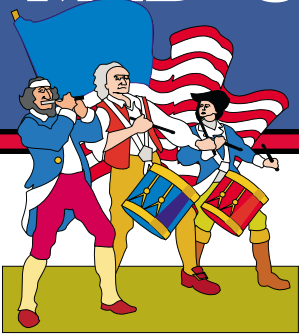


MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

July 2002 Newsletter



Quips N' Tips

by Rick Howell

Kazaa and Morpheus continue to top CNET's top download list this week, with Kazaa taking top honors of 2,693,326 downloads this week to Morpheus' 991,548 downloads. The popularity of file sharing software continues to rise despite the ethical and moral questions being raised by the music and movie industry. It is rather Karmic that the industries that have contributed so much to the moral and ethical demise of the entire country are now the poor victims of the monster they have created. Somehow the word "justice" comes to mind.....

You also might keep an eye on number seven on the download list. BearShare is an "up and coming" fileshare program based on Gnutella. While it may be yet another flash in the pan, last week it was downloaded by over 267,000 users and the reviews look interesting. Also, Blubster, another file-sharing program hit the top ten download list with over 142,000 downloads. As a matter of fact, six of the top ten downloaded programs this week had file-sharing capability. Looks like file-sharing, and in particular, music and movie swapping has become the number one use of the personal computer in the general population.

Have you ever used Instant Messaging? IM is another cool tool for computers. I have been using AOL Instant Messenger for about two years now, and I think it is a great way to keep in touch with friends and family. I have IM set up to start automatically on my computer when I boot up. IM pops up a list of people who are friends, family, or co-workers and checks to see if they are signed on to the service. It also lets them know that I am signed on. If anyone on the list wants to send me a message while I am logged on to the Internet, it pops up in a window on my computer and I can either ignore them or send them a reply instantly. While my son Richard is at school in Lubbock, we keep in touch primarily with AOL Instant Messenger. It is like he is right there in the next room. This is one of the few services available for free on the Internet which is probably worth paying for. Try it! Perhaps we could have a program on instant messaging.

Windows 2000 comes with its own internal chat program called Winchat.exe. This program is useful if you want to chat with someone on a local network. I am not sure if this program has been included with other versions of Windows, but you should be able to find it in the Windows/system subdirectory. On Windows 2000, it resides in the /WINNT/System32 directory.

Ever have keyboard problems while running Windows and don't want to lose some important data you have on the screen? Go to START / RUN and run a utility program called OSK.EXE. OSK stands for On Screen Keyboard, and that is just what it is. Although crude and not as easy to use as your ergonomic contoured keyboard, it can get you out of a bind.

If you have upgraded your keyboard in the last five years, chances are you have a Windows Logo key on the keyboard. It is usually located on the lower row to the left of the space bar, usually between the Ctrl and the Alt buttons. The Windows Logo key provides you with a few shortcuts that can come in handy sometimes. For brevity, I will abbreviate the Windows Logo key with the initials **WL**.

WL - Displays or hides the START menu
WL + Break - Displays the System Properties dialog box
WL + M - Minimize or Restore all windows
WL + E - Opens "My Computer"
WL + F - Search for a file or folder

Ctrl + WL + F - Searches for another computer on a network

WL + F1 - Displays Windows 2000 Help

WL + R - Opens the Run Dialog box

WL + Tab - Switch between open items

WL + U - Opens Utility Manager

Hopefully you will find this useful. The shortcuts can save you some time if you use them on a regular basis and can commit them to memory.

Our last meeting was held at the Haltom City Library. While not as nice as our previous meeting place, the facility is more than adequate for our needs and fits our current budget a lot better. For directions see the web site at <http://www.mcpcug.org>. See y'all at the meeting.

MEETING NOTICE

by: George Miner

When: Tuesday, July 9th, at 7:15 PM

Where: Haltom City Library, located in the 3200 block of Friendly Lane. See our web site for more specific directions. [Http://www.mcpcug.org](http://www.mcpcug.org)

Program: No program has been scheduled for this meeting, but member discussion on a variety of computer related topics will take place.

Windows XP

ZD Net Checks in on Microsoft's latest operating System

By Jim Aspinwall

Is Windows XP meeting your expectations or causing more exasperation than you bargained for?

Microsoft's latest operating system just turned six months old, and most would say that it's neither a failure nor a raging success. While XP promised the latest and greatest multimedia, security, and ease of use features available, many users have yet upgraded, fearing the hefty system requirements and potential compatibility disasters inherent in a major OS upgrade.

At the end of the day, some 17 million of us chose the XP route. Did we really get what we paid (quite a lot) for? Is XP more stable and more secure? Does it support all of our hardware and software? Does it really have cool, new features that we can't live without? In honor of its half anniversary, we checked in on XP to see what major issues linger, if any, and what features you might be missing.

The Systems Requirement Swamp

Windows XP seems to come with two sets of system requirements, confusing many would-be upgraders. Microsoft issued a minimum requirement for hardware performance and capabilities; if you don't meet that requirement, XP simply refuses to install. But the company also issued a minimum recommendation .. A set of far more stringent specs that should result in optimum performance. So, which set applies to you?

We've taken the last six months to play around with various hardware configurations and found that you need worry only about the minimum requirements. You can run on any system that meets or exceeds those specs .. Namely a 233MHz CPU with 64 Mb of RAM memory, 1.5GB free drive space, 800x600 display capability, and a CD ROM drive . But, if you want XP to run fast and crash-free, the minimum recommendation offers a sort of best practices target point.

More is better

Over the past six months, we've determined that XP runs just fine on a Pentium III 500 with 128MB of RAM. As expected, however; boosting both hard drive speed and RAM makes a significant difference in XP's performance. For best results, choose a hard drive that spins at 7,200 or 10,000RPM (vs a 5,400RPM drive), a fast enough processor to feed it (400, 600, or 800MHz vs. 233 or 266MHz), and generous amounts of RAM (256or 512MB vs. 64 or 128MB). You should probably avoid 8 or 16 bit ISA or legacy I/O cards for sound and video, and we highly

recommend PCI or AGP video cards too, in order to enjoy Xp's nifty video effects, such as menus that fade in and out and drop shadows on windows and desktop icons.

Many complaints on ZDNet's XP board (Web site) indicate that several system-board and hardware vendors have not and do not plan to provide XP drivers, but we've found that most hardware works well using Windows 2000 drivers. For example, you can't install Windows XP if your motherboard contains the High Point Technologies HPT-366 chipset (Highpoint's tech-support personnel confirm this: XP just doesn't have the drivers to support the chipset). To get XP to work on that hardware, you can download and use Windows 2000 drivers for the chipset or contact HighPoint Technologies' help desk and ask for XP-specific drivers, which you must load early in the XP setup process.

Oh, Driver, My Driver

Many new users spent the past few months muddling through Xp's seemingly complicated driver requirements. Most of the questions we received were about signed drivers. Here's the deal. In an effort to protect us from crashes related to conflicting versions of drivers and DLL files, Windows XP automatically checks incoming drivers to see whether they contain a *digital signature*, which indicate the file is uncorrupted and originates from the vendor that it claims to. (Microsoft strongly encourages vendors to abide by its voluntary driver-signing process, available on its site.)

Currently, XP won't prevent you from installing an unsigned driver but warns you that the file is not signed and cannot be verified to be from the claimed source. Then the system offers to continue the installation or let you cancel. Most of us simply click the Continue Anyway button, go on about the installation, and have no trouble at all. This method works fine as long as you're downloading from a well-known vendor.

Xp's Driver Airbags

But XP offers driver protection beyond the signed drivers. If you run across a problem with a driver once you've installed it--unexplained crashes, for example, or a kaput device--the OS can get you out of trouble in several ways. The first is the Driver Rollback feature, which allows you to replace your current troublesome driver with a previous working version. To access Driver Rollback, click Start > Control Panel then select the Classic View for the Control Panel. The Classic View shows you all of the Control Panel options. Double-

Continued on next page

Windows XP continued

click Administrative Tools > Computer Management in the left-hand list under Computer Management, select Device Manager; this will display a list of all of your systems devices. Double-click the device with which you are having a problem, then select the Driver tab. On the Driver tab, click the Roll Back Driver button for a list of previous drivers for the device.

If Driver Rollback won't fix your device catastrophe, you can take advantage of Xp's full System Restore feature, which lets you roll back to a precrash state. You can also use the Add/Remove Program control panel to undo Windows Update and service packs.

Service Pack, Anyone?

Every Operating System has glitches and gotchas; the key to an Os's success is how quickly they are discovered and fixed. So far, Microsoft has released approximately 30 critical and recommended update for XP, including 9 patches covering security problems.

Of course, all that constant tweaking can be a pain. Perhaps you're wondering if your OS just isn't ready for prime time. If you're holding out for a second edition of XP, dig in for a few more months. Microsoft plans to release its first service pack in the second half of this year. The company won't tell us exactly what Service Pack 1 will include, but we expect it to have many of the updates you can already get via Windows Update, such as USB 2.0 and Bluetooth support.

Microsoft belatedly released USB 2.0 drivers for Windows XP in February, and recently announced that it will include both Bluetooth support and a line of Bluetooth peripherals, such as keyboards and mice, in the service pack.

Microsoft also announced that, in addition to the usual fixes, this service pack will include support for new smart

displays such as Mira, new tablet-style purchase, and Freestyle digital-media devices for consumers.

The Help You Need

So, after six months, you're still having trouble figuring out how to use XP properly and running into compatibility problems at every turn? We've seen hardly any buzz about a feature that could save your tail, so we thought we'd offer some friendly advice to those in search of tech help.

Xp's Remote Assistance feature lets you seek help from your corporate IT department or PC-savvy pal online --in real time. Here's how. If you're online with XP or XP Pro and need a little tech support, simply press the F1 key to access Xp's Help And Support screen. On that screen, select "Invite a friend to connect to your computer with Remote Assistance," and XP sends e-mail requesting help to your company's IT department or a friend. You can even send the request via Windows XP Messenger, Xp's built-in IM client. Note: Your IT department or tech-savvy friend must be running XP Pro; only the Pro version can view or control another XP Pro or Home system.

Once your chosen helper receives and accepts your request, he or she can view your onscreen movements and offer advice via Messenger or over the phone. You can also hand off control of your PC, complete with keyboard and mouse activity, but you must give additional permission first.

Remote Assistance also lets you transfer files between PCs so that you can install necessary driver and configuration files to repair a problem.

Because Windows is so graphically intense, Remote Assistance works best over a fast Internet connection, such as DSL or cable. But you can scale down the screen resolution and visual features to make the performance tolerable on slower DSL or dial-up connections if you're desperate.

**A survey was sent out to find out what Operating Systems club members are using and to get their input
The following was received and compiled by Pat Hester:**

	<u>OS</u>	<u>How Long</u>	<u>System Failure</u>	<u>Recommend It?</u>	<u>Used Others? Prefer It?</u>
M. Schaefer	XP	3 Months	None	Yes	No
R. Murrell	98 & XP	3 yrs/2 wks	None	Yes/?	Yes - don't know
N Terrill	98se	3 years	How Do You Define	Yes	No
A. Nagy	Win 2000 Pro	2 years	None	Yes	No
Tom Waak	98	4 years	Weekly but rare	Yes	Early Linus, similar to 98, but more complex
Rick Howell	Win 2000	18 months	Once in 18 mos.	No	Anything Better/No
P & N Hester	Win ME	1 year	2 X in yr	No	95 & 98 / No
George Miner	98 Desk/95 lap	2 yrs/1.5 yrs	Occasional on 98	Maybe	No

THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

The Mid-Cities PC Users' Group is a not for-profit organization whose objectives are:

- * to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience,
- * education in the form of seminars and programs, and
- * community as pertains to the computer industry.

Annual membership is \$24.00 per family with one vote per membership. Members are encouraged to notify the Membership Chairperson of any change of address as soon as possible to continue receiving their monthly newsletter. Please address any notifications to: Mid-Cities PC Users' Group: Attn. Membership Chair, P.O. Box 54141, Hurst, TX 76054

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THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP NEWSLETTER

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File Formats: MS Word or Word Perfect is preferred. If formatting is crucial and you do not have access to the above programs, send a hard copy to show the layout.

Submitting Articles: You may use one of two methods. Uploading the article to Nancy Hester at newsletter@mcpcug.org or e-mailing her directly at nancyhesterusa@netscape.net



Thanks a lot!

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