

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 140. Yet More Goodies

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Back in No. 137, I discussed defragging and mentioned several good freeware defraggers. I also alluded to an up-and-coming beta version that runs constantly in the background whenever Windows is up. It defrags a little whenever the machine is idle, as when you are taking a break, or even between your keystrokes. I told you it still had a few bugs. Well, the bugs seem to have been worked out, and the package now does a good job. If you don't want to bother with defragging manually and just have it done in the background, I think it is ready for you to use. I had it on my main machine for a couple of months with no problems, and it does what it says it will do. Go get it (do a Google search, or just stop by majorgeeks.com and find it there). IObit Smart Defrag is its name. It is still in beta version, but it seems to be very stable and worth putting on your machine. I suspect it may be a pay-for program when it comes out of beta, so if you get it now you will be ahead of the game. Good stuff! Note however, that I am still more partial to JkDefrag, also mentioned in #137, because it does such a fast and thorough job (much better than your built-in Windows version). It is also unique in leaving space on the fastest portion of the hard drive platter for those hundreds of little files that Windows is constantly creating and modifying. Tough choices among great software! What the heck, why not get the best of both worlds? Routinely let IObit Smart Defrag do its thing in the background, but run JkDefrag now and then to really clean things up! I have done this and it works fine. Just don't run both at the same time.

At our Ozaukee Radio Club weekly breakfast a few weeks ago, Ed Rate (AA9W) reminded me of an unusual program that has been around for a long time. Originally programmed for Linux as KdirStat, the Windows version is called WinDirStat (version 1.1.2.80). This program does a very rapid scan of whatever partitions you may have (C: or D: or E: or all of them) and then presents you with a very unusual map of all the files. Each file type is a different color; .jpg files are blue, .doc files are red, .ico files are gray, and so on. A colored box represents each individual file. Moreover, the relative size of each box informs you at a glance of the relative size(s) of all the files on the partition, classified by type. Clicking an individual colored box will show you the name of the file, and you already know what kind it is from the color-coding. There are many options, including deleting the file. You have the option of deleting it to the recycle bin (a reversible process), or deleting it completely (the file is then lost forever unless you use a special program to recover it). WinDirStat is touted as a tool to "show where all your disk space has gone, and help you to clean it up". It certainly does give you a good sense of the space your files occupy on the disk. Just use caution in deleting stuff unless you are very sure of what you are doing. The viewing aspect of the program is quite safe, and it is instructive to use it. A most unusual and interesting visual display! Oh yes, it works with everything up through XP. I don't know if anyone has tried it with Vista.

I have messed with any number of freeware CD/DVD burners in the last few years, and most will do the job to one or another extent. However, CDBurnerXP (<http://www.cdburnerxp.se/download.php>) is the most trouble-free burner I have found. It has a clean, slick interface with just about all the options you will ever need. It requires that you have the free Microsoft .NET Framework installed, but many people have this already (or should have it). Just download and install CDBurnerXP – it will tell you if you need anything not presently on your machine. By the way, don't be fooled by the name of this program. It works fine with Windows 2000. A very nice freebie!

One more goodie is Universal Viewer. How many times have you downloaded or otherwise gotten a file and could not open it because you don't own the program that created it? This is a problem we have all run up against from time to time, and UV will generally solve it. It can open a huge number of different file

formats, at least so you can see what is in them. It even has a hex viewer for program files (.exe) or .dll files, or other non-text files. To get the free version, go to <http://www.uvviewsoft.com>*, click on the download button on the left and select the free version. Then install it. When you need it, just right click the file you want to look at and select Universal Viewer from the dropdown list. UV has solved problems for me dozens of times already! (*Read that URL as U V V I E W S O F T – two Vs next to each other look like a W)

Happy Computing!