

# MBTS TekJournal

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## Never say Never

Last issue I told everyone that it would be the last issue unless there was a public outcry. Well it was more like a whimper, but it did tell me that the TekJournal is still wanted by its readers.

Quite a few of the replies I received acknowledged the amount of time it takes to put a single issue together, but suggested that I shoot for once every six to eight weeks instead of once a month or more often. The alternative is to produce quick versions with a little information at a time and send them out whenever appropriate. It seemed like good advice, so I will take it, and that means the TekJournal is back, at least for now. How often it is delivered depends on how much happens in the computing world.

It seems that Microsoft is really serious about cracking down on software pirates. They recently introduce the Genuine Microsoft Advantage which your system will undergo next time you visit the Microsoft site to acquire updates for any Microsoft product. The GMA will verify that ALL the serial numbers your Microsoft software has recorded are valid, and if it finds any numbers that

it determines are pirated, no more downloads until the problem is corrected. The good news is the GMA is done once, unless there was a problem. If every software company had this capability, pirates would have a lot harder time, and software would be considerably less expensive.

We announced in an earlier issue that Internet Explorer 7 would be released this past summer (2005) since we had it on good authority direct from Bill Gates. But it seems that IE 7, like Longhorn – now called Vista, is going to take just a little longer. The prediction now is late 2005 or maybe even the first quarter of 2006. Firefox may be looking better and better yet. The features we are patiently waiting for include Tabbed Browsing, RSS Integration, built in Search bar, Printing improvements, & Phishing filter. Many of these features are available now in Firefox without the security risks.

Here are a couple of tips we just learned about doing research for this issue: When you shut off your inkjet printer you should always do it using the power button on the printer. Apparently, there is a mechanism that seals the print head to prevent the solvent from drying out. If you turn it off by any other method (at the power bar for example) the print heads remain open and dry out quicker causing other printer problems. Also, since we just installed Zone Alarm Security Suite 6 we found out that MSN monitors your keyboard and mouse for keystrokes and movement, but Zone Alarm can stop this activity from happening.

Since this is September, everybody who does - is going back to the hallowed halls of higher education. On pages Five and Six we are offering Acer brand Desktop Systems and laptops in two formats. Really low priced because we deliver them unopened, or for a small fee we will pre-configure them, add Norton Anti Virus, perform all updates and include setup on site. All Desktop systems come with a one year on site hardware warranty, and laptop warranty is handled by Acer Canada.

That's all for this issue of the MBTS TekJournal. Next issue we look more closely at Firefox & Windows Vista. ☺

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## Surf's UP

We have come across a site you may find helpful answering your term papers this year, but only if you can phrase the question properly. GuruNet has a Google powered search site that offers "provides relevant information – not a list of links – in response to users' lookup queries." And can be found at the following link - <http://www.answers.com> However, when I tried it to find out how to remove old silicone from bathtubs all I got was a list of 500+ links.

"Picasa is software that helps you instantly find, edit and share all the pictures on your PC. Every time you open Picasa, it automatically locates all your pictures (even ones you forgot you had) and sorts them into visual albums organized by date with folder names you will recognize. You can drag and drop to arrange your albums and make labels to create new groups. Picasa makes sure your pictures are always organized." You can find it at <http://picasa.google.com/index.html>

We may have uncovered software for every list maker and note taker in existence. "With **EverNote 1.0** you can easily store and quickly access typed and handwritten memos, webpage excerpts, emails, phone messages, addresses, passwords, brainstorm, sketches, documents and more!" The URL access point for this app is <http://www.evernote.com/en/>

As far as we are concerned the jury is still out as to whether Firefox or Internet Explorer is the better browser. I personally really like Outlook so I don't see myself ever switching to Thunderbird, but if all you have to choose from is Outlook Express or the free version of Incredimail, maybe Thunderbird is a good choice. The really nice thing about choice is that in a free country we have the power. Recently, Microsoft announced that their share of the browser market slipped below 90%. If Firefox is the reason, maybe we all better check it out... <http://www.mozilla.org/>

Many years ago it was believed that the TV would infiltrate the Internet and we could do away with that little box in the family room. Well, the little box is probably now a big box or maybe even a really thin (but large) plasma or LCD screen. But with Windows Media Centre, Web TV is becoming more popular. We decided to do a little surfing and see just what was available and if it was worth watching. If you can

navigate through the mumbo jumbo

<http://www.webtvlist.com/> might be a good starting point to finding what might be available. wwiTV claims to let you access up to 3000 live feeds and video on demand. <http://www.wwitv.com/> These two sites might just provide you with a simple way to pass a weekend this fall.

BlinkxTV <http://www.blinkx.com/> offers a search engine just for Web TV. NOTE – You may require Real Player, Quick Time, and/or Windows Media Player installed to view all feeds.

<http://video.msn.com/v/us/v.htm> MSN Video News - great web TV clips for News, Sports, Entertainment, etc.

A new addition in Entertainment is the Open Media Network claiming to offer free Movies, TV, etc. Software installation is mandatory to use this site. <http://omn.org> More on this site in future issues...

As an alternative to Web TV is a site called ifilm at <http://www.ifilm.com/> when it seems you can find just about anything. I suggest doing a search for 405 and checking out the special effects some people can do with computers these days. Other shorts may not be to everyone's liking but clip number 405 is unbelievable.

Okay, this will cost you money in the long run, but it is a utility that is sorely needed and no one really afford to live without. <http://www.diskeeper.com/defrag.asp>

"Disk fragmentation occurs when a file is broken up into pieces to fit on the disk. Because files are constantly being written, deleted, and resized, fragmentation is a natural occurrence. When a file is spread out over several locations, it takes longer to read and write. But the effects of fragmentation are far more widespread: Slow performance, long boot times, random crashes and freeze-ups —even a complete inability to boot up at all. Many users blame these problems on the operating systems, when disk fragmentation is often the real culprit." Download the Diskeeper 9 Trialware for a month and see if your system doesn't run faster.

There are times you need to know information about network settings. IPAddress 2.0.4 is at <http://www.bluefive.pair.com/updates.htm> and will reveal your IP Address. However, if you are behind a firewall use <http://www.mywanip.com> to display the IP address on the screen.☺

# Firewall Security

With today's Internet getting to be just as unsafe as our streets if you travel into places you shouldn't be, it is very wise to make sure that you have the proper safeguards in place.

Everyone should know what they are by now, but as a recap here are the three primary tools to keep your computer safe from intruders: Spysweeper to guard against and remove Spyware, Adware, and other Malware threats; a solid Anti Virus solution like Norton Anti Virus; and a firewall. A software firewall is built into XP SP2, but a hardware solution is much more effective.

For those users who don't employ a router, Shaw Internet offers Shaw Secure while MTS offers their customers a free copy of Zone Alarm Security Suite 6.

From a personal standpoint fixing client's computers who have install Shaw Secure, the router is a better solution. Shaw Secure is easy to install, but almost impossible to remove. We reviewed this product earlier in Volume 4 Issue 4.

We received an email from MTS announcing Zone Alarm Security Suite 6 as a "freebie" and installed it just today (9/15/2005). If you have no protection on your system we expect installation to be a breeze. However, their anti virus doesn't like Norton and calls it a competing product and asks that you uninstall it. We didn't give up Norton however, maybe on our new system. The rest of the installation was straightforward and there doesn't seem to be any slowdown in performance as is often the case with other security suites namely Norton Internet Security, PC-Cillin Internet Security and McAfee.

PC Magazine gave Zone Alarm Security Suite 6 an amazing 4.5 stars (out of 5). I must be reading the license wrong however because it says the product update service will expire in 7306 days or just over 20 years. Stay tuned and I'll let you know.

As for features: I can't comment on Anti Virus because I am quite happy with Norton, however, the antivirus engine was licensed from Computer Associates, and will detect viruses but not remove them. Sort of makes me wonder what it does to them.

The Spyware identifier/remover wants to label and

remove my paid for version of LimeWire Pro as Spyware when no other competing product does. LimeWire by the way is not Spyware and may be completely harmless to your system.

The software firewall is more robust than it has been in the past and very quickly and automatically identifies what to trust, not trust, should have Internet access, etc.

The first access to Outlook created a Junk Mail and a Challenged Mail box for keep out SPAM. Nice touch and I hope it works, although the mail accounts on this system are secondary and not used a lot.

However, Zone Alarm Security Suite 6 looks like a keeper and my thanks to MTS for providing a solid solution to computer security just for being a client.

Hardware firewalls have the distinction of never having to be updated unless you want to add more features. Then it is called a firmware upgrade and it is usually free. I have had a used a router since 1998 and have never paid for a firmware upgrade. In fact I just installed version 2.70 for July 27 2005 this minute.

If your router is more than 2 years old, the firmware is probably out of date, but generally only needs updating to add new features or possibly to improve performance. Upgrading firmware should never be done using a wireless connection, always connect to the router using a CAT5 cable.

DLink – <http://www.dlink.com> Select Support, identify your router from the drop down boxes and then scroll down to see the available versions.

Linksys – <http://www.linksys.com> Select Support and from the drop down menu choose Downloads. Select your router from the next drop down list and proceed to firmware. Choose Download Version info to see what changes have been made to the firmware.

GNet or GVC – <http://ftp.gentek.com> Select gvc or gnet depending on your router, and ckick through the option to select the proper firmware directory.

Once you have the proper file downloaded, there should be a screen in your router setup for updating the firmware. Remember that all your original settings will be overwritten so you will need to know your user logon information and any security codes for resetting your wireless security before continuing. For on site help, call us at 771 8930 for an appointment.☺

## Windows XP Tips

When you first got your computer, I bet it was extremely fast. But today it doesn't seem to be running at the same speed. Here are some tips to consider about how to get back the speed you crave.

**1. Use Quick Launch** – When your computer was new the desktop was empty. Now it is probably cluttered.

Using the Quick Launch bar is a simple fix to a common age old problem. Right-click the Taskbar; Select Toolbars from the popup menu; make sure Quick Launch is checked. The Quick Launch tray is located beside your start button. Finally, drag all your favorite shortcuts off the desktop and into the Quick Launch area. This frees up valuable system memory needed to run Windows.

**2. Clean Out Your System Tray** - Eliminate every unnecessary application. These apps drain your processor's cycles and memory. That means a gradual slowdown, until you're crawling.

**3. Update Your Drivers** - It's easy and fast, yet most PC users never bother. Keeping on top of video card and chipset drivers by visiting the manufacturer's site frequently can deliver amazing performance benefits.

**4. Visit windowsupdate.com regularly** - This is a one of the biggest things users don't do. The "patches" that are made available on a weekly basis not only provide protection for your PC, they are also designed to improve performance. Even if Automatic Updates are turned on, visit the actual update site at least once per month.

**5. Convert Your Drives To NTFS** – While it is true that only an NTFS based system can read an NTFS drive, we always have at least one system available to read your drive. To get the most from your drives under Win XP, make sure the file system you are using is NTFS.

**6. Speed Up Your User Interface** – Excess graphics rob your system of fundamental power. Open the Display panel and access Appearance and Effects. Uncheck the first two options, as well as "Show shadows under menus."

**7. Last major point – Defrag, Defrag, Defrag.** A well ordered drive accesses data quicker and everything runs smoother. <http://www.diskeeper.com> 

## Desktop Search

Are you a packrat? Do you save every email sent and received, while deleting nothing? Do you never delete installation files even when a new release comes out? Then one of these products may be right for you.

These are the Desktop Search Tools, and the free ones are available from the majors:

Copernic - <http://www.copernic.com>

MSN - <http://desktop.msn.com>

Google - <http://desktop.google.com>

HotBot - <http://www.hotbot.com/tools/desktop>

Yahoo - <http://desktop.yahoo.com>

Jeeves - <http://sp.ask.com/docs/desktop/index.html>

Seems like everyone has one, but which one is best? And, do you really want a program indexing everything on your computer, even if it is encrypted and hidden from view? Using a sample base of files (1.5GB) plus 000's of email messages and 900 attachments, we will itemize the time required to build the initial index for each engine.

**Copernic Desktop Search** – 21m 10s, index Outlook & Express including attachments and contacts, as well as your specified folders. It does include PDF, MP3, and HTML files but won't access ZIP or their contents. Indexing can be set to suspend while the system is busy and only update indexes when idle. This app supports 98, Me, 2000, and XP.

**MSN Desktop Search** – 7m 15s, this product is a major component of the MSN Toolbar Suite, supports both Outlook and Outlook Express, and Outlook users get an integrated Toolbar. However, a convenient Deskbar allows for searching directly from the XP taskbar. Messages, Attachments, Contacts, Appointments, Task and Notes, as well as My Documents, all local hard drives are included in the search. There are filters to include non native file types, some of which are free. To include XZIP files however will cost you money. By default this product only indexes when the system is idle. The search window supports the use of Boolean logic (And Or & NOT to include/exclude/or narrow searches). The app supports 2000 and XP only.

**Google Desktop Search** – 13m, allows searching of

*Desktop Continued on Page 5*

local files and the web at the same time. This program relies on real time indexing and may slow down your system. Should you ever stop the indexing process, the only way to recreate a full index is to uninstall and reinstall the app. As a security note, Google Desktop Search indexes encrypted files, so any data you thought was completely safe will be available to anyone using your system after the indexing is complete. This app supports 2000 and XP only.

**HotBot Desktop Search** – 5h 38m (not a misprint), given that indexing takes forever, this product should be dismissed outright.

**Yahoo Desktop Search** – 15m 45s, this product is actually a subset of another pay for search engine called X1 and as such probably offers the most features of all desktop tools. It indexes local files, Outlook Express/Outlook email and contacts however appointments notes and tasks are not included. It does include archived files including ZIP, TAR, LZH, and GZ. This app supports 2000 and XP.

**Ask Jeeves Desktop Search** – 50m 40s, search local files, e-mail, and the Web but can't search email and local files at the same time. You toggle between these two data type with Computer or Email buttons. You cannot define your own set of folders to index and ZIP and PDF files are ignored. This app supports 2000 and XP only.

Given that desktop search tools are always evolving, the one product you choose may not index everything today but future upgrades may change that. But the biggest concern should be about security. If your desktop search tool indexes encrypted data (generally banking and personal health info) then anybody who gains access to your system, either via the keyboard directly or the Internet, will have access to data you probably would rather have kept locked up.

In December 2004, a security flaw was discovered in Google Desktop Search that could give a hacker easy access to the entire index. This bug was quickly fixed, but should prove that nothing is infallible. Any product which includes encrypted data must be treated with the utmost respect and watched carefully to ensure the overall security of the data and the system.

Only you can decide if you need a search tool, but here is a starting point. ▢

## Tower Specials

### Acer Aspire T120-3002

AMD Sempron 2800+, 512MB RAM, 160GB Hard Drive, DVD RW, 9 in 1 Digital Card reader, 10/100 LAN, Modem, Microsoft Windows XP Home

Base System Price **\$ 625.00** (plus PST & GST)

**Base system plus: Setup, Configuration of XP, installation and configuration of Norton Anti Virus, all updates and full on site installation \$ 800.00** (plus PST & GST)

### AcerPower P5161

Intel Pentium 4 2.93 GHz, 512MB RAM, 80GB Serial ATA Hard Drive, DVD/CD RW Combo Drive, 10/100 LAN, Microsoft Windows XP Professional

Base System Price **\$ 550.00** (plus PST & GST)

**Base system plus: Setup, Configuration of XP, installation and configuration of Norton Anti Virus, all updates and full on site installation \$ 725.00** (plus PST & GST)



### LG L1715S-SN

17 inch LCD Flat Panel, 1280 x 1024, 500:1 Contrast, 12 ms response

**\$ 395.00**



### Acer AL1914ms

19 inch LCD Flat Panel, 1280 x 1024, 500:1 Contrast, 8 ms response, Speakers, VGA & DVI Connectors

**\$ 495.00**

## Ink Jet Maintenance

Ink jet printers are generally very reliable and fairly inexpensive to operate. However, they are also very precise machines and require a certain amount of care to operate efficiently.

Ink cartridges have a shelf life and do go bad over time, either by not being installed or used by the Install or Best before date, or by being left unused in a printer for a long period of time. To maintain the reliability of the ink you should make sure to use your printer at least twice per week.

The ink in the cartridge is either pigment based or dye based. Pigment base ink left sitting can come out of suspension creating micron size particles to develop which can clog the print nozzle. Dye based ink is very susceptible to airborne impurities which can turn it into sludge, also clogging the print nozzles.

Ink cartridges don't suddenly go bad. However, white lines can periodically show up in your printed output which signifies that a cleaning is required. Most printers come with special software to help with the cleaning process.

When running the cleaning software, make sure that you print one or two pages after each cycle to see if the problem has been fixed, and to ensure that air bubbles are not present in the ink. During the cleaning cycle, air bubbles can be created in the ink well, and subsequent cleanings without performing a print may significantly increase the air bubbles in the well. Only during printing are these air bubbles expelled.

If after trying the cleaning cycle six times you do not see a significant improvement, turn off the printer for two to three hours to left the air bubbles (if present) to work their way out through the nozzles. After the sitting period, turn the printer on and print a test page. If the print still isn't right you can try cleaning and printing again. If it still doesn't fix the problem, the cartridge probably needs to be replaced.

Once a print cartridge has been installed, do not remove it unless it is to be replaced. In some cases the cartridge is pierced to allow the print nozzle access to the ink and removing the cartridge and reinstalling may make the access point larger than normal. In the case where the print nozzle is part of the cartridge, leaving the cartridge out of the printer for as little as 30

minutes will allow the ink to dry in the nozzle rendering it useless.

If your printed ink smears on the page while it is printing, this generally means there is dust or hair sticking to the print head. With HP and Lexmark printers you can remove the print cartridge and attempt to clean the cartridge manually using a small swatch of material which won't leave fibers behind. Use small amounts of warm water or alcohol and make sure there are no traces left behind when you reinstall the cartridge. With other printers, perform the head cleaning and nozzle check to try to remove the impediment.

The last and probably most important tip: make sure you always turn the printer off with its own power switch. Most printers seal the print head when you flip that switch, to prevent the solvent from drying out. If you turn the printer off using a switch on a power strip, the print head may be left exposed to the air.☺

## Laptops



**Acer Aspire 1619WLCi** - Intel Pentium M 725 (2MB L2 Cache, 1.6GHz, 400MHz FSB), 512MB DDR2 RAM, 40GB Hard Drive, DVD/CD RW Combo Drive, 15.4 inch WXGA 1280 x 1024 TFT display, CrystalBrite Technology ; Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 900; 802.11b/g WLAN, 10/100 LAN, V.92 modem, Windows XP Home

Completely configured including Norton Anti Virus 2005, all updates, delivery and on site installation in Winnipeg

**\$ 1,375.00** (plus PST & GST)

**Acer Aspire 5002WLCi** – AMD Turion 64 ML-30 (1MB Cache, 1.6GHz, up to 16000MHz FSB) 64 bit processor with Enhanced Virus protection, 512MB DDR333 SDRAM, 80GB Hard Drive, DVD +/- RW, 15.4 inch 1280 x 800 WXGA TFT display, CrystalBrite Technology; SiSM760GX chipset with integrated Mirage™2 graphics; 802.11b/g WLAN, 10/100 LAN, V.92 modem, Microsoft Windows XP Home

Completely configured including Norton Anti Virus 2005, all updates, delivery and on site installation in Winnipeg

**\$ 1,299.00** (plus PST & GST)