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TARGETED UTILITIES

PentaSuite 7 Offers Task-Specific Functions

By Stephen Bird, Contributing Editor

Many readers know of my interest in computer utilities generally and utility suites in particular. In the December 1, 2003, issue of *The Lawyer's PC* I talked about Symantec's Norton SystemWorks, System Mechanic 4 from iolo technologies and SystemSuite 5 from V Communications. I've recently discovered PentaSuite, which offers some of the same functionality as the other suites plus some new and different features that may make your computing life easier.

At the heart of PentaWare is the nicely designed PentaWare Manager which gives access to the various programs in the suite as well as access to Advanced Options, Help Files and the PentaWare Web site. While you can use the programs without the Manager, it does provide a convenient way for you to manage compressed (zipped) files/archives, view and edit files, encrypt (protect) files, copy files to a CD or DVD, create photo albums in HTML or PDF format, convert files from one format to another and e-mail files. A new product under the Tools section of the Manager, called PentaRename, is for the bulk renaming of files.

PentaZip 7 is, apparently, the core product on which the PentaSuite is built

In the never-ending quest to make your computing life easier and better functional, PentaWare adds variety to the array of utility suites.

In This Issue


Targeted Utilities: PentaSuite 7 Offers Task-Specific Functions - 1

TECHSHOW '04 to Present Two-Day Exposition & More Than 50 Educational Sessions - 5

Product Briefs - 12

LPC Newsroom - 14

Selected Reading - 15

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and can be purchased (\$40) separately. Version 5.1 received an Editor's Choice award from ZDNet (http://reviews-zdnet.com.com/PentaZip_5_1/4505-3513_16-9973536.html?tag=pdtl-list). It can be used to manage compressed files and archives by creating new ones, modifying existing ones, extracting files or just viewing them. Although the program refers to the most common form of compressing or "zipping" files, it can handle many other forms including ARC, ARJ, LHA, LZH, RAR and Zoo (which some readers may recall from the days of DOS computing). PentaZip also offers ZGB (ZipGigaByte) and ZIP64 compression, which allows users to create/extract archives larger than 4 gigabytes, as well as compressing single files that are larger than 2G.

PentaZip includes a Shell (menu options) when a user "right button mouse clicks" on a file while PentaSFX is used to create self-extracting files. Such files can be either useful or problematic if they are e-mailed to a colleague—useful if the recipient doesn't have a program to uncompress the file, while problematic if the recipient's Internet service provider (ISP) deletes all files with an *.exe extension, assuming they are viruses.

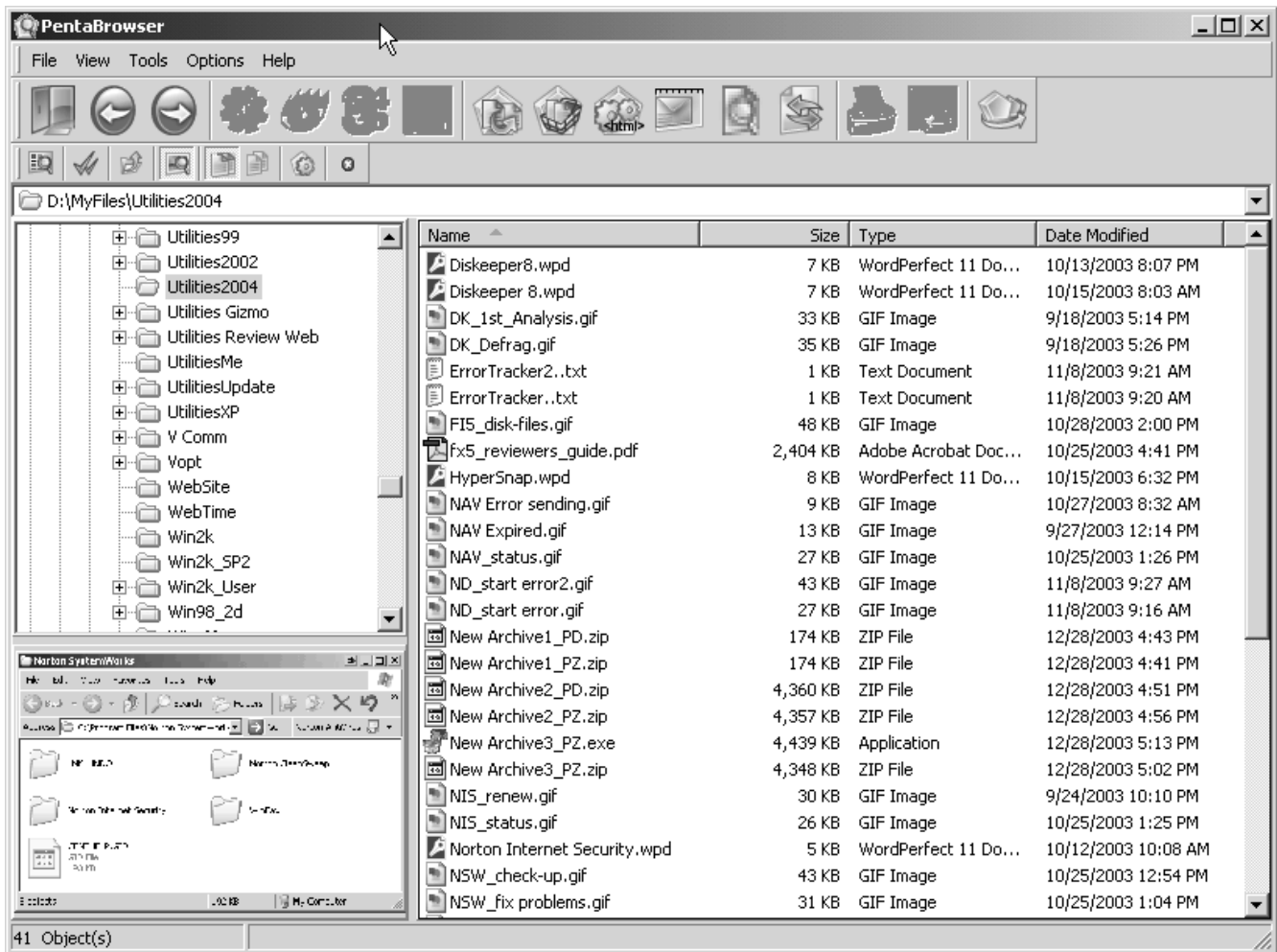
Other PentaZip features include scripts and a scheduler, which provides for the unattended running of scripts, batch files, and other programs, including recurring events.

PentaPGP is the interface for PGP encryption, with other settings (AES, Blowfish, Serpent, TDES, DES, Mars with Hash – Sha and Haval and 160–512-bit encryption) found in the Advanced Options section. The PentaSend Wizard helps users encrypt files using PGP; upload; e-mail; or save to a hard drive, CD or DVD. Users can use the simple encryption/decryption found in PentaZip.

PentaBrowser works something like Windows Explorer and my longtime favorite file manager, PowerDesk. PentaBrowser has a number of associated tools, including PentaView, PentaConverter,



PentaWare Manager

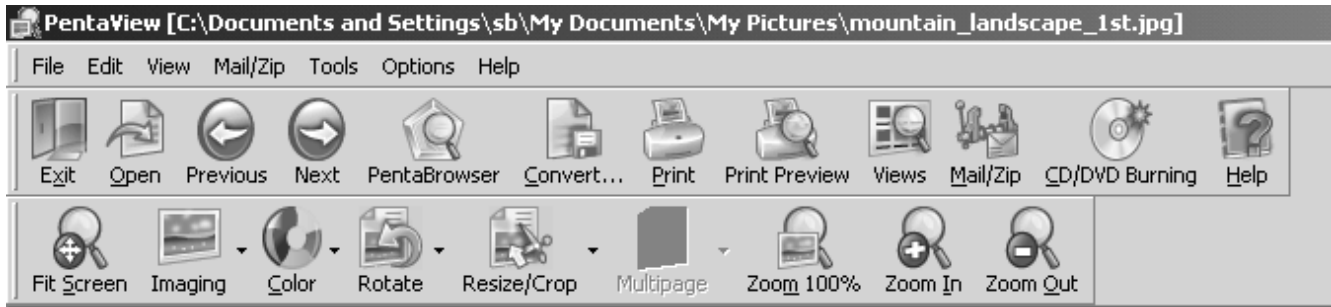


PentaBrowser

PentaCollector and PentaHTML, as well as a feature to copy files to a CD or DVD. Here is a brief description of these tools:

- * PentaView reportedly can show/examine files in more than 120 different formats;
- * PentaConverter converts files from one format to another;
- * PentaCollector select files for a CD/DVD, compressing, e-mail, and so on;
- * PentaHTML creates photo albums for Web posting, CD burning or e-mailing; a number of new features have just been added, including a preview of the Photo Album inside the program, better management of templates, and editing by using installed HTML editors;
- * PentaFTP is for uploading/downloading files from sites using File Transfer Protocol;
- * PentaDVD makes CD/DVDs (including from the command line with strong encryption), which is useful for batch file data back-up.

Law firms should find PentaDVD useful for back-ups, data salvaging, digital photography storage and viewing in court, as well as other presentations. Multi-volume compressed archives can be stored on a CD, DVD or the hard drive, and large files can be split across multiple CD/DVDs. According to the



The PentaView Toolbar

documentation, “It supports all major optical media formats currently available (CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD-RW, DVD+RW) and works with all recent standard models of CD and DVD burners. It even supports numerous anti-buffer underrun/overrun methods including ‘burn proof.’”

“PentaWare has successfully created a set of utilities designed for very specific functions. . . . [T]hese nicely integrated utilities are designed for managing archived (zipped) files, encryption, file viewing, DVD/CD creation and FTP transfers.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

After looking at PentaSuite, it is clear to me that PentaWare has successfully created a set of utilities designed for very specific functions. These are not general service utilities such as those described in *The Lawyer’s PC* last December, which are primarily designed for trouble-free computing; rather, these nicely integrated utilities are designed for managing archived (zipped) files, encryption, file viewing, DVD/CD creation and FTP transfers.

Overall, I like what the PentaSuite offers, especially its support for many different types of archive, encryption and file formats. It supports format conversion and integrates with antivirus programs. When I tested the speed/compression of PentaZip, I found it fast and offering good compression. I used PentaViewer, as well as a couple of other viewers, to successfully look at a variety of files; unfortunately, none could handle a Canon photo file with a PSF extension, although PentaBrowser and PentaView can handle Canon Raw Format (CRW) as well as a number of other digital photography files. It is likely more formats will be supported, given PentaWare’s openness to suggestions and ongoing program development.

PentaSuite costs \$100, which some may consider a little on the high side. However, by comparison, Norton SystemWorks costs \$70, System Mechanic 4 Pro costs \$70 and SystemSuite (which includes PowerDesk 5) costs \$60, while PentaWare says the component prices of popular brands are as follows: Compression \$30, Viewer \$50, CD/DVD Creation \$70, encryption \$55, and FTP file transfer \$40, for a total of \$245. Even if you don’t need all the components, PentaSuite is well priced for those you do require. A fully functional, 30-day demo and more information are available from www.pentaware.com. PentaSuite is for Windows 98SE/Me/NT/2000 and XP Home and Pro versions. ❖

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