



Nybbles & Bytes



www.neopc.org

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April, 2009 . . . Volume 25 Issue 7

Happy Easter

The Presidents Desk—



President's Message

By Lee Gerber:

Ahhh... Spring and taxes. Hopefully you're getting a huge refund that will allow you to buy that ultimate PC you've always wanted. Or maybe just pay your utility bills.

Don't forget to use the NEOPC Forum to let us all know what's new and exciting in your life. Whether it's a new purchase or a personal accomplishment I'm sure your friends in the Club would be interested in hearing your story.

In these tight money days try the on-line buying option for some good deals on just about anything you need or want. Check out our on-line buying selection by looking at our Affiliates web page for links to bargains in every category.

HOPEFULLY NO MORE SNOW.

Webmaster Bulletin—



NEOPC Webmaster Message

By Dick Rose:

The webmaster has not been idle. After many suggestions and several discussions a few recent changes have occurred. Some of the pages have been removed from behind the curtain and are now open to the sun and fresh air. Keep your eye on the "Site Activities" page on the website . . . I will advise you of changes as I submit them so that you needn't explore the entire site looking for something new. The listing is in reverse chronological order (latest first). Here is last month's activity:

3/14/2009 - Added Minutes of the March Steering Committee meeting. Also, added a couple of Microsoft Tutorial links to the "Favorite Links" page.

3/14/2009 - Added a new "Be There" page to the "Members Only" area.

3/5/2009 - Moved some pages from behind the "portal" to the public area to stimulate interest: "Past Newsletters"; "Crossword"; renamed "Sigs" to "Special Interests"

3/2/2009 - Altered the "Ladies Only" SIG definition to accommodate the change of meeting days from Thursdays to Wednesdays.

3/1/2009 - Placed the latest Financial Report on the site.

Letter from the Editor -



NEOPC Newsletter Editor

David A. Vydra

We have lift off! This month we will feature an article in the "Members Podium" column from Darlene Ells (Past president NEOPC). Darlene tells us about an application that she uses religiously. It is Total Commander and is a replacement for Windows Explorer. Don't miss it.

I certainly hope that this will be just the first of many provided to us by our membership. Everyone has had a success or failure experience. This is your opportunity to share your experience and provide your fellow members some real life insight. Don't be shy. However, if you are hesitant to express a less than stellar experience, do not worry. We can always say "Author Anonymous". In any event, all articles submitted will be edited where needed. Be brief and on point with what you have to say. Clarity, Brevity, Originality and Aptness of Thought (As they used to require on the old radio contests) are the watchwords.

To assist you in putting your thoughts to paper we suggest that you follow the "Credo" of the news reporter as a guide.

What? Your topic. Is it about hardware or software? Sadness or elation? What is the cost factor for the product or service?

When? When did you discover this? What led you to this solution good or bad?

Where? Did someone give you a tip? Did you find this through a search? Did someone provide assistance? Is there a link to acquire the product or service?

Who? (Also the anagram How?) Who pointed you to this product or solution? How have things improved through the use of this product or the advent of the solution?

Why? Why do you feel you have benefited? Why do you believe others can benefit from you experience?

Put your thoughts together today. Send them to info@neopc.net and be sure to include Members Podium in the subject line.



Through the Gates:

Enter to the Trove of Bills Treasures and Travails

A monthly column dedicated to revealing some of the unknown or lesser known features or foibles of the Microsoft line of products.

By: David A. Vydra

Nearly three years after shipping Internet Explorer 7, Microsoft has updated its flagship Web browser with the release of IE 8. Based on tests of this final release and the previous RC and beta code, it's clear that IE 8 is possibly the best Web browser that Microsoft has released since IE 5. For anyone currently using IE 7, IE 8 is a

must-upgrade, as it improves greatly on that version and includes many features that improve the usability and the security of the Web browser.

On March 19th, Microsoft released the final version of Internet Explorer 8 for public download. Many of the reviews I've read so far have focused on raw speed (page rendering and JavaScript execution, in particular). The subject of performance isn't nearly as cut and dried as those benchmark results would suggest, however. One factor they don't measure, for example, is browsing efficiency. Page load time is irrelevant if you can translate a paragraph of text or see a list of search results without having to open a separate page. I've been using IE8 and Firefox daily (Have not tried Google's Chrome as yet.) for several months, as it wound its way through beta versions to a release candidate and finally to the version that was made available on 3/19. For the most part, I never notice differences in page loading time between the browsers, but I do notice the shortcuts and navigation tools that each browser uses to improve the browsing experience. IE8 has dozens of little usability tweaks that have had a genuine impact on performance in my daily browsing. Some are built-in, while others are available as add-ons. In this month's article, I want to call your attention to some of the less obvious features in IE8 that you might miss in other reviews.

Tabbed browsing improvements

Every modern browser supports the concept of multiple tabs. If you routinely work with large numbers of tabs, you'll appreciate the concept of *tab groups*, which is unique to IE8. If you begin from a search results page, you might open several new tabs from links on that page. When you do, the parent tab and each new tab pick up a distinctive color which is one of the cooler features. When you're done with that bit of research, you can close all those related pages in one motion by right-clicking on a tab and choosing Close This Tab Group.

Visual search

Every browser has a search box, and IE8 works by default as you would expect: Type some text, press Enter, go to your default search page and display results. But customizing the list of search providers by visiting the IE8 "Find Search Providers" link adds some features you won't find elsewhere, including visual results from sites like Ebay and Amazon.com, which appear in a drop-down list as you type. The New York Times search accelerator lets you type a term and see current headlines, also in a drop-down list, without having to leave the current page.

Extensibility

For a long, long time, the selection of add-ons available for Internet Explorer was pitiful, especially compared to the rich selection that the community built for Firefox. IE8 can't match those community-driven repositories for size or variety, but the selection is now large and useful. The most useful add-ons are those that target popular sites like Google, Facebook, and YouTube, but there are enough small gems to make it worth browsing the complete and well-categorized collection at <http://ieaddons.com>.

Accelerators

This is one of those gadgets that you will soon wonder how you ever got along without it. The longer you use this browser, the more you'll have to adjust to the underlying concept of accelerators. Instead of cutting and pasting an address at your favorite mapping site, you can select an address, click the blue Accelerator button, and see the map in its own window. That extra work load is now a thing of the past. You can use the same basic technique to translate text from a web page written in a foreign language.

Add-on management

Browser add-ons are a blessing and a curse (and that's true on non-Microsoft code as well; many a Firefox fanatic has been caught in the same web with one extension too many). The IE8 solution is the Manage Add-ons dialog box, which has a couple of innovations. First, IE8 reports on how much load time each browser helper or toolbar requires. If a toolbar uses 10 seconds before you see a page, you might want to disable it. And if you decide to disable an individual add-on, IE8 shows you other add-ons from the same developer, giving you the chance to disable the complete set.

A smarter Address bar

Firefox fans love the Awesome bar, which displays suggestions drawn from your browsing history and your bookmarks as you type a URL. Typing in the IE8 Address bar displays a similar set of results, but with some welcome usability tweaks. For starters, the list is organized by category, with the five top suggestions from your favorites and history shown by default. The best improvement, though, is the red X at the end of each item in the list, which lets you clean out clutter by deleting unwanted or dead URLs from the list of suggestions.

Compatibility list

With the new standards-compliant rendering engine in IE8 it appeared that many web pages were broken with the release of IE8 Beta as well as the Release Candidate. At that time, the only way to see these pages properly was to click a Compatibility View button for that page (or set the browser to render all pages in IE7 mode). In this final release, Microsoft has made that step unnecessary, at least for the most popular sites. The IE8 Compatibility list arrives via Windows Update and automatically toggles Compatibility View on for more than 3000 sites worldwide (many of them in China). After a few days of browsing, I've only had to add a few sites to the compatibility list manually because of improper rendering. The Compatibility View button appears like a little window that is broken in the middle. If a page is not rendering properly, a simple click of the button initiates the IE7 compatibility mode. However, not all sites that have a Compatibility View button will have rendering problems. You only need to invoke IE7 compatibility if there is one. Some sites are fully compatible with the IE8 Standards and no button will be shown. But, just to show that not all things Microsoft are as should be, there are some of their sites that still need to have compatibly invoked. I rather imagine this will be a short lived problem.

Bottom Line

Upgrade! However, if you are still stuck in Windows98 land, there is no version of IE8. At the least, you should be using IE7. For those with XP and Vista you should have no problem. The die-hard IE6 users are well advised to make the change as soon as possible. At some future date, Microsoft will make IE8 part of the Update package and it will be installed for those who allow automatic download and installation. If you insist on resisting the use of IE8 then you have to change your settings. For all of the advantages, it is my recommendation to make the switch. From the installation of IE8 Beta to the present day, I have had no real downsides. The only glitch was installing the final version. I downloaded it to a folder. When I initiated the installation, the first action was to uninstall IE7. Then, a Malicious Software search ensued followed by the requisite installation. A reboot will be required so you should have all applications closed beforehand. I would suggest rebooting to a new instance prior to beginning to insure that everything is closed as well as setting a "Restore" point. The glitch came after the reboot. It seems that IE7 was still the active browser. So, I initiated a second installation if IE8. This did the trick. All of my settings and bookmarks have been retained. Enjoy your browsing.

Portions of this column may have been garnered from several publicly available sources, verified and edited for content. Where an article is used in its entirety without editing, the author and source are acknowledged.

Members Podium - All NEOPC Members



Submitted by Darlene L. Ells, Past-President of NEOPC

I have never liked Windows Explorer doing “Copying and Moving files”. This is one function I do quite often. I like looking at (2) directories at one time to determine what I am doing. This is the reason I use **Total Commander** instead of **Windows Explorer**. Present Version is 7.04a, (a Shareware file manager for Windows). Originally this was called, “Windows Commander”; name changed in 2002. This product was recommended by a friend of mine, who installed systems for small businesses. Total Commander is a file manager for Windows, a program like Windows Explorer to copy, move, or delete files. You can do much more than Explorer, e.g. pack and unpack files, access ftp servers, compare files by content, etc. This is the 1st software I install on a new computer.

This is a Shareware program; this means that you can test it for a period of 30 days. After testing the program, you must either order the full version, or delete the program from your hard disk. When you register, you receive the latest version on CD, plus a quick reference card with an overview of all Total Commander functions and keystrokes. A personal license is now \$38. You buy this shareware software once & you are a permanent subscriber – no other fees again as long as you leave a certain key in the directory. To order you can download from the website: www.ghisler.com. Also (on the website), there are tutorials for Beginners as well as Advanced users.

What does it do?

- 1). Two file windows side by side; Multiple language support;
- 2). Enhanced search function;
- 3). Compare files (now with editor) / synchronize directories;
- 4). Quick View panel with bitmap display;
- 5). ZIP, ARJ, LZH, RAR, UC2, TAR, GZ, CAB, ACE archive handling + plug-ins;
- 6). Built-in FTP client with FXP (server to server) and HTTP proxy support;
- 7). Parallel port link, multi-rename tool;
- 9). Tabbed interface, regular expressions, history and favorites buttons;
- 10). Thumbnails view, custom columns, enhanced search;

New: Updated interface and icons, compare editor, cursor in lister, separate trees, logging, enhanced overwrite dialog etc.; and many more!

Installation: It is very simple, and I have never had any installation problems no matter what version of Windows I used. I have installed this on Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows XP on various computers. You can create an icon on desktop, installation under Programs folder, or on the Quick Launch in Windows. I have never installed it on Vista, since I do not have a Vista machine. This is the first piece of software I install on a new system.

Handy Functions that Total Commander uses: On the bottom of the screen, they are: **F3:** View; **F4:** Edit; **F5:** Copy files; **F6:** Move files; **F7:** Create New Folders or Directories; **F8:** Delete files or Folders. You may invoke the Function by either clicking on it or using the appropriate Function key.

There are standard and application specific menu items: **Files/ Mark/ Commands/ Net/ Show/ Configuration/ Start/ Help**. Each has a pull-down menu with various functions. Too many to list in this review. There are also many set-up functions under “**Configuration**” that can be changed. If you are interested in this Darlene Ells can help you in setting up some extra buttons or the appearance of this program, please feel free to call Darlene Ells.

I highly recommend this product. I use it daily to function on any computer. If you have any questions about this review, do not hesitate to send an e-mail to Darlene Ells, leave a message on our Forum (which I use regularly) or call me (Phone number and Email listed in the NEOPC Members page). **I hope you will download this product, and try it!**

Editors Note: Darlene submitted much more than we have allotted to her article. However, most of this was devoted more to the technical usage of "Total Commander" and not inline with presenting an overview of the benefits. A good case has been made for using the 30 day Trial period to judge for yourself. I would recommend giving it a look see. And, also make use of the Tutorials that are available. I am sure that Darlene would be most happy to assist anyone that has any problem.

"Conficker"

Even the most accomplished security experts are unsure of exactly what Conficker will do. This malicious code is deemed to be polymorphic, which means that when security researchers attempt to identify the specific code so that a fix can be written, the code actually changes its nature. Perhaps the most obvious frightening aspect of Conficker C is its clear potential to do harm. In the best case, Conficker may be used as a sustained and profitable platform for massive Internet fraud and theft. In the worst case, Conficker could be turned into a powerful offensive weapon for performing concerted information warfare attacks that could disrupt not just countries, but the Internet itself.

Sounds interesting, but what, exactly, does this mean to you?

What researchers have found is that the writers of this program have installed some form of logic bomb that is set to trigger on April 1, 2009. No one is quite sure what will happen. Will Conficker be used as a DDOS attack against government servers? Will it steal information and attempt to then connect to a command and control center? What is clear is that Conficker dramatically raises the stakes in the botnet game.

What's most perplexing is that Conficker is still alive and well, despite all of the negative attention it has garnered. Conficker became notorious enough to prompt Microsoft to form the Conficker Cabal, a coalition of security vendors and organizations dedicated to killing it. Microsoft even offered a \$250,000 bounty for information that helps in the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators behind Conficker.

Although Conficker C appears to be programmed to run a new algorithm for domain-name generation on April 1, infected machines don't actually need to check in with command and control, and can get their updates at any time: "It doesn't really need those domain names to be updated" because it's peer-to-peer. It's unlikely anything will happen on the first of April is the opinion of some experts. Considering all the attention going on about April 1st, why would they do something that day? The group behind it could as easily do something on April 4th or April 10th. And most of the infected machines have the older Conficker.B variant, anyway, which isn't scheduled for activity on April 1.

The worm initially hit enterprises hard, but many organizations have been able to clean up their internal machines, thanks to Microsoft's efforts, as well as the various vendors that released prevention and cleanup tools for Conficker. It spread extremely fast within internal networks at first. Now it's a combination of corporate and end users who haven't patched their computers for whatever reason. So why worry about Conficker if it hasn't really done any visible damage thus far? Because there are still 1 to 2 million computers out there that are infected, and they could potentially do a lot of harm to the rest of the Internet. And, the accountable number of infected computers is expected to grow since there are many that have yet to be discovered. Although no one is sure what Conficker is ultimately up to, its creators are obviously not amateurs. Conficker is not a classic worm due to its botnet-like command-and-control channel. It does propagate like a worm, though, exploiting machines that haven't installed the MS08-067 Windows patch for Windows 2000, XP, and Server 2003 systems issued by Microsoft back in October. The Conficker creators have been cranking out new variants of the worm to evade detection, and infection requires no action on the part of the PC user. If there is peril, it is not only yours, but your friends and neighbors as well. Update everything! If you can't, you need help.



 Coming Events

April 2009

Event Date	Event
04/03	<p>Northeast Ohio PC Club (NEOPC)- General Meeting- Porter Public Library, 27333 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, OH. 6:30pm Social (pastries and beverages); 7:00pm Club announcements; main program will be "Q & A" with Lee Gerber and Dave Vydra. Bring Questions; 8:30pm Raffle and Door Prizes.</p>
04/14	<p>*** Computer Fundamentals Open Forum *** MORNING session. Northeast Ohio PC Club (NEOPC) - 9:30am Fairview Park Senior Center -Fundamentals of computer use - Any and all topics discussed - Bring a question, bring a topic - Guests always welcome - Always coffee - Free and open to the public. Second Tuesday of the month.</p>
04/16	<p>April 16, 2009 PLEASE NOTE: THE DATE FOR THIS meeting has BEEN CHANGED FROM WEDNESDAY to Thursday for April only. Remaining meetings before our summer break will remain on Wednesday. Ladies Only Special Interest Group at Westlake Porter Public Library from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Library is located at 27333 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, Ohio. All ladies are invited, whether or not members of NEOPC. Come with your questions and/or comments about software you have.</p>
04/22	<p>NEOPC/CAGG Computer Class Orientation meeting - Wednesday, April 22rd, 10:00 AM - if you think you might be interested in participating in any of the (FREE) classes we conduct at the Fairview Senior Center you need to attend one of these monthly meetings to determine which class you would like to be invited to.</p>
04/25	<p>Final day to submit your article for inclusion in the next "Members Podium" column for the May 2009 issue of Nybbles & Bytes. We had an excellent article this month from Darlene Ells. Keep them coming. Be sure to send your article to info@neopc.net and include the phrase "Members Podium" in the subject line.</p>
04/28	<p>Northeast Ohio PC Club ***Fundamentals Special Interest Group*** (SIG). Fairview Park Library (lower level) 7:00 - 8:30pm. Fundamentals of computer use - Any and all topics discussed - Bring a question, bring a topic - Guests always welcome - Free and open to the public. Fourth Tuesday of the month.</p>

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