

# Bytes & Pieces

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## Mozilla becomes SeaMonkey

According to the developers, 'The SeaMonkey project is a community effort to deliver production-quality releases of code derived from the application formerly known as 'Mozilla Application Suite'. Whereas the main focus of the Mozilla Foundation is on Mozilla Firefox and Mozilla Thunderbird, our group of dedicated volunteers works to ensure that you can have 'everything but the kitchen sink' – and have it stable enough for corporate use.' SeaMonkey includes a web-browser, email and newsgroup client, webpage composer and IRC chat client and will now replace the Mozilla suite which has seen its last release.

I tried version 1.0.1's browser. While there are still a few Mozilla features, such as extensions, to be added, it is a fast, easy-to-use browser with its own look, (but with a strong resemblance to Mozilla, as you might expect). It automatically picked up the settings from the already-installed Mozilla. That made configuration and installation very simple.

At this stage, I still prefer the Firefox and Thunderbird combination (which Xandros changed to from Mozilla a few months ago), but SeaMonkey shows great promise and is worth keeping on eye on, if you prefer an integrated suite – browser, email, newsgroup, webpage composer, chat client – to individual applications.

<http://www.mozilla.org/projects/seamonkey>

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## Make Windows XP Recovery Console useful

By default, XP's Recovery Console is limited to just a few system folders with no access to any other part of your hard drive. It does not accept 'wildcards' (such as '\*.doc' to represent all files ending in '.doc') and it won't let you copy files to removable media such as floppy disks. Combine these limitations with the command set it uses and there's not a lot the average user can do at the so-called Recovery Console.

However, in his LangaList Standard Edition newsletter (1 May 2006), Fred Langa points out that there is a way to overcome these limitations, making the Recovery Console, “ ... in effect, a general-purpose XP DOS, serving much the same function as did DOS boot floppies for earlier versions of Windows. With the Recovery Console's limitations removed, you can then access any file or folder anywhere on your hard drive and run any of some 34 DOS-like commands.” He points out that “ ... With this tweak, the Recovery Console really does become a kind of lightweight XP DOS – a much more powerful, all-purpose mini-operating system, making it enormously more useful than otherwise.”

Once you have applied this tweak, you can run any of the commands listed below. They will allow to replace corrupted files, copy recovered files to removable media (such as floppy discs), repair the Master Boot Record, and

much more.

ATTRIB	COPY	EXIT	LOGON	REN
BATCH	DEL	EXPAND	MAP	RENAME
BOOTCFG	DELETE	FIXBOOT	MD	RMDIR
CD	DIR	FIXMBR	MKDIR	SET
CHDIR	DISABLE	FORMAT	MORE	SYSTEMROOT
CHKDSK	DISKPART	HELP	NET	TYPE
CLS	ENABLE	LISTSVC	RD	

If you don't know how to use these commands, do a Internet search and you will quickly find Microsoft and other articles explaining their functions and how to use the Recovery Console. Print those articles out and put them in a folder and you will have an invaluable aid to use when your computer crashes.

**Note:** Before you can use the Recovery Console you may need to install it. How to do so is described in Fred Langa's article:

<http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=187000225>

If you're an experienced Windows user and don't subscribe to his newsletter, you are missing out on a lot of useful information. To subscribe go to:

<http://langa.com/newsletter.htm>

While there check out Langelist Plus Edition. For just \$USD13.50 a year, you get all issues published in the twelve months, currently running around 72 issues) with additional content instead of advertising, earlier delivery and much more.

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## ABC Podcasts

Podcasting is a way of automatically downloading audio files to your computer. You can then listen to this audio on your computer or transfer them to an MP3 player. It is different from the ABC's streaming audio service, which is currently offered in Real Media and Windows Media formats. With streaming audio, the complete audio file is never actually downloaded to your computer's hard drive. Instead portions of it are downloaded and played progressively. Streaming is therefore more suited to broadband users.

By contrast, a podcast file – in the ABC's case an MP3 file – is downloaded completely to your hard drive. It can then be played directly from your computer at your leisure, or downloaded from your computer to a portable player such as an iPod (hence the name 'podcast', a cross between 'iPod' and 'broadcast'). Because the file is completely downloaded and stored on your computer, the speed of the download is not critical and podcasts are therefore suitable for dialup users.

MP3 files are large. If you are on one of the broadband starter packages, you may have as little as 70MB download included in your monthly fee. Downloading large files will quickly put you over quota and you will have to pay for that excess at up to 18c/MB. For the actual cost, you would need to check your particular contract.

Note: Some Internet Service Providers, notably Internode, do not count material from the ABC website as download, unless you obtain it through a web proxy. Check your provider's 'unmetered' content, if indeed they have any – many don't!

From time to time, some material broadcast in the original version will be deleted from the podcast. This is because copyright conditions for audio streaming and broadcasting differ from those affecting podcasting. Most likely omissions are complete pieces of music and readings from published books.

With special software, such as Juice Receiver and iTunes, you can receive regular updates to your selected downloads. The range includes programs which allow you to listen to podcasts on Pocket PCs, mobile phones, iPods, and MP3 players. To subscribe to a podcast you download your chosen software to manages all of your podcast subscriptions. When connected to the internet, the software searches for the latest edition of the program on the ABC website, and will download it to a folder on your computer, ready for when you next plug in your portable MP3 device. This means that you don't have to manually search for new programs to download on this website. It

happens automatically. The ABC suggests, however, if you are new to podcasting, you check the podcast feeds manually until you are acquainted with your chosen software.

If you don't have the special software, you can download the MP3 files by right clicking on the link to the file and choosing 'Save link target' (or whatever variation of that your browser uses). Downloaded files can then be played by most media players, such as RealPlayer.

Further help with ABC (Radio National) podcasting is available from

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/help.htm>

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## Dealing with spam (Part 2 – ISP to the rescue)

*The Story So Far:* In the first part of this article we dealt with measures you can take to prevent spammers from getting your email address. We also showed you how to use disposable email addresses where there is a risk of your address falling into spammers' hands. Now we look at the role your Internet Service Provider (ISP) can, and should, play.

### **A significant problem:**

Last June my ISP, Internode, experienced an absolute avalanche of virus-infected and unsolicited commercial email (spam). Here's how they describe what happened and how they dealt with it:

*Our mail service normally delivers around 1.2 million messages a day. [In the latter part of June last year], the incoming spam and virus traffic volume dramatically exceeded normal levels, peaking at an incoming message rate more than 50 times the usual level.*

*The mail cluster did continue to deliver customer email, notwithstanding that delivery was substantially delayed for many customers. The delays were the consequence of the system processing, and rejecting, this onslaught of additional incoming message traffic.*

*As another consequence of the exceptionally high message load, some customer email messages were delivered multiple times - the system does this in order to insure against non-delivery of the messages concerned.*

*We are pleased to say that the problems caused by this incident have now been resolved, the backlog of delayed email has now been cleared, and normal services have been restored.*

*We take any sort of disruption to our service very seriously. We have had teams of people working solidly to fix this problem, around the clock, since it began.*

*We made a decision to guarantee that email got through eventually – even if it took some time to work through the backlog – rather than just clear the queues and start from scratch, which would have caused even more problems for our customers.*

*During this incident, we configured and installed additional network hardware to permanently block the incoming spam onslaught, by creating a second tier of high performance email firewalling for our mail cluster.*

*This new system is capable of rejecting incoming spam and virus attacks of this sort on a sustained basis, and operates in addition to the anti-spam/anti-virus software already operational inside the mail cluster itself.*

*In a round-the-clock effort, a separate technical team worked to improve the efficiency of the underlying cluster, installing additional mail processing cluster service nodes and installing higher performance disk server systems. These efforts allowed the server to clear the backlog still faster, and will also provide sustained benefits in terms of future server performance.*

*We apologise to every customer who was disrupted by these email problems.*

*While the source of the problem was beyond our control, our response to it was as rapid, and effective, as humanly possible in the circumstances.*

*We assure you that we will invest whatever it takes to further harden our mail system against any future problems of this nature.*

As you can see, dealing with incoming spam and virus attacks can be expensive for Internet Service Providers and may even be beyond the capabilities of smaller companies.

#### **Rule 4: Choose an ISP who will filter for spam**

When choosing an ISP, check whether they filter for spam and viruses. Do they charge an additional fee? If so, factor that into your decision on which ISP to sign up with. How do they process spam? Is it delayed, held, or marked? The notes below explain each of these options and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

#### **Rule 5: Make sure ISP spam filtering is turned on**

Once your account is implemented, make sure that both virus and spam filtering have been turned on. You may have to opt in to the services and, as mentioned, doing so may incur an additional fee. It is nevertheless important to have this level of protection.

#### **How spam is processed**

Some ISP's add the word 'SPAM' at the beginning of the Subject line and allow the email through. By adding a filter/rule to your email client's sorting system, email so marked can be sent to a 'Junk' folder/mailbox immediately on receipt. Check that mailbox/folder every few days because some email that has been marked 'SPAM' may not be. The disadvantage of this system is that you still download the junk onto your hard drive. If you are on a small download quota, you may find this undesirable.

Others hold suspected spam on their servers for a week or two before deleting it. It is held so that you can again check whether any emails have been wrongly classified. Usually the system will allow you to release the email on a one-off basis without classifying it as non-spam. There will also be an option that allows you to add the sender to a 'white list' of people whose emails are always allowed through. Read any help notes that the ISP has provided and follow them carefully to get the maximum benefit from the system. The disadvantage here is that wrongly identified mail may be deleted if you do not check soon enough. Bear this in mind if you only use your computer infrequently, or it is out-of-action for an extended period.

Another technique, called 'greylist', that can be used at ISP level is to reject all unrecognised email at the first attempt and only allow it through if it is re-sent after several minutes, or even half-an-hour. This is based on the behaviour of many spamming servers which only attempt to send the email once. An undesirable side effect of this system is that email is delayed. If your waiting on an email detailing the next step in a sign-on process, that can be disconcerting.

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## SCCC newsletter

The Sunshine Coast Computer Club Inc. (SCCC), publishes an excellent online newsletter called "Bits'N'Bytes". It is available in both OpenOffice.org and PDF formats and their website explains how to download the version of your choice. Like myself, the Editor of Bits'N'Bytes uses a Linux-based system, but you don't need Linux to enjoy the fruit of his/her labours. You do, however, need OpenOffice.org, StarOffice or a PDF Reader installed on your computer.

From many years SCCC and HCUG have exchanged newsletters and, if you would like to read Bits'N'Bytes, send our Editor an email and he'll organise it.

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