

BYTES & PIECES.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Browser freezing	Internet Explorer froze, but why?	1.
Give me five	A good cause gets a plug	2.
Finding images	Use Google to get the image you want	2.
TAFE courses	Not just for young job seekers	2.
Multifunctions centres	Some more thoughts on combined scanner copier printers	3.
Graphics formats	What does a message in the sand have to do with JPG?	3.
Which is the G A Wood Hall?	Charles finds the map plays tricks	3.
Microsoft pursues Linspire	The fine print will confuse people says the software giant	3.
Rambus finds new grounds to sue memory makers	It was collusion that destroyed our business, Rambus alleges	4.
Good buy	Cheap ink for your printer	4.

BROWSER FREEZING

I had a call from a customer complaining that her computer froze when she tried to browse the Internet. I ran through in my mind the usual suspects – corrupt Winsock, corrupt drivers, etc. – but really didn't suspect the true cause.

I decided to give the computer a general check and tune-up. I ran a virus check, defragged the drive and ran a registry check. Then I decided to use Lavasoft Ad-aware to check for spyware. 836 objects! Once they were removed, Hotbar disappeared and Kazaa wouldn't work, but Internet browsing proceeded smoothly with no freezing.

What advertising-supported applications riddle your computer with spyware? Among the worst spyware and "clog your computer with advertising" companies are Gator, GAIN and Claria. Actually, these are all the same company, which has gone through a number of name changes. Another one to look for is WildTangent, an online game company. Radiate and Conducent are two more to add to your list. The products of these companies, though sometimes useful, sap your bandwidth and, in extreme cases, can bring your browser to a halt.

For a much more comprehensive list of offending applications and companies go to <http://www.infoforce.qc.ca/spyware>. It is not a pretty site; just a text list of companies and their products. Some are listed as "confirmed", while others carry a "suspect" tag. All should be treated with caution. Ask yourself whether you really need this product and, if you do, do a search of the Internet to see if there is a non-spyware supported product that does the same job. If you don't, then don't put it on your computer.

Keep an eye out for excessive spyware by running anti-spyware software, such as Ad-aware, from time to time. When using such software, be sure to check for an update first. That's because they work from a database that needs to be updated whenever a new type of spyware appears.

Ad-aware is available from <http://www.lavasoftusa.com/>.

[top](#)

GIVE ME FIVE

If you don't listen to FM radio station Magic107, you may not have heard of their annual appeal for the Pediatric Ward at the Royal Hobart Hospital. A couple of years ago they raised \$30,000, last year \$62,000 and this year they are aiming to raise \$100,000. The money raised will go towards the cost of building a High-Dependency Unit, equipped with an Intrapartum CTG Monitor valued at more than \$25,000, Foetal Monitors valued at more than \$12,000, Blood Pressure Machines valued at \$5,000, and an Ultrasound Transducer valued at more than \$15,000, as well as other associated equipment.

\$100,000 sounds a lot of money, but, if every person in Southern Tasmania with a full-time job gave just \$5, every part-timer or welfare recipient gave \$1 or \$2, and kids chipped in with a little of their pocket money, the appeal would raise in the vicinity of \$500,000! And what do you buy with \$5 that you could really skip just once – a takeaway meal, a couple of capuccinos, a couple of beers, a glossy magazine, an overnight video hire?

Having lost two young children ourselves, my wife and I hold this cause dear to our hearts and commend it to you. There are many appeals, but none more worthy, in our opinion, than this. Donations can be made at any Westpac branch, at the RHH, or at Magic107 in Liverpool Street (opposite the Alabama).

For more information: <http://www.magic107.com.au/giveme/about.asp>

[top](#)

FINDING IMAGES

Here's a hint from Sid Davis:

If you are looking for images – say you want a picture of a particular make and model of motor vehicle – go to the Google website (<http://www.google.com>) and click on Images in the menu just above the box where you enter what you want. Then enter the details of the image for which you are searching and hit Enter. Google will then search its database of images.

Searching for an image this way can be easier than trying to capture an image from a website. Some websites protect their images so that you cannot capture them, on others you may find the image is too small, or you may simply not be able to find a website with a suitable image.

Note: Images on websites and on the Google database are subject to copyright.

[top](#)

TAFE COURSES

You may have seen the advertisements offering free introductory computing classes for any person who has left school and has little or no formal training in computers, but did you know that they are not restricted to young people looking to improve their job skills? Sid Davis found that he was eligible and recommends that seniors who lack computer skills check the courses out. Excellent course materials are provided and there is an online version for those who would prefer to take the course that way.

On Saturday, 26 June 2004, a new round of these courses will be advertised. They will cover the basics of Windows, word processing, spreadsheets, using the Internet and email, and will be held in the TAFE library, 3rd floor, 75 Campbell Street. The courses will be start in early July and finish towards the end of August. Sessions will be on Mondays and Wednesdays, 9.30 – 12.30, 1.30 – 4.30 and 6.00 – 9.00; and on Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.30 – 12.30 and 6.00 – 9.00.

To join a course you must watch for the advertisement to appear in Saturday's Mercury (in this case on 26 June) and then you must go in person to the Reception Area at the Institute of TAFE Tasmania, 26 Bathurst Street, Hobart to collect an e-learn voucher as soon as possible after 9.00 am on the following Monday. There is no other way to enrol. Pre-bookings are not taken.

[top](#)

MULTIFUNCTION CENTRES

I mentioned the growing move towards multifunction printer/scanner/copier/fax machines. There seem to be two reasons for their increasing popularity. Firstly, the quality of the output has improved; they scan at high enough resolution for most users and they give a good quality print-out. Secondly, they are now priced similarly to the combined price of separate units that together can do the same job. They may even be a little cheaper.

To get a feel for what a budget of up to \$600 can buy, have a look at the latest "Australian NetGuide", which reviews a number of machines in that price range. However, don't forget that prices start at around \$150 and a very nice unit can be bought for around \$300. I know, I've just installed a Canon MP 360, which has a recommended price of \$299. It doesn't act as a standalone fax machine, but can be used in conjunction with the computer and modem to handle faxes. It does act as a standalone colour copier and is a fast scanner and printer. And all with a footprint less than the scanner and (separate) printer it replaced.

[top](#)

GRAPHICS FORMATS

If I writing a note, I could scrawl it on a chalkboard with a piece of chalk, print it with my computer onto pristine white paper, scribble it with a ballpoint on a ruled pad, or trace it out in the sand with a stick. Each would be a different format although the message would be the same. However, which would be the most appropriate, or even suitable, would depend on the circumstances. A chalkboard would be difficult to send to you through the post, the incoming tide might wash away my message in the sand, my computer might have crashed, and my handwriting is worse than the proverbial doctor's! So, too, it is with picture (graphics) files.

For a more detailed look at graphic file formats and their suitability for different tasks, see:

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,1524991,00.asp>

[top](#)

WHICH IS THE G A WOOD HALL?

Charles Hunt noticed that, no matter which building he pointed to on our website map, the pop-up told him it was the G A Wood Hall. The reason was simply that that was the way Frontpage had named the illustration. By renaming it, I have been able to change the pop-up to a relevant message. Check it out at

[top](#)

MICROSOFT PURSUES LINSPIRE

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Do you think that the foregoing words are confusing consumers? In a country where Lindows Inc. does not do business? Should Lindows Inc. be heavily fined in the Netherlands for retaining the corporate name Lindows Inc. in the United States? Read on ...

Michael Robertson, CEO of Lindows Inc., reported recently that Microsoft has brought a new case against Lindows in the Netherlands, even though the company has changed the name of its products and does not do business in the Netherlands. Here's how he tells it:

Microsoft has filed a new complaint against Lindows, Inc. in Dutch courts, despite a product name change and corresponding website name change to Linspire. Microsoft has asked the court to levy a 100,000 Euro per day fine against the operating system competitor. A hearing on this request will be held on May 11, 2004.

On April 13, 2004, Lindows formally changed its product name and website from Lindows to Linspire in response to a Microsoft tactic of launching lawsuits in countries around the world over identical issues already heard in the United States concerning the windows trademark. More than two years ago, Microsoft

began asking U.S. courts to halt the use of the term "Lindows" and have been repeatedly rejected. The U.S. case is awaiting trial which Microsoft is now delaying with appeals.

The outcomes from Microsoft's many lawsuits have been mixed. Most recently, a French court sided with Lindows, but earlier a Dutch Judge blocked sales of Lindows into the Netherlands. After that ruling, Lindows halted all sales of its products under any name into that country. Currently no products are being sold under the Lindows or Linspire name into the Netherlands, yet Microsoft is continuing to file complaints in this region.

"Microsoft is continuing the bullying tactics which have obliterated competition over the last 20 years and led to convictions on multiple continents," said Michael Robertson, chief executive officer of Lindows, Inc. "Its recent actions demonstrate that it has not reformed, but continues to be one of the world's worst corporate citizens that will do anything to squash competitors that threaten its monopoly profits."

"We halted the sale of all products under any name to the Netherlands some time ago. At that time Microsoft argued that consumers were confused, although they have never presented even one consumer who admits to being confused. Now Microsoft is taking the ridiculous position that the U.S. required copyright notice in tiny text on the bottom of some of the pages of Linspire's website will confuse consumers," added Michael Robertson. "We hope the Judge and the world will view Microsoft's action as continuing anti-competitive behavior and compel the company to compete fairly."

In a stalled US case, Lindows is defending its name on the grounds that Windows was a generic term before being registered by Microsoft. As such, it is, Lindows argues, not protectable. One can't help feeling that, with this latest action, Microsoft aims to drive Lindows out of business, thereby preventing that defence from ever being ruled on. Can't say I blame them. If the courts take a common sense view, Microsoft has a snowball's chance of proving that Windows is a protectable trademark. But when did courts ever take a common sense view of anything?

[top](#)

RAMBUS FINDS NEW GROUNDS TO SUE MEMORY MAKERS

The dispute between Rambus and the makers of DDR memory continues. Having failed, despite backing from Intel, to take a significant share of the PC memory market with their slightly faster, but significantly more expensive RDRAM, Rambus are now alleging collusion between four major memory makers. They are also accusing Micron and Infineon of patent infringement. Meantime, Rambus are the subject of an on-going suit by the US Federal Trade Commission, alleging antitrust violations.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the millions spent on litigations and all that effort could be channelled into producing better and cheaper products for us to use?

[top](#)

GOOD BUY

The cheapest Canon printers and the MPC190, MP360, MP370, MP390 all use the same ink cartridges. Canon recommends that these sell at \$13.95 for black and \$29.95 for tri-colour. If you don't require the best archive quality for photos, you may care to use substitute inks. An Universal Market (<http://www.aumarket.com>) has *Million Color* cartridges for \$6.00 (black) and \$8.00 (tri-colour). If you buy \$50 worth at a time there is no postage charge. AU Market has cheap cartridges for other Canon models, Epson, Hewlett Packard and Lexmark, as well. The free postage deal only applies to Canon and Epson.

Last time I looked, they had a special deal on selected Epson-type cartridges if you bought five at a time.

[top](#)

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