



## The wicked Wizard

**With so much nonsense being written about the Registration Wizard, Tim Nott thinks it's time he set the record straight.**

There has been much shock horror in the computer press about the deviousness of the Registration Wizard. Various critics have described this as "viral", and speculated that it sends anything from a complete directory listing of your hard disk to your inside leg measurement. Similarly inept was the initial Microsoft reaction online. "The Wizard does not transmit any information about any software on your machine other than the specific Microsoft software which it looks for and asks you for permission to transmit. The Wizard does not transmit any other files from your computer. The Wizard does not transmit your directory structure either. You may consider this an official response from Microsoft. You may crosspost this. You may also publish it." This was closely followed by the admission that it does, in fact, transmit details of installed rival products.

At the time of writing this column the official line was that yes, it does send information on both Microsoft and non-Microsoft products, but only with your permission. It does send hardware details and your name and address — but again, only with your permission. It doesn't send any other files, directory listings or serial numbers. "For a list of the exact information gathered by online registration, the user can view the REGINFO.TXT file found in the C:\WINDOWS directory of the local computer." The release concluded with the fine piece of spin-doctoring that this "helps Microsoft build better products, as well as offer customers better information on their programs and better product support".

Despite a lot of heated debate, I couldn't find anyone who'd actually tried this on their PC, so as I have nothing to



*Customising those Welcome messages with the Registry editor*

hide from Microsoft, I went for it. I can report that it asked my permission for everything, asked if I was sure I wanted to transmit the information, dialled up the Microsoft Network, then thanked me. I can also report that I can't find hide nor hair of REGINFO.TXT. However, I did find the information — as I'd given it — squirreled away in the Registry, so perhaps this has been subject to a beta version change.

Finally, I can report that the Wizard's detective skills rival those of Inspector Clouseau. Out of over 50 Microsoft and other applications it reported but two: Microsoft Works and WordPerfect. Whether this is what was actually transmitted, is open to a whole new round of fun-packed paranoid speculation, but the few seconds of connection were certainly not long enough to transmit a full disk listing at MSNet's lugubrious data rates.

### Rabbiting on

There's been a lot of feedback about the full window dragging/sizing "secret" revealed in July's column, much of which was along the lines of "What are you on

about?" or even "What are you on?". First, I should have explained that putting ILOVEBUNNY32=1 in the [windows] section of WIN.INI doesn't automatically enable this on its own. Bunny lovers will have to hop over to Control Panel/Display or right click on the desktop and choose Properties. Click on the Settings tab and you should see two new checkboxes, one for full window drag/size and one for font smoothing.

The bad news is that not all display cards support these functions; the boxes may be greyed out. There's worse news as this doesn't work at all with builds later than the preview and apparently won't be a standard feature of Windows 95. Instead, it will form part of Microsoft Plus! for Windows 95.

As I have an abhorrence! of silly punc-

uation marks! in the middle of sentences, as well as product names that are five words long, I'll refer to this henceforth as Plus. Plus what? Plus when? Plus how much?

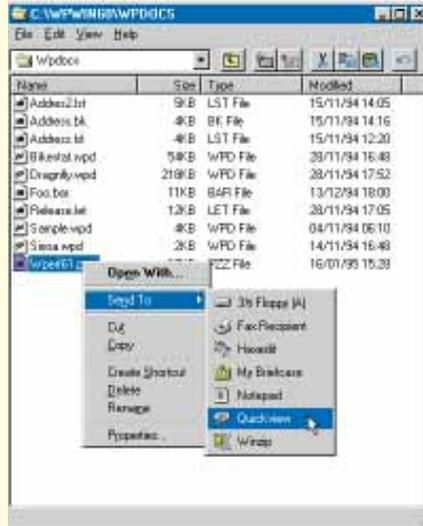
The "what", according to the Microsoft press release, is a System Agent that provides smart versions of DriveSpace, ScanDisk and Defrag that work automatically in the background to keep your PC in top shape. Then, as well as font smoothing and full-window drag, there's a range of desktop bolt-on goodies in the form of themed wallpapers, colour schemes, fonts, icons, sounds and animated cursors. A Multimedia Pinball game is promised, if you're getting bored with Freecell, and the Internet Jumpstart kit, which will provide "easy sign-up and one-button access to the Internet". The "when" is "expected within 60 days of the release of Windows 95" and "how much" is "expected to be under £40".

Your correspondent has yet to see a beta of this, so will believe it when he sees it, but meanwhile, you may remember last month we looked at how to associate file types with more than one application, so, for example, right-clicking on a BMP file offered the choice of opening it with the

native Paintbrush or a third-party application such as Paintshop Pro or Photostyler. A variation on this theme is the Send To option on the menu that appears when you right-click a file. This doesn't rely on associations with a file type, so you can "send" any file to a named destination.

By default you'll have floppy disk, and if you have the software installed, your Briefcase, Fax Recipient and maybe some other destinations. This would seem to indicate that Send To is essentially a smart file-copying tool, but it goes much further than that. Try, for example, opening the main Windows folder and the Windows/SendTo folder. Right-drag NOTEPAD.EXE out of the former into the latter and choose Create Shortcut. Now right-click on any file, choose Send To and you'll see that Notepad is added to the list of possible destinations. Hence you can now send *any* file to Notepad, which is especially useful for all those odd-named text files such as READ.ME, README.NOW or README.1ST, for example. And there's no reason to stop there — there are all sorts of useful destinations to which you can send a file, or group of files. If you use an archiving utility such as WinZip you can add a shortcut to it in the SendTo folder and send a bunch of files to be zipped up. If you're an inveterate meddler or just plain nosy, like me, you can add a hex editor.

The possibilities are really only limited by your imagination, but one useful option is the Windows 95 viewer: QUIKVIEW.EXE in WINDOWS\SYSTEM\VIEWERS. Since this option is already on the menu for many registered file types, it might at first seem redundant. But playing around with the viewer shows there's rather more to it than meets the eye. For example, I can find nothing in the documentation to say that the viewer can read GIF files. Yet, as dragging one onto an open Viewer window will confirm, it can, so it's always worth a try. Similarly, there's a viewer for WordPerfect files, but as that application takes a rather liberal attitude to file extensions, you may have WP documents with all sorts of extensions that it would be laborious or even impossible to register individually. I've tried renaming these to all sorts of silly extensions, but after a query message saying "There are no registered viewers for this type of file - would you like to try the default?" it seems to work every time. In an extreme fit of destructive perversity I even tried renaming them to BMP and TXT, but I couldn't confuse it — the viewer showed exactly the same as with a WPD extension.



*You can send any file anywhere you like...*

### A warmer welcome

Here's some good news about those "Welcome to Windows 95" tips of the day. Though useful at first, half a dozen or so repetitions of "You can minimize neck strain by positioning your monitor at eye level" tends to grate. I mean, where do they think I might have the thing positioned? Down the bottom of the garden? Of course, the sensible thing is to turn it off (the tip box, not the monitor), but those with a more twisted imagination will be delighted to learn that you can create your own messages. Boldly go to the Registry Editor, which you should find by hitting the Start button and going through Programs/Accessories/System Tools.

You'll find a rather intimidating list of things such as HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT and HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE. As you click on these, they will expand into a seemingly infinite tree of sub-entries, like some bizarre text fractal. I found the tips by clicking down through HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\CurrentVersion\Windows\explorer/Tips. Alternatively, run Edit/Find... on Tips and keep hitting F3 until you see a list of the tips in the right-hand pane. Double-click on the icon next to the one you'd like to change and type the new text into the dialogue box. Close the Registry Editor, the changes will be saved automatically, and in the fullness of time your custom message(s) will appear on the Welcome panel.

### PCW Contacts

Keep the feedback flowing in, by post to PCW or by email to [timn@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:timn@cix.compulink.co.uk)