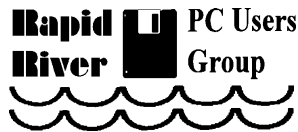


# The Com Port



A Publication of Rapid River PC Users Group, Inc.  
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Rapid River PC Users Group, Inc. is a group of computer users who meet on the second Wednesday of each month. We get together to discuss computer woes and try and figure out how to resolve them. We meet at Opportunity Development Center (ODC), 1191 Huntington Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI.



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## RECOMMENDED READING

Smart Computing, the Learning Series  
*By Rick Ida*

I finally have found a magazine that is written for the computer novice. It is called Smart Computing, the Learning Series. It comes out monthly, and retails for \$5.95, but a full year subscription is only \$29.00. It is available at many local stores that sell magazines.

Each month, the magazine has a theme or general topic, and all the articles in that issue, deal with this theme or topic. The magazine is written in plain English, and each issue is filled with very detailed how to articles. Even for a novice like me, I was able to follow through their suggestions on how to install new hardware, or trouble shoot hardware currently not working properly.

The issue I am currently reading is all about the web and how to improve your web knowledge. Some of the topics in this issue are: Earn money while you surf, Eliminate Online Ads, Use Internet Based Storage, Share Photos Online, Watch Webcasts, Browse the Web Anonymously, Find Free Web Hosting, Using Web Browsers, and more. Not only do they tell you how to do these things, but also web sites are actually listed to find and do what is being explained to you.

Every issue has many hardware and software reviews as well. Embossed vinyl binders are available to store your magazine collection for continued ref-

erence. I highly recommend this magazine for anyone who is not a computer wizard. Look them up at [www.smartcomputing.com](http://www.smartcomputing.com)

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Windows 98 Annoyances  
*By Carole Liebenstein*

WINDOWS 98 ANNOYANCES  
By David A. Karp  
O'Reilly & Associates  
1998

Windows 98 Annoyances is a reference-type book that I found to be very helpful. If you find things you would like to change in Windows 98, chances are many of them can be changed and this book will tell you how to do it. The book is written in plain English so you don't have to be a computer technician to understand what the author is telling you.

The way the book is written, you can use it as a learning tool and also as a reference. Reading the chapters in order will teach you about Windows 98, starting with basic annoyances, all the way to using the Windows Scripting Host. The book is well indexed so you can easily find what you are looking for.

Each chapter deals with a specific topic. They are as follows: Making the Most of Windows 98, Customizing the Interface, The Registry, Tinkering Techniques, Maximizing Performance, Troubleshooting, Networking, Taking Control of Web Integration, and finally, Scripting and Automation. Six appendixes are also included as references.

They are: Setting Locator, DOS Lives, Contents of the MSDOS.SYS File, Class ID's of System Objects, Interface Terminology and the Basics, and Software to Solve Annoyances. Additional information can be found at the Annoyances website at [www.annoyances.org](http://www.annoyances.org)

In each chapter problems or annoyances are stated, along with corresponding solutions. Information is also included, concerning why you would want to complete the solution and also useful background information. There are even "Undo" sections telling you how to undo the solutions if you find you liked the old way better.

I found Windows 98 Annoyances to be highly informative. It answered many questions I had concerning Windows 98. I would highly recommend it for anyone wishing to understand and customize Windows 98.



## SOFTWARE REVIEWS

Pandora's Box

*By Connie Wood*

Microsoft Pandora's Box  
Puzzle Game of The Year Edition

System requirements:  
Pentium 100 or higher processor  
Windows 95 or higher  
16 MB RAM  
150 MB hard drive space  
4x CD-ROM drive  
Super VGA video display  
Sound card, speakers and mouse  
MSRP \$19.95

Pandora's Box was awarded Puzzle game of the Year 1999 by Electric Games. Designed by Alexey Pajitnov—creator of the popular Tetris—Pandora's Box features more than 400 colorful three-dimensional puzzles. Each puzzle uses the latest technology to challenge

your visual skills.

Seven tricksters have escaped from a mythical box and are causing mischief around the world. It is up to you to solve a series of intricate puzzles, capture the tricksters and save the world from total chaos. You will experience colorful graphics and impressive animations. Hints and wild cards help guide you through your quest.

Skill levels range from easy to challenging and it is a non-competitive game so you can set your own pace. If you like puzzles this is a fun game for you and your family. Test your visual skills, recognition, observation, image composition, and spatial relationships.



Fix-It Utilities 99

*By Jim Suzda*

Mijenix Corporation.  
3030 Sterling Circle  
Boulder, CO 80301-2338  
[www.mijenix.com](http://www.mijenix.com)

System Requirements:  
Windows 95, 98 and NT (4.0 or above)  
8MB of RAM (16MB for NT)  
20MB free disk space.

Price: MSRP: \$49.95

This software package is designed to be directly competitive with Symantec's Norton Utilities and McAfee's Nuts and Bolts. Included on the CD, as an additional bonus, is a complete copy of PowerDesk Utilities 98 at no additional charge. The addition of PowerDesk makes for a nice set of tools to keep your PC running at its maximum.

I will not try to write about every feature of all the utilities in this package because there would be just too much to write about and way too much for you to read. However, before I go any fur-

ther with the report on Fix-It 99, I'd like to mention that just like PowerDesk, a lot of Fix-It 99's utilities are included with Windows 95 and 98. But what is nice about these two programs from Mijenix is that they put all the utilities into two nice convenient packets.

Here is a small list of the things you can do with Fix-It 99:

- Clean, defragment, and back up the system data on your hard drive(s).
- Clean, optimize, and make a back up of the Windows registry.
- Keep track of your system's resources.
- Scan for Viruses.
- Save hours of work with crash protection.
- Create an emergency boot disk set with virus-scanning abilities.
- Restore deleted files.
- Customize your Windows environment.
- Diagnose your hardware.

This is by no means the complete list of utilities that are included in Fix-It 99. What I especially like is the full PRINTED manual! This is something that is lacking with many of the other competing products.

Install was a breeze. Just put the CD in and if you have auto startup on your CD-ROM, the "InstallShield" program will start automatically. Follow the onscreen instructions to finish the install. As soon as the install is complete, the program will ask you if you want to check for any updates via the Internet. This step is very important because Mijenix has already updated the program from what is on the CD and at this point you should download the current virus signature file. When the updates and signature file download are complete, you are given the option to register your software with Mijenix. After Fix-It is installed you are given the option to install PowerDesk, which will become one of your favorite tools to manage your files. Installation will put two icons on your desktop for easy starting of the two utilities.

Just click on the Fix-It icon and you are

greeted with a nice menu with five program buttons. The first time you run Fix-It you should create a System Rescue Disk, which is a diskette that boots up your computer and can help you fix problems in case something "goes south" with your system. Mijenix even includes an emergency boot disk with the package in the event that your system is dead in the water before you try to install Fix-it. You can use this as a system rescue disk, but, of course, it is a generic setup and probably not set up for your computer. So, it is highly recommended that you create your own disk as soon as possible.

The first item on the program menu is FixWizard. On thing that I don't like about this menu is that the first time I looked at the screen I did not realize that I had to click on the icon on the bottom of the screen to gain access to the program. The icon is not highlighted nor is there any indication that you have to click on it to start things up. The only way I found it was by passing my mouse pointer over the screen and I saw the little hand with the extended finger when it passed over the icon! I think it would be a lot easier to use if this menu had a 'click here' or something similar to indicate the button. Anyway, from this menu you can set up Fix-It to run some or all of the utilities all in one step whenever you press the FixWizard start button. I would recommend that you only mark the items that are necessary because some of them are not necessary to run on a constant basis. For instance, how many times do you have to check your computer for Y2K compliance? But, using the FixWizard is nice for the computer novices because it painlessly leads users through a variety of utility features.

Another available feature is CrashProof 99. I have not yet tried this because my computer never crashes! (Yeah right!) The real reason that I've not used this is because I have as few things running in the background as possible. I really have not had many crashes and lockups so I would be hard pressed to evaluate the

effectiveness of the CrashProof utility. I suppose that if I tested more software, it would be needed. But, for those of you who are plagued by computer crashes or are doing a lot of sensitive work, this utility would give you a chance to save your data.

One thing that I have used is the Disk Repair and DefragPlus to check my drives. Not that I had to, but did for part of this review. These utilities are also included with Windows 95/98, but Mijenix's utilities are faster and seem to work better. Another function is the registry optimization, repair, and backup. Your Windows registry can get really fragmented, full of broken items, and full of junk. So, after running these programs you should notice a speed up of your system. Also, you get a 'safe' feeling knowing that you have your registry backed up!

Virus scanning. The package from Mijenix includes full comprehensive anti-virus protection. This was developed in partnership with Aladdin Knowledge Systems' Internet Security Unit. The package price includes a full year of protection, and according to Mijenix, the subsequent updates will be available for an unspecified low fee. One point to note is that if you already have a virus scanner running in the background and install this second one, they could disable each other and leave you with no protection at all. Therefore, it is very important to disable one of the scanners that are running in the background. But, as I always recommend, it is a good idea to run two different virus scanners occasionally to check your system for any possible problems. Just don't run them at the same time and only use one running in the background.

Again, this is by no means an evaluation of all the utilities included in this package by Mijenix! Fix-It 99 has a full menu of utilities for you to use to keep your system fine-tuned and to get you out of trouble if something quits working. I use it and would recommend it to others. In

this review, I've not even touched on any of the PowerDisk portion, because that should be a whole different review.

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CompuPic 5

*By Kelly Liebenstein*

Compu Pic 5

Digital content manager

Photodex Corporation

[www.photodex.com](http://www.photodex.com)

Shareware 15 day free trial \$39.95 to buy.

System Requirements:

Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000

486 or higher processor

32 MB RAM

256 color display

20 MB hard disk space

Compu Pic 5 is a multimedia manager/viewer utility program. An Explorer-like interface lets you choose a directory using the tree view on the left side of the screen. On the right side of the screen your files are listed in one of five formats: details, file listing, icon thumbnails, or tile thumbnails or Windows style thumbnails.

Compu Pic 5 reads and writes the following graphic file types: BMP, FIT, FTS, GIF, ICN, JFI, JFF, JFIJ, JMH, JPE, JPEG, JPG, PBM, PCX, PNG, PSD, SBIG, SBI, TGA, TIF, TIFF, XPM. In addition to these file types, Compu Pic 5 can read many other graphic, audio and video files. CPIC can detect the file format and can read and/or write files regardless of the file extension.

There are too many features to list them all. These are some of my favorites.

Thumbnails—View entire directories at a time as icon thumbnails or large

thumbnails. They are stored in a data file for fast access next time you view that directory.

Picture Index—Create a catalog of thumbnails that you can print or save as a file.

Slideshow/Maxishow—The slideshow shows images, plays videos, sounds and animations. The Maxishow is basically a slideshow that shows multiple images on the screen at once.

Multitasking—Thumbnails are created as a background process so you don't have to wait for them to be finished. You can continue using the program while they are created.

Screen Capture—Capture the screen by pressing the "print screen" key. It will then show the screen in view mode so you can save or print it.

This program is especially helpful if you have clip art disks and you want to know what's on them. It's also great for viewing desktop themes. You can view all of the icons, wallpaper files, and even listen to the sounds. It also works with most scanners to acquire and edit images.

CPIC is shareware and can be downloaded free of charge from [www.photodex.com](http://www.photodex.com). After the 15 day trial period, CPIC displays a reminder to register. You cannot save modified images or create wallpaper until you register.

Versions also available for Macintosh and Linux



Copernic 2000

*By Tim Smith*

Copernic 2000  
Freeware Search Agent

System requirements: Win 95/98/Me/  
NT4/2000

Netscape 3 or higher or IE3 or higher

If you looking for a way to search across

the top search engines simultaneously and are frustrated by dead links look no further.

Copernic 2000 is an Internet search agent that allows you to do a simultaneous search of all the top search engines in six categories; the web, newsgroups, e-mail, buy books, buy hardware, and buy software. These searches can be saved, modified, refined, and validated for bad links. The result of these searches can also be viewed as a single page on a Copernic browser that is opened up when you highlight a search and select the browse button.

The interface of the program is very IE like and simple to understand. The top contains the usual menu with a bar directly under that hold a row of most used task buttons. The left side of the interface displays a column of links to the different categories you specify for you search with the top six available on this freeware version. The top pane displays a list of your searches and when clicked on will product the fruits of your search in the lower pane. This lower pane has the results listed and divided into columns for title, address, score, and engines. There are also some customizations you can make to this lower pane such as adding a few more columns, sort the results by different categories, and changing the appearance of the results.

If want more options Copernic offers a pro version for the price of \$79.95 and adds the ability to search for information from hundreds of different sources. The only real draw back to the freeware version of Copernic 2000 is the banner advertising that goes on between the top pane and the button bar, but this is a very small inconvenience for such a well-designed useful program. If this program interests you, it is a small 2.65mb download at [www.copernic.com](http://www.copernic.com)



## TIPS AND TRICKS

One-Click Shutdown

To shut down Win95 with a single click:

Locate the file RUNDLL.EXE in your Windows directory

Right click on the file and create a shortcut

Drag the shortcut onto your desktop

Right click on the shortcut and select Properties

Click on the Shortcut tab

Add the following to the target user.exe,exitwindows

It should look exactly like this with no added spaces:

`c:\windows\rundll.exe user.exe,exitwindows`

Rename the shortcut to Instant Shut Down or something similar so you know what it is for.

Now instead of clicking on Start,shut down, and shut down to shut down your computer, all you have to do is double-click on your new shortcut.



## ON THE INTERNET

The PC Guide

<http://www.pcguide.com/>

This is a great site loaded with pc reference information. Topics include just about anything you want to know about the working and configuration of computers. The site is fully searchable with its own search engine. You can choose between a framed or frameless interface.

PC 911

<http://www.pcnineoneone.com/index.html>

This is a site where you can get friendly expert computer help in plain English. Do you want a listing of all the files contained in the Win98 and Win 998SE cab files? You can get it here. You'll find how-to's, tweaks, computer news and much more.

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## THE LIGHTER SIDE

### Roberts Rules of Computer Order

1. You will never have an extra blank disk.
2. If you do bring along a blank disk, you won't need it.
3. If you don't bring along a blank disk, it will be the only available opportunity to obtain a copy of a hitherto unattainable, and uniquely appropriate program.
4. If someone else is watching while you are doing anything on the computer, anything at all, it will screw up (that's a technical term).
5. The percentage chance of screwing up increase in direct proportion to the size of your audience.
6. No matter how simple it seems to you, your explanation will be more than they want to know.
7. You will amaze your mother at how much you know about computers.
8. The only pieces of data you will ever lose are the ones you were going to save just as soon as you finished typing a couple more lines.
9. The update of your program will use the keys for something entirely different in this version than it did when you first learned it.
10. You will not understand it the first time

you read it in the manual. You will understand it better the next time you read the manual, for no discernible reason.

11. When you are late for an interview and need a last minute copy of your resume your printer will go down. It will always go down. It doesn't care. Nowhere in your repair manual will it ever tell you what you really need to do—which is to turn the darn thing off and get yourself a cup of tea.

12. The price of anything you buy will stay the same until the actual impact of your money on the bottom of the cash drawer, at which time it will automatically re-list itself in next Thursday's paper at 30% less.

13. Staring at the screen for 97 continuous minutes will not necessarily reveal to you the secret location of any colon that should have been typed in as a semi. Or vice versa.

14. It will always seem like your friend got a better deal.

15. The 800 number will be busy.

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