



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Vol. 19 number 1

The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

February 2002

CLUB NEWS

OPCUG elections for 2002

by Claude G. Jarry

The list for candidates for those who wished to seek nominations to the Board of Directors of our group for the year 2002 was closed on December 31, 2001.

At this date the following had indicated they would stand their candidacy:

Jocelyn Doire
Bob Gowan
Brigitte Lord
Tim Mahoney
Vince Pizzamiglio
Chris Taylor and
Morris Turpin.



Since there were no other nominations, the above members are elected by acclamation.

There are still two vacancies on the Board. It will therefore be the responsibility of the New Board of Directors of the OPCUG to appoint "volunteers" to these posts.

Anyone who believes that he or she would have something to offer to help members help other members — solve their problems with the fascinating world of computing — contact anyone of the above. You'll be glad you did.



SOFTWARE REVIEW

Defrag Commander Personal Edition

by Chris Taylor

I have done reviews in the past of Executive Software's Diskeeper (see opcug.ca/public/reviews/diskeeper6oct01.html and opcug.ca/public/reviews/diskeep5.htm). While I was quite impressed with the program's ability to keep my disks defragmented, the program — at about \$75 — is not what you would call inexpensive. As such, many people will forgo the program and use the defragmenters built into almost every version of Windows since Windows 95.

But relying on the built-in defragmenters has its problems. The main problem is that some versions of Windows make it difficult to schedule the built-in defragmenter. If you have to remember to defragment your disks manually, there is a good chance the job simply does not get done, or at least not as frequently as might otherwise happen.

If you wish you could easily defragment your hard disks more frequently but find that Diskeeper is too expensive, you might want to look at a more cost-effective alternative — Defrag Commander Personal Edition from Winternals Software. At the bargain basement price of US\$19, it just might be what you need to keep your disks in tip-top shape.

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Next meeting: **THURSDAY, February 20th, 2002**

Computer Show & Sale

by Tim Mahoney

**Lansdowne Park
March 2 and 3
from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Featuring: New, Used, Closeouts and Overstocks. 20-80% off a full selection of computer & tech products.

Exhibitors include local, regional and national computer dealers, wholesalers, distributors and retailers. Services exhibitors will include IT consultants, training programs, placement services and more.

A great destination for both the business and personal user. For more information check out the Summit Computer Shows web site at <http://summitcomputershows.com/>

***Are you free to volunteer for a shift at the OPCUG table?
Contact Tim Mahoney or any Board member!***



February meeting date

Please note that due to conflicts with scheduling at the museum, we are unable to meet on the regular second Wednesday of the month for February. The meeting will instead be on: **Wednesday, February 20th, 2002**

WINTIP

The ten immutable laws of security

by Scott Culp, Microsoft Security Response Center

- Law #1** If a bad guy can persuade you to run his program on your computer, it's not your computer anymore.
- Law #2** If a bad guy can alter the operating system on your computer, it's not your computer anymore.
- Law #3** If a bad guy has unrestricted physical access to your computer, it's not your computer anymore.
- Law #4** If you allow a bad guy to upload programs to your web site, it's not your web site any more.
- Law #5** Weak passwords trump strong security.
- Law #6** A machine is only as secure as the administrator is trustworthy.
- Law #7** Encrypted data is only as secure as the decryption key.
- Law #8** An out of date virus scanner is only marginally better than no virus scanner at all.
- Law #9** Absolute anonymity isn't practical, in real life or on the web.
- Law #10** Technology is not a panacea.

For details about each of these points, see <http://www.microsoft.com/technet/columns/security/10imlaws.asp>



CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, Feb. 20 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, Feb. 20 th	Come and join our discussions!
Developers SIG	Wednesday, Feb. 20 th	Immediately following the main OPCUG presentation, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Delphi User Group	TBA	8:00 p.m. at Chapters Store in the Pinecrest Mall (at the Queensway)
Ottawa Paradox Users Group	3 rd Thursday each month	6:00-8:00 p.m. — Corel Bldg 1600 Carling Ave

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

Defrag Commander *...continued from page 1*

Defrag Commander PE runs on every version of Windows from Windows 95 through Windows XP. However, the program differs considerably between the Windows 9x kernel (Windows 95, 98, ME) and the NT kernel (Windows NT, 2000, XP).

Under the 9x kernel versions of Windows, all Defrag Commander PE does is provide a scheduler to control the built-in defragmenter. This left me scratching my head a bit, because I found it quite easy to use the Windows Task Scheduler to schedule the job. More on this a bit later.

Once you move to the versions of Windows that use the NT kernel (NT, 2K, XP), things become more interesting. First, NT did not include a built-in defragmenter. You could download a free version of Diskeeper 3.0 from Executive Software that could do the job, but you couldn't schedule it. Windows 2000 includes a defragmenter (written by the folks at Executive software and based on Diskeeper) but it cannot be scheduled and requires that you be logged in as an administrator. I am not sure about Windows XP, but I assume its limitations are the same as Windows 2000.

Defrag Commander can be used to schedule the built-in defragmenters of Windows 2000 and Windows XP, but it also includes a much better defragmenter written by the folks at Winternals Software which runs on any NT kernel version of Windows (Windows NT, 2000, XP).

The Defrag Commander defrag engine is quite nice. It is fast, defrags the disk in a single pass (unlike Diskeeper which can require several passes to complete its job), is effective when there is a low amount of free space (Diskeeper has severe problems operating effectively if there is less than about 25% free space on the volume), and is very effective at consolidating free space, which helps prevent future fragmentation.

I have used Defrag Commander PE on my Pentium III/933 machine for over a month now. It hums away once a day ensuring my

Windows 2000 disks are kept nice and neat. The daily run takes less than 5 minutes.

You can get Defrag Commander for less than half the price of Diskeeper, but is there anything lacking? Well, you don't get the ability to defrag the page file and it doesn't include the ability to defrag some of the system areas of NTFS volumes, most notably the Master File Table (MFT).

For the page file, Winternals Software does have a free utility you can download from their web site that will handle this. As for the MFT, there is considerable debate on just how important it is to have a contiguous MFT. Even Executive Software (Diskeeper) staff have admitted that there is no performance impact by having a somewhat fragmented MFT.

Oh, and you don't get a pretty display. While the built-in defraggers can display a nice map of the disk, showing where contiguous files, fragmented files, and free space are, Defrag Commander runs entirely in the background. It does provide a report after each run that details things like the number of files, average file size, number of fragmented files and average fragments per file. The numbers are reported for analysis before defragmentation as well as after. The total number of moves are also reported.

I promised to come back to the discussion of Windows 95, 98, ME. While there is really no benefit to using Defrag Commander Personal Edition on such machines, Winternals also has the full Defrag Commander product that may be of interest to folks who administrate many machines. The full product allows you to schedule defragmentation across the network.

Again, for Win9x machines, I really sort of question the value. It would be a fairly simple job to go to each machine once and set up a scheduled task using the built-in scheduler and defragger. But if you have lots of machines, remote machines, or machines that end up being in locked offices – well, it might be worth the money.

For Windows NT/2K/XP machines, Defrag Commander also allows you to deploy the Winternals defragging engine and schedule it – all over the wire. In fact, the defragging engine is not even left on the remote machine. It is deployed as two 62K packets. When the defrag run is done, the defragging software simply disappears. Very slick!

The full Defrag Commander costs US\$169 and includes ten client licenses. You can download a 30-day eval version of either Defrag Commander or Defrag Commander Personal Edition from the Winternals web site at www.winternals.com.

If you haven't defragged your disks in the past month, and you use Windows NT, 2K, or XP, I highly recommend you try out Defrag Commander PE. If you use the 9x kernel, fire up the Windows Task Scheduler and set up a scheduled job to defrag your disks.



Yahoo's Group by Jocelyn Doire

Ever wanted to organize a family reunion, a support group or any other kind of meeting involving lots of people spread all over the place? To do that you use the old method of using the mail or the phone, but both are slow and potentially expensive. Alternatively you could use the Internet and create a web site, but it's not everyone who has the knowledge and the time to create an attractive web site. When my high school class decided to make their "conventum", that is a reunion of all those who graduated 20 years ago, they used the group feature offered by Yahoo.

The first thing you need to do is to open an account for yourself if you don't already have one, for that go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/> (or <http://fr.groups.yahoo.com> for the French version), select *Click here to register* and fill in the forms. Read carefully what's there, or you may end up with something you don't want, for example on the second page, I did not want to "Yes, personalize my browser with Yahoo! Companion toolbar", so I removed the check mark there. If you have trouble with what you get from Yahoo, don't ask me, asks Yahoo!

The second step is to create the group, for that, click on *Start a new Group!*, which should bring you to <http://groups.yahoo.com/start>. If you are a new user, you will get a message saying that you need to verify your Yahoo email address, follow the instructions; click on "here", then "Non-verified", then "send verification". When you get the confirmation message, get the verification code and enter it with your password, click on verify, click on *Continue using Yahoo!*, re-enter your password once again and fill in the member detail form, and finally click on "finished". If you are like me, you will probably have

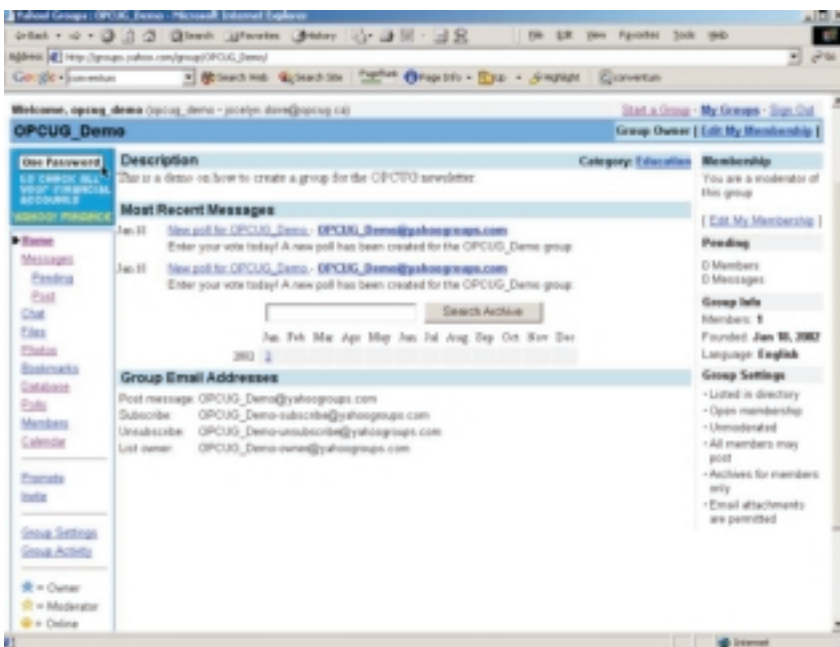
to repeat some of the steps (or all of them...), just re-read the screens and follow the step until you are verified member, and then go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/start>.

To create the group you need to tell Yahoo what kind of group you are, in my example I selected "", then "Education". I could have refined further the type but I thought it was enough and I clicked on *Place my group in Education*. On the second page you can type the name of the group, the description, the email address of the group and a few options like whether the group is moderated or not. On the third page you can select your profile and email address. Finally on the fourth page, you can enter the emails of the members of your group, the welcome message and how you want to subscribe the your members. If everything went OK, you will now have a group web page (for example http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OPCUG_Demo), and a group email (for example: OPCUG_Demo@yahoogroups.com).

Now the fun part begins!

With your group web page you can:

- Send invitations to anyone to register to the group (click on invite)
- Send messages to all the members of the group (click on post)
- Read the messages posted by the members (click on messages)
- Create polls (click on polls, create poll, enter the question and the choices)
- Create a photo album (click on photos, create album)
- Create a database, for example one with phone number (click on database)
- Create a calendar of the events (click on calendar)
- Chat with members that are online (click on chat)
- and more.



The most difficult part for me was to register to Yahoo using the web interface, but you can make the whole process much easier to your members by sending invite messages, which will allow registering by simply replying to the invite. Obviously you have to be careful to not annoy your members, and depending on the level of trust or knowledge, you may need to become the moderator to filter the messages.

This is a great service offered by Yahoo, and for the price of some ads, it can make the organization of your meetings so much easier, and help to keep all the members well informed in near real time.

If you have the time, why don't you take a look at the group web page I created and try the little surveys I did at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OPCUG_Demo/polls? You can easily subscribe by sending an empty email to OPCUG_Demo-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and by replying to it. Note that you will get all the messages that are posted on the group's site. To unsubscribe, send an empty email to OPCUG_Demo-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com.

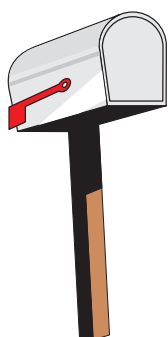


REMINDER

Ottawa PC Users' Group
has a new domain name!

To access electronic
services (Web, email, FTP,
Listserve, etc), please use

opcug.ca, rather
than opcug.ottawa.com



Connectix Virtual PC for Windows

by Morris Turpin

Emulators have been around for some time now and Connectix has been at the forefront with its Virtual PC for the Macintosh. This program has allowed Macintosh users over the years to run Windows or DOS-based programs by emulating a Pentium system on the Mac. Connectix now produces Virtual PC for Windows, which allows Windows users to create one or more X86-based virtual machines on a Windows platform.

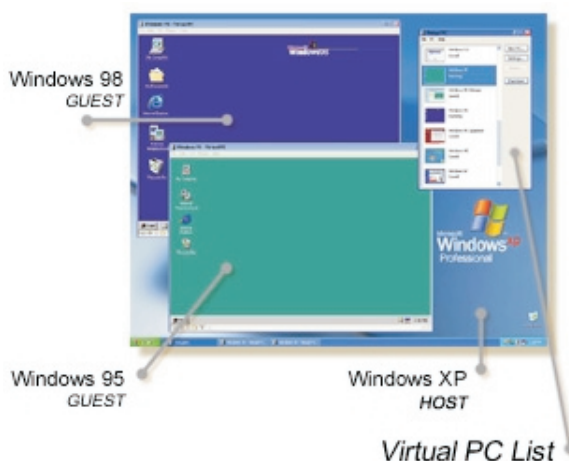
If you use legacy hardware or software that forces you to use a dual-boot system then this could be the solution for you. Or, if you want to run multiple operating systems for software development or just to experiment with different operating systems, Virtual PC for Windows will let you do all this on a single computer without the need to reboot.



Virtual PC for Windows enables a single PC to run multiple operating systems simultaneously. Unlike the Macintosh version, which must emulate the Pentium processor, the PC version runs most of its code natively. This results in faster code execution since code not directly accessing the hardware runs at the full speed of the host PC.

Host operating systems can be Windows ME, Windows 2000 Professional, Windows NT 4.0 with SP 6, Windows XP Home or Windows XP Professional. Operating systems running in the virtual machine (the guest OS) can be any version of DOS, any version of Windows from 3.1 to XP Professional, including server versions, OS/2 version 4, and many distributions of Linux or BSD UNIX.

Installation is about as easy as any program can be, just insert the CD and follow the installation wizards. The procedure is to first install



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Virtual PC ...continued

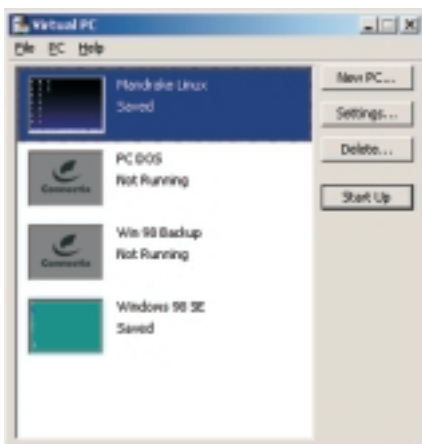
Virtual PC for Windows on the host computer, create one or more virtual PCs and then install the guest operating systems. Again, the wizards walk you step-by-step through the installation.

Connectix provides two methods for installing a guest operating system. If you already have an OS you'd like to use it's as easy to install it to a virtual PC as it is to install it on any other hard drive partition. The virtual PC will accept a bootable floppy or a bootable CD for the installation. As an alternative, Connectix sells OS Packs, which work with either Virtual PC for the Macintosh or Virtual PC for Windows. These packs are pre-installed and pre-configured versions of Windows 2000, ME or 98. This makes installation of the guest OS as easy as dragging the disk image from the CD to a directory on your hard drive.

To start a guest OS, first open Virtual PC, select the guest OS and click on the Start Up button. After booting, the OS is ready to use. At this point you can install your



applications. If the guest OS is a Windows machine, it's recommended that you install VPC Additions at this time as well. VPC Additions provides further integration between the guest and host PCs. These enhancements include pointer integration, allowing the pointer to move freely between



the guest and host PC, drag and drop of files and folders, copy and paste, sharing folders, sharing CDs, sharing volumes and clock synchronization.

Virtual PC gives you the option to set the virtual hard disk to “undoable”. This provides the ability to make any changes you want to the OS or any applications running on it, then turn off the PC and lose any changes that you made. This mode is extremely valuable when you're experimenting and run the risk of doing damage to the application or the OS. When re-started, the virtual PC is in its original state.

By default, the guest PC is networked with its host PC sharing the host's TCP/IP address and, through Network Address Translation (NAT), with other computers on the host's network. This provides the ability to access any of the host's drives as well as any other resources that are available to the host on the physical network. Windows-based guest PCs can share folders with other computers on the network; this option assigns a local drive letter to the shared folder for easier access.

Connectix provides a copy of PC DOS 2000 with Virtual PC. I also installed Windows 98 and Mandrake-Linux. The only trouble I experienced was with the Windows 98 guest. I was able to drag and drop a file from the guest PC to the host but was unable to do the same from host to guest. Connectix' support department was responsive and was eventually able to duplicate the problem but so far no fix has been forthcoming. My primary reason for running Virtual PC was to gain access to my Xerox P12 laser printer; a fine printer but one without Windows 2000 drivers. Under Virtual PC, I was able to do exactly what I needed to do without having to reboot into a separate Windows 98 partition.

Connectix specifies the minimum CPU speed at 266 MHz but recommends 500 MHz. Almost any Intel or AMD CPU meeting these speed requirements and having level 2 cache will do. The amount of memory varies with the host and guest operating systems used but it ranges from a minimum of 128 MB to run either DOS or Windows 3.1 as guest OS's with Windows ME as the host platform to 320 MB to run Windows 2000 Advanced Server as the guest OS on a Windows 2000 Professional host platform. Specific information can be obtained from the Connectix web site at <http://www.connectix.com/products/vpc4w.html>.

My system has an AMD 1.33 GHz CPU with 512 MB DDR RAM. Running Windows 98 as the guest OS, a little slowdown was noticeable between running applications in the Virtual PC compared with running them under Windows 98 natively in its own partition. Accessing the physical network was noticeably slower than under native Windows 98 but any delays were certainly tolerable. Using the “save PC state” option when shutting down results in shutdowns and startups of less than 5 seconds.

Virtual PC is not a product that everybody will have a need for but for those that do, it just could be the best solution available.



Virus warnings (real or hoax?) by Dave Burnside

Have you ever received an email warning about a new virus telling you to pass it on to everyone you know so they won't get infected? Or one that told you that you might be infected by a virus that cannot be detected by any virus detector and to check for a file or files on your computer and if you find them to delete them? Were they supposedly issued by Microsoft, Compaq, IBM, AOL, FBI, etc.? Did you wonder if it was a real warning and if you should follow the instructions about deleting the file(s) and forwarding it to all your friends? Or did you assume that they were true and do what the email asked?

Unfortunately today most of these virus warnings are in fact hoaxes (i.e., fakes). They are meant to either get you to destroy vital files on your own computer to achieve the same end as a real virus or to get you to mass forward the email thus contributing to clogging up as many email systems as possible.

My experience in the computer security field has taught me that when an email warning arrives, common sense should alert most people to the possibility of it being a hoax. Statements that would normally sound like they could be untrue probably are untrue. For example, one that says virus scanning software cannot detect the virus is most certainly false. Today the major virus scanner companies react to multiple new viruses daily. It is even possible to obtain daily virus update files for emergency cases. Here's a list of statements contained in various warnings that should indicate a possible hoax:

- Type in: SULFNBK.EXE. [Note: This file is actually a critical file required by Windows]
- Begin search
- Go to 'File' and delete it
- Find the file and delete it from the Recycle bin
- Wait 48 hours after you receive the virus in order to clean it, otherwise it will erase your hard disk and BIOS
- It will destroy your memory, sound card and speakers, hard drive and it will infect your mouse or pointing device, as well as your keyboards making what you type not able to register on the screen
- This information was announced yesterday morning from IBM, FBI and Microsoft states that this is a very dangerous and malicious virus, much worse than the "I Love You," virus and that there is NO remedy for at this time
- In order to fix this problem, we need you, the America Online User to click on 'Reply' and enter in your log-on password in order to have these problems fixed
- This information was announced yesterday morning from Microsoft
- Forward this to everyone you know and if it reaches 13,000 people, 1,300 of the people on the list will receive \$5,000, and the rest will

receive a free trip for two to Disney World for one week during the summer of 1999 at our expense

- This mail contains a plain text virus called PII-Degrade
- No Virus software can detect it
- McAfee and NORTON cannot detect it because it does not become a virus until June 1st

In addition, most such messages include something in the line of the following to try and get you to participate in the propagation of the hoax:

- Please, send this message to the most people possible!
- Pass this on to anyone you have an e-mail address for
- Pass this on fast and far—virus warning
- Please send this away to all your friends in the world
- Please forward this email to everyone you know
- Please, transmit it to anybody that you know that has access to the Internet
- Send this e-mail to all yours friends

Such messages should **NEVER** be forwarded unless **YOU** have personally checked to ensure the validity of the warning. If you're unsure, **DON'T** forward the message. Also **NEVER** follow instructions in such a warning about deleting files or altering settings on your computer before validating the authenticity of the instructions first.

To check out the validity of such e-mails, there are a number of sites that you can access on the internet. Here's a partial list of the most popular ones. Remember to also check the Hoaxes areas at these sites:

<http://vil.mcafee.com/>

(The McAfee Virus Information Library)

<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/index.html>

(The Symantec Virus Library)

OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.



Member participation is encouraged! If you would like to contribute an article to *Ottawa PC News*, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Saturdays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

Fees

OPCUG annual membership: \$25 per year.

Mailing Address

3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6

Web address

<http://opcug.ca/>

Bulletin board—the PUB II (BBS)

Up to 33.6 kbps V.34 228-8951

Chairman and System Administrator

Chris Taylor ctaylor@nrcan.gc.ca 727-5453

Meeting Coordinator

Tim Mahoney timothy@cyberus.ca 225-2630

Treasurer

Vince Pizzamiglio vince@monisys.ca

Webmaster

Brigitte Lord opcug@iname.com

Secretary

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ca

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer Mark.Cayer@StatCan.Ca 823-0354

Newsletter

Bert Schopf (editor) bert@blackbirdpcd.com 232-8427

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire (distributor, electronic version):

Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ca

Public Relations

Morris Turpin morris.turpin@rogers.com 729-6955

Facilities

Bob Walker skywalk@iname.com 489-2084

Beginners' and Windows SIG coordinator

Duncan Petrie petried@onebox.com 841-6119

Internet SIG coordinator

Norm Dafoe ndafoe@sirius.ca

Paradox SIG coordinator

John Ladds laddsj@statcan.ca 951-4581

Delphi SIG coordinator

Stan Isbrandt isbrandt@trytel.com ... 992-8141 / 729-7793

Orphan SIG coordinator

Henry Sims ha4326@rogers.com

Developers' SIG

Bob Thomas BobThomas@msn.com

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Virus Hoaxes ...continued

<http://www.datafellows.com/virus-info/>

(The F-Secure Virus Information Library)

<http://www.europe.datafellows.com/virus-info/>

(The F-Secure European Virus Information Library)

On a couple of occasions, the last reference above actually had information about quickly propagating viruses before North American sites because of the time difference.

Of course, your best defense against real viruses is to have a virus scanner software on your computer and make sure the virus signature file is update regularly. Normally this means that it should be updated at least weekly.



CLUB LIFE

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Bring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphenalia you want to **GIVE AWAY** to the General Meetings, and leave them at the table near the auditorium's entrance. *Please limit magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.*

You may **TAKE AWAY** any items of use to you. Stuff left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to the recycle bin.

