

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

TECH ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

June 2009

\$5.00

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page 20

Weird Windows behavior
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Diagnosing RAM errors in Vista
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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 **210-561-2278**

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:

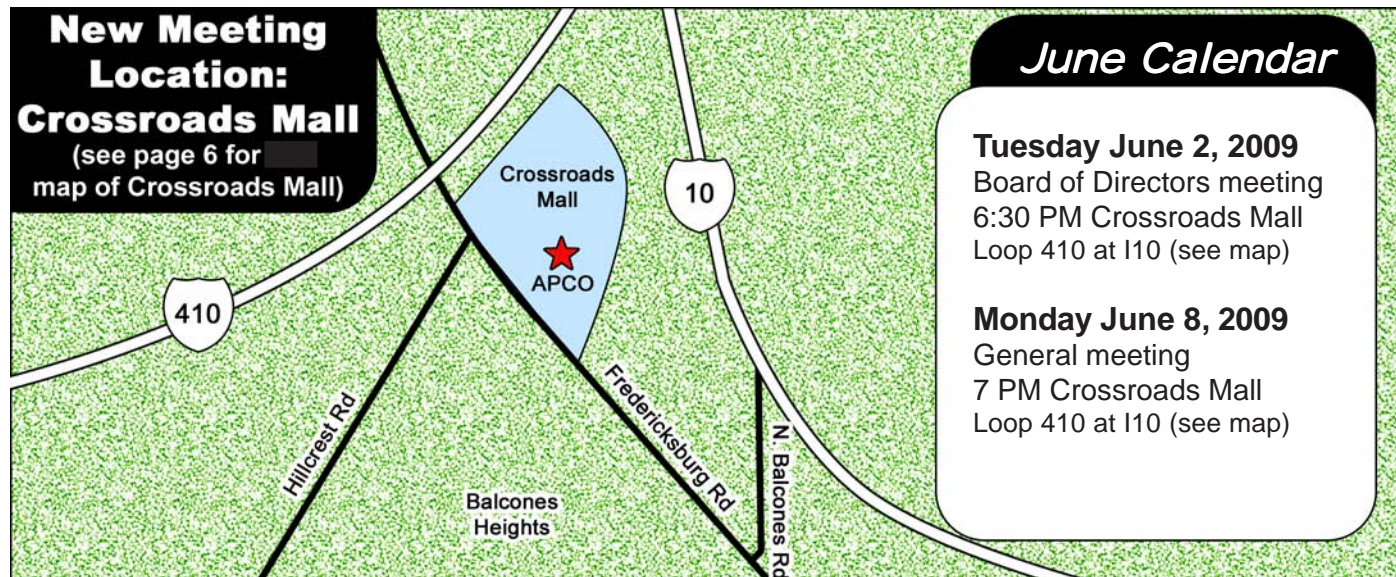
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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)



June Calendar

Tuesday June 2, 2009
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday June 8, 2009
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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PC Alamode

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

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

product reviews

Hardware Review: Magic Jack
Software Review: PowerDirector 7 Ultra

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Rate frequency.	Ad rates effective January 2005			
	1 x	3 x*	6x*	12 x*
	Per insertion			
Full pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h)	\$274	\$260	\$246	\$238
Half pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	144	138	130	121
Half pg. (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h)	144	138	130	121
Quarter pg.(3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
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Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

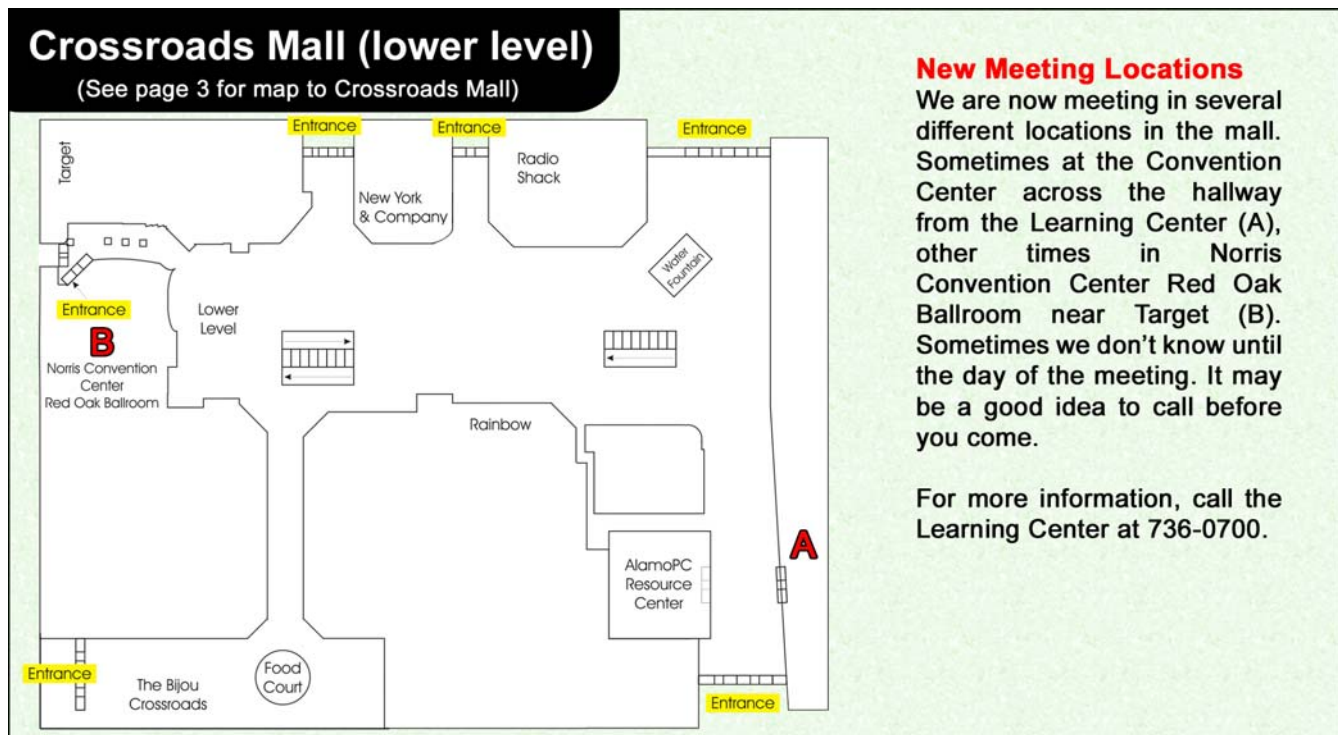
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

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



PC Alamode Links List



Face life fun

[<http://liftmagic.com/>](http://liftmagic.com/)

Who needs those expensive consultations, charged at exorbitant rates when you can sit at your desk and see what you would look like after the knife?



Baby maker

[<http://www.vw.com/vwhype/babymaker/en/us/>](http://www.vw.com/vwhype/babymaker/en/us/)

Ever wonder what a baby would look like if you paired two people? Volkswagen gives you a way to see that cute little baby with the Baby Maker.

This is the latest the PC Alamode has been delivered to you. My apologies to you all. Unfortunately, we are suffering from a crisis. Not only is membership down. Not only have we lost our Learning Center. We are losing contributors as well.

When I started as editor of PC Alamode in 2004, there were about a dozen local contributors who wrote monthly to bi-monthly columns. Today we have one.

Back then, it was common for members to write in with tips or suggestions. Stories about small triumphs and major headaches related to a computer problem would fill this column and other spaces in this magazine. Today, I rarely get any correspondence.

Members used to review products. Certainly, the club used to offer many neat and interesting software and even hardware to review, but no one can claim in the past five years not to have bought some sort of new bit of software or computer peripheral. Your opinion is what made this club so popular for more than 20 years.

Today, the magazine, our only member benefit, withers. While we do have voices from across the country to fill us in on the latest computer news, very few local voices are represented here. You can change that. Share with me and other members a small triumph. It doesn't have to be a well-researched two-page article. A few sentences strung together explaining how you fixed a problem, liked a piece of software, hated a particular online game or wished there was a way to get such-and-such to work would go a long way to restoring the community we all have enjoyed for so long.

Joseph de Leon, Editor

[<editor@alamopc.org>](mailto:editor@alamopc.org)



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for more than 10 years.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

"June" - Full Moon, Flag Day and Fathers' Day

We only have three things listed for this month that might be of interest to folks, and they occur in seven day increments: 7th - Full Moon: Period when the entire surface of the moon, that faces the sun, is illuminated (thought that some might want to just enjoy); 14th - Flag Day: In the United States, it commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States, which happened by resolution of the Second Continental Congress in 1777. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation that officially established June 14 as Flag Day. In August 1949, National Flag Day was established by an Act of Congress. The day is not an official federal holiday, though on June 14, 1937, Pennsylvania became the first (and only) U.S. state to celebrate Flag Day as a state holiday. (The week of June 14 is designated as "National Flag Week." During that week, the president will issue a proclamation urging U.S. citizens to fly the American flag for the duration of that week.); and 21st - Fathers' Day: A secular celebration inaugurated in the early twentieth century to complement Mothers' Day, in celebrating fatherhood and parenting by males, and to honor and commemorate fathers and forefathers. Fathers' Day is celebrated on a variety of dates worldwide (for the US, the third Monday of June this year). Also, please place the punctuation correctly, as we sometimes see the apostrophe placed before the letter S. Because this is a day for all fathers, the correct position of the apostrophe is after the letter S, making it plural possessive - "Fathers' Day." However many people incorrectly cite it as the singular "Father's Day" or they leave out the apostrophe altogether. (Just a little lesson in using correct English notations.)

The May BOD meeting again only had three board members present. A presenter for the May General Meeting was addressed, but David Steward indicated he had not been able to secure one. He also indicated that he did not have anything he could think of to present. It was decided that with such short response time we would not be able to get anyone scheduled, so the May General Meeting should be canceled. The June General Meeting was addressed, and proposed presenters were suggested to David. He indicated he would work the problem and should be able to have a presenter available for the meeting. Once again those board members present reviewed the latest financial information available for the organization, the declining membership, (no new members since December '08), expenses associated with the continuing monthly operation of Alamo PC, plus the best guess future of the Organization, the PC Alamode magazine, and other related things.

We are hopeful the June General Meeting will take place and be profitable to those attending. Suggested topic was an update on "Identity Theft," plus any the associated new ways thieves are endeavoring to secure personal information. We might also consider an APCUG webinar presentation. It is in David Steward hands, as he stated he would contact the appropriate agencies to try and schedule something for a presentation.

Overall interest in User Groups is not what it use to be at either the corporate or membership level. As I have pointed out in previous messages, this fact is confirmed by the ever declining membership here (no new members since November 2008) and the fact we have not had a full compliment of board members (at least one vacancy) for the past three years.

Anyone having questions regarding any area or matter pertaining to the Alamo PC organization, and future proposed plans may refer them to membership@alamopc.org, and Steven Tech will try to provide information relating to the request.

With the declining number of individuals who are currently serving the organization in a board member capacity and who appear to be willing to continue serving, can only cause one to believe that the future of OUR organization appears to be dimming.

I am hoping that we will have a presenter for the June General Meeting who can address something beneficial to those present. Since things can change, even at the last minute, check the website for the latest information about the General Meeting. (The server is back online for the membership area, and our telephone is now working at the new location.) On the day of the meeting (5/13), call 736-0700 for the most current information on location and presenter. I can only hope that David Seward will have made the latest information available for a posting on the home page of the Alamo PC website.

Continued on page 9

Again, as previously mentioned, since almost all of our new members were previously obtained from walk-in traffic at the Learning Center, that luxury longer exists due to our move. Unless we have members helping to obtain new members, at some point in time funds will no longer be available to allow the Alamo PC Organization to continue operating.

As things have settled down a little, and the phone is working at the new location, we are asking for volunteers who would be willing to handle phone calls coming to Alamo PC and answer any questions posed. We addressed this at the April General Meeting and will address it again at the next General Meeting.

We are still trying to improve member retention, but it has not been as successful as hoped (as mentioned, the total number of members continues to slowly decline and no new members since November). If you do not choose to renew, send a comment briefly giving an explanation as to "Why?" to membership@alamopc.org, with a copy to me (president@alamopc.org, or privately to me - wlklutzjr@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 additional 'business decisions' will have to be made that will affect everyone." With our past trend of fewer members each month, it may be sooner than later! I hope it does not come to that, as it will be like the loss of a friend or family member, and will impact those in the community desiring to learn about computers or improve their computer skills.

June Program

Bill Klutz

It is late May, and I have not been informed whether or not there will be a corporate level presenter for our June General Meeting. The meeting location will be confirmed at the June board meeting (regardless of the presenter identified). Since things can change at the last minute, please check the Alamo PC web site (www.alamopc.org) for information on the presenter and meeting location. BUT, on the meeting day, please call 736-0700. Make plans now to come and bring some friends, as we hope to have an interesting presentation, and possibly "gifts."

Volunteer of the Month

Don Robinson



Memorial

Forrest Melton



Forrest Melton died Sunday, May 31, 2009. His Wife and Daughter Sharron survive him. He has been sick since March - April last year with a brain tumor. After the removal of the tumor he began to improve. Until a couple of weeks ago he started to feel worse. He passed away while he was sleeping.

He was laid to rest at Fort Sam Houston.

The "Doctor Is In" group at Alamo P.C. will miss Forrest. He volunteered a tremendous amount of time fixing other member's computers.

His cheerful presence will truly be missed at the Alamo P.C. Organization. Many people respected his opinions and his point of view.

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

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

What you can find at the show:

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Internet Services
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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:

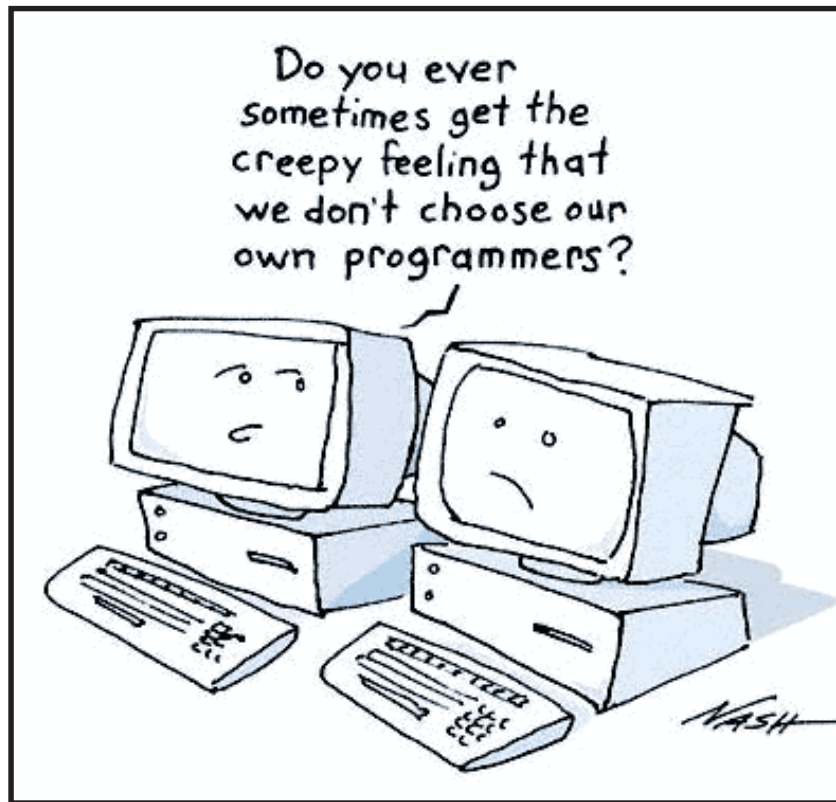
August 29th
November 14th
December 12th

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



Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen





Windows Vista

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.

If you see a green progress bar across the top of Windows Explorer on your Vista Operating System, it could mean that Explorer has crashed. To reset Explorer without restarting Windows, press Ctrl, Shift, Esc, choose the Processes tab, and click the Image name Column header to check the list. Now select each instance of Explorer.exe in the list and click End Process to close it. You may lose your desktop along the way, but not to worry. From Task Manager's File menu, select New Task, type explorer, and click OK to restore your desktop. Unfortunately there are many reasons Explorer hangs or crashes. One fixable problem is Vista's thumbnail display. If you open a folder with a corrupt or empty video file, a garbled photo, or any media file that uses a defective driver, Explorer crashes while generating the thumbnail. To fix the problem rename the extension of troublesome files, for example, change myvideo.wmv to myvideo.wmv.broken. You can also stop the crashing by disabling thumbnails altogether. Open the Folder Options dialog in Control Panel, choose the View tab, select Always show icons, never thumbnails, and click OK.

Set Up an E-Mail Account in Windows Vista

You can use Windows Mail to set up an e-mail account. To set up an e-mail account in Vista, you need your username, password, and a working Internet connection. Set up your Internet account and open Windows Mail. To call up Windows Mail for the first time, open the Start menu and click the Windows Mail icon. If you don't see this icon, choose All Programs and then click Windows Mail. Windows Mail hops onto the screen, ready to be set up to send and receive your e-mail. If these steps don't appear automatically, open Windows Mail and choose Accounts from the Tools menu. Click the Add button, choose E-Mail Account, and click Next. Type your name and click Next. This name appears in the From box of all your e-mail, so most people simply type their own name. Type your e-mail address and click Next. Your e-mail address is your username, the @ sign, and your ISP, all information that your ISP must provide you with. Choose your server type and the names for your incoming and outgoing mail servers and click Next. Here, you need to know what type of e-mail account the service uses. It's a word like POP3 or IMAP. (If it uses HTTP, Windows Mail can't work with it.) Most ISPs send you these settings and instructions through the post office. Google's Gmail, AOL, and Yahoo! all require you to click the box marked Outgoing Server Requires Authentication on this page. Type your account name and password and click Next. For your account name, enter the part of your e-mail address before the @ sign. Then type that account's password. Check the Remember Password box to fetch your mail automatically in the background. Check the Secure Password Authentication box only if your Internet provider requests it. (Yahoo! does, for example.) Click Finish and Windows Mail should immediately get any waiting e-mail and let you begin sending e-mail.

Bad Memory

Unexpected system errors can sometimes be caused by faulty RAM (Random Access Memory). To check your Vista system's memory, you can use the built-in Memory Diagnostic Tool. To find the Memory Diagnostics Tool, just type Memory Diagnostics Tool into the Start Search Box and click the tool. Since the Memory Diagnostics Tool can't check memory while Windows is running, you'll be given two options, e.g. restart the system immediately and run the test, or run it the next time you restart. The memory test usually takes around 10-15 minutes to complete its task. When it's finished your system will automatically restart and let you know if any problems were found with the RAM.

Deleting Cookies in Internet Explorer 7 (IE7)

To cut down on cookies, customize the privacy option in IE7 by clicking Tools, Internet Options, and the Privacy tab. Click the Sites button and enter specific Web site addresses that are allowed. You can also click the Advanced button set first-party cookies to Prompt and third-party cookies to Block. This step has eliminated 90% of your unwanted cookies. If you just want to delete unwanted cookies, click the General tab in Internet Options and under Browsing History, click Settings. In the resulting Temporary Internet Files and History Settings window, select View Files. All of the cookies will appear and can be individually deleted. The folder will be full of images and other items unless you first do the following: While under the General tab as previously described, click the Delete button under Browsing History and click Delete Files next to Temporary Internet Files. These steps will rid the folder of extraneous images and other files and leave only cookies.

Cookies

If you click Start, type Cookies: and press Enter, Vista tried to do what WinXP did, e. g. take you to your Cookies folder located at G:/Users/yourlogon/cookies. The problem is that in Vista the Cookies folder isn't located where it was in WinXP. Instead, Vista has a pointer in the old location that tells it where the real Cookies folder can be found. Since Vista apparently doesn't

Continued on page 14

believe you should be privy to this information, it tells you that the folder isn't accessible. To locate the actual folder, click Start, type C:\Users\username\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\Cookies\Low, and then press Enter. These steps should take you to the Real Cookies folder. Once you've found the correct folder, you can make it easily accessible by holding down the right mouse button while dragging the Cookies folder icon from Windows Explorer's Folder pane to the Desktop, the Start Menu, or some other convenient location. When you release the button, select Create Shortcut Here.

Desktop Icons

If the icons on your Vista Desktop are too small to see clearly, or you think they're taking up too much space, there's an easy way to resize them. When you right-click an empty part of the Desktop and select View, you'll be able to choose between Large, Medium, and Classic (WinXP style and the smallest) icon sizes. If not satisfied with any of the three size options, and have a mouse with a scroll wheel, you can fine-tune the size of your Desktop icons by clicking somewhere on the Desktop, then holding down the CTRL key. Now move the mouse's scroll wheel up or down to grow or shrink the icons.

Magnifier

The magnifier is available in both WinXP and Windows Vista. In XP, it's Start, All Programs, Accessories, Accessibility, Magnifier. In Vista, it's Start, All Programs, Accessories, Ease of Access, Magnifier. The magnifier can be docked on any edge of the screen. The magnifier comes with its own settings window which lets you customize the magnifier. It also has controls for turning it off. But this settings window can be minimized to your taskbar.

Recycle Bin

If you ever find the Recycle Bin icon missing from Vista's desktop, there's an easy way to get it back on the screen. Right-click an empty part of the desktop; choose Personalize; and then click Change Desktop Icons. Finally, put a check next to Recycle Bin and click OK, and your recycle Bin will reappear on your desktop. The Recycle Bin icon disappears whenever you right-click it and inadvertently choose the Delete option when you meant to choose Empty Recycle Bin instead.

Run command

Windows Vista does not have the Run Command found in WinXP. If you use the default Start menu in Vista, as opposed to the Classic Start menu, the Run command doesn't appear in this operating system. To change that situation, right-click the Start button and choose Properties. With the Start Menu tab active, now click the Customize button in the upper right. Next scroll through the list of options and check Run command and click OK twice. The Run command will appear in the lower-right corner of the Start menu.

Starting Excel 2007 from the Vista Start Menu

You can use the Start Search box at the bottom of the Windows Vista Start menu to locate Excel on your computer and launch the program in no time at all by clicking the Start button on the Windows taskbar.

When the Windows Start menu appears click the Start Search text box and type ex. When Vista locates Microsoft Office Excel 2007 on your computer, click the Microsoft Office Excel 2007 option that now

appears in the left Programs column on the Start menu. You can also launch Excel from the Vista Start menu by clicking Start, All Programs, Microsoft Office, Microsoft Office Excel 2007. Microsoft's Express Upgrade program offers discounts on Windows Vista upgrades. Depending on the retailer, the discount may cover the upgrade in full. Express Upgrade is available for Vista capable computers. The program encourages people to buy a PC before Vista is released. It also makes things more complicated for those people. As you noticed, drivers are an important issue with upgrades. Without new drivers, Vista may not know its way around your hardware. The computer maker likely will include new drivers with the upgrade kit. For example, this is true of Dell and HP. You can also check retailers' Web sites for Vista drivers. For peripherals like printers, check the manufacturers' Web sites. Before you upgrade, be sure to back up your files. The Vista installation process includes the option to transfer files and settings. It walks you through the process of backing up to CD, external hard drive or other storage. Unfortunately, installed programs are difficult to transfer. Usually, it's best to reinstall programs from the original discs or downloads. Generally, the upgrade kits do not come automatically. You must request yours using the retailer's site or by use of a paper form. The deadline for the Express Upgrade program is March 31. An easy way to get started is Microsoft's Get Ready site. It links to many retailers' individual Express Upgrade pages.

Speed Up Windows Vista

Windows Vista is a huge visual improvement over Windows XP - its animated window motions, visual Alt-Tab functions, and overall more appealing user interface make it quite the eye candy. There are feature improvements too like a better search function, desktop gadget support, and a whole lot more. But do you know what many have noticed? Windows Vista can be slow - very slow. Even if your computer hardware exceeds the recommendations, you may find that Windows Vista can sometimes move at a snail's pace. If you haven't been happy with Windows Vista's response time, give some of these tips a try.

- Change the Start Menu Power Button Action
- Automatically Log On To Windows Vista
- Disable Low Disk Space Checks
- Disable Thumbnail Previews in Windows Vista Explorer



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.

I was reading the Orange County IBM PC Users Group newsletter (nibbles & bits) and noticed an interesting article. Linda Gonse does a great job of editing this great newsletter and those of you who don't get to read it are missing a real treat. I don't own an iPhone, but many of my readers do. Lorene Romero, North Coast Macintosh Users Group President (in Santa Rosa, CA), wrote the article about some unique items available for iPhones. Three that I found interesting are quoted below with Lorene's permission:

"Coffee Break: \$1.99 (****): Great app for those who love coffee! It has a very 'fun' interface with appropriate company cups. It has the usual suspects (Starbucks, Pete's and Seattle's Best), but it also has a category for 'Other Coffee Places.' It is a great app if you are a coffee hound, like I am. The seller is Marco Pifferi"

"AroundMe: Free (****): Cool little app that lets you find banks, coffee places, gas stations, supermarkets, and even an Apple store, located near you. First it finds your location and then accesses a database filled with local shops. I used it in Seaside, OR and found a wonderful coffee shop right down the street."

"Say Who Free (****): Finally an app that brings back voice activation to the iPhone! Say any name (Jon Jones Mobile) and it will dial it every time for me."

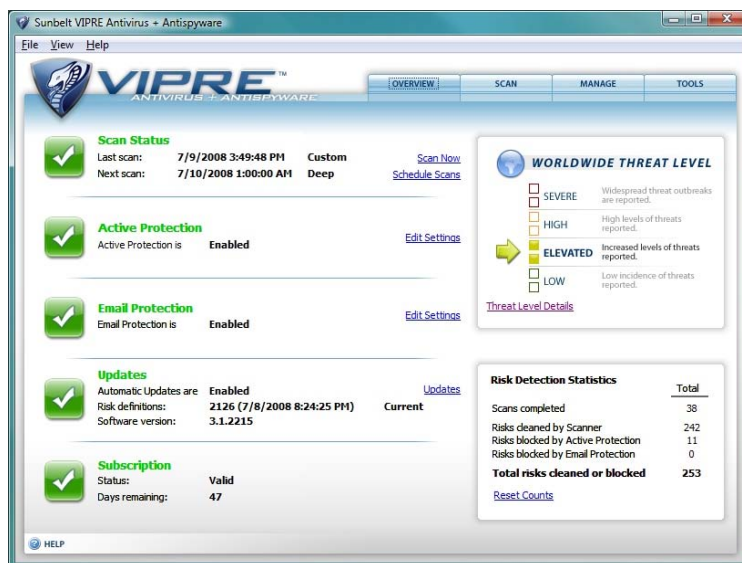
You can download these from the iPhone store: <<http://www.apple.com/itunes/whatson/appstore.html>>

*Why Not Scrap The Crap?

One of the Vendors at the FACUG/APCUG Florida spring conference was Sunbelt Software. They offer Vipre Enterprise. They call the product a non-bloated antivirus, antispysware, and antirootkit software that includes other technologies to make it an all-in-one protection. They say it offers Real-Time Monitoring with Active Protection. Removing rootkits is supplemented by VIPRE's FirstScan™, which runs at the system's boot time. FirstScan bypasses the Windows operating system to directly scan certain locations of the hard drive for malware, removing infections where found. They say Vipre's Active Protection delivers real time monitoring and protection against known and unknown malware threats. Active Protection works inside the Windows kernel, (the core of the operating system), watching for malware and stopping it before it has a chance to execute on your system.

VIPRE includes comprehensive protection against e-mail viruses, with direct support for Outlook, Outlook Express and Windows Mail; and support for any email program that uses POP3 and SMTP. In reading their product information, I found more good information on the product than I could possibly include in this column, so please visit their Web site and look it over carefully for full information. <<http://www.sunbeltsoftware.com/Home-Home-Office/VIPRE/>>.

This company is not based on some small Pacific atoll, or some strange sounding name of a country you never heard of, but is located in Clearwater, Florida where their tech support will speak good English (maybe Spanish if you need that) if you need to talk to them. Trip Kirk, Sales Engineer for Sunbelt Software, said they'll offer user group members the following coupon code (DealsGuy) that's good for \$5 off of any Vipre consumer license through August 31, 2009 at <<http://shop.sunbelt-software.com/licensing.cfm?product=VIPRE>>. Trip says that can be a single license, a two-computer license, or even the unlimited home license, which is good for as many



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computers as someone has at their one home address; or if they have computers in Florida and also in another state, such as snowbirds can, they can use it for all of the computers that they personally own. I guess that being surrounded by seniors in Clearwater has influenced them favorably.

For what it's worth, I realize that you can instantly name at least six places to find FREE protections of all types, but it can also be said that "you get what you pay for?" Just about every free protection product also offers a pay version with added features that they hope you'll buy later on to give better peace of mind. Here you get the peace of mind right up front. I have not had the chance to try this product.

***What's This, A Photo Production Line?**

Bits&Coffee has released BatchPhoto V 2.5, a powerful Windows photo manipulation program that makes it easy to annotate, touch up, transform, apply effects, convert, and rename hundreds of pictures in a single operation. BatchPhoto lets you select a group of images, define a series of edits, and apply them in a single operation rather than individually.

With version 2.5, BatchPhoto introduces Raw Photo Development. DSLR digital cameras can save the raw image data as read by the optical sensor without any loss or additional processing. The resulting files, often called raw images or digital negatives, need additional processing on the PC with specialized software. Almost every digital camera manufacturer has one or several different file formats for storing the raw image data, which leads to poor support from software vendors. BatchPhoto can read and convert most of those formats, including formats from digital camera makers like: Canon, Nikon, Sony, Olympus, Fuji, Kodak, or Pentax.

By taking advantage of multi-core processors, BatchPhoto can convert hundreds or even thousands of raw images to common image formats like JPEG or TIFF in a single session. Custom defined settings, like White Balance or Demosaicing, allow the user to control the development process in detail. Additional filters and transformations can be applied to photos in the same session (e.g. Watermark, Resize, Sepia and so on).

BatchPhoto can convert the raw images to dozens of image formats, including: JPG, TIF, PDF, PNG, GIF, BMP, EPS, TGA, and PSD. It can also change the meaningless names assigned by digital cameras to custom keyword based names, in the same operation. A second new feature is the ability to create PDF documents from multiple images. In the same process each image can be annotated, watermarked, and adjusted.

Overall, BatchPhoto has more than three-dozen graphical filters that can be applied to pictures. The filters are divided into four main categories; Annotate, Touch Up, Transform, and Effects. BatchPhoto adds itself to Windows Explorer's contextual (right-click) menu, so the user can apply predefined, or custom defined profiles to groups of pictures with ease.

BatchPhoto V. 2.5 runs under all versions of Windows, including Windows Vista and Windows Server 2008. Home version is priced at \$29.95 (US), and Pro at \$59.95 (US). User group members get a 40% discount on the purchase of BatchPhoto by using the discount coupon 5A1398E4 when ordering, and it's good through June 2009. <<http://www.batchphoto.com/>>.

***How About Better Efficiency**

Almeza Company has announced LeaderTask Company Management 6.4, a smart solution for managing employees' projects, processes, company documents, and relations with clients. Designed to facilitate and streamline workflow, the system offers essential tools for managing task assignments, scheduling appointments, tracking project status, evaluating employees' efficiency, and many more.

To save time and effort, LeaderTask Company Management has been developed. The system provides advanced workflow management capabilities, storing the information on all tasks, projects, and appointments and delivering it in the convenient form. The software doesn't require a server and works via Internet or LAN. LeaderTask provides each user with an organizer and can serve as a task planner, personal information manager, calendar, project manager and contact manager, allowing the user to add tasks, contacts, notes, links, projects and categories.

LeaderTask PDA Organizer is a mobile version of LeaderTask for Windows Mobile. LeaderTask PDA allows

having an instant summary of tasks by projects, contacts, and categories on the pocket computer. At the same time, it's easy to quickly add new tasks and make notes. The program features customizable filters with flexible viewing options. A user can easily sort and filter projects and tasks by key elements and tags such as due date, priority, employee, project, and category, etc.

LeaderTask Company Management requires MS Windows 2000 or higher and costs \$69 for a workstation license. User Group members will get a 10% discount. Further information on the product, as well as its free evaluation copy is available from <www.leadercommand.com>. To order with the discount, e-mail them at <ivan.abramovsky@almeza.com> because I haven't gotten a response to my request for instructions. Also, with a minimum of five workstations per order, look the pricing over carefully if you are interested.



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: Revisited

John R. Chait D.C. , Sarasota PC User Group

Dr. Chait is a practicing chiropractor in Sarasota and is the SPCUG ergonomic consultant. As an avid computer enthusiast, Dr. Chait knows first hand how important proper interaction between the user and their PC can be. He stresses this in his ergonomic tips column and his lectures. <drchait@hotmail.com> For more ergonomic tips, visit <<http://chaitchiropractic.com/links/Ergonomics/>>

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is one of the most common and potentially disabling injuries experienced in computer use today. Your knowledge of symptoms, and potential causes can help you circumvent injuries, or assist in the recovery from this and other common Repetitive Strain Injuries.

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome? The median nerve travels from the forearm into your hand through a "tunnel" in your wrist. Wrist bones form the inferior and lateral parts of this tunnel, and a strong band of connective tissue called a ligament covers the superior aspect of the tunnel.

This tunnel also holds nine tendons that join muscles to bones and bend your fingers and thumb. These tendons are covered with a lubricating membrane, which may enlarge and swell under some circumstances. If the swelling is enough it may cause the median nerve to be pressed up against this very strong ligament which may result in symptoms, such as numbness, tingling in your hand, clumsiness or pain described above.

Risk Factors for Computer Users:

- * Ignorance of the caution signs or risk factors for damage
- * Heavy computer use.
- * Lack of frequent or regular breaks.
- * Poor Posture.
- * Incorrect keyboard or mouse height or positioning.
- * Resting your wrist on the work surface, wrist rest or using your mouse.
- * Keying or using your mouse with wrist bent upwards, rather than being straight.
- * Stretching and twisting to reach keys while your wrists are anchored on a wrist rest or desktop.
- * Stretching and twisting while using your mouse with your wrist fixed on a wrist rest or desktop.

What are the Warning Signs?

- * The first symptom may be numbness and tingling (pins and needles) of the palm, the thumb, index, middle and half of the ring finger.
- * Pain and aching in the same area of the hands may also occur, with some radiation up into the forearm area.
- * Awakening with a tingling sensation.
- * Hands falling asleep.
- * Cold hands.
- * Difficulty using hands, such as, holding a cup, turning pages in a book or turning a door knob.

If I have carpal tunnel syndrome, what can I do about it?

Proper diagnosis and management of this condition is essential in order to curtail the disabling symptoms associated with the advancement of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Chiropractors are equipped to deal with this problem and can offer many patients relief of their problem.



Vista: Excel and Driver Query

Vinny La Bash , Sarasota PC User Group

Vinny (SPCUG President in 1996-97-98) is a retired IBM'er and teaches computer part time at the Sarasota Vocational Technical Institute. <labash@spcug.org>

Anyone using Vista for any length of time knows that most of the common driver problems were resolved long ago. Advances in computer technology including removable devices however, have called attention to problems that may be caused by device drivers that are no longer needed, but still installed on the system. These drivers can become corrupt over time. If they become inadvertently enabled they can cause memory conflicts which under some circumstances could crash your system.

Most people beyond the novice level have some familiarity with Device Manager, but are usually not knowledgeable with its limitations. They know that Device Manager will allow a rollback to a previous version of a driver if problems are encountered, but few know that Device Manager has no way of keeping track of a device driver's history. This is important because you can't document which version of a device driver is good and which version could cause problems.

You can get around this limitation by using a command-line tool called Driver Query that will track the history of all the device drivers on your system. From the Start Menu, open Accessories, and activate the Command Prompt. Type driverquery.exe at the command line and you will see a list of all the device drivers with some basic information included. This list by itself won't do you much good. You need to use some command-line switches to get the information that you need.

Continued on page 19

Microsoft Excel - DRIVERINFO									
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Data Window Help									
Type a question for help									
Go to Office Live Open Save									
A1 Module Name									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Module Name	Display Name	Description	Driver Type	Start Mode	State	Status	Accept Stop	Accept Pause
2	ACPI	Microsoft ACPI Driver	Microsoft ACPI Driver	Kernel	Boot	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
3	adp94xx	adp94xx	adp94xx	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
4	adpahci	adpahci	adpahci	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
5	adpu160m	adpu160m	adpu160m	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
6	adpu320	adpu320	adpu320	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
7	AFD	Ancillary Function Driver for W	Ancillary Function Driver for W	Kernel	System	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
8	agp440	Intel AGP Bus Filter	Intel AGP Bus Filter	Kernel	Manual	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
9	aic78xx	aic78xx	aic78xx	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
10	aliide	aliide	aliide	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
11	amdide	amdide	amdide	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
12	AmdK8	AMD K8 Processor Driver	AMD K8 Processor Driver	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
13	arc	arc	arc	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
14	arcsas	arcsas	arcsas	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
15	aswFsBlk	aswFsBlk	aswFsBlk	File System	Auto	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
16	aswMonFlt	aswMonFlt	aswMonFlt	File System	Auto	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
17	aswRdr	aswRdr	aswRdr	Kernel	System	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
18	aswSP	avast! Self Protection	avast! Self Protection	Kernel	System	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
19	aswTdi	avast! Network Shield Support	avast! Network Shield Support	Kernel	System	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
20	AsynchMac	RAS Asynchronous Media Driv	RAS Asynchronous Media Driv	Kernel	Manual	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
21	atapi	IDE Channel	IDE Channel	Kernel	Boot	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
22	browser	Browser	Browser	File System	Manual	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE
23	BrFiltLo	Brother USB Mass-Storage Lo	Brother USB Mass-Storage Low	Kernel	Manual	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
24	BrFiltUp	Brother USB Mass-Storage Up	Brother USB Mass-Storage Up	Kernel	Manual	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
25	Brserid	Brother MFC Serial Port Interfa	Brother MFC Serial Port Interfac	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
26	BrSerWdm	Brother WDM Serial driver	Brother WDM Serial driver	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
27	BrUsbMdm	Brother MFC USB Fax Only M	Brother MFC USB Fax Only Mo	Kernel	Disabled	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
28	BrUsbSer	Brother MFC USB Serial WDM	Brother MFC USB Serial WDM	Kernel	Manual	Stopped	OK	FALSE	FALSE
29	BthEnum	Bluetooth Enumerator Service	Bluetooth Enumerator Service	Kernel	Manual	Running	OK	TRUE	FALSE

At the command prompt type:

```
DRIVERQUERY /FO:CSV /V > C:\DRIVERINFO .CSV
```

DRIVERQUERY is the primary command that tells the operating system to run the query.

The /FO switch says you want the output to be formatted.

CSV (Comma Separated Variable) tells Vista to format the output so it can be displayed in a spreadsheet.

/V (Verbose) tells the query to blab its head off and tell everything it knows about each driver in the system.

C:\ says to put the output file in the root (primary) directory of the primary drive where your operating system is installed. This makes the file easy to find in case you can't remember where you put it.

DRIVERINFO.CSV is the name of the file with an old DOS style extension. You can name the file anything you want, but do end it with the CSV extension or you might confuse your spreadsheet when you try to open it.

After creating the file, open your spreadsheet, click the file open icon and in the File name: box type:

```
C:\DRIVERINFO.CSV
```

By opening the file this way you don't have to get into DOS commands. You may, of course, use DOS if you feel Vista isn't complicated enough.

Your spreadsheet will resemble the illustration. After expanding the columns you will have to scroll horizontally to see all the available information. The amount of information for each driver has greatly increased, but you still don't get the driver version. Tracking driver changes is possible if you run the query periodically and compare the Link Date column for changes. It's clunky and cumbersome, but it does the job.

Another important piece of information that's missing is any data about whether or not the driver is signed. A signed driver is a device driver that includes a digital signature which is an electronic security mark that tells you who published the driver. It also indicates if the original software has been altered in any way. Signed drivers provide assurance that the software actually comes from the manufacturer and hasn't been changed.

This exercise is an excellent illustration of the laws of information availability.

1. The information you have is not the information you want.
2. The information you want is not the information you need.
3. The information you need you can't get.
4. The information you can get is either too expensive or too troublesome to obtain.

Tech issue

Juice Your Broadband Speed

by **Vinny La Bash**, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL,
www.spcug.org, vlabash@comcast.net

People prefer broadband internet connections because of the obvious speed advantages over dial-up and satellite links. Then why is it that broadband never seems to be fast enough? Are you getting the speed promised by your ISP? Broadband can cost \$100 a month or more, but does the provider really provide the advertised speed? Is the connection reliable or does the modem need a reboot several times a day? Fortunately, there are ways to achieve high, reliable throughput without having to have an engineering degree. Here are some suggestions to get every bit per second possible from your modem without any technical hiccups or interruptions in service.

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Start with your computer and TV equipment. A common source of line noise can be traced to improper grounding of anything that plugs into household electrical circuits. This can seriously degrade performance of cable equipment. Every electrical device, especially those in the same room as the cable modem, should be plugged into properly grounded outlets. The best connections are with polarized plugs oriented in the correct direction, and please don't use any three prong to two prong adapters. Get up-to-date gear. Electric outlet testers are cheap. Buy one and use it to test for excess voltage on your cable wiring. Any problem could indicate a serious safety hazard. Engage a licensed electrician to fix it.

Almost anything manufactured today in the consumer electronics world is light years ahead of its predecessors manufactured only two or three years ago. Cable modems are no exception, so if yours is more than three years old get a new one from your provider. Most providers will make a free exchange, but some will require an extension of your contract. You want to do this because the latest modems conform to the DOCSIS 2.0 standard. This offers higher upload and download capabilities and supports other advanced broadband applications, including online gaming and peer-to-peer computing.

Ask your ISP if they automatically update firmware for the modem. If they don't, have them supply the website address of your modem's manufacturer so you can download the most recent firmware. Check the website about twice a year for new updates.

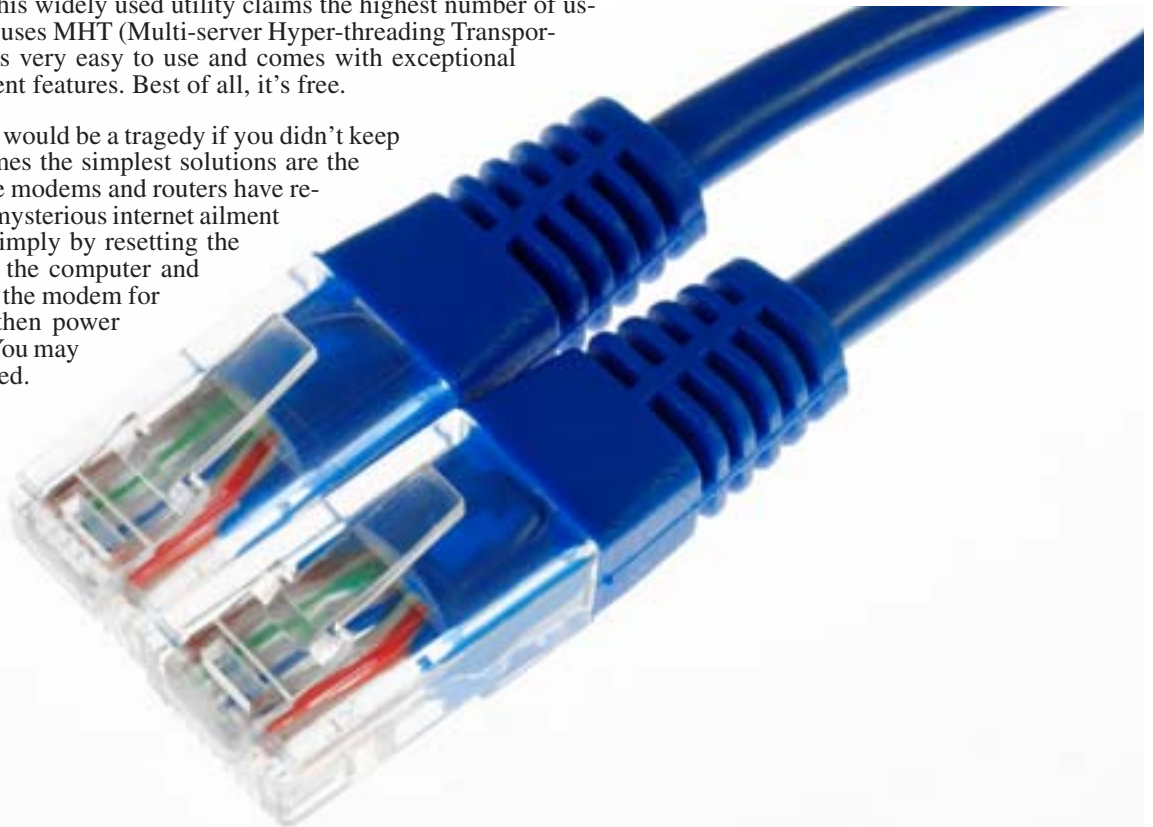
Next, go to a test site such as PC Pitstop, and check your upload and download speeds to see if they match the terms of your service contract. If they don't, give your ISP a call and have them reset the modem's settings. While you're at it, have them check the signal-to-noise ratio. Too much noise can cause interference, and your modem will then have to resend information cutting down on your throughput.

It's possible that your cable wiring may contain too many splices or simply be too long. That can be fixed by a visit from your ISP technician. Have the technician check the line quality leading to your house. If the signal is good and you're having problems, the house wiring may be the culprit. The definitive answer for cable modems is to create a split directly after the junction box and then run a new cable directly to your modem. The other side of the split will take care of your television sets which aren't nearly as sensitive to line noise.

After you've done everything from a hardware and firmware standpoint, and your cable connection is as clean as possible, you're ready to fine tune the system for best performance. Vista users don't have to do much of anything to optimize the operating system since Vista does TCP stack tuning dynamically. Any internet performance adjustments can be made through the browser. Firefox users may want to try Firetune or Fasterfox. They are both free utilities and allow adjustment to cache memory, capacity and other settings such as pipelining.

If you do a lot of downloading, you can save time by installing a download manager like Flashget. This widely used utility claims the highest number of users on the internet. It uses MHT (Multi-server Hyper-threading Transportation) technique. It's very easy to use and comes with exceptional document management features. Best of all, it's free.

After all this work, it would be a tragedy if you didn't keep in mind that sometimes the simplest solutions are the best ones. Most cable modems and routers have reset features. Many a mysterious internet ailment has been corrected simply by resetting the equipment. Turn off the computer and the modem. Un-plug the modem for a few minutes and then power everything back on. You may be pleasantly surprised.



Face Time

in the 21st Century

by **Lou Vitale, President**, Macon County Users Group, North Carolina, www.maconusersgroup.org, mug@maconusersgroup.org

Person to person communication was pretty simple last century. There was the letter, or as we call it today, “snail mail” and the telephone. Our address book contained the physical address of our friends and their phone numbers. It is amazing to me how much we actually got done, we won wars and went to the moon and created the greatest county on earth, and all without a single bit of digitized information.

To someone who grew up in the last 20 or so years that must seem quaint. They probably can't imagine life without a cell phone, email, IM and a dozen other ways of communicating with their fellow human beings. I am beginning to wonder myself. Someone asked me the other day if I “Twittered”, I thought it was a neurological disorder. No, it was a form of micro-blogging, another way to stay in touch in the 21st century.

So just how many ways can you keep up to the minute with your “friends” today, let me count the ways. And this is by no means a complete list.

Email has been around since the beginning of the internet. By the late 80s' everyone with a computer had an email account. Now we could send a message to anyone with a computer and they could reply. This was a momentous social change. It significantly accelerated the communication between people. Plus we could “attach” stuff, like pictures of the grandkids, or an excel spread sheet to our email.

In it simplest form, a blog (web log) is an online diary or journal. Prior to the mid 90's online forums and BBS (bulletin board systems) allowed people to have running conversations on a web site with a moderator to keep order. Then some high profile personalities started to keep online diaries which allowed comments from anyone to be posted, and the blog was born.

Today bogging is a serious force to be reckoned with. Anyone can start a blog and thousands do every day. Currently there are an estimated 12 million blogs and about 57 million blog readers. These numbers are deceiving, since it appears that only about 20% of blogs are active and 60% to 80% of blogs are abandoned after one month. As one commentator put it “the average blog has the life span of a fruit fly”.

Yet this kind of personal communication has again changed the social landscape. Anyone can comment on anything from personal hygiene to politics and anyone can respond with their take on the subject. Some bloggers have aspired to become journalists and others are just looking for some virtual recognition, either way we are more in touch.

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The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

facebook

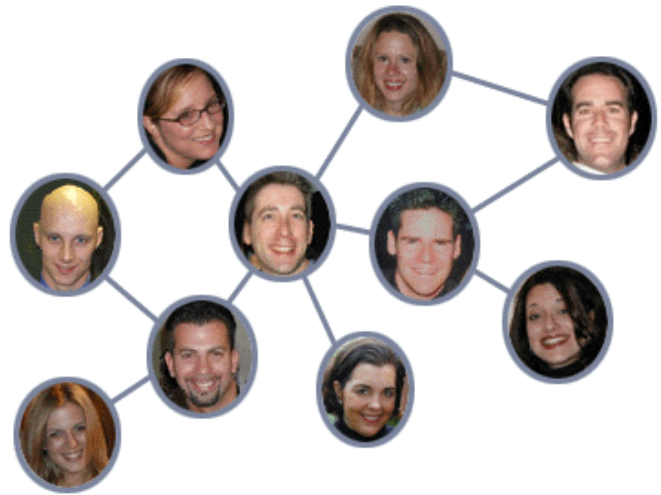
Personal communication has taken another leap with the creation of social networking sites like Face Book and My Space. These sites and many others like them allow virtual conversation to take place between friends on an almost instant basis. I will confess, I don't know much about them which only proves my age. But without a doubt, and from now on a person's identity will forever be linked to their Face Book page and their list of friends.

Will someone please explain to me why someone would attempt to communicate by text using a device no bigger than a deck of cards and with a "Key Board" consisting of 12 keys? At a minimum IM (Instant Messaging) requires tiny fingers, superb eye hand coordination and a new language consisting of thousands of newly created letter combinations to represent real words. And another thing since this device is a Phone, why not just TALK to the person? LOL

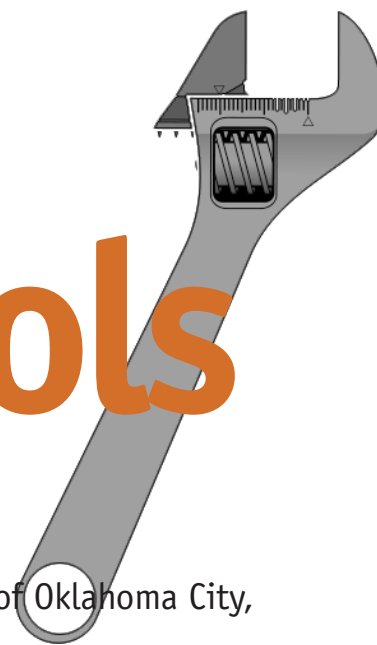
The ultimate "Personal" communication for the 21st century must be in Second Life. In this enormous virtual world millions of people interact with millions of other people, one on one. The whole range of human activity can now take place in a virtual environment. You can be anyone you want and "talk" to a dragon or a real priest, free of the most basic limitation of our human form. In a sense this is probably personal communication on a level never seen before.

Twitter is the newest "form" of communication. It answers the pressing question, "What are you doing NOW?" As you go through your day, you constantly update your "Twitter" page with mini blog entries no more than 140 characters long. Now anyone who is logged on to your page can tell what you are doing, what you are feeling, who you are with and any moment in the day. Why didn't I think of that? It's obvious that I would want to know all the mundane details of all my friends' daily lives.

Face time means actual face to face talk. The words, the eyes, the body language, the context, all convey meaning. Let me know when we can do that online. Until then, don't look for my Twitter page.



Concepts and Tools



By **Elizabeth B. Wright**, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City,
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One day in the near future there will be no computer “beginners” at the adult level. The children born into the world as it is today are exposed to computers from conception. After they are born, many have very sophisticated hands on use of the machines from the minute they can reach out from their parent’s lap and touch the keyboard. There is no mystery to them.

But while there are still older adults who want computer knowledge, someone has to be available to instruct them. And adults do not learn the same way that babies and children learn. Sometimes, when leading a group or teaching a class, it is difficult to explain to students why they need to understand the difference between how a computer or a program works and how to make it actually do something. In my opinion, concepts are far more useful in the long run than specific techniques, especially when dealing with someone using a computer for the first time or who has gone just beyond the basics. But how do you teach a concept?

First, accept the fact that it will take more time in the beginning to teach concepts, but it will save time later on. The real trick is to make the process interesting and easy to understand

The simple fact that a computer is basically thousands of off and on switches, the same as a light switch, seems to be information that many people find irrelevant. But once a student gets some idea of the actual simplicity of the machine, much of the mystery is removed from the learning process.

Second, CONCEPTS, once understood, are usually far easier to remember than techniques. Anyone who “gets the idea” of a computer fundamental can usually find the tools later to accomplish the end result, even if the specific steps are not used often enough to remember them in sequence.

Many first session lesson plans skip computer functionality and plunge straight into using software. As an example, the concept of organizing files on a hard drive seems to be much harder for new users to comprehend than teaching them to open the file manager, aka Windows Explore or some similar program. So many teachers go through the cumbersome task of showing people how to open the file system, only to become bogged down in the steps needed to find a particular file, then later to continually have people complain they have lost a file and firmly believe it has disappeared from their machine. Most new users find it difficult to make the connection between finding a file on the computer and why understanding how to find it is important. It is the instructors job to help them make the connection. The CONCEPT of hard drive storage is not easy to absorb, so the instructor must make it easy. Also many new users find it difficult to transfer keystrokes learned on a classroom computer to their own computers at home. The reason for this is that no two computers are exactly alike, so the steps learned



on one machine may or may not work on another one. But if the student comprehends the idea behind digital file storage, the actual keystrokes will begin to make sense, regardless of what computer they are using. In my opinion, rote learning is not the best way to become even moderately proficient on a computer. Real understanding of basic computing processes is vital.

Since many new users have little idea of what hardware is on their own computers, talking about C:\ drives and other drives in relation to specific files means little to them. But a well developed discussion of what basic hardware CAN be on a computer and how it works is not a waste of time, answering questions along the way.

Many new users won't see the value in a technical discussion, so it is important to present hardware demonstrations using common sense terms rather than obscure technical language. It is never necessary to impress new students with what you know, but rather to make the information as easy for them to understand as possible. With practice, a teacher or presenter can develop the dialog necessary to convey essential information and still keep the listeners engaged.

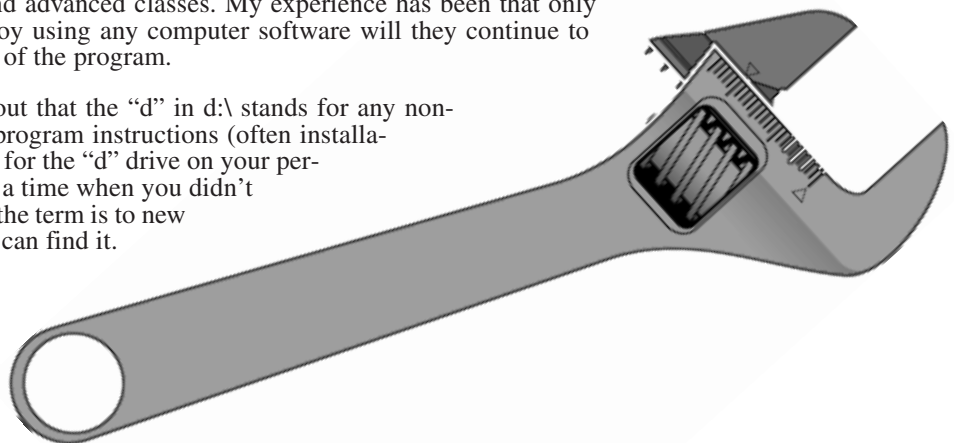
Students appreciate being encouraged in the idea that they may not know much to begin with, but they will

leave each session armed with useful information and techniques that will build a good basic foundation for them. Biblically we were taught not to build our houses on sand. Why are the pyramids in Egypt still standing? Because underneath all that sand there are foundations built on bedrock. Good computer skills begin the same way.

Nearly all programs are far too comprehensive to be taught in detail to beginners. But if the most basic use of the program (the program's CONCEPT) can be presented in a way that is useful to students, they will get their feet wet. From there they can then be encouraged to not only attend study groups and advanced classes, but to explore their favorite programs on their own. Again, the difference is between teaching new users the fundamental use of the program itself as opposed to teaching them to use specific program "tools".

Obviously some techniques need to be taught in early sessions, but teaching the use of most tools is best done in intermediate and advanced classes. My experience has been that only when people have a need for or enjoy using any computer software will they continue to explore and expand their knowledge of the program.

How long did it take you to figure out that the "d" in d:\ stands for any non-specific "drive" when dealing with program instructions (often installation procedures) and not specifically for the "d" drive on your personal computer? Admit it, there was a time when you didn't know that. Just think how confusing the term is to new users. There is a concept here if you can find it.



Hacking 101

**By Marjie Tucker, Editor, Macon Computer User Group,
North Carolina, www.mcug.org, mcug@dnnet.net**

We are being bombarded with warnings about securing our data and the entry to our computers. Do you ever wonder what the big fuss is all about? How can a hacker possibly get into your data? And, what would he be looking for? Let's spend some time answering those questions.

How Does A Hacker Get In To Your Computer?

When you give your computer access to the Internet, you need an IP (Internet Protocol) address. The IP addresses that we are currently using have 4 octets with periods between them. They will be something like 192.168.100.1. When you access the Internet, that address is read by the router, modem, whatever that links you to your Internet Service Provider. Then it is read by the routers that route all the data through the Internet. This address makes it possible for you to send data, such as e-mail or

requests for web pages. And, in turn, that same address is used to direct incoming e-mail and web pages into your computer. There are several websites and programs available that will translate these IP addresses into the name of the company that purchased them. In many cases, like our residential usages, the company name will be the ISP. For commercial use, it will be the name of the company that rents the block of IP addresses. Hackers use this IP address information to find their targets much like we use a physical address to find a house or office.

Once a hacker finds out your IP address it's relatively simple to send your computer a Trojan horse program, spyware, or a virus that will open a port that you usually don't use. Once that port has been opened, he can freely enter into your operating system and browse around just like he was there in person. He would look for programs that store valuable data like social security numbers and credit card account numbers. (Do you have that information entered into your Quicken or Money program?)

He would look through your My Documents folder for password lists and search your Internet Explorer favorites for financial sites where you saved the username and password. And, before he leaves he usually plants another Trojan horse that will give him the ability to take control of your computer in the future.

Commercial Websites

The most common way to hack into a company's website through the Internet is by using a Denial of Service attack. These DoS attacks use multiple computers to overload a website with bogus requests for information. The hacker usually creates a Trojan horse program that he sends into the computers of unsuspecting people (remember that program that was left behind when your computer was invaded above?) The message that he creates usually contains a header saying that it comes from an IP address that doesn't exist. When he is ready to attack, he calls up all the computers that he infected with his Trojan horse and tells them to contact a specific IP address. Those computers follow his instructions and send his preprogrammed message to that website. Servers that control websites always check to verify that IP addresses requesting information or webpage downloads are legitimate addresses. When a server is hit by a bombardment of these false address requests, it tries to track down every one of the fake addresses. Before long the server becomes overwhelmed by the fruitless process and crashes. When it crashes, the website will vanish and the hacker will be given access to a prompt for the server. He can then use Linux or DOS commands to request and view information on that server other servers.

How About Wireless?

Let's put this hacker into an airport where hundreds of people are sharing a wireless network. It's like leaving a child alone in a candy store. In this case the airport's wireless system usually provides the IP addresses through DHCP and he can easily look at the list of addresses that have been supplied. He can test each of the addresses for available ports and it's quick work to access the most vulnerable. The same principles apply in hotels and restaurants that provide wireless Internet access. If you have a wireless network in your home, our hacker can drive down your street using a laptop or PDA to search for wireless networks. This process is called Wardriving. If he finds one that has not been secured at all, he doesn't even have a challenge. If you have added a password, he simply has to crack the password.

What Tools Do They Use?

It's very easy for a potential hacker to find the tools of his trade. There are many websites that offer program tools and tutorials for using them. Here are some of the popular:

Anonymizers and Remailers - Anonymizers are online services that eliminate the trail of information that is left behind. These sites use anonymous proxies that a hacker can use to access computers and servers without leaving his IP address on any log. Remailers strip the header off a message and replace it with a meaningless header that can't be traced.

Command.com - When this command is typed into a server it will basically give you administrative rights. You can then see all the folders and files. It's also very easy for the hacker to create a new administrative account that he can re-use in the future.

Password Crackers - These programs try random passwords at lightening speeds. They are usually very successful.

Key Loggers - Hackers frequently install these on computers, especially public PCs. The programs actually record every stroke that you make. Hence, when you type in a username and password, it has been captured.

Port Knocking - This is a method of externally opening ports on a firewall by mimicking the process you normally use to add a port to your firewall.

Wireshark - This popular program captures and analyzes the data on a network. It's used by hackers to find information they want and it's also used by network administrators to manage networks.

Aircrack - This program is used to crack wireless WEP and WPA passwords.

Metasploit Framework - This is a tool that can be used by hackers to search the Internet for sites that have dubious code. These are the sites that are the easiest to hack - especially when this program does the searching for you.

Networks identifying the types of data and the internal addresses of this data. It's a valuable tool for administrators, but can save a great deal of time for a hacker.

NMAP - This is a port scanner. Since a hacker knows that he needs to use a port to access your computer or network, he can use this program to see which ports you have open.

NetStumbler - This program finds any wireless networks that are in range.

Wardrivers drive through residential neighborhoods using NetStumbler to search for available wireless networks.

Kismet - This program takes NetStumbler one step farther. It searches for wireless networks that are not broadcasting their SSID.

NSLookup - If you type a domain name into this program, it will give you the company's IP address

Traceroute - This is a very valuable troubleshooting tool for technicians. It will trace a packet on its route through the Internet. It shows every IP address it visits along the way.

Snort - This is an open-source intrusion detection system. It shows traffic analysis and packet logging on networks.

TCPdump - This is the most widely used network sniffer/analyzer for UNIX networks.

Net Cat - This has been called the Swiss army program for hackers. It performs many sniffing and cracking tasks.

This was really just some of the basics. But, if we know why security is so important, we may remember to take the right precautions. Hope your web surfing stays secure.

Weird Windows Behavior

By **Sandy Berger**, compukiss.com, Sandy@compukiss.com,
www.compukiss.com

Have you ever been completely dismayed by your computer? Does it seem to do unusual things that you can't trace back to any of your actions? Well, you are not alone. This happens to all computer users. In the computer world, unusual things sometimes happen. Here is a list of some weird computer behavior and how to combat it.

Icons disappear

Right-click on any open area of the computer desktop, then chose Arrange Icons By. If your icons have accidentally become hidden there will be no checkmark in front of Show Desktop Icons. Just click that option and your icons will reappear.

Unusual windows appear

Windows has a lot of keyboard shortcuts that can be accidentally accessed. For instance, when I started this column, I wanted to hit the Shift key and the letter "h" for the word Have. However, my finger slipped and I hit the Ctrl key and the letter "h" instead. A window popped up asking what I wanted to Find and Replace, which is not at all what I intended.

If this ever happens you to you can usually just close the pop up window, but occasionally you have to look a little further into what happened. For instance, when working in Microsoft Word, if you accidentally hit Ctrl+N, a new window will appear making it look like you just lost your entire document. If you look closely you will be able to figure out that all you have to do is close the new window and the document you were working on will reappear.

If you can't figure out what happened or you get caught in a loop, restarting your computer will usually bring you back to normal.

Lost toolbars

As noted before, an errant key press can cause a problem. This time the culprit is one of the F keys. Accidentally pressing the F11 key can make the toolbars disappear. This is often used as a feature when you want to show something in what they call "full screen mode". If this happens to you, just press F11 again to make the toolbars return.

The toolbar moves

Have you ever had the toolbar that usually appears on the bottom of the screen show up on the side or top of the screen? There is an easy way to get it back where it belongs. Just place your cursor right next to, but not on, the Start button. Then hold the mouse button down and drag the toolbar back where it belongs.

Dramatic slowdown

A dramatic slowdown can mean that your hard disk is filling up. The computer uses the hard disk as sort of a scratch pad when it computes, so when your hard drive starts to fill up, it can slow the computer down significantly. Click on My Computer and highlight the drive called Local Disk (C:). Look at the Details area to see how much space is free. You should have at least 10% of your hard drive free. If you don't, a hard drive cleanup is in order. Delete unnecessary programs and backup old files and photos to an external drive or CD so you can delete them from the hard disk.

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You can use the Disk Cleanup utility to empty the recycle bin and delete unnecessary temporary files. To access it, click on Start, choose All Programs, then click on System Tools where you will find Disk Cleanup listed. It will walk you through the cleanup. Once your hard disk has more free space, your computer will perk up considerably. You might also consider defragging your computer to speed it up. The Disk Defragmenter utility is in the System Tools area. Remember there are other things like viruses and spyware that can also slow down your computer.

No sound

Sometimes the sound gets muted by mistake. Look at the taskbar at bottom of the screen. In the right hand side you will see a small icon that looks like a speaker. If it has a red X on it, the sound has been muted. Click on the icon, then click to remove the checkmark in front of the word Mute. If you don't see this icon, go to the Control Panel and choose Sounds or Sounds and Audio Devices where you will find a place to uncheck the Mute option. Many laptops and some desktops also have a volume button on the keyboard which you can use to mute and unmute the speaker.

Mouse shutters

If your mouse is hard to control or acting erratic, it may need a cleaning. An optical mouse with a flat bottom just needs a cleaning with a damp cloth. If your mouse has a roller ball on the bottom, remove the ball and clean the rollers inside the mouse with a Q-tip soaked with isopropyl alcohol.

Hope this gets you through some of those weird Windows moments in your life.



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Diagnosing RAM Errors in Vista

Written by **Vinny La Bash**, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL, www.spcug.org, vlabash@Comcast.net

There is nothing useful that can happen in your PC without RAM. That's why it's essential to have high quality, reliable memory chips installed on your equipment. Defective RAM shows up as application errors, messages that your operating system is not quite right, and stop errors which bring your system down hard and unexpectedly.

Testing your machine's RAM with Vista's Windows Memory Diagnostic will either find your problem or assure you that your RAM is in tip-top condition.

With your system up and running, close all applications before launching the diagnostic tool to prevent data loss. Click on the Start orb, select Control Panel, and click the System and Maintenance icon. Select Administrative Tools, and from the right pane click on the Memory Diagnostics Tool icon. An alternate way of starting the tool is to click on the Start orb, type Memory in the Start Search text box, and then click the Memory Diagnostics Tool icon.

When the dialog box appears left click on the portion that starts with Restart now. The dialog box will close and your computer will restart. Eventually the Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool's dialog box will appear and the test will begin automatically.

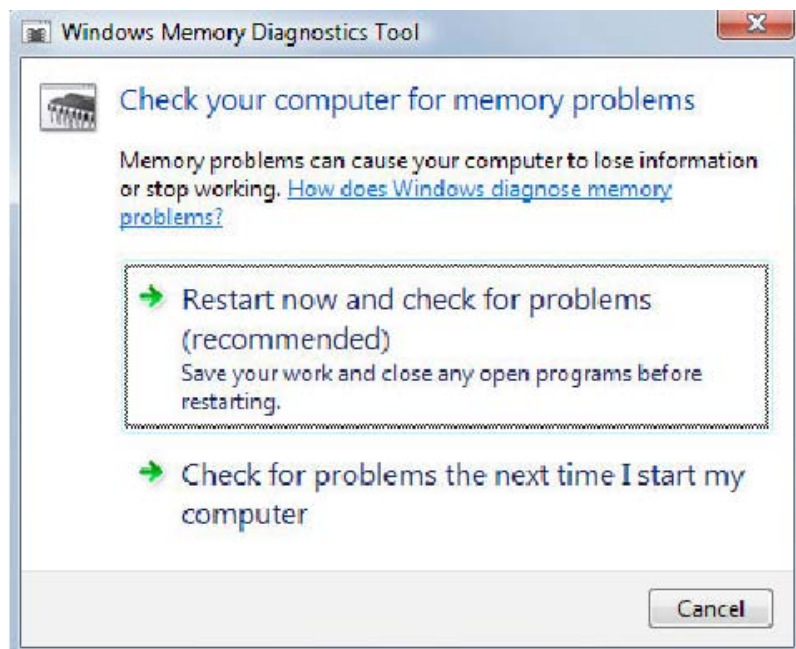
Watch the white progress bar as the test advances through its various stages. You will be able to track progress as the tool repeatedly writes information to memory and then reads the data to verify that nothing changes from the write to the read.

The default is a standard memory test, but there are two other types of memory tests available to you depending on how much time you want to devote to testing, and how thorough you wish to be. Pressing the F1 key will bring up the Options screen.

Locate the Test Mix section and choose either the Basic or Extended mix. The Basic mix runs a decent basic test, but is superficial in comparison to the Extended mix. Up to eight hours can be required for the Extended mix, so don't run it unless you have exhausted all other options.

Each test mix was designed with certain default cache settings which are optimized for that particular test mix. You can change the defaults and create a custom mix of your own, but unless you have an advanced level understanding of how memory works and is tested, you are probably better off leaving the default settings alone.

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Some analyses use the cache on the microprocessor to see if the microprocessor is retrieving data properly from the memory modules. Other tests disable this cache to force the microprocessor to access all its data directly from the memory modules.

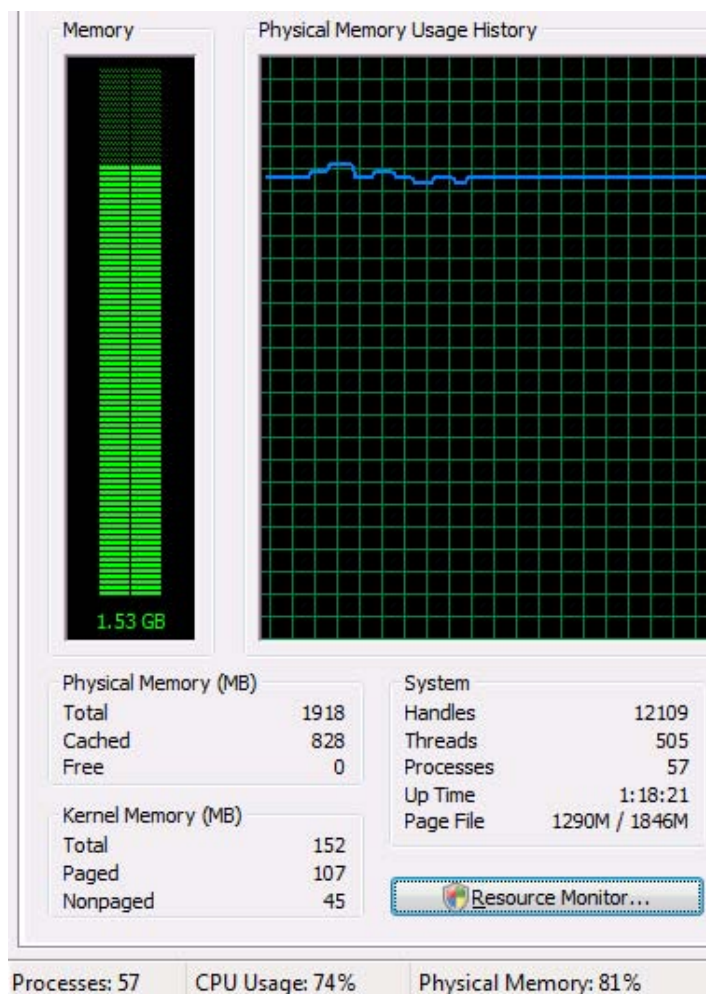
The tests are run twice, but by pressing the Tab key you can access the Pass Count section and specify how many times you want to repeat the tests. Make your changes and save them by pressing F10.

Messages will appear on the Status area if problems are found. If you wish to do other things while the tests are running, you can because if problems are found the Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool will reroute data around the trouble areas and allow Vista to restart without crashing. When you return, look in the notification area to access the test results. The System Event Log also stores the test results. Look under MemoryDiagnosticResults.

What if Vista won't boot? Start the system and continually press the F8 key until the Windows Boot Manager appears. The Windows Memory Diagnostic option is at the bottom of the screen and you can select it with the arrow keys.

If it's impossible to get to the Boot Manager, run the tool from the Vista installation disk. Follow instructions until the Install Now prompt appears. Look for and select the Repair Your Computer option. You will find the Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool on the System Recovery Options menu.

The Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool is an excellent utility, but it sometimes delivers a false positive. In addition, many knowledgeable people believe that hardware based testers are superior. Regardless, the utility is an excellent diagnostic instrument provided it is used with those limitations in mind.



Internet Security: iFrame Attacks

By **Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.**, Member and Contributing Columnist,
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I'm sure that most of you reading the title of this article are asking "What is an iFrame?". Well, sit back, get comfortable and I'll tell you about the latest method hackers are using to steal information from you.

First the definition of an iFrame, which is shorthand for inline frame. That clears it up doesn't it? I guess I'd better add some more to that. An inline frame is code within a web page that permits a second page to be imbedded inside the first page. For example, they can be used to imbed an ad that is located on a different web site. One example is the clickable scrolling ad you frequently find on web sites. IFrames generally load after the main page and may sometimes have their own scroll bar.

The iFrame may contain Javascript programming code which can permit interactive content. Some iFrames may be invisible and may contain code which can redirect the user to another page or download trojans or viruses.

Whenever your Internet browser sees an "iFrame tag" in the web page code it sets aside the space requested in the tag. It also goes out to the web page specified in the code to download the requested information.

So is this something new? I thought it was until I read a report in a tech newsletter (Windows Secrets) about an attack on the AskWoody web site. It turns out that iFrame attacks have been recorded since 2004. The first exploit implanted a worm on thousands of computers. The only thing that stopped it was a patch that Microsoft had to apply to Internet Explorer 6. In June 2007 over 10,000 pages were infected in Italy.

In November 2007 Monster.com had to shut down as a result of an iFrame attack. Then, this year the AskWoody site had iFrame code added to its main web page. His research indicated that the code originated on a Russian web site, which subsequently disappeared. The code placed on the AskWoody web page linked to a web site in China and subsequently to the Russian web site.

This was all done by a short length of code that setup a single, invisible pixel on the web page. The code was designed to load data from the Chinese web site. Anyone with an unpatched IE 6 that visited the AskWoody web site would probably have been infected. However, it was never determined just what was being delivered by the offshore web site.

The worst part of this scenario is that the owner of the AskWoody web site did not find out about the iFrame exploit until he started receiving messages from someone who advised him that their AVG Resident Shield said his site was infected. That was followed by Google advising him that his site was infected and down rating the site. Google also provided a warning to anyone attempting to link to AskWoody warning them that visiting the site might infect their computer.

The question becomes, how did the iFrame code become attached to the web page? The code pages on web sites are generally password protected. Access to these pages for the purpose of making changes is controlled by the web site host and the hosting software. However, there are several programs available which enable hackers to take advantage of holes in web site security.

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Some of these are described as “kiddie scripts”, indicating their ease of use. Others, such as Mpack, require a more sophisticated knowledge of programming. The problem is that thousands of respectable sites have been infected. The following are only a few that were reported in March 2008 by Dancho Danev's blog (a security information web site):

eHawaii Portal - ehawaii.gov - 992 pages

The World Clock - timeanddate.com - 944 pages

Boise State University - boisestate.edu - 471 pages

The U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) - aoa.gov - 425 pages

Gustavus Adolphus College - gustavus.edu - 312 pages

Internet Archive - archive.org - 261 pages

Stanford Business School Alumni Association - gsbapps.stanford.edu - 157 pages

BushTorrent - bushtorrent.com - 147 pages

ChildCareExchange - ccie.com - 131 pages

The University of Vermont - uvm.edu - 120 pages

Hippodrome State Theatre - Gainesville, FL - thehipp.org – 112 pages

Minnesota State University Mankato - mnsu.edu - 94 pages

Medicare – medicare.gov – 12 pages

In many instances it appears that the hackers were able to “harvest” passwords which gave them access to these sites. Then, if the site did not have current input validation patches, the iFrame could be added to web pages. In some cases, home users may have been the source of the initial password theft. By use of a keylogger a hacker can obtain passwords to any protected site visited by the user. In other cases clicking on a banner ad that attracts you can result in the download of a bot, a trojan or other spyware.

This is especially true if you are still running an unpatched Internet Explorer 6. It appears that Firefox is less vulnerable to these types of exploits. Also, clicking on an executable file in IE 6 generally results in running the file. In Firefox you are

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usually only given the option to download the file. Obviously you should never download or run any file that you don't know or don't recognize. This is especially true when the site tells you that you need some kind of add-on or special viewer to see the information you want. This is the type of social engineering being used to tempt users into downloading spyware.

There is also a danger related to the firewall you are using on your computer. A keylogger or other trojan needs to be able to report "home" without the user being aware that information is being sent out. This is done by opening a "back door" to the Internet; an outgoing port in one of the thousands on every computer.

If your firewall doesn't check on all outgoing data and requests permission for new unknown activity, then you will not be able to block the trojan's back door connection. So it is very important that your firewall check both incoming and outgoing data. Then, anytime your firewall requests permission for a program, one you don't recognize, to connect to the Internet, just say NO.

There is one other recognized method for obtaining the information needed to get into web page code. Hackers can purchase web site administrator information on the black market. One software application used to hack web sites, Mpack, sells for about \$1,000 US. The person behind this software is known as \$ash in the Russian underground. The software exploits six flaws in Windows and Internet Explorer. Thus for not a lot of money, hackers can obtain everything they need to exploit weaknesses in web pages.

As you can see, the iFrame attack is a real danger for those who surf the Internet. If you want to read more about these attacks, a Google search will provide you with tons of information. If you want to protect yourself from these attacks, your ability is limited. It is really up to your ISP and the web hosts to provide the security needed to prevent the web page intrusion of an iFrame. So what can a home user do? The following will help, but are no guarantee of protection.

1. Beware of pages that require software installation. Do not allow new software installation from your browser unless you absolutely trust both the Web page and the provider of the software.
2. Scan with an updated antivirus and anti-spyware software any program downloaded through the Internet. This includes any downloads from P2P networks, through the Web and any FTP server regardless of the source.
3. Use only a firewall that checks both incoming and outgoing data.
4. Beware of unexpected strange-looking emails, regardless of their sender.
5. Never open attachments or click on links contained in these email messages
6. Enable the "Automatic Update" feature in your Windows operating system and apply new updates as soon as they are available
7. Always have an antivirus real-time scan service. Monitor regularly that it is being updated and that the service is running.
8. OR another option would be to verify that the address is safe before going to it. You can do this by checking it at: <http://linkscanner.explabs.com/linkscanner/default.asp>

As you can see, for Windows users, the Internet is becoming more of a hazard to navigation. You, as a user, must always be cautious about clicking on links or accepting downloads. If in doubt, don't do it! If everyone practiced safe-surfing, it would be harder for the hackers to succeed.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years; teaching, developing software and assembling systems. He can be reached at bwsail@yahoo.com.



Online Weather Resources May Be Lifesavers

By Ira Wilsker

We just learned a valuable lesson from the hit we took recently from Hurricane Humberto. At 8am on a Wednesday, a local TV weatherman was saying that the clouds in the Gulf would not amount to anything. At 10am, the National Hurricane Center (www.nhc.noaa.gov) announced that it was Tropical Depression 9, and we were put under a tropical storm warning. At 1pm, the National Hurricane Center announced that it was Tropical Storm Humberto. When it came ashore here in the wee hours of Thursday morning, it was a hurricane. According to Senior Hurricane Specialist James Franklin, of the National Hurricane Center,

"To put this development in perspective — no tropical cyclone in the historical record has ever reached this intensity at a faster rate near landfall. It would be nice to know, someday, why this happened." Whether a tropical storm, hurricane, tornado, severe thunderstorm, or other major weather event, we need to be informed about what natural events may be threatening us. If we are kept informed, we may be better able to keep our families safe, and prepare for the potential event.

Now that we are in the most active part of the hurricane season, and living on a coastal plain near the Gulf of Mexico, tropical weather is a major concern to me and others so situated. Arguably one of the best resources to keep track of tropical weather is the website of the National Hurricane Center at www.nhc.noaa.gov. This site has what may be the most comprehensive information on tropical weather available. Its maps of projected storm tracks and wind fields are widely used by both the print and electronic media to show where the storms are likely to be going. A wealth of other information is freely available as well, including hurricane safety, radar and satellite images, free public news feeds available via RSS, and email alerts. Public advisories are posted in English and Spanish, and forecast advisories and discussions are posted as well. Data and graphics on this site are frequently updated, with typically a six hour schedule; when storms threaten land, updates are more frequent, typically on a three hour cycle. This excellent service, along with its poignant graphics of current storm locations and projected storm tracks, has rendered the archaic paper hurricane tracking charts which required manual updating obsolete.

The "granddaddy" of weather sites is the National Weather Service at weather.gov. The heart of the site is an interactive weather map where clicking on the map will open up a localized web page displaying the desired information. Tabs on the top of the map will display other maps showing warnings and forecasts, graphical forecasts, a traditional national weather map, radar images, detailed water and flood information, air quality, satellite images, and climate information. By entering a city and state in the search box on the page, detailed local weather information will be displayed including a "7-Day" forecast, and other comprehensive information. There are many fine commercial weather sites online from a variety of sources, such as the Weather Underground, and the Weather Channel. The Weather Channel obtained the valuable domain name weather.com where it posts detailed weather information. Hyperlinked topics available include weather news, travel weather, driving and traffic reports, healthy living, home and family, sports and recreation, and information about the Weather Channel. At the top of the page, comprehensive local weather can be displayed by entering a city or zipcode. The local page shows the current temperature and heat index (or wind chill), weather videos, and a 36-hour forecast. Links lead to hourly weather forecasts, a 10-day forecast, and an air quality forecast.

In March of 1994, while the internet was in its infancy, there was no comprehensive local weather information for this Gulf region, so I created my own non-commercial weather page, the Golden Triangle Weather Page at www.beaumontweather.com. During most of the year it displays local weather information, current satellite and radar images of the area, and regional and national weather maps. Without a lot of current interest in weather topics, it only gets a few hundred hits per day. During hurricane season however, the number of hits on the site skyrocket, getting as many as 60,000 hits per day. I created a template where I can quickly add contemporary tropical storm and hurricane information to the site utilizing public domain resources. The template includes the latest tracks and predictions from the National Hurricane Center, textual reports and predictions, wind charts, and two other features not commonly found on tropical weather pages. One of the unusual items on my weather site during hurricane season, and only displayed when there is tropical activity, is a highly detailed tracking and prediction chart from the U.S. Navy's Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Center in Norfolk, Virginia. This Navy chart differs from others because of its detail, and includes a display of the projected width of storm winds, as well as charts predicting wind speed and times, and "CPA" (closest point of approach) showing how close the center of the storm will pass from selected cities. Another unusual feature included on my page when storms are active is what is known in meteorology circles as a "spaghetti map", which shows the individual and often different predicted storm tracks using 15 different prediction models. This is what the media refers to when they talk about the models showing projected storm paths.

Some people would like real-time weather alerts if storms threaten, and would like to see current local weather radar such that they can better plan their day. Yahoo! offers thousands of free "widgets" which are computer desktop graphical displays that are frequently updated. Some widgets simply display current local weather conditions in a variety of formats. Others only display weather alerts and bulletins for selected cities or zipcodes. One that I have on my desktop full time is the "Texas Doppler" radar widget (widgets.yahoo.com/gallery/view.php?widget=39762) which can selectively display the weather radar from dozens of Texas TV stations. I have the weather radar from one of my local TV stations displayed, which automatically updates every few minutes. There is also an option to animate the radar display to show the movement of storms. Similar displays are available for other states and countries as well.

Hardware Review

MagicJack

Published by Little Gems

A review by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@comcast.net,
Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.



If you have thought about abandoning your traditional land line because your phone bills are too high, you might be attracted to magicJack. It's a small device designed as a plug-and-play USB telephony tool. The product offers unlimited calling within the United States and Canada. International capability has been promised by the end of 2009.

It's very easy to use. Plug it in to your USB port and shortly thereafter the bundled software automatically installs itself. After you register, the company issues your own personal MagicJack phone number. You can't port your existing number into the service, but the company says that capability will be available by the end of 2009. Plug a standard phone into MagicJack's phone jack and you're ready to make calls.

Voice quality is good. It has voice mail, caller ID, call waiting, and call forwarding. Plus there is a 30 day free trial. What's not to like? Nothing if you accept the company's advertising and promotional literature at face value. However, if you read the End User License Agreement (EULA) which most of us don't, you may be in for a few unpleasant surprises. First, the company doesn't make the EULA easily accessible. I had to do some serious searching to find it. You can read it yourself at <http://www.magicjack.com/tos/>. I urge you to do so before buying this or any software product.

The EULA has several introductory paragraphs before the legal stuff begins. The heavy reading is divided into 24 sections. Keep in mind that End User License Agreements are meant to protect the company, not you.

Let's start with section 1, Description of How the magicJack Device and Software Works: It's really not as easy as simply plugging in the device as the ads say. If you have a home security system the device may not work. You may also be out of luck if you have medical monitoring equipment, a fax machine or a satellite TV system. The device may not work even with some modems.

Section 2, Ownership and Risk of Loss of magicJack Device: If you decide you want a refund, you have to wait 45 days, plus you will pay all shipping and handling costs. I've also heard reports that the company charges your credit card in 15 days, but I haven't been able to verify this conclusively.

Section 5, Emergency Calls: Since the services offered by magicJack are not traditional telephone services, the company is under no obligation to offer traditional 911 emergency services, and it doesn't. They offer something called Voluntary 911 Service. If you need to call 911 you will be speaking to an internet operator who may ask you for location or other information before rerouting the call to an actual 911 operator. This could result in fatal delays, so you need to have access to 911 through a traditional landline.

Section 6, Proper Use: The issue of free unlimited use gets fuzzy here. The company states very explicitly that if it thinks you are using the device too often it has the right to terminate your account without notice and without giving any refunds.

Section 10, Privacy Policy: Here is where you find out that your personal information may be transmitted to a third party without your knowledge. You gave permission when you accepted the terms of the EULA.

Section 11, Advertisements: You will receive advertisements through magicJack, and you can't opt out. The process is completely automated so you may get an ad at an inconvenient time and there's nothing you can do about it. Remember, you agreed to this when you accepted the EULA. This is partly your own fault.

Sections 13 and 14, Modification and Termination: If the company decides to call it quits, it can terminate the service either temporarily or permanently without notice, and of course no refunds. You can end the relationship at any time too, but don't expect any money back.

Section 16, No Warranties: This is the only section printed entirely in upper case. I suppose that means the company thinks it's important. The company makes it very clear that it guarantees ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. 911 calls are made at your own risk and the company does not guarantee that the call will be completed.

Section 17, Limitation of Liability: All the company will admit to is that under some special undefined circumstances, they might, just might refund the money you paid for the device plus one year of service. Don't count on it.

We could go on, but I think you get the idea. This column was not written to pick on MagicJack specifically, but the ubiquity of its ads made it a compelling subject. I mainly wish to point out that whenever you install software of any kind, please READ THE END USER LICENSE AGREEMENT first. You may be glad you did. Any and all communications with the company will be either by email or internet chat. The company does not provide a phone number for customer contact.

Software Review

PowerDirector 7 Ultra

Published by Cyberlink

A review by Terry Currier, Vice President & Editor, WINdows usERS, California,
www.windowsusers.org, winnersug@aol.com

I've used several video editing programs over the years, but I still like using CyberLink's PowerDirector. Yes, there are more powerful programs that can do more, but I feel that the PowerDirector's interface is just easier to work with, and it's faster. If I have not used it for a long period of time I can still figure things out without having to bring up Help.

They have a new Vista-like interface with PowerDirector 7. I like the new dark background, it's easier on the eyes than the previous bright white. One of the more interesting things CyberLink did was create a website (<http://directorzone.cyberlink.com/>) where users can share customized DVD menus, templates, frames, static and motion objects. There are hundreds for people to choose from. You can also search for and import media directly into your media library from Flickr or Freesound. It can work with video in either 16:9 or 4:3 aspect ratio.

PowerDirector 7 will allow you to import video from an HDD camcorder; the edited file can be burned to a disc or back to a hard disk drive camcorder. If you have the Ultra version you can import AVCHD format. I had no problem with taking in my Canon HF100 raw AVCHD and working directly on it. If you have a Blu-ray drive Ultra will also work with it.

The picture-in-picture (PiP) feature is something you may not think to use, but once you do you will realize how much fun it can be. I'm starting to import old VHS tapes of my kids. It was interesting to have the high school band practicing their marching in the main screen and have a PiP of the march in competition.

With the new PowerDirector 7 you can have up to six PiP. You can modify the size of the PiP, degree of transparency of the overlapping clip, as well as its position, motion and other properties using the PiP Designer. So for my grandson's birthday party I can put in the video I took and on the corners have the 200 still pictures showing in four PiP (he's really cute.)

The Slideshow Designer has been enhanced with more styles to choose from. They say you can synchronize photos with the beat of the music and have full creative control over the design in slideshows. I did not do that, but I was really impressed with the Slideshow creation. Easy to do, add music to the background, pan and zoom in Magic Motion, or add a style. It will help you create soundtracks that fit perfectly within the length of a video clip or photo slideshow.

PhotoNow will let you edit images (stills.) You can resize, crop, rotate, remove red eye, adjust color, brightness and more. They show you the original and new image side by side so you can decide how it compares.

Magic Cut helps you fit a video clip to a specific time by automatically cutting out unnecessary portions and keeping only the best moments. The Magic Cut feature uses video technology to locate and keep the most interesting moments, while discarding sections of lesser importance. Great for the times when you have to get that 70 minutes of video down to 60. I did try it and thought it worked pretty good. You still want to check to make sure everything you need is in it.

In the Title Designer you can move the title to any part of the screen, change font, change the color, blur it, make it transparent (percentage), or change the gradient direction. As I said you can download many different DVD menus, or it is not that hard to create your own. One of my favorite things is to create a short video of up to 90 seconds and have it be the background for the DVD menu. When burning to a DVD in the past version they had a feature called Smart Fit which supposedly helped to make your video fit onto a DVD. Most of the time it would not work for me. Well, now in 7 they fixed it.



Continued on page 38

The Voice-Over Recording Room contains controls for recording a narration from a microphone while watching the video clip the voice-over it is destined to accompany. You can control the position and volume of the recording.

Magic Fix will help smooth shaky video and clarifies blurry footage (don't expect miracles on a bad video.) With the previous version using Magic Clean users could only apply one improvement method at a time - Lighting and Color Adjustment, White Balance and Backlight Compensation. With 7 you can apply all at the same time.


Is it perfect – well no video editing software is. When burning a DVD, the program default is to add background music that goes with the different templates. Excuse me, if I wanted it I would put it in. Also the template has the title put in as “My Videos” for each page you have. More chapters means you will have more buttons and therefore more pages. You can edit and put in whatever you want. If I put in Soccer 1993 on the first page I feel it should put that same title on all the pages. Instead I have to edit each page (and remove the background music from each) to change the title.

Besides burning the video to a DVD you can save the video you worked on to a good variety of choices. These include AVI, MPEG-1, 2 and 4, with full control over codec settings. Streaming options are WMV, RealVideo and QuickTime. If you want you can write your videos back to DV or HDV tape. The Production Wizard will link directly into your YouTube account, encoding and uploading straight to the Web.

PowerDirector Ultra is \$119.95 while the Deluxe version is \$69.95. If you do not have a camcorder that outputs to AVCHD or Blu-ray, you only need the Deluxe. You can download a 30 day trial version from the CyberLink website www.cyberlink.com



June 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Board of Directors Crossroads Mall @ the Food Court 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. (Members are welcome to attend)	3	4 High Growth Stock Investing (a/r) 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.	5 Small Business Server 8 - 10 A.M. *PRR*	6 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
7	8 General Meeting @ 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter:	9	10	11	12	13 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
21  Father's Day.	22	23	24	25	26	27 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
28	29	30				

The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

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.

Contact: Maynard Burstein

<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

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

Where: Contact Maynard for location

Pre-registration: Call Maynard

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

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

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

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

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

Where: Learning Center

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

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

Technical Rating: ★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced Study Group is designed for those who already have their MCSE certification.

Since space is limited and the subject matter is advanced, membership is restricted. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

Tuition fee: Cost of any books and registered tests.

When: Every Saturday morning from 8:30 am to 12 pm

Where: Communities in School, 1616 E. Commerce

Study Group Leader: Larry Lentz, (210) 826-8188

Small Business Server Study Group (SBS)

This is a forum for discussion and presentation of topics related to Microsoft's Small Business Server. The target audience includes, computer consultants, small business owners, and network administrators. The meetings begin with a "Taco Social" from 8 to 8:30 am followed by our presentation. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

When: First Friday of the month from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Where: Flexware, 10444 Gulfdale (about block off Isom)

Contact: Larry Lentz for information and registration. Phone (210) 826-8188. Visit the group web site at <http://www.LentzComputer.net/SBS>.

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. |

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.

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.

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.



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 -\$25

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

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

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

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

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

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

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

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



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

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

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

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

