

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

RSS ISSUE

www.alamopc.org
August 2006
\$4.00

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Innovative use of RSS
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Alamo PC Organization

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



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

Registration number **210.736.0080**

If you **didn't receive your issue** of *PC 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:

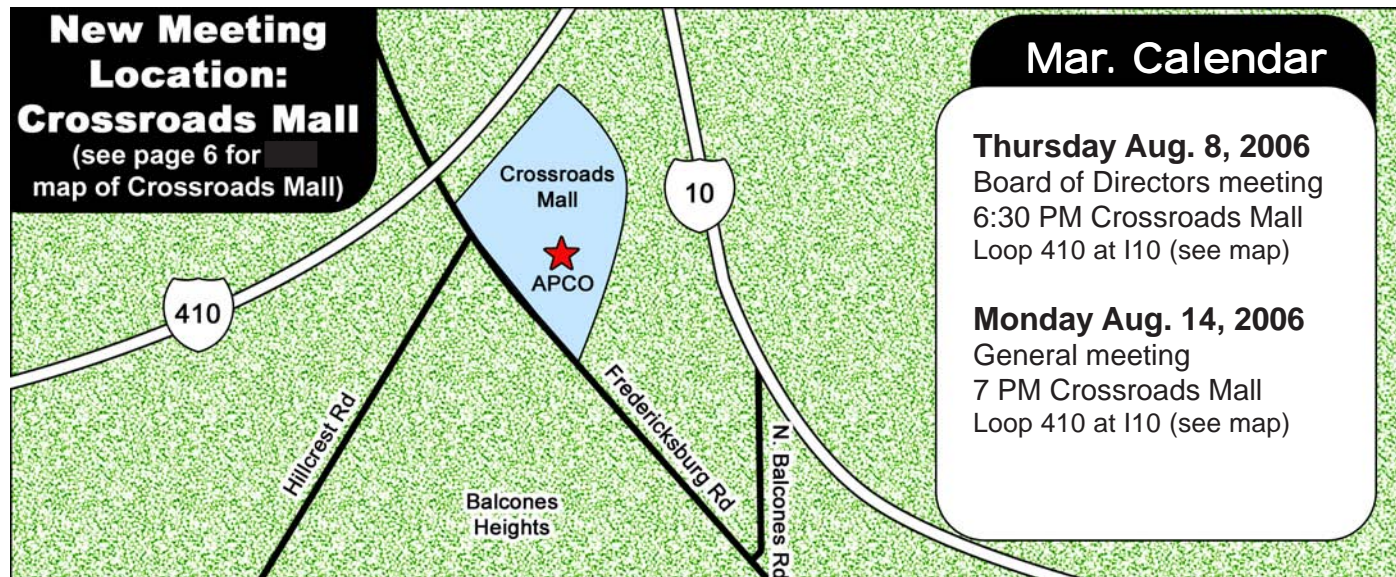
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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

Thursday Aug. 8, 2006
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Aug. 14, 2006
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

RSS feeds

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PC Alamode

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Featured this month

RSS

What are RSS feeds?
What are the benefits of RSS feeds?
Innovative use of RSS
Displaying RSS feeds
Future of RSS isn't blogs
RSS won the battle
Security and RSS
RSS and read estate
Monetizing RSS feeds
Interesting RSS tools and uses
More RSS tools

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

editor@alamopc.org

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode

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San Antonio, TX 78212
editor@alamopc.org

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

product reviews

Books

Computer Crimes Susan Ives
Word Anoyances Steve Bass

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Board of Directors

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| President | Bill Klutz | 532-9122 (Home) | president@alamopc.org |
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Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

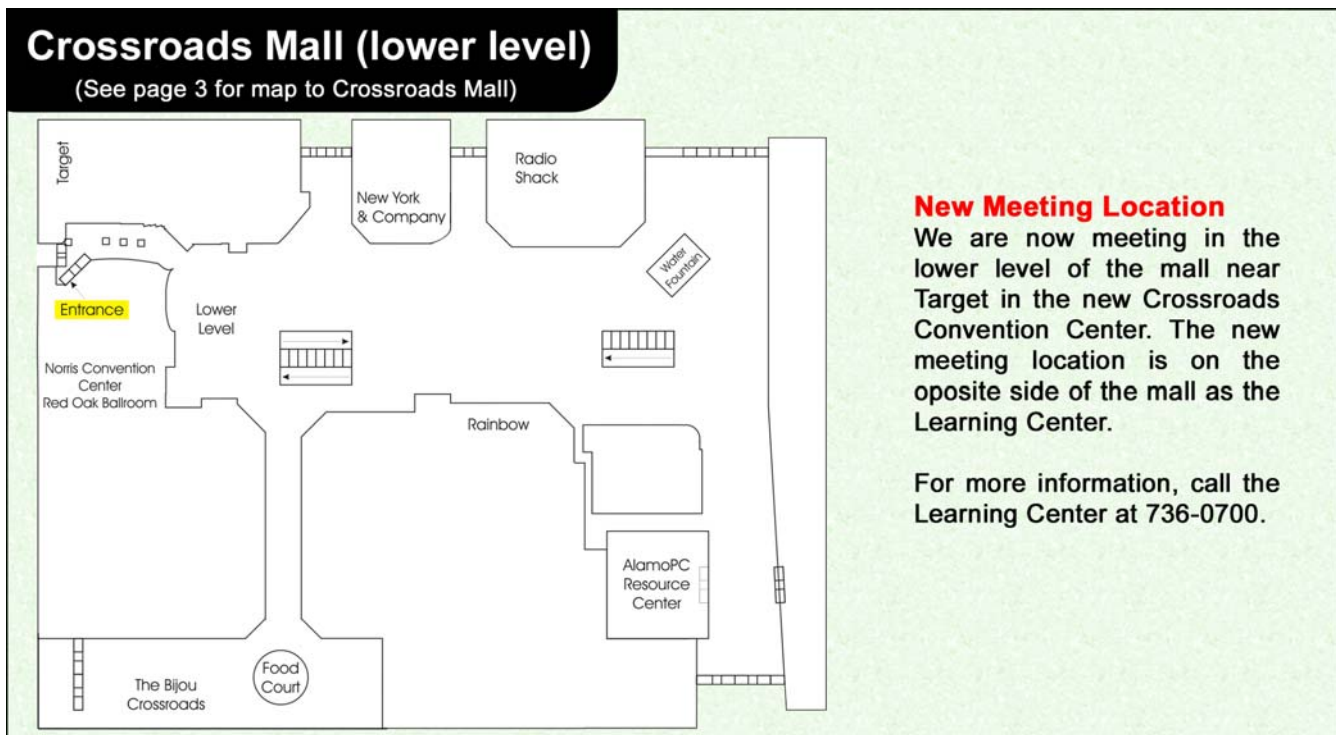
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

| | | | |
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For Study Groups and Classes, phone: 736-0080 or 736-0700



PC Alamode Links List



Today's front pages

<http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/>

Every morning, more than 400 newspapers from around the world submit their front pages to the Newseum via the Internet.



Do it yourself center

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

Learn how to do home repairs yourself, shop for supplies and more.

enter

This month, our issue is dedicated to RSS. It's not a new technology, but it has recently gained a lot of attention. For more than 10 years, Real Simple Syndication has allowed Web authors to share data with users. The system uses Extensible Mark-up Language, XML, to distribute snippets of data linked to a Web site.

The most common content is probably news headlines. Many products on the market allow users to read and link into RSS feeds. You can even create your own content, but that isn't covered in this issue.

You will learn what RSS is, how it's used and get a handle on the different applications out there, such as real estate and tracking fast moving data like the weather, jobs and shipments.

The entire issue comes courtesy of Sharon Housley of Notepage, a wireless text message service. You may remember the podcast issue from April, also Sharon's. She manages marketing for FeedForAll <http://www.feedforall.com>, software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts.

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

"August Aghast!"

At the July General Meeting, David Steward had a Time Warner representative talk about things Time Warner provides its customers. Since many present were Time Warner customers, the presentation covered many relevant things that the audience was interested in knowing about. Those present seemed to enjoy the information provided, since there were many questions about the current and future services addressed. Points of clarification, about current services, were also resolved and some seemed interested in becoming customers. Many took notes and the representative was very helpful - he told those present to "Call ME day or night if you are having any trouble with any of the services you have purchased!" Great for customer relations.

If you are aware of the definition of aghast - struck with terror, amazement, or horror : SHOCKED - you can pretty much describe my condition (doubled) at the start of last month General meeting, since two significance things should have been planted in the minds of Alamo PC members in my last article. The first was the July BOD meeting being moved because it fell on Tuesday, July 4th (only important for those desiring to attend) and the second (the much more important one, since it impacts on the future of Alamo PC) was that July is Alamo PC's annual month for nominations for Board positions that are vacant or expiring.

The article also stated "Elections Committee will try to seek members willing to serve at the BOD level, but since we have operated with vacant positions since Oct 2005 (despite numerous pleas from me in past messages), it would appear the task may prove to be difficult. Each member also has a stake in this process. They are responsible for identifying individuals willing to serve at the BOD level, and will be given the opportunity to submit names at the July General Meeting. There will also be an opportunity for floor nominations, from those present. Once the list of individuals has been identified, individual biographies will be submitted for inclusion in the August PC Alamode. During August, the online election process will be conducted to determine the list of Board members for the coming year (Oct 2006 - Sep 2007)."

I was double aghast when nomination from the floor were requested, and not a single name was provided from the 39 individuals who were present. (Sadly, I had to report to those present that the election committee search had also not produce one single name from among our members.)

If you can remember back to my article in June of 2005, when I first introduced the Coastal Area Users Group (CAUG; from Corpus Christi, TX) and the plea from their then president for someone to take his place by the end of 2005 and to consider replacing the VP and Secretary in 2006, it was a warning as to where we could be in the future. (The July 2006 issue of the CAUG Coastal Computer News indicates "CAUG NEEDS YOU! We have some openings in our group that really need to be filled. They are as follows: President, VP, Treasurer, Programs....) Well, we seem to be moving in the same direction - no nominations and one board position that has remained vacant since October 2005.

The election process for Oct 2006- Sep 2007 (Floor Nominations/Election Committee Names - Submitted NLT Jul 10 [Gen Meeting]; Bios - posted to website ASAP & included in Aug ALAMODE; Voting - Aug 1 until midnight Aug 31; New

Board Members identified ASAP - Names available to members ASAP in Sep [Website & at Gen Meeting Sep 11th] and included in the Oct 1 Alamode) is under way. Since no names were forthcoming, no bios will be needed. The remainder of the process will continue, however, the voting portion will only take place to allow individual members the opportunity to provide "write-in" names. Individuals will be contacted to see if they will serve and names will be appointed to vacant board positions based on number of submissions [highest to lowest], and only after individuals currently serving in positions about to expire have had the opportunity to indicate they will continue to serve.

Once again I ask each member to commit to being just a little more actively involved with the Alamo PC Organization. This is OUR organization, and if WE want it to continue, WE must continue to be a member and try to participate at some level.

Consider taking advantage of the free class benefit by enrolling in one or more of the classes. (If a class you would like to have isn't on the list, make it known to the people at the Learning Center. They will put it on the "Wish List" of classes that people have requested. One membership entitles one family member to vote, but it entitles each family member in the household to enroll in free classes during, the time the membership is current.

I am sad to say we are continuing the trend of not retaining members at the level we need. If you do not choose to renew, please let us know "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! If membership continues to fall, the BOD will have to address changes that the organization will be required to make, if we are going to continue to have an organization. Remember, this is our organization. If you want to have your voice heard, attend a BOD meeting, General Meeting, write or call someone.

This future of OUR organization is essentially in the hands of its members. Whether WE continue (or not) depends on the interest and involvement of each member, shown. But, it primarily depends on membership renewals. Without those, we will not be able to meet our financial obligations.

August Program

David Steward

A program has not been confirmed for August. Please visit [<http://www.alamopc.org>](http://www.alamopc.org) for more information.

News Brief

Discover Web learning

Cosmeo is bringing Discovery's online encyclopedia into homes via it's Web site. The site resembles the screen of a handheld game device and features video clips and interactive games. Content providers, including Scholastic Corp. and the Public Broadcasting Service, are customized to meet the curriculum standards of different states. The service is available for \$9.95/month.

News Brief

Annual APCUG Conference

It's not too early to start making plans for APCUG's Annual Conference to be held at the Riviera Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, January 4-7, 2007. It features a digital photo contest, roundtable discussions, educational forums, and a host of vendors.



Volunteer of the Month

Joan Sonnenschein



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

What you can find at the show:

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

Location:

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

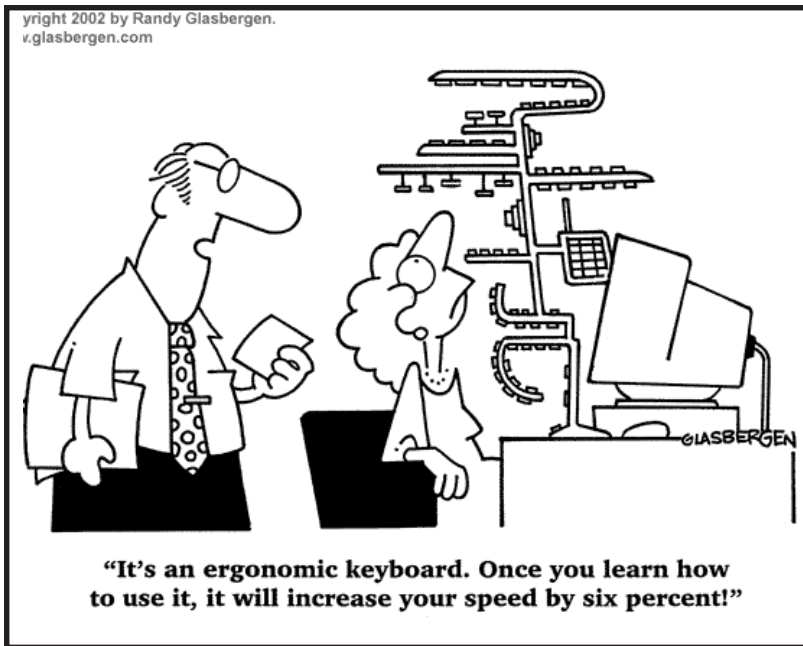
Show Dates and Times:

Sept. 9, 2006
more info at <http://www.pcshows.com/>



Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen



News Brief

APCUG Digital Photo Contest

You have until September 30 to submit your photos. Let your imagination look through your viewfinder! Photos may be submitted in each of four categories:

People and children

Animals

Landscape / Flowers

Still Life

Note: Landscape can be mountains, sky, sea, flowers, desert, trees, etc. Still life is any object not shown in motion: architecture, automobiles, boats, sculpture, historical objects, etc.

FAQs

Why do I need to submit 4 copies and 1 CD-ROM?

Each judge (and there are 3) will receive a copy for judging; 1 copy is for displaying at the annual conference – the "Photo Idol" will be chosen from the Conference attendees; and the picture(s) on the CD-ROM will be used to upload the pictures to <www.apcug.net>, etc.

Why do I need to print the photos, why can't someone just print them from the CD-ROM?

Your personal printer or printing service (COSTCO, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, etc.) produces a unique print and we want the pictures to look and be judged as the person who took the pictures wants them to look.

An entry blank for this contest is available at:

<<http://www.apcug.net/events/photocontest/index.htm>>

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.

Last month I published an announcement for a product that could copy DVDs. We included what we found about downloading an additional product that was necessary to accomplish certain tasks, and I was accused of encouraging illegal activities. Maybe I should have worded it differently, but the fact is, I simply published the announcement for a free product, along with our findings, and made the information available so an editor, or reader, could use it, or not use it, however they wished. I had two complaints (from the same UG) and that group chose not to make the column available to their members, which is their choice. This is not an apology because there has been tremendous interest in such products; I simply reported the facts and people are responsible for their own actions. I have read a number of articles in UG newsletters containing opinions concerning the law and the tactics of publishing companies. By the way, since last month's column, ShrinkTo5's product pricing and lineup has changed.

There are also those who would argue that a gun shop encourages murder, and I could use other similar issues that might be said to imply illegal activity. Recently I published an announcement for a product that recovers passwords. That could also be used for an illegal activity if used on a stolen computer. With all the write-ups and notoriety about new and controversial copyright laws, I wouldn't even try to explain the legalities of anything. Is it legal, or illegal to make a backup copy? Do you know for sure? Also, ShrinkTo5 has other uses and we did not include a link for Machinist2.dll. My proof reader suggested that car companies must encourage a long list of illegal activities, including manslaughter, since they sell cars that can do such things.

Actually, I am not a fan of publishing companies' tactics and the UCITA or DCMA laws. If those officials have their way, you would not be able to give, or even lend, anything published after you have read or listened to it. From what I read, they want all used book stores shut down as well as all libraries, and you would even be arrested if you were caught lending, or giving, a book or CD to a friend. Who knows where it all might end when it comes to the pockets of some corporate bigwigs. However, I have no interest in any of this copying stuff. I have no time and have not bought a music CD in years, nor do I rent videos or go to a movie. The performers and executives involved with that industry are grossly overpaid, but they don't make any money from me. I don't watch much TV now, but if they keep adding commercials, I'll shut that off too. While I'm on my soapbox; if I am paying for cable TV, why should I have to put up with all those commercials? People are much too tolerant of being taken advantage of, and about what they are paying for.

*Do Your Homework

The announcements below have been edited to shorten them so be sure to check their Web sites for better information. Remember, I have not tried any of these and have no knowledge about their reliability.

*Check That Malware, And For Free!

Put an end to all types of Malware, at no cost: The a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0 hunts undesired Spyware modules and dangerous Trojans, Backdoors, Keyloggers, Worms, Dialers, Rootkits, Hacking Tools, Riskware and TrackingCookies;

all from within the Web browser and no software must be installed. All users having Internet Explorer and a fast Internet connection, such as DSL, can make optimum use of the scanner.

The a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0 uses over 350,000 signatures and an ingenious heuristic algorithm for detecting pests on the local computer, and this scanner can be used directly from the Web browser. The user can choose from four different scan functions depending on the time available for a scan. The quick test provides rapid results, while a detailed analysis of the entire computer can take a while. A Riskware recognition system can also be enabled that informs the user of programs that are usually harmless, but are often used by Malware for specific tasks. There is also a paid version that they recommend as quicker and better with a 30-day free trial.

a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0: <<http://malwarescan.emsisoft.com>>

a-squared Anti-Malware: <<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/software/personal>>

Product details Malware-IDS: <<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/software/ids>>

Order a-squared Anti-Malware: <<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/order/homeuser>>

Phone: +43-664-3446068 (German)

Fax: +43-6272-73083

Email: <info@emsisoft.com>

Web: <www.emsisoft.com>

*Lets Compare Data

ZsCompare allows users to efficiently synchronize computers, backup data, compare different versions of files, verify that CDs have been copied correctly, manage Zip files, review changes to source code, and more. Users can easily run comparisons on local directories, networked computers, or removable media, such as CDs, DVDs, and flash drives.

ZsCompare 3.0 adds many new file and freeform text comparison features, including the ability to compare text from Microsoft Word documents and PDF documents. Also, zsCompare provides additional control over how the comparison is performed with predefined options for common comparisons. Finally, the new version of zsCompare permits direct editing of the contents of a file from the results. ZsCompare 3.0 operates on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. It runs on the Java platform, a copy of which is included with the ZsCompare installation. ZsCompare 3.0 is available in three editions: Professional (\$199.95), Standard (\$99.95), and Lite (\$35.00). For a 20% discount, my readers should enter the coupon code "DealsGuy" when purchasing a license at <https://www.zisasoft.com/store/order.shtml>. The Lite Edition contains basic comparison and synchronization functionality. With the Lite Edition, users can compare directories, zip files, text files, and freeform text. All versions include free lifetime upgrades and free technical support.

More information, including a complete list of enhancements and a fully functional 30 day trial version, is available at <http://www.zisasoft.com/products/zsCompare/index.shtml>.

Sales: sales@zisasoft.com

Telephone: 1 (303) 638-9235

Fax: 1 (720) 862-2089

*The Arnold Schwarzenegger Of Windows?

Tame Windows with Actual Window Manager 4.01. Microsoft Windows is the most widely used operating system today and its window architecture is a brilliant invention. However, this architecture comes with a bit of baggage and a degree of frustration, especially when you work with several windows simultaneously. With many applications open at once Windows becomes heavily cluttered, which in turn cuts down on your computational productivity. The more windows you open, the more time you spend to manage them and less focus is on the job. Monotonous clicking, window clutter in the taskbar, switching between windows, their positioning and resizing may double and even triple the time you need to concentrate on your job.

Actual Window Manager adds its buttons to each window in your system and allows you to navigate them in new ways. Instead of the taskbar, you will be able to minimize windows to the task tray or to the edge of the desktop, or roll them up or unroll, like blinds. If you need to multitask in several applications at once, you can simply pin all necessary windows on top without the need to bring up each one several times a day. In fact, you have over 40 other controls to automate routines related to windows. You can apply a predefined level of transparency to any window, automate positioning of windows, resize them and change priority from the title bar menu and more.

Over 450 suggestions were carefully considered and reflected in a more intuitive user interface. The customization of options has become much simpler, and the choice of options wider. In addition to subtle customization abilities, the program has a list of presets for most popular applications that allow you to use Actual Window Manager in the "install-and-go" style.

Read the complete description of features at <http://www.ActualTools.com/windowmanager/>

Download a no-cost evaluation copy from <http://www.ActualTools.com/files/aimsetup.exe>

Pricing and Availability

Actual Window Manager 4.0 runs under all Windows platforms and costs \$39.95 (USD) for a single-user license. Registered customers are entitled to the unlimited functionality, free updates and lifetime technical support. Additional information on Actual Window Manager, a collection of tutorial articles and success stories, as well as a 60-day evaluation copy is available from <http://www.ActualTools.com/>. UG members should visit our User Groups Support page <http://www.actualtools.com/usergroups/> and click the "Get 20% discount" Link, then follow the instructions.

E-mail: info@actualtools.com

News Brief

Vista rumored to have eight flavors

Microsoft announced that it has delayed the mainstream launch of Vista until next year. Steve Sinofsky, the head of the Office unit, has been tapped to lead Windows development. Following its push back of Windows Vista, Microsoft confirms the Office 2007 release will move to next year as well. It's been reported on a number of blog sites that Microsoft will release Windows Vista with 8 different versions, but no pricing information is available yet . . .

What is the Real ID Act of 2005?

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>

Almost everyone is unaware that a national ID card is on the way. In 2005, the Real ID Act was enacted as federal law. The Act was attached to a 2005 military spending bill. The Act establishes national standards for state-issued driver's licenses and non-driver's identification cards; waives laws that interfere with the construction of physical barriers at the borders; updates and tightens the laws on application for asylum and deportation of aliens for terrorist activity; introduces rules covering "delivery bonds" (rather like bail bonds, but for foreign nationals that have been released pending hearings); funds some reports and pilot projects related to border security; and changes visa limits for temporary workers, nurses, and Australians.

The vehicle for implementation of the Act will be State driver licenses (and substitute identity cards for non-drivers). After May 11, 2008, "a Federal agency may not accept, for any official purpose, a driver's license or identification card issued by a State to any person unless the State is meeting the requirements" specified in the Real ID Act." States may also issue non-complying licenses and IDs, so long as they have a unique design and a clear statement that they cannot be accepted for any Federal identification purpose. The federal Transportation Security Administration is responsible for security check-in at airports, so bearers of non-compliant documents would no longer be able to travel on common carrier aircraft.

Each card must include, at a minimum: the person's full legal name; the person's date of birth; the person's gender; the person's driver's license or identification card number; a digital photograph of the person's face; the person's address of principal residence; and, the person's signature.

The card must have physical security features designed to prevent tampering, counterfeiting, or duplication of the document for fraudulent purposes. It must also have a common machine-readable technology, with defined minimum data elements. The details have not been spelled out, but are the responsibility of the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Transportation and the States.

There are specifications for the States stating the documentation required before issuing a license or ID card. Before a card can be issued, the applicant must provide the following documentation: a photo ID, or a non-photo ID that includes full legal name and birth date; documentation of birth date; proof of Social Security Number or verification that the applicant is not eligible for one; and documentation showing name and principal residence address.

In addition, the Act requires documentation showing that the applicant is legally present in the US. For example, that the applicant is a US citizen or national, is an alien with permanent or temporary residence status or a valid visa, has applied for or been granted asylum, or is a refugee. The State must verify each of the above documents with the issuing agency. The only foreign document that may be accepted for any of the above items is an official passport.

Each State must agree to share its motor vehicle database with all other States. This database must include, at a minimum, all the data printed on the State drivers' licenses and ID cards, plus drivers' histories (including motor vehicle violations, suspensions, and points on licenses). Any State that does not link its

database, containing records on all drivers and ID holders, to the database of the other States loses its federal funding.

The ID provisions of the Act are not without controversy. One website, realnightmare.org, summarizes the negative aspects as follows:

- 1) The Act was not passed through a true democratic process. It was slipped through Congress in May, 2005, in a "must-pass" Iraq War/Tsunami relief supplemental bill, as part of a deal reached between the powerful Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R, Wis.) and the Congressional leadership. There was no time for sufficient consideration of the Act and its sweeping implications; in the Senate, there was not even a single hearing held on the Act. The result is that Real ID lacks the legitimacy that comes from having been studied, debated, considered, and directly voted upon by Congress.
- 2) The game is not over, it has just moved into the States. Although the Act was passed by Congress, Real ID cannot go into effect without a multitude of actions in the States. State legislatures must appropriate money and, in most cases, change State laws. State executives must remake or build anew all the administrative machinery required to comply with the Act's numerous mandates. A lot of people at the State level do not like what they see.
- 3) Opponents range from privacy and civil liberties organizations to conservative groups and immigration groups.
- 4) It is a bad Act. Most fundamentally, the Real ID Act has sparked opposition because it would not be good for our country.

In addition, Homeland Security has become a windfall for certain areas of the country. Harold Rogers is a Kentucky congressman who is the chair of the subcommittee that controls the appropriations for Homeland Security. His district has profited from his position in terms of government contracts including the production of identification cards. Congressman Rogers represents an economically depressed area and has exercised his control to influence technology decisions. Industry experts say his interference has been detrimental to the development of identity cards using state-of-the-art technology. It is a safe assumption that Congressman Rogers will seek to influence the Real ID card technology so that it benefits his home district.

Regardless of whether the Real ID card is a good idea or a politician's dream in term of "pork" projects, this is a topic that is worthy of attention and investigation. The motivation for this project may be more complicated than just national security.



Erasing a Dead Hard Drive

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>

You will have a hard drive fail. If you have been around computers for any length of time, you probably know this already. Nothing in this world lasts forever and hard drives are no exception. But let's say you have a hard drive keel over unexpectedly with all of your data still on it. Lots of folks dutifully take the computer back to Best Buy, CompUSA, or wherever for repairs, trusting that they will keep your personal information secure. Yes, the hard drive is dead, but the data isn't! Hank Gerbus found this out in a most alarming way.

According to an article at MSNBC, one year ago, Hank Gerbus had his hard drive replaced at a Best Buy store in Cincinnati. Six months ago, he received one of the most disturbing phone calls of his life.

"Mr. Gerbus," Gerbus recalls a stranger named Ed telling him. "I just bought your hard drive in Chicago."

In June 2005, when Gerbus took his computer to Best Buy for repairs after a hard drive crash, he knew the drive was a potential hot potato. So when a clerk there told him it had to be replaced, he asked for the damaged hardware back.

No dice. The replacement was done for free, under warranty, and Gerbus was told the old drive had to be sent to a repair center in Chicago to fulfill warranty terms.

"I asked in the store on two or three occasions. ... I was very concerned," he said. "But they said 'we can't give you the old one because it's under warranty.'"

Gerbus said he was assured that, after verifying the warranty, workers in Chicago would drill holes through the drive and make it unusable. . .

'I JUST BOUGHT YOUR HARD DRIVE'

Posted: Monday, June 5 at 03:00 am CT by Bob Sullivan;
<http://redtape.msnbc.com/2006/06/one_year_ago_ha.html>

The Best Buy service center did not destroy the drive but instead sold it. A fellow named Ed bought it at a flea market for \$25. Social Security numbers, account numbers, and retirement/ investment information was on the drive. Ed tracked down Mr. Gerbus at his winter home in Florida (from information obtained on the hard drive) and fortunately returned the drive. Best Buy is said to be investigating and has offered Mr. Gerbus a \$250 Best Buy Gift Certificate for his troubles.

I have seen for myself the information left on hard drives. I have gone to computer shows and bought used hard drives, never paying more than \$7 a piece. I recovered data on 5 out of seven drives during one such show; however, none of the drives that I bought had sensitive or personally identifiable information on them. All of the drives were erased and were used for data storage.

In 2002-2003 Simson Garfinkel, an MIT researcher picked up a number of used hard drives from various sources. He examined 129 drives; only 12 had been completely cleared of data. One drive had 3,722 credit card numbers on it! <http://www.computer.org/portal/cms_docs_security/security/v1n1/garfinkel.pdf>



So how do you deal with a dead hard drive? We will assume that the drive has very sensitive data that you do not want others to have access to.

If taking it back to the retailer or in to a shop for repair, call them first. Explain the situation. Hopefully, they will have a more realistic policy than Best Buy. Some manufacturers will allow you to keep the drive in your possession, but require you to sign a form stating that you have physically destroyed the drive. They will then replace or send you another hard disk. But don't look for this policy on their website, for obvious reasons they do not advertise it.

You could also ask the repair shop or retailer to destroy it on the spot and in your presence. Drilling holes through it would work, so will smashing it with a heavy hammer.

The best way to destroy the drive is to melt the discs that contain the data located inside the drive, but this is not always possible, again for obvious reasons. I prefer to take the drive apart and physically remove the platters and file the surface or run a powerful magnet over both sides of each platter or disc. Hard drives typically have strong magnets located inside of them. These may be able to do the job.

Of course the problem with taking the drive apart is that you void the warranty. But it may be worth it if it means protecting your data.

If the company insists having the drive intact and the warranty seal unbroken then you can avoid Mr. Gerbus' situation with a powerful magnet, like the ones found in some hard drives. Rubbing it over both sides of the drive, top and bottom, at least ten times should hopefully do it. But beware, MOST magnets people have available to them are not strong enough to penetrate the

shielding of the hard drive case. Simple iron magnets, including the big ones, just cannot do it. Electro magnets used for erasing floppy disks and video tapes are also too weak. As a loose rule of thumb: if you can, without much difficulty, move the magnet over the drive in a circular motion, it is too weak. The proper magnet should be VERY difficult to move in a circular motion over the drive because it is forcibly sticking to it.

The only magnet I have seen that worked (after trying many!) is a Neodymium magnet. These are the strongest magnets made. They come in various grades such as N28, N35, N38 and N40. An N40 of sufficient size, say 1" W x 3/4" thick x 2" long, would probably work. A 1-1/2" Diameter x 3/4" ring might also, which may be easier to handle. These will cost around \$25 from an industrial supply, hobby store, or specialty store. Using one of these magnets should render the hard drive data very difficult if not practically impossible to recover. You can then pop the drive back in the computer and ship it off for warranty repair with reasonable confidence.

I have verified that they work. After taking a Neodymium magnet that was roughly 2" x 2" x 1/4" to a working hard drive I was unable to recover any data afterwards. Unfortunately, it also wrecked the drive, rendering it useless.

My company is actually using neodymium iron-boron magnets in its development work on a magnet powerful enough to erase U.S. intelligence-gathering aircraft's hard drives in emergency situations - like that which took place near China several years ago, <<http://gtresearchnews.gatech.edu/newsrelease/erase.htm>>

A note of caution: these magnets are not for kids to play with. They are very strong, even the small ones, and should be kept away from all electronic devices including pacemakers, security badges, monitors etc. Size matters! Two magnets in the same proximity can slam together and splinter or shatter. Larger examples, such as 2" x 1" disk, can crush fingers if in the presence of another. And do not stick the magnet anywhere near your computer! Remove the hard drive first.

Of course, this method has its disadvantages. You have to remove the hard drive, you have to find or buy a magnet that is sufficiently powerful, there is no easy way to verify that the data is erased and because of the magnets strength, it can be an irritation to work with. Still, you can sweat it out like Mr. Gerbus did, only to find out that your sensitive information was sold at a flea market, or you can have some measure of confidence that your data is safe. It's up to you.

News Brief

Vista aims to tackle slow performance, spyware issues

Microsoft is building in a tool, Windows Performance Rating, that will rate a PC based on how well it is running and on how much it can take advantage of Vista's capabilities to help average consumers easily understand their Windows Vista PC's overall performance. As for systems slowing down over time, that's another issue that Microsoft is trying to tackle. Meanwhile, Vista is being designed to shut the door on spyware. It will introduce important changes at the heart of the operating system, as well as to Internet Explorer, and include Windows Defender, an anti-spyware tool.



Rooting out evil

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 29.

Basically a rootkit is something you do not want on your computer. We'll go into detail later. Rootkits have been around for some time now but folks in the anti spyware community rarely used to speak of them. Lately rootkits have been making some news and the news is not good – they are becoming more common. Considered very sinister because they are almost non detectable.

Rootkits definition from Wikipedia - A rootkit is a set of software tools frequently used by a third party (usually an intruder) after gaining access to a computer system. These tools are intended to conceal running processes, files or system data, which helps an intruder maintain access to a system without the user's knowledge. Rootkits are known to exist for a variety of operating systems such as Linux, Solaris and versions of Microsoft Windows. A computer with a rootkit on it is called a rooted computer.

Basically what this means is that malware, including viruses, spyware, and trojans, with the use of rootkits, attempt to hide their presence from spyware blockers, antivirus, and system management utilities thereby having free reign on a computer.

There are several rootkit classifications depending on whether the malware survives reboot and whether it executes in user mode or kernel mode. Kernel mode which can also be described as the system or privilege mode is the core of the operating system. Instructions to the computer originating at this level have the permission to do all and everything. If a rootkit has infiltrated this level call 911, but chances are that you won't even be aware of it.

Sony BMG (Music Entertainment division of Sony) faced a wave a public outrage and criticism, after experts discovered that the copy protection software, created by First 4 Internet, for Sony's music CDs was using a rootkit. This rootkit was designed so that copies could not be produced by users of the music that Sony sold to them. The problem was that because of flaws in the rootkit, Sony's software was left open enough such that other, malicious software could take advantage of its presence on a computer to hide itself.

Shortly after, Sony BMG announced that it would suspend the production of audio CDs that contain the rootkit, but the damage was already done. In the same month EFF and a number of individuals filed cases against Sony at courts across the US. These cases were granted class action status on 1 December. The settlement would enable consumers who bought, received, or used a Sony CD loaded with XCP to exchange the disc for a replacement CD, an MP3 download of the same album, and either a cash payment of \$7.50 and one free album download or three free album downloads.

Also, Sony BMG, will provide consumers with a patch that removes the software from their computer. Virus writers have utilized Rootkits to hide their sinister payloads. Since the beginning of this year several software vendors have introduced tools to help root out, if you will, Rootkits.

SpySweeper, by WebRoot, which has one of the best spyware detection and removal scorecards on the market is one program that offers rootkit detection. Among the other offerings is BlackLight Rootkit Elimination Technology from Finnish security vendor F-Secure Corp. Sysinternals, also produces a rootkit detector called Rootkit Revealer and offers some good information on their site at <<http://www.sysinternals.com/Utilities/RootkitRevealer.html>>

Word on the street is that Microsoft is ready to do battle with the evil vermin. According to the Microsoft research site, the software maker is developing a new prototype tool named Strider GhostBuster, <<http://research.microsoft.com/rootkit>> an offline scanning tool. It compares files on a potentially infected system to files created by a separate, uncompromised system. Microsoft would not comment further about the technology. A spokesperson said the company does not have plans to announce a release date for Strider at this time. When Windows Vista is unveiled it will offer better protection from Rootkits.

While Rootkits are not in wide use as of this writing, I'm sure we'll see more of them in the future.

Stay vigilante and happy computing.

Student Practice Lab

Polish those new skills - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (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. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700

Antivirus wrongly flags software as virus

An error in McAfee's virus definition file released mid-March caused consumer and enterprise antivirus products to flag Microsoft Excel, AdobeUpdateManager and other applications on users PCs as a virus called W95/CTX". Files were deleted or quarantined, depending on the user's settings.



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Internet, Part VII

Win9x/Me/XP Computer tips & tricks

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.

Printing Web Pages w/Date

If you like to print web pages and want to automatically put the date on them, this information can be printed in the margins. Using Internet Explorer (IE), select File, Page Setup from within IE

Now look at the Headers and Footers section. You'll see several codes in those boxes. These codes tell you what will be printed on a Web page. You can put codes together. For example, if you looked at the first page of a four-page print-out, "Page &p of &P" will print "Page 1 of 4" in the bottom margin. Experiment with the codes. If you are using Netscape, you will find similar settings under the File, Page Setup menu.

Public Records

This site <www.searchsystems.net> was the first and continues to be the largest and most comprehensive collection of links to free public-record databases on the Internet. There are over 10,000 links to databases around the world.

Rebates

RebatesHQ.com <www.rebateshq.com> helps you find and submit the proper paperwork for your rebate. You can even submit and track your reimbursements online. There are also tips to help ensure your rebate doesn't get lost in a bureaucratic nightmare.

Refresh/Reload

Sometimes a Web page gets garbled on the way in or you interrupt it by clicking the Stop button on the toolbar or by pressing the Esc key. You can tell your browser to get the information on the page again for examination. In Netscape, click the Reload button or press Ctrl+R. In IE, click the Refresh button or press F5.

Resume

If you need a professional résumé, today's word processing programs make it easy by offering fill-in-the-blank templates designed by professionals. Additionally, there are 99 more in Microsoft Office Template Gallery <<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/templategallery/>>.

Safe Surfing

Privacy on one's computer is a big issue. There are all kinds of companies that want to keep track of where people surf, what they buy, and even what movies they watch on their computers for marketing purposes.

Although there is no one absolute way to completely protect yourself, you can limit your exposure. After

surfing online, take a few moments and clean out your files. There are third-party software programs that can clean up Internet files, as well as the everyday Windows clutter. You can also use IE's 'Delete Files' to remove files by right-clicking the Explorer icon on your desktop, selecting Properties, and pressing the 'Delete Files' Button. This step will delete some Internet files, but not your entire list.

Satellite Internet Service

If you are not interested in high speed Cable or DSL or in an area where those services are not available to everyone, then I suggest that you might want to research Satellite Internet Service. There are several providers of satellite Internet service: <www.skycaster.com>, <www.starband.com>, and <www.direcway.com>. A Federal Communications Commission Web page discusses broadband at <www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/highspeedinternet.html>.

Saving Documents as Web Pages

This tip works with Word 2000, but it may also work in other versions of Word with very little alteration. Word 2000 can create Web documents for viewing in a Web browser, and it can also read these documents back in for editing. When you save any Word document as a Web page, almost all of the document's information, including its content, formatting, and document properties, are retained in the HTML document. Just choose File, Save as Web Page. You can also preview any Word document as a Web page by using the File, Web Page Preview in Word. When you choose Web Page Preview, Word automatically launches IE to view the Word document as a Web page.

Scam

Scam is the result of your being drawn into spam with titles such as "Make money at home," "Buy prescription drugs online," "Find out anything about anyone," or "Root out porn on your computer," you should be suspicious of a scam. Almost all of these schemes are out to get your money. Either they are worthless propositions or expensive ones which won't make you money in the long run. All of the schemes reinforce the saying that "there's a sucker born every minute."

Script Error

If you encounter a message stating "Internet Explorer (IE) Script Error," you need not worry about it. This message is generated by a feature in IE that is seldom needed by most computer users. Its use is more important to software/web designers who have made errors in their work. You can turn off this feature without a problem. With your Web browser open and on the screen, click on the menu item labeled Tools, select Internet Options, and then click on Advanced. You'll now see a long list of items. Find the one that says "disable script debugging" and place a check mark in the box next to it.

Search Engines

IE and Netscape have default search engines. You have the option of changing them. In both programs, you can search from the Address box or from a search window. To set up IE's address box, click Search, Custom, Autosearch Settings. Now select the search engine and click OK. To set up the search window, click Search, Custom. Select "Use one search service..." and pick the search engine and click OK. To set up Netscape's address box, find the search box near the top of the window, click the down arrow, and select the search engine. To establish the search window setting, click Search on the Toolbar and select one of the five search engines. What follows are some of the better search engines: Google <www.google.com>, Yahoo <www.yahoo.com>, Search.com <www.search.com>, MSN Search <<http://search.msn.com>>, Excite <www.excite.com>, and Ask Jeeves <www.ask.com>.

Secure Security Layer

The Secure Security Layer security is built into IE and Netscape Navigator and works automatically when you are ready to send a credit card number to purchase something from the Web. All you should do is check to see that you have a secure connection when you're about to send that credit card number. This connection appears as either a change from <http://> to <https://> on your location bar line, or more likely as a little icon that looks like a padlock on the bottom line of your browser. When you're in secure mode, the padlock is locked. When you're in less secure mode, the padlock is unlocked.

Senior Citizen Discounts

You can search this site, <www.seniordiscounts.com>, by city, state and the type of business for senior citizen discounts at movie theaters, restaurants, car rental agencies, etc.

Shortcuts

Like most programs, IE offers shortcuts. In versions 5.0 and 5.5 you can use: Ctrl+E to open the Search menu; Ctrl+F to open the Find dialog box; Ctrl+H to open the History list; Ctrl+I to open the Favorites list; Ctrl+N to open a new browser window; and, Ctrl+O to type in a remote address.

Spacebar Scrolling in IE

For the IE users, scrolling up and down a Web page doesn't have to involve a mouse. In addition to the Page Down and Page Up keys that catapult one through the page in a somewhat jerky fashion, you can also press the Spacebar to scroll smoothly down the page or Shift+Spacebar to sail smoothly upward.

Spam

The word spam on the Internet refers to thousands of copies of the same piece of unwanted e-mail sent to either individual e-mail accounts or Usenet newsgroups. It's also known as junk e-mail or unsolicited commercial e-mail (UCE). The message usually consists of unsavory "scam" advertising for anything from get-rich-quick schemes to even pornographic offers. Spam doesn't necessarily have to be commercial, but it has to be unsolicited; if you asked for it, that's not spam. Many spams include a line that instructs you how to get off their lists, something like "Send us a message with the word REMOVE in it." But don't bother, spammers' remove lists almost never work. In fact, they are usually a method for verifying that your address is real, and they are more likely to send you more spam. Check out these Web sites for information about spam and how

to fight it, technically, socially, and legally: Fight Spam on the Internet! [<<http://spam.abuse.net/>> a spam overview; Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-mail <<http://www.cauce.org>> anti-spam laws; and Network Abuse Clearinghouse <<http://www.abuse.net/>> a complaint forwarding service. For anyone having America on Line (AOL) as his/her Internet Service Provider (ISP), you can block spam messages from entering your Mailbox. You should begin by selecting Mail Controls from the Mail menu. On the first AOL Mail Controls window, now select the appropriate screen name under Set Mail Controls For, click the Customize Mail Controls For This Screen Name radio button, and click Next. Now under Allow And Block Screen Name, E-mail Addresses, And Domains, you should click the radio button to Block E-mail From The Listed AOL Members, E-mail Addresses, And Domains, Allow E-mail From All Others. Next you should type the e-mail address for the offense spammer, click Add, and Summary. Lastly make sure you review the controls. If they look correct, click Save. Then to alert AOL about the spam, forward the spam e-mail message to tossam@aol.com. Another way to keep spam out of your e-mail personal and business accounts is to establish a separate e-mail account online that you always use when buying things or responding to offers on the Internet. This latter e-mail account will end up receiving all of the spam generated from your purchases or other Internet activities.

Spam Stoppers

Spam stoppers and busters are software programs that can help eliminate unwanted e-mail messages from your in box. Some work by checking your mailbox independent of your mail client and deleting messages that they recognize as spam. One such program, Spam Buster, can be found at <www.contactplus.com/products/spam>. Novasoft's SpamKiller, <www.spamkiller.com>, is a spam filtering tool that periodically checks your mailbox and deletes any messages that appear to be spam. Other programs use disposable e-mail addresses (DEA) that let you send and receive mail using an alias that routes to a real e-mail account. If you don't like the mail you're getting from one of these spam stopper companies, just dispose of the DEA. Spamex, <www.spamex.com>, SpamCon Foundation, <www.spamcon.org/services/dea>, Emailias, <www.emailias.com>, Sneakemail, <www.sneakemail.com>, are a few of the DEA spam stopping companies on the market.

Speed Check

A lot of variables can affect the speed of your broadband connection. For a quick calculation, you can try downloading a sizable file during a non-peak periods and timing in seconds the time taken for this exercise. Next check the size of the download, in bytes, by examining the file's properties. Now divide the file size in bytes with the recorded time in seconds, and multiple the results by 10 to determine the download speed in bits per second.

Speedier Internet Connections

Does Win98 seem to take a really long time to establish a dial-up connection with your ISP? If so, try clicking the Start button and choosing Settings, Dial-Up Networking. Right-click your dial-up connection and choose Properties. Next, click the Server Types tab and remove the check marks next to Log on to Network, NetBEUI, and IPX/SPX Compatible Protocol. Now click OK. Finally, double-check to make sure your connection still works. If it doesn't, replace the check marks you removed.



Excel 2003, power programming

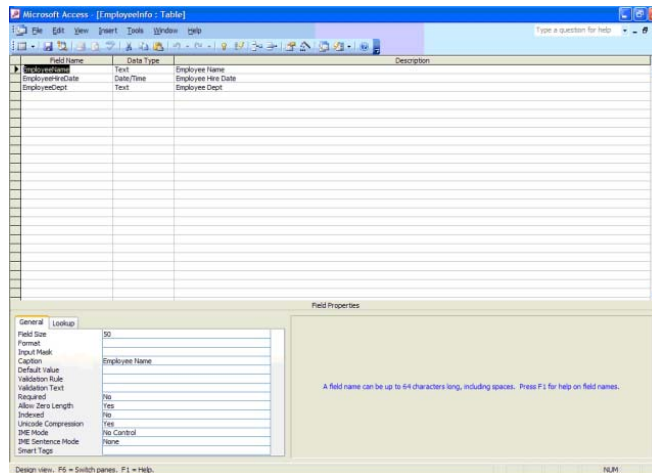
by **James D. Duncan, CPA**

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

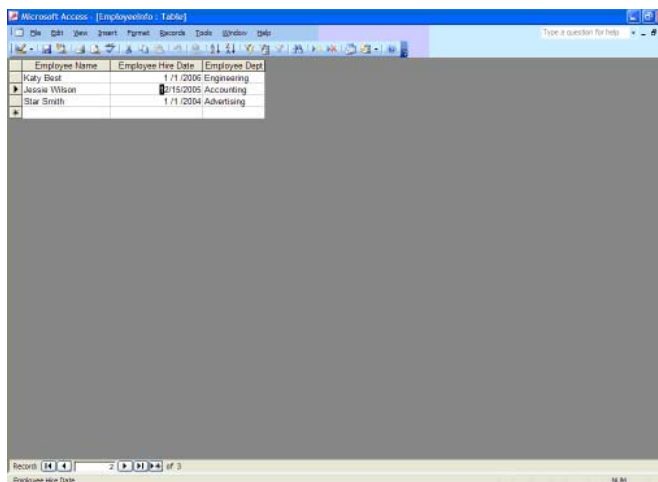
This is an extension of the article on queries using an input date to select records. The link to this is: http://www.ccokc.org/articles/2005Articles/Mar05_Articles/Mar05BusSolutions_AccessDates_Duncan.htm :

You can look at that and I will try to explain this in full here also. The basic premise is that the user input a date on a form, a query uses that date to select records and a report is generated. I have used a different table but the theory is the same.

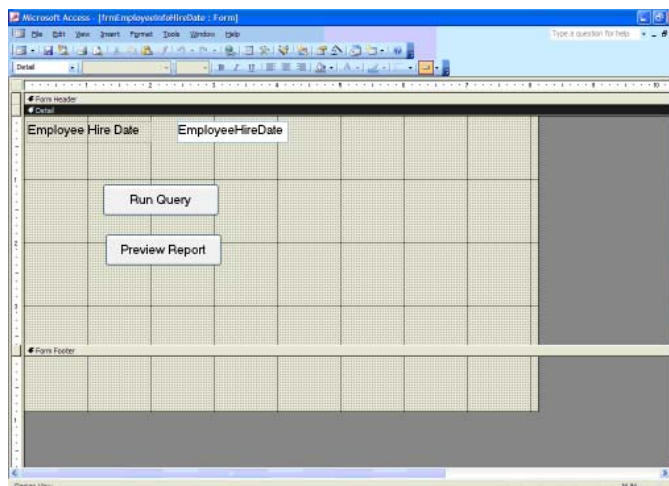
First we build a quick table with sample information.



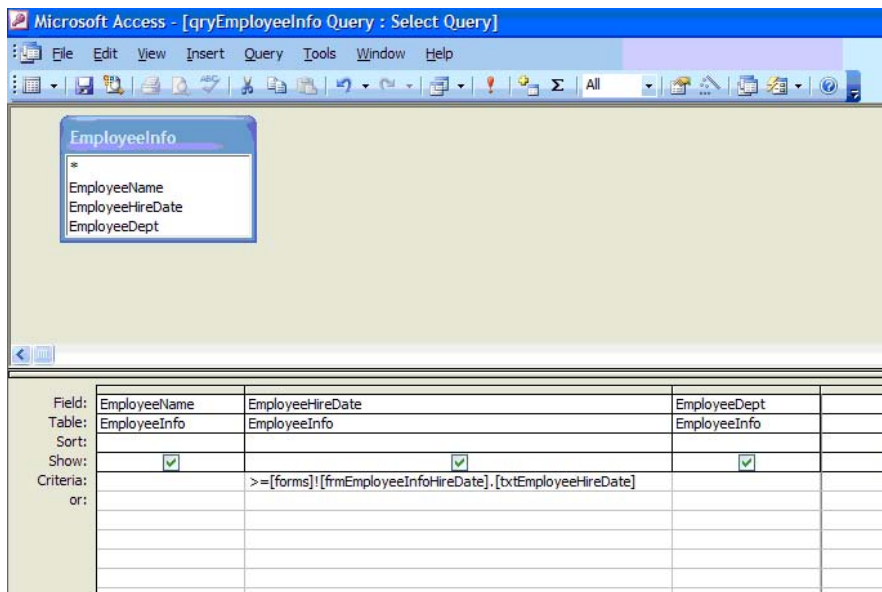
Save it, named it EmployeeInfo, and filled in some data.



Now a form for quick input.



This form is bound to the employee file we built. The run query button runs the query that is based on the following query. Notice the code in the criteria in the EmployeeHireDate.



This lets us select dates greater than or equal to those entered in the field txtEmployeeHireDate from the form frmEmployeeInfoHireDate.

The report button was build using the wizard. The only tricky part is that it is based on the query instead of a file. Select miscellaneous and run query in the wizard and things should be fine.

Now when you select the run query you get the following results:

| Employee Name | Employee Hire Date | Employee Dept |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Katy Best | 1 /1 /2006 | Engineering |
| Jessie Wilson | 12/15/2005 | Accounting |

And when you press the preview report button you get:

| <i>rptEmployeeInfo</i> | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Employee Hire Date</i> | <i>Employee Name</i> | <i>Employee Dept</i> |
| 12/15/2005 | Jessie Wilson | Accounting |
| 1 /1 /2006 | Katy Best | Engineering |

If you have any question please drop me a note. This month got a little busy with work and all the volunteer duties. And if you volunteer you know that these are not really duties but a very rewarding way to spend you time. Help your friends, help the agencies, reward yourself with that warm fuzzy feeling and march on. The deeds are your rewards. You do not need a thank you or recognition. You know you did a good deed. I say "thank you" to you!

STUDY GROUPS

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



User stories, part 4

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

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

#28: FDISK or FORMAT?

A user called to get my assistance in recovering data from her hard drive. We'd installed her operating system (OS) on drive C and her data on drive D. Her computer had slowed and she wanted to format the C drive to reinstall the OS. When the OS came back up, her D drive was missing. I asked how she prepared the hard drive for installation. She informed me that she'd used FDISK C: at the command prompt. I asked if she had a backup. She didn't.

#29: Office Plants

A user complained that her monitor was malfunctioning. She wanted a new one. The tech replaced her monitor twice before wondering what field this person was emitting that was killing so many new monitors. After the second replacement, the tech pretended to walk away, only to return to see the girl stand up and water the plant she'd just placed ON TOP OF THE MONITOR!

#30: Copy that Disk

A user needed a document off a disk, but was having problems retrieving the document. The tech asked to be sent a copy of the disk so he could try to access the file. Five minutes later, a copy of the disk arrived—via the FAX machine.

#31: Typed Labels

A clerk who worked for me in the military was having problems reading disks in the computers at work. Since it was unclassified work, she'd done some work at home and saved the information to floppies. I suspected her drive at home might be out of alignment, until I found what she was doing in the office. Regulations stated she had to label the disks according to the document management process. She didn't have the labels at home. As soon as she got to work, she'd label the disk. She'd then insert the floppy in the typewriter and type the label.

#32: Don't Use Your Kids Name in a Password

A user used his daughter's name followed by a number as his password. Each month, he'd just change the number. Even though one would think this was an easy password to remember, he was consistently locking himself out of the company network. The tech assisting him asked how he was forgetting the password. He'd forgotten how to spell his daughter's name—her name was Kathleen and he kept spelling it with a C!

#33: A Simple Problem

The ticket read, and I quote, "User cannot read files in Microsoft Word after they have been deleted." Hmm...

#34: Almost On-Line (AOL)

A home user called to ask how to delete files in Windows 98. The tech took her to Windows Explorer and asked which files she wanted to delete. "All of them." He explained to her that deleting all files would make her computer inoperable. She needed to delete files because the new version of AOL wouldn't install until she had enough free space on her hard drive. The tech helped her locate several older AOL directories and decided these would be safe to delete. He told her to highlight the folders, hold down the Shift key, and then press Delete. The tech heard repeated beeps and asked her which key she was holding down. "The long one at the bottom," she answered. "Ma'am," he replied, "that's the space bar. The shift key is the one with the word SHIFT on it."

Well, that's all the stories that I have for now—but just give me a few more weeks in the business and I'm sure I'll come up with 100 more!

Just for Fun

Eclectic

This month promises to have a little something for everyone as I choose to randomly discuss various topics which crossed my path this month.

The Office Slacker

This section is for all you that really don't like being in the office. Here are some helpful hints to make your cubicle life a little more bearable.

First, did you know that Outlook has an option where you can compose an e-mail message but schedule it to be sent at a different time? You can "prove" that you were working late by having that message to your supervisor go out at 7:00PM, clearly demonstrating what a hard working employee you are.

Are you going to be unable to meet that pressing deadline for the report your supervisor asked for two months ago? You can buy yourself a little extra time by generating your own "corrupted" file. Simply grab that picture of your kid that's sitting as the background on your desktop, make a copy, and rename the copy of the picture to the title of your document (report.doc). When your supervisor attempts to open the document, it'll come up as a bunch of hieroglyphics and you'll have a little more time to "recover" a previous version of your report.

My favorite can be found for FREE at the website <http://kinkodev.free.fr> and is called Nap 'n Coffee. From their site, they ask: "Are you tired of working? Do you need a break (even though you just took one? This is the program for you." Simply choose the time you want for your break (there are some other options as well) and this program will generate dialog boxes to make your computer appear busy. You can even simulate an installer package. And you know you can't be working on your computer while it's installing an important piece of software!

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac To Partition or Not to Partition

Shane uses OS X. E-mail him at <mac@vpwn.com>.

Hard drive problems are common with all computers. And while Apple's Disk Utility can go a long way in fixing many problems that crop up from time to time, it won't always save you. Even advanced Mac tools like Disk Warrior won't always come to the rescue. In such cases, you have little choice but to reformat and restore your data from your most recent backup. This may sound like a major problem, but it's actually less of an issue if you've divided your hard drive into multiple partitions.

What is a partition?

Hard drives are defined both physically and logically. A physical hard drive is that hard metal casing that you physically place inside your computer. It's what actually contains the hard disc platters and the read/write heads of the drive. Most computers can have more than one physical hard drive installed. Each of these physical hard drives can be formatted using multiple partitions, a logical division of a single physical hard drive. To the computer, each partition appears as a separate mounted volume, which you can read and write directly to.

What are the benefits of partitioning?

Assuming the problems are with the partition and not with the actual hardware failing, you don't have to reformat the entire hard drive. You simply have to wipe and restore the data on that partition. If you were running the operating system (OS) on one partition and saving your data on a second (where the problem occurred), you don't have to waste time reinstalling OS X.

You can use multiple partitions to organize types of data, for instance placing documents on one partition and music on another. You can use partitions to load multiple OS on your system (like Windows XP using the BootCamp installer) or to load multiple instances of the same OS (if you were interested in testing early versions of OS X before they're officially released). You can even use partitions to limit the amount of space being used by certain programs.

Are there any drawbacks?

Well, you have to have a pretty good idea of what you want to do from the beginning, since partition sizes are fixed in size and can't be changed once they've been set (at least with the set of disk utilities that are provided by Apple). Also, having your data in multiple locations can make it more challenging to find. There have also been some reports that Spotlight (using OS X 10.4) takes longer to search on systems with multiple partitions than it does on systems with a single partition.

How do I create partitions?

The easiest way to create partitions is to use Apple's own Disk Utility. Launch the utility and select the drive that you want to partition from the column on the left of the screen. Then, click on the Partition tab. You can use the Volume Scheme pop-up menu to use preset partition settings, or you can make your own.

Realize that partitioning a drive erases the data currently on that drive. Make certain you have a current backup of anything you want to keep!



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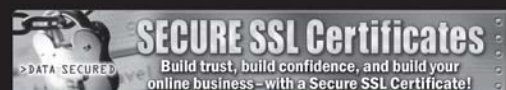
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Links

The Lazy Webmaster

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

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

There is more to links than . In this edition of the Lazy Webmaster we will look at some ways to make your links and page transitions jazzier.

Opening a link in a new window:

You can code your links so that the new page opens in a new browser window. Some Webmasters believe that this technique, especially when used for a link to another site, helps keep visitors committed to your site. I disagree. I think many Web users are confused by multiple open windows and are frustrated when they can't use the back button to return to a previous page.

If you do find a use for this it is easy to code:

```
<A HREF="http://www.yourdomain.com/"
TARGET="_blank">Your Link</a>
```

The secret is in adding the blank target. Make sure to include the underline.

Targets and Names:

The target attribute can be useful in other ways. Most often you will see it associated with a name. You can give any spot on your Web page a name. This can be handy if you have a long list of items and want to include a table of contents at the top. Let's use a monthly events listing as an example. You can type all the months – January, February, etc. — and name each month. The code for this would be:

```
<a name="aug">August</A>
```

The month of August is now named "aug." This will be invisible on the screen.

Next, you want to create a link to the events page that will automatically jump to the page right to the month of August. If you are creating the link from within the events page, the code will look like this:

```
<A HREF="#aug">Jump to August</A>
```

If you are on a different page, the link will look like this:

```
<A HREF="events.html#aug">See August events</A>
```

Using graphics as links:

I often use graphics as links, especially for top-level categories that aren't going to change frequently. I have a couple of suggestions:

* When using a graphic for a link ALWAYS use the "alt" attribute in the image tag. This is essential for vision-impaired visitors who may use a screen reader program and for others who turn off 'autoload images' in their browser. The "alt" attribute is easy:

```
<IMG SRC="graphic.jpg" alt="calendar">
```

* When you link an image it will have a border around it to indicate that it is a link. If you want your image to float on the screen you need to get rid of the border. The code for this is:

```
<IMG SRC="graphic.jpg" border="0">
```

Fancy link tricks:

In a past column, I've covered how to eliminate the underlines from links (June, 2003 – Cascading Style Sheets) and pointed you to a Web site that will make a slick dropdown menu (July, 2003.) Here's another code for a simpler dropdown menu:

```
<form name="sitemap">
```

```
<select style="font-size:12px;color:#006699;font-family:
```

```
verdana;background-color:#ffffff;" name="menu">
```

```
<option value=" lazy/lazy503.html">June 2003 Lazy
Webmaster</option>
```

```
<option value=" lazy/lazy703.html">July 2003 Lazy
Webmaster</option>
```

```
<option value="http://
www.susanives.com">susanives.com</option>
```

```
</select>
```

```
<input style="font-size:12px;color:#ffffff;font-family:
```

```
verdana;background-color:#006699;" type="button"
```

```
onClick="location=document.sitemapmenuoptions[document.sitemapmenu.
```

```
selectedIndex].value;" value="GO">
```

```
</form>
```

This uses a combination of HTML, JavaScript and CSS, Cascading Style Sheets. The text in italics is the CSS stuff and can be omitted. It changed the colors of the text and the submit button and the family and style of the font. The word "GO" on the next to the last line is the text that will appear on the button. The key line of code is:

```
<option value="lazy/lazy503.html">June 2003 Lazy
Webmaster</option>
```

Duplicate this, by cutting and pasting, as many times as you need it. The size of the selection box will expand to accommodate your longest line of text. You only need use the HTTP:// protocol if the page is outside your site.



Fingerprints and Linspire

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

Jessica Fridrich and coworkers at Binghamton University have developed a technique to extract a characteristic “fingerprint” pattern from pictures taken by a digital camera. It depends on the observation that each original digital picture is overlaid by a weak noise pattern characteristic for the camera used. It is due to background electrical noise in the pixel units of the light sensing element.

That pattern can be seen by taking a picture with a digital camera with the lens covered. The resulting image is not pure black, as with a film camera, but shows a mottling in many colors, due to electronic noise. The mottling also shows up when a digital picture is underexposed, maybe because the flash did not go off. The mottling pattern is uniquely different for all cameras. It is distinct from pixellation that results from insufficient resolution.

It requires a number of pictures taken by the same camera to extract the characteristic pattern. Being able to identify the camera used can be helpful in legal prosecutions of child pornography and such. Study of the background patterns can also give an indication of image tampering.

Astrophotographers habitually take pictures of faint objects in a dark sky with CCD chips similar to those found in digital cameras. In order to eliminate the mottling from their images they take a “dark frame,” a picture taken under identical conditions with the lens covered. They then digitally “subtract” the dark frame from the image to remove the mottling. This can be done with Adobe Photoshop, but it doesn't work with inexpensive digital cameras that internally process and compress photos, usually in JPEG format. (<http://urel.binghamton.edu/PressReleases/2006/Jan-Feb%2006/Fridrich.html>)

Linspire Back On Top

The best things in life generally go unnoticed. If you notice your shoes, they probably don't fit right. If everyone notices your new glasses they may not be flattering.

If you own a PDA, do you know what operating system it uses? Never noticed it? How about the operating system of your computer? You've noticed that plenty of times, haven't you?

The ideal operating system works quietly in the background, doing what's expected of it. Microsoft Windows has come a long way over the years, to the point where weeks may go by without you noticing anything wrong. But oh boy! when it crashes.

Over the past 15 years Linux, “the other operating system,” has in the hands of computer professionals grown into a powerful, reliable tool. It has been running many of the largest computer servers in the world, including Google. Early efforts to make it available as a desktop operating system didn't get very far because of the steep learning curve to overcome in mastering it.

To make Linux easier to use, a number of Linux distributions on CD-ROM have become available. They typically bundle the Linux Kernel with drivers for peripherals, sound and video cards, and network connections, and include a boot manager to allow side-by-side installation of Linux with MS Windows. In addition, the self-installing distributions typically include a windows interface, an Office Suite such as OpenOffice.org, an Internet browser and email program (Mozilla), a paint program (The Gimp), a variety of card and arcade games, and other useful or entertaining features.

The ideal distribution provides the best off-the-CD support for a wide variety of peripherals, useful programs, and easy access to a broad range of other programs available for the Linux operating system. Over the last several years I have reviewed most of the major distributions and concluded that Linspire (nee Lindows) and Xandros came the closest to the ideal.

Last year Linspire underwent a major upgrade to version 5.0, including support for the latest version of the Linux Kernel, itself a major upgrade. Unfortunately, I couldn't get the new Linspire to run well on my computers, so I reluctantly switched to Xandros on my desktop, and kept the old Lindows 4.5 on my laptop for everyday Internet access. Xandros does not have the same range of software available, including updated versions, as Linspire.

Recently Linspire issued its greatly improved version 5.1, and I am glad to report that in my opinion they are back on top again. It faultlessly recognizes all my systems, including the recent AMD 64-bit double-core CPU in my new computer. In fact, Linux was weaned on 64-bit processors and runs best in that environment. Linspire continues to offer its extensive program library (\$20/year) that lets you download programs over the Internet and install them, all with a single mouse click. It doesn't get easier!

Try it sometime. Use the free LIVE CD version of Linspire 5.1 to boot your computer. It allows you to experience Linux without permanently installing anything on your hard drive, and to determine your system's compatibility. After you turn the system off nothing is left behind. (www.linspire.com)

Maybe some day you'll be running Linux without even noticing it!



Blending modes and transparency

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>.

The last two months, I have addressed using layers and masks in **Adobe Photoshop** to create sophisticated composite images. This month we move to a related

for users of **Photoshop Elements**, this is one of the features that **Adobe** did not include so you can skip to the next paragraph. In a Layer Mask, white makes the layer opaque and black makes it transparent. Shades of gray give levels of translucence. All of the usual painting tools can be used on a Layer Mask including Brushes and Gradients. Figure 2 shows an image with a gradation on a Layer Mask.

Blending Modes allow layers to behave

differently than simply being transparent or translucent. The default blending mode is 'Normal,' but there are several others (Fig 3). Experimentation is the best way to learn how these different modes will affect your specific images, but here are some general principles.

The most useful blending modes are 'Multiply' and 'Screen.' These are basically opposites of each other. Multiply mode makes everything in the layer that is white to be completely transparent and everything that is black to be completely opaque. Shades of gray will have an equivalent degree of opacity. Screen mode makes white areas opaque and black areas clear. These modes are used most often for shadows and glows. Multiply mode is also useful for fixing

topic, transparency and compositing or blending modes. These tools are also available in **Photoshop Elements** and other image editing programs.

Photoshop's Layers palette is the control center for all of these tools (Fig 1). At the top is an Opacity slider and pop-up menu of Blending Modes. The Opacity slider is very straightforward. At 100% opacity, that layer is totally visible and covers up any image beneath it. At 0%, the layer is totally transparent, the layer beneath shows through. Any number in between can be used for varying levels of opacity. Multiple layers can be composited diaphanously for an artistic effect.

Layer Masks allow for more control of transparency. Unfortunately

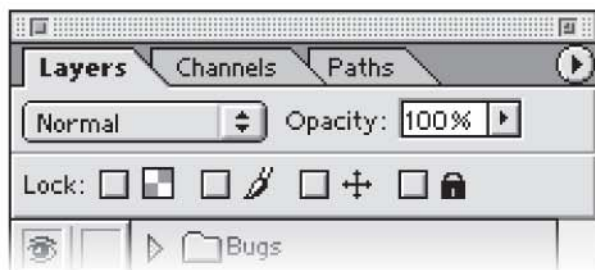


fig. 1



fig. 2

a faded photograph. The procedure is simple. Duplicate the background, put the new layer in Multiply mode, and adjust the opacity until you get the desired effect.

'Overlay,' 'Soft Light' and 'Hard Light' modes are cool effects; I usually find them the most useful for reflections, lighting effects or shading. In each of these modes, 50% gray is transparent. 'Color Burn' and 'Color Dodge' are neat, but are rarely used. 'Darken' and 'Lighten' modes are self-explanatory. Pixels in layers set to 'Darken' mode will only be visible if the pixels on layers beneath are lighter in tone. 'Lighten' works the opposite. These can be used for glows and shadows, but don't work as well as Multiply and Screen. 'Difference' and 'Exclusion' modes help to make that trippy-looking computer art we all know and love.

Photoshop gives you a set of tools that can be combined in countless ways to help you create the images in your mind. Using layer transparency and blending modes can give your images a depth and complexity that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.

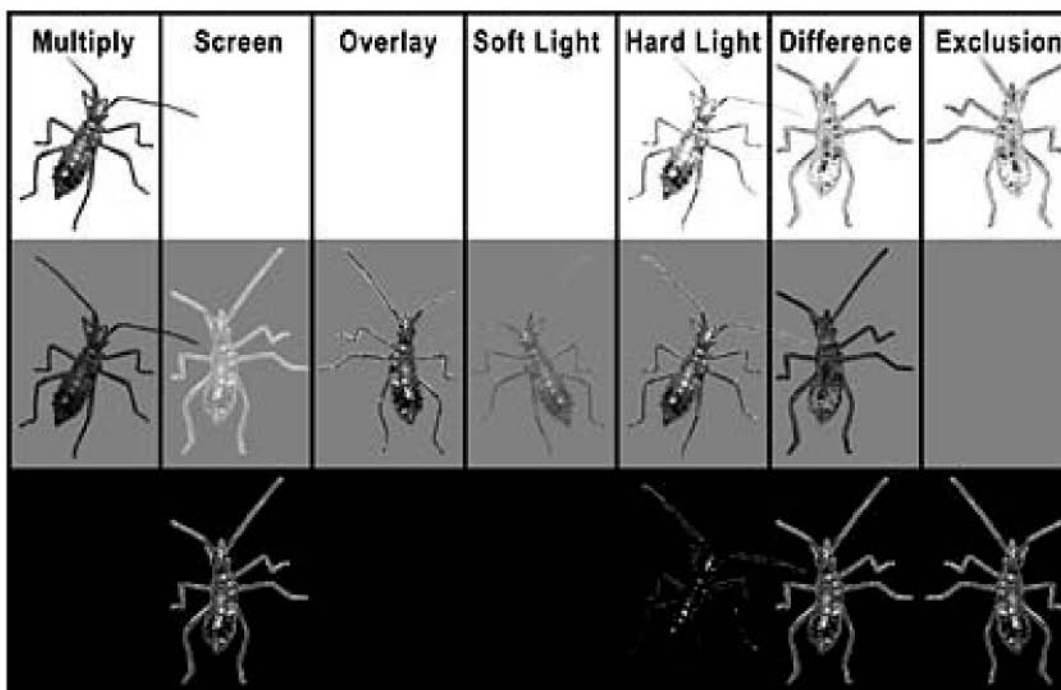


fig. 3

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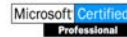
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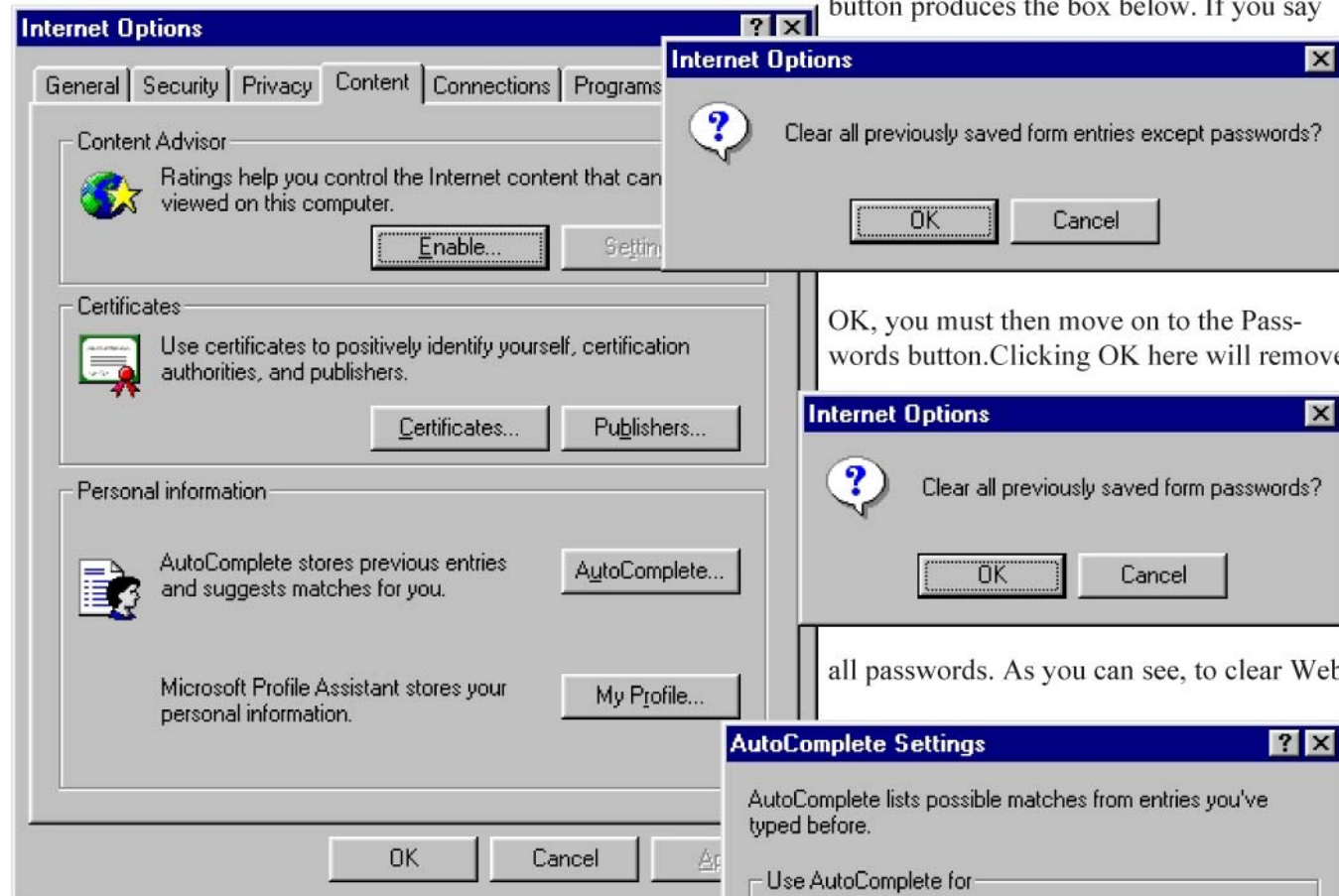
Internet Explorer - Personal Information

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>

Continuing with the Internet Option tools, let's look at something that will perhaps be of more use to you. The last section of the Content tab is Personal Information, seen below. The AutoComplete button can be very

wish to modify your choices at a later date, you may move on to the Clear AutoComplete history area. Here you have the option to clear Forms or clear Passwords by clicking on the appropriate radio button. The Forms button produces the box below. If you say



useful, especially if you use the same addresses frequently. As you can see at the right, AutoComplete will list possible matched from entries you've typed before. Some people find this feature irritating, particularly if it comes up with incorrect matches from which you have to back out. Personally, I find that it works quite well in most cases. The possible uses for AutoComplete are Web Addresses, Forms, and User names and passwords on forms. You may select any or none of these by placing a check in the appropriate box. The final option is the Prompt me to save passwords. I have not had occasion to use the Forms option, so will be unable to comment on it. Should you

OK, you must then move on to the Passwords button. Clicking OK here will remove

all passwords. As you can see, to clear Web



Addresse entries, you must click the Clear History button on the General Tab of Internet Options. To give



you an idea of how the AutoComplete function works, note the address line from Internet Explorer on my computer. As soon as I begin typing the “e” the two drop down choices appear. If eBay is not the one I want, I may just double-click energizer.com. As you can see, this can save you some extra typing, certainly a convenience. If you continue typing the “n”, the eBay choice will be dropped, and only the energizer.com will remain. You must still select that choice and click on it. You probably use the drop down entries from the address line in your browser to return to previously viewed sites. Each time you type



in an address on that line, it will be added to the list seen at the left. Note that URLs that are opened from links within messages or web pages are not added to the list. You will find a maximum of 25 entries here. As you exceed that number, the

earliest entries are dropped to make room for the most recent. If you want to clear the list and start over, this is where you use the Clear History button in the General tab. This will remove the entire list. You should note that any mistakes you make are recorded in the list, such as <http://www.en>, which I mistakenly clicked. You should also note that there is no way in IE6 or Mozilla/Netscape to remove individual entries like that, or any others, from the list.

Moving on to the My Profile Button, you should note that this will open a window similar to the details from an entry in the address book. This form has considerably more detail. As you can see from the summary, details from any of the tabs will be displayed. I have only filled in a few of them to demonstrate how it works. The Name tab includes the name and email address. Home provides a street address and

the phone numbers seen in the summary. Business gives an address, plus phone, fax, and job information. Personal includes the names of your spouse and children, plus birthday and anniversary information. Other gives you the option to add notes you might wish to include. There is also a Group membership area, which is not available to me for some reason. The NetMeeting tab allows you to include information pertinent to online conferencing you may use, such as NetMeeting. Finally, Digital IDs lets you enter for your specified email addresses things like Digital Ids and Certification information which you can import from the lists we discussed last month.

That pretty well sums it up for this lesson. Again I stress that the best way for you to learn how to use these or any other features of this or any software, is to jump in and give it a try. I can try, as I have here, to describe how things work and show you screen captures of some of the windows which will open as you progress through a given task. However, there is no substitute for your doing it on your own. You may refer to these lessons if you need an occasional crutch. In many cases the MicroSoft help files will guide you through the process. The main thing to remember is that in most cases, if you run into a bind or make an error in some way, most times you'll have the option of undoing what you just did and trying again. At the worst, you may have to start over from scratch. If so, welcome to the club. That's the way all of us who are now considered knowledgeable learned. Correcting your own mistakes is the best way to learn. □

Ronald L. Ingraham Properties

Summary | Name | Home | Business | Personal | Other



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The importance of backing up your computer

By Gene Barlow, User Group Relations

Backing up your computer's main hard drive is the most important task every user needs to do on a regular basis. Still, I hear end-users say they have nothing of value on their computers, so they really don't need to do backups. This is not true. I hope this article will help you understand why backups are important to do.

Most users think that the display, keyboard, and computer box are the main parts of their computer system. While the computer hardware is important, the real heart and soul of your computer are the many files stored on the hard drive. These files are what make the hardware run and do useful tasks. Without them, your computer would be useless.

Your computer's hard drive contains two general types of files on it – program files and data files. It is very important that you backup both of these types of files, but you will want to back them up for different reasons.

Program files include your Windows operating system and all of the application programs you run on your computer. Without them, your computer would do nothing. If your hard drive should fail without a backup, then you would have to spend days or weeks reloading all of these program files on your hard drive. This is a lot of work and you may never get your computer to run again like it did before the hard drive failed.

Data files are the files you create using the programs on your computer. These are the most important files you have on your computer. They are the email messages you send, the documents you write, the financial records you keep, your digital photographs and music files. So, when your hard drive fails on you, you will lose all of these important data files. This can be a major disaster for you. Let me tell you about a real situation that occurred this past year.

A member of a user groups in California had been taking lots of pictures with her digital camera. She saved these on her hard drive in albums ready to show her family and friends. Her wedding pictures were also saved on her hard drive. One morning, she could not get her hard drive to work. It had failed on her without a backup. She took the hard drive to a company specializing in recovering data from failed hard drives. They analyzed the drive and told her they could probably get most of her photos back and their fee for this service was \$1000. She was shocked at this high fee, but all of her photos were very important to her, so she ended up paying this fee. A good backup would have saved her this expense.

Computer hard drives are very reliable today, but they still fail for many reasons. The hardware can wear out and stop working. A more common reason is that the programs on your main hard drive become corrupted and no longer function. It is not a question of if your hard drive will fail; it is more a question of when will it fail on you. You need to be prepared with a backup for when your hard drive does fail on you.

Backing up your computer's hard drive is a fairly simple concept. To backup your main hard drive, you copy all of the files on that drive and store them on another device that you can save away from your computer. Then if anything should hap-

pen to your main hard drive, you put a new hard drive in your computer and copy all of these important files to this new drive. You can be up and running again in minutes with a good backup.

Backing up your hard drive is very easy to do with the latest technology. To help you understand more about how to do backups, I have put together a training session titled the Perfect Backup Approach. You can find it on my web site at www.ugr.com/tutorials.html. Take a few minutes to watch this tutorial and you will have a much better understanding of how to do backups using the latest technology today.

To help you get started to backup your hard drive, we are running a Summer Special that includes the best backup software available today, Acronis True Image 9.0 Home edition. You can order this top rated backup software product for just \$29 on our web site at www.usergroupstore.com. It normally sells for \$50 in computer stores. To make the deal even better, we will include a copy of our Perfect Backup Approach training CD at this special price. Don't wait too long as the summer is coming to an end and this special will not last into the fall.

To make it easy for you to start to do backups, we have prepared a technical paper titled, Using Acronis True Image 9.0 Home edition that you can find on our web site at www.ugr.com/newsletters.html. Read and follow this article as you install and start to do backups and it will guide you through each of the steps in doing backups. It couldn't be easier to get started.

That completes this article on the importance of backing up your hard drive. If you have questions on this article or other questions about True Image or your hard drive, send a note to gene@ugr.com and I will try to assist you.

Gene Barlow

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This is one of a series of monthly technical articles that I distribute to those that have subscribed to this newsletter. You can subscribe at www.ugr.com/newsletters.html. Watch for them and learn more about your computer and its hard drive.

Product Recall

Lexar JumpDrive® Computer Storage Devices Recalled for Burn Hazard, Certain Models Involved

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in cooperation with the firm named below, today announced a voluntary recall of the following consumer product. Consumers should stop using recalled products immediately unless otherwise instructed.

Name of Product: Lexar JumpDrive® FireFly and 1GB Secure II

Units: About 66,000

Manufacturer: Lexar Media Inc., of Fremont, Calif.

Hazard: The recalled JumpDrives® FireFly and Secure II products could overheat, posing a risk of burns to consumers and property damage.

Incidents/Injuries: No incidents or injuries have been reported.

Description and Models: The recalled drives are high speed flash drives used to store, transfer and carry data from one computer to another. This recall only includes Lexar JumpDrive® FireFly which is sold in various colors, and Lexar JumpDrive® Secure II 1GB which has a metallic silver housing. “Lexar” is embossed on the front of the plastic housing and the capacity is marked on the back. The part number is located on the FireFly’s packaging, and on the back of the Secure II 1GB drive.



Secure II 1GB



FireFly 256MB



FireFly 512MB



FireFly 1GB



FireFly 2GB

| JumpDrive® FireFly | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Capacity | Part Number |
| 256MB (red) | JDFF256-431RU |
| | JDFF256-264 |
| | JDFF256-445RU |
| 512MB (lime green) | JDFF512-431EM |
| 1GB (blue) | JDFF1GB-431TO |
| 2GB (black) | JDFF2GB-431BK |

| JumpDrive® Secure II 1GB | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Part Number | |
| JDSE1GB-00-500 Rev H | and |
| | 3052-1GBA-2006 |
| | 3052-1GBA-2106 |
| | 3052-1GBA-1906 |
| | 3052-1GBA-1806 |

Online “My Family Health Portrait”

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host

Recently, a relative in another state was hospitalized via an emergency room admission. His new wife of just a year did not have much information on the family health history, so urgently needed by the physicians in order to diagnose and treat my relative. Urgent phone calls followed, gathering the requisite family medical history to enable the appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Philosophically, what if a comprehensive family medical history could have been immediately available? This circumstance is not unique, but a reasonable solution has been available for free for over a year at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory, courtesy of the U. S. Surgeon General's Office

This site explains the necessity of such data with the statement, “Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and even rare diseases - like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy.” In order to accomplish this task, the Surgeon general offers two simple options; one an online web maintained version hosted on a secure server (that is what the “https” means in the internet address) at <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov>, the other a 1.6mb downloadable “Zip” file which may be stored on a home computer, and utilized in the privacy of the home. The files created in either version can easily be exchanged among family members via email or disc.

In the online version, a family history can be newly created, or an existing version can be uploaded from the home computer to the secure Surgeon General website where the data can be managed, and then saved back on the home computer; no personal information is saved or captured by the government computer, protecting the privacy of the user. It should be noted that much effort has gone into the creation of this web based service, in that it explicitly works equally well with almost all known browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mac Safari, Netscape, and many other browsers.

The first step in using the online version is to “Create a Family History”, or to “Load a Saved Family History” if a file had been previously created. The preliminary step is to create a personal profile, where basic information such as name, gender, height, and weight are entered. The personal profile continues with a simple checklist of major common diseases (such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes), and age of onset, followed by a fill in the blank chart of other diseases. After the personal health history is created, there is then an

WEBSITES:

<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory>
<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov>
<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/download.html>

opportunity to create a family profile. The family profile states “Only add family members that are biological (blood) relatives (not adopted or step-relatives).” Similar fill in charts are presented to complete the information for the other family members. Data can be modified, added, or deleted at any time. Once the user has completed entering the basic family information, a button “Go to My Family” takes the user to the basic “Family Health Portrait” where a family health tree can be displayed or printed; this family tree contains symbols and abbreviations immediately recognizable by a health care practitioner as a basic family health history. Other family members, such as aunts, uncles, and other blood relatives can be added to the list as well. Other family members listed on the family tree can have their own personalized family tree created at this point, and the entire file can be downloaded to the user's computer, leaving no personal data on the HHS computer.

If for privacy or other reasons, the user does not wish to enter personal family health data to the secured website, the downloadable version is a self-contained version of what is available on the website. Once uncompressed with any zip utility (built in to Windows XP), the file is easily and quickly installed. The software does require the Microsoft “.Net” utility, version 1.1 or later, available for free at windowsupdate.microsoft.com. Once installed, the entire process is completed in the privacy of the home, with no personal data leaving the computer, unless the user desires to send the data files to other family members to complete or use as a basis for their own family health history.

With this information readily available both within a family unit, and shared with other blood relatives as appropriate, family health histories can be easily maintained, and distributed or printed as needed.

Many times we cannot recall family health problems that family members may have had which may give us a predisposition, or otherwise genetically affect us. With this free service and software from the Surgeon General, we may all be better able to provide our health care professionals with the information that may prove so vital to our health care and treatment.

News Brief

Micorsoft Windows Live drives targeted marketing

When Microsoft first talked about Windows Live in November, most of the “Live” products were MSN services that had been rebranded. Since then Microsoft has added more than a dozen new products under the Windows Live umbrella. MSN executive David Cole explains, “Microsoft’s goal is to continuously update and launch products”. Over the next 3-6 months, Microsoft expects to ship more Windows Live technology into the marketplace than during their entire 10-year OS history. Microsoft’s new ad-serving engine, AdCenter, is at the heart of Windows Live. AdCenter draws on user demographic information to help drive more targeted marketing. Microsoft has even talked about using advertising as a way to pay for traditional desktop software. Meanwhile, the list of Windows Live services continues expanding to include all the basic portal services.



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RSS feeds

What Are RSS Feeds?

Sharon Housley manages marketing for NotePage, Inc. <http://www.notepage.net> a company specializing in alphanumeric paging, SMS and wireless messaging software solutions. Other sites by Sharon can be found at <http://www.rss-specifications.com> , <http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com> , and <http://www.small-business-software.net>

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, mean-



ing 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.

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>>

News Brief

Robotics contest inspires mentorship

Take a look at the Ice Weasels, Space Cookies and Cheesy Poofs, high school teams competing for top merit in the 15th annual robotics contest sponsored by FIRST (For the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology). With about \$10,000 worth of donated hardware and software, high school students are given 6 weeks to assemble a functioning robot that can move around a court and shoot Nerf basketballs for points. Part of the challenge is for teens to find and work with mentors who are experts in technology and science. Once registered, the teams are given 3 boxes of hardware and software and a programming language called Easy C that allows them to write a program for the robot's onboard computer. Also included is Autodesk's 3D Max Studio animation software so they can create a 30-second animation. The game itself is roughly 2 minutes long, with robots that are 2 feet wide by 4 feet high. For the first 10 seconds, the robots must make as many baskets as possible; the robot with the most points from the first 10 seconds then gets to play offense. Winning bots will go on to compete at Atlanta's Georgia Dome at the international finals.

What are the benefits of RSS feeds?

Sharon Housley manages marketing for NotePage, Inc. <http://www.notepage.net> a company specializing in alphanumeric paging, SMS and wireless messaging software solutions. Other sites by Sharon can be found at <http://www.rss-specifications.com> , <http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com> , and <http://www.small-business-software.net>

RSS streamlines communication between publishers and readers. Since RSS has had a popularity surge, webmasters have been experimenting and using RSS feeds to deliver content in new and innovative ways. Typically, RSS feeds contain news headlines and content summaries. The content summaries contain just enough information without overwhelming the reader with superfluous details. If the reader is interested and wants additional information they can click on the item in the feed, accessing the website which contains additional details. RSS readers aggregate multiple feeds, making it easy for individuals to quickly scan information contained within each feed. Feeds are generally themed, allowing users to opt-in to feeds that are of interest.

The big benefit to RSS is that individuals opt-in to content of interest, totally controlling the flow of information that they receive. If the quality of the content in the feed declines, users simply remove the feed from their RSS reader and they will not receive any additional updates from that source. The RSS reader acts as an aggregator, allowing users to view and scan multiple content streams in a timely fashion.

RSS is a great supplemental communication method that does not burden the publisher with maintaining lists or following strict privacy guidelines. RSS feeds are compiled according to the user's choices, removing any burden that is placed on publishers of email newsletters. Publishers no longer need to be concerned with spam, privacy policies, and age guidelines.

Publishers using RSS as a communication vehicle are able to create keyword-rich, themed content, establishing trust, reputation, and ongoing communication with current and prospective customers.

What Kind of Information Can be Delivered in RSS Feeds?

Blogs Feed

Many blogs are catalogued in an RSS feed, with each blog entry summarized as a feed item. This makes it easy for visitors to scan blog posts for items of interest.

Article Feed

Articles are often placed into feeds to alert readers when new articles and content are available. The feed entry is typically an article summary or introduction. Readers can then ascertain if the article is of interest and read further.

Forum Feed

Many forums now have add-ons that allow participants to receive forum posts via RSS. The RSS feeds often will show



the latest discussion topics; if users are interested they simply click to enter the forum to participate in the discussion. As the topic is updated they will see new entries in the RSS feed.

Schedule Feed

Schools, clubs and organizations will often use feeds to communicate meeting times, places and events that might be occurring. The RSS feeds are often used to publicize events, notify the community of schedule changes or meeting agendas.

Discounts / Specials Feed

Retail and online stores have begun using RSS feeds to deliver their latest specials and discounted offers. Some online retailers have taken this a step further, allowing users to create their own feeds based on keywords or phrases.

For example, this service will generate a URL than can be entered into a news reader. The feed is updated each time an item is added to Amazon that meets the specified criteria or keywords - Amazon Search Feed - <http://www.oxus.net/amazon/>

RSS feeds

Ego / News Monitoring

Companies or individuals interested in receiving headline news based on a specific brand or keyword can use RSS feeds to monitor news sources.

For example, users can use the following tool to create a feed that will allow them to receive filtered news from Google News. They will only receive items related to a specific keyword or phrase they setup - <http://www.justinpfister.com/gnewsfeed.php>

Industry-Specific RSS Feed Uses Include:

Technical professionals in specific industries have also developed RSS feeds as way to market, promote or communicate within their specific industries. In many cases, this has expanded

their reach and increased communication with current and prospective customers and clients.

RSS feeds can be used by realtors to communicate the time and location for open houses, announce new property listings or promote decreased mortgage rates. Content feeds can also be used by universities to communicate sports scores or event schedules. Computer service professionals can create feeds to notify clients of potential security breaches, virus risks or outbreaks. Ultimately, RSS is molded to meet the communication needs of many sectors. Consider how RSS can benefit your business and supplement your communication needs.

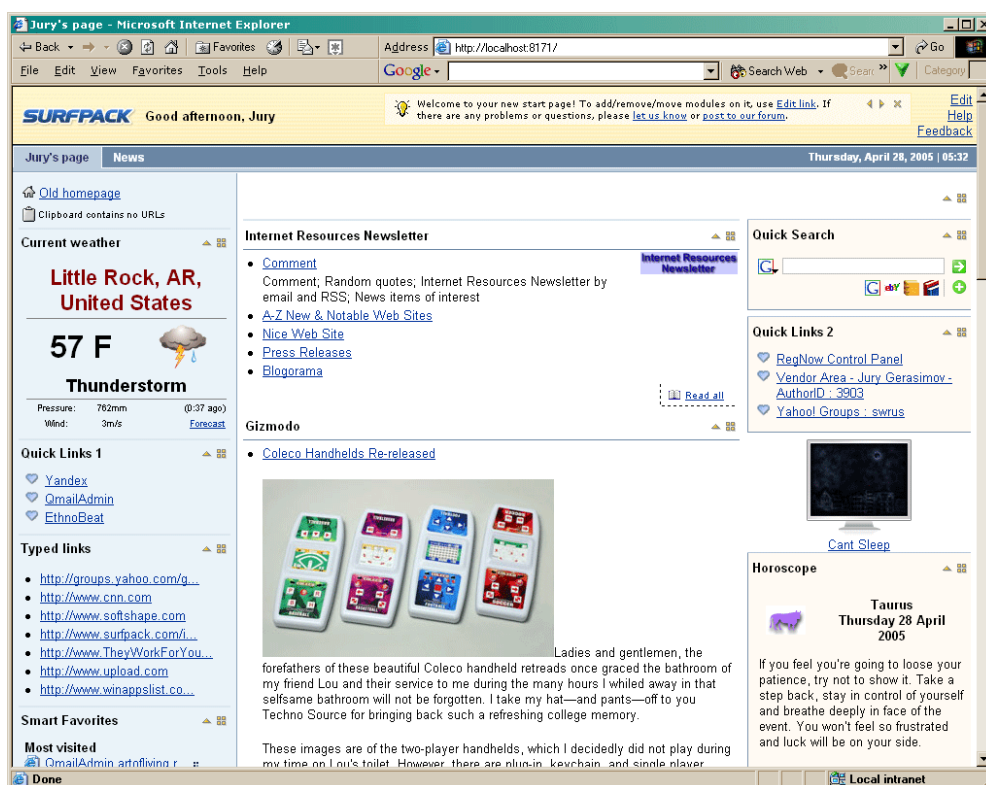
RSS feed creation tool for publishers interested in creating fresh content - FeedForAll - <http://www.feedforall.com>

RSS ware

SurfPack

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

Surfpack is a desktop application that gathers up information from your favorite web resources into a dynamic HTML pages, which then presents it in whatever form or shape you might like - favorite URL links, newsfeeds and even entire web pages! Surfpack's DHTML interface works under Internet Explorer 5.0+, Mozilla Firefox 1.0+, and Opera 7.5+.



Innovative Business Use of RSS as a Technology

Sharon Housley manages marketing for NotePage, Inc. <http://www.notepage.net> a company specializing in alphanumeric paging, SMS and wireless messaging software solutions. Other sites by Sharon can be found at <http://www.rss-specifications.com> , <http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com> , and <http://www.small-business-software.net>

RSS, or Really Simple Syndication, is a new way to broadcast corporate news and structured information. RSS offers a quick, easy corporate communication channel. The RSS contents are published as a feed and the feed's content keep customers, partners and journalists abreast of corporate news and information. The RSS feeds are read using a tool referred to as a news aggregator, or an RSS reader. The aggregator periodically checks to see if the RSS feed has been updated. As the feed is updated, new information will automatically appear in the RSS reader.

While RSS was at one point only considered to be a means to deliver news headlines, RSS has quickly become a powerful medium to disseminate all kinds of information. As traditional marketers are attempting to rein in content delivery, measuring e-mail open rates, click-throughs and conversions, Internet users are fighting to gain control over the content they receive. Savvy marketers and business owners are using RSS as a way to improve corporate communication and increase their external exposure and brand appeal.

What is the enclosure tag?

RSS 2.0 is quickly becoming the definitive RSS standard, all because of its support for the enclosure tag. The enclosure tag is an optional field in the RSS 2.0 specification that allows the feed publisher to include a link to a file. The file can be just about anything. Businesses have seized the opportunity, including tutorials, streaming audio lectures, PDF proposals, Power Point®, presentations, podcasts of sales meetings, and advertising portfolios among other traditional uses for RSS.

Many businesses have yet to realize the potential hidden in the enclosure field. The implications and power of how RSS can be used is really awe-inspiring. Consider the following business uses for RSS:

1. PDF Documents - Consider broadcasting meeting agenda notes or documentation as a PDF included with a feed, allowing interested individuals to access information without having to deal with cumbersome e-mail attachments.
2. PPT Presentations - Presentations can easily be distributed in a feed enclosure. The added benefit is that presenters using Power Point®, will not have to lug their notebook to a meeting to present - they can manage the presentation from an iPod or similar handheld that reads RSS feeds.
3. Video - Video or streaming video are both possible via the enclosure field. Have lectures or even political debates come to life with the added video component.
4. Audio - Audio content does not mean that feeds are limited to your favorite songs. Podcasting is the coined term for audio content contained in a feed and can include language instruction, talk shows or editorials.

5. Images - Imagine realtors using the enclosure field to display photos of homes to interested buyers. Now they can carry a light-weight catalog with them to show potential buyers at a moment's notice.

6. Downloads - Consider an information technology department in a large corporation conducting proprietary software updates, including executables or zip files in the enclosure field which allow users to update the software at a convenient time.

Feedreaders are playing catch-up

RSS news aggregators were initially designed to receive text-based content. As users find outside-the-box uses for RSS, developers of RSS readers are struggling to release new versions that support the enclosures businesses are eager to use.

FeedDemon, a popular RSS reader, has recently added support for every type of enclosure in their latest release. They have created a safe list that can be customized to include specific types of file types like PDFs. This will automate downloads of files that are deemed "safe". This was clearly designed with security in mind, to prevent automatic downloading of executables.

Businesses are revolutionizing RSS as a communication medium. While some traditional businesses are struggling to include monthly newsletter summaries in an RSS feed and reap the benefits of RSS, other innovative businesses are adopting incredibly creative uses for both internal and external corporate communications.

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|--|--|

RSS value

Do I Need an RSS Feed?

RSS has been around for more than 10 years but has only recently become popular. RSS provides headlines and summaries of information in a concise and standardized way.

1.) Avoid Spam Filters

Statisticians estimate that 70% of the email transferred each day is spam (unsolicited email). With that statistic, even opt-in users risk losing valuable messages in the cesspool of spam. RSS feeds effectively nullify spam as an issue. Requesting feeds allow users to maintain complete control over the content they view. Users can easily opt-in and out of feeds that provide content of interest or importance.

2.) Expanded Reach

RSS allows publishers to reach a number of new and different markets that typically are less crowded with competition. Many small businesses are often slow to adopt or learn new technologies, giving businesses that lead the way a competitive advantage.

3.) Content Syndication

Syndication of feeds increases exposure.

4.) Repeat Visitors

RSS is all about repeat visitors. Users who have previously visited a site often have a stronger connection to the site and are more likely to purchase or trust the information on the site.

5.) Free web traffic

As the internet has evolved, many webmasters have found that what was once free traffic must now be paid for in order to sustain decent visitor statistics. RSS is in a unique position to bring free traffic because they are content-driven, and if they include interesting or valuable information, will pique the curiosity of web-surfers and entice them to visit a particular site.

6.) Less Effort

Newsletters and E-zines undeniably bring visitors, but the effort involved in creating, distributing and maintaining a newsletter can be a burden. Maintaining the list, ensuring the list is clean, growing the subscriber base, updating and removing bad e-mail addresses, all take time. RSS feeds are not burdened with those issues. There are easy-to-use RSS feed creation tools that require little effort, allowing publishers to recycle content, often simply cutting and pasting into RSS feed creation software.

Displaying RSS feeds

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RSS offers webmasters a unique opportunity to display fresh content on websites. While publishing an RSS feed is a great way to generate site interest and increase communication, syndicating and displaying feeds from related relevant sources can also generate interest, increase traffic and improve search engine ranking.

RSS Radars

Webmasters with limited time or capacity can syndicate related content. In a nut shell, webmasters can create RSS radars by combining a mix of content from related sources by grouping similarly-themed feeds. RSS feeds are updated at different intervals, providing an ever-changing collection of related information.

RSS is a form of eXtensible Markup Language or XML. Viewing an RSS feed in a web browser generally produces code that is not easy for website visitors to decipher. As a result, webmasters use tools to display the content contained in an RSS feed.

Content contained in RSS feeds can be added to websites a number of different ways. Each method for displaying the RSS feed has pros and cons associated with it. Webmasters will need to determine which option will best meet their hosting and technology needs.

Using Javascript to Display RSS

Javascript is the easiest way to display RSS feeds on a website. There are a number of sites that will allow you to generate code that can be inserted into a website. The javascript will auto-update, showing the latest headlines as the feed is updated. Each time a visitor visits the website the javascript pulls the data from the feed. Often, the various scripts can be customized so that the look of the feed can be made to match a specific website with hopes that the search engines will devour and spider the contents, you will be disappointed. When javascript is used to display RSS feeds, search engines do not actually "see" the contents of the feed, meaning that the search engines will not index the contents of the feed within the website.

Feedroll - Feedroll is a free service for syndicating RSS and ATOM news feeds on your website. Simply select a feed, customize the design, then copy and paste the code provided onto your page.

<http://www.feedroll.com>



Using PHP to Display RSS

PHP is a slightly more complex solution for displaying RSS. Like javascript, as the contents of the feed updates, the web page contents will update as the page is refreshed. The benefit of using PHP to display RSS is that the contents of the feed displayed with the webpage can be spidered and indexed by search engines. The result is a feed that always displays the most current information from the RSS feed and the web page content is considered search engine spider and robot-friendly.

rss2html.php - The rss2html.php script allows users to create web pages that will always display the most current information from the RSS feed, and because the resulting page is pure HTML, it will be in a format friendly to search engine robots. Using rss2html.php, webmasters can customize the format and look of the web page created from the feed. The RSS feed's contents can easily be integrated into an existing website's theme. The rss2html.php script parses the RSS file, extracts the pertinent information, formats it, and serves it up as regular HTML.

<http://www.feedforall.com/free-php-script.htm>

FeedRoll Pro - FeedRollPro was really designed to enable publishers to syndicate their own content on other sites. But it can be used to syndicate news feeds from other sites on your own pages. <http://www.feedrollpro.com>

RSS feeds

Using ASP to Display RSS

ASP is similar to PHP. The free ASP/ASP.NET scripts can be used to convert RSS feeds into HTML and display on ASP/ASP.NET web-server.

rss2html.asp - ByteScout has implemented a guide for displaying of RSS/XML feed using free RSS2HTML.ASP script in ASP or ASP.NET environment. This script can be used free of charge on any ASP or ASP.NET web-server and generate HTML from RSS feed. This free ASP script uses MSXML to load RSS feed from URL and display it. You can use it as a standalone or call from script on HTML page to generate HTML content from RSS feed and then display on your HTML page.

http://bytescout.com/how_to_display_rss_using_asp.html

RssFeed - RssFeed is an open-source custom ASP.NET server control that displays the contents of a specified RSS feed in an ASP.NET web page.

<http://www.scottonwriting.com/sowBlog/RssFeed.htm>

If PHP or ASP is used to update feeds, the website will have free fresh, relevant content each time the feeds referenced are updated.

Export RSS to HTML

If you wish to dress up the feed's appearance you can use a template exporting the feed as HTML or an HTML table. Publishers can incorporate exported tables into an HTML template using a server-side include. Each time the feed is updated, the feed will need to be exported to HTML and uploaded along with the feed. Though this only takes a few moments, exporting RSS to HTML does require webmaster intervention to update the content. The end result, though, is a complete web page with an RSS feed in it that will be search engine-friendly.

FeedForAll - FeedForAll allows users to export RSS feeds from RSS to HTML. The look of the HTML can be modified to match an existing website's design.

<http://www.feedforall.com>

Using Services

There are a number of services available that host and display RSS feeds, in many cases free of charge. Because these services operate on a different domain server there is little benefit to end-users displaying their feeds in this fashion. That said, the services are generally free of charge, so you get what you pay for.

RSS2HTML.com - Select a layout, color scheme and enter the URL of the feed. A web page URL will be generated that will display the feed in the selected scheme.

<http://www.rss2html.com>

FeedBurner - FeedBurner provides a number of online services. Among them is a service that displays RSS feeds on a website.

<http://www.feedburner.com>

Using XSL to Display RSS

Although using XSL and CSS stylesheets to display XML directly is easy to understand in theory, it is rather tricky to implement in the real world and is very tough for novices to use successfully. Webmasters must be fairly familiar with CSS and XSL to have the formatting work well, and webmasters then have to address browser incompatibilities and exceptions. As a result, not a lot of resources or services yet exist to display RSS using XSL.

Using highly targeted feeds, webmasters can enhance their websites with themed content. Ultimately, providing relevant, educational or newsworthy information from reputable related sources will establish expertise in a specific area.



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Future of RSS isn't blogs

Sharon Housley manages marketing for NotePage, Inc. <http://www.notepage.net> a company specializing in alphanumeric paging, SMS and wireless messaging software solutions. Other sites by Sharon can be found at <http://www.rss-specifications.com> , <http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com> , and <http://www.small-business-software.net>

Blogs vaulted RSS into the limelight but are unlikely to be the force that sustains RSS as a communication medium. The biggest opportunities for RSS are not in the blogosphere but as a corporate communication channel.

Even now, businesses that were initially reluctantly evaluating RSS are beginning to realize the power and benefit of the RSS information avenue. The inherent capacity for consumers to select the content they wish to receive will be the driving mechanism for keeping advertisements to a minimum and content quality consistent.

Like the Internet when it first started, blogs were emboldened by the "cool factor". As the novelty of being new and cool wears off, Internet webmasters and bloggers alike are realizing that maintaining a website or blog is time-consuming. "Coolness" often wears off if a channel is not monetized. With the ease of blogging and the array of blogs available, only a handful will be able to sustain fresh, constant, unique content and generate any sort of reasonable or significant revenue. As a result, blogs as we know them today will fade into the background, with many blogs being abandoned.

RSS, being a tool that saves Internet surfers time and allows webmasters to re-purpose and re-package existing and new content will, in my opinion, continue to thrive. A business effectively using RSS can bring new site visitors, increase search engine positioning, and generate product interest. The flexibility of RSS as a communication medium and the expansion capabilities of the enclosure tag will allow RSS to flourish as an online marketing tool. Each day businesses are adopting new uses for RSS, and users are becoming accustomed to skimming content that *they* choose in a single centralized location.

As businesses adopt RSS and consumers experiment with feeds, the popularity of RSS will grow. Ultimately, consumers are the driving force behind technology. The convenience of RSS and increased popularity will set a precedent for consumer expectations. Businesses using RSS as a communication vehicle are able to create keyword-rich, themed content, establishing trust, repu-

tation, and ongoing communication with current and prospective customers.

The big consumer benefit to RSS is that consumers opt-in to content of interest, totally controlling the flow of information they receive. If the quality of the content in the feed declines, users simply remove the feed from their RSS reader and they will not receive any additional updates from that source. The RSS reader acts as an aggregator, allowing users to view and scan multiple content streams in a timely fashion.

Consumer expectation will drive businesses that are slow to adopt. Ultimately, RSS will be a standard, like email addresses and websites are now a "must" for businesses. RSS feeds will join their ranks.

Unlike blogs, businesses can easily justify RSS feeds, as they will be increasing customer and corporate communication. RSS will create new revenue channels. RSS has the potential to help companies develop strong relationships with consumers and create brand loyalty. RSS Feeds will draw existing customers and prospective clients, translating to a new or renewed income stream. Businesses using RSS feeds as a communication medium to notify interested customers of specials, discounts, product announcements, technical support tips, news and industry studies will ultimately sustain RSS as a viable and valued communication medium.



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RSS won the battle

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RSS appears to have conquered the last hurdle in becoming the industry syndication standard. Microsoft's inclusion of RSS into the newest version of Internet Explorer and reports that RSS will be in Longhorn's coming release appears to be the final nail in the coffin of the Atom specification. Even Atom's steadfast supporter Google, appears to have seen the light. Google had previously acquired Blogger, a popular blogging tool that uses the Atom specification to syndicate the contents of blogs created on the Blogger platform. In the past Google had strategically steered clear of endorsing the RSS specification hoping that Atom, would take hold.

Google's recent new service that allows web surfers to monitor Google News using either RSS or Atom feeds, appears to be an acknowledgment that perhaps in purchasing Blogger, they chose the wrong specification.

The adoption of a syndication standard was slowed by the struggle between Atom and RSS. Two defined syndication standards vying for the number one position. In an IT industry that clearly favors single standard solutions, Atom supporters claimed added flexibility, but RSS' wide sweeping support from heavy hitters like Microsoft, Apple and Yahoo. Along with the popularity surge of podcasting, which is based on the RSS 2.0 specification appears to have sealed the fate of the future syndication standard.

The history and relationship between RSS and Atom is a sordid tale that has hindered the progress of an online syndication standard. Now that the leader has been defined their is little in the way of RSS' growth. Businesses leery of becoming entwined in a standards struggle are now embracing RSS as a communication channel.

It is clear that those who have lined up behind RSS as the leading specification are the winners.

Oddly enough, while those entrenched in the industry acknowledge the difficulties with a dual standard, users rarely see a difference in feeds created using the Atom and RSS standards. Most popular RSS readers support reading feeds in both formats. Though the purpose of RSS and Atom is the same, the specification itself is very different, making it difficult and time consuming for tool developers to move between the dual standard.

Now that Atom's attempt at replacing RSS has fallen flat, the syndication arena will likely see significant innovation and progress.

Large companies are taking advantage of RSS' extendibility using namespaces adding needed tags. Apple has done this with iTunes, Microsoft for ordered lists, and Yahoo with MediaRSS. All use the same basic RSS 2.0 format but supports defined RSS' future is bright with many companies working proactively to unite a once divided standard.



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Security and RSS

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RSS is growing at a lightening speed. What was once only known as a "techie tool", RSS is becoming a tool that is continuously being used by the general population. Along with the good comes, the not so good. And while some have mentioned the emergence of RSS spam, where content publishers dynamically generate nonsensical feeds stuffed with keywords, the real concern relates to security. While an annoyance to the search engines, spam in RSS feeds pales in comparison to the possible security concerns that could be in RSS' future.

Security Implications Related to RSS

As RSS gains momentum security fears loom large. As publishers are quickly finding innovative uses for RSS feeds, hackers are taking notice. The power and extendibility of RSS in its simplest form is also its achilles heel. The expansion capabilities of the RSS specification, specifically the "enclosure" field which has launched the podcasting phenomenon, is where the vulnerabilities lie. The enclosure field in itself is not the problem, in fact the majority of RSS feeds do not even use the enclosure tag. The enclosure tag is essentially used to link to file types, things like images, word documents, mp3 files, power point presentations, and executables and can be thought of in similar terms to email attachments.

The fact that RSS can be used to distribute these file types has opened a myriad of doors to users of the syndication standard, but also has created cause for concern.

Most people do not feel that the risk is significant because people "choose" the content that they receive, and while it might make the distribution of malware, viruses and spy applications via RSS less prevalent, their is still the inherent risk of a infected file being distributed.

Lack of technology,education

The danger lies in the fact that many RSS readers, news aggregators, or pod-catchers automatically download the information contained in the enclosure field regardless of its file type or source.

Most RSS developers acknowledge the risks associated with the enclosure field, but few have had the forethought to include filtering, screening or authentication capabilities and many automatically download enclosures.

Nick Bradbury of Bradsoft/NewsGator seems to be proactive, designing FeedDemon with security in mind. FeedDemon uses an editable safelist of file types as well as allowing users to monitor what files are automatically downloaded. FeedDemon also contains hard-coded warnings related to specific file types.



Developers of ByteScout took a different approach to the handling of enclosure files, ByteScout does not automatically download anything without user intervention for each download.

Unfortunately, not all RSS readers, aggregators and podcatchers consider the possible security implications associated with RSS feeds and podcasts, some will automatically download enclosures without warning or any thoughts of security. Be sure to examine how your RSS reader handles files contained in the enclosure field of an RSS feed.

With the increased use of RSS and podcasting, the security risks increase with it. Their is cause for concern, however proactive users and conscientious developers can easily subvert the risk by taking precautions seriously. Computer viruses and malware are cause for legitimate concern, there is ample time and action that can avert potential problems.

News Brief

Absurd trade nears success

Kyle MacDonald is on the verge of successfully completing a project that sounds absurd: Trading--with the help of a blog--a single red paper clip for a house. Since embarking on his house hunt last year, MacDonald has traded with people from across Canada and the United States and is now sitting on a year's free rent for an apartment in Phoenix. MacDonald is confident he's going to succeed, and hopes it can happen by the July 12 anniversary of the project's launch. And his goal is getting tantalizingly close. The project has allowed him to initiate a Net cult following that's hoping he'll succeed, too. Popular blogs such as boingboing have been tracking his progress.

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RSS and real estate

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Daily more and more realtors are turning to RSS as a tool to market homes for sale. The growing RSS phenomenon in the realty market makes perfect sense. Unlike email RSS feeds have a 100% delivery rate. In addition the costs involved in creating and managing an RSS feed are insignificant when compared to the print advertising Realtors spend on each week. Imagine the amount spent each week to promote various properties in circulars and weekly newspapers, compared to the costs associated with updating and managing an RSS feed.

How it Works:

1. Create Specific Feeds.

Create RSS feeds of homes for sale in a specific town or zip code. Another consideration is to create an RSS feed based on the home cost or create a feed of scheduled Open Houses in a specific region. RSS feeds can be created manually using a text editor. A step by step guide is available at <http://www.make-rss-feeds.com> or software specifically for RSS feed creation can be used.

The realtor publishing the RSS feed controls what information is syndicated in the RSS feed, so ultimately it is the realtor's decision as to whether to include teaser copy or full articles. Generally most Realtors use copy similar to those in print ads to attract the home-buyers attention.

Once you have constructed an RSS feed, you will need to transfer the feed to your server. This can be done using a standard FTP client (if it is not built into the feed creation software). The feed is usually placed in the domain's root directory like this: <http://www.mydomain.com/nameoffeed.xml> or a subdirectory like this <http://www.mydomain.com/rss/nameoffeed.xml>.

2. Promote the Feed.

Once you have an RSS feed you will need to promote the feed on the realty company website, submit the feed to the numerous RSS feed directories and tell customers about the availability of the RSS feeds.

In order to signal to website visitors that an RSS feed containing content related to the website is available, include a colorful graphic on the website. Realtors can customize RSS feed buttons by selecting the text on the button and the color scheme of the button. Once the color and text is entered, a custom graphic is instantly created. Webmasters can easily match the style of the RSS button to a website's theme.

Create custom RSS buttons - <http://www.feedforall.com/public/rss-graphic-tool.htm>



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RSS feeds

Many website visitors who have RSS readers/aggregators installed will automatically detect an RSS feed on the website if you add a small portion of text to the header field of your web page. Use the following format to assist RSS readers in auto-detecting the location of the RSS feed.

```
[link rel="alternate" type="application/rss+xml" title="RSS"
href="http://www.yourdomain.com/rss.xml"]
```

Replace the brackets [] with less than and greater than symbols < and > and replace <http://www.yourdomain.com/rss.xml> with the URL to the RSS feed.

In order to increase exposure of a realty RSS feed, Realtors should submit the feeds to RSS search engines and directories. This can be done manually. Just as you would submit the URL of a website or web page to a search engine, or you can use software to automate the process. There is a large list of RSS directories at <http://www.rss-specifications.com/rss-submission.htm>. If you prefer to automate the submission process, consider evaluating RSS Submit available from: <http://www.dummysoftware.com/rsssubmit.html>.

3. Update the Feed.

Update the RSS feed(s) daily or weekly by adding a new feed item, as new properties are made available. Repost feed items for any properties that have experienced a price change.

4. RSS Feed Tips.

In order to maximize the benefit of marketing using RSS be sure to include the realty company phone number or link to the website in the description of the feed, so that any prospective buyers will call the appropriate office to receive additional details, or schedule a viewing. Include images of the home in the RSS feed's description, so that the property will attract the viewer visually. Highlight different homes each week or emphasize different property features each time a property is listed. It is also suggested that Realtors communicate success stories by letting prospective buyers know when homes are under-contract but still on the market, or communicate when properties are sold and no longer available.

The realty market will benefit from RSS as a technology as it is a natural fit for the Real Estate industry.

RSS ware

Active Web Reader 2.43

http://www.download.com/3001-9227_4-10555779.html

If you want an RSS newsreader, Active Web Reader is one of the better ones available. This application offers all the standard features you need, plus a few extras that make it easy to get your news fast and all in one place. Active Web Reader comes with a sampling of feeds and Web sites you can explore in the three-pane interface common to most readers in this category.

If you want to add your own feed, you can right-click a category, title the feed, and enter the XML link and how often you want it to update, and you're done. The viewing window offers tabbed browsing and a brief summary of each story, so you can decide if you want to open a link. Our favorite feature is the ability to import your Internet Explorer bookmarks, so in addition to your RSS newsfeeds, you can check all your favorite Web sites. Our only criticisms of this reader are its reliance on Internet Explorer and the inability to drag and drop feeds into the interface.

Active Web Reader offers an ease of use that's unmatched in this category, and it remains free (though the developer would like your donation). Due to its mostly intuitive interface and excellent feature set, we recommend this newsreader for beginning as well as for advanced users.



Monetizing RSS feeds

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Publishers are evaluating options and determining how they can profit from RSS feeds. The two obvious contenders that publishers are considering using to profit from their RSS feeds are: subscription RSS feeds and RSS feed advertisements.

Subscriptions.

Subscription feeds are designed so that subscription fees are charged for unique quality content. Publishers include teaser copy in the RSS feed and readers have to purchase a subscription to see the content in its entirety. The New York Times was the first to introduce the subscription model. Initially the NY Times faced some resentment from users who had become accustomed to free RSS based content, but ultimately consumers realize that businesses must achieve profits in order to continue.

The greater the value of the content contained in the feed and the uniqueness of the content will determine the success of subscription based feeds. Simply put, if readers can obtain the same quality and quantity of content from an alternative free source they will. Not unlike magazines, if the content the publisher is providing is unique and valuable, the subscription model will flourish.

Advertisements

The web has undergone a number of revisions to online advertising models. Banner ads, once an effective way to generate valuable leads are screened or filtered by most novice users. Text ads have become commonplace and are far less effective than they once were, advertising in RSS feeds was a natural step for online advertisers.

Contextual advertisements or advertisements that relate to the webpage or RSS feed's content, achieve the highest rate of success. As a result both advertisers and content providers should critically evaluate advertisement placement systems to determine which system produces the highest relevance in contextually based advertisements.

Google AdSense provides contextually relevant ads while Phaedo provides related category feeds. Publishers need to determine which model will produce advertisements that are relevant to the RSS feed's content and actionable by feed readers.

Hybrid Advertisements

Other hybrid alternatives for profiting from RSS feeds include optionally giving subscribers the choice. A small fee for many might give subscribers the option to pay for the feed ad-free or view advertisements in the feed. The business model is reminiscent of adware in its infancy where



users could use software for an unlimited amount of time. The software had imbedded advertisements and publishers were compensated for ad impressions or click-throughs. If users preferred an ad free version of the software they could purchase a registered copy that would remove the imbedded advertisements.

More on Advertising in Feeds with a comparison of ad serving technologies.

<http://www.feedforall.com/advertising-in-rss.htm>

Advertising online is constantly evolving. Both content publishers and advertisers are adapting and evaluating new advertising models. RSS feed subscriptions and advertising are merely a step in the evolution of online advertising. Knowing your audience will help publishers determine the most effective model for profiting from content contained in an RSS feed.

Interesting RSS tools and uses

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The core use for RSS is generally considered news headlines and blog syndication, but innovative businesses are learning to use RSS in different ways. Consider RSS as a communication channel that can provide current, targeted information as it appears within a very targeted audience.

Monitoring Newsgroups/Usenet

Google Groups is a free online community and discussion group service that offers the Web's most comprehensive archive of Usenet postings. Google Groups can be monitored using RSS feeds. In order to monitor a specific newsgroup simply add "/feed/msgs.xml" to the end of the Google Group URL. Add the new URL to a newsgroup reader and receive updates each time a new post is added to the newsgroup.

Example Feed: <http://groups.google.com/group/alt.comp.shareware.authors/feed/msgs.xml>

Calendars

Build a calendar for public or private use and receive calendar updates via an RSS feed. Calendars can be created for personal reminders to pay bills or attend social functions. Calendars can also be used for specific groups like schools, sporting events, or industry events. The calendar can be syndicated and shared using RSS feeds.

CalendarHub - <http://www.calendarhub.com>

Example Feed - <http://www.calendarhub.com/rss/21882/month>

Weather

Enter a zip code and obtain the weather information in a specific region. Click the orange RSS icon and add the feed to your reader. Each morning you will receive local and regional weather reports as they are made available. RSS feeds can be customized to include current local conditions, local Doppler radar, pollen trends, regional video forecasts with expert commentary, and extended forecast details.

Weather.com - <http://www.weather.com> or RSS Weather - <http://www.rssweather.com>

Classifieds (Homes/Jobs)

Curious about the availability of specific employment opportunities in a specific industry? Receive notification when positions are made available. RSS feeds can be created for regions, salary ranges, or positions.

RSSJobs - <http://www.rssjobs.com> or Craigslist Example Feed - <http://www.craigslist.com/sof/index.rss>

Ego Searches

Ego searches are free and simple searches designed to monitor blogs and news portals for mentions of your company, product, competitors, or other specific keywords. Conduct-

ing ego searches, not only allows you to stay informed, but also allows you to maintain a strategic advantage over competing companies. A number of new Internet services are freely available that make these 'ego searches' painless and easy.

Many of the services allow you to create a keyword based feed. Each time new information containing the keyword appears in the searched resources, the RSS feed updates.

More on Ego Searches: <http://www.small-business-software.net/ego-searches.htm>

Shipments

Receive notification via RSS feeds when packages are delivered. Custom RSS feeds can be created to monitor delivery progress. Track the status of packages shipped via US Postal Service, USP, DHL or Federal Express.

Simple Tracking - <http://www.simpletracking.com/>

Coupons or Specials

Everyone loves a bargain, RSS feeds that promote time sensitive discounts or offers are becoming increasingly popular. Restaurants convey lunch specials while travel companies convey last minute deals to prospective travelers using RSS Feeds.

Sample Restaurants Feed - <http://www.bestrestaurants.com.au/xml/feed/dining-specials-australia.xml> or

Sample Travel Feed - <http://www.orbitz.com/rss/flightdeals.rss.xml>

Auction Monitoring

Items on eBay are time sensitive, few individuals have time to make daily auction checks of new auctions for specific products. Create an RSS feed using keywords to monitor products as they become available for auction.

Bidding Tools - <http://www.freebiddingtools.com>

Example Feeds - <http://www.freebiddingtools.com/rss/feeds/47459>

RSS is still very young. Both publishers and consumers are actively seeking ways to exploit this communication medium. Additional uses of RSS feeds are popping up daily. Consider how your business might use this new communication medium to increase sales, increase productivity, and reach new customers.

More RSS tools

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Considering the ever-increasing support for RSS in online communities, we have compiled a list of resources and products that will benefit webmasters, web surfers and publishers in their quest to understand the power of RSS. RSS has rapidly become an alternative communication venue. In order to understand the full benefits, consider utilizing some of the following tools and resources.

1.) RSS Tools - RSS feeds bring automatically 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.

RSS Readers - RSS readers are designed as tools to view RSS feeds, making it easier for users to view and manage the content of a feed. Feed readers make it easy to mark feeds as read or flag items that are important. The following are some of our favorite RSS readers:

FeedDemon - FeedDemon is a 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.feedException.com>

FeedScout - Feed Scout is a RSS/ATOM/RDF reader that can be used directly from Internet Explorer. Feed Scout enables you to view RSS/ATOM feeds from different sites directly in Internet Explorer. You can even set your Home Page to show your favorite feeds. <http://www.feedscout.com>

2.) RSS Creation Tools - As RSS feeds have increased in popularity and breadth publishers and webmasters have struggled to find a solution to create RSS feeds. The following tools will assist webmasters in creating RSS feeds:

FeedForAll - Desktop software used to create, edit, manage and publish RSS feeds. New RSS feeds can be quickly and easily created with FeedForAll. Advanced features enable you to create professional-looking RSS feeds quickly. Existing RSS feeds can be repaired and enhanced with FeedForAll. RSS 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>

3.) RSS Articles and Tutorials - Articles and tutorials based on RSS and designed to demystify Really Simple Syndication for users and publishers. RSS Specifications - RSS Speci-



fications contains a collection of articles related to RSS and news feeds that assist both publishers and users in deciphering Really Simple Syndication.

RSS Specifications - 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. <http://www.rss-specifications.com/article-feed.xml>

Make RSS Feeds - Step by step instructional tutorial detailing how to manually create an RSS feed.

<http://www.make-rss-feeds.com>

4.) Ebay Monitoring Using RSS - Monitor online auctions for specific items of interest. As eBay has grown it has become difficult to discern and locate specific auction items. By using RSS tools users can easily receive instant notification when a specific item is being auctioned.

Free Bidding Tools - FMonitor online auctions for specific items of interest. As eBay has grown it has become difficult to discern and locate specific auction items. By using RSS tools users can easily receive instant notification when a specific item is being auctioned.

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

RSS feeds



5.) Web Monitoring - Monitor the Internet for specific news items or blog topics of interest. A number of free online RSS tools make web monitoring very easy.

PubSub - Monitor the Internet for specific news items or blog topics of interest. A number of free online RSS tools make web monitoring very easy. PubSub - Every day, PubSub's matching engine performs billions of matches of new items against user subscriptions. The instant a match is made, PubSub alerts the user via RSS. PubSub monitors more than 6.5 million blogs, as well as 50,000 USENET newsgroups, all SEC/EDGAR filings, press releases from major wire services, and FAA airport delay alerts.

<http://www.pubsub.com>

Google News Monitoring Using RSS - This free online tool turns a Google news search into an RSS feed.

<http://www.justinpfister.com/gnewsfeed.php>

6.) Other RSS Tools - Alternative tools for creative webmasters.

RSS2Wap - The RSS2Wap site is meant for online conversions of RSS feeds into WML for access on WAP devices (RSS2WML, RSS WAP or RSS-to-WAP). It's free and you can make a link on your web site.

<http://www.rss2wap.com>

7.) RSS Graphic Tool - Websites that have RSS feeds available use colorful graphics as flags to indicate to web surfers that RSS feeds are available for specific content.

RSS Graphic Tool - Websites that have RSS feeds available use colorful graphics as flags to indicate to web surfers that RSS

feeds are available for specific content. **RSS Graphic Tool** - Customize RSS buttons. If you have limited time and lack artistic abilities, use this free online RSS graphic tool to create an RSS button. The button's color and text can be customized to suit the look and feel of your website. <http://www.feedforall.com/public/rss-graphic-tool.htm>

8.) Displaying RSS - Many webmasters display the contents of RSS feeds on their web pages as a fresh source of content and information that changes on a regular basis.

Javascript Options - Using Javascript to display RSS feeds is a very easy way to provide dynamic content with very little effort. Unfortunately, when you use Javascript to display RSS feeds, search engines do not see the feed's content, so the content is not spidered and ultimately will not help with search engine optimization.

Quick RSS Feeds - Free online tool that allows you to simply enter the URL of the RSS feed, define the number of items you would like displayed, and the Javascript will be automatically generated.

<http://www.quickrssfeeds.com>

FeedRoll - A free service for syndicating popular RSS and ATOM news feeds on your website or blog. Select a feed, customize the design, then copy and paste the code provided onto your page. <http://www.feedroll.com/rssviewer/>

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

TOSHIBA



DELL



SONY



hp



IBM



Gateway



COMPAQ



RSS to Javascript - RSS-to-JavaScript.com was designed to easily convert any valid RSS, RDF or ATOM feed into easy-to-implement Javascript. No XML or programming experience is necessary. <http://www.rss-to-javascript.com>

PHP Options - The benefit to using a PHP script to display RSS on a website is that the content dynamically updates but search engines see the content as static.

FeedForAll's rss2html.php - If you are technically savvy and wish to host the script yourself, check out FeedForAll, as they have a free PHP script available that will display RSS feeds on a website. <http://www.feedforall.com/free-php-script.htm>

FeedRoll Pro - A fee-based professional service that tracks statistical information for publishers displaying feeds. FeedRoll Pro incorporates a number of display options for publishers wishing to syndicate their content, giving users the choice of PHP or Javascript. <http://www.feedrollpro.com>

RSS2HTML - Display RSS feeds by selecting layouts and color schemes on this free resource.

<http://www.rss2html.com>

9.) RSS Blogs

Stay informed about the latest RSS industry news by monitoring RSS blogs. Daily posts bring readers current news, industry announcements and general RSS information.

RSS Specifications - Everything you need to know about RSS. The RSS Specifications blog contains daily posts and RSS tidbits.

<http://www.rss-specifications.com/blog.htm>

KbCafe - Daily posts and editorials related to RSS and new RSS products that have emerged.

<http://www.kbcafe.com/rss/>

10.) Publishing List / RSS Newsgroups

New RSS-Publishing List for publishers. The list is focused on marketing/publishing/operational issues rather than hardcore technical details of RSS, meaning that coding issues and disputes over the merits of RSS vs. Atom are not the focus. If you wish to participate in the list and receive e-mails of posts, simply subscribe by sending an e-mail to: rsspublishing-subscribe@topica.com

RSS Syndication - Collection of RSS related news feeds displayed in an easy-to-read format.

<http://www.rss-syndication.com/rss-news.htm>

11.) RSS Related 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 RSS consider participating in the following online RSS communities:



2RSS - RSS forum for feed and related RSS discussions.

<http://forum.2rss.com/>

FeedForAll Forum - RSS forum for RSS and feed creation-related discussions.

<http://www.feedforall.com/forum>

German RSS Forum - German RSS forum for feed discussions.

<http://www.rss-forum.de/>

12.) Locate RSS Feeds -

Syndic8 - RSS and Atom news feeds on a wide variety of topics. Designed with a directory structure and search functionality. Syndic8 also tracks statistical information related to RSS feeds.

RSS feeds



<http://www.syndic8.com>

Feedster's FeedFinder - Use Feedfinder to search by keyword or by URL or a combination of the two in order to find feeds on that topic or by that organization. .

<http://feedfinder.feedster.com/>

RSS Discovery - The websites you already read may have an RSS feed. Use the BlogStreet's RSS Discovery tool and enter in a website. If there is a feed available BlogStreet will provide the URL.

<http://www.blogstreet.com/rssdiscovery.html>

RSS Locator - Directory and search engine for RSS content including weblogs, newsfeeds, forum feeds and related content feeds. Locate topic-specific RSS feeds for syndication. RSS Locator displays feed content in an HTML format so users can preview the feed's content.

<http://www.rss-locator.com>

13.) Submit RSS 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.

RSS Submit - Save time and automate RSS submissions with RSS Submit from K-Soft. <http://www.dummysoftware.com/rsssubmit.html>

RSS Specifications - Submit RSS files to the large list of RSS directories and expedite your RSS content syndication.

<http://www.rss-specifications.com/rss-submission.htm>

RSS Submission Service - A fee-based blog submission service that will submit your blog or RSS feed to more than 70 blog directories. Submissions are done manually, and this service is primarily designed for blog feeds.

<http://rss-submission-service.notrivia.com/>

RSS Top 55 - Top websites for RSS submissions. Premium service is available for a nominal fee that will prioritize the RSS site submissions in the order of importance.

<http://www.masternewmedia.org/rss/top55/>

Using RSS tools, publishers and webmasters can increase productivity and efficiency. RSS monitoring can often automate many of the procedures that are time-consuming and monotonous, freeing up time.

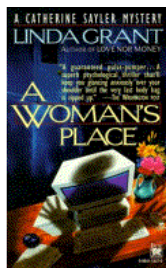


Computer Crimes

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

A Woman's Place

By: Linda Grant, Reviewed by Susan Ives Paperback, Fawcett, 1994, \$5.99, 248 pages



Private investigator Catherine Saylor and her partner, Jesse, are hired to go undercover in a software company where the women are being harassed. While Jesse handles the technical aspects, such as stolen passwords, Catherine insinuates herself into the company. The harassment escalates, a woman is murdered, and Catherine becomes the next target.

This is a compelling case study of sexual harassment in an industry where women were - and still are - in the minority. Interesting look at the software industry, just as corporations were starting to drift away from their mainframes and over to networked PCs.

Good writing, tense plot, interesting characters. This is an excellent series. Recommended.

Monkeewrench

By: P.J. Tracy, Reviewed by Susan Ives Hardcover, Putnam's, 2003, \$23.95, 384 pages



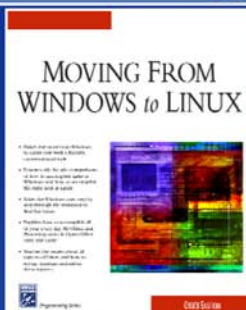
The staff of Monkeewrench software is devastated when three local murders follow the scenarios of the beta release of their new computer game, Serial Killer Detective. They are an oddball crew, college friends who had been traumatized by a friend's murder. In fear for their own lives, they changed their names, skipped town and developed a game where the killer is always caught. Initially hesitant to blow their cover by calling the St. Paul police, they come to the sober realization that there are 17 more scenarios available for download from their

Web site - and 17 more potential victims. The killer could be one of the beta testers, their old nemesis come back to haunt them - or one of the Monkeewrench crew themselves.

P.J. Tracy is the pseudonym of a mother-daughter writing team. This is their first book and it is a sure-fire winner. The plot was fast-paced, the ending a shocker, and the Monkeewrench crew crackled with tension and energy. The technical challenge of figuring out which beta testers have progressed far enough into the game to have knowledge of the fatal scenarios is a clever puzzle that database gurus will enjoy. Highly recommended.

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

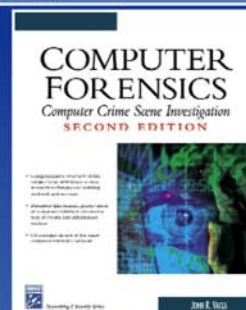
COMPUTER BOOKS THAT DELIVER



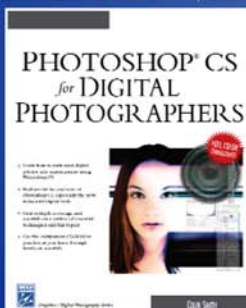
1-58450-280-0 \$44.95



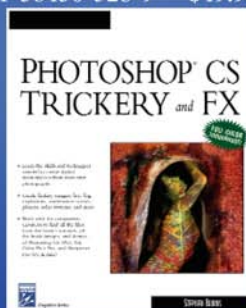
1-58450-328-9 \$49.95



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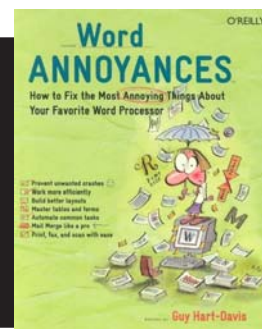
Book Review

Word Annoyances

By Guy Hart-Davis

\$19.95

By Steve Bass



Word has tons of dumb, strange, weird, and annoying features, enough so that I was able to write a 200 page book on the topic. Here are a few of the most annoying...

Save the Document? I Haven't Made Any Changes!

THE ANNOYANCE: All I did was open the document and print it. Why is Word asking me if I want to save changes when I close the document?

THE FIX: The document contains one or more fields that were updated automatically when the document was opened or when it was printed. Often, the field that changes is a date field that changes to the current date, so check that the printout contains the date you want it to have. For an older document of which you're printing a new copy, you probably will neither want the date to change nor save the changed version of the document. To prevent Word from updating the field when you print, choose Tools*Options, click the Print tab, and uncheck the "Update links" box.

If you can't immediately identify the field, choose Tools*Options, click the View tab, choose "Always" in the "Field shading" drop-down list, click the OK button, and then look for the shading in the document.

Another way to find the fields in a document is to search for ^d.

Remove Personal Data from a Document

THE ANNOYANCE: Last month, an ex-colleague blew the whistle on a few corners our boss had been cutting. She dropped HR a document anonymously—but it turned out that her name was hidden in it somewhere. So now she's no longer working here.

THE FIX: In each document you save, Word stores your user name (as entered on the User Information tab of the Options dialog box) as well as other identifying information. Word 2003 and Word XP let you easily remove personal data from a document; Word 2000 does not, but you can choose File*Properties and delete particular items of information manually.

Choose Tools*Options, click the Security tab, and check the "Remove personal information from file properties on save" box. For security, you may also want to check the "Warn before printing, saving or sending a file that contains tracked changes or comments" box so that Word prevents you from saving or sending a file that contains text that may be hidden from you.

After choosing these options, you must save the document to make the options take effect.

Word Asks You Whether to Save Changes to Normal.dot

THE ANNOYANCE: When I close Word, it asks me whether I want to save changes to Normal.dot. What is Normal.dot and why is it doing this to me? I haven't done anything to it.

THE FIX: You probably have done something to Normal.dot, but only inadvertently. Normal.dot, also called "the Normal template," is the default template on which Word bases documents unless you tell it to use another template. Beyond typical template items such as styles, page margins, and default font and paragraph settings, Normal.dot contains your formatted AutoCorrect entries and your AutoText entries.

It's also a convenient place to store VBA items such as macros and user forms. So if you've created a formatted AutoCorrect entry or an AutoText entry, or if you've changed your default font, page layout, or paragraph settings, you've changed Normal.dot. Similarly, if you've created or installed a VBA item, you may have changed Normal.dot. If Word prompts you to save it, click the Yes button.

If you're not aware of having made any such changes, it's possible that your computer has a macro virus that has made a change against your will. If so, you won't want to save changes to Normal.dot. Check your computer for viruses immediately.

If you want Word to save any changes to Normal.dot automatically without prompting you, choose Tools*Options, click the Save tab, and uncheck the "Prompt to save Normal template" box.

Volunteers Wanted

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



Paying too much for healthcare?

discounted fees on:

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- ◆ dentists
- ◆ prescription drugs
- ◆ vision care
- ◆ chiropractors
- ◆ alternative health care
- ◆ and more



visit online:

<http://ushealthadvisors.net/davebobst>

August 2006

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SUN - 6 | MON - 7 | TUE - 1 | WED - 2 | THU - 3 | FRI - 4 | SAT - 5 |
| | STUDY GROUP Genealogy 7:00-9:00 PM Classroom Two | CLASS 1 of 8 * PRR * Introduction To Digital Photo Editing 9:00-11:00 AM Classroom Two | CLASS 1 of 6 * PRR * Introduction To Windows 10 AM -12 PM Classroom One CLASS 2 of 6 * PRR * Internet and Email 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One | STUDENTS PRACTICE LAB 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom One CLASS 1 of 8 * PRR * Digital Camera And Photography 9:00 -11:00 AM Classroom Two STUDY GROUP High Growth Stock Investing meets at UBS Financial 6:30-8:30 PM STUDY GROUP NET - Web Development Technology 7:00-9:00 PM Classroom One | STUDY GROUP * PRR * Small Business Server 8:00-10:00 AM Classroom One CLINIC Computer Diagnostic: The Doctor Is In 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom Three WORKSHOP * PRR * Photoshop 1:00-5:00 PM Classroom One CLASS * PRR * Acrobat - PDF 7:00-9:00 PM Classroom One | STUDY GROUP * PRR * MCSE Advanced 8:30 AM-Noon Classroom Three CLASS 1 of 6 * PRR * Windows XP 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One STUDY GROUP C/C++ 2:30-4:30 PM Classroom Two |
| SUN - 13 | MON - 14 | TUE - 8 | WED - 9 | THU - 10 | FRI - 11 | SAT - 12 |
| | Alamo PC General Meeting Program 7:00-9:00 PM Crossroads Mall Convention Ctr | CLASS 2 of 8 * PRR * Introduction To Digital Photo Editing 9:00-11:00 AM Classroom Two Alamo PC Board of Directors Meeting 6:30-9:30 PM Classroom Three | STUDY GROUP Power Internet 10:00 AM-Noon Classroom Three CLASS 2 of 6 * PRR * Introduction To Windows 10 AM -12 PM Classroom One CLASS 2 of 6 * PRR * Internet and Email 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One CLASS Home Page Jumpstart 5:30-7:00 PM Classroom One | STUDENTS PRACTICE LAB 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom One CLASS 2 of 8 * PRR * Digital Camera And Photography 9:00 -11:00 AM Classroom Two | CLINIC Computer Diagnostic: The Doctor Is In 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom Three WORKSHOP * PRR * Photoshop 1:00-5:00 PM Classroom One | STUDY GROUP * PRR * MCSE Advanced 8:30 AM-Noon Classroom Three CLASS 2 of 6 * PRR * Windows XP 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One STUDY GROUP Commodore Users of SA 1:00-4:00 PM Classroom Three |
| SUN - 20 | MON - 21 | TUE - 15 | WED - 16 | THU - 17 | FRI - 18 | SAT - 19 |
| | | CLASS 3 of 8 * PRR * Introduction To Digital Photo Editing 9:00-11:00 AM Classroom Two CLASS 1 of 6 * PRR * Windows XP 1:30-3:30 PM Classroom One | CLASS 3 of 6 * PRR * Introduction To Windows 10 AM -12 PM Classroom One CLASS 3 of 6 * PRR * Internet and Email 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One | STUDENTS PRACTICE LAB 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom One CLASS 3 of 8 * PRR * Digital Camera And Photography 9:00 -11:00 AM Classroom Two | CLINIC Computer Diagnostic: The Doctor Is In 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom Three WORKSHOP * PRR * Photoshop 1:00-5:00 PM Classroom One | STUDY GROUP * PRR * MCSE Advanced 8:30 AM-Noon Classroom Three CLASS 3 of 6 * PRR * Windows XP 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One CLASS C/C++ 2:30-4:30 PM Classroom Two |
| SUN - 27 | MON - 28 | TUE - 22 | WED - 23 | THU - 24 | FRI - 25 | SAT - 26 |
| CLASS Corel Draw 12 Beginners 6:00-8:00 PM Classroom One | CLASS 4 of 8 * PRR * Introduction To Digital Photo Editing 9:00-11:00 AM Classroom Two CLASS 2 of 6 * PRR * Windows XP 1:30-3:30 PM Classroom One | CLASS 4 of 6 * PRR * Introduction To Windows 10 AM -12 PM Classroom One CLASS 4 of 6 * PRR * Internet and Email 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One STUDY GROUP WordPerfect Evening 7:00-9:00 PM Instructors Home | STUDENTS PRACTICE LAB 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom One CLASS 4 of 8 * PRR * Digital Camera And Photography 9:00 -11:00 AM Classroom Two STUDY GROUP DotNetNuke Portal 7:00-9:00 PM Classroom Two | CLINIC Computer Diagnostic: The Doctor Is In 9:00 AM-Noon Classroom Three WORKSHOP * PRR * Photoshop 1:00-5:00 PM Classroom One | STUDY GROUP * PRR * MCSE Advanced 8:30 AM-Noon Classroom Three CLASS 4 of 6 * PRR * Windows XP 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom One Computer Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1:00-3:00 PM Classroom Three | |



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: ★

The next three free or low-cost classes provide instruction on the basics of using a computer, the Windows Operating System, and how to use Adobe Acrobat to obtain your PC Alamode 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 obtained 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 noon, choose one set:

Set 1) May 24, 31, June 7, 14, 21, 28

Set 2) August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Sep 6

Set 3) Oct 4, 11, 18, 25, Nov 1, 8

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 1:30-3:30 pm; Choose one set:

Set 1) May 9, 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13

Set 2) August 15, 22, 29, Sep 5, 12, 19

Set 3) October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, Nov 7

OR

Instructor: Don Robinson

When: 6 sessions, Saturdays 1-3 pm; Choose one set:

Set 1) May 27, June 3, 10, 17, 24, July 1

Set 2) August 5, 12, 19, 26, Sep 2, 9

Set 3) Oct 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov 4, 11

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 Alamode 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 on-line, 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@yahooogroups.com>." Or, if you're reading the electronic version of the PC Alamode 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@yahooogroups.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: ★★

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. Topics of discussion may include camera optics, composition, tips, choosing the right camera, lighting, how to take night shots, silhouettes, portraits, action shots, and close ups. 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 8 weeks on Thursdays 9 -11 am (some sessions may be longer)

Choice of two class sessions:

Thurs., Aug 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, Sep 7, 14, 21

OR

Thurs., Sep 28, Oct 5, 12, 19, 26, Nov 2, 9, 16

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

Where: Computer Learning Center Plus Field Trips

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Intro. To Digital Photo Editing Class Advanced Digital Photo Editing

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.

The Introduction Class may include:

Remedial computer work as it relates to the use of Image 2006. Any computer skills that will be essential for success in Image 2006. We will learn how to place files into the work area. How to control the work area. We will learn the use of the essential photo editing tools such as; color balance, sharpening focus, removing red eye, crop, straighten photo, etc. We will advance as far as the students prior experience allows.

The Advanced Class may include:

Learning the work area of our program. We learn the use of the tools that are available with Image 2006. We learn to use the tools to do everything from making greeting cards to photo refinishing.

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 8 weeks on Tuesdays 9 -11 am

Introduction: Tuesdays, Aug 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Sep 5, 12, 19

Advanced: Tuesdays, Sep 26, Oct 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, Nov 7, 14

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 CD with the images for the entire class is provided. Photoshop Classes are offered as

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. |

three separate classes, teaching the basic tools, palettes and procedures Instruction class "A" using Photoshop 7. includes adaption for Photoshop CS and CS2 Instruction class "B" with different lessons and text, using Photoshop 7 includes adaption for Photoshop CS and CS2 Photoshop Basic Instruction for Photoshop CS and CS2 (focuses on CS and CS2 but those using Photoshop 7 can take this class)

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: Photoshop Basic Instruction for Photoshop 7, CS, and CS2 will meet on Fridays, 1 to 5 pm, January and February 2007

Fees: \$90 for New Students, \$50 for Previous Students who have attended a Photoshop 7, Instruction Class A or B class, or CS2 class

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. Workshops are open to all Photoshop 7 and CS2 users who have taken previous classes from Beverly Bihn or with the permission of the instructor.

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: August on Fridays (Aug. 4, 11, 18, 25) from 1 to 5 pm; Lessons that will be a continuation of the June- July basic instruction classes September on Fridays (Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29) from 1 to 5 pm Working on "fancy" procedures beyond the basics October on Fridays (Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27) from 1 to 5 pm Working on more "fancy" procedures beyond the basics November on Fridays (Nov. 3, 10, 17, 24) from 1 to 5 pm Calendar classes for various 2007 calendars, using personal photos

Fees: Tuition fee: \$25 per month

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: ★★★

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

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: ★ - ★★

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

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.

Prerequisite: Home Page Jumpstart Class, familiarity with Windows
Pre-registration: yes
 To register e-mail Mike at
 <webmaster@alamopc.org>
Technical Rating: ★★

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

Choose one set:

Set 1) May 24, 31, June 7, 14, 21, 28

Set 2) August 2, 9, 16, 23, (skip Aug 30) Sep 6, 13

Set 3) Oct 4, 11, 18, 25, Nov 1, 8

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.
- ★★ 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.



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

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>.

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

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

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

Step One

1 Computers for Beginners

2 Windows 98

3 Windows XP

Microsoft Office

4 Word

5 Excel

6 PowerPoint

7 Publisher

8 WinFax Pro

Corel Office

9 WordPerfect

10 CorelDraw

11 Quattro Pro

12 Paint Shop Pro

Photoshop

13 Adobe Photoshop

Internet and E-mail

14 Internet Basics / ISP Connection

15 Web Page Development

16 Internet Explorer

17 MS Outlook Express

18 Opera

19 Mozilla

20 Dreamweaver

21 .Net

22 Flash

23 RoadRunner

Open Office

24 OpenOffice

Financial

25 Quick Books

26 Quicken

Auction Online

27 eBay

Genealogy

28 Family Origins for Windows

29 Genealogy

Communications / Management

30 Time&Chaos

31 Act

32 Goldmine

Data Base

33 Access

34 AlphaFour

35 dBase

36 Paradox

37 MySQL

Networking

38 Networking

Other

39 Hardware / Setting Up A New PC

40 Maintenance and Security

41 Home Help

Step Two

| Expertise | Name | Phone | Availability | E-mail |
|---|---------------------|----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1, 5, 6, 3, 12, 23, 26, 38, 41) | John Bolton | 658-3060 | 6pm-9pm M-F | |
| (1, 3, 14) | Joe Barth | 696-5783 | 7pm-9pm Tu, Th, Sat | jbarth@swbell.net |
| (2, 3, 4, 16, 17, 23, 29, 38, 39, 40, 41) | Bruce Cramer | 865-2933 | 9am-3pm M-F, Sat | service@pcpro4u.com |
| (3, 5) | Bill Eastridge | 223-8743 | 10am-6pm M-F, Sat, Sun | |
| (4, 15, 17, 33) | Bill Hudson | 490-6513 | 7pm-10 pm M-F, Sat, Sun | bhudson3@satx.rr.com |
| (4, 9, 14, 27) | William Hudson | 824-6910 | 3pm-8pm M-F, Sat | rwsh@earthlink.net |
| (19, 24, 30, 37) | Chris Montgomery | 490-2415 | 7pm-9pm M-F / noon-6pm Sat, Sun | |
| (3, 16, 17) | Ted Ressler | | | catechist@gmail.com |
| (1, 3, 14, 16, 17, 40) | Don Robinson | 497-3737 | 9am-5pm M-F, Sat, Sun | dl7266@swbell.net |
| (10) | Stephen Tech, Jr | 675-2880 | 5:30pm-9pm M - F | stephentechjr@yahoo.com |
| (9) | Cynthia Thompson | 655-1058 | 7pm-9pm M-F / 10am-4pm Sat, Sun | cynthom@satx.rr.com |
| (4) | Christel Villarreal | | | christel.villarreal@gmail.com |

If you are unable to find help in the list above, consider contacting the desk staff volunteers at the Alamo PC Computer Learning Center. 736-0700 or 736-0080. 10am - 4pm M-F, Sat Remember these volunteers are all levels of expertise and some may not be able to answer your questions, but may be able to find someone who can.


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Classified Ads

E-mail or snail mail (address on page 3) your ad to the Editor, PC Alamode 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's 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 8 issues ago. Reward: free classified ad.



100% gray cotton golf shirts with pocket and embroidered full-color **Alamo PC logo**
Available at the Learning Center in a wide variety of sizes.

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at **736-0700**

Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

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

Monthly Meetings

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

Award-Winning Magazine

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

Special Interest Groups and Classes

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



Internet (www.alamopc.org)

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

Alamo PC SeniorComp

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

Expert Help

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

APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

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

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



Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

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

FIRST: _____ MI _____ LAST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE H: _____ W: _____ FAX: _____

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

EMPLOYER: _____ TITLE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

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

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

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

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

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

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

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

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



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

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

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

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

