

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

TECH ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

April 2007

\$4.50

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page 36

Accessories for that new computer
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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:

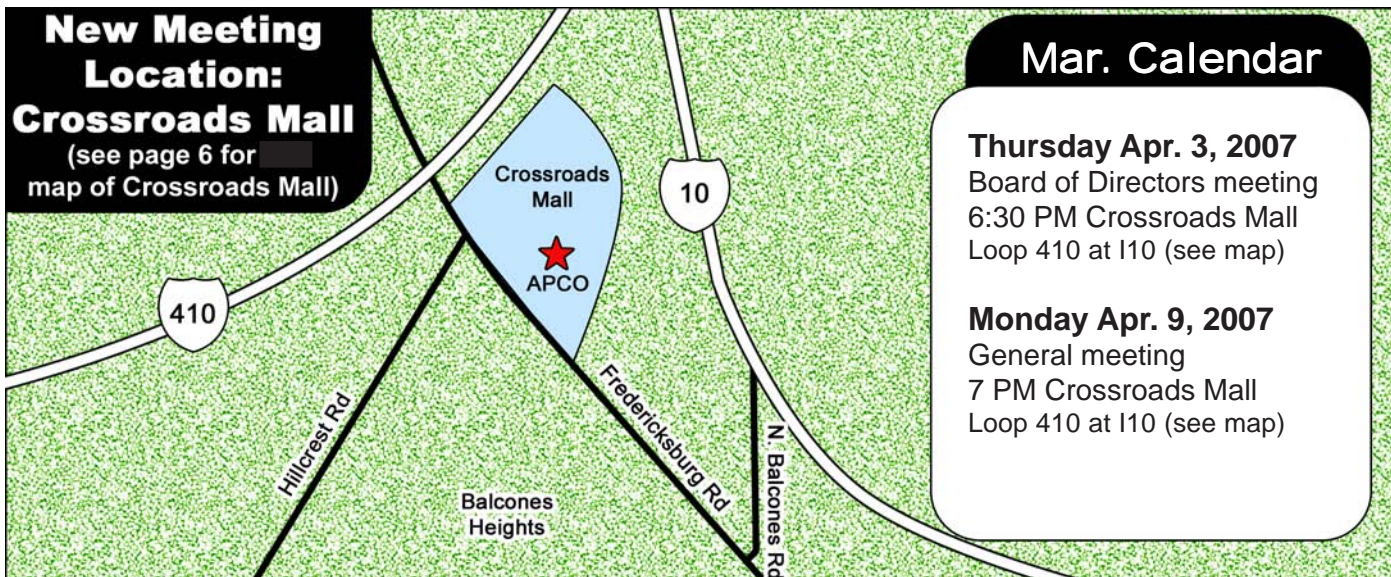
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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 Apr. 3, 2007
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Apr. 9, 2007
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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PC Alamode

(501 (C) (3))

Featured this month

Shopping for Free and Open Source Software
Managing Device Drivers
Windows XP Remote Assistance
Tweaking Window's Taskbar
Thinking about Disaster
New Security Products
Resolutions for Safe Computing
Accessories for that new computer
Upgrading to and LCD monitor

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

editor@alamopc.org

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode
editor@alamopc.org

Ad rates effective January 2005

Rate frequency.	1 x	3 x*	6x*	12 x*
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Quarter pg.(3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37

*Consecutive months

**To be paid in advance

product reviews

Computer Crimes
Book Review: Real Digital Forensics
Software Review: Spin It Again

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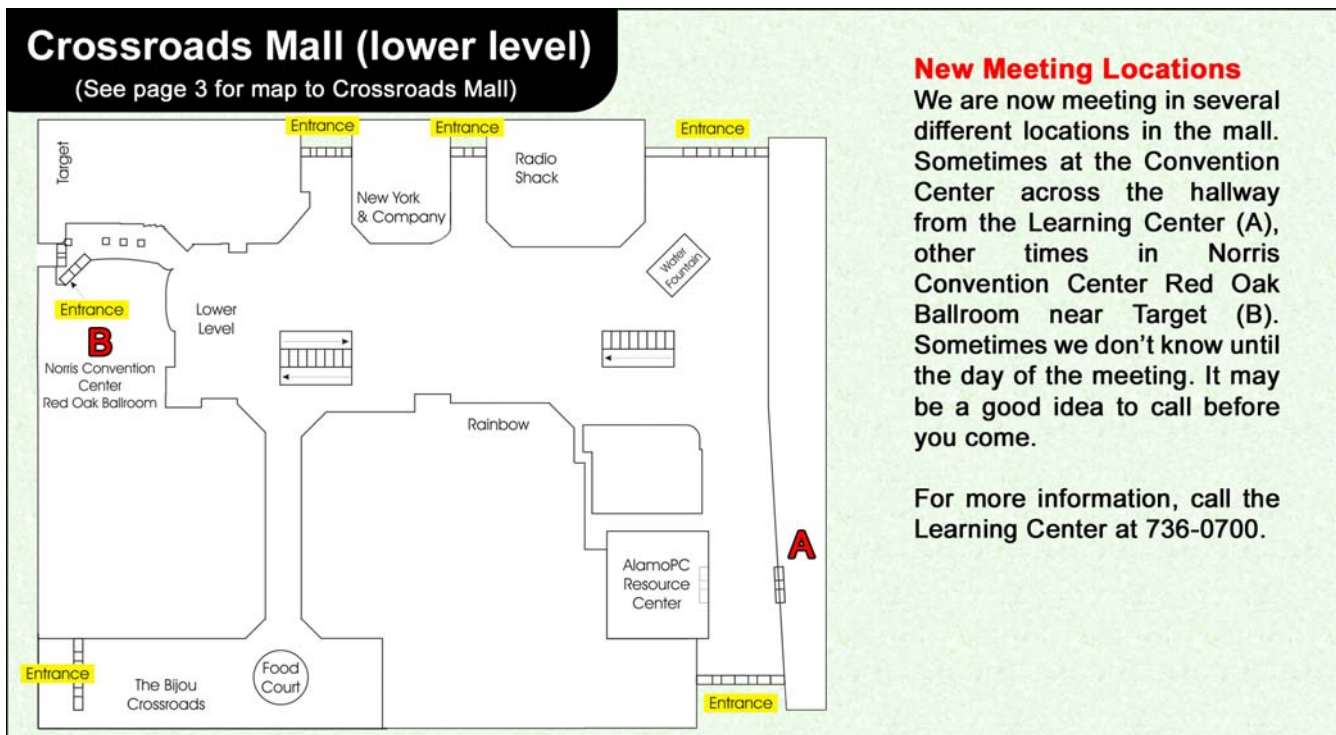
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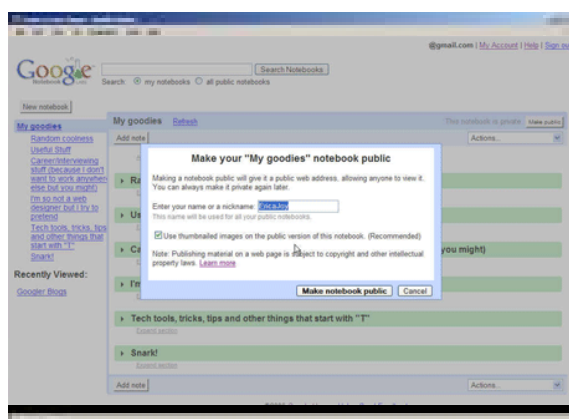
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For Study Groups and Classes, phone: 736-0080 or 736-0700



PC Alamode Links List



Google Notebook

<<http://www.google.com/notebook>>

Notebook allows users to gather content from around the web, add metadata like categories and publish the information to the Internet.



Google Patent Search

<<http://www.google.com/patents>>

Google has a new beta application that lets users search the full text of U.S. Patents and even displays diagrams related to those patents.



Letter from APCO member:

I just downloaded the Feb PC Alamode, all 68 pages! Please run an article on how to print both sides of a sheet of paper for various printers.

Cornel Sarosdy 11108

Answer:

The good news is that can be done. The bad news is, every printer is a bit different and most don't have an automatic feature.

Auto Feature:

These printers will automatically print on both sides of the paper. After you send a document to print, look for the page set up or page layout options. There will be an option to print double sided. You may need to specify top edge binding (tablet) or left edge binding (booklet). Lots of inkjet printers with this feature tend to jam up, so make sure the rollers are clear of debris. Otherwise try the method below.

Manual Method:

After you send a document to print, look for the page set up or page layout options. Look for an option that allows you to print odd or even pages. Start with odd pages, since the magazine starts with the number 1. Next, flip the printed pages over and load into the paper feed tray. Try printing one even page first to be sure the orientation is correct. If not, turn the stack 180 degrees. Now you should be able to print the remaining even pages. Presto -- double-sided printing!

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for 9 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

"April" - Fools, Taxes, Wittle

This month starts off as usual, with "Fools Day" on the first day. Probably fitting, since the IRS Tax Code usually makes fools out of most of us. Also, because April 16th is the deadline for filing a 2006 individual tax return (unless an extension is requested). Good news, however, since the 15th is on a Sunday the government gives folks until midnight on the next business day - Monday - to get the tax forms submitted. WOW! - A whole extra day to file at the last minute!

If you have not started yet, you might consider one of the tax software programs that are available from a box or online (TurboTax seems to be the favorite choice in computer magazine I have looked through). The programs generally remind you of most deductions you should consider. A more complicated return, however, may require the help of a tax specialist or tax attorney.

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

The month of April focuses us on the two things mentioned earlier - "Taxes" and "Fools." But, for computer users, the monthly general meeting for Alamo PC should be near the top of the interest list. It happens on April 9th, shortly after "Fools Day." If you miss the next Alamo PC general meeting and presentation I would have to classify you as a "Big Fool."

Dave Whittle is scheduled for the April meeting. He is a technology and security expert (also a software vender), and 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.


Note: Keep in mind the other General meetings, and the presenters tentatively scheduled, or who are being contacted to determine their availability - May: A Microsoft representative will focus primarily on VISTA (the new OS released in Jan). June: Gene Barlow, a 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.

I was gratified to see a little over 100 people present on March 12th for the monthly meeting. David Perry, Global Director of Education for Trend Micro talked about some of their products, and about recent developments and current risks from viruses, worms, trojans, spam, spyware, rootkits and other threats to PC computer and network systems. He also addressed the benefits of you will receive from PC-cillin, their premier anti virus software fighter of the bad things listed above. For those present, he offered the \$49.95 product (licensed for up to 3 computers) for \$20. (As I told you in my last message "They will probably offer some sort of discount to user group members...", but I had no idea it would be that good.

I am asking current members to reconsider what this organization has to offer, what it has done for you, and what it can do for others. You are our best source of free advertising. Perhaps by thinking about it, you will be prompted to renew your membership and provide some much needed support, at various levels in the organization - marketing, advertising & sponsors, software for evaluation, general meeting set-up & tear-down, trade shows, learning center volunteer, class teacher, etc. Please remember for this organization to survive WE must each continue to be a supportive member, through renewals and participation at some level.

Consider some of the following items available to members (and please talk to others about them): 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 so they can put it on the 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, "The Dr. Is In" - Friday AM hands-on help with computer problems, at the Learning Center; monthly presentations about current issues in the computer hardware and software; etc.

Don't forget about our popular Digital Camera & Photography classes (4 different levels, each repeated once during the year). Picture opportunities are available throughout the year, not just during holidays. After taking one or more classes, every picture day should be considered a "Photo Holiday."



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

Continued on page 9

We are still trying to improve member retention, although new members have almost been sufficient to offset non-renewing members. We want to try to "grow the membership" through each member renewing and trying to encourage someone to join. If you do not choose to renew, send a comment or two as to "Why?" to membership@alamopc.org, or to me (president@alamopc.org or privately wlklutzjr@juno.com). I appreciate all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

The future of OUR organization will always rest in the hands of its members. Whether WE continue (or not) depends on OUR interest and involvement. 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."

I look forward to seeing members and guests at the April General Meeting. It will be in a Norris facility (hopefully across from our Learning Center).

April Program

Bill Klutz



We are fortunate to have Dave Whittle scheduled for the April General Meeting. He is a technology and security expert (also a software vender), and 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. Generally, he will have a theme to his "picks" - security, Internet, etc. We will have to be present to see what

he has planned for our meeting. I think we would not be surprised to have a give away, or two. Also, user group member desiring to purchase software presented will probably receive a discount.

The April General Meeting will be in a Norris conference facility. Hopefully it will be across from our Learning Center, in Crossroads Mall.

Volunteers Wanted

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

STUDY GROUPS

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

Volunteer of the Month

Adrian Prado



News Brief

One-click Access to Frequently-Used Programs, Files and Folders

There are certain files, folders, programs, and websites I access frequently during the day. To make this easy I create shortcuts to them in my Quick Launch toolbar that I keep normally hidden on the left side of my Desktop. Moving the mouse cursor to the left side of the screen unhides the toolbar, and a single left-click opens the shortcut.

Every entry in the list at the left is a shortcut, so any can be deleted without loss of the underlying program or file. However, Internet shortcuts like YQ will be deleted if the icon is deleted (but I keep a copy of it in my Favorites folder).

The one thing that takes getting used to is that sweeping the mouse cursor to the left edge of the screen may unhide the toolbar, thereby obscuring icons on the Desktop or menu choices on a window. This is just a matter of not letting the sharp point of the cursor get too close to the edge of the Desktop window.

Since this toolbar auto-hides, it does not take up any Desktop space. When unhidden, by moving the mouse cursor to its position, it moves out over icons at the left edge of the screen, and does not force those icons to shift over.

To start the QL Toolbar right-click an empty spot on the Taskbar, Toolbars, Quick Launch. Make sure the Taskbar is not locked (right-click the Taskbar to see). Move the mouse cursor to the "Handle" at the left end of the QL toolbar to result in the double-pointed arrow), press and hold the left mouse button, drag to the left edge of the screen, and release the mouse button. Drag the edges of the resulting toolbar to the shape shown. Right-click an empty spot on the toolbar and click "Always on top" and "Auto-Hide". Other right-clicks on this toolbar can lead to other options (I am using large icons and no text).

I have created my own icons for many of the choices so I can identify the functions from just the icon – but that is another story.

To add a shortcut to this QL toolbar, right-click the toolbar, uncheck Auto-Hide. Then right-drag a program, file, or other choice to the toolbar so a dark horizontal bar appears, release the mouse button, click "Create Shortcut Here." The icon can be dragged up or down the toolbar to whatever position you like. Once added, right-click the toolbar again and hide it.

by Glenn Richards, Emeritus Member of the Lake-Sumter Computer Society, Leesburg, FL, grich32@yahoo.com, www.lscs.us

The Doctor is In



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

What you can find at the show:

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

Location:

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

Show Dates:

May 12, 2007
June 30, 2007
Sept. 29, 2007
Dec. 8, 2007

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



Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen





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.

Are you taking a medication that has noticeable side effects? If so, you're not the only one. I recently read an article in Consumer Reports about the biggest complaints that patients have about their doctors. At least a third of the patients surveyed complained that doctors won't discuss the side effects of medications. I've noticed that too, and the answer I get is that I will get used to the side effects, and that I need those drugs regardless. No compromise is discussed and the doctor changes the subject. My family practitioner did help me get off two medications when I complained strongly enough and insisted on a substitute.

I was put on Coumadin for a blood clot in my leg last year and my blood pressure started raging. My cardiologist prescribed two drugs, Coreg and Lisinopril for both the heart and the BP, which brought it under control. Not long after I started taking them though, I began having serious numbing of my toes and feet. I thought I might have a circulation problem in the feet (common with diabetics) so I went to my podiatrist who said I had no circulation problems and it was probably a nerve problem in the leg.

I have two friends who had taken Lisinopril and got off it because of bad side effects, and two others who take it now and they say with no problems. I decided I wanted a replacement for Lisinopril and the doctor prescribed Quinapril. But the paper about its side effects read the same as the Lisinopril description; it said among the side effects that numbing toes, feet, fingers and arms could be a side effect so I refused to take it. Since I stopped taking Lisinopril (new BP medication now) the numbing in my toes is improved, but not gone, and I also occasionally still have it in my fingers. A nerve conduction study recommended by the doctor showed nerve damage in the legs and arms. That nerve damage in the legs also affects my balance. Doctors tell me the diabetes caused the nerve problems, not any medication. Maybe, but a logical conclusion to me is that I had the diabetes for seven years with none of those problems before I was prescribed the Coreg and Lisinopril, and I always keep my blood sugar very near 100. I wonder if those medications were attacking my nervous system.

I also developed a problem while taking those meds when trying to sleep. My head moves around, but I have little control over that when trying to sleep on my side. That situation has also improved some since getting off of the Coreg and Lisinopril. We'll see how it goes; but not much thanks to the doctors listening to my complaint. My cardiologist tells me to "stop playing doctor, you are not a doctor." I think doctors should be better doctors to their patients instead of protecting drug companies. I would like to hear from my readers on all this. I have already heard from several readers in the past about these problems.

*The following announcements were severely edited so check their Web site for more information. I have not tried any of these products.

*Problem With Your Flash Card?

PANTERASoft is proud to announce the release of version 2.1 of Flash File Recovery, a digital image recovery software tool for flash cards. Flash File Recovery 2.1 efficiently recovers corrupted or lost data from formatted, damaged, unreadable or defective storage media devices. This software recovers image and video files of different types, like JPEG, TIFF and others; RAW Image files, like Canon CRW, Nikon NEF, Kodak DCR and various other video files - AVI, MOV, MPG/MPEG, and many more. It is also capable of recovering pictures from damaged or corrupted flash drives (including a camera's built-in memory) and memory sticks. Flash File Recovery 2.1 supports a wide range of flash cards: SmartMedia, CompactFlash, Memory Stick, MicroDrive, xD Picture Card, Flash Card, PC Card, Multimedia Card, Secure Digital Card, and many others.

Flash File Recovery 2.1 requires Microsoft Windows 9x/NT/2000/2003/XP/Vista and costs \$49.50. User Group members get a 15% discount. Additional information on Flash File Recovery 2.1, as well as its fully functional version for evaluation is available for downloading from <<http://www.panterasoft.com>>.

Product page link: <http://www.panterasoft.com/file-recovery/index.html>

E-mail: <alexey@panterasoft.com> with discount ordering questions.

Continued on page 14

*You Tell Me What This Does!

ALM Works announces the release of JIRA Client 1.0, the first version of a handy desktop client for Atlassian JIRA issue tracking and project management system. This client offers interactive user interface, powerful search, offline mode and other capabilities that expand JIRA functionality to organize issue tracking for more convenience and efficiency. Thanks to JIRA Client caching issues, you can now search, create and modify issues when JIRA server is not available such as during business trips or on-site with a customer.

JIRA Client downloads issues from JIRA and stores them in a local cache allowing users to view and edit issues, regardless of a server's availability. Any changes that are not marked "draft" are uploaded to JIRA whenever the server is reachable. JIRA Client also periodically polls the server for changes and downloads new or modified issues. These changes are automatically reflected on the JIRA Client's interface, in issue counters and issue tables. JIRA Client has a powerful search with complete Boolean logic processor. Each downloaded query is displayed along with an issue counter that shows the number of issues that pass the query's filter.

Neatly Organized Issues Allows you to Concentrate on Work to be Done. Links between issues may be created by dragging "source" issues and dropping them over "target" issues, or by using copy-and-paste operations.

JIRA Client corporate license price is \$169.00 per user. User group member are entitled to 15% discount for any type of license (offer is valid until June 1, 2007) by using coupon code UGPROMO. ALM Works also offers floating, academic and personal licenses. JIRA Client is free for use in open-source projects. All customers are entitled to free lifetime patches and minor updates, and to limited-time technical support and major upgrades. JIRA Client 1.0 runs under Microsoft Windows 2000/XP/2003/Vista, Linux and Apple Mac OS X 10.4. The client is compatible with Atlassian JIRA version 3.3 or later, any edition. JIRA Client downloads and free time-limited evaluation is available from the product web site: <<http://almworks.com/jiraclient>>

Download link: <<http://almworks.com/jiraclient/download.html>>

Company website: <<http://almworks.com>>

*Super DVD Creator Now Available

MasterSoft, Inc. announces the release of Super DVD Creator 9.30. Super DVD Creator lets you jumpstart your creativity and make a personalized disk (DVD, VCD or SVCD) from your own or a downloaded video. Whether you want to create a DVD as a present for your friend or beloved, transfer an old video of a family get-together from VHS to digital form, or create a digital resume, Super DVD Creator is an excellent choice. Select the format (DVD, SVCD, VCD disk), then add video files, include a DVD menu with chapters and subtitles and click 'Start'. That's all! Super DVD Creator will take care of the rest. It'll burn the output to DVD in brilliant quality and much faster than any other DVD authoring software on the market. Another unique option in Super DVD Creator is Super Encode Engine, which is based on MMX-SSE & 3DNow! technology. It delivers an advanced and high speed converting method that lets users create a full 4.2 GB DVD in 60 minutes!

Super DVD Creator 9.30 runs under Microsoft Windows 95, 98, 2000, XP and Vista, and costs \$29.90 (US) for a single-user license. User group members get 20% off its regular price. E-mail <press@alldj.com> for ordering info. Licensed customers are entitled to free lifetime technical support by e-mail and free lifetime upgrades. The software is backed by 30-day money back guarantee. Among the company's premier products, there are Super DVD Creator, Super DVD Player, Super DVD Video Editor, Super IPOD/PSP/iTurn/3GP/PDA Video Converter, Super Clone DVD, DVD To AVI Converter, and DVD To Mpeg Converter. For more information, please visit the Web site.


Product page link: <<http://www.alldj.com/sdvdc/index.htm>>

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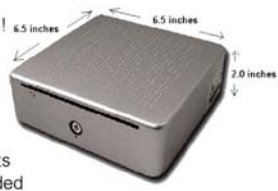


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stereo audio out

POWER DVI / VGA S-video out (TV) LAN (ethernet) firewire USB 2.0 USB 2.0

BASE MODEL FEATURES:

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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

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Continued on page 16

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

"Scientomogy.info"

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

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

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

News Brief



Soft Hardware from Otterbox!

Fort Collins, CO is a charming college town. I know, I've been there, done that and have the t-shirt. You would not expect to find a lot of businesses prospering in this relatively quiet town that wasn't geared towards students and faculty. However, I have discovered one that is worth further investigation, as they have some products that seem to be extremely useful in today's global mentality.

After having been awarded a new 8700 Blackberry by Ziff Davis for participating in a webinar, I finally found the time to switch the cell phone to this device, and synchronize it with all the contacts, calendar appointments, tasks, etc. that has glommed onto me from years of Outlook usage. But the holster that came with it seemed to always dial home, whether I needed to or not. It seems that unless the keypad was locked when inserted into the holster, some of the keys along the side of the keypad were depressed, thus ET was phoning home without realizing.

Enter Otterbox, from Fort Collins (<http://www.otterbox.com>)! They have cases for a lot of different toys we now consider indispensable. They have products for the Blackberry, for the Treo, for the iPod Nano, for laptops, etc., so it would behoove all y'all (I had to do that at least once...) to see what is available for your gadget du jour. Not only do these cases stop the phone home syndrome (poetic, isn't it?), but they are also shock-resistant, water-resistant, dust-resistant, scratch-resistant, and offer protection against extreme elements. The most significant discovery I have found is that you can use all the Blackberry features while it's fully encased in the Otterbox, such as the track wheel, the keypad, the escape key, etc! And when you need to recharge the unit itself, a small plug removes from the side of the case to allow access, so you don't even have to remove the case for this veritably essential chore.

The company is very user-friendly, and seems to be perfectly accommodating, to ensure that you are satisfied with their products. The black and gray color isn't the most flamboyant scheme, but it will go with almost any wardrobe choices you have, and doesn't call attention to what you are doing. The molded rubber and o-ring seals are a bit on the bulky side, but really do provide an unbelievable amount of protection, and transform a fairly delicate instrument into something a lot more usable and carefree. The Blackberry itself is not skinny, so just a little more girth doesn't deter me from believing this is an extremely essential accessory, especially for less than \$130.00 US.

I am one of those people who think hardware is boring, as all it does is just sit there & blindly obey. But these superb soft hardware enhancements, that actually do what they purport to, without a lot of glitz and hype, aren't at all boring. They are practically a necessity. Now, if they could only find a way to protect you from leaving it on the seat in the taxi!

*By Judy Lococo, Program Director, Kentucky-Indiana PCUG, Kentucky
www.kipcug.org, programs@kipcug.org*



SIW and Autoruns

Rob Rice, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

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

Knowing the intimate details of your PC is a necessity when troubleshooting or repairing. Now, having said that, Windows does provide a lot of information but it is not always easy to find or accessible by a simple click of the mouse. For example, if you lose your Windows Key, how do you find it? Is a high temperature on my hard drive or CPU causing my system lockups? What processes are currently running or what programs start when I start Windows?

Two free programs, SIW and Autoruns will answer these questions and provide answers to questions you have not even thought of yet!

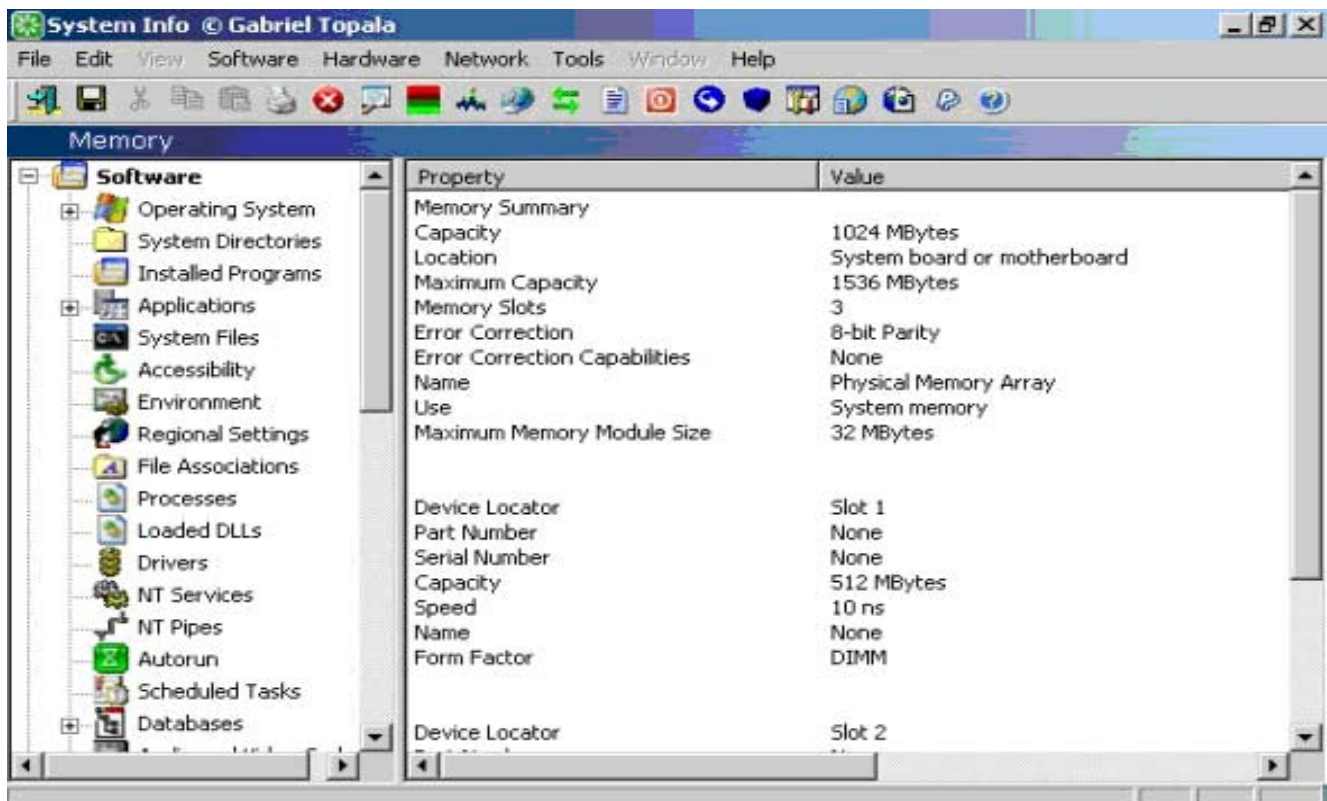
SIW - System Information for Windows

Written by Gabriel Topala, SIW is an easy to use program that, "Performs computer configuration analysis and diagnostics". With no installation required, it is just click and run. It can be loaded on to your USB flash drive, transported, and run straight from the flash drive. Detailed information is presented in a simple interface about such items as: network traffic, CPU, motherboard, chipset, BIOS, CPU, PCI/AGP, USB and ISA/PnP devices, memory, monitor, video card, disk drives, CD/DVD devices, SCSI devices, S.M.A.R.T., ports, network cards, printers, operating system, installed programs, hot fixes, processes, services, serial numbers (CD keys), users, open files, system uptime, network, and network shares. If that were not enough, real-time information for CPU, memory and pagefile usage is also available. Just click on the Secrets links to reveal passwords hidden behind asterisks.

Several basic network tools are also thrown in such as ping, trace and Whois to name just a few. The program can run in batch mode and can create an HTML report; however, be careful when creating a report since all system information is logged by default, including passwords! To choose which items should be documented, go to Tools in the top menu bar and choose Options.

SIW will run on, Microsoft Windows 98/Me/NT4/2000/XP/Server 2003/Media Center/Tablet PC/Windows 2003 Server R2/Windows Server 2003 x64/Windows XP x64/Vista.

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Autoruns – by Mark Russinovich and Bryce Cogswell

Like SIW, Autoruns does not need to be installed on your hard drive and weighing in around 725KB; you can put it on a floppy. Written by the good folks over at Sysinternals, this latest tool will show you the current auto-start applications and the full list of Registry and file system locations available for auto-start configuration. Auto-start locations displayed by Autoruns include logon entries, Explorer add-ons, Internet Explorer add-ons including Browser Helper Objects (BHOs), image hijacks, boot execute images, logon notification DLLs, services and Winsock providers.

An auto-start entry can be disabled by removing the check in the check box or removed entirely by simply selecting the entry and pressing the delete key.

With a right-click of the mouse button a handy menu is displayed and there you will find one of my favorite features; if you don't know what a particular auto-start program is, an option to look up a file with a Google Web search is available. Select the file you have a question about, right-click and choose Google. The number of folks using Autoruns is growing and with that growth is an increase of people seeking answers, fortunately others are sharing their knowledge. In another words, it's getting easier to find information on those obscure programs that start up every time you log in to windows.

You can hide the Microsoft entries by selecting the Hide Microsoft Entries in the Options menu. This will allow you to zoom in on suspect or unfamiliar entries. Select entries in the User menu to view auto-starting images for different user accounts.

The various selection tabs include:

- **Logon** This entry results in scans of standard auto-start locations such as the Startup folder for the current user and all users, the Run Registry keys, and standard application launch locations.
- **Explorer** Select this entry to see Explorer shell extensions, browser helper objects, explorer toolbars, active setup executions, and shell execute hooks.
- **Internet Explorer** This entry shows Browser Helper Objects (BHOs), Internet Explorer toolbars and extensions.
- **Services** All Windows services configured to start automatically when the system boots.
- **Drivers** This displays all kernel-mode drivers registered on the system except those that are disabled.
- **Scheduled Tasks** Task scheduler tasks configured to start at boot or logon.
- **AppInit DLLs** This has Autoruns shows DLLs registered as application initialization DLLs.
- **Boot Execute** Native images (as opposed to Windows images) that run early during the boot process.
- **Image Hijacks** Image file execution options and command prompt auto-starts.
- **Known DLLs** This reports the location of DLLs that Windows loads into applications that reference them.
- **Winlogon Notifications** Shows DLLs that register for Winlogon notification of logon events.
- **Winsock Providers** Shows registered Winsock protocols, including Winsock service providers. Malware often installs itself as a Winsock service provider because there are few tools that can remove them. Autoruns can uninstall them, but cannot disable them.
- **LSA Providers** Shows registers Local Security Authority (LSA) authentication, notification and security packages.
- **Printer Monitor Drivers** Displays DLLs that load into the print spooling service. Malware has used this support to auto-start itself.

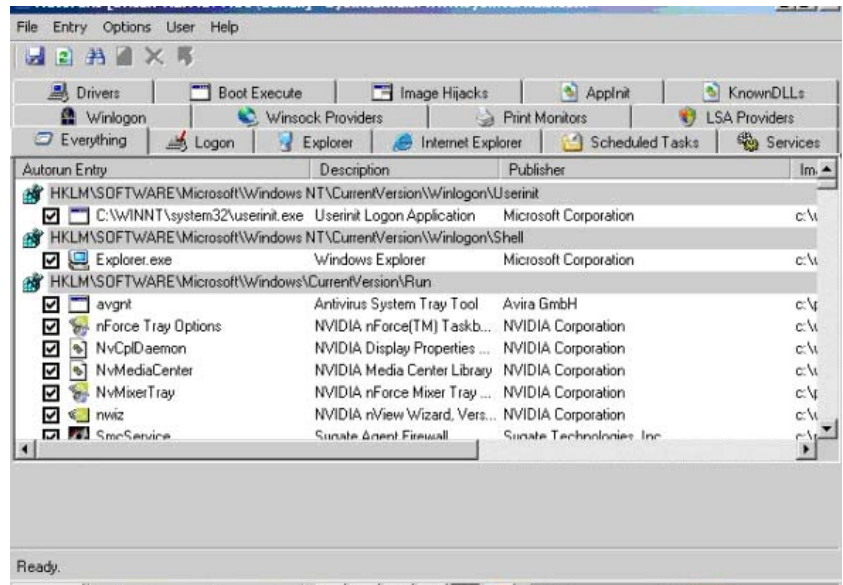
Autoruns works on all versions of Windows including Windows XP 64-bit Edition (for x64) and Windows Server 2003 64-bit Edition (for x64).

By themselves SIW and Autoruns are two terrific free programs, but using both creates the potential to stop problems cold. These are definitely two “must have” pieces of software!

Autoruns is available from Sysinternals (Now a wholly owned subsidiary of Microsoft Corporation):

<http://www.sysinternals.com/Utilities/Autoruns.html>

SIW is available from Gabriel Topala's website: <http://www.gtopala.com>





Win9x/Me/XP Computer tips & tricks

Microsoft Office Word, Part II

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.

This article continues with more Microsoft Office Word computer tips. Most of these tips apply to the more current versions of Microsoft Office Word. However, many computer users are still using the older versions of this software program.

Cursor Location

When opening Word and loading the document you were working on the day before, the cursor always appears at the top of the document. So you now must locate where in the document to continue your work. This problem is often a real pain if you're working with a long document and were not at the end of it when Word was closed. To get back to where you left off, run Word, load the document and then press Shift+ F5. Word will place the cursor just where it was when you last closed the program.

Custom Bulleted Lists

Word comes with a number of fonts that contain nothing but unusual fonts that usually end with "MT." You can use these fonts to create bulleted lists that give your document a distinctive edge by creating a document that uses Word's automatic bulleted list feature. With your mouse, select the entire bulleted list. Right-click the list and choose Bullets and Numbering from the shortcut menu. In the Bullets and Numbering dialog box, click the Customize button and choose a custom bullet. You can click the Bullet button to pull in additional unusual bullets from other Word fonts like Wingdings, Almanac MT, and others. When you click OK the bulleted list is reformatted with the new bullet style.

Custom Menu Bar

If you do a lot of work with Microsoft Word and want to create a custom list of features used on the menu bar, this tip will meet your need. The menu bar is at the top of the window. It includes the words File, Edit, View, etc. Each of these includes a long list of items, some of which have submenus. To create a custom list, which would include only those items you use, click Tools, Customize, and the Commands tab. Under Categories, scroll down to and click New Menu. It will now be shown in the Commands box to the right. Click once on New Menu in the Commands box, and drag it to the Menu bar at the top of the window. Then, in the Categories box, click the headings in turn that include your favorite commands. As the commands appear, drag them to the new menu item in the menu bar. This tip works in all Microsoft Office programs, not just Word. The new menu bar heading, along with its dropdown menu, will be saved in Word or whichever program you choose. Each time you open a new document in that program, it will appear.

Character Spacing

The Word 2000 Spacing control in the Character Spacing tab of the Font dialog box defines how much space appears between characters. This control changes the spacing between characters by the same amount for all characters in a selection. The default setting is Normal. Choosing the Expanded setting adds more space between all characters in your selected text. Choosing the Condensed setting decreases the amount of space between the characters. By default, Word uses one additional point for expanded spacing and one less point for condensed spacing. You can customize spacing for the Normal, Expanded, and Condensed options by typing a number between 0.25 and 14.00 in the By box or by choosing the By text box and clicking the up- or down-arrow buttons.

Christmas Cards

There are a number of programs you can use to make Christmas cards using MS Word. There are templates on the Microsoft site that make cards. They load into Word with one click. To get started, go to Microsoft's template site at <http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/templategallery>. If you are looking for Christmas cards specifically, you'll find the selection sparse. You first print the outside, then run it through the printer again for the inside. There are other specific cards for the holiday season. These include cards for Hanukkah, Ramadan and Kwanzaa. There's nothing for Festivus. Microsoft also includes generic season's greetings cards. They have a Christmas look and should suffice for most occasions. The site includes both business and personal cards. Most are intended to be used with Avery card stock, which will give your creations a more professional look. In addition to cards, the site includes free labels, place settings and other holiday items. Most can be used with Word 97 or later. However, some require Word 2000 at least, and others Word 2002. If you want more selection, there are a number of card programs available. Some of the manufacturers are Broderbund, Sierra Home and Elibrium and their programs are generally inexpensive.

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Color Palette

In Microsoft Word 97, you can choose from an almost endless palette of colors for drawing, but you have a choice of only 16 default colors for text. But Word 2000 supports the full palette of colors available via your video card for coloring text. Select some text, then choose Format, Font from Word's menu. Use the drop-down Font Color list, or click the drop-down arrow to the right of the Font Color button on the Formatting toolbar, to choose a color. By default, you get a palette of 40 color swatches covering a broad spectrum. Now click the More Colors button at the bottom of the list to see an expanded palette and a control box you can use to mix the right shade.

Color Text

Add color to your Word document to make certain parts of your text easy to find. First, select the text as a block. Then click the down arrow by the capital A icon on your tool bar. A drop-down color palette should appear. Choose any color, and your text will take on that color.

Comments

In the old days, comments were scribbled illegibly in the margins of books and documents, but in Word 97/2000, comments are easy to read. To write a comment, follow select the word or sentence that you want to criticize or praise. Choose Insert, Comment. A window opens at the bottom of the screen with comments that have already been made and the initials of the people who made them. The comments are numbered. Type your comment next to the square brackets with your initials in them. Click the Close button.

Copy and Paste

One of Word 2003's new features is the ability to store more than one cut or copied block of text in the Clipboard at a time. You can cut, cut, cut or copy, copy, copy, and then pick and choose which of those blocks you want to paste back into your document. To view the Clipboard, just choose View, Task Pane, click the downward-pointing triangle in the task pane, and choose Clipboard from the menu. You'll see a list of all the things you've cut or copied. To paste any collected text in the Clipboard, place the cursor's insertion point where you want to paste the text in your document, and click that chunk of text in the task pane. To paste something else, just move the insertion point again and click on another chunk of text.

Crop an Image

Cropping means changing an image's size without making the image smaller or larger. It's like using a pair of scissors to cut a chunk from a picture. To crop an image using Microsoft Word 2003, click the image once to select it and then click the Crop tool on the Picture toolbar. The crop tool looks like two intersecting right angles. You're now in cropping mode, which works much like resizing an image. Drag one of the image's handles inward to crop. After you're done cropping, click the Crop tool again to turn that mode off. If you don't like the cropping you've done, click the Reset Picture button to undo it.

Cross-References

Creating a cross-reference within a document to another section of your document is a simple matter of typing some fixed text and then inserting a reference to the item. To use this tip, place your cursor where you want the cross-reference to appear, and then type an introductory text. For example, you might write "For more information, see." Make sure your cursor ends up at the exact spot where you want the cross-reference inserted. Choose Insert, Cross-reference. The Cross-reference dialog box appears. Select the general reference category in the Reference type drop-down list. The Insert Reference To and For Which list changes. Select an option for the Insert References To drop-down list to specify the information from the reference category that should be inserted in the cross-reference. Note that each reference category contains a Page Number option with which you can refer to the page where the reference item occurs. Specify the exact reference that you want from the For Which list. If you choose Bookmark as the reference type, the For Which Bookmark list then contains a list of all bookmarks in the document. Choose Insert. The Cross-reference dialog box remains open so that you can add more info to your reference. When you're finished, close the Cross-reference dialog box.

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Computer Problems?

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Bruce Cramer





Dashes

There's a difference between hyphens and dashes. Most people insert a hyphen where they should use an em dash or an en dash. An em dash looks like a hyphen but is longer - it's as wide as the letter m. The last sentence has an em dash in it. An en dash is the width of the letter n. Use en dashes to show inclusive numbers or time periods, like so: pages 45-50; Aug.-Sept. 1998; Exodus 16:11-16:18. An en dash is a little bit longer than a hyphen. To place em or en dashes in your documents, press Alt+Ctrl+- (the minus sign key on the Numeric keypad) to create an em dash, or Ctrl+- (on the numeric keypad) to create an en dash. You can also choose Insert, Symbol, and, on the Special Characters tab in the Symbol dialog box, choose Em Dash or En Dash.

Date and Time Insertion

Word can lighten your load by automatically inserting the correct time and date into a file. For this tip, open a document and place the cursor where you want the current date to appear. Now begin typing the date and watch for the AutoComplete tips, which Word displays after you type a few characters.

Press Tab to accept the AutoComplete tip, and then press Enter. To insert the time to the document, select Insert, Date and Time from the menu bar and the time format from the Available Formats list. Place a checkmark next to the Update Automatically check box and click OK. Word inserts the current time into your document. To update the time, right-click the time and select Update Field from the shortcut menu. The time is automatically updated.

De-hyperlinking Hyperlinks

Ever copy and paste a URL from your browser into a Word document, only to have Word automatically format it as a hyperlink? Word thinks it's doing you a favor! However with Word 2002 you can remove the hyperlink and make the URL appear as regular text by right-clicking the link and choosing Hyperlink, Remove Hyperlink.

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New, Best and Worst

Globalization, spam and free software

Pim Borman
SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

University and industrial research laboratories in the United States can be proud of having spawned the computer revolution almost single-handedly. AT&T's Bell Laboratories invented the transistor and developed the Unix operating system that in turn formed the basis of DOS and Linux. The C and C++ programming languages originated at Bell Labs also. The basic configuration of desktop computers originated with the IBM PC which in turn was the seed for the current Intel and Microsoft dominance in desktop computers.

The Internet grew out of a collaboration of mostly American researchers, sponsored by universities and government labs. Microsoft's near-monopoly created de facto software standards, including the Windows operating system, Web browser, Office programs, and related software. Not surprisingly, even though computers have spread out all over the world, the standards governing their behavior are still strongly American-dominated.

Increasingly, foreign governments are objecting to some of the US-based standards. One bone of contention is ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, a California non-profit corporation that manages the assignment of domain names and IP addresses on the Internet. There is widespread feeling that this task should be taken over by an international committee. Also, de facto standards imposed by the dominant MS Windows operating systems and the proprietary nature of its Office software are being challenged with a world-wide move towards Open Source software, including the Linux operating system and notable software such as the OpenOffice suite of office programs.

The latest version of Microsoft Office, version 7, uses a different proprietary format, based on the XML hypertext markup language. It is not only incompatible with earlier MS Word and Excel formats, but also with the internationally established standard Open Document Format, equally based on XML. This is regrettable since much documentation generated since computers came in use is already inaccessible in electronic form because of obsolescence. General acceptance of the Open Document Format is an essential step to avoiding further loss of documentation due to changing technology. There is a growing trend amongst private and governmental organizations to abandon proprietary document formats in favor of international standards. Microsoft may be forced to accept the open Document Format for use with its Office programs sooner or later.

The computer revolution clearly originated in the USA, and we can be proud of that. But now that the technology has spread to the rest of the world, opposition is growing to the continuing domination of American companies and standards. Globalization may have to extend to the acceptance of internationally generated and approved standards.

Random Spam

Have you noticed that a lot of spam lately appears to be totally pointless? Instead of trying to sell pornography, get-rich-quick schemes or ED medication (aka Viagra), the subject lines and content appear to consist of random words and sentences. Its intent is to neutralize spam filters that depend on keywords such as Viagra to identify and intercept spam. Swamping the Web with these decoys makes it harder to distinguish spam carrying messages from random noise. Same trick as used by Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. Most of these decoys are sent out by zombie computers, personal and institutional computers lacking adequate firewalls and virus protection, that have been hijacked by spammers and are transmitting spam unbeknownst to the owners. Are you sure yours is not one of them?

Continued on page 23



Free Software

As long as it has been available, I have been using tax preparation software for the annual IRS ritual. Mostly, I have been using the plain version of Tax Cut, because it has been the cheapest and done the job. Since my tax return is much the same from year to year I used to get irked by the roundabout way Tax Cut forces you to prepare your return. Last year Tax Cut sent free copies of its program around to previous users and as inserts in PC Magazines, so I just put up with it again. But this year I haven't seen any free copies and decided to try the free Tax Act. It has the reputation of being a solid program, but with less hand holding than Tax Cut and Turbo Tax provide – just what I wanted.

I downloaded the program from www.taxact.com and used it to prepare a provisional return. It worked just as I wanted, straightforward question-and-answer steps, or by directly filling in the forms as preferred.

It told me about the tax credit for previously paid federal telephone taxes and otherwise took care of the calculations and printing the forms. It also offered to file electronically without charge, but I am still waiting for some 1099 forms, and the government still hasn't finalized some of the supporting forms for 2006. The only minor downside was that it didn't import my personal data from last year's Tax Cut-prepared return, but that was typed in quickly enough.

If you really need more help (from J.K. Lasser) you can download the Deluxe version for 9.95, or for 15.95 if you also want it to do the state return.

If you are interested in protecting your computer with a firewall and anti-virus software you might look at the Comodo Group. They offer a completely free firewall program, Comodo.firewall 2.4 that has received good reviews for effectiveness and ease-of-use. They also have Comodo.antivirus that is still in beta, but free for the downloading.

Comodo Group is an organization providing commercial security software worldwide, making it likely that they know what they are doing. They provide this free software, as well as some other free security programs, to improve their name recognition. More power to them! Find out more at <http://www.comodo.com/news/>

News Brief

Scanning Published Photos

If you scan a photo from a newspaper or magazine, then examine the results on your computer screen, you may see a criss-cross pattern of fuzzy lines over the entire print. If you print the scanned photo, you may also see such a pattern. This happens because pictures in newspapers and magazines are printed in a “halftone” mode.

The halftone process was invented when it was desired to print black-gray-white photographs using a printing press that used only single-color black ink. In this process, the photo is divided into a pattern of small squares, then each square is replaced with a black “blob” of a size proportional to the average shade of black in the square. For example: a white square remains white; a light gray square becomes a small black blob; a dark gray square becomes a larger black blob; a black square remains black. The gray shades were called “half-tones”, which explains the name of the process. Originally, the conversion was done by re-photographing the picture with a camera that contained a wire screen. then developing the picture in a high-contrast mode. Nowadays, the process can be accomplished on a computer.

If the density (squares per inch) of the scanned picture is not an exact multiple of the pixel density of the scanner, computer screen, or printer, an interference pattern occurs. They may also appear if the original photo is slightly rotated after scanning.



Colored pictures from publications may also give you interference patterns. For these, the halftone process uses filters to split the image into more than one black-gray-white photo, with each photo representing the intensities for each color. In each resulting halftone, the blob pattern is slightly offset from that of the other halftones. The picture is reproduced by printing the same paper once for each halftone, in the corresponding color. The printing press does not print one color on top of another because of the slight offset of the halftones.

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Do we need Vista today?

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

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

I've been using Vista since the early BETA releases. I've had mixed feelings since the first day I loaded it. Of course, I was excited to be one of the first ones I knew to give it a test drive. Then, I was disappointed when the motherboard I had didn't have drivers to support it. I got generic parts and installed again. It booted, but I was disappointed when the Aero Glass interface wouldn't run on my video card. I upgraded the video, but drivers were lacking again.

These are expected BETA blues, right?

Now we've reached the full release of the product and I'm still excited...and disappointed. This article is dedicated to why I think you might want to avoid jumping head first into Vista today!

First off, the hardware requirements are high, especially if you're not one to update your system every year or so. Microsoft's site tells you that the minimum requirements are a 1GHz processor, 1GB of RAM, and a 128MB video card. I know a lot of users that don't meet those requirements, and you won't necessarily be happy with your system's performance (in comparison to what you were getting with a clean installation of Windows XP) with them.

I recently tried to upgrade a friend's machine that surpassed those specifications and it blue screened before it even started installing because Vista didn't like the motherboard. The facts are, if you haven't purchase a new rig in the last couple of years, it might not support the new power management features that Vista requires to operate. The amount of memory you have in your system is going to make a huge difference. And don't forget, the user interface is all about 3-D performance. You'll need a true 3-D gaming card to get the full Vista experience.

Of course, what good is a new operating system if you can't get your work done? Early on, I was worried about protecting my environment due to a lack of anti-virus protection. Lately, it's been a lack of disc-burning and other multi-media applications. On top of that, home grown applications that are finally working with Windows XP are no longer working with Windows Vista. The development process will start all over again. This is an expensive and time consuming process. Software support for Vista is simple lacking at this point.

Third, the drivers still aren't there. Would you believe that Microsoft actually broke some things between the BETA and final release of the product? I had one machine where the sound card actually worked during the BETA release of the product and was no longer recognized when I loaded the final release of Vista. To their credit, I've noticed that they're providing new drivers as they become available through Microsoft Update Services. I've had a couple of other machines connected to a network that had hardware devices that weren't detected. When they've downloaded updates from the Microsoft site, the devices were detected. At the same time, many devices that you'd think are common—especially USB devices—just aren't supported. Manufacturers still have a long way to go in order to make Windows Vista a fully functional operating system for wide adoption.

Finally, there are parts of the code that are just broken. Surely, you've heard many IT professionals say they won't install an operating system until its first service pack. There are reasons for saying this. I tried to get my laptop on Microsoft's own public wireless LAN the other day. The WiFi adaptor in my laptop recognized their network, but refused to actually allow a full connection. We worked for nearly 30-minutes trying to troubleshoot the problem, because my laptop had recently been connected to another similar wireless network.

We finally gave up.

When we left the building, we went online and did some research. We were able to find an article on Microsoft's website talking about a bug in Windows Vista that causes it to refuse connection to certain types of wireless LANs. It states that there is a Hotfix (which is a minor bug fix) available to repair this problem, but you are required to contact Microsoft directly to get this fix. The article states that this fix is still being tested and even recommends that you wait until the first service pack (which will include this Hotfix) before installing the patch. If Microsoft recommends this practice, don't you think it might be the best one to follow?

Look, I actually like Vista and use it on my laptop. However, I don't think it's the best move for everyone at this point. If you don't have to be on the cutting edge of technology, I think you can afford to wait on Vista. I've needed to keep at least one fairly clean and patched Windows XP-based system up and running in the house for various reasons. I think you'll be safe doing the same thing. Vista is pretty, but there are times when your computer just needs to work!

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac Back to BootCamp

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

Apple updated Boot Camp, its software that lets Intel-based Macs run Windows, to version 1.1.2. This release adds features to fix problems with Apple's USB modem, a peripheral offered for recent models that do not include a built-in modem. It also fixes track-pad scrolling and right-clicking issues, and idle sleep bugs. There are fewer dialog boxes during Windows driver installation, better international support, and improved wireless networking support for some Mac models.

The system requirements for Boot Camp v1.1.2 call for an Intel-based Mac running Mac OS X v10.4.6 or later, 10GB free hard disk space, the latest firmware updates, a blank recordable CD, and a licensed copy of Microsoft Windows XP, Service Pack 2, Home Edition or Professional.

This latest update got me thinking...

I know Boot Camp's release code (included with OS X 10.5 Leopard) should support Windows Vista, but will this BETA? And if it can, how well? Does my Mac Mini even meet the minimum requirements that Vista needs?

Here's what I started with:

- 1.66Ghz Intel Core Duo processor
- 2MB shared L2 cache
- 2GB of DDR2 SDRAM
- 80GB Serial ATA hard drive
- Slot-loading SuperDrive
- Intel GMA950 video with 64MB of shared memory
- 10/100/1000BASE-T Ethernet
- AirPort Extreme wireless
- Bluetooth 2.0
- One FireWire 400 / Four USB 2.0 ports

Microsoft states the minimum requirements for Vista are a 1GHz processor, 1GB of RAM, and a 128MB video card to get the full Vista experience (meaning the Aero Glass user interface). Anything below that, you're stuck with Windows Vista Basic, which is pretty boring to look at. If you don't manage to get the Aero effect, I don't really see the point—and with 64MB of shared memory, I don't stand much of a chance—but I have to give it a shot anyway!

I booted into OS X and double-clicked on the Boot Camp assistant. I removed my previous installation of Windows XP Professional and repartitioned the hard drive. I decided to go with a 32GB partition, leaving 25GB free for OS X. I rebooted and fed the Vista disc into the Mac. The Vista loader appeared. Another reboot. Vista copied its files, continuing setup. One final reboot and the Setup Windows dialog box appeared. I entered my User Name, Password, and chose my Picture. I named the Computer and picked my Background. I selected to receive Automatic Updates and made the appropriate Time Settings. Finally, I made the selection between Home, Work, and Public for the location of the machine. At that point, Vista started scanning the computer for system performance.

Once all of this completed, I logged on for the first time. Vista came up in Aero Glass!

Since I was connected to the Internet, Vista immediately downloaded a series of Windows Updates. Some were driver updates. I noticed a screen flicker as it updated my video driver. When the updates finished, I was asked to reboot again.

In the Welcome Center, it correctly recognized the T2300 1.66GHz processor. It told me I had 1.96GB of RAM and a Mobile Intel 945GM Express graphics card. I figure the difference in the 1.96GB reported and the 2GB of RAM installed has something to do with the shared memory of the graphics card, but that's a weird number. I checked in the video properties settings, and it told me that the system was only using 32MB of shared memory (as opposed to 64MB per system specification). Since Microsoft reports 128MB minimum needed for Aero Glass, this has me baffled—but the Mac is running Aero incredibly smoothly, so I'm not going to worry about how it's pulling it off.

Next, I decided to test the Performance Score of the system. This is a utility that gives you a ranking from 1.0 to 5.0, with 5.0 being the best, for the different subsystems of your machine. The higher your score, the better your system performs under Vista. If you have a super high-end machine, you may even find that some of your scores go above the 5.0 level. Your total score is based on the lowest value of any of the tests.

Here were my results:

Processor:	4.6
RAM:	4.7
Graphics:	3.4
Gaming:	3.3
Hard disk:	4.5
TOTAL:	3.3

I was pleasantly surprised by these scores. I use Vista full-time on the PC laptop I purchased just a few months prior to my Mac Mini, and it scored a 1.0 on the Vista scale. It cost me a lot more.

While running these tests, the Problem Reports & Solutions window popped up. It informed me of two known issues—a problem with Advanced Configuration and Power Interface and with an Infineon Trusted Platform Module. It provided recommended solutions for these problems, but I noticed that when I rebooted again, these fixes were applied by a Windows Update patch. They were listed in the Windows Update history and the problems were removed from the Problem Reports & Solutions window.

I decided to check out Device Manager to see if anything else hadn't Plug-N-Played correctly. I found only one device that hadn't been configured—a USB Human Interface / Performance Counter. Currently, all my USB ports are functioning, so I've not been able to determine which device this is. However, I know this is simply a driver problem and should be solved when the final code for Boot Camp is released.

I also noted that the internal speaker on the Mac Mini no longer plays all my media files. This speaker worked under Windows XP, but not under Windows Vista. I will be curious to see if this is a driver problem that will be addressed under the release code.

Once I had the computer running to my satisfaction, I decided to put it under my standard workload to see how it would perform. I joined the Mac to a Windows domain, I synced my user profile and documents, and I loaded Microsoft Office 2007. I then proceeded to write some documents, surf the Internet, and I even decided to add some gadgets (just like Mac Widgets) to the Sidebar. The response time was snappy and Vista is running just fine on my Mac. I suspect it'll run even better once Boot Camp comes out of BETA and OS X 10.5 is released. It just needs better drivers (like everyone else who's trying to run Vista does right now!)



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CSS tricks

The Lazy Webmaster

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

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

Cascading Style Sheets, or CSS, are an HTML coding option that allows webmasters to apply display styles to each page of a web site by setting up templates. HTML was invented to structure information, not to make it pretty. The tag <H1>, for example, means the most important headline. It also creates the biggest text. If you use <H1> to make a trivial thing big, you have committed a terrible HTML faux pas. I do it all the time. CSS separates style from structure - its purpose in life to make things pretty.

If you've ever created a Web page using Microsoft Word and then looked at the resulting HTML code, you've seen CSS is all of its complicated glory. I have a book on CSS - indeed I do. It's sitting there on the bookshelf just waiting until I have a free week to memorize it.

But the true beauty of CSS is that it's not an all-or-nothing proposition. You can use the bits of it you want without having to learn the entire package. And that's exactly what I do.

Highlighted text

College students use yellow highlighter pens to mark important information in their textbooks. You can do the same thing in HTML using CSS - make text look like it's been run over by a highlighter. This is a two-part process. First, nested in the <HEAD> tag somewhere (I shove all of this stuff in below the <TITLE> tag) enter this code:

```
<style type="text/css"><!--.HL {background: yellow;color: black;} --></style>
```

You can substitute the hex codes for the colors: #ffff00 for the yellow highlight and #000000 for the black text. You can also change these colors to whatever ones you prefer.

When you want to highlight a string of text, you use a modified tag: type text here

To see this in action — and to learn some variations on the code — open this popup window.

No underline on links

Here's another trick: get rid of the underlines under your hyperlinks. This is a dangerous move - people expect links to be underlined and may become confused if they are not. However, this might fit your design and is easy to change if it befuddles visitors. Just add this line nested somewhere within the <HEAD></HEAD>tags:

```
<style>a{text-decoration:none}</style>
```

Change Scrollbar Colors

This trick has no redeeming value except to astound people. The normal scrollbar is in shades of gray, unless the visitor to your Web page has installed a Windows theme that overrides this default. You can make the scrollbar any color you want. Nest this code within the <HEAD> tag:

```
<STYLE type="text/css">
BODY {scrollbar-3dlight-color:#B8860B;
scrollbar-arrow-color:#000000;
scrollbar-base-color:#F5F5DC;
scrollbar-track-color:#FFFFFF0;
scrollbar-darkshadow-color:#006400;
scrollbar-face-color:#F5F5DC;
scrollbar-highlight-color:#006400;
scrollbar-shadow-color;}
</STYLE>
```

You can use either hex codes or color names. The parts of the scrollbar are obscure: the most important are the face color (the rectangle that moves up and down) and the base color (the background track.) Arrow is the little up and down arrows; dark shadow is the far right edge and shadow is the next color in from that. Highlight color is a sliver along the left edge of the scrollbar face.

To see this in action — and view a labeled chart of the parts of the scrollbar — open this popup window.

Format Text in a Table

I use tables a lot and in a radical departure from my usual lazy ways, I hand code them. A nasty feature of tables is that each element - each <TD> tag - has to be formatted separately. You haven't truly suffered until you've typed 100 times. Well, never again. CSS has a shortcut - the <TBODY> tag:

```
<tbody align="center" style="font-family:verdana,arial,Helvetica,sans-serif; color:black; background-color:yellow; size:-1">
```

If you want the entire table to be formatted this way, insert the <tbody> tag right after the <table>tag and insert </tbody> at the end just before the </table> tag. You can also use <tbody> for a row <TR> or even a cell<TD>. Just include the attributes that you want changed: if you don't want to change the background color, leave off that bit.

Is This Too Easy?

Yes, this does seem too easy and in one way it is. CSS doesn't work with older browsers - it was fully implemented in ver. 4 of Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer. Things may display oddly in Netscape - always check your coding in that browser. For most of the tricks I've described here, it won't matter. If the scroll bar doesn't change color your whole site won't collapse. Older browsers will just ignore what they don't understand.

CSS is, I suspect, worth learning. With it you can create one style sheet and have your entire Web site feed off of it. It makes your pages load faster and saves your time, especially when you want to revamp the look of your site. One of my goals is to master CSS, but in the meantime, I'll borrow what I need and ignore the rest.



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Dreamweaver MX 2004

The Graphics Guy

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>.

I use Adobe Photoshop, and its companion program ImageReady, for a lot of different tasks. The combination will do a lot of the retouching, compositing and general Web graphics work I need, but one thing that you can't do easily is to create pop-up menus for a Web site. You know what I'm talking about, those menus that drop down when you mouse over a button on some sites. ImageReady can make the buttons with rollover effects, but drop-down menus are not readily available. For this task I like to turn to a Photoshop competitor, Macromedia Fireworks MX 2004.

If you use Macromedia's Dreamweaver to create Web pages, you already know what kind of handy tool it is. Fireworks works hand-in-glove with Dreamweaver; Macromedia even bundles them together, with Flash and FreeHand, in their Macromedia Studio MX 2004 suite

Fireworks is a great program for working with Web graphics. For my example, I created a simple Web page template with a navigation bar in Photoshop. Each button on the bar is a separate layer and I saved the file as a Photoshop PSD file to preserve the layers. You can then open this file in Fireworks, although you will need to thereafter save it in Fireworks' native format, PNG (Portable Network Graphic). The Fireworks PNG file will also preserve the layer information as well as all of the Web-related effects we are about to add.

Now is the time chop up the image into slices. This is a way of subdividing the design to allow different areas to have varying functionality. Just like in Photoshop or ImageReady, you use the Slice tool to box off the individual buttons and the logo. You can make the slice exactly as big as the buttons or they can encompass more of the nav bar. I like to do this to keep from having a lot of little images in an oddly formatted table.

Once you add the slices you will see a green overlay on top of the sliced areas and a new layer for each one under the Web Layer area of the Layers palette (Fig. 1). At this point you can take the time to name each slice layer if you like to be organized about things, but you can leave the default names if you choose. You can now select any of the slices with the pointer tool edit things like link information and alternate text in the Properties palette.

Continued on page 30

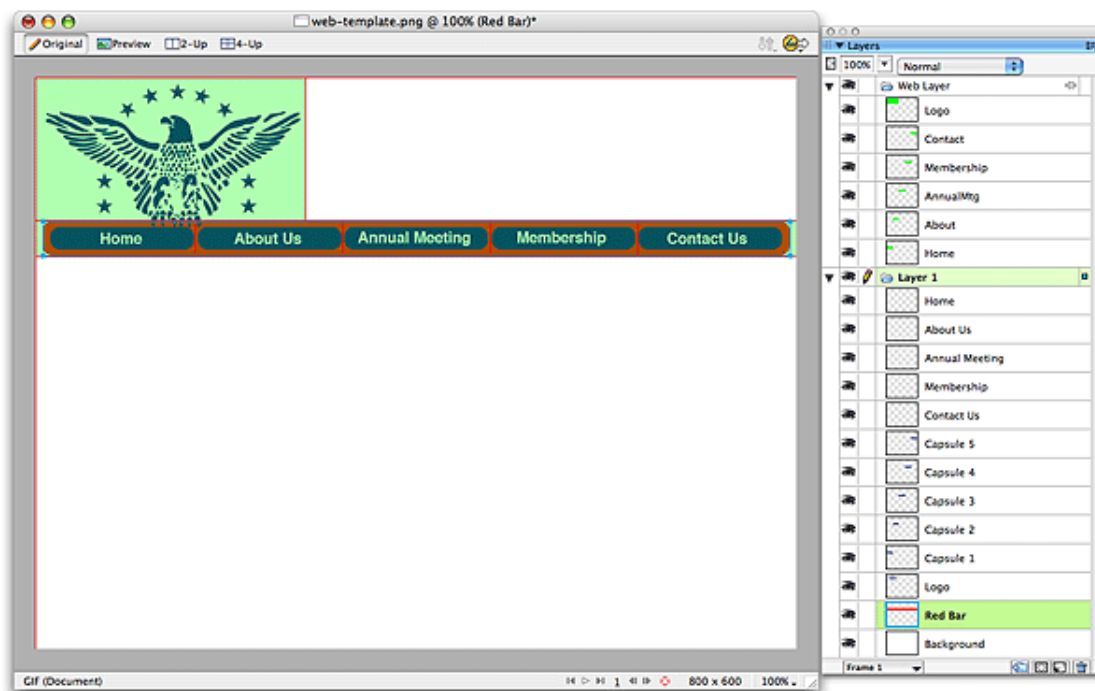


Figure 1

This is where you can name the slice if you did not using the Layers palette, adjust the size of the slice numerically, set the file type and compression options (the pop-up menu next to the C-clamp icon). Here you see the Properties for the logo slice (Fig. 2) which I want to link back to the main page if you click it. In the Link box I typed index.html, but I could also use an absolute address beginning with http and spelling out the full domain name. You should enter some Alt text. This is the text that shows up in the browser if the image is not downloaded or the viewer is on a slow connection. This is also a great place to put some keywords for search engines. The Target field lets you specify an HTML Frame or spawn a new browser window (_blank). If you don't use frames, you can leave this blank.



Figure 2

Use these same settings for the 'Home' button and then we are ready for the cool part. We are going to add a pop-up menu to the 'About Us' button so that we can have multiple choices listed under the button. Select the 'About Us' slice and then from the menu bar pick Modify > Pop-up Menu > Add Pop-up Menu to get to the Pop-up Menu Editor. There are four tabs in the dialog box for you to fill out.

In the Content tab (Fig. 3), add the Text you want to appear in the menu, the page to which it is to Link and, optionally, the Target. The plus and minus buttons at the top allow you to add or remove menu entries, the icons next to them enable you to indent some menu options. When you have these filled in to your satisfaction, click the Next button to move to the Appearance tab (Fig. 4).

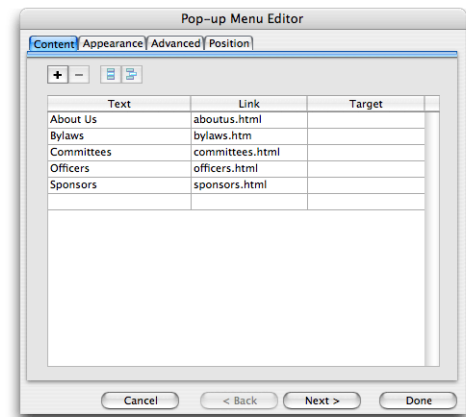


Figure 3

Here you can choose whether you want the menus to be styled using HTML tags or to use an image for the states of the menu. The image option does increase the download time slightly but looks much nicer and lets you apply some nice emboss effects. This area is also where you set the font and size of the menu text as well as the color of the normal and over states. You can also choose whether the menu pos vertically or horizontally. When you are finished, hit Next and move on.

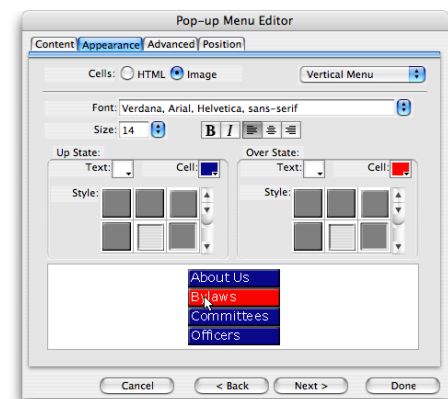


Figure 4

The Advanced tab (Fig. 5) gives you settings for borders, spacing and padding. You can set border colors and widths and a couple of other details. You can leave these settings untouched if you don't want to futz with it.

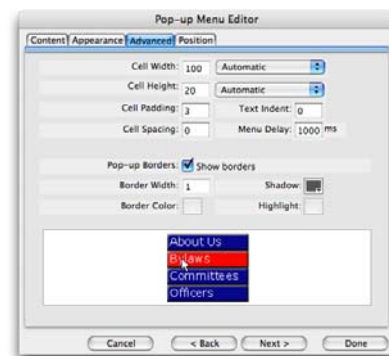


Figure 5

The last tab is Position (Fig. 6). This governs whether the menu pops down or up, left or right. Click one of the icons and then the Done button. Now when you have the slice selected, you will see an outline of the menu position. You can click this with the pointer tool and move it as needed. I chose to center mine under the button.

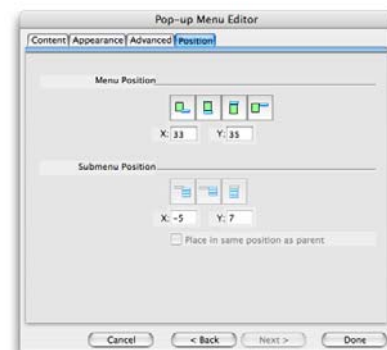


Figure 6

Once you have set up each button as needed, you can preview it in your Web browser of choice by selecting File > Preview in Browser (F12) (Fig. 7). When you are satisfied with your work, go back to Fireworks and export the page as HTML by choosing Export from the File menu. In the Export box, select Save As HTML and Images and the other options as shown (Fig. 8).

While Adobe Photoshop is the best program for a lot of Web work, gems like Macromedia Fireworks MX 2004 offer useful features missing from Adobe's programs. If you are interested in Macromedia Fireworks, download the 30-day demo from Macromedia's Web site (www.macromedia.com). Look for the Free Trials section of the site and click on Studio MX 2004.

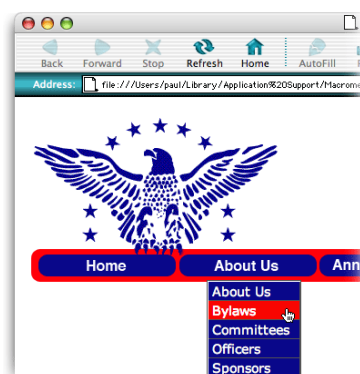


Figure 7

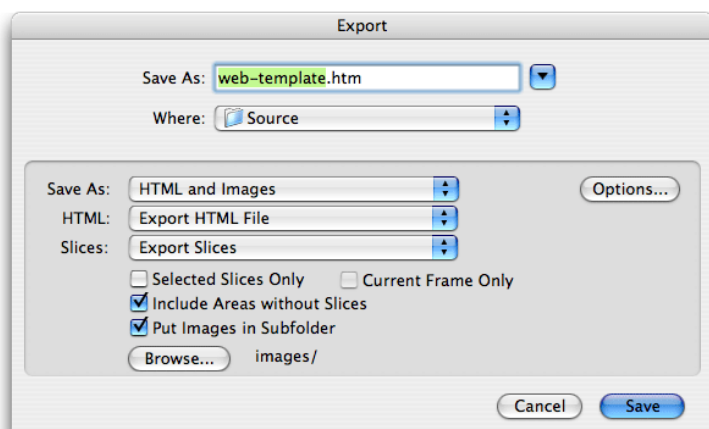


Figure 8



Microsoft Works - Word Processing Docs

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>

Many of you may not have a requirement to create documents other than letters. For those who do, Works offers a wide variety of forms and templates to make the job easier. Most of them will set you up with a boilerplate with the basics in place. You may then modify the document to fit your needs.

one thing I was unable to do in this example was remove the graphic above Club Name. I had thought it possible to cut that graphic and replace it with a club logo. Not so in this case. The remainder of the entries may be changed at will. Simply highlight (select) the



From the Task Launcher you may select the type of document you want to create. In the example above, I've chosen Newsletters and Flyers. Having done so, there are four different options presented.

Brochures for clubs, teams, or social groups are available in a wide selection of designs, to help you get your message across in style.

Event Flyers are used to publicize all kinds of events - sports events, recitals, school fairs, and more.

You can create all sorts of general type flyers and signs using the **Flyers** choice.

Attractive **Newsletters** may be created in a variety of styles and layouts to match the character of your group.

Let's take a shot at an **Event Flyer**. Clicking on Start this task opens a Wizard offering five different categories; Club, House Party, School Fair, Sports, and Theater. We're going to choose Club for this example. At the right you see the beginning of the flyer. The important thing to remember here is that as with any word processor document, you can change formatting or layout, insert pictures and check the spelling. The



Continued on page 33

line of text you wish to change and type in the text of your choice. The remainder of the template may be

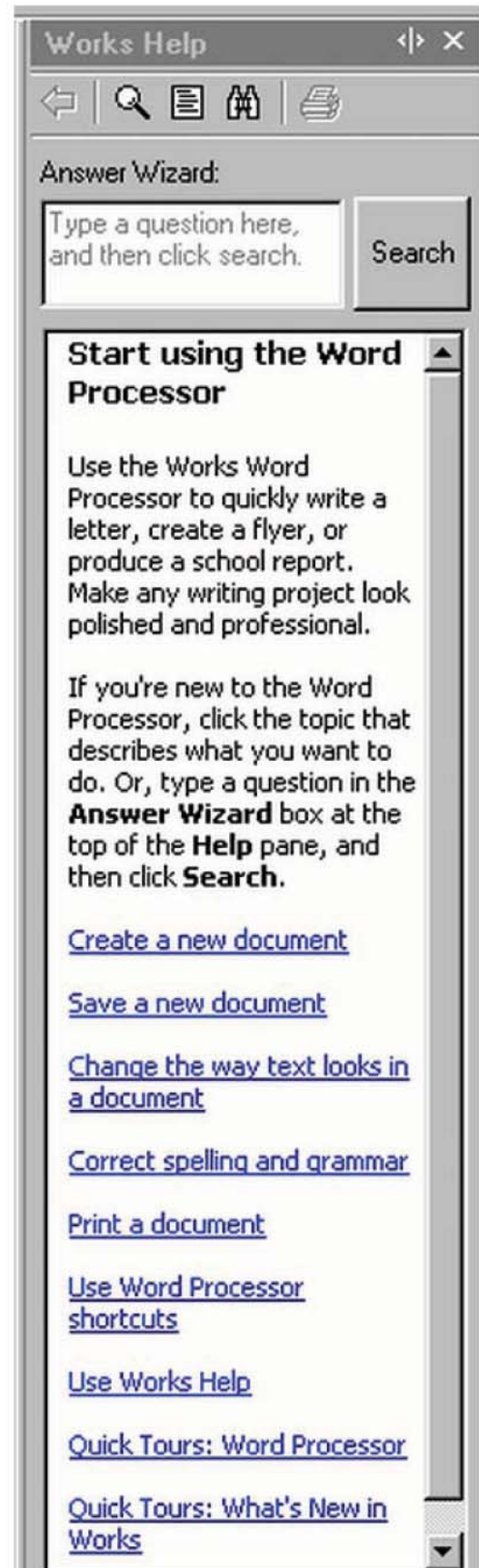
Agenda Sammery	
Text here	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Item• Item	
Officers	
Title:	Name:
Title:	Name:
Charter	
Text here	

seen above. This is just to give you an idea of the type of flyer the Wizard can provide. If this is the type of thing that interests you, I'd suggest that you browse the area on your own to sample the remainder of the items offered.

One important area that deserves much more attention is the Works Help sidebar that appears when you activate a Task Wizard. At the right you can see the basic Help sidebar. The content of the area will vary depending on the Wizard in use. We'll cover the use of this excellent tool in depth. It's like having a personal tutor at your shoulder as you tackle projects in Works.

First: Note the Toolbar at the top of the column. Hovering over each of the icons will tell you its function. They're pretty straightforward - the left pointing arrow moves you back in the content. The magnifying glass is for the answer wizard which appears just below the toolbar. The next icon is Contents, The binoculars are for the index, and the Printer allows you to print the existing page. You'll find this very useful as you work through the topics. Some of them will tell you that 'This topic will not be visible after you complete step 1. Click **Print** on the **Help** toolbar and use the printed copy to complete the procedure.

More on this next month.



The Garage

By Berry F. Phillips, a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and a monthly contributor to the e-Monitor <http://www.ccokc.org>, bfpdata@1access.net

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

IT was born in a garage! If you had driven by the garage located in a residential neighborhood, you would not have noticed there was anything strange about the garage since it looked like all the other garages attached to residences. However, if you were a neighbor you would be aware of certain unusual activity. You would have at times noticed the cars lining the street, and people going into the garage carrying various equipment usually in the evening.

If a neighbor was blessed or cursed as the case may be, with an active imagination several fantasy explanations could come to mind. Perhaps it was a band practicing in the garage but there was no sound of music. Perhaps it was some kind of a terrorist group but no smoke or explosions or sounds of automatic rifles being fired. Perhaps they had a still operating in that garage however there were no police raiding the garage. Well, the garage could be used for all kinds of purposes but one thing is certain; it was not being used as a garage!

The garage was located in Menio Park, San Mateo County, California and was a maternity ward for the birthing in March 1975 of the Homebrew Computer Club. The 1999 made for television movie, "Pirates of the Silicon Valley (and the book on which it was based, "Fire In the Valley: The Making of the Personal Computer") describes the role the Homebrew Computer Club played in creating the first personal computer. Hackers were attracted to the garage like steel to a magnet since in those days it was just another name for a computer enthusiast like nerd or geek. In the old days a hacker is one who "hacks" through a computer problem and who writes his own code to fix it. In modern times a hacker has unfortunately a negative connotation which should be correctly called a cracker, a combination of the word, criminal and hacker.

The hackers wanted to "homebrew" their own machines using parts from the Altair computer kit, computer chips such as Intel 8080, or any other computer equipment. While the members of the Homebrew Computer Club were hobbyists, most of them had electronic engineering or programming backgrounds. I am reminded of Bill Gates' Open Letter to Hobbyists which lambasted the early hackers of the time for modifying and pirating commercial software programs. Several founders of microcomputer companies including Bob Marsh, Adam Osborne, Lee Filsenstein, and Apple founders, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were founding members of the Homebrew Computer Club.

Thirty years later in 2005, a reunion celebration was held as part of the Vintage Computer Festival sponsored by the Computer Museum. Upon the completion of the activities in the exhibit hall, there was an autograph signing as well as vintage computer equipment for sale that took many a hacker back to those early days they "homebrewed" their computer.

The Homebrew Computer Club's newsletter was one of the major forces that influenced the formation of the Silicon Valley created and edited by the members. The first issue was published in 1975 and continued in several designs ending after 21 issues in December 1977. There have been other Homebrew Computer Clubs that have emerged like the one in the Netherlands that started with a dozen members and operates today with 180 thousand members which is the largest association in the world. Their small newsletter grew into the magazine, "Computer Total."

Today, many of the original members of the Homebrew Computer Club meet today as the 6800 Club named after the Motorola (now Freescale) 6800 microprocessor. Who would have ever thought that a garage would be a maternity ward for the IT (Information Technology) Industry? I have decided to elevate the status of the lowly garage in my mind especially since I found out many of our largest corporations were also born in a garage! Why I am thinking now that a garage should not be for cars or junk but a shrine dedicated to American ingenuity and innovation!

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Hackers are NOT Crackers

by **Berry F. Phillips**, Member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City
www.ccokc.org

The media loves to publish stories about so-called hackers breaking into computer systems and causing destruction. It is time to set the record straight, based on historical truth.

The hacker culture actually started in the 1950s when computers were huge to say the least, and programming then meant connecting wires to electrodes. While they did not call themselves hackers then, that for the most part explains what a hacker is. A hacker may be defined as a person who enjoys exploring the details of programming systems and how to stretch their capabilities as opposed to most computer users who prefer to learn only the minimum necessary.

Hacker as a term was first adopted as badge in the 1960s by the hacker culture surrounding the Tech Model Railroad Club (TMRC) and the MIT AI Lab. All computer systems that we use today are based on early hacker research. Much of this research was done out of love for the subject and the fame within the hacker community. One must be recognized as a hacker by the hacker community, which is a certain ego satisfaction. Several famous hackers from the first computer club, the Home Brew Club, were instrumental in founding major computer companies.

Around 1980, a new breed of computer-fed kids evolved, due to easy access to the Internet in the United States and Europe. They soon learned that they could break into other people's systems. Unfortunately, the media called them hackers and the name sort of stuck, when in fact hackers do not consider such illegal security breakers to be hackers, but crackers. Hackers build things; crackers break them!

Much of the freeware on the Internet comes from hackers. It would seem that hackers have been given unjustly a bad name by the media and deserve an apology at the least. While crackers should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law for their illegal actions.

While it is true that many hackers possess the skills for cracking, they outgrew any desire to do so except for immediate, benign, practical reasons. Contrary to non-hacker belief, there is no thin line between being a hacker and being a cracker.

Hackers built the Internet, maintain Usenet, work in IT computer security, and all Internet related businesses owe their origin to hackers. We can demonstrate our respect for their considerable IT achievements by making sure we do not use the term, hacker, when we mean cracker, who is involved in illegal cybercrime.

My thanks to Philip Tellis who did considerable research that was the basis for this article to correctly inform the public.



STUDY GROUPS

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

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Tech-O-matic Needs

Shopping for free and open source software

Written by **Bill Wayson**, Member of the Channel Islands PC Users Group, California
<http://www.cipcug.org>, bwayson@gmail.com

By the time you read this, the holiday shopping season will be over and many of you will be trying to figure out what to put on your new computer. It seems fitting, then, to make a few suggestions of programs you will find in your Web browser-based shopping center, the Mall of Free and Open Source Software, or the Mall of FOSS. All of the suggestions made here are suitable not only for users of Linux and BSD, but also for Windows diehards. In some cases, other operating systems, such as the Mac and Solaris are supported. So fire up your computer and head on out to the Internet highway. Oh, and you can leave your credit card at home, for the goods at the Mall of FOSS are priced most attractively: free.

Continued on page 37

Screensavers

The holidays are really meant for the child that resides in all of us, and all children want to have fun. So spice up your PC with some fun items. Start by stopping at the Really Slick Screensavers Web site at <http://www.reallyslick.com/>. Here you will find out-of-this-world, mesmerizing screen savers that range from “psychedelic” to “nauseating.” One includes great sound effects. They all perform best with hardware-based video acceleration, but that should not be a problem with recent hardware. Once you see these, you’ll never go back to the flying Windows or pipes again.

Web browsers

Is your gift recipient still using Internet Explorer? Head on over to <http://www.mozilla.com/> to get Firefox for him or her. Firefox is a great Web browser with such features as tabbed browsing, configurable security, extensions that provide additional features, and themes that change the look and feel. Firefox version 2.0 was released Oct. 24. Or you can shop for a newer browser, Flock, at <http://www.flock.com/>. Flock is based on the same page rendering engine, Gecko, that the Mozilla family of browsers is built around. But Flock focuses on sharing and connecting with other people online, with enhanced support for blog posting, RSS feed integration, photo posting on Yahoo Flickr, and saving your bookmarks on the Internet for sharing between all the computers you use.

Instant messaging

Maybe your giftee spends time in the world of instant messaging. If so, get Gaim, a multi-protocol instant messaging (IM) client, from <http://gaim.sourceforge.net/win32/>. Gaim will work with several different protocols, including AIM, MSN, Yahoo!, Jabber, ICQ and others, so it could become the only IM client anyone needs. If someone prefers the more traditional Internet Relay Chat (IRC), consider getting Xchat (<http://xchat.org/windows/>) or Kvirc (<http://www.kvirc.net/>) for them.

Juice Receiver

Has someone on your holiday giving list complained about using iTunes on Windows? That person may enjoy receiving an open source replacement, Juice Receiver, available at <http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/>. It has access to many of the same podcast indexes that iTunes provides, as well as a number of indexes that it does not.

Bittorrent for file swapping

If you have diehard computer geeks on your list, they most likely share files with their friends. The standard file-swapping protocol is bittorrent, and you will find bittorrent clients for them at <http://www.bittorrent.com> and <http://www.getazureus.com/>. Perhaps they have always wanted to create their own dynamic Web site but have balked at the price of commercial Web server software for Windows or the Mac. If so, head over to the XAMPP for Windows store at <http://www.apachefriends.org/en/xampp-windows.html>. XAMPP for Windows will give them everything they need to build a robust, full-featured, dynamic Web site, and it is ready to go out of the box.

CLAMAV

Does anyone on your list need or want to try a different virus scanner? The shop at <http://www.clamwin.com/> has the open source scanner, CLAMAV for Windows, available for you to give. They’ll be getting a GUI-based virus scanner, free and automatic signature updates, and scheduled virus scanning.

Outlook alternatives

The shops at <http://www.mozilla.com/thunderbird/> and <http://shellter.sourceforge.net/evolution/> offer alternatives to the Outlook e-mail client. The former site has Thunderbird, an easy-to-use product of the Mozilla project, while the latter provides Evolution, which sports additional support for calendaring and Microsoft Exchange e-mail servers.

GIMP

Moving on to applications, if there is one on your gift list who does any sort of work with images, ranging from doctoring photographs to graphics for a Web site, you owe it to them to stop off at <http://www.gimp.org/windows/> and pick up a copy of the GIMP. Somewhat mischaracterized as the “Poor Man’s Photoshop,” the GIMP provides a large range of image processing tools and plugins, as well as a framework for writing custom plugins. With the GIMP, they’ll be able to do just about anything they’d ever want to do to their pictures.

Continued on page 38

Audacity

Or maybe you are looking for something for someone who is into sound recording, someone who perhaps was a Mr. or Miss A/V in high school? They undoubtedly would really enjoy receiving the Audacity sound recorder, editor, and writer. Look for it at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>. This powerful program literally will turn a PC into a full-featured sound recording and production studio. Pair it with a professional-quality sound card, and it is hard to beat at any price.

DVD-capable media players

Many of those on your gift list also want to be entertained, and maybe they'd like to watch a DVD while working at their computers. A couple of DVD-capable media players they would like can be found at <http://www.mplayerhq.hu/> — which offers the MPlayer media player — and <http://www.videolan.org/> — which offers the VideoLAN VLC player.

Office applications

Chances are the computer users on your holiday gift list use traditional applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and the like. There are several gifts in this category that you cannot go wrong with. OpenOffice.org is possibly the most popular open source office application suite available. The latest version, which can be found at <http://www.openoffice.org/>, is highly compatible with Microsoft's Word, Excel, and Powerpoint formats, and all but the most complex of documents can be shared in both directions. OpenOffice.org also supports out-of-the-box export to PDF and Flash formats.

OpenOffice.org is certainly not the only option in this arena. The Abiword word processor from <http://www.abisource.com/> is a mature product offering a range of features. Since it is a lightweight user of computer resources, it runs well on older hardware that might bog down under OpenOffice.org, Microsoft Office, and Vista.

GNUmeric, from <http://www.gnome.org/projects/gnumeric/>, is a nice, mature spreadsheet program that has all the options and features your giftee wants for the spreadsheet work. If someone would like something to help create pretty, Visio-like organizational and flow charts, stop over at <http://dia-installer.sourceforge.net/> and pick them up a copy of DIA, a diagramming tool.


PDFCreator, Scribus

Do your giftees need to produce PDF documents? If so, they'll be grateful to receive PDFCreator, which is available at <http://www.pdfforge.org/>. PDFCreator works with any application that prints to the Windows printing system, making it easy to create not only PDF documents, but PNG, JPG, TIFF, BMP, PCX, PS, and EPS as well. Or maybe they want to create professional-looking documents like brochures, booklets, or newsletters. For them, take a trip to <http://www.scribus.net/> and get them Scribus, a desktop publishing system with many of the same page layout and formatting features you expect to find in the more expensive commercial systems. Scribus also runs on the Mac.

Web page design

Do you have a Web designer on your giving list? He or she might like to receive Nvu (pronounced n-view, and found at <http://www.nvu.com/>), a WYSIWYG Web page editor that will remind you of Dreamweaver. With its integrated FTP client, it may be all an e-designer would need. Perhaps they prefer to develop their Web pages from scratch (or someone on your list might like to get an advanced text editor). If so, stop off at <http://notepad-plus.sourceforge.net/uk/site.htm> and pick them up a copy of Notepad++, which is what Windows' Notepad might be if it consumed strong steroids. It will give your recipient syntax highlighting, auto-completion, WYSIWYG markup, bookmarking, zooming, multi-document viewing, and much more.

I hope this gives you some ideas about which stores to look at for your holiday gift-giving needs. And do not forget the most important person on your holiday gift list: you! If anything here looks interesting as you read about it, make sure to get yourself a copy. The great thing about all the stores offering FOSS software gifts is that they always have a great two-for-the-price-of-one sale going on, the perfect holiday sale.



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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



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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.

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

Amazing inkless printing possible with ZINK

ZINK Imaging has unveiled a new way for consumers to print and experience full color digital images without the need for ink cartridges or ribbons. ZINK Imaging's patented technology, being shown for the first time at the DEMO 07 conference, shifts the printing paradigm from an ink cartridge or ink ribbon, to a totally ink- less system. Images magically appear on the ZINK paper without a drop of ink.

The key to the ZINK process is the ZINK paper, which is protected by more than 100 patents and patents pending. Dye crystals are embedded in the ZINK paper and are activated by heat from a ZINK printer. The crystals then colorize, producing high quality, long-lasting, durable, and affordable images.

"At ZINK Imaging, we are insisting on the impossible to deliver a revolutionary digital printing experience to the world. ZINK technology does not require ink to print, provides a magical user experience, can transform any device into a printer, is good to the environment and most importantly, makes people smile," said Wendy Caswell, president and CEO, ZINK Imaging. "Our unveiling at DEMO marks the completion of a long and intense road of research and development that has resulted in a patented, innovative printing technology that we are quite proud to deliver this year."

Windows XP: Remote Assistance

By **Dick Maybach**, Member of the Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey

<http://www.bcug.com/>, N2nd@att.net

“With Remote Assistance a tutor can see a student’s Windows desktop and operate his or her computer over the Internet.”

Because of BCUG members’ interest and experience with PCs, many of us are asked for help by friends and family. Often, those seeking help live across town or across the country, and it is inconvenient to visit them. Fortunately, Windows XP (both the Home and Pro version) provides a solution. Using its Remote Assistance feature, a tutor can see a student’s Windows desktop and operate his or her computer over the Internet. This allows you to assist someone almost anywhere in the world. Remote Assistance supports an audio link and live file transfers. During the session, you can speak with the person you are helping, and exchange files between the two PCs as easily as you can move them between directories.

To use Remote Assistance, both parties must be using Windows XP, either Home or Pro. The operation will be smoother if both have high-speed Internet access, but this is not required. Also, both parties should have microphones or combination microphone-earphone headsets, which are available inexpensively from many computer hardware dealers. Without this, you will have to juggle a telephone during the whole session or use text chat, both of which are inconvenient. Finally, Universal plug-and-play must be enabled on your hardware router, if you have one. This appears to be the default for those used in homes, but if you are behind your company’s, college’s, or some other organization’s firewall, you may not be able to use Remote Assistance. UPnP does entail a small security risk, which many organizations won’t tolerate.

It will also be helpful to use MSN Messenger to set up the session. Without this, you will have to use e-mail, which will slow down the dialog immensely. (As a bonus, Messenger will allow you to make free audio or video calls anywhere in the world.) Both the Messenger software and service are free. You can download the software from Microsoft. (The fastest way to find the correct download page is to do a Google search for “MSN Messenger”. During the installation process, you will be led through the process of obtaining a Messenger account.)

XP enables Remote Assistance requests by default; however, check to be sure that this is so. The error message if it isn’t is not helpful. (Right-click on My Computer, select Properties, select Remote, check Allow Remote Assistance invitations to be sent ..., select Advanced, check Allow this computer to be controlled ... While you are here, reduce the time that requests are active to something like four hours; the 30-day default is far too long.) Allowing Remote Assistance requests does add a small security risk; I recommend that you disable it when you aren’t using it.

Use the following procedure to start a session. (It assumes you use MSN Messenger.)

- Both parties start MSN Messenger and sign in.
- The student requests assistance (Start » Help and Support » Invite a friend to connect to your computer with Remote Assistance » Invite some to help you » select the friend from the Messenger list » select Invite)
- The tutor accepts the request.

Both can now see the student’s desktop, but only the student can control it; that is, the tutor’s mouse and keyboard do not affect the student’s desktop. For many problems, this is all that is needed.

Once the session has begun, you can control the interaction.

- If you are using a high-speed connection, tell the program so. (Click Settings and check High Quality Connection.)
- To start a voice conversation, click Start Talking. Again, one party requests and the other accepts the link. This, of course, requires a microphone or a headset at each PC. You can use instant messaging for conversations, but this is much slower than talking and can be confusing.
- The tutor can request control by clicking Take Control. If the student accepts, both now control the student’s desktop. This allows the tutor, for example, to demonstrate the correct procedures and to make changes in the student’s configuration.
- Either party can send a file, by clicking Send a File.
- Hitting Esc allows either party to revoke control, kill the voice link, or stop the session.

Remote Assistance provides a very valuable tool that allows PC users to help each other without leaving their homes, but it hasn’t received the recognition it deserves.

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.

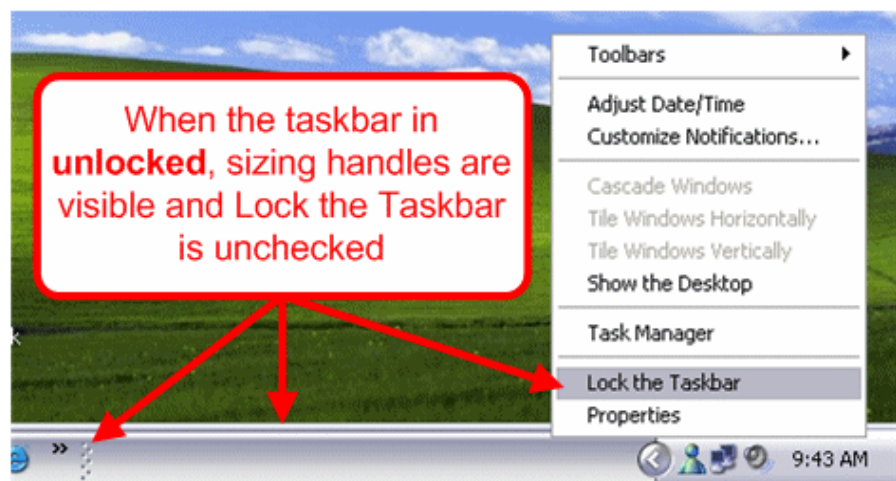
A key option -- Lock the Taskbar -- controls whether you can change the taskbar. When the taskbar is unlocked, you can change its size by dragging its edge away from or towards the screen's edge. You can move individual toolbars by grabbing their handles (perforated line near each one) and move the taskbar 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



Continued on page 43

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!

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Thinking about Disaster

by **Dick Maybach**, a member of the Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey
<http://www.bcug.com/>, N2nd@att.net

Here, we aren't discussing PC problems such as disk crashes, but real life disasters, such as those represented by the four horsemen of the apocalypse: pestilence, war, famine, and death. There's not much we can do about these, but careful preparations will lessen the consequences. While it's not pleasant to contemplate woes, and you certainly don't want to become obsessed, some constructive worrying today could save you or your family much trouble later.

PCs have become indispensable tools for many of us. The conscientious user backs up regularly, probably to an external drive sitting beside the PC. However, if you experience a fire, flood, or theft, both your PC and its backup data will probably disappear together. If a theft occurred, not only have you lost your data, but somebody else has it. You'll need to cancel your credit cards and close bank accounts immediately, but you no longer have the information you need to do this. Thus, there are two problems: replacing the lost data and stopping somebody else from misusing it.

The best solution to the first problem is to keep a backup of your critical data in a safe place, such as bank deposit box. Many banks offer free boxes to their customers, but you could also keep the information at work or with a friend. It will be most convenient to restore this critical data to your (presumably new) PC if the backup takes the form of diskettes or CD-ROMs. If your deposit box is too small or too full to hold a 5 1/4 inch disc, use a 3 1/8 inch CD-ROM (holding about 200 Mbytes) or a USB thumb drive. The saved data will include, for example, your passwords, contact names and addresses, financial data, and family photos.

For the second problem, keep a paper copy of your credit card and bank account numbers as well as contact information for your financial institutions. You will want this data immediately, and it will take a little time to find a PC and print out the contents of a disc.

You've now taken care of disasters that happen to your home, but what if something happens to you? What information will your family need if you are not available or incapacitated? Certainly, this includes the user names and passwords for your computer and PDA. They will need the URLs, user names, and passwords of any sites you use for financial transactions, such as credit cards, banks, merchants that are authorized to charge your credit cards or make withdrawals from your bank account, employers, and retirement organizations. They will also need the passwords for any data you have encrypted, such as Quicken files or password storage programs. Finally, they will need your social security number, birth certificate, and life and health insurance policy information. You should have a paper copy of this information and tell your family where it is.

What do you do if a relative dies and you must obtain access to their PC and allow their family to carry on with their financial duties? If there is a BIOS password on a desktop PC, you must open the system unit. Most motherboards have a connector into which you can insert a jumper to restore the BIOS factory defaults and remove any passwords. Laptops have similar provisions, but you will have to contact the manufacturer to find what it is. Once the BIOS password is removed you can boot the machine, at which point you may find it has a Windows password. The safest procedure is to obtain a Linux "live CD-ROM", such as Knoppix. With this you can boot Linux directly from the CD-ROM, which will let you read and copy, but not necessarily write, Windows files. Once you have copied all the critical files from the PC, you can reset the Windows password using one of the password-cracking programs that are available on the Internet. **IMPORTANT EXCEPTION** – Windows 2000 and XP Pro allows files and folders to be encrypted. If this has been done, resetting the Windows password will render these permanently unreadable. Fortunately, few users use this feature. There are also PDA password cracking programs, but those I've found work only on the PC desktop program that backs up the PDA; I've not seen one for the PDA itself. If there are encrypted Quicken files, Intuit promises to remove the passwords for \$10 per file; see their Web site for more information. If you are more adventuresome, Quicken password-cracking programs available on the Internet.

If the relative uses on-line banking, contact the bank to obtain a new password and change the ownership of the account. Monitor the account carefully for automatic transfers, both deposits and withdrawals. You probably want to stop these. Also contact all credit- and debit-card vendors to close the accounts, and notify employers and, if appropriate, Social Security of the change. Open and read carefully all letters; some bills and checks appear to be junk mail. Finally, be alert for scams; for instance, you might receive unordered merchandise or claims of debts.

Having to deal with these issues is especially difficult in times of stress, and preparing the information before they arise is a much better approach.

New Security Products Shown at APCUG Annual Conference

by **Ira Wilsker**, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas; Radio and TV Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net

I recently had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting and convention of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) in Las Vegas. Even though I have attended APCUG annual events since 1991, it always amazes me how quickly technology changes, and how those changes are rapidly introduced to us consumers.

Every year participants are astounded by what we see, but every year has also demonstrated technologies dwarfing those shown the previous year. The APCUG events were all on topics related to personal computers, including security, applications, operating systems, hardware, CPU, and other technological services and components. Three of the presenters were companies in the computer security software sector.

Grisoft (www.grisoft.com) is a computer security software publisher headquartered in the Czech Republic, and best known in the U.S. for its very popular free version of AVG antivirus software. I was very surprised to learn that the more sophisticated and comprehensive commercial versions of AVG are among the most widely used computer security utilities in Europe. AVG has a professional staff of engineers in Europe, but also has sales, and more importantly technical support services, located in the U.S.

I have to admit that until I saw the AVG-Grisoft presentation, I was unaware of the degree of sophistication and quality features built in and backing up the AVG products. My opinion of AVG was positively changed, as I had always thought of it as an excellent free antivirus product; now I know it as a technological leader providing enhanced features and functionality in its products.

While I will still recommend the free version of AVG antivirus software to those who may not be able to afford commercial software, I would also hope that those who use AVG free version and are satisfied with it would eventually upgrade to the more comprehensive and feature rich commercial products. AVG offers a comprehensive selection of security software ranging from antivirus software to complete security suites. AVG has been certified as among the most effective antivirus products by several independent testing and rating services.

Panda Software (www.pandasoftware.com) is a publisher of computer security software headquartered in Spain, but with a strong American presence. I first became acquainted with Panda several years ago when I purchased a copy of Panda Antivirus at one of the big-box office supply stores. I had read some amazing reviews of it in a computer magazine, so I decided to try it on my Windows 98 computer to replace an expired competing big-named American product.

My "98" computer continued to have Panda protect it for the remainder of its lifetime, and Panda never failed me. At APCUG Panda amazed me with its degree of technical sophistication in dealing with the changing threats facing the computing public. According to Panda, over 90,000 new malware threats appeared in 2006, with some individual months in 2006 having as many new threats as in all of 2005. Panda explained how the threat scenario for computer users changed from the old-fashioned viruses intended to damage computer files with random acts of vandalism, to the new threats that are almost all commercially driven.

Panda Software offers technology security solutions ranging from its free online "Active Scan", to free-standing antivirus software, to comprehensive security suites complete with antivirus, firewall, anti-spyware, anti-spam, wi-fi protection, and other protective features. Panda has its own proprietary "TruPrevent Technologies" which is designed to protect computers from attack by new and unknown viruses even before the virus signatures can be updated. Most Panda Software packages can be

WEBSITES:

<http://www.apcug.net>
<http://www.pandasoftware.com>
<http://www.grisoft.com>
<http://www.trendmicro.com>

Continued on page 46

installed on multiple computers under a single license, and should be considered as a very strong and capable competitor to other better known security products on the market.

Trend Micro (www.trendmicro.com) explained the degree and types of security threats facing computer users. Identity theft of various types was discussed as well as the means to detect, protect, and neutralize a wide variety of other computer threats. Threats can come via email, malicious code on websites, from file sharing services, and countless other places. In order to deal with and protect from a wide variety of threats, Trend Micro demonstrated its flagship product Trend Micro Internet Security 2007 with its integral TrendSecure online services.

Previously known under the moniker PC-Cillin, Trend Micro Internet Security 2007 provides protection from viruses, spyware, spam, phishing, and other forms of attack. Features also include a "fraud defense" to explicitly help protect credit card and other sensitive personal information from being compromised while online. The 2007 version includes a single license that can be installed on three computers which make it both a qualitative and economical good choice when compared to the other name brand security software titles widely available at retail.

I am a firm believer in good competition and the free enterprise system. As was clearly demonstrated at APCUG and CES, competition drives innovation which in turn provides valuable and tangible benefits to the consumer. We all need antivirus and other flavors of security software on our computers and any of the feisty competitors above can provide a quality product and service at very competitive prices. If more computer users could have seen what those of us at the APCUG event saw, the security "biggies" would have a lot to fear, because these aggressive "little guys" are providing excellence by innovation and superior service and support at a fair price.

Those big guys on the block should be looking over their shoulders, as these little guys are growing stronger by capitalizing on the weaknesses of their larger competitors. Security software should not just be purchased based on the familiarity of the name or brand, but on the quality of the services and support offered. Any of the three products mentioned above would be a good choice for virtually all PC users.



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Resolutions for Safe Computing

By **Ira Wilsker**, APCUG Director; columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host, iwilsker@apcug.net

Despite exhortations in this column for several years, as well as pleading on my weekly radio show, it is still abundantly clear that many of you still need some encouragement to practice safe computing. In no special order, here are some safe computing resolutions that we should all follow:

WEBSITES:

<http://www.ntius.com> - Shadow Backup

<http://www.getfirefox.com> - Firefox 2

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie> - Internet Explorer 7

<http://www.trendmicro.com> - Internet Security Suite 2007

<http://www.snopes.com> - Snopes Hoaxes and Urban Legends

Backup Backup Backup.

These are the three most important words in computing. I still receive many calls for help from readers and listeners who have had a hard drive fail, resulting in the loss of critical data files. Remember that Murphy's first law of computing is, "A properly backed up hard drive will never fail; but the first time you do not have a current backup, the hard drive will always fail at the most inopportune time."

Think about the critical data files that you have on your hard drive right now; family photos, tax records, spreadsheets, databases, important letters, and other important data. While the loss of a hard drive may be tragic, it may also be no more harrowing than a minor inconvenience if that hard drive is properly backed up. There are several software products that automate the backup process almost invisibly, and with minimal intervention. Personally, I have NTI's Shadow (www.ntius.com) running on a full time basis performing a real time backup to an external USB hard drive.

If my hard drive were to unexpectedly fail, or if I even had to purchase a new computer, I could quickly be back up and operating with no loss of critical data files. In the event of a disaster, such as Hurricane Rita, the external hard drive loaded with data, or some other media (CDs and DVDs are also commonly used for backup), could be quickly and easily packed for evacuation or relocation, allowing for quick recovery or operations from an alternative location.

There are other methods of backup, including automated remote backup to a distant location via a broadband connection. Whatever method and media of backup is selected, just do it, and do it constantly. Remember the cliché that it is better to have it and not need it, then to need it and not have it.

Phishing, spyware, and other forms of malware may have become a greater threat to our safe computing than the traditional virus attacks. Identity theft is rampant, and unsafe computing is a major contributor to identity theft. Phishing is a form of identity theft where the user is tricked into connecting to a spoofed website imitating the website of a major company or financial service organization.

Companies' websites such as PayPal, eBay, Sears, and major financial institutions and credit unions are commonly spoofed by criminals who attempt to persuade the victim to enter personal information, account numbers, credit card numbers, and other sensitive information on the spoofed site. Various media accounts put the increase of phishing attacks from seven to eighty times more than a year ago.

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No reputable company will ever ask you for credit card or personal information in an email. Fortunately, more protections are currently available to protect us from phishing attacks. The new versions of the major internet browsers, such as Firefox 2 and Internet Explorer 7 include integral protection against phishing by warning the user of suspicious websites.

Several of the new 2007 versions of software security suites, in addition to traditional antivirus and firewall functions, now also provide protection against phishing, spyware, and other malware attacks, as well as other security functions. For example, with Trend Micro's Internet Security Suite 2007 installed (www.trendmicro.com), clicking on a phishing link in an email will immediately popup a warning that the site is illegitimate. Protecting us from malware is an excellent safe computing resolution.

Parallel to the anti-phishing protections, we still need protection from viruses, worms, Trojans, and other malware. Most current antivirus software includes an automated update feature. I continue to hear from callers and readers that they update their antivirus every few days, or once a week; that is totally inadequate as well as dangerous.

Most antivirus publishers are now releasing several updates a day, sometimes as frequently as hourly. Configure the antivirus software to check for updates as frequently as possible. With about 300 new and altered viruses appearing on a daily basis, very frequent updates are a necessity. It is dangerous not to update as frequently as practical as it may give the user a false sense of security that they are protected, when in fact they are not. Updating antivirus software on a constant and consistent basis is an excellent resolution.

Another resolution would be to stop forwarding hoaxes, urban legends, and other useless emails. I still get several sent daily by well intentioned and faithful readers and listeners. Remember that you will not receive gift cards by forwarding emails, and Bill Gates is not giving away \$1000 for forwarding emails announcing new products. Good luck will not come from forwarding emails, and evil will not befall the user if they break a chain letter email. Before forwarding anything exciting like a warning, check it out on one of the hoax and urban legend websites, such as Snopes (www.snopes.com).

Complete your resolution by promising never to respond to popup ads, and not to reply to spam emails. Do not respond to get rich quick schemes like the infamous Nigerian 419 money laundering scams (you will not get a share of millions by wiring money), or to fraudulent international email lottery scams. Do not buy trashy penny stocks based on a spam email touting explosive future gains; you will only be funding a criminal enterprise.


These are not all of the safe computing resolutions that we may make, but they are a good start to safe computing. Safe computing practices should be continuously improved, and now is the best time to start. Tomorrow may be too late.



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Accessories for that New Computer

By **Ira Wilsker**, APCUG Director; columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; TV and radio show how, Iwilsker@apcug.net

While almost all new computers will run out of the box, these same new computers are often the epitome of vulnerability as they often lack appropriate protective security software. While many new computers come with some software and utilities, there are still several items which would make good last minute Christmas gifts, or an appropriate utilization of a gift card.

WEBSITES:

<http://free.grisoft.com> - AVG Free Antivirus Software

<http://www.zonelabs.com> – Zone Alarm Free (and commercial) Firewall

<http://www.safer-networking.org> – Spybot Search & Destroy

<http://www.openoffice.org> OpenOffice Free Office Suite

New computers are generally very vulnerable to a variety of attacks from hackers, crackers, viruses, spyware, and other virtual threats. I would strongly suggest that the new computer be accompanied by any one of the many readily available security suites. Under the premise that something is better than nothing, any of the commonly available comprehensive software security suites will do a reasonable job of protecting the computer.

Brands of security suites from such well-known companies as Trend Micro, Symantec (Norton), McAfee, Kaspersky, Panda, CA (Computer Associates), and Zone Alarm, will all do a satisfactory job protecting the computer from attack. All of these brands, as well as most others, recently released the 2007 dated suites which include the latest in features, including antivirus, firewall, anti-spyware, and other utilities.

Those who will be using the computer with broadband access may decide to forgo the gift card and utilize the free security software offered by the broadband companies. Alternatively, free protective software from such companies as Grisoft's AVG Free Antivirus software, (free.grisoft.com) if used along with a free firewall such as the free version of Zone Alarm (www.zonelabs.com – under the "Quick Links" heading on the bottom left of the page) will provide reasonably effective security.

Since spyware of various types is now considered by many as a greater threat than viruses, anti-spyware software is a necessity. The above suites all include anti-spyware software, but those who want free anti-spyware can get the free and excellent Spybot Search and Destroy from www.safer-networking.org.

Regardless if a commercial or free product is selected, it must be immediately installed on that new computer, updated and configured (the default configurations are good enough for the common user), as computers are subject to immediate attack the instant they go online, and new computers lacking appropriate protective software are prime and juicy targets for miscreants and purveyors of malware.

Another very useful device that can be utilized with that new computer is one or more USB flash drives (also called thumb or pen drives). Since very few new computers come with floppy disc drives anymore, the user will need some easy and efficient way to move data between computers. USB flash drives are ideal for this purpose. The prices of these small drives have plunged in recent months, and capacities have soared. For reasonable prices these drives can be purchased at any computer store, electronics store, discount store, or warehouse club.

Many of us do much more with our computers than surf the net. We will likely need some productivity software that has a word processor, spreadsheet, and other utilities. Microsoft's Office Suites (the MS Office 2007 Suite is just coming on the market) are arguably the most popular productivity suites on the market, but they are quite pricey, even if purchased as a student edition. Alternatively, there is an excellent suite published by Corel which continues the WordPerfect tradition with its Corel WordPerfect Office X3.

Continued on page 50

Since many of us find that our finances may be a little tight following the holiday season, a free office suite may meet our needs. OpenOffice is an outstanding and comprehensive office suite consisting of a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation program, database, and other office utilities, and is available for free download from www.openoffice.org.

A new computer is often accompanied by a new monitor, printer, and other peripherals, most of which have demands for clean electrical power. A good surge suppressor type of power strip is a necessary but somewhat inexpensive adjunct to the new computer, in order to protect it from power surges and spikes that could “fry” sensitive electrical components. Surge suppressors should have a UL label showing that it meets the standards of UL1449.

The ability to resist power spikes and surges is measured in joules, and generally the more joules listed on the label the better. It should also be noted that most surge suppressors can and do wear out, so it would be a good practice to include a new one with that new computer, or as soon as practical after Christmas. If the budget or capacity of the gift card will allow it, a good “UPS” (Uninterruptible Power Supply) may be better than a surge suppressor.

As a caution read the package label carefully to verify that the selected UPS has the battery capacity to power the computer and monitor (other peripherals need not be connected to the battery side of the UPS) in the event of a power flicker or failure. If the power fails and an appropriate UPS has been installed, the user will have time to safely shut the computer down. If A UPS is selected look for features like “AVR” (Automatic Voltage Regulation) which will provide clean power to the computer in the event of surges or brownouts.

There are a lot of other useful peripherals and software which should be considered, such as media (blank CDs and DVDs), web cameras, digital cameras, backup software and hardware, and other helpful and necessary items.

Whatever you do with that new Christmas computer, be sure that it is always properly and adequately protected from a variety of threats.



Upgrading to an LCD Monitor

How to guide

by **Herb Goldstein**, Software Evaluation Chairman and Reviews Editor, Sarasota PCUG, Florida, www.spcug.org, reviewseditor@spcug.org

Actually, I was happy with my high quality CRT (cathode ray tube) monitor. It was with considerable reluctance that I recently decided to get with the modern era and upgrade to an LCD. It has been quite a learning experience. Looking back, I realize that there are a number of very important practical considerations of which I was unaware in making the change and in making a choice. Perhaps I can pass along a summary of them along with some insight gained by hands-on experience to make the experience a little easier for you than it was for me. You need to do your homework both before and during your investigation. Here are some of the most important things you should know.

An LCD monitor offers considerable advantages in upgrading from a CRT. It is infinitely lighter and takes up much less desk space than a CRT. It uses the smallest fraction of electricity by comparison and is devoid of radiation concerns. When properly installed, its display may prove brighter, sharper and provide superb color.

SIZE: In any size range, an LCD will display more viewable screen than a similarly sized CRT. I decided on a 19 inch, the size of my CRT that I was happy with. Seventeen may work for you if that's what pleased you on your CRT. Over 19 for average use is both too much screen and excessive cost for most people.

ORIENTATION: Most prefer a normal tall screen (portrait view) for average usage. Wide (landscape) screens are available at greater cost in the same size range and are not recommended unless you have special need for that display. Some makes offer a swivel screen that you can change from tall to wide and back again instantly. You will pay considerably more for this feature when it is available.

COST: Has been decreasing from a few thousand some short years ago to a few hundred today. A quality 17 inch LCD can be found today for under \$200, and a 19 inch for less than \$300. If you have a watchful eye, special sales are common and offer substantial saving.

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BRAND: There is a very significant display quality to be gained in better models of better brands. The most common best quality brands usually topping the review lists in computer publications are LG, NEC, Viewsonic, Dell and Samsung. Different models in the same brand provide different features. Check them out carefully on their respective websites and “Google” for reviews. You need to do your homework both before and during your shopping experiences if you want the best for your buck.

WARRANTY: Better brands provide a 3 year replacement on defective monitors. Don’t settle for a one year warranty!

VIEWING ANGLE: Unlike a CRT, an LCD’s view falls off sharply at the sides when you are not positioned in front of your monitor. In practical usage, this should not be at all a problem. Your view will be just fine when you are normally seated at your screen, with more than sufficient leeway from the norm.

RESPONSE TIME: Usually indicated in the advertising of better models. A faster response time is better—it indicates how quickly the screen can refresh a video image. If an LCD’s response time is too slow, the display’s pixels won’t be able to keep up with the information sent from the computer’s graphics card, and you may see ghosting and digital noise as a result. 8ms or better response time is common on quality LCD’s and is preferred! The lower the response time, the less of a blurring effect is possible on the screen.

ANALOG VS. DIGITAL: Video cards can provide outlets for two different monitor display types, analog and digital. CRT monitors are cabled to your video card with an analog (15 pin) cable. LCD’s usually provide the same cable and connection but will provide a significantly better display when attached via a digital (VDI-D) to a digital port on your video card. Better LCD’s provide both digital and analog connections. So do better video cards. If your card doesn’t have a digital port, you can either replace the card with one that does, or you can add an additional card. Easy to do. Just plug it into a PCI slot and your computer will recognize it. You are really better off in many ways with a better card.

If need be, you can run your LCD with the same analog connection as you used for your CRT previously, but a digital connection will give you better results.

NATIVE RESOLUTION: LCD monitors will provide their best display when run at their “native resolution” which varies with the size of the monitor. For a 19 inch, the native resolution is 1280x1024. The resolution of a display can be changed easily by right-clicking on an empty area of your desktop and selecting “properties,” and “settings.” The same can be accomplished through your Control Panel in your Start Menu. Normally the correct choice will be made automatically by the installation software that accompanies your new monitor.

When you change your most common CRT setting of 1080x760 to 1280x1024, everything, including all your icons and fonts, will suddenly appear much smaller. Your LCD display however will become infinitely sharper. If you find it strange to your eyes, you can easily change your display properties to provide larger fonts. Additionally, many programs like word processors permit you to change your text to any size you wish while maintaining its quality, regardless of screen resolution.

Running at native resolution (your choice to do or not, but very highly recommended) will make your screen display smaller but you will be able to accommodate more viewed area on a page. It may be strange somewhat to your eyes at first, but the greatly increased sharpness and over-all quality of your LCD display will more than make up for it, especially if you are using digital rather than analog display.

AUTO-DISPLAY: Most quality LCD monitors will automatically install at their best display settings when you plug them in. However, they will also provide easy to adjust menu settings for most of their values that permit you to easily adjust the display to what is most pleasing to your eyes. The most common adjustment people make is for brightness. Most LCD monitors tend to be too bright unless adjusted. LCD screen illumination is entirely different and better than that from a CRT.

RUNNING MULTIPLE MONITORS: What’s to do with your CRT now that you have your new LCD? One of your choices may be to keep it and run two monitors side-by-side. If you are using Windows XP and you have two ports on your video card (or two video cards), it’s easy to do with a few simple settings in your display properties menu. You will then be able to run two different programs at the same time and easily drag items from one monitor screen to the other. Your cursor will readily move from one monitor to the other alongside. It can double your productivity and allow you to see and do things you did not know were possible.

Over all, upgrading to an LCD monitor will greatly enhance your computer experience and enjoyment. It’s way more than worth any effort or expense involved.

Computer Crimes

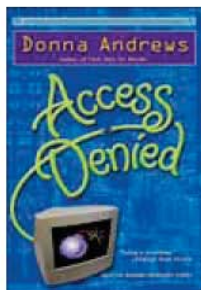
Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Access Denied, by Donna Andrews

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

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

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

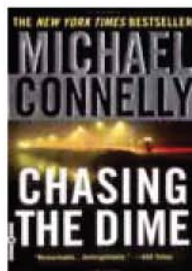


able. As always, there's a bit of hacking and philosophizing about (literally) the meaning of life. Lovely scene with a computerized security and lawn watering system gone whacko. This is a marvelous series: read the books in order if you want to get the full effect. Highly recommended.

Chasing the Dime, by Michael Connelly

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

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

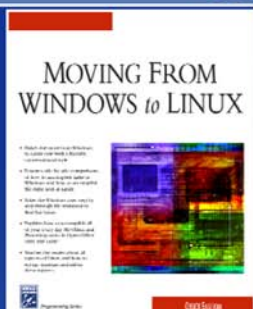


be busy preparing for a meeting with a major investor he gets drawn into finding the missing Lilly.

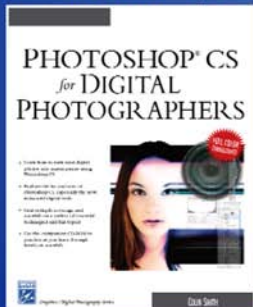
Excellent descriptions of nanotechnology and its potential uses, plus peripheral stuff about hacking, patents, high-tech financing and the Internet porn industry. The term "chasing the dime" refers to the competitive rush to invent a molecular computer no bigger than a dime. This is a very good thriller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

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

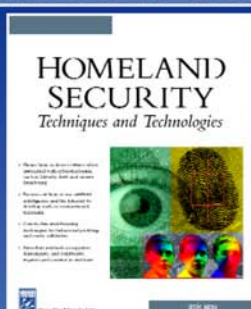
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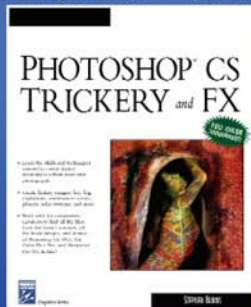
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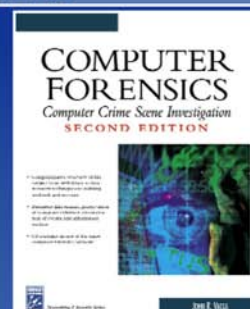
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Book Review**Real Digital Forensics**

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Published by Addison-Wesley

Reviewed by Jim DuWaldt, North Orange County Computer Club, California

This book (with included DVD) intends to teach Computer Forensics for both Windows and Linux systems, that is, gathering evidence from infected machines and the network they operate in so that the intended victim can effectively react to a successful penetration.

Or, to quote the book: "...give new forensic investigators more than words to learn new skills." "We use the same tools attackers use... the same methods rouge employees make... [collect] the same media we typically collect...this book takes a practical, hands-on approach to solving problems...[with] techniques you can employ immediately."

The clear implication is that the book is aimed at the inexperienced practitioner. As usual, TCP/IP knowledge is a good idea. There is one staring oddity: to use one of the tools you need to alter your kernel! From pg 208: "Please download and install the NASA-enhanced kernel..." This takes more than just a beginner's skill!

The context for the procedures is provided by five scenarios which are a mix of internal and external threats as seen from the point of view of admins or law enforcement. As the techniques are presented, it is explained how they might be applied to these scenarios, as opposed to stepping through the scenarios and describing the methods.

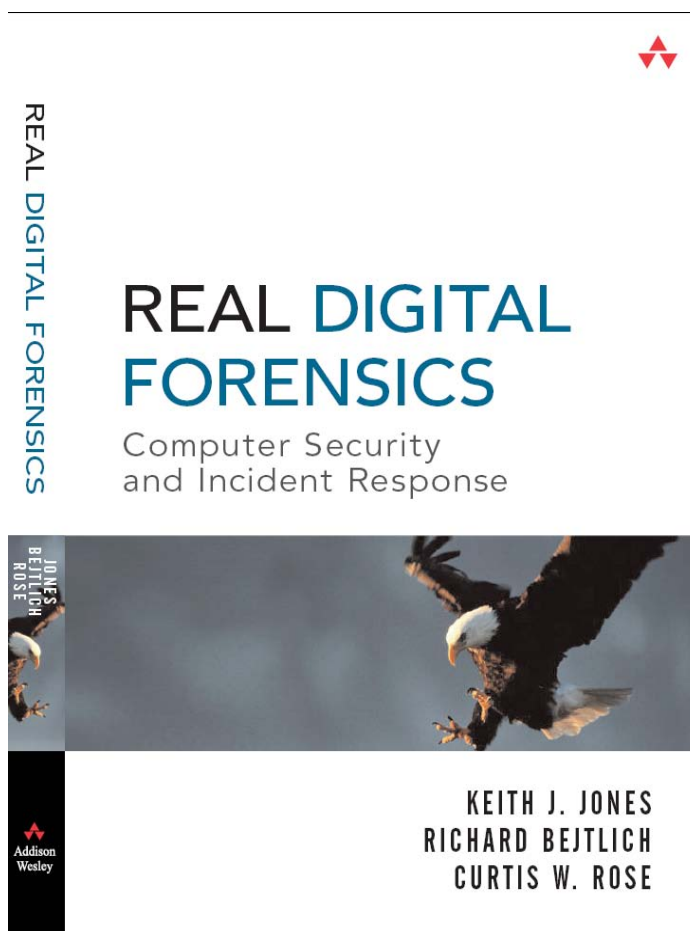
Richard Bejtlich's books usually focus on evidence gathered by network monitoring. Instead, Part I ("Live Incidence Response") begins with host-focused procedures for both Windows and Linux (one chapter for each). Live Response techniques invoke a series of programs on the suspect machine in order to gather "volatile data," that is, system state that will not survive a reboot or shutdown. This explanation is entirely suitable for creating your own Live Response software and procedures.

Networks return to the center of attention in Part II ("Network-Based Forensics"). There is a brief but well-done review of the types of data (Full Context, Session, Statistical, and Alert Data) that should be collected and the software to collect them (Tcpdump, Snort, and many others) as well as the five steps of intrusion (recon, exploitation, reinforcement, consolidation, and "pillage"). A Cop/Drug Ring analogy is employed to describe these four data types which, given the popularity of CSI, might be good for rank beginners but will be less useful to anyone with more experienced. This section also has separate chapters on analysis of the information for Windows and *NIX machines.

Part III ("Acquiring a Forensic Duplication") presents open and closed tools for the forensic cloning of a suspect disk, regardless of the operating system. Its chapter on legal paperwork is very efficient but it would be great if the authors had photos or illustrations of what they use, if only as an example. The material on disk duplication, on the other hand, had lots of excellent photos and screen shots for both the commercial (EnCase and FTK) and open source products (DD, DD_resume, DCFLDD and NED).

Part IV (Forensic Analysis Techniques) shows you what to do with your new disk image. Methods for disk analysis begin with looking for and recovering deleted files, what to do when that is not possible, discerning strings of interest from NBE (Network-Based Evidence) and Live Response findings (like the name of an executable) and searching the disk for them.

This is followed by techniques for reconstructing emails (even Outlook and Outlook Express proprietary formats can be analyzed by open source tools), pages visited while web



browsing including reconstructing emails sent with web clients, and the examination of the Windows Registry (good for finding recently-accessed documents or evidence of programs subsequently deleted).

(Currently only commercial applications are available for analyzing the Registry which is odd, considering that scripting languages, like Python for example, have Registry access libraries.)

Multiple chapters focus on examining unknown files to determine their use, with an emphasis on Microsoft-formatted documents and on the examination of unknown Windows and *NIX executables. This includes static analysis with tools like strings.exe and hexWorkshop and disassemblers like IDA to discover system calls or modify a binary file in order to, for example, bypass password security. Missing are instructions on using a product like VMware to set up a virtual machine environment for protecting the rest of the system from the foreign executable; they only mention that you *should* use something like VMware when in fact it is vitally important to do so or you could wind up with yet another infected computer!

Part V ("Creating a Complete Forensic Toolkit") succinctly describes creating CDs for a Live Response toolkit. (But, why not do this in the first part of the book?) It also describes the use of a Knoppix disk which allows you to examine a suspect system without having to boot it from its (possibly) contaminated disk or be concerned about your 'clean' OS being cleverly contaminated by a suspect hard drive.

Part VI ("Mobile Device Forensics") describes gleaning and examining data from PDAs like Palms and iPaqs (with additional information about how they manage memory and how to access internal debugging consoles), USB and CF drives. Forensic examination of USB/CF devices using a loopback is well illustrated and an example of recovering a deleted file is shown. The chapters also illustrate that, while some PDAs have good forensic tools available (like later Palms and iPaqs), the earlier ones do not: sifting through evidence on a Palm III, for example, is limited to hex and string searches.

Part VII ("Online-Based Forensics") presents methods for determining where an email originated from via header examination, and how determined users could cover their tracks. Finally, they leverage searching for DNS records into a lesson on manipulating the entire VeriSign TLD (Top Level Domain) file in a large (100GB+) Postgres database, allowing them to find all DNS names owned by, in their example, the company Foundstone.

My only complaints about the book are the sudden request to change the kernel and a failure to put front and center the necessity of using a virtual machine environment before executing potentially hazardous code.

Otherwise it was a typical Bejtlich security book (no offense to the other authors), containing the basis for immediately creating Standard Operating Procedures, in particular for Live Response, proper forensic documentation, and creating forensic-compliant duplicate drives. It definitely has a place on my security bookshelf, alongside The Tao of Network Security and Extrusion Detection.



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Software Review

Sping it Again

\$34.95

Published by Acoustics

Rod Rakes, APCUG Advisor; President & Editor, Gwinnett SeniorNet PC Users Group, Georgia;
Editor & Webmaster, Huntsville PC User Group, Alabama

Spin It Again by Acoustica is a software program that will make it easy to convert your collection of cassettes, 33's, 45's and even 78's to MP3/WMA/WAV files or directly to CDs. Some folks have even used the program to rip 8-Tracks. Remember those? How good is it? REALLY GOOD! First off, I was impressed by the voice instructions when the program starts. There is a Hookup Wizard with photos of how to connect to your amplifier, cassette player or turntable. Songs are automatically divided into files based on the lull between songs. A Level Wizard sets the volume level automatically based on playing a portion of your loudest song in an album.

You can save the files as MP3, OGG, WMA or WAV files. A variety of choices are available to clean up the recordings, e.g., Damaged Record, Damaged Tape, Tape clean with Equalizer, Tape Noise Begone, Warped record, even a No-preamp blues setting, etc. Someone referred to this as a Mikey cereal eater that eats Snap, Crackle and Pop. Accept the defaults and it's very easy work.

I recorded three record albums and two cassette tapes of music using a stereo amplifier, cassette player and turntable. The result was free of any clicks, pops and hiss of the original recordings, at least to my ears. The only "problem" I had was a song by Judy Collins that had long silent passages which fooled the software into thinking there were several songs. But, it was easily fixed with the Merge options. (Be sure to read the tutorial.) I chose to save the songs in MP3 format and gave each a name in the chart before actually hitting the Save/Convert button. You can embed in the files the Artist, Title, Genre, Year and add comments. On the last test I chose to record an album directly to CD using the Spin It Again software. It worked like a charm with no need to make a later recording from the MP3's using Nero, Roxio, etc.



I had a priceless cassette
tape of family non-
sense that had been re-

recorded from reel to reel tapes from long ago

when my children were small. The volume varied greatly. I placed the cassette tape in a small inexpensive hand held player (Walkman type) and connected a cable between the speaker jack and the Line In jack in the back of my computer. This meant I could adjust the sound during the low and high volume sections of the tape by using the player's volume control. That worked satisfactorily since the tape was not perfection in the first place. The recording was even better than the original with little or no hiss and a more consistent volume level! There is an option for auto-leveling the volume for a given song to eliminate distortion on high peaks.



An MP3 file of LaPaloma had a loud click at the 51-second mark that could not be cleaned properly even with the special peak click filtering after manually isolating the click. I was finally able to eliminate the click but each side of the original click had a warble that was worse than the click. The Help file said if this

happens, try to make a better recording somehow. Since it was only one click, I would guess there was a spot of something on the vinyl surface or a pin point gouge. You can't make a purse out of a sow's ear, huh?

One of the fun and useful features is the ability to adjust the speed of a recording. I recorded several old 78 RPM records using the 45 RPM speed of my turntable and increased the speed accordingly using the drop-down menu until it sounded normal. I'm trying to find my 78 RPM copy of Roy Acuff's "Sixteen Chickens in a Frying Pan." Everybody needs to hear that.

For the tinkering types out there, many tweaks are available including a change in sampling rates, sensitivity of track detection, recording levels, etc.

Cost? \$34.95 retail, but \$27.96 for User Group members. This 20% discount is available online from the link above. You must use the code "CLUB2007." You will receive a registration code via email. But, you can try it free for three times. (3 albums).

Where do I get it and/or read more? <http://www.Acoustica.com> The program is an 8+ MB download.

System Requirements? If you have a Windows computer with a soundcard you're ready to use the software!




Recommended? YES!



 Compatible inkjet Cartridges starting at \$5 www.tdinksales.com tdinksales@satx.rr.com	L & M Bookstore 1716 N. Main Ave.
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April 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 	2 Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Introduction to Windows XP 10 A.M. - Noon Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M.	3 Class 1 of 8 *PRR* Advance Digital Photo Editing 9 - 11 A.M. Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. EOD 6:30 - 9:30 P.M. (Class Canceled) Advanced Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.	4 Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Introduction to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Class 2 of 6 *PRR* Internet & Email 1 - 3 P.M.	5 Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon 1 of 5 *PRR* Photoshop Advanced 1 - 4:30 P.M. (a/r) High Growth Stock Investing 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Net Web Development 7 - 9 P.M.	6 *PRR* Small Business Server 8 - 10 A.M. Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon PC Alamo Magazine PDF 7 - 9 P.M.	7 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 9 - 11:30 A.M. Class 2 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. Class 5 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.
8	9 Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Introduction to Windows XP 10 A.M. - Noon General Meeting @ Crossroads 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter: Gene Barlow discussing general computer info	10 Class 2 of 8 *PRR* Advance Digital Photo Editing 9 - 11 A.M. Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Class 2 of 4 *PRR* Advanced Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. (Class Canceled)	11 Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Introduction to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Internet & Email 1 - 3 P.M. Home Page Jumpstart (TBA)	12 Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon 2 of 5 *PRR* Photoshop Advanced 1 - 4:30 P.M.	13 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon 3 of 5 *PRR* Photoshop Advanced 1 - 4:30 P.M.	14 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 9 - 11:30 A.M. Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. Class 6 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.
15	16 Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Introduction to Windows XP 10 A.M. - Noon	17 Class 3 of 8 *PRR* Advance Digital Photo Editing 9 - 11 A.M. Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. (Class Canceled) Advanced Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Class 1 of 4 *PRR* eBay Intro to Internet Auction 7 - 9 P.M.	18 Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Introduction to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Internet & Email 1 - 3 P.M.	19 Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon 4 of 5 *PRR* Photoshop Advanced 1 - 4:30 P.M. Class 1 of 4 *PRR* eBay Intro to Internet Auction 7 - 9 P.M.	20  Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon	21 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 9 - 11:30 A.M. Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
22	23 CorelDRAW X3 6 - 8 P.M.	24 Class 4 of 8 *PRR* Advance Digital Photo Editing 9 - 11 A.M. Class 4 of 4 *PRR* Advanced Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. (Class Canceled) Class 2 of 4 *PRR* eBay Intro to Internet Auction 7 - 9 P.M.	25 Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Internet & Email 1 - 3 P.M. (a/r) WordPerfect 7 - 9 P.M.	26 Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon 5 of 5 *PRR* Photoshop Advanced 1 - 4:30 P.M. (Dot) NetNuke Portal 7 - 9 P.M. Class 2 of 4 *PRR* eBay Intro to Internet Auction 7 - 9 P.M.	27 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon	28 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 9 - 11:30 A.M. Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1 - 3 P.M. Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M.
29 	30					

AlamoPC Organization



The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

COMPUTER CLINIC

The Doctor Is In

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

What to bring with you:

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

When: Every Friday 9 am to noon

Where: Alamo PC Organization
Computer Learning Center

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

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

Technical Rating: ★

STUDY GROUPS

Student Practice Lab

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

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

C/C ++ Study Group

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

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

When: First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★★ - ★★★

Commodore Users of SA

Contact: Diana Jones
830-303-1220

When: Second Saturday, 1-4 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★★★

Genealogy Study Group

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

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

When: First Monday, 7-9 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

HGSI Study Group

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

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

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

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

Pre-registration: Call Maynard

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Technical Content Ratings

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

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

DotNET Study Group

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

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

When: 1st Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★★

DotNetNuke Portal Study Group

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

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

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

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', is currently studying Microsoft 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 Small Business Server Special Interest Group, APCO SBS SIG, held its November meeting, Friday November 3rd, at the Alamo PC Learning Center in San Antonio, Texas. Naturally we started off with our traditional Taco Talk with tacos supplied by Albert Obar. Our main attraction was Peter Gallagher, Microsoft Small Business Server Support from the Las Colinas (DFW) regional office. Peter explained many things including how to configure e-mail enabled Public Folders to save attachments to SharePoint document libraries. Apparently one has to do it a bit differently in SBS than in a non-SBS SharePoint server. He also explained how to set up a Site-to-Site VPN using ISA on SBS. Apparently that also needs a little extra TLC in SBS due to the ISA being on the Domain Controller. All in all, Peter spent about 2 hours imparting his vast knowledge on the group. Afterwards the group adjourned to Mamacitas Mexican restaurant for lunch where we continued to pelt poor Peter with questions. Peter has promised to come down again, hopefully in February. 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 ★ - ★★★★★

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: ★

CLASSES

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 Alamo online magazine. The successful completion of the Windows XP class (or classes) would then enable those students to take the other classes offered by Alamo PC.

Introduction To Windows - \$

The Introduction To Windows class is designed for people who do not have a computer yet or have just 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 Email will NOT be covered in this course.

Instructors: Andy Roca, Donna Dudley

When: Six sessions, Wed.; 10 a.m. to noon

Set 1) March 14, 21, 28, April 4, 11, 18

Set 2) May 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13, 20

Set 3) August 15, 22, 29, Sep 5, 12, 19

Set 4) October 10, 17, 24, 31, Nov 7, 14

OR

Instructors: Cary Hall, Jean Hall

When: Six sessions, Mon.; 10 a.m. to noon

March 12, 19, 26, April 2, 9, 16

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 days Tue. or Sat. Choose one set

Instructors: Audrey Henkin, Ed Henkin
When: 6 sessions, Tue. 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Set 1) March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 10, 17
Set 2) May 15, 22, 29, June 5, 12, 19
Set 3) August 14, 21, 28, Sep 4, 11, 18
Set 4) October 9, 16, 23, 30, Nov 6, 13
OR

Instructor: Don Robinson

When: 6 sessions, Sat. 1 to 3 p.m.
Set 1) March 31, Apr 7, 14, 21, 28, May 5
Set 2) May 26, June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Set 3) July 7, 14, 21, 28, Aug 4, 11
Set 4) Sep 15, 22, 29, Oct 6, 13, 20

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

This class will use the Easy Windows XP book, purchase of the book will be helpful and is recommended but is not required.

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Adobe Acrobat - PDF Class

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

Instructor: Steve Tech
stephentechnr@yahoo.com

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

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

APCO Retro (Antique Computer Users Group)

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

apcoretro/join>

Contact: Shane Hicks

<shane@absolute-powercomputing.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. This class will include field trips to interesting local spots to learn photography techniques. Topics of discussion may include understanding your camera manual, camera optics, composition, tips, choosing the right camera, lighting, how to take night shots, silhouettes, portraits, action shots, and close ups.

Instructor: Joe Davis

When: Class meets once a week for 3 weeks - choose one set:

Set 1) Tuesdays, January 16, 23, 30 9 am to 11 am (some sessions may be longer)

Set 2) Tuesdays, July 10, 17, 24 9 am to 11 am (some sessions may be longer)

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Digital Photo Editing Classes \$

A series of Photo Editing Classes ranging from basic to advanced skills. The Microsoft Digital Imaging 2006 software is not required for these classes but it would be helpful to have on your home computer. Students will need recordable CD's or Flash / Thumb drives to be able to save their class work.

Intro to Digital Photo Editing \$

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.

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

Instructor: Joe Davis

When: Class meets once a week for 4 weeks - choose one set:

Set 1) Tuesdays February 6, 13, 20, 27 9 am to 11 am

Set 2) Tuesdays August 7, 14, 21, 28 9 am to 11 am

Fees: registration fee \$10

Where: Learning Center

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

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.

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

Instructor: Joe Davis

When: Class meets once a week for 4 weeks - choose one set:

Set 1) Tuesdays March 6, 13, 20, 27 9 am to 11 am

Set 2) Tuesdays September 4, 11, 18, 25 9 am to 11 am

Fees: registration fee \$10

Where: Learning Center

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Advanced Digital Photo Editing \$

This class is for the student who is very serious about digital editing. It involves the manipulation of photos whether they are new or old. We learn to use the tools to do everything from making greeting cards to photo refinishing.

Prerequisites: Students must have completed either the Introduction to Digital Photo Editing Class or the Digital Photo Editing Class or completed one of Joe Davis' prior Digital Photo Editing classes

Instructor: Joe Davis

When: Class meets once a week for 8 weeks - choose one set:

Set 1) Tuesdays April 3, 10, 17, 24 May 1, 8, 15, 22 9 am to 11 am

Set 2) Tuesdays October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 November 6, 13, 20 9 am to 11 am

Fees: registration fee \$10

Where: Learning Center

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

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

Photoshop CS2 Classes are open to any Alamo PC member who has Photoshop 7, CS, or CS2. Students must have one of these software programs on their home computers. All students are provided a CD with images we will use in the classes plus written lessons to go by and practice at home. Texts will be recommended for those who want to purchase their own as reference.

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

Beginning Photoshop CS2:

This course includes Lessons on Tools and Palettes, Adobe Bridge, Resolution, Cropping, Tonal Range, Color Cast, Restoring Images, Colorizing, Cloning Layers, Channels, Extract, Gradients, Camera Raw, Vanishing Point, PDF Presentations. New Students need to attend free CS2 workshops on Thursdays (or a different day if scheduled) during the beginning session to receive extra help (lead by Jane Montgomery) from 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

When: May – June; Fridays May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuition Fee: \$90 for new students \$50 for returning students

Intermediate Photoshop CS2:

Lessons on Typographic Designs, Paths and Shapes, Clipping Groups, Layer Sets, Adjustment Layers, Liquefy Filter, Actions Palette, Layer Styles, Adjustment Layers, Contact Sheets, Picture Package, Text Along Path, Creating Links

When: set 1) Fridays March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

set 2) Fridays July 6, 13, 20, 27 and Thursday July 26; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Advanced Photoshop CS2

Lessons on Rollovers, Animations, Warp Tool, Image Adjustments, Creating Curled Edges, Lighting Effects Creating Patterns, Creating Pencil Sketches, Creating Posters and Post Cards

When: set 1) Thursdays April 5, 12, 19, 26 and Friday April 13; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

set 2) Fridays August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Fancy Photoshop CS2 Class 1

Lessons on Custom Brushes, Stamping, Painting, Design Techniques, Creating background, Papers, Template Designs, Photomerge, Creating Kaleidoscopes, Hangovers, Frameups

When: Fridays September 7, 14, 21, 28 and Thursday Sep 27; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Photoshop Holiday Lessons

Holiday lessons using all of the procedures in CS2 (or possibly a Playing Cards class instead)

When: Fridays October 5, 12, 19, 26 and Thursday Oct 25; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Photoshop Calendar Class (taught by Jane Montgomery)

When: Fridays November 2, 9, 16, (skip the 23rd), 30; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Instructor: Beverly Bihn assisted by Jane Montgomery

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.

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

When: to be determined

Where: Learning Center

Instructor: Instructor needed

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★

Student Practice Lab

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

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Home Page Jumpstart

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

Contact: Susan Ives

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

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

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

HTML and Beyond Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML. Students should attend the Home Page Jumpstart Class and have familiarity with the Windows Operating System. The Six (to Eight if needed) Session class will begin a new cycle each March and September.

Contact: Mike Bianchi

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

When: Saturdays, 4-8 pm

Where: Learning Center

Prerequisite: Home Page Jumpstart Class, familiarity with Windows

Pre-registration: yes, 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
Set 1) March 28, Apr 4, 11, 18, 25, May 2
Set 2) May 16, 23, 30, Jun 6, 13, 20
Set 3) July 11, 18, 25, Aug 1, 8, 15
Set 4) Sep 12, 19, 26, Oct 3, 10, 17

Instructor: Don Robinson

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: YES call 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: Two sessions, 2nd and 3rd Wed. 7-9 pm of Odd numbered months

Instructor: Wade Forrester

Where: Learning Center

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Movie Maker

A fun class learning to use the Movie Maker program included with Windows XP, to create slide shows with voice, music, text, and special effects. It is a very simple program, yet will do fades, wipes, special effects, sound, and moving text, etc.

Contact: Joe Davis

When: Class meets once a week for 4 weeks - choose one set:

Set 1) Tuesdays June 5, 12, 19, 26 9 am to 11 a.m.

Set 2) Tuesdays November 27, Dec 4, 11, 18 9 am to 11 a.m.

Where: Learning Center

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

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Microsoft Word

Students will become familiar with and understand Word's basic functionality, menus, toolbars, icons and shortcut keys. Students will learn how to create, view, format, save and print a Word document. Also work with templates, multiple documents, insert files, objects and pictures and email documents.

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

When: 4 sessions per class
MS Word Basics: Tuesdays, Odd Numbered Months, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.


MS Word Advanced: Tuesdays, Even Numbered Months, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Instructor: Tod Bruning

Where: Learning Center

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★



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

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\$20.00

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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.

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: ★

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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Water Ware	55


Classified Ads

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

For Sale 3 Camera Bags - Universal Style 5" wide X 9" long X 6" deep, Sony DSC F828 case with shoulder strap Lowepro Micro 100 Trekker. All in good condition. Contact Bob Ramert rpramert@sbcglobal.net.

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

Wanted Non-profit organization seeks IT Manager. Call 210.688.3371 x106 for information.



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

Alamo PC logo

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

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at 736-0700

Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

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

Monthly Meetings

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

Award-Winning Magazine

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

Special Interest Groups and Classes

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



Internet (www.alamopc.org)

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

Alamo PC SeniorComp

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

Expert Help

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

APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

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

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



Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

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

FIRST: _____ MI _____ LAST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE H: _____ W: _____ FAX: _____

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

EMPLOYER: _____ TITLE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

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

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

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

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

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

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

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

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



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

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

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

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

