

OTTAWA



PC NEWS

The Newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG)

Windows 95

Miscellaneous bits

by Chris Taylor, BBS Sysop

Tired of the logos displayed when Windows 95 starts up and shuts down? It is easy to replace these with your own.

There are two shutdown screens, both located in the Windows directory. LOGOW.SYS is the screen that displays the 'Wait while Shutting down...' message. LOGOS.SYS is the 'You may now shut-off...' message. You can load either of these into Windows Paint and use them as a starting point for your own artwork or witty messages. The Windows startup screen is named C:\LOGO.SYS. (If one does not exist, Windows uses an internal version.) To create a screen, you must create a bitmap with image attributes of 320x400x256 colours.

There are also some replacement startup/shutdown screens available on The PUB.

Viewing a folder from DOS

If you are at a DOS prompt and want a quick folder view, you don't have to switch back to your desktop and double-click on My Computer. Simply

type "start." (without the quotes, and include the period). To get a folder view of the parent directory, type "start..". You can type a full path name as well, such as "start c:\windows\system".

Disk thrashing

Every now and then, you might notice that your disk starts thrashing for no apparent reason. There are at least two possible reasons that I know of—both fixable. The first is due to the swap file shrinking, the second due to icon caching.

By default, the swap file in Windows 95 is dynamic. As you open more and more applications, the swap file grows to accommodate them. As you shut down these applications, after a minute or two, Windows decides that it doesn't need such a large swap file and shrinks it. If you don't like this constant resizing of the swap file, you can set a minimum size for it, as follows.

Right-click on "My Computer" and select Properties. Click on the Performance tab, then the Virtual Memory button. Select the radio button "Let me specify my own virtual memory settings." Set the minimum size

INSIDE

Coming up

Microsoft's Internet strategy and new products..... 3

Club News

Calendar of meetings..... 3

January and February winners..... 7

Ontario Computer Fairs..... 7

Reuse, recycle..... 7

Newsletter submissions 8

Fox SIG

Mastering Visual FoxPro: CDROM-based training from Microsoft..... 4

Internet SIG

I-SIG logo contest..... 5

February's Internet SIG Meeting.. 6

Paradox SIG

Paradox tricks and techniques 3

to whatever seems reasonable to you. As a starting point, you might try for a total memory size (swap file and real RAM) of 24 to 30 Mbyte. Set the maximum size to "No maximum". This allows the swap file to grow if necessary, but keeps it from shrinking too small, which reduces disk thrashing considerably. Periodically check your WIN386.SWP file in your Windows directory. If it is frequently larger than your minimum, you might want to

Continued on page 2

try increasing the minimum size.

If your disk thrashing is accompanied by the disappearance and repainting of your desktop icons, the problem may come from the way Win95 caches icons. Win95 has a background program called PIFMGR.DLL. Its task is to maintain a file in the Windows directory called **ShellIconCache**, which is a cache of the icons for the programs and files that Explorer and folder windows display, and those that are displayed in the Start menu and on the desktop. Quick look-up indices allow Win95 to display icons without having to look them up and read them out of individual files when you display a folder.

Well, like all things which grow on your hard disk, there has to be a limit. ShellIconCache is set up with a limit of about 500 icons. While this sounds like a lot, if you count the number of unique icons that are displayed, this probably exceeds 500. If the cache fills, Windows destroys it and rebuilds it from scratch. To do this, PIFMGR walks the start menu and looks up the icons for everything it finds. Then it does the same for the desktop and open folders. This can cause a great deal of disk thrashing. You can increase the size of the cache to reduce the likelihood of the cache filling up, as follows.

Create a plain text file containing the lines (a) (see insert below). Name the file THRASH.REG. Double-click on the file in Explorer and the cache will be in-

creased from 500 to 2000. Increase or decrease the number in the last line to make the cache larger or smaller. Note: If you have not yet read my article in the December 95 newsletter on protecting the registry, do that **before** you do the above!

Run or save executables from the Internet

By default, when you use Internet Explorer and activate a link on a Web page that sends you an executable, Internet Explorer pops up a dialog box asking if you want to run it or save it to disk. You also have the option of saying not to pester you with such mundane details in the future. If you do, it always runs executables rather than giving you the option to save to disk. Probably the exact opposite of what you wanted!

To get the dialog back, double-click on "My Computer". Select View, Options, File Types. From the list, highlight Application and then choose the Edit button. There is a check box for "Confirm Open After Download." Put a check mark in the box.

Environment variables

If you want certain environment variables available globally to all applications in Windows, you can add them to AUTOEXEC.BAT. However, CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT are not strictly required by Windows 95 except if you have real mode drivers for devices not directly supported by Windows 95.

If you prefer to go without CON-

FIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files, you can provide environment variables through a utility included on the Win95 CD in the directory \admin\apptools\envvars called WINSET.EXE. The file is also available on The PUB in the Windows - Utilities file area as ENVARS.EXE—a self-extracting archive file. I recommend placing the WINSET.EXE file in the Windows\Command folder—the normal place for Win95 console (a.k.a. character mode) applications.

Winset acts the same as the SET command, and can be called from a batch file, but rather than setting the variable in the batch file's environment, the variable gets set in the Windows global environment. As an example of its use setting the path and an environment variable, you could create a batch file containing lines (b) (see insert below).

You could then place a shortcut to the batch file in your startup folder (c:\windows\start menu\startup) to have it executed every time you start Windows 95.

Oops...

An editing error on my part eliminated some information from my article last month. I pointed out how you could set a new default for how Windows opened **new** folders. What I left out was the fact that Windows keeps track of the last 50 or so folder settings, so you may still see some folders open with your old settings until you have opened enough new folders.

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(a) REGEDIT4

```
[HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\explorer]
"Max Cached Icons"="2000"
```

(b) c:\windows\command\winset path=c:\windows;c:\windows\command;c:\util
c:\windows\command\winset dircmd=/ogn

Microsoft's Internet strategy and new products

Microsoft plans to present a mostly Internet theme at the March general meeting (March 19). They'll be showing us:

- their new Internet server software known as Catapult

- authoring tools for MS Office, including Internet Assistant for Word, Excel, and Powerpoint
- Vermeer, the web editor
- Internet Studio, which allows a web author to create 2-D

and 3-D content, with streaming audio and video

To top off the evening, Microsoft will show off the new Windows NT4.

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Calendar (subject to change)

General Meeting Location: Sir Robert Borden HS
131 Greenbank Road

General Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Date	Topic
Tuesday, 19 March	Microsoft Sneak Preview
Tuesday, 30 April	Lotus and Borland
NO MEETING in May	
Tuesday, 4 June	To be announced

Please note that the second Tuesday of each month rule will be violated in the next four months: *third* Tuesday in March, *last* Tuesday in April, *no meeting* in May, and *first* Tuesday in June.

The Ottawa Paradox Users Group

February Meeting: Paradox tricks and techniques

by Larry Chop, Paradox SIG Coordinator

The February 15 meeting was a lively exchange of tools, tricks and techniques between the members. Thanks to Nick Potter who brought a portable, we were able to walk through John Ladd's method of accessing and controlling forms from libraries and/or other forms. Larry Chop then illustrated his technique of exiting an application cleanly by having Opal close all forms and reports before shutting down the application and Paradox. Bud Reid—who sug-

gested this topic and who was awarded the Borland shirt for the idea (courtesy of Borland Canada)—then led a discussion on how to handle dates in Object Pal. The source code for these will be posted on the club BBS.

The next meeting will be on the regular third Thursday of the month on 21 March 1996 at 6:15 p.m. at Inly Systems, 1221A Cyrville Rd., just East of St. Laurence shopping center. The topic has yet to be set.

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Mastering Visual FoxPro: CDROM-based training from Microsoft

by Andrew Ross MacNeill, Fox
SIG Coordinator

In recent months, Microsoft has started offering CDROMs that provide training on their various developer products. The first of such CDROMs was a product called Mastering Microsoft Visual FoxPro and introduced new users to the world of Object-oriented programming available in FoxPro. I can only assume that additional titles will feature similar interfaces so I'll take a brief moment to describe the interface used in the Mastering series.

Mastering interface

The Mastering interface follows that of online help within Windows 95 combined with viewer style technology found in most Microsoft multimedia products. Put another way, if you've used Encarta, Bookshelf or one of the Online guides that are being provided in other products, you'll be right at home with these training tools. Users can use the Navigator to follow through the training in its original order by using the contents, find specific information either by using the Find or Index options and then write notes to themselves with the Notebook. The CDROM doesn't just present a specific course; it also includes sample code, a glossary, library, and the Microsoft Knowledgebase for the particu-

lar product. An added bonus is the inclusion of many conference session notes. As a result, it contains a lot more information than what is just presented through the online training course.

Multimedia online guide

The Visual FoxPro course is broken into twelve chapters, each designed to highlight particular aspects of the product. Just browsing over the titles of the chapters, I was surprised to find that there was no specific chapter on working with the data dictionary. Instead, this information was sprinkled throughout various areas of the training course. This brought me to my first conclusion about the product: It's more of a thorough Multimedia online guide than a training course. This isn't to say that the Mastering Visual FoxPro CDROM isn't a great product. It uses graphics and hypertext links to help users move around information quickly and easily, even from within the course. If you're learning about the Project Manager and decide that you want to move ahead to the Designing Forms chapter, you can click and you're there.

On-line demos

A key benefit of the product is the use of demos, which are video clips that walk through



various aspects of the program. The Project Manager demo, for example, shows how to navigate through a project. This is great if you want to get into the Project Manager but aren't sure how. Unfortunately, this is a Windows product and most users have already figured out how tabs and outlines work.

On-line tips

The product has tips that help in working within the FoxPro development environment as well as pictures that show what is being described. One of the best aspects of this product are icons called "Expert Point of View", which is a video clip that explains, in simple terms, how a particular aspect works. All of these items may be viewed by clicking on little icons. The Tip icon is a little light bulb, the Expert is a guy with classes, and so on.

Test yourself

After a chapter is finished, there is a Self Check that is a little test that you can give yourself to ensure you've learned what they've been trying to teach you. The Self Check covers up a picture that only be answered once you've gone through the entire course.

Continued on page 5

Practice yourself

The Course also has several labs that the user can put themselves through. The problem with these labs is that they aren't as interactive as they could be. Microsoft has a great tradition of interactivity using Cue Cards that actually "sense" where you are. This technology wasn't put into the Labs, which is very disappointing.

Best of all

If you read the above stuff and said "so this isn't a great training product", you're right. The real wealth provided in the Mastering Visual FoxPro CDROM isn't in the course; it's in the other information that's on the CDROM. The course materials describe in very simple terms how to use the various tools that Visual FoxPro provides. But it doesn't go into a great deal of depth. This is reserved for the additional information. Most of the good stuff is stored in the Resource Library.

The Resource Library holds information from the 1995 Developer Conference, The Developer Network CDROM, Technet, and the Microsoft Knowledgebase. All of these areas can be accessed either through the actual Resource Library section or by searching for a topic.

Using the CDROM as a reference tool is a lot better than using the online help provided in Visual FoxPro because it covers more topics and includes tips and tricks. It's not a full reference guide but it provides detailed discussions on areas that are glossed over in the normal FoxPro manuals. How to work with 32 bit DLLs, real client/server work, analysis and design...these issues are all covered here.

Is it worth it?

So what's the total worth of Mastering Microsoft Visual FoxPro? Well, if you're looking for "in-depth, interactive training for Experienced Developers", which is how it's billed, I would suggest

looking elsewhere. Microsoft has set some ambitious goals for the Mastering series and it's not quite there yet but it's getting close. People have to remember that after all, Windows 95 was built on the experience gained from Windows 1.x through to Windows 3.11. With this product, it will be the same.

If, however, you're a beginner, you purchased Visual FoxPro and you haven't opened it yet, and you're not really sure how to work with it, it's a strong training tool, covering many basic topics in depth. If you are a FoxPro developer and you are in need of a strong resource library of Visual FoxPro related materials, it's got some great stuff. But if you already subscribe to Microsoft Developer Network, or TechNet, or have regular access to FoxPro forums on CompuServe, this is a product that you won't use and that is the real worth of any product.

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Internet SIG

I-SIG logo contest

by Jean Stalker

The Internet SIG needs a logo. We're looking for a simple, eye-catching design that symbolizes the Internet and the philosophy of 'Members helping Members'. It will be used in the Ottawa PC News and in the Net; possibly other uses will emerge later.

Parameters

- clear and recognizable
- submitted in two sizes (full page and thumb-nail) plus 3.5" diskette

- any shape, preferably equal in width and height
- preferably black & white, optionally in gray-scale or colour
- vector-based format
- created on a PC system

Judges

- David Curling, Coordinator, Internet SIG (731-5381)
- Bert Schopf, Coordinator, DTP SIG (838-3492)
- Chris Seal, Editor, Ottawa PC News (831-0280)

Deadline

Entries to reach Jean Stalker, 17 Kedgewick Court, Nepean, ON, K2G 4M9, before 5:00 p.m., April 19, 1996.

Decision

Decision of the judges is final. The winning entry becomes the property of the Ottawa PC Users' Group, and will be used for club purposes only.

The winner

To be announced at the April general meeting (April 30) and in the May edition of the Ottawa PC News.

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February's Internet SIG Meeting

by Jean Stalker

David Curling, I-SIG coordinator, was the speaker at the February meeting of the Internet SIG. His subject was 'Authoring Tools for the World Wide Web'. He began by outlining his own Internet routine, then went on to describe and demonstrate some of the tools he has found most useful in keeping himself up-to-date and in building and maintaining his Web sites. David currently maintains three sites:

- LODAY Systems Ltd,
<http://www.synapse.net/~lo-day/>
- The WWW Project Management Forum,
<http://www.synapse.net/~lo-day/PMForum/>
- The Project Management Institute of Canada
<http://www.synapse.net/~pmicanada>

Sites and applications discussed at the February meeting included:

- on-line resources
- editors and checkers
- page preparation tools
- author on-line help, an inventory of sites that provide assistance to web authors. Many readers will want to explore some of these sources for themselves. The sites are described in depth, and the references are cited (as URLs) in handouts provided by the speaker.

You can obtain a copy of the speaker's handouts (runtime version of a Freelance slide show) by anonymous ftp of `authtls.zip` from the following address: `ftp.synapse.net/private/1/lo-day/outgoing`.

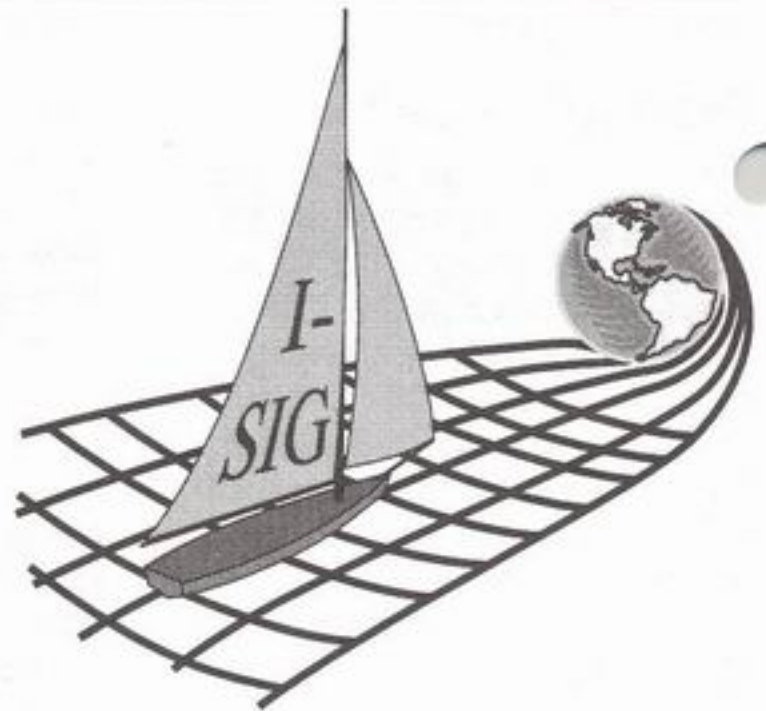
For a copy of the speaker's handout (`authtls.zip`) and Jean Stalker's report (`authrpt.txt`), the address is: `ftp.synapse.net/private/p/pmi-canada/outgoing`.

I-SIG calendar

Members Helping Members sessions are at Sir Robert Borden School, from 9:00-10:00 pm, immediately after the main OPCUG meetings.

Other presentations are held at Regional Government Headquarters, 111 Lisgar Street, from 7:30-9:00 pm.

- March 19, Members Helping Members
- March 14, Java Live. Java is a pivotal new development in Web technology, recently introduced by Sun Microsystems. It provides a way to include dynamic content in Web documents. Java consists of a programming language, a virtual machine, an application programming interface (API) and a Web browser (HotJava), every one of which is an important innovation. This rich new environment is rapidly becoming the focus for new development in many different



quarters and a turning point in the evolution of the Internet. The speaker will be Martin Kolesar, author of the feature article on Java in the January issue of Monitor Magazine. Mr. Kolesar will demonstrate the development of a simple Java application, illustrate some of the present uses for Java, and speculate about the directions it will take in the future.

- April 11, Death of the Document, presented by Mark Baker. Mark Baker sees the evolution of a new kind of interactive information product that will significantly improve delivery beyond traditional methods. To him, the Internet is a medium through which this new kind of information product can be developed and delivered. Mark Baker is a documentation professional working at Nortel on new authoring methods and information products.
- April 30, Members Helping Members
- June 04, Members Helping Members

For information, contact David Curling, I-SIG Coordinator, at

January and February winners

by Mark Cayer, Membership
Chairman

The Ottawa PC Users' Group thanks the presenters for donating the following door prizes at the general meetings.

January's meeting

Thanks to Western Digital for the 1 Gig hard disk won by Michel Perron.

February's meeting

Thanks to Look Software for the 'Seminar Special' purchase offers made to all club members for the 'Virus Alert' and 'Virus Alert Plus' software packages.

As well, the following members won a copy of Look Software's 'Virus Alert':

John Bond, Arthur Bowker, Patrick Brewer, Ed Mullen, Tracy Pitre, and Robert Watson.

Club news

Reuse, recycle

Bring your old computer magazines, books, or any other computer paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the general meetings, and leave them in the area specified. If you don't bring something, you may want to TAKE AWAY something of interest, so look in on this area. Any item left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to the dumpster.



Club news

Ontario Computer Fairs

The First local Ontario Computer Fair of 1996 is to be held on the weekend of April 27 and 28 at the Nepean Sportsplex, 1701 Woodroffe Avenue, between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm. As usual, the organizers of the OCF are providing OPCUG members a coupon for a dollar off the regular admission price.

Because the OPCUG's April meeting is just after the OCF (OPCUG meets on April 30). The announcement has to go out with this issue of the *Ottawa PC News*. Unfortunately, the schedule of events at the Ontario Computer Fair is not known by us at time of publication, but be reassured that there will be seminars on both days, as well as the static displays. The Ottawa Computer Users' Group encourages its members to attend the fair.



**ONTARIO
COMPUTER
FAIRS**

**\$1.00 Off
regular
Admission
Price**

**April
27 and 28**

Nepean Sportsplex
1701 Woodroffe Ave

**Ottawa PC
User's Group**

This coupon MAY be photo-copied

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Ottawa PC News

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members. Deadline for submissions is four Sundays before the general meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG normally meets on the second Tuesday in the month, except in July at Sir Robert Borden HS, 131 Greenbank Road, Nepean.

Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.

Disk-of-the Month: \$25 for either 5.25-in or 3.5-inch diskettes (10 diskettes).

Mailing Address

3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6
Telephone answering machine 723-1329

Bulletin board—the PUB (BBS)

Up to 28.8 kbps v.34 228-0665 (6 lines)

Chairman

Harald Freise 828-3411

Treasurer

Tony Frith (819)671-0401

Secretary

David Reeves 723-9658

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer 224-8031

Software Librarian

Jorgen (John) Rasmussen 821-3040

Judy Tomlin (assistant) 821-3040

BBS Sysop

Chris Taylor 723-1329

Newsletter

Chris Seal (editor) 831-0280

Julie Dustin (assistant editor) 823-1552

Jean Vaumoron (Mr.) (layout) 731-7847

Public Relations

Bob Herres 836-7532

Facilities

Bob Walker 489-2084

Beginners' Corner

To be announced

DTP SIG Coordinator

Bert Schopf 838-3492

Fox SIG coordinator

Andrew Ross MacNeill (voice/fax) 596-3313

Internet SIG coordinator

David Curling 731-5381
curlingd@today.com

OS/2 SIG Coordinator

Jocelyn Doire (Mr.) Please contact via PUB

Paradox SIG coordinator

Larry Chop 236-8761 (days)

Windows SIG coordinator

Philip Baker 247-9555



Club news

Newsletter submissions

We are always looking for articles, reviews, tips, in fact, anything that may be of value to the readers of the Ottawa PC News.

The deadline for a particular month's issue is four Sundays before that month's general meeting. That gives us a week to prepare the newsletter, a week to have it printed, and just over a week for it to pass through the mail system in order for readers to receive it prior to the meeting.

Your submission should be in straight ASCII text: no formatting, no margins, no justification, no indents or outdents, no tabs, and a single carriage return between paragraphs. It is a lot easier for us to work with unformatted text. If you want special formatting, you can in-

clude the instruction in the text, enclosed in curly braces { }. Ensure that your name, as you want it to appear in the byline, is included in the file. You might want to add your phone number (which will not be published) so we can reach you if we have any questions.

We reserve the right to edit submissions for length and clarity.

Upload your submission to The PUB in the File-Send-Newsletter area. Although once it has been uploaded you cannot see it, rest assured that we will. Alternatively, put your submission on a disk, and hand it over to the Newsletter Editor (or other executive) at a general meeting.

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PC Users Group Of Ottawa
(OPCUG Member #: B066 Expires: Free)
C/O Chris Taylor
3 Thatcher St.
Nepean, Ont.
K2G 1S6

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