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ROM is issued
six-times
a year to
members of the
Guildford PC
User Group
All Contributions
to the Editor
Tony Hawes
(details on page 2)

ROM

Newsletter of the Guildford PC User Group

Editor's Bit

Time again for the Annual General Meeting of the Group

In accordance with the rules, individual committee members will explain their past years' activities and the treasurer will present the accounts. Committee members of the Guildford PC User Group will stand down and an election of a new committee will take place.

If you have any points that you think should be raised at the AGM, please let your Editor know before the meeting (his contact details on page 2).

This is the opportunity to help guide the group in the months ahead. Please let your requirements or wishes be known to the Editor or a member of the committee. Remember, if you don't volunteer, things will remain the same and some work may not even get done.

Review of the Year

We started 2007 with the news that the charity "Disability Challengers" had taken over management of the hall where we meet from Surrey County Council.

After initial teething problems with chairs, keys, the burglar alarm etc things settled down and at the time of writing are working well.

Soft and Hardware reviews have been well received. Most software received positive re-

views, but two bits of hardware kit caused problems i.e. the Plustek 7500Ai scanner which was reviewed in February and the Archos TV+ reviewed in this month's ROM.

Secretary's Notes — April 2007 — March 2008

Monday 16th April 2007. Annual General Meeting. Individual committee members explained their past years' activities and the treasurer presented the accounts. The Chairman (Tony Wood) mentioned that the past years' activities are recorded extensively in the April - May 2007 edition of ROM, the Group newsletter and members were directed to the Group web page to download a copy if they had not already done so. Overall we have had a good year with presentations and demonstrations at most meetings, but membership remains static and existing members are encouraged to recommend potential new members from among their friends or colleagues emphasising that new members are always made very welcome. The committee welcomes suggestions from members as to how we can raise awareness of the Group and make computer users in the area aware of our existence.

The Treasurer (Francis Jacques) presented the accounts of the group; these showed we are still in the black; this is accounted for by the decision made at last years AGM when it was decided that the Group newsletter (ROM) would no longer be printed and posted to

(Continued on page 2)

ROM is now only available as a full-colour .pdf download from the Group web page at:
www.guildfordpcusergroup.co.uk

**NEXT MEETING — Monday
14th April 2008 at 7.45 p.m.**

**Annual General Meeting
Followed by a Demo of
Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008**

Committee members will present their annual reports and will want to hear from those present how best the Group can serve their needs. A new committee needs to be elected.

Afterwards Paul & Chris Kuzmin will demonstrate some of the features of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008.

Spread the word and please bring a friend — coffee, tea & chocolate biscuits are free.

**Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday
of each month at 7.45pm at the
Stoughton Youth Club and Community
Centre (opposite "The Royal" — Pub)
Worplesdon Road (A322), Guildford.**

Forthcoming Meetings

Monday 12th May 2008

Microsoft Live OneCare

Monday 9th June 2008

New AeroSoft add-ons for
Microsoft Flight Simulator X

Monday 14th July 2008

To be announced

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries or questions about the Guildford PC User Group and its activities please contact the following members of the committee:

Chairman
(Position Currently Vacant — contact Tony Hawes for info)

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<http://www.orchardoo.com>
(this site contains many of the reviews that have appeared in ROM)

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members, but only available as a download from the Group web page, thus leading to substantial savings. The Treasurer mentioned that on the assumption that membership remains at the current level or higher there is no need to raise the membership fee beyond the current £20 pa. Copies of the accounts were handed to members.

The Editor of ROM (Tony Hawes) said it was still an uphill struggle to get input for ROM, but he was very thankful for the assistance made by those members who made regular editorial contributions.

The Membership Secretary (Maxine Bushell) was absent but she considered (in a separate contribution) that with ROM now only available as a download, the necessity of recording individual postal mail addresses and printing the labels for despatching ROM by post was no longer a task that need a separate member of the committee. It was agreed therefore that the post of Membership Secretary would be allowed to lapse. A list of members is available from the Treasurer who records their details when they pay their subscriptions.

The committee then stood down and election of new committee took place. Unfortunately there was no volunteer for the post of Chairman, which is currently in abeyance. However, the former Chairman agreed that he would remain the registered Group key holder for the keys to the hall. The positions of Treasurer, Editor of ROM, Secretary & Public Relations and Web Master remain with the current incumbents who were elected unopposed by members present. Contact details of Committee members will appear in the June / July issue of ROM.

Monday 14th May 2007.

Upgrading to Vista and Blue Squirrels' Clickbook Program. An interactive demonstration showing how to upgrade your operating system from Windows XP to Windows Vista followed by a demonstration of Blue Squirrel's software printing called "ClickBook". This is a very easy to use program which will turn anything you can print into a booklet format (and others). ClickBook will take any of the many varieties of computer and Windows application documents such as Word, Publisher, PDF, HTML, text etc and shrink the pages or rotate the layout to fit the output format you have chosen. It will print both sides of the paper and always maintaining the book page numbering.

Monday 11th June 2007.

Paint Shop Pro Tutorials. We were shown some of the Lynda.com tutorials that come with Paint Shop Pro XI Photo. They covered everything from the basics to the more complex of photo editing procedures. We saw how to rotate your image, adjust the levels to compensate for lack of flash, correct skin blemishes, whiten teeth, remove objects and crop images ready for printing. The woman doing the voice over had a strong American accent which took a while to get used to but she didn't use too many technical terms in her descriptions. An informative evening

Monday 9th July 2007

Survey Results and DVD Home Moviemaking.

The first part of the evening on Monday 9th July was devoted to a presentation by Laurence Fenn of his ROM Survey of how members use their PC's. The result of the Members Survey can be viewed on the Group Web site. This was followed by a tutorial DVD presentation of "DVD Home Moviemaking - A Beginners Guide". Applicable to all the main home movie-making programs including Pinnacle Studio Plus, Ulead Video Studio and Adobe Premiere Elements the tutorial covered the subject from basic concepts to a professional standard in episodes covering such subjects as, DVD standards, shooting your video, transferring home movies from a camcorder to PC, video editing, adding sound and special effects, adding stills, and burning to disc. I am sure that this introduction to the subject will encourage members to think seriously about acquiring a camcorder.

Monday 10th September 2007

Symantec Ghost 12 and Seagate's FreeAgent Go.

A practical demonstration of Symantec Norton Ghost 12. Ghost as a file transfer / back-up program was created in the late 1990s, GHOST being the acronym for "General Hardware-Oriented System Transfer".

As your Editor explained, every computer, no matter how carefully maintained is still subject to disaster, whether by viruses, Trojans, faulty files, hard drive failure or some other catastrophe. A regular back up routine should therefore have a high priority. We were given a practical demo of how to back-up a laptop's hard drive to an external hard drive and how easy it was for Ghost 12 to backup files, folders or the entire internal hard drive including the operating system.

We saw how by booting from the Ghost 12 CD that comes with the program the system could be booted into a reduced Windows interface with a Ghost recovery application, from which it's possible to choose a backup recovery point that allows backups to be recovered even when the computer could not be otherwise booted up. Also shown was the Ghost 12 facility that allows the cloning of one hard disk to another. A useful facility when it comes to upgrade a small Drive C hard drive to a new much larger drive. This facility clones the whole drive: operating system, files, applications, the lot, and as demoed it works.

We also He also gave a demonstration of Seagate's FreeAgent Go. This is a small external 160GB hard drive which includes software that lets you download from your desktop computer your working files like Word, Excel etc., carry them around and work on them elsewhere. Later these updated files can be synced to the appropriate files on your main computer when you return to base. To keep your data safe FreeAgent Go includes an application that offers strong file encryption to protect your content, and allows you sync your files from several PCs — an interesting concept.

Monday 8th October 2007

Microsoft Excel/Access. Francis Jacques, our treasurer, enjoys cycle racing in his spare time and combines this with his computer knowledge to organise cycle races of various lengths with up to 120 participants. He demonstrated how he prepared the documentation using Access 2000 and Excel 2000. All the potential competitors have to enter with a form giving name, address, club, date of birth, past best time for this length of race, etc. From this information he sets up an Access database with additional fields for handicap, start time, likely finishing time and order of start. From this database he produces a Query to extract the

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additional information from the tables in accordance with criteria such as the formula for determining handicaps, the likely finishing time and order of start. The data is then transferred to Excel in order to produce the start sheets to be distributed to the competitors prior to the race and the result sheets afterwards. An Access report is used to print the competitors name, address and competition number on envelopes which are fed directly into a printer.

Monday 12th November 2007

Lexmark X4550 All-in-One. A hands-on demonstration of the Lexmark X4550 All-in-One, this is a combined printer, scanner, copier and fax machine which also has a built-in 802.11g Wi-Fi for wireless printing. With multi-function devices fast gaining popularity among home users most printer manufacturers have a range of similar All-in-One Multi Function Devices (MFDs).

We were shown the capabilities of the flatbed scanner including a simple Copy button, that was particularly quick with an accurate copy of the original emerging within seconds. We then saw how well the optical character recognition (OCR) software (Abby FineReader 6 which is bundled and installed by default from the installation CD) worked, this impressively scanned and converted a magazine article into a Microsoft Word document in very short order — ideal if one wants to copy an article and extract content for later editing in Word. Other features demonstrated included the normal scan of a photo for saving to one's hard disk; using the Import function for importing files from a memory card and how to use the quite comprehensive editing features of the installed Lexmark editing suite.

Colour printing using only the basic cartridges was demonstrated and the quality was considered to be more than satisfactory. Digital media memory card slots (SD and CF) let one print direct from the card without a computer being connected. The provision of a PictBridge socket alongside the memory card slots allows the connection of a digital camera with a PictBridge connection, in this way photos can be printed directly from the camera. The fax facility, of course, requires a fax modem in the computer.

Monday 10th December 2007

Annual Christmas Quiz. The Christmas quiz was once again a big success with a good turnout. Congratulations to Ric Evans who got the most questions right and had 1st choice of the many prizes on offer.

Monday 14th January 2008

Windows Movie Maker. At our first meeting of the New Year we had a practical demonstration of how to use Windows

Movie Maker, a free application that comes as part of Microsoft's Windows XP and Windows Vista operating systems. The demo on a 64-bit Notebook used the latest Windows Vista version of Movie Maker, but there is not too much difference between this and the version that comes with Windows XP (SP2).

Windows Movie Maker introduced an easy and intuitive new interface to help users turn their video memories into winning videos. The improved effects and multiple transition options in Windows Movie Maker, together with the high-end graphics power of today's PCs, can help turn just about anyone into a movie director.

With a JVC Camcorder connected to the computer via the Firewire port we were shown how easy it is using Windows Movie Maker to import video from a Camcorder, to Edit and trim video footage, add Music and narrations, create titles and end credits etc.

The demo finished when we saw a six-minute edited home video created with Windows Movie Maker which was ready for burning to DVD using Windows DVD Maker. Windows DVD Maker is only available in Windows Vista Home Premium and Windows Vista Ultimate, (not with Windows XP). With it the user can create professional-looking video DVDs that can be viewed on home DVD players as well as on a PC and regardless of geographical region codes.

Although Windows Movie Maker doesn't have all the bells and whistles of 'full' consumer video editing programs, for those on a tight budget or just wanting to experiment with video editing, Microsoft Movie Maker is surprisingly capable (and free) when it comes to editing your Camcorder home video footage.

Monday 11th February 2008

Plustek OpticFilm 7500i AI Film Scanner

On Monday evening, 11th February, Tony demonstrated this scanner and for comparison brought along his three year old Epson Perfection 4990 flat bed scanner to see how the results of the two compared.

He emphasised how important it was to transfer to a digital format the many 35mm transparencies or 35 film strips that we all have, recording memories of past occasions. Many of them, with the passage of time and handling, have scratches and colour loss. The Plustek 7500i AI is a professional scanner costing £395 and is fully described in the ROM article together with the software included.

The results of the tests of the Plustek compared to the Epson were very disappointing. The scratches were still showing and the colour loss was very obvious. The Plustek was slow, at 1200 dpi taking 6 minutes to scan and remove imperfections with the hardware rectification built into the scanner and the bundled SilverFast software. In the case of the Epson; corrections for scratches and the removal of dust and spots was car-

ried out using their [Epson] bundled Digital Ice image correction and enhancement program. The colour loss was corrected using the EpsonScan software, but this scanner was very slow too, taking the same 6 minutes for a 1200dpi scan.

What could not be ascertained was whether the Plustek scanner or the supplied software was responsible for the disappointing results. Plustek comes with a plug-in for Adobe Photoshop permitting direct operation of the Plustek scanner via Photoshop, but as Tony does not have Adobe Photoshop installed on his computer it was not possible to assess whether this would have made an improvement. It was an interesting evening to see the two scanners side-by-side and the differing results.

Monday 10 March 2008.

Microsoft Office Publisher 2007. Tony Hawes demonstrated Microsoft Office Publisher 2007. This is part of the Microsoft Office Professional 2007 suite of programs but can be purchased separately. Tony said that 2007 seemed very similar to Microsoft Publisher 2003 which he uses for the production of ROM every second month, except that with the 2007 version it is now possible to download an add-on for the creation of PDF and XPS files. There appears to be an additional number of pre-designed templates for various projects.

Using Microsoft Office Publisher 2007 he demonstrated how he prepares ROM. He starts by dividing the A4 page into three columns and places a text frame in each. On the front page he has a fourth text frame across the top for the headings. He showed the effect of various fonts and colour combinations to attract attention. He then imported text into the columns demonstrating how it can be made to flow from one column to the next and even to the next page. The inserting of pictures with their captions within the text and how the text wraps round them was shown. The rather tricky job of page numbering and labelling was discussed and the "Continued on page xx" and "Continued from page xx" link facility was shown.

The evening ended by illustrating what can be accomplished using the various templates for calendars, greeting cards, business cards, brochures etc which are provided. Tony's final demo was to show how easy it is to create individual "Lost and Found" and "For Sale" notices complete with photographs etc.

...and for the rest of 2008?

Whilst our regular stalwarts show their expertise at our various demos and hands-on workshops at our monthly meetings, we definitely need more input from other members.

Do you have a particular expertise in a computer related subject that you could talk about? If so please let us know — we need variety and not the same old faces each month — thanks.

2008 — The Year of a Resurgence of DOS?

Unlike Windows Vista, DOS doesn't waste precious resources displaying flashy graphics. In fact, most versions — from IBM's PC-DOS to Microsoft's MS-DOS to their open-source variants such as FreeDOS — can run extremely well with a few hundred kilobytes of RAM and less than 10Mb of hard-drive space. That frees the rest of your PC's disk space and RAM to perform more-important tasks.

Windows Vista, of course, requires a minimum of a 1-GHz processor, 512Mb of RAM, and a DirectX 9 graphics card just to boot the OS. To handle all of the operating system's fancy decorative flourishes proficiently, users need 1GB of RAM and a discrete graphics card armed with more than 128Mb of video memory.

that it intends to stick with its plan to end most sales of Windows XP on 30 June 2008, effectively steamrolling (or stampeding, depending on the term that captures one's fancy) consumers into adopting Windows Vista from that point forward, willy-nilly, whether they want it or not.

Sensing the burgeoning wave of dissatisfaction with Vista, users attending CES earlier this year initiated a Save Windows XP campaign. More than 100,000 computer users have so far signed a petition addressed to Microsoft so far.

Users argue that, with its smaller footprint, simpler interface, and lower system requirements, Windows XP has numerous and substantial advantages over Vista. But taking the same reasoning even further, a DOS revival would solve even more prob-

personal Web surfing now!"

Even Gamers see the Obvious Benefits of DOS.

Commented dedicated gamer L337 PwNX0Rz, 31, of Holloway, North London. "Before I tried gaming on DOS, I preferred the Xbox 360," he says. "But once I learned to edit my autoexec.bat file to allocate system memory, I got hooked on DOS-only games. Even my online Guild game partner can't stop talking about the new massively single-player, text-based game World of ZorkCraft."

DOS in the 21st Century...and Beyond

Conventional wisdom says that in 1981, Microsoft founder Bill Gates quipped, "640k [of RAM] ought to be enough for anybody." Actually, there's no such evi-

A	B
1 DOS	Windows Vista
2 Stable command line interface	Bloated graphical menu system
3 Runs with as little as 640KB of RAM	Requires at least 512MB of RAM
4 Can run with no hard drive	OS alone takes up 15GB
5 Streamlined Edit.exe text editor	Overblown Notepad.exe editor
6 Easy to configure with autoexec.bat	Complicated system configuration
7 Games launch in seconds	Games require high-end graphics card
8 Eye-popping ANSI, ASCII graphics	System-choking Aero graphics

DOS vs. Vista. A comparison of each OS's features demonstrates that DOS outshines Vista in every relevant category

A	B	C
1	DOS	Windows Vista
2		
3 Boot time	Seconds: 3	Seconds: 97
4 Text document load time	Seconds: 1	Seconds: 6
5 World Bench Zip Test	Seconds: 7	Seconds: 302
6 Copy 500MB file	Seconds: 2	Seconds: 7
7 Shutdown time	Seconds: 0.1	Seconds: 23

DOS zooms past Windows Vista on every performance test. Just look

DOS could hardly be more different. As you can see in the screen grab (above left) DOS's full complement of user-friendly features cleverly beats Windows Vista's complex set of tools. Feature for feature, DOS offers a simpler, more efficient way to accomplish your computing tasks.

In today's highly mobile world, Vista's demanding specs leave many laptops — even relatively new models — out in the cold. DOS, however, can turn an aging laptop into a performance powerhouse faster than you can say "Where do I want to go today?"

In independent tests, DOS outperformed Windows Vista in every task thrown at it, as shown in the second screen grab (above right). From its astonishingly brisk boot times to its snappy shutdowns, DOS does everything faster and less fussily. As for the things it can't do at all, well, none of them actually matter.

What About Windows XP?

Despite cries of outrage from sober, diligent, and thrifty users, Microsoft says

lems associated with Windows-era gewgaws and fripperies—thereby essentially eliminating the need for continued XP sales into the bargain.

Many others agree. So much so that they have set up a campaign with the title "Save DOS: The Ultimate Antidote to Vista's Bloat — Tired of sluggish, expensive and overblown operating systems? — Its time to return to the command line".

There Have Been Many Testimonials for DOS.

James Bradley, IT director for a leading City Commodity Broker, says that he noticed critical performance differences last year while his company evaluated Windows Vista.

"I tested Vista on one of our systems, and it ran, but just barely," Bradley says.

Then a lightbulb went on. Bradley remembered that there were perfectly good DOS-based PCs stored in the basement. "Some of them were even portable with handles and everything!"

The results were spectacular, he said. "Those old PCs don't have browsers or graphics, so our employees do a lot less

dence he uttered those words. But he should have. They still ring true today.

And there's no reason why a DOS resurgence need be restricted to PCs. DOS's minimal hardware requirements and intuitive command-line interface would make it an ideal platform for smart phones, for example. A DOS-based BlackBerry would make a compelling rival to Apple's pretty but unduly complex iPhone and to devices based on Google's as yet unproven Android OS.

In short, DOS is poised to reassert itself as the perfect operating system for 2008 and beyond. The ahead-of-its-time product that Microsoft introduced in 1981 represents not just software's past but a bright, enticing future — and many can't wait for it to return to its rightful dominance once again.

In short when it comes DOS vs. Vista there is just No Contest — or at least no comparison.

Tempted enough to want a free copy of DOS? Details as to where it can be obtained can be found in the box on the back page — Ed

April Funnies

In April Norman Risbridger our late Chairman was in the habit of sending me some pictures he'd picked up for publishing in ROM as April-Fool's jokes. Trouble is that they weren't always jokes but illustrations of real-life events. So I thought it worthwhile taking up his baton and having a go at finding those odd photos that can bring a smile to one's face. Here's this year's funnies.



Diskeeper 2008 Professional Premier Edition

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

I reviewed the previous version of Diskeeper last year and gave it a good buy rating. Now the company have launched the 2008 version with a range of enhancements, so how does it compare?

As the company says in their Press Release:

"Diskeeper Releases Highly Anticipated, Most Intelligent Real Time Defragmenter. After extensive field testing and dramatic results that went far beyond expectations in overall system performance and reliability gains, Diskeeper Corporation today announced the launch of Diskeeper 2008, the most automated performance enhancement defragmenter ever built.

As Diskeeper Corporation Europe is constantly concerned about the needs and wants of its customers, Diskeeper 2008 now holds a variety of highly requested new features.

1. *NEW! Defrag with free space as low as 1% ensures optimum performance and reliability even under extreme hard disk conditions.*
2. *NEW! Defrag under the heaviest fragmentations levels including millions of fragments.*
3. *NEW! Intelligent defrag dynamically chooses which software engine will net the most performance gains on a given system or environment.*
4. *NEW! Frag Shield 2.0 boosts reliability by automatically preventing crash-inducing fragmentation of critical system files.*
5. *NEW! Volume Shadow Copy Service (VSS) Compatibility mode leverages the data protection of VSS with the performance and reliability benefits found from defragmenting.*
6. *NEW! Disk Performance Analyzer for Networks in the Administrator Edition provides real-time performance metrics on-demand or emailed automatically.*
7. *I-FAAST 2.0 (Intelligent File Access Acceleration Sequencing Technology) automatically boosts access speeds for your most frequently used files (by 10% - 80%).*

All of this takes place using Diskeeper's innovative InvisiTasking background processing technology. This taps the full power of otherwise idle resources to ensure maximum performance and reliability at all times. Once Diskeeper 2008 is deployed, a system runs faster and more stably."

In Use

Diskeeper for Home/Home Office comes in four versions: Home, Pro, Pro Premier, and Home Server.

The differences being:

- **Diskeeper 2008 Home.** Automatic defragmentation the "pros" use designed for home-computing needs to keep non-networked PCs healthy and running at top speed.
- **Diskeeper 2008 Professional.** Designed for the typical office PC user, Diskeeper 2008 Professional includes advanced protection against performance problems for PCs and Laptops.
- **Diskeeper 2008 Pro Premier.** Specially designed for high-end systems and power users. Get an EXTRA performance boost above and beyond anything ever experienced before - even better than when a system was new!
- **Diskeeper 2008 HomeServer.** Diskeeper 2008 HomeServer edition is top-speed cruise control for Windows Home Server (WHS), allowing unprecedented performance and reliability for centralized applications and shared files.

Diskeeper Features

- **Fully Automatic Operation.** Diskeeper is designed to operate without your intervention. Simply install Diskeeper, then sit back and let it take care of the details. Of course, you can also run Diskeeper manually. (But you probably have better things to do with your time. That's what Automatic Defragmentation with InvisiTasking is for!)
- **Descriptive Console Interface.** The Diskeeper console provides an intuitive and informative defragmentation experience. Common commands are grouped together in the Quick Launch pane, and a group of tabbed panes show you a wide variety of information. Diskeeper shows you the condition of your disks, and provides suggestions for improving or maintaining your disks.
- **Performance and Volume Health Analysis.** Diskeeper collects and displays data regarding the performance and overall health of your volumes in the Dashboard tab. This information allows you to be more proactive in the management and maintenance of your computers.
- **Boot-Time Defragmentation.** Defragment files at boot-time that cannot be moved safely when Windows is running.
- **Event Logging.** Diskeeper records information about its activity in two ways. First, general information about previously-run defragmentation job is shown in the Log tab within the Diskeeper console. Additional information can also be stored in a log file. A wide variety of information can be saved for future reference.

Other Things About Diskeeper

- When running Diskeeper in Automatic mode, you can run other tasks while defragmentation is occurring.
- With the exception of boot-time operations, Diskeeper runs as a Windows Service and it optionally logs useful defragmentation information into the Windows Application Event Log.
- Diskeeper can be uninstalled in the standard manner using the Add/Remove Programs applet in the Windows Control Panel.
- Due to limits built into Windows 2000, Diskeeper cannot defragment files on NTFS volumes on Windows 2000 systems with a cluster size greater than 4KB (4096 bytes), except during Boot-Time Defragmentation. This limitation has been removed in Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows Home Server, and Windows Server 2003, where Diskeeper can defragment NTFS volumes with cluster sizes of up to 64 kilobytes. *Note the boot-time defragmentation operations are not affected by this limit.*
- By default, you must be logged into an account that is a member of the Administrators group to run Diskeeper. Diskeeper Professional and Pro Premier editions can be set to allow non-Administrators to run Diskeeper. Click here for more information.

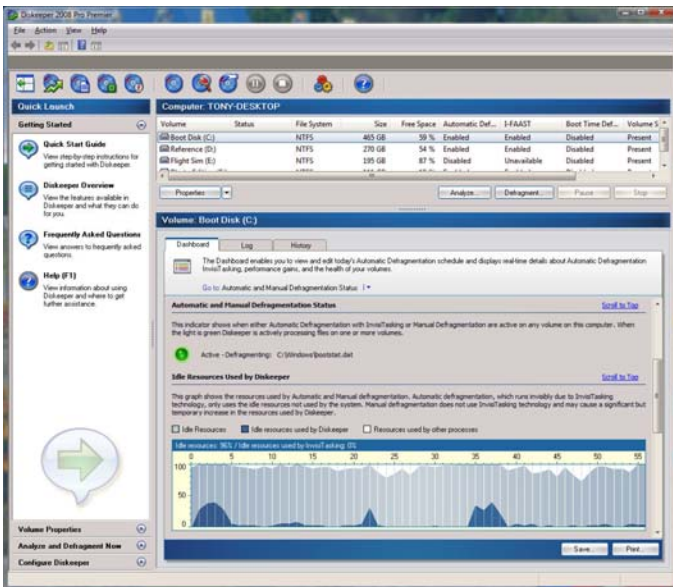
The provided review copy was the downloadable Pro Premier version but there is no difference between the boxed and downloadable version apart from the absence of a CD, so once downloaded and to avoid conflicts I uninstalled the previous version and ran the setup file. All went well and in a couple of minutes and with a re-boot it was up and running.

I've been using Diskeeper for a couple of years now and until the arrival of the 2008 version I'd relied on Diskeeper 2007 to keep my hard-disks defragmented, and it had done so with absolutely no trouble at all, the Diskeeper automatic defragging process works like a dream. Previously I'd relied on either the Norton Utilities SpeedDisk utility or the Windows Defrag utility. Both work reasonably well but both can take an age to run, but Diskeeper just works away in the background leaving your hard disks at their optimum operating condition.

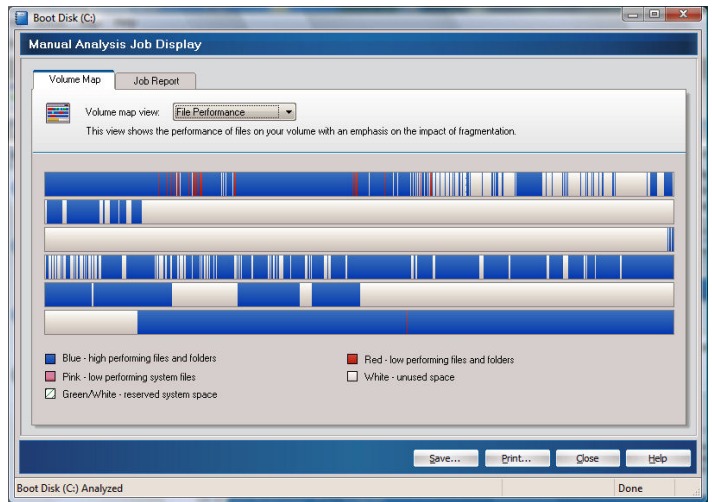
It's technically hard to explain exactly how Diskeeper goes about its business, but the features listed above plus the screen shots on the next page show the options available and results obtainable when using Diskeeper's various defragging actions.

Conclusions

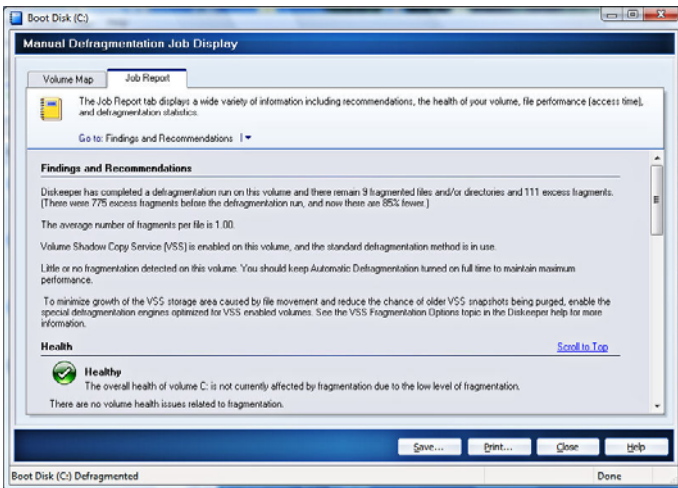
(Continued on page 7)



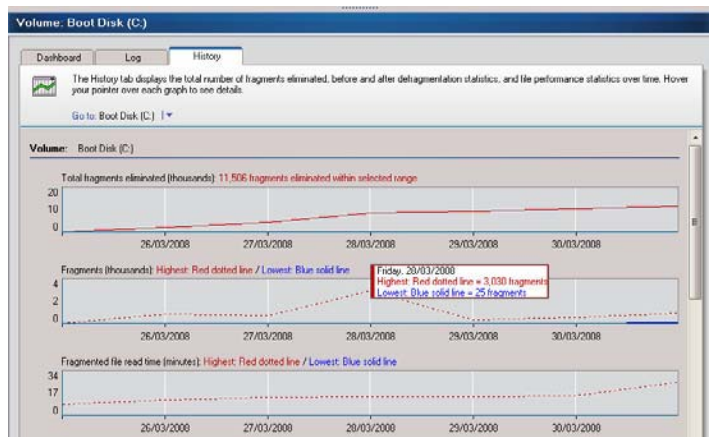
Diskeeper 2008 — Console view showing options available



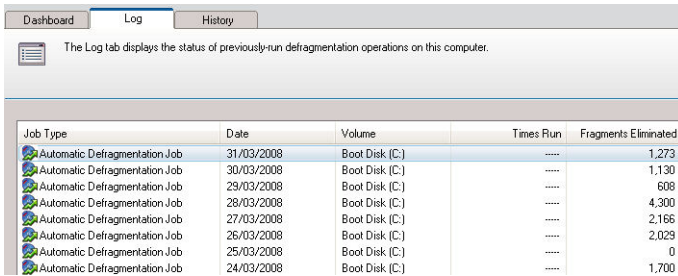
Job Report showing file performance



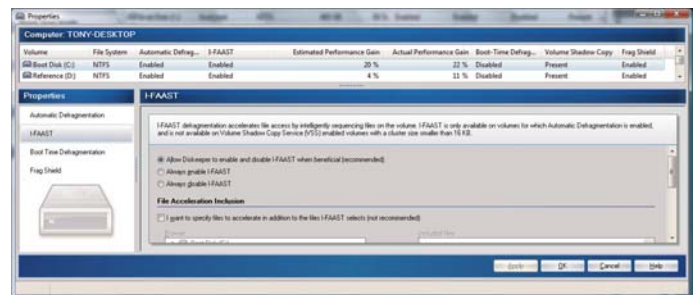
Job Report showing Drive C as Healthy with no fragmentation



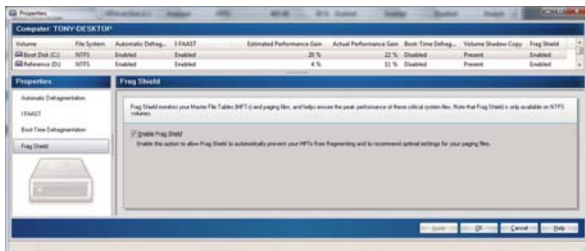
History showing fragments deleted



Log showing history of defragmentation operations



I-FAAST options screen



Enabling Frag Shield monitors the Master File Tables (MFT) and the Windows paging files to ensure peak performance.

(Continued from page 6)

Being simple and fast Diskeeper really is Defragmentation Made Easy — The user interface is straightforward and intuitive and once set up it automatically defrags your hard disks with no manual intervention whatsoever with the result that the old built-in Windows manual defrag routine can be consigned to the dustbin of history. Recommended.

Pricing & Availability

Diskeeper 2008 Professional Edition - Complete package £34.80

Diskeeper 2008 Pro Premier Edition—Complete package £69.61

These prices from Amazon.co.uk

A one-month free trial version can be downloaded from:

http://www.diskeepereurope.com/en/01_ho/xhtml/downloads_dk.ht

Nuance PDF Converter 5

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

Introduction

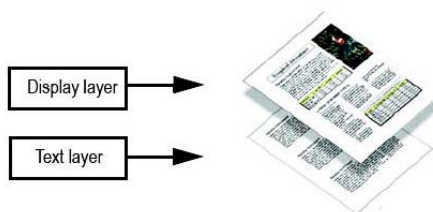
Have you ever wanted to convert the text and graphics in a PDF file so you can edit it and use it MS Word? You can do it if you have Adobe's acrobat; you highlight columns or portions of text, copying them and paste into a Word document, but it isn't easy, formatting goes all haywire, fonts are wrong and the process needs an inordinate amount of fiddling to get it right. If you don't have Acrobat it's very hard indeed to convert one format into another.

A couple of years ago ScanSoft introduced a new utility called ScanSoft PDF Converter which makes it easy to convert PDF files to Microsoft Word documents. Since then its gone through several version upgrades each with added functionality and two years ago Nuance (the new name for ScanSoft) introduced PDF Converter 4. Following the ScanSoft / Nuance tradition of updates to their programs every two years, in February 2008 Nuance launched PDF Converter 5.

Background — How do PDF Files work?

PDF files display texts correctly wherever they are viewed because they carry their typographic information with them. Fonts in the document are embedded in the PDF file and are used after distribution to reconstruct the document. The display does not depend on the needed font files being available on the viewing machine, nor on the language of its operating system.

PDF documents present their pages as images. They can be marked-up and commented, but the ability to change the basic text is limited. Most PDF files can be searched, because the file has two layers. There is an image layer that is presented on-screen. Behind that there is usually a text layer that can be matched to the characters displayed on the screen.



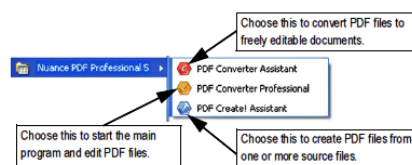
When the starting point for a PDF file is a set of images, or a scanning process, this text layer is not present and the result is an image-only PDF. When the starting point is an editable document, the text layer can be created and the PDF is called 'Normal' or 'Searchable'. The creator of a PDF can require provision of a password to allow access the text layer.

How Does PDF Converter 5 Work?

PDF Converter 5 has the ability to perform Optical Character Recognition (OCR). This is the process of extracting text from an image. It does not need to use OCR to unlock PDF or XPS files with an accessible text layer - it must capture the page layout and arrange the given text and other elements correctly on each page in the new document.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is normally used only for input pages without an accessible text layer or when non-standard character encoding is detected, but you can require it for any conversion under Processing Options in the Converter Assistant.

The Three Essentials of PDF Converter



1. Create PDF Files

The PDF Create! element of PDF Converter 5 creates PDF files from a wide range of file types. The Print dialog box in print-capable applications will offer a printer named ScanSoft PDF Create! The PDF Create! Assistant lets you compile a list of files generated by different applications. You can also create PDFs from XPS files.

Each file can be converted to a separate PDF file, or they can be combined, overlaid or packaged into a single file. When working in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint or Outlook you can call on the program to create a PDF file directly from your current document. When converting from Microsoft Word, hyperlinks and comments can be transferred and you can set bookmarks to be generated from the structure of the Word document. Files can be protected by passwords and can include watermarks.

2. Edit PDF Files

When it comes to editing PDF files PDF Converter Professional provides extensive control over PDF files through an easy-to-use browsing and reading interface. You can edit pages and documents, annotate and review them, adjust document security, sign your documents and more. PDF documents can be compiled from different sources and pages can be rearranged. The program delivers a powerful document management system: use it to create ar-

chives from related documents to index and search them later. Alternatively, in the Enterprise edition, you can access different document management systems through the application: use them to store or archive your PDF documents.

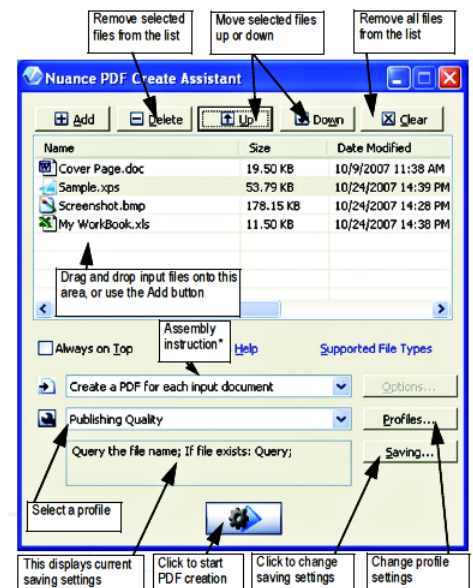
3. Export PDF Files

To do more with PDF's PDF Converter 5 lets you unlock PDF and XPS files to edit them as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, Corel WordPerfect, and generic RTF files. It also can open PDF files directly from these applications, edit them and save them in the appropriate file type. It converts PDF files up to and including version 1.7. The program offers four types of conversions:

- Standard documents
- Legal documents
- Forms and
- Spreadsheets.

Starting the Program

Choose Nuance PDF Professional 5 from the Windows Start Menu. This offers the following items:



To Create PDF Files

Click the New PDF button in the Main toolbar of PDF Professional, or select New PDF from the File menu. You can create a blank PDF or choose From File... to select one or more files from an Open dialog box, even if they were created in different applications. Three further commands lead to the PDF Create Assistant giving full control over the creation process. You can also drag-and-drop files created in a print-capable application onto the PDF Converter Professional workspace. In this case the behaviour is the same as when choosing From File... .

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

Creating PDFs from Print Dialogs

The Print dialog box appearing in your print-capable applications will include a PDF Create! printer. Load a file you want to make a PDF from, then select File/Print. Select ScanSoft PDF Create! as the name of your printer. Specify a page range and other settings as desired. One PDF file is created; the number of copies value is ignored. Click Properties to check or change PDF Create! settings. Click OK to start the creation. By default the Save As dialog appears, but you can give automated saving instructions under Properties/PDF Settings.

Using the PDF Create Assistant

The Assistant is called from the Windows Start menu. It lets you compile a list of files to be converted. These files may have been created in different applications. Choose to combine the files in the given order to create a single PDF file or have each file converted separately. You can package a set of files into a single PDF. Files can also be overlaid for the conversion. The Assistant lets you use profiles to control the PDF creation. Profiles contain a group of settings designed for a particular outcome. The program includes seven profiles; you can create more for your own needs.

To Create PDFs from Microsoft Word

1. Open the Word document.
2. Select Create PDF from the Nuance PDF menu. In Word 2007 you can find this in the Nuance PDF tab.

3. Accept or change the default target folder and file name in the Save As dialog box that appears.
4. Optionally, add document information (keywords etc.).

To Package PDF Files

A package is a single PDF file that contains a set of PDF files. Packages help you group related files, making it easier to send them by e-mail.

To package a set of files, maybe of differing file types, select them in the PDF Create! Assistant. Choose packaging as the assembly instruction. Click Options to choose which cover page to use: a Create Assistant Template or the first listed file. Click GO to have PDF files created or transmitted into the package.

To open a PDF package you must use a recent PDF viewer or editor, such as Nuance PDF Converter Professional 5 (or Adobe's Acrobat Viewer will do the job). All files in the package are listed, you can open and save each one separately. With Nuance PDF Converter Professional 4 and older PDF viewers/editors, the files are indicated as attachments.

Legal Support

At the launch of the presenter mentioned creating PDFs with "Bates Stamping". This had me flummoxed for a while, but is a term used by the legal profession to label and identify legal documents with unique identifiers for each page of each document for reference and retrieval. PDF Converter 5 fully supports the "Bates Stamping" protocol.

Redaction

Document text confidentiality is achieved

by redaction — the blacking out of pieces of text or images on a PDF document and is commonly used by government departments when releasing documents into the public domain where some parts are still of a sensitive nature. Redaction is done by selecting the text or images with the Redact tool in the Document menu or the Security toolbar. This menu also allows marking for redaction by searching. The program finds all occurrences of a given text string in the document, letting you review them and choose which will be marked for redaction. When a redacted document is saved, the program always offers Save As, because the redacted file should be given a new name whilst the original file remains with the redacted items marked but still readable.

Conclusions

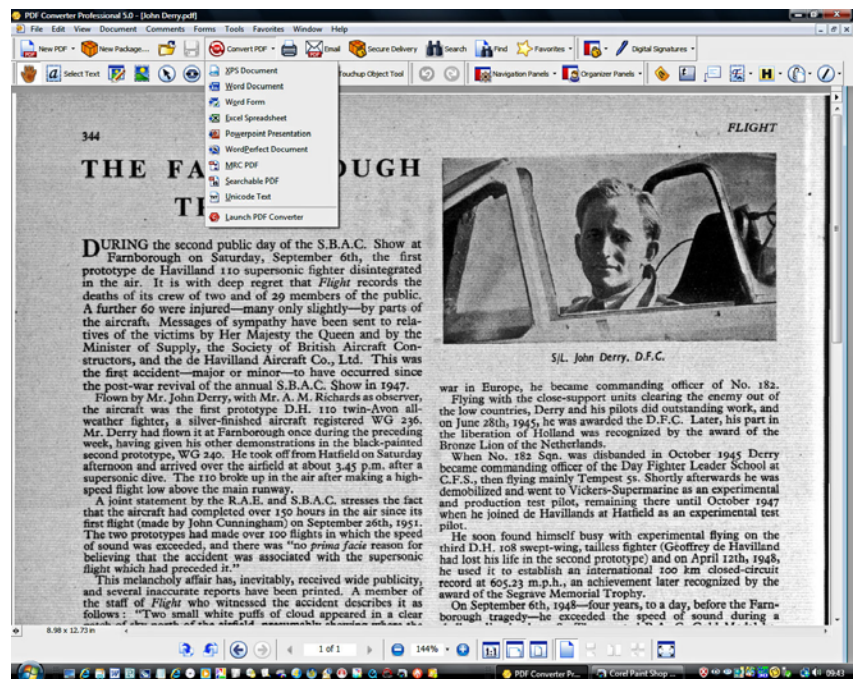
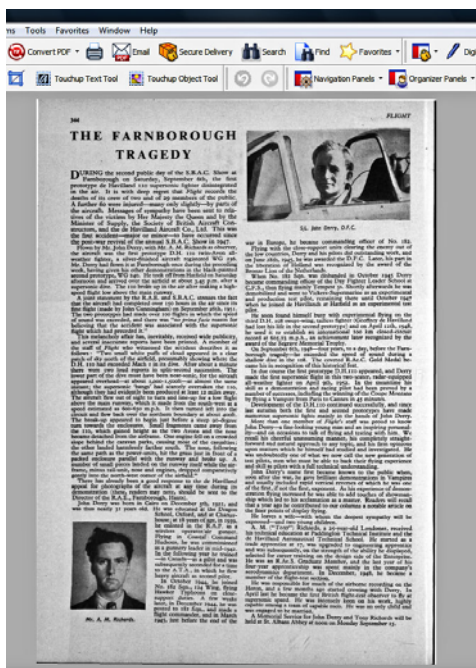
As a regular user of Adobe's Acrobat I was impressed by PDF Converter 5's capabilities. It seemed to do all that Acrobat does but at a fraction of the cost. This cost feature alone will have a bearing on one's choice. However there is one small minus feature and this concerns file size. For example I converted (printed to PDF) the last issue of ROM. The original MS Publisher file is 15.3Mb in size and using the standard PDF compression features of both PDF Converter 5 and Acrobat the resulting PDFs output file sizes were:

1. PDF Converter 5 — 3.4Mb
2. Adobe Acrobat — 1.6Mb (Original MS Pub File — 15.3Mb)

Pricing & Availability

PDF Converter Professional 5 at £92 and the less well featured PDF Converter 5 (Standard Version) for £50. Prices include VAT and delivery from Amazon.co.uk.

Following are some of the screens



Above left a 1952 magazine article archived on the Net as a PDF file. Retrieved from the archive and imported (as a PDF) into PDF Converter 5 with in the drop-down menu (shown above right) options of being able to convert to a variety of file types: namely as an XPS Document, Word Doc, Word Form, Excel Spreadsheet, PowerPoint Presentation, WordPerfect Document, MRC PDF, Searchable PDF or Unicode Text. Over on page 8 what the converted file looks like.

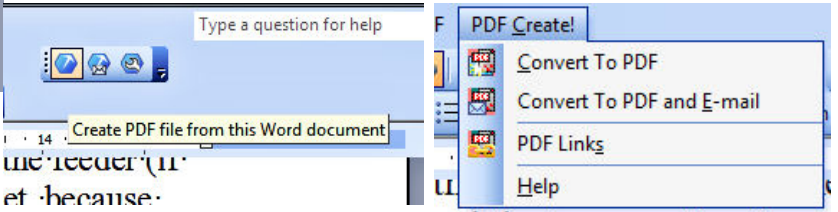
Continued on Page 8



MS Word .doc file resulting from the conversion shown on page 7. Given that the original 1952 archived file (archived as a PDF document) is not of high quality, PDF Converter 5 has made a gallant attempt at conversion as the result above shows. The font is slightly odd, but given that the converted document is a MS Word document, it's a simple matter to highlight the text, change the font and edit to one's taste.

Above (left). ROM as a MS PUB file converted (printed) as a PDF file with Adobe Acrobat.

Right above: The same file converted with Nuance PDF Converter 5. A perfect conversion.



In MS Word 2003 there is a drop-down menu invoked by an icon menu (left) to convert a MS Word document to PDF. Above is what one sees when the icon is clicked.

ABBYY FineReader 9.0 OCR Software

Reviewed by Geoff Arnold

Tony asked me to review this software at short notice and he also provided me with images of documents he'd photographed at the National Archives (NA) so as to test one of the claimed functions of ABBYY FineReader 9.0 whereby a .jpg file of a document could be processed by FineReader to retrieve the text content which as you will see works very well.

Members will be familiar with ABBYY FineReader because it has been a feature of scanners and Multi-Function Devices that have been demonstrated at the Group's regular monthly meetings. Demonstrations have taken place of scanners and multifunction products from Canon and Lexmark that come bundled with the "Lite" versions of ABBYY's FineReader OCR application.

The earlier version of FineReader (FineReader 8) was reviewed in ROM when it was compared it with OmniPage Pro 15. The review gave it a cautious "thumbs-up" for its performance. So this time round I have the latest version 9.0 to see how it works. The new features were mentioned in the last issue of ROM so I won't go through them again.



If you have a scanner, Optical Character Recognition OCR is one of the most useful features of modern scanners. Though only relevant for those that want to save time by not having to re-type a document that's available in paper form only, it can be a space saver when transferring magazine articles into PDF files for archival purposes.

FineReader comes with several predefined automated tasks. On the whole if your source

document is legible and consists of simple text pages (including tables) and of a size that will fit on the platen of your scanner, FineReader will cope admirably. But if the original is a little more complicated its necessary to use the Automation Wizard to guide you step by step through the process of creating a new customized automated task, which then can be imported and exported for easy sharing

Using FineReader 9.0 the accuracy of OCR'd was on the whole fine, but not I think up to the standards of OmniPage Pro 16. ABBYY's OCR engine appeared to be a little too enthusiastic when it came to scanning graphs and tended often to output a jumble of random letters and punctuation. Where FineReader scored over OmniPage was when a deliberately "skewed" document was placed on the platen of the scanner. As can be seen from the example it scanned this skewed document and recognised it brilliantly. The "thick book" test fooled it badly and it wouldn't recognise deeply into the spine of the book. When your editor reviewed OmniPage 16 a couple of months ago it OmniPage worked much better at this task.

If you're just scanning text, though, you

(Continued from page 10)

won't have any complaints with FineReader. Both bold and indented text was perfectly reproduced, and a downloaded PDF document, despite some problems with graphs, showed perfect text recognition. Like the previous version FineReader 9.0 comes with Adaptive Document Recognition Technology (ADRT).

With ADRT, rather than scanning piece by piece, the software checks the document first. This gives it a much better idea as to how it should scan the document, in the process working out among other things whether the document has headers and footers, the layout of the document, page numbering, how its arranged etc. that need to be considered before it goes ahead and does its scan. Similarly FineReader 9 incorporates a special Adaptive Recognition of Digital Camera Images which prepares camera images for OCR processing.

FineReader 9.0 is able to read from typical picture formats like JPG, BMP, TIFF

and PNG with its Single Step Digital Camera OCR, which makes processing camera images even easier and faster. Just load an image of one of these supported files and it starts the recognition process straight away. As mentioned, your editor sent me some .jpg images photographed from National Archives files which FineReader 9.0 recognised and converted into text as a MS Word file. It did so admirably with almost no mistakes.

Another and somewhat gimmicky feature is the ability of being able to extract text from "grabbed" computer screenshots, much like the recognition of photographic images, but I'm not sure whether this is a gimmick worth having as I find it easy enough to highlight, copy and paste when necessary — still the function is there should you require it.

Finally if you need it, ABBYY FineReader 9.0 has the capability to scan and recognise a multitude of foreign languages, (up to 179) in a host of scripts, including

Greek and Cyrillic and can spell-check 36 of them.

System requirements are a computer with a 1GHz processor, 512Mb RAM, 250Mb of hard disk space and a scanner with a TWAIN or WIA interface. Your computer should be running Windows 2000 or later (it's Vista compliant); I used the program with Windows XP.






Conclusions

FineReader 9.0 is a very comprehensive OCR suite, it's not cheap, but it gets the job done quickly and with the minimum of fuss. The digital camera options are impressive and appealing.

Pricing and Availability

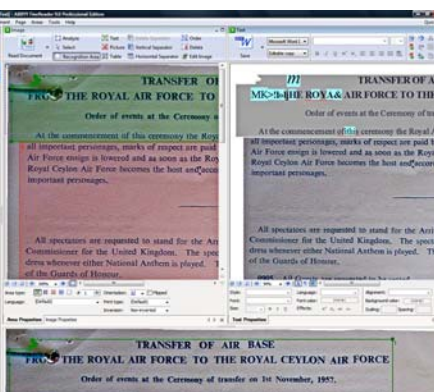
ABBYY FineReader Professional 9.0 at about £90 from Amazon.co.uk is a bargain especially if you consider its nearest competitor OmniPage Pro 16 costs over double. If you've an earlier version or want to upgrade from an OEM 'lite' version that came with

Get results with one mouse click

-  Scan to Microsoft Word
-  Convert PDF/Images to Microsoft Word
-  Scan to PDF
-  Convert Photo to Microsoft Word
-  Scan to Image File
-  Scan
-  Open

Do not show this window again

 ABBYY FineReader Essentials
Work Selection Screen



JPG Photo converted to MS Word



Left:
An occasion when a PDF File wasn't converted accurately to MS Word

Norton
from symantec
News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SYMANTEC'S NEWEST NORTON GHOST PACKS POWERFUL DETECTION AND THREAT PROTECTION PUNCH

Norton Ghost 14.0 Features Most Advanced PC Backup and Recovery Tools

Symantec Corp. (NASDAQ: SYMC), makers of Norton security software, today announced the release of Norton Ghost 14.0, its most advanced PC backup and recovery solution. Norton Ghost 14.0 backs up and restores a user's entire PC computer system, including all of its data, applications, settings, folders and files — and offers exclusive remote backup management, incremental backups and advanced compression features to ensure everything on the PC is protected. And users can quickly recover lost or damaged files and restore from system failures, even if their computer's operating system does not start.

Most notably, Norton Ghost 14.0 leverages Symantec's ThreatCon global security alerting system (http://www.symantec.com/businesssecurity_inspiration/index.jsp) to identify threats, trigger offers powerful protection with new features such as offline backups as well as enhanced incremental backups, remote management, lightweight Restore capability, and a choice of more Norton Ghost 14.0 backup types: full system (disk image) or specific files and folders. Incremental backups and enhanced compression help reduce the amount of required storage, while encryption helps keep everything safe. And recovery is even easier with Google Desktop integration, which allows users to recover data even faster with searchable backup indexes.

"Performance is a priority and a critical piece of the performance equation is depth and breadth of protection from unforeseen threats to system data," said Con Mallon, director of product marketing, Symantec Corp. "No other solution on the market today protects users — even those who diligently back up their systems — from the all too prevalent and potentially system-crashing threats like Norton Ghost 14.0 and its advanced ThreatCon integration feature. Norton Ghost 14.0 truly offers the most advanced PC backup and recovery tools in the industry."

Norton Ghost 14.0 works with most storage drives, including external hard drives, networked drives, and recordable and removable CDs and DVDs.

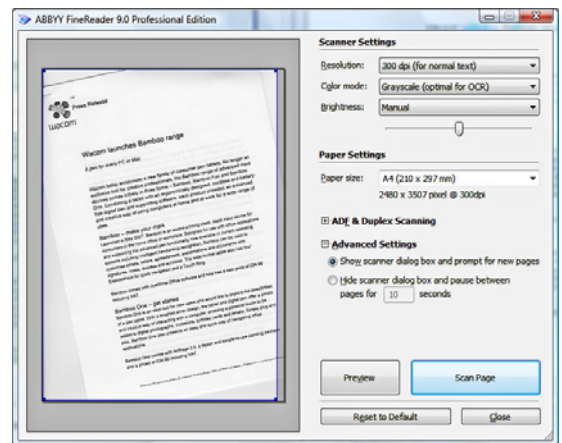
Pricing and Availability
Norton Ghost 14.0 will be available in UK stores from April 2008 priced £39.99. It will also be available through the Symantec Store at www.symantecstore.co.uk.

About Symantec
Symantec is a global leader in infrastructure software, enabling businesses and consumers to have confidence in a connected world. The company helps customers protect their infrastructure, information and transactions by delivering software and services that address risks to security,

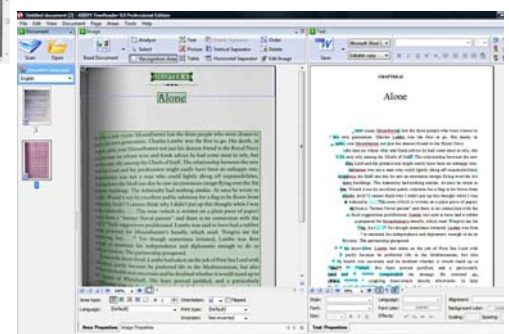
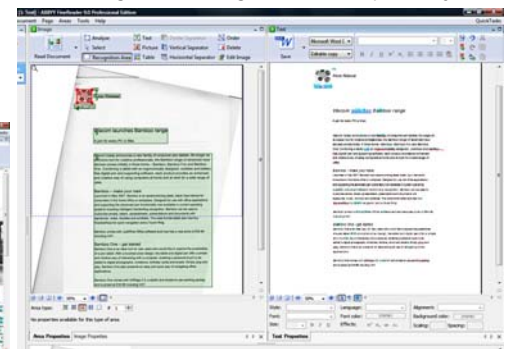
Plain A4 Press Release Scanned & Recognised to MS Word



PDF Converted to MS Word



A 'skewed' original. It recognised almost perfectly —



Scanning into the spine of a thick open book. The resulting output was not good.

NewsBytes — Acer & HDD Recovery Pro

ACER—NEW NOTEBOOKS

Late last month in London Acer launched the latest versions of their Aspire series of Gemstone computers under the name "Gemstone Blue". Blue probably because they come equipped with Blu-ray DVD readers/writers.

The two models launched the Aspire 8920 and the Aspire 6920 feature Intel Centrino Core 2 Duo processors and up to 4GB of DDR2 667MHz RAM, depending on your choice. Both come with an integrated webcam, fingerprint reader, draft-N wireless, Bluetooth, CineDash media controller and Acer Arcade Deluxe software for all managing your media files. Depending on model they come with either Vista Ultimate or Home Premium

The 6920G series comes with a 320GB hard drive, 1X Blu-ray Super Multi double-layer drive, and choice of a 16-inch LCD screen at 1920x1080 or 1366x768. Graphics are handled by an NVIDIA GeForce 9500M GS with 512MB of dedicated video RAM that can also grab up to 768MB of system RAM. The notebook weighs 7.7 pounds with the standard battery attached.

The much bigger 8920G comes with up to two 320GB hard disk drives, an optional TV tuner and a 2X Blu-ray Super Multi double-layer drive, and has a massive 18.4-inch LCD running at full HD (1920x1080). Its possible to opt for the same GeForce 9500M GS graphics as fitted to the 6920G

or pay more for the NVIDIA GeForce 9650M. Video RAM is the same as the 6920G. The notebook weighs in at 4.1 Kgs (9.04 lbs) with the standard battery.

The 6920G features an unconventional 16" display (to benefit from 16:9 ratio widescreen movies), while the 8920G jacks that up to 18.4", both featuring 1080p resolution.

Dolby were present at the launch extolling the virtues of their Dolby Home Theatre technology which comes as standard. The 6920G has a Dolby 5.1 speaker output whilst the larger 8920G comes with a 5.1 speaker set-up complete with six integrated speakers including a built-in subwoofer, which has been designed to operate without disrupting hard drive movement.

Having seen and heard these two models in action at the launch I was highly impressed. They have stunning looks, the definition of the playback of a Blu-ray movie at 1080p resolution was astounding and the built-in speakers would blow your socks off without a hint of distortion.



The Stunning Acer Aspire 8920G with its 18.4-inch screen



Built-in Media Control Panel

Due to hit the UK market later this month they would be ideal for a true desktop replacement and are definitely worth a serious look.

Product Line-up
Price Range 16": Aspire 6920G: £699.99 - £1149.99 RRP

- Intel® Centrino® Processor Technology
- 4096Mb (2*2GB) RAM (DDR2 667 MHz)
- NVIDIA® GeForce® 9500M GS with up to 1280 MB of TurboCache™ (512 MB of dedicated GDDR2 VRAM, up to 768 MB of shared system memory)
- Intel® Wireless WiFi Link 4965AGN (dual-band quad-mode 802.11a/b/g/Draft-N)
- Acer Arcade Deluxe™ & Integrated Media Console
- Dolby Home Theater®, Virtual 5.1 Surround Sound, 2 Speakers + 1 Subwoofer
 - 6-in-1 Card Reader
- 0.3Mp integrated CrystalEye webcam
 - Bluetooth 2.0
- Bio-Protection fingerprint solution
 - 6 cell battery

£699.99 15" WXGA Intel® Core™2 Duo T5750 250GB HDD	£899.99 15" WXGA Intel® Core™2 Duo T8100 320GB HDD Blu-ray Disc™/DVD-Super Multi	£999.99 16" WXGA Intel® Core™2 Duo T8300 320GB HDD Blu-ray Disc™/DVD-Super Multi TV Tuner & Remote	£1149.99 16" WXGA Intel® Core™2 Duo T9300 320GB HDD Blu-ray Disc™/DVD-Super Multi Windows Vista® Ultimate
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Product Line-up
Price Range 18.4": Aspire 8920G: £899.99 - £1399.99 RRP

- 18.4" WUXGA
- Blu-ray Disc™/DVD-Super Multi
- Intel® Centrino® Processor Technology
- 4096Mb (2*2GB) RAM (DDR2 667 MHz)
- Intel® Wireless WiFi Link 4965AGN (dual-band quad-mode 802.11a/b/g/Draft-N)
- Acer Arcade Deluxe™ & Integrated Media Console
- Dolby Home Theater®, True 5.1 Surround Sound, 5 Speakers + 1 Subwoofer
 - 6-in-1 Card Reader
- 0.3Mp integrated CrystalEye webcam
 - Bluetooth 2.0
- Bio-Protection fingerprint solution
- Full size keyboard with number pad
 - 8 cell battery

£899.99 Intel® Core™2 Duo T5750 320GB HDD NVIDIA® GeForce® 9500M GS	£1099.99 Intel® Core™2 Duo T8300 320GB HDD NVIDIA® GeForce® 9500M GS	£1249.99 Intel® Core™2 Duo T9300 2 * 256GB HDD NVIDIA® GeForce® 9500M GS TV Tuner & Remote	£1399.99 Intel® Core™2 Duo T9300 2 * 320GB HDD NVIDIA® GeForce® 9500M GS Windows Vista® Ultimate
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HDD RECOVERY PRO

HDD Recovery Pro from the Undelete Company is a brand-new product to undelete files, recover corrupted disks and partitions, and fix damaged file systems.

HDD Recovery Pro allows computer users without previous experience in data recovery to successfully repair logical damage on their hard drives and memory cards or unerase deleted files in a completely automatic manner. The product comes with intuitive wizard-like user interface that can

be used by even unskilled computer user. HDD Recovery Pro automates the process of data recovery, allowing undoing damage caused by accidentally formatting the disk or deleting files.

The newly developed Smart Scan engine prioritizes the recovery of office documents, ZIP and RAR archives, and digital pictures in various formats over other types of files, ensuring priority handling of user's work and private information. The Smart Scan engine accesses the disk in low level, scanning its surface sector by sector and

matching the content with a set of pre-defined patterns in order to detect the beginning and end of each recognizable document. This, in turn, allows HDD Recovery Pro to discover and successfully restore files that would be otherwise irrecoverable.

HDD Recovery Pro works on all versions of Windows, and supports all revisions of FAT and NTFS file systems.

A demo version of HDD Recovery Pro is available as a free download at:

<http://www.the-undelete.co>

Archos TV+

Reviewed by Laurence Fenn



The Archos TV+ is a fifth generation device for recording TV and playing back video, music, photos and also streaming media wirelessly from your PC as well as browsing the internet from your television. Now as I only have one PC directly connected to my ADSL modem, I have no need for a wireless set up. I don't need to browse the web from any other room, so I was intrigued to find out how the device would work without a Wi-Fi system.

The box has no power switch, but does have a small reset button on the back. There is a large selection of phono connectors, which with the supplied leads go to a single SCART connector for input, and another for output. There is a network socket and an HDMI socket as well. On the front is it very sparse, with only a few LEDs behind a flat panel, plus an infra-red receiver.

A slip supplied with the device suggested a firmware upgrade, which I downloaded



from the website. It was an AOS file, which I copied to the device via a USB key, as there is a USB socket on the side. Using the file browser page on the Archos TV+ I ran the update, but I couldn't see any major difference to the device. I then copied some AVI, MPG, WMV, MP3, JPG and SWF files to some relevant directories via a USB cable. The device appears as an external hard drive to the computer, and it is a fairly standard procedure to copy files across.

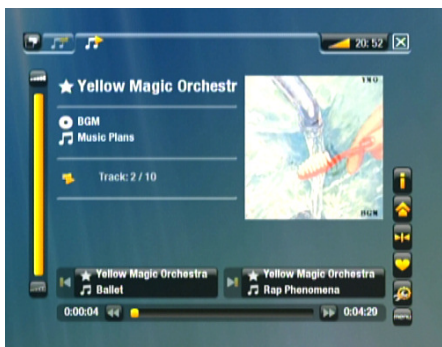


Figure 1 - Playing mp3 files

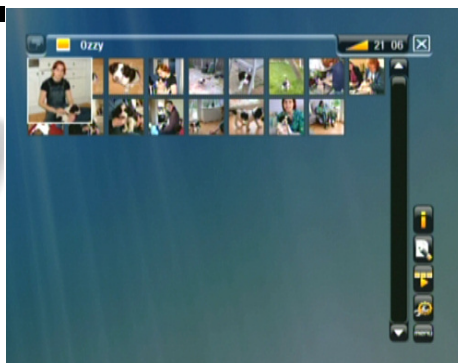


Figure 2—Browsing photos

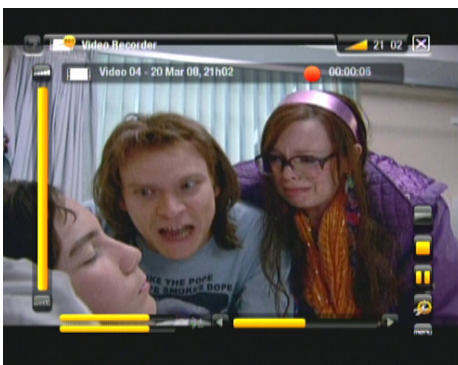
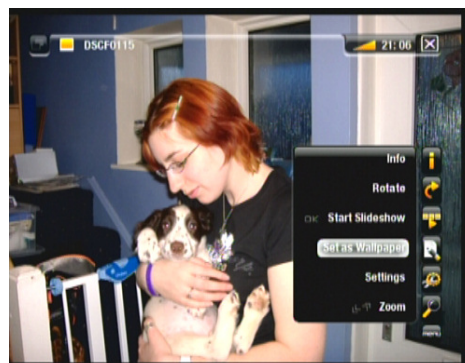


Figure 3 – Recording TV and playback (note the difference in screen ratio)

When copying mp3 files a dialog did appear saying that m3u files were not needed by the device and they did not need to be copied. These are playlist files usually generated by

Winamp.

When all the cables were plugged into my television, I switched on the device and pressed OK on the remote control when a picture appeared. I then had to set the country, screen ratio, time and date. After this initial set up I browsed to the music page and played some mp3 files. The cover art is shown if present in the file but there is no visualisation to generate a moving display. You can read file information about the mp3 playing, and return to the main menu page with the music playing in the background.

Photos are displayed with a nice fade between the pictures, and you can zoom in or out of the image. It can display JPEG, BMP or PNG picture formats. There is no card reader slot to plug in your memory card direct from your camera to view your photos. My Panasonic DVD Recorder has an SD card reader for exactly that purpose, and most digital cameras come with a cable to plug it into your television via a phono lead connection.

I then tried to play some flash files, but the SWF files lost several frames. I could-

n't use any form of a pointer to click on a link (like a start button). In fact I couldn't use any of the 'mouse' functions on the left-hand side of the remote control.

Video Playback

Video played back full screen by default, so I had to change to the original ratio to see the complete picture for most files. WMV version 8 files cannot be played, and neither can MPEG files without the plug-in. Even though it has an HDMI socket, it only displays up to DVD resolution (for the UK, 720x576). At the time of writing I didn't have an HD TV to test this. Most files played fine, but one avi file crashed the box every time I tried to play it. The file played fine without any problems on my PC with Media Player 11. It also didn't like a QuickTime movie file that I had downloaded from the Apple website, saying that the frame size was too big. Smaller framed video files fill the screen fine.

To Record TV Programs

To record television programs, you have to plug in a device with a tuner into the Archos TV+, which will then control it and switch it on to record from. Setting the TV Control was quite complex. Firstly, I had to choose Digital TV for my Panasonic Freeview box, and then go through five codes to see which one would set the power to 'off'. Then I had to set the upper channel number and the machine tested for a channel change code, but without seeing the display from the Freeview box. The code

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seemed to work for one box, but when I connected the Archos TV+ to another identical Freeview box, it did not work. No TV tuner means that the box has to connect to another device and try to control it using the phono to SCART cable. If a TV tuner was included then it would have been a lot easier. A pass through for the signal from the Freeview box (or satellite receiver) would have made the set up procedure simpler, but this does not work until the TV set up has been switched on.

Works Like a PVR?

As the device is supposed to act like a PVR, I tried to record from the television signal of the Freeview box, but the TV set up must be activated by registration on the Archos website. As I had no Wi-Fi connection to browse the web from the device, I had to download some ArchosLink software onto my PC and update that through my normal internet connection, then sync to the device using a USB connection. When the TV setup was activated, updating the program schedule, to set the timer to switch on the TV device (in my case the Freeview box) for timer recordings showed no listings. With just the Freeview box switched on, the pass through signal was displayed in the wrong screen ratio, but recorded correctly and when played back was shown at the right screen ratio. There was far too much information on screen when recording, and although you can pause and continue a recording, which can be renamed later on, when you hide all the screen info so you can actually watch the channel there is no indication when you pause the recording in this mode. Even on a VHS recorder you get a pause symbol on the screen, but not on the Archos TV+.

The device includes a version of the Opera web browser, but you need to buy the plug in to get it to work. The full qwerty keyboard on the remote is so you can type in web addresses and such, but as I tend to download software and pictures, or text from a web page to use elsewhere, I prefer to browse the web from my PC.

The remote control was a bit fiddly, and I tended to use most of the buttons on the right, with none of the keyboard buttons (as no browsing is available without a Wi-Fi connection). It has two battery compartments for each of the AA batteries, evenly balanced to make the remote better to hold.



The supplied remote control

You have a choice of themes for the whole interface, and you can set a wallpaper from any video or picture. The Archos TV+ can also read PDF files, which is handy as the help files included on the built in hard drive are PDFs. The manual has more information than the printed guide.

You Have to Buy Plug-ins

Out of the box, you cannot use the web browser or playback DVD MPEG2 files. You have to purchase plug-ins from the website and download them onto the device and activate these features. The three plug-ins available are:

Video podcast plug-in (H.264, AAC Audio)

- Listen to audio podcasts, free audio files downloaded from the internet in AAC or M4A format.
- Play back free video files downloaded from the internet with .mp4, .m4v or .mov extensions, encoded with H264 video codec and sound track in MP3 or AAC format.

Cost: €19.99 (£15.13)

Cinema plug-in (DVD, MPEG2 video, AC3 audio)

- Play back videos on and from your ARCHOS in DVD quality: MPEG-2 format (vob, .mpg and .ps extensions). Multi-language supported.
- Listen to 5.1 sound on your home cinema system through the SPDIF output (through the DVR station).

Cost: €19.99 (£15.13)

Web Browser Plug-in

- Open up your ARCHOS device to the full power of the Internet with a full-fledged Internet browser.
- Surf the Web from any WiFi hotspot.
- Download video and music.
- Watch videos from shared video web

sites such as Daily Motion on your device. Adobe Flash sites supported.

Cost: €29.98 £22.69

That's nearly an extra £53 to pay to get the most from the device, which I think is a bit of a con. The Archos TV+ comes with either an 80GB (£169.99) or 250GB (£239.99) hard drive. As an alternative you can buy a media player hard drive enclosure with a card reader for £40 from Maplins, which combined with a 250GB hard drive (£55) would be a lot cheaper. It wouldn't record from TV or be wireless, but I have a DVD recorder and I couldn't test the wireless part of the device anyway.

If you want to wirelessly stream content from your PC, you need to have a working Wi-Fi system to 'add' the box to. I spent a couple of hours trying to use the network cable to connect to my PC, but I was unable to get it set up. I ended up attaching the device to my PC via the USB socket, which has a slide cover for both types of socket, USB Slave (USB B) and USB Host (USB A). I could then copy files across and then plug the device into my television. DVD players are quite versatile these days and can read JPGs (so you can view pictures from a CD or DVD), play mp3 files and some can read different format video files (like DivX) and play them back without having to convert them to an MPEG2 DVD compatible file. Still, the Archos TV+ did play most files smoothly (after the plug-ins were installed) even if the original file was in the NTSC format, or had a different number of frames.

Making Simple Things Difficult

I couldn't test all of the features of the device, but I found that some parts of the interface made doing simple things more difficult. Video playback and photo viewing was fine, but recording from a TV signal was complex to set up and would have been simplified if a TV tuner was included. The mp3 playback was okay, but there were no visualisations, only a static screen with the cover art. Without the wireless features the web browsing is not available; the flash files I did use did not playback properly, and I couldn't get any interactive to work with them either. Maybe another firmware update could correct this, but overall I was disappointed with the Archos TV+. It just about did the job, but it wasn't very intuitive.

Norton Ghost 14.0

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

Norton Recently Released the latest version of Ghost. When we reviewed Ghost last year it was version 12, but doubtless to cater for those who use computers and are superstitious they've skipped a version number and the new version is Version 14.

Here's what Symantec say about Norton Ghost 14.0.

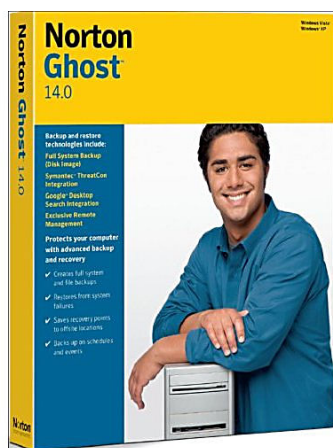
Norton Ghost 14.0 Features Most Advanced PC Backup and Recovery Tools

Symantec, makers of Norton security software, today announced the release of Norton Ghost 14.0, its most advanced PC backup and recovery solution. Norton Ghost 14.0 backs up and restores a user's entire PC computer system, including all of its data — applications, settings, folders and files — and offers exclusive remote backup management, industry-leading encryption and advanced compression features to ensure everything on the PC system is protected. And users can quickly recover lost or damaged files and restore from system failures, even if their computer's operating system does not start.

Most notably, Norton Ghost 14.0 leverages Symantec's ThreatCon global security alerting system (http://www.symantec.com/business/security_response/index.is) to identify threats, trigger incremental backups and protect the user's system even before an attack can occur. It also offers powerful protection with new features such as offsite backups as well as enhanced performance, remote management, LightsOut Restore capability, and a choice of more Norton Ghost 14.0 backup types: full system (disk image) or specific files and folders. Incremental backups and enhanced compression help reduce the amount of required storage, while encryption helps keep everything safe. And recovery is even easier with Google Desktop™ integration, which allows users to recover data even faster with searchable backup indexes.

"Performance is a priority and a critical piece of the performance equation is depth and breadth of protection from unforeseen threats to system data," said Con Mallon, director of product marketing, Symantec Corp. "No other solution on the market today protects users - even those who diligently back up their systems—from the all to prevalent and potentially system-crippling threats like Norton Ghost 14.0 and its advanced ThreatCon integration feature. Norton Ghost 14.0 truly offers the most advanced PC backup and recovery tools in the industry."

Norton Ghost 14.0 works with most storage drives, including external hard drives, networked drives, and recordable and re-



writable CDs and DVDs.

Ghost 14 — Key Technologies

1. Creates full system and file backups
2. Restores from system failures
3. Saves recovery points to offsite locations
4. Symantec ThreatCon integration*
5. Features Full system backup (disk image)—Backs up everything on a hard drive or partition.
6. File and folder backup—Backs up only the specific files and folders you choose rather than saving an entire drive.
7. FTP backup—Copies recovery points to a FTP site for easier offsite backup management. NEW
8. Offsite backup—backs up your files to NAS (Network-Attached Storage) devices. NEW
9. Symantec ThreatCon integration—triggers incremental backups whenever ThreatCon reaches a specified threat level. Great for computers without virus protection. NEW
10. Incremental and differential backup—backs up only files that have changed.
11. EXCLUSIVE! Google Desktop integration—makes data recovery even faster with searchable backup indexes.
12. LightsOut Restore—Restores your system with an on-disk software recovery environment—no bootable CD required.
13. EXCLUSIVE! Remote management—Controls other Norton Ghost installations (12.0 or higher) on your local area network.
14. Advanced compression and encryption—Minimizes storage space and helps keep sensitive documents safe.

Ghost 14 in Use

I last looked at Ghost (version 12) last year so was interested to see what Ghost 14 does that Ghost 12 didn't. Actually there wasn't much difference so I'll just go

through a how I used it review.

In Use

Installation is easy. You can let the program use its default features or use the customise option if you want to be different and install it to another location or drive etc.

Following a reboot you are asked to activate the product, or you can leave it un-activated. If you do this you can use it for 30-days, after this it'll no longer work until activated.

Always alert to the axiom "Anything that can go wrong, will", especially when applied to computers, I guarantee at some time your computer *will* go wrong, so it's essential that you back up your PC regularly. So Ghost on my computer with its backups on an external HDD is a vital security tool.

I use my notebook with a drive dedicated solely to software reviews, some of these reviews are of beta versions of software that hook deeply into the operating system, with Ghost I can backup my drive. Install the test software, test it, and at the end of the test quickly use Ghost's Recover My Computer option to revert it back to its previous state, without having to bother sorting out and uninstalling the software from my system — a piece of cake!

Although Ghost can do differential and incremental back-ups I prefer to back up the entire hard drive overwriting whatever was there before. If required Ghost can back-up individual files and folders without needing to back-up the whole drive which is a useful facility.

Emergency Recovery CD

If you have a boxed copy of Ghost the Install CD acts as an emergency bootable recovery CD that loads a cut down Windows interface complete with USB drivers so one can recover a HD if its become corrupted or individual files. If you've purchased the downloadable version it incorporates the facility to create a Symantec Recovery Disk needed for a full system restore as a .ISO file. Once burnt to CD it acts as an emergency bootable recovery CD allowing access to the reduced interface from which you choose your preferred recovery point

New Features

There are some but not many, most seem cosmetic. The interface appears the same maintains its design but there are several options that have moved their place. The home screen has added a Send Feedback option, letting you tell Symantec what you think of the program. The option to do an Offsite Copy of your back-ups is now in the Backup Destinations dialogue and the Recovery Point Browser has been moved from the Tools menu into the Tasks menu. These are all minor changes and do not detract from the overall

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ease of use, which remains very good, especially for beginners who've probably never made a back-up in their life. So top marks to Symantec here.

Platform

Windows XP and Vista

Pricing and Availability

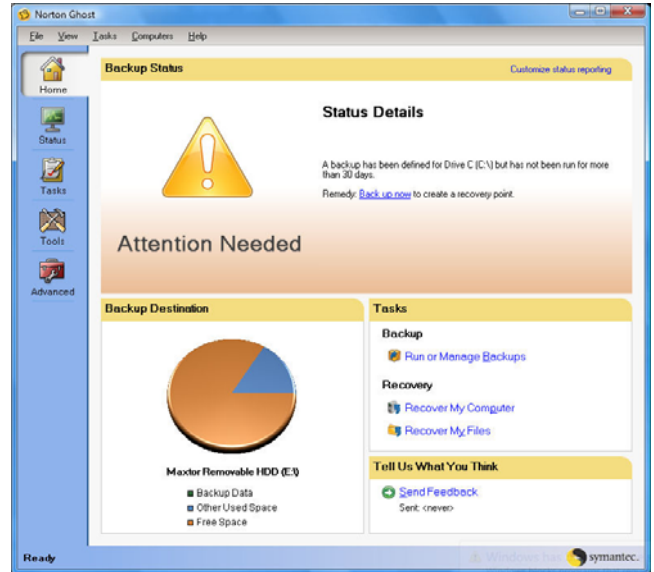
Norton Ghost 14.0 costs £38.48 from

Amazon.co.uk whilst the upgrade version from earlier versions costs £31.

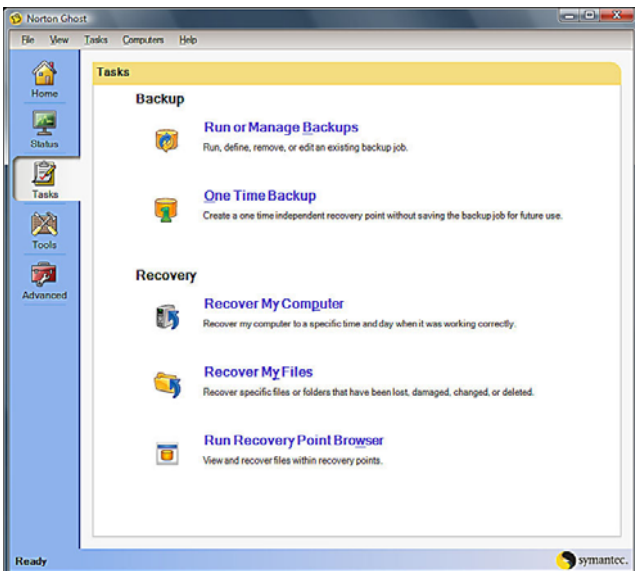
They can also be purchased and downloaded online from the Symantec Store at www.symantecstore.co.uk.



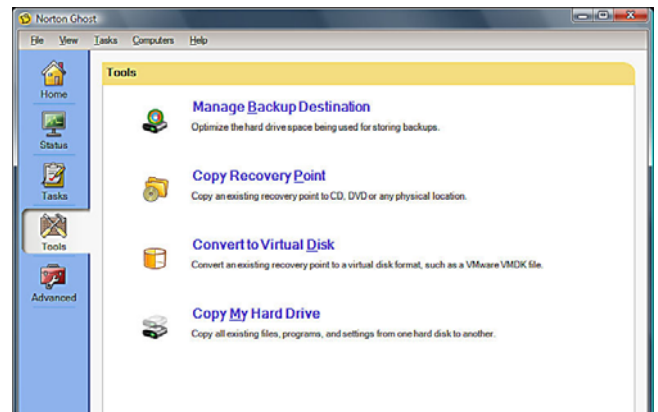
Live Update is an integral feature that makes sure that Ghost is up to date



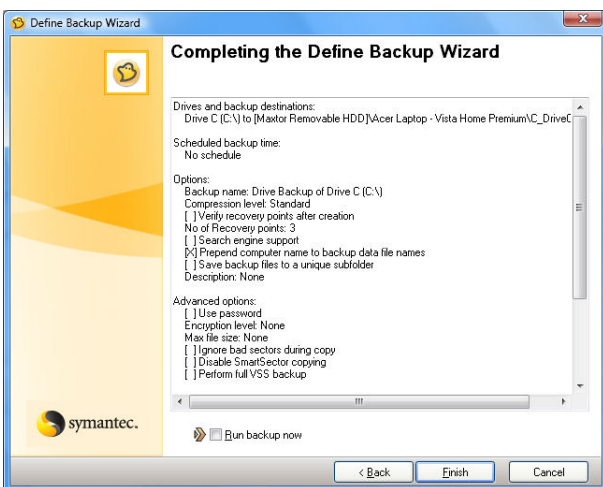
If you haven't made a recent back-up this nag screen appears



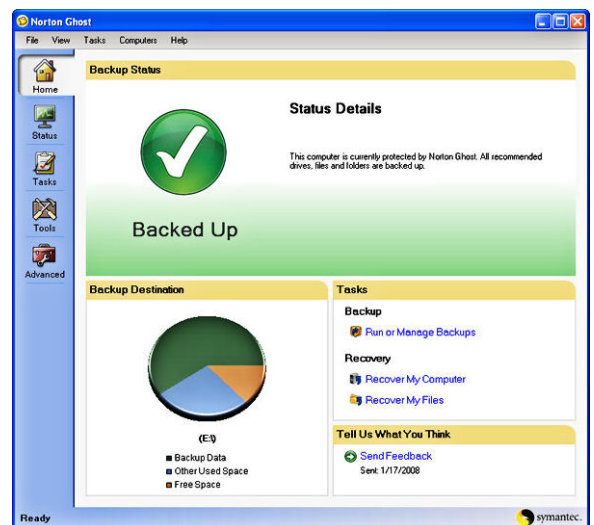
Ghost 14 — Tasks Menu — Options



Ghost 14 — Tools Menu — Options



When you've defined your back-up options its only necessary to tick the Run Backup Now box.



Ghost 14 — Status after a successful backup

DOS Download details from page 4
Have you checked the month?— Ed!