Dan's Desktop

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Technobabble

GROWING INTERNET USE ESPECIALLY . . .

What age group has shown the biggest rise in Internet use? People over 45 have shown the biggest increase in use of the Internet.

SNET DSL SERVICE

SNET's DSL Internet service is becoming increasingly available throughout Connecticut. The $40 per month DSL fee is in addition to the cost of the existing phone line, but includes SNET Internet service. SNET was offering free equipment and installation for those who make a one year commitment. Check www.snet.net for latest deals and availability in your area. (Note: Operation of SNET Internet is slated to be taken over by Prodigy some time later this year.)

HUMUNGOUS HARD DRIVES FOR LITTLE $

Some typical prices of hard drives:

- *14 GB --------------- $130*
- *20 GB --------------- $160*
- *30 GB --------------- $200*

AOL PURCHASE OF TIME WARNER

AOL's purchase of Time Warner leads to some intriguing , if not confusing, possibilities. Time Warner's cable systems can provide tremendously fast access to AOL. AOL would have access to the programming and content of Time Warner's various media. Conceivably, someone could access any Time Warner video through AOL and play it through a high speed connection. In theory, someone could watch HBO using AOL connected to a high speed DSL or cable modem instead of through the cable service. Time Warner cable could possibly be driven by set top boxes that use AOL to access everything. The possible combinations and permutations are rather staggering. Ten years from now, will there be an antitrust case against AOL?

WINDOWS 2000: NOT A WINDOWS 98 UPGRADE

*Windows 2000 is **not** the successor to Windows 98. It is the next version of Windows NT. It is primarily used by corporations that have needs for more stability and network security. The upgrade costs about $200. It is generally not for home and small business use. This fall Windows Millennium Edition will come out on the market for about $90. It is an upgrade to Windows 95 and 98. It claims to be more stable. It will have a feature that will let you restore changed system files to a state they were at a prior time. This could be useful if a software installation damages files.*

Writing My Own CDs

DESPITE BEING SLOWER I WANTED A USB DEVICE

I have been looking into buying a CD Writer for some time. I decided early on that I wanted an external one that I could connect to a USB port. Even though these are a bit more expensive and slower than internal drives, I wanted the flexibility to use it on other PCs that have Windows 98 and USB ports — including those of my clients.

WANTED SPACE, COMMONALITY, FEWER DISKS

I have been using a lot of Zip disks to archive almost every data file I have ever created. A Zip holds 100 MB and costs $8 - $12. A blank CD holds 650 MB and costs $0.50 to $2.00. Besides my Zip disks, I have been carrying around with me many floppy disks with various updates and utilities for my clients. They all fit on one CD and that CD will work on almost any PC. Besides recording data, the CD Writer can record music onto a CD to be played by a music CD player.

CD-R VS. CD-RW

There are two types of CDs on which a CD writer can record. A CD-R can be recorded until it is full. It cannot be erased or recorded on once full. However, you can continue to write to it as long as space is available. CD-Rs can be played on nearly any PC's CD-ROM drive. They cost well under $1 each when bought in quantity.

CD-RW can be overwritten many times over just like a floppy disk or Zip disk. They cost about double the price of CD-Rs. Unless you buy preformatted ones, CD-RWs need to be formatted before they can be used. This takes about an hour. CD-RWs generally do not work in normal CD drives.

SOFTWARE

Special software is required to do all these marvelous things. The software comes with the CD writer. My Iomega CD Writer includes software that lets me write directly to the CD in much the same way I would to a floppy or Zip drive. I don't use the CD writer this way because of an ominous note that I found in the package it came in. The note indicates that there may be some problems with the integrity of data that is moved to the CD using this *DirectCD* software. In other words, the data you copy may be no good. So, I write CDs using the *Easy CD Creator* software that is also included with the drive. This involves more steps, but the data is stored properly.

As far as I know, there is currently no software that works with CD writers to backup a hard drive as a Zip or tape drive can.

Please contact me if you would like me to archive some of your files onto CDs.

Software To Consider

Along with others I have previously written up in the newsletter, I have found the following software titles to be very useful. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions on their usefulness to you.

MICROSOFT STREETS & TRIPS 2000

This update of two former programs improves on what were already a couple of good products that provide local street maps and trip directions. The combined programs in the 2000 version make it much easier to get doorstep to doorstep directions. One small beef I have with the new version is that it can't load trips saved in the 98 version. I also find it interesting that the 98 and 2000 versions come up with different routes sometimes. Either of these is superior to *Rand McNally's TripMaker* which, in my experience, seems to consistently plot longer routes than the Microsoft programs. I purchased *Streets & Trips* at Costco warehouse for $27 and received a rebate from Microsoft.

VISIONEER PAPERPORT DELUXE 6

Paperport is a great tool for managing documents you scan into your computer. It can also be useful for managing other files on your PC. It provide an easy interface to other programs including e-mail programs. This version even allows you to create thumbnails of *Word*, *Excel*, JPEG, and other files. The included *ScanDirect* software facilitates directly scanning items into many programs. The included Web Capture utility lets you take and store a "snapshot" of a web site. The FormTyper utility allows you to type data onto a paper form you have scanned.

I purchased this latest version of *PaperPort* online from Staples and downloaded it for $39.95. It can also be bought on CD for about $50. Note: The download file was over 40 MB and took close to three hours to download on a 56K modem.

If you have a scanner, I strongly recommend this product.

MEMTURBO

I read about this utility in *PC World* magazine. It keeps an eye on the RAM memory usage on your computer and cleans it up at specified time intervals or when available memory falls below a certain level. It also defragments RAM memory. I downloaded a free trial version from the *FileWorld* section of *www.pcworld.com*. I liked it so much that I bought the full version online for $20. I have seen an improvement in the performance of my PC since installing this.

VIRTUAL DRIVE

Virtual Drive is another utility I read about in PC World. It creates one or more virtual CD ROM drives on a PC. You can then store the entire contents of a CD on the hard drive and use a Virtual CD drive to access the information. With the huge hard drives now available, this has become a very practical alternative to swapping CDs in and out of your PC. I use it primarily with my *Pro CD Phone* directory software. A trial version can be downloaded for free. The software costs $40 if you wish to keep it and receive the full version that allows for multiple virtual drives.

Tips and Tricks

FLY OUT MENUS FOR ANY FOLDER

Many would like the capability to use fly out menus to navigate through folders and documents. You can accomplish this easily if you have Internet Explorer 5 by taking the following steps:

1. Right click on any unoccupied portion of the Windows Task Bar.

2. Click on Toolbars, New Toolbar.

3. Click on a folder you would like on the toolbar, such as My Computer or My Documents, then click Okay.

4. When the new toolbar appears, shrink it down left to right to its smallest size where only the name of the folder and a double arrowhead is displayed.

That's all it takes. If you click on the double arrowhead to the right of the tool bar, a listing of all its folders and files will appear. Hover over a folder and its files pop out just like on the Start menu. Clicking on any icon opens that document.

I have My Documents and My Computer on the task bar so I can easily navigate to anything I wish. For example, if I click on the double arrowhead next to the My Computer task bar, I can navigate to any item on the computer including specific Control Panel functions.

VIEWING THUMBNAILS

Internet Explorer 4 and 5 allow you to see a thumbnail view of all graphics in a folder. To enable this, do the following:

WINFAX PRO 10

WinFax greatly simplifies the process of faxing from your PC. It adds a fax button on the toolbars of many applications so you can fax at the click of a button. Besides the standard features you would expect from fax software, WinFax Pro allows you to make use of Word mail merges to send customized faxes to broadcast fax recipients. The program also allows the use of two modems on one PC. It even allows faxes to be sent, received, and forwarded through e-mail. WinFax Pro costs about $100, although there is a $50 rebate to current users. I have used this newer version on several client PCs and plan to upgrade mine soon.

MICROSOFT PUBLISHER 2000

I have used *Microsoft Publisher* 2.0, and then upgraded to *Publisher* 95, 97, and then 2000. I use publisher to design my business cards, newsletters, and even my web site. I have also used it to develop documents of various kinds for clients. The new version offers more templates and features and is better integrated with Microsoft Office. If you do any kind of special printing activities, *Publisher* can help. I bought it on sale for $70 and received an upgrade rebate from Microsoft.

IOMEGA QUIKSYNC

This software can be downloaded at no cost from the Iomega web site. It works in conjunction with your Zip drive. *QuikSync* watches any one folder on your hard drive, such as My Documents, and continuously backs up any changed files. (The first time it runs, it backs up everything in the folder.) I store nearly all my data in My Documents, even my e-mail and address book. The software can even be programmed to save multiple versions of files. I have found it sometimes necessary to turn this program off when I am working with database files which are continuously being updated while in use. This is a great program for those who have Zip drives and are very casual about backing up documents.

NORTON ZIP RESCUE

This program can also be downloaded from the Iomega or Norton web sites. It uses a floppy disk and a Zip disk to facilitate recovery from a problem that may prevent Windows from starting . It enables you to run Windows off the Zip drive and then helps you to recover from the problem. Caution: one client used the recovery when it wasn't necessary and created some problems.

REMOTE DISCONNECTION UTILITY

As you may recall, my PC is networked with my family's PC and we use the Internet Connection Sharing feature of *Windows 98 Second Edition* to share my Prodigy Internet connection. One of the minor problems of this has been that my family had to go to my PC to disconnect. The Remote Disconnection Utility takes care of this. After the remote user disconnects, the host computer is given a countdown in case its user wishes to remain online. This program is free and can also be downloaded from PC World's FileWorld.

Please let me know if I can assist you in selecting or using software to accomplish your goals.

1. Right click on the folder that has the graphics and click on Properties.

2. Check Enable Thumbnail View, then click OK. (If this option does not appear then your Windows software may not be set up to work with Internet Explorer in this fashion.)

3. Open the folder by double clicking it.

4. While viewing the folder, click on View, Thumbnails.

This capability makes it easier to work with graphics. It makes your folder view look like a slide sorter.

Note that setting up this feature causes a hidden file, thumbs.db, to be added to the folder.

There is absolutely no truth to the rumor that Dan Henry will be bundled into the next version of Windows. Although some say everyone needs a "Dan" ...hmmm….

Dear Clients—

Please note that as of July 1, 2000, my consulting fee will increase to **$40 per hour.** This new rate will help me deal with increased transportation and taxation costs. This new rate will also begin to offset some of the non-billable hours I spend in order to serve my clients. This unbilled time includes travel, phone consultations, business administration, research, education, and the publication of this newsletter.

This new rate still keeps me well below comparable consultants who charge $70 to $100 or more per hour.

Dan Henry Computer Services

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Have you:

ρ Backed up your files?

ρ Updated your virus protection?

ρ Downloaded and installed free program updates?

ρ Run Scandisk and Disk

Go to www.danhenry.net for the complete text of this newsletter along with links to additional information.