



News about information systems throughout

Volume 14 • Number 3

January / February 1999

Sloan School Launches a Next-Generation Web Site 2

Software Spotlight
Word, Excel, PowerPoint: What's New in Office 98 3

Network Notes
Certificate Renewal Is at Hand for Many on Campus 4

Computer Corner 4

MIT Computer Connection/ Bits and Bytes
Apple Unveils Colorful Computers and Displays 5

NAI's Anti-Virus Software Offers Convenient Updates 5

Publishing Pointers
Choosing File Formats for Web Documents 6

Y2K Today
Checking Your Desktop Computer for Y2K Compliance 7

A New Service from the MIT Libraries Helps You Stay Current 7

Getting Help 8

Surf Sites: How's the Weather? 8

Jupiter System Gives Weather Forecasts by Phone

Lee Ridgway

The following exchange may seem mundane, but one of the speakers – Jupiter – is no ordinary being.

Jupiter: Hi! This is Jupiter. How may I help you?

Caller: What's the forecast for Boston on Thursday?

Jupiter: In Boston Thursday, cloudy with periods of steady rain likely. High 43 and low 30. Is there something else you would like to know?

Caller: Is there snow in the forecast?

Jupiter: To my knowledge the forecast calls for no snow in Boston Thursday.

Jupiter is an experimental system that provides up-to-date weather forecasts over the phone. It is one of several projects of the Spoken Language Systems (SLS) Group in the MIT Lab for Computer Science. Other projects include Pegasus, for airline flight and gate information, and Voyager, for traffic conditions in the Boston area.

The SLS Group is headed by Victor Zue, Senior Research Scientist. Its aim is to provide universal access to computerized information via speech. To achieve this, SLS is developing a human-to-computer conversational interface that closely resembles natural, spoken language. This technology will enable us to talk with machines in much the same way that we talk to one another.

Behind-the-Scenes Technology

Jupiter relies on the complex interaction of high-speed, background computer processes, running on Pentium IIs. Here is a summary of the processes that are performed, in real time, for Jupiter to understand and respond to weather-related questions.

1. *Speech recognition*: the human speech is converted into a set of candidate sentence hypotheses.
2. *Language understanding*: the natural language component selects the most plausible hypothesis and converts it into a meaning representation, called a semantic frame, which contains the basic terms needed to query Jupiter's database of weather information.
3. *Formal language generation*: the semantic frame is used to build the query to the SQL database.
4. *Information retrieval*: the database query is executed and the requested information retrieved.
5. *Natural language generation*: the query result is converted into a weather report in natural English.
6. *Information delivery*: the report is synthesized into speech for delivery to the caller. Eventually, the system will be able to respond to, and in, languages other than English.

Jupiter, the first of the SLS projects to go public, can answer questions about weather conditions for over

continued on page 2 ►



JUPITER

continued from page 1

500 cities worldwide (of which 350 are in the U.S.). The weather data comes from four different Web-based sources.

Talking to Jupiter

Using Jupiter is easy: you make a phone call and ask a question (weather-related, please!) in your natural voice. You don't need to pause unnecessarily between words (as with some voice dictation systems), over-enunciate, or speak in "computerese" (e.g., "weather Boston" instead of "What's the weather in Boston?"). Nor do you have to repeat details in follow-up questions that can be understood by context. If the system doesn't understand your question, it will say so. And if Jupiter misinterprets your question (it thought you said Austin), simply correct it ("No, I said Boston."). When you're done, hang up.

While Jupiter has a practical side for callers – most of us do want to know about the weather somewhere – it is still a research project in speech and language understanding. Callers need to realize that they are participants, albeit anonymous, in a large-scale public test. SLS records the calls to Jupiter to analyze how people talk to a computer

and respond to its messages. Part of the analysis is to measure the error rate of the system, a reflection of how accurate it is at understanding what a caller said. So even if you don't get the information you want, unsuccessful queries help the researchers improve the technology.

Jupiter has been publicly available since May 1997, fielding about 100,000 queries since then. With a vocabulary of nearly 2000 words, correct understanding of weather queries is about 80% for novice users and over 95% for experienced users.

Pegasus Takes Flight

Just opened up for public testing is Pegasus, which maintains information on airline flights within the U.S. It can give information about the estimated departure and arrival times for flights that have either filed a flight plan or are in the air. In addition, Pegasus can tell you about actual arrival times for flights that have landed during the current day. To help callers who may not know the airline and number for a flight they are meeting, Pegasus also has information on schedules. A caller can ask about flights between two cities arriving at an approximate time. Pegasus responds with the possibilities, from which the caller selects a flight.

The system then responds with up-to-the-minute arrival information from its database – all in spoken dialog.

The researchers in SLS remind callers that because Pegasus is just starting up for public use, it is still somewhat fragile. At first, callers will probably help the researchers more than they get helped by the system. Over time, though, Pegasus should become more accurate in its understanding and reliable in its answers.

Details and Connections

For more details on how Jupiter and Pegasus work, see the Web sites listed below. The phone numbers for both services are also listed; the 800 numbers are toll free in North America.

- **Jupiter**

<http://www.sls.lcs.mit.edu/sls/whatwedo/applications/jupiter.html>

Phone: 258-0300 or 1-888-573-8255

- **Pegasus**

<http://www.sls.lcs.mit.edu/sls/whatwedo/applications/pegasus.html>

Phone: 258-6040 or 1-877-648-8255

For more information on the Spoken Language Systems Group, visit their site at

<http://www.sls.lcs.mit.edu>

Sloan School Launches a Next-Generation Web Site

The MIT Sloan School of Management has done its homework. After a year of collaborative effort involving more than 150 members of the Sloan and MIT communities – and the award-winning design firm Interactive Bureau – Sloan has launched a redesigned Web site at <http://mitsloan.mit.edu>

User-Oriented Features

This ambitious site, with 5,000-plus pages, offers a unique combination of content, functionality, and online community. Features include a database platform that integrates a growing number of Web-based business functions and services at Sloan. For example, Sloan is the first business school to accept only online MBA applications, starting this year. Students also bid for classes, sign up for job interviews, conduct coursework, and swap opinions – all via the Web.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the site is its focus on users. The site is organized by key Sloan stakeholder groups – students, faculty and staff, alumni, and the business community. Architecture, content, and navigation are based on the needs of these audiences, rather than conforming to internal and departmental structure.

The site also has a more traditional menu on the left, for visitors who do not self-select as a member of any of these predefined audiences. This menu includes a Visitor's Center, Academic Programs, Calendar, and the like.

To keep things fresh, the Sloan site has frequently changing news articles on its front page and section fronts. The articles may spotlight the research of a Sloan professor or what's new in the Trading Room. You can even find out about the Digital Time Capsule – sealed into the site at its launch and to be reopened in 2004. It holds predictions about the Internet by famous figures ranging from Bill Gates to Kofi Annan. ☺



Managing Editor
Robyn Fizz

Writer/Editor
Lee Ridgway

i/s is published six times a year. MIT faculty and staff receive copies through campus mail; *i/s* is also available in lobbies around campus. Individuals at MIT may subscribe by contacting the managing editor.

Send comments or subscription requests to:
MIT Room N42-290b, 77 Massachusetts Avenue,
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307
Phone: (617) 253-0540
Electronic mail: <fizz@mit.edu>

i/s is also published online at
<http://web.mit.edu/is/isnews/>

A companion Web site, *i/s NewsLink*, offers frequent news updates. It's located at
<http://web.mit.edu/is/newslink/>

All product names are trademarks of their manufacturers.

© 1999 Massachusetts Institute of Technology



Word, Excel, PowerPoint: What's New in Office 98

Al Willis

In the last *i/s*, the Software Spotlight gave an overview of Microsoft Office 98 for the Macintosh, covering installation, file formats, system requirements, online help, and support on campus. This time around, the Spotlight takes a look at new features in each of the Office suite's individual programs – Word 98, Excel 98, and PowerPoint 98.

Word 98

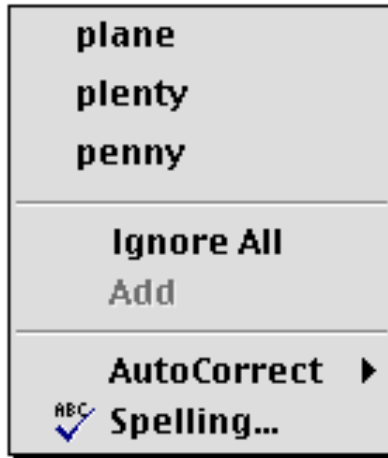
Microsoft's word processor has been transformed through a host of small changes that make it more user friendly. For example, Word 98 has a WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) font menu. Toolbars can be turned into floating windows, which gives you more editing room.

By default, Word 98 automatically checks your spelling and underlines in red any words it thinks are misspelled. You can either ignore Word and do the traditional spell check later, or use Word's contextual menus to select alternative spellings. To do this, you click on the offending word while holding the control key. A contextual menu of alternatives pops up, from which you can select the correctly spelled word. Word also offers a grammar checker and a built-in thesaurus.

Word tries to automate typing in small ways. For example, when you start to type the name of a day of the week or a month of the year, Word recognizes this and prompts you to let it complete the word automatically. It also recognizes the most common typos and corrects them (e.g., changing "teh" to "the"). These features do take a little getting used to; they can be turned off if you don't like them.

Support for versioning lets you keep multiple versions of the same document in one file. In a slightly different twist on versions, you can set a preference to automatically save files in a previous version of Word. This is handy when you are working with colleagues who have an older version.

Microsoft is aware that many of its Macintosh customers are still using Word 5.1 for a variety of reasons. To encourage these users to make the



This contextual menu suggests alternatives to replace the misspelled word "plenny."

transition to Word 98, Microsoft has combined the familiar with the new: Word 5.1 users who move to Word 98 can still use 5.1's toolbar, menus, and shortcuts, while accessing Word 98's new features.

Excel 98

Excel 98 supports natural language formulas: You can have a formula such as "Net Worth = Assets – Debt" instead of using cryptic cell references. The Formula Palette provides easy access to a menu with the most popular functions, and Excel 98 can correct common mistakes in formulas, such as extra parentheses or operators.

The program also uses color to simplify formula building and editing. The range of cells corresponding to a formula are color-coded, along with the cell containing the formula, so that you can quickly see which numbers a formula pertains to.

Formatting in Excel 98 is much improved. Individual cells can have custom formats, including rotated and indented text. A standard set of number formats, in a new Special category, includes formats for commonly used data such as zip codes, telephone numbers, and Social Security numbers.

New chart types have been added, including bubble, time series, and pie-of-pie charts. Charts can include pictures, textures, and gradient fills.

A new preview feature shows you where the page breaks are. You can drag and drop the breaks to get the layout you want for printing.

Last but not least, Excel 98 lets Macintosh and Windows users share Excel workbooks over a network. Users can highlight their changes and attach comments to any cell. The Track Changes feature automatically tracks each user's changes and lets reviewers accept or reject them. All versions of the same workbook can be merged into one file.

PowerPoint 98

Perhaps the most important new feature of PowerPoint 98 is the ability to export a PowerPoint presentation as HTML. When you select Save as HTML... from the File menu, PowerPoint steps you through various options, such as choosing a graphic type (GIF or JPEG), screen resolution, page colors, and button style.

PowerPoint 98 comes with 30 new templates for streamlining the creation of a presentation. Design templates add even more flexibility; they let you change the look of a finished presentation without affecting its content.

With the Custom Shows feature, you can tailor the content of your presentation to specific audiences. You simply choose different subsets of your slides and save each version of the presentation within one file. You can add slides to or remove slides from each custom show.

New tools on the Drawing Toolbar help beef up PowerPoint's graphics arsenal. The AutoShapes menu, for example, includes basic shapes, flow-chart elements, stars and banners, callouts, and connectors. (A connector is a line between two objects that stays attached when you drag the objects to a new location.) You can use adjustment handles to alter a shape, and also type text inside a shape.

PowerPoint 98 includes native support for QuickTime, which can be used to add video, animation, or music to a presentation. You can choose images, sounds, and animation from the Microsoft Clip Gallery or import your own. The Animation Effects toolbar lets you control the sequence in which text and graphics appear.

A new Meeting Minder feature lets you record minutes and action items during a presentation. The action items are then displayed as bullets on a new final slide. You can also export your meeting notes to Word. ☺



Certificate Renewal Is at Hand for Many on Campus

Lee Ridgway

At MIT, Web certificates – also known as digital certificates – are the key to a growing menu of crucial applications and services. Among these Web services are personal account information at the Benefits Office, the IS Help Desk CaseTracker logs, NECX for computer purchases, SAPweb, WebSIS for students, and off-campus ISP access to the secure server tute.mit.edu.

These applications come from Web servers that limit access to authorized users and protect transmission of sensitive data by encryption. Certificates provide authentication between your computer and the secure Web server, and set up the secure connection that ensures the privacy of transactions over the Web. Access to MIT's secure Web servers requires two different types of certificates: the MIT site certificate and your personal certificate.

Among the benefits of certificates is convenience: once you have your set of MIT certificates – site and personal – you can get to any of MIT's secure Web services for which you are authorized. Without certificates, you would probably need a different username and password for each service. Also, with certificates there is no need to send your Kerberos password over the Internet.

Periodic Expiration

MIT personal certificates are set to expire periodically, based upon when the certificate was acquired. Periodic expiration of certificates helps maintain security by ensuring that only current MIT faculty, students, and staff are in the system. When your personal certificate expires, you will

not be able to use any of MIT's secure Web applications until you get a new personal certificate.

Many MIT personal certificates will expire on February 28 or March 1, 1999. (The MIT site certificate does not expire until the year 2006). Information Systems recommends that these personal certificates be renewed as soon as possible. The new certificate will be valid until December 31, 1999.

Checking the Expiration Date

You can check the expiration date on your personal certificate from within Netscape (version 4.05), as follows:

1. Open Netscape.
2. Click on the Security button in the tool bar.
3. In the window that appears, in the panel at the left, click on Yours under Certificates.
4. In the box on the right, click on your named certificate, then click on the View button.
5. In the window that appears, you will find the date on which you obtained the certificate and the date on which it will expire.

For more details on checking the expiration date of a personal certificate, including for Netscape 3, go to the Web page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/cert/certsexp.html>

This page also steps you through how to delete an old certificate and get a new one.

Questions?

If you have questions about the process of getting certificates, get in touch with the IS Computing Help Desk. For contact information, see the "Getting Help" section on the back page of this issue. ☺



This column presents news and tips from the consultants who staff the Computing Help Desk. Check out their Web site at

<http://web.mit.edu/helpdesk/>

Q In Microsoft Excel 97 (Windows) or 98 (Macintosh), is there a way to highlight numbers when they go above or below a given threshold?

A Yes, there is, through a feature called conditional formatting. When it's applied, Excel dynamically changes the formatting of a cell based on the results being displayed in that cell. For example, if a cell contains a formula that calculates the variance between your monthly budget and actual expenses, you can instruct Excel to turn the number in the cell red whenever your expenses exceed your budget.

Follow these steps to apply conditional formatting to cells:

1. Enter a value or cell formula in the usual way.
2. From the Format menu, choose Conditional Formatting...
3. In the dialog box that opens, choose whether you want to use the value in the cell or a formula as the formatting criteria. Then enter a value or a formula as your specified condition.
4. Click on the Format button.
5. Move through the Font, Border, and Patterns tabs to select the options you want to apply – such as font style, color, or cell shading. Then click on the OK button.
6. To add another condition, click on the Add button and repeat steps 3 through 5. (You can specify up to three conditions.)
7. Click on the OK button to close the dialog box.

Note that cells keep their existing formats if none of the specified conditions are met. Further, conditional formats remain applied to the cells until you remove them.

See Microsoft Excel's online help system for more information about conditional formatting – including tips like using the Format Painter to copy conditional formats to other cells. ☺

New Outgoing E-Mail Server Introduced

In response to the increasing demand on MIT's e-mail system, Information Systems recently introduced a new server dedicated to sending e-mail. This server should alleviate the timeouts experienced by many a few weeks ago.

If you use Eudora (or another e-mail client) on a Macintosh or Windows computer and are still experiencing problems sending e-mail, you may want to compare your settings for sending e-mail to the recommended settings noted on the Web page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/eudora/>



Apple Unveils Colorful Computers and Displays

Robyn Fizz

Since the introduction of the iMac last summer, Apple Computer has been on a roll. Recently the company introduced an updated iMac – in five colors – along with new Power Macintosh G3s and new displays. Here's the scoop.

iMacs, Round Two

The revamped iMac has a 266-MHz PowerPC G3 processor, 32MB of RAM, a 6GB hard drive, and a 24x CD-ROM drive. The high-resolution display is complemented by stereo speakers. Internet ready, the iMac has a built-in 56K modem, 10/100Base-Tx Ethernet, and two Universal Serial Bus ports. Mac OS 8.5.1 and lots of software are bundled in.

For full details from Apple, see

<http://www.apple.com/imac/>

The NECX price for iMacs is \$1099 plus shipping. (Each color has its own NECX item number).



New G3s

Not to be outdone by the iMac, the new Power Macintosh G3s have a colorful blue-and-white enclosure.

Different models sport a 300-, 350-, or 400-MHz processor, 64 or 128MB of RAM, 6 to 12GB hard drives, and a 24x CD-ROM drive.

Complete specifications for the G3s are online at

<http://www.apple.com/powermac/>

For an in-depth look at performance and expandability, see

<http://www.macintosh.com/bg3.html>

NECX carries four configurations of the Power Macintosh G3. They range in price from \$1439 to \$2699, plus shipping.

New Studio Displays

The 21-, 17-, and 15-inch Apple Studio Displays are designed to complement the new G3s in appearance. Advanced screen technology offers vivid colors and sharp text.

The 21-inch display (19.8-inch viewable area) comes with ColorSync, an internal calibration system that controls color accuracy. This Trinitron-based monitor has four USB ports.

The 17-inch display (16-inch viewable), with Diamondtron technology, is bright and crisp with minimal glare.

The 15-inch model is a flat-panel display – a desktop space-saver. Its active-matrix LCD technology delivers images that are twice as bright and sharp as those of typical CRT displays.

Apple profiles all three displays at

<http://www.apple.com/displays/>

NECX prices for the Apple Studio Displays range from \$449 to \$1349.

Need Help?

If you have questions about Apple products or using the NECX online catalog, contact the MCC at x3-7686 or <mcc@mit.edu>. ☺

NAI's Anti-Virus Software Offers Convenient Updates

Janet Littell and Jerry Isaacson

MIT has a new vendor for anti-virus software: Network Associates Inc. (NAI). Actually, NAI software is not all that new to MIT computer users, since the company is the product of a series of mergers and acquisitions – of McAfee, Virex, and Dr Solomon's. The names of these former vendors continue to appear in NAI's software and documentation.

NAI's anti-virus software for PC desktop users is McAfee VirusScan 4.1. For Macintosh users, it's Virex 5.9.1. There are also products for network and server administrators:

- Management Edition 2.0 for PC networks; Virex Administrator 1.4 for Macintosh networks
- NetShield 4.02 for NT servers

If you are off campus and not using Tether, you will need certificates to download the NAI software. You can get updates to the software without certificates from NAI's Web site.

Unix, OS/2, Netware

NAI is working on anti-virus software for Unix, OS/2, and Netware. When the software is ready, Unix users will be able to scan for infected documents that originated on PCs or Macintoshes.

Auto Updating

For PC users, auto updating is perhaps the best new feature of NAI software. A quick point and click on a Web link adds the latest virus definitions to your NAI software. Macintosh users still need to download updaters onto their system; a double-click on the updater adds the new virus definitions.

Other New Features

The latest versions of NAI's software include several new features.

- *VirusScan 4.1.x for Windows 95/98* has improved detection mechanisms and scanning for e-mail and downloads. An update installer can be loaded to a diskette for use on another computer.
- *VirusScan 4.1.x for Windows NT workstations* includes the features listed above, plus scheduling of automatic updates.
- *Virex 5.9.1 for Macintoshes* includes more sophisticated detection mecha-

nisms, and Mac OS 8.5/AppleTalk issues have been resolved.

- *Management Edition 2.0 for PCs* provides deployment and configuration support for VirusScan on Windows 95/98/NT and Netware. You can drag and drop to configure an entire domain in a single step. Updates can be put in a network directory so that client workstations and servers can use a local source instead of the Web.
- *Virex Administrator 1.4 for Macintosh* provides similar network protection features for the Macintosh community.

Switch to NAI Now!

MIT's license with Dr Solomon's expires at the end of February, so it is imperative that you transition to NAI software. You can download it from the MIT Information Security Office at

<http://web.mit.edu/security/www/>

Macintosh users should upgrade to Virex 5.9.1, following the Macintosh links on the security pages. For most desktop PCs, downloads are available as a single file or in disk image format.

User guides for Macintosh and PC are available in PDF format. ☺



Choosing File Formats for Web Documents

Deborah Levinson

How do you share information on the Web with people who use a different type of computer (say, a Macintosh or Unix workstation instead of a PC), or who work with different software? At MIT, it's safe to assume that most people have Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint...or is it? Beyond MIT, things only get more complex: your audience could be using any of a number of computers or applications.

It may seem easier to take your PowerPoint presentation and upload it to your Web site than it would be to translate it into HTML, but by doing so, you could be alienating as many users as you are welcoming. This article can help you decide when to distribute your information in its native file format and when to translate it into something more Web-friendly.

Three Paths

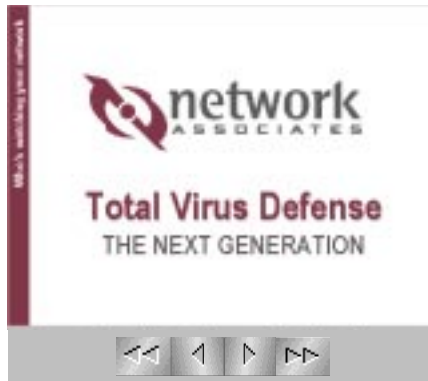
You have three different options for posting native-format content to the Web. You can

- Post it "as is" (e.g., as a Microsoft Word or Excel file)
- Use Adobe Acrobat to create a Portable Document Format (PDF) version of the file
- Translate it into HTML

When deciding which option to choose, remember the underlying principle behind the Web: It's a way to transfer information efficiently from person to person. It may be convenient for you to post the file in its original format; however, it's a lot less efficient on the other end if someone has to track down a translator, plug-in, or even the right kind of computer.

In addition, native-format files are often very large. (A PowerPoint presentation can easily weigh in at 5 or 10MB.) That may not be such an issue here at MIT, with its high-speed Internet connection. However, a significant chunk of the public is still connecting with 28.8Kbps modems.

The bottom line: Keep the user's needs in mind rather than your own.



PowerPoint presentations translated into HTML by Internet Assistant retain their directional arrows.

Original Format

It's appropriate to post a file in its original format when

- Users on the other end must be able to edit the file in its native format
- The file contains complicated charts, graphs, or other images
- The file's layout is crucial to understanding its content

Even if these conditions are met, there are still some drawbacks to posting a file in its original format. First of all, content in Word, Excel, or PowerPoint documents is not indexed by some Web search engines, with other engines indexing files only from specific versions of each program. Second, Microsoft's PowerPoint Viewer plug-in is available only for Windows-based machines, so Macintosh and Unix users won't be able to use their browser to view PowerPoint presentations. Finally, most Unix users aren't able to read Word, Excel, or PowerPoint files.

Adobe Acrobat (PDF)

If the users on the other end don't need to edit a file, the PDF option may be a better choice. Acrobat lets you preserve the layout and typography of a document. Many search engines (including Ultraseek) can index Acrobat content, as long as you generate your PDF in binary rather than ASCII format. The Acrobat Distiller uses the binary method by default.

Acrobat offers other benefits over posting content in Word or Excel. You can create hyperlinks to locations within your PDF, to other PDFs, or to URLs on the Web. Unix users can read PDFs as easily as Macintosh or PC users.

And if you have only a paper copy of a document with graphics or formulas, you can scan it into Adobe Photoshop 5.0 and save it directly as a PDF.

Like any file format, Acrobat has its weaknesses. Users must have the free Acrobat Reader or PDF Viewer plug-in to read Acrobat content. Also, creating PDF files can sometimes be time-consuming, since you must consider whether to embed your document fonts, which parts to hyperlink, and so on.

IS Academic Computing maintains an excellent PDF FAQ at

<http://web.mit.edu/acs/www/faq/pdf.html>

HTML

HTML, the language of the Web, is the most accessible format for posting information. All browsers, no matter on which platform, can read HTML, and all search engines index HTML files.

Although Microsoft's Office suite includes an Internet Assistant for translating files into HTML, it doesn't do a very good job except for the simplest files. The PowerPoint HTML translator does offer one nice feature: The files it generates preserve the flow of your presentation, down to "previous" and "next" arrow graphics on the Web page.

Translating Excel tables into HTML is easy with FileMaker, Inc.'s Home Page Pro. Simply cut and paste the table into Home Page, and Home Page automatically turns it into an HTML table. In fact, Home Page does this with any tab-delimited data, so the same trick will work if you cut and paste tabbed data from Word.

Multiple Choice

Sometimes the friendliest thing you can do for your users is to provide your document in multiple formats. One user may need your Excel chart's custom formulas; another only cares about the chart layout; and still another only wants to see the data. Providing an HTML version along with one or two of the native formats discussed in this article makes your content accessible to everyone.

If you are having a difficult time deciding which format to use, the CWIS Team can help you figure it out. Contact CWIS at cwis-help@mit.edu or x3-0101. ☺



Checking Your Desktop Computer for Y2K Compliance

Gayle Willman

As the Year 2000 approaches, you may be wondering how to check the readiness of your desktop computer and the software on it. Perhaps you've heard about programs that you can download from the Web that check hardware for Y2K compliance. Before you download anything, be advised that MIT's Year 2000 Team has some recommended programs and procedures in place. These are described on the team's Web page at

<http://mitvma.mit.edu/mity2k/y2kcomp.html>

Checking Hardware Compliance

The Macintosh has been Year 2000 ready since its introduction. If your Macintosh has a PC emulation card, read the related material at

<http://til.info.apple.com/techinfo.nsf/artnum/n19843>

For the PC, the Year 2000 Team recommends a free utility called YMARK-2000 that can be downloaded from

http://www.nstl.com/html/nstl_ymark2000.html

This test program checks whether the clock chip in your PC is Y2K compatible. It then checks the progression from December 31, 1999 to January 1, 2000, and also checks your system's recognition and support of leap years from 2000 through 2009.

If your computer fails any of the YMARK2000 tests, go to the hardware vendor's Web site to find out if the BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) can be updated. If you have a mission-critical machine that fails the tests, fix or replace it.

Checking Software Compliance

To find out if the software on your desktop system is compliant, the Year 2000 team suggests that you first create a list of the programs installed on your PC or Macintosh. A free utility called KeyAudit can assist with this.

You can download it from

<http://www.sassafras.com/keyaudit.html>

KeyAudit scans mounted disks for all application programs and saves its audit report in a file. By structuring the file as tab-delimited text, KeyAudit makes it easy to move the report into a spreadsheet or database program, such as Excel or FileMaker. The audit includes software version numbers, vendor names, and other useful information.

The KeyAudit report includes more information than you may need, since it lists every executable file on your mounted disks. Focus your investigation on programs you use routinely.

Use your audit list in conjunction with the manufacturers' compliance information at

<http://mitvma.mit.edu/mity2k/swupdtab.html>

and

<http://mitvma.mit.edu/mity2k/y2kcomp.html>

to determine whether or not your software is compliant. Most of the vendor links on these pages offer information on steps you may need to take to make your software Y2K compliant. ☺

A New Service from the MIT Libraries Helps You Stay Current

Deborah Helman

If you have a hard time keeping up with the literature in your field or want to stay current with popular magazines, you may be interested in a service called UnCover Reveal. It can deliver alerts to your e-mail address that contain:

- Tables-of-contents for the latest issues of periodical titles that you select
- Citations for new journal articles on topics that you specify
- Citations for the latest books published on subjects that you specify (Books-in-Reveal)

Thanks to a site license purchased by the MIT Libraries, an UnCover Reveal subscription is free to any member of the community with an MIT e-mail address. For detailed instructions on how to subscribe and how to set up search strategies, go to

<http://libraries.mit.edu/reveal/>

Current Services

The UnCover database contains article information from the tables-of-contents of over 17,000 journals in all subject areas, going back to 1988. The basic Reveal service is a tables-of-contents alerting service based on UnCover. As a subscriber, you can specify up to 50 journal or periodical titles. The tables-of-contents of these titles are e-mailed to you as soon as they appear in UnCover – in about the same time frame that they are delivered to your library or local newsstand.

Subscribers can also be alerted to new journal articles and book titles on topics and authors of interest to them. After a subscriber creates a search strategy, it is run against both the recent additions to the Table-of-Contents database and new book titles (about 600 a week) supplied to UnCover Reveal by the Academic Book Center. Weekly alerts with articles and book titles that match the search terms are sent to the subscriber via e-mail.

You can edit your title list or search strategy at any time.

Back Issues

Note that these alerting services focus on the most current periodicals and books. If you are interested in information from back issues, you can go to the UnCoverWeb home page at

<http://uncweb.carl.org/>

and select the Search UnCover option. Once you supply your subscriber ID and password, you can search the entire UnCover database by keyword, author, or journal title.

More from the MIT Libraries

UnCover Reveal is just one of the many resources the MIT Libraries have put in place to help you with your information needs. Over 80 databases and 350 electronic journals are available on MITnet via the Web. For more information about these and other resources and services, see

<http://libraries.mit.edu/>

For questions about UnCover Reveal or other MIT Libraries' services, contact Deborah Helman at x3-9368 or <dhelman@mit.edu>. ☺



Getting Help

If you don't know where to get help for your computer, network, or telephone problems, dial one of the help lines listed to the right.

If you prefer to use e-mail, you can send your questions to the corresponding addresses on the far right. (When logged into Athena, you can also use the `olc` command to send questions to Athena's online consultants.)

For a complete list of services offered by Information Systems, see the Web page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/>

For help with...

Athena Computing Environment
Athena hardware repairs
Computer and printer repairs
Computer sales
Disabilities and computing
Macintosh computers
PC computers
Telephone repairs
UNIX/VMS (by subscription)
Voice mail

Dial...

3-4435
3-1410
3-0815
3-7686
3-7808
3-1101
3-1102
3-4357
3-1103
3-3677

Or send a message to...

olc@mit.edu
hotline@athena.mit.edu
pcservice@mit.edu
mcc@mit.edu
atic@mit.edu
mac-help@mit.edu
pc-help@mit.edu
5help@mit.edu
unix-vms-help@mit.edu
vmail@mit.edu



Surf Sites: How's the Weather?

Weather – it's everywhere – and so are reports about it. If you want more detail about the weather than Jupiter can provide (see the lead article on pp. 1-2), check out some of the sites listed on the right. Among their features are global city forecasts, satellite and radar maps, storm watches, driving conditions, and climate archives. At the Weather Underground, you can even read the weather in assorted languages, from Esperanto to Thai.

For capsule reviews of several weather sites, visit the Yahoo! link at the bottom of the list.

AccuWeather

<http://www.accuweather.com/>

CNN Weather

<http://www.cnn.com/WEATHER/>

Intellicast Weather Forecast (Boston)

<http://www.intellicast.com/weather/bos/>

National Weather Service

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>

The Weather Channel

<http://www.weather.com/twc/homepage.twc>

Weather Underground

<http://www.wunderground.com/>

Yahoo! Internet Life – Site Reviews: Weather

<http://www.zdnet.com/yil/content/roundups/weather.html>



i/s is printed with soy inks on recycled paper, and can be recycled in MIT's "white paper only" bins.