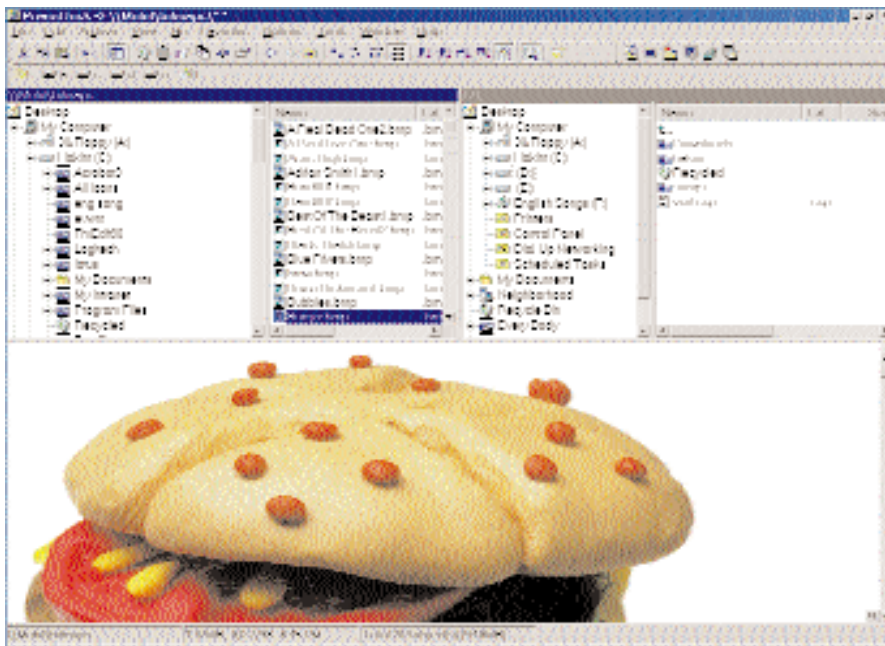


SOFTWARE CHIP TEST

This month, CHIP tests utilities, shareware and freeware

PowerDesk Utilities 98

Power of organisation in your hands



If your management needs extend beyond the scope of Windows Explorer, you are a prime prospect for PowerDesk Utilities 98. The latest version of PowerDesk Utilities from Mijenix, one of the leading utility software developers in the world, will ensure that your files do not disappear into nowhere while they are moved or copied.

The software has an unusual combination of standard file-management features (such as format, move and copy), a well-designed, integrated zip/unzip utility; a DOS command prompt; shortcuts to your favourite applications and file viewing capabilities for over 80 formats.

In complete 'sync'

The folder-synchronisation feature in PowerDesk Utilities 98 is far superior to the Windows' Briefcase. It is more intuitive and offers a greater number of file selection methods. You can move or copy individual files among folders or even synchronise

folders with a diskette. This utility also supports the synchronisation of any two folders, including those on a network.

Those who have to frequently type in filenames into documents, will appreciate the new Copy Paths as Text option. This feature copies the full name and the path of a selected file on to the Windows Clipboard. For example, if you want to inform your colleague of a word processing document that resides on the network, you could use this feature to select a file and paste its filename into an e-mail message. This leaves far less room for error than if you had typed out the full filename and path (especially if your file is buried deep).

Power you can use

Unlike Windows Explorer you can split PowerDesk's window into two panes (rather than opening a second copy of the program) which makes drag-and-drop operations between folders or network

drives much easier.

The main menu incorporates a few updates as well. It provides easy access to the Erase Diskette option. You can also place the File Viewer at the bottom or right side of the main window. (File Viewer is really a combination of Inso Corp's QuickView Plus, and LEAD Technologies' Multimedia Viewers.)

The Toolbar of the previous version has been retained and it still is conveniently dockable, with shortcuts to program groups or applications, resource monitors (such as CPU use), and a digital or analog clock.

A dialog-box enhancer called Fullview lets you resize File Open and File Save dialog boxes for applications using common file dialog boxes. And for Word and WordPerfect, which do not require common file dialog boxes, another feature called Tracker adds two small icons to the upper-right title bar of the Open and Save boxes, listing the recently used files or folders.

PowerDesk Utilities' Size Manager makes it possible for you to have a bird's-eye view of hard disk space usage (making it easy to spot those bloated obsolete files). The application allows you the possibility of as many as 24 graphics formats. Or right-click on a file to decode MIME/Base64, BinHex, and UUencoded mail attachments (it can create UUencoded files too). You can also use the Easy Update functionality, which allows you to update the program via the Web.

In terms of file management, convenience, design and synchronisation PowerDesk Utilities 98 is the perfect utility.

VERDICT A+

- Feature-rich; powerful, easy file management
- File Sync application could have been simpler

Contact: Microware Computer Services
 Price: Rs 1,600
 Phone: 022-8729725
 Fax: 022-8727446
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 Web site: www.mwcrom.com

FreeSpace 1.0

For more space on your hard disk



Hard drives, no matter what size, have this irritating habit of running out of space. And the efforts to make available more hard disk drive space (with utilities such as Drive Space) often end up in compressed hard drives leading to decrease in performance.

FreeSpace from Mijenix allows a user to compress individual folders and files instead of entire drives. Thus, the user frees space without compromising on the performance. FreeSpace works with Windows 95 and Windows NT 4.0, although for Windows NT the drive must use the New Technology File System (NTFS).

One of the few applications that are still available on a 1.44-MB floppy diskette, FreeSpace is easy to install. You can add FreeSpace to the right-mouse-button context menu. In Windows 95 you can also add it as an icon to the taskbar.

Wizards: Sure way to more space

After installation, FreeSpace Manager loads up, giving you a menu of wizards. The QuickSpace Wizard scans your hard drive for the folders that have to be compressed and highlights folders that will provide more than 1 MB of free space after compression.

You can specify the amount of free space you need—10 MB is the default setting. If that does not suffice, you can ask for a new set of suggested folders, which

will be highlighted in a different colour. During the test, the Wizard was asked to free 10 MB of space on a Windows 95 machine with more than 700 MB of available disk space. QuickSpace recommended 70-odd folders for compression, for the majority estimated compression ratios of over 50 percent.

Once you have selected the folders you want to compress, the Compression Wizard gets into action. It searches for files of a particular extension in any folder of the hard drive. You can select either Choose Default or a Custom Search. The latter specifies which folders or file types to look for, based on the relative importance you assign to three factors: the last modification date, the amount of space that will be gained through compression and the compression ratio.

The Results window displays compression candidates that you can select with the adjacent checkboxes. Below this window are displayed: the amount of space you save, the current free space and the number of folders the Wizard suggests you compress.

Once FreeSpace completes compressing the selected files, it enlists the files that could not be compressed, most likely because they were in use.

A summary includes the names of the folders, the full path to each, the amount of free space created, and the compres-

sion ratio for each; it also tells you how much free space is now available. If you select the option of compressing by file type, FreeSpace breaks down your drive by file type and lists the file types it finds, starting with those that would yield the greatest space savings if they were compressed.

Tight integration

A commendable feature of FreeSpace is its integration into Windows Explorer. Compressed files are highlighted in blue in Explorer; you can also enter Explorer without opening FreeSpace and right-clicking on the file or folder.

An option allows you to compress, decompress, or analyse disk space savings in Windows 95, and compress or decompress them in Windows NT. If you select Properties for a file or folder, FreeSpace shows you a pie chart with its estimated compressed size and saved space, along with the option to compress or decompress it.

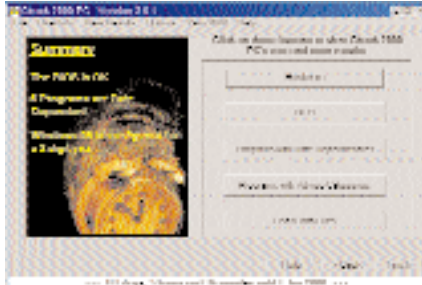
Under Windows 95, FreeSpace uses Mijenix's Dynamic File System Extension (DFSE) technology (patent pending) for compression. DFSE's TightCluster feature stores files in a way that optimises a cluster. Under Windows NT, the native NTFS file compression provides dynamic compression and decompression features. The Decompression Wizard arranges its search results in a window much as the Compression Wizard does. FreeSpace Analyzer is used to help the user figure out the right compression or decompression folders and files.

The only drawback is that the application depends on a driver, which it loads at Windows start up. This can affect the performance of any computer that has less than 16 MB RAM.



Inexpensive
 Takes a long time for decompression
 Contact: Microware Computer Services
 Price: Rs 1,500
 Phone: 022-8729725
 Fax: 022-8727446
 E-mail: sales@mwcadrom.com
 Web Site: www.mwcadrom.com

Year 2000 Now Now? Or Never?



Here is one more software that promises survival—"SURVIVE THE MILLENNIUM BUG" (as the package says). Year 2000 Now from IMSI contains UpdateNow, Check 2000 PC and InocuLan Antivirus. The last two are labelled as bonus software. This means that out of the much-hyped trio, UpdateNow is the only software developed by IMSI. Even though two entire sections outline additional bonus programs like GetRight (the popular download manager) and Jackhammer (the Ping software), neither of them were on the test CD.

UpdateNow functions more or less like

CyberMedia's Oil Change and automatically searches the Net for latest versions of different applications, drivers for display cards, soundcards, printers etc.

The program profiles your computer for all the application software, drivers, games as well as ActiveX controls.

After an easy installation (of UpdateNow only) later, you are prompted to install Check 2000 PC (optional). This software consumes up to 5 MB of space and checks your system BIOS for Y2K-compliance. It also checks the Windows Regional Date Settings, and trigger dates like September 9, 1999 (9-9-99), the day after February 28, 2000 (and 2001). It also checks for programs with date dependencies and provides advice for the same.

Basically, UpdateNow is a subscription-based service that uses the Internet to connect you to the UpdateNow database. The user has to first register using the client program. After this, the user can check for the latest versions of programs supported by UpdateNow.

Though the user interface is simple, it

provides exhaustive details about the applications—the version number, type and Y2K-compatibility of the detected software is displayed. The program will display detailed information about available updates for that program, including size of the update, location on the Net, update description, time to download etc.

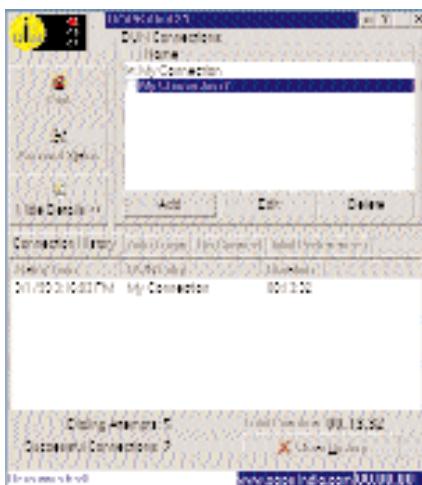
For installing the 'bonus' InocuLan Antivirus, one has to manually load the setup program from the InocuLan directory on the CD.

The Year 2000 Now 'suite' is merely an accumulation of various programs on the CD. When you can download shareware with the same functions, would you really spend Rs 2,200 for this package?

None
 Bonus programs are missing
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 Web site: www.mwcddrom.com

OOPS iDial 2.1

With OOPS, it is goodbye to OOH, AH, OUCH!



This Internet dialler has been developed by a Chennai-based company called OOPS. And the software has a noble aim—to reduce the pain users experience while trying to dial into the Internet in India. OOPS iDial comes on a 1.44-MB floppy

and the installation of the utility was mostly trouble-free. The only hitch is that the installation program does not tell the user how much space is required to install the utility.

Automating the logon process of the Internet can greatly improve one's efficiency as this obviates the need to type in either the account name or the password. Till now the only way to accomplish this was by writing a script, which required some technical know-how. OOPS iDial 2.1 asks the user to enter the account name and the password in its interface and then it carries out the dialling process for him by itself.

The latest version can even launch a specific application once it is connected to the Internet. You can specify the application—browser or mail client—you want the OOPS iDial to run.

In addition, OOPS iDial can monitor the number of hours that have been spent on the Net. To activate this feature, the

user will have to fill in the details of the Internet Account once, preferably the first time. Thereafter iDial will maintain the Internet Account every time the user connects to the Net.

iDial will also pop-up an alert message whenever less than 10 hours are left in your account or if your account is due to expire within 10 days.

The only flaw, if at all, is with the online help of the utility. This could be greatly improved. But for Rs 500 the utility is definitely worth its price.

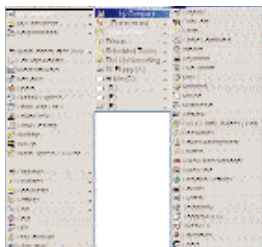
Easy to operate
 Online help leaves a lot to be desired
 Price: Rs 500
 Contact: OOPS Service
 Phone: 044-8529332
 E-mail: info@oops.org
 Web site: www.oops-India.com

Shareware

PaneKiller 1.31

Less pane, much gain

Tired of opening Windows Explorer to access a document buried under layers of folders? PaneKiller 1.31 provides an alternative to filling up your screen with the innumerable



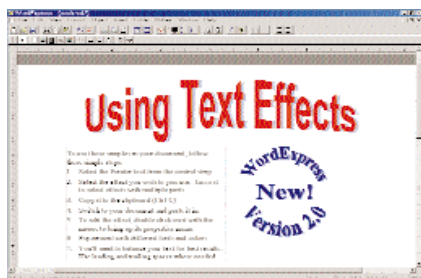
Explorer windows. It offers a convenient cascading menu to navigate through documents, files, folders, and programs. The menu can be configured and sorted alphabetically. Right-clicking on any menu item brings up its context menu. The latest version has the ability of displaying custom backgrounds—menus can also be made transparent.

Rating: **HHHH**

PaneKiller 1.31
Download size: 295 KB
www.maddogsw.com/panekiller/

WordExpress

Featherweight that outperforms the heavyweights



Now here is an excellent and full-featured application for Windows 95. Called WordExpress, this shareware features a multiple-document, multiple-window interface with a customisable

toolbar that allows the user complete control over character, paragraph and page formatting utilities. It also allows you to create headers and footers.

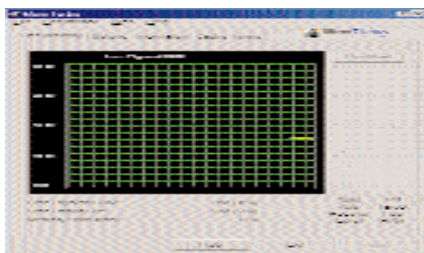
If you own a low-end Windows-based PC, or simply want to be extra stingy on hard disk space (in order to load an extra game or two), you can substitute MS Word with WordExpress. For a miniscule download size, you get functionality too.

Rating: **HHHHH**

WordExpress
Download size: 1.56 MB
www.mvd.com/wordexpress/index.htm

MemTurbo

Make more RAM



This shareware boosts the performance of your PC by increasing the available RAM, defragmenting system memory, and more. MemTurbo recovers memory leaks from poorly-behaved applications and

flushes unused libraries and DLLs temporarily out to the disk, making more room (read RAM) for your favourite games or applications. It also defragments physical RAM to increase the efficiency of your CPU and motherboard caches. The program silently operates from the System Tray (the bottom right of your Windows desktop). And since it does not install any drivers or virtual devices, MemTurbo consumes very little system resources. In the shareware version, the cache-tuning feature has been disabled.

Rating: **HHH**

MemTurbo
Download size: 779 KB
www.memturbo.com/

Freeware

NotesPad 8.0 (Size: 752 KB)



A very user-friendly tabbed interface, plus the ability to open 16 files together and edit them too, makes this freeware a potential replacement for your Notepad. Another noteworthy addition is a Spellcheck utility that can work for seven languages!

www.newbie.net/NotesPad/index.html

NetSonic 1.2 (Size: 762 KB)



NetSonic has an intelligent look-ahead cache, which works in the background and automatically downloads the links to any Web page you visit. Upon clicking on any hyperlink on the site, the page along with all the graphics gets loaded. Net-Sonic is also customisable.

www.web3000.com/

More Properties 2.03 (Size: 157 KB)

Apart from an interface that is user-friendly, you can tweak or customise many of the hidden Win 95 settings. Utilities that can be changed include Explorer, CD AutoRun and Plus! settings, startup options, icons for My Computer, Recycle Bin, Printers, and more; System Properties, such as the registered name/owner, drive list and the option to use the tilde (~) when truncating long file names.

www.imaginary.co.za/mp20/