

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

YEAR'S END AND REVIEW ISSUE

www.alamopc.org
December 2009
\$5.00

2009 Come and Gone
page 19

New Free Security Utilities
page 27

Review: Cyber Crime Fighters
page 29

Review: Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2
page 34





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 (when resumed), Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:

Registration number **210-736-0700**

If you **can't access your issue** of *PC Alamode* or have questions about your **membership** e-mail:

membership@alamopc.org

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Alamo PC office number **210-736-0700**

If you have comments about classes call

Linda Bianchi **210-561-2278**

If you have questions about advertising e-mail

Joseph de Leon
send e-mail to editor@alamopc.org

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

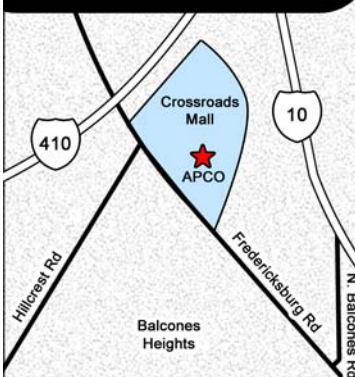
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

Meetings

Monthly program meetings are normally held the second Monday of the month. Unless otherwise specified, meetings are held at 4888 Whirlwind Drive, located near the intersection of Loop 410 and IH-35 North 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 in the food court 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 and/or Web site. Open to all members.

Alternate Meeting Location:
Crossroads Mall
(see page 3 for map of Crossroads Mall)



General Meeting Location:
4888 Whirlwind



Dec. Calendar

Tuesday Dec. 8, 2009
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I-10 (see map)

Monday Dec. 14, 2009
General meeting
7 PM 4888 Whirlwind
Loop 410 at I-35 (see map)

Board of Directors

President	Bill Klutz	532-9122 (Home)	president@alamopc.org
Secretary	David Steward	662-8606 (Home)	secretary@alamopc.org
Treasurer	Billy Samples	646-0047 (Home)	treasurer@alamopc.org
Education	TBD		education@alamopc.org
Operations	Cary Hall	736-0700 (Learning Center)	learncenter@alamopc.org
Marketing	TBD (Steve Tech)	675-2880 (Home)	marketing@alamopc.org
Communications	TBD		communications@alamopc.org

Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

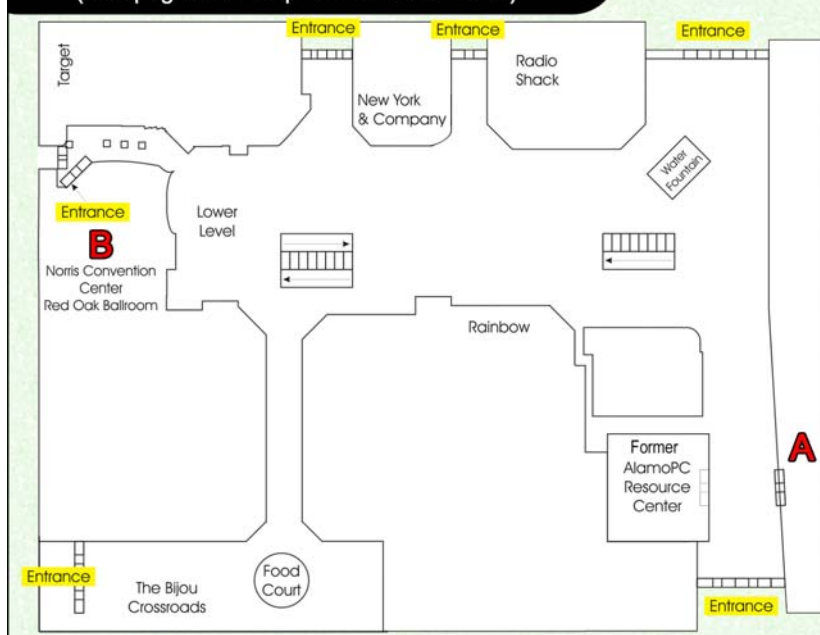
Office Center, 4888 Whirlwind

	736-0700	FAX 736-0032
Office Center Manager	Cary & Jean Hall	736-0700 (Learning Center)
Past President/Programs	David Steward	662-8606 (Home)
Member Records	Steve Tech	675-2880 (Home)
Public Relations	Susan Ives	694-4582 (Home)
Product Review Coordinator	TBD (David Steward)	662-8606 (Home)
Study Groups Coordinator/Ed	Linda Bianchi	561-2278 (Home)
Special Projects	Joe Brazell	370-2207 (Office)
Registrar	Linda Bianchi	561-2278 (Home)
Webmaster	Mike Bianchi	561-2278 (Home)
Lab/Network Administrator	Gary Grieve	492-5066 (Home)
Trade Shows	Steve Tech	675-2880 (Home)
APCUG Representative	David Steward	662-8606 (Home)
Editor, PC Alamode Magazine	Joseph de Leon	unlisted
		learncenter@alamopc.org
		dsteward@texas.net
		membership@alamopc.org
		suives@texas.net
		reviews@alamopc.org
		education@alamopc.org
		projects@alamopc.org
		Registrar@alamopc.org
		Webmaster@alamopc.org
		netadmin@alamopc.org
		stephentechnjr@yahoo.com
		dsteward@texas.net
		editor@alamopc.org

For Study Groups and Classes, phone: 736-0700

Crossroads Mall (lower level)

(See page 2 for map to Crossroads Mall)



Alternate Meeting Location

We may meet in several different locations in the mall. Sometimes at the Convention across the hall from our former Learning Center (A) of in the Norris Convention Center (B) near Target. Sometimes we don't know until the day of the meeting. It would be a good idea to check the website (alamopc.org) or call (736-0700) before you come.

For more information call 532-9122

Regular Meeting Location

4888 Whirlwind Drive
See page 3

Year's End and Review issue

departments

PC Alamode Links List	6
Enter <i>Joseph de Leon</i>	6
President's Message <i>Bill Klutz</i>	7
December Program News <i>Bill Klutz</i>	8
Volunteer of the Month	9
Funny Bytes	11

columns

Windows Tips & Tricks <i>Bill Beverley</i>	12
--	----

guest contributors

The Deals Guy <i>Bob Click</i>	14
Ergonomic Tips <i>John R. Chait D.C.</i>	16
Practicing the Blakc Art <i>Vinny La Bash</i>	17

Alamo PC Phone Directory	3
Map to Meeting Places	2
Alamo PC Calendar of Events	38
Study Groups and Classes	39
Help Numbers	40
Classified Ads	41
Membership Application	42

PC Alamode

(501 (C) (3))

Featured this month

2009 Come and Gone
Cryptography: Big Word that Protects Internet
Microsoft Releases Beta of Security Software
New Free Security Utilities

product reviews

Book Review: Cyber Crime Fighters
Book Review: O'Reilly Books Are The Best
Software Review: RevoUninstaller
Software Review: Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2

19 *PC Alamode* (ISSN 1065-3708) is published on-line monthly by the Alamo
23 PC Organization, Inc., PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180, an
25 independent association of personal computer users, founded in January 1983,
27 and incorporated in January 1984 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
COPYRIGHT © 2009 by Alamo PC or the author. All rights reserved. No part of
PC Alamode may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means
— mechanical, electrical, or otherwise — including, but not limited to,
photocopying, recording, or information storage/retrieval, without express
written permission from Alamo PC. However, unless otherwise indicated, articles
may be reprinted by other user and education groups provided the articles are
reprinted unaltered and the publication acknowledges the author thereof and
PC Alamode. Articles, programs, reviews, and advertisements are compiled
without verification of accuracy or applicability to a specific task, computer,
or other equipment. Comments or claims are made solely by the individual
author and do not necessarily represent the views of Alamo PC or of any other
Alamo PC member. Trademarks have been used at random within the publication
and are hereby recognized as such.

EDITOR
Joseph de Leon

INTERIM PRODUCT REVIEW COORDINATOR
David Steward

ADVERTISING
Joseph de Leon

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

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

Rate frequency.	Ad rates effective January 2005			
	1 x	3 x*	6x*	12 x*
	Per insertion			
Full pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h)	\$274	\$260	\$246	\$238
Half pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	144	138	130	121
Half pg. (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h)	144	138	130	121
Quarter pg.(3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37
*Consecutive months		**To be paid in advance		

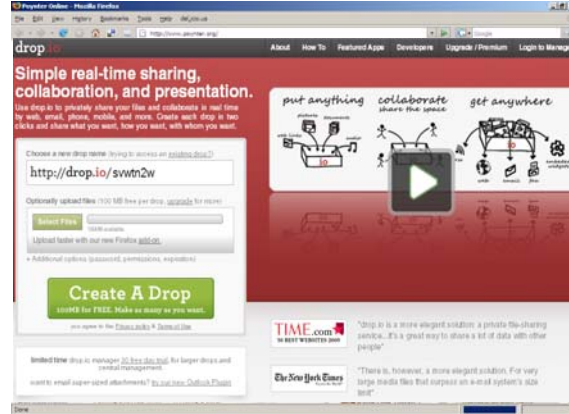
PC Alamode Links List



Skype

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

Skype is a Internet Telephony system. It is based on proprietary software and offers free calls between users. It is aimed at individual users and doesn't have the quality control or features that business users demand.



Drop Box

<<http://drop.io/>>

Drop.io is an easy to use, online collaboration and file sharing service that provides users with a simple, real time and private way to chat and share images, video, audio, documents and other digital content through unique, user-created and controlled sharing points called 'drops'.

I installed Skype (www.skype.com) on my laptop a few months ago. I think Skype is great for audio and video communication over the Internet, though I've only found a few occasions to use it. I've done some test videoconferences with co-workers and friends and my wife has used it with our netbook computer to call me when she was away on business. The main downside to Skype is that it must be run on both ends for a free call. You can use it to make a call to any phone from your PC, but that incurs a charge. Unless the person on the other end of the connection is willing and able to use Skype, it does not help you much.

I've been making all of my recent long distance calls over MagicJack, and have had no problems with it. I look forward to taking it on a trip and being able to make calls for free over free Internet service in a hotel or hotspot. I even bought a compact corded phone on eBay to use with MagicJack. Its limitation is the U.S. call restriction; it may be able to call International, but I'm sure there would be additional fees involved. The company does advertise it as the perfect communication tool to take on a foreign trip to call back to the U.S. for free. I'm hoping for a chance to try that out one day.

Another great communication tool that I've started using is drop.io (www.drop.io). It provides a free "drop box" for transferring up to 100 MB of photos or any other files to anyone. You create a drop, upload the files and provide the drop name and password to the recipient, who then downloads the files from the drop.io site. I recently had to provide 300 MB of photos to someone, so rather than mail them a CD, I set up three drop.io drops and sent the access info through e-mail.

Just a few ideas for you to consider this Holiday season.

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

"December" - AIDS, Human Rights, Hanukkah, Holidays

This month's article will be a little shorter than usual. With the end of the year almost upon us, not much is happening. That makes it difficult to provide Alamo PC information. It is hoped that the ending of the year will bring a resurgence in economic growth and jobs for those who are currently unemployed.

This month marks several things of interest to many: 1st - Worldwide AIDS Awareness Day: Started on 1st December 1988, World AIDS Day is about raising money, increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education. The World AIDS Day theme for 2009 is 'Universal Access and Human Rights'.

World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done. According to UNAIDS estimates, there are now 33.4 million people living with HIV, including 2.1 million children. During 2008 some 2.7 million people became newly infected with the virus and an estimated 2 million people died from AIDS. Around half of all people who become infected with HIV do so before they are 25 and are killed by AIDS before they are 35. The vast majority of people with HIV and AIDS live in lower_ and middle_ income countries. But HIV today is a threat to men, women and children on all continents around the world; 7th - Pearl Harbor Day: Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. Lest we forget, vigilance must be maintained for those who would do this country harm (both foreign and domestic); 10th - International Human Rights Day.

This day commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. "The declaration and its core values, inherent human dignity, non_discrimination, equality, fairness and universality, apply to everyone, everywhere and always. The Declaration is universal, enduring and vibrant, and it concerns us all" (United Nations Statement). A day celebrated annually across the world to help people become aware of the rights they have, and help create an awareness that there are many people in the world who do not have the same basic rights granted to them [e.g. the right to equality, democracy, etc.]; 12th - Hanukkah (begins sundown the eve before): Start of the eight-day Jewish festival of lights, commemorating the rededication of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem; 17th - Wright Brother's Day: First flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903. Look how far aviation has progressed and how vital it has been to our travel and military operations; 21st - First day of Winter: the arbitrary time established by man to initiate a change of season; 24th & 25th - The eve of and day of festivities and celebration focusing on Christ (usually accompanied by family gatherings and gift giving); 31st - New Years Eve - The end of the current year (2000) and at midnight, the beginning of the new or next year (2010).

The November BOD meeting was not held, as only three members have been attending in the past (Me, David and Steve), and David Steward and Steve Tech were both out of town.

At the November General Meeting David Steward provided some info on Windows 7, and answered some related questions. He also touched on some other items of general interest to the 14 people in attendance.

It is very late in November, and I have yet to be informed by David Steward about anything regarding the December General Meeting (14th). I can only hope he has something worked out for the meeting. I am hopeful the December General Meeting will take place and be profitable to those attending. The meeting, unless otherwise noted on the web site, will be at our current office location (4888 Whirlwind, in NE San Antonio), regardless of the presenter obtained. It is once again in David Steward hands, as he has previously stated he is "trying" to get something scheduled. We shall see what transpires!

Overall interest in User Groups at the corporate and membership level continues to wain. As I have pointed out in many previous messages, this fact is confirmed by the ever declining membership (only about 10 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, it can only cause me to believe that the future of OUR organization appears to be dimming rapidly.

Continued on page 8

I am hoping that we will have a presenter for the next 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. 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 no 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.

We are still trying to improve member retention, but it has not been as successful as hoped. If you do not choose to renew, send a comment briefly giving an explanation as to "Why?" to membership@alamopc.org, with a copy to me (president@alamopc.org, or privately to me - wlklutzjr@juno.com). I appreciate all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

As, I have said before, "the future of OUR organization will always rest in the hands of its members. Whether WE continue (or not) depends on OUR interest and involvement. But, it primarily depends on membership renewals and/or financial support. Without those, we will not be able to meet our financial obligations and additional 'business decisions' will have to be made that will affect everyone." With our past trend of fewer members each month, it may be sooner than later! I hope it does not come to that, as it will be like the loss of a friend or family member, and will impact those in the community desiring to learn about computers or improve their computer skills.

I can only hope everyone will have an enjoyable holiday period and many good things will be in each of your lives. With some of the "Holiday Deals" retailers are already advertising, I am sure someone will reward you for being good during this year. If not, I hope you are able to reward some others, so that their lives will be enriched during the days ahead. Happy Holidays!

December Program

Bill Klutz

It is very late in November, and I have not been informed by David Steward about anything regarding the December meeting. So, unless I hear otherwise, the meeting location will be at our current office location (4888 Whirlwind, SAT). 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 always, we hope to have an interesting presentation.

Volunteer of the Month

Billy Samples



Computer Briefs

With Ron Broadhurst

Turn off indexing for faster XP performance

Windows XP keeps a record of all files on the hard disk so when you do a search on the hard drive it is faster. There is a downside to this and because the computer has to index all files, it will slow down normal file commands like open, close, etc. If you do not do a whole lot of searches on your hard drive then you may want to turn this feature off:

- Open My Computer.
- Right-click your hard drive icon and select Properties.
- At the bottom of the window you'll see "Allow indexing service to index this disk for faster searches," uncheck this and click ok.
- A new window will pop up and select Apply to all folders and subfolders.

It will take a minute or two for the changes to take affect but then you should enjoy slightly faster performance.

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
- Printers, Monitors, Scanners
- 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:

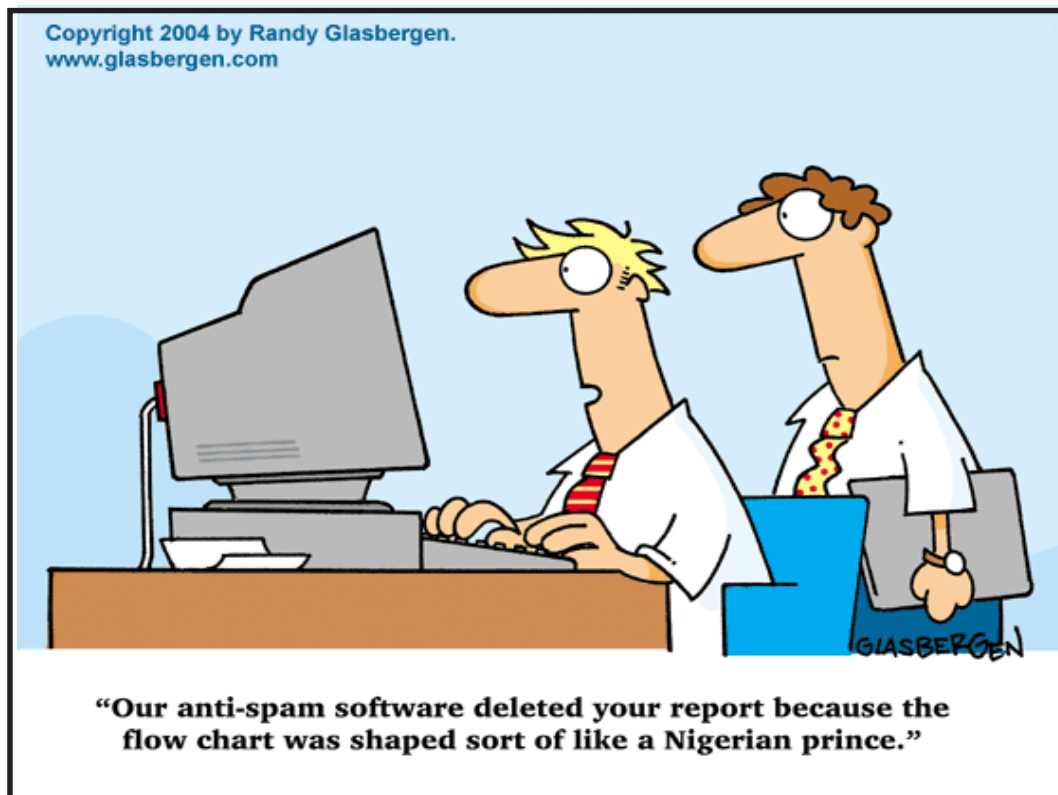
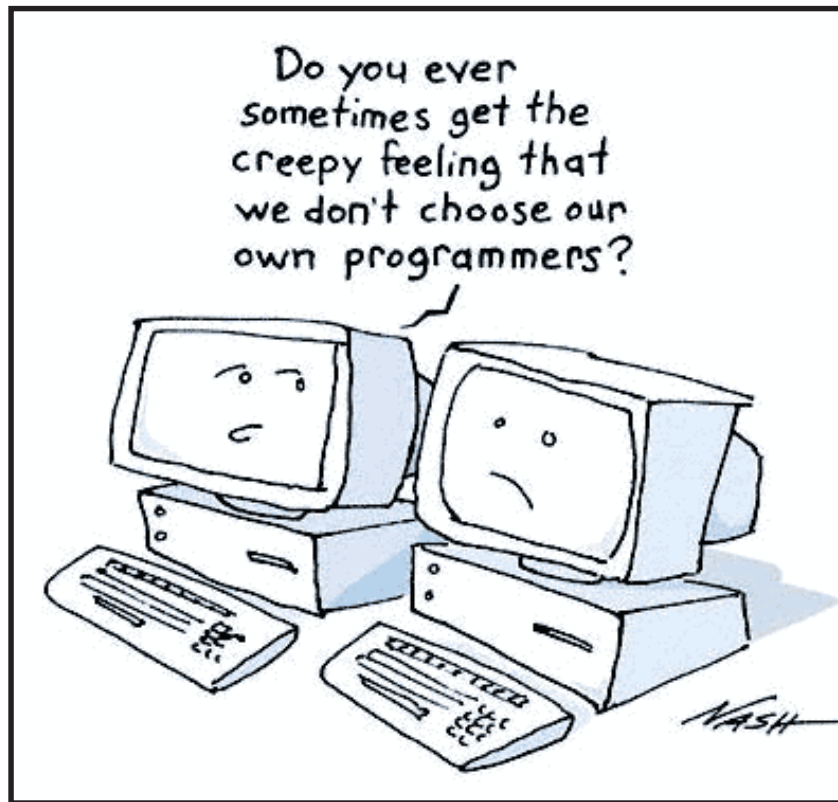
December 12th

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



Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen





Computer PM Meter

Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for seven years. He has contributed for the past six years.

If you're hearing one long beep or one beep that constantly repeats, your computer likely has a RAM problem. Make sure your RAM modules are properly seated in their slots. If they already are seated properly, try moving the modules into different slots.

Computer Updates

It's necessary for all computer users to update their Windows Updates and anti-virus software programs. This year the Conficker worm virus slithered onto millions of computers unprotected by a critical patch that Microsoft had issued late last year. The patch addressed a hole in the Windows Server service, which most desktop and server versions of Windows use. Without it, a computer is vulnerable to attack by infected machines across a network. Windows updates can be accessed by going to Microsoft site <<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/downloads/windowsupdate/automaticupdate.mspx>>,

which will provide directions for Vista or XP. Unfortunately one can not get Windows Updates for previous versions of Windows. All the name brand anti-virus software programs installed by the computer users provide free antivirus periodic updates to include AVG <<http://free.avg.com/download-avg-anti-virus-free-edition>>.

Computer Viruses:

Here are a few primary indicators that your computer might be infected:

- Your computer runs more slowly than normal
- Your computer stops responding or locks up often
- Your computer crashes and restarts every few minutes
- Your computer restarts on its own and then fails to run normally
- Applications on your computer don't work correctly
- Disks or disk drives are inaccessible
- You can't print correctly
- You see unusual error messages
- You see distorted menus and dialog boxes

These are common signs of infection, but they might also indicate hardware or software problems that have nothing to do with a virus. Unless you run the Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool and install industry-standard, up-to-date antivirus software on your computer, there is no way to be certain if your computer is infected with a virus or not. If you don't have current antivirus software installed or if you're interested in installing a different brand, you can try Windows Live OneCare free for 90 days or visit our Windows Marketplace for software from other companies. Beware of messages warning you that you sent e-mail that contained a virus. This can indicate that the virus has listed your e-mail address as the sender of tainted e-mail. This does not necessarily mean you have a virus. Some viruses have the ability to forge e-mail addresses.

Dirty USB Ports

One can clean dirty USB ports. First, turn off the device and dab the edge of a clean, lint-free cloth in rubbing alcohol. Then carefully insert the wet edge into the port and slowly rub until the port is clean. Finally allow the device to dry for about 20 minutes before turning it on.

Continued on page 14

Driver Updates

You can go online for Automatic Driver Updates. Here are some Web sites for that purpose. Driver Detective www.drivershq.com gives you access to millions of device drivers. As it locates available drivers for devices, it scan your PC with a Driver Scanning Engine. DriverScanner 2009 www.liutilities.com manages and installs the latest drivers in order to renew your system. When scanning for old drivers, it classifies each driver by determining what type of update it requires. RadarSync 2009 PC Updater www.radarsync.com helps your computer run safely and increase its life span by keeping your hardware drivers and software applications up-to-date at all times. The RadarSync 2009 PC updater is free unless you subscribe to RadarSync Premium, which is \$29.95 for a year subscription.

Driver Magician www.drivermagician.com is a program that backs up, restores, updates, and removes device drivers. DriverCure www.drivercure.com has some unique built-insecurity features that protect your PC from malicious driver code and lost driver data. Driver Genius Professional Edition 9 www.driver-soft.com has a Driver Download Manager that makes it easy to view drivers are available and how many are required for associated devices. It also informs you of the size of each download. DriverAgent www.driveragent.com patrols for the newest drivers from companies in order to increase your PC's performance and repair glitches.

IObit Advanced Windows Care

If you are interested in improving the performance of a sluggish computer, several computer experts recommend the free version of IObit's Advanced Windows Care – Personal Edition, Version 2. Recently IObit released an upgraded and updated utility renamed Advanced System Care Free V3, which IObit claims has over 10,000 improvements and updates. You can go to the IObit website at <http://www.iobit.com/>, and downloading the new software. Once down loaded, you will be given the choice of multiple download sites.

One of them is the Texas mirrors of MajorGeeks, a major download service. The download is about 7.6 megs in size. Once downloaded, click on the file to install it. When the install is complete, you will see displayed a clean fresh graphical interface that on the left of the window gives the choices "Maintain Windows," "Diagnose System," "Utilities," and "Home." Which-ever icon is selected opens the right half of the window. For a test of the software, choose to Maintain Windows. You will be offered a check-box selection of "Spyware Removal," "Registry Fix," "Privacy Sweep," and "Junk Files Clean." You can select all of them and click on "Scan." In just seconds, all of the corrections and deletions will be carried out. Next you might want to select the "Diagnose System" icon.

It will give you check boxes for "System Optimization," "Security Defense," "Disk Defragment," and "Security Analyzer." The Security Defense feature can immunize the computer against thousands of malicious websites, illicit tracking cookies, browser hijackers, dialers, and other malicious software. Security Analyzer examines running programs to detect and disable any malware that may be currently running on the computer. The Utilities selection offers 20 distinct utilities to tune-up the computer and its applications. Under the Tune Up tab, you will find that Firefox can be optimized for maximum performance. The "Home" icon displays program version, database updates, most recent scan user account (free or paid "Professional" account), and the cumulative results of the scans that had been performed. The center "Care" icon automatically runs the system optimization utilities, as a one-click performance improvement function. IObit has a comparison chart that compares the features of Advanced System Care Free V3 with its software competitors, both free and commercial. This software is compared to seven major competitors (1 free and six commercial), and comes out feature rich compared to the competition. Some of the products listed have features and capabilities not included with Advanced System Care Free V3, but comparing system utilities and clean up programs, this program compares very well.

After trying the free version, IObit wants the satisfied user to upgrade to the Pro version, which has more features and capabilities, and is currently on sale online for \$19.95 (regularly \$29.95) directly from IObit. The Pro version has additional performance improving features, a deep registry scan that roots out many more useless registry, additional tune-up features to both improve hardware performance and web speed, and free technical support.

Security Software Removal

If you want to uninstall security software on your computer, here's an option. The next time you restart your computer, repeatedly press the F8 key after the initial power-on message appears on the screen and chose Safe Mode. That move prevents some services from starting and might allow you to complete the uninstallation of the software. Otherwise, you might have to pay for tech support from the software maker.

Surge Protectors

Here are some good tips to protect your computer equipment which are connected to surge protectors. A multi-socket power strip is not necessarily a surge protector. Check and see how the device is labeled. If the surge protector is hot to the touch, remove and replace the unit. Do not plug a surge protector into an existing surge protector or power strip. This practice is called "daisy chaining" and is a fire hazard. There should only be one surge protector plugged into a single duplex electrical outlet. Do not use a surge protector in a moist environment. The surge protector should always have either a polarized plug with one of the blades being larger than the other one or a three prong grounded plug. Never use a three to two prong adapter to power the unit.



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.

People I've seen since releasing the November column commented on my vacation, but missed that some pictures of Port Huron, Michigan's Boat night would be on my Web site. You can check <http://www.dealsguy.com/Boatnight_Images.html> for the pictures and descriptions.

I was surprised to hear from as many readers as I did about the GM bankruptcy thing. I was unaware that so many of my readers were also affected. Good luck to us all. I wonder why most of the people that ran GM into the ground are still running it, with our money. I hear people complaining about the unions, but their pay cuts didn't make the news. Many GM workers took pay cuts, some as much as 50%. That must have hurt, although some people feel that even workers at a 7/11 make too much money. Salaried workers involuntarily took health care cuts long before the union people had to. Where I worked in Michigan is pretty much a ghost town now where former GM plants are now fields of weeds. When I hired into my GM plant, I was overwhelmed by the size of the plant (eight blocks long and four blocks wide) where over 7,000 people worked in 1950. Buick City was much larger, but it's also gone.

*Recreation Time

My wife and I took a bargain cruise in September with two other couples and found that corporate cutbacks have also invaded the cruise industry. At least that's what we were told when we asked crewmembers, or customer service, questions. Customer service urged us to e-mail our concerns to the corporate Web site. Our ship was the Freedom of the Seas, a Royal Caribbean beauty. It can carry about 4,300 passengers and has 1,400 crewmembers. Last December (2008), we cruised on the Mariner of the Seas (also Royal Caribbean) and it's slightly smaller than this one, but they are both large. There are no more free gifts for "Crown & Anchor" members (people with multiple cruises on RC). We did get coupon books, but discounts in them don't amount to much.

We weren't the only ones who noticed that portions at dinner are now smaller, although I have no problem with that. The buffet was only complete in the morning. For the luncheon buffet, half of the area was cordoned off, but the selection was still good. We never went to the evening buffet so we don't know about that one. Servers told us that with part of the area cordoned off, there was less food that had to be thrown away. Everybody did get whatever food they wanted. We noticed a few other cuts, but we still enjoyed the cruise. Of course, some of these policies could actually be "that ship's" policy. The cruise in December on the Mariner of the Seas was better, but it's been moved to Las Angeles and the Freedom is taking its place out of Port Canaveral. Corporate cuts probably took place since we took the cruise on the Mariner.

The Freedom of the Seas is about 1,100 ft. long and 126.64 ft. wide; and is much too large for the Panama Canal. As I said, we had a fun cruise, but it is often crowded in certain places. The evening shows were great and one person in our group managed to get us tickets to a show at the ice rink, and that was also a spectacular show.

We think our next cruise will be on a smaller ship. There seems to be some great cruise bargains available these days. How about \$399 for a 7-day cruise on a Holland America ship! Also, Norwegian Cruise Lines, which I have never tried, called to offer us a five day cruise at \$129, but we weren't quite ready for their fast approaching open dates. We did sign up for the Florida Association of PC Users Groups spring conference, which will be held on a three day cruise next spring. Registration for it has been great and it seems to be well received.

Enough about our fun (which is destroying our savings); here's a few things that might be of interest to you.

*Just the Ticket For Dark Restaurants

If you haven't seen (or heard) them, you'd be impressed with "Talking Menus." I saw them at a food show some time ago, but haven't been to a restaurant that uses them. I've been to a few restaurants with a dark ambience and tried everything to see what was on the menu. These talking menus would be the answer, and according to the brochure, they can also tell you the nutritional facts if you are interested. Look them over at <<http://www.talkingmenus.com>>.

I could have asked them for a discount, but I doubt your budget would have tolerated a \$399 menu for your dinner table at home (from the prices in the booklet they gave me), and I doubt the cook offers multiple selections to choose from. Ask your favorite

Continued on page 16

restaurant if they'll be getting them soon. We don't frequent the dark places much and our favorites, the fast-food places, don't need them. However, my wife has to read the menus behind the counter to me because the print is too small. Have you noticed that on their dollar menus?

*Tool For Repairing Access Files

I ran this product back in March, but if you missed it at that time, DataNumen is now offering a 20% discount by using the coupon code DATA-E2OI-TWEN when ordering at <<http://www.datanumen.com/aar/order.htm>>.

This is a better deal than the discount last March which was only 10%. The discount code may also work for ordering their products for repairing Excel and Word; and for the Outlook and Outlook Express files. Check their Web site for descriptions of the products. The version for Access is 2.1, updated from the one in March.

*How's Your Battery Doing?

Hewie Poplock of Central Florida Computer Society <<http://www.cfcs.org>> mentioned this product to the members of his SIG (Special Interest Group) and it sounded to me like something that my readers might be interested in, considering the proliferation of laptop use these days. According to their product page, "BatteryCare" is a free utility that gives you much more information about your battery than how much charge you have left for the current session: The app changes power profiles for you when you connect your laptop to a power source, lets you know how many recharge cycles your battery has left, and more, all for free." I know my laptop is not accurate about its remaining time, but I have not used it very much while depending entirely on its battery.

It sounds like a handy product, and how could you go wrong if it's free. However, the developer does appreciate any donations to help keep his work going. Makes sense to me. <<http://batterycore.bkspot.com/en/index.html>>



*Having problems reading the screen?

A while back, I read a review of DeskTopZoom written by Bonnie Snyder in Bits of Bytes, newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society of Colorado Springs <<http://ppcompas.apcug.org/bb0903.pdf#page=5>>. This product does a good job of giving you options for enlarging parts of your screen for easier reading, or to study something you can't see very well on a page. It does have a few shortcomings, but all in all, she speaks highly of it, and the price is "nada." If you would like to find out more, read her article in the above link, or go to <<http://www.softpedia.com/get/Desktop-Enhancements/Other-Desktop-Enhancements/DesktopZoom.shtml>>. There may be improvements since her review was written.

*Magnifier You May Already Have!

Let's say that you sometimes need simple magnification for something. Like me, you may not have known about the screen magnifier in XP. It's nothing exciting, but simply click "All Programs, then Accessories, then click Accessibility" and you'll find Magnifier. I tried it and it's pretty basic, but I'm told that more information about it is on the Microsoft Web site. The article I read said there's a link for that, but I didn't see it. On my screen, large text appeared at the top with a large cursor, and while there wasn't much magnified screen area, I was able to make use of it. Try it; it may be all you need. Clicking "exit" stops it. I was unaware of this gem until I read it in a newsletter.



Exercise for the health of it

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/>>

All computer users should take advantage of the New Year and make a commitment to their health and happiness. Start an ergonomic exercise routine to keep you in top shape in the battle against the computer. The following are some necessary exercises:

Neck Exercises

To loosen the neck and avoid painful stiffness, bring your head into a fully upright position then lower your head until your chin tucks into your neck. Try to touch your chest gently with your chin. This exercise loosens both your upper back as well as your neck.

Hold your head down for 5 seconds, and then return your head to a relaxed upright posture once more.

Turn your head slowly to the right as far as possible then return to a forward position. Repeat the movement to the right 3 times, and then switch to the left.

Be sure not to overextend your neck as you go in each direction. If you feel any tightness, ease your head back to the forward position.

Start with your head in a fully upright position. Place your left hand on your right shoulder, and then tip your head to the other side. This movement gently stretches the lateral neck muscles while keeping your face pointed forward. Hold your head to the side for 5 seconds then switch to the other side, putting your right hand on your left shoulder and tipping your head to the right.

Shoulder Exercises

Relax your arms by your sides and bring your elbows in close to your hips. Slowly rotate your shoulders in a forward motion for approximately 10 seconds. Reverse direction and bring both shoulders back. This simple exercise reduces muscle tension in the neck and back area as well as improving blood circulation in the shoulder tendon and joint capsule.

Lock your hands together behind your back and try to touch your elbows together. Don't push too hard. Hold your hands together for 5 seconds then let go.

Try to raise your arms as high as possible while pushing your elbows close together.

Back Exercises

With your hands on your lower back and your feet shoulder width apart, slowly lean backward. Extend yourself until you feel a gentle pull on your stomach muscles.

This exercise helps relax your lumbar region, the most common cause of back problems, especially those caused by excessive periods of sitting.

With your arms above your head and your fingers interlocked, palms facing upwards, stretch your arms, shoulders and ribcage. Slowly bend to your left and right side, stretching as far to each side as is comfortable for you. This exercise helps exercise and loosens tightened, overstressed muscles in your back including the trapezius and latissimus dorsi.

Lock your hands behind your head. Now pull your shoulder blades together and hold that position for five seconds. Repeat this exercise two times. This exercise helps release tension that can build in the upper back, especially the trapezius.

These are all important exercises that will benefit you for many years to come. The trick is start now.



A Slightly Different Kind of Shortcut

Vinny La Bash , Sarasota PC User Group

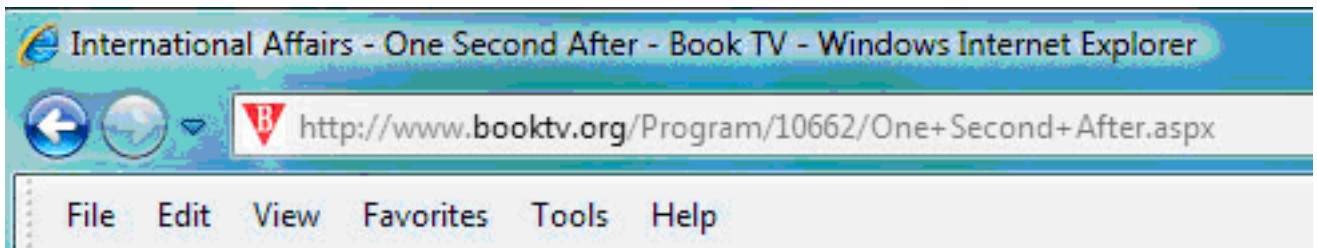
Vinny (SPCUG President in 1996-97-98) is a retired IBM'er and teaches computer part time at the Sarasota Vocational Technical Institute. <labash@spcug.org>

Whenever you select a menu item or activate an icon on your desktop, you are most likely opening a file called a shortcut. This is a great time saver for the average person who uses computers on a regular basis. A computer shortcut is a file similar to any other file that resides on your computer, with one big difference.

It's only function is to direct the operating system to the location of another file so you don't have to go exploring through layers of folders to find it, assuming you even know its location. As mentioned above, it's a great time saver. Wouldn't it be handy to have a desktop shortcut icon that would bring you to your favorite web site without having to go through all the intermediate steps to get there? First you need to open your browser. Then it's a matter of getting the URL into the address bar. There is more than one way to do this.

You can use the mouse to select an item from the Favorites bar or Command bar. You can also type in the address manually, which is prone to error and can be cumbersome if the URL is long and complex. Suffice to say that Microsoft has provided the ability to create many paths to the same destination. No matter which path you take, the first time you visit a web site is the most time consuming. Only once do you need to take the longest journey. Subsequent visits can be made via a desktop shortcut. Let's take the path of least resistance.

The illustration shows the web address (URL) of a web site we'll presume you visit frequently. The easiest way to create a desktop shortcut to this location is to:



1. Right click the icon immediately to the left of the web site address. In this example, it's the red down-pointing triangle with the white B inside.
2. Minimize any open windows blocking access to the desktop.
3. While holding the right mouse button, drag the icon to an empty portion of your desktop.
4. Release the right mouse button and a dialog box will appear prompting you to create a shortcut on the desktop.
5. Click on the Create Shortcuts Here option.

Your desktop icon will resemble the illustration on the left. Customizing the icon is easy. Right-click on the icon, and select Properties from the popup menu.

Activate the Web Document tab. From here you can change the icon by clicking on the Change Icon button and choosing from a large selection provided by Microsoft. If you don't care for any of these, you can browse through folders on your computer until you find one you prefer.

The Security tab allows you to grant or deny access to anyone who also shares your computer. Information on the Details tab will vary with the web site.

The General tab, (which should be the Details tab), is where you get the detailed information about the icon.

Change whatever you think needs changing or leave everything alone. The choice is yours.

As always, the devil is in the details. If the website you wish to access through the shortcut requires authorization, the shortcut may not work. If a user ID and password are needed you will most likely get a message telling you that you're not getting in until you provide proper identification.

Task Manager

If your computer is running slowly, the Windows Task Manager offers a quick and easy way to check the load on your Central Processing Unit (CPU). To open it, press Ctrl, Alt, Del (in Vista, you must then 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 must frequently rely on the slower virtual memory 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 then 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 % DiskTime, 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 running Vista, you can check on your disk use in the Disk graph under Resource Overview.



We specialize in individual and small business tax preparation

Laura B. Grover, E.A.
Tax Preparation & Financial Consulting
14350 Northbrook Drive, Suite 240
San Antonio, TX 78232

(210) 402-6100
Fax (210) 402-2888

laurab@lauragrover.com
www.lauragrover.com



Enrolled to practice before the Internal Revenue Service

Year's End and Review issue

2009 Come and Gone

By **Elizabeth B. Wright**, a member of the
Computer Club of Oklahoma City, OK,
www.ccokc.org, wright599new@sbcglobal.net

Yes, another year is coming to a close. And what do we have to show for it? Another Microsoft OS for those who are not already confused, limited software and a world gone wild on the internet. Is that what we had hoped for as 2010 looms on the horizon? While all of the above were probably inevitable, how can we make the most and best of it?

Continued on page 20

First: the new MS OS, fondly known as Windows7. It's really not too bad, considering the fact that all Windows based computers work under the original handicap of the hardware created by IBM for its personal computers. I have seen my friends and loved ones switching to Apple based computers and loving every minute of it, even though Apple creates new operating systems about as often as does Microsoft.

But then, most people switch for the graphics and possibly the word processing capability of Apple (Mac) machines, and perhaps are not as compelled to upgrade to a new OS like Windows customers are. Yes, our photographs are very important to us and Apple made that kind of computing a good experience many years ago.

But what about those of us who like to work with both graphics and number-crunching software? Best to stick to the unending procession of Microsoft operating systems. With powerful enough hardware, including RAM memory and a good graphics card, even Windows can do a passable job with graphics. It has always done exceptionally well with the numbers stuff. And if we can get version 7 and whatever comes next to work with our older software, then maybe we can carry on business as usual. I for one plan to give it a try. But to utilize additional RAM, we are faced with using the 64bit version of Windows 7 with a 64bit processor.

So we might not actually get as much good out of the new OS and newer photo editing software if our hardware can't meet those standards.

Second: limited software. By now most average users have all the programs they will ever use. About the only thing new many people buy is the latest, greatest antivirus program. Businesses use number crunching, word processing and data manipulation software; individuals tend to use graphics, word processing and the internet. Microsoft and Apple, and to some extent Sun Microsystems, have both categories firmly in hand, and we likely will see no new software for average users. But the old MS and Adobe stuff will continue to be "improved" in order to keep those companies in business. No need to beat that dead horse. Programs for Linux based computers are more of the same.

As for huge corporations, they depend on specialists to continually fine-tune their programs in order to keep up with the competition. The industry that has developed for just that purpose is something of which most of us are not likely to have much knowledge or interest.

Third: The World Gone Wild. That is the one that worries most thinking people more than anything else. Again, it doesn't need explaining since most of the people reading this are well aware of the idiocy available on the internet. Yes, there is still some really good stuff out there, but so few people are taking advantage of it. The bad stuff, and everyone knows just how bad it is, may be the ultimate downfall of civilization as we now know it.

From selling iffy goods to selling sex and extreme violence, the internet is a place where legitimate learning and business is losing the battle. Even the so-called online universities are often nothing but sham corporations. They tie people up with debt as soon as they enroll, knowing full well that many of their "students" will never finish even the first course, much less graduate. And what are those degrees worth? I guess I can expect a lot of dissent on that subject, but first hand experience with relatives has shown me that my theory is on target.

But of course, the upside is that the internet system will probably implode in perhaps the not-too-distant future. Either governments will hijack it or it will just crumble from its own weight and greed. Do you remember the world before the internet? What you may not remember, or possibly don't know about, was the existence of computers connected via phone lines and other cabling systems which were military and scientific in nature. Then the rest of us got into the act.

Outlook for 2010: For computer users who want something more than email and surfing, there continue to be ways to improve skills. And many of those choices are still available free on the internet. Check out your favorite program to see what and where you can find training programs, then DO IT!! Make the effort to at least make Microsoft, Apple and all others work for you instead of the other way around.



The Great Computer Build, 2009

DIY in the Decade of Dell

By Jan Fagerholm, Associate Editor and 'Puter Parts Purveyor,
PC Community, CA, pcc4me@gmail.com, www.pcc.org

First in a series on building a high performance computer with the latest technology.

Personal computers have become ubiquitous. Not only as desktop computers, but as a variety of portable computers. These days, laptops of various stripes outsell desktop computers by a large margin. And why not? – Laptops do nearly everything that a desktop computer can do, and are smaller and portable. The present crop of Netbook

computers are a case in point: they are the first new variant introduced that break the march of the past (bigger, more features, faster) with a new reality appeal: the just-right size and performance for the task.

This scaling doesn't always work in the performance direction. A high performance laptop with a big screen will cost lots of low performance dollars but its performance will still fall well short of a desktop computer that costs half as much, particularly in graphics performance. So if you want to build a performance computer, you are still looking at buying or building a desktop computer.

I use a laptop computer for much of my work for the same reasons most people do: it's portable, and good enough for all but the most demanding graphics tasks. For the more demanding CAD/CAM work and for desktop publishing (DTP) I rely on my desktop machine because of its superior graphics capability.



In the early days of PCs, enthusiasts normally built their own machines from individually selected components, which had the advantages of getting exactly what you want, and it was cheaper to roll your own than buy one pre-built from a retailer. Companies like Dell have turned this scenario inside out, and it is now possible to buy a pre-built computer cheaper than you can put it together yourself from identical components. Computer consulting is part of my business, and I have gotten away from building computers for my clients because I can get the computer they need pre-built from an online source cheaper than I can build it myself. This also has the advantage of knowing all the parts will work together (a potential problem when dealing with bleeding edge technology) and I don't have to warranty the machine myself.

Continued on page 22

I remain an enthusiast, though, so the compulsion to roll my own still remains. The justification is that I still think I can build a machine best for my needs (not all rational) at a price I am willing to pay. If you lean toward the performance end of the scale, it is still possible to just throw money at the problem and get a high performance machine. Moore's Law is still the rule (George Moore, while Director of Research at Fairchild Semiconductor, wrote an article for the April 19, 1965 anniversary edition of Electronics magazine where he hypothesized that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit would double every year through 1975.

Others, later, dubbed it "Moore's Law") Bill Machrone, in PC Magazine in 1984, stated a pragmatic corollary; "the computer you want will always cost \$5000." Neither Moore's Law nor Machrone's corollary has changed much to this day. Niklaus Wirth, inventor of the Pascal programming language,

popularized what he credited as Reiser's Law: "software is slowing faster than hardware is accelerating" (Martin Reiser, then at IBM Research, subsequently demurred, "It is not the first time I am accused of having said something that I cannot remember having said".) Stated in a canonical context, "what Moore giveth, Gates taketh away." Ask yourself, does your newest computer boot and load applications any faster than the computer you had ten years ago?

But I digress. Today's point is that I have been one of those who have spent money on the bleeding edge of this technology since 1978, and while I still want a fast computer, I'm not willing to spend \$5000 on it right now. These days, that money will get you a high end gamer machine (that's where the technology really rides) with the fastest quad core CPU (\$1000), the fastest quad PCI-E video cards (\$2400), 16 GB DDR3 RAM (\$800), two 7200 RPM 2 terabyte hard drives with hardware RAID 0 (\$750) (note that "10,000 RPM" and "terabyte" do not come together at this time – more on that later). We have spent \$4950 on this and we don't even have a monitor, case, power supply, keyboard and mouse yet. . . What's a 3D gamer, -er, high end CAD/CAM user to do?

Obviously, some scaling down in expectations is required when you budget purchases. Your performance vs. pocketbook price point will vary, but I will explain mine as we go along. The objective is to build a machine capable of running high end software (Adobe CS4, CAD/CAM) and provide respectable performance with 3D game software. (3D games are one of the better informal benchmarks for hardware.

Right now, I'm starting with a budget constraint and working within that, much as I do for my clients.

Buying computer by parts, we are dealing with essentially these parts: CPU, motherboard, memory, hard drive, optical drive, monitor, the case, power supply, and probably a new keyboard and mouse to make the newness complete. (When building your own, it is tempting to recycle many of the parts from the old computer, but if the computer you are considering is more than three years old, you will probably compromise the new computer's performance by using these parts.)

In subsequent articles, we'll examine in turn CPU-motherboard-memory, then the rest of the stuff. Yes, there is even something to learn about cases and power supplies.





Cryptography

A big word that helps keep the internet secure

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida,
www.spcug.org, president@spcug.org

You may have asked yourself some of the following questions. How secure is the internet? What has been done to make the Internet secure? How safe is my private information during an internet transaction? If so, read on; if you are a very trusting individual and figure that “they” will keep the internet secure, jump to the next article. During this time when the Internet provides essential communication between tens of millions of people and is being increasingly used as a tool for commerce, security has become a very important issue. And when it comes to computers, “security” is of concern on many different levels.

There is physical security that keeps your computer hardware from being stolen. There is software security that keeps people out of our private files. There is “malware” security, that keeps your computer software from being infected with viruses, spyware, worms and the like. And finally there is “network” security that keeps private data protected as it goes from one computer (or client) on the internet to another computer (or server) on the internet. This article deals with network security, which is ensured by applying cryptography to messages that are transmitted on the Internet.

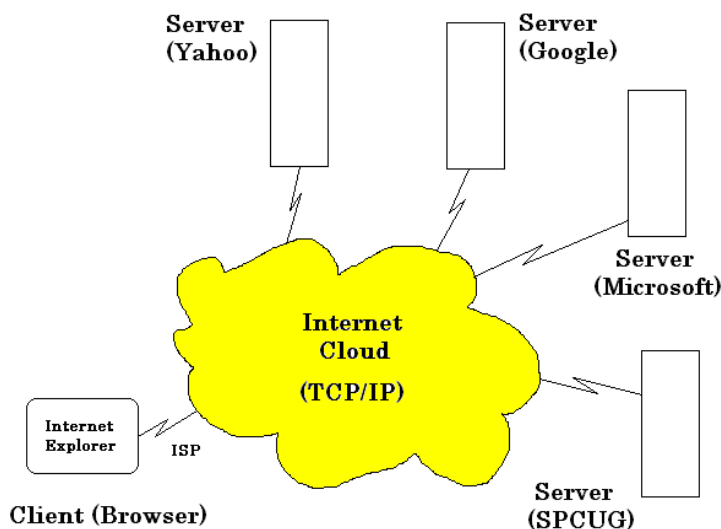
Remember the “s” in “https://” and the little lock icon on the browser when you went to a “secure” website? Well, cryptography is behind all that security. Cryptography is used to secure Internet and even telephone communications. Cryptography is nearly as old as written language itself. It was invented to address the age-old question: How can I communicate with my friend, so that no one else will know what was communicated?

Cryptography becomes necessary whenever one is attempting to communicate private information over an “un-trusted” medium, such as the Internet. Typically, you can be sure that the message you send over the internet will get to its destination, but you cannot guarantee that intermediaries (computers along the way) will not be able to see and read your message, unless it is protected. With a collection of not-so-expensive equipment and a good deal of knowledge, a message on the internet can be intercepted (sniffed), and if it is “plain text”, it can be read. For mundane e-mail messages, this is not much of a concern, but for messages that contain private information, such as passwords or bank account or social security numbers, this could be an invitation for Identity Theft.

Cryptography to the rescue. Cryptography (from the Greek for “hidden writing”) is the ancient science of encoding messages so that only the sender and receiver can understand them. Cryptography can be defined as the conversion of data (plain-text) into a scrambled code (cipher-text) that can be sent across a network, and deciphered by the rightful receiver at the other end.

There are two main techniques used to encrypt data, Symmetric and Asymmetric. Symmetric encryption uses the same key for encryption as it does for decryption. Symmetric encryption is also called Secret-key encryption because the key is kept a secret between the two cooperating parties.

Conceptual View of the Internet



Continued on page 24

Asymmetric uses separate keys for encryption and decryption. Asymmetric encryption is also called Public-key encryption because one of the keys is allowed to circulate in the public (and one is kept private).

Cryptography is now available to everyone thanks to the development of modern computers, which can perform more mathematical operations in a second than a human being could do in a lifetime. An ordinary PC, with the proper software, can produce codes of such complexity that the most powerful supercomputer using the best available software could not break them in thousands of years. Before modern times and the personal computer, cryptography was concerned solely with message confidentiality.

Message confidentiality is conversion (encryption), of messages from a “plain-text” form into an incomprehensible one (cipher-text) for transmission and then back again to the original form, at the other end (decryption). This keeps the message unreadable by interceptors or eavesdroppers who do not have knowledge of the “key” needed for decryption of that message. (With the advent of the personal computer and the proliferation of digital information, the field of digital message protection has expanded beyond only confidentiality concerns to include techniques for message integrity checking, identity authentication, digital signatures, and password protection all of which we will leave for future discussions.)

As stated above, Secret key cryptography refers to encryption methods in which both the sender and receiver share the same key. Secret key cryptography is ideally suited to encrypting long messages, providing privacy and confidentiality for messages typically used in computer to computer transactions.

Public Key Cryptography refers to methods in which two keys are owned by each participant, one for encryption (public key) and one for decryption (private key). Public Key cryptography is suited to short messages and is typically used to exchange “secret keys” between two computers. Public Key cryptography could, theoretically, also be used to encrypt messages but this is rarely done because Secret-key cryptography is about 1000 times faster than Public-key cryptography.

So, just how do these schemes work in our typical computer to computer (network) communications? Secret-key and Public-key cryptography are used to setup and maintain a secure data path from a client (your computer browser) to a server (information or data storage system). Because Secret-key cryptography is best used for long messages, a secret key will be used to encode all messages during the transaction.

But how do we get a secret key to be used by both computers for the transaction. In comes Public-Key cryptography. Public-key cryptography, which is best suited for short messages, is used to send the secret key (which is short) from one computer to the other, so that both will have the secret key for encoding the messages that follow.

The server has a public key for the client (your computer) and it encodes a “secret key” with that public key. It then sends the encoded message to the client and the client can then decode the message with its private key. The private key is used to decode the “secret key message” so that the client knows what to use as the secret key for subsequent message encoding (i.e., the decoded secret key). This all sounds very complicated, and it is, but all of this is controlled by the “secure software protocols” and you, the user, don’t have to get involved at all. (I’ve actually simplified the operation a bit, but the essence of how cryptography is used is still pretty accurate.)

So, with the use of Public-Key, and Secret-Key cryptography, you can rest assured that the messages you are sending over the Internet will not be of any value to anyone attempting to intercept such information. What more could you ask for - through the use of cryptography, the un-trusted Internet can now be used to send private messages, therefore providing secure communications, over the Internet, for everyone.



Microsoft Releases Free Beta of New Security Software

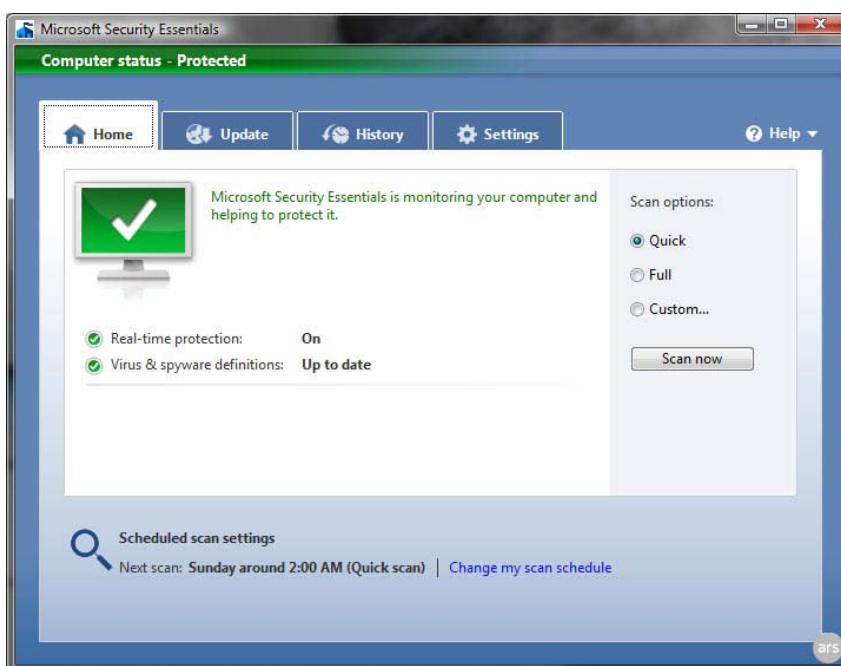
By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director, Columnist, The Examiner,
Beaumont, TX; Radio Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net

Many of us love to kick Microsoft as the 600 pound gorilla who created the most popular computer operating systems and also attracted countless miscreants who locate and take advantage of security breaches. Microsoft has produced some very good security products, such as the anti-spyware product Windows Defender, and some mediocre products such as Windows Live OneCare. Now, Microsoft is releasing a free public beta of its newest incarnation of comprehensive security software code named "Morro", but publicly named "Microsoft Security Essentials" (MSE). The public beta release of MSE should be online by the time you read this, at www.microsoft.com/security_essentials. There are some reports that Microsoft will limit the number of beta downloads of MSE to 75,000.

MSE's final release version is scheduled to be available later this year, and is planned to be a free security package designed to protect the computer from viruses, spyware, rootkits, and Trojans. MSE will be replacing Microsoft's current commercial offering, Windows Live OneCare, which Microsoft announced will be discontinued as of June 30. Initial reports that have leaked from Microsoft indicate that MSE will be a low-end security product, competing against the wildly popular free offerings from AVG and Avast, but lacking the full featured security capabilities of such commercial powerhouses as McAfee, Norton-Symantec, and TrendMicro. MSE will be a free download, and will run on Windows XP, Vista, and the new Windows 7. Separate installers will be available for 32 bit and 64 bit versions of Windows, and will vary from 3mb to 7mb in download size. It should be noted that only users of genuine licensed copies of Windows will be able to download and install MSE, as Microsoft claims that the MSE installer will be able to detect illicit copies of Windows and block the installation.

Preliminary anecdotal reports leaked about Morro, the precursor of MSE, indicate that it will install with a wizard that will require the uninstallation of any antivirus software that is on the computer before MSE can be installed. MSE will also deactivate Microsoft's Windows Defender anti-spyware if it is installed on the computer, as it will no longer be needed.

MSE will offer free frequent updates of virus and malware signatures, as well as system scans on demand and at scheduled times. MSE was designed to minimize the impact on system resources, and not significantly degrade system performance. The user interface (UI) is simple and clean, much like Windows Defender, and does not require any technical skills to properly operate. Microsoft designed MSE to be a simple but effective free security utility to protect Windows computers lacking effective antivirus and anti-spyware software. At present, it does not appear that MSE will be offering additional security features and benefits included in the top-selling commercial security suites. "This is security you can trust," said Alan Packer, general manager of Microsoft's anti-malware team, when asked to define how it differs from rivals, both free and not. "And it's easy to

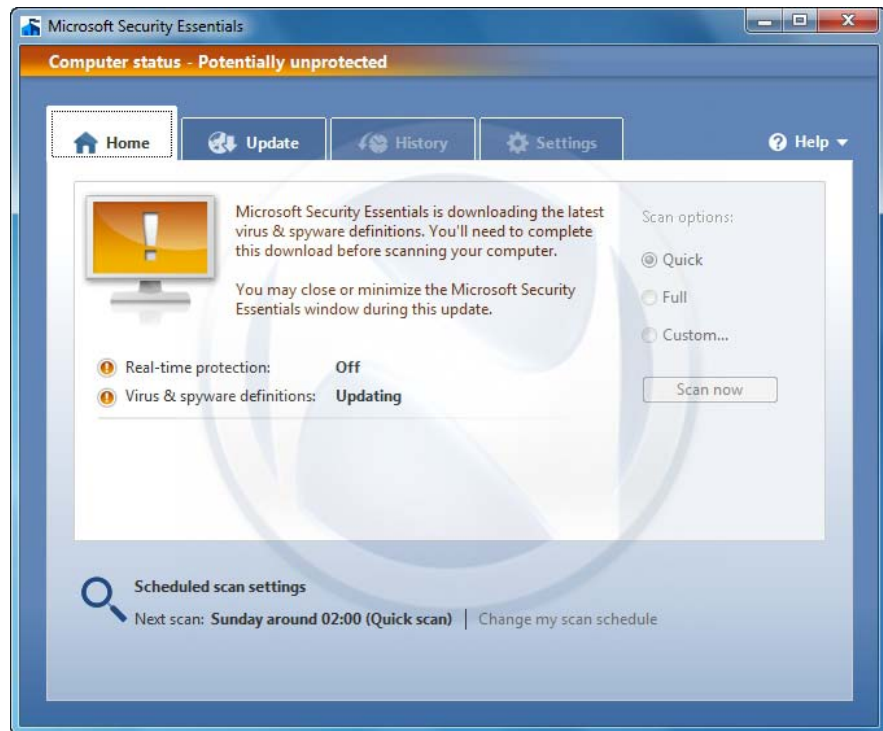


Continued on page 14

get and easy to use." "Rather than scan and clean, which it also does, it's trying to keep you from being infected in the first place," Packer said.

In addition to malware signatures which will be updated frequently, MSE will use a feature Microsoft calls "Dynamic Signature Service" which links the computer with MSE installed to Microsoft's servers. If MSE detects suspicious behavior, but does not have a digital malware signature in its database, MSE will query Microsoft's servers. "If it sees something new, like a new binary, the client queries the back end," Packer said. "The server can then ask for a sample, which the client sends as a hash." The user can control and consent to the sending of the potential malware to Microsoft, as MSE will ask for permission to send it. If Microsoft has already created a digital signature and remedy for the malware, the server will instantly push the signature to the computer. "We have a list of known good software, of course, but outside that, if a program is doing things like hooking Autostart points in the registry, or trying to kill other processes, Essential will query the servers," Packer said.

It is too early to tell about the quality of protection offered by MSE, as it has not yet been tested and rated by the independent services that test and rate security products. It also needs to be noted that the current software is a "beta" or pre-release version, and may contain unresolved bugs or other problems that will likely be resolved by the final release later this year. Still, if your PC is lacking effective security software, or your subscription to a commercial product is about to expire and you are willing to take the risk of having beta software provide basic protection to your computer, then Microsoft Security Essentials may be a worthwhile consideration.



New Free Security Utilities

Do You Speak Klingon?

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

Do you speak Klingon, the language of the intergalactic warriors of Star Trek fame? If so, the newly released (beta) product of Sophos' new on-demand malware scanner may be just for you. If you are among the Earthlings who have some command of the English language, then the English version of Sophos Klingon Anti-Virus may be more practical than the Klingon language version. Those of us so ethnocentric that we choose to speak English may be at a slight disadvantage, as Wikipedia states, "According to Guinness World Records, Klingon is the most popular fictional language by number of speakers."

Klingon Anti-Virus (beta) is one of the latest anti-malware products released by the UK's Sophos, a successful security company with over 100 million registered users. Klingon Anti-Virus is not a stand alone security product that provides continuous protection, but instead is an on-demand scanner that detects and removes viruses, spyware, adware, zero-day threats, and other varieties of malware. According to Sophos, "The software can be run without deactivating your current anti-virus software." This software is expressly intended to detect any malware that may have slipped through the protection provided by any installed security software on the computer. It should not interfere with any other security software already installed on the computer, and is not memory resident (loaded) except when explicitly loaded by the user.

Klingon Anti-Virus will run on any 32 or 64 bit version of Windows 2000, XP, Server 2003, or Vista, and has minimal hardware requirements. While Klingon AV will not interfere with existing antivirus installations, it should not be installed on any system currently protected by the full version of Sophos Anti-Virus. As a beta (pre-release) version, the current download offers full functionality and updates for 30 days. Installation of Klingon AV requires the entry of a specific username and password, both of which are included in the "release notes", which is adjacent to the download link (Username for the English version: TERRAN01, Password: BTANKITM).

Klingon AV is really an incarnation Sophos Threat Detection Test, which is the product name displayed when the English version of Klingon AV is installed. If the Threat Detection Kit is downloaded directly (not the Klingon AV), the user must register online (free) prior to the download. The Threat Detection Test uses the same scan engine as the commercial Sophos Anti-Virus product, and has been tested and certified as effective by the major antivirus testing organizations, including the ICSA Labs, West Coast Labs, and Virus Bulletin. Sophos' Klingon Anti-Virus and Threat Detection Test are effective and useful tools to periodically check to verify the integrity of the installed security software, and to determine if any malware has penetrated the existing mode of protection. The Threat Detection Test directly checks performance of Symantec, McAfee, TrendMicro, CA, Kaspersky and F-Secure security products, without interfering with them.

If the user can read Klingon, then that version may be the better one to download, but if English is more appropriate, then download the English language version of Klingon Anti-Virus. Confirming that the installed antivirus software is functioning properly can provide some peace of mind.

Three other free security utilities have been made available by BitDefender, a European purveyor of excellent quality cyber protection products. One utility that I use regularly is the browser (Internet Explorer) based BitDefender Online Scanner, which runs a very fast but thorough scan of the computer for malware. BitDefender Online Scanner runs on demand from the browser, separate from the installed antivirus software, and scans for

KLINGON ANTI-VIRUS from Sophos

- ✓ Free virus, spyware, and adware scan for members of the Klingon empire
- ✓ Find threats your other anti-virus missed
- ✓ No need to turn off your current anti-virus

Download
Klingon Anti-Virus

Release notes
(including password for updates)

Can't read Klingon? What are you!!? Ferengi?

- Download English version
- Release notes

Continued on page 28

viruses and spyware that may have penetrated the existing security software. The online scan does not interfere or interact with the existing security products. The Online Scanner will scan the system memory, files and hard drive boot sectors, and then automatically clean any malware that is found. I have used this product several times on several computers, and found it to be the fastest scan that I have ever used, and was capable of detecting what the installed security software missed. My only issue with the product is that it only runs only on Internet Explorer, and not on Firefox or other browsers. BitDefender Online Scanner is a very worthwhile product to have available on all PCs as a check and verification that the system is clean of malware.

Many of us routinely chat online. While most of our online chats are of a personal and casual nature, there is sometimes a need to discuss sensitive or proprietary information in a chat session. Because we never know if some unauthorized person is listening in on our chats, it may be necessary to encrypt our online chats, such that interception of the content is nearly impossible. BitDefender has released its free BitDefender Chat Encryption utility that allows users to communicate securely if Yahoo! Messenger 8 (or later) or Windows Live Messenger 8.5 (or later) is utilized. With these instant messaging clients, BitDefender Chat Encryption offers effective privacy by integrating a simple but automatic encryption and decryption process. In order to function, both parties must have BitDefender Chat Encryption installed. This software runs on XP with SP2 installed (32 bit), and 32 bit versions of Vista. If secure online chats and instant messages (IM) are desired, then this product may be for you.

One of the common methods of identity theft is phishing, where the user is tricked into entering personal and financial information on a spoofed website. While the latest versions of Internet Explorer (IE) and Firefox offer some protection against phishing and spoofed websites, another layer of protection may be desirable. BitDefender Anti-Phishing Free Edition is a toolbar that works well on both IE and Firefox. According to BitDefender, "BitDefender Anti-Phishing Free Edition provides browser-based protection from phishing attempts by blocking the malicious web pages used to steal credit card data and other personal identification information." This toolbar incorporates real-time filtering of web pages, and detects attempted fraud. If a suspicious site is detected, the user is notified of the potential threat, and given the choice to continue to the questionable website or to block it. The toolbar will also detect links that may be sent through Yahoo! Messenger or Windows Live (MSN) Messenger. If the user does not already have a layered anti-phishing defense, this toolbar from BitDefender will provide substantial protection from phishing websites.

Whether in Klingon, or from BitDefender, it may be a good idea to have another verification of cyber defenses using the appropriate products mentioned above. You can never be too safe.

Free Tools



BitDefender Online Scanner

Free and effective malware cleanup directly from your browser Incorporating the BitDefender award-winning scanning engines, BitDefender Online Scanner is an on-demand antivirus and antispyware tool that shows how safe your PC is. Accessible from your browser, it will scan and automatically clean the system memory, all files and drives' boot sectors.

[» more info](#)



BitDefender Chat Encryption

BitDefender Chat Encryption allows you to communicate securely via Yahoo! Messenger or Windows Live Messenger by encrypting the instant messages exchanged with another PC on which BitDefender Chat Encryption or a BitDefender 2009 product is installed.

[» more info](#) [» download now](#)



BitDefender Anti-Phishing Free Edition

BitDefender Anti-Phishing Free Edition provides browser-based protection from phishing attempts by blocking the malicious web pages used to steal credit card data and other personal identification information. The toolbar works with Microsoft Internet Explorer and with Mozilla Firefox

[» more info](#) [» download now](#)



Sophos Threat Detection Test

Is your anti-virus catching everything it should?

- ✓ Free virus, spyware, and adware scan
- ✓ Test your existing anti-virus protection
- ✓ Find threats your anti-virus missed



Scan once to find viruses, spyware, adware and zero-day threats

Use the Sophos Threat Detection Test to quickly perform a scan and find any viruses, spyware, adware or zero-day threats that might have by-passed your existing protection. The test can be run without uninstalling or deactivating your current anti-virus software.

The test utilizes award-winning [Sophos Anti-Virus](#) detection, [certified](#) by ICSA Labs, West Coast Labs, and Virus Bulletin.

Test your existing anti-virus protection

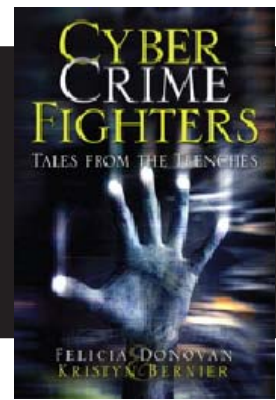
- Scans without the need to uninstall or disable your existing protection
- Runs on Windows 2000/XP/2003/Vista
- Checks performance of Symantec, McAfee, Trend, CA, Kaspersky and F-Secure
- Uses a single scan to detect viruses, spyware and adware
- Detects **zero-day threats** using unique **Behavioral Genotype® Protection**
- Updates automatically for 30 days
- Powered by [SophosLabs™](#) security expertise

Book Review

Cyber Crime Fighters: Tales from the Trenches

Published by Pearson Education, Inc.

Reviewed by Steven M. Breitbart, Director, NOCCC (North Orange County Computer Club, California), www.noccc.org, sbreitbart@socal.rr.com



I have never wanted one of my book reviews to be on Page 1 of the Orange Bytes before now. The Internet has become an entity where all of the old evils are amplified and expanded, and new evils have been created. As the book says “Once again, computer technology and the Internet is a double edged sword, providing tools both for those involved in illegal drug activity as well as for those seeking justice.” You can just as easily plug in identity theft, child pornography or any other crime that can be committed using the Internet.

This book explores many, if not most of the crimes committed using the Internet. The authors, Felicia Donovan and Kristyn Bernier have “over 25 years of combined law enforcement experience.” They discuss cyber stalking, identity theft, online dating, child pornography, social networks, illegal drugs and peer-to-peer network crimes. The crimes range from bullying, stalking or stealing the victims’ identity all the way to murder.

The book is written for the ordinary person who is not an IT professional. They describe an honest, if pessimistic view of the Internet. It appears that someone illegally exchanging songs using a peer-to-peer network is more likely to be sued by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for music piracy than people who acquire child pornography are to be arrested by law enforcement.

One thing I have learned from this book is that if you have a business with any sort of network and access to the Internet, you must either have an IT person or be the IT person yourself. You must have policies clearly defining acceptable uses of business computers and make sure every employee understand the risks involved of visiting risky web sites. You must have procedures, hardware and software in place to make sure nothing sensitive gets out or nothing dangerous, such as spyware and viruses, get in.

Another thing is that you should initiate all actions and not respond to web sites or emails offering any type of get-rich quick scheme or warning. If you get an email asking you to send money, promising that you’ll get back more, it’s probably one of many types of scams. If the scam isn’t asking to you to send money, it’s asking for enough information so they can steal it directly out of your bank accounts - having acquired your name, user identification and password. The authors describe how pedophiles have posed as children and get information from real children, who give out all sorts of information on Facebook, MySpace or other social networking web sites.

Sometimes they get the children to do things in front of their webcams. Once recorded, these videos are circulated among the community of pedophiles. If the pedophiles can get the children to meet them in person, they are often molested or worse.

A great thing about the book is that they include a lot of information on how to protect yourself, your family and your business, but it is scattered all over the book. What we all need is a pamphlet summarizing all the recommended procedures and different web sites we can go to for help.

The whole thing reminds me of an episode of the television show Criminal Minds. The victim asks FBI Agent Hotchner “How many of these people are out there?” He replies, “More than you want to know.” While the characters were not talking about Cyber Crime, the result is the same. As long as I mentioned a television show, I would like to thank the authors for Appendix B, which describes the incredible differences between television’s version of law enforcement and the real thing. It seems to me that animated cartoons resemble reality more.

There are seventeen chapters in the book, plus two appendices. Sixteen of the chapters are chock full of case after case of criminal activities committed using the Internet. While it seems repetitive and tedious, one must remember that this is a small sample of what law enforcement and other agencies find. The book usually describes what happened to the victims and whether the criminals were caught. As one would expect, it doesn’t usually cover the techniques that law enforcement uses too much. Law enforcement is apparently at such a disadvantage in terms of funding, personnel and legal requirements that they cannot afford to give away any information.

Law enforcement is fighting an uphill battle. A lot of the “evil” is coming in from other countries, the criminals are able to remain anonymous on the Internet, and law enforcement is constantly crippled by a lack of budget or personnel for special-

Continued on page 30

ized squads. Add to this the fact that the laws applying to cyber crime vary from state to state, technical challenges and other factors; you get a very pessimistic picture. The Internet is an almost lawless place and it is up to the user to be vigilant.

There are a few small issues I have with the book. The title did not excite me; the word “trenches” is used to mean everything from real world experiences to military operations to undercover investigations; how about “online front line” instead. They repeat various agency names and their acronyms over and over. Either use the full name once along with the acronym, then use just the acronym for, say, the rest of the chapter. The

photographs they used for the Internet address line that says “https” and the padlock icon weren’t clear enough to see. Also, in the chapter where they describe botnets, they begin with a clear description. Two pages later, they say they will define botnets “later” - but they already have.

The last chapter is “How We Would Combat Cyber Crime.” They have many good ideas and I hope the new Cybersecurity Czar will at least listen to the advice of these authors.

I highly recommend this book for anyone who uses the Internet.

It will certainly be too simple for people already involved in computer security. However, the rest of us need to understand what can happen if we are unaware of the pitfalls of using the Internet.

Cyber Crime Fighters: Tales from the Trenches, by Felecia Donovan and Kristyn Bernier; ©2009 Pearson Education, Inc. (part of Addison-Wesley Professional) Boston, MA. ISBN-13: 978-0-7897-3922-3; ISBN-10: 0-7897-3922-4

List price is \$21.99, but is available for \$17.15 at Amazon.com. If your group is a member of the Pearson User Group program, members will receive a 35% discount. Purchase of the book includes a free 45-day online edition through Safari Bookshelf.

Computer Briefs

With Bill Beverley

TestDisk

TestDisk <www.cgsecurity.org> is a free, open-source application that runs a test on your hard drive. It can handle nearly any software drive failure. If your computer runs slow to the point where you are frustrated with it, then it may be time to purchase a new one. Before taking that step, you should run Disk Cleanup to remove all of the “ash and trash” from your computer. Look to remove unused computer software programs to give your unit more memory space. There are several utilities which can be used on your computer to remove unwanted spyware, etc. Next perform all of the routine preventative maintenance tasks, such as Check Disk and Defragmentation. If you have exhausted all of those options and don’t want to reinstall your operating system and the computer still runs like a turtle, then give serious consideration to purchasing a new computer with more memory

Book Review

O'Reilly Books Are The Best

Published by O'Reilly

Written by Cheryl Wester, Program Chair, Temecula Valley Computer Users Group, CA,
www.tvcug.org, Cheryl.wester@gmail.com

I am an avid book reader-primarily junk novels to relax me. I was given the opportunity to check out some books from O'Reilly and all I can say is WOW!!! They were not “junk” novels but definitely kept my interest. I have two of the books with me right now and I'm not sure I would want to give them up.

Best iPhone Apps

The Guide for Discriminating Downloaders by Josh Clark is great. It saves you all sorts of time because he has done the dirty work for you. This book checks out many popular programs for the iPhone-both free and with a minimal charge-and rates them. He also tells you a little background about the apps so you can make an informed decision prior to downloading the app.

I found some really cool apps courtesy of this book and I wouldn't have found them without his assistance. The book also offers great pictures for ease of use. It is a quick read and a great resource for when you are looking for a certain type of application. I would put it on the top of my Christmas list for the person who has everything.

iPhone: The Missing Manual by David Pogue is also a great book. It covers all models with the 3.0 software including the newly releases 3GS. There are numerous tricks to doing just about anything with the iPhone and I quickly found my new favorite one on taking a screen shot of my screen using the built in features-if you want to know how you'll need to bribe me or buy the book!

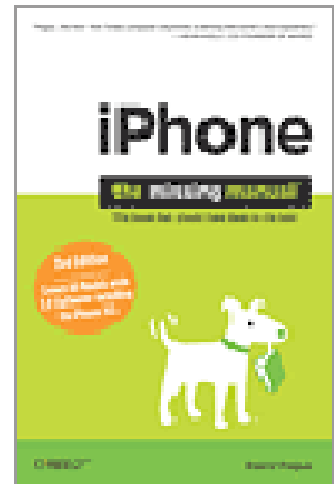
The “Seven Basic Finger Techniques” really help you in understanding how the phone works and the battery tips he includes really work. I like the way the three networks that AT&T has are explained in the book-very easy to understand and to read.

O'Reilly has a lot of missing manual books and based on the ease of this one I'm really going to be investigating the other books and what they offer - now if they could just teach me to parallel park!

Buy 2, Get the 3rd FREE!

Buy two books direct from O'Reilly and get the third free by using code OPC10 in our shopping cart. This offer includes books from O'Reilly and Microsoft Press as well as our partner publishers No Starch, Paraglyph, PC Publishing, Pragmatic, Rocky Nook, SitePoint, TidBITS Publishing, and YoungJin.

- All orders over \$29.95 qualify for free shipping within the US.
- Offer includes O'Reilly products offered as electronic (PDF, EPUB, Mobipocket) documents.
- Offer applies to International customers.
- Offer does not include Rough Cuts.
- Unless the offer message indicates otherwise, the promotional offer applies the discount across the books.
- On the final checkout page, we will show the discount.
- Offer may not be combined with other offers.
- Requires three or more items in your cart.



Software Review

RevoUninstaller: A Tale of Two Printers, a Scanner, and a CD Drive

Written by Bruce Preston, president of West Mountain Systems, Inc., Danbury Area Computer Society, CT, www.dacs.org, bpreston@mags.net.

Printer #1: About two months ago, my friend/dentist called to say that he had a problem with his Epson Stylus CX-3810 Multifunction printer. Usually when he printed, a pop-up window would appear showing the level of his ink cartridges. This had disappeared. In addition he could not get it to appear when he went to the printer's property page by way of Control Panel > Printers. He had wasted two hours on the phone with Epson's support "somewhere" - they had him uninstall the printer and reinstall it twice, and finally they used the generic "not my problem" cure - they told him to "reinstall Windows." Fortunately he didn't follow that instruction.

Printer #2: About a week ago, I had a problem with my HP OfficeJet 6310, a multifunction printer. It just ceased to respond to print requests, although the scan and copy functions worked just fine. I tried doing a "repair install." HP's large hourglass thing came up for a while, a screen flashed by too fast to read, and the setup utility concluded before asking me what to do. I went to the HP site and found that they had a 38MB download of basic drivers for "Corporate Use Only."

Reading the description, it detailed that this was a lightweight install for distributing over a corporate network such that the printer's functions could be shared over a local area network (which I do) without the baggage (not their phrasing) of all the add-on software that the consumer installation puts on each machine. The consumer install puts "HP Director" - a dashboard application, various photo manipulation software, various photo sharing software, and the ubiquitous automatic check for updates application.

The one thing that it would lose would be the ability to send a scan to a desktop application at a selected machine by pushing buttons on the printer's control panel - "pushing" the scan to the computer rather than "pulling" it from the computer. This is a feature I don't need. The lightweight install was just what I wanted. In addition, it said that if it found the consumer drivers it would uninstall them. I downloaded it and cranked up the installation program from the command line as instructed. Again, I got the large hourglass, a too-fast-to-read pop-up, and then nothing.

Scanner: About a month ago there was a Q&A Posting on SmartComputing where a reader had a problem with an Epson Perfection 2580 scanner. Upon pushing the scan button he got a message on his computer's display that a DLL was unable to save the file. Previously it had worked fine. He too had not gotten a solution from Epson support.

CD Drive: About two weeks ago a friend of mine in Michigan had a problem with a CD drive. It "just disappeared." When she had installed an upgrade to her antivirus software it had complained about an incompatibility with the CD burner software (the software came with the machine when new). She ran the uninstall program which crashed, and the drive disappeared from the device manager.

Continued on page 33



Epson Stylus CX-3810



HP OfficeJet 6310

What do all of these have in common? It appears that all the problems were caused by corrupted registry entries. It is unknown what might have corrupted the registry entries, perhaps an update from either the vendor or Microsoft - but I won't point fingers without evidence. Whatever the cause, the standard response of "uninstall/reinstall" or "repair reinstall" didn't fix the system.

The good news is that free RevoUninstaller from www.revouninstaller.com resolved all four problems in minutes. After uninstalling the broken software we were able to install components without a problem.

RevoUninstaller loads quickly and presents you with a very inclusive list of things that it offers to remove for you. I found it notable that it presented the list within a second whereas the standard Add/Remove Programs takes about a minute to populate on my machine. When you select something to uninstall, it gives you three options:

- 1) Safe - fast uninstall and a scan of the hard disk for left over files.
- 2) Moderate - same as Safe with an additional extended scan of the system registry for left over entries.
- 3) Advanced - Same as Moderate but with a deeper registry scan. Takes a bit more time but finds and/or clears more.

I have always used the "Advanced" option. RevoUninstaller analyzes the application for a moment and then uses the application's native uninstall mechanism first. Upon completion it then does its own digging. When done, it presents you with a tree-view of what it found in the registry with full path to the registry keys. The items it suggests for deletion are shown in bold, and have an adjacent check box. I have always used the SELECT ALL and the DELETE button. Having cleaned the registry of leftover, it then displays a similar page with a list of leftover files, and gives you the same option of selecting files for deletion. Again, I have used SELECT ALL and DELETE to good effect.

Why it works - this is just an educated guess but I suspect it to be accurate. When an application is installed, along with the core .EXE files the vendors often include a multitude of dynamic link libraries - DLLs, which are either provided by the vendor or a third party. These DLLs provide common functionality across products. (For example, almost every application in Windows is likely to make use of COMDLG32.DLL from Microsoft - this Common Dialog module provides the ubiquitous FILE / OPEN, FILE / SAVE, FILE / PRINT dialog boxes. DLLs are activated from the .EXE by way of registry entries. If COMDLG32.DLL has three functions (known as Entry Points) then it would have three registry entries, one for each function. Now suppose an update is installed - it may replace a DLL with a newer one, and may insert a new registry entry to point to the new DLL. But, if some other application also makes use of the DLL that has been replaced, it may break. For this reason when you uninstall something you may see a warning message that asks for permission to remove a component that might be shared.

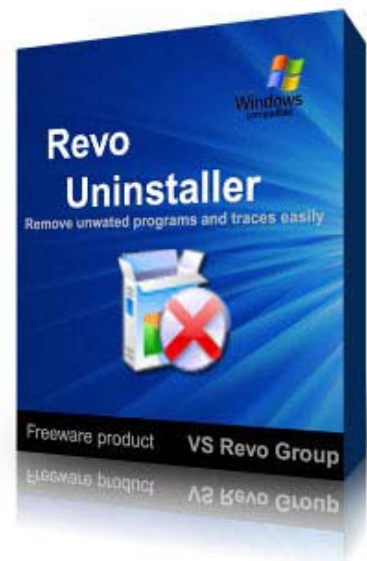
I suspect that the first two printer problems weren't cured by the reinstall SETUP because the SETUP found either the leftover files or left over registry entries and decided that it wasn't necessary to continue, and thus either skipped a critical step or just decided to bail out. By running RevoUninstaller the machine was wiped clean in such a manner that the SETUP was forced to do all of its operations.

For what it's worth - the HP installer seems to be a homegrown custom module rather than an installer based upon the almost industry standard InstallShield product. I don't know about the Epson installers or the one for the CD drive. There are several products used for creating installations - InstallShield, Wyse, Microsoft's MSI, etc. I won't go so far as to say that the problem is specific to any particular installer product - in fact, they may all be innocent and victims of a sloppy update.

Lastly, I'm not a fan of the various "registry cleaners" as I have found them to be either a scam (We've found 4,513 problems in your registry. We will remove 33 of them, and if you pay us \$29.95 and we'll remove the rest!) or to work only on the registry without delving into the innards of related applications. Revo Uninstaller seems to approach the registry from the application's side and work from the outside in, rather than from the registry side and work from the inside out. Again, that's just my educated guess. Be that as it may, I highly recommend RevoUninstaller.



Epson Perfection 2580



Software Review

Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2

Published by Corel

A review by Lynn Page, Newsletter Editor Crystal River Users Group, Florida,
www.crug.com, newsletter@crug.com

This review of Corel's Corel Photo & Video Bundle covers Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2. My experience with Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo began when I won Version XI as a prize for a photograph I submitted of the FACUG Spring 2007 conference. Since then and my review of the application in September of 2007 Paint Shop Pro Photo has become my photo editing application of choice.

Paint Shop Pro X2, as the previous version, is easy to use. The menus and toolbars are similar to other photo editing applications. Therefore you will find Paint Shop Pro Photo an easy transition. The Tools Toolbar, displayed vertically, contains tools image-editing tasks including buttons Selecting, Outlining, Cropping, Cloning, Erasing, Filling, Painting, and Text Entry. The small down arrow by a Tool indicates that a group of similar tools are provided by a drop down listing. If you are unfamiliar with these tools, the Learning Center on the left side of the main pane offers help with editing tasks and explains the use of the tools. The Standard Toolbar shown below the Menu Bar displays the most common commands, including saving images, undoing a command, and cutting and pasting items

Interface Changes

The most noticeable change in Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 is the Graphite color scheme. The white-on-gray interface takes a little getting used to. If you don't like it, you can turn it off by unchecking Use Graphite Workspace Theme in the View drop down menu. Some of the icons and menu options have also changed. So I had to use Help a couple of times to find the new locations of some less used tools and functions.

Continued on page 35



Express Lab

Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 includes a new Express Lab that puts some common photo editing tools in one location. It is like a mini-application within Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2. The settings for a tool appear along the right side of the Express Lab. After selecting the folder with the photos to work on you can move between photos using the Next and Previous buttons.

Open Express lab from the View drop down menu or click the Express Lab Icon in the Standard Toolbar. Click the Get Photos button and browse to the folder of images to be loaded into the preview bar at the bottom of the Express Lab. Select an individual photo to load and the smart photo fix editor is displayed on the right. It includes sliders for Brightness, Shadows, Highlights and Saturation and a histogram for exposure. Additional tools are available below the selected image including Save, Save As, Undo, Redo, Straighten, Crop Tool, Smart Photo Fix, Makeover tool, Clone Brush, Red-eye Tool and Rotate Right or Left.

Express Lab is designed to help complete the first cut editing of photos. I personally did not find the Express Lab useful. I prefer to work completely through the editing of each photo. It would have been useful for rotating photos if a group of photos could be selected and an operation completed on all in one step.

HDR Photo Merge

HDR Photo Merge is a major addition to Version X2. It combines bracketed shots using different exposures to create a single high contrast photo. My camera does not have the ability to take bracketed shots so I manually took photos with varying exposures and used HDR Photo Merge.

From the File drop down menu select HDR Photo Merge. Click the Browse button to find and select the photos to be merged. Since I had to manually take the photos I found that using Align Images to better position the images for merging a plus.

A preview of the merged images and thumbnails of the photos to be merged are shown. Click the Suggest Settings button to see the image as Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 recommends it be merged. I merged the photos with this setting first and then went back through the process and customized the Suggested Settings by using the Brightness and Clarify sliders.

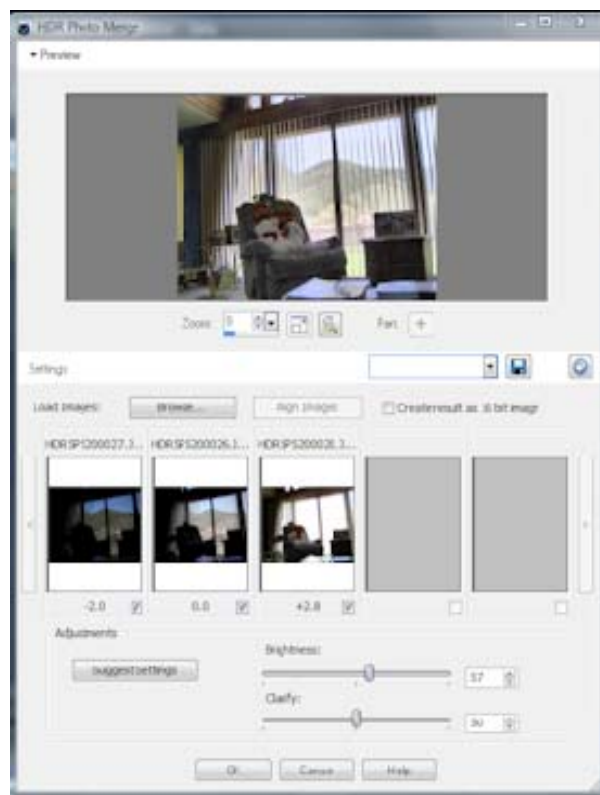


Photo Editing

Editing photos can be easy with Paint Shop Pro X2's One Step Photo Fix. With one click, Paint Shop Pro makes automatic adjustments to color, brightness, contrast, and sharpness. Many times this all that is necessary to get extra detail or color. I always start my photo editing with One Step Photo Fix because it is so simple. If the result is not good enough it is easy to undo the process if the photo still needs additional work. This is where Smart Photo Fix comes in. Manually adjust brightness, saturation, focus, and black and white levels until you get the results you want. Smart Photo Fix shows you the before and after in real time so you know what the end result will be.

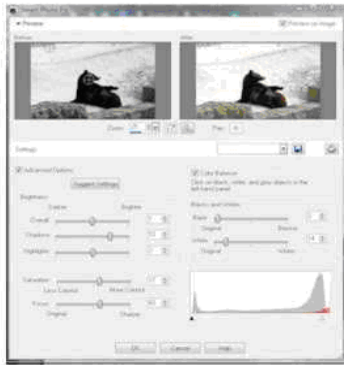
Continued on page 36



Original Photo



One Step Photo Fix



Smart Photo Fix

This photograph of a mother black bear and cubs taken by my brother-in-law this spring in Yellowstone did not show the cubs clearly.

The mother was trying to get the cubs across a stream but one was afraid and crying. So she decided to feed them to quiet the baby down. All three were nearly the same color and quite far away so it was hard to see the cubs. Using One Step Photo Fix and Smart Photo Fix I changed the dark tones and highlights to make the cubs more visible.

One Step Noise Removal automatically gets rid of unwanted pixels or groups of pixels resulting from image compression. The Color Balance editor makes it easy to make a picture appear “cooler” or “warmer” by changing the color temperature and tint in both white balance and color balance. Paint Shop Pro X2’s Clarify tool analyzes the image and adjusts the brightness in each region to enhance depth and clarity. Choose the strength of the effect and Paint Shop Pro X2 sharpens the image bringing out fine detail. Here I used the same photograph of the black bears and the Clarify Tool.

If a photo is slightly blurred from unsteady hands or object motion, High Pass Sharpen, in the Enhance Photo tool set might help. By increasing the contrast of certain pixels, the High Pass Sharpen tool can make the blur disappear. Specify the radius around the soft edges to define change, and the resulting image will be clearer. It’s something you play with and adjust manually.

For this photo of buffalo galloping through a meadow I used several steps to reach a final edited image. The image labeled Original is the photo as cropped and resized for the review. Paint Shop Pro Photo X2’s new Crop to New Image feature is great. It lets you crop the photo automatically to a new image so you don’t have to worry about resaving and losing the original photo.

Then with Smart Photo Fix followed I slightly increased the brightness of the shadows and highlights. Using Color Balance I increased the warmth of the colors in the photo. Finally I used the High Pass Sharpen to increase the detail



Original



Edited

Continued on page 37

Makeover Tools

Paint Shop Pro Photos X2's Makeover tools are a subset of photo editing tools to apply cosmetic improvements to people in your photos. The Makeover tools have been improved and include the Blemish Fixer, Toothbrush, Eye Drop, Suntan, and Thinify. The Red Eye tool is still available as a separate tool in the Tools toolbar.

With Blemish Fixer you set the Size control and Strength and then simply click over the blemish. Set the strength of the Toothbrush and brush over the teeth to whiten them. Add whitening eye drops to eyes with the Eye Drop tool. The Suntan tool has settings for Size and Strength. Just set the values and then drag over the flesh tones. I find that it is helpful to first select the area for editing, like the teeth, eyes and faces before applying the Toothbrush, Eye Drop or Suntan.

An amazing new Makeover tool is Thinify. It makes slimming down easy. Just set the Strength and click in the middle of the person to slim down.



Original



Edited with Makeover Tools & Color Changer

I thought that this picture of my sister and nephew sledding only needed a few improvements. I used the Makeover Toothbrush, Eye Drop, Suntan and Thinify tools. Then I applied the Skin Smoothing tool from the Adjust drop down menu. To add a little color to the snow I used the Magic Wand Selection tool to select the snow in the background. Then with the Dropper tool I selected a pale blue color from the snow and finally used the Color Changer tool to change the white background snow to the pale blue color.

Additional Editing Options

Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 offers so many possibilities that it would be impossible to even gloss over them all. So I have only discussed a few of the most commonly used editing features. But I also wanted to touch on a couple fun things that you can do.

Changing Colors



Original



Color Changer Repaints the Room

The Color Changer tool offers a lot of options for editing images. If you are considering redecorating, Color Changer can help with selecting colors. Another fun use for the Color Changer is to colorize old black and white photographs.

Quickly substitute a new color paint in a photograph before redecorating a room.

Continued on page 38



Original



Edited with Color Changer & Brush Tools

My mother did a lot of photography and would hand color black and white photographs. So with Paint AHop Pro Photo X2 is digitally added color to this photo of her with the Color Changer tool.

Erasing the Background

The Background Eraser tool also offers many options. There is a new add-in Background Eraser tool in my version of Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 but I found that I liked the original tool better. When you have the opportunity to photograph something you may never see again but the day is not sunny all is not lost. When we toured Denali the clouds did not obscure the mountain but the sky way gray. So I cropped and edited the image. Then using the Background Eraser I removed the sky. After adding a new layer behind the mountain I cloned the sky from another photo into my image.

Another use of the Background Eraser is in creating a collage of photographs. West Yellowstone, Montana has painted buffalos scattered throughout the town. I found them interesting and photographed each. But a photo of painted buffalo in front of buildings and on street corners is not very interesting. So I used the Background Eraser to create images of the painted buffalo with no background. Then I copied each and pasted it as a new layer on a photograph of a herd of buffalo grazing in the park. The same process can be used to create a collage of family photos or other scrapbook images.

Continued on page 39



Original



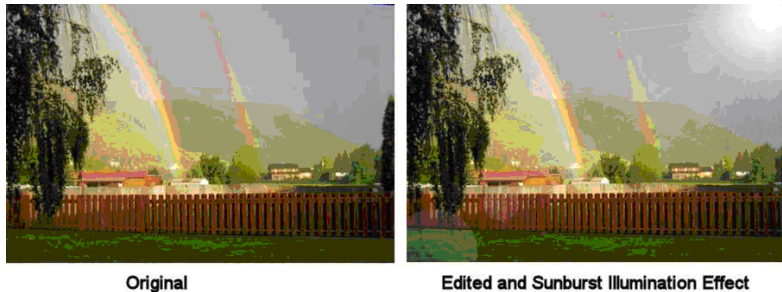
Cropped, Edited with Cloned Sky

Creative Content

Besides the actual editing and even artistically combining images Paint Shop Pro Photo offers additional creative content. Photo Effects, creative Frames and Photo Tubes are just a few. I used a photograph of a double rainbow taken from the back door to illustrate some of these features.



Here I cropped and edited the image with Smart Photo Fix. Then from the Effects and Illumination drop down menus I selected the Sunburst to add the sun and light rays. Positioning the sunburst in the right upper corner worked with the rainbows in front of the mountain.




Then with Add Frames and Photo Edges found in the Text and Graphics portion of the Learning center I selected three different frames to border the photo. Paint Shop Pro Photo offers everything from the edge treatment, to the whimsical photo frame and elegant picture frame that I chose. A final fun option is the addition of Picture Tubes. Select the Picture Tube tool in the Tools toolbar or in the Learning Center in Text and Graphics select Add Graphics. Then select a Picture Tubes from the drop down menu and drag to paint it over the image. Here I added rain clouds, birds, dogs and cats and a jumbo jet.



Conclusions

I was already sold on Corel Paint Shop Pro and have been using Version X1 as my photo editing application of choice for several years. The new features in Version X2 make the program even better. The Express Lab is good for photographers with large amounts of images to process who wish to make quick preliminary changes to their photos. The revised Makeover tools will interest portrait photographers. Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 is an impressive image editing application with a broad selection of tools that are easy to use. As a part of Corel's Photo and Video Bundle or as a standalone application Paint Shop Pro Photo is an affordable, easy to use, full-featured image editor.

DECEMBER 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3 High Growth Stock Investing (adv) 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.	4 Small Business Server 9 - 10 A.M. *FRR*	5 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *FRR*
6	7	8 Board of Directors Crossroads Mall @ the Food Court 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. (Members are welcome to attend)	9	10	11	12 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *FRR*
13	14 General Meeting @ 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter:	15	16	17	18	19 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *FRR*
20	21	22	23	24	25 Resource Center is closed. Have a Merry Christmas!	26 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *FRR*
27	28	29	30	31  New Years Eve.		
ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION <small>Pre-Registration Required</small>						

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

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

