

The Voice
of **FCUG**

April 2004
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Meeting 7:30 pm 6th at
New Canaan Historical
Society
13 Oenoke Ridge Road

BOILERPLATE

"The Voice of FCUG" is the monthly newsletter of the Fairfield County Computer Users Group, Inc., a registered non-profit organization dedicated to helping members use their PC computers. Non-commercial and non-profit users are free to copy or quote material herein; proper credit and sending a copy of the publication to the Editor would be appreciated.

Members can exchange ideas and opinions through this newsletter, at a monthly meeting held the first Tuesday of most months, at occasional SIG programs, and on a bulletin board reached from the Club Internet Web-site at www.fcug.org.

Meetings and SIG groups are open to the public. Membership costs \$30/Yr, prorated. For information and payment contact

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To submit articles or letters for The Voice send an e-mail message to thevoice@fcug.org, hopefully with article attached, or mail paper, or even a diskette in ASCII, Word, or WordPerfect format to:

The Voice, 280 Main Street, Westport, CT 06880

Let's start those cards and letters coming, folks!

The Editor's Desk

Well, it happened. This issue was four pages short when I spent about two weeks in hospital and rehabilitation, most of the time without a computer or an Internet connection.

Then a friend brought me my laptop, and another provided a PCMCIA modem. I unplugged the bedside phone and managed to get the Windows 98 Network Wizard to set up a connection to my ISP. For two days I was happy as a clam – until the hard drive went on the fritz and the machine would not boot!

Luckily, at the last minute, I found a new article on one of my recent sites for material, but that source may not last forever.

Sooo . . . please read the sentence just above this short essay and act on it. Remember, this is your magazine, or journal, or whatever, so if you can help to keep it running, so much the better.

And many thanks again to Claire Giler, who has proof-read the last two or three issues – and, despite my best efforts, found at least three problems each time!



Program for 6th April 2004

- Call to order Fearless Leader – Charles Bryk 7:30**
- Novice topic: File Extension – Ed Congleton 7:40**
Dealing with the world of file extensions and the dangers of having programs
recognize file-types by extension and act accordingly without being asked!
- Q and A: Moderator – Nick Fellner. 8:00**
- Epicurean Break . . Chef du Soir – Jane Muschamp. 8:20**
- Main topic:. FileOn – Anowar Shahjahan 8:30**
This Norwalk company provides paper-to-Internet-storage conversion for company
documents (an electronic equivalent to the microfiche?) Come and learn
more about a really modern business service.
- (Possibly followed by a raffle)**
- Adjournment 10:00**

LOOKIN' FOR A RIDE?

If anybody who wants to attend meetings has a transport problem, please mention it and together we will look for a solution. You can also contact Membership Chairman Dick Booth (dick.booth@juno. com or phone 203-847-8047). He can tell you who lives near you, or might pass by on their way.

THE WAY WE WERE – APRIL 1984

PRESIDENT : Robert Jackson VICE PRESIDENT : Herman Parks
SECRETARY: Patricia Brinson TREASURER : John Roy
EDITOR : Alan Abrahamson ASSOC. EDITOR : I.M. Anonymous
This Newsletter printed by Sir Speedy Printing Center, Wilton CT.

Apple's Macintosh Revealed! -- John Krause. One page introduction to a new computer, listing for \$2,500, though they claim a similar PC would cost \$1,000 more.

Disk drives now available for the Model 100! -- George Saladino. Two pages, including listing for set-up program.

Master Directory Utilities – John Krause. Five pages as it says.

Printer Lower Case Mod -- Dave Pedersen. One page.

ROM Check (ROMCHK) Revisited – John Roy. Four pages, including a list of the chip's instruction commands.

Retrieving Killed NEWDOS/80 Files – Time Porreca. Two pages reprinted from TBUG.

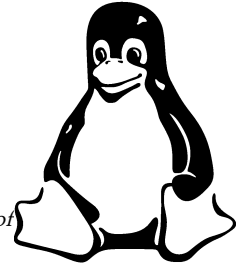
“At the last meeting [we] were blessed with a number of demonstrations. Peter Mead demonstrated Pascal-80 and we had a lively discussion of different languages. . . . Aaron Bisberg demonstrated his bicycle selection program and described the Model 4 Basic and problems getting used to the machine. Hope Durham showed us the new Model 4P and talked about her experience with the Model 4. And last of all I gave a demonstration of MID\$.

“At the next meeting we will have a tutorial on Z-80 machine language by Alan Abrahamson for the beginner. . . . **Note: I heard recently that the TRS-80 Model 16 is a hot item now it has Xenix working and can provide multiuser service.**” [Ed.Note: my emphasis. . .]

Pete and the Penguin -- Adventures with Linux

Pete Tinaglia

*[From Volume 20 No.1 of Hard-Copy , the journal of
the Chicago Computer Society]*



Penguins waddle. Some limp. There's a reason penguins walk that way. It's that their proportions and design are better for swimming than walking. They swim very well. Most people find them distinctive and appealing.

I'm sure most computer users have heard of Linux (pronounced *LIN*-ucks)***, an operating system which is an alternative to Windows, and have seen that a penguin is its mascot, or worldwide logo. The original developer is Linus Torvalds, a master programmer, native of Finland, now living in Santa Clara, CA. The operating system he created is based in part on a version of UNIX. Combining "Linus" and "UNIX", he got "Linux". He likes penguins and held a contest for an image. The winner is nicknamed Tux. *[For his special view of contented penguins see <http://www.linux.org/info/penguin.html>, 5th and 6th paragraphs. -C.S., Ed]*

Linux has been around for 13 years now, and it was originally based on some lofty ideals: Linux, and the programs that are designed and distributed to use within it, are FREE. So what is Linux? And why does the penguin limp?

Linux is a complete operating system that has no files or systems that use any parts of processes that are attributed to the Microsoft Windows operating systems. Why? So no one has to pay Microsoft royalties to use language, files, or systems that they developed or bought. Moreover, and in return, Microsoft has no control over the core parts of the Linux operating system. Is that good, or bad?

Think of Microsoft as a king. By being in control of Windows' properties Microsoft has also assured you that if you buy a Windows program it will run on any of the Windows operating systems they say it will run on. Kind of like the same reason McDonald's bought back all of the restaurants they'd originally sold to franchisees. Better control of the product means your product will work the way it is supposed to and your customers will be happy. They get what they expect to get. Of course, it also means a few other things to Microsoft. They control who gets to write programs for their systems by granting permission – or not – and maybe they will make a few extra bucks along the way because of it.

Linux, on the other hand, is a little like anarchy. Because it is FREE,

=====
***[Ed.Note: Actually, I think LEAN-ucks might be closer]

and because programmers (some of the really smart, knowledgeable ones) can delve into the depths of the operating files and processes to modify it to suit their needs. Now, Linux software companies are trying to become popular competitors to Windows. Some have issued graphic interfaces as an overlay of the behind-the-scenes DOS-level programming to make it easier for us regular people to use Linux. You may have heard of Gnome, or KDE, but there are several different interfaces. Well, these companies don't necessarily talk to one another. They each think their own way is better (how could you say someone else's way is better after you have sunk so much money and resources into a process?), so some of the Linux programs you can get work better, or not at all, in one interface than in others. A trade-off for democracy and freedom.

But, remember, the base program of Linux is supposed to be the same regardless of the interface.

As I said, Linux has been around and growing for several years now. The last big push I witnessed was at COMDEX Chicago maybe two years ago. Boy, it was everywhere, and they had beautiful displays from several companies that took up maybe one quarter of the space on one floor level, and that cute little penguin. I purchased about twenty or twenty-five CD disks of different flavors of Linux, programs and utilities, some for backup, some maintenance tools. Loads of programs, all for about \$30. THOUSANDS of programs. So I went home and tried to learn about Linux – but what I discovered was that Linux was not ready for Prime Time. To say the least, it was hard to install, used terms I was not accustomed to, didn't install completely, and didn't honor most of my hardware. I may not be an expert, but I know a lot about computers and this just was not competition for Windows.

Here we are, let's say two years later, and Linux has gone from Version 6-something to Version 9-something. How does it work? The penguin still limps.

If you want your computer company, whether software or hardware, to be successful, I believe you must realize the main reason your customer uses his computer is to make life and/or business easier and more effective. I.E., I didn't buy my computer to become a computer expert; I bought it so I could spend more time *doing* my business more efficiently. Linux hasn't figured that out yet (but then again, Microsoft has just barely got a handle on it also). I spent three days and a total of eight separate installs and reformatting before I got a workable installation of Linux 9.0 that I was satisfied with. I didn't say I had everything working, just satisfied with.

I'm not going to go into the details, but what it amounts to is that if you're installing either Red Hat or Mandrake (two of the Linux variants) and you want Linux to run when you get done, you had better do an "automatic" install. That means choose all of the default values and let the software do what it wants to do. But this is exactly one of the things that the Linux people rebelled against. They didn't like the thought that Microsoft was controlling things – but to me it's just a different "bad guy". This time it's a Linux programmer, not a Microsoft programmer, calling

the shots on what goes on your computer. Also, somewhere in this article, I have to admit to you that in effect Linux is not actually FREE any more. Well, yes it is, you can download anything for Linux freely from the Internet, but you really are better off buying a “package deal” from someone like Red Hat or Mandrake for about \$50 to get you started. I’d bet the user manual is worth that much alone.

Back to Linux. I chose to use the KDE interface because through some of those partial installs I found that it had a built-in file manager that looked like I could get used to it rather easily. It also has the ability to look remarkably like a Windows desktop. Some of the Windows shortcut key strokes, like Alt-Tab for toggling between open programs, have the same functions in Linux. And now, after about a week of actually using Linux for tangible output, including productivity applications, e-mail and browsing the Internet, I like it.

Amazingly, it can read Microsoft DOS and Windows floppy disks, or formatted partitions on hard drives. You can copy your pictures and personal files in almost any popular format from a Microsoft Windows computer and Linux programs will read them and view the pictures with its default settings. My KDE interface included a complete copy of Star Office version 6 and when I copied my Word documents onto the Linux disk the familiar Word icon appeared next to the files. When I opened a Word document written on a Windows machine, it was treated as if it was one of its own documents. I was more than pleased. Also included are several Internet browsers, one of which is Mozilla. You will know this program as Netscape. It looks and feels the same, has the familiar e-mail capabilities, and even allowed me to import my Favorites, or Bookmarks, from my Windows computer.

Something else I noticed was that a Linux program doesn’t take up the hard drive space that a comparable Windows program does. A Linux-based computer will not run a Windows program, but if you wanted to you could install both Linux and Windows on the same computer and boot up to either operating system. That also has its pros and cons, because if one operating system or the other has a major failure I think you could also have problems getting to the second operating system on the same hard drive. My suggestion is to use a separate hard drive for your Linux system.

If you are of stout heart and sound mind with lots of patience, go ahead, BORROW a friend’s Linux disks and install them on your computer. It’s okay, it’s legal. In fact you can install Linux disks on as many computers as you wish and it won’t cost you a dime extra, nor will the Software Police be dragging you off to Sing Sing. I’d suggest investing in a couple of large bottles, or a six-pack, of a favorite beverage, some snacks and sedative, or yoga mats – but you won’t need any “Get out of jail free” cards.

My next Linux experiences will involve downloading and installing program from Linux Internet websites. As of now, my dial-up connection to the Internet works, but I am in the process of finding out how to get the KDE interface to honor my network so I can use my cable modem.

Linux recognizes it when it boot up, but I need help from here on in. Again, a symptom of “not ready for Prime Time” and a limp.

Pete Tinaglia has name with a silent “g” and an extensive record as a CCS officer, leader, mover and shaker. Further, you could put “prime” before most of those nouns. He attends Westside Chapter and many other meetings.

—ooOoo—

One way to catch a pest

William T.G. Hart

A girl in our office was being harassed with the e-mail equivalent of heavy breathing. It was not funny, and she was becoming more and more distraught. So we put our heads together and came up with a trap.

Many people seem to think that using a dial-up ISP, like Hotmail or Yahoo, gives you some sort of anonymity, because the IP address of the location you use to access a web site (which can appear on the web site’s log, no matter where you are in the world) does not identify you directly, but only one of the ISP’s addresses temporarily assigned to you. And very few ISPs are really prepared to back-check their logs for any Tom, Dick, or Harry to see which of their customers was using a particular address at a particular time. (Maybe that’s why the Government has recently been talking of trying to force them to keep and releases such logs?) But sometimes that expected anonymity is not as iron-clad as you thought.

Also, most mail programs seem as a default to process any HTML they find without asking permission first. This is a very dangerous procedure, and one of the reasons so many viruses are so successful. The latest version of Outlook Express apparently does have the option of turning this off, and although I have never used Eudora, or Juno, one hopes that they have similar settings available.

You may have read more than once about spammers using single-byte picture files to trap their victims’ e-mail addresses. This is how they work. In an otherwise-innocuous message I insert a piece of HTML, calling for an image to be inserted. The “image” is a single byte of white space, lost in all the other spaces in the message. For example, I might use a simple graphics program like an icon editor to write a single-byte graphic file which I store on my website (say, at <http://my.server.com/obscureaddress111010101928/dot.jpeg>). I use a really obscure address

so that, hopefully, only my target will find it on my website, and other random visitors will not. Then my message reads

```
<HTML>This is<IMAGE=http://my.server.com/obscureaddress  
11101010101928/dot.jpeg>a test.</HTML>
```

Executed, this looks exactly the same as if I had written

```
<HTML>This is a test.</HTML>
```

BUT the recipient has had to recover the file, which means going to my website to that particular obscure address. And I have my website set with a logging program recovering the IP addresses of any who visit it and what they do there. Oops! You have just told me you have read my message. And, if I really know what I am doing and am spamming a number of possible contacts at a dial-up ISP, I can design each of my messages to send back to me individual ID strings to tell me exactly which e-mail address at your ISP was the reader. For example, a message sent to jblogs@company.com can contain a link to

<http://my.server.com/company.com/jblogs/dot.jpeg>).

Back to the story. We sent a reply loaded with a single-byte picture file reference to the breather's theoretically-anonymous e-mail address and waited. Shortly afterwards (in geological time, at least) our server had a hit on the picture file, and we knew the location of the breather. Turned out he had operated from another local company's server. When the clues were added up, the girl realized she was being harassed by an ex-boyfriend with whom she had had an acrimonious split a while back. So we let his employers know what he had been doing. If they had a tough personal-use policy against employees playing on the Web he may have had a rude awakening. . .

The lessons to be learned here are:

- Switch off HTML rendering in your e-mail client, if you can.
- Never assume anything you do on the Web cannot be tracked, traced, or linked back to you.
- Don't do the crime if you can't do the time. . .

EMAIL HINT FOR AOL USERS

John Roy

I frequently get nested email messages from AOL users. When an AOL user forwards a message that has been forwarded to them it creates a series of separate messages that have to be opened separately. It's bad enough that the recipient must open several envelopes to get to the message, but every folder contains all the email addresses of every previous forward. This becomes an email address gold mine for Spammers to harvest from. What complicates the solution of the problem is that the AOL user may not be aware what is happening when doing a forward.

I posed this question to a knowledgeable computer person who was able to experiment with an AOL account. He provided me the following information. Since I don't use, nor would ever want to use, AOL, I don't know if the information is useful to you, but please read through it and give it a try.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) If a message arrives as an attachment, then **DOWNLOAD, OPEN, COPY and PASTE** into a new **REPLY** message.

NOTE: A forward will just compound itself. When you click **FORWARD** in AOL, the message **LOOKS** blank, but then **ALL** the previous stuff is added. **IF** a person **HIGHLIGHTS** any of the message and **THEN** chooses **FORWARD**, they get the highlight as well as **ALL** the previous stuff.

2) If the message happens to be in the main message, the part you wish to send on should be **HIGHLIGHTED** and then hit **REPLY**, instead of **FORWARD**, and only that selection will be in the email.

TidBytes

Sure, as reported last month, it is now illegal to sell LindowsOS in the Benelux countries, thanks to the good old fair competition provided by Micros**t – but you can buy and use Lin____s, or “LinDash”, instead. Where there’s a will there’s a way. . .

BUT – MS went back to the EU judge, crying foul and asking for fines to be imposed on LindowsOS ten times the legal maximum. They really are nice people and use such fair business competitive practices, don’t they?

* * * * *

Gleaned these rules for adjusting Outlook Express from VnuNet the other day. If you make the changes, they are supposed to make your Web life safer. I could not find all the boxes mentioned on my ME version, but maybe you will be luckier if you are still keeping up-to-date with Redmond.

Start Outlook Express. Press Tools | Options and click the Security tab. Select the ‘Restricted sites zone’ option and tick the box for ‘Warn me when other applications try to send email as me’. If you tick the ‘Do not allow attachments ...’ box, Outlook Express will prevent you from opening attachments that may contain viruses, but this option may prove too restrictive for some people.

While still in Tools | Options, click the Read tab. Tick the ‘Read all messages in plain text’ box and click on OK. All of your messages will now appear as ordinary text, not fancy formatted web pages. This will prevent messages from automatically downloading information and images from websites, which means you won’t see images in spam either.

May make your messages less exciting to look at – but then, the results will be less exciting in the wrong way, too, all being well. . . .

* * * * *

If you make the following adjustments, too, VNuNet suggests your IE life may be calmer: In Internet Explorer, press Tools | Internet Options and click the Security tab. Click the Restricted Sites icon, then click the Custom Level button. On the Security Settings dialog box, choose ‘High’, from the drop-down list and click the Reset button. Confirm your changes, then click on OK to close the dialog box and then click on OK to close the Internet Options box.

Happy surfing!

* * * * *

Want help with your Windows or DOS system? Take a look at www.mdgx.com/95.htm. AXCEL216 provides all sorts of “Windows 95/98/ NT4/2000/ME/XP/2003 + DOS 7.xx/8.00 ©Tricks+Secrets Files” as it says. Might be worth checking.

* * * * *

The Register (www.theregister.co.uk) offered a limited edition of T0shirts reading “My job went to India and all I got was this lousy T-shirt” -- sold out almost as soon as issued. Though I guess there would be no harm in making your own if you want to. As the Register said,



“Readers should not be alarmed at the possible repercussions on standards. Bangalore is awash with IT-savvy graduates with an excellent command of English. They offer three distinct advantages over their English and US counterparts: they earn 60p [Ed.Note: c. \$1.00] and hour; they do not have to be got drunk twice a week; and they can spell.”

Follow-up: Thomas Friedman wrote about this in the New York Times recently, but gave the T-shirt producers a U.S. address. The Register was really riled; and when I went to check the US address given, it had been removed!

* * * * *

More on the Canadian kid, mentioned last month, with the website that roused the ire of TBOR; there are two of them! Mike Morris now runs onlinemike.com since being warned off mikerrosoft.com and Mike Rowe still, at this time of writing, runs mikerowesoft.com. Trust the Press to screw things up.

* * * * *

Correction! Mea Culpa! I should be more careful researching before putting thumbs to word-processor. Recently I filled a couple of pages with a few words about Kmail, the KDE Linux e-mail program, and said it normally does not execute HTML. This is not strictly true, I discovered the other day. Press 'Settings' | 'Configure Kmail' and go to 'Security'. Under the 'General' tab there are three options: 'Prefer HTML to plain text'; 'Allow messages to load external references from

the Internet'; and 'automatically send receive and read confirmations'. They are all turned off as the default. I've left them that way, too.

Hope you find something similar in your e-mail program options.

* * * * *

ROKSO, which collects information on hard-line spam operations, recently put out some interesting statistics. They say 200 "Known Spam Operations" are responsible for 90% of your spam, and ended the report I found with a list of worst guys and their home countries. Of course, by spoofing and other tricks, the actual malefactors' names rarely appear, but ROKSO has methods. . .

OK, Gang, which do you think wins? China? Russia? Eastern Europe? No, no, no. The list has, by my count, 170 entries; in ascending order we have:

China, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Philippines, Taiwan – one each (that's 9 in all)

Cost Rica and United Kingdom – two each (4 more)

Argentina and Russia – three each (6 more)

Australia – 6

Canada – 10

The Good Ole U.S. of A. -- 135!!!

We can sure show the rest of them how to keep the Internet happy, can't we! So the next time you complain about spam, remember it's good to check your own house first, I guess.

-o—oOo—o-

In case you are interested, the car on Page 3 is a 1903 Celeritas.

FCUG Meeting 2nd March 2004

At the peak, 53 people were in attendance, and from what was heard afterwards, everything was well received.

Roger Giler, under the title “Some E-Mail Wisdom”, discussed proper e-mail ‘Netiquette’ as well as providing useful safety tips. There were so many points made that it is to be hoped that an article for the Voice might be made available later. He covered the usual Netiquette rules: make the message interesting for the reader; provide a descriptive title – ‘Help’ is not really enough, and a blank title is likely to be trashed as potential spam; don’t flame – that is, don’t be gratuitously rude; don’t SHOUT, or write all in capitals; and respect the recipient’s time. He moved on to cover some of the software available for e-mail, how to handle the Address Book (including saving a copy for security), replying, organizing your mail, forwarding, and nuisances like spam, spyware, worms and viruses. He ended with some rules for safety, which included: delete suspicious messages without opening; be careful opening attachments, even from friends, unless you know for certain what they are; use ZoneAlarm; use your virus checker on outgoing messages as well (in case you have picked up a virus without knowing it); NEVER answer spam (it just gives the spammer a valid address to pass on or sell); use good passwords (discussed by others in previous issues of the Voice); and, also mentioned here before – open your mail in text mode only if possible, so as not to execute inadvertently any Java script or HTML-driven programs. It was a full, first-class, coverage of an important subject and received its due recognition.

Pete Fuller ran the Q&A session. Towards the end things became too complex to record properly, but the following were noted before the pen jammed:

Q: How do I save my Address Book?

A: Press File | Export and follow the rules.

Q: How do I upgrade from OE5 to OE6?

A: Each new version of IE has the correct OE with it.

Q: How do I preserve my Address Book when reinstalling?

A: Reinstalling over the old version should leave your personal files alone.

Q: How can I install an older version over a newer one?

A: Delete the newer one first.

Q: How can I save a streaming video run by Media Player, which executes immediately and deletes any temporary files at once as well?

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A: Disassociate files with that extension from any default application. On reading the video file a window will then open asking if you want to save the file or run it immediately. Save it, and run later as many times as you want.

A': This may not work if you actually retrieve some meta-file which calls the video later, but it's worth a try.

Q: How do I clean up a multi-forwarded message for further forwarding without all the address nonsense?

A: Use Copy and Paste into a new message.

Q: Can I delete cookies?

A: Netscape 7.1 and later have a cookie manager which allows this.

A': You can use a program like CookieCop. Check the FCUG site.

Q: My Windows 95 Temporary Internet Files folder contains some apparently permanent files which will not delete.

A: They may be being used by Windows. Delete with DOS – and cross your fingers!

A': Some files may have the Read-Only attribute set. Remove this and try again.

Q: My two-year-old XP system is suddenly running like 100 times slower.

A: Remove Temporary Internet Files; clear some disk space.

Q: What are Temporary Internet Files? Are they important?

A: They are saved while surfing to make page reloading faster. They are not necessary.

The discussion now centered around how to find the folder and clear it; voices were raised from all over and the reporting quill dried to a nub. . .

During all this Spencer Kellogg had been carefully laying out glasses of juice and boxes of nibbles ready for the locusts to descend, which they did, but not apparently in sufficient numbers to consume everything, at least as far as could be seen from here,

It was then time for the main speaker, Maury Lynch (ex-banker turned certified MS Network Engineer) who told us about WiFi. Another first-class presentation; it is to be hoped that fuller details will shortly be available on the website. He told us much more than can safely be reproduced (probably badly) here, but he did cover not only the mechanics of how to set up a wireless network, but also useful safety/security tips. To start, you need a router, known as an Access Point, with at least one wireless outlet. Every piece of wireless equipment has a built-in SSID, an individual identity number, so you should set your router to recognize communication only with the SSIDs of your own

equipment. You should also use encryption for wireless links, and change the encryption key regularly. Even so, the chances of your network being 100% secure are pretty low!

When using your wifi laptop outdoors, be careful to watch for spies recording keystrokes and such; even one of the new telephone cameras can be a powerful spy tool for recovering passwords and other private data.

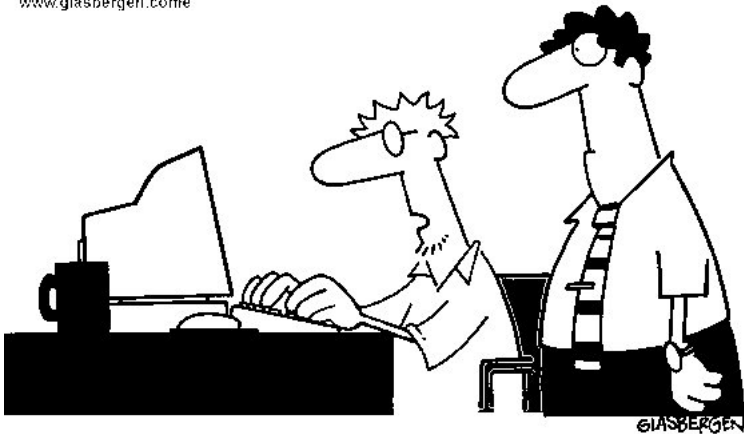
Perhaps this overstates the case, but these suggestions made a lot of sense to this listener. Many thanks, Maury.

In case you want to get in touch, he can be reached at mlynch@computerdocs.biz, or mlynch@optonline.net.

Parks did not pick tonight, so we piled the chairs and then ourselves into our vehicles and departed.

—oOo—

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www.glasbergen.com



“You need to be more careful! Your computer has a virus, your monitor has warts, your mouse pad has athlete’s foot and your modem has rabies.”

Software Licensing: The Hidden Truth by 'Valour'

It's a hoop we've all been jumping through for years: agreeing to lengthy license agreements that we never read. Few people ever read them because they're long and difficult to understand. License agreements are generally written for lawyers, not regular people, and are meant to be "interpreted" rather than understood. It's time we started reading these licenses and determining if we really agree to them or not. Indeed if we do not agree to the terms, we should not be using the software. Read on for an in-depth explanation.

A license is basically an agreement (not a legal contract, although software companies often try to turn it into one by making you perform an act of agreement) between the end user and the software manufacturer, and it outlines the terms by which we are allowed to use the software sold or given to us. Generally we're forced into agreement with a software license by an anonymous act, not a genuine signature or verbal agreement. Acts of agreement generally include breaking a clearly labeled seal to open the software package or disk bundle, clicking on a button in a program that asks us if we accept the license terms, or simply by using the software our agreement can be assumed. So when you install a new software program and use it you are knowingly or unknowingly agreeing to the terms of the license. But do you know what that license really says, and what you are and are not allowed to do with the program?

Microsoft: An Example

While Adobe, IBM, Apple, Corel and Macromedia (among others) all have similar agreements for most or all of their software products, Microsoft is the most widely-used proprietary software company in the world, so it makes sense to use them as a specific example of a typical proprietary license agreement. Proprietary in this sense means that the software is licensed (not sold) by a company that has exclusive rights over it. That means that although you may have purchased a retail box with fancy logos on the front and a manual and CD media inside, you do not own these things. Rather you license their use from the company that owns them.

For this example I've examined the Outlook XP license; Outlook has been available as a standalone product for some time, although most people generally get it as part of the Microsoft Office suite. The license is, as far as I can tell, identical to the one that governs all of Microsoft Office XP.

Every company has a different name for their license. Microsoft calls theirs the End-User License Agreement, or EULA for short. Without further ado, here is a mostly complete list of restrictions that the EULA imposes on people who buy and use Outlook or Office XP:

You can install and use one copy of the software on a single computer. This implies that you may not install two copies of the

software on the same machine (as would be useful for people who dual-boot Windows 98 and Windows XP or some Windows combination similar to that). Microsoft allows a second copy to be installed on a portable machine, but only if the licensee is the primary user of both computers.

You can install the software on a network for several client machines to use, but each client machine has to have its own license in addition to the license for the server. That means you need to buy a separate copy of the software for each computer that connects to the program on the network. Even though you have licenses for each client machine, you are not allowed to use them to access the server concurrently -- in other words you can only use one machine at a time to use the software.

The software package may contain "media elements" such as movie clips, clip art drawings, photos, etc. You aren't allowed to sell these media elements as standalone items or as part of a package. If any media elements contain people, names, logos, initials or other trademarked, copyrighted, or rights-reserved materials, you can't use it for commercial purposes. You can't create "obscene or scandalous works" with the media elements included with the software. Third parties are unable to distribute standalone copies of the media elements, and if you use them in a commercial project you must include proper copyright notices for the media elements. Lastly, Microsoft won't be held liable for any lawsuits or damages that may arise by modifying the media elements. With all of this nonsense, it would seem less of a burden to simply not include "media elements."

Microsoft specifically states that all rights that are not specifically granted to you are reserved by Microsoft. This is to cover up loopholes that might otherwise allow something obscure yet harmful.

Product activation is mandatory; you are required to participate in Microsoft's activation scheme.

The product may include a copy protection scheme as well, which would prevent you from making copies of the software. Under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act it is illegal to attempt to defeat this scheme. You are allowed to make a backup copy of the original media only if the program requires the media in order to operate. Otherwise your original program CD or CDs count as backup copies.

Microsoft forbids you to decompile, reverse engineer or disassemble the software in any way.

If you buy the whole Office suite, you can't break it up and put different programs on different machines. The suite itself is treated as one individual product.

You're not allowed to rent, lend, loan or lease the software to anyone, and you can't use the software for commercial hosting purposes. If you call Microsoft for product support, they will use your customer information for "business purposes." The EULA says that no "personally identifiable information" will be used, if collected.

You may transfer your license to someone else, but that person may not transfer it to anyone else. In other words the license can be

transferred only one time. If you want to transfer the license to someone, that person must agree to the EULA.

The EULA may be terminated by Microsoft if you violate its terms. If that happens, you must destroy all copies of the software and accompanying materials and components. That means you can't keep the software you bought if your license is terminated by Microsoft.

If you're upgrading, you have to have a properly licensed qualifying product to upgrade from. Once you upgrade, the old program's license is terminated in favor of the new one. So if you upgrade to Outlook XP from Outlook 97, your old copy of Outlook 97 can no longer be used. I'm not sure if you're supposed to destroy the old copy or not -- the license isn't too clear on that.

You're not allowed to copy the product documentation, but if an electronic edition of the documentation is provided you are allowed to print out one (and only one) copy of it for yourself.

The software is warranted for 90 days from the date of purchase. The warranty covers virtually nothing at all; all that is warranted is that the software will operate as the documentation says it will. If it doesn't, Microsoft will either fix the software for you or refund what you paid for the software (the choice is theirs to make). You have to mail them the software and the receipt at your own expense. Updates, service packs, hotfixes and other add-ons and extensions are not warranted at all.

Microsoft will not be held liable for any damages resulting from using or installing the software, even if it doesn't work as stated in the documentation. Furthermore although Microsoft makes and sells this software for a profit, it doesn't guarantee that the software is safe to use, secure from intrusion, free of viruses or harmful programming mistakes, or that it will be at all useful to you. So in other words if you buy Microsoft Outlook expecting it to function as promised, but instead it puts a virus on your system, deletes all of your personal data and overwrites your motherboard's BIOS with garbage (thereby ruining the motherboard), the best you can hope for from Microsoft is US \$5 or the purchase price of the software, whichever is greater. This is very poor corporate accountability; companies that make and sell physical products (cars, toys, other "real" things) must be held liable for any damage it does due to negligence on the part of the company, but somehow Microsoft wants to absolve themselves of the responsibility of making a safe product. Fortunately some states have laws which force corporations to be held liable for damages in such instances; the EULA cannot override the law. If you're in Canada or some other country outside of the US, check your local laws to see if they have such a protection for consumers.

The warranty does not cover damage to the software via accident, abuse, misapplication, abnormal use, or viruses. I'm curious as to what "abnormal use" refers to; I wonder if Microsoft software has a maximum duty cycle?

As thorough as the license is, it's odd to find a typo, yet there certainly is one in item 12 where "SHALL" has only one L. I'm not generally one to criticize the editing efforts of others, but it's almost

surreal to see an error as basic and silly as this in a document that is so precise and particular.

Do You Agree?

It may be that you don't find these terms all that disagreeable. In that case you wouldn't be violating your morals or ignoring your conscience by using this software. However if you disagree with even one point of this EULA you should not accept its terms, which generally means you can get a refund for it if you bought it. If you didn't buy the software -- if someone gave you a copy or if you downloaded it from a filesharing service -- then you're breaking the law and could face civil penalties of up to US \$150,000 or criminal penalties of US \$250,000 and up to five years in jail. All that for sharing your software with your friends and family.

So what if you don't agree? What then? You quit the installation program, repackage the software and return it to the manufacturer (not the reseller or the hardware manufacturer if you bought the software with a computer) for a refund. As for what you'll be using instead of proprietary software like Outlook, there are a lot of programs out there that are licensed under less restrictive licenses like the BSD License or the GNU General Public License (GPL). These programs are free to use, modify, sell, copy and redistribute -- a quality known as Free Software. That's free as in the licensing terms, not as in price. While you generally aren't charged a fee for downloading or using Free Software, if you find it useful you should donate a contribution to the project that maintains and develops the software you're using. If you're not sure, you can donate directly to the Free Software Foundation. In many instances they're as good as or better than their proprietary competitors.

An excellent replacement for Outlook XP would be Aethera, a Free Software PIM/email client that isn't susceptible to many of the viruses that Outlook and Outlook Express are. If you're looking for a word processor, spreadsheet and presentation program suite like MS Office XP Standard Edition, OpenOffice.org makes production-quality replacements for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. There are several other alternatives that are worth exploring, and most of them are free to download and use.

A Pirate's Life For Me?

The things I personally find most disagreeable about the EULA are the restrictions placed on loaning or selling the software and the fact that they're backed with civil and criminal penalties. It shouldn't be a felony for me to give a copy of my software to someone in need. Not using this software is a matter of integrity for me; if I don't agree to the license, I'm not going to lie and say that I do just so that I can use it. I've lied to Microsoft and Macromedia and Adobe and others for years -- I'm sick of it. I don't agree to their restrictive licenses and I refuse to use their software. Amazingly, my life has not been upheaved as a result, and I feel much better about my situation now that I'm using Free Software instead. Now I can give out copies of my software to those in need without the

pang of conscience telling me that I'm lying and breaking the law.

Illegal copying and distribution of software is called "piracy" by the big software companies. When you install your copy of a program onto a friend's machine, Microsoft prefers to use the term "softlifting" to describe your actions. This is an effort to make it sound like you are stealing or "shoplifting" something from them. You are not stealing in this instance, or committing a true act of piracy, but you are breaking the law. Microsoft says that software "piracy" accounts for an industry loss of US \$13 billion annually. This is a complete fabrication -- this number is a projection based on an estimate of how much proprietary software is illegally installed, a number which is impossible to accurately guess. Many industry experts feel that this estimate is far too high because of the arbitrary method by which it is calculated. This also wrongfully assumes that all of the people who illegally installed proprietary software would have otherwise paid for it. In my experience if it were impossible to illegally copy and install software in this manner, most people would find other, cheaper (or free) alternatives or they would simply go without it. Microsoft's (and other big software companies') counter-argument to this is the assertion that proprietary software would be more affordable if illegal copying and use didn't exist, because software companies would be making more money. Their logic is laughable -- what they're saying is that they'll charge us less money if we give them more money. We already know that trickle-down economics (or as George Bush Sr. called it, "voodoo economics") doesn't work; we don't need the software industry to show us more proof. The only thing that makes proprietary software cheaper is strong competition from a variety of smaller entities.

The Reality Of "Piracy"

But despite their claims, I don't believe that Microsoft is really interested in stopping software "piracy." I always suspected that they had a secret interest in "piracy" because it makes their software more ubiquitous and has been an effective method of making products like Word into industry standards. The second point is that very few people are ever arrested for software "piracy" and I can't find evidence of any home users being prosecuted for "softlifting" despite its widespread and well-known practice. But recently something happened that fortified my suspicion: some of the source code for Windows 2000 was leaked onto the Internet. It immediately appeared on filesharing services where any number of proprietary programs can already be found. Microsoft responded by posting notices on these P2P networks informing people that they would be tracked down and punished if they downloaded the Windows source code. They pulled out their full arsenal to try to stymie the spread of the leaked source code, even getting the FBI involved and dedicating resources to finding out who was responsible for the leak. I was amazed at this response, considering the fact that you can find several different versions of Windows and Office (including server and corporate editions, alpha and beta test copies, activation code generators and cracks for activation procedures) on these same networks -- and

they've been available for years without this kind of reaction from Microsoft. If Microsoft is capable of such measures, why doesn't it go to that degree to stop the illegal distribution of binary copies of Office and Windows? Ruling out the possibility of being unable to accomplish a crackdown on illegal distribution, that leaves two possibilities: they are unwilling to act, or they are apathetic about the situation and not very serious about attacking software "piracy." The former implies that they receive some benefit from "piracy" and the latter implies that they aren't significantly affected by illegal distribution.

The secret may be that big software companies don't really want to stop illegal distribution because it doesn't affect their paying customer base. People who most often pay for expensive proprietary software are in businesses that need it to operate or make money; home users rarely will shell out hundreds or thousands of dollars for software that they will barely use or couldn't otherwise afford. In other words, those who are "pirating" are not generally people who would be paying for the same software. If this is the reality of the software world, why wouldn't companies like Microsoft want to make a considerable reduction in price -- or give the software away for free -- for noncommercial use? Why not make less money rather than no money? Some software companies already do this, but the biggest ones do not.

There are many people who justify their own software "piracy" by saying that it hurts companies like Microsoft, which are generally considered immoral and "evil" by those who gladly distribute and install proprietary software illegally. The irony of the situation is that it likely does more to help big software companies by improving their installed base percentage (the number of computers in the world that use the software) without generating any costs. In the long run this may help improve market share by selling upgrades to people who have previously used "pirated" software.

Conclusions

Imagine walking into a hardware store to buy some tools and supplies for making a shed. You bring your selected products to the counter and prepare to pay for them, but the clerk won't take payment until you've agreed to certain terms and conditions: You can't lend your new tools to your friends or family members; the tools can only be used to build the shed, and nothing else; the shed must follow one simple blueprint and may not be altered or painted; only you may enter the shed when it is complete; you may not rent out the shed or lend it to others; you may not buy other materials and make an identical shed using the same blueprint; if the shed collapses due to poor design or flawed materials, you may not collect damages from the company who designed the blueprint or made the wood. If you don't agree to these terms you can't buy the products, and if you buy the products and then violate the terms of the agreement you face astronomical fines and possibly jail time. Would you walk out of the store empty-handed, seeking a more liberated solution that fits your needs? Or would you buy the materials, resigned to

the fact that your shed will not be as useful to you as you'd hoped?

Such is the dilemma with software licensing. Software is a tool that we use to help us be more useful and to improve our lives in many ways, and we should be able to use this tool in any way that we see fit. I have stopped jumping through the EULA hoops that big software companies put in front of me because I know that there are alternatives that don't tie me down and rob me of my rights as an end-user. If you don't agree to the license, don't lie and say that you do -- refuse to use the software and demand a refund.

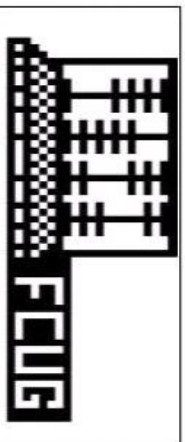
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