

Keyboard & Mouse



Newsletter of the Hobart Computer Users Group Inc.

Speed up XP

Online backup

XP backups in Vista

Shortened URLs again

Waving the Red Flag

Another way to print envelopes
with OpenOffice.org

Extra large screens

Latest Firefox news

Another Norton problem

Google Gears

Internode price increases

In this issue:

Speed up XP

Microsoft's advice to keep XP running smoothly 1

Online backup

Secure your data away from your computer 2

Shortened URLs again

Hopefully, this will work 3

XP backups in Vista

Not compatible, but 4

Next Meeting

Where, when, who and what 4

OpenOffice.org envelope printing

Another way to do it 5

Waving the Red Flag

China's official OS 5

Extra large screens

TV and computer on the one screen 6

Windows XP tricks

With TechRepublic's help, here's some tips 7

Latest Firefox news

Support for version 1.5 ending, update now 8

Another Norton problem

Pegasus deleted as a trojan 9

Google Gears

Online applications to work offline 10

Double the membership

Your part in our recruitment drive 11

Internode price increases

Internode adjust their broadband plans and prices 12

©Hobart Computer Users Group Inc. (except where stated otherwise)
Produced using StarOffice 8.0 from <http://www.sun.com> running under Xandros Linux 4.0 from <http://www.xandros.com>

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

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. Some articles are designed only to stimulate thought and discussion.

Website: Back issues of our newsletters are available from our website <http://hobartpcgroup.org.au>
Subscriptions: To subscribe to this newsletter, please visit our website. It is available in PDF format only

Reprinting: While permission will be given to other non-profit organisations to reprint items from this newsletter, (where the Group holds the copyright to the material in question), please contact the Editor for verification before reprinting

Our cover: You're never too old! A 91 year old member at her 32 inch TV/screen (See *Extra large screens* on page 6)

Speed up XP

According to Microsoft's website there are five things you should do regularly to keep Windows XP running smoothly.

1. Remove programs you don't use any more. This prevents them from running in the background without your knowledge and frees up disk space. This is particularly important when your hard drive is nearly full.
2. Install and run anti-spyware software. Spyware often installs itself either completely without your knowledge, or after you have okayed the "fine print" without reading it. It often cannot be removed by the normal add/remove programs feature in Control Panel. Instead you need a specialist program to remove it. Having installed it, don't forget to run your anti-spyware program regularly.
3. Run a disk cleanup tool to free up waste space. Last issue we mentioned CCleaner, but, if you haven't installed that highly recommended tool, at least use the one that comes with Windows.
4. Defragment your hard drive. Once you have freed up waste space, defragment the drive. This will allow Windows to make more

efficient use of the recovered space.

5. All of the foregoing are well-known to experienced Windows users. We just put off doing them. The fifth one that Microsoft suggests was one I hadn't thought of: Disconnect unused network connections, especially where network drives have been mapped on to your computer. While they remain mapped, Windows will spend time looking for them when booting up, and some programs will also search for them when run.

For more details and the original Microsoft article, visit their website, where you will find step-by-step instructions:

<http://tinyurl.com/pu74d>

For a more comprehensive maintenance routine, spend \$USD5.95 and download this checklist, which "*covers 50 essential tasks that will help support pros avoid problems and ensure that their computer systems are optimized and healthy. Preemptive measures include checking page file configuration, updating firmware, running Disk Cleanup, ensuring fan operation, and verifying power quality.*"

<http://tinyurl.com/2yb2bh>

[Index](#)

Online backup

Thanks to a suggestion from a reader, I had a look at a file backup service called Mozy. Mozy works best with NTFS drives, which means Windows 2000, XP and Vista. There is also a public beta for Mac OS/X.

Making software only for the more recent versions of Windows is becoming more common now that Windows 95, 98 and ME are no longer supported by Microsoft. This can make the software more secure, an important consideration in these days of constant virus and hacking attacks.

How it works

1. Sign up for an account.

Create a Mozy user account which will allow you to download Mozy software and back up your data. The free account gives you 2GB of storage. For a modest fee, you can increase this, when you need to. Once the download is complete, install the software.

2. Download and install software.

Mozy downloads in about 30 seconds, and the installation is simple and fast. Once the installation is completed, you need

to set Mozy up to do your backing up. This, too, is easy.

3. Select files to be backed up.

Next, simply click on the types of data you want Mozy to protect, and it does the rest. You can also dig into the details of your hard drive and get specific about files and directories you want Mozy to take care of. Because Mozy does automatic continuous backups, it is really only suitable for a broadband connection.

What You Get

- 2GB of storage*
- Open/locked file support
- Block-level differential backup
- 128-bit SSL support (to secure your data during transport)
- 448-bit Blowfish encryption (to secure your data on our server)
- Continuous or scheduled backup options

*Upgrade to Mozy Unlimited for just \$USD4.95 per month and back up all your data. (Some services charge as much as \$USD9.95 for 5GB of data, while others provide unlimited backup for \$USD49.50 a year. Shop carefully.)

Alternatives to Mozy

Mozy suggests the following alternatives:

- *Burn a new CD or DVD every Sunday night and store them at your brother-in-law's office.*
- *Pay \$200/year for an online backup service that uses old, mediocre software.*
- *Buy a \$200 external hard drive and hope your office doesn't burn down.*
- *Do nothing and don't worry about backup. (We suggest closing your eyes, plugging your ears and repeating "I'm in my happy place, I'm in my happy place.")*
- *Run a cron job of rsync, gzip and mcrrypt piped over ssh to your friend's server over his DSL line.*

Mozy won't tell you, but I will: Another similar service is IDrive-E. It claims to be up to 30% faster and also better. You can see a comparison at:

<http://www.idrive.com>

Online backup not only backs your data up, it removes it from the premises so that, should some disaster destroy your computer (fire, flood, burglary) your data is still safe and can be restored to your replacement machine.

[Index](#)

Shortened URLs again

Last issue I tried shortening URLs with a geobay.com extension to Firefox. Shortly after the issue was published, Geobay disappeared from the Web. I also published an item in which I said that there was not an extension for using the long-established Tiny URLs. I was wrong. There is and it works even better than the Geobay one did. So forget Geobay and install the tinyurl.com extension instead.

To install the URL shortener, go to:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/126>

and click Install Now. Reboot Firefox and you're done. You'll find TinyUrl Creator has been added to your Tools menu.

Shortened URLs are useful for inclusion in emails and newsletters. They can also be used to shorten your personal website's URL and to direct people to a particular page in your website.

For example: <http://tinyurl.com/3axbz8> will take you straight to the May newsletter, which will open on-screen in your PDF reader. (Best not tried with a dialup connection, as it would be very slow.)

[Index](#)

XP backups in Vista?

The backup system in Vista is quite different from that in Windows XP and the files from the latter are incompatible. However, Microsoft has provided a way for you to use those backups now that you have upgraded to Vista. (If you haven't, I'm still suggesting that you wait a bit longer until all the early issues have been resolved.)

The first step is to download and install the Windows NT Backup – Restore Utility from the Microsoft Download Center:

<http://tinyurl.com/32ztmz>

Before you are allowed to do this, you will need to subject your copy of Vista to the validation process. Once you locate the Windows NT Backup - Restore Utility page, just click the Continue button to begin the Windows validation procedure.

Before you actually install and run the Windows NT Backup - Restore Utility, you must enable the Removable Storage Management feature. (If you don't, you may receive an NTSMAPI.DLL error.) To do so, access the Control Panel from the Start menu and click the Programs item. Once the Programs window appears, locate and select the Turn Windows Features On or Off command under the Programs and Features heading. When you do, you'll encounter a User

Account Control (UAC) dialog box and will need to respond accordingly. After this, download and install the utility in the usual manner (double click on the MSI file) and then refer to this page for further instructions:

<http://tinyurl.com/yrmoc6>

Oddly, Vista calls this an unidentified program. Just ignore this and run it anyway.

If you are planning to upgrade to Vista, make sure that you back everything up before you start. Even though companies such as Microsoft go to great lengths to ensure that upgrades will install smoothly, they cannot prevent a power failure or user error from causing the installation to fail. That's when you'll be glad you made a backup.

[Index](#)

Next Meeting

Topic: Firefox and Thunderbird

Speaker: Peter Campbell

Venue: St Andrews Hall, 29 Bathurst Street, Hobart

Time: 8.00 pm

Date: 12 June 2007

OpenOffice.org envelope printing

Last month I outlined how to print envelopes using templates. However, there is another way that OpenOffice.org and StarOffice handle this task and it's found oddly enough on the Insert menu. Apparently the reasoning is that you Insert an envelope into the printer ahead of the page you are writing.

- Open the **Insert** menu
- Click on **Envelope**
- Click on the **Envelope tab**
- Fill in the sender and addressee details (using fields for the addressee if preparing a mail merge)
- Click on the **Format** tab and choose the envelope size you intend to use
- Click on the **Printer** tab and choose the printer alignment that your printer uses (landscape, portrait, left, right, centre, offset etc.)
- Click **Setup** to choose which printer and its settings
- Click **New Doc** and **File/Print**

You will still need to experiment to find the best settings and feed arrangements for your printer. For example, on a Lexmark X1140 I found that “C6/5” worked for printing C6 envelopes, whereas “C6” led to the address being cut off on the righthand side.

[Index](#)

Waving the Red Flag

On the June 2007 issue of APC magazine is a DVD that includes Red Flag Linux. Just before you rush out and buy it, let me point out that Red Flag is in Chinese – the English version is still a few months away.

Red Flag is the operating system of choice for the Chinese Government and is a highly configured version of Red Hat Linux (hence the name). It uses an interface which has been customised to resemble Windows closely. Just what other delights it may offer we will have to wait and see – unless, of course, you read Chinese fluently.

Other Linux distros developed jointly with Red Hat are Miracle and Haansoft. These three form the Asianux consortium and target the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean markets respectively. Red Hat and Miracle provide some information on their websites in English, but the Haansoft site appears to be solely in Korean.

It is precisely because of the penetration by Linux into third world countries that Microsoft offers a special version of Windows in these areas. Whether its cut-down version can compete with full version Linux supported by various governments remains to be seen.

[Index](#)

Extra large screens

As we get older our eyesight may fade or be affected by eye disorders, such as macular degeneration. That doesn't mean abandoning the computer. As our cover picture shows, one answer is to install a larger screen.



Such screens are expensive and it would be difficult for many of us to justify the expenditure purely for computer use. However, one solution is to use a large LCD TV, which is what the screen shown in the cover picture and the one above are. Their in-built tuners even bring in the HDTV channels.

The screens are 32 inch with a 16:9 ratio. Used for computing with a 4:3 ratio they provide an approximate 23 inch

diagonal. **Note:** With the right video card and driver, the full width of the screen can be used, but, in this case, the computer doesn't support that option.

Several sets of input sockets are provided on the back of the screen so that a digital camera, computer, VCR, DVD and more can be plugged in. All of which does nothing to reduce the \$1800 price tag, but you do get a lot more use out of it than you would if it was restricted purely to computing.

The proud owner of this particular setup finds that she can now read the captions on SBS from the other side of the room and use her computer without difficulty. As she previously only had analogue TV, she has also found the extra channels, especially ABC2, to her liking.



If you don't need a screen quite that large, or are looking for a cheaper option, 19 inch LCD computer monitors now sell for as little as \$300 or so. Even changing from a 17 inch CRT to a 17 inch LCD monitor will give you a noticeable increase in size, as part of the measured diagonal on a CRT screen is not viewable. Although quoted as 17 inch the typical CRT screen gives 16 inches or slightly less.

[Index](#)

Windows XP tricks

Speed up defrag

Before beginning a defrag operation, reboot your computer. Press F8 as it is rebooting and choose Safe Mode. This achieves two things. Firstly, rebooting allows the operating system to clear out the virtual memory/swap file and reset it to the default size. The defrag program can then concentrate on the necessary data on the hard disk without having to manage a huge swap file loaded with unnecessary data. Applications running in the background may write to the hard disk thereby interrupting the defragging operation. Going into Safe Mode ensures that no such applications are running.

Another approach to speeding up a defrag operation in Windows XP is to configure it to occur immediately upon startup. For details of how to do this, go to <http://tinyurl.com/23cqgn> and download *10 handy Windows XP efficiency tricks*.

Quick shutdown

Another of TechRepublic's ten tricks is to schedule a reboot on computers that are left running overnight. To do this they use *shutdown.exe*, which is found in the System32 folder of Windows XP. A better tool for this operation and one which

can also speed up the normal shutdown process is found in a file called *qsd.zip*. This can be downloaded from <http://www.winutility.com/qsd>. Using *Quick Shutdown*, as the utility is known, not only can you force a quick shutdown of Windows XP, you can also force Windows to hibernate, reboot, logoff, standby, eject any removable media, or lock your computer with the one mouse click. You can even run it from the command line.

Unzip the download and run *setup.exe* to install the utility. An icon will be added to the system tray (the group of icons beside the clock at the bottom right of your screen). A click on this icon will show you just what *Quick Shutdown* can do. You should also read the information on the Quick Shutdown webpage.

How to Rename the Recycle Bin

To change the name of the Recycle Bin desktop icon, open Regedit and go to:

```
HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\CLSID/{645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-00AA002F954E}
```

Change the name "Recycle Bin" to whatever you want (don't type any quotes).

[Index](#)

Latest Firefox news

Direct from Basil Hashem at Mozilla, here's the latest news on the phase out of version 1.5:

As part of Mozilla Corporation's ongoing stability and security update process, Firefox 1.5.0.12 and Firefox 2.0.0.4 are now available for Windows, Mac, and Linux for free download from <http://getfirefox.com>.

Due to the security fixes, we strongly recommend that all Firefox users upgrade to these latest releases.

Note: We anticipate this to be the last release in the Firefox 1.5.0.x series. Mozilla typically maintains support for previous releases for six months after a major release. Mozilla has previously extended the planned end of life for the 1.5.0.x series in order to accommodate some recent changes in update functionality. Firefox 1.5.0.12 is available for download from <http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/all-older.html> but all users are encouraged to upgrade to Firefox 2.

If you already have Firefox 1.5.0.x or Firefox 2.0.0.x, you will receive an automated update notification ... This update can also be applied manually by selecting "Check for Updates ..." from the Help menu ...

For a list of changes and more information, please review the [Firefox 1.5.0.12 Release Notes](#)

(<http://en-us.www.mozilla.com/enUS/firefox/releases/1.5.0.12.html>)

and the [Firefox 2.0.0.4 Release Notes](#)

(<http://en-us.www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/2.0.0.4/releasenote>).

Over the coming weeks, Mozilla will be presenting 1.5.0.12 users with a notification message that will offer users a "major update" to Firefox 2. Upon confirmation, a user's browser will be upgraded from 1.5.0.12 to 2.0.0.4.

Basil Hashem (basil@mozilla.com)

According to the Download Squad's blog:

The 2.0.0.4 update, includes security fixes, stability improvements and enhancement to Firefox's ability to block popups.

The ad blocking patches in 2.0.0.4 ensure that content requested through Flash or Javascript methods is subject to the same policies as normal HTTP requests, allowing tools like Adblock Plus to keep out even more content you don't want to see.

Keep your Firefox up-to-date by upgrading Firefox 1.5.0.x to 1.5.0.12 or, better yet, to 2.0.0.4. If you are already using version 2.0.0.x, download the latest update for even better security. Also check out the latest extensions. There will almost certainly be something that can improve your Firefox experience.

[Index](#)

Another Norton problem

I've seen a number of computers lately which were performing somewhat slowly. When the Norton Security Suite software was replaced, they booted and ran better.

Now comes news of another Norton problem. TNPC newsletter publisher, Dan Butler, sent this email recently to his subscribers about a problem resulting from a 15 May 2007 update of Norton Antivirus:

It is only for Pegasus email users who also use Norton Antivirus. If you don't use Pegasus you can ignore the rest of this note. If you do use Pegasus but not Norton you still may want to read the note.

I received an email from David Harris the creator of Pegasus email. Apparently there is an issue between Norton Antivirus and Pegasus email. In a nutshell Norton is flagging Pegasus as a Trojan and deleting the program. I put David's email on the TNPC Blog. He gives specific steps to take if you are affected and points to a discussion for more information: <http://www.tnpcnewsletter.com/blog>

As part of that discussion, Pegasus Mail has this to say:

Firstly, we wish to stress that there is no trojan horse in

Pegasus Mail: the Norton Antivirus program is producing a "false positive" - an incorrect analysis based on poor or erroneous signature information.

Secondly, you will not be able to recover from this problem without first amending your Norton Antivirus installation, since it will automatically delete any attempt to download or reinstall the Pegasus Mail program.

There is a comprehensive thread describing this problem and offering some short-term workarounds on our community web site, here:

<http://community.pmail.com/forums/thread/659.aspx>

A trial version of Norton Security Suite is often supplied with new computers and motherboards. Try it and if you notice any problems similar to the ones described above, don't buy it.

And remember that for personal use – not commercial or organisational use – you can adequately protect your computer by using products such as AVG, Avast or AntiVir antivirus; ZoneAlarm, Comodo, or OutpostPro 4.0 firewall; and Spybot Search and Destroy, or Ad-Aware anti-spyware; without spending any money. Just be sure to keep them up-to-date by checking for updates regularly.

[Index](#)

Google Gears

Reuters reported from San Francisco at the end of last month that Google Inc. had created open source Web software that runs both online and offline. This allows producers of such software to incorporate Google Gears into their products. Once Google Gears is incorporated, users will be able to work on planes and trains; with spotty wireless connections; and even in the most remote locations.

Google Gears allows users of computers, phones and other devices to manipulate Web services like email, online calendars, word processors and spreadsheets, whether online, intermittently connected to the Web, or completely offline, synchronising their files when they are able to get a reliable Internet connection.

By bridging the gulf between new Web services and the older world of desktop software, where any data changes are stored locally on users' machines, Google is pushing the Web into whole new spheres of activity and posing a challenge to rival Microsoft Corp., leader in the desktop software area.

Microsoft already offers technologies like Groove, which allows users to work offline, then synchronize changes when connected later. But the software giant has been reluctant to make existing products work both online and offline.

"The Web is great but it doesn't work very well when you don't have a Web connection," Jeff Huber, Google's vice president of engineering, said in an interview. "Gears addresses a functional gap on the Web."

Google plans to make the Gears technology available for free as "open source" software, meaning other developers are free to use and enhance the software in their own products.

The first Google product to feature Gears will be Google Reader, which allows consumers automatically to track updates to hundreds of Web sites. Users could connect temporarily for updates, then go offline and read up on recent Web news. "We expect this to be extended to other Google applications over time," Huber said, without setting any timeframes.

Early partners who will use Gears in their products include design software leader Adobe Systems Inc., maker of Flash animation and Acrobat document-sharing software, as well as new Apollo tools that work online and offline, Adobe said.

Other organizations working with Google are Norway's Opera Software ASA, maker of a Web browser popular with mobile phone users, and Mozilla.

[Index](#)

Double the membership

The Committee at its May meeting decided that the time has come to launch a campaign for more financial members.

Not only would a successful membership recruitment drive improve our finances, allowing us to update our equipment, it would also mean larger attendances at meetings, which would make it easier to attract guest speakers.

You should also bear in mind that all organisations such as ours gradually lose members and these members need to be replaced to ensure the future of the Group.

New members benefit from the help and information we are able to pass on and the social interaction with people with whom they share an interest.

Any recruitment drive, however, can only succeed if you, as individual members, become involved. That involvement can be as simple as inviting someone to come with you to a meeting. If each existing member found just one new member, our membership would double! Is finding one new member such a difficult task? I found one recently without even trying when an elderly lady whom I've known for years said to me, "I get so much help from you and the newsletter that I really feel I should join, even though I cannot come to

meetings."

Alternatively, you could find a new outlet for our brochures, or arrange for a poster about the Group to be displayed at your local online centre or computer store, or just let the staff at the outlet know about the Group.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that most people who could benefit from joining the Group, and most people who would be happy to refer "newbies" to us, **do not know we exist!** That should be easy to remedy.

To illustrate that last point, let me ask you to consider this:

One of our members went into a computer store and while buying a drive, mentioned our website. The sales assistant, whom I will call Andrew, responded that he had not heard of it. The member commented that he thought our Webmaster was a regular customer of that store. Andrew looked up the computer and confirmed that that was the case. Whoops! Seems I missed an opportunity there!

The Committee proposes to support the recruitment drive with advertising in the Computer column in the Mercury, but the amount of such advertising will be limited because of the expense. Word of mouth is far more cost effective. Invite someone along now.

[Index](#)

Internode price increases

After more than six years of providing broadband, Internode has announced their first ever price increase for broadband services.

Some months ago, Telstra began wholesaling higher speed broadband (up to 8000Mbps) and, as a result, Internode introduced a range of new plans at reduced prices (or with increased quotas).

Now, in the light of an analysis of how the current plans are being used and the costs of providing them, Internode has decided to increase the cost of some plans, revise quotas on others, and introduce new rules with regard to “shaping”.

Shaping is the practice of slowing the broadband connection when the customer's quota is exceeded. It is intended as a gentle alternative to imposing excess charges, with the customer reducing their activity until the end of the charging month.

However, a few customers have used it as an excuse to go beserk and download as much as possible, albeit at reduced speed. Internode will now impose a 3GB limit on over quota usage and may impose further constraints on users who exceed this 3GB limit.

Internode's analysis has shown that, thanks to the new higher speed plans introduced some months ago, customers are now typically downloading increasing quantities of data at faster speeds. This increases Internode's costs under current network charging structures.

In addition, per user network costs have stopped falling over time and, in many cases, have actually risen in the past several months. Internode expects that, in time, as new network capacity comes on line, the trend will reverse and costs will again fall, but until that happens, there is no alternative to a price increase.

Customers who signed up within the last six months and who choose to cancel their accounts and move to another provider will have the normal exit fee waived if they act quickly and make their new arrangements before the price increase becomes effective.

Price increases vary from \$5 to \$40 per month and are significantly biased towards heavy users. That is, those who use the most will face the biggest increase.

New plans have also been introduced that give customers the option of a reduced quota instead of the price increase.

As an alternative to shaping, Internode will introduce data blocks that can be purchased and used that month. They do not roll over into the next (charging) month. The current immediate plan change system will be phased out in favour of the data block arrangement.

Full details of the plan changes are available from:

<http://www.internode.on.net/adsl/planchanges>

and Internode customers will be contacted individually to advise them if they are affected and what their options are.

[Index](#)