OTTAWA PC NEWS

Club news

Welcome back!

I hope everyone had a great summer. Now is the time to trade in your beach balls for trackballs and your iced tea for mice with USB. You get the picture-the OPCUG is back for another season of "users helping users" with computers.

We hope to present an interesting and stimulating lineup of presentations at the General Meetings. Our Special Interest Groups are fine forums for many specific computer disciplines. Wander into a SIG meeting sometime. There is a great wealth of information W thin our membership and this is just one way to tap into it-or contribute to it!

PUB II, the OPCUG communications (webBBS) server is up and running and being continually developed. Check it out. Try it with Wildcat! Not sure what that is? Sysop Chris Taylor has promised to offer another "how-to" session on PUB II communications tools including Listserve and many other features you probably didn't know existed! Whether you're a beginner or an advanced user, there's something for you in OPCUG. Got an idea? Share it with us. It's your club. Want to get more involved? Talk to us (or e-mail us or post a message on the PUB II, etc.). Ours is a community of volunteers with a common interest: learning from others and

sharing what we know Why? I guess we like working and playing with computers.

Bert Schopf
President, OPCUG

PS. Feel free to contact me or any member of your Board of Directors, whose addresses are conveniently located on the back page of this newsletter.

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INSIDE

Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, September 2ᵗʰ, 1998**

An HTML and *Java primer by Bert*

Come to the season opener of the OPCUG's General Meetings to get up to speed on basic HTML and Java. We are pleased to welcome presenters Sean Creaghan, from Griffin Computer Training and Consulting, and Dave Healey, President of Kinetic Imagery, to our September 2nd meeting.

Mr. Creaghan will explain how easily HTML can be coded by demonstrating how a series of formatting tags translate into a web page. He u-ill also explain the functional relationships of the Internet's nuts and bolts: servers, web sites, browsers, editors and other applications.

Then he will provide a brief description of Java and JavaScript and demonstrate what you really need to know to use them.

Mr. Healey will then demonstrate web-based applications using PERL and scripting languages to show various web design possibilities.

If you've web-surfed other sites and are ready to set up your own, this promises to be a useful session. If you already have a web site, pick up some pointers to update it.

Surfing the Internet, how to make your own big wave

by David Reeves

You're cruising on **a 300 MHz, MMX Pentium PC with 64 MB RAM,** 4 GB hard drive and a 3D accelerator video card. Even with your WAVE or ADSL connection, it feels like you're doing the dog paddle when you are out trying to surf the Web. Time is precious; if your surfboard is a 386/33 with 8 MB of RAM, as I used to use, you will do everything you can to make the most of the resources you have.

At the March ISIG meeting, I moderated a white board discussion of how to optimize your time on the Internet. We came up with 14 ideas on how to make better use of ;;our time. Here are a few of those suggestions; all 14 ideas have been posted on the ISIG conference area on PUB II.

• Use three browsers: Use Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator as necessary for those sites that support one browser exclusively. The third browser should be one of the many alternates that are available. The Opera browser was favourably commented upon at the meeting and is one that I use most of the time at home Occupying less than 2 MB of disc space, it is very quick, it is easy to use and has the majority of the features that are available on the mainstream browsers.

• Choose what you want to see and when you want to see it. Turn off' graphics since most sites alternate text with graphics. Turn off Java.

Calendar		
Meetings	**Date**	**Time and venue**
OPCUG General Meeting	September 2nd . **HTML and Java basics** See Coming up article, above.	7:30 p.m. - National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Ottawa Paradox Users Group	Third Thursday of each month	6:15 pin - Inly Systems, 1221a Cyrville Rd.
FOX Pro/Developers SIG	To be announced	7:15 pin - Sir Jean Talon Building Conference room, Tunney's Pasture, Holland Ave. (north of Scott St.)
PIG SIG (or is it WING SIG?)	September 2°d After all the other SIGS - All questions, be the q y serious or not	"Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe

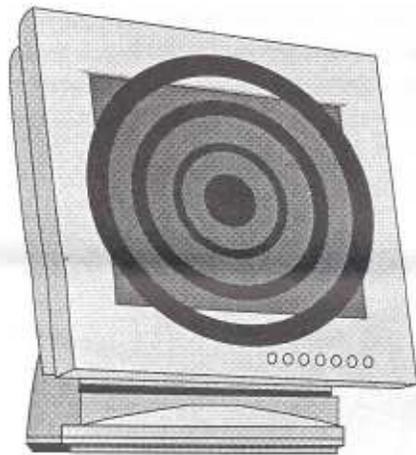# The Year 2000 and the Small Business Computer by Terance P. Mahoney

It's difficult to avoid hearing about the many electronic disasters that are going to afflict our society with the coming of the year 2000. There is an abundance of horror stories suggesting plummeting aircraft, falling elevators and other catastrophes. These stories have proven popular with the press and have spread as much or more misinformation as they have truth. Some of this misinformation applies to the small business computing environment. In particular, some of the suggested tests for year 2000 compliant computers do not ensure compliance.

Let's consider potential problems. Initially, there are three areas that may present problems to you and your business:

Problems

• **Computers-The** system BIOS must be year 2000 compliant and the real time clock must be compliant. Many do-it-yourself tests will check the BIOS, but do not test the real time clock for compliance. Partial compliance may not effect your data until the computer shuts down (possibly a power failure).

  -Operating Systems-According to Microsoft, MS DOS 6.22, WFWG 3.11, Win95, NT work station v4.0 and NT Server 4.0

are compliant with minor issues. Some of these minor issues require downloading patches or new executables to bring the OS into full compliance. Novell versions 3.11 through 4.10 require patches and anything earlier than 3.11 seems to be unsupported. Any of these operating systems may have problems depending on the hardware's BIOS.
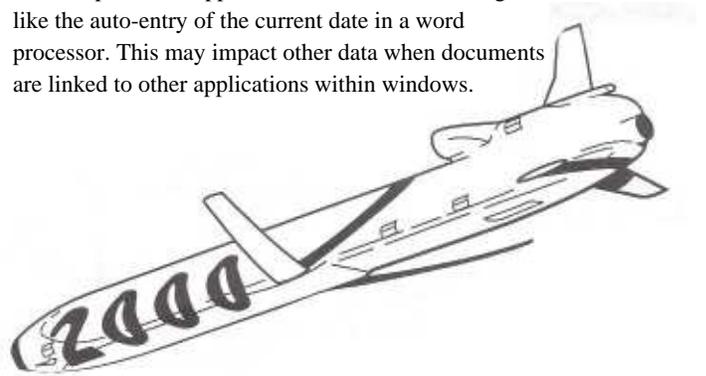
  -Applications Software-There are two distinct areas for compliance with applications software: the application including its screens and the way data is stored. Many Xbase storage systems have compliant date data with noncompliant programs. In later versions of Xbase there is a program system setting that enables the display of dates with centuries. This setting does not bring screens and reports into

compliance. The most frequent source of corruption of Xbase tables is using third party tools on the tables. This can be of particular concern where dates are involved.

Accounting programs must be reviewed on their own merits. Pre-scheduled items like lease or rent payments may be the first indications that you have problems. Every effort should be made to determine if your applications comply Generally this means contacting your software vendor or manufacturer.

Noncompliance in applications can be a small thing like the auto-entry of the current date in a word processor. This may impact other data when documents are linked to other applications within windows.

Solutions

• **Computers-Use** a BIOS board, or replace the BIOS and real time clock. Cost is generally too high to make this a desirable solution except in the case of an expensive server.

Replace the motherboard. Cost generally compares favourably to the above. For work stations care should be taken that the supplier warrants a compliant motherboard.

Replace the computer system. This can be cost effective, particularly where non-compliant software and an operating system are being upgraded at the same time.

• **Operating systems-If** the computer is compliant, the choice may be between upgrading the software and getting the fixes appropriate to the operating system you are presently using. You should be aware that Microsoft is recommending NT Workstation for all business systems. Computers can be compliant without having sufficient resources to support NT

NT Server will support work stations running Win9x. Another alternative is N T Terminal Server edition.

Generally a small business will have insufficient work stations to make terminal server cost effective.

-Applications software-If the computer is compliant, you will need to consider each application individually. Costs associated with upgrading software can be higher than replacing the software. The most significant cost associated with new or upgraded software is training, not the cost of the software.

In summary; every small business is unique and will have its own requirements. Hardware compliance is the first step in preparing your business for the millennium. It is not the only step. Use every resource available to you including your suppliers. Members of the OPCUG are prepared to assist you in making the right choices.

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<u>Club News</u>

An Electronic Village-Part 1 *by Terance P. Mahoney*

Several months ago there was an article in the Citizen lamenting the death of the BBS. Marshall McLuhan may have contemplated the global village, but the problem is that the

global village is populated with strangers. A BBS provided a local village, sort of like the Pub in Cheers, where everyone knows your name. OPCUG's BBS "The Pub" (version I) provided that kind of friendly environment in the User Forums. I, for one, would like to recreate that environment on PUB II.

You see, I would rather get help from someone I know, not some anonymous nickname. I also think that the advice you get is significantly better when the giver is prepared to meet you face to face. I would like to think that "talking" to people you know cuts down on chaff by eliminating flame wars and just plain rudeness.

We still have all these forums on PUB II. They can be entered directly when you log on to PUB II. If you don't want to log on to the PUB II and check the forums daily there is another way The OPCUG has set up Lists for every forum. By subscribing to a list you can use your e-mail to post queries, carry on a conversation, and get all the open

dialogue in a forum. It's really easy to subscribe. I say this although it took me three tries to spell the address correctly.
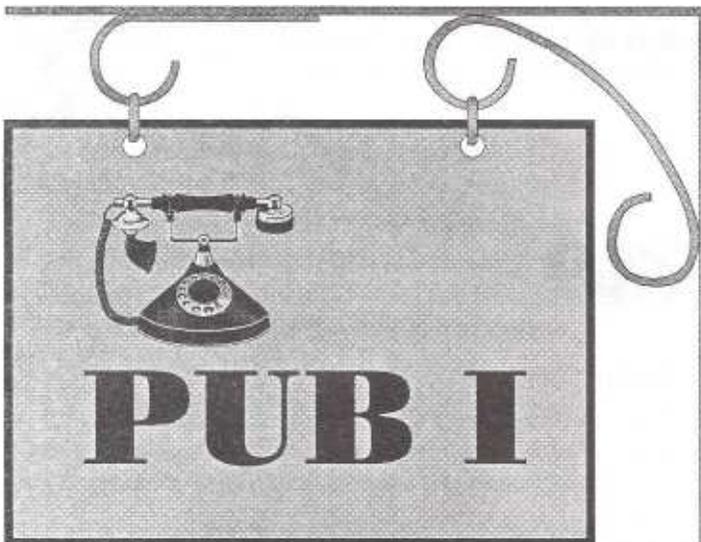
To subscribe to a list, send mail to the administration address (listserve@opcug.ottawa.com) with the command "subscribe" followed by the name of the list. Make sere this command is on the first line of the message body. For example, to subscribe to the "general" list, send the command: subscribe general.

If you need assistance, Chris Taylor is more than willing to help you. Send him a message.

Come on people. Let's get some dialogue going. Post some messages. Subscribe to a list. Make your voice heard. We all would like to hear from you.

I'm amazed how much time I can save on the Net if I check the forums first or post a message. Yon the members are a valuable resource to one another. Users helping users is what this club is about. I can't even help myself if I don't speak up.

© Aug 1998 Terance B Mahoney

KeyView Pro 6 *Software Review*

Many computer users are faced with a daily quandary: how to view data files produced by applications that they do not own. Windows *95* shipped with a "lite" version of Quick View Plus; however, it had fewer filters than its commercial sibling and now those are dated. I obtained Verity's KeyView Pro, version 6, originally to use with Windows *95*. When I upgraded to Windows *98, I* didn't bother determining its inherent capabilities; instead, I re-installed KeyView Pro. If you have more robust requirements, have a look. KeyView Pro is a file utility that supports viewing over 200 file formats without requiring the presence of the application itself. Principal features include support for:
 • Documents-current and legacy formats from word processors, spreadsheets, and presentation graphics (includes Corel Suite 8, Microsoft Office 97 and Lotus SmartSuite 97) and the Clipboard,
 • E-mail-Eudora Pro, Lotus notes, Microsoft Exchange and Outlook, Netscape Mail, and others,
 • Brow sers-Netscape (and most plugin filters) and Internet Explorer (as an ActiveX object), versions 3 or later,
 • Faxes (DCX and TIFF),
 • Multimedia-sound (AIF, WAV MID) and video (MPG, MOV, AVI),
 • Graphics-most current file formats including Web-based,
 • Compression (Zip, Z-comp, GZ) and Encoding/Decoding (BinHex, MIME, TAR, UU),
 • Viewing documents as formatted, text or hex,
 • Searching for data within a file or copying data from a file,

 • Converting files from one format to anotherincluding HTML and a versatile batch option,
 • Encrypting files with PGP (web download), and
 • Printing single or multiple files.
The program integrates with Windows 95, 98 and NT 4.0. Using Windows 95 (OSR2) it installed readily and has worked without problems for me (about three weeks of use). I subsequently installed the Windows 98 upgrade: same story Choose either a typical (6.2 MB) installation that disregards the legacy data formats or a complete (10.2 MB) one. Netscape plugins provide support for Adobe Acrobat (PDF), Autocad (DWG/DXF), Corel, MicroGrafx (Designer and Draw), and RealAudio; there are others. Some might miss a Custom option; however, the "hit" for the complete installation is quite modest in this age of program bloat.
 It was refreshing, in this age of electronic documentation, to find not only a printed manual but also a coil-ring binding that will lie fiat on your desk.
 Specialty file viewer programs might offer more formats in one category; instead, KeyView provides great breadth with a realistic selection of filters for mainstream use. At present, it could not display Access files in native format although I expect that this deficiency would be rectified. It is reasonably priced (about *$50* at local stores) and one-third less expensive than a leading competitor. A 30 day, full-feature, trial version is available from the website: http: //www. keyview. com.

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Windows 98 - Up Close and Personal

Software Review

Your erstwhile editor sacrificed himself and upgraded to Windows 98. My experiences to date relate to my own machine: a hot-well, it was when I bought it-Pentium 166, 64 MB memory with an ASUS motherboard and the FX chipset. Initially I upgraded over Windows 95 but then decided to "clean house" and install to a freshly formatted hard drive. Now, there are pros and cons to each approach. The upgrade is less time consuming since you do not have to reinstall all your applications; conversely, it may allow a lot of unnecessary baggage to remain.

Installation

This installation is certainly smoother and faster. There were many fewer questions to answer; Windows 98 Setup has automated most of the hardware detection and for me it was flawless. As a test, I turned on my vintage scanner with a proprietary pseudo-SCSI card; Windows 98 detected it and installed its driver! Under Windows 95, I was on my own.

Windows 98 is supposed to be faster and more stable. I have not noticed any speed differences-mind you, 1 did not time everything with a stopwatch. Suffice to say that it is not noticeably slower! Crashes: Windows 95 did on occasion. Windows 98 itself has crashed much less frequently; however, I notice that the Windows 95 crash-prone applications still crash on occasion while running under Windows 98. On the plus side, they rarely dragged Windows 98 down with them. Check the Websites for your applications; there are many Windows 98 upgrades available.

I have inactivated the Active Desktop and Webcasting. This might be useful if you are a Microsoft Network client. I am not; "nuff said!" Anyway, tradition dies hard.

Yes, I installed FAT 32. I was not desperate for hard drive space; however, I believe that the future is here and I might as well adjust. Yes, it does promote efficiency (smaller clusters) although I can't determine if it is faster or slower. Regarding stability: well, it has not crashed -yet! To be fair, any drive will crash; the correct question is "when," not "if" and the FAT version is not relevant. I feel more secure running FAT 32 than I did while experimenting with drive compression (Stacker, DoubleSpace or DriveSpace).

Problems?

Yes, there are reports of problems: indeed, horror stories; however, that has not been my experience. Apparently, there are problems with some applications (these are third party reports and not my personal experiences) including: Office 95 or earlier, Photoshop4.x and some plugins for it, and some development packages. For those anticipating upgrading a

Stacker compressed drive-don't; remove the compression before upgrading.

Many applications will run better with the latest version; often, these are free downloads from the company's Website. In particular, upgrade utilities (for example: Norton Utilities, Nuts and Bolts or First Aid) to make them FAT 32 aware. Virus checkers and backup programs are other potential problems.

Given the wide choice of backup media available, I was disappointed that Windows 98 backup module (licensed from Seagate Software) supports only QIC 80 devices-support for removable media (Zip drive) would have been a nice touch. Seagate apparently offers an all the "bells and whistles" upgrade if you are willing to pay.

I have no new hardware (for example, USE, AGP or notebook power management) and cannot comment from personal experience. Out-takes from others suggest that USE enjoys improved support; most of the problems reported under Windows 95 are history I gather AGP is disappointing for some; however, this may be merely a question of software drivers for a new technology (similar to USE's problems running under Windows 95).

The Windows 95 Tweak UI has been upgraded; the new version is on the upgrade CD-ROM. (I don't know about OEM versions.) The other Powertoys, from Windows 95, remain functional. Microsoft's policy remains unchanged: while Powertoys and Tweak UI are in-house creations they are not officially supported.

VCM

One nagging problem that you may experience: the Version Conflict Manager (VCM) is a utility to track disabled files and provide a way to restore earlier file versions. Unfortunately Windows 98 Setup gives no notice the files are changed. If Win 98's Setup detects a more recent shared file from a competitor then Setup relocates the file-that is, disables it. Windows 98 installs the older "Windows 98 shipping" version of the same file into the proper location. Microsoft claims that this will establish a common baseline operating system; practically, the bottom line is applications don't work. (An aside: your editor's attempt at humour-rumour has it that Microsoft has posters stating: "The job's not done until the competitors' software won't run.") Frequent victims are: TWAIN.DLL, version 1.6.0.3 replaced by 1.6.0.1; MSCONV97.DLL, version 1997.4.2 replaced by 1997.3.12; and W951NF32.DLL, version 4.71.17 by 4.71.16.

Windows 98 *(Continued)*

VCM is only turned on during Windows 98 install; then it ceases to monitor the system. A subsequent third-party installation that causes a problem will not activate it. If you experience problems immediately after the Windows 98 Setup routine check VCM: click Start... Programs... Accessories... System Tools... System Information... Tools... Version Conflict Manager to determine if any shared files were changed. It should show the names and version numbers of any modified files.

Office 97

If you elect the clean install and you own Office 97 you may experience a bizarre problem when you attempt to perform the Service Patch I upgrade. Windows 98 incorporates a utility called SpeedLoad. This utility rearranges the application files on the hard drive to speed the loading process. By default, this feature is activated in Windows 98. (As an aside, Norton Utilities has a similar program called Norton Optimization Wizard. I suspect that this utility might trigger the same result.) While rearranging the file module order on the hard drive does speed loading the application, the Office 97 patch, in contrast, expects to find various modules of code in a specific relationship. SpeedLoad has usurped this relationship; the patch will fail! To avoid this problem you must disable-temporarily, at least-SpeedLoad (suggestion: rename the executable, C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM\ WALIGN.EXE) before you install Office 97 and the subsequent patch. Once the patch has been applied, SpeedLoad can be re-enabled. If you were caught already then you must deinstall Office 97, disable SpeedLoad and reinstall Office 97.

Plus Pack

I also opted to obtain the Windows 98 Plus! Pack. Although I am not a game,, rave notices about Lose Your Marbles have been posted by several trade writers. For those who enjoy CD music while you work, the Deluxe CD Player has also received good grades. If you are entering the world of image editing, Microsoft has included a lite version of Picture-It. (Windows already includes a version of Wang/Kodak's Imaging

utility that I believe has similar capabilities; pay your money and make your choice.) I was mainly interested in the McAfee Virus Scan package to upgrade an older engine. While an upgrade is an option, if you consider only the direct cost plus exchange rates (download from the Website) then the rest of the Plus! Pack is a freebie. The Windows 95 Plus! Pack screen savers are now part of the Windows 98 upgrade package (OEM?). Plus! Pack 98 has several new themes for those who want a change of scenery.

Upgrading the upgrades

Despite the "just released" status of Windows 98 there are already several upgrades. The Microsoft Intellimouse (with the scrolling wheel) has a software upgrade. Windows 98 included a driver; however, this offered no significant new features. The upgrade will add the scrolling feature to most applications instead of the limited array at present.

Hilgraeve is offering a free upgrade for the version of HyperTerminal that shipped with Windows 98. It promises a number of improvements and a few bug fixes. I use it infrequently and have had no problems; however, the price is right.

Multimedia

The multimedia arena is primed for several updates. Windows 98 shipped with DirectX, version 5. Direct X is a series of system utilities that run in the background to support multimedia (for example: motion video, 3D, sound, joysticks). Microsoft has posted DirectX, version 6 for download (about 1.6 MB) from its Website. There is also a Windows 95 version, I believe. Other upgrades or add-ins scheduled to appear include: Media Player

(incorporated into Internet Explorer 4), more fonts (primarily for the Web), Microsoft Chat 2.5 and WebTV Guide.

Microsoft my release these individually or as an upgrade. They hesitate to use "Service Pack" as the description; however, some bug fixes will be incorporated. No release date is announced; internally, Microsoft is "aiming" for late August or September 98.

Explorer

One bug that certainly deserves extinction is the Explorer file deletion bug. If you navigate quickly among different folders (directories) while deleting files in some folders, it is possible that the wrong files would be deleted since Explorer has not recorded the folder changes accurately.

OTTAWA PC NEWS

Surfing the Internet (continued from page 2)

Turn on cookies! Most people do not like the idea that information is being gathered about them. On the other hand, cookies are a great way to avoid entering your name, password and personal preferences every time you visit the same site. It may not save you a lot of time, but every minute counts and it does reduce some of the aggravation.

• Open two browser windows. If you are memory rich, open up three or four. If you intend to visit three or four sites, initiate the visit to all of them at the same time. Browse through the one that loads the quickest while the slower ones continue to load. Some uses for this approach include: downloading a file in one browser window while continuing to navigate through the site in another window and opening several newsgroups or conducting a chat session while surfing on other pages if you are really into multi-tasking

Hope these ideas help make your next ride on the Internet a little more enjoyable.

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Club News

Prizes at June General Meeting by Mark Cayer

Rod Davidson won a copy of Microsoft Golf and Paul Gagne received a Microsoft Technet CD.

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Club life

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 yon 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... recycle bin.

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