

OPTICAL DRIVE FEATURES

The optical storage drive appears to be here to stay. With faster and faster drives and the addition of DVD-ROM and record-capable CD-RW, the choices in optical drives is only growing faster.

What features should you look for in optical storage?

First, look for a drive that features CD playback controls (next track, previous track), a volume wheel, and a headset jack on the front of the unit. With a drive like this, you can quickly plug in headphones and listen to your favorite music CD even if a microphone and speakers are consuming your sound card ports (or if your headphone cable is too short to reach to the back of your PC).

In a minitower-style PC case, the PC is meant to stand straight up, usually under your desk. With a desktop-style case, the PC is designed to sit on top of your desk, usually underneath the PC monitor. However, at times you'll want to store this type of PC underneath your desk too, standing it on one end to save space on a small desk.

In this case, you'll need an optical storage drive meant to operate on its side. Many optical drives can manage this, but they must feature small plastic arms that hold the CD in place while you open and close the tray. Look for these disk holders on any optical drive you plan to buy.

Newer, small-footprint PCs have a very limited number of open drive bays. You may want both a high-density DVD-ROM playback drive and a recording CD-RW drive--but you may not have the sufficient number of drive bays in your system.

Take heart. Products like Ricoh's MediaMaster MP9060A (www.richo-usa.com) package a CD-RW drive and a DVD-ROM drive in a combination drive that fits into one PC drive bay. While combo drives are generally not the fastest-performing drives available, their space-saving designs are good for certain upgrade scenarios.

Remember all the industry struggles over the recording format for DVD media? In the beginning, a host of formats and names battled for center stage, and great confusion reigned over their mutual compatibility.

Well, most of the confusion has fallen away. The first available and currently clearly dominant DVD-recordable format is called DVD-RAM. Currently DVD-RAM drives can

use two types of media. Type 1 is double-sided and can record up to 5.2GB per disk; Type 2 is single-sided and stores 2.6GB per disk.

If massive storage is your goal, look into a DVD-RAM drive, with a caveat: Just a handful of the very latest DVD-ROM drives on the market support DVD-RAM playback. Also keep in mind that you can only remove Type 2 discs from their standard cartridges, so you won't be sharing your recorded DVD-RAM media with many other people.

Some people own a PC with a DVD-ROM drive but use a notebook that only supports CD-ROM media--thus limiting their ability to use DVD-ROM discs while traveling. One way around this problem is to purchase a portable DVD-ROM drive for use with your notebook. For example, Port-Noteworthy at

<http://port.com>

offers a DVD/CD-ROM PC Card drive for \$399. Similarly, Addonics at

<http://www.addonics.com>

sells its FireWire-PC Card interfacing PocketDVD drive for \$423.

Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts

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Since 1983

Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts

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L.C.A.C.E.

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Membership

Membership for L.C.A.C.E is open to all individuals and families interested in personal computing. Annual dues are \$20.00 per individual/family. Associate membership is only \$10.00 (out of state, unable to attend meetings). Membership includes a one year subscription to the L.C.A.C.E. News Journal and access to all club libraries, and functions. Applications for membership may be obtained at the monthly meeting, by request on the club Hotline and is now available on our WEB site at <http://inf-net.com/lcace>.

Meetings

L.C.A.C.E. meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month at the Warren/Newport Public Library, 224 N. O'Plaine Road in Gurnee, Illinois. The meeting location opens at 11:30a.m, and the formal meeting begins at 12pm. All meetings are open to the public. Bring a friend!

Advertising

Ad rates per issue: Full page - \$25, Half page -\$15, Quarter page - \$10, Business Card -\$5. Discounts are available on advance purchase of multiple issues. Please send Camera-ready copy and payment to the club address by the 21st of the month preceding publication. For more information on ad pricing, please call our Hotline. Ads are **FREE** to all paid members.

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ARTICLE DEADLINE

The deadline for all articles being submitted for the News Journal is the 20th of each month. Send your articles via E-Mail to Corky Bell at corky@foxvalley.net or Vic Falkner at rvf@se-iowa.net or the Club's E-mail at lcace@inf-net.com

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As much as we try, we do make errors. Please advise us if there is a mistake in your E-Mail address or if it is not included in this listing. Send E-Mail to lcace@inf-net.com with the additions and/or corrections. Thank you.

This listing last updated - May 30, 2000

Members Web Sites

Corky Bell

<http://users.foxvalley.net/~corky>

Phil Grimm

<http://public.surf.free.com/pgrimm>

JJ

http://easyfoto.com/jj_johnson

Time to Renew

The following members need to renew their membership. This information will be published in the News Journal and will be posted on our WEB site which is:

<http://www.inf-net.com/lcace>

If it is time for you to renew your membership, please fill out a new Application and a Member's Profile Sheet. These forms can be obtained at the meetings or downloaded from our WEB site.

The following Member(s) need to submit renewal applications:

Vic Falkner 08/00
Bob Carpenter 08/00

John Nabors 09/00
Larry Nixon 09/00

If you have already filed an application, please disregard this notice.

See the CLUB PICTURES at:

www.easyphoto.com/lcace

Take a look, you may be in there!

ERGONOMICS AND THE COMPUTER:

So you want to become a computer expert, or at least learn how to turn the darn thing on and pretend to know what you are doing.

Well this is not that kind of article god knows that I ain't no computer expert but I do like to play on one and hopefully learn a few things on my own and from the real experts in and out of the computer club.

But I digress expert or novice if you have ever had burning eyes, sore back, your hands or fingers tingle or hurt or you loose circulation in your hands or feet this article may help.

The fact is that while the computer may be designed to make tasks easier and faster for us mere mortals not much thought has gone into the side effects that this device has on the human body.

Whether you are an expert or not you can fall prey to a variety of ailments both physical and mental from headaches to crippling physical disorders from sitting in front of a computer for any length of time.

It does not matter whether you are doing work for school or on the job or just trying to win at your favorite game these side effects strike with very little warning and in some cases can last a life time.

Scared yet? Well that is not my intention, what I do want to talk about is some solutions that may help to control these problems or even keep them from occurring at all.

Ok here we go you just bought a brand new computer (or at least for you it is) you want to set it up and start using it. But first a few thoughts like maybe where am I going to put it and all its attachments and maybe if you are the type that thinks ahead future attachments.

This is where ergonomics really starts find a nice place with room and light or provide adequate light so you are not straining to see what is on your computer screen (remember the

burning eyes). A fact eyes are not replaceable if you wear special visual aids **wear them** vanity has no place in computing.

Well you found the perfect or near perfect place now what are you going to set it on? If you have picked up a computer and all it's sidekicks you have discovered that they can be pretty heavy so a television tray is out of the question. So unless you have a good size table just hanging around the house you might want to invest in a piece of furniture that is designed to hold all the stuff and maybe future stuff that you bought or intend to buy. In other words a good computer desk or center is a good way to go.

All set? Good hopefully you also thought of something to put behind the computer center like something to sit on. This is usually something in a chair and for the sake of your body the only one you will ever own make it a comfortable one padded with arms a decent back rest even adjustable. You will not be sorry and your body will thank you. Make sure that you are sitting up in a straight position (yes your mother was right) and that your feet are flat on the floor. It would not hurt to use the armrest that is what they are there for.

So let's turn this sucker on we have ignition and wow something on what was just a minute ago a blank screen. Now you are up and working great but think ahead are you comfy monitor in a good position you are not to close or to far away? Is the printing ok maybe it is a little small do you have to strain to see the written word? How is the color to harsh or bright, to faint check a variety of other factors that may be bugging you or may bug you as time goes on. Well fix them use a little preventive maintenance. If you right click your mouse on a blank part of your screen and go down to properties you will see all sorts of wonderful things you can adjust to make your computing easier. Font for example don't squint make the printing bigger and easier to read. Resolution another good feature especially for the graphics I want to see that mole on her left cheek the higher the

Continued on page 8 - Ergonomics

The PRESIDENT'S RAM

I'd like to welcome everyone back from our short summer "vacation" and hope that everyone had a great time in whatever they did.

Just so that everyone is informed ahead of time, our next three (3) meetings, those being September, October and November will be held at the Grant Township Meeting Hall in Ingleside, Illinois. The Warren/Newport Library could not accommodate us with any meeting rooms, so once again we had to use our second meeting room option. I will not be sending out any notification postcards for these meetings as the location has been announced long in advance of these meetings, the meetings are shown as such on our Web Site (<http://inf-net.com/lcace>) and are also listed in the News Journal. So please note this in your calendars for future reference.

Our December meeting, which is our annual Christmas Party and Swap Shop, will be held once again at the University of Illinois Auditorium in Grayslake, Illinois on December 9th. The hall will be opened at 11:30am (barring any adverse weather conditions such as the fog we experienced last year), until 3pm. Now that we have a better idea of the layout of the hall, we will be able to set it up in a more fashionable manner to allow the partiers to be in one area, the raffle drawings in another, for those who bring computers for display another and the Swap Shop merchandise in another. As near the big date, more information will be provided to everyone. If anyone has any ideas for the party, please tell us. I have E-Mailed all the Board Members for ideas as to what they would like to have for the RAFFLE's GRAND PRIZE. If any member has an idea, please present it to us at the meeting or E-Mail it to us at lcace@inf-net.com before the September meeting. I would like to have the tickets ready for distribution to the membership at the October meeting if possible, so let's get the ideas in so a decision can be made.

At the present time I am working on a CD that includes all the News Journals for 1998 and 1999. This is being done so I can open up more room on

our Web Site for future editions. I am going to keep the current year's editions online, and then they will be pulled as soon as I get them burned onto a CD. The News Journal Disk for these two given years, and possibly the previous years if they are in the archives will be made available for sale from the Club Librarian, Leslie Salsburg. I am planning on getting together with Leslie to discuss a listing and even an online order form for diskettes.

For the newer members who are not familiar with the Library, JJ used to maintain a fabulous Public Domain Library for us when we were an Atari group. This Library contained programs from Games to Utilities for our computers. and could be purchased at a nominal fee. But with the change of format and our moving from one place to another the library was "set aside". In the past couple of months people have asked about it and now that Leslie has volunteered to maintain the library, we have to get it back into a proper order so it can once again be utilized by the membership. The main difference between the "New" Library and the "Old" is that many of the disks and/or programs will have to be paid for before the disk will be "burned". As soon as we have everything ready, I will get the information to everyone.

That's all for this month's RAM. See everyone at the Grant Township Hall on August 9th and Good Computing to All.

Corky Bell



Windows 95 Tips

WINDOWS 95 VERSION NUMBER

Want to know which version of Windows 95 you have on your system? Right-click My Computer and select Properties. (Or hold down Alt as you double-click My Computer.) On the General tab of the System Properties dialog box, you'll see the version listed under System. The original version of Windows 95 is 4.00.950. This same version number followed by the letter "a" indicates that the original version of Windows 95 was installed and then updated with Service Pack 1 or OEM Service Release 1. The letter "b" after the version number indicates Windows 95 OEM Service Release 2.

Backup Configs And Inis

It isn't enough to back up your data files. That's a good start, but a lot of your computing life is tucked into configuration and initialization files. If you lose these to a crash, virus, or other malevolence, you'll have a more difficult time getting your PC running right again. Make sure you back up CONFIG.SYS, AUTOEXEC.BAT, WIN.INI, and SYSTEM.INI files for a complete contingency plan.

CHANGE HARD DRIVE ICON

Want to change the icon used to represent your hard drive? Here's how: Open Notepad (select Start, Programs, Accessories, Notepad) and type exactly:

```
[autorun]
icon=PATH,#
```

where PATH is the path of the icon file containing the icon you want to use, and # is its number (see note below for more information). So, for example, if you wanted to use a globe icon, your Notepad file would read:

```
[autorun]
icon=c:\windows\system\shell32.dll,13
```

Save the file as AUTORUN.INF on the root of your hard drive, then close Notepad. Open a My Computer window, press F5 (to refresh), and there's the new icon.

(Note: To view the contents of an icon file--such as Windows\System\shell32.dll--right-click any short-cut, select Properties, click the Shortcut tab, and click the Change Icon button. >From there, you can click Browse, and so on, to open another icon file.)

ADVANCED FIND OPTIONS: DATE LAST ACCESSED AND FILE TYPE

Need to locate a file, but can't remember its name? Windows' Find utility offers plenty of ways to track it down. Just fill in what you do know about the file on the Name & Location, Date, and Advanced tabs, and chances are, Windows can find the file you're looking for.

Let's suppose the only things you can remember about a file are that you opened it last Friday and that it was a Microsoft Word document. Select Start, Find, Files Or Folders. On the Look In line, click the down arrow and select the drive on which the file is located. (If you aren't sure, select My Computer.) Click the Date tab, select Find All Files, click the down arrow next to this option, and select Last Accessed. Select Between and complete both date fields with last Friday's date. Finally, select the Advanced tab, click the down arrow next to the Of Type box, and select Microsoft Word. Click Find Now, and the resulting list will include all Microsoft Word documents opened last Friday.

**The next meeting of L.C.A.C.E.
is at the Grant Township Meeting
Hall in Ingleside, Illinois on
Saturday, August 12th.**

WINDOWS 98 TIPS

CALCULATOR'S MEMORY FUNCTIONS

Suppose you've just completed a calculation (in the Windows 98 Calculator), and you'd like to insert the result into another calculation. Don't waste time writing it down. Store it in memory so you can insert it into the next equation at the click of a button.

With the number you'd like to store in memory displayed in Calculator, click the MS button. (An "M" appears in the gray box above all the "M" buttons.) Now go ahead with the other calculation. When you need to insert the stored number, click the MR button.

So what do the rest of those "M" buttons do? To clear the number in memory, click the MC button. (Or, click MS to overwrite the number in memory with the currently displayed number.) To add the currently displayed number to the one in memory, click the M+ button and then click MR to display the result.

TURN OFF SCHEDULED TASKS

Don't want the Task Scheduler running in the background all the time (and taking up valuable Taskbar space)? Simple--turn it off.

Select Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Scheduled Tasks to open the Task Scheduler. Now select Advanced, Stop Using Task Scheduler. The program's icon will disappear from the tray of your Taskbar, and the scheduler will no longer start when you start Windows 98.

(To turn Scheduled Tasks back on, follow the steps above, but select Advanced, Start Using Task Scheduler.)

CANCEL PRINT JOB

Just sent a bunch of documents to the printer, and now you've changed your mind? Rather than waste all that paper, use the printer queue to cancel what you

can. Select Start, Settings, Printers, and double-click your printer's icon to display its queue, or list of pending jobs. Right-click the job you'd like to cancel and select Cancel Printing. Immediately, that document disappears from the list.

(Tip-in-a-tip: If a long document is already in the process of printing, canceling that job will stop it midway.)

HOT KEY ACCESS TO APPLICATION

Want to open your favorite application on the fly? Create a hot key to it, and you can open it from anywhere with the press of a keyboard combo.

Right-click the shortcut you use to open the application, then select Properties. Click the Shortcut tab and click inside the text box next to Shortcut Key. Type the letter you'd like to use in combination with Ctrl-Alt to open the program (Windows 98 fills in the Ctrl-Alt part). For example, you could type "W" to stand for Microsoft Word. Click OK, and from now on, pressing Ctrl-Alt-W launches Word.

CUT-AND-PASTE INSTEAD OF DRAG-AND-DROP

Planning to move some selected icons to a new location, say to a new folder or to the desktop? Don't assume you have to click and drag them all the way there. Instead, try a cut-and-paste operation.

Assuming you've already selected the icons, right-click the selection and select Cut. Poof--the icons disappear. Right-click their destination (desktop, folder, wherever), select Paste, and they're right where you want them.

Reminder

If you have an article for the News Journal, it must be submitted to the Editor before the 20th of each month.

Continued from page 4 - Ergonomics

resolution the more detail in the picture.

You will also notice on your monitor that like a television you have adjustments for bright, verticle, horizontal and such it's all yours to do, as you will. Invest in a good light something that is comfortable to read by this is not always florescent as they can be very harsh as time goes by there are some very good reading lamps on the market today.

Congratulations you have passed the vision test hopefully this will help to avoid headaches in the future maybe after a few hours of sitting in front of the computer.

By now you have been clicking your mouse and typing on your keyboard and you may notice that you are starting to get uncomfortable. Maybe you fingers or wrist are starting to hurt or start to tingle.

This brings me to the next topic the mouse and keyboard or the way you let the computer know what you want. Let's start with the mouse there are many mouse pads on the market today get a good one a nice thick one with some type of wrist pad so that you are using an easy smooth motion as you send the little darling on it's merry way. For the key board a nice wrist rest for a smooth typing motion is a must both of these items help to avoid a disease called carpal tunnel as you repeatedly click and type on your computer. Most of the newer key boards now come with some type of wrist rest if not get one it is a very important factor in healthy computing.

So now you have been sitting in front of this device for quite some time doing what ever it is you do and you notice you are feeling a little pekid, tired or just plain restless. **Well get up** use your legs stop and smell the roses expand your vision. In other words take a break for at least five minutes or more if needed even a decent work place should allow you that. This also is essential to good physical and mental health taking periodic breaks will help keep body and mind in sharp focus and help complete the task at hand. This is the best preven-

tive and it's free.

I have tried to convey the importance of good computer habit's this may not make you a better computer expert but hopefully it will make you a healthier and less stressed one.

There are many articles in various computer magazines on ergonomics as well as many products to help with a healthier computing life style it is in your best interest to take advantage of these resources. I do hope that this article has brought a few of these points to light. Remember the body you save may be your own.

Get in touch with your local computer club and retail stores they should have even more helpful suggestions for making your computing a healthier more pleasurable experience.

Respectfully submitted by

LESLIE SALSBURG

If you have an article for the News Journal. please forward it to the News Journal Editor at

corky@foxvalley.net

or

lcace@inf-net.com

or deliver the article on disk to one of the officers at the Meetings.

Year 2000 Calendar

The following are the tentative dates, locations, and/or the agenda for each of the L.C.A.C.E. Meetings for the Year 2000:

August 12th

Grant Township Meeting Hall
Linux - Lester Larkin

September 9th

Grant Township Meeting Hall
Scanning & Digital Cameras

October 14th

Grant Township Meeting Hall
Diamond Rio

November 11th

TO BE ANNOUNCED
CD Writers

December 9th

University of Illinois
Auditorium
Grayslake, Illinois

Annual Christmas Party
&
Swap Fest

Is your membership up to date? Check with the Membership Chairperson, Donna Bell, to find out what your status is. Contact her at 815 344-1271 after 7:30pm daily or send E-Mail to: lcace@inf-net.com to be kept informed.

REMINDER

THE AUGUST MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE GRANT TOWNSHIP MEETING HALL

THE GIGAHERTZ PC ARRIVES

The 1GHz (or 1000MHz, if you prefer to call them that) PCs have finally arrived. Currently, Dell at

<http://www.dell.com>

sells home systems featuring Intel's new 1GHz Pentium III processor, and Gateway at

<http://www.gateway.com>

and Compaq at

<http://www.compaq.com>

offer home desktops featuring AMD's Athlon 1GHz processor. Any of these 1GHz models start at around \$3000, so don't expect a bargain.. However, if you are willing to drop down to 800MHz clock speeds, you will find discounted prices.

FOR SALE

Olympus D-500L Digital Camera



I have moved up to one of Olympus newer models so I'm letting go of my D-500L. This is one digital camera that feels and looks like a SLR. The D-500L "high resolution" point and shoot digital camera, producing 1024x768 pixel images. To accommodate situations in which you might not need all that resolution, both cameras provide "low-res" capture modes, with image sizes of 640x480 and 640x512.

I'm including the leather case, which was purchased separately from the camera. Other accessories include: 4-Meg SmartMedia card, lens cap, serial cable (for transferring photos), and instructions book. Asking price \$250.

Contact JJ - jj1450xl@ix.netcom.com

Free ISPs

by Bob Carpenter

A free Internet Service Provider (ISP) sounds like a great thing. If you plan things correctly, it can definitely save you money. However, a free ISP isn't for everyone. If you're just getting on the Internet, a free ISP probably isn't for you. It can be very useful to pick up the phone and call your local ISP if you're having a problem. Also, if you have given out your E-mail address to many people, it can be more hassle to leave your local ISP (and tell everyone your new address) than it's worth. Lastly, it can be more expensive to use a "free" ISP if they don't have a phone number in your area.

If you're still looking to save some money, then you might be interested in my free ISP overview. I haven't tried every free ISP. A new free ISP seems to spring up every day. Also, free ISPs can go out of business just as quickly. One of them (worldspy.net) that I really liked because it didn't use an annoying ad banner recently went out of business and forwarded their users to Juno.

The other free ISPs that I tried were: Freewwwweb, Freeinternet.com, Bluelight.com, Altavista, and Juno. With the notable exception of Freewwwweb, all of the other free ISPs had ad banners and were intrusive in some way. All of the free ISPs also have some sort of survey for you to fill out. Most of the surveys were very generic and didn't ask for much information. The survey for Netzero, on the other hand, was a 3 page survey that I thought asked far too many questions.

One other thing I should mention is that all of these ISPs (except Freewwwweb) will automatically change your home page to be the home page for the free ISP. Either they change your entry in your browser or, normally, they feed their home page address to the browser so the browser starts at their home page regardless of what you've entered in Netscape or IE.

The first free ISP that I tried was Altavista (www.altavista.com). Like most of the free ISPs, it requires that Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 be installed on your system. You can browse the web with any browser you want, but the free ISPs tend to use

pieces of IE 5.0 for their ad banners. After downloading and installing the 600K program, I was ready to cruise the web. Surprisingly, I didn't have any problems with busy signals and browsing the web and downloading files wasn't any slower than with my local ISP. However, there is a catch. Altavista's ad banner seems to work like a "virtual pet". If you don't click on the banner every so often (about every half hour), you can lose your connection. Obviously, this wouldn't be good if you were trying to download a large file and leave your computer. Also, like most free ISPs, they don't offer a POP3 mail account. This means that you'd have to set up a web mail account and read your E-mail from the web instead of using a mail reader like Outlook Express or Eudora Pro. There is a solution to this problem if you're willing to use Outlook Express. I'll explain that later.

The next ISP I tried was Freeinternet.com (www.freeinternet.com). I was pleasantly surprised to see that a POP3 mail account was included with this ISP. Freeinternet.com also required IE 5 to be installed. It also supports the Macintosh (if that's an issue for you). I downloaded the approximately 2 Meg file and dialed up to the Internet again. Again, I didn't see much of an issue with busy signals. Of course, this can depend on the area where you live. One thing that I don't like about freeinternet.com is that it brings up two annoying windows. The first window (with news headlines and some ads) can be closed. The second window is the standard ad banner. I didn't appreciate the "one-two" punch of the windows. Again, the throughput seemed decent. As always, it depends on the time of day that you're on the Internet.

I should mention that the ad banners for all of the ISP were approximately the same height. The freeinternet.com banner took up about half the width of the window. Most of the other ISP banners took up the entire width of the window. How tall the banner is will depend on your screen resolution. When I ran in 640x480, the banners took up about 15% of the screen. It was extremely annoying. However, at my normal screen resolution of 1280x1024, the banners were so small as to be insignificant.

Continued on page 11 - ISPs

Continued from page 10 - ISPs

The next ISP I tried was Bluelight.com (www.bluelight.com). It's banner was almost identical to the one I saw for altavista.com. Like Altavista, Bluelight.com doesn't offer a POP3 mail account. You can setup a Yahoo web mail account, but I chose not to. Bluelight.com's install also installed Yahoo companion so I had an extra toolbar in my browser. To be fair, though, it was very easy to uninstall Yahoo companion when it annoyed me too much.

Juno (www.juno.com) was the most awkward free ISP I tried. It uses its own E-mail program so you can't use Outlook Express or any other mail reader. Juno's E-mail program doesn't support HTML mail so you may have problems receiving mail from people who use HTML. Also, Juno uses two separate phone numbers (one for E-mail and one for web access). This means if you switch from E-mail from the Web, Juno will hang up and dial up another number. Thankfully, you can use a standard browser.

My favorite free ISP is Freewweb (www.freewweb.com). Freewweb doesn't make you run a banner program that eats up your screen. You set up a normal Dial-Up Networking account just like you would for any normal (non-free ISP). They do insist that you set your home page to: home.freewweb.com. I don't know if they can tell if I've done this, but their home page isn't too bad so I use it anyway. Also, if you prefer another home page, you can set that page up as a button in either Netscape or IE and just stop the loading of Freewweb's home page. Freewweb used to charge a one time fee. That hasn't been the case for over a year. They also no longer ask for your credit card number. In fact, they ask for very little information. I'm sure they're hoping that you'll click on the advertisements on their home page which helps them out. One thing I should mention is that Freewweb has a time limit of 80 hours/month. However, even Freewweb points out that you could set up multiple accounts to get around this limit.

If you do decide to use a free ISP, I highly recommend getting a Hotmail address. That's because you can read Hotmail E-mail from their web site or by using Outlook Express. It also gives you a standard

E-mail address in case you have to change free ISPs because of problems or because the free ISP went out of business.

That's it for my short tour of free ISP services. Free ISPs do fill a niche. I use my Freewweb account as a backup in case my normal ISP is having problems. My friend uses a Freewweb account so that her daughter can use the normal account since her ISP only allows one person at a time to use the account. Free ISPs aren't for everyone, but it's nice to have that choice.

Linux Mandrake 7.1

A first look

by Bob Carpenter

I've started to see reviews of Mandrake's latest release and I thought I'd add my voice to the mix. I've had 7.1 running for about a week now on both of my Linux systems. Overall, I like the update but there are some differences to be aware of if you're looking to install 7.1.

First of all, notice that I mention installing 7.1. I've read on the 'Net and know people who have attempted to upgrade 7.0 to 7.1. Unless you plan on your grandchildren using the upgraded machine, I'd suggest installing 7.1 instead of attempting an upgrade. For some reason, it seems to take an incredibly long time to upgrade to 7.1. If you do an install (like I did), it doesn't take any more time than normal (about an hour depending on your machine and how much of Mandrake you're planning to install. I'm hoping that Mandrake will address this problem since it can be real handy to do an upgrade instead of wiping the machine clean and reinstalling your software.

The most obvious change you'll see is that the downloadable Mandrake version is now 2 CDs. You only need the 1st CD to install Mandrake, but the 2nd CD has some extra programs that you might be interested in. Since I don't recommend downloading Mandrake unless you have a T-1, DSL, or cable connection, it's only an extra 300 Meg to download.

Continued on page 12 - Linux Mandrake

Continued from page 11 - Linux mandrake

The install is very similar to 7.0's. It still uses the DrakX graphical installer. Mandrake has tweaked it a bit for 7.1, however. Now, you can configure both a dialup and network connection during the install (7.0 made you choose which one you wished to configure). Also, the expert mode is significantly easier to use than in 7.0. In 7.0, I found it difficult to figure out which packages were selected and which weren't. 7.1 uses a simple tree menu (like gnome linuxconf) and you simply check off which programs you want to install.

I should mention that DrakX locked up my mouse at the end of the install on one of my systems. Since it was after I chose XFree86 4.0, it might well be an XFree problem, but I did want to mention it.

As I said, 7.1 does include XFree86 4.0. However, they bury it pretty well. You can only install it if you choose the expert option and answer "Yes" to whether you wish to try out 4.0. Obviously, you can upgrade the RPMs to 4.0 after the install if you don't wish to use the expert install. Since the 3.3.x series supports more graphics cards than 4.0 (at least right now), I can see why Mandrake made this decision. I'm very impressed with the performance of 4.0 on my Nvidia TNT, though. I don't play Linux games, but I can tell it's faster just by how long it takes for the KDE shutdown screen to appear. It used to take 2-3 seconds to appear in 3.3.x. In 4.0, it appears instantaneously.

One other item about XFree86 4.0. You may think that Mandrake is still using the same XF86Config file for 4.0. You'd be wrong. It turns out that the 4.0 config file is called XF86Config-4 (it's still in /etc/X11). I spent a long time trying to make changes to support my MS Intellimouse Explorer mouse and it just wasn't doing what I expected. Also, if you have an Intellimouse Explorer like I do, set your ZAxisMapping to be buttons 4 and 5 instead of buttons 6 and 7 as suggested at xfree86.org. All the mouse support programs that I've found (Star Office, GTK apps including Mozilla) seem to be assuming the 4th and 5th buttons are mapped to the wheel. I didn't find a way to change the apps, so it was easier to just change my XF86Config file. While 4.0 supports my

extra two buttons, I haven't figured out yet how to map those buttons to the "back" and "forward" browser buttons like in Windows.

You will want to read the documentation at xfree86.org on how to set up your mouse in 4.0 if it has special features (like wheels, extra buttons, etc.). At this point, the GUI config tools (like Xconfigurator) are still based on the 3.3.x config file format.

Also, 7.1 includes a new utility called DrakFont. It's an easy to use font manager. Most people will use it, as I did, to install my TrueType fonts in Linux. The program worked perfectly, but I hope a couple of items are changed in this utility. First, when you say "Get Windows fonts", it shows you the DOS filename of each TrueType font. Since Mandrake is capable of reading the font information, it would've been nice if the font name had been used instead. More importantly, it copies your Windows fonts onto your Linux partition. If you bring over all of your Windows fonts, this can be a significant waste of space. When I did this manually, I created the fonts.dir file in my Windows\Fonts directory since Windows couldn't care less about it. I just added my Windows\Fonts directory to the /etc/X11/fs/config file. I was disappointed that DrakFont didn't give me a similar opportunity.

For you KDE buffs, the biggest change may well be that the KDE menu editor (kmenuedit) is missing. It's still installed, but it's not on any of the menus and the KDE panel can't find it. That's because Mandrake has started using auto menus. The theory of this is whenever you install a Mandrake RPM, it will automatically install the menu item for you **in all of the window managers that you have installed**. This means that, if you change window managers, your programs will be exactly where you're used to finding them. If the program is removed, the menu item is also removed. This won't happen automatically if you install a non-Mandrake RPM or install a program from a tarball.

However, buried in the documentation, there is a file in /usr/doc/menu-2.1.5 called menu.txt. This gives you the background on how to create auto menu entries yourself. So you avoid my frustration, the part

Continued on page 13 - Linux Mandrake

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Thinking about building your own PC? The first thing to start with is the motherboard; you'll build everything from the motherboard's foundation. For a quick introduction to motherboard shopping, browse MotherboardsDirect at

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You'll need to pick the features of your board, including the CPU socket type, number of ISA and PCI add-in board slots, form factor, and other things. Generally, motherboards cost \$70 to \$200.

MOVIE BLOOPERS ONLINE

<http://www.moviebloopers.com>

No matter how many millions Hollywood spends to produce a feature length film, it seems the film will never be perfect. This site uses still video captures from popular movies to point out cinematic errors and inconsistencies from scene to scene. For example, in one "Ghost" scene, Demi Moore's hands are covered in clay one moment, then magically clean in the next. Or in "American Pie," a plastic keg cup magically changes colors between scenes. Your reaction, from "So what!?" to "Wow!", is probably a good indication of how much you'll enjoy this site. Movies are sorted into genres, such as action, comedy, horror, and, of course, Star Wars, which gets its own category. It seems that even Mr. Lucas and company couldn't get those light sabers to work perfectly all the time.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The **MEMBER'S PROFILE** will be continued in next month's edition. I did not have a member for this issue and am updating the records now so we can enjoy sharing information about ourselves with the group. Please make sure that we have your most recent information and picture for the article.

Continued from page 12 - Linux Mandrake

that says you can put your custom menu entries in \$HOME/.menu only seems to work if you're using icewm as your window manager. There seems to be a problem with the KDE and Gnome scripts for this. If you put your custom entries in /etc/menu, they will appear on your menu as you expected. This will affect all users on your system, however. Since I'm running a single-user Linux box, it doesn't matter to me, but I did want to point that out. I'm betting, with the confusion that's already been appearing on the 'Net, that Mandrake will have a GUI way to control this in the next release. I'm hoping that Mandrake doesn't listen to the criticism and remove this feature completely in the next release. While it's rough around the edges, the idea behind the auto menus is a great one. Reading the documentation, Mandrake has taken this system from Debian. That's one thing I love about open source programming. Distributors don't feel the need to reinvent the wheel if someone's already created something that works.

As you can see some things have changed. However, one thing still hasn't changed. Even with the rough edges, I still recommend Mandrake to all the Linux newbies I know. It seems to have been customized for the end-user to be comfortable in Linux. It's not perfect and sometimes Mandrake strays a bit too close to the "bleeding edge", but I'm not confident that as many Windows users would be trying Linux if Mandrake wasn't around to try to cushion the blow.

FIND ONLINE MERCHANTS

Most search engines, such as Yahoo! and Alta Vista, provide a special shopping section. The trouble is that, in most cases, these services offer access to relatively few merchants, often only those who pay for the privilege. To widen your search, try Buyer's Index, which claims to offer access to more than 14,000 online shopping sites and mail-order catalogs. The site offers free listings to merchants, although merchants can pay for a "preferred listing," as well. Descriptions of merchants include what they carry (in general terms), how long they've been in business, and "reliability indicators" from BizRate and The Public Eye.

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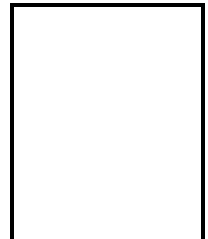
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