

GOOD TIME TO BUY?

Last issue I specifically didn't put in any specials to (a) see if people missed them and (b) see if I would get any letters from the embedded link saying "We want to see the specials". In all honesty, less than 10% of the group responded, but it told me that some want them so I will continue to include them for a while.

Statistics are interesting: The July 4th issue attracted 48 unique visits while the last issue only attracted 28 unique visits. A unique visit is each IP address accessing the site for the first time. Maybe it has something to do with the summer being the prominent time for people to take holidays that access is down. I will monitor the stats more closely and see what the future holds.

The other hook I offered in the last TekJournal was the future of computing. Probably the most asked question I get is "Is now a good time to buy a computer?" In order to answer that question, I have to know what you want to do with it. If you always want the best, NEVER is a great time to buy a computer. If you realize that computers are only good for two to three years, **NOW** is the best time to buy a computer. Here's why...

The speed of computers has just about reached it's maximum potential with the current technology being what it is. Both Intel and AMD are beginning to release 64 bit processors for the desktop and the current architecture can't keep up. So the solution is to develop a new architecture, called PCI-X (for PCI Express) which can handle the data transfer required by the new processors. There is no software yet written to handle the new processors, but it is coming. There is a new Windows coming as well, and almost all operating system prior to Windows XP are now classified as unsupported by Microsoft.

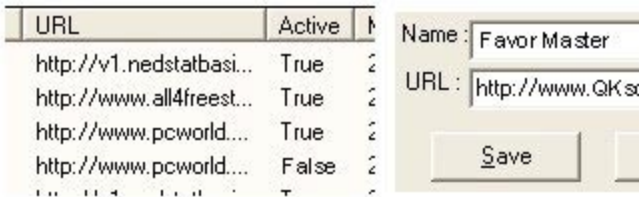
As PCI-X becomes mainstream, and the new processors become common, older components (things we now call state of the art) will become harder to find. When was the last time anyone wanted an 8 bit card or even a 16 bit ISA card. The response was usually "What's ISA?" Soon that will be the answer for PCI and AGP. Manufacturers will soon be (if not already) gearing up for the manufacturing of new components. When that happens the availability of PCI and AGP components will shrink and prices will rise. Currently, prices are fairly stable and in some cases dropping. So, **NOW** is the best time to buy a computer!

HOW DO I ?...

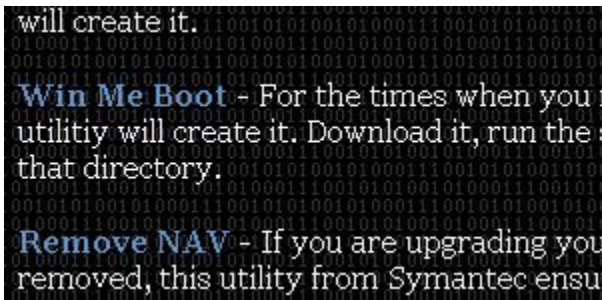
I get a lot of questions from people wanting to know how to download things from the Internet. Last issue I discussed using WinZip to compress and uncompress files on your computer. Many of the files you may download will be in a zipped format to conserve space. Obviously you would use WinZip, or a compatible program, to uncompress these files for your use. But how do you get it from the Internet?

In the early days it was difficult, but has been made increasingly easier through technology. Now, when you want to download something from a website, there is generally a link to click on, or a button that says Download. All you do is click the link, tell your system where to save it, and it does it.

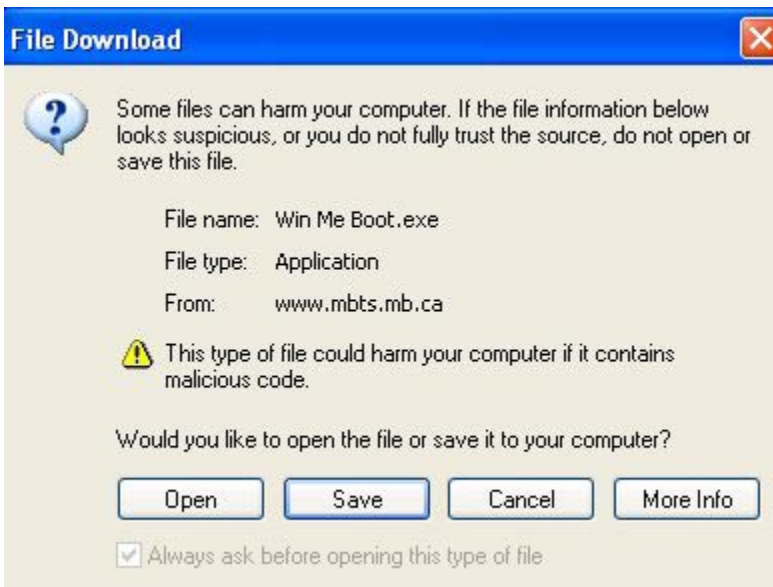
On the website for the Favourites Manager, the download button looks like this...



If you go to my site and want to download the file to create a Windows Millennium Boot Disk, that part of the screen is a download link, and looks like this...

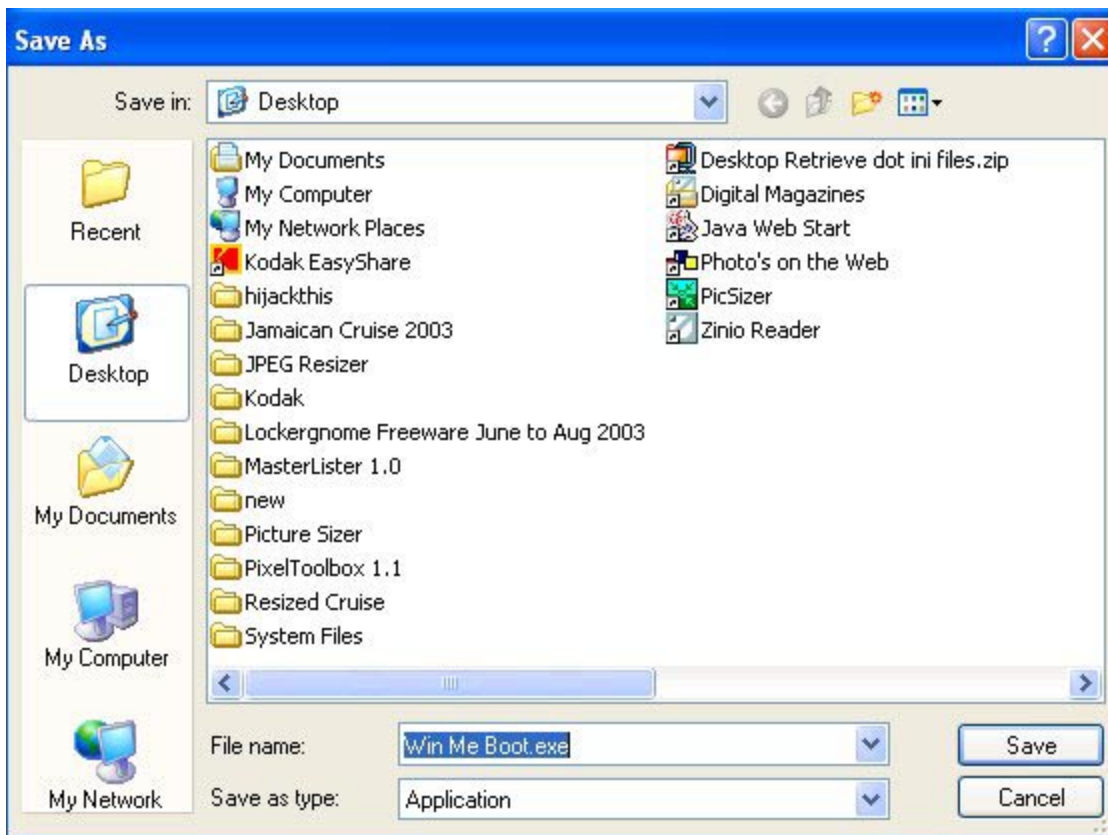


When you click on the download link, in the case above it is the blue printing Win Me Boot, the following screen pops up...



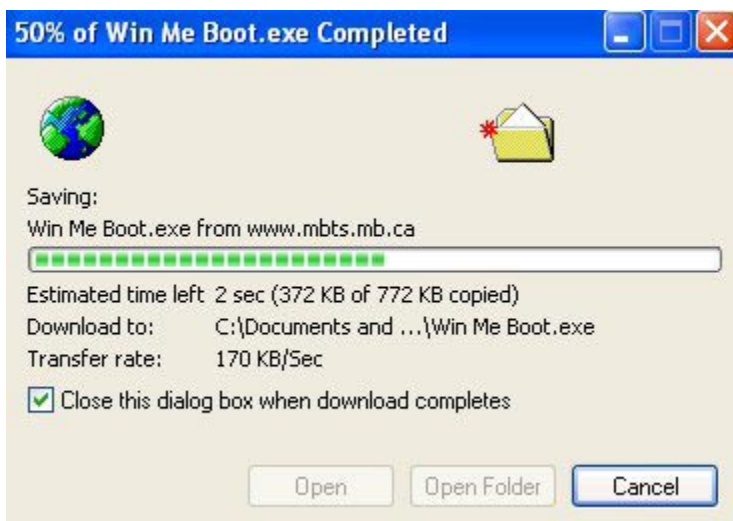
Here you can change your mind and press cancel, decide to try and install the program from it's source site to your computer by pressing Open, or save the file to your hard drive by pressing Save. Programs that you would use the Open command for are generally utility programs that can download and install in one process. Programs like MSN Messenger and Yahoo fall into this category and the web site usually will tell you when to press the Open button instead of Save.

Once you press the Save button the following screen appears asking where you would like to save it.



Use the Save In: arrow at the top to navigate through your hard drive to save in a particular folder, or use the buttons on the left (XP) to select a specific site on your system. If you want a special folder to save the item in, click the open folder with the red dot (second icon from the top right) to tell your system to create a new folder. When you have navigated to the proper spot, click Save.

The following graphic shows the downloading dialog box you will see after pressing save.



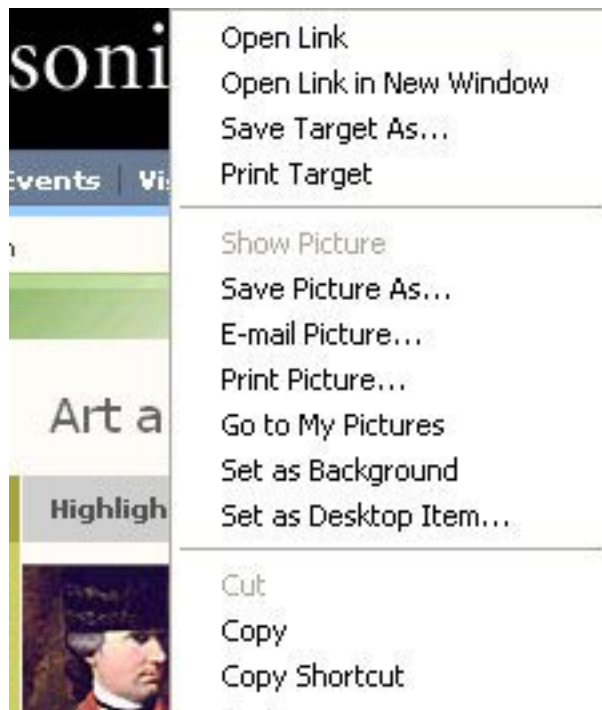
That seems easy enough, but what if I want a picture or something that doesn't have a specific download link attached to it?

Fortunately, almost everything on the Internet is public domain. I haven't heard of anyone yet being caught "stealing" a copy of a picture or graphic to use on their site from someone else. But on the Internet, as in our society, it is always polite to ask before reusing someone else's stuff. If it is for personal use, here is how you get a picture that doesn't have a link.

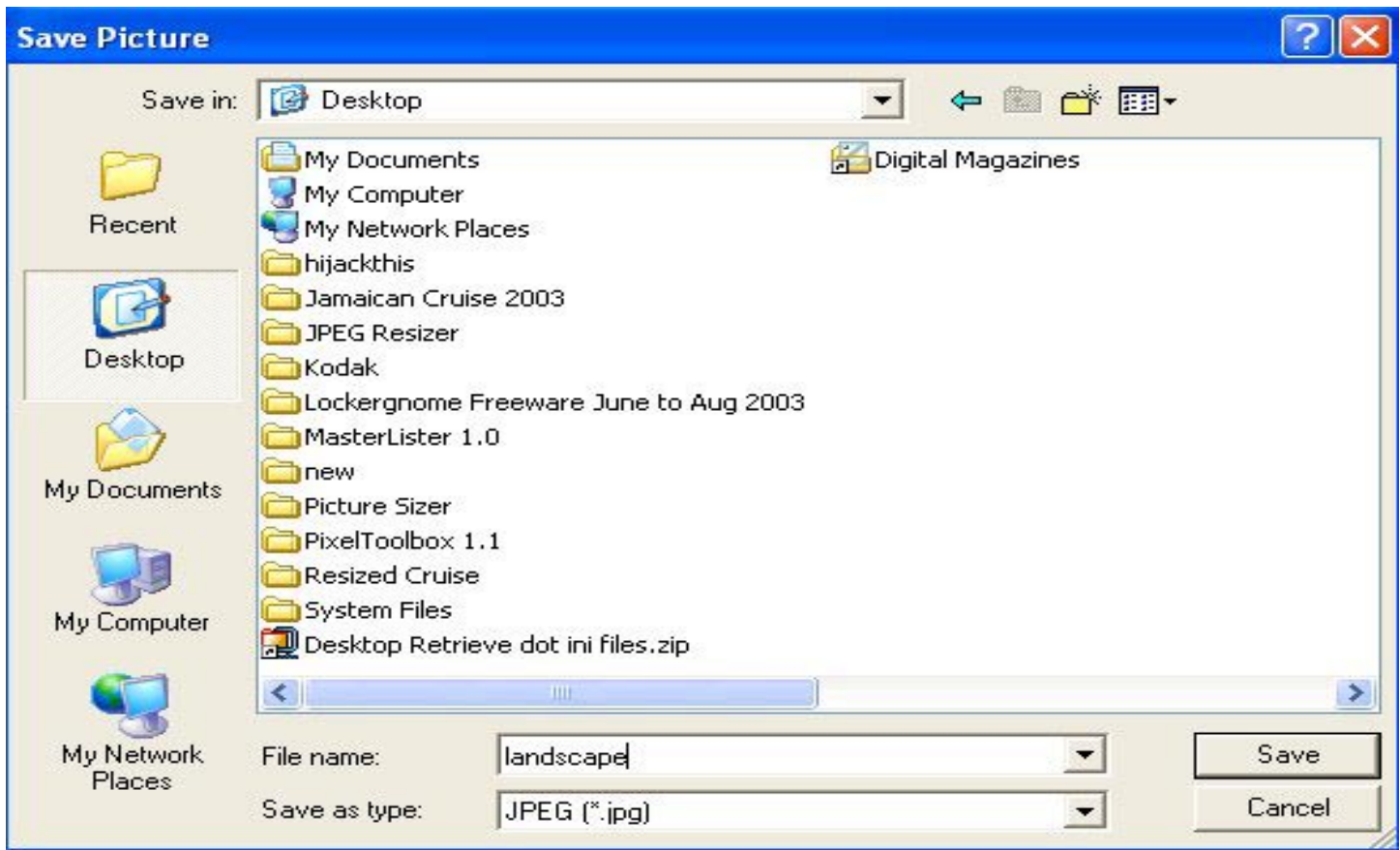
On the Smithsonian page there is a nice landscape I like beside the Joan of Art link. Here is how I would download that item for myself. Click on the [Smithsonian Link](#) to get to the right spot, and find the picture.



The above graphic is a portion of the screen showing the picture I want. When I right Click on the picture, a context menu pops up showing a lot of choices.



The option I want is the sixth one from the top titled "Save Picture As..." When I click on that link, I get the following...



This dialog is the same as the dialog for downloading using a download link. Again, you use this to navigate through your hard drive to put the picture where you want it. Most people would put it in My Documents\My Pictures. In the Filename section I have changed the name the system put there to something I will remember easier. Now click Save. Your screen may flash and the procedure is done.

And that is how easy it is to get stuff off the Internet onto your own system.

**** NOTE **** Always remember the easiest way to get a virus is to “grab” something from the Internet. **NEVER** go there without a good anti virus program like Norton Anti Virus.

SURF'S UP...

Computers are becoming much more than just business tools and appliances for accessing email. They are also being developed for the entertainment market and in time may replace television as the primary household medium. With the introduction of plasma screens, which granted are still quite pricey at \$ 4,500 and up, having a computer in the family room instead of a tv is becoming possible. Basing your entertainment around a 42 inch (or larger) plasma screen and a computer with wireless keyboard and mouse, a 160GB hard drive, a very high end video card, DVD player (or possibly a RW unit), telephone based satellite signal with call display, and home theatre surround sound, provides you with an entertainment centre that lets you surf or get email during commercials, know who is calling during your favourite program, view high quality digital picture and sound for TV and DVD movies, record movies you want to watch later, and more.

For now, we have to live in reality and can only dream of when we can afford such a system. But after sitting in front of the computer all day doing accounting, writing proposals, in general doing business, some of us want to play games and relax. Here are a few sites you may find interesting.

When I started accessing the Internet (on dialup at 33K) I frequently played Bridge with people from around the world on [Yahoo](#). Yahoo has since expanded to include dozens of different card games,

board games, tile games, fantasy sports, arcade games and more. In order to play you have to register and create a Yahoo ID, similar to that for Hotmail. Once inside there are hours of fun awaiting you.

Not wishing to be outdone by the competition, Microsoft also has a gaming zone quite obviously called [MSN Games](#). Signing in is as simple as using your current Hotmail account, which probably everyone using Windows has. Again there are Puzzle games, Card and Board games, Word games, even an area where you can play for cash.

Especially for kids, there is a site called [Kids Domain](#) online games. Straight from their site it says “Time to play! Lots of online games, including some of our own. They are organized by category and what plug-ins they use - including some that don’t use any plug-ins. Click on a computer to start playing!”

[POGO](#) is another site I have often heard about but have never tried. Like most sites you have to sign up to play, but their hook is “Play games for free Win CA\$H!” We could all use spare coin so maybe I will try this one next.

Anyone ever play [Flash Games](#)? Click on this link to find out how addictive they can be. You don’t need to register to play, but if you get a really high score, you can’t brag without registering. (And no, my name is not on the site anywhere)

WINDOWS 101

Prior to Windows 95, for those that remember, everything was stored in different program groups and these program groups covered your desktop. With the introduction of Windows 95, program groups became obsolete with the introduction of folders. But everyone still cluttered up their desktop with all kinds of icons and shortcuts to their favourite places and programs. Windows 95 however, even though it wasn’t well advertised, also introduced the System Registry.

The System Registry was the nucleus of everything that was loaded, and therefore available, on your system. With the introduction of Windows 98 the System Registry became the focal point of the operating system but didn’t take into consideration all the bad habits we had accumulated from Windows 3.1 on.

Who remembers DOS? With DOS you loaded a program, and when you were done with it you simply located the directory and deleted it. This was the most simple way to uninstall a program. Windows introduced the Add/Remove concept but people for the most part used the Add function, and when they were done with the program, found it in File Manager and simply deleted it. No harm, no foul, or so we thought.

With the introduction of the System Registry, this repository was now responsible for keeping track of everything that was added to the system and was supposed to be kept informed when programs and hardware were removed or changed. However, most of us kept the old tradition alive by finding the folder with Windows Explorer and deleting it. Over time this will always corrupt the System Registry.

Therefore, to add a program or application to your system you must use the Add Program function in the Control Panel. However, since technology has advanced far enough that most, if not all, software now comes with an autorun function which forces the implementation of the Add Program routine. However, many of us still have the bad habit of using Windows Explorer to delete the folder with the no longer wanted program instead of using the uninstall or Remove Program function in the Control Panel. We must stop doing this because this corrupts the System Registry and causes unexpected errors in the future.

Without getting overly technical, your computer uses the information in the System Registry to locate all the hardware and software it believes is on your system. If you have removed something without notifying the System Registry it will waste precious seconds looking for something that was once available. Over time, your system will become slower and slower and then unexplainable errors will occur. At that point you will have two choices. Hire someone to try and uncorrupt your system, or reformat your hard drive and start over with a clean installation of Windows.

So the first rule of thumb is to let the software automatically begin the installation of the desired application, and if that function is not available, use the Add Program function in the Control Panel. When you want to remove a program either locate an uninstall option in the application folder by navigating through Start -> Programs -> application name, or use the Add/Remove function in the Control panel to locate the program and then uninstall it. Unfortunately not all software removes all traces of itself from the System Registry when you use this option, but it will always remove more than if you simply delete the folder using Windows Explorer.

Other utilities I have mentioned in the past are Scandisk and Defrag. these utilities make sure that every file can be found easily on your hard drive and that every file take up as much contiguous space as possible. Contiguous space is important to everyone, especially your computer. Consider yourself leaving for work in the morning and going from room to room in your house collecting your shoes, your coat, your wallet or purse, your keys, and so on, instead of having all the necessary items in one convenient place. Defrag makes sure everything is conveniently located to save time whenever you next need it.

We have also discussed in previous letters the damage that Spyware can have on your system and why you should avoid it at all cost. The program [Spybot S&D](#) is a free utility that will locate and remove all the Spyware on your system but it can also do more. There is an immunize button that will actually prevent Spyware from being loaded on your system. There is also a link to [SpywareBlaster](#) which is used in addition to the immunize function of Spybot S&D to extend the type of Spyware that is not allowed to be loaded on your system. These programs should be run monthly to receive the latest updates and apply them to make sure your system is always protected.

TIPS, TWEAKS, & TUNEUPS

Can Outlook Express and Internet Explorer 6 be safely removed from Windows XP?

There are options built into Windows XP that allow the removal of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. Go to Add/Remove Programs and click on the Add/Remove Windows components. Remove the check marks from the desired programs and click Next to continue. However, you may notice that both programs will remove a grand total of 0.0 MB of information from your system. Therefore, all you are probably removing is a link and an icon. It is better to just leave well enough alone and ignore them as best as possible.

Windows 9x Tip

If your system 'freezes' up there may be a way to "thaw" it out without having to hit the reset button. First bring up your Task Manager by pressing Ctrl+Alt+Del and then look through the list for a file called 'rundll'. If that is in your list, highlight it and press Endtask. This often will 'jumpstart' your system back to life. If not you may have to use the task manager to end the current application you are in. As always, once your system comes back to life: save and Reboot!

Windows 9x Processor Tweak

This tweak is not for the faint of heart or the real foolhardy. Take extreme care using this one, and

make sure your registry is backed up 9 ways from Sunday before proceeding. MicroByte TekSolutions takes no responsibility for your system should you modify the System Registry in any way.

This might help you squeeze just a bit more performance out of your Windows 9x system overall, and may have a noticeable impact on some systems depending on a number of different factors. The premise of this hack is that you'll be increasing the foreground process **CPU Priority** which may result in faster general OS function. The downside is that background tasks will be of lower priority and could affect overall operation if the foreground applications are very CPU-intensive.

Start by navigating to the Registry location HKLM \ System \ CurrentControlSet \ Services \ BIOS . Add a new DWORD value named CPUPriority and set the data to 1. The default value is 3, so if you notice undesirable results, just modify this value, setting it at 3, then restart your system. You could also split the difference and try it set at 2. ***NEVER set this a 0 which would equate to Real-Time priority and literally cripple anything running in the background.***

Windows XP Tweak

Do you work on a network and often add and remove network drives? Isn't it a pain to find the elusive Map Network Drive option. Use this tweak to add this useful function to your toolbar.

1. Open My Computer, right-click the toolbar, then unlock the toolbars, if necessary.
2. Right-click the toolbar again and click Customize.
3. Under Available toolbar buttons, locate Map Drive, and drag it into the position you want on the right under Current toolbar buttons.
4. Click Close, click OK, and then click OK again.

You now have a drive mapping buttons on your My Computer toolbar, so you can map drives from any folder window. To unmap drives, follow the above procedure, selecting Disconnect under Available toolbar buttons.

VIRUS UPDATES

Microsoft has recently announced a major flaw in Windows NT, 2000, XP and 2003, that has to do with port 135. This port is being used by different companies to send popup's to your desktop in the way of advertising. Apparently, this hole can also be exploited by malicious worms and trojans that will infect your system. There is a [patch](#) available to fix this particular problem available from Microsoft. If you haven't used the Windows Update feature lately, now would be an excellent time to do so.

According to Symantec there are a number of worms that exploit the problem identified above. These include W32.Blaster.Worm, W32.Blaster.B.Worm, and W32.Blaster.C.Worm. The first was identified on August 11th and the later two which are variations of the first were discovered on the 13th. The original is the most dangerous, but the variants are almost as lethal. Symantec is warning everyone to visit Microsoft and get the patch immediately. From personal experience, downloads from the Microsoft site have increased substantially in the last few days.

Another virus to be very wary of is W32.Randex.E which is an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) Trojan Horse that allows its creator to control a computer by using IRC. It is also a worm that can use the DCOM RPC vulnerability (described in Microsoft Security Bulletin MS03-026) to spread itself.

Make sure you have the latest updates for your particular anti virus software before venturing too far into the Internet.