



AllChars for Windows Better Than "Insert Symbol"

By Jim Gaffney, SWIPCC Member

Once in awhile, it's gratifying to run across a great piece of software that is freeware. **AllChars**, by Jeroen Laarhoven of the Netherlands, is such a package.

What does it do? It allows you to insert accented characters such as like é Û ç î æ and special characters like f ² % c £ ± ß 1/2 ¿ « » T , in most Windows programs. You may be

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From The DealsGuy, by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

Attention readers! I have posted a new Web page containing articles I've read in the newsletters I receive that I think people may be interested in. I have asked the authors for permission to post them and you're welcome to download them. [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] Editors are asked to send the author a copy of your publication if you use their article. I hope to post more, but finding an e-mail address for the authors is often difficult.

Eatin' Some Crow!!

In a past column I commented about a lack of voice tech support from Creative Labs, among others. Glen McLamore from Central Florida Computer Society e-mailed me to say that I was wrong about Creative Labs. He had talked to a technician for advice only a few days before, although he said he had problems negotiating the phone system. He forwarded their phone numbers to me to use. Perhaps I missed what I was looking for, but I did hear a distinct message saying they no longer took voice tech support calls when I tried it last summer. Good to know you can still get help.

More Crow, or Victim of Circumstances??

Last month I wrote about Address.com, a free ISP. I was originally going to write about 1stup.com, but when I looked it over, it was more of a network hosting service for free ISPs so I decided to write about Address.com. 1stup.com closed their doors shortly after I looked it over and I don't know which ISPs they were the network for.

Wouldn't you know, the very day I released my column, unknown to me, Spinway.com closed their doors and they are also a network hosting service for free ISPs, in fact, for Address.com and Bluelight.com. To survive, Bluelight.com bought some of the assets of Spinway.com to continue operating. Address.com emailed me to say they were shut down, but were negotiating for a new network provider. Things happen fast in the free ISP

February 6, 2001

Taylor Memorial Library

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

6 PM Windows ME Video from

Microsoft; 6:30 Q&A;

7:30 PM: Network 2 PC's at Home

by Gerry Schafer

From The Deals Guy, *continued from page 1*

tion if you do that kind of work. According to "Upperspace," DesignCAD will handle that type of drawing needs with ease and it's easy to learn and use. It's also a much better bargain, even at its regular price, but I have a "deal" for DesignCAD. You can actually own "DesignCAD" at about the price for only an upgraded version of that other famous CAD program.

Drawing and editing commands are intuitive and FAST. Drawing shortcuts, such as a right-click for snap and object menus, horizontal and vertical cursor mode, and cursor step sizes, allow you to make faster and more reliable drawings. 3D support is greatly enhanced and animations can be saved in .avi format.

This product offers so much that you should go to [<http://www.designcad.com>] to get the details. They're offering a great discount from February 1st through March 30, 2001; thanks to Jody Wallace, Public Relations Director. She recommends taking advantage of the "Bob Click Special" from Upperspace to enjoy 40% off your order. **DesignCAD 3000** – normally \$299.00 - Bob Click special - \$179.40. **DesignCAD 3000** combines powerful 3D solid modeling with easy-to-use 2D drafting. **DesignCAD 3000 Express** - normally \$129.00 - Bob Click special - \$77.40. **DesignCAD 3000 Express** offers easy-to-use 2D drafting and has all the same powerful features of **DesignCAD 3000**, minus the 3D solid modeling. **ViaPage** - normally \$49.95 - Bob Click special - \$29.97. **ViaPage** makes designing your personal web page or small business page simple!

Prices are in US funds. Uses Windows 9x/NT4 platform. Not sure about Win2K or ME. Order by phone/fax/email/mail. Phone: 800/233-3223 or 918/825-4844 Fax: 918/825-6359 Email: sales@upperspace.com Mail: Upperspace Corp. 600 SE 49th Street Pryor, OK 74361

Liven Up Your Web Graphics

Caligari Software has introduced "iSpace." At this writing I have purchased it, but have not yet tried it, but I have used Caligari's "TrueSpace," also an excellent product for giving graphics an impressive new look. I'll include some of their description below.

"For web designers and developers who want to differentiate the look of their Web site, iSpace provides a Web graphics tool that enables the creation of stunning 3D graphics. Working with traditional Web design tools, iSpace delivers the

full range of 3D capabilities in a familiar drag-&-drop environment. Unlike other 3D tools, iSpace works seamlessly with your main HTML editor (such as Front Page, Dreamweaver or Adobe GoLive) and uses a standard HTML format for input and output of the entire fully formatted page. 3D workspace is revolutionary . . . the rendering results breathtaking."

Check out [<http://www.caligari.com>] if you want more details on iSpace. I had a better special posted on my Web site that ran out December 15, 2000. However, they agreed to offer my readers iSpace at \$199.00, which is \$100 off the MSRP, from January 1 through February 28, 2001. Go to [<http://www.caligari.com/inspace/is1dg/>] to order. It uses Windows 95/98/2k/NT4 platforms. Win ME?? Be sure to check their recommended hardware.

Hey Browser --- Don't Do As I Do --- Do As I Say

Last month I wrote about Conversa's voice powered browser software. Now I'm introducing you to "Ivan," (Intelligent Voice Animated Navigator). I enjoyed their demonstration at Comdex with an "Ivan" walking around the booth. I watched as a demonstrator talked to his browser, asking for various types of Web sites, and even products. The browser responded saying "I'll get that" and listed sites catering to his request. Sometimes IVAN asked for more information.

IVAN is also said to think, understand what word sounds mean, learn your preferences, search by concept instead of just keywords, and is easygoing when spoken to in common everyday language. My wife sometimes tells me she is like that. With her though, I just keep saying "yes dear" to play it safe -- no commands! They say that VoiceSite is the One Voice technology that can actually make your Web site talk and be interactive, and is an easy-to-use Windows-based applet. It doesn't affect your existing HTML code, no tagging or special codes required and it's a GUI interface.

Find out more at [<http://www.myivan.com>] and [<http://www.onevoicetech.com>] where there may be free downloadable software, but it looks like PC only. The way they make their money is by registering a company's Web site to their search engine. I believe their browser voice software is free, but you need your own headphones. Check their system requirements. They'll also send disks for your user group if you ask.

When Ya Gotta Go, Ya Gotta Go (More Trivia)

You're walking on the sidewalks of New York and suddenly, you really have to find a bathroom, fast. What do you do - What do you do? I'm not

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From The Deals Guy, *continued from page 2*

talking about the American Express card for this one though. No, I'm talking about asking the net, that is, if you have a wireless Internet phone with you. Just use it to search out the closest bathroom in about 30 seconds.

Actually, your search is only possible in about a dozen major cities, but I look for the service by YadaYada.com to get better. You can thank [<http://www.besttoilets.com>] for putting this information together. However, I suppose it will be a while before you could ask about restrooms in YeeHaw Junction, FL. Best to use your "Road Whiz" for that one. You do have a Road Whiz for auto travel, don't you?

Get a Family For Free

My thanks to Lou Harris of Alamo PC Organization Inc., for forwarding this to me through Clark Bird, their editor. It is a news release from Ken McGinnis of Millennia Corporation. Check further, but I only saw it listed for PCs.

Legacy 3.0 is now FREE!

Yes, you read correctly. Legacy Family Tree 3.0, the most comprehensive and easy-to-use family history software, is now free for the taking. This is the entire program. Nothing has been held back and there are no restrictions. Everything is there, from world-class merging, search-and-replace and spell checking, to powerful research logs, reports, and sources.

"Legacy overpowers the competition with an unbeatable feature list. Beginning December 12th, 2000, you can download the Standard Edition of Legacy from our Web site at [<http://www.LegacyFamilyTree.com>]. There are no strings attached. It is our gift to the genealogy world. Please come to our web site and read all about this great program. You can also read about the new Deluxe Edition that is now available . . . Legacy Family Tree -Changing the World of Genealogy."

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [dealsguy@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns.



**"Information security is becoming a big problem here.
Do you still have my Captain Crunch decoder ring, Ma?"**

Visual Basic Scripting to Replace Batch Files By Art McRowe, ACPCUG

Visual Basic Scripting is a free, simple-to-use language from that great Redmond, WA source of largess, Microsoft. It was originally, and still intended, to be a simple way to create things on a Web Page. And it works well there as a client of Internet Explorer (v. 3 or later). It doesn't work on Netscape (because AOL chooses it not too).

Just as Internet Explorer can be a host, so can your Windows Operating System. WSH (**Windows Scripting Host**) shipped with Windows 2000, but it is available for downloading from the Microsoft Web Site. WSH is compatible with Windows 95, 98 and ME. Now Microsoft is infamous for shifting things around on their sites, but as of Friday, January 26th, it was available at: <http://www.microsoft.com/windows98/downloads/corporate.asp>.

Both WSH and Visual Basic Scripting are available there for downloading. Simply follow MS's instructions, but make certain you have a special folder set up for them. Installation is simple and automatically registers the special file extensions into your registry. (Therefore, back up your registry soon!).

Back to Basics (pun!)

This article really is concentrating on scripting as a method of replacing the old batch file language from DOS. If you're comfortable with DOS' batch file language, why should you change over? Well, if you can do everything you want with DOS, OK, forget scripting! But are you sure?

The heart of the power of VBScripting is the FileSystemObject. This is actually shared code with Visual Basic 6.0, VBA and even JScript (MS version of Java Script). For example, running under Windows 98 SE, DOS can't find the file System.dat in your Windows directory (yes, I know it can in Windows 95, but...). But the FileSystemObject can and does make copies. (What else it can do **W T H T H A T**

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AllChars, by Jim Gaffney

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thinking "Why do I need AllChars when I can do that in my word processing program by clicking on "Insert" and "Symbol"?" That's true, but can you do it in other applications? In your Email package? In Windows Notepad? And if you do, have you ever noticed how long it takes for the "Insert_Symbol" window to load—especially if you have numerous fonts installed in Windows? And do you, as I, find the shortcut keys to be something less than intuitive? If you need to need to place a capital Ñ in a document to a Spanish speaking correspondent, how intuitive is the Alt key plus 0209 (only on the numeric pad, if you please)?

AllChars works by installing itself to intercept the keyboard and monitor for the Ctrl key being pressed and released and then it interprets the next two keystrokes for their significance. The user does not hold down the Ctrl key, but rather strikes it and then follows with two other keystrokes from a well thoughtout and intuitive set to produce a special character. As an example— to generate the Ñ, stroke Ctrl, then ~, then N. Not very impressive? OK, how about Ctrl, then T, then M for T (the trademark symbol)? Or Ctrl, 1, 4 for ¼? Or Ctrl, Period, 3 to cube a number 3? It is even simple to enter a 72 temperature by using Ctrl, Period, 0 (zero). I thought about including a table of the possible keystrokes here, but why waste all that printed space? Jump onto the Internet and surf on over to <http://allchars.polder.net/ansitable.htm> to see a complete list of available key combinations.

While the application is running, it displays an icon in the tray area of the taskbar. Double-clicking that icon pops up a complete listing of key combinations.



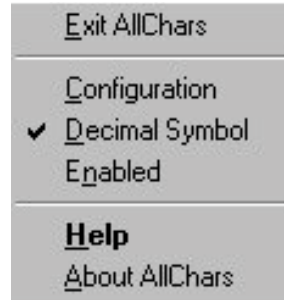
Right-clicking the logo displays a short popup menu that allows you to configure, enable/disable, or even exit the application.

AllChars is free for unrestricted use by individuals or companies. The zip file containing all necessary setup/installation files is 970 KB in size and it can be downloaded from <http://allchars.polder.net>. A 16_bit version for Windows 3.x systems (Version 1.22) is available as well as are custom configuration information/files for those needing Western, Eastern or Central European, Baltic & Turkic characters.

AllChar 3.0, By Jeroen Laarhoven, Ruurlosebeek 4, 8003 DV Zwolle, Netherlands

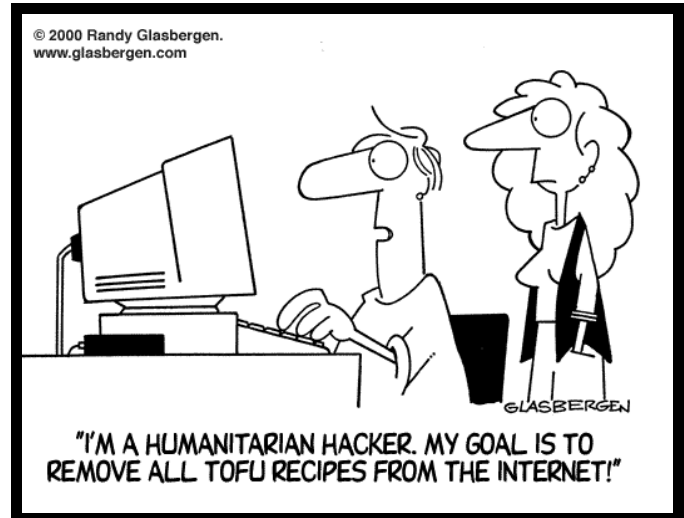
This article was reprinted from the Feb, 2000 issue of Throughput, the Journal of the SouthWest

International Personal Computer Club.



AllChars menu object.

[Ed. Simple to use and the price is right! Thanks to author Jim Gaffney!]



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is called programming.

Find some examples and modify them!

Towards that end, I am posting my Registry-Backup script file on the ACPCUG.org web site for downloading. The program works for me, and I see no reason it wouldn't work for you. But you will want to do something differently – maybe a lot differently! Change it and try it out. Make some small changes at first, then, when those work, make a copy! Then march on and make more bold changes. There are lots of things to change in my code. I am really embarrassed to throw it open to scrutiny, but then that's a way for me to learn, too. I would appreciate seeing your modifications and extensions! My e-mail is amcrowe@bright.net.

Finding code samples isn't easy! Some early Microsoft examples and an article in PCMagazine available at the ZDNet web site are all I've found. There are lots of web sites about using VBScript for web scripting, but very little seems to be available for batch file displacement.

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System.dat file, I don't really want to find out!)

What else can VBScript do?

Manipulate files, drives, and directories (folders) very powerfully!

Powerful date and time manipulations and calculations

Complete string manipulation capabilities

Can open program objects (programmer's lingo for an application) and set files, templates and engage application macros and the like. For example, MS provides an example of a small script-file that opens up Excel with a specific spreadsheet file, takes a chart in that spreadsheet and rotates it about an axis for your viewing. Think of the ease with which scripts can open up Word with specific documents and templates for different situations in a routine office environment. Much more powerful than any batch file.

Run independent programs like PKZIP or other command-line programs to compress files and data where you want and how you want. Actually, this is accomplished by another object, the wshShell object. The process of running one program from another is known as "shelling out". This is a capability that I am not yet proficient in, yet. My next project!

VBScript accepts and uses proper ActiveX controls. ActiveX controls (formerly called OLE control or Java control) are compiled objects that can dramatically extend the power of any script language and overcome scripting shortfalls.

Error checking is powerful – as the programmer who writes the script.

VBScript make, read, write and append text files.

What does VBScript NOT do?

Very little user interactive capabilities, limited to message boxes that stop the program flow. But after all, scripting languages are designed to operate unattended, and message boxes kill the flow. Not compiled – may seem slow, but I think it's very fast for what it does. And if your script needs the speed of compilation, then an ActiveX control is called for.

VBScript does not force you to write good error handling routines, that's up the programmer.

VBScript does not readily handle binary files and a lot of trickery is used to kludge

VBScript into doing it. It is expected that this condition will change, but for now, it hasn't been an important issue in replacing batch files.

Unfortunately, No IDE

OK, Microsoft purely chintzes on this freebie; there is no IDE (Integrated Development Environment) for the VBScripting. What to do? Any simple text editor will work. But since runtime errors in VBScripting are reported with line numbers, I highly recommend using a text editor which automatically keeps track of line numbers. One freebie I have written about in the past is *Metapad*. The last regular edition is downloaded from ZDNET.COM. There is an exciting beta 2.2 from the home site: <http://guesswork.org/metapad/>, which has many new features. Since I have not tried it extensively, I have to leave it up to you to obtain the tried and true MetaPad from ZDNET or the beta 2.2 for the Metapad homepage. Your choice. A lot of people just use Notepad that comes with Windows9X, but you'll be doing a lot of line number counting!

MOST IMPORTANT FILE: Vbscrip5.chm

Vbscrip5.chm is a compiled HTML help file that contains all the information you need (well, almost all) about everything in VBScript. Keep this file in the background ready to call up whenever you get stumped for the right, function, method, property, etc., etc. And it's loaded with examples, too. And it has a tutorial for us beginners. And it's well indexed! **Most Important File!!**

Some tips getting started:

Always begin your VBScript code with "Option Explicit"! This forces you, the programmer, to always declare your variables. Otherwise, you might declare "DIM myfile" and then refer to the misspelled "myfiles" in your code someplace, and VBS would just create a new variable "myfiles" on the spot, which would lead to an ultimate error later in the program. Believe me, with my lousy spelling and typing, I much prefer to get an error message for an undeclared variable "myfiles" at line number XXX, than some vague mumbo jumbo error later on in the program.

Make an outline! Programming lingo calls this pseudo-code. But it simply means forcing yourself to *write down (paper or computer file)* what you intend to do, in what order. Don't worry about jargon or the exact language. In fact, use the language you would talk to your spouse in explaining the project to her or him. This outline is then the starting point for filling in more and more details. This organization and translation process

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Akron-Canton PC Users Group
 PO Box 2151
 Akron Oh 44309-2151

Next Meeting - Feb. 5,
 Taylor Memorial Library
 Cuyahoga Falls, OH

First Class Mail

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Anticipate errors in disk and file tasks! For example, my program looks to a specific directory on the C: drive. If it's not there, the script makes the folder, and then it continues on and copies the registry files there. You might just as well prefer to put these files on a *removable disk*, like a CD-ROM, floppy or ZipDisk. That's fine; just make a routine to check the disk to see if it's ready (a simple Boolean property called *IsReady*). If it's not ready, notify the user to make it ready, or maybe for unattended use, to exit simply and leave a file with an error message.

March 5, 2001 Meeting,
 Stark Technical College, North Canton
 Main Auditorium
 Use Visitor's Parking Lot

Whatever you want!

I hope this article (and the preceding talk) initiate a series of interesting forays into Visual Basic Scripting that ACPCUG members find interesting and feel like participating in! Please write, e-mail with ideas, suggestions (and corrections, too)!

This club and its newsletter are for you!

Club Officers			
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Future Events	
Sat., Feb. 24th, 2001	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Temple off Arlington Road, Akron, OH
Sun., Feb. 25th, 2001	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds. Exit I-71 at Bagley Rd. going West
Mar. 25th, 2001	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Temple off Arlington Road, Akron, OH