

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

TECH ISSUE: OS AND SECURITY

www.alamopc.org
November 2006
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Windows Vista, a preview
page 36

Are you a zombie? How about your computer?
page 48

The part of backup nobody mentions
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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:

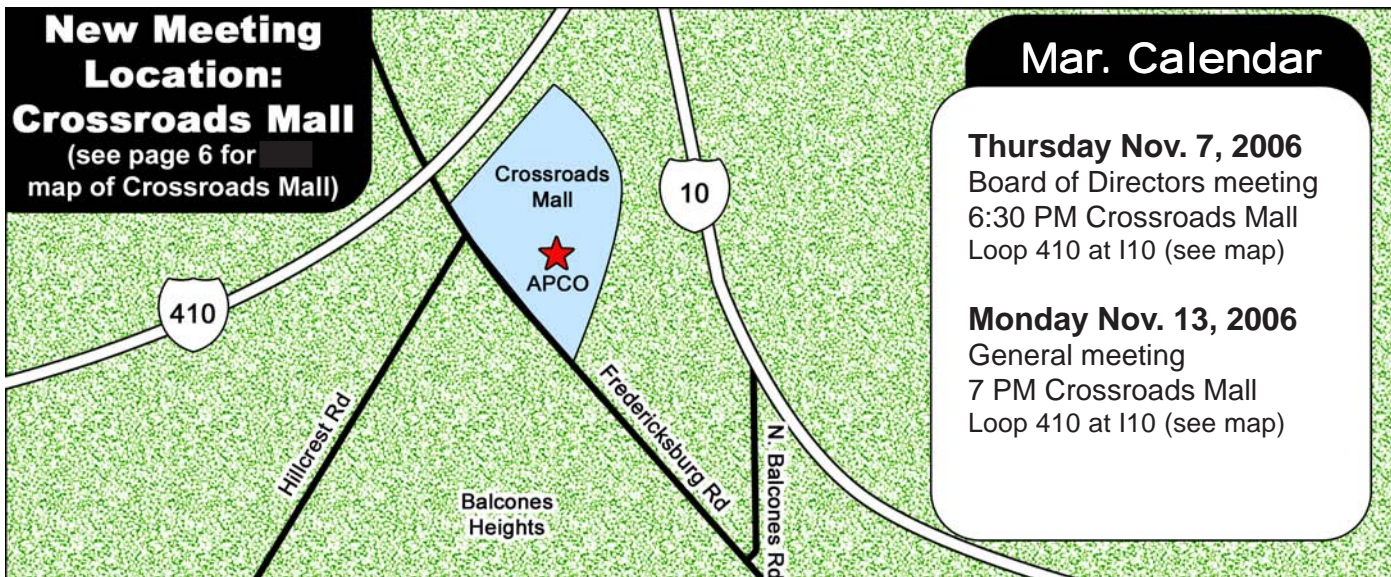
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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 Nov. 7, 2006
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Nov. 13, 2006
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Tech junkie



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PC Alamode

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OS

- Microsoft Vista Beta - first look
- Windows Vista, a preview
- XP or Vista?
- Windows XP and speech recognition

Security

- Accessing family accounts in case of emergency
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- Avoiding security risks
- The part of backup nobody mentions
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PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS: Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. **Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication.** e-mail to:

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Quarter pg.(3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
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*Consecutive months

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product reviews

- Computer Crimes
- LowerPro Rover AW II camera bag

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Board of Directors

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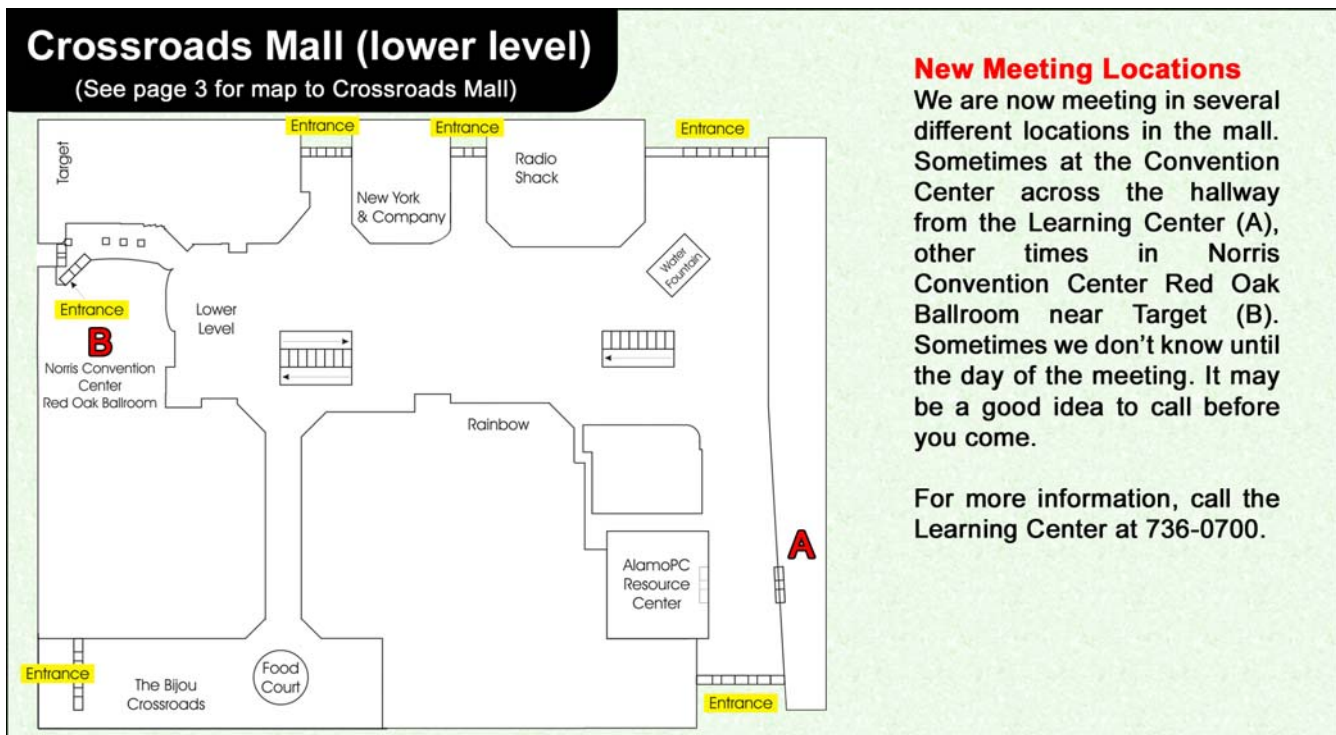
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

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



PC Alamo Links List



Holiday

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

It's a neat collection of multimedia holiday celebrations. Just click on a category and get everything you need from recipes to greeting cards.



PodCast Network

<<http://podcast.net/>>

A huge collection of podcasts from a wide range of topics. Just click and listen from your browser!



I've gotten a few e-mails from those of you who like the new one column format. Another continued request is to go easy on the colors and graphics. Many of you still prefer a printed version of the magazine and have taken to publishing it on your home printers. Hope the single column format doesn't interfere with the printed versions!

Some of you have found the changing location of the general meeting a bit frustrating. Please be advised that sometimes the meeting is held across the hall from the resource center. Other times it's been held at the XXX near Target. Since we often don't know where the gathering will be held until the day of the meeting, please call the learning center in advance to learn where to get together.

For details, call 210-736-0700.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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

"November" - Veterans, Thanksgiving, Microsoft

The month of November should stir several thoughts. One, with all the end-of-the-year reminders in stores, is "The Holidays are almost here and I haven't even started to shop!" (Hope you have done a little all year and are almost finished.) But, the major thoughts for the month are: Veterans Day - A time to reflect and give honor to those who serve/served in our military forces, especially those who have seen war (As we consider this, keep in mind that those who served in WWII, and survived, are almost, if not already, gone); Thanksgiving - no explanation should be necessary, but generally it stands for a time soon after this country was begun, when many wanted to thank those already on this new soil for helping make it possible. (We should "give thanks" everyday, especially to those who have helped us, even in some small way, as life is sometimes short.); Microsoft - a scheduled representative from the company is to be the presenter at the November 13th Alamo PC General Meeting. Discussion and demo should focus primarily on VISTA (the new operating system now scheduled for release in early 2007).

Note: Keep in mind other General meetings, and the presenters tentatively scheduled, or who are being contacted to determine their availability December: Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) Global supplier of integrated circuits for personal and networked computing, and also communications; January: Beverly Bihn (member of Alamo PC) Photoshop and some of the capabilities (Industry presenters will all be attending the Consumer Electronics Show [CES] at this time); February: Smart Computing in my opinion, one of the best kept secrets around if you want to know more about computers. (Subscription price to the magazine allows access to several other online magazines, plus an extensive database); March: Trend Micro Develops, markets and supports anti virus software and management solutions for corporate computer systems and personal computers; April: Gene Barlow General Computer Information specialist (expert in Hard drives, backups, and computer vulnerabilities that may come from the Internet), friend to User Groups, and software vender; May: Dave Whittle - Technology and security expert (also a software vender), will probably address "Whittle's Picks." These are hidden gems from companies large and small, old and new on computer related technologies, helps and security.

I am sure with Microsoft and VISTA present in November, there will be increased interest and support for our General meeting (invite someone to come hear the latest industry & company information). Hopefully we can reverse the trend of waning interest and the desire to "pass" on the benefits this organization can offer (one of which is the meeting presentations). Word-of-mouth advertising is a great tool. Please help us spread the word on things people may find useful about Alamo PC. Current members, need to reconsider what this organization has done for each of you, and what it can do for others. Perhaps that will help motivate the renewal effort and improve the desire to provide some much needed support, at various places in the organization.

I will continue to ask each member to consider being just a little more actively involved with the Alamo PC Organization. Please remember "this is organization is OUR's (yours and mine), and if WE want it to continue, WE must continue to be a supportive member, through renewals and participation at some level." If not, we will be allowing circumstances to decide the fate of this organization.

Consider some of the following (and tell others to): free class benefit - enroll in one or more of the classes; the "Wish List" - (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 for the family - 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.

With the holidays approaching, consider our popular Digital Camera & Photography class. (Last month I shared the following: In Google, enter www.popphoto.com to get a sub-list of additional items listed at the site that may be of interest to you. Then pick the original entry and look for an area of interest or free tips/courses on photography. Also, you might want to check the Hewlett Packard website <hp.com>, for more related free courses on cameras and photography.) That should put you in a great position to get more info on editing and being creative with photos when the January meeting presenter has her say. (She and her class are great!)

The retention of members has improved some, but new members are still not sufficient to offset non-renewing members. Each month has shown a net loss. (We can't continue this way for much longer.) Please, if you do not choose to renew, give us a comment or two as to "Why?" (Please send an E-Mail to Steven Tech 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! As I have previously indicated, if membership continues to fall, the BOD will, at some point, have to make changes that will be to the detriment of the organization. As I have already said, "Remember, this is OUR organization." If you want to have your voice heard, attend a BOD meeting, General Meeting, write or call someone.

The future of OUR organization is essentially in the hands of its members. As I have stated before, "Whether WE continue (or not) depends on the interest and involvement of each member. But, it primarily depends on membership renewals and/or financial support. Without those, we will not be able to meet our financial obligations and 'business decisions' will have to be made that will affect everyone."

Although there may be more I could say on the matter, all I will say is "PLEASE GIVE US SOME HELP!" We are (and will continue) paring the financial expenditures as much as possible, but that is only slowing a process that seems to have been decided by the position of many current and former members "withdraw support because I don't have a printed magazine in my hands!" (If someone has a way to provide Alamo PC with about \$4,000 each month or get free printing and only cover mailing costs, we can again print and mail the magazine.)

Hope to see many members at the November General Meeting in the Norris Conference Center, near Target. (We only had 40 people, counting the speaker, for the COREL presentation in October. Not much interest for a major software developer!) For those who missed it, you missed an interesting and informative presentation, plus the opportunity to leave with software.

November Program

David Steward

Microsoft presents Vista. Come to the meeting to find out more!

News Brief

A new way to manage software

Virtualization provides not only a way to use computers more efficiently, but it also offers a new, relatively painless way to install software. VMware and other virtualization advocates are working hard to promote the software distribution and installation technique. However, licensing constraints pose a significant impediment. VMware, long considered the market leader for virtualization software, potentially changed the virtualization software market by announcing that the upgrade to their GSX Server product would be renamed VMware Server and made available for free to anyone who wants it. Although VMware Server is free to download, test, and deploy, it may not be totally free to run in perpetuity. VMware plans to sell support plans for VMware Server that are anticipated to cost \$350 - \$400 per installation. These plans will be made available once VMware is out of beta and released.

News Brief

The next energy source: Barnyard animals?

Microgy, which has discovered that manure and other waste products from cows, pigs and other livestock is a largely untapped source of energy. The company builds industrial-sized “digesters” that, through heat and microbes, reduce mountains of waste into gas or electricity that can be reused on the farm or sold on the open market. The plant will start shipping natural gas (methane) in the third quarter and, when fully operational, will churn out an estimated 1 billion cubic feet of biogas a year.

STUDY GROUPS

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

Volunteer of the Month Shane Hicks



THE DOCTOR . . . IS IN

EACH FRIDAY FROM 9:30 TO 12 NOON
DIAGNOSE YOUR SOFTWARE & HARDWARE PROBLEMS

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TROUBLESHOOT HARDWARE, RUN TESTS

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ALAMO PC RESOURCE CENTER

A cartoon illustration of a doctor in a white coat and stethoscope, holding a stethoscope to a computer monitor. The computer is sitting on a desk with a keyboard and mouse. The doctor is looking at the monitor with a concerned expression.

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Bare Bone Systems
Computer Related Books
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Show Dates and Times:

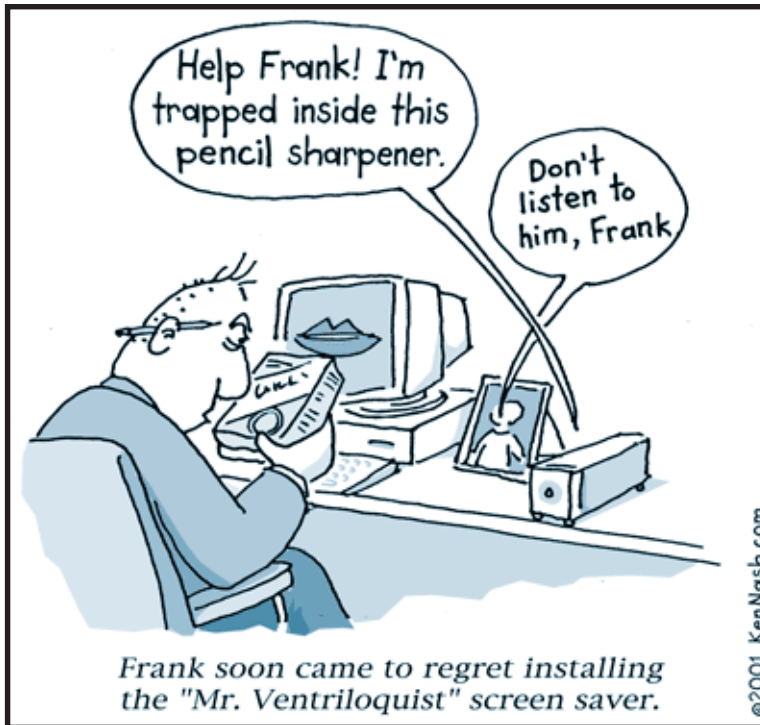
Dec. 9, 2006

more info at <http://www.pcshows.com/>



Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen



News Brief

Pesticide market goes organic

AgraQuest is one of a rising number of companies promoting biopesticides--substances that kill bugs with selectively bred microorganisms, rather than chemical concoctions. A novel fungus called Muscador lives naturally in the bark of a type of spice tree found in Central America and other tropical regions, emits a cocktail of about 30 gases that kills a variety of pests. Muscador-based products will likely start coming out this year. Organic biopesticides comprise only a small fraction of the overall \$30 billion pesticide market, but they are growing rapidly.



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.

*Here Is Some Fast Food Technology

Technology is fast catching up with vending machines according to this article I read in Information Week. Soft drink machines are everywhere you go, also vending machines for candy, coffee and many other types of products, even machines that dispense ice cream bars and ice cream sandwiches. A technique has now been developed for an ice cream vending machine that does not need to be refrigerated full time. To quote from the article, "we pump the base mix, aerate it, flavor it, flash freeze it, scrape it up off a freezing surface, form it into a scoop and into the consumer's cup in 45 seconds." Also, no refrigeration is required for warehousing. You can read the article at <<http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=193004764>> and it also mentions their use of Linux for the machine.

*Have Your Medical Data With You!

Be medically prepared with all your medical records hanging around your neck (or in your possession) when you are away. Medistick makes a USB flash drive that is designed to hold up to five medical histories. It appears to be a self-extracting file that can also offer password protection. Medistick has medical emergency logo on the sides. Capacities are available from 128 MB to 4 gigs and costing \$57.00 for the 128 mb size. <<http://www.medistick.ch>> Information is collected and entered by you, or your doctor, if his staff will help in that regard, and the document automatically converts to a pdf file.

I doubt I would use the password protection because what if you are incoherent and can't give medics the password to open the file for your medical information? On the other hand, since some folks write their password on the side of their computer, you could do that with the Medistick. <G> I am cramped for space here so be sure to check their Web site to get the best description of the product. It sure sounds great to me, and so is the deal. All your records are carried with you including all your doctors' names and phones. If you see a new doctor, just give them your Medistick to get all your medical info. With my health, I will probably need the 4 gig model. Just a thought, but this might make a great Christmas gift for the person who already has everything, and for that person who has a serious medical history.

Medistick has offered the DealsGuy readers this deal: "1 128MB Medistick and software for 1 person for only \$49.00 with shipping included. (MSRP is normally \$57.00 plus \$3.50 shipping) This deal is good until Jan. 31, 2007. Readers should click on <<http://www.medistick.ch/en/contact/>> and mention the DealsGuy column in the 'comments' area. They will then get an online invoice from Medistick through PayPal for \$49.00 as payment by credit card in advance."

*Reminder About the Laptop Discount by Dave Whittle

Don't forget about Dave Whittle's discount offer on the Lenovo Thinkpad laptops that is still good. Simply call Lenovo's user group inside sales rep, Isaac Williams, directly for help in configuring your system, or to get answers to your questions. Call 1-877-338-4465, Option 1, Extension 6322.

*How About A Backup With Security!

SoftOptima LLC announces the release of Backup Premium 2.5 backup software. The specially designed protocols SFTP and FTP SSL/TLS provide a high degree of security for data transferred via the Internet. Backup Premium offers the capability to backup user data using SFTP and FTP SSL/TLS and allows substantial safety of the backup process.

You can backup all important files from a Windows profile, Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express and ICQ; running certain programs before or after backup sessions; and the possibility to work with network drives under different accounts. It's easy to configure the backup process and adjust it to the particular needs of a single user, or a whole company. Backup Premium has an ergonomically correct user interface and a high-quality graphic solution that makes the work with the program simple and yet pleasant.

A fully functional Backup Premium 2.5 trial version is available for a 30-day evaluation period. Registration costs \$39 for a single user license. Users group members receive a special 25% discount at <<http://www.backup-premium.com/special-order.shtml>> until February 2007.

Product Page: <<http://www.backup-premium.com>>

Screenshots and graphics: <<http://www.backup-premium.com/screenshots.shtml>>

Download: <<http://www.backup-premium.com/backuppremium25.exe>>

***This Product Helps You Work With Your Pictures**

Almalence Incorporated announces PhotoAcute Studio 2.0. PhotoAcute Studio processes sets of images taken in continuous mode. It utilizes super resolution algorithms to convert a sequence of photos into a single high-resolution and low-noise picture that could only be taken with a much better camera. PhotoAcute Studio operates with various camera and image types from mobile cameras to DSLR cameras supporting RAW format and 16-bit color.

Spatial resolution is limited by a camera's matrix and lens, but this limit can be exceeded by means of super resolution that can be done by either acquiring more graphic information (e.g. taking and merging several images of the same object) or by reconstructing the details lost due to the faultiness of the optical system. Noise is the most undesirable factor that degrades image quality. PhotoAcute Studio combines several photos of the same scene, separating the useful signal and the noise, thus providing strong noise reduction without losing the image details. By merging several images taken at different exposures, PhotoAcute Studio expands the dynamic range of the resultant image revealing the details usually clipped in the highlights and the shadows.

PhotoAcute Studio is a Windows based application. The Macintosh version will be released in 2007Q1. A detailed description of PhotoAcute Studio features, online help and an examples gallery are available at <<http://www.photoacute.com>>. You can download a free trial version. The price of the full version varies depending on supported camera types, ranging from \$19 for mobile phone cameras to \$119 for DSLR cameras with the support of RAW format and 16-bit color. Users group members get a 35% discount by going to the order page <http://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?items=13404-1&ss_coupon=DGY-8JQU> which contains the discount code in the URL. The discount will be applied on the second page of the ordering procedure. This discount is good until January 31, 2007.

PhotoAcute Studio 2.0 can be downloaded at: <<http://www.photoacute.com/studio/download.html>>

Product page URL: <<http://www.photoacute.com/studio>>

Direct download link: <http://www.photoacute.com/files/PhotoAcuteStudio_setup.exe>



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Domain names and trademark issues

John Brewer, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

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

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

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

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

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

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

If the infringement results in actual litigation, and if the plaintiff is successful, remedies can vary depending on whether the trademark was registered. The most common form of relief granted to a successful plaintiff in a trademark infringement lawsuit is an injunction against further infringement. If the infringed mark was federally registered, attorney's fees could also be available to a successful plaintiff. Monetary damages are available under the Lanham Act, but are rarely awarded in trademark lawsuits.

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

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

In summary, the mark holder is putting the registrant on notice that the domain name is infringing on the registered trademark/servicemark. The author of this article is not aware whether this matter has been resolved and the contents of this letter are for illustration purposes only. So, what are the practical issues involved with the registration of a domain name? Again, the author of this article emphasizes that this topic is complex in character and does not cover the topic in detail. Readers should also be aware there is a US law known as the Anti-Cybersquatting Act that may apply when the domain name is a protected mark. The most important issue is that one has to consider trademark issues when registering a domain name.

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



RAM & Reason

Putting the fun back in computing: The Live CD

Rob Rice, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

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If you have a CD or DVD writer (burner) and the software to write to disk an ISO image (the file that a Live CD typically comes in), such as Roxio's "Easy CD Creator" or Sonic's "Record Now!" you can download and create disks that will run a specially crafted operating system without loading it to your hard disk or disturbing any of your files. A Live CD or as the case may be, a Live DVD, is a bootable disk that loads the operating system into your system's memory and runs the necessary operating files from your CD or DVD drive. Some are designed to be run with a rewritable disc so that files can be burned to the disk while you work. Test drive Linux or Free BSD. Recover files, trouble shoot, test hardware, or, just try something different. Live CDs are truly loads of fun, especially since many, if not most, are free!

So you don't have any software that will burn an ISO image? Many Live CDs will work from a USB flash drive. Heck, "floppyfw" fits on a floppy disk! Floppyfw is a router with the advanced firewall capabilities found in Linux - and it fits on a single floppy disc.

Several websites have a nice long list of currently available images (files) for download. FrozenTech ([http://www.frozentech.com/content/Live cd.php](http://www.frozentech.com/content/Live%20cd.php)) is one of my favorites. The images are anywhere from 2 megabytes up to 3 gigabytes in size.

There are many different types and platforms available. Therefore, if you currently use Windows you will want to pick something that is listed as being for a x86 platform. But perhaps the most difficult task is trying to choose from this buffet which goodies to try.

DistroWatch, (<http://distrowatch.com/dwres.php?resource=cd>), has another list which gives nice descriptions of Linux Live CDs.

Some of the more popular Live CDs and DVDs include:

Knoppix and Ubuntu: These are Linux distributions that are loaded with lots of extra software, such as office tools and web browsers.

Helix: A Linux based incident response and forensics program. The later versions will open in Windows.

Ultimate Boot CD: Diagnostic and rescue tools.

avast! BART CD: Bootable Antivirus & Recovery Tools CD.

LLGP and GamesKnoppix: Games and lots of them!

SLAMPP and ATmission: Create a server.

There are dozens of programs for many different uses. Some of the categories include (From the FrozenTech website):

Desktops: provides a working GUI desktop environment with a collection of desktop programs, such as browsers and text editors. Many also include utilities for other purposes, such as home entertainment, but are only listed here because the additional functions are not their primary focus.

OS Replacement: provides an option to transfer the co to the hard drive, or to install an OS in a different form

Education: provides a collection of educational programs, or was created to be used in the educational field

Rescue: provides tools needed for data recovery

Clustering: provides tools for making clusters

Security: contains network security tools

Home Entertainment: geared towards playing video and audio

Gaming: video games!

Medical: contains medical programs

Diagnostics: contains utilities for testing hardware

Firewalls: distributions created to be used as firewalls

Forensics: distributions containing forensic tools

Servers: distributions used for various server functions

So put the fun back into computing and try a Live CD. You'll be glad you did!

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CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart)

By Sandy Berger. Compu-KISS, www.compukiss.com, sandy@compukiss.com

Have you ever tried to sign up for a message board or Web service and been presented with an image with letters and numbers which you are asked to read and type into the Web form? While the shape, size, and background of the image varies it always has contains a series of letters and numbers, usually on a graphic background.

Often the letters and numbers are distorted and you have to struggle to recognize them, making you wonder why the website is making you go through this extra step. Don't blame the website. This image-recognition routine is something caused by cousins of the nasty spammers who have permeated our email.

The mechanism that makes you type in this information is called a CAPTCHA. If you know what those letters stand for, you will have a pretty good idea of why this mechanism is being employed. CAPTCHA stands for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.

Here's the story. Spammers have completely infiltrated the world of the Internet. In email they try to get you to buy their wares. On message boards they list links to their Viagra and pornographic websites so that they get better positioning in the search engines. They overload online opinion polls and they sign up for free email accounts which they use to send out more spam.

For the most part, all of this spam activity is done automatically. The spammers send out what we call "bots". These are actually software programs that search the Internet and imitate the behavior of a human. These bots are smart enough to fill out registration forms and so they can automatically register at a variety of websites.

We recently had an attack of these automated bots on our Compu-KISS message boards. After years of being unaffected, we suddenly had hundreds of postings that told off-color jokes and lead to pornographic and drug-selling websites. We moved the website to a new area (www.happycomputing.com), but were still inundated by these automated posting. So we installed a CAPTCHA. Now when a new person registers for the message board they must type in the five letters and numbers that they see on the screen to prove that they are human. Since the CAPTCHA is a graphic image, most of the bots cannot read the text like humans can.

The CAPTCHA that we use has letters and numbers that are undistorted, so it is easy to use. If, however, we are attacked by some of the smarter bots that are out there, we will have to distort the letters and numbers slightly to make it even harder for the bots to register.

Although a slight inconvenience to the average user, the CAPTCHA is a real roadblock to vision impaired Internet users who use screen readers which, like the bots, are unable to read the text on the CAPTCHA.

It is extremely unfortunate that we all have to be inconvenienced because of the activities of Internet spammers. I really hated to have to install this software, but I had no other choice. The same is true of many other websites and Web services. So when you encounter a CAPTCHA, don't blame the website, blame the spammers!



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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.

Well it's about time we got back to some of the basics of computer security. I was reading a computer article the other day and couldn't believe that someone had come up with yet another term to define spyware, which some of us know as adware, or malware. Some people call it by another name but we won't put that in this article.

There is a plethora of information out there in print whether it is in the local newspaper, one of the many computer magazines or good old books. Then we have information in cyberspace from newsgroups, blogs and websites dedicated to computer information to email newsletters from Kim Komando and the like. While most of this information may be good, to prevent us from getting "information overload" it helps to understand some of the terminology that is being used in this information. As it is with most things in technology, some of this information is new and introduced with the expectation that the reader is familiar with it.

Some of the following definitions were obtained from with help from Wikipedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Adware is software integrated into or bundled with a program. It is usually seen by the programmer as a way to recover programming development costs, and in some cases it may allow the program to be provided to the user free of charge or at a reduced price. Some well known adware programs are:

123 Messenger, 180 Solutions, 180SearchAssistant, Zango, Bonzi Buddy, BlockChecker, ClipGenie, Comet Cursor, Cydoo, Direct Revenue, Aurora (adware), Ebates MoneyMaker, Gator, PornDigger! WinFixer, Hotbar, ErrorSafe, Smiley Central, WeatherBug, WhenU

Antivirus is a term referring to a software program that attempts to identify, thwart and eliminate computer viruses. Antivirus software usually does this in 2 different ways. 1 is by scanning files and looking for ones that are in its virus database which is updated regularly. Another way that viruses are identified is by suspicious behavior or heuristic technology, hence if it smells, acts, walks and talks like a virus it generally is. A good antivirus program will update itself regularly, scan downloads and emails and let you automatically schedule full system scans.

Crimeware this is a newer one and here is wikipedia's definition - a type of computer program or suite of computer programs that are designed specifically to automate financial crime. The term was coined by Peter Cassidy, Secretary General of the Anti-Phishing Working Group to distinguish it from other kinds of malevolent programs. Crimeware (as distinct from spyware, adware, and malware) is designed to (through social engineering or technical stealth) perpetrate identity theft to access a computer user's online accounts at financial services companies and online retailers for the purpose of taking funds from those accounts or completing unauthorized transactions that enrich the thief controlling the crimeware.

Farming is a hacker's attack aiming to redirect a website's traffic to another (bogus) website. The term pharming is a word play on farming and phishing. The term phishing refers to social engineering attacks to obtain access credentials such as user names and passwords. In recent years both pharming and phishing have been used to steal identity information. Pharming has become of major concern to businesses hosting ecommerce and online banking websites.

Firewall is basically a piece of hardware and/or software which functions to prevent some communications forbidden by a security policy. A firewall has the basic task of controlling traffic on your computer and the Internet and vice versa, keeping the bad guys out of your system.

Malware is software designed to infiltrate or damage a computer system without the owner's informed consent. It is a blend of the words "malicious" and "software". The expression is a general term used by computer professionals to mean a variety of forms of hostile, intrusive, or annoying software or program code.

Phishing is a criminal activity using social engineering techniques. Phishers attempt to fraudulently acquire sensitive information, such as passwords and credit card details, by masquerading as a trustworthy person or business in an electronic communication. Phishing is typically carried out using email or an instant messaging.



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Spyware is a type of program that watches what users do with their computer and then sends that information over the internet. Spyware can collect many different types of information about a user. More benign programs can attempt to track what types of websites a user visits and send this information to an advertisement agency. More malicious versions can try to record what a user types to try to intercept passwords or credit card numbers (keyloggers). Yet other versions simply launch popup advertisements.

Trojan is impostor files that claim to be something desirable but, in fact, are malicious. Rather than insert code into existing files, a Trojan horse appears to do one thing (install a screen saver, for example) when in fact it does something entirely different, and potentially malicious, such as erase files. Although often referred to as such, Trojan horses are not viruses in the strict sense because they cannot replicate automatically. For a Trojan horse to spread, it must be invited onto a computer by the user opening an email attachment or downloading and running a file from the Internet, for example. Trojan.

Virus is a self-replicating computer program written to alter the way a computer operates, without the permission or knowledge of the user. Though the term is commonly used to refer to a range of malware, a true virus must replicate itself, and must execute itself. The latter criteria is often met by a virus which replaces existing executable files with a virus-infected copy. While viruses can be intentionally destructive—destroying data, for example—some viruses are benign or merely annoying.

Worm is a self-replicating computer program. It uses a network to send copies of itself to other systems and it may do so without any user intervention. Unlike a virus, it does not need to attach itself to an existing program. Worms always harm the network (if only by consuming bandwidth), whereas viruses always infect or corrupt files on a targeted computer.

I hope this information helps some of you better understand and relate to computer security in a way that will help you protect yourselves and your computers.

Be safe and happy computing.

News Brief

What is APCUG? It's the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.

Do you know that our Club is a member of APCUG?

IF Yes! Then have you explored the many other clubs located in the USA, Canada, Japan and Australia that are also members? If not, you are missing something.

IF No! And you are interested in finding out—click on <http://www.apcug.net>

Oh! Too much to click on, of course. Start with Newsletters ? then Online newsletters? States ? Pick the State you want.

What state should I pick first?

Why not Michigan? The Henry Ford Village Computer Club AND the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. <http://www.semco.org/> are members of APCUG. OR—Find Florida in the list of states & click on Central Florida Computer Society. <http://www.cfcs.org/newsletter.asp> OR—Find the MOTHERBOARD, a publication of the Computer Users Group of Redding, CA. Of course look in the California list of clubs. <http://users.snowcrest.net/ibmpcugr> Ohio is near—check out <http://www.acpcug.org/site3/presentations.htm> (Akron Canton PC Users Group) and click on Past Newsletters. Look at all the sites you can contact from their Web site. There are over 300 Computer Clubs that belong to APCUG.

Why Bother?

Of course, to read the Computer Club newsletters—current & past issues— and find what they are doing. Get helpful tips and tricks that other Club members have found and are sharing. If you

find a good one to share, send it to your Editor. Try Canada, our neighbor. Big Blue & Cousins: <http://bbs.bbc.org/newsletter/index.php>

Tell us what you find of interest to you that you think our Club should consider doing.



E-mail, Part V

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.

When encountering email problems, first check to ensure you are connected to your Internet Service Provider (ISP). If your computer is equipped with an analog modem, you should reestablish a dial-up connection. If it's equipped with a Digital Subscriber Line router or cable modem, check the device's external indicator lights to determine whether it has established a viable connection. If you cannot locate or communicate with the mail server, verify that it has the correct address for mail server. To verify the mail server addresses in Outlook Express, open the Tools menu and select Accounts. On the Mail tab of the resulting Internet Accounts window, highlight your current account and click the Properties button. From the dialog box that appears on-screen, click the Servers tab and type the incoming and outgoing addresses in the Incoming Mail and Outgoing Mail field and then click OK to save the new settings. If your problem is undeliverable messages, there are three possible explanations. One is that your email address was typed incorrectly in the TO block. If the recipient's security software has identified your message as spam, it will also be undeliverable. Finally, the recipient's mail server may be temporarily "down" and therefore fails to respond to the attempted delivery. If you can't send an attachment, some ISPs configure their mail servers to refuse messages with large file attachments. You can still send the attachment by compressing the file before attaching it to an email message. On the other hand, if you can't open an attachment, the problem may be that your email client is configured for security reasons to prevent a recipient from opening file attachments of a certain size, content, or type. You can disable this setting in Outlook Express by opening the Tools menu and selecting Options, clicking the Security tab, deselecting the "Do Not Allow Attachments To Be Saved Or Opened That Could Potentially Be A Virus" option, and clicking OK.

AOL Sounds

To turn off the slamming door sound while online with America Online (AOL), on the Buddy List, click Setup, IM (Instant Message) Settings, and select the Expressions tab. Under Buddy Arrival and Departure Sounds, select "Do not play any sound." Do the same for IM Sounds and then click Save.

Arrow Removal

If you frequently receive forwarded e-mail messages with all of the arrows (>>>>), clean them up instantly by downloading and installing the free eCleaner utility <www.ecleaner.tripod.com/clean202.zip>. Copy and paste the garbled e-mail into the program and see the text come alive without the arrows. eCleaner can also remove unnecessary HTML code and headers.

E-mail Accounts

With very few exceptions, anything you do on a company PC at work can be monitored and examined by your employer. E-mail, Web site history files, even stored documents and settings, are all fair game. At work, you probably have zero privacy. Why use your company e-mail for personal messages? Drop by Yahoo <<http://www.yahoo.com/>> or Hotmail <<http://www.hotmail.com>> or any of dozens of other Web sites for a free e-mail I.D. Internet Explorer (IE) saves copies in a cache of Web pages that you've accessed, to make things faster if you look at the same page again. IE also maintains 20 days worth of history, listing the sites you've visited. Clear them both by starting IE, clicking Start, Internet Explorer, choosing Tools, Options, and choosing the appropriate buttons under the General tab. You can send e-mail anonymously and nobody will be able to trace it back to its source. The Anonymous Remailer <<http://www.gilc.org/speech/anonymous/remailer.html>> is particularly valuable for journalists.

E-mail Addresses

There are several places online that allow you to search for a person's e-mail address. The results are not always accurate because many of these directories contain old or outdated e-mail addresses for yourself and/or your friends. Here are some online e-mail address directories: <<http://www.addresses.com/>>, <<http://www.infospace.com/home/white-pages/email-search>>, <<http://my.email.address.is/>>, <<http://www.who哪里.lycos.com>>, and <<http://www.switchboard.com>>. There are also places where you can type in an e-mail address and check its validity. Before you type a long note only to have it returned to you because the address was invalid, use one of these sites: <http://www.addresses.com/email_verify.php> and <<http://www.server2.com/Tools/ValidateEmail.asp>>.

E-mail Brackets

Some e-mail programs insert a bracket automatically at the beginning of each line of the original text when you include it in your reply or forward it. Each time the message is replied to or forwarded another layer of brackets is tacked on to the message. To banish the brackets in Outlook Express, click Tools, Options, Send. Under "Mail Sending Format," select "Plain Text Settings" and uncheck "Indent the original text with > when replying or forwarding." In Outlook, click Tools, Options, Preferences, E-mail Options, and under "On replies and forwards," change both fields to anything except "Prefix each line of the original

message. In Eudora 5 or 6, reset the <ReplyPrefix>. Go to Eudor's tech support site <www.find.pcworld.com/43814> and scroll down to and click <ReplyPrefix> to open the Change Option dialog box back in Eudora. Make sure that the "New value" field is blank, and click OK. Finally repeat the process for <QuotePrefix>.

E-mail Embedded Pictures

You can include pictures and embedded or inline images in the body of your e-mail messages versus sending them as attachments as long as your e-mail program accepts HTML messages. In Microsoft Outlook, create a new e-mail and then click Insert, Picture From File. Navigate to the image and click OK. In Outlook Express, click Format, Rich Text (HTML) and click Insert, Picture, browse Navigate to the image file, and click OK. In Eudora, create your message and then click the Insert Object button on the formatting toolbar, click Picture, browse to the picture, and click Open. If the toolbar is not available, click Tools, Options, Styled Text., click "Show formatting toolbar," and select "Send both plain and styled." In America Online, click the camera button on the right end of the toolbar, click Insert a Picture, navigate to the picture, and click Insert. There are other ways to share photos with the online photo-sharing services.

All of these sites work pretty much the same. You sign up for a free account and create a photo album. You then upload your pictures from your computer. From the photo-sharing Web site, you send invitations to others to view the pictures. People you send these photos would then just need to visit the photo-sharing Web site and sign in to see your pictures. These web sites are: Ofoto <<http://www.ofoto.com>>, Shutterfly <<http://www.shutterfly.com>>, and Yahoo! Photos <<http://photos.yahoo.com>>.

Free E-mail

If you are looking for a free email service, check out this listing

- 1) Gmail - Free Email Service Gmail is the Google approach to email and chat. Practically unlimited free online storage allows you to collect all your messages, and Gmail's simple but very smart interface lets you find them precisely and see them in context without effort. Unfortunately, Gmail does not offer IMAP, only POP access. Gmail also puts contextual advertising next to the emails you read.
- 2) FastMail Guest Account - Free Email Service FastMail is a great free email service with IMAP access, useful features, one of the best web-based email interfaces and few ads.
- 3) Yahoo! Mail - Free Email Service Yahoo! Mail is a comfortable, reliable and secure email service with a reasonable amount of storage. A pretty good spam filter keeps out the junk, and you can send rich emails using Yahoo! Mail's HTML editor.
- 4) AIM Mail - Free Email Service AIM Mail, AOL's free web-based email service, shines with 2 GB of online storage, very good spam protection and a rich, easy to use interface. Unfortunately, AIM Mail lacks a bit in productivity (no labels, smart folders and message threading), but makes up for some of that with very functional IMAP access.
- 5) Inbox.com - Free Email Service Inbox.com not only gives you 2 GB to store your mail online but also a highly polished, fast and functional way to access it including speedy search, custom folders and reading mail by conversation.
- 6) goowy mail - Free Email Service goowy mail is your rich Desktop email program on the web with a fast interface that lets you drag and drop, use context menus and enjoy lots of pleasant eye candy. In addition to email, goowy offers a calendar, an RSS feed reader and games done in a similar fashion. More features and online storage would do goowy mail good, though.
- 7) MSN Hotmail - Free Email Service MSN Hotmail comes with solid security features and a straight forward, easy to use yet quite powerful interface. Unfortunately, Hotmail lack of POP or IMAP access, you cannot search messages in Hotmail, there is no support for secure messaging, and email management tools as well as the spam filter could use some improvement.
- 8) My Way Mail - Free Email Service My Way Mail is a clean, fast and fun (though not particularly advanced) free email service.
- 9) Care2 E-mail - Free Email Service Get a solid Web-based email account and donate to environmental organizations, both for free with Care2 E-mail.
- 10) Lycos Mail - Free Email Service Lycos Mail has no advanced features, but it also can be configured to have no spam.

Full Mailbox

If a friend calls to tell you that his/her e-mails to your mailbox are bouncing, it's because your mailbox is full. The message refers to the server that handles your mail and not to your e-mail software. The server is operated by your ISP. Your ISP allots a certain amount of space for your e-mail which is usually 5 to 10 megabytes. If you don't get any mail that means all of your old e-mail has accumulated there over time. You've finally filled your space. There's a setting within your e-mail program that tells the server to delete your e-mail after you've downloaded it. Otherwise, the e-mail will simply be stored there. Call your ISP and ask that the e-mail be deleted from the server. That will solve the immediate problem. Then fix your software so e-mail will be deleted from the service automatically. In Outlook Express, click Tools, Accounts, click the Mail tab, select the proper account., then click Properties, Advanced. Now clear the box next to "Leave a copy of messages on server." In Microsoft Outlook, click Tools, E-mail Accounts., select "View or change existing e-mail accounts," click Next, select the proper account, and click Change, Change and More Settings, and select the Advanced tab. Next clear the box next to "Leave a copy of messages on the server," click OK, Next, Finish. In Eudora, select Tools, Options, Incoming Mail, and clear the box next to "Leave mail on server." In Netscape, select Edit, Mail & Newsgroups Account Settings, click Server Settings, clear the box next to "Leave messages on server," and click OK.

Google E-mail Account

Google launched Gmail <www.google.com/accounts/NewAccount>. It's a free e-mail service so impressive that Hotmail and Yahoo! were forced to upgrade their free offerings. You get a whopping two gigabytes of storage space, which means you don't need to delete messages; you can simply archive them. It also features threaded views that help you manage your e-mail. You can get Gmail on the Google home page.



Backup, Schmackup

Pim Borman
SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

New, Best and Worst

I can't pick up a computer magazine without being harangued about the urgent need to back up my hard drive(s) before the world is coming to an end. I have never been able to bring myself to follow that well-meant advice, although not without lingering feelings of guilt. On a few occasions I have used the latest hot backup program to store data folders to a compressed file on a backup drive. Then I wondered if I would be able to retrieve my data from that file if the need arose, and conveniently forgot to update the backup.

Last year I bought a 200 GB external hard drive to store backups. It came with a backup program that I used to back up those data folders I wanted to protect. After I was done I had about 199 GB of external disk space left. It dawned on me that it might be easier to just copy the data folders I wanted to back up directly to the external drive. No big deal and no worry about the integrity of my backup data.

After all, what is there that's irreplaceable? I edit our User Group's Web site, about 12 MB by now. After every update I publish the site to my external hard drive and two locations on the Web. Once or twice a year I also copy the whole thing to a CD-ROM that I give to our president for safekeeping. That's safe enough by any measure.

I keep extra copies of photos and genealogy data on several hard drives, and annually copy them to a backup CD. Current financial and tax data I keep on removable storage with backup to CDs, as well as hard copies in a file cabinet. Personal email correspondence gets backed up occasionally, although I can't remember ever going back to letters from years ago. I might have to borrow a computer from the Smithsonian to recover my earliest correspondence, written in the late eighties with a Textra word processor on floppy disks that actually flopped.

During the past two Christmas seasons, while nostalgia was running high, my son Mike and I dug out some old 8-mm family movies, taken in the 60's, 70's, and 80's, for conversion to digital format. The old projector suffered from a broken drive belt, but thanks to Google I managed to find a replacement on the Web. I still had some splice tapes left to repair the brittle film as needed. We used a Vivitar UVC-1 All-In-One Universal Video Converter to funnel the images into Mike's digital camcorder. The converter is a rectangular box with an opaque glass projection window in the long side, and a condenser lens in the short side. The camcorder, on a tripod, is focused through the condenser lens and a diagonal internal mirror on the projected image. We needed to adjust the frame rate of the camcorder to obtain a steady picture. Mike then recorded the camcorder copy with a SONY RDR-GX300 DVD Recorder on DVDs for sharing with relatives and archiving. Now THAT is worthwhile backing up! The quality of the old movies is primitive by today's standards, but the contents are invaluable and irreplaceable.

If you run a business I can see the importance of regularly and completely backing up everything, making sure to keep extra copies off-site. But as a private individual, just use common sense and stop worrying. What is there to lose, really? And while you are at it, maybe you should look around the garage, the attic, or the basement for clutter that can safely be thrown away!

TV Tuner Troubles

We live at the edge of the city of Evansville, with a small, wooded area behind our back fence. That provides great privacy and a wide variety of interesting wildlife, from birds, squirrels, and raccoons to occasional deer. Unfortunately, over the past 50 years or so the trees have encroached on the overhead power line, and we suffer frequent power outages whenever a storm passes through the area. Naturally, that happens just when you are glued to the TV screen to follow the progress of the storm on the radar.

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SOLVE O/S MYSTERIES
PROVIDE ASPIRIN AS
NEEDED
MAJOR SURGERY
ACCOMPLISHED BY
OTHER FACILITIES

**ALAMO PC
RESOURCE
CENTER**



I went looking on the Internet for an external TV tuner that I could plug into the USB port of my laptop when the power went off. As it turns out, there are several models available. I first chose a Hauppauge WinTV USB2 unit, about \$90 online. Unfortunately, it didn't work as advertised. The picture was all right, but I could not get the sound to come on, and the software did not manage to activate the remote control. FAQs on the Hauppauge Web site did not help and the latest drivers were identical to those on the CD. I tried the unit on my desktop computer with the same lack of success. The vendor, J&B Music, readily gave me a Return Authorization number, although I'm still out the shipping charges both ways.

Undaunted, I bought an ATI TV Wonder USB 2.0 tuner at Circuit City, \$80 with a \$20 mail-in rebate. Same features but without remote control. Same problems too, except that this time I received no picture either. Checked their Web site's FAQs, downloaded and installed newly updated drivers. Now I didn't even get the black screen. Called support who referred me to a help file on the FAQ site. No luck. Returned the unit to Circuit City and got all my money back. Oh well... If you know of a reliable external USB2 TV Tuner, please let me know. It better be good this time.

Freespire

For those of you with an interest in the Linspire Linux distribution, there is now a free distro called Freespire. It is essentially the same as Linspire 5.1, without some help files, but with developers utilities. To quote freespire.org: "The regular, complete version includes legally-licensed, 3rd party codecs, drivers and software, to offer better hardware, file type, and multimedia support. Freespire includes turn-key, out-of-the-box support for MP3, Windows Media, QuickTime, Java, Flash, Real, ATI drivers, nVidia drivers, proprietary WiFi drivers, modem drivers, fonts, and so on."

It has all the functionality of Linspire 5.1, including some new features forthcoming in Linspire 6.0. The expectation is that Freespire will function as a core around which volunteer programmers will add new functionality under the Open Source system, similar to other Open Source projects such as Firefox, Thunderbird, and OpenOffice.org. Meanwhile, if you were thinking of giving Linspire a try but were unwilling to pay \$40 for the program, you can now use Freespire for free and have essentially the same functionality.

Dell DeCrapifier

Dell stock has gone down more than 50% during the last several years. Many reasons are given, including the presumed ineptness of its CEO during the last two years, Kevin Rollins. Specifically mentioned are poor customer service and the loss of key personnel (The Wall Street Journal 8/22/06). There is no mention of the disgust of many new Dell customers when they find their new computer loaded with unwanted software and spyware that slows everything down and is almost impossible to remove. Jason York to the rescue! He has written a script called the Dell DeCrapifier that automatically detects and removes unwanted software from new Dell computers. If you have a new Dell you can find it at www.yorkspace.com. (PCWorld September 2006).

News Brief

Bricks now have intelligence

Lego expects to release software, hardware and Bluetooth developer kits. The firmware code and the developer kits should be available by August when Mindstorms NXT is publicly available. 114 Mindstorms fans have been taking part in an invite-only developers program. The idea is that they will be able to write books about Mindstorms, as well as create new software and designs for it. the developer program participants are now free to discuss their projects, and much of that work should begin appearing on the Mindstorms Web site <http://mindstorms.lego.com/?domainredir=www.mindstorms.com> soon. the Bluetooth developer kit details the Bluetooth protocol built into the NXT microprocessor. That should enable users to design programs allowing any Bluetooth device to interact with Mindstorms NXT robots



Next Generation MS Certifications

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

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

Microsoft's intent with their new generation of certifications is to become more specific and targeted to reflect the detail of what you do and to prove your expertise to those who need to know. What they've actually done is confuse some of us who understood the old certifications by throwing in some new letters that we don't yet understand. So let's see if we can sort out the new alphabet soup. As shown in the figure below, there are three series and four credentials.

[NOTE: The following information comes directly from Microsoft.com.]

The focus of this article will be on the Technology Specialist and Technology Series and the IT Professional Portion of the Professional Series of certifications. Technology Specialists target specific technologies, distinguishing themselves by demonstrating in-depth knowledge on certain technologies. Those seeking certifications in the professional series demonstrate skills which include design, project management, operations management, and planning, and they are contextual to the job role. These credentials give candidates a reliable indicator of on-the-job performance.

The Professional Series certifications typically consist of one to three exams, have one or more prerequisites from the Technology Series, are focused on a single job role, and require recertification to maintain in active status.

Microsoft currently offers two Professional series credentials:

Microsoft Certifications for IT Professionals

The new Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) and Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) credentials provide IT professionals with a simpler and more targeted framework to showcase their technical skills in addition to the skills required for specific developer job roles. The credentials are geared toward IT professionals who administer a Microsoft SQL Server 2005 database or develop business process and integration solutions by using BizTalk Server 2006.

The Microsoft Certified Database Administrator (MCDBA), Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician (MCDST), Microsoft Certified System Administrator (MCSA), and Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) credentials continue to provide IT professionals using Microsoft SQL Server 2000, Microsoft Windows XP, and Microsoft Windows Server 2003 with industry recognition and validation of their IT skills and experience.

Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist

The new Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) credential highlights your skills and knowledge of Microsoft products. With the credential, you can demonstrate your expertise administering, deploying, and maintaining Microsoft SQL Server 2005 or developing business process and integration solutions using BizTalk Server 2006. The two Technology Specialist certifications are as follows:

Technology Specialist: SQL Server 2005
Technology Specialist: BizTalk Server 2006

Microsoft Certified IT Professional

The new Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) credential lets you highlight your specific area of expertise. Now, you can easily distinguish yourself as an expert in database administration, database development, or business intelligence. The three IT Professional certifications are as follows:

IT Professional: Database Developer
IT Professional: Database Administrator
IT Professional: Business Intelligence Developer

Microsoft Certified Database Administrator

Demonstrate that you have the skills to lead organizations in the successful design, implementation, and administration of Microsoft SQL Server 2000 databases with the following Microsoft Certified Database Administrator (MCDBA) credential.

Microsoft Certified Database Administrator

Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician

The Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician (MCDST) credential proves that you have the skills to support users who run Microsoft Windows XP. It also proves that you can troubleshoot desktop environments that run on the Microsoft Windows XP operating system.

Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician

Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator

The Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator (MCSA) certification will advance your career by ensuring you have the skills to successfully manage and troubleshoot system environments that run on the Microsoft Windows operating system. The MCSA: Messaging credential identifies systems administrators who implement, manage, and maintain a messaging infrastructure using Microsoft Exchange Server. The MCSA: Security credential identifies systems administrators who specialize in managing, maintaining, and implementing security on the Windows operating system and as part of a secure computing environment.

Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator
MCSA: Messaging on Windows Server 2003
MCSA: Messaging on Windows 2000
MCSA: Security on Windows Server 2003
MCSA: Security on Windows 2000

Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer

Earn the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) certification and prove your expertise in designing and implementing the infrastructure for business solutions that are based on the Microsoft Windows 2000 operating system and the Microsoft Windows Server System. The MCSE: Messaging credential identifies systems engineers who design, plan, implement, manage, and maintain a messaging infrastructure using Microsoft Exchange Server. The MCSE: Security credential identifies systems engineers who specialize in managing, maintaining, and implementing security on the Windows operating system and as part of a secure computing environment.

Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer
MCSE: Messaging on Windows Server 2003
MCSE: Messaging on Windows 2000
MCSE: Security on Windows Server 2003
MCSE: Security on Windows 2000

As you can see, there really isn't that much change in the Microsoft plan for the IT Professional on the Administration side. They've primarily just added some entry level certifications at the top and some specialization certifications for those that deal with SQL Server as Administrators and Developers, which many that I've talked to in the industry felt were necessary. I hope this article, and the links provided, helped sort out any of the new letters that you've seen being thrown about as of late. Sometimes wading through all those acronyms can be a bit confusing.

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PROVIDE ASPIRIN AS
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MAJOR SURGERY
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**ALAMO PC
RESOURCE
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Alamo PC Organization now offers members private or semi-private tutorials

 Keyboarding/Typing
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 Microsoft Word

Rates for one student

\$35 per hour
\$300 for 10 hours

Rates for two or three students

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

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that fit **your** schedule at our modern facility in
Crossroads Mall.

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(210) 736-0080

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac More Macstuff

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

What is becoming of Microsoft's support for the Mac?

As most of you know, I've been a long time supporter of Virtual PC for the Mac. However, Microsoft just announced that it's ending its support for the software on Intel-based Macs. The decision is most likely due to the creation of Parallels, which I mentioned back in June of this year, and VMWare stating that they intend to create their own version. Of course, everyone is also aware of Apple's own Boot Camp software which is now in Beta, but will become native in the next version of OS X.

"The (Macintosh business unit) still recognizes that customers need access to Windows applications from their Intel-based Macs and feels confident that alternative solutions offered by Apple and other vendors, combined with a fully packaged retail copy of Windows will satisfy this need," the company said. Microsoft is moving ahead with its effort to bring a native version of Office to Intel-based Macs. It didn't say when it'd be ready. The first native software for Intel Macs is planned to be Messenger 6.0, set for release later this year.

Features of Leopard (OS X 10.5)

At the Worldwide Developers Conference 2006 in San Francisco, Apple CEO Steve Jobs gave a first look at Leopard, the next version of OS X. The proposed launch date is next spring.

Apple outlined a dozen features that will be new and improved over the current OS.

One feature is Time Machine. This is a totally new, automatic backup and version-control application (somewhat similar to Microsoft's system restore and backup utilities in some ways). Time Machine can automatically back up entire systems, along with any changes made to an external hard drive or a server. Apple claims that even if your hard drive dies, you can use Time Machine to restore your system to a new drive.

Another interface element, Dashboard, will also see changes in Leopard. In addition to a developer tool called Dashcode, which includes a visual HTML, CSS, and JavaScript editor and debugger, Dashboard also will include Web Clip, a Dashboard widget that allows users to grab portions of any Web page, be it a Webcam image, a top-10 list, or a comic strip, and create a widget. These widget update live as the Web page does.

iChat AV, Apple's instant-messaging and videoconferencing application, will gain features such as multiple logins, tabbed chats, video recording, and invisibility. Also, the new iChat Theater feature will allow users to present iPhoto slide shows, Keynote presentations, QuickTime movies and more to their chat buddies.

Leopard will also support virtual desktops, known as Spaces. Jobs demonstrated with four of these and showed how you can see all of them at once and even drag applications from one to another.

Spotlight, Universal Access, and Mail will also be revised, with the last gaining stationery, notes, and system-wide To Do capabilities.

Leopard will include full 64-bit support, all the way from the lowest levels of the operating system to application user interfaces, while maintaining full 32-bit backward compatibility. Jobs also mentioned that Leopard will be a "complete package," with applications currently in Beta, such as Boot Camp, and previously separate applications all bundled as one. Jobs also said Leopard will offer a new level of parental controls and that the iCal calendaring application will gain full multi-user abilities, although neither app was demonstrated at the conference.

Evil Widget Installer?

MacWorld reported that Apple quietly included a Widget update mechanism in the OS X 10.4.7 update that is not user controllable. Most every other program does so through a mechanism that can be disabled. While the update collected no personal information, it did communicate to Apple the widget usage on the machine. In my opinion, the update mechanism should be controllable and Apple didn't bother to tell us about it.

This opens up a dangerous area. Instead of thinking about the benefits of automatic updates from Apple that add new and beneficial features to your operating system, your more likely to wonder what Apple is using to spy on you. Imagine if something were installed that monitored all outgoing or incoming Internet traffic, or what you have installed on your machine.

I think Apple should be more upfront with it's users before it pushes such updates in the future.



Finding a home for your hompage

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!

After you design your Web site you need a place to host it. A Web host is a service that gives you space on their server, a computer that is configured for public access to Web sites.

1. **Paid Shared Hosted Site:** This is by far the most popular solution. Web hosting companies will host your site and register your domain name for a modest monthly fee. You will be sharing a remote computer with many other hosted Web sites. Two companies that I have used are Hosting Matters and 5 Dollar Hosting. For less than \$100 per year you can get a year's worth of Web space and get a registered domain name such as <www.yourname.com>. Everything is arranged online with a credit card, and your name and space should be ready to use in a day or two.

Two terms you need to know:

* **Storage space:** This is the megabytes (MB) of files that you can store on a server. At the least expensive level this is usually 25MB. Most Web sites will easily fit in this amount of space.

* **Data Transfer/Mo:** Each time someone views the front page of the SAVAE site they transfer 15 files totaling 41KB. If he or she clicks on the "Music" link they transfer another 34KB. If they decide to listen to the audio clip of Mananitas, they are transferring 125KB more. At the least expensive level you will get 2-5 gigabytes (GB) of data transfer per month. If you exceed it the Web host will alert you and charge you more or, if you prefer, close down your site for the remainder of the month.

Don't buy more than you need, but make sure you can scale up if your needs change.

For example, you might not need a shopping cart with the ability to accept secure transactions on your initial business Web site, but if this is in your future plans, make sure that it is available. Same with SQL (Structured Query Language), a standard interactive and programming language for getting information from and updating a database.

Some Web hosts will provide tools to make it easier to construct and design your site. Yahoo, for example, offers a program called Site Builder, that walks you through menus to design your site.

If you use Microsoft Front Page make sure that your host supports Front Page Extensions. Also, make sure it supports FTP and doesn't require you to use a clunky Web-based interface to upload your files to their server.

Most of the Web hosts will also give you free e-mail addresses and other services, but note that your Web hosting does NOT include basic Internet access - you're just buying space for your Web site, not access to the Internet.

Most Web hosting services offer a complete package - you can register your domain name, contract for the space and be online within a day or so.

One of the advantages to having your own domain name is that you can transfer your hosting service to another company and still keep the same Web address. Take the time to make the best choice for your needs, but take comfort in knowing that if it doesn't work out you can always switch.

2. **Free Web Hosts.** This is free service that you pay for indirectly by agreeing to include advertising on your site. Some of the most popular are Tripod, Angelfire and Geocities. All of these include Web page building tools that use templates and wizards to help you build your site, or you can design them from scratch. The advertising - popup ads - are added automatically by the service. All of these also allow you to upgrade your service, for a fee, to eliminate the ads or use your own domain name. Your address will look something like <www.geocities.com/yourname>.

Free is good, but most people find popup ads irritating. Use this for a personal site, but not for a business one.

3. **ISP hosted services.** Many Internet Service Providers - the company you get your basic Internet service from - include some free Web space. The address of such a site will look something like <yourname.ispname.com> or <www.ispname.com/~yourname>. Some ISPs restrict the kind of site you can host for free - some prohibit business sites.

Contact your ISP to see if they offer free Web space.

It is, of course, possible to manage your own server, but this is complicated, expensive and beyond the scope of the Lazy Webmaster.

This is a decision you don't have to make right away - your Web site can be designed totally off-line and only uploaded to the public server when you are ready to go public.

The extra experience and breathing space might give you more data to ensure you are making the right decision.



The Graphics Guy Layer upon layers in Photoshop

Paul Vaughn, Alamo PC

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

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

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

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

Continued on page 29.

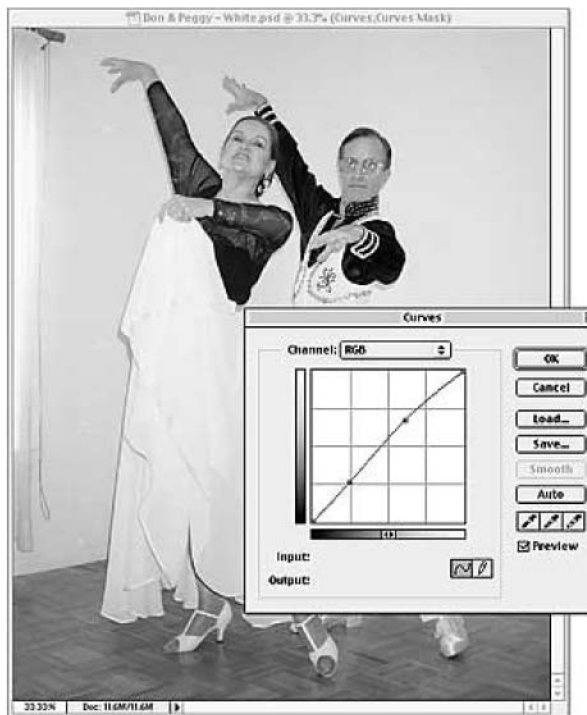


Figure 1



Figure 2

Volunteers Wanted

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

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

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

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



Figure 3

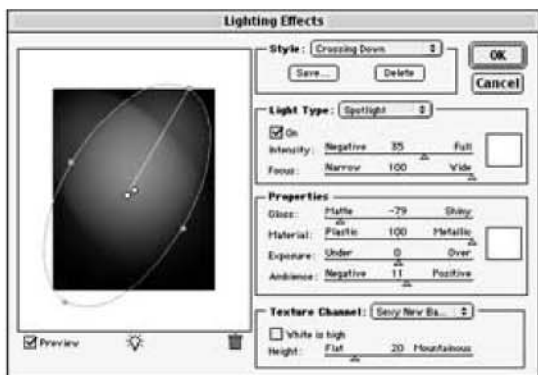


Figure 4

STUDY GROUPS

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



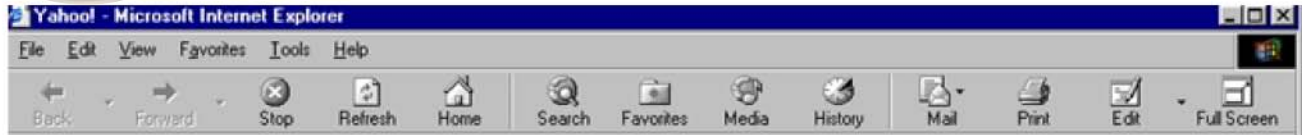
Figure 5



Internet Explorer - Connections


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>




I believe we've covered the subjects on the Drop Down menus pretty thoroughly. The Standard Button bar is located directly below, as seen above.

The Back and Forward arrows, grayed out in this example, allow you to shift between pages that you have opened online. As you follow links to different pages, you may use the arrows to go back or forward to the previous or next page. The arrows still appear grayed out until you hover your cursor over them. If a page is available, the arrow will appear in color.

At times, you may begin trying to access a particular site. If the server is very busy, or for some other reason the page seems to be taking much too long to load, you may wish to change your mind and try a different one. At this point the  Stop button comes into play. Just click on this one and the action will cease. You may then enter a different URL in hopes of a faster response.

Should you have reason to feel that the current page has been corrupted, or is not functioning properly, the  Refresh button does just as its name implies and re-acquires the data for that page. I have used it in the past, but cannot come up with a solid example as to why.

After browsing a number of sites, you may wish to return to the home page to pursue some other feature of your browser. This is where the Home button comes in handy. Simply click on it and you return immediately to your home page. 

At this point the Standard Buttons become a little more complex. The Search button opens a new area on the left side of the active window. Here you're given a range of things for which to search. The first of these which you may see at the top of the next column under "Choose a category for your search", is Find a Web page. At the bottom of the list you see a dialog box "Find a Web page containing". For example, I placed Arthroscopic Surgery here and came up with the list seen at right, just a small part of



the list provided by MSN Search.



The next search category is “Find a Person’s Address”, seen below.

Choose a category for your search:

- ☐ Find a Web page
- ☒ **Find a person's address**
- ☐ Find a business
- ☐ Previous searches
- ☐ Find a map
- ☐ Look up a word
- ☐ Find a picture

Search For:

 First Name:

 Last Name:

 City:

 State/Province:

 Brought to you by InfoSpace

The resulting list seen below is just the beginning of what amounts in my case to a full page of various data. The results appear in the right hand pane of the browser. Try to put your own name in the search. The results may surprise you.

Ronald L Ingraham
 9570 S Tropical Trl
 Merritt Island, FL 32952-6906
[Add to Outlook](#)

“Find a Business” functions in the same manner only searches in the Yellow pages. The search below proved difficult because of the spelling of the business name. It took several tries before I came up with something close enough for it to be found.



YELLOW PAGES SEARCH

- ☐ Find a Business by Type
- ☒ Find a Business by Name



ALL LISTINGS

81% **STIX N'Rig'n**
 228 Marina Bay Drive Suite D
 Kemah, TX 77565
[business profile](#) | [phone](#) | [map & details](#)

This listing was preceded by the statement “No exact match found”. You see their estimate percentage of accuracy.

“Previous searches” produces a list as below. I’m not sure how many searches are saved. Clicking on any of the list will return you to results page for that search.

☒ Previous searches

- ☐ Find a map
- ☐ Look up a word
- ☐ Find a picture

You've run the following searches:

- [Sticks ,Texas](#)
- [Ron,Ingraham,Merritt Island,FL](#)
- [Arthroscopic Surgery](#)

“Find a map” allows you to see a map of the found location, or any new search you wish, a service of expedia.com

☒ Find a map

- ☐ Look up a word
- ☐ Find a picture

Search For:

 This Address:

 City:

 State/Province:

 Zip/Postal Code:

 Brought to you by Expedia.com

“Look up a word” allows an Encarta search of an encyclopedia, a dictionary search of Merriam-Webster, or a thesaurus search of Thesaurus.com. Merriam-Webster has links to 4 dictionaries plus Britannica.

Finally, “Find a picture” brings up the Corbis site where you may enter any picture subject and receive a gallery of related thumbnails. They may be saved as jpegs. Corbis has a stringent use agreement you should study before downloading pictures. □

Tweaking Windows' Taskbar

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, www.aarp.org

It's easy to use a key part of Windows' screen real estate, the taskbar, without really noticing it. Like a car's dashboard, taskbar components summarize what's happening on your computer and access running software. But unlike your car's dashboard, the taskbar can be customized for individual needs and preferences.

www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/howto/tweaking_windows_taskbar.html

Fun with Windows' Taskbar

I've read reports that most people can't accurately draw their car's dashboard, no matter how many hours or years they've stared at it. Similarly, many of us look at and use a key part of Windows' screen real estate -- the taskbar -- without paying much attention to it.

Like a car's dashboard, taskbar components -- Start button at one end, notification area icons at the other, and application buttons in between -- summarize what's happening on your PC and give quick access to running software. But the taskbar is more interesting than a car dashboard: you can customize it for your individual needs and preferences.

This article describes Windows XP's taskbar; other Windows versions have mostly similar facilities. People sometimes worry when their taskbar disappears or suddenly looks odd -- or moves to an unfamiliar place on the screen. We'll see how such glitches are easily fixed.

Right-clicking a blank taskbar area displays Windows' familiar context menu, showing available options. Clicking Toolbars lets you display or hide built-in toolbars (groups of icons representing programs, folders, or files) or create your own. My favorite toolbars are Desktop (a handy pop-up list which duplicates desktop icons) and Quick Launch (which

holds the few key icons I always want immediately available). Other standard toolbars are Address and Links. Cascade and Tile options specify arrangement of open application windows: fanned like playing cards or arranged in a grid. A key option -- Lock the Taskbar -- controls whether you can change the taskbar. When the taskbar is unlocked, you can change its size by dragging its edge away from or towards the screen's edge. You can move individual toolbars by grabbing their handles (perforated line near each one) and move the taskbar by grabbing a blank area.

Clicking Properties brings up a detailed options dialogue box. It's safe to experiment but only change one thing at a time until you learn your way through all the choices. The Taskbar tab customizes the taskbar itself and its notification area. You can auto-hide the taskbar -- handy on small monitors to reclaim space for application windows. When it hides, moving the mouse near it makes it visible. You can always keep the taskbar on top of other applications, or allow it to be covered. If it's hidden, pressing ctrl-esc displays it.

Similar task bar buttons -- for example, representing multiple Word documents -- can be grouped to save taskbar space, or spread out. If they're grouped, left-clicking the group displays all open files, and right-clicking lets you manipulate the files simultaneously.

You can add and delete Quick Launch toolbar icons by dragging them on or off the toolbar. I trimmed mine to two icons: Show Desktop and Windows Explorer. From a Windows keyboard, these are available by pressing Win-D and Win-E, respectively.

The notification area (called the "tray" in earlier Windows versions) shows icons for small applications or utilities that are running, plus your clock. Mousing over an icon pops up its name. You can control which icons are displayed and whether inactive icons (representing programs you haven't used for a while) are hidden. Each program running consumes PC resources so it's worth monitoring these icons and pruning any which aren't necessary. Right-click an icon to display options. Closing some applications prevents them from automatically starting at system boot, while others offer an explicit option.

Continuing our tour through taskbar properties, the Start Menu tab lets you specify Start Menu appearance and operation. You can pick large or small icons and determine how many shortcuts are saved in it for recently used programs. Key programs can be "pinned" to the Start menu by right-clicking a desktop icon or dragging an icon to the Start button, and placing it in the permanent top area. The Advanced tab determines Start menu behavior and lets you select modern or "classic" Start menu format.

Finally, when the Taskbar is unlocked, three extra toolbar right-click options are available: View, Show text, and Show title, for fine tuning your PC's "dashboard".

While Windows operates just fine as it's installed, tweaking taskbar settings and other options can make it faster and more pleasant to use. And since there are usually multiple ways to accomplish tasks in Windows, it's worth exploring -- for example, right-clicking to explore context menus and clicking various options/customize/advanced buttons to see what's available. Don't be afraid to tinker, but remember what you change so you can undo it!

News Brief

New Trend: Convert that hybrid

A few small companies will start to offer services and products for converting hybrid cars like the Toyota Prius that currently get around 50 miles per gallon into plug-in hybrids that rely more heavily on electrical power and can get about 100 miles per gallon. But conversion won't be cheap—at least initially. California's EDrive Systems will charge around \$10,000 to \$12,000 to install the extra lithium batteries needed to turn a standard Prius into a plug-in hybrid when its service begins later this summer. At that price, and with gas at \$3 a gallon, it would take around 160,000 to 200,000 miles of driving to break even. But some groups are looking to the do-it-yourself crowd for a cheaper solution. CalCars is working with independent inventors to bring the price of a DIY kit based around an open blueprint to about \$3,000. Mass manufacturing, though, could lower the prices dramatically over time. Andrew Frank, a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of California at Davis said "We can't switch from where we are today overnight. It will take 20 years or more to take the PHEV (plug-in hybrid electric vehicle) to get into our society," Frank said. Nonetheless, "we can greatly reduce the amount of liquid fuel we use for transportation,"

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Managing Device Drivers

By **Vinny La Bash**, Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
labash@spcug.org, www.spcug.org

Windows is the most widely used operating system (OS) in the personal computer world. For each piece of hardware that's connected to a Windows based computer, somebody somewhere has written a piece of software to make the device work with a computer. This piece of software is called a "Device Driver." One of the most useful features of a well-written device driver is making itself all but invisible to whoever is using the computer. You create a document, send it to your printer, and somehow the document prints. Your device driver takes care of all the little details necessary for the printing operation to occur.

Drivers are one of the three most important broad categories of software in computers. The first is the operating system, the second is whatever applications are installed, including communications, and the third is device drivers. Drivers are important for two reasons. First, your peripherals won't work without them, and second, corrupted or out-of-date device drivers are responsible for most system crashes.

There are other reasons why it's important to keep your device drivers up-to-date. Sometimes a manufacturer will become aware of some kind of defect or glitch in the driver software and issue a fix. You will need it. A different manufacturer may have a driver for its own device that will cause a conflict with an out-of-date driver on your device. Over time, updates for Windows may eventually cause problems with an out-of-date driver.

Proper device driver management is essential to keeping your computer crash proof. If device driver management is unfamiliar territory, please pay attention. You'll be glad you did. Microsoft introduced the concept of Signed Drivers with Windows 2000 and continued with Windows XP. If a device driver is "signed" by Microsoft, it means that the driver has been subjected to meticulous, painstaking, extensive testing to ensure compatibility with your Windows operating system.

Anytime you install a signed driver, Windows checks it by default and also guarantees it has not been altered or changed in any way. If the driver is not signed, Windows alerts you with a strong message that the driver has not passed Microsoft's rigorous certification tests.

Windows will also ask if you want to install the driver anyway, and will do so if you give it permission. Keeping your computer safe from unstable software is always a good idea. Fortunately, changing the Windows default is relatively easy, but you need Administrator privileges.

Right-click the My Computer icon on the desktop, then select Properties. Click the Hardware tab and then the Driver Signing button. Choose Block to let this be the new default, and you're done. Windows will now block any device drivers that it does not recognize as signed.

Not all manufacturers send their drivers to Microsoft for testing. For small firms this can be an expensive proposition. Does this mean you should never install an unsigned driver? No, but you should do some checking of your own to ensure that the company has a good reputation in the industry. Sometimes a new device driver will prove unstable for various reasons. Windows XP has the ability to delete the driver and install a previous version. Open the Device Manager, and double click the drive that's causing problems. Switch to the Driver tab and Roll Back the driver to the previous version.



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What we've discussed so far is fine if you're using relatively new equipment, but suppose you're having trouble with something that's old and the manufacturer has gone out of business. Chances are good that the original installation disk is lost or deteriorated to a point where it is no longer useful. There are many other reasons why you could have difficulty finding a device driver, but these are the most common.

In the past, finding the right device driver or firmware was often a tedious, time consuming, and frequently impossible task. Nowadays, we have web sites such as www.driverguide.com to help us. The site has been around since 1997, and has seen many improvements. It has a unique membership base of thousands who collectively compiled a massive database of drivers, firmware, and support documents that is the largest and most comprehensive on the Web.

Recognizing that most people who use computers are not experts, they have devised an easy step-by-step process that will help you find and install drivers. There is an archive of hundreds of thousands of files containing not only drivers, but voluminous information on manufacturers including links to other sites with driver information. Also useful are the discussion boards where you can chat with others who have the same hardware, and learn from their experience.

After you search for a driver and find it, help doesn't stop. The Driver Summary provides you with a rundown of all the information you're likely to need to make the decision about whether or not to download and install the driver. This information is put together from the original manufacturer, plus ratings and comments from those who have previously downloaded and installed the file. It's nice to have everything in one place.

There are many web sites where you can find information about device drivers, but this is one of the best places to use as your starting point. Managing device drivers does not have to be a search in the dark. Use the tools available to you, and your system will be stable and a lot less prone to crash.

News Brief

Amazon Reveals Windows Vista Pricing

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,2010150,00.asp>

Preorder prices posted on the Amazon.com Website, Windows Vista Home Basic will retail for \$199, while an upgrade to this version will cost \$99.95, with \$89.95 for an additional upgrade license. Vista Home Premium is priced on Amazon.com at

\$239, with an upgrade costing \$159 and an additional upgrade license for \$143.00, while Vista Business costs \$299 retail, \$199 for an upgrade and \$179 for an extra upgrade license.

Tech junkie



Microsoft Vista Beta-First Look

by **Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.**, Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida <http://www.spcug.org>, bwsail@yahoo.com

Many of the reviews that I have read on the early releases of Windows Vista have been done on "fast" hardware. Many times with 1- 2 GB of RAM. Knowing that many users of Windows XP will probably upgrade to Vista with their current hardware, I installed a Beta 2.0 copy of Windows Vista on an older machine. This computer has an Intel 1.3 GHz CPU and had 256 MB of RDRAM. I upgraded the RAM to 512 MB which is normal for many Windows XP users. The computer also has an ATA 40 GB hard drive and it did have a CD writer. However, when I went to install Vista, I found the installation disk was a DVD. So I had to upgrade to a DVD unit. I did manage to find a Sony DVD burner at a very reasonable price. So, a word of warning for those interested in upgrading to Vista when the final version is available, you may have to have a DVD drive to install it. This review is based on my hands-on experience with Vista.

I installed this Beta version to the hard drive as a new installation. It saved the previous version of Windows and user files in one folder. Since I had no applications or personal information on the drive I was able to delete this folder after the installation was complete. I did note that the installation took more than 90 minutes to complete. I'm sure that this was partly related to the speed of this computer as well as the size of the operating system. Since this is a pre-release version, it probably contains debugging code which contributes to its overall size.

Once Vista was installed, it brought up a Control Center Window. This had icons for several items, one being hardware that wasn't installed and other to add a printer. There were also a Vista tutorial and an icon for new items in Vista. The first thing I tried was to see what hardware wasn't installed. The first item on the list was the ethernet card, next the sound system, then a "Simple Controller" which I finally figured out was the modem and a SCSI controller. To simplify things I removed the modem and the SCSI card. Then I tried to install the ethernet card. At that point I started getting the User Account Control (UAC) windows which required that I approve every step that might change the make-up of the computer. Every time I tried to install a driver I had several UAC windows to get through before I could get to the installation process. And this, in spite of the fact that I was running as the System Administrator.

Any of you that have set up Window XP Professional should be familiar with the Administrator and User Account system. On my XP Pro system I have the Administrator account and a User account, both of which are password protected. I rarely use the Administrator account, instead I work in the User account. You might ask why I do this. The reason is that without the Administrator account running it is more difficult for trojans or parasites to make changes to any of the system files on my computer.

That is assuming that they can get past the firewall in the first place. I have seen too many XP Pro systems where the user is always running in the Administrator mode which has allowed invasions of the system by trojans/parasites. I have just cleaned out one system that was acting weirdly until I removed 295 parasites/trojans. Whenever I need to install software on my XP system, I simply use the "Run As" command and enter the Administrator password. That way I don't have to change from the User mode to the Administrator mode.

However, this has all changed in Vista with the User Account Control. Even if you are logged on as the System Administrator, it requests your permission for access to anything related to the system or devices. Just to review the list of hardware in the Device Manager requires that you get permission to do so by clicking in the Permissions request window. When you try to install new software or drivers you get a security window which requires your permission to let you continue. Then you get the UAC window which requires that you verify that you know you are installing new software and that you think it is reliable! You even get a UAC window when you try to download and install Windows Updates! I have learned that there is a good reason for this security. According to one report I have read it is possible for Trojans downloaded to your computer along with a web page, to inactivate your anti-virus, firewall and anti-parasite software. This can all be done in the background if you are running in the Administrator mode. Then changes can be made to your system software that can affect the operation of your computer. The UAC in Vista is designed to prevent this from happening. Once I set up my User account, then I had fewer UAC windows show up. They occurred only when I wanted to install new software or drivers. The only thing I had to do then was to provide the Administrator password.

Since I didn't have drivers for the ethernet card, I had to search for one on the Internet using my XP computer. After some research I was able to identify the make/model of the card. Then I found a driver on DriverGuide.com. I downloaded the zip file to my hard drive and burned it to a CD-RW. Then I transferred it to the hard drive on the Vista machine. Vista quickly extracted all the files for me. Then in the device driver, I clicked on "Update drivers" for the ethernet card and told it to search the drive for a driver. Low and behold, it did find and install the driver. Now, after some hard drive activity and approving the UAC to update the Network center, I was on the Internet.

The next thing I wanted was not my sound card driver. It was an anti-virus program. According to the Vista information site only TrendMicro has an A-V program approved for Vista. However, I had noticed on the Avast Web site that they had a Vista compatible version of their A-V software. So I went back to their web site and found that all versions of Avast are now Vista compatible. So I downloaded a free Home Edition and installed it. Again, I had the UAC windows to get through to get the installation under way. After it was installed, I went through the Avast registration and my A-V program was operational. So far, the Avast is running normally and is doing its usual updates in the background.

I have been using the Windows Firewall as I "assumed" it was a two-way firewall. I have since learned that it is only an incoming firewall. I plan on replacing it with ZoneAlarm.

After a re-boot of the computer, Vista popped up a window and asked if it could install my multimedia sound card. I clicked on OK and the next window had two choices, one of which was to search the Internet for a driver. At this point I still had no indication as to the manufacturer of the sound card, so I selected the Internet search. In just a few minutes it changed from searching to installing the software. Then I had a window saying it had installed the software for the Creative Labs sound card! Now that, in my mind is quite an improvement over previous Windows versions.

The one interesting aspect of the Creative installation is that Vista could not install a driver for the game controller. As with most sound cards, there is a output for a game controller. For some reason, Vista was unable to install a driver for this output. It is now listed in the Device Manager as an unknown device. The sound card is listed correctly.

My next step was to set up a User account and shift out of the Administrator mode. That was accomplished quite easily through the Control Panel. So, once I was in User mode, I downloaded a copy of OpenOffice. When I started to install it, a UAC window popped up and I had to enter the Administrator password. Then the installation proceeded normally. Not really any different from the User mode in XP.

Vista has a Security software setup in the Control Panel that is similar to that in XP. It shows the status of the firewall, anti-virus, updates and a new item, Windows Defender. This latter software is an anti-parasite package. It has a default setting to scan your hard drive every day at 2:00 a.m. Since my computer is rarely turned on at that hour, I changed the setting to 5:00 p.m. It is more likely to be running at that time.

The last step was to install two networked printers. I clicked on the "Add printers" icon in the Control Center Window. That brought up the Printer Installation Wizard. I selected a networked printer and told it to find the printer. Several minutes later it told me there were no networked printers. So I backed up and selected browse for printer. That took me through the whole network tree, but I did find the printer. When I selected the printer and went to the next window, a bright yellow warning popped up to tell me that "printer drivers can install viruses! Are you sure this networked computer is trustworthy?" Well, since it is my main computer, I decided it was trustworthy and clicked on the OK button. Then I got the usual UAC window. After entering the password, the installation was completed and a test page printed. I had to go through the same routine with the second printer. But at least both of them are installed and working.

The Vista computer is now part of my local network and I can share files with it. In fact, part of this article was written on the Vista computer using the OpenOffice I downloaded. I had intended to finish the article on that computer, but the hard drive died. I can't fault Vista for this, the computer is old and it was the original drive. So, when the new drive arrives, I will have to reinstall Vista and all the drivers. Since I had activated this copy of Vista, it will be interesting to see what will happen when I have to activate the new installation.

Next month I hope to tell you of my experience with the Vista interface. So, hang in there, more information on Vista will be coming.

**Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at bwsail@yahoo.com.*

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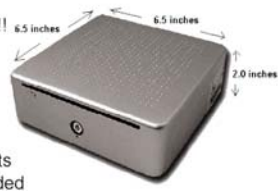
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Long-distance telephone customers can receive refunds of between \$30 and \$60 on their 2006 taxes to reimburse them for a now defunct telephone tax, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service said recently. The U.S. Treasury Department in May announced

it would end its legal right to keep a 3 percent federal excise tax on long-distance telephone service that dates back to 1898, when a luxury tax on wealthy Americans who owned telephones was imposed to help finance the Spanish-American war.

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Windows Vista; A Preview

By **Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.**, Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
Bwsail@yahoo.com, <http://www.spcug.org>

As you all probably know by now, Vista is the next version of Windows that Microsoft will be releasing. It was supposed to be available this November, but its release has been postponed to after January 1, 2007. However, that 2007 release date relates to the non-business versions of Vista. In other words, the versions that most of us will be using. The “enterprise” or business versions are expected to be shipped this November, unless something else slips.

As Dr. Goldstein pointed out in last month's “Bits & Bytes”, there will be more than one “consumer” or Home edition. You should realize that the six versions of Vista that are expected are really only two more than are currently available in Windows XP. In XP you have the Home and Professional versions plus the Multimedia and Tablet PC versions. In Vista you will have Vista Starter, Vista Home Basic, Vista Home Premium and Vista Ultimate. (Please remember that these names may change by the time Vista is actually released.) The non-consumer versions will be Vista Business and Vista Enterprise. I will limit the scope of this article to the consumer versions of Vista.

Now for a disclaimer. Although I have a beta copy of Vista, I have not yet installed it on my computer. I do have a large enough partition I could install it and dual-boot my machine. However, current anti-virus, firewall and anti-Trojan software will not run on Vista. There are not yet any new versions of these security programs available for Vista. Consequently, I have no intention of installing this Vista software on my main working computer. I have just acquired a second-hand system that I intend to use with nothing but Vista and connect to the Internet only when absolutely necessary. So this article is being written based on the most reliable sources I have been able to find that have been testing the beta version of Vista. After I return from my two months road-trip, I'll start working with the Vista beta. For those not familiar with the term “beta”, this refers to pre-production software or a testing version of software that is not yet ready for the market.

Now, back to the various versions of Vista. The Starter edition is a very low end version that will support only 32 bit software. Its exact limitations don't seem to be available yet. So, we'll just have to wait and see what Microsoft does with this version of Vista. It is fairly certain that it will not support the new graphics interface called “Aero”. In fact, it doesn't appear that the Home Basic edition will support this new graphics interface either. However, Home Basic will require a minimum of 512MB of RAM. From most reports it appears to me that Vista running on less than 1 GB of RAM will be seriously slow. Just like computers that try to run XP on only 128 MB of RAM.

So what does Aero offer the average computer user? If you have a 3D graphics card with enough video RAM (128 MB or more), then Aero will provide an entirely different appearance on your screen. (Some commentators have compared the Aero graphics interface to that of the Apple Macintosh OS X!!) Graphics designers refer to some of the capabilities as transparency, blurring, window previewing, and graphical rollover indicators. The easiest way to describe some of the effects is to provide some examples. The minimize, maximize and close indicators that you find in the upper right corner of your current window will change color as you pass your mouse over them. And this color will spill out around the edges of the icon. This gives you an additional visual indicator when your mouse is in the right position. Another example is when you place your mouse on the shortcut on the taskbar you will see a thumbnail view of the program. So when you are multi-tasking you can easily see which application you want. Or, you can check on the progress of a video feed or other running processes. Some other advantages of Aero are the ability to see “around the edges” of windows to the windows behind. This involves the transparency and blurring referred to earlier. This is advantageous to those who do multi-tasking. This ability is also apparently built-in to the new tabbed interface being included in Internet Explorer 7. There is also a change to the Alt-Tab function which allowed users to tab through the list of running programs to find the one they wanted to shift to in earlier versions of Windows. In Vista this function, now called Flip,



allows users to see a larger thumbnail view of open programs. There may also be a related 3D view which will show all the open windows twisted to a 45 degree angle. The user can then cycle through the windows by repeatedly pressing the Tab key.

The Aero graphics will be incorporated in the Home Premium and Ultimate versions. However, it requires a minimum of 128 MB of fast video RAM, DX9 3D support and a minimum of 1 GB of system RAM. Some comments have led me to believe that it will not work with motherboards that use shared RAM for the video function. It requires a separate graphics card. Also, I would never recommend trying to run a system with these minimums. They should both be doubled at the very least. If your PC doesn't have this capacity, then you will still be able to run Aero, but in a limited or basic mode. It will not display all the features found in the full Aero mode.

There have been a number of articles related to hardware requirements to run Vista. In my mind, I think it's a little early for these specs to be firm. One thing you can be sure of, Vista will require more RAM, a large hard drive and a fast central processor. Both Intel and AMD are touting their latest generation of processors as being necessary for running Vista. It does appear that current single core processors will be able to run Vista in 32 bit mode. I suspect that at some later date you will need to consider a dual-core 64 bit processors or a 32 bit processors that runs hyperthreading. Naturally, the 64 bit processor will have a definite advantage in running Vista.

The other questions is, how well will Vista run current 32 bit software? Most of the new computers currently being manufactured have 64 bit processors. These are designed to work with both 32 bit and 64 bit operating systems. Vista will be a 64 bit OS. There are very few 64 bit software applications available and most of your current software is, or should be, 32 bit. It is expected that "well behaved" 32 bit software will run on Vista without problems. Only those applications that don't install system level drivers or try to take control of the OS are considered well-behaved. You will have to replace your anti-virus and firewall software. That is a given. New Vista applications should be available when Vista comes on the market. The same is true of anti-trojan/anti-parasite software. Other software that might be a problem would include video games and multimedia applications. Those of you who have been running Windows for a few years and have upgraded from earlier versions are already familiar with one of the real road blocks to getting started with a new OS. That's right – device drivers! Every device driver for your hardware like printers, scanners, external USB drives, etc, will have to be re-written. Early adopters of Vista will have similar problems.

Windows XP runs 16 bit software in "Windows on Windows" (WOW) emulation mode. Vista will run 32 bit software in much the same way using an emulation layer to talk to the software. This converts the 32 bit program calls to 64 bit code. This process should be transparent to the user. Now, if you still have some 16 bit software or DOS software, it really is time to upgrade. These will not run on Vista without the use of third-party emulation software. There is no indication that Microsoft will support 16 bit or DOS applications.

Now the next topic is one that is really of primary interest with this Windows upgrade. It is also the one for which the least info is available. That is – Security! Windows XP and Internet Explorer have developed quite a reputation for being full of security holes. In spite of all the efforts to plug the gaps, new ones keep showing up. Microsoft has indicated that Vista will be far more secure than previous versions. The problem is that in trying to tighten the security net, Microsoft seems to be making things more difficult for the average user. With XP Home, the user generally operates in an administrator mode so that new applications can be installed and unused ones removed without having to set up additional permissions. With both XP Home and XP Professional, Microsoft has tried to get individual users to use a limited non-administrator mode on a regular basis. This has been singularly unsuccessful. The reason for running in the limited user mode is to prevent malware from accessing system applications in the Windows director and subdirectories and/or the registry. When the computer is set up so that accessing these functions requires a password, less damage can be done, by any outside influence, to the operating system or to the installed applications. However, because the limitations of the user mode are so great, most Windows users end up running in the administrator mode to simplify making changes to their computer. Well, it appears that Microsoft is going to change that. Vista will enforce the limited user or user account control (UAC) to prevent the user from having constant access to administrative functions. Microsoft obviously doesn't believe that users can be allowed unlimited access to their own computers. Included in this there may be increased blocking of online software distribution. You may get more pop-up warnings when your installed software tries to access the Internet. Nearly all applications need to access the Internet at one time or another. This gives them the capability to download updates, patches, bug fixes and other security related information. Many applications also need to hook into the operating system in ways that are similar to those used by malware. If your operating system is constantly popping up warning windows and telling you that your computer is at risk, how would you react? Especially if responding to these warnings by clicking on "Cancel" closes the program and prevents you from using an application. You may try to go back and run all of your applications as an "Administrator" as you did in XP. However, Vista has various levels of "Administrator" and may still require you to enter a password for non-Microsoft applications. Now for the caveat: Vista is not yet in final beta form, therefore there can be many changes, especially in the security setup. It will depend in part, on the comments from the testing community. Hopefully not all of them will be system administrators for large corporations. What Microsoft has admitted in one of their own tech articles is that "Windows services represent a large percentage of the overall attack surface in Windows". That is a direct quotation. So if Windows is the problem why are they trying to solve it by limiting the ability of users to use their computers and their software?

Over the coming months I will continue to provide updates on my own experience with Vista as well as information I obtain from other beta testers. We'll see just how much benefit we'll really get from this Windows upgrade.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail: bwsail at yahoo.com.

XP or Vista?

By Elaine Drain, President, Senior Surfers Computer Club, Delaware
www.nscseniorsurfers.com

From talking with our members, it seems that quite a number of you with older computers running Win98 or ME are in a quandary as to whether to go ahead and buy a new computer now with XP or try to hold out until Vista arrives on the scene. As Jim and I tell our members when asking for buying advice, it's a personal choice you have to make depending on your needs and your budget. We can, however, provide some general information to help you choose, so read on.

XP certainly is superior to Windows 98 or ME, especially now that 98 and ME are no longer supported. Microsoft will probably continue to support XP for 4 or 5 more years (but no one can say for certain on that one). XP, even with its vulnerabilities, is a very stable operating system. Jim and I are both running XP Pro and have been satisfied with its performance overall. I have been doing a lot of reading on Vista and, from the information available, feel that it will be superior to XP, but not everyone will require all of the features that will be included in the full version of Vista.

So given that information, here are some choices:

Current Computer with 98 or ME: If you are currently running Windows 98 or ME and don't want to spend a lot of money next year for a new computer with Vista, you may want to go ahead and buy a new computer with XP soon. The Back-To-School prices for computers right now are very enticing. Certainly, the newer computers next year running Vista will cost substantially more because of the increased hardware requirements.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and have minimum needs only using your computer for email and surfing the Internet, and do not plan to upgrade to the Vista operating system down the road, a budget-priced computer with a Celeron or Sempron processor may suit your needs, even though you would have fewer upgrade options in the future.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and may wish to upgrade to Vista later on and also have higher needs such as working with digital photos and editing programs, spreadsheets, databases, powershows, etc., you should consider spending a little more to get a Pentium or Athlon processor. I would recommend a bare minimum of 512Mb of memory (RAM) if you are working with multimedia (photos/music/movies/radio) for now but you should plan to add another 512Mb of memory when you upgrade to Vista.

If you are wondering about the minimum requirements for upgrading your current computer to Vista, the following information was taken from the Microsoft website:

Windows Vista Minimum Supported System Requirements

PCs that meet the minimum supported system requirements will be able to run the core features of Windows Vista with the basic user experience.

Processor

800 MHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor

System Memory

512 MB

GPU

SVGA (800x600) (GPU means Graphics Processing Unit, or in other words, Monitor)

Graphics Memory

(not stated, although I have heard a minimum of 128Mb)

HDD

20 GB (Hard Drive)

HDD Free Space

15 GB

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Keep in mind that the above specs are for running the BASIC version of Vista and not the fully functional version which has a multitude of new features. Although Microsoft is currently stating that Vista will run with 512Mb of RAM at a minimum, I would make certain the computer could be upgraded to 1GB of RAM. Minimum requirements are just that – bare bones minimum – and I would recommend that your computer exceed these minimums. Vista is currently in the Beta2 stage and is nearing (so they say) finalization before debut, but that does not mean that the system requirements stated here won't change by the time the system is ready to sell, so stay tuned on that.

Personally, if your current computer came with Windows 98 or ME, I would not recommend attempting to upgrade your old computer to Vista unless you originally purchased a high end computer with a Pentium processor with the capability of 1GB of RAM. Even then, it may not be worth the time, effort and money to upgrade. The cost to purchase the Vista operating system, plus any installation charges, plus the cost of

the memory upgrade, not to mention the graphics card requirements, would add up to a tidy sum and in the end you would still have a very old computer (that may or may not work well with Vista).

Current Computer Came With XP: If your current computer came with XP already installed, you may want to hold out and wait to see what Vista offers and how it operates before you take the plunge.

Excellent Comparison – Vista vs XP: If you would like to take a peek and see how Vista compares with XP side by side, follow this link: <http://www.bentuser.com/article.aspx?ID=332&page=1>

If you're wondering how the Apple operating system, Tiger, compares with Vista, this article may be of interest to you: <http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,1842175,00.asp>

News Brief

Will Vista have it all?

New security features in Windows Vista will largely eliminate the need to run separate antispymware or firewall software, according to a new analyst report. Vista does not include antivirus functionality; Microsoft plans to sell its Windows Live OneCare antivirus software separately starting next month. But while the changes in Vista should reduce the risk for most users, the security features mean upgrading won't be easy. The annoyance would come from features such as User Account Control, which is to be enabled by default and lets users run Windows with fewer privileges. "Although the new security system shows promise, it is far too chatty and annoying," wrote analyst Andrew Jaquit

Windows XP and Speech Recognition

By Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
vlabash@comcast.net

I used to watch Star Trek in envy as the ship's computer "listened" to the crews' instructions and responded with perfect understanding. Speech recognition is not there yet, but why let lack of perfection stop us from trying?

Speech recognition has come a long way since it was first introduced to personal computers. On a basic level speech recognition is the process of converting an acoustic signal, captured by a microphone, and transforming it into words on a document. The procedure is highly technical, but you don't have to understand its inner mysteries to use it any more than you need to know how an automobile is designed in order to drive it.

Many of those who have Windows XP installed believe that speech recognition is built into XP. That's because many PC vendors install Microsoft's speech recognition software along with XP as a convenience to customers. Click on the Start button and go into Control Panel. Locate the Speech icon and open it with your mouse. A dialog box will appear. If it has a Speech Recognition tab, the program is already installed.

If speech recognition is not installed you have several options. You can buy Microsoft Plus! for Windows XP for about \$30. This is the least expensive option. You get some additional goodies with the package for your money, but they're not important to our discussion.

If you have Microsoft Word or Office installed, and you don't have the Speech Recognition tab in the above mentioned dialog box, the program was not installed by default. Fortunately, it's easy to install from Word. From the Tools menu open the Speech option. Choose Yes when you're asked if you want to install the program. You will probably need the installation disk.

You didn't think you were finished, did you? The program needs to be trained like a puppy dog. It won't mess your carpet, and you don't need to take it for a walk, but you do have to show it how to speak appropriately. The program will assist you with the proper position of your microphone, and it will help you create a profile.

The profile stores your unique speech patterns and any pronunciation quirks you may have. You can use one of three different voices as your default, Michelle, Michael, or Microsoft Sam. They could all stand some improvement, but I prefer Sam.

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All that's left is for you to "train" the program to convert your speech into words on the document. Start the training from the Speech option in the Tools menu. You will be offered a selection of different texts to read, ranging from Bill Gates' book "The Road Ahead" to Edgar Allen Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher". The more text you read, the more accurately the program will convert your speech to text. In time, you can experience an accuracy rate better than 98%.

Get a high quality microphone. A noise-canceling headset can be purchased for less than \$50. Speak naturally, the same way you would speak to another person in a normal conversation. Don't try training the program as if it were a child or an obstinate pet. That produces very poor results and needless frustration.

Even with all the progress in the last decade, speech recognition is still far from perfect. So why bother using it? It's an excellent tool for creating the first draft of a manuscript of any length... Dictation is a lot easier than using the keyboard and mouse to make text entries. If you take the time to learn how to correct errors through the program's editing utility, you will save time, especially if you fall into the camp of lousy typists as most of us do.

Speech control allows many people access to computers who could otherwise not use them through the conventional keyboard and mouse interface. Those who suffer from visual impairments, repetitive strain injuries or other physical limitations have found new opportunities through speech recognition. You may be amazed at what you can accomplish when you unleash the power of your voice.

There is no reason why speech recognition has to be confined to computers. This technology is slowly finding its way into homes, automobiles, factories, and wherever the marketplace dictates.

Speech recognition, like video editing, requires a lot of computer power. Have at least one gigabyte of memory and a 2.0 MHz processor as a bare minimum.

News Brief

Light Bulbs Going Organic

http://articles.techrepublic.com.com/2100-22_11-6111872.html?tag=nl.e019

The Ewing, N.J., company--along with General Electric, Osram Opto Semiconductors and others--is tinkering with the idea of transforming organic light-emitting diodes, thin sheets of plastic that emit light, into a source of room lighting. Pioneer and Samsung Electronics already use OLEDs for screens on consumer electronics products. By increasing the size of the sheets and the brightness, researchers think the material could become an energy-efficient substitute for the incandescent light bulb.

Accessing Family Accounts in Cases of Emergency

By **Gabriel Goldberg**, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, www.aarp.org

We know it's important to maintain current wills, powers of attorney, medical directives, and other such documents. With much data now stored electronically, emergency preparedness includes planning for family members, trusted friends, and advisors to access personal information stored online, on computers, and in electronic gadgets.

Access Family Accounts in Emergencies

It's clear how important it is for each of us to maintain current wills, powers of attorney, medical directives, and other such documents. And family members, trusted friends, and advisors such as lawyers need quick access to them. In their absence, at stressful times, important actions and decisions become needlessly difficult.

With much data now stored electronically, emergency preparedness requires that loved ones or advisors can access personal information stored online, on computers, and in electronic gadgets like cell phones and PDAs (personal digital assistants, Palms and Pocket PCs). This preparation merely adds our electronic lives to a readiness checklist.

It's no more exotic or worrisome than opening joint bank accounts or giving a house key to a trusted neighbor.

Actions we should take are as unique as our legal, medical, and financial profiles. Preparation is especially important because laws and business practices don't match today's technologies.

News stories highlight some of today's challenges and risks. A soldier in Iraq used e-mail and a Web site to communicate with the world. When he was killed, his parents wanted to preserve what he had created. But his ISP refused to allow access or provide the data, citing privacy concerns. Similarly, when a Texas man's wife died, he cancelled her cell

phone. The company also disconnected his phone, which had been on the same account. He couldn't reactivate it, leaving him isolated at a difficult time.

Where to begin? Many such legal and logistical problems can be avoided by simply including two names on accounts such as online banking and investing, mortgage service, bill paying, e-mail, and Web services. This way either person can deal with accounts on the other's behalf. But ensure that both names aren't required for routine actions.

Then record account names, passwords, and Web addresses for family members, trusted friends, or a lawyer, accountant, or executor. They needn't have the list until it's to be used so just ensure that they can find it and that it's kept updated.

Those of us in the baby boomer "sandwich generation" may have parents and children to look out for and with whom to share our technology preparation information. Preparation requires replacing the common mindset of independence with one of readiness and collaboration. An estate attorney can be a valuable resource, providing legal documents, objective advice, and what-if scenarios.

Commercial services are arising to help. Denver-based Family Matters USA [www.familymatters.com] claims to have "identified, researched and solved over 120 tasks that an estate executor or family could perform". They believe that while privacy issues affect all sorts of accounts, proper legal forms, a legitimate need, and perseverance (sometimes escalating to a supervisor) will yield the desired information.

While organizations typically handle employees' work information during emergency situations, supervisors and individuals should inventory what they use on the job and how others might need to access it.

At home or at work, the largest obstacle to emergency preparation is the wealth of information we use from memory. You can start an inventory by noting details of online accounts, Web site bookmarks saved, and passwords stored. Then make a list to share with someone who may need to follow in your electronic footsteps. Remember to safeguard your list, whether it's on paper, a PC, or a USB drive [www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/hardware/secure_usb_drives.html]. But don't hide the list itself behind a secret password!

Finally, there's a very tangible step to take. Emergency responders encourage using a high-tech replacement for traditional wallet contact-list cards [www.macmillandictionary.com/NewWords/050808-ICE-number.htm]. They commonly check victims' cell phones or PDA directories for entries filed under "ICE" ("in case of emergency") to determine whom to call.

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News Brief

Homemade Car Gets 105 mpg

http://news.com.com/2061-11200_3-6118875.html?tag=nl.e703

Inventor Jory Squibb combines environmentally friendly products and do-it-yourself gadgetry with the "Moonbeam," a DIY car that he claims can get up to 105 miles per gallon. The project took about \$2,500--and 1,000 hours--to complete. Check out the step-by-step instructions on his Web site: <http://mysite.verizon.net/vze6omtd/jorysquibb/id1.html>

STUDY GROUPS

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

Are You A Zombie? How About Your Computer?

by **S. Jack Lewtschuk** Monterey Bay Users' Group – Personal Computer (MBUG-PC) www.mbug.org, blacklion@royal.net

There are literally hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of “zombie computers” out there. Is your computer one of them? Creating zombies out of computers used by you and me has become a major tool used by computer hackers, unscrupulous marketers, and other malicious evil-doers. A computer becomes a zombie when it performs tasks as instructed by someone other than the computer owner. The instructions given to the zombie usually involve distributing information to other computers, which the zombie computer does without notifying its owner. In every spare moment, a zombie computer sends out data, most of which is spam that tries to get someone to purchase something.

Watch for “Zombie Computer” Warning Signs

- The computer seems sluggish.
- The computer seems to be accessing the hard drive constantly.
- The mouse or keyboard becomes unresponsive.
- Excessive “bounce” notifications from people you never knowingly tried to e-mail.

These warning signs may also be symptoms of other computer problems, but if you see any of them you should investigate. For more information on zombie computers and spam, check out the Federal Trade Commission's Operation Spam Zombies website at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/edcams/spam/zombie/index.htm>.

Protect Your Computer from becoming a Zombie

- Install a good antivirus program and make sure you update it regularly.
- Install a good two-way firewall. It will notify you when information is being sent from your computer. Unfortunately the WindowsXP firewall is not adequate for this purpose—it is “one way” only.
- Update your operating system and other software regularly.
- Use an anti-spyware program to eliminate spyware on your system.
- Check your antivirus and firewall software occasionally to make sure they are running properly—often one of the first instructions given to a zombie computer is to disable the antivirus and firewall software.
- Don't open unknown/unexpected e-mail attachments!
- Use caution when downloading software—buy from reputable companies, and be sure to read every screen as you download and install any software.

NOVICE CORNER

So, you've decided to download a program from the Internet. Are you sure that you really need it? OK, if you can't live without it, are all of your security programs active and updated? If so, click on “download” and cross your fingers.

An Internet download usually comes with a “prompt” from your browser—you'll be asked whether to “Run” (or “Open”) or to “Save” the file. What should you do? Here's the difference:

- If you select “Run”, the download file will go to your “Temporary Internet Files” folder. Then it will run or open automatically.
- If you select “Save”, you have to choose where the file will be stored on your hard drive (creating a “Downloads” folder on your C-drive might be a good idea at this point). The file will sit in this file until you decide to open it yourself.

So “Run” is convenient, but “Save” gives you more control and it's generally safer. Once the file is saved, you can run a virus scan on it and examine the file. On the other hand, you shouldn't be downloading something of which you are unsure. Downloads from companies you know—for instance, Microsoft, Adobe or Apple—are always OK.

Even if you do choose “Run”, you may still have the option to do some checking. Internet Explorer often lets you view digital signatures from the download prompt. After you click “Run”, a digital certificate message will pop up. You can click on the name listed under “Publisher” for more information. Under “Digital Signature Information”, it should say, “This digital signature is OK”. Otherwise, the file is high risk.

Another option you might see is a checkbox labeled something like “Always ask before opening this type of file”. Other browsers might use different phrasing such as “Always perform this action with this type of file”. The phrasing can be tricky—the two examples mentioned here have opposite effects. So be careful with options that include “always”, “never” or “automatically”. Select the setting that will alert you with every download. Good luck!

Are You Concerned About Loss of Personal Data?

By Carlisle Barnes, Newsletter Editor, Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, KY, Newcarlislebarnes@insightbb.com, <http://www.bgamug.org/>

The advanced state of Information Technology is one of the great blessings of modern times. Today it is built into our economy, and it would be hard for both individuals and corporate America to do without it. However, along with the blessings to us have come curses. These curses are going to get considerably worse unless some dramatic changes are made in the way stored information is handled by the majority of organizations.

Computer spam, phishing/phishing schemes and other e-mail con games, as well as a multitude of ever changing computer viruses are obvious curses to everyone using a computer on-line. Great effort is being expended to get these curses under control. Very good and still improving anti-virus programs are available. Bill Gates said recently that spam will be completely under control within two years. (It will be interesting to see if Bill is right about that.) The point is that something positive is being done to correct those Internet curses.

However, one of the worst of current IT curses is identity theft, and very few positive things are being done to stop it. Identity theft is not associated with the Internet as are many other IT curses, but it has become very much associated with computers because of the casual way in which CD's, laptop computers, and portable hard drives are often handled. People who would never ever consider leaving a collection of gold coins laying in the back seat of a car, or leaving a thousand dollar bill on a table while going to get another cup of coffee, seem to have developed very little concern about leaving a portable computer, a container of CD's, or even a portable hard drive in all sorts of places where they can be easily stolen. (Home?)

Unlike sensitive data handled by military or military contractor organizations, the personal data stored in files of civilian Government organizations, major universities, insurance companies, credit card companies, and etc. are often treated as casually as advertising material. A recent extreme example is shocking and deserves examination.

Not long ago, a Veteran's Administration senior analyst took home electronic data from the office to do after-hours work on his personal computer. He had done this numerous times before. The data included names, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth on 26.5 million veterans. These data list essentially all military personal who have served following the Second World War. The analyst's laptop and a Government owned external hard drive (along with all the data under discussion on it of course,) were stolen in a May 3 burglary of his home. He reported the theft within an hour of discovering it. VA Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson made a public announcement of the theft on May 22.

Jim Nicholson appeared before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs to explain the situation. While accepting a certain amount of personal responsibility for the data breach, Nicholson expressed anger toward the analyst who took the data home "without permission." Further, he said "As a veteran myself, I have to tell you I'm outraged. Frankly, I'm mad as hell." Afterward, he fired the analyst involved. For what appear to be justifiable reasons, the analyst is now suing to be reinstated.

What Nicholson did not report, and later insisted that he did not know, was that the analyst had been taking data home as part of his regular work routine since 2003. (Is the VA a good place to work?) Furthermore, existing documents dated September 5, 2002 show that the analyst -- lead programmer within the Policy Analysis Service -- was officially permitted to take the external hard drive home for "work-related projects." Specifically, he had a property pass allowing the laptop and accessories to be removed from the building and also a permit allowing him to access any Social Security numbers on the hard drive. It later turned out that there was yet a third document allowing him to remove various materials from the VA building.

A certain amount of security could have been provided for these "take home" documents, by encrypting them. However, a reasonable up-front cost for the systems, services, processes, and procedures to encrypt 100,000 or more customer records is estimated to be about \$500,000. VA working personnel probably couldn't justify that sort of expense to their budget group.

Once files have been stolen, it is difficult to determine if the data have been used illegally. The computer and VA hard disk have now been returned, apparently without data loss, but if it is eventually considered necessary to contact all affected veterans and to provide them with credit-checking services, then there will be an estimated taxpayer cost of at least \$100 million.

The fiasco was not quite finished when Nicholson appeared at the congressional hearing. It was revealed at that hearing that Pedro Cadenas, the VA's chief information security officer, had resigned by e-mail 30 minutes before the proceedings began. Nicholson said he was completely unaware of Cadenas' intentions. Evidently, Nicholson has learned many things rather late.

On June 28th, not quite two months after they were stolen, the computer and external hard drive were turned in to the FBI Office in Baltimore, Maryland. A tipster, in response to the \$50,000 reward being offered, had let a US Park official know that the equipment might be recovered. Quickly then, the stolen items were turned in to the FBI. The tipster was not identified, nor was it clear if either he or anyone else would receive the \$50,000 reward. Furthermore, no one has been arrested for stealing the equipment, unless that particular information is being held secret for some reason.

Inspection of the hard drive by the FBI does not indicate access to the data during the time that the drive was in the possession of the thief. Superficially then, no data were compromised and there is perhaps nothing to worry about.

Unfortunately, if the thief was a computer expert, knew what he had, and wanted to make illicit use of the data, then he could have transferred everything on the external hard drive to another hard drive without leaving a record. While that is possible, it seems improbable and it seems unlikely that there is reason for continued concern. However, can we be absolutely sure?

Those of us who served in the military, or worked for military contractors are quite well aware of the way in which sensitive intellectual material is handled by these organizations. While current practices are unknown to the author, not very many years ago, there were at least five security levels. Restricted meant that the information was not to be given to unauthorized people, was certainly not to be made available to newspapers or to other media, and was not to be left anywhere where it might be stolen. The only people allowed to see the material were those with a need to know about it. Confidential material classification, one step up from Restricted meant that the material was not to be made available to anyone not having appropriate clearance i.e., clearance by appropriate investigators. Except when being used in a cleared area by cleared personal, the material was to be locked in a desk or file cabinet with a safety bar and a combination lock. All desks and cabinets were to be regularly checked by guards. Secret material was to be handled in somewhat the same way, but clearance was more difficult to obtain, storage was in a secure safe, not in cabinets or desks, and material was to be guarded twenty four hours a day, and seven days a week. Top secret material was of course even more closely guarded, and investigations for personal clearance were carried out by FBI personnel; in general all security was substantially tightened. . Then there was "Special Clearance" which need not be discussed here, but which was very tight indeed.

It is absolutely shocking to note that as serious as identity theft can be, hardly anyone handling social security numbers, driver's license numbers, medical history facts, educational information, and etc., etc. is required to treat personal information in their possession with a level as high as military Restricted. As this article was being written, yet another security breach occurred at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. There were several resignations from the school staff as a result, but it is one more case of "locking the barn door after the horse is gone."

If current sloppy handling of private data continues, then it is only a matter of time until identity theft becomes a disaster.

This article by your newsletter editor is as close as you will get to a BGA-Bytes editorial. However, your editor considers the matter to be a lot more serious than it is being treated by many people and particularly by most public officials.

If you would like to encourage your congressmen or other public officials to put some teeth into privacy laws and into laws concerning the handling of private information, then may I encourage you to write and let them know how you feel.

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Avoiding Security Risks

By **Kraig Lane**, Group Product Manager, Symantec Corp.

For millions of consumers in households worldwide, home computers are being used for a wide range of activities. From managing booking travel reservations to managing financial accounts, communicating with friends and colleagues, conducting research, and more, the PC has become a critical component of everyday life.

However, as computer-related security incidents continue to increase, consumers have become increasingly concerned about online safety – and with good reason. To protect themselves from becoming victims of a growing wave of Internet threats, computer users need to know how to avoid them.

To achieve this, consumers must first understand the types of threats on today's digital horizon and then identify and follow simple best practices for protecting their confidential information and safeguarding their home computers.

Financial Objective

In recent years, hackers launched malicious code in order to get attention, particularly from the technical community. But today's hackers are driven by financial motives. According to the most recent Internet Security Threat Report from Symantec Corp., a comprehensive, biannual review of global Internet threat activity, the financial sector received the highest ratio of severe Internet attacks of any other industry, including high tech, manufacturing, healthcare, power and energy, and more. The reason for the focus on the financial sector is clear: that's where the money is.

Evidence of this shift in motivation is as easy as looking at consumers' email inboxes. Most likely, in addition to the mounds of spam messages are phishing attempts. Phishing is an effort by a third party to solicit confidential information from an

individual, often for illicit financial gain. Phishers often use spoofed email, malicious Web sites, or Trojan horses downloaded through the user's Web browser to trick users into disclosing sensitive information such as credit card numbers or online banking information.

Phishing is a big problem that's getting bigger. During the last six months of 2004, the number of phishing attacks increased steadily from week to week—from 193 new attacks during the first week to an average of 400 phishing attacks by the end of the period. Because spoofed email and Internet sites are becoming more and more sophisticated, phishing attacks are harder than ever to identify and defend against.

To protect against becoming victims of phishers, security experts recommend that in addition to following general best practices for computing, consumers should visit sites such as www.antiphishing.org in order to learn about the latest phishing scams. Security experts also suggest that users should never disclose any confidential personal or financial information if they have doubts about the authenticity of an email or Web site.

Nowhere to Go...

Information exposure threats can be present in almost any type of malicious code, including Trojan horses, worms, viruses, and back door server programs. Several worms and Trojan horses contain keystroke logging and back door functionality in addition to their other components. Such threats have continued to increase since June 2003, according to the Internet Security Threat Report. Over the last half of 2004, malicious code that exposed confidential information represented 54 percent of the top 50 malicious code samples received by Symantec—up from 44 percent in the first half of 2004 and 36 percent in the second half of 2003.

This increase is partially due to the increasing proliferation of bots, which expose all information on a compromised computer due to their remote access capabilities. Bots—short for “robots”—are programs that are covertly installed on a user's computer in order to allow an unauthorized user to control that computer remotely. Bots are designed to let an attacker create an entire network of compromised hosts, which can then be remotely controlled to conduct malicious activities collectively. Bots are a significant part of the trend of using malicious code for profit as spammers use the IP addresses of compromised home computers for relaying their messages.

Bots often employ multiple propagation mechanisms to compromise computers. Therefore, consumers are advised to avoid using questionable peer-to-peer services, use strong password protection on shared network drives, and patch vulnerabilities in their operating systems and applications.

It is not surprising that client-side vulnerabilities are often implicated in information exposure breaches. Client-side vulnerabilities target the computer systems of individual users rather than servers of an organization. They target applications such as Web browsers, email clients, peer-to-peer networks, instant messaging clients, and media players. They are often, but not always, the result of logic errors or flaws in access-control systems and they are often easily exploitable, particularly in browsers.

In fact, Web browser vulnerabilities are also taking on a new twist as hackers are now not only looking to exploit vulnerabilities in Microsoft Internet Explorer but also in newer, alternative browsers such as Mozilla, Firefox, and Opera. After all, a compromised browser could mean a compromise in the security of all Web-based transactions. In the last half of 2004, Symantec documented 21 vulnerabilities affecting Mozilla and Firefox, 13 vulnerabilities impacting Microsoft Internet Explorer, and six reported in Opera.

To avoid browser-based threats, consumers should carefully research browser alternatives and evaluate their level of security before deploying them on the desktop.

Spyware's Ugly Face

Spyware is one of the most worrisome Internet threats that consumers face today. The term applies to standalone programs that can secretly monitor system activity and relay the information back to another computer. Some spyware is legitimate. Some corporations use it to monitor employees' Internet usage, and parents use spyware programs to monitor their children's online activity. But it is the less-than-legitimate spyware that represents a security risk to consumers, particularly since it can be used for identity theft and fraud.

There are a number of ways by which spyware can be installed on a user's system. Some spyware programs are made available as freeware—that is, as software that can be downloaded at no charge. These programs usually require the user to agree to an end user license agreement (EULA). Other spyware programs do not include a EULA. Consequently, consumers are advised to use security solutions that detect spyware regardless of the presence of an EULA.

Spyware programs can also be bundled with a legitimate program. This bundling is not done by the legitimate program producer or distributor but rather by someone who wants access to confidential data that users may divest as they use the legitimate program. The software package is then placed on a public download site or is sent to a newsgroup for maximum exposure. It is executed when the user runs the legitimate program.

Spyware can also be installed through a Web browser using ActiveX controls or browser helper objects (BHOs). BHOs are add-on programs that can add features to a user's browser. To reduce this risk, it is recommended that users disable ActiveX wherever possible or configure their browser to require a prompt for ActiveX controls to execute. Then, should the browser present a dialogue box that is not expected, the user should not click anywhere on the dialogue box but, instead, immediately close the browser window.

Consumers are advised to be extremely cautious when removing spyware. Programs should be removed as non-intrusively as possible in order to minimize any problems that might result from the removal of the program. To avoid these types of problems, it may be necessary to ignore some non-critical aspects of these programs such as benign registry keys left behind during the uninstall process.

Best Practices for Consumers

By following a number of general best practices, consumers can significantly reduce their exposure to today's Internet threats. For example, consumers should use an Internet security solution that combines antivirus, firewall, intrusion detection, and

vulnerability management for maximum protection against complex, blended threats. They should also ensure that security patches are up-to-date and that passwords are a mix of letters and numbers. Additionally, passwords should not include dictionary words, and they should be changed often.

Email attachments continue to pose a major security risk to consumers. Users should avoid viewing, opening, or executing any email attachment unless the purpose of the attachment is known. Virus definitions should be updated regularly. By deploying the latest virus definitions, consumers are protected against the latest viruses known to be spreading "in the wild." Consumers are also counseled to routinely check to see if their PCs or Macintosh systems are vulnerable to threats by using an online vulnerability scanning service from a reputable information security provider.

Education, in harmony with reliable security solutions, is vital to thwarting security breaches. Consumers should learn to recognize computer hoaxes and phishing scams. Hoaxes typically include a bogus email warning to "send this to everyone you know" and improper technical jargon to frighten or mislead users. Phishing scams are much more sophisticated. Consumers must remember that most legitimate businesses will never ask users to disclose confidential information over the Internet. The best course of action is to simply delete these types of emails.

As group product manager at Symantec (www.symantec.com), Kraig Lane is responsible for the overall management of Symantec's consumer Internet security solutions. He works to define product objectives and strategies for Norton Personal Firewall, Norton AntiSpam, and Norton Internet Security, cornerstones of Symantec's thriving consumer business. Lane also utilizes his vast knowledge of the Internet security space to drive the development and introduction of new solutions to tackle emerging online threats.

The Part of Backup Nobody Mentions

by **Vinny La Bash**, Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida, vlabash@comcast.net, <http://www.spcug.org>

There are dozens if not hundreds of ways to backup your data, but we're not going to talk about that. We're going to discuss the most important part of doing a backup, the part that is hardly ever mentioned. Do you believe that your backup is a sound copy of your data? Would you be at ease if all your files suddenly disappeared from your computer, and all you had was your backup to restore them?

If your confidence fizzled to zero, what's the problem?

You may have developed the most sophisticated and comprehensive backup scheme the computer world has ever seen, but you won't ever know if it's any good unless you test it. Without a valid method of testing, you can have no confidence in your backups. There are many things that can go wrong with a backup, some beyond your control, some not.

Perhaps one day you were in too much of a hurry, and you made a backup of one folder instead of your entire system as you planned. Hmm, no wonder that backup completed so fast.

Your backup disk got exposed to a magnetic field and scrambled all your data.

The CD containing your data was left in the car, and excessive heat warped the media, making it unreadable.

You encrypted your backup and lost the password to restore it.

You upgraded your backup software, and now it can't read your old backups.

Your new upgraded backup software program becomes corrupted, and you can't make a new backup or restore an old one.

Your new backup program has a great innovative file compression scheme. However, it turns out that it compresses better than anyone expected.

You upgrade your Windows Operating System and your backup software no longer works. (Rare, but it happens).

Let's stop here before you get too depressed to make another backup. What's important is to understand that a great many things can go wrong even with the best backup methods.

The only true test of your backup is to do a restore and see if it works. Does this mean you have to erase all your files, and then run a restore from your backup media? No. Fortunately, there are less chancy ways of verifying your backup data.

One thing you can do is install a second hard drive and restore your data files to the second disk. If your original disk has enough capacity, you can partition it into at least two sections, and restore into one of the new partitions. Hard drives have become almost dirt cheap, so this is not particularly expensive.

Another thing you can do is make at least three backups and store them in three different locations for safety. Keep one copy at home, but in a different room than your computer. Store a second copy at your office or a friend's house, and do the same for him or her. The third copy could be in a safe deposit box or similar secure location.

If you feel that such measures are not necessary, ask yourself if you are ready to perform the ultimate test. Would you feel totally at ease erasing your hard disk today and restoring it from your backups? If not, then think again.

Safeguarding Your Data

By Mindi McDowell, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, US-CERT, United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team

When there are multiple people using your computer and/or you store sensitive personal and work-related data on your computer, it is especially important to take extra security precautions. Why isn't "more" better? Maybe there is an extra software program included with a program you bought. Or perhaps you found a free download online. You may be tempted to install the programs just because you can, or because you think you might use them later. However, even if the source and the software are legitimate, there may be hidden risks. And if other people use your computer, there are additional risks.

These risks become especially important if you use your computer to manage your personal finances (banking, taxes, online bill payment, etc.), store sensitive personal data, or perform work-related activities away from the office. However, there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

How can you protect both your personal and work-related data?

Use and maintain anti-virus software and a firewall - Protect yourself against viruses and Trojan horses that may steal or modify the data on your own computer and leave you vulnerable by using anti-virus software and a firewall (see Understanding Anti-Virus Software and Understanding Firewalls for more information - <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-005.html> / <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-004.html>). Make sure to keep your virus definitions up to date.

Regularly scan your computer for spyware - Spyware or adware hidden in software programs may affect the performance of your computer and give attackers access to your data. Use a legitimate anti-spyware program to scan your computer and remove any of these files (see Recognizing and Avoiding Spyware for more information - <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-016.html>).

Keep software up to date - Install software patches so that attackers cannot take advantage of known problems or vulnerabilities (see Understanding Patches for more information - <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-006.html>). Many operating systems offer automatic updates. If this option is available, you should turn it on.

Evaluate your software's settings - The default settings of most software enable all available functionality. However, attackers may be able to take advantage of this functionality to access your computer. It is especially important to check the settings for software that connects to the internet (browsers, email clients, etc.). Apply the highest level of security available that still gives you the functionality you need.

Avoid unused software programs - Do not clutter your computer with unnecessary software programs. If you have programs on your computer that you do not use, consider uninstalling them.

Consider creating separate user accounts - If there are other people using your computer, you may be worried that someone else may accidentally access, modify, and/or delete your files. Most operating systems (including Windows XP, Mac OS X, and Linux) give you the option of creating a different user account for each user, and you can set the amount of access and privileges for each account. You may also choose to have separate accounts for your work and personal purposes. While this approach will not completely isolate each area, it does offer some additional protection.

Establish guidelines for computer use - If there are multiple people using your computer, especially children, make sure they understand how to use the computer and internet safely. Setting boundaries and guidelines will help to protect your data (see Keeping Children Safe Online for more information - <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST05-002.html>).

Use passwords and encrypt sensitive files - Passwords and other security features add layers of protection if used appropriately (see Choosing and Protecting Passwords and Supplementing Passwords for more information - <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-002.html> / <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST05-012.html>). By encrypting files, you ensure that unauthorized people can't view data even if they can physically access it. You may also want to consider options for full disk encryption, which prevents a thief from even starting your laptop without a passphrase. When you use encryption, it is important to remember your passwords and passphrases; if you forget or lose them, you may lose your data.

Follow corporate policies for handling and storing work-related information - If you use your computer for work-related purposes, make sure to follow any corporate policies for handling and storing the information. These policies were likely established to protect proprietary information and customer data, as well as to protect you and the company from liability.

Dispose of sensitive information properly - Simply deleting a file does not completely erase it. To ensure that an attacker cannot access these files, make sure that you adequately erase sensitive files (see Effectively Erasing Files for more information - <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST05-011.html>). Follow good security habits - Review other security tips for ways to protect yourself and your data - <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/>.

Flying-car

http://news.com.com/Flying-car+?rm+releases+simulator%2C+takes+deposits/2100-1008_3-6112862.html?tag=nl.e703

The Transition, a plane that can also be driven as a car, won't come out for a few years, but you can try a flight simulator now and put a deposit on a future plane too. Terrafugia, a "roadable aircraft" developer that emerged out of MIT, has devised a flight simulator for its aircraft (which can be downloaded here). The application runs on top of the X-Plane simulator for Laminar Research. Potential buyers can also now plunk down \$7,400, or 5 percent of the anticipated \$148,000 purchase price, for a deposit on a Transition. The planes will come out in late 2009. A fully operational prototype is expected to come out in 2008.

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

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

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Computer Crimes

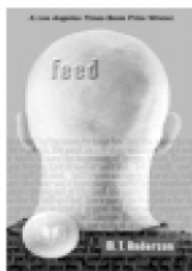
Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Feed, by M.T. Anderson

Paperback,
Candlewick Press,
2002, \$7.99, 299
pages

In the not-too-distant future, computer chips that transmit a steady stream of popular culture and banner ads are implanted into children's brains at birth. Titus, on a boring spring break at a moon resort, falls in love with the eccentric Violet. Their feeds are hacked. Titus recovers, but Violet, slowly dying, decides to resist the feed and tries to break through the mindless consumer babble that fills Titus's brain.

This exceptional novel is this generation's answer to Orwell's 1984. Anderson has created a dystopia, a plausible extension of the current media/consumer culture gone haywire.

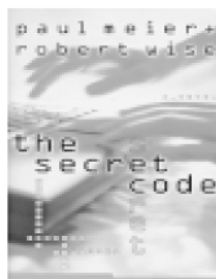


Culture is reactive, sped up; marketers, wired directly into the brain, feed a silent stream of ads to pliable consumers. Schools, run by corporations, teach only consumer skills: after all, Titus reflects, "who needs to know what dumb battles George Washington won in the Civil War?" Written for young adults – high school age – the clever language is a bit strong but quirky and fun once you get the hang of it. Not only for kids; highly recommended.

The Secret Code, by Paul D. Meier and Robert L. Wise

Paperback, Thomas Nelson, 1999, \$, 301 pages

As college sophomores Judy and Ben become engrossed in the Bible code and after eight years of study determine that the Torah predicts that a nuclear Armageddon will

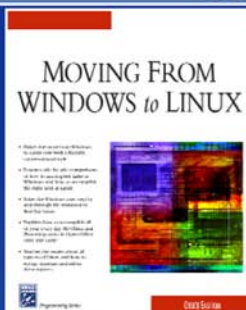


destroy Jerusalem in 2006. Their warnings unheeded, they gather together a small band of Messianic Jews and flee for the safety of Petra, in Jordan, pursued by Israeli soldiers and a coalition of evil nations.

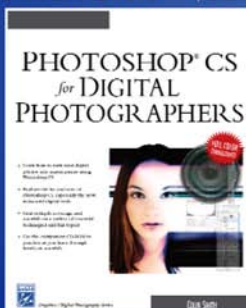
The Bible Code was a best seller in 1998. Its premise was that secret messages are hidden in the Torah, deciphered by counting every fifth or thousandth Hebrew consonant. These messages could only be deciphered once computers were programmed to analyze the Equidistant Letter Sequences (ELS) that contain the predictions. It's total nonsense, of course, although the authors, who also write a millennial series of Christian books, seem to take it seriously. Sloppy writing and sloppy theology. Skip this one.

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

COMPUTER BOOKS THAT DELIVER



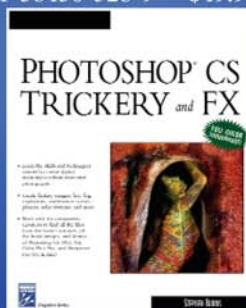
1-58450-280-0 \$44.95



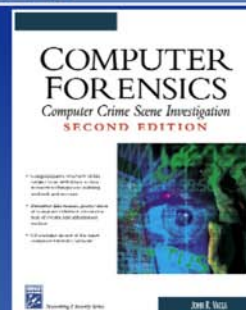
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Hardware Review

LowerPro Rover AW II Camera Bag

\$165.00 US (\$115 Amazon.com)

Review by Susan Ives, Alamo PC



Call me compulsive. On my trip to Jordan, Israel and Palestine last year I took four cameras: my Nikon Coolpix 990 digital; my Sony TRV-25 digital HandiCam; my trusty old Minolta Maxxum 7000i 35mm and a new toy, a Reefmaster Sealife 35mm, an underwater camera that I got for a snorkeling adventure in the Red Sea.

Add to that the battery chargers, AC/DC conversion kit, lots of mini DVDs and 35MM film, manuals, a ton of AA batteries, the boom mike for the HandyCam and a flash and a zoom lens for the Minolta and I had myself a big lump of fragile photographic equipment to haul around. I reluctantly left the tripod at home. See, there is a limit.

I bought myself a new camera bag. I spent hours looking at bags and decided on the LowePro Rover. At an MSRP of \$165 it's not cheap, but it has features that the serious photographer with a lot of equipment should consider. I bought my bag at Ritz Camera at IH-10 and Callaghan, but it is also available online at eBags, <www.ebags.com> or through Amazon for \$115.

This is a serious piece of equipment, made for rugged outdoor use. You could climb Mount Everest with this pack. It's made of 600 denier TXP rip-stop nylon combined with 2,000 denier ballistic nylon. I do believe it could stop a bullet.

It has two main compartments. The lower compartment is padded and divided with adjustable, padded inserts for camera gear. All my cameras and lenses fit. The upper compartment is a place to stash your lunch, a light jacket or all the cords and cables you need to haul along on a long trip. The divider between the two compartments is removable, so you can gut the innards and use it as a general-purpose day pack.



On the outside there are two small zippered pockets, mesh bins on the sides for maps or a water bottle

and right down the front there's a pull-out cloth tube for your tripod.

All that camera gear is heavy, and the suspension system takes the load off your back. It has a padded, built-in backpack harness that includes CollarCut shoulder straps, a sternum strap, padded waist belt, and load-adjustment straps. The back of the pack is padded and ventilated. There is also a bungee cord compression system, which tightens up the load.

The pack itself is relatively heavy at 4.5 pounds, but all that padding and protection weighs a lot.

I liked the two-part system. Most other large camera backpacks zipped all the way around, which means that you would have to lay the bag down flat to keep your gear from tumbling out. With this one, I could unzip it, hold it by the top handle and grab the cameras one-handed.

If this seems like too much bag for you, LowePro's Orion Trekker is a smaller, lighter-weight version of the same bag, for \$80.

I recommend spending an hour or so carefully examining the bags at a store like Ritz or the Camera Exchange. There are a lot of innovations and you might find a better system for hauling your valuable stuff around.



Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC


STUDY GROUPS

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

Volunteers Wanted

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

November 2006

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
			1 AARP Tax-Aid class 9 A.M. - 4 P.M. with lunch break Class 5 of 6 **PRR** Introduction to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Class 5 of 6 **PRR** Internet & Email 1 - 3 P.M.	2 Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 6 of 8 *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 - 11 A.M. (a/r) HGSI 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. .Net Web Development 7 - 9 P.M.	3 *PRR* Small Business Server 2003 8 - 10 A.M. Class 6 of 8 *PRR* Adv. Digital Camera & Photography 9 - 11 A.M. Dr. is in 9:00 A.M. - Noon Workshop *PRR* Photoshop 1:00 - 4:30 P.M. Download the PCAlamode Magazine, burn to a CD, & use PDF 7 - 9 P.M.	4 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
5	6 Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M.	7 Class 7 of 8 **PRR** Advanced Digital Photo Editing 8 - 11 A.M. Class 6 of 6 **PRR** Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. BOD 6:30 P.M. Class 1 of 4 Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	8 Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon Class 6 of 6 **PRR** Introduction to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Class 6 of 6 **PRR** Internet and Email 1 - 3 P.M. Home Page Jumpstart 5:30 - 7 P.M. Class 1 of 2 **PRR** PowerPoint 7 - 9 P.M.	9 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 7 of 8 *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 - 11 A.M.	10 Dr. is in 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 7 of 8 *PRR* Adv. Digital Camera & Photography 9 - 11 A.M. Workshop *PRR* Photoshop 1:00 - 4:30 P.M.	11 Veterans day *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. Commodore 1 - 4 P.M.
12	13 General Meeting @ Crossroads Convention Center 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter: Microsoft - Vista	14 Class 8 of 8 **PRR** Advanced Digital Photo Editing 9 - 11 A.M. Class 2 of 4 Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	15 (a/r) WordPerfect 7 - 9 P.M. (Rescheduled from Nov 22) Class 2 of 2 **PRR** PowerPoint 7 - 9 P.M. (Rescheduled from Nov 22)	16 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 8 of 8 *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 - 11 A.M.	17 Dr. is in 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 8 of 8 *PRR* Adv. Digital Camera & Photography 9 - 11 A.M. Workshop *PRR* Photoshop 1:00 - 4:30 P.M.	18 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
19	20	21 Class 3 of 4 Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	22 (a/r) WordPerfect 7 - 9 P.M. (Rescheduled to Nov 15) Class 2 of 2 **PRR** PowerPoint 7 - 9 P.M. (Rescheduled to Nov 22)	23 Resource Center is closed.  Please, check with class leaders for rescheduling of classes	24 Dr. is in 9:00 A.M. - Noon Workshop *PRR* Photoshop 1:00 - 4:30 P.M.	25 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1 - 3 P.M.
26	27 CorelDRAW X3 6 - 8 P.M.	28 Class 4 of 4 Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	29	30 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon		

Alamo P & T Organization



The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

COMPUTER CLINIC

The Doctor Is In

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

What to bring with you:

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

When: Every Friday 9 am to noon

Where: Alamo PC Organization
Computer Learning Center

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

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

Technical Rating: ★

STUDY GROUPS

Student Practice Lab

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

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

C/C ++ Study Group

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

Contact:
Bruce McAlexander
<mcalexb@satx.rr.com> 210-680-0231
Murry Adams
<mnadams@texas.net> 210-696-0047
Carl Deneke
<cdeneke@Texas.net> 210-496-6397

When: First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★★ - ★★★

Commodore Users of SA

Contact: Diana Jones
830-303-1220

When: Second Saturday, 1-4 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★★★

Genealogy Study Group

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

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

When: First Monday, 7-9 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

HGSI Study Group

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

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

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

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

Pre-registration: Call Maynard

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Technical Content Ratings

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

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

DotNET Study Group

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

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

When: 1st Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★★

DotNetNuke Portal Study Group

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

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

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

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', is currently studying Microsoft Dynamics CRM (Customer Relationship Manager) version 3.0 (www.Microsoft.com/CRM). The group will prepare for the three CRM certification exams. The study group is lead by Microsoft MVPs (Most Valuable Professional) in CRM, Larry Lentz. There are only 15 MVPs for CRM in the world. More information on the Microsoft MVP program can be found at www.Microsoft.com/MVP. The group has recently completed its study for the CRM 3.0 Applications exam and are now starting study for the CRM 3.0 Customization exam. The group 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 Alamo magazine online or download it to your computer or a CD. Students who want to download the magazine to a CD in class should bring a blank CD-RW (a read / writeable or recordable CD)

Instructor: Steve Tech
stephentechnr@yahoo.com

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

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

APCO Retro (Antique Computer Users Group)

We're initially only going to meet 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 Alamo where this text appears, you can join APCO Retro simply by going to

<<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apcoretro/join>>

Contact: Shane Hicks

<shane@absolutepowercomputing.com>

When: Anytime

Where: Cyberspace

Pre-registration: Must sign-up on <APCORETRO@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 computer students. 2) Students need the Software for Photoshop 7 or Photoshop CS or Photoshop CS2 on their home computers to join these graphics instruction classes.

Instructor: Beverly Bihn assisted by Jane Montgomery

When: Instruction class "A" using Photoshop 7 includes adaption for Photoshop CS and CS2 will meet 8 weeks on Thursdays, 12:30 to 4:30 pm Jan 4, 11, 18, 25, Feb 1, 8, 15, 22 Year 2007.

When: Photoshop Basic Instruction for CS and CS2 will meet 8 weeks on Fridays, 12:30 to 4:30 pm Jan 5, 12, 19, 26, Feb 2, 9, 16, 23 Year 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.

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: September on Fridays (Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29) from 1 to 5 pm Working on "fancy" procedures beyond the basics.

When: October on Fridays (Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27) from 1 to 5 pm Working on more "fancy" procedures beyond the basics.

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: ★★★

Home Page Jumpstart

A general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is *not* a course

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

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

Prerequisite: Home Page Jumpstart Class, familiarity with Windows

Pre-registration: yes

To register e-mail Mike at <webmaster@alamopc.org>

Technical Rating: ★★

Technical Content Ratings

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

Internet And E-Mail - \$

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

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

When: 6 weeks, Wednesdays, 1 to 3 pm
Choose one set:

Set 1) May 24, 31, June 7, 14, 21, 28
Set 2) August 2, 9, 16, 23, (skip Aug 30)
Set 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

Microsoft's PowerPoint presentation program is the defacto standard for making presentations to a large audience. This class will show students how to create a PowerPoint presentation, how to add graphics and photos, business graphs, and sound clips. We will also learn how to use special transitions and animations in presenting your slide show to an audience.

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

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: 2 sessions, 7 to 9 p.m., 2nd and 4th Wed. of the month, **Nov. only:**, class meets 2nd and 3rd Wed.

Where: Learning Center

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

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.

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

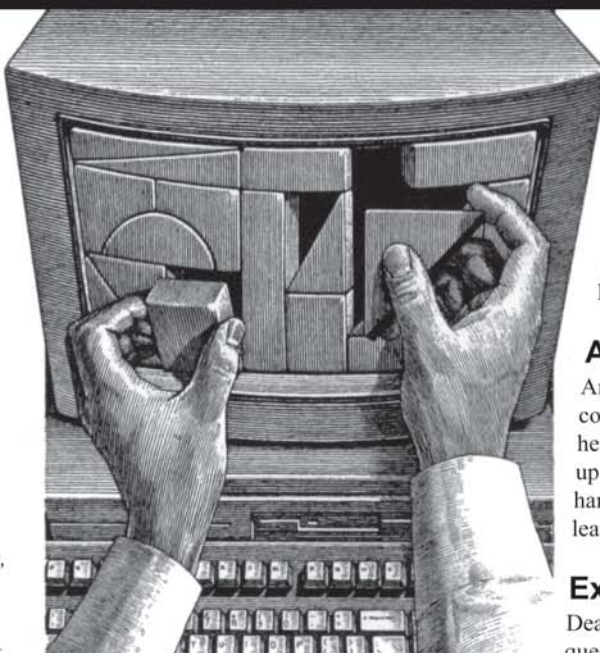
Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

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

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

