



# The cable guy

Bob Walder is your new man on Networks. He begins by explaining how to make the best connections, and takes you through cabling and the ins and out of correct configuration.

**M**any correspondents to this column seem concerned with the basics of networking, so this seems like a good place to start. In the future, I will be concentrating on the most popular products used in most networking applications. But I won't be concentrating exclusively on the basics: I will cover the spectrum of networking, including management, groupware, Branch Office/Small Office connectivity issues *et al.*

A couple of letters reflecting readers' concerns come from Scott Walker and Chris Thomson, both similar in content. Chris writes: "I was interested to read John Rowlett's letter, in the June issue column, relating to the linking of two PCs together, using only Windows 95. I have tried this between my Dell Optiplex GXMT5133 (built-in 3Com Etherlink III 3C509b-TPO network card) and my Compaq Prolinea 5100, with an NDC NE2000 card (configured as a Novell/Anthem NE2000 compatible), but with no success. The 3Com help files even give instructions on how to set up a 'peer-to-peer network by creating the same Client for Microsoft Networks' on each PC with 'IPX/SPX-compatible Protocol' and using the 'File and printer sharing for Microsoft Networks' network service.

"Am I missing something obvious? I have used a standard Category 5 cable between the two PCs and both individually show the relevant Workgroup in Network Neighbourhood but they don't seem to talk to each other. Diagnostics on both cards pass OK and they are configured OK in Win95 (no conflicts). My eventual aim is to purchase a mini-hub, as my business is likely to expand to another PC soon and we will all want to share the one HP DesignJet 250C plotter (we all use AutoCAD, hence

the A0 plotter) and be able to access files (drawings) between PCs. Should my current setup work? Or do I need to consider a mini-hub to link the two PCs?"

OK, two things here. The first is to deal with why your current setup will not work, and the second is to take a general look at configuring peer-to-peer networking under Windows 95 so you can check that you have done everything right.

If you need to connect two or more PCs without using a 10Base-T hub, the only way to do it is to use Thin Ethernet. Standard Thin Ethernet (also called 10Base-2) coaxial cable is readily available and easy to use. Whenever you buy a network card with a BNC (Thin Ethernet) connector, you should also get a small T-shaped device called a T-connector. This is plugged into the card's BNC connector and the Thin Ethernet cable can then be connected between the two PCs. You can connect as many PCs together in a chain as you like (although there are distance restrictions) and you will always be left with two spare connectors; one at each end of the chain. Each should be fitted with a "Terminator", a plastic or metal-tipped "cap" which is also supplied with some of the better quality Ethernet cards. Do not try to connect a single piece of coax cable directly to the BNC connector on the network cards — it will not work. You must use the T-connectors and terminators.

Once, this Thin Ethernet stuff would have been your best option until 10Base-T arrived. Now we no longer connect PCs in a chain but with a "star" configuration, with a hub at the centre. Each port of the hub is connected to a PC, or to another hub, and all communications go via the hub. This provides more flexibility in cabling our networks, and uses lighter and cheaper

cable which resembles telephone wire (don't try to use telephone wire!).

Standard 10Base-T cable is designed to connect a PC to a hub, not a PC to a PC. The signalling simply will not work, which is your problem in a nutshell. If you want to use 10Base-T, you should be investing in a hub: small four-port devices can be had for around £50 these days. But Thin Ethernet cable is even cheaper, provided your card has connectors for both 10Base-T and Thin Ethernet. If your card supports only 10Base-T connectors, there is one other possible option, provided you only want to connect two PCs.

When you need to connect two hubs which do not have "cascade" ports, or when you need to connect a file server directly to a router, say, you use something called a "crossover cable". Externally this looks exactly like a standard UTP cable, except the pairs of wires within the outer sheath are arranged slightly differently.

Using a crossover cable plugged directly into the UTP ports of your network cards may provide the breakthrough you are looking for (though I cannot guarantee it will work). Unfortunately, crossover cables are not as readily available as standard ones, so if you are treated to a blank stare when you ask for one, get out of the shop quickly and try a more specialised retailer, or order one from the Inmac catalogue.

## Scalpels out!

Next, call up your Control Panel and double-click the Network icon to bring up the network configuration window (Fig 1). We're going to try some drastic surgery now, to make sure we are starting from a solid base. So, scalpels at the ready, and have your Win95 CD-ROM or floppy disks to hand.

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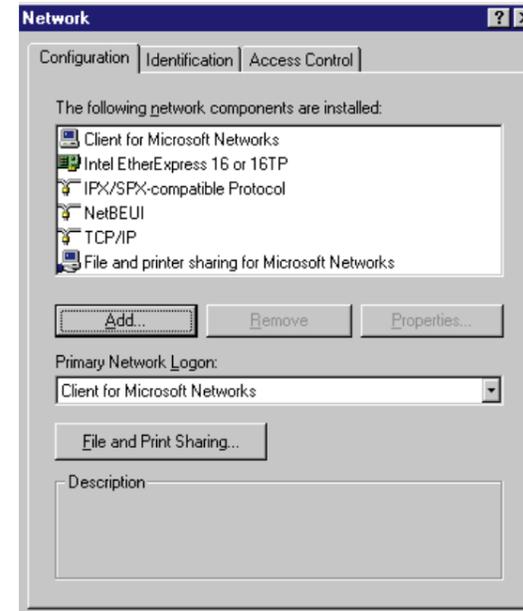


Fig 1 Network configuration window

1. Once your machine has restarted, click on the Network icon in the Control Panel again, and on the Configuration tab, click the Add button.
2. In the Select Network Component Type dialog box, double-click the type of component to install, as shown in the list in Fig 2. We are going to add our adapter.
3. Up will come a two-pane window with a list of manufacturers and a list of the network card drivers. Select your manufacturer (Intel, in this case), then select the

appropriate network card (EtherExpress 16 or 16TP), and click OK.

4. If, however, you have a driver disk which was supplied with your network card, you are better off using those drivers. Click on the "Have Disk" button, and browse the floppy disk looking in the root or Win95 (or however it is named) directory for a file with the extension .INF. Highlight this file, click OK, and you will get a list of the network card drivers which are on the disk. Select the appropriate one. You have now caught up with the rest of us.
5. When you return to the Configuration screen, you should see the Ethernet card,

appropriate network card (EtherExpress 16 or 16TP), and click OK.

If any are missing, or if you later delete them by accident, they can be added manually. Click on the Add button, select Client, Microsoft, and you can install the Client for Microsoft Networks. Clicking Add/Protocol/Microsoft will let you add the IPX/SPX Compatible Protocol.

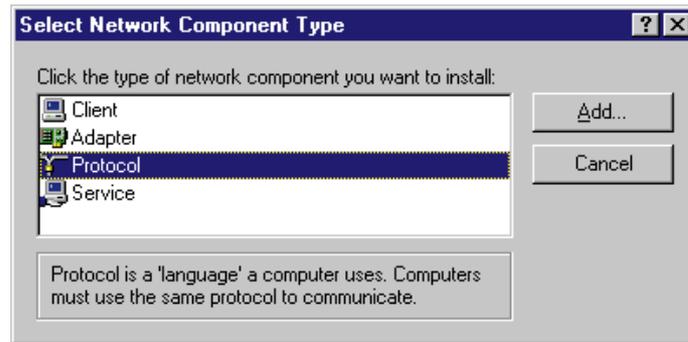
Back on the Configuration screen, select Client for Microsoft Networks and click Properties. Ensure that the box "Logon to Windows NT Domain" is *not* checked, and check the "Quick Logon" box. Click OK.

Select your ethernet adapter and click Properties. In the "Driver Type" tab, ensure you are using the Enhanced Mode NDIS Driver. The Bindings tab should show a check box next to the IPX/SPX Compatible Protocol. You can ignore the Advanced tab for now but the settings on the Resources tab should be changed if necessary to match those set on your ethernet card. This is the trickiest bit, since every network card is different. Some require you to set jumpers or DIP switches on the card, some let you make the changes in software, others are fully plug-and-play.

You must determine what hardware settings are used (e.g. interrupt and I/O address range) and ensure that the settings on this screen match whatever you have set on the card. Then click OK.

If you need to troubleshoot your network

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**Fig 2** Network component window

the network, so it might be helpful to put something descriptive in here, like "Bob's Computer in Accounts".

13. In Access

adapter at a later date, you will need to go to Control Panel/System/Device Manager/Network Adapters. There you can view the existing resources used by the adapter, check to see if they clash with any other device in the system, and change them if necessary. If you are not using plug-and-play devices, remember to change the settings on the adapter itself so they always match those you set within Windows 95.

8. You can have a look at the properties in the IPX/SPX Compatible Protocol screen if you like, but there are no changes to be made.

9. Presumably, you want to share disks and printers between your networked PCs, so click the File and Printer Sharing button and check the boxes which are applicable (if you are not sure, check them both). Click OK and you will see the "File and Printer Sharing for Microsoft Networks" entry appear on your Configuration screen.

10. Move on to the "Identification" tab. Win95 requires you to define a workgroup and computer name for each networked computer, independent of the type of networking software you use. First, you give your computer its name: keep it simple, use 15 characters or less, and make sure that every computer on your network has a *unique* name. This is very important.

11. The default Workgroup name is WORKGROUP. You can leave this as it is, if you are creating a network from scratch, but if you change it, you must make sure that it is *identical* on every PC on your network. For those of you who are adding a Win95 client to an existing network, this should be the same as that used on all existing PCs, or should be the existing NT Domain name if you want this PC to act as a client to an NT Server (I will cover using Win95 as a client to NetWare and NT servers in more detail in a future column).

12. The description field is for information. Do with it as you will. However, this field is displayed as a comment next to the computer name when users are browsing

Control tab make sure the "Share-Level Access Control" box is checked.

14. The configuration is now complete, so click OK. You will be prompted for many disks or your Win95 CD-ROM at this point, following which you will be asked to reboot your machine.

15. When backing up, you should be asked for a user name and password, and if creating your network from scratch, you can make these up (try to remember them!).

16. You should be able to browse the network using the Network Neighbourhood icon and the workgroup you created should be visible, as should all Windows 95 clients in the same workgroup as your own PC.

17. Even though you can see the other machines in your workgroup, you won't be able to do much with them until you have created some shares. Bring up the "My Computer" window and right-click on the C: drive. If your networking is functioning correctly, there will be a "Sharing" option on the menu.

18. Select "Sharing" and check the "Shared as" box. The share name will default to "C", and you can leave it as this or give it a more descriptive name.

19. Under "Access type", check the "Full" box. This is all we need to do for now as, to begin with, we are more interested in getting the network up and running than in security. Click OK and the icon for the C: drive will change, to indicate it has been shared.

20. Try to browse the drive from another PC in the same workgroup. If all is OK, repeat the process with other drives and printers throughout your workgroup.

Happy networking!

I'm off to Novell's BrainShare conference in Nice, so next month I will share the juicier bits of gossip with you.

## PCW Contact

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# A star is born

Do you know your thin ethernet from your T connector? Your star cabling layout from your 10Base2? Mark Baynes puts networking basics in the spotlight to help you get connected.

**M**ost letters I get are concerned with basic networking problems, so this month will be of use to most people. I will be covering the basics of networking PCs in terms of network topology and cards. As ever, this will be hands-on and based on real-life situations. Some information will already have been covered in previous columns but bear with me, because it is worthwhile to cover every step. We are only concerned here with ethernet networks, not the wonderful world of Token Ring.

So what are we trying to do? And, more importantly, why? Networking is simply a matter of connecting two or more computers together so that their resources can be shared. Whether a network is the web or two PCs in your bedroom, the principles are the same. By resources, most people mean files, but the most commonly shared resource on a network is a printer.

## On the bus

The first thing you are going to need is a good network card and some cabling. For most people, their first network is a peer-to-peer affair whereby two or more computers

share their files with each other. The most simple way to do this is to use 10Base2 or thin ethernet cable (also known as BNC) to establish a bus topology (i.e. network structure) as seen in Fig 1.

You will need an appropriate length of cable between each PC to be networked, and it's a good idea to buy cable lengths slightly longer than you need in case you move your PCs (but not so long that it turns into spaghetti all over the floor).

Each PC will need a network card with a BNC connector and each card will also need a T-connector. The connector attaches to the BNC port, or stub, which sticks out of the back of the network card. The BNC cable does *not* attach directly to the stub (Fig 2). T-connectors are usually included with the card.

Thin ethernet cable is easily recognisable because it will have the BNC connectors at either end: sometimes these are covered with a rubber sleeve, sometimes not, and the cable is quite stiff in comparison to twisted pair or 10BaseT cable. This is because it is shielded and is therefore more robust. Thin ethernet is not sufficiently robust that it will withstand a desk or chair

leg being placed on it or a person's weight being applied to it.

Now, whether or not your BNC network cable (or cables) snake all over your office, with BNC cabling you are merely organising a single line or daisy-chain of PCs and the network cards at either end of the line have to be terminated. This is done by attaching a T-connector to the network card stub, but instead of attaching *another* piece of cable to the *other* side of the connector, you attach a terminator block (Fig 2).

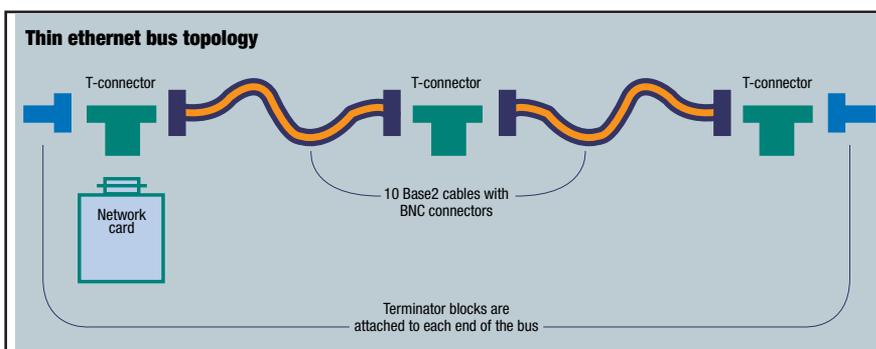
It may be that at some point one of the PCs at either end of the network may need to be removed for some reason: you can remove the T-connector from the PC and just leave it dangling there, and the network will still work well as long as the terminator is present: I've done this a number of times. But it is much better to shorten the network by that single cable run and move the T-connector to the PC which is now at the end of the line.

## Star spotting

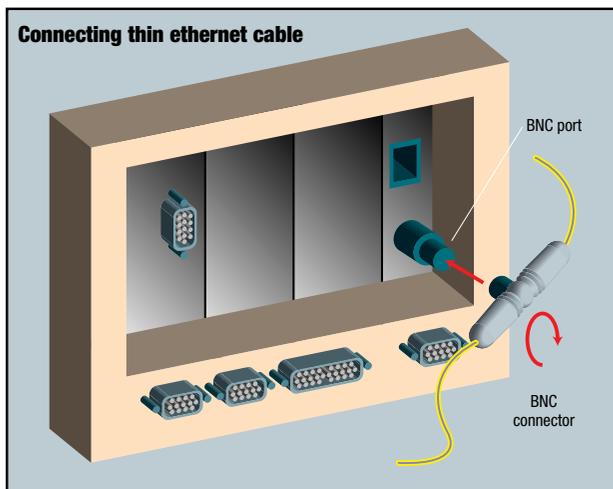
If you have five or more PCs, or you plan to have more in future, you might be best advised to use a different type of cabling layout from the bus topology, the star, at the centre of which is a hub (or repeater, if you prefer the old-fashioned term). I have used both topologies and prefer the star simply because it is easier to manage. The problem with the bus approach is that the network signal goes from one PC to the next, so if there is a break in the cable in the middle of the network, PCs either side of the break cannot communicate with each other. Also, you have to faff around with T-connectors and terminators — thin ethernet cable is difficult to tuck away out of sight.

If you use the star approach (Fig 3) all

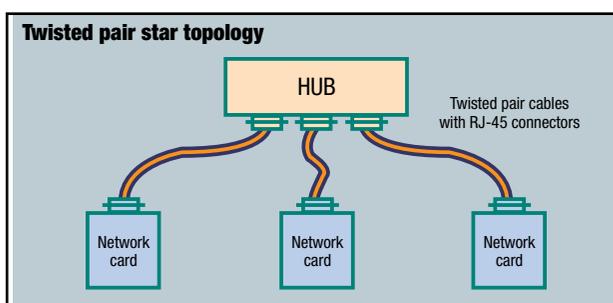
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**Fig 1** The thin ethernet bus topology requires terminator blocks to be attached to the T-connectors of the network cards at each end of the bus



**Fig 2 (left)** Thin ethernet cable is always attached to the network card via the T-connector, never straight to the BNC stub on the card itself (Source: 3Com)



**Fig 3 (below left)** The twisted pair star topology means the extra expense of buying a hub but is a much better network layout to manage

PCs are connected directly to the hub, so if a length of cable is damaged, only the signal to the PC on the end of that cable run is affected: the others are still in contact with each other. There is the extra cost of the hub, but it's well worth it in the long run.

All hubs have simple connection indicator and network traffic lights on each port which can tell you whether there is a live PC at the other end of the cable run,

providing a single logical hub of 60 ports or more. For most small offices a hub with 10 or 12 ports will suffice.

Hubs can be daisy-chained together using a special crossover port. I do this in the office, with one hub downstairs with all the network PCs and the print server connected to it, which is then daisy-chained using a long run of cable to another hub upstairs, which has the server attached to it.

You can get 10Base2 hubs which use the BNC approach but most people use twisted pair or 10BaseT hubs which use what is called an RJ-45 port and connector, which looks similar to the connector on the end of a phone or modem line but which is slightly different. The RJ-45 connector on the end of the cable goes into the RJ-45 port in the network card at one end (Fig 4) and the hub at the other end, and that's it.

Twisted pair cable is also thinner than thin ethernet cable so it is easily tucked under the corner of carpets and up the stairs (you should see my house...). But this flexibility is at the expense of resilience, although it is reasonably durable. Because the nature of the star approach means that you will have lots more cable lying around, it is quite often a good idea to fix some plastic ducting to the wall and run the cables through this. You can find this type of ducting in most DIY stores and it's worth the time spent installing it.

#### Play your cards right

If you are not sure what sort of topology to adopt, I would suggest a combination card, so-called because it has both BNC and RJ-45 ports which allow you to install the card once and change cable types as you wish.

Some cards have an AUI (Attachment Unit Interface) port but for most small networks a combo card with BNC and RJ-45 ports will do fine. I am on record as having stated my belief that it is well worth investing in a good-quality card: 3Com has

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## Bang on queue

Following publication of the Hands On Networks column in April's PCW, I've received several letters regarding the issue of print servers. Here's one of the best. Thanks for your input, everyone!

■ "With regard to your reply to a reader's letter about print servers which do not require a network print queue. In fact, the HP JetDirect card supports the functionality you need, in both the internal and external flavours.

"Download Windows for Workgroups drivers for the card, so that a WfWG Network PC can print directly to the

printer. The driver uses MS DLC.

"You can also add HPNetwork Printers to W95 which will work in the same way. I've a group called

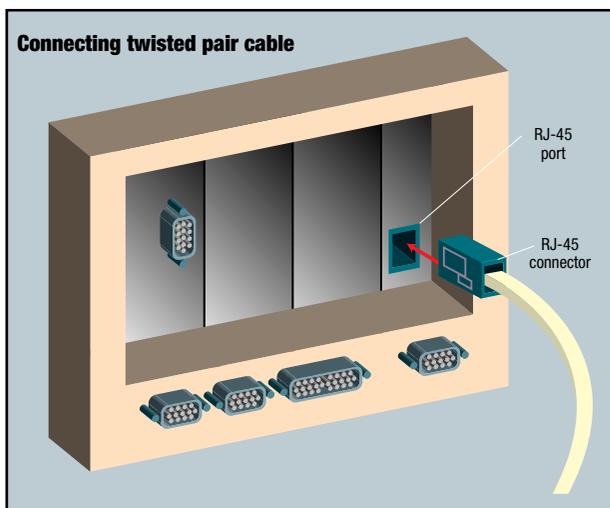
**HP\_Network\_Printers**

in my Network Neighbourhood and can map a local device directly to the device in the Network Printer group.

"If a printer can be made visible in a WfWG network, I think it can be viewed and used by OS/2, and even SCO Open Server 5.0 with Advanced File & Printer Services.

Jason Cathles

[jcathles@compuserve.com](mailto:jcathles@compuserve.com)



**Fig 4** Connecting twisted pair cable is simply a matter of plugging the RJ-45 jack on the end of the cable straight into the socket in the card. (Source: 3Com)

via the RJ-45 or BNC socket, ensure that the network cable you are attaching to the card is attached to the rest of the network, and that's it from the hardware side.

But this is only because

kindly lent me some of its rather good EtherLink cards: the EtherLink III ISA combo and the EtherLink XL PCI RJ-45 card.

Upon opening the box of any good network card you should find at least three things: the card itself, a documentation booklet, and a floppy disk containing a setup program and basic drivers for the usual network clients. The only ones with which we are immediately concerned are the Windows drivers.

My installation machine is an ageing 486DX2 50MHz ISA PC with 12Mb RAM and a 500Mb hard drive, running Windows for Workgroups. It normally has an SMC card installed in it (and has done for the last three years) which has been trouble-free, but for the purposes of this month's column I have removed it.

Physical installation of the EtherLink is simple: just open the machine, slot the card into a free ISA slot, screw down the rear plate, attach the network cable to the card

the EtherLink is software configurable. If you have a card where you have to faff around with jumper switches on the card itself, you will have to set these correctly. I always leave the PC casing open anyway, until I know the new network card is working.

It is always a good idea to check which IRQ and memory address space is free for your card, irrespective of whether your PC and card combination can automatically detect these settings. If you insist on jamming a card into every available slot in your PC, you may have some juggling to do. I always try to keep things as simple as possible in the knowledge that they will get complicated anyway.

## PCW Contacts

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3Com 0800 966197: [www.3com.com/](http://www.3com.com/)



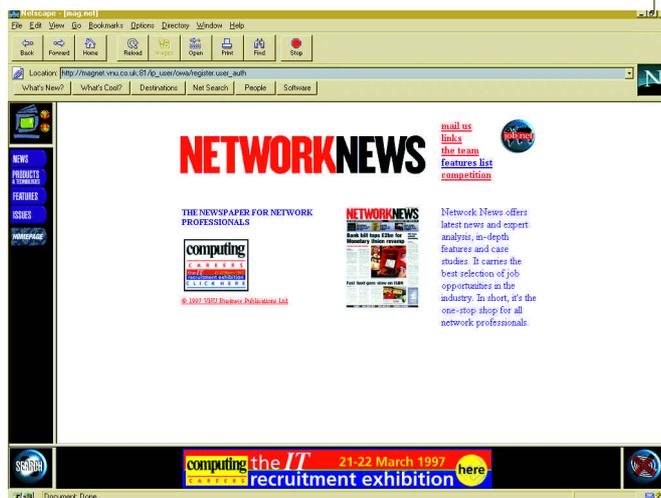
# Suspect packages

Mark Baynes learns his lesson — you must treat each new bit of software with suspicion, no matter which supplier it comes from. A simple installation could turn into a real ordeal.

**M**y Ant Web network is in a far worse state than last month, for the simple reason that we decided to buy a scanner. “What on earth has a scanner got to do with a network?”, I hear you ask. I have always considered networks to be not just cables, cards and hubs, but also the PCs, servers and associated gadgets that hang off them.

I bought a Hewlett-Packard ScanJet 4p and decided to install it on one of the clone PCs we use that are running Windows 95. I installed the HP SCSI card and the HP

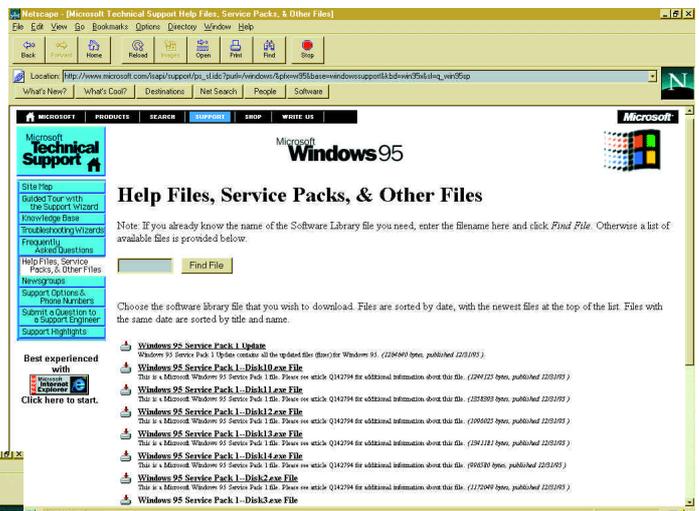
**Right** Make sure you install the Win95 Service Pack 1 update before putting Office 97 on your system  
**Below** Check out the *Network News* web site for a comprehensive set of links to networking companies



Deskscan and Visioneer PaperPort software that comes bundled with it. I re-booted, and the PC froze with a memory exception error. I re-installed. The PC re-froze with the same memory error. Assuming it was the PC that was the problem, I removed the SCSI card and placed it in my own PC. The same thing happened — twice. The problem is that the PC on which I first installed the scanner now crashes whenever any software is run, so I have to reconfigure it.

file. When I did this, the scanner worked but nothing else, so I re-installed Windows 95 on my PC, re-installed the PaperPort software, edited the system.ini file, and then put my applications (Office, HTML editor, just the basics) back on to my machine. It worked OK.

The trouble is that this nonsense took me a whole day to sort out. My LAN was an irrelevancy, with half the PCs trashed. The reason I recount all this is that you should always treat *any* new software as being



I insist that all data is kept on the server, so it's only Windows 95 and the applications that need to be re-installed. I called HP tech support who advised me to remove a couple of lines, referring to the PaperPort software, from the system.ini

suspect until proved otherwise. An important technical note that came out of this is that if you have an original version of Windows 95, especially the upgrade from Windows 3.x, and are going to install Office 97 onto a Windows 95 PC, make sure that you install the MS Windows 95 Service Pack 1 before you install Office 97, which you will find at [www.microsoft.com/windows95/](http://www.microsoft.com/windows95/). I wasted another day before I twigged what was going on.

## Web sites

I am currently overwhelmed by emails from readers and I must apologise if a reply does not appear in print — there isn't enough space to print them all. One FAQ is the whereabouts of good sources of networking information on the web. I don't know of any single site worth visiting, but you could try the home page of PCW's sister publication, *Network News*, at [www.NetworkNews.vnu.co.uk](http://www.NetworkNews.vnu.co.uk) and check out the “Links” hot spot which has a comprehensive list of networking

## Compaq Prosignia 200 workgroup server

I have used Compaq servers for years, and although it is a byword for reliability and performance, Compaq traditionally also means expensive, so I was more than interested to review the new Prosignia 200 workgroup server which you probably will have seen advertised in the national press as starting at under £1,000. The unit I reviewed had a 166MHz Pentium Pro, 48Mb RAM, 1.6Gb SCSI drive and Compaq NetFlex-3 ethernet card pre-installed.

At this price I fully expected the system unit to be rather tacky, but I was proved wrong. The Prosignia has a very solid feel. To get at the inside you unscrew three thumbscrews at the rear — no messing around with screwdrivers, then slide the left-hand panel off. The internal layout is, well, pretty weird. The power supply, floppy drive, CD-ROM and SCSI drive(s) sit at the top of the unit, the motherboard is on the right-hand side with the Pentium Pro halfway up the board. To the rear of the motherboard is a riser board which has two PCI, one ISA/PCI and two ISA slots, but these are almost completely hidden from view by a metal supporting plate (or "expansion backplane brace") which runs the length of the unit.

To install a card you have to disconnect the fan and pull the whole riser sub-assembly out of the unit. This is the first time in six years of configuring servers that I've had to read the manual to install a network card.

Worse was to come when I tried to put the sub-assembly back in, as it needed quite a bit of pressure and I ended up laying the server on its side before applying a final shove to slot the riser board into the motherboard. I was terrified I was going to break something. The next daft thing is that

the SIMM sockets are right at the bottom of the motherboard, so if you move *this* server, do it very carefully. With the power supply and drives at the top of the unit, it is top heavy (and there are no stabilising feet). In fact, the layout of the Prosignia 200 would make much more sense if you were to turn it upside down. No doubt this strange arrangement is the only way Compaq can produce a server at such a low price.

Inside the Prosignia packing there are three packages: one, labelled Server Set-up and Management, contains Compaq's SmartStart and Insight manager software. Another, labelled Software Products, contains versions of Novell's IntranetWare, Cheyenne ARCserve for NT and NetWare, Windows NT Server v3.51 (why not v4.0?), and SCO UnixWare and Netscape Servers, all on CD and optimised for Compaq's hardware. Of course, you will only be able to use the Compaq version of the NOS after you buy the appropriate licences from Compaq, which will then allow you to access the software via a CD key. I was provided with the SmartStart key for IntranetWare so I had to install that. The final package contains basic setup information.

Within the Set-up and Management package there is a SmartStart setup sheet. Once you have the appropriate activation keys, you boot the server from the SmartStart CD. SmartStart is a good idea both in theory and practice, as it will optimise your server operating system which will make a difference to your network's performance.



I did not have the Prosignia 200 on my network for long enough to get a good idea of its reliability, but being a Compaq it should be pretty stable. Would I spend my own money on one? No, I don't think so, because I have the feeling I would break something the first time I put a new expansion card in it.

### PCW Details

**Price** £1,805  
**Contact** Compaq 0181 332 3000  
**Good Points** Integrated NOS installation with SmartStart. Price. Should be reliable.  
**Bad Points** Stupid internal design. Installing network cards is a nightmare.  
**Conclusion** Buy one if you are sure will never need to put in a new network card.

## Another perspective

"I was interested to read your advice in PCW [April] that it is impossible to run a printer directly as a network device without any PC acting as a server. I can't fault your reasoning, but I can say that we are doing exactly that on our network. We run a peer-to-peer network over 10Base-T. An HP LaserJet 4 printer is connected to the hub via an HP JetDirect card in the printer. No PC is designated to 'serve' the printer, yet every PC can print to it using drivers supplied with the JetDirect card. I have often wondered where the print queue goes. Is it that each PC holds its own queue? Printing is so quick that one rarely sees a printer icon on the task bar. We use Windows 95 but the card claims to support all the main NOSs. I hope this helps your reader."

David Marshall

companies' web sites. Another useful source of hardcore technical information are books. Two which I swear by are *Understanding Data Communications and Networks* by William A. Shay (PWS Publishing 1995, ISBN 0-534-20244-6) and *Computer Communications* by Beauchamp and Poo (ITP 1995 ISBN 1-85032-168-X).

### Making a connection

**Q.** "What is the cheapest way to connect the two machines specified below for (preferably complete) access to each other's resources running Win95? What software is needed, and what are the potential pitfalls and problems (e.g. can both machines access the internet from the one card or print to either printer)? For example, would a pair of MediaFORCE BNC Network cards (ISA) from Choice Peripherals (£14 each) be sufficient?"

- Machine 1 (four-year-old Dan for Windows) 486DX 33MHz not local bus or PCI, with free ISA slots, upgraded with two-speed CD-ROM, SoundBlaster, additional 1.2Gb hard drive, and now 20Mb RAM. Canon BJC-610E colour inkjet.
- Machine 2 (a soon-to-be-purchased Dan Ultimate) Pentium 200MHz (32Mb EDO RAM), free PCI and ISA slots, 28.8/36.6 fax modem, lomega Zip drive, eight-speed CD-ROM, Wavetable sound card, Brother HL730 laser printer."

John Rowlett

**A.** Consider what is the most hassle-free way of networking two machines together. Because they are so fundamental an item, network cards are the cause of about 80 percent of network problems, so it is well

worth paying a few extra quid and getting some good ones. I know of network managers who will buy an old clone PC yet insist on branded network cards.

Yes, in theory, a pair of MediaFORCE BNC Network cards plus a length of BNC cable would do the job, but I swear by two brands of card: SMC and 3Com. It is also worth buying what are known as Combo cards which have both BNC and 10BaseT connectors, so you can upgrade to a 10BaseT hub-based network without changing your cards. A 3Com or SMC Combo will cost you about £50 each and are well worth the money, believe me. I've suffered. If you *don't* take my advice and buy A.N.Other cards, then get ones that are at least software configurable. Once you have your cards installed, you can hang a printer off one machine and print to it from another using Win95 only. Accessing the internet is slightly more complicated because you will have to run the dreaded TCP/IP protocol, but get the basics up and running first and take it from there.

### All in the game

**Q.** "I want to set up a small LAN of three or four computers. They wouldn't be permanently linked as my friends would be bringing their computers round and it wouldn't be used much. I'm looking for a cheap way to network them, for a cost of £150 at most. They would really only be used for games like Quake or Duke Nuke 'em, which require quite fast connections."

Neil Knapp (Age 14)

**A** At last, someone who wants to use a network for a real reason! Apparently, PC World superstores are now stocking the D-Link DE-905 networking starter kit which includes a small 10BaseT five-port mini-hub, two 16-bit ISA cards, two cables, documentation and software drivers for £99. D-Link will also give you free lifetime technical support. I have yet to get a networked version of Quake running on my own network, which is a pity because it's better than the standalone version.

Happy gaming!

### PCW Contacts

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D-Link 0181 235 5555  
 PC World 0990 464464



# SAPS up!

It's Spring again, the sap be risin' and it's a good time for Mark Baynes to review the SAPS modem sharing software kit for Windows, in addition to zapping your networking problems.

**A**t long last I have managed to get the SAPS modem sharing software reviewed, as promised. This is for those among you who were wondering how to share a modem using Windows NT. Last month, I was having *big* problems with my server, "Pig", and as I write it is languishing in the corner, not sulking but dead. This has meant quite a few problems, as we have been getting up to speed with

our web work and so the use of a server was an imperative. To get around the problem, I have simply used the most powerful workstation which is running NT Workstation 4.0 as a server, although as it is not a dedicated server, it is really peer-to-peer. However, this has proved not to be too much of a hassle as we are simply sharing files and do not use the "server" for anything else. Anyway, this is unlikely to be the case for much longer as

we get more work in and we just *have* to be able to work more efficiently. This month, I have had some letters from people who want to get to grips with the very basics of networking, and I have received several others from people asking me to stick with the problems of smaller networks. But don't worry, I will. For those of you who are concerned about getting started with networking, I would say (a) ignore my cynicism, and (b)

## SAPS — SpartaCom Asynchronous Port Sharing kit

■ *The package reviewed here is the SAPS kit containing one server and five client licences.* The way this product works is that it establishes a modem as a shared resource on the server and is accessed via the addition of a com port re-director on the clients. This version of SAPS supports either a single Windows NT or Windows 95/3.x server and five clients which can be either NT, Windows 95, Windows or DOS. SAPS supports all NetBIOS protocols such as TCP/IP, NetBEUI and IPX. I chose to install the server on a 133MHz Pentium running Windows NT Workstation 4.0 with 64Mb RAM and the client on a 100MHz Pentium running Windows 95 in 32Mb RAM, connected via thin Ethernet. The first task was to remove the 28.8Kbps US Robotics Sportster which usually runs on the client and install this onto the NT box. Setup is simple apart from having to enter a serial number and software protection key, the only real choice being whether to install the SAPS Server and the SAPS Manager, or just the SAPS Server (I installed both). Once this has been completed you will be presented with the main SAPS Server screen. Click on the familiar Microsoft share icon at the top of the screen and the Shares window will be displayed. Click New, then enter the new share name and an optional password. I entered Sportster and ignored

the password option. I added the available Com port shown and clicked On. And that's it (see Figs 1 & 2, opposite). The next task was to install the client. You should check to make sure that the client can see the server over the network before installing SAPS. During installation you will again have to enter a separate serial number and software protection key. You will then be asked for the redirection path that will be connected to your new SAPS port. You can set up pools of modems on an NT server to operate with SAPS (it works with NT's Remote Access Services) but as I was only sharing the one modem, I didn't bother. Next, you must undertake a standard Windows 95 modem install, making sure that you choose auto-detect. This checked Com 1 and Com 2 and then found the modem on the newly installed Com 4. You are then ready to go, simply specifying the modem on Com 4 for any of your dial-up needs (Figs 4 & 5). The only problems I experienced were initially naming the shared modem in the NT server setup "USR Robotics Sportster", which SAPS did not seem to like, so I changed this to "Sportster" and all was well. The other glitch was that following the autodetect on the client, which found (as it always does with my Sportster) a "standard modem", I changed this to "USR Robotics Sportster" and, despite being able to undertake a complete diagnostics test of the modem over the network from the client, I

could not connect to the SAPS Server. I re-installed and this time did not change the modem detected from "Standard Modem": SAPS worked fine, and allowed me to connect to the net from my PC in the same way as if it were attached locally rather than via the network. SAPS is a simple product, with no frills, which does exactly what it is supposed to. More software should be made this way. The documentation is simple and straightforward: it could do with a troubleshooting section, but that is my only minor criticism. I highly recommended it.

### PCW Details

**Price** SAPS One: NT server plus five clients, as reviewed, £195. SAPS Small Office (not NT): one line plus five clients £115; two lines plus five clients £165; two lines plus ten clients £210. SAPS Server for Windows NT: £535 for 256 lines/users. (All prices ex VAT)  
**Contact** Icon Technology 0181 357 3600. Email [icon@icon-plc.co.uk](mailto:icon@icon-plc.co.uk). Web [www.icon-plc.co.uk](http://www.icon-plc.co.uk)  
**Good Points** Simple to install and use.  
**Bad Points** None.  
**Conclusion** The ideal product if you want to share a single modem in a small office with a minimum of fuss. Buy it now and save yourself a lot of hassle.

★★★★★

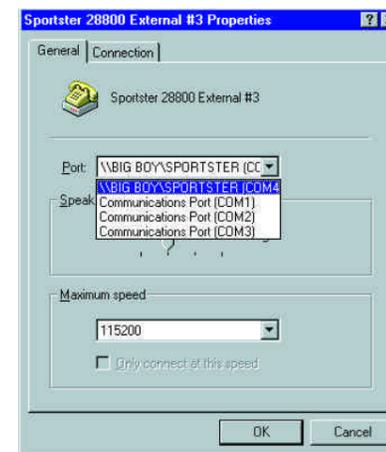
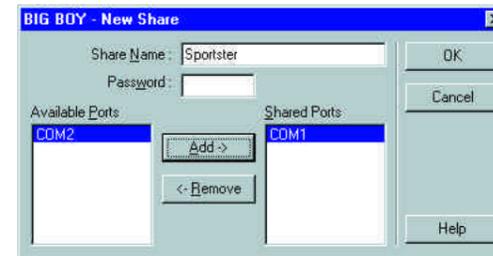


Fig 1 (top) Using SAPS Server Manager to establish a new shared Com port on NT Workstation 4.0

Fig 2 (above) Connecting to the shared modem on the SAPS server from the client workstation

just get on with it. If you are running Windows 95 all you need is the networking hardware (all the essential software is included in the basic product) and this

means a couple of good SMC or 3Com cards and a length of thin Ethernet cable to connect the two together.

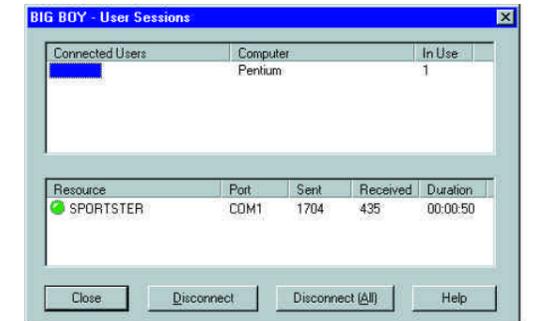
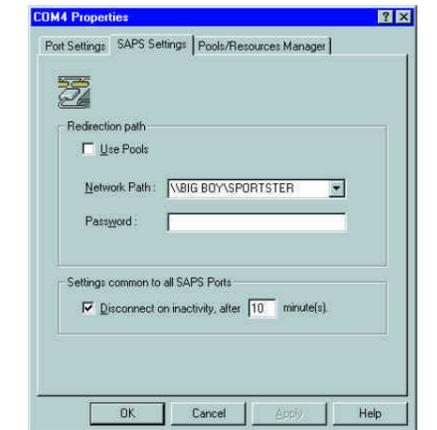
If you take things slowly and try not to run before you can walk, then it's not too much of a problem. The main thing to consider when setting up a

network card is to make sure that it works properly before you try to do anything with it. There is no point in attempting to use a network card when you know you have an interrupt problem with it. Networks are layers built upon layers and if the foundations aren't right then everything else is going to fall down: I may get a couple of cards and go through the basics of setting them up.

One of the letters I have received this month comes from Barry Phillips who has a small network running but wants to send email to his colleagues. While I was considering his question, it occurred to me that this might be a better way for me and my team to share each others' files at times, rather than simply saying "It's called snigger1.gif in AntWeb\Blue\Test\Final on Big Boy". So I may also go through the basics of setting up a Microsoft Mail PostOffice on our system in the near future and tell you how we get on. I have most probably

apologised before about spending a lot of time talking about Microsoft products like NT and so on, but the simple fact is that

Fig 3 (below, top) The modem seen as a shared network resource from the client  
 Fig 4 (below, bottom) The SAPS Server Manager shows the activity of any open sessions



there's a lot of Bill's software out there and it seems sensible for me to write about what you are likely to be using. And, although I occasionally use NetWare for testing, I never, ever touch OS/2 in any shape or form. Sorry.

So last month, having shared the printer using the Intel Netport Express PRO/100 Print Server and then having shared a single modem using SAPS this month, the next may well involve my setting up an internal email system using MS PostOffice and Exchange.

Or, I might just take my dead fileserver, "Pig", down to the beach and set fire to it. We like burning things in Sussex. (Ever been to the Lewes Bonfire Festival? You should go, it's great.) Or there again, I may just change my mind. On the other hand...

#### Booking in

**Q.** "Could point me in the right direction regarding the connection of two PCs I have at home? I know I can use a Null Modem cable (and have successfully done so) but I want to try using network cards and cables. Can you suggest any FAQs or good books on the subject?"

"By the way, is it possible to connect WFWG to a machine with Win95?"

**Sanjay Patel**

**A.** A reasonable book is *Nets and Intranets with Win95* by HD Radke (ISBN 1-55755-311-4), published by Abacus. Don't worry about "Intranets" being part of the title; it is much more about basic Win95 networking fundamentals, although you might find something just as good, or better, in your local book store.

I am not too hot on FAQs and newsgroups but a bit of net surfing might reap rewards. But be warned: I have found some stuff on the net which is just plain wrong. And yes, it is possible to connect a WFWG (Windows for Workgroups) machine to a Win95 machine. I do it all the time.

#### Exchange and start

**Q.** "I have a LAN consisting of four computers running Windows 95. We can access one another's hard drive but that's all we can do between us. Is it possible to send memos, etc, to each other? Do we need particular software to do this?"

**Barry Phillips**

**A.** As you will already have gathered, my approach to networking is KISS (which

stands for "Keep It Simple, Stupid") even though the rest of my life seems amazingly complicated, so I would suggest that if you are running Windows 95 you use the basic tools that come with it and see how they work for you. If you really find that you need something more, then start looking around.

Every copy of Windows 95 comes with Microsoft Exchange which you can use for sending email to your colleagues or for sending faxes. However, I must confess that I only use it for the latter because I find it easier and far more satisfying to shout at my colleagues and/or write things down on bits of paper (...and then promptly forget about them!). But seriously, I reckon that you will find Exchange is reasonably easy to install and use.

A simple way to check whether or not Exchange is installed on your machine(s) is to see whether the Inbox icon is on your desktop; if it isn't, then it isn't, if you see what I mean.

It may well be that when you go into Exchange, you can only see Fax services. If this is the case, you will have to go into Control Panel, Add Remove Programs, Windows Setup, Microsoft Exchange and check Microsoft Mail Services.

However, before you do all the Exchange setup, you will have to set up a Microsoft Mail PostOffice. But this is fairly simple to do: go into Control Panel again, choose Microsoft Mail PostOffice and set up a new post office. Of course, the machine with the post office on it will need to be on all the time and will have a slightly heavier load than the other PCs in your organisation, but this shouldn't cause too much of a problem.

Once you have Mail and Exchange up and working, you can set up a Memo template in Microsoft Word (I am assuming that you are using Office like 95 percent of the rest of the world) then simply send these Memos to whoever you like, using the Send or Routing Slip option that you will find on Word's File menu.

As I say, there are other mail programs on the market, but as the Microsoft one is there, why not use it?

#### **PCW** Contact

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# Pigs might fly

Mark Baynes finds hardware to be a boar, as he tries to install SAPS on Pig: even putting the boot in doesn't work. He's just in time to catch the Netport Express for a quick review, though.

Ever since I took over Hands On Networks I have had problem after problem with the hardware on my network, in particular a certain server which I shall refer to as "Pig". I would like to refer to it as "**\*!\*\*\*?\* !\*?\***" but apparently I can't, and anyway, if my Mum read it she would be a bit upset.

You may recall, in last month's column, I mentioned that Chris Langford emailed me to ask exactly *how* I was going to share a modem on NT Server over my LAN, and I replied that I was going to review a product called SAPS which does just this thing. So there I was, software in hand, all ready to demonstrate the wonders of SAPS, when Pig failed to re-boot. It was not resting ... it was dead.

Now, this is not the first time I have had problems of this kind with Pig, so I knew it

was a hardware problem and gave it a good kick, and I do mean a literal *kick*, not a metaphorical one. You should never treat hardware with too much respect and should always let it know who is boss whenever you have the chance. It responded slightly to the kick but because I was up against a deadline I had to review an Intel Netport instead. This was also somewhat problematic (as recalled here).

The funny thing was, I had copied all the data files on Pig to my other server "Big Boy" only two days before, because I wanted to reconfigure it with both NT and NetWare. Lucky, huh? The reason I mention this is that if you believe your server is going to last a lifetime, dream on. Mine is from a well-known manufacturer but has been on the blink for 12 of the 24 months I have been using it. I am not revealing the name

of the server because, to be fair, it does receive a lot of abuse — apart from me kicking it. But when I do get it back together, Chris, I will definitely review SAPS — honest.

So there I was, all ready to review the Intel Netport Print Server (see page 315). I had the hardware installed, with a test page printed. I decided to install it under Windows 95 because NT Server was down, but I found that the Netport management software, running under Windows 95, couldn't see the Netport so I couldn't configure it.

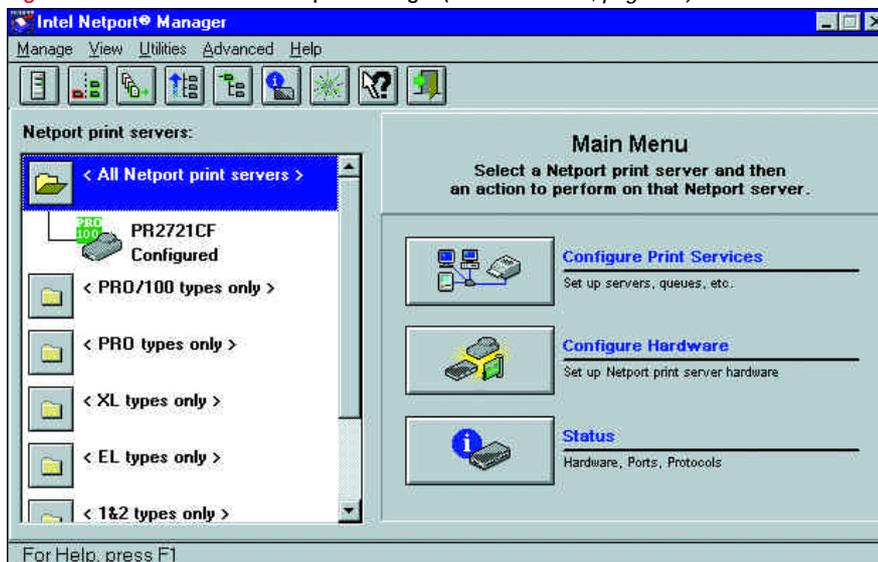
I turned it on and off several times and re-installed the software. I even read the Help file and realised that I needed NetBEUI installed. I re-booted but still got no joy, so I rang Intel tech support and spoke to two of their people for half an hour — very helpful but as baffled as I was — and then decided to attempt configuring from another workstation running Windows 95. Did this. Oops, same problem.

It seemed like a low-level protocol problem (it wasn't the physical media) and my instinct told me that the root of this problem was in Windows 95 itself, not with the Intel software. So I then installed the software onto another machine running NT Workstation 4.0: it instantly saw the Netport and allowed me to configure it.

I know I should really find out exactly what the problem was with Windows 95, but while my server may be a Pig, I also know that quite often, when networking, Windows 95 is a complete dog.

Next month: how to remove the impression of a size-ten boot from your server side panel.

Fig 1 The main screen of Intel Netport Manager (see mini-review, page 315)



**Mixed bag**

A few words about correspondence: I am pleased to look at any queries you email me and find them very interesting, so please keep them coming. But I should point out that (a) due to lack of space I cannot print replies to them all, and (b) due to the lengthy process inherent in producing something the size of PCW, there is a significant delay between my receiving them and my reply appearing in this column, so don't wait for me to come up with a fix!

I will always tend towards answering the more generic questions as these are going to be of more use to more readers. And I will also favour those from individuals or those with limited backup support.

I received a query recently from someone working for a well-known IT consultant which charges hundreds of pounds a day for advice. I say to them: "Sorry, this column is for those of us who deal with little networks!"

**OSI models and protocols**

**Q.** "It was good to see coverage of the OSI model in your column but I think you should make a distinction between the model, which applies to almost all comms protocol stacks, and the OSI protocols, which have a small user base, particularly now that the IP suite has taken over the world.

"Your example of two developers in California and Peckham being able to co-operate using the OSI model to interface network widgets would only work if they were using OSI protocols throughout. In fact, there is so much room for interpretation that the widgets would most likely interwork only if they were following a specific OSI profile such as GOSIP. Such profiles are the closest thing to 'an OSI stack', but to use the 'OSI stack' is seriously misleading.

"On the software side, there is also no reason why developers A and B should use even remotely compatible APIs. This has been a major problem with OSI and required the invention of things like System V Release 3 Streams and other models for the software side of protocol stacks.

"The API deficiencies of OSI are another reason why IP has taken over. The latter has a straightforward sockets API rather than a plethora of higher level APIs, and allows selection of suitable presentation/session layer functionality, depending on the application.

"For example, OSF DCE RPC has a very

complex presentation layer function, while Telnet's is extremely simple, each being appropriate to the application domain."

**richardd@cix.compulink.co.uk**

**A.** Richard, thanks very much for your letter and for clearing this matter up. Any more questions about protocol stacks are coming directly your way!

**Halfway house**

**Q.** "I was interested to read in the February issue of PCW that you intend to connect four PCs together using 10-Base T and to attach further resources straight to the hub. I have a similar situation. I have a 10-Base T network of four PCs plus two printers, and I would like to achieve independence of the PCs and the printers. We run a variety of software: at various times a machine might be running any of OS/2, Windows 95, Windows NT Workstation or Windows 3.x.

"The peer-to-peer style of networking permits each user to share resources such as printers, and to allow other workstations access. For example, workstation A has a printer and workstation B may use the printer as an output device. I do not like this example because the printer is owned by workstation A. I would like the printer to be a network device in its own right, and available to both workstations A and B. In the server style of networking the printer is owned by the server. The server is running permanently and allows workstations access to the printer.

"I want a halfway house situation where the printer is not owned by any workstation or server. I want the printer to be an independent network device in its own right. Any workstation may send work to the printer whenever it wishes.

"There are many sources of standalone box which will allow a printer to become a network device. All I have identified are intended for use with a server operating system. The printer, although connected as a network device, effectively becomes a slave of one particular server.

"Do you know of any software, or hardware/software combination, which will allow the same printer to be addressed as a network device from multiple workstations, with no server involved? I don't expect you to identify a solution for all of the software environments — any of them would be a start!"

**100121.77@CompuServe.COM**

**Mini-review — Intel Netport Express PRO/100 Print Server**

I have been trying to get my hands on one of Intel's Print Servers for quite a while now. I have reviewed a few print servers and, to be quite honest, a couple of them have been extremely poorly made. The Intel is quite the opposite, however, and is designed to withstand wear and tear.

At the front of the unit are the three printer ports, two parallel ports and one serial port, and on the left-hand side is an RJ-45 socket for a length of 10BaseT. There are a couple of recessed DIP switches, a diagnostics button and the connector for the power

supply. The documentation is good, the first page of the Quick Start guide showing

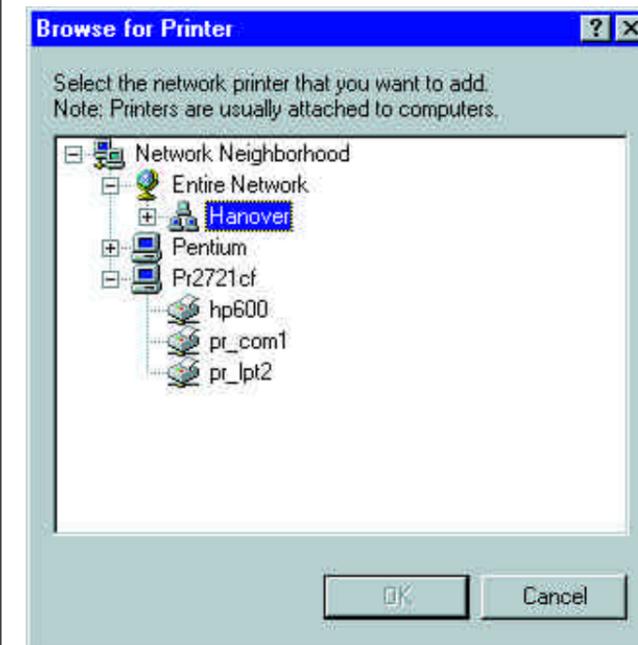
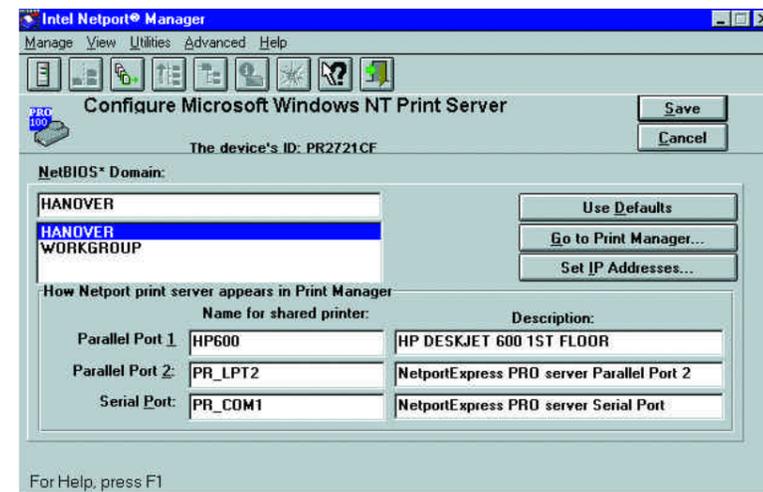
**Fig 2 (right) The Netport print server status**



**Fig 3 (right)**

**Basic identification details of my DeskJet 600 attached to the Netport**

**Fig 4 (below) At last! The Netport seen as Pr2721cf under Windows 95**



how to connect your printer(s) to the network.

I plugged in the Netport Express and the Activity, Transmit and Receive lights on top of the unit began to flash. I connected the existing printer cable from my tried-and-tested HP DeskJet 600 into parallel port one on the Netport Express and

plugged a length of cable into the RJ-45 socket. It will auto-detect if your ethernet network is running at 10 or 100Mbps/sec. To test that all is well from a hardware point of view, you simply press the diagnostics button on the side of the Express and it should print a diagnostics report. Hardware setup time is three minutes.

I next installed the software. Network operating systems supported are Novell, NT, Windows 95, Windows for Workgroups,

LAN Manager, IBM LAN Server and AppleTalk (Unix is also supported). I chose to install a 100MHz Pentium PC running Win95 and this is where my problems started — I could not get the Netport software (running under Win95) to see the Netport, but I eventually installed the software onto another PC running NT Workstation 4.0 and this went very smoothly indeed.

This is a nice, high-quality piece of hardware, but it's not cheap.

**PCW Details**

**Price** £468.82 (£399 ex VAT)  
**Contact** Intel 01793 431155  
**Good Points** High-quality, good management software but...  
**Bad Points** ...potential problems installing under Windows 95.  
**Conclusion** Handy piece of kit for the small-to-medium-sized ethernet network.

A. This is an interesting one! I have the feeling that what you are after does not exist, although I could be wrong.

In a peer-to-peer situation, a printer hangs off a specific PC which is, in fact, a print server for that PC dealing with the print queue. In a server-based LAN, the printer can hang off the server or, more likely, be an independent physical network device in its own right (see *mini-review of Intel Netport Print Server, page 315*) but — and it is a big “but” — the print queue has to be managed somewhere by the NOS. In a server LAN, this is going to be the NOS running on a server.

So your ideal of “a halfway house situation where the printer is not owned by any workstation or server” is not really possible because it has to be managed by something.

#### There goes the Neighbourhood

Q. “I have a 486 DX4 100 running Windows 95 and a Pentium 75 with NT W/S 4.0.

“Things ought to be going smoothly — after all, this sort of setup is Microsoft’s dream, is it not? Well, unfortunately, the Windows 95 machine shows no computers in Network Neighbourhood — not even itself — even if the ‘T-piece’ on that machine has a terminator on both ends. The Entire Network icon exists but when attempting to open it I get the message: ‘Unable to browse the network ... it is not accessible’.

“The NT machine allows browsing of the

network, but the other PC (the only other one on the network) does not show. I have toyed with the idea of a hardware fault, but I have tested everything I can think of and that appears not to be the case.

“I am a newcomer to networking and can’t be sure all the settings on either machine are correct, but I am fairly confident. Any ideas? (The protocol I am using is TCP/IP, but I have also installed NetBEUI.)

“If I enable file/print sharing on the Win95 machine, it does appear in Network Neighbourhood although it takes a couple of minutes for this to happen, during which time it is still unable to browse the network.”

**alex@margo.demon.co.uk**

A. It is nice to know that this happens to other people apart from me! Don’t worry about being a networking novice: I have been doing this stuff for over five years now and I still often find that after zapping my PC’s hard drive and carrying out a reinstall (which I do on a regular basis to clear out all the dregs of software I have reviewed), I still get this problem from time to time.

I cannot tell you definitely what the problem is but try this:

1. The first thing to do when you have any network connection problems is to check the physical media — do you know for certain that the network cable works properly? Can you borrow another one on a working system for a while and try it with that?
2. Are you certain that the network cards in

each machine work? If not, get their installation disks and run the self-test diagnostics. Then double-check to make sure there are no interrupt clashes; you can do this by looking in Settings/Control Panel/System.

3. Have you tried the Network troubleshooter in Windows 95 Help? This is quite good and has saved my bacon a couple of times.
4. Remove all your network software components and start again, but to start with try just running something simple like IPX or NetBEUI, before trying TCP/IP which is about as much fun to configure as putting your hand into a waste disposal unit and turning it on.
5. Have you tried Find Computer from either the Start menu or Windows Explorer? I have found in the past that although a computer will not show up in Network Neighbourhood you can “Find” it. Strange but true.
6. Zap both PCs and start again. It’s a drastic measure but it often works. It depends how much software you have installed on them because some programs can, for no obvious reason, have side effects on others.

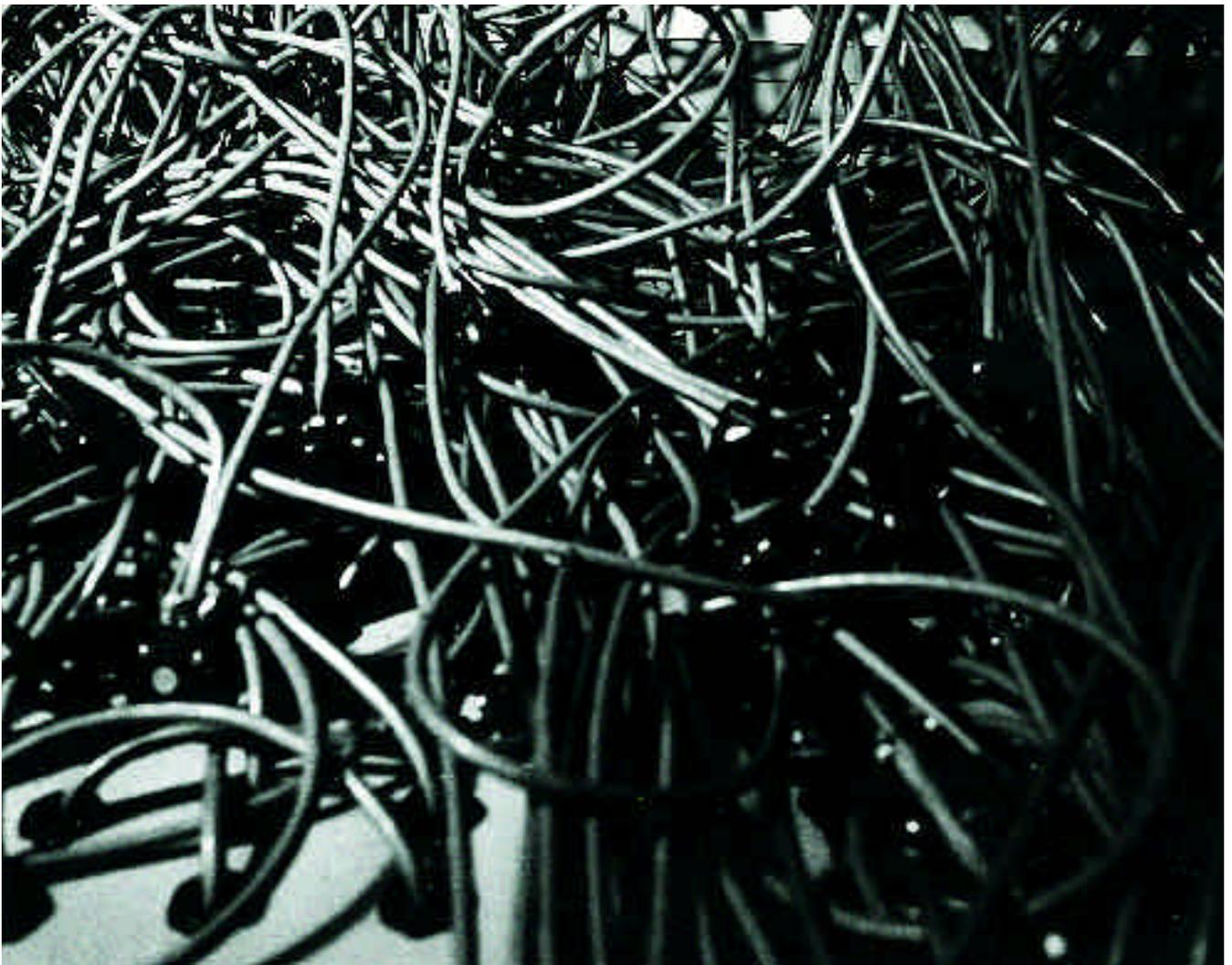
#### PCW Contact

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# Cabling for company

Mark Baynes and his colleagues have a new office. All they need now is to get it networked. Mind you, there's always the good old shouting-up-the-stairs routine to fall back on. Plus, The Squirrel tries LAN management, and Dell's PowerEdge serves up a treat.



**D**uring the past few weeks I have been running around like a mad thing cabling up the office so that my colleagues and I could enjoy basic networking comforts like sharing a printer and sharing files on the file server as we get

our first few web sites under way.

We all met while taking an MA in Multimedia at Sussex University and, in the multimedia lab at that time, we did not have a file server or any form of networking apart from internet access. The main reason we

were not networked to each other was because the university systems staff thought that we would start sending multi-megabyte multimedia AVI files to each other (and yes, we would have); this potential problem being exacerbated by our position

p322 >

on the university system. So what we did was simply shove files onto the PD drives with which the PCs were equipped and transferred them from one machine to another in this fashion — fine, but at times a bit of a pain.

Of course, the first day in the office, one of my colleagues could be seen wandering from one networked PC to another with a floppy disc in his hand because his files were in different places. I must admit I did wait until 5.00 p.m. until I explained that because all the files were on the file server, and that all the PCs were connected to the file server, he did not need to do this... Well, it kept me amused.

Another communications problem we have is that our offices are on three separate floors. We do not have an internal telephone system installed, so this leads to us conducting conversations while leaning over the banisters and shouting at each other. Someone suggested that we should get some whiteboard software installed on the LAN but I think it might be a lot cheaper and more efficient to buy an intercom. The low-tech solutions are usually the best. Or we could move to a single, larger office. But then we would have no good reason to shout at each other — not.

#### Getting kitted out

A friend of mine, with whom I occasionally undertake network consultancy (aka The Squirrel), has been tearing his hair out trying to make a newcomer to the wonderful world of LAN management understand that running ten networked PCs is ten times as complex as running ten standalone PCs (although you get far more than ten times extra productivity from the networked system), but to little avail.

This LAN newbie is a real gadget freak whose main goal in life seems to be to spend as much money as possible on a new 18-node network that he wants installed, irrespective of what he and his company actually needs to get the job done. (At the moment every PC has its own printer — honest.) Unfortunately some other networking firm, the employees of which all wear Stetsons, shoot from the hip and call their company cars Tonto, are intent on fulfilling the newbie's dreams and letting him spend about £30,000 more than he needs.

I have this nasty feeling that if everybody only bought the amount of networking kit they needed, rather than what they wanted to play with, then the network industry

would be only half the size it is. We have mixed feelings about Mr LAN Newbie. Yes, we could get a nice contract, recommend and install kit for only half his budget which would do the job he wants it to do, and we could make a profit; but would he actually realise that it was capable and that we had done a professional job for him?

There is the occasional temptation to agree to install the massive file server this guy has wet dreams about, and the extra 16Mb RAM in every PC he insists is necessary, but we both think it would make for a much easier life to just forget about the whole thing.

#### Server sense

Anyway, back to the subject of this month's column, which was going to be "Ethernet and Fast Ethernet explained". But it ain't, for the simple reason that a Dell PowerEdge server has turned up for review (see the separate review, opposite) so I am going to talk about file servers instead.

Exciting, huh? Well, more interesting than a load of theory about collision detection, anyway. I have fond memories of Dell servers because the first EISA server I ever configured was a Dell and somehow I managed to do it without (a) the manuals and (b) any knowledge of what an EISA server was.

One of the first things to bear in mind when buying a server is that it is not a go-faster PC. Yes, it may have a faster CPU, more RAM and more hard disk space, but the main requirements of a server are that it is built like a tank and that it is reliable. If someone tries to sell you a server on the basis that it's got a really high-end graphics card, walk away: you only need a basic colour monitor and they do not know what they are talking about.

If the system unit cover is a pain to remove, then it is highly likely that the whole system has not been designed very well. Look inside the unit and see if the wiring is carefully arranged and tied back so that you can access the cards and system board. Can you upgrade the RAM without having to remove any of the network cards? Are the standard hard drives from a good-quality company? Can you buy a RAID system from the same manufacturer?

Ignore any benchtests. Benchtesting of PCs such as you find in *PCW* or other mags are usually good indicators of performance, but benchtesting file servers is complete and utter nonsense. Most benchtests of file

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## Dell PowerEdge 2100/200

The Dell PowerEdge 2100/200 arrived for review installed with a 200MHz Pentium Pro with 256Kb cache, 64Mb EDO RAM and 2Gb Seagate SCSI drive, and integrated Adaptec AIC-7880 ultra-fast and wide SCSI controller. There was also an NT Server v3.51 (4.0 by the time you read this) and an Intel LANDesk Server Manager v2.5 pre-installed. Integrated server management circuitry monitors the state of the system fan as well as other critical system voltages and temperatures in conjunction with LANDesk, so you can find out exactly how hot your Pentium runs (Fig 1), the activity of installed network cards and protocols (Fig 2) and just about everything else.

The PowerEdge has a mini-tower type of system unit which is quite wide; a minor but important point as it is quite difficult to accidentally tip a unit with the dimensions 44.45 high x 24.13 x 41.91cm deep and weighing 17.68kg. The front of the unit is dominated by a large ventilation grille which, in conjunction with the large and noisy fan at the rear of the unit, should maintain the airflow over the system board and the hard drives.

There are the usual floppy and eight-speed CD-ROM drives and one free bay for a tape device. Plus points to Dell for taking the trouble to recess both the power and reset buttons so that there is no way they can be hit in error. Between them there is a SCSI drive activity light. The rear of the unit is fairly unexceptional, with the usual I/O ports and such like, except for a blanking plate where you can install a

system cabling which is neatly bundled together and attached to the top of the unit. There are three EISA/ISA and three PCI slots available. One of the PCI slots is occupied by an Intel EtherExpress Pro/100 Ethernet adaptor which can auto-sense whether you have a 10Mbps or 100Mbps network connection.

Although NT Server has always had basic system management software included, you really need a third-party solution and Intel's LANDesk Manager is a good option. The amount of detail it provides you with is more than adequate for the majority of daily LAN management tasks you will undertake, and if you take the time to configure it properly, you will have a comprehensive system available

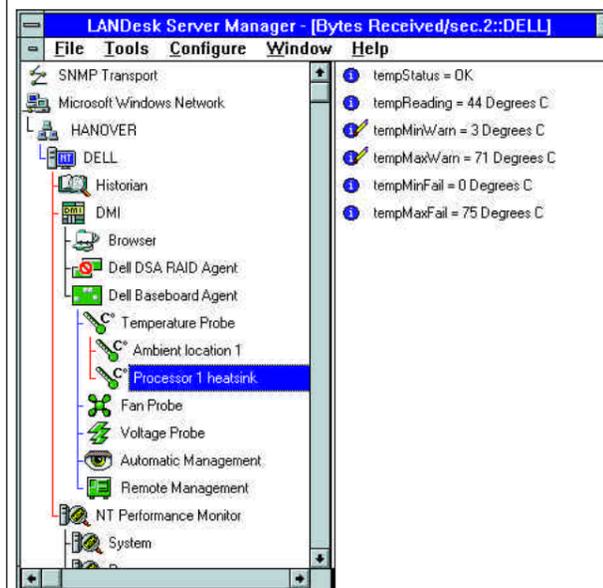


Fig 1 (above) LANDesk Server manager showing Dell Baseboard Agent details of Pentium Pro temperatures

server management unit if required. Removing the rear casing is fairly straightforward because once the security lock has been removed there are only four screws to be undone and the cover slides off easily to the rear.

Inside, the unit is neat and tidy with plenty of room to work when installing extra network cards. The Pentium Pro itself is hidden beneath a massive heat sink at the top of the system board. The four RAM slots are easily accessible and are not obscured by any of the

servers are usually just tests of the network card. But even if there were such a thing as a valid benchtest of a file server, it would still be of dubious value because the benchtest was not undertaken on your particular network.

Think of your LAN as one big distributed computer of which the file server is one (but not necessarily the most) important component. A benchtest of your file server is rather like benchtesting the latest Pentium CPU without reference to the system within

which it will run. If it is put in a well-organised system, a fast CPU will improve performance. But put the same CPU in a badly organised system and it may not improve performance at all. Get the idea? The same is true of file servers within a LAN.

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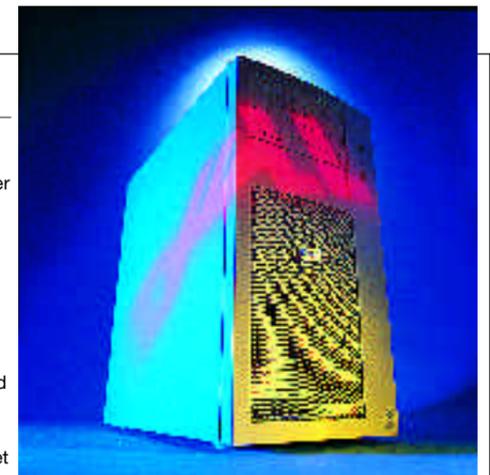
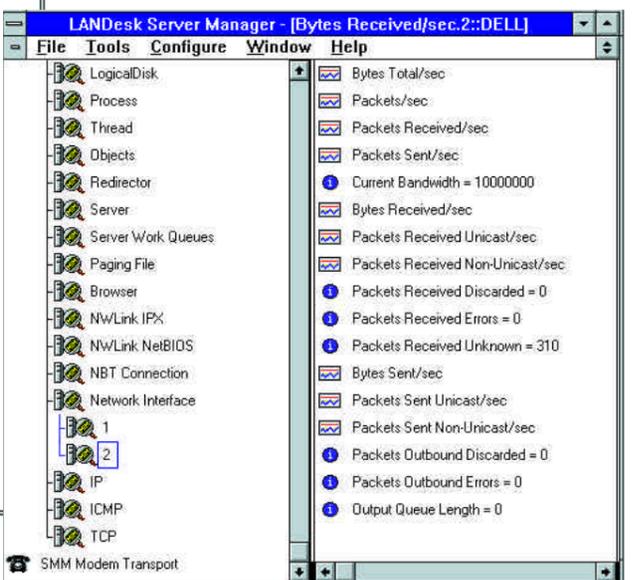


Fig 2 (below) LANDesk Server manager showing the activity of the network card



which should make your working life more bearable. Documentation is very good — just about the best I have seen.

I attached the PowerEdge to my system and used it as an auxiliary server for several weeks, and found it to be tough and reliable. Pricing for the system specification reviewed here at the time of writing was £3,878 inclusive of 15in colour monitor, NT Server and LANDesk Manager, so the PowerEdge should be near to the top of your list when considering a new server for your LAN.

■ Dell Computer Corporation 01344 724883

Which brings me to my final point. If your LAN is running slowly, do not think that merely buying a new server is going to make it run faster. You would probably be better off taking the time to analyse the performance of your LAN over a few weeks and properly identifying the cause of the problem. If you then find that the server *is* the problem, analyse server performance for a while.

If you have exhausted all possibilities, then think about buying a new one, but not before. You could find that spending £150 on a new network card would give your LAN just as much of a performance boost as a new server.

But now I must turn my attention to the most fundamentally important LAN management task that I have yet to undertake — getting the first networked game of Quake under way!

### Questions & Answers

I have just started to receive the first of your letters and have been intrigued by the variety among them. If I cannot find an answer to one of your queries, I will let you know, but I hope that I will be able to help in the majority of cases.

Don't be afraid to ask really simple questions because quite often these are the ones that other people would like to ask if they were not so shy. And, if you have any useful information you would like to share, do let me know.

#### A modem shared

*Q. "I read in your Networks column in the December issue of Personal Computer World that you were installing a modem as a shared device on an NT Server. How is this done? I can't find any option in NT Server to allow you to share a modem."*

**Chris Langford**

*A.* NT's Remote Access Service (RAS) is primarily designed for remote access by remote nodes and does not support a dial-out modem pool for users on a LAN (which is what you and I want to do) but there are third-party products which allow you to do this. One of these is SAPS modem sharing software from SpartaCom (tel 0181 357 3600; web address [www.spartacom.nl](http://www.spartacom.nl)) and costs around £95 for the single-modem NT server licence and £195 for five-client licences. I reviewed a previous version about 18 months ago and remember it as being simple to install and effective. However, I have the latest version on order and I hope to review it in Hands On soon.

#### Home network

*Q. "I am an avid reader of Personal Computer World and enjoy your Hands On Networks section, even though I don't yet run a network! I would nevertheless appreciate some advice on a networking issue. I am a student attending Nottingham Trent University, taking a computer science degree course. We have just started to learn Java for producing client/server*

*software for a distributed systems module. In order to be able to do this work at home, I need to set up a TCP/IP network on my Windows 95 machine. I do not have a network card, but was wondering if it were possible to set up a form of network on a standalone PC?"*

**Mark Jessop**

*A.* You cannot really set up a network on a single PC, but then, this doesn't matter because for your purposes you don't need to. In order to be able to access the internet from a Win95 PC you have to set up TCP/IP (via the Microsoft network client) on it, as this is the protocol on which the net runs. When you connect to the net, your PC becomes part of the network. The reason you can do this is that a modem is regarded by Windows 95 as a "dial-up adaptor" and this is what TCP/IP is binding to. However, I do not know the full details of what you want to do with yummy Java (although I am running a web design company, I am avoiding having to learn it — I found Prolog was bad enough) but I suspect this might take you part of the way. If you do not have a modem, however, you may well be stuffed. Sorry!

### PCW Contact

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# Transmission without tears

Mark Baynes tackles the serious subject of organising communications for his own business. He eases himself into ISDN, and gets to the nub of some networking basics.

**T**he more networking I do, the more I realise how little I know. While many networking professionals can specialise in their particular area (Banyan Vines, routers, ISDN, and so on), I feel that I am more akin to those lucky people within companies throughout the UK who have had responsibility for networking thrust upon them — in other words, you have to be a “Jack of all trades”. Yet what this person becomes, however, is a master of one subject; delivering the right mix of PC networking technology which is right for their company.

At the moment I am in the early stages of establishing my web design company, Ant Web at [www.ant.uk.com](http://www.ant.uk.com), and am therefore considering the basics of what myself and my business partners need in terms of networking. For the past few months, while we have been in the brainstorming and planning stages, we have been able to work at home, meet up on a regular basis and communicate via email and the telephone, but as we now have some real sites to build, we soon realised that we needed to be in the same place at the same time.

## Home truths

There is an awful lot written in the various magazines and IT sections of the national newspapers about home working and telecommuting but a lot of it is complete nonsense. The first thing is that the people who write this stuff frequently get seduced

by the technology (I, too, have been guilty of this in the past) and forget the obvious; like the fact that it is much simpler to collaborate on a project with a person who is in the same room as you. Yes, if that person is on the other side of the world and you cannot be in the same room then technology may be the answer, but it is still nevertheless second best.

Videoconferencing, groupware, email, whiteboarding and all the other wonderful techno-goodies are really useful but we should remember that these are substitutes.

The reason I raise this is that, for the last few weeks, I have been meaning to get around to establishing a remote access server to which we can all dial in, but fortunately, like most of my bright ideas, I never quite got down to it. But I will, at some time or other, because there is no doubt that we will have a need to access centrally-held data, either from our homes or while on the road. But it is not the priority it once was.

The basic jobs I have to do are: (a) establish a LAN in our office; (b) ensure that shared resources such as fax, email and web access facilities are available; and (c) devise the world’s best data backup system for the LAN.

To a certain extent, I regard the provision of a basic LAN as pretty straightforward in terms of connecting four PCs together, as I will simply hook them up using 10BaseT via an Ethernet hub and attach further

resources such as a server, printer and ISDN router, straight off the hub.

For the past couple of years I have been able to configure my own LANs just as I want them, but this is a bit different as I have to cater for the tastes and needs of three other people, so no doubt you will be hearing a lot about this on a regular basis.

## Into ISDN

Last month, as regular readers will remember, I was due to have my Basic Rate ISDN installed. This has now been achieved with a lot less fuss than I thought. You can read a feature on ISDN basics elsewhere in this issue [page 106] so I won’t bore you with the details again here; suffice it to say that there is more to ISDN than mere speed and I am carefully considering just how I can make the best use of ISDN’s flexibility for my business.

One of the many different ISDN access devices that came my way was a beautifully-built 3Com OfficeConnect Remote 530 ISDN router. Within minutes I was fiddling around, unsuccessfully, trying to use this to connect to Pavilion Internet, my ISP. One of the main reasons I could not get it to connect was that to use a router for ISDN access you need rather more than one dynamically-allocated IP address.

For a network ISDN connection you need a bunch of 16 “class C” addresses. The first and last of these addresses are reserved. You will need one for the connection to your ethernet LAN so you

## Baynes on books

### ■ Nets and Intranets with Win95

Author HD Radke

Price £37.49 (CD included)

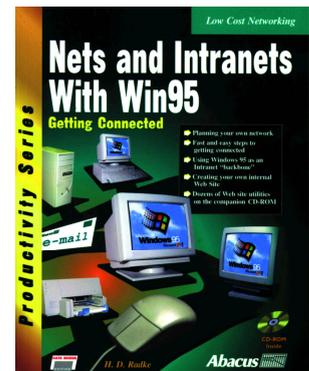
Publisher Abacus

ISBN 1-55755-311-4

For those who are new to networking, a single source of the most basic information is frequently hard to find, but *Nets and Intranets with Win95* might fit the bill. This 319-page book provides a basic approach to networking small LANs without talking down to the reader.

The first chapter, entitled "What Should Your Network Look Like?", is concerned with planning and deciding what type of network you should aim for: direct cable connection, Ethernet with Win95, a Dial-Up system or a server-based LAN; and provides you with "what you need to know" to get you started. Another chapter moves on to upgrading PCs and the basics of installing network cards. Although the accompanying photographs are not very clear, they are adequate. A useful flowchart, which guides you through the installation process, is a great help. Elsewhere, the book moves on to the subject of configuring Win95 networking and installing Microsoft Exchange.

The basics of sharing resources across a LAN, how an office works using a LAN, and mobile computing are also covered. The only weak part of this book is the final chapter, providing only a cursory explanation of intranets, but this doesn't really detract from the overall usefulness of the book. The focus on Microsoft products such as Exchange and MSN can also be forgiven. Recommended for the first-time networker.



### ■ Using Windows NT Workstation 4.0 Special Edition

Author Paul Sanna et al

Price £46.99 (CD included)

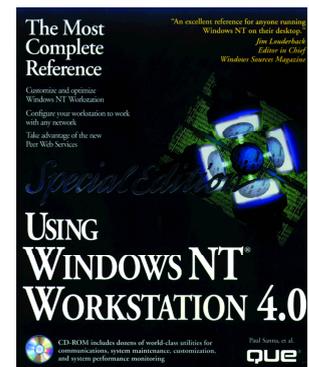
Publisher Que

ISBN 0-7897-0673-3

This is a monster 1,198-page book with a price to match. NT Workstation 4.0 is gaining popularity as a robust OS with the ease of use of Win95 and none of the hassle of Unix. But Microsoft's documentation is not extensive (although there is a lot of on-line help) so you are really going to need a book like this one, to be able to make the most of Workstation 4.0.

The first chapter is the usual introductory stuff and it is not until you get into chapters two and three that the really useful information is provided, which will give the Win95 user a reasonable understanding of why NT Workstation 4.0 could be described as "Windows for Adults v1.0".

The networking section is okay and a reasonable description of TCP/IP configuration is provided, prior to the chapter on using Windows NT with the internet. Using Internet Explorer, Mail and News is covered in succeeding chapters, although only v2.0 of Explorer is dealt with. The accompanying CD is stuffed with useful shareware and some sections will also be of use to advanced Win95 users. This book is worthy of consideration if Workstation 4.0 is becoming a part of your network.



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have 13 remaining which you can allocate to users. Some vendors are advertising these small ISDN routers as being ideal for the home worker, but quite how it can be economical to supply one homemaker with an ISDN router costing £800 when a TA or card will do the job for £200 is rather beyond me. But then, what do I know?

**Transmission threesome**

But before I get carried away with the delights of routing let's get down to some

networking basics. Why not start at the bottom of the OSI stack with the actual physical transmission media itself?

There are essentially three different types of transmission media. The first of these, and the most common, is a conductive metal such as iron or copper. The second type is optical fibre and the third type is not physical at all but, literally, wireless.

Apart from the actual costs of installing and using different network media types there is the all-important issue of

bandwidth. To be really technical you should talk about the data rate of a particular media as being the number of bits (not bytes, remember) that can be transmitted per second, and the bandwidth as being the difference between the highest and lowest frequencies that can be transmitted, the frequencies being measured in hertz (Hz).

In practice, the data rate of a network: 128Kb/sec for two, bonded, ISDN B channels; 10Mb/sec for Ethernet; and

**Different types of datacommunications — an overview**

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	Twisted Pair	Coaxial cable	Optical fibre	Microwave	Satellite
<b>Data rate</b>	Dependent on cable run length	10Mbps	400-500Mb/sec up to several Gigabits/se.	200-300Mb/sec	1-2Mb/sec
<b>Susceptible to interference from:</b>	Nearby wires and monitors	Well-shielded. Not much of an issue but use common sense	Immune to electrical interference	Solid objects, so line of sight is required	Atmospheric conditions
<b>Maximum theoretical distance</b>	Up to one mile between repeaters but dependent on data rate required	2-3 miles between repeaters	20-30 miles between repeaters	20 - 30 miles between microwave towers but dependent on positioning of antenna	Worldwide
<b>Typical use</b>	10Base-T/server-based LANs	Peer-to-peer LANs	Network backbone	Where laying of cable is not a practical option	Primarily used for broadcast and telephony systems
<b>Practical benefits</b>	Very flexible in terms of topology	Simple to install. Reasonably robust	Very high data rates	Good for links between sites where disruption of environment is an issue	Worldwide communications
<b>Practical drawbacks</b>	Easily damaged	Not very flexible in terms of topology	High costs	Needs line of sight	Not cheap

## A short guide to datacomm terms

■ **Asynchronous transmission** A scenario where the data stream is sent, typically one byte at a time, and the receiver does not know when it will arrive. A start bit and stop are used to indicate the beginning and end of the data transmission. It is typically used where high speed is not an issue.

■ **Synchronous transmission** Where much larger quantities of data need to be transmitted and so, instead of sending characters separately, they are sent in groups known as data frames or frames.

■ **Simplex communication** Where communication occurs only in one direction; your TV, for instance.

■ **Half-duplex communication** Where data devices at either end of the network link can both send and receive but *not* simultaneously; a two-way radio, for example.

■ **Full-duplex communication** Where a data device can both send and receive *simultaneously* (say, a computer) and, as it can become more than a little complicated, this is where protocols come into their own.

155Mb/sec for ATM is usually referred to as its bandwidth.

Twisted pair is one of the most common and certainly most flexible (in all senses of the term) varieties of cabling media used for LANs which are our primary concern here. It is so called because insulated copper wires are twisted around each other and then encased in a protective shield. The twisting reduces the interference and good-quality network cabling actually consists of several pairs of wire (e.g. "four-pair"). You will find twisted pair in your telephone socket as well as in any big computer network.

Coaxial cable (or "coax") comprises of an inner copper or aluminium core which is the actual conductor of the signal, an insulating layer around this, then a wire mesh shield and an outer protective shield. Coax can transit information in either baseband mode (where the whole cable is devoted to a single data stream, which is what happens

on a LAN) or in broadband mode where several different data streams are carried simultaneously (cable television is an example).

Optical fibre is something that is much talked about but rarely seen as it is typically used as the backbone of a network. That is, the main network from which the other, smaller networks (typically using twisted pair) feed into. As such, it is usually hidden in the very structure of a building or run down a lift shaft.

One of the main benefits of fibre-optic is that because it uses light (rather than electricity) to transmit data, it is immune to electrical interference. And because of this it can transmit huge amounts of data. When you first see a fibre-optic network cable it's slimness is quite awe inspiring, especially when you realise that most of its bulk is just a plastic shield. In an ideal networking world all cable would be fibre-optic and then we

would all be able to enjoy the benefits of immense bandwidth. But there is a cost hit with fibre because the equipment required to convert an electrical signal to light and back again is the expensive part, rather than the cable itself.

### Satellites and microwaves

Wireless networking has often been hyped as the answer to all problems. The reality is that it is only cost-effective in specific scenarios, typically where there is the need for a short-distance network link and it is not feasible to install a permanent cable: between two buildings, for instance, or where great distances need to be covered and it is not known where one end of the network will be situated (say, a mobile link).

For short distances, microwave links are used where two or more microwave devices are installed in line of sight of each other. For greater distances, the wireless link is established using a satellite to act as the signal repeater. However, *PCW* readers are advised to forget about using satellite links as part of their standard network installation — it is not cheap and not that practical either.

Next month we will take a look at how Ethernet and fast Ethernet work.

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# Stack 'em high

Mark Baynes' new guide to networking terms begins with an explanation of the OSI stack: it puts the 'work' in networks.

**P**anic over! No sooner had the HP Colorado T4000-S tape drive arrived than I ran down to the shop and bought a TR-4 Travan mini cartridge. I slammed — sorry, I mean carefully installed — the T4000-S into my dodgy server, Palace Pier, and within a few minutes was happily backing up three years' work. Actually, when I say "slam", I mean fiddle around for 20 minutes or so.

The T4000-S comes as a kit with DOS, Windows 3.1 and Win95 software (for more details on the T4000-S see my review panel, page 328) but I wanted to run and install it on Palace Pier under NT Server 3.5. The network card on Palace Pier wasn't working so there was little point in installing the T4000-S on my PC, and even if the network card in Palace Pier was working, the T4000-S is a SCSI-2 device and, firstly, my PC isn't SCSI-enabled, and secondly, I didn't have a SCSI-2 card to make it so.

I first had to go to HP Colorado's web site to download the appropriate NT drivers. Having got these, I realised that I needed to upgrade the server firmware, and having

got the necessary utility from the same site, ran it and then installed the NT driver. Next, I used the standard backup facility, which comes with 3.51, to backup all my data files to the tape. I could then begin to breathe again and set about scrubbing the server hard disk, removing the T4000-S from Palace Pier and installing it into West Pier, then restoring the files from the tape to the server's hard disks so I had two copies.

There was still the problem with the network card on Palace Pier. Because the card had given me no trouble whatsoever for the last 18 months until, that is, I started faffing about with Palace Pier, I should have reasoned that the cause of the problem was Yours Truly. But I didn't. It wasn't until I was on the phone to technical support that I realised the cause of the problem was that I had somehow managed to set the interrupt for the card to 15 — which the on-board Adaptec SCSI rightfully wanted all to itself. Setting the card interrupt to 5 duly solved the problem and I was ready to install NT Server 4.0. At some point, I had managed to set the PCI configuration to its default

setting — pretty stupid really, so please don't tell anyone.

Even though I now have a tape drive in place, I still don't have a proper backup routine. I would prefer to get the tape drive out of any one network node and hang it directly off the wire. I have the same situation with my HP DeskJet 600 which has done sterling service in the last few months, printing off five 20,000-word dissertations without a glitch. At the moment, it is directly attached to my main PC which acts as a print server, but I would prefer to use a separate print server and be able to hang it straight off the network rather than having to attach it via another device. More on this next month.

### Danger — philosophers at work

I am a great believer that people who are into the technicalities of computers and networks are rather like philosophers: although they quite often use terms they do not understand, they are still capable of having meaningful conversations; and because everyone thinks that everybody else *does* know what they are talking about, they are afraid to ask the really basic questions. The problem is that some people go on for years using terms which they cannot explain.

Working on this basis, I thought I would devote some time over the next few issues to explaining some of the really basic networking terms. If you are a real expert or just a plain smart-arse, you can devote your attention to other parts of *PCW*; but if there are gaps in your knowledge, read on. I will not attempt to give complete explanations of every networking term and concept, but I will do my best to provide enough information to provide you with a basic understanding which will hopefully improve both your theory and practice of networking.

### OSI Seven-Layer Protocol

One of the most common terms that is bandied about, yet poorly misunderstood, is the dreaded OSI (Open System

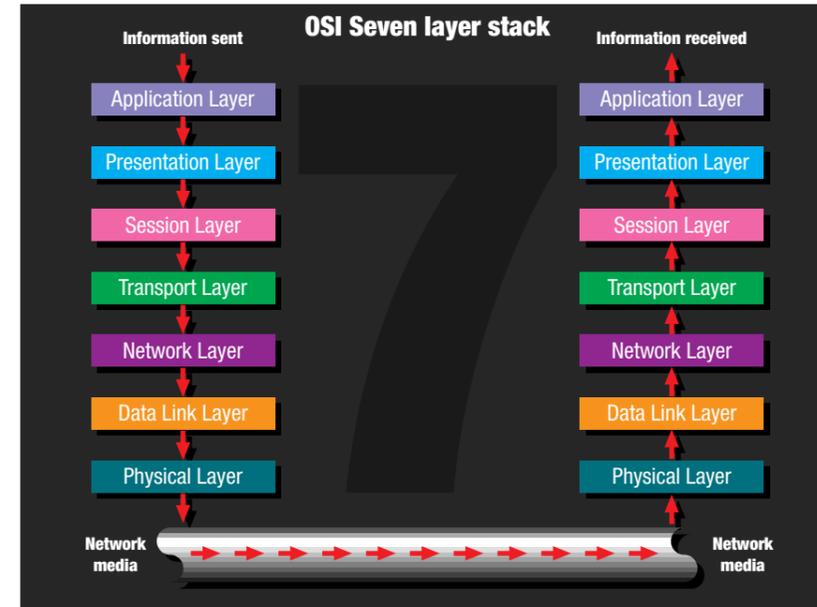


Fig 2 The OSI stack: if it didn't exist, we'd have to invent it

Interconnect) stack a.k.a. the OSI Seven-Layer Protocol defined by the ISO (International Standards Organisation). If you spend your days running and building LANs, you won't need to know a great deal about this. The simple fact is that without it, networks would not network. It is the most basic networking standard that allows one system to talk to another.

A developer, developing the latest and greatest networking widget in the sunshine state of California, knows their widget will work with the next latest and greatest networking device being built by a

developer working underneath a railway arch in Peckham because they will be designing them to work with the OSI stack.

Networking life would be much easier if every network used the same protocol but, in the networking industry, getting everyone to agree to using the same data-communications protocol would be like getting all the hardware manufacturers to agree on the same hardware architecture — impossible. The pragmatic alternative is to have a standard way of translating between different protocols and hence the OSI stack.

### Standards Committees

- American National Standards Institute (ANSI): members of ANSI are manufacturers, users and other organisations with an interest in standards. They devise stuff like ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Exchange). ANSI is a member of the International Standards Organisation (ISO).
- Comité Consultatif Internationale de Télégraphique et Téléphonique (CCITT): an agency of the ITU whose members include telecommunications agencies, scientific and industrial organisations and the ISO. Some of its most well-known and commonly-used standards are the X series which is concerned with network interfaces and public networks like X.25 and X.400, and the V series which deals with telephone communications like V.21 and V.22 modem standards and such like.
- Electronic Industries Association (EIA): members manufacture telecommunications and electronic equipment. The EIA is a member of ANSI and sets standards such as the much-loved RS-232.
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE): usually known as the "I triple E", its members are computing and engineering professionals and it is responsible for setting standards such as the 802 series for local area networking.
- International Standards Organisation (ISO): international body whose members include other standards organisations and whose most important work in the computing and datacommunications field is on open systems, including the OSI stack.
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST): a US Government agency which develops a variety of standards, including the data encryption standard (DES).

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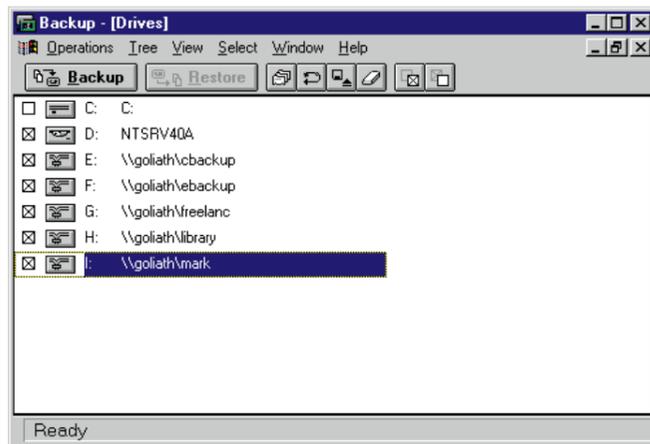


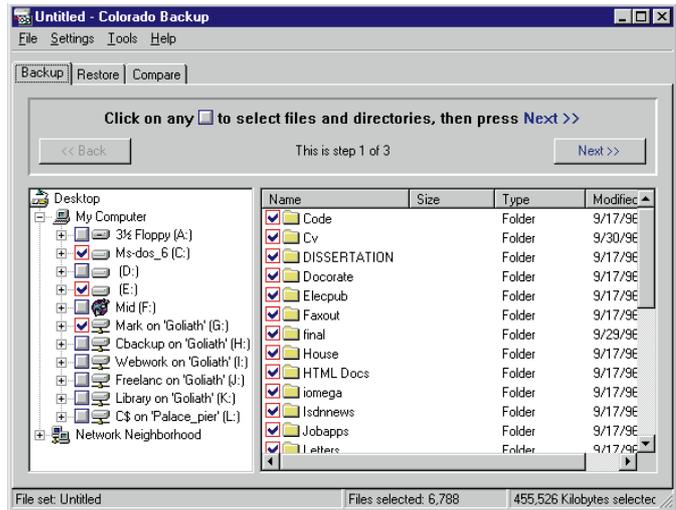
Fig 1 MS Backup is plain and simple but it does the job... just about

## HP Colorado T4000-S

Colorado Memory Systems is a division of Hewlett-Packard, hence the slightly confusing product name. The T4000-S comes as part of a kit which includes the tape drive itself (standard 5.25in size), four installation screws, and two installation disks with DOS, Windows 3.1

and Win95 software. There is a 66cm long SCSI cable, software and installation guides and, according to the blurb on the box, a free tape (which mine didn't have). The default SCSI ID setting is four but if you need to change this the manual shows you how to reset the jumpers on the drive. If the tape drive needs to be flagged as unterminated, you have to remove three sets of terminating resistors from beneath the rear of the drive, for which you will need a pair of needlenose pliers, then slide it into a spare bay in your PC or server, connect the power and SCSI cables and reboot. I discovered that once I had the correct NT 3.51 drivers installed, using the vanilla NT backup software was quite straightforward. NT 4.0 recognised the drive immediately and I encountered no problems with the T4000-S during the month that I carried out backups at least once a day.

Whether you install this tape drive on a networked PC or a server you will, of course, be able to back up data from right across the network. And, having a capacity of 4Gb uncompressed and 8Gb compressed, it should be able to cope with most small LANs. There are also external, dedicated network and parallel port versions of the T4000 available.



### PCW Details

#### HP Colorado T4000-S

Price £321 (plus VAT)

Contact Hewlett-Packard 0990 474747

A good analogy for a data-communications protocol is a letter. Everyone knows that the agreed format for a letter is the address at the top (43 Acacia Avenue), the salutation (Dear Frank...), the main message (I want to thank you for...) followed by the signature (Yours faithfully...). This is a simple protocol, in the same way that you say "Hello" when you meet someone rather than when you are just about to leave them. Datacommunications protocols are set by standards committees (see the panel, "Standards Committees", on the previous page) who spend many a happy hour doing the boring work so our networks can talk to each other. Essentially, if the OSI stack did not exist, we would have to invent it.

#### Stack 'em high

Every layer in the OSI stack communicates directly only with those layers directly above and below it (Fig 2): the highest layers

dealing with user services and the lowest layer dealing with the physical nature of the transmission medium itself.

The seven layers of the OSI stack can be sub-divided into two groups, with the transport layer acting as a bridge between them. The application, presentation and session layers deal with end-to-end communications and are not bothered with the minutiae of the details of data transmission. The network, data link and physical layers at the bottom of the stack deal with the nitty-gritty of specific network communications, and the transport layer is the bridge between the two groups.

The OSI stack is a model and as such not all protocols adhere to it precisely, but it does provide a common reference model:

■ **7 Application Layer.** This is not a user application (such as Word, Notes, and so on) but it does deal directly with applications in terms of providing services such as email and file transfer.

## Dear Santa...



I know you are getting on a bit now and you are very busy at this time of year, but do you remember what I wished for last Christmas? What I wanted was a cut in the cost of Basic Rate ISDN (also known as ISDN-2) installation by BT from a rip-off £400 down to something a bit more realistic so I could actually surf the net instead of doing doggie-paddle. Of course, I didn't want the cut in installation costs just for me and my friend up the road, but for the whole of mankind or anyone with a vested interest in networking in the UK. I reasoned that if the price of ISDN-2 was reasonable, loads of keen individuals and businesses would get it installed and it would really get the UK networking scene moving. Not just the business side of things but also stuff like community networks.

What did you get BT to do, you old duffer? Yeah, so they cut the prices of *some* ISDN-2 installations from £400 to £199 but then they put the cost of the rental up! What were you thinking of? I know that, at BT, those in charge of ISDN have their Christmas wish lists as well, but as I got mine in early (around February if I remember rightly) I thought I would get priority treatment. I did leave you those really nice sandwiches and that glass of sweet sherry out on Christmas Eve. By the way, sorry about leaving the fire blazing away in the grate.

So this year, I want broadband modems for every house in the land. Yep, more bandwidth than you can shake a stick at, for everyone, right into their home via their cable television set-up. If you can do this, then within a few months most families will be interacting with each other in real time and putting their holiday videos up on the web for everybody else to see. Now wouldn't that be interesting?

At the moment, the craze is for 33.6Kbits/sec modems, the trouble with this being that a 28.8Kbits/sec modem is pushing the capacity of an ordinary telephone line to the limit so buying a 33Kbits/sec version is pretty much a waste of money. However, if you ask BT nicely it will tweak your line for you. Broadband modems, on the other hand, can shove huge amounts of data around: a cable modem can do 30Mbits/sec, while ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) modems using the telephone lines can do 9Mbits/sec which is still pretty quick. The trouble is, there is no point in you delivering a neat little black box to everybody on Christmas Day if the communications infrastructure isn't there to support it. But when it is, just think — neighbourhood pitted against neighbourhood in the ultimate game of Quake!

■ **6 Presentation Layer.** Carries out formatting and security tasks. The presentation layer at one end of a secure file transfer would encrypt data while the presentation layer at the other end would decrypt it with the user being unaware this was happening.

■ **5 Session Layer.** Deals with starting, maintaining and stopping sessions between network nodes, especially synchronisation of sessions and error recovery.

■ **4 Transport Layer.** Lowest layer that deals with communications — the three layers below deal with the network itself.

Sorts out which particular way to transport data and packet transmission.

■ **3 Network Layer.** This sorts out routing strategies. It is fundamental to the efficient working of complex topologies as it works out the best route through the system.

■ **2 Data Link Layer.** Uses error detection and correction techniques to ensure that transmissions between network nodes are error-free either by correcting the error or requesting a new transmission.

■ **1 Physical Layer.** The lowest layer needs to know the physical nature of the transmission media. For example, is this communication being transmitted over copper or fibre-optic? Sends and receives bits without comprehension of their validity and passes them up to the Data Link Layer.

### Bandwidth on demand?

I have finally taken the plunge and allowed BT onto the premises to install my ISDN-2 line. Sod's Law says it looks like I will have to lift up the floorboards in the living room again to run the cable through to my study, but fortunately, the fact that I cannot afford a new carpet yet means that I will just have to shove a couple of rugs out of the way. Will ISDN-2 be worth it? Will my ISP be able to satisfy my insatiable bandwidth demands? Does anyone *care* apart from me?

### •PCW Contacts

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# Tales from the **black hole**

Our new networks man, Mark Baynes, kicks off his series by shining a bright light into the depths of network problem-solving.

**I**f you are new to networking, do not make the mistake of thinking that looking after ten networked PCs is just the same as looking after ten standalone PCs. It isn't. It should be simpler because, with the right management tools, you can control everything from one network node; but it never seems to work like that.

Planning your network system before you implement it helps, but my experience of networks is that they tend to evolve of their own accord and network management soon turns into fire fighting, IPX driver disk in one hand, screwdriver in the other.

One of the most important pieces of advice I can give when problem-solving on networks is to always avoid the "black

hole". This is a situation where in order to solve problem A, you have to solve problem B. In order to solve problem B you have to solve problem C which in turn depends on having fixed problem D. Get the picture?

At all times ask yourself why you are trying to fix something. Are you sure it needs to be done or have you disappeared down the black hole of problem solving? Have you checked for the obvious answer first? A good example of this is when you lose a network connection. Before you question the integrity of your network operating system, check the physical integrity of your network. Is everything connected to everything else and in the proper manner? Do all the cables work?

A classic example of not doing this was the first time I tried to connect four PCs to a NetWare 3.12 server using 10Base2. Whatever I tried, the server remained invisible. Network cards were installed and re-installed, IPX drivers were configured and re-configured, Windows for Workgroups settings changed, Ethernet frame types examined, lengths of 10Base2 inspected, changed and swapped around. This went on for about three days before I admitted defeat and rang the manufacturer who sent an engineer to fix the problem.

## Path of least resistance

The engineer walked into the office, traced the ends of the 10Base2 cable run and examined both the terminators. He changed one and solved the problem. All the PCs could now see the server. This took about three minutes. The problem? One of the 10Base2 terminators was of 70 Ohm resistance instead of the standard 50 Ohm. The engineer had driven all the way from Birmingham to London to do this and now he was going to drive all the way back. Since then, I have always carefully checked the resistance of terminators on 10Base2 before installation.

One way around this is not to use 10Base2 Ethernet but go for 10BaseT. 10BaseT topology involves the use of a hub, but as these are cheap now, around £10 per port or less (price per port is simply the total cost of the hub divided by the number of ports), or the cost of a couple of adaptor cards, the flexibility you get from 10BaseT is worth the extra cost.

If you have to use 10Base2 for some

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## A personal word from Mark Baynes...

Asking me whether I would be interested in writing the Hands On Networks section of *PCW* was rather like asking a small child whether it would like to be let loose in a toy shop. "When can I start?" was my only reply. The question I found harder to answer was the one I asked myself: "What does networking mean?" A few years ago, state-of-the-art networking was running NetWare 3.12 over 10Base2 to access file and print sharing on a 386 fileserver with a whopping 12Mb RAM and a huge 60Mb hard drive. But now, networking means different things to different people. The only thing of which I am sure is that as 1997 approaches, networks of all sorts and all sizes will converge to completely change the way we live and work... well, a bit. Convergence is what it is all about.

My first introduction to networking was as an undergraduate studying computing and artificial intelligence. I would like to say that I was immediately enthralled by the power and mystery of Unix, but I hated it. Fate decreed that five years later I would find myself editor of a magazine dealing with local area networking. But I soon discovered that while standalone computers can be tricky, it's only when you try hooking them together that you can really test your technical ability. Designing and installing the VNU Labs' network testing facility proved to be as "hands on" a networking task as you could hope for. Three months ago I completed an MA in Multimedia at Sussex University which gave me the opportunity to step back and look at the concept of networking from a broader perspective. Now I find myself running a web development company, developing virtual reality systems for a variety of clients, and reviewing network hardware and software for magazines. So the issues you will be reading about in Hands On Networks in the next few months will be varied to say the least.

## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO RAID (Redundant Array of Inexpensive Discs)

RAID levels 1 to 5 were originally described in a paper published at Berkeley University in 1988. RAID levels 0 and 0 + 1 were added by the computer industry. There is not an optimum RAID level; you just have to consider whether you want to trade speed for security of data.

LEVEL	CHARACTERISTICS
0	<b>DATA STRIPING</b> Data is striped across multiple discs at the bit or block level which is very fast but provides no fault tolerance.
1	<b>DISK MIRRORING</b> Mirrored fault tolerance — the array of discs is split into two and one group mirrors the other. The second set of discs can be on the same host adaptor or a separate one (duplexing).
0 + 1	<b>DATA STRIPING ON MULTIPLE MIRRORING DRIVES</b> Stripes data across two mirrored banks — a combination of RAID 0 and 1.
2	<b>BIT INTERLEAVING/MULTIPLE CHECK DISCS</b> This level is not commercially available for file servers or PCs so forget about it.
3	<b>BIT INTERLEAVING/SINGLE CHECK DISC</b> Data is written across several discs at the byte level and a separate disc is used for storing parity bits.
4	<b>BLOCK INTERLEAVING/SINGLE CHECK DISC</b> Same as RAID 3 but the data is striped across all of the drives at the block level, parity information again being stored on a single check disc.
5	<b>BLOCK AND PARITY INTERLEAVING/NO CHECK DISCS</b> Both data and parity information is striped across all disks at the block level so multiple drives can fail, but data can still be retrieved.

FASTEST

MOST SECURE

RAID 0 is frequently used for non-critical servers as the server will give better performance with four 500Mb discs than one large 2Gb disc.

Another term you may hear in relation to RAID is JBOD. This stands for Just a Bunch of Discs and is what you have in a typical PC with separate drives (C:, D:, etc) where data is only written to a single drive.

reason then buy combination cards which can take either 10Base2 or 10BaseT so it is easier to upgrade in future. The most immediate benefit to be gained from the 10BaseT star topology is that if you have a dodgy connection on a network node, only that node will be affected. With 10Base2, because of its peer-to-peer topology, if a cable is damaged, nothing can get past it. The nodes either side of the break may continue to operate but if they do, they will only be able to talk to each other.

By wiring everything into the hub, you are, of course, relying on that hub always working. But these are pretty reliable and there's nothing wrong with putting all your

eggs in one basket as long as you make sure it is a damn good basket.

### LAN of sorrows

On first considering writing Hands On Networks I was worried that I would not have enough hands-on network issues to write about, but within a week I had more disasters happen to my LAN than in the whole of the past year.

The first was when two drives on West Pier, one of my NT Servers, decided to give up the ghost. Fortunately, this server has a RAID (Redundant Array of Inexpensive Discs) system which I had set at RAID 5 to provide me with redundancy in case the

worst should happen. Not that it would happen to me, of course. Because data has to be written to multiple discs, RAID 5 is pretty slow at I/O, but it's safe and I had been considering reconfiguring the server to RAID 0 for maximum I/O for the previous month. I had considered getting a proper data backup policy in place. *Considering*, you notice — not actually *doing*.

One morning, the server started to make nasty sounds as if someone had given the hard drives a good scrubbing with wire wool. Maybe they had? A reboot provided me with a system message that one drive was dead and another was critical, so I needed to back up everything... and *fast!* If I had put a data backup policy in place I need not have worried. But I hadn't, so I did. The only device with enough spare capacity was my other server, Palace Pier, also running NTS 3.51, but this capacity was in the form of the NetWare 4.1 partition which I rarely use.

The ability of NT to provide a simple multiple boot setup is very handy provided you do things the right way, but I had configured this server as having a C: FAT partition consisting of 41Mb for MSDOS 5.0 with NetWare 4.1 taking up the remaining 500Mb, and a D: NTFS partition of 500Mb for NTS. Ah, I thought, just zap the NetWare partition, give that to NTS and use that to back up the other server, happily reconfiguring and formatting the "unrecognised operating system on C:" from within the NTS Disk Administrator.

NTS recognised the new space and I copied the data from the RAID server across my Ethernet network, downed the server, junked the two dodgy drives and rebuilt the remaining drives. I had to do all this in a hurry because Sod's Law decreed that this was the day I had to do some VRML work for a company in the US, within the next twelve hours. Still, I got the job done.

Several days later, my 14.4 modem started to make a continuous whining noise. As it had been playing up recently, I decided to set up one of my servers with a modem that could be shared across the network. Having bought myself a Motorola 3400 Pro 28.8 external modem from my local computer shop, I downed Palace Pier (which, you will remember, had recently had its C: partition hurriedly zapped) in preparation to installing this modem as a shared device. But then I realised I had to finish some copy which was on the server, so I rebooted.

#### Sorting it with the Squirrel

This was the first time I had downed Palace Pier since the hurried backup of West Pier. But on trying to reboot I was shown the message "invalid partition table" and nothing else. Seven attempts at recovering the NTS installation all failed and my NT Emergency Disc had also been corrupted. It took me a whole hour and several phone calls to my colleague Dave the Squirrel before we realised what I had done.

Normally I would realise that formatting

the C drive on a server is pretty silly, but in my rush to back up the other server I had acted without thinking.

I finally re-installed NTS 3.51 to D: and, strangely enough, I could still see and boot the NetWare installation on C:, while the NTS installation on D: was seeing C as NTFS partition E — and it still had all my data on it. Sadly, there now seemed to be a problem with the network card in Palace Pier. I could see my data was there, but I could not access it across the network.

Having to get this column out within a couple of hours, I attached the Motorola 3400 Pro to my PC and it promptly made the same whining noise as its predecessor. I then did what I should have done before I bought it. I checked the telephone line by attaching a telephone to it which promptly rang... and rang... and rang. The problem was the line, not the modem. What was I saying about avoiding black holes?

#### Stay tuned

My immediate problem is to access the data on Palace Pier, back it up, then re-configure Palace Pier. I will probably create even more problems for myself by going for an NT Server 4.0 install, but at least I will have something to write about.

Once Palace Pier is resurrected, I then need to get a proper data backup policy in place sooner rather than later, because although I have had some problems I have not actually lost any data — yet.

A Hewlett-Packard Colorado T4000-S

## Baynes on books

### ■ *Internet Information Server*

The internet may be dominated by a variety of Linux and Unix servers, but Microsoft's Internet Information Server (IIS) is riding the NT wave despite Netscape's best efforts. IIS fully integrates into other Microsoft BackOffice products and its familiar user interface makes configuration reasonably painless, but its documentation is not that good.

This book tries to rectify this fault. It is aimed both at users and providers of information on the internet and is divided into six sections: creating your site, installing and developing your web site, installing and developing your FTP site, installing and developing your Gopher site, server security and site management. The first chapter is wasted on descriptions of system requirements for NT Server, being a result of the dual nature of its intended audience. Chapter 2 continues with more unnecessary descriptions (we know what File Manager is, thank you). Even as far in as Chapter 7, the basics of HTML publishing are still being described. It is only in Chapters 8 and 9 (working with scripts and ISAPI) that any useful information is revealed so you can begin to investigate the guts of IIS.

This is a good introduction to IIS but it would have been better had it assumed a greater knowledge of NT Server among its readers from the outset. It's reasonable value for a general introduction to IIS, but once you get up to speed you are likely to outgrow it very quickly.

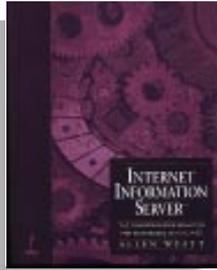
### ■ *Strategic Networking: From LAN to WAN to Information Superhighways*

Networking means many things to many people. The term covers such a range of technologies and concepts that it is hard to keep up. This book should help if you want to learn more or place your own speciality in context. It is written for business executives and network practitioners. Chapter 1 begins with the basics of different types of transmission media and cabling standards, and Chapter 2 describes and clearly illustrates different topologies. Some chapters cover operating systems, network services, network design, protocols and network applications. Others cover system administration, internetworking, disaster recovery, organisational and social issues. Each chapter has a list of web references for further research.

The book doesn't attempt to treat any area in great detail but it does give a good overview of networking in the mid-nineties and will be of use to a range of personnel, especially those who want a better understanding of what the different technologies actually do.

■ *Internet Information Server* by Allen Wyatt. Price: £36.99 (478pp). Published by Prima. ISBN: 0-7615-0693-4.

■ *Strategic Networking: From LAN to WAN to Information Superhighways* by Paul David Henry and Gene De Libero. Price: £25.95 (498pp). Published by International Thomson Computer Press. ISBN: 1-85032-203-1



tape drive with 4Gb capacity (8Gb compressed) has just arrived so I have no excuses. Other immediate technical issues are to delve into the mysteries of routers as I have a Proteon Globetrotter sitting in my "to-do" corner, and also to decide whether I really am going to get ISDN-2 installed.

I don't mind the time I devote to sorting out my email and surfing the web but I am getting fed up with spending most evenings downloading files. I start the bigger downloads of many megabytes before I go to sleep and set Windows 95 to kill the connection after an idle time of 20 minutes so the file should be there in the morning.

However, working with a client in the US on VRML work, I find I need to send and receive large files within minutes rather than hours. Also, the client has mentioned the possibility of using video conferencing so I may have to deny all my beliefs and give BT some money now that the installation costs of ISDN-2 have fallen to £199. Pity I had to buy that new modem, really.

## • PCW Contacts

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**Stephen Rodda:** As Stephen hands over his Networks column this month, he would like to extend his thanks to past readers. If you would like to contact him, he can be reached at [the\\_bear@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:the_bear@cix.compulink.co.uk)



# Rules of the road

Stephen Rodda customises a highway code for networks. And, slave to his readers' requests, turns from Windows to OS/2 to install IBM's new Warp Server 4.0.

I have been criticised for not mentioning IBM's products in my networking column. So when IBM issued a new version of its Warp Server (hitherto called LAN Manager), I decided that I should get a taste of it.

When I attempted to install the package, this is what I got: *"WARNING: The OS/2 Installation program has found some hidden Microsoft\*\* Windows\*\* files on drive C. If you continue to install OS/2 on drive C, you will not be able to start Windows NT after installation. If you continue, you must use OS/2 to format drive C. You can choose to exit, and then install OS/2 on any drive other than drive C."* Since this was on a system bootable into either Windows 95 or NT, all the stupid installation program had to do was take a copy of the boot sector and then pretend that it was a DOS disk, using the boot program as usual.

Not one to be dissuaded from my intentions, I copied the boot sector using an old version of Peter Norton's Utilities 4.5. I'm afraid I am a bit of a Luddite about these things — and that's some confession, coming from a technology journalist. But when all I want to do is read a bit of disk and save it as a file until the MS-DOS format changes, I'll carry on using Norton 4.5.

I rebooted but OS/2 still didn't like the hidden NT files. I took a directory listing, using DIR/B and wrote it to a file, then used ATTRIB to flag all files -R -S -H and had another try. I thought "thank goodness I'm writing about it while I'm doing it". At least I got something productive done while "fiddling" around (*I had considered using another word instead, but you can fill it in for me according to your sensitivities*). It still stated that I had some hidden files in the

directory, which was patently not true. So I telephoned IBM support and within a few minutes they'd confirmed my suspicions that it wasn't just the NT files but the whole VFAT (Windows 95's method of putting long file names on a FAT partition) structure which OS/2 didn't like. My first reaction to being told that I should repartition or reformat the disk was "I don't believe it!" I know MS and IBM have been having an extended war where each has worked hard to prevent its own product running under the other's operating system (Windows 3.11 upgrade being a case in point) but IBM not supporting VFAT, which has been out since NT 3.1, seems a bit thick to me.

Since I was using a review machine (the AMD K5-100) and there was nothing important on the hard disk I decided to overwrite the hard disk contents. Once I'd decided not to keep any of the old data, installation went like clockwork, although I was surprised that there was no Novell/Eagle NE2000 adaptor. The NE2000 Plus was supported, so I tried using that instead despite the thought that I'd probably have to do something about it later. Something which surprised me was the fact that nowhere in the documentation did I find a mention of Apple Macintosh file sharing — and this from a server package.

As far as the Novell NE2000 driver is concerned, I had forgotten that OS/2 automatically takes note of the fact that the adaptor card isn't an NE2000 Plus and configures itself from there.

## The AMD K5-100

Do you want an 80586-100 for the price of an 80586-75? ...doesn't everyone? I had a loan machine from AMD, complete with one

of their 80586 clones. I use the term 80586 rather than Pentium, because the Pentium is a trademarked name and a series of numbers isn't.

The clone makers have had to resort to all sorts of tactics to make their chips seem different (branding, I think it's called). AMD has an 80586 chip which performs (from my usage tests) every bit as well as an Intel Pentium P-100. The AMD K5-100 sells for within a pound or two of the Intel P75, so you really do get more bangs per buck!

I've also been trying to get hold of the new Cyrix 686-in-a-586-package chip as I've heard good things about it, but as yet I seem to be getting nowhere, fast.

## Letters

This month I'm devoting the letters section to Windows 95, and you'll find that some of the enquiries come from someone you already know!

**Q.** *"My installation of Windows 95 seems to be running slower (especially when browsing the machine). Can you suggest anything to improve the speed of the program?"*

**Stephen Rodda**

**A.** If you've got the hard disk space, I'd suggest that you reinstall Windows 95 into a different directory (or folder) to see whether slow-down occurs then. It is possible, if you install and test many different programs, for the registry to become corrupted or overloaded.

A fresh installation of Windows 95 should sort out the slow-down. Make sure the slow-down isn't due to trying to access a CD. Your search path could possibly be pointing there.

## Networking Rules

I was flying back from the UK to the Netherlands the other day and as the aeroplane was preparing for landing the thought struck me, seeing all the little drainage channels and noting how orderly everything was, that networks also need order imposed on them to operate properly. "Why not set out the bones of a networking rule book?" I thought. So here is my own version of a set of guidelines to which you can add or delete from, as you see fit, to create your own networking rules.

**1. Use easily-remembered passwords which are changed monthly.** Depending on the sensitivity of your data, you may be prone to a dictionary-type password attack. There are two ways to defeat this: firstly, make sure that a type of "three strikes and you're out" password checking is enabled and secondly, make sure that all passwords are made up of two common words, concatenated. The first method will disable an account for a set period if an attacker (or even the user) types the wrong password for the account a number of times in a preset period. See the screen shot from NetWare (Fig 1) showing this form of lockout. The second ensures that the password is easily remembered but unguessable. A password in this vein could be sausageprinter. Certainly it's easily-remembered but it's also a totally illogical series of characters.

**2. Back up your data at least once a day.** Even if it's only an incremental or differential backup, please do it! Remember to make a full backup every week and to keep it and your end-of-the-month backup tape in a safe place (preferably off the premises). The reason that I recommend a full backup once a week is so that you don't end up having to fish out a hundred different tapes containing the past four months' incremental backups.

**3. Don't allow unauthorised or unknown programs to be run on your network.** You don't want to risk getting attacked by "Trojan horse" type programs (i.e. those which pretend to be



Fig 1 NetWare's intruder detection lockout enabling screen

one sort of program and end up formatting your hard disk accidentally-on-purpose). Believe it or not, there is one which masquerades as a version of PKZIP. Make sure that you only use programs from recognised and responsible sources (cover disks are usually fine, as is Cix and such

Q. "I've been trying to share my fax or connect to another, shared fax. I don't seem to be getting anywhere. Windows 95 won't recognise the shared fax on another machine. Can you help, please?"

Jeff Sanders

A. This is a problem which Jeff, my business partner, has been having. It's always a bad sign when he starts cursing, because I know he's starting up a PC. Actually, I think he likes to have something to complain about.

He's been asked to design a book for a charity and, of course, he decided to use Ventura Publisher. In our experience, it's the only reasonably ordinary program specifically designed for book publishing. So in order to send proofs to the client he needed to use a fax. His machine has only one communications port (for a

variety of reasons, mainly to do with the fact that it uses an old NE2000) and that is taken up by the mouse. We decided to use Windows 95's built-in fax sharing, so I could get on with my work while he faxed the document through my machine.

Firstly, we had to make sure that the machine (where the fax is installed) had got file sharing enabled and accessible via the Network control applet in the Control Panel (see Fig 3). Of course, on my machine, I was sure that this was the case.

Secondly, Microsoft Exchange does get its knickers in a twist occasionally and you can do far worse than removing all the exchange components, rebooting and reinstalling from the CD once again. Another thing you could check is whether the machine is actually visible on the network. If not, a simple network diagnosis should sort out any problems you may be having.

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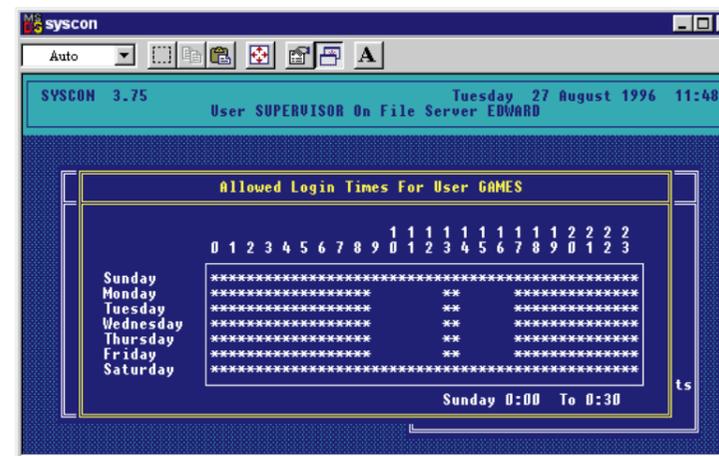


Fig 2 How a login can be configured so it's available throughout what isn't the working day

places where all programs are scanned before being made available).

**4. Scan all disks from outside, for viruses.** Although this is obvious, it's surprising how many times people get caught out by viruses.

Don't just assume that a large company site is free of viruses. We've been caught napping by a virus which was widespread throughout the reprographics industry at that time. Remember that bureaux and the like can be hotbeds of infection and always make sure that you scan your floppies and removables before using them if they've been off your premises.

**5. If you must connect to the internet, make sure that you do so safely.** Remember that a firewall is the safest method of connecting to the internet but if your connection is only temporary in nature (like a dial-up connection), then it'll take someone with real determination to stay on a leased line, keeping a look-out for you, and then to attack your system while you're there on the dial-up link. Not a common problem I should have thought, but one worth bearing in mind.

**6. Don't allow people to let a third party log in under their names and passwords.** Apart from the fact that this is sloppy practice, it also defeats the advantages of email and so forth and exposes a password to (possibly) an outsider.

**7. Enforce logging out when the workstation is unattended for a significant period of time.** This can stop people leaving their machines logged on all night, allowing passers-by access to sensitive data. It can also get people into the habit of switching their machines off at night, which is good for the ecology.

**8. Stress to everyone that data which they wish to be backed up is stored on the network.** Some server-based backup programs will back up workstations, provided they are switched on. Save lots of electricity by backing up the server only.

**9. Impress upon everyone that despite their data being stored on the same machine(s) as everybody else's, as long as their data is stored in their own home directory it is secure.** People don't seem to realise (notwithstanding rule 12) that if a networking system allowed people, apart from the administrator, to wander through others' data then the company selling the networking system would very quickly go out of business.

**10. Negotiate and enforce a company-wide policy on playing (network) games.** People will probably

want to play Doom and Quake. If you can arrange that these are available perhaps through special games logons but also outside working hours, this will probably remove the temptation to bring in their own games from outside (Fig 2).

**11. Since they're bound to do it anyway, impress upon people the correct method of moving their machines.** This is useful if you're using 10base2 (coaxial Ethernet) because if the cable is broken for a significant length of time the whole segment of the network is disabled. This is not such a necessity with 10baseT and token ring and their variants but as long as users understand how the network is cabled, callouts will probably be minimal.

**12. Keep the file server in a locked room.** There is no good method of preventing someone with physical access to the machine from reading the data on the storage system. Remember that the security inherent in NetWare or NT does not prevent someone with a suitable boot disk from accessing the system as an administrator. The safest place for data is on a disk which is attached neither to a computer nor a network and which is stored in a strongroom. Disk encryption hardware does exist but it is far from commonplace. We must therefore compromise.

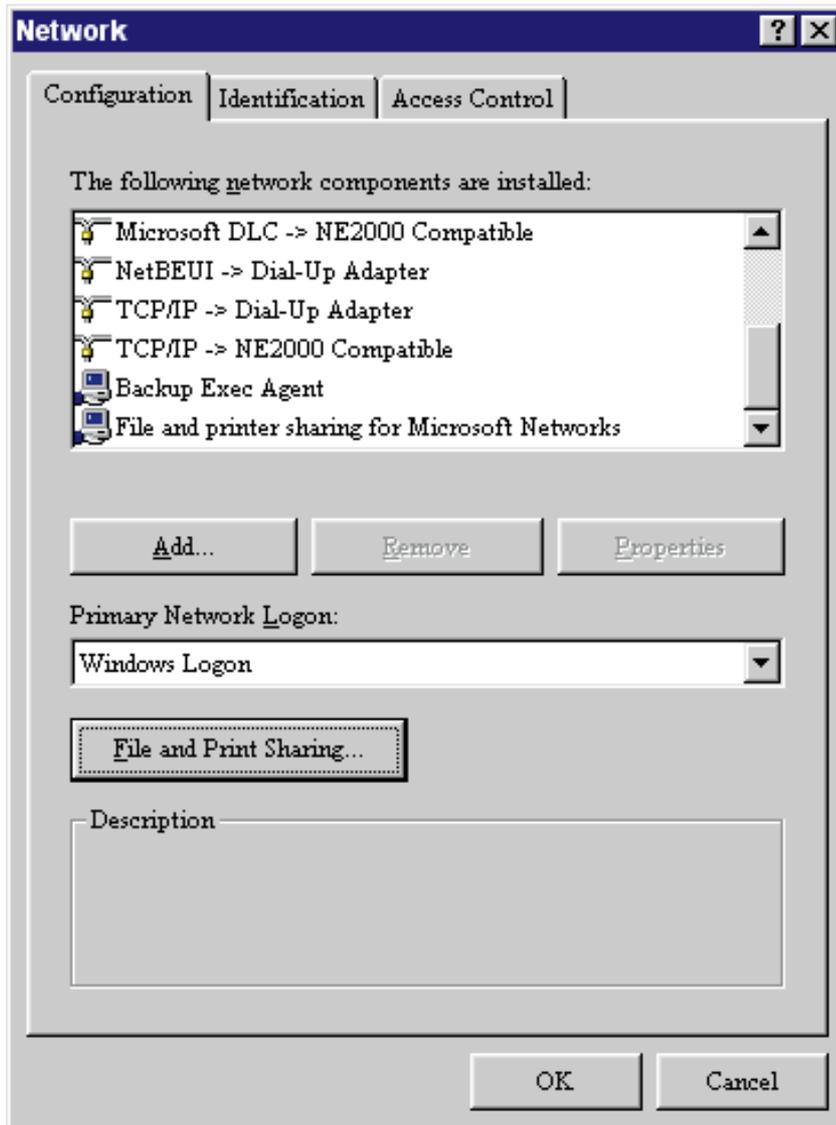


Fig 3 The Network control applet, showing the file sharing button

I removed Exchange, rebooted my machine and reinstalled it. What a total pain in the fundament that was! I remembered that removing Exchange would remove Microsoft Fax but I'd forgotten how heavily-intertwined the comms part of Windows 95 actually was — until I discovered I'd removed the Microsoft Network as well.

#### Coming soon

I was chatting in the pub to a mate who is an avid reader of my column the other day and he mentioned that he hasn't yet come across a very simple explanation of how to put together a small network. So next month, I shall be concentrating on this, if only to shut him up.

#### Quick tip

I gather from my sources that many Macintosh LC475s are starting to show errors on booting, giving the same signs as would a dead motherboard. Apparently it's the PRAM battery which, once changed, restores the machine to its original working state. I also hear that some less-reputable or knowledgeable repairers are replacing the motherboard (and charging for this repair) when all that's needed is the battery replacement. You have been warned!

#### PCW Contacts

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## Colour-fast

What could possibly tempt Stephen Rodda to dig out his cheque book? Cheap to run and a joy to own, HP's Colour LaserJet hit the right spot.



**R**egular readers will know that I'm always after a better, bigger and faster colour printer. This month I've had a Hewlett-Packard Colour LaserJet 5M (CLJ5) to play with, and by golly it's a beauty.

It's not as technically perfect as a Kodak Colorease PS which I also played with last year, but it is faster. And cheaper. And the consumables are cheaper. In fact, it costs slightly less to produce a full-colour print on plain paper on a CLJ5 than a monochrome print on a LaserJet 4 Plus. That's cheap. Just compare the running costs of the Colorease PS at about £2 per print with the output costs of the CLJ5 which are fractions of a penny or, if you really want to push the boat out and use H-P's

own special paper, about 10p.

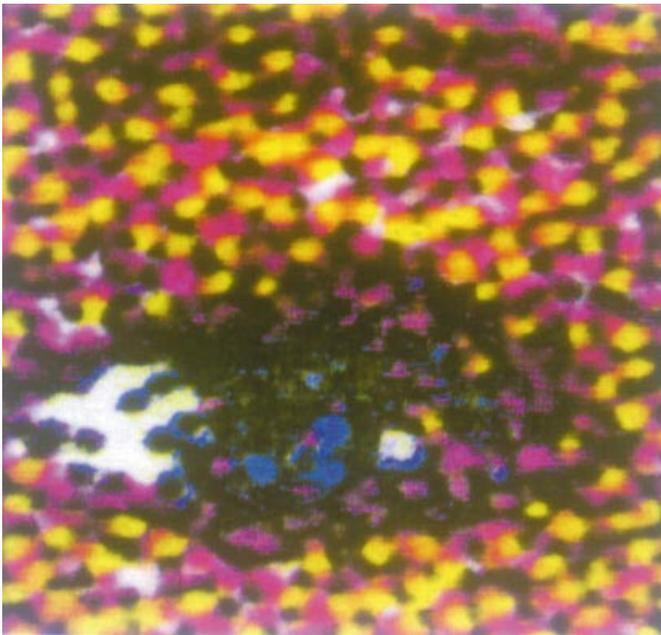
The printer uses a newly-developed version of the H-P RET (Resolution Enhancement Technology) to make 300dpi look as good as 1,200dpi. And H-P has succeeded: I've got a blown-up picture of a portion of output done on two different machines. The first is a scan of a conventionally-produced 300dpi print and the second is the same, but with RET.

The printer prints A4 in colour or A3 in monochrome. Why the size difference? The colour picture is laid down on the drum only and then transferred to the paper in a single shot. This makes registration of all the colours perfect, since there's no fussing about getting the paper in exactly the correct place four times in succession.

Why am I talking about a printer in a networking column? Because this one is a networked print server. Being connected by means of a JetDirect card, it can be shared across the whole LAN as a joint resource. I tested it with nearly all the networking protocols it supported.

At first, of course, it appeared on the AppleTalk network a few moments after it was switched on. Then, spoilt for choice, I decided to have a look for the printer on the NT Server. Naturally, the AppleTalk server was easily visible. "What of the other protocols?" I wondered. I installed the DLC protocol and saw the printer directly.

Next I tried "lpr" (Unix printing capability). Setting the printer to a static IP address, as



Conventional 300dpi output (enlarged)



Resolution enhanced 300dpi output to 1200dpi (enlarged)

**"Readers' wives" husbands' desktops**

"Here's a useful tip. It is possible to connect to NT FTP Servers over the internet using Windows 95 as if they were network drives within My Computer.

To connect to Microsoft's FTP Server, edit LMHOSTS (in the \WINDOWS directory) to read

```
198.105.232.1 ftp #PRE
```

Save the file, make sure you are connected to the internet, and from the MSDOS prompt (while running Win95 of course) type

```
nbtstat -R
```

(case is important). You should get a message saying everything is OK. You can now right-click on My Computer (or Network Neighbourhood) and select "Map Network Drive"; type

```
\FTPDATA
```

in the path box and select OK. If all is well after a couple of seconds, you should see a new drive appear in My Computer and an Explorer window will appear on the desktop just like a normal network drive.

You can now copy files from Microsoft by simply dragging files to the desktop (or any folder you like). I don't know if it's just coincidence, but file transfers seem faster to me. Included is a picture of my own desktop connected to Microsoft in the manner I have described."

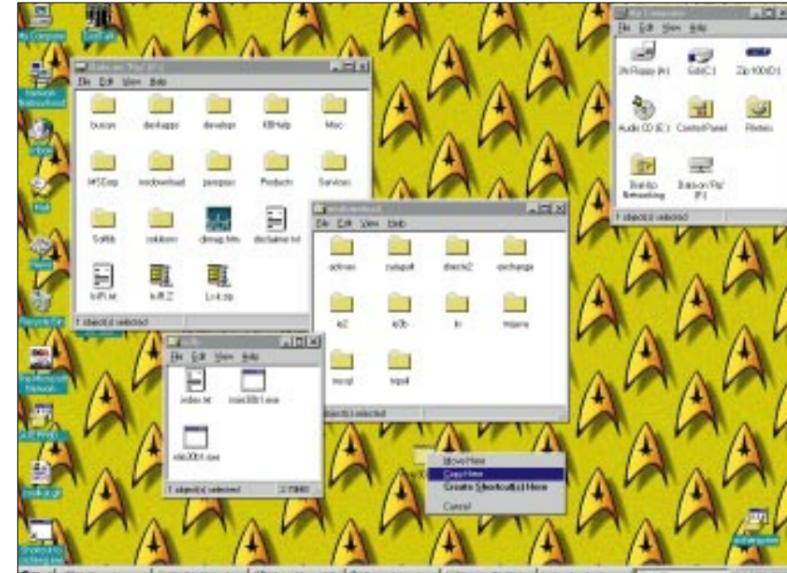
**Paul Fitzgibbon**

**<paulf@spoonnet.demon.co.uk>**

Thank you, Paul, for the picture of your desktop (shown here) with the MS ftp site mounted on your computer as another drive. Just as a word of warning to other readers, though: I should point out that Paul isn't strictly correct about the requirement for an NT server, since all that is required is a server supporting NETBIOS over TCP/IP. An NT server with NETBIOS turned off won't work in this manner, but a Linux server with NETBIOS turned on and using (say) Samba will. I believe this is the only ftp server which has this capability, but please contact me if you know of others.

Colour schemes such as this shouldn't be attempted by the inexperienced or without an adult present, and I am definitely not

going to publish a series of pictures of "Readers' wives" husbands' desktops — unless I can be convinced otherwise.



Paul Fitzgibbon's brightly-coloured desktop showing his attachment to the Microsoft ftp site

my TCP/IP network is too small to bother with having a bootup (automatic address allocation) server, I sent a job to the address where the printer was installed (10.0.0.10) and the page printed as I would have expected. Incidentally, I use 10.x.x.x in my network, as this address will not propagate across the internet. Whichever machine is accessing the internet acts as a sort of low-class firewall, since I haven't enabled internet-routing across my own network.

Next, I tried to use the Novell Print Server capability of the JetDirect card. For some reason, I failed to do it. I believe it was my own failure rather than that of the card, as I remember some strange incantation I had to make the last time I used a JetDirect card on a Novell NetWare network. Unfortunately, the relevant grimoire wasn't to hand.

**Under Windows**

So far, so good. So next I tried it under Windows 95 and Windows 3.11. Windows 95 wasn't the easiest operating system to use in order to find the printer. I tried installing DLC as a protocol, and the network failed to see the printer at all.

This was a fault with Microsoft's Windows 95 DLC rather than with the printer since NT saw the printer without

hesitation. I thought I'd try using TCP/IP printing. Never having installed an lpr-like printer server under Windows 95, I was somewhat at a loss. I ended up sharing the AppleTalk protocol through NetWare, which is exactly the strategy I adopted under Windows 3.11 as well, since I wasn't even prepared to try what didn't work under 95.

I was disappointed only on one count, and this is really only a minor niggle. I feel that since H-P has virtually led the world in pioneering 100MHz networking with 100baseVG, it might have been a good idea to include the technology on the JetDirect card, especially when you consider that colour reproduction can require up to four times the information that monochrome needs. What effect does that have on me? Just the fact that transferring what could sometimes amount to 32Mb of information to print out one A4 sheet would obviously be better over a network running ten times faster than the norm.

Overall, the printer performed beautifully. But I would have liked to have seen the manual-feed adaptor included as part of the standard package, which also allows a straight-through paper path. As the printer stands, it will accept thinnish card through the standard feed, although I

assume the manual feed would allow thicker stock to be used.

I printed out a few sheets of coated art paper, but sometimes the toner preferred to temporarily stick to the fuser roller rather than the paper. I think this was rather more to do with the fact that I had selected the face-down output option, sending the

paper through another 180° turn just after the fuse, instead of the face-up option which I could have selected instead.

All in all, the Colour LaserJet 5M is a smashing printer, and those of you who have read my previous columns will know that my partner, Jeff, who is a graphic designer, has also placed his seal of

approval on it. This is one machine I shall be sorry to see the back of. In fact, where's my cheque book?

**Just another manic mailbox**

As ever, I have had a hectic time with my mailbox, and the following letters represent a cross-section of the queries, suggestions and complaints I get.

There is a new variety of email which I have come across recently, and that is the anonymous sort. Actually, I haven't had any insulting mail, just a friendly note, but whoever it was hadn't got their mailer set up with their correct domain name. So, if you're reading this, "davem@freight", I suggest you check out your mailer configuration.

**A share for all**

"I note with interest your response to Keith Rowe [PCW August], especially in relation to modem sharing. I am currently investigating sharing a modem on a mixed network (NT Server 3.51, Windows 95, NT Workstation 3.51 and 4.0, WFW 3.11 and a Novell Server).

We have the modem connected to the NT Server, which we have configured as an intranet with dial-in facilities, and we would like to share the modem available for most users.

We have a fax server running on a WFW 3.11 with multi-com software, but with the quantity of faxes, we feel the second modem would be better utilised for

outgoing modem use.

*We were led to believe by Microsoft that modem sharing was available, but cannot find a way of doing this and are trying to find a third-party solution which caters for most of the above clients."*

#### **Glen Worrall**

Basically, I think you're looking at two different requirements for modem sharing. The first would be an internet connection which anyone could use over the network, and the second would perhaps be an outgoing fax connection.

I suggest you try Winport and Faxport from lansource@cix.compulink.co.uk. I gather there's now a demonstration version so that you may assess the software's features on your own network.

#### **Lining up a Linux server**

*"I was reading your response to a letter by Keith Rowe (PCW August), and I have a question about setting up a Linux File Server. At the moment, I have a small network of Pentiums (all P75, apart from one P100, all with 8Mb RAM) using Windows 95 as a peer-to-peer network operating system.*

*The network is used for file and printer sharing between various computers in different parts of the office. I am thinking of getting a file server, so instead of moving the backup drive from machine to machine at the end of the day, we could store all data on one server and just back that up. I am interested in having a Linux server as it*

*is a lot cheaper than Windows NT, but I do have a few questions.*

*In the first place, I was wondering if I could carry on using the network for printer-sharing because with all the files being on the server, we would no longer need to transfer them from machine to machine.*

*Secondly, could I continue with the current BNC wiring and connectors we are using? Could I use an H-P Colorado T1000e drive on a Linux server?*

*And lastly, could we carry on using Windows 95 to access the server, or would we need to invest in extra software?"*

#### **Jonathan Friend**

**<jonathan@friendco.demon.co.uk>**

Your first question is easily answered. Yes, even though you use a Linux machine as a server, you can still run Windows for Workgroups or Windows 95's own printer sharing over the network. So is the second question: it's a resounding yes on that one, too.

The reason behind this is that although you may be changing the type of packet and the protocol which is sent around the network, these packets and protocols can coexist with other packets on the same bit of cabling. My own small network uses Novell's IPX, TCP/IP, MS NETBEUI, HP DLC and AppleTalk at more or less the same time.

Linux has built-in support for the H-P

Colorado drives. Windows 95 can be used perfectly well to access a Linux server. There is, however, a variety of ways in which you can do this. The methods range from using rather crude ftp services which are built into Linux to transfer files from the server's hard disk to a local hard disk, to installing a networking server-type package on the Linux machine.

Most of these server packages are free, so don't worry. You can use one of three I am considering (although I'll probably get floods of mail, telling me about a fourth, fifth or even a sixth option). These are NFS (Sun's own file-server protocol for the Linux box), Samba, which pretends to be an NT server on the network, and a NetWare-alike server package.

I'll treat you to my own set of prejudices as to which I feel you should install, so remember they are really personal and not to be messed with.

NFS is slower than Samba and requires that you load a separate client under 95, thereby taking up extra memory on the workstations. The NetWare-alike server is in beta test and also requires you to load another protocol. Samba has been in use in various production environments and has proved its stability. It simply runs under TCP/IP with NETBIOS.

#### **PCW Contacts**

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## If you can't beat 'em...

**Stephen Rodda has finally given in and fitted a sound card. There's fun with the Internet Phone, a fax pack and FAT 32, too.**

This old fuddy-duddy has finally got a sound card. "Why," I hear you ask "is this in a networking column?" I don't know; apart from the fact that almost everybody's machine seems to be sporting one, and you can't really consider a high-range machine without one these days. So, multimedia has finally hit "Rodda Towers" and, after all, it is necessary for things such as internet and intranet telephony.

With plug and play, which was almost perfect under Windows 95, the card ran quite happily. Until, that is, the Energy Star power-save on my green motherboard cut in. Then the sound card's output had a severe attack of the vibratos. The only cure was to restart the machine and open the BIOS configuration to prevent the processor being clocked at a slower speed when not strictly in use. This cured the problem.

The review sample came from Creative

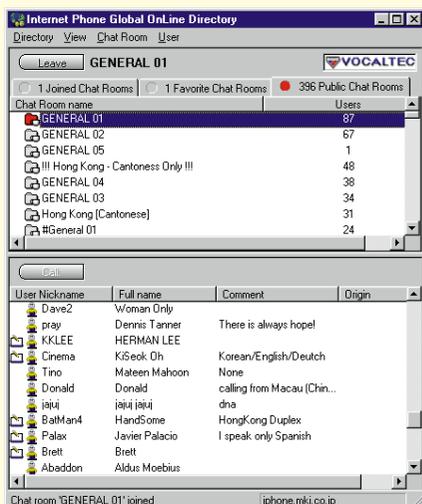


*Internet Phone waiting for a call*

parameters. It seems there are no drivers available for the plug and play card.

I was surprised by the fact that although clone cards come with AWE-32 MIDI-capability as they stand, the kosher SoundBlaster cards have this as an additional extra. I was not able to use any of the MIDI voices already installed on the clones.

Something which comes with the cards is a voice synthesiser. These voices sound like a cross between a dalek and the Beverly Hillbillies. One of them sounds like they've got a throat infection. Just for fun I got one of the voices to read the Dutch text which came with the sound card. The result was hysterically funny.



Labs and was a SoundBlaster 16 Plug and Play which came with its own IDE port for CDs. This makes three IDE ports, including two on the motherboard, which are installed in my machine, none of which I use.

Under NT 3.51 I had to use the ordinary SoundBlaster NT driver and tweak the

*Internet Phone's directory of currently online users*

### Internet Phone phun

Wondering about the Internet Phone, I downloaded INETPhone 4.0, which has just been released, and tried it out.

This package allows the transfer of audio data over the Internet and lets you make a "telephone" call without the associated call charges. All you need is a sound card, an internet connection, a microphone, and a loudspeaker or a pair of headphones.

There are various methods of calling. ➔

You can either specify an address directly (if you have a schedule to call someone) or phone them and tell them to get onto the internet in, say, ten minutes' time. Or you can join chat rooms. This journalist discovered that people were merely lurking in these chat rooms for some nefarious purpose or other, and quickly left.

If we were to use this piece of technology wisely, it could save a fortune in phone calls over the company WAN. But be advised that the bandwidth is probably greater than a traditional telephone call. PTTs (Postal, Telephone and Telegraph) are trying to ban this as it could undermine their monopoly on voice transmission.

One other problem is that if everyone used the Internet Phone program, the internet or intranet could screech to a halt (at least until the backbones had all been upgraded again).

Internet Phone is well-presented, installs professionally and does what it claims. This new version allows you to leave voicemail for someone, which gets dropped into their mailbox. A whiteboard option is available which allows multiple users to leave comments, much like OS/2's groupware which I reviewed about a year ago.

It seems that people are on the internet just to make funny noises or for, er, other reasons. As the technology matures, or in the right hands, it will be a very useful tool.

### Telcom Fax

On a more serious note, I've been looking at Telcom Fax, which has just come out in the new 3.0 version. This is specifically written for Windows NT and allows the modem to be shared as a fax machine.

I know I keep griping about this, but the manufacturers of fax-sharing packages should really get their heads together and

work out a method of including the poor relations like Macintosh, OS/2 and UNIX in the general scheme of things.

As things stand, there is no cross-platform fax package. Why not? Simply because nobody ever considers the advantages of real networked fax. Many networks are of mixed-platform machines, especially now that NT makes mixing Unix, OS/2 and Macintosh machines on the same LAN as their PC counterparts so easy.

Why can't we have a shared network fax package which caters for Macintosh and Unix machines? I'm sure it wouldn't take too much work to implement. NT Server even has a PostScript rasteriser and Adobe has fax extensions for PostScript, which are already in use on Data-products machines, available on the Macintosh and other platforms.

A program would have to fish out the details, presumably encoded into the PostScript output, send the code to the rasteriser and then transmit the resultant bitmap to the address and recipient which it read from the PostScript code. I've had the idea, so all someone needs to do now is to implement it. Remember, you read it here first!

I tried installing it on the net as <http://www.compulink.co.uk/~teddy/TF30/EVAL.EXE>. It seemed to get nowhere under NT 3.51, with or without service packs or the new-technology shell preview (Windows 95-alike). Don't say I didn't warn you. I have included a screenshot of it (*below*) just to whet your appetite.

### FAT filing

FAT 32 is the new version of the MSDOS FAT filing system. It's just like the old MSDOS filing system, with long file names which we've been used to under NT and

Windows 95 but with one important difference: don't expect to read the partition under DOS 6.22 or under NT, because it isn't supported.

This FAT 32 filing system is installed on Windows 95 machines which have had Windows 32 installed on them at the factory, and it makes NT multibooting a very difficult procedure. The advantage is that it is capable of using far smaller cluster sizes, hitherto a problem under FAT.

With 2Mb drives, a cluster size of 32Kb was always used as there were only 16 bits used to address a FAT cluster. With FAT 32, we can use 4Kb clusters for DOS files. No doubt there will be NT drivers, but they are not yet available.

If you want to use a FAT 32 drive with

NT, it would be better to install an older version of DOS. Partition and format the partition under this version of the operating system. Install Windows 95 on this partition so that NT can read the FAT partition and consequently share the primary partition.

### Putting the boot in...

● "I am working for a project to get diskless workstations to run from a Windows NT server 3.51. NT, believe it or not, provides a remote boot service which allows it to happen. (To my surprise, I recently discovered this in the installation guide.) But I am having trouble with the boot PROM chips on the network cards.

Apparently, there are specific boot

PROMs for NetWare, as well as for NT. I have not been able to find a provider for the NT versions. Can you help me?"

Ivan

[ilabra@clink.samara.co.zw](mailto:ilabra@clink.samara.co.zw)

That is a problem. I'm afraid I've never been able to find LAN Manager remote boot PROMs either.

The other thing to remember is that you have to use cards with MAC addresses within Microsoft's pre-planned scheme of things for each manufacturer. Otherwise it doesn't do a good job of recognising them, and therefore pukka Novell/Eagle cards are the best bet.

Unless you're running DOS on the diskless machines, it's wise to forget the

## Two-way Winder

I've been reading Davey Winder's new book, *Sex and The Internet*. Firstly, let me get this out into the open: Davey's an acquaintance of mine, so I may be thought of as plugging the book. But I'm not.

The book is a well-written, humorous and authoritative guide (at the time of writing) to all the sites where things of a sexual nature within the bounds of reason, if not censorship, can be found.

This book can be thought of in two different ways: firstly, as a guide to where to find this type of material, and secondly, as a guide to where *not* to go so as *not* to discover this type of material.

Let me clarify what I mean. The first meaning is obvious, but the second perhaps not so. A network administrator may configure a firewall — a computer used to share and filter various bits and pieces out of a direct internet connection — in one of two ways. The firewall may only allow connections to and from trusted sites, say [www.bigcompany.com](http://www.bigcompany.com), or the firewall may disallow connections to sites such as a mythical [www.leatherknickers.com](http://www.leatherknickers.com).

With the information supplied in this book, a network administrator could compile a list of sites to which to disallow connections at all costs, rather than having to compile a list of trusted sites, which would certainly mean much more work.

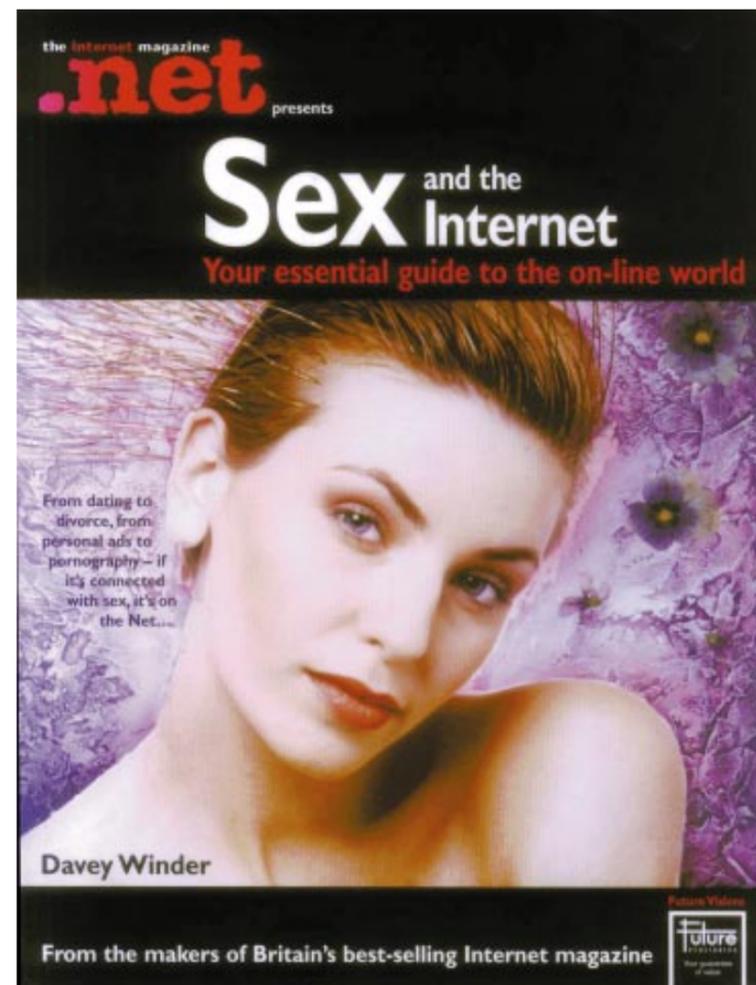
With this secondary strategy there would be loopholes, and the main use of a firewall is to prevent attacks on one's LAN from the outside. The economic reason behind blanking access to naughty sites is simply to prevent extraneous web browsing and time-loss during work-time.

Naturally, you wouldn't want young Thomasina, Richard or Harry browsing [www.big-bits-of-anatomy-of-your-](http://www.big-bits-of-anatomy-of-your-)

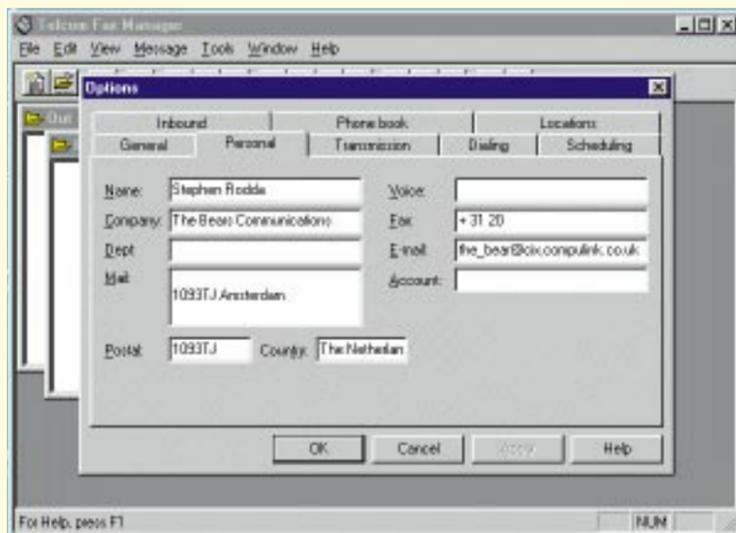
[choice.com](http://choice.com), so in an educational installation you'd probably only allow access to trusted sites. Apart from all that, it's entertaining and

a recommended read.

● *Sex and The Internet*. £12.99 from Future Publishing. ISBN: 1-85981-049-7.



You pays your money and you takes your choice: where to go, or where not to go, on the internet



The Telecom Fax client: sadly, I couldn't get the other bits to work

remote booting aspect. I've set up remote boot networks and although they work, and work very well, I don't think I'd do it again.

### ...I got the boot

● "Thanks for your reply." (See "Putting the boot in", above). "I actually solved the problem of the PROMs. There is a company in Canada called lanworks ([www.lanworks.com](http://www.lanworks.com)) which claims that it can do the boot PROMs. However, I would like to find out more about Microsoft's pre-planned scheme of MAC addresses. Can you direct me on that?"

Ivan

[ilabra@clink.samara.co.zw](mailto:ilabra@clink.samara.co.zw)

It's not actually Microsoft's pre-planned MAC address scheme; it's the MAC addresses used by the card manufacturers themselves. Certain manufacturers use certain ranges of addresses and Microsoft uses the addresses to identify the cards. As long as your clone NE2000 card doesn't use, say, a 3Com address there's no real problem, but you'll have to edit the remote boot service's configuration manually. I'm afraid it's quite a messy business, but then remote boot usually is messy, anyway.

### Making amends

"One of our NT Systems crashed. Following reboot, the disk administrator showed no file system on partition. The partition was a volume set with two volumes. Any idea how I might recover this partition?"

Do you know of a tool which can find the partition table of a drive containing

NTFS partitions where the table is lost?

Can someone post a place where I can download the NTFS package for Linux?"

Joerg Viernann

[<jv@cadlab.de>](mailto:jv@cadlab.de)

All you have to do is to start the machine with your NT installation diskettes and accept the "repair" option. The installation program will prompt for your recovery disk and should then repair this for you.

With regards to the Linux driver, email [loewis@tiger.informatik.hu-berlin.de](mailto:loewis@tiger.informatik.hu-berlin.de) for information.

### No entry

"I run Windows 95, and successfully connect to NetWare and Windows networks. I want to connect to the firm's ASI400s. I thought it was just a case of installing MSDLC, but it didn't do much good. I suspect it's not as simple as this. All I want for now is access to the drives — client access will come later. I notice that IBM have a 95 beta available.

The other option is TCP/IP, which we have running on the ASI400. If I have TCP/IP on Windows 95, I should be able to ping the 400. We have a standard ethernet connection to the 400. When we use 3.1 or 3.11, we use all manner of drivers. I presumed 95 would have this functionality built-in."

Paul Moss

[pmoss@studley.jba.co.uk](mailto:pmoss@studley.jba.co.uk)

Windows 95 has got TCP/IP built-in. The thing to remember is that TCP/IP is a transport protocol, much like IPX, but as in NetWare NCP you still have to run a filing

system as well.

Much the same is the case with TCP/IP. You have to have some form of file transfer protocol (or FTP). To use this, you have to have an FTP client on 95. Just type ftp from the command prompt, or use CuteFTP or some other commercial product, and run ftpd (the FTP daemon) on the AS/400, assuming it's not already running it.

Alternatively, install Samba on the AS/400 and then you can use NETBEUI over TCP/IP from Windows and mount drives properly on your desktop. To use Samba, you either have to use the Unix compiler on the AS/400 or download Samba from a ready-compiled source.

Samba is by far the easier option, although you may already be using NFS. If so, just install the NFS client onto the Windows 95 machines, direct from the CD. ■

### Next Month: heavy testing

As a taster for next month, I've had a Hewlett-Packard Colour LaserJet 5 delivered for network evaluation, so that's going to be tested under all the operating systems I can throw at it.

I've got the promise of an AMD-powered 80586 machine to look at and contrast with the more traditional Intel Pentium, and I've also got hold of a couple of utilities which add NFS and TCP/IP to Novell NetWare 3.1x more cheaply than the Novell product.



## Hard cheese and soft warranties

**What happens when your hard disk dies and the dealer warranty bears no resemblance to the original? Stephen Rodda takes a case in point.**

**H**ard disk failures seem to be all the rage recently. No sooner did I mention on CiX that I'd had a hard disk go West on me than I heard from many, many, more people who had experienced the same thing in the recent past. Luckily, many had had as good, or better, service than I. But unfortunately some were left holding an expensive dead dog. In the greatest majority of cases the problems turned out to be with Seagate drives.

Now, don't think I am saying anything against Seagate; as the largest supplier of hard disks, you'd expect people to have more problems with Seagate drives, purely from a statistical standpoint. The problems people were experiencing weren't to do with the fact that the disks had died, (because sometimes, this happens) — their problems were concerned with getting their warranties honoured.

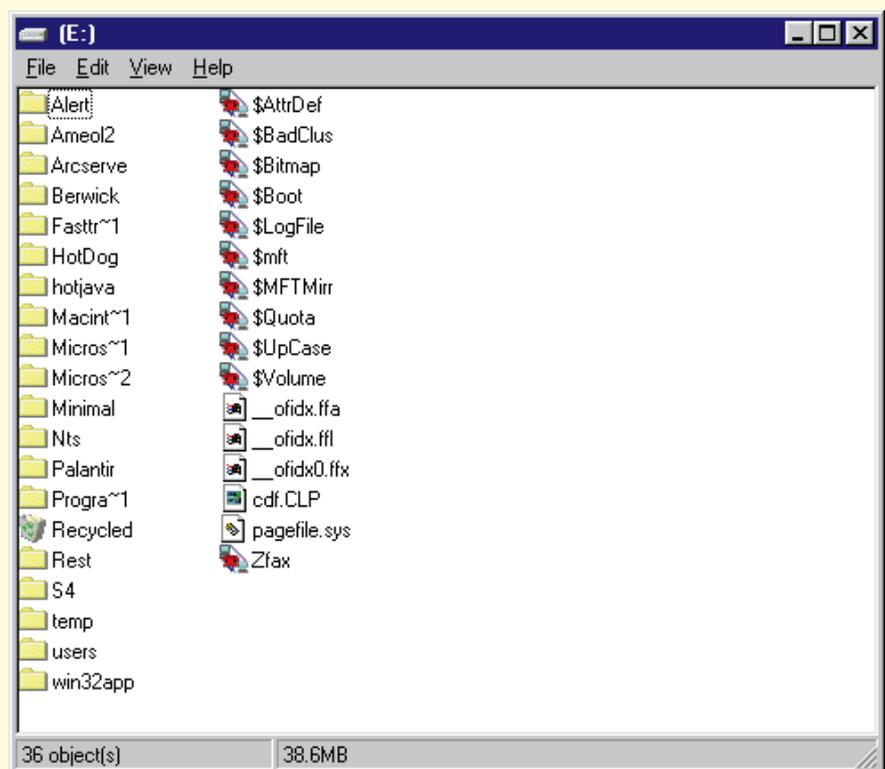
Apparently, Seagate warranties the drives to their distributors — in some cases for three years. It is then the distributor who will pass on the warranty (or not) to your dealer, who in turn will pass on a warranty to you. By this time the warranty may not bear any relationship to the one which the manufacturer originally supplied. It is the dealer's duty to return the drive to its distributor, who should return the drive to the manufacturer, who will replace it, or repair it under the warranty.

What if your dealer says that the drive only had a one-year warranty (when it was advertised as having a three-year one)?

Tough luck. Hard cheese. You might just as well throw the drive into the bin.

I thought that a situation like this shouldn't be left alone, so I decided to contact Seagate direct. The company's PR

people gave a better response: if you find this happening to you, they say that you should contact one of the company's distributors in the country concerned (this offer is valid throughout the world) and



**Fig 1** Screen shot of an NTFS drive mounted under Windows 95 — notice the lack of long filename support in the 0.90 version of NTFSDOS under Windows 95

## Naughty net

The Internet is playing up at the moment. Or at least it is between the Netherlands and the UK. Goodness knows they can build something that will work even in the event of nuclear war, but it falls over as soon as British Telecom gets near it. Actually, that's not quite true. British Telecom, bless its cotton socks, started it all off. Poor old Beattie seems to have been having regular attacks of amnesia during the past month or two: the PCW production desk has only been receiving my copy when I get tiddled off with poor Internet response and use a direct telephone line to connect and file it.

This month, the failure was due to an outfit called Ebone.net — or so I assume. It's certainly in a router in this outfit's own class C address, so I suppose it's them. I guess they neither trust it nor like it enough to give it a name (or perhaps Ebone.net doesn't want people to know it's them). The rub is that Joe Bloggs can't just mail these people and say "Hey, pull your socks up you naughty people" (or words to that effect), "I'm getting pretty ghastly traceroute figures and it's your router that's to blame". Oh, no. It doesn't work like that. Your email gets bounced, even when you send it to "postmaster", contravening the RFCs (Requests for Comment — documents which specify exactly how the Internet works, or how it should work).

Now I don't mind my packets taking 13 or 14 hops to get to Surbiton, where they used to take five or six, it's just that from my end they seem to be going from Amsterdam via Stockholm to Paris and then to the UK. I'm sure as eggs are eggs there has got to be a shorter route somewhere. Once

this month, I was even getting routing via Los Angeles.

We'll soon see what's happening and if my hair survives I'm also including my traceroute output so that you can see for yourselves how dire things have become.

As a little update to this, it seems that when things are quieter, the router takes a more direct route. I had a little look at the routing just before I went to bed (I'm never early to bed) and at 2a.m I was actually connecting in seven hops. It looks as though someone needs to sort something out.

```

MS-DOS Prompt
Auto
Microsoft(R) Windows 95
(C) Copyright Microsoft Corp 1981-1995.
C:\WIN95\Desktop>tracert tom

Tracing route to tom.compulink.co.uk [194.153.0.51]
over a maximum of 30 hops:

  0  0 ms    0 ms    0 ms    du-ams-2.access.nl.demon.net [194.159.73.18]
  1  141 ms   143 ms  153 ms   cow-2.router.nl.demon.net [194.159.73.12]
  2  148 ms   154 ms  158 ms   Amsterdam-EBS.ebone.net [193.0.15.129]
  3  137 ms   153 ms  154 ms   Stockholm-eps.Ebone.NET [192.121.155.10]
  4  205 ms   223 ms  165 ms   Paris-EBS1.Ebone.net [192.121.156.33]
  5  412 ms   *      *      192.121.156.58
  6  878 ms   751 ms  794 ms   telehouse-smds-f0-0.ukcore.bt.net [194.72.7.1]
  7  *        887 ms  812 ms   baynard-smds-s1-0.ukcore.bt.net [194.72.0.1]
  8  819 ms   *      912 ms   baynard-access1-e0.ukcore.bt.net [194.72.4.34]
  9  1009 ms  906 ms  1013 ms  cix.customer.bt.net [194.72.10.34]
 10  870 ms   697 ms  573 ms   conferencing-gw.compulink.co.uk [194.153.0.5]
 11  1055 ms  1032 ms *      tom.compulink.co.uk [194.153.0.51]
 12  *        935 ms *      tom.compulink.co.uk [194.153.0.51]
 13  *        1212 ms 1011 ms tom.compulink.co.uk [194.153.0.51]

Trace complete.
C:\WIN95\Desktop>

```

*The Internet is crawling at the moment — or at least my bit of it is*

make arrangements, direct. This is also valid if your dealer has succumbed to financial pressures and gone into liquidation. So what I thought would be a bag of rotten tomatoes becomes a bouquet! Seagate, please stand up and take a bow for looking after your customers.

With Sony, it appears that the company follows very much the same procedure. When asked, Sony said that any customers of dealers who had ceased trading should contact its national information centre for repairs or whatever might be required.

## NTFS drives

Those of us who run more than one operating system (like NT and Windows 95 and Linux), will have found that there are advantages to having NTFS (and Linux) partitions in that the operating systems which own these partitions perform faster, or better, or both.

In my own case, I have an NTFS partition from which I couldn't read files when running under Windows 95 or Linux. For some time now, there has been a read-only Linux device driver which allows NTFS partitions to be added to the Linux filesystem, yet nothing for DOS-based machines. Until recently, that is. Taking the work which was done for Linux, there is now a DOS version of the work carried out by Martin Löwis for the Linux driver on ftp://ftp.ora.com/pub/examples/windows/win95.update/ntfsdos.html (also available on CiX in the windows/files.nt topic and on this month's cover-mounted CD-ROM as ntfsdos.zip). It installs as a network

```

Ameol2 - Administrator - [Mail/postmaster]
File Edit OX Mail News View Folder Message Settings Window Help
updates (F) 11/35
macvpc
general 0/32
Mail
postmaster 29/615
Messages 0/10
stenhen n/n
Message 608 from datan@freenet.hut.fi on 28/05/96 at 12:37. 29 unread messages in folder.
Received: from [194.218.155.210] ([194.218.155.210]) by freenet.hut.fi (8.7.5/8.7.3) with SMTP id
Date: Tue, 28 May 1996 12:37:11 +0300 (EET DST)
Message-Id: <199605280937.MAA14813@freenet.hut.fi>
X-Authentication-Warning: freenet.hut.fi: Host [194.218.155.210] didn't use HELO protocol
X-Sender: datan@freenet.hut.fi
X-Mailer: Windows Eudora Version 1.4.3b4
Mime-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"
To: the_bear@cix.compulink.co.uk
From: datan@freenet.hut.fi (Lars Fredriksson)
Subject: THE SAMBA SUITE
Apparently-To: the_bear@cix.compulink.co.uk

Hello !

I only want to ask where from I can get the Samba suite, do You have any
good WWW address.

I'm sorry for my bad English - I'm Swedish you know !

- Lars Fredriksson
datan@freenet.hut.fi
8420 unread messages 11:40 am

```

**Fig 2** People often ask me about CiX. I access the service by telnet via demon in Amsterdam and currently use the CiX offline reader, Ameol, pictured here

redirector in DOS from within the AUTOEXEC.BAT file and is then available in Win3.1 and Win95.

There is one small caveat, which is that it doesn't support long file names under Windows 95 but allows all read operations under Windows 3.11, I'm told. I removed all traces of 3.11 (I think) from my machines quite a while ago, although my colleague Jeff's Macintosh still runs SoftWindows 3.1 it isn't suitable for the testing of a device driver giving nearly direct hardware access.

When the driver executes, it looks through all the drives on the machine and identifies those which have an NTFS format. It then mounts these as read-only, under unused drive letters. I found it to be totally foolproof in operation. I'm certainly looking forward to it being read-write and integrated with Windows 95, possibly as a service installable under the operating system proper.

See the screen shot (Fig 1) — under Windows 95 (you'll have to believe that it is Windows 95) for the details of the drive which is attached.

#### Problem postbag

● "I am relatively new to the world of networking and am helping in a part time job setting up a network. I currently run three Pentium PC's using Windows 95 peer to peer networking, but need to expand.

The final system will need to cope with around five PCs (all Pentiums with 16Mb or more), a modem for Internet (mainly email but occasional web browsing), and a variety of UNIX-based workstations (SUN,



DEC and so on). I am looking at a high-end Pentium or Pentium Pro for a server but have very little idea what network system should be running on the server, Novell looks preferable as it has the lower system requirements.

The fileserver needs to be kept within a budget of £2,500 including network software. Can Novell 4.1 handle workstations based on '95, NT and UNIX or would NT be the more realistic choice? Also, can I put the modem on the server and have everything access it through there? Please help!"

**Keith Rowe**

Firstly, we are looking at a networking system which essentially runs the TCP/IP protocol, which you'll have to use for the UNIX-type workstations. Once we've decided which protocol is being used, we decide which transport we want to run.

Currently, there are three eligible forms

of read-write filing system which run over TCP/IP: there is NFS (Sun's own — and extra under NT); FTP, in my opinion only valid for masochists; and Samba, a Lan Manager-like filing system which will run on the UNIX (and Sun and DEC) machines and allow them to connect to an NT machine which is publishing shared drives.

If you were to be running Novell Netware, you would have to pay quite a lot more for the NFS connectivity (which is also the case with NT) — in my opinion, it isn't worth it. Please also remember that the DEC machine might want to run DEC Pathworks, although there shouldn't be any problem with running Samba there, too.

Now that we've looked at the connection possibilities, what remains is the modem sharing. There are a couple of strategies which immediately spring to mind. The first is to use NT which will allow the sharing of a modem, but the modem cannot be started from any workstation; the server must explicitly request it.

Alternatively, you could look at a Linux server which would provide Samba shares which are visible to Windows machines, UNIX machines with Samba client software and so forth, and which can also share a modem over your network.

Whichever system you choose, you'll need a computer to start with, so why not begin by getting the computer and installing PCW's Linux CD which was our free cover-mounted CD-ROM on the May issue? You can then determine whether you like Linux and whether you're

comfortable with the operating system as a file server. If you do like it, I can guarantee that it will be stable and will out-perform most other file servers with the same specification.

● "I'm sure you've been asked this question hundreds of times before: I have a Pentium 75MHz system with 8Mb RAM and a 1Gb HDD. I am thinking of networking this (running Win95) with a very cheap PC. I would like the second PC to be diskless, using the Pentium as a file-server. The distance between the two PCs will be about 30m.

As I would like to keep the prices to a minimum, I am thinking of a 386SX 25 with 4Mb RAM. Would this be unbearably slow, — especially running Office Pro 95? What would be the effect on the Pentium's performance and, finally but most importantly, what is the best way to do all this?"

**Alexi Margo**

Windows 95 doesn't provide for remote booting and therefore a ROM in the network card would not influence the 386 to retrieve DOS code from the Pentium.

You can, however, achieve much the same effect by booting the 386 from a floppy disk containing Microsoft's DOS client software for Lan Manager and then loading the Windows software from the Pentium. The main drawback here is that you would have to provide for Windows on the 386 to perform swapping over the network.

This would, essentially, be incredibly slow. I also wouldn't dream of running Windows 3.1x in this configuration (possibly you might just get away with it if you were running a properly-tuned networking package like NT or Netware, or with a SCSI disk on the server), let alone Windows 95 on 4Mb of RAM.

I think the time has come to evaluate whether this 386 is upgradeable or not and to act accordingly, running DOS or Linux on it rather than the current, bloated, GUI operating systems and applications. Personally, I curse Office Pro 95 on a 32Mb 486-50 with 4Gb of disk space. I think you'd have to have the fire brigade in pretty regularly to peel you off the ceiling if you persisted in running that software on your hardware specification. My advice to you is to look at the 386 and see whether you can give it a motherboard transplant.

Once you have decided what to do, you can get a length of thin ethernet (it would probably work out cheaper than twisted pair) cabling and connect a couple of terminators onto the ends and then connect the machines up using a couple of networking cards.

A small point here; I would really suggest you get hold of multi-type networking cards. These seem to be available now at a very small premium and they allow you to connect them to either thin ethernet or twisted pair cabling.

● "I've a couple of questions I'd like to put to you. But first a bit of background: I've now mastered patching and compiling Linux kernels and have patched my 1.2.8 kernel with the IP\_MASQUERADING patch and have managed to get it working. FTP won't work at present but the Web does. It wasn't that difficult really.

My questions relate mainly to Samba. I've downloaded Samba and compiled it (rather than upgrading to a 1.3 kernel). It seems to work as far as I have tested it, but it does seem to need to run over TCP/IP. Is it possible for the Linux box to talk NetBIOS over the network rather than TCP/IP?

If TCP/IP is necessary this would cause problems as my own machine jumps frequently between Linux and Win95, and when it is running Win95, the TCP/IP stacks on the other machines cause these machines to grind to a halt (obviously they can't get through to my machine via TCP). If TCP/IP is necessary, is it possible to have two winsock stacks running simultaneously, or to run one stack that can cope with two different ranges of ip addresses as my machine would need both talk to the network and to my Internet provider. Any ideas?"

**Malcolm Holmes**

Since getting Linux to talk NETBIOS is not feasible (well, it's possible, just like anything else, but I doubt if anyone's done it), you must use Microsoft's own TCP/IP stack for Windows in order to talk TCP/IP to Linux.

Once you've done that, you use Winsock to connect as usual. On the other hand, you could use Linux as a gateway and firewall machine — you pay your money and you take your choice. ■

CiX is on 0171 296 6999, or you can join up without the normal £25 joining fee by setting your modem to dial 0171 296 1255 (n81), then, when asked if there is a special code, enter "friend".

#### PCW Contacts

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# Some do, some don't

**Stephen Rodda takes the Executive approach to fragmentation and defragmentation, and tries to quell some concerned response to a schools networking query.**

Some file systems fragment; some don't. When I first started using a defragmentation utility it was done in the foreground and took about a minute to run. This, of course, was \*COMPACT and it was on the BBC Micro. No wonder it took only one minute. All it had to do was to move less than 200Kb of data on a floppy disk. Nowadays, with very much larger hard disks, the spectre of disk fragmentation and defragmentation

utilities rears its ugly head.

Do I need to defragment? The answer to this question depends very much upon the operating system and how it is used.

Novell maintains that with the random access nature of any file server (since many users are likely to be demanding different data and files at the same time) defragmentation of a NetWare server is not necessary. Of course, we all know what advantages are to be gained by

this from Executive Software at

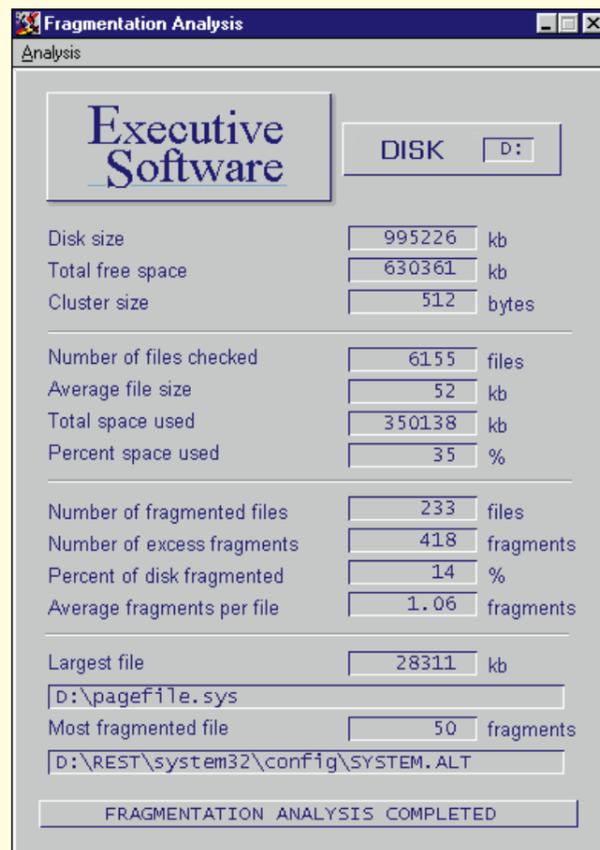
<http://www.execsoft.com>. I found that it was impossible to contact the Web site and opted for the download from CiX instead.

The company additionally supplies a file defragmentation utility for NTFS, but it appears that this requires constant upgrading between service packs. It has also been alleged that this firm is associated with the Church of Scientology. I downloaded the file and ran it on my NT setup. Look at Fig 1 to see what it found.

I put the results down to the fact that I have restored the system to a clean disk, as I wrote last month, and this together with the fact that most of the data itself resides on the file server, means that my NTFS machine's hard disk doesn't change very much and therefore doesn't get fragmented. I must say that after restoring the whole contents of the hard disk, disk operations seemed to run at breakneck pace, and since the hard disk was exactly the same model this is probably the reason — I'm sure the access time of the hard disk won't have changed.

I still feel, however, that whether a file server is running NetWare or Windows NT, or anything else as a file service platform, the fragmentation is less important than that of a workstation type of machine. The reason is that given by Novell, and what with elevator seeks and so on (where disk requests are sorted into sequential requests depending upon the address of the sector on the hard disk required, so that the heads don't thrash), the impact upon data transfer speeds through fragmentation should not be an issue.

defragmentation of a DOS FAT or HFS (Macintosh) drive using either the proper utilities or by backing up all files, deleting them and then restoring them. Now the jury appears still to be out under NTFS. Either we look at the network as a whole (in the case of a file server) or we consider just the user who has the computer as a desktop machine. Of course, NTFS becomes fragmented and there is a utility for measuring

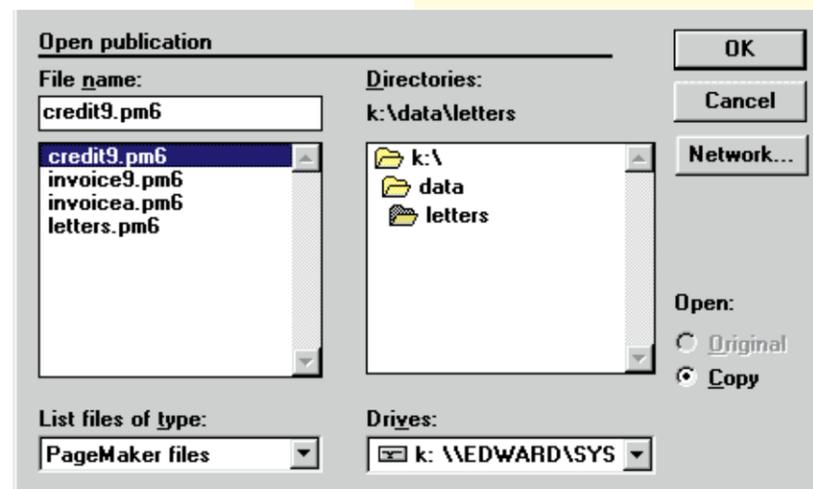


**Fig 1** Fragmentation Analysis Utility from Executive Software, showing fragmentation on my NTFS disk

## Network platform integration

Doing my usual check on the various versions of software which have come lately to the market, I am still amazed that PageMaker 6, although reasonably true to the format of the document used, still doesn't store PC and Macintosh files in a common format. I like to keep tabs on inter-platform compatibility and of course this is one of the things I wanted to check out. PageMaker 6 must still make a copy of the document when converting between platforms. Fig 3 shows that the open original radio button is greyed out and that the only choice here is to open a copy of the original document.

On the same sort of subject, I notice that NT Server's automatic conversion from Macintosh to PC format and back again has been disabled for Windows 95 clients. When a Macintosh user saved a Microsoft Word file as, say, "Letter to Fred Bloggs and Co 31-5-96" to a Macintosh share on NT Server, a Windows 3.x client would see the document as something like "Letter~1.doc" and Word would be able to open the document quite happily from a double-click on the document. Under Windows 95 as a client, the document's name appears as "Letter to Fred Bloggs and Co 31-5-96", but without the extension, so it's a case of guessing which program created it. The only solution I can currently see is to persuade the Macin-



**Fig 3** Pagemaker 6's file open dialogue box showing the "Original" radio button greyed out

tosh users (and this isn't easy, considering they've all had total filename freedom) to use the DOS extension convention and to save, say, PageMaker publications as .PM6, XPress documents as .QXD, Word documents as .DOC and so on. I hope Microsoft sorts this thing out in due course.

Pentium, and that a better processor than a P5-75 would be appropriate for the Win NT Server. However, I was not certain whether you were suggesting that Win NT Workstation would run satisfactorily on a 486DX100 equipped with 8Mb of RAM, or whether it should be a P5-75 or better processor.

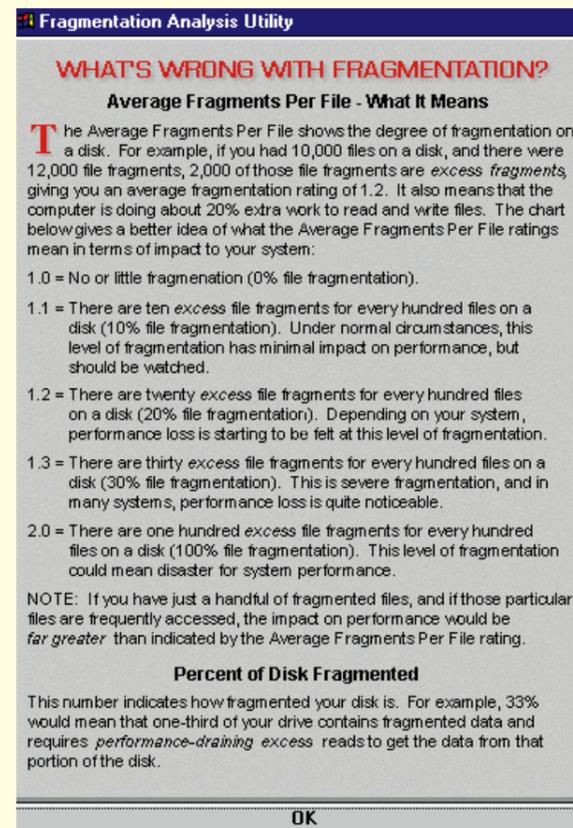
I have always assumed from what I have read that one ought to use a reasonably fast Pentium with Win NT Workstation in order to obtain adequate performance from it; e.g. a P5-90 or better with at least 16Mb, if not 32Mb, the specification increasing according to the applications one intends to run.

By the way, I am examining the best way forward for my own organisation, which will have a full complement of four staff, but using high-end systems in part."

**David Priestley**

Thank you for your comment. The suggestion that I made for the NT server — that a high-end 486 (such as a 486DX-100) will outperform a lower specified Pentium (such as a P75) — also holds good for the workstations. With the current availability of DX4-120 chips at reasonable prices, I feel that from a performance point of view it would, as you rightly suggest, not be a good idea to use a Pentium running slower than around 90MHz; so, yes, unless you're using code specifically optimised for the Pentium, stick with the 486 until Pentium prices come down — they will, especially with clone chip makers like AMD and Cyrix entering the fray.

We are also looking at educational machines, not at production machines. The reason I suggested NT Workstation is that, in my experience, NT outperforms Windows 95, and that running a single



### Other schools of thought about networking

My reply to Stuart Davies in the May issue seems to have stirred up a hornets' nest. Here are some of the letters which I have received: "I read your article addressing Stuart Davies' school networking query in the May PCW with interest. However, I was a little uncertain regarding one aspect of it. I note that a 486DX100-equipped machine can outperform a low-end

**Fig 2** This screenshot of the help file for the fragmentation utility explains the analysis in Fig 1

application (or two at a pinch) would not overtax the machine.

Of course, in a working environment, these machines would indeed benefit from more memory, but lessons tend to advance at a more relaxed pace than a working environment and therefore a small speed trade-off, rather than embroiling the school in a full lease contract, would be acceptable.

*"After reading your column in May PCW, I think you are the one to ask concerning Windows 95 networking. I have two questions:*

*1. I have a quad-speed EIDE CD-ROM drive in one of my computers. I can share this drive, and map a network drive to it. But how do I make Windows 95 think that this is a CD-ROM drive and not just a network drive? By tricking Windows 95 into thinking that it is a CD-ROM drive, I can achieve the following:*

*a) playing audio CDs on a remote computer; and*  
*b) using applications that require MSCDEX, such as most CD-ROM games.*

*2. When I click on the 'Access Control' tab from Network in the Control Panel, I can see that there is an option for 'User Level Control'. What is this? I can't find any reference to how to set up this facility.*

*Do I need Windows NT? (All my machines use 'Client for Microsoft Networks' from Windows 95) — I have heard that this will allow me to choose which users can access which shared resources, as opposed to giving a*

*resource a password."*

**Paul Oakham**  
**101731.2345@compuserve.com**

The first problem is that, as far as I am aware, (1a) is not possible without a remote control package. You could then, using something like Carbon Copy for Windows 95, get the machine to play an audio CD simply by taking control of it from the remote machine. On the other hand, an audio CD should play automatically when inserted, but if you particularly like the CD, I suppose you could get the remote machine to play it again (and again) with a remote control package.

Not being a particular games player (I get enough excitement playing with hardware on my machines), I'm afraid I don't really understand the requirement. Is it that the games software actually requires the MSCDEX in order to fool it that there's a CD loaded before it will run over a network connection? If so, then you'll have to pester the manufacturers. It's more likely that the game hits the MSCDEX extension directly, rather than bothering with niceties such as DOS's own filing system, so you'll probably be in the same boat even if you do manage to load MSCDEX anyway.

The user level control you mention in the networking control panel in section (2) of your letter is available only to Novell NetWare clients, and requires a NetWare server to be installed on the network. This server does all the user validation required. The only ways to achieve this

are either by setting up a NetWare server or by running Windows NT as you suggest.

*"I've just read your reply to the perplexed school computer manager in May's PCW. I must say, that while I normally respect your magazine's advice and bow to you as a network expert, I sincerely hope the poor guy doesn't take your advice.*

*Educational networks are a slightly different breed from your standard business setup and they operate in significantly different ways. Firstly, you have far more users than machines. In my own school there are over a thousand users and a network of 50 machines. You can't expect (as you would in a business) that because Sally is using the computer in that office today, she'll be using the only one using it. The system has to be set up so that PCs are user-independent. In my own school, everyone has their own area on the hard disk and these areas are secure from other users; students can log on to the system at any point in the school and get to their own (password protected) area.*

*Secondly, in business, security against users is not a huge concern. But in schools, if your system is not completely tamper-proof, some eager beaver will be rooting around in system areas or, even worse, trying deliberately to bring the whole thing down for a laugh. Alternatively, they will use the system to play lots of games and this is not really what it was bought for, was it?*

*Thirdly, when I describe myself as a*

*network manager, this is by way of a secondary description: I spend most of my time teaching — this is what the school pays me for. Network management has to take about one or two hours a week at most and therefore I place a high value on the support I get from my supplier. I haven't got time to take apart all my 286s, insert new boards and set up a network all on my own — not if I want to stay sane. Most school network managers feel the same because schools are so pushed for cash these days they can't afford to employ people who spend all their days tinkering with the kit.*

*Lastly, schools have no capital — they are in effect given running expenses each year. In good times they can save out of these running expenses to finance big purchases but you must have noticed that these are not good times for schools.*

*Teachers are being made redundant, and experienced teachers are being pushed into early retirement (newly qualified teachers are cheaper) because there is no spare cash. That's why many schools are having to go towards leasing if they want reasonable kit."*

**Phil Hardcastle**

Thank you for your interest. I note your points and would like to defend my suggestions.

The first aspect you mention is "hot-desking", which basically is the industry term for having fewer computers and desks than computer users. The thing with Microsoft Windows 95 and, indeed, with NT is that each user will have their own area on the file server in which to store files — naturally. This is what file servers are all about. Indeed, NT and Windows 95 specifically allow separate desktops to be stored for *each user* so this will allow hot-desking with no problem. Furthermore, NT has even better support: one's desktop will follow one through a whole organisation over any number of NT machines.

Your second point makes differences between the security needed by a business and an educational site. The thing about business is that in some concerns, as you suggest, security may not be an issue but I think you are over-exaggerating a school's need for security as opposed to that of a large organisation. At any one time there must be thousands of confidential documents stored on a large business's file server to which the management would not want just any member of the company to have access. Security is therefore paramount,

and only by having either knowledge of an administrative login and password, or direct and unsupervised access to the file server, could anyone break into the system. This naturally follows for schools as well as for the corporate sector, as does unauthorised access to the system areas.

Apart from some specially-designed front-end to Novell NetWare I can conceive of nothing which would make the administration of a file server as easy as that which is already built in to NT Server. Believe me, file servers are as impregnable to attack as the computer room or their passwords. It's as easy as that; you need no specially-crafted software nor hardware to secure an NT (or, come to that, a NetWare) file server.

Thirdly, server administration is not a wholly automatic process. You have to change backup tapes and so on, and to purge outdated files. At the end of an academic year, you will have to remove the logins and files of those who have left the school or college, and at the beginning of each academic year you will have to generate new accounts for that year's intake. Adding a network card to a machine is a trivial matter in comparison, best carried out during the holidays, perhaps with help from a computer-literate parent or two. The somewhat extreme reference you make to "spend(ing) all their days tinkering with the kit" is, of course, a knee-jerk reaction. Once a network adaptor or motherboard is installed, it stays there. I concede that you can always find people who will willingly fit this model, but now that we have left the pioneering days behind, computers are serious business machines with hardware stability to match and this sort of involvement is neither desirable nor necessary.

My reasoning behind the advice not to lease is that I felt the upgrade to the equipment could be financed out of what would, in effect, have been one year's leasing fees. To this effect, no new money would have needed to have been found — what they were probably prepared to pay in leasing in the first year would almost definitely have provided the upgrades required for that year. Remember that leasing can be the financial equivalent of trying to fill the bath with the plug out. ■

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# The great bathtub curve mystery

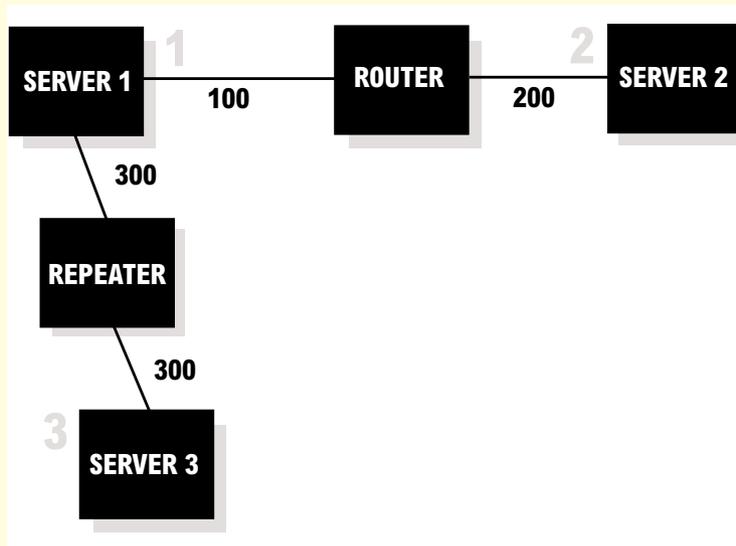
**A bad case of “stiction” nearly got the better of Stephen Rodda. This is how he restored order...**

**H**ard disks have only a limited life, you know. Mine did. Or, rather died. It must be about time for me to have what seems like my annual rant about backups and so on, so consider yourselves ranted at. I had a case of “stiction” (a combination of friction and sticking), characterised by the drive not spinning up when power is applied. Luckily it was under warranty (a DEC OEM warranty of five years) and was replaced next day.

## Bathtub blues

Unluckily, the replacement suffered from bathtub curve failure. A bathtub curve is the shape of a bath cut down the long way, half-way between the taps. You start at the tap end and graph failure of new units in pieces per thousand or so against time. At the tap end, fairly many new units will fail. As the faulty ones die, there's a fairly level area from the plughole up to where the bath starts sloping at the other end. This is where the equipment fails due to wear and old age.

No sooner had the engineer gone (around ten o'clock in the morning) and I had started to format the replacement, than I heard some funny noises coming from the disk. I wandered over to my Frankenstein machine which was formatting it, and received the dreaded Adaptec error screen, telling me the disk had failed. I switched the machine off and tried again.



**Fig 1** *How to stop servers complaining about the network numbers of the other servers [see “We’ve got your number”]*

This time it was better. The disk not only refused to come online, but after a while it powered down. I telephoned DEC again, telling them the disk had died. “There’s nothing we can do about it today,” they said. “We do warranty repairs with a day’s turnaround.” “But this was reported yesterday,” I howled over the telephone. “No, the report you made yesterday has been dealt with.” “By giving me a drive which died within ten minutes.” “Possibly so, sir.”

The moral of this story is that tomorrow I shall nail the DEC engineer down and force-feed her or him with coffee until the drive has finished formatting and verifying.

Luckily I only had stiction, and I could just do a couple of extra backups to make

quite sure. Remember — there’s no such thing as too many backups. Of course, all the live data was on the NetWare server, mainly because I’m too lazy to move it, so the NT Server and Linux machine is the one that’s out of commission. Actually, there’s a secondary drive in it. Let’s see if that’s bootable. No it isn’t. So, here I am, using an RM EISA machine. It’s a piece of luck that there’s a spare. I shall tell you what happens to the restoration of the data and the fitting of the new drive in a few lines, and you

will be a lot better off than I, since you will know in a few moments. I shall have to wait another 20 hours or so.

## Dear diary

Today. The hard disk has been replaced and formatted. Now I’m blessed if I know where I can find drivers for my CD. I suppose even if I found them, I’d have forgotten how to install them. Windows 95 and NT just don’t need all this. Oh, I forgot to mention *why* I need drivers for the CD. I need drivers for the CD so that I can install Windows NT so that I can use the backup routine to restore from the tape drive. In the end, I went and stole an Apple CD, stuffed it onto the SCSI interface and ran EZSCSI from Adaptec.

Twenty minutes later, my machine was running Windows NT and restoring data to the new hard disk. Within the hour, I’d rebooted finally and everything had been restored perfectly. ➔

## Never mind the internet, here's the intranet

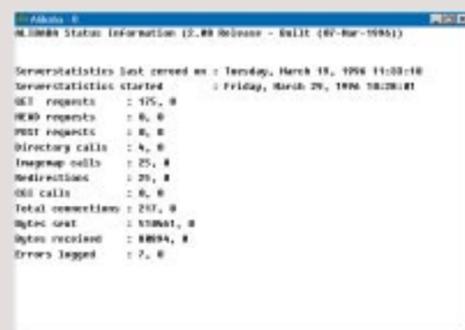
Since the most recent buzzword seems to be "intranet", I thought I'd have a wander along that path.

The first question which posed itself was, "What exactly is an intranet?" I define an intranet as a LAN or a WAN operating under TCP/IP and providing some or all of the facilities available on the Internet itself.

Now, I don't have a lot of use for local FTP since all machines can (sometimes with a little jiggery-pokery) talk to

all other machines on my network. Nor do I find life not worth living without Telnet.

Something which seems to be quite useful, however, is a local World Wide Web server (or perhaps I should call it an Office Wide Web). This allows you to test World Wide Web pages without



having to go online all the time. Most of the stuff you need from day to day would be available simply with a LAN connection, loading pages manually with File and Open.

Sometimes, however, it's nice to be able to test CGI scripts and image maps without going to the trouble of uploading the pages to a Web site and trying from there. To that end, I have looked at LeanHTTP (a simple server with no scripting abilities) and at Alibaba, which is built for Windows 95 and NT. LeanHTTP, which works well,

really just changes your home page to a local version and can't really be recommended for any other reason than it will allow a Macintosh to access HTML files on a Windows 95 machine. Alibaba, however, on <ftp://ftp.eunet.co.at/pub/vendor/csm/alibaba/alibaba.exe>, is a very different kettle of fish. Be prepared for a 4Mb download. I used an ftp agent to get it, since it was too slow from The Netherlands, so I'm sure it's a reasonably slow site. It's currently running on our LAN and I'll be reporting on how we get on with it in a future column.

Fig 2 Alibaba's statistics screen

## We've got your number

I am often asked about network numbers under Novell's NetWare, and how to stop servers complaining about the network numbers of the other servers. Remember this simple rule: you can't refer to the same piece of wire carrying the same protocol by different numbers. In this case, "the same piece of wire" includes two segments bridged together or an extended network containing a repeater. Fig 1 (page 323) may help to explain; for clarity, workstations have been omitted.

Server one has two networks attached to it. Firstly, it has the segment numbered 100, which is connected to a router. This could be any form of router, but let's just say that this is a connection to a kilostream link to an office in another part of the country, which is connected to server 2. Now note that the segment which appears after the router is numbered 200 — that is to say, differently from that which goes into the other end of the router.

Note also that server 1 is connected to a very long LAN which will not reach all the machines on the site. The network administrator has added a network repeater which has extended the effective length. This repeater is transparent to the server and server 3 will see that server 1 is calling the segment by its original number. Installing server 3 we have to be careful to use the same number as server 1 for that segment. If we were to add another LAN segment to server 3, we could not use 100 or 200 again, since these numbers have already been used on the same LAN.

## Xen and the art of network upgrading

"For the past year we have run a very small PC network. I asked the local Novell/Apricot dealer to design a suitable network for our purposes. This consisted of:

- 1 x Apricot Xen PC Pentium 75, 8Mb RAM, 1Gb hard disk.
- 2 x Apricot LS Pro, AMD 486 33MHz, 8Mb RAM, 230Mb hard disk.
- 1 x HP LaserJet 4MP+ printer.
- 1 x Epson dot matrix printer.

The Xen PC is the server, running NetWare 3.12 and Tapeware backup. The LS Pros run Win95 3.11, and on a daily basis use MS Office Pro, PageMaker 5, and Access for Windows accounting.

I have subsequently added an Intergraph TD4 PC workstation (2 x Pentium 100, 64Mb RAM, OGLZ graphics, 1Gb HD, operating under Windows NT Workstation 3.5). All are connected by 3Com Ethernet boards and coaxial cable.

The Intergraph drives an HP DesignJet 200 plotter, a 4Mb DAT drive via SCSI, and primarily runs Pro-Engineer 3D modelling software, MS Office Pro and PageMaker 5. Occasionally it needs to access the accounting package.

We are effectively networked to share data files and printers. We have no in-house anorak, but most of us have long experience of Windows since version 1.0, a year of NT, and virtually no experience of NetWare.

It is now time to add a couple more workstations to the network (probably LS550s), mainly to use the accounting

package and MS Office. I have been receiving conflicting advice from suppliers, who should know more than we do, but I sometimes wonder. My questions are:

1. With NetWare, I have been told we cannot use the Xen as anything other than a server and for network backup duties. Is this true? It would clearly be helpful to have this machine as another workstation.
2. If we dumped NetWare and plumped for NT Server, what are the pros and cons? If we did, would you recommend Win95 or NT for the workstations?
3. Are there any other cost-effective solutions which would make the server available as a workstation?
4. If not, is there any advantage to updating 3.12 to 4.0?
5. Finally, I use a Xen-PCm at home, using most of the software mentioned above, and would like to be able to log on to the network after hours to access the accounting package and other files. The Xen has 16Mb RAM, a Pentium 120 and 1Gb HD, and runs Windows 3.11.

Which remote control software would you recommend, assuming MS Remote Access could be bettered? Again, should I run NT or Win95?"

Tony Young

Phew! I'll answer the questions in the order you posed them:

1. Firstly, whoever told you that the Xen can only be used as a server was guilty of feeding you utter rubbish. It's a computer, just like anything else (albeit over-specified for running NetWare). I also presume

that whoever sold you a Pentium as a server also specified the machine with an IDE or EIDE hard disk (was that scornful enough, by the way?). Really, it does make me cross that people specify the wrong sort of computer all the time. At least when a parrot is taught to speak, you know that whatever comes out of its beak is not going to be blessed with anything as dangerous as original thought.

2. Since NetWare seems to work in your installation, I wouldn't suggest changing it now. I'm of the "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" school of thought. Windows 95 and Windows NT make perfect clients for NetWare, so there's really no problem with your current installation. With the current specification of workstation you have, it's difficult to recommend any operating system other than Windows 3.11. If you were to put another 8 or 16Mb in the workstations, I'd suggest you go for NT Workstation. On these machines, it would be faster than Windows 95.

3. Certainly there are. Just swap hard disks between one of the workstations and the server, and reconfigure (if necessary) — not forgetting to make a note of the settings first, before you open the machines up. You've then got a faster workstation and a server which still goes as fast as before. My NetWare server for four machines is a 386DX-20: you just don't need anything faster if you're only sharing files.

Another possibility is to see if there are any second-hand machines available for use as a server. An old Compaq Deskpro 386 DX with 8Mb of RAM would be ideal, as long as it is capable of taking your exist-

ing hard disk. Even if it isn't, hard disks are cheap enough that you could (possibly) upgrade to a SCSI hard disk for the server. (I'll bet these shysters sold you an IDE disk, I really do...)

4. There's no advantage to changing your network operating system until it breaks. One possible cause is that you might exceed the user count. Have you got a five-user installation, and do the printers log on to the network through JetDirect cards? Using one of the printers hanging off one of the workstations frees a Novell seat if things are getting tight.

If they do, and you want to, then I'd suggest first that you change your dealer. The one which specified the system for you clearly can't find its corporate bottom with both hands. It would have been better for you to have two faster workstations and a slower server — and they would have made more money.

If you find that you run out of networking connections, there are two possible avenues you can explore. The first, and more expensive, would be to upgrade the server to NT Server (or Workstation, since that allows ten connections). Remember, however, you'll need an altogether beefier machine to run it. The other possibility would be to see if you can get another copy of NetWare 3.12 which allows more users if it's necessary, but you should be able to do this by buying from someone who's retiring their old NetWare system.

5. A remote control system isn't the same as a remote client system. I'm not sure whether you're really clear on that point. If you only want to grab a few files for work at

home, I don't think there's anything wrong with the MS Remote Access server and client which comes with Windows 95 or NT. Windows for Workgroups 3.11 on your home machine should be able to communicate adequately with one of the machines on the network for file transfer. There's no point in spending money on a flashier product which would only do what you're already capable of doing for free.

If you decide to upgrade your home machine's operating system, do remember that more memory would not go amiss.

## Sharing is such sweet sorrow

"I wish to set up two computers to share files between them via a modem link. I have tried to set it up using Dial up Networking in Windows 95 but failed miserably. Could you describe how to do it? Otherwise I shall end up having to shell out an enormous £120 for LapLink 95 to do the job."

P.S. Both machines run Windows 95."

Ian Powell

The problem here is that you only get the Remote Access Client with Windows 95. If you need a Remote Access Server, then you need the Plus! Pack. This supplies the Remote Access Server, and your troubles will be over.

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