

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

PODCASTING ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

April 2006

\$4.00

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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:

membership@alamopc.org

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Learning Center number **210.736.0700**

If you have comments about classes call

Linda Bianchi **210.226.2460**

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:

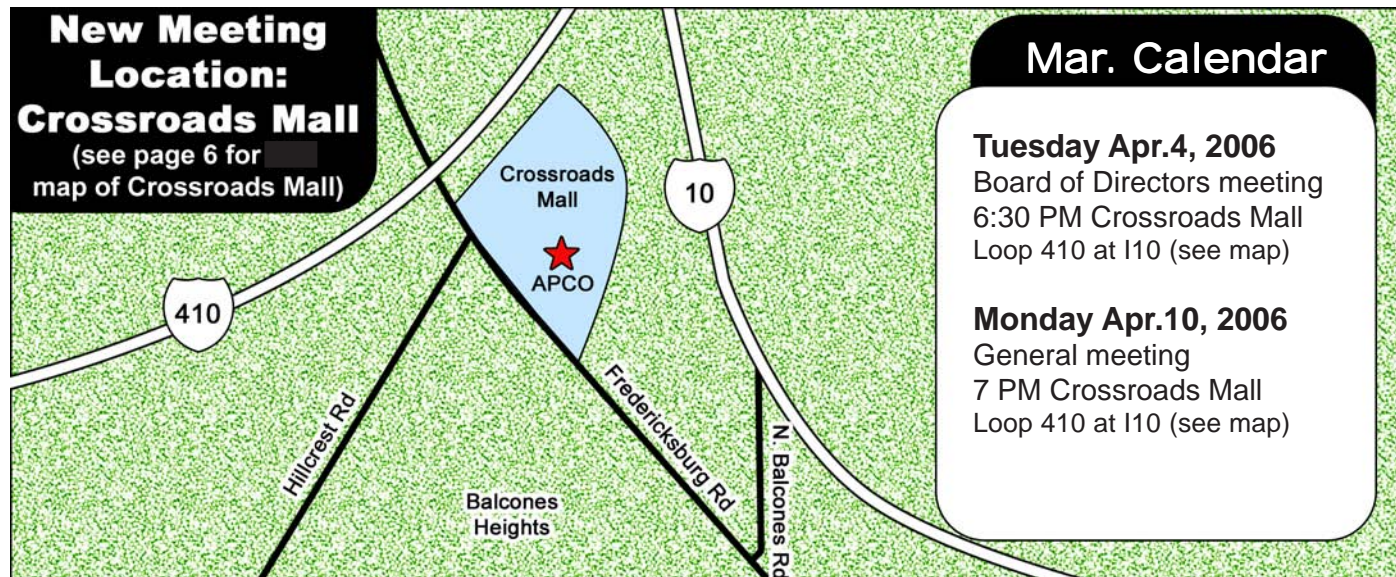
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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)



Mar. Calendar

Tuesday Apr.4, 2006
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Apr.10, 2006
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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PC Alamode

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

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Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode

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Ad rates effective January 2005

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Quarter pg.(3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37

*Consecutive months

**To be paid in advance

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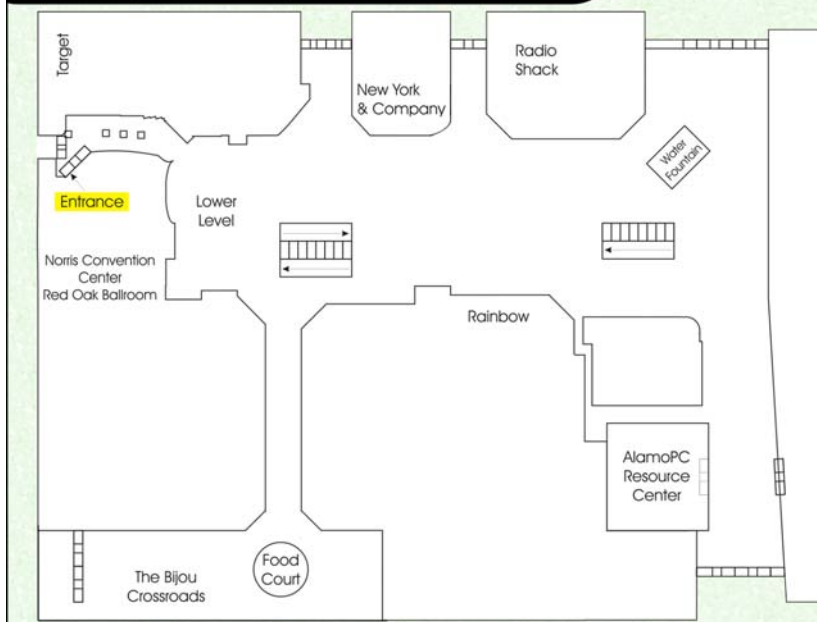
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For Study Groups and Classes or for SeniorComp classes, phone: 736-0080

Crossroads Mall (lower level)

(See page 3 for map to Crossroads Mall)



New Meeting Location

We are now meeting in the lower level of the mall near Target in the new Crossroads Convention Center. The new meeting location is on the opposite side of the mall as the Learning Center.

For more information, call the Learning Center at 736-0700.

PC Alamode Links List



Medicine Net

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

Medical information and consumer reports contributed by over 50 doctors and health professionals.



Origin Search

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

This genealogy search engine is designed to find web pages that contain genealogical information and covers over 400 million names from around the world. The service launched in August 2002. This is a subscription service.



Special Features

Both Bill Klutz and David Steward attended the Consumer Electronics Show this year. Last month Bill gave us a description of what it was like. Bill follows up with part 2 of his experience. This month, David writes about his experience with APCUG. Check both articles out in the Special Features section starting on page 32.

Bill also compiled a special report prompted by last month's general meeting by FBI Special Agent John Wood. Special Agent Wood led a discussion about identity theft and other cyber crime issues. Bill collected other articles and information to create a definitive source on this growing topic.

New Content

There are several new additions to this month's PC Alamode. On page 12, Funny Bytes is taking the place of the Geeky Gourmet. Funny Bytes will feature technology cartoons by artists such as Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen. You will also notice a new column.

Business Solutions on page 22 covers business topics using Microsoft Excel. James Duncan is a CPA and a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. This month, James addresses automating VBA scripts with Excel.

Learning Center Section

The Help Numbers portion of the Learning Center Section is currently under revision. Several of the numbers are incorrect and some of the members listed are no longer available to help. Please look for an updated list in May.

It has been several issues since the PC Alamode has featured any new classified ads. Please remember, members may place an unlimited number of classified ads to help sell, buy or trade any computer-related items. There is no charge for this service, so please take advantage!

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for 8 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

"Tax Time!"

We start the month off with "April Fools Day" on the first day of the month. It seems fitting because April 17th is the deadline for filing an individual 2005 tax return, unless an extension is requested. (This year the 15th is on a Saturday so the government gives folks until midnight on the next business day - Monday - to get the tax forms submitted.)

I say "April Fools Day" is fitting because some will try to fool the tax folks with deductions that are questionable. I am afraid more will be fooled by the plethora of tax instructions and information that is often confusing for most. Perhaps it is the way the government generates extra funds. (You will never know you overpaid if you can't follow the confusing instructions provided.) You might consider one of the tax software programs that are available. They generally remind you of almost every deduction you should be considering. Beyond that you may need a tax attorney to do the more complicated return.

Hope everyone get every deduction you are entitled to take. If you made a donation to Alamo PC last year we profoundly "Thank You!", but be sure you don't forget to take the deduction you deserve.

Computer Show

If you missed the computer show at the Live Oak Civic Center, you will have to wait about 3 months for the next one. Vendors usually can provide some good deals, depending on what you are looking for. The admission is \$5, but for those who worked the Alamo PC booth got in for free. Maybe that will provide an incentive for others, when we call for volunteers for the next show. I want to say "Thanks!" to those who worked the recent show, and for your help in providing the organization with some new members.

FBI Presentation

Special Agent John Wood provided a presentation on identity theft, fraud, and scams at the March general meeting. This is a growing concern, and does not appear to be around for the short term. (I plan on working up a general article on these areas of concern. Perhaps it will be finished in time for this issue.)

April General Meeting

Members whose address is current, or who still have a valid "Forward Window" (about 6 months after a move) should receive a post card announcing the April general meeting. COREL (home based in Canada) will be here to show off the latest versions of CORELDraw X3 and WordPerfect Office X3 (a suite of software). The show starts at 7 PM, so come early to get a good seat. There will be lots of valuable prizes and the Secret Code that can get you a Deep User Group Discount when you buy software from the COREL Web site. (For more information or to register for one of our COREL classes, or other classes offered, call the Learning Center @ 210-736-0700.)

Server Problems

As I mentioned last month, we have recently had server problems, caused by one or more outside sources trying to gain access to information reserved for members. With continuous attempts, in rapid succession, the server will eventually

take itself offline and has had to be manually restarted. During the down time, members cannot access the member's area (where the PC Alamode is maintained). The "Tech Staff" has tried to resolve this problem, and it appears action taken thus far has substantially reduced the down time. The "Tech Staff" is continuing to work the problem and hopes to have a solution soon that will reduce the down time to near zero. But, with the increase in "identity theft, viruses, hacker activity, etc." I am afraid problems of this nature are going to be with the computer community for some time, and will probably only get worse before they get better.

Keep Alamo PC informed

Make sure that your member info is current, especially your E-Mail address (update both on the web-site, via "members" password protected section). That will allow us to send out a renewal reminder about two months early, without cost to the organization. Again, please try to keep track of when your membership expires, and renew well in advance, to save the organization a notification expense and someone's time preparing the correspondence. If you are able, attend some of the monthly general meetings where presenters provide information about current and future computer related issues, plus other things that may be related to computers and computer users. By attending, you also have the opportunity to go home with free product that is often distributed by the presenter and/or receive limited time discounts. If you know of someone who may be able to provide a presentation on computer related issues, let me know. It may be of great value to you and other members of this organization.

Membership renewals

We still are 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 account <president@alamopc.org> or privately <wkklutzjr@juno.com>. Also, if you have anything (comment, question, statement, concern), please make someone aware of it (preferably me). I welcome all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

I hope the information I previously presented about our award winning magazine (a 1st place at CES in Jan 2006) will keep you interested in the organization and help you to find some prospective members. Also, the classes and "Dr. Is In" are also winners that more people need to know about. Hope you can try to help the Alamo PC Organization, in some additional ways during the coming year.

I hope everyone had a good Spring break and will be rejuvenated enough to come to the April General Meeting. I don't think you will regret the decision, especially if you go home with one of the free software packages that the COREL folks plan on making available to lucky winners.

April Program

David Steward

Corel presenters to showcase CorelDraw and Corel WordPerfect



April will again, be a very special month for the members of the Alamo PC Organization. At the April General Meeting, we will be visited by one of the finest and most widely known companies in North America. Yes, I am talking about Corel. Robert MacDonald and Tanya Lux will bring the Corel show to our meeting.

Robert MacDonald brings over five years of experience with Corel products from several different roles within the company. From his time as a sales engineer to his current role as the manager of the product training team, Rob really understands what makes his audience tick. His down to earth attitude and passion for Corel products really shines through.

Tanya Lux is an enthusiastic presenter with a flair for making her audience smile. As a product specialist, she has the opportunity to travel the world, meet customers, conduct seminars,

and chat with user groups. With years experience with Corel products, she brings a wide breath of knowledge to the table.

Rob and Tanya will be showing us the just released versions of both Corel Draw 13 AND Corel WordPerfect Office 13. Loaded with new features, either of these packages are "must haves" for our members.

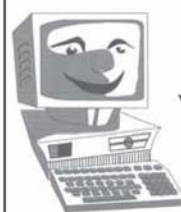
In addition, they will show us how to get all of Corel products at great user group discounts. Since they will be showing both products, it might be a rather long meeting, but worth it. And, of course, there will be door prizes and other goodies.

So, if you want to see one of the year's best presentations, plan on being at the Cross Roads Convention Center at 7:00 PM on 10th. Come early, as all of the best seats will go quickly. And who knows, there might even be a surprise at the meeting. See ya there.

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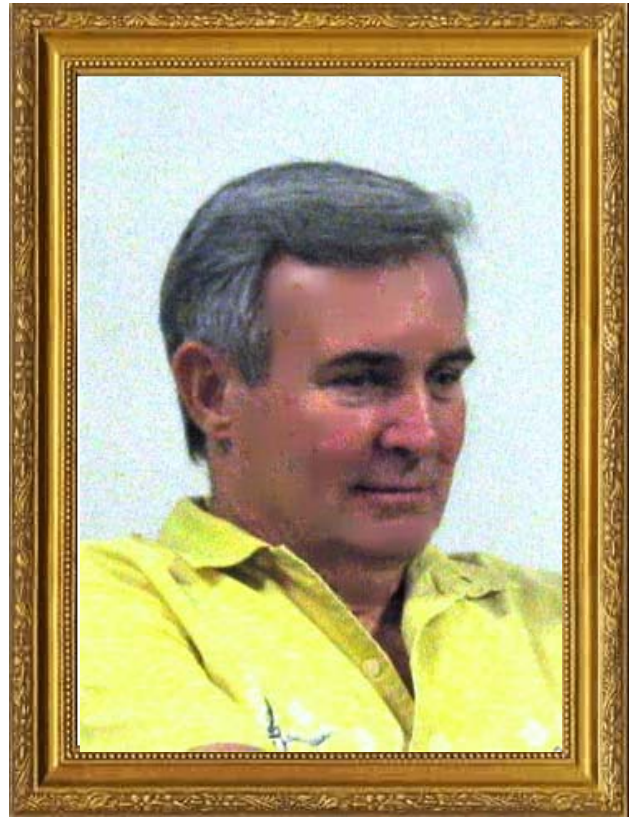
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Volunteer of the Month

John Northrup



News Brief

LCD Plasma TV Obsolete?

If you've bought a plasma TV, you might get one-upped in two years, when TVs using new carbon technology arrive. A new type of flat-panel display that will rely on diamonds or carbon nanotubes--two forms of pure carbon--to produce images. Theoretically, these "field effect displays," or FEDs, will consume less energy than plasma or liquid crystal display (LCD) TVs, deliver a better picture and even cost less.

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:

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Ink-Jet Recharge Kits
Imaging Devices
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Used Hardware
Multimedia Upgrades
Shareware
Diagnostic Equipment
Cables & Connectors
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Location:

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

Show Dates and Times:

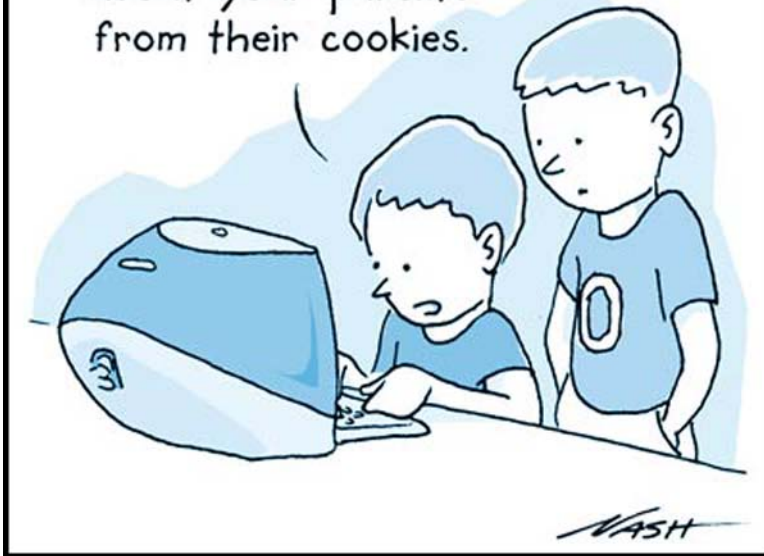
9 a.m. - 5 p.m. April 29, 2006
more info at <http://www.pcshows.com/>



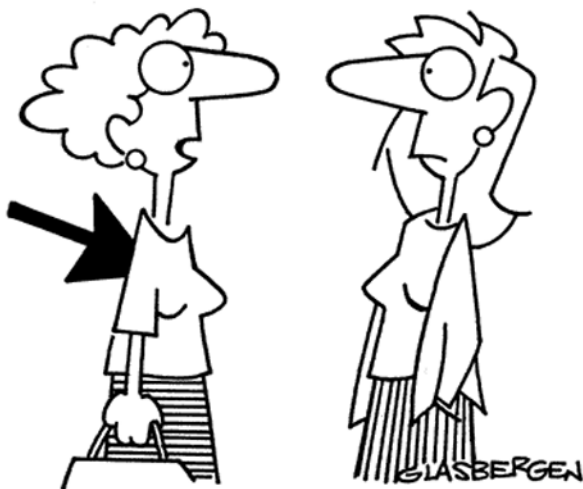
Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen

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about your parents
from their cookies.



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**"It's not Cupid's arrow, it's a cursor.
I fell in love over the Internet."**

News Brief

Edible origami by Canon?

The Canon i560 inkjet printer doesn't just print menus Moto restaurant in Chicago; it prints menus you can eat. Homaru Cantu, the executive chef, prints menus and many other items onto edible starch-based paper. Instead of using the typical CMYK inks--cyan, magenta, yellow, and black--Cantu has filled the cartridges with edible solutions. Think SSSB: sweet, sour, bitter, and salty. Cantu uses combinations of these four liquids on the edible paper to create dishes unlikely to be found anywhere else, such as "baked map of Alaska" and a type of maki sushi that he wraps in flavored paper bearing images of sushi, instead of seaweed.

Volunteers Wanted

Call the Learning Center to volunteer to assist ongoing classes. For more info, call 736-0700.



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.

As time goes forward, my health gets more complicated. I have been a Type II diabetic for a few years now and other than some swelling in the legs, my sugar control is pretty good, which I assume many of you can relate to. Problem is I started the sugar control too late and suffered serious heart damage. Now it seems that I have developed a large blood clot in my lower leg, I believe from a fall, and the doctor put me on Coumadin (Warfarin), better known as rat poison. It has a long list of drugs that cause interactions. I am already a walking pharmacy so now it gets complicated. This turn for the worse seems to bring other unexpected complications. I have started getting temporary spikes upward in my blood pressure for no apparent reason, which sometimes causes a nosebleed. I am afraid to go anywhere these days because I might get a nosebleed, although I can stop it now rather easily. My doctor has prescribed medication for my blood pressure as a solution to the changes and I sure hope it works. Getting old sure gets complicated, but the alternative to getting old "really sucks." It looks like I will have five more months on the rat poison, if I survive. I have talked to many people also taking Coumadin who tell me even worse stories about bleeding where you don't want to and a lack of good control by their doctor.

Right now, I need a blood test at least once a week for my INR, (the clotting ability of the blood). The doctor says I can purchase a machine to do that test at home, but I checked on the Web and it would cost \$2495 (no decimal point). I'll let the clinic do the testing. Medicare only pays for that if you have valve problems in your heart. I'm still doing my best to continue cheating my wife out of the life insurance money. Whenever I start to slow down on exercise etc., I get a vision of my wife sitting on the beach of some south sea island with a stud sitting next to her, and she is writing a check on my insurance money for their next vacation. That little vision gets me right out of the chair to exercise.

*How Secure is Your System?

I read an article in Information Week magazine that was both amusing and interesting. It concerned a company whose CIO hired security investigators to test how good their system stood up to being infiltrated. The director of the network operations center was sure they couldn't break into the systems or facilities, but they very soon proved him wrong. Some of the weaknesses were so stupid that I had to chuckle, such as many of the passwords for work stations were written on a note taped to the machine or hidden under the keyboard. They gained access to limited access places just by calling the receptionist and telling them that some agents were coming in to do an audit and needed access, which was easily granted to the very people who made the call. Office keys were sometimes in the secretary's desk. You can find this article at <<http://www.informationweek.com/management/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=177100115>> and you'll find it enlightening.

*Leaky Capacitor Update

A while back, I wrote about a leaky capacitor problem on motherboards that I read about in Ed Foster's Gripe Line, and gave you the URL to find out more. Since then, I received a message from Carey Holzman, author of Healthy PC, who tells me that is a four-year-old issue and that there has been "some" resolution in the matter. He says he has covered it since it first came up four years ago and more information is available on his Web site. <www.careyholzman.com>. Also a second URL: <www.badcaps.net>.

*Great, The Bundle is Back

Colleen Toumayan from Executive Software sent a message letting me know that their "bundle" is back. For a limited time you can get both the award winning Diskeeper 10, Home Edition, and Undelete 5, Home Edition, products for just \$49.95 plus S&H. I have never heard anything but praise about these fine products. Mine is not the latest, but it always works well, and fast. Use this link to order: <<http://purchase.diskeeper.com/checkout/addtocart.aspx?Item=1382>>.

Continued on page 14.

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*ExtraLabs Releases Version 3.4 of Feed Editor (an edited announcement)

New RSS Editor Makes Anyone An RSS Guru!

ExtraLabs Software unveils Feed Editor 3.4, a full-fledged RSS editor that offers you an easy way to create and maintain RSS feeds and podcasts. Compared to other RSS editors in its category, Feed Editor combines an unprecedented number of features including support for various RSS formats, a podcasting support, a WYSIWYG HTML editor, an XML editor, an RSS Feed preview, an FTP upload and publishing, automatic date management and an ability to convert CSV or HTML to RSS, and back.

Feed Editor can create and maintain an unlimited number of RSS feeds and podcasts, thus letting you maintain and distribute multiple content streams simultaneously. To create a new RSS feed, you can use a New Feed Creation wizard that will guide you through the RSS setup process in a step-by-step fashion. Additional convenience comes with a built-in WYSIWYG HTML editor that allows you to edit a feed in much the same way as you would edit a word processing document. You can format the text, apply styling, and insert images and hyperlinks. Also, "Feed Editor" can generate a feed from a CSV and HTML file. Once a feed is ready, you can preview it and publish online using an FTP upload facility.

Read more about Feed Editor at <<http://www.extralabs.net/feed-editor.htm>>

Download an evaluation version to try it for free <<http://www.extralabs.net/FeedEditorSetup.exe>> (1.72 Mb.)

ExtraLabs Software is glad to offer the newest version of "Feed Editor" with 50% off the regular price making it just \$19.95. Also, ExtraLabs will offer all user group members an additional 5% discount on the purchase of the program during April and May. Follow this link for the extra discount: <<http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=74108&pc=312aY>>.

Feed Editor 3.4 runs under Windows 95/98/Me/2000/NT/XP/2003. Registered customers are entitled to free lifetime updates and premium technical support. Discounts for volume buyers are available.

*If You Like Games, Check This Announcement

From the creators of "Zzed" comes a new game of Wonderlines by NevoSoft. Wonderlines is a remake of a popular game. Only balls and lines remind you of its predecessor here and the rest is covered with the charm of novelty. A player will see a new bonus system, a new intricate game play structure and a fresh interface design. The music and visuals are great.

Puzzle, Action, Zen Way modes are different, yet each requires special skills. Generally, the game stayed nearly the same yet now you match several balls of one color in a line, but also blow them up over certain brown squares. The challenge of the game is to remove all brown squares in each level. 70 levels of the game are very different one from another. Another merit of the game is new bonuses: the miraculous multicolor ball, dazzling diamond and clever hammer, triple or quadruple bomb and others, which help a lot while making your way through Wonderlines.

Wonderlines runs under Windows 98/ME/XP/2000 and costs \$19.95 (USD). NevoSoft offers a 30% discount to user group members if you use this link:

<https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=8323-16&ss_coupon=NEVO-GPCU>. Registered customers are entitled to the unlocked game play and lifetime technical support. An evaluation version of the game, that offers 60 minutes of game play, is available as a free download at

<http://www.nevosoft.com/wonderlines/wonderlines_demo.exe>.

Be aware that this vendor has no privacy statement on their Web site about protecting your information.

For more information, visit us at <<http://www.nevosoft.com>>

Product page link: <<http://www.nevosoft.com/downloadable-game/en/games/wonderlines.html>>

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<http://www.davidsessentialdomains.com>



Domain names and trademark issues

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>

Many individuals and companies own domain names. However, many new registrants for domain names fail to consider the implications of trademark law when registering a domain name. Trademarks are registered at the federal level by the Office of US Patents and Trademarks (USPTO). Federal registration gives legal protection to the registrant against certain uses of the trademark within the market place. Readers of this article are cautioned that trademark law is a complicated legal matter and this article is general in nature.

A trademark includes any word, name, symbol, or device, or any combination, used, or intended to be used, in commerce to identify and distinguish the goods of one manufacturer or seller from goods manufactured or sold by others, and to indicate the source of the goods. In short, a trademark is a brand name. In addition, there are service marks and collective marks. There are a number of benefits to registering a trademark with USPTO: 1) constructive notice nationwide of the trademark owner's claim, 2) evidence of ownership of the trademark, 3) jurisdiction of federal courts may be invoked, 4) registration can be used as a basis for obtaining registration in foreign countries, and 5) registration may be filed with U.S. Customs Service to prevent importation of infringing foreign goods.

There are a number of "classes" specified by the trademark/servicemark system. When one registers a mark, the application must specify the class in which the mark is being registered.

A problem can arise if the domain name "infringes" upon a mark that has legal priority. For example, suppose one registers the following domain name (assuming it is available): www.mackdonalds.com. MacDonalds is a federally registered trademark. Suppose mackdonalds.com is a hamburger restaurant. It is possible that confusion can result within the public between Mackdonalds and MacDonalds. Bingo, the improper use of MacDonalds will result in a "cease and desist" letter that will inform the infringer that legal action is imminent unless use of the infringing term is discontinued. However, use of the term MacDonalds for a hardware store owned by "Oliver MacDonald" might be permissible since confusion is less likely by the public.

Courts generally look to certain legal "elements" to determine if the likelihood of confusion exists. These elements can be summarized as: 1) the similarity in the overall impression created by the two marks (including the marks' look, phonetic similarities, and underlying meanings); 2) the similarities of the goods and services involved (including an examination of the marketing channels for the goods); 3) the strength of the plaintiff's mark; 4) any evidence of actual confusion by consumers; 5) the intent of the defendant in adopting its mark; 6) the physical proximity of the goods in the retail marketplace; 7) the degree of care likely to be exercised by the consumer; and 8) the likelihood of expansion of the product lines.

If the infringement results in actual litigation, and if the plaintiff is successful, remedies can vary depending on whether the trademark was registered. The most common form of relief granted to a successful plaintiff in a trademark infringement lawsuit is an injunction against further infringement. If the infringed mark was federally registered, attorney's fees could

also be available to a successful plaintiff. Monetary damages are available under the Lanham Act, but are rarely awarded in trademark lawsuits.

The following is a portion of a "cease and desist" letter sent by the Religious Technology Center to the registrant of a domain name alleging infringement of a federally registered trademark:

"Our office represents Religious Technology Center ("RTC"), the owner of the federally registered trademark and service mark "SCIENTOLOGY". The "SCIENTOLOGY" mark is registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office under registration numbers 1,755,441; 1,540,928; 1,342,353; 1,329,474; 1,318,717; 1,306,997; and 0898018. "SCIENTOLOGY" is also registered as a trade and service mark in numerous countries throughout the world, including New Zealand under registration numbers B 119,381; 153,974; 180,601; B 153,085; B 153,086; 180600. We also represent the Church of Scientology International ("CSI"), which is the licensee of the "Scientology" trademark. We have been advised that you have registered a domain name with Enom, Inc., a United States domain registrar and agreed, through Enom's Registration Agreement, Governing Law and Jurisdiction for Disputes, to submit to the jurisdiction of Bellevue, Washington, regarding the following domain name: "Scientomogy.info"

In summary, the mark holder is putting the registrant on notice that the domain name is infringing on the registered trademark/servicemark. The author of this article is not aware whether this matter has been resolved and the contents of this letter are for illustration purposes only.

So, what are the practical issues involved with the registration of a domain name? Again, the author of this article emphasizes that this topic is complex in character and does not cover the topic in detail. Readers should also be aware there is a US law known as the Anti-Cybersquatting Act that may apply when the domain name is a protected mark. The most important issue is that one has to consider trademark issues when registering a domain name. That means proper legal advice may be necessary if one intends to use the domain name in commerce.

Does this complicate registration of a domain name that is intended for use in commerce? Unfortunately, it does. Readers who have this type of issue are advised to consult a specialist in this area or take their chances for the future receipt of a "cease and desist" letter. The chances for the receipt of such a letter are much better than winning the Powerball Lottery.

News Brief

New Laser Chip

Intel has created a chip containing eight continuous Raman lasers by using fairly standard silicon processes rather than the somewhat expensive materials and processes required for making lasers today. The lasers emit a continuous stream of light that can then be modulated, or chopped up, into a stream of impulses that can represent data. Cheap optical parts could not only lead to faster computers but also to less expensive and more accurate medical equipment.

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News Brief

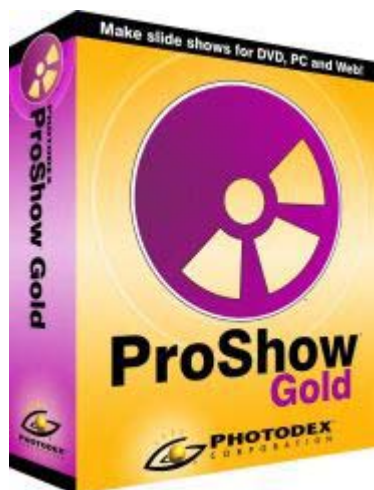
Molecular Computer Would Be Faster, Smaller & Cheaper.

Researchers from Hewlett-Packard have created devices called crossbar latches that can be used to perform calculations in microprocessors, the same function silicon transistors now have. Crossbar latches--which consist of a grid of microscopic wires linked by molecules at their intersections--are far smaller and, potentially, far cheaper to make because they are produced using processes more like inkjet printing than the etching processes required for today's chips. HP has already shown how crossbar latches can be used in memory. "This is the final piece of the puzzle for building a molecular computer," said Phil Kuekes, senior computer architect and primary inventor at HP's Quantum Science Research (QSR) unit.

Polished Gold: Photodex ProShow Gold 2.6

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>



Forget about groundhogs, the best test of an early spring in Alaska is sighting a tour bus making its practice runs around the sights. I love taking photographs and living in Alaska means I take LOTS of photographs, especially in spring. Needing some way to preserve and display them, a couple of months ago, I set off to find a good DVD photo slide show program. There are numerous good CD burning slide shows available and many for free, but I wanted the quality of a DVD. So I set off to see what I could find. Wow! There are lots of them, some expensive, some basic, some complicated. Some were loaded with features; some were middle of the road. But in case you are wondering, I did not find any that were free. That is not to say there is free software out there; it's just that I did not find it. Yet, the one thing that I did find with many was that they were either unstable or too basic.

Armed with 248 photos and 5 songs to accompany the photos, I tried to compose and burn the compilation to a DVD. The systems that I used were 1.5 GHZ computers with a gigahertz of RAM. The operating systems were Windows 2000 and Windows XP. The DVD would be about 23 minutes long with each slide displaying about 10 to 11 seconds. Of the products that I tested two stood out from the pack; the free Microsoft Photo Story 3 and the \$69.95 Photodex ProShow Gold 2.6. Both were intuitive enough to get a basic disc burned, both were stable and both were flexible enough so that a respectable disk could be produced.



So which one is tops, Photo Story 3 or ProShow Gold? Well, Microsoft Photo Story 3 is only free if you already have Windows XP and the \$19 Sonic Solutions plugin to burn DVDs; otherwise you are limited to SVCDs (Super Video CD). The SVCD is in its own right the best of the CD burning formats but it cannot out do the DVD for picture clarity and capacity. In the end, the answer was easy, Photodex ProShow Gold 2.6 wins.

The problems that I encountered most with the programs that I tried were instability and a lack of flexibility.

Stability

As I mentioned earlier, I took 248 photos and 5 songs to accompany the photos and tried to compose and burn the compilation. That is a lot of pictures, but the total running time was only just over twenty minutes. Almost all of the programs that I tried simply froze. Some threw errors or mysteriously lost photos when I tried to manipulate them; however, ProShow Gold didn't seem to care if I threw 3 photos or 300 photos at it, it performed without a hitch and burned the DVD every time.

Flexibility

One of the features that many of the programs are promoting is the ability to have the view of the slide move from one corner or another, creating a type of panning effect that is common to TV documentaries. This is a nice touch, except that some programs did it by default to every slide and would not allow you to turn it off, which after a while got darn right nauseous! ProShow Gold allows for the manipulation of the panning effect as well as the ability to turn it off or on for each slide.

One of the programs had a bad habit of running your slides off of the edge of the screen. ProShow Gold has a nice feature, the



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Continued on page 18.



an executable that can be opened and played on a computer, a self starting CD for the computer, or even a screen saver - one of my favorite options. You can even email your creation right from ProShow Gold or share it with a friend. A show for your web page can also be created; the terrific Help file shows you how to put the show on the page. Options also allow you to limit the time that a person can view the show and to add a password.

While the process is pretty much straight forward, what I really like about ProShow Gold is that you really can grow into it. At first glance it does not look like a program with a lot of flexibility or options, but a right click menu shows otherwise. The helpful menus along the creation process create an easy learning curve and introduce even more flexibility into the process without dumping it on you all at once.

Conclusion

The bottom line; I was able to compose, edit and burn a DVD with music in under an hour that played on my home DVD player without touching the manual (Help file). Also, just as important, the quality was exactly what I expected from a DVD and without any aggravating moments such as skipping music, crashing, pictures or captions off the edge of the screen, etc. There was only one irritation in the final result and that was the Photodex animated logo automatically placed at the beginning of my show. Finally reading the Help file revealed that by unchecking a little box titled "Include Intro Show" the animated logo went away. Given how good this program works, my irritation very quickly subsided. And, believe it or not, if you should run into problems Photodex has a 1-800 number that you can call for help. Not too many software companies do that anymore!

Photodex got it right. ProShow Gold 2.6 is worthy of the praise that it gets in the press and on the Web. The program has all of the bells and whistles that most folks would want and it is still an easy and fun program to learn. You can tell when people who write software have taken the time and listened to their customers. This is not a hurried product that was shoved out the door and is beta tested by the customers. It is a polished and mature product that has finally ended my search for a quality photo slide show.

Here is a list of ProShow Gold features from the Photodex website (<http://www.photodex.com>). A version for professionals is also available called ProShow Producer. Free, thirty day trial versions are available from the Photodex website.

News Brief

Antispam Tools Initiate New HIV Vaccines

At the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Boston, workers for Microsoft Research said they have been using database and antispam software to identify previously unseen patterns in genetic mutations of HIV. The researchers said their work illustrates how medical experts can use machine-learning, data-mining and other software methods to sort through millions of strains of HIV and improve vaccines. By seeking out genetic patterns that could be used to train a person's immune system to fight the virus, they are already making headway, the researchers said. The group reported that the first of its proposed vaccine designs is already undergoing laboratory testing.



Computer Defense Systems



Bruce Cramer, Alamo PC

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

Microsoft has long been criticized for not doing enough in the fight against malware. They have slowly but surely stepped up to the plate and continue making strong efforts in the ongoing battle. This was quite evident when they purchased Giant Company Software late in 2004. Giant was a leader in anti spyware technology at the time of the acquisition. Microsoft has unveiled some new weapons against malware and in this article we will take a look at their latest offerings. Looking at figure 1 you will see a snapshot of Microsoft's arsenal which we will discuss.

Defender is the evolution of Microsoft's AntiSpyware program that was in beta throughout 2005. Defender is free and will get program updates and spyware definition updates through the Automatic Updates mechanism used by Windows. Defender is currently in beta 2. Microsoft will incorporate Defender in their new operating system, Vista, which is to be released sometime this year. The interface is somewhat cleaner than AntiSpyware and many of the obtrusive popups are now gone only leaving critical notification popups. After testing Dendender I find it does a better job of detecting spyware and at the same time using fewer resources. From other reviews I have read it is still not what most experts expect from Microsoft. Another words if you are already paying for some other reputable antispyware software such as SpySweeper or CounterSpy, don't uninstall them. As a matter of fact it is recommended that you use more than one antispyware software. As you may have heard me mention before, unlike a virus, spyware rears its ugly head in manner different shapes and forms. Key loggers, browser hijackers, tracking cookies, etc and some antispyware software is better than others at detecting and eliminating different forms. Bottom line – 2 heads are better than one.

Windows Live Safety Center is a free tool that works over the Internet. It will scan and remove viruses and tell you about security issues that your computer may have. Keep in mind that even with a broadband connection the scan will take some time as it goes through all the files on your computer. You can check it out for yourself at <http://safety.live.com/site/en-US/default.htm>

Malicious Software Removal Tool checks for infections by specific, prevalent malicious software—including blaster, sasser, and mydoom—and helps remove any infection found. When the detection and removal process is complete, the tool displays a report describing the outcome, including which, if any, malicious software was detected and removed. Microsoft releases an updated version of this tool on the second tuesday of each month, and as needed to respond to security incidents. You can run the tool from this web page anytime or download it to your computer.

OneCare Live has Defender built in as well as an antivirus, firewall and backup function. This time Microsoft's firewall will offer 2 way protection instead of only checking for incoming issues as Service Pack 2 did. Microsoft describes OneCare as a product for consumers who want a "just take care of it for me" service. Early reviews of OneCare are mixed, with some praising the clean interface and others saying the service's feature set doesn't quite justify its price.

It will be available in June from retailers and via the Web for an annual subscription of \$49.95 MSRP for up to three personal computers. Microsoft also announced a promotional deal offering the

Product name and intended users	Handling of spyware and potentially unwanted software		Handling of viruses and malicious software		Scheduled scanning provided	Provided at no additional cost
	Scan and Remove	Helps Protect	Scan and Remove	Helps Protect		
Windows Defender (Beta 2) - Consumers	✓	✓			✓	✓
Windows Live Safety Center - Consumers	✓		✓			✓
Malicious Software Removal Tool - Consumers and businesses			✓			✓
Windows OneCare Live - Consumers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Microsoft Client Protection - Businesses	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Figure 1

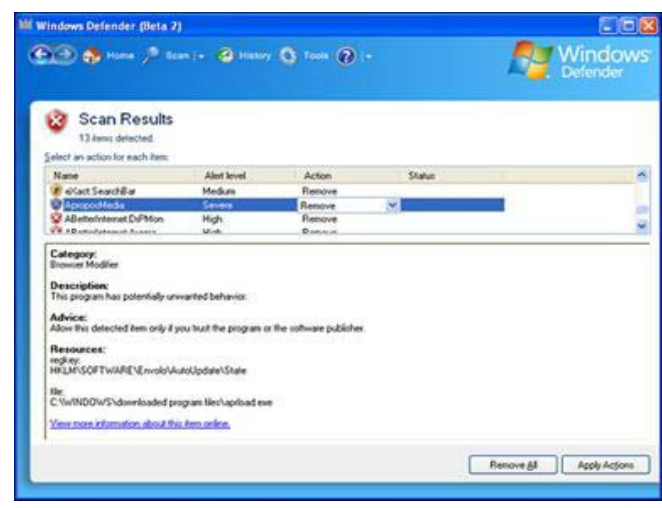


Figure 2

first year of Windows OneCare Live service for \$19.95 to beta customers who become subscribers between April 1 and April 30, 2006.

Client Protection is geared towards the business community and a beta has not yet been released. Microsoft plans to release it later this year.

User of Windows ME and 98 are out of luck with these tools from Microsoft as they are not supported. Keep in mind that any support of Windows 98 will come to an end at the end of June when Microsoft will stop issuing updates. Reasons to upgrade never looked better.

Microsoft doesn't have anything to gain if their products are constantly attacked and you are frustrated using them. Users of Windows XP can hardly go wrong using what Microsoft has to offer in the way of security and protection, especially if it is free.



Keyboard

Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

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

Most computer users have seen the “QWERTY” adjective used in combination with keyboards. It’s the name commonly given to a standard keyboard layout. The name comes from the combination of the first six keys on the keyboard in the row below the numbers. Several attempts have been made to replace the old QWERTY keyboard with something more sensible but seemingly an impossible mission. The keyboard is your direct link to your personal computer. Therefore your keyboard should work with rather than against you. You can adjust several settings to suit your preference. One is repeat rate which is a measure of how many times per second that characters are repeated once you’ve held down the key long enough to begin repeating letters, numbers, or symbols. Second is repeat delay. It is a measure of how long you must hold down a key before that character repeats. Third is cursor blink rate. This setting doesn’t affect your typing speed. It controls how quickly the cursor blinks on and off. To access these keyboard settings, choose Start, Settings, Control Panel, and Keyboard. Next, choose the Speed tab where you’ll see slider adjustment controls for the three settings.

Alt Key

Win2000 offers many ways for you to perform the simplest tasks. For example, if you’re a fast typist and don’t like to remove your fingers from the keys, take advantage of keyboard shortcuts to all the menus in Win2000 Professional. Press and release the Alt key and keep an eye on the row of words in the menu bar. All the words suddenly have a letter underlined and the first word, File, looks like a button that’s been depressed. Now, look to the right on the menu bar to see how the letter V in View is underlined. Press V on the keyboard and the pull-down menu hidden below View falls down.

Application Hopping

Application hopping is unavoidable when you’re working on a presentation that will feature a spreadsheet for figures, a document for the outline of your presentation, and a Web site with research information. It gets tiring if you must minimize, maximize, and then go to the Taskbar and click on the application’s icon. Instead, it’s easier to hold down the Alt key and press the Tab key. Now let go of the Tab key while still holding down Alt, then press the Tab key to scroll through each application. When the box surrounds the desired application, let go of the Alt key.

Application Windows

Alt+Tab: View and select from a menu of all Taskbar items.

Ctrl+Tab: Toggles between windows of a Multiple Document Interface (MDI) program, such as Excel.

Ctrl+F4: Closes the current window in a MDI program.

Alt+Spacebar: Opens the current window’s System Menu, which includes Restore, Move, Size, Minimize, Maximize, and Close functions.

Alt+-: Opens the System Menu for a single window of a MDI program.

Alt+E: Performs the same operation as clicking that menu option. For instance, in Word press Alt+F to open the File menu and Alt+P to print the current document.

Alt+M: Minimizes all windows.

Alt+Spacebar+N: Minimizes the current window only.

Alt+Prt.Sc: Copies the current window.

Audible Alerts

Most keyboards have indicator lights for the CAPS, NUM, and SCROLL LOCK keys. If you accidentally press the CAPS LOCK key and type entire sentences in all capital letters before you notice the little green light, use audible alerts to let you know when a LOCK key changes status. Assuming Accessibility Options are installed on your system, open the Control Panel and double-click Accessibility Options. On the Keyboard tab, select Use ToggleKeys and then click OK. From now on you’ll hear a beep every time the Caps Lock or Num Lock keys are turned on or off. If the Accessibility Options is not installed on your computer, open the Control Panel, double-click Add/Remove Programs, and select the Windows Setup tab. Under Components, select Accessibility Options, click OK, and when directed insert the installation disk.

Backspace to Previous Folder

If you’re viewing a folder’s files and want to view the contents of the parent folder, the one that contains the folder you’re viewing, just press the Backspace key on your keyboard.

Case Change

To quickly change the case of your text in Word, highlight the word you want to change and press Shift+F3. Each time you press F3, the capitalization of the word changes.

Cells in Word Tables

When working with Word tables, you might like to use some keyboard shortcuts to select columns and rows. To select a column, hold down the Alt key and click in the column you want to select. To choose a row, click in the first cell of the row you want to select and then press Alt + Shift + End. To select several cells in a column, click the first cell you want to choose and then hold down Shift while clicking in the last cell. The same procedure works for rows. You must first click in the first cell, hold down Shift, and then click in the last cell.

Continued on page 21.

Cents Symbol

Here is a tip you will want to remember. Unfortunately there is no “¢” key on your computer keyboard. Instead of resorting to typing \$0.50, you hold down the Alt key and type 0162 on the number keypad to get 50¢. Now don’t forget to first push in the NUM LOCK key and then type 0162.

Control Key

To copy a file without having to perform any additional work, press and hold the CTRL key while dragging the object to its destination. Windows will automatically assume that you want to copy it.

Details Columns

You can resize every column to fit the widest entry in one fell swoop in an Explorer windows screen with any selected item by holding down the Ctrl key as you press the plus sign (+) on your numeric keypad. For this trick to work in a two-paned Explorer window, the focus must be on the right pane. Click any item or a blank area inside the right pane, then press Ctrl, +.

Dialog Box Tabs

You can move from one tab to the next in an open dialog box without using the mouse by pressing Ctrl+Tab. While holding down Ctrl, press Tab continuously until the tab you want is highlighted and then let go. To jump through tabs in reverse, press Ctrl+Shift+Tab.

Spacebar: Clicks the outlined button, toggles the outlined checkbox, or select the outlined radio button.

Enter: Performs the same command as clicking an outlined button.

Esc: Performs the same command as clicking Cancel.

Double-Clicking Substitute

Win98/Me lets you cut down significantly on double-clicking. Although single-clicking takes a little getting used to, it’s a lot easier on your mouse hand. However, if your mouse isn’t working for some reason, there is a keyboard equivalent for a double-click or, if single-clicking is enabled, a single-click. Use your arrow keys to move the cursor to the beginning of the item you want to activate. Hold down the Shift key while you press the arrow keys. The text becomes highlighted as you move the arrow keys.

Editing Shortcuts

If you prefer the keyboard to your mouse, here are some shortcuts to use in your Word 2000 document by pressing keys:

Press the down arrow key to move down one line in your document.

Press the up arrow key to move up one line in your document.

Hold down the Ctrl key and press the up or down arrow key to jump up or down a paragraph at a time.

Press the Page Down key (or PgDn on some keyboards) to jump down the document one window at a time.

Press the Page Up key (or PgUp on some keyboards) to jump up the document one window at a time.

Hold down Ctrl and press the Home key to jump to the beginning of your document.

Hold down Ctrl and press the End key to jump to the end of your document.

Press Shift-F5 to get back to where you were working on a long document the next time you open a Word document.

Shortcuts for editing include: Ctrl+A: Selects the entire document. Ctrl+B: Bold selected text. Ctrl+C: Copies text to the Clipboard. Ctrl+F: Finds text. Ctrl+H: Replaces occurrences of one text string with another text string. Ctrl+I: Italicizes selected text. Ctrl+P: Prints current document. Ctrl+S: Save current document. Ctrl+U: Underlines selected text. Ctrl+V: Pastes text from the Clipboard. Ctrl+X: Cuts text to the Clipboard. Ctrl+Y: Redoes an undone command. Ctrl+Z: Undoes the most recent command. Ctrl+Backspace: Deletes from the insertion point to the start of the word. Ctrl+Del: Deletes from the insertion point to the end of the word.

European Key Combination Shortcuts

There are two ways to find European key combinations in Windows. You can use the Character Map, at Start, All Programs, Accessories, and System Tools. To use Character Map, find the letter or symbol you want, select the font you are using, press Select, and then Copy. Go back to your document, put the cursor where you want to make the insert, and click Edit, Paste. Microsoft Word has key combinations, which may also work in other applications and some in Microsoft Outlook, too. They include:

Umlaut--press Ctrl+Shift+Colon, then the vowel. Grave--Ctrl+Grave (upper left, under Esc), then the vowel. Tilde--Ctrl+Shift+Tilde, followed by the letter. Inverted exclamation mark--Alt+Ctrl+Shift+!

Inverted question mark--Alt+Ctrl+Shift+?. French cedilla--Ctrl+comma, then c. French circumflex--Ctrl+Shift+Caret(^), then letter. French e acute--Ctrl+Apostrophe, then e.

Excel Sheets

You can forget about the tab scrolling buttons and sheet tabs and just go back and forth through the sheets in a workbook with the keyboard. To move to the next worksheet in a workbook, press Ctrl+PgDn. To move to the previous worksheet in a workbook, press Ctrl+PgUp. The nice thing about Ctrl+PgDn and Ctrl+PgUp is that these keystroke shortcuts work whether or not the next or previous sheet tab is currently displayed in the workbook window.

Font Size Changes

Want a quick and easy way to increase or decrease font size in Word? Simply highlight the text you want to change and press Ctrl+Shift+> (greater-than key) to increase font size. Press Ctrl+Shift+< (less-than key) to decrease font size.

Freelance Graphics

Here are some useful Freelance Graphics shortcut keystrokes: Insert: Arrange, Edit Points, Add Point;

Delete: Arrange, Edit Points, Delete Point; Shift-F6: Arrange, Points Mode; Alt-F9: Toggle Black and White or Color; F8: Arrange, Priority, Fall Back One; Shift-F8: Arrange, Priority, Send Forward One;

F5: Go To; F6: Import Data; Ctrl-F6: Next Window; F7: Page, New; F9: View, Redraw; Ctrl-F2: Tools, Spelling Checker.



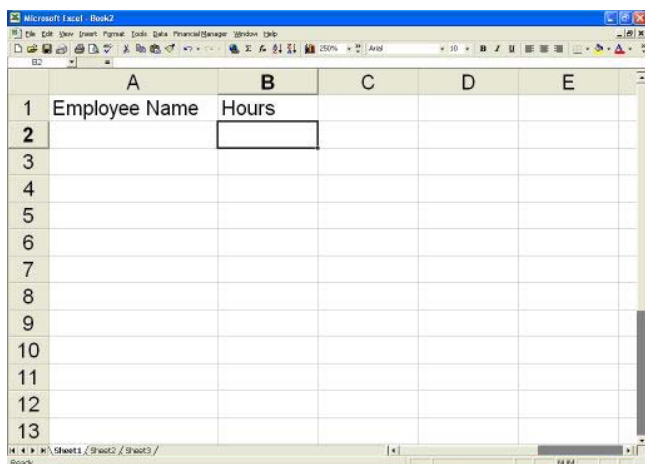
Let it write the VBA code

by **James D. Duncan, CPA**

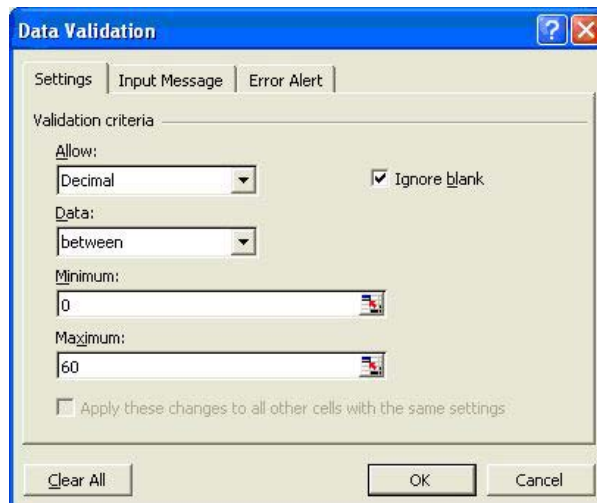
James is a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and an expert in Access and Excel. He can be contacted at bj4duncan@aol.com

Correct data input is the goal of everyone. Excel has several built in routines that will help us with validating the input of the sheets. This is especially important if we are making the spreadsheets for others to use. All the correction routines and visual clues we can give the input person will make balancing easier later on.

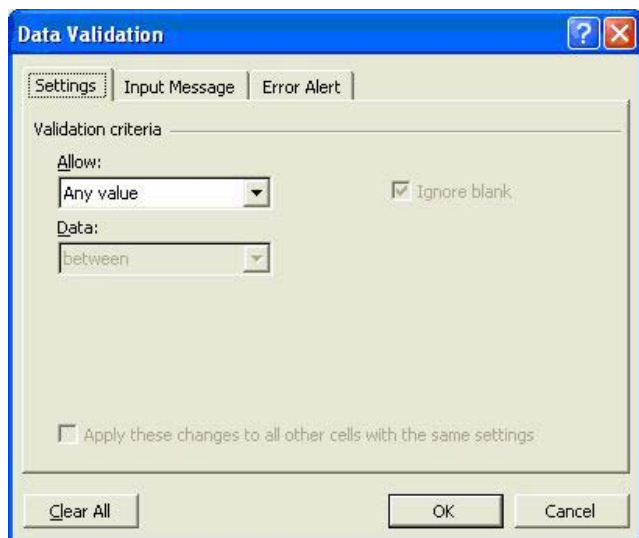
I am using Excel 2000 for this example. I have created a spreadsheet with two columns, employee name and hours. We will validate the hour's input. For this example I am using a rule that hours have to be between 0 and 60.



Move to B2 and click on Data and then choose Validation. The following screen will appear.



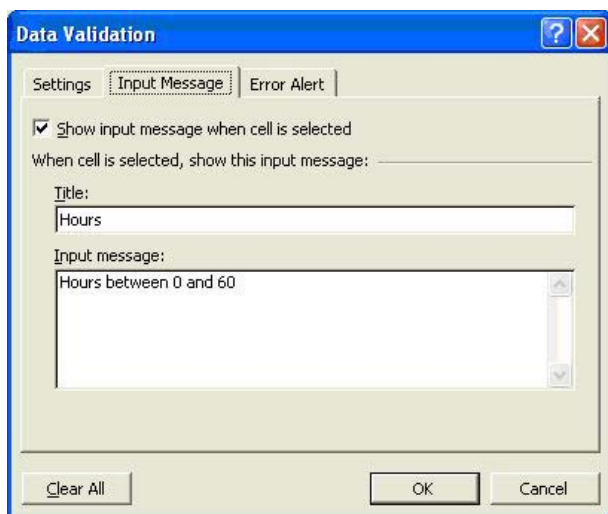
I chose the between for data, 0 for minimum and 60 for maximum. Next click on the Input Message tab. The following screen appears.



You can see that there are three tabs. We will start with the Settings tab. In the Allow: dropdown box choose Decimal. This selection will create other selections for a decimal input.

Continued on page 23.

This screen will give us the visual clue to what we want in this cell and we can tell the user what the restrictions on this cell are. I used “Hours” for the Title and “Hours between 0 and 60” for the Input message.

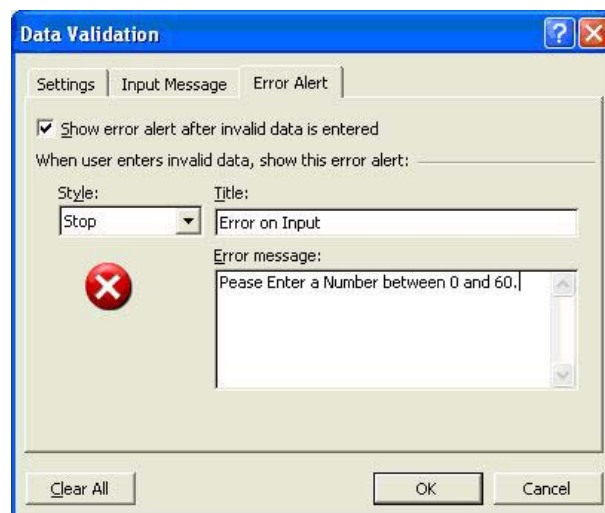


Next click on the Error Alert tab and we will fill what we want when the input is other than a decimal or outside the 0 and 60 range. The blank screen is shown next.

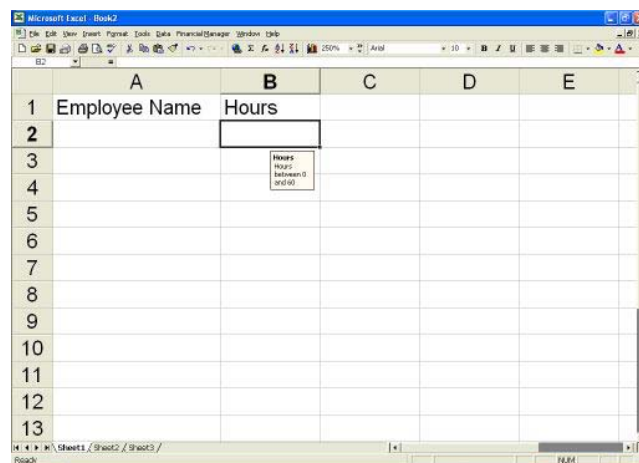


I chose the Style, Stop. You can see there are other choices and I recommend you try each one to see how it works. I used “Error on Input” for the Title and “Please enter a number between 0 and 60” for the Error Message.

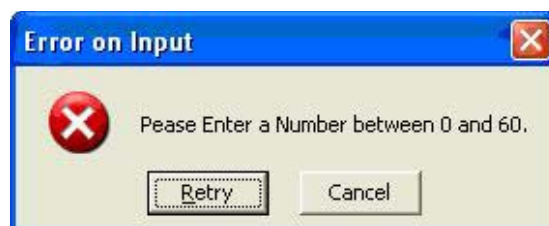
Click on the OK button and the sheet will now look like this.



The user of the sheet now gets the prompt when they move into this cell. Lets put in a number outside the range of 0 to 60. I entered 80 for example.



The following error box appears and alerts the user that the input is incorrect. The same message will appear if alphabetical information is input. B2 can be copied down the sheet to give this column the same data validation for all those cells.



This is built in and no macros or programming is needed to make this work. Go back into the Data and Validation and change the settings, messages and error alerts to see how all the different settings can be used for different validations. This is just one example of how to help the user keep the data accurate.



Vista update

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane uses a PC. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com.>

You've likely already read about all the new features that Microsoft is promising with the release of Windows Vista, now slated for release at the end of 2006. These features include a totally new graphics engine, an updated user interface, and advanced search features. There will also be improved touch-screen support and a Windows sidebar that can display all kinds of real-time information, such as upcoming appointments, e-mail messages, and a clock.

Is Windows Vista more secure?

However, Vista's most compelling new features may prove to be in the realm of security. Microsoft is promising better defenses against phishing attacks, spyware, and other malicious code. "Safety and security is the overriding feature that most people will want to have Windows Vista for," said Jim Allchin, the co-president of Microsoft's platform, products and services division. "Even if they are not into home entertainment or in any of the specialty areas, they are just going to feel safer and more secure by using it."

In this version of Windows, Microsoft updated their development practices to prevent security bugs. Additionally, the core of the operating system is being designed to resist attacks. "We have put features into the product to double-check itself," Allchin said. Microsoft has marked the OS services to know what network ports they should open and what OS functions they should call. Then, another part of the OS verifies the process. "If we ever find something trying to open a port that the developer said it should not be opening, it is immediately shut down."

Windows Vista offers improved security by limiting the use of privileges. In Windows XP, and standard user was also usually an administrator, an account with unlimited access to the computer. When malicious software was activated under this user account, it could wreak havoc on a system. Windows Vista introduces several new privilege levels. The first is a protected administrator. If the system is set to protected administrator, users will have to change to full administrator to perform certain tasks, such as installing an application. The operating system will warn the person when full privileges are needed. "Any action that requires full privileges will be displayed with a shield," Allchin said. Vista will also offer standard user mode, which has the fewest privileges. It will allow users to perform several common tasks, like changing the clock, but it won't allow a user to install applications.

Another security change at the operating system level involves Internet Explorer. In Windows Vista, IE 7 will run in protected mode. This mode prevents silent installs of malicious code by stopping the Web browser from writing data anywhere except in temporary folders without first seeking permission.

On systems with 64-bit processors, Vista will require digital signatures to run kernel-mode software such as device drivers. This is an attempt to block unwanted software, such as rootkits (see my article on Sony's CD copy protection problem) from entrenching in your computer.

Microsoft's firewall has been updated to look at incoming as well as outgoing traffic. They also intend to bring their anti-



spyware tool out of Beta testing and incorporate it into the operating system, with the name of Windows Defender.

Other security features in Vista include BitLocker Drive Encryption to protect data on computers when lost or stolen. The encryption feature is designed to work with a chip called the Trusted Platform Module (which is the same type of hardware chip I commented on in my article about Intel-based Macs), which offers protected storage of encryption keys, passwords and digital certificates.

Windows Vista will also offer tighter control over removable storage devices by letting administrators centrally block the installation of, for example, USB flash drives and external hard drives. This feature is designed to help prevent intellectual property or sensitive data from being compromised or stolen.

When will I see Windows Vista for myself?

Microsoft has changed its testing schedule for Windows Vista. Rather than have a formal test version labeled "Beta 2," the company is planning a series of test releases for 2006. An update to the current Community Technology Preview (CTP) program, set for release sometime during the first quarter, will serve as the version that Microsoft wants corporations to test. The company also wants to release a "customer preview program" that will give early-adopters a chance to get their hands on Vista. Allchin said these releases have all the necessary features that Vista will contain and that no major capabilities have been cut from the last preview. But while those features are all present, they will not necessarily be presented in their final form.

I guess we'll have to see for ourselves...

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac
They're here!

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

Have you seen the commercials on television? The bunny-suit men have arrived, delivering Intel processors to Apple computers. The roll-out of the Intel-based Macs was announced as part the 2006 Macworld Expo.

So, what's new?

The iMac has two versions: a 17" model running at 1.83GHz (Current Price: \$1299.00) and a 20" model running at 2GHz (Current Price: \$1699.00). Each houses Intel's Core Duo processor, which is a single processor with two independent cores (similar to the Power Mac G5 Quad covered in my March article). They come with 512MB of RAM (PC2-5300 SO-DIMM), an 8x dual-layer SuperDrive, and a 128MB ATI graphics card. Each system has a mini-DVI port, allowing you to extend the desktop to an additional monitor (instead of just mirroring what is shown on the main screen). The iSight camera and Apple's Front Row (the remote control feature) are also incorporated.

Before upgrading to the iSight-integrated version of the iMac, Apple was congratulated for creating an easily upgradeable system. Unfortunately, the new iMacs aren't as friendly. Memory is added through an access panel on the bottom (easy). But anything else (i.e. hard drives) require you to crack open the case. This is something to remember when deciding whether to purchase the 17" model with a 160GB hard drive or the 20" model with a 250GB hard drive.

The MacBook Pro represents the Intel-based laptop offering. It comes in 1.67GHz (Current Price: \$1999.00) and 1.83GHz (Current Price: \$2499.00) models using Intel's Core Duo, both with 15.4" monitors and SuperDrives. The 1.67GHz model has 512MB of RAM (PC2-5300 SO-DIMM), an 80GB hard drive, and a 128MB ATI-based video card. The 1.83GHz version has 1GB of RAM, a 100GB hard drive, and a 256MB ATI-based video card. Both laptops come with Front Row and iSight built-in.

A new laptop feature, known as the MacSafe power adaptor, sounds really cool. It creates a magnetic connection between the power adaptor and the laptop. This creates a tight connection, but allows for a clean break from the system if someone trips across the cord. I've had my PowerBook yanked to the side of the desk on more than one occasion, so this is a welcome addition.

Apple claims the iMacs perform 2x faster than the old iMacs and that the MacBook Pro provides 4x performance. However, as mentioned in my March article, performance is primarily determined by the software you use. On the software side, Apple already boasts that its operating system and all of its bundled applications, as well as iLife and iWork, are "universal," meaning the code runs natively on both G5 and Intel Macs. Third-party software that hasn't been compiled specifically for the Intel platform (i.e. Microsoft's current version of Office) must be translated before execution. This is done using Apple's Rosetta technology and will produce some delay in system performance.

Do they do Windows?

There's a lot of talk about whether the new Intel-based Macs can run Windows or not. The answer is technically, "No." You can't simply put a Windows XP CD into your Mac and load the operating system. It's an issue with system BIOS, hardware, and drivers—not to mention EFI (Extensible Firmware Interface), that little piece of hardware I mentioned in February that allows you to only run Mac software on the Intel Mac. Plus, you'd be violating all kinds of licensing agreements.

Besides, why would you want Windows on your Mac?

News Brief

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Making photos load faster

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!

If you've hung around the Web for a while you probably remember when the height of chic was black text on a gray background. Boring – but it sure did load fast. That was also the days when most people had 28.8 modems, so load time was more of an issue than it is now. But don't discount it. Fewer than 10% of the people viewing your site have high-speed connections, such as DSL or Cable. The rest are still viewing your site at dialup speed.

My design relies heavily on graphics. I like my sites to be inviting. But I am careful, always careful, to make my graphics load as quickly as possible.

Size matters

It seems obvious, but just making a graphic smaller will make it load faster. It is possible to manipulate the size of your inline graphic by using HTML code. The digital photos that come from my camera are 2048x1536 pixels. The lowest screen resolution is 640x480 pixels. Let's say I want a photo to take up half this screen, or 320 pixels.

I can force the photo to look smaller on the screen by using these attributes in the HTML code:

```
<IMG SRC="photo.jpg" width="320" height="240">
```

But there's a catch. This JPG straight from my camera is 638KB. That's a lot of download time! If I use HTML code to make the photo look smaller, it will still be 638KB. If I use my graphics editing software to make the photo physically smaller, downsize it to 320x240 pixels, I can get the weight down to less than 165K. Using a 56.6 modem, the larger file would take about 100 seconds to appear on the screen, the smaller photo about 25 seconds.

Drag-and-drop programs make it convenient to resize the appearance of a picture while leaving the original size intact and the download time long. It pays to take the time to physically alter the size of your photos.

Quality matters

Twenty five seconds for one photo is still a pretty long wait time. What else can we do to make the photo smaller? We can decrease the quality. Screen resolution is 72 dpi (dots per inch). If you are used to working in print, you are more likely to think in terms of 300dpi, 600 dpi or even higher. Change your thinking. Anything over 72dpi is wasted pixels when viewed on a monitor. When working with the JPEG format (on-line photos should always be JPEGs) you have a choice of selecting a quality level between 0 and 100, or low, medium, high and maximum. I've found that a low resolution is often good enough, almost indistinguishable from the original. This same 320x240 photo saved at a low resolution is less than 13 KB and will load in about 2 seconds with a 56.6 modem. Saved at a medium resolution still saves you time and space: it's about 21KB and loads in a little over 3 seconds.

Making your images use fewer kilobytes without a noticeable loss of quality is called optimizing your images. Many software programs take the guesswork out of this, including JASC Paintshop Pro and Adobe Photoshop Elements. Both retail for \$99. If your graphics program doesn't do this, one of these programs would be a good investment.

If you would like to test-drive a graphics optimization program, download the 30 day free trial of WebGraphics Optimizer. The standard version costs \$39. A free program is Paint Studio Lite.

Thumbnails and galleries

If you have a large number of photos that you need to display, one way to present them is in a thumbnail gallery. A thumbnail is a small copy of a photo, about 90x120 pixels or smaller. When you click on the thumbnail, it links you to a full-size photo on a new page. Many graphics programs have a gallery wizard that will do this for you. If yours doesn't, you might want to look into purchasing a program such as Thumbnail (get a free trial or purchase it for \$28.99. You can see an example of a gallery. These were created using Adobe Photoshop.

GIF vs. JPG

There are two common file formats for Web graphics: GIF and JPG.

GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) is a way of compressing graphics to send over telephone wires. It is a "lossless" format, which means it keeps all of the graphics data intact. GIF is limited to 256 colors. It is best used for graphics that have flat areas of color (like line art and text). GIF is used for animations and for transparent backgrounds: graphics where the background color or image shows through.

JPG (Joint Photographic Exchange Group) is a lossy format, which means that some of the file data is discarded in the compression process. JPG should always be used for photographs or other art where there are a lot of color gradations.

Many graphics fall somewhere in between. In these cases it pays to experiment to find the format that gives the best quality for the lowest pixels.

Save your original

A final word of advice. When you start messing with graphics — cropping, adjust color, playing with file formats or bit depth — work off of a copy, not the original. Save the original in its native condition. That way, if you make a mistake, need a higher resolution for a print publication or change your mind about the crop, you have a fallback position. Periodically archive your photos on a CD to clear room on your hard drive.



Rants

Collected by Pim Borman,
SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc., IN; <m>

It is a dark, dreary, drizzly day in mid-January as I write this, perfect for contesting a will (as they say in my native Holland) or protesting the peccability of PC peddlers.

Rant #1 concerns the software Dell installs on new computers, whether you want it or not. James Derk, computer columnist for Scripps Howard News Service, wrote recently about the effort it required to remove all the extraneous junk from someone's new Dell system: "Dell is on the list this year for adding so much junk to their new PCs that it takes a trained technician to remove most of them. Their "starter" edition of QuickBooks is the most annoying...even popping up reminders to try the program long after you've deleted it. I know Dell sells 80 percent of its PCs to businesses but there's no reason to have such an invasive product and selling tactic. Most large businesses don't use QuickBooks, most small businesses already have it and consumers don't want it. Editing the Windows Registry should not be needed to remove it. (Dell gets an honorable mention for charging \$25 for a USB cable to connect their "free" printers to their computers.)" (<http://snipurl.com/derkcolumn2>). Elsewhere he mentions the desirability of removing the pre-installed temporary version of McAfee anti-virus. He wrote: "If you have McAfee preinstalled on your new PC, I would uninstall it immediately and install a free product. It's not just a bias...in my computer repair business I have seen dozens of PCs with McAfee installed that are riddled with viri. Something either about McAfee's online-only product or the configuration just lets viruses pass through" (<http://snipurl.com/derkcolumn>).

As luck would have it, my neighbors asked me soon thereafter for help with the installation of their new Dell computer. The recently retired professional couple had been using a MacIntosh computer for the past eight years and were unfamiliar with MS Windows. Remembering Derk's comment, I suggested we remove the McAfee program and install Norton Internet Security. Tough luck! As I attempted to remove McAfee via the Control Panel's Add/Remove feature, I kept getting error messages that part of the program was running and could not be removed. I did everything I could think of to stop/disable McAfee, but nothing managed to kill it dead. I did a Google search later on and found that usually there is no simple way to get rid of it. A "help" page on the McAfee page provides pages of procedures to "try," all of them obscure and non-intuitive. An unwanted program that can not simply be uninstalled is malware in my opinion. If Dell is unwilling to sell computers without all the junk, the best solution may be to reformat the hard drive and reinstall the desired programs only. Or choose another vendor. It is hardly an attractive option for new Windows users.

Rant #2 Sony BMG recently got caught using rootkits to provide copy protection on CDs they sold. Rootkits are programs that hide on your hard drive, out of sight of Windows. They are an open invitation for virus writers to invade your system and are hard to remove without damaging Windows. Sony was forced to apologize for its error, recalled the CDs involved, and published a patch to remove the rootkits from the customers' computers.

According to an article in eweek.com, the rootkit trick is being used by other companies also (<http://snipurl.com/lis7>, thanks to Jim Geiser). Norton SystemWorks is specifically mentioned. Symantec explained that they used the rootkit to prevent users from accidentally removing the file, but offered to relocate it with a program update. According to eweek.com there are other instances of rootkits being used, but no specifics were mentioned.

My Norton Internet Security subscription is about to expire. I already had planned to try the ZoneAlarm Security Suite, based on a recommendation in PC Magazine (12/27/05) that included it in their list of Best of the Year Products (but that also included McAfee anti-virus!). But then Linda Gonse, editor/webmaster of the Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, wrote that the ZoneAlarm Security Suite interfered with her ftp program and mangled the files she uploaded to her Web site. She had a dickens of a time trying to uninstall the program. However she never had a problem with the plain, free ZoneAlarm firewall. I concluded that my best bet was to use free ZoneAlarm as the firewall.

I chose a separate anti-virus program, f-prot from Frisk software (<http://www.f-prot.com/products/>). I used that program years ago in the DOS days, and more recently I have been using it on my Linux computers. Their technical support is outstanding, as I mentioned in a previous column (P-See Urgent, December 2005). F-prot, based in Iceland, was one of the first to spot the rootkits and to provide an uninstallation patch. They update their database as soon as they add new data, usually several times a week. The Windows version costs \$29 per year, but a trial version is available to make sure the product fills your needs.

As expected, replacing Norton Internet Security with ZoneAlarm and f-prot was not without problems. I downloaded the trial version of f-prot without difficulty and stored it, ready for use. Getting the free version of ZoneAlarm was a different story.

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In love with layer comps

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>.

A typical photographic problem is having the right shot with the wrong background. This month I will discuss a great way of using Adobe Photoshop to drop out the unwanted background, putting the subject into a simple but more appropriate setting. I started with a scan of the photo that was a little flat, a quick curve (Image: Adjust: Curves) (Fig. 1) pumped up the contrast and improved the color (if you could see the color).

Next, I made the photo into a layer by double-clicking the "Background" layer in the layers palette. By doing this, I can now add a layer mask to this layer (now called "Layer 0"). Add a layer mask by choosing Add Layer Mask from the Layer menu using the option of "Reveal All." A layer mask allows you to hide parts of a layer without destroying or erasing them, the greatest benefit being that you can fudge back & forth if you are not that steady drawing with a mouse.

The technique is simple, paint with black anywhere that you want to be hidden, any of the painting tools will work, but I prefer a slightly soft brush with the paintbrush tool (Fig. 2). Photoshop represents transparency by filling the clear area with a checkerboard grid. For added effect, I used a feather elliptical selection to leave a 'spotlighted' area of the floor still visible by filling that area of the mask with white.

Continued on page 29.

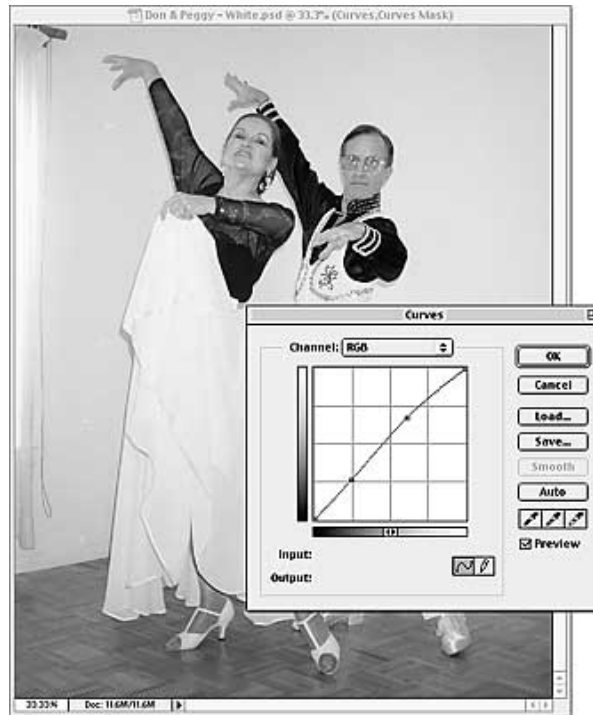


Figure 1



Figure 2

Volunteers Wanted

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Now that the mask is made, the fun begins. To add the new background, first add a new layer by selecting Image: New: Layer from the menu (by default it is called "Layer 1"), and drag it so that it is below your main photograph. Using the Radial Gradient tool (Fig. 3), I created a gradation from gray at the center, to black in the corners. At this point you may see some imperfections in your mask, and you may need to touch them up.

Next, with Layer 1 selected, I applied a lighting effect by selecting Render: Lighting Effects from the Filter menu (Fig. 4). Using one of the stock effects, I was able to create a dramatic backdrop. To make the background look more realistic, I added a little noise (Filter: Noise: Add Noise) to simulate the grain of the existing picture.

To finish the project, I added the names of the dancers with a little glow effect (Fig. 5). You do not need to make your own background, with the same layer mask technique, you can use a different photograph altogether. Photoshop's layer mask feature makes it very convenient to turn a mediocre photo into a great piece.



Figure 3

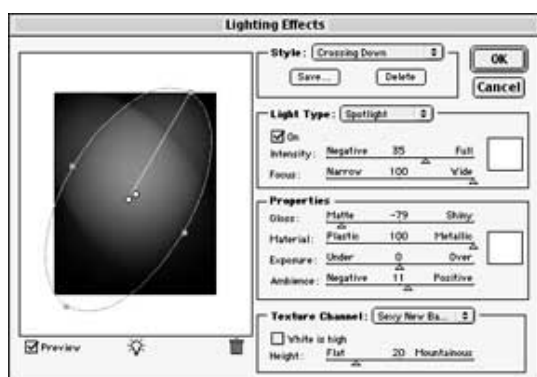


Figure 4

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.



Figure 5



Internet Explorer - Internet Security Options

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>

Internet Options

General Security Privacy Content Connections Programs Ad

Select a Web content zone to specify its security settings.

Internet Local intranet Trusted sites Restricted sites

Internet
This zone contains all Web sites you haven't placed in other zones

Security level for this zone

Medium

- Safe browsing and still functional
- Prompts before downloading potentially unsafe content
- Unsigned ActiveX controls will not be downloaded
- Appropriate for most Internet sites

Warning!

The recommended security level for this zone is "Medium".
The security level that you have chosen is lower than this.
Are you sure you want to change the security level?

Yes No

OK Cancel Apply

As you see above, IE offers four content zones wherein you may define the levels of security you wish to use. I won't go into the Custom Level here. There are about 30 choices to be made there. You may look it over if you wish. I have always stayed with the default level, and have had no problems.

High

- The safest way to browse, but also the least functional
- Less secure features are disabled
- Appropriate for sites that might have harmful content

Medium-low

- Same as Medium without prompts
- Most content will be run without prompts
- Unsigned ActiveX controls will not be downloaded
- Appropriate for sites on your local network (intranet)

Low

- Minimal safeguards and warning prompts are provided
- Most content is downloaded and run without prompts
- All active content can run
- Appropriate for sites that you absolutely trust

The default levels are controlled by the slider at left. High, although safest, will tend to hobble your browsing.

Continued on page 31.

Finally, the “Low” setting, seen at lower right of the previous page, also not recommended, leaves you highly vulnerable. You have few safeguards and prompts. Almost everything will run. This setting is only useful in an environment you can completely trust.

The next zone is seen below. Most of you will not



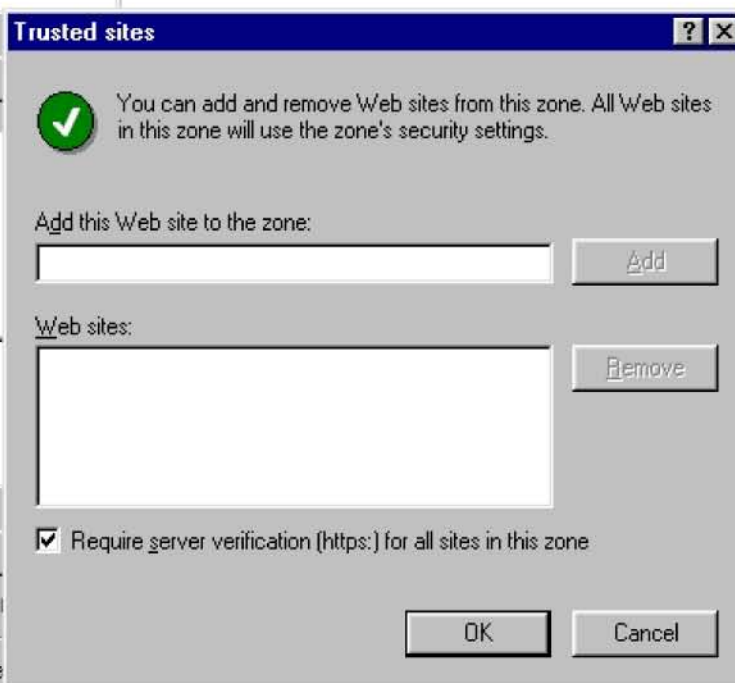
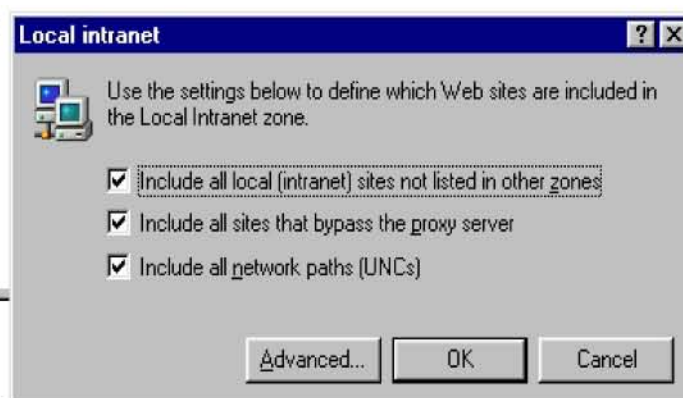
occasion to use these settings. Intranets generally connect computers within an office environment. Security levels for this zone are the same as for the Internet Zone.



Trusted sites, as seen above, are those which allow you to set a “low” security level.

The final zone, “Restricted sites” requires the “High” security level.

One thing I have not mentioned yet is the **Sites** button on each of these screens. The button is inactive on the “Internet” zone, because as it says, this zone contains all Web sites not placed in other zones. The “Local Intranet” zone offers selection boxes from which you can choose. The window at the top of the next column shows these. The “Trusted Sites” and “Restricted Sites” zones have yet another window which allows you add or remove sites as you see fit. I should stress again, that most of you will not be using anything but the “Internet” zone.



Since I don't use any zone other than “Internet”, I can't offer advice as to how one might go about selecting Web sites to Add to either the “Trusted” or “Restricted” zones. I believe this area is beyond the scope of these articles, so will leave it at that. I just felt that you should at least be aware that these security zones exist and see something of their characteristics.

Next month we'll move on to the “Privacy” tab, which I think will find more general application. It deals with a fairly large number of levels which may be applied to the “Internet” zone to deal with the types of “Cookies” you allow to be added to your computer. Cookies in general are not necessarily harmful to your computer. However, you may wish to block certain of them, while allowing others.

Until next month.

Play it straight: Avoid pirated software

By Sharon Oosthoek, Microsoft® Home Magazine, Articles, Tips + Tools for Better Living <<http://www.microsoft.com/canada/home/>>
<mindshare@microsoft.com>

Find out how to determine if your programs are legit and the benefits of owning the real thing

Ever been pleased to find the little variety store on your corner is selling a computer program at a bargain-basement price? Or you've learned a friend of a friend can get you a deal on the latest games? If so, you could be unwittingly using pirated software.

Debi Lascelle, a self-employed editor in Ottawa, was certainly surprised to learn she was using pirated operating system software. Lascelle bought a new system from an acquaintance last year, but ran into difficulties after an electrical problem in her home crashed her hard drive.

When her Nerds On Site technician asked for the disks to reinstall the operating system, Lascelle had no idea she was even supposed to have disks. As a neophyte computer user, she had bought her system assuming the preloaded software was legitimate. It was not.

Constable Judith Laurence of the RCMP's Federal Enforcement Section says software piracy is "making a copy of a company's software without permission from them." And according to the Canadian Alliance Against Software Theft (CAAST), 39.4 per cent of software in this country is pirated.

In Lascelle's case, having pirated software cost her dearly. Not only did she originally pay \$1,000 to the acquaintance for the software, she then had to fork out another \$1,000 to buy legitimate operating system software. "I thought, 'I'm running a business doing government contracts and I have to have legal software. It's got to be legitimate. I don't care what it costs,'" she says.

Spot the real thing

It is possible to be unaware the software installed on your PC is pirated, says Brent Renouf, an anti-piracy investigator with Microsoft Canada and a former Mountie with an expertise in fraud. He says pirates are incredibly sophisticated and able to mimic the most up-to-date security features.

Laurence, whose job it is to investigate software piracy in Canada, recommends making sure you buy your product at a legitimate store. "That's not to say it's impossible to get pirated software at a legitimate store, but if you do, you can go back to them and get help," she says.

In fact, pirated software may alert you to the fact it is pirated. John Harbarenko, co-founder of Nerds On Site, says that because pirated software is often copied repeatedly, it may come with viruses, causing your computer to slow down or even crash.

And, most importantly, pirated software doesn't come with upgrades, warranties or technical support, meaning if something goes wrong, you're likely on your own. "People could definitely find themselves without support, even from third parties," says Harbarenko.

When it comes to your Windows XP operating system, one way to find out if your copy is legitimate is through a recently launched program called Windows Genuine Advantage (WGA). A simple online validation process tells you if your product is supported by Microsoft and allows you to take advantage of special offers and download programs.

To participate, input your Certificate of Authenticity (COA), the 25-character string of letters and numbers that comes with your copy on the Is your copy of Windows genuine? site. If you had Windows preinstalled when you bought your computer, the COA label should be stuck to the CPU. If you bought the operating system separately, the COA should be on the top of the box.

Click here <<http://www.microsoft.com/resources/howtotell/ww/default.mspx>> for tips on how to tell if your other Microsoft products are genuine.

What to do with pirated software

As with most companies, Microsoft's website allows users to report piracy. You can also report illegal software to your local RCMP office or Crime Stoppers. The information is passed on to Laurence's team, which can't take on every file, but will take note of complaints and start an investigation if it's a serious case.

Laurence says computer users are guilty of software piracy whether they make a single copy for a friend or many copies for resale. "You can make one backup disk for yourself, but you can't share it with friends and family," she explains. This complies with the Canadian Copyright Act, which says it's illegal to knowingly distribute, rent or import for sale any illegal copies.

However simply having illegal software is not against the law. "The penalty is if you're manufacturing and distributing it," says Laurence.

Nerds On Site - <<http://www.nerdsonsite.us/>>

Certificate of Authenticity - <<http://www.microsoft.com/resources/howtotell/ww/coa.mspx>>

Is Your Copy of Windows Genuine? - <<http://www.microsoft.com/resources/howtotell/ww/windows/default.mspx>>

How to tell if your other Microsoft products are genuine - <<http://www.microsoft.com/resources/howtotell/ww/default.mspx>>

Sharon Oosthoek is a Toronto-based journalist. As the mother of two very busy boys, she's interested in computing only when it makes her life easier.

Protect and purge your personal files

By Alyson Munroe

APCUG Advisor; radio show host; Vice President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

When you stop and think about it, your home computer holds a lot of information about you — credit card numbers, bank account details, passwords, medical information, websites you've visited and those deep, dark secrets you share with your best friend via e-mail.

There naturally comes a time when it's time for an upgrade, whether it be a bigger hard drive or an entirely new PC. But what should you do with the old one? And what about the information on it? You need to remove this information whether you donate it, sell it or trash it.

Imagine your hard drive — including all of your personal information — falling into the wrong hands. That's what could happen if you don't do a little damage control before you dispose of your hard drive.

Why "delete" isn't enough

Many people think that clearing their history, deleting files and cookies, and emptying their computer's recycle bin is enough. Not so, according to Vancouver IT specialist Tony Lum. He says that's like removing the table of contents in a book. The chapters (or your files, in this case) are still there, they're just harder to find.

What you've actually done is remove a particular file from the disk's index. The file itself still exists on your hard disk. For the average person it's harder to recover, but an experienced programmer (or hacker) could easily locate the file. Previous or temporary versions of the file might also be saved under different names.

You need to go one step further and overwrite your data. Lum recommends you back up everything you want to keep on your hard drive and then run hard-drive wiping software, which will overwrite your information with random ones and zeros. He also recommends you use a program that overwrites your data more than once. The more it's overwritten, the harder it is to recover.

Select software to wipe your hard drive clean

Is it impossible to retrieve your information afterwards? Not 100 per cent, but Lum says unless CSIS or the CIA is after you, you should be in the clear after using one of these disk-erasing tools that are available for you to download online:

- <http://www.killdisk.com/>: This free hard drive eraser overwrites data using zeros. You can upgrade to the professional version that conforms to the US Department of Defense (DOD) standards.
- <http://www.heidi.ie/eraser/>: Eraser is a free download that boasts a simple user interface and top reviews from a number of popular computing websites and magazines.
- <http://www.softpedia.com/get/Security/Security-Related/DP-WIPER.shtml>: Toronto IT consultant Daniel Gresser recommends freeware programs from Softpedia, like DP Wiper, which can overwrite in from one to 35 passes and has DOD-compliant wiping.
- <http://www.jiiva.com/products/>: Mac users can try SuperScrubber for \$29 to \$49 US, which also boasts DOD compliance and an intuitive interface.

"Always keep a record of where all important files are stored," says Gresser, who recommends deleting each file by dropping it into DP Wiper and selecting the kind of wipe required.

Unless you take the hard drive out and keep it, to get a PC ready for sale, Gresser suggests PC users delete the following using DP Wipe or a similar program:

- Everything in the My Documents folder.
- All temporary Internet files.
- All cookies.
- All files relating to personal and financial matters that may have been stored in folders other than My Documents.
- All e-mail: Outlook Express users need to search for and delete *.dbx files and Outlook users need to search for and delete *.pst files. This will send them to the recycle bin for secure deletion. Also, remember to remove all e-mail account settings and passwords, etc.

Reinstall your operating system to overwrite files

Your operating system's installation CD should allow you to simultaneously reinstall and clear your hard drive. Lum says this should be enough to prevent the average person from obtaining personal information from your hard drive. However, he says he's managed to salvage data from computers using third-party software even after an operating system was reinstalled.

Protect information on your work computer

You'll also want to think about personal information on your work computer when it's time to move on to a new job. You can't wipe the hard drive since the computer isn't your property, but you can make it somewhat harder to find sensitive information by deleting personal e-mails, clearing your web browser's cache and history, deleting any personal files on your hard drive and emptying your trash or recycle bin.

Playing it safe

Still concerned? Don't dispose of your hard drive. "The bottom line is, if you're really concerned about identity theft then don't give away your hard drive," says Lum.

Gresser also recommends taking some preventative measures when you set up your new computer. "One thing people can do to make disposing of PCs with sensitive data easier down the road is to encrypt their data as soon as they get a new PC or hard disk," he says. "If strong encryption is used then you can format the drive and dispose of it with the computer. Someone who wanted to retrieve the data would first have to undelete the data and then try to break the encryption, which is not going to happen." He suggests using BestCrypt from Jetico to encrypt your documents.

International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2006

The Year of the Gadget

Part II

by Bill Klutz, President, Alamo PC

In the March issue of PC Alamode I provided Alamo PC members with my "Trip Report" to the January 2006 Consumer Electronic Show (CES) in Las Vegas, NV. I knew I had missed a lot in the short time that I was there (3 days at Microsoft's invitation & expense), due to the enormity of the show. When I read the following article, which appeared in the First Quarter (Jan-Mar) issue of REPORTS, published by The Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), I thought would share the information with Alamo PC members.

The article is by Tom Jones, APCUG Board of Directors, APCUG Rep and Past President for NEOPC. It provides an overview of CES, addresses some of the non-mainstream items presented at the show, and gives some of his personal thoughts about items presented and being worked. I hope you find the information informative.

"The Consumer Electronics Show is billed as the biggest trade show in Las Vegas. I'm not sure what other city could host a bigger show, though. CES is certainly big enough. The official statistics are impressive. Just over 2500 vendors and over 150,000 attendees were registered to attend this year. The show covered over 1,670,000 square feet of floor space, plus a lot of outside exhibits filling a couple of big parking lots. They use all of the Las Vegas Convention Center space - the North Hall, the Central Hall, and both floors of the new South Hall. But that is not enough, so they also use the Sands Expo

& Convention Center, the Hilton Hotel Convention Facilities, the Renaissance Hotel Convention Facilities, and dozens of suites at Alexis Park (for the high-end home theater products).

CES has a history of being the place to go to see new and innovative products. In fact, some of the products shown here are not even in production yet. They may be just being shown by their inventors looking for investors or venture capital to bring their products to market. In past years, CES was the first place to see such items as VCRs, camcorders, CD players, DVDs, Satellite Radio, HDTV, X-Box, Plasma TVs, etc. I didn't see any "big" announcements of new technology this year, but I did see a lot of improvements on many of the innovations of past years, and I saw a lot of great "gadgets" this year.

How would you like to have a gadget from Cool?it Systems that plugs into any USB port and keeps your beverage can cold for you while you work on your PC? Or perhaps you could get some housework done while you surf the web. You may have seen the Roomba before - that little round robotic vacuum that cleans your rug for you. Now they also have the Scooba that looks similar, but it is for hardwood, tile, or linoleum floors, and it will scrub-mop and dry them for you. You can use it while you sleep at night, or while you are off to work, or just in the other room watching TV or surfing the web. Did you ever go to a sporting event and want to see an instant replay like you can on your TV? Well, now you can take your Bushnell binoculars with the built-in instant replay feature that captures what you are watching in the binoculars and replays it for you (and the buddy in the seat next to you) on a small LCD screen that flips up from the binoculars.

Have to be somewhere and don't want to miss your favorite TV show? Now you can watch that TV show live anywhere on your cell phone from MobiTV.





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Take a pleasant ride on your bicycle in the summer, and capture the view with a handlebar mounted video camera. Then, when the weather is bad, you can play the video back and watch it while you ride your exercise bike that adjusts the settings automatically to replicate the ride you video recorded. Have you learned to snowboard but don't have snow enough of the year where you live? Now you can get a motorbike that you ride standing up sideways, and balance and steer just like a snowboard.

A keyboard with oversized keys may be just right for young children or maybe even senior citizens who can't see the small print as well as anyone else.

How about a wireless HP laptop with a built-in connection to Verizon's network? You can surf the web anywhere your cell phone works. Dell expects to have one out soon, too.

Want a mouse pad that looks nice on your expensive office desk? Maybe the Mouse Rug is for you. It looks like a small Persian rug. They have even smaller matching rugs to use as a coaster for your coffee cup as well. All of these, and many more gadgets, were there at CES to examine or play with.

There must have been thousands of TV screens and monitors all throughout the CES exhibits, but I don't think any of them were the old type with a picture tube. LCD, Plasma, and DLP are the big three now, and they were plentiful in a wide range of sizes. The North Hall was dedicated to everything associated with vehicles, so there was a great array of audio and video systems for cars, trucks, and even golf carts. The smallest LCD I saw was one that fit in the gas cap door of a Cadillac EXT. I guess that was so you didn't miss a scene of your DVD movie while you stopped to fill up the gas tank (which you have to do often on those big SUVs). On the big side, Samsung seems to go the furthest in size. They had an 82" LED based LCD and an 82" standard LCD, a 102" Plasma prototype, [102 inch plasma] and an 80" Plasma production model.

One of the hot topics this year is the battle for the next PC optical disk format. We started out using the audio CD format, which could store up to 700 megabytes of data. DVDs soon became

available that store up to 4.7 gigabytes. Many companies have a dual-layer version that stores over nine gigabytes. Now we have two competing formats for the next version of optical storage. Both use a blue laser (CDs and DVDs use red lasers) with the dual-layer technology to be able to pack more info on each disk. Blu-ray uses a new technology to store up to 50 gigabytes (most only get about 25 gigabytes, though, due to problems getting the two layers to work right). HD-DVD also uses the blue laser and dual layer technology to get up to 30 gigabytes per disk, but is considered more reliable than Blu-ray because they used an existing technology instead of a new technology to manufacture the disks. Blu-ray was developed by Sony and is backed by Dell, HP, Hitachi, Philips, Pioneer, Sharp, Samsung, TDK, Columbia TriStar, MGM, Twentieth Century Fox, and Disney. HD-DVD was developed by NEC and Toshiba, and is backed by the DVD Forum along with Time Warner (Warner Brothers, HBO, New Line), Universal, and Paramount. At CES, the HD-DVD announcements included the upcoming release of a bunch of titles, including "Batman Begins," "Braveheart," and the Harry Potter series. Blu-ray was vague about its announcements, and it seems they still have a few "bugs" to work out yet to be sure that a disk recorded on one vendor's product will play back on another vendor's product. Almost all of the HD-DVD players will also play standard DVD disks. Samsung had been saying for months that they were going to be able to make a drive that would play both new formats, but they sure didn't have one at CES, and it sounds like the biggest stumbling block is not technical, but legal. It seems that, for now, there are licensing agreements in place that prevent a dual-mode player. Leave it to the lawyers to slow down technical progress.

You might remember, or have heard of, the old Commodore computer company. They introduced the VIC-20 and the Commodore 64 at CES shows over 20 years ago. A Dutch company now owns the Commodore brand, and they were at CES this year, featuring a GPS unit based on Windows Mobile and set-top media player. It's not your father's Commodore, I guess.

While on the subject of computers, I should comment on the CPU battle between AMD and Intel. AMD has talked about their new Live! brand of products and how it will help get all of your electronic stuff in the home working together with your PC. CES was their chance to show off how these things work and they expect to be shipping large numbers of these units by midyear. Not to be outdone, Intel unveiled not only a new logo at CES, but they also now have a new processor / chip set for the digital home. Intel calls this new platform Viiv, which, coincidentally, rhymes with Live! AMD has made great strides against Intel in the past couple of years, and has even outsold Intel in certain markets (such as home computers) for over a year now. Intel still leads market share overall due to the large volume of business sales that have historically been Intel based, but that could change. AMD processors typically outperform Intel now in most head-to-head tests, and they work with many other vendors' chip sets, while Intel seems to want to make all of the major chips that go inside the PC, making their motherboards often more expensive. In this battle, I hope the customer wins!"

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CES Trip Report

APCUG Events Jan 3 – Jan 6

by David Steward, Secretary, Alamo PC

As usual, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) preceded the Annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) and convention. The APCUG event are designed for user group leaders from all over the world, to come to a centralized place, and meet and work with the various vendors that support user groups. In addition, round tables and strategy sessions are held, to allow user group leaders to learn from each other, and to share ideas and goals towards a common purpose.

This year's event was held at the Stardust Hotel and Casino. With over 250 user group officers in attendance, this year's event was the best ever. During the course of the event, I was honored to introduce speakers like Chris Prillo (world renowned techno-geek extraordinaire), Tanya Lux from Corel and Jonathon Schekler of AMD. Most of the user group sponsoring vendors were present, and I had the opportunity to meet with each of them to coordinate presentations and reviews over the coming months.

One of the best features of the APCUG event was the opportunity to attend presentation given by folks like Microsoft, CNET Corel and Linspire, at which the attendees were give sneak peaks at the up-coming releases of their products. For example, we learned that Corel would be releasing new versions of Corel Draw and WordPerfect during the first part of 2006. (Corel will be at the Alamo PC meeting in April to show off their new releases). We also got to see and play with the next generation of Windows, code named Vista, which is expected to be released in the fourth quarter of 2006.

Of the many other activities that took place, one very important event was the awards dinner, where the winners of the various user group contests were announced. During the awards, it was announced that the PC Alamode had won First Place in the Large Group Division of the Newsletter competition. As I was one of the two Co-Chairs of the contest, I was greatly surprised to learn that we had beat out the Melbourne, Australia's printed newsletter, which has not happened for a long time. Just as a side note, I do want to say that I had excused myself from judging the PC Alamode to avoid a conflict of interest. I want to congratulate Joseph DeLeon and all of the staff writers on the winning of the contest.

The various user group-supporting vendors sponsored most of the meals and other events. During these meals, we were treated to presentations of their products that were geared towards the user group industry. Industry leaders like Microsoft, Adobe, CompUSA, Corel and Linspire were all present and pronounced continued support to the user group community. I had the opportunity to sit down with each of these company representatives and work out presentations and review product for our organization.


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The ACPUG, of which the Alamo PC is a member, is striving to devise plans to make the user group community a bigger part of the vendors support bases. We are trying to improve benefits in individual user groups, make it more beneficial for software and hardware vendors to provide support for individual user groups, and overall, to develop programs that insures the continued viability of the user group arena.

The Future of the Industry aka Ask and Ye Shall Receive

As is the norm, Bill Gates officially opened CES with his Key-note Address. The first part of his presentation dealt with what he believes will become the next defining moment in the computer age. He calls it the Digital Decade. He believes (and when he says he believes, Microsoft is already working on it) that within 4 years or so, the face of computer connectivity will completely change.

He gave a demo of his virtual world with actual working scenarios. First, as he emerged into his kitchen for a cup of coffee, he was greeted with a flat screen built into the way, that was displaying his children's drawings in one portion (completely selectable with just a touch), a map showing the locations of the other members of his household, (one of which was driving to the soccer game, and a broadcast of pertinent news articles that he like to follow. After his coffee, he traveled to his office while viewing the new videos on his cell phone, which was permanently connected to his "home" system

At the office, he sat behind his virtual desk that had a very large screen in front of him, from which he could monitor everything that happened in the company, keep track of the stock markets and news, conduct his business and participate in video conferences all simultaneously. Later, as he was waiting for a flight at the airport, he set his cell phone onto a virtual table. The table recognized the cell phone, and after authenticating himself with his fingerprint, the table connected to his "home" system, and turned into a flat screen monitor. The table was actually a Bluetooth receptor with a small camera embedded. To demonstrate the features of this, Bill placed a business card on the table, which immediately read the information into the contacts file in his cell phone. He then turned the card over, and it read the notes

that he had written on the back of the card into his Personal Information Manager. The entire demonstration was completed without touching a keyboard or mouse.

Bill then proceeded to give the audience an idea of Microsoft's direction in the development of software. In a word, simple. His goal is to make things that we do everyday much easier and in most cases, automatic. Things like entertainment will be built into the PC, in a much more convenient manner, easier to operate, and much more dependable and unlimited content. The Media Center Operating System will undergo many changes over the next few years, and will probably become the most important piece of our home entertainment. With the advent of IPTV (Internet TV) your TV viewing will be greatly enhanced. Instead of watching the same old boring advertisements, day after day, IPTV will allow the advertising that reaches you to be more selective to your likes and dislikes. I am not quite sure that I like this, but, I'll give it the old college try. <G> I do like TV, and having the ability to program what I want, when I want it holds a great deal of appeal to me.

Aaron Woodman, Vista Group Product manager then gave the audience a quick tour of Vista. Aaron demonstrated the nuances of Vista as compared to Windows XP, some of which included the new transparent windows, the sidebar and the new gadgets that will be introduced. Gaming has been made much more robust owing to the new nad improved graphics engine and connectivity aids. The Alamo PC members will

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be treated to a complete demonstration of Vista, sometime later in the year.

We were then treated to a look at the new Microsoft – MTV partnership venture called URGE. URGE will revolutionize the PC music industry; by introducing widely varied genre play lists, and over 100 Internet radio channels. You will be able to customize your area however you want. To emphasize the impact that URGE is going to have on the industry, Justin Timberlake was on hand to demonstrate its ease of use.

As you might imagine, the Xbox 360 was one of the main attractions at this year's Microsoft booth, and to show it off, Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer ended the keynote address by playing a game on it. The game that they chose was by EA Games, and was titled Fight Night Round 3. Steve Ballmer played the role of Joe Frasier, while Bill Gates was Mohammed Ali. As you can probably imagine, Ali beat Fraiser. The whole purpose of this was to show the realism of the Xbox 360's playback and fast rendering of the playback scenes. And, with the addition of the external HD-DVD drive that will be made available later this year, this realism will take a gigantic step forward. I am really looking forward to seeing this system in it's final stage.

The Show Floor a.k.a. A Cacophony of Sights and Sounds

I have a subtle warning for anyone who visits the CES show: Take some GOOD earplugs with you. If you don't, you'll live to regret it.

Upon entering the show floor, I was greeted with a blast of sound emanating from hundreds of different speakers all playing a different tune. It seemed that each exhibitor was trying to outdo the others, demonstrating their latest development in the entertainment industry. From Ipod players, to full blown home entertainment systems, each of the over 1100 exhibitors had something new or improved, to offer.

Since Bill Klutz, our president, has already reported on some of the booths at the show, I wanted to describe one thing that I saw, that reinforced my opinion of just to what extents some people will go to get a little attention. It was a car. Not just any car, but a Cadillac Escalade SUV. What as different about it, you ask? Well, for one thing, only 2 people could

ride in it. Although it is touted as being able to seat 7 comfortably, all of the space behind the driver and passenger seats was taken up by a gigantic 39" speaker and a slew of smaller speakers. In addition, a power director that controlled the onboard computer system took up most of the cargo area. This computer system controlled the DVD screens that were present throughout the interior of the vehicle. Oh, did I mention that all of the exterior taillights, running lights, and back window, were actually high-resolution flat panel displays? Well, they were. When they were not in use, as when you step on the brakes, they were displaying a very nice playback of Top Gun. The taillights, when you applied the brake, immediately turned into a bright red panel, just like a real taillight. I actually got to sit in the car, and was amazed that although I felt every sound, it sounded great. And, I understand that you can own this beautiful piece of equipment for only a cool quarter of a million dollars. They will throw in two cup holders if you say "please".

Another highlight of the show was a handheld Global Positioning System apparatus produced by a company named Freescale Semiconductor. As with other GPS systems, the device provided the user with their exact position. But unlike other systems, a map was over-layed on the screen and the system was integrated with a very detailed mapping system that included roads, restaurants, hotels, and other service oriented facilities. And, it was voice operated. The user would say something like "Find the nearest hospital", and the system would generate a map to it, from their present destination, and provide verbal driving or walking directions.

Among the many celebrities and industry leaders that were present at the show, I was privileged to see only a few. I did get to see Morgan Freeman, Tom Cruise, Ellen DeGeneres and I was very excited to meet and have a brief conversation with Dan Brown, the author of "The DiVinci Code", a best selling book that is being made into a major motion picture to be released later this year.

All in all, the theme of this years CES show was "Entertainment". Most of the new innovations and improved products that entered the market last year were geared towards personal entertainment. Products like the Ipod and MP#3 equipped cell phones led the list with Video and Media Center PC's following in a close second. During a conversation with Gary Nash of




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Toshiba, I inquired as to the reasoning behind this. His reply to me was that since the computer age has matured, and productivity has moved to an all-time high because of it, people have more spare time on their hands. The market, being what it is, want to capture and take advantage of this "spare time", by marketing products to fill in the gaps, ie...entertainment. Look for a big thrust in the video market this year, as companies make it easier for the consumer to choose what they want to watch, and when they want to watch it. In addition, advertising will take a new role in our everyday lives, as new methods are developed to get the word out, as people are not watching as much advertising on public TV anymore.

Finally.... The end of everything

I returned home on Saturday, after attending 5 full days of the APCUG conference and 2 ½ days of the CES show. And, being on the conference team, I was working most of that time. Believe me when I say that I was glad to see my own bed. I left with 1 suitcase and returned with 3. I am still sifting thru the literature and having conversations with the people that I contacted, arranging presentations for our group, and to improve the relations between the vendors and the user group community. Look for some exciting presentations in the coming months. And, as always, I was proud to have been representing the Alamo PC Organization, at this year's APCUG conference and CES show.

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What is Podcasting?

By Sharon Housley, marketing manager for FeedForAll <<http://www.feedforall.com>> software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts. Sharon also manages marketing for NotePage <<http://www.notepage.net>> a wireless text messaging software company.

Podcasting is quickly becoming a buzz word among the techie crowd. So what is podcasting, anyway? Podcasting is online audio content that is delivered via an RSS feed [Editor's Note: read about RSS on page 41]. Many people liken podcasting to radio on demand. However, in reality, podcasting gives far more options in terms of content and programming than radio does. In addition, with Podcasting, listeners can determine the time and the place, meaning they decide what programming they want to receive and when they want to listen to it.

Listeners can retain audio archives to listen to at their leisure. While blogs have turned many bloggers into journalists, podcasting has the potential to turn podcasters into radio personalities.

Podcasting can be used for:

1. Self-Guided Walking Tours - Informational content.
2. Music - Band promotional clips and interviews.
3. Talk Shows - Industry or organizational news, investor news, sportscasts, news coverage and commentaries.
4. Training - Instructional informational materials.
5. Story - Story telling for children or the visually-impaired.

Podcasting is the syndication of audio files using RSS. Podcasting works the same as a standard RSS feed reader or news aggregator, the only difference is that the feed you subscribe to contains an audio file in it. Instead of reading content in your RSS feed reader or aggregator, you can listen to the contents of your feed using a reader or aggregator that supports podcasting, or you can listen to them on an iPod or similar device. While podcasting was named for the iPod,



you do not have to have an iPod to listen to a podcast. Podcasts can be displayed on websites with clickable links to audio files and many of the standard RSS readers, like FeedDemon's latest beta, have begun supporting audio enclosures.

The audio file that makes the feed a podcast rather than a standard RSS feed is contained in the 'enclosure' tag. The easiest way to think of this is as an e-mail attachment.

Although the "enclosure" tag is not new to RSS feeds and has been included in the RSS v2.0 specification for about four years, podcasting has only really been around since August of 2004.

Webmasters are finding creative ways to provide media-rich content. The syndication aspect and potential increase in audience size are an attractive lure. Listeners benefit from podcasting because, like RSS, podcasting is a means to publish content that ultimately gives the recipient the control over the information they want to see or hear.

Podcasting Resources:

Podcasting Tools - <<http://www.podcasting-tools.com>>

Podcast Alley - <<http://www.podcastalley.com>>

PodcastBunker - <<http://www.podcastbunker.com>>

Podcasting News - <<http://www.podcastingnews.com>>

It will be interesting to see how this publishing medium develops. Currently, only the technical crowd has endorsed podcasting as a new audio medium, but the potential is real and the process is not overly complex. With a little time I think this field will develop and prosper.

What is RSS?

By Sharon Housley

RSS also known as rich site summary or real simply syndication, arrived on the scene a number of years ago, but was only recently embraced by webmasters as a means to effectively syndicate content. RSS Feeds provide webmasters and content providers an avenue to provide concise summaries to prospective readers. Thousands of commercial web sites and blogs now publish content summaries in an RSS feed. Each item in the feed typically contains a headline; article summary and link back to the online article.

Benefit to the Webmaster

As the web has become more crowded webmasters have been striving to provide fresh and up to date content for their website visitors. Many webmasters have discovered they can easily utilize the information in RSS feeds to provide fresh web content.

RSS feeds are composed in XML, which is a very simple markup language. Similar to HTML, XML uses tags to identify fields. Webmasters can easily parse the RSS feed and dynamically create web pages that contain headlines and summaries. The feeds will continuously update, supplying a steady stream of automatically generated fresh content.

RSS allows webmasters to:

- 1.) Provide fresh and relevant content on their website, which encourages users to return.
- 2.) Constantly changing content means that search engine spiders will visit more frequently.
- 3.) Automate content delivery.

The benefits of RSS feeds are not limited to webmasters, surfers too benefit from the technology as well.

Benefit to Web Surfers

The beauty of RSS is that readers can quickly scan headlines (titles) and read articles of interest. Because the information is condensed and provided in a single location users can generally review more information in a shorter time frame. Additional information is only a click away. Best of all readers choose the feeds they wish to see, there is no spam with RSS. If you are

not completely thrilled with the content appearing in a feed simply remove it from the newsreader. The technology is a pull technology rather than push technology, meaning the content is not forced on the consumers, who pull the content they want to see.

RSS allows for users to:

- 1.) Easily locate information.
- 2.) Read condensed information or 'soundbytes' with clearly marked and dated topic material.
- 3.) Classify and categorize information in an easy to navigate manner.
- 4.) Maximize their time without having to deal with spam.

RSS feeds can be viewed in a news aggregator or reader, which constantly updates and shows unread feeds. I found the functionality of the newsreaders to be similar to a simple email client. Consumers generally enter the URL of any RSS feeds that interest them. Topics with a common theme can be segregated into related groups.

I highly recommend FeedDemon <http://www.feedException.com> by BradSoft as a newsreader. FeedDemon is extremely easy to use and allows for quick scanning and indexing of topics. FeedDemon allows users to quickly scan, sort and scroll through headline and article summaries, while viewing the actual content in a split screen web browser.

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Finding Topic Specific Relevant Feeds

In order to find feeds that provide niche information users can search Feedster. Feedster <http://www.feedster.com> is a rapidly growing news search engine that indexes information contained within RSS feeds. Searches for topic specific feeds can be conducted and feeds can be retrieved for syndication.

Benefit to Content Developer

While the benefits to users and webmasters are clear the distribution opportunities made available to content developers should not be overlooked. Information contained in the RSS feed can be easily syndicated, increasing content distribution and reach.

RSS allows for content developers to:

- 1.) Increase exposure in niche markets.
- 2.) Communicate with user bases and reach potential customers via an alternate communication method.
- 3.) Disseminate relevant information.
- 4.) Define themselves as an industry expert.
- 5.) Automate content delivery.

RSS has effectively standardized the format for content delivery and has effectively defined the accepted standard for

content distribution and syndication. RSS will likely rival email as a means of content distribution in another few years. The sheer simplicity makes the technology very appealing.

The distribution potential, while albeit difficult to measure, is still attractive to all parties making the likelihood that RSS popularity will only continue to grow.

RSS Feeds to Try

Feeds exist for almost any topic consider trying these feeds out by entering the url in your feed reader:

Small Business Feed - small business tips and news
<<http://www.small-business-software.net/blog-feed.xml>>

Software Marketing Blog Summary - software marketing and online news
<<http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com/blog-feed.xml>>

SMS, Wireless Messaging Related News - news related to telecom, wireless industry and NotePage's software
<<http://www.notepage.net/blog-feed.xml>>

Free Content Articles - collection of free content articles, updates when new article is released. <<http://www.small-business-software.net/article-feed.xml>>

Software Marketing News - news related to software conferences, awards, software development and marketing
<<http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com/feed.xml>>

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How is Podcasting used?

By Sharon Housley, marketing manager for FeedForAll <<http://www.feedforall.com>> software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts. Sharon also manages marketing for NotePage <<http://www.notepage.net>> a wireless text messaging software company.

Although podcasting is new, it is well on its way to becoming a mainstream communication medium. Podcasting, simply put, is audio files that are delivered via RSS [Editor's Note: Read about RSS on page 41]. Many people believe that podcasting is solely for the distribution of music files, but really, nothing could be further from the truth. This emerging method of audio file distribution has opened an array of marketing and communication opportunities to businesses. Currently, most who are familiar with podcasting are technically savvy, but it is clear that podcasting will be more than a passing fad as many businesses are adopting podcasting and employing it in unusual yet powerful ways. Podcasting can be used for talk shows, tutorials, music demos, educational training, stories, comedy clips, debates or even foreign language tutorials.

While RSS has had the capacity to include audio files for a few years, only recently have entrepreneurs made the conceptual leap, taking advantage of the new power held within this communication medium. In reality, podcasters cover the gamut; some are professional broadcasters, while others are obvious amateurs.

Podcasts are usually published with associated meta information that includes descriptive data about each specific audio file. This allows listeners to make a determination of which audio items are of interest. If listeners are using a news aggregator that supports podcasting, they will automatically receive updates in their feed reader or news aggregation software when a new podcast exists for a feed that they have subscribed to.

Why is podcasting so beneficial to the subscriber?

Unlike traditional radio, with podcasting the subscriber decides what content he/she receives. Podcasting is extremely useful to the subscriber because the user can easily receive information he/she would like, and listen to it when they want. The material, once downloaded, can be listened to and viewed on wireless handhelds, allowing subscribers to utilize time on the road.

Topic-specific radio talk shows with commentaries, interviews and debates can now be heard at a time and place of the listener's choosing. Consider the benefit of educational tutorials and foreign language instruction; lessons could be listened to during a work commute. Supplementary class lectures, step by step tutorials or walking guides are all possible using podcasting. An unlimited collection of books read aloud for elderly or visually-impaired listeners only scratch the surface of what is possible in the future of podcasting.

The fate of podcasting is in the hands of the subscribers. The subscriber can easily delete podcast feeds that do not satisfy their needs with the single tap of a button. Ultimately, the sub-



scriber maintains control and determines what podcasts are deemed successful. This intrinsically builds in a quality control level and will ensure that the more innovative instructional and interesting podcast feeds survive.

The technology is fresh and, like the Internet, is opening doors to entrepreneurs. As podcasting evolves, users will find more creative kinds of audio content to deliver. The low barrier to entry has forced this new medium to the forefront, as businesses and individuals have really little to lose in adding podcasting as a communication channel.

How does podcasting work?

By Sharon Housley, marketing manager for FeedForAll <<http://www.feedforall.com>> software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts. Sharon also manages marketing for NotePage <<http://www.notepage.net>> a wireless text messaging software company.

It has been said that in October of 2004 a Google search returned less than 6,000 results for the term "podcasting". Today, a similar search yields more than 857,000 results. Like the blogging phenomenon, podcasting has come out of nowhere and attracted an enthusiastic following.

While some traditional radio talk shows have begun providing podcasts of their regularly-scheduled broadcasts, the bulk of the podcasts that have cropped up tend to be independent broadcasters who have a fascination with technology. As a result, some podcasts are a little rough around the edges. Nonetheless, it is clear that the technology provides a significant opportunity and potential. Even nay-sayers believe that podcasting is more than a passing fad.

Podcasting is RSS [Editor's Note: Read about RSS on page 41] that is used to syndicate and distribute audio files. Podcasting contains an audio file in the RSS feed's enclosure tag. An enclosure tag is used in RSS feeds to include certain types of files. The file contained in an enclosure tag can be: an image, a data file, a video file, or an audio file. Podcasting specifically refers to RSS feeds that contain audio files in their enclosure tag. The RSS version that currently supports enclosure tags is RSS version 2.0. All podcasts are currently created using this specification.

The benefit to podcasting is the fact that users can sync content with their media player and listen at a time and a place of their choosing: radio on demand. And while this technology is not limited to music, it seems to be the area that has received the most attention.

Podcasting is generally inexpensive to implement. Investment in a good quality microphone will ensure that the recording is audible. Depending on knowledge and experience, some podcasters invest in audio conversion, compression and audio editing software applications. Also, web space bandwidth and software to create the feed for the podcast is needed. All in all, the initial expense is relatively small.

Publishing Podcasts

In three simple steps, independent broadcasters can have their voice heard:

1. Publishers create audio content, posting it on a website for listeners.
2. Create or edit an existing RSS feed including a link to the audio file in the "enclosure" field of an RSS 2.0 feed, uploading it to a website.
3. Tell the world that a podcast is available.



Listen to Podcasts:

In three simple steps web surfers can listen to podcasts:

1. Download a news aggregator or RSS reader that supports podcasting or sync a wireless device like an iPod with your computer.
2. Enter the URL of the podcast feed into the news aggregator or podcast management software.
3. As new items appear in the aggregator, review the podcast's description and listen to those that are of interest.

As popularity increases it is likely many voices will be drowned out, but for now, an independent broadcaster with a microphone and unlimited bandwidth can make a name, create an image and change the world.

Useful Tools for Podcasting:

Create podcast feed - <<http://www.feedforall.com>>

News aggregator supporting podcasts - <<http://www.feedException.com>> or <<http://www.primetimepodcast.com>>

Podcasting Tools - <<http://www.small-business-software.net/podcasting-tools.htm>>

Podcasting tools

By Sharon Housley, marketing manager for FeedForAll
<http://www.feedforall.com> software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts. Sharon also manages marketing for NotePage <http://www.notepage.net> a wireless text messaging software company.

Podcasting is increasing in popularity and, realizing that many are interested in providing audio content in a podcast, we have assembled a collection of tools that make creation, promotion and listening to podcasts a little easier.

1.) Podcasting Tools - RSS feeds automatically bring updated information straight to your desktop. You can monitor or promote news, job listings, personals, and classifieds using RSS. The following tools assist webmasters in using RSS to maximize their time:

Tools for Listening to Podcasts

Many RSS readers now include podcast support. The reader allows the user to view the contents of the cast before making a decision about listening. Podcasts that are deemed important can be flagged or set to auto-download. The following are some tools for listening to podcasts:

Podcast Receiver - Podcast Receiver is a free client used to keep up-to-date on the latest and greatest podcast feeds without any effort. The Podcast Receiver manages podcast subscriptions and schedules automatic scans for new podcasts. <http://www.primetimepodcast.com>

FeedDemon - FeedDemon is a desktop client that can retrieve and organize RSS feeds from the internet. It comes pre-configured with several news-feeds, and you can easily add your own by adding the URL for an RSS feed of your choice. FeedDemon offers an attractive and easy-to-use interface with integrated web browsing. <http://www.feeddemon.com>

Create Podcasts

As podcasts have become increasingly popular, radio personalities and hobbyists have struggled to find a solution to create podcasts, not realizing that podcasts are simply RSS feeds which merely contain an audio component in the enclosure field.

FeedForAll - Desktop software used to create, edit, manage, publish RSS feeds and podcasts. New podcasts and feeds can be quickly and easily created with FeedForAll. Podcast feeds generated by other means can be automatically repaired so that they conform to the RSS 2.0 specification. Existing feeds can be enhanced to contain advanced feed properties, and give them a more professional look. <http://www.feedforall.com/podcasting-tutorial.htm>

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- * TV output, S-video & component HDTV out!
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- * Software included: Nero CD burning, Drivers, Windows XP, full Office suite (Open Office)
- * Unlimited expansion via USB and firewire

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2.) Podcasting Articles and Tutorials - Articles and tutorials based on podcasting and RSS. The articles are designed to demystify podcasting and Really Simple Syndication for users and publishers.

Podcasting Articles - Podcasting Tools contains a collection of articles related to podcasting and RSS that assist both broadcasters and listeners in deciphering RSS and podcasting. <<http://www.podcasting-tools.com/podcasting-articles.htm>> or the articles can be read in an RSS feed reader. <<http://www.podcasting-tools.com/podcasting-articles.xml>>

RSS Articles - RSS Specifications contains a collection of articles related to RSS and news feeds that assist both publishers and users in deciphering Really Simple Syndication. <<http://www.rss-specifications.com/rss-articles.htm>> or the articles can be read in an RSS feed reader <<http://www.rss-specifications.com/article-feed.xml>>

3.) Podcast Directories - Directories make finding podcasts easier.

Podcasting Station - A categorized podcast directory that allows visitors to search for podcasts that are topic-specific. <<http://www.podcasting-station.com>>

Podcast Bunker - Before Podcast Bunker adds a podcast to their list, they first listen to the podcast for audio quality and content. They only list what they think are the very best podcasts. They add new podcasts as they are submitted for review, and as they find them. <<http://www.podcastbunker.com>>

Podcasting News - Popular podcasting directory. All podcasts are categorized by topic, making it easier for listeners to find podcasts of interest. <<http://www.podcastingnews.com/forum/links.php>>

4.) Podcasting Graphics - Websites that have podcasts available use colorful graphics to indicate to website visitors that podcasts are available for specific content.

Podcast Graphics - Create custom podcast graphics in seconds. If you wish to customize your podcast buttons and are crunched for time or lacking artistic abilities, use this free online podcasting graphic tool that is capable of creating a podcast button. The button's color and text can be customized to suit the creator. <<http://www.feedforall.com/podcasting-graphics.htm>> or create custom graphics <<http://www.feedforall.com/public/rss-graphic-tool.htm>>

Podcast Icons - Pixagogo provides a collection of podcast icons from various sources. <<http://www.pixagogo.com/5111825842>>

5.) Podcasting Blogs - Stay informed about the latest podcasting industry news by monitoring podcast blogs. Daily posts bring readers current news, industry announcements and general podcasting information.

Podcasting Blog - Daily Podcasting Blog and news related to podcasting, RSS, podcast news and aggregation <http://www.podcasting-tools.com/blog.htm> or access the podcasting blog feed at <<http://www.podcasting-tools.com/blog-feed.xml>>

Podcasting Avenue - Blog containing items related to podcasting. <<http://podcasters.blogspot.com>>



6.) Podcast Bandwith Hosting - Audio files can take up a fair amount of storage space and depending on a podcast's popularity, can be expensive to host. Bandwith hosting companies that focus on the podcast understand the needs that are unique to podcasters.

Libsyn - Libsyn is designed for podcasters. They do not require any long-term contracts and there are no surprise over-usage charges. They provide a pay-as-you-go service on stable, secure servers. Every month, media files are archived and hosting space is refreshed. <<http://www.libsyn.com/>>

7.) Audio Tools for Podcasting - Managing audio files can be tricky. Software tools allow for audio files to be manipulated, converted and edited, providing a higher quality yet smaller audio file.

Replay Radio - Now you can record hundreds of radio broadcasts from all over the world, listen whenever you want on your PC, CD Player or MP3 player, and even skip over the fluff. It's easy with Replay Radio! <<http://www.replay-radio.com>>

Audio Conversion Wizard - Helps you to convert audio files of supported audio format from one format to another with all possible settings, using easy, step-by-step interface. MP3, WMA 8 (Windows Media Audio), OGG Vorbis and WAV PCM formats are supported, with ID3v2 copying and creation. <http://www.litexmedia.com/audio_wizard/>

Helium Music Manager - Allows you to seamlessly handle the different file formats and lets you work and edit music formats. Quickly tag and organize your entire music collection. <<http://www.helium2.com/eng/index.php>>

8.) Podcasting Forums - Forums can be a useful for anyone doing business online, both in terms of reading the content and actively participating in the discussions. If you want to learn more about podcasting, consider participating in the following online podcasting communities:

Podcast Alley - <<http://www.podcastalley.com/phpBB2/index.php>>

Podcasting News - <<http://www.podcastingnews.com/forum/>>

Podstrigs - <<http://podcastrigs.net/forum/>>

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9.) Submit Podcast Feeds - As more and more people get involved with the Internet and as more Web sites, blogs, news services and other online resources continue to grow in number and variety it becomes increasingly important to maintain high visibility and exposure for the content being generated by closely following the major distribution media. As a rapidly increasing number of content sources, new and old, migrate or add RSS as a key distribution channel, and as more people utilize RSS newsreaders and aggregators to keep themselves informed, the ability to maintain high exposure and visibility is gradually shifted from complete

attention to major search engines and content optimization techniques to an increasing awareness of RSS feed directories and search tools.

Podcasting Tools - Submit podcasts to the large list of Podcast directories and expedite your podcast syndication. <http://www.podcasting-tools.com/submit-podcasts.htm>

Using podcasting tools broadcasters, publishers and webmasters can increase their audience and reach.

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■ **CROSSROADS MALL**
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WED 9AM-4:30PM

■ **CHANDLER CENTER**
137 W. FRENCH PLACE 78212
FRI 9AM-1PM

■ ■ **AARP OFFICES** 348-8684 for appointment
8507 N McCULLOUGH, SUITE C-9 78216
MO-TU 10AM-2PM
WED 2-6PM

■ **CHURCH OF RESURRECTION**
5909 WALZEM, Kirby 78218
WED 10AM-2PM

■ **KINGSLEY PLACE**
3360 OAKWELL CT 78218
THURS 9AM-1PM

■ **ST. JOAN OF ARC CATHOLIC CHURCH**
2829 ACKERMAN RD. 78219
TUE 9AM-1PM

■ ■ **CRESTHOLME BOYS & GIRLS CLUB** 359-7822
1602 GOLIAD ROAD 78223 call 3-6pm
WED 9AM-1PM for appointment

■ **SOUTH PARK MALL**
2310 S.W. MILITARY DRIVE 78224
MON 9AM-1PM

■ **LEON VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER**
6421 EVERS RD 78238
TUE 9AM-1PM

■ ■ **OASIS CENTER AT FOLEY'S FURNITURE**
6161 NW LOOP 410 78238 for appointment
TH-FR 10AM-2PM call 647-2546

ANY QUESTIONS? CALL 348-8684

Identity Theft (Phishing & Pharming) and Help

by Bill Klutz, President, Alamo PC

Identify Theft Scams Abound. That is what we are facing. At the March general meeting, for members of the Alamo PC Organization, FBI Special Agent John Wood (Cyber Crime Division, Computer Intrusion Division, Cyber Crime Investigation, San Antonio Division) provided a general presentation on identity theft, fraud, and scams. This is a growing concern, and does not appear to be something that will be around for the short term.

After the presentation, I thought about the subjects covered and considered that much of what I have read about Identity Theft has been in "bits and pieces." If it has been that way for me, it has probably been the same for most. So, I thought members might appreciate having a little more than isolated "bits and pieces" to consider. Maybe stringing some together would be more helpful.

In my search, I found a number of "bits and pieces" dealing with the three topics, all of which are designed to separate a person from their money. Therefore, in my opinion, they are inter-related. Since the three have recently begun to focus more on the electronic arena (the Internet, computers, and things related to computers), I will try to stay in this area.

Identity Theft

It is a serious crime. How does it happen? Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information without your permission to commit fraud or other crimes. While you can't entirely control whether you will become a victim, there are steps you can take to minimize your risk.

One missing puzzle piece can dramatically change a puzzle's characteristics. The same is true with a person's identity? one bit of personal information is all someone needs to steal your identity. The below referenced FTC website provides detailed information to help protect yourself, and the steps to take if identity theft occurs.

Federal Trade Commission

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has indicated that Identity Theft is the fastest growing Internet crime. That is apparently why it operates the US government's central website for information about identity theft <www.consumer.gov/idtheft>. It is listed as "Your National Resource about Identity Theft." It is reported to be "a one?stop location to learn about the crime of identity theft." It provides detailed information to help you protect yourself from identity theft, and some of the steps to take if it occurs. It is also a comprehensive reference center — for consumers, businesses, law enforcement, and the media — with access to specific laws, contact information, and resources from state and federal government agencies.

A World Wide Problem

And, we shouldn't think of Identity Theft as a problem unique to the United States, as identified by excerpts from Mike

Oliveira's, 3/24/06 Toronto, Canada newspaper article: "Identity theft has siphoned more than \$100 million into the pockets of criminals and wreaked havoc on the lives of tens of thousands of Canadians, and unless people begin the habit of shredding their bills, there will likely be another 13,000 victims this year, police warn."

A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) representative stated that "since 2002, identity theft has affected nearly 50,000 Canadians. And while it's usually businesses that are stuck with most of the financial losses, individuals suffer too. Usually it's time (lost) and in most cases it's not a lot of money involved. But you can get the odd exception if your ... credit goes bad you may have to delay closing on a mortgage to straighten out problems with the bank. This is just one of some serious costs to the consumer, associated with Identity Theft."

The article also stated the Competition Bureau was hosting a shredding campaign on 2/25/06 in 20 cities across Canada, hoping to raise awareness about how criminals steal identities. The bureau invited people to bring unwanted personal documents to mobile shredding trucks to help stem the flow of personal information making their way into garbage bags, dumpsters and landfills.

The RCMP representative indicated that "the minimum information need to begin the process of identity theft is just a name, address and date of birth." If they get other pieces of information like a credit card number, driver's license number, health card, or other bits and pieces about you, it just helps a thief create the illusion that this is really you.

"People throw out a lot of paper, not realizing that it's extremely valuable to a criminal trolling for a victim. So, destroy those documents; burn them, shred them, rip them up, etc. You can also protect yourself by checking your credit rating to make sure there's no fraudulent activity going on without your knowledge. Taking the time to check your credit report is a great idea and most people haven't checked their credit report once in their lifetime, let alone do it at least once a year."

Another sign of the growing Identity Theft problem mentioned in the article is, Allstate Canada recently began offering Identity Theft insurance to customers with homeowner, condominium or tenant policies. So far, 3,000 customers have signed up and there have been no claims. (Maybe these folks have been doing some of the "prevention measures.") "Identity theft is not an epidemic but is a growing problem and a huge inconvenience to anyone struck. About 50,000 Canadians have been victimized, but that number is growing, on average, by 13,000 victims a year."



Phishing & Pharming

Two of the more common ways thieves try to steal identities are phishing and pharming (as you may remember, "ph" is pronounced with the "f" sound). John Pearce, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado Springs, CO addressed these in an article that appeared in the September issue of Monitor (the monthly magazine of the Capital PC User Group).

"First, there was 'phishing,' the attempt to collect personal information by fraudulent means. Recently a newer form of attack, called 'pharming,' has been emerging, one that tries to do the same thing in a more technologically sophisticated way. Neither phishing nor pharming should keep you away from the Internet, but you need to be on guard. Let's take a quick overview of both.

Phishing starts with an e-mail, typically from a financial institution, with a message that dire consequences will happen if you don't immediately verify your account information. A Web site link is conveniently provided for you in the e-mail. The provided link is to a Web page that looks like the real Web site but is actually a Web site controlled by the bad guys. The fraudulent Web page asks you to enter credit card and billing information, or possibly user name and password information. You can imagine what the bad guys are going to do with the information they collect.

Pharming is a way for the bad guys to redirect your Web browsing to a site which they control. Pharming is also known as 'DNS (Domain Name System) cache poisoning.' DNS is what converts human-friendly names like <webboard.apcug.org> to numerical addresses like <192.160.122.122>. The bad guys want to impact the largest number of Internet users possible so ISP's and large corporations are the most likely targets of pharming attacks. One goal is to download spyware or adware to your PC.

Protecting yourself from phishing attacks is as simple as ignoring the e-mail. (All but one of the dozen or so phishing e-mails I have received have been from banks where I don't have an account.) In that case, delete the e-mail and go on with your life. If you have an account with the financial institution and are concerned, use the telephone and ask to speak with their Internet security department. If you go to the Web site to login, type the Web site Uniform Resource Locator (URL) into the browser ? do not use the link provided in the e-mail.

Protecting yourself from pharming attacks takes a little effort. Start by keeping your browser updated with all the security patches. Next, you should be sure the padlock icon is displayed on any page where you enter personal information such as username, account number, or password. The padlock icon indicates you are connected to the legitimate owner of the URL and the data you enter is protected by SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) encryption during transmission. The bad guys would have to know the private key of the site in order to make the padlock appear. You can view the security information by double clicking the padlock icon on your browser. You can also use a tool like SpoofStick (free from <www.corestreet.com/spoofstick>) to confirm the URL of the Web page you're viewing.



Being aware of phishing and pharming, along with a little care and caution, will keep your Web browsing safe from the bad guys."

Note: according to a recent study by AOL and the National Cyber Security alliance, it is believed that roughly a quarter of the home computers receive at least one phishing e-mail each month. One source reports the top 10 companies targeted as phishing bait are: Citibank, eBay, US Bank, PayPal, Fleet Bank, Lloyds TSB, Barclays, Earthlink/AOL, Halifax, and Westpac. According to The Washington

Post, Earth Link gets around 300 phone calls and spends just under \$5,000 per incident. Still, the nation's fourth largest ISP encounters about 15 new phishing scams a month featuring email that purports to come from its own service. And, Phishers now focus almost exclusively on banks and online shopping sites. During the past 10 months, nearly 60 percent of their attacks targeted Citibank or US Bank.

In an article by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director, which appeared in the March 2006 issue of DATA BUS (Official Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc.), he had the following to say: "These types of e-mails present a very real and growing threat to our financial privacy and security. They are representative of a rapidly growing and dangerous trend. By simply responding to the e-mails (by clicking on the authentic looking link), the user is directed to an authentic looking, but counterfeit, website which solicits the victims' personal information. Once that information is entered, it has been documented that credit cards can be illicitly charged within seconds, and bank accounts drained via the use of the ATM and PIN numbers.

The Anti Phishing Work Group <www.antiphishing.org> is a trade group with over 2000 members including the major credit card companies, banks, credit unions, eBay, and financial service companies, which track phishing attacks. The most recent figures available indicate that in the month of November 2005, there were 16,882 individual phishing attacks, each possibly consisting of millions of fraudulent e-mails sent to people like us. The rate of phishing attacks, and the number of phishing e-mails has doubled since November 2004, and the numbers still appear to be increasing as it has become an easy method to defraud victims out of their money. These attacks connected to 4,630 fraudulent websites, triple the number for the same month in the previous year. The scam sites are short lived, being shutdown either forcibly, or voluntarily, within an average of 5.5 days, with some being active for as long as 30 days. Eighty percent of phishing scams illicitly use the name of just six legitimate companies, such as PayPal and eBay, and the other 20 percent of scams misrepresent 87 companies. While the majority of these websites are hosted in the US, they are actually owned and operated predominately by foreign nationals, often in Eastern Europe, and southeast and central Asia. Criminal prosecutions and recovery of lost money are scarce, making it a high gain/low risk crime, which helps account for its rapid and malicious spread.

A comprehensive list of current phishing scams, predominantly directed against the customers of major financial in-



stitutions may be found at www.websensesecuritylabs.com/alerts. Some of the most recent listed financial institutions targeted are Greater Texas Federal Credit Union, Day Air Credit Union, First Bank, The Farmers Bank, Town North Bank, and many others.

As users start to implement updated software of various types, phishing may become more difficult. Newer versions of e-mail programs, such as Outlook, Mailwasher, Eudora, and others show if a link redirects to another address, other than the one listed. The new version of Internet Explorer offers an anti-phishing option which will check Internet addresses against suspicious or known phishing sites. Trend Micro's PC-Cillin Internet Security Suite 2006 offers an anti-phishing toolbar for Internet Explorer that shows if a link is being redirected to a suspicious site. Recent versions of the Firefox browser offer some protection against phishing by indicating the real, rather than the apparent web address in the address bar, which should notify the user of a potential scam. In order to bypass many of the new protections offered, some phishers are registering close variations of legitimate domain names in an attempt to trick users into accepting their false authenticity.

Whether you suspect phishing or pharming (or even if you don't), NEVER click on a link in an e-mail warning about some dire financial risk or reward, as reputable agencies will not utilize that tactic in the event of a problem. A quick call to a known 800 number to verify any such problem will quickly indicate that the e-mail is bogus. Better safe than sorry."

Some Growing Frauds

Scholarship/Grant: No one likes an unexpected present more than cash-poor college students and/or their often cash-poor parents. That is what the bad-guys are hoping for when they claim the student has been selected for a scholarship or qualification for a government grant has been approved. The catch is that you only have to pay a processing fee, give your Social Security number and/or credit card number to "hold" the scholarship or grant. Keep in mind, organizations awarding scholarships or agencies dealing with government grants won't initiate correspondence with you or require an up front fee.

Internet Telephone: Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone service is growing in popularity for lowering phone bills. The bad guys have figured out how to use the software to hide their true location, allowing them to hide overseas while appearing to operate in the United States. Then they can hawk "investments" that appear to have a US base of operation, because of the telephone number used. Linda Parnes, director of the FTC Bureau of Consumer Protection, warned "The days are gone when consumers could rely on a phone number to know where someone is located."

Identity Theft of Children: Social Security numbers are now required for the very young. This, and other information about the child, makes him/her a potential Identity Theft target because of their clean credit and absence of any criminal history. Linda Foley, co-executive director of the Identity Theft

Resource Center idtheftcenter.org in San Diego, estimates that at least 400,000 children had their identity stolen in 2005, more than twice the number in 2003. Believe it or not, about two-thirds of the child ID thefts are done by family members. Keep your child's information in a locked drawer, but never in your wallet (it can be stolen).

Jury Duty: The fake jury duty scam is worse than any jury duty you may have to perform. A phone call, supposedly from your local court system, says a warrant has been issued for your arrest because you failed to report for jury duty. When you indicate that this must be a mistake, the helpful caller assures you that you shouldn't worry as the matter can be resolved. "I'll just need your full name, date of birth, and Social Security number to check our records." If you provide that information, kiss your identity goodbye. Real courts almost always correspond by mail and they usually only need your name and address.

Pretending: The caller "pretends" to be reputable and just asks for information. "I am with (your bank of other financial institution) and have been asked to verify that the name on the account, date of birth, account number, and Social Security number are all in agreement. Could you begin by verifying the name on the account...." Once the bad-guys have the information they can call your financial institution and pretend to be you, then bleed you dry. NEVER give out your personal information to an unsolicited caller.

ATM Snooping: This is technology at work, but the bad-guys have a propensity for exploiting technology. Usually the newer the better as many people just don't stay current. In this emerging scam, a wireless digital camera is cleverly disguised as part of the card-scanning equipment and affixed to the front of an ATM. The camera then transmits a recording of the transaction, including card number and PIN, to a device in the possession of a bad-guy who is waiting nearby. Your account and your Identity are now vulnerable. Be suspicious of devices attached to the front of an ATM of key-pads missing Braille markings. Don't hesitate to report anything unusual or suspicious to the ATM owner and police.

Medicare: The Medicare prescription drug program that took effect on January 1, 2006 is confusing and administers a lot of money. That has drawn the bad-guys like bees to honey. Uninvited fraudsters will try to bilk seniors by selling phony plans or bogus Medicare drug benefits. Don't give out information to uninvited sales people. If contacted to set up an appointment (an invite) verify the person is legitimate by asking who they work for, looking up the number yourself and dialing to see if the person really is a sales person for the company name given.

Online Job Search Resume: More and more people are using the electronic resume posting services that are available, in hopes of finding a job. However, genuine employers aren't the only ones patrolling these sites. They are also favorites of the bad-guys, as there is usually lots of personal information available, like an e-mail address. Then the pitch is made electronically in hopes that the person will send money in hopes of getting money. Job hunters should be watching for the too-good-to-be-true employment offers, especially ones that involve sending money.





The IRS Ploy: The message appears in your inbox and appears to be from the IRS. It claims you either have a refund due or you have some tax problems. You are asked to click on link to a website where the matter can be handled. If you do, that is when the scam begins. The link sends you to a page that appears to be on the IRS website (the URL even includes www.irs.gov), but in reality it is a fake site designed to collect your private financial information. (A spam e-mail has been sent around the world telling people they are eligible for a \$571.94 tax refund from the IRS. The e-mail offers a link to a fraudulent IRS site, but the link actually goes through a legitimate Government site. The government is aware of the issue and is working to fix the problem.) If you think you may be due a tax refund, you can check by calling 800-829-1040 or by logging directly onto the IRS website (www.irs.gov) and clicking on "Where's My Refund."

Hotspots: Another ID Treasure Area

And just when you thought the growing frauds were about it, there appears another way the "bad guys" are exploiting information. I found this one by Craig Crossman in the Cincinnati Download, the newsletter of the Cincinnati PC Users Group <www.cincypcug.org>. Craig is a Knight?Ridder newspaper columnist writing about computers and technology. He also hosts the nation's longest running nationally syndicated radio talk show on computers and technology, Computer America, heard on both the Business TalkRadio Network and the Lifestyle TalkRadio Network, weeknights at 10PM Eastern time.

"Going online these days exposes your PC to all kinds of cyber?nasties such as viruses and spyware. To combat them, we use anti-virus and anti?spyware software. You also can subject yourself to a wide variety of hacker attacks that try to access your computer. These kinds of attacks try to steal your passwords, credit card numbers, banking information and any other kind of sensitive information you may have stored on your computer's hard drive. For those problems, we install firewalls that hopefully let only the good data come in. That's all well and good when you're using your computer at home or at the office. But what about when you take your portable computer to a Hotspot?"

Hotspots are venues that offer wireless access to the Internet. Typical public Hotspots include libraries, airports and other commercial locations such as restaurants and coffee houses like Starbucks. It turns out that when you go wireless, accessing the data to and from your computer is even easier to get than it is when you are directly wired to a network. After all, it's being transmitted out over the open air so it's readily accessible to anyone who knows how to reach out and grab it.

One example of how hackers get your wireless data is via an 'Evil Twin.' Say you're about to log onto your local Starbucks' T?Mobile connection to gain access to the Internet. Nearby, an attacker with an ordinary laptop running special software can interfere with the Hotspot's legitimate network connection by sending a stronger signal from a base station positioned close to the wireless client (Starbucks) thus turning the fake access point into a so?called 'Evil Twin.' You see a website that looks identical to the legitimate T?Mobile logon screen you

normally see, asking for your user name, password or a credit card number. But in fact, you are really logged onto the 'Evil Twin' website. So when you enter in your account information, everything is being captured by the bad guys.

Some of the more simplistic 'Evil Twin' sites will just say that the service is temporarily down and to try again later. You leave never suspecting that your sensitive information has already been captured and stolen. More sophisticated 'Evil Twin' sites may actually supply you with Internet access so that wherever you go, everything you type and receive is also being intercepted and stolen. And you may never be the wiser until it's too late. So what do you do?

On Computer America, I recently interviewed Richard Rushing, the Chief Security Officer for AirDefense. The company makes AirDefense Personal, an end?user software agent that protects users of Hotspots and other networks from wireless risks that could expose private data and transactions. His advice is to never give out proprietary information while using a

Hotspot. Just surf the net for casual purposes. Never use anything that requires a password or access anything that you wouldn't want anyone else to know. The other thing you can do is use AirDefense Personal. The software is specially designed to first help reconfigure your computer's operating system so that is less susceptible to hacker attacks. For example, it disables Bluetooth, and turns off bridging and ad hoc modes.

AirDefense Personal checks for a variety of suspicious behaviors such as an unusually high amount of wireless data transmitted compared to what you ordinarily transmit. And best of all, AirDefense Personal

is FREE. The company bills it as their lite version but according to Rushing, the only other thing added to their full version is useful only to enterprise environments. So for the single average user, the lite version is all you'll need. Currently in its version 2.0 release, AirDefense Personal can be downloaded from the company's website at <www.airdefense.net>. So go ahead and enjoy the convenience of being able to wirelessly access the Internet. Just make sure that you use some common sense, a dash of caution and AirDefense Personal. With these precautions in mind, you'll be more inclined to stay cool at your Hotspot."

New Federal Website Offers HELP

Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director, in the March 2006 Digital Viking, provided the following helpful information:

Websites:
<<http://www.onguardonline.gov>>
<<http://www.onguardonline.gov/quiz>>
<<http://www.onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html>>
<<http://www.onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html>>
<<http://www.onguardonline.gov/tutorials>>

The media has recently been rife with stories about Internet scams, frauds, identity theft, pedophiles, and other malevolent occurrences that have happened on the Internet. While there are many online resources providing informational

MOST IDENTITY THEFT OCCURS OFFLINE

Despite growing concerns over online fraud, a new study conducted by the Better Business Bureau and Javelin Research finds that most cases of identity theft can be traced to a lost or stolen wallet or checkbook, rather than vulnerable online financial data. Computer crimes make up just 12% of all ID fraud cases in which the origin is known, and half of those are attributed to spyware that sneaks onto computers and steals private information.



websites to help prevent us from falling prey to Internet victimization, a consortium of federal agencies has created 'OnGuard Online' at <www.onguardonline.gov> This consortium consists of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Postal Inspection Service, the Department of Commerce (DOC), and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The purpose is to provide users with Internet Safety and Security information.

What you can find Materials are provided on this website to inform and educate the computer user about several of the most nefarious threats that commonly assail us as we enjoy the abundance of the Internet. Topics currently covered are spyware, identity theft, phishing, spam scams, online shopping, P2P (Peer-to-Peer) file sharing, and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol ? Internet telephony).

At <www.onguardonline.gov/quiz> there are also a series of online quizzes where the user can test his knowledge on the security risks associated with these topics. A series of videos and tutorials on related topics, such as 'Viruses and Worms,' and 'Protect Your Privacy, Family, and PC' are also available at this site <onguardonline.gov/tutorials> For those who have been victimized by Internet miscreants, a resource is available to show the user where and how to file complaints with the appropriate federal and other agencies at onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html.



Spyware: Spyware is defined at this site as '... software installed on your computer without your consent to monitor or control your computer use.' Spyware can be used to steal your identity or capture your usernames, passwords, and account numbers (keyloggers); compile personal surfing profiles for directed advertising or other purpose (some forms of tracking cookies); display unwanted pop-up ads, which may be pornographic (ad-ware), redirect the browser to other sites (browser hijacking); install unwanted links on the desktop or in the 'favorites' or bookmarks; and a variety of other unwanted and possibly dangerous web related items. OnGuard Online provides links and information on removing spyware, and protecting your computer from spyware.

Identity theft: Identity theft is a scourge that may impact as many as 10 million Americans each year, according to some sources. The incidence of identity theft through Internet tricks, such as 'Phishing' (typically e-mails directing the user to an authentic looking but counterfeit website soliciting credit card information, PIN numbers, etc.); 'Pharming' (changing data files or 'hosts' on the computer to redirect intentional visits to financial or commercial sites to counterfeit sites where valuable personal information is illicitly obtained) accounts for an increasingly significant portion of identity theft. OnGuard Online provides information on how to protect yourself from Phishing scams, and how to protect your identity while online, as well as instructions on dealing with identity theft if victimized.

Spam: Some Internet security companies report that the amount of spam, or unsolicited commercial email, can easily amount to 60 to 80 percent of all e-mails sent. According to

this website, details are provided on the major spam scams currently in circulation.

The top 10 spam scams are: The 'Nigerian' Email Scam (may also appear to be from Russia, Columbia, England, or other sources); Phishing; Work-at-Home Scams; Weight Loss Claims; Foreign Lotteries (Congratulations, you are a winner in the Spanish/British/Canadian Lottery!); Cure-All Products; Check Over payment Scams (I have a large cashier's check ? cash it, keep some, and wire me the difference); Pay-in-Advance Credit Offers; Debt Relief; and Investment Schemes (buy this penny stock ? it will quintuple in a few days). Sadly, many gullible Internet users still fall for these scams enriching the crooks, and typically receiving nothing worthwhile in return.

Online shopping: Millions of Internet users shopped online during the holiday season, and still continue to do so at online retailers, or popular auction sites such as Ebay. While most online shoppers have been successful, and had few problems, there are also thousands who have been victimized to some degree by Internet crooks.

This site explains a series of safe shopping tips, including 'Know who you're dealing with; Know exactly what you're buying; Know what it will cost (including shipping, taxes, and other charges); Pay by credit or charge card; Check out the terms of the deal; and Print and save records of your online transactions.'

File-sharing: 'Peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing allows users to share files online through an informal network of computers running the same software.' People, especially children and college students, use these P2P networks to exchange software, music, videos, and other files.

While there is much material that can legitimately be exchanged, P2P is also often a source of spyware, viruses, and illicit and illegal copies of pirated software, music, and other intellectual property. This site lists many of the risks common with these P2P services, and how to safely utilize such services.

VoIP: You have likely seen the ads on TV as well as displays at the electronics and mass merchandising stores for 'VoIP,' services that allow the broadband Internet user to make local and long distance phone calls over the Internet for a flat monthly fee. While expanding on popularity, the path has been bumpy, as some subscribers have been dissatisfied with the service.

Issues and service such as '911' calls, while addressed in regulations, are still not universally implemented on many VoIP systems. The OnGuard Online website also explains what many local VoIP users painfully found out during the recent spate of hurricanes and other storms, that if there is no power, or Internet service is otherwise inaccessible, the VoIP services generally do not function, leaving the user without phone service.

Warnings: The OnGuard Online site 'Stop ? Think ? Click: 7 Practices for Safer Computing' <onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html> reiterates the often stated common sense warnings that all computer users should be aware of, and implement:



Identity Theft

1. Protect your personal information. It's valuable.
2. Know who you're dealing with.
3. Use antivirus software and a firewall, and update both regularly.
4. Make sure your operating system and Web browser are set up properly and update them regularly.
5. Protect your passwords.
6. Back up important files.
7. Learn who to contact if something goes wrong online.

If the information on the OnGuard Online websites is utilized, we will all have a safer and more enjoyable Internet experience.

Tips To Avoid Identity Theft & Fraud

Because of the nature of the crime, victims of Identity Theft often don't realize their identity has been stolen until they're denied credit, sent a bill for purchases they didn't make or are contacted by a collection agency. Every consumer is a potential target. While people can't entirely control whether they will become a victim, there are steps to take to minimize the risk:

1. Never give out personal information on the phone, through the mail or over the Internet, unless you initiated the contact or are sure whom you are dealing with.
2. Tear or shred charge receipts, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, bank statements, checks, expired credit cards and credit card offers before discarding into the trash.
3. Review credit card, telephone, cell phone and bank statements for irregularities and be aware of billing cycles. Contact creditors immediately if a discrepancy is found.
4. Close all accounts that are no longer needed or used. Write the company a letter and ask them to verify, in writing, that the account has been closed.
5. Order a copy of a credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus once a year. Review the information carefully and dispute any discrepancies.
6. Use passwords on all accounts. Avoid picking easily determined numbers such as a birth date, mother's maiden name or last four digits of your Social Security number.
7. Be wary of any offer that demands an immediate response or uses a P.O. Box for a return address.
8. If you have to send money to make money, think about it. Why not just take the fees from the first check or two.
9. Don't reveal personal information unless you initiate the call and you are confident the place called is reputable.
10. NEVER respond to any e-mail requesting personal information, no matter how official it may look.
11. NEVER click on a link from an e-mail sender you don't know.
12. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Most wealth comes from hard work and savings, not get-rich-quick schemes.

Victim Of Identity Theft?

Even people who have been careful keeping personal information private can still fall victim to identity theft. The FTC website indicates that if you think your identity has been stolen, here's what to do:

1. Contact the fraud departments of any one of the three consumer reporting companies to place a fraud alert on your credit report. The fraud alert tells creditors to contact you before opening any new accounts or making any changes to your existing accounts. You only need to contact one of the three companies to place an alert. The company you call is required to contact the other two, which will place an alert on their versions of your report, too. (But, it is a good idea for you to do the job yourself to make sure it is done. Remember it is YOUR life that is involved, not the person who is suppose to contact the other two credit reporting companies.) Once you place the fraud alert in your file, you're entitled to order free copies of your credit reports, and, if you ask, only the last four digits of your Social Security number will appear on your credit reports.

2. Close the accounts that you know or believe have been tampered with or opened fraudulently. Use the ID Theft Affidavit (PDF, 56 KB, at the FTC site) when disputing new unauthorized accounts.

3. File a report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place. Get a copy of the report or at the very least, the number of the report, to submit to your creditors and others that may require proof of the crime. 4. File your complaint with the FTC. The FTC maintains a database of identity theft cases used by law enforcement agencies for investigations. Filing a complaint also helps us learn more about identity theft and the problems victims are having so that we can better assist you.



For more information on identity theft, contact the Federal Trade Commission at (877) IDTHEFT (438-74338) or www.consumer.gov/idtheft. For more indepth information on recovering from identity theft and help with specific problems, read "Take Charge: Fighting Back Against Identity Theft" at the FTC website.

Most of all, if you have been victimized, don't be embarrassed. Scammers work overtime to perfect their trade. Compared to them, the rest of us are just amateurs. So, don't be afraid to speak up. You can start by contacting your local attorney general's office (under government listings in the phone book), The FTC (877-382-4347), of the National Fraud Information Center <fraud.org>. Even if authorities can't help get all or some of your money back, they can help prevent others from getting ripped off. Once a scam gets widely publicized and known to many, the scammers are forced to find a new scam.

I hope the above information has been helpful. Remember, it is only a start. If you want to try to keep current on the Identity Theft problem, the new ways the "Bad Guys" are trying to steal identities, and what you may be able to do about it, periodically visit the websites mentioned. To find additional information, and perhaps new websites, try using the GOOGLE search engine. Enter "identity theft" (with the quotes to restrict the search) and read the brief wordings presented to find things that look interesting, before clicking on an entry. If you want to further restrict the search to specific areas of interest, try adding words like "scams," "cons," "prevention," "internet," "computer," etc., before or after "identity theft" (as may be appropriate, and inside the quotation marks).

Computer Crimes

Susan Ives

The Fractal Murders by Mark Cohen

Hardcover, Mysterious Press, 2004, 310 pages \$25

A college professor hires private detective Pepper Keane to find out if there is a connection in the murders of three fellow mathematicians, all experts in fractal geometry.



A fractal is a complex shape in which each part of an image is a smaller version of the whole. Fractal geometry is being used for everything from artwork to economic forecasting. If you've been curious about fractals, this is an entertaining introduction. Computers are present

throughout the book, from hacking and file recovery to a brief interlude with neural networks. A nice effort for a first novel, which seems to have been self-published a few years ago and is being released as a hardback next month.

Deleted! By Robert L. Wise

Paperback, Thomas Nelson, 2003, 302, \$12



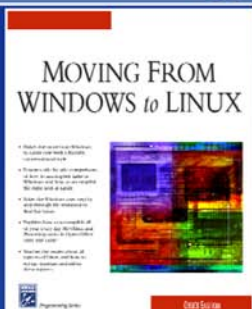
A young Jordanian has broken the code designed to protect movie disks. Colorado Springs Detective Sam Sloan gets roped in by the FBI to track down the missing program, and he, in turn, enlists the help of his 17-

year-old daughter, a budding hacker, putting his entire family in jeopardy.

The author is an Evangelical Episcopal bishop and this novel has a heavy-handed millennial Christian message that I found distracting. Lot's of computers, though, especially cracker programs, discussion boards and programming, well integrated into the plot and decently explained.

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 and Lockhill-Selma), (210) 344-7776, tries its darndest to keep the recommended books in stock.

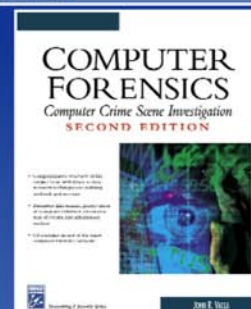
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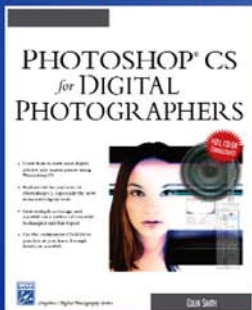
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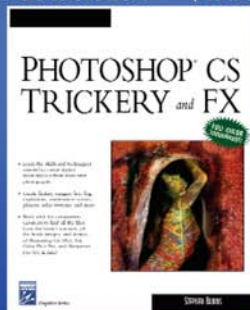
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Book Review

Online Investing Hacks

By Bonnie Biafore

Published by O'Reilly

\$24.95 US

Reviewed by Steve Devine, Alamo PC



Like most of us it seems, individual investors have slowly and sometimes painfully become more computer-literate and technology-dependent over the past few years. Whether searching for corporate earnings or other performance data, investigating broad market trends, or other ways of managing one's portfolios, getting good data is necessary and the Internet can be both a goldmine of market data and corporate information as well as a minefield of misinformation!. Today's investors also use spreadsheets, databases, and financial applications to study and manage investments. If you crave the next generation of tips, tricks, and tools to boost your efforts, Online Investing Hacks is the book for you.

This book is a compilation of "hacks", or "little things you can do" to use computers, the Internet, and other electronic information sources to create and manage an investment portfolio

.This book is laid out cookbook style – it is a listing of 100 online investment tricks that are well grouped by chapters into sensible categories:

Chapter 1: Screening Investments

This beginning chapter contains 6 hacks which give a basic lesson in how to find lots of useful financial information by searching various data sources using loose criteria and then how to cherry pick the good stuff out from your results. This chapter is concerned with screening stocks, loans, mortgages, and winnowing the wheat from the chaff.

Chapter 2: Hacking Excel for Financial Analysis

This chapter contains 7 hacks describing the basics of how to use Excel, the Microsoft spreadsheet program. (Though many other spreadsheet programs exist, MS Excel is by far the most common, and it is the one most people are most likely to run into. Please forgive me if I give short shrift to your personal favorite.) This chapter goes on to cover in detail the use of Excel's built-in financial functions as well as how to use Excel to draw down information directly from the World Wide Web without using a browser, which is something I didn't even know it could do! Also included are short hints about how to make both exceptionally good and exceptionally bad results stand out vividly in the spreadsheet so that you can more easily detect them; also included are hacks on using nested functions, and managing growth calculations so they don't blow up. A final hack on creating financial charts rounds out this fine chapter.

As a side note: at the Alamo PC Learning Center Mr. Bill Eastridge teaches a fantastic class in beginning Excel. The Learning Center is located on the bottom floor of the Crossroads Mall at Fredricksburg Road and Loop 410 right here in San Antonio. Call (210) 736 0700, or drop by the center from 9 a.m. To 4 p.m for class details. I took it in four evening sessions of 2 or 3 hours each, and it was a real eye opener: high powered stuff that is easy to learn and well taught, to boot. Go Bill! Let's see if this review can net us any students!

Chapter 3: Collecting Financial Data

Unlike most chapters in this book, this chapter has an introduction: How to Fathom Financial Statements. It includes a short section each on income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements.

The 11 hacks here include how to download financial statements and price histories; and sources of free data and for-pay data. There are also several hacks involving using Excel to download and crunch various sorts of information from these sources.

Chapter 4: Analyzing Company Fundamentals

A "big 'un", this chapter contains 21 hacks. It has three, count 'em, three introductions devoted to various topics of investment philosophy basics. The hacks themselves consist of six devoted to calculating ratios of various sorts such as growth and return percentages, price/dividend, additional valuations, financial strength, management effectiveness, turnover, and profitability; other hacks round out the process of basic corporate financial analysis, with, yes: three hacks devoted to high powered Excel use.

Chapter 5: Technical Analysis

This chapter consists of 8 hacks concerning the dark art of Technical Analysis. TA's claim to fame is in analyzing market movements and stock price patterns that are independent of the actual nature of the companies involved. Some swear by it as a valid and valuable tool for investing. Others scoff because it ignores the "Fundamentals" (see previous chapter) of corporate realities in favor of market realities. No book on investing would be complete if it ignored the issue, though, and these hacks cover the basics of support and resistance, indicators and oscillators, point and figure charts, line and bar charts, candlestick charts, and where to find the best tools to practice TA.

Continued on page 56

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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

Chapter 6: Executing Trades

Five hacks on executing trades: such as after hours trades, fractional shares, building your own mutual fund, and buying bonds online.

Chapter 7: Investing in Mutual Funds

This chapter of 14 hacks is devoted to the care and feeding of mutual funds. Various analysis and evaluation tools are discussed, as well as how to spot fake index funds and other forms of cheating.

Chapter 8: Managing Your Portfolio

Fourteen hacks concerning asset allocation, bond mixing, forecasting, comparing to benchmarks and alternative investments, and yes, an Excel trick or two.

Chapter 9: Financial Planning

The last 14 hacks are of a general and miscellaneous nature such as choosing the right account, choosing an online broker, choosing a broker for your trading style, college funds, retirement planning, debt management, and how to balance multiple objectives.

The author Bonnie Biafore, has written several books about personal finance and investing. Eight contributors sent in their hacks, writing and, yes, their spreadsheet formulas. The contributors include finance and investment authors, a couple of consultants, an intellectual property attorney, one investment software tool creator (yep there had to be at least one of those in there, didn't there?), and an assortment of relatively respected small investors.

A pretty motley bunch all told, I'm afraid, but since this is a book of one hundred hacks for beginners to learn and use I can see the value in "casting the net wide" to find a nice assortment of standard tools as well as a few wild cards in there to make you think.

Software Review

Linux

GNU General Public License

Free

Reviewed by Orv Beach, Simi-Conejo Linux Users Group



Linux puts the "fun" back in computing! Grab a copy and install it. The only thing you'll spend is some time, and just think of the hardware upgrades you can buy with the money you saved on software!

Open Source software is programming code that's generally available at no cost to you. But we should draw a distinction between "freeware" and Open Source programs.

The premise of Open Source (and, hence the name) is that the source code of the program is available to you. That's not so much so YOU can modify it (although you could and are free to if you knew how). It's more in order to place the program in "public escrow." Once a program has been licensed under the GPL (General Public License), it can never be retracted, and thus never orphaned.

That's an advantage for both individual users and companies; you don't have to worry about future forced upgrades by your software vendor! This licensing arrangement also encourages community development. Coders add features, fix bugs and document applications, and return those improvements to the users.

Open Source: Party Animal

Open Source software continues to gain in popularity as a result of it being, well, open to coders. The best current examples are probably the Firefox browser, and the OpenOffice office suite (This article was written in OpenOffice.). Both are popular and powerful applications that run equally well on several operating systems.

Firefox is generally faster than Internet Explorer, and arguably more secure. Tabbed browsing and a wide array of theme choices are popular features. Patches are generally provided very quickly to rectify any security problem that might appear in contrast to the relatively slow pace of fixes for commercial code. OpenOffice has improved in functionality, and in compatibility with Microsoft Office since its first release about two years ago. It can read from and write to Word, PowerPoint and Excel formats, compose HTML documents and output to Flash and Acrobat files.

Need more? How about a database? Both applications are frequently updated; current version for Firefox is 1.5, OpenOffice, 2.0.1. Best of all, both are free for the downloading.

Applications Not Just for Linux

Some other good examples of Open Source software available for both Windows and Linux are:

- * GAIM, the "multi-protocol" instant messaging program
- * The GIMP, a great graphics editing program
- * Blender, a 3D modeling and animation program

There are Windows applications with no perfect analog in Linux, but the situation is improving daily, and Linux has matured in all desktop areas. For example, multimedia programs for manipulating graphics or editing video and audio are often on par with their commercial counterparts. In fact, Linux "distributions" either come with all that good stuff, or if not, they can be downloaded separately. The distributions range from completely free via downloaded CD images, or inexpensively purchased, with some customer support and documentation included. Much of the differentiation between these distributions (Fedora, Ubuntu, SuSE) lies in the graphical installer and system tools, driving development of a more user-friendly experience for even a novice.

Of course occurrences of viruses happen about once a decade, thanks to the inherent security in Linux. Spyware, or malware programs aren't a problem because they can't install themselves.

And Linux is stable; it doesn't crash very often. If you leave your Linux box running, several months later you'll realize it's still running, and hasn't had to be rebooted.

It's a Freebie

If you'd like to experiment with Linux, but don't want to commit to loading it on a computer, there are "Live CDs" available. These are bootable Linux CDs – everything runs off the CD rather than from a hard disk. This allows you to "try before you install". I'd say "try before you buy," but the buying is optional! Some examples of bootable Linux CDs are Knoppix and Mepis.

If you're still dependent on some Windows applications, or want to be able to use both Windows and Linux, you can "dual-boot" your computer. That means putting both Windows and Linux on the same hard drive (or separate ones), and when you boot, be able to select which operating system will boot. That gives you a lot of flexibility in what you can do with your computer.

Linux isn't perfect; there are some shortcomings:

* Administration of a Linux system is different (not harder, just different); the methods for installing and upgrading programs have to be learned.

* High end games aren't as widely available for Linux (exceptions include the iD series - Doom & Quake - as well as Unreal Tournament).

* Personal Finance is still weak; there's no direct equivalent for Quicken (although GnuCash is very usable, and of course free to try).

Hardware Requirements

For good results a modern "full house" installation of Linux intended for desktop use should be installed on a computer that has the following characteristics:

- * 800 MHz CPU (faster is better, of course)
- * 6-10 Gigs of disk space
- * Minimum 256 Megs of RAM (512 Megs is better if you're going to have more than a couple of large applications open at the same time)
- * A video card with 8 Megs of RAM or better (shared RAM is ok, if that's the type of video your computer has).
- * A 17" or larger monitor
- * Audio card & speakers

Note: inexpensive WinModems are not well supported; neither are WinPrinters; the inexpensive ones that require the CPU to do all the formatting.

If you're read about Linux and are interested, your local Linux user group may be doing an Expo. For instance, every year in February, there's an Annual So Cal Linux Expo in southern California. Check <<http://www.socallinuxexpo.com>> for details.

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

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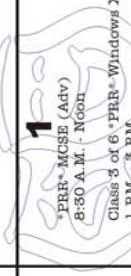
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April 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						 <p>1 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 P.M. - 3 P.M. C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. Class 5 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.</p>
2	<p>3 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M.</p>	<p>4 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. BOD 6:30 P.M.</p>	<p>5 G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Internet & Email 1 - 3 P.M.</p>	<p>6 Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (a/r) HGSI 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Net Web Development 7 - 9 P.M.</p>	<p>7 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 1 of 8 *PRR* Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. PC Alamode Magazine PDF 7 - 9 P.M.</p>	<p>8 *PRR* Intro. to Photo Editing 8 - 10 A.M. (Cancelled) *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Commodore 1 - 4 P.M. Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 P.M. - 3 P.M. Class 6 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.</p>
9	<p>10 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. General Meeting @ Crossroads 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter: Corel showing WordPerfect Office X3 & CorelDraw Graphics Suite</p>	<p>11 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M.</p>	<p>12 G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Internet & Email 1 - 3 P.M. Home Page Jumpsstart 5:30 - 7 P.M.</p>	<p>13 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon</p>	<p>14 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 2 of 8 *PRR* Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.</p>	<p>15 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 P.M. - 3 P.M. C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.</p>
16	<p>17 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.</p>	<p>18 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M.</p>	<p>19 G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Internet & E-mail 1 - 3 P.M.</p>	<p>20 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon</p>	<p>21 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 3 of 8 *PRR* Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.</p>	<p>22 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1 - 3 P.M. Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M.</p>
23	<p>24 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. CorelDRAW 12 6 - 8 P.M.</p>	<p>25 Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M.</p>	<p>26 G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. (a/r) WordPerfect 7 - 9 P.M.</p>	<p>27 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (Dot) NetNuke Portal 7 - 9 P.M.</p>	<p>28 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 4 of 8 *PRR* Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.</p>	<p>29</p>
30						

AlamoPC Organization



The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

COMPUTER CLINIC

The Doctor Is In

Each Friday morning, volunteer "Computer Doctors" share their time at the Computer Learning Center to handle technical hardware and software questions and solve problems. They attempt to troubleshoot hardware and sort out software problems on site. If the problem is beyond their means, the member is referred to one of the repair shops that advertise with Alamo PC. The repair shop does charge for the problem. We do the work at the Computer Learning Center as a member-to-member benefit, with donations requested.

What to bring with you:

- Your Alamo PC membership card
- Your computer and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area
- You do not need to bring your monitor, mouse, or keyboard unless you are having a specific problem with those items. Make sure you have the keycode for all of your software.
- If you are having problems with your scanner, printer, or something that hooks up to your computer; bring that item in addition to your computer etc. plus all connecting cables and software (don't forget the keycode for your software)

When: Every Friday 9 am to noon

Where: Alamo PC Organization
Computer Learning Center

Prerequisites: Bring your hardware and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area

Tuition fee: Donations for this service are requested, the funds are used to purchase testing and other equipment to use at the Dr Is In sessions.

Technical Rating: ★

STUDY GROUPS

Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas
When: Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

Where: Computer 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: ★ - ★★★★★

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: ★ - ★★

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.

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

DotNET 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: ★★★

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: ★

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

Technical Rating: ★★★★★

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.>

Power Internet Study Group

Current Internet users can learn more. Each month a different Internet application will be discussed, such as 64 bit computers, SATA HDD technology, 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: ★ - ★★

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.

CLASSES

Alamo PC offers Free and Fee-Based classes. Classes showing a \$ next to the title indicate that either a Registration Fee or a Tuition Fee will be required.

Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

When: Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

Alamo PC offers Members the next three good, basic, free or low cost classes, providing instruction on the basics of using the Computer, the Windows Operating System, and how to use Adobe Acrobat to obtain your PC Alamo online magazine. The successful completion of the Windows XP class (or classes) would then enable those students to take the other classes offered by Alamo PC.

Introduction To Windows - \$

The Introduction To Windows class is designed for people who do not have a computer yet or have just gotten one and don't know how to "turn it on". Students will learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills used in many software programs, and some word processing. Instruction proceeds at a slower pace than most computer courses and time is allotted for "hands on" practice. Taking the next course, Windows XP, will still be necessary for students who want to be productive with their computers, but the students will be better able to understand what the Windows XP Instructor is teaching. Internet and E-mail will NOT be covered in this course.

Instructors: Andy Roca, Donna Dudley

When: Six sessions, Wednesdays; 10 am to 12 pm; March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

This class will use the Easy Windows XP book, purchase of the book will be helpful and is strongly recommended but is not required. The book may be purchased from Alamo PC for \$20

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Windows XP - \$

Our Windows XP course reviews the fundamentals of using a computer, and provides instruction on using the Microsoft Windows XP operating system. In this class you will learn how to: Open, Close, Save, Delete, Copy, and Move files; work with Files and Folders; customize your Desktop Layout; and to Resize and Move program windows. You will also be introduced to several "free" programs already on your computer, including: Wordpad - for basic word processing; Paint - for basic graphics work; Computer Solitaire and other games; and a Calculator.

Prerequisites: Students should have completed the Introduction To Windows course or have the equivalent knowledge. Choice of two class sessions:

Instructor: Audrey Henkin

When: 6 sessions, Tuesdays 1:30 to 3:30 pm; March 14, 21, 28, April 4, 11, 18 OR

Instructor: Don Robinson

When: 6 sessions, Saturdays 1 to 3 pm March 18, 25, April 1, 8, 15, 22

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

This class will use the Easy Windows XP book, purchase of the book will be helpful and is strongly recommended but is not required. The book may be purchased from Alamo PC for \$20

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Adobe Acrobat - PDF Class

How to download, install, and use Adobe Acrobat Reader. How to view the PC Alamo magazine online or download it to your computer or a CD. Students who want to download the magazine to a CD in class should bring a blank CD-RW (a read / writeable or recordable CD)

Instructor: Steve Tech

stephentechnr@yahoo.com

When: first Fri. of the month, 7 pm to 9 pm

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

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@absolutepowercomputing.com>

When: Anytime

Where: Cyberspace

Pre-registration: Must sign-up on <APCORETRO@yahoo.com>

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★★★

CorelDRAW I Class

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

Contact: Steve Tech

<stephentechnr@yahoo.com>

210-675-2880

When: 4th Monday, 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★★

Introduction To Photo Editing

An interesting and informative class teaching the basics of photo editing. We will primarily use Photoshop Elements software although we will also use Corel Photo-Paint and ArcSoft PhotoStudio from time to time. Students will also learn how to put together a short "movie" using Microsoft Movie Maker

Prerequisites: Students must have completed the Introduction To Windows course or have the equivalent knowledge, and have a graphics software program on their home computer.

Instructor: Clarke Bird

When: Meets for 8 sessions, once a month, on the Second Sat. of each month, 8 - 10 am

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★★★

Digital Camera & Photography Class

Digital Cameras have become an integral part of our computerized lifestyle. They come in all shapes and sizes; some are simple, some not. Yet many of us look at this wonderful tool and think, "Now what is that doohicky for?" Sometimes learning to use our digital cameras can be a confusing and frustrating experience and the manual may even make it worse. Then when you do figure out how to use the camera, the photo never seems to come out quite right.

Learn how to use your digital camera, plus all the tips and tricks to get better pictures when you take them. This class will include field trips to interesting local spots to learn photography techniques.

Instructor: Joe M. Davis

When: Class meets once a week for 6 weeks on Thursdays 9-11 am (some sessions may be longer)

Choice of two class sessions:

Thurs., April 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1st OR

Thurs., June 8, 15, 22, 29, July 6, 13

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center Plus Field Trips

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Digital Photo Editing Class

The companion class to the Digital Camera and Photography Class. Students will learn the basics of digital photo editing using Microsoft Digital Imaging 2006 and if time permits, extra tips and tricks about matting and framing plus interesting uses for your photos.

The photo editing basics used in this class can be applied to almost any photo editing program. The Microsoft Digital Imaging 2006 software is not required for the class but it would be helpful to have on your home computer.

Prerequisites: Students should have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

Instructor: Joe M. Davis

When: Class meets once a week for 12 weeks on Tues., 9-11 am May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13, 20, 27, skip July 4, cont. July 11, 18, 25

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Photoshop Classes for use with Photoshop 7, CS, CS2 - \$

These courses will teach you how to modify and combine images to create realistic composite images. You will learn to use several tools for selecting parts of images, and will move, duplicate, and resize images. You will also learn to use layers, and to apply layer effects and filters to create special effects. Additionally, you will use painting tools and blending modes to create blending effects, and will perform adjustments to enhance images. A text is supplied to new students, and a CD with the images for the entire class is provided. Photoshop Classes are offered as two separate classes, teaching the basic tools, palettes and procedures. Instruction class "A" using Photoshop 7. includes adaptations for Photoshop CS and CS2

Instruction class "B" with different lessons and text, using Photoshop 7 includes adaptations for Photoshop CS and CS2

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.

Prerequisites: 1) Students need to have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge to be able to function properly and progress in these graphics programs. This is Not a course for beginning students.

2) Students need the Software for Photoshop 7 or Photoshop CS or Photoshop CS2 on their home computers to join these graphics instruction classes.

Instructor: Beverly Bihn assisted by Jane Montgomery

When: Instruction Class A will meet 8 weeks on Fridays, 1 to 5 pm

April 7, 14, 21, 28, May 5, 12, 19, 26

Fees: Tuition fee: \$90 for New Students; Tuition fee \$40 for Previous Students to re-take the Instruction A or B class, you may be asked to purchase a book.

Previous enrollment in the Photoshop Elements 2 class does not count as a previous student.

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★★-★★★

Photoshop Workshop for use with Photoshop 7, CS, CS2 - \$

Written creative lessons are given to participants and demonstrations of the lessons are given during class for students to follow. Extra exercises at the end of the lessons encourage students to do similar tasks on their own without demonstrations. They can bring a blank recordable CD or a jump drive, to copy the images for the lessons to take home for more practice.

Prerequisites: 1) Students need to have completed the Photoshop Instruction Class A or Photoshop Instruction Class B, or have the equivalent knowledge with the permission of the Instructor.

2) Students need the Software for Photoshop 7 or Photoshop CS or Photoshop CS2 on their home computers to join these graphics instruction classes.

Instructor: Beverly Bihn assisted by Jane Montgomery

When: Once a week for 4 weeks in March on Thurs. or Fri. (choose one day), 1 to 5 pm

Fees: Tuition fee: \$20

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★★-★★★

eBay - Bid with Confidence: An Introduction to Internet Auctions

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

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

When: Date and time. To be announced. Call the Alamo PC Computer Learning Center at (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700 to place your name on a Waiting List

for the class. You will be notified when the next class is available.

Where: Learning Center, Room 1

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating: ★

Excel Class - Basic

This class is intended for people who want to do significant projects or develop skills for the workplace. As such it moves at fairly brisk pace and includes homework assignments. 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. Also, understand and use formulas, work with worksheets and workbooks, and learn the basic productivity elements of Excel. The Excel 2000 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 **no class July, Aug.**

Class will resume Sept.

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★

Excel 2000 Class - Intermediate

This class is follow-on to the Excel Basics Class and is intended people who want to do significant projects or develop skills for the workplace. It covers conditional formatting, absolute addressing, sorting, subtotaling, filtering, charting, functions and other subjects as time permits. The Excel 2000 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 Feb., June and Oct. 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

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: ★ - ★★

Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

When: Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

HTML and Beyond Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML.

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: ★★

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.

Internet And E-Mail - \$

The Internet and E-mail course will cover basic techniques needed to effectively and enjoyably "surf the net." Students will learn how to find information on the net, download files, applications and graphics, and how to purchase items from "e-commerce" sites. Depending on student interest, the class will learn about important Internet issues like privacy, credit card security, and information reliability. Depending on time constraints, students may also cover more advanced topics like using the Internet for long distance communication, "Web Cams," and enjoying "streaming" audio and video.

Prerequisites: Students must have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

When: 6 weeks, Wednesdays, 1 to 3 pm
March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19

Instructor: Don Robinson

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

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.

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: Dates and time to be announced

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. 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: Linda Bianchi at
education@alamopc.org

When: To be announced

Where: Learning Center

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

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

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

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

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

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

Where: Learning Center

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

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

Technical Rating: ★

Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

When: Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No


Technical Content Ratings

★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.

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★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.



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

Alamo PC logo

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

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at 736-0700

Visit the Alamo PC Learning Center

Media Center

Learn all about computers with hundreds of books and dozens of video tapes. Enjoy our large selection of techno-fiction.

A comfortable seating area is available.

Call (210) 736-0700

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 Linda Bianchi at 226-2460 or email her at <education@alamopc.org>.

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
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Step Two

**This area is under revision and
will return in the May issue**

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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 Old dusty computer found in my garage. No power source, no mother board, no RAM. It's basically a plastic box full of dust. \$2,000 or best offer. Call 555-5555

For Sale Invest in antique computer junk. Box of old 5.25" disks. Paid \$45, will take \$600, plus delilvery fee. Call 555-5555

Wanted Classified ads from members of Alamo PC. It costs nothing and it a good way to sell or buy any computer related thing.

Missing Alamo PC members from the classifieds section. Answers to the name of 'Apconian.' Last seen about 4 issues ago. Reward of free classified ad offered.



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

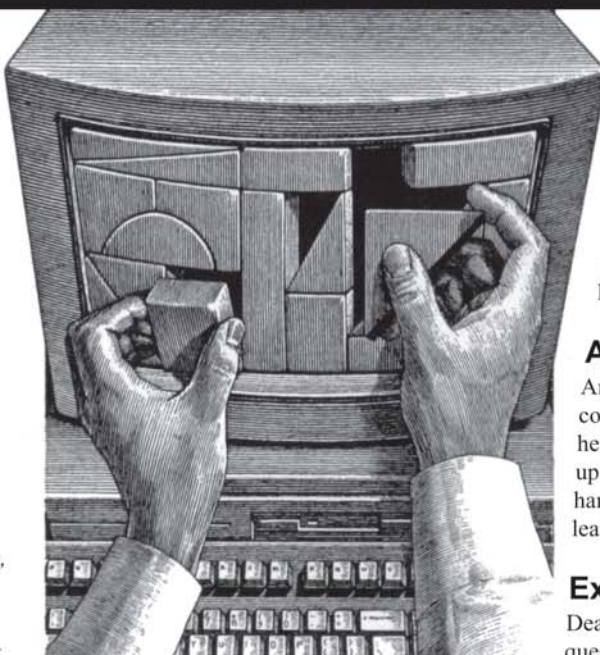
Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

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

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

