

# BYTES & PIECES

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF THE HOBART COMPUTER USERS GROUP INC.

Volume 2 - Number 20

15 February 2004

## IN THIS ISSUE

### We're back!

A packed meeting endorsed the Committee's efforts to restart the Group ..... 1.

### HCUG-List is for everyone.

It's how we communicate with members ..... 2.

### Is Windows a trademark?

It's registered, but a judge says it shouldn't be ..... 2.

### Care and feeding of CDs.

You might be putting your photos on CD and at risk at the same time! ..... 3.

### Phishers attack the smaller banks.

Scammers target Bendigo Bank and Citibank ..... 3.

### Firebird is no more.

The fastest browser undergoes a name change ..... 3.

### Acrobat Reader 6.0.

Have Acrobat Reader read this to you ..... 4.

### Good buy.

Competitive components prices and some good used gear on offer this week ..... 4.

### Contact points.

Here's how to contact the Editor ..... 4.

## WE'RE BACK!

The biggest turnout we've seen for quite a while turned up at the Special General Meeting to hear the Management Committee's recommendations.

The first problem was to appoint a new President and Vice President. Under the Rules of the Association, the Committee has the power to fill casual vacancies without an election, and even without having the appointments ratified by the general membership. However, such appointments are only valid until the Annual General Meeting.

Peter Campbell reviewed the relevant Rules and pointed out that we no longer needed a full Committee of eight. There being six remaining Committee members (after the President's resignation took effect), he suggested that Paul Turvey assume the Presidency, until other arrangements could be made, and that Luke Solak remain as Vice President on the same basis. Luke agreed readily and Paul, after some careful thought, also agreed to "... give it a go".

With the Committee appointments out of the road, the meeting discussed the proposed meeting plan and considered the available details about a possible new venue, and resolved to leave to the Committee to implement the move as soon as possible, subject to it being beneficial to the Group. A number of members made suggestions that the Committee will, no doubt, take on board.

Sid Davis presented Cindy with a bouquet of flowers and, on behalf of the Committee and the membership, thanked her for her efforts. Cindy closed the Special General Meeting, and some members' problems were addressed in the time remaining before supper.

If you were withholding your membership dues until the future of the Group was clarified, you may now pay them, confident in the knowledge that we are back and going forward!

## HCUG-LIST IS FOR EVERYONE

As we no longer produce a regular printed newsletter, our main means of communication with our membership and the computer world at large is this electronic publication. However, we have found that not all members who have an email address have subscribed to the HCUG-List, through which this newsletter is distributed.

To correct this and ensure that we can keep our members informed, the Management Committee has decided to change to an opt-out approach, rather than the current opt-in method whereby you have to go to the list website, complete certain details and later confirm that you wish to subscribe. Provided we have members email addresses, they will now be added automatically with members having the right to request that they be removed from the list at any time that they no longer wish to receive the newsletter, warnings about latest viruses, discussions, for sale notices, wanted notices etc.

The newsletter will continue to be available as an email (RTF/HTML format) and in PDF format for those who want to print it out with numbered pages. This can be downloaded from the website, or sent as an email attachment if so requested from the Editor. Note: All members on the email list receive the email version.

## Is WINDOWS A TRADEMARK?

When Microsoft sued Lindows.com over the similarity between their name and Microsoft's well-known operating system, they may well have thought that the matter would be quickly decided. Such was not to be the case.

Lindows.com mounted a spirited defence questioning whether Windows, having been a generic term used by Xerox to describe their prototype "WIMP" system, Apple in 1984 to describe the way their Macintosh worked, and Microsoft in its press releases for Windows 1.0, as well as elsewhere, should have been registered as a trademark. (It was knocked back twice, before finally being registered in circumstances which Lindows.com promised would make interesting reading when the matter came to trial.)

Microsoft sought an injunction to prevent Lindows.com from using the names Lindows.com, Lindows and LindowsOS, but the injunction was refused more than once. The matter was to go to trial last year, but the trial was put off until 1 March this year. Now a judge has ruled that Microsoft's argument that what counts is how the word is perceived now, rather than whether it was generic twenty years ago, is not correct and has ruled that Windows is indeed a generic term not eligible for registration (in the US) as a trademark. Microsoft will now appeal this ruling.

Paul Thurrott of *Windows & .Net* magazine says:

*This week's ruling means that an appeals court will decide whether windows is indeed a generic term; if so, Microsoft could lose its trademark. At the very least, a jury will be able to use that determination to decide the future trial case between Microsoft and Lindows.com.*

*But before the anyone-but-Microsoft crowd gets too excited, it's important to note that the appeals court will be working under a strict set of rules. According to US District Judge John Coughenour, the court can consider only whether the term windows was a generic computing term before November 1985, when Microsoft released the original version of Windows. And Microsoft can appeal the ruling, of course.*

The matter will drag on through the courts for quite a while yet. However, the Judge's action in allowing Microsoft to appeal his ruling now, rather than after the trial, has allowed Lindows to keep trading indefinitely. If, as Microsoft earlier claimed, Lindows was doing "irreparable" harm to Microsoft's business and were confident that their Windows trademark is valid, wouldn't they have wanted the trial to proceed so that Lindows would be forced to change their name when they (Lindows) lost? After all, that is what Lindows' CEO has promised to do.

Personally I have no difficulty distinguishing between "Microsoft Windows" and "LindowsOS", whether hearing the words themselves, or seeing the two products on screen and cannot see the few hundred thousands machines running LindowsOS damaging anyone's business. But then, that's just me!

## CARE AND FEEDING OF CDs

You've transferred your photos to a CD-ROM disc, you've crafted a beautiful label for the disc, you've fed the disc through your cataloguing program, you've carefully filed your disc away in the CD cabinet you bought at Chickenfeed specially for the purpose, and now you're sitting back confident in the knowledge that your photos are preserved for the rest of time.

I'm sorry, but all is not as it first appears. The "burning" of the CD, the label, the way you handled the disc while burning and cataloguing it, the cabinet, heat and dust in the area where the cabinet is ... These are just some of the variables that could jeopardise your precious photos. For an explanation and helpful information on preserving those precious photos, see our Feature Article "Care and feeding of CDs" on our website.

[http://www.hobartpcgroup.org.au/care\\_of\\_cds.htm](http://www.hobartpcgroup.org.au/care_of_cds.htm)

## PHISHERS TARGET SMALLER BANKS

Four times in one week I have been asked to go to a bank's website and confirm my account particulars. Two of these requests appeared to come from "Bendigo Bank" and two from "Citibank". As I have accounts at neither, it was not hard to decide that the requests belonged in the Junk box and I promptly right-clicked and dumped them there.

"Phishers", as they have been dubbed, try to persuade you to go to a website that purports to be that of a financial institution or service and "confirm" your confidential details. The actual site is not what it appears and, once the phishers get your account details, they will try to clean your account out, or charge purchases to your credit card. So, beware!

A quick rule of thumb will protect you from this kind of scam activity: Never send confidential details in an email and never supply them to a website you reached by following a link, especially a link in an email. As a further precaution, look out for the https:// and padlock symbol that indicate a secure site and also check what security the site is using, e.g. VeriSign.

If you have mistakenly visited a scammers website and given confidential particulars, contact your financial institution for advice on what to do now.

## FIREBIRD IS NO MORE

There was once a project to produce a fast, small browser called "Phoenix". Because of copyright/trademark issues its name was changed to Firebird. Firebird was small and fast, but gave the greatest viewing area of any browser – and isn't viewing webpages what browsing is about? It was written to conform strictly to W3C standards, ensuring compatibility with every website in the world that abides by the "rules". It included pop-up blocking, tabbed browsing, integrated search, keyboard navigation – open links by just typing part of the name – and customisation via more than 150 downloadable extensions. It was available for Windows, Linux and MacOS-X. Now it is no more.

Instead we now have Firefox. Firefox is the latest release of Firebird, but, according to Mozilla, it has been renamed because of an "overlap with another OpenSource product".

Firefox 0.8 boasts an improved download manager that makes it easy to manage multiple downloads. It has "numerous improvements to bookmark handling" and it has improved extension installation. The installer for Windows has also been improved. However, if you already have Firebird installed, it is important that you read the Release Notes and follow the installation procedure described therein. Otherwise you will have to read the Release Notes to find out how to get Firefox running, a process which involves finding and renaming the Chrome folder in your Profile.

Firebird has won awards and was adopted by several magazine writers as their browser of choice. Now, as Firefox, it is set to be even more successful. Not bad for what its makers describe as "a technology preview".

I wonder how much better it will become by the time it reaches version 1.0.

Now that Firefox 0.8 has been launched, Mozilla plans a “Get Firefox” campaign to raise awareness and, of course, to get people using it. If you are serious about your Internet use, give it a try. I’ve looked at NeoPlanet, Avant, Crazy Browser, Opera, Netscape and more, but nothing, in my opinion, is better than Phoenix ... er ... Firebird ... er ... what name is it using this week? ... ah ... Firefox!

<http://www.mozilla.org>

## ACROBAT READER 6.0

One of the improvements in the latest version of Acrobat Reader is that it can read text to you from any PDF file. To do this it needs Windows Speech Engine, a standard component of Windows XP, and one that can be added to most earlier versions.

The Speech Engine offers a choice of three synthesised voices. After you have selected a new one, you will need to reboot Windows before the change will affect Acrobat Reader.

Although Acrobat Reader will attempt to read any PDF document, the results will vary with different document layouts. To assist the engine read this newsletter, and thus to provide a document that is more accessible to people with failing eyesight, I have been experimenting with visible and invisible full-stops. When the Speech Engine recognises a full-stop, it alters its inflection and adds a pause. This makes it easier to follow what it is reading.

Over time, I will test the “readability” of the website and try to improve it.

Hand in hand with document reading goes document dictation using speech recognition. The two most widely used speech recognition applications are Dragon Naturally Speaking and IBM ViaVoice. Despite the latter’s name, it is now owned by the same firm as Dragon.

If you use either of these applications, I should like to hear from you. You may be able to assist other users and you could help me decide which is the better application.

## GOOD BUY

If you are running short of hard drive space, now would be a good time to add a bigger hard drive. 120 GB drives are selling for around \$160, 80 GB about \$120 and 40 GB around \$90. You could also replace that decrepit old 14 inch monitor with a shiny new 17 inch for around \$170. And instead of that CD burner you have been promising yourself, how about a DVD player/CD burner for around \$110! DVD burners are as little as \$210. Contact Peter Campbell or Luke Solak if you are interested.

Want a Pentium 233 for a modest price? How about a Hewlett Packard 670C DeskJet? Contact Peter Campbell for further details.

And don't forget the ink cartridges available from <http://www.intelligentink.com>. Quality ink cartridges with smart chip, where applicable, at prices that are hard to beat.

**Produced with:** OpenOffice.org 1.1. **Last changed:** 15 Feb 2004

**Editor:** Peter Campbell, C/-Hobart Computer Users Group Inc.,  
PO Box 563, Rosny Park Tas 7018, Australia.

**Phone:** (03) 6234 4691.

**Email:** [editor@hobartpcgroup.org.au](mailto:editor@hobartpcgroup.org.au).

*Disclaimer: Opinions expressed herein are those of the Editor or the author of the item concerned and are not necessarily endorsed by the Management Committee of the Hobart Computer Users Group Inc. While care is taken in compiling the information in this newsletter, the Hobart Computer Users Group Inc. and its officers and members cannot take responsibility for any problems arising from the use of the information.*