

VIRUSES, A REQUEST, AND REDIRECTION

Well, I have changed my QTH (my excuse for missing a month's Computer Corner), and all the pertinent data is shown above. To start this, the 20th in the series, I would like to share a short letter that I received in February.

Dear Stan,

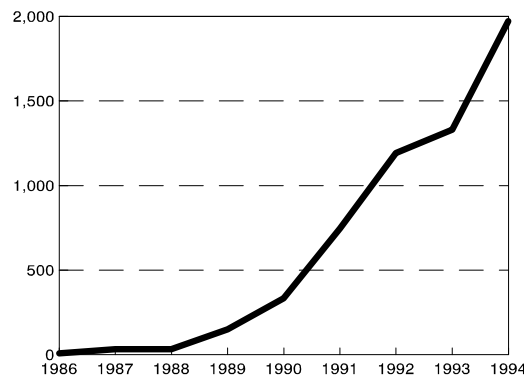
Read your computer article about virus protection and I took the doctor's advice a few weeks ago. Put VSAFE on both my PCs.

Last night I was checking directories on several disks and got the virus warning red screen. It didn't list which virus, but I detected and cleaned the disk.

It was a practice disk I got from an Executrain Course I took for Harvard Graphics 3.0. My computer is still healthy; thanks for the prescription.

73, Richard, K9GDF

So, at least one person, our own SM, took my advice and was saved the grief of a virus infection because of VSAFE. Are you likely to encounter a virus? Well, take a look at the graph below, which shows the approximate number of viruses authored each year since 1986 (data courtesy of Norman Data Defense Systems, Inc., 2775-B Hartland Road, Falls Church, VA 22043-3529). If the trend continues, your chance of encountering a virus nearly doubles each year. Take heed!



A request. In the move to new quarters, I have misplaced my copies of BSSS that carried Computer Corner #1 (NASA tech briefs), 2 (Floppy disk sizes), 3 (floppy disk compatibility, formatting), 4 (floppy disk formats) and 16 (Worrying About Memory). If anyone has those issues, I would appreciate borrowing them long enough to make a photocopy of the articles. Thanks!

Did you ever have to create a tiny file, lets say just a few words, in a hurry and had to load your word processor for the job? Did you know you could create, and even print your file right from DOS? You can do it by using redirection. Redirection is not a DOS command; it is just a technique by which you redirect the results of a DOS command to a different destination. For example, when you give the DIR command, the output of the command is normally sent to the screen. But if you wish, you can have the results sent to the printer, instead. For example, the command:

DIR > PRN

will send the directory right to your printer (you had better have it on, or you will get an error message!) and you will not see it on the screen. This is because the > (right carat command line operator) tells DOS

that you intend to redirect the output of DIR to PRN. PRN is a name DOS understands to mean the System Printer. Go ahead, try it. It works.

By the same token, you can capture the output of DIR in a file. The command DIR > MYFILE will create a new file called MYFILE that contains in it the output of the DIR command. I just did it.

Now, on to creating that tiny file without any word processor. Basically, you need a way to redirect anything you type on the keyboard into a newly created file. You can't use the right carat command operator (>) because DOS needs a little more information than that. The COPY command will do the trick. Don't worry about whether or not you have the DOS file COPY. You do. It is buried inside COMMAND.COM. Here is the command:

COPY CON MYFILE

You have told DOS to COPY anything on the CONsole into a new file called MYFILE. The CONsole normally has as it's input the keyboard, and it's output the screen. You have told it to also put the typed stuff in MYFILE.

When you give the command above, the cursor will suddenly appear on the next line, and nothing will happen. Now type:

These words are in MYFILE.

Next, you need to tell DOS you are done. Press F6 (or ^Z, which means hold the control key down while you press the letter Z). That ends and closes the file, and you will see the ^Z echoed on the screen. Now do a DIR. A new file called MYFILE is there. Give the command: TYPE MYFILE and its contents will appear. There you have it, a tiny file with "These words are in MYFILE." in it.

You can also change your computer into a typewriter with redirection! Give the command:

COPY CON PRN

and the cursor will pop down a line. Type a few lines of text using the ENTER key after each line. Now press ^Z to quit. How about that. A typewriter! Now, when you want to connect to Stan's packet station and you are tired of typing the path each time, you can do this:

COPY CON YAPP.DIR

and then this:

Stan WB9RQR v N9PBY ^Z

Then, when you are in YAPP, press Alt-C, and you will be prompted for a name. Type Stan, and YAPP will get the proper path from the file. Isn't computing wonderful?

By the way, the path shown above is correct if you are close. Otherwise:

WB9RQR @ N9PBY.EN63BI.WI.USA.NA

I would be pleased to hear from you if you like (or dislike) this series, or if you have special hardware or software topics you would like me to address. 73, Stan