

MBTS TEKJOURNAL - 2004

Welcome to the June/July 2004 edition of the MBTS TekJournal.

It had to happen someday, and it finally has. Vapourware was really noticeable back in the late 80's with everybody and his brother jumping on the technology bandwagon trying to make a quick buck. Lots of companies told you to beware of these fly by night solutions, the biggest voice of warning belonging to Microsoft. Well, Microsoft has just joined the elite of vapourware suppliers. Windows XP Service Pack 2 was announced earlier this year with a release and launch date set for June 16th across North America. That date has come and gone and no Service Pack was released. It was advertised, and talked about, and conferences were held, but there was no product to hand out and nothing the end user could download, but it is suggested that it will be available in July, or least this summer, or...

To be fair, Windows XP SP2 is said to be an incredible undertaking for Microsoft, much like releasing a replacement operating system. Microsoft has taken a lot of bad press for security flaws dealing with Windows XP and Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, and hackers seem to love finding new problems and exploiting them. Viruses and Worms are running rampant, popups seem never-ending, SPAM seems to be on the rise, we now have to watch carefully for Spyware, Adware, and other forms of Malware, Dialers, Trojans Horses, etc. Windows XP SP2 is said to be the magic pill to help end all this suffering among computer users in general.

With security being the most important feature of SP2 there will be a new implementation of the Windows Firewall (formerly referred to as Internet Connection Firewall). This feature will be turned ON by default and will "drop all unsolicited incoming traffic that does not correspond to either traffic sent in response to a request of the computer (solicited traffic) or unsolicited traffic that has been specified as allowed (excepted traffic). Windows Firewall provides a level of protection from malicious users and programs that rely on unsolicited incoming traffic to attack computers." There is a new feature called Don't Allow Exceptions in which all traffic not generated by the host computer will be stopped from accessing the host computer. The user will also be allowed to identify what excepted traffic will be allowed past the firewall by identifying the scope of acceptance. Memory protection in limiting Buffer Overruns is a major enhancement to SP2. Assuming it works as deployed "when an attacking worm or virus inserts program code into a portion of memory marked for data only, an application or Windows component will not run it." There is safer email handling and enhancements to email attachment security to further isolate potentially unsafe attachments. Two additional technologies included in SP2 are Security Center, which provides a central location for information about the security of your computer, and Windows Installer, which provides more security options for software installation.

Changes to Internet Explorer security include checking the publisher's information when downloading a file. Once the file has been downloaded the publisher's information will be displayed allowing the user to make a more informed decision before installation. If a

publisher has been blocked for any reason, his executable program will not be allowed to run. However, if you allow unsigned or invalid ActiveX controls to be installed, you will nullify the effect of this security enhancement. Additional improvements to Internet Explorer include “Internet Explorer Add-on Management allows users to view and control the list of add-ons that can be loaded by Internet Explorer with more detailed control than before. It also shows the presence of some add-ons that were previously not shown and could be very difficult to detect.

Internet Explorer Add-on Crash Detection attempts to detect crashes in Internet Explorer that are related to an add-on. When the add-on is successfully identified, this information is presented to the user. The user has the option of disabling add-ons to diagnose crashes and improve the overall stability of Internet Explorer.”

The user will also be able to show both the add-ons currently loaded into Internet Explorer and those that have been used. Another feature will be the ability to look for updates to installed ActiveX controls. If an Add On has been blocked, a special icon will appear in the status bar.

There are too many changes being made to Windows XP to name them all here. The initial White Paper I read on this release was 156 pages and it has been growing steadily since. If you have a spare system with XP on it that you don't mind sacrificing and want to install a BETA copy of SP2 on it (although we don't recommend anyone doing this) or you just want to read more about the upcoming release, here is the [Official Link](#).

Death in the Age of Steam Update

It is now official – Mel Bradshaw, the author of Death in the Age of Steam, is coming to Winnipeg for a reading of his new book. The date and time of the reading is Whodunit? Mystery Bookstore, 165 Lilac Street (about a block and a half north of Corydon) at 7:30 PM on Wednesday July 28th. I have frequented the bookstore a few times since Mel told me of the reading and it has a great selection of books, both new and used, but the store itself is a little small. So if you are interested put the date on your calendar and get there early. Here is the [bookstore's website](#).

APPLICATION UPDATES

It is really great that Adobe has released the free Acrobat Reader so that we can enjoy public PDF files without having to purchase the full package. But like all software applications today, version 6.0 seems to suffer from bloat. It takes forever to open a document because it seems to load everything including the kitchen sink. It would be much better to only have to open and add the plug-ins you regularly use and leave the clutter behind. Now there is a solution.

[TNK-Bootblock](#) has a free utility to speed up the operation of Adobe Acrobat Reader. You download and run the utility program once and it automatically disables all the rarely needed plug-ins that most of us will never need. The speed increase can be as much as 60%. And if you really like the slowness of Adobe Acrobat Reader you can

always undo what this little gem does for you. Since it works with all versions of Acrobat Reader from v3.0 to present, it is well worth the download.

Is anybody feeling just a little daring? Want to try out a new product from Microsoft that may just cause you to reinstall everything? Microsoft has release a Beta version of [Media Player 10](#) for download. Generally when these products hit the Beta stage they can't really ruin your computer system and force you to reinstall, but I guess that is why they have a Beta program. Anyway, here are the improvements that are supposed to be in version 10:

- A streamlined and sleek new design delivers a fresh new look and improved ease of use, including faster access to top Player tasks. The most important
- Introducing the first "Digital Media Mall" enabling you to discover, download, rent or stream music and video within the Player from a choice of online stores.
- A wider selection of devices are supported with this release.
- Improved All-in-One Smart Jukebox

Oh yeah, the big drawback from Media Player 10 is that it will only work with Windows XP.

HOW DO I ...

How do I remove unwanted ActiveX Controls from my Internet Explorer?

Use [Active Xcavator](#). This program is a free download and tells you what controls have been installed, and enables you to easily remove them. Active XCavator lists ActiveX controls installed from the Web by Internet Explorer 3.0 or later. It displays all the information on the control, such as the name, size and location of the file. If you have an ActiveX control that is very large, doesn't work properly, or was downloaded by accident, Active XCavator lets you delete it.

Why does my Add/Remove programs box show so many copies of Adobe Acrobat Reader?

PDF files have become a standard for sharing information over the Internet. Even we eventually convert all old TekJournals into PDF format for our archives so you can read them on line or download them to read later. PDF files are created using a program called Adobe Acrobat and since it is so technologically packed, it is quite expensive. To make it easier for companies to distribute their information and allow everyone to read it, Adobe has created a subset of this popular program called Adobe Acrobat Reader which is available as a free download.

However, technology is constantly changing and therefore software products must evolve to keep up. I don't think my first copy of Acrobat Reader had a number, but the current version is 6. Since this is a free program, there is no upgradeable option available.

Therefore, before installing any new copy you must uninstall the copy currently on your system. If you don't, new registry keys will be added for the new product and the newer files will simply overwrite the existing files in the Program Files/Adobe folder. Then when you uninstall an older version to remove it from the Add/Remove, you will actually remove the current version as well. This makes for an unclean system, a possibly corrupted registry, and a call from a service tech to fix everything properly.

Therefore, to be safe, always uninstall an existing software product before installing a new copy, unless the software explicitly states that it is an upgrade to an existing product.

SURF'S UP

Surfing the Internet is always fun, you just need an idea of what you want to look for. In the past we have done freeware, cooking, museums, self help, games, entertainment, etc. This month we will revisit some of the old favourites and add some new ones.

[Darwin Awards](#) are generally awarded posthumously since the recipient has usually done something so off the wall that he (or she) has done themselves in by completing what they started out to do. These stories, many quite unbelievable, are generally good for a chuckle.

[The Ig® Nobel Awards](#) follow in the footsteps of the Darwin Awards however with a significant twist: Every Ig Nobel Prize winner has done something that first makes people LAUGH and then makes them THINK! These awards date back to 1991 and the award for PEACE went to Edward Teller, the father of the hydrogen bomb and first champion of the Star Wars weapons system, for his lifelong efforts to change the meaning of peace as we know it.

[The Comedy Zone](#) should have something to tickle just about everyone's funny bone. This is a site best visited when you want to waste a little time, are feeling a little blue, or just want a quick pick me up. Since there is no way I can look at all the pages that may appear on this or any other site I reference I take no responsibility for the content provided. I apologize in advance to those people who may find some of the items on these pages offensive or possibly just a waste of time. The Internet after all has no police or decorum which is why if you can't find something on the Internet it probably hasn't been invented.

Proving that almost anything can be found on the Internet, here is a topic that will entrance some, and bore others. The [History of the Magic Square](#) begins by showing a magic square of order 3 (three numbers to the side of the square). What makes it magic is that if you add up any row, column, or diagonal, it sums to the number 15.

Staying with the awards theme of the first two sites, here is the official (?) site for the [Oscars](#). In case you missed the event and are still curious this is the site to find out who won for both this and previous years. You can download Best Picture Posters for movies

since 1928, read this history of the Oscar Statuette, view the ceremonies posters, and a lot more.

TIPS AND TWEAKS

(NOTE – Modifying System Files is not recommended. You must always have a valid backup copy of the file(s) about to be modified before continuing. Incorrect editing may severely and irreparable damage your operating system. MicroByte TekSolutions takes no responsibility for the health or stability of your system, should you attempt to modify the System Registry.)

Windows XP contains a new feature called Services which lets you decide which services to leave running and which to turn off. Many of the services have been enabled for you even though you may not even have the necessary components installed which make the service viable. Here is a list of the services you may want to turn off to save resources and have your system run more efficiently.

Services you should be able to turn off

- Alerter
- Background Intelligent Transfer Service
- ClipBook
- Distributed Link Tracking Client
- Error Reporting Service
- Indexing Service
- Messenger
- MS Software Shadow Copy Provider
- QoS RSVP
- Remote Registry
- Removable Storage
- Routing and Remote Access
- Telnet
- Universal Plug and Play Device Host
- Upload Manager
- Volume Shadow Copy
- WebClient
- WMI Performance Adapter

Services you may be able to turn off

Service	Reason you may need it
Application Layer Gateway Services	If you are using the built-in Windows firewall on any network interface and if you are not using internet connection sharing from that computer
Automatic Updates	You prefer to let Microsoft decide when you should

Computer Browser	update your system If you are operating in a Windows NT / 2000 Domain environment
Fast User Switching Compatibility	If you have multiple users per machine
Fax	If you don't have a competing Fax product and need Fax
IIS Admin	If you run the personal version of IIS on Windows XP
IMAPI CD-Burning COM Service	If you have and use a CD-Writer.
Infrared Monitor	If you have and use Infrared devices
Internet Connection Firewall (ICF) / Internet Connection Sharing (ICS)	If you don't use either service
NetMeeting Remote Desktop Sharing	If you use the Desktop Sharing facility in NetMeeting
Portable Media Serial Number	If you have a portable MP3 or music device that connects directly to your computer via a digital interface.
Remote Desktop Help Session Manager	If you use, or may use, Remote Assistance
Smart Card	If you have a Smart Card security device on your system leave this enabled
Smart Card Helper	If you have a Smart Card security device on your system leave this enabled
SSDP Discovery Service	Your network has Universal Plug n Play devices
Uninterruptible Power Supply	You have a UPS attached to your system
Windows Image Acquisition (WIA)	You have a scanner or digital camera
Windows Time	You are operating in a Windows NT or 2000 Domain.
Wireless Zero Configuration	This service should only be disabled if you're not using a WLAN (WiFi, 802.11) card on your computer
World Wide Web Publishing	This service should only be disabled if you're not running the personal version of IIS on your computer.

VIRUS UPDATES

Anyone surfing the 'Net or just access the Internet for email (yes even if all you do is access email you are still using the 'Net) your system must be protected by a good anti virus product like Norton Anti Virus 2004 and should also be protected by a hardware or software firewall. If you're not secure enough, or think you may need more help, call us at 771 8930 to remove Viruses, Spyware, Dialers, Trojans, etc., or just to make your systems safer from the outside world.

The Beagle and Lovegate worms have reappeared once again and the absolute latest is the **W32.Atak@mm** worm, which is a mass-mailing worm that spreads by sending itself

to email addresses gathered from the infected computer. It was discovered on July 14th and is currently a threat level 2.

May sure your systems are protected by anti virus and a firewall to be safe.

TEKSPECIALS

I apologize for the links in the last TekJournal not working. It worked in my test but somehow when we went to production it didn't. I hope to fix all bugs with this issue and forever after.

LG [CD RE-WRITER / DVD COMBO](#) 52x24x52 & 16 DVD \$ **107.00** plus PST & GST
Installed

LG GMA-[4081B 8x DVR](#) - CD-R, CDRW, DVD-RAM, DVD-R, DVD +R, DVD-RW,
DVD +RW \$ **160.00** plus PST & GST *Installed*

LGE [T710BH](#) E-Z FLAT 17 in .25 FLAT CRT \$ **195.00** plus PST & GST *Delivered in
Winnipeg*

LGE [T910BU](#) E-Z FLAT 19 in .24 FLAT CRT \$ **365.00** plus PST & GST *Delivered in
Winnipeg*

LGE [L1910S](#) 19in FLAT PANEL SILVER / CHARCOAL \$ **975.00** plus PST & GST
Delivered in Winnipeg

Thanks for reading. Happy Computing

Ric Jackson
Owner
MicroByte TekSolutions