



The Update update

Tim Nott reveals other aspects of the Windows 98 Update tool and turns his attention to automation.

Recently, I wrote in glowing terms about the Windows 98 Update tool (*February issue*). Since then, there have been a couple of developments. First, despite what I said about having to use a third-party utility to save the update files to disk rather than just apply them to the PC in use, reader Graham Mayor has a simpler way:

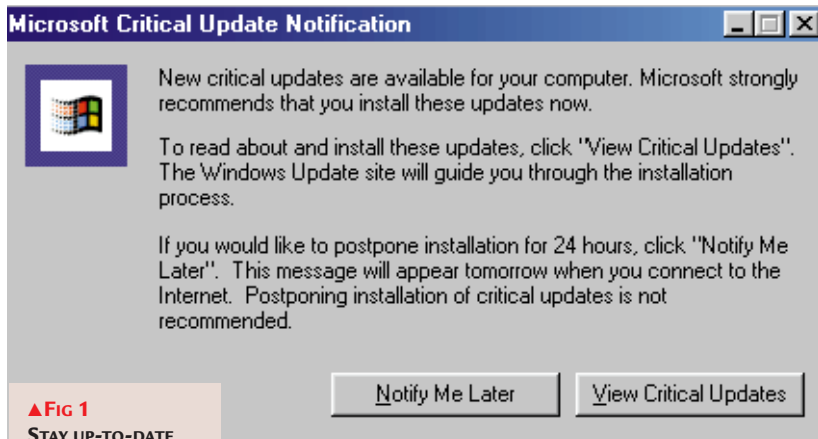
'It is possible to recover the files from Windows/Temporary Internet Files with Explorer. Select the folder, sort on date/time and pick out the relevant *.exe, *.cab and/or *.zip files, then copy them to another folder.'

Peter Geddes, however, states that the files are saved in the folder MSDOWNLOAD.TMP. Mileages seem to vary, as having just downloaded the Critical Update Notification utility I could find no trace of it in the latter but did eventually track it down to a sub-folder of Temporary Internet Files.

Second, you can now be informed automatically when relevant updates become available. To enable this, go to windowsupdate.microsoft.com and download the Windows Critical Update Notification. To quote from the instructions: 'When you install Critical Update Notification, you give Windows Update permission to scan your computer. The scan which occurs in the background while you are using the internet determines if the available update is appropriate for your system.'

Task Scheduler controls the scanning schedule so you'll see a task for Critical Update Notification among your other scheduled tasks. The scanning schedule is preset and Microsoft recommends that you do not modify the settings. You won't be notified of every scan, the scans won't interfere with your internet computing and none of the information gathered is sent over the internet.' This feature is fairly overbearing, though. The default interval in Task Scheduler is five

Windows has never addressed automation very well



▲ Fig 1
STAY UP-TO-DATE
ON UPDATES

minutes and the message [Fig 1] is somewhat insistent. Still, it's only a 24Kb download and you can uninstall it from Control Panel Add/Remove should it get too irritating.

■ Keeping to the script

One thing that Windows has never addressed well is automation. DOS has the fairly primitive processing of a list of commands in batch (.BAT) files, and Windows 3.x has the Recorder which creates non-editable scripts of keystrokes and mouse actions. Office users have the full panoply of VBA, or WordBasic in earlier versions of Word, but Windows 95 has nothing.

Enter Windows 98 and the Windows Scripting Host. Windows 98 users may have noticed a folder under Windows named Samples\Wsh which contain a number of files carrying the .VBS and .JS extensions. If you do not have these you will need to install the Windows Scripting Host from Control Panel, Add/Remove, Windows Setup, Accessories.

You might have noticed that this column has been strangely silent on this topic. This is because I have been searching for an 'idiot's guide to Windows scripting'. As this search has been largely unsuccessful I'm having to write my own, which at least has the advantage of being written for idiots by one of their own. Visual Basic and Java Scripts are not, in themselves, new;

they've been available to HTML programmers for some time. What is new with Windows 98 is the standard provision of the Windows Scripting Host, though this is also available for NT and as a download for Windows 95.

The Scripting Host provides an interpreter for Java or VB scripts running directly from the PC, rather than being embedded in an HTML page. These scripts are plain text files and the best

HACK WATCH

One update which wasn't on the windowsupdate site (*see main text*) at the time of writing rectifies a security loophole in Forms 2.0 which gets installed by Office 97, Outlook 98, Project 98 and Visual Basic 5. The loophole was discovered by the magnificently-named Spaniard, Juan Carlos Garcia Cuartango.

The risk is that a hacker could 'use the Forms 2.0 Control to read text on a user's Clipboard when that user visits a web site or opens an HTML email created by the hacker.' You can get further details, and download a patch to rectify this, from officeupdate.microsoft.com/downloaddetails/fm2paste.htm.

While we're in a security-conscious mood, there's a further patch that addresses a vulnerability in Word 97. See this month's *Hands On Word Processing* (p256) for the full story.

way to get the feel of what they can do is to double-click on one of the sample VBS files and see what happens. Then right-click Edit the file to see what's making this happen. The sample scripts include adding and removing Registry keys, doing things with Excel (if you have it), creating shortcuts and connecting to a network. This is obviously a rather powerful, if under-documented, feature.

For reasons of pure ignorance I'm going to pass rapidly over Java script but if you've done any VBA programming, you shouldn't find the VB script language too unfamiliar. What you don't get, however, is an all-singing, all-dancing editor like that in Office 97. You're stuck with the distinctly unentertaining Notepad.

So, we're going to build a VB script which provides another way of getting at that old Windows puzzle of a printable file listing [Fig 2]. Bear in mind that this is the blind leading the blind so if you know more than I do about the subject, please don't laugh. The code is in the *Hands On Windows* section of this month's PCW CD-ROM as FLIST.VBS.

How does it work? The first three lines [Fig 2] declare the variables we will be using, which is good programming manners. The next line creates an 'object' which we'll use later to find the path to the desktop.

The Function on the following line, creates more objects to hold a folder and its files, and creates a list of the latter with a carriage return between each. The script then prompts for the target folder — sorry, no browsing — then assigns the result of the previously-defined function applied to the target folder to the variable 'filelisting'. The variable 'desktoppath' is then assigned to the actual location of the desktop (which may not be C:\Windows\Desktop) using the WSHshell object created earlier.

Finally, the 'Creatfile' subroutine is called which creates a text file on the

[FIG 2] Another way to get a printable file listing

This script prompts for a folder path and creates a list of its files on the Desktop:

```
Dim myobject, targetfolder, allfiles, eachfile
Dim filelisting, desktoppath, WSHshell
Dim mylist, crlf, myobject1, mytextfile
Set WSHshell = WScript.CreateObject("WScript.Shell")

Function ShowFileList(folderspec)
    crlf = chr(13) & chr(10)
    Set myobject= CreateObject("Scripting.FileSystemObject")
    Set targetfolder = myobject.GetFolder(folderspec)
    Set allfiles = targetfolder.Files
    For Each eachfile in allfiles
        mylist = mylist & eachfile.name
        mylist = mylist & crlf
    Next
    ShowFileList = mylist
End Function

whatdir=InputBox("Enter the path to the folder you want
listed")
filelisting=ShowFileList(whatdir)
desktoppath = WSHShell.SpecialFolders("Desktop")
Call Createfile

Sub Createfile
    Set myobject1 = CreateObject("Scripting.FileSystemObject")
    Set mytextfile = myobject1.CreateTextFile(desktoppath &
"flist.txt", True)
    mytextfile.WriteLine("List of files in " & whatdir)
    mytextfile.Write(filelisting)
    mytextfile.Close
End Sub
```

(Key: ✓ Code string continues)

desktop, writes a one-line heading showing the folder name followed by the list held by the 'filelisting' variable. No frills, error handling or file details but it gives an idea of what can be done [Fig 3].

■ Department of obscure tips

Henry Bevan and other readers came up with a useful pointer concerning the tip about letting IE4 expand web addresses (February column). It involves a Registry

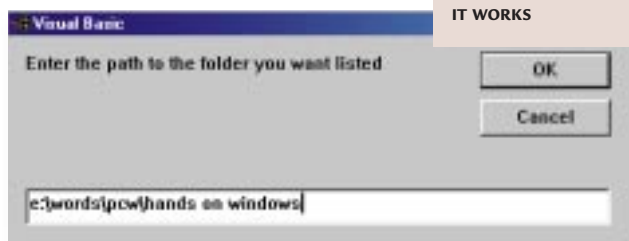
edit so the usual disclaimers apply, but if you go to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main\UrlTemplate, you can edit the prefixes and suffixes and the order in which they are tried. The

'%s' stands for what you've typed, so editing an entry to 'www.%s.co.uk' will add UK web sites to the list.

Here's one that is even more useful, concerning the ghost that makes unwanted dial-up calls to the internet. I've already mentioned two suspects: RealPlayer G2 Beta (*March column*), and Lotus SmartCentre (*see p256 in this issue*).

Reader Alex Nichol claims that Windows can manage this all by itself without third-party help. He writes: 'It involves a registry setting. Look under HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\OLE. In the right pane will be two lines: EnableDCOM = Y and EnableRemoteConnect = N. The trouble arises when the latter gets set to Y. I think it is part of Microsoft's assumption that everyone is on a fast LAN and wants instant connection to it at boot...' or, indeed, that everyone has free local calls to their ISP.

▼ Fig 3 NO BELLS AND WHISTLES, NO BROWSING, BUT IT WORKS





Questions & answers

Q What is a RAM drive?
On the net, I've seen things to do with them but I don't have an icon for one in the My Computer folder.

TOBY McDONNELL

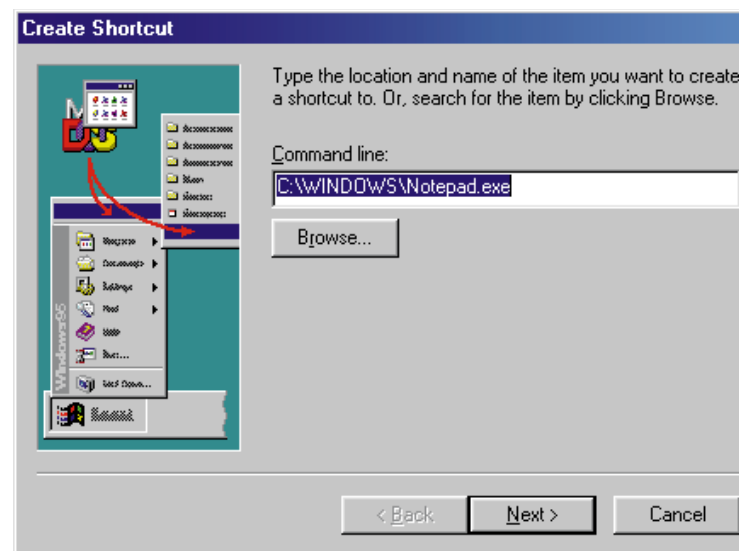
a A RAM drive is an area of memory (Random Access Memory) that is used as if it were a disk drive. Access is much faster than a normal disk but it's a much more expensive form of storage and is lost when you switch off the PC.

Windows has a much better way of speeding up your PC, by using memory as disk. It is called cacheing. If, say, you load a large application, then close it, then load it again, you'll find it's much faster the second time as it is still 'cached' in memory. The RAM drive is, however, used by the Windows 98 emergency recovery disk. This contains a whole load of utilities which are zipped — that is, compressed — in order to fit onto a floppy, and which are unzipped onto a RAM drive for use. That way they will work even on a PC whose hard disk has not been formatted.

Q I have lost my shortcut wizard — by this I mean that when I right click on the desktop and go to New, Shortcut, I just receive a new file called 'New shortcut'. When the properties are examined it is shown to be a 0Kb file. Then, if I add '.lnk' to the file name it becomes a shortcut and can be set up as such, but where on earth is the wizard?

ROD LANE

a This is a long-running mystery but I have at last found an answer [Fig 4] on the Microsoft web site. It appears



◀Fig 4
THE AMAZING,
DISAPPEARING
SHORTCUT
WIZARD

waiting years for Microsoft to incorporate this into Explorer. My delight was diminished, though, when I noticed that a folder I had opted to view as thumbnails

had acquired a 'thumbnails.db' file. On a folder with 11 JPEG files which Explorer reports as totalling 121Kb, the thumbnails.db file is 322kb! Has Microsoft signed a pact with hard disk makers?

CHRIS VENESS

a I do not think that the conspiracy theory applies here. What is happening is that Windows creates 120-pixel square 24-bit colour thumbnails, seemingly using a similar compression method to the original.

My trials show that ten thumbnails of JPEGs totalling 390Kb produce a 132Kb thumbnail file, or around a third of the originals. If the original files are smaller than 120 pixels square, then the thumbnail file could well exceed the total size of the originals. Converting the same files to the TIF format, however, where they total 9Mb, produces a 432Kb thumbnail file — a twentieth of the originals.

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that installing Internet Explorer 4 can damage a key in the registry. So, to repair this, you should first backup the registry and then launch Regedit. Go to HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\lnk\ShellNew\Command. If you have the Windows Desktop Update component installed, then this should have a value of

your CD-ROM drive letter):

```
EXTRACT /A D:\WIN95  
_02.CAB MARLETT.TTF  
/L C:\WINDOWS\FONTS.
```

If this gives you a 'Bad command or file name' message then you need to copy EXTRACT.EXE from the Windows 95 folder on the CD to C:\WINDOWS\COMMAND. Note that

If I add '.lnk' it becomes a shortcut and can be set up as such, but where's the wizard?

RunDLL32 AppWiz.Cpl, NewLinkHere %2. If not, then the value should be RunDLL32 AppWiz.Cpl,NewLinkHere %1.

Q My Windows 95 caption buttons show a diagonal pencil for minimise, a pen nib for maximise and a square instead of a cross for close. The scroll bar arrows are also wrong and the check boxes are indecipherable. Please help!

CHAS GRUNDY

a This sounds as if your Marlett font has gone AWOL. First, you'll need to reinstall it from the Windows 95 CD. From a command prompt, type (assuming D: is

Windows 98 users can just double-click on Win98\WIN98_47.CAB then double-click on MARLETT.TTF to extract it. After you've extracted the file to the Windows\FonTS folder, set its attributes by typing this line at a command prompt:

```
ATTRIB +S +H C:\  
WINDOWS\FONTS\  
MARLETT.TTF.
```

If the problem persists after replacing the Marlett.ttf file try deleting the Ttfcache file in the Windows folder. It will be rebuilt at the next boot.

Q I was pleased to read your tip about thumbnails in Windows 98/IE4 as I have been