

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

**Alamo PC Organization is South Texas' Premier PC
Club promoting computers for everyone: from
beginner to expert.**

www.alamopc.org

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Alamo PC Organization
Regular Meeting is usually held
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4888 Whirlwind Drive
San Antonio, TX 78217
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(see map, page 2)

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Windows 7 Tips & Tricks

Shake Your Desktop Free of Clutter

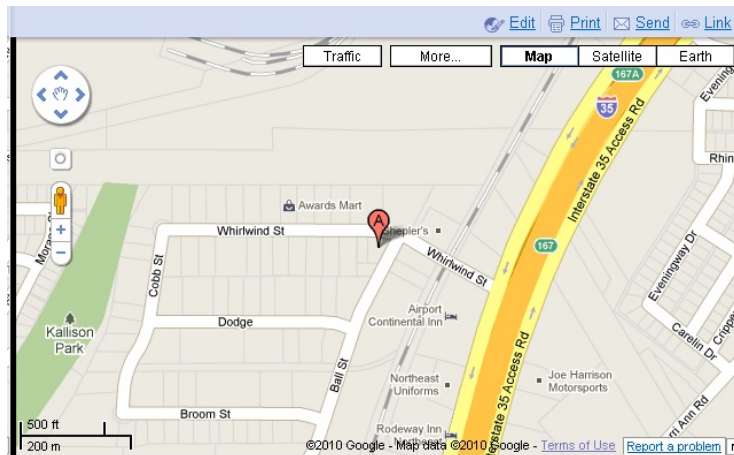
If you frequently run multiple programs simultaneously, your desktop can get extremely cluttered. This can get annoying if you're working on one program and want to minimize all the other windows -- in previous versions of Windows you had to minimize them individually.

With Windows 7's "shake" feature, though, you can minimize every window except the one in which you're currently working -- in a single step. Click and hold the title bar of the window you want to keep on the desktop; while still holding the title bar, shake it quickly back and forth until all of the other windows minimize to the taskbar. Then let go. To make them return, shake the title bar again. You can accomplish the same thing by pressing the Window key-Home key combination -- although doing that is not nearly as much fun.

See Taskbar Thumbnails Without a Mouse

If you're a fan of using the keyboard rather than your mouse whenever possible, you can move your cursor from icon to icon in the taskbar without a mouse -- and still see thumbnail previews. Press Windows key-T, and you'll move the focus to the leftmost icon on the taskbar. Then, while still pressing the Windows key, press T again to change the focus to the next icon to the right. You can keep doing this as long as you like.

Map to Meeting



DISCLAIMER

As most of you know, the Alamo PC Organization has significantly reduced in size. Although the organization has been pretty much dead for the past few months, there are a few key people that have been working behind the scenes to try to resurrect and revive the group. Although it is a slow process, there has been a lot of headway made.

For example, we are happy to be able to again offer our members a chance to download the award winning PC Alamode magazine. Even though it is somewhat reduced in size, it is still packed with great articles and tip and tricks for optimizing your PC's and just plain having fun.

Starting in the 1st quarter of 2011, we will again be having PC-based presentations at our monthly meetings. Some will be live, while others will be "net" meetings. Regardless of the type, they will all prove to be beneficial to the attendees.

So, as you can see, we want to continue the comradery of the user group, and want you back. We are presently charging no dues, and will try to continue this policy as long as we can. However, donations are and will be greatly appreciated.

The rest of the website will remain up and accessible by all visitors, with the caveats below.

Most of the information on the website is "dated" and the accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed. With these limitations in mind, we hope visitors to the website find what remains to be somewhat informative and helpful.

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The Running of the Nerds

By Lou Torraca, President
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Prez Lou

No, I wasn't in Spain at the Running of the Bulls...I was in Las Vegas to attend the annual Consumer Electronics Show and yes, I was one of the thundering herd going from press event to press event, starting on Tuesday, January 4. Those of you who remember my last years review will recall that there are a number of events designed to get the media (and now, also, bloggers) together with selected vendors as well as individual press conferences by vendors, some of which began on Tuesday. The big day for press conferences is Wednesday, beginning at 7AM and continuing all day for 45 minutes each, allowing the running to commence before each new conference. The somewhat smaller, but not much, are the Tuesday afternoon, CES Unveiled, Wednesday evening Digital Experience, Thursday and Friday Lunch at Pieros and Thursday evening Showstoppers. The lunches at Pieros are probably the most productive as the number of invitees and vendors is more practical allowing time to find out more from the vendors. This years CES reportedly attracted 140,000 people to browse 2,700 or so booths. BTW, if you are a tablet fan or an iPod owner you had 85 clones to view and evaluate. And if you wanted anything to use with your iPad, there were iPad cases, iPad holders, iPad keyboards, iPad chargers, iPad alarm clocks, and who knows, what all, but of course, no iPad!

Two things that were widely hyped were 3D TV and linking everything! I'm honestly not much of a fan of 3D TV...who wants to buy a box full of glasses so you can invite your 20 buddies to watch the Super Bowl? And no glasses 3D is a loser...you have to sit perfectly in the middle of the screen for it to work. I also don't care for using a 75" screen to do computer stuff...but maybe that's just me {-) Just to put some of this in perspective, there was a press conference by a company that makes high-end 3D glasses that do all sorts of things (and cost \$1K or more!)

I attended all of the above, so I'll give you a quick list of some interesting things I saw and continue with more, the next couple times.

First is in the health category, a big one this year concentrating on linking to many different media and allowing a lot of freedom for those who are getting on and live alone.

Withings is back with another health tracking product. This time, instead of tracking your weight and body fat, it tracks your blood pressure. They call it the **Smart Blood Pressure Monitor**.

Instant Measurement

Simply connect the Withings monitor to your iOS Device. The Withings application runs automatically and makes the measurement available with a single action.



Clear results

Detailed results are displayed, and the application will indicate the recommended values, using all the display qualities of the iOS Device.

Automatic Saving

All results are saved for a precise monitoring of your health. There's no need to note down results, calculate averages and transmit them. The Withings monitor does all this for you.

Health monitored from your pocket

Automatically traced curves facilitate the detection of trends in the blink of an eye. Morning/evening values and subsequent average values are clearly displayed for effective monitoring.

Lenovo was showing off a full range of notebooks but the most impressive was the Lenovo U1 notebook/tablet hybrid. Presented was an i5 laptop running Windows 7 with a screen/tablet running Android. The tablet could be removed and replaced in under 5 seconds and without powering off. Currently available overseas, the U1 should be coming to the USA in the coming months.



Kingston Digital, Inc., the Flash memory affiliate of Kingston Technology Company, Inc., the independent world leader in memory products, announced the SDHC UHS-I UltimateXX memory cards. The highest speed class available today, the UltimateXX meets standards set by the Secure Digital Association for next level performance in SD card technology.

Shipping later this month, Kingston's UltimateXX memory cards are ideal for the serious photographer or videographer. Photographers will appreciate the ability to easily capture sequential shots that were once a challenge due to the speed limitations of memory. The UltimateXX also makes it easy to capture HD video. The performance of SDHC UHS-I memory card is optimized when paired with a UHS-I device, although the card is backwards compatible with Class 4, 6 and 10 equipment. "Kingston is pleased to be one of the first manufacturers to offer SDHC UHS-I memory cards to our customers," said Mike Kuppinger, Flash card product manager, Kingston®. "Being a member of the SD Association enhances our ability to bring new technology to market. As the devices that support SDHC UHS-I become prevalent, our UltimateXX cards are at the ready." Kingston's UltimateXX line meets the SD Association standards for the UHS-1 speed class with speeds up to 60MB/sec, read and 35MB/sec. Write. At this performance level, the write speed of SDHC UHS-I memory cards is more than three times as fast as SDHC Class 10 cards. The UltimateXX product line will offer capabilities of GB, 16GB and 32GB.



Now here is one you weren't expecting. Laundry pre-treaters will collect dust thanks to the new **Maytag® Maxima™ washer**. Its Power Wash™ System takes out tough stains and provides better overall cleaning performance while using less detergent. The system's features include Optimal Dispense which injects detergent intermittently throughout the washer's fill time and industry-first, Power-Spray, to provide enhanced cleaning by spraying the detergent solution evenly on the washer's contents.

I have LoJack on my laptop, but since I use the netbook on all my trips, it seemed the smart thing to do to add it to the netbook as well, after my talk with the Absolute Software folks at Lunch at Pieros.

What's Your Digital Net Worth?

Think about it. How many songs have you downloaded onto your laptop? How many movies?



Combined with the initial cost of your computer, most people have a digital net worth that could easily run into thousands of dollars. Not to mention the priceless value of photos, personal information, correspondence, coursework and other irreplaceable items. So what are you doing to protect your investment?

When your laptop is stolen, you can feel powerless. But you don't have to. LoJack® for Laptops by Absolute Software is a computer theft recovery service with remote device and data security features. If your laptop is stolen or missing, you've got the power to remotely block access to it and the personal data it contains, while their dedicated Theft Recovery Team works to recover it for you.

Now for you 4G fans...Motorola has a really neat combo. The Atrix...a phone and a laptop, except it's not really a laptop. You have to snap the phone into this really good looking, sleek, thin and light (2.4 lbs) laptop/dock. The phone provides the processor, memory, Internet connection and, all your photos, videos, music and files. Whatever was on the phone's screen is now on the laptop, plus you gain a trackpad and full keyboard. No synch is necessary, it's all on the phone.



So there you have a few things to ponder...stay tuned for more in my next volume. Be safe out there in the www and remember to be careful.

Aloha, Lou

Aloha, Lou

You can read Lou's monthly column at



http://www.aroundhawaii.com/technology_in_plain_english.html / <http://bit.ly/f3TQ5t>

Will Google Take Over the World?

By Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS

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My predictions for the year 2010 is that this year Google will get one giant step closer to taking over the world! Well, perhaps, that is a little too strong a statement, but none the less, the rate at which Google is spreading their products and the scope of their reach is almost incomprehensible. I believe that in 2011

Google will become entrenched in even more areas.

The first such area is the operating system area. Those of you who watch the mobile phone market know that the Google Android operating system is now the fastest growing OS in mobile phone history. Google has already introduced their Chrome web browser, which is garnering high usage and praise as one of the fastest and safest web browsers.

Next year Google is poised to introduce their Chrome operating system, which is now in Beta testing. Google has just sent out tablet PCs with the Chrome OS to hundreds of testers. The idea behind the Chrome operating system is to create an OS that works almost completely online. Your tablet PC or small computer will be basically only used to access your online applications and information.

Google is targeting this system to businesses first. The infrastructure is already in place. Gmail is the email program. Google also has many other apps including Google Docs, an online Word substitute, Google Calendar, the iGoogle home page, and many, many more. There are even applications to track financial data, to perform asset management, to increase productivity, and to control sales and marketing. For businesses this will mean lower hardware and software costs as well as lower IT costs. Google will do this with added security and increased productivity. In a world where businesses are looking to save money, moving to the Google world will be very attractive. Once businesses are convinced to move to Google, it won't be long before home users recognize the same benefits.

Google has already reached into the area of health with Google Health, a free online system that lets you organize, track, and monitor, your health information. It lets you manage your health history online and track and monitor personal health and wellness goals.

Google owns YouTube, so it has already made its mark in the video world. Google is also laying fiber optic cable for Internet use through a project called Google Fiber. Google has said that it plans to build a trial fiber network that can move data up to 100 times faster than existing technologies. Trial projects will take place in over 1,000 American communities. If you travel by air this holiday season, you will be able to find free Wi-Fi courtesy of Google in many of the country's airports. Google already has a program called Google Educators in place to help teachers.

These are just a few of Google's major endeavors. As I said, Google has an unbelievable reach, which is going to touch every aspect of our lives. While some might find the spread of Google something to be feared, right now they are creating breakthroughs in many different areas that are making all of our lives better. This will be interesting year to watch Google.

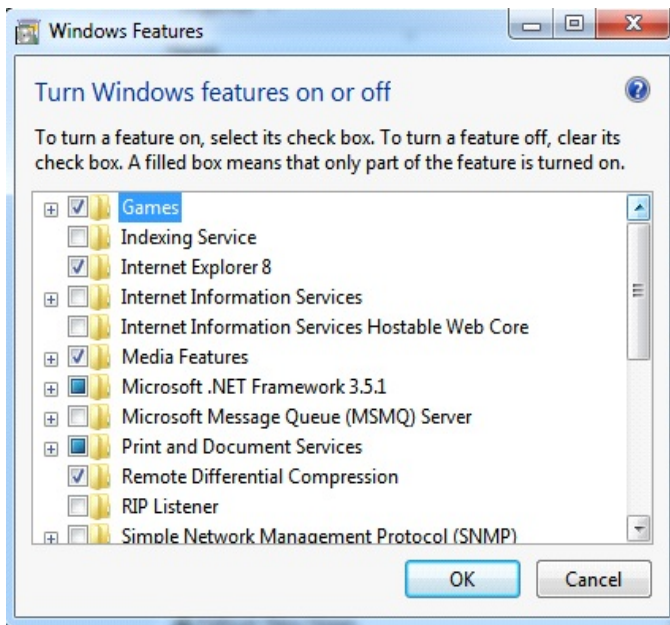
You've Got Them Why Not Use Them

By Vinny La Bash, Regular Columnist
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January 2010 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor
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People configure their desktops in different ways for an all encompassing assortment of reasons. Most use the Windows defaults which are quite reasonable, but operate from a false assumption that “factory specifications” are enough. Windows has lots of useful features not included in the default settings which could have great benefits, but if one doesn't know the features are there, one can never enjoy these prospective benefits.



Let's start by opening the **Control Panel** and clicking on **Programs**. In the **Programs and Features** section click the **Turn Windows Features on or off**. A dialog box appears which will enable you to turn features on or off. (See illustration).

There's probably much more here than you want, so let's examine several features that you are more likely to use rather than the ones which require professional technical knowledge to be useful.

The Indexing Service got a bad reputation in Vista because it was annoyingly slow. There is no doubt that Vista was a resource hog so any service or utility that had additional requirements tended to bog down the system

even further. Microsoft resolved the problem in Windows 7 by turning the Indexing Service off by default. That's too bad because the utility can actually be very helpful in locating files and other content through flexible inquiries. Try it, you just may like it.

Internet Information Services (IIS) and Internet Information Services Hostable Web Core: You will not be held accountable if you don't know what these tools do or if you choose to ignore them. **IIS** is mostly regarded as a major component of a server while the **Hostable**

Web Core performs fewer functions and needs fewer resources. If you write web based applications or wish to experiment hosting a web site on your desktop, these tools may be essential.

Microsoft Message Queue Server: This utility has been around for years and most application developers have come to ignore it because it's not new. If you send and receive messages on a regular basis with people who are in remote locations on the planet, and have "iffy" connections, you now have a tool to build a message queue, store a message within it, and send it when the connection to the recipient is up and running. You can also create a similar structure for receiving messages. Using this tool effectively requires basic programming skills.

Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP): Everyone who uses a computer on a regular basis should be concerned about unauthorized access to personal information or attempts to trick people into revealing information which should remain private. If you have a home network, wireless or not, SNMP gives you better control over devices on the network. You can configure hardware, troubleshoot more effectively, and in many cases even track down attempts to crack into your network. This tool requires a working knowledge of how a network operates.

Telnet Client: This is a great diagnostic tool if your email client is acting strangely and normal diagnostics can not resolve the problem. Turn it on when you need it, and turn it off when you're not using it as there are security issues with it.

These tools are not for everyone, especially those with little computing experience, but your level of knowledge shouldn't remain at the novice stage. Challenge yourself and you won't be like the guy who thinks he has twenty years of experience when in reality all he has is one year of experience twenty times.

Software Review - UbuntuOne

By Drew Kwashnak, Director, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT
January 2011 issue, DACS.doc, a Computer and Technology Newsletter
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Computers are great, aren't they? What else can help you lose so many files, pictures and home videos so easily? When you have more than one computer, then you have double the chance of losing anything (plus your sanity)!

That's where the Internet comes to help. The folks who bring you the Ubuntu Linux distribution have made a great product that helps organize and keep your files where you can find them. They call it ...



Despite the “One” in its name, UbuntuOne is two components; the installed application that comes installed on each Ubuntu Linux release since 8.04 LTS, and the site located on Canonical servers on the Internet. The real magic, though, is where these two components meet.

Typically, online file storage requires you to install their application and set a single directory to synchronize with your account. UbuntuOne, on the other hand, is already installed on Ubuntu. Instead of selecting a single directory to synchronize with your online space, you can select a number of existing or new directories to synchronize. In this way, you can keep your documents in your Documents directory, pictures in your Pictures directory and anything you want in any directory. When a file is added, deleted or updated, the system automatically synchronizes the changes with your online location, depending on Internet access.

The beauty of this stands out when you have more than one Ubuntu system connected to your UbuntuOne account. First, when you point Ubuntu to your UbuntuOne account, whatever directories you had set to synchronize before will be automatically set to synchronize on your new system as well. No need to remember which directories are set and which ones are not.

Afterward, whichever system modifies a file in a flagged directory, that change will automatically be updated in all other systems connecting to your account. So you can make a slide show presentation on your desktop and have it automatically updated on the laptop the next time it logs in to UbuntuOne over the Internet, and vice versa. If you don't have Internet access then, then it will synchronize the next time it is able to connect.

All the while, you still have a web interface available that allows you to upload files, add directories and delete files from any computer with a browser, and have it automatically update your Ubuntu systems the next time they synchronize. You can even download or publish files from your UbuntuOne account through this interface. Published files are accessible to other people, without having to grant them access to all of your files.

This is where UbuntuOne pulls ahead of the other sites with features they just don't have. Ubuntu synchronizes more than just files.



If your monitor is outlined by sticky notes like a lion's mane, you will be happy to learn that Ubuntu includes a note taking application, Tomboy. Tomboy notes, combined with UbuntuOne, synchronize just as easily as your files. For those times you are not in front of your Ubuntu Linux machines, you can use the web interface to add, update and delete your notes, which will be updated on your systems the next time they are synchronized.

Have you ever wanted to send an email and find you have it on your other machine? Just as Notes can be synchronized with UbuntuOne and edited through a web browser, so are your contacts stored in Ubuntu's default email client, Evolution. Evolution is an email, calendar, task and contacts application similar to Microsoft's Outlook, except the address book can be automatically synchronized with UbuntuOne.

Even better, UbuntuOne now offers UbuntuOne Mobile that allows you to synchronize your contacts with your iPhone, Android, Blackberry or any of the 1,000 of phones supported. One address book to rule them all!

With a Firefox Add On called Bindwood, your bookmarks can be synchronized with your UbuntuOne account. So by signing into one simple account you can get your files, notes, contacts and bookmarks automatically synchronized across multiple machines, or all of your information put back onto a fresh installation or upgrade. Yet UbuntuOne does more than just file storage and synchronization.

With version 10.04 LTS, Lucid Lynx, the people from UbuntuOne introduced the UbuntuOne Music Store. This combines the default music player Rythmbox with an online music store so you can browse, buy and play your music, through the same application. Songs bought are high quality 256 kbps or higher DRM-free MP3s and are placed in your UbuntuOne account. It is then accessible and downloadable by all of your Ubuntu Linux systems. Don't worry about running out of space either, there is no storage limit to the music you purchase.

Not only can you buy, store and access your music from any of your Ubuntu Linux systems, UbuntuOne Mobile allows you to stream your own music from your account, uploaded and purchased, to your iPhone or Android phone. So now your music can be stored in one location, and accessed by your computers and your phone.

Don't think they are done adding features, either. Currently the UbuntuOne team is working on a beta version that runs on Microsoft Windows as well as adding to UbuntuOne Mobile the ability to automatically synchronize pictures taken with your smart phone.

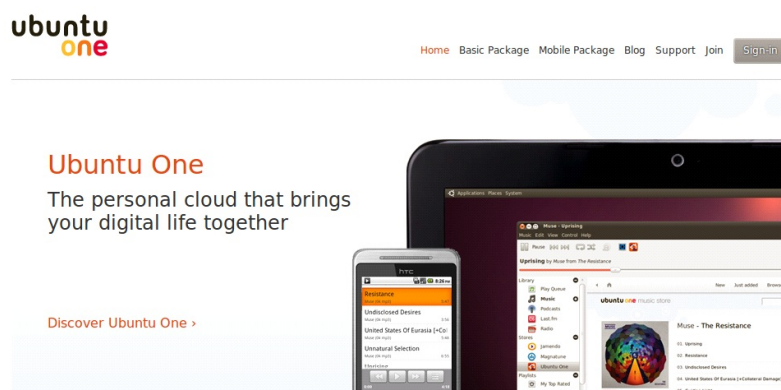
I know what you are thinking, how much does all of this cost? The free basic account gives you 2 GB of space free. This allows you to synchronize your files, contacts, bookmarks and tasks between all of your Ubuntu Linux systems and to use the web interface. More space can be purchased as a 20-pack; 20 GB blocks of additional storage space for \$2.99 per month or \$29.99 per year. Purchased music synchronizes with all accounts, and if the combination of music and files puts you over your limit, it doesn't stop you from buying more music. You are not able to add any more files to your UbuntuOne account until either your combined files and music are removed to fit within your storage space, or your storage space is increased to more than the combined files. UbuntuOne Mobile includes the Contact synchronization as well as music streaming capabilities for \$3.99 per month or \$39.99 per year.

Support for Windows is still in the early stages of Beta, but if you are interested in getting involved, more information is available at <https://wiki.ubuntu.com/UbuntuOne/Windows>. It's very early, and only allows synchronizing the Ubuntu One folder manually unless you make it

a scheduled task. The ability to synchronize other folders, contacts, bookmarks and notes are on the project's To Do list.

If nothing else, UbuntuOne makes it easy to backup and store files, music and pictures while at the same time making it so simple to restore these to a replacement, new or updated system. On a personal note, I have been using UbuntuOne to keep files on my desktop and laptop in sync and it has been doing a wonderful job. This and other articles have been saved in a synchronized folder and I have had no problems accessing and updating the files from one system to the other. With the basic version and Ubuntu Linux free of charge, why not give it a spin and try it out for yourself?

For more information, go to <https://one.ubuntu.com/>



Drew Kwashnak has been using Ubuntu off-and-on for over 5 years now, and with the way UbuntuOne is helping keep his files accessible and in check, it looks like he may be sticking with Ubuntu for a while now.

ISP Negotiations -- Speeds/Features/Software Myths vs. Realities

By Gabe Goldberg
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Trapped! It's easy to feel that way when the relationship with your ISP (Internet service provider) turns sour. Too often, people slavishly accept whatever service they get, meekly pay bills, and don't comparison shop or even measure connection speeds. So they don't know whether they're getting what they're paying for, let alone whether they can talk their way into something better.

Utility bills are so nasty and convoluted that it's easy to ignore them -- especially when they're auto-paid by credit card or bank draft. But that lets companies bury changes to rates and

terms of service, hardly ever in consumers' favor, deep in the small print. So check bills and tiny-type messages every month and especially carefully after moving or changing services, since orders/options/fees are too-frequently botched!

If service or bundle bills creep upward as they often do, call a few times a year to ask about specials -- sometimes they're not advertised. You may have to extend a contract to win a bargain, but if you'd have stayed anyway, it's a winning tradeoff.

Watch the market for changes in services, prices, and bundles. When you see new features such as FiOS enhancements offered, call and demand them. Emphasize that as a long-time customer you should get the same deal as new subscribers! When considering FiOS, remember that it depends on your electricity for operation. Battery backup will carry it for a few hours but that may not be adequate for telephone, alarm system, or health communication. FiOS is strongly marketed to include phone but it isn't needed; you can retain reliable copper phone service while using Internet and cable via FiOS.

Focus on what matters. For most people, after a certain point, increased Internet speed may not matter as much as other enhancements such as more premium TV channels, online backup storage, or a DVR. Aim requests to optimize YOUR total package, not simply get connection speed bragging rights.

Especially when establishing Internet service, but even after-the-fact, consider separating connectivity from email hosting to allow ISP (s)hopping without having to change email address. Fully sliced, Internet services may involve multiple fees: connectivity, email/Web hosting, and domain registration. But the total won't necessarily exceed that of a services bundle, and splitting enhances flexibility and negotiating clout, letting you tell your ISP that your email address doesn't tie you to them.

Even using your ISP's email service doesn't mean you're trapped by monthly bills. Though AOL has offered free email service for years, even allowing accessing it with standard email software and some free Web email services, many people still feel obligated to pay for it. That's like feeling stranded on a stalled escalator when you can just walk off.

Internet connection speeds are quoted in squishy terms, such as, "Up to xxx megabits/second up and down". Nobody complains when actual speeds exceed the promised "up to" rating (as mine routinely do!), but not enough people gripe when speeds are far below claimed service quality.

So test connection speed occasionally using websites like speedtest.net and dslreports.com, keep records (or let test sites do that), and politely ping your ISP if it falls short of what it advertises.

Check and cite reviews, BBB ratings, or blog posts indicating that the ISP isn't fulfilling promises. Compare notes with neighbors and other customers elsewhere; if there's a pattern of dissatisfaction, don't be snowed by customer support claiming that you're alone complaining. Investigate whether your city/county has an agency handling Internet complaints and mention that you'll consult it for advice and action.

You're a stronger negotiator if you know and cite available competitive ISPs. If you're a cable customer with FiOS available, tell your ISP that you're being courted by the other vendor and wonder why you should remain. And WiMAX offerings <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wimax>> are proliferating, often adding a third service choice competing with the traditional cozy ISP duopoly (cable and telco).

Keep detailed notes on interactions with your ISP, noting date/time and contact person. Always request ticket/incident numbers for follow-up and proof of patterns. Log problems, outages, and slowdowns for later reference even if you don't report them all.

If you're not getting satisfaction from first-level support, escalate firmly but politely, emphasizing that you simply want to resolve issues, but not taking problems personally or blaming anyone. On a more positive note, request personal contact info from helpful people. When available, it's pleasant being able to contact them directly rather than having to go through usual screening or taking pot luck with random staffers.

If a conversation feels rigidly scripted, try asking questions "off the record" or "person-to-person" or "as one IT professional to another" to try to get off-script and have an actual human conversation. It won't always work but when it does, results can improve.

Besides billing, speed, and reliability issues, technology itself is a fruitful haggling area. Cellular companies are introducing MiFi <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MiFi>>, a nifty gadget which uses cellular broadband to create a small/local/personal wireless hotspot. These are often offered under special promotions but you don't need these to play let's-make-a-deal with a hungry ISP. A similar technology allows tethering a computer to a cell phone, using it as a modem. Some companies disable this or charge extra for it, but it's worth asking (demanding?) for it as a service plan addition.

If you've had a connection for a while, you may not have the current generation of modem (and router, if it's all one unit). Companies sometimes provide this gear at no cost, so it can't hurt to ask for a free technology refresh -- especially if speed or reliability aren't what they should be. Separate from replacing hardware, occasionally ensure that you're running current software versions in telecom equipment by noting model numbers and visiting manufacturer Web sites for upgrades.

Finally, for emergencies, unless you check -- perhaps with a special high-gain antenna -- you never know what public hotspots or open networks are within range.

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SmartPhone = PDA + Phone

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, FL

January 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

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Smartphones can be seen all around. Notice the phone being used on your favorite TV show; next time, odds are that it'll be a smartphone. A year or two ago it was a flip phone (do you remember Jack Bauer on 24 using his?), but no more. Now the phone of choice seems to be the smartphone. Apple, and more recently, Google, have really changed the mobile phone landscape. The iPhone, with its iOS Operating System available only on the iPhone, released in 2009, really started the whole movement. Google, with its Android Operating System (provided for free to hardware phone manufacturers), has come on

very strong in the past few months so that iPhones and Android phones now have about the same market share - about 35% each, which only leaves 30% to be shared by Blackberry, Nokia, and Microsoft.

The Smartphone equality, as stated in the title, suggests that the smartphone is equal, in functionality anyway, to a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) and a standard mobile phone. PDAs have been a popular way of allowing one to have many of the computer files, pictures, videos and music, available on the go - remember the Palm Pilot. A phone was another necessity for someone who was always on the go. So for someone who had to be mobile and needed access their computer files, a phone and a PDA became a good combination. I carried a PDA for many years and more recently, a PDA and a flip phone. Now I can carry only one device, a smartphone. And, as a welcome side effect, now I only have to make sure one device is charged nightly.

The smartphone is made possible by a number of technologies. Among them are: Capacitive touch-screens; 3G (soon to be 4G) wireless telephone networks; Wi-Fi; GPS; Micro-miniature processors, memory and components; Digital Cameras; and Phone oriented Operating Systems. Some of these technologies are used in phones - like touch screens, networks, small components, Digital cameras, and operating systems. And some are used in PDAs - like touch screens, Wi-Fi, small components, and operating systems. As you can see there is a good bit of overlap, so putting it all together was just a natural. But it took the genius of Apple to put it all together and make it work and make it practical and make it cool. And now with the help of Google it has become more practical and popular.

All of the technology for replacing the mobile phone and the PDA is included in the smartphone, and then some. (I didn't have a good camera in my mobile phone, before.) But, it does take some planning and forethought to make the smartphone do everything. Some of the things to be concerned with are: Contacts, (which are phone numbers, addresses, e-mail addresses, and related notes); Calendar events; E-mail; Memos, (which are lists of important things); Documents; Spreadsheets; Pictures, Videos, Music; and Browsers. Before you can consider using any of these things there has to be an "App" (Application) installed on your smartphone. (I am using a Motorola Droid2 as an example, but most of what I am referring to will be very similar on another Android smartphone, and even similar for an Apple iPhone.)

There are Apps for all of these tasks. In fact there are over 100,000 Apps for Android phones and over 240,000 Apps for iPhones.

So, the first thing to do is to identify an App to handle each task you want accomplished. Your smartphone probably came with a basic collection of Apps. Basic things like Contacts, Pictures, Videos, Music, and Camera will probably be covered by these Apps that were installed at the factory. If not, you can go to the “Market” for Android Apps, or the Apple Store for iPhone Apps, and find one that fits your needs. Many of the Apps at these stores (websites) are free or have a nominal cost, most under \$10. Things like Word or PDF Documents, or Excel spreadsheets may have to be

handled by an App from one of these stores. Once you get to the App store, you will find a myriad of App titles. You can typically search for “All Apps”, or limit your search to only free ones. You can even search for Games that will run on your smartphone. When you find an App that you want, you will pay for it (via a credit card account that was previously set up) if it is not free, and then it will be downloaded right onto your smartphone. The download is completely controlled from the Market and there is no further action on your part needed. After the App is downloaded and installed, you will receive a message that it is complete. It couldn't be any easier.



Once an App has been downloaded, it can be placed on the home screen. Actually, one of the home screens. The Droid2 has 7 home screens. Multiple home screens make it easy for you to organize your Apps. Apps that you think work together can be collected on a particular home screen. You could have a home screen for entertainment, one for work, one for family, another for sports. Any organization of Apps that makes sense to you would be appropriate.

Once you've organized your home screens and downloaded the Apps needed, I'm sure you'll see that the smartphone is a very useful device for someone on the go. Future articles will concentrate on some of the new ways of interacting with the touch sensitive screen and some of the smartphone's more interesting features, but I think you will now agree that: Smartphone = PDA + (not so smart) phone.

Smart Computing Tips & Tricks

Don't Bring In A Virus

Although USB flash drives give you the ability to transport your files between work and home, you'll want to make certain you don't introduce a virus, which may have been on your home computer, onto your office network. If you have antivirus and antimalware software on your home PC, use the software to scan your USB flash drive before you take the flash drive to work.

Plustek Film Scanner

By George Harding, Treasurer
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December 2010 issue TCS eJournal
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Plustek has come out with a film scanner that is compact in size and efficient in operation. It connects to a PC by USB and is powered from a regular power outlet. It comes with two CD-ROMs, one for installation of the device drivers for the scanner and a couple of pieces of software that can be used after you do your scanning. The other CD-ROM is the installation disk for Silverfast, software to help you make your scan and to modify the result if necessary.

Also in the box are two strip holders, one for slides, the other for negative film. These are easy to use and durable. More may be obtained from Plustek, the manufacturer. A padded bag is included, which allows you to safely carry your scanner when required. The scanner illumination is by LED, which means less power usage and lower heat emanation.

Installation takes awhile and requires a restart. It also takes hard disk space of some 400 MB. The result is an easy-to-use application that scans either slide or negative film. The scans are stored as TIFF format files by default, although you can also save as JPG or PDF. The use of TIFF saves the pixel information even with repeated opening and saving, whereas each such action with JPG causes some loss of data.

When you start Silverfast, five separate windows open. The largest is the prescan window. You can use it to size the scan properly and adjust certain aspects of the image before the final scan.

The two strip holders are designed to hold either slides or negative film. The slide holder has four slots and the negative film holder has six openings. The scanner has two openings on either side of the box, into which you slide the holder. There are appropriate indents in the holder so that you can tell when a slide or section of film is properly centered for scanning.



The output size can be adjusted for printing, for use in documents or on a web page. The resolution can be selected from 72 to 7200 dpi. The effect of higher resolution is two-fold. First, higher resolution produces larger files. Second, higher resolution requires longer scan times. I found that 150 dpi is adequate for normal scanning. There are adjustments available for different types of film, for example, Kodak, Fuji,

Polaroid and so on. There are, in fact, many more adjustments available than I could try out! The Silverfast software is a photographer/graphic artist's "dream come true."

Learning how to productively use the software is a challenge. There are several tools to help with this. Each window has a Quick Time icon, which represents a QT movie illustrating briefly how to use that Window's tools.

The product comes with a 450-page manual and there are several helps on the Silverfast web site.

There is no automatic advance from one slide/film to the next. It is strictly a manual operation. However, this is probably what you want, since you may want to make adjustments to the prescan before the final one.

About: Plustek Film Scanner

Manufacturer: Plustek

www.plustek.com

Price: \$349 MSRP

Works with Windows 2000, XP, Vista, 7 and MAC.

Technology - 2010 Year in Review

**By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, TX
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As usual, the state of computing technology has been very dynamic, and what was state of the art in much of 2010 will be archaic by this time in 2011. This week I am going to do a quick review of what I wrote about in 2010, and what has changed since my original column.

In my column dated January 1, 2010 I wrote about "What You Need for that New Christmas Compute." While most of the recommendations made in that column hold true, today I would revise a few of those recommendations. While some things did not dramatically change, such as the need for a good surge suppressor with a UL1449 rating (not just a simple power strip), or a good protective case for that new laptop or notebook computer, some things did change, such as the necessity for comprehensive security software. In that January 2010 column I wrote about some free antivirus software from AVG, AVAST, Panda's then new Cloud Antivirus, and the free version of Zone Alarm firewall. I also suggested that users consider Microsoft's free "Security Essentials" as a combination antivirus and antispyware product. Since that column a year ago, all five of these popular products have come out with new versions of their software, generally increasing speed, performance, and protection. While all of those products are still available as free versions, all but the Microsoft Security Essentials are also available as paid commercial versions with additional benefits and enhancements.

If I were to write that same column today, I would make a different security recommendation, as the threat landscape has changed dramatically over the past year. Computer viruses, while still present and posing serious threats, are not the primary security threat as they had been in the past; now the most common threats are Trojans, spyware, keyloggers, hijackers, and other such non-virus threats. At this time last year, there were about 10 million known malware threats, but as I type this, one of the leading cyber security services now lists almost 19 million malware threats, about double the number this time last year. An analysis of those threats indicates that while thousands of new viruses and variants have appeared in 2010, millions of other new threats have evolved, mostly in the realm of spyware, keyloggers, and hijackers. Much of the newer malware in circulation is intended to steal the user's identity such as user names, passwords, banking information, credit card numbers, and other sensitive personal information that has significant financial value to a criminal. To a lesser extent, but still very common today, is malware that hijacks and turns your computer into a zombie, sending out countless spam emails, or even engaging in cyber terrorism where your computer, along with thousands of other computers, simultaneously attack a specific server on remote command, crippling it or shutting it down. Also in the past year, another type of security threat has become endemic, and that is extortion ware, a type of rogue software that high jacks your computer and by way of a popup, (falsely) informs you that your computer is infected with hundreds of viruses and other types of malware, and that you must pay the scammer to register your rogue software to remove the malware. If you consent, you are sending your credit card information to a cyber criminal, probably in Russia. Since the security threat has changed, so has the need for more comprehensive security software than the simple antivirus software that had been adequate in the past.

Since the simple antivirus software by itself is no longer adequate to provide comprehensive security protection, it is now more appropriate to install a complete security suite rather than just one of the popular antivirus programs. In my December 17, 2010 column I wrote about Agnitum's new free security suite, Outpost Security Suite Free (free.agnitum.com). This integrated free security suite (paid commercial version also available) has everything that the



typical user would need to protect his computer. Outpost Security Suite Free has excellent antivirus protection, antispyware protection, a world class firewall, and other protection modules that can provide reasonable security, and protect the user from most forms of malware. On October 8, 2010, I wrote about Trend Micro's new comprehensive commercial

security suite, TrendMicro Titanium Maximum Security. This suite contains extremely comprehensive modes of protection, but is unusual in that it does not significantly degrade performance, and what is most unusual is that there is no “update” button, in that it is continuously updated using the new cloud computing technology. Simply, TrendMicro Titanium Maximum Security is always up to date in terms of malware protection, and there are no signature updates to schedule or manually download, because the protection is transparently and silently kept up to date. If I had a new Christmas computer, and I wanted to use a security suite, I would choose either Outpost Security Suite Free, or the commercial TrendMicro Titanium Maximum Security for my protection from cyber threats.

Much has happened in terms of computing over the past year; faster new processors are still frequently being introduced and put into production, pushing yesterday’s new “gee whiz” processors into bargain priced computers, or into the discontinued clearance bargain bin. Hard drives have become larger in capacity, faster, and cheaper. A year ago a terabyte (1T) hard drive (1024 gigabytes) was uncommon and expensive, but today they are available for as little as \$50, with 1.5T and 2T drives becoming readily available, and priced in the \$100 range. Newly released video cards are becoming faster and more powerful, with many supporting HD video, and capable of simultaneously running a monitor and an HDTV. This has expanded the demand for streaming media, including on demand HD movies from Netflix, Amazon, and other providers, negating the need to order and return DVD discs via the mail. On a recent trip to visit my daughter’s family, I watched videos on my computer streaming from Netflix, connected to her 802.11N wireless router. She watches streaming Netflix videos directly on her HDTV, which is connected to her broadband internet. The distinctions between computers and home entertainment are blurring, as systems become integrated, bring both computing and entertainment together on a big screen TV.

If this is just a microcosm of what has happened to home technology in 2010, I eagerly await what we will see in 2011.

The MAC Corner

**By Danny Uff, a member of the Help Line, Mac OS X and Windows XP
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Digital photos are great. They allow us to save those memories onto our computers. Gone are the days of boxes and boxes of old, aged photos in some drawer (yes, I am old enough to remember them) or bent photo corners. Yep, it’s great! Until your computer crashes, and you have no DVD or printed back up of those memories. Do you wish you knew a way to back up those photos that you spent hours importing into iLife’s iPhoto application? Well, it’s easier than you think!

First you’ll need an external back up source. If you only have a couple photos, then a USB flash drive should do nicely. But if you’re like me, you have thousands of photos (old and

new) so you may need to save them to a CD, DVD, external hard drive or an Internet back up service. Secondly, there are two ways to back up your photos using iPhoto:

1. If you do not have them sorted into groups, events, etc., just highlight all the photos, and then use the File> Export command.
2. If you do have them sorted, then your best bet is to save the actual data file that iPhoto uses. Backing this up is a snap:

- Open Finder, then select the Pictures folder
- Within that folder is a file called iPhoto Library. Make sure this file is saved to the external source you are backing up too. That's all there is too it!

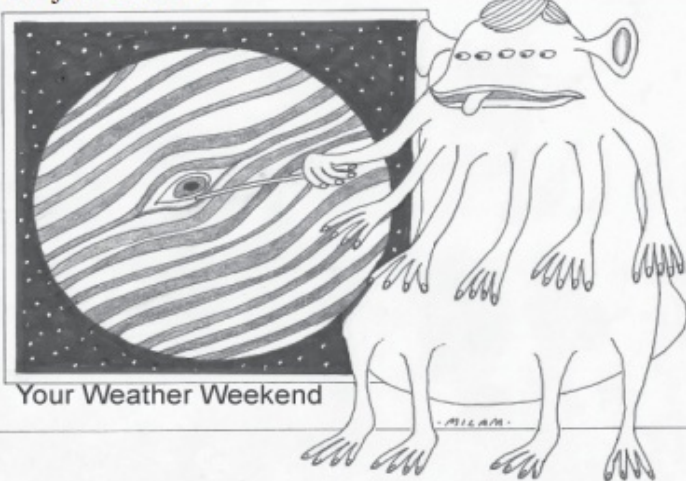
Now, to restore the photos, just get the external source and copy the iPhoto Library file back to the Pictures folder, then go back into iPhoto and bingo! All of your events, places, faces and photos are back again. Well, that's it for this month.



The Lighter Side



On Jupiter the Weather Channel may be more scary, but just as dull.



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"It looks like there are no asteroid collisions in the forecast and the Red Spot seems to be shrinking due to climate change. However, don't expect to spend any vacations there for at least another 300 years."

Bucky Milam is a master of the fine arts, with an emphasis on the cool and casual. He is the recipient of numerous awards for his painting and graphic design, which has been displayed at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Modern Art, the Chicago Art Institute, and the London and Tokyo Museums of Fine Art. A trumpet virtuoso, he performs widely in clubs throughout the region and is a recognized composer of jazz and classical music for brass.

Bucky comes to computing as an accidental tourist. His peculiar perspective is of the visual media and the image they project of our civilization and culture. You can find his musings in each monthly issue of dacs.doc. (Danbury Area Computer Society)