

**Software
Issue**

BYTES & PIECES

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IN THIS ISSUE

Word processing, spreadsheet, drawing, photo, 3D, web publishing software free!

- In this issue we find the best free software 1

OpenOffice.org 1.1 reviewed

- A look at the latest release of this free office suite 1

Vicman's Photo Editor 7.5 available

- The add-ons cost but the editor is free 2

Free Serif software suite

- A creativity suite free 3

Keep the nasties at bay

- Antivirus and antispyware software to keep your system clean 3

A Danish subscriber to the HCUG-List

- Ole Wassman joins us 4

Buy, buy

- Pickles auction coming up 4

WORD PROCESSING, SPREADSHEET, DRAWING, PHOTO, 3D, WEB PUBLISHING SOFTWARE FREE!

A complete office suite, photo retouching software, publishing software, web publishing software ... the list of quality free software gets bigger every year. In this issue, we look at some of the wonderful programs that are available and also report on Microsoft's latest version of Office.

To save you downloading the free applications, Peter Campbell has done that for you and can provide them on CD. You will need to register some of them before you can use them, however.

OPENOFFICE.ORG 1.1 REVIEWED

Why .org?

OpenOffice.org is the OpenSource software upon which Sun Microsystems' StarOffice is now based. It is being developed by many programmers working around the world. Their efforts are co-ordinated by an organisation set up and supported by Sun. That organisation was called "OpenOffice.org" with the intention that the office suite would be called "OpenOffice". However, the trademarks "OpenOffice" and "Open Office" are used by several other organisations in various countries. As a result, Sun and the organisation decided to call the product "OpenOffice.org" instead. Many people, however, refer to it simply as "OpenOffice" and I will do that throughout the rest of this article.

What's new?

I won't reinvent the wheel. Just take a look at

http://www.openoffice.org/dev_docs/features/1.1/features-text.html

<http://www.sun.com/software/star/staroffice/whatsnew/whatsnewguide.pdf>

for a run-down on the new features. About the only thing they haven't mentioned on that page is the improved XP-like interface. All your old favourites are there, hiding behind new "prettier" icons.

What I noticed

The first thing I noticed about the released version of OpenOffice 1.1, as opposed to the beta version I tested earlier, was the speed with which it booted up and also the speed with which it loaded documents. StarOffice 5.x, which preceded OpenOffice, was quite slow to load, in part due to its use of its own desktop, instead of the Windows one. When StarOffice 6.0 and OpenOffice 1.0 were developed without that desktop, many of us expected a speed improvement, but that didn't happen then. Now it has.

Next I noticed how the icons have revamped to give OpenOffice a new look that blends in with Windows XP, rather than its previous look, which was somewhat Unix in appearance. If you don't like the new look, you can choose from "X-Window" (Linux), "Macintosh", and "OS/2". You can also customise various aspects of the interface.

This newsletter is produced in a PDF format for those who like to print it out and keep it for reference. With that in mind, you can easily see how pleased I was to see a PDF export button alongside the Print Directly button. You can also export drawings and presentations in Macromedia Flash format. These are both useful improvements.

The designers have continued with Star Division's "Everything in one place" philosophy, even though this has meant that OpenOffice differs from Microsoft Office when it comes to setting up options. On the other hand, the "roll-up" menus have become floating windows that you close when you have finished with them. We wouldn't want to confuse those MS users too much, would we?

OpenOffice 1.1 is a cross-platform application. That means that I can get versions that run on Windows, Mac OS-X and Linux. I don't need the Mac one, but being able to use the same application on Windows and Linux is very useful to me.

All in all, I am impressed with the new OpenOffice 1.1 and am saving my pennies to invest in StarOffice 7 and, perhaps, a "StarOffice 7 Companion" when it is published.

VICMAN'S PHOTO EDITOR 7.5

An excellent photo editor you can have free

Victor Sazhin of Vicman Software produces an excellent photo editor which he makes available for free to interest users in his range of software products. A Pro version and various related and unrelated programs are available for purchase from his website. Just take a look at what the Photo Editor offers:

VCW VicMan's Photo Editor 7.5 includes new advanced features, which include Adobe Photoshop compatible filters support, letting you take creative photo retouching and web graphics design to a higher level. Winter holidays are the busiest time of the year, and nobody would like to spend them learning complicated software for the sole purpose to enhance their Christmas and New Year snapshots. With new detailed online help and animated tutorials even those who are totally unfamiliar with image editing can learn how to turn photos into works of art in a few easy steps. VCW VicMan's Photo Editor is suitable both for professional and novice users. This powerful application is user-friendly, offering users the simplicity of image editing, high productivity and easy customizing abilities.

Apart from basic image editing features, VCW VicMan's Photo Editor lets Review Request for VCW VicMan's.ems you get the most out of its unique live color tolerance tool as well as built-in and custom transformations, effects and filters.

Main features:

- 20+ image file formats support

- *Adobe Photoshop compatible plug-ins support*Nearly a hundred pre-installed filters, transformations and effects
- *Edit and preview images at any scale*
- *Handy drawing tools: Pencil, Brush and Eraser*
- *Color selection and replacement tools*
- *Selection tools: rectangular, freeform, and Magic Wand*
- *Text and gradient tools*
- *Color tolerance tools with separate options for each of the three color channels*
- *Gamma correction tool*
- *Brightness, saturation and contrast adjustment*
- *Noise reduction*
- *Automatic color correction tool*

Main changes in version 7.0:

- *Significantly improved interface*
- *100% new text rendering engine*
- *100% new brush engine*
- *Automatic color correction*
- *Noise reduction*
- *New unique Live Tolerance concept*
- *Improved performance*
- *A number of bug fixes.*

Those who need yet more power and flexibility of use may benefit from the PRO version, which costs \$29.95. Additional features of the PRO version let you:

- *Open and edit unlimited number of images simultaneously*
- *Export artwork to GIF format*
- *Handle large resolution images to obtain and preserve outstanding image quality*
- *Use advanced cloning tools: clone images using their own parts or external images as a source*
- *Get free support and upgrades*

System Requirements

Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP, Truicolor display, Pentium 3

<http://www.vicman.net/index.htm>

FREE SERIF SOFTWARE

To quote from Serif's website: *Serif is the world's leading independent publisher of desktop publishing, design and graphics software with an award-winning range and a reputation for making professional effects and publishing capabilities accessible to ordinary PC users.* They certainly have a reputation for very capable, but inexpensive software. Now they are further enhancing this by offering older versions of their main lines for free download. Web publishing, general publishing, 3D design, photo retouching, drawing – all free!

<http://www.freerisefsoftware.com/products.asp>

You will also find Serif software on *Windows XP Answers* currently on sale at some newsagents.

If you find yourself being asked to phone the UK to register the software, try registering online:

<http://www.freerisefsoftware.com/support/registration.asp>

KEEP THE NASTIES AT BAY

No issue about free software would be complete without mention of antivirus and antispaam software. So, at

the risk of repeating what we have told you recently, here's our suggestions:

Antivirus

AVG from Grisoft has recently undergone a restructure. Now, instead of downloading updates around 1.5 MB, they are generally less than 40 kb! Even on a dialup connection that only takes a minute or two to download. No longer is there an excuse for not keeping your antivirus up-to-date.

AVG is independently tested for 100% detection of malware and is available free for single home and non-commercial use and gives you:

- AVG resident protection
- AVG email scanner
- AVG on-demand scanner
- Basic scheduled tests
- Free virus database updates
- Automatic update feature
- Easy-to-use interface
- Automatic healing of infected files
- AVG Virus Vault for safe handling of infected files

Do you really need anything more?

Antispam

After testing several possibilities, Spam Assassin in the form of SProxy is set to become my antispam software of choice. Using Bayesian filters, SProxy can be trained to recognise various characteristics and assign probabilities to each characteristic. This helps to reduce "false positives" – emails incorrectly identified as spam.

As its name implies, SProxy is set up as a proxy server on your computer. All incoming emails pass through it and are analysed. To integrate it with whatever email client you use, you need to set your email client to look for incoming email from "localhost" and set up a filter/rule to read the flag which SProxy sets in email identified as spam. This sounds complicated but is actually quite simple to do.

If you can't manage to do it yourself, seek help. It only needs to be done once and there are plenty of Group members who can assist.

A DANISH SUBSCRIBER TO THE HCUG-LIST

The HCUG-list is **not** restricted to Group members. Anyone is welcome, but they need to subscribe personally. Latest non-member to join the list is Ole Wassman from Denmark. Ole is looking for someone to correspond with. His interests are: Computers, history, heraldic, genealogy and bowling. For more details, see the separate email forwarded to the email list.

"Ole Wassmann" <ole@wassmann.net>

BUY BUY

Those computer auctions keep coming. This time it is Pickles Auctions on Wednesday 22 October at 10.00 pm. onsite at 1 Self's Point, Lutana. Desktops, laptops, laser printers, monitors – there's plenty to choose from. <http://www.pickles.com.au> for more details once the items are lotted into the sale – usually two days beforehand.

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