might say, "Why does Intuit need to upgrade its outstanding product again? It seems like it was only last year that Quicken 2001 came out. It vastly improved many areas over Quicken 2000—particularly in the area of the Tax Planner and the Account Overview Pages.

I received from Matt and Richard (Quicken evangelists) a copy of Quicken 2002 Deluxe along with a sample database that I used for this article. I look forward to moving our own family finances to Quicken 2002.

This year, some of the over a dozen major improvements are in the area of Investments, Taxes, Reconciliation and Budgeting.



Budgeting is always a difficult issue. Now Quicken 2002 has the ability to set up multiple budgets. No, this is not one budget for normal and a second if you win the Lottery. This might be one if your child or grandchild goes to USC and the other budget for Orange Coast College attendance. Budgets can be automatically based on past

Continued next page

transactions or can be built from scratch. The new capability allows for easy modification of the budgets.

Also updated is the “My Finances” setup screen, which is the heart of the new, easier setup process in Quicken 2002. Here you will find it easy to select the items to be watched as your financial life moves along.

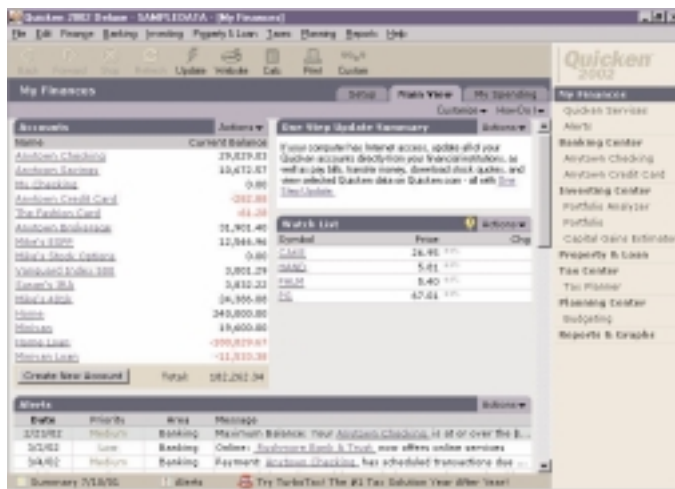
Another newly improved item is the “Never Miss a Bill.” Here Quicken finds past repeated bills that you have entered and can alert you when these bills are due. Needless to say, Quicken can download your account information from many banks, credit card companies and brokerage houses.

Another new service is Automatic Categorization. Quicken recognizes thousands of company names and

automatically categorizes a transaction. I am not yet sure if this is what I want but it sure is a good start.

Finally, several new investment features have been included. Three of the features are the addition of the Portfolio Analyzer, The Tax Implications View in the Portfolio View and the ability to track more types of investments such as IRAs, Employee Stock Purchase Plans, individual bonds and short sales.

After all of this, I look forward to bring information down to my Palm



Pilot. As I understand it, this is a subset of Quicken but should put at my fingertips a lot of information.

Next month, I hope to report on the “Home & Business” features of Quicken 2002 Deluxe.

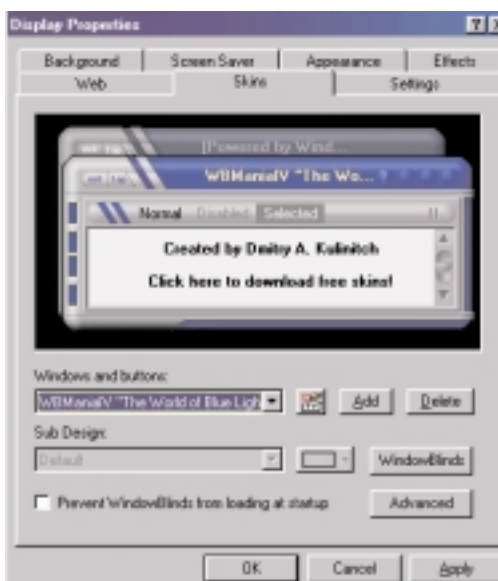
WINDOWBLINDS

Continued from page 5

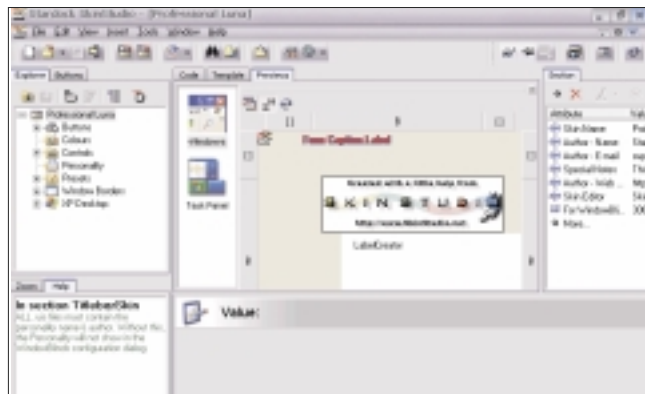
So Microsoft Word could have its own unique look.

With compound skins, a used skin can have several different versions of itself included. Skins that support dynamic colorizing in Windows XP allow the user to change the color of the skin. Windows itself allows the user up to three color options. WindowBlinds allows the user to pick from up to 16.8 million colors to apply to the skin. WindowBlinds costs \$19.95. You can download a free 30-day trial version from their home web site

<http://www.stardock.com>.



If you like it and want to try making some skins of your own, download the SkinStudio program. You can make your own for any version of Windows. You can even import parts of other skins so you don't have to start over with everything. Authors can associate sounds with different actions. For example when you click the close button it will play a certain wave file. It costs \$19.95 also.



March 9 – 9 a.m. to 12 noon Orange Coast College Science Building Room #149

Rudy Wolf is going to show you how he does the backup for his computer. He/we will give you tips on how to do backups for yours. During the last 30 minutes we will give you tips on how to prevent a computer crash.

Pig SIG: We will go to a different place—the China Olive restaurant at 3420 S. Bristol, just above South Coast Plaza. Bob and Bev Blakely have eaten there and said it was good food and reasonable prices. So we'll try it!



P. O. Box 9274
Newport Beach, CA 92658

