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Volume 5
Issue 6
March 1999

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Year 2000 Special Issue

Due to the increased amount of calls inquiring how the year 2000 will affect computers, this issue is dedicated to the year 2000, and how to test your computer to make sure your ready for the new millennium.

The year 2000 problem has been written about to death, so I have tried to avoid it in this space. The problem - that programmers stored year data as two digits, assuming the first two numerals of a year would be "19" - affects big-iron systems more than PC users, but I'm confident the worst catastrophes will be avoided.

There are a few year 2000 issues that are specific to PCs and Windows, however, so here is a short list of steps you can take to head off difficulties.

The most common behavior that PCs will exhibit on Jan. 1, 2000, is that their BIOS chips (Basic Input/Output System - A chip that tells the computer how to act) won't roll over from the year 1999 to 2000. If this occurs in your PC, many versions of DOS will revert to the "year one" of PCs and think it is 1980. (This is a revealing illustration of what PCs would say about us if they could talk: They think history began in the year the first IBM PC was invented.) PCs that shipped before 1996 tend to have this glitch.

Having your computer think it is January 1980 means that documents that automatically insert dates will seem 20 years behind the times. Your scheduler program also won't remind you about your next presentation to the executive committee; the program will assume the meeting isn't happening for another 20 years.

Fortunately, the roll-over bug is easy to fix. Turn on your PC on Jan. 1, 2000, and see if it says Jan. 1, 1980. If so, set the date correctly and you're in shape for another century of trouble-free computing.

Windows NT 4.0 (with Service Pack 3 or later) automatically compensates for this type of error. But this doesn't necessarily mean the underlying BIOS problem is gone.

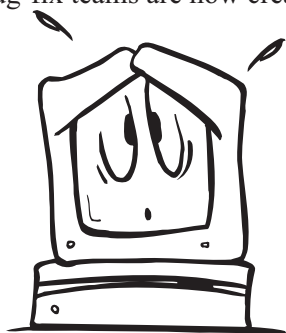
The other common behavior that Windows users will experience involves dates in spreadsheet programs such as Microsoft Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, and Corel Quattro Pro. If you have typed all your dates with four-digit years (such as 1/1/1999 and 1/1/2000), you should be fine. But if you have typed two-digit years (such as 1/1/99), you may be surprised at the way different programs handle the date.

For example, Excel 95 handles the two-digit year "29" as though it were 1929, but Excel 97 handles it as 2029. Quattro Pro handles "00" through "50" as 2000 through 2050, and "51"- "99" as 1951 through 1999.

Higher two-digit years are treated by these programs as being in the 1900s. Excel 95's century "window" is 1920-2019; Excel 97's is 1930-2029; and Quattro Pro's is 1951-2050

Microsoft has much more detailed information Excel and other year 2000 issues at www.microsoft.com/technet/year2k. And click "Quattro Pro."

Assuming civilization as we know it doesn't end on Jan. 1, we can get to work on the year 10,000 problem. That's because our millennium bug-fix teams are now creating programs that assume a year must have four digits.



This article was written by Brian Livingston and published in Infoworld

2000

The Year 2000 Problem

It may not be a problem for all, it will mostly affect those who use spread sheets and accounting programs. If your computer has this flaw, it wants to read the 00 (as in 2000-01-01) as 1900-01-01 or as 1980-01-04.

How to Test your computer for the Flaw:

Using windows '95 or '98 -

- 1) In File Manager choose Control Panel.
- 2) From Control Panel choose Time/Date
- 3) Set the date to 12/31/99 and the time to 11:59pm
- 4) Close and reopen the Date/Time dialogue box
- 5) The time should be 11:59pm and advancing. Wait until the date changes (should roll over into 1/1/00)
- 6) If the date doesn't change correctly, your computer isn't year 2000 compliant.
- 7) If the date is correct, continue test.
- 8) Close Date/Time dialogue box and Control Panel.
- 9) Create and save a file (Microsoft word, for example)
- 10) Enter anything into the file and select File and then Save As.
- 11) Select a Directory to save the file in and save the file as Y2kTest (double click on OK).
- 12) Exit out of program.
- 13) Open File Manager and select Directory where file was stored.

14) Select View from the menu bar

15) Select All File Details from the pull down menu.

16) Highlight the file you created (click on it one time)

17) Verify the date the file was created is correct (0/1/00). If incorrect (1/1/:0, for example) your PC is not Year 2000 compliant.

18) Delete the test file (select File, Delete, then YES).

19) Open Date/Time and enter the correct date and time.

Using DOS:

(Power off test)

1) At prompt, type C:>DATE 12-31-1999 (hit enter) and C:>TIME 23:59.

2) Power off the system, wait over one minute and power on the system.

3) Allow the system to boot and check the DOS date. It should read 01-01-2000. If it's not (it's usually 01-04-1980) your machine is not Year 2000 ready.

(Power on test)

1) At prompt, type C:>DATE 12-31-1999 (hit enter) and C:>TIME 23:59.

2) Wait for more than one minute, and check that the DOS year has changed to 2000.

3) Reboot the computer and check the DOS date. It should read 01-01-2000. If it does not, your machine is not Year 2000 Ready.

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