

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 149. Remote Control Pro

- by Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR
715 N. Dries Street
Saukville, WI 53080-1664
(262) 268-1949
skaplan@mcw.edu

I hope you had a great Field Day!

Here is another program that does an elegant job of solving problems. Remote Control Pro (RCP) is an amazing program that, in essence, allows you to completely control one computer from another.

As I wrote in the last article on GoodSync, I have six permanent computers at my QTH. Three are in my office on the second floor of my home. My main machine is named Main32, a laptop on the desk next to it is called DellLT, and my wife's machine is named Nancy. Three more live in the basement, two floors below. One is dedicated to Winlink 2000 (named Wlink), another dedicated to general ham stuff such as PSK31 and the like (named Ham). A third machine is used in rebuilding computers for ARES/RACES (it always has its covers off and I often switch its hard drive temporarily with one I need to wipe or partition during the rebuilding process); that one is named Basementest. All machines are now hard wired to my router with network cable.

When there is an update of one kind or another, or a new software package, I install it on each of the office machines. Then I have to traipse down two flights of stairs into the basement to install the update on the three down there. Gee, it sure would be nice to be able to do all the basement machines from my main computer! RCP lets me do that, and anything else I want to do, without moving from my main machine.

To use RCP, one installs a server module on each computer you want to control, and an administrator module on the machine you wish to do the controlling with. When properly set up, the program will start with Windows on all machines and sit in the background, listening. Thereafter, it could not be simpler. In the RCP administrator, I double-click an icon that represents Ham, and suddenly my desktop is covered with Ham's desktop. Once it is there, my mouse moves Ham's cursor, and I can do anything from upstairs that I could do sitting at Ham's keyboard in the basement. I can install software, run a virus scan, or anything else. If I could physically see Ham's screen in the basement, I could watch the cursor moving around as it is controlled from upstairs. I can even restart the remote computer, or shut it down completely. Indeed, I often check Winlink remotely to see if there are any new email messages that have come in via Winlink 2000. I can even send one remotely. Amazing!

I was introduced to RCP by Jim Darrow (KB9MMC), Assistant Section Emergency Coordinator for Digital Communications. Jim is the Winlink 2000 guru for the state ARES/RACES Winlink program. Jim actually logs onto my Wlink machine remotely from time to time to install Winlink updates or to tweak my system as necessary to keep it in peak operating condition for the sake of the ARES/RACES network. It is astounding to look up from my basement workbench to see Wlink's cursor across the room flying around the screen as he works on my system from his house, about 40 miles away. Just amazing!

The authors have done a fine job in designing this software. It only requires about a 5 – 10% load on the CPU of the target (controlled) machine. The desktop you are controlling is updated on your machine thousands of times a second, so it is hardly perceptible that you are not sitting in front of the controlled desktop.

You can get the current version of RCP (3.7.0) from <http://www.alchemy-lab.com/products/rcp/>. You must pay for this version, however, at \$15 per pc for 2-4 computers. Version 2.7 of the software was

shareware. On the other hand, the version I am using (2.0.0, released in 2005) is freeware and seems to work just fine. You can get it at <http://remote-control-pro.lastdownload.com/>.

A fun and useful program! Must go now – I need to check to see if any email has come in on Wlink over the Winlink 2000 system (without going down to the basement). Happy Computing!