

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

FREWARE ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

July 2009

\$5.00

What is Freeware?
page 20

Dozens of PC utilities free for the taking
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Things you can do with that flash drive
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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:

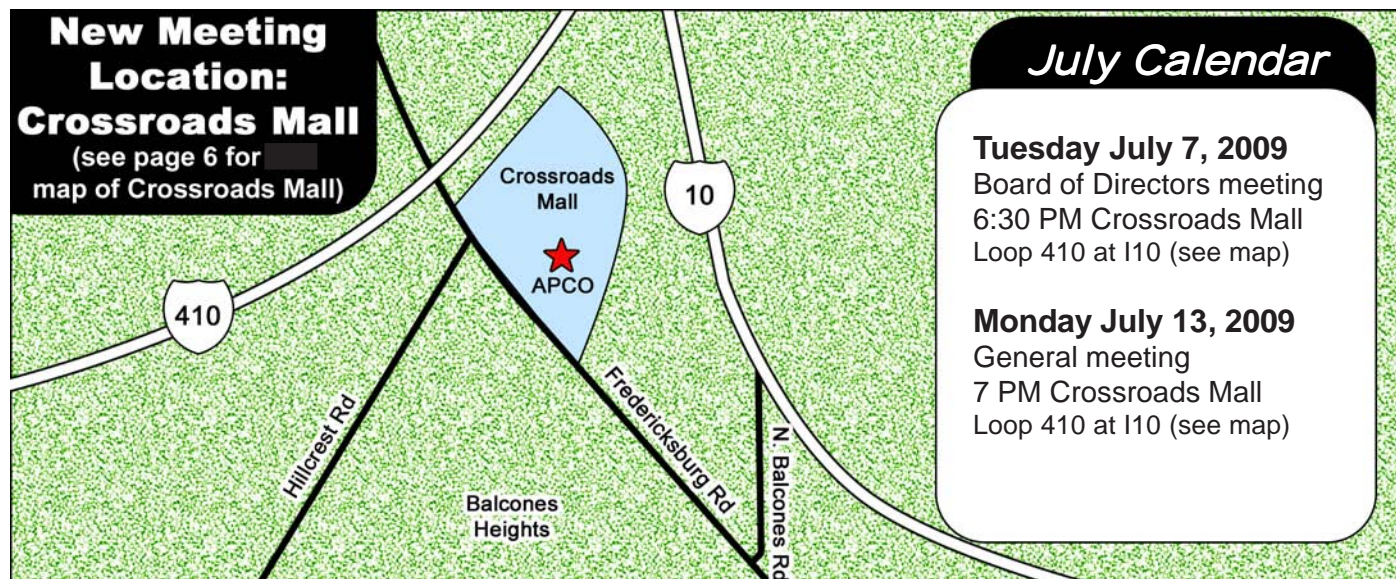
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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)



July Calendar

Tuesday July 7, 2009
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday July 13, 2009
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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PC Alamode

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Featured this month

What is Freeware?

Freewaregenius evaluates free PC software

Dozens of PC utilities free for the taking

Free PC utilities from Comodo

Linkscanner, free protection from Web threats

Panda introduces new antivirus technology, free

Free PC utilities from Piriform Software

Things you can do with that flash drive

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INTERIM PRODUCT REVIEW COORDINATOR

David Steward

ADVERTISING

Joseph de Leon

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

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Software Review: True Image Home 2009

Software Review: Media Show 4

Ad rates effective January 2005

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| | | | |
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| Communications | TBD | | communications@alamopc.org |

Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

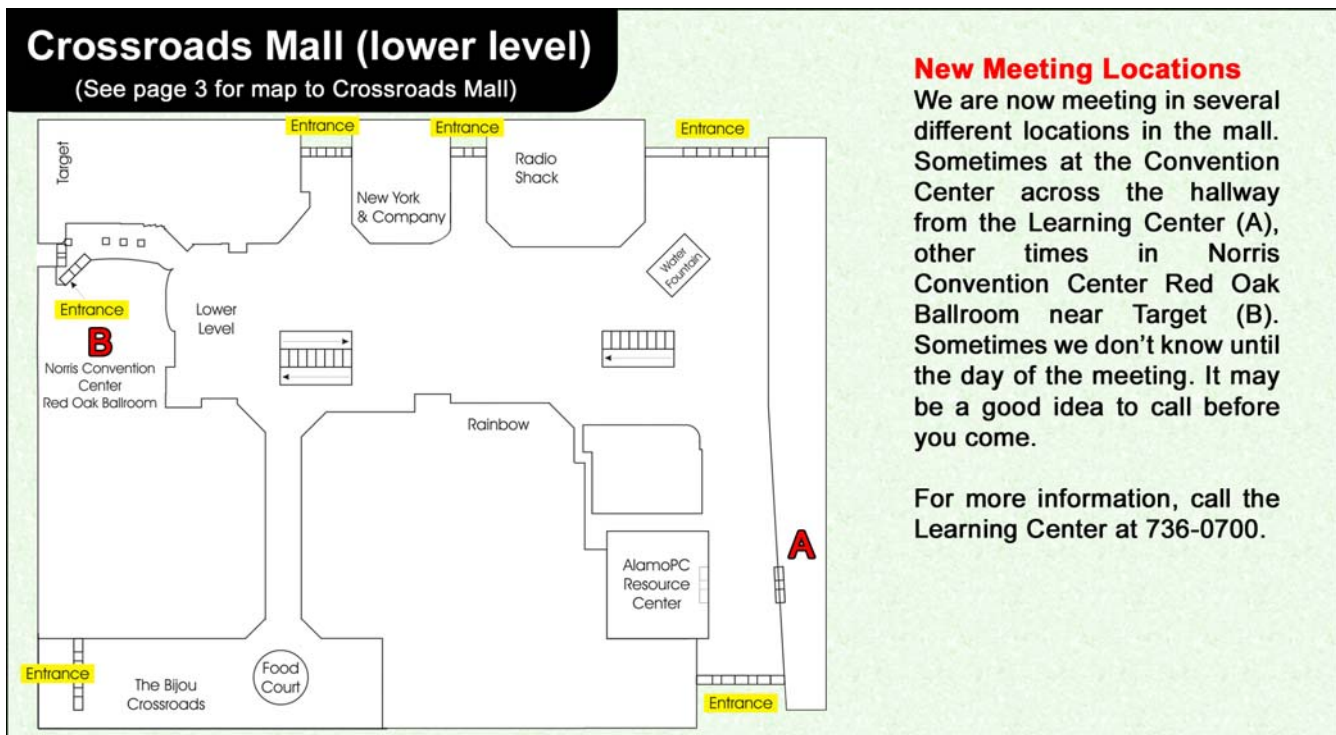
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

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

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





Face life fun

<<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/>>

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 month, I'm sharing with you many ways to save money when you use your computer. I'm not talking about turning the computer off before you go to bed. While that may save a few cents on the electricity bill, it makes more sense to save on the front end. I'm talking about free software.

Our July issue is dedicated to freeware, a type of software license that lets individuals use a particular piece of software for free. Sometimes strings are attached.

Nagware is free to use, but users will see an annoying reminder every time the program is started. Some will even interrupt the work session to remind you how hard the author worked to write the program. Want to get rid of the nagging? Buy a license!

Other programs are free to use on a trial basis, then you have to pay. It's often referred to as shareware. There are many other divisions of freeware and each license agreement is specific to the program, but if you get to use it for free, even if for a limited time or only a few features, you've benefited from freeware. Enjoy!

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<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

"July" - Independence Day and Full Moon

This month there are only two things I find on the calendar for the U.S. that would be of interest to most folks: 4th - Independence Day. It commemorates the severance of ties for the New World colonies, and all the people who were here, from previous rule imposed on them. The flag adopted then has evolved to what we have today - 13 stripes for the original 13 colonies and 50 stars for the current 50 states. (Remember that last month, on the 14th, we celebrated 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); 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 it again in this month).

The June BOD meeting had only three board members present. A presenter for the June General Meeting was addressed, but David Steward was out of town and no one had any information about what would take place. The June General Meeting was addressed, and proposed presenters were E-Mailed to David. 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.

I believe that because information about the presentation for the June General Meeting and the location was not made available in a timely manner, only nine individuals were present for the presentation given by David Steward. I am truly sorry that the information was not made available.

It is very late in June, and I have been informed by David Steward that he is "trying to get something worked out with a pre-recorded presentation by Corel.... If this does not work out, I will be using them for August, but am trying to get it setup for July." We are hopeful the June General Meeting will take place and be profitable to those attending. The meeting location will be confirmed at the June board meeting (regardless of the presenter identified), but will most probably be at our new location (4888 Whirlwind, SAT). It is in David Steward hands, as he stated he is "trying" to get something scheduled.

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 many previous messages, this fact is confirmed by the ever declining membership here (no new members since November 2008) plus the fact we have not had a full compliment of board members (at least one vacancy) for the past four 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 although answering machine may no always function properly.) 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 at the earliest time.

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.

Continued on page 9

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 - wklutzjr@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.

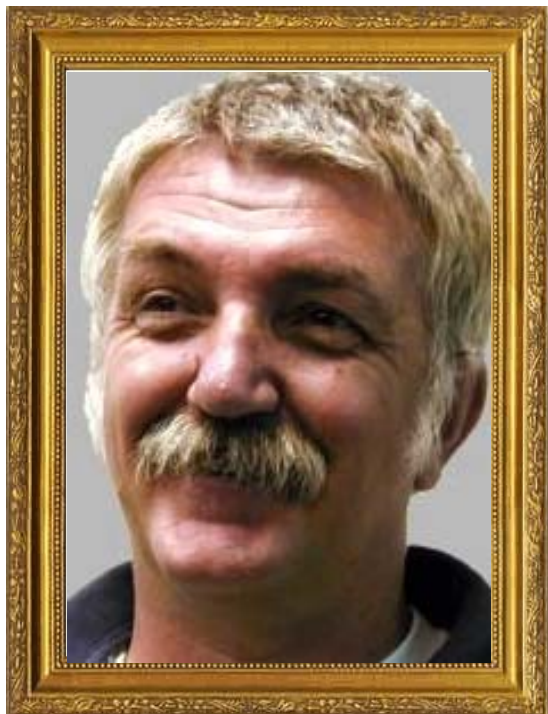
July Program

Bill Klutz

It is very late in June, and I have been informed by David Steward, "I am trying to get something worked out with a pre-recorded presentation by Corel.... If this does not work out, I will be using them for August, but am trying to get it setup for July." The meeting location will be confirmed at the June board meeting (regardless of the presenter identified), but will most probably be at our new location (4888 Whirlwind, San Antonio). 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. Make plans now to come and bring some friends, as we hope to have an interesting presentation.

Volunteer of the Month

Stephen Tech, Jr.



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

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

Rates for one student

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

What you can find at the show:

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

Location:

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

Show Dates:

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.

To remove your password in Vista, click Start, Control Panel. Double-click User Accounts. Under "Make changes to your user account," click "Remove your password." Enter the password in the box. Click Remove. Close the Control Panel window. This is also easily done in Windows XP. Click Start, Control Panel. Double-click User Accounts. Double-click your account. Click "Remove my password." Enter your password in the box. Click Remove Password. Close the open windows. However, you might eventually find that you need a password. For instance, say you use Windows encryption to safeguard a folder. After encryption, the file still opens automatically after the sign-on to Windows. But its key is linked to your password. Others can't sign on and see the folder. You'll also need your own password if you have a Guest account. Such an account is really handy when you have company. Guests might well want to use your computer. People using the Guest account can't download anything or see your files. The Guest account never takes a password. Setting up a password is as easy as removing it. In Vista, click Start, Control Panel. Double-click User Accounts. Click "Create a password for your account." Enter your new password twice. Enter a hint, if you like. Click "Create password." In Win XP, click Start, Control Panel. Double-click User Accounts. Click "Create a password." Enter your password and click Remove Password. Enter the password twice, along with a hint if you like. Click Create Password.

Sync Center

Sync Center eases the process of keeping information organized among multiple computers, network folders, and mobile devices. It does this task by managing defined relationships between devices and automatically syncing files without the need for you to initiate a transfer. Before you can synchronize files between devices or between a computer and a networked folder location, you'll need to create a sync partnership. After connecting your synced device to your computer, open the Sync Center by selecting Start, All Programs, Accessories, and Sync Center. Next, click Set Up New Sync Partnerships in the left pane of the Sync Center. You'll then see a list of available sync partnerships. Choose the appropriate device and click Set Up from the toolbar. A Wizard will appear and walk you through the steps necessary to establish the partnership. After you've established a sync partnership, click View Sync Partnerships to sync immediately or to browse the files on the synced device. Note, not all devices are compatible with Sync Center.

Tagged Files

Windows Vista allows you to tag files for improved organization and search. First, open Windows Explorer and find the file you want to tag. The Details Pane shows details associated with the file at the bottom of the window. If the Details Pane isn't turned on, turn it on by going to Organize, Layout, Details Pane. Click the Tags area of the Details Pane to add a tag. Type your tag, and be sure to click the Save button to save your changes. Once you tag a file, you can use Vista's instant search to find the file quickly.

Task Manager

If your computer is running slowly, the Windows Task Manager offers an easy way to check the load on your Central Processing Unit (CPU). To open it, press Ctrl, Alt, Del (in Vista, you must click Start Task Manager). Next click the Performance tab to see graphs slowing CPU usage. If your processor consistently runs at more than 50% of capacity, you may have a real problem. To distinguish between your system's CPU usage for Windows and its CPU usage for any applications, select View, Show Kernel Times. Windows breaks the CPU usage graph into a red line for Windows and a green bar for applications. Click the Processes tab to view all your currently running processes, the micro-programs that make up your applications, and to display the CPU usage for each one under the CPU column. Reinstall any program that you discover is eating up processes unnecessarily or find and install a less processor hungry alternative. Task Manager's Performance tab provides a quick snapshot of your computer's Random Access Memory (RAM) use, too. In WinXP, if the Total Commit Charge regularly exceeds the Total Physical Memory, your system may rely on the slower, hard drive or swap file. The greater this reliance, the slower your performance. (In Vista, click Resource Monitor and then the Memory bar near the bottom of the window to view your Commit Charge by application.). The most effective way to cure memory bottlenecks in your computer is by adding RAM. If you suspect that your hard drive is slowing down your computer, click, Start, Run (in Vista just Start), type perfmon, and the press Enter to open XP's System Monitor or Vista's Reliability and Performance Monitor. If your system is running XP but you don't see % Disk Time, right-click Counter near the bottom of the window and select Add Counters. Then choose PhysicalDisk under 'Performance object,' and select % Disk Time. If counter consistently runs higher than 40 to 50 percent, your drive may be hindering your computer's performance. If you running Vista, you can check on your disk use in the Disk graph under Resource Overview.

Continued on page 14

Thumb Drive

You can format thumb drives in FAT32. Both PC and Mac will be able to read it. Furthermore, most files you use will be readable in both systems. To format the drive in a PC, plug it in to a USB port and click Start, Computer in Windows Vista, or Start, My Computer in XP. The drive will show up in either. It may be marked as a drive, as removable storage or by its name. Right-click the drive, click Format. Under File System, select FAT32, and do a full format. You can also format the drive in a Mac. Again, insert it in a USB port. Go to Go, Applications, Utilities and open Disc Utility. On the left, select the thumb drive. Click Erase at the top of the right panel. In the Volume Format box, select MS-DOS File System. Also, choose a name and click the Erase button at the bottom right. To use the drive on a PC, insert it in a USB slot. To find the drive, click Start, Computer in Vista, or Start, My Computer in XP. You can also find it in Windows Explorer. To load files, drag and drop them on the drive. In your computer (PC), go to Computer or My Computer and double-click the drive. The list of files and folders will be shown. Drag and drop them in their new home. It is important that thumb drives be removed properly. On the PC, right-click the icon in the notification area. If necessary, mouse over the icons.

The correct icon will say Safely Remove Hardware. Follow the instructions to remove the drive. If you have multiple thumb drives, you probably have an organizational problem. You can fix it with Microsoft's USB Flash Drive Manager. If you want to carry your favorite programs with you, try MojoPac. It turns a thumb drive into a little computer. Your browser may not support display of this image. If you use a thumb drive to carry files between home and work and want to synchronize it with your computer, there are a couple of options, depending on your operating system. In Vista, the drive can synchronize automatically. In WinXP, the drive will synchronize with a click. First, you'll need to download SyncToy. This is a free, easy-to-use program from Microsoft. It provides sophisticated synchronizing options. Install SyncToy on both computers. It must be in the same location on both machines. I recommend installing it in your Program Files folder. Once you've installed SyncToy, you'll set up folder pairs. You can set up multiple pairs, if you'd like. For now, pair a folder on your computer with one on the thumb drive. SyncToy synchronizes files in the folders based on options you select. Once SyncToy is set up, you'll need to establish autorun options. You do this by creating a file named autorun.inf on the thumb drive. Open Notepad (Start, Accessories, Notepad).

Enter the following in the blank document: `[autorun] open=C:\Program Files\Microsoft\SyncToy\SyncToy.exe -R"My Pair" action=Synchronize Folders`. Check to be certain that this path is correct. Otherwise, Windows won't be able to open SyncToy. Synchronization will fail. You're using the drive with two computers. So, the path must be the same on both. Finally, replace "My Pair" with the name you gave your folder pair in SyncToy. Keep the quotation marks. Click File, Save. Name your file autorun.inf. In the box labeled "Save as type," select All Files. Click Save. Now that you've created the autorun file, you need to tell Windows to follow it. In Vista, click Start, Control Panel. Double-click AutoPlay. Make sure "Use AutoPlay for all media and devices" is selected. Beside "Software and games," select "Install or run program." Click Save. When you insert the drive, Windows will automatically synchronize your files. Unfortunately, there is a potential problem. Any thumb drive or disc with a program will run automatically. That includes malicious software. So, I would think twice about using the autorun feature in Vista. Instead, you could create a shortcut that automatically synchronizes your files. You'd simply double-click it. SyncToy would launch, run and then close.

To do this, open Notepad and enter the following: `"C:\ProgramFiles\Microsoft\SyncToy\SyncToy.exe" -R"My Pair"`. Again, make sure you have the correct file path for SyncToy. And substitute the name for your paired folders for "My Pair." Keep the quotation marks. When you're done, click File, Save. Name the file and give it a .BAT extension. For example, name it "synctoy.bat." For file type, select All Files. Click Desktop, Save. Things are different in WinXP. Insert the drive, and the AutoPlay dialog box will open. Double-click Synchronize Folders. SyncToy will launch and synchronize your files.

Vista Address Book

Although backing up Windows Mail is important, it may be useful to you to print a list of your contacts or at least print contact information for the people you'll be meeting that day. Here's how to turn a piece of paper into a personalized, on-the-fly address book. Open your Contacts folder and select the people to

print. Click your username atop your Start menu's top-right corner and then open your Contacts folder. Press Ctrl+A to highlight all your contacts or hold down Ctrl and click the names you want to print. Click the folder's Print button, select your printer, if necessary, and choose your Print Style. The Print Style section offers three ways to print your contact sheet. Memo: Print everything about the contact. Business Card: Print standard business card items for each person, including name, phone, address, company, and e-mail address. Phone List: Print each contact's name and phone numbers (cell, fax, home, business). Click Print. Windows Mail prints a neatly formatted list according to your specifications. If you've never printed your contacts before, try each of the three printing options to see their look. It's worth three sheets of paper.

Vista Sidebar

The Windows Vista Sidebar is a portion of your desktop where you can store small programs, called gadgets, that display useful information. You can add the slide show gadget, a notepad, clock, calendar, and currency converter. Additional gadgets are also available at the Windows Live Gallery.



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.

Attendees walk into a trade show and the glitter and glitz greets them, but they have no inkling as to what goes into setting up an impressive show floor. My wife and I worked the SAP/ASUG Sapphire show <http://www.sap.com/community/events/sapphire_online_2009/index.epx>, and it was the most impressive set-up with respect to just the suspended trusses with attached equipment. There were fourteen JLG High lift platform machines working from 8am to 10pm for 9 days, along with 10 battery operated hydraulic scissor high-lift platforms, all needed to assemble and raise the many trusses, signs, lighting and necessary equipment high above the 1.1 million sq. ft. of show floor in the Orange County Convention Center building in Orlando.

You've seen those so-called cherry pickers on four wheels, and the larger ones are hybrid types with a propane gas engine to drive a generator and hydraulic pump. The body can rotate on its mobile frame and the platform's high-lift boom extends in sections that can be manipulated to a great extent. They're completely controlled by the operator using a control panel located on the platform railing, including driving it around, even fully extended. Per OSHA rules, an operator must be properly licensed to operate a boom-lift or scissors-lift.

These trusses aren't the triangular type supporting a home's roof, but are square frame structures made of tubular aluminum for mounting all kinds of necessary paraphernalia used above booths, and other areas above the show floor. Equipment attached to the trusses might be lighting, including computerized lighting (sometimes very elaborate), projection systems and other electronic gadgetry, drapery and drapery traverse rods, among other things.

Most suspended trusses in this show were heavier (20" square), but some were 12" square. They mostly come in 10' lengths and bolt together end to end, although there are also corner, curved, and angled pieces, depending on the configuration they want. There was almost FOUR MILES of truss suspended in the Sapphire show, and there were over 1,000 1/2 ton electric winches attached to raise and suspend them. The winches to put them up there are interesting because when the workmen get the trusses and equipment assembled, there will be multiple winches attached to each one.

While it's called a winch, a better term would be "chain lift" because there's no cable and drum to wind it around. When lifting, a chain runs through the winch, but then falls over the side into a cloth storage bag until the winch is reversed. These were three-phase (electrically) and are mounted according to whether the winch has to lift itself, or something else. On each truss assembly, every winch's power-cord is connected to a master control panel so that when an assembly is elevated from the assembled position on the floor, the control panel operator simply presses one button and the entire truss assembly, no matter how large, immediately rises in unison retaining the established level position to the required height. Each winch can also be operated individually if needed to adjust individual truss heights.

One I noticed began with a 125' long 20" truss with seven winches attached to the top of it (each winch will pull itself and its attached truss up). The winch's hoisting chains were attached to the roof structure. Then seven more winches were assembled to the bottom of that truss to raise and suspend another truss; and hanging drapery was attached on each side of the top truss. It was raised to the desired height. Then another truss 8" wide by 12" high, and 125' long was attached to the lower winches' chains and a heavy-duty traverse rod was attached to the bottom of that truss to operate a lengthy 8' high drape for the attendee entrance.



Continued on page 16

Suspended drapery cordoned off a stage and projection screen 70' long by 20' high. Several trusses above the stage held lighting equipment. This screen used four projectors behind it in two stacks of two. The top ones were backups (there's always a backup projector). Smaller projection screens were on each side of the large one, with rear projection, and four more screens and projectors were hung back above the seating area, along with speaker systems.

Entering the show floor from the lobby, attendees saw two giant projection screens showing SAP hype (positioned in a V shape) that were each 30' high and 60' wide. Their projectors were mounted on a truss, in this case, in front of the screens, and there were four projectors (two stacks of two) for each screen, each one producing 30,000 lumens of light. The bottom projector in the stack is the main one and the top one is for backup. If a projector goes out, the backup takes over and you would hardly know anything went wrong. Each projector costs roughly \$100,000.

Some assembled trusses above the show floor were 200' long holding special lighting and drapery to cordon off areas. There were about 50 riggers (workman who work high up) hurrying to accomplish just this work, not the actual show floor exhibits, which were assembled by 200 other workers. The stage area was the most complicated with its lighting, sound and projectors; and most of these productions use about a million dollars worth of equipment that usually takes two eighteen wheelers to transport. In this show, it took three trucks to bring in just the necessary truss sections.

The exhibitor area uses smaller ones, but most other projectors used in this show ranged from 20,000 to 30,000 lumens of light output. They were water-cooled and used three-phase power (if you know electricity); and they use from 30 to 50 amps. The lenses alone can cost \$10,000. The makes were mostly Barco, but some were Christie, a more expensive brand. I was told resolution was 2200 x 1480. They had to change a few of the Christies to something else on hand, because those particular Christies didn't deliver the desired resolution.

There was seating for 9,000 attendees. The production folks don't install the elevated projectors and lighting because of the installation height. I'll put some pictures of the trusses, and audio/video production equipment and consoles on my Web site if you would like to see them. <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> Don Henley was the featured entertainer on the last evening of the show.

*Consider This!

Bob Elgines, President and Editor of Colorado River Computer Club, writes an interesting monthly column that is carried by many editors in their newsletters. I loved his comment about the \$29.97 he paid for 1.42 ounces of black ink. He says that in comparison to gas, it works out to \$2700 per gallon and that perhaps somebody should start drilling for ink. If that wasn't in your newsletter, now you know about a possible new business venture. With this economy, I'd try anything.

*Help With Your Data Disk Cataloging

Nowadays, people may own hundreds of CD and DVD data disks. How do you find the necessary information on disks without endless inserting and ejecting disks? SearchMyDiscs is a handy software application that helps people with a large CD and DVD collection quickly find the disk that has a needed file, photograph, music track, or movie clip.

First, you individually insert every CD or DVD that needs to be indexed into your PC and the program will automatically scan the disk, cataloging its contents. The program will store the file structure of the disk, thumbnail images for photos and movies, EXIF tags for digital photographs, ID3 tags for MP3 tracks and many other file properties (video codec information, textual documents' content, etc.). The program is then ready for use. Next time you need to find a certain program or photograph, simply enter the name of the file or other search parameter, like the name of a song, performer or album, digital camera model, etc., and SearchMyDiscs will show exactly what CD or DVD contains the desired data.

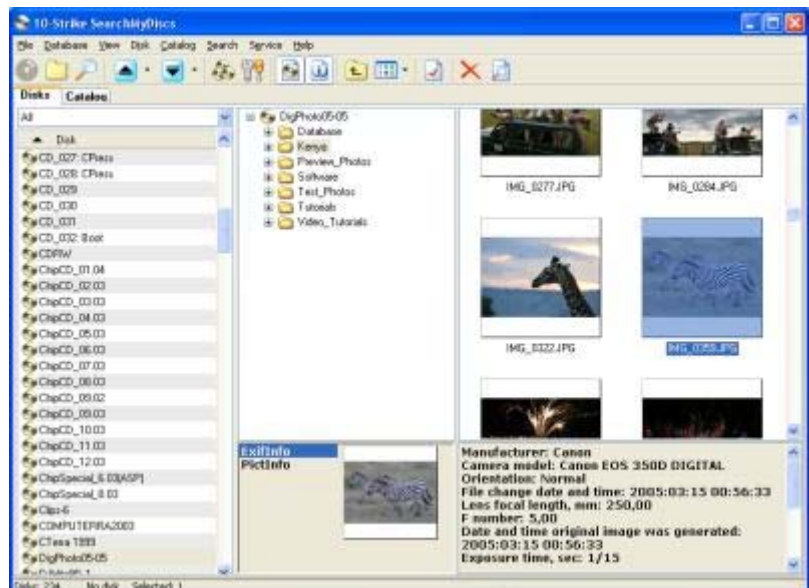
The new version 4.0 contains a new powerful report generator that can export reports on files to many popular file formats: PDF, XLS, RTF, HTML, Open Office, CSV, etc.

SearchMyDiscs 4.0 is available at <<http://www.searchmydiscs.com/>> for a free 30-day trial download. The cost of registering it is \$29.95 US Dollars, but user group members get a 25% discount with coupon code (DKLS-TRG2).

System Requirements: A PC with Windows 95/98/ME/NT4/2000/XP

Download: <<http://www.searchmydiscs.com/searchmydiscs-setup.exe>>

Order Link: <<http://www.searchmydiscs.com/order.shtml>>





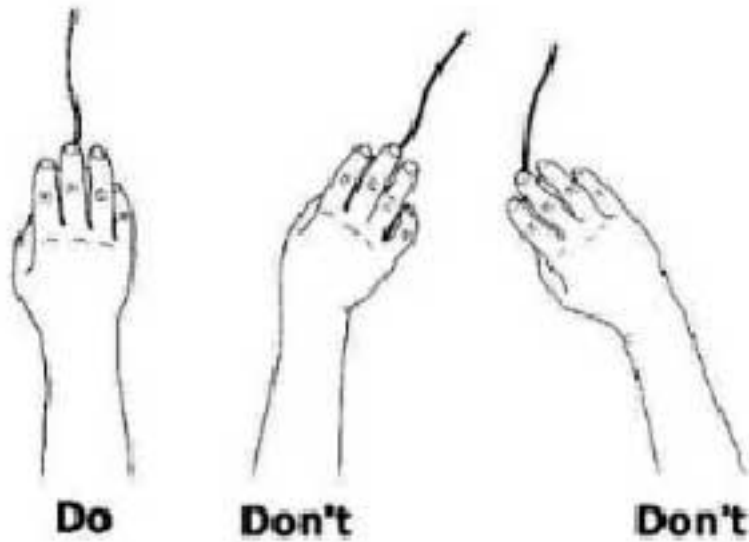
Mouse use tips

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/>>

Ergonomics is the study of how people interact with their working environment. Ergonomic improvements don't have to involve expensive changes in your work location. Simple tools shared with appropriate instructions are often all that is needed. A footstool can reduce stress from common activities of everyday living like ironing, washing dishes, or any forward bending activity. Advice about correct posture (maintaining the lumbar curve or "neutral spine") can improve head and neck alignment and result in a less fatigue while sitting at your desk working on your PC for extended periods of time.

- When purchasing your mouse, make sure it fits comfortably in your hand.
- Consider a mouse with multiple buttons.
- Test different models of mouse, trackball or other input devices. Consider the shape and size of the devices, how comfortably it fits into your hand, ease of operation, and any special features that might make your job easier. {short description of image}
- If you surf the web or edit long documents, you may want to try a mouse with a scroll wheel.
- If you're experiencing pain or symptoms in your wrist arm or shoulder, using a trackball may help.
- Set your mouse for single clicking instead of double clicking. {short description of image}
- Use your shoulder muscles to move your mouse instead of your wrist muscles Try to use the mouse with a sweeping movement, instead of a quick, twisting motion..
- You'll find it easier and more comfortable to get the control you want if you're not squeezing the mouse or trackball too tightly.
- When you use your mouse or trackball, avoid resting your wrists on your desktop.
- Make sure your elbow next to your side with your forearm parallel to the floor or slightly bent down. Position your and mouse or trackball so you do not have to reach for it.
- Keep your wrist relaxed and straight - don't bend it up, down, or to either side. Keep your shoulders relaxed. Do not hunch or shrug.
- Take frequent "stretch breaks" to stretch the wrist muscles at different angles.
- Using a mouse demands a certain level of surface stability; if used on a keyboard tray, the tray should not wobble or tip.
- Contact a Chiropractor if you experience pain, tenderness, swelling, burning, cramping, stiffness, or numbness in your fingers, hands, wrists, arms, or shoulders.





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>

Third party Windows applications are rarely examined in this column, but CrossLoop is too good a utility to ignore. Trying to walk someone through a computer problem over the telephone is often an exercise in frustration. There is no substitute for seeing what is actually on a user's screen to find out the root cause of a problem.

Vista has a built-in support tool known as Remote Desktop, but far from making the process easy, it has a tendency to confuse those with no technical background. Remote Desktop makes it rough on those who don't know how to handle the added complications of firewalls and routers. CrossLoop, which is a free remote support utility, could be an excellent solution.

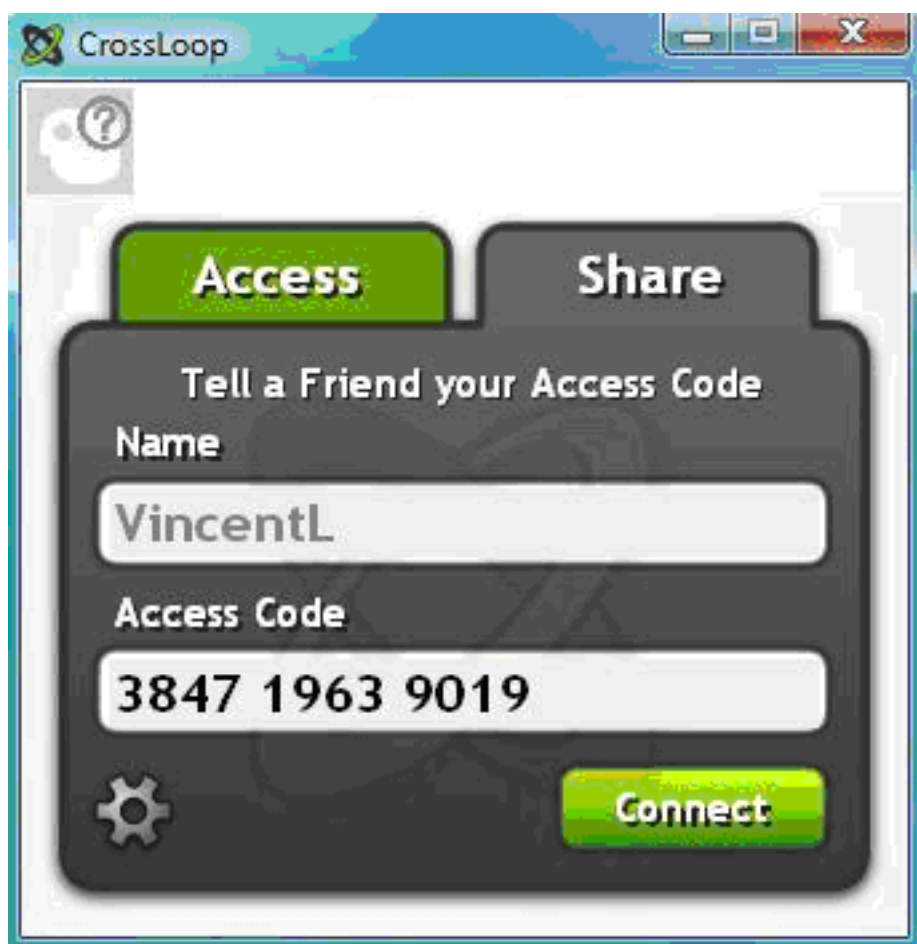
CrossLoop shields users from tricky situations involving communicating through routers, firewalls, and other potential obstacles. Setting up a communications session between two computers physically separated, but connected through the internet, is reduced to a process hardly more complex than turning on your TV. Those concerned about security can relax. CrossLoop uses something called TightVNC which safeguards data with 128 bit encryption.

Crossloop is useful for people who want to train or support others remotely. If you're an experienced web surfer, for example, and need to show someone how to access a disk drive or retrieve a lost document, CrossLoop allows you to take control of their computer screen, and show them exactly how to do it.

Hard core geeks may not be satisfied with CrossLoop. It's not complicated enough. It works better than most similar commercial utilities, and your technically challenged friends and relatives will find it aggravation free.

You can download the program without charge from <http://www.crossloop.com>. The site has a video that demonstrates how to install and use the program which is very helpful for technophobes.

Once you're up and running, the interface presenting itself is a model of simplicity which effectively masks the complexity behind the scenes. As mentioned earlier, security and remote control is handled by TightVNC. VNC stands for Virtual Network Computing, and is a very well designed software tool that easily allows remote access to Operating Systems with a graphical interface. The technical specifications say you need Windows 98 or higher. A broadband internet connection is also a requirement. Dialup connections



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won't work. Drive space, processor speed, and memory requirements are negligible given the general power of today's computers.

Another benefit of TightVNC is the built-in 128 bit encrypted security. When you begin a communications session, the program generates a new 12 digit access code. The access code then generates the encryption codes giving you an additional layer of security. Not bad for a free utility.

Running the program is so easy it's almost boring. As you can see from the illustration, the interface is simple and straightforward. Assuming you started the session, the next step is to communicate the access code to the person you are communicating with. You can do this by email, telephone, screaming into the next room, etc.

After starting the session, your friend types the access code into the box and clicks Connect. When the Connect button is clicked on both sides the two PCs are linked.

This method of troubleshooting a remote PC eliminates all the hassles of trying to interpret what an inexperienced user is attempting to explain. It's difficult to imagine anything less complex than a one button interface. With 128 bit encryption built in, it's tough to beat.

Other applications that make such connections possible have been available for years, but nothing I've seen makes it as simple as CrossLoop.

Computer Briefs

Needles and Haystacks

When did you first hear or see the term "cloud computing"? I'm usually the last to know anything, it seems, so I've only recently started noticing this term on the Internet. I did some research, and some say it's the greatest thing since sliced bread—but others think it isn't such a hot idea. In very simple terms, cloud computing is this: rather than having programs and files on your computer, you would store files online and also access applications (programs) online (think Google Docs or MS Office Live; think Flickr or Buzzword). Your computer really wouldn't need to have much on it, and you'd have to have an Internet connection in order to run applications or access your files. Not only individuals, but also companies would be doing this (and in fact, are doing it now). One of the major benefits is that a company (or an individual, for that matter) has the use of combined server resources they might not otherwise be able to afford "in house."

The ever-vigilant Richard Stallman warns against the use of cloud computing: "Somebody is saying this is inevitable—and whenever you hear somebody saying that, it's very likely to be a set of businesses campaigning to make it true... One reason you should not use web applications to do your computing is that you lose control," he said. "It's just as bad as using a proprietary program. Do your own computing on your own computer with your copy of a freedom-respecting program. If you use a proprietary program or somebody else's web server, you're defenseless. You're putty in the hands of whoever developed that software." Food for thought.

Sister Dorothy Robinson, Editor, OMUG News, The Olympia Microcomputer User Group, WA, www.oly mug.org, Newsletter@oly mug.org

Freeware issue

What is **FREE** Ware?

By R. Kayne, Conjecture Corporation

Freeware is software offered free of charge, downloadable off of the Internet. If the software requires the user to view ads while using the program, it is technically not freeware but adware.

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Freeware is also different from shareware in that shareware requires a payment if the software is to be used past a trial date.

Though freeware does not require financial compensation, it does have a user license or EULA (End User License Agreement). Each license is specific to the freeware it is bundled with, but some restrictions are common to most programs. For example, most freeware forbids the user to alter the program, repackaging it, or sell it. It might allow redistribution, however, as long as the program is unchanged and the license agreement intact.

Understandably, freeware does not often come with technical support, and some programs do not have an extensive Help menu. Many freeware operators write programs in their spare time and do not have the resources to offer tech support. That said, other freeware programs not only have an extensive built-in manual, but they also have their own websites with FAQs and USENET newsgroups dedicated to users helping users. Some authors of freeware personally answer email from end users, though this can't be counted upon.

Often, a program is only available as freeware if it is for personal use, while commercial or business use requires a paid license. It is important to read any license that comes with the freeware program. The license will appear during the initial stages of the installation process. As with most software, freeware is offered "as is" and the user assumes all responsibility for its use.

Freeware has proven to be an incredible benefit to computer users since online services became popular in the late 1980s. Many talented coders report that writing handy programs is an addictive hobby. Others use freeware as a stepping-stone to garner sales for more robust editions offered at a cost. And still other freeware programs bring traffic to sites that rely on a suite of related shareware programs for income.

While there are countless freeware programs, some have become staples in the online community. Others have changed status over the years from freeware to shareware or adware. There are several sites dedicated to freeware only. Most of the popular download sites, including TuCows, ZDNet and SnapFiles, distribute both shareware and freeware.

Computer Briefs

www.portablefreeware.com

Portable Freeware

In recent years, the term "portable" has quickly come to be associated with apps that you run off a USB memory stick. However, to me, "portable" has always meant that I could easily move apps from one machine to another without too much inconvenience. In fact, in the earlier days, I had my portable apps in a separate partition on the harddisk so that when I reinstall or upgrade Windows, I didn't have to reinstall/reconfigure my favorite apps. So in my mind at that time, portability didn't involve a removable storage device at all.

Portable apps are nice because I can easily pass them to a colleague or friend ("Hey, try out this latest version of Firefox with my favorite addons!"), or help out friends when they run into problems with their PCs (eg. file recovery, network diagnosis). I can upgrade to a newer machine and have my favorite apps up and running in no time, instead of having to spend the entire day swapping CDs and reinstalling/reconfiguring apps that I need. This really made my computing life better.

Since then, I have learnt that some people actually live a nomadic computing life; that they may hop from PC to PC with only their USB memory stick; that they may be using an old machine with some incredibly old version of Windows that has never been updated; that they may only have guest access to the host machine; that they may not want to leave any trace on the host machine after they unplug their USB memory stick.

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(mailto: andrew@portablefreeware.com)

See page 35 for
a related article

Freewaregenius – Evaluates Free PC Software

Written by **Ira Wilsker**, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner,
Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net,

Reiterating what I wrote in a recent column, I still get a positive response from readers that they like the idea of getting free software for their PCs. From your feedback, these freeware columns are among your favorites, and I will continue to compose them.

I have used a variety of sources to denote which freeware programs would be most beneficial to most users, and have now come across another valuable resource on the subject. Lately I have been reading the listings and evaluations from a site “freewaregenius” (listed as one word in lower case), www.freewaregenius.com, which has been busily locating and testing some of the finest free software available. About once a week, freewaregenius posts its latest recommendations. Two of the recent postings were especially interesting to me, and they are a review of the best free antivirus programs, and a review of software uninstaller utilities.

On almost every radio show, and via a steady stream of emails, I am frequently asked about my recommendations for free antivirus software. Users are either fed up with the poor performance of their commercial antivirus software and are seeking free alternatives, or are seeking to conserve their scarce fiscal resources by utilizing free software rather than buying it. Freewaregenius evaluated the three most popular free antivirus programs in order to bestow the title “best freeware antivirus program”. The three contenders for the top spot were the enormously popular programs Avira Antivir, Avast, and AVG. The author of the review summarized his findings with the statement, “My conclusion: all three are very worthy contenders that can hold their own or surpass any heavyweight for-pay antivirus; however Antivir and Avast are definitely in the first tier, while AVG is a close second tier.”

In his evaluations, the author used the latest available objective comparisons performed by a third party testing laboratory, AV-comparatives. While there are some other excellent freeware antivirus programs (I have recommended Comodo in the past), for the purpose of evaluation, the author chose to compare the top three free antivirus programs. These three programs, which in their aggregate, arguably represent the large majority of users of free antivirus programs, were also compared to the performance of some of the top performing commercial programs, Kaspersky and Eset Nod32.

In the independent laboratory tests by AV-comparatives, Avast and Antivir both performed extremely well, and were very close in their abilities to detect viruses. In fact, the free Antivir came out at the top of the list in detection, beating out all of the commercial products tested. Antivir was also excellent at detecting new threats that had not yet been added to its virus

WEBSITES:

<http://www.freewaregenius.com>
<http://www.av-comparatives.org>
<http://free.grisoft.com>
<http://free-av.com>
<http://www.appremover.com>
<http://www.pcdecrapifier.com>
<http://www.revouninstaller.com>



freewaregenius
SOME DAY ALL SOFTWARE WILL BE FREE

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How to uninstall anything: free apps that get the job done 13 Apr

Posted by Samer on Monday, April 13th 2009

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Description: this article presents three handy free programs designed to remove installed applications from your system: Appremover, [PC Decrapifier](#), and Revo Uninstaller. All three are portable (or, in the case of Revo, have a portable version available).

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signature database, using a detection technology known as “heuristics”. AVG, while slightly behind in its detection ability, was ahead of the others by having the lowest rate of false positives. To swing the other way, AVG had a slower scanning speed than the other two.

While top rated in detection, Antivir does have one feature that many users found irritating, and that is that it displays advertisements with each update. Antivir also integrates anti-spyware (as does AVG), but both AVG (the most popular) and Avast are easier to use than Antivir. Personally, I have tried both AVG and Avast, and have recommended them, along with Comodo, for a long time. Cognizant that none of the three are by themselves a comprehensive security suite, but are a vital component in protecting the PC, I would feel comfortable with any of the three.

Another common situation that virtually all PC users eventually face is the occasional difficulty uninstalling no longer needed software. Microsoft’s Add/Remove Programs utility is notorious for its inability to remove all traces of an application when uninstalled. Luckily for us there are several free utilities that are available that typically do a better job removing unwanted software than Microsoft’s utility. Freewaregenius has recently obliged us by reviewing some of the best of the free uninstall utilities, Appremover, PC Decrapifier, and Revo Uninstaller.

Among the most difficult programs to uninstall are security applications, especially those from Symantec/Norton. Appremover (www.appremover.com) is a utility expressly designed to remove those no longer needed security applications. I have used Appremover to uninstall Norton security products that have been difficult to remove, even with the utility available directly from Symantec. Just recently, I tried to uninstall a Norton security suite from a troubled computer, and using Norton’s uninstall utility, there still were large amounts of digital debris left on the hard drive, including now obsolete registry entries; Appremover handled the job much more efficiently and completely than Norton’s own utility. Many other security utilities are almost as difficult to remove, McAfee products being among the most difficult, and Appremover handles them all with ease.


PC Decrapifier (www.pcdecrapifier.com) may have an unpleasant name, but it is a sweet program that I have used numerous times to selectively remove the trial software, demo software, and other useless items installed by computer manufacturers. Much of this factory installed software and services are commission generating or advertising in nature. One major PC maker actually charges the user \$50 to order a computer without such software installed! PC Decrapifier can remove that software from a new or not so new computer for free.

Because I review so much software, I am frequently installing and uninstalling software and my most frequent utility to accomplish that task is Revo Uninstaller (www.revouninstaller.com). Revo Uninstaller displays all of the software installed on the computer, and can quickly and completely remove unwanted software with the click of a mouse. On my computer, Revo shows several times more programs than Add/Remove Programs, and removes them much more completely. Revo Uninstaller is the primary program that I use for this purpose on a regular basis, and I have been very satisfied with it.

At present, freewaregenius has a directory of over 600 free programs that it has reviewed and evaluated, and another listing of the programs that it has rated with its highest 5-star rating. Freewaregenius is a very worthwhile web site to periodically visit, and use as a resource to discover some excellent free PC software.

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Effective application removal.

AppRemover enables you to thoroughly uninstall security applications such as antivirus and antispyware from your computer. [Learn more »](#)

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Download Now
(Release Candidate 1)

AppRemover is tested spyware-free using [Filterbit](#) and has been downloaded 52459 times.

Supported Operating Systems:

Windows 2000, 2003, XP (32 / 64 bit), Vista (32 / 64 bit), 2008, Windows 7 beta

Dozens of PC Utilities Free for the Taking

Written by **Ira Wilsker**, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net,

I read a lot of online computer magazines. Most of them are American, but some are foreign, including from such diverse places as England, Germany, and Australia. Recently the Australian magazine PCWorld Australia published an article titled (sic) “95 great free sites and downloads you’ve probably never heard of” (tinyurl.com/95free-utilities). From the feedback I have received from readers of this column, there is great interest in totally free computer utilities, especially in these pressing economic times.

The article categorizes the free software into 12 categories including productivity software, music utilities, security tools, web enhancers, phone utilities, photo and video managers, social networking, PC performance enhancements, file synchronization, and business applications. In the productivity software category, the first recommendation is one of my personal favorites, OpenOffice. OpenOffice (OpenOffice.org), which was reviewed in this column last year, is a full featured free office suite that can read and write Microsoft Office files such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, as well as many other formats. With its frequent updates and enhancements, OpenOffice would be a wise choice for anyone who wants an office suite with “all the bells and whistles” totally free. The menu hierarchy and appearance are nearly identical to Word, Excel, and other Microsoft Office products providing for a “near zero” learning curve for anyone familiar with Microsoft Office products. Other productivity utilities are displayed including: Flowgram, which can create web-based multimedia presentations; Gubb, which is a personal time manager; PrimoOnline, which helps you create PDFs without software; and “Remember the Milk” which helps you to remember to do anything, and integrates many platforms, including BlackBerry, iPhone, Gmail, and Windows Mobile.

The music utilities category has several programs that I am not familiar with, but appear to be very attractive, and since they are totally free, there is no downside risk in trying them. The one rated as a “BEST BET” by the magazine is Songbird, an open-source downloadable media player that's completely customizable and packed with innovative features. Songbird is both a music player and a Web browser that enables the quick downloading of music. Other utilities listed include “SharePod”, which enabled iPod users to change, backup, or share music between iPod users.

WEBSITES:

<http://tinyurl.com/95free-utilities>
<http://openoffice.org>
<http://www.iobit.com>
<http://www.defraggler.com>
<http://www.recuva.com>



The security category includes some utilities that I have written about in the past. The one top rated by PCWorld Australia is the excellent and free Avast Antivirus, which utilizes seven different “shields” to protect the computer from attack from different sources and vectors. Avast is one of the most popular free security utilities with tens of millions of devoted users, and would be a good choice for anyone wanting a free antivirus product that is equal to or superior than many of the expensive commercial competitors. Other free security utilities listed are from “a-squared” (previously discussed in this column); “Attack Trace”, which can detect if a website is under attack; Comodo EasyVPN Home, which allows the user to create a virtual private network (also recently discussed in my column); a firewall, and a pair of excellent anti-spyware utilities. These utilities would all be worthy of consideration as their quality is generally excellent, and often better than their commercial counterparts.

Most of us use our internet browsers directly as they come from the publisher, unaware that there are tweaks that are available to improve our online experience. There are thousands of plug-ins and add-on’s for Firefox, and unknown to many there are also many similar improvements for Internet Explorer. These plug-ins listed in the magazine article include a note taker for Firefox, a news reader which is an improvement over the one integrated with Internet Explorer, a FTP (file transfer) utility for Firefox, a nifty utility “Google Preview” that displays thumbnail images of web pages that appear in Google search results, IE7Pro which adds Firefox-like features to IE7, a mapping utility that automatically displays street maps by clicking on an address, and “Video Download Helper” which is a Firefox plug-in that I use to download videos from the major video sites such as YouTube. The 11 browser enhancements listed may add a lot of enjoyment to the web browsing experience.

Being a typical geek, I like to try and tweak the best performance that my computer is capable of delivering. PCWorld Australia editors and I think alike as we have both written about some the same free performance enhancement utilities. At the top of the magazine’s list is one of my personal favorites that I use regularly, Advanced System Care Free, available from www.iobit.com. This is a full featured performance utility that has dozens of tools to enhance PC performance, including a registry cleaner, anti-spyware, internet speed-up tools, and many others. I routinely put this program on almost every computer that I use. Just a few weeks ago I wrote about free utilities from Piriform, including a unique defragmentation utility called Defraggler (www.defraggler.com). This utility, which is on my computer, can quickly defragment files, folders, or an entire hard drive. Recuva (www.recuva.com), also from Piriform, is a file recovery utility that can undelete files on hard drives, flash drives, and other forms of media. I have personally used Recuva to restore some photos accidentally deleted from my digital camera, and it worked fine!

Computer Briefs

Copying Info from the Screen

Dick Carricato, member of the Tri County Computer User Group in Florida wrote a good article about copying pictures from your computer screen. Sometimes there are other things you may want to copy from your screen that may not lend themselves to the PrtScr method. This is especially true of lists in drop down boxes that require a scroll bar down the right side. PrtScr will only show the portion of the list that shows. For instance, I write a (almost) monthly newsletter on the web and usually include a bunch of pictures. I like to have a hard copy of the picture thumbnails at hand to remind me of things to say. This is always a scrolling window. Often I want a hardcopy of a menu, too.

I have found FastStone Capture to be a perfect answer to my needs. You can try it free by going to <http://www.faststone.org/>. Then, if you like it, as I do, you can purchase a lifetime license for \$19.95.

You can capture and annotate anything on the screen including windows, objects, menus, full screen, rectangular/freehand regions and scrolling windows/web pages. Editing tools include annotating, resizing, cropping, sharpening, watermarking, edge effects and many more. Of course, you can transfer the image to any editor of choice. You can either print the copy or save it in one of eight different formats. I choose JPEG. Further, you can choose the resolution of the saved image. I don’t know if it actually improves the resolution or just resizes to more pixels.

By Richard Kennon Member Amador Computer Users Group, Jackson, California, <http://www.acug.net/>, drtrdguy@volcano.net

Free PC Utilities from Comodo

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net,

Last year I wrote in this column about a free suite of excellent security products from a little known company called Comodo (www.comodo.com). Comodo is one of those sleeper companies that quietly provides very good products and services, but just seems to dwell in the background while it adds paying customers and clients. Comodo is an international company with offices in the U.S., the U.K., the Ukraine, and in India. While not visible to the ordinary internet user, Comodo is the exclusive provider of digital security services to the top level internet domain name registrants. Comodo has over 200,000 commercial customers in over 100 countries, and protects over a half-million businesses and private individuals. As is common in the field, Comodo offers some excellent free products available to all users that Comodo hopes will spread its reputation and services, and eventually attract paying clients to its more sophisticated commercial products.

In my earlier column on Comodo, I discussed the individual free Comodo security products, including its antivirus, firewall, antispyware, and other security products, all of which can still be downloaded individually, but work together as do many of the competitive commercial security suites. To ease the download process, and even better integrate the protective functions, Comodo has introduced its free Comodo Internet Security, a fully functional, but basic antivirus, firewall, and proactive security suite. This free suite has been recognized by the media for its quality, by being awarded CNET's highest 5 star rating, and was selected by PC Magazine as its "Editors' Choice". Comodo hopes that users of the free security suite will want to eventually upgrade to its commercial big brother (\$40) that offers additional and enhanced features along with free 24/7 online chat support.

Comodo offers a somewhat unique free product in its "Comodo Memory Firewall Version 2.0". This is an unusual utility in that unlike a conventional firewall (which is also required to maximize security), this Memory Firewall monitors the memory of the computer and the running applications. It is on the lookout for attacks on running programs such as buffer-overflows, attacks, a common and damaging threat to our computing security. Attacks such as these, which can be prevented with this Memory Firewall, can cause system crashes or steal confidential information from the targeted computer.

An extremely common threat faced by all web surfers is a form of identity theft through the use of "phishing" or otherwise fraudulent websites. Comodo offers its "Free Forever" Comodo Verification Engine, which notifies the user if a website is legitimate or fraudulent. If a website is known to be legitimate, simply placing the mouse over the website logo will display a green border. This is an excellent tool to prevent some of the more common online forms of identity theft.

Many thousands of computers are lost or stolen each year. It is a known fact that thousands of laptop or notebook computers are stolen in airports and other places annually. One major concern of the owner of a lost or stolen

WEBSITES:

http://www.comodo.com/products/free_products.html

Comodo BackUp Version 1.0.4.337

Automatic file backup and recovery for Windows Vista, XP and 2000

FREE Download and License

- Easily backup files or folders anywhere on your computer, network, DVD-RW, CD-RW or FTP server
- Files can be written to a multi-session DVD if it already contains a file with the same name
- Email, FTP, zip and configuration passwords are stored in the registry with encryption
- Protect yourself against ever losing those critical files that took hours to create
- Quickly recover your data in the event of data loss
- Schedule backups to run automatically at a time that suits you
- Synchronized backup feature - save a file and it gets copied instantly
- Send E-mail notifications to team members about the status of a backup job
- Save Disk space by compressing your backups as ZIP files
- Configure in minutes with our intuitive interface



Continued on page 27

computer is the potential disclosure and abuse of the personal data on the hard drive. Comodo offers a solution to this vexing problem, its free Disk Encryption Software, which can be used to encode the data on a hard drive, preventing its use by unauthorized individuals. This provides continuous protection of the data on the drive, and includes two levels of data authentication. This protects sensitive data without disrupting the ability to legitimately utilize the data, but makes the same data useless to an unauthorized user, such as a thief.

You may have heard commercials on radio and TV about a “VPN” or Virtual Private Network, where selected computers can be connected together over the internet, just as if they would be connected over a wired in-house network. For those who may need to connect distant computers, Comodo offers its free “Comodo EasyVPN”. This VPN provides secure encrypted communications over the internet, and allows for the safe transmission and reception of sensitive communications. It also allows for remote access to connected computers, including a “remote desktop” feature that allows one user to access control over another distant computer. For family use, EasyVPN allows for the quick and easy internet exchange of music or photos, and even allows connected users to play multi-user games. This is like having a remote office, where the office computer can be securely accessed from anywhere there is an internet connection. This may be a very useful utility.

I hate spam, that unwanted junk email. Comodo offers a free anti-spam utility that can stop spam, phishing (identity theft), and other fraudulent email from getting into your inbox. The software can import the address book from most popular email clients to create a safe senders’ list, and provides for a challenge and response system to verify unknown senders, and adds verified senders to a safe “white list”. Using Comodo’s Anti Spam utility can significantly reduce the unwanted mail in your inbox.

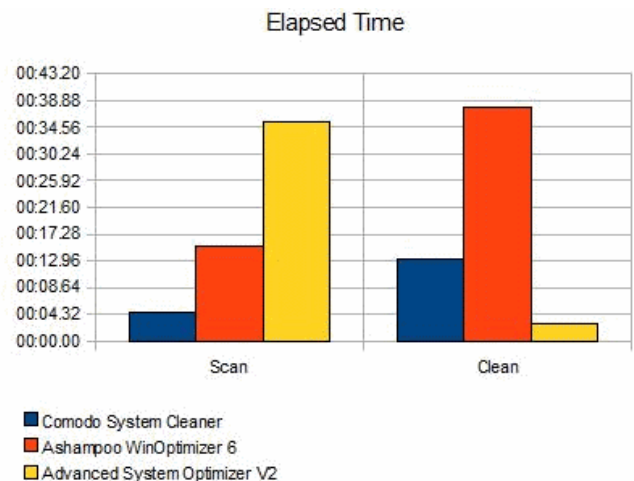
Sometimes we must send and receive sensitive information via email that we would not want others to be able to access or read. Comodo has a free solution to this problem, its SecureEmail utility. This utility encrypts and digitally signs email such that it cannot be read by anyone except the intended recipient. This utility seamlessly integrates with all major email clients, and has a wizard to help setup the program.

While Comodo offers many other utilities, it is best known for its security products. One such free product offered is its BoClean, which can detect and remove rootkits, hijackers, keyloggers, and Trojans, as it continuously monitors the system for attack. BoClean offers real time protection against online identity theft caused by malware, as well as protection from file damage caused by other varieties of malware.

Regular readers of this column have read the three most important words in computing, “Backup, Backup, and Backup!” Comodo offers a full featured and free backup utility that can automatically backup critical data files to almost any form of media or storage system. Backups may be scheduled automatically, or run at will, and allow for the easy recovery of files in the event of system crash, natural disaster, theft, or other loss of data. With software such as this, and a secure place to store the backed up data, there is no reason why any important data should ever be lost.

Comodo offers its System Cleaner utility to clean computers of useless and wasteful files and registry entries that can adversely impact computer performance, thus improving performance. Comodo System Cleaner is among the fastest and most efficient system cleaner tested, including several of the popular competitors. System Cleaner includes both disk cleaner and registry cleaner tools, as well as other powerful diagnostic tools. System Cleaner claims “100% Safe Cleaning” as it implements proprietary “Registry Protection” and “Safe Delete” features which can automatically restore any files that may have been deleted in error.

Comodo offers an impressive collection of free utilities, and should be commended for offering them. Comodo explicitly states that many of these utilities are free for both personal and business users, making them most cost effective at “free”. For this price, they are most worthy of a try.



Total number of files found after scan:

COMODO System Cleaner: 629 files
 Ashampoo WinOptimizer 6: 394 files
 Advanced System Optimizer V2: 23 files

Linkscanner – Free Protection from Web Threats

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net,

Many of us have felt secure while surfing the web, safe in the knowledge that our PC security software will protect us from all of the threats out there. Initially, in the early days of PCs, we came to understand that a good antivirus program would give us all of the protection that we needed. Later, we learned the hard way that antivirus software by itself would not protect us from the then-current threats, so we needed a firewall and anti-spyware software.

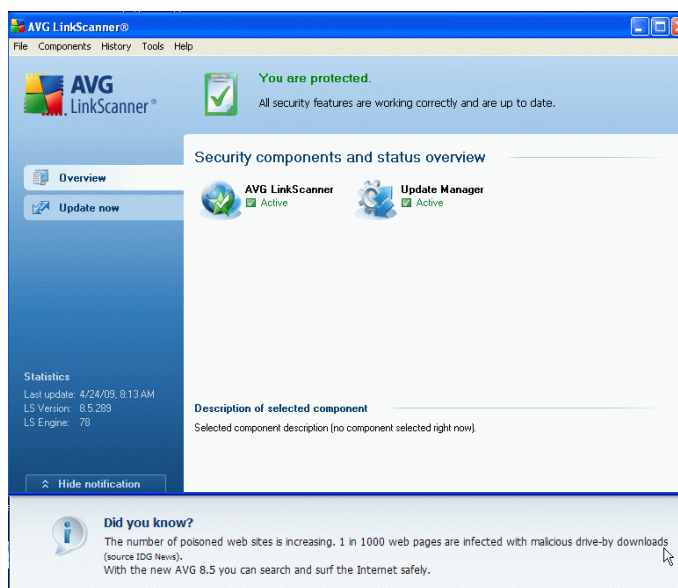
WEBSITES:

<http://linkscanner.avg.com>

The major publishers of security software obliged us by producing and selling us better, and more comprehensive protective software, culminating in today's typical security suites. Sadly, the miscreants that create the threats to our computing safety are often a step ahead of the security software publishers, and manage to craft new categories of threats that are explicitly designed to penetrate our protective shields, or even bypass them altogether. This makes us vulnerable to attack, even though we blissfully surf the net, oblivious to these new threats, confident in the knowledge that our security software will forever protect us. Regrettably, many of us will find that our personal computing has been compromised by malware from which our security suites provide little or no protection, leaving us open and vulnerable to attack.

According to published reports, as many as 95% of the new online threats are now coming from the websites that we visit, and are often undetected by our existing security software. This means that the blind trust that many of us have in our security software, regardless of the brand, may be unfounded, as our computers may be substantially unprotected from this new vector of attack. According to a recent article on the subject on ZDNET, "The most dangerous page on the web may be the one you are about to click on." As many as 100,000 to 150,000 legitimate websites, often those of national brands and companies, are compromised every day, and are "poisoned" in such a way that innocent visitors to those web pages unknowingly load malware onto their computers, bypassing the antivirus and anti-spyware software installed on the computer to expressly protect against such malware.

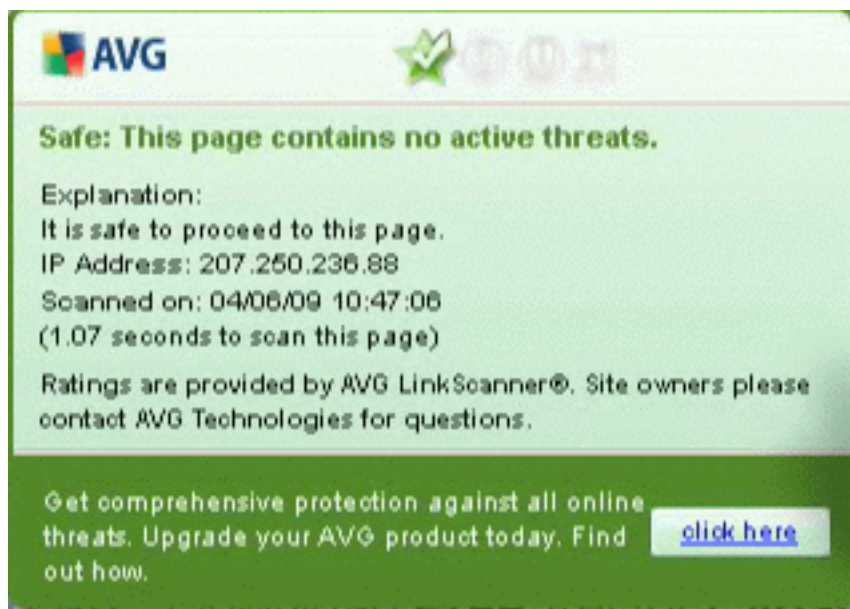
This malware, when loaded on the victim computer, can open the victim to identity theft or other damages to his privacy or the sanctity of his data. Traditional whitelists (directories of safe sites), and blacklists (directories of dangerous sites), while widely used by conventional protective



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products are ineffective, as 60% of the poisoned websites are dangerous for less than 24 hours, many of those malignant for only a few hours. This threat is real, and according to security vendor AVG, "One in eight web users will unknowingly come across a poisoned page at least once a month."

The European computer security company AVG (formerly known as Grisoft), has an excellent reputation in the industry, and currently has over 80 million registered users of its software. While the AVG Antivirus software is among the most widely used free antivirus software in the world, AVG also publishes comprehensive commercial security suites that have a loyal following in the millions. AVG has always been considered as a leader in security technology, as demonstrated by a feature included in its top commercial security suite, Linkscanner. The Linkscanner technology has given AVG a strong competitive edge when compared against many of its commercial competitors, as it provides substantial protection from the web borne malware that would possibly slip by competitive products.



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Enrolled to practice before the Internal Revenue Service

Recently, AVG released a free version of its Linkscanner software which I immediately downloaded and installed on several computers. Linkscanner installed smoothly on each computer except one, that one computer having a security suite that was incompatible with Linkscanner (Trend Micro Internet Security Suite 2009 Pro). According to the AVG webpage, this conflict was unusual, as Linkscanner was tested and found to be compatible with almost all other security suites available.

Linkscanner, available for free download at linkscanner.avg.com, scans each webpage as it is downloaded to your browser, looking for dangerous content, and blocking the loading of the webpage if malware is found. This prevents the web borne malware from being installed on the computer as it is stopped before it is effectively downloaded. Linkscanner does this so quickly, and utilizes minimal system resources, such that there is no noticeable effect on the speed of websites loading and being displayed in the browser. Linkscanner works well with Internet Explorer and Firefox browsers, and will run on most current versions of Windows, including 32 and 64 bit operating systems. Except as mentioned above, Linkscanner will generally not interfere with other security software and runs in addition to it.

There are two components to Linkscanner, Search-Shield and Active Surf-Shield. Search-Shield works with the major search engines, such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN, and displays a safety rating for links displayed during a search. If a website is known as safe, and is free of malware, Search-Shield will display a green star with a checkmark adjacent to the site name. Websites known to harbor malware will be displayed with a red "X", warning the user not to go there. By knowing in advance which websites are safe to go to, or should be avoided, the user can search with a high degree of safety. While not a scientific study, I compared load times with and without Search-Shield running, and I could not notice any difference in the time to load and display Google and Yahoo search results.

The second key feature in Linkscanner is Active Surf-Shield, which scans the webpage behind any link click on, or web address typed into the browser. If Active Surf-Shield detects that the page has been "poisoned", the continued loading of the page is stopped, and a large red warning window is displayed. Again, in my non-scientific tests, I did not notice any difference in the load times of web pages with and without Active Surf-Shield running, and it appeared that the results were displayed almost instantaneously.

Linkscanner (linkscanner.avg.com) is listed as "free forever" when used on individual personal home computers, and provides a valuable and worthwhile adjunct to the security software that we already have on our computers. Since as much as 95% of the contemporary cyber threats are web borne, and Linkscanner explicitly protects against those threats that may slip through our antivirus and anti-spyware software, Linkscanner should be installed and used as appropriate.

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Panda Introduces New Antivirus Technology – FREE

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net,

Most antivirus software has become bloated and a drag on system performance. One major issue with most antivirus products is the time delay between the detection of a new threat, and the time it takes to push updates to users of the software. Thousands of new viruses and variants appear every day, and it is a major burden on the purveyors of antivirus software to keep their respective products up to date.

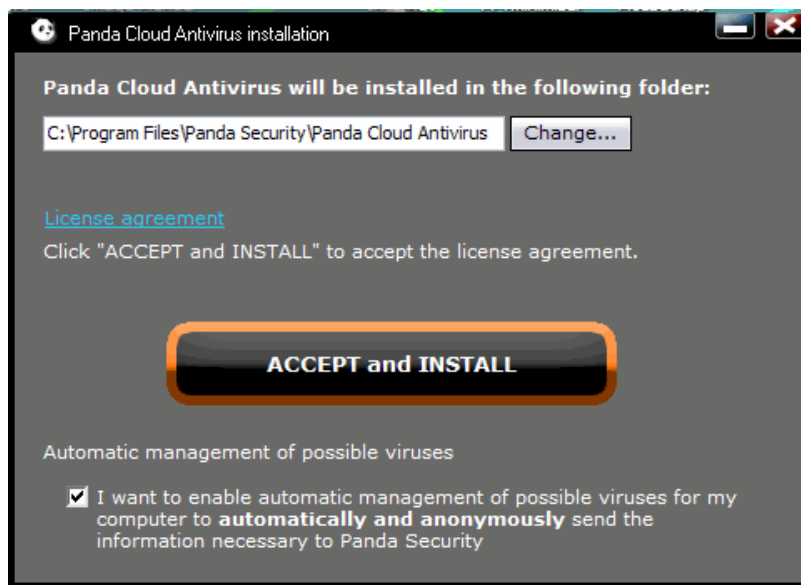
WEBSITES:

<http://www.cloudantivirus.com>

Regrettably, many users update their antivirus software daily, which is woefully inadequate, as most publishers of the antivirus software now send out updates several times a day, and in some cases, several times an hour! It often takes hours for updates to be created by the software companies and ready for users to update their software. This still leaves the users' computers unprotected from the newest threats during the lengthy time that it takes for new threats to be detected, analyzed, neutralized, and distributed to the users of the software. An analogy would be reading the printed daily newspaper you may have found in your driveway this morning; it may be today's newspaper, but it is really yesterday's news. That is the same way that antivirus updates work; the updates that you download and install right now, are viruses that were first detected hours ago, leaving your computer vulnerable to those threats during those hours. You may also have no protection from new viruses and other malware that have been detected in the wild, but not yet included in the latest updates. In the past, when many new viruses spread slowly, this time lag was not serious, but with the rapidly spreading threats of today, that delay can be deadly in a cyber context. We blissfully traverse the internet safe in the knowledge that our just updated antivirus will protect us from whatever we may come across, but this blissful ignorance may fail to consider the new threats in circulation. Philosophically, if our antivirus and anti-malware software was so good, why do millions of computers that have updated antivirus software still get infected?

Another issue with the bloated antivirus that many of us use is the large amount of system resources consumed by our antivirus software when running, and the degradation of performance that inevitably occurs. Many of us are unaware that the antivirus and anti-malware software that we may be using may be causing a significant slowdown in our computers' ability to process data, which is a frequent cause of degraded computer performance. Some of the more progressive publishers of antivirus software have addressed this predicament by releasing software that is easy on system resources, and does not significantly degrade performance, but these companies are in the minority; most antivirus software currently in use, including several of the most popular titles, are a drag on the system.

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Panda Software, a well respected Spanish publisher of excellent quality system security software, recently released a free new product that is claimed to resolve the problems mentioned above. Using the concept of “cloud computing”, Panda is now distributing its new product “Cloud Antivirus”. In its simplest form, cloud computing takes advantage of the combined knowledge and processing power of large sectors of the internet, where networks synergistically and instantly work together to intelligently solve problems. Panda’s Cloud Antivirus claims to capitalize on that power by using Panda’s servers in the cloud, and is currently a free download at www.cloudantivirus.com. By utilizing the power of the cloud, Panda claims that new virus and malware signatures can be available to users of Cloud Antivirus in as little as six minutes, closing much of the window of vulnerability from new threats. What makes Panda Cloud Antivirus such an interesting product is that it is very easy on system resources, as all of the work of protecting your computer is done in the cloud, rather than by the CPU in your computer, which does not degrade system performance while providing the maximum in protection. In addition to not degrading performance, it is designed as an “install and forget” product that removes the user from the loop of updates, system configuration, and decisions about threats encountered. Simply stated, Panda Cloud Antivirus can be downloaded and installed, and no further intervention or updates are necessary in order to have comprehensive antivirus and anti-malware protection.

It should be noted that as I type this, the version of Panda Cloud Antivirus that is available for download is described by Panda as a “beta” or pre-release version, but by entering an email address when downloading the software, Panda states that it will provide a free activation key for the final version when released, and that Cloud Antivirus will remain a free product.

Cloud Antivirus works by using a small, resource sparing dashboard on the user’s desktop. This dashboard connects your computer to Panda’s data center, which tracks anything that may be even slightly suspicious, with Panda’s data center stopping the threat before it can become active on the computer. By instantly combining the real-time threat “intelligence” from thousands of computers, Panda can better detect and react to threats than more traditional antivirus software. Panda’s CEO Juan Santana says that Panda’s cloud, “harnesses the knowledge of Panda’s global community of more than 10 million users to automatically identify and classify new malware strains in real-time.” In terms of the rapid growth of cyber threats, “PandaLabs detected more malware in 2008 than the previous 17 years combined, representing a major tipping point for both consumers and the antivirus industry as a whole,” said Santana.

In addition to being reactive, this intelligence can also be proactive, allowing Panda to predict evolving threats, and be ready to deal with them before they become an active threat. By using the power of the cloud, rather than the power of the user’s computer, there is no drag on system resources, while the computer is protected from the latest threats with minimal lag time.

Panda’s Cloud Antivirus is a fascinating new technology that holds great promise. It may take a paradigm shift not to download frequent updates, and scan everything opened and run on the computer, which consumes great amounts of processing power and slows the loading and execution of programs and data. If this new technology is proven as reliable as I hope it initially appears to be, Panda may be a bigger threat to its competitors than malware will be to us.

Light

Panda Cloud Antivirus protects you while you browse, play or work and you won't even notice it. It is extremely light as all the work is done in the cloud.

Secure

Panda Cloud Antivirus provides you with the fastest protection against the newest viruses thanks to its cloud-scanning from PandaLabs' servers.

Easy

Panda Cloud Antivirus is truly install and forget. Don't worry about updates, configuration or complicated decisions ever again.

Free PC Utilities from Piriform Software

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net,

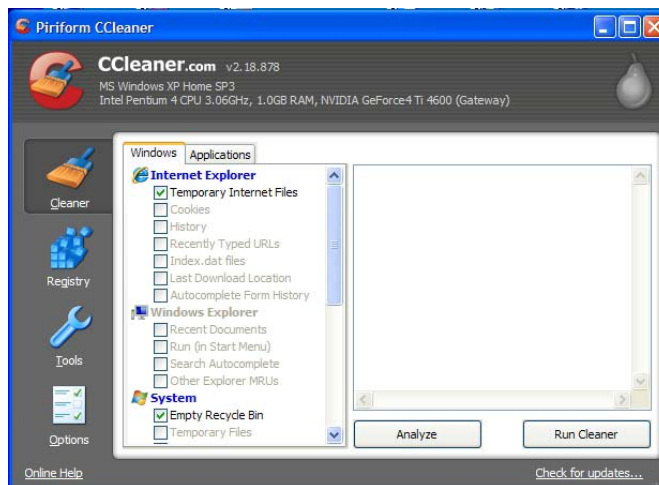
There are some excellent free software utilities available that are every bit as good as their commercial counter parts, and sometimes even better. One software publisher, with an almost unknown name, but with very popular products is Piriform Software. Piriform, a British software company located in London, distributes free software that it creates, and is financially supported by the advertising on its websites and donations. While Piriform may not be well known, its software is very well known, with over a quarter-billion copies downloaded! All Piriform utilities are totally free to download and used both by individuals and by corporations, or other organizations.

WEBSITES:

<http://www.ccleaner.com>
<http://www.defraggler.com>
<http://www.recuva.com>

Piriform's best known software is its CCleaner, available for free download at www.ccleaner.com. Originally released with a filename that many found objectionable, the moniker was shortened to CCleaner which led to explosive popularity, and a very loyal following. CCleaner is arguably one of the most widely used utilities in the cyber-world, with over 260 million copies downloaded. CCleaner is totally freeware and contains no spyware and adware. CCleaner is a system optimizer that can improve system performance, enhance internet privacy, and remove useless and obsolete files from the computer, freeing up disk space. CCleaner is one of the utilities that I carry with me on a flash drive whenever I am asked to checkout a computer, and in some cases has safely removed gigabytes of outdated files from overly cluttered hard drives. CCleaner also includes an effective registry cleaner that can remove obsolete and useless entries from the registry, which may improve performance. (CAUTION: Always use the backup feature in CCleaner, and make a system restore point before running any registry repair utility!). One especially nice feature of CCleaner is its speed, typically scanning a hard drive in a matter of seconds, and rarely more than a few minutes.

Web surfers are often unaware of how many out of date and otherwise temporary files are saved in the cache and other places on the hard drive, often creating an enormous amount of clutter on the hard drive that consumes valuable space, and can also lead to a degradation of performance. CCleaner works with Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome, Opera, and Safari, and can selectively clean and remove temporary internet files, history, cookies, download history, auto-complete forms, and index.dat files, often freeing up large amounts of hard drive space. By my personal choice, I only choose to delete my temporary internet files and index.dat files, but that still frees up almost all of the wasted hard drive space, as the remaining items are relatively tiny. Some users who want to maximize their privacy and security may choose to delete all cookies (small text files places on the hard drive by websites), but many cookies are a convenience item, and not a security or privacy threat.



Continued on page 34

While controversial in some tech circles, the cleaning of the computer registry of old and obsolete entries may slightly improve performance. To mitigate any possible damage that may result from an erroneous registry deletion, CCleaner integrates a comprehensive registry backup feature which can quickly restore any deleted entries. CCleaner's registry cleaner can remove unused and out-of-date registry entries, including file extensions, ActiveX controls, classIDs, progIDs, uninstallers, shared DLLs, fonts, help files, application paths, icons, invalid shortcuts and other useless entries.

In addition to cleaning browser files and the registry, CCleaner also cleans the residue left behind by many other applications, including Windows Media Player, eMule, KaZaa, Google Toolbar, Netscape, Microsoft Office, Nero, Adobe Acrobat, WinRAR, WinAce, WinZip and many other programs, which will not just save space on the hard drive, but may also improve the performance of those programs.

In the "Tools" section of CCleaner are an uninstall utility and a startup manager. The uninstall utility can be used to initiate the removal of any unwanted software, and the startup manager can be used to stop any unwanted software from loading at boot. Both utilities are useful in improving system performance.

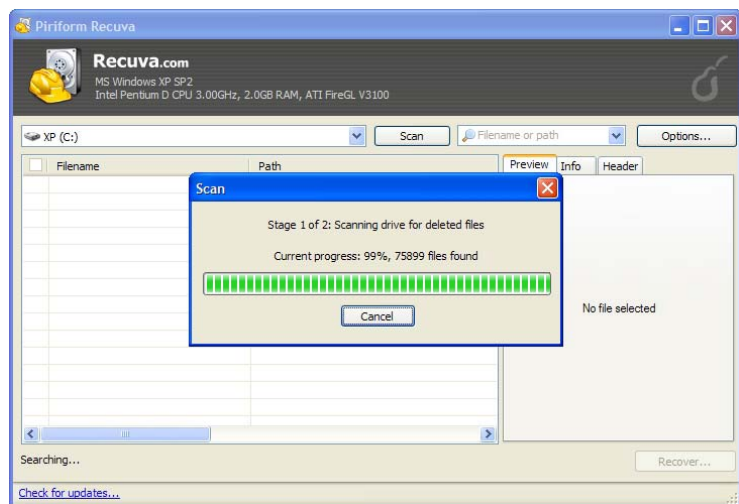
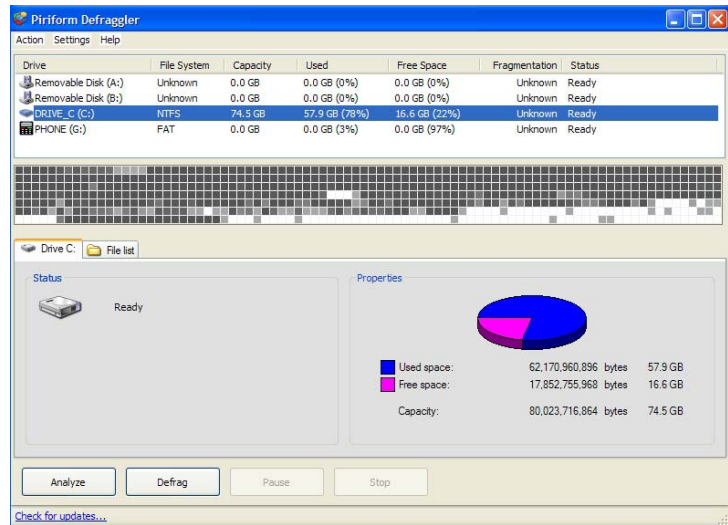
For those who may be reluctant to use CCleaner to maintain their computers, Piriform states, "CCleaner was designed from the ground to be safe and secure to use. It has multiple levels of checks in place to ensure that it cannot delete any useful information or documents you may still need."

CCleaner will run on any PC with Windows 98, ME, NT4, 2000, 2003 and 2008 Server, all versions of XP including 64 bit, and all editions of Vista including 64 bit. Since it is a small program (3 mb download), and utilizes minimal hard drive space when stored, and minimal memory when run, Piriform states that there are no minimum memory or hard drive requirements to run CCleaner. No wonder that all of this power in a small, free program has gained such a large and loyal following.

Piriform also publishes two other useful, excellent, and free utilities, both of which have earned a large and loyal following. Piriform's newest utility is Defraggler (www.defraggler.com), a simple but powerful disk defragging utility that has features lacking in most other defraggers. While Defraggler can do a full drive defrag like other utilities, what makes it unique is the ability to defrag only selected files, without the need to process the entire hard drive. Defraggler is a single exe file less than 1 mb in size that requires no special installation on the hard drive. I carry the Defraggler file on my flash drive, from which it can be run on any compatible computer. Defraggler will run on any Windows PC with Windows 2000, 2003, XP, or Vista, both 32 and 64 bit versions.

Piriform's other free utility is Recuva (www.recuva.com), pronounced "recover", which is a file recovery utility. Recuva can recover and restore files that have been deleted from the computer, digital camera memory cards, MP3 players, and other devices, even if they have been emptied from the recycle bin. It may be possible to recover files that had been lost from program bugs, system crashes, and viruses. I have used Recuva to recover deleted files from my flash drive, and the SD cards from both my digital camera and my GPS. This is another small but very useful utility that I carry on my flash drive, as I will never know when there is an urgent or critical file to recover. As with all other file recovery utilities, deleted files can only be recovered if they have not been overwritten, which is another reason to always have a current and contemporary backup of any important files. Recuva will run on any Windows PC with Windows 98 to Vista.

London-based Piriform is to be commended for producing such fine and free utilities as these three above. If you use one or more of them, please seriously consider making a PayPal donation from the link on the respective webpage; that way maybe Piriform can be incentivized to produce more excellent and free software.



Things That You Can Do With That Flash Drive

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner,
Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net,

With the demise of the floppy disk, and the approaching demise of the CD disc for data purposes, the USB flash drive has become the defacto method of saving and transporting files between computers. These small USB drives are known by a variety of monikers, such as flash drive, pen drive, pin drive, and thumb drive. Since their introduction a few years ago, their capacity has increased, and their prices have plunged. They are readily available in the big box stores, discount stores, club stores, and online. The most recent ones I purchased for the holidays were 8 gig size (almost the equivalent of the data stored on 2 standard DVD discs, about a dozen CD discs, or about 5700 floppy disks), and cost under \$15 each. In the after-Christmas sales, some 8 gig flash drives were advertised for \$9 each (after rebate). This amount of non-volatile storage for the price was inconceivable just a few years ago. I thought I was getting a bargain a few years ago when I bought my first flash drive, a 64mb Lexar, for \$49, and now a drive with about 64 times that capacity is about one-fourth the price! I have co-workers and students who wear their flash drives on cords around their necks, where they are referred to as “geek beads”.

WEBSITES:

<http://portableapps.com>

http://u3.sandisk.com/download/Download_no.asp

Most of us use the drive simply for portable storage, the ability to carry files around with us, but in reality these flash drives can do much more than to simply be used for storage. Most of the USB flash drives on the market today comply with the USB 2.0 standard for high speed transfer, while there still are a few inexpensive, low capacity drives that are of the slower USB 1.1 speed standard, or only about 3% of the speed of the USB 2.0 drives. From a practical viewpoint, the user will not notice any significant difference in speed if small files are saved and read, but will notice a difference if large files are used.

There are some other standards for USB flash drives that many users may find beneficial, if their flash drives have the capabilities. Users of Microsoft Vista (Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, and Ultimate versions) may find it advantageous to purchase flash drives that are labeled as “ReadyBoost”. According to Microsoft, “Windows Vista introduces Windows ReadyBoost, a new concept in adding memory to a system. You can use non-volatile flash memory, such as that on a universal serial bus (USB) flash drive, to improve performance without having to add additional memory “under the hood.” If the drive is compatible with the ReadyBoost standard, some of the flash memory in the drive can effectively and temporarily be added to the RAM (memory) installed in the computer, with an improvement on performance. If the Vista user with a compatible flash drive right clicks on the flash drive letter displayed under “My Computer” or Windows Explorer, and then left clicks on Properties – ReadyBoost, Vista will recommend how much of the available memory on the drive can be effectively and safely utilized by Vista. Other data stored on the ReadyBoost drive is protected from damage, and will not be harmed if the drive is used as a ReadyBoost drive. Because of the higher performance requirements, ReadyBoost compatible flash drives are slightly more expensive than standard drives, but are often the least expensive way to add memory to a Vista computer.

Another useful feature often found on a USB flash drive is known as “U3”. Drives that are U3 compatible are labeled as such. A U3 powered flash drive allows the user to carry special versions of hundreds of programs on the flash drive that can be run directly from the flash drive without being installed on the computer. This is an effective way to carry the actual software the user is familiar with, and run it on other computers. When unplugged from the computer, U3 leaves no data or other information left on the computer that was used. Some of the popular programs that come in U3 formats are the Firefox browser, Skype telephone, McAfee Antivirus (about \$15), RoboForm Password Manager, OpenOffice (the comprehensive suite of office software including a Microsoft compatible word processor, spreadsheet, presentation program, database, and more, free), Thunderbird email client, and dozens of games. Most U3 drives come preinstalled with password protection and a “U3 Launchpad” which is a menu driven directory of the software on the U3 drive.

For those of us who have standard non-U3 drives, there is now an alternative that provides for the same functionality. This alternative to U3 that will run on almost all contemporary flash drives is called “PortableApps”, and can be found online at portableapps.com. According to the PortableApp website, “A portable app is a computer program that you can carry around with you on a portable device and use on any Windows computer. When your USB flash drive, portable hard drive, iPod or other portable device is plugged in, you have access to your software and personal data just as you would on your own PC. And when you unplug the device, none of your personal data is left behind.” Dozens of portable apps are available, including the Firefox browser, OpenOffice office suite, antivirus software, games, password managers, and many other pieces of software. The PortableApp Suite is totally free, and does not contain any spyware or adware. In addition to the bundled suite, there are many other programs available, almost all free, which will run as portable apps. The PortableApp website keeps a running tally of new software that is available, including new releases and versions, as well as beta (pre-release) software. A simple click will install the selected software on the flash drive.

Software Review

True Image Home 2009

Published by Acronis

A review by Gene Barlow, User Group Relations, gene@ugr.com

Backing up your computer's hard drive on a regular basis is the most important thing every user should be doing on their computer. The hard drive on your computer will eventually crash and when it does, you will be protected if you have a good backup. Without a backup, your computer will no longer function and all of your important files and pictures will be lost. Start doing backups today and be safe!

The best way to backup your computer is to use Acronis True Image Home 2009 and save your backups on an external hard drive. You should backup your main hard drive at least once a week including the entire hard drive and not just a few files or folders on the drive. I recommend a full backup image at the beginning of each month and then weekly incremental backup images during the month. See my article titled the Perfect Backup Approach at <http://www.ugr.com/nl0804.html> for more details on the best way to do your backups. You can order the latest version of Acronis True Image Home 2009 from us at <http://www.ugr.com/TrueImage.html>. Use the order code of UGNL0609 when completing the order to get an excellent discount price.

Many users start with a great determination to do their backups on a regular basis, but after a couple of weeks of doing backups they tend to forget to do regular backups. I have found that it is best to automate your backups, so that you don't need to remember to do this very important task. Let the computer remember to do its own backups when they need to be done. That way, your backups will get done on the weekly basis, so that you are properly protected. The purpose of this paper is to help you set up automatic backups on your computer.

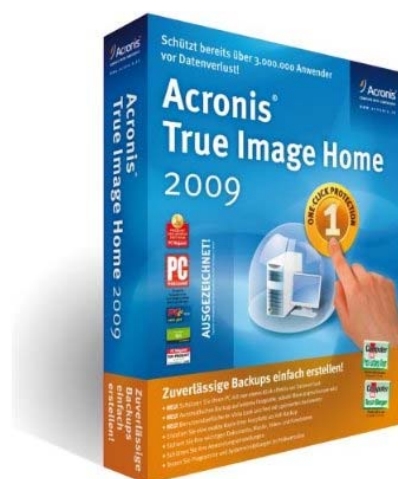
Acronis completely redesigned the end-user interface to True Image 2009 to make the product easier to use. The automatic backup function was also completely revamped. This new automatic backup function was not ready to release when the rest of the product was released in October 2008. It took Acronis a couple of extra months to complete and perfect this important function and it was then put in the product with follow-on builds of the software.

Before you start to set up an automatic backup on your True Image 2009, you need to update your True Image 2009 software to install the latest build (#9709) which became available on January 23, 2009. To do this, you must do three things: 1) set up an account on the Acronis web site, 2) register your product serial number in this account, and 3) download and install the build from the entry on your registered product. Details on how to do this can be found on my web site at <http://www.ugr.com/AcronisQuestions.html>. The rest of this paper assumes that you have upgraded your system to this latest build in order to work properly.

Before we begin the detailed steps to set up your automatic backup, let me suggest a calendar change that needs to be considered. I recommend a full backup at the beginning of each month and then weekly incremental backup images at the end of each week during the month. The problem in doing this is that every month has a different number of days and begins on a different day of the week. So, setting up a rule to do exactly this schedule is not possible. A better approach is to adopt the 13-month calendar of exactly 4 weeks that many businesses use. That would give you exactly a full backup followed by 3 weekly incremental backups 13 times each year. This approach is more regular than trying to fit a regular backup schedule into our irregular monthly calendar. So, in this paper, I will be showing how to set up a 13-month approach.

First, create a folder on your external hard drive to contain your backups. Name this folder after the computer and partition that you plan to backup in this folder. If you have one computer and one main partition on it, this folder may simply be named something like My Backups. If you have two computers to backup on the same external hard drive, set up two folders and name them after each computer. For example, name them My Backups HP Computer and My Backups Dell Computer. Now we are ready to start setting up the automatic backup process with True Image 2009.

Setting up Automatic Backups with True Image 2009



Continued on page 37

Run Acronis True Image Home 2009 on your computer and on the main screen, click on the Task Management button under the What would you like to do? heading. This will take you to the area in True Image where you set up and manage your automatic backups. Now click on the Scheduled Tasks tab in the middle of the screen under the calendars. Below the tabs is an area where you will see all of the automatic scheduled tasks on your computer. At this point, you should see the indication, No items to display. Next, click on the Create Backup Task menu item near the top of the screen. This will begin the Backup Wizard which will guide you through setting up an automatic backup task on your computer.

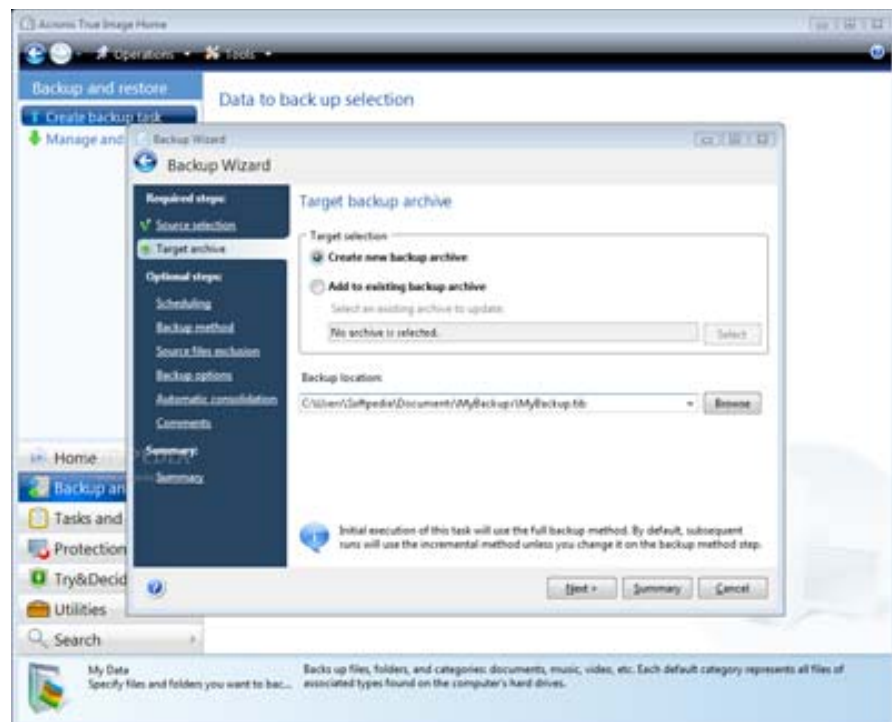
The Backup Wizard is mostly self explanatory, but you can see a full version of this article on my web site at <http://www.ugr.com/nl0609.pdf>. It will contain all of the details that you need to follow. I would suggest that you go to this page and print out the PDF form of the article and then follow it step by step as you set up your automatic backup process. That will make sure that all of the steps are filled in properly to do your automatic backups with True Image 2009.

In closing, let me suggest that you periodically look at the backup image files True Image is automatically making for you on your external backup hard drive. Use Windows Explorer to do this. After a few weeks, you should see a list of files something like this:

| My Backups | (folder name) |
|-------------------|--|
| MyBackup.tib | (full backup image of first month) |
| MyBackup2.tib | (incremental backup image of first month) |
| MyBackup3.tib | (next incremental backup image of first month) |
| MyBackup4.tib | (last incremental backup image of first month) |
| MyBackup(1).tib | (full backup image of next month) |
| MyBackup(1)2.tib | (incremental backup image of next month) |
| MyBackup(1)3.tib | (next incremental image of next month) |
| MyBackup(1)4.tib | (last incremental image of next month) |
| MyBackup(2).tib | (full backup image of current month) |
| MyBackup(2)2.tib | (incremental image of current month) |

If they do not look similar to this, then you may have set up your automatic task wrong and you need to check it and edit it so that it is set up correctly.

I hope this helps you set up True Image 2009 to run automatic backups on your computer. If you have questions about this article or have problems setting up your automatic backup tasks, send a note to support@ugr.com and I will try to assist you. With a little care, you should be able to have your backups run automatically on your system.



Software Review

Media Show 4

Published by Cyberlink

A review by Terry Oden, President, Macon Computer User Group, Georgia,
www.mcug.org, terryo@brmemc.net

There may be hundreds of ways to gather, store, view, edit and show off your pictures and videos. This is one of the best and easiest I have found so far. Your own operating system will do a fairly good job of getting your pictures and videos into your computer for you. On the net you also have programs that are free like Picassa, Flickr and You Tube which all do a very good job of storing and displaying your own work to family and friends.

One of the things that I liked best about Media Show was ease of operation. There are only 5 buttons to control the whole program. Below you'll find a screen shot of the second screen you'll see select the Pictures button. Starting with the # 1 button, or the Home button here you can see all of your different folders and how many pictures or videos you have in each folder.

For the # 2 button you have Create. Here you can do things like make your own Screen Saver, compose a movie or DVD. You can print your own pictures or order prints on line. Next you have the # 3 button or the Share button. Here you can share your pictures with friends and family or up-load them to Flickr. Also, you could upload them to U-tube with a single click of your mouse, if desired.

The next button # 4 is the View button, here you can adjust the size of your thumbnails or add any captions to your pictures. You can also change the color of the skin of the program (appearance). The last button or # 5 is the Folder Tools button. Here you edit, sort, locate, delete or hide some pictures if you like.



This Media Show 4 is one of the top programs when it comes to ease of operation, not to mention what the finished product will look like. To create a movie or slideshow with sound and motion, fading or cell you only have to make about three clicks of the

mouse. First you have to decide if you want background music or not, next select what format you want to use, and where to save your work in your computer. Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!

Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done! To create a DVD it's very easy. First decide a name for your DVD. Then pick out a menu style for your DVD. Now comes the hard part. You must decide which videos you want to use and if you want any still pictures in it or not. Yes, once again you have to tell the program which videos or pictures you want to use.


Next, click on the preview button to see what your work looks like. If you like it, click on the burn button and you're done.

System Requirements

1. Operating System- Windows Vista / XP (with Direct X 9 or above)
2. Screen Resolution- 800 x 600
3. Printers- All
4. CPU- Intel Pentium D 3.0 GHz, AMD Athlon 64 3500+ or above
5. Sound Card- PCI sound card or on-board audio
6. Memory- 512 MB RAM minimum, 1GB recommended
7. Hard Disk Space- 1 GB required, 20 GB recommended for DVD production
8. Graphics Card- Intel 945GM or above-64 MBVRAM or above
9. Optical Drive- A DVD burner (DVD+R/RW or DVD-R/RW) is required to burn content onto DVD's
10. Import Devices- Cameras via removable disk interface-Cameras support Windows Portable devices interface-Camcorder DV devices via IEEE 1394 (Firewire)
11. Internet Connection- An Internet connection is required for some upload/download features.

As for the overall way the program works, I've not found a program this large at this cost that operates so easily and simply. I have found no shortcomings with this program yet. This is the best program for the money that can be found, under \$50.00.

July 2009

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|-----------|---|---|-----------|--|--|---|
| | | | 1 | 2 High Growth Stock Investing (adv) 8:30 - 8:30 PM. | 3 Small Business Server 8 - 10 A.M. *PRR* |  4 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* |
| 5 | 6 General Meeting @ 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter: | 7 Board of Directors Crossroads Mall @ the Food Court 8:30 - 8:30 P.M. (Members are welcome to attend) | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

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

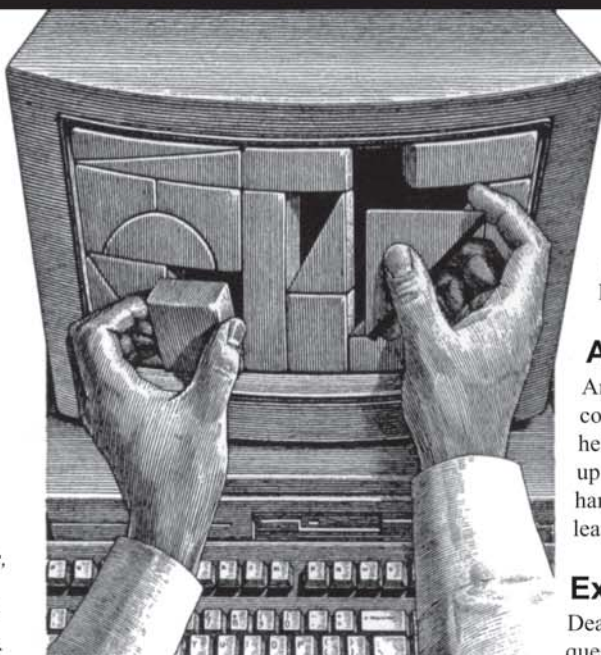
Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

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.

