FIGHTING THE COOKIE MONSTER

I discovered a free program that fills an important security need. Consequently, the column I promised on a second backup program will have to wait one week.

There’s something going on with cookies. I’m not sure what, but I guarantee you - somebody’s up to no good.

No, I don’t mean computer cookies - although that’s another story. I mean the cookies you get in the store on the bakery; they’re getting bigger. Am I the only one noticing this? I haven’t seen anything about it in the media - it’s as if there is an organized effort to completely ignore this phenomenon. We all know how the cookie industry has handled its opponents in the past, and I have no desire or intention of ending up in a steaming batch of shortbread, if you know what I mean.

I’ve taken what I consider to be reasonable steps to protect myself. I have all my findings and documents on a PC - several, in fact, with backup copies of the hard drives in safe keeping, with instructions to my attorneys to release the information if anything happens to me.

But my preferred option would be not become a martyr to the cookie industry; I’d much rather live to fight other battles.

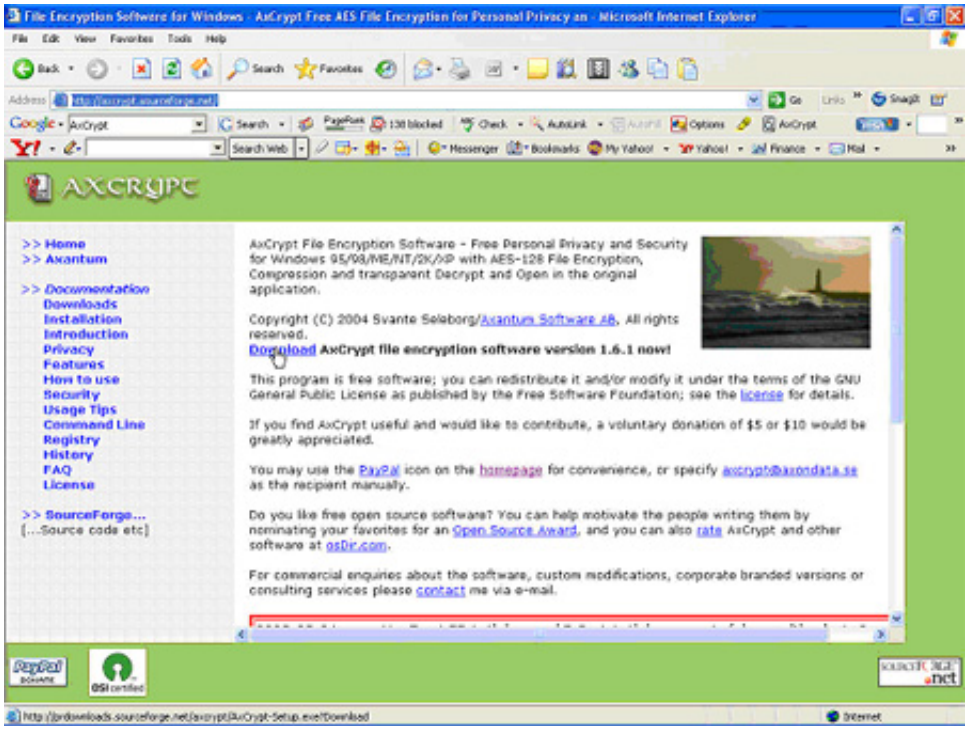
So I’ve begun protecting my files with a great application I’ve discovered, one that will enable you to keep any secret exactly that - a secret, one that no prying eyes will be able to get at.

Keeping my notes, charts, databases, development projects and contacts to myself is essential. You never know who is watching - whether on a network or over the Internet.

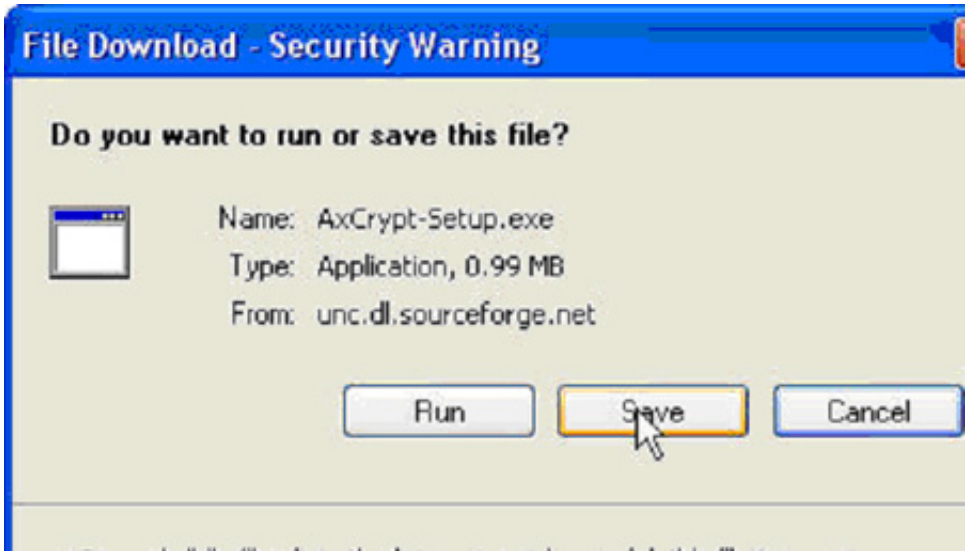
With all the sophisticated search tools today, it’s a simple task for a programmer to write a script to search for data, whether text or otherwise. There is one sure way to keep prying eyes off your files, and that’s to encrypt them, with the strongest most invulnerable encryption possible.

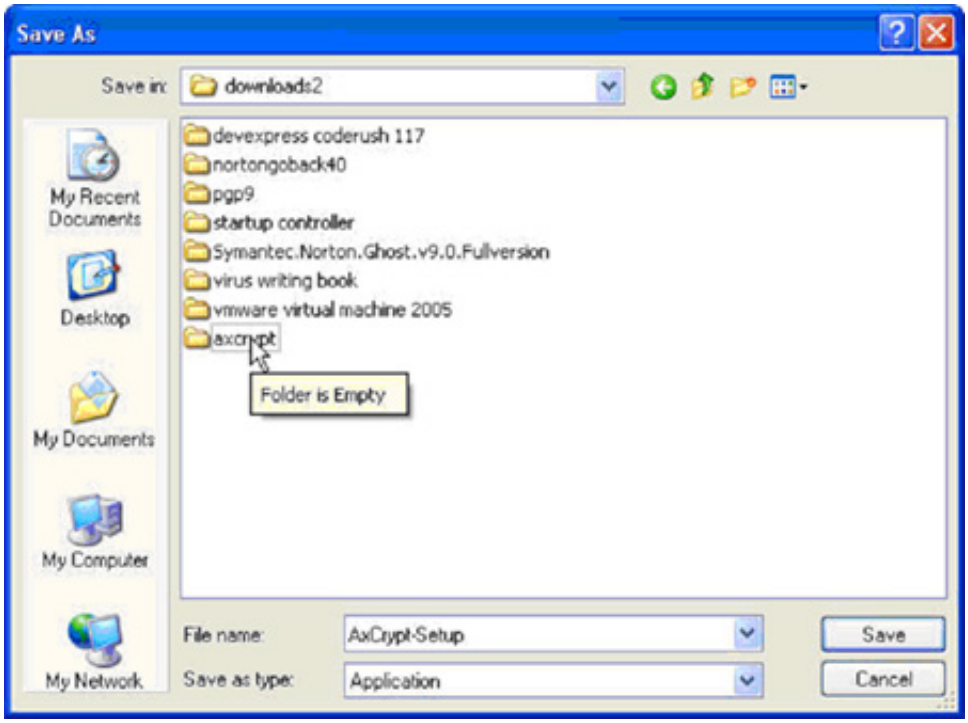
You can do it for free. I recommend you download and install AxCrypt, a program based on the strongest encryption model available - AES-128 File Encryption and Compression).

Download AxCrypt from http://axcrypt.sourceforge.net, for all Windows from 95 on.



Click where the cursor shows on the screenshot. You'll see four download screens in a row. Of course, you can choose a different folder as the target.


File Download - Security Warning
Do you want to run or save this file?
Name: AxCrypt-Setup.exe
Type: Application, 0.99 MB
From: unc.dl.sourceforge.net
Run
Save
Cancel


Save As
Save in: downloads2
devexpress coderush 117
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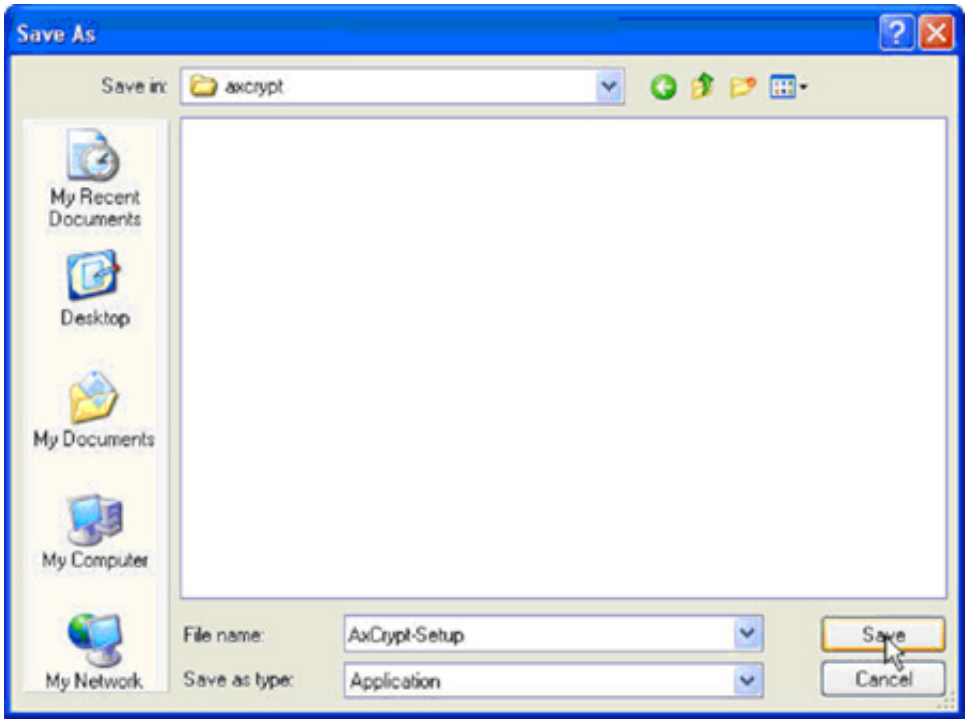
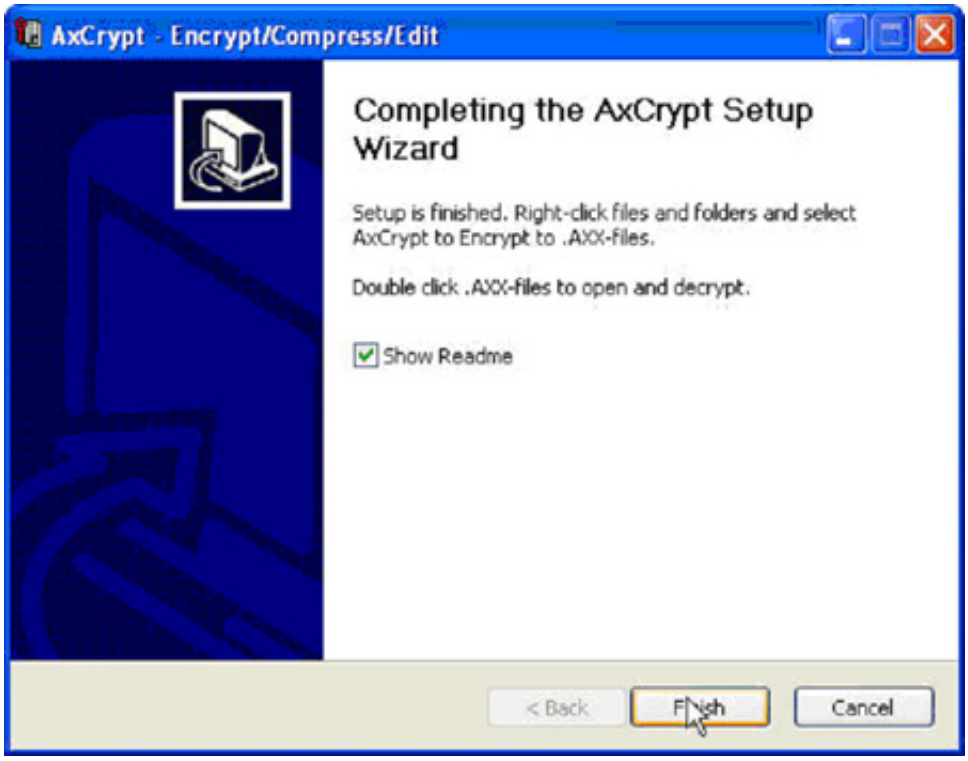
startup controller
Symantec.Norton.Ghost.v9.0.Fullversion
virus writing book
vmware virtual machine 2005
axcrypt
Folder is Empty
My Recent Documents
Desktop
My Documents
My Computer
My Network
File name: AxCrypt-Setup
Save as type: Application
Save
Cancel

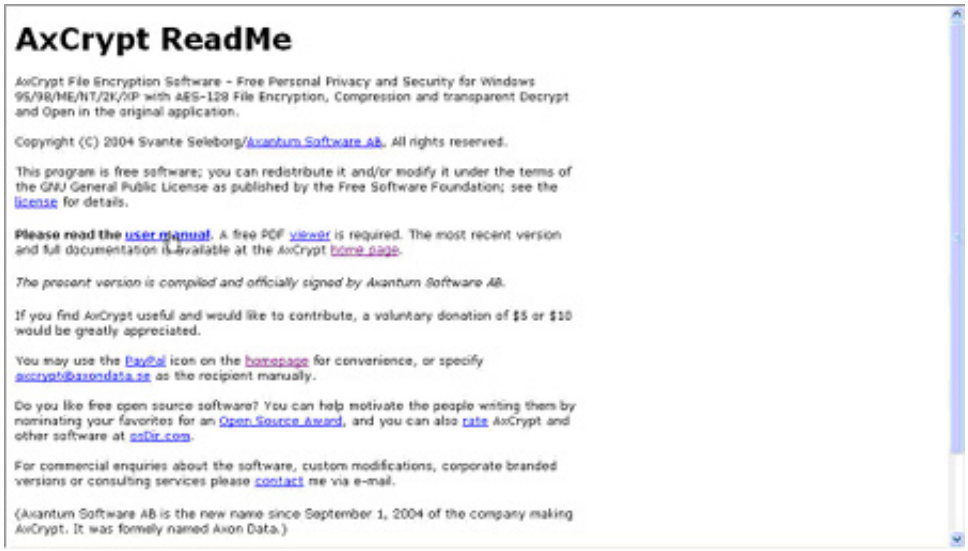


The download with a broadband connection only takes several seconds. Navigate to the target folder and double click the setup icon.

You'll go through a typical installation process, ending with the screen:



It's important you read the Readme file, so don't uncheck it before clicking 'Finish'.



AxCrypt ReadMe

AxCrypt File Encryption Software - Free Personal Privacy and Security for Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2K/XP with AES-128 File Encryption, Compression and transparent Decrypt and Open in the original application.

Copyright (C) 2004 Svante Seleborg/Axantum Software AB. All rights reserved.

This program is free software; you can redistribute it and/or modify it under the terms of the GNU General Public License as published by the Free Software Foundation; see the license for details.

Please read the user manual. A free PDF viewer is required. The most recent version and full documentation is available at the AxCrypt home page.

The present version is compiled and officially signed by Axantum Software AB.

If you find AxCrypt useful and would like to contribute, a voluntary donation of $5 or $10 would be greatly appreciated.

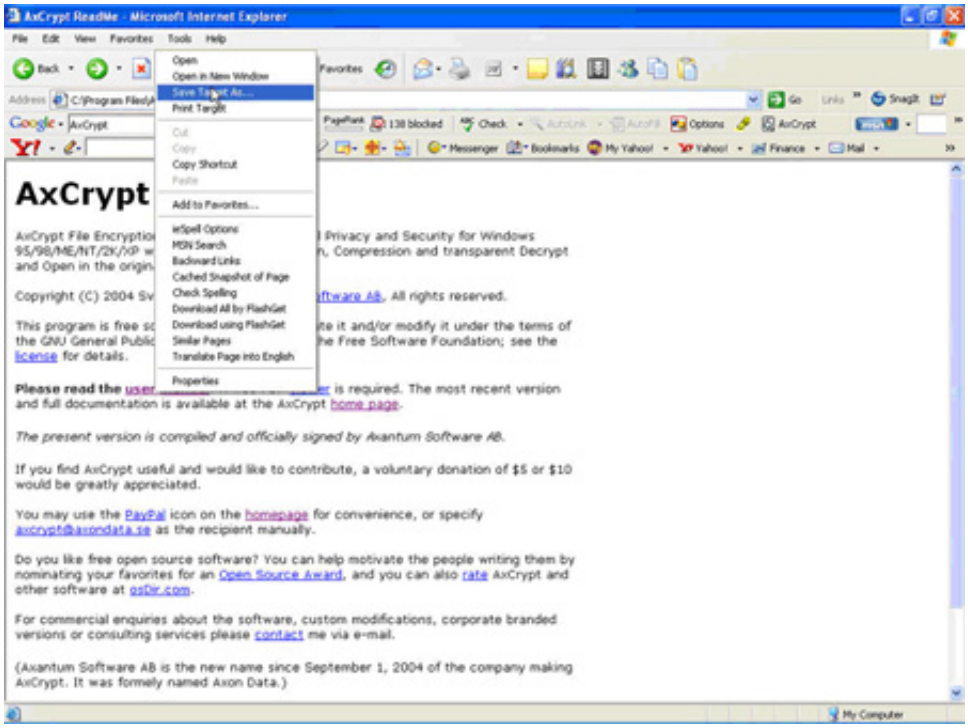
You may use the PayPal icon on the homepage for convenience, or specify axcrypt@axondata.se as the recipient manually.

Do you like free open source software? You can help motivate the people writing them by nominating your favorites for an Open Source Award, and you can also rate AxCrypt and other software at osDir.com.

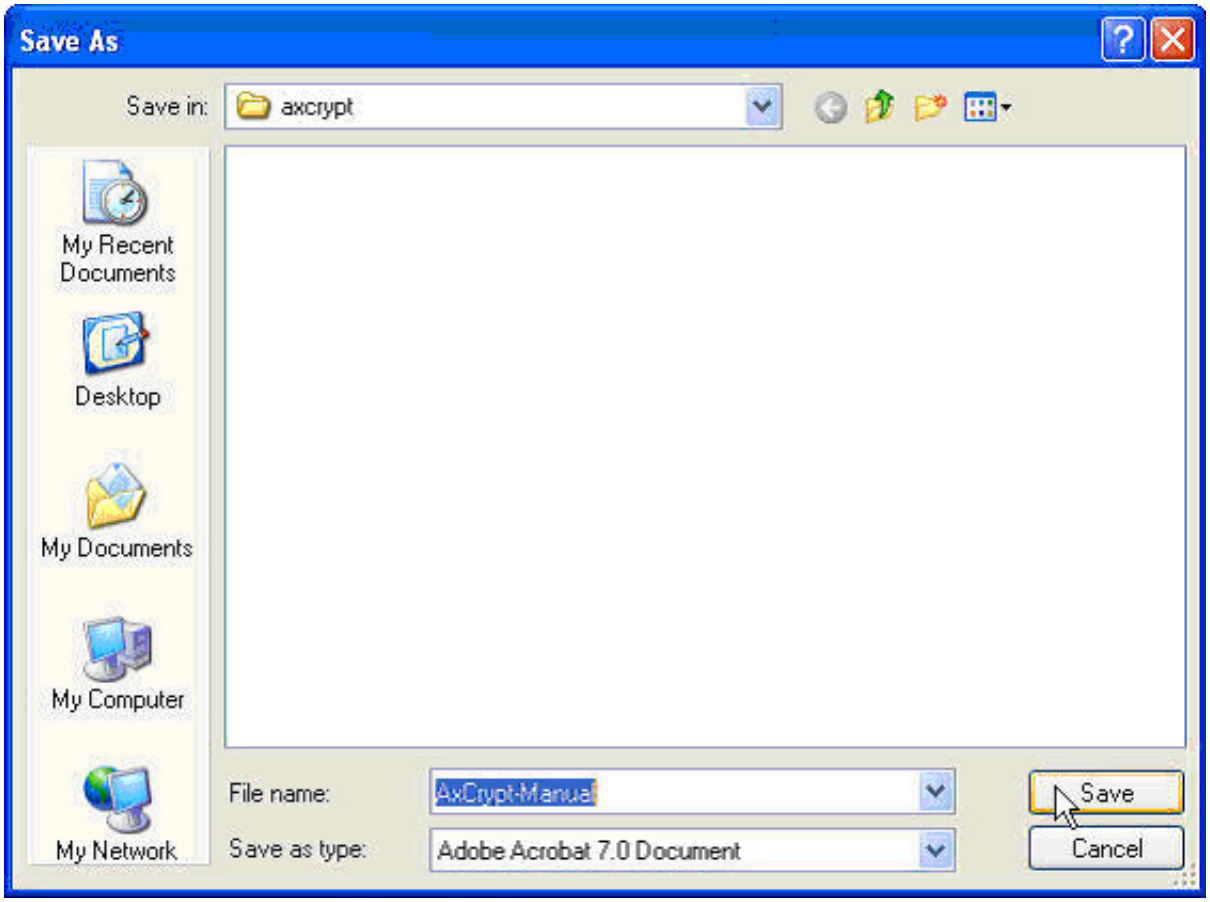
For commercial enquiries about the software, custom modifications, corporate branded versions or consulting services please contact me via e-mail.

(Axantum Software AB is the new name since September 1, 2004 of the company making AxCrypt. It was formely named Axon Data.)

If you click 'user manual' it'll appear online. Instead, you'll want to download the manual to refer to at your leisure. You may do that by right-clicking the user manual, which will bring up a context menu.



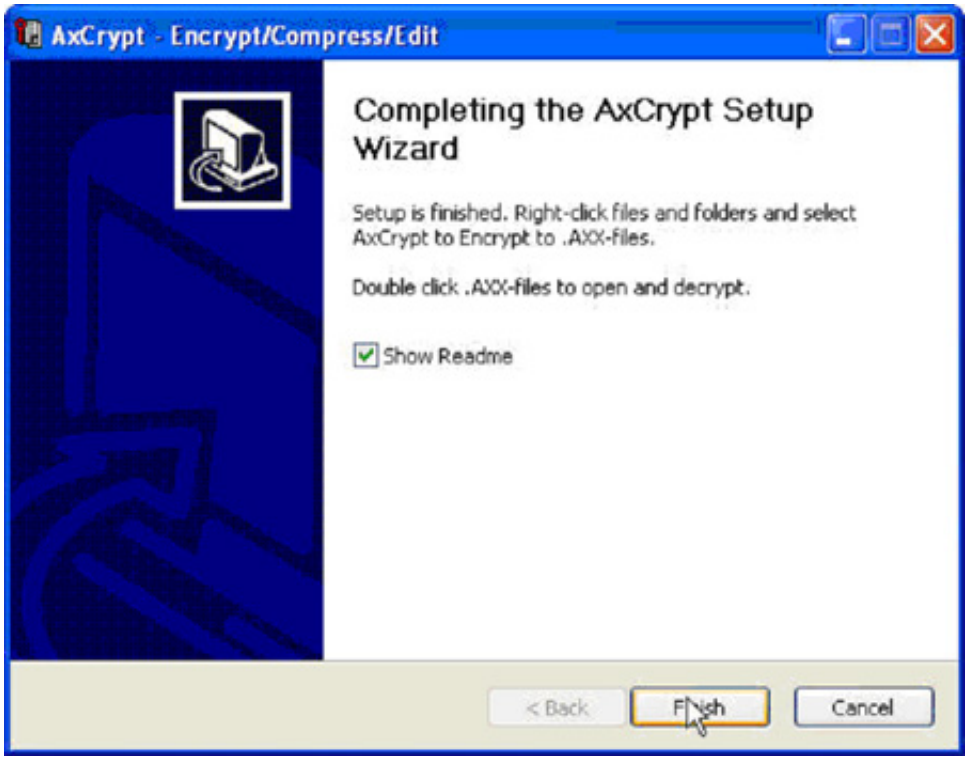
Select ‘Save Target Asï¿½



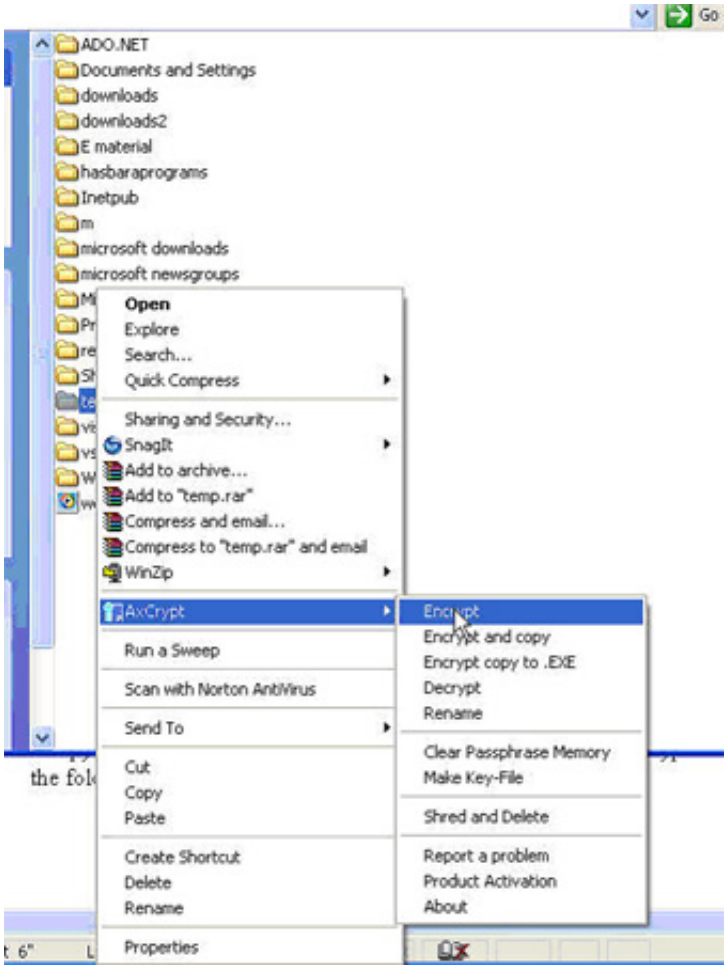
And save it to the same folder you saved axcrypt to.

To install AxCrypt, simply double-click the setup program in the folder to which you downloaded it.

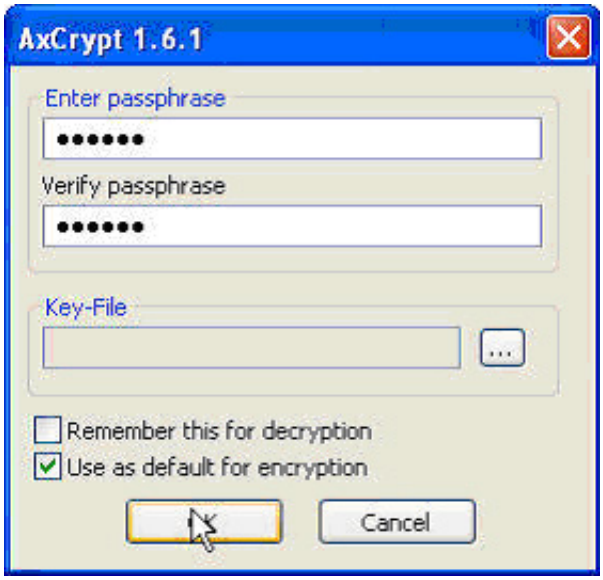
You'll begin a typical installation process, whose final page is:



Once installed, AxCrypt integrates into Windows Explorer. I suggest you first try it with a copy of a folder, in case you make a mistake. In my case I encrypted c:\temp. Select the folder or file and right click.



Next you get two choices of how to encrypt the file or folder.



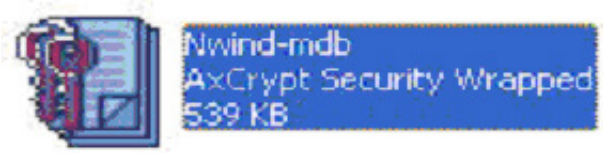
I used a short passphrase here, just for a test. In practice you should use a long, complicated passphrase, with small letters, capital letters and numbers. Be sure not to forget it. There is no back door. If you forget the passphrase, you are out of luck.

Write it down, gtve it to one or two trusted friends or relatives, and that's that. Since it is very unlikely any one of us can remember many long passphrases, I chose to use this as a default. The one I'm going to use in the future is something I'll never forget.

The alternative is to let AxCrypt generate a unique key-file for each encryption. In my mind, it would be a nightmare keeping track of folders, files and key-files.

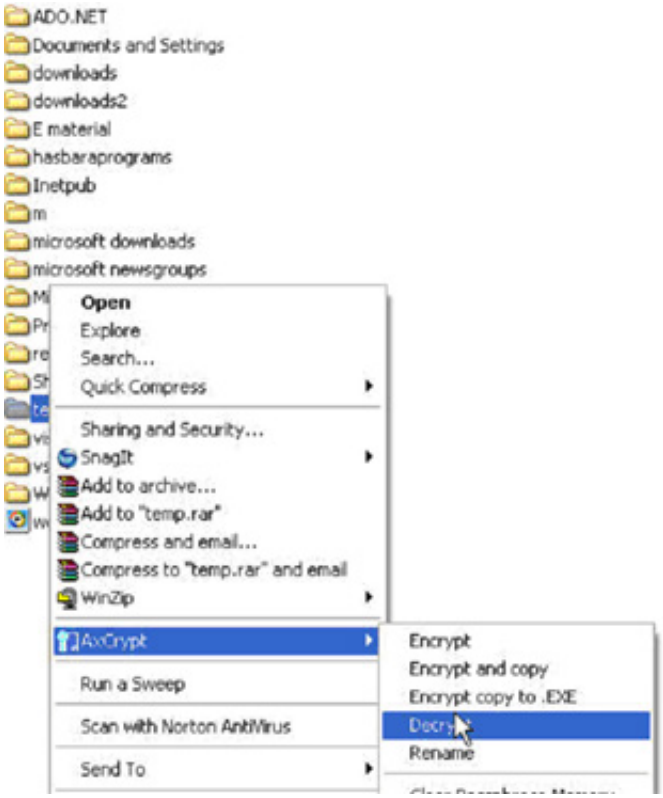
I suggest you don't check the box to remember the passphrase for decryption. Anyone can automatically decrypt your folder if you check the box.

Let's look inside the folder after it has been encrypted.



You can see it's an AxCrypt file.

Now we'll reverse the process and decrypt c:\temp



And behold. If we open c:\temp, we have the original file.

There's a lot about AxCrypt I don't yet know. And there are programs such as CookieCop that allows you to approve or disallow each cookie. However, it's terrible intrusive and slows down your computing, as well as itself slowing down your computer.

Last week I got an email asking me if Norton Ghost performs incremental backups. An incremental backup is just appending the changes since the previous backup. Yes it does. It's a real time saver and I should have mentioned it.

Spysweeper 4.0 is out. It got rave reviews. Version 4.0 is much faster, gives more information, and reviews say it catches even more intruders.

Dennis Turner