

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

INTERNET ISSUE

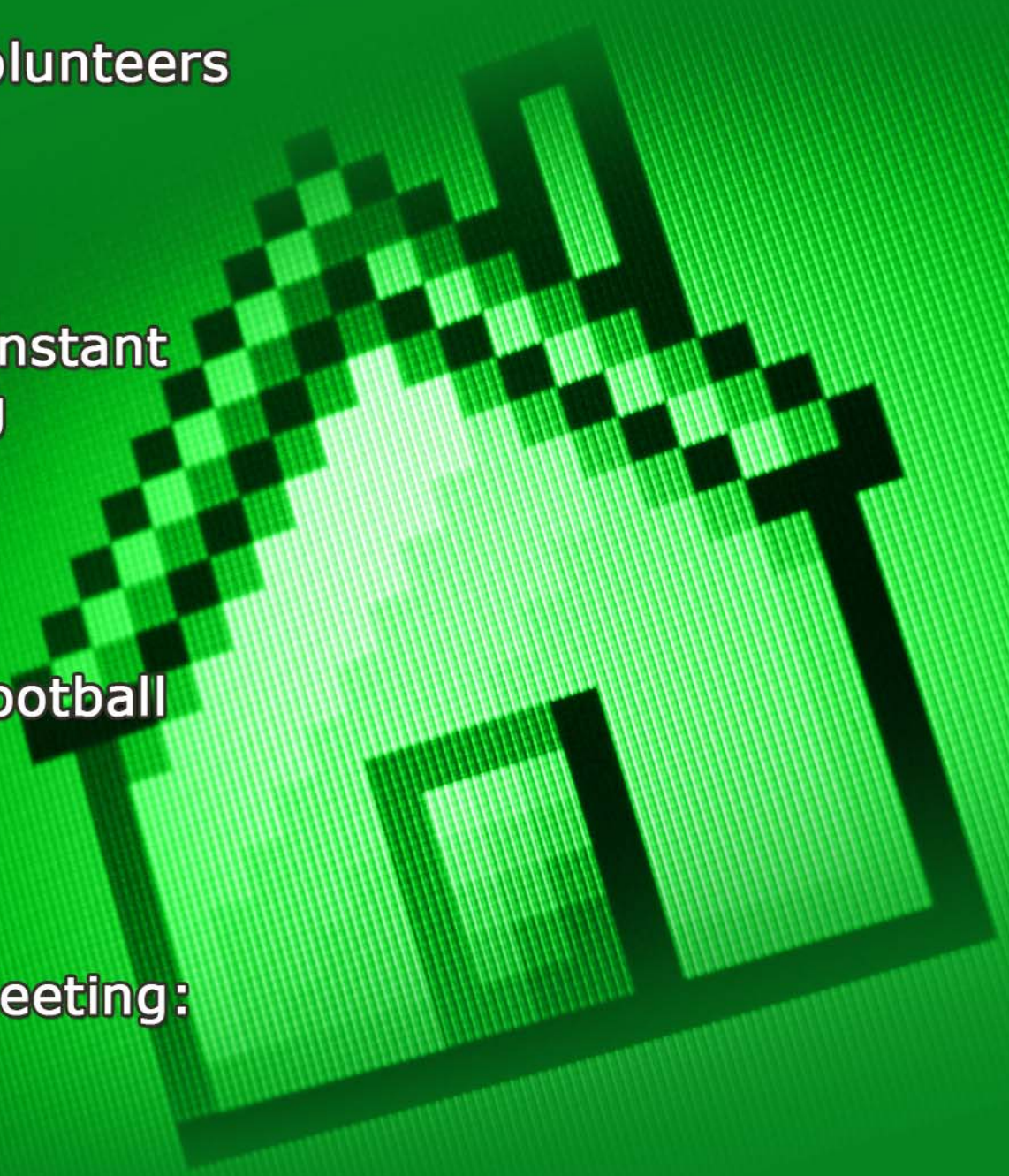
www.alamopc.org
October 2005
\$4.00

Call for Volunteers
page 34

**Wireless Instant
Messaging**
page 42

Fantasy Football
page 46

**General Meeting:
Linspire**
page 9





SAVE ON INK

without the squid farm.


LEXMARK
Canon
EPSON
and more...

Discount Printer Ink

Ink Cartridges ♦ Laser Toner ♦ All Printing Supplies

Huebner Oaks
next to BBQ Galore

San Pedro
next to Hermes Music



The Forum
behind Hobby Lobby

Bulverde Road
inside Loop 1604

210-2-BUY-INK
(210-228-9465)
www.inksell.com

Printer
InkSell.com **INK**



 **New
Life
Toner inc.**

930-9300

5800 Rittiman Plaza
www.toner.net

Reduce Office Cost!
Save Up to 70%
on Supplies
Printer, Fax, & Copiers
Toner, Ink, Ribbons
Free Delivery
Volume Discounts
Money Back Guarantee
Huge Selection

New and compatible Toner & Ink Crtgs

We buy empty toner and ink cartridges.
Ask about the great deals on refurb. printers

**Authorized
Printer Service**
Hewlett-Packard
Xerox
Okidata
Brother

10%

Discount
On Parts and Labor

We also service
Lexmark
Canon
Sony
Computer Service
Coupon 1103



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 Alamode* or have questions about your **membership** e-mail:

Bill Eastridge 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:

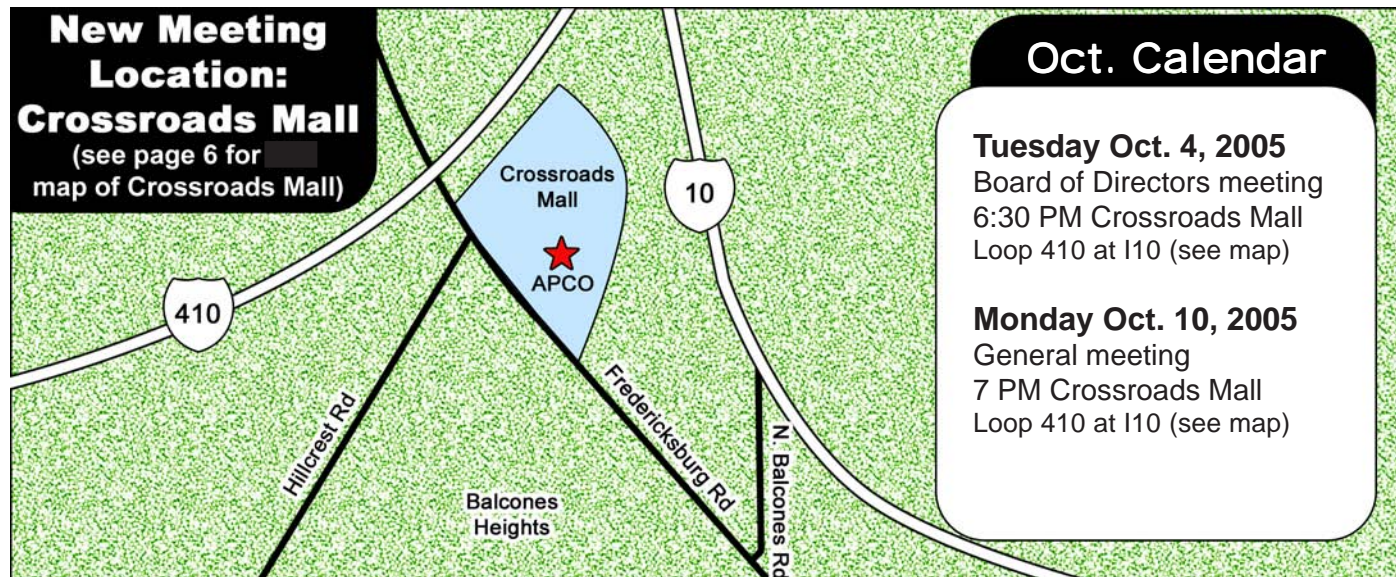
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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)



Oct. Calendar

Tuesday Oct. 4, 2005
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Oct. 10, 2005
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



columns

| | |
|---|----|
| The Deals Guy <i>Bob Click</i> | 13 |
| Computer Law <i>John Brewer</i> | 14 |
| What happened at ChoicePoint? | |
| RAM & Reason <i>Rob Rice</i> | 15 |
| Keeping your laptop young | |
| Whatsup.Doc <i>K. Joyce McDonald</i> | 16 |
| DSL, MyYahoo and Google Sidebar | |
| Preventive Maintenance <i>Russell James</i> | 17 |
| War of the Worms | |
| Computer Defense Dept. <i>Bruce Cramer</i> | 18 |
| Antivirus program takes no prisoners | |
| Windows Tips & Tricks <i>Bill Beverley</i> | 20 |
| Preventative Maintenance Part V | |
| SBS Lessons Learned <i>Larry Lentz</i> | 22 |
| Fishing with Microsoft CRM | |
| Best and Worst <i>Pim Borman</i> | 23 |
| Firefox, Graphics Standard, Bloggers | |
| PowerTalk <i>Shane Hicks</i> | 24 |
| No free technical support, Part 2 | |
| The Switcher <i>Shane Hicks</i> | 25 |
| Widgets | |
| Lazy Webmaster <i>Susan Ives</i> | 26 |
| CSS - Part IV | |
| The Graphics Guy <i>Paul Vaughn</i> | 28 |
| Adobe Photoshop Web design | |
| PC 101 <i>Ron Ingraham</i> | 30 |
| Accessories "WordPad" | |

departments

| | |
|--|----|
| PC Alamo Links List | 7 |
| Enter <i>Joseph de Leon</i> | 7 |
| President's Message <i>Bill Klutz</i> | 8 |
| October Program News <i>David Steward</i> | 9 |
| Volunteer of the Month <i>Gene Uptain</i> | 10 |
| Senior Comp Schedule <i>Bill Hudson</i> | 10 |
| Geeky Gourmet | 12 |

guest contributors

| | |
|---|----|
| Thank the leaders of your user group <i>Phil Shapiro</i> | 33 |
|---|----|

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Alamo PC Phone Directory | 6 |
| Map to Meeting Places | 6 |
| Alamo PC Calendar of Events | 60 |
| Study Groups and Classes | 61, 62, 63 |
| Help Numbers | 64 |
| Index of Advertisers | 65 |
| Classified Ads | 65 |
| Membership Application | 66 |

Featured this month

Call for Volunteers

Free e-filing for seniors *Henry C. Johnson*

Browsers

Chasing the Internet *Gabe Goldberg*

Internet Explorer tips & tricks *Richard O. Johnson*

29 useful bookmarks *Richard O. Johnson*

Wireless

Wi-Fi & Network Availability *Ira Wilsker*

Wireless I.M. conversation *Gabe Goldberg*

Utilities

Maintain your downloads *David Garcia*

Reading product manuals online *Gabe Goldberg*

Screen shots *David Garcia*

Just for Fun

Fantasy Football *Wayne Steene*

Selling on eBay *Dorothy Alexander*

Guerrilla strategies for eBay *Steve Bass*

If Edgar Allen Poe used a computer

34

35

36

38

40

42

43

44

45

46

48

50

52

Volume 22, Number 10

PC Alamode

(501 (C) (3))

PC Alamode (ISSN 1065-3708) is published monthly by the Alamo PC Organization, Inc., PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180, an independent association of personal computer users, founded in January 1983, and incorporated in January 1984 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. COPYRIGHT © 2005 by Alamo PC or the author. All rights reserved. No part of PC Alamode may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means — mechanical, electrical, or otherwise — including, but not limited to, photocopying, recording, or information storage/retrieval, without express written permission from Alamo PC. However, unless otherwise indicated, articles may be reprinted by other user and education groups provided the articles are reprinted unaltered and the publication acknowledges the author thereof and PC Alamode. Articles, programs, reviews, and advertisements are compiled without verification of accuracy or applicability to a specific task, computer, or other equipment. Comments or claims are made solely by the individual author and do not necessarily represent the views of Alamo PC or of any other Alamo PC member. Trademarks have been used at random within the publication and are hereby recognized as such.

Periodical postage paid at San Antonio, TX and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PC Alamode, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180.

EDITOR

Joseph de Leon

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Joe Barth
Susan Ives

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Bill Beverley
Bruce Cramer
Shane Hicks
Tim Hoke
Bill Hudson
Susan Ives
Russell James
Larry Lentz
K. Joyce McDonald
Paul Vaughn

INTERIM PRODUCT REVIEW COORDINATOR

Susan Ives

ADVERTISING

Joseph de Leon

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

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode

P.O. Box 12202

San Antonio, TX 78212

editor@alamopc.org

Ad rates effective January 2005

| Rate frequency. | 1 x | 3 x* | 6x* | 12 x* |
|---|-------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| | | Per insertion | | |
| Full pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h) | \$274 | \$260 | \$246 | \$238 |
| Half pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h) | 144 | 138 | 130 | 121 |
| 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

product reviews

Book Reviews

Computer Crimes *Susan Ives*

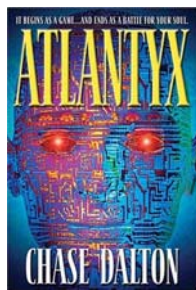
Word 2003 Personal Trainer *Mei Haenze*

Photoshop Masking & Compositing *John Donan*

56

57

58



Atlantyx

by Chase Dalton

56

Net Blue
Glen C. Allison

56



Board of Directors

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| President | Bill Klutz | 532-9122 (Home) | president@alamopc.org |
| Past President/Programs VP | David Steward | 662-8606 (Home) | dsteward@texas.net |
| Treasurer | TBD (Bill Klutz) | 532-9122 (Home) | treasurer@alamopc.org |
| Member Records | Bill Eastridge | 223-8743 (Home) | membership@alamopc.org |
| Secretary | David Steward | 662-8606 (Home) | secretary@alamopc.org |
| Webmaster | Mike Bianchi | 226-2460 (Home) | webmaster@alamopc.org |
| VP Education, Study Groups Coord. | John Gaddis | 494-9449 (Office) | education@alamopc.org |
| VP Member Retention/Services | Bill Klutz | 532-9122 (Home) | services@alamopc.org |
| VP Trade Shows | Steve Tech | 675-2880 (Home) | stephentechnr@yahoo.com |
| Director of Operations | Cary Hall | 736-0700 (Learning Center) | learncenter@alamopc.org |
| APCUG Representative | Dick Popps | 403-2225 (Home) | rpopps@wireweb.net |
| Board Member | Mark Lauterbach | 492-0005 (Home) | mark.lauterbach@sbcglobal.net |

Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

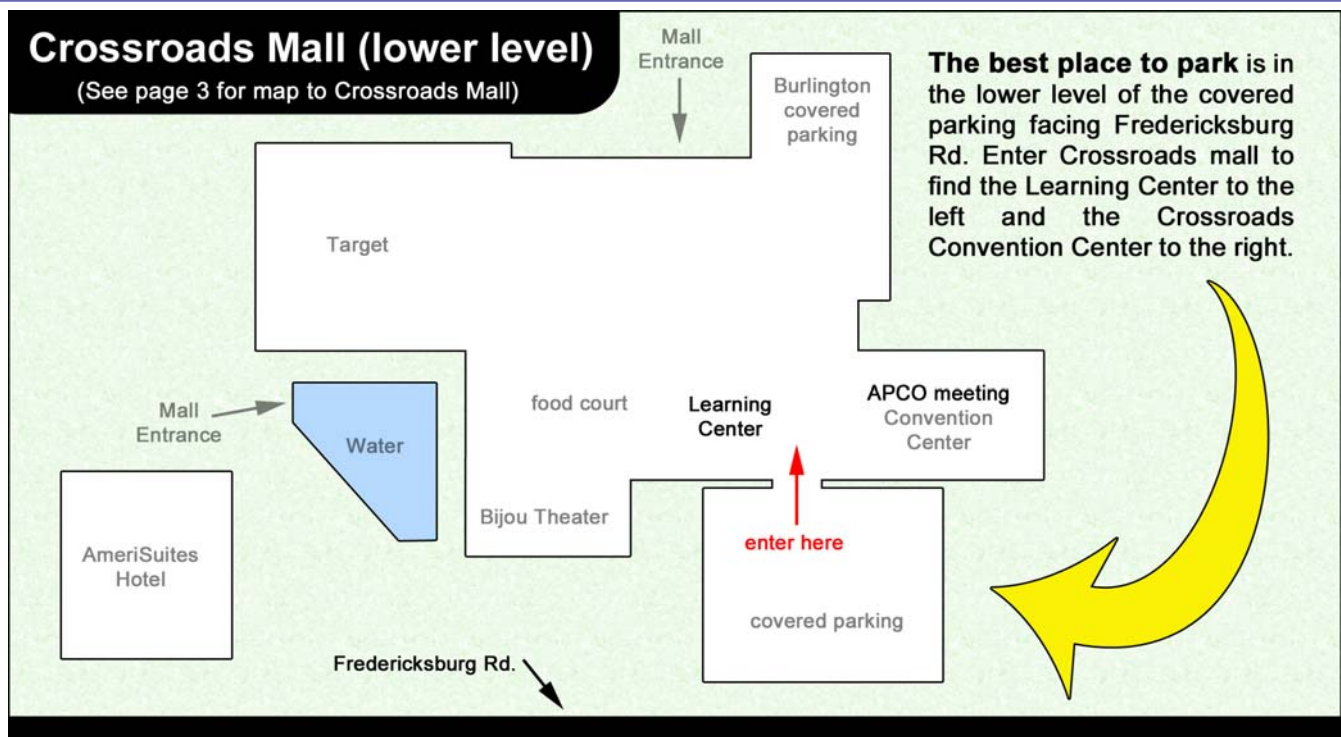
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

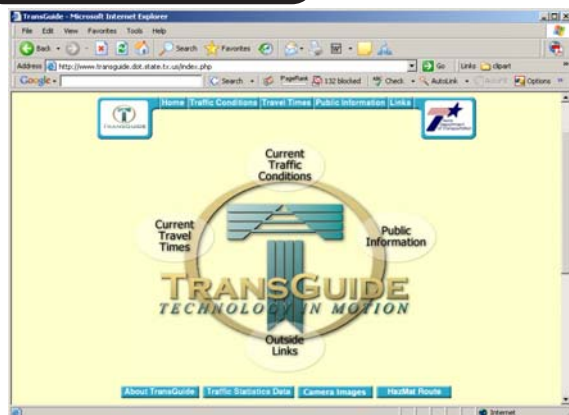
FAX 736-0032

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Learning Center Manager | Cary & Jean Hall | 736-0700 (Learning Center) | learncenter@alamopc.org |
| Director of Communication (Pub. Rel.) | Susan Ives | 694-4582 (Home) | suives@texas.net |
| Product Review Coordinator | Susan Ives | 694-4582 (Home) | reviews@alamopc.org |
| Volunteer Coordinator | Billy Samples | 646-0047 (Home) | volunteers@alamopc.org |
| Special Projects | Joe Brazell | 370-2207 (Office) | projects@alamopc.org |
| Registrar | Linda Bianchi | 226-2460 (Home) | registrar@alamopc.org |
| Webmaster | Mike Bianchi | 226-2460 (Home) | webmaster@alamopc.org |
| Lab/Network Administrator | Gary Grieve | 492-5066 (Home) | netadmin@alamopc.org |
| Senior Comp Director | Ed & Audrey Henkin | 494-8227 (Home) | seniorcomp@alamopc.org |
| Editor, PC Alamo Magazine | Joseph de Leon | unlisted | editor@alamopc.org |

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



PC Alamode Links List

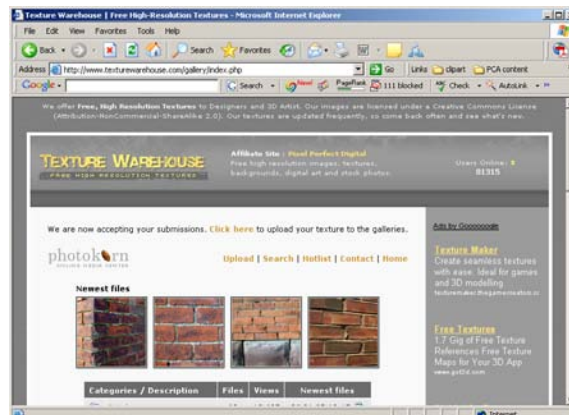


TransGuide

<<http://www.transguide.dot.state.tx.us/Traffic/equip.php>>

Submitted by Joseph de Leon, editor, *PC Alamode*

The current status of TransGuide equipment can be obtained here, such as messages being displayed on message signs around town and camera images.



AtomFilms

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

Submitted by Joseph de Leon, editor, *PC Alamode*

AtomFilms is where the Web goes to watch movies, providing on-demand viewing of over 1,500 world-class animations and short films. Collectively, more than 20 million loyal entertainment fans visit the AtomShockwave sites each month.

← enter

I hope you had a chance to cast your vote for the Board of Directors elections last month. Please take a look at the President's Message for details on this year's election. Alamo PC President Bill Klutz gives some great insight in his last message as president this year.

Internet issue

This issue of the PC Alamode takes you into a few very popular segments of the Internet.

Every one who accesses the Internet uses a browser. Get some great tips on how to use Internet Explorer to its fullest.

Wireless Fidelity networks are the hottest thing in Internet connectivity. Learn how instant messaging is changing the face of Wi-Fi. Another hot topic is Fantasy Football. Pick your own team, and play the game on your own terms.

New columns

PC 101 is back again! We pick up where we left off, with Windows Accessories. This month, Ron covers WordPad.

If you have any ideas or comments about your magazine, please let me know.

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for 7 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College. 3

President's Message

Bill Klutz

We Really, Really Need You!

In my last message, I indicated "We really need you to take time to evaluate the relationship that exists between you and The Alamo PC Organization. Why? Because without you, but especially individuals willing to give the Organization some time and talent, this organization will be a 'Use to Be.'"

Voting

As most should know, August of each year is a time to vote. Normally the voting is only to select new directors. This year, however, two votes were required Bylaws and directors."

The web site had information posted, members were notified by postcard and the subject was again mentioned at the monthly meeting on August 8th. We thought almost all had the information.

Bylaws Voting

The vote to accept or reject the proposed changes to the Bylaws was somewhat encouraging, although short of what was desired. When the 14 day voting period (Aug 1-14) ended, the total votes cast indicated that only about 10% of the members took the time to vote. Not a very impressive figure for such an important vote. But, the amended Bylaws were accepted. [Probably the most noteworthy change was reducing the number of directors from thirteen (13) to seven (7).]

Director Voting

The second vote to elect directors for the 2006 fiscal year (Oct 05-Sep 06) Board positions was not as encouraging. Our August 8th membership meeting was the annual meeting and was the time when a member qualified to vote was able to nominate a person with the second of any other member qualified to vote. It was the final time for accepting nominations.

We only had nine (9) nominations. Three (3) of the nominees declined, leaving only six (6) for seven (7) board positions. (The math is not rocket science!) The biography of each of the remaining nominees was posted to the web site for members to review. Voting was to finish on September 12th (the night of the September monthly meeting). Just prior to that date there has been only about 80 people who had voted. Not very encouraging!

The Alamo PC Organization doesn't want to become a "Use to Be" statistic. However, it may if individuals are not willing to help.

CAUG Example

In previous messages I have used a couple of groups as examples of also asking members for "HELP - We can't seem to get anyone to step forward and fill positions!"

In a follow-on article, from the past president (resigned after 10 years as president) of the Coastal Area Users Group <caug.org>, that meets in Corpus Christi, Texas wrote "... We just held the board meeting for May ... it was decided by the board, that I would write this one last plea for volunteers, and if none step up by our July social, we the board ... will put CAUG on 'Life Support' until such time we get members willing to take some of these key offices...."

The next published article stated,

"Starting effective August 2005, the Board of Directors of the Coastal Area User's Group (CAUG) have decided to go the 'life support mode.' Since there were no takers for vacant officer positions to this date, despite repeated pleadings by the board, the decision was made...." This appears to be a user group traveling the "down hill" road to the end. I remain hopeful that we are not on that road, but with the interest level being shown in the Bylaws and director voting, and the number willing to serve as a director, we may be beginning our journey down that same road.

CAUG's Latest News

"Recently, we have had to restructure how general meetings are held, and some have taken that to indicate CAUG is dead or dying. I am here to tell you not hardly, the only thing that can kill CAUG is the lack of support by you the members ... I hope you will send in your dues, volunteer when you can, and keep CAUG going strong. Computers are constantly changing so why would your user group be any different. As long as CAUG has your continued support the changes will be for the better."

Things to think about

Recently, Phil Shapiro, Capital PCUG, wrote an article entitled "How to Thank the Leaders of Your Computer Group." I believe it gives all of us things to think about:

"If you have found benefit in belonging to a computer user group, there are many ways of thanking the leaders (and other members) of the group. Sure, you can always walk up to them after a meeting and shake their hand. But there are more meaningful things you can do, too.

You can:

Thank them by moving the club forward in countless small ways. You can drop off membership flyers at the local computer stores and public libraries. You can offer a smile and encouraging word to people who show up to meetings.

Answer/ask questions on the club's member Forum section. (Questions are as valuable as answers.) You can exhibit patience with computer beginners answering their questions in ways that benefit them the most.

Offer some computer item you're no longer using to another member of the club. (If you're giving away commercial software, make sure you delete the copy on your own computer.)

Spread the word about the club around town. Be careful not to oversell, though. When I explain about the benefits of the local user group, I spell out honestly what the club can offer and can't offer. You would be doing no?one any favors if you raise false expectations in the minds of prospective club members.

Write an article for the club's newsletter. Articles can be on almost any topic you think would bring value to club members. You don't need to be a computer expert to write an excellent article. Computer beginners have lots of important and interest-

ing things to say. 'In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few.'

Talk to your local public librarians about the benefits you've encountered in your user group. Librarians are the intellectual hub of any community. You want them to be able to pass on information to anyone who inquires about computer user groups. You might even give them a video showing one of your user group meetings in action so they can better visualize and describe the meetings to other community members.

More ideas:

And now here's some unexpected ways you can thank the leaders of the club. You can show up to the club meeting with an unexpected door prize. Perhaps buy a pair of new computer speakers. Some headphones. A computer micro phone. Other similar items.

Stop by a bookstore and buy a copy of a new how-to computer book. Or purchase a modest Amazon.com gift certificate as a door prize.

Offer to be a "club driver" if someone calls the club and says there is a sick child or adult who could use a computer at home, you'll be there to deliver that donated computer on behalf of the club. Bring homemade cookies to club meetings (being careful not to leave crumbs for the next people using that meeting space.)

Offer to be a 'computer mover,' so that if someone in the club isn't able to move their computer from one room of their house to another you'll be there to help them do that. Or be the modem rescue person, so if someone's modem got zapped by lighting, you be there the next day and connect a replacement modem for them. If they ask you why you did that, tell them that you value them being connected.

You can start a scholarship program for a set number of families per year in your community. Interested families could apply to the club to get 1/2 off the annual dues of the club (for the first year, since you would pay the other

half). By doing so you're building a ramp to club membership, you're helping the community and you're creating new ways for club members to engage in outreach and publicity

Get creative in how you thank the leaders of your computer club. Behind the scene many hours of work go into making computer clubs work. Club leaders are not paid a dime. They do it because they get a thrill from seeing people help each other; from people increasing in their learning and computer confidence.

Surprise them in the ways you say thanks. You may even want to say: 'I'm ready to work. I'd like to offer my time to help.'

What can I do?

Once again I ask each member to ask this question and consider committing to being a little more involved with the Alamo PC Organization. Keep your member info current, especially your E-Mail address for periodic notices (update both on the web-site, via "members" password protected section). Also, keep track of when your membership expires, and renew well in advance, to save the organization a notification expense. Attend some of the monthly general meetings where presenters provide information about current and future computer related issues. (Last month the Microsoft representative covered "Tips and Tricks" for some of their products.)

Membership renewals continue to be a concern we are still not retaining members at the level that we would desire. If you do not choose to renew, we would appreciate knowing "Why?" (Send an E-Mail to membership@alamopc.org) or to me through the organization [<president@alamopc.org>](mailto:president@alamopc.org) or privately [<wlklutzjr@juno.com>](mailto:wlklutzjr@juno.com). Also, if you have anything (comment, question, statement, concern), please make someone aware of it. I welcome all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

I am not sure who will write the next message, as board positions will not be filled until the October Board meeting. If it is not me, I thank you for allowing me to serve you for the past year, and will continue to serve the organization in some capacity during the coming year.

October Program

David Steward

Kevin La Rue of Linspire demonstrates ease of Linux

On October 10th, the Alamo PC Organization's General Meeting will be hosting a presentation of one of the easiest Linux systems available.

Kevin La Rue, VP of Marketing at Linspire, will be introducing the World's Easiest Desktop Linux at this month's meeting! Linspire is an affordable, easy-to-use Linux-based operating system for home, school, and business users. If you've been curious about Linux, don't miss this opportunity to learn about a powerful alternative to Windows that is starting to be sold at nationwide resellers like CompUSA, BestBuy, Fry's and more. Kevin will be demonstrating the latest version of Linspire, as well as select software programs that are bundled with Linspire

including the firm's innovative CNR ("click and run") Service - you won't believe how easy software management has become until you've seen CNR!

So, if you have ever been curious about alternative operating systems, this is one meeting not to miss. Kevin, will of course, be bringing goodies and door prizes for some lucky attendees.

The presentation will be on October 10th at 7:00 PM in the Crossroads Convention Center (now named the Norris Technical Center) located in the Crossroads Mall. I look forward to seeing everyone there.

Alamo PC Organization now offers members private or semi-private tutorials

- 🖱️ Keyboarding/Typing
- 🖱️ Basic Computer Skills
- 🖱️ Microsoft Word

Rates for one student

\$35 per hour
\$300 for 10 hours

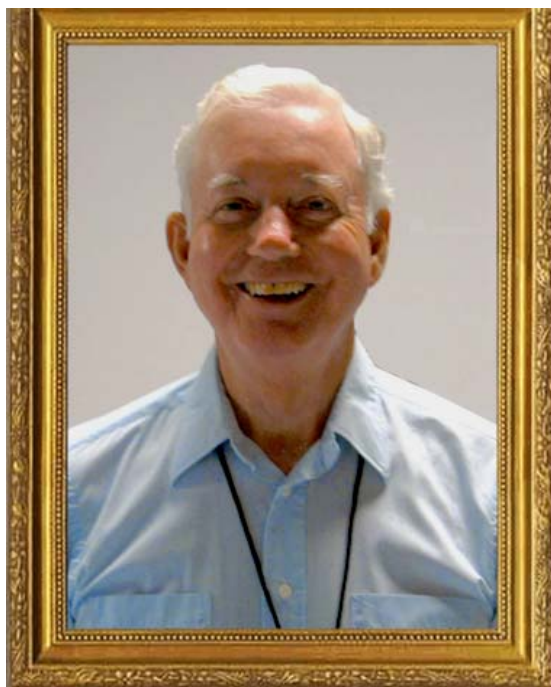
Rates for two or three students

\$20 per student per hour
\$150 per student for 10 hours

Enjoy private instruction on days and at hours
that fit **your** schedule at our modern facility in
Crossroads Mall.

Call or visit the Learning Center to register
(210) 736-0080

Volunteer of the Month Gene Uptain



Senior Comp Schedule

Bill Hudson, Senior Comp Instructor

Senior Comp Fall and Winter Schedule of Classes

Basic Introduction to Windows

Andy Roca and Donna Dudley
Wednesdays 10am -12pm
Oct. 12, 19, 26, Nov. 2, 9, 16

Introduction To Windows

Don Robinson
Mondays 1pm -3pm
Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28, Dec. 5, 12

Introduction To Windows

Audrey Henkin
Tuesdays 1:30pm - 3:30pm
Oct. 25, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Introduction to Windows

Jane Montgomery
Wednesdays 1pm -3pm
Oct. 12, 19, 26, Nov. 2, 9, 16

Introduction To Windows II

Bill Hudson
Tuesdays 10am - 12pm
Nov. 8, 15, 22, 29, Dec. 6, 13

World Wide Web and E-Mail

Don Robinson
Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm
Nov. 2, 9, 16, 30, Dec. 7, 14

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 backed by 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:

Live Oak Convention Center
8101 Pat Booker Road
San Antonio, TX.

Show Dates and Times:

October 29 & 30
more info at <http://www.pcshows.com/>



Geeky Gourmet

Autumn is in the air and pumpkins are coming out of the patch and appearing on the menu for this month.

Spicy Pumpkin Bisque

- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1-teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 1 (16-ounce) can pumpkin
- 1 (7-1/2 ounce) can whole tomatoes, drained and chopped

Sauté onion and garlic in butter in a 2-quart saucepan. Add broth and seasonings; bring to a boil. Cover. Reduce heat, and simmer 15 minutes

Combine half-and-half and pumpkin; mix well. Stir in pumpkin mixture and tomatoes; cook, stirring constantly, until heated. (Do not boil.)

Nutty Pumpkin Muffins

- ¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1 cup canned or mashed cooked pumpkin
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1-teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1-teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans
- ½ cup raisins

Combine sugar, eggs, and butter in a large mixing bowl; beat until sugar dissolves. Add pumpkin and buttermilk; beat until smooth.



Combine remaining ingredients; add to pumpkin mixture, stirring just to moisten dry ingredients. Spoon into greased muffin pans, filling two-thirds full. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Yield: 1-1/2 dozen

No-Bake Pumpkin Tarts

- 1 (16-ounce) can pumpkin or 2 cups cooked pumpkin
- 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
- 1 (3-ounce) package egg custard mix
- 2 egg yolks
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1-1/4 teaspoons pumpkin [pie spice]
- 12 (3-inch) commercial graham cracker crumb tart shells
- Whipped cream (optional)
- Pecan halves (optional)

Combine first 6 ingredients in a saucepan; mix well. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until mixture boils. Remove from heat; cover with waxed paper, and cool slightly.

Spoon into tart shells. Chill until set. Garnish with whipped cream and pecan halves, if desired. Yield: 12 servings.

Pumpkin Kahlua Cake

- 1 (18.5-ounce) package spice cake mix without pudding
- 1 (16-ounce) can pumpkin or 2 cups cooked pumpkin
- 4 eggs
- ¼ cup water
- 1 (1.4 -ounce) envelope whipped topping mix
- Kahlua glaze

Combine cake mix and pumpkin in a mixing bowl; beat at low speed of an electric mixer until cake mix is moistened. Increase electric mixer speed to medium, and add the eggs, one at a time. Beating well after each addition. Add water and whipped topping mix; beat batter 2 minutes.

Pour batter into a greased and floured 13" x 9" x 2" baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Remove cake from pan, and place on a serving tray. Allow cake to cool slightly. Drizzle cake with Kahlua Glaze.

Kahlua Glaze

- 1-1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar
- ¼ cup butter or margarine, melted
- 2 tablespoons Kahlua

Combine powdered sugar, butter, and Kahlua in a small bowl; stir until mixture is smooth.



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.

If you plan to build or remodel a home, how tough is the job of getting the design just like you want it? You could browse through a ton of architectural designs, or read a lot of magazines and become completely confused. You might even have a conference with an architectural firm or builder and discuss the entire project; or you could purchase Super Home Suite by Punch! Software and experiment all you like right on your own computer to prepare. This package has everything you need to design or remodel your own home, as well as the landscaping, and you can use your own creative contribution to get what you like. In fact, you can move walls around and even adjust the studs to get the type structure that suits your fancy, not to mention even the landscaping design around the home.

*How About Designing or Remodeling Your Home

This package contains seven powerful programs that work as one to help you in the design or remodeling plan. They are 3D Home Design, 3D Landscape, Home Estimator, AutoFraming, Floorplan Trace, Real Model and 3D Furniture Workshop. Besides that, you also get Ultimate Deck as a bonus. Comparing it with a competitive product shows many features in Super Home Suite not included in the other product. When I worked with it, I was impressed with the versatility of this product, and the many features that I found during my experience checking it out. I always need instructions so it also took some reading and experimenting from their 120-page manual, and checking the help section. I sure didn't get prolific in a day. Even the packaging was unique when I opened it.

A good example of the complete coverage and interaction in this product is the Home Estimator that automatically tallies your expenses and calculates total material costs as you design. You can add local costs and view information in an exportable spreadsheet format (which I did not do). It recognizes 2"x4", 2"x6" and custom studs; and keeps separate counts; also door and window schedules. You can list quantities of trees and other plantings, and square footage calculations are included. This product has so many features that I suggest you check their Web site <<http://www.punchsoftware.com>> for complete information. I loved working with this product even though I don't need a house right now. After a few days, I designed a new home with my favorite desires near my present income, but I'm working on a million dollar home to build after my wife's lottery ticket wins the thirty-five million this week. Of course there is just a slight chance she might not win! I love this new toy.

Punch! Software tells me there is a \$10 Manufacturer's rebate available on the Super Home Suite, ESP (Estimated Street Price \$49.99) making it just \$39.99. Sounds like a bargain to me. There should be a rebate sticker on the box and a form inside to send in on all their rebated products.

Punch! Software also offers several other products, some of which are more specialized for particular tasks. I will describe two others below and more products with a rebate next month:

Punch! Master Landscape and Home Design Professional. ESP is \$79.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it only \$59.99.

This product is new, but here is partial information from a similar product on their Web site: "This package contains nine powerful garden and landscape design software tools, patent-pending PhotoView™ and their sortable PlantFinder™ database with over 2,000 landscape plants, and in one easy-to-use interface! In addition, you will receive Ultimate Deck, a Punch! deck design software completely integrated. PhotoView™ technology lets you combine real-world photos with your own landscape and garden designs to create a realistic image of your future outdoor living space. You can import a photo of your own home, add landscaping or a deck, then view it from any angle, with realistic 3D photo-quality perspective. Place a scanned photo of doors, windows, pets, even add your children into the backyard!"

I didn't see the new Pro version described on their Web site, but the basic version is there with plenty of description. It appears to be very powerful.

Punch! Professional Home Design Suite Platinum. ESP is \$99.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it just \$79.99.

This home design software package lets you design all of the critical components for your home. The powerful home design capability includes foundations, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, custom windows, custom roofs, and much, much more. You can turn layered drawings on and off for uncluttered viewing of your home design and you can combine as few, or as many, layers as you wish, and spot potentially costly design conflicts. Ordinary blueprints could never give you that level of insight into your home designs!

Their Web site showed fourteen major features in this package, but I didn't see the new Platinum version posted there. However, check the Web site for more info. They say they have offered the #1 selling products in this field for the last five years, so take a look.

*An Announcement I Received Back In June And Edited For publishing

Our company, XP-Web-Buttons, would like to announce the release of XP Web Buttons 3.15 for Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003. We'd like to offer your members and subscribers a 25% discount off the regular price.



What Happened at ChoicePoint?

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>

ChoicePoint is a giant depository of consumer data – called a data aggregator. The company is a spin-off from Equifax, one of the leading consumer reporting agencies. ChoicePoint is headquartered in Atlanta and employs approximately 5,500 people in 60 locations. Recently the ChoicePoint data was compromised. The story of the intrusion into the ChoicePoint data follows.

The New York Times reports that 145,000 consumer records were compromised – addresses, social security numbers and other data. ChoicePoint has written notification letters to the affected victims. Reports state that least one class action lawsuit has been filed and a Nigerian national (is that surprising?) has been sentenced to a prison term in California for his role in the fraud.

ChoicePoint has responded that the company “is going to extraordinary lengths to assist people whose identities may have been compromised by the crimes committed against the company and will continue to do so. We have gone far beyond what the California law requires by voluntarily notifying individuals nationwide who may be impacted, by providing free credit reports, and credit monitoring for a year, and by setting up a dedicated support center to help consumers who receive a notification letter.

ChoicePoint is actively engaged with local and federal law enforcement agencies in the continuing investigation of a fraud committed against us, through which a small number of very organized criminals posing as legitimate companies gained access to personal information about consumers. This incident was not a breach of ChoicePoint's network or a “hacking” incident, and did not involve any of ChoicePoint's customer information.”

The ChoicePoint incident has renewed concerns about the amount of consumer information that is collected and sold by the big data firms. “When individuals understand the amount and detail in the information that these companies are selling,” said Chris Jay Hoofnagle, associate director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a digital-rights group in Washington, “their attitudes are likely to sour.”

The Times article claims that ChoicePoint has 19 billion public and private records aimed at -- and accessible, in varying degrees -- to a relatively wide client base that includes insurance agencies and corporate employee screeners, check-cashing companies, media outlets (including The New York Times), private investigators, law enforcement officials and even the United States government. The company also markets low-cost, online public-records access to individuals.

Unfortunately there is no one governmental agency that oversees and regulates the industry. The federal Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1999 governs the use of personal information maintained by financial institutions. The Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970, along with its 2003 amended version, and the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act, establishes rules for access to, and dissemination of, consumer reports. The Drivers Privacy Protection Act of 1994 provides protection for driving records, while the Health Insur-

ance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 contains provisions for privacy of medical records.

State laws are apparently a hodgepodge according to the Times article and are highly inconsistent in the degree of privacy protection they provide their residents. Critics have suggested, for example, that ChoicePoint informed only 35,000 Californians that their information might have been compromised in the most recent incident because California is currently the only state that requires companies to make such disclosures. It was not until word emerged that other states were affected that ChoicePoint began voluntarily notifying the 110,000 other consumers around the nation.

“We're going to see this over and over,” said Mr. Hoofnagle of the Electronic Privacy Information Center. “This is not about a rotten apple. It's about a rotten barrel. And it's only because of California's law that we're beginning to see it and smell it.”

Individual state laws are probably inadequate to cope with this type of problem. Federal law would be more effective in creating uniform standards regarding this type of violation of personal privacy. It is obvious that this type of incident facilitates identity theft.

PC World reports that U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat, has called for congressional hearings on privacy legislation she introduced this year. Feinstein's Notification of Risk to Personal Data Act, introduced on January 24, 2005, would require businesses and government agencies to notify likely victims when there is a “reasonable basis to conclude” that a criminal has obtained unencrypted personal data.

Feinstein's bill lacks co-sponsors, however, and a similar bill went nowhere in Congress in 2004. Asked about the bill's chances in 2005, a Feinstein spokesman said that the ChoicePoint problems have shown the need for legislation. “Moving any bill is always a difficult prospect, but now more people are coming to an understanding of the issue of identity theft,” the spokesman said.

Feinstein, in a statement, called upon the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold hearings on her bill as soon as possible. “I strongly believe individuals have a right to be notified when their most sensitive information is compromised--because it is truly their information,” her statement said. “And they have the right to decide what actions they want to take once a breach has been discovered. Unfortunately, data breaches are becoming all too common and current federal law does not require notification to consumers when these breaches occur.”

Regulation is always a controversial topic and industry is never receptive to new rules that safeguard consumers and that cost money to implement. However, the ChoicePoint incident is an indication that someone needs to monitor the rights of consumers to privacy versus the right of industry to make a profit.



Keeping Your Laptop Young: The Resilient PC Card

Rob Rice, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Rob Rice is a computer specialist working in Anchorage, Alaska. Rob can be contacted at <articles@isp.com>

Laptop computers are pricey little gizmos that depreciate faster than a new car just driven off the lot. Just as soon as you have convinced yourself that you bought the most current and feature-packed model, some gee-whiz component comes out that has people asking why didn't you buy that other model. Fortunately there is a saving grace, that little PC Card slot on the side of almost all laptop computers built in the last ten years or so.

The PC Card is a small, thin, metal and plastic card that is 85.6mm long and 54mm wide. It is a tough little device, able to be stored and operated at freezing and up to roughly 130 degrees Fahrenheit temperatures.

There are three types of cards having differing thicknesses and uses, but all utilize the same 68-pin interface and slot on the computer.

- Type I that has a thickness of 3.3mm and typically is used for memory devices such as RAM, Flash, OTP, and SRAM cards.
- Type II has a thickness of 5.0mm. It is typically used for I/O devices such as data/fax modems, LANs, and mass storage devices.
- Type III has a thickness of 10.5mm and is typically used for thicker devices such as hard drives.

Founded in 1989, "To establish standards for Integrated Circuit cards and to promote interchangeability among mobile computers," the Personal Computer Memory Card International Association (PCMCIA), who are also the same folks that brought you the SmartMedia flash card for digital cameras, defined the requirements for the first PC Card in the Standard Release 1.0/JEIDA 4.0 - June 1990. This described a plug and play device with a 68-pin interface and the Type I and Type II PC Card form factors. The second standard followed shortly after by defining input/output (I/O) cards in releases 2.0, 2.01 and 2.1 - 1991-1994. February and March of 1995 saw improved compatibility as well as support for features such as 3.3 volt operation, DMA support, and 32-bit CardBus busmastering. A series of recommended guidelines for developers of specific types of PC Cards, such as modems, wireless devices, ATA cards and CardBus cards was also issued. PC Card Standard 8.0 issued April 2001, added the CardBay USB Interface and Vcore Supplemental Voltage.

In 2003, the PCMCIA announced a new standard that is backwards-compatible with the older card slots, but is smaller and faster, accomplished by taking advantage of USB and PCI Express.

What all of these standards and revisions mean is that the PC Card has not only kept up with technology, but has provided a vehicle for getting new equipment to the customer, such as wireless connectivity. Compatibility has also been maintained, thanks in part to the PCMCIA having over 200 member companies and a staff of industry insiders. The PCMCIA's board of directors is currently staffed by folks from Intel, Microsoft, Dell Computer, Lexar, Texas Instruments and Hewlett Packard. The Chairman of the Board and Technical Chair is from Intel and the current President is from Microsoft.

One must admit that the real beauty of the PC Card is that it keeps pace with technology and gives the buyer the ability to expand and upgrade their laptop - holding on to it for at least one more year.

As an example, consider this list of PC Cards that are available and can be put into any PC Card slot:

Storage

- Flash Memory - The earliest use of the PC Card and still a viable one.
- Hard Drive - I priced a 5 gig drive at \$169.

- Flash Media card readers - I priced a 4-in-1 Card Slot(SM, MS, SD, MMC) reader at \$24.

Expansion

- USB 1.1 & 2.0 - Adds USB connections, \$15 and up.
- IEEE 1394 & 1394b Firewire - Adds Firewire/ iLink connections, \$15 and up.
- USB and Firewire Combo Cards - about \$30 and up.
- SATA - Connects a Serial ATA external hard drive to your laptop, \$20 and up.
- SCSI - Connects a SCSI external hard drive to your laptop, \$100 - \$155.
- Serial Ports - Adds serial ports your laptop, \$45 and up.
- DVD Drive - Adds an external DVD drive to your laptop, \$145.
- CD ROM Drive - Adds an external CD ROM drive to your laptop, \$120.

Connectivity

- Ethernet - Adds a LAN connection, a 10/100 card goes for around \$19.
- Wireless - Adds a wireless network connection, \$10 (on sale) and up.
- 56k modems - Good old dial-up modem, \$25 to \$35.
- Bluetooth - Adds Bluetooth capability, \$45 to \$65.

Sound Card

- The Creative PCMCIA Sound Blaster® Audigy® 2 ZS Notebook with THX® certified 24-bit ADVANCED HD™ audio quality playback and encompassing 7.1 surround sound for Dolby® Digital EX as well as DTS-ES™ supported DVD movies; any DirectSound3D games and CMSS 3D virtualized 7.1 stereo music, can be had for around \$120

TV Tuner

- The LifeView 700450202060 TV Tuner PCMCIA Card features Worldwide TV and stereo sound standards Inputs for S-Video and composite video Real-time record digital TV to MPEG2, analog video to MPEG 4/2/1 TimeShifting Functionality with Composite, S-Video and Audio ports goes for around \$80.

Video Capture

- Video conferencing, live video feed from a camera for monitoring, or video mail, about \$250 or less.

Radio

- FM Radio, \$149 or less. Often included in a TV Tuner card.

PCMCIA Card Reader for the Desktop with a PCI Interface Cable

- Quatech PCD2-F/PCI-E for a 3.5 inch bay, \$100.

So before you declare your old laptop as being hopelessly out of date, have a look at the latest PC Cards. You may be amazed at what it can still do!

The PCMCIA, <<http://www.pcmcia.org>>

Prices are from the Internet and meant only to give a general idea of cost.



DSL, MyYahoo and Google Sidebar

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>.

DSL's time had arrived, at least at our house. After years of Internet access via cable modem we made the tough decision to switch to DSL. Our impetus for change came about as the aftereffect of a few rusty outside cable connectors, which, interestingly, were probably the result of our being cable customers for so many years. Although RoadRunner eventually discovered and fixed the problem, my husband had already spent too many hours listening to voice mail, punching phone buttons and waiting for a human to offer technical support. Once he made contact with a human, it was the same old story. Reboot modem. Reboot each computer. Do this. Do that. Since we were complaining about intermittent service one would think that they would guess hardware was involved but that's the last place they looked, and they had to look twice before they found the problem.

My husband, in the mean time, was getting info about a possible deal with Southwestern Bell DSL. As it turned out DSL was much cheaper than cable, and in addition, we got a break on our landline phone and our Cingular wireless bill. The service came in two flavors: slow and fast, but even the fast service was cheaper than our cable modem bill.

The DSL modem installed fairly easily, and if it matters, is much classier looking than the cable modem. The service is as good or better than the cable modem (when the cable modem connection was working.) Is it faster? I did an informal test on LLBean with a feature called "My virtual model." It works like an electronic paper doll and tries on the clothes that I might want to buy. Previously, via the cable modem, this feature slowed my access to a crawl even when our Internet access was active (something we couldn't always depend on.) With DSL, it performed as fast as any other LLBean page.

Of course the best benefit of our DSL is uninterrupted access to the Internet. Since DSL is dependent on phone lines, we assume that the phone lines will get better maintenance than the cable lines, as the infrastructure for maintaining them has been in place for decades.

With DSL we did run into one glitch, although it came about because of our unusual needs as DSL customers. DSL has a default service called Port 25 blocking, which prevents a third party domain from routing e-mail through their servers. For most DSL customers, Port 25 blocking is a blessing. What it means is that some jerk can't hijack your e-mail program (Outlook is the biggest target) to send a bunch of worm e-mails. However, because we operate four business domains from our household network, this meant that we could receive e-mails for all our business domains, but we couldn't reply or send out e-mail (at least not via Outlook.) We could still use webmail to send and receive email for any of our domains, but this cumbersome chore is made much easier with a mail client that retrieves and sends from all domains at once.

Fortunately the SBC Frequently Asked Questions page explained this feature and told us how to opt out. An email with the right setup automatically opts you out of Port 25 blocking provided that it is sent from household's master DSL account (meaning my husband's account). An automatic reply instructs you to reboot the modem. When we had another Port 25 blocking question not answered in the Frequently Asked Questions, my husband called on a Saturday, talked to a human immediately, and got a quick and sensible answer.

The only down side is that I have had the same e-mail address for years, and now I will have to change it. I spent a good deal of time this weekend notifying the really critical services like E-Bay and PayPal plus our domain name and hosting services. The up side is that it will take a while for the spammers to catch up with my new e-mail address. My RoadRunner account now receives about 40 spams a day in spite of a year of diligent blacklisting via Mailwasher. My new address is listed elsewhere in this column. Please make note of it.

While I was having fun doing e-mail change of address notifications, my husband was exploring the glories of the MyYahoo page, a default with DSL. He has had a Yahoo email address for quite some time, but he had never paid much attention to the customizable MyYahoo personal home page. He now has his Yahoo page up to deliver the scores of the important football games, his stock quotes, and headlines from the Wall Street Journal.

In the interest of one-upmanship, I may have to install a Google Sidebar. With this new feature Google plans to go up against Microsoft and Yahoo. Sidebar offers a pane of customized information such as weather forecasts, stock quotes, headlines, text feeds from favorite Web sites, photo slide shows and e-mail alerts.

The "sidebar" sits alongside whatever else the user is viewing and emulates some of the features of MyYahoo. Google's offering goes further by customizing the sidebar automatically, based upon the user's browsing activities. Included in Sidebar is a text editor and a task tracking ("to do list") function that Google's leaders hope will steal some thunder from Microsoft's Office software, specifically Word and Outlook.

As with any new product, I have some reservations dependent upon the answers to several questions. Will the new Sidebar features hamper the performance of the browser? Do we need the functionality of a limited text editor, another to-do list program and a smart aleck program that tracks our browsing habits? Will Google abandon what it does well in favor of what it must do to get one up on the competition? Will the new features include adequate instructions, or will the instructions echo Microsoft's documentation? (Example: If you do a search on the term "shortcut" will it explain what the term means, or just tell you to enter it?) The "intelligent" feature that tracks your browsing habits—does it default to "on" and if it gives you the creeps, how easy is it to turn off?

I haven't tested Sidebar or MyYahoo yet, so the jury is still out. As for DSL itself, from my one weekend of usage, I give it a thumbs up.



War of the Worms

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

We have had a lot of new virus activity in the past month. We have had about 50 new or variations of major viruses come out in the last month. There have been new versions of the Mydoom, Netsky and Bagle worms appearing in our inboxes seemingly on a daily basis.

It seems that much of the increase in traffic is due to a war between rival virus writers. Bagle.J, Bagle.K, Netsky.F and Mydoom.G all contain comments in the binary code that is found within the files of the virus, according to Sophus PLC, an antivirus company. These comments are aimed at the rival authors and contain foul language, bad spelling and good old fashioned insults.

Panda Software has published a time-line of the recent events to help the end users understand the severity of the situation. This should be a good read for all of us by the time this article appears since March 11th has been declared "the skynet day" by the author or authors of Netsky.K. Skynet Antivirus is referred to in many of the messages talking about the writers of Netsky.

It seems that the exchanges started in January when a version of Netsky began removing the Mydoom and Bagle viruses from machines that it infected. The barbs have continued and even escalated to the point of almost daily updates of the viruses being released. Most of the new versions are said to be for the sole purpose of continuing the exchange of insults between the authors.

All three of these viruses spread in e-mail messages with vague sounding subject lines to try to get you to open the attachments that come with them. Do not be fooled by the simple messages that might seem like a real e-mail. If you open the files and are not protected sufficiently, you will become infected and start to infect others.

The viruses carry their own e-mail sending engines, which means that they do not need your e-mail account to send out infected e-mails from your system. They look through the different drives on the infected system for e-mail addresses to send themselves to. Then when they send themselves out to try to infect other machines they will use one of the e-mail addresses that it finds as the from address. This is why you may recognize the name of the person that is supposedly sending the virus. If your e-mail address is found on an infected system then there is a chance that you will know someone else who is listed there.

There are more problems that are created other than just being infected and infecting other users. The Bagle and Mydoom worms also use code to open ports on your system that can then be used to send spam e-mail through your machine, send harmful instructions to your computer or install software to spy on you and any other users of the infected machine. One more reason to get your anti virus software installed correctly and set to update automatically on a daily basis. I would suggest that you set them to check for updates at 8 pm. This would give the antivirus companies time to make the updates available and allow your system to update since there seems to be a lot more activity during the evening and early morning.

We have about 30 e-mail addresses at our company. I wanted to get some idea of how many viruses are actually flowing around out there so I took a look at the log file on our e-mail server. There were over 1000 messages that were deleted in a 2 minute period because they were infected with a virus. I understand that this is in the middle of a very serious outbreak but the numbers are overwhelming. That is a lot of e-mail coming to one server that is doing no good to anyone. If we as a company did not have any protection there is no end to the number of machines that we could infect before our own systems were crippled and could not function anymore.

There is not much good that can come out of a virus outbreak like this. The only positive that I can see is the addition of the verbal sparring that is going on between the authors. The sparring has been going on between hackers and virus authors since their beginning. Hopefully with the increase in messages within the viruses they will send some clues that will lead to their arrest and conviction. The only problem with this thought process is that the ones that get caught are not the ones that need to be caught the most. The ones that don't get caught would have to be the smarter ones of the bunch and thus the ones that do the most damage. Life is not fair but such is the rule of survival of the fittest. Last one standing wins.

TAKE IT TO BJ's - THE LAPTOP SPECIALIST!
IF WE CAN'T FIX IT, NO ONE CAN!

AWARD WINNING SERVICE SINCE 1982
Residential, Corporate,
Education, Government,
No job is too small.

WE SERVICE ALL BRANDS!

- New/Refurbished Notebooks
- Accessories Notebook Drives
- Ac/Adapters Wireless Solutions
- Batteries Networking
- Parts/Memory LCD'S/Screens

YOUR MOBILE COMPUTING PRO!

BJ ASSOCIATES OF SAN ANTONIO

10823 GULF DALE, ISOM AND 281N NEAR THE AIRPORT
HOURS: 9-6 MON-FRI Carry in/On-site
EMERGENCY/AFTER HOURS SERVICE AVAILABLE

210-344-4563 San Antonio
800-366-7104 Metro and out of Area
www.bjassociates.com info@bjassociates.com



Computer Defense Department Antivirus Program Takes no Prisoners



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.pcp4u.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 47.

Every once and a while I feel that there is a product out there worth spreading the word about. An antivirus program by the name of NOD32, by ESET looks to be real winner in my book. I came about this little gem reading an antispayware newsletter, which I look at regularly at <<http://www.spywareinfo.com>>. I was tired of Norton's error messages and telling me that it found a virus or piece of spyware but could not fix it (even though I had the latest updates.) Symantec, the maker of Norton, was consistently sliding out of it's top notched position which it shared with McAfee for years. I tried McAfee for almost a year on a system that would not activate Norton (Symantec could not figure it out either and refunded my money.) While I was pretty confident in McAfee's ability to keep viruses at bay I was irritated at it's constant popups, that don't go away unless you acknowledge and respond to them, telling me that it had just done something wonderful like updated itself. What really irritated me about McAfee was the difficulty a user had to go through to find out what the virus definition dates were and manually update the virus definitions. Remember your antivirus software is only as good as it's last updates. I had heard good things about PC-Cillin by Trend Micro, Panda's Titanium Antivirus as well as a product called Bit Defender. I had used PC-Cillin for some time and was not totally confident in it. Now you must buy the suite of software that consist of antivirus, firewall, antispayware, antispam, etc. I find that most of these "all-in-one" programs tend to better at one rather than all of the task they claim to handle. I had also used AVG. While the price is right you usually get what you pay for and I can't afford a virus.

I feel that a good indication of any product is its willingness to give a free test drive. ESET gives you a 30 day, fully functional trial. I downloaded the trial from <<http://www.eset.com/download/trial.htm>>. Installation was painless with just a full questions. Not personal marketing question but simply questions about how you wanted your computer protected. After installation a reboot was required. There were no screens prompting you for further action after the reboot only NOD32's "eyeball" splash screen, quite ugly I might add. Then NOD32 goes to the task tray as a white and off green colored icon. By hovering your mouse over the icon you will see a small information popup telling the date of the virus signature – talk about service. If you have a broadband connection your virus definitions will be updated automatically.

By clicking on the icon you will get the menu in Figure 1. From there you can see that you have a list of items to play with. By clicking on any of the icons you will get a second menu (Figure 2) to the right allowing you to update, run a manual scan, or configure certain settings.

While it check for viruses, NOD32 also detects and eliminates common malware. I have found it to more effective than Norton. Norton claimed to find and eliminate malware since it came out with its 2004 version. However I found in my experience that it detected very little malware and was able to get rid of a very small percentage of what it did find. When NOD32 finds a virus a screen such as the one in Figure 3 pops up and alerts you and gives you the opportunity to quarantine, clean, delete or rename the virus

NOD32 does all that the big name antivirus applications do but it's claim to fame is that it uses a smaller footprint meaning that it takes less system resources. It also has excellent independent lab results against known and unknown viruses. ESET's anti-threat solution uses unique ThreatSense(TM) technology, which employs behavior-based analysis to detect malicious threats kept NOD32 users safe from the Zotob virus that struck many computers in August while it took

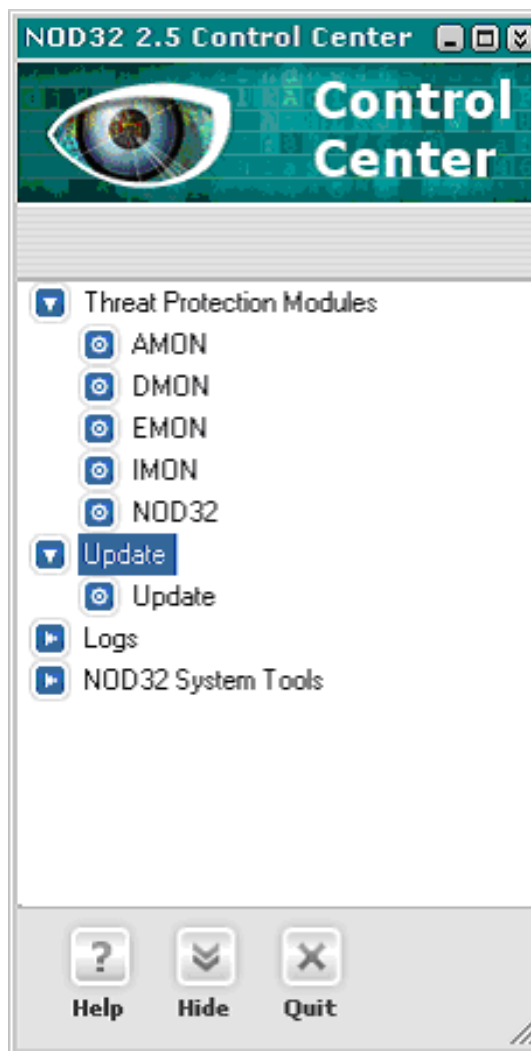


Figure 1

Symantec and McAfee hours to produce new virus definitions to combat Zotob.

NOD32 is made by ESET out of San Diego, CA. As mentioned, NOD32 is available for download at <<http://www.eset.com/download/trial.htm>>. You can also purchase it from the same website for \$39.00. NOD32 is not available in stores at this time.

PROS: fast, reliable, uses very little resources, updates are easy and easily identified.

CONS: Big eye on startup screen is not pretty – but then neither are viruses. Shows files that are not scannable.

I am not saying uninstall your present antivirus program and go out and buy NOD32. But if you are having “issues” with your present AV program or just don’t have a lot of faith in it NOD32 by Eset is definitely worth taking a look at.

Be safe and happy computing.

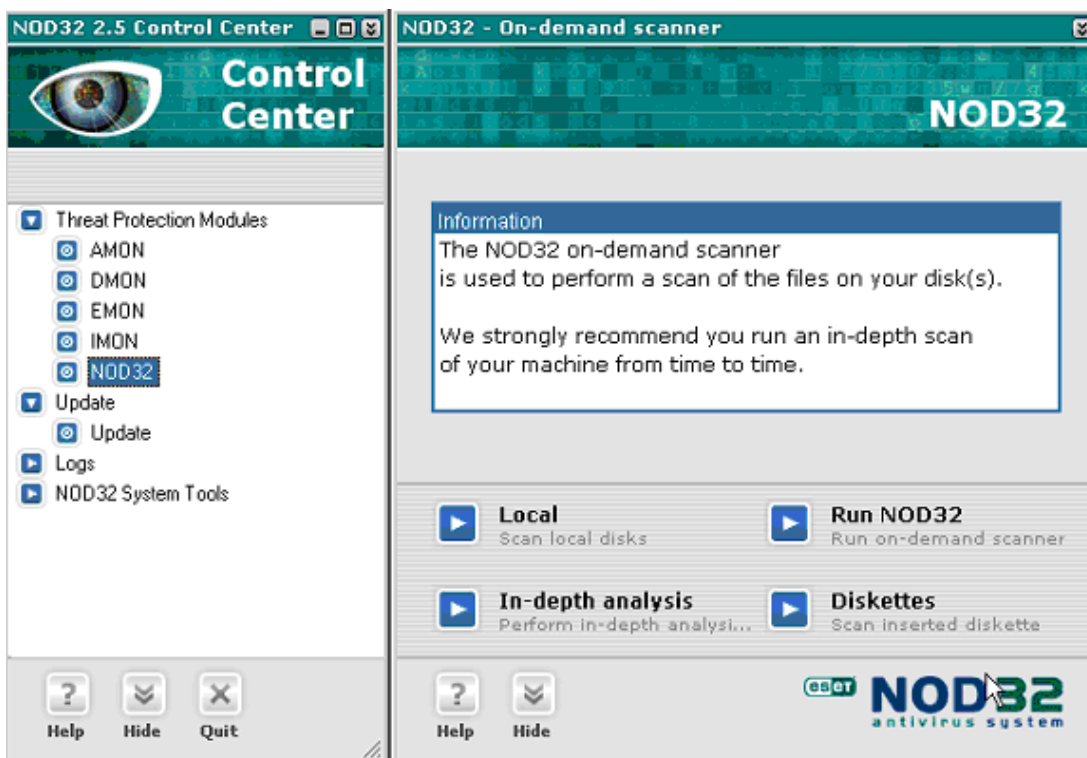


Figure 2

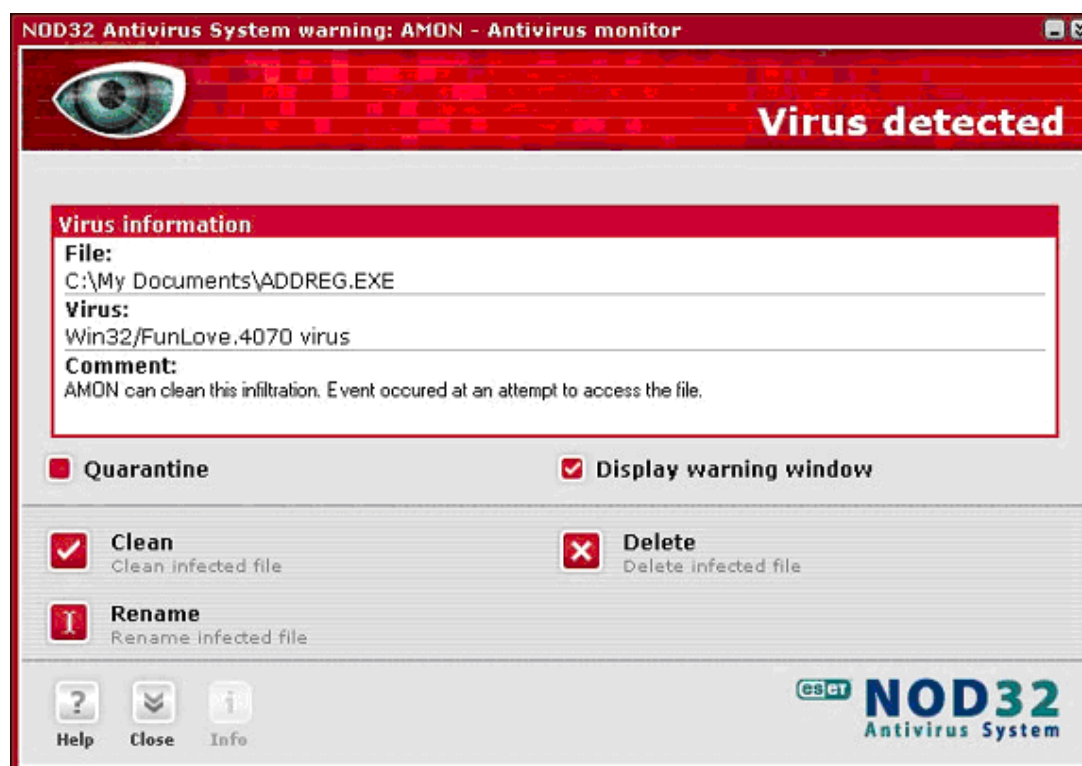


Figure 3



Preventative Maintenance Part V

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.

There are three reliable and free software programs which can help computer users eliminate potential problems. They are: Ad-Aware Personal SE <www.lavasoftusa.com/support/download/>, Spybot <www.safer-networking.org/en/download/index.html> and Microsoft AntiSpyware <www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.msp#x>.

Hard Drive Replacement

If your hard drive is failing and you need to replace it, mirror the old one with a new drive by

installing the new drive as a slave using a jumper on the back of it. Then run the mirror software, which will make an exact copy of the original drive. Mirroring software is made by Norton (\$70) and Acronis (\$50). Find them at, respectively: <http://www.symantec.com/sabu/ghost/ghost_personal/> and <<http://www.acronis.com/homecomputing/products/>>.

Scheduled Maintenance

Scheduling maintenance is an easy task in WinXP. XP uses a program called Check Disk (or Chkdsk). If you want Check Disk to fix errors automatically, click Start, My Computer, right-click the drive you want to check, and click Properties, Tools. Next click Check Now, check "Automatically fix file system errors" and "Scan for and attempt recovery of bad sectors," and then click Start. On the information window, click Yes and reboot the computer. When Check Disk completes its work, it reboots the computer. To schedule Disk Defragmenter, you need a password. When the computer reboots, it will ask for the password. The boot process will then stop until the next day, when you enter the password. You can't run Disk Defragmenter the same night as Check Disk, unless you want to get up and enter the password. It is best to run Check Disk before Disk Defragmenter. You'll have to do a little customization to make Disk Defragmenter run automatically. It has to run in a DOS window. To set it up click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Scheduled Tasks. Double-click Add Scheduled Task and click Next, Browse. Now navigate to Windows>System32 and click Defrag.exe>Open. In the Schedule Task Wizard, click Weekly, click Next, select the time and day, and click Next. Enter your username and Windows password twice, and then click Next. Check the box marked "Open advanced properties for this task when I click Finish," and click Finish. In the Run box, you will find the path to the defrag.exe file. At the end of this string, add a space and "c:" (without the quote marks) and click Apply. If you are asked for your password again, enter it and click OK, OK. The Disk Defragmenter will run in a DOS window. It analyzes the disk and reports on fragmentation and then defragments the drive. The DOS window disappears when defragmentation is complete. Again, you must have a Windows password to schedule Disk Defragmenter. If you don't have a password, establish one by clicking Start, Control Panel, double click User Accounts, click your account, and click "Create a password." Fill in the blanks, click Create Password, and close the windows.

Security Bulletins

Microsoft has a free e-mail notification service. The notifications are technical and sometimes difficult to understand. But at a minimum, they let you know there is a problem. The e-mail contains information on the issue, the products it affects, and how to correct the issue. Keep in mind that this service covers all Microsoft products. There is no way to limit the bulletins to the software installed on your computer. Go here to sign up: <http://register.microsoft.com/subscription/subscribeme.asp?ID=135>

These free bulletins generally come out in midweek. If you have trouble grasping the Microsoft bulletins, you can check news sites for additional information such as Google News. Click on the Sci-Tech button on the left. There you'll find news of Microsoft's bulletins, dangerous viruses and other critical topics.

Security Fixes

It's not easy to stay current with Microsoft's security updates. Two or three alerts are issued weekly. The company has a free program to remove some of the confusion. Called the Microsoft Baseline Security Analyzer, it checks your system for vulnerabilities. It is available for WinXP, but not Win98/Me. In addition to Windows, it checks Office 2000/2002, Internet Explorer, and Outlook Express. This program gives you a read out of flaws it finds, and then recommends corrective action.

SPAM

There are ways to fight spam. The Network Abuse Clearinghouse has a mil-forwarding service <www.abuse.net/howwork.html> for forwarding a complaint to the system managers of the spammer's Internet Service provider. This service also has a sister site <www.lax.us.spam.abuse.net/userhelp> that contains tips and help for tracing and reporting spam.

Shutdown Problems

If you have shutdown problems with an older computer, it could be caused by one of the following situations. One cause might be dust buildup. Proper cooling requires unobstructed air passages inside the computer. If you have never opened the computer, you might well have a dust buildup. The fans in the computer draw air in, usually through the front, and exhaust it through the back or side. Dust can build up in the case vents. To fix this, buy a can of air at a computer store. Unplug the computer and open the case. Ground yourself on the computer's frame--static electricity can kill your computer's circuitry. Using the air, you should blow out the vents from the inside and

the fan atop your microprocessor. You may also have fans on your chipset, which will be located near the microprocessor on your motherboard, and your video card, if you have one. Blow those out, too, along with the rest of the computer's parts. Dust buildup could conceivably cause a heat problem on the motherboard or other circuitry.

Once you get it cleaned up, turn the computer on and check that all of the fans are working. Remember to check the fan in the power supply. That is located in the top rear of the computer. A second cause could be airflow. Be sure the ribbon cables that attach the drives to the motherboard are not blocking the airflow. Eyeball the path from the front vent to the microprocessor. If a ribbon cable is in that path, turn off the computer and push it aside. If you still have these problems, look for a hardware failure. Watch for any error messages, especially if you are getting a blue screen. Copy down any numbers and check them on the Microsoft site (<http://www.microsoft.com>).

Finally, you could also have a virus. It could cause shutdowns. Be sure that your anti-virus software is up-to-date. Shutdown problems can be difficult to diagnose because of the many possible causes. Here are some more possible solutions: 1. Check for a bad sound file. Assuming you have system sounds enabled on your computer, you could have a bad sound file. Click Start, Control Panel and double-click Sounds and Audio Devices. Now select the Sounds tab. Under Program Events, scroll down to Windows Logoff and click it and then click the down arrow under sounds, select None, and click Apply, OK. 2. Because something that starts automatically could be causing a problem, click Start, Run and enter "msconfig" without the quotes and click OK. Now click the Startup tab and note any boxes that are not checked.

Next select the General tab and click Selective Startup. Clear Load Startup Items and click Apply, OK. Use the computer as you normally do. Then try the shutdown. If it shuts down properly, your problem is probably one of the items in the Startup tab. Restore them one-by-one until you identify the culprit. You can probably get by without that item starting automatically. Are you getting an error message when you try to shut down? If it references a program, that is the one to look for in Startup. Try disabling that one. 3. You may have a process running in the background that is causing the problem. Check your processes by clicking Ctrl+Alt+Del. Click Task Manager and the Processes tab. Now try ending the processes one-by-one before shutdown.

Most of the processes are parts of Windows and should not be causing the problem. Others belong to other programs. If an external process is causing the problem, contact the publisher of the program for help. Use Process Explorer to be sure you're identifying everything that is running. Process Explorer is a free program. Get it at: <http://www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/freeware/procexp.shtml>.

Again, if you get an error message, look for program names. If that program is among the processes, end it. 4. Sometimes, a bad driver can cause hangs. A driver is a program that tells Windows how to interact with a piece of equipment, for instance, a printer. If you have installed anything recently, check the manufacturer's Web site for an updated driver. If one is there, download and install it. If no driver is available, try uninstalling the new equipment. Should that cure the problem, get in touch with the manufacturer. 5. Did you recently remove a program? If programs are not deleted properly, they can leave behind files that cause problems. Programs should always be deleted through Add/Remove Programs. Click Start,

Control Panel. Double-click Add/ Remove programs. Find the program in the list and remove it. If a file is missing and Windows cannot uninstall the program, reinstall it. Then go to Add/Remove Programs and delete it. 6.

Is this a recent problem? If so, try going back a few days with System Restore. Click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, System Restore. Select "Restore my computer to an earlier time" and follow the wizard. 7. If nothing else works, try the Windows Shutdown & Restart Center. It has many tips at: <http://aumha.org/win4/a/shutdown.htm>. Also, Microsoft has information at: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;308029>.

Usually, when WinXP fails to shut down, it restarts automatically. It displays an error message on a blue screen, but the automatic restart happens too quickly to read it. If you have this problem, turn off the automatic restart by clicking Start. Next right-click My Computer, click Properties, select the Advanced tab. Under Startup and Recovery, click Settings. In the System Failure section, clear the check mark from Automatically Restart and click OK twice.

Now you can read the error message, copy any likely phrases or error numbers, and search for them in Microsoft's Knowledge Base <http://support.microsoft.com/>. There have been a few shutdown problems in XP. At least one was repaired in a Windows Update. Be sure that your copy of Windows is updated. In Internet Explorer, click Tools, Windows Update and follow the prompts. If you are using an old Nvidia video card, that could be the problem.

There may be a driver available on the Windows Update page. Also, check Nvidia's site at <http://www.nvidia.com/content/drivers/drivers.asp>. Processes that take too long to close also can cause this problem. By default, running processes are given 20 seconds to close. If necessary, you can give the processes more time. However, doing that requires a change in the Registry. That is the super-critical part of Windows. Before making changes there, you should back it up. To make the change, click Start, Run, enter "regedit" (without the quotes) in the box, and click OK.

Now look for HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop. In the right panel, find WaitToKillAppTimeout and double-click it. In Value Data, you will find the number 20000 which is 20 seconds expressed in milliseconds. Now change that to 25000, click OK, close Registry Editor, and reboot. If the problem continues, add more time in two-second increments. If you still have a problem, broaden your Knowledge Base search. WinXP shutdown issues are addressed at http://snipurl.com/shutdown_XP.



Senior Comp

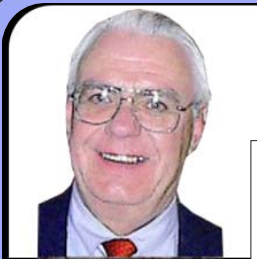
A program of Seniors teaching Seniors

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.



Fishing with Microsoft CRM

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

I use Microsoft's CRM to keep track of my customers, my appointments, and the work I do for my customers. I also use it to go 'fishing'. That's fishing with an 'F', NOT a 'ph'. I attend a lot of networking events; breakfasts, luncheons, mixers, committees, etc. I collect a lot of business cards at these events. When I do, I enter them into Microsoft CRM. I include a field for the organization where I met them such as the North San Antonio Chamber, Friday Networking Luncheon, SAMA (San Antonio Manufacturers Association), etc. This field, leadsourcecode, is not on the default Contact form but I added it via System Customization. On the screen I have it displayed as 'Source'. It is a picklist field so I have added the organizations I frequent to that picklist. I also added a new field, Initial_Venue, to the database and added it as well to the Contact form. These two fields give me a lot of flexibility. For instance, when I meet someone at the Friday Networking Luncheon, I select that from the picklist of the Source field. Since that pretty much says it all, I leave the Initial_Venue field empty. On the other hand, if I meet someone at the North San Antonio Chamber networking breakfast, I select North San Antonio Chamber from the Source picklist and enter 'networking breakfast' in the Initial_Venue field. If I meet someone at the Technology Committee, I enter that in the Initial_Venue field. If I meet someone at a one time event whose organization isn't on my Source picklist, I just enter it all in the Initial_Venue field.

So, now I have a new contact in my CRM database and I've entered the source and venue of our meeting. Whoopee! Now what? Well, I've set up a Workflow rule in Microsoft CRM that is attached to every new contact entered into the database. This rule automatically checks the information in the Source and Initial_Venue fields and if there is appropriate information, it sends the new contact an e-mail, automatically. The e-mail template looks something like this:

Dear {!contact:salutation;},

I enjoyed seeing you at the {!contact:leadsourcecode/@name; } {!contact:CFSInitial_Venue;}. I look forward to seeing you again at future meetings. Please feel to contact me at any if I can be of any service to you or {!account:name;}.

Larry

The e-mail template automatically inserts the contact's name, !contact:salutation, from the database. So if the persons 'real' name is Jonathon but he goes by 'Bucky', your e-mail will be addressed to 'Dear Bucky'. Next is the statement 'I enjoyed seeing you that the ...'. Here the !contact:leadsourcecode field is inserted followed by !contact:CFSInitial_Venue. This way the e-mail says something like 'I enjoyed meeting you at the North San Antonio Chamber networking breakfast.' The last line of the message includes the company name (!account:name) as well to further personalize it.

Now you may think that sending such an automated 'personalized' message is a bit phony. However, I realize that when I enter a new contact in my database and include the appropriate information, the message will be automatically sent. I consciously make the decision to reach out to the contact. I just save myself a few steps by letting CRM do a bit of the work for me. When I send out such messages, it's a bit like going fishing. You throw out your line and see if you get a bite. Sometimes the new contact doesn't respond. Most often they will respond and an e-mail dialog will occur which can often result in a new relationship being built. I've made a lot of friends 'fishing' this way.

At some of the meetings I attend, I use CRM Mobile on my Pocket PC to record the folks attending that I already have in my database. I include a code in the Description field of the Contact record that indicates that they are members of a particular group. For instance I include 'FNL' for Friday Networking Luncheon, 'NSACC' for North SA Chamber, etc. That evening, I do an Advanced Find in CRM to search for records whose Description field contains the appropriate code. Then I go through the list and deselect those contacts that were actually at the meeting that day. Those left on the list will receive a message stating how distraught I was that they were not at the function that day. That gives me another opportunity to 'ping' them and let them know I was thinking of them, noticed their absence, and gives them a nudge to attend the next time. I get a lot of feedback that builds relationships, and a number of these folks make an effort to attend the next time.

Come on! Let's go fishing.

New Class Starting

Surf and Search - A new beginners' class to explore the internet. How to search for long-lost cousins, how to research Aunt Jemima's antique tiara or how to find just about anything on the internet (including yourself). While the class will be largely "Google-based" we will also look at many other options and will be sharing our own favorite sites.

Pre-registration is required. Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700



Firefox, Graphics Standard, Bloggers

Collected by Pim Borman,

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

As you should know by now, Mozilla Firefox is the up-and-coming Internet browser that is giving Internet Explorer a run for its money. It is small, fast, and free and is not subject to the many malware vulnerabilities that Internet Explorer suffers from. That does not mean that it is immune to attacks, and recently a few weak spots were identified in Firefox 1.0.3 that could allow attackers to take over your computer and wreck havoc. Thanks to the fact that Firefox is an Open Source program, many volunteers immediately set out to plug the hole, and in less than no time Firefox made a new version available, Firefox 1.0.4 that you can easily download (4.7 MB) from <www.mozilla.org>. You can also order a CD with Firefox and Thunderbird (email program) for \$6.95 or the CD together with a printed Firefox Guidebook for \$13.95. The updated version installs right over the current version on your computer.

According to PC Magazine (6/7/05), Firefox now has 6.7% market share. The browser is almost fully compatible with Internet Explorer. The only instance where I could not use Firefox, not surprisingly, was when I wanted to download Windows update files.

New Web Graphics Standard

The forthcoming version 1.1 of Firefox is expected to support the new Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) standard for Web graphics, well ahead of Internet Explorer. PC Magazine (6/7/05) describes SVG as a "twodimensional graphics enhancer." Accordingly, while "current Web graphics are just a bunch of pixels," SVG-based graphics are "dynamic and interactive." This means that you can directly zoom in on an image, such as a map, whereas with current graphics, zooming in requires the server to create another map while the user waits. Interestingly, this technology has already been available for mobile phones since 2001.

Plug-ins for current Firefox versions before 1.1 from Adobe and others are available from the Mozilla Web site but are reported to be unstable. Better wait for the forthcoming Firefox upgrade.

Bloggers, Who Are They?

We discussed blogs and bloggers during our May meeting (see the minutes later in this newsletter). Blogs, short for Web logs, are intended to be online diaries. The vast majority of these blogs are of a personal nature, with entries of little interest except to the author and maybe a few close friends or relatives. Only a small number are of general interest and enjoy a wide readership. That raises the question: why would anyone want to bother?

In a commentary about blogging by Mark Lawson in The Guardian titled "It's uncut, leftwing and Pooterish" <<http://snipurl.com/pooterism>> he states: "Although the word blog suggests attitude and subversion, it's really just a hi-tech kind of diary and carries the identical risk of Pooterism." The British have a funny way of putting things, so I checked several online dictionaries for the meaning of pooterism. No mention of the word anywhere, but a dictionary of slang <<http://snipurl.com/poot1>> and a dictionary of neologisms <<http://snipurl.com/f3kg>> both referred to pooter as a contraction for computer, suggesting that pooterism refers to a connection with computers. However, elsewhere I found a reference to Pooterism (capitalized) as "taking yourself grotesquely seriously." If Mr. Lawson thinks bloggers are Pooterish, maybe we can accuse him of being Snooterish?

Everyone shows a constant need to express himself in some way or other. Prehistoric men painted sketches of animals on cave walls for no special reason. Small children draw familiar objects as soon as they can hold a crayon, and many artistic people, be they painters,

musicians, dancers or writers, practice their art with little or no expectation of reward or recognition. We sing in the shower, wear a cap backwards, get a tattoo or a Tammy Bakker makeover, or display bumper stickers. Most of all, we all make conversation, and we talk to ourselves, sometimes out loud, but usually just in our minds. Some of us like to express our thoughts in writing, and the Blogosphere provides just one more outlet for our musings. Some bloggers may indeed suffer from Pooterism. But as one blogger comments in the BBC Online Magazine: "... I think the problem with your method of understanding blogs is that you've lumped them all together, when there are definite 'genres' of blogs. The loosest definition I can think of for a blog is a 'regularly updated webpage containing (often tendentious) information on a topic.' By that definition though, the BBC is a blog too ..." <<http://snipurl.com/bbcmag>>

Come to think of it, the only reason I have been writing these columns for years is that I enjoy doing so. They might well have been called blogs if the word had been coined at the time. James Derk actually collects his weekly syndicated newspaper columns on his blog site, www.cyberdads.com/blog.htm. So who are all these bloggers? To misquote Pogo: "We has met the bloggers, and they is us."

Grab Bag

PC Magazine (4/26/2005) lists their choices for the best 100 Web sites, as well as 100 undiscovered sites. Browsing through the undiscovered sites, a few caught my eye.

Amazon's A9.com (www.A9.com) is a metasearch engine that lets you search everything from Google to the Movie Database. I tried it on "pooterism" and found an article that describes a Victorian satire, George Grossmith's The Diary of a Nobody. It is described as "the hilarious depiction of a hapless bank clerk, Charles Pooter, that mocked the obsessive domesticity, philistine suburbanism and pompous aspirations of feminised males." I have added the brand-new beta version of A9.com to my Bookmarks.

I had heard of Flickr (www.flickr.com) in connection with a program that allows adding pictures to blogs on blog sites such as Blogger. I tried it and it works quite well. It allows you to edit and post a blog with the inclusion of a picture to Blogger or several other blog sites. I find it easier to use than Google's Hello/Picasa program, and Flickr gives better control over the layout of the blog. Flickr also serves as an online storage area for your pictures so that you can share them with others. There are several other links worth exploring, but the choice is a matter of taste. You might check this issue of PC Magazine (4/26/05) and see for yourself.



No FREE Technical Support! (Part Two)

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane uses a PC. He wants someone to show him how to get work done with Linux. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com.>

Last month, we talked about the pitfalls of providing free technical support. But we all know that in turning down these pleas for assistance, we run the risk of coming across as total jerks. So, this month, we'll talk about some polite ways to turn down these no good free loaders!

RESPONSE #1: "I'm sorry. There's really nothing I can do."

This response is handy when the client wishes to do something with their machine that it wasn't designed to do. For instance, I just had a call from someone who wanted to run the latest DirectX version of some PC game they'd purchased for their kids. They were constantly getting an error message during installation. The REAL problem was they wanted to run this on a business class system with a 32MB video card. The minimum requirement for the game was a much more robust nVidia or ATI graphics chipset with 128MB of RAM. Either spend \$200 on the proper video card, or spend \$40 on the Xbox version!

RESPONSE #2: "This is beyond me."

I've had technically savvy friends use this one to pass along their free loaders to me, so I know it works. This response requires you to be brave because you come across as not being as competent as they believed you to be. This can hurt long term potential business, but it will certainly have the added benefit of stopping the free technical support calls as well! It can also be a good way to refer these individuals to local tech shops or others who need their business.

RESPONSE #3: "My services are exclusive to my employer."

I've had the electricians that worked on my house use this one. I asked to have an additional outlet installed on the side, and they told me to call the office and get an official quote from their boss! It's a great excuse to use if you work for someone else in the technical support industry. It's also really hard to dispute and most people will "respect" your loyalty to your employer.

RESPONSE #4: "Wow, that'll cost you!"

This one hinges on you convincing them that it'll cost just slightly MORE to repair or fix their problems than to purchase a brand new system. This response is GREAT if you happen to be the one willing to sell them that new system.

RESPONSE #5: "Do you mind if we talk about [insert professional service that the individual provides themselves] first?"

This one is good for those times when urgent requests for help come from individuals such as doctors or lawyers. It can be really fun to watch them squirm when they're asked to provide free services that they normally get paid in excess of \$200 per hour to perform.

RESPONSE #6: "We aren't allowed to work on personal systems at work."

This response is used when you encounter other employees in the work place that have decided that corporate technical

support is their own free helpline. Again, this one is easy to support. Just show them the company's acceptable use policy and gently explain how this further applies to the use of your time and the appropriateness of them bringing their personal machine into the workplace. You can also scare the crap out of them (especially if you work for the government) by implying there's a policy that states that any personal computing equipment brought into the facility becomes the property of that organization. We used that one in the military ALL the time.

RESPONSE #7: "I can't fix this without the software/recovery discs."

This is useful in a LOT of situations. First, you can use it as an anti-piracy software tool. If you feel this person doesn't have the disc, or a legitimate license for using the software, this can solve several problems simultaneously. It can also be used to divert them back to DELL, Compaq/HP, or whoever they actually bought the system from in the first place. It's certainly not your fault if they didn't keep track of the CDs/DVDs that came with their computer. I once had a client tell me that he'd heard that you could only load software one time, so he threw all his CDs away after installing them the first time. That was an expensive mistake!

RESPONSE #8: "Look, this is what I do for a living."

Sometimes, they don't realize the problems they're having are the ones you get paid to solve. You can use this as an opportunity to turn them into a paying customer. You can advise them of your business hours and when might be a good time to drop their system off. You can also make an appointment to come see them at their location so that you can provide them with your full attention.

RESPONSE #9: "We offer a service plan that covers this type of support."

You can use this response as well to turn free loaders into profitable clients. It all goes back to setting a value on your services and honoring that value. Most technical firms have some type of pay-as-you-go phone support or a service plan. It only makes sense that you have the same arrangement if you are providing similar services and support.

RESPONSE #10: "No."

This is the toughest, but you don't need to provide any excuses. You don't need to feel guilty. They aren't paying customers, so you don't owe them anything. When you go home at the end of the day, you may be absolutely SICK of looking at computers. You're entitled to down time as well. Don't be ashamed of taking it.

SUMMARY

If you find yourself providing a constant stream of free technical support and need to escape, I hope you find these responses useful in the future. If you suddenly see yourself on the other side, as being one of those annoying people that always ASK for free technical support, you need to wake up. Offer to pay

for these services up front. If it's something little that most technicians can fix in a couple of clicks, you'll probably get it free anyway. If you constantly abuse the good will (and wallets) of technical support gurus, we'll go away permanently. And if you find my number and ask for technical support, I'm going to need your credit card number before we can go any further.

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac Widgets

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

Probably the most useful new feature of OS X 10.4 (Tiger) is the Dashboard, a collection of desktop mini-applications (called widgets), that appear on the desktop and then disappear when you're done with them. Dashboard is permanently on and is accessible through the Dock. You click its icon to bring up the widgets. Tiger is bundled with over a dozen widgets, but third-party developers are already creating a flood of new ones. These new widgets are being made available online from Apple's website. I looked on the web and found a list of some popular widgets available for download. For your benefit, since you're reading the electronic version of this document on-line, I've included the hyperlinks to the download in this article.

1. **Package Tracker** (<http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/26514>) is a handy little widget that lets you track UPS, FedEx, or DHL shipments. Click the shipping service name and then type in your package tracking number to get the latest information on where your package is and when it will arrive.

2. **Yahoo Local Traffic** (<http://www.webrankinfo.com/english/se-news/topic-4353.htm>) widget provides you with an online traffic report so you can avoid getting in a jam on your way to work.

3. **8 Ball** (<http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/18144>) can make all the hard decisions for you. What's in your future? Ask the magic 8 ball!

4. **Wikipedia** (<http://www.whatsinthehouse.com/widgets>) is a rich resource for information on numerous topics. Just type in your search term, and your result will be displayed right in your Wikipedia widget. You can change languages or even opt for a random article by clicking on the question mark to the right of the search field.

5. **Lyric Tracker** (<http://www.imac.com/downloads/dashboard/music/lyrictracker.html>) allows you to search for the lyrics to your favorite songs.

6. **Dash Monitors** (<http://www.gauchosoft.com/Software/Dash%20Monitors/Download/>) gives you the status on your CPU, memory, network, and disk I/O performance. You can choose between text, simple, or a graphical views of what's happening on your Mac.

7. **MacDailyNews** (<http://www.macdailynews.com/>) gives you a constant update on what's going on in the Mac world without ever having to leave your dashboard.

8. **My Yahoo** (<http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/26799>) widget lets you access headlines from your My

Yahoo selections and provides a handy Yahoo search box. You'll also get RSS subscription headlines displayed and you'll know when you have more mail.

9. **Password Generator** (<http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/18043>) will create complex passwords for you with the click of the "generate" button.

10. **Positive Quote of the Day** (<http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/games/positivequoteoftheday.html>) lets you get your day off to a great start with a quotation from some of history's greatest writers and thinkers.

11. **Kennedy Space Center Video Feeds** (<http://download.zicos.com/news.php/n/170617/>) lets you keep an eye on the latest shuttle mission.

12. **This Day in History** (<http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/26604&vid=200596>) provides facts about what happened on any given day.

13. **The Weather Widget** found at www.accuweather.com displays your current local weather as well as a five-day forecast.

14. **Scoreboard** (<http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/17995>) shows you the scores of the day or lets you track a particular team.

15. **SysStat** (<http://www.dashboardlineup.com/article.php/20050527080207471>) is another utility that lets you easily view CPU usage, network info, load averages, memory usage, and your top three processes.

Remember, new widgets are coming out everyday. Just drop by the Apple website to see the latest and greatest offerings from the Macintosh community.



CSS IV – Stylesheets the lazy way

The Lazy Webmaster

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!

This is the last of four columns about cascading style sheets. Last month I promised that I would explain how to lay out your Web pages using CSS, but I lied. Instead, I'm going to point you to some online utilities that will do most of the hard work for you.

Using tables to define your layout is old-fashioned and is being degraded. Someday it will not work at all. CSS is the modern way (at least this week) to lay out Web pages.

I originally learned HTML by studying other people's designs and viewing their source code. CSS layout is best learned the same way: start off by deconstructing and adapting other people's layouts and gradually work up to creating your own from scratch.

There are several great Web sites that offer basic CSS layouts:

[<glish.com/css/>](http://glish.com/css/)

This site is called "CSS Layout for Fun and Profit." It has x layouts that you are free to copy and adapt: 3 columns, the holy grail; 2 columns, ALA style; 4 columns, all fluid; 3 columns, all fluid; and static width and centered nested float. This site also has links to excellent tips and tutorials.

[<www.bluerobot.com/web/layouts/>](http://www.bluerobot.com/web/layouts/)

This site is called "The Layout Reservoir" and offers three CSS templates: 2 columns - left menu; 2 columns - right menu; and 3 columns - flanking menus.

[<www.maxdesign.com.au/presentation/page_layouts/index.cfm>](http://www.maxdesign.com.au/presentation/page_layouts/index.cfm)

Max Design has too many layouts to list and the added advantage of including tutorials on how to implement each design.

[<www.inknoise.com/experimental/layoutomatic.php>](http://www.inknoise.com/experimental/layoutomatic.php)

This site is called "Layout-o-matic." You fill out a simple online form that specifies the basic layout (full page; two columns (left or right sidebar) or three columns); the width of the entire page; the space between elements; and the padding inside the blocks. Push a button and the CSS is written for you. Also check out their "List-o-matic (to generate dynamic menu bars) and rollover-o-matic. Way cool!

Doctype:

HTML 4.01 Strict

Page Alignment:

☒ Full ☐ Centered ☐ Left

Min Width: ☐ px ☒ em ☐ %

Max Width: ☐ px ☒ em ☐ %

☐ Header:

☐ Left Column:

☒ Center Column: (width generated automatically)

Background-color:

☐ Right Column:

☐ Footer:

[<www.csscreator.com/version2/pagelayout.php>](http://www.csscreator.com/version2/pagelayout.php)

CSS Creator is another fill-in-the-blank layout maker. See an example of the interface at figure 1.

[<www.benmeadowcroft.com/webdev/>](http://www.benmeadowcroft.com/webdev/)

Ben Meadowcroft has some unusual layouts: I especially like the one he calls "Pro and con," two columns overlapping a central image. Note that the actual stylesheets are in a zip file.

If you want more than this, search for CSS layouts and you'll find hundreds.

Now, I don't want to make this sound easier than it is. In order to use these templates you will need to have a pretty solid knowledge of HTML and the courage to experiment.

Another option is to use CSS software.

[<www.bradsoft.com/topstyle/>](http://www.bradsoft.com/topstyle/)

I've been experimenting with a program called TopStyle, which was developed by the same guy who developed Homesite, the HTML editor I use. You can have a look at the interface at fig-

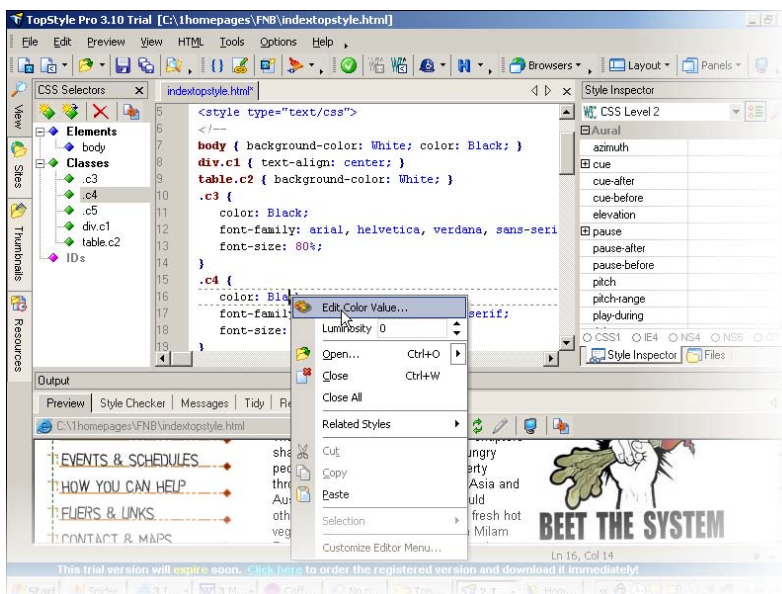
ure 2 or, better yet, download a trial version that is good for 20 uses before they ask for \$74. The program includes a CSS tutorial and complete reference. In figure 2, I took a Web page that I had designed using straight HTML and asked TopStyle to convert it to a CSS stylesheet. You can peek at the results in the top center window. TopStyle integrates seamlessly with Homesite, Dreamweaver, Cold Fusion and Front Page. All of these programs have some CSS functionality, but TopStyle is much more robust. This looks like it will be a superb program, both to simplify the creation of stylesheets and to learn more about how to use them.

[<www.coffeecup.com/stylesheet-maker/>](http://www.coffeecup.com/stylesheet-maker/)

CoffeeCup offers good, basic software. Their Style Sheet Maker is available as a free trial download, or you can buy it for \$34.

There are lots of other programs out there, most of them available in free trial versions. Search for CSS software.

I heartily encourage everyone to try stylesheets. They will save you time, produce more elegant code and will have a longer shelf life than other coding methods.



GLOBAL TRAVEL TRENDS

We're Going Places!

Global Travel Trends has designed a fun, work from home, Associate Travel Agent Program, to provide an opportunity for people all over the world, a way for them to change their lives for the better.

Take advantage of tremendous savings when planning a family vacation or a romantic trip for two by visiting our website at www.greatratetravel.gttrends.net and click on the "Travel Center" button.

Rudy & Debra Flores

Associate Travel Agents

(832) 259-9910

(832) 372-4527

greatratetravel@sbcglobal.net

*** Cruise for \$40 a day**

*** All-Inclusive Resorts for \$30-\$50 a day**

*** Upgrades on Flights, Car Rentals and Hotels**

STOP PAYING RETAIL! BECOME A TRAVEL AGENT! SAVE & EARN!

TO LEARN MORE, WATCH THIS MOVIE:

www.gttmovie.com/greatratetravel

Adobe Photoshop Web Design

Paul Vaughn, Alamo PC

Paul Vaughn is a freelance graphic artist, writer and web designer who has yet to object to anything smart. If you would like to see the Graphics Guy address a specific topic, email Paul Vaughn at <paulv@mac.com>.

Living in the Internet Age is a pretty remarkable experience. There is a wealth of information just a click away and anyone can publish his or her own web pages. Many Internet Service Providers even give you free web hosting space with your account. Of course, the problem is that few people actually know how to create a web page from scratch. This month we take a look at how my favorite application, Adobe Photoshop, can help you create your web page without knowing a lick of code.

The first step is to design and build your web page graphic. You can do this in Photoshop or you can use an illustration program like Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia Freehand or Corel Draw and then import it into Photoshop. Size the graphic to fill a standard-sized browser screen, about 800 x 600 pixels (Fig. 1). This month's example was put together in Photoshop with a photograph and some text. I also added some capsule shapes behind each line of text to use as a rollover, a graphic that will change interactively when the cursor is over that menu item on the web page (Fig. 2).

Once you have your web page design, you need to divide it up so that some areas will respond a mouse click. This process is called Slicing and Photoshop gives you several tools for doing it. In the Tools palette there is the Slice Tool below the Magic Wand (looks like a knife); but because the design of this page is pretty simple, I can use the New Layer Based Slice command from the Layer menu (Fig. 3). Click on each of the capsule layers and repeat the command. You will now see a grid showing the sliced areas of the image (Fig. 4). In the final web page, each cell of the resulting table will contain a separate piece of the composite graphic.

You can only do have of this process in Photoshop itself, now it's time to take the image into Photoshop's companion program, Adobe ImageReady. This app gives you the rest of the tools to build your interactive web page and is included when you install Photoshop. To move the document into ImageReady, click the Edit in ImageReady button at the bottom of the Tools palette.

ImageReady looks and feels a lot like Photoshop. Make sure that ImageReady is showing the slices (View > Show > Slices) and select the top slice with the Slice Select Tool (on the Tools palette it looks like a knife with an arrow cursor next to it). Note that only the slice you are selected on is shown correctly, the others displayed lighter so you can tell what you're working on.

Pull up the Slice palette (Window > Slice) and you can fill in the information about that slice (Fig. 5). In the Name field, replace the default name with a more descriptive name, in this case

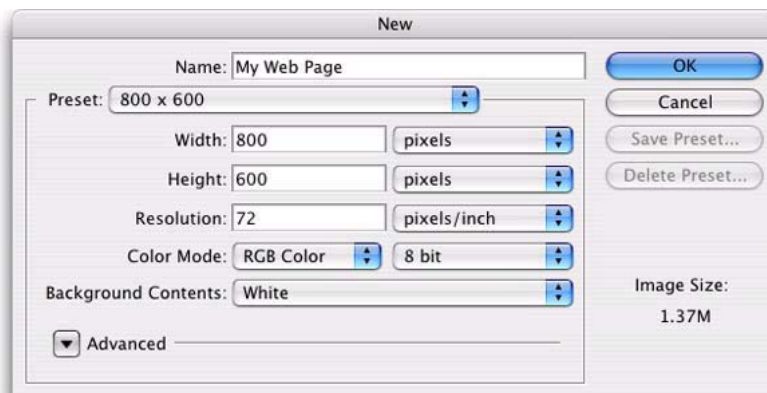


Figure 1

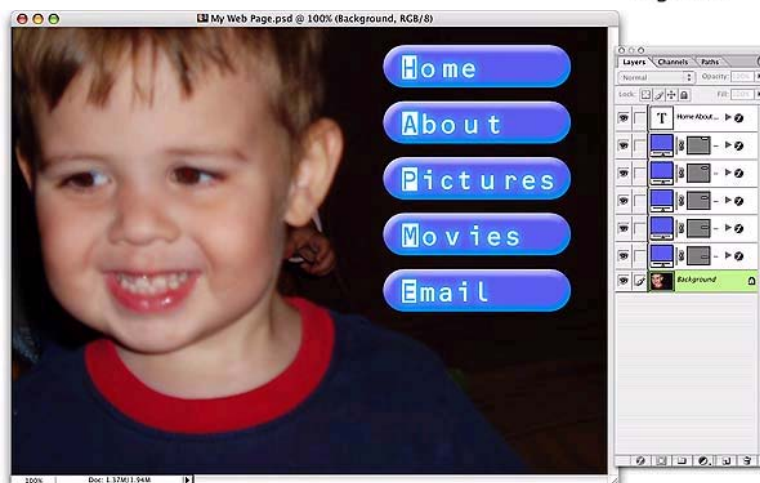


Figure 2

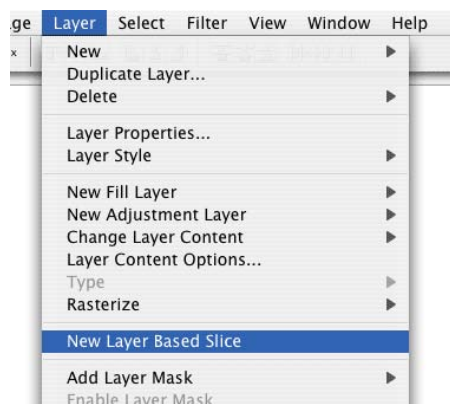


Figure 3



Figure 4

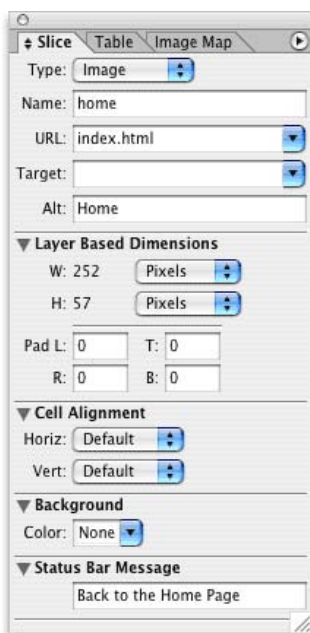


Figure 5

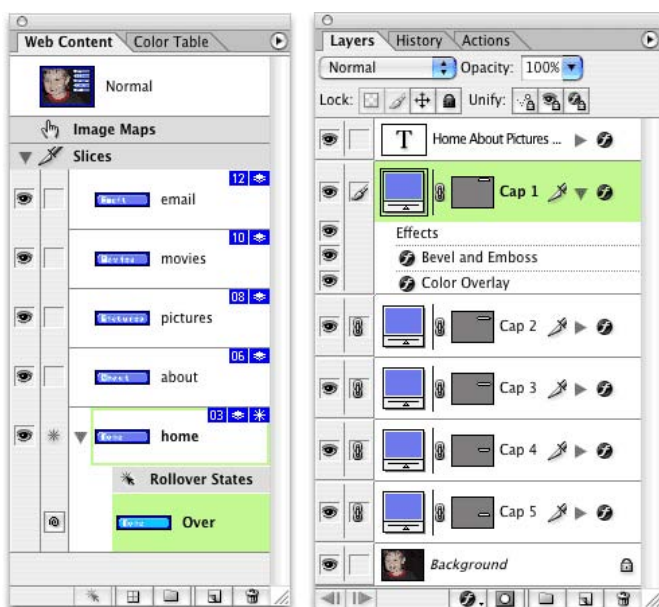


Figure 6

'home'. It is best to avoid any spaces or special characters. For the URL, type the web address of the page to which you want to create a link. It can be just the filename of an HTML web page (in this case index.html), or it can be a full address starting with http://. Target you don't need unless you are using Frames or want the link to open in another browser window. Next to Alt, type in the text you would want seen if the viewer turned off the graphics on their browser or if they are on a slow connection. The last part to fill out is Status Bar Message. This text will be seen in the Status bar of some browsers. Repeat this for each button in the document.

To make the button change when the mouse moves over it, you need to use a combination of the Web Content and Layers palettes (Fig. 6). In the Web Content palette, select a slice and click the Create Rollover State button at the bottom (it looks like a document). By default this state is called Over. This will be what the button looks like when the mouse moves over the button. You can now make changes to the Layer Styles in the Layers palette; you can also alter which layers are visible and even vary their opacity. For this button's Over State I just added a simple Color Overlay layer style to give the button a lit up appearance.

Click the Create Rollover State button again to add a Down State. For this Down State, what the button looks like when the mouse button is depressed, I changed the direction of the Bevel and Emboss layer style I already used to down instead of up. ImageReady remembers the differences between the layer properties for each of the different states. Again, repeat these steps for each button. If you need to change things in the normal state, click Normal at the top of the Web Content palette.

Each part of the image now needs to be saved in a web compatible format like GIF or JPG. To determine the specifics for each portion of the image, you can use the Optimize palette. For this example, I selected JPEG Medium from the Preset pop-up, but you can adjust the setting to your taste. You can mix and match file formats for different sections of an image depending on if one will give you a smaller file or if you need a special feature of one format like animation in a GIF.

If you want to preview your file as a web page, you can click the Preview in Browser button at the bottom of the Tools palette (it will have your default web browser's icon). Or you can select your favorite browser from the list under File > Preview In. Once you are satisfied with the page, select File > Save Optimized As. Choose Format: HTML and Images, Settings: Default Settings and Slices: All Slices and click Save.

You can now open the HTML page in any browser. The buttons change when the mouse moves over or clicks them and the links will work. To put the files on your web site, use your favorite FTP program. If you are already using Adobe Photoshop, this technique leverages knowledge you already have and makes Photoshop and ImageReady an indispensable part of your web creation toolbox. Remember, your ISP gives you free web space, but it's only free if you use it.



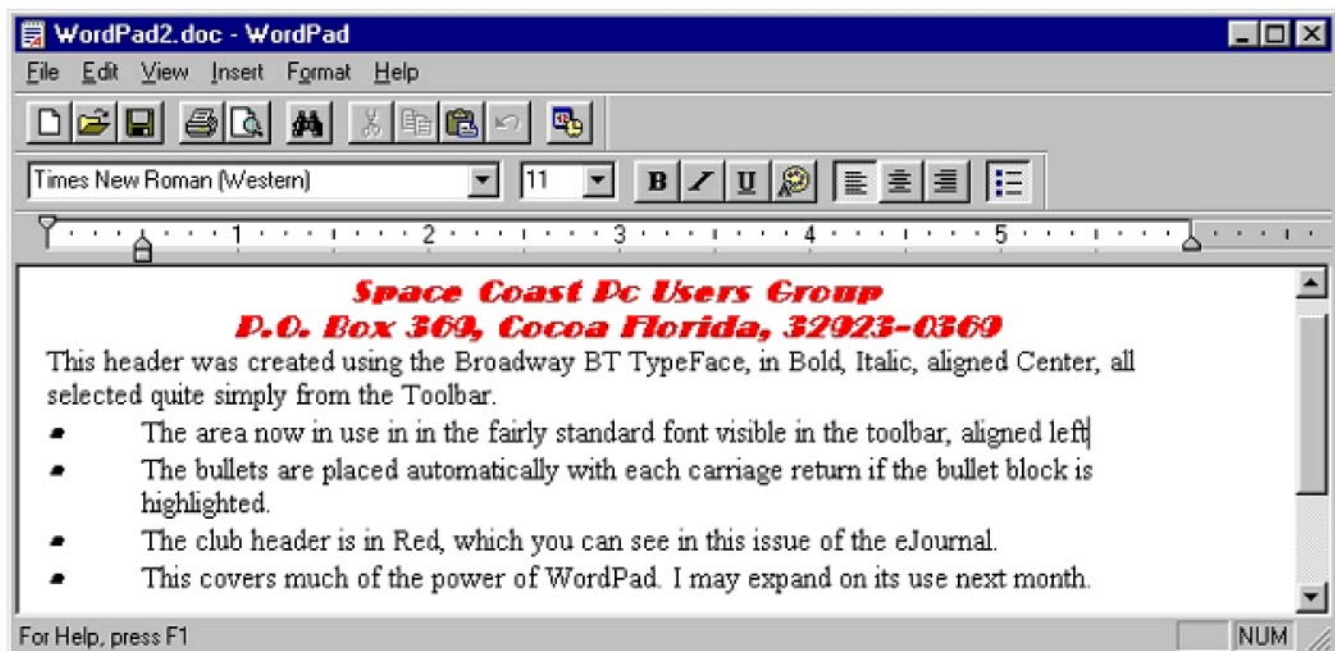
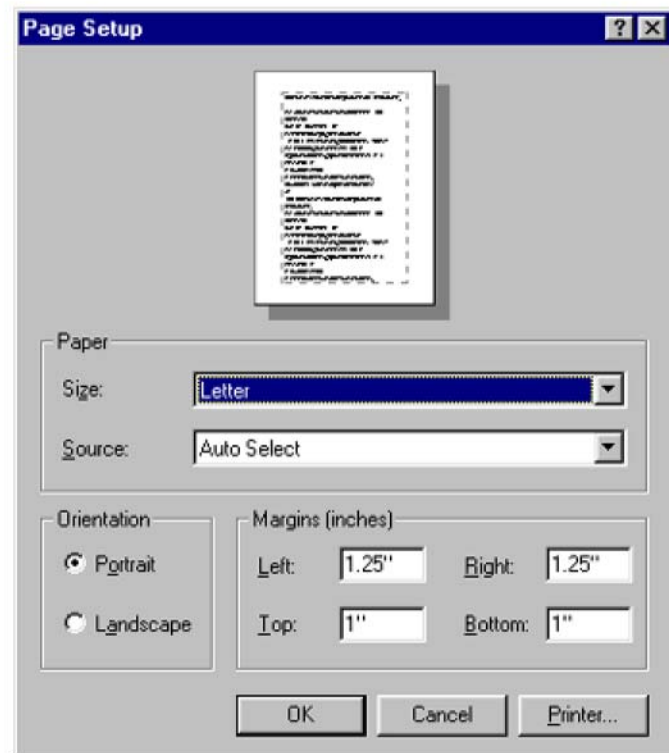
Windows Accessories "WordPad"

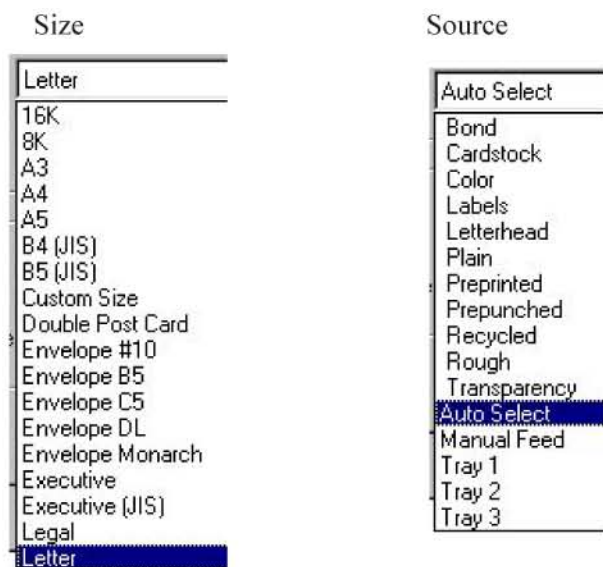
Ron Ingraham, Space Coast PC User Group

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>

We're coming to the end of our review of Windows Accessories. At least on my computer, WordPad is next to last on the list, but by no means the least important or useful feature. For most people, this modest word processor is probably the only one they'll ever need. More powerful than Notepad, which was covered in the September issue, it has many of the most important features found in MS Word, or Works.

Let's begin by opening a blank WordPad document and filling in some text, using the basic features of the program. You'll notice that by simply clicking on WordPad in the Accessories menu, this window is opened for a new document. Just by placing the cursor in the upper left corner, you're ready to begin typing. The basic page layout is already established, with the Font, font size, margins, etc. selected. If you wish, you may change the layout itself, using the drop down menu under File, Page Setup, seen at right. The options available for Paper selection include Size, ranging from Letter to Legal, through the whole list of European sizes, as well as a variety of Envelopes. The Source menu offers a selection from a variety of materials and location in the printer, depending on your printer, see the complete lists on the next page.





The next option is the paper orientation, either Portrait or Landscape. This page is in Portrait orientation. Landscape places the long edge of the paper horizontally.

Margins are pretty much self-explanatory. The default, seen at left, looks well for most documents. If for some reason you need more space on the page, the size of the margins may be reduced. In my case, the minimum the program allows is .17". I believe the reason for this is that most printers will not print any closer to the edge of a page.

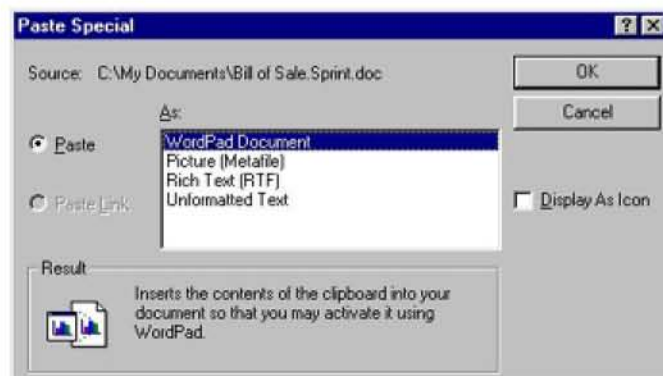
The last item of interest in the File menu is Send. If you wish to include the document with an email



message, clicking on Send will attach the document to a message in your email client, which you may then complete as you wish.

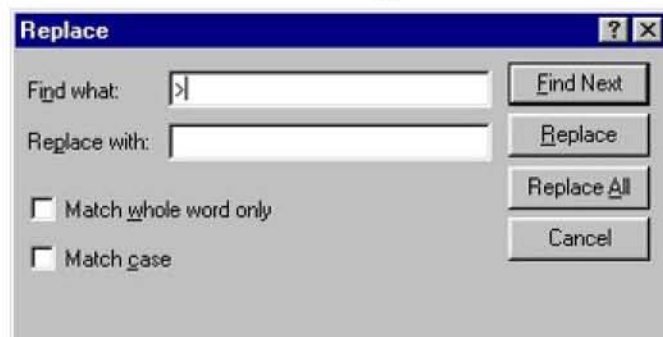
The Edit menu has various commands available depending on what you're doing in the document. The items

greyed out become active as you require them. for example, the Cut, Copy, and Clear commands will do so after you select (highlight) words, sentences, or paragraphs in the document. Their function is the same as in other Microsoft programs we've dealt with in the past. The Paste command will place the previously Cut or Copied item from the Clipboard to the location of your cursor in the document. The Paste Special command opens a dialog window where you're given four choices as to exactly how you wish to paste the item.



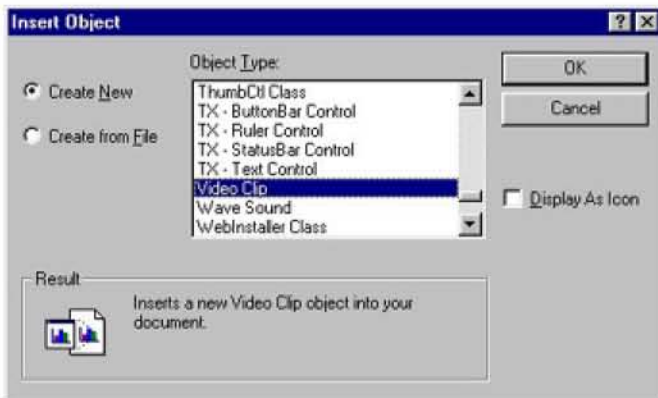
These choices will vary depending on the type of item you're pasting.

Find and Replace may be, in my opinion, two of the most useful features in the program. How many times have you received an email which has been forwarded to you, having been forwarded several times before, so that the text when displayed, has multiple symbols at the beginning of each line like this --- >>>>>>>? Irritating to say the least. As a matter of Netiquette, you should remove all such marks before you forward the message again. How to do it? Simply select the text in question, copy and paste it into a WordPad document. Then click on the Replace command. This



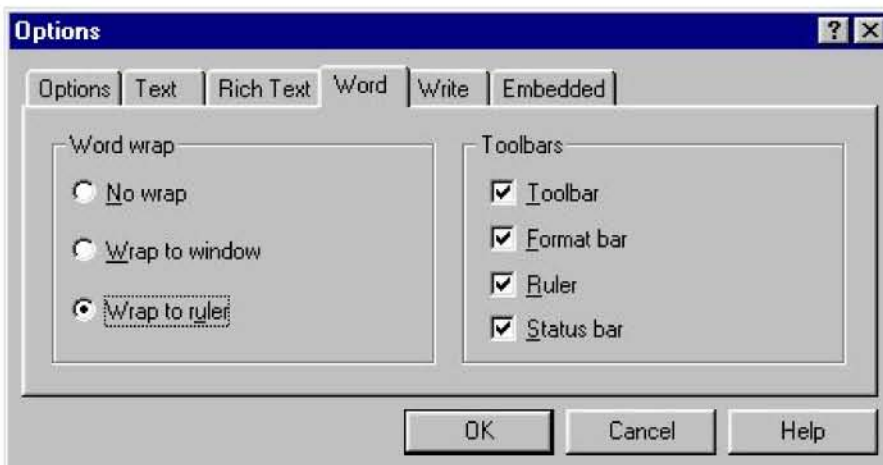
will open the window above where you place the offending item in the Find what line, and choose the replacement, in this case nothing. If you click on the Replace All button, all of the desired items will be found and replaced with whatever you choose.

The remaining commands in the Edit menu may be active if you have inserted Links or Objects in the document. This is done from the Insert drop down menu, which allows you to insert Date and Time or an Object. In the example below I have scrolled thru the



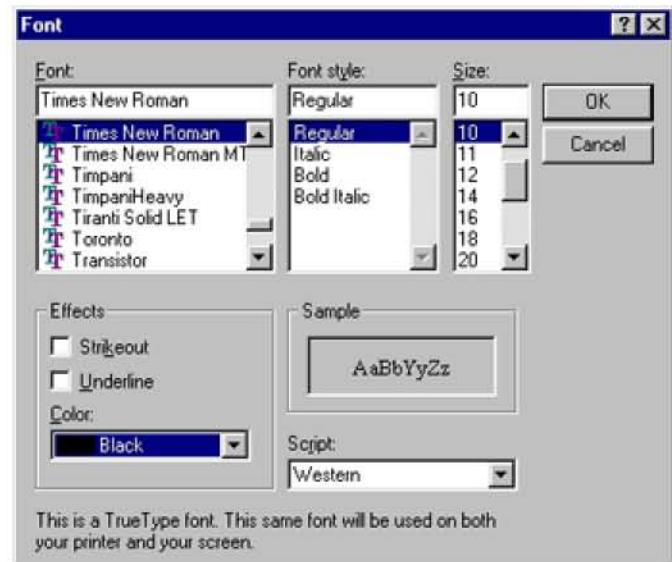
Object Type selection in the Create New option, to the Video Clip option. If I click OK at this point, I'll be asked for the location of the video clip I wish to include. Should I send this WordPad document to another computer, the recipient could view the inserted object in whatever default program available for the file type on that computer. I digressed a bit here to show how the Object Properties command at the bottom of the Edit menu would become active.

Moving on to the View menu, we see the drop down box at right. As you see, you have a number of options for the basic set up of your WordPad window. You may have as many of these items displayed as you wish, or none of them. The Options command gives



you further choices as to how WordPad will function. The Options tab allows you to select the dimensional units on the page, i.e., inches, centimeters, Pica or pixels. It also allows you to toggle on or off, Automatic word selection. Each of the next three tabs, Text, Rich Text, Word and Write, allow you to select one of the three word wrap choices, as well as designate which toolbars will be displayed with type of file. The final tab, Embedded, provides the same choices for embedded objects.

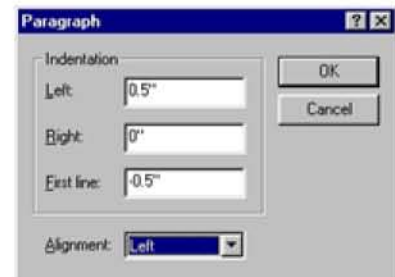
The Format menu offers four choices for changes you may make: Font, Bullet Style, Paragraph, and Tabs. As you can see below, you have a wide range of



choices as to typeface, font style and size, as well as colors. The Script option offers Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Turkish, Baltic, Central European, and Cyrillic script. Each of those appear in the Sample window so you can see what you'll be getting.

Bullet Style offers only a round dot.

Paragraph provides the options seen below.



The Tabs option keeps track of tab settings used in the current document.

See the document in the WordPad window, bottom of page 24. □

How to Thank the Leaders of Your Computer User Group

By Phil Shapiro, member of the Capital PC User Group, Virginia Macintosh Users Group, Washington Apple Pi, Young Hackers and Scholars Libre Users Group

If you have found benefit in belonging to a computer user group, there are many ways of thanking the leaders of the group. Sure, you can always walk up to them after a meeting and shake their hand. But there are more meaningful things you can do, too.

You can thank them by moving the club forward in countless small ways. You can drop off membership flyers at the local computer stores and public libraries. You can offer a smile and encouraging word to people who show up to meetings.

You can answer questions on the club's email list. You can ask questions on the club's email list. (Questions are as valuable as answers.) You can exhibit patience with computer beginners -- answering their questions in ways that benefit them the most.

You can offer some computer item you're no longer using to another member of the club. (If you're giving away commercial software, make sure you delete the copy on your own computer.)

You can also spread the word about the club around town. Be careful not to oversell, though. When I explain about the benefits of the local user group, I spell out honestly what the club can offer and can't offer. You would be doing no-one any favors if you raise false expectations in the minds of prospective club members.

You can write an article for the club's newsletter. Articles can be on almost any topic you think would bring value to club members. You don't need to be a computer expert to write an excellent article. Computer beginners have lots of important and interesting things to say. "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few."

You can talk to your local public librarians about the benefits you've encountered in your user group. Librarians are the intellectual hub of any community. You want them to be able to pass on information to anyone who inquires about computer user groups. You might even give them a video showing one of your user group meetings in action -- so they can better visualize and describe the meetings to other community members.

And now here's some unexpected ways you can thank the leaders of the club. You can show up to the club meeting with an unexpected door prize. Perhaps buy a pair of new computer speakers. Some headphones. A computer microphone. (Note Macs use different microphones than Windows computers. Mac users usually use a USB microphone.)

Stop by a bookstore and buy a copy of a new how-to computer book. Or purchase a modest Amazon.com gift certificate as a door prize.

Offer to be a "club driver" -- so if someone calls the club and says there is a sick child or adult who could use a computer at home, you'll be there to deliver that donated computer on behalf of the club. Bring homemade cookies to club meetings (being careful not to leave crumbs for the next people using that meeting space.)

Offer to be a "computer mover," so that if someone in the club isn't able to move their computer from one room of their house

to another, you'll be there to help them do that. Or be the modem rescue person, so if someone's modem got zapped by lighting, you be there the next day and connect a replacement modem for them. If they ask you why you did that, tell them that you value them being connected.

You can start a scholarship program for five families/year in your community. Interested families could apply to the club to get a donated computer and 1/2 off the annual dues of the club. (For the first year.) By doing so you're building a ramp to club membership, you're helping the community and you're creating new ways for club members to engage in outreach and publicity.

Get creative in how you thank the leaders of your computer club. Behind the scene many hours of work go into making computer clubs work. Club leaders are not paid a dime. They do it because they get a thrill from seeing people help each other, from people increasing in their learning and computer confidence.

Surprise them in the ways you say thanks. You may even want to say: "I'm ready to work. I'd like to offer my time to help."

A grateful handshake is a good starting point. A grateful action is an appropriate follow-up. Actions speak louder than words.

Find a need. And then fill it.

The author has benefitted from the generosity of people in computer user groups for the past 20 years. He is reachable at <<http://www.digitaldivide.net/profile/pshapiro>> and <pshapiro@his.com>

This article was inspired by the actions of the Macintosh Business Users Society of Greater Philadelphia in starting an award program for students at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia -- where this user group meets. Somebody in that club is thinking outside of the box in excellent ways.

New Class Starting

Surf and Search - A new beginners' class to explore the internet. How to search for long-lost cousins, how to research Aunt Jemima's antique tiara or how to find just about anything on the internet (including yourself). While the class will be largely "Google-based" we will also look at many other options and will be sharing our own favorite sites.

Pre-registration is required. Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700



**Special
Announcement**

Free e-filing for seniors

--You can help, and help yourself

By Henry C. Johnson

Two million older taxpayers had their Federal Tax Returns filed for free this year. The service was provided by the 32,000 nationwide volunteers of AARP Tax-Aide. AARP Tax-Aide is jointly funded and guided by the I.R.S. and the AARP Foundation, a not-for-profit, non-political offshoot of AARP.

The Board of Directors of Alamo PC has reviewed this volunteer program and recommends that its members consider signing up for these reasons:

1. Volunteers get excellent training in the tax code, and their computer skills are used to advantage
2. Clients are supremely grateful for this help at a stressful time
3. Alamo PC will gain exposure to potential members
4. Alamo PC will get very favorable publicity citywide.

Henry Johnson is Volunteer Coordinator for Bexar County: 210/865-9733 or johnson.h.c@worldnet.att.net.

The IRS certifies volunteer Counselors after receiving 40 hours of training in the tax code. The typical Counselor is retired and has returned to Counseling for several years. Most Counselors stay on because they get great satisfaction from helping the Clients. A typical Counselor works a four-hour shift each week February 1 through April 15, 40 hours in total, and will usually complete 50 returns. Many Counselors work additional shifts because they get more proficient with practice and the work is rewarding.

Priority is given to clients 60+ years of age, but no one is turned away, unless their return demands the skills of a professional tax preparer. Almost 60% of the Clients are 70+, 60% are single, including many widows who never had to deal with Form 1040. Two-thirds have income under \$30,000; 72% are retired. Past Clients rate the service as "excellent" by 81%; 94% "would recommend it"; 75% are repeat users.

The I.R.S. supplies Tax-Wise, a professional-level software package from Universal Tax Services. The software follows the flow of Form 1040, making it a simple and direct process of interviewing the Client and "filling in the blanks". The completed return is printed, reviewed by another Counselor and the Client, and signed by the Client. The Client's signature confirms the truthfulness of the data, and Counselor is free of any liability.

The return is then e-filed, guaranteeing a direct-deposit refund within two weeks—a check takes another week.

Training for "new recruits" with existing computer skills occurs in mid-January each year in a one week, 40-hour class. Returning Counselors have a 1-2 day refresher course covering tax law changes.

In San Antonio, there is another free tax service that is sponsored by the City in conjunction with numerous charitable organizations. This Consortium focuses on low-income families. The Counselor training emphasizes Earned Income Credit, Child Tax Credit, and other such benefits. In contrast, AARP Tax-Aide emphasizes Retirement Plans, Schedule A Deductions, and Schedule D Capital Gains.

The location of tax service sites, recruitment of volunteers, and publicity is being coordinated between the two groups to better serve all elements of the community. Alamo PC will get public recognition for contributing to this valuable program through all local media.

AARP Tax-Aide sites are usually open 10am—2pm weekdays because the Clients are mostly retirees and the Counselors are mostly retired. The Consortium sites are usually staffed by people who have jobs, and students, and are open in the late afternoons and evenings on weekdays and on weekends. Of course, a trained Counselor can work at any site for either group.

One additional benefit for Alamo PC is exposure to potential new members. Last year, sadly, only 35% of the local returns were e-filed by AARP Tax-Aide because Counselors lacked necessary computer skills and equipment. (A paper return must be mailed and requires several additional weeks for processing.) The Crossroads Mall site has operated for about 10 years, and last year did almost 500 returns without use of computers, operating one day a week. It is planned to operate an additional day using computers, offering reserved times to Clients.

Many of the Counselors who know the tax code wish to be further trained to use a computer and Tax-Wise, and training in Alamo PC facilities would be a significant first step to membership. It is expected that such training will begin in October, depending on classroom availability.

Anyone interested in participating should contact Henry Johnson at 210/865-9733 or johnson.h.c@worldnet.att.net. Brochures will be available in the Computer Learning Center or check www.alamopc.org.



Internet Junkie

Part 2

Browsers

Chasing the Internet

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computers & Technology Website

A long-ago famous and favorite I Love Lucy episode [<www.tvtome.com/tvtome/servlet/GuidePageServlet/showid-1038/epid-15119/>](http://www.tvtome.com/tvtome/servlet/GuidePageServlet/showid-1038/epid-15119/)

showed Lucille Ball and sidekick Ethel facing an ever-faster conveyor belt delivering chocolates for them to wrap: they couldn't keep up. The Internet sometimes makes me feel as though I'm at the wrong end of that conveyor belt.

I confess that I don't always reduce online interruptions and information coming at me. I'm not yet a recovering info-junkie, so this article is definitely "do what I say, not what I do" advice.

The Internet is like the accelerating candy conveyor belt. There's more content (online newspapers, portals, Web rings, etc.) and more forms of content (e-mail initially, then Web sites, mailing lists, blogs, streaming audio/video, downloadable music, Web cameras, etc.)

But even with today's pace of change, whether we do it deliberately or just let it happen, we create our own online experiences. So we can make it fit our needs and change it when necessary. I've sometimes resisted dropping e-mail lists because I once liked them. That's silly: my and your most precious resource is time.

So I'll share time savers:

Tell people what you're interested in; if they scan online and offline resources for you, you don't have to.

Tell people what you don't want! If you don't want jokes, motivational sayings, political news, etc., cancel your subscriptions by asking people to stop sending it. I like jokes, I like technology, I'm interested in politics. But some people just aren't on my wavelength.

When you send e-mail or reply, don't send unnecessary copies. Encourage people to not copy you unless you need to know or do something about the topic.

When replying, trim what you quote to essential matter and (especially) encourage others to do the same for you. Bloated and repetitive reply-reply-reply notes waste time while you look for what's new!

If you send common replies or send periodic e-mail such as club meeting notices, use templates (stored copies of preformatted e-mail) so you can just fill in details but needn't enter text repeatedly.

Use e-mail and spam filtering. Most e-mail software can automatically route spam to a special folder (and, of course, I'd like to route spammers to a special place). Some spam filters learn what's spam based on what you flag, so their accuracy improves over time. My spam is increasingly filtered, and no real e-mail is filtered. You can also set

rules for routing e-mail into folders for easier reading and management. Based on rules I've defined (special keywords in e-mail subject and sender fields), my e-mail is put in folders such as AARP, Lists, To-Read, and Travel. This lets me

organize e-mail time, prioritize my reading and answering, and sometimes catch up by deleting an e-mail

category I don't really need to read. And the best part is that I avoid interruptions of each note arriving, since routing takes place silently and invisibly.

Set discussion mailing list subscriptions to "digest mode". This groups list e-mail into fewer/larger notes, sent occasionally, sometimes once/daily. This has two benefits: it eliminates many interruptions, and it greatly reduces the temptation to answer list notes, since by the time you see something someone else has likely already answered it.

Pick times during the day to handle e-mail, read favorite Web sites, use instant messaging, etc.; ignore it all at other times. This allows focusing on tasks at hand, reduces frenzied multitasking (trying to do many things at once), and lets you actually finish things you start!

Don't be trapped by time-wasting habits. Use technology that matches your needs; change it for yourself, not because people urge you to (there's peer pressure at all ages!); adopt changes such as broadband Internet that save you time but be selective in what it brings you.

Recognize that the conveyor belt always wins the race and focus on what really matters -- most of which, after all, isn't even online.

This article originated on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>, and is copyrighted by AARP. All rights are reserved; it may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use, or by non-profit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to AARP. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail Gabe Goldberg at <gabe@gabegold.com> when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

Browsers

Internet Explorer Tips and Tricks

by Richard O. Johnson, TUGNET <rij@theskillspool.org>

Internet Explorer, despite inroads made by Firefox and other browsers, overwhelmingly remains users' browser of choice (perhaps because it comes bundled with all new Windows computers). The following pointers are designed to help you get the most out of your use of Internet Explorer. They're written with IE6 in mind, although most will apply to earlier versions, and some may apply to other browsers as well.

Use keyboard shortcuts

My regular readers will know that to increase efficiency I strongly encourage the use of keyboard shortcuts in preference to the use of the mouse. Here are my favorite IE keyboard shortcuts:

- Use Alt-Home to bring up your home page.
- Use Ctrl-H to open or close your history pane.
- Use Ctrl-I to open or close the Favorites pane.
- Use Ctrl-B to organize your Favorites
- Use Ctrl-N to duplicate the active page in a new window.
- Use Ctrl-F to find a word, partial word, or phrase on the current webpage.
- Use Backspace (or Alt-Left) instead of the IE Back button, to navigate back.
- Use Alt-Right to navigate forward.

- Use F11 to toggle full-screen mode.
- Use Alt-D to move to the address bar. (Or use Ctrl-O, and you won't need the address bar! See "Other" Tip 3, below, for details.)
- Once in the address bar, use Enter to bring up the specified webpage or Ctrl-Enter to first surround what you've typed with "www." before and ".com" after, and then bring it up.
- Use F5 or Ctrl-F5 to refresh a page. It's a good idea when refreshing to routinely hold down Ctrl (whether you're using the keyboard or the mouse), to bypass the IE cache and give you a more effective refresh.

Optimize the toolbar

Unless you maintain only a dozen or so Favorites, you'll want to take full advantage of the Links option for the IE toolbar, which you activate with the right-click toolbar menu. Drag the Favorites you'll want to have most prominent into the Links section of the toolbar. Using the right-click Properties menu of each "Link," you'll probably want to assign it a unique icon and, to save space, rename it to a shorter form.

Tip: You can save additional space by shortening the “Links” title on the toolbar. Unfortunately, simply renaming the “Links” folder won’t work. You’ll need to open the Registry Editor, by choosing Run from the Start menu and typing regedit. After pressing Enter, drill down to HKEY_CURRENT_USER > Software > Microsoft > Internet Explorer > Toolbar. On the right-hand side you’ll see LinksFolderName=“Links.” Change the word within the quotation marks to a one-character name you’d like to use instead, perhaps “.” or “+,” and close the Editor. (Use extreme caution, as making a wrong entry in the Registry Editor can have dire consequences!)

You should unclutter the toolbar by instructing it to “Remove” nearly all the toolbar buttons. These not only occupy valuable space but can actually interfere with efficient browsing (by discouraging use of the keyboard shortcuts described above). You get to the Remove command via “Customize,” on the right-click menu. Of the built-in IE toolbar buttons, the only ones I recommend displaying are those for Size and Back. All the other button functions can better be facilitated via the keyboard or by other means. (For a complete list of IE keyboard shortcuts, go to <<http://snipurl.com/bskn>>. The reason for keeping the Back button is its associated pull-down menu.)

Keep IE secure

It goes without saying that you need to keep IE fully patched, perhaps with the use of Windows Update or Microsoft Update. But what of the Internet Explorer security settings (accessible via Tools > Internet Options > Security)?

In the “Internet Zone”—the default zone for a webpage—it’s prudent to be more rather than less restrictive. (Better safe than sorry!) The easiest way to go is simply to move the “Default Level” slider to High. Or you could use the “Custom Level” to make a determination for each setting. In that case you may want to consult a guide such as the one at <www.techspot.com/tweaks/ie6/ie-5.shtml>.

Remember that if your security restriction interferes with the proper viewing of a page, Windows will let you know—although most often you’ll be able to view the page just fine notwithstanding what Windows says. To remove the restriction for a given page, you can add that page to your “Trusted” sites, against which the restriction won’t ordinarily apply. (You may have to refresh the page after adding it.) To simplify moving webpages to your trusted list, a free program is available at <www.geeksuperhero.com/zones.shtml>.

An alternative method does not require you to move all such sites to the Trusted zone. For this you’ll need the laudable Push the Freakin’ Button software, available at modest cost at <www.tlhouse.co.uk/PTFB.shtml>. With PTFB in place, use IE’s Custom Level to choose “Prompt” instead of “Disable” for every feature except any that you’re absolutely sure you’ll never want to use. Then instruct PTFB to push the “No” (disallow) button when the prompt appears. Should you decide to permit the feature in question, you can with a double click disable PTFB, and just as easily re-enable it when done.

A good (free) test to assess your IE vulnerability may be found at <<http://snipurl.com/ietest>>.

Other tips

1. To execute a link in a new window, hold down Shift.
2. Is IE acting strangely? You can often fix it by using the IE Repair utility accessible via Add/Remove Programs (in the Windows Control Panel), upon selecting “Microsoft Internet Explorer” and then “Add/Remove.”
3. You can dispense with the address bar, by using Ctrl-O to open a webpage or other location. You can then completely hide the address bar (using the IE toolbar’s right-click Customize function) or shrink it down to its title only (having first “unlocked” the toolbar, also with the right-click menu). Losing the address bar will eliminate the temptation to go there with the (less efficient) mouse, and can free up space that may be better put to other use. On the downside, you’ll also lose the functionality of the Ctrl-Enter address bar shortcut (see Keyboard Shortcuts, above).
4. You might be able to save considerable time if you bypass your home page (start page) when you don’t need to see it. Here’s how: Enter “about:blank” [without the quotes] in the IE address bar, to create a blank quasi-webpage. Then use Right Click + F to turn that page into a Favorite, and drag the new Favorite’s icon into the Quick Launch section of your Windows task bar, before deleting the Favorite. You may want to assign a different icon to your new IE shortcut with the use of its right-click Properties menu. (You can use this same technique to set up a “secondary home page” instead of a blank page.)

Add-ons

Useful IE add-ons, free except as noted, include:

- Google Toolbar, at toolbar.google.com, which enables too many useful features to even hint at here. Highly recommended.
- Favorites Search, at <www.dzsoft.com>, which lets you speedily locate a Favorite, no matter how many you’ve stored.
- Y!Q DemoBar, at <yq.search.yahoo.com/splash/demobar.html>, which enables context-based searching. This can easily be squeezed onto the same line as the IE address bar.
- ieSpell, at <www.iespell.com>, which will quickly spellcheck all the text you’ve entered in any Web form.
- AddaButton, at www.harmonyhollow.net/aab.shtml, which will let you fit more buttons onto the IE toolbar. These buttons can open documents and applications (not just websites) and don’t require space-consuming displayed names. Shareware, \$11.95

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization <<http://theskillspool.org>>. He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. He welcomes feedback, at <rj@theskillspool.org>.

29 Useful Bookmarks

By Richard Johnson, TUGNET <www.tugnet.org>

The Web is a marvelous resource, and most of us come nowhere near tapping its full potential. I've attempted here to list 29 websites that without any necessary downloading provide exceedingly useful free non-specialized services and tools, that require no particular knowledge except how to navigate the World Wide Web.

1. **Time Cave** <www.timecave.com>

2. **Memo to Me** <www.memotome.com>

Using these two email reminder services you'll never forget another upcoming activity or event. Time Cave allows you to schedule incoming messages by interval (so many hours, days, weeks, months, or even years away) as well as by date and time. Memo to Me allows editing of content and date. With Time Cave you can choose your own subject line and send reminders to others, but Memo to Me will charge you for those features. On the other hand, Time Cave charges for the ability to repeat messages (monthly, weekly, etc.), standard with Memo to Me.

3. **Way Back Machine** <www.archive.org/web/web.php>

Is a website you're seeking no longer around? If it was active as late as 1996, you'll probably find it easily in this huge archive.

4. **Centerwatch Clinical Trials** <www.centerwatch.com>

Gives information on more than 41,000 active clinical trials in which you could participate. (Some compensate you handsomely for helping, along with free medical monitoring.) Includes a notification service, for trials in areas of your interest. Also describes the newest drug therapies.

5. **Objectgraph Dictionary** <www.objectgraph.com/dictionary>

A combination standard dictionary, technical dictionary, and thesaurus. (There's also a dictionary of chemical elements, of rather limited interest). A unique feature is the site's ability to "read your mind" if you're not sure of the word you're thinking of -- or its spelling -- or if you just want to save typing.

6. **Myway email** <www.myway.com>

An excellent Web-based email provider with an exceptionally clean interface (no banner ads or pop-ups). Unlike the case with competitors like Yahoo mail, Myway will respond to support inquiries. (It also has a terrific weather page -- see link #7 following.) [If you prefer Gmail, equally clean-appearing, I can get you an invitation -- see my article in the March Keywords.]

7. **Myway weather** <weather.myway.com>

The best weather page on the Web. Even though its weather information is from weather.com, you'll see when you use it that the interface is much cleaner (and loading therefore faster) than if you were to bring up either weather.com or one of its competitors. You can personalize the weather according to your home town or zip code; the page you'll want to bookmark is that personalized page

8. **Past Weather** <www.weather.com/activities/other/other/weather/yesterday.html>

Use this site to compare today's forecast with yesterday's weather. There's also interesting historical data and a graph showing the weather for the past seven days. The past weather information can easily be compared with the forecast from Myway weather (link #7), which derives its data from the same source.

9. **Furl** <www.furl.net>

Bookmarking is useful, but what do you do when you find that a bookmarked page has disappeared (left the Web)? Or maybe it's still there, but -- as with many newspaper sites -- you can't read it without going to a paid archive. This won't be an issue if you've Furl'd the page. Furl allows you to create a set of special bookmarks that can be easily searched or browsed -- or shared with others -- but whose contents are permanently stored on your hard drive. (If you feel the need to save parts of a page, try Net Snippets Free at www.netsnippets.com/basic. This does require a download.)

10. **Gold Star Events** <<http://snipurl.com/bl9o>>

Gold Star enables admissions to a large variety of live California productions at 50% off or better. After your (free) registration, you'll receive regular email notices of well-described shows in the zip code areas of your preference. There's a small per-ticket service fee, usually between \$3 and \$7.

11. **Password Generator** <<http://mistupid.com/computers/passwordgen.htm>>

Random characters compose the safest passwords. This tool will create a password with random characters according to your specifications. On your instructions, will even avoid ambiguous characters [o and 0, l and I].

12. **Zap2it** <www.zap2it.com>

With Zap2it you can check out both TV and movie schedules. Various options let you permanently personalize each set of listings, to give you just the information you need, in the format you prefer.

13. **Acronym Finder** <www.acronymfinder.com>

Don't be baffled by acronyms and abbreviations you encounter on the Web and elsewhere. This site offers definitions for over 398,000 such terms. Optional downloading of any of a number of search tools (for various browsers) will allow you to view a definition almost instantly.

14. **Restaurant health ratings (LA County)** <<http://lapublichealth.org/rating>>

Avoid traveling to an appealing restaurant only to find that its health rating is below the level with which you're comfortable.

15. Translation Wizard <www.faganfinder.com/translate>

The Translation Wizard uses other sites' services to ease the process of finding a translation -- that otherwise might require visiting ten or more sites to find the language of interest! It also has a neat button to identify a mystery language.

16. Anybirthday <<http://anybirthday.com>>

A fun site that can divulge your friend's birthday or even tell you where to mail the card.

17. TrackEngine <www.trackengine.com>

Notifies you via email of changes in Web pages that you select. You can preview the changes or view the whole page via email, with changes highlighted. Choose the Web address of a neighborhood theater, to see what plays are coming up. Or see every new installment of a favorite newspaper column, without having to buy the paper.

18. GovBenefits.gov <<http://govbenefits.gov>>

A source of information on over 400 government-funded programs that extend benefits for which you may qualify, including compensated volunteering. Features a confidential questionnaire designed to point you to the most likely matches.

19. AddALL <www.addall.com>

Use this site to find the very best price for a book you want to buy. Unlike most other comparison sites, it figures in shipping costs for your location. Links will take you to pages for magazine subs, music CDs, and videos.

20. jux2 <www.jux2.com>

Jux2 lets you receive and compare search results from two or three different search engines, or see what you're missing from your regular search results. (According to the site, competing search engines typically share fewer than 4 out their 10 top results.) Still in development, it's currently limited to Google, Yahoo, and Ask Jeeves.

21. Medem Medical Library <www.medem.com/medlib/medlib_entry.cfm>

Searchable and browsable medical library, organizing contributions from 45 medical societies. Features a complexity indicator for each article, from "introductory" to "professional."

22. Metacritic <www.metacritic.com/film>

23. Kids-in-mind www.kids-in-mind.com Metacritic is an excellent source for movie critiques. For each film, it arranges its large variety of reviews from most to least favorable, and then tabulates the opinions, for an overall "metascore." (Additional Metacritic pages cover videos, music, and games.) For evaluating movies for children, or if you have a concern about violence, sex, or profanity, Kids-in-mind will rate and describe each film's content in those three areas.

24. CardRatings <<http://cardratings.com>>

This site maintains information on over 700 credit cards, and will suggest the best cards in a variety of categories --low or no credit, no annual fee, low interest, rewards/rebates, etc.

25. The California Patient's Guide

<www.calpatientguide.org>

A well-organized extensive guide to Californians' health care rights, and what you can do if they're compromised. Assembled by medical, legal, and consumer experts, and published by the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights.

26. CheckFree <www.checkfree.com>

There are a host of good reasons for paying your bills online. It saves time, saves the cost of stamps, reduces the chance of late payment, extends the time in which you can use your money, cuts down clutter, eliminates the danger of checks lost in the mail, and facilitates tracking. With CheckFree you'll be able to pay many or most of your bills online, and the service is free to the payers.

27. Bug Me Not <www.bugmenot.com>

This site and the one following save you time and trouble while helping you cut down on spam. Bug Me Not keeps on hand log-in data (passwords with user names) for a huge number of sites that require registration. If you want access to such a site (like latimes.com), but don't want to bother registering, just visit the Bug Me Not site and log in easily.

28. Spam Bob <http://evil-wire.luvfeed.org/cache/1269>

Spam Bob offers a choice of three email addresses that you create, to protect your privacy. Anything@spambob.org is a phantom address, messages to which disappear into the ether. Use <anything@spambob.com> if you'll want to check on a reply message. (This is handy for registrations that require confirmation.) And you may want to use <anything@spambob.net> for all your correspondents. Mail from each such "net" address can be forwarded to you, and if it starts generating spam, just cancel the forwarding order!

29. Google Maps <<http://maps.google.com>>

Head and shoulders above the competition, these maps are much larger and far easier to configure. Zooming in and out is quick as a bunny, and re-centering is instantaneous. You can locate by category businesses in the map area, along with their phone numbers. Note that (at least as of this writing) these maps are not implemented in the regular Google search results, which will still point you only to Yahoo and MapQuest maps.

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization (<http://theskillspool.org>). He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. You may reach him at <rj@theskillspool.org>.



Paying too much for healthcare?

discounted fees on:

- ♦ doctors
- ♦ dentists
- ♦ prescription drugs
- ♦ vision care
- ♦ chiropractors
- ♦ alternative health care
- ♦ and more

visit online:

<http://ushealthadvisors.net/davebobst>



Wi-Fi Wireless Internet and Network Availability

Wireless

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner,
Beaumont TX: Radio Show Host

WEBSITES:

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

<<http://intel.jiwire.com>>

<<http://www.wi-fihotspotlist.com>>

Recently, one of my daughters called me from a major city, and asked me where she could find some free “hotspots” or wireless “Wi-Fi” locations where she could get free broadband wireless internet access. She gave me her street address, and within moments I found several nearby locations where she could access the internet for free using the wireless “802.11b” PCMCIA card she had with her notebook computer. She told me which hotspot she selected, and I gave her the “SSID”, or “Service Set Identifier”, a simple code, usually a name, that identifies a local hotspot.

I recently purchased a new notebook computer for another daughter, and this computer came with an Intel Centrino chipset, which provided integral wireless internet access, where ever available, whether at home or on the road. As she travels around town, at school, or away from home, she can likely access the internet at high speeds.

I travel extensively, and always take my notebook computer with me, as I often find it necessary to check my email, find restaurants, or locate other information on the internet. Through experience, I have found that many hotels, restaurants, airports, and other locations offer wireless broadband internet access either for a fee, or for free. Now before I leave home, I check a website www.jiwire.com, or its twin sister site supported by Intel, intel.jiwire.com, to determine what wireless access is available enroute, or at my destination.

Jwire.com is one of the leading interactive directories of publicly available wireless internet locations, typically using one of the industry standard 802.11 protocols. Standardization, as well as substantial downward compatibility, has ensured that almost all computers equipped with 802.11 type wireless internet hardware can effectively communicate at broadband speeds. As I type this, Jwire is listing almost 70,000 public access wireless hotspots around the world. The Intel companion site lists almost

30,000 wireless hotspots in the U.S., and about 40,000 international wireless hotspots. According to the Intel site, the top U.S. cities for public wireless are New York City with over 550 public access locations, followed by Chicago (434 public wireless locations), San Francisco (412), and Seattle (320). Texas is well represented in the top 10 most

“unwired” cities with 309 public hotspots in Houston, 250 in Austin, and 192 in Dallas. California is listed by Intel as the state with the most public access with over 5000 locations, followed by Texas with almost 2000 hotspots, Florida with about 1800, and New York with over 1600 public hotspots. It should be emphasized that these numbers are only the wireless sites that allow public access, either for free (sometimes with some strings attached) or for a fee, and does not include the millions of sites that are private wireless networks. The listing also does not include many of the hotel chains that offer free wireless access to registered guests.

Many of the free sites listed are local restaurants, some hotels, many airport terminals, RV parks, and other locations. All it takes to access these totally free and public sites is the SSID of the wireless host and appropriate hardware; the Jwire sites list the SSID’s of the public sites. When the wireless access on the notebook computer is activated, the wireless

networks within range can be identified, and if accessible, the SSID can be entered, and connections established. It is important that from a personal security standpoint, these public connections are not often encrypted, and can be “sniffed” or picked up by anyone with suitable equipment; sensitive information, passwords, banking, and other critical information should never be sent on an insecure public network.

In addition to the free sites, there are many thousands of publicly accessible but commercial (fee based) hotspots, often in coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, bookstores, some airport terminal areas, and other locations. These hotspots either require a subscription to a service, such as a cellular phone company or other third party, or a daily or hourly fee for access. Generally, since these pay services require some type of access code, they are slightly more secure than the free public sites, but are still usually accessible to a hacker with commonly available but illicit software. Again, it is a good practice not to type any sensitive personal information while on a publicly accessible wireless network. Some of the commercial hotspots offer “WEP”, or wireless encryption protocol, which makes it more difficult for unwelcome third parties to listen in on internet communications, but the methods for cracking WEP have been widely published, and are now only considered to provide marginal security.

One warning about wireless internet access; it is illegal to access a wireless network without the consent of the owner, despite the fact that studies have indicated that about 80% of all private wireless networks, both workplace and home based, are not adequately protected, and can easily be picked up and accessed by anyone who wants access. A popular hacker method of gaining “free” broadband internet access is driving around town with a notebook computer with 802.11 hardware, and logging the wireless networks found, with those same networks often broadcasting the SSID necessary for

access. This practice is called “wardriving”. In major cities, marks are drawn on sidewalks and the outside walls of buildings in a similar escapade, “warchalking” where SSID’s and other relevant information is written for all to see, and access. Locally, in a security demonstration, a security consultant drove around the business district of town, and logged hundreds of wireless networks, 80% of which were easily accessible, as they were not properly secured. These included such sensitive locations as banks, law offices, retail stores, medical facilities, and other choice locations for hackers to penetrate.

Use the Jwire sites to find wireless access, as I do, but be totally aware of the risk and security implications of broadcasting critical information. There are a variety of hardware and software utilities that can be utilized to harden wireless access, and some of those will be discussed in a future column.

News Brief

End of analog TV?

Millions of American television sets that receive only analog over-the-air broadcasts could go dark if not upgraded by Jan. 1, 2009. That deadline was suggested by members of the U.S. Senate's Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. The committee is readying legislation expected this year that would require all American televisions to run on digital signals by the end of 2008. That would free up the analog, or 700 MHz, spectrum for other uses. Under current law, analog television would be cut off on Dec. 31, 2006, or when 85 percent of households are capable of receiving digital signals, whichever comes sooner. Last month, the FCC proposed to move the date by which all televisions with screen sizes of 25 to 36 inches must contain digital tuners up to March 2006. All televisions, VCRs and DVD players would have to carry the technology by 2007.



SAN ANTONIO • PC-HELP

(210) 748-5311 • SAPCHELP@ATT.NET

Seniors — Computer troubles ?

We understand that making the jump to computers, E-mail and the Internet can be a real challenge.

When you are stuck or your computer just doesn't seem to be working as you expected, call us. In the comfort of your own home, let us help you work through the problem. We provide on-site service for the individual PC user and small to medium size business.

Call PC-Help today!

SE HABLA ESPANOL

(210) 748-5311

9 AM - 4 PM • Monday - Friday

Wireless Instant Messaging Makes Conversations Portable

Wireless

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Web site

I love technology competition. Having multiple ways to meet a need gives consumers choices; it also encourages vendors to innovate, rather than offering take-it-or-leave-it products. Being accustomed to PC-based instant messaging (IM), and not enjoying queuing up for Internet access, I was intrigued by wireless IM letting people communicate and have IM-fun without occupying prime family "real estate" -- the PC. Zipit and IMfree, taking different approaches to do this, may eliminate your family traffic jams. There's no monthly fee with either device.

Both handheld devices have almost-normal keyboard layouts but are too small for touch typing. They're good for thumbing or index-fingering and will be quickly comfortable for anyone used to cell phone text messaging. Multi-line displays, scrollable one line-at-a-time, are mostly very readable, except for the way that IMfree displays screen names with messages: hard-to-read white-on-black text with sender/receiver distinguished by upper and lower case letters.

On both devices, slightly odd shift keys allow entering capital letters and numbers/symbols (which don't appear on usual keys); it's all easy to get used to. IMfree sends twelve specific smileys (emoticons like ;-) for winking) with button combinations; Zipit allocates three buttons to specific smileys and allows setting three others to your choice of symbols -- though they're hard to distinguish. Or you can just enter characters to form smileys!

My wife called both devices "cute", liking Zipit because it has a lid protecting screen/keyboard and IMfree because it has a modern look.

More significant is how the units communicate. IMfree includes software and a base station which plugs into a PC USB port; handheld range is about 150 feet. Zipit uses a WiFi network with a range of about 300 feet. (If you don't know what WiFi is, you probably don't have it. It adds to Internet connectivity, typically cable or DSL. It's also available in "hot spots" like coffee shops.)

IMfree base stations can talk to seven handhelds at once and handhelds can move among base stations, and many Zipits can access a WiFi network at once, so they're both great for at-home IMfests or using IM when visiting or traveling. Unfortunately, IMfree handhelds aren't sold without base stations.

Both devices can carry on multiple conversations. You select IMfree conversations with instant button pushes; Zipit conversations are selected from a pop-up scrollable buddy list, slightly less convenient. If you're switching among conversations, be careful to send messages to the person you intend!

IMfree supports only AOL Instant Messenger (AIM); Zipit supports AIM, MSN, and Yahoo. IMfree supports chat rooms and has flexible/powerful parental controls; Zipit only supports instant messaging and lacks such controls. IMfree conversations are private, not shared with the base PC, unless the IM account is also logged on there. A screen name can't be logged on to Zipit and a PC at the same time so Zipit dialogues are private.

Both devices were impressively simple to install. Each has a clear manual, worth reading for learning features and many

customization options (alert sounds, display settings, etc.). Neither screen is backlit; they're both reasonably easy to read in normal lighting. Zipit's lid-mounted screen is easy to angle for best viewing.

Both powerful units share and can modify buddy lists (but Zipit can't create a screen name; you must have or visit a PC for that). On both, idle buddies are flagged and you're notified by tone and visual indicator if a message arrives from a conversation not currently displayed.

Zipit comes in many tasty colors and promises automatic updates adding features such as streaming music.

There's a great bottom line to this story: I liked both these low-cost devices and they're different enough to fit a variety of needs. So have fun with your IM, wherever your keyboard and handheld may take you.

Company: Motorola

Product: Motorola Personal Instant Messenger Mx240

Price: \$50 or less online -- shop around!

URL: <broadband.motorola.com/consumers/products/imfree/>

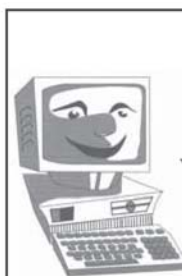
Company: Aeronix Consumer Media Systems

Product: Zipit Wireless Messenger

Price: \$100

URL: <www.zipitwireless.com>

This article originated on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>, and is copyrighted by AARP. All rights are reserved; it may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use, or by non-profit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to AARP. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail Gabe Goldberg at <gabe@gabegold.com> when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.



Computer Experts

Is your PC acting strange?
Wonder if it has a virus?
We've been fixing weird problems
since 1995. For PC or Mac
solutions, Call the experts...

Computer Experts

(210) 771-7075

Maintaining Your Downloads

By David Garcia, President, Little Blue PC Club,
Northglenn, Colorado <petitbleu@comcast.net>



Having trouble keeping track of your downloaded files? Here's a couple of easy procedures to help you maintain, identify, and document your downloads.

1. Create a "Downloads" Folder & Sub-folders

When downloading files, (for example, you buy some software online, and download it instead of having it mailed) it is a good idea to place all your downloads into a specific folder so that you can always find them when you need them. If you don't already have a folder called "Downloads," or "My Downloads," then you should create one on your hard drive (normally the "C:" drive).

To create a folder on the "C:" drive right-click the Start button on the desktop, then click "Explore" in the popup menu. This will open the Windows Explorer. Left-click the "Local Disk (C:)" icon to highlight it. Then click "File" on the Menu Bar and point to "New." When the fly-out menu opens, click "Folder." A "New Folder" is created on the C: drive. Rename it to "Downloads" or "My Downloads" as you prefer. To rename it just right-click it and select Rename from the popup menu.

Prior to downloading a given file it would also be good, for identification and documentation purposes, to create a sub-folder within the "Downloads" folder that identifies the origin of the download. Give the sub-folder a short name that identifies its origin. For example, if you download some anti-virus software from Symantec, you might name the sub-folder "Symantec." Then when you download the file place it into the Symantec sub-folder within the "Downloads" folder. Any subsequent downloads from Symantec should also be placed into this folder.

Creating the sub-folder is similar to creating the "Downloads" folder. To create the sub-folder you left-click the Downloads folder, click "File" on the Menu Bar, point to "New," click "Folder," and rename it. You should now have a sub-folder within the Downloads folder. The hierarchy should look like this:

Local Disc (C:)
Downloads (or My Downloads)
Sub-folder (Whatever you name it)

2. Documenting the Download

When a file is downloaded it usually has a cryptic name like "Abc4205.exe" To further document my downloads, I create a text file within the sub-folder that identifies the download. Within the text file I give a description of what the download is, when I downloaded it, and when I installed it. I give the text file the same name as the downloaded file except for the extension. For example, if I downloaded a file called "Abc4205.exe" from Symantec using the procedure #1 above, it would be in the "Downloads" folder in the "Symantec" sub-folder. I would then create a text file called "Abc4205.txt," and also place it in the "Symantec" sub-folder. In this example, I would have two files within my "Symantec" sub-folder: Abc4205.exe which is the downloaded file and Abc4205.txt which is my description of the downloaded file.

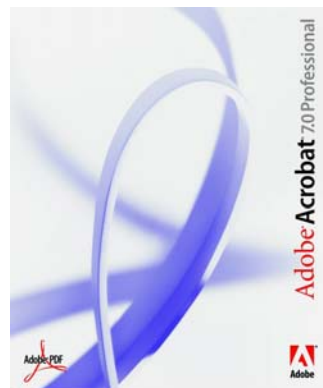
To create the text file left-click the sub-folder name (e.g. "Symantec") once. Click "File" on the Menu Bar and then point to "New." When the fly-out menu opens, click "Text File." A "New Text Document.txt" file will be placed into the subfolder. Rename the file to the download file name (without the "exe" extension). Now double-click the renamed text file to open it with Notepad. Type in your description of the download and save it.

Using the above two procedures gives you an orderly method of maintaining, identifying, and documenting your downloads.

Article rights are reserved. This article may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use by nonprofit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to David Garcia. Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn CO. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail David Garcia at littlebluepcclub@comcast.net when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

Reading Product Manuals Online

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



I'm reasonably well-organized; my wife thinks I'm a packrat (she keeps trying to sneak my '70s shirts to the thrift shop). You'd think this would mean that I can find product manuals for every appliance, gadget, PC component and software, etc., I've ever bought. That's mostly true.

But sometimes my filing system fails me. Or I've forgotten to whom I loaned something. Or someone else in the house (but I'm not naming names) has moved it. What then?

Fortunately, manufacturers are increasingly making product literature and documentation available online. While this isn't entirely out of generosity -- it reduces their customer-support workload -- it's great for consumers who can find and read the material.

A good starting place is the manufacturer's Web site. For example, I'm writing this article using a Samsung SyncMaster 912n LCD video monitor. Suppose I need to know what its control buttons do but can't find its manual. Samsung's home page <www.samsung.com> offers a button, "Download Center: Download Drivers, Manuals, Software, and Firmware". I can either enter a product model number or name, or search via product group (audio/video, computers, etc.), then product type, then product subtype, and model name.

Computers are very precise; searching took three tries, since it wanted only "912n", not "SyncMaster 912n". The manual was then available in any of 28 languages, from Bulgarian to Chinese. A PDF file (see below for explanation), it's just under three megabytes, dated about a month ago, complete, 83 pages including clickable Table of Contents. So a minute after deciding to look for it, I'm looking *at* it.

Another way to search is via Google <www.google.com> entering terms like

912n manual site: <samsung.com>, which only searches the samsung.com Web site. This took me to the right neighborhood on the Web site but left me needing a few more clicks to hit the manual. Sometimes search engine results are better than navigating within a site, so consider both techniques.

Manufacturers often update online material as mistakes or shortcomings are found in printed versions, so for important products it's worth checking Web sites occasionally. Sadly,

they also sometimes package only abbreviated versions with products, suggesting or expecting consumers to download full versions.

Either way, online manuals are also useful when considering purchases or comparing choices, since they give -- or should give! -- more complete and useful information than is printed on the box. If you're evaluating something pre-purchase, evaluate the manual's organization and quality -- Will you be able to find information you need? Will you understand it? If you're buying something used, online availability of a missing manual can make the acquisition much more pleasant.

Online manuals can be in many formats -- HTML (normal Web pages), Microsoft Word documents, PDF (Portable Document Format), and others. Each format has advantages and disadvantages. HTML is nearly universal; if you can view Web pages you can read HTML documentation. But it may be harder to download and save/organize all pieces of a large document. You'll need Microsoft Word software (or free reader) to read MS Word files. Flexible PDF is becoming the most popular online document format, but it too requires software, Adobe's Acrobat Reader, for viewing. Fortunately, this is free and easy to download/install; visit Adobe <<http://www.adobe.com/>> and click Get Adobe Reader.

Some manufacturers take a different approach, offering search tools and links within their Web sites for different material, such as overviews, tutorials, problem solving tips, even video clips illustrating usage.

Finally, LiveManuals <www.livemanuals.com> takes an interesting/interactive approach, providing interactive product demonstrations. Though it doesn't include every product -- office equipment and appliances aren't presently well represented -- the Wish List page accepts nominations for items to add.

This article originated on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>, and is copyrighted by AARP. All rights are reserved; it may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use, or by non-profit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to AARP. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail Gabe Goldberg at <gabe@gabegold.com> when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

Screen Shots

Utilities

MONTHLY FEATURE

By David Garcia, President, Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn, Colorado <petitbleu@comcast.net>

Have you ever wanted to print out what you see on your monitor screen? This is called a "Screenshot," and there are several software packages on the market that allow you to do just that with various degrees of sophistication.

If you don't need that sophistication, you can easily use Windows to get a screenshot:

- 1) Press the Print Screen Key (PrtScr) on the keyboard.
- 2) Click Start, then click Run.
- 3) Type "mspaint" (without the quotes) in the Run box and click OK.
- 4) In Paint, click Paste in the Edit menu
- 5) Click Print Preview in the File menu. If the screenshot is cut off, you may want to change the printer setting to print in Landscape mode.

- 6) Click Print and close Paint. You're done!

You can also save the file if you like:

- 1) Click "Save" in the File menu
- 2) Browse to the folder you want to save the file in so that the folder name is in the "Save In" box.
- 3) Type a file name for the screenshot; use JPG in the "Save as Type" box and click Save.

Article rights are reserved. This article may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use by nonprofit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to David Garcia. Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn CO. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail David Garcia at littlebluepcclub@comcast.net when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

GLOBAL TRAVEL TRENDS

We're Going Places!

Global Travel Trends has designed a fun, work from home, Associate Travel Agent Program, to provide an opportunity for people all over the world, a way for them to change their lives for the better.

Take advantage of tremendous savings when planning a family vacation or a romantic trip for two by visiting our website at www.greatratetravel.gttrends.net and click on the "Travel Center" button.

Rudy & Debra Flores

Associate Travel Agents

(832) 259-9910

(832) 372-4527

greatratetravel@sbcglobal.net

*** Cruise for \$40 a day**

*** All-Inclusive Resorts for \$30-\$50 a day**

*** Upgrades on Flights, Car Rentals and Hotels**

STOP PAYING RETAIL! BECOME A TRAVEL AGENT! SAVE & EARN!

TO LEARN MORE, WATCH THIS MOVIE:

www.gttmovie.com/greatratetravel

Fantasy Football

By Wayne Steen, Contributing Editor, Q BITS; Quad-Cities Computer Society, Iowa <Pythagoras78@hotmail.com>

Playing Fantasy Football allows you the opportunity to manage your own team of professional football players. You begin by drafting your own team of players from across the NFL (National Football League). Then you receive points based on your players' actual performance in NFL games. Have you ever thought that you could do a better job of running the Chicago Bears than the current management has been able to do? Well, this is your opportunity to prove yourself capable of being an NFL owner (you will have to become a multimillionaire on your own).

There are many fantasy football leagues to choose from on the Internet. For this article, I will be using the NFL's official Fantasy Football League. You can go to <<http://football.nfl.com>> to find out more about joining the Official Fantasy Football League.

You can choose between two playing options. The Fantasy Football game is for one player. After you sign up, you will name your team and you are arbitrarily assigned to play in a league by <NFL.com>. The League Manager product allows you to manage your own league of friends or co-workers.

I strongly suggest you play a season as an individual player and then be a League Manager the second year. Being a League Manager is a very time-consuming job and required experience playing Fantasy Football.

The X's and O's

First, you do not need to have been a football player to be successful playing Fantasy Football. Playing Fantasy Football is a great way to learn about the great game of football. If you have a friend or spouse who loves football, then ask him/her to help you with a Fantasy Football team. It will help you understand their passion for the game.

The screenshot shows the NFL.com Fantasy Football 2005 website. The browser window title is "NFL.com - NFL.com Fantasy Football - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://football.nfl.com/splash/football/nfl/single". The page has a navigation bar with links: Home, News, Scores, Stats, Schedules, Standings, Teams, Players, Rosters, Depth Charts. The main heading is "FANTASY FOOTBALL 2005". Below this, there's a large section titled "FREE FANTASY FOOTBALL" featuring a "FREE Fantasy Football on NFL.com" banner with a list of benefits:

- Sign-up now and get our most popular game... FREE!
- Includes FREE live/real-time scoring.
- Easy to sign-up and play.

 Other listed benefits include: FREE - Live Scoring, FREE - Private and Public Leagues, FREE - Live or Automated Draft, FREE - Expert Analysis, FREE - Up to the Minute Fantasy News, FREE - Player Ranking, FREE - Mock Drafts, FREE - League Message Boards, and FREE - E-mail Alerts. A "SIGN UP NOW" button is prominently displayed. To the right of the main banner, there's a "SIGN UP NOW!" section with the "FANTASY 2005" logo and a "Sign Up Now!" button. Below that is the "League Manager" section, which includes the "LEAGUE MANAGER 2005" logo and text about managing a league. Further down is the "Fantasy Extra" section with the "FANTASY EXTRA" logo and text about getting the inside edge. At the bottom right, there's a "Frequently Asked Questions" section and a "Fantasy Players" section with a "SUNDAY TICKET" logo.

Each league consists of 12 teams. You will manage one of the teams. You will play weekly against one of the other teams in your league.

You can sign up for Fantasy Football 2005 until 11:59:59 PM on October 8, 2005. <NFL.com>. Fantasy Football is free to play.

After signing up, you will then join a draft in which you will raft your team. IF you are new to NFL football, then you may want to ask a friend/spouse who knows football to help you with the draft. Last year I was very lucky and was able to draft Ben Roethlisberger as my quarterback. Ben was the rookie quarterback of the year for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Each team has 14 plays; therefore, you will have a fourteen round draft. Then each week during the season, you will select a starting lineup of eight players from the 14 players on your team.

The scoring system is too complicated to explain in the brief room I have for this article. There is a detailed explanation of the scoring system on the NFL.com Web site.

The twelve-team league is divided into three divisions. The winner of each division plus a wild-card team will meet in the playoffs.

The division champion with the best win-loss record will play the wild card team. The other two division champions will play each other. Then the two winners meet for the championship.

If you win the championship of your league, the next season you will be eligible to play in a special winners' league. I lost

in the playoffs last year, so I cannot tell you much about the winners' league.

You can make weekly lineup changes and can trade players during the season. This is where championships are won and lost in Fantasy Football! Trading during the season is much more important in Fantasy Football than it is in the real game. You do not have to worry about salary caps and the financial aspects of the game of pro football when playing Fantasy Football.

Conclusion

The grand prize is \$5,000 and a free trip to Super Bowl XL in Detroit. If you win the grand prize, you can take me along as your friend.

For the first time players, I recommend that you subscribe to Fantasy Football Extra. You can subscribe to Fantasy Football Extra at the same Web site as NFL Fantasy Football.

The Extra e-mail subscription keeps you up to date on NFL statistics and injuries. It also provides some useful tips on drafting and trading players. At the time this article was written, the Fantasy Football extra e-mail subscription cost \$34.95 for the football season.

Fantasy Football is a national craze and is much easier on your wallet than online poker. It is a great way to learn about the game of football.

Once you et past your rookie year of Fantasy football, then I suggest you create your own league with friends or co-workers. It is a great way to bring everyone together.

David's Essential Domains



Website Hosting Starting at \$3.95/month!

| Economy | Deluxe | Business |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| \$3.95/mo. | \$9.95/mo. | \$29.95/mo. |
| 50MB storage | 1GB storage | 2GB storage |
| 1 GB transfer | 15 GB transfer | 30 GB transfer |
| 50 e-mails | unlimited e-mails | unlimited e-mails |

Domain Names

.COMs starting at \$7.85!
FREE with every domain:

- FREE! Change of Registration
- FREE! Parked Page w/ Domain
- FREE! Domain Name Locking
- FREE! Status Alerts

Website Tonight

Click 'n build your site online, in minutes!

- Hosting is built in
- 5 Page Site - \$4.95/mo
- 10 Page Site - \$8.95/mo
- 20 Page Site - \$12.95/mo
- 100+ professional templates



SECURE SSL Certificates

Build trust, build confidence, and build your online business - with a Secure SSL Certificate!



TRAFFICBLAZER™

Prepare your site so the search engines find it!

<http://www.davidsessentialdomains.com>

Computer Problems?

**Call Now to
get your
computer
working for
you!**



Cramer's Computer Services

(Formerly known as
PCPro Computer Services)

(210) 865-2933

www.pcpro4u.com

In-Home/On-Site Service Specializing in:

- Troubleshooting & Repair
- Virus/Spy ware Detection & Removal
- Hardware Upgrades
- Networking & More



**10%
Military
& Seniors
Discount**



Bruce Cramer

Microsoft Certified Professional

Now Accepting



Selling on eBay

By Dorothy Alexander, Executive Member Sarnia Computer User's Group, Canada <www.scug.ca>

The first thing you should do is to look at the eBay site <<http://www.ebay.com>> (American site) or <<http://www.ebay.ca>> (Canadian site) and register with them. When you start selling on eBay they credit you with \$10.00 to your eBay account to get you started. You then need to reimburse them using any of the following; credit card, money order, cheque or direct bank withdrawal from your account. You will need to decide on a user name and password with the auction house.

If you are planning to use BidPay.com (Western Union) it is advisable to register with them. If you are going to use PayPal you need to register with them also.

You should look to see what your type of item is selling for and see if there is an interest in it. Make a note of the category that the other items were listed under that was similar to your item you wish to sell. For additional fees you can list in more than one area.

Take a picture of the item. It is a known fact that it sells better with a photo. You are allowed one photo (not be over 250 kb) of each item with Ebay. Each additional photo costs five cents. After you take your photo you should scan it, remove unwanted backgrounds and size it. Make sure to save the photo. Save to

an appropriate folder for easy access. I have a digital photo folder and a sub folder called "Ebay photos".

You are now ready to log onto Ebay. You need both your user name and password to do so. Location prompt is next. You can enter Sarnia or simply say Ontario or name of choice. The next prompt asks if you want it listed regionally. The reply is "DO NOT LIST REGIONALLY". The reason is that this is for U.S.A. not Canada. Then the next thing you type in is Canada in the appropriate box. Now you indicate how many days the sale will be. You can choose 3, 5 or 7 days. There is an extra 0.10 charge for a 10-day advertisement. Mark if you want a RESERVE price on item and enter the amount. There is a charge for this (see below). Sometimes this is a good idea for an expensive item that you definitely have a certain price in mind that you want to get. If there is a reserve price put on it you can start it low to get the bidding going. If you do not want to put on a reserve price start it just around the amount of money you would be willing to sell the item for: e.g. \$49.99 if you wanted at least \$50.00 for item.



The rates to list on eBay are:

Listing Price Cost to list

\$0.01 to \$0.99 0.30

\$1.00 to \$9.99 0.35

\$10.00 to 24.99 0.60

\$25.00 to \$49.99 1.20

\$50.00 to \$199.99 2.40

\$200.00 to \$499.00 3.60

\$500.00 and up 4.80

Cost to put on Reserve

\$1.00 to \$49.99 1.00

\$50.00 to \$199.99 2.00

\$200.00 & up 1% of reserve

Commissions are charged on the selling price and are as follows:

\$25.00 or less 5.25%

\$25.00 to \$1000.00 5.25% on 1st \$25.00 then 2.75% on balance

\$1000.00 plus 5.25% on 1st \$25.00, 2.75% on balance up to \$1000.00 then 1.5% on balance above \$1000.00

Give your item a title. The aim here is to make it so attractive that everyone will read it! Decide how you want to word your advertisement. Your description should be quite detailed as to what you have to offer. Next choose the category best suited for the item you wish to sell. Make sure to totally describe the item (including flaws, tears, cuts (in other words everything). If it is a garment it is a good idea to measure it, even if you know the size. Give details as to how you want payment for the goods and instructions in regard to shipping and handling. State if you will accept checks or what kind of payment you wish. All items are paid for in U.S.A. dollars unless you go on EBay Canada or specify otherwise. Make this as descriptive as possible to avoid the goods being returned for misrepresentation. You can choose font size, colour, etc. when you are doing this. This is all loaded into your ad with a prompt to see if you wish to check it for spelling or errors BEFORE completing the ad.

These are the additional charges for special services:

Home Page featured \$99.95

Feature Plus in category 19.95

Highlight 5.00

Bold 2.00

Gallery 19.95

Buy It Now 0.05

The next question you need to answer would be if you want a counter on your ad. There is no charge for this and it lets you know how many people have actually looked at your item. Then you will be

asked if you will accept escrow. I do not personally. I indicate that I will ship worldwide as I have a lot of my sales

go abroad. After you have filled out all the areas necessary you can get a preview of what you have filed in to confirm that you are happy with it. After all is OK click continue. They will tell you how much money you have left in your account before you click that you do in fact want your ad to be activated.

Now a screen will come up telling you where your ad is located and announcing that the sale has begun. You will get an e-mail, almost immediately, giving you the status of your account and listing cost of the ad that you just placed.

When your sale has been completed the buyer can put in a FEEDBACK for you, either Positive or Negative. You will see a star following your name. The colour changes at different levels and the number shows that there has been that many feedbacks entered for you. Most of the customers do this, but occasionally some do not. Of course you strive to get a positive feedback and not a negative one. New sellers have sunglasses after their name alerting the public that they are new to Ebay.

You can revise your ad but it has to be done prior to anyone making a bid on it. You can add additional information that you may have forgotten, at any time. It will be posted beneath your description in the ad.

If you do not sell an item you can re-list it for the sale again. If it sells the second time you get this listing fee returned to you.

GOOD LUCK! Have fun.

SAVE UP TO 50%



Recycle Your Toner Cartridges
As Low As \$32.95

Ink Jet Cartridges Available-Call For Pricing!

We now offer
Computer
Sales ■ Repairs ■ Upgrades

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| ★ Minority/Veteran Owned | ★ Service Guaranteed |
| ★ MasterCard/Visa Accepted | ★ Pick-up/Delivery Available |
| ★ Service Available for Most Models: Laser Printers, Copiers, Faxes | |

590-1154 ★ 4234 Center Gate
1 Block off Loop 410 East

Guerilla Strategies for eBay Buying and Selling

Just for Fun

By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Everyone's heard of eBay, even my Aunt Blossom, my only relative without a PC. I'm guessing many of you buy from eBay but haven't had the nerve to sell. Well, folks, I've been buying and selling on eBay for about a year, much of the time with great success. Over time, I've accumulated a few iron-clad strategies and a couple of rules, things that have helped me prevent getting burned either as a buyer or seller.

Fair warning: at least two tips might rub you wrong; some of you might call them unethical. I'll let you decide what's right for you. Like everything in life, in order to be successful with eBay, you need to do your home work.

Whether you're buying or selling, spend lots of time examining similar products on eBay.

My rule is to examine the price and condition of at least 20 items from at least five different sellers. If it's a high-ticket item (a set of expensive, custom-made GNP speakers, for instance), I also want to track the day and time of day when other high-end speakers sell. That way I have a good feel both for pricing and when to put my speakers up for sale.

eBay provides flexible – and powerful – searching tools. When searching for an item, use an assortment of spellings. For instance, I was looking for a charcoal barbeque, so I searched on BBQ, barbecue, barbeque, bar-be-que, b-b-q, and grill. To hone in on the right BBQ, I modified the search to ignore things I wasn't interested in seeing. Placing a minus sign in front of each of following words eliminated them completely: gas, propane, indoor, book, tongs, and smokeless.

What may not seem obvious are eBay's tremendous tracking tools. Before I sell a product, I'll watch dozens of items using the Bidding /Watching tab portion of "my eBay." I also have a dozen searches saved within the Favorites tab.

Ready for some eBay sacrilege? I think you're better off selling on eBay rather than buying. Sure there are exceptions, lots of them. You might be looking for something unique, an item you just can't get elsewhere (and willing to pay the price). For instance, I really, really, needed a CPU for an old Gateway Destination and I found it on eBay – and at a decent price.

My take? Just because it's up for auction on eBay, it doesn't mean it's going to sell at a bargain price.

But overall sellers are having a field day because there's real excitement bidding, something that often pushes up the price.

For instance, not long ago I was looking for a specific Sony DVD player and watched a dozen eBay bids. I couldn't believe what I was seeing: The lowest auction ended at \$130 plus \$22 shipping; the highest at \$140 and \$21 shipping. The price at Crutchfield, a big online discounter? \$135 with free shipping. (Sorry, you've got to do the math yourself.)

The message? Check outside of eBay for a pricing reality check.

Everyone knows to check a seller's feedback, right? What's important is you need to do more than just scan the feedback, but pay close attention to the details.

The letter "B" and "S" at the right side of each feedback listing signifies whether the person was a buyer or seller. If you're a buyer,

the feedback about the person's buying behavior, while not irrelevant, isn't as critical as his seller feedback.

Make sure to scroll through at least five pages of feedback, especially if you're buying a high-ticket item.

You can also get a better sense of a buyer or seller's attitude by viewing their feedback about others. Head for their feedback page and click on the "Feedback About Others" link.

I discovered these two strategies by accident and now use them regularly.

I was thinking about selling my car, a '95 Volvo, through eBay. I watched dozens of auto sales and the majority were successful. Yet it was a \$6000 sale so I was getting cold feet. I decided to contact potential buyers, people listed in the Bid History area of the auction page.

My goal was to find out what motivated them to buy and what dissuaded them from bidding on the car more than once. What I got was an enormous amount of valuable info. For instance, on guy said, "I only will bid on a car that has an eBay warranty on it for major problems." Another explained "Start the bidding at \$1500 in order to just get serious buyers. Nothing annoys me more than someone who starts bidding at \$1.00 on a 2001 vehicle, especially when they have a buy-it-now price in the \$20K range."

What was more exciting were these questions: "BTW - I've gotta ask...what color & how many miles?"; "I feel the urge to ask -- what kind of 95 Volvo do you have to sell, color, mileage, options etc.?"

I ended up selling the car locally, from a sign on the car that I parked in the street.

I built a small pond in the backyard, something to attract birds. I needed a submersible pump and just missed an auction. I wrote to the seller, asked if he had any more, and bought one at about \$10 less than the price it sold for at auction. I've tried that twice and both times it's worked out with a successful purchase.

Now reverse the situation. Say you have something you're about to put up for auction. You do your diligence and find a handful of similar items for sale. What's to say that after the auction's ended, you can't contact each of the non-winners (okay, losers – I was trying to be kind) and offer to sell them your item directly.

The truth is I've heard people say these methods are unethical, at least according to eBay's rules. I'm sleeping well but you'll have to make your own decision.

Listen, I've got to go. I just got a page that an auction's about to end and I have to start bidding.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Check his Home Office columns at <<http://snurl.com/homeoffice>> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at <<http://snurl.com/signup>>

The 8th Annual



October 28 - 29, 2005

9AM - 3PM

Airport Convention Center
8505 Broadway at Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas

INFORMATION CENTER

For more information call SMC Events:

Quincy Barnes Quincy@smc-events.com (210) 832-8444 ext 202

Valerie Breining valerie@smc-events.com (210) 832-8444 ext 200

presented by:



WELLMED



RMG Health Centers

Partners in Your Health

Just for Fun

If Edgar Allen Poe Used a Computer...

By TheMisanthropicMeanie



Once upon a midnight dreary, fingers cramped and vision bleary, system manuals piled high and wasted paper on the floor,

Longing for the warmth of bedsheets, still I sat there, doing spreadsheets:

Having reached the bottom line, I took a floppy from the drawer.

Typing with a steady hand, I then invoked the SAVE command and waited for the disk to store,

Only this and nothing more.

Deep into the monitor peering, long I sat there wond'ring, fearing, doubting, while the disk kept churning, turning yet to churn some more.

“Save!” I said, “You cursed devil! Save my data from before!”

One thing did the phosphors answer, only this and nothing more,

Just, “Abort, Retry, Ignore?”

Was this some occult illusion? Some maniacal intrusion? There were choices undesired, ones I'd never faced before.

Carefully, I weighed the choices as the disk made monstrous noises.

The cursor flashed, insistent, waiting, baiting me to type some more.

Clearly I must press a key, choosing one and nothing more,
From “Abort, Retry, Ignore?”

With my fingers pale and trembling, slowly toward the keyboard bending,
longing for a happy ending, hoping all would be restored,
Praying for some guarantee timidly I pressed a key.
But on the screen there still persisted, words appearing as before.
They ghastly blinked and grimly taunted, haunted, as my patience wore,
Saying “Abort, Retry, Ignore?”

I tried to catch the chips off-guard – I pressed again, but twice as hard. I
pleaded with the cursed machine: I begged and cried and then I swore.
Then I tried in desperation, Sev’ral random combinations, still there came the
incantation, just as senseless as before.
Cursor blinking, mocking, winking, flashing nonsense as before.
Reading, “Abort, Retry, Ignore?”

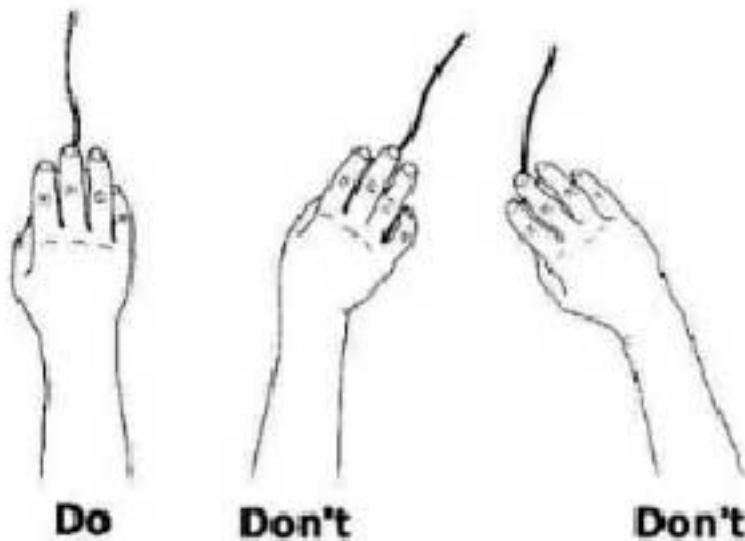
There I sat, distraught, exhausted, by my own machine accosted.
Getting up I turned away and paced across the office floor.
And then I saw a dreadful sight: a lightning bolt cut through the night.
A gasp of horror overtook me, shook me to my very core.
The lightning zapped my total data, lost and gone forevermore.
Not even “Abort, Retry, Ignore?”

Submitted by Russ Dooley

Essential Mouse Use Advice

by John R. Chait D.C., <drchait@hotmail.com> Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

1. When purchasing your mouse, make sure it fits comfortably in your hand.
2. Consider a mouse with multiple buttons.
3. Test different models of mouse, trackball or other input devices. Consider the shape and size of the devices, how comfortably it fits into your hand, ease of operation, and any special features that might make your job easier.
4. If you surf the web or edit long documents, you may want to try a mouse with a scroll wheel.
5. If you're experiencing pain or symptoms in your wrist arm or shoulder, using a trackball may help.
6. Set your mouse for single clicking instead of double clicking.
7. Use your shoulder muscles to move your mouse instead of your wrist muscles. Try to use the mouse with a sweeping movement, instead of a quick, twisting motion.
8. You'll find it easier and more comfortable to get the control you want if you're not squeezing the mouse or trackball too tightly.
9. When you use your mouse or trackball, avoid resting your wrists on your desktop.
10. Make sure your elbow next to your side with your forearm parallel to the floor or slightly bent down. Position your mouse or trackball so you do not have to reach for it.
11. Keep your wrist relaxed and straight - don't bend it up, down, or to either side. Keep your shoulders relaxed. Do not hunch or shrug.
12. Take frequent "stretch breaks" to stretch the wrist muscles at different angles.
13. Using a mouse demands a certain level of surface stability; if used on a keyboard tray, the tray should not wobble or tip.
14. Contact a Chiropractor if you experience pain, tenderness, swelling, burning, cramping, stiffness, or numbness in your fingers, hands, wrists, arms, or shoulders.



Get the Picture? Finding Free Images

By Bill Mabray APCUG Director; Columnist, *The Examiner*, Beaumont, Texas' Radio Show Host; Police Officer

Sometimes the most difficult part of building a Web site is finding the right graphics. You know what you want to say – you already have that on the page. You know exactly what it should look like – you can picture it perfectly in your mind. However, you have searched all your clip art and looked at every digital picture you have ever taken and cannot find the right image. Where do you look next? Online, of course.

You could try something like Google's Image Search <<http://images.google.com>>. This will likely give you thousands of results, but very few will be useful. That's because most artwork on the Web is copyrighted and the owners of those copyrights do not want their images used without their permission. You might think they will not mind if you use their picture for your little Web page, but you risk receiving a rather nasty letter from their attorneys.

Fortunately, there are Web sites that specialize in clip art and stock photography that are both free of cost and free of restrictions. There are also search engines and directories that specifically list free artwork.

My favorite site for free stock photography is Stock.XCHNG <<http://www.sxc.hu>>. Stock.XCHNG contains over 100,000 images, many of very high quality. The search engine is excellent – the photographers who upload their pictures add keywords to each photo so you can find what you are looking for.

If you are looking for more cartoon-style clip art, TigerDirect Clip Art <<http://www.tigerdirectart.com>> offers thousands of images. They cover a wide range of subjects, including sports, animals, and holidays. TigerDirect also has a wide variety of page borders and fonts.

There are many sites similar to these two, including Image * After <<http://www.imageafter.com>> and Visipix <<http://www.visipix.com>>. When you look for stock photography or clip art sites, be sure they say their images are “royalty free.” This means you can use them as often as you want. Always read the terms of use, because some sites do have restrictions – they may want you to link back to their Web site, or they may not allow commercial use of their works.

Besides these collections, you can find free images by looking for art with a Creative Commons <<http://creativecommons.org>> license. Artists who want to allow limited free use of their works will release them under one of the Creative Commons (CC) licenses so others will know how the works can be used. The Creative Commons Web site offers many ways to find CC-licensed material. Similarly, Yahoo offers a CC search <<http://search.yahoo.com/cc>> to find free artwork on the Web. Flickr, an online photo organizer, allows people to apply CC licenses to their pictures. By visiting the Flickr Creative Commons Pool <<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons>> you can find photos according to the particular license you are looking for.

Now you should be able to find that perfect image you need. And, if you don't yet know what your Web site is going to look like, browsing a few of these sites should inspire you. Inspiration is always free.

Websites:

Stock.XCHNG

<<http://www.sxc.hu>>

TigerDirect Clip Art

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

Image * After

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

Visipix

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

Creative Commons

<<http://creativecommons.org>>

Yahoo! Creative Commons

<<http://search.yahoo.com/cc>>

Flickr Creative Commons Pool

<<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons>>



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.

Computer Crimes

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Net Blue, by Glen C. Allison

Trade Paperback,
Yoke Press, 2004,
\$14.95, 250 pages

Al Forte, a recovering cocaine addict and former Navy SEAL, runs an agency that protects children in danger. While his attention is focused on protecting a boy who is under threat from the mafia he is called into a case involving a precocious 14-year-old girl who disappears after meeting a man she met in an Internet chat room.

The New Orleans setting was poignant, as I read this just a few weeks after the city was destroyed by Katrina; there's even a long episode at the Superdome. Especially vivid plot line about the danger of teenage girls and their vulnerability to Internet stalkers and a

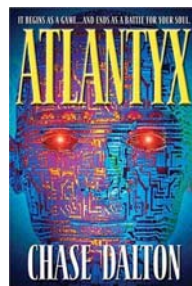


parallel story about a mafia computer guru who embezzled from his boss, placing his young son in danger. Don't blink or you'll miss the nice techno-touch of a pedophile checking the video on his home security system via a laptop hooked into the Internet via cell phone. Nice book – made me want to read Miscue, the first novel in this promising series.

Atlantyx, by Chase Dalton

Trade paperback,
Thomas Nelson, 2002,
\$14.99, 249 pages

Valerie Russell's master's thesis at Denver University is about computer game addiction, and she quickly is drawn into the mystery surrounding the disappearance of a student whose life revolves around Atlantyx. She quickly figures out that Atlantyx is more than a game: rich

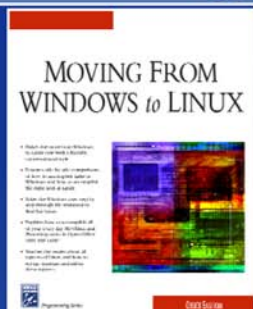


players combine the virtual reality experience with a designer drug that heightens their experience. The game company will stop at nothing to keep the money rolling in and hide the drug reaction that sends some of the players into a catatonic state.

This is a compelling idea: co-marketing of a computer game and a reality-enhancing drug. To get to the play online and take drug stage, players have to earn their chops in the arcade version of the game – also a nice touch. It's a fast-moving plot with lots of gaming sequences. This is Christian fiction – not my favorite genre – but the prayer life of the characters is integrated nicely into the plot and doesn't slow down the action.

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 darnest to keep the recommended books in stock.

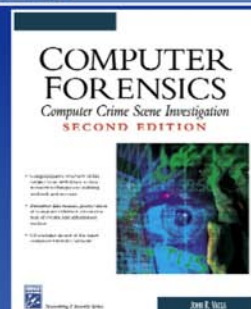
COMPUTER BOOKS THAT DELIVER



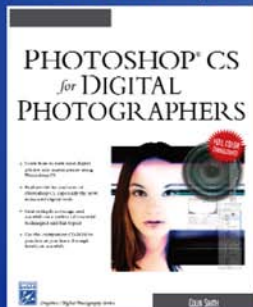
1-58450-280-0 \$44.95



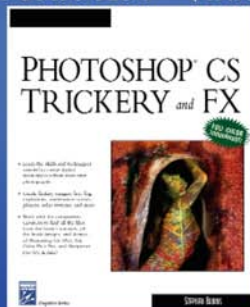
1-58450-328-9 \$49.95



1-58450-389-0 \$49.95



1-58450-321-1 \$39.95



1-58450-297-5 \$39.95



1-58450-387-4 \$41.95



20% OFF AT WWW.CHARLESRIVER.COM

ALSO AVAILABLE AT AMAZON, BARNES & NOBLE, BORDERS, AND OTHER FINE RETAILERS.



Book Review

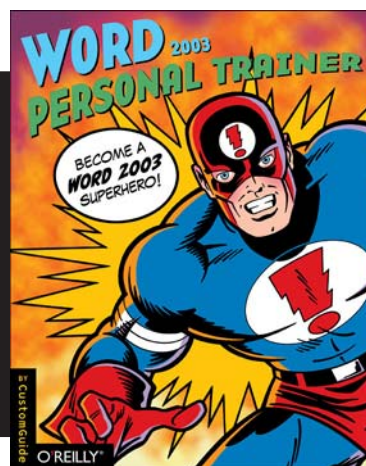
Word 2003 Personal Trainer

\$29.95

By CustomGuide Inc

Published by O'Reilly

Reviewed by Mei Haenze



Word 2003 Personal Trainer, by CustomGuide, Inc., and O'Reilly Media, Inc. is a guide to all the secrets of using Word 2003 like a professional. It includes a CD with a Word 2003 simulator, so that the reader does not have to have the program already installed. Each lesson is written as an exercise, with step-by-step instructions to be worked with the simulator, including the expected result.

The book is very well written. It does not assume that the reader knows anything; as it states, the first time the reader is told to click something, a picture of the icon is included, so that the reader knows exactly what to click. It also shows several different ways to perform the same action; although the book primarily uses menus and toolbars, it also includes keystroke and right mouse button shortcuts when it can. A Quick Reference, restating the main steps, follows each exercise. Exercises also have tips (supplementary information) and notes (warnings of things to watch out for).

The book starts at the simplest level: how to turn on the computer. It then goes on to creating a new document, including inserting and deleting text, selecting and replacing text, and saving the document.

The book has 15 chapters: the Fundamentals; Working with and Editing Text; Formatting Characters and Paragraphs; Formatting Pages; Working with Tables; Working with Templates and Styles; Drawing and Working with Graphics; Performing a Mail Merge; Document Collaboration; Working with Outlines and Long Documents; Working with WordArt and Charts; Working with Other Programs; Working with Forms; Creating Web Pages with Word; and Advanced Topics. Each chapter has a Review, which includes a Lesson Summary, Quiz (with Answers), and Homework.

Since I used Word extensively in my work as a technical editor, I skipped the preliminary chapters. I primarily previewed the chapters that dealt with documentation (Document Collaboration and Working with Outlines and Long Documents), subjects with which, theoretically, I was well acquainted. The chapters were very well written; I learned how to do several things that I had not known before (including some I probably should have). I also learned why some things that I had been doing worked, and learned new ways to do some tasks.

One problem I noticed was incorrect icons shown. I found a couple of instances where the icon pictured did not match the actual icon that should be used. It was very easy to figure out the correct icon from the context, but care must be taken not to be confused.

Overall, I was very impressed with "Word 2003 Personal Trainer". I know it will be a great help to me in my future work.

Mei Haenze is presently living with her parents while looking for a position as a Technical Writer/Editor. She previously worked as Technical Editor for a software development company, on contract with NASA.

Relax
and let us
do your taxes

We Specialize in individual &
small business tax preparation

Laura B. Grover, E.A.
Tax Preparation & Financial Consulting
14350 Northbrook Drive, Suite 240
San Antonio, TX 78232
210/402-6100
FAX 210/402-2888
laurab@lauragrover.com www.lauragrover.com

23 years
in public
service

Enrolled to practice before the Internal Revenue

Book Review

Photoshop Masking & Compositing

by Katrin Eismann

\$54.99

Published by New Riders

Reviewed by John Donan, North Orange County Computer Club



I'm forever learning Photoshop, as is the case with every Photoshop user I know. As such I scour every Photoshop book I own for added tidbits. The Katrin Eismann books have contributed more to my learning than any other and it is from this viewpoint that I will discuss this book, highlighting some of the things which might be of interest to others. (Katrin states in her introduction that, after 14 years with Photoshop, she has still learned in writing this book.)

My book fell open to chapter three and, bang, there she showed that selected parts within a multilayered composite, revealing a coarse contour, can be refined by employing a Gaussian Blur to soften the edges of a Quick Mask. She says, "Using your Photoshop discretion to refine selection edges requires some practice and a critical eye. But believe me, making a good edge is so much better than trying to fix a bad edge with" "The book has thirteen chapters, covering 519 pages, organized into four parts: Selection Tools, Layers and Masks, Fine Details and Subjective and Objective Compositing. There are 1,070 single and multi-part illustrations, an average of more than two to a page. (At 1000 words per picture that's over a million words.) There are twenty contributors identified in the Appendix, links to their works are given there. As with other of her books, there is a dedicated website www.photomasking.com with ancillary information, such as images used for examples in the book. Because of proprietary issues, many figures shown in the book are not available.

The first part gives a history of this art form (composites) although many other applications of multilayer techniques are covered later on. There are twenty one pages addressing the set up to be considered at the start of any project, one of them is interpolation.

PhotoshopCS now has two new methods of interpolation, Bicubic Smoother and Bicubic Sharper. She identifies their recommended use as Smoother for making an image larger and Sharper when reducing (down sampling) an image. The default interpolation setting, which applies to such things as Free Transform, is set via the Preferences menu and should be Bicubic. Settings recommended for the eight sub-menus of Preferences are thoroughly covered, as well as color settings and management.

There are sixty three Tips, Notes and Cautions sprinkled throughout the book. As an example, where Display and Cursors settings are discussed there appears, "Tip: You can always access a precise crosshair cursor by pressing the Caps Lock key. To return to your regular cursor, simply press Caps Lock again." This is something I didn't know or had run across, not used and forgotten. The magnitude of things that can be done in Photoshop is so overwhelming that pointers such as

these are of great benefit. One can sharpen his skills by just going through the book and checking the tips.

She has a thorough coverage of layer, channel, and vector masks. The reader can participate here in four examples employing eight images provided on her website. Katrin notes that there are four essential skills needed by an accomplished Photoshop user.

Besides masking, they are managing color (covered in her previous book Photoshop Restoration and Retouching,) making selections and working with layers. There is one chapter devoted to both image layers and effect layers, with hands on examples possible for the reader. Photoshop can accommodate 800 such layers. The second part concludes claiming "the soul of Photoshop," is the layer mask, whereby one can move, hide, blend, conceal and experiment with image combinations without the risk of losing so much as a single pixel. There were two examples here that caught my interest, they had multiple images of the same scene photographed on a tripod and then combined. One was made for different color temperatures to correctly combine interior and daylight illuminations. The other



Fig. 1 This composite created after September 11, 2001 reduced the size of the people to exaggerate the flag. © Mark Beckelman Photography

was a combination of seven different exposures of a building taken over a three hour period till sunset.

At least forty percent of the book is dedicated to the fine points of making and using selections. It categorizes five types, each requiring different tools and techniques. In the third part of the book, there is emphasis on capturing fine detail such as hair and also placing selections on another background. A recommendation was made here that one should consider acquiring a library of backgrounds. At this point I was introduced to Photoshop's new Shadow/Highlight which the author used in creating a mask. The techniques beyond fine details cover capturing translucence, smoke, flame, flowing cloth etc.

Finally we come to the considerations to be made in creating composites. First you must have some sort of a plan. You have to know what you want to do. If you create through your camera you must have all the props equipment and participants in line. There has to be consistency within the composite regarding perspective, scaling, illumination and camera technique.

Where photorealism is desired, the result must be accepted as real by the viewer. An example of this showed a heart forming in the bubbles of a glass of beer. It took twelve layers to accomplish this. The book addresses photographic deficiencies. E.g., Photoshop now has a Lens Blur filter. There are other techniques for taming distracting elements. The last chapter shows examples of creativity. Since creativity comes from within, I accept this as what can be done. Not what can be copied. Katrin Eismann is world famous as a lecturer, author, and educator. Her books are written so that they are easy to read and easy to understand. Photoshop Masking & Compositing (ISBN#: 0-7357-1279-4) is published by New Riders Publishing. List Price is \$54.99. Its price throughout the Internet is \$37.39.

Do I recommend it? Yes! Is it a bargain? Yes! It can self teach and costs close to half the tuition of a three-unit Community College course, requiring, in addition, a much more expensive and inferior text usually selected by the head of the campus bookstore.

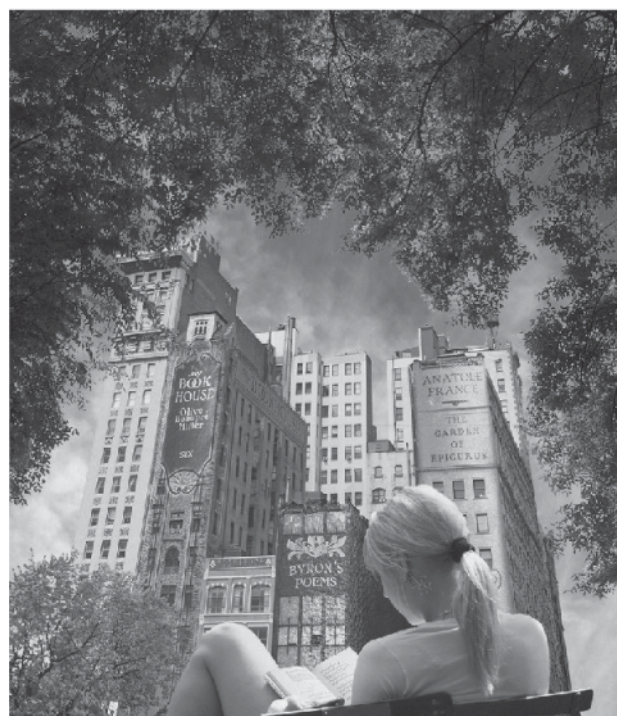


Fig 2 A poster for a fictitious City of Books festival in downtown New York required that each of its elements be photographed with consistent lighting and combined with proper perspective. © Mark Beckelman Photography



**Compatible
inkjet Cartridges
starting at \$5**

www.tdinksales.com
tdinksales@satx.rr.com

L & M Bookstore
1716 N. Main Ave.

Qwik Pack & Ship
1205 N. Loop 1604 W Suite 221

Great Northwest Postal Center
8745 Grissom Road

American Shipping & Mail Boxes
8452 Fredericksburg Rd

Ink Spot
6420A Bandera Road

Alamo PC Organization

now offers members
private or semi-private tutorials

🖱️

🖱️ **Keyboarding/Typing**

🖱️ **Basic Computer Skills**

🖱️ **Microsoft Word**

🖱️

Rates for one student
\$35 per hour
\$300 for 10 hours

Rates for two or three students
\$20 per student per hour
\$150 per student for 10 hours

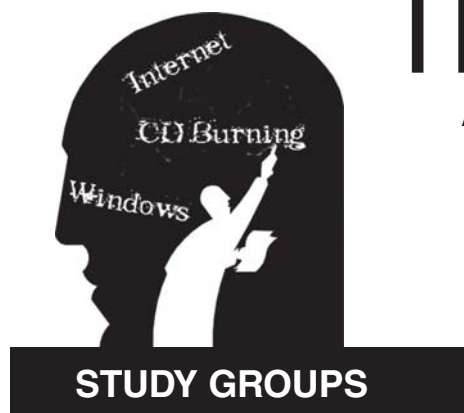
🖱️

Enjoy private instruction on days and at hours
that fit **your** schedule at our modern facility in
Crossroads Mall.

Call or visit the Learning Center to register
(210) 736-0080

October 2005

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| | Calendar is subject to change, Please call the Learning Center 736-0700 or visit the online calendar listing at <http://alamopc.org/calendar.html> | | | | | |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| (Sr. Comp. p/r class 4 of 6) Intro to Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M. | BOD 6:30 P.M. Word 2000 7 - 9 P.M. | (p/r class 1 of 4) Bid with Confidence Intro to Internet Auctioning 7 - 9 P.M. | Sr. Comp. Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 1 of 4) Photoshop 7 Personal Playing Cards 1 - 5 P.M. (a/r) HGSI 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Met 7 - 9 P.M. | (a/r) Small Business Server 2003 8 - 10 A.M. Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 1 of 8) Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. (p/r) PC Alamode Magazine Adobe PDF 7 - 9 P.M. | (p/r) Photo Editing 8 - 10 A.M. Introduction to MS Access 8 A.M. - Noon (a/r) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon (p/r) Photo Editing 10 A.M. - Noon (p/r) Photo Editing 12:30 - 2:30 P.M. Commodore 1 - 4 P.M. (p/r class 8 of 8) HTML 4 - 8 P.M. | (a/r) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 3 of 3) Computer Lit 1 - 3 P.M. C++ + 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. (p/r class 4 of 6) HTML 4 - 8 P.M. |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| (Sr. Comp. p/r class 5 of 6) Intro to Windows XP (Moved to Oct 24) Tax aid training (classroom 2) 9 - Noon and 1 - 4 P.M. General Meeting Crossroads 7 - 9 P.M. Convention Center Presenter: Linspire (Linux) | (p/r) Small Business Server Certification 6 - 9 P.M. Word 2000 7 - 9 P.M. | Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. p/r class 1 of 6) Basic Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. p/r class 1 of 6) Intro to Windows 1 - 3 P.M. Jumpstart Your Home Page 5:30 - 7 P.M. (p/r class 2 of 4) Intro to Learning Easy 7 - 9 P.M. | Sr. Comp. Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 2 of 4) Photoshop 7 Personal Playing Cards 1 - 5 P.M. | Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 2 of 8) Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. | Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 3 of 8) Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. | Introduction to MS Access (Class 2 of 4) 8 A.M. - Noon (a/r) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 1 of 3) Computer Lit 1 P.M. - 3 P.M. C++ + 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. (p/r class 6 of 6) HTML 4 - 8 P.M. |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| (Sr. Comp. p/r class 6 of 6) Intro to Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. Tax aid training (classroom 2) 9 - Noon and 1 - 4 P.M. | (p/r) Small Business Server Certification 6 - 9 P.M. Word 2000 7 - 9 P.M. | (Sr. Comp. p/r class 2 of 6) Basic Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. p/r class 2 of 6) Intro to Windows 1 - 3 P.M. | Sr. Comp. Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 3 of 4) Photoshop 7 Personal Playing Cards 1 - 5 P.M. | Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 3 of 8) Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. | Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 4 of 8) Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. | Introduction to MS Access (Class 3 of 4) 8 A.M. - Noon (a/r) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 2 of 3) Computer Lit 1 P.M. - 3 P.M. Sr. Comp. Staff Meeting 1:30 - 3 P.M. Desk Staff Meeting 3 - 4 P.M. |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| (p/r class 2 of 2) Internet Jumpstart 2 - 5 P.M. | (Sr. Comp. p/r class 6 of 6) Intro to Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. CorelDRAW 6 - 8 P.M. | (Sr. Comp. p/r class 1 of 6) Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon (p/r) Small Business Server Certification 6 - 9 P.M. Word 2000 7 - 9 P.M. | (Sr. Comp. p/r class 3 of 6) Basic Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 4 of 4) Bid with Confidence Intro to Internet Auctioning 7 - 9 P.M. (a/r) WordPerfect 7 - 9 P.M. | Sr. Comp. Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 4 of 4) Photoshop 7 Personal Playing Cards 1 - 5 P.M. Advanced Access 7 - 9 P.M. (Dot) NetNuke Portal 7 - 9 P.M. | Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 4 of 8) Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. | Introduction to MS Access (Class 4 of 4) 8 A.M. - Noon (a/r) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon (p/r class 3 of 3) Computer Lit 1 P.M. - 3 P.M. |
| 30 | 31 | Alamopc Organization | | | | |



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 becomes 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 each month in the UBS Conference Room, in Suite 300 at 200 Concord Plaza Drive, 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

This is a study group for those interested in developing Windows and Web applications using Microsoft's .NET technology. We will use development modules and applications for the DNN Portal using VB.NET and C# as a basis for demonstrating .Net development. Guest speakers occasionally present new technology and development tools available for .Net Developers. Door prizes (books, software, shirts, etc.) are distributed at most meetings.

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

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', is currently studying Microsoft's new ISA Server 2004 in anticipation of it's being included in the soon to be released Service Pack 1 for Small

Business Server 2003. The SIG meets every Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. Space is limited and the subject matter is very advanced. Therefore membership is restricted. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

Contact: 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

Small Business Server Study Group

The Alamo PC Organization Small Business Server Special Interest Group (APCO SBS SIG) celebrated its first birthday on Friday, July 8th. We had a record turnout of 24 despite several 'regulars' having to be out of town or taking care of clients. The technical portion was a brief discussion of how to configure Internet Over the Internet (RPC over HTTP).

Our next meeting will be on Friday, August 5th. After the Taco Social we will have a discussion of WSUS, Windows Software Update Services.

For more information, please contact group chair, Larry Lentz at Larry@LentzComputer.net, or visit the group web site at <http://www.LentzComputer.net/SBS.>

Small Business Server Certification Study Group

The SBS Certification Study Group will focus on presentation of material related to Microsoft's Small Business Server Exam Preparation. The target audience includes computer consultants, and network administrators holding advanced Microsoft certifications MCP and MCSE. Experience with small business server product support is important. Due to the anticipated pace of the class and complexity of material, attendees should have previously passed an advanced Microsoft Server Certification Exam (MCP or MCSE) and be experienced and competent with SBS Win2000 or SBS Win2003.

Contact: Ed or Therese Weitz for information and registration.

Phone 210-946-4700 or e-mail <ed22@satx.rr.com>

When: Tuesdays, 6-9 pm

We will not meet on the Tuesday when the Alamo PC board meets

Where: Learning Center

Technical Rating Code: ★★★★★

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 Study Group is intended for intermediate to advanced users - those who are now on the Internet and want to learn more. Each month a different Internet application will be discussed, such as 64 bit computers, SATA HDD technology, DSL and direct cable broadband connectivity, e-mail, browser use, MS Outlook, and virus protection in communications. This is a good place to share interests and insights about your experiences on the World Wide Web.

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

When: 2nd Wednesday, 10am-noon

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: No
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.

Contact: Cynthia Thompson
210-655-1058

When: 4th Wednesday, 7-9pm

Where: Call Cynthia for directions

Pre-registration: Yes - Call Cynthia
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

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 an understanding of surfing the web and using email. The course prepares students to enroll in a variety of second-level courses.

Contact: Ruben Sanchez

When: Sat. Aug 20, 27, Sep 3 1-3 pm

Sat. Sep 17, 24, Oct 1 1-3 pm

Sat. Oct 15, 22, 29 1-3 pm

Where: Resource Center

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

DotNetNuke Portal Study Group

Learn DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website. Focus on hands-on configuration and use of the DNN 3.x portal. The class will discuss the portal framework and configuration of a DNN site. Setup web pages, insert modules on the pages, modify and edit the look of the pages and data in the pages. Modules include Calendar, Announcements, Forums, Blogs, Contacts, Links, Surveys and HTML.

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

When: 7PM - 9PM Sept. 29, Oct. 27 (no November or December meeting)

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating: ★

FREE CLASSES

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
<stephentechnr@yahoo.com>
210-675-2880

When: 4th Monday, 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★

APCO Retro (Antique Computer Users Group)

We're initially only going to meet online, through the mailing list I've established using Yahoo! Groups. Membership is limited to Alamo PC members, but anyone can join the list by sending a message to <apcoretro-subscribe@yahoo.com>." Or, if you're reading the electronic version of the PC Alamo where this text appears, you can join APCO Retro simply by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apcoretro/join>

Contact: Shane Hicks

<shane@absolute-power-computing.com>

When: Anytime

Where: Cyberspace

Pre-registration: Must sign-up on
<APCORETRO@yahoo.com>
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, etc.) 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

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

HTML and Beyond 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. Students should attend the Home Page Jumpstart Class and have familiarity with the Windows Operating System. The Six (to Eight if needed) Session class will begin a new cycle each March and September.

Contact: Mike Bianchi
<webmaster@alamopc.org>

When: Saturdays, 4-8 pm

Where: Learning Center

Prerequisite: Home Page Jumpstart Class, 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 Sunday of even numbered months, 2pm - 5pm.

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Desired, but walk-ins are welcome
Technical Rating ★

Introduction to Photo Editing

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

No Class in June, will resume in July

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

PINNACLE STUDIO PLUS

Learn how to edit your home videos on Pinnacle's Studio Plus Version 9 and make it look like it was done by a pro.

Contact: Learning Center
(210) 736-0080

When: 7 to 9 pm, September 14, 15, 16 or 7 to 9 pm, September 21, 22, 23

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes
Technical Rating ★

Power Point class

This course features a structured curriculum for Microsoft PowerPoint. Students will be introduced to PowerPoint and will experience hands on development of an entertaining PowerPoint presentation. Emphasis will be placed on Inserting Graphics, Text, Layout, Titles and Slide Transitions. Students will also learn to modify their presentations through Adding Sounds, Multimedia Movies and Timing.

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: Dates and time to be announced

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 Sundays of odd numbered months, 2pm-5pm.

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: Ruben Sanchez

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

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes, call Learning Center at 736-0080

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

FEE-BASED CLASSES

Photoshop Elements & Photoshop 7 Class - \$

2005 Schedule:

September - each Friday 1 - 5

Elements workshop for all students who have previously taken the Elements 2 instruction classes. Fee \$20.00; Registration required

October - each Thursday 1pm-5pm

Special Playing Cards class; learn to create your own personal playing cards for anyone who has previously taken Photoshop 7 or Elements 2 instruction classes; Fee \$20.00; registration required; bring photos; small laminating machine and pouches required.

November - each Thursday 1pm-5pm

Calendar Class; learn to make personal calendars for friends & family; bring photos; fee \$20.00; registration required

October through November -

Photoshop 7 classes - 8 weeks on Fridays, 1 to 5 p.m.

The course will teach you how to modify and combine images to create realistic composite images.

When: Fridays 1-5 pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$90 Alamo PC members (includes textbook) \$20 for Previous Students to retake the same class

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

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Contact: Beverly Bihn

<bihndolls@att.net>

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: Saturdays, October 8, 15, 22, 29, 8:00 - Noon

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

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.

Step One

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.

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 0 | ACT! | 28 | Quattro Pro |
| 1 | Access | 29 | Quick Books |
| 2 | AlphaFour | 30 | Quicken |
| 6 | dBase | 31 | Photo Album |
| 7 | Delphi | 32 | Windows 98 |
| 8 | Dreamweaver 3 | 35 | WinFax Pro |
| 9 | Networking | 36 | MS Word Windows |
| 10 | Excel | 37 | WordPerfect |
| 11 | Family Origins for Win. | 39 | Visual Basic |
| 12 | FrontPage 98 | 40 | Internet Explorer |
| 13 | Flash 4 | 41 | MS Outlook Express |
| 14 | Genealogy | 42 | Home Help |
| 16 | RoadRunner | 43 | Hardware |
| 18 | MS Publisher | 44 | OpenOffice |
| 21 | Paradox | 45 | Time&Chaos |
| 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 |


Advertisers Index

| | |
|--|-----|
| BJ Associates of San Antonio | 17 |
| Charles River Media | 56 |
| Computer Experts | 42 |
| Computer Fest | 11 |
| David's Essential Domains | 47 |
| Global Travel Trends | 27 |
| Holiday Ink | 59 |
| Inksell | IFC |
| Laura B. Grover, E.A. | 57 |
| New Life Toner | IFC |
| PC Pro | 47 |
| SA PC Help | 41 |
| Senior Lifestyle Show | 51 |
| Texas Recharge & Toner Company | 49 |
| United Service Association for Health Care | 39 |
| Water Ware | 57 |

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** 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: <joecool@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



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

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 you 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.

