

WINNERS

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July 2002

Vote pad



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Bits & Bytes & Xp

By Siles Bazerman



After seeing a demonstration of System Mechanic by Iolo at a recent Winners meeting, I bought a copy. It installed and functioned properly in Windows Xp, especially after I downloaded the additional updates on the Iolo web site.

Do not make the mistake of thinking the retail package is always the most up-to-date version of the program you purchased. You have no way of knowing when it was packed at the manufacturer, how long it sat before being shipped to the distributor, or how long until it went to the retail outlet. You do not even know how long it sat on the retail shelf. Always check at the software company's web site for any updates, patches, fixes or additional information after installing the program.

Back to System Mechanic. This is a suite of maintenance programs which work in Windows, including Windows Xp. I purchased the package at the club users price and, therefore, do not owe Iolo a favorable report.

After using the programs included in this package for about two weeks, I removed Norton System Works 2002 from my computer. The only thing I left on was Norton AntiVirus (NAV).

I haven't used parts of the System Works suite in years. I have never used System Doctor, finding it a memory hog and troublemaker. It has a tendency to create zero bit files repeatedly. Some systems have reported thousands of such files. I have not used CleanSweep uninstaller in Windows Xp, as Microsoft has done an excellent job with the built-in one. Also, the install programs of software certified for Xp are now almost 100% compliant with it and leave just about no leftovers.

System Mechanic has a small footprint, does not run in the background, except for the task scheduler. It runs those maintenance tasks you desire on your schedule, usually at boot up. I use it to remove junk and obsolete files, and to clean out invalid registry items. If it had a disk defragger it would be perfect. All the other programs have been used and have not created any problems and have helped me avoid a few.

For defragging I use Perfect Disk by Raxco. This has replaced Norton Speed Disk, my long-time favorite. I chose this over the other five or six defraggers I tried for a number of reasons. It is the only one I found that will defrag my system files and page file at boot up before I enter Windows. I have tried Speed Disk, Microsoft's built in defragger, Diskeeper, Vopt, and a few

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Parenting in Cyberspace

Let's protect kids without cutting them off from technology

Posted June 17, 2002

Now that school's out for summer, millions of children have more free time to be with friends, pursue hobbies, listen to music, play electronic games—and explore technology.

In fact, today's kids can do all of the above simultaneously. Using a PC, many young people exchange instant messages, surf their favorite Web sites and blast their Ashanti CD, even while they perform heroic feats in an online game.

Technology opens new vistas for today's children, who have grown up with PCs as an integral part of their everyday lives. And not just for

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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	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Internet	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Novell, NT & Networking	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	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 July 13 Orange Coast College 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon in Science Room #149

PowerQuest - Gene Barlow

See page 3 for more details

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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.

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Website: <http://windowsusers.org>

FUTURE MEETING DATES

- ★ July 13
- ★ August 10
- ★ September 14
- ★ October 12

shareware ones that I disliked so much I can't even remember their names.

Ad-Aware by Lavasoft has been upgraded and also so has the Refupdate program which will download and install the signature files. The signature files have been updated almost weekly in the past few months. It seems that there is an intense race between Lavasoft and the other spyware blockers and the spyware creators. The worst offenders for spyware are KaZaa and Gator. Real Networks also seems to want to spy on us.

Zone Labs has updated both the free version of Zone Alarm and the Pro version. The Pro will block third-party cookies, but can be defaulted to accept those you want. System Mechanic can also be set to delete cookies, or keep only those you desire.

Service Pack 1 (SP1) for Windows Xp is scheduled to be released in the August-September time frame. However, we know Microsoft's record of missing release dates. It is in Beta now.

President's Message

Just a few quick notes. We have a new web site address that fits our name. You can now go to

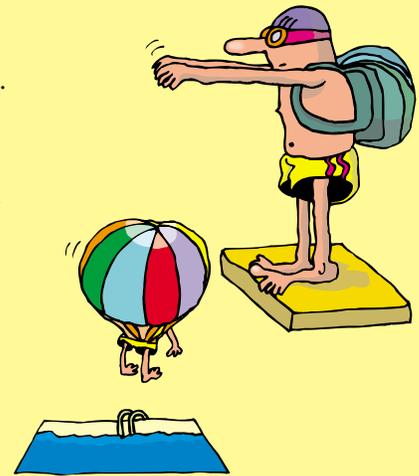
<http://www.windowsusers.org>

or you can cheat and not type the w3 as in

<http://windowsusers.org>

Either way will get you there.

The Margolins are going to have a pool party and you're all invited (at least all of you in the Southern California area.) It will be on August 8; more information will be given out at the meeting and a you will receive an email.



Lastly, I finally got around to installing Windows XP last weekend for my notebook. I don't honestly know if I will keep it on. My HP scanner will work with the XP software. However, my all-in-one HP laser-fax-scanner printer will print but not scan. I downloaded a patch which only worked on the printing. I figured I will try re-installing the software. My question is: Why is it I can find every other CD, including 4 CDs of AOL of differing versions, but not the CD for installing. Oh—I found the one for a Mac, but not the original one for my IBM. Just the way it goes with computers.

Terry

General Meeting July 13

We get to have the Barlows back talking and tutoring us on how the best to setup our hard drives. They will show us the great PowerQuest programs, as well as some AccessData programs. Remember they sell the programs at the meeting at a discount so you can get it right away.

PartitionMagic V7. The world's leading hard-drive partitioning software for desktop systems allows you to safely and easily create, resize and merge partitions on your hard drive without destroying data. PartitionMagic helps organize and protect your data, run multiple operating systems, convert file system types and fix partition table errors.

Drive Image 2002: Allows you to quickly and easily clone important hard disk data. With the click of a button, you can back up, restore or upgrade your hard disk. Drive Image 2002's proven and award-winning technology provides step-by-step guides to help you easily back up important files to several drive types.

DriveCopy V4: The affordable solution to safely and easily copy your old hard drive to a new hard drive in minutes instead of hours. With DriveCopy 4.0, upgrading the hard drive in your Windows or Linux system is quick and easy. DriveCopy allows you to easily copy the entire contents of your old hard drive to your new one.

AccessData products

SecureClean V3: For anyone trying to delete sensitive documents or personal information, Windows simply does not do the job. SecureClean solves these security problems by removing the deleted data, files, and folders you specify—quickly, easily, and permanently — everything else on your computer remains safe and untouched.

WipeDrive: Are you aware that when you delete a file, format a disk, or partition a hard drive, your data has not been removed? By using WipeDrive, you can securely overwrite and remove ALL of your data giving you the peace of mind you deserve.

PARENTING IN CYBERSPACE

Continued from page 1

summertime entertainment. At home and in millions of classrooms around the world, students use computers and the Internet to gather information, stimulate their thinking and make learning more fun.

But not all Web content is appropriate for young people, and kids' privacy—even their safety—can be endangered if they are not cautious when interacting with strangers online. Protecting children as they learn to use technology is a vital concern to everyone.

A new study by the National Research Council concludes that the best protection comes from parents and other caregivers. The NRC report, *Youth, Pornography and the Internet*, likens protecting kids online to keeping them safe around swimming pools. Fences, alarms and locks can help, but they are no substitute for adults teaching children to swim, and to swim safely. Education, at home as well as at school, can be the most effective way to protect kids using technology, too.

That new laws will not suffice was made clear again this month when a panel of federal judges unanimously struck down a law that required libraries to filter Internet content for material harmful to minors. Two previous federal laws intended to protect children from online pornography also ran afoul of free-speech protections in the First Amendment.

Software tools can provide a measure of protection. For example, Microsoft Internet Explorer offers a Content Advisor option that blocks access to sites based on a multilevel labeling system for language, nudity, sex and violence. Similarly, the Xbox video game system enables adults to “lock out” games they consider inappropriate.

Microsoft is working to develop more advanced content-filtering software for protecting children and for other purposes, such as blocking junk e-mail. We also work closely with other industry leaders on innovations in child protection technologies, but this progress could be threatened if the government were to mandate the use of a particular technology based solely on what's possible today.

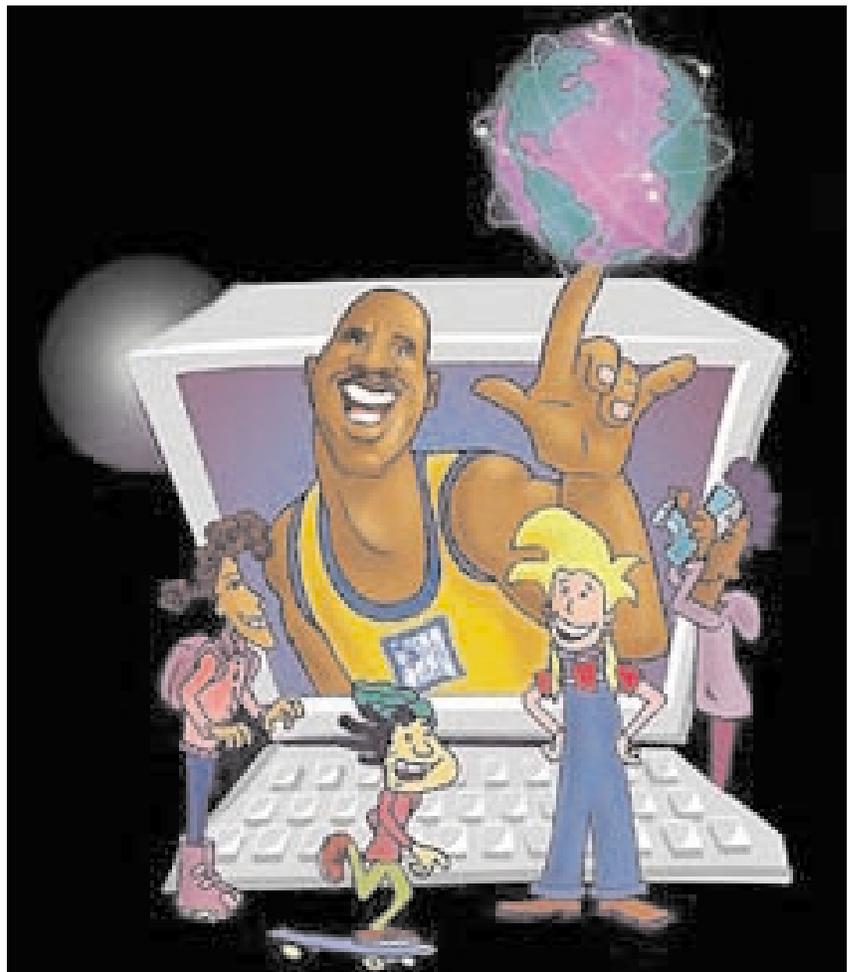
Ultimately, there is no substitute for adults teaching children a few basic rules—for instance, to tell an adult if they encounter inappropriate online content, and to never disclose personal information to strangers online. Many helpful resources are

featuring NBA star Shaquille O'Neal. It's available at <http://www.staysafeonline.com>.

Microsoft also cooperates with other industry leaders in an online resource center for parents and caregivers at <http://www.getnetwise.org>.

There, they can find safety tips, links to Web sites for kids, a guide to Internet safety products and instructions for reporting problems to authorities.

Working together, we can protect children as they use technology to realize their full potential throughout their many summers to come.



available on the Internet. For example, Microsoft has worked with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America to develop Stay Safe Online, an interactive instructional program

WinTasks 4 Professional

From Liutilities

By Terry Currier

In January, I did a review of WinTasks 2000. WinTasks 4 Professional is their latest version. It does everything better by giving you more details about the process. Bringing up WinTasks shows how many processes (programs) you have running, how much memory is in use, and CPU usage. Same as before, but now it shows even more information about the processes running. For instance, click on a process, then click on modules, and it tells you what other processes are working with, or using, that process. A DLL in Windows is a program part that is dynamically linked during the execution of a program, when needed. DLLs are often used for sharing program code by several different programs. With WinTasks, it is possible to find out which DLLs are used by a specific process.

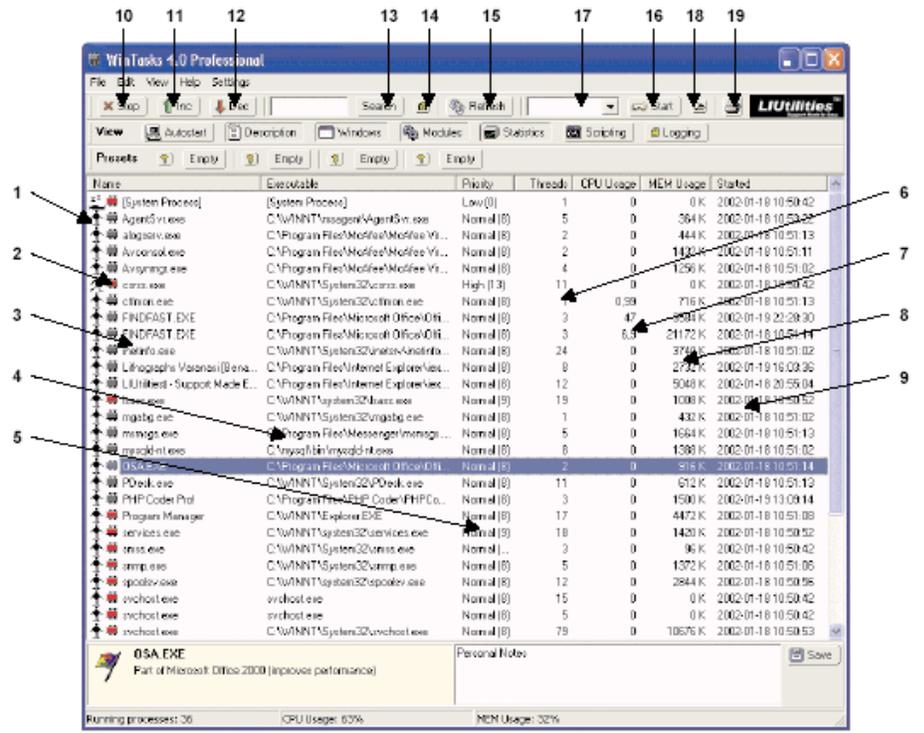
Below is the opening screen from WinTasks, and description from

Name	Executable
ADVAPI32.DLL	ADVAPI32.DLL
COMCTL32.DLL	COMCTL32.DLL
COMDLG32.DLL	COMDLG32.DLL
DDRAW.DLL	DDRAW.DLL
GDI32.DLL	GDI32.DLL
KERNEL32.DLL	KERNEL32.DLL
LTFIL10N.DLL	LTFIL10N.DLL
LTKRN10N.DLL	LTKRN10N.DLL
NTDLL.DLL	NTDLL.DLL
OLE32.DLL	OLE32.DLL
OLEAUT32.DLL	OLEAUT32.DLL
SHELL32.DLL	SHELL32.DLL
SHLWAPI.DLL	SHLWAPI.DLL
USER32.DLL	USER32.DLL
VERSION.DLL	VERSION.DLL
WINSPOOL.DRV	WINSPOOL.DRV

within the help manual in PDF format. It can show the different options or things available to the user better than I can.

the functioning of the operative system (red) or if it is a normal process (black).

- **Process name:** (3) shows the



In the main window a list is shown of the processes that are running on the computer.

- **Process icons:**

(1) shows an icon that describes the priority of the process. The four different levels of priority (*low, nor-*

mal, high and real-time), are represented by four different icons. (2) shows whether the process is important for

name of the process. The name is most often the name of the executable. If the program has a visible main window, the name is instead the title given to the main window. Notice how I have this document open and where it started from. By clicking on a selected process a second time, the process can be given a user defined and more descriptive title.

- **Executable:** (4) shows where the program is stored meaning that the complete search path for the program is displayed.
- **Priority:** (5) shows the priority level for a process.

- **Threads:** (6) shows the number of threads per process (not supported in Windows NT).
- **CPU Usage:** (7) shows the process' use of the CPU in percent (0-100) (not supported in Windows 98).
- **MEM Usage:** (8) shows how much of the internal memory the process is using (not supported in Windows 98).
- **Started:** (9) shows when a process was initiated.
- **Stop process:** (10) is used to stop one or more of the selected processes.

Note: Where it mentions CPU and Memory usage is not supported, they are talking about for each process. It does give a CPU and Memory report on the bottom bar. For Windows 2000 and XP it works and you can even sort by memory use.

So what (again) can you do with WinTask? You can have it give a greater priority for your defragging so it will actually finish without so many interruptions. Burn CDs by giving the software a high priority and you won't be making so many coasters.

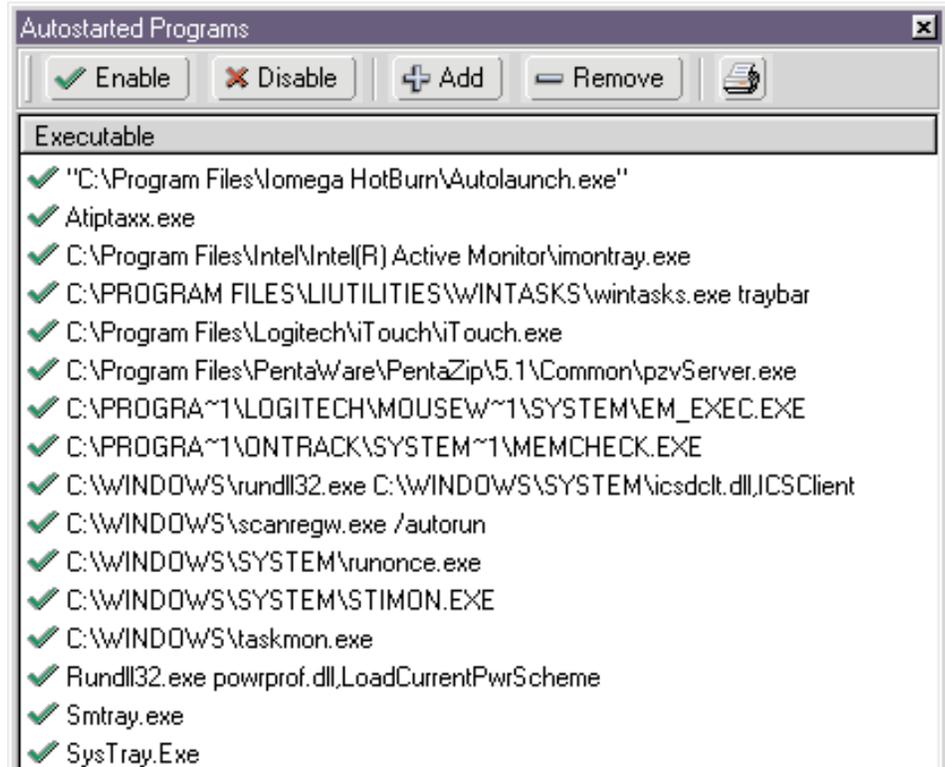
New features also include autostart. Click on it, and WinTasks displays the programs that automatically load when you startup your computer. From there you can disable the program so it won't start, add another program, or remove it. The add and remove function works directly with the Windows registry.

Statistics

The statistics window shows CPU use and how the internal memory is used. The information

is shown for the selected process (green) and for the whole system (blue). The information is

continuously updated even when the statistics window or WinTasks are minimized. By



moving the mouse over one of the graphs, it is possible to read the time as well as the value for the CPU utilization and memory use for a position/time. Note the spike in CPU usage? That is when I started up another program.

WinTasks keeps a log of programs that are started and stopped. This makes it easy for you to experiment the best ways to recover memory.

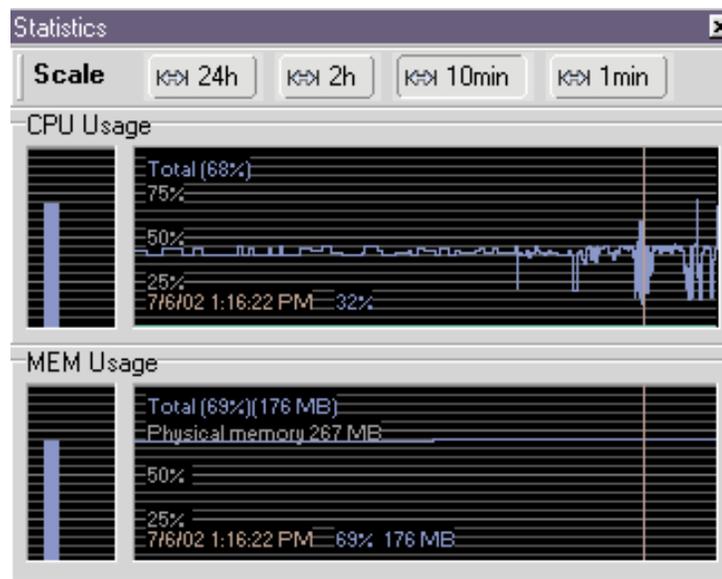
If you want to better the performance of your computer

WinTasks is a great place to start. You can download it for \$37 (US), get a boxed version for \$57, and, if you have a previous version, you can get it for \$25. The Standard version is \$20 less. Check their web site, sometimes they have discounts of \$10 off. If you would like to try it out you can download a 30-day trial version from

<http://www.tucows.com>

(not the Professional version). Make sure you type in the full name of Wintasks—there is another program called wintask for automating tasks

on the computer.
<http://www.liutilities.com>
 or call (800) 903-4152



System Requirements

Windows 98,
 Windows NT,
 Windows 2000 or
 Windows XP
 10 MB free hard disc
 capacity
 32 MB RAM
 Pentium 200 MHz or
 higher

Art & Commerce in the Digital Decade

Protecting intellectual property will take cooperation and innovation

Posted June 3, 2002

The brief but dramatic history of Napster and other file-sharing services underscores an important legal and policy challenge posed by the Internet: how to protect intellectual property in the digital age.

At stake is the continued growth of the digital economy. Copyright holders—authors, musicians, filmmakers, software developers and others—will be able to take full advantage of the Internet as a powerful distribution channel only if their creations are appropriately protected.

The recording industry and movie studios, understandably concerned about the implications of file sharing, have been pressing Congress to act. A bill now before the U.S. Senate could result in the government selecting a specific anti-piracy technology and mandating its use in personal computers and other digital devices.

Piracy is deeply troubling, and the government clearly has an important role in the fight against it. But a government-mandated standard could actually hinder anti-piracy efforts by stifling technical innovation.

As creators of the first digital media, software companies have long understood the value of intellectual property and the need to protect it. Microsoft and others in our industry have invested significantly in building anti-piracy safeguards into software products, yet even today,

software piracy drains an estimated \$12 billion each year from the economy and from thousands of businesses large and small.

Anti-piracy measures are self-defeating if, in tightening security, they impair technology's usefulness or burden users. And even the best security is breakable. It must be improved continuously to stay ahead of hackers.

In fact, the technology industry is continually devising, testing and distributing innovative security solutions to protect all forms of intellectual property. Microsoft has pioneered important advances with our rights-management software for digital media and eBooks.

Microsoft is also working with other leaders in the technology, entertainment and consumer electronics fields to develop new



security capabilities through organizations such as the Copy Protection Technology Working Group.

These cooperative efforts are making vital progress. For instance, critical standards for interoperability—the means for different digital rights management systems to work together—have

recently been specified by the Moving Pictures Expert Group.

Meanwhile, some ideas advanced by the entertainment industry could have unintended consequences. One concept would require computers and other devices to inspect every bit of incoming content—every file, every e-mail—for digital “watermarks” that indicate copyrighted material. Potentially an invasion of users’ privacy, this measure would also slow the processing of data communications.

A more effective solution would be for entertainment companies to invest in digital distribution. Few companies have made much content available online, yet the popularity of file sharing among music fans suggests that the market is large. Making legitimate content available easily and affordable would help to counter the illegal supply.

Some file swappers may be ill informed about what constitutes a copyright violation and why it hurts the very artists whose work they enjoy. Industry-sponsored public education would help curb theft that, on the surface, might seem harmless.

The discussion of how best to protect digital content should not pit one set of copyright holders against another. We all share the same long-term interests in finding digital rights solutions that both protect intellectual property and work easily and flexibly for consumers.

Microsoft is committed to continuing the dialogue and to working constructively with all stakeholders. Our collective progress will benefit everyone—consumers most of all.

Windows XP: As Good as it Gets

Bass discovers few crashes, great performance, and a minimum of headaches with XP Pro

By Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group

Kvetching about an operating system is therapeutic. Believe me, I've done lots, saving regular visits to my shrink. But my complaining has almost bottomed out since I made the full-time switch to Windows XP Pro.

You caught that, right? I said almost. The reason is that even though I'm wildly pleased with XP, there are still a few features—and loose ends—I don't like. I'll describe a few of them in this and subsequent columns, and show you how XP has built-in ways to make the changes. (Of course, that's one of my primary kvetches—finding the spots to modify XP isn't obvious and requires digging.)

To play fair, I have to warn you that I'll also do some proselytizing. I'm going to do my best to win you over, so to speak, for your own good. That's because once you get over the hassle of Product Activation, and Microsoft's annoying single license policy, I really think your computing experience will increase substantially.

I need another soapbox minute or two. Many of the *PC World* letters I receive complain, sometimes bitterly, of a Microsoft conspiracy to force you into upgrading your system. Readers go on to say that in order to use XP, they'll need to replace some of their devices (printers seem to be the first ones not to work), or stop using old, 16-bit programs written for Win 95.

I'll concede and agree with many of the readers that Microsoft should have done a better job with previous Windows versions; then we wouldn't be stuck in the corner having to upgrade.

But the reality is that if you want a slick operating system, one that's likely to make your computing day smoother and your workday more productive, you'll have to upgrade. [Set Soapbox to Off].

No More Stinkin' Crashes

You probably know that XP is a pretty interface hung on Windows 2000's architecture, so it resists crashes extraordinarily well. That's true for XP but not necessarily for programs that still plow headfirst into the bit bucket. For instance, Eudora, my e-mail program, locks up when I try embedding what it considers a too-large image into a message. And Internet Explorer also has a way of choking and freezing on some sites, doing its best to imitate a deer in headlights.

With Win 9x, the Eudora and IE crash could bring the system down; even if it didn't, I'd reboot to clear out any leftover holes in memory. Win XP contains the crash and stops it from contaminating the rest of the system. Using Control - Alt - Delete, the three-finger, soft-boot salute, calls up Task manager, one of XP's shining lights. Click on the toasted app and it's history.

Crash Reports? No, Thanks

Of course, with Microsoft at the helm, nothing as cool as Task Manager's handling of a crash can be left alone. Microsoft insists on meddling by sending itself the details of the crash. No doubt, the crash report does provide clues,



often vital ones that you can review, to explain why a program crashes.

But once I've looked at a report—say, Eudora's `paige32.dll` bug that Qualcomm won't fix—I'm no longer interested in seeing it pop up. So I've turned parts of the feature off. (From Start, Control Panel, Advanced tab, Error Reporting.) This dialog gives me choices, and they're good ones. I can get the report but not send it, opt to hear only about programs or XP's errors, or even add specific programs to watch.

Zap, You're Restored

GoBack was the first successful utility to save snapshots of a PC's hard drive and let you restore the drive to a time when things were running well. It shouldn't surprise you to see a similar feature in Windows XP. Roxio's GoBack, \$40, download at <http://www.roxio.com>

Quick aside: Many of Microsoft's niftier features are from the brain trusts of third-party companies. Woody, creator of dozens of Office, and specifically Word, add-ons, said that to me in a private e-mail recently. More in another column.

XP's System Restore does just about everything GoBack does, just not as well. Nonetheless, it's an improvement over the way it worked in Windows ME, and a handy tool. I create a Restore point just before installing a new application. If the installation goes kablooey, I use System Restore to jump five minutes into the past and get my system going again.

I use it so often, I pinned it onto my Start Menu for easy access. Try it: Find System Restore in All Programs, Accessories, System Tools and right mouse click on the icon and choose Pin on Start menu. Easy, no?

System Restore's Problems

The problem? System Restore isn't perfect. While I haven't had a problem in the 25 times I've used it, some reports on the Internet talk about DLLs that should be gone after a System Restore, are still on the system.

One thing Microsoft doesn't tell you is that each Restore Point (and system checkpoints, those restore points XP does automatically) takes up disk space.

You can dump all but the last system point by using XP's Disk Cleanup tool. Open Disk Cleanup, by clicking Start, choose All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, select Disk Cleanup, and choose the More Options tab. (Shortcut: From Start, Run, type cleanmgr.)

In the next series of columns, I'll show you other features built into XP that can keep you focused on productivity rather than rebooting two or three times a day or recovering from crashes.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with *PC World* and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Check PCW's current edition at <http://www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp>

http://www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.

Ten Years Ago

A look back at a column that deals with the transition to Windows in 1992. The title: "The Ongoing Windows Dilemma"

By Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group

If you're like many computer users, you're gradually making the switch to Windows. You've abandoned some of your DOS applications and forced others to work in Windows and maybe even found some neat replacements that are designed for Windows.

If you play around with a few Windows applications, the advantages are easy to see. To begin with, Windows applications all adhere to the same basic interface. That means once you've grown accustomed to clicking the mouse on the File portion of the menu in one application—for example, to Save, Open, or Print a file—you'll discover it's in the same place on all Windows applications. That reduces the learning curve on new applications and, well, just makes each product easier to use.

From Here to There

You'll also find out how easy it is to transfer data from one Windows application to another. That's because all Windows products—as opposed to DOS programs—are generally made to work in the same way thereby allowing them to share data. And because Windows is a graphical environment, it means you can easily see things on the screen just as they'll look when you print them out.

Some adjustments, however, are harder to make. Because I come from a DOS environment, I rarely used the

mouse. Unfortunately, Windows word processing programs are notorious in their attempt to make me use the rodent. When I write, as opposed to working in a spreadsheet, I like to keep my fingers on the keyboard. So along with learning to use the mouse, I've searched out keyboard alternatives to mouse clicks.

It's not that difficult, but, as you may have discovered, not always a slick solution. Especially if you're used to a series of DOS keystrokes.

To get around the problem, I've taken advantage of the macro function of most Windows programs. A macro gives me the ability to assign numerous keystrokes to one or two key combinations, easily duplicating keystrokes from my old DOS programs. Now I know you're going to laugh but the first Word for Windows macro I created was CTRL-T.

1-2-3...Quattro

Borland's Quattro Pro for Windows, the star of Windows spreadsheet programs, took a bold, but obvious, step in making the mouse more useful. If you've highlighted a spreadsheet cell and click on the right mouse button, for example, you'll get a dialogue box allowing you to modify the properties within that cell. Pretty bright. Not only that, as you scroll across QP/WIN's Speedbar, a brief description telling you what each icon does appears on the bottom of the screen. Boy, does that help in learning.

Overall, I think the most daunting part of switching to Windows is first facing—and then choosing from—the staggering number of Windows applications on the market.

Continued on page 10

TEN YEARS AGO

Continued from page 9

The problem is they're all solid contenders. (We should always have such problems.) In the last month, for example, I've tried to decide on a word processor. Because of my work with *PC World* (I have to test every user group tip so I've tried lots of software), I've played with Lotus' Ami Pro and Microsoft's Word for Windows. Both products are winners and each has half a dozen features I like.

For example, Ami Pro's Smart Icons—shortcut buttons that help me get to many other features—are a great help with navigating through the program. I can move the icons to just about any location, handy if I'm fiddling with some design at the bottom of the page. Ami Pro's Icons are colorful, something I didn't think was important until I compared it to Word for Windows' monochrome Toolbar.

But wait, Microsoft has some neat things too. Word for Windows' Create Envelope feature lets me address and print an envelope in less time than it takes to lick a stamp. The outlining feature, something I've ignored in stand-alone programs because it was so hard to get to, was addicting. The Page Preview functions in Word for Windows are glorious.

Too bad I can't combine the best features of both and call it BassWord WinPro.

Need a Database?

The one program that I'm still up in the air about is a Windows database.

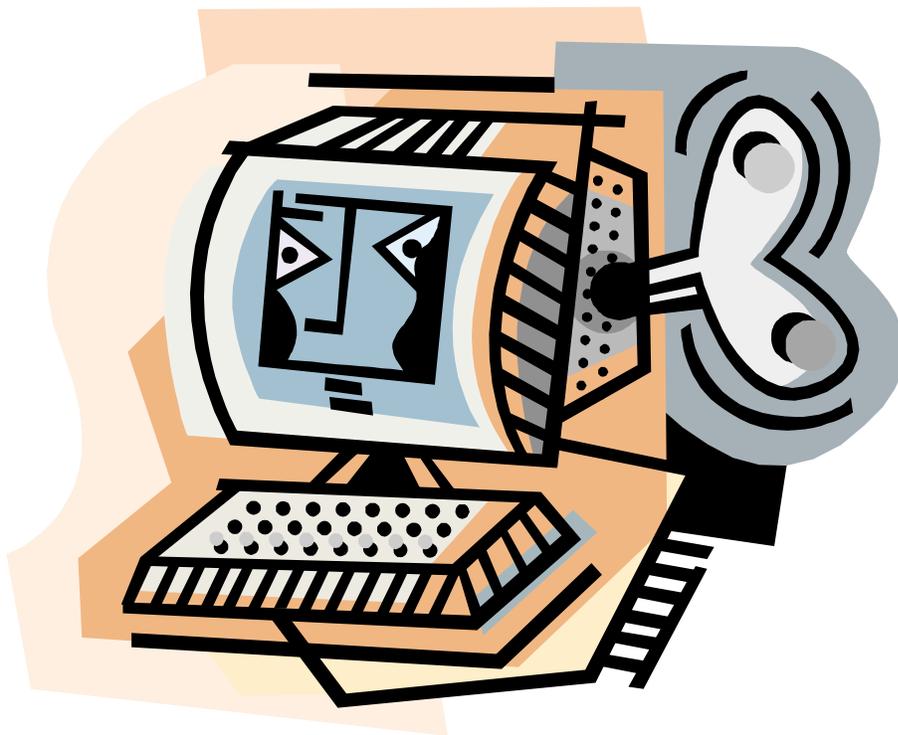
The two software giants are slugging it out, each vying for my attention, trying to get me to buy their database. And if you played your cards right, you cashed in on the ridiculously low prices. I mean, Microsoft's Access for \$99 bucks. It's almost like buying shareware.

Then Borland, with its stock wallowing in the low twenties (it looked like it dropped a point for every day Paradox was delayed), tempts you with user group specials. Paradox for Windows for \$125 and, for another \$55, Quattro for Windows. At the Borland meeting, one guy bought five copies and said he was a commodities broker. Sure, I'll take a hundred pork bellies, a

But I Digress...

Hey, did I get off the subject?

Both Access and Paradox for Windows are great products. Microsoft tempts you with Wizards and Templates while Paradox for Windows mesmerizes you with power, speed and, the best of all, familiarity. You already know Paradox, why learn something new?



bushel of soy beans and a handful of PDX/WIN's.

Look, the prices are low because there's a lot at stake for both companies. Generally, the product you start with is the one you'll stay with because you've spent so much time learning the keystrokes. So if they can get the product into your hands before the other guy, well, you get the picture.

And we're in the catbird seat because they look at user groups members as Influential End Users. They figure that if you buy one and like it—and with any luck use it—you'll likely tell ten other users. Then if you like it and you're MIS, well, they've really hit the jackpot.

So which one are you going to choose? It's the perennial battle, the one you face with every program you see at Egghead.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with *PC World* and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. 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

AOL Scam Alert

from Steve Bass

My mother received recently received a beautifully done AOL scam. It's the kind of thing you read about but rarely get to see firsthand.

The message she received is from the AOL Billing Services Team. She forwarded it to her accounting department—moi—because I pay for her account. (She has me to blame for using AOL, I know.)

It took less than a minute to figure out something wasn't right.

Telltale Clues

For one thing, the e-mail header showed that the AOL Billing Services Team was blind copying her using version AOL 5.0. You'd think they could use a more current version, right? There's more: The return address was Remindingyou@aol.com and the subject line had a misspelling.

I followed the Billing link in the message. At first glance I saw an AOL Welcome box. Take a careful look and you'll know why something's not quite right. Yep, lots of misspellings.

<http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolwelcomescreen.jpg>

I went along with the game plan and clicked OK. Now I was staring into what looked like a remarkably authentic credit card payment form.

<http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolcreditcard.jpg>

Is It Really You?

To make sure it's really you, they also want your Social Security Number, date of birth, driver's license number, and mother's maiden name. With that, the scammers can get to "identity theft" heaven before you shut down your PC for the night.

But they're not finished. How about throwing in your AOL screen

name and password, something even novices know AOL wouldn't do. To add a level of legitimacy, they warn you that, "For your safety, Please do not download any files from strangers. AOL will never ask you to download anything."

Who Is?

I went to <http://www.samspade.org> my favorite Web examination site, and traced the Billing link. It's an obfuscated URL: [Http://www.aol.com-billing:july-2002@072002.hypermart.net](http://www.aol.com-billing:july-2002@072002.hypermart.net)

that leads to <http://072002.hypermart.net>.

(That's because any characters before the @ sign are ignored.) And all it took was a quick web search with Google.com to find locations loaded with other AOL scamming files. I found one at the top of Google's search: <http://kenel.hypermart.net/aol-scam/>

What I did

I contacted Rich D'Amato, one of AOL's security people. I met Rich years ago because of a story I did on AOL. It's been four days and I haven't heard back from him. I also sent a message to abuse@hypermart.net. Nope, I didn't hear from them either. And the site's sill up and running.

What you should do

The best AOL protection strategy is to be alert to constant scams. You know, if it looks like a duck, smells like one, and occasionally quacks, there's a good chance it is one.

If you're unsure about a billing question, it's best to call AOL's billing services directly at 800/827-6364, or their Screen Name/Password line at 888/265-8004.

Here's the message, complete with headers:

Return-path: <Remindingyou@aol.com>

From: Remindingyou@aol.com

Date: Fri, 5 Jul 2002 04:26:47 EDT

Subject: Possible Service Interruption

X-Mailer: AOL 5.0 for Windows sub 138

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Dear Member:

Thank you for choosing America Online. Unfortunately there has been a problem processing your billing information for the month of July, 2002.

Please review our billing requirements at KW: Billing. You will be able to update your billing information quickly and easily using our secure server webform. Please understand that without promptly updating your billing information, your America Online Internet service may be discontinued. To update your billing at this time, please visit our secure server webform by clicking the hyperlink below.

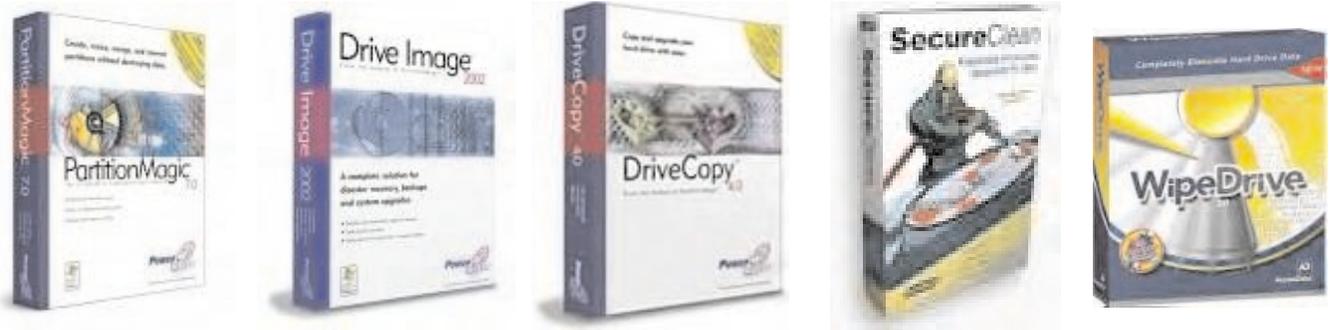
America Online Billing Services.

We appreciate your business and hope to keep you as a customer for life. America Online is so easy, no wonder it's number 1!

Sincerely,

The AOL Billing Services Team

July 13 – 9 a.m. to 12 noon Orange Coast College Science Building Room #149



PowerQuest with the Barlows

Pig Sig: Bangkok Thai Cuisine Restaurant 1969 Harbor Blvd. in Costa Mesa

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