

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 106. Free Programs That Make Your Life Easier

- by Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR
105 Martin Drive
Port Washington, WI 53074-9654
(262) 284-9346
skaplan@mcw.edu

There are some great freeware programs out there, written by folks who just do it for the love of it. For sure, some free programs are not so good – poorly written or they do stuff that really doesn't need to be done, or things that can easily be done with the operating system. But now and again someone writes one that really fills a need, and they write it well. Let me tell you about two I discovered recently. One I discovered just by surfing the freeware sites, the other was a tip from my oldest son Wayne, a Professor of Materials Engineering.

The tip Wayne gave me concerns probably the best graphics viewer available, called InfanView. You can download it (free) from **infanview.tuwien.ac.at**. , The downloadable file is only 808kb in size, so it won't take long to get it. Download the .exe file to your desktop or other folder, and remember where it is. Then make a copy on a floppy for safekeeping. Double-click the .exe file to install it. It will want to know where you would like to install it, and you can certainly accept the suggestion it makes. Since I put all my application files on my D: drive, I selected D:\InfanView. Next it wants to know whether you want its icon on the Start menu, on the desktop, or both or neither. I wanted it on the desktop only. The next thing it will want to know is what kinds of files you would like associated with InfanView. This function, known as "file associations", simply means if you double-click a .gif file, do you want InfanView to be the program that opens it? I selected all from the menu it provided, knowing that I could change that later in the InfanView program if I needed to. That's it! You now have a bright new icon on your desktop, on your Start menu (or both or neither). Now delete the original .exe file, since you have a backup on a floppy disk. You can start the InfanView program with a click or two on the icon, then ask it to open nearly any type of picture file available, and it will do so with good clarity. You can select a full screen view, if you wish. You can even do some editing of the image – sharpen, rotate, swap colors, convert to grayscale, and so on. If you have associated .gif files with InfanView during installation or later, you don't even need to start the program. Just click the .gif file, and InfanView will start automatically. Very nice, indeed. The latest version at this writing (Aug 02) is 3.75. I recommend it.

The other free file is PrintDeskTop, 772kb, available from **www.printdesktop.com**, version 1.05. This is a real time and paper saver. Have you ever been surfing and found a document with information you needed, and wanted to just print the single page shown on the screen rather than the whole document? Or, have you ever wanted to just print your desktop as a record of the icons you have now? Have you ever wanted to print a pop-up error message that appeared on the screen? This will let you do all of those. Again, download the file to your desktop, make a copy on a floppy, then install it and erase the desktop file when the installation is complete. Now, you can print whatever is on the screen on a single sheet of paper. Just click the START button in the lower left corner, select PrintDeskTop, and the program will send whatever is there to the printer. You can be surfing the web, or even in a program. For example, if you are in Microsoft Word, the entire screen will be printed exactly as it shows in the program. Well worth the effort of downloading and installing it; highly recommended. By the way, you can also install shortcut keys with this program, such as Ctrl-Alt-P, or even the Print Screen key, which will also send the screen to the printer. Then you don't need to click START, then PrintDeskTop. Your preference. It is interesting to note that we used to be able to print the screen from DOS by just tapping the Print Screen button on the keyboard. For some reason, Microsoft took this highly

useful function out of Windows, much to the chagrin of many of us. PrintDeskTop puts it back in. Hurrrah!

Have you discovered other free programs that you really love? Tell me about them. I will try them out and, if they turn out to be of wide interest, I will publish them here. Happy computing!