

the newsletter of Tarragon Solutions

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Windows 7 to include XP Mode for legacy applications

Over the last couple of months I have mentioned on several occasions that, with the forthcoming Windows 7, Microsoft are doing all they can to avoid the real and perceived problems that caused Vista to be less than a resounding success for them.

The latest announcement is that Windows 7 will include an "XP Compatibility" feature that will allow applications designed for Windows XP and earlier to be used without change under the new operating system. One of the big complaints about Vista was the difficulty of using older applications.

Windows XP Mode, as the feature will be called, is implemented using Microsoft's virtualization software, Windows Virtual PC. According to a posting on The Windows Blog by Scott Woodgate of Microsoft, "Windows XP Mode is specifically designed to help small businesses move to Windows 7. Windows XP Mode provides you with the flexibility to run many older productivity applications on a Windows 7-based PC."

He goes on to say, "all you need to do is to install suitable applications directly in Windows XP Mode which is a virtual Windows XP environment running under Windows Virtual PC. The applications will be published to the Windows 7 desktop and then you can run them directly from Windows 7".

GeoCities: The End is Nigh

Back in the mid-nineties, a phenomenon began in California: a website that allowed users to create and maintain their own pages of information. The first of the social networking sites, Beverly Hills Internet changed its name to GeoCities and became a legend. That legend has now been condemned to death.

Yahoo!, which bought GeoCities for around \$3billion at the height of the dot-com bubble in 1999, has announced its closure, scheduled for later in 2009.

Geocities was the Facebook or Twitter of its time but started to wane in popularity after the Yahoo! acquisition. The new owners started to apply rules, including claiming ownership of all material placed on the site, and these upset many of the users. In recent years, the introduction of newer and more flexible social networks has meant that GeoCities got left behind.

Gradually, the groundbreakers of the internet era, such as Netscape and GeoCities, are disappearing.

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US Army Goes to War on an Apple

For thousands of years, seemingly innocent inventions have been adopted and adapted by people more interested in their possibilities for military use. This process continues and the latest piece of leisure equipment to have been converted for battlefield use seems to be the Apple iPod Touch.

According to a recent issue of Newsweek, this version of the iPod is proving invaluable as a means of keeping US soldiers in Afghanistan in touch with intelligence resources and each other.

They can download images from surveillance drones, obtain translations of local information and even receive intelligence about a local area by uploading a photograph of a street sign.

The iPods are also being used to relay to remote villagers pre-recorded video messages from local Afghan



leaders while an application running on the device offers translation of spoken and written Arabic, Kurdish and a couple of Afghan languages.

The great advantage of the iPod, apart from its versatility, is that most new recruits are already familiar with it, saving much of the need for training in the basics of usage and uploading/downloading of data.

One suspects that Apple did not have a military use for the iPod Touch in mind when they designed it – but one suspects also that they are not displeased with the orders rolling in from the Pentagon!

What's in your keyboard?



Have you ever considered just what might be lurking in the dark spaces underneath the keys? The usual position of a keyboard – just in front of you and probably just behind your sandwich, coffee or soft drink – means it has a habit of becoming the repository for all kinds of detritus.

Apart from the fact that crumbs, crisps and (especially) cola do a wonderful job of gumming up the works, they also become a perfect breeding ground for bacteria!

A company that specializes in cleaning IT equipment reports that some amazing things have been found inside keyboards: apart from the food remnants, things like nail clippings, chewing gum and (mostly on keyboards used by men) beard hair. And some substances they'd rather not identify.

A study by *Which Computing* in 2008 visited a typical office in London and inspected the keyboards in use. It was found that some contained high levels of bacteria, high enough potentially to cause illness. One extreme case held 150 times the recommended limit of bacteria – many times more than a toilet seat that was swabbed in the same test!

It's not just keyboards that suffer in this way; the humble mouse is also a dirt trap though a modern laser mouse is somewhat easier to keep clean than the old-fashioned variety with a rolling ball and buttons that had nice grime-absorbing openings. With both the mouse and keyboard, apparently it's easy to tell who likes salt and vinegar crisps!

For some tips on how to clean a keyboard, visit: <http://www.wikihow.com/Clean-a-Keyboard>

p.s. Another tip: Before you think about removing the keys to clean them, ensure you know their positions so you can put them back!

Tip of the Month - Worried about Conficker?

Many people are worried about the much-publicised Conficker virus following the large media coverage and build-up to its expected activation date of April 1st. Little happened on that date though, subsequently, Conficker has started downloading code to infected PCs. Windows users are worried about Conficker's potential effect on their systems but also about the uncertainty of whether their PC has been infected with the virus or not.

Generally speaking, if you have kept your Windows Updates and Anti-Virus up to date then you won't have a problem but, if you want to check, here's a useful link that will allow you to do just that. The link attempts to pull images from a number of different Anti-Virus providers; one of the things Conficker (in common with much other malware) does is try to block access to these providers so if all the images display then your PC is clean*, of Conficker at least.

http://www.confickerworkinggroup.org/infection_test/cfeyechart.html

The web page explains what to look for and it also includes a caveat about when the test might not be accurate.

Please let us know what you think of **Solutions!** - email solutions@tarragon.co.uk

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