

Computer Support Newsletter Audience

A note to our many readers.....

This newsletter is published mainly to inform MSA employees of Information Technology (IT) news and happenings. Much of the newsletter will relate to the local user base. If you are NOT at Stoneville, some of the contained items may not be relevant to you.

Advance Fee Scam! Beware!

ARS and many other agencies seem to be receiving several emails from individuals using various tactics offering to transfer millions of dollars into a personal bank account; "advance fee fraud schemes". Some are using the tragedies of 9/11 as their plea for assistance. The United States Secret Service has provided a brief overview of these schemes which may be accessed at:

<http://www.secretservice.gov/alert419.shtml>

Stoneville Research Unit Screen Savers

Computer Support has put together several Windows screen savers. Currently, we have screen savers for APTRU, SIMRU, CGPRU and CGRU. Other screen savers will be available shortly. You can download the screen savers at:

<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp/screensaver.html>

OpenOffice vs Microsoft Office vs

StarOffice! (by Kent Rushing and Megan Wolters)

Would you like a FREE (or cheaper) alternative to Microsoft Office? Computer Support has been using OpenOffice and StarOffice and comparing it to Microsoft Office by opening complicated files from Excel, Word, and Power Point. We then changed data, headers, footers,

etc. and compared the two documents for any differences. All files opened in OpenOffice were quite similar to their original document in Microsoft Office with occasional minor changes.

Some minor differences are:

-Power Point files may be opened as a read-only file, but can be converted into an OpenOffice document by selecting **File-Autopilot-Documents Converter-then follow directions**. If the document is a read-only file, you must convert it in order to edit any information.(duh!) Also, some of the more complicated animations and transition in PowerPoint are not available (or don't transfer) in OpenOffice.

-When an Excel document containing a chart is opened in OpenOffice, the grid lines will appear behind the chart, but this does not mean they will print out. To make sure they do not print out, select the whole document and go to **Format-Cells**. Then make sure there are no borders or backgrounds selected. Then you can print the page out to double check that the gridlines will not print out.

-Keep in mind that there is a **Help** menu that can guide you through most minor problems.

One of the major "forward-thinking" feature of OpenOffice (and StarOffice) is the native support for XML; XML is quickly becoming the standard file format of the Internet.

For most users, the menus of OpenOffice are

similar enough to Microsoft Office that users will quickly adapt to the new application with minimal effort. There is no formal technical support (some website help is available online) for OpenOffice, but considering the price of OpenOffice (**FREE!!!**), it appears this is a deal that is hard to pass up! OpenOffice runs on Windows, Linux, and Solaris. (Mac OS X version coming soon). OpenOffice can be downloaded at:

<http://www.openoffice.org>

or

<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp/openoffice>

StarOffice is nearly identical to OpenOffice with a few exceptions. StarOffice is a commercial product from Sun Microsystems. Sun provides some technical support via the internet. With this product purchase, you receive a nice paperback user manual and a license. More file converters are included. The price for StarOffice 6.0 (latest version) is \$75.95 from Sun.com or Amazon.com.

Neither OpenOffice nor StarOffice support Microsoft Access, but considering that other alternative databases are available (Adabas, MySQL, Oracle, PostgreSQL, etc) this is a very minor issue.

Unfortunately, WordPerfect support is very minimal since the goal of OpenOffice and StarOffice is to offer an alternative to Microsoft Office, not WordPerfect.

Windows NT/2000 vs XP

Q: Will programs that run on Windows NT or 2000 run on XP?

A: They have about the same chance of running on XP as programs developed for win 95/98/ME (about 90%).

Many (maybe most) older programs will run on XP, regardless of what previous version of Windows they were originally developed for.

In fact, we've seen programs that run on win 9.x work just fine on XP, but not run at all on our Win 2000 computer.

So, to answer the question, "it just depends". As more and more programs are going to be 100% XP compatible, this issue will be history. Probably, just in time for a newer version of Windows OS.

If you cannot get a program to run on XP, try the following:

1. Right click its icon under the **Programs** menu, then select **Properties** from the resulting menu.
2. Now, click the **Compatibility** tab. You can choose what version of Windows you want XP to emulate.

For example, suppose you have a program that installs on XP but refuses to run. If you set its compatibility for Win 98, it may be perfectly happy running on XP.

(This usually works, so don't be too disappointed if it doesn't.)

ESRI GIS Software

USDA ARS has licensed Arc GIS software from ESRI. This is one of the premier software packages for GIS applications. If you need this software, please have your supervisor or RL send an email to rkaczanowski@ars.usda.gov and request a copy of the software. Much of the GIS software only operates on Windows NT, 2000, or XP. The software does not come with any manuals and very limited technical support. Workshops are available through ESRI (www.esri.com/seminars). There is an upcoming seminar on 8/15/02 in Little Rock, AR. Registration deadline is 8/5/02.

File Upload Utility

Do you have a need to transfer large files to another user? **The GroupWise email attachments will be limited to 10 megabytes**, so what do you do? Computer support has setup a transfer location on the webserver. The maximum filesize is currently 100 megabytes. You can upload files using the utility located at:

<https://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp/upload/>

(note the "s" in https) Please contact computer

support at (662) 686-5305 for the userid and password to use this utility. **Note: All files will be deleted on Saturday night to prevent users from storing files on the system indefinitely and filenames can not contain any spaces.**

Virus Blues Be Gone!

Here are two FREE online antivirus scans that can check any system in minutes:

<http://www.symantec.com/securitycheck/>

and

<http://www.pepitstop.com/antivirus/default.asp>

ars.usda.gov Email Problems

We are diligently working with headquarters to remedy the internet email inbound/outbound problems associated with ars.usda.gov. The problem surfaced after the gateway in Ft. Collins was upgraded. Please bear with us during this most difficult time.

Comments and Contacts:

Comments: email your comments to:

rkaczanowski@ars.usda.gov

Old Issues: Old issues of The Computer Support Newsletter can be found at: <http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp>