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FEATURING ARTICLES BY COMPUTER CLUB MEMBERS

"GETTING MORE OUT OF YOUR COMPUTER"

Windows 2000 — The best Windows yet!

By Don Poulton (PCCT)

The Microsoft Windows operating system has evolved over the last decade through several versions, each offering a little more than the previous one, but each also containing numerous bugs. I remember my recent experience with Windows 95, where the system would hang on me nearly every day. This was before I began studying the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) course using Windows NT 4.0. While Windows NT 4.0 is much more stable than Windows 95, it is not very friendly for ordinary home users—for example the number of games is limited by the limited extent of hardware it supports, and by the fact that it does not allow direct interaction to hardware, as Windows 95 and 98 do. Neither is it friendly for business people on the road, as it does not support battery-saving features built into notebook computers, among other drawbacks.

Enter Windows 2000. This new system, expected to become fully available by the end of this year, combines the best features of Windows 98 and NT 4.0.

A user version, called Windows 2000 Professional, works with several server versions as well as with existing Windows NT 4.0 servers or can be used in a stand-alone home or small office environment. Unlike Windows NT 4.0, it gets along with

almost any type of hardware that a user may possess (and new device drivers are being written all the time!) Space does not permit me to describe the many new convenient features that this latest Windows version possesses, but a description of my brief experiences with the new system should be strongly convincing.

I have found
Windows 2000
to be very enjoyable
and extremely easy
to use

Shortly after starting my first employment as a MCSE, I purchased a brand-new computer with all the latest bells and whistles. Trying to keep costs down, I transferred a Zip drive from my old computer to my new one. I also configured the new machine to dual-boot Windows 98 and Windows NT 4.0 Server. In addition, I installed the Rogers @home Internet service. After some help from their technicians, I was able to get the Internet going on both operating systems. However, the Zip drive refused to function with either system. Only after help from my

vendor who had to search on the Internet, did I get drivers that allowed the Zip drive to function on both systems. But, on Windows 98, two undesirable things resulted: First, I must ensure that a Zip disk is in the drive before starting Windows 98, or it would not find the drive; in addition, it created a phantom drive that caused an error message at start-up to which I must enter "A" for abort. No amount of searching and tweaking the Registry would change the latter fact.

These were not the only problems. On Windows NT 4.0, the sound card and the Rogers @home network card did not like each other. No sound would play. The Internet connection worked fine, but without sound. If I removed the network card, I could get sound. On trying to get support from my supplier, I was advised to remove the network card to get sound. That, I obviously did not want, so it stayed this way, getting sound only on Windows 98. Also, the new Intellimouse (with the scroll wheel) did not work on NT, only on 98, so I had to use the older serial mouse with NT. There were other problems, including some with installing NT in the first place, but I will not go into any more details.

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When did YOU

last write for read.me?



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OCTOBER 19 MEETING

Sympatico's High Speed Edition

Up until recently those craving a high speed internet connection had to either sign up for the Rogers cable service or possibly pay large fees for a very high speed line connection, if one could get the service. Enter Bell Sympatico's High Speed Edition service, a relatively recent offering that allows for high speed voice and data connection to the internet.

Join Bell presenters, Beth Patterson, Assoc. Director Broadband Development and Frank Chan for a talk that will cover the general technical details, pricing and competitive information about the offering. For those wanting a look at some details of the service before the meeting check out the following website at: www.hse.sympatico.ca.

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General Meeting Tuesday, October 19th, 1999

Admission for non-members – \$5.00

6:30pm: Meet and discuss—your ideas for PCCT with some of our Board members and volunteers.

7:00pm: General Meeting—starts with a Question & Answer session.

The Personal Computer Club of Toronto

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October 19th, 1999

Volume 17, No. 9
ISSN 0848-8983

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The Personal Computer Club Of Toronto (PCCT) is an independent, not-for-profit association for people who use PC microcomputers. Our philosophy: *Users helping Users.*

"read.me" is the newsletter of the PCCT, published 11 times a year, featuring articles by club members and members of other user groups from around the world. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of the PCCT.

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The PCCT does not assume responsibility for damages arising from the publication or non-publication of any advertisement in this newsletter. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement by the club.

Special Interest Groups

The Basics SIG

Leader: Frank Latchford (416) 340-0999

Learning Windows 95/98 SIG. This SIG is intended for those who are new to Windows 95/98. We will discuss how Windows works and how to use it on a daily basis. The intention of this SIG is to teach—not to entertain. We will start at the beginning and go to the end. You should have learned to use some aspect of Windows by the end of the evening.

DayTime SIG

Leader: Bob Matheson (416) 222-4628

This is a discussion group that covers a wide range of topics relating to IBM and compatible computers. It is for novice, intermediate and advanced users.

Digital Imaging SIG

Leader: Ron Caine ron_caine@msn.com

Interested in scanners, photography, digital cameras and the software to run all that? Then this SIG is for you. We will go over all facets of manipulating pixels to give you the results you want.

Investment SIG

Leader: Ken Morgan (416) 491-1932

Analytical techniques, use of spreadsheets, graphical display of investment analysis all play an important part in these meetings. Also, considerable use is made of video training tapes on investment subjects.

Internet SIG

Leader: David Paikin (416) 225-1057

This SIG concentrates on how to access and utilize the various resources of the Internet. If you are having difficulties using the Internet or simply wish to learn more, then this SIG is for you. The first 15 minutes of the SIG are used to answer general communications issues.

Linux SIG

Leader: Avnish (Kash) Kashyap (905) 677-8337

Linux for Beginners, How to Install, Configure, Use and set up a Graphical user interface. It is almost free, robust and reliable. Come on in and have look see.

New Users SIG

Leader: Henry Crane (905) 884-5443

This is a group arranged specifically for novice computer users. It holds informal friendly discussions on the essentials of personal computing. You will get clear concise explanations of computer terms on your personal level of understanding, help with what to learn and how to learn it quickly and cheaply, purchasing, upgrading and problem solving advice that can save you many hours and dollars.

Office SIG

Leader Andy Hagan ad.hagan@sympatico.ca

Learn how to use the Microsoft Office suite of programs: Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Access. A SIG geared to helping small business make effective use of this software.

Visual Basic SIG

Trevor Pedley 416-751-2396

Learn Visual Basic, a popular programming language. This group follows a beginners' level text with a structured learning environment. Easily learn sophisticated ways to program applications in the Windows environment by attending this group.

Windows SIG

Leader Steve Rakus src@tth.net

Here is where you can learn how to get and use the maximum from MS Windows. You will enjoy an information-packed, entertaining evening while you learn how to use all the Windows tools, and make Windows run more efficiently on your machine. You can participate in the monthly training session and become an expert user in less than a year. You will learn tips and tricks that will save you hours. You will meet many power users, see the latest Windows products and perhaps win a valuable door prize.



Notes from the Board, September 1999

By Robin Wright, President

A new season, a new start, new challenges. During August the Directors learned of the impending strike in the Mega City which would block access to the Burgundy room for our September general meet-ing. The support materials stored there were removed for safe keeping. An alternate venue was found by Doug Colquhoun, approved and reserved. Fortunately we did not have to change location.

Our long standing agreement for nine SIG meetings each month at the library was affected by a new policy which we heard about during the first week of September. The meeting room must be vacated by 8:30 p.m. The fee structure will change to a significantly higher hourly rate. By the third week of September the SIG's affected had moved to a new location thanks to some quick negotiation by our Facilities Manager Doug Colquhoun. The new location at Beth Torah Synagogue will meet our foreseeable requirements. Public transit is less than a block away, and parking is free.

The parking fee underneath the Burgundy room has risen to \$4.50 for the evening after 6.00 p.m. Attempts to

negotiate a better price have not been successful. Alternative parking is available above ground, and is free on some of the adjacent streets.

The club booth at the fall Computer Fest was well supported. Our members were asked to staff the "Help Desk" although only a few volunteered. As no one responded to Doug Colquhoun's requests for transportation help after tear down, we were fortunate that Jerry Stevens was able to find space in his van in addition to the NEUGC booth that he and his wife had been staffing. Members A.J. Parl and Wilf Olin dis-assembled the booth without previous experience or guidance.

At the Annual General meeting in December the Directors will propose an increase in the number of elected Directors from seven to nine. The division of responsibilities by department has required too much time for each Director. The function of Director is to lead the various departments for which they are responsible, but not necessarily do all the tasks themselves. The greatest challenge is getting members to help even in a small way. For the club activities to continue we all need to be reminded to complete the tasks we have volunteered to do and to do them on time.

We belong to a club, which implies that we all help for the common interest. This is in contrast to clicking the remote control and expecting entertainment to appear before us. If we have to pay for services to be provided we become more like an association with a paid staff. This would require a substantially different organization and financing.

The annual election of Directors will take place during the A.G.M. in December. A nominating committee has been formed, chaired by Craig Faichney. At the time of writing the following Directors will stand for election. Doug Colquhoun, Arthur Robertson and Karl Stanley. Other nominations are welcome, and should be sent to Craig.

During recent terms, directors have been expected to attend all Board meetings, usually held once a month. Attend the monthly General Meeting to be available to members, and to find volunteers for the departments for which they are responsible. Regular communication by e-mail including monthly departmental reports, running sub-committees, and cyber voting. In addition to the SIGs in which they are interested, Directors can expect to spend another hour a week on club duties.

New SIGs, new SIG Leaders, new location. Be sure to attend, and enjoy all that the club has to offer. ♦



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continued from front page

IN NOVEMBER ... a representative from IBM will be on site to give members a look at the newest Aptiva and Thinkpad lines of personal computers. If you are considering a new machine to put under the Christmas tree you'll not want to miss the November meeting!

Panic in Silicon Park

By Craig Faichney,
SIG Co-ordinator

This last month has been very interesting. Not only have we been threatened with a strike, but our number one location for SIG meetings has become rather dictatorial in their demands; no later than 8:30 p.m. which means we'd have meetings of 45 minutes long, and a warning of massive rate increases.

Ahhh, the joys of amalgamation.

So... to stem the tide, Doug Colquhoun stepped into the breach and found us some new digs. Any of the SIGs that were at Maria Schukla Library (YPL) will now be held at Beth Torah Synagogue at 47 Glenbrook Ave. If you refer to the map on the back page, the website (www.pcct.org) or to the insert from last month's *read.me* you'll see the location.

Beth Torah Synagogue has tons of parking in the back.

I hope to see you at the SIGs; same time, new location. ♦

By TTC from the Wilson Station, board the Dufferin bus #29 going South. From the Dufferin Station, board the Dufferin bus #29 going North Customer Service for the TTC Tel: (416) 393-4636

Google—Great Search Engine

By James Bodard,
North Texas PC News



We've all experienced the problem: The automated search engines (like Alta Vista) return 54,321 items "in no particular order" (many of which are porn sites). But the human-indexed search services (like Yahoo) often can't find what you want because they're only able to index a small fraction of the entire Web (since they're human). So you're left with the uneasy (but probably accurate) sense that what you want is out there somewhere ... but you're no closer to finding it.

The truly amazing new solution: A couple of extremely bright guys at Stanford University solved the Web Search Engine Problem once and for all, creating the last search system you will ever need: <http://google.com/>. What's their secret? They use Linux-based Web robots to explore and index the entire Web. But then they determine the QUALITY of each resulting link based upon the QUALITY of the OTHER sites that link INTO that site. So, *the only way* a site can be highly rated, under Google, is

Drop That Pudding!

X-ray scanner technicians at a British airport have been fooled by Christmas puddings, which they cannot tell from Semtex plastic explosive. Many travelers heading away for the holidays from Manchester Airport packed the seasonal fare in their luggage, but the airport's \$23 million baggage

security system has trouble differentiating between the terrorist's plastic explosive and the popular Yuletide dish.

Airport officials insisted that the sophisticated security system was not malfunctioning. "It is designed to detect organic matter and Christmas puddings have unusual density, which alerts the system," an airport spokesman said.

GB of hard disk space and a fast processor. It will be up to each individual to decide whether it is worthwhile. But those who elect to try it will be very pleased at all of its

Pic'O The Month

By Trevelyan [Trev] Beard, PCCT

In this new regular column I'll try to bring you interesting stuff. Some of it might even be useful. There's enough material out there for me to last at least a couple of years and by then they'll have topped up the tank. So here goes ...

Your Fonts—Friends or Foes?

Years ago, when a thing called DOS was known about, I edited a couple of newsletters one for the Graduates Club and another for Pot Pourri (a social club). Content was of course brilliant but it needed dressing up and the careful selection of different fonts made a lot of difference. Even in those days fonts were plentiful, there being hundreds of them in all varieties. I needed a Font Manager. The best I could find was called FontSpec and it served me well. That was then and this is now.

In the intervening years I dropped the program and didn't notice until recently that something terrible was happening—my font file had grown to over 300 and the machine was becoming slower and slower to start up. What had happened was that various programs that I would try out all added a few more fonts to the file. On startup, the machine talks to each font and this takes time. I had long since forgotten what most of the fonts looked like and when I suddenly thought to use something sensational it took too long to make a selection and I would drop the idea.

Then I popped in to Computer City one day and squandered \$9.99 on a CD called Handwriting Fonts "Add Flair to all Your Documents". Now I was in trouble—no way was I going to add 100 new fonts to an overloaded system. Then I remembered FontSpec and phoned to get updated. It seems there are better Font Managers available and FontSpec itself is up from Version 2.3 to 7.6.

Their best model is Fontrax ('they' are called UniTech but more later). It's excellent and worth the \$35 US they ask. You can download it and try it for 30 sessions before you buy.

Fontrax sits as an icon in the Task Tray (bottom right of screen) and when you pop it up you see 20 of your fonts displayed in 'real time'. Now that's a multimedia word I've just invented to mean 'As the font is in real life'. You can scroll down the collection and they all display themselves as 12 pt samples. Very neat! You can click on various screens to do various things such as view the font in different sizes, colours, bold, italic, etc., plus TTF

file number. You can of course print samples in one or two columns and other formats.

But best of all you can organise your fonts into different 'fontpacs', thus making your workday fontpac small and preserve computer resources. Installing and un-installing fonts is a breeze with Fontrax. There is nothing the program won't do and it's only a matter of time before Bill buys it up and makes it part of Windows. But don't wait.

Next favourite is Fontspec V7.2 which is true shareware with no limits to its use other than it will print only one page. Fontspec will do all that Fontrax will except it is a little more awkward to handle. It will create groups of fonts and viewing is 'realtime'. For those members who are 'economically challenged' this is the one to get.

They have another shareware available called FontNamer which allows you to rename a font, good for changing that very fancy scrolly font to "Wedding".

Should you opt to register for any of these, you become eligible for 4 free gifts—Fontlist, Fontgrid, Fonteyes and Fontpack Installer. Good marketing.

Here are the details: www.mytools.com is the website from which you can download this material. The web page is full of ads leading to other font related programs and I spent a pleasant afternoon investigating some of these. If you are after free, unusual fonts, you'll find them here. Phone: 314-770-2770.

Please write and tell Joan you like this column, I like the money <grin> ♦

ViewPrint Pro 32

A superb graphics viewing and handling program
By Joan Latchford (PCCT)

Leafing through old User Group magazines, I came upon a review of a program named VuePrint in the June 1998 issue of Westchester PC news, written by Dan Jerome, reprinted from the Twin Cities PC User Group.

Since a year is a long time in the life of software, I went onto Hamrick Software's website (www.hamrick.com) to download the VuePrint Pro 32 edition, version 7.5.

VuePrint Pro is simplicity itself to operate. Place a shortcut on your desktop for convenience and when you wish to search for a graphic file, click "open" on the file menu and choose any directory on the familiar Explorer-like tree. You can move up and down directory levels till you find the folder that has the graphic files you want to examine.

I keep my graphics sorted into directories according to type, .tif, .jpg, .pcx, and so on. Sometimes I will find an orphan .bmp in with the .tif files looking like a lonely little petunia and it is a pleasure to find that Vueprint will open a mixed batch of files without a hiccough.

You can scan and save files from the File menu in Gif, bmp, pcx, tga, jpg, and tif. formats. Images display instantly with a single click and you can zoom in and out over eighteen levels to a dot the size of a period using your right and left mouse buttons.

You only have to drop down the menus one after another to see the plethora of options available to you, from conversions of six or more graphic file formats to another, options to view your files in slide show format, choose your interval and much, much more. You will have to explore VuePrint's features for yourself to see if it is the answer to your needs.

Previously, I have been using Graphic Workshop Pro for viewing and file conversions. While it offers many more translations from one format to another, it has a confusing learning curve because of its non-standard interface.

VuePrint Pro 32 is Shareware and comes with a fifteen day free trial. While I have yet to explore it fully, I like what I see and feel the registration fee of \$40.00 US is not too much to ask for the convenience it offers for quick and dirty graphic manipulation.

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Exploring Your PC

By Dick Maybach, BCUG BYTES

Knowing how your PC is configured can be important. It was probably delivered already set up, with Windows and some applications installed, and when you turned on the power, magic happened. Sometimes, however, the magic stops, and you may need to know how to set it up. With older PCs, this required you to open the system unit to examine the motherboard and expansion cards because they were configured with switches and jumpers. The advantage of this was that no matter how badly the system crashed, those switches and jumpers wouldn't change. The configuration of modern PCs is largely determined by the BIOS and is stored in a few bytes of non-volatile memory. ("Non-volatile" means that the data doesn't change when you turn off your computer.) The first PCs to employ this technique used Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor (CMOS) memory, since it requires so little power that a small battery could power it for years. Newer computers use other memory devices, but most people still call it CMOS.

You should record the CMOS configuration data, as some problems (for example viruses and operator mistakes) can corrupt it. As your PC boots, it probably displays a message telling you what keys to press to start the BIOS configuration program. Once you see the first screen, try using the Print Screen function (usually by pressing the Shift and Print Screen keys) to print it out. If this doesn't work, you will have to write down the information. The PC hardware manual probably has instructions on how to use the BIOS configuration program. If it does, read it carefully; if it doesn't, be careful. If you inadvertently change something, you may have to take your PC to a shop to get it straightened out.

The main screen on my BIOS (by Award) has the following choices:

```
STANDARD CMOS SETUP
BIOS FEATURES SETUP
POWER MANAGEMENTSETUP
PNP AND PCI SETUP
LOAD BIOS DEFAULTS
SUPERVISOR PASSWORD
USER PASSWORD
IDE HDD AUTO DETECTION
SAVE & EXIT
SETUP EXIT WITHOUT SAVING
```

Yours is probably similar. Some of these choices bring up new screens with more information, and some of them are commands that change the configuration information. We want to look at the first and avoid the second. If you inadvertently do change something, note the EXIT WITHOUT SAVING choice, which will let you discard any changes. As you move through the screens, record the information on each one and keep it in safe place.

STANDARD CMOS SETUP brings up a screen that shows and lets you change the date and time, the hard and floppy disk configurations, the total RAM installed, and the type of video. As on all the screens, there will be terms you don't understand. If your hardware manual doesn't explain them, write them down and take your list to a bookstore. You now have a way to choose a good computer hardware book: pick the one that does the best job of explaining the terms you don't understand.

BIOS FEATURES SETUP brings up a more complex screen. It allows you to turn off the cache memories, determine in which order disks are searched during boot-up, set up ROM shadowing, and set the typematic speeds. Shadowing moves data from ROM to RAM, allowing the programs stored there to operate much faster. Typematic is the feature that repeats letters when you hold down a key.

CHIPSET FEATURES SETUP is even more obscure; you will surely have to consult a good book to understand the terms. Here you can change the timing of the various types of RAM. On my BIOS, this screen also lets you configure, enable, and disable the serial and parallel ports. You will have to do this if, for example, you install an internal modem or set up an infrared link.

POWER MANAGEMENT SETUP lets you configure power saving features, such as turning off the monitor or the hard disk after a period of inactivity. This is more important for laptops than for desktops. Be careful about turning off your hard disk; many programs will fail if the hard disk doesn't respond in

a fairly short time.

PNP AND PCI SETUP is important for proper plug and play operation. If you have expansion cards that aren't plug and play (usually ISA types), you must tell the BIOS about them, otherwise it may assign their addresses and IRQs to other cards. If your internal modem is not plug and play (the usual case) and is installed on COM 2 (again the usual case), you will have to show that IRQ 3 is used by an ISA card.

LOAD BIOS DEFAULTS changes all the parameters to what the BIOS manufacturer thinks are normal. Note that since the BIOS manufacturer is not the company that built your computer, some of these will be wrong. The only time you would choose this is if you are building a new computer or recovering from a disaster and want to get most of the parameters close to where they should be.

SUPERVISOR PASSWORD and **USER PASSWORD** let you require a password to access the BIOS setup screen or to boot the computer, respectively. Most home users don't need either.

IDE HDD AUTO DETECTION sets up the BIOS for your hard disks. Modern disks have the capability of telling a BIOS what their parameters are, and this saves you from having to enter the information.

SAVE & EXIT SETUP and **EXIT WITHOUT SAVING** let you exit the program and resume the boot procedure. Your PC probably differs, but this gives you a good start on exploring it. Store the CMOS information on paper, because if it isn't right you may not be able to boot up. This makes programs that store CMOS data on disk of doubtful usefulness. ♦

What's that—

WINDOWS KEY GOOD FOR...

By Beverly Kurtin, North Texas PC NEWS

Do you have a Windows compatible keyboard? You can tell by just looking at your keyboard. If you have a "flying windows" key between your Control and Alt keys, you have one.

But are the keys good for anything other than just popping up the Start menu? You betcha. Whole bunches of things.

Let's say that you've got four or five applications open and you want to get back to your desktop in a hurry. Press the Windows key (I'll call it the WinKey for the rest of this article) and the letter "M," and in an instant, you're on the desktop. Want to go back to the last application in which you were working? Press Shift + WinKey + M. Ta-daa, you're there!

An alternative is to press the key combo WinKey + D. That is a toggle which will take you to the desktop, pressing the combination a second time takes you back to the application in which you were working. Need the Accessibility Properties box? Just press WinKey + A. WinKey + E takes you to Exploring My Computer, WinKey + F opens the Find dialog box.

WinKey + P allows you to see your printer setup, and WinKey + R brings up the Run dialog box. Finally WinKey + F1 opens Windows Help.

So what about that odd-looking key on the right side of the keyboard, just to the left of the Control key? That's the context menu key. Try pressing your left mouse button. Now press the menu key. Same menu, just a little easier for those of us who like to use keyboard strokes instead of reaching over for the mouse.

Not all of these keyboard combinations may work with all OEM versions of Windows 95. As you're no doubt aware, each computer manufacturer messes around with Windows a bit. This group of keys was tested with a Packard Bell Platinum 4500.

If you happen to use Internet Explorer 4.x, try pressing the WinKey + R. When the Run dialog box appears just type www.whatever.com, press Enter, and IE will launch with that site as its opening page. ♦

I have tested these Tips with WIN98 and they all work with the exception of WinKey + A. Editor.

Conversions Plus V4.6

By Fred Kagel, BCUG BYTES

Conversions Plus by Data Viz has the motto "To convert and use files, no matter where they come from. Instantly."

To wit, that is exactly what the program does. The program is actually a series of utilities. The first of these is an improved version of a file format converter, that I reviewed several years ago. The interface has been snazzied up. The right mouse short-cut menu has been implemented with options to get information on a file, to view a file, to convert a file, or to launch a file. The viewer also lets you print files even if you don't have the program that created the file.

Over sixty different file formats for the both the PC and Macintosh are supported and the conversion goes both ways. Word and Excel, short of Office 2000, are fully supported cross platforms. Wouldn't you know it, I had to pick one that wasn't supported—a Macintosh file created with Claris Works 5.0 on my Dad's iMac. The Conversions Plus program told me that the file type was unsupported for conversion, but identified the type and asked if I wanted information on how to use the file. I had several choices: 1) Tell Dad to save the file as version 4.0 of Claris Works or to save it as another file type common to the PC, 2) Go ahead and read it in Notepad or a word processor as text, better known as the workaround method, or 3) Wait for the company to update a translator for that file type.

A quick check of the website at www.dataviz.com did not reveal any upgrades or additional translators. However, an e-mail response came the next day informing me that version 5.0 of Claris Works "will be added to our translator library on our next release which may be sometime near the end of the summer, possibly the end of the year." The e-mail also confirmed choice #1 above.

All other conversions I tried worked flawlessly. A plus (pun intended) is the improved ability to convert files in batch mode. Also, the built-in file viewer works with word processors, spreadsheets, some databases, and standard graphics files. I say, standard, meaning that it works with the likes of JPG, GIF, EPS, PICT, PCX, TIFF, BMP, and WME. Conversions Plus does not work with fax file formats. The program is a lot easier to use than it used to be.

Application Conversion from iMac to PC: An Appleworks spreadsheet created on the iMac, which had been saved as Claris Works 4.0, had to be converted to Excel 5.0 on the PC side. Otherwise, the Excel '97 conversion was uneditable and menu options were grayed out.

Lest We Forget

Here are some basic answers to your graphics confusion.

by Ken Fermoye, TUGNE

Judging by questions I'm asked regularly, many computer users don't really understand the differences between vector (or object-oriented) images produced by graphics draw programs and bit-mapped (raster) images produced by paint programs. The differences are significant, and knowledge of what they are will help you choose the best tool for a given graphics task. First, a few basic definitions are in order.

Draw programs use mathematical expressions to create objects (lines, curves, circles, squares, etc.) that make up the drawing. Paint programs create an image dot by dot, by turning the pixels that represent each dot on or off. When you draw a line in a program such as Corel Draw, for example, you create a mathematical formula that describes that line and its location. When you draw a line in any paint program, you create a series of dots that make up the line.

Each method has advantages and disadvantages. Draw images are resolution-independent; because of the way they are described, objects are printed at the resolution of the output device, be it a 300-dpi (dots per inch) laser printer or a 1,270 dpi imagesetter. Moreover, they can be made smaller or larger without affecting their quality and sharpness.

The second utility of Conversions Plus is the ability to open "garbage" e-mail: uuencoded, MIME, Binhex, etc. First test was an Uuencoded attachment from a newsgroup. Conversions Plus recognized it, gave me the info, viewed it, and converted it no matter what the file extension was. In this respect, Conversions Plus has an edge over Winzip, which also converts uuencoded files.

With Winzip version 6.3 (the one I currently use), I have to spoon feed it the proper extension.

I wasn't so lucky with my second embedded file from the curse of the Internet, AOHell. However, the pop-up help and instructions told me to copy the file to the clipboard and then convert it. I did that, but Conversions Plus didn't guess that it was an embedded ZIP file and didn't correctly convert it. Oh well, maybe Conversions Plus wouldn't forgive me since I did not make it my default compression program. Could have been my fault, too, because I found the clipboard method kludgy. I'll kludge my own solutions, thank you, but I expect a commercial program to be a click and go-definitely needs to be improved.

The third utility of Conversions Plus was the main attraction for me, the MacOpener. This utility lets you read, write, and format Mac files on floppies (1.44 only) and removable media such as Zip disks. Mac CD-ROMs can also be opened on a PC. All tests worked flawlessly.

Mac formatting on a PC: PC disks had to be unconditionally formatted with the PC format first and then re-formatted with the Mac format. Otherwise, Conversions Plus complained of "invalid media."

As hinted above, Conversions Plus includes yet another compression utility, which I decided not to opt for. While Winzip has been knocked out by the benchmark tests of other compression algorithms, old habits are hard to break. Conversions Plus is a serious must-have utility for anyone working between Mac and PC platforms and is now established in its own right as a PC-only utility. Average retail price is \$100.

PROS: Converts and uses files, no matter where they come from. Instantly and in batch mode; clean interface, simple to use.

CONS: Clipboard conversion is kludgy. Given the resurgence of Mr. Jobs & Co., more timely translator updates are in order.

VERDICT: Definitely a buy if you need it—and you WILL.

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Paint images are created at a given resolution that can't be changed. So an image created at 72- or 300- dpi will print only at that resolution even if the output device is capable of 1,270-dpi or more. Nor can they be made much larger or smaller than originally painted. Blow them up much and paint images become coarse, with obvious "jaggies." Reduce them significantly and the dots merge, making images muddy and indistinct.

Paint image file sizes tend to be much larger than draw image files, though the introduction of compressed image formats such as JPEG and GIF in recent years has reduced this imbalance to some degree. To illustrate size differences, I saved an identical piece of art in several formats; here are their respective sizes:

CGM – 20KB ... JPEG – 45KB TIFF – 46KB ... BMP – 8,974KB!

CGM (Computer Graphic Metafile) is a draw or vector format; the others are bit-mapped formats.

Metafile formats such as CGM, WME, BPS and PostScript basically use draw techniques to create images, but bit-mapped fills can be added to add richness. Programs like Corel Draw, Xara and Adobe Illustrator allow image layering to produce illustration-quality images.

All this made it a no-brainer for desktop publishers to select draw art whenever possible, especially back in the 1980s when much of the paint clip art available was in PCX, native format of Zsoft's PC Paintbrush. It usually was quite low in resolution: 150 and even 72 dpi (the latter to match screen resolution). Many of us preferred the CGM format or, if using a PostScript device, EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) graphics-native or proprietary format of Adobe Illustrator, first

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Web Pages Lost?

Check History In Your PC or Mac Browser: By Ken Fermoye

Your Web browser's history keeps a record of Web pages you've visited recently. If you forgot to bookmark a page you liked, your history can often help you find it again.

To open your history in Microsoft Internet Explorer, click the History button in the toolbar (Windows) or click the Go menu and choose Open History (Mac). In Netscape Communicator, type Ctrl-H (Windows) or Command-H (Mac).

Once the history window appears, double-click a page to view it in your browser. For more Web browser tips, go to www.earthlink.net/internet/web/browsers - A Ken's Korner TidByte

Seattle FilmWorks Adds Sound To Photos Delivered via E-mail

Seattle FilmWorks, a long-time discount photofinisher now largely Internet-based, has joined forces with VStream, a leader in Web-based communications, to bring audio commentary to e-mail-delivered photos. The new service allows FilmWorks customers to add a personal narrative to their photos, using VStream's Internet-based messaging service, Beep.

"This is a marriage of two convenient services with high customer appeal," said Paul Berberian, VStream president. "We're blending Internet-enhanced communications with multimedia and the result is a visual and audio service that is fun and personal."

Using VStream's voice-to-email technology, Seattle FilmWorks customers can add narration to a photo with a simple phone call to VStream's automated messaging center. The audio file, produced through VStream, accompanies the photo when-ever a customer emails photo links to friends, family, and business associates.

"We know our nearly two million customers enjoy sharing their visual memories with family and friends over the Internet, and now using VStream's technology, they can enhance those memories with audio descriptions," said Gary Christophersen, president and CEO, Seattle FilmWorks.

A Seattle FilmWorks customer, while viewing an online image of a photo, can now add a personal message at the click of a button. After selecting "Send a voice message" option, you receive an identification code and phone number. You then dial the number, enter the ID code and record your private messages and captions for specified photos. The audio file accompanies the photo, so anyone who views the photo via e-mail has the option of also hearing the audio caption.

For more information, visit Seattle FilmWorks <<http://www.filmworks.com>> or VStream <<http://www.vstream.com>>.

Net2Phone Announces Agreement with Compaq

Net2Phone will offer its award-winning Internet telephony services to new Compaq Presario customers in Canada, Latin America, Japan and Asia-Pacific.

Under the agreement, a button located on the Presario keyboard will connect online users to a co-branded telephony services web site. Called the Community Center button, it initially connects Presario customers to a Compaq and Net2Phone joint Website which features free downloadable PC-to-phone software, download nstructions, and details about Net2Phone's low calling rates.

After downloading the software and setting up an account, the user can launch the application and connect via the Web to a phone anywhere in the world.

Apple Files Suit Over iMac Look-Alike

Apple Computer has filed a lawsuit against eMachines, charging that the \$799 eOne PC copies the iMac. This is Apple's latest attempt to prevent rivals from cashing in on its innovative iMac design. Apple filed similar lawsuits on July 1 against Daewoo Telecom of Korea and Future Power, Daewoo's joint venture that sells PCs in the United States.

The complaint accuses eMachines of "illegally copying" the iMac's industrial design. It asks the court to prevent eMachines from shipping its look-alike computer, and seeks unspecified actual and punitive damages. *TidBytes from Ken's Korner*

The Last Word

By Joan Latchford (PCCT)

I find it embarrassing as an editor when I have to put *read.me* together by combing through issues of other User Group Newsletters. Embarrassed on two counts, one that their articles are so often better than ours and two, I believe that if we are a vibrant, viable club we should be people with inquiring minds who ask ourselves "Now I wonder why that happened" and go on to find out the reason. That is often enough to generate a short article.

For instance, today I had to print out two *.tif files on my Epson Photo EX for a friend who does not have a colour printer. These were to be used for a book cover he was designing and he was getting impatient. But however often I pressed the button to clean the ink jets, the print came out with fine white horizontal lines that were not acceptable.

Some months ago I had installed a new Photo Ex driver but had lost the on-screen gauge which shows how much ink is left. Presuming it must be low, I bought new cartridges and opened up the printer to install them, only to find that no amount of coaxing would move the old cartridges over to the extreme left where it is possible to lift the lever and remove them.

Opening the manual, I found you are not supposed to change a cartridge till the flashing empty light comes on—indeed you can't—but I still had no way of knowing how much ink was left. I contemplated printing a batch of prints to use up the ink but decided to reinstall the original software that came with the computer. This gave me back my ink gauge which showed a respectable amount of both black and coloured ink, except now, Photoshop gave an error message and re-refused to load the image. I got around that by importing the image into Pagemaker with the "Place" command, set the print quality to high and out came perfect streakfree prints.

Going to "printers" from Control Panel I found that there were now two installations for the Photo EX. After deleting the previous one and rebooting, Photoshop (which I had deleted and reinstalled twice to no avail) worked perfectly.

* * *

We are badly in need of good technical writers who can make subjects understandable to the non, or less techie person. If any of you are interested in perhaps developing technical writing as a career or sideline, I recommend "Writing To Learn" By William Zinsser, Harper Row 1988, subtitled "How To Write— And Think—Clearly About Any Subject At All." Several writer's who started writing for *read.me* are now published authors.

We need illustrators who can draw topical cartoons, photographers who record club events (not just the handshake as we hand over the mug) but perhaps the spontaneous shot of the lucky winner of the big software prize.

Nobody sent in an account of the PCCT picnic or a few good snaps of people enjoying themselves around the Bar-B-Que. I have a scanner and can always translate them into .tif files for import.

I don't have a lot of time to search the Web for interesting clip art and the less time I have the plainer and greyer these pages become. If you stumble across something send it along. Remember that .gif and .jpps are seldom high enough in resolution to reproduce well in print so look for black and white or greyscale images that could illustrate an article that you or someone else could write.

I can receive your material by e-mail attachment, by Fax (416)340-1104, and even printed copy to scan and recognize, if it's in good, clean type.

See what you can do for me for next month. I really need your participation. ❖

Concluded from page 6, column 2, "Graphics"

of the high end illustration graphics programs.

When scanners began gaining popularity, the TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) bit-mapped format developed by Aldus, Microsoft and others specifically for capturing scanned images, was used widely. Digital cameras will further popularize bit-mapped formats, and we can only hope that a standard will emerge from the many proprietary formats now used.

The biggest boost to bit-mapped graphics, however, has been the World Wide Web, which requires bit-mapped images, usually JPG (short for JPEG, Joint Photographic Experts Group) or GIF (Graphics Interchange Format). Both formats greatly compress the size of bit-mapped files; JPG files may be 20 times smaller than the original image, but images may lose something in the translation.

Graphics professionals may argue that this information is too simplistic, but space is limited and I believe it does cover the basics. Perhaps your group has several members with wide graphics experience and they could provide more

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TIME: 7 p.m.

WHEN: Third Tuesday of the month.
 see the calendar below.

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With your family membership you get:

- Expert help from knowledgeable computer users;
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- Demonstrations by leading software and hardware companies;
- 10 monthly Special Interest Groups (SIG) meetings;
- Access to a software library with the best of shareware and freeware programs; communications software;
- Access to the club BBS (for a one-time set up fee of \$20);
- Monthly issues of the club newsletter you're holding right now!

Calendar of Events 1999

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
O C T O B E R	4	5 Windows SIG BTS 7:30 pm	6 Investment SIG BTS 7:00 pm	7 Win Basics SIG BTS 7:00 pm
	11	12 Daytime SIG St. A 1:00 pm	13 Digital Imaging SIG BTS 7:30 pm	14 Visual Basic SIG BTS 7:00 pm
	18	19 General Meeting NYC 7:00 pm	20 New User Group BTS 7:30 pm	21 Office SIG BTS 7:00 pm
	25	26 Daytime SIG St. A 1:00 pm Linux SIG BTS 7:00 pm	27	28 Internet SIG BTS 7:00 pm

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
N O V E M B E R		2 Windows SIG BTS 7:30 pm	3 Investment SIG BTS 7:00 pm	4 Win Basics SIG BTS 7:00 pm
		9 Daytime SIG St. A 1:00 pm	10 Digital Imaging SIG BTS 7:30 pm	11 Visual Basic SIG BTS 7:00 pm
		16 General Meeting NYC 7:00 pm	17 New User Group BTS 7:30 pm	18 Office SIG BTS 7:00 pm
		23 Daytime SIG St. A 1:00 pm Linux SIG BTS 7:00 pm	24	25 Internet SIG BTS 7:00 pm
		30		

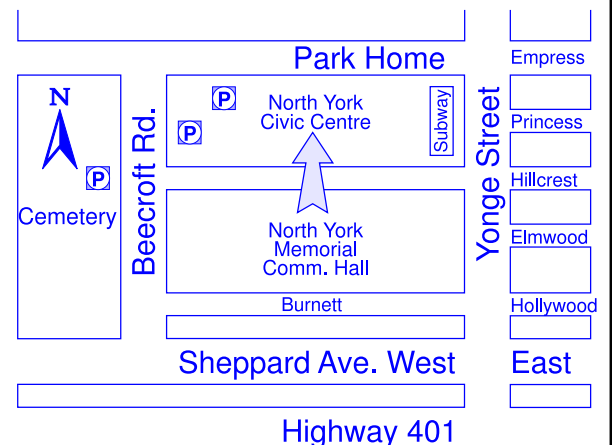
INFO LINE!



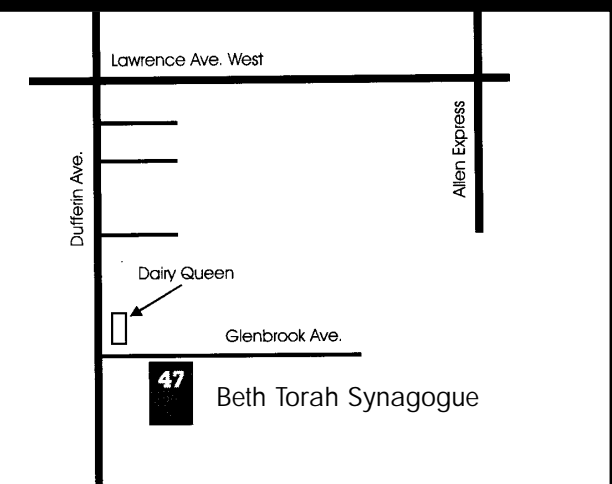
Find out what is going on at the PCCT each week by calling the club hotline at: **(416) 633-6971** for the latest news on meetings.

The new message is changed on Sunday for the following week. Check for last minute changes. If there is a cancellation of a SIG meeting, the message should be on our phone line or BBS.

NYC North York Memorial Comm. Hall, 5110 Yonge St.



BTS Beth Torah Synagogue 47 Glenbrook Avenue



St.A Church of St. Andrew 2333 Victoria Park Ave

