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Software Review

“Two-for-One” (WMatch32 and CaseRename)

by Alan German

I really like utility programs. There are always tasks which the operating system, and the associated accessory software, either can't do at all, or doesn't do very efficiently. This situation provides the niche for clever programmers to work their magic and rescue mere mortals.

My recent job has been managing a web site with over 200 individual files; most are HTML code and many are frequently being updated. I actually do keep frequent backups, using floppy disks, of all this material—gasp—every time files change! I also switch the files among my machine at home, my machine at work, occasionally a laptop computer, and the previously mentioned floppy backup disks.

Furthermore, I use a mix of DOS copy commands and file utilities from both Windows 95 and Windows NT. Not only are there numerous opportunities for files to get out of synch but also their names switch case with monotonous regularity (a problem with a case-sensitive web server).

Here's one situation where two small utility programs come in very handy...

WMatch32

In the good old days I used PC Magazine's DOS-based freeware utility, DirMatch, with its two-panel view, to synchronize files in two directories. Eventually, I switched to WMatch32—the GUI successor to DirMatch (available as version 1.1.0.0, PC Magazine, 7 November 95, written by Michael Mefford and revised for 32-bit Windows by Neil J. Rubenking). This program works fine—until it encounters long file names. At this point the insidious tilde character(~) enters the fray, and essentially it's game over!

To avoid such trauma, I have steadfastly maintained a file system with 8.3 file names and extensions. But, all good things must come to an end. I recently discovered how to develop on-line, server-side-processed forms. The downside is that my ISP insists that the associated code files must have an .shtml extension; I must use long filenames—like it or not.

Fortunately, PC Magazine came to the rescue with the release of a 32 bit version of WMatch which, among other features, handles long file names with no difficulty (no tildes).

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Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, October 6th, 1999**

October 6th

We shall gain an insight into Future Directions in Computing Technology for Home/Office Users, as presented by Peter Leach, President, CITO (Communications and Information Technology Ontario)

November 3rd

OPCUG Annual Computer Swap Meet. Need we stress this is an important event, which you should start preparing for right now.

As you start setting aside all the goodies you have not used for some time and are prepared to sell or swap at the meet, try to remember that they will indeed be used by somebody else. Their new user will be glad to have the manuals and the spare parts you got when you first opened the box, connecting cables, CD-roms, installation diskettes and all necessary items; even the notes you took when faced with some difficulties could be of help to the new owner.

December 1st

Digital Cameras, presented by John Stephens, General Manager, The Focus Centre



Out of disk space

by Dunc Petrie

Microsoft has acknowledged that under certain circumstances an "out of disk space" error message can occur while installing new software. Invariably, unused drive capacity is not the real issue. Microsoft associates the problem with its Internet Explorer, version 4.01; however, keep this tip in mind if you experience false error messages about a lack of hard drive capacity. The full report is found on Microsoft's Knowledge Base at: <http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/q189/7/87.asp>.

The problem

According to Microsoft: "The problem can occur due to the way the value for free space on your hard disk is calculated. Information about the amount of free space on your hard disk is stored in a dword value in the Registry. If this amount exceeds 4 GB of free disk space, the amount over 4 GB is moved into another dword value, and it is this new value that Setup examines to verify the amount of free space on your hard disk. For example, if this new dword value is 50 MB (because the amount over

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Calendar

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	October 6 th : Future Directions in Computing Technology for Home/Office Users, by Peter Leach, President, CITO (see above) November 3 rd : OPCUG Annual Computer Swap Meet December 1 st : Digital Cameras	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 pm - Inly Systems, 1221a Cyrville Rd.
FOX Pro/Developers SIG	To be announced	7:15 pm - Sir Jean Talon Building Conference room, Tunney's Pasture, Holland Ave. (north of Scott St.)
PIG SIG (or is it WING SIG?)	October 6 th , after all the other SIG's - All questions, be they serious or not	"Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe

Installation is simple. Unpack the archive (ZIP file) into a specific directory, and create a desktop shortcut to the executable file. There are no registry entries, no DLLs scattered across the disk: just a ready-to-run file system.

Similarly, operation is simplicity itself. Disk and file directory selections are made in a Windows Explorer-like menu. Two selected directories are displayed side-by-side. Options include: comparing All Files, Different Files, or Alike Files. Tag individual files, or all displayed files (using a single check box) in the selected window. Tagged files can be deleted, copied or moved to the other window. Thus, the backup task is simplified; merely copy all the "different" files from the working directory on the hard drive to the backup floppy disk.

There are a couple of nice new features of the 32-bit version of WMatch (over the operation of the earlier 16-bit program). Directory selection is made with a single mouse click, rather than a double click. Also, the program continues working normally when a floppy disk is switched. In the earlier version, in this situation, the program was unable to read the new disk's directory structure.

CaseRename

I noted that the use of multiple machines and different operating systems can lead to changes in the case of file names—names appear in lower case, upper case, and even first character as upper case, depending on the application accessing the file. You could resolve this problem by over-typing, in Windows Explorer, the leading capital letter of each filename with the equivalent lower case character in rename-mode. With dozens of files spread throughout a



lower case

directory holding hundreds of files this isn't a welcome proposition!

Chris Taylor, OPCUG's all-knowing SYSOP, came to the rescue by suggesting a couple of utility programs which change the case of filenames automatically. In my view, the slickest of the two is CaseRename (version 1.3, freeware written by Kjetil L. Nygård, 1997, www.uio.no/~kln/).

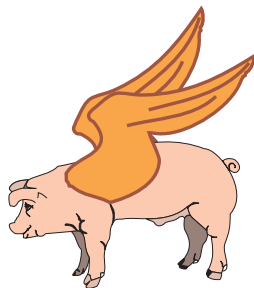
Like WMatch32, installation consists of unpacking the archive to a directory on the hard drive and creating an appropriate shortcut (my preferred method of file startup). Operation is intuitive. Running the program (written and compiled in Borland Delphi 3.0) creates a three-panel box on the screen. The middle panel is marked "make lowercase". Drag a bunch of files onto this panel and their file names in the original directory are quickly changed to all lower case characters. My kind of software!



Club Life

Fly West

The "Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe, for chicken wings and a drink after the General meeting: may be the best and most informative SIG meeting of the evening. See you there!



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 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... recycle bin.



OmniPage Pro, Version 9.0 by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.

Anyone who uses a scanner eventually wants to read a text document into their word processor. When you scan anything it is read into your computer as a series of white or black dots (pixels). Essentially it is a picture. Since word processors can't edit a picture directly you need to convert this picture to letters and numbers. That's a job for OCR (optical character recognition) software.

Most scanners are sold with a "light" version of OCR software. Although these applications can convert your scanned document to text, they generally have a limited capability. For example, they usually cannot convert pages with both graphics and text. They may also have some problems in terms of the accuracy of the conversion. Caere's OmniPage Pro is the very powerful upgrade of its limited version. The upgrade is available to anyone who has any other OCR software regardless of manufacturer. Caere guarantees that this software will work with your scanner, or they will refund your money.

Installation

I didn't bother to read the manual before I installed the software. I simply put in the CD-ROM and let the auto-run start the installation program. During the install process the program asked me to pick the brand of my scanner from a list, then it checked whether I wanted the 16-bit or the 32-bit driver. After that, it finished the installation. It was very fast and simple. Next, I inserted Caere's test document in my scanner and started the program.

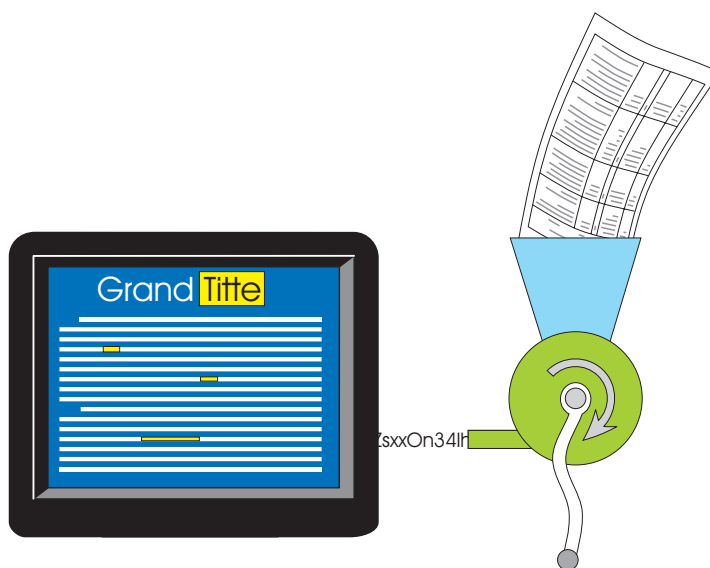
A quick test

The user interface offers a choice of an Auto button, a Load button, a Zone button, an OCR button and an Export button. Each one of these buttons has a drop-down list allowing you to select from several functions. For example, the Auto button can be changed to Auto OCR or OCR Wizard. If you have never used OCR software before, the OCR Wizard will lead you through the entire process, step by step—using your pre-selected settings or the program's default settings.

I selected Scan Image on the list under the Image button. Next, I clicked the Image button, which brought up the scanning software. I performed a preview scan to be certain the scanner margins fit the document. Then I scanned the

document and it displayed in a window in the OmniPage Pro desktop. Since the document was straight text, I next clicked on the OCR button. This quickly converted the document and displayed the result in another window. Then I clicked on the Export button and saved the document as a WordPerfect file. After I opened the document in Word Perfect, I found no spelling errors! That's the first time that I have done an OCR with no errors. Since it was Caere's test page I figured that really wasn't an adequate test of the software. Next, I used a page from a newsletter that had a combination of text and graphics. When this was scanned, OmniPage Pro had placed lines around the text area and the graphics area. These are the marked "zones" in the document. The only thing that it had not done was recognize that the page was two columns. I then selected the multi-columns choice

under the zones button. I processed the document using OCR & Proof: it was converted and the possible spelling errors were brought up on-screen for checking and correction. The number of errors was less than five words. After they were corrected, I was able to export the document, with its graphics, into WordPerfect. That's something that my efforts with earlier OCR software had not been able to accomplish.



Always read the manual

The manual is well organized, clearly written and has a good index. I didn't have to start with OmniPage. Post-installation, there are two new items on WordPerfect's File menu, "Acquire Text" and "Acquire Text Settings." Using these I can scan a document, convert it to text and have it show up in Word Perfect (as long as the default settings will accommodate the document you wish to scan). If the document needs some special settings, then you should start in OmniPage. Using

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it either way, I find that it works with a high degree of accuracy.

Additional capabilities

There are some additional functions in Omnipage Pro that aren't available in the limited versions. One important option is the ability to recognize and export information in tables. However, I recommend that you work directly from the Omnipage program if your document has tables. I found that trying to work on tables while WordPerfect was operating was not satisfactory. The same is true if you are working from a printed spreadsheet. After you have converted it with the OCR button, save it either as a spreadsheet (in Excel, Quattro Pro or Lotus) or as a word processing document. The latter will open as a table in Word Perfect or Word.

Precautions

There are a number of things that can degrade the quality of the final output from Omnipage Pro. First, and most important, is the quality of the document that you want to scan. Second is the complexity of the document. Straight text is not really a problem for this program. However, when you mix text, graphics and tables, you need to spend some time in the setup process before you try to convert the document. The better your preparation, the better the outcome. I also found in my documents that Omnipage flagged many correct words simply because they were not in the dictionary it was using.

However, as you add words you commonly use to the dictionary, the processing time will be reduced.

Conclusions

If you need to edit scanned documents in your word processor, then you really can use this software. There is no doubt in my mind that it will save you time and certainly reduce the amount of typing that you have to do. This program is highly recommended. Omnipage Pro is published by the Caere Corporation, 100 Cooper Court, Los Gatos, CA, USA. The street price for the upgrade to version 9.0 is \$99.00 (US). The full version is priced at \$499.00 (US).

[Editor's Note: If you want to "try before you buy," then a full-function version is available from www.caere.com. This 40 MB download is limited to 15 scans.]

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System Tweak

Y2K System Date

For those running Windows (9x and NT), here is one Y2K problem that can be repaired quickly and easily.

1. Double click My Computer and select Settings.
2. Double click on Control Panel and then Regional settings.
3. Click on the Date tab at the top.
4. Where it says, Short Date Sample, determine if it displays the year using a two digit format. This is the default for Win 9x and NT. This format is vitally important; it is the system date source for many software applications. In two digit format it will not roll-over correctly for the year 2000.
5. Click on the button beside Short Date Style and select instead the option that shows MM/dd/yyyy. Be certain that your selection displays four 'y's.
6. Click on the Apply button. Click on OK. That's it!





WINDOWS

DUNC PETRIE'S CORNER

BEGINNERS



Graphics Potpourri

Latest news

One of the longest-standing truisms of bitmap graphics is: "Never use resampling—aka interpolation—to enlarge an image." Bitmap images are pixel-based and are the product of scans, digital cameras and image-editing software like Adobe's Photoshop, Corel's PhotoPaint and JASC's Paint Shop Pro. While various algorithms could be employed, along with an assortment of sharpening filters (some surprisingly sophisticated), the bottom line is invariably image degradation.

Now, Altamira Group, a software company that specializes in creating production filters for use within image editors, has discovered a way to break—or at the very least, severely bend—the "rules."

How? Altamira has created an algorithm that converts the images to a fractal graphic. Fractal graphics are responsible for much of the digital landscape scenery. It is also used to produce a kaleidoscope of textures and patterns for image backgrounds. While intriguing uses, in this instance fractals have one endearing feature: essentially infinite scaling without visible degradation.

It is available as a Photoshop plug-in with two variants: one for RGB only (for the Web) and the other for multiple environments (output to Web, printers, etc). A demo is available on their Website: www.altamira-group.com.

Wacom's Graphire

Last November, the feature presentation demonstrated Wacom's new graphics tablet: Intuos. For dedicated digital artists, a tablet is a necessity. Precision, pressure sensitivity and more natural hand movements are inescapable benefits. For more casual followers, the drawback was cost. Wacom also had an introductory-level tablet called the Pen Partner (about \$120 locally).

In an effort to bring Intuos' features downscale, Wacom will launch, on October 15, the Graphire with a list price of \$99 (US)—about the same as the Pen Partner. However, unlike that tablet, the Graphire integrates both a mouse and a graphics tablet. The former is a cordless, 3-button wheel-scrolling mouse with no ball to clog and higher sensitivity than the usual mouse. The pen uses no battery, offers pressure sensitivity, two side buttons and an eraser. The tablet has a 4 inch by 5 inch active area, 0.02 inch accuracy and resolution over 1000 lines per inch.

The system is compatible with Windows 9.x or NT 4.0. Both serial port and USB versions will be available.

Bundled applications include Photoshop plugins, handwriting annotation software and Painter Classic, an image editor.

Windows Tip

Customize the Start Menu

If you have a lot of folders in your Start Menu, try this. By default, Windows 98 arranges the Start Menu folders in a single column. You are forced to scroll this list to locate entries at the extremes. Instead, customize Windows by using multiple columns.

Let's visit the Registry (backup first). Open Regedit and navigate to: `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\explorer`. In the pane on the

extreme right, you must create a new Text Value: namely, "StartMenuScrollPrograms" (without the quotes). Type this entry and then press the Enter key. Right-click this entry to modify it: type "false" (without the quotes) in the 'Value Data' box and then click 'OK.' Close Regedit. Press the F5 key (refreshes the Desktop display). It is not necessary to reboot. You're all done!

Curiously, this tweak does not work on all systems.

Hemera Technologies

In previous issues I have recommended a variety of British computer magazines due to the high-quality, commercial software that is offered on the bundled CD-ROM.

This time, the freebie is a little more complicated.

You may recall the article that featured Hemera Technologies Inc. in the Ottawa Citizen's High Tech Report (6 September 99). This company is championing the use of high quality photographs to replace the prevalent clip-art.

Shift to Great Britain—at least virtually, courtesy of the Internet—and visit PC Plus magazine (www.pcplus.co.uk). This website is offering, in conjunction with Hemera, an introductory tryout of 500 images for anyone who wishes to download the files. Make no mistake: this download is 65 MB. This offer must be obtained by download; PC Plus does not offer it on any of its bundled CD-ROMs. While each file is only 1.4 MB (high density floppy) you must download all the files to use any image (requires installation). If you are interested in using these images commercially, I urge you to examine the fine print first for possible restrictions.

PC Plus also offers some other free commercial packages on this website and intends to expand the selection. These are legal (at least for personal use) versions; they do not time-expire and have no restrictions on the feature-set (not, for example, save-disabled). Evidently, they are not the current commercial release but are quite competent.

Have a look!



PC Plus

In the March 97 issue of the club newsletter I wrote a product review of Zenographics' SuperPrint. This program is intriguing but obscure; it is neither widely advertised nor does it appear often on the shelves of local vendors. PCPlus' website has a fully-functional, non-time limited version for download (about 9 MB). If you are interested, be certain to capture the information page since it has the serial number that is required during the installation procedure. A few highlights from the features-list of this software utility include:

- support for many non-PostScript inkjet printers (Canon, HP, Epson),
- the ability to print graphics files although you do not own the host application,
- increased control of many printing variables (for example, colour correction and dot gain), and

- a PostScript Level 2 driver (as a software emulation: slower than hardware but cheaper).

Although printer drivers have improved significantly (particularly in response to photographic quality printing), those supplied with earlier colour inkjet printers could benefit from some tweaking. Given the pace of the introduction of new models, once the drivers are (relatively) stable, the manufacturer will no longer devote resources to wringing the utmost from previous models. I predict that any inkjet printer supported in this version will offer noticeable image improvement. For fulfilment, this expectation does require some user experimentation; you will be confronted with myriad options and settings that allow the end-user to fine tune the driver.

Again, this is not the current version (presently 5.x with version 6 rumoured for over a year) but it does work in Windows 9.x. (I have a document for my review version that states Windows NT 3.51 is supported; however, version 4.x is not mentioned.) I used successfully for some time the software that I reviewed—version 4.01b—on a Windows 98 machine. This version is a minor upgrade (version 4.14—likely bug fixes).

Although I have not specifically installed this version, I expect that it would behave similarly to the one I tested. Appreciate, however, that this program likely dates from mid-to late 1997 or possibly early 1998. Consequently, the most recent printer models will not be supported. You can visit the Zenographics' website at: www.zeno.com for additional information.



Extensis Mask Pro

Hard on the heels of the offer from PC Plus magazine is a remarkable offer from a sister publication: Computer Arts magazine (www.pcplus.co.uk/arts). Keep a sharp lookout for the October issue on the newsstands.

[Jean's note: An interesting side issue to this magazine is that it is translated into French under the same title. Articles appear somewhat later (one or two months) but the freebies are the same and the cost, for once, is only half that of the English version!]

In the December Ottawa PC News I offered a teaser for Extensis' (www.extensis.com) Mask Pro, Version 1.0. This Photoshop-specific plugin (although most plugins that adhere to the Adobe Photoshop plugin standard are also

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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 and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members. Deadline for submissions is four Saturdays before the general meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG normally meets on the first Wednesday in the month, except in July and August, at the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.

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Dunc Petrie's corner

Mask Pro (Continued from page 7)

compatible with Corel's PhotoPaint and JASC's Paint Shop Pro although you may experience some difficulties with PhotoPaint and PSP) received high praise with a single caveat: it cost over \$300 (Cdn). Times have changed for the better.

The October Computer Arts magazine will include, on the bundled CD-ROMs, this filter for the cost of the magazine alone—\$18.95 plus taxes. To make it even more appealing, also bundled is a copy of Extensis' PhotoFrame, version 1.0. The latter provides a wide selection of borders ("frames") that you can add to your artistic creations.

Granted, these are not the current versions of these filters; however, they are fully functional (not time- or feature limited demos) and the price is right. Full tutorials are included for each package.

Enjoy!



Out of disk space (Continued from page 2)

4 GB is 50 MB), but Setup requires 100 MB, Setup incorrectly interprets the amount of free space on your hard disk to be 50 MB, and then generates the error message listed earlier in this article." Note that this problem can occur with large hard disks where the amount of free space on your hard disk is slightly above a multiple of 4 GB. For example, this problem could also occur if you have 4.05 GB free, 8.05 GB free, 12.05 GB free.

Workaround

Either reduce the amount of free space on your hard disk to a value that is slightly below a multiple of 4 GB, or increase the amount of free space on your hard disk to be at least 100 MB above a multiple of 4 GB.



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