



The Old New Thing: Practical Development Throughout the Evolution of Windows

By Raymond Chen

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"Raymond Chen is the original raconteur of Windows."

--Scott Hanselman, ComputerZen.com

"Raymond has been at Microsoft for many years and has seen many nuances of Windows that others could only ever hope to get a glimpse of. With this book, Raymond shares his knowledge, experience, and anecdotal stories, allowing all of us to get a better understanding of the operating system that affects millions of people every day. This book has something for everyone, is a casual read, and I highly recommend it!"

--Jeffrey Richter, Author/Consultant, Cofounder of Wintellect

"Very interesting read. Raymond tells the inside story of why Windows is the way it is."

--Eric Gunnerson, Program Manager, Microsoft Corporation

"Absolutely essential reading for understanding the history of Windows, its intricacies and quirks, and why they came about."

--Matt Pietrek, MSDN Magazine's Under the Hood Columnist

*"Raymond Chen has become something of a legend in the software industry, and in this book you'll discover why. From his high-level reminiscences on the design of the Windows Start button to his low-level discussions of GlobalAlloc that only your inner-geek could love, **The Old New Thing** is a captivating collection of anecdotes that will help you to truly appreciate the difficulty inherent in designing and writing quality software."*

--Stephen Toub, Technical Editor, MSDN Magazine

Why does Windows work the way it does? Why is Shut Down on the Start menu? (And why is there a Start button, anyway?) How can I tap into the dialog loop?

Why does the GetWindowText function behave so strangely? Why are registry files called "hives"?

Many of Windows' quirks have perfectly logical explanations, rooted in history. Understand them, and you'll be more productive and a lot less frustrated. Raymond Chen--who's spent more than a decade on Microsoft's Windows development team--reveals the "hidden Windows" you need to know.

Chen's engaging style, deep insight, and thoughtful humor have made him one of the world's premier technology bloggers. Here he brings together behind-the-scenes explanations, invaluable technical advice, and illuminating anecdotes that bring Windows to life--and help you make the most of it.

A few of the things you'll find inside:

- What vending machines can teach you about effective user interfaces
- A deeper understanding of window and dialog management
- Why performance optimization can be so counterintuitive
- A peek at the underbelly of COM objects and the Visual C++ compiler
- Key details about backwards compatibility--what Windows does and why
- Windows program security holes most developers don't know about
- How to make your program a better Windows citizen

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Raymond Chen writes The Old New Thing, one of today's most influential technology blogs. A programmer at Microsoft Corporation, Chen has been involved in the evolution of Windows for more than a decade. He also writes *TechNet Magazine's* Windows Confidential column and has been known to make appearances at technology events.

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Much ink is devoted to describing the "how" of using and developing software for Windows, but few authors go into the "why." What might appear at first to be quirks often turn out to have entirely logical explanations, reflecting the history, evolution, and philosophy of the Microsoft Windows operating system. This book attempts to provide knowledge not so much in the form of telling what needs to be done (although there is certainly plenty of that, too) but rather by helping to understand why things came to be that way. Thus informed of the history and philosophy of Windows, you can become a more effective Windows programmer.

The emphasis here, then, is on the rationale behind Windows. It is not a reference or even a tutorial, but rather a "practical history," taking a conversational rather than didactic approach in an attempt to give you an appreciation for the philosophy of Windows through a series of brief, largely independent essays. You can therefore skip freely to topics of momentary interest (or technical expertise). Essays have been grouped into general themes, and there is the occasional sequential pedagogical treatment when a topic is explored in depth; even in those cases, however, the topic is confined to a single self-contained chapter.

Writer and commentator David Sedaris is often asked whether his stories are true. He responds that they are "true enough." Like David Sedaris's stories, the material in this book is also "true enough." The focus is on the big picture, not on the minutiae; on making a single point without getting distracted by nitpicking detail. Key details are highlighted, but unimportant ones are set aside, and potentially interesting digressions may be neglected if they do not serve the topic at hand.

The primary audience is technology-savvy readers with an interest in Windows history. About half of the essays require no programming background. Most of the remaining topics assume a basic background in software design and development, although nothing particularly advanced. Topics specifically related to Windows programming assume reader familiarity with Win32 user interface programming and COM. The table on page xxv provides a breakdown of the chapters for nonprogrammers and for general programmers who do not have an interest in Win32 specifically. Of course, you are welcome to skim chapters not explicitly marked as of interest to you. Perhaps you will find something interesting in them after all.

What will you get out of this book? As noted previously, the primary goal is to convey the philosophy and rationale behind what might at first appear to be an irrational design. You will also understand that when something can't be done in Windows, it's often for a good reason; and you will gain an appreciation of the lengths to which Windows goes to preserve backward compatibility (and why it's important that it do so). And if nothing else, you will be able to tell amusing stories about Windows history at cocktail parties (that is, cocktail parties thrown by other geeks).

Much of the short-essay material here has already appeared in one form or another on the author's Web site, The Old New Thing (<http://blogs.msdn.com/oldnewthing/>), but is substantially supplemented by new material better suited to book form.

Visit the Web page for this book (www.awprofessional.com/title/0321440307) to download two bonus chapters, "Tales of Application Compatibility" and "How to Ensure That Your Program Does Not Run Under Windows 95." Think of them if you like as the book version of a movie's unique and insightful deleted scenes. The Web page also contains the code samples from the book as well as errata.

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