

... **Investing** ... Continued

By comparison, screening for Canadian securities is quite limited. There are very few choices, free or otherwise. There are MSN Moneycentral at <http://ca.moneycentral.msn.com/investor/finder/custstoc.asp> ; pre-set screens at the Stingy Investor at <http://www.ndir.com/SI/strategy/screen.shtml> and some minimal screening capability at the Globe and Mail at <http://www.globeinvestor.com/static/hubs/filters-historical.html>

The next group of screening tools are the "semi-free" ones at discount brokerage website. As with the free sites, the US screening tools are more powerful than the Canadian screening tools although the Canadian tools are adequate. As with the free sites, the brokerage screening tools have different characteristics and you should design screens for each if you have access to more than one brokerage firm. My experience has been that TDWaterhouse and BMO Investorline have good US screening tools and acceptable Canadian screening tools. As a result, I have not looked at other discount brokers. Samples of the TDWaterhouse stock screen pages can be found at <http://www3.sympatico.ca/moongateca/TEMP/TDWaterhouseSearch.pdf>. Any good online brokerage should have similar tools. Information on Canadian online brokers can be in The Globe and Mail's 2004 On-line Broker Report at <http://www.globeinvestor.com/series/brokersurvey/>

The list of commercial stock screeners is extremely small. I have only been able to discover two. One is NAIC Stock Prospector from iClub Central at [http://www.iclub.com/products/stock\\_prospector.asp](http://www.iclub.com/products/stock_prospector.asp). It's quite reasonably priced at US\$59 and has a free demo available at <http://www.iclub.com/downloads/ProspectorSetup.exe>. User support from iClub Central is excellent. Data is separately available at US\$25 at <http://store.yahoo.com/betterinvesting/comgroupmem.html>. The data is provided by Standard and Poor and is thus of the highest quality. The search criteria are extensive across both US and Canadian stocks. Data is updated electronically each weekend. For about C\$115, this is an excellent screening solution available. The other stock screening tool comes from the American Association of Individual Investors at <http://www.aaii.com/>. At US\$198 for AAI members and US\$247 for non-members, it is more expensive than Stock Prospector but it also offers more. Although there is no demo, there is a full money-back guarantee: "You may confidently order any AAI product in our Store to review in your home. If any materials fail to live up to your expectations, we encourage you to return them for a full refund."

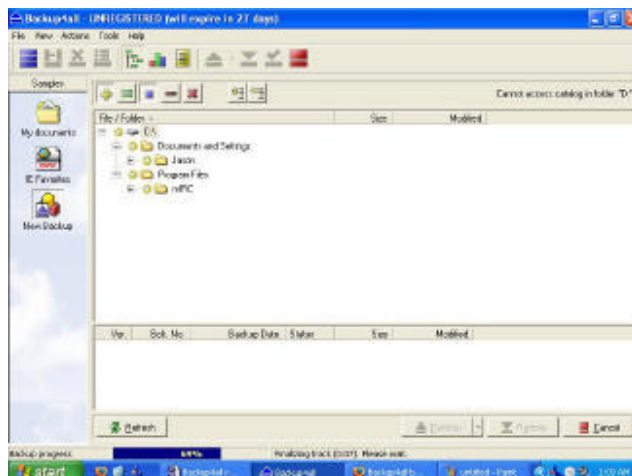
In the next article, I'll look at the commercial analytical software that exists as well as some of free spreadsheets that exist.

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## Backup4all: It Could Keep You Out Of The Doghouse

Review by Jason Wallwork

Computers are great, but we put a lot of trust in them. Think about it. Nowadays, we'll do business via email, store hundreds or thousands of pictures from our family albums and do our personal chequing and save it all on the computer. What will happen when your hard drive gives up the ghost (not if, but when) and not all of it is backed up? If you're smart you'll prepare for it and not have to cry over spilt data.



Backing up everything can be so time-consuming it's no wonder we either don't do it at all or often enough. IT professionals will store backups onto tape usually at night and in an automatic fashion. Most of us can't afford tape backups and aren't familiar with the complicated backup software they use. Something simpler is required.

With new software and the inexpensiveness of CD and DVD burners, backup is easier than in the old days. I recently tested Backup4all, which comes in three versions - Mirror (\$25 US), Classic (\$30 US) or Professional (\$45). Specifically, I looked at the Professional version. All the versions run under Windows 95, 98, Me, XP, NT or 2000 though I tested it under Windows 98. The difference between the versions is the types of backup that are supported.

To understand the different versions, you need to understand the different types of backup. A mirror backup is the type that everyone thinks of when they hear of backup. It copies everything in the directories and files that you choose. It's slowest to backup because everything is backed up each time from scratch whether it's changed since the last backup or not. The advantage is that restoring files is the easiest. A mirror backup is just like the original - no compression is used. A full backup does the same thing as a mirror backup except that compression is used.

A differential backup relies on a previous full backup and only backs up those files or folders that have changed since then. It's faster than a mirror or full backup since you're only backing up what has changed. However, a restore operation takes longer since you need a full backup plus the differential backup to restore everything.

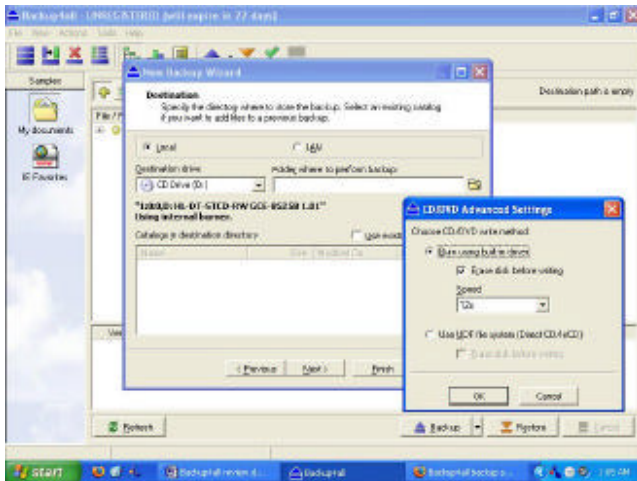
An incremental backup only checks which files have changed since the previous incremental backup. If this is the very first incremental backup, then it looks for files that have changed since the full backup. It's fastest to backup, but slow on restore operations.

Backup4all Mirror version only supports mirror backups; the Classic version supports mirror and differential backups. Only the Professional version can do incremental backups.

What can you backup to? Backup4all can use network drives, zip drives, CDs (CD-R/CD-RW), DVDs (DVD-R/DVD+R/DVD-RW/DVD+RW) using internal drivers. If your device isn't supported you can backup your files to a folder and use your regular CD/DVD burning software to write the backup. I only have a CD burner so that's the one I could test.

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Doing a backup is easy with the program's backup wizard. Choose the directories, even specific files to backup, choose where to, and what type of backup you'll use. If you use CD-RWs, you are even given the option of erasing it before doing the backup. However, if you're doing a differential backup or an incremental backup, it'll let you do this but you won't get what you expected. You'll instead get a full backup, something that isn't obvious at first. Tech support has assured me that they're addressing this in a future release. You can choose to do the backup right away or schedule it for later (and on a regular basis). An excellent feature is that Backup4all validates the backup data afterward to make sure it can be trusted. In my tests, I was able to backup and restore full and incremental backup data successfully several times.

Tech support was both friendly and helpful. I recommend this program without hesitation if you need a backup solution. More information is available at <http://backup4all.com>. Claudiu Spulber, with Backup4all writes: "We're using ShareIt as an e-commerce partner and... instead of printing in the newsletter the entire address of the coupon you can give my email address and they can contact me directly and I will redirect them to ShareIt."

The discount will be 20% and they only have to say that they're part of the Kawartha Computer Club.

Of course, if you want I can give the same discount for people that are referred by the KCC members."

Claudiu's email address is [cs@softland.ro](mailto:cs@softland.ro). Feel free to share this offer with friends (just tell Claudiu you were referred by a KCC member or read the article here).

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## From Muppets To Mayhem: SIGGRAPH 2004 Conference

By Timothy Everingham, TUGNET  
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SIGGRAPH, the Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques hit the Los Angeles Convention Center in a wild and woolly way this year.

You could see how the visual effects on The Lord of The Rings movies were done to the latest in virtual swim gear. Even Gonzo from the Muppets showed up. Some really great technology that has or will wind up in products for the professional and consumer were shown.

Technology has come to the point where it is now possible to get motion picture quality animation rendered in real time using dual processor computers with high end professional graphics cards; something that you can order from an online catalog from IBM, HP, or Boxx Technologies (\$8,000-\$20,000). However, a lot of the software to do it is propriety right now and sometimes uses specialized interface hardware.

Someone that is uniquely using this technology is the Jim Henson Company. They are most widely known for the Muppets; but increasingly going into other areas of film and television, including the science fiction series Farscape. They have come up with the Henson Digital Performance Studio. With it you can manipulate a feature movie quality 3D character as you would a theatrical quality puppet and composite it against a rendered 3D feature movie background and have it all rendered in real time, with the characters and backgrounds near photo-real.

Demonstrated at SIGGRAPH was the NVIDIA mermaid Nalu interacting with a live audience. The mermaid was controlled by two puppeteers in a connecting booth, one of them supplying the voice of the mermaid. At a special session on puppetry and computer graphics, where the Muppet Gonzo made a surprise appearance, this technology was shown how it has been used in film and television production. Many directors prefer this method because unlike having live actors interacting with 3D characters that will be added later, the puppeteers can be directed right on set to produce the character's actions just as you would with a live actor and showing up on the director's monitor screen in real time along with the live actors. That means the director has much more control and has a much better idea of what the results will be before even getting to post production. Henson developed this system with the assistance of NVIDIA.

Each SIGGRAPH Conference has an Emerging Technologies area. This is where bleeding-edge technology is shown as being applied in some interesting ways. It is one of the highlights of the show. They had a series of self propelled floor tiles that would anticipate your movement as you walked. The one you were on would move in the opposite direction and the next tile would place itself where the old tile was, creating a situation where you would continue walking, but never go anywhere. This has its application in virtual reality applications where a person would in reality walk, but remain stationary in the simulator. This allows the simulator to remain relatively small, but be able to have the person feel as if they are moving through a large simulated environment. This so called CirculaFloor is from the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

Also there was Swimming Across the Pacific where a person is suspended by a hang-glider harness, wears a head mounted display and eight tracking sensors. It is a virtual swimming simulator, where the person experiences swimming in virtual water. They plan to use it as an entertainment device, an exercise machine, for education, and to be part of a program to treat people who are afraid of the water. They call it Swimming Across The Pacific because they plan to install it in an airplane traveling across the Pacific Ocean and have people use it while in flight. The developers are from the University of British Columbia and the Nagoya Institute of Technology.

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