StarTech

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Whirlwind

The Whirlwind computer was developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It is the first computer that operated in real time, used video displays for output, and the first that was not simply an electronic replacement of older mechanical systems. Its development led directly to the US Air Force's SAGE system, and indirectly to almost all business computers in the 1960s. During World War II the US Navy approached MIT about the possibility of creating a computer to drive a flight simulator for training bomber crews. A short study by the MIT Servomechanisms Laboratory concluded that such a system was certainly possible. The Navy decided to fund development under Project Whirlwind, and the lab placed Jay Forrester in charge of the project.

TECHFOCUS

Portable Applications

Carry your workstation in your pocket

AHMED ASHIFUL HAQUE

ONCE known as simple little gizmos that were basically just modern replacements for floppy disks, USB flashdrives have suddenly grown. Impressed with the ease and convenience of flashdrives, people started asking themselves, "I can now take all my files with me wherever I go, wouldn't it be nice if I could take all the software I use with me too?"

Developers realised this and got to work. Projects and websites sprung up in a flurry. Popular and widely used open-source software were targeted, trimmed and re-designed to run smoothly from a removable drive. Websites like PortableApps.com and UsbApps.com now offer portable versions of all the popular free software like Firefox, OpenOffice.org. You can now imitate your desktop environment with all your favourite software customised with all your preferred settings from your USB flashdrive.

Here in this article we take you through some of the most popular portable applications for your flashdrive. Almost all of them are available online.

Portable Firefox is a fast, easy to use, full-fledged web browser. It has all the great features of regular Firefox including popup-blocking, tabbed-browsing, integrated search, improved privacy features, automatic updating and more. Plus, it leaves no personal information behind on the machine you run it on, so you can take your favourite browser along with all your book-

marks and extensions with you wherever you go. If you spend a lot of time on computers that you don not own and long for the comfort of your Firefox that you have at home, get yourself a copy of Portable Firefox 1.5.

If you are looking for anonymous browsing, TorPark will give you an encrypted and anonymous IP browsing experience straight from your USB flashdrive. The browser is a combination of Tor (The Onion Router) and Mozilla's browser technologies. It sounds like a good idea when you are browsing on someone else's computer. It is available for download at torpark.nfshost.com

Portable OpenOffice.org is compatible (and, *arguably*, comparable) with Microsoft Office suite but without the price tag, lets you view and edit office documents on a computer with a USB port without installing anything on the hard drive. Mighty handy in situations where you don not have admin access or time to install the full version of the software. A 144MB version of free the office suite is now available for running from your USB flashdrive.

Portable Thunderbird is a safe and fast email client that is easy to use. It has all the great features of the regular Thunderbird including quick message search, customisable views, support for IMAP/POP, RSS and more.

Portable Sunbird is a standalone organiser and task management application built on the same technology as the Firefox. It is easy to use and

keeps your calendar and tasks up-to-date.

Portable NVU is an easy to use web editor similar to the Microsoft Frontpage or Dreamweaver. Some of its features include a FTP site manager, tabbed interface, CSS editing, standard-compliant markup, fully customisable interface, a built-in spellchecker and more.

Portable Gaim is an instant messaging client that works with AOL Instant Messenger, ICQ, MSN Messenger, Yahoo and more. You can log on to multiple services with the same program, no need to open multiple instant messengers. All your IM settings stays the same.

Portable AbiWord is a free word processing program similar to Microsoft Word. It has the ability to read and write a number of document types. It includes grammar and spelling checkers as well as an array of other handy features.

PStart is a simple tray tool

designed to run all these portable applications from the flashdrives or removable disks. The start menu provided is great for anyone who has a lot of portable apps on their portable drive. PStart is available at pegtop.net

None of these applications leave any information or files behind on the machine you run it on. For a more comprehensive list, head over to Wikipedia's list of portable applications at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_portable_applications

When you are away from your home or office, these programs might prove to be a real lifesaver. These programs do not just run from the flashdrives you can install them on any media that can

be written on to, such as USB harddrives or shared network drives. People are even installing them on iPods and MP3 players, which can easily be configured to serve as external PC disc drives as well as music players.
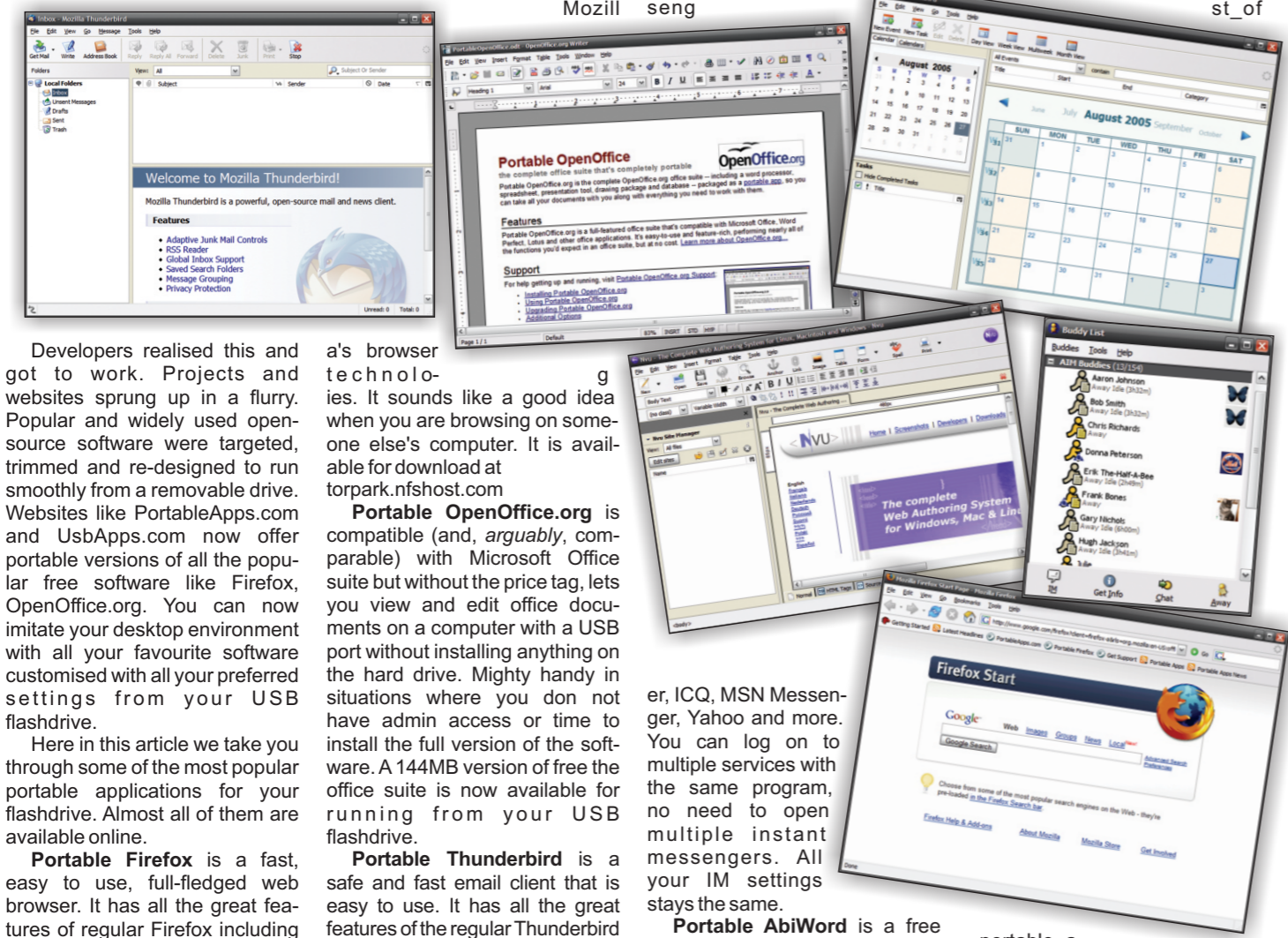
Obviously the portable apps are getting popular for the convenience they offer. You can now use the same programs on every computer. And not only your data, You get to keep your settings, your bookmarks, your address book, all correspondence and files on your flashdrive or even on your MP3 player. Work at home, work at the office, work at some relative's, any place there is a computer you are able to function the way you like it.

But there are some issues: flashdrives are only detected automatically by Windows XP, 2000 and ME. Earlier Windows versions require you to install a driver for the drive, meaning you have to carry a CD containing the driver when you are on the road. Which partially takes out the edge of portable apps.

A secondary issue: Older systems may have USB 1.0 hardware, which has much slower transfer rates than the current USB 2.0. USB 1.0 is painfully slow when it comes to loading software; although they work pretty well once it starts running. With USB 2.0 you would have no problems. You can upgrade to USB 2.0 by inserting a PCI card with more ports.

Nevertheless, portable applications are getting kudos from backpackers and travellers, students and soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. For a lot of people portable functionality is more important than nitpicky obsession with features of many mostly Microsoft programs.

One last note here: scan your pen drive for viruses periodically. In the *old* days, viruses spread through disks, not through the Internet. The same potential threat is there today when you move programs and files from computer to computer.

TECHNEWS

Lexmark rolls out six new products in Bangladesh

STARTECH DESK

LEXMARK, one of the most popular brands in printing solutions, have recently launched six new products for the Bangladeshi market, replenishing their already impressive product line.

The printers were launched by Vu Tran, country manager for Bangladesh, Lexmark, through a 'meet the press' event last week.

"Bangladesh is the fastest growing market and therefore, we dedicate our efforts at updating our product line in this market as fast as possible," he said.

He pointed out that the Lexmark brand had an upward market growth each and every year of their operation.

The growth is reflective of Lexmark's global market growth.

"Lexmark currently enjoys a market share of 29 per cent combining inkjet, laser and the All-in-One plus fax featured products," he said.

Tran cited that the current position of Lexmark has been achieved through product innovation and the usual traits of their printers like speed, reliability, quality and low acquisition cost.

Computer Source is the local distributors for Lexmark since 2003 and were the organisers of the launch.

"Around 80 per cent retailers of Lexmark printers are in IDB and Elephant Road Computer Market due to the brand's reliability and effective pricing. We are also capable of asking for prices which are at least 10 to 15 per cent lower than our competitors," Tran informed.

Also present at the event were Normar Ku, sales and marketing manager, Lexmark, AHM Mahfuzul Arif, managing director of Computer Source along with other partners and resellers of Lexmark printers.

The first product to be launched is the Lexmark Z735 for graphics and priting. The printer can efficiently print at a speed up to 15 pages per minute (ppm). It provides up to 4800x1200 dpi print resolution on photo paper. The printer can print 2200 pages out of one cartridge.

Next on the line is the Lexmark E342N, an affordable printer with unique networking features. Along with a built-in 10/100BaseTX

Ethernet card for network printing, it has a printing resolution of 1200x1200 dpi. The E342n can print at a speed of up to 30 pages per minutes (ppm).

The Lexmark X1195 is appropriately called the 'All-in-One' as it works at a speed of 14ppm black and 8ppm colour. The resolution is 4800x1200 dpi on photo paper in best mode & has a scanner with 600x1200 dpi capability. The scanner can be enhanced to 9600 dpi. There is embedded with Lexmark photo editor software which aids users to scan, edit and print images.

The Lexmark W840N is wide-format (A3, Ledger) performing at 50 ppm and a 625 MHz processor can be a reliable office machine. The printer has 1100-sheet input, offset stacking for standard output with optional 4,000-sheet input, and a 3,500-sheet finisher with multi-position stapling, and hole punch capability.

Last but not the least is the Lexmark T642 Multifunction Printer, providing the best value with 64MB memory, a standard 457 MHz processor, and 600-sheet input. The printer comes with optional wireless, security options, special applications and paper handling features. It can process up to 45 ppm on letter size paper.

Lexmark claims that the printer has a 225,000 pages duty cycle.

Seven best resellers of the country were later rewarded at the event.

TECHNEWS

QMS based QISS software launched

STARTECH DESK

QUALITY Institute of America (QIA), the premier consulting and training house of the country in the fields of quality, environmental and safety management systems, recently launched QMS based software, 'Quality Institute Software Solution' (QISS) in Dhaka, says a press release. The software was launched by Wali Alam, president, Quality Institute of America, Houston, USA.

The Director General, Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI), ABM Abdul Hawk Chowdhury attended the programme as chief guest. Chowdhury highlighted the need for adopting ISO 9000

QMS. He asked industrial manufacturers to fully implement the requirements of the standard so that they can obtain benefits from the system. He also asked the consulting and audit companies to maintain high level of professional ethics and excellence.

M Wazirul Alam, executive vice president, QIA presided over the programme. He spoke about the journey of quality in Bangladesh since 1994, and how QIA helped business entrepreneurs of the country in adopting the management system as a way of doing business.

In his presentation, President of QIA, Wali Alam described the common features of the software and explained

the benefits a company can get by using it. He said that the software would help management personnel to do their jobs without drudgery and reduce their workload. He explained that QISS would help companies to optimise the use of their resources in inventory, machinery, human resources etc, as well as maximize productivity and responsiveness to market demands.

The launching ceremony was attended by a good number of CEOs and top management personnel from many leading business houses of the country. A good number of software professionals were also present in the seminar.

TECHNEWS

The Godfather game hits market at last

A screenshot of character Don Vito Corleone (C) and associates from the new video game from Electronic Arts 'The Godfather The Game' based on the Paramount Pictures movie.

REUTERS, New York

ELECTRONIC Arts Inc. on Tuesday said its highly anticipated, but much delayed, video game based on the popular "Godfather" films is now in U.S. stores, and will debut in Europe on March 24.

The company saw its stock rise by 3.95 percent in early market trading to $54.75.

Last July it pushed back the launch of "The Godfather The Game," sending its shares lower, when it said the game would not make the crucial Christmas retail delivery window.

The game, created via a licensing relationship with Viacom Inc. affiliates Paramount Pictures and Viacom Consumer Products, is available for Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2, Microsoft

Corp.'s Xbox and also for personal computers. It is based on the Mario Puzo book and Paramount Pictures movie and features some of the voices of the original actors.

The Godfather game was developed by EA Redwood Shores which created other game franchises including Lord of the Rings and Tiger Woods PGA Tour.

PHOTOTECH

T-REX BOT

A Tyrannosaurus Rex robot walks onto the stage during its demonstration in the Earth environment Academy exhibition in Tokyo on March 26. The 3.5-metre-long and 80 kilogram dinosaur robot was developed by the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO)

PHOTO: AFP