



OTTAWA PC NEWS

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Opening Windows

Safeguarding the Windows 95 registry *by Chris Taylor*

I've talked often about the importance of safeguarding the Windows 95 registry. This huge database (often over 1MB) contains almost everything Windows knows about your hardware, Windows configuration, and 32-bit applications. If the registry becomes corrupted, Windows is dead. Windows is smart enough to make a backup of the registry each time it successfully starts, but this is not always sufficient.

Using Win95 tools

Tools provided on the Win 95 CD-ROM—CfgBack and ERU—do a credible job of backing up your registry. ERU also has the ability to back up other important files, such as Autoexec.bat, Config.sys, Win.ini, and System.ini. Each of these utilities has a drawback. CfgBack runs only under Windows 95, so you must have a running system in order to restore a configuration. Also, it does not back up the user portion of the registry (User.dat) if you are using profiles. ERU defaults to saving the backup files to drive A: and unceremoniously drops System.dat when it no longer fits. (This is not as bad as it sounds, as you can easily tell ERU to create the backup files on your hard disk instead.)

Using ConfigSafe 95

I recently came across a very nice utility program that promised to make backing up the registry a simpler and safer task. The program is ConfigSafe 95 from Imagine LAN Inc. (<http://www.imagine-lan.com>). I tested v1.01.08. There are versions of ConfigSafe for Windows 3.1 and Windows NT. You can download a 14-day fully functional version of ConfigSafe 95 from The PUB. Look in the Windows Utilities file area for Cs9514d.exe.

ConfigSafe saves five types of information in a snapshot:

- ♦ First (the most important) is the registry. The default profile backs up both of the main registry keys—HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE and HKEY_USERS. Since other keys are either sub-keys of these two or contain only dynamic data, backing up these two keys backs up the entire registry.
- ♦ Second, ConfigSafe backs up other critical files. The default profile includes Autoexec.bat, Config.sys, Win.ini, System.ini, and Protocol.ini.

- ♦ Third, it tracks changes to folder structures. The default profile tracks the Windows and DOS folders.
- ♦ Fourth, ConfigSafe tracks system information, including CPU, base memory, and Windows version.
- ♦ Fifth, it tracks available space on all fixed disks.

The first three types of information are all configurable through profiles. You can easily create new profiles that back up the information you want. For the registry, you can select any key or sub-key. For file changes, you can select any files you want. For folder structure, you can specify any folder. Selecting a folder automatically includes all sub-folders.

Working with snapshots

Once you have taken at least one snapshot of your system, you can use ConfigSafe to view

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Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 5, 1997** See page 2

Exchanging email on schedule *by Julie Dustin*

Chris Taylor will be the first member of OPCUG to make a presentation for the group in a long time. He is hoping others may come forward and do similar demonstrations in the near future. Chris has been a member of OPCUG since 1984 and is a technical support specialist. He has been working in the public sector providing user- and application-support on LANs for seven years. Oh yes and in case you don't use the PUB (our on-line bulletin board), he has also been a very helpful and patient Sysop for as long as I have been using it.

Chris plans to show some of the less talked-about features of Microsoft Exchange 4.0 for Windows 95 and Schedule+ 7.0. As Chris says, "This could be an opportunity for discussion by those who may be looking at installing an Internet mail package for the first time. I also hope others will add their hints and feedback on other products as well. I, for example, can now access my business mail from my house. And it doesn't mean I have to maintain two mailboxes. Many e-mail users with POP accounts download all their mail and then deal with it off-line."

With standards developing such as IMAP 4 (we think it stands for Internet Mail Access Protocol 4), Internet service providers may soon let you leave mail on the server. Of course, they will likely limit how much space you can use at one time. Chris cautions, "Very few products support IMAP at the present time."

This overview will also show other options such as server-based rules and the "out-of-the-office assistant" that will advise others when you are away from the office and they send you mail. We will also see some of the connections from Microsoft Exchange to Schedule Plus.

Chris notes, "Previously, the contact list in Schedule Plus was kept as a separate file from the address book in MS Exchange. This required you to create and maintain two lists. And the lack of real-time synchronicity meant you didn't get the notification that you had a meeting in 15 minutes unless Schedule Plus was running in memory." Did you miss a few meetings that way, Chris? One of Microsoft's new products, Outlook, is better, but there are problems with upgrading.

Come and welcome Chris into the limelight. Discussion is welcome including the advantages and disadvantages of other packages. Yes, there will even be giveaways.



Club news

February's winners

by Mark Cayer

Thanks to Corel Corporation for providing the following door prizes won at the February 5th general meeting:

- ◆ Corel Mousepads were won by Paul Gagne (not bad for his first meeting!) and Bob Cross.
- ◆ "Herman Treasury" CD's went to Ben Heaps, G.W. Leir, Bert Schopf, and Warren Sleeman.
- ◆ And our grand prize winner was Cornel Bierman who went home with a copy of CorelDraw 7.

There were a few Corel keychains left because someone (no names mentioned!) forgot to put them out until the end of the meeting. Look for these at the next meeting.



Reuse, recycle

Bring your old computer magazines, books, or any other computer paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the general meetings, and leave them in the area specified. If you don't bring something, you may want to TAKE AWAY something of interest, so look in on this area. Any item left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to the dumpster.



Calendar

Meetings	March	April
OPCUG General Meetings <i>Normally 1st Wednesday</i>	Mar. 5 Demonstrations of MS Exchange and Schedule Plus (see page 2)	Apr. 8
Desktop Publishing SIG <i>Normally 1st Tuesday</i>	Mar. 4: Computer hardware security	April 1
Internet SIG <i>Normally 2nd Thursday</i>	Mar. 13: Netscape plug-ins	Apr. 10
Ottawa Paradox Users Group <i>Normally 3rd Thursday</i>	Mar. 20	Apr. 17
FOX SIG <i>Normally 2nd Tuesday</i>	Mar. 11	Apr. 8

Product review

Superprint, by Zenographics by Duncan Petrie

Are you interested in obtaining that 'little bit extra' your printer has to offer? How? Read on...

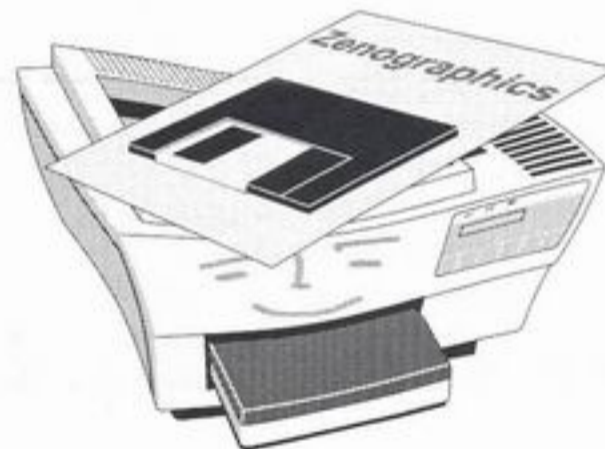
Zenographics has developed a printer driver utility (for Windows 3.1, Windows 95, and Windows NT. I am using only the Windows 95 version.) that supports many non-PostScript dot matrix, inkjet (color and b/w), and laser printers.

Supported printers enjoy:

- ♦ true 32 bit printing (not the 16-32 bit mixture of Windows 95)
- ♦ control of sharpness, contrast, lightness, saturation, grayscale, dot gain, color correction (CMY hue matching), halftoning algorithm (15 possible)
- ♦ an enhanced print spooler (faster and more features)
- ♦ resident filters for many graphic file formats (you can print file types although you don't own the host application.)
- ♦ a PostScript Level 2 driver (provides PostScript's power without its associated cost.)
- ♦ web-ready files from any Windows application (for example, print a Word document to a .JPG file and drop it into a Web page.)

Yes, it also has difficulties:

- ♦ some common applications (CorelDraw) lack a drag-and-drop filter (you must have the application to print its files.)
- ♦ there is no printed manual (it is on the CD-ROM.)
- ♦ most annoyingly, the current retail version is 'old' (it is 4.00 while the most recent is 4.01b. The latter is a website download; curiously, to



utilize it a new purchaser must first upgrade to version 4.01a that is available only by mail. Shipping/handling is 'only' \$25 (US) to Canada: practically, exchange and assorted charges mean you almost 'buy it twice to use it once.' The local dealer interceded and I avoided this hassle.)

On balance, if you own a supported printer the results – for me – were worth the effort. The more you experiment, the better the results. However, Zenographics needs to move product upgrades into the retail stream faster.

Suggestion: Wait for the upgrade to 4.20 that is 'announced' but not yet released.

Zenographics' homepage is at <http://www.zeno.com>.

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changes or restore a previous configuration. You can compare any two snapshots, or compare any snapshot to the current configuration. Buttons at the top of the screen allow you to select which of the five types of information you want to compare. The screen clearly shows additions, deletions and modifications. For .ini files, ConfigSafe breaks them out according to sections, helping to isolate changes. For non .ini files, it can show line numbers to help you find the information. In all file and registry changes, you have the option of viewing just the changed lines, which helps focus on exactly what is different, or the entire file, which helps you see the context of the change.

You can create reports of the differences between any two snapshots, or any snapshot and the current configuration. You can view the report on-screen or send it to the printer.

Of course, the main focus of ConfigSafe is the ability to restore any configuration. Selecting the Restore button brings up a dialog box that allows you to select which snapshot you want to use and then which files and registry keys from that particular snapshot you want to restore. All are selected by default, but you can easily select just those portions you want to restore. ConfigSafe then quickly and easily restores the configuration. A restart of your system is required to complete the change.

If you ever discover that Windows 95 will not start due to registry corruption or some configuration change to either startup files or the registry, you can use the DOS-based program SOS (provided with ConfigSafe) to restore a previous snapshot. You can even run SOS from a previous version of MS-DOS, so if things are so bad that you have to boot from a floppy, even a DOS 6.2 bootable disk is enough to allow you to restore a snapshot. The SOS program is more limited in its ability to restore a snapshot—you can't select specific files or registry keys to restore, you have to restore a complete snapshot.

If, after restoring a snapshot, you find your system is worse off than before, you can undo the last restore. This can be done from DOS or Windows.

Automatic snapshots

For those who always forget to do backups, you can configure ConfigSafe to perform automatic snapshots once a month, week, day, or even every time Windows starts. The check to see if it's time to do a snapshot is performed only at Windows startup, so users who never shut down Windows will want to take other steps to ensure snapshots are taken.

Since snapshots eat up disk space, there is a setting for the maximum number of snapshots you want saved. You can choose anything from 1 to 99,999,999. (Due to the naming convention for the files used to save snapshots and the requirement to be able to restore from a previous version of MS-DOS, I suspect you are limited to 9,999 snapshots in total.) Once your maximum is reached, the oldest automatic snapshot is deleted to make room for the new one. This affects only automatic snapshots—your manually taken snapshots are never deleted automatically. You can use the Manage option to rename or delete any snapshots.

Each snapshot is saved as a series of files. There are plain text versions of all files you are tracking, and an encoded file that tracks the folder changes. Strangely, the two registry keys are stored in three files. All three files are compressed and take up about 50% the space of the original registry files.

Restoring a snapshot

As with other programs I have seen that back up the registry, you have to watch out for how the User.dat portion of the registry is handled when you have user profiles enabled. Everything is backed up correctly, but what you have to be careful about is restoring the snapshot. If, for example, you are logged in as Sam when you take a snapshot, but logged in as Pete when you restore that snapshot, you will restore Sam's User.dat, not Pete's. It *does* get restored to Sam's profile directory, so your own configuration is not overwritten, but Sam may not be pleased. I would much prefer if the

continued on page 5...

Windows95

Correction to the February article

by Chris Taylor

Last month, sometime between my article being written and being printed, a greater than sign disappeared. While in most cases, this would not be a big deal, in this particular case, the greater than sign is rather critical—it was in the line for the Xcopy command. As published, the command will only return an "Invalid number of parameters" error message. The correct line should have a greater than sign before the "d:\copied.dat" portion, as follows:

```
xcopy c:\*.* d:\s/c/h/e/r/k > d:\copied.dat
```

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March presentation: Paul Blakely on Netscape plug-ins *by Jean Stalker*

Netscape plug-ins are very popular. This seminar will tell you what's available, where to find them, and how to install them, and you'll see a demonstration of a few plug-ins if time permits. You'll also be encouraged to discuss your favourite plug-ins at the seminar.

Paul K. Blakely is president of OneGlobe Marketing, a company providing website design, Internet consulting and training seminars. Paul, a former consultant in agricultural economics and statistics, was one of the early founders of the Ottawa PC Users' Group Internet SIG and has periodically presented customized Internet seminars to high school teachers, senior citizens, and the I-SIG group.

Paul and his company are featured in the February 15 issue of Adobemag Online. (<http://www.adobemag.com>). The article, by Addy Hatch, is entitled "It's Virtually Working". It is about teams of independents taking advantage of new technologies to work collaboratively across time zones and physical boundaries. You can reach him by email at pblakely@oneglobe.com, by phone at (613)226-6095, and by FAX at (613)226-8117.

The presentation takes place on Thursday March 13 from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Ottawa-Carleton Centre, 111 Lisgar St., Ottawa.



For more information, call David Curling, I-SIG Coordinator, at 731-5381 or email to curlingd@loday.com.

Visit the I-SIG Website at <http://www.synapse.net/~loday/isig.htm>.



Opening Windows (continued from page 4)

snapshots had the current user name automatically added to the description. As well, when restoring a snapshot when you are logged in as someone else, it would be nice to get a warning that you will be overwriting someone else's profile. Lastly, an option to include the User.dat from other profiles might be useful. This can be done manually through a ConfigSafe profile, but would have to be manually changed to include new profiles.

Strange and annoying

One thing I found strange about ConfigSafe—it does not get a button on the Taskbar when it is run. When minimized, it goes down to its own bar at the bottom of the screen. It does show up on the Alt-Tab task switcher.

I ran into one annoying bug in the program. If you delete a profile, you immediately lose the ability to restore from any of the snapshots taken with that profile. However, all the files associated with those snapshots are left on disk, consuming space. Although it is possible to delete these left over files manually, it is a tedious process to verify the filenames of all valid snapshot files and then delete the rest. Since each snapshot is typically composed of ten separate files, you can see how cleaning up from this bug can be a real pain!

Conclusion

ConfigSafe 95 requires a little over 1.5MB for the program files. Most users should reserve at least 5MB of disk space for snapshots. The list price is US\$60.00. Site licensing ranges from US\$300 for 10 systems to US\$10/system for 1000+ systems. The 35-page manual is included as a Word document on disk (readable in WordPad.)

I really like ConfigSafe 95. It gives you the confidence that you will be able to recover from problems related to configurations. It is simple and straightforward to use and can be automated so that you don't have to remember to do anything. Download the 14-day trial version for The PUB and see if it works for you. While it may be a bit expensive for the average user, it is much like an insurance policy—if you really need it once, it will probably pay for itself.



Review of February's presentation *by Jean Stalker*

Blaine Agnew was the speaker at the February 13 I-SIG meeting. Blaine is the systems application engineer seconded from Silicon Graphics Canada to implement the computer network in the Algonquin Media Centre. The network gives the students easy access to a range of high-end Silicon Graphics machines running industrial-strength software. Blaine sees his role as one of removing constraints to the creativity of the students, who have been selected mainly for their ability as artists.

After a little more than a year of operation, the Centre has earned an enviable reputation; in the last program, there were 400 applicants for 35 places! Blaine says that he never ceases to be astonished by what people with talent can do. He showed clips of a variety of 2-D animations created by students in the program; all of them would have taken much, much longer (or many more people) in another environment.

The key to the Centre's success is the high-powered Silicon Graphics machines, plus the open and innovative atmosphere. The network includes 39 Indys, four Indigo 2s, one Onyx, and one Challenge server. SGI machines have been in a class by themselves ever since the company was founded in 1982. The original intent was to produce an environment for 3-D modeling, but these powerful machines are also exploited extensively for databases and CAD/CAM.

SGI is very much in the lead in multimedia creation. The VRML standard (Virtual Reality Modeling Language) is derived from SGI's Open Inventor. Blaine discussed and demonstrated a number of VRML applications. Particularly striking was the dismantling and re-assembly of a small computer. Francis Pelletier and the Digital Simulation Lab at Public Works have created a complete Virtual Reality model of the Parliament Buildings for use in the Parliamentary Precinct renovations.

The main impediment to 3-D modeling is the high cost of both hardware and software. Nevertheless, processing power is rapidly becoming

affordable and problems are being identified and solved. The new entry-level SGI machine, O2, starts at about \$CAN10k, half the price of the Indy, which it is to replace.



Another trend contributing to the shape of the future is the increasing bandwidth becoming available to the home. Cable modems support a transfer rate of 1.2 Mbits/second, and Bell is prototyping a service capable of delivering full-stream video.

The time is surely coming when 3-D models will be widely available through the Web.

Blaine Agnew suggests that his present reality is our future reality!

For a glimpse of the Algonquin Media Centre and Blaine Agnew's role in this innovative program, drop in on <http://www.sgi.com/International/Canada/success/algoinc.html>. For a little first-hand experience of VRML, try SGI's VRML site, <http://vrml.sgi.com>. You can download a VRML browser named "Cosmo Player" from this site and enjoy some of the samples.



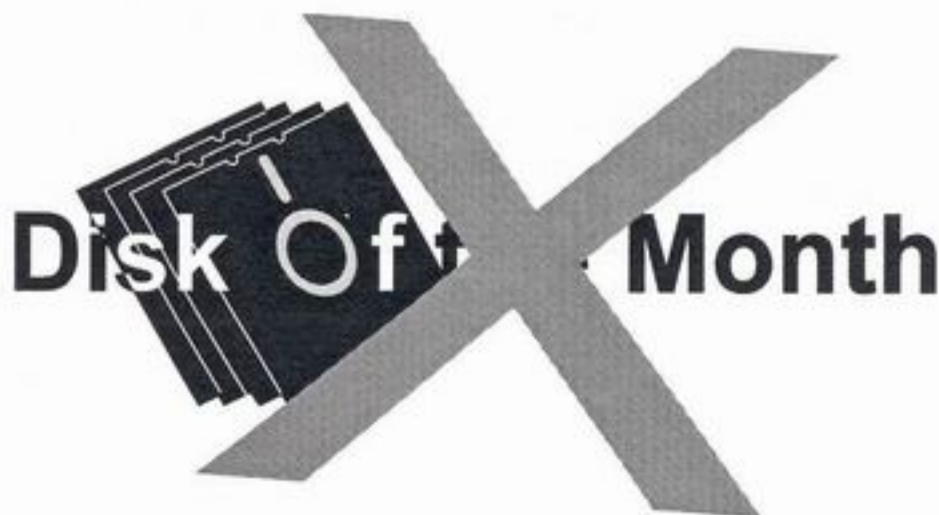
Club news

Disk of the Month program cancelled *by Chris Seal*

The Disk of the Month program has been cancelled.

If you are holding DOM cards that have a balance, you can redeem the outstanding value in a cheque for the balance.

Please bring your DOM cards to the general meeting where you can make arrangements for redemption. Please note that cheques will be mailed to you.



Galactic Civilizations by John Archibald

Galactic Civilizations, by Stardock Systems Inc., is a sophisticated OS/2 game that is complex enough to challenge almost any user. The general goal of this game is to create an ideal society. To play GC to its full potential you must develop a keen sense for management on an extraordinary breadth of scale. You must think in terms of galactic exploration, acquisition of discoveries, logistics, resource management, planning, human behavior patterns, transportation, foreign trade, and diplomatic relations. This must apply, not just to a global environment, but to operations on a truly galactic scale. While some aspects of the program strike me as having similarities to Sim Earth and Sim City, the mental requirements of Galactic Civilizations far exceed the puny, limited scale of those popular games.

This game accomodates multiple game players, in the form of friendly and hostile forces. Provision is made for on-line connection to remote players as well, and you have full control of both friendly and potentially hostile planets and organizations in the set-up stages. A variety of parameters can be introduced, at initial set-up, that ensures no one will be bored during the unfolding of events. This includes the insertion of unpredictable variables that can work to enhance or defeat your efforts to create an ideal society. The ultimate benevolent dictator role is a good analogy of what to shoot for.

You must play the game to fully appreciate the challenges that present themselves in this program. The use of Artificial Intelligence approaches to game strategy are unique and capable of generating surprises that both educate and entertain.

Superior graphics and sound

I found the graphics to be superior and the sound superb. The program was run in OS/2 Warp version 3.0 but is created to run on lesser versions of OS/2 as well. I used an IBM Model 2168-M40 486 Pentium 75 with a 4-speed CD ROM drive, 8MB of internal memory, a 1GB HD, SVGA

color monitor, and amplified speakers driven by a Sound

Blaster card. The program runs off the CD-ROM so is not memory hungry. It does use some memory for a few files and requires temporary memory space to hold .DLL files.



Poor documentation

My only criticism of the package applies to the included documentation that falls short of being at all user friendly. I found the instructions to install and start the program somewhat confusing. I began to think the book was not updated from the previous version except for the page that described additions and improvements. When the program is running control icons are displayed that are not well explained, nor clearly illustrated in the guide. Some work is needed to elaborate on the use of these icons and to define their functions.

Control functions should be complete enough to reduce unnecessary guessing, or trial and error approaches in the game. Fortunately, I have had enough experience with program logic and game structure to figure out what some controls do and what displays or information should be expected. Somehow I did not expect the program author to deliberately set out to confuse the average user.

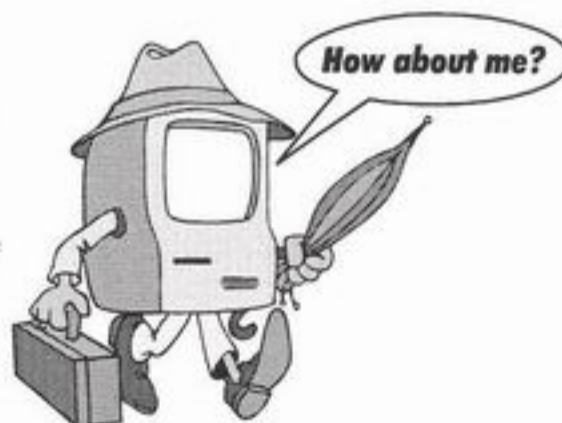
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DTP SIG

It's 11:00 p.m.: Do you know where your computer is? by Bert Schopf

The March 4th DTP SIG meeting will focus on **computer hardware security**. Rising theft statistics and insurance premiums are no laughing matter, so be sure to attend the meeting and reduce your chances of becoming a victim.

We welcome **Doug Gervais** of Prolox Computer Hardware Security Systems to our meeting. Doug will demonstrate various devices to secure your computer components so that they cannot be stolen. We also hope to have a public sector security specialist address the group on home/office/mobile computer anti-theft measures.



The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. and is held at Lemmex CTCI (275 Slater at Kent, suite 340). Parking is available on nearby streets and lots.

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OTTAWA PC NEWS

Club news

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members. Deadline for submissions is four Saturdays before the general meeting.

Group meetings

OPCUG normally meets on the first Wednesday in the month, except in July and August, at the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.

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Thanks to Wackid Radio

by Chris Taylor

At the Windows 95 seminar sessions in January, we were provided with an LCD panel and overhead projector by the museum. However, the overhead projectors they had were under-powered. While I began with material that did not require use of the computer, Harald began phoning around looking for a replacement. Wackid Radio came through by loaning us a projection monitor unit at no charge. I would like to express my gratitude to Wackid for the loan of this equipment. The quality was spectacular and certainly helped make the seminars a success.

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