

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

HARDWARE ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

June 2007

\$4.50

XP Hard Drive Management
page 36

My Registry Adventures
page 43

Book Review: Computer Privacy Annoyances
page 57

General Meeting:
page 9



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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:

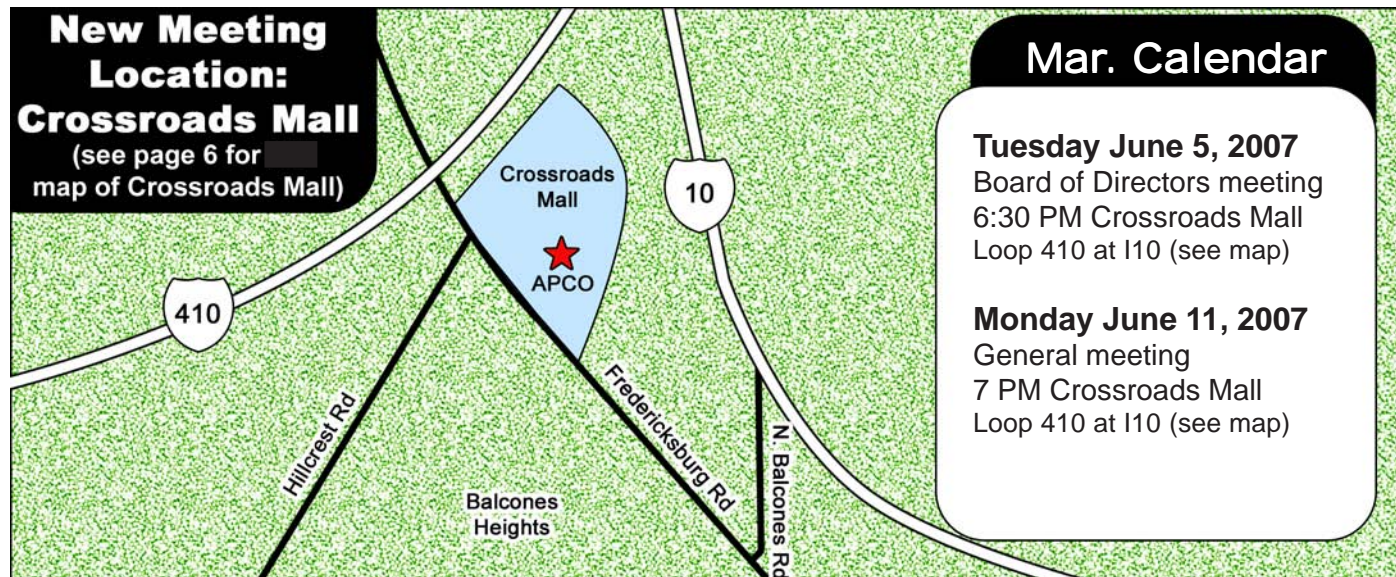
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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

Tuesday June 5, 2007
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday June 11, 2007
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



columns

| | |
|---|----|
| The Deals Guy <i>Bob Click</i> | 13 |
| Computer Law <i>John Brewer</i> | 15 |
| RAM & Reason <i>Rob Rice</i> | 17 |
| Windows Tips & Tricks <i>Bill Beverley</i> | 19 |
| New Best and Worst <i>Pim Borman</i> | 21 |
| PowerTalk <i>Shane Hicks</i> | 24 |
| The Switcher <i>Shane Hicks</i> | 26 |
| Lazy Webmaster <i>Susan Ives</i> | 27 |
| The Graphics Guy <i>Paul Vaughn</i> | 29 |
| PC 101 <i>Ron Ingraham</i> | 32 |

departments

| | |
|--|----|
| PC Alamode Links List | 7 |
| Enter <i>Joseph de Leon</i> | 7 |
| President's Message <i>Bill Klutz</i> | 8 |
| June Program News <i>Bill Klutz</i> | 9 |
| Volunteer of the Month <i>Jean Hall</i> | 10 |
| Member of the Year <i>Steve Tech</i> | 10 |
| Funny Bytes | 12 |

guest contributors

| | |
|--|----|
| Countdown to the digital deadline | 34 |
| Tweaking Windows' Taskbar | 35 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Alamo PC Phone Directory | 6 |
| Map to Meeting Places | 6 |
| Alamo PC Calendar of Events | 58 |
| Study Groups and Classes | 59-63 |
| Help Numbers | 64 |
| Index of Advertisers | 65 |
| Classified Ads | 65 |
| Membership Application | 66 |

PC Alamode

(501 (C) (3))

Featured this month

XP Hard Drive Management
Build it Yourself
Live CD-ROMs
My Registry Adventures
Recovering files from a hard drive
Thoughts on upgrading PC hardware & software

36
39
42
43
47
48

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Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode

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*Consecutive months

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product reviews

Computer Crimes
Software Review: The Ultimate Troubleshooter
Software Review: CyberLink DVD Suite 5.0
Software Review: Avery DesignPro
Hardware Review: The Tornado
Book Review: Computer Privacy Annoyances

50
51
53
55
56
57

Board of Directors

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
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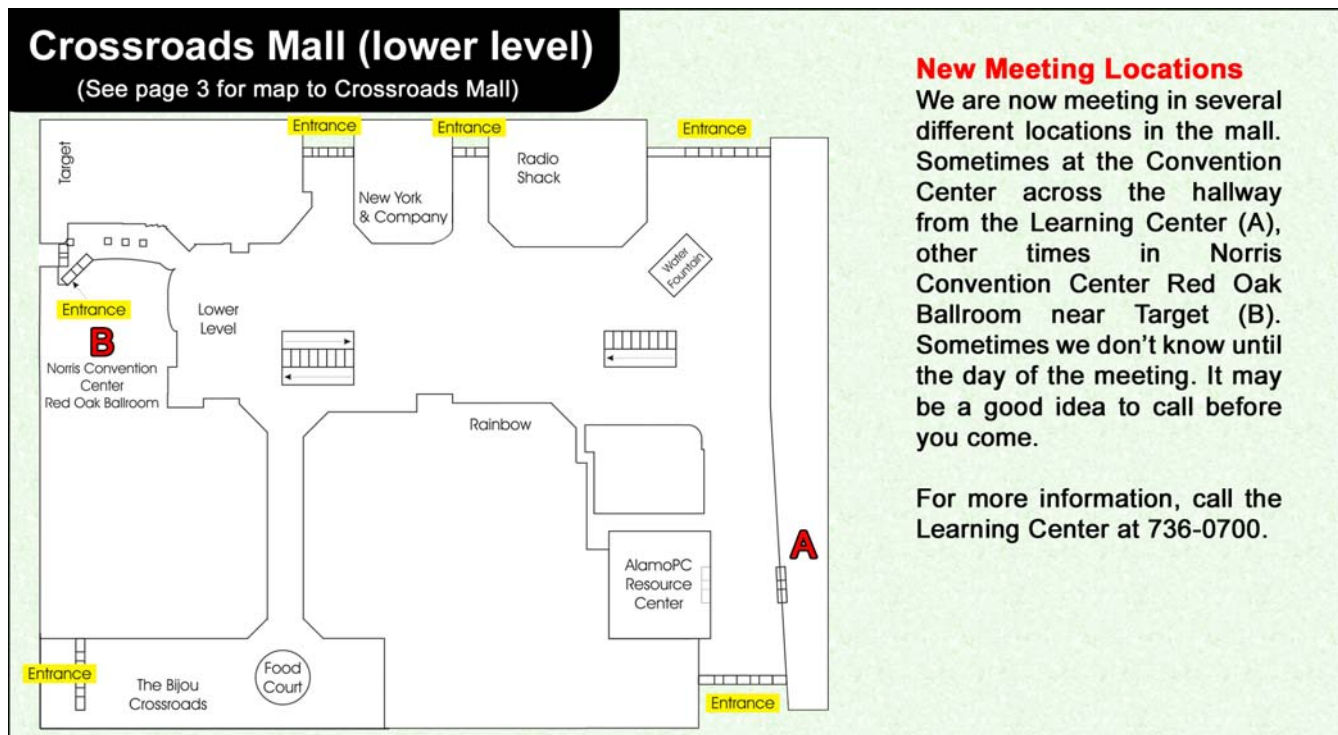
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

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



PC Alamode Links List



Paloozahead

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

Impress your friends with a stage performance on the Lolapalooza stage, a three-day festival featuring today's hottest bands. Upload your favorite picture, pick an outfit and music, then let the show begin.



Interactive Narratives

<http://www.interactivenarratives.org/>

Interactive narratives are informational and storytelling experiences designed and produced for the web. They leverage great design, visual journalism and rich-media content.

← enter

I hope everyone is enjoying the season. It may be hot, but it's fixing to get a lot hotter. Just like last year, forecasters are predicting a stronger than usual hurricane season. Let's hope they're wrong!

You'll notice some of the articles in this issue are bit on the technical side. While Alamo PC does help novice computer users make sense of that big fancy box with all the wires coming out of it, it's also a club for professionals and advanced enthusiasts.

Let me know what you'd like to see in the magazine and have a safe summer!

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

"June" - Flag Day, Father's Day, Summer, Election Process

Not a very inspiring month - School's out, hotter weather prevails, vacations begin. Some June days that may be important to someone are: 14th - Flag Day (don't forget to fly yours); 17th - Father's Day ("We remember Mother, so don't forget Father"); 21st - First Day of Summer. For the Alamo PC membership, June 11th should be the day to watch. It is the day of the monthly General Meeting (a scheduled presentation), and the start of the annual election process.

At the time of this writing (late May) our Programs official has not informed me of the presenter for the June General Meeting, but I am sure he is trying to secure a good one. (We have been hoping for 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). Check the website or Learning Center for the latest information, but plan to come and bring some friends.

Elections: The Elections Committee will try to seek members willing to serve at the BOD level. Members will be responsible for identifying individuals willing to serve at the BOD level, and will submit names at the July General meeting. There will also be an opportunity for nominations from those present. Once the list of individuals has been identified, individual biographies will be submitted for inclusion in the August PC Alamo. During August, the online election process will be conducted to determine the list of Board members for the coming fiscal year (Oct 2007 - Sep 2008).

I was disappointed to see less than 50 people present on May 14th for the monthly meeting, especially since we had announced Microsoft and VISTA. (Guess folks have already made up their minds about purchasing or not purchasing VISTA.) Lara Pryor, from Microsoft, covered VISTA and some other Microsoft products. After her presentations, the answering a number of questions, and agreeing to find answers to some of the more technical ones, she provided a few lucky winners with some Microsoft products. (Several received a CD that would allow them to download a copy of VISTA rollout.) Needless to say, some went home happy (winners) and some went home less happy (non-winners). I think everyone present felt they benefitted from having been at the meeting, including some of the visitors who were present.

The Alamo PC Open House on May 20th allowed individuals to see the Learning Center and classroom facilities, recognized individuals who have contributed time and energies to the organization, and allowed a "mingling of members." We certainly appreciate all who contributed to the event, and were saddened that Linda Bianchi, the main organizer of the event and staunch worker for the organization, had to leave on Wed (May 16th) to fly to Arizona. She went when her Dad told her that her mother, who was hospitalized, appeared to be in rapidly declining health. I do not have more information at this time.

I continue to ask current members to consider 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.

Continue to 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 Learn-

The Doctor is In



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ing Center; monthly presentations about current issues in the computer hardware and software; etc.

We continue to review member requested classes to determine if and when a new area of study should be scheduled. If you have a suggestion, let the Director of Education know <education@alamopc.org>. That is how several classes have been started, including the ones in the next paragraph.

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," and produce good results.

We are still trying to improve member retention, although new members have almost been sufficient to offset non-renewing members. We continue 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 wkklutzjr@juno.com). I appreciate all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

As, I have said before, 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 June General Meeting. Without a presenter scheduled, I am not sure if it will be in our Learning Center (LC) or a Norris conference facility (hopefully across from our LC). Check the website for the latest information.

June Program

Bill Klutz

A presenter has not yet been confirmed for the June general meeting. Check the Alamo PC website for more details www.alamopc.org.

Visit the Alamo PC Learning Center

Media Center

Learn all about computers with hundreds of books and dozens of video tapes. Enjoy our large selection of techno-fiction. A comfortable seating area is available. Call (210) 736-0700

Student Practice Lab

Polish those new skills - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

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

Volunteer of the Month

Jean Hall



News Brief

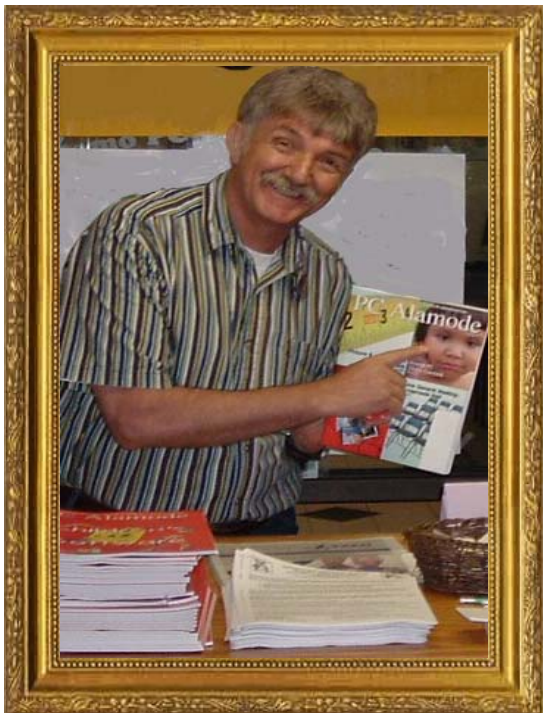
Google Nears Omniscience

Eric Dahl, PC World

If search engines could talk, what would they say? Now that it's acquiring giant advertising network DoubleClick, Google could potentially say a lot more about you. For the most part, the company is making the right kinds of noises about building walls between its different collections of data, but... Remember when everyone was worried about Eschelon, the secret intelligence project that would monitor phone calls, e-mail, and other data? Well, let's run down all the Google services most people use: You have Gmail, Docs & Spreadsheets, Calendar, text and voice chat through the still-in-beta Google Talk, shopping at Google Product Search--and of course everything begins with Web search. Throw all of that together, and Google could probably do a good Eschelon impression. And while the company's motto is "Don't be evil," giant data repositories always attract attention--from hackers, governments, and corporations.

Member of the Year

Steve Tech



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

What you can find at the show:

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

Location:

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

Show Dates:

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.

This article about a new operating system to be released later this year might interest you. <<http://www.informationweek.com/showArticle.jhtml;jsessionid=VXX3ONZTMMENEQSNDLRSKHSCJUNN2JVN?articleID=197801331&queryText=Thomas+and+Clabum>> It's a free XML-based OS that runs inside a Web browser. Free software, especially an OS, might be good news, but we'll see when it is introduced.

Also, here is an article about some amazing technology to "rewire the brain" of stroke victims and perhaps help the patients develop movement. <<http://www.informationweek.com/showArticle.jhtml;jsessionid=DGOCRR2VULTB4QSNDLRSKH0CJUNN2JVN?articleID=199000976&queryText=K.+C.+Jones>>

In the Feb. 5, 2007, issue of Information Week was a lengthy article about conflicting opinions inside the open source community that are hindering further development of it; even some of the foremost developers don't agree. <<http://www.informationweek.com/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=197002953>> There were also some side articles on particular versions.

We worked the 2007 CTIA Wireless show <<http://www.ctia.org>> that you might have seen news reports on. It was a large show taking the entire West building of the Orange County Convention Center (1.1 million square feet of exhibit space) and I didn't get much chance to tour that show. A couple of editors asked me if I would write up something, but I didn't feel up to going in early to look around. Actually, I don't know enough about that subject to write an intelligent article on the show. Past Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton were the featured keynote speakers. I read about an interesting comment by George H.W. Bush. He said, "This hour I'll be up here (speaking) is about the longest I ever go without using my Blackberry."

It was unusual that after the keynote speech the presidential entourage entered the show floor to see some exhibits, probably because this show was important for all the new products introduced, especially concerning security. The security company working that show, building security and the Secret Service cleared a 15-foot path for them to caravan from one booth to another for a while. I'll bet a few attendees were thrilled to be that close to those guys regardless of the politics. There may also have been security people watching from the catwalks 40 feet above the show floor. I was working afternoons, and missed all that.

May 2007 will bring the largest trade show ever (in total exhibit area) <<http://www.nationalhardwareshow.com>> to Orange County Convention Center. It will take both the old and the new cc buildings (over 1.1 million square feet of exhibit space in each building, not including meeting rooms, concourses, lobbies, etc.). Some of the show and its events will be in at least four hotels nearby, and even two tents will be in set up in the parking lot.

Microsoft's Tech Ed 2007 show will also be back here in June, and its only \$1,995 to attend the full conference <<http://go.microsoft.com/?linkid=6643812>>. You'll have 440 breakout sessions to choose from if you attend.

*Now For The Deals

I have not tried any of the items below so study them well if you are interested. A klutz like myself is not qualified to try out and give opinions on most products. The write-ups are theirs, but edited by me to shorten them, and correct some wording.

*Chop Up Your PDF File Without An Ax

A-PDF Solution has announced the immediate availability of A-PDF Size Splitter 1.2, the newest version of a useful and handy tool for splitting any Acrobat PDF file or group of files into smaller-sized PDF files. A-PDF Size Splitter 1.2 doesn't require Adobe Acrobat and works independently producing PDF documents compatible with Adobe Acrobat Reader 5 and above.

A-PDF Size Splitter 1.2 is a flexible utility letting the user set any size of split files, and supports batch operations. Thanks to the built-in output file name pattern, each of the split PDF files is logically named and can be easily identified later. A-PDF Size Splitter 1.2 works even with password protected PDF files. It keeps the original PDF file encryption. Additionally, the generated split PDF files can be recombined with other PDF files, using A-PDF Merger, another utility developed for forming new composite PDF files.

A-PDF Size Splitter 1.2 runs under Microsoft Windows 98/NT4/Me/2000/XP/Vista and costs \$49 (USD). Users group members get 20% discount on a purchase using coupon code APD-AASX. Click the "Buy now" button, then click the "Add to basket" button and input the code. A free 15-day evaluation version is available to download at <http://www.a-pdf.com/size_splitter/a-pdf-ss.exe>. For more information, please visit <<http://www.a-pdf.com>>.

Product page link: <http://www.a-pdf.com/size_splitter/>

***Manipulate Your Files and More**

SoftPrime today announces the release of Advanced File Organizer 3.0 that not only features an opportunity to collect all information about drives, files and folders, but developers placed great emphasis on the ability to use this information later. Advanced File Organizer offers several ways to organize your data: add searchable comments for your files and folders; combine disks and folders into groups based on any feature you want; or sort your data by categories. All files can be referred to one or several categories that form a hierarchical tree, making your own virtual file structure. You can restructure your data collection in a minimum of time and effort by just dragging a certain item (file or folder) and dropping it wherever necessary in categories.

The program includes an ability to extract information from ISO and Nero CD/DVD images and import it as a folder, and to import information from DVD-Video thereby getting a comprehensive catalogue of all information on your hard drive, and any other data storage media.

Advanced File Organizer runs under Windows 95/98/ME/NT 4/2000/XP/Vista and costs \$29.95 (USD) or 24.95 (Euro). Users group members get a 10% discount on Advanced File Organizer 3.0 by following this link: <<http://www.softprime.com/discount/group.htm>> and using the SOFT-6C6F coupon code. The trial version of Advanced File Organizer is available at <<http://www.softprime.com/download/aforg.exe>> (1.85 Mb)

Company website: <<http://www.softprime.com>>

***Translate Everything For FREE**

New York, 4/16/07 - LingvoSoft <www.lingvosoft.com> has announced the launch of the newest web-based translation service for anyone needing to work with foreign languages. LingvoSoft Online <<http://www.lingvosoftonline.com>> provides visitors with an array of indispensable translation utilities. It features a selection of tools that can be used to communicate over the web. LingvoSoft Online not only delivers dictionaries based on its own translation vocabularies, but also an online PhraseBook that is able to translate between 45 of the world's most popular languages, and their FlashCards language learning utility.

The service is available for over 40 languages, and offers voice capabilities. LingvoSoft Online provides the voicing of translations out loud using the latest TTS (text-to-speech) technology as well as native-speaker voice narration of the PhraseBook entries. It has an advanced spell-check function that finds misspelled and incorrectly entered words, and a similar word search that provides a list of synonyms for a word.

LingvoSoft offers other website owners the opportunity to put the added functionality of online translation to work for them on their own sites by providing the opportunity to include a LingvoSoft translation module on their pages to increase traffic and keep visitors coming back for more.

***A Bonanza Of Freebies From Microsoft**

Here is an excerpt from the Microsoft Newsletter if you are not getting it: "Here are 101 fantastic freebies by clicking on <<http://go.microsoft.com/?linkid=6626107>>. Want to make your PC more productive, secure, informative and entertaining? These downloads and services will do the trick and they don't cost a dime." These goodies were actually selected by PC World.

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

 **Keyboarding/Typing**
 **Basic Computer Skills**
 **Microsoft Word**

Rates for one student

\$35 per hour
\$300 for 10 hours

Rates for two or three students

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

Enjoy private instruction on days and at hours
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Crossroads Mall.

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



Trolling for Wi-Fi - Is it legal?

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>

Local area networking has experienced a profound change in recent years. Wired networks are still the norm but wireless networking is popular at homes and businesses. There are several issues worthy of exploration regarding this topic and this column will explore these issues in some detail in this and future columns. One issue is the legality of accessing an "open" wireless network and the other issue is the necessity to protect a wireless network.

Wikipedia states that "wardriving" involves the use of an automobile and a Wi-Fi-equipped computer, such as a laptop or a PDA, to detect Wi-Fi wireless networks. It is also known as "WiLDing" (Wireless Lan Driving), originating in the U.S. with the Bay Area Wireless Users Group (BAWUG). It is similar to using a scanner for radio. Many wardrivers use GPS devices to measure the location of the network, find and log it on a website. For better range, antennas are built or bought, and vary from omnidirectional to highly directional. Software for wardriving is freely available on the Internet, notably, NetStumbler for Windows, KisMac for Macintosh, and Kismet for Linux.

Wardrivers make identification and access of wireless networks a sport, but is the sport legal? Is there a clear-cut answer or does it depend on the facts?

A recent Florida case provides some guidance. A Florida man, sitting in his SUV and using a laptop, was accessing wireless networks in a residential neighborhood. The St. Petersburg Times reported the matter and made the observation that "a drive through downtown St. Petersburg shows how porous networks can be. In less than five minutes, a Times reporter with a laptop found 14 wireless access points, six of which were wide open. I'll guarantee there are tons of people out there who have their wireless network being exploited but have no idea. And as we see more people utilizing wireless, we'll see more people being victimized." The Florida man was indicted and convicted.

"Wireless fidelity, or 'Wi-Fi,' has enjoyed prolific growth since catching on in 2000. More than 10-million U.S. homes are equipped with routers that transmit high-speed Internet to computers using radio signals. The signals can extend 200 feet or more, giving people the ability to use the Web in the back yard of his Crescent Heights home, but also reaching the house next door, or the street."

The expansion of Wi-Fi hot spots is part of this phenomenon. With a wireless-capable laptop, it is possible to access the Internet at places called "hot spots," and they are everywhere. Some charge for access but many provide free access. There is an inherent risk in this technology. The router that provides the wireless access point has an identifiable internet protocol (IP) address. Anyone accessing the Internet through that router will appear to be authorized to use that IP address. Someone with a nefarious intent can create a possible legal nightmare for the person responsible for that IP address. The ability to look through the IP address and identify the computer behind the DHCP server is more difficult.



A recent case in Michigan involved the unauthorized access of an unsecured Wi-Fi network at a Lowe's home improvement store to steal credit card numbers. A 20-year-old and a friend stumbled across the network while cruising around in a car in search of wireless Internet connections – wardriving. He was convicted.

An emerging threat is the "evil twin" attack. A person with the proper equipment sets up a local hot spot and overpowers the Wi-Fi network. Any computer user who accesses the bogus Wi-Fi network is then at risk by the evil twin. The Wall Street Journal has reported an evil twin setup at a technology conference in London. Hackers set up evil twins that infected other computers with viruses and gathered information on the users.

It is apparent that security is an important issue in a wireless network. The original standard was called WEP (wired equivalent privacy). WEP is a form of encryption, but the level of encryption is relatively weak. An improved form of encryption for wireless networks uses AES (advanced encryption standard). AES is strong encryption.

There are ethical issues in accessing a wireless network unless one has specific authority. Is it similar to a form of electronic trespass? Does it constitute a form of theft from the internet service provider? One can argue both sides of these questions easily.

The next column will investigate the legal issues of these questions in more depth. In the interim, owners of wireless networks should consider the security of their networks. Improvements can be made to the wireless network fairly easily. A company by the name of Force Field Wireless has some excellent suggestions regarding wireless security. See www.forcefieldwireless.com. Some of the tips are:

- Enable WEP. Make sure you use the largest WEP key size that the equipment supports.
- Change the SSID (Service Set Identifier) to something non-descriptive. Do not give a name, address, or any other useful information to potential hackers. Do not use the default SSID.
- Change the default password(s) on the access point. The default passwords of most network equipment are well known and could allow an intruder to gain access to the access point.
- Disable Broadcast SSID. If the access point supports "closed system" or allows one to "disable broadcast SSID," use this feature. This will make the network essentially invisible to almost all scanning methods.
- Update the firmware and drivers on access points and wireless cards. It is always wise to use the latest firmware and drivers on access points and wireless cards. Manufacturers commonly fix known issues, security holes, and enable new features with these updates.
- Enable MAC-based filtering. This feature limits access to unique wireless cards.
- Turn off access points when not in use.
- Try to position access points in the center of the house or building. This will minimize the signal leak outside of its intended range.
- Prudent use of security features in a wireless network can prevent misfortune.

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PDF Converter

Rob Rice, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

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E-mail, web browsers, audio players, word processors, these are all examples of “killer apps,” those software applications that helped to revolutionize computing and that no computer seems to be able to do without. While it may not belong in the class of a killer app, ScanSoft’s PDF Converter for Microsoft Word does have the potential to be one of those applications that no computer, at least those with Word installed, should be without.

No doubt you have encountered .pdf files, those documents that require Adobe Acrobat to read them. Used to convert documents, web pages, pictures and spreadsheets, etc., into a format that just about anyone’s computer can read, Acrobat itself is on the edge of being defined as a killer app. Acrobat, with free Adobe Acrobat Reader has made possible a much needed standard for a common file format with the sophistication and power to handle complex documents.

So what is the problem? If Adobe Acrobat works so well then why do we need anything else? The answer is simply that while the Reader is free, Acrobat itself costs in the neighborhood of \$300 – \$400 for a Pro version.

So what can you do if you are faced with having to fill out forms created in the PDF format? You can either print them and mail them via post, unless you are in a hurry; scan them with a scanner, convert them to a text document and then convert them back into a .pdf file with your word processor, which will hopefully have that ability and hopefully it will all hold together; or you could use a PDF to document converter. Having tried the other methods, I decided that I really needed the latter. And having tried the few available applications that claim to do this I have found only one that gives any level of satisfaction and that is ScanSoft’s PDF Converter for Microsoft Word.

ScanSoft’s PDF Converter is actually a plug-in for Microsoft’s Word. There is nothing to start or open, it just detects when you want to open a PDF file in Word and converts it to a .doc format so that it can be opened and edited--simple and exactly what I wanted.

ScanSoft, Inc. is one of the leading suppliers of speech and imaging software. Products such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking, IBM ViaVoice, OmniForm, OmniPage, and PaperPort, all carry ScanSoft’s logo. As you can see by such a product line, ScanSoft specializes in digital document handling.

As for the PDF Converter, installation is nothing special, just pop in the disk and follow directions. Yet, be warned, registration is required and it is persistent and will disable the product should you fail to register. Here is a comment regarding the process from ScanSoft’s web site:

“Activation” is a means of activating a license of the product with ScanSoft. During the installation of PDF Converter, customers are prompted to “Activate” the product. This activation process assesses the hardware configuration of the installation PC and associates it with the software’s serial number.

Note: No personal information is retrieved. Hardware configuration “fingerprint” is transferred to the activation server.

I have not tested what will happen if your hardware configuration changes. This may be something to keep in mind.

So how does PDF Converter perform? As mentioned earlier, once the product is installed and registered, you can go into Microsoft Word and open a PDF document just as you would any other document. The conversion process is handled automatically. The package claims instant conversion, but the word “instant” is obviously relative. It took typically anywhere from 10 to 45 seconds to convert a document depending upon size and complexity. This was using a 1.45 GHz processor with 512 Mb of RAM. Once the conversion process was complete, the results were mixed. An application form with a font size of six came out garbled for much of the document. Elsewhere, on the same form, where the font size was



eight or larger, the words were less scrambled. Size twelve was rendered with few errors.

Grabbing a copy of the Fredericksburg PC User's Group newsletter, Electronically Speaking, I had greater success. Overall the nine page newsletter was reproduced with few errors, the most serious being a single paragraph that overlapped another. However, the photographs, tables, art, and colors were well-reproduced without any serious problems. Only the one paragraph seemed to give it trouble, as the rest of the text was very good.

Pulling out a copy of the Oklahoma City PC User's Group newsletter, the eMonitor, produced a near flawless reproduction. The only errors were some additional white space between pages.

In a fourth test, I used ScanSoft's own Quick Reference for PDF Converter. In this nine page document, which has screen shots, hyperlinks, text and graphics, I could see only two sentences out of place and some extra white space. The hyperlinks were flawless overall, a nice job done by PDF Converter.

There are some things that PDF Converter will not do and a few caveats that you should be aware of. For example, from the ScanSoft Web page:

- * While converting a PDF file with the PDF Converter, you will not be able to edit a document in any Word window until the conversion is complete.
- * The PDF Converter cannot convert encrypted .pdf files.
- * When using dual monitors, the PDF Converter splash/converting screen may appear split between monitors.
- * Files created in the PDF 1.5 format can not be converted by PDF Converter.
- * PDF Converter does not support footnotes. PDF documents that contain footnotes will not retain them when opening the files in Microsoft Word. To process PDF files and retain footnotes, we recommend using the latest version of OmniPage.
- * ScanSoft PDF Converter works with PDF "normal" files, such as those created from all PC applications. To process PDF "Image" files, such as those created from a scanner, you can use ScanSoft OmniPage.

I also had several instances where the program reported a problem yet was able to render the document in a usable state. In one instance, while converting the Fredericksburg PC User's Group newsletter, it reported a problem, opened my Web browser to their support site and still made a good reproduction with the exception of the paragraph overlay.

ScanSoft's PDF Converter for Microsoft Word reminds me of the early versions of OCR software, the program that converts your scanned document into an editable one. It appears to have many of the same growing pains such as properly rendering fine text. However, PDF Converter is a good product that I hope the company will continue to refine. While only in version 1, it does an admirable job and easily beats the competition. So, while it does not do so good a job at rendering PDF file formats as Acrobat does, at \$49.99 there is no reason to hesitate in buying this potential killer app.

Notes: Please do not confuse ScanSoft's PDF Converter for Microsoft Word with those applications that convert documents into .pdf files, as I saw one reviewer had. PDF Converter goes the other way, converting .pdf documents into Microsoft Word documents.

These tests were run using Windows 2000 and Office XP.

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Win9x/Me/XP Computer tips & tricks

Computer Preventative Maintenance Part XIII

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 tip has six ways to speed up Windows. 1) Defragment Your Hard Drive: Over time, the data on your hard drive gets scattered. Defragmenting your hard drive puts your data back into sequential order, making it easier for Windows to access it. 2) Scan Your Hard Disk: Windows provides a utility called scandisk that will automatically detect and fix much of the damage caused by power outages and crashes, improving your system's performance in the process. 3) Scan for Viruses: Detecting and cleaning viruses is an excellent way to improve your system's performance. 4) Check for Spyware and Adware: Spyware is software that allows companies to monitor what websites you visit or even access your computer. Adware is software that displays advertisements. Both use system resources and slow your computer down. Detecting and removing the programs will improve system performance. 5) Uninstall Unneeded Programs: Removing programs that you no longer use can free up space on your computer and speed up your system's performance. However, you need to uninstall the programs properly to see much improvement; deleting them is not enough. 6) Adjust Visual Effects for Better Performance: WinXP provides a number of interesting visual effects like animated windows and fading menus. These effects, however, can slow down your computer.

Help and Support Center

When you choose Start, Help and Support Center, WinXP presents you with a wide array of choices. Microsoft hopes to make finding what you need easier for you even if you don't know the answer to your question in advance. Windows Help options fall into several categories: Overviews, articles, and tutorials: Explanatory pieces aimed at giving you an idea of what is going on with your computer. Tasks: This aid is a step-by-step procedure for solving a single problem or changing a single setting. Walkthroughs: These aids are marketing and multimedia demonstrations of capabilities. Troubleshooters: They take you through a series of frequently complex steps to help you identify and resolve problems. Microsoft has tried hard to enable you to solve your own problems. Search Options. The Help and Support Center already looks in all the places it can for you but this aid is another aid to find information. Live, one-on-one support from Microsoft: When Troubleshooters cover only the most basic problems and the most direct solutions. Remote Assistance is a great idea, but in practice the idea has plenty of problems because both you and your assistant have to be connected to the Internet or to the same local network. If firewalls exist between you, Remote Assistance might not work at all. Windows Newsgroups: They are on the Internet and may help you solve a problem. Windows Updates: These updates need to be applied to your compute to prevent problems. Hardware and Software Compatibility Lists: These lists assist you in determining compatibility of your computer with new software programs or hardware peripherals.

Frozen Computer Problem/Solutions

Sometimes when we think a computer has frozen up on us the problem is just a slow machine. If after a few minutes you determine that there really is a frozen computer problem, then there are several options to get out of this situation. First, if your keyboard is still working, then press CTRL, ALT, DEL to open the Task Manager (Windows 2000 requires you to click a Task Manager button, while in Windows Vista, the button is Start, Task Manager.). Now click the Applications tab, and check the Status column for any application that is "Not Responding." If you find one, select it and click End Task. Next, click the Processes tab and look for any process running at 100 percent CPU utilization (or 50 percent of you have a dual core system). If there are no running process(es), select Shut Down, Restart or press Alt, U, and then R to reboot Windows. Second, if your keyboard and mouse are both unresponsive, press your Caps Lock key while looking down at your keyboard. If the indicator light doesn't change, your keyboard and your PC aren't communicating. Move your mouse around while looking at the screen. If the pointer doesn't budge, even after a few seconds' wait, your mouse is out, too. Either your computer needs a hardware reboot, or you have a keyboard and mouse problem. If they're wire, unplug the mouse and keyboard

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then plug them in again. If they're wireless, press their reset buttons or change their batteries, or take both actions. Three, your last resort is to try a hardware reboot. You may lose whatever work wasn't saved when the problem began, but if you have no choice, press and hold your system's power button for 5 seconds. If that doesn't turn your machine off, unplug the power cord. On a notebook, you may also have to remove the battery. Your next boot-up may take longer than usual because Windows runs additional diagnostics whenever it doesn't shut down properly. Fourth, if Windows doesn't reboot at all, then find your instructions to use your Emergency Boot CD(s).

Process Explorer

Here's another tip much like the first one in this article. If your computer is still running at a snail's pace, then short of tweaking MSConfig, defragging, and installing Ad-Aware or reinstalling or upgrading to Windows Vista, you can identify and remove memory processes which are the root cause of your performance problem. Download Process Explorer from <www.microsoft.com/technet/sysinternals/utilities/ProcessExplorer.msp> and unzip it. There is no installer for this program. Now focus on performance by right-clicking on any column header, then choose Select Columns, click on the Process Performance tab. Now place a check next to CPU Usage and CPU Time and click on the Process Memory tab and then place another check next to Virtual Size. Next you should click on any column heading to sort by that column. For example, if you click the Virtual Size header, you will see the most memory-consuming processes listed first. When you click the CPU header, you will see those processes that are using all of the processor power on your computer. At this point you can carefully review those processes which are precluding good performance. Once you have identified those memory consuming processes, search the Internet by process name. You want to ensure you don't delete a process which would cause your computer to crash.

Temporary Files

You can also free up space on your drive by deleting temporary files. Use the Windows Search feature to locate the different files on your system that have the following characteristics and then delete them but only after determining that it's safe to do so: .tmp extension: By far, the most common indicator of a temporary file is one that ends in the .tmp extension. Tilde (~) as first character: Your operating system is not content with conforming to the .tmp extension standard because some programs create temporary files that begin with a tilde. For instance, you may see a file named ~DF3E05.tmp. Zero file length: Sometimes a program may create temporary files and put nothing in them. Since these files have no characters, they have no size. .bak extension: Technically, these files are not temporary, but they're backup files. If the file is old, you may not need it anymore, and you can safely delete. .old extension: When programs update some files, they rename the original file with the .old extension.

Test Hard Drives

There are a few programs available to test hard drives. Most speed measurements and tools focus on network bandwidth. A few programs include HD Tach (free), PerformanceTest (\$24) and Stellar Smart (\$29). These are general benchmarking programs that include transfer rate as a component. You can find performance specifications on product packaging as well. Most hard drives are labeled with a rotational or spindle speed. Measured as RPM (rotations per minute), it's the speed at which the drive's platters spin. Higher speeds mean potentially faster transfers to and from the drive. Some hard drives are also labeled with a seek time. That's the average time a read/write head takes to position itself over a platter. The difference between "average" and "better" transfer rates is a matter of milliseconds. You may not notice a difference unless you regularly work with large files or virtual memory. The Web sites of drive manufacturers like Seagate, Hitachi and Western Digital may also be of help. Some offer free downloadable diagnostic software for their drives. Other components in a computer can slow things. They include memory, the video system, the bus system and the microprocessor. If you're looking for a system speed boost, consider adding memory (RAM). That can prevent your PC from resorting to virtual memory. Virtual memory is a section of the hard drive that takes overflow from RAM. Virtual memory slows things. Even a speedy hard drive is noticeably slower than RAM.

Thumb Drives

Assuming that your external/removable drives show up in My Computer, you should be able to run the utilities on them. Drives become fragmented when you write to a file, then resave it. You might get fragmentation with differential or incremental backups. There's no reason why defragmentation should hurt your external hard drives. This is also true for Check Disk. However, before defragmenting, do an analysis of the drive by clicking Start, My Computer, and right-clicking the drive, Properties, selecting the Tools tab and clicking Defragment Now. Highlight the drive and click Analyze. Even if it says defragmentation is unnecessary, you can still do it. Running Check Disk occasionally also won't hurt anything. It is also accessed off the Tools tab by clicking Check Now and selecting all options. Follow any instructions. The other drives are more problematic. A flash drive is accessed the same way. Theoretically, at least, you can wear flash drives out. They're generally good for 10,000 reads and writes, according to manufacturers, thus doing extra work on them might cause problems. To avoid a potential problem, you can copy the files off and then do a quick format, rather than a thorough one. For this task, go to My Computer and right-click the drive. Now click Format, check Quick Format, and click Start. The quick format would leave the files on the drive. But it would break the links to them from the disk index. That tells the disk they aren't really there. When you reinstall the files, they should go into contiguous areas. Check Disk works fine on a flash drive. Run Check Disk as you would on the external hard drives. You can also use Check Disk on your Nano. When it comes to defragmentation, Apple recommends the iPod Updater. You need not worry about the CompactFlash cards. They should be formatted in the camera.

PC Protection

There are several ways to protect your computer when it has new software programs without patches. New software programs are marketed without patches. Upon identification to problems, patches are then made available to fix them. If that's the case with your new computer and/or software programs, first upgrade from Internet Explorer 6 to version 7. Second enable automatic updates for Windows and other programs whenever possible. Third, choose good antivirus software programs. Fourth, make sure you use WinXP/Vista's or some other firewall running on your computer. Finally, stay informed of security news. www.alamode.com



Online Mania

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Millions of people of all ages, worldwide, spend a large part of their lives in the make-believe online world of the Internet. MySpace.com is representative of several virtual social gathering places where participants, young and old, meet to chat and make virtual friends. So far, so good. But for many it has become a measure of someone's popularity how many "friends" they have and how cool they are. According to ZDNet (3/20/07), "Barack Obama is en route to a landslide victory over Hillary Clinton in the MySpace friends contest: Obama 55,674 friends versus Clinton 26,702 friends....John Edwards calls his MySpace friends Pals. He has 12,319 of them ... Republican candidates are trailing the Democrats overall at MySpace, big time: Rudy Giuliani 928 friends, John McCain 340 friends, Mitt Romney, 308 friends."

Lesser mortals are also competing for friends in the popularity contest. It's not only the number of friends that counts, but they have to be cool and glamorous. Enter Brant Walker who noticed, while browsing MySpace pages, that "some people would have a lot of good-looking friends, and others didn't." He came up with the idea "to turn cyberlosers into social-networking magnets" by providing fictitious postings from attractive people. So he set up a business, FakeYourSpace.com, to provide MySpace inhabitants with photographs and comments from hired "friends" — mainly attractive models — for 99 cents a month each. He used photographs of models from iStockPhoto.com until they found out about it and put a stop to it. According to The New York Times (2/26/07) Walker is regrouping and may soon be back in business again, together with others anxious to get in on a social reputation enhancement scam.

Meanwhile, online gaming continues to be an addiction for many. Although many of these games are violent and crude, others offer many examples of complex play that involve social interaction, collaboration and long-term goals. The major games, often referred to as MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games), involve tools, weapons, and other artifacts that the players collect while playing the game over a period of time. Since some games started to allow transferring those artifacts to others, a lively market has sprung up on E-bay and similar sites where they are sold for real money. As a consequence, game "farms" have sprung up, mostly in third-world countries in the far East, where thousands of players are being paid to play MMORPGs all day to generate in-game goodies for sale at a good profit.

The amount of money involved is mind-boggling. In November 2006 Business Week reported that Second Life player Ailin Graef had become the first millionaire (in US dollars) based on the value in game dollars of land holdings by her avatar, Anshe Chung, in the online virtual world. A runaway success, Second Life is the creation of Linden Labs and its currency, Linden dollars (L\$), is pegged at about L\$270 to the US dollar (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life). There are currency exchanges where game dollars can be traded for real currency, and Linden Labs intervenes in the background to keep the exchange rate fairly stable by adding or withdrawing game dollars from the virtual world. Maybe this is a good retirement hobby for Alan Greenspan!

Not surprisingly, the IRS is taking a good deal of interest and is considering taxing the proceeds from gaming. According to PC World (March 2007), the Joint Economic Committee of Congress (JEC) is working on a report regarding the economies of World of Warcraft, Second Life, and other MMORPGs. With an estimated world-wide "real-money trade" of \$ 1 billion the tax man's hands are itching. But wait, there is more! It is estimated that the total wealth created within these games (in the form of artifacts not sold for real money, yet) amounts to some \$10 billion. Exchanges of these artifacts between players in Second Life (instead of outright sales in real money)



might be considered bartering, and bartering transactions are taxable according to IRS regulations. With \$10 billion of assets being exchanged between players, the potential tax liabilities would be significant. The tax gurus are having a fine time pondering this. Fortunately there are other voices that don't want to spoil the fun of online gaming. We'll have to wait and see what the JEC comes up with. But just to be proactive, H&R Block has already established a virtual tax preparation office in Second Life (<http://slurl.com/secondlife/HR%20Block/>)

Not all online gaming is frivolous. Search engines such as Google have great difficulty labeling images so that they can be retrieved through keywords. It takes direct human involvement to describe an image in meaningful words, an impossible task with the untold billions of images on the Internet that have no captions or descriptions. Unless you make it into a game, that is.

Luis von Ahn, an assistant professor in the Computer Science Department at Carnegie Mellon University, developed a game called ESP in which two participants who can't communicate with each other are shown a picture and asked to come up with descriptive labels within a short time period, such as 90 seconds. Matching labels are awarded with points. The resulting matching labels proved to be highly descriptive of the images. The game turned out to be highly addictive. Google has licensed it and created its own version, Google Image Labeler (images.google.com/imagelabeler). It is surprisingly difficult at first to generate descriptive labels for an image that is flashed on the screen for 90 seconds, but it probably gets easier with more practice. Obvious labels, such as "church" for a picture of a church that may have been generated previously, are declared off-limits. With an unending supply of images on the Web, the game can continue indefinitely. Give it a try!

Von Ahn was earlier credited with developing Captchas, those words written in a way that computers can't read them but humans can. They are used frequently to make sure that a human is at the end of a transaction, rather than another computer. You have probably encountered them, for instance when you signed up for a Yahoo email account.

Von Ahn is currently working on other games to help with recognition problems, such as locating objects inside an image, summarizing text passages, and developing common sense.



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What's the best media for archiving important data?

Lincoln Spector, PC World

How should I archive files--on CDs, DVDs, floppies, flash drives, or a hard drive?

I wish I could give you a definitive answer, but no one knows how long specific media will last. You need confidence that hardware and software that can read your archive files will be around, too. I'd stick with popular, nonproprietary file formats, such as .bmp, .jpg, .mp3, .htm, .txt, and .pdf. And make sure any computer you buy can read your archives before you bag the old system.

Both CDs and DVDs are excellent choices for archival storage.

Floppy disks, though, caught a train to Obsolescentville several years ago.

Flash drives and SD Cards have withstood teething puppies and trips through the wash, but no one expects them to last for more than about ten years. They support a limited number of writes and connections, depending on the type of memory they use. One of the new ruggedized flash drives, however, could be a good--albeit somewhat expensive--archiving option for both photos and documents; a package of 100 4.7GB DVD-Rs costs less than a single 4GB flash drive.



Your hard drive can be a convenient and reliable data repository, though you could accidentally overwrite a vital file.



Using Bitlocker

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

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

In Windows Vista Ultimate or Enterprise editions, you can encrypt the information on your hard drive using BitLocker technology. However, in order to do this, you must pre-configure the hard drive. The first step in this process is to divide the drive into two separate partitions: a 1.5GB partition used to start the system, with the remaining space on the hard drive used for your OS and data protected by BitLocker. Both of these partitions will use the NTFS file system.

You must begin with a fresh installation of Windows Vista on your computer. Using the Windows Vista DVD, boot into the Recovery Environment and open the Command Prompt. Start Diskpart and perform the following commands:

select disk 0

clean

create partition primary size=1500

assign letter=s

active

create partition primary

assign letter=c

list volume

exit

format c: /y /q /fs:NTFS

format s: /y /q /fs:NTFS

exit



From top to bottom, these commands: select the first hard disk, delete the partition table, create a 1.5GB partition assigned the letter s and make it bootable, use the remainder of that drive for the c drive, display the information on the drives you've just created, close out of Diskpart, format your partitions, close out of the command prompt.

Then, when you install Windows Vista, you need to install it on the c: drive.

The next step in configuring BitLocker is to determine if your hardware includes a Trusted Platform Module (TPM) chip or not. This chip is simply used to store security information on your computer. If this chip exists, you'll need to enable it in your system BIOS. On TPM-enabled computers, a PIN is stored on the motherboard (or on a USB key) that BitLocker uses to decrypt your data. Without this PIN, you can't decrypt the data. This keeps the drive from being decrypted by being moved to another machine.

You can use BitLocker without a TPM chip by using a USB key in its place, but some further configuration is required. You'll need to use the Group Policy Object Editor (gpedit.msc). To do this, open Computer Components, Administrative Templates, Windows Components, BitLocker Drive Encryption, Control Panel Setup and then click Enable Advanced Startup Options. Choose the option to allow BitLocker without a compatible TPM. Finally, click on Apply and then OK to close the Group Policy Object Editor. Once you've done that, you can run the BitLocker setup program in the Control Panel.

Troubleshooting Vista

Windows Vista includes some great new tools that can help you out when things aren't going quite right with your system.

Recovery Environment

The first of these is the Recovery Environment. You access the Recovery Environment by booting from the Windows Vista DVD, clicking through the initial startup screens, and selecting the Repair option. There are five tools.

Startup Repair: analyzes boot-level problems and makes repairs. Since these problems aren't always fixed on the first attempt, multiple reboots might be required. You can attempt this repair up to five times.

System Restore: enables you to back-out to a recovery point before you installed a bad piece of hardware or software that left your system inoperable.

Windows Complete PC Restore: this is the first time that Microsoft has offered their own full-blown disaster-recovery solution. It's available in the Business, Ultimate, and Enterprise editions using Microsoft's new built-in disc imaging system now included in their backup software.

Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool: tests all your system memory (to include CPU cache) and offers three testing levels. There are several custom options to help you find memory problems.

Command Prompt: enables full command-line access, unlike the Windows XP Recovery Console. This enables you to access any program needed for system and data recovery. It can also be used to format CD and DVD media and copy data to or from USB drives connected to the computer.

Problem Reports and Solutions

I loaded Windows Vista Business edition onto my laptop the other day. That was when I was introduced to Microsoft's Problem Reports and Solutions applet. It seems that when you have a hardware or software problem, Windows Vista captures information about the problem and uploads it to Microsoft for analysis. In my case, there was a piece of hardware that Vista didn't have a driver for. I'd located it in Device Manager, where it appeared as a Mass Storage Controller. I had no clue what this was, and just hoped it wasn't going to seriously effect what I needed to do on the computer. Vista popped up a Window and told me what the device was (a Texas Instruments on-board PC Card reader) and told me to contact Sony (my laptop maker) for an updated driver, as this was a known issue with the model of laptop that I have.

To view the history of problems and solutions that Vista may have found on your own system, open the Problem Reports and Solutions applet in the Control Panel. You can also configure problem reporting, list current problems and upload them to Microsoft, and clear the solution and problem history.

Event Viewer and Reliability

Microsoft has upgraded the Event Viewer and included a brand-new utility called the Reliability and Performance Monitor. Both of these are found in the Control Panel's Administrative Tools. Event Viewer still uses the Microsoft Management Console (MMC), but with a new face. It now displays information on application, security, setup, system, and forwarded events. You can still customize and filter event views to find problems quickly.

The Reliability and Performance Monitor provides real-time tracking of CPU, disk drive, memory, and network performance, and the Reliability Monitor tracks application failures, hardware failures, Windows failures, and installation failures to generate a reliability index. This tool allows you to locate troublesome applications that may make your system unstable. I decided to give my laptop the test. In the Reliability Monitor, my laptop reliability index read 8.45, with less than four failures over a month long period. It told me exactly which applications caused these failures. This can be a very handy tool.

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

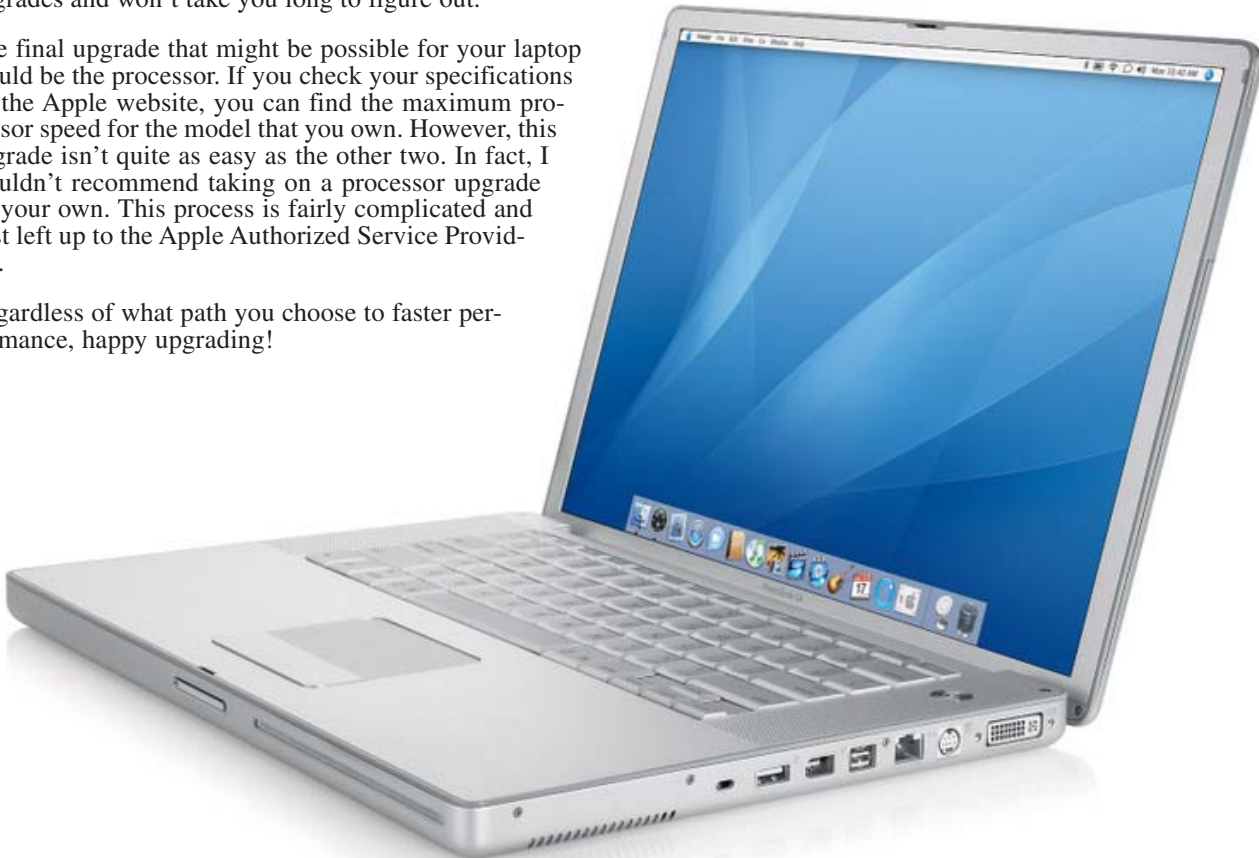
It's been a couple of years since you purchased that laptop. The blazing speed you once had just isn't there anymore. However, your pocket book can't stretch far enough to afford the shiny new Mac. What can you do? You've heard your desktop counterparts talk about upgrading their rigs, but can you really do that to your portable? Well, you can in a fashion. There are key components common to both systems that can really boost your performance.

Just like the old days, the more memory you have, the better off you'll be. First off, RAM is easy to add. Most laptops offer a simple access panel that you remove with a few screws, allowing you to pop in the needed modules. Second, RAM is cheap these days. You can afford to add the additional chips. This is probably the most important upgrade you can make. Everything your computer does depends on RAM. Sure, your machine might run well when you're surfing the Internet or checking e-mail, but try rendering high-end graphics files with Adobe Photoshop or producing your movies with Adobe Premiere. You won't meet your Hollywood deadlines that way!

The hard drive is the next easiest upgrade you can make and also another major performance boost. The first factor to consider is size. Earlier laptops came with tiny hard drives and run out of space quickly, especially considering the size of today's operating systems and applications. Add to that the packrats we've all become with pictures, movies, and tons of music. Speed is also a factor. The earlier hard drives were 4,200RPM, compared to the current line of both 5,400RPM and even 7,200RPM drives. These faster drives offer quicker access to your data. This allows information to load faster, becoming available for you to manipulate sooner. The upgrade path for hard drives varies by laptops. Some have access panels. Others require you to physically open the laptop. However, this shouldn't intimidate you. Laptops are designed for relatively easy hard drive upgrades and won't take you long to figure out.

The final upgrade that might be possible for your laptop would be the processor. If you check your specifications on the Apple website, you can find the maximum processor speed for the model that you own. However, this upgrade isn't quite as easy as the other two. In fact, I wouldn't recommend taking on a processor upgrade on your own. This process is fairly complicated and best left up to the Apple Authorized Service Providers.

Regardless of what path you choose to faster performance, happy upgrading!





Blogs

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!

BLOG is short for Web Log and is a free and easy way to get timely information onto the Internet. It is a combination of software tools and web hosting that allows anyone to keep and maintain an online journal without having to learn complicated computer or Web design skills. It's a personal publishing system that gets your thoughts into cyberspace instantly. There's no way to count the number of blogs, but estimates start at a million and go up from there.

Seeing a blog is more enlightening than reading about them, so have a look at my newest blog at lazywebmaster.blogspot.com. In fact, you can finish reading this column there.

The first thing that you will notice is that it is arranged chronologically, with the newest entry on top. This diary format is the defining characteristic of blogs. They are intended for instant and frequent communications.

I found that the service called Blogger, owned by Google, is the easiest to use, especially for beginners. Another good free service is Journal Space.

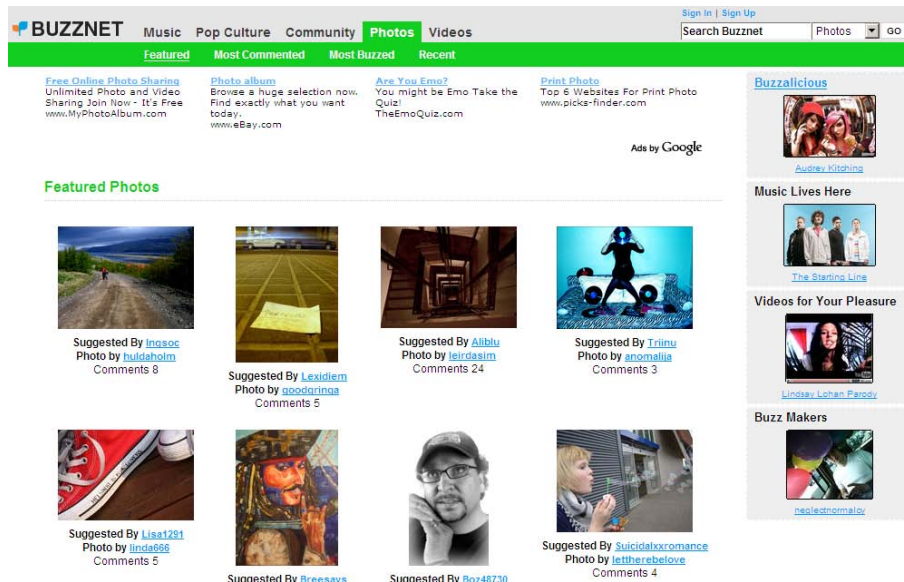
With all of the blog services the first thing to do is to set up a free account, which essentially means giving the service your name and e-mail, selecting a password and a name for your first blog.

The blog name will become part of the address - yourblogname.blogspot.com. In Blogger, you can have unlimited blogs. Journalspace gives you one, and your user name becomes your blog address, so pick it carefully.

So you don't get confused, Blogger is the name of the service and the address you visit to manage your blog. Blogspot is where the blog is actually hosted, and the address that your visitors use. They are the same service.

The other required action is to pick a blog template, or the look and feel of your blog. The service will give you a set of templates from which you may choose (and easily change if you change your mind.) More experienced users can download other templates from third-party sites, design their own templates or modify the ones provided (they are created in HTML and Javascript: you have access to the code.)

That done, start blogging! Each entry is called a post. You type in your post, then



publish it (click a button) to make it go live onto the Internet. If you want, add a few hyperlinks and format the text, just as you would with a word processor. There's even a spell checker (hint, hint.) That's it. You can master the basics of blogging in about five minutes.

But why stop with the basics?

Most blog hosts allow you to post pictures onto your blog. Blogger doesn't have an innate photo capability so you have to use a third-party program or service to transfer photos to your blog.

Hello, from Picasa Software, is a free program that is installed on your computer. You can download it from www.hello.com. Hello is sort of an instant messenger optimized to facilitate sharing photos with friends, but an added feature is a "bloggerbot" (bot is shorthand for robot) that sends pictures to your blog. It's quite simple to use. Master this in about a half hour.

Another way to add photos to your blog is through another blog (are you confused yet?) BuzzNet is a photoblog, sometimes called a Moblog. The MO stands for mobile: many people use these to share photos taken on their mobile phones. You can send photos by e-mail over the wireless access protocol, or WAP, as well as using BuzzNet's easy Web-based interface.

After you set up your free account with BuzzNet you can upload up to 60 photos per month. If that's not enough, you can buy more photo storage (100 more images in a month for \$5; \$15 for 300 images, or go for it and get their premium service - no banner ads, custom templates, password protected galleries and 250 photos a month - for \$36 a year.)

BuzzNet is optimized for photos rather than text; it's set up more like a gallery, although there are ways to add comments to photos. One of the options is "Blog This!" which will send a photo and text to your Blogspot blog with the click of a button.

BuzzNet is especially handy if you are traveling and are using someone else's computer - at a cyber café, for example. Since the interface is Web-based, you don't have to worry about installing any software. Hint: if you do a photo blog while traveling with a digital camera, get a USB-based card reader (something like the SanDisk 12-in-1 Memory Card Reader, about \$35) so that you can read your memory card directly into the alien computer. If you are in the US and taking photos with your digital camera this is not necessary.

I set up a BuzzNet account: you can see my moblog there at susanives.buzznet.com. Sign up for your own BuzzNet account at www.buzznet.com. If photos aren't enough, how about audio? Both Blogger and Journal Space allow audio blogs, which are sound files that you call in from any telephone and are automatically posted to your blog. These work through 3rd parties and are considered "add-ins" to the blog. You can listen to one at lazywebmaster.blogspot.com. I used a service called audioblogger www.audioblogger.com which is free and lets you post an unlimited number of 5-minute long messages by calling them in over your phone. Some other audioblog services allow much longer posts - up to an hour! - and allow you to record them on your computer using a microphone. Some people are actually doing full-length "radio" shows using audioblogs. Sometimes this is referred to as "PodCasting," as people download the audio from the blog onto their MP3 players (an iPod, for example) so that they can listen to it away from their computer. Video blogs (Vblogs) are also starting to show up. Look at www.audioblog.com for more info: their service is \$50 a year. This really just skims the surface of blogging. You can set up team or group blogs that multiple people can post to. You can enable a feature that allows others to add comments to your blog. There are blog communities that interact with each other.

Most blogs, including Blogger, will automatically set up an RSS (syndication) feed for you.

If you have your own Web space, Blogger allows you to integrate it with your web content so that it uses your URL.

Blogging can be serious business. Last summer, Express-News military reporter Sig Christenson maintained a daily blog from the battlefield in Iraq. They can also be silly and superficial. What you blog is up to you.

For personal use, a blog can be used for vacation photos - while the vacation is still happening! They can be used for family photos - a wedding? New baby? Or even just to post your musings. If you have the Google toolbar installed, there is a Blog button on it. If you click it, it will automatically post a link to the page you are currently viewing to your BlogSpot blog. Many people use this feature to share interesting sites with friends.

But blogs can be used for business, too. They are an excellent way to get current news up onto the Web fast; even someone with no technical skills can do it without waiting for the office Web guru to fit you into her busy schedule.

Here's a warning. Any free service, blogs included, can go out of business. Weblogs, a free service started by blog pioneer Dave Winer, suddenly shut down last summer, leaving thousands of bloggers homeless.

Give it a look. A blog might be all you need, or it could be a trendy and useful add-on to a full blown Web site.



Colorizing Artwork

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>.

Previously, I talked about different methods to colorize photographs. This is not something that people have to do frequently, but it is a fun way to make a cool effect. A more common task that folks require is the ability to add color to black and white artwork. It can be easy to find the almost perfect piece of clip art, perfect except for the lack of color. This month we take a look at how to add color to otherwise lifeless line art.

The artwork that you start with can be from a variety of sources. You can find illustrations from a clip art CD, scan an image from a public domain book or simply draw your own image and then scan it. For my first example, I drew a paint can in Adobe Illustrator using a Wacom digitizing tablet and then copied the artwork into Adobe Photoshop CS. The Photoshop file should be in one of the color modes (usually RGB).

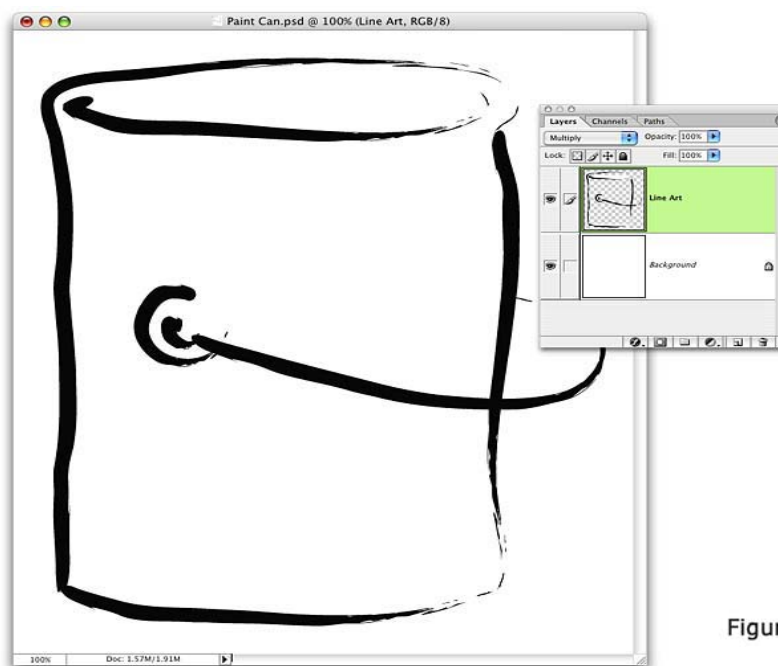


Figure 1

Since I pasted the art into Photoshop, the artwork is automatically on a new layer. If you scanned the art (like I did for my second example), create a new layer for it by dragging the 'Background' layer to the New Layer icon in the Layers palette. This will make a new layer called 'Background Copy', rename it something descriptive like 'Line Art' (Fig. 1). Now click on the 'Background' layer in the Layers palette and fill it with white by selecting Fill from the Edit menu.

The method we will look at for coloring your art is what your grade school teacher always wanted: coloring inside the lines. In order to do this, you will need to set the 'Line Art' layer's Blending Mode to 'Multiply' in the pop-up menu at the top of the Layer's palette. When you use Multiply mode, the black artwork remains black, but the white areas will show the underlying layers. Shades of grey will darken the layers underneath.

Now create a new layer, title it 'Color' and position it between the 'Background' and 'Line Art' layers. I like to paint the color on a layer separate from the background, but you can also paint directly on the background layer if you wish. Pick your favorite painting tool and go to town (Fig. 2). Don't worry if you make a mistake, simply use the Eraser tool to touch up any stray color areas. Having the color on a separate layer lets you use any of the adjustment tools (Curves, Hue/Saturation, Levels, Color Balance, etc.) to fine-tune your colors without affecting the art or the background. You can also use any of the filters and effects to enhance your picture.

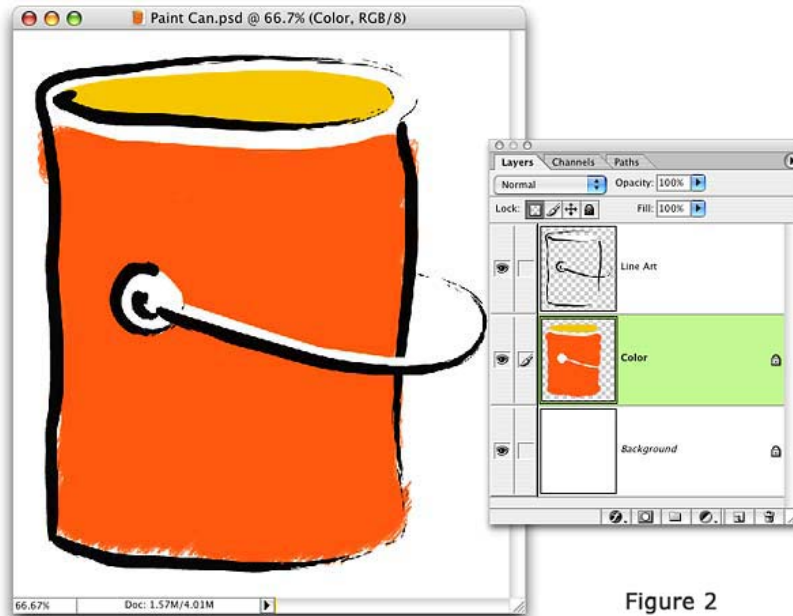


Figure 2

Occasionally, you may want to colorize the linework of your art instead of the areas inside. Photoshop gives you great tools to do this as well. Set up the image the same way as described above, but leave the 'Line Art' layer in Normal mode. Next we are going to use the Channels palette (usually found docked with the Layers palette or by choosing Channels from the Window menu) to separate the artwork from its white background. Select the composite RGB channel (they should all be the same in a black and white image, but use the composite just in case) and click the Load Channel as Selection button at the bottom of the palette (Fig. 3). When you do this, all of the white areas will be selected and all of the black will not.

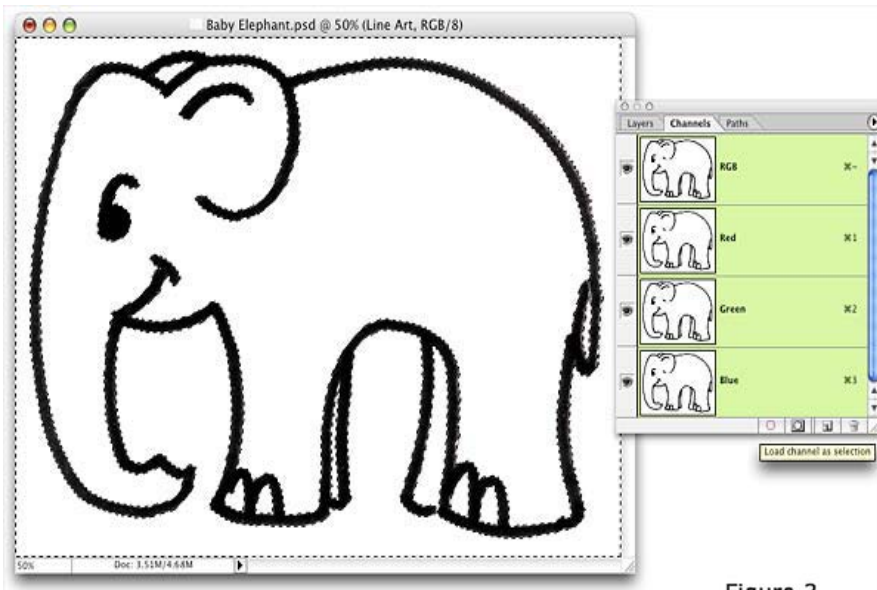


Figure 3

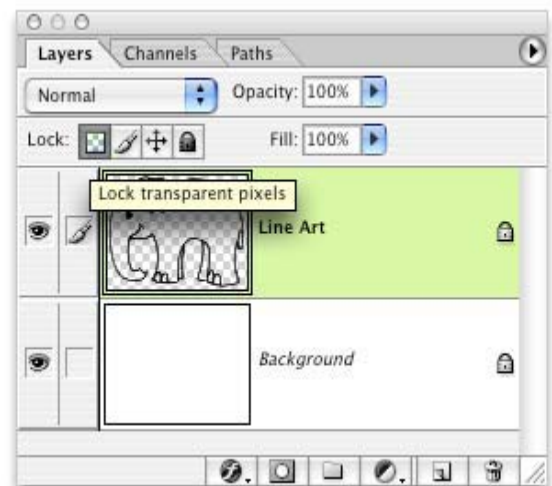


Figure 4

With the selection still active, click back on the RGB Channel and then switch to the Layers palette and select the 'Line Art' layer. Choose Inverse from the Select menu and fill the selection with black. Inverse the selection again and delete the selection by hitting the Delete key or choosing Edit > Clear. Click the Lock Transparent Pixels button to prevent painting outside the lines (Fig. 4) and now you can use any of the painting tools, including the Brush, Gradient, Paint Bucket and Pencil, to color your artwork. Using the Gradient tool can add an element of dynamism to an otherwise static image (Fig. 5).

When you are finished, save a copy of the image in a flattened format, like TIFF or JPEG, whichever format suits your needs best.

A little color can add a lot to ordinary illustrations and clip art. Using the tools in Adobe Photoshop or any of your other favorite paint programs you can customize your artwork to give it your own personalized touch.

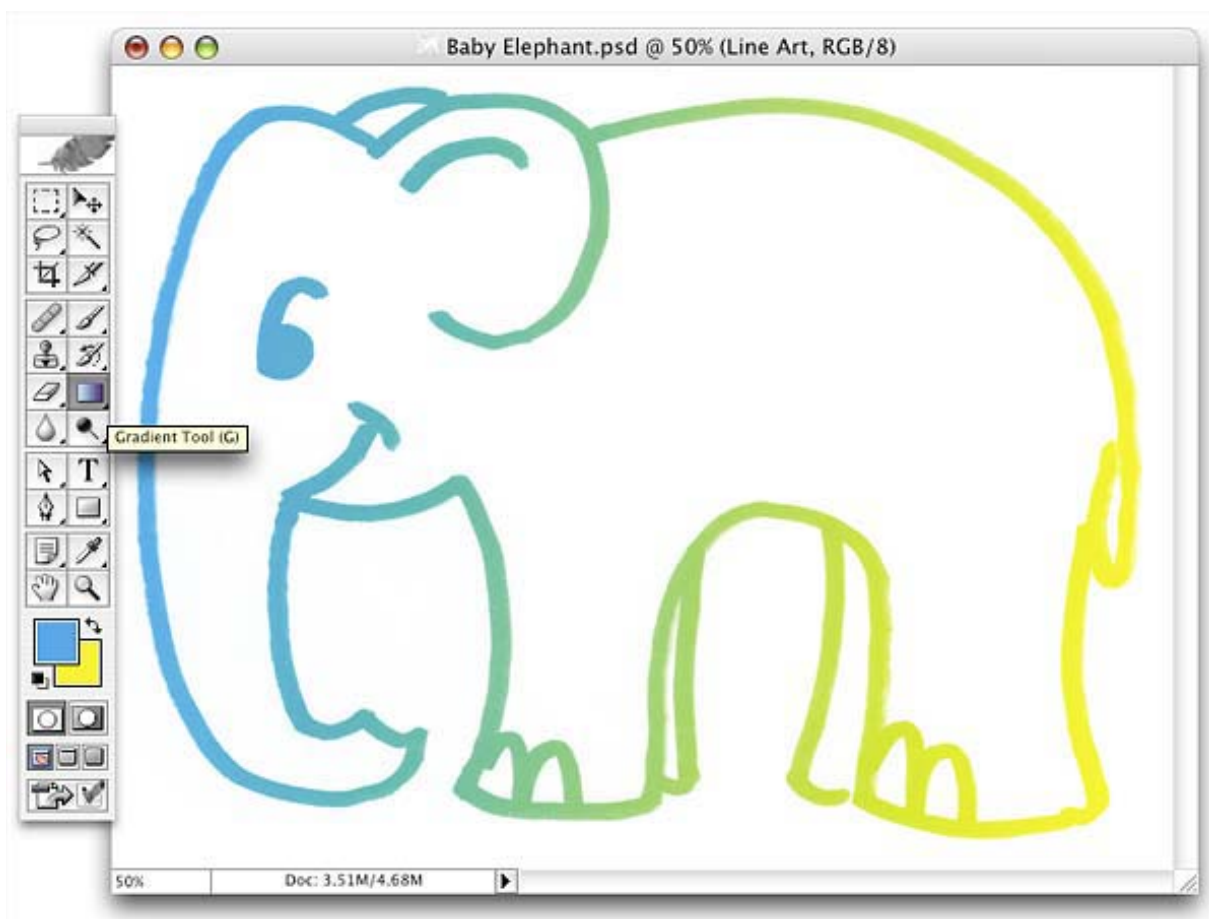



Figure 5



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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>

I said last month that we'd be looking in detail at the Wizard option "Use the keyboard shortcuts to move through a document". If necessary, refer to the July

should also note that the shortcuts are not limited to just the word processor. The same shortcuts move to different points in spreadsheets and databases than they do in the word processor.

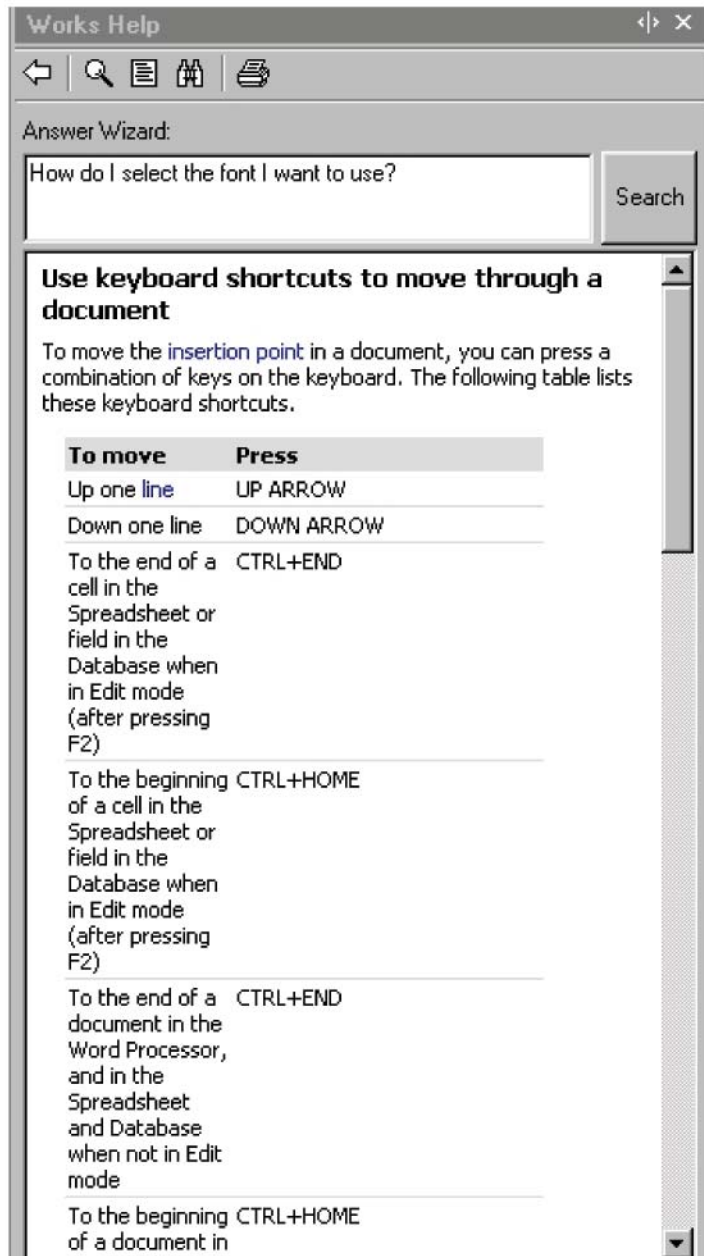
Note that CTRL+END moves to the end of a cell or field in the spreadsheet and database when in the Edit mode (after pressing F2).. The same shortcut moves you to the end of a word processor document, and spreadsheets and databases when not in edit mode.

CTRL+HOME has the same split function for the spreadsheets and databases as CTRL+END, moving you to the beginning of a cell or field when in the edit

mode, and to the beginning of the spreadsheet or database otherwise. It moves you to the beginning of a document in the word processor.

PAGE UP and PAGE DOWN affect all three in the same way, moving up or down one screen at a time.

The LEFT and RIGHT ARROWS behave as described at the left, moving one letter or character in the edit mode, one cell or field



issue to see how to access the above window. You should note that this window has a fairly extensive scroll bar, allowing to access all of the shortcuts. You

One character to the left in the Word Processor, and in the Spreadsheet and Database when in Edit mode (after pressing F2)

LEFT ARROW

One character to the right in the Word Processor, and in the Spreadsheet and Database when in Edit mode (after pressing F2)

RIGHT ARROW

One cell to the left in the Spreadsheet and Database when not in Edit mode

LEFT ARROW

One cell to the right in the Spreadsheet and Database when not in Edit mode

RIGHT ARROW

One word to the left in the Word Processor, and in the Spreadsheet and Database

CTRL+LEFT ARROW

when not.

CTRL+LEFT or RIGHT ARROW move one word in either direction for the word processor, and for the spreadsheet and database in edit mode.

CTRL+UP ARROW moves to the beginning of a column in the database. It's a little more complicated in a spreadsheet, in that it moves to the beginning of a column where there are values in every cell in the column. If not, it moves to the beginning of each group of values. The same applies to CTRL+DOWN ARROW, but moving to the end of a column or group of values.

The wizard makes no mention of the above shortcut keys relative to word processor documents. I experimented with it to see the effects. CTRL+DOWN ARROW in this case moves from the beginning of a document (or anywhere in that paragraph) to the next blank space (between paragraphs for instance) and from there to the beginning of the next paragraph. From there it moves you to the next blank space, and so forth. From anywhere in the final paragraph it moves you the end of that paragraph.

CTRL+UP ARROW functions in the reverse manner, as expected.

As I always recommend, the best way for you to become familiar with these things is to open the software on your own computer and try out each of these tips.

If you've been following along on your own computer since this series began, you most likely remember the first part of Works Help referred to "Start using the Word Processor". One of the topics appearing there was "Use Word Processor shortcuts". This topic includes a list of both mouse and keyboard shortcuts, as seen below and at the right at the right.

Use Word Processor shortcuts

When you work with the Word Processor, you can use mouse and keyboard shortcuts to make some of your work go more quickly.

The following tables list mouse and keyboard shortcuts.

| To select | With the mouse |
|--------------------|---|
| A word | Double-click the word. |
| A line | Click anywhere in the margin to the left of the line. |
| A paragraph | Double-click anywhere in the margin to the left of the paragraph. |
| An entire document | On the Edit menu, click Select All . |

| To | On the keyboard |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Copy text | Press CTRL+C |
| Cut text | Press CTRL+X |
| Paste text | Press CTRL+V |
| Undo an action | Press CTRL+Z |
| Select an entire document | Press CTRL+A |

You change the spacing between text in the following ways.

| To | On the keyboard |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Single-space text | Press CTRL+1 |
| Add 1 1/2 spacing between text | Press CTRL+5 |
| Double-space text | Press CTRL+2 |
| Triple-space text | Press CTRL+3 |

You format text and paragraphs in the following ways.

| To | On the keyboard |
|--|--------------------|
| Make text bold | Press CTRL+B |
| Underline text | Press CTRL+U |
| Underline text (but not spaces between text) | Press SHIFT+CTRL+W |
| Make text italic | Press CTRL+I |
| Open the Format Paragraph dialog box | Press ALT+O+P |
| Align a paragraph to the center | Press CTRL+E |
| Justify a paragraph | Press CTRL+J |
| Align a paragraph to the left | Press CTRL+L |
| Align a paragraph to the right | Press CTRL+R |
| Indent a paragraph from the left | Press CTRL+M |

Each one powerful. Check them all out.

Countdown to the Digital Deadline

*By Jim Sanders, Editor, North Orange County Computer Club, California,
www.noccc.org, editor@noccc.org*

Television, as most of us know it, has barely two years of life left in it. Congress has set a deadline of February 17, 2009 for analog broadcasts to end. That means that the faithful television that you have had, for I don't know how many years, will cease functioning on that date. Well, cease functioning may be too strong of a description, but there will no longer be an over the air broadcast of the analog type of signal that it knows how to interpret.

Starting on that date, all of the over the air television broadcasting stations have been mandated to transmit the digital television format signal only. Old faithful, or maybe not so old, can still be used as long as there is some device that can feed it the analog signal that it knows how to deal with. This could be your VCR or DVD player for instance. Or, it could be one of the set top boxes that millions of people are going to have to purchase if they wish to continue using their analog television to receive over the air television broadcasts. The purpose of the set top box is to tune in the digital television frequency and convert it to the NTSC analog signal that your television knows how to deal with.

The set top boxes contain an ATSC tuner. This stands for Advanced Television Systems Committee. They are an international organization setting the standards for digital television. In time, they will replace the NTSC, which is an American organization overseeing analog TV transmissions. There is considerable talk about Congress passing legislation to subsidize, or provide free of charge, set top boxes to low income families. At this time there is no requirement that the recipients be United States citizens.

When you purchase a digital television, ATSC is a term that will be listed on the specifications showing that the television has a built-in digital tuner. There are eighteen formats in the DTV spectrum, 12 SDTV formats and 6 HDTV formats.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the regulating organization in the United States that controls conversion from analog to digital. The Federal Communications Commission has set deadlines that mandate all manufacturers include digital tuners in their televisions. These are the dates that have been mandated:

- July 1, 2005: all TVs with screen sizes over 36 in. must include built-in ATSC tuner.
- July 1, 2006: 100% of 25 to 35in. TVs must include ATSC DTV tuner.
- July 1, 2007: 100% of 13 to 24in. TVs must include ATSC DTV tuner.
- July 1, 2007 100% of all interface device's must have ATSC DTV tuner. That includes equipment such as VHS VCRs, DVD player/recorders, and DVRs.

These deadlines only apply to new televisions and do not include the huge inventory of existing units. That is why you may see a number of television's larger than 36in. still being sold without built-in digital tuners.

Definition of television; a television is a viewing device that includes a tuner. A device without a tuner is called a monitor. There is a loophole in the FCC regulations that allows manufacturers to build TVs without any tuner which would technically make it a monitor.

Most cable subscribers and all satellite subscribers use their service provider's set top box to receive and decode the digital signals instead of using the television's built-in ATSC tuner. One exception to that rule is a small credit card type of chip that takes the place of the set top box and is called a CableCARD.

Most cable and satellite providers charge in the neighborhood of \$9.95 a month to receive HD channels. Over the air High Definition channels are "free" in the same sense that current analog channels are free, that is you pay the price of watching the commercials but don't actually have to shell out money. So if you spend the extra bucks up front to buy an HD television that includes the ATSC tuner, you are not forced to pay that additional monthly charge. By purchasing an antenna from an electronics store for in the neighborhood of \$25.00 to \$100.00, a person that owns a set with a built-in ATSC tuner can enjoy the over the air broadcasts for free.

When the analog signals are turned off and digital becomes the standard, cable and satellite providers will probably provide the local networks for free if they don't do so already. But you will still have to buy or lease the cable box which right now costs in the neighborhood of \$199.00. In addition to that, you'll still have to purchase the programming from the provider.

So if you are a person that currently relies on getting all of your television through a rooftop antenna, in less than two years you will be faced with the choice of spending money for some new equipment or no longer being able to watch television.

One method of dealing with the problem would be to purchase one of the new DVD VCR combos that include the ATSC tuner. A number of VCR manufacturers, including Panasonic, have announced that when the new regulations go into effect, they will simply stop manufacturing that class of equipment. JVC has announced a new DVD/VCR/ATSC tuner model that will be available in May, the DRMV99 at \$329.95. If you already own a good VCR and a good DVD player, it might make more sense to go ahead and purchase just the ATSC set top tuner.

In addition to dealing with all of the high definition signal acquisition problems, a whole lot of people are already trying to deal with the somewhat confusing array of HDTV offerings. The terminology which is frequently observed in the papers can be very confusing. The phrase “HD ready” is usually an indicator that the unit is a monitor that does not include a tuner. A lot of advertisements conveniently do not include what version of high definition a particular offering is. It is simply referred to as HD without saying whether it is 720i, 720p, 1080i or 1080p. The actual pixel resolution is often omitted as well. The 720i or p sets need to have a resolution of 1280 pixels by 720 pixels. The real 1080i or p sets need to have a resolution of 1920 pixels by 1080 pixels. Just like the older VGA computer monitors the 720i refers to an interlaced display and the 720p refers to a progressive scan display. The progressive display is the better quality.

Then you have to decide which display technology you are going to pick. The Plasma flat panel, the LCD flat panel, the rear projection DLP television, the rear projection LCD television, the wall projection unit in either DLP or LCD. What is the brightness level? What is the viewing angle? What is the life expectancy of the projector bulb? What is the cost of the projector bulb? Does the unit have a VGA, a DVI and an HDMI video connector?

At the moment, I think the best bang for the buck is to purchase a projector that will do 720p, and if you can afford the extra cost, one that will do 1080p. If you have never seen even an older 800x600 projector displaying a movie from a standard DVD on an eight foot diagonal screen, I think you will find it impressive and I think you should do that before you spend money on anything.

Some selected FAQs from your <http://www.dtv.gov/> site.

What is the digital TV transition?

The switch from analog TV (the traditional TV system using magnetic waves to transmit and display TV pictures and sound) to digital television (the new TV system using information transmitted as “data bits” -- like a computer -- to display movie-quality pictures and sound), is referred to as the digital TV (DTV) transition. In 1996, the U.S. Congress authorized the distribution of an additional broadcast channel to each TV broadcaster so that they could introduce DTV service while simultaneously continuing their analog TV broadcasts. In addition to improved picture and sound quality, an important benefit of DTV is that it will free up parts of the broadcast spectrum for public safety as well as other valuable uses. This is possible because the modern technology of DTV is more efficient than analog TV technology. DTV allows the same number of stations to broadcast using fewer total channels (less of the broadcast spectrum) which will free up scarce and valuable spectrum for public safety and new wireless services.

What is the February 17th, 2009 DTV deadline date?

Congress passed a law on February 1, 2006, setting a final deadline for the DTV transition of February 17, 2009. Most television stations will continue broadcasting both analog and digital programming until February 17, 2009, when all analog broadcasting will stop. Analog TVs receiving over-the-air programming will still work after that date, but owners of these TVs will need to buy converter boxes to change digital broadcasts into analog format. Converter boxes will be available from consumer electronic products retailers at that time. Cable and satellite subscribers with analog TVs should contact their service providers about obtaining converter boxes for the DTV transition.

What is digital television (DTV)?

Digital television (DTV) is a new type of broadcasting technology that will transform television as we now know it. By transmitting the information used to make a TV picture and sound as “data bits” (like a computer), a digital broadcaster can carry more information than is currently possible with analog broadcast technology. For example, the technology allows the transmission of pictures with higher resolution for dramatically better picture and sound quality than currently available – called High Definition Television (HDTV) - or the transmission of several “standard definition” TV programs at once – called “multicasting.” “Standard definition” digital TV pictures would be similar in clarity and detail to the best TV pictures being received and displayed today using the current analog broadcast system and TV receivers. DTV technology can also be used to provide interactive video and data services that are not possible with “analog” technology.

Is HDTV the same thing as DTV?

HDTV is the highest quality of DTV, but it is only one of many formats. In addition to HDTV, the most common formats are Standard Definition Television (SDTV) and Enhanced Definition Television (EDTV).

SDTV is the baseline display and resolution for both analog and digital. Transmission of SDTV may be in either the traditional (4:3) or wide-screen (16:9) format. EDTV is a step up from Analog Television. EDTV comes in widescreen (16:9) or traditional (4:3) format and provides better picture quality than SDTV, but not as high as HDTV.



New Hard Drives and XP Hard Drive Management Utility

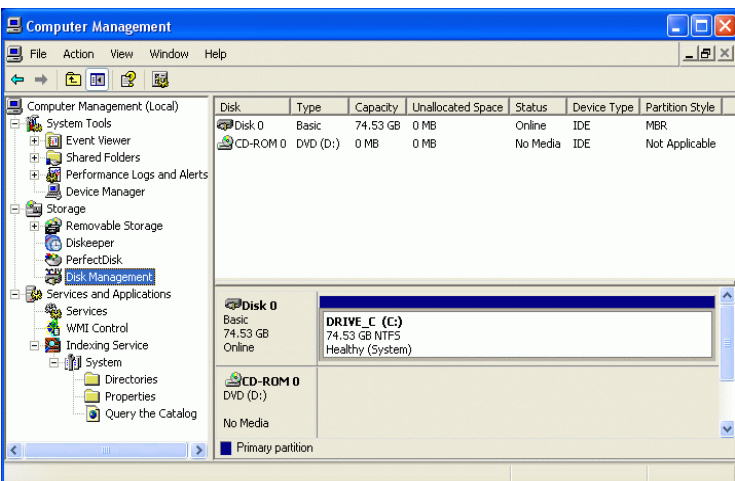
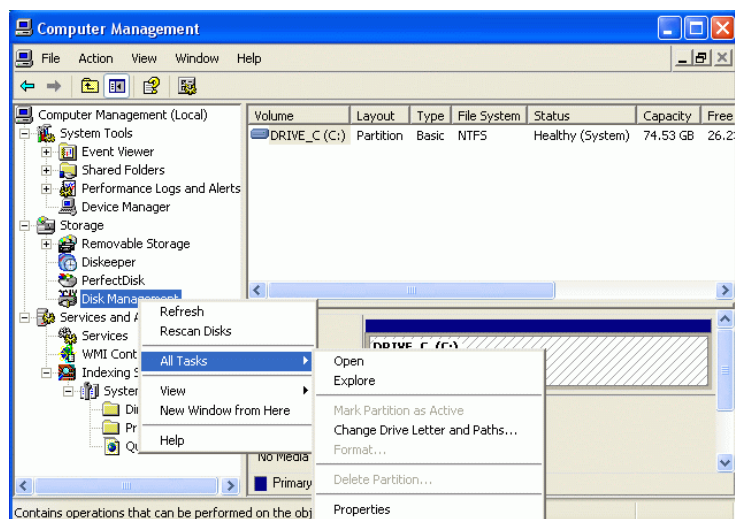
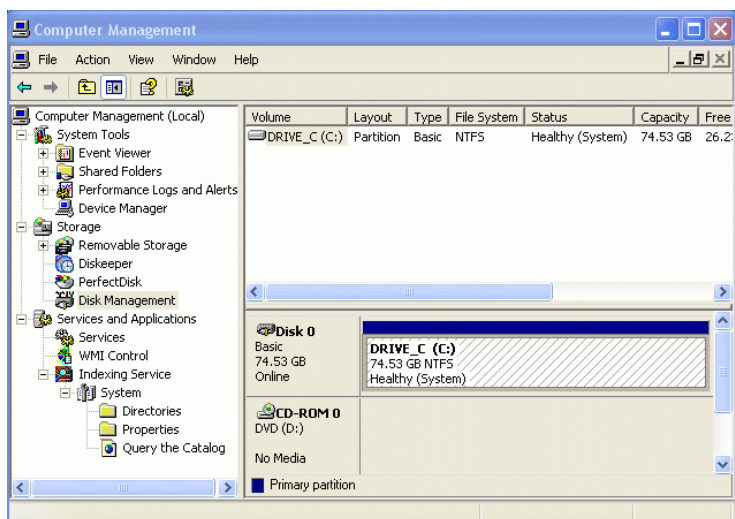
By **Ira Wilsker**, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio & TV Show Host

With the oft mentioned convergence, where our desktop computers are now commonly used for more than traditional computing tasks, many of us seem to run low on hard drive space. A quick review of the newspaper and online ads for the electronics and office supply stores often show a selection of large capacity hard drives for very reasonable prices. Sometimes these hard drives can be purchased for an exceptionally low price after the application of high value rebates. Now that many of us are using our hard drives for the storage and editing of video (very large files), countless music files (typically a few megabytes each), and even recording and time shifting TV (huge files), it is quite easy for hard drive space to run short. This is an indication that it is time to somehow utilize an additional hard drive.

The aftermarket hard drives now so readily available come in a variety of packages. Generally the lowest priced drives are name-brand drives packaged as “OEM” intended for computer builders, and typically lack cables, installation software, instructions, brackets, screws, and other sometimes useful accessories. Commonly available at the retail stores, for slightly more, are drives packed in retail packages which usually include cables, detailed install instructions, partitioning and formatting software, technical support, brackets, and other paraphernalia. At the top of the price charts, but still sometimes bargain priced are external drives, already partitioned and formatted, and ready to use by simply plugging one cable into a USB or firewire port, and connecting the traditional power cord, with no other hardware installation. External drives often come with a variety of utility software titles for creating backups, and other purposes. Since there are a variety of hard drive controllers (the device that physically connects the motherboard in the computer to the cable and drive) in use, the purchaser needs to be sure that any internal drives purchased are compatible with the controllers in the computer. Acronyms such as IDE, EIDE, and SATA are commonly used to describe the interface of the hard drives advertised. If the purchaser is not sure which type is correct, a knowledgeable salesperson or call to the hard drive manufacturer may help the buyer select the correct type.

Installing an additional hard drive in a desktop computer may be easy, and can be done by anyone with moderate mechanical or electrical skills. The retail packs often come with very easy to follow directions (and sometimes even a video!) showing the step-by-step process. Most typically, computers come with two hard drive controllers either built in to the motherboard, or on a separate card; each controller can usually drive two hard drives, or a hard drive and a CD/DVD player or burner, allowing for up to four hard drives and CD/DVD units in any combination without the installation of additional controller hardware. One proviso worth noting here is that if the computer is still covered by warranty, opening the case to install an additional hard drive may void the remaining balance of the warranty. There is no warranty risk in using an external hard drive since there is no “hard” installation necessary.

Once a new internal hard drive is installed, it must be partitioned and formatted appropriately in order for it to function properly. If a retail pack was purchased, there will likely be a floppy or CD included that contains the necessary utilities; if an OEM drive was purchased, either a third party utility must be used (my favorite is Partition Magic), or a little known XP utility can be used. External drives, unless home built with a separate drive and case, generally do not need any utilities to make them function properly. Fortunately, users of Windows XP have a built-in utility that can be used for the necessary partitioning and formatting of new drives, as well as other hard drive and computer management tasks. Fred Langa, author of the very popular “Langa List” (www.langa.com) published a series of articles in early March documenting the availability and utilization of this integral utility. “Administrator” access is necessary to access this utility. While there are several ways to access the utility, one of the easiest ways is to right click on the “My Computer” icon on the desktop, and then clicking on “Manage”. “Disk Management” is listed under the “Storage” head-



ing. From this point, hard drives can be partitioned, formatted, have drive letters designated or changed, and a variety of other hard tasks can be accomplished. It is important to be especially careful not to partition or format existing hard drives with this utility, unless explicitly desired, as it is likely that existing data on the drive may be destroyed or otherwise become inaccessible. Other non-hard drive management tasks can also be utilized from this utility.

If a new hard drive is installed, it will show up as an "unknown" disk. Right-clicking on the new disk will open a menu with "partition" as one of the choices. Selecting this will open a wizard which will guide the user through the steps of initializing and partitioning the drive, and then formatting it with an appropriate format. After the process is completed, the new drive should show up in Windows Explorer.

Since many of the new hard drives are truly huge in capacity, it may be more convenient in the long run to partition them as if they were several smaller hard drives, each partition with a separate drive letter. This makes disk storage more efficient, with less wasted space, as well as easier to backup, maintain, defragment, and perform other tasks.

A new large capacity hard drive may be useful to improve the utilization of the computer as well as allow it to be used for the many new non-computing tasks that are becoming popular.



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Build It Yourself

By **Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.**, Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida,
www.spcug.org, bwsail@yahoo.com

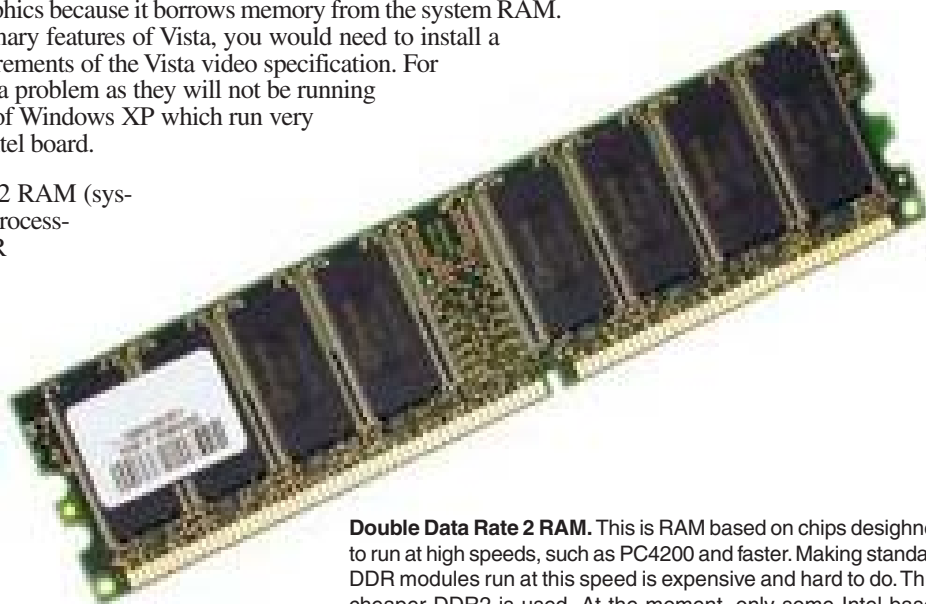
You may never have considered building your own computer, but it is really just an assembly job. When you are familiar with the components of your system, you will find it is easier to understand and possibly diagnose problems. A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to assemble two new computers for one of my children. She needed two additional systems for the growing work force in her business. I had forgotten how much fun it is to put a new system together. So, I thought I would share some of the reasoning behind the selection of the components and assembling them into a working product. Even if you don't build a new computer, it might be useful the next time you are looking for a new system.

For these computers it was not necessary that they be "state of the art", so I selected an Intel Celeron D central processor(CPU). These CPUs function quite well, especially at the 3.2 Ghz speed. Since they were intended for a specific office environment the price point and the speed were ideal. However, Celeron processors do not support dual-threading nor are they dual-core processors. If you want the latest in processors then you should consider the Intel Core-2 Duo or an AMD dual processor. Another alternative would be to use a 64 bit processor instead of these 32 bit processors. The main drawback to that is that most software isn't really ready to take advantage of 64 bit processing and there are still problems with some drivers for peripheral equipment.

Once I decided on the CPU, the next step was to find an appropriate motherboard. I selected an Intel 946 series with the 775 socket. This motherboard supports Intel processors from the Celeron D to the Core-2 Duo. This makes it a good choice for any upgrades to another CPU. It also supports up to 4GB of RAM. This board also features built-in sound and video. Naturally that has both pros and cons associated with these features. With the integrated video you can run Windows Vista in the mode which uses the "Aero Glass" graphics because it borrows memory from the system RAM. As this graphic interface is one of the primary features of Vista, you would need to install a separate video card which meets the requirements of the Vista video specification. For the computers I was building this was not a problem as they will not be running Vista. Instead I purchased 2 OEM copies of Windows XP which run very well with the integrated graphics on this Intel board.

The Intel motherboard also requires DDR2 RAM (system memory) modules which improve the processing speed over that of the original DDR RAM. It also has a front-side bus which can run at 533, 800 or 1066 MHz.

With the Celeron D this bus runs at 533 MHz. For those who are not familiar with bus speeds, the front side bus refers to the speed at which information is transferred to/from the various peripheral slots to the CPU. In today's computers this can be one of the bottlenecks for data transfer. The other is the Input/Output transfer for the hard drive. Other features of this board include 8 USB 2.0 ports, a 10/100 LAN port and four SATA hard drive ports.



Double Data Rate 2 RAM. This is RAM based on chips designed to run at high speeds, such as PC4200 and faster. Making standard DDR modules run at this speed is expensive and hard to do. Thus cheaper DDR2 is used. At the moment, only some Intel based systems use DDR2.

I have always found Intel motherboards to very solid and dependable performers. If I were intent on building a faster system with a Core-2 Duo or AMD processor then I would be looking for an ASUS motherboard. In general they get much stronger reviews related to state-of-the-art installations. I have also used them in a number of systems some of which are still running some five years later. So I always consider them for a top of the line system.

The next item I considered was the case for these systems. The one I selected was an Antec Sonata II which is a mid-size tower. This comes with an air control system that channels air from outside the case directly to the CPU. It has a 120 mm exhaust fan and provisions for an additional fan in the front of the case. The Antec power supply provides 450 watts maximum and has two fans. The exhaust fan runs only when the power supply reaches a specific temperature. As it turned out, this was the quietest case I have ever used. The fans are really whisper quiet. With any ambient noise in the work space you really can't hear the computer. This is also related to the shock mounting of the hard drives. The hard drive cage has individual removable mounts with rubber grommets around the attachment screws. Each drive is therefore mounted on these rubber grommets and essentially no vibration is transmitted to the cage or the case.

One thing I haven't mentioned yet is the RAM I installed. For these computers, considering how they were to be used, I only installed one GB of RAM. This was one Kingston 1GB DDR2 240 pin module for each system. This leaves one slot open for additional memory should an upgrade be needed.

Installation of the components into the case is not really difficult. The first part is to screw in the motherboard supports and to replace the I/O shield at the back with the one supplied with the motherboard. I always install the CPU, the CPU fan and the RAM before I try to put the motherboard in the case. Then the trick in getting the motherboard into position is to make sure that you tilt it toward the back so it fits the I/O shield and then lay it on the supports. You generally have to put a little pressure on the front edge of the motherboard to get the screw holes lined up. Once it is screwed down you can install the power connectors and the various connectors for the LEDs and front panel USB connectors. The Antec case manual is quite helpful in this regard. The Intel instructions are all pictorial and might take some thinking if you've never done this before. I found that the ASUS motherboard manuals are much better designed for non-commercial installers. Intel obviously figures that anyone using their motherboard has done this before.

Now we get to another really important component, the hard drive. As I mentioned earlier the motherboard supports up to four SATA (serial ATA) drives. So I selected Seagate Barracuda SATA2 160 GB hard drives for these systems. I went with Seagate because I have found over the years that they are more reliable than other brands. Even though some are now Seagate subsidiaries, I still prefer the Seagate label. Also, I would not consider installing IDE drives in any new computers. The transfer rates for SATA2 are so much better it doesn't make sense to install an IDE drive anymore. The other point is that the price of SATA2 is quite competitive with IDE. I suspect that it won't be long before it will be very difficult to find IDE drives. Oh yes, the cost of 160 GB drives is only a few dollars more than an 80 GB drive. And, you can go up to 500 GB for not much more. The attachment to the motherboard uses a power cable from the power supply and the data cable which comes with the motherboard. Each of these are keyed so they fit only one way into the drive and the motherboard.

At this point I usually do a power-on test to see if everything wakes up. So I connect the video monitor and external power, then press the power switch. Once the power connection is made the motherboard LED lights up. Then pressing the power on results in the case fan and CPU fan spinning. Of course I get an error message on the monitor that there is no operating system. But everything else looks good. So I just hold in the power button until the system powers down. Then I disconnect the power and video.

The only other internal drive that I installed was an NEC DVD burner. This fits into one of the exposed 5 ¼" drive slots. To get this in you have to remove one of the slot covers. The easiest way in the Antec case is to push it out from the inside. Then on the back of this cover are two rails that are removed and attached to the DVD drive with the supplied screws. Then you simply slide the drive in so it is supported by the rails. The motherboard comes with an IDE cable that attaches to the motherboard and to the drive. Each end is keyed so you really can't attach it incorrectly. These systems did not require a floppy drive.

The monitors I selected for these systems are a Samsung 17" LCD. The monitors have an adjustable height stand and can be rotated for either portrait or landscape orientation. The contrast ratio is one of the highest I've seen for LCD monitors. In addition, I didn't find any dead pixels in any of the three systems I purchased. I've had similar success with other Samsung monitors I have installed.

The final hardware components are the mouse, keyboard and speakers. The speakers for these systems are an inexpensive CyberAcoustic set since they are headed for an office environment. You can certainly find better and more expensive speakers if you



prefer. The keyboard and mouse are a wireless combination from Logitech. As I use Logitech's wireless systems, I find I really like the way they operate. the only drawback is that they do require batteries. However, in the mouse that I use with my laptop the two AA alkaline batteries lasted for a year. The mouse and keyboard operate using an RF (radio frequency) receiver that plugs into the PS/2 ports on the case. With Windows XP both of these were immediately recognized as being the usual PS/2 components.

As I mentioned earlier, the operating system for these computers is Windows XP. After I had all the components installed I put the Windows CD in the drive and rebooted the computer. The system booted from the CD with no problem. Then it all that was needed was to follow the on-screen instructions to partition and format the new drive. After that Windows continued with the installation of XP. That took about 30 minutes after the completion of the drive formatting.

The final steps in the preparation of these systems was the downloading of various software components. These included Firefox, Avast anti-virus, ZoneAlarm firewall, Spybot, Spyware Blaster, Ad-Aware and OpenOffice software suite. I can highly recommend all of these components as I have used them myself for multiple years and installed them on many other computers. Oh yes, the total cost for each system, including the monitors was just over \$800.00. Sure, you can buy a computer for less, but you may not get what I consider to be quality components. And, you won't know your system as well as the one you built.

How long does it take to assemble a computer? With experience it will take a few hours. If you have never done it before, I suspect it could be 4-8 hours. But like anything else, when you do it yourself there is a great deal of satisfaction obtained from a final working system. Who knows, you might enjoy trying it. Even if you don't I hope this article has given you some additional insight into the workings inside that "black box" called a computer.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor, but not in computer science. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years teaching, repairing, assembling and writing software for computer systems. He can be reached at bwsail at yahoo.com.

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Live CD-ROMs

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

In the early days of PCs, we did much more experimenting than we do now. The only long-term storage was on diskettes, and when we removed the diskette holding the operating system, we also removed any problems that resulted from our experiments. Now, our hard disks hold large, complex operating systems, and if they are damaged by our errors or by malware such as viruses, the recovery process can be long and painful. Those who still like to experiment should consider live CD-ROMs.

A live CD-ROM contains an operating system and applications and can be run without using the hard disk at all. When you remove the CD-ROM, your old operating system (probably Windows) takes over. In fact, since the hard disk was not accessed while the live CD-ROM was running, Windows is no more aware that the PC has been used than if you had never switched on the power.

To use a live CD-ROM, you must set up your PC so that if a CD-ROM is present, it will try to boot from it, rather than the hard disk. Watch carefully as your PC boots, and you should see a message telling you how to start the BIOS set-up program. Often, the procedure is to press the F2 key repeatedly during booting. Don't just hold it down, as the PC will think your keyboard has a stuck key and will refuse to start. Once the set-up program has started, read each screen carefully before changing anything. If you think you've made a mistake, exit without changing anything (often done by pressing the escape key) and start again. You are looking for the screen that lets you change the boot order, which is the order in which the PC checks devices for an operating system. It always includes the hard disk, diskette, and CD-ROM, and (on newer machines) USB devices. In our case we want the CD-ROM checked before the hard disk. Once you are satisfied that everything is ok, save your changes and exit the program, often done by pressing F10.

You can download live CD-ROM programs free from the Internet. However, you will now have what's called an ISO image; this is not a file, and if you write it to a CD-ROM as a file, it won't be bootable. Unfortunately, the free versions of CD-ROM burner programs included with many PCs won't burn ISO images. However, a suitable program, ISO Recorder, is available, free over the internet from <http://isorecorder.alexfeinman.com/isorecorder.htm>. Many live CD-ROMs are also available as pre-recorded CD-ROMs; see the referenced Web sites for information.

A good place to start is with the Ultimate Boot CD, available at <http://www.ultimatebootcd.com/>. This provides four versions of DOS and five of Linux, plus tools for motherboard, hard disk, and file system maintenance, in addition to four virus scanners.

If you long for the simpler days of DOS, see <http://www.freedos.org/> to obtain an open-source clone of DOS. This will allow you to get reacquainted with the command line, BAT files, BASIC programming, and run those old programs that no longer work under Windows. The full version contains some extras, FreeGEM (a clone of the old Digital Research graphical user interface), BWBasic (Bywater Basic), and several games.

If you would like to experiment with Linux, but aren't ready yet to install it on your hard disk, look at Ubuntu, <http://www.ubuntu.com/>, which provides a Windows-like interface, or Knoppix, <http://www.knoppix.org/>, which is known for being very adaptable to different PC hardware. Several tutorial books are available for each; check your local Barnes & Noble or Borders.

For Linux, Windows, and, to a limited extent, Macintosh maintenance and recovery, my favorite is INSERT, available at http://www.inside-security.de/insert_en.html. This is worth a complete article, and I'll discuss it next month's column.

Security Tools Distribution (STD), <http://s-t-d.org/>, is a variant of Knoppix, customized for those in computer security. It includes tools for encryption and code-breaking, for finding evidence of computer break-ins, for working with firewalls, for building honey pots (traps for ensnaring hackers), for analyzing and breaking passwords, for analyzing network traffic, and for assessing computer vulnerability.

You can see a long list of available live CD-ROMs at <http://www.frozentech.com/content/livecd.php>. Most of these are versions of Linux, because its source code is available and free, and because it's modular. Windows, by comparison, is proprietary and monolithic; at one point, Microsoft claimed that you couldn't remove even its Internet browser without disabling the operating system.

My Registry Adventures

By **Al Gruber**, a member of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. (SEMCO), <http://www.semco.org>, AlGruber@Comcast.net

Suppose you try to delete a file on your Desktop, but instead the system starts to install a program. You furiously click cancel a dozen times, and it stops. So, you try the delete again, and it happens again, and again, even after rebooting. Evidently, some wires are crossed in your computer: the delete key is now assigned to installing a program called ScanSoft PDF Create. That's what made me delve into the registry.

By way of background, I've had problems with ScanSoft ever since their last upgrade, so I knew enough to demand that they remove their setup program, and hallelujah, that did give me back my delete key. But it made sense to me that this fixed only the symptom. Somewhere in there, the wires were still crossed. And that somewhere must be in the registry. Unfortunately, I didn't know enough about the registry—and though I know a little more now, I still haven't fixed the problem.

To start, I pulled down my copy of Windows XP Registry Guide, (Jerry Honeycutt), which I had always planned to read “one of these days.” It's a good book, but at over 450 pages, my mind wandered to the registry-cleaning program (System Mechanic 6) I had recently bought from ZoneAlarm. Their general idea is that they scan your computer for errors and then fix them. Not being that trusting, I finally found out how to stop them from making the fixes before I could review and approve them. Then I ran the program. Surprise, they had no proposed fixes. My Registry was perfect!

But I knew that was wrong. As I was following the Honeycutt book and inspecting the registry, I had discovered many out-of-date entries involving the Start > All Programs menu, some for programs I had uninstalled and others perhaps caused by my habit of combining programs under suitable headings. For example, I have a heading called Graphics that holds 10 different graphics-related programs.

When I asked the System Mechanic techie why their program might not find known registry errors, he explained that they must be shared programs, which I could pin down by running System Mechanic in protected mode. I did, and now found a grand total of 1 error.

I now decided to try some other registry cleaners. Here's a partial list of the commercial offerings: Error Nuker, Free Registry Fix, PC On Point, RegCure, Registry Fix, RegistryHealer, Registry Mechanic, Registry Medic, System Mechanic.

Unfortunately, most of these programs give off a bad smell. These are inexpensive programs; most in the range of \$20 to \$30, but they all try to give the impression that they're free: e.g., “free download,” “free scan,” but to fix your registry, you must pay. The most egregious is “Free Registry Fix,” which claims on its opening screen: “the world's only FREE registry cleaning software on the market today.” Their price is \$29.95! Mind you, I understand their problem. Since I don't need registry cleanings very often, I might take my free cleaning without ever buying. But still, it's a shell game. And frankly, I am reluctant to give them my credit card. (Actually, there are at least 4 genuinely free programs, but they are a bit harder to find: CCleaner, EasyCleaner, RegScrubXp, Eusing Free Registry Cleaner.)

Another point is that the commercial product information is more hard sell than information. “Statistics show that over 93.7% of pc's have corrupted registries;” “Don't compromise with second best;” “100% guaranteed.” If there are product differences, and there clearly are, I couldn't find them in their literature. And of course, their documentation is weak. This was especially disappointing because I was hoping their documentation would give me a clue about my problem.

These programs all use about the same approach. They offer to scan your registry (Free! Free! Free!). These scans invariably find lots of “dangerous” errors. To fix these, you must register the program, which is when you find out that it isn't free after all. The programs do give you one or two free fixes. But since all of them find hundreds of errors, you invariably have too many for

their free offer. Incidentally, the program that claims to be the only freebie in the universe does give you 50 free fixes, but I don't think you qualify if you have over 50 errors.

After the scan, these programs go automatically into their repair phase, unless you have figured out how to opt out, which again took me quite some time. (The problem here is that they never tell you if choosing "fix errors" will still let you back out.)

So, after System Mechanic had said I had an error-free registry, here's the number of errors I found in the various programs:

| Errors Found | # |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| CCleaner (really free) | 1000* |
| EasyCleaner (really free) | 251 |
| Error Nuker | 267 |
| Free Registry Cleaner (really free) | 1651 |
| Free Registry Fix740 | |
| PC On Point | 739 |
| RegCure | 2374 |
| Registry Fix | 714 |
| Registry Mechanic | 430 |
| Registry Medic | 1575 |
| RegistryHealer | 3777 |
| RegScrubXp (really free) | 339 |
| System Mechanic | 0 |

* Estimate, no total supplied.

Now, I knew System Mechanic was wrong when they said I had no errors. But when Registry Healer says 3,777 there must be some grade-inflation going on. After all, my computer boots and runs ok. The ScanSoft problem is a suspicion at this point, not a blue screen emergency. So why should I let Registry Healer repair these errors. I suppose it would speed boot-up and shut-down. Would it actually run faster? The sales pitch says yes, but as I said, I'm not that trusting.

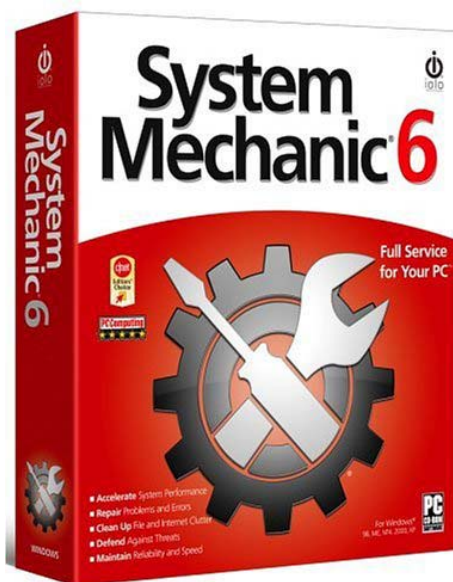
To give you a little more feel, here are the warnings from "Free Registry Fix":

- 274 high severity problems—apps won't run, system may crash.**
- 121 medium severity—app errors or won't run.**
- 345 low severity—computer will run slow.**

This seems like a good time to tell what little I have found out about the registry. First, it is loaded into memory when the computer starts. The part we are interested in resembles a Rolodex, a list of programs and their addresses. Entries are added when you install a program, and removed when you uninstall.

Apparently, not all programs uninstall properly; some entries are not removed from the registry—outdated cards left in the Rolodex. This may create a junky registry, but should not automatically cause problems. Another factor is that programs often involve multiple parts, hence multiple entries in the registry. So, if each improperly uninstalled program had 10 parts, the amount of junk might be that much greater. But aside from the wasted time riffling through left-behind cards, no real harm should ensue. Even if you call a contact whose number has been disconnected, all that happens is a no-answer, i.e., the program won't run because you uninstalled it.

Finally, there are other ways to cause registry junk. If you occasionally reorganize your Start button > All Programs menu, it turns out that old entries are not deleted from the registry. Example: I moved Word from its old category called MsWord to a new one called Microsoft. In terms of the Rolodex analogy, this is like adding a card when a contact changes her name. If she keeps her phone both cards are usable, but the old one becomes superfluous as you switch to using her new name.



System Mechanic 6 Fix problems, boost performance, eliminate crashes, defend against spyware, viruses, and hacker threats, and much more. Use one centralized system dashboard to automatically perform all vital PC maintenance.

Source: <http://www.iolo.com>

Are we getting any closer to understanding how a group of registry cleaners can be so far apart in the number of errors they find? Hold on. Registry cleaners conduct their scans by problem categories that they describe with names that are suggestive but by no means clear. I think that the differences in their results are caused by which categories they pick, and perhaps how tight their rules are. (Though it seems likely that System Mechanic contains some programming errors.) Here are my guesses as to what their categories mean:

Typical Registry Errors Categories

The first 5 items below are written into the registry at the time of program installation, but not always fully deleted at uninstallation. Many registry cleaners offer to delete the useless left behind entries.

1. Software Locations: At installation, applications enter their location in the registry.
2. Controls/ActiveX files/Shared DLLs, Browser Helper Objects: Applications enter the location of their *.dll and *.ocx files in the registry.
3. Help Files: Some applications enter the location of their help files in the registry.
4. Installers/Add/Remove Programs: Applications enter the location of their install and uninstall programs files in the registry.
5. Start Menu and Startup (boot up) entries: At installation, applications enter the location of both of these items in the registry.

The following items are written into the registry at various other times. The cleaners check to see if they represent real addresses. If not, they are useless and can be deleted.

6. Windows Services: This tells the location of various Windows services.
7. Windows Fonts and Sounds: These sections tell the location of installed Windows font and sound files.
8. File Extensions: This lists file extensions (e.g.: *.txt) and tells which if any applications may open them. If an extension lists no programs, or only nonexistent programs, the entry is useless.
9. History List: This section is scanned for invalid history files paths.
10. Invalid Paths and Folders: this section is scanned for any other non existent files and folders.
11. Hardware Drivers

To summarize, I am guessing that looking for somewhat different errors causes cleaners to get different problem counts. This is only a guess because their product descriptions aren't that specific. Surprisingly, nobody claims to look for more problems than their competitors. I suppose, on these grounds, I should pick Registry Healer because it finds (and fixes) the most errors.

But then, I must face the question; should I let Registry Healer delete the "problems" it reports, so that my system won't crash (which it doesn't do anyway) and will run faster (which I suppose is possible)? I admit that part of my reluctance is fear. Whenever anybody mentions editing the registry, they first warn that you could cripple your computer for life, so back up first. And the registry cleaners themselves, of course, say that their software is not created for any useful legal purpose and that users cannot rely on them working.

Part of my problem is with the concept of backups. If my computer won't start after deleting the "problems," and if I had a backup, and, if I had a boot disk, and, if I could get into restore mode, I should be able to rescue the situation. But with my luck, the computer will start fine. Then three weeks later, some program I haven't run since the "cleanup" will not run. And three weeks is long enough (for someone with senior moments) that I probably won't connect it with the cleanup. And if I did, would I want to lose whatever new stuff I had done since then? No!

This brings to the fore one missing feature of all the cleaner programs. My specific problem is a possible registry error involving



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ScanSoft. But the cleaner programs don't let me search for ScanSoft errors. They just report what they want to report, and on top of that, they all want to report something different.

Speaking of features, here are some of the differences I noticed between programs: As you know, the cleaners find and delete calls to missing programs. A couple however, also search for the missing programs, so they can correct the call if they find it. I don't know how successful this is, but it makes sense to me. Registry Healer is one of these. For the rest, when they say repair, they really mean delete.

Another feature I like, is the ability to send a list of the errors to disk or printer. This caters to my cautious nature; it lets me think about the "problems" before agreeing to delete them. Registry Healer and EasyCleaner both offer this.

Another feature I found useful is that one click takes you from the error to the actual registry entry. Again, this reflects the fact that I was trying to investigate a specific problem, rather than running a housecleaning operation. About half the programs, including Registry Healer, offer this feature.

Finally, most but not all have some form of online documentation, though most of it is pretty amateurish. Their general rule is to explain the obvious (click scan to do a scan) (click cancel scan to cancel scan) but gloss over the mysterious, such as the purpose and implications of selecting certain registry categories.

Over the years, I have downloaded many trial versions of small-time programs, usually without knowing exactly what they are supposed to do, and why. If the documentation tells me why they made the program, that's a big plus in my purchase decision. And if it then explains logically and coherently how it works, I get confidence. If the documentation sounds smart, I believe the program is smart. By contrast, my problem with the registry cleaners is that they do lots of shouting but not much explaining.

Finally, as you know, I still have lots of questions. I am leaning toward Registry Healer, but haven't bought it yet. E-mail me if you have answers. Who knows, maybe we can do a sequel based on your expertise.

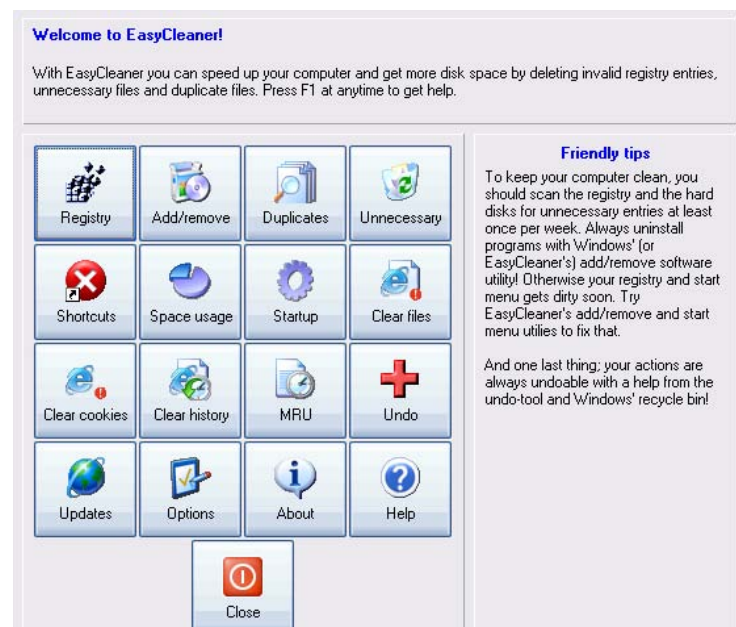
Al Gruber is a member of SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. (SEMCO).

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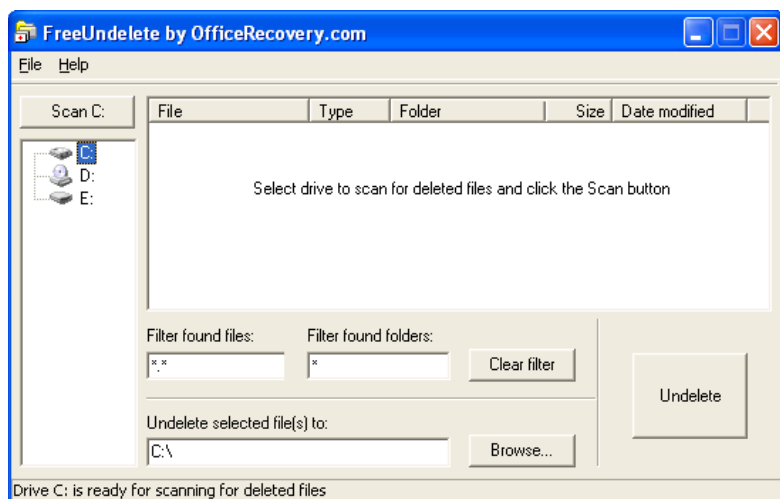
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Recovering Files from a Hard Drive

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

Have you deleted a file that you need and you don't know how to get it back? The first step is to make absolutely sure that it has been deleted. Open your Windows Recycle Bin and double-check. Is it in there? If so, simply right-click on the file and choose Restore.

If you have emptied the Recycle Bin the next step is to restore the file from your latest backup. You do back up your data regularly, don't you?

Unfortunately, there is no native "Undelete" command in Windows XP. This is a mystery because Microsoft had a nifty undelete feature in Windows 3.1 which somehow disappeared in Windows 95 and subsequent versions of the operating system. This is abysmal for Windows users, but profitable for third party software developers.

It's important to understand that when a file is deleted it is not actually removed from your system. Windows deletes only the first letter of the file's name and replaces it with a marked for deletion character. This makes the file "invisible" to windows, and if Windows needs the space for something else, it has no qualms about overwriting your valuable data.

What this means is that if you accidentally delete a file, you have a limited amount of time to recover it before windows stores something else over the same space. It may not happen right away, but it will happen eventually.

Since there is no way within XP to recover a lost file, you have to turn to a third party solution. The good news is that there are several excellent programs that will do the job easily. The even better news is that these programs are free. Isn't that nice?

Use Google or your favorite search engine to find FreeUndelete, PC Inspector File Recovery, or Undelete Plus. All of them work well though you may find one easier to use than another. That's a matter of personal preference.

You need to be cautious about this. If you download the utility directly to your hard drive, you run the risk of storing the undelete program over the very data you are trying to recover. If you have a second hard drive, you can download to that or better yet, download directly to a thumb drive. That avoids all danger of losing important data, and it has the additional advantage of immediate portability.

The programs all work similarly. Direct any of the programs to a specific disk and you will get a list of all deleted recoverable files on the drive. You may also get a description alerting you that the file(s) may be wholly or partially recoverable. That's good to know.

Direct any recovered files to an external hard drive if you have one. Don't save anything to your hard drive until you have recovered everything you need. Use Windows Explorer to manage the recovered files. Group them into categories to sort or group the files so you can easily determine if they are program files, data files or something else. Some files may have data missing if Windows overwrote some of the sectors where it was stored.

If after all this you haven't been successful, your best alternative is to consider a data recovery service. These can be a devastating drain on your wallet, so don't use these services to recover saved game files. Do some comparison shopping as rates can vary considerably. Good luck and watch those sticky fingers when they hover near the delete key.

Thoughts on Upgrading PC Hardware and Software

By **Dick Maybach**, Columnist, Brookdale Computer User Group (BCUG)
Brookdale, NJ, www.bcug.org, n2nd@att.net

I can think of three valid reasons for upgrading a PC: (1) to try something new, (2) to improve performance, and (3) to solve a problem. Trying something new means you are treating your PC as a hobby. In this case you don't really need to upgrade, but you want to. Just bear in mind that there are risks, which means that you may get more adventure than you planned on. Improving performance is difficult to justify, unless your system is very old. Almost any system will do just fine surfing the net, word processing, balancing your checkbook, etc. Upgrading your hardware will often provide no discernable speed-up, because the speed is really limited by your typing speed or Internet connection. Upgrading your software may actually slow things down, because newer software has more features and requires more computer resources. This leaves problem solving. Your hard disk may be full; your motherboard may have only old, slow version 1 USB ports; or your bank may require a recent version of Quicken for on-line banking.

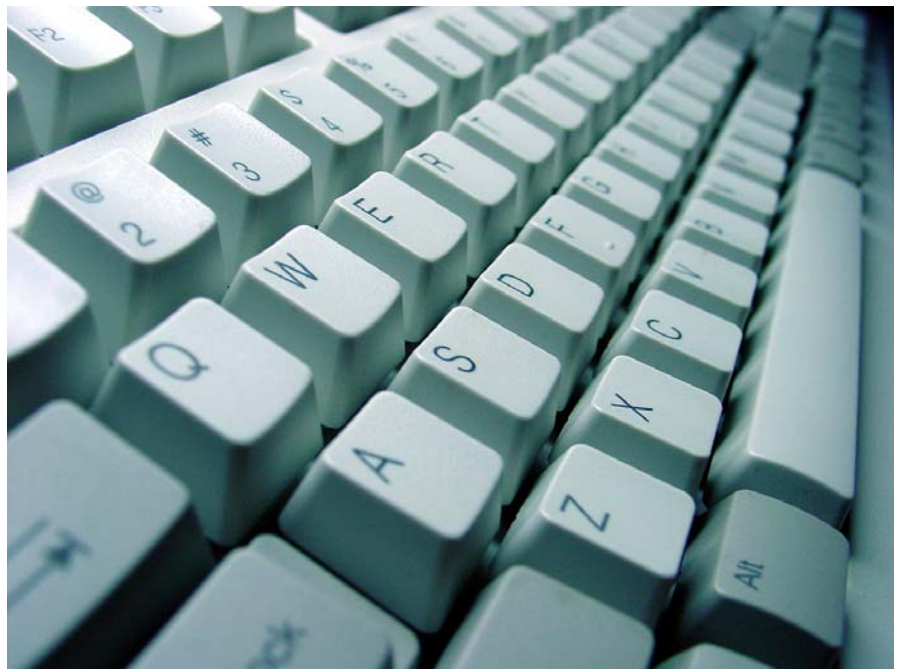
You shouldn't upgrade to Windows Vista unless you replace the PC, and even then you may have problems. A friend of mine bought a new Dell PC with Vista and found his old printer wouldn't work and he could no longer access the Internet. Operating system designers can't possibly test every combination of hardware and software. As a result, they concentrate on new components, since most operating system sales are for new computers, and there may be problems with older peripherals and software.

You should back up all your files before you make any system change, no matter how trivial. And any time you open your system case, you should use a grounding strap to avoid damaging components with static electricity. This is especially important during the approaching winter months, when the humidity in your house is low.

Let's look at the easy upgrades first. Adding RAM is usually not difficult; just plug it in and look at your CMOS screen to be sure the PC has recognized it. (Of course you must use the correct chips. Check your PC manual.) You can usually add new peripherals, such a CD-ROM, DVD, or a second hard disk drive without problems, although if you have already filled all of the available ATA slots, you will have to add a second disk controller. Take your system to a reliable shop if you have doubts about your abilities. Replacing a hard disk is somewhat more difficult, because you must transfer all your software to the new unit, which requires disk copying software. You can't just copy your files with Windows Explorer.

More adventuresome is installing a new motherboard. Be aware that upgrading your motherboard may not result in a noticeable performance improvement unless you also upgrade your hard disk and/or your video controller. If your current motherboard is very old, you must also upgrade its case and power supply. Changing the video controller or monitor is also not too hard. Most monitors are plug-and-play so Windows should automatically recognize your new monitor.

When you buy new peripherals, be sure you get any drivers they need. Many PC



manufacturers don't include a complete Windows, but strip off all the drivers except for the equipment they sell you. If necessary, download any missing drivers from the Internet before you change your hardware.

An alternative to an upgrade is a complete new system, and the vendor will insure that all the software and hardware plays well together. This leaves your old system intact so you can transfer your files without risk of losing anything.

Regardless of your approach, you must also choose where and what to buy. Where is a choice between mail order and a local dealer. What is a choice between name brand and commodity hardware.

The choice between mail order and local dealer depends on how much experience and time you have. The low profit margins in PC hardware mean that both component manufacturers and system assemblers spend little time on testing. Dead-on-arrival hardware and infant mortalities are common. When this happens you are entirely dependent on the company that sold it to you. If you purchase from a mail-order firm, you must either trouble-shoot any problems yourself or ship the entire system back to the seller, while a good local dealer can often make repairs in a few hours. You are trading off convenience for cost, because using mail order can often save you a few dollars.

Name brand hardware costs more than its commodity equivalent. The difference is between Sound Blaster and "Sound Blaster equivalent". I favor name brands. You can be sure that every vendor of software that uses sound has tested its products with Sound Blaster cards, but it is impossible for a small manufacturer to test its sound card with every program.

The less you pay for a system, the more likely it is to contain commodity parts. System manufacturers and assemblers usually purchase components on an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) basis, and most parts sold at computer shows are OEM. The cost of these is less because the dealer relieves the manufacturer from all customer support. This means that the component manufacturer often won't even talk to the end purchaser. Your only warranty is from the seller, and you must select him or her with care.

Finally, schedule any upgrade when you have some time. Plan on taking a weekend for simple jobs and more for complex ones. I've found that I need a couple of weeks (not full time of course) to get my PC fully functional after reinstalling an operating system for example.



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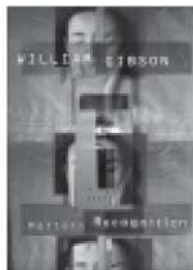
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Computer Crimes

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Pattern Recognition, by William Gibson

Paperback, Berkley, 2003, 356 pages, \$14.00



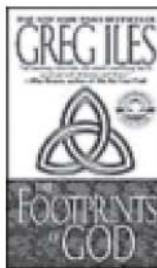
Cayce Pollard, a market researcher with uncanny intuition and a physical allergy to name brands, is hired by a tycoon to uncover the source of "the footage," video snippets that appear on the Internet a disjointed clip at a time, attracting a cult following. Her search takes her to London, Tokyo and Moscow, following a trail of marketing, globalization and terror.

William Gibson is an iconic writer: he invented the word "cyberspace." This is his first novel set in the present day,

although there is something futuristic in his depiction of everyday objects, events and relationships. Lots of technology – mostly Internet centered – but also a thoughtful, deep analysis of the human condition. Beautifully written, with an engaging plot and delightful characters. Highly recommended.

The Footprints of God by Greg Iles

Paperback, Pocket Star Books, 2003, 528 pages, \$7.00



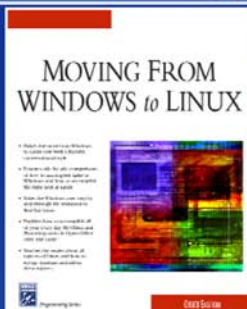
Medical ethicist David Tennant works for Project Trinity, a secret government organization attempting to build a quantum-level supercomputer. Using advanced magnetic resonance imaging techniques, six top scientists have supplied Trinity, the experimental computer, with molecular

copies of themselves as models for a neurological operating system. When the scientists start suffering neurological malfunctions from the high-level MRI they underwent to map their brains, he is forced to flee.

There is a bizarre subplot of Tennant having mystical visions in which he inhabits the body of Jesus, which Iles just manages to bring off. There is lots of technology, bordering on sci-fi, most interesting in its exploration of the ethical and religious implications of technology. This is a good techno-thriller, trying to be more profound than it really is.

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

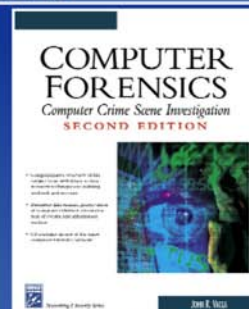
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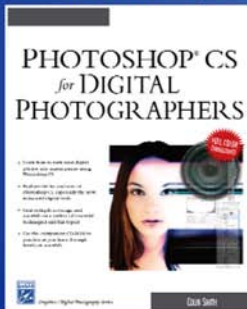
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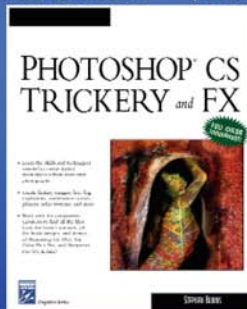
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Software Review

“TUT” – The Ultimate Troubleshooter

\$29

Published by AnswersThatWork

Reviewed by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio & TV show host, iwilsker@apcug.net



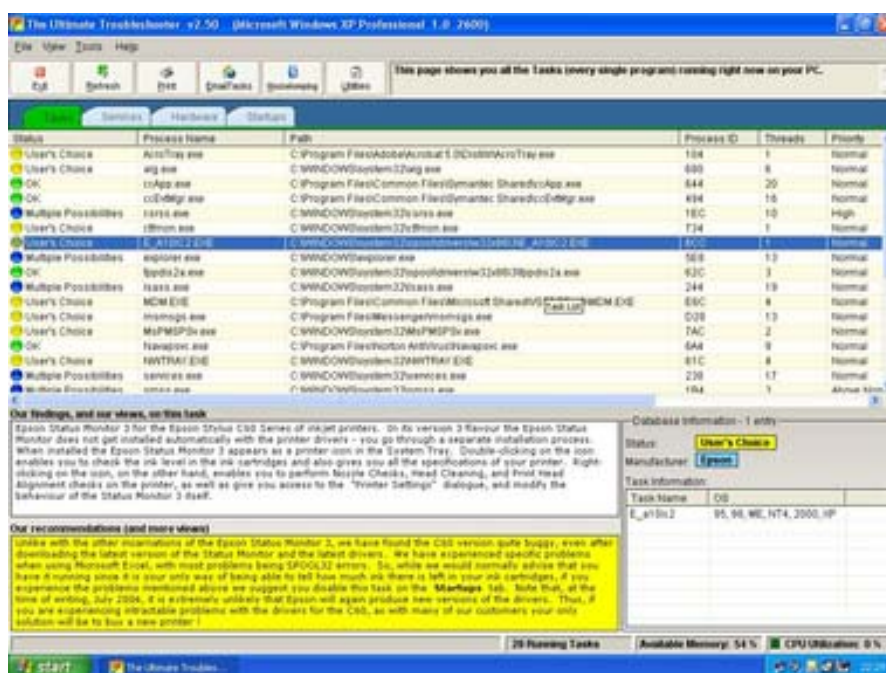
According to a British website, “Answers That Work” (www.answersthatwork.com), 65% of problems on PCs, such as lockups, crashes, blue screens of death, and poor performance are due to causes other than the commonly suspected culprits. Many people erroneously blame malware such as viruses or spyware for the problems on their computers, and some go to extreme measures to attempt to resolve these problems. Unbeknownst to the users of computers with the symptoms above, the problems they are experiencing are not due to the possible presence of malware, but to background tasks that are loaded and running mostly from the software the users have installed on their computers. A solution to improve performance by giving the user easy and informed control over the tasks running on the computer is a \$29 program called “The Ultimate Troubleshooter”, commonly known in industry circles by its acronym, “TUT”. TUT is a compilation of solutions learned based on over 20 years experience trouble shooting computers.

For the past four years I have diagnosed my computers using TUT, and have been able to tweak them and maximize performance based on the recommendations made possible by the software. One of the functions integral in TUT is its “PC Tuning” service which uses its extensive database of tasks that may be running on a PC, and the degree of necessity of that task. As I type this, I have 45 tasks running on my computer, and TUT displays each of the tasks running and explains the functionality in understandable terms. Each task can be managed by the user such that only necessary tasks are running, which will free up system resources resulting in improved performance. Each of the running tasks is labeled by status (unknown, user’s choice, multiple possibilities, OK, and Not OK), task name, CPU usage of each task, memory being used, manufacturers’ description, and other technical information is displayed. Right clicking on a task will allow the user to terminate the task, suspend the task, or get additional information about the task.

Many users are plagued with slow booting of their machines when turned on and subsequent impaired performance. The primary cause of this malady is too many or unnecessary programs loaded when the computer is booted. The startup sequence becomes bloated as software is installed, as many programs want to be automatically loaded every time the computer is started, and this can degrade performance. TUT contains one of the most comprehensive startup managers available. The “Startups” function of TUT displays each program that is loaded when booted, regardless of whether the program is loaded from the startup file, registry or other source. Each program is labeled by status, startup name, launch command, manufacturer, description, and startup source. The status indicator shows if the programs are necessary and OK (green), user’s choice (yellow), dangerous or otherwise unnecessary (red), or unknown (no color tag). By removing any red tagged startup items (which may also be viruses or spyware) dangerous and otherwise useless items will not be loaded at the next boot. The user’s choice (yellow) items can be reviewed and selected or de-selected by the user by simply utilizing a checkbox. Unchecking an item will

prevent it from loading at next boot. Stopping unnecessary items from loading at boot will improve performance and speed the boot performance.

The “Services” tab shows the internal workings of the operating system and other programs that are running at the moment. Right clicking on a running service allows the user to control the service by stopping it, and control the loading and execution of the service item at startup. The tradi-



tional red – yellow – green indicator on each service clearly indicates the degree of functionality, necessity, and safety of each running service.

The “Housekeeping” function of TUT allows the user to selectively clean junk files from the hard drive, freeing up disk space. Housekeeping also runs a PC health check to determine the operating condition of the computer. Freeing up drive space and ceasing unnecessary tasks contributes to stability, another key ingredient of overall system performance.

For both informational and maintenance purposes, it is often useful to know precisely what hardware and software is in and on the computer. “System Info” displays comprehensive information about the machine and its software. The “System Summary” displays detailed information about the motherboard, BIOS, CPU, graphics card, operating system, memory, disc drives, and other information. Detailed information about components is often necessary for maintenance and update purposes, and TUT provides that information. Details are also provided about the cache memory, comm ports, drives, environmental variables, graphics card and settings, and many other computer components. Installed software is also listed in detail, along with a very helpful adjunct; TUT also displays an internet “Help Link” for more information from the software publisher, and as a resource for updates and upgrades. Other hardware and software information is listed as well. One helpful feature is a complete listing of Windows updates that shows the date of the update, a simple description of the update, and the Microsoft Knowledge Base (“KB”) number for additional information from the original source.

For those who want to know about websites and other internet information, TUT offers several utilities, including the identification and display of the computers IP address (TCP/IP configuration, MAC address, etc.), name server lookup, ping, trace route (shows the path that internet connections follow over the internet) and “whois” (displays the registered owner of a website).

One nice service provided by TUT is the frequent updates of its database, as well as periodic updates of the software itself. As I type this, I am using TUT version 4.21, which is an update from the recently released version 4.0.

TUT version 4 works on Windows 2000, XP, Win2003, and 32 bit versions of Vista. For the bargain price of \$29, I found that TUT is an indispensable utility for diagnosing computer problems and improving PC performance. Its full name, “The Ultimate Troubleshooter” is a well earned moniker, and I strongly recommend it. A free demo version is available to download from www.answersthatwork.com so users can examine the product prior to purchase.

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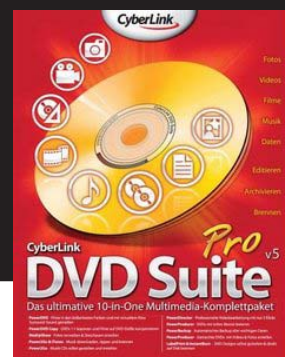
Software Review

CyberLink DVD Suite 5.0

\$49.95

Published by CyberLink

A Review by By Terry Currier, President, WINNERS - WINDOWS users, CA,
<http://www.windowusers.org>, Winnersug@aol.com



A do-all suite of products. It has 11 CyberLink programs put together into one suite so you can backup, burn, play movies, and music. PowerDVD 7 (Express) is really the best way to watch a movie on your PC. I have been using it since version 4. Watching it on a PC gives the viewer greater control than just watching it play on a DVD player connected to a TV. The viewer has more speed options: Forward and reverse speeds are 1/2X, 1X, 2X, 3X, 4X, 8X, 16X, 32X. You can bookmark a scene to jump to it quickly. If you have several bookmarks, pressing the F2 key takes you to the next bookmark, or use the right-click popup menu. With PowerDVD you can also capture (snapshot) what is showing on the screen. I use that feature to capture images of home movies and print them onto printable DVDs. Note: my version came with PowerDVD 6, the latest version now includes PowerDVD 7.

PowerBackup 2.5 lets you backup your data easily. I backed up 7.1GB to an external USB hard drive in 26 minutes, including verifying. You can also backup to a Blu-ray Disc, or any type DVD. It lets you schedule automatic backups and you can do full, incremental, or differential backups. Filtering is available to include or exclude files (such as .doc files.) You can also password protect archives. When you do a backup it offers a Restore Tool that integrates the restoration application and your data, and saves the resulting file as an executable (.exe) file. So if the computer crashes you can restore your data on a computer that does not have the PowerBackup program installed.

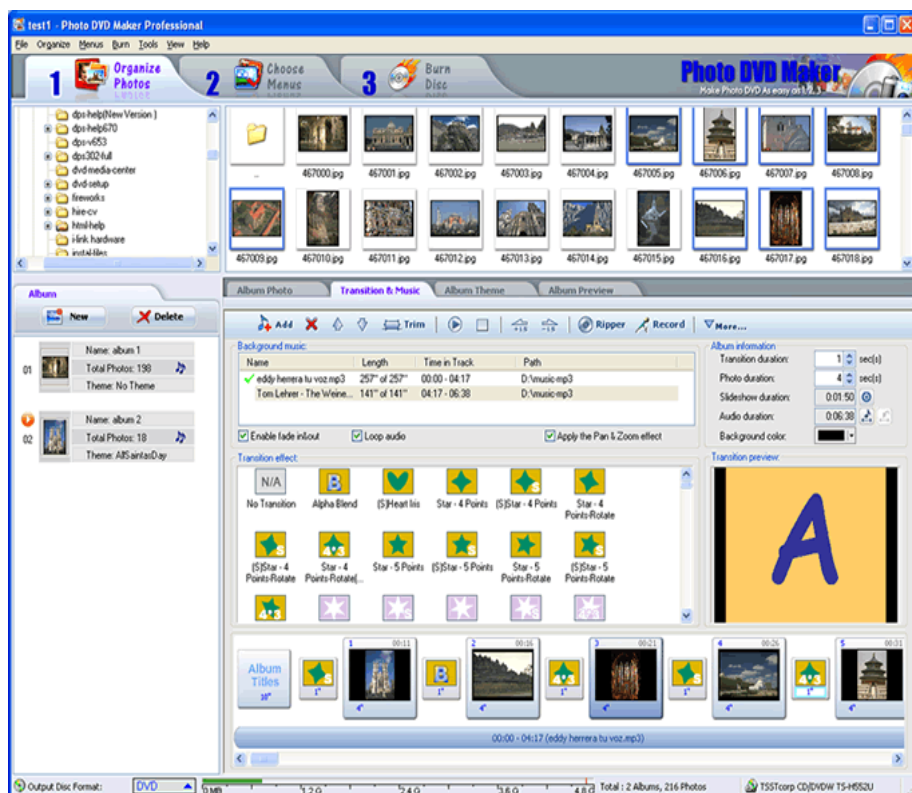
PhotoNow! is a photo correction program which allows the user to resize, crop, remove red eye, and do some special effects on photos. It can also touch up color hue, brightness, and make a color picture monochrome.

MediaShow 3 helps you create photo slideshows and is fairly easy to do, with manual or auto playback of the show. Within MediaShow you can fix photos and apply image effects with PhotoNow!. You can add background music or record audio directly to narrate the slides. One nice feature is that you can have it saved as a Screen Saver (.SCR), allowing you to save the file as a desktop screen saver. You can also save a slideshow as an EXE file, allowing playback on any computer.

PowerDVD Copy lets you duplicate non-CSS encrypted DVDs. It will auto-shrink 8.5 GB of video to fit onto a standard 4.7 GB DVD. There is a preview window to view your chapters and select to copy all, or some.

Power2Go 5.5 is the disc burning module, whether it be data or music. Burn data onto Blu-ray Discs, HD DVDs, DVDs and CDs and you can rip CDs to create MP3, or WMA files as well as convert between file formats. I had a problem with this at first, shutting down when I tried to get information about the album, but CyberLink had a patch for it and I had no troubles after that. Which leads us into -

LabelPrint 2 helps you create labels, covers and jewel-case inlays. It can import photo files for the labels, or even etch images directly onto LightScribe discs. Two things I really liked was the ability to im-



port MP3 song titles and playlist information to put on the label. The second thing which was great for me was it worked with my Epson printer to print the label directly onto the CD.

InstantBurn 5 gives the user the ability to use a CD, Blu-ray Disc, HD DVD or DVD like a super large floppy disc. Using drag and drop you can easily create an audio CD, Video DVD, or data disc. You can also copy files from one disc to another.

PowerProducer 4 allows you to record high-definition video content directly from a camcorder to disc. Bringing video into the program you can edit by cutting it to a desired length or splitting it into chapters. Working with a video you can edit, cut, rearrange and merge to get exactly what you want. You can add photos to create a slideshow within the video, and add background music to a video clip. PowerProducer will do just about everything you need, but if you want to do more, click on the Advanced Editing button and it takes you to -

PowerDirector 5 (SEP version) is the big brother of PowerProducer. It can do everything PowerProducer does, but the editing is easier. It also has what they call Magic Fix to stabilize shaky videos and sharpen picture focus. Magic Style helps create movies with pre-designed templates automatically. It will put in effects, transitions, and create the movie using your timeline. Just pick a template, preview it, and apply the one you want. Note: the Standard version of CyberLink DVD Suite does not come with a full working version of PowerDirector. You have to purchase the Pro version to get it. I have the full version of PowerDirector 5 which also has more features such as the ability to put in Picture-in-Picture.

CyberLink Utilities lets you create a image of a disc onto your hard drive and then burn it onto another disc.

Conclusion

This is a great selection of programs for a good price \$49.95 for the Standard, but I highly recommend you opt for the Pro version for \$89.95 which includes PowerDirector. The only downside is on the PowerDVD and PowerDirector they include lite versions (SEP), but these will do just about everything you could want to do.

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

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Software Review

Avery DesignPro

Free

Published by Avery

Reviewed by Ronnie Ugulano, Editor, Fresno PC User Group,
www.fresnocomputerusers.org, priswell@comcast.net



Last month when I walked in for the FPCUG meeting, I was met by an old friend, a very familiar piece of software - Avery DesignPro, the software that is specially designed to be used with Avery cardstock and labels. A stack of the software was sitting on the table as I entered and was given to members as long as the stack lasted.

Over the years, I have used this software many, many times for a long list of printing projects. As a homeschooling parent, I've used the software to design student and teacher identification cards, bookmarks, T-shirts and certificates. As a housewife, I've created distinct address labels and business cards for each family member, get-together invitations, thank you and other occasion cards, and wish-you-were-here postcards to send to friends and family. As a soapmaker hobbyist, I make labels for the lotions, soaps, and bath salts I make for myself and others. As a computer geek, I fire up Avery DesignPro to create labels for the CDs I burn, and the occasional floppy.

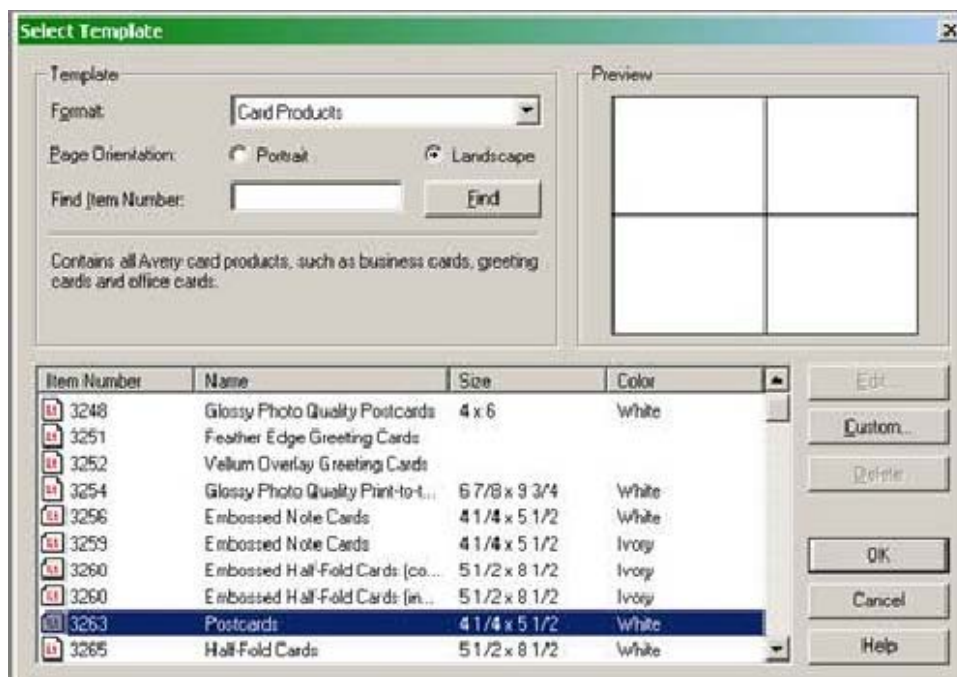
So, you might say, I use Avery DesignPro a lot. Over the years, I've collected enough cardstock, artwork and cute sayings that I can whip up something for nearly every occasion that comes along. Who needs Hallmark?

But I wouldn't be able to be so glib with the printer unless DesignPro was easy and dependable. It's one thing to cheerfully tinker with computer hardware or software-gone-wrong for fun. It's another thing to need a really nice card to go with a baby shower gift at the last minute, only to find that the software doesn't do what you need it to do - yesterday.

Once you learn your way around DesignPro's simple interface, it's no trouble at all to whip up what you need, when you need it. When you open the program, you have the option of making something new, or opening a project you have previously used. If you are creating

a new project, the tools for placing text and pictures is easy and intuitive. You can choose whether to make many copies of one design, or unique designs for each item. Fonts can be scaled as small as 8 or as large as 72, and graphics can be sized up or down to the size of the cardstock, or limit of the resolution of the graphic. There are even options for text direction, serial numbers and UPC codes - all push-button easy, using similar conventions as you'd find in Microsoft Word, only with much more in the way of options and flexibility for this specific series of jobs.

Oh, and did I mention that it's free? Yep, some Avery labels come with a disk enclosed (see specially marked packages) or, you can download the software from Avery's website. If you choose to download, I recommend that you select the stand-alone version, the one that does not integrate into Microsoft Word. It's leaner, cleaner and less clunky.



Hardware Review

The Tornado

A Surprising New Search Engine

Review by Sharon Walbran, Editor, The Digital Viking, Twin Cities PCUG, MN,
www.tcpc.org, SQWalbran@yahoo.com

Transferring files to a new computer is a task that's become common with people replacing their computers every few years or so. A product that can make the transfer of files and settings less painful is "The Tornado" from Data Drive Thru, available online at <<www.datadrivethru.com>>

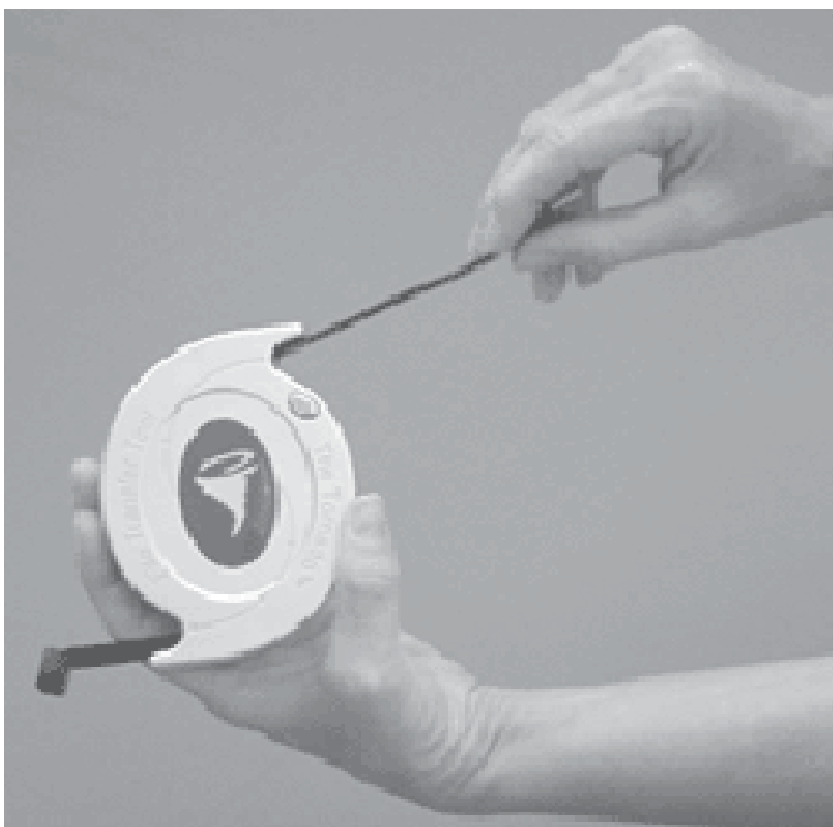
The lightweight device which fits in the palm of your hand houses two USB cables. One cable is connected to the old computer; the other USB cable is connected to the new computer. No software needs to be installed if the computer running the software has Windows XP installed. When the USB cables are connected, built-in software automatically starts up, displaying a split screen with the folders and files on the old computer in one half of the screen and the folders and files from the other computer in the other half of the screen. Copying files from one computer to the other involves dragging the files from one half of the screen to the destination folder in the other half. The computer you are using for the transfer is identified as "This Computer"; the other as "Other Computer."


Transfer of files can be made from computers running versions of Windows back to Windows 98. If both computers are running Windows 98, the company provides drivers for Windows 98. What makes this device particularly attractive is the speed of transfer. The company claims a transfer rate of 25 MB per second and my experience confirms the speed.

The span when the USB cables are fully extended is just 4 feet, but that can be expanded by using a USB extension cable. However, as a result of the limited range, the device works best when computers are placed in close proximity to each other.

No mention is made on Data Drive Thru's website as to whether this is one of the transfer devices approved by Microsoft for transfer of files and settings from Windows XP computers to computers running Microsoft Vista.

The current price is about \$60 but discounts have sometimes been offered to user groups. The com-





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Book Review

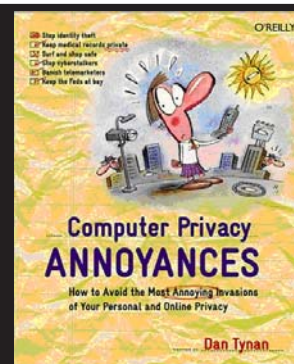
Computer Privacy Annoyances

By Dan Tynan

\$19.95

Published by O'Reilly

Review by Reviewed by Bayle Emlein, Secretary and APCUG Representative,
PC Community, CA, www.pcc.org, pcc@ix.netcom.com



Dan Tynan starts off with a couple of personal revelations, such as how he got to be writing this book and how much of himself he'll share. He also notes his discovery that "...privacy is, well, personal. Everyone has an individual definition of what's an acceptable level of privacy and when that limit has been exceeded." For example, his wife loves receiving the catalog offers that he loathes. As a result, he reports a variety of ways to address most privacy annoyances and potential problems.

Though just this side of full-blown paranoia most of the time, Tynan does distinguish levels of vulnerability and sensible precaution. Is it clear that your online banking needs better password protection and encryption than your records of your kids' Little League schedules? He didn't say it out loud, but his cautions frequently reminded me that way back when a computer took up a good-sized storeroom and needed a dedicated air conditioning system, we had a saying: "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you." But now the ageist cry has turned around to "Never trust anyone under 30."

Annoyances has explanations replete with screen shots. Unfortunately, a lot of the screen shots are too small to be completely readable. This might be OK for a graphic whose purpose is to give a general idea of the configuration of the desktop at a given point. However it's a major annoyance when an essential detail is obscured in the screen shot. Exactly which one is the radio button I'm supposed to pick in order to make my life safe and secure without limiting my freedom or spending all my waking hours covering my tracks? And what are you hiding in that black-on-gray fine print? Something else I'd like to see in the next edition are page references when another section is discussed. In this edition, Tynan rarely tells me where to look when he refers to a Table, Chart, Figure, Tip, or Sidebar. Is it coming right up? Is it two pages back, or in the last chapter?

Given the publishing cycle, a book on any technology topic has to be out of date by the time Amazon gets it. However, this nearly-three-year-old edition of Annoyances agrees surprisingly well with the October 2006 issue of Consumer Reports (pp. 41-45).

Of course, Tynan goes into much greater detail. He includes phone numbers and internet addresses for following up, checking for various potential problems and security leaks and for plugging them where possible. He subdivides privacy concerns into the areas of life where they occur: at home, at work, on the Net, in public, with governments mostly Federal, though he has some discussion of interesting state variability in managing citizen privacy and security. Moving the data in all these areas to computer databases has enabled access by almost anyone; the ease with which databases can be combined means that information that formerly sat in isolated dusty drawers and files can now be linked and massaged to easily relieve the typical citizen of her rights, reputation, and/or cash. The "Privacy in the Future" section discusses implications of current trends, precautions that could be taken to prevent further erosion of privacy and to limit unauthorized access and potentially harmful use of one's data.

This could be an intense, dense technical tome. Instead, varying from straight exposition to sidebar to tip and including many tables and charts helps make it comprehensible. Tynan's conversational style adds to the readability, though a couple of times, his vernacular sent me scrambling for the dictionary. There have been some changes in focus since Tynan wrote: renewal of the Homeland Security Act was just gearing up as he wrote and college campuses were trying to figure out how to cope with the original Napster. On the other hand, RFIDs (Radio Frequency ID chips) were just moving into the public consciousness beyond a way of identifying a lost pet and potential abuses of medical and genetic records were becoming apparent. His information is still surprisingly current, given the annoying speed of change in areas computer-related. I had intended to read Computer Privacy Annoyances and then pass it on. Given the amount of useful information and the number of useful web addresses and telephone numbers, I'm going to hang on to it for a while.

While details change, and specific companies and scams come and go, computer safety has to be added to crossing the street in the instructions for growing up in the 21st Century. Computer Privacy Annoyances provides a sound set of guidelines for protecting your identity (or rescuing it if stolen); fighting back against aggressive marketers; stopping (or at least slowing) spam, viruses, adware, spyware and other invasions; avoiding cyber-stalking; shopping safely; protecting your home network; coping with work-place monitoring of surfing and information and the number of useful web addresses and telephone numbers, I'm going to hang on to it for a while.

In summary, computers being a powerful tool, they can be used for good or ill. Just as truck drivers need more training than the drivers of passenger cars, we as users need training in how to manage computer email or our own benefit. While details change, and specific companies and scams come and go, computer safety has to be added to crossing the street in the instructions for growing up in the 21st Century. Computer Privacy Annoyances provides a sound set of guidelines for protecting your identity (or rescuing it if stolen); fighting back against aggressive marketers; stopping (or at least slowing) spam, viruses, adware, spyware and other invasions; avoiding cyber-stalking; shopping safely; protecting your home network; coping with work-place monitoring of surfing and email; and telling those folks who are profiting from use of your personal data to cease and desist. Just gathering all the resources to address these issues is (was for Dan Tynan) a major project. Make use of his work: go forth and protect yourself without hiding from all public contact and unplugging totally.

June 2007

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| | | | | | 1 *PRR* Small Business Server 8 - 10 A.M. PC Clinic-Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 5 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1 - 4:30 P.M. PC Alamode Magazine & PDF 7 - 9 P.M. | 2 *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. |
| 3 | 4 Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M. | 5 Class 1 of 4 *PRR** Movie Maker 9 - 11 A.M. Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. BOD 6:30 P.M. Class 1 of 4 *PRR** Basic Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. | 6 Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Class 4 of 6 *PRR* Internet & E-Mail 1 - 3 P.M. | 7 Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 6 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1:30 - 4:30 P.M. (a/r) HCSI 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Class 1 of 4 *PRR* Excel 7 - 9 P.M. | 8 PC Clinic - Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 6 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1 - 4:30 P.M. | 9 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 9 - 11:30 A.M. Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. |
| 10 | 11 General Meeting @ Crossroads 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter: | 12 Class 2 of 4 *PRR** Movie Maker 9 - 11 A.M. Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Class 2 of 4 *PRR** Basic Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Alamo Coders (DotNET - Web Development Technology 7 - 9 P.M. | 13 Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Internet & E-Mail 1 - 3 P.M. Home Page Jumpstart 6:30 - 7 P.M. Canceled class will start again in the fall | 14 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 7 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1:30 - 4:30 P.M. Class 2 of 4 *PRR* Excel 7 - 9 P.M. | 15 PC Clinic - Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 7 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1 - 4:30 P.M. | 16 *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. |
| 17 Father's Day | 18 | 19 Class 3 of 4 *PRR** Movie Maker 9 - 11 A.M. Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Class 3 of 4 *PRR** Basic Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. | 20 Summer Begins Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Internet & E-Mail 1 - 3 P.M. | 21 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 8 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1:30 - 4:30 P.M. Class 3 of 4 *PRR* Excel 7 - 9 P.M. | 22 PC Clinic - Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 8 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1 - 4:30 P.M. | 23 *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 9 - 11:30 A.M. Class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1 - 3 P.M. |
| 24 | 25 CorelDRAW X3 6 - 8 P.M. | 26 Class 4 of 4 *PRR** Movie Maker 9 - 11 A.M. Class 4 of 4 *PRR** Basic Microsoft Word 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. | 27 (a/r) WordPerfect 7 - 9 P.M. | 28 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 9 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1:30 - 4:30 P.M. Class 4 of 4 *PRR* Excel 7 - 9 P.M. | 29 PC Clinic - Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Class 9 of 9 *PRR* Photoshop Beginners 1 - 4:30 P.M. | 30 Class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M. |

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: ★★ - ★★★

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: ★ - ★★★

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.

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.)

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 ★ - ★★★

CLASSES

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

Student Practice Lab

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

leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

The next three free or low-cost classes provide instruction on the basics of using a computer, the Windows Operating System, and how to use Adobe Acrobat to obtain your PC 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
stephentechnjr@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@yahoogroups.com>." Or, if you're reading the electronic version of the PC Alamode where this text appears, you can join APCO Retro simply by going to <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apcoretro/join>>

Contact: Shane Hicks

<shane@absolutepowercomputing.com>

When: Anytime

Where: Cyberspace

Pre-registration: Must sign-up on

<APCORETRO@yahoogroups.com>

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★ ★★

CoreIDRAW 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

<stephentechnjr@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: ★ - ★★

Open Source And Freeware Software

Students will learn how to download, install, configure and use Open Source and Freeware applications such as Mozilla Firefox, Open Office, AVG Free Antivirus and many others.

Instructor: Tod Bruning

TodBruning@Hotmail.com

When: The first four Tuesdays in May 6:30 to 8:30 pm

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

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

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

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; Thursdays May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 June 7, 14, 21, 28; 1 to 4:30 pm

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

The four session class will allow you to buy and sell at Internet auctions effectively and with confidence using the eBay À system. The class will cover searching & browsing, registering, buying, selling, how to research your items to buy or sell, how to evaluate your prospective customers and sellers, basic html, digital photo hosting and much, much more! You will also actually use the system in a real-time mode and you can feel the adrenaline rush during the last few seconds of our auctions. Automobile and real estate are excluded.

Instructor: William Hudson
WilliamTheRebel@gmail.com

When: Four sessions, choose one set: (Preference will be given to those who have placed their name on the waiting list for this class)

Set 1) Tuesdays April 17, 24, May 1, 8; 7 to 9 pm

Set 2) Thursdays April 19, 26, May 3, 10; 7 to 9 pm

Where: Learning Center, Room 1

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

Technical Rating: ★

Microsoft Excel

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 should be familiar with operating a mouse, keyboard and Windows Operating

System. Knowledge of another program such as Microsoft Word is helpful.

When: Four sessions, choose one set
Set 1) Thurs May 3, 10, 17, 24; 7 to 9 pm
Set 2) Thurs June 7, 14, 21, 28; 7 to 9 pm

Where: Learning Center

Instructor: Cheng Yuan

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

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★

Home Page Jumpstart

This is a general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is not a course on HTML. Includes a 20+ page manual, training disk, and a walk through the development process.

Contact: Susan Ives

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

When: ONE session, the second Wed. of the month 7 to 9 pm. Class does not meet each month, please check the calendar or call the Computer Learning Center to confirm meeting dates 210-736-0080

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: The first four Tuesdays in June 6:30 to 8:30 pm
MS Word Advanced: to be announced

Instructor: Tod Bruning
TodBruning@Hotmail.com

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

Alamo PC logo

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

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at 736-0700

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.

Advertisers Index

| | |
|--|-----|
| BJ Associates of San Antonio | 54 |
| Charles River Media | 50 |
| Computer Experts | 31 |
| Computer Fest | 11 |
| Cramer's Computer Services | 25 |
| David's Essential Domains | 16 |
| DV Nation | 45 |
| Global Travel Trends | 41 |
| Holiday Ink | 56 |
| Inksell | IFC |
| Laura B. Grover, E.A. | 49 |
| New Life Toner | IFC |
| SA PC Help | 22 |
| United Service Association for Health Care | 46 |
| Water Ware | 19 |


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 donated working, or small repair cost, copier(s) . Latest model with low operating cost (toner & drum) preferred. Pickup of item will be arranged. Call 210-532-9122 to provide make, model, features available or additional 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.

