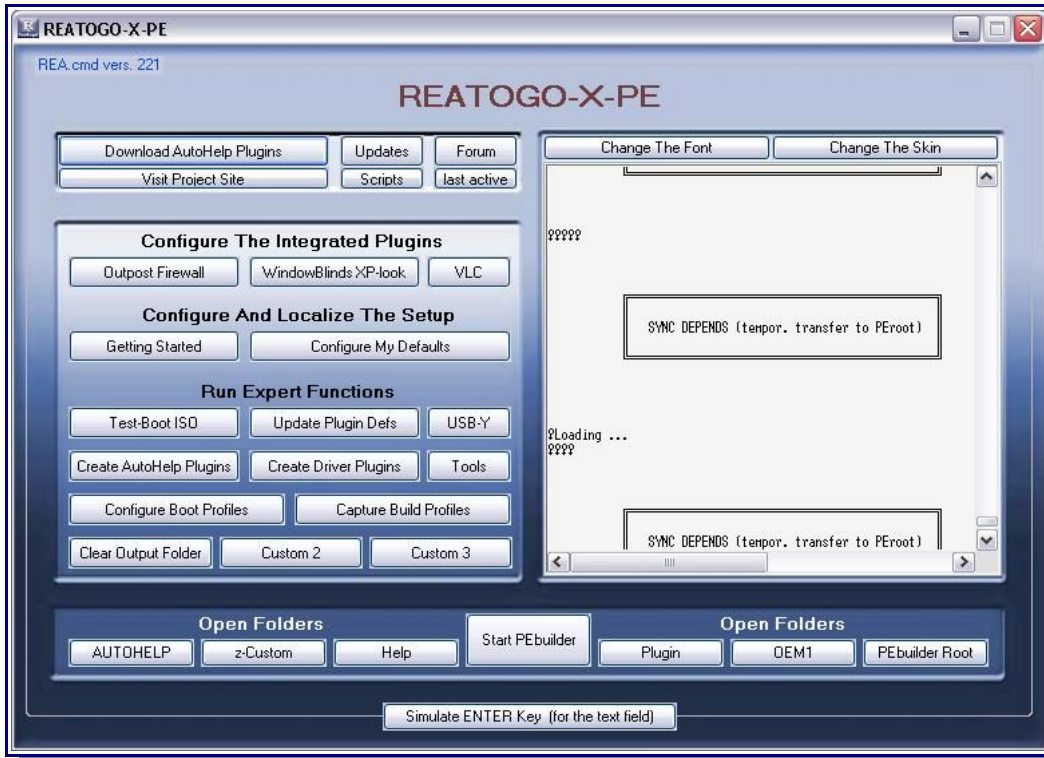


Keyboard & Mouse

Newsletter of the Hobart Computer Users Group Inc.



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 Internet Explorer 7 released
 Firefox 2 also
 Dai.sy joins us and Natalie vanishes
 Older Windows support
 Freespire
 Foxit Reader 2.0
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Editor: Peter Campbell,
 C/-Hobart Computer Users Group Inc.,
 PO Box 3179,
 West Hobart Tas 7000, Australia
Phone: (03) 6261 5686 **Email:** editor@hobartpcgroup.org.au

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Our cover: The builder for the Reatogo-X-PE CD, one of the rescue CDs described in this issue

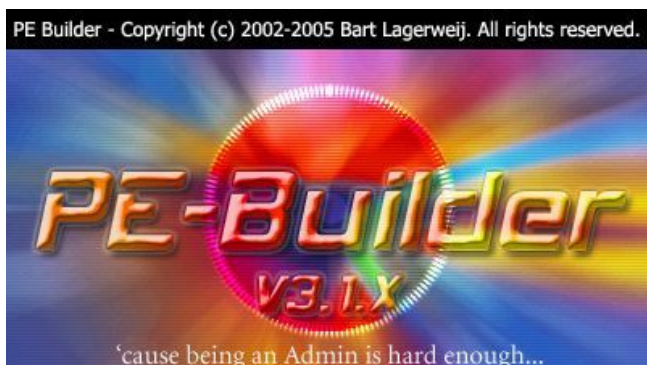
Complete rescue kit

Just when you aren't prepared for it there will come a time when your hard drive partition crashes or some other disaster strikes. To deal with such problems, you need to take steps now. One invaluable tool that you could have in your armory is Reatogo-X-PE. (See front cover.) The PE part of the name comes originally from Microsoft's Windows PE. Other possibilities are BartPE and UBCD4Win.

Windows PE

The Microsoft Windows Preinstallation Environment (Windows PE) provides preparation and installation tools for Microsoft Windows XP Professional and Microsoft Windows Server 2003. With Windows PE, IT staff can build custom solutions that help with deployment and maintenance of networks in large organisations. It is also used by Original Equipment Manufacturers for testing and setting up newly-built machines. The Windows PE licence agreement places strict restrictions on its use and specifically excludes use outside of the eligibility criteria.

BartPE



Bart Lagerweij, a Dutch programmer decided that such a tool should be available to non-professionals and he created BartPE in an effort to overcome the restrictions. He believes that, provided you own a valid copy of Windows XP, creation of a BartPE CD will not breach the EULA of that copy. In any case, if you make such a disc for your own use and do not loan or give it to anybody else, you are unlikely to invoke the wrath of Microsoft.

BartPE and its creator, Bart Lagerweij, are in no way connected with, or supported by, Microsoft. Do not seek support from Microsoft and read Bart's website before seeking help from him.

In addition to your BartPE disc, or one of the derivatives described in this article, you may need to create some floppy disks with utilities on them. These are also described later.

What is BartPE and PE Builder?

Bart's PE Builder helps you build a "BartPE" (Bart Preinstalled Environment) bootable Windows CD-Rom or DVD from the original Windows XP or Windows Server 2003 installation/setup CD, suitable for PC maintenance tasks.

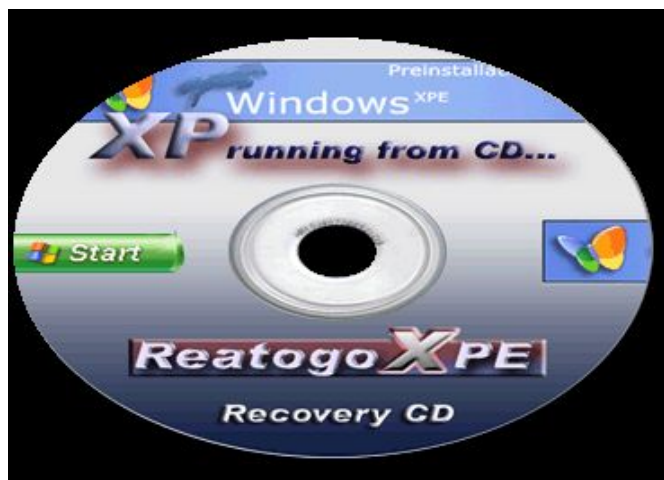
It will give you a complete Win32 environment with network support, a graphical user interface (800x600) and FAT/NTFS/CDFS filesystem support. This Bart says is "Very handy for burn-in, testing systems with no OS, rescuing files to a network share, virus scan and so on. This will replace any Dos bootdisk in no time!"

BartPE has given rise to a whole heap of websites listing add-ons (or plugins as they are usually called). Unlike Windows PE, BartPE has no limit to what you can add.

Bart licenses his code and encourages the development of plugins so that others can build on his work. This led to the development by Gianluigi Tiesi of an XPE-plugin which adds more of the Windows environment to BartPE. It also led to some other derivatives, two of which are described below.

At least one of these recovery discs deserves a place in your toolkit to ensure that you can fix things when something goes wrong.

Reatogo-X-PE



Some users experienced difficulty in making XPE discs. Other problems users struck include the scattering of BartPE plugins over many websites, the limitations of Bart's default package and the sometimes manual installation procedures necessary to get plugins correctly set up.

These problems led another programmer, Siegfried Benthin from Germany, to devise Reatogo-X-PE. This is the tool I recommend, if you have a system capable of producing its CD. You will need an installed Windows XP system with an NTFS drive and a copy of the XP

installation CD. If it does not include at least SP1, you will need to slipstream a service pack and the Windows CD to produce one that is. Alternatively, if you have a CD drive in addition to your burner (or if you copy the service pack to a folder on your hard drive), you can have Reatogo slipstream the two during the compiling of the Reatogo CD.

If you only have a FAT32 drive, you may not be able to compile the final CD correctly. Before attempting to make a Reatogo-X-PE disc, you should use Partition Magic, or a similar utility, to convert your drive to NTFS, which is a more efficient format for large drives. Alternatively, you might try the "Ultimate Boot CD for Windows", which I will describe later in this article.

Firstly, you will need to download and install the Reatogo builder from <http://www.reatogo.de/REATOGO.htm>. Install the software in the root directory of an NTFS drive. Make sure that no folder in the path to the Reatogo builder has a space in its name.

When run the first time, you will be asked to do a number of preparatory tasks. You do these by clicking Fix and then following any on-screen instructions. Once the tasks are completed, the builder opens the windows shown on the cover of this issue.

For your first build:

- Go online – if you don't have broadband, enlist someone who does, or be prepared for a very long session
- Go to the button WindowBlinds XP-Look
- Choose a look for your finished CD
- Then go to Outpost Firewall
- In the window that appears, click Configure the Auto-Help plugin
- If you don't have Outpost Firewall installed, Reatogo will download it for you and configure it.
- Take particular note of any on-screen instructions, as only by following them can you automatically transfer the necessary files when you build your final CD
- Click on VLC to select a skin for the media player.
- Now click on Download Auto-Help Plugins
- This will bring up a note about the new update procedure
- Close this and Reatogo will bring up a window listing the many Auto-Help plugins available with a * beside any that are already configured
- Select a plugin you want on your CD and click the Download Plugin button (a globe at the bottom of the window)
- In the window that is opened, find the autoHelp.cmd (it will have the name of the plugin after the words "autoHelp") and run it
- When another Reatogo window appears, click on the Configuration button at the bottom of it

- If you don't have the needed files, they will be downloaded
- In some cases, the application will also have to be installed in your existing Windows.
- If offered the option to compress the files, do so if you want to crowd as much as possible onto your Reatogo CD
- On slower computers compression may take some time – read a book, magazine, or play cards!
- Once completed, a DONE window will open
- Click OK
- Close the AutoHelp window for that plugin
- Repeat the process for each plugin that you want on your first CD
- Close the Reatogo Update and Download Service window
- Click the Plugin Defs window to update your chosen antivirus and anti-spyware applications. (Not all can be updated in this way, but you do want them updated before burning the CD.)
- Put your Windows XP installation CD in the drive.
- Click on Plugins and finalise your selection of plugins
- Close the Plugin window
- Choose a name for the ISO file and where to save it
- Click Build and your Reatogo disc will be compiled into an ISO file, from which a CD must be burned. (Check your burner software's instructions so that you don't just copy it onto a CD.)
- Choose a CD-RW disc as this will not be your final CD, but is needed to build your final CD
- If you are going to use Reatogo to repair older computers, you may need to burn your final Reatogo-X-PE onto a CD-R disc
- For modern computers use a CD-RW so that you can update it before use
- After you have built your first CD, test it. If it doesn't contain everything you want, or some applications don't work, repeat the exercise, noting any specific instructions for plugins that didn't work
- In your second or subsequent build, you may want to try creating your own AutoHelp plugins using the button in the Expert area

The above process may seem somewhat involved and may take some hours to complete. However, once you have worked through it a couple of times, you'll find that it really doesn't involve much more than following the on-screen instructions and using some common sense. Ultimately, you will have a CD that can repair most damaged Windows systems and recover data from damaged drives.

UBCDWin



UBCD4Win is a bootable CD which contains software that allows you to repair, restore, or diagnose almost any computer problem. The goal is to be the ultimate free hardware and software diagnostic tool. All software included is freeware.

This is where it differs in philosophy from Reatogo-X-PE, which allows the creation of plugins to add commercial products to your final CD. It is also based on BartPE.

With network support, the ability to modify NTFS volumes, recover deleted files, create new NTFS volumes, scan hard drives for viruses, etc. this project includes almost everything you need to repair your system problems.

This project has been put together to be the ultimate recovery cd and not a replacement OS (Operating System). Please visit the "[List of Tools](#)" page for a complete list of what is included in the latest version of the project.

Instructions to help you build your UBCD4Win disc can be found at <http://www.ubcd4win.com/howto.htm>. To save having to download all the software needed to build the CD, you can order a CD of that software for \$USD7.95 from the UBCD4Win website.

You will still need to build the actual UBCD4Win disc as it has to include Windows files from your Windows installation disc.

Floppy disks

If your computer has a floppy drive (and many laptops, as well as some desktops, don't), you should make some bootable floppy-based utility disks for your system. Partition Magic and Drive Image come to mind. You might also make an antivirus set. These will enable you to perform a number of functions without your having a boot CD.

CMOS setting

In order to boot from a rescue and repair CD, you need to set your computer's boot sequence so that it seeks to boot from CD before it tries the hard drive. Many modern computer BIOSes come set to try the hard drive before the CD.

Resetting this involves going into the hardware setup. On many computers this can be achieved by pressing the DEL key when you see the message "Press DELETE to enter Setup" (or a similar one). On others it may be another key or combination of keys.

Some computers don't show this message and you may need to consult your computer's manual or do a search on the Internet to find the necessary key or key combination. A few very old computers used a floppy disk, but modern BIOSes allow entry during boot-up.

Once you have entered the Setup area, the procedure is usually straightforward. Don't change anything you are not sure about and, if you feel you have made a mistake, try to exit without saving changes and try again. If you do make a mistake, go back in and look for a way to reset the CMOS to the defaults and then try once more.

Other considerations

To protect your own system, make a drive image on to another partition or drive. You can do this with Drive Image, or DriveImage XML, if you need a free disk utility. You can get the latter from <http://www.runtime.org/dixml.htm> and use it on your Reatogo CD, but you may have to make your own AutoHelp plugin using the button in the Expert area. Burn the image to DVDs, if possible.

You should also make regular backups. If you have a recent version of Nero (6 or 7) you can use their backup program. Otherwise go to <http://www.back4win.com/> and download either Back4Win (Freeware) or Back4WinXP (Shareware – 21 days trial before registration payment of \$USD24.95). The latter has more features and is designed for business use.

Outlook Express users should add Outlook Express Quick Backup (OEQB) to their arsenal. This will back up all messages, the address book, settings and rules. If used regularly, it is invaluable for restoring Outlook Express when disaster happens.

If you have a digital camera, burn your photos on to a CD immediately after downloading them. This preserves the originals that might otherwise get damaged when retouching mistakes are made.

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Internet Explorer 7 released



Microsoft has released Internet Explorer 7.0 (IE7) to the general public and it can be downloaded from a number of websites, but it is not for

everybody.

Firstly, IE7 requires Windows XP with SP2, Windows Server 2003, Windows Server 2003 ia64, Windows XP Pro x64, or Windows Server 2003 x64 to run. If you try to load it into any earlier version of Windows, it simply says "Later version of Windows needed". Secondly, you will need to validate your version of Windows, or, again, it will not install.

IE7 improves on its predecessor in a number of ways, such as:

- It adds long-overdue support for tabbed browsing, something its competitors and various browsers built on the IE6 engine have had for some time. Tabbed browsing reduces clutter and system resource usage.
- There is a built-in search bar. Maybe this will stop the kids from adding all those spyware infested ones. Again Microsoft is only just catching up with its competitors, copying the Firefox search bar almost exactly.
- New RSS support for receiving web feeds has been added – also a feature other browsers already offer
- Printing capabilities have been redesigned to make it easier to see and customise what you are printing. Users who want to print out pages will appreciate that one.
- There is now an opt-in system for ActiveX controls to help prevent unwanted installations.
- A phishing filter has been added to detect and block websites designed to look like legitimate websites, something Firefox already has.
- There is an option to clear all private data so that you can quickly remove any information stored since you started browsing.
- IE7 has the ability to undo changes made to your browser makes it far easier to recover from your browser being hijacked – a useful improvement.
- Security has been tightened preventing malicious sites from hiding their identity and preventing the address bar from being hidden.
- A User Agent String Utility 2.0 is available that can make IE7 identify as its predecessor for sites that specifically check whether you are using Internet Explorer 6.
- Microsoft has also added a button that imitates one of Firefox's plugins by showing a page with thumbnails of all the open tabs with a vertical scroll-bar on the right.
- For those running Vista, there is a "Protected

Mode" and enhanced parental controls.

Those who haven't upgraded to Windows XP will have to content themselves with Internet Explorer 6 (IE6). Microsoft will continue to support IE6 with security and stability patches as needed.

IE7 will be pushed through Windows Updates. Automatic Updates will first notify people when IE 7 is ready to install and then show a welcome screen that presents key features and the choices to install, not install or postpone installation.

Those who have upgraded to XP SP2 and are allowing Windows Update to install updates automatically will probably have IE7 installed by the time they read this. However, you can remove it by going to Add/Remove Programs and uninstalling it. If that fails, you can remove it manually.

If IE7 hasn't been installed on your system and you don't want it to be, you can get an IE7 blocker from Microsoft downloads. This will prevent IE7 from being installed indefinitely and is primarily intended for use in large organisations, where training may be required before deployment. However, you can use it too, should you prefer to stay with the browser (perhaps Firefox, Opera or one of the IE6-based variants) you are currently using.

Minimum Requirements (from Microsoft website)

Computer/Processor

Computer with a 233MHz processor or higher (Pentium processor recommended)

Operating System

Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2)
Windows XP Professional x64 Edition
Windows Server 2003 Service Pack 1 (SP1)

Memory For Internet Explorer 7

| | |
|---|-----|
| Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2) - MB | 87 |
| Windows XP Professional x64 Edition - MB | 168 |
| Windows Server 2003 Service Pack 1 (SP1) - MB | 87 |
| Windows Server 2003 Service Pack 1 ia64 - MB | 218 |

Drive

CD-ROM drive (if installation is done from a CD-ROM)

Display

Super VGA (800 x 600) or higher with 256 colors

Peripherals

Modem or Internet connection
Microsoft Mouse, Microsoft IntelliMouse, or compatible pointing device

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Firefox 2.0

Mozilla today released Firefox® 2, a major update to its popular and acclaimed, free, open source Web browser. Firefox is developed by an international community of contributors working together under the umbrella of the Mozilla Foundation, a non-profit, public-benefit organization dedicated to improving the Internet experience for people everywhere.

In less than two years, tens of millions of people worldwide have discovered the easier, faster and safer online experience that Firefox provides. Translated into more than 35 languages at its release, Firefox 2 is available in a native language version for more people around the world than any other Web browser.



Fig. 1: Firefox's trademark logo is the subject of some dispute in Linux circles

Firefox 2 is immediately available for Windows, Mac or Linux operating systems as a free download from www.getfirefox.com.

“Firefox 2 delivers the best possible online experience for people today,” said Mitchell Baker, CEO,

Mozilla. “The improvements Mozilla has made to the ease of use, performance, and security in Firefox 2 reflect our ongoing, singular focus on meeting the needs of Web users all over the world.”

What's New in Firefox 2

Improvements to the user interface, security tools and options for customization, combine to deliver a rich, engaging, safer and more productive Web browsing experience for all.

Tabbed browsing. Firefox popularized tabbed browsing, enabling multiple Web sites to be viewed as separate tabs contained within a single browser window, and improving people's efficiency by helping them better organize their desktops. In Firefox 2, tabbed browsing has been further improved with the addition of individual close buttons on each tab, enhanced tab navigation features, and a session restore system that automatically restores previously-open windows and tabs when a new browsing session is started.

Spell checking. Modern Web sites are increasingly complex with the rollout of new, rich Internet applications, such as word processors, spreadsheets and blogging tools. Inline spell checking in Firefox 2 automatically checks for spelling errors and suggests corrections as users interact with Web sites, bringing a common desktop feature to the Web.

Search. Search is one of the most frequently used features of the Web. With Firefox 2, Mozilla improves the

browser's integrated search capabilities, making it even easier for users to find the information they are looking for. The new Search Suggestions feature dynamically updates a drop-down list of suggested search terms as users enter text into the search bar for Google, Yahoo! or Answers.com search engines.

Web feeds. Firefox users can now take better advantage of the frequently updated content offered by Web sites, with increased options for handling Web feeds. Users now see a preview of the content being offered and are given the option to subscribe to a feed as a Live Bookmark, using a Web service such as Bloglines, My Yahoo!, or Google Reader, or with a desktop application.

Identity theft protection. In addition to its award-winning safeguards for blocking drive-by installation of spyware and unwanted pop-up windows, Firefox 2 helps protect users from identity theft by quickly informing them when they surf to a questionable Web site. To protect users' privacy, Phishing Protection is active by default with a local blacklist that updates hourly, rather than sending information to an external online service. An enhanced mode is available where users may optionally elect to have Firefox check the validity of Web sites with a third-party Web service, such as Google, prior to loading the site. Phishing Protection provides warnings, advice and guidance when Firefox encounters a Web site that appears to be fraudulent or malicious.

Proven security model. Mozilla's open and transparent community-driven security model helps ensure Firefox provides the safest possible online experience. Thousands of security experts and technical contributors from around the world examine and analyze the Firefox source code, uncover potential threats and vulnerabilities, and work together to quickly identify and address emerging threats. This open, distributed, innovative approach to security puts people's interests first and delivers the safest Web experience possible.

Customization. No other browser can be customized like Firefox 2. With thousands of add-ons that enhance the browser's functionality and features, Firefox lets users personalize their Web browsers to fit their interests and style.

For more information on Mozilla Firefox 2 and how it delivers an easier, faster and safer online experience, visit www.mozilla.com/firefox/features.html.

Mozilla Firefox 2 is available now as a free download from www.getfirefox.com.

About Mozilla Corporation

Mozilla is a global community dedicated to building free, open source products and technologies that improve the online experience for people everywhere. As a wholly owned subsidiary, the Mozilla Corporation organises the development and marketing of Mozilla products on behalf of the Mozilla Foundation.

Note for users of Debian-based Linux distributions. In the forthcoming “Etch” Debian, Firefox may be named “IceWeasel”. This comes about through the Debian developers' pedantic insistence that distributions based on Debian be free to change the Firefox logo, which is a Mozilla trademark and, according to Mozilla, gives the user an assurance of the quality of the product.

In law, a trademark's use is controlled by the trademark owner. Applying it to a changed product requires the owner's permission. To get that permission, Debian have to submit any changes to the code for Mozilla's approval and that is what the Debian developers won't do.

Unfortunately, this split in the Linux community will only help competing operating systems and Linux distributions. It does nothing for those Debian supporters who just want a complete and easy to use distribution.

Some Linux distributors, even some using Debian-based Linux, are prepared to abide by the requirements and will be issuing updates to Firefox 2.0 shortly. Others may issue a renamed version, either “IceWeasel” or a name of the distributor's choice.

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Dai.sy joins us and Natalie vanishes



Fig. 2: Dai.sy uses the sidebar in compatible web browsers

Dai.sy – “The human side of the Web” is a sidebar for Firefox and Flock browsers. (Internet Explorer 7, Konqueror and Opera will follow in the next month or so.) With it you can make any website a meeting place (Meet), exchange files on a peer-to-peer basis (Share) and leave comments for those that visit the site later (Blog).

Already more 3400 sites have signed up and many users have posted comments and even photos and videos. One would think that the photos posted are of people who want to chat to other Dai.sy users, but that isn't always so. The photo of “Blonde Natalie” herewith is a case in point. It was number 11 (sic) in a “Top Ten” posted by “Ututo”.

The next day I was unable to find the “Top Ten” again, but yesterday it popped up once more. It turns out that

there is a difference between a site beginning with “www” and the same site without the “www”. This illustrates one of the difficulties with Dai.sy – some inconsistencies in the navigation.

Yet another problem is that the Dai.sy website lists the active websites, and can sort them into most visited, most blogs, most recent and most shared, but there is no description of the individual sites. Nor is there any way to search for a particular site in the list. It will also take a while before Dai.sy reaches critical mass. Until that happens, you will find few blog entries at the “active” websites.

No doubt, with time, the creators of Dai.sy will fix the problems – it is only version 1.0.3 at the time of writing. In the meantime, to join the fun of testing an exciting new concept, go to our website and click on either of the Dai.sy links you will find there. Install Dai.sy and try it out. (If you don't have a compatible web browser, try Firefox 2.0, or next month, Opera.) Perhaps, you might even find Natalie!



Fig. 3: Not Dai.sy, but the vanishing Natalie - see text

To switch sites, you click on what looks like a reload page icon beside the Dai.sy logo. This is made clear in the “Learn Dai.sy” notes on http://dai.sy/daisy_help.php. Prior to discovering that, I was closing Dai.sy, switching sites and then reopening Dai.sy. (RTFM, Peter!)

(Actually, I have discovered where the picture of Natalie came from originally. **Hint:** Ask Google; Google knows everything, including where there are eleven more pictures of this young lady.)

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Older Windows support

With the roll-out of Windows Vista, it is perhaps time to review just what versions of Windows Microsoft still provide full support for. I was prompted to do a review when I read the erroneous statement that support for Windows 2000 ceased back in June of this year. The correct position, I found, is that it moved from full support to "extended support". Here's what that means according to the Microsoft Internet Explorer blog:

There are two important events that will happen to the support policy for Windows 2000 after June 30th of this year.

First, support for both IE 5.01 SP3 and IE 6 SP1 on Windows 2000 SP3 will expire. Users running IE 5.01 or IE 6 SP1 on Windows 2000 should upgrade to Windows 2000 SP4 in order to continue to receive security updates.

Second, Windows 2000 SP4 moves from mainstream to extended support. The key difference between mainstream support and extended support which I think is most relevant to this audience is this quote from the lifecycle site: "Microsoft will not accept requests for warranty support, design changes, or new features during the Extended support phase."

We will of course continue to keep our Windows 2000 SP4 customers secure with security updates through the life of Windows 2000 (through 2010). There are a few other differences between the two support models which you can read about at the lifecycle site. You may also want to read my previous post about Windows' lifecycle.

It should be no surprise that we do not plan on releasing IE7 for Windows 2000. One reason is where we are in the Windows 2000 lifecycle. Another is that some of the security work in IE7 relies on operating system functionality in XPSP2 that is non-trivial to port back to Windows 2000.

Please note that these lifecycle changes are only for IE on Windows 2000. For questions about other versions of IE (IE for PocketPC, IE for Mac), please consult the lifecycle site for the latest expiration dates.

As for Windows 98, 98SE and ME, support has ceased and there will not be further security updates. This should be borne in mind if you plan to continue using these now-obsolete versions.

For example, they are still usable on machines that don't access the Internet or email. However, you will need to add third party firewalls, virus checkers and spyware removers if they do. Even then you might be better off upgrading or switching to a suitable distribution of Linux.

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Freespire and Xubuntu

One Linux distribution, which would suit those whose version of Windows is now unsupported, is Freespire. Sponsored by Linspire (originally known as Lindows), Freespire comes in two versions, one of which is purely open source and is accordingly labelled OSS. Avoid that one and go for the full version which includes proprietary drivers, codecs and applications. The inclusion of these



Fig. 4: Freespire uses the KDE desktop

ensures that you will get the maximum functionality out of your Freespire system with support for MP3, Windows Media Player, wireless connectivity, nVidia and ATI video cards, Real, QuickTime, Java and Flash included in the initial installation.

As can be seen from the screenshots on the Freespire website, it is even possible to add XGL and give your desktop a Vista-like 3D desktop.

Obtaining Freespire

Freespire can be downloaded from various sites by FTP, HTTP or torrent. However, the best place to start is the Freespire website – <http://freespire.org>. The download comes in the form of an ISO file. From this you burn the installation CD. (See your burner instructions for this.)

Freespire includes licensed Windows Media Audio and Media Decode Technology that support the WMV format and other licensed proprietary drivers. In a number of cases the license does not permit Freespire to grant redistribution rights. As a result the full version of Freespire's distribution is more restricted than fully open source versions of Linux.

Minimum specifications

According to the Freespire user manual, in order to install Freespire you must have:

- PC with 800MHz processor (1Ghz recommended)
- 128 MB of RAM (256 MB or higher recommended for best performance)
 - Note: If your video chip is set to share 128 MB of the main RAM you will need 256 MB of RAM as a minimum.
 - Note: The use of emulators (Crossover Office, Win4Lin, etc.) is RAM intensive, so the minimum recommended is 512 MB.
- Hard drive with 4 GB free space
- SVGA or higher resolution and monitor (3-D graphics accelerator card for some games, screen savers, etc.)
- CD-ROM or DVD drive, keyboard and mouse (The computer must support booting from the CD or DVD drive. Most modern computers can do this.)
- Linspire/Freespire-compatible sound card and speakers or headphones
- Linspire/Freespire-compatible 56 Kbps hardware modem, cable modem, or DSL modem
- Ethernet card for Internet/LAN connectivity
-

Additional applications

Freespire comes with a good assortment of applications and more can be obtained from the Freespire repository using CNR. Applications from the thousands of packages held in the Debian repository can also be used.

Installation

Freespire can be installed by overwriting an existing drive or partition, or re-partitioning a drive. The

install disk comes complete with the necessary tools to do this.

If you install Freespire on one partition of a drive where Windows is already installed, it will create a boot menu, allowing you to dual boot.

Even better, you can run Freespire Live! from a CD before installing anything and check that Freespire is compatible with your hardware and that it provides the applications that you need. Once you have done that you can go ahead and install Freespire with confidence.

After you have completed the installation, you can run CNR and obtain additional applications from the Linspire repository. Before gaining access to the repository, you will need to register with Linspire/Freespire.

Xubuntu

If your computer doesn't reach the minimum specifications for Freespire, you may be able to upgrade it, or, alternatively, consider using some other version of Linux, such as Xubuntu – a version of Ubuntu that uses a lightweight desktop manager and is available in six versions for different types of computers. For those PC-compatibles with less than 128MB of RAM, choose the Alternative CD of Xubuntu (not to be confused with XUbuntu – a version for the X-Box), but for best results, you do need 128MB and can use the standard CD. This

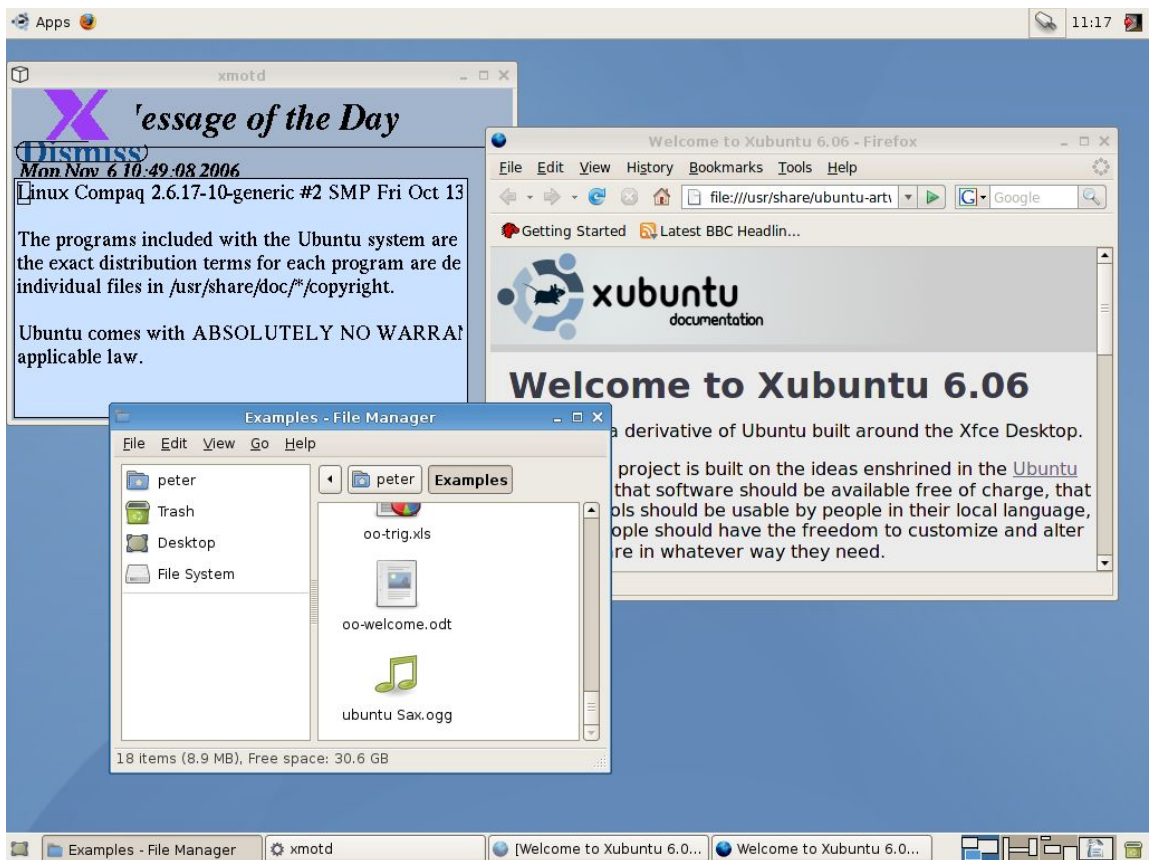


Fig. 5: Xubuntu uses the Xfce desktop - fast, but different

provides both a Live CD that runs from the CD itself and an install option to put it on to your hard drive.

Linux is about choice

One of the features, for better or worse, of Linux is choice. DistroMania, which tries to provide every known distribution of Linux, lists 140 current distributions, as well as another 174 archived distributions. As if that was not enough to confuse the beginner, you can choose from different window managers and desktops. Ubuntu cuts through the confusion by packaging their Linux distribution with different desktops and giving the result different names that reflect which desktop has been used.

Freespire, described earlier, uses X.org window manager and KDE desktop. Kubuntu is the nearest to this in the Ubuntu stable. Ubuntu, without a prefix to the name, comes with the Gnome 2 desktop, while Xubuntu uses Xfce desktop with Xfwm4 window manager and has been built with lower hardware requirements in mind. That doesn't mean you can only use it on low-end equipment. Its efficient design means that it runs very speedily on high-end equipment.

If you have a computer capable of running it, Kubuntu includes far more applications and its KDE desktop will require less adjustment if you are coming from a Windows background. However, the total package is a full DVD (or a number of CDs) and downloading 4 GB takes a long time even on a broadband connection and could even prove expensive if you don't have sufficient quota to cover it. However, Internode customers can download it from the Internode mirror as unmetered content and that is what I chose to do. Took a whole day though!

Ubuntu philosophy

Ubuntu believes that software should be both free-of-charge and free of hindrance should the customer wish to alter it to suit his/her requirements. With the resources of Canonical Ltd behind it, Ubuntu Linux has become a popular desktop choice.

Obtaining Xubuntu

Xubuntu can be downloaded from <http://xubuntu.com> and various other sites around the world. If your Internet Service Provider serves up unmetered content, you may be able to get it from there, saving a big chunk of your quota. Just choose whichever of the six choices is most suitable for the use you have in mind and download the appropriate ISO file. Then burn a CD from that file. (Check your burner software's instructions on how to do this.) You can test the CD by booting your computer from it and running the Live version before committing to installing Xubuntu on your hard drive..

Installation

Like Freespire, Xubuntu can be installed by overwriting an existing drive/partition, or re-partitioning a drive. The install disk comes complete with the necessary tools to do this.

If you install Xubuntu on one partition of a drive where Windows is already installed, it will create a boot menu, allowing you to dual boot.

Once you have run the Live version and checked to see if it correctly detects your hardware – especially sound and modem – you can click the Install button on the Xfce desktop and Xubuntu will ask you a few simple questions and then install. It takes somewhat longer than Freespire to complete, though.

After you have completed the installation from the CD, you can run Add/Remove Programs to add additional applications. For this you would be best advised to use a broadband link. However, a dialup link can be used if you have a reliable line. Just leave it running overnight after having chosen a selection of programs to add. Some selections will require immediate installation, which is why a broadband link is preferable.

One difficulty with the Xubuntu Add/Remove Programs interface is that it lists a number of versions of what are essentially the same thing. Bear in mind that, as far as possible, you do not want KDE or Gnome versions and select accordingly. You will get a chance to review what you have chosen, before committing to an install, so look through your selections carefully. If you do install more than one version of an application, you can remove it by running Add/Remove Programs again.

Comparisons

Of the two, I found Freespire to be the more “Windows-like”, while Xubuntu did a better job of detecting my hardware, especially the sound chip, the time clock and the wireless network connections.

Freespire, with its licensed versions of Windows Media and other proprietary files, probably provides better support for media files, and its network management is easier to follow. On the other hand, Xubuntu seems to have the better hardware support and a fast simple interface.

Both are based on Debian so, in the end, the choice comes down to which desktop you are most comfortable with, assuming that all your hardware is correctly supported by both distributions.

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Foxit Reader 2.0

An improved version of the tiny Foxit Reader for PDF files has been released by Foxit Software. The new Windows version includes an installer and is a 1.5 MB (.exe) or 1.7 MB (.zip) download.

Foxit has also released an evaluation version for Linux. This has been tested with SUSE Linux 10.0 and Fedora 4, but won't necessarily work with other versions. However, I found that the Windows version worked well with the Crossover code in Xandros Linux and, unlike its predecessor, correctly printed graphics in documents, even one which the Linux Adobe Reader failed to render correctly. There was one exception, however – it omitted the logo from an Internode advice that I tested it on.

If you find the prospect of downloading the huge Adobe Reader 7.0 somewhat daunting, give this fast, compact reader a try. You won't be disappointed.

Foxit Reader and other Foxit PDF software can be obtained from <http://www.foxitsoftware.com>.

Foxit also offer a Pro version with additional features. Details at: http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/rd_intro.php.

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Langalist plus Windows Secrets

I have mentioned *Langalist* on a number of occasions. It is the largely one-man effort of Fred Langa and contains many useful tips. However, the effort required to run such a newsletter is considerable and Fred has now joined forces with Brian Livingston, publisher of *Windows Secrets*, “a well-known source of little-known tips”, as Fred says.

Fred advises that Brian has an excellent, professional staff and a sophisticated email-publishing system that will remove almost all the quirks and oddities that have cropped up from time to time with his (Fred's) home-grown system. Fred will be the Editor of the combined publication and Brian will be the Editorial Director.

Initially the merged newsletter will be known as *Windows Secrets & Langalist*, but early next year will simply be known as *Windows Secrets*. Existing subscribers to Langalist will have received instructions on updating their preferences and the rest of you should seriously consider subscribing! The two publishers have been around magazine and how-to books for many years and their expertise is well worth tapping into.

<http://windowssecrets.com>
<http://langa.com>

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Office pirates beware!

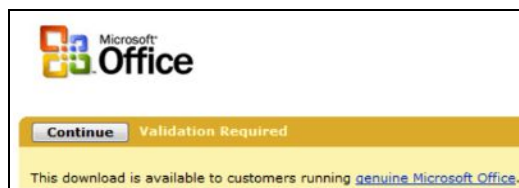


Fig. 6: Pirates beware! Office Genuine Advantage is out to get you!

Starting in January 2007, Microsoft Office users will have their copy validated before they can download material from the Microsoft Office website. The Office Genuine Advantage (OGA) software has been in beta-testing for several months and will be switched on for all users of the website. The validation software will also be built in to Vista.

According to Alex Zaharoff-Reutt of *Free Access* magazine:

As of October 27 last week, anyone using a pirated version of Office will no longer be able to download Office templates or other Office downloads. From January 2007, pirated Office users will no longer be able to check for and download Office updates.

Should a Service Pack 3 become available for Office 2003, or other security updates for Office 2003 and earlier, still supported versions, your copy of Office will be checked for authenticity before the download will begin.

If you're not legal, you won't be able to update Office, and will have to run the risk that documents you receive from others don't contain threats that could damage your system.

He goes on to ask:

Or should that be Microsoft beware: some of your users are about to jump ship to a free Office alternative, whether the next version of Office is 10 years ahead of the competition, or not.

Microsoft has implemented this program because of the widespread use of pirated and counterfeited software and expects that it will force major users to get legal software, which, of course, costs hundreds of dollars.

Home users will probably be able to buy a special home version of Office that will allow you to legally install it on up to three computers, as is the case with the *Student and Teacher* edition of *Office 2003*.

The cost of this special educational version is approximately \$AUD150 and it is available, without any particular checks for educational credentials from major retail stores in Australia. It is, however, strictly for non-commercial use and omits some Office programs, only giving you *Word*, *Excel*, *Outlook* and *PowerPoint*.

So, if you're using a pirated version, there are only three choices available to you. The first is to buy *MSOffice*. As *Office 2007* will be released by the time the Office Update checks with OGA come online in January, Microsoft is no doubt hoping very much that the new *Office 2007* interface along with all its other features will be more than enough to convince you to buy.

The second is to consider using an alternative, such as *OpenOffice.org* (which is free), *StarOffice*, or *WordPerfect*. The third possibility, being pushed by Google, ThinkFree and others is the use of online office applications. ThinkFree's *Office* strongly resembles Microsoft's *Office 2003* and would be a good starting point, if you like that approach.

Alex concludes:

The empire that was built on a massive global user base of pirates, coupled with vast numbers of paid for copies in business, government, education and by everyday consumers, is about to start making sure that both hard core pirates and casual copiers are stopped in their tracks ... the gravy train is fast coming to a stop. You'll have to start using free Office suites instead, or bite the bullet and pay.

<http://www.freeaccess.com.au>

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RTFM

Recently a friend, whom I shall call GT, told me he was unable to log on to his bank's website. When he clicked the Sign On button, he simply found himself still at the same page.

It turned out that GT could log on to three similar sites, but not <http://www.cardservicesdirect.com.au>. I advised him that, as he could log on to other sites, it was probably not his general browser settings and to look for something specific to that site. Later he emailed me that he "... had to resort to reading the instructions on bank home page." Those instructions included advice on what to do if you were having trouble logging on – specifically to disable pop-up blocking.

To access some websites you may need to turn off pop-up blocking, allow cookies, or download and install ActiveX controls, or maybe some combination of those three. Users of Firefox may even have to resort to Internet Explorer, especially if the problem involves ActiveX.

So, if you strike a similar problem, RTFM (Read The Flaming Manual), or the website instructions, or do a Google search for advice. You never know what you might be overlooking.

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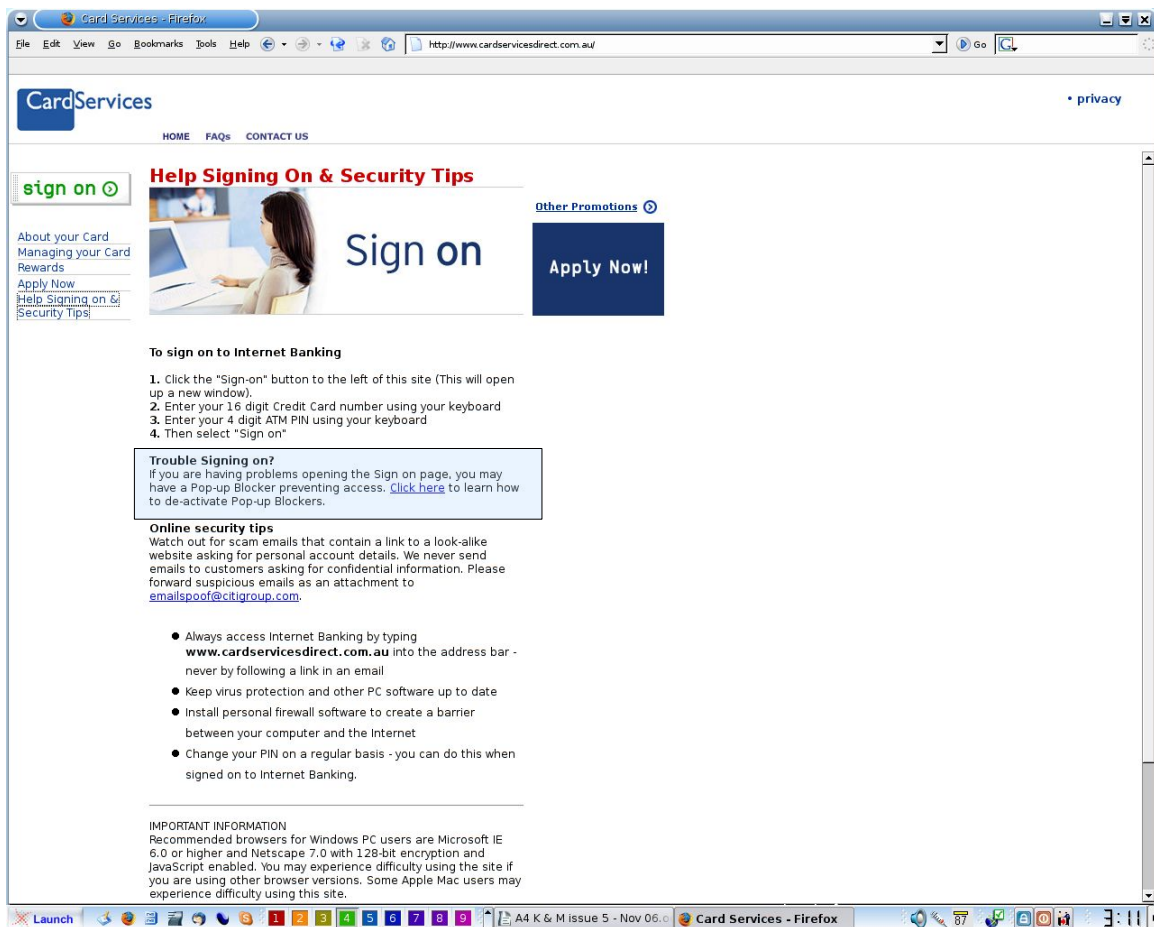


Fig. 7: Read the instructions - it often helps!