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ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO OPENOFFICE.ORG

Publishers Derwent Howard have added a new guide to the range available at better newsagents. This one gives you "Everything you need to become productive using this feature-packed and completely free office application suite" – even the software, complete with source code.

On the disc, they have also included MySQL database, RealVNC remote control software, The GIMP graphics manipulation software and Blender 3D graphics creation software, though the guide only covers OpenOffice.org.

The guide first discusses the advantages of OpenOffice.org and outlines under what circumstances you may wish to stick with Microsoft Office (e.g. if you have a heavy investment in VBA macros). It then takes you through step-by-step the various applications that make up OpenOffice.org – word processing, presentations, spreadsheets, drawing, math and web design.

As the author Con Zymaris puts it "We know that OpenOffice.org can help you work better, faster, stronger. We know because it has done this for our users and customers, and we will show you how you can do the same for yourself and your organisation. We will do this by giving you the best introduction, tutorial and reference that can be had on this topic in 112 pages."

Selling at \$14.95 at better newsagents, "The Essential Guide to OpenOffice.org" is recommended reading for anyone who wants a comprehensive, easy-to-use, office suite that "performs the tasks everyone needs, without any over-reaching and pretentious distributed authoring and document sharing schemes."

BACKING UP AND EXPORTING OUTLOOK EXPRESS MESSAGES

A few times recently I have had to try to recover Outlook Express messages and it has not proved to be the

easy task that it is with Eudora. Here are some ways in which you can make it easier for the inevitable time that you have to do it yourself.

If Outlook Express is still running, you should be able to export both the address book and the messages using the Export option on the File menu. It doesn't tell you where it is going to export the address book to, which adds to the fun when you try to find it. And it may refuse to export the messages with a "Error initialising MAPI" error. At least, that has been my experience, three times out of the last four attempts to export messages from other people's Outlook Express. However, if it is working properly and you make backups regularly, you have a much better chance of recovering your messages and address book.

If you find that you cannot export the messages, you can try importing the messages into Outlook, if you have it, and then exporting them from there. If you do, you will have greater control over the process. If you have Eudora, you will be able to import the address book successfully, but may not get all the messages.

As you can see, such methods are rather long-winded. Is there a better way? Yes, there is. In fact, there are several, but the one I am going to recommend is free. It is not pretty, but it does the job. It is called OEBackup (by Majik).

<http://www.oehelp.com/OEBackup/Default.aspx>

There are two versions. The first is Outlook Express Freebie Backup (OEFB) and the second is Outlook Express Quick Backup (OEQB). The latter does basic backup and restore only, while OEFB has more features:

- Complete Backup and Restore with just one button (each - ok, so it's two buttons)
- Quick backup of current selected Identity.
- Show the path list to the select message store (DBX files).
- Show the path list to the Address Book
- Search for DBX, IDX, MBX, WAB and WA~ files used by Outlook Express.
- Generate a text or HTML report of Identities and files.
- Easy change of Address Books and have multiple Address Books available.
- Backup and restore of Address Book file
- Backup and restore of DBX, IDX, MBX files used by Outlook Express 4, 5 and 6.
- Backup and restore of registry entries.
- Change the {USER_ID} of a registry file to another.
- Change the username of a selected Identity.
- Create a new Identity.
- Clone an Identity for use on the same computer.
- Remove an Identity.

By combining some of these features you can copy an Identity from one computer and use it on another computer.

Now all I have to do is to persuade all OE users to get this backup program, install it and use it regularly! Might be easier to persuade them all to use Eudora!

For further information on backing up Outlook and Outlook Express, try this tutorial:

<http://www.sitedeveloper.ws/tutorials/outlook.htm>

WORMS IN THE SYSTEM

Kevin, Neil and others have reported receiving infected attachments. I have myself, quite often finding messages like this in my Junk box:

From: bblonde@cottonboll.com
To: pensy@bigfoot.com
Subject: Re: Your software
Date: Thu, 18 Mar 2004 11:04:48 -0600

Here is the file.

Viruses found in the attached files.

The attached file application.pif is infected by I-Worm/Netsky.D. The attachment was removed from the mail.

Incoming mail is certified Virus Free.

Checked by AVG anti-virus system (<http://www.grisoft.com>).

Version: 6.0.624 / Virus Database: 401 - Release Date: 15/03/2004

Designers of malware (worms, viruses, trojans) go to some lengths to try to trick you into opening the attachments by means of which they spread. They try to word the accompanying message so that it appears to come from someone you know or makes the attachment look inviting. Once their worm gains access to your computer, it places executable files in the computer, and it is these you must eliminate to free yourself from the worm.

Windows ME and XP and backup utilities like GoBack add another dimension to the problem by backing up executable files, including the malware. Usually these backups occur automatically when you boot your computer up and when you add programs and device drivers.

When you run your antivirus software, you may find that it does not eliminate these backed up malware files. You must disable System Restore or GoBack before running the antivirus software to allow it access to the Restore files. Or you can use DOS-based "rescue" disks that boot the computer to a command prompt and run from there. As Windows isn't running when you do this, it cannot interfere with the elimination process.

If your antivirus software has identified the malware and failed to remove it, there is yet another alternative. Go to Symantec's website (or the website of the producer of your antivirus software) and see if they have a utility specifically for removing that particular worm or virus. While you are there, print out a copy of the instructions for using the utility and follow those instructions carefully.

For more information on the risks: <http://www.vnunet.com/News/1153550>

STOP SPAM

Rob Crombie, our technical adviser, has some rules for avoiding spam that are well-worth thinking about:

1. Never give banking details in response to an "official looking" query from your bank ... do it in person at the bank.
2. To check the true identity of a potential suspect email ... right mouse button on the mail ... scroll to properties...choose the details TAB to view the full header address, to find who sent it [*In Eudora, click on the Blah, Blah, Blah button while viewing the email. - Ed.*]
3. If you find any suspect emails you should be able to "block the sender" ... if you are not sure ... click on your mail program "HELP" to find out how to.
4. Create a separate account with Hotmail or any other free mail server, and use this email address whilst "surfing" the net. I use Hotmail and block anyone who is not on my address book, and I have no one listed, so I don't get any mail. If I need to view an email in response to something, and before I use the email address in a request from the WWW site, I open Hotmail and enable all mail. If you do not do this you will end up with hundreds of mails from all kinds of advertisers.
5. Do not use the send to bulk mail option ... otherwise you will end up with hundreds of bulk mail. JUST DELETE FROM SERVER.
6. Keep your primary email address for friends, business and known organisations, never use it for web surfing ... or suffer from SPAM !!!
7. Never "block send" emails ... this is where you send one letter to all listed people in your address book, there are sniffers out there looking for huge chains of valid email address, and you are just helping them improve their spam listings.
8. If anyone sends you "joke of the day" or "greeting cards" or you send people greetings cards... you are helping the spam people. If you want to read something funny open a search engine and search for

humour ... you'll get 1,000,000 or more websites with funny jokes, if you have time.

9. Before you send an email, or use your email address ... take a few seconds time-out, and think about the consequences of pressing SEND MAIL, if you are unsure then don't press it ... ask another club member. There is nothing that important that cannot wait one more day.

He adds: "I can keep on writing rules... these are but a few, to sum everything up, take the time to think smart ... don't be an Internet puppet, those SPAM people just love lambs that walk to the slaughter house without a care in the world.

"I'm opening up my tasrobc@yahoo.com.au to club members as an open forum for problems. Whilst I might not be able to help over the net, I might be able to throw some light on a subject. Of course if anyone breaks my rules listed above they will be permanently blocked without hesitation or warning. I have a very clean yahoo account, and I do not want to find jokes of the day or similar filling up my inbox and wasting my time."

If you're already plagued by spam, you may like to sign up for Blue Squirrel's free email course "Stopping the Spam" at <http://www.bluesquirrel.com/courses/courses.html>. The course includes information on how to stop unsolicited commercial e-mail (spam). You'll learn why the problem is getting worse, and what you can do to stop unwanted e-mail from reaching you.

Long time readers will recall that I was involved in beta testing Blue Squirrel's first anti-spam product and found it to be very good. This course, no doubt, promotes the latest version, which should be even better.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

So many things can go wrong with your computer: bad drivers, malfunctioning components, hardware conflicts, spyware invasions—the list goes on and on. Or perhaps you just can't get your software to work the way you think it should. Diagnosing the problem can be tricky, let alone fixing it once you know exactly what is wrong. Some issues can be fixed with a few blanket procedures, such as updating your drivers and operating system. Others are more complicated and will leave you wishing for some expert advice. But where can you turn for help when something goes wrong with your computer?

So writes Matthew of *PCMagazine* (April 6, 2004). He goes on to put together one of the most comprehensive guides to getting help that I've seen. By following Matthew's advice, not only will you be able to solve many problems yourself, but, more importantly, you'll be able to provide your favourite guru with the information he/she needs to help you.

Flip over to <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,1544179,00.asp>, click on the Print button, print out this guide and file it with your most valuable possessions. You'll be so glad you did when next you strike a major problem on your computer.

THE LINUX FACTOR

Linux has its strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes they are one and the same. For example, there are dozens of distributions of Linux, each differing from all the others in some respect. This gives knowledgeable people a choice, but confuses novices. It also leads to some incompatibility – Red Hat applications won't necessarily run on an SuSE Linux installation. Some of the support is "politically" motivated. "*Bill Gates is someone who has pissed me off from day one. I don't mind that he got rich, but I do mind that he peddles himself as the ultimate hacker and God's own gift to technology when his track record suggests that he wouldn't know a decent design idea or a well-written hunk of code if it bit him in the face. He's made his billions selling elaborately sugar-coated crap that runs like a pig on Quaaludes, crashes at the drop of an electron, and has set the computing world back at least a decade.*" (Attributed to Eric S. Raymond, author of *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, quoted in *APC's* April 2004 issue, p. 97). And some people think *I* am anti-Microsoft!

Even if you are not anti-Microsoft, there are valid reasons why you might consider running a Linux distribution: lower hardware requirements, fewer (much fewer) virus attacks, stability, modular construction

and freely available source code allowing tailoring to your particular requirements, free software, – to name a few.

Australian Personal Computer for April 2004 includes a “Special Report” on where Linux is going, “plus massive guide to distros [distributions], apps [applications, programs] & resources [where you can find the foregoing]”. You also get two cover CDs with a Web developer’s “Power Kit”, a fully licensed version of ACDSee (version 4.0), Pal Popup Eliminator and other full applications valued at \$598. \$9.95 at your friendly newsagent now.

MICROSOFT TALKS WITH EUROPEAN UNION FAIL

Despite a rush trip by Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer for discussions with the European Union, the EU now seems set to impose sanctions on the company next Wednesday.

In a statement, Competition Commissioner Mario Monti said "a settlement on the Microsoft case has not been possible. I therefore intend to propose to my colleagues in the Commission next Wednesday to adopt a decision, which has already received the unanimous backing of member states."

It is understood that the decision includes a demand that Microsoft make available a discounted version of Windows that does not include Windows Media Player, effectively unbundling the video and audio software from the operating system. The decision may also include provisions to allow some of Microsoft's competitors in the server market access to Windows source code. The EC may also levy a fine on Microsoft of up to 10 percent of its worldwide revenue and is reported as proposing a fine of \$3.2 billion. However, analyst Garner believes that Microsoft has already budgeted for such a fine and will not be greatly affected by the European courts decision.

NEW HTML ONLINE EDITION

For the benefit of those who like to read this newsletter online, but would prefer not to wait for Adobe's Acrobat Reader to load, I have decided to reinstate the HTML version online.

One reason for not doing various versions is the extra time involved. However, with a little experimentation I found that saving the OpenOffice document as HTML did a good job of converting the newsletter. A quick touch-up is all that is needed to ready the page for loading into Frontpage, where it is added to the website.



Good Buy

Free computer? Buy the computer and sell the software for the bargain of the year!

CPU: 1.33Ghz Athlon

RAM: 392 Mb

Video: 2D/3D Banshee Soundblaster

USB: 1.1 x 2, 4 x USB 2.0

CDR/RW: 8-4-32x Soundblaster

DVD: Player

ZIP: Internal 100MB

Modem: 56K fax/voice

Extra cooling: Drive bay fans

Bonus: Approx \$400.00 of brand new still sealed software!

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