after hours: *on line*

After some serious downloading of useful software this month, Terry Pinnell tackles a tarantula and finds some real viruses and bugs

Downloading software must be one of the most popular activities of Web users. There's so much good stuff out there that finding it is a serious challenge. It's even harder because the gems are mixed thoroughly with mediocre and even bug-ridden programs that, superficially, can appear equally attractive. Ultimately, of course, it's a matter of trying it out yourself, on your own PC and Windows configuration. But recommendations can be useful, so we'll offer some of those occasionally. Apart from suppliers, there are hundreds of sites that list software and allow direct download, with and without their own opinions of the software, and we'll continue to cover a few of these too.

Desirable downloads

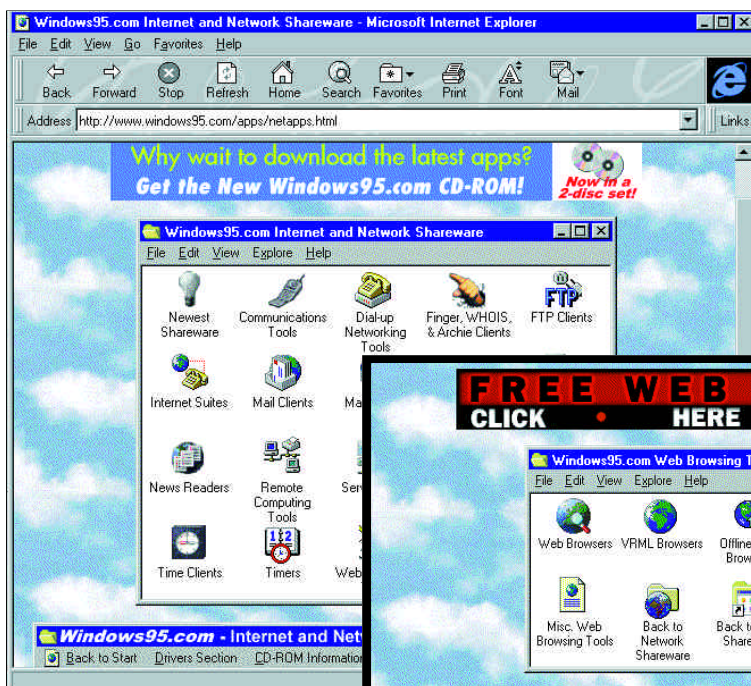Two excellent sources we've mentioned before are windows95.com and tucows. Both make it easy to find and download what you're after. The Slaughterhouse is another, with sections for various categories, such as off-line Web readers. Windows 95 Annoyances is a firm candidate for your favourites folder or bookmarks file if you're a serious Windows 95 user. As its name implies, it's concerned primarily with bugs and fixes rather than new software. This is where you'll find clever tricks of all sorts, such as how to rename your Recycle Bin or change your screen resolution without rebooting. Bugs and intermittent crashes are often rightly blamed on video drivers, so it's also sensible to take advantage of any updates from the home pages of manufacturers such as Diamond and Matrox. If you can excuse its immodesty, you might also try the site that reckons it's 'The Very Best of Windows 95 Downloads.'

www.windows95.com
www.ukonline.co.uk/tucows/
index.html
www.slaughterhouse.com
www.matrox.com/mgaweb/
products.htm
www.diamondmm.com/
www.totalweb.co.uk/pathogen/

Spiders

Your reaction to a large spider suddenly scuttling across the duvet towards you, as you doze off reading the latest *What PC?* (about Web browsers, naturally), probably depends on where you live. Happily, the UK is relatively free of black widows, tarantulas and the like, so they are not likely to be fatal unless they make you spill your nightcap over the electric blanket. But, in more rational moments, you have to acknowledge that these eight-legged critters have got their fascinating points, and the Arachnology site is ▶

getting s t a r t e d

In six easy steps...

1 Install a fast modem on your PC (preferably 28.8 or 36.6Kbits/s).

2 For full Internet access, open an account with one of the many Internet Service Providers (ISPs), within local call range.

3 If you can afford the extra cost, extend your scope by opening another account with a general on-line service provider, within local call range. You may be able to combine **2** and **3** with a single provider, but separate services generally provide better performance.

4 Install software for browsing the Web and using other Net and on-line services, plus off-line utilities.

5 'Internet connectivity kits' are available which package the above elements into one bundle.

6 Revise your phone budget and free up a lot of hard drive space.

Glossary
popular gobbledegook

FTP	File Transfer Protocol; an 'FTP site' is a source for downloading files.
HTML	Hypertext Mark-up Language; for making Web pages.
IRC	Inter Relay Chat; using the Net like a CB radio.
IP	Internet Protocol; an addressing system.
ISP	Internet Service Provider; sometimes confusingly abbreviated to IP.
JPEG	Joint Photographic Experts Group; popular graphics file format (JPG).
PPP	Point-to-Point Protocol; communications program.
SLIP	Serial Line Internet Protocol; another program for communications.
UUE	UUEncoded files used with Internet News Groups.
URL	Uniform Resource Locator; Web addressing system.
Winsock	Windows Socket; standard interface between applications (like Netscape) and networking protocols (like PPP).

Contacts
major on-line services and ISPs

Pipex 01223 250100
CompuServe 0800 289378
CIX 0181 296 9666
Microsoft 0800 750800
AOL 0800 376 5432
UK Online 01749 333300
Demon 0181 371 1234
Pinnacle 01293 613686
Direct Connection 0181 297 2200
BT 0345 776666
Cityscape 01223 566950
Global Internet 0181 957 1003

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where to study them. Arachnids are spiders, scorpions, mites and ticks, and they're all here in this compendium for experts and curious alike. Professionals (those presumably with 'Arachnologist' on their passport) will be in high heaven, as this page gives them access to conference news, access specimen collections and DNA databases, read their colleagues' publications, and so on.

For the likes of you and me, one of the most interesting pages covers poison, bites, diseases, and phobias. But the place to head for is the link that takes you to around a hundred still and moving images. Just be careful not to visit before bedtime.
dns.ufsia.ac.be/Arachnology/

Inst-all and Favesave
In pursuing worthwhile software, don't ignore private or small business home pages. For instance, try Jason Ozin's page, Jaysoft, where you can get a simple but very handy little utility called Inst-all. Providing that you remember to have it running, it records all those out-of-the-way changes to your system files when you install new software – and it's free.

FaveSave is another neat program for saving Internet shortcuts ('Favorites') for Microsoft Internet Explorer from within any Windows 95 application, using the clipboard. It can be downloaded from the home page of its author, Nigel Mercier, or from the MSIE conference if you're a CIXen.
www.users.dircon.co.uk/~jaysoft/
www.creativelement.com/
win95ann/intro.html
dialspace.dial.pipex.com/
nmercier/index.htm
www.conitech.com/windows/

Cells Alive
Strange-looking citizens of the cellular world are pictured here, from viruses to bacteria and from blood cells to human sperm. They're fascinating enough and so too are the pages at the Crystals Alive link, a collection of colourful 'landscapes' produced by polarisation microscopy of various

common substances. But the site also contains 3D computer animation, which you can see with your QuickTime video viewer or alternative helper. For example, take those scary E. coli bugs that have tragically claimed so many lives recently; thanks to digital time-lapse recording you can see them tumbling and twirling as they feed and move from place to place.
www.comet.chv.va.us/quill/

A beer too many?
One of the key motivations of many private home page publishers is clearly to impress anyone who strays onto the site. Often the target is a prized collection of some sort, such as Florida student Dave Hubbard's 603 different types of beers. He seems a bit light on his UK entries though, with only John Smith's Tadcaster Brewery Bitter. And from the date of the last update, it looks as if Dave had a quiet Christmas Eve.
bleach.eng.usf.edu/beerlist.
netscape.html

Feedback welcomed:
You can e-mail Terry Pinnell at 102404.2400@compuserve.com or send your comments to us at *What PC?*: WhatPC@vnu.co.uk