Plug-in perils

Beware those forgotten extensions, temporarily loaded: they can cause all sorts of cross-platform infestations. Ken McMahon relates his own tale of woe and finds some fixes.

This month it's my turn to ask you lot for help. I was producing a brochure for a client who, for reasons best known to themselves, decided to have the cover produced elsewhere. When the cover arrived — a Quark XPress 3.32 Mac document — we were unable to open it without loading a couple of extensions, Resize XT 1.1.3 and Scitex Polygon 3.1. Of course, I forgot to remove them from the extensions folder afterwards, and every document I subsequently saved will not now open without the extensions present.

On the offensive

This is tantamount to a virus infection. We cannot send our "infected" Quark files to the output bureau without the offending extensions present, and this exposes the bureau and all of its other customers to the same problem. The last time something like this happened was with a nasty piece of work called Pasteboard XT which provided the not very staggering improvement of a large pasteboard area. Then someone came

up with a lifesaver called Pasteboard Xterminator which, if present in your Quark extensions folder, allowed you to open Pasteboard "infected" documents. The problem travels across platforms, so if someone sends you a Mac Quark file created with any of these monsters, you won't be able to open it on a PC. You can get both Mac and PC fixes for Pasteboard at www.markzware.com.

The Scitex ones are more of a problem. I have a Mac workaround; anyone who's interested can email me for details, but this doesn't help if you want to open an "infected" Mac file on a PC. Pasteboard is available in PC format; as far as I'm aware, the Scitex ones are Mac only.

Finally, on the subject of Quark plug-ins, by the time you read this, **version 4.0 of Extensis QX-Tools** will be available for Windows (95, 98 and NT4) and MacOS. QX-Tools is a nifty suite of plug-ins which includes things like group scaling, palette docking and attribute find-change. The last one is a dream for changing all your box line weights at a stroke — and it only costs £99.


▲ You can get your very own David free of charge from Photoempt
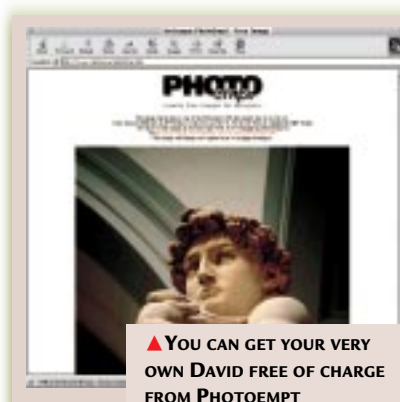
PICTURE THIS

Still looking for that elusive image of a church door, autumn leaves, a Tuscan landscape or a suburban semi? Then Photoempt's collection of royalty-free images could be the answer to your prayers. At the moment they've got a mere four-CD collection, each with 100 images at 800x600 pixels. Each CD costs $99 (Canadian) which is about £40, and you have to phone or email to order. Repro-resolution images are available individually. Photoempt will never compete with the likes of Corel, Photodisc or Digital Vision in terms of volume or service, but you can't have too many sources of good pics, and there's a free sample, changed regularly, on the web site at www.rjsid.on.ca/photoempt.htm.

SWISS ROLL

Mike Godfree's solution to the mappers problem raised by Ian Cargill in the July issue is to use a Swiss application, OCAD, designed for orienteering. "The user can define his or her own symbols and the Win95/NT version (OCAD 6) has a set of symbols for city maps and tourist maps. Demo versions can be downloaded from www.ocad.com and the only limitation is a maximum of 500 objects, which is probably adequate for the type of map Ian Cargill talks

about. Version 6 allows tracing of a template in bmp format but does not allow the use of a digitiser. Version 5 allows a digitiser as well as tracing over a template, will run on Windows 3, but does not have the extra pre-set symbols. The main advantage is the small size of the program and the subsequent speed. Full versions cost around £250 (it is priced in Swiss francs)." The developer has even written an interface for GPS receivers, so you can create your own maps "in the field",
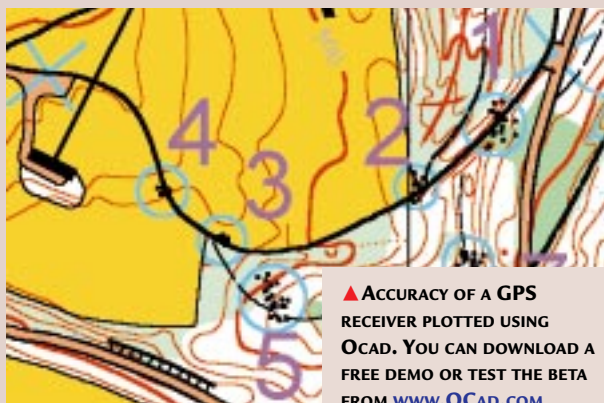
▲ Accuracy of a GPS receiver plotted using Ocad. You can download a free demo or test the beta from www.OCad.com

as it were. The results of his tests, which are on the web site, show an accuracy of, at best, plus five metres and, at worse, plus 25 metres. Clearly room for

improvement if you don't want to find yourself in a river when you should be in the bar of the pub next to the church with a steeple.

Questions & answers

Q I have around 400 fonts on my Windows 95 machine. They don't appear to slow things down as they did under Windows 3.x, but that really is an unmanageable number. Even with font management software, I cannot face going through and comparing all those fonts, a slow and inexact process if you do not have wide experience of the subject. Is there a useful working set that would cover most bases without excessive duplication?

DAVID THORPE

a *The trouble with the Fonts folder is that it does have a tendency to grow unnoticed, particularly if you frequently install new packages which come with free fonts. The problem is exacerbated by the way TrueType font files are displayed. One font will usually have at least four "styles" — roman, italic, bold and bold italic, each with a separate font file. Fonts like Universe, which come with more weight variations than you're likely to want to count, pose even more of a problem.*
A quick way to make things look tidier without actually deleting fonts is to hide the numerous variants that make up a particular font family. In the control panel, double-click the fonts icon and simply select <hide variants> from the View menu. If you want to actually remove the fonts so that they don't appear on application fonts menus, play safe by copying all of your fonts into another folder

▲**ATM LETS YOU CHECK OUT FONTS BEFORE INSTALLING THEM — HANDY IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A FACE THAT FITS ▶ YOU CAN SET UP DIFFERENT SETS FOR DIFFERENT APPLICATIONS AND KEEP YOUR FONTS ANYWHERE YOU WANT. YOU JUST DRAG FROM THE RIGHT WINDOW TO THE LEFT TO ADD FONTS TO THE SET OF YOUR CHOICE, AND ACTIVATE SETS SIMPLY BY CHECKING THE BOX**
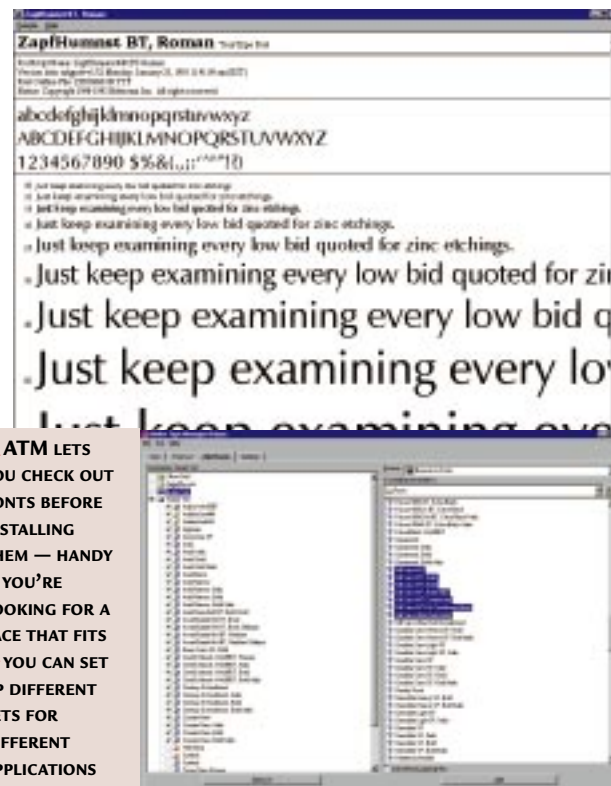
before removing any from the Fonts folder using the Fonts tool. If you later decide to reinstall the removed fonts, select "copy fonts to the Fonts folder" option. If you don't do this and subsequently remove the font a second time from the Fonts folder, you will no longer have a copy to restore. A far better option in my view would be to get yourself a copy of Adobe Type Manager Deluxe 4 which, among other highly useful things, allows you to easily manage all your TrueType and Type 1 fonts without having to mess around copying them from one folder to another. ATM lets you install and uninstall typefaces using a

drag-and-drop interface and allows you to create custom sets of fonts that launch at start-up, with a particular application or a specific file. So if, like me, you only ever use Word to write things without formatting them, you can configure ATM to use only a very basic font set. You can tell it to launch a more comprehensive set with your page layout application, to load your company fonts when opening any stationery files, or a special web font set when you launch your browser or web authoring package.
ATM also simulates missing fonts using Adobe's Multiple Master font technology, has its own Type 1 smoothing engine, allows you to print font samples prior to installation, and improves output to non-PostScript printers. For £49

for the full version and £35 for an upgrade, it's undoubtedly the best way to get your TrueType and Type 1 fonts organised.

Q Can you give me any information on colleges that offer desktop publishing and graphic design courses? I am currently employed by a local publishing house as a DTP operator and would like to extend my limited knowledge of PageMaker 5 and CorelDraw 6.

LINAH@AWS.GAIA.CO.ZW

a *I just couldn't resist the challenge of tracking down some course information on the web, so I tried hotbot with the string +"higher education" +courses +UK +graphic design" and came up with 241 matches, including the Government's National Grid for Learning web site at www.ngfl.gov.uk. This place is a mine of information. You have to complete a very short registration form to access the site, but the links that the search engine throws up are well worth the effort. I was quickly able to track down information on institutions offering higher education courses in graphic design and related subjects, course information on NVQs in design, reviews of software on the curriculum, information about exam bodies (tip: don't type examination bodies into the subject field of a search engine — it won't yield what you expect) and links to other useful resources.*

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