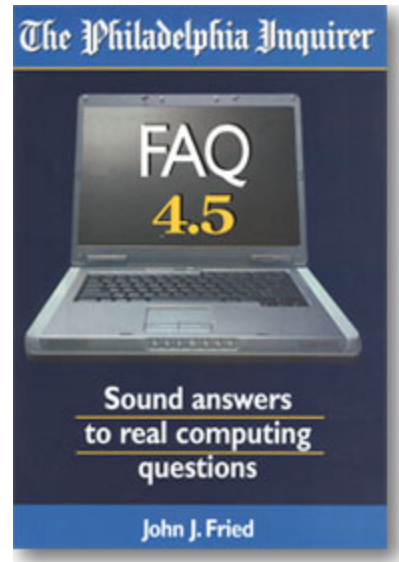# FAQ 4.5

Sound Answers to Real Computing Questions
John J. Fried

From the Foreword

In the seven years since the FAQ column made its debut in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, I have been inundated with thousands of questions from harassed, confused and, sometimes, angry computer users.

The book in your hands is the fourth collection of answers to frequently asked questions. These books are like no others you will find in a book or computer store. The advice they contain is based on the real problems people face when they sit down at their PCs.

As a result, this new volume, as well as the rest, is likely, to a far greater extent than conventional help books, to provide the solutions you need to alleviate many of your computer-induced miseries.

Many of the items in this book contain references to specific pages in computer-related Web sites. However, please remember that Webmasters are always messing with their sites. Thus, you may find that a link cited in this book may not get you where you want to go. One possible remedy is to enter the address of the site itself. That is, if a link to the mythical page http://www.helphere.com/printers/oddities.htm results in an error message or a blank page, try entering only http://helphere.com and then searching for the specific information you seek.

From Chapter 1

Error Messages
Runtime Error

Q: Halfway through using Microsoft Word, I get a message that there has been a runtime error in Microsoft Visual ++. What am I doing wrong?

A: Nothing. Suspicion should first fall on add-ins or plug-ins that have insinuated themselves into Word.
A plug-in is a program that works within Word to enhance its capabilities. An optical character reader, which converts scanned documents into editable text, is one example.

Anyway, open Word and make your way to Templates and Add-Ins in the Tools menu. Look for entries in the "Global templates and add-ins" section.

One approach is to just delete everything listed in that box, especially if items you do not use are listed.

But it may be wiser, once you have seen what plug-ins you have, to back out of the Templates and Add-Ins section and click on Tools/Options.

In Options, click on the File Locations tab. Highlight any add-ins and templates you see listed, and move them to another folder. You do that by clicking on the Modify button and then just choosing a target folder in the window that opens.

Whether you delete or move add-ins and templates, finish by closing Word. Then bring it back up and see whether you can get through your work without the runtime error message.

If not, something else may be afoot. Update your virus definitions and scan your computer for viruses. If that does not help, search for and delete the Normal.dot file, then close and restart Word to create a new one.

URL Open Error

Q: I am getting a message that there has been a URL Open Error. After I close it, I can proceed. But what does it mean?

A: One of the first things to suspect when your efforts to reach specific Web sites go awry is "malware," also known as "scumware" or "spyware."

Same holds true if your browser starts acting squirrelly, like giving you a contentless space near its top edge; when it does not act squirrelly, but refuses to take you where you want to go; or when there are strange messages like the one you got.

These illicit programs are meant to survey your Internet meanderings and turn them into marketing information, to take you to sponsored sites, or to influence the results of your searches. If your computer seems to be dragging its feet and you have already reduced the number of programs running and defragmented your hard drive, then malware should be considered a second-tier suspect.

Two excellent programs for discovering and removing scumware are Spybot and Ad-Aware. Run them regularly--at least once a week--especially if you spend a lot of time on the Internet.