

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

MAPS AND TRAVEL ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

May 2005

\$4.00

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GPS Unit Comparison
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Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Organization is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.



To register for a Class, Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:

Registration number **210.736.0080**

If you **didn't** receive your issue of *PC Alamo* or have questions about your membership e-mail:

Sandra Bloom at: membership@alamopc.org

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Learning Center number **210.736.0700**

If you have comments about classes call

John Gaddis **210.494.9449**

If you have questions about advertising call

Joseph de Leon
send e-mail to editor@alamopc.org

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

Meetings

Monthly program meetings are normally held the second Monday of the month. Meetings are held at the Crossroads Convention Center (across from the Learning Center) located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

The Board of Directors meets normally on the Tuesday prior to the monthly General Meeting. The BoD meets at the Alamo PC Learning Center located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 6:30PM. Any changes will be announced via the Voice Mail/Hot Line (736-0700) and on the Calendar of Events. Open to all members.

New Meeting Location:
Crossroads Mall
(see page 6 for map of Crossroads Mall)

May. Calendar

Tuesday May 3, 2005
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday May 9, 2005
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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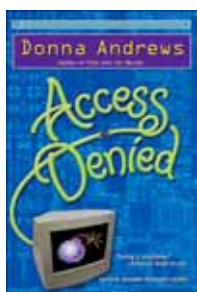
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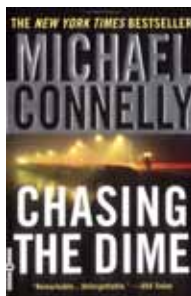


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PC Alamode

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PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS: Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication. e-mail to:

editor@alamopc.org

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		Per insertion		
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Half pg. (3 1/2" w x 9 1/2" h)	144	138	130	121
Quarter pg. (3 1/2" w x 4 1/2" h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 1/2" w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37

*Consecutive months

**To be paid in advance

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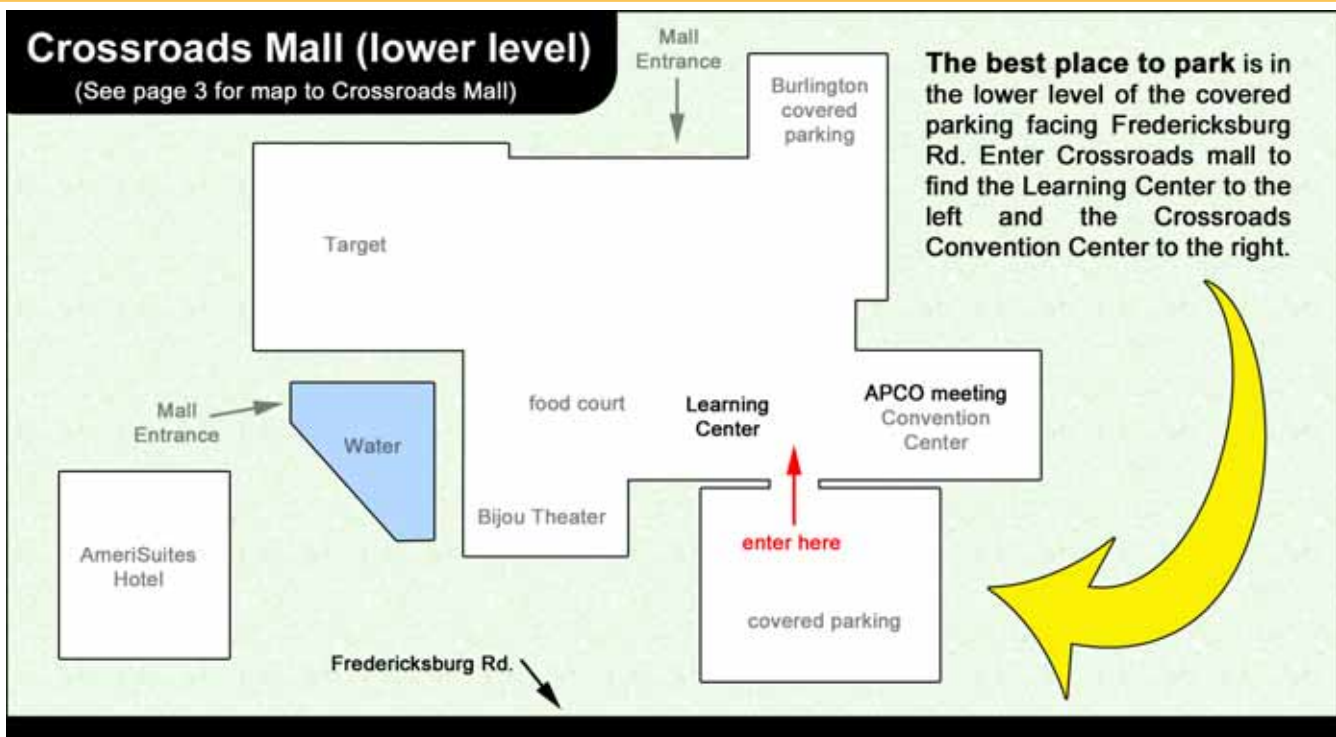
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736-0700

FAX 736-0032

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For Study Groups and Classes or for SeniorComp classes, phone: 736-0080



PC Alamode Photo Contest

1st Runner Up
"Hanging Around"



1st Place Winner! (cover) "Bonnet Boots"

Submitted by V. P. 'Swami' Swaminathan

This picture was taken at the Wild Flower farm near Fredericksburg in March 2005. Swami used a Nikon Coolpix 990. The image is unedited.

Submitted by Charles du Val

Charles entered a picture of his dog hanging out on the kitchen gate. The image was taken with a Sony P10 Digital on March 19, 2005.

PC Alamode Photo Contest Guidelines

1. Submit your JPG file by E-mail to <editor@alamopc.org>.
2. Each member may submit one entry per month.
3. Image will need to be cropped to 4.25" wide x 5.5" tall if selected for the cover.
4. Observe the due date – 10th of the month before publication date.
5. Only the first place winner will be notified.
6. Submit original images only.



This month's PC Alamode is themed around maps and travel. We have a great collection of software and hardware for your travel needs. There are a variety of really interesting products that make traveling easier. From software related to buying airline tickets, to small gadgets that are indispensable while traveling. Summer is right around the corner, so the time is right for a trip.

Photo Contest

You may notice that there is only one runner up shown for the May Photo Contest. Only two Alamo PC members submitted images for consideration. Since many of you will be traveling over the next few weeks, please take a moment to send in a picture of your trip.

Product Review Request

We are currently in need of a new product review coordinator. Susan Ives is currently serving as Interim Product Review Coordinator, but if you are interested in taking over the job, please contact Susan at suives@texas.net. Susan has many products that need to be checked out for review.

Please volunteer to review a product. You get to keep the product you review, in exchange for a short article about your experience using the product. This is one of the ways Alamo PC can influence product developers make better products. What's more, your feedback can help other people decide if they want to invest in a particular product or not.

Joseph de Leon, Editor
<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for over 6 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 60-63.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

Work Continues!

The Board of Directors (BOD) level "works in progress," that I referenced in my last message, has continued. The 3 hour sessions during Feb have declined some, and it is hoped that as current items on the "works in progress" are completed, the maximum duration of the meetings will gravitate to a 1-1.5 hour time frame. With the preceding in mind, the BOD agreed at the March meeting to meet bi-weekly through May (the second meeting to be held two weeks after the regularly scheduled monthly meeting). Special meetings were scheduled for Mar 15th, Apr 19th, and May 17th. (The date for each of the special meetings was posted on the web site.)

The Elections Committee has been activated again. (Normally activated and meeting from March through September.) Members will be responsible for identifying individuals willing to serve at the BOD level, and will submit names at the July General meeting. There will also be an opportunity for nominations from those present. Once the list of individuals has been identified, individual biographies will be submitted for inclusion in the August PC Alamode. During August, the online election process will be conducted to determine the list of Board members for the coming year (Oct 2005 - Sep 2006).

Once again I ask each member to commit to being just a little more actively involved with the Alamo PC Organization. As I stated previously, this can be as simple as keeping track of when your membership expires, and renewing well in advance. That saves the organization the expense of having to notify you, which ultimately impacts the bottom line figure in a very small way. Also, attend some of the monthly general meetings where presenters provide information about current and future software products, news events relating to the future of the computing, and new software/hardware that is scheduled to be introduced in the near future. (Some lucky attendees receive products that the presenter "just happens to have.")

One of the great benefits that members often overlook is the classes that are offered. Consider taking advantage of this benefit by enrolling in one or more of the classes. (If one that you would like to have is not on the list, make it known to the people at the Learning Center. They keep the "Wish List" of classes that people have requested. When several people express interest in a subject, the search begins for an instructor.) As stated before, one membership entitles one family member to vote, but it entitles each family member in the household to enroll in one or more of the free classes during the time the membership is current. Our two "first rate" classrooms, with individual computers for each attendee, should make any learning experience easy. No one can ever know too much, and the classroom approach, with an instructor, often facilitates the learning process, minimizes the time involved in learning, and makes interaction with the computer and software more rewarding.

Keep in mind that a membership also entitles each household member to receive help with computer problems (general, software, and/or hardware). The "Help Numbers" near the back of the PC Alamode magazine have a list of people willing to help, and this can often times be accomplished telephonically. Hardware, and some software problems, are usually best satisfied through the "Doctor Is In" assistance (each Fri morning from about 9?12). Remember, someone must bring the computer to our Learning Center (lower level of Crossroads Mall, near the Mall entrance from the underground parking spaces that are accessed from Fredricksburg Road). The person must also be able to tell one of the "Doctors" about the problem, and stay with the "sick" computer while an attempt is made to fix the problem. As always, there are no guarantees given, but generally a "well" computer leaves for home. Although the service is free to members, donations

are accepted. Keep in mind that these donations help the "Doctors" purchase additional diagnostic equipment, and some supplies, to help fix "sick" computers at considerable savings to the member. The "Doctors" volunteer their time and conduct training sessions for "Doctors" on most Monday nights. This helps them become better at their job, and makes for more "well" computers and very happy members.

As I have also stated previously, we always need volunteers. Our primary requirement is toward having the Learning Center open almost every day from about 9 AM ? 4 PM, with at least two people, on each of two shifts. If you can help us in this area, please call the Learning Center at 736?0700, and make your desires known. If you can answer a phone, you can pretty much assure yourself that you can do the job. We also need more individuals to help with some of the "upper level" work as well. A President Elect would be nice, along with a full time Treasurer, Communications specialist, plus Public relations. Interim fills currently have been made, but full attention is best. There are also other areas that need people to be involved, if only for a small amount of time each month. I hope some will respond to my plea for volunteers willing serve.

The PC Alamode's transition to an online product, on Mar 1, went reasonably well. The April issue was larger (more information) and had more color. The online PC Alamode is still a "Work In Progress" as we try to develop a better online magazine, manage the file size (for download time to members, and overall bandwidth usage for costs to the organization). The few problems that have arisen, since going online, have been addressed as quickly as possible and resolutions were as expeditiously as possible. We will continue to try and improve the overall process and work toward the PC Alamode being a better product, and being available at the beginning of each month. (It was unfortunate that the editor's father had a stroke this past month, which shifted his attention to his father for a few days, and delay the magazine being available online for a few days in April.)

Membership renewals and new member interest has done reasonably well during the past two months. Yes we have lost some members, and may lose more, but we would have lost all the members if we had no organization. As previously stated, "Whatever the BOD does at this point will not sit well with someone. But, I believe the majority of the membership can see that the BOD is trying to chart a course that is 'Best for the organization.'" Until next month's message.

Whittle's Picks for the Digital Home

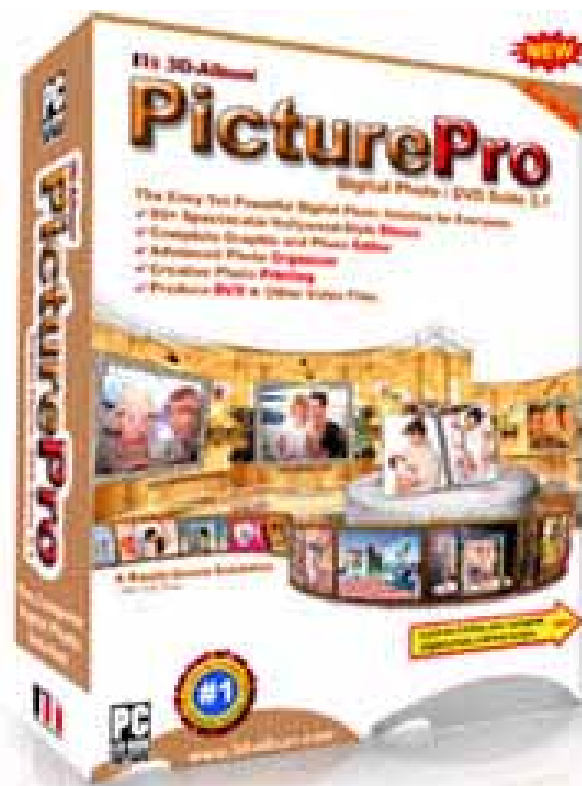
Are you enjoying the digital revolution that is transforming your home? In the digital home, PCs and consumer electronic devices work together to deliver digital media such as pictures and video and music to the parts of your home where you want it. Enabled by innovation's rapid pace, you can re-invent your lifestyle, waste less time, and have more fun. Simply gathering together to share family memories can now become a precious memory of its own. The possibilities for digital entertainment and managing your own digital content are more engaging than ever before. On Intel-based systems, you can now take pictures and videos with digital cameras and camcorders, add our choice of background music, and moments later share them with family and friends via e-mail or CD or even by DVD, displayed on our television sets in "home theaters."

On May 9th, at the usual General Meeting location in the Crossroads Mall Convention Center, The Alamo PC Organization is hosting a presentation by one of our old friends, David B. Whittle, author of "Cyberspace: The Human Dimension" and named by Working Woman Magazine as "one of America's most original technological thinkers." Dave's been a leader in the PC revolution since 1979, and an opinion-leader in the PC industry since his days as OS/2 Evangelist at IBM in the early '90s. Now he's bringing to you his favorite discoveries from recent trade shows in order to show new products that open up new horizons of possibility or solve problems you might be facing.

Would you like a brief look at the latest hardware and software technologies available for the digital home? Do you want to easily but dramatically show all of the digital photos in any given folder while the song of your choice plays in the background? Would you like to have software that takes your raw video footage and photos and almost magically transforms it into a movie that is a surprising delight to watch? Ever wish you could rise above ordinary flat snapshots of those special places you visit and have an immersive, 3-dimensional picture of the place so you can revisit the scene looking in any direction? Would you like the ability to create a file containing printed pages of your information in the Internet-standard Adobe® Reader (PDF) format but couldn't afford it or didn't know how to do it? Would you like to simplify and eliminate the rats-nest tangle of charger and other cables in your home? Are you looking for a new laptop but don't know what to look for? Interested in building your own PC? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you won't want to miss Dave Whittle's presentation at our next monthly meeting!

Dave will introduce some of his favorite technologies and products that might help make life a little bit better. "Whittle's Picks" are hidden gems from companies large and small, old and new, with outstanding, innovative technologies -- including Intel®, 3D Album, muvee™ Technologies, iSeeMedia, activePDF, and Zip*Link. See exciting new products from these companies and learn how digital multimedia can enhance your life. You will come away from this meeting entertained, informed, and perhaps even inspired. Dave will provide time for questions and will bring valuable door prizes, informative handouts, and actual product for sale at significantly discounted prices arranged exclusively for user groups. If you'd like to take advantage of these special prices at the meeting and take product home with you, remember to bring your checkbooks. The prices and deals offered will only be available the night of the meeting.

Due to the large amount of material that will be presented, the meeting will start promptly at 7:00PM. Seating for the event will start at 6:15PM. As usual, there will be door prizes awarded at the end of the meeting. I look forward to seeing everyone there. Bring a friend.



Senior Comp

**A program of Seniors teaching Seniors
Classes starting every few weeks.**

No previous experience necessary.

Small Classes with hands on training.

**We hope to "empower" our Seniors to be
active participants in the information age.**

Significant Happenings...

John Gaddis, Education VP

Things You Should Consider

Our Alamo PC Organization has developed a core set of classes in the photography field that are receiving accolades from the students who have taken the courses/workshops. We currently do not have any comments from graduates because the leader, Beverly Bihn, and her assistants, Rebeka Morozoff, and Jane Montgomery keep adding new classes so fast that nobody has been able to graduate. If you have a digital camera, you really should attend these classes/workshops. You and your family will gain much more enjoyment from your pictures.

If you would like to see how much fun students have, look at the poster boards in the Learning Center, which have examples of their completed class projects whenever you are at the Learning Center. You will be very impressed and I hope you will join a beginner's class.

Prerequisites to Join Photoshop 7, Elements 2, Photo Editing, or Photo Artistry Instruction Classes at Alamo PC:

Participants MUST be a member of Alamo PC and know how to use a computer. They need the Software for Photoshop 7 or Elements 2 on their home computers to join these graphics instruction classes. Students need to have completed Computer Literacy or Senior Comp's Intermediate Windows or equivalent to be able to function properly and progress in these graphics programs.

Students have been able to obtain OEM software for Photoshop 7 online for around \$50.00 or at eBay Auctions. It is for the CD only, no texts included. The original cost of Photoshop 7 software was around \$800.00. It is no longer available in stores because it has been replaced by Photoshop CS which is almost identical to Photoshop 7 but the cost is

around \$900.00 in stores. Students have been able to order CS from various sites on the internet for around \$550.00.

Elements 2 software has been available online or at eBay auctions for \$19.99 + shipping. The original cost was around \$89.00. It also is for the CD only. Although Elements 3 has replaced Elements 2 in the stores, it seems entirely different from Elements 2 and Alamo PC is only teaching the Elements 2 program at the present time.

Instruction classes for Photoshop 7 are led by Beverly Bihn, for an 8 or 9 week period, depending upon the amount of Fridays in the months it is taught. A text is supplied, a CD with the images for each student is provided, and creative printed lessons are provided for a fee of \$90.00 for members of Alamo PC. The Photoshop 7 instruction classes are offered each Friday for the months of January-February and May-June from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. Registration is required.

Workshops for students who have completed any of the Photoshop 7 instruction classes are offered each Thursday for a fee of \$20.00 per month. Printed lessons are provided. Registration is required.

Senior Comp Schedule

Bill Hudson, Senior Comp Instructor

Senior Comp Spring Schedule of Classes

Basic Introduction to Windows

Andy Roca and Donna Dudley
Wednesdays 10am -12pm
May 4 - June 8

Introduction To Windows

Don Robinson
Mondays 1pm -3pm
May 16 - June 20

Introduction To Windows

Jane Montgomery
Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm
May 18 - June 22

Introduction To Windows II

Bill Hudson
Tuesdays 10am - 12pm
May 17 - June 21

Senior Comp Practice Lab

Joe Gentry and Sarah Thomas
Every Thursday 9am -12pm

This schedule is subject to change.
Please check with the Alamo PC
Registrar at 210-736-0700

Classes meet for six two-hour sessions. Pre-registration is required. Cost \$60.00 (class materials included); \$40 to repeat a class. Senior Comp classes are specifically designed to assist Adults (age 45 or older) to learn how to effectively use their computers. Senior Comp is a nonprofit with eight years of proven success.

ComputerFest is a collection of local and statewide dealers under one roof offering rock-bottom prices on all your computer needs. All of our dealers are independent wholesalers, so each conducts business separately. Most of the dealers will accept credit cards, but with cash you can usually get the best deals. And new products are almost always backed up with a warrantee, so you and your wallet can always feel comfortable with your purchases.

What you can find at the show:

- New Complete Systems
- New Hardware
- Newest Software Titles
- Printers, Monitors, Scanners
- Ink-Jet Recharge Kits
- Imaging Devices
- Internet Services
- Used Hardware
- Multimedia Upgrades
- Shareware
- Diagnostic Equipment
- Cables & Connectors
- Bare Bone Systems
- Computer Related Books
- Refurbished Systems, Monitors

Location:

Airport Civic Center
8505 Broadway @ Loop 410
San Antonio, TX.

Show Dates and Times:

Saturday, April 30, 2005 10am - 5pm
Sunday, May 1, 2005 12pm - 5pm.



Geeky Gourmet

As the maps come out in preparation for that vacation or trip to grandma's new beach house, we need to prepare something easy and something cool as we debate whether to take the scenic route or the one that takes us there the quickest.

Orange Salad

- 1 small can mandarin oranges
- 1 can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 small ctn. Cottage cheese
- 1 large ctn. Cool Whip
- 1 small pkg. Orange jello

Drain oranges and pineapple. Mix together Cool Whip and Jell-O in large bowl. Add oranges and pineapple. Add cottage cheese, stir well. Store in covered container. Refrigerate at least 1 hour.

Hamburger Fingerlings

- 1 lb. Ground beef
- ½ lb. Pork sausage (hot)
- 1-cup chicken and rice soup
- 2 slightly beaten eggs
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1-cup breadcrumbs
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 1/8 tsp. Pepper and garlic salt
- ¼ tsp. Poultry seasoning
- 1 cup crushed corn flakes or more
- 2 Tbsp. Shortening
- 1 can mushroom soup
- 1-cup water

Combine all ingredients except mushroom soup and water. When well blended, shape into fingers, roll in crumbs and brown on all sides in skillet of shortening. Place in baking dish; pour over mushroom soup and water. Bake uncovered, in slow oven (300 degrees) for about 1 hour.



Baked Potatoes

- 4 large potatoes
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1 Tbsp. Margarine or butter
- Salt and pepper
- Aluminum foil

Cut potatoes into halves, butter, salt and pepper each half. Put a slice of onion in between 2 halves; hold together as you roll them in foil. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for 1 hour or on grill for 1 hour. Serves 4.



From the Deals Guy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns and some interesting articles.

*The Bundle Is Back

I received a message from Colleen Toumayan at Executive Software telling me that their bundle pricing is back. If you want to improve your disk defragging and undelete software, here is another chance to save some money on these great products. I have not tried the Home Versions, but their products I tried in the past were impressive. The bundle contains Diskeeper 9, Home Edition, and Undelete 5, Home Edition for \$39.95. (Download only) To get it, the URL is <<http://consumer.execsoft.com/purchase/purchase.asp?RID=50>>. Executive Software is also an APCUG sponsor.

*Put Your DVD Burner To Work

Here are two products that will help preserve your videotaped memories. They are "CameraMate VideoSafe" and "CameraMate Real Time Video" by Zio Corp. VideoSafe allows you to capture analog video/audio from any VCR or camcorder and burn it to a CD or DVD. The VideoSafe hardware has plugs for the video/S-video/audio cables on one end and a USB cable to connect to your computer on the other end. An included CD has the drivers and software. The MSRP for VideoSafe is \$49.99 with a \$10.00 rebate sticker on the package. VideoSafe is mostly for a direct conversion from your source to your burner, so if you want to do additional work with your video in the process, the product below is for you.

Real Time Video is also an adapter and software for capturing the video/audio from any VCR or camcorder for the purpose of burning to a CD or DVD. However, Real Time Video software also offers Autoedit Wizard, Autoedit Storyboard Wizard, Randomize Wizard and a DVD Burn Wizard. Software and drivers are included on a CD. Real Time Video's MSRP is \$69.99, but I suggest you shop wherever you can get the best price, even at local stores, then apply for the rebate. The URL for downloading the rebate form is on the rebate sticker on the box. This rebate expires on April 30, 2005, but they will honor it for us until May 31, 2005. The adapter cables with RCA audio/video/VHS C jacks are not included, but are easy to obtain and many folks have them lying around.

They sent me the products to try, but I was up against my deadline and a friend gave it a quick try. He had a few minor problems, but after tweaking some settings in his Windows operating system, he said it worked fine. He had no problems with the installation. It works with Windows 98SE/Me/2000/XP. However I didn't have time for some more extensive tests on his part. Video resolution is 720 x 480 for NTSC (the American TV standard). Their URL for more information is <<http://www.easiestvideoever.com>>.

*Announcement for Active Screen Lock (Edited)

"ActiveScreenLock 2.3 could be of interest to users group members and they can get a 20% discount on ActiveScreenLock 2.3. The coupon code is DMVS-QJPR.

"How to protect your PC from unauthorized access with one mouse click. ActiveScreenLock is one of the most simple, yet effective ways to protect PCs from unauthorized access. While most people worry about viruses, trojans and spyware, folks

tend to ignore the fact that co-workers, visitors or even family members are much more likely to get access to confidential data by simply walking up to a PC and looking it up. ActiveScreenLock is a software application that makes your PC inaccessible without entering a password. While Windows OS comes with the password-protected screensaver option that seems to have the same function, any advanced user knows that there are a number of ways to bypass this.

"When ActiveScreenLock is activated (either by clicking a tray icon or pressing a combination of designated hotkeys), the PC becomes inaccessible. Whenever anybody tries to do anything with the locked computer, the program displays a password-protected window placed on top of all the others. In order to remove it, a correct password needs to be entered. Key combinations Alt+F4, Ctrl+Alt+Del, Alt+Tab, and WinKey are blocked.

"If necessary, a program user can opt to disable task manager or hide the cursor. Restarting the locked PC will not undo the protection. Should anyone try to pick the password, the program will log all login attempts and what passwords were used.

"ActiveScreenLock has received dozens of awards, including Editor's Choice at TopShareware and FileHeaven, and 5-star rating at Softpicks, Shareup, FileTransit, SmartDownloads, and UKwares. A free demo version is available at <<http://www.dmvsoft.com/>> for evaluation (30-day free trial period). The price of a single copy is \$25 US Dollars. Registration removes all time limitations and nag screens, gives you free unlimited support and entitles you to free upgrades and new version updates.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael McCarthy at <pr@dmvsoft.com>

System Requirements:

- Operating system: Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000 or XP

Company Website

<<http://www.dmvsoft.com/>>

Download

<<http://www.dmvsoft.com/ActiveScreenLock.zip>>



Digital Discovery

John Brewer, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace. E-mail him at <johnb@jnbrewer.com>

All litigation involves a process known as discovery. Discovery is the process whereby one party asks for information and the other party responds to the discovery requests. Discovery in civil litigation is a topic that is fluid by its very nature. There is the ongoing friction between the plaintiff and the defendant as to the manner and the scope of the documents that are furnished pursuant to a request for discovery. Consider the impact of an opening statement with the following words (an opening statement is the beginning of a trial where the lawyers tell the jury what the evidence will be during the trial):

"You'll see a lot of documents. But there are a lot you are not going to see. There are a lot of documents I haven't gotten to see. Documents were destroyed. An order was entered by this court at the very beginning of this case, on May 5th, 1997, that the documents were not to be destroyed. It has already been found that thousands of documents and e-mails, among the people of the company, in the time that matters most to this case, don't exist. And they don't exist for the simple reason that American Home Products destroyed the documents. The legal implications of that destruction you will hear at the end of this case from the judge. We will ask you to do justice ... to honor the memory of a young woman, Mary Linnen, who simply wanted to look beautiful on her wedding day."

Back among the spectators, a Wall Street lawyer representing AHP investors shook his head, "How the hell could AHP let this get to trial?" he muttered to a benchmate. "This is a disaster."

These are the words of Alex MacDonald, the lead lawyer for the plaintiff in the wrongful death trial of Mary Linnen. Ms. Linnen had taken the combination of weight loss drugs known as Fen-Phen for approximately two weeks and died less than a year later. American Home Products, the lead defendant in the case, destroyed electronic evidence in the case. This evidence was in the form of backup tapes. Among other sanctions, the court intended to instruct the jurors as to the implications of the spoliation of evidence and the inferences that could be drawn from the destruction. This was a very damaging factor in a case where American Home Products appeared to be a sinister villain corrupted by corporate greed. The case settled after the first week of trial but several jurors stated, after the trial, that they were prepared to award actual and punitive damages against the defendant for \$1 billion. This is not a typo. There were jurors who were predisposed to award damages of \$1 billion for the death of one young lady who died prematurely in the commonwealth of Massachusetts. Alicia Mundy tells the Fen-Phen story in a terrific book titled, *Dispensing with the Truth*.

"How much data is electronic? Technology consultants will tell you that it is not unusual for each employee to receive 30+ e-mails a day. If a company employs 1,000 workers, this adds up to 210,000 e-mails each week or 10.9 million each year. If a company employs 10,000 employees, this adds up to 2.1 million e-mails each week or 109 million each year. 100,000 employees create 21 million e-mails each week or over 1 billion a year.

More than 35% of corporate communications will never reach paper. Up to 40% is non-business communication. About 18% of e-mails contain attachments. Each attachment is a

new discoverable object. Approximately 8% of e-mails are broadcasts; i.e., e-mail messages sent to more than one person.

Active versus inactive data

Active means live data, currently being used, currently on hard drives, databases, servers, etc. Active data is easy to search and can be searched using the Boolean techniques familiar to users of search engines.

Inactive means stored data, usually on backup tapes, perhaps in a warehouse, perhaps far away; perhaps made with software applications and operating systems that are no longer in use or, possibly, no longer in possession.

Inactive data is much more difficult to search, as that data is not stored in any logical or easily searchable way, and is therefore more expensive and more time-intensive. Why? Because inactive data must be returned to active data status before it can be searched. Unused computer capacity must be found to accommodate it and the software that generated it must be found so that it can be read.

These statistics are reprinted from the article by John Jessen, "Special Issues Involving Electronic Discovery," 9 Kan. J.L. & Pub. Pol'y 425, 2000.

What does this mean? It means that in many court cases, the focus has shifted from paper and traditional analog forms of documentation to digital information residing on computers and other digital equipment. This shifts the focus of many court cases from the paper memo to the e-mail residing on a server somewhere or backed up to tape.

The transformation to a digital society in terms of sending and storing information has changed the nature of legal litigation, the same as it has changed so many other areas of our society.



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Spam Cures

Russell James, Alamo PC

Russell is General Manager at BJ Associates of San Antonio, The Laptop Specialist. They are an authorized service center for Toshiba and Sony systems. They are the laptop specialist and also handle system builds and parts for desktops. They take care of any IBM compatible hardware or software problem that you have. e-mail <russell@bjassociates.com> or visit them on the web at <<http://bjassociates.com>>.

Preventive Maintenance

ALAMODE COLUMNS

It's official, Spam is out of control. I receive at least 100 e-mails per day that are considered to be Junk E-mail by my mail program. I am using Outlook 2003 with the latest updates. The e-mail filter that is part of the program is the only filter that I use and it seems to be doing a good job for the most part.

I cannot say that the filter does not let some spam into my regular mailbox but it does do a very good job. There are only about five to ten emails a day that slip past the filters and have to be added to the junk filter manually. I also cannot say that the filter does not filter out real email as junk mail. I will say that it has been a long while since I have found a real email in the junk folder. Granted, I do not look at every email that is in the junk folder, but I do try to spot check periodically and have not found a keeper in a very long time.

I have to work a little to be sure that I receive the mail that I want to get sometimes. If I subscribe to a newsletter, there will usually be a verification e-mail from the newsletter to verify that I did actually subscribe. This is a good thing since I do not want anyone else subscribing to things for me. That would not be a good thing. The problem is that these verification e-mails usually go straight to the junk e-mail folder since the senders of the newsletter send out so many e-mails that invariably they will be considered to be spammers. I have to go into my junk e-mail folder when subscribing to newsletters to mark the verification e-mail as not junk so that I will be able to receive the mail in my regular e-mail box.

I do not think this is much of an inconvenience and my system seems to be working pretty well as far as I can tell. I do not receive the bulk of the spam that is delivered to my e-mail address because of the filters that are in place within the program. I also have the ability to add and remove addresses from the junk e-mail filter list manually. This allows me to have some control over who I receive mail from if I choose.

There are many other e-mail programs that have the same type of filters available in varying degrees so don't think that this is an advertisement for Microsoft. This just happens to be what I use and I am happy with what the program is doing for me and the users that I have to support within the company.

The entire purpose of this article is for me to ventilate about some of the spam cures that are being sold. The white list spam programs are one way to help filter junk e-mail from your system. This is the service that gets all of your e-mail and replies to each of them with a form letter stating that the person that I sent the e-mail to would like to receive my e-mail but if I would like for the e-mail to get through I will need to click on a link to reply to their reply to let them know that I am a real person.

Let's look at this with a real example. Someone sends me a question which I try to answer to the best of my knowledge with a reply e-mail. I then receive an e-mail from their spam service telling me that I am not authorized to send e-mail to this person. If I would like for this person to receive my answer to their question I will need to reply to this second e-mail that will add me to a list of authorized addresses that will then allow my e-mail to be sent on to the person that originally asked the question of me. In other words, they are saying that every e-mail that they get is spam until proven not to be spam. Guilty until proven innocent is not the way it should be even though most of the e-mail out there is spam. I don't think that I should have

to answer a reply e-mail to prove that I am not spam when I am only replying to an e-mail. They need to add e-mail addresses that the user sends e-mail to the white list automatically. This way I won't have to prove that I am not a spammer when I am only trying to help them out.

No matter what solution you choose, even if it is only to delete the junk manually, know that there are many available. They do not all do a great job of filtering the junk so get some advise before you lay your money on the table. Ask your friends what they are using and whether they are happy with their choice. Take a look at reviews that are available on the Internet. The information is out there but you will need to look for it as always.

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MP3 Players & the Muddled Science of Design

K. Joyce McDonald, Alamo PC

Joyce is a contract technical writer specializing in Internet/intranet infrastructure documentation. Visit her Internet domains at <www.jbmcdonaldandson.com> and <www.taichi-interactive.com>. E-mail her at <kjoycemcdonald@satx.rr.com>.

Have you seen the new plastic “cans” that package Folgers’ coffee? They look a little like the plastic cans that carry premium paint. Recently, I opened a large Folgers® can and found a blurb inside that said “Folgers® Aromaseal™ is commended by the Arthritis Foundation. Ease of Use Commendation...” Like many baby boomers, I have struggled with Arthritis for the past few years. I was pleased that someone had taken enough of an interest in our plight to make something easier for us to use, especially since I have purchased medicines for Arthritis pain that came in childproof bottles that were agony to open. Then again there is my telephone, an expensive one made especially for the hearing-impaired. The phone does enhance conversation. Now if I could only hear it ring...

My day job is to explain how a program, device or network functions, so I spend a lot of time thinking about design. I evaluate a system to see how easy it is to understand, how logical it is, and how consistent in concept. The content should give me a clue to the education and technical ability of the product audience; if not, I gear the document to the lowest ability and knowledge level for anyone who could possibly use the system or product. Then I determine the best way to present the information and evaluate the presentation using the same criteria I used to evaluate the system. This should explain why I get annoyed when I see illogic, inconsistency or poor usability in the products I use.

One product with interesting design features is the MP3 Player. The industry standard is the Apple iPod, the success of which has demonstrated that people will pay a premium price for intelligent design. I now own three portable devices that are capable of playing MP3 music files; unfortunately, none of them is an iPod, although I recently heard of a good reason to buy one. According to Walter Mossberg of the Wall Street Journal, the iPod’s huge hard drive and ease of file transfer make it a good choice for backing up files from your laptop (not just music files, but any files.) The 60 Gigabyte iPod Photo retails for \$350. It might cost a lot of money for an entertainment device, but if it saves you from disaster, it could be well worth it.

I can’t say anything further about the iPod because I don’t own one, but I can evaluate the players I do have to suggest what (and what not) to look for in an MP3 Player. My first MP3 device was a 64-megabyte Diamond Rio MP3 Player that we got free several years ago with an HP CD burner. It is about as basic as an MP3 player comes. Its best attribute is its size, which is a little smaller and thinner than a deck of cards, with a lightweight carrier that clips to my belt. It holds about an hour’s worth of music, about right to keep tempo during my daily walk. Its best attribute is that it bookmarks my place when I turn it off, meaning that when I start it up again, I start listening to the song that was playing when I shut it off.

The device has a wheel on the side that is alternately used as a volume control and a program or feature selection device. I don’t use the wheel often because it requires that you press and turn the wheel while it displays menus on the front. Then you press again for the menu option you want. I invariably select the wrong menu item and spend my walk time trying to figure out how to back out without accidentally sending loud blasts to the earphones. Luckily, once set, the defaults (such as randomize, repeat and folder selected) remain selected until you (deliberately or accidentally) change them.

My only complaint about my MP3 player, besides its tiny capacity, is the software I use to load songs on it. We have thousands of songs on our network, so finding the right songs to

load involves wading through umpty-jillion titles to pick out what I want. I once tried editing my favorite MP3 files so that they would sort more easily at load time. The dumb thing I did, however, was to edit the MP3 files in Music Match Jukebox, which later made the files impossible for the RioPort audio manager to recognize. I finally moved my favorite songs to my laptop and select songs from its limited library.

In an effort to solve the low capacity and difficult loading problems with my first MP3 player, I tried a different approach. I got a Diamond Rio MP3 CD player. With this device, I could burn a CD in MP3 format that holds at least two hundred songs. I could burn all my songs into several CDs and swap CDs when I got tired of the songs on one. But this solution has a down side. The player skips sometimes, either because of impact or a smudge on the CD. It is larger and heavier than my dedicated MP3 player. I could live with both of these shortcomings, however, if the interface had been better designed. It makes no sense to have two hundred songs on a CD if you have to listen to the same song every time you start up the player. Every time I turn the player on, I have to wait until the first song loads and starts playing, use the fast forward buttons to skip to a song I’m not sick of, then press the “mode” button five times to tell it to randomize the selection of songs. The player does not bookmark my place. It does not save my “randomize” setting. It doesn’t have a lighted screen so I can see to set up the options while I’m walking (usually after dark.) I’m unhappy with the main operating buttons, situated such that when I grab the player in the dark, I hit the “stop” button, inadvertently turning off the machine, losing all my settings and having to start all over. This device is obviously not good as a walking companion, but I can’t think of any alternative uses for it. Since it skips too easily, it wouldn’t work in a car. Since it didn’t come with an AC adapter, it wouldn’t make a good stationary device because it is very hard on batteries. And I own cheaper and nicer looking paperweights.

While researching a replacement for my Palm M130 Personal Digital Assistant (which was ready for intensive care) I found that most new PDAs offer MP3 capability. Since I wasn’t ready for an integrated PDA/Phone or PDA/Digital Camera, the PDA/MP3 player sounded useful. I wanted a large memory capacity to hold all my electronic books. The PalmOne Tungsten T5 holds 160 Mb—not huge, but enough for my books and data and a couple of hours’ of my favorite songs (if the music is not installed on an external SD card.) The crisp, clear oversized screen is excellent for reading e-books and playing Scrabble. It can communicate with Bluetooth devices. And it plays MP3s. Best of all is the ease with which I can transfer music to it. Using the PalmOne File Transfer program that comes with my Tungsten, I can copy my music files along with any other files I want to copy, using an interface similar to Windows Explorer. At \$399, the Tungsten is not cheap, but it will do until I find an iPod plays Scrabble with me.



Computer Defense Department How does MS Service Pack 2 Help protect you?



Bruce Cramer, Alamo PC

A+, Network+, Microsoft Certified Professional (Windows XP). Bruce is retired from the Army. He is the owner/operator of PC Pro Computer Services <www.pcpro4u.com> where he provides in-home/on-site computer services. He is a regular at the Doctors Is In on Friday mornings, at the Learning Center and has never met a piece of malware that he couldn't get rid of. Bruce can be reached by e-mail at <service@pcpro4u.com>. See his ad for PC Pro Computer Services on page 37.

Microsoft released Service Pack 2 (SP2) in August of 2004. While some folks installed it with great apprehension others have avoided it altogether either because they don't believe it to be necessary or because of the tirades others have reported. Some users have reported problems after installing SP2 such as hardware or software not functioning or not functioning properly. These problems are usually resolved by obtaining a new driver or update from Microsoft or the applicable vendor.

SP2 is only for Windows XP and does not apply to Windows 98/SE and ME. Not to fear though, despite rumors Microsoft will still provide critical updates for Windows 98/SE and ME. Their website indicates that these updates will be provided until at least June Of 2006.

SP2 is Microsoft's answer to the evolving computer issues caused by ITDs (Internet transmitted diseases) and other problems that plague the operating system. After installing SP2 Windows will by default setup a firewall, enable a popup blocker and check you system for an antivirus program and let you know if it is current with updated virus signatures. These are just some of the safeguard measures that Microsoft takes to help protect your computer.

If you never installed Service Pack 1 don't worry. SP2 includes all of those updates as well. You can expect the installation to take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour with a reboot after the installation is complete. After the installation is complete and your computer has been restarted you will be presented with prompts on your screen asking you to activate automatic download of Microsoft critical updates, and check your antivirus and firewall settings. You will have the option of letting your antivirus software monitor the antivirus settings which is the preferred method if you are using either Symantec's or McAfee's antivirus applications.

Microsoft not only culminated all their critical updates since SP1 in this service pack but included some security enhancements. To start off with SP2 has a "Security Center" which keeps tabs on your antivirus, firewall and of course your Microsoft updates. Kind of like the National Security Threat Adversary, this Security Center presents itself with a shield at the bottom of your computer screen in the Task Bar, with different colors alerting you about the status of your computers security status. If there is something that needs your attention the shield will produce a text balloon telling you what the issue is and invite you to click on it for instructions on how to resolve it. The shield will appear in one of four colors in your task tray.



Blue means that you have a potential security risk, yes; I know it is a little vague. Microsoft goes a little further with the yellow shield. This means that your computer security settings are not as secure as they should be. If you see the red shield this could mean that your antivirus definitions are out of date or that you do not have a firewall installed. Green is good.

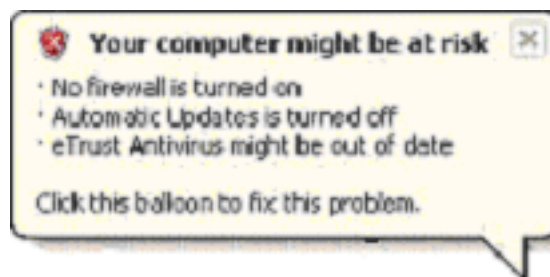
While SP2 doesn't directly prevent spyware from invading your computer it does take steps to ensure that your system has it defenses up. It is highly recommended that you enable automatic updates. Hackers and kiddy scripters are busy at work producing new villains. Microsoft is busy in turn building patches and preventions from them in the form of updates to you.

I touched on some of the major features of SP2 but many of the changes made to Windows are behind the scenes such as security enhancements to Internet Explorer. Some people may find that the new popup blocker that is enabled by default will not let them access certain sites such as their bank or other financial institution. The popup blocker is easily disable by clicking on Tools from the top menu bar in Internet Explorer, then clicking on Pop-up Blocker, then Turn Off Pop-up Blocker.

Now that I've said SP2 doesn't directly prevent spyware they have introduced a new antispyware tool that is free but again only for users of XP. This tool which is still in the beta stages does a pretty good job at detecting and deleting spyware. Microsoft simply calls it AntiSpyware and it provides full time protection from those evil vermin. It is a free download from the Microsoft.com website.

To learn more about SP2 refer to <<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/sp2/default.msp>>

Stay tuned as next month I will review a new up and comer in the Antispyware tool shed.





The New, the Best and the Worst

Collected by Pim Borman,

SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc., IN; <<http://swipcug.apcug.org/>>

Alternatives Revisited.

Last September I wrote here about alternatives to Microsoft programs. I specifically recommended the free (Mozilla) Firefox as an alternative to Internet Explorer, and OpenOffice.org as a free replacement for MS Office. I also recommended the Linux-based Linspire operating system and programs library to replace MS Windows and virtually eliminate risks from MS-targeted viruses and worms. Linspire includes OpenOffice and Firefox as well as dozens of excellent multimedia, photo editing, productivity and entertainment programs. Hundreds of more specialized programs are available by subscription to its extensive library. Linspire is the most user-friendly of the many Linux distributions available and requires absolutely no knowledge of Linux on the part of the user.

The column was reprinted in several other PCUG newsletters and finally caught the eye of Microsoft. I received a letter from Aaron Coldiron, manager of Mindshare, the MS connection with the User Group community. The letter is too long to reprint here, but is available on our Web site at <http://swipcug.apcug.org/special/MSalts.htm>. Following are some quotes from the letter and my comments.

Coldiron wrote: "I'm concerned that some user groups are pushing members to adopt software that they ultimately won't be happy with." Pushing? Heaven forbid! Suggesting maybe.

Quote: "First, Windows XP Service Pack 2 is available on CD for free, and has been since August. The CD order form may be found here http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/updates/sp2/cdorder/en_us/default.mspx." Microsoft's issuance of XP-SP2 to correct weaknesses in Windows XP was not unlike a car company issuing a recall – for free – for a potentially dangerous brake design. Later in 2004 we received a supply of the CDs from the Mindshare program that we distributed to our members who asked for them.

Quote: "Also, you may not know that Microsoft provides free technical support for Service Pack 2 should a user have any problems installing." That is good to know.

Quote: "Finally, you mention various incompatibilities with SP2. This isn't actually quite true. As you may know, Microsoft eliminated certain ways programs may access various resources throughout the operating system; we did this to tighten security and close loopholes that aren't officially supported programming functions. As a result, some programs which aren't designed to run under the tighter security protocols of SP2 may not function correctly (or at all) until the program is updated to a more recent version. There is a list of about 35 known incompatibilities on Microsoft's help site [here](http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?kbid=884130&product=windowsxpsp2) <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?kbid=884130&product=windowsxpsp2>." It is a point well taken, although it doesn't help if your peripheral or program suddenly doesn't work any longer.

Mr. Coldiron appended a copy of a letter he wrote earlier in response to a review of OpenOffice. In it he writes: "For instance, we created the Works Suite of applications for consumers who don't need to do spreadsheet functions and can use the free Outlook Express. Works 2005 can be bought for as little as \$69 major internet shopping sites." Well, yes, but

OpenOffice is free, and in addition to its MS Word-compatible word processor it includes an Excel-compatible spreadsheet, a PowerPoint-compatible presentation manager, and simple database and drawing features. And as far as compatibility is concerned, I notice that Word 2002 needs a conversion utility to display older versions of Word, including some available in Works.

Also: "Microsoft Office is the gold standard in interoperability. I'm sure you could think of a long list of features you love given a few minutes. Here's a few of the one's I like. As I type this I'm using Word as my email editor, allowing me to use advanced word processing functions if I want. Icons appear next to names in the "to" bar telling me if they are on or offline and allowing me to instant message them. I use OneNote which allows me to drop in meeting dates and times directly into my note files. I can also send my scribbles from OneNote as the text of an email – in my own handwriting if I want. I can copy and paste PowerPoint Slides whole into other applications like email. For that matter, I can drop Excel spreadsheets into PowerPoint and even link them so that the PPT file updates automatically if I change the spreadsheet in Excel." Impressive, but few of us need that sort of software acrobatics.

Furthermore: "Several studies have shown that Microsoft Office has a lower total cost of ownership than its free or open source competitors. It has a higher up front cost, but the additional productivity and lower support cost more than offset the higher up front cost." Maybe for a corporate office, but not for individuals.

Finally: "I really hope that consumers choose the suite that best fits their needs, whether it is MS Office 2003, Works 2005, or one of our competitors' products. I just wanted to point out that it isn't just a case of the price out of the box. There are a lot more factors to consider." I agree.

The Bottom Line

Few will argue that Microsoft Windows with its built-in Internet features is the Cadillac of operating systems. Not everyone needs or can afford a Cadillac and a less expensive brand may be preferable, maybe even a foreign make. The customer has the choice, based on his pocketbook and his needs. When shopping for a computer from a major manufacturer, other than Apple, it is impossible to avoid having to pay for the installation of the Microsoft Windows operating system and usually at least one of its software suites. Last September I wrote that Dell would

start selling computers, in Europe only, without an operating system, leaving it to the buyer to add his own. It never happened. According to rumor, Microsoft threatened Dell that it would no longer make Windows available at an especially low, OEM price. That may, or may not, be true.

Currently only a few minor, obscure computer manufacturers, often outside the US, sell systems with one of the Linux distributions pre-installed, or nothing at all. You can order one on the Wal-Mart web site and find others through links on the Linspire or Xandros Web sites. Of course, you can also go to a local computer builder, or build your own.

It may take a long time to break the Microsoft monopoly in the US, where the Microsoft Windows and Office programs are deeply entrenched and anti-trust laws seem to be a quaint footnote to history. But overseas, and especially in rapidly developing countries such as China, there is greater open-mindedness toward new ideas, and Linux is making rapid inroads. It also helps that the open source nature of Linux allows foreign governments to make sure the software doesn't contain backdoors for access by spy organizations.

I own three Wi-Fi connected computers. The newest, a 3.1GHz Dell Inspiron laptop uses Windows XP PRO. I update the operating system, MS Office, spyware, virus, and firewall programs with great regularity. I use it mostly for photo editing and financial programs, as well as to maintain the SWIPCUG Web site, because I am familiar with the programs. My older desktop, a 600 MHz Dell Dimension runs Windows ME but is mostly used to evaluate various Linux distributions on a dual boot basis.

The computer I use most is an old 600 MHz Celeron Inspiron laptop running Linspire 4.5 – Linux laptop edition. It sits on a small roll-around desk stand next to the La-Z-Boy in my den. It connects wirelessly with the router on the other end of the house. At any time I can check e-mail, get the latest news from all over the world, look up crossword puzzle clues with Google, maintain my checkbook file, and play FreeCell or BreakOut. All of that without fear of being attacked by worms and viruses. Seeing is believing – I add a photo taken by my wife Pat.



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Troubleshooting Windows

Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for six years. He has contributed for the past five years.

A staggering 65% of problems a personal computer (PC) encounters, whether in business or at home, are caused not by hardware problems but by viruses. They are not caused not by spam but by background tasks. From PC lock-ups due to illegal operations, Internet Explorer crashes, slow-downs and more problems are simply tasks running in the background on your computer and demanding its attention. Most of the time the trick running your PC is knowing which background tasks are essential, which are not, and which need to run only sometimes. By managing these processes more intelligently your system can free more memory and run with greater reliability.

Anti-virus Applications

To keep your computer running virus free, there are at least two good free online anti-virus applications that not only find viruses but remove them. They are: Panda Active Scan <<http://www.pandasoftware.com/home/default.asp>> and HouseCall <<http://www.trendmicro.com/en/home/us/personal.htm>>. In addition to these applications, it's a wise move to obtain the following free utilities to remove unwanted ads and spyware: Spybot Search and Destroy and Ad-aware. You can download them at <www.download.com>. Another good utility to clean up your computer is Pest Patrol.

Boot Disks

At some point with a computer, you'll need a boot disk. If there's a glitch in your Master Boot Record (MBR) or boot sector, a boot disk will bring your PC back to life. Bootdisk.com offers <www.bootdisk.com/> resuscitation to systems ranging from DOS 5.0 through WinXP.

MSCONFIG

Many programs slow down your boot time and use valuable system resources. You can stop these program from automatically launching by clicking Start, Run. Now type "msconfig" without the quotes, click OK, and the Startup tab. You'll see a number of programs listed on the screen. You can find a list of entries and explanations for those programs at <www.sysinfo.org/startuplist.php>. Next clear the boxes for the programs you don't need on your computer and click Apply, OK. You'll be prompted to restart your computer. After restarting it, you'll receive a message stating that the System Configuration Utility is in Diagnostic or Selective Startup mode. Check the box next to "don't show this message again" and click OK.

Device Manager

Windows keeps a Device Manager entry for every piece of hardware that's ever been recognized by the system, regardless of whether it is currently present in the machine or was even set up correctly in the first place. The "View Hidden Devices" option in Device Manager won't show you these "residual" drivers. You can force it to show you everything by going to My Computer Properties, the Advanced tab, Environment Variables, and adding a new system variable with the name "DEVMGR_SHOW_NONPRESENT_DEVICES" and a value of 1. Opening Device Manager and choosing "Show Hidden Devices" really will show you everything. Standard practice at the factory is to

use a single image and just move it from model to model, letting it plug and play all the new hardware along the way. This leaves you with an impressive list of hardware still in the Device Manager, but no longer in the system. You also see this list to a lesser degree when restoring a system from an image created for backup purposes. These "residual" drivers can sometimes cause all kinds of problem and are best removed by right-clicking on their entry in the Device Manager and choosing "uninstall." This procedure works on Win2000/XP.

Drivers

A driver is a small software application that controls many of the devices on your computer. They are often troublesome and you may need to update or replace faulty ones. There are several driver Web sites that can help you obtain drivers for your computer's peripheral devices. DriverGuide.com <www.driverguide.com> is a free site with more than 60,000 drivers. Driverzone.com <www.driverzone.com> and DriversHQ.com <www.drivershq.com> are also free sites with many drivers. Conventional wisdom says that if a patch is available to apply it. That is true for your operating system (OS). However, if your application software is working properly, leave it alone. The same is true with your hardware. Sometimes drivers can cause rather than resolve problems especially with applications/hardware.

Files' Functions

To my knowledge there are no programs that will allow a computer user to determine the function of the files on his computer. Some files work with more than one program. However, one often can identify individual files on the Internet by using a search site such as Google at: <<http://www.google.com/>>. Removing individual files is dangerous. Some files, such as those with the extension of DLL (dynamic link library), can be used by many programs. Removing such a file could make a number of programs inoperative. An exception would be a file planted by a malicious program. If your anti-virus or anti-spyware programs recommend deletion of a file, you should agree to this course of action. If you are trying to figure out what something does in your startup, you can find a list of entries and explanations here: <<http://www.sysinfo.org/startuplist.php>>. If you are interested in housecleaning, use Disk Cleanup, which is a Windows application. To access it, click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Disk Cleanup. Follow the advice of this application. Temporary and log files are almost always safe to remove. Temporary files end in a TMP extension. They are created by Windows for a particular job and then discarded. Log files are created by Windows or other programs to tell you what those programs did during an operation. Many security programs, such as those that attack viruses, create logs. The

logs often grow quite long. They can be safely deleted. But, the information they contain could be important if you have a security problem. The Internet has plenty of information about individual programs. Again, you can use Google to find them. If you don't want a program, delete it properly by clicking Start, Control Panel, and double-clicking Add or Remove Programs. Find the program in the list and remove it. Hard drives today are quite spacious, so there is much less need for housekeeping. If there is any question in your mind, leave files on the drive. Otherwise, you could cause yourself needless headaches.

Monitor Problems

If you have problems with your computer monitor, it is possible that your display is not set properly on the unit. Computers are capable of showing up to 16.7 million colors. But your monitor may be set to 256 colors, or even 16. Either of them will give you an unappealing display. To check it, close all of your windows. On the desktop, right-click in an unoccupied area, click Properties, and select the Settings tab. If 24-bit is available, select it. A second choice would be 32-bit and failing it, go for 16-bit. If none of those are available, you probably need to download and install a new driver. To identify the maker of your video system, click Start, Control Panel, double-click System, and select the Hardware tab. Next click Device Manager and click the plus mark next to Display Adapters. When the display adapter's name appears, right-click it and click Update Driver. Now use the wizard to search for a new driver. You can also go to the manufacturer's Web site to hunt for a new driver. If your display is properly set up, check your monitor. Adjustments can be made to the display. Your documentation should explain those steps. You could have a bad monitor. For verification, swap it with another computer. Finally your video system also could be bad. You could try a new video card.

Password Lockout

What can you do if your hard drive is password protected and you've forgotten your password? There are some options. You can call the computer manufacturer. The company may have a master password that will work to unlock your computer. You'll need the serial number to prove the machine is not stolen. You can try to use generic passwords to help you recall it, for example your spouse's and/or children's names, etc. You can try the BIOS manufacturer's passwords. You'll find a list at <http://www.elfqrin.com/docs/biospw.html>. You can use a cracking program. These programs, when successful, will tell you the password. As a warning, though, check these programs for viruses before you use them. You can find free programs at <http://www.cgsecurity.org/>, <http://www.11a.nu/>, and <http://natan.zejn.si/rempass.html>. You can reset the BIOS to its defaults. This task can be done by removing the CMOS battery when the computer is turned off. CMIS is not the main battery that powers the computer. The CMOS battery is about the size of a nickel and located on the motherboard. Most motherboards also will let you reset the BIOS by using jumpers. If you have the manual, it might explain this procedure. The manual also may be online. If nothing else, call the manufacturer and ask for help. You can also take the computer to a shop and have the BIOS chip or hard drive replaced by a technician. However, with this option you will have to replace Windows and the applications that are on the drive. There is a lesson here for those of you who use passwords. You should keep a list!.

Recovery Software

Should you reformat your hard drive and then realize that important files, photos, etc., had not been removed from your computer, there may help in one of the following software programs: File Scavenger, \$40, <http://www.quetek.com/>, GetDataBack, \$69, <http://www.runtime.org/>, File-Rescue Plus, \$40, <http://www.filerescueplus.com/default.html>, or OnTrack <http://www.ontrack.com> EasyRecovery Professional, which unfortunately costs \$1,300! You should avoid reinstalling any programs on the hard drive because it would overwrite the lost data, making recovery much less likely.

System Restore

System Restore, a utility in WinXP/ME, makes a picture of your Windows system state at certain designated times. If your Windows OS should become unstable, you can use System Restore to go back in time when it was in a stable condition. If you have a virus, it often will infect the System Restore points. You not only have to clean your system but also must delete the restore points by clicking Start, Control Panel, double-clicking System, and selecting the System Restore tab. Check the box that says "Turn off System Restore on all drives," click Apply, OK, reboot the computer. When it comes back up, all of the restore points will be deleted. You can now run the scan and thereafter your computer should be virus-free. Now go back to the System Restore window and clear the box next to "Turn off System Restore on all drives," click OK, Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, System Restore, Create a Restore Point, Next. In the box, enter the word New, and click Create. Now you will have a fresh and clean restore point.

The latest phishing trick exploits an old security hole. The links in the phishing e-mails contain an attack script that, when clicked, replaces legitimate content on a Web company's site with a form controlled by the hacker. By taking advantage of the cross site scripting hole in some poorly secured Web sites, a phishing e-mail can insert malicious code into a page on a legitimate site. Most of the page may be real content from your bank, but fill in the proffered form and you've been "phished." To be safe never click the links in a suspect e-mail- just open your browser and enter the site's main URL.



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Windows Small Business Server Lessons Learned

Redmond comes to San Antonio

Larry Lentz, MCSE+I & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging W2K3

Larry Lentz is an MCSE + Internet, an MCSE on Windows 2000, a Microsoft Certified Database Administrator, an MCSA: Messaging on Windows Server 2003 and Exchange 2003, and Past President of Alamo PC. He is the owner of Lentz Computer Services, www.LentzComputer.Net, which he founded in 1989. Larry has over 22 years as a computer professional and specializes in Microsoft Small Business Server. He chairs the MCSE Advanced SIG affectionately called 'The Geeks' and the Alamo PC Small Business Server Special Interest Group (SBS SIG). Larry is available for presentations on technology for small business and can be reached via e-mail at Larry@LentzComputer.Net

On March 30th, 2005, the Alamo PC Organization Small Business Server Special Interest Group (APCO SBS SIG) hosted the Microsoft Small Business Server User Group Tour. This was quite an honor as only 14 cities through out the nation were included in this first ever event. Only two Texas cities were on the list, Dallas (Irving actually), and San Antonio. Alamo PC is fortunate to reside in Crossroads Mall right across the hall from the Crossroads Convention Center, our venue for the event. The space was more than ample for our goal of 100 attendees, but come show time it was almost standing room only! Our official count was 97 on the sign-in roster but the registration volunteers reported many slipped by them. Registered attendees received a very nice leather padfolio and a 128MB USB jump drive. Everyone enjoyed pizza and soft drinks while waiting for the show to begin.

Our Microsoft team of speakers from Redmond consisted of Tracy Daugherty, Group Program Manager, SBS, and Guy Haycock, Product Manager, SBS. Also present were members of the Redmond CRM team.

The presentation started with a brief history of how the SBS 2003 version has done. It seems Microsoft sold more SBS 2003 in its first 4 months than they did of the very popular SBS 2000 in its first full year! And they have sold 262% more SBS 2003 the first year than the first year of SBS 2000.



Nearly 100 people attended the Microsoft Small Business Server User Group Tour March 30



Tracy Daugherty, Group Program Manager of SBS, and Guy Haycock, Product Manager of SBS

SBS Service Pack 1 is a hot topic in the SBS community and at our meeting. SP1, anticipated to be released in the next couple of months, is expected to bring a number of long awaited updates and upgrades to SBS 2003. Top among them is ISA Server 2004. While ISA 2004 has been out since last summer, installing it 'broke' SBS. SP1 for Windows Server 2003 and is also included. The upgrade addresses other customer satisfactions issues. Later this year Microsoft expects to release SBS 2003 R2 which is to improve patch and update management and include improved server and client anti-spam. Looking further into the future, SBS Longhorn is anticipated sometime in 2007. We'll see.

Microsoft is making a big push to link SBS with CRM. SBS provides the infrastructure required to run CRM so it is a natural fit. The presentation highlighted Small Business Pains and the Value and Benefits of Microsoft CRM. Microsoft is to run an ad campaign in major publications this Spring.

Since this was a Microsoft Partner targeted event, the guys from Redmond spent a bit of time reviewing the marketing opportunities for Small Business Server and how partners can take advantage of them. They also highlighted the Microsoft Small Business Center web site, <<http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness>> and how partners can get listed in the Partner Finder available to prospective customers.

Following the presentation, everyone held their breath as we had a drawing for the grand prize, a fully resalable copy Microsoft Small Business Server 2003 Premium Edition worth \$1,499! Henry Daigle was the big winner. David Kanter won a copy of Harry Brelsford's SMB Consulting Best Practices book. Diane Bagley was the winner of the Ladies Only (size M) Microsoft SBS 2003 t-shirt. It took a while to finally draw a lady's name. The SBS SIG also conducted a raffle to raise money for our parent organization, The Alamo PC Organization. With the help of many volunteers including Gene Flesher, John Gaddis, Steve Bagley, and many others we raised approximately \$1,600 for Alamo PC! Thanks to all you who generously purchased tickets. Thanks also to the many volunteers who helped make this event a success. Special thanks to Will Wiggins, Albert Obar our photographer, Edgar Chew, Ed Boland, Leslie Lentz, Cary and Jean Hall, Joe Mechinus, and many others. Many thanks also to PC Wholesale for helping to promote the event and InkSell.com for their assistance in the raffle and generous donation to Alamo PC.

Pictures of our event and the PowerPoint slides used by the folks from Redmond are available on the Alamo PC SBS SIG web site at <<http://www.LentzComputer.net/SBS>>. Look for the slides under 'Presentations' in the left most panel of the site. The SBS SIG meets on the first Friday of every month at 8 AM at the Alamo PC Learning Center, Crossroads Mall, San Antonio, Texas. Come join us!



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User Stories, Part I

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane uses a PC. He needed comic relief this month. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com>.

We all know we wouldn't make money if it weren't for our dear users. We shouldn't poke fun at their problems, but you sometimes have to wonder, "What are these people thinking!" This month, I provide the first in a series of stories I've experienced, heard from friends, or gathered from other sources.

#1: Properly lubricate your components

I was teaching for the Air Force recently when a student of mine, who provides IT support for a group of airplane mechanics, told this story. He'd been experiencing a lot of odd problems with various machines, so he popped one open to check for hardware problems. He discovered an oily substance all over the internals. When he asked one of the mechanics what happened, the mechanic calmly explained that it was making a squeaking noise, so he oiled it—with a good dose of WD-40.

#2: The Multi-Purpose Room

A friend of mine was recently called to troubleshoot a network for a small company. It seems their systems worked fine most of the time, but the entire network would go down between the hours of 11:00AM and 1:00PM. My friend met with an administrative assistant and asked to be shown to the wire closet. The girl looked perplexed and asked what a wire closet was. He described the room where all the cables from the computers come together. She said, "Oh, you mean the break room!" Sure enough, she brought him to the break room where he discovered the company's network switch sitting directly on top of the company's microwave oven.

#3: Proper Cleaning and Maintenance

We all know how terrible dust and heat can be to the health of a PC. To troubleshoot some random lockups described by one client, a technician suggested that the customer open their system (which had been running, untouched, for nearly three years) and clean it out. The customer called back claiming his problems had gotten worse. He'd thoroughly cleaned the system, opening the case and washing the dust out with a hose. He let the system dry. When he plugged it back in, nothing worked!

#4: Career Transitioning

In my adventures in training, I often encounter students who are tired of working their present jobs and desire to enter into the exciting world of computers. In one such instance, I heard a story of a woman who'd worked as a seamstress for nearly 30-years of her life. She'd just gotten her new computer, which she loved, but she was curious about one thing. She couldn't figure out how to use the foot pedal (a.k.a., the mouse!)

#5: At Least My Phone Didn't Crash!

A technician received a call from an irate customer whose new PC wouldn't boot. The tech quickly went down his troubleshooting checklist. He informed the user that both the

monitor and the computer needed to be turned on for the system to work. The user informed the tech he was aware of the fact. The tech asked where the machine was located. The user answered, "Under the desk." The tech asked the user to look behind the machine to insure it was plugged in. The user responded angrily, "I can't see a thing back there! The lights have been out for almost two hours!"

#6: Leave Moving to the Professionals

One company decided to save money, having their administrative staff move their computers while rearranging their offices. They called their technician when some of the computers failed to work correctly after the move. He discovered no picture on the monitor, with monitor power confirmed, when the system booted. He asked if they'd disconnected anything. They told him they managed to move the desks and PCs without disconnecting anything. When he moved to the other desk, he found its monitor displaying Windows before he'd turned the computer at that desk on. The girls had accidentally switched monitors during the move. They claimed they thought their mouses and keyboards just weren't working when both systems were on.

#7: Check Your Default Gateway

One technician was trying to assist a client with setting her TCP/IP properties. He asked her to make an entry for her Default Gateway. She refused. He asked her to do it again. Again she refused, claiming she couldn't do that. He told her the Default Gateway was required for her to get on the Internet. She exclaimed, "I guess I won't get the Internet, then. I don't have a Gateway, I have an HP!"

#8: Proper Utilization of Enlisted Soldiers

A young tech, providing support for his Air Force unit, told me about his new commander. He was called to the boss's office where the commander's administrative assistant explained that the Colonel got no picture on the monitor when he turned it on. The commander was upset because he was falling behind on his work. He told the assistant to "get SGT Cantu down here and get this fixed now!" The tech bent down and pressed the power button on the PC. The monitor came to life. He gently reminded the assistant that the computer, as well as the monitor, must be turned on each day. When the assistant informed the Colonel of the problem, he stated, "You called that sergeant all the way down here for that?" The assistant responded, "But, sir, you ordered me to."

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac Welcome to The Grid

Shane's a Mac user. Assist in his quest to learn OS X — e-mail him at [<mac@vpwn.com>](mailto:mac@vpwn.com).

Ever wanted to own your own supercomputer? It's possible with what most of us have just laying around the house—well, pretty close anyway. All you need is two or more Macs running OS X 10.2.8 or later, a paltry 128MB of RAM for each, and a hub with the network cabling required to connect your Macs together. From there, download Xgrid from Apple at www.apple.com/acg/xgrid for FREE and your ready to build your first supercomputing cluster, now known as a grid.

You might say, "I thought we were building a supercomputer? What's with this grid?" Well, a grid is simply a group of computers working together to solve a single problem. It's a popular computing concept today, being built-in to several major data crunching applications, like the latest version of Oracle. Possibly the most well known example of a successful grid computing project is the University of California at Berkeley's SETI@Home. This project allows computer users around the globe to donate free processing time from their individual computers for analyzing radio telescope data on behalf of the project team's search for extraterrestrial intelligence. Apple's application of grid computing is implemented using Xgrid.

How does Xgrid perform?

According to Apple, Xgrid has no real limitations on the amount of computational power it can support. Performance depends on the hardware and software used. When optimized, an X number of 1GHz computers can work together for an effective clock speed of nearly X GHz.

How Xgrid Is used?

Xgrid can be implemented in to ways: ad hoc participation or as a dedicated grid.

In an ad hoc grid, users can add any computer resources they choose, from anywhere. This means that computers that aren't necessarily controlled by the organization solving the problem can be incorporated into the grid. With Xgrid installed on each system, they can participate at will. When computers are brought on- and off-line, physically connecting and disconnecting from the network, the grid changes dynamically in size.

A screen saver may be used to join machines to the grid. In an average office during the day, people are busy using their computers. However, during lunch or at the end of the day, the computers are left with nothing to do. When the Xgrid screen saver appears, that computer has joined the grid. As resources become available, they start working on their assigned portion of the problem. When finished, the computer returns its results and waits for the next task.

If the system resources are needed by a user before it's finished the task assigned, the task is suspended until the screen saver kicks in again. If no computers are available to the grid, the jobs submitted to the grid remain suspended until resources become available again.

Some organizations require frequent, rapid computation of large calculations. Such organizations might purchase dedicated servers for these tasks. Xgrid can be configured as a dedicated grid in this situation. Here, this set of servers immediately works on assigned tasks, without waiting for idle time.

What are the software components of the grid?

An Xgrid cluster is made from three components: an agent that runs one task at a time per CPU, in either dedicated mode or screensaver mode; a controller that queues tasks, distributes those tasks to agents, and handles failover; and a client that submits jobs to the Xgrid controller in the form of multiple tasks.

To learn more about Xgrid computing on the Mac, Apple supplies several resources:

<http://www.apple.com/acg/xgrid>—Xgrid product page

<http://www.apple.com/acg> Advanced Computation group

<http://www.apple.com/xserve/cluster/resources.html> Third-party cluster resources

<http://lists.apple.com/listinfo/xgrid-users> Clusters mailing list

If you're interested in finding general information on how computers running in a cluster are performing, there are several communities of information available that are controlled by Apple:

<http://www.macos.utah.edu:16080/xgrid/>

<http://unu.novajo.ca/simple/archives/000024.html>

<http://www.newsforge.com/hardware/04/01/12/1628240.shtml>

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Tables Part III: Spacing and Alignment



Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Susan Ives is a former president of Alamo PC. She archives these columns on her Web site, www.susanives.com/. If you visit, you can cut-and-paste the code instead of retyping it from the magazine – the ultimate in lazy Webmastering!

For the past two months we've talked about tables: this month we tackle alignment and spacing.

Alignment refers to how the table data is displayed side to side (horizontally) and up and down (vertically). This is controlled by inserting attributes in the either the `<TR>` or `<TD>` tags.

If used in the `<TR>` tag, the attribute is applied to all of the data within each `<TD>` of that table row. If inserted into the `<TD>` it will apply to that cell only and will override any `<TR>` formatting.

Figure 1 shows the options.

I have found that the JUSTIFY attribute doesn't work in either Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator so you might as well disregard it. The BASELINE attribute requires a little explanation.

In most instances, BOTTOM and BASELINE will produce the same results. Figure two illustrates the difference.

When you are working with text, the BOTTOM attribute will line up the absolute bottoms of the text. BASELINE compensates for the descenders (the bits of letters that dip below the line, like the tail on the Y) and lines up the bottom of the text itself, known as the "x height" in typography. This is most noticeable when you are using different font sizes, as I did in figure 2. It is considered more elegant to have the baselines line up. If you are working with graphics bottom and baseline are the same.

You can use the ALIGN and VALIGN attributes in the `<TABLE>` tag, although with a totally different result.

ALIGN=LEFT, RIGHT or CENTER, as in `<TABLE ALIGN="CENTER">` will align the entire table on the screen, in this case, by centering it. ALIGN="RIGHT" and ALIGN="LEFT" will also make the table act as a separate element in relation to other elements on the page.

Default	The default attributes are left aligned and centered on the vertical.
<code><td align="RIGHT"></code>	The "align" attribute set the alignment in relation to the right and left margins. The possible variables are RIGHT, LEFT, CENTER and JUSTIFY.
<code><td valign="TOP"></code>	The "valign" attribute set the alignment in relation to the top and bottom margins. The possible variables are TOP, CENTER, BOTTOM and BASELINE.

Figure 1

justify	justify	<code><td valign="BOTTOM"></code>
justify	justify	<code><td valign="BASELINE"></code>

Figure 2

This is illustrated in figure 3.

Tables 1 and 2 were formatted with no horizontal alignment specified: the default is that they align one under the other. Table 3 was given the attribute `<TABLE ALIGN="LEFT">` and, as you can see, it lines up to the left of table 4. The same coding would also make it align to the left of a graphic or a block of text.

There are two other possibilities: BLEEDLEFT and BLEEDRIGHT. In typography, a bleed is something that goes right to the edge of the paper, and this is what happens: the table goes right to the edge of the screen with no margin.

The spacing around the data within a `<TD>` cell is controlled by two attributes: cell padding and cell spacing. Although these attributes control the format of the cells, they can only be inserted into the `<TABLE>` tag itself, and thus affect the entire table.

Cell padding puts a buffer inside the cell so that the contents do not touch the cell edges. You specify the

amount of padding in pixels: `<TABLE CELLPADDING="5">`

Cell spacing inserts a space between the cells themselves, also specified in pixels: `<TABLE CELLSPACING="5">`

If you have a borderless table with no added color the difference between the two might not be obvious, but the actions are actually very different. Figure 4 illustrates the difference. The top table has neither cell padding nor cell spacing. The middle table is exactly the same, except with the cell spacing set at 15 pixels. The bottom table has the cell padding set at 15. See the difference? You can use both, if you want: `<TABLE CELLPADDING="4" CELLSPACING="2">`

One other attribute might help you get the spacing right: NOWRAP. As we discussed last month, tables have a way of deciding on their own how they will format themselves. Sometimes you do not want a break in a line even when the table thinks it ought to be broken.

Figure 5 is my first try at designing the table used in figure 1. See how the lines of code in the left-hand column have a line break in them? To make it all fit on one line, I inserted the NOWRAP attribute: `<TD NOWRAP>`.

You can add NOWRAP to `<TD>`, `<TR>` or the entire `<TABLE>`. But be careful: the attribute says no wrap and it means it! If you use this recklessly you could end up having text drift off the right hand side of the screen into infinity. It works well for a short item like the line of code used in this example, or a name or phone number.

We still have two more sessions on table manners before we wrap this up. Next month: color and buttons.

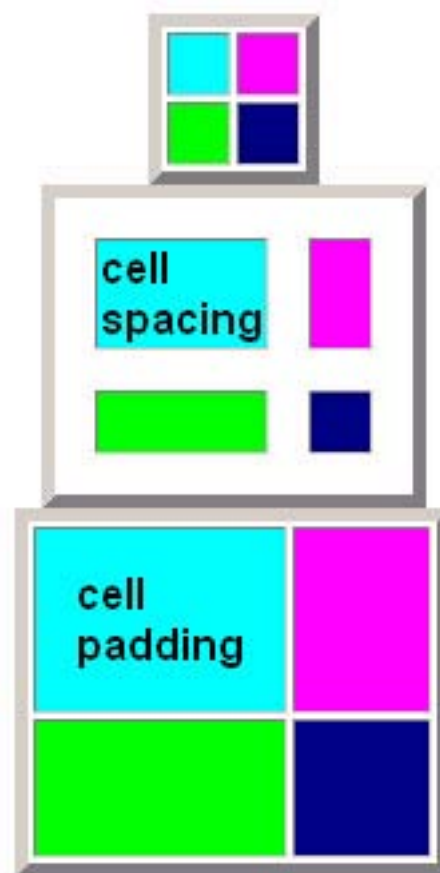


Figure 3

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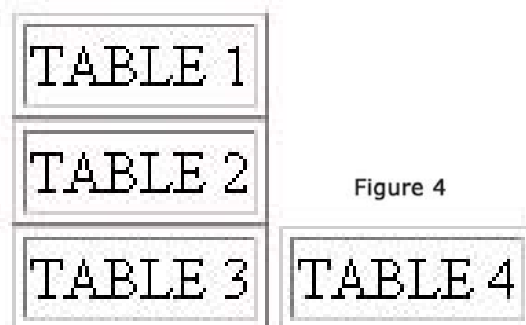


Figure 4

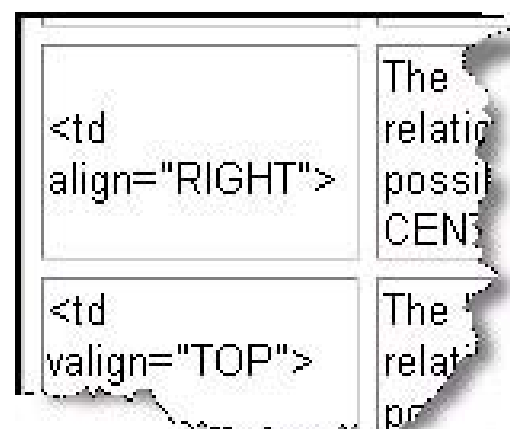


Figure 5



More Fun with Layers

Paul Vaughn, Alamo PC

Paul Vaughn is a freelance graphic artist, writer and web designer. He also writes the Mac Guy column in the Business section of the Sunday Express-News newspaper. If you would like to a specific topic addressed, email Paul Vaughn at < paulv@mac.com >.

Somebody called me recently to discuss a problem he was having in Adobe Photoshop. He was creating a T-shirt design and the shirt printer needed all of the artwork in black on a white background. Since this was a multi-color shirt design, things like drop shadows had to have a hole knocked out of them so one color would not overprint another. “No problem,” said I. With the power of Adobe Photoshop, simple Layer Styles can be dissected and manipulated even further.

Making a drop shadow in Photoshop these days is remarkably simple. No longer do you need to create a duplicate layer, blur it and then offset it. Now, you’ve just got to select Layer > Layer Style > Drop Shadow (Fig. 1). What’s more, if you change the artwork on the layer, the shadow updates automatically. But to achieve the knockout effect as described above, you have a couple different options.

The easiest is to simply make a duplicate of the layer (Layer > Duplicate Layer or drag the layer to the New Layer icon of the Layers palette). For the layer on top, turn off the visibility of the drop shadow by clicking the eye icon to the left of the words drop shadow in the Layers palette. On the layer below, set that layer’s Fill to 0% with the slider near the top of the palette (Fig. 2). This will show the drop shadow, but will leave the area where the art was as transparent.

For something more complicated, say if you had to knock out multiple shapes that were on several different layers, you can separate the Layer Style from the layer altogether. To do this, select your layer with the appropriate Layer Style applied and select Layer > Layer Style > Create Layer. This command will have Photoshop create as many discreet layers as needed to reproduce this layer style. Photoshop will warn you first that some Layer Style cannot be exactly reproduced this way (Fig. 3), but simple effects like drop shadows are usually not a problem. Before doing this I typically will make a duplicate of the layer first in case I need to make further changes to the Layer Style.

In my example, once I performed the Create Layer command, I now had the art on one layer called ‘Ball’ and a new layer called ‘Ball’s Drop Shadow’ (Fig. 4). This layer can now be manipulated separately from the art. To create the knockout, all I need to do is load the ‘Ball’ layer’s transparency mask as a selection. Do this by clicking on the ‘Ball’ layer and then picking Select > Load Selection (Fig. 5). In the Channel pop-up menu

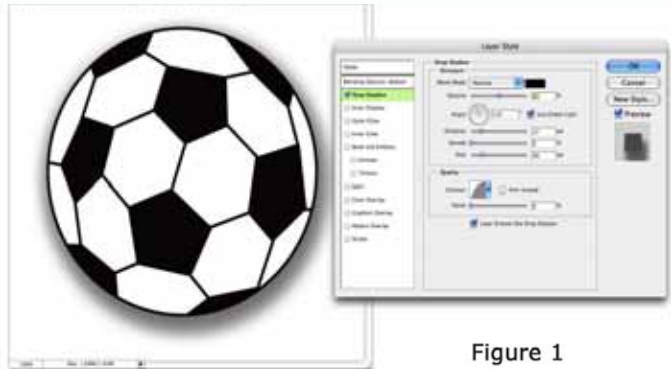


Figure 1

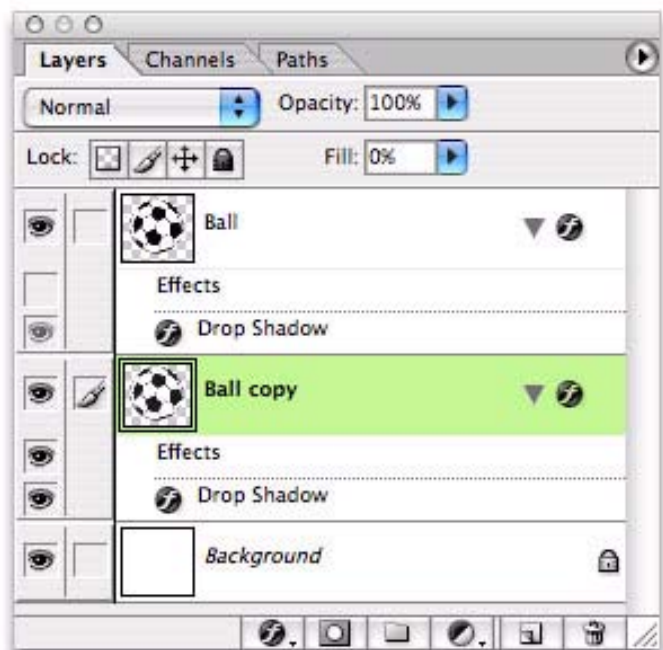


Figure 2

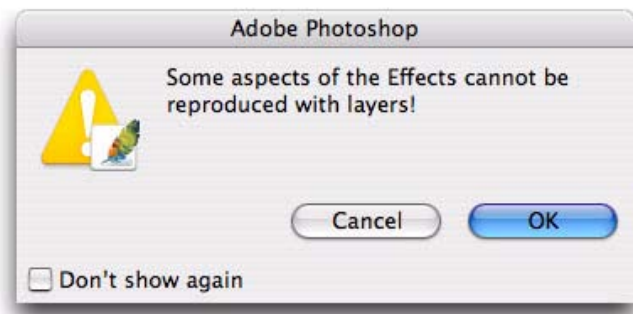


Figure 3

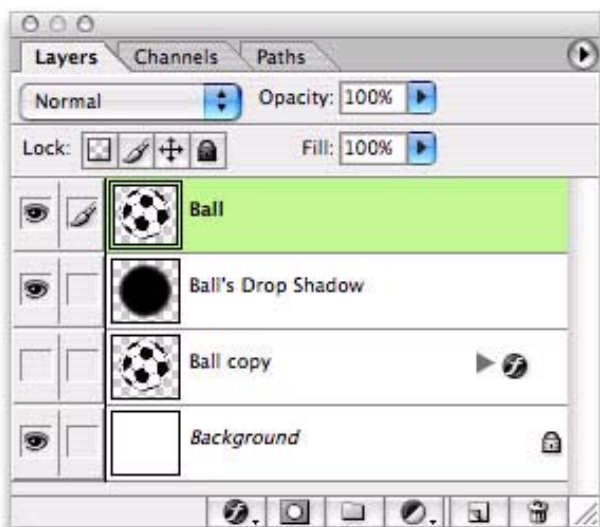


Figure 4

choose 'Ball Transparency' and click 'OK'. Complete the knockout by selecting the 'Ball's Drop Shadow' layer and hitting the delete key or choosing Edit > Clear to delete the area inside the selection.

So this all may seem pretty esoteric, but here is a little something extra you can do with this knowledge. Since you can manipulate the Layer Style by itself, you can use any of Photoshop's tools on it. Here is a neat effect that I did recently for a client.

I wanted to add a glow to a company's logo, but sometimes a regular old glow can seem pretty tired. Using this technique, I added an Outer Glow Layer Style to the 'Logo' layer and then used the Create Layer command to break the glow off as a separate layer. Then, I simply used a filter on the glow layer to give it a unique look. In this case I used the Corona filter (Fig. 6), part of Alien Skin's Eye Candy series of filters. You could also use any of the other tools in the Photoshop arsenal. I then repeated the process to add a spidery glow to the address text as well. Here is what the effect looks like on a black background where it is easier to see (Fig. 7).

Being able to manipulate these Layer Styles beyond simply changing the settings is yet another gem waiting to be discovered in the Adobe Photoshop treasure chest.

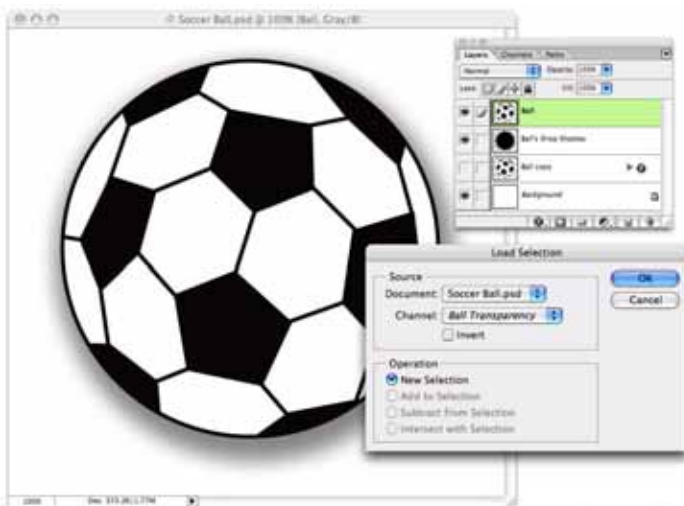


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Windows Accessories "Address Book"

Ron Ingraham, Space Coast PC User Group

Ron is a member of Space Coast PC Users Group. Instructions in this column were created on a Windows 98 system. E-mail Ron at <ringram728@earthlink.net>

Having completed "System Tools" we need to check the remaining Accessories. The Address Book is pretty much self-explanatory. There are a couple of things I might point out that you may have missed, or just not tried. You may not have need for the List feature, but it can be quite handy if you want to send the same document to a group of people. For example, a few years ago I was Secretary for the Biennial Reunion of the Air Force Helicopter Pilots Association. In that capacity had occasion to send a number of e-mails to the group. So I set up a group list.

You notice in figure 1 I actually had three lists, with slightly different names. The reason for this was that my ISP considered more than 50 addressees for the same message to be SPAM. So I had to break the list into smaller chunks.

The top two lists are the groups to whom I send the electronic Journal. In this case I keep our group members separate from the user groups with whom we exchange Journals.

The Resource Center Attendees are the folks who attend the Resource Center sessions fairly regularly. I have set up this list to facilitate their notification of things like cancellations when Towers residents preempt the room.

The SCPCUG BOD needs no explanation. We exchange messages frequently in the conduct of club business.

The point to remember here is that I can prepare one message, click the Address Book icon in the To: line, select a list, and proceed to prepare the single message to all intended recipients.

How do we actually create a group list? Well, it's sort of like making elephant stew - you know, first you take an elephant. In this case the address book must already have a basic listing of all the people you want to include in the group. This is not entirely true. As you are preparing a group list, if you need to add someone not already in your address book, you will be prompted for a new contact.

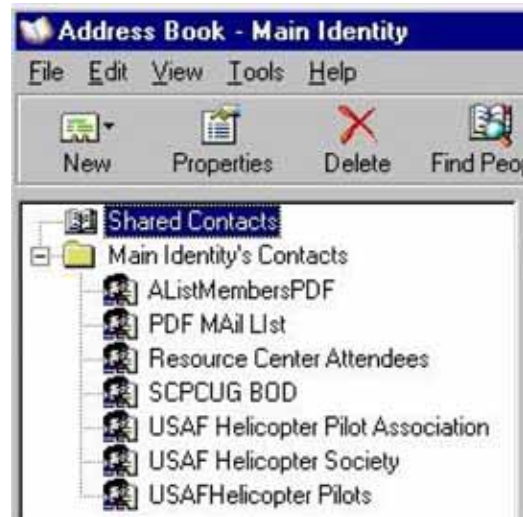


Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 2 contains all of the contacts in my address book. For the reasons mentioned earlier, my list is most likely much longer than yours.

To begin the process, if you click the “New” icon on the menu bar, you will get the drop down seen in figure 3. Here you can select New Group. This will open a new window in which you can construct a Group list.

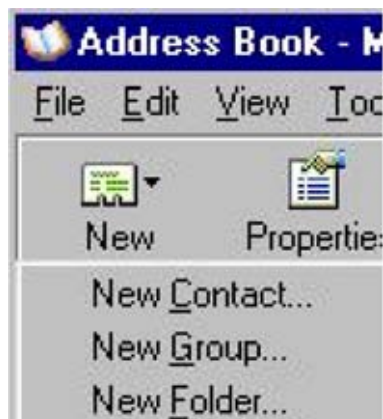


Figure 3

First order of business is to give your list a name. In this case we'll call it Christmas List. As you can see in figure 4, there are the three ways to add to your group. If you click the “Select Members” radio button, your address book list (bottom right previous page) will pop up in a new window, which you can see at the top right. Highlighting (or selecting) any name from the list, and then clicking the “select” button will add that person to your list. Clicking the “New Contact” radio button will bring up the standard window the same as if you click the “New Contact” button on the “New” dropdown list from the toolbar and select “New Contact” or the dropdown from the File menu. Add as many names as you wish.

The last method mentioned in the properties window is to add someone to the group but not to your address book. The two open lines at the bottom of the window “Name” and “E-Mail” are for this purpose. Simply type in the name of the contact and the e-mail address in the space below. The new name will appear in the list, but the address will not be added to the book. I can't think of an instance where this might be appropriate, but perhaps you will. I haven't mentioned the “Group Details” tab on the window to the left. That appears to me to be most useful if your list is for a group, such as Space Coast PC Users Group, where you may list the essential information on the group itself, such as the address, phone and Fax numbers, website URL, and you may even request a Map from a “View Map” radio button.

That pretty well covers the Address Book. If you have difficulty with it, check the Help files. A fairly comprehensive summary of its features lists the many ways you can use it. Take a look at it for more detail.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Ponderings

Meredith Poor

If Moore's Law states that computer power doubles (for a given cost) every 18 months, than this means that it increases by one order of magnitude (10x) in roughly 5 years. For the basket of technologies where Moore's law is applicable, \$2000 worth of purchases made in 2010 should be worth \$20,000 today. \$2000 worth of purchases in 2015 should be worth \$200,000 today. What kind of computer would anyone buy today that is worth \$200,000?

In the 1970's 'progress' in computer processor speed was limited primarily to processors and disk drives, but by the 1980's this branched out to display adaptors and CD players, and in the 1990's to all kinds of digital bric-a-brac, from stand-alone computer games to DVD players to Tagamochi virtual pets to digital cameras to MP3 players. In short, more and more apparatus became subject to Moore's law.

One consumer product purchased today in the \$20,000 range is an automobile. What exactly would have to happen to make it subject to Moore's law? There is no evidence that automotive power improves with higher resolution chip fabrication. Given what, and who, is on the road right now, do we really need twice the power at a given price in 18 months?

This line of inquiry, however, has it's uses. One product I am seeing sprouting up like weeds right now are electric motor scooters. Some of these are priced in the hundreds rather than the thousands of dollars. Another product I'm seeing proliferating is high-power lithium-ion batteries, high power meaning first that they can discharge at high current rates, second that the batteries have high energy density (about six times that of lead-acid batteries), and third that they are physically large, more on the range of motorcycle and UPS batteries than what you see for cell phones and flashlights. Hybrid cars (gasoline engines with electric motor assists) are now becoming the rage, but a pure electric car (EV) would be practical with these batteries.

One would not take a motor scooter to work in the driving rain, penetrating cold, or blazing heat that makes up the climate of South Texas. For the most part people would avoid exposing themselves to the traffic hazards and grime one encounters on the daily commute to work. A minimum commuter vehicle would have to enclose the driver, be street legal, provide heat and air conditioning as appropriate, and offer up some degree of protection from collisions. This does not have to be a full blown four or six-passenger car.

The electric motor scooter idea only has to grow up into something that can comfortably house a 'normal' driver making 'normal' use of the vehicle, and this might be something with a somewhat more novel wheel arrangement than what we use now. Motorcycles have a tendency to tip over if someone is trying to keep one right side up when it is at a standstill. A creative use of gyroscopes, 'landing gear', and embedded controllers might remedy this. All that remains as an issue, at that point, is the protective housing that encases the rider in a crash-worthy shell.

What emerges from such an idea is relative large, stabilized motorcycle with a car-like exterior. Is this a \$2000 product? There is one other 'gotcha' in this: energy costs.

If a ten-year-old car has 120,000 miles on it, then obviously it is being driven 12,000 miles a year, and this is somewhat less than 40 miles a day, on average. A smallish car typically uses 16 horsepower to travel at a constant 60 miles per hour on a flat surface. This is 12 kilowatts, so such a car might use

12 kilowatt/hours in one day's travel. At 8 cents per KWh, this is \$1 worth of electricity.

A car getting 20 miles to the gallon in the city is using two gallons of gas a day, at \$1.60 a gallon this is \$3.60, so there is a pretty huge disconnect between the price of gas and the electric car equivalent.

\$3.60 per day times 360 days is \$1300 a year, so a \$20,000 car financed and operated for five years costs (aside from insurance and maintenance), in addition, \$6500 for fuel. An 'order of magnitude' reduction in price would be \$2650. Energy costs at \$1 a day using this would be about \$1800, however motorcycles have substantially greater efficiency, so this number might be cut in half to \$900. To meet the combined pricing objective the vehicle would have to cost \$1750.

The price 'homes in' at about \$3000 if insurance and interest costs are added to the price of the car and then also diminished by the relative price of the vehicle.

If the average American salary is \$45,000 and a car is \$22,500, then it takes six months of work from the average worker to buy a car. If productivity increased at a 3% per year rate over the next five years, salaries would rise effectively to \$52,000. Six months is about 1000 work hours, so an order of magnitude reduction would be 100 hours, or about 3 weeks of work, or \$3000.

Could such a vehicle be built in five years? One would expect the factory to be almost completely automated. Nearly everything except the motors and bearings would be (recycled) plastic. Would there be a market for at least 10 million of them? Is the price of such a product ultimately dependent on Moore's law in some form?

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Configuring a Basic User's PC

By *Gabe Goldberg*, APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Don't be alarmed by the high-falutin word "configuring". It just means deciding what components -- otherwise called "parts" -- will perform various PC functions. It's like old-days car buying: reviewing a dealer checklist to pick dozens of individual features, from radio to power steering to disc brakes and more.

The good news is that almost any current PC with a printer and Internet connectivity will handle mainstream requirements. That means that a generic Windows PC is usually adequate -- but you should upgrade if you'll do anything challenging or exotic.

Just as when buying a car, the first step in buying a computer is deciding what you'll do with it: e-mail, Web searching/viewing, word processing? Financial work with Quicken? Digital photography? Simple games? Ultra-demanding tasks like high-end games and digital video editing?

Just as when making any major purchase, a small investment in learning pays off for years. Before buying a PC, learn the basics: -- take a class, buy a book, attend local computer user group meetings, consult Web sites, read technology magazines at the library.

As you look at applications' system requirements (processor speed, RAM size, hard drive storage capacity, video card speed and memory, etc.) note differences between minimum and recommended specifications. Vendors are often too optimistic -- and that's being charitable -- about what's needed for their software to run productively. It's much safer, and not much more expensive, to buy at least the recommended choices. In fact, I usually buy a little more power than I need. This bumps cost just a little and it avoids future problems and upgrades. Purchasing this way greatly extends a PC's life and makes it more compatible with future innovations, at least for a while.

Remember that as PCs evolve, a range of choices is always available, from bleeding-edge new to borderline obsolete. An equally valid -- and more economical -- approach to configuring is finding the current technology "sweet spot" the point where cost, performance, compatibility, and useful life are in balance.

A key decision is whether to buy a brand-name system or an unknown-brand machine, have a PC built to order, or build it yourself. Choices for laptop computers are much more limited: brand-name systems dominate, trailed by a few off-brand manufacturers. There are no build-it-yourself options, though manufactured systems can be customized extensively.

Each purchasing choice has advantages and advocates. Brand-name systems can be evaluated and compared by consulting references such as Consumer Reports magazine, are available everywhere via catalog or online shopping, and may have better standard or optional warranties (often worthwhile for quick service and peace of mind). But brand-name systems sometimes suffer from using commodity parts vs. best-quality components.

Unknown-brand machines can be reliable money savers or risky acquisitions. I'd only buy such a system from a trusted store with a flexible return policy. I favor having PCs built to order by small local shops with established reputations, offering maximum flexibility and consultation during design. And I've enjoyed watching my PCs take shape as they're assembled from a tableful of parts!

Some people build their own PCs, often with training and mentoring from computer user group volunteers. This demystifies system innards, greatly facilitating diagnosing and repairing problems and upgrading components. Build-to-order and build-your-

self allow specifying brand-name parts for improved performance and reliability.

No matter where you purchase, look carefully at monitor choices. Traditional CRT monitors prices have declined, allowing buying larger devices with better resolution. And newer/thinner/lighter LCD panels offer a powerful -- though sometimes less flexible -- alternative. Visit stores to compare brands and models and explore settings to match your preferences.

Decide how you'll back up your software and data. Choices include a second -- perhaps external or removeable -- hard drive, writable optical media such as DVD, and tape. The first two are most often used, with each having unique advantages. Follow your backup plan regularly; nothing ruins a day like losing months or years of can't-be-replaced data, not to mention having to reconstruct all your software.

Small choices can make large differences in productivity and comfort. For example, mouse technology has advanced far beyond the traditional two-button wired device. Mouse alternatives include trackball and wireless devices, gadgets with many extra programmable buttons, wheel mice allowing horizontal/vertical scrolling, etc. Considering how much time you'll use your pointing device, it's worth spending a little extra money to have the device that suits you best!

Windows offers many choices for easing use -- enlarging type, making keyboarding easier, providing special audible and visual cues, etc. Accessibility options are found in different places -- usually via Control Panel or the Start menu. It's worth exploring these to tailor your PC to your individual preferences. Similarly, small add-on programs can greatly improve a PC's comfort factor. Remember that Windows is highly configurable: you can change how it looks and operates. As you become familiar with your new PC, explore options/settings/preferences. Just as you wouldn't insist on driving a car with seats and mirrors exactly as they came from the dealer, don't be captive of Microsoft's initial settings!

Name-brand computers usually include software bundles. Vendors shout about how valuable they are and how much money you're saving on them -- but that's only true if you'll use the software provided. As soon as you have your machine, examine pre-installed software and remove anything you know you won't use. Then defrag your disk and then install the programs you'll use. These simple steps will make your machine run better by decluttering it.

Finally, If you understand how to do this, use built-in tools such as MSCONFIG to chop out unneeded services started by default when your system boots.

Software bundles often include junior-grade versions or limited-time trial copies of critical tools such as anti-virus and anti-spyware software. For system reliability and security, upgrade these to full versions and subscribe to update services.

Not much else in modern life besides computers keeps getting faster/better/cheaper. And it's not hard to find or build a computer that meets needs for several years, runs reliably, and doesn't break the bank.



Maps and Travel

Introduction

by Susan Ives

You may notice that almost every product review in this map and travel issue of the PC Alamode mentions GPS, Global Positioning Systems.

Until five years ago – May 1st, 2000, to be exact – civilian-owned global positioning systems were deliberately inaccurate. They'd get you into the neighborhood but you wouldn't know what door to knock on.

It wasn't a matter of the technology: the last of the 24 positioning satellites was launched in October, 1993. It was a matter of policy. Until five years ago, to protect national security, civilian GPS satellite signals were scrambled, subject to "selective availability," a random signal dithering process that reduced the accuracy of the unit to about 100 meters.

The law changed five years ago, and GPS took off. Now, every GPS is accurate to within 15 meters and most have signal enhancement technology to bring the accuracy to 3 meters. That so close that it not only gets you to the right house but also to your own seat at the dinner table!

They're everywhere. If your cell phone has e911 service, it's provided by a GPS chip. Factory-installed GPS is an option in luxury cars (Plan on springing about \$1,500 and having it bundled with other high-end options.) An entire sport – geocaching – has sprung up around GPS. You can even get a GPS enable wristwatch for about \$150.

Computers can help you get to your destination, whether it's across town or around the world. The annual maps & travel edition of PC Alamode will help you get there too.

On the Road Gifts:

Throughout this issue, you will see a variety of gift ideas for travelers. Look for the "On the Road" info box for a great trip-related gadget...

GARMIN VS. NAVMAN

By Joe Barth, Alamo PC

Comparisson and Evaluation of two Portable In-Car GPS Units

Garmin helped start the US civilian GPS industry in 1989 and their pioneering efforts set marks for others to follow. I first saw their aircraft units when I was a flight instructor and a very well equipped aircraft had one installed. It worked great and I was impressed with the technology. Their unit is the Quest.

Navman is new to the handheld market but have been making products for marine use for several years and have been well received in Europe. They are establishing a strong presence in the US market. They got their start in 1988 and are well known in boating circles in New Zealand and in Europe. Their unit is the iCN 510. (iCN is for in-car navigation).

Both companies graciously lent us their top-of-the-line unit, and gave us sufficient time to give them a fairly complete road test. The opinions that I present are based on using each unit for about a month and the 510 was used on a trip to New Orleans. (Yeah, I know that isn't too tough – take IH10 East until you get there but more details follow).

I plan on buying a unit for use with the American Red Cross disaster program as Marion and I often find ourselves looking for streets and street numbers that aren't there due to tornado's and hurricanes and floods. The GPS unit is usually accurate to within 10 feet or so.

Figure one shows the relative sizes of the two units compared to my measuring standard – the one-dollar bill. The screens are small compared to the dealer installed units (\$2000 plus) or even to some of the ones like the RoadMate 700 previously reviewed for Alamo PC. The screens are small but usable.

Their voice direction was a source of great amusement to my assistant testers (the two grand daughters) when I deviated from the route that the computer thought I should take.

The voice told me how to get back on the route and the girls claimed it sounded a bit peeved when I ignored it. "Off route, recalculating" was often heard but both systems really did a fine job getting me back on route.

Let's talk about what the units have in common.

Both are portable, have internal batteries, a way to store maps, a plastic clip-on holder for use within the car, car chargers, 110 volt power converters, voice directions, maps on CD's, transfer cables for installing/removing maps using a computer, and their prices are about the same.

A touch on pricing – the 510 price on the Internet varied from \$411 to \$1200+. The Quest ran from \$416 to \$850. It really does pay to shop. A few prices were cheaper than eBay auctions when the shipping was considered.

Price should NOT be a consideration when selecting one of these units.

Both units warn you of upcoming turns or lane merges about 400 feet before you must make the maneuver. They commonly



Figure 1

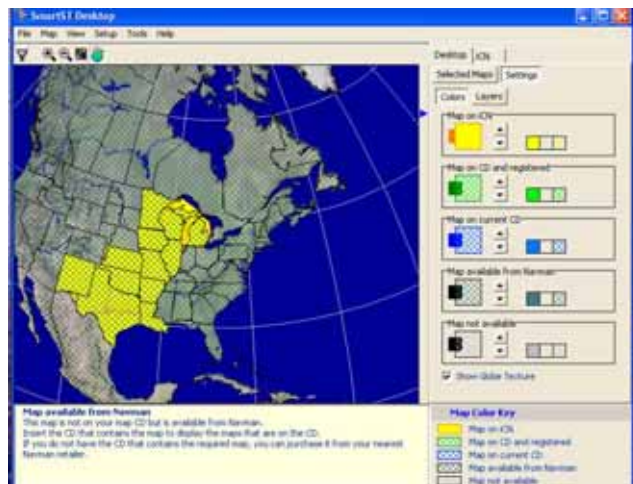


Figure 2

announce the need to move and then just before the actual turn they announce it again.

Both quickly recalculate the route to get you to your destination if you do not follow their initial directions. You know your neighborhood and have your own short cuts that the systems will not recognize. A computer thinks in a different manner than we do, so don't blame it for following its own logic. **DO NOT BLINDLY FOLLOW THE UNIT – IT MAY BE WRONG.**

Both units come with maps on CD's and they are not up to the minute accurate. For example, Lockhill-Selma between Loop 1604 and De Zavala does not exist but the side streets frequently do. Also, the mess at 410 and I 10 shows the former way to travel. Updates are available for about \$100 every couple of years if you want them although I suspect I would wait about 4 years before spending the money.

Both units locked onto the necessary satellites quickly and held the lock. There were times when it took more than 5 minutes to lock on but not consistently nor could I get the conditions to repeat. Just have to live with it, I guess. Their self contained antennae worked well but an optional external vehicle antennae is available at extra cost.

You can use both units for geocaching if you wish but try to get a good topo map of the area to avoid walking into dangerous areas. There are hand held units that are easier to use for geocaching but they don't work well on roads.

Both units could find street addresses with excellent accuracy. You did have to be careful to spell the names properly or you can't get there from here but – in anticipation of that problem, both units have a system to either complete the street/city name or to quickly offer you a selection of names to choose from.

Both units allowed for a "warning" if a pre-selected speed was exceeded. This caused great amusement for the grand daughters and a certain amount of "tightness" across the shoulders of one of the drivers that is known to have a heavy foot on the flat pedal. I sat in the back and the unit spoke for me. (There was a certain coolness directed to that option for some reason, and I turned it off to keep peace in the family but, as an old cop, I must admit I liked it).

Both units allowed for the display of thousands of "points of interest" such as medical facilities, gas stations, restaurants, casinos, parks, airports, etc. You really have to be selective using them otherwise the screen becomes so cluttered that it is even harder to read.

The mapping software included worked well but as you can see from figures two (510) and three (Quest) the screen differences are obvious. It takes a bit of time to sync the units using the included USB cord but once in sync you can move maps as desired. (See comments below on the differences).

The units allowed you to program a trip to a city center or specific address or intersection provided it was in the memory. The result was also available for review before you left home to make sure it made sense or, at least, took you to your destination. Once locked onto the satellite system the units did a great job of getting me to where I wanted to go.

I had the options of selecting more or less freeway, quickest route, shortest route, or a route with stops in between. It worked well.

On the Road



Car cassette adapter

The mobile cassette adapter from Belkin easily connects your portable MP3, CD, cassette player, PC, or laptop to your car stereo, through your car's in-dash cassette player. Get it for \$24.95 from <catalog.belkin.com> or at Best Buy, Circuit City, CompUSA, Office Depot or Office Max.

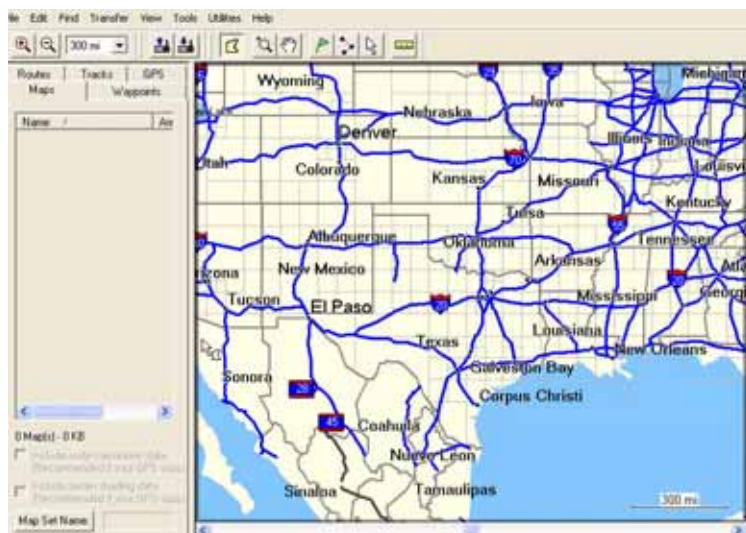


Figure 3



Figure 4

They both came with a “quick-start” set of instructions. Neither had a hard copy manual.

Now for some of the differences.

The 510 obviously has a bigger screen. This does help when using it in the car but the driver really does need to keep a close eye on the road and a “navigator” can be a big help. It is still small enough to put in its’ included soft carrying case and put in your pocket.

The smaller size of the Quest makes it easy to put in your pocket which is a mixed blessing in that you best be sure you have no keys or pens in that pocket so that you don’t scratch the screen since a case is an after purchase product.

The car adapter for the 510 is smaller than that of the Quest which means it takes up a bit less of your windshield. The adapter for the Quest is powered and charges the unit while it is in the adapter and the voice comes from the plug that goes into the vehicles electrical system. (See figure four). The 510 plugs into the system also but the power cord goes into the bottom of the unit through a hole in the adapter.

The adapter for the Quest was a bit hard to use in that lining up the unit “just so” to get the power to the unit was not easy and it was hard to remove. This may change with more use, but we must remember that the adapter is plastic and can break unless you’re really careful.

The Quest voice system requires that the unit be in the adapter and plugged into the car but it will let you rely on a “chime” sounding to warn you of a turn coming up. The 510 has a built in speaker that makes the announcements fairly loud and clear even if it is not plugged into the car or home electrical system.

Both units have a great backlight, but the Quest consistently turned it off regardless of the internal settings. Not a big thing, but an irritant I could have done without.

Figure five shows the screen of the Quest and figure six shows the same location on the 510. I found the 510 easier to see which may be a product of aging.

The internal battery on the Quest is rated at approximately 20 hours and the one in the 510 is good for two to three hours. Clear advantage to Quest in battery life.

The 510 comes with a 256 MB SD card to load maps on. I added, at my own expense, a 1 gig card because I wanted to use it the way I expect to with the Red Cross and I need several states on it. The Quest has a built in capacity of 115 MB of storage, which is about one-half that of the 510 and is not expandable.

I could load every street address in TX, LA, and OK, into the Quest and those plus NM, MO, and AR into the 510. There was enough room left over for one more state if I needed it.

The map programs had every address in Canada and the US in it and there were others available for purchase. Marine maps for off coast and inland fishing were also available.

I used a card reader to transfer maps to the SD card for the 510 and I could load them about 90% faster that way. It does take time to load to the unit itself since transfer rates are very slow even using USB 2.

I was confused when I first tried to use the 510. I could program a destination in fairly easily but then the system would immediately start running the route. I printed out the manual



Figure 5



Figure 6

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and found a setting that previewed the route at an average speed of 60MPH so you could have an idea of what was going on with the route. Once I turned off that feature I had no further problems – would have been nice to know about before hand.

The 510 tech support is the best I've ever experienced. Total time to call in, leave a number and get a call back was under 5 minutes. I often got tech support on the first try and everybody was very knowledgeable and helped solved problems clearly and easily.

Quest tech support took longer but also answered the questions but the speed was not anywhere near that of the 510.

How to use the systems:

After the units lock onto the satellite I would enter the destination by use of a stylus on the 510 or typed into the Quest (figure 7). The stylus was faster by far. Once I had the details entered I told the unit to either go there or to save it for future use. The unit calculated the route and started navigating me to that destination.

Figure seven shows the data entry screen on the 510 and the same screen on the Quest is at figure eight. I found the stylus was much easier to use rather than using the large round button on the Quest to move around on the screen to select a letter and then hitting OK on the pane.

As mentioned earlier the guidance was accurate and got me to where I was going without any significant problems. This was especially true in New Orleans as the streets there were interrupted by canals but I was steered around them.

Once you get to your destination you can return home was easy as the Quest has a setting for "home" and the address was stored in the 510 in the favorites as well as in the recent destinations. Backtracking was also available if I wanted to use it.

There are numerous ways to "tweak" the units and personalize them to your standards. They are so many options and settings to use that it would take another long article to describe all of them so I'll just let it go and tell you to seriously investigate one of the two units on your own.

I went to Connecticut for the Red Cross and I took the 510 with me to experiment with. I did not take or use any paper maps and I had never been in the state before. I loaded the CT map before I left home. It took me to several locations around Hartford and New London and never got me lost nor did I have to ask for directions. I was greatly impressed. I know I said, earlier, not to rely just on the unit but I couldn't resist the temptation.

Bottom line – and my own opinion – is that both units work extremely well but I'll recommend the 510 for my personal use because the screen is much bigger and the SD card makes it easier to load a lot of maps. The holder for the car seems to work better also.

Either one of these will make you happy. Go for it.

Joe is a frequent contributor to the PC Alamo and is on the Editorial Review Committee. He and his wonderful wife Marion are quite active with the Red Cross Disaster program and they spend their limited free time in travel and spoiling the grand daughters.

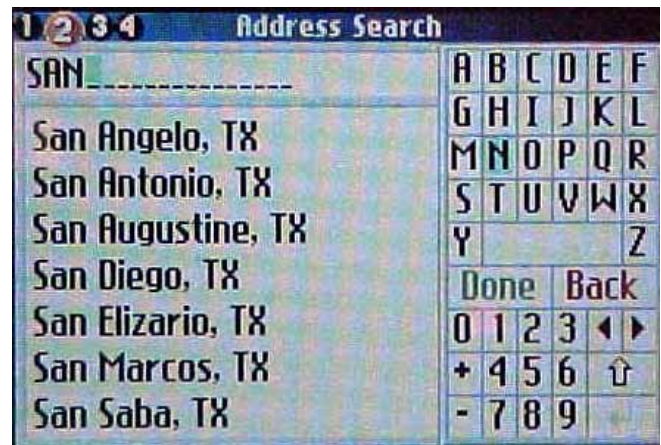


Figure 7

On the Road

Portable Ethernet cord

I stayed at a hotel last summer that had a free Ethernet connection in the room. I had the laptop, but not the cord. For \$19.95 you can get a cool 2-foot-long retractable one from www.kensington.com. Don't forget the modem cord, too: \$9.95 from the same place. Or get either one from local stores. This is a MUST for the mobile traveler



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Garmin 18 GPS receiver

By Susan Ives and Al Konschak

When my brother came to visit last month he brought his hockey puck. At least it looked like a hockey puck. Turns out it was a global positioning system. It didn't look like any GPS I had ever seen before and, in fact, it wasn't.

The Garmin 18 is a GPS receiver without any interface. No buttons or knobs, no color screen, nothing. Just a hockey puck with a tail. As you can see from the photo, if you want to get any data from the Garmin 18 you need to hook it up to a PC laptop.

The device comes in several different flavors. The USB version hooks into the computer's USB port and gets its power from the computer. The serial cable version is a little bulkier and requires external power from a 12 volt source such as a car cigarette lighter.

On the face of it looks like a no-brainer. Get the USB: why mess with an extra power outlet? However, the devices are actually quite different. The USB version uses a Garmin proprietary output and can only be used with Garmin software. The serial version works with the industry standard NMEA 0183 data format, works with most mapping software, and can be programmed to work with the Garmin standard as well.

My brother got the serial version, as he wanted to use it with APRS, an amateur radio-based automatic position reporting system.

The package comes with the GPS: a 12 parallel channel, WAAS-enabled sensor, with an integrated magnetic base (you can snake the 6.5 foot long cable out the window and put it on the car's roof) and a suction cup windshield mount. WAAS stands for Wide Area Augmentation System, a series of ground-based antennae whose precisely known locations are used to correct the satellite signals and provide greater positional accuracy – up to 3 meters.

It also comes with software. nRoute, is the navigational interface, which performs turn-by-turn route assistance and previewing, including spoken turn reminders and automatic recalculation when off-route. It provides driver with information, including upcoming cross-streets, street addresses, speed, bearing, and elevation. nRoute requires map data, and that is provided as well, in the form of MapSource City Select North America v6, which includes detailed maps throughout the U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico. It also features more than five million points of interest including restaurants, lodging, attractions, shopping, emergency services, post offices, and more.

All of this lists for \$162.49, which explains its appeal. It's by far the one of the least expensive automotive GPS solution for those who already have a laptop. The top-of-the-line Garmin StreetPilot 2660 GPS, by way of comparison, has a MSRP of \$1,749.98

My brother, being my brother, bought an OEM version, which comes without the software, for about \$70 from Provantage <www.provantage.com> which also sells the full version with software for \$108. You can get the full version (receiver + software) from Amazon.com for about \$130. Garmin sells the product from their own Web site <www.garmin.com>.



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We tested it using two different software packages: Precision Mapping <www.undertowsoftware.com> and Street Atlas USA <www.delorme.com>. It worked fine with both of them.

We rented a van, so the laptop fit on the floor console between the front seats. The driver could view the large display with just a quick glance downward. In a smaller car it might have to sit on the front passenger seat, which would make it harder to view without taking the driver's eyes off the road. It does have voice prompts, so this may not be as big a drawback as it first appears.

By working off the PC your mapping software does double-duty as both a trip planner (which can produce printed output) and as an onboard GPS. If you are already using map software on a laptop – Delorme Street Atlas or Microsoft Streets and Trips, for example – you already know most of what you need to learn to use the GPS.

Perhaps the biggest advantage is that a laptop has virtually unlimited hard drive space, so all of your maps can be stored. Most automotive GPS require that you load the specific maps that you will need for your route as their memories are not large enough to hold the entire country. This can become awkward on a long trip when you are crossing over map boundaries.

I was impressed. If you've already own a laptop, this is an excellent entry level solution and might end up meeting all of your needs.

In addition to the GPS and laptop, you will need a DC-AC Inverter to make your laptop work on a cigarette outlet in your car (about \$25) and, if you get the serial model, a splitter so you can plug in two devices (less than \$10.) The software works with Windows 98 and above; we tested it using Windows 2000.

You can contact Garmin International Inc. at 1200 East 151st Street, Olathe, KS 66062 Phone: (913) 397-8200 or at <www.garmin.com>.

The RoadMate 700 GPS From Magellan

By Joe Barth, Alamo PC

If you've noticed the various car ads showing off the more expensive vehicles I'm sure you noticed that they include "in car navigation" systems as optional equipment. The bad thing about this is the sticker price is usually above \$2000 for the system.

For those not familiar with the GPS (Ground Positioning System) this is a civilian version of the system installed to make our missiles more accurate. It consists of a series of satellites in orbit and it samples their location and where the lines of three or

more intersect—that is where you are. The system is accurate to within about 3 meters in most civilian versions and the RoadMate worked to that standard.

I became interested in the GPS after working as an American Red Cross volunteer in the hurricane disaster in Florida. One of my co-workers had one and we really used it to find streets that were no longer there so we could verify damage and help the clients. Then, when working fire calls in San Antonio we found it easier to find the one and two block long streets with the GPS rather than the paper map or even the Internet generated ones.

If you want a system in your car you can certainly shell out the big bucks for it and they will work reasonably



well but I would strongly urge you to consider the “portable” system such as this one for several reasons:

- a. You can use it in more than one vehicle;
- b. You can program it in the house (using the included power adapter) which will also give you a preview of your route before you start on the trip.
- c. Updates to the maps can be downloaded rather than needing a CD or DVD to install in the car system.
- d. It costs a lot less.

Cost is an issue and the RoadMate sells on eBay from \$700 to \$1200 and can also be found online for prices ranging from \$800 to \$1300. BestBuy and CompUSA have it for \$1199.99 and Oshman’s has it for \$1092. Shop around and save.

The unit has a 3” by 2 ½” inch screen (4 inches diagonally) which is smaller than those found in cars but it is easily seen while driving. (Figure 1 with dollar bill). The system comes with a plastic mounting bracket that positions the unit where you can best see it.

CAUTION: This can distract you as you get used to using it so be careful. **DO NOT** try and operate it while driving. Position it so the passenger can make the mode changes.

We used it around town and on a trip to New Orleans as a test and it functioned well. As you come close to a turn a voice tells you to prepare to make the maneuver a chime sounds. Then, when you are very close to the turn the chime sounds again. The voice is selectable as to male or female and there are several languages to pick from.

If you miss the turn or follow a different path due to a shortcut that you normally use the unit will announce that you’re off track and will recalculate the route. Sometimes it advises you to make a “U” turn but if you don’t it will find another way for you to go.

Please keep in mind that this is an electronic device, not a mind-reader. The maps are reasonably current but not all new streets are in the database. For example, it had me making a round about way to go to IH 10 and then downtown but it learned the most direct way after I drove it a couple of times. Also, it does not know about closures and construction zones such as the one at IH10 and Loop 410 so the directions provided were wrong. Always do a reality check before charging forth which is why programming it for your destination in your home is the smart thing to do.



Figure 1

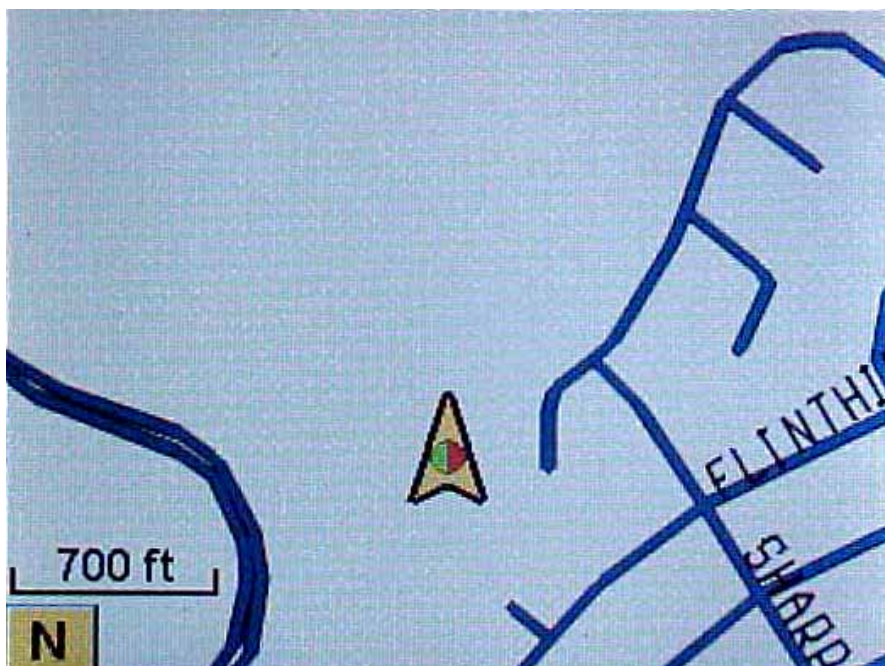


Figure 2

You can also designate your home address as “home” and select that destination wherever you are and it will calculate the way home for you. You can specify interstates, quickest route, shortest route, avoid toll roads, etc. if you wish. There are limitless points of interest to be displayed if you also choose them, but that does tend to clutter up the screen.

Figure 2 shows the screen showing the location of my house at the setting for the screen to display a 700-foot area on the screen. You can go as low as 350 feet and as much as the entire country. This gives you a feel for your relative position.

It takes a while for the system to detect the satellites so it isn’t just turn on and go. It took as much as 15 minutes on occasion for the system to operate so make sure you know the first few turns if you plan on jumping into the car and taking off.

The system has a built in hard drive sufficient to store all addresses/streets in the USA. It took us to New Orleans and back with no problem except for thinking we

were on an access road a couple of times and that was not a big thing. The hard drive is a great idea as you don't have to swap DVD's or reload maps into internal memory or SD chips.

Since the RoadMate does not have a built in battery it is unsuitable for use in geocaching since it requires a power source at all times to operate. It is strictly for automobile use and it does that job superbly.

I found it easy to use and also intuitive which helps as the manual is (alas) on a CD. If you don't want to print the sixty-five pages, you can select the most important ones. To make it easier the system comes with a small basic users guide that is really all you need to make it work well.

Of course it also comes with the required cords for connecting to the computer (for updates), a power adapter for home use, a power cord for use in the car, and the mounting device.

Once you've played with it a bit you can find a lot of information contained within the unit. You can use it as a trip com-

puter to show how far you've gone, distance to go, average speed, ETA, etc. My wife did not like one feature at all as you can set it to warn you when you exceed a selected speed, and "Lead-foot" did not like the reminder that she was speeding. (She just gave me a dirty look but it is a nice thing to have).

There are multiple options as to how you can route yourself and the system is quite forgiving if you make an error. For example, the "QuickSpell" system allows you to type in the first few letters of a street or city and then gives you the options available. I typed in San An and the system showed me the six cities in the US that start that way. Street selection is the same. I wanted Houston Street and it gave me a choice between east and west.

My opinion is that this is the way to go if you want an in-car system and don't need true portability. Shop for your best price and good luck in finding your way around and about.

Joe is a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee and served on the Board for several years. He is retired and spends his free time doing what Marion wants and spoiling their grand daughters. They both volunteer as disaster workers for the Red Cross.

Geocaching - Finders Keepers

Originally run in the May, 2003 issue of PC Alamo

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Last month when I was Alamo Quarry Market pretending to be a yuppie I noticed a bunch of people rooting around in the bushes on a steep slope at the edge of the parking lot – in the rain. They were smiling. Being a naturally nosey person, I sauntered over and asked them what they were doing.

"We're geocachers!" they said.

Don't feel bad – I didn't understand either. They went on to explain that people hide stuff in waterproof containers all over the world and then post the geographic coordinates on a Web site. Other people log in, enter the coordinates onto a portable Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and then go on a hunt for the hidden loot.

Geocaching became a viable sport on May 1, 2000. Few pastimes can pinpoint their origins with such accuracy, but that's the nature of geocaching. On that day President Clinton removed the controls that degraded GPS signals on civilian units (called Selective Availability, or SA) and overnight made them 10 times more accurate. Two days later the first geocache was hidden.

Geocachers recommend that a handheld GPS have these minimum requirements:

- Store waypoints (Waypoints are named coordinates representing points on the surface of the Earth)
- Long battery life (about 20 hours)
- Waterproof
- A wrist strap
- 12 channel parallel receiver system for good reception in most conditions.

The cost of GPS units has come way down – one unit that meets the above criteria is the Garmin Geko GPS, which retails for \$79.99 at Amazon.com. Garmin's Rino 110, selling for less than \$150, has more features and also includes a 2-way radio with 12 FRS (Family Radio Service) frequencies. (figure 1) All of the portable GPS can be mounted in a car and used for road navigation as well as for hiking and geocaching.

Start by searching for a cache or two. As a minimum, a cache is a waterproof container that includes a log book that finders can use to record their find. Many people also place small gifts in their cache. If you take a gift, you are expected to leave one in its place. Look at This San Antonio Cache:

Are we having fun yet?

by Cybercat & Eddie

N 29° 29.793 W 098° 36.924 (WGS84)

UTM: 14R E 537280 N 3263063

or convert to NAD27 at Jeep.com

This information tells you the name of the cache, who left it there and the GPS data that you need to locate it in several different formats.

There is also a lengthy description of the cache:

Near intersection of Huebner & Bandera Rds, San Antonio This park has another nice walking trail beside a little creek on the other side of the baseball field. As it gets hotter and hotter here in SA, and I turn into a puddle of sweat before I walk 50 feet, and I continue to hide these caches, I just wanted someone to

remind me—are we having fun yet? Small tupperware container at the base of an oak tree covered with a piece of plywood. Contents—8 ball car deodorizer, Altoids, toy car, Route 66 lighter, razor, sun and stars glow in the dark things, earrings, cigar, pacifier, snowman pin, and other stuff I forgot.

There is a lot of other information – including encrypted hints and a place where finders can make journal entries. Advice is also provided about the difficulty of the terrain and the expected ease of finding the cache.

You can search for caches by zip code – there are currently 358 caches listed within a 100 mile radius of San Antonio. That's enough to keep you busy for a few weekends! There are geocaches in 162 countries, so it's a hobby that can travel with you.

There are several different kinds of caches.

A Traditional Cache is the type described above: a container with at least a logbook in it.

A multiple cache has 2 or more caches. There are many variations, but most multi-caches have a hint to find the second cache, and the second cache has hints to the third, and so on.

A virtual cache is a cache that exists in a form of a location. Depending on the cache "hider," a virtual cache could be to answer a question about a location, an interesting spot, a task, etc. The reward for these caches is the location itself and sharing information about your visit. An example of a San Antonio virtual multi-cache is one leading you to four works of famed concrete sculptor Dionicio Rodriguez. No containers are hidden and you record your find by responding with the locations of the works.

A webcam cache is a web camera positioned somewhere on the planet. With a partner's help, you position yourself in front of the camera and call your friend to have them take a picture of you. You can then upload your photo to the web site to log your find. There is one webcam cache in San Antonio, near Sunset Station, but at this writing it is temporarily down.

This sounds too easy – too many clues! But the geocachers I ran into at the Quarry had been there a good half hour and were still searching when I left. Clever placement can make a cache a challenge to find. GPS units are accurate to about a 6-foot radius (the more expensive models) to a 20-foot radius (the bargain models.) There are a lot of hiding places in that expanse.

After you have spent an afternoon finding caches, its time to place one yourself. Just register on the geocache site <www.geocache.com> – it's free – and get moving.

There are some commonsense rules for geocaching. No fire-arms or drugs. No food – animals may get into it. Get permission before placing a cache if it is on private land. The National Park Service (the Missions here in San Antonio) does not permit caches. Hide it well enough so that non-geocachers won't stumble upon it and pillage it. Check you cache periodically to make sure it's still there. The Web site has a lot of advice and a discussion board where you can discuss tips and tricks with other geocachers.

My brother has a GPS mounted in his car. A couple of years ago we went to a computer show just outside of New York City. On the return trip we got caught in a terrible traffic jam, also known as the State of New Jersey. He tapped in the coordinates for his house, got off the highway and used his GPS to navigate the back roads. We got through the Garden State parking lot

and back into Pennsylvania in half the time we would have taken on the congested turnpike. This almost convinced me to spring for a GPS, but the San Antonio traffic hasn't reached East Coast horrors – yet. Geocaching, and the low entry cost, has just about convinced me. It seems like a fun sport that would get John and me outside to stretch our muscles a bit.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.



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How Does GPS Works?

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

In Space: This part consists of 24 satellites, manufactured by Rockwell International, which are launched into space by rockets from Cape Canaveral. They are about the size of a car, and weigh about 19,000 lbs. Each satellite is in orbit above the earth at an altitude of 11,000 nautical miles (12,660 miles), and takes 12 hours to orbit one time. There are 6 orbital planes each having 4 satellites. The orbits are tilted to the equator of the earth by 55° so that there is coverage of the polar regions. The satellites continuously orient themselves to ensure that their solar panels stay pointed towards the sun, and their antennas point toward the earth. Each satellite carries 4 atomic clocks.



On the ground: This part consists of 5 worldwide unmanned base-stations that monitor the satellites to track their exact position in space, and to make sure that they are operating correctly. The stations constantly monitor the orbits of the satellites and use radar to check altitude, position and speed. Transmitted to the satellites are ephemeris constants (an ephemeris is a list of parameters describing the orbital track of a sensor; used to identify the location of the vehicle and its orbit at any given time) and clock adjustments. The satellites in turn, use these updates in the signals that they send to GPS receivers.

The main base-station is in Colorado Springs, Colorado: if you have a radio-controlled atomic clock, this is where the signal originates. The other four are located on Ascension Island (Atlantic Ocean), Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean) and Kwajalein and Hawaii (both Pacific Ocean).

In your hands: This part consists of user receivers which are hand-held or, can be placed in a vehicle. All GPS receivers have an almanac programmed into their computer, which tells them where each satellite is at any given moment. The GPS receivers detect, decode and process the signals received from the satellites. The receiver is usually used in conjunction with computer software to output the information to the user in the form of a map. As the user does not have to communicate with the satellite there can be unlimited users at one time.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.

 A cartoon illustration of a person with blonde hair relaxing in a hammock strung between two trees. The person is smiling and has their hands clasped.

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On the Road

PC Enabled GPS-enabled running assistant

This gadget is so cool it almost tempts me into becoming a runner. Almost. It might look like a pedometer but the underlying electronics are a fully functional global positioning system, or GPS. Because it's electronic rather than mechanical, it provides precise speed, distance, and pace data by bouncing your location off of satellites. It stores data for up to two years and you can retrieve it as graphs. Here's the kicker: you can hook it up to your PC, download the data and keep comprehensive workout statistics. There is an optional clamp you can get to mount it on a bicycle. Lots of other features, like a virtual running partner and the ability to map a path back to your starting point. Awesome. It's made by Garmin <www.garmin.com/products/forerunner201/> but you can buy it locally at sporting goods and electronic stores for \$161.



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Fugawi Map of America

By Joe Barth, Alamo PC

I have been lucky enough to have the opportunity to review several map programs and I looked forward to seeing this program especially since I've been working on the various GPS receivers that will be the subject of another article.

I was impressed with some of the features contained within this two DVD program since I have had several friends become involved with geocaching and I wondered just how effective a topographic map would be. The answer – awesome.

Geocaching is the sport of hide and seek using the modern technology of a GPS unit plus some outdoor skills. The object is to find an inexpensive object hidden in a location given by a latitude/longitude coordinates. This can be a very dangerous sport if you don't watch what you're doing as we saw in San Antonio a few months ago.

If you recall, we had a searcher fall while seeking out a cache and he failed to survive the accident.

I won't claim that the use of a topo program and map would have prevented his death but I can assure you that the use of a map showing the relative steepness of the terrain would certainly alert you to the real dangers of the area you're going to be in.

Figure one shows the general location of a geocache that I obtained from <www.geocaching.com>. I entered my zip code and it returned several locations nearby and I took the one entitled "The Toy Chest".

Figure two shows a close up view close to where it is located in Quarry Park just off of IH10. If you want to go there, get a GPS unit, get the coordinates and have a nice hike.

Figure three shows a simulation of a three-dimensional view looking west from the approximate location of the cache. You can immediately tell that there are hills in the area so plan on doing some hiking to get to the cache.

The program shows the coordinates at the bottom of the screen and that allows you to seek out the location and get as close a view of the area as you wish. The uses of such detail not only contribute to safety but also suggest a route of advance to the target and allows you to do some planning before you leave home.

You can also hook up most GPS units to the program and upload the coordinates

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location for cache

Figure 1



Figure 2

and get directions to the site but you must remember that the GPS is only accurate, under the best circumstances, to within 3 meters so you still have some searching to do.

If you are interested in mapping out a route before you start hiking/driving/biking you may establish waypoints that will tie a route together and then you can print the map out and take it with you. The waypoints are marked by use of one of the tools provided and you can easily determine the easiest route or one more difficult for off-trail hiking.

It is nice to sit at home and take a look at trails on the other side of the country before you charge off for the adventure. Hiking the Cumberland trail would be just one example of knowing what you're facing before you get there which will certainly help in equipment planning.

Once you establish your route of travel you can transfer map data to various handheld PDA's but I did not test this feature. I am sure that it will work quite well, as this program is a very smooth operating one that does not require hours of study to use.

This program contains the entire United States which is why two DVD's are needed. You can load by regions to avoid using

too much disk space and can move from one region to an adjacent one as you move the selection point. The top part of the screen contains tools to use to navigate across the maps and a selection of tools is also shown along the side of the map. The tools all come with a flag that pops out when you place the cursor on the icon.

The program does not have a printed manual but does have a short program guide that is quite sufficient to start and there are extensive help files loaded onto the computer at installation.

The program retails for about \$40 and, in my opinion, that is a good price for such an extensive program that covers the US. Other programs I've evaluated have covered much smaller areas at a much higher price.

If you choose, there are also add on programs that can get you to street level detail if you have a need for that option. Their prices are comparable to those from other companies.

Joe is a frequent contributor to the PC Alamode and is a volunteer with the American Red Cross. He and his wife Marion spoil their grand daughters and do a bit of traveling which is why he likes mapping programs.

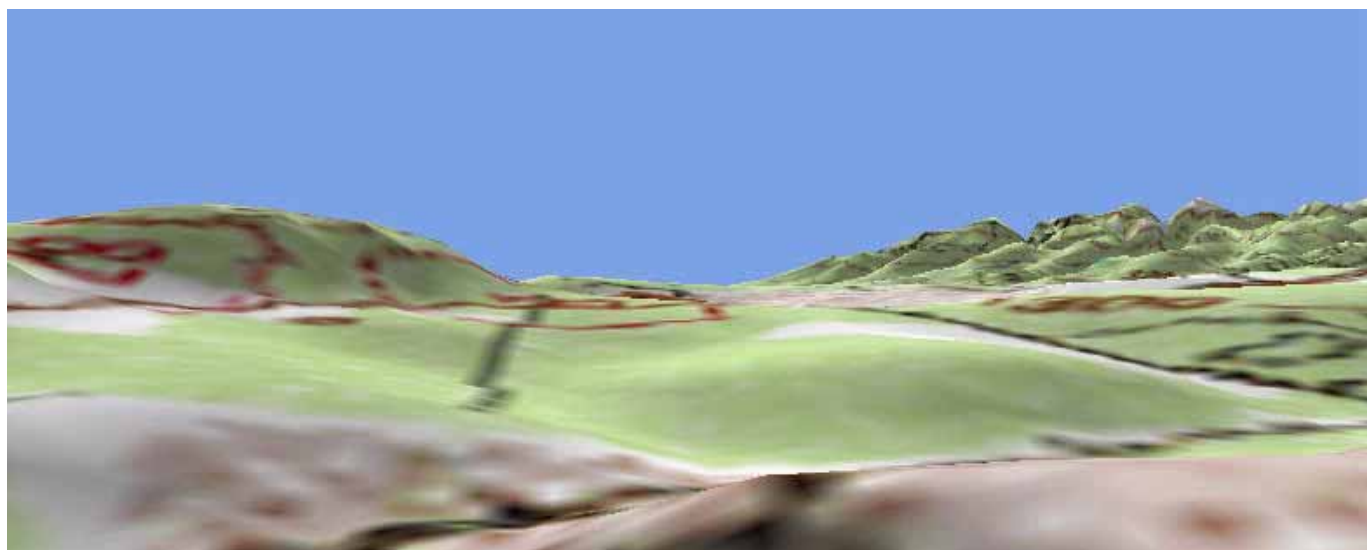


Figure 3

On the Road



USB Flash Drive

This is the must-have gift this year. Of course, I said the same thing last year and the year before. . . This mini hard drive plugs into any USB port and stores gobs of data. I call mine my "portable brain" and wear in on the included lanyard around my neck. There's room for a PowerPoint presentation to take on the road, or use it to copy files from laptop to desktop. I bought a 128 MB from <www.crucial.com> for \$29.95; 1GB will set you back \$180. Everyone is making these now: shop around for the best deal.



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National Geographic National Park Map

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

The National Park Map series by National Geographic includes five CD-ROMs with maps for 60 national parks: Acadia, Apostle Islands, Arches, Badlands, Bandelier, Big Bend, Big South Fork, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Bryce Canyon, Buffalo River, Canyonlands, Cape Cod, Carlsbad Caverns, Channel Islands, Chilkoot Trail / Klondike Gold Rush, Colorado National Monument, Crater Lake, Death Valley, Denali, Dinosaur, Everglades, Flaming Gorge, Glacier, Glacier Bay, Glen Canyon / Capitol Reef, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Great Smoky Mountains, Guadalupe Mountains, Haleakala, Hawaii Volcanoes, Isle Royale, Joshua Tree, Kachemak Bay, Katmai, Kenai Fjords, Kenai, Lake Mead, Mammoth Cave, Moab, Mojave, Mount Rainier, New River Gorge, North Cascades, Olympic, Organ Pipe Cactus, Padre Island, Prince William Sound, Redwood, Rocky Mountain, Saguaro, Santa Monica Mountains, Sequoia / Kings Canyon, Shenandoah, Virgin Islands, Wind Cave, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Zion.

These are topographic maps, so the ones selected are the ones most appropriate for rugged hiking: you won't find maps of urban parks, such as the San Antonio Missions.

The program is fairly straightforward. You install the first disk and then select your map. The one I chose was Big Bend, right here in Texas, which you can see in figure 1.

You can zoom in and out on the map, create and download waypoints to and from your global positioning system, mark and measure distances and, of course, print a map.

One of the key features is the ability to look at your route in cross-section, as you can see in the lower right corner of figure 1. I marked off a 19.3 mile route from the campsite in the middle of the map to the campsite at Castalon. You can get the distance and elevation of any point along the route, and get a feel for how “up and down” the terrain will be.

There's also a search feature, illustrated in figure 2: if you are looking for an abandoned mineshaft, a waterfall or Maple Canyon Valley, you can search for it by category or name. The map

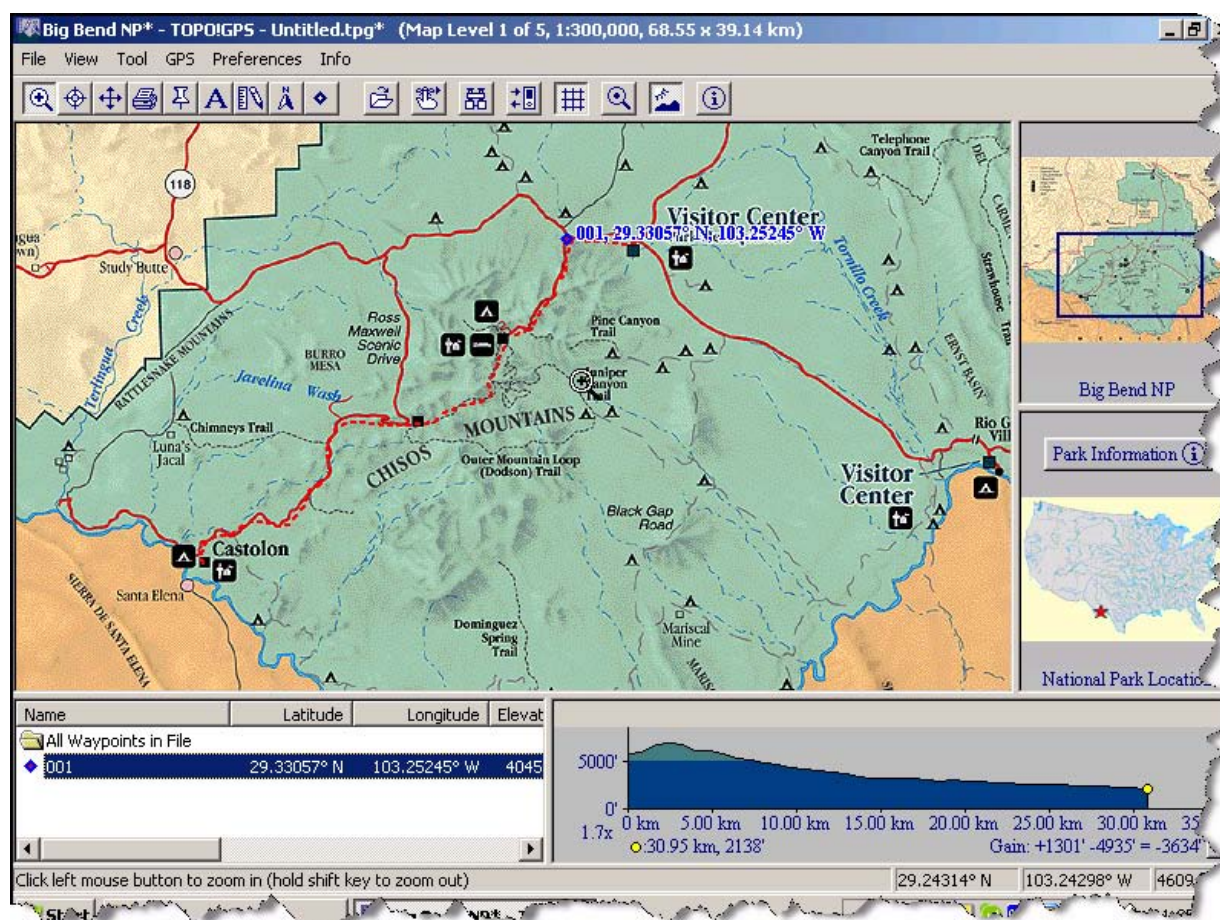


Figure 1

can zoom right into the feature you want. It doesn't work the other way, unfortunately: you can't mark an area and get a list of all of the features that lie within.

For printing I had to go to the manual (a 44-page Adobe Acrobat file). The default print size is as much of the map as will fit on one page. This tends to shrink it down to almost unusable size; my Yellowstone map, for example, printed 1 inch=10 miles. You can, however, select smaller sections of the map to print and expand them to whatever resolution suits your needs.

There's also a little bit of information about each park: its address and phone number, a note or two about the wildlife and a list of campgrounds.

At a list price of \$49.95 this is a bargain box for those who hike the trails of these 60 national parks or just want to dream about it. However, it is the least-featured of the National Geographic topo maps. The TOPO! State Series, Back Roads Explorer and GPS USA, for example, all allow you to annotate your maps with Web links and photos. State series and Explorer let you to share maps using a MapXchange utility, have a shaded relief option and are compatible with Pocket PC software.

I'd use this to get comfortable with the interface and, if you like using it, get one of the more expensive packages. Now that I've looked it over, I really, really, really want several of the Topo State Series programs. If I were going on a two-day hike in Big Bend, I would use this program to help me plan my route and download waypoints to a GPS but would want to take a "real" printed map along as well.

If you do print these maps for your big hike, consider getting Adventure Paper: it's waterproof and tear resistant, so your map won't wash away with the first rain. Twenty-five sheets of 8½x11" is \$19.95 at the National Geographic store or at <www.freshtracksmaps.com/paper.htm>, which also carries a brand that works with laser printers.

All the National Geographic's products can be purchased from their Web site, <www.ngmapstore.com>. You can get it \$15 cheaper at Amazon.com.

This was fun to play with and would be a useful addition to any back-packer's toolkit.

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.

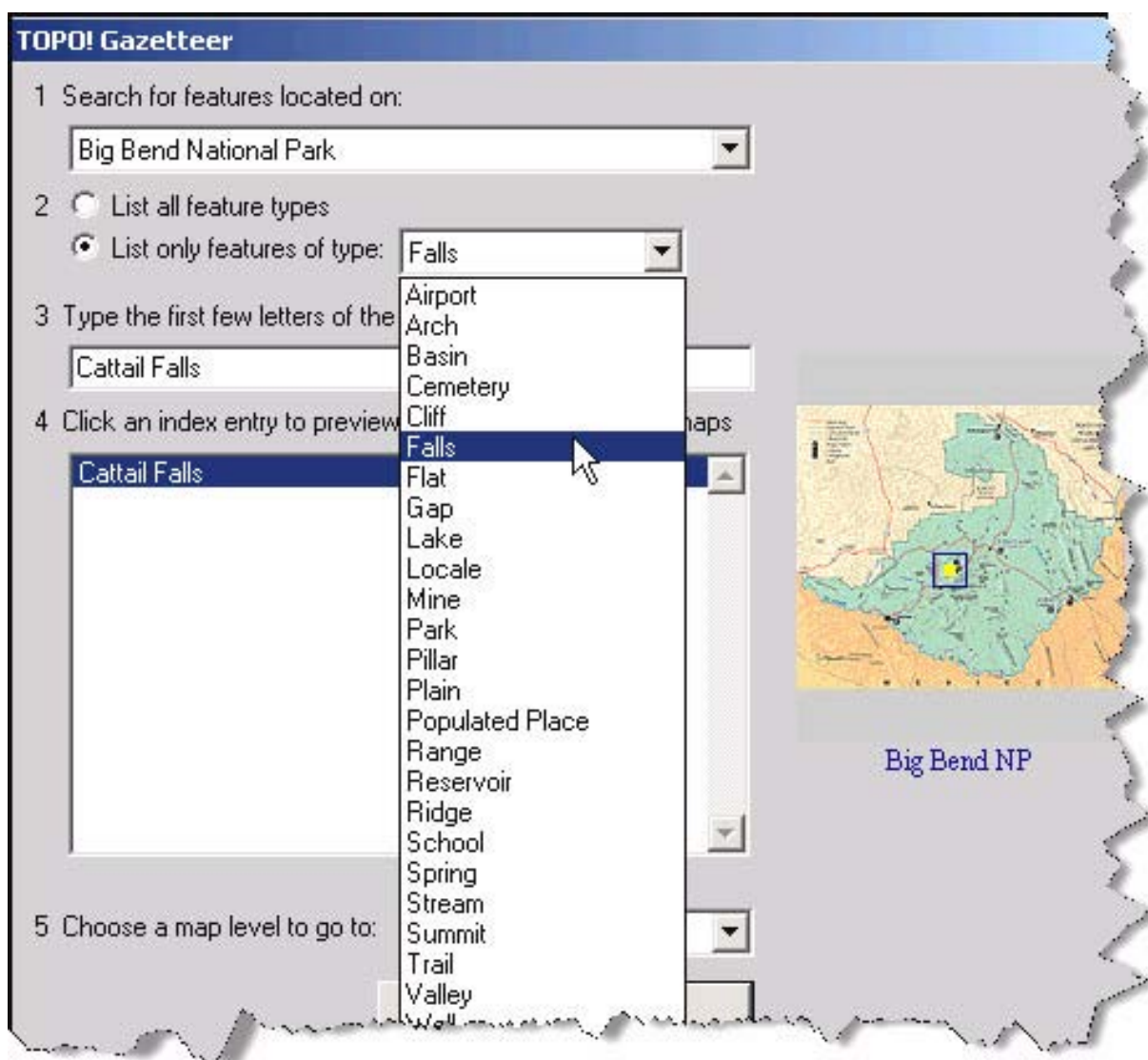


Figure 2

Fraud, Travel and You

By Joe Barth, Alamo PC

Let me start out by saying that this article contains my own opinions based on many years in law enforcement and in watching the tragic results of people that try to save money but wind up losing what they've worked so long and hard for. People over 50 are increasingly becoming the target for con artists and other scum that want what the good folks have, but are unwilling to work in legitimate ways to obtain it.

For example, there are some really good deals on the Internet for travel – airfare, hotels, rental cars, cruises, rentals, etc. A careful person can visit several different sites and find some serious money saving deals BUT the old adage “if it sounds too good to be true, it is” clearly applies.

Let's say you want airfare from San Antonio to Orlando for a family of four. You want to travel July 5th and return on July 12th. Not a bad way to spend a week with the grand kids or your own kids.

Delta wants \$359, Southwest wants \$274, Cheaptickets.com wants \$232, and Priceline.com wants \$284. We now have a baseline for what the tickets should cost and your goal is to beat Cheaptickets.com. Of course, there are add-on's to be aware of such as increased taxes, segment charges, fuel surcharges, service charges, etc. but you get the idea, right?

What happens if you do find a site that offers the ticket for \$195 with no surcharges, etc.? Does that make your cheap-skate gland kick in and cause a smile? BEWARE!!!

There are sites out there that go up for about a month and will sell you tickets at ridiculous prices and send you the itinerary and confirmation number. They happily collect your credit card number and verification code. They are bogus sites that will run up as many charges as possible on the card and you never get the ticket. You gave them all they needed to rip you off. If it sounds too good to be true, it is!

Moral is to buy from established sites or from the airline directly.

Ah, you finally get to a nice place and want to enjoy a nice meal – which you charge on your plastic. What happens if the cashier is not a nice person and they run your card through twice, or more? Well, if you have a credit card you can usually get the additional charges reimbursed but if you have a debit card – you may get most of the money back but the use of the card could drain your account and you won't be able to use the card as you planned. Watch, if at all possible, what happens when your card is taken to a different place out of your sight. There really are dishonest people out there.

Many hotels and rental car companies will demand a credit card from you so you might want to get a card with a very low credit limit just for them. They put a “hold” on the card to make sure you can pay the bill and this hold can run several hundred dollars. Those dollars are not available for you to use until the hold is released which will be a day or so after you pay your bill. Having a card rejected is not a fun thing!

We came home from a disaster assignment with the American Red Cross and three weeks of mail had stacked up. (My son-in-law had picked it up and we had stopped the paper so

there were no real outward signs we were gone for three weeks).

I went through the “junk” mail and almost threw out an envelope from Sprint because I thought it was just an advertisement. I did see it was first class so I opened it and found a bill for cell phone service.

Someone had taken my name and address out of the phone book and Sprint allowed them to sign up for service. I called their security department and a rather rude young lady grilled me for about five minutes trying to point out that if I didn't do it, it must have been a family member. After discussing the situation with her supervisor and pointing out I'm a retired Police Chief, they finally thought it might be fraud on someone else's part and cancelled the bill.

Can it happen to you? Sure can. Watch out how many people know you're out of town. Don't advertise it at church or in organizations if you can help it. Don't make it easy for someone to have a week or more to use your name.

According to the San Antonio Police Department, 1,049 cases of identity theft were reported in 2004. My personal guess is that there were at least that many more not reported for one reason or another.

When you travel you set yourself up for a wonderful experience but some cautions will make coming home much more fun.

Both the FTC and AARP have great information on preventing identity theft and on how to protect yourself. Please take the time to check out the sites and prevent problems for yourselves.

One last tip. Congress recently passed legislation requiring the credit reporting agencies to furnish you a free copy of your credit report. This requirement is being phased in by regions of the country and we should be able to take advantage of it mid-summer. Do so and make sure that all unused cards are closed and that the report is accurate.

If identity theft has made you a victim be sure and notify the police and contact one of the three credit reporting agencies. The one you contact will notify the others and they will put a restriction on your accounts so no large purchases can be made or new cards issued without your personal approval.

These are the sites you need to know about:

FTC – www.consumer.gov/idtheft

Equifax – www.equifax.com

Experian – www.experian.com

TransUnion – www.transunion.com

Good luck, happy traveling, and bring back some nice pictures for the photo contest.

Better Look Busy -- The Boss is Watching!

By Debra and Rudy Flores, Guest Contributors

He looks over and sees you hard at it on the computer, taking care of business. When all the while, you're surfing the net, doing a search for the most searched item on the Internet from work... VACATION/TRAVEL. You just can't wait to take a few days off and go on a little trip to paradise (anywhere other than work).

You are not alone!

Travel is the most searched item on the Internet. One third of everything sold on the Internet is related to the travel industry. Over 70% of all travel sales are made online. Travel is the largest industry in the world. Over \$6 trillion is spent annually on travel. To give a little perspective, \$600 billion a year is spent on the telecommunications industry. Travel – \$6 TRILLION... with a "T" and will double to \$12 trillion by the end of the decade. Why? Baby boomers.

Over the next 20 years, 1 retires about every 8 seconds. I wonder what they're going to do with all that extra time and money? TRAVEL!

The travel industry is fully aware of that and is taking measures to meet the demand. For example, major cruise lines will be building 20 – 30 new cruise ships over the next 2 – 3 years. Hotels and resorts are going up all over the world at a dizzying pace.

The Internet is making it easier and cheaper than ever to plan a great trip. There are countless number of search engines to book flights, hotels, cruises, condos, car rentals, vacation packages and just about anything you can imagine related to the travel industry. Not too long ago, we had to rely on the traditional "Brick & Mortar" travel agencies to accomplish all this. They alone had the means to make all the necessary arrangements to plan an "affordable" vacation. The Internet has changed all that. There are very few "traditional" travel agencies left because the Internet has empowered us to create our own unforgettable vacation experiences at unbelievable prices. It gets even better. Imagine having all the best-known travel search engines, as well as some of the ones you've never heard of all in one place. A one-stop shopping site to take care of all your travel needs. Just go to <www.greatratetravel.gttrends.net> and visit the Travel Center, to take advantage of tremendous savings when planning a family vacation, a romantic trip for two, a business trip or even just a quick, last minute, getaway.

You can also learn how to become part of this fast growing industry. Whether you want to save money and have more fun when you travel, or make extra money working from home visit this website: <www.gttmovie.com/greatratetravel>.

Don't wait a lifetime to experience your dream vacation! Get on the net and start surfing, (in Hawaii maybe) and make your dreams come true. It's easier than you think.



Baby Boomers are traveling in record numbers.

On the Road

Car Chip

Shade tree mechanics have been stymied by the computer systems that now control their automobiles. Computer diagnostic tools are now available to you through the car chip. The \$139 device, available from <www.smarthome.com/9251.html>, plugs into the On-board Diagnostics slot (OBDII) that is required in all vehicles manufactured since 1996. It collects a bunch of data: distance, speed, idle time, hard accelerations and decelerations and engine diagnostic trouble codes. Using a serial cable, you can download all the information onto your PC and analyze your driving style and your car's problems. This version logs 75 hours of data; a 300-hour version is available for \$20 more.



Computer Crimes

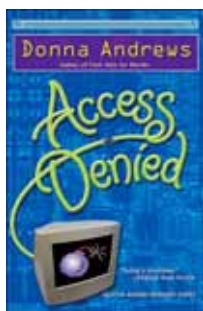
Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Access Denied, by Donna Andrews

Hardback, Berkley Prime Crime, 2004, \$23.95 251 pages

Turing Hopper, the sentient artificial intelligence computer, is back in her third adventure, along with human sidekicks Maude and Tim. Turing dispatches Tim to stake out an empty house with a porch stacked with packages charged to the credit card of the elusive arch criminal Nestor Garcia, the thief who stole Turing's clone. Tim falls asleep on the job and falls under suspicion when a young man is murdered at the site.

The plot involves identity theft and a credit card scam: the way it's done is clever and will make you feel vulner-

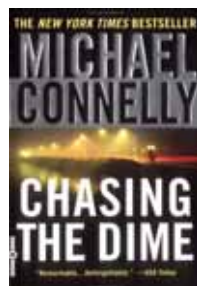


able. As always, there's a bit of hacking and philosophizing about (literally) the meaning of life. Lovely scene with a computerized security and lawn watering system gone whacko. This is a marvelous series: read the books in order if you want to get the full effect. Highly recommended.

Chasing the Dime, by Michael Connelly

Paperback, Warner Vision, 2002, \$7.99, 436 pages

Henry Pierce, founder of nanotechnology company Amedo, moves to a new apartment and gets phone calls for Lilly, an "escort." Her – now Henry's – phone number is still listed on a porn website but no one has seen her for weeks. Although he should



be busy preparing for a meeting with a major investor he gets drawn into finding the missing Lilly.

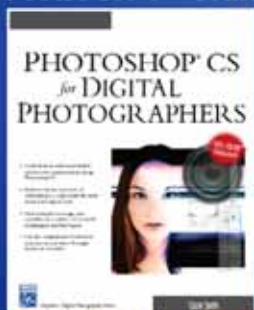
Excellent descriptions of nanotechnology and its potential uses, plus peripheral stuff about hacking, patents, high-tech financing and the Internet porn industry. The term "chasing the dime" refers to the competitive rush to invent a molecular computer no bigger than a dime. This is a very good thriller with a wonderful kicker at the end. Recommended.

Susan Ives, past president of Alamo PC, claims that computers are a mystery to her. Remember the Alibi Bookstore at 8055 West Ave. #101, San Antonio, TX (at the corner of West Ave. and Lockhill-Selma), (210) 344-7776, tries its darndest to keep the recommended books in stock.

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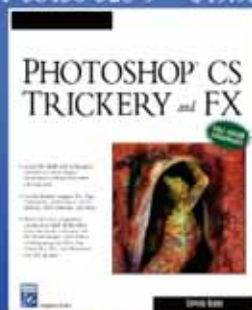
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Book Review

The OS X Files: How to Become a Mac OS X Power User (Panther Edition)

By Bob LeVitus

\$29.99 US

Published by Wiley

Reviewed by Shane Hicks, Alamo PC

This book claims it can turn me into a Mac OS X Power User. That's a pretty hefty claim. Let's see if this book lives up to its cover! This is a light read at 482 pages. It has fifteen chapters in four parts.

Introduction

I like the doctor's definition of a power user—basically, someone who can do more with their Mac than you can. I also like the fact that the author admits to knowing a lot about the Macintosh, after working with it for 15-years, but is still learning new things. This is an attitude that I like to see in the computer industry—you never know all there is to know and you never stop learning! This book is designed to show what the Doctor has learned in his experiences with the Mac. This book is for any Mac user, with a focus on topics of interest to the intermediate to advanced user.

The Book

The first chapter is an overview of the Mac. Of interest is a listing of additional resources accessible from the Internet to learn more. After all, as the author states, you never stop learning and a power user will read everything they can get their hands on.

This author is a fan of being mouse independent, so he covers the importance of learning the shortcut keys available in the OS. Chapter 2 is on the Finder and the Dock. There are good tips on using custom icons and associating them with your programs and files.

Chapter 3 provides a good summary of the OS X file system and how folders are organized. It talks about keyboard shortcuts and placing items in your Dock.

Chapter 4 talks about the importance of back-ups and provides some information on third-party applications available for purchase to perform these back-ups.

The next chapter covers on-line resources—many pay-as-you-go.

Chapter 6 covers the Classic (OS 9) environment.

Chapter 7 is a chapter on hardware. It talks about RAM usage and how to monitor it so that you know when you need to buy more. The author also discusses several additional components that can be added to the standard computer to make the Mac do more.

Chapter 8 provides useful troubleshooting and information on fixing common problems.

Chapter 9 contains some cool tips on customizing your Mac interface, but most involve the use of third-party tools to accomplish the tasks.

Chapters 10 and 11 are on UNIX, but have a surprisingly little focus on powerful things to do with UNIX. The major tips deal with viewing video files.

Chapter 12 is a tiny chapter on users and groups.

Chapter 13 talks about using AppleScript and provides some useful resources for downloading pre-made scripts, so you don't have to do any of the programming yourself.

Chapter 14 provides a list of software the author feels power users should own.

Finally, Chapter 15 contains several tips the Doctor collected on his web site from other users. This is probably the most useful chapter in the book.

Summary

Well, if you've seen my other reviews of Macintosh books, you're probably wondering why this one is so short. All I can say is, "Lack of content!" For a book that promised to make me a power user, it really didn't have much substance.

The book is not poorly written. In fact, I liked the Doctor's demeanor and style. As always, I enjoy and good sense of humor and a writer that doesn't take themselves too seriously. But I expected some hardcore content in this book—not common sense references or pointers to additional sources of information.

I'm irritated when books tell me to buy something additional to accomplish what I bought the book for. I'm also irritated when a book is little more than a list of additional resources that are available on the Internet. I'm competent enough that I could've done a search on Google and found most of this information. Even the tips the author provided are generally published monthly in the Mac magazines. As a power user, reading everything you can, you're probably already getting these magazines.

Why pay an additional \$29.99 for the same stuff?

If I were you, I wouldn't.

Software Review

Air Travel Toolkit - USA Edition Ver 2.0.0

\$12 (+ Shipping & Handling)

Published by ForumSoftware

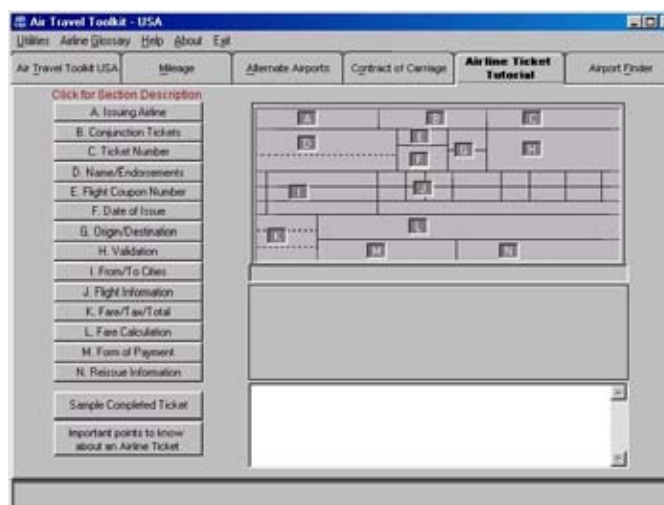
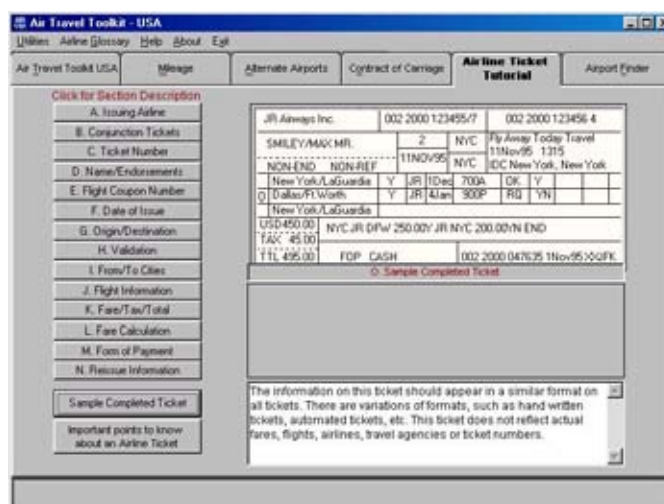
Reviewed by Bill Klutz, Alamo PC

If you are a business traveler, who sometimes has to "book on the road," this small program looks like it might be something that could be useful. But, anyone could derive use out of the program, if they are willing to "pay the price!" (If space allows the graphics to be included with the article, they will be helpful in locating and visualizing the areas being discussed.)

The program includes Utilities (a chart for a 24 hour clock, where 1 PM = 1300 hours; and a phonetic alphabet, where the letter H = Hotel). These will help decode some times listed on tickets (plus other materials you may encounter), and help when pronunciation of a single "letter" may not be clear. These two items are almost standard in the world-wide air travel community, whether commercial or military. Also included is an Airline Glossary - terms associated with air travel. Some examples are> ABEAM: An aircraft is abeam a fix, point or object when that fix, point or object is approximately 90 degrees to the left or right of the aircraft; AFFIRMATIVE: Yes; and SEGMENT: A portion of the itinerary. This can be an airline flight, a hotel, a car rental, a tour. Many of the examples are terms used by Pilots and/or ground controllers and are just information. Others will help clarify what the world-wide airline industry and/or a specific airline generally means when the term is used. For example> CLASS OF SERVICE: Code(s) used by airlines to indicate a specific cabin on the aircraft (F) First, (Y) Coach etc. This code(s) also indicates the type of fare the passenger has purchased; DEPARTURE TIME: The time an aircraft becomes airborne; and EXCURSION FARE: A discounted fare that usually requires an advance purchase and other restrictions.

Under the "Help" listing is an explanation for each of the 5 tabs to the right of the Airline Travel Toolkit USA tab - Mileage (over 8500 city pairs), Alternate Airports (over 170, for potential cheaper fair), Contract of Carrier, Airline Ticket Tutorial, and Airport Finder (over 560 official 3 letter codes, for 50 states and more than 10,000 cities). Although I would have grouped the 2 airport and mileage tabs together, it shouldn't present any difficulty finding what you want, using their current location. Perhaps you will have a different approach, but for me, I believe I would want to start by finding an airport at, or near, one or more of my destinations, finding alternate airports and then identifying the air miles. (My pretend trip was to depart San Antonio, TX and go too visit family in La Porte, TX. During this process I found the program to be somewhat lacking for what I wanted to do. If it was lacking for my example, it will probably be lacking for other examples too.)

With the software running I selected the "Airport Finder" tab. In the "Select a State" box I selected "Texas." This brought up a state map with many 3 letter airport codes. (Usually, but not always, the city name is within one or more of the 3 letters, but it helps to know the general location where you will



be going, within the state.) I know the 3 letter identifier for San Antonio is SAT and La Porte is east of Houston. Looking east of SAT there is HOU, but nothing that may be an identifier for La Porte. I confirmed the 3 letter airport identifiers in the "Decode" box, just to be sure. Next, I went to the "Airport Finder" box and looked up La Porte. It indicated that La Porte was 32 miles NE of HOU. (I happen to know it is almost due East of Houston's William P. Hobby airport - HOU.) Since there might be some difficulty getting to HOU I wanted to have an alternate airport ready, so I used the "Alternate Airports" tab. Finding and highlighting Houston (HOU) in the left column, provided Houston (IAH) and 29 miles. (Would have liked to know what direction it is from the original airport. I determined that from the Texas map with the 3 letter codes - it is north.) If we had to land there, the distance to La Porte might be about 55 miles. Now to determine the mileage (Mileage tab). I selected San Antonio in the first city, but when the second city box was displayed there was no Houston. (Apparently the list is incomplete as cities with A-R, and perhaps some S's, were missing. The first city listed was San Diego, CA.) So, trying to be resourceful, I used Houston as the first city and when I clicked on San Antonio (as the second city) the trip list box was filled as though I was going from HOU to SAT. But, I got the mileage. (If you have additional locations on a multi-city trip, just keep filling the trip list for a "Total Trip" readout. Now that we have covered that, let's move along.

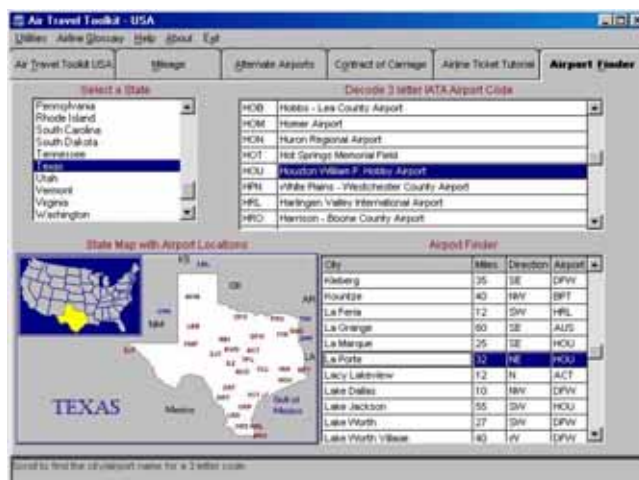
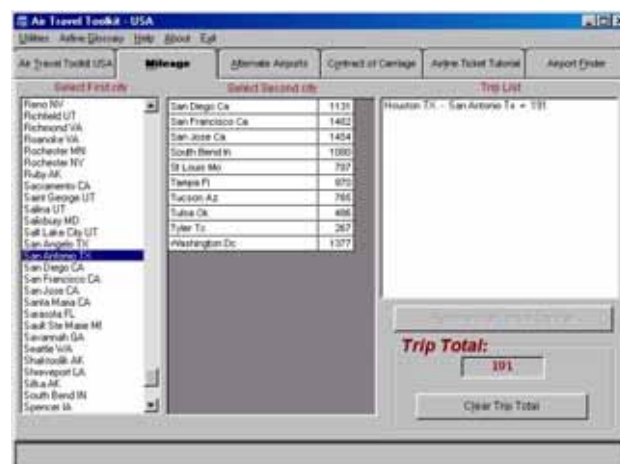
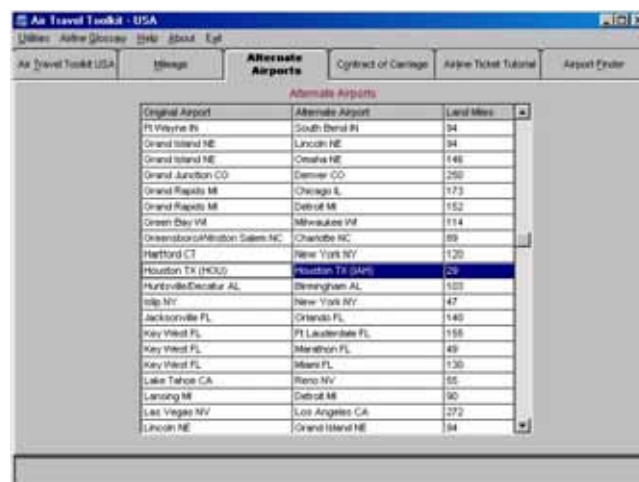
(Note: When you pay for your airline ticket, you have just entered into a "Contract" with one or more airlines. Upon request, each airline should provide you with the specifics of this information before you purchase a ticket.) The software provides general information on a Contract of Carriage, and addresses such things as tickets, refunds, fare changes, stopovers, overbooking, failure to operate, baggage, etc. If you have any questions, request the airline's copy of their Contract of Carriage, as that will be the information that will be in effect during your trip.

The Airline Ticket Tutorial may also be helpful. It is only a representation of a ticket, but should present most of the information included on any ticket. If not already showing, click on the "Important points to know about an Airline Ticket" bar to depict the A-N letters identifying a specific section of the ticket. By clicking on the corresponding letter bar (on the left, followed by brief identifying words), a description of the section is provided. To view a sample ticket, just click on the "Sample Completed Ticket" bar.

System requirements: Compatible with Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP. No other requirements were provided.

Contact Information: Other than the web site <www.forumsoftware.com>, only an E-Mail listing <soft@forumsoftware.com> was provided. There was no address or phone numbers at the web site or in the software, that I could find.

Bill Klutz does consulting work, primarily in the areas of Management, and Computer Applications/Hardware/Software.



Software Review

PocketChange, Ver 1.0.0

\$12 (+ Shipping & Handling)

Published by ForumSoftware

Reviewed by Bill Klutz, Alamo PC

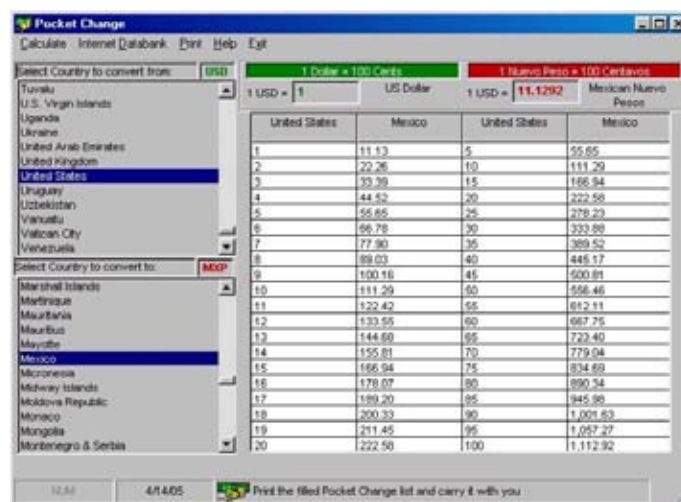
PocketChange does not change your pockets, does not put change in your pocket and does not count any change already there. Now that we know some of the things it will not do, let's see what it will do, and how. (If space allows the graphics to be included with the article, they will be helpful in locating and visualizing the areas being discussed.)

Pocket Change is a powerful yet easy to use program for calculating and depicting currency exchange at the specified daily rate. (It can calculate exchange rates between more than 260 countries.) It provides two lists to choose from, labeled "Select Country to convert from" and "Select Country to convert to." For example, if you wish to calculate exchange rates between the currency of the United States (US) and Mexico, you can pick the US from the first list and select Mexico from the second list (or vice versa). As soon as you select the From and To countries, the respective International Organization for Standardization (ISO) code is displayed. This is the official standard used by all financial organizations worldwide. (Examples: US = Dollar; Mexico = Mexican Nuevo Peso; United Kingdom = Pound Sterling; etc.) In each case, the rate is depicted against the US Dollar (i.e., 1 USD = Exchange Rate Displayed).

If you select the US as the "From" or Origin Country then the units in Column 1 will reflect the US Dollar as whole units (nothing less than 1 dollar). If you Select Mexico as the From or Origin Country then the units in Column 1 will reflect Mexican Pesos as whole units (nothing less than a Peso). [I recommend you do it both ways, since you can print a Traveler's Sheet, or mini chart, for each, and take it with you for the day. This will give the flexibility of using either mini chart, as you "price shop" and determine which chart is easier to use.]

For either display (remember, I recommend printing both) you need the exchange rate for both countries, if either of the countries is not the US. (Note: The program comes with exchange rates current on the day of it's publication, which could be weeks before you acquired the program. Therefore, you need to check the exchange rates of the countries you choose, on the day you intend to use the information, for the most current exchange rate.) If you have an Internet connection, you should be able to obtain a reasonably accurate rate of exchange by going to the software company's web site. Use the Internet Databank at the top of the screen and it will take you to the Currency Databank at the web site. This will give you the "suggested" daily exchange rate for that day. (Remember the rate is a "floating rate" so every day it will probably change by a little, and may go up or down from the previous day.) There are also many other sites available to obtain current rates, as well as banks, newspapers, etc. Generally, an establishment in the area you are in will display the daily rate, and all of the "locals" will use that rate for their business that day. If you can find that rate, I think it would be the one to use.

Once you have the countries entered and the exchange rates identified, enter the appropriate current exchange rate in the appropriate box (if not already depicted), and click on "Calculate" at the top left to have the chart automatically completed.



Once the chart has been "calculated," just click on "Print" to obtain a printed copy. Once you have reversed the position of the countries and again printed a copy (my recommendation), you are ready for the day.

(Note: On the web site the following statement is depicted, "Imagine being in a foreign country and you want to purchase an item you can't live without. It costs 110,950 Lire. You pull out your pocket change mini chart and see that the cost in US Dollars is only \$48.41. No problem!" Unless I am not using the software correctly, I could not duplicate this example from the mini chart, although I did read the tutorials carefully, without doing some addition, interpolation and/or calculations outside the software. I will try to explain through the example in the next paragraph.)

While strolling along with the sheets for the US and Mexico (using an exchange rate of 1 USD = 11.1291 Pesos), we find an item that costs 238.32 Pesos. "How much US?" is our mental question. By referring to the mini chart that converts from US to Mexico to see that the price is above \$20 USD (222.58 Pesos), but less than \$25 USD (278.23 Pesos). We can get closer by adding another \$1 USD (11.13) to get to 233.71 Pesos. That still leaves us 4.61 Pesos short. Since the chart doesn't show anything less than \$1 USD = 11.1291 Pesos, I will have to guess that the remaining 4.61 Pesos is about 40% of 11.1291 Pesos. So, if I add another \$.40 cents I will have an approximate figure (\$20+1+.40) of \$21.40 USD. (Just leave off the last part if you don't do mental math well, as you will be within \$.40 of the final number.) If we use the chart that converts from Mexico to the US we can get closer, but again have to do some "mental math." The 200 Peso figure is \$17.97, 30 Pesos is \$2.70, and the 8.32 Pesos remaining is about 80% of the 10 Peso figure (.8 x .9), or about .72. When we add these figures together (\$17.97+2.70+.72) we get \$21.39 USD. To verify our numbers we could use a hand calculator to divide the 238.32 Pesos by the exchange rate of 11.1291 and see that the figure is 21.414. We're within a couple of cents using either mini chart (and some mental calculations). So, from my

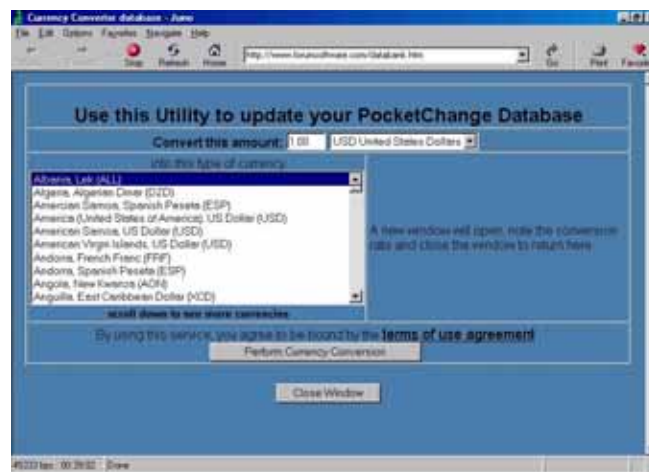
perspective, if you want to be CLOSE you can use the mini charts. Including some interpolation will get you CLOSER. But, using the hand calculator will get you the correct figure. It is your choice!

One additional item worth mentioning is the "Status Bar" located on the bottom of the Pocket Change © Screen. It has three panes for additional information: Left Pane - Indicates if the Number Lock (Num Lock) key on your keyboard is on or off. If off the NUM indicator will be dimmed; Middle Pane - Displays your systems date setting; Right Pane - Displays ToolTips as your mouse hovers over different parts of the Pocket Change © Screen.

System requirements: Compatible with Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP. No other requirements were provided.

Contact Information: Other than the web site <www.forumssoftware.com>, only an E-Mail listing <soft@forumssoftware.com> was provided. There was no address or phone numbers at the web site or in the software, that I could find.

Bill Klutz does consulting work, primarily in the areas of Management, and Computer Applications/Hardware/Software.



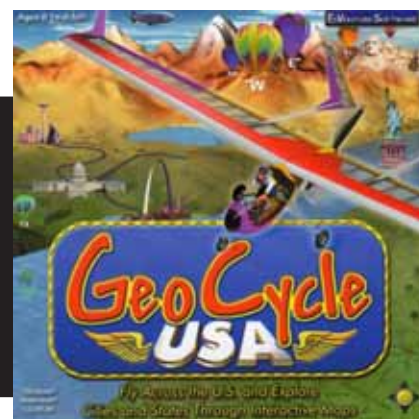
Software Review

GeoCycle USA

Published by EdVenture Software

\$29.95

Reviewed by Barbara Boucher, PT, PhD



Early in our development as humans, we learn to respond to verbal praise – prompting us to repeat rewarded behaviors. At some point, visual novelty becomes rewarding, and in this educational software, rewards are provided as parachuting pigs, cows, and elephants. Further along the developmental path, we learn to work for symbolic rewards, and feel good about earning more than someone else in competition. Yes, if you know your geography, you too, can earn points by mouse-directing a glider powered by a cycling person across states, hitting geese and dodging “evil flying spaceships”. Clearly, GeoCycle USA is not reality-based, but can appeal to eight- to twelve-year-olds for proving their geographic prowess.

If you know United States geography, you can rack-up points with GeoCycle USA. GeoCycle rates well for graphics clarity, but does not open to full screen. I had some difficulty distinguishing dots representing the small northeastern states, but then you could say I don’t know my geography very well. There are multiple play levels and several games from which to choose. From the Main Menu, “cyclers” choose US regions, subjects (states, capitals, major cities, rivers, lakes, mountains, famous sites), and Flying Mode (level of play). Points can be earned and stored by name. Bonus points can be earned after each flight by answering “blimp” questions, or questions posed on a back ground of blimps. One side game reinforces the USPS state abbreviations. I suppose that is useful, and graphically simple for writing the software. A truly useful skill tested in GeoCycle is understanding directionality on a map – North, South, East, and West. Determining the relative position of states according to polar direction is worthy of practice – a cognitive/perceptual task many adults fail. The GeoChallenge appears to be the premiere portion of the game – requiring knowledge of place location, directionality, and the ability

to click on slow-flying geese who announce themselves with honks before appearing on the screen. The cycle theme is carried through by offering each “cyclers” three “bike lives”. Bike lives are lost when hit by evil flying spaceships, and there are three bike lives per game. There are different video endings, depending on cyclers’ bike life status at the end of the game. Potentially, the crash-landing ending may be as rewarding as the one for “100%”.

Learning geography by using this software is dubious. There are limited opportunities to guess wrong, necessitating you to remember your errors and re-play to click other answers. If the child finds the visual rewards strong enough (ie their parents severely limit their computer interaction games), and they have learned some geography, GeoCycle might be requested by some children. GeoCycle cannot compare to fast-paced games with elegant graphics that provide intense verbal praise, visual novelty, and symbolic rewards. My twelve-year-old daughter was unimpressed with GeoCycle, despite the fact that we severely limit her access to computer interaction games (only Nintendo 64). This software could be useful in a classroom situation, as an alternative means of testing children in 4th or 5th grade.

System Requirements for Windows: Pentium Class Processor, 32 MB RAM, 30 MB Available HD Space, 4 Speed CD-ROM Drive, and 16 Bit Color Graphics.

System Requirements for Macintosh: System 7.5, Power PC, 32 MB RAM, 30 MB Available HD Space, 4 Speed CD-ROM Drive, and 16 Bit Color Graphics.

Barbara Boucher is a physical therapist and child development specialist. Her husband, a grade school teacher, and her twelve-year-old daughter contributed to this review.

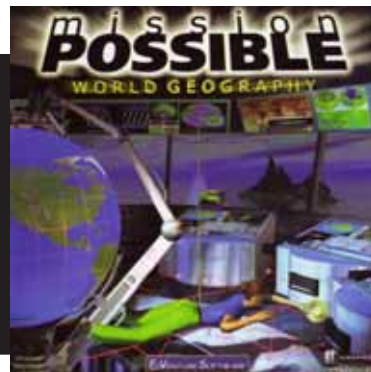
Software Review

Mission Possible

Published by EdVenture Software

\$29.95

Reviewed by Barbara Boucher, PT, PhD



EdVenture comes-up a notch from GeoCycle USA with Mission Possible. As it should be, for this software is targeted for a slightly older audience (12 years to adult). The software opens with two missions related to preventing global warming, and asks the player to accept the mission – all with some appropriate background music. Upon opening the main menu of Mission Possible, it is intuitively obvious how to play and score in this game.

Mission Possible taps your knowledge of world geography. The graphics are not quite smooth, but larger and more interesting than those in GeoCycle. Some of the map graphics are the same as in GeoCycle but the whole premise for Mission Possible has more depth and is consistent in its theme. Just for fun, players or “agents” get to select their appearance prior to embarking on the mission. Multiple choices are available for the color of hair, skin, T-shirt, pants, belt, and shoes. There are seven levels of play available, and the agent chooses a level of play by estimating their response time. There is a no-points-awarded training session available. The agent moves closer to accomplishing the mission, and racking-up points, by answering questions on geogra-

phy, and by answering them quickly. Mission Possible definitely challenged my knowledge of world geography. Surprisingly, I was motivated to do some research between games so that I could score better with successive missions. Mission Possible has potential as a classroom medium for grades 7 through 9.

System Requirements for Windows: Intel Pentium II Processor, 64 MB RAM, 50 MB Available HD Space, 4x Speed CD-ROM Drive, 256 Color Display, and Windows compatible sound card.

System Requirements for Macintosh: System 8.5, Power PC, 64 MB RAM, 50 MB Available HD Space, 4x CD-ROM Drive, and 256 Color Display.

Barbara Boucher is a physical therapist and child development specialist. Her husband, a grade school teacher, and her fourteen-year-old son contributed to this review.

Hardware Review

Laptop Desk (\$29.95)

MouzPad (\$9.95)

USB LED Light (\$19.95)

Mini USB Hub (\$19.95)

From LapWorks, Inc.

Reviewed by Bill Klutz, Alamo PC



At the April general meeting I first saw the Laptop Desk and thought it would be very useful, since my laptop computer gets too hot to sit on my lap without something between my legs and the laptop. (I had been using one of the “cake boards” kept by the stove, but it is too big to fit into my laptop bag. When folded, the Laptop Desk fits my bag nicely.) In discussing the item with the software coordinator I found that the same company had also provided 3 additional items. So, with permission, I picked up 4 items from LapWorks, Inc. that everyone else had “left behind.” My guess was that since they were not software, there was little or no interest. Or, maybe folks thought it would be hard to write about hardware.

Laptop Desk, ver 2.0

This versatile item is identical to the Laptop Desk Original, with one significant advantage: the latest version lets you use

it as a desktop stand, as well as a lap desk. It weighs just 1 lb, 6 oz, is black in color, is made from rugged polycarbonate plastic and is engineered for heavier notebooks - in the 5+ lbs range. (An UltraLite model is also available for notebooks under 5 lbs.) The L x W x H dimensions (in inches) are: folded - 10.69 X 11.13 X .63; Unfolded - 20.56 X 11.13 X .31.

In the desktop stand mode, you can choose from one of five (5) positionable, ergonomically comfortable typing angles. Positioning the keyboard in an incline has been proven to reduce shoulder and back strain. At full extension, the new support arm raises the screen level by 3 1/4" (closer to eye level), also helping to reduce neck strain.

Another benefit of the newer version is the super-gripping feature. As a desktop stand, 35 square inches of no-slip rubber grips a desktop while another 35 square inches grips your notebook. Also, with your notebook on your desktop, without using

a Laptop Desk, you may hear the cooling fan turn on to cool the computer. Using the versatile Laptop Desk, the fan will turn on much less often. Ventilation channels in the product cool your notebook through convection, and contact with the no-slip rubber surfaces helps cool your notebook by conduction. The versatile Laptop Desk has been scientifically proven to reduce heat build-up in a notebook computer by 15% to 20%! (It reduces the heat transfer to my legs by 100%) Heat reduction, in a notebook, translates into extended life expectancy.

Some additional items about the laptop Desk include: The only lap desk product on the market that easily converts into a desktop stand for any notebook, and it has been given several awards from various independent reviewers - Computer times, Techzone, and OnePC, to name a few.

Mouse Pad Extender

More than half of those who own the Laptop Desk use it on their lap in the mobile application and the great majority of those use an external mouse. Many of those owners asked for a mousing surface that is larger and free of the no-slip rubber on the Laptop Desk's surface. That caused the development of the MouzPad™.

The MouzPad is a rigid mousing surface (same color and of the same material as the Laptop Desk) that attaches to the Laptop Desk, when working on your lap in a mobile position. The MouzPad will work with either version of the Laptop Desk (original or ver 2.0). It weighs only 3.7 ounces and measures 6" X 9" (with a thickness of less than 1/8"). It provides a textured mousing surface for use with any size and type of mouse - roller ball or optical. It also works equally well for right or left handed persons, and adds only 3 additional inches to the overall length of the Laptop Desk. It has six utility holes, three each at the two outer corners to hold pens or other items that can fit the openings. The MouzPad also has a series of notches, three on each side, for weaving a mouse cable through. This "cable capture" is helpful when the Mouzpad is in an incline position - to prevent the mouse from falling when released.

Although the MouzPad snaps into place easily, it does not snap off easily when downward pressure is applied by a heavy-handed mouse user. To remove the MouzPad from the Laptop Desk, simply lift up on its outer edge with about 2 lbs of lift and it will be easily removed.

USB LED Light

If you need a keyboard light for your notebook computer, then try the Nite-Key-Lite™. This 18" long serpentine keyboard light works great, and illuminates practically the entire keyboard with two (2) LED white lights. And, it doesn't draw any more power from your notebook battery than 90 seconds per hour of laptop life. The flexible stalk is long enough to reach over the top or around the sides of most computer screens. However, unlike some other keyboard lights, it holds firmly in the position you put it in (ergo, no repositioning). It plugs into any USB (Universal Serial Bus) port and the high-tech LED lights should last up to 8,000 hours.

Note these additional important features: No external power source necessary - plugs into any USB port; Soft white light illu-

minates your keyboard just enough to see - shouldn't disturb others. Useful in illuminating the keyboard with enough light to see all the keys, when working in low light-no light environments, such as a bed, darkened boardroom, airplane, etc.; Flexible neck lets you position the light where you want it; Small and lightweight - perfect for road warriors on the go; Fits easily almost anywhere - coiled or extended; Lifetime warranty; No risk 30 day money back guarantee.

Mini USB Hub

The LapWorks USB-H4 is a small 4-port USB hub that allows a computer user to connect up to four USB peripherals or devices through one USB ready computer port. It provides an out-of-the box, plug and play industry standard USB connection. The device is designed to provide quick and easy access to the four type "A" downstream ports for connecting peripherals with USB support, other USB hubs, and similar devices (mouse, digital camera, printer, etc. A single type "B" upstream port is provided for connecting to the host computer or another USB hub. Configured directly by the operating system, the USB device operates seamlessly with both Microsoft's OpenHCI Host Control Interface) and Intel's UniversalHCI.

As a standard USB hub, the device buffers USB data from any attached peripherals or devices, in compliance with USB Specification version 1.1, to provide an invisible extension of the computer's USB port. Supporting both low speed 1.5 Megabytes Per Second (Mbps) devices and high speed 12 Mbps devices, each port creates a bridge between the peripheral and host computer. The device also supports self-powered and bus-powered modes for connection of up to four (4) low-powered devices. This device is primarily a "Low-Power" USB hub that provides 500 mA (milliamps) of power per port. (For notebooks, devices such as scanners with high power demands should be plugged directly into one of the notebook's USB ports, and the notebook plugged directly into a wall outlet so as not to put a strain on the notebook's battery.)

Other features and specifications: Supports 1 upstream port and 4 downstream ports; Complies with USB specifications 1.1; Supports Windows 98/SE/ME/2000/XP and Mac OS 8.5 and above; Supports hot plug and play, and automatic speed detection; Reliable at up to 15 feet of transmission; Built-in over-current protection with auto-recovery; Supports self-powered and bus-powered mode (both are automatically switching); Cable is 24 inches; Device dimensions (excluding cable and plug) are 70 X 30 X 12 mm

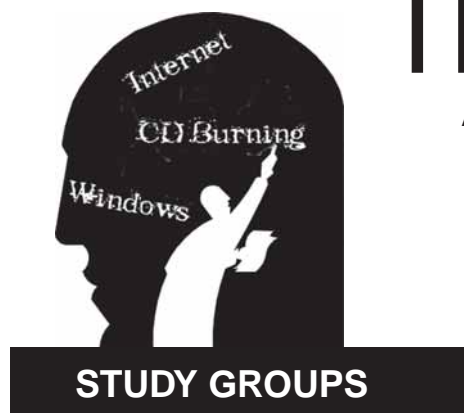
Contacts: LapWorks, Inc., 7955 Layton St., Rancho Cucamongo, CA 91730; 877-521-9675 or 909-948-1821; E-Mail: corporate@laptopdesk.net <> Texas Regional Contact: Betty Wheeler, 2517 Monterrey St., Arlington, TX 76015; 817-688-5146, FAX: 817-460-5055; E-Mail: jbwheeler@flash.net

Bill Klutz does consulting work, primarily in the areas of Management, and Computer Applications/Hardware/Software.

Alamo PC Monthly Planner

May 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Genealogy	3 Excel 2000 BoD Meets	4 eBay	5 .NET HGS Photoshop Practice (Adv)	6 Dr. is In HTML Photoshop Class SBS 2003	7 CC++ Computer Lit MCSE Adv
8	9 General Meeting Crossroads Software Checkout	10 Excel 2000	11 Homepage Power Internet eBay	12 Photoshop Practice (Adv)	13 Dr. is In HTML Photoshop Class	14 Commodore Computer Lit MCSE Adv Photo Editing WindowsXP
15	16 PowerPoint Quicken	17 Excel 2000	18 eBay	19 Photoshop Practice (Adv)	20 Dr. is In HTML Photoshop Class	21 CC++ Computer Lit MCSE Adv
22	23 CorelDRAW 1	24 Excel 2000	25 WordPerfect eBay	26 Access Adv Photoshop Practice (Adv)	27 Dr. is In HTML Photoshop Class	28 MCSE Adv WindowsXP
29	30	31	<div> <div> Apr 2005 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 </div> <div> Jun 2005 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 </div> </div>			



The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

Genealogy Study Group

For everyone interested in using their computer for genealogy. We will discuss currently available genealogy software, their pros and cons and meeting participants views as to best software to use for both beginners and advanced genealogists.

Contact: Jim Collier
<jcinquiry@earthlink.net>
210-710-5660

When: First Monday, 7-9 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

HGSI Study Group

The premise of the HGS Investor SIG is, "Knowledge is stronger when passed on to others." We have created an environment for continuing education and open discussion between well informed members and guest speakers in matters of using Fundamental and Technical Analysis for the buying and selling of equities. Meetings are held on the First Thursday of the month in the UBS Conference Room, 200 Concord Plaza Drive, Suite 300 at 6:30PM to 8:30PM. If you wish to be added to our mailing list or for more information, contact below.

Contact: Maynard Burstein
<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

When: 1st Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

Where: UBS/Paine Webber, 200 Concord Plaza Dr. Suite 300

Pre-registration: Call Maynard

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

.NET Study Group

A study group for those interested in developing Windows and Web applications using Microsoft's .NET technology. We will focus on VB.NET and C# to build Web applications that interact with a SQL Server database (ASP.NET & ADO.NET). Tools used will include the .NET Framework SDK and WebMatrix. Additional discussions and use of Visual Studio.NET will be included.

Contact: Joe Brazell 688-9508

When: 1st Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', has just completed its study for the Exchange Server 2003 design exam to qualify for the MCSE : Messaging on Windows 2003. In January we will begin learning about either ISA Server 2004 or studying for the Windows XP exam. The MCSE Advanced SIG is designed for those who already have their MCSE certification. Space is limited. Therefore membership is restricted. The SIG meets every Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

Larry Lentz, MCSE on NT, W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging
<Larry@LentzComputer.Net>

When: Every Saturday, 8:30-noon

Where: Contact Larry

Pre-registration: Yes - contact Larry

Technical Rating ★★

Small Business Server Study Group

The Alamo PC Organization Small Business Server Special Interest Group held its regular monthly meeting on Friday, March 4th at 8 AM in the Alamo PC Learning Center in Cross Roads Mall, San Antonio, Texas. We had 18 in attendance. Following our Taco Social, Ken Strain, The Montopolis Group, led a great discussion on antivirus solutions for Small Business Server. The Alamo PC SBS SIG will host the Microsoft SBS User Group Tour on March 30th. Even so, the group elected to hold their regular monthly meeting as well on April 1st (no joke) even though it is only a couple of days after our 'big event'. Edgar Chew, Edgar Chew and Associates, will lead a discussion on Swing Migration in April. The Alamo PC SBS SIG meets the first Friday of every month at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Cross Roads Mall, San Antonio, Texas. All interested parties are welcome to attend. For more information contact SIG Chairman Larry Lentz, <Larry@LentzComputer.net>

Photoshop Study Group

Visit the Learning Center every Thursday (except holidays) from 1pm - 5pm for advanced Photoshop practice. Basic Photoshop practice will be held every Friday (except holidays) from 1pm - 5pm during even numbered months. **Only students who have attended the Photoshop Basics class are eligible to attend.**

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Thursdays & even month Fridays

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: no

Technical Rating ★★ - ★★★

Advanced Access Study Group

This study group is designed for people with experience with Microsoft Access who wish to learn and share ideas on advanced forms, VBA code, reports, queries, etc. Attendees should already be familiar with database design basics and the basics of building forms, reports and queries in Access. Topics include using graphs, database security, SQL Server connectivity, customer functions or other topics of interest.

Contact: Joseph Kubon
<joseph.kubon@padgett-cpa.com>
210-828-6281 x 1554

When: Fourth Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★★

C/C++ Study Group

Please note we are currently a study group and no longer a Class. C/C++ Study Group Our group consists of 3 to 6 regular members who meet twice a month to discuss their plans and progress on development of software for experimental use. We do not plan to offer C or C++ courses in this study group. To join the study group, get acquainted with some of its members and consider preparing a brief presentation of your planned or current efforts.

Contact:

Bruce McAlexander
<mcalexb@satx.rr.com> 210-680-0231

Murry Adams

<mnadams@texas.net> 210-696-0047

Carl Deneke

<cdeneke@Texas.net> 210-496-6397

When: First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★ - ★★★

Commodore Users of SA

Contact: Diana Jones
830-303-1220

When: Second Saturday, 1-4 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★★★

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

Power Internet Study Group

This year we are covering eight subjects: PC-to-PC data transfer, third party data transfer, DSL and direct cable broadband connectivity, e-mail, browser use, MS Outlook and virus protection in communications.

Contact: John Woody
<jwoody@texas.net>
210-494-5684

When: 2nd Wednesday, 10am-noon

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: No

Technical Rating ★★

Quicken

Each month the Quicken Study Group leaders will provide tips, techniques, answer questions, solve problems, and present an in-depth discussion of some aspect of Quicken for Windows. Have questions about how to do something in Quicken? Come to the Study Group and have questions answered.

Contact:

Larry Mathews

<clm.sat@iname.com>

Yael Friedlander

<yaelf@sbcglobal.net> 210-492-1163

When: 3rd Monday, 7-8pm (No Dec. meeting)

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: Not required but preferred. Call Yael Friedlander between 8am & 5pm.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

WordPerfect Evening Study Group

We demonstrate projects and features of the latest version of WordPerfect. We also like to work on real life situations with our members who have questions. Co-chairs Frances Pape and Paul Chevalier.

Contact: Cynthia Thompson
210-655-1058

When: 3rd Wednesday, 7-9pm

Where: Call Cynthia for directions

Pre-registration: Yes - Call Cynthia

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Call for New Instructor

A Computer Literacy class leader is needed for an additional class. Please contact John Gaddis at <education@alamopc.org> or 494-9449.

FREE CLASSES

Computer Literacy Class

This course is designed for beginners and those who want to brush up their computer skills. Students learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills used in many software programs, and gain a basic understanding of surfing the Web and using e-mail. The course prepares students to enroll in a variety of second level courses.

Contact: David Henry <oobootes@juno.com>

When: First three Saturdays of every month, 1-3pm

Where: Resource Center

Pre-registration: Yes - Call the Learning, 210-736-0080

Technical Rating ★

CorelDRAW I Class

This basic class discusses basic tools and effects, concentrating on fills, blends, envelopes and other special effects for the next few months.

Contact: Steve Tech
<stephentechjr@yahoo.com>
210-675-2880

When: 4th Monday, 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★

DotNetNuke Configuration and Management

This is a class on using the DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website. The class will focus on hands-on configuration and use of the DNN 2.x portal. This portal is a service available to Alamo PC members. The class will setup web pages, insert modules on the pages. Modify and edit the look of the pages as well as the data in the pages. Modules will include: Calendar, Announcements, Forums, Blogger, Contacts, Links, Surveys and HTML.

Contact: Joe Brazell,
<ejbrazell@satx.rr.com>, 345-2207
When: August 31 7PM - 9PM

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

eBay - Bid with Confidence: An Introduction to Internet Auctions

This 4-session class shows you how to buy and sell at Internet auctions using the eBay system (excludes real estate and automobiles).

Contact: Learning Center 736-0080
<learncenter@alamopc.org>

When: 7-9pm on Wednesdays.

4th, 11th, 18th, 25th of May

Where: Learning Center, Room 1

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating: ★

Excel 2000 Class

Students will become familiar with Excel 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars, icons and shortcut keys. Learn how to create, format, save and print an Excel spreadsheet. Understand and use formulas, work with worksheets and workbooks, and learn the basic productivity elements of Excel. The Excel 2000 Basics Class will use the Excel 2000 Step By Step book. This book will be helpful but is not required.

Contact: Bill Eastridge

<weastridge@satx.rr.com>

When: First four Tuesdays of odd numbered months (Jan, Mar, May) 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

HTML Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML. Some of the topics discussed include formatting text, links and forms. Additional non-HTML topics include planning, design and management, color and graphics, CSS, FTP and dealing with search engines. The 10 week class will begin a new cycle each January, May and September.

Contact: Mike Bianchi

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

When: every Friday 7-9 pm

Where: Alamo PC Learning Center

Prerequisite:

Home Page Jumpstart
familiarity with Windows

Pre-registration: yes

To register e-mail Mike at

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

Technical Rating: ★

Home Page Jumpstart

A general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is *not* a course on HTML. Includes a 20+ page manual and a training disk. Not hands-on.

Contact:

Susan Ives <suives@texas.net>
210-694-4582

When: 2nd Wednesday, 5:30-7pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Internet Jumpstart Class

The class is intended for people who would like to learn more about the mail program Outlook Express, which is a subset of Microsoft Outlook. The first class is entirely on e-mail and the second class is for people who have never seen the Internet, who have not been on the Internet or who are on the Internet but are just beginning to find their way around.

Contact: Sandy Knight

<sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Saturday of even numbered months, 9am-noon.

Where: Learning Center
Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★

Introduction to Photo Editing

Due to member interest, two back-to-back classes will be held the 2nd Saturday of each month. Requirements are the attendee should be an intermediate computer user (no beginners, please) and should already have a graphics software program on their PC. We will primarily use Photoshop Elements software, although we will also use Corel PhotoPaint and ArcSoft Photostudio occasionally.

Contact: Clarke Bird

<cbird@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd Saturday, 8-10am, 10am-noon

Pre-registration: Yes - Learning Center
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Power Point class

A new PowerPoint class will start in January 2005. See Significant Happenings Page 8. Pre-registration is required.

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: call

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes
Technical Rating: ★

Windows XP Class

This class is intended to help you make the transition to Windows XP the latest version of Microsoft's Operating System. Subjects covered include the features of and how to configure Windows XP.

Contact: Sandy Knight

<sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Saturdays of odd numbered months, 9am - noon.

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Word 2000 Class

Become familiar with Word 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars and shortcut keys. Students will learn how to create, view, format, save and print a Word document. Also work with templates, multiple documents, insert files, objects and pictures. Optional textbook: Word 2000 Step by Step book (this will be helpful but is not required). Student should have basic knowledge of Windows and be familiar with operating the mouse and keyboard.

Contact: Joe Haggard, 342-5373

When: First four Tuesdays of even-numbered months (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec), 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

FEE-BASED CLASSES

Photoshop Elements & Photoshop 7 Class - \$

2005 Schedule:

March thru April - Elements 2 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

May thru June - Photoshop 7 instruction classes (8 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

July thru August - Elements 2 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

September thru October - Photoshop 7 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Fridays 1pm - 5pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: (includes textbook) \$120 non members (includes one year membership to Alamo PC), \$90 Alamo PC members

Pre-registration: Yes - call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Photoshop Workshops - \$

March thru December - Open to anyone who has previously taken the basic Photoshop 7 classes at Alamo PC

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Thursdays 1pm - 5pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: (includes written instructions) \$20 per month for Alamo PC members only

Pre-registration: Yes - call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Senior Comp Class - \$

Introductory classes for people 45 and over. New classes begin approximately every two months. Classes are held at the Resource Center Lab and meet for two hours once a week for six weeks. Courses offered: Intro to Computers 1&2 and MS Word and Internet/E-mail.

Contact: Ed & Audry Henkin
www.seniorcomp.org

When: see page 10 for schedule

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$60 includes textbook

Pre-registration: Yes - call 736-0080

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Introduction to MS Access Databases Class - \$

This class is a hands-on beginner's class on Microsoft Access offered in four 4-hour sessions (16 hours total) over four consecutive weekends. The focus is on designing and building database applications. The fee includes a syllabus and a textbook. Prerequisites: Experience using Microsoft Office programs such as Word and Excel.

Contact: Joe Brazell,
<ejbrazell@satx.rr.com>, 210-345-2207

When: contact Learning Center

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$60 Alamo PC Members; \$75 Non-Members

Pre-Registration: Required - Call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080. Technical Rating: ★★

Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

Develop your skills at your own pace and at a time that fits your schedule. Introductory private tutorials for one, two, or three students. Choose from:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Basic Computer Skills, or
- Keyboarding/Typing

Contact: Learning Center (210) 736-0080 or 736-0700

When: Days and hours are arranged between the student(s) and teacher.

Where: Learning Center

Fees: 1 student: \$35 per hour, 10 hours for \$300. 2 or 3 students: per student—\$20 per hour, 10 hours for \$150

Pre-registration: Yes—call or visit the Learning Center

Technical Rating: *

Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

Help Numbers

Can you help a new member with a new computer? Are you proficient in software not listed? Can you help with a title currently showing only one volunteer? Call John Gaddis at 494-9449.

1 Look down the list for the software program you need help with; note the number in front of the title.

2 Then look down the list to the right for the corresponding number for the person who may be able to help you.

Please observe the times given by the volunteers name to call for phone help.

Step One


0	ACT!	28	Quattro Pro
1	Access	29	Quick Books
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6	dBase	31	Photo Album
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8	Dreamweaver 3	35	WinFax Pro
9	Networking	36	MS Word Windows
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11	Family Origins for Win.	39	Visual Basic
12	FrontPage 98	40	Internet Explorer
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22	PageMaker	46	Opera
23	Paint Shop Pro	47	Mozilla
24	Adobe Photoshop	48	MySQL
25	Crystal Reports	49	.Net
26	PowerPoint	50	Windows XP

Step Two

Expertise	Name	Phone	Availability	E-mail
(2)	Tom Drawert	696-9601	M-F 6-9pm; S/S 9am-6pm	
(12,24)	Steve Northover	497-5750	M-F 7-9pm; S/S 12-3pm	
(6)	Bowen Moursund	736-1791	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Keith Marbach	(830)303-9344	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Ed Conner	696-0191	4-7pm	
(9, 10, 16, 23, 30, 32, 33, 35, 42)	John Bolton	658-3060	M-F 6-9pm;	
(0, 10, 11, 26, 29, 30, 35, 36, 42)	Jean Smith	822-1133	M-F 10am-8pm; Sun 12-8pm	
(11, 14)	Bob Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	
(14)	Bob Battaglia	651-5642	9am-7pm	
(18)	Lou Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	louharris@alumni.utexas.net
(18, 23, 31)	Herb Langthorp	651-6087	M-F 6-10pm; 6-9:30pm on S/S	pokeypub@satx.rr.com
(44, 45, 46, 47, 48)	Chris Montgomery	490-2415	M-F 7-9pm;S/S 12-6pm	
(21)	Paul Woods	653-8940	4-7pm	
(25)	Barry Woitena		M-F 9-5pm	dallasmx@swbell.net
(28)	Brian Collie	828-1505	M-Sat 10am-5pm	
(36)	Christel Villarreal			cvillarreal@stic.net
(37)	Cynthia Thompson	655-1058	9am-9pm	
(9,42, 43)	Frank Flores	344-2231	M-Sat 9am-1pm	frflores@grandecom.net
(10, 43)	Mario Flores	566-4048	10am-11pm. Leave name, number.	
(8, 13, 26)	Robert Carrasco			carrasco_r@yahoo.com
(1, 10, 25, 26, 36)	Joseph Kubon	828-6281 x 1554	12noon - 8pm M-F and S/S	
(1, 10, 36)	David de Leon	614-3100	1-4pm M/F 12noon-8pm Sat & Sun.	
(9, 14, 16, 32, 36, 40, 41,42, 43)	Bruce Cramer	865-2933	M-Sat 9am-3pm	service@pcpro4u.com
(40, 41, 50)	Ted Ressler			catechist@gmail.com

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100% gray cotton golf shirts with pocket and embroidered full-color

Alamo PC logo

Available at the Learning Center in a wide variety of sizes.

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at 736-0700

Classified Ads

E-mail or snail mail (address on page 3) your ad to the Editor, PC Alamo at: editor@alamopc.org. Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

- For Sale** Mail Station MIVO 100 - Used to e-mail on the go from any phone line. Brand new in box. Paid \$50.00, asking best offer. Call Jay Goodall at 867-9301.
- For Sale** Scrapbook Tote Crop-in-Style XXL is new with pull up handle, fixed ball bearing wheels,removable pen caddy hold 75 pens, 18 scissors loops, punch storage. Holds multiple albums up to 12" x 15" and anything else you can think of for the growing scrapbooker. Store price is \$140.00 plus tax and I am asking \$95.00. Call David at 492-5153. <marjdave1@sbcglobal.net>
- Free** Free to anyone who needs them: FAX paper rolls, one new, one half used. Heat sensitive paper. (8 1/2 x 98 ft.) I got a new FAX machine that doesn't use them, so if someone wants them... E-mail for more info: <joeecool@satx.rr.com>
- For Sale** 100Gig hard drive, 512Mg RAM, Flat screen monitor, Speakers (with subwoofer), DVD drive, CD/DVD writer (separate drive) \$700, negotiable. <richardstrout@hotmail.com>
- For Sale** View Sonic Professional Series P75f+ Flat Screen CRT 17" monitor. Purchased June 1, 2004. Hot key to boost brightness levels for intense, vivid colors with video, DVD, graphics and gaming. Toggle back to normal brightness for text. Ultra-fine 0.25mm aperture grille pitch. \$99 call Sandy 372-9985 or <sknight@satx.rr.com>
- For Sale** Hewlett Packard Laser Jet 1100se black and white printer with extra unopened Laser Jet Toner Cartridge. Used occasionally for 3 months. No problems. \$65 total. Contact Doris at 494-2402
- Wanted** Handspring Deluxe PDA. 646-7856. Mary Sidorsky
- Wanted** Someone to teach me Publisher and Access, will pay. Contact <jwoody39@netzero.net>

Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

Your membership number entitles you to a full year of membership privileges. Established in 1983, this non-profit, all-volunteer organization is dedicated to helping members keep up with trends and technologies.

Monthly Meetings

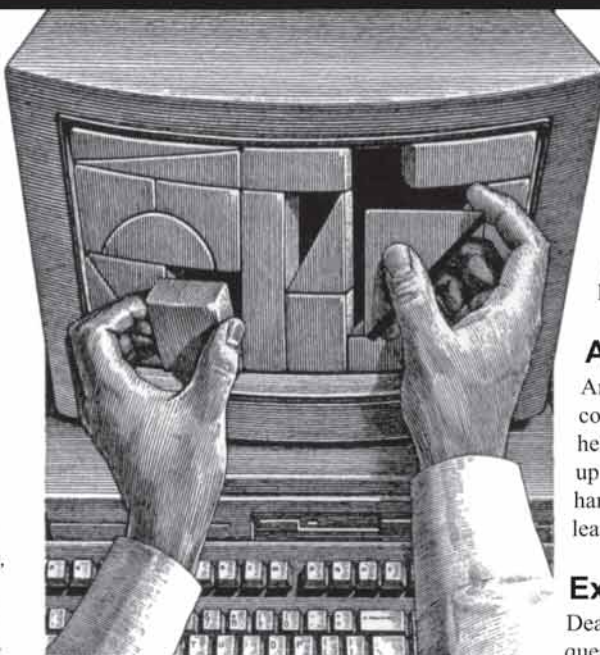
Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

Award-Winning Magazine

When you join Alamo PC, you'll receive its award-winning magazine, *PC Alamode*, each month. You'll learn of group activities and you'll enjoy the reviews of new products from your fellow members. Regular columnists will give you insight to this fast-paced, dynamic industry. As a member, you can sell your outgrown stuff in our FREE Classified ads section.

Special Interest Groups and Classes

Alamo PC offers more than 30 Study Groups and classes on specific software programs for beginners to expert. These small groups typically meet once a month in one of our two hands-on computer labs or classrooms and provide an opportunity to get answers in an informal setting. There are groups for word processing, Web design, graphics and programming and even study groups to help you get Microsoft Certified. You can attend as many SIGs as you'd like and, as you become experienced, even lead one!



Internet (www.alamopc.org)

Alamo PC is on the Internet, and more importantly, Alamo PC can help you get on the Internet too. If you're already on the Internet, attending one of Alamo PC's Internet SIGs will help you to become a savvy Internet surfer.

Alamo PC SeniorComp

Are you age 45 or older and not into computers or the Internet yet? Let us help. Contact Alamo PC today and sign up for the very next class. Classes are hands-on at a pace to match your learning style.

Expert Help

Deadlocked with a computer problem or question? Get access to personal help from expert Alamo PC members. Just call! If you need someone to diagnose hardware and software problems, try "THE DOCTOR IS IN," a free clinic where members bring in their computers and allow our experts to help diagnose and often fix many PC ailments.

APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

To join, return the application below or sign up online at www.alamopc.org. Your \$45 dues covers your entire family!e. You may use your credit card or send your personal check. If you need more information, call (210) 736-0700. Shortly after joining, you'll receive a membership card entitling you to all rights and privileges and discounts. **JOIN TODAY!**

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE: Call 210-736-0700 for details.



Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. This information will be kept in confidence - it will be used for planning purposes only

FIRST: _____ MI _____ LAST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE H: _____ W: _____ FAX: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: ____/____/____ OCCUPATION: _____

EMPLOYER: _____ TITLE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please accept my membership for: ☐ 1 year - \$45 ☐ 2 Years - \$85 ☐ 3 Years - \$125 ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Method of payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Credit Card # _____ EXP DATE: ____/____ SIGNATURE: _____

Make checks payable to Alamo PC Organization and mail to: **Alamo PC, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

IMPORTANT ☐ I do not authorize Alamo PC Organization to release my name address and phone to selected vendors

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

Isn't it about time for you to consider all the benefits of membership with Alamo PC? Renew your membership before the year is over!

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



Consider A Matching Donation, or a Donation To Alamo PC Organization

Increasing members knowledge and effective use of personal computers, and providing other membership services and access to the expertise of other members, does not happen without an associated monthly expense. In recent months, although member dues and ads have offset the majority of the required monthly expense, and cost-saving measures are constantly being reviewed, the total amount of monthly funds generated has been less than the monthly expense. The shortfall has had to come from reserve funds, which have been severely depleted. We would like to offer everyone the opportunity to help rebuild the reserve fund.

If your employer has a "Matching Donation" program, please consider that you can double a donation amount by participating. All donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall (near the underground parking entrance, accessed from Fredericksburg Road) or mailed to **Alamo PC Organization, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX, 78265-5180**. Checks, Money Orders, etc., should be made payable to Alamo PC Organization and identified as "Donation."

On-line donations can be made at <<https://training.alamopc.org/donations>>. If you do not have on-line access, credit card donations can be made by mail if you legibly provide the following information on a piece of paper: Full Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number (to verify you want your card charged), Name of Card, Card Number, Card Expiration Date, Donation Amount, and your usual Signature. Please help us keep our membership dues low, meet our monthly expenses and rebuild the reserve fund.

