Cover charge

Terence Green charges *PCW* with negligence over the shoddy representation of OS/2 on our Cover CD. Why not try it with Java, he says. And he gets verbal with Warp 4.

This month's big question is, where did they put the OS/2 stuff on the CD? Congratulations to anyone who managed to find the material on the December issue free cover disc! And sincere comiserations to those who found the Netscape OS/2 beta
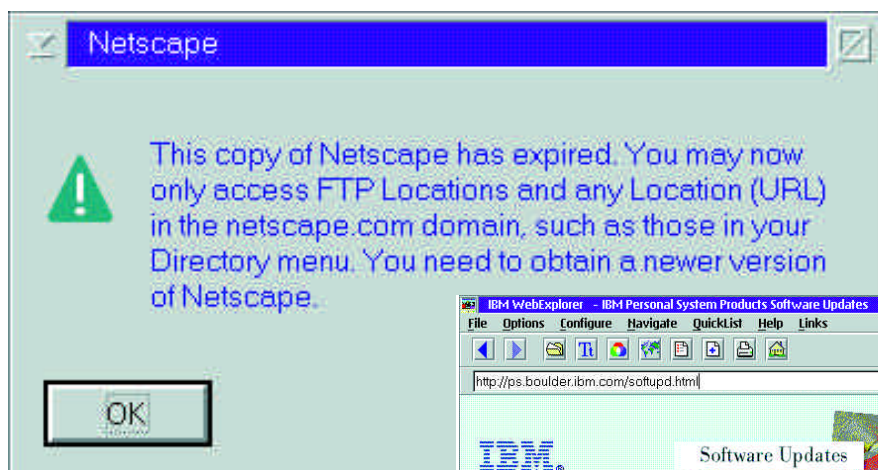
CD-ROM team tell me they are working on making the CD directory structure a little bit more logical.

Speaking of which, if anyone has managed to install and run the Cover CD software with OS/2, do tell. It seems to be hard-wired for Windows users. I had the

Adobe Acrobat Reader for OS/2 and Netscape for OS/2 (both beta) installed but couldn't manage to get the Cover CD software to use them, or to install properly in a Win-OS/2 window.

Eventually I found and ran the Windows help file from the CD and discovered that I could use a web browser to access the HTML file RESOURCE.HTM in <cd drive>:\HTML\RES. Sadly this uses frames so it's a no-go area for Web Explorer. And then it turns out that only a fraction of the OS/2 files on the CD turn up in the HTML listing anyway.

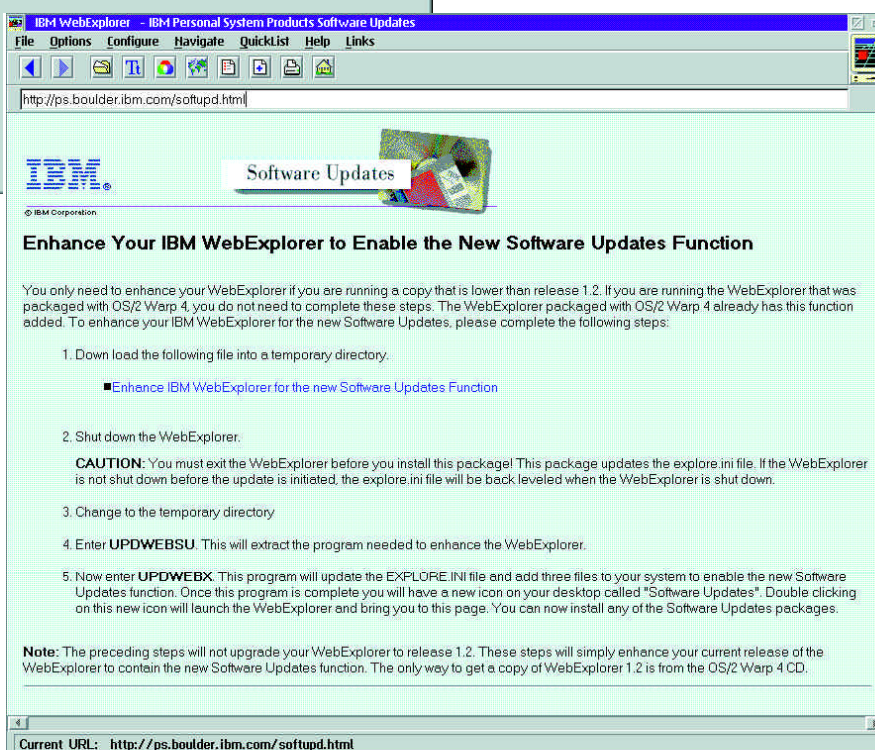I guess the cover CD software works okay in Windows 95 with a late-model

Above Sorry, but the Netscape for OS/2 Beta 1a had a hidden timeout set for 30th November, 1996, which renders its inclusion on the previous cover CD a little pointless
Right Web Explorer lives on! But it's only in maintenance mode now. Still, the Warp 3 versions can be enhanced to automatically install updates

on the January Cover CD, only to discover that it had just timed out. In future I had better read the licence agreement a little more carefully so as not to miss the obvious BLOCK CAPITALS timeout warning.

The location of the OS/2 files for the December issue turns out to be in <Cover CD>:\HTML\RES\RESOURCE\HANDS\ OS2. It's obvious really, but the PCW

browser, but what about OS/2, Windows 3.1, Windows NT 3.51, Linux, Macintosh, Amiga, Atari, Unix and so on? Isn't this exactly why there's so much interest in Java? One binary executable — many platforms supported.
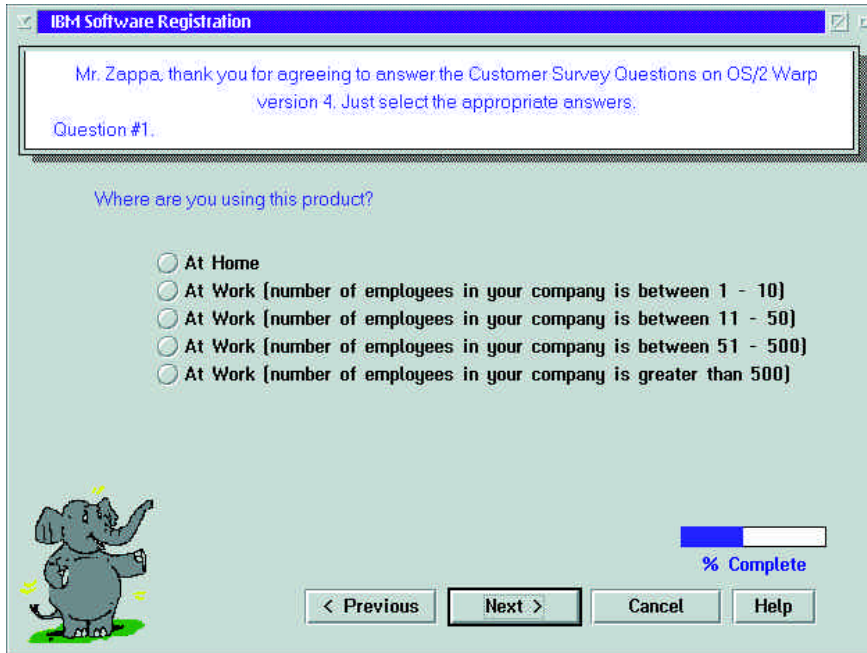
Java brouhaha

Java doesn't have to be trivial, and trivial doesn't necessarily imply useless. If Corel can build an Office suite in Java, the PCW Cover CD could be given a Java front-end and made accessible to all PCW readers.

Seek out the Corel Office Java suite preview page at http://officeforjava.corel.com/preview/ for a view of more complex Java applications than the usual animations. However, it's pre-release, it's on the other side of the transatlantic pipe, and it really does need a high-bandwidth internet connection, ISDN 128Kbps or better.

But, what about the Cover CD? It's in your CD-Drive on a relatively fast I/O bus and bandwidth would not be a problem. Java-based Cover CD software would make it easier for everyone to enjoy the CD regardless of their chosen browser, operating system or operating system version. Grounds for a new approach?

There are a number of ways of running Java applets in OS/2 Warp 3, none of them obvious and most requiring large downloads. For legal and practical reasons you'll need to download Java support from IBM. Practically speaking, the Java OS/2 situation changes faster than the lead time of the OS/2 column, so check the latest situation at www.ibm.com/java or browse to the IBM Java Centre at http://ncc.hursley.ibm.com/java/ and the IBM Alphaworks site www.alphaworks.ibm.com/ .

The easiest way to run Java applets is to use Warp 4. If you need to use a browser to navigate to and run a Java applet on a web server, you have to use Netscape for OS/2 because the Web Explorer 1.2 in Warp 4 doesn't do Java. Weird or what? The Java-enabled Web Explorer demo has also since vanished from the IBM Web sites. Another possibility might be to run the Java-enabled 16-bit Netscape Navigator for Windows 3.1 which Netscape was threatening to ship around mid-November.

Netscape for OS/2 should be in production by the new year. The unfortunate timeout problem with the cover-mounted Netscape beta is a consequence of the speed of change associated with internet

The famous dancing elephant is an old IBM in-joke and has nothing to do with stamping out wild ducks, burning or not

technologies, so while I realise people appreciate the cover software, I'll be more circumspect with beta selections in future.

Speak to me

In early November the UK version of Warp 4 arrived and I replaced the US version I had been running since late September. In an earlier column I waffled on about difficulties with the US speech model in the Merlin beta. To my surprise, the US version handled speech navigation and basic dictation really rather well straight out of the box. Soon I was blithely issuing commands to my computer and receiving an instant response. This system I can heartily recommend to any parents of teenagers.

The one thing that can turn Warp 4 speech enablement into a real drag is insufficient memory. Memory prices have edged up yet again but I reckon I'd still fork out for the extra memory to have at least 24Mb in a Pentium 100MHz system for the voice capabilities.

Warp's Java capabilities are discussed above and the feature set was listed in a previous column where I enthused about the interface, which I really like. The trays on the Status Bar are very useful. Drag and drop anything onto the status bar and it will open or start from there. Add extra trays by right-clicking on the status bar for the popup menu and change trays by clicking on the bar. Click the box to the far right of the status bar to change from time to date to timer. A little clock appears.

Warp 4 networking is much better integrated now and easier to set up too. One thing you need to do during install if you plan to use the internet and you don't have a networked PC with a network card is to be sure to choose the NO NETWORK ADAPTER option when asked to select a card. And if you run any version of Warp on a small network using NETBEUI to peer with other OS/2 and Windows PCs and the login process takes an age, reduce the timeout which is more appropriate to an enterprise network. Open MPTS in System Setup and opt to configure the LAN Adapter and Protocol Support. Select IBM OS/2 NETBIOS in the Current Configuration window and click EDIT. Change the Query Timeout (default 2,000) to 1,000 or 500.

Warp surprises

Warp's not perfect — it can go wrong, and sometimes it's difficult to know where to start. Customer service is always worth a try but you need to register, which is one way of turning off that irritating elephant. The other is to put up with it — it appears five times in the first 40 days, after which it won't return until a year has passed when it presents you with a customer satisfaction survey! Free end-user support covers basic installation issues for the first 30 days from a 24x7 call centre. After that you have to pay, but if you're up and running you can try the internet support. Alternatively there is a HelpFax service. Coverage varies — there are four HelpFax lines covering Europe.
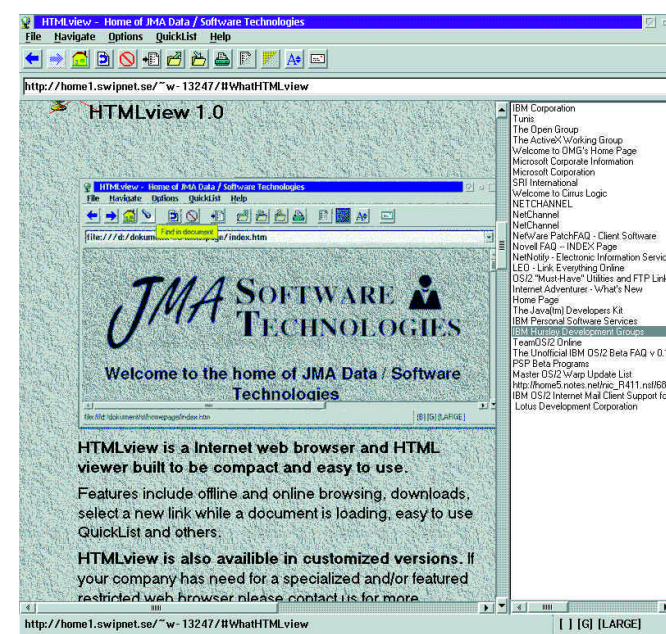

Some OS/2 showstoppers are quite easy to resolve. Several problems can cause the Warp WorkPlace Shell to hang or to run so slowly as to make no difference. Warp 4 is much better than Warp 3 in this respect, but not immune. Typical problems are installation hangs, driver glitches, and some Windows programs. It's become much easier to troubleshoot OS/2 since Warp 3 and Warp 4 takes it a bit further. The following applies to all Warp versions unless otherwise stated.

If the Warp 4 install program stalls, reboot and press ALT-F1 when the OS/2 block cursor appears. Select F6 to disable Hardware Detection and cross your fingers.

If Warp installs but fails to display, or if it mangles the display, do the ALT-F1 thing and select the return to VGA option. If it works okay in standard 640 by 16 colour VGA, there's a problem with the SuperVGA driver or the selected resolution or perhaps it was incorrectly detected.

If, after working properly, Warp displays the graphic backdrop when rebooted but then hangs, either displaying or trying to display the desktop, there might be a network problem or some other process or thread might have started and hung unseen.

Reboot and wait until the backdrop and clock appear. Then hold down Left-Ctrl and Left-Shift and F1 simultaneously until the desktop icons appear to stop programs from autostarting.

Alternatively, take the long-term option and edit CONFIG.SYS. Reboot and ALT-F1 and this time choose the Maintenance Desktop. Open a windowed OS/2 session and start the E.EXE editor. Load CONFIG.SYS and edit out the word PROGRAMS from the line beginning "SET AUTOSTART=". This stops programs which were running when the system was rebooted from restarting.

A better option is to add the line

`SET RESTARTOBJECTS=STARTUPFOLDERSONLY`

to CONFIG.SYS. RESTARTOBJECTS defaults to YES if the SET command is absent form CONFIG.SYS but this can result in a program being started twice on reboot, once from the Startup folder and once again because it was running when Warp was rebooted.

Finally, Warp 4 has a new feature which enables you to kill a process from the desktop. Add the line

`SET KILLFEATUREENABLED=ON`

to CONFIG.SYS. Now when you encounter a hung program press the Ctrl while clicking on the Window List (the little cascaded window icon on the Start Bar) and a list of running threads will pop up. If you click on one of the threads, you are offered the option to kill it.