

NORTON ANTIVIRUS

I have been a fan of Norton products for many years, I can remember buying Norton Utilities 5 in 1990 and being amazed at the power it brought to the DOS environment. I didn't know at the time that Peter Norton was actually getting fired from his job as utilities editor over at PC Magazine for essentially stealing a contributed program (filefind) that he ended up re-tooling and putting in with his utility suite. Bad Peter. He ended up selling off his company to Symantec.

I was disappointed years later (probably 1996) when I purchased Norton Utilities for Windows (obviously Peter's bad behaviour had little effect on the marketability of his name) and realized that the company had almost nothing useful in the package for making Windows run better, though the DOS utilities were still excellent. In fact, the "features" that the package added to Windows in reality slowed the whole PC experience to a crawl. I still tell clients not to waste their money on utility programs that add more to the overhead of running Windows than the apparent utility is worth. In particular, I distrust anything that is intended to run resident.

As far as anti-virus software is concerned, Norton's has had a pretty good history of providing a relatively stable product, with excellent virus database updates and online encyclopaedia. Their online repair database is the best out there. Sure, NAV 2001 had troubles protecting email without borking up your email client settings, and all versions have suffered the same problem as any anti-virus program, namely what to do with viruses that move faster than protective updates can be distributed. My favourite version has been NAV 2002 with 2003 as a somewhat distant second. As I write this, my NAV 2002 is running four processes for total RAM usage of 4.9 Mb. On a NAV 2003 system, there are 7 running processes using a total of 16 Mb of RAM. By comparison, the Word 2000 that I am using to write this is taking up 19 Mb RAM, and the Winamp that I am listening to Nirvana Unplugged on is using approximately 14 Mb RAM.

It is right to expect that your working applications should take more RAM than your resident programs. After all, what the heck is the PC for, if not to perform useful functions for you? Unfortunately, the code jockeys over at Symantec have elected to exchange their thoroughbred quarter horses for hippos, presumably for the purposes of keeping up the feature set. Norton AntiVirus 2005 is a giant, fat behemoth of a program that can cripple a P4-3000, I suspect that it slows down your Windows 15% on a fresh load. There are no less than 12 processes running with a memory footprint that can reach 40 Mb of RAM!

Now, to be fair, this system expense is all supposed to be for the purpose of protecting you from the entire armada of threats on the internet; worms, Trojans, dialers, adware, malware, plus the now almost forgotten virus. Does it work, or more properly, is it worth it? More next week....

If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email sean@intrex.ca or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.