

Hints for the Wannabe Blogger

By Joan McIlmoyl Cleghorn, a member of Big Blue and Cousins, Canada, www.bbcc.org, joansjoy@gmail.com

Do I Need Or Want to Have a Blog? Now, for many, the first question is “what on

earth is a blog?” and, “why would I want one?” The origin of the actual word 'blog' comes from the definition of what it really is – a web log – which then became shortened to 'blog'.

People are using blogs for many varied purposes. Some use them like a personal diary, as though the world is truly fascinated by the minutiae of their daily lives (though in the case of celebs, that may be the case). Others, for sharing their knowledge of a particular subject which doesn't necessarily lend itself to publishing a book; and still reporting on the constantly changing happenings in a specific area of interest. In many instances now, professional reporters, whether radio, TV or in print, are writing blogs as well as their regular reporting functions. Others, for reporting on the constantly changing happenings in a specific area of interest.

There are two advantages of using blogs over publishing in the more traditional ways – first, they can be interactive, allowing the readers to make comments, add to the information or contradict the writer; and, second, as mentioned, the ability to update immediately with new or additional information.

My purpose in starting a blog at the end of June was prompted by an article in the Family Chronicle which pointed out how, by publishing a family history book, relations that you'd never known or connected with would suddenly contact you.

This struck a chord with me as I was in the midst of planning a family history book and wanted to connect with others researching this same family. Obviously, publishing a book wasn't the answer for my particular situation.

After some thought on this, I decided to investigate what was involved in creating a blog, thinking this might accomplish my purpose. Of course, one can use any of the social media sites such as MySpace, Facebook, etc. as a type of blog. However, I was looking for specific 'blog' sites. Well, typing 'free blog sites' into Google gave me far more results than I could have dreamed of! Fortunately, there were two with which I was somewhat familiar so I opted to check them out first.

I wanted simple and easy to use.....nothing fancy, just the ability to type whatever I wanted to post and have it work. Obviously I was asking a lot for anything connected with technol-

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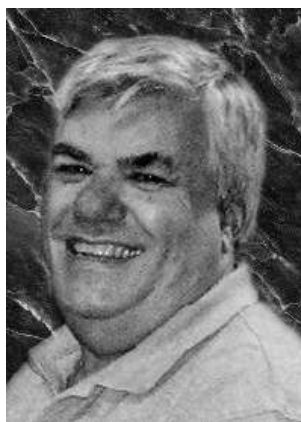
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Volunteer of the Year



Bill Beverley

Volunteer of the Month



Neil Shaver

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:

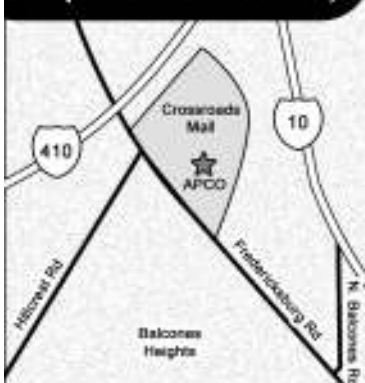
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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



March Calendar

Tuesday March 2, 2010
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I-10 (see map)

Monday March 8, 2010
General meeting
7 PM 4888 Whirlwind
Loop 410 at I-35 (see map)

Alamo PC Directory

Office Center
736-0700

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

Office Center Manager
Past President/Programs
Member Records
Public Relations
Product Review Coordinator
Study Groups Coordinator/Ed
Special Projects
Registrar
Webmaster
Lab/Network Administrator
Trade Shows
APCUG Representative
Editor, PC Alamode Magazine

Cary & Jean Hall
David Steward
Steve Tech
Susan Ives
TBD (David Steward)
Linda Bianchi
Joe Brazell
Linda Bianchi
Mike Bianchi
Gary Grieve
Steve Tech
David Steward
Joseph de Leon

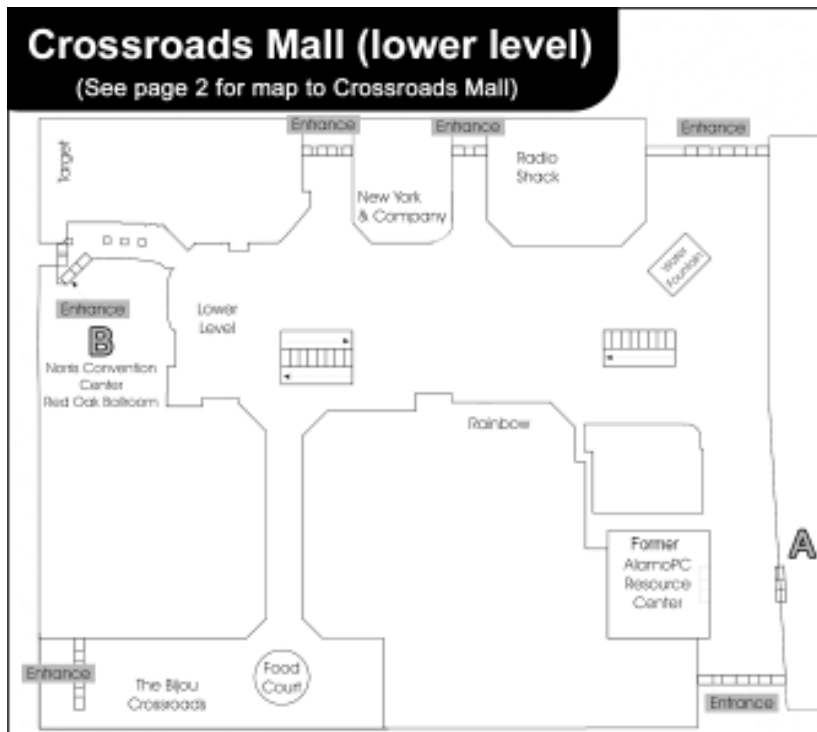
736-0700

736-0700 (Learning Center)
662-8606 (Home)
675-2880 (Home)
694-4582 (Home)
662-8606 (Home)
561-2278 (Home)
370-2207 (Office)
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492-5066 (Home)
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662-8606 (Home)
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stephentechnr@yahoo.com
dsteward@texas.net
editor@alamopc.org

For Study Groups and Classes, phone: 736-0700



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

Enter

It's been seven great years since I've taken the reigns of PC Alamo from Clarke Bird, the editor before me. In that time, I've learned so very much and enjoyed the work I have done on behalf of Alamo PC.

I regret to tell you all that I have resigned my position as editor as of this issue. I can no longer spend the time putting together the magazine and the organization's decline over the past few years has made it less rewarding than when I started.

Best wishes to you all as you continue to learn how to better use the screen before you. It's been a pleasure to serve you and I'll always be fond of saying I was the editor of one of the best computer user group magazines around.

So long and happy clicking.

Joseph de Leon, Editor

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



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

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

May Program

Bill Klutz

David Steward has scheduled himself to be the presenter for the May General Meeting. So, unless I hear otherwise, the meeting location will be at our current office location (4888 Whirlwind, SAT, 78233) on April 12th at 7 PM. Since things can change at the last minute, please check the Alamo PC web site (www.alamopc.org) for information on the meeting and the location. Make plans now to come and bring some friends. As always, we hope to have an interesting presentation.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

"May" _ May Day, Mother's Day, Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day

We have seven things this month that should be of interest to most folks: 1st - Often called May Day, just might have more worldwide holidays than any other day of the year. It's a celebration of Spring. It's a day of political protests. It's a neopagan festival, a saint's feast day, and a day for organized labor (Labor Day in many countries). In many countries, it is also a national holiday; 4th - National Teacher Day: It is part of a week-long celebration honoring our teachers. On Teacher Day, be sure to honor the special teachers in your life for the hard work they do each day; 5th - Cinco de Mayo (the fifth of May in Spanish): It is a national holiday in Mexico and also celebrated in many areas of the U.S. It celebrates the legendary and victorious Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862; 9th - Mother's Day: A day set aside for each family member to honor his/her mother; 15th - Armed Forces Day: Simply a day to salute sharply to all of the men and women, in all branches of military service, who protect our country and each of us; 22nd - National Maritime Day: A day for the U.S. to observe its proud maritime heritage and honor the men and women who serve and have served as merchant mariners; 31st - Memorial Day (observed; 30th is day enacted): Today, it is celebrated at Arlington National Cemetery with a ceremony in which a small American flag is placed on each grave. Also, it is customary for the president, or vice president, to give a speech honoring the contributions of the dead, and also lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Your browser may not support display of this image. Rent expense was paid through April, less than 150 membership (indicating waning interest in the organization plus only 12 at the April General Meeting), and shrinking finances (less than \$50 at the beginning of April) available to pay remaining expenses and anticipated expenses has brought Alamo PC the brink of non existence. (With remaining funds being as low as they are, it looks like an official organizational presence has been terminated.) The Alamo PC magazine (PC Alamode) is continuing to be published, as long as the current editor is willing to do the job. Looks like the website has been HACKED, so will have to get the webmaster to try and clean it up to allow the magazines to continue to be available. (The website continues to be maintained in a "caretaker" mode.)

The April BOD meeting was not held, since there did not appear anything needed to be discussed. Each of the others had a conflict that was deemed "more pressing." At present, our location will remain the same through the generosity of our landlord. He is also allowing us to continue with ad hoc General Meetings for the foreseeable future.

At the April General Meeting, David Steward provided a technical discussion format and related questions. He also touched on some other items of general interest to the 13 people in attendance. Questions were again forthcoming about Alamo

PC and the Organization's future. Answers were provided as information was available, and proposed thinking and actions were again reviewed. Those present seemed to understand the difficulties leadership is faced with, given the expenses and declining membership. Some again indicated they were surprised the leadership had been able to keep the organization functioning for as long as it has.

It is late April and David Steward has indicated he will be the presenter for the May General Meeting (10th) and for any future meetings, unless he can get another presenter. The meetings, unless otherwise noted on the web site, will be at our current office location (4888 Whirlwind, in NE San Antonio). It is once again in David Steward hands, so we will have to wait to see what actually transpires! Since things can change, even at the last minute, check the website for the latest information about the General Meeting, which begins at 7PM.

At this point, it is almost pointless to reiterate that overall interest in User Groups at the corporate and membership level is almost non-existent. Also, that I have pointed this out in many previous messages, and this fact is confirmed by the ever declining Alamo PC membership over the past four years and the few that have attended recent General Meetings.

With the declining number of individuals who are currently serving the organization in a board member capacity, and who have been willing to continue serving, it looks like it won't be long before the "lights may go out" permanently on an era.

Being a member of Alamo PC since the early 90's, and having tried to serve the Organization in various capacities has been a great experience. But, as I have previously stated, the mission of Alamo PC when started was "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." Over the years that mission has been accomplished, albeit with declining effectiveness. We should be aware that individuals born since Alamo PC was founded in 1983 have grown up with computers, most individuals who were about 25 then were associated with computers through their jobs, and those who were about 50 have moved to the 75 year figure and many of that grouping are no longer with us.

As, I have said before, "the future of OUR organization ... [rests] ... in the hands of its members (however few they may be). Whether WE continue (or not) depends on OUR interest and involvement. A Board of Directors cannot keep an organization going without members." For this organization, it primarily depends on membership renewals and/or financial support, which has not been forthcoming in the last few years. Without those,

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we have not been able meet financial obligations and “Business Decisions” have been made that have ultimately affected everyone involved. We are now feeling the effects of “Business Decisions” that have been made. The result feels like the loss of a friend or family member, and the impact for those in the community desiring to learn about computers or improve their computer skills is also being felt

Again, my thanks for allowing me to try and serve each member, although I have some misgivings about the effectiveness of my service to the Alamo PC Organization. Within the next two month my wife and I will be relocating to the Centerville, TX area to be near our son and his family. Anyone having questions regarding any area addressed or any matter pertaining to the Alamo PC Organization, and any future proposed plans should refer them to membership@alamopc.org (Steven Tech) or to me at either one of the following: president@alamopc.org, or privately at wlklutzjr@juno.com). We will try to provide information relating to the request.

Computer Tips

HOW TO MAKE THE SECURITY CENTER STOP NAGGING

Service Pack 2 added the Security Center to XP, and in many ways it's a great idea - putting security-related applets all “under the same roof.” But by default, it has the personality of a bad mother, following you around and nagging you that your system isn't secure if you've opted to turn off automatic updates or it doesn't recognize the anti-virus you're using.

Luckily, it's much easier to make it shut up without hurting its feelings than it may be with mom:

1. Click Start | Settings | Control Panel
2. Click Security Center to open its window
3. In the left pane, click the link labeled “Change the way Security Center alerts me”
4. Uncheck the item(s) it's been nagging you about (firewall, automatic updates, or virus protection)
5. Click OK Now the two of you should get along much better.

COMPUTERfest Productions

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:

May 22nd
July 10th
September 11th
December 11th

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

Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen





Odds and ends

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.

Manufacturers are now turning out what they call “tough books,” which are portables that can take a hard knock. These computers feature shock-mounted hard drives surrounded by stainless steel, extended battery life, and cases made from durable materials such as magnesium alloy. They also have moisture and dust resistant keyboards and screens. Itronix has introduced an officially branded, “shock resistant” Hummer laptop. Laptops such as that one or Panasonic’s similar line don’t cost much more than the traditional models. However, “tough” features add weight to the laptops.

Aircraft Power Adapters

Not every aircraft offers power outlets for every passenger who want to use their laptops while in flight. Power outlets are becoming more prevalent. However, you will need a special adapter to plug your notebook into an airplane seat’s power outlet. These adapters are expensive at \$80 to \$120. Adapters are available from IGo, Kensington, Lind Electronics, Mobility Electronics, Targus International. Each company lets you run your notebook (and recharge its battery) from an airline power outlet, which is usually located in the armrest divider between seats. Most of these adapters also allow you to power your notebook from an automobile’s cigarette lighter/power outlet. There are differences among the auto/air power adapters on the market. Some manufacturers sell adapters that work on selected notebook models only. For example, Lind Electronics sells an auto/air adapter that works with Dell Latitude XP4100 models (\$100), while another works exclusively with Dell Inspiron 3500 and 7000 notebooks (\$100). Lind may make adapters for most every major notebook manufacturer

<http://lindelectronics.com/cgi-bin/store/shop.cgi!/ORDERID!/aaa/x/dbx_gen_aaa_mfgs>.

Other companies, such as Kensington, Mobility Electronics, and Targus, sell adapters that come with a set of interchangeable tips. Each tip is designed to fit the power port on one or more notebook models.

One adapter can charge a variety of notebooks. Targus’s Universal Auto/Air Power Adapters (\$120) include tips that fit notebooks from Apple, Dell, Gateway, Compaq, and Sony (model

PA380U) or from Compaq/Hewlett-Packard, IBM, and Toshiba (model PA360U)

<http://www.targus.com/us/accessories_power.asp>. For the latest prices on the adapter that works with notebooks from Apple, Dell, Gateway, and Compaq/HP, go to:

<http://pcworld.pricegrabber.com/search_getprod.php?masterid=549153/tk=mcx>. Kensington recently introduced its Universal AC/Car/Air Adapter (\$200), which includes ten interchangeable tips that fit notebooks from Apple, Compaq/HP,

Dell, Fujitsu, Gateway, IBM, Toshiba, and Sony. Unlike the Targus models and most adapters that work with specific notebooks, Kensington’s model can also act as an AC adapter. As a result, you can plug your notebook into a wall socket, an automobile power outlet, and an airline power port using a single device and interchangeable power cords or plugs that are designed to fit specific power outlet types.

Antennas/Wireless Extenders

If you have a problem where you are not close enough to connect to the Internet from a location with Internet access, then this tip has a solution. It is easy to extend the signal of your wireless access point. There are many antennas and wireless extenders on the market. You can also extend the range of desktop computers fairly easily. But you’re using a laptop. That will require a little more work. These days, most laptops include built-in wireless. You can add a wireless card that plugs into a PCMCIA slot. They run about \$50. These cards are less elegant than built-in ones. They protrude from the side of the computer. The part that sticks out is the antenna. Of course, an antenna on an add-on card isn’t likely to be much better than the one already inside the computer. But some cards allow you to attach an external antenna. That’s precisely what you want to do. As it happens, Buffalo makes several models that feature connections for external antennas. They’re clearly labeled on Buffalo’s site. You should be able to find Buffalo cards at your local electronics store. If not, you can purchase them online. Some Proxim-Orinoco cards accept external antennas. So do some Senao and ZyXEL cards. You’d need to hunt around the Internet to find these cards. And, I can’t provide you with much information on which models of the cards accept antennas. I learned about these cards through Internet forums, not first-hand experience. So details were vague. When you buy a wireless card, you’ll see varieties. There’s 802.11a, 802.11b, 802.11g and pre-n. Pre-n will become 802.11n when it is finalized; I would stay away from this one for now. Pre-n gear may not be compatible from manufacturer to manufacturer. Instead, opt for 802.11g; it provides the best combination of speed and range. Once you find a wireless card, you can buy an antenna to connect to it. You may also need to buy an additional adapter, depending on the connection type. Connection types include SMA, MC, MMCX, MCX and RP-MMCX. Sigh. The Super Antenna (\$50) will work with laptop cards. It requires an adapter, which is \$8. The site lists laptop cards with which the adapters are compatible. You’ll find more antennas at Antenna Systems. RadioLabs also sells a variety of antennas. Additionally, it sells laptop cards and entire kits. Some of the kits are specifically designed for truckers. When you’re buying an antenna, look at the gain. You’ll see numbers like 5 dbi or 11 dbi. Higher is better. If you add a wireless card to your laptop, you’ll need to disable the internal one. Otherwise, you’ll run into problems. Also, be very careful with the setup. Connections on the

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PCMCIA cards are fragile. You can easily break the connector and wreck the card. Some wireless cards can be adjusted. So you may be able to give your card a little extra boost. In the wireless card's program, you'll find its settings. Under transmission power, set it to maximum, or 100 percent. If your laptop uses power savings, the transmission power may be reduced to preserve the battery.

Computer Resources

If you travel often enough, there may come a time when you think you can make do without your notebook or PDA. Here are some ideas and resources for getting along on a business trip without your gear.

Copy Centers

Copy and printing centers rent the use of computer terminals, printers, and scanners. Kinko's stores operate 24 hours, 7 days a week, and their computers are well equipped with applications such as Adobe Photoshop, Lotus 1-2-3, and Microsoft Office, as well as a variety of fonts. Computer rental rates vary by location but are generally about \$10 to \$12 an hour. For more information go to: <http://www.kinkos.com>

Internet Café

Internet cafés are practically everywhere selling inexpensive online access for about \$5 to \$10 an hour.

Many Internet cafés have computers. The CyberCafe Search Engine is a regularly updated tool for searching some 6500 cybercafes and other public Internet access points in 167 countries. You can find

it at: <http://cybercaptive.com>

Airport Business Centers

Laptop Lane Business Centers, now owned by Texas-based Wayport, has 13 locations in U.S. airports, including Atlanta, Chicago, and New York's LaGuardia. Computer rentals aren't cheap, though--I was quoted a price of \$40.75 an hour at a Laptop Lane in Atlanta's Hartsfield International. For more information, go to: <http://www.wayport.com>

Airport Clubs

Some airline membership clubs offer complimentary computer use.

Room Service

Some hotels catering to business travelers equip every guest room with a PC. The hotel chains most often touting high-tech guest services include Hyatt, Hilton, Westin, Sheraton, W Hotels, Four Seasons, and Wyndham.

Mobile Phone Rental

Action Cellular Rent a Phone offers phone rental and service plans in more than 200 countries. A rental includes a Motorola, Nokia, Toshiba, Mitsubishi, or Ericsson phone, two fully charged batteries, a charger, and a carrying case. A domestic plan is \$1.75 a minute, with a 5-minute daily minimum, but no equipment charge. For more information, go to: < <http://www.1800rentphone.com>>. Other mobile phone rental agencies include: Cellular Express Phone Rentals, for domestic and international: <<http://cellularexpressphonerentals.com>>,

InTouch USA, for international rentals: <<http://www.intouchusa.com>>, Planetfone, for international rentals: <<http://www.planetfone.com>>, and

WorldCell, for international rentals: <<http://www.worldcell.com>>.

Computer Connection Problem

If you have problems when on the road using high-speed Internet connection receiving but not sending email using Outlook Express, go to Tools and Accounts. Find your email account in the listing, highlight it, and click Properties. Next click on the Servers tab of the Properties dialog. You incoming (POP3) and outgoing (SMTP) servers should be listed there. Now write down the server names. If you can not remember your incoming server password, download SnadBoy's Revelation from <www.snadboy.com>. It can reveal password text that's normally shown as asterisks or dots, which is the case with Outlook Express. Look for a setting your mail program, probably labeled with something such as "SMTP authentication required." In Outlook Express it's on that servers tab. Click the Settings button to make sure Outlook will use the incoming username and password for the outgoing server. If that procedure doesn't work, to back and manually fill in the username and password and then click the Secure Password Authentication checkbox and try it again. As an alternative method, you can use a browser-based mail system such as Hotmail or Gmail. Your own service provider, Direcway, has a Web mail interface, too. It's at <change.myudirecway.com>.

Computer Security

In response to the seriousness and countless number of stolen laptops, software and hardware safety accessory makers are churning out products designed to protect these computers. They include fingerprint identifiers, motion detectors, lock and cable mechanisms, data scrambling techniques, etc.

There are several laptop tracking software programs that provide a degree of security for stolen laptops. Mobile Secure <www.lucira.com> and CompuTrace <www.computersecurity.com> offer software programs that can be installed on your laptops for a fee of approximately \$50/year. If your laptop computer is stolen and the thief uses the Internet, the software programs automatically send details of the user's Internet connection, phone number, etc., to these aforementioned web sites. These security companies advertise a 75% recovery rate for stolen computers that have their software programs installed on them. Trackit <www.trackitcorp.com> uses a transmitter installed in or attached to a laptop case to maintain a continuous radio signal with a mobile sensor carried by the owner. If the laptop is moved beyond a set distance, an alarm sounds and the mobile unit is alerted. Caveo <www.caveo.com> has an Anti-Theft PC card which combines motion detection, data encryption and password protection. Targus <www.targus.com> makes a Defcon PC Card Fingerprint Authenticator which is mounted in a laptop's PC card slot and features a retractable thumbprint pad. Cable locks are increasingly the security feature of choice as standard equipment for most business computer users. If your laptop contains sensitive financial, personal, or classified information, you may well need some sort of security feature to protect it from a thief.



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.

We attended the 2010 FACUG Spring Conference cruise and it was well attended with about 250 registrants and a total of 350 attendees (considering the non-member spouses). I was not enthused about the ship and its food, but most liked it. This conference had the most sessions I've ever seen, and with very talented presenters. There were also some APCUG people doing breakout sessions. You made a tough decision almost every hour with four great sessions to choose from, especially when we wanted to spend time shopping at Nassau, Bahamas. There was a photo-shoot session done ashore by Bill Campbell, a professional photographer who has traveled worldwide and written books. Bill did other photo-related sessions. We didn't stop at Great Stirrup Cay (Norwegian's private island) because of windy conditions; they just made a very slow trip continuing on back to Miami.

Shopping in Nassau I found a polo shirt with a pocket (hard to find these days) that had "Nassau" on it, and we bought a few other souvenir items. We also visited the Gucci store for the experience. A beautiful women's purse was on sale for "only" \$3,500, marked down from \$5,000, but darn, I had accidentally left my plastic in our cabin safe. <G> I was disappointed not to get it for her! Maybe it will still be on sale if we visit Nassau again (and we win the lottery).

I was surprised that Microsoft was not a sponsor. Only Corel joined us on the cruise, but Smart Computing sent lots of magazines. There were 33 breakout sessions during the Saturday and Sunday conference hours. The presentation "Technology of the Space Program" by Jeff Fishkin (works for NASA) was extremely interesting and informative. Carey Holzman's keynote talk about computer security was outstanding and informative. Carey hosts a radio show about computers.

The ship's navigator gave a great talk and we learned about an unexpected weather problem the night before that most were not aware of. It seems a sudden storm came up and the ship quickly listed about six degrees before they could correct it, which is not a serious danger, but some bottles slid off the shelves in the liquor store. Good thing we were unaware or some of us might have been there with straws helping clean up the liquor store floor. He said they quickly used pumps to move water or fuel to the proper ballast tanks to correct the listing situation. Ten lucky people got a tour of the navigation room. Everyone enjoyed a Welcome Cocktail Party on Friday evening and a Farewell Cocktail Party Sunday evening, with door prizes. I had great conversations with people that I only see at that event. Some pictures are posted at <<http://www.facug.org>>.

I heard varying opinions about this event, but most sounded positive, even when they were originally against it. The pluses were no traveling from a hotel for events, vendors didn't need to buy attendees meals, and everything that went on was only a few steps away from your room. No sessions after 7PM meant you could take in shows, live music in the lounges, late night buffet parties, or other ship events. I saw the best musical show I have

ever seen on any ship we've been on. I enjoyed the comedian the next night. The Cruise Director announced at the musical show that 51 different countries were represented on that cruise, the most that ship ever had. Whenever my wife and I went to the buffet for a snack, we saw a few people with FACUG badges having snacks together and often meeting for the first time. All of us wearing badges were often asked what it was about, so we got a chance to promote user groups.

Next year's conference is already planned, but is in jeopardy because of very slow registrations, in spite of a positive survey taken after our return. I think it's too early in the year to start the registration, but maybe the cruise line will relent and give us more time to get the 100 registrations needed. It's a day longer and on a better ship. There will be no sessions next year during certain hours in Cozumel, Mexico.

*Another users group gives up

I received a message from Dick Hiatt recently telling me that their San Diego Personal Computer User Group was disbanding. They have published the DealsGuy column for years and Dick has been the editor for years. Their membership was at an all time low and so was their meeting attendance. I didn't ask when I called him, but I assume that, like most groups, the officers have all held their jobs for years. Their final meeting will be sort of a party without smiles, but most of the active members are likely to affiliate with other computer related groups in the area. In their good times, they had about 200 members. With all of the help for computer users, and the great camaraderie, it's hard to think that user groups are becoming an endangered species.

*Diskeeper Introduces An Update

Most of you are familiar with the Diskeeper and Undelete products <<http://www.diskeeper.com>> and their great performance capability. Diskeeper Corporation has introduced an update. Diskeeper features a breakthrough technology called IntelliWrite that prevents the vast majority (up to 95%) of fragmentation from ever occurring. InvisiTasking technology is an important breakthrough that allows processes running in the background to run invisibly with zero conflicts. They say the Titan Defragging technology is about the strongest ever built, and the Terabyte Volume Engine technology rapidly defrags multi-terabyte volumes. (DealsGuy comment; check <<http://www.diskeeper.com/diskeeper/home/comparison-chart.aspx>> to better understand that statement.)

They say that Boot-Time defragmentation defrags and consolidates directories to improve application speed, eliminating slows, hangs, and crashes. Defragmentation during boot-time handles those files that cannot be moved while the system is active. All Diskeeper 2010 editions are fully compatible with Windows 7

Continued on page 16

(Home Edition is not compatible with Windows 7 Enterprise). Registered users receive full 90-day telephone tech support and special upgrade pricing. I found that Diskeeper works fast and efficiently. There's more, but I don't have room for every feature here.

Undelete 2009 is not updated, but is a fascinating product. It protects files that the Windows recycle bin and backup systems miss: The following is from their Web site, but I'm not sure if it all pertains to the Home version as well.

"Undelete 2009 with InvisiTasking to the Rescue

Undelete replaces the Windows recycle bin with a catch-all Recovery Bin™ that intercepts all deleted files, no matter how they were deleted. Lost file? No problem! Use the Recovery Bin's Windows Explorer-like interface to navigate to the file, or take advantage of Undelete's powerful search capabilities. Right-click the file, select Recover, and the file is back. The Microsoft Office Version Protection functionality can even restore your earlier, saved over versions of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) files.

Undelete includes Emergency Undelete, which can recover files deleted before Undelete was installed; provided they haven't been overwritten on your hard drive, and SecureDelete 2.0, an electronic shredder to completely erase confidential files.

Innovative Set It and Forget It™ features and technology (InvisiTasking) guarantee that new Undelete 2009 will safeguard your computer silently and automatically." There's more, but I don't have room. Here are some special offers for a limited time:

Diskeeper 2010 Home 2-pack \$49.95 (Save \$30) <https://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout/addtocart.aspx?item=49115&qty=1&srchash=_ioxswm_p>

Diskeeper 2010 Professional 2-pack \$99.95 (Save \$20)

<https://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout/addtocart.aspx?item=49365&qty=1&srchash=_ioxswm_p>

Diskeeper 2010 Pro Premier 2-pack \$169.95 (Save \$30)

<https://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout/addtocart.aspx?item=49366&qty=1&srchash=_ioxswm_p>

Undelete 2009 Home and Diskeeper 2010 Home bundle \$49.95 (Save \$20)

<http://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout/addtocart.aspx?item=50519&qty=1&srchash=_ioxswm_p>

*How About A Smart Uninstaller!

A guy was telling me about his favorite uninstall software called Zsoft Uninstaller. I don't think it's an exclusive feature, but it has a way to keep track of any changes on your hard drive when you install a new program. If you don't like the new program, Zsoft can completely remove it even if there is no uninstall tool included. Prior to installing a new program, Zsoft will make some type of hard drive image to use as a reference if it has to uninstall that software. I have not tried Zsoft, but it sounds like it has a good concept and it's free; however, as with most freeware, they accept donations if you like it. Check it out at <<http://www.zsoft.dk/index/software>>.

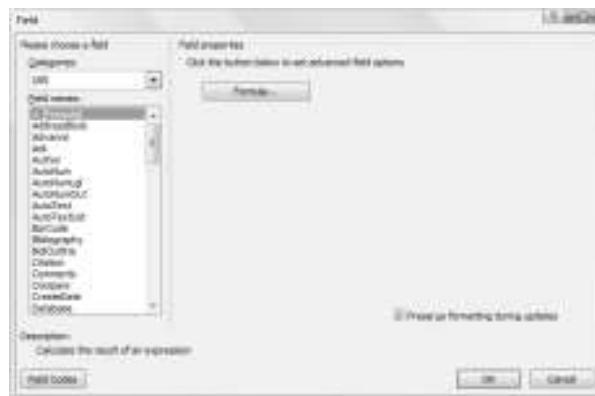
Sharon Parq Tips

Microsoft Word

Inserting the Total Number of Pages in Your Document

It is not unusual to put a page number in your headers or footers, if you choose to use headers and footers with your document. You can also, however, insert a field that indicates the total number of pages in a document. This can be used in a header or footer or directly within the text of your document. To insert the total number of pages in your document, follow these steps:

1. Position the insertion point where you want the total number of pages to appear.
2. Make sure the Insert tab of the ribbon is selected.
3. In the Text group, click Quick Parts. You'll see a drop-down menu.
4. Choose Field. Word displays the Field dialog box.
5. In the Categories drop-down list, choose Document Information.
6. In the Field Names list choose NumPages.
7. Click on OK to close the dialog box and insert your field.



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ogy right? Actually, wrong. I was able to set up the blog, type out my first posting and have it online within an hour!

You want a site that gives clear, easy to understand directions and allows you to have some choices on the appearance or theme of your blog. Also, if you want some interaction with your readers, make it easy for them to add their comments. The site I chose definitely qualified under these points; much more so than the second site I checked out. I also checked out a few that I wasn't as familiar with and found that my first choice was still the best for my purpose. The two choices I initially checked out were Google's Blogspot and Wordpress. They can be found at www.blogspot.com and www.wordpress.com; however, be sure to check out some of the others as well.

Should you decide to start a blog, there is one caveat I'd both read about as well as heard about from others – don't start posting, and collecting followers of the site, only to lose interest,

and just stop posting, or become very erratic in your postings. When first starting my blog, I hoped to post about three times a week, with no less than once a week. In the nine weeks since I started, I've made 18 posts so have averaged two per week, even though I had a couple of weeks when I didn't make any posts due to the death of my mother.

Now, was posting my blog successful in my original purpose? So far, yes. I've heard from a couple of researchers with whom I'd lost contact a number of years ago, plus another couple of whom I'd never heard, so I certainly accomplished that part of my goal. Another bonus is the information I'm gaining from those connections that I might not have otherwise found. Should you wish to take a look at my blog, here's the address: www.mcilmoylefamna.blogspot.com. If you decide that having a blog is something you'd like to do, I wish you well, and have fun with it! For tips on 'how to blog' just type 'blog tutorial' into a search engine and you'll find lots of choices.

How to Forward Emails Appropriately

Written by Dorothy Porterfeld, a Member of The
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A computer expert received the following directly from a system administrator for a corporate system. It is an excellent message that ABSOLUTELY applies to ALL of us

who send emails. Please read the short letter below, even if you're sure you already follow the proper procedures.

Do you really know how to forward emails? 50% of us do, 50% DO NOT.

Do you wonder why you get viruses or junk mail? Every time you forward an email there is information left over from the people who got the message before you, namely their email addresses & names. As the messages get forwarded along, the list of addresses builds, and builds, and builds, and all it takes is for some poor sap to get a virus, and his or her computer can send that virus to every email address that has come across his computer. Or, someone can take all of those addresses and sell them or send junk

mail to them in the hopes that you will go to the site and he will make five cents for each hit. That's right, all of that inconvenience over a nickel!

How do you stop it? Here are several easy steps:

(1) You MUST click the "Forward:" button first and then you have the full editing capabilities against the body and headers of the message. When you forward an email,

DELETE all the other addresses that appear in the body of the message (at the top). That's right, DELETE them. Highlight them and delete them, backspace them, cut

them, whatever it is you know how to do. It only takes a second.

(2) Whenever you send an email to more than one person, do NOT use the To: or CC: fields for adding email addresses. Always use the BCC: (blind carbon copy) field for listing the email addresses. This is the way the people you send to will only see their own email address. If you don't see your BCC: option, click on where it says To: and your address will appear. Highlight the address and choose BCC: and that's it, it's that easy. When you send to BCC: your message will automatically say "Undisclosed Recipients" in the TO: field of the people who receive it.

(3) Remove and "FW:" in the subject line. You can rename the subject if you wish or even fix spelling.

(4) ALWAYS hit your Forward button from the actual email you are reading. Ever get those emails that you have to open 10 pages to read the one page with the information on it? By Forwarding from the actual page you wish someone to view, you stop them from having to open many emails just to see what you sent.

(5) Have you ever gotten an email that is a petition? It states a position and asks you to add your name and address and to forward it to 10 or 15 people or your entire address book.

The email can be forwarded on and on and can collect thousands of names and addresses.

FACT: The completed petition is actually worth a couple of bucks to a professional spammer because of the wealth of valid names and email addresses contained therein.

If you want to support the petition, send it as your own personal letter to the intended recipient. Your position may carry more weight as a personal letter than a laundry list

of names and email addresses on a petition. (Actually, if you think about it, who's supposed to send the petition in to whatever cause it supports? And don't believe the ones that say that the email is being traced, it just ain't so!)

(6) One of the main ones I dislike is the one that says something like, "Send this email to 10 people and you'll see something great run across your screen." Or, sometimes they'll tease you by saying something really cute will happen. IT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!!! (Trust me, I'm still seeing some of the same ones that I waited on 10 years ago!) I don't let the bad luck ones scare me either, they get trashed. (Could that be why I haven't won the lottery??)

(7) Before you forward an Amber Alert, or a Virus alert, or some of the other ones floating around nowadays, check them out before you forward them. Most of them are junk mail that's been circling the net for YEARS! Just about everything you receive in an email that is in question can be checked out at Snopes. Just go to <http://www.snopes.com>

Password Protect Your Account

By Kathy Frey, Webmaster, Computer Club of Green Valley, AZ, <http://gvcc.apcug.org/>, frey58@cox.net

If you password protect your account for your Windows operating system, then you should create a password reset disk. It takes very little time and is easy to do. In Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7, these first steps are the same.

1. Click Start
2. Click Control Panel
3. Click User Accounts

After you have the User Accounts window open, select the account for which you want to make the password reset disk. (Make a reset disk for each account.)

In Windows XP, on the left under Related Tasks, click on Prevent a forgotten password to start the Forgotten Password Wizard, and then click Next. Follow the wizard. You can use either a floppy disk or a USB drive for the reset disk.

In Windows Vista, on the left click on Create a Password reset disk, then follow the wizard. The Password Reset Disk is essentially a small file that can be used to reset your password, even if you have changed your password since creating the reset disk.

In Windows 7, click on Create a password reset disk. If no media is installed, you will get a message that indicates you need a removable media, such as a floppy disk or a flash drive.

Otherwise the password reset wizard comes up, and you again will need to follow the screens.

After creating your reset disks, store them in a very safe place, since the information can be easily used by anyone to reset the password and gain access to your account.

There are other ways to change the passwords in all three operating systems, but the above is an easy and quick way to have that extra safety net in hand.



Networking For Dummies

Written by Ron Hirsch, Member & Contributing Editor,
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Introduction

Now, before anyone feels that I'm out of line for referring to someone as a dummy, I want to make it clear that I was the networking dummy in question, for many years.

While I build and repair my own computers, and have written considerable software, I was always very weak on networking. However, lately I've graduated from dummy school, thanks to some good hardware and software, and more experiences with my home network.

I thought I'd share my old, and new experiences, with you, as they have come from many years of frustrating activities, associated with my home wireless network.

This article will not go into the complete aspect of all types of networks, but is limited to home networks, which are what many of you already have, or are possibly contemplating having in the near future.

HOME NETWORK PURPOSES

Allowing multiple computers to share the internet, is the usual purpose of a home network. My Internet Service Provider (ISP) is Comcast.

Most homes use either the local cable company, which is Comcast here in Boca Raton, or a DSL (digital subscriber line) from the landline phone company (AT&T here in Boca).

A secondary purpose can be accessing stored files on other computers on the network, or sharing devices such as printers installed on other computers.

WIRELESS ROUTERS

Most home networks use a wireless router. This is a unit which allows multiple devices (usually computers) to be plugged into it, and also provides a wireless signal which broadcasts in all directions, so that computers which have a wireless adapter (either via an internal card, or a USB plug-in wireless adapter) can connect to the Internet.

My Networking Task & Troubles Back In 2002

First, here's a commentary of what occurred, some years back, in my first brush with home networking.

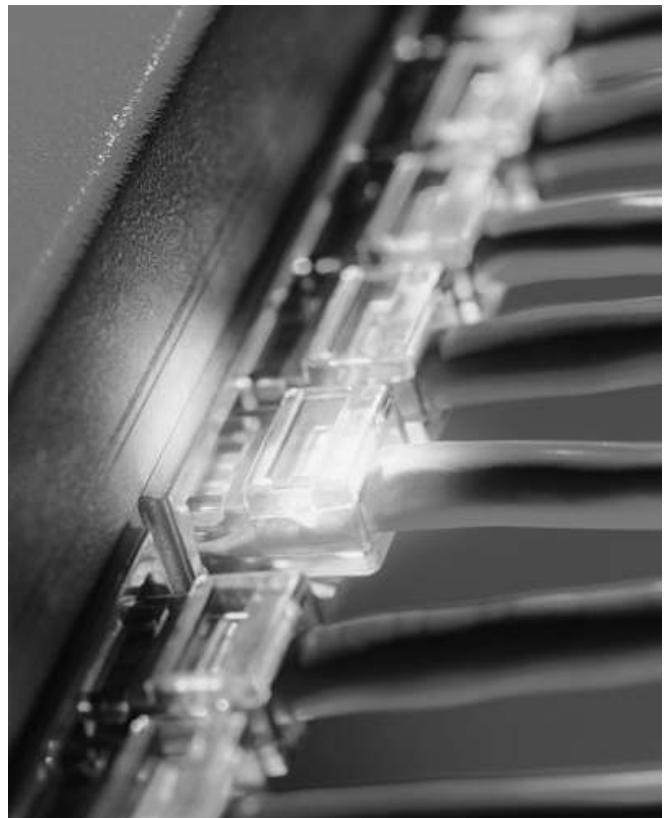
I decided that I wanted a wireless network, as I had two computers, and I wanted both to have access to the Internet. Since it would have been very inconvenient to run an ethernet cable from my main computer's router to the second computer, I opted for a router with wireless capability.

MAIN COMPUTER SET UP

I purchased a Linksys wireless router, since Linksys was one of the biggest names in this product area, then I installed the router, and connected my main computer via an ethernet cable, which uses RJ-45 connectors. These connectors look like the connectors on telephones, but they are larger. I connected my Adelphia computer mo-dem to my new router, and just assumed that all would work right away. Of course, nothing worked to start off.

There was no installation CD disc, but there were many pages of manual instructions on what one had to do to set things up. The complexity of the instructions was mind boggling, so I called Linksys support - which was in the Philippines.

Tech support worked by rote. They followed various sets of instructions, and most of the support staff really was not that capable. I also called Adelphia tech support, finding someone "network knowledgeable" there was also quite difficult.



After several days of back and forth calls, and speaking to quite a number of different persons, I finally got my main computer (which was hard wired to the router) online and working properly with my Internet connection.

SECOND COMPUTER SET UP

Next came getting my #2 computer connected to the router, via the wireless capability. I had bought a Linksys USB wireless adapter. It also had nothing much in the way of information on how to use it, and no install CD.

I connected the wireless adapter to machine #2, and guess what - nothing happened. So, it was back onto Linksys tech support. I must have spent eight to ten hours fumbling around, while talking to Linksys support. We tried everything, but we could not get the second computer to connect to the Internet.

Finally, the Linksys tech support person advised me that he could only suggest one final step. There was a free program available on the Internet, called "Boingo" - some name! He gave me the URL to that page, which was not a Linksys page. He suggested that I download and install it, and it would get my wireless adapter connected up, so I did, and amazingly 5 minutes later, I realized success.

So why couldn't Linksys have some similar software included with the wireless adapter?

TASK NOT QUITE FINISHED YET

I noted that when my #2 computer finally made it on line, that the received wireless signal was quite weak. Out of a possible 5 bars of signal strength, it hopped back and forth between one and none, so I did some investigating, and learned that the large distance between my wireless router, and the #2 computer was right at the max usable distance. Checking around, I found, on the Linksys site, a "booster amp", that was designed to work with my router. There were even four recessed holes on the top of my router, to hold the four feet of the booster amp.

So I bought this amp, and finally the install went smoothly. Since it was nothing but an amplifier, there were no settings or adjustments. It did improve the signal strength slightly, and I now had a solid one bar reading. This was good enough to maintain Internet connectivity, but did give me a very slow connection.

So after about 10 days of stumbling around, I finally got my system working.

This picture is what the router and booster look like. The picture is actually the new router, with the old booster on top of it. The new and old routers are virtually identical in size.

Moving Ahead In Time

In mid April 2009, I suddenly started having problems with my main computer's Internet access, and then my wireless computers' access.



After reviewing the symptoms, and running a few checks, I became convinced that my Linksys router had developed a problem. Because of its age (7 years), and the fact that it was an older 802.11b model, I decided that the simplest approach was just to get a new router. And, if I stayed with the Linksys WRT54GL, which was an 802.11G unit, I could have the faster speed of the G series. And, the new router would accommodate my old booster, since it had the same mating holes to mount the booster.

EXTENDED NETWORK

By this point in time, I had my main desktop computer hard wired to the router, and two other desktops and a laptop wirelessly connected to the router. And yes, as I added computers 3 and 4 some years back, all things did not go smoothly. My laptop was the easiest. When I got it in 2004, it already had a wireless adapter built in. When I turned it on, it immediately found the wireless network, and was connected.

The #3 desktop also had a built in wireless card, but getting it online was a struggle, similar to the first wire-less connection. Finally, I did get it working, without having to resort to BOINGO.

I'll relate my experiences in installing the new Linksys router, and then getting all four machines running smoothly there. I was dreading going through what I'd been through in the past.

This was a night and day difference from my first experiences in 2002. The router came with an installation CD. And it installed the router and my main computer, "as smooth as silk".

When I started on the installs of the three wireless computers, there were a few hiccups. But I then went on line, to check out a program called "Network Magic". It was touted as being the way to go when installing and configuring

networks. They offered a free 7 day trial, which allows the user to install the software on up to eight computers, and let Network Magic do all the work for you.

Since Network Magic was created by Cisco, and Cisco now owns Linksys, if you were using a Linksys router, most of the important software features would continue working forever, at no cost to the user.

If you did not have a Linksys router, you could buy the lesser standard (up to 3 computers), or the Pro version (up to 8 computers), for \$29.99 and \$39.99 respectively.

Conclusion

This was indeed a real eye-opener for me. I was most happy to see that the setup and configuration had gone from a terrifying experience to a "walk-in-the-park".

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose-leaf notebook, for future reference.

THE PURPOSE OF A HOME NETWORK

The main purpose of most home networks is to share an internet connection among several computers. Using a wireless router typically provides 4 plug in ports for hard wired cable connections, and a receiver/transmitter which broadcasts the connection wirelessly, with a typical range of up to 300 feet, depending upon the router, the surroundings, walls, etc.. You can of course share files, printers, et al, should you wish to do so, but configuring this is done after the initial setup.

YOU WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING

First you will need a wireless router. The two current main varieties of routers are the "G" and "N" series. The "G" series wireless capability can handle up to 54 Mbps (megabits per second), and the "N" series is roughly twice as fast. But for home use, the "G" series hardware is more than fast enough for any high speed cable modem connection. And the "G" series runs at 2.4 Ghz, as opposed to a much higher frequency for the "N" series. Considering all the spec variables between "G" and "N", I would recommend the "G" series, since it is also more readily compatible with earlier hardware types, especially "B". I used a Linksys WRT54GL for this new install. The price range for this is in the \$70 region, depending upon your choice of vendors.

This router comes with an installation CD. Just run the CD, and follow the instructions which are plainly and clearly presented. In the areas of security, I would accept the suggestions made along the way. You will have to establish some passwords et al, and connect things up as directed. From what I've seen, most routers today come with a good install CD. Before you buy your router, check to make sure that is the case for the unit you choose.

There may be one window which comes up along the way, where there are fields to be filled in re IP addresses, gateways, etc..

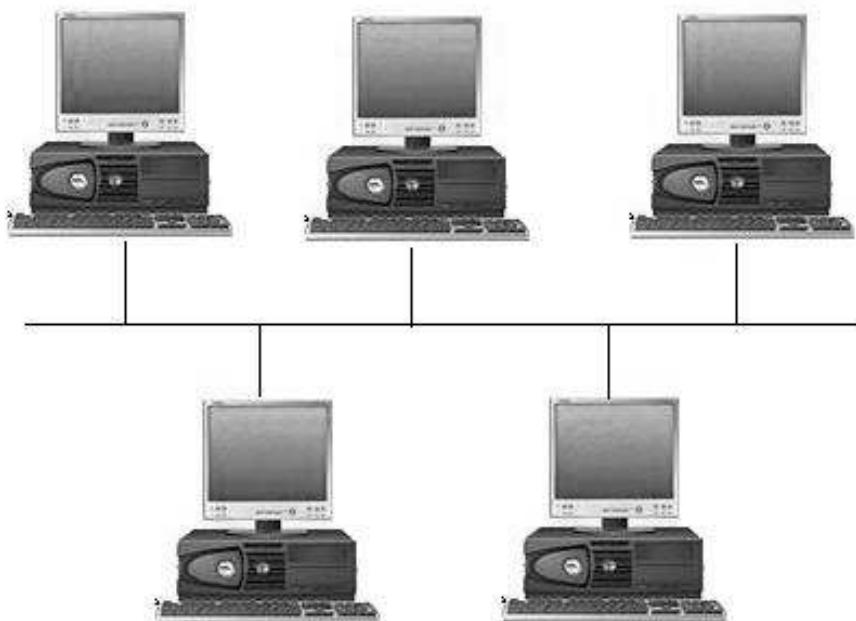
But the one key item to be selected is the choice of static or dynamic IP addresses. In most instances, such as Comcast, dynamic IP addresses are used, and when that choice is made in the window, all the other fields disappear, making life that much easier. Locate the router as high up as possible.

A computer cable modem is required. But if you already have an Internet service provider, you already have the necessary modem in place and working. For a number of years, I rented the cable modem, for \$5 per month on my Comcast cable bill. You are allowed to purchase your own modem, which I did, and save the monthly charge. A suitable Motorola cable modem will cost in the \$40-\$55 region, and will quickly pay for itself. Of course, if you own it, you are responsible for it. Cable modems seem to have very long life however.

Several lengths of Ethernet Cat-5 cable with RJ-45 connectors. You will need one length to connect the cable modem to the wireless router, and then another length to connect

the router to your computer. You can of course have all your computers run via a wireless adapter. But it is usually better to have your "main" computer hard wired to the router. However, if your cable modem is in a location which is not convenient for this, all computers can run in the wireless mode. Most routers come with one length of cable. If you need more, CompUSA is as good place as any to go. Even Office Depot may carry the needed cables.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose-leaf notebook for future reference.



Privacy and Google Voice

Written by Michael Gemignani, a member of HAL-PC,
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I had originally intended to follow up on my previous column concerning ways we can get crosswise with the law using our computers, but I decided to postpone that discussion when I saw the announcement that Google is making available a service that will expand our ability to manage our phone service, but, at the same time, will vastly increase Google's ability to know more about us.

Basically, if I choose to use all of the capabilities of Google Voice, Google can obtain a complete record of all of my phone calls, not merely who called me or whom I called, but a recording of each and every one of those calls. Some would say that Google's collecting this much information about me goes far beyond merely recording my Google searches or my clicking on banner ads or on links to other sites. Google might be seriously infringing my "privacy."

Of course, if I choose to use Google Voice, presumably I know what I am getting into. I can voluntarily give up some of my privacy in the interests of convenience. I am under no obligation whatsoever to use Google Voice. But what is privacy, and how much of it have I already lost in this technological age?

Most people, I think, would be surprised to know that the Constitution of the United States does not give anyone a right to privacy. The right to privacy was created by the courts, most particularly the United States Supreme Court, in such cases as *Roe v. Wade*, which gave a woman a limited right to an abortion based on her right to privacy. "Privacy has several meanings, but, basically, it refers to a person's right to control his private property, including his own body, and the information publicly available about him. Immediately, then, we see that the right to privacy is not absolute. My car is my private property, but I am not free to use it however I choose. I am not even free to use my body however I choose; for example, when my body is in the front seat of a car, I am obligated by law to restrain my body with a seatbelt."

The balance to be struck between my right to restrict the information publicly available about me and the government's and the public's reasonable "need to know" is often controversial. If I am a public figure, such as a candidate for high office, I am expected to reveal more about myself so the public can better decide whether to vote for me. But even if I am the humblest of private citizens, if I use a charge card, a record is made not only of my purchase, but of the time and place where I made the purchase. If I make a phone call, the phone

company has a record of the number I called in its logs. If I sign on to a website, there is a presumption that I visited that site at the time and from the IP address indicated on the site's log.

Moreover, cell phones are easily tapped, and there is no expectation on privacy when using a cell phone. Even computers that are not properly shielded emit electromagnetic waves that can be picked up with the proper equipment and the computer's activity duplicated exactly on another computer. There are, of course, other means of spying on my computer activity, such as packet sniffing for one. And though such sophisticated mechanisms to invade my "privacy" would hardly be justified in the case of an ordinary citizen, the mechanisms are out there. The only secure computer is one that is shielded against emitting radio waves and is totally isolated from the outside world. And, of course, those who truly want to know more about me, for reasons good or bad, are developing increasingly powerful means to do so.

Just as the notion of intellectual property has had to be rethought in the light of modern technology, so, too, does the notion of privacy. Just as there is the balance to be struck between my right to control what is mine, including information about me and the limitations on my control based on the legitimate needs of society, I can often decide what personal balance I am willing to strike. I can pay cash for all my purchases so there will be no records from my charge cards. I can use a pay phone, if I can find one, so I cannot be traced to the numbers I called. I can forego use of the Internet so that not even cookies will find their way to my hard drive. And I can refuse to use Google Voice. "Where I draw the line concerning my privacy is one of the choices left to me, or is it? Access to the Internet is almost a necessity for much of our work and leisure. Cell phones are beginning to replace land lines, and many people already use VOIP for their phone service. Perhaps Google Voice is a bridge too far, or maybe it is simply just another milestone on a road we have been traveling for decades. Are we still controlling technology, or is technology controlling us?"

The Rev. Dr. Michael Gemignani, an attorney and Episcopal priest, is also a former professor of computer science who has written extensively on legal issues related to computers. Although he is now retired, he enjoys writing and speaking about computer law and security. Contact him with any questions or comments about this topic.

Stealth Spyware: The New Spyware Threat

Written by **Kristofer Simon**, a member of the Fox Valley PC Association, Illinois, Fox Tales,
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For most of us, the word spyware is not an unfamiliar term anymore. It can mean cookies that track your movements on web pages or other little programs that put garbage applications on your machine. While spyware intentions have not changed much over the past few years, their infection practices appear to be doing so. The newest kind of spyware, which I personally came in contact with a few months ago, should be referred to as “stealth” spyware. What I mean by that is that this spyware installs on your machine without you even knowing about it. You do not become aware of the spyware infection on your machine generally until the next time you reboot and the spyware program activates. In this short article, I will describe my experience with a piece of this spyware and what I had to do to get rid of it so that, hopefully, none of you have the same experience that I did.

The piece of spyware that infected my machine was called “XP Police Antivirus.” I became infected, I believe, after visiting a third party website that provided updated information and screen shots for Nintendo Wii games that were about to hit the market and that were in development. As I said earlier, this program was a piece of “stealth” spyware and installed on my machine without my knowledge. It did not slow down the performance of my machine at all (at least not that I was able to notice), nor did any installation screens pop up during the install. The next time I booted up my machine,

an icon appeared on the lower right hand part of my screen that looked like the XP Security Center shield. When I put my cursor over it to see what it was, it said “XP Police Antivirus.” For just a split second, I wondered if maybe Microsoft had tried to install a new version of an antivirus program they created on my machine, but I quickly realized that this was a piece of spyware that had infected my machine without my knowledge.

The program tried to fool me into thinking that anonymous users from the Internet (it would put public IP addresses in the warning dialog boxes) were attempting to access my computer maliciously and it recommended that I install the full program to prevent these attacks. I wasn’t going to do this because I had the full and up-to-date version of McAfee Security Center so I knew this was bogus. When I tried to remove the program through the Add/Remove Programs option in the Control Panel, I was able to wipe out the program temporarily but the next time I rebooted my machine, the application

icon was in my system tray again and I was getting the same bogus dialog boxes about people trying to access my computer.

This spyware also put another program on my machine called Security Center 2009 that also was made to look as realistic as possible.

Finally, I went on my Motorola Q Smart Phone and searched on the XP Police Antivirus program. Immediately, I got a link to a page that told me that this was a piece of stealth spyware and told me how to get rid of it. I actually had to go into the computer’s registry (kind of like the computer’s brain) and delete the entry that the spyware had made there, as well as delete a number of files the program had put on my machine. Once I did that, the spyware programs (both XP Police Antivirus and Security Center 2009) were finally gone but I still had one more hurdle to overcome from this program.

The spyware also installed a software program known as a “browser hijacker.”

For those of you who don’t know what this is, let me explain. Let’s say you launch a web browser and you want to go to www.cnn.com to see the latest news. You type www.cnn.com into the address bar of your browser and either hit “go” or hit return. The browser initially begins to go to that page, but suddenly the browser gets “redirected”

to another page. This happens every time you try to access a web page. These programs are EXTREMELY hard to get rid of but I was able to get rid of the one on my machine using a third party program that found the program and removed it.

While this may sound like a dire situation, the most important thing you can do as an end user in these situations is to remain calm and scrutinize every program that you see on your machine, that you haven’t specifically downloaded (ex. a game, a patch from Microsoft, etc.). If you do get infected by stealth spyware and can’t seem to get rid of it, go to a non-infected PC or web enabled cell phone and do a search on the program’s name. You will almost always get a link telling you how to get rid of the program. Also, never send personal information over the Internet to any site that you cannot confirm is a legitimate site that you use (ex. Amazon.com, Paypal.com, etc.). Using these steps you can help eliminate most of the problems caused by spyware, but you should always

remain vigilant. You can get infected with a stealth spyware program from just about any website, so be careful out there!

How to get the most out of web surfing

Written by Beverly Rosenbaum, a member of HAL-PC, Texas, www.hal-pc.org, webwindow@hal-pc.org

Many people consider “Google” to be synonymous with web searching, implying that it is the only search engine available.

Indeed, practically everyone uses the word “Google” as a verb to describe searching the Internet, much like “Xeroxing” is intended to mean photocopying. But Google is only one of hundreds of search engines and search tools available. And, depending upon what information you're seeking, selecting the best one can improve the success of your search. This is especially true when searching for more specialized technical, legal, medical or scientific information. As an example, Google would be a poor choice when looking for job opportunities, while there are more than ten job search engines that would yield much better results.“

So exactly how do search engines work, and why would you need them? They're actually tools designed to retrieve content from Internet indexes based on criteria defined by you, the user. These databases contain information collected from billions of pages and documents that are on the Internet. Google claims an index of more than 3.3 billion pages, and Yahoo more than 3.1 billion! Think of a search engine as a card catalog in a huge library, to help you locate the information you need without having to examine every single book yourself.

“When you sit at your computer and submit a search, you are presented with a list of results almost immediately. The speed of this search varies from one engine to another, and the results are often different because each search engine uses a different ranking process. And you're probably wondering how search engines can collect information from so many pages that are constantly changing. To do this, they use software programs called “robots” or “crawlers” or “spiders” to continually follow hyperlinks from one document to another all around the Web. When these programs discover new links, updated pages, or dead links, they send that information back to their main site to be indexed. Google's Googlebots fetch

not only titles and text, but also copies of the page contents, and return them to their index stored on a huge set of computers. That is how you're able to view from a Google search result a “cached” copy of how a web page last appeared, when the site may be currently unavailable.“An estimated 30 billion web pages are linked to more than 100 million web sites, and every single page has a unique address or URL (Uniform Resource Locator) to specify its location. This address incorporates three components – 1) the protocol, 2) the domain name or IP address where the resource is located, and 3) the path and file name. The protocol identifier is separated from the resource by a colon and two forward slashes; for HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol), the resource name would always begin with “www.” The parts of the domain name or IP address are separated with periods, and single forward slashes separate the domain from the path of the files. So in this example -- http://www.hal-pc.org/journal/2009/09_feb/index.html -- the protocol is HTTP, the domain name is www.hal-pc.org, and [journal/2009/09_feb/index.html](http://www.hal-pc.org/journal/2009/09_feb/index.html) is the path for the index page of the February 2009 issue of HAL-PC Magazine.“Site Maps Play an Important Role“

To improve visibility and inform search engines about the pages on their site, webmasters create a text document outline of those links called a Site Map. This is a standard inclusion for web sites, and is always located at the root of the server. The URL for ours is www.hal-pc.org/sitemap.html.

The Site Map is an XML file that contains URLs for the site along with additional information about each URL (when it was last updated, how often

it usually changes, and how important it is, relative to other URLs in the site), enabling search engines to more intelligently “crawl” the site. So the information from Site Maps augments the data collected in the “crawling” process. In addition, visitors to specific web sites often seek out and use the Site Map



to find the page they need more quickly. This “bird’s-eye view” of the site’s content shows the structure and layout, and allows one-click access to all the topics. Visually impaired users who employ text readers to help them surf the Internet are also able to navigate web sites much more easily with a good Site Map. They are as important for human visitors as for the automated indexing “crawlers.” “

You can imagine how single web pages that are not linked to any other page would never appear in the search engine results. Google first introduced the Sitemap Protocol in June 2005 so web developers could publish lists of links from across their sites. The next year Google, Yahoo, and MSN announced their joint support, followed by other search engines, and state governments were the first to announce that they would use Site Maps on their web sites.

“How to Search” I’m sure you’ve often entered a search term and either gotten too many pages of results or nothing at all. Here are a few rules to remember: The most important thing to do is keep the search simple - describe what you are looking for in as few words as possible. If you’d like to search for an exact phrase, enclose the words within quotation marks. You can exclude certain words by appending them to the search terms, preceded by a space and then a minus sign (-). Placing a plus sign (+) immediately before the search term will yield only an exact match and no synonyms. “The biggest general search engines include Google (www.google.com/), Yahoo (www.yahoo.com/), and Ask (www.ask.com/). While Google and Yahoo process search terms similarly, Ask allows you to enter your search in the form of a natural question, such “How do I make a resume?”

“Both Yahoo and Ask also provide kid-oriented search engines at kids.yahoo.com and www.askkids.com. “In meta-search engines like Dogpile (www.dogpile.com/), Mamma (www.mamma.com/), Clusty (clusty.com), or Copernic (find.copernic.com/), the keywords you submit in the search box are transmitted simultaneously to several individual search engines and their databases of web pages. Within a few seconds, you are presented the results from all the search engines queried. Meta-search engines do not have their own database of Web pages, they search the indexes maintained by other

search engine companies. Most send their queries to smaller, free search engines and directories, but Dogpile uses Google, Yahoo, Ask.com, and MSN Livensearch. Many search engines blend into the results any sites that have purchased ranking and inclusion, so you’ll see “sponsored” links below or beside the search results.

“Waiting 17 Years for an Engine” A new search engine is due to come online later this year as a result of the Anti Car Theft Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-519). The National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS) will provide a searchable database of Vehicle Identification Numbers (VINs) to avoid fraudulent retitling of salvaged vehicles. This system will provide an electronic means to verify and exchange titling, brand, and theft data among motor vehicle administrators, law enforcement officials, prospective purchasers, and insurance carriers, and allows state titling agencies to verify the validity of ownership documents before they issue new titles. It has taken thus far 17 years to accomplish a piece of legislation that a majority of Congress obviously agreed would benefit the public. When available, it will be found at www.nmvtis.gov/.“

At the end of 2008 Google controlled 72% of all searches in the US, Yahoo had 14%, and MSN 8%, for a total of 94%. So all the other search engines together have 6% market share. In future columns we’ll explore what you may be missing. Did you ever want more information about some of the people in the news? There are lots of reference engines, and even a pronunciation engine that provides both phonetic and audible assistance from 50 resources.“

The Internet is a great place to find information on any topic by letting your fingers do the walking on your keyboard. In future columns, we’ll delve more deeply into search strategies and how to select the best tools for your needs. If you have any search queries, questions, or favorite search tools to share, send them to webwindow@hal-pc.org.“

Beverly Rosenbaum, a HAL-PC member, is a 1999 and 2000 Houston Press Club “Excellence in Journalism” award winner.



Net Neutrality

By Ira Wilsker

I have taken pride over the years that I have written this column to offer my readers a non-political and non-partisan break from the political tribulations of the day. Unfortunately, sometimes politics and technology clash, with each side having an argument supporting its opinions, and expressing why the other side is wrong. A long standing dispute rages in the technology world about the internet, and who should control the access to it. This is not some type of political censorship like what we often see in totalitarian regimes, but an economic issue where strong powers on both sides of the issue are taking a stance on the future of the internet. This is not a classical Democrat versus Republican, or liberal versus conservative squabble, but a dispute about the potential revenue streams and the use and control of the bandwidth that we have available. This often heated discussion has made it to the halls of Congress and to the bowels of the regulatory agencies, with heavy input from the participants, all of whom are trying to protect their turf. While the issues are complex, and I will try to explain both sides of the issue in an impartial manner, the name of the controversy carries the simple moniker of "Net Neutrality".

According to Wikipedia, "At its simplest, network neutrality is the principle that all Internet traffic should be treated equally. Net neutrality advocates have established three principal definitions of network neutrality: Absolute non-discrimination; Limited discrimination without QoS (Quality of Service) tiering; and Limited discrimination and tiering." The expression "Absolute non-discrimination" was defined by Columbia Law School professor Tim Wu as "The idea is that a maximally useful public information network aspires to treat all content, sites, and platforms equally." The part about limited discrimination without quality of service tiering basically means that while internet services providers can offer different levels of service (speed and volume) to their customers at different prices, they should not charge special fees for a higher quality of service, or priority in delivering information. University of Michigan Law School professor Susan P. Crawford "believes that a neutral Internet must forward packets on a first-come, first served basis, without regard for quality-of-service considerations." "Limited discrimination and tiering" means that there can be no exclusivity in service contracts, and that internet service providers and carriers cannot charge users for exclusive access to another's content. This concept is not some new creation of the internet age, but a well established 150 year old legal principal. Again, according to Wikipedia, "In 1860, a US federal law was passed to subsidize a telegraph line, stating that messages received from any individual, company, or corporation, or from any telegraph lines connecting with this line at either of its termini, shall be impartially transmitted in the order of their reception, excepting that the dispatches of the government shall have priority

... An act to facilitate communication between the Atlantic and Pacific states by electric telegraph, June 16, 1860."

Google has published a policy statement (google.com/help/netneutrality.html) that says, "Network neutrality is the principle that Internet users should be in control of what content they view and what applications they use on the Internet. The Internet has operated according to this neutrality principle since its earliest days... Fundamentally, net neutrality is about equal access to the Internet. In our view, the broadband carriers should not be permitted to use their market power to discriminate against competing applications or content. Just as telephone companies are not permitted to tell consumers who they can call or what they can say, broadband carriers should not be allowed to use their market power to control activity online." Google is not alone with this concept, and has been joined by many large content providers, including Yahoo!, Vonage, eBay, Amazon, EarthLink, and others

What is happening today is that some internet service providers (ISPs) are either hindering access to popular online video and audio services, or implementing a special fee or charge to the user in order to be able to access these services at the users' normal access speeds. Some of the carriers engaged in these practices cite the infrastructure cost that this high bandwidth usage incurs, and that it is only fair to charge a premium price to those who are taxing the capacity of the systems. According to the website SaveTheInternet.com, "... cable and telecommunications companies such as AT&T, Verizon, Comcast and Time Warner of wanting "to be Internet gatekeepers, deciding which Web sites go fast or slow and which won't load at all. These companies want to tax content providers to guarantee speedy delivery of their data ... to discriminate in favor of their own search engines, Internet phone services, and streaming video while slowing down or blocking their competitors."

The cable and telecommunications companies are represented by the US Telecom Broadband Association (www.ustelecom.org) and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, (www.ncta.com), which have aptly presented the side of the big carriers. The design, construction, maintenance, and upgrading of the intranet infrastructure are very capital intensive, and the demands on the networks are increasing dramatically. As stated by Wikipedia, "... telecom providers should have the ability to provide preferential treatment in the form of a tiered services, for example by giving online companies willing to pay the ability to transfer their data packages faster than other Internet traffic. The added revenue from such services could be used to pay for the building of increased broadband access to more consumers."

The NCTA, on its webpage (ncta.com) says, "There is no evidence that consumers are being prevented from accessing any lawful content on the Internet, nor are broadband providers

impeding customers from subscribing to broadband applications that don't harm the network. The best consumer protection is a vibrant marketplace in which choice for providers exists and allows subscribers to switch if they're not satisfied with the current service. The biggest risk of Internet Regulation is that it will freeze investment and innovation in further broadband deployment and development." USTelecom, representing the broadband providers, states on its webpage (ustelecom.org), "This unnecessary intervention would slow broadband deployment and the arrival of a wide variety of pro-consumer advances. Regulating the Internet would delay the arrival of life-enhancing technological advances in health care, education, the economy and beyond by sending a distinct chill through the investment climate. This 'about face' for U.S. innovation policy would undermine the critical progress being made in today's competitive Internet marketplace, where adoption is accelerating across demographic groups and nearly 1,400 companies are racing to extend broadband's capacity and reach throughout our country. Instead of slamming on the brakes of our information economy and slowing the arrival of new innovations in our lives, our government should stay focused on broadband deployment and pro-investment policies that bring the high-speed Internet and its many possibilities to all Americans." According to Wikipedia, "John Thorne, senior vice president and deputy general counsel of Verizon, ... has argued that they will have no incentive to make large investments to develop advanced fibre-optic networks if they are prohibited from charging higher preferred access fees to companies that wish to take advantage of the expanded capabilities

of such networks. Thorne and other ISPs have accused Google and Skype of freeloading or free riding for using a network of lines and cables the phone company spent billions of dollars to build."

None of the combatants in this battle are claiming that the internet should be fiscally free, or that it is wrong for the ISPs to charge different rates for different speeds and bandwidth limits. What is in dispute is whether all content should be treated (and charged) equally in terms of bandwidth and speed used, and whether the users of heavy content providers (such as streaming DVDs by Netflix) get equal access to the capacity of the internet. Hypothetically, an ISP could charge a user a premium price for priority access to streaming DVDs, and thus transmit that data ahead of his neighbors' email, or offer faster speeds to users of its own content than it does to other providers. Another consideration under dispute is whether an ISP should be able to provide a higher quality of service and speed to its own digital phone service than it does another digital phone service, such as Vonage or Skype. Discrimination of these types is contrary to the concept of "net neutrality".

This is a tough issue with valid points made by both sides. Hopefully the above content and links will provide the reader with adequate information and resources on both sides of the debate such that he can make his own decision. As the technology advances, and our demands on the internet infrastructure increases, we as a society must come up with some viable way to ensure that the capacity is there when and where we need it.



Thousands of Free Books Available Online

By Ira Wilsker



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I enjoy reading. I find that reading is intellectually stimulating, broadens my horizons, and provides vicarious experiences. My daughters grew up in a home full of books where they all became avid readers; this substantially contributed to their academic and professional achievements.

My students at LIT should be reading more, but the cost of books is a deterrent, and a trip to the college or public library is often an inconvenience. Many of today's students have grown up in the era of online information, email, Twitter, Facebook, Yahoo!, and Google and to them "online" is their primary information resource. Now there are internet resources where anyone can read literature of any genre, including hundreds of current textbooks, for free. Depending on the rules of the respective websites, these complete books can be read online in a browser window, or downloaded in a variety of formats, often including the popular and universal PDF format.

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human voices. There are also about 150 recordings of mostly classical music, and a few dozen historically significant recordings from no less than the likes of Thomas Edison. Project Gutenberg has books available in many languages with the largest number being in English, and even some written in Mayan or Yiddish. I know people who download the audio books in MP3 format, burn them to CD, and play them in the car. I know of one individual who has downloaded several of the Edgar Allen Poe audio books, and plays them from an MP3 player as spooky stories for the kids around the campfire.

I teach economics every semester at LIT and try to instill in my students some of the history, culture, and philosophy that created our economic system. While he is briefly recognized in our economics books, Adam Smith is believed by many to be the father of classical economic philosophy. The full unabridged version of his most recognized tome "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations", better known as the "Wealth of Nations" is on my recommended reading list. In the past the students had to compete for the limited number of copies available in the library or purchase a copy, an often difficult task for a cash strapped college student. Today's college student, or anyone for that matter, can simply go online and read it on his monitor, or download a copy for future reference. This is but one example of how technology can be positively used to expand the minds of society, and provoke inspired thought and discussion. The book "Wealth of Nations" is but one of many thousands available for free online at Project Gutenberg.

While not as extensive as Project Gutenberg, one of my favorite free eBook websites is Feedbooks at www.feedbooks.com. Feedbooks are almost all in PDF format, and can be read unabridged online or downloaded for reading at the individual's

convenience. Feedbooks has books in four languages, English, French, German, and Spanish, and from hundreds of authors. Feedbooks' selection is exemplary by having what may be the complete works of many authors, including Arthur Conan Doyle, 32 titles; Charles Dickens, 45 titles; Edgar Rice Burroughs, 68 books; Washington Irving; Henry David Thoreau; Jonathan Swift; and hundreds of other authors. Feedbooks is totally searchable, but I enjoy browsing my favorite categories, such as Novels (1382 books), History (111 books), Politics (32 books), Humor (68 books), and Non-Fiction (83 books). There is an extensive "Young Readers" selection composed of over 100 titles that would be good for parents to read to their children, or as a reading experience for the kids themselves. Titles include such classics as Grimm's Fairy Tales, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Peter Pan, American Fairy Tales, Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen, Black Beauty, and over a hundred other age appropriate titles.

Many of us are all too aware of the high cost of textbooks. There is currently a move on to publish current textbooks online for free. While this project is in its infancy, there are already many recently published e-textbooks available online at www.flatworldknowledge.com. It is worth noting that hundreds of college faculty have already adopted these free titles. Students typically have the option of reading the chapters online for free, or printing individual chapters for a nominal fee (about \$2 per chapter), printing the entire book, or purchasing a bound

copy of the book. Faculty may request a free bound copy as well as support materials such as test banks, PowerPoint slides, instructors' manuals, and other supplementary materials, just like the existing commercial textbooks. Even for those who are not currently college students, these online free college textbooks can be a valuable resource for personal and professional enrichment.

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Book Review

Web Video: Making It Great, Getting It Noticed

Published by PeachPit Press

Reviewed by Iris Yoffa, Member, Tucson Computer Society, Arizona,
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We seem to be living during the decade of the rise of video as the media of choice for self-expression. And where better to publish for maximum exposure than the web. In the beginning, just about any online moving picture was considered good and worth the wait, no matter how long it took to load and how poor the quality turned out. It was new, cutting edge and so exciting to be part of. However, the world-wide audience has become more discerning and has come to expect a touch of story, direction, and technical quality in the visual and audio. So, a book with the title of Web Video: Making It Great, Getting It Noticed, would seem to be the ticket to success.

The authors, Jennie Bourne and Dave Burstein, have done an admirable job of putting together an extensive array of basic to quite-involved information, tips, online resources, explanations of relevant technologies, and production techniques, approached in an entertaining format. There is a lot to be learned here for the individual involved in the bare bones to studio quality video. And, being totally new to the subject, I really

enjoyed this unique insight into the world of video production. This is a very different beast than using a video camera to record home and business inventories where no editing is required.

The book's 321 pages are divided into nine chapters. "Making It Great" is the focus of chapters one through seven. Publishing to the web for a world-wide audience of varying technologies and viewing devices presents many issues to consider that film, TV and home movie enthusiasts and professionals don't have to deal with, in addition to the challenges that they do have to take into consideration.

So to start you need to have a plan and a great idea, target an audience and keep it as simple as possible. Because of the heavy compression used in web video, the varying bandwidths for download, and the variety of hardware your viewers will be using to watch your movie, there is a lot that is out of your control for you to consider. You'll learn about the pros and cons when making choices about equipment such as video camera, tripod, microphone, lighting, cables and connectors, recording media and backup options.

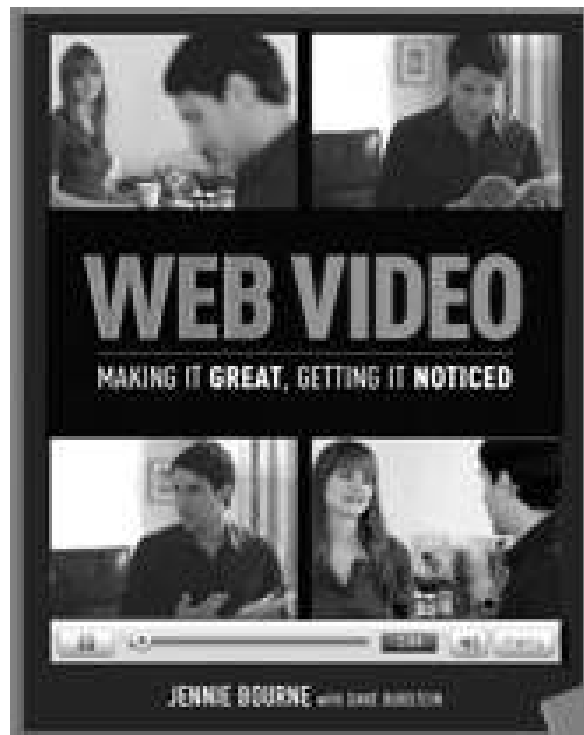
There are also a variety of techniques and approaches to consider for videoing events, interviews, how-to's, and news. Editing is a much overlooked and underutilized part of the process, but is essential for refining your focus and message. There's a lot to consider in addition to which video-editing

software to use, such as shaping the story, adding transitions, titles, graphics, and sound, working with compression and selecting an encoding format.

"Getting It Noticed" is discussed in the last two chapters. This is a lot trickier than one might think and there is no sure formula to get you there. Going viral is usually the result of inspired marketing. There are a lot of ideas here and vignettes of success stories to get you going.

However, you must first make it great.

This book is packed with excellent ideas and resources to help you make a success of your production. The chapters end with projects for you to work on, based on what you've absorbed so far. Throughout there is a focus on techniques for improving your video skills and methods and to assist you in this are interviews with accomplished video folks which cover a broad range of topics. The information, interviews, and tips are interspersed with vignettes of web video success stories. This insight into a world unto itself was just fascinating to me.



Software Review

MotionDSP vReveal: Flawed video no more

Published by O'Reilly

Reviewed by Steve Miller, VP Vendor Relations, Brookdale Computer User Group, NJ, www.bcug.org, stevemiller1@comcast.net

“Do you shoot video with your cell phone, digital camera, or other handheld device?” is the question found on the website for vReveal. “Then the chances are good that you have shaky, dark, noisy, pixilated, or blurry videos. Less-than-ideal videos that obscure your life’s best, captured moments.”

“But those moments don’t have to be lost to common video problems anymore,” the site promises. “vReveal has the advanced enhancement technology and “one click” touch-up tools that make it easy to dramatically improve the quality of flawed videos.”

I was impressed by vReveal’s enhancements of my video. I was equally impressed by the dramatic speed increase resulting from off-loading computing from my motherboard CPU to my system video card. As advertised, vReveal improves snowy/jerky/low quality video. It also exports a high quality photo, derived from lower quality source video.

Installation

I own a compatible late-model NVIDIA graphics card (8800GT). I downloaded the latest NVIDIA graphics driver, which enabled vReveal software to use parallel processing by ~100 processors in my video card. During the simple vReveal

installation, I specified a video folder to be “watched” by the new program.

Evaluation

Figure 1 shows the primary user screen. My video was displayed split-screen, in order to contrast before and after application of the video enhancements. I discovered an important, but unadvertised use for this amazing software. vReveal improves the quality

of Standard Definition (SD) video, so the contrast becomes less noticeable when SD videos are used in the same movie with High Definition (HD) video.

My Standard Definition video sources include traditional SD camcorders as well as my digital still camera (in “video capture” mode). My HD sources include a HD camcorder, and digital photos, which I “pan” and “zoom” to create motion.

I used the following vReveal settings to enhance my Standard Definition video:

“One Click Fix” (this automatically “Cleaned”, “Sharpened”, and AutoContrast”).



“De-interlace”. (“de-interlace” is an important feature which prevented unacceptable artifacts during video with fast motion).

To view the result of video enhancement, I used my favorite video editor to create one timeline that contained three types of content.

Standard definition video, no enhancement

Standard Definition video, enhanced with vReveal

High Definition video

I then “burned” a standard DVD, and also “burned” a High Definition BluRay DVD

(encoded with the optional HDV MPEG2 format). I used Cyberlink “Power DVD”

software with a 24 inch Samsung LCD (1680X1050) to “play” the DVDs, and compare SD video (with and without enhancements) to the HD video.

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Visible results

The original (un-enhanced) SD content was clearly deficient to HD video content. After

enhancement, my SD content exhibited remarkable video improvement (although not quite up to the high definition sources): Snow (especially resulting from low light) totally disappeared on my SD content after enhancement. Colors were brighter, blacks were

blackier, and contrast was enhanced.

vReveal, owned by NVIDIA, includes a performance and control dashboard to showcase the speed increase resulting from leveraging NVIDIA video card GPU (graphics processors). My jobs ran twice as fast when I shifted the processing from

my high performance quad core to my lower-end video card!

(Enhancement of my 40 minute SD video took about 90 minutes when off-loaded to the video card, and took about 180 minutes when confined to my high performance quad processor.)

System Requirements

Hardware: Intel or AMD 1.6GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, 50MB hard drive space; NVIDIA video card with “CUDA” enabled (GeForce 8-series, and higher); 100GB free disk per hour of enhanced video (uncompressed AVI)

Software: Microsoft® Windows XP with Service Pack 2 or Windows Vista™ Home Premium, Business, Ultimate, or Enterprise (certified for 32-bit editions).

Output file types supported: WMV and uncompressed AVIs

Price: \$49, download from www.nzone.com 30-day trial software is available (watermark is applied to output video files.)

For more information: <http://www.vreveal.com/>



MAY 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 MCHS Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon - TUE*
2	3	4 Board of Directors 8:30 - 8:50 PM. (Members are welcome to attend)	5	6 High Growth: Rock Ironworking (adv) 8:30 - 8:50 PM.	7 Board Business Survey 9 - 10 A.M. TUE*	8 MCHS Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon - TUE*
9  Mother's Day 9 - 9:30 P.M. Donations: ROSE	10 General Meeting 9 - 9:30 P.M. Donations: ROSE	11 Alamo Lockers (Desktop - Web Investigation Technology) 9 - 9 PM.	12	13	14	15 MCHS Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon - TUE*
16	17	18	19	20	21	22 MCHS Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon - TUE*
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					
ALAMOPC ORGANIZATION						

TUE* = Two Registration Required

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. |

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 Alamo*, 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 JAN25

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.