

BYTES & PIECES

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SPAM, SCAM, WORM AND VIRUS

2004 has seen an upsurge in unsolicited commercial emails (spam) despite legislation that has been passed in various countries. Spammers have been busy finding ways around the restrictions that have been imposed.

There has also been an upsurge in emails trying to trick the recipients into divulging confidential information, such as credit card numbers and bank account details. The phishers, as they are often called, have recently turned their attention to customers of smaller financial institutions.

Recent months have seen an increasing amount of malware (worms, viruses, trojans) that spread through infected attachments and try to use email address books to proliferate. At one stage this produced so much email that major Internet Service Providers experienced difficulty in coping with the flood. Telstra reportedly increased their email capacity by 70% to prevent a recurrence of the problems they experienced. Reports suggest that some legitimate email was lost and some was delayed by as much as a month.

What should you do to prevent infection of your computer and also to prevent the spread of such malware? How can you protect yourself from the scams and keep spam under control? The problem isn't going away, legislation isn't providing an answer, and you can't afford to ignore the problem. For the Editor's recommendations, pop over to our website and read the Feature Article, *A Complete Email Solution*.

If that solution doesn't suit you, come along on 9 March 2004 to the New Town Senior Citizens Centre, 22 Creek Road, Lenah Valley and hear our technical adviser, Robert Crombie of Salamanca Systems, discuss other ways to tackle the problem. Bring all your computer friends with you. The less they currently know, the more they need to attend. Otherwise they will remain part of the problem and you will be doing them a disservice by not inviting them.

If you can get a poster into the window of the local shop, or publicise this meeting in any way, let the Committee know what you are doing so they can co-ordinate publicity efforts. This meeting is topical and important. Let's get the message out.

REVAMPING THE WEBSITE

Over the last week, or so, I have been revamping the website. Some “buttons” have been moved – i.e. the pages associated with them have been linked in differently. Most buttons have been restyled to freshen up the look. Some minor errors have been corrected as well.

The “What’s New” button has been removed and the “What’s New” page has been incorporated into the home page so that it is now the first thing that you encounter. This change reflects the fact that almost all of our visitors have visited the site previously and so are likely to be looking for changes and meeting details. If you scroll down the home page, you will find details for the next meeting are also right there on that page. For further details of the next meeting, as well as details of other planned meetings, use the “Meeting details” button at the left of the screen.

Now it is time to start adding new material to the website. More hints, another feature article, more photos and so on. If you have any material you would like included on the website, or suggestions as to what should be there, now would be a good time to email details to webmaster@hobartpcgroup.org.au.

WEBSHOTS AND FIREFOX

As reported last issue, I have upgraded from Firebird 0.7 to Firefox 0.8. It works well and the new features generally work well. However, there was one thing that bugged me: I couldn’t download photos from Webshots. Instead Firefox 0.8 tried unsuccessfully to open the photos but reached a point where it could not proceed.

I was about to report the problem as a bug when it occurred to me that there might be a way around it. If Firefox was trying to open the WBZ webshot file, it must have an association in Windows that told it what program it should use. I clicked on Tools/Folder Options/File Types, found the association and deleted it. Windows duly warned me that I would not be able to double-click on a WBZ file and have Webshots open – no loss, really, as I never open Webshots that way – and I clicked OK.

Then I tried downloading a few photos from Webshots and, as expected, the downloading worked fine. However, when I went into Webshots the next day, the problem was back, as was the association.

I installed FreshDownload and told it to integrate with Mozilla, but it didn’t integrate with Firefox. I set the Firefox download options to not show the download manager window when downloading and to ask me where to save the downloaded file each time, and, suddenly, in the File Types within Firefox’s Download options, there was the file type WBZ with the action “Save to disk”.

So it seems there is a bug after all, but with a little fiddling you may be able to get around it.

DO YOU WANT OS WITH THAT?

Lindows.com, in between being sued by Microsoft, is busily finding new ways to market LindowsOS, a Linux distribution, to the masses. So far they have produced an evaluation version that runs from a CD disc, got boxed LindowsOS into retail stores in Canada, the US, some European countries and, even into one or two in Australia; offered LindowsOS for a small yearly fee to computer assemblers and resellers; persuaded various manufacturers of desktop and laptop computers to produce models with it pre-loaded; announced a deal with hard drive manufacturer Seagate to preload it on some of their drives; and, now, have signed a deal with Taiwanese motherboard manufacturer Albatron to bundle LindowsOS with selected micro-ATX motherboards.

Meanwhile, to get around court injunctions granted to Microsoft in some European markets, they have marketed LindowsOS under the name Lin---s (pronounced “Lindash”). I can’t help wondering how many people will be confused by that cheeky name and think that they are buying that other well-known operating system. But, then, that’s just me!

A FRONTPAGE RIVAL?

With Lindows' sponsorship, open source programmers are creating a new website creator/manager/publisher in the tradition of Dreamweaver, Frontpage and NetObjects Fusion. They took Mozilla Composer (the website creator used in Mozilla and Netscape) and began adding features a few months ago.

I tried the recently released beta and have to report that it has a long way to go. In addition to a few bugs, it lacks FrontPage's ease-of-use, although it is clear that the designers are headed in that direction.

I also recently tried NetObjects Fusion MX, thanks to the UK magazine "PCPlus", and found that, while it would import the Group's website, the result was incomplete. However, if you were creating a website from scratch and had access to a broadband link, it could be worth considering. (The broadband link is desirable as the magazine-distributed version obtains some extras from NetObjects website.)

I haven't had a chance to try a recent release of Dreamweaver, nor have I tried some of the other good programs that are out there. Nonetheless, I remain convinced that for quick creation and easy maintenance of a website, FrontPage deserves its popularity.

SUN EVALUATION DISC

Around the world, distributors of Linux are making a big push for a slice of the desktop operating system market. As part of that push, Sun Microsystems recently offered registered customers an evaluation copy of their Java Desktop, which combines StarOffice, a Linux distribution, a Java Virtual Machine, and the Gnome desktop into an integrated desktop package.

I have requested my copy and will review it when it arrives. Stay tuned.

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 \$150, 80 GB about \$115 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 \$100! DVD burners are from as little as \$200. Contact Peter Campbell or Luke Solak if you are interested.

Want a Pentium 233 for a modest price? How about a Hewlett Packard 690C DeskJet for \$60? 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.

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