

The Rochester Computer Society Monitor

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The Mouse That Works

by Joe Pia

Rochester Computer Society

A mouse is a wonderful thing. It allows us to move our cursors to any place on the screen that suits our fancy at any given moment. In addition, a click here or a click there helps us get our work done or our games played.

But the kind of mouse that most of us have uses a trackball on the bottom and a pad to roll that trackball on. Such machines are subject to all kinds of difficulties. One that is really a problem is lint. Lint can pile up on the inner workings of the trackball mechanism. If that amount of lint is beyond a certain critical mass, the trackball no longer works.

I found that out when my mouse developed an aversion to going left. Any direction left. Up or down, or slant wise across the screen. Going right seemed to be just fine. Talk about frustration. Of course, I learned quickly how to trick the beast into thinking it was going right even when I needed it to deal with something on the left of the screen. But what a pain!

After calling Bill at Computer Warehouse, I figured out that the mouse I have been using all these years had developed the Lint Disorder. He told me to take the bottom off the mouse, let the ball drop out and take a serious squint at the little bars surrounding the ball. And then clean them.

I followed his advice as well as I could, being a helpful type and all that. But, when I put it back together, the mouse still had an aversion to going left. Nothing much had changed. So, I put the thing in the car with me and drove to his shop.

The solution, Bill told me, was the new type of mouse. And it was only about \$16 plus tax.

The new mouse works with a laser beam which shines out of the bottom. That beam

replaces the track ball. And it needs no special mouse pad to work. A simple table top, or I suppose a lap or thigh, works just fine.

The cursor moves around on the screen just like it's supposed to. No aversions to any particular directions. Quite an improvement, and it clicks just fine. All this and relatively cheap, too.

So, goodbye trackball. To you know where with the Lint Disorder. For me it's a new world and a screen that's reachable from anywhere. Long Live the Laser Mouse!

Trimming and Cutting for Dummies Like Me

by Bruce Switalla

Coastal Area Users Group

Since it will be a while before I learn how to get my graphic printouts to line up correctly on pre-perforated paper, I decided to simply save money on mistakes and take matters into my own hands. So, for the Feb. graphics SIG, I briefly demonstrated how I make business cards, greeting cards, and photo prints without the perforated paper that I can't always figure out how to line up.

For now, I use Epson Matte Heavyweight paper (52-lb.) for everything. It makes a thin but acceptable business card, and it doesn't stick to glass photo frames. It yields rich, dark colors too. For business card software, I use Print Artist and can get it to print *twelve* cards per 8½ x11 sheet with hairline crop marks that get split in two and don't show. The pre-perforated business card sheets I've seen yield only ten and thus leave wasted paper.

For business cards, greeting cards, and photos alike, I use the following equipment. I place an 11x15 Good Cook Flexible Cutting Board (about \$2.95) on my table surface. Yes, it gets cut marks in it, but that's what its for! Fabric stores have more costly cutting mats that "heal" after you cut into them thus

preventing the knife from following a previous groove.

To cut, I use an Exacto knife and keep it covered with its plastic cap when not in use. For the projects without crop marks like photos, I use 2 sharp pencil marks to determine where to cut. I place the knife on the mark first, then slide a cork-backed metal ruler against the knife at my first point.

Then, holding the ruler down with my finger out of the way of the cut, I place the knife-point in the other pencil mark, pivoting the ruler this time against the knife. I consistently keep the knife straight up while watching my fingers. I cut 2 or 3 times just past where I need to, so the side cuts will come apart when finished. I got a beautiful 5x7 mahogany-colored wood frame for \$2. And 8x10s are \$3 and \$4. If you go with glossy paper, you cannot let it touch the glass, so you will need to place a spacer, like a mat, around the photo.

Advanced Advice

If you can control how large your photo prints out, you may opt for 4½x6½ or so with white borders that you leave when you cut to 5x7, since a 5x7 wood frame will cover a quarter inch on all sides, and ink is expensive.

Measure the frame's inside dimensions for white border (cutting purposes) and from the front of the frame measure for printing purposes but be sure no white will show after framing. Better to think this all out and practice on Crayola-colored notebook paper than mess up a print. "Measure twice...."

Folded greeting cards.

I place two pencil marks down the center of where I need to fold. Then I put the ruler edge over the marks and use a pizza cutter to crease neatly the fold I need. Care is needed to avoid rolling away from the ruler's edge. The resulting fold looks professional!

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

Home Net Hassles

Home networks are hot and can be extremely useful—once everything is up and running. But getting there is often a bumpy ride.

Got net? Not Internet, but a network of your own—one that connects two or more PCs so they can share files, printers, and a single Internet account? If you have a home network or are contemplating getting one, you're not alone: Research firm Parks Associates estimates that 7.2 million households will have a network by year's end—up from 5.7 million in 2001—and that 21 million will by 2006.

However, you've also got company if you've tried to set up a network and either failed or only partially succeeded. Don't get me wrong: Home networks can really help you get the most out of your PCs and peripherals. But no matter what networking-gear Web sites or computer-sales reps may tell you, the technology is neither simple nor foolproof. When I think back on my networking woes,

problems ranging from system crashes to PCs that couldn't see each other on the network to ISPs that made network setups problematic come to mind.

Most of the time, I finally managed to make things work, often with the help of a network-savvy friend or a good networking site. Where there's a will to network, there's generally a way. But you may have to spend more time or money than you planned.

The number of households with two or more PCs is rising along with those that have broadband Net access. That in turn has driven up demand for home networks, as users see the benefit of sharing files, broadband access, and peripherals such as printers.

But while the need may be reaching mass-market status, the products seem to be trailing behind.

Newcomers to networking may be somewhat tech savvy, but they're not the IT pros who used to be networking gear's primary

consumers. "So many of the products are IT-based, and people don't want an IT experience," says Giga Information Group research fellow Rob Enderle. "They want a consumer experience—something that just works."

"It's not nearly as plug-and-play as it should be," agrees Chris Kaminski, a former systems administrator with software and Web development experience who now runs a networking self-help Web site called www.homenethelp.com. Additional evidence backs the perception that networking is not yet mass-market friendly. Most vendors and retailers won't comment publicly on networking-equipment return rates (CompUSA says that returns are about average compared with those for other products), but privately a few acknowledge they are high.

"If you go to any of the retailers and look on shelves, you'll see that a lot of stuff has been opened and resealed and put back," Giga's Enderle says, adding that the problem usually isn't due to faulty equipment but to buyer frustration. The vendors are attempting to respond. Linksys, a major home-networking gear maker, received so many tech support calls from customers last year that it has since increased its tech support staff from about 280 reps to almost 500.

Other vendors hope to boost sales and head off support calls by further simplifying installation. Actiontec, for example, has introduced new products it touts as the "easiest home networking kits on the market," with color coding and pictorial guides. Even Microsoft is entering the fray, promising to make home networking a snap with a line of Wi-Fi products which are available locally at Sam's Club and CompUSA.

Myriad Problems

Despite the vendors' efforts, however, numerous hapless home networkers report finding a multiplicity of problems. Home NetHelp.com's Kaminski says that the most common queries posted on his site's user forums deal with five main issues: networking PCs that run different Windows versions; enabling networked PCs to see each other; making sense of con-

fusing ISP instructions; running apps such as video-conferencing and games through a firewall; and setting up network security. Users often turn to computer-savvy friends or to professionals for help. Because trouble can arise from so many sources—the networking gear, the operating system, the ISP, other system software—people don't know who to call for technical support. And some users who do call report that tech support reps try to pass the blame elsewhere.

That situation may persist while networking painfully transitions from IT product to consumer product. Standards for networking, cable or DSL access, and the like exist, but these can take you only so far. Faced with so many pieces that need to work together, the industry is unlikely to establish a single interoperability standard anytime soon.

Solutions?

Figuring out how to troubleshoot a home networking problem isn't easy. On her own, JoAnn Kovach, a medical assistant from Zion, Illinois, put in a router and an ethernet network to connect an older PC with a newer one so her visiting children and grandchildren could share her AT&T Broadband Net access. File and printer sharing were no problem, but the broadband connection went down every two days and wouldn't return until she rebooted. Her router maker told her to consult her ISP. An AT&T rep came to her home but failed to fix the problem, blaming it on an unspecified configuration issue. A friend thought the trouble might be that one system was running Windows 98 and the other Windows XP, but "I thought the whole purpose was to be able to network an older with a newer computer," Kovach says. Since her router seemed to have difficulty resuming her Internet connection, HomeNetHelp tried walking her through configuring its firmware; this helped, but it did not fix the problem. She's still working on it.

Mark Tracy of North Sioux City, Iowa, a telephone sales representative for Gateway Computers, had to enlist a colleague's aid to get file sharing and encryption working on

the wireless network he set up between a Gateway laptop and a Gateway desktop using a Linksys router. They finally solved the problems by changing the settings for Windows networking and for the Wired Equivalent Protocol (WEP, Wi-Fi's built-in security). Still, Tracy complains, none of his equipment vendors responded to his request for assistance.

"Gateway [which sold him the router] said it was a Linksys installation technical support question," Tracy recalls. "Linksys said that since I was successfully connecting to the Internet through the AP [access point], it was a Microsoft operating system configuration issue--and of course, Microsoft would be more than happy to help, for a fee."

Call-center coordinator Anthony Gabriel of St. Joseph, Michigan, can't set up his network to share Net access; he thinks his broadband ISP (his cable company) may be the problem. His IP address is one reserved for Network Address Translation, the technology that lets several PCs on a network access the Internet via one external IP address (assigned by the ISP). Some smaller ISPs that have too few external IP addresses use NAT themselves, which can create conflicts for any users who want to set up NAT for their businesses or homes.

Gabriel's ISP, Greene County Cable TV, confirms that it does use NAT to serve its residential clients, but the situation may change soon. The company doesn't support home networks for users on its low-end plan. In fact, many ISPs support third-party products like networking gear only for users who buy the equipment or multiple IP addresses from them. (But that doesn't mean users can't get home networks to work.) As of this writing, Gabriel was considering an ISP switch. Blake Hansen, an insurance agent from Idaho Falls, Idaho, spent 8 hours trying to set up a simple peer-to-peer network between two systems at his home. "I had the wrong cable, and then it just went from bad to worse," Hansen says. Frustrated by the experience, he chose not to contact his retailer's customer support before calling in a pro.

Net Benefits

Still, even the readers who e-mailed me about their networking problems had generally positive views about home networking. If you're thinking of installing a home network, don't let the prospect of running into installation hassles dissuade you. But don't count on having a completely trouble-free experience, either. Try to do as much research as possible, invest in newer equipment (which generally is more user-friendly than early home networking products), and give yourself a few hours to read manuals and troubleshoot any problems that may arise. And don't feel embarrassed about asking for help--from the Web, from a friend, or from a paid consultant. Once your network is up and running, you'll be glad you did.

Resources

Check these links, including PC World's how-to guides, for help in setting up home networks:

How to Set Up Your Home Network

(<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,102461,00.asp>)

The No-Hassle Networking Guide

(<http://www.pcworld.com/features/article/0,aid,86935,00.asp>)

HomeNetHelp.com

(<http://www.homenethelp.com/>)

PracticallyNetworked

(<http://www.practicallynetworked.com/>)

Microsoft Community Newsgroups:

Windows XP, Networking and the Web

(http://support.microsoft.com/newsgroups/default.aspx?ICP=GSS3&NewsGroup=microsoft.public.windowsxp.network_web&SLCID=US&sd=&id=fh;en-us;newsgroups)

Cures for Common Networking Headaches

A home network that won't work can be very frustrating, but don't give up. Here, courtesy of HomeNetHelp.com's Chris Kaminski and Linksys product support manager Shannon Lehmann, are some basic troubleshooting steps to try when you're faced with three common problems.

I can't see other PCs on the network. Make sure the workgroup name is the same for all

networked PCs. For Windows 98, right-click Network Neighborhood (My Network Places in Windows Me), click the Identification tab, and enter the workgroup name. In Windows 2000, right-click My Computer and select Properties, Network, Identification, Properties. Click the Workgroup radio button, and then enter the name. In Windows XP, right-click My Computer, select Properties, Computer Name, and—if the workgroup name needs to be changed—click Change and then select the Workgroup radio button.

My network adapter doesn't work. Make sure you've properly installed the driver. Windows 98 and Me users must have their Windows installation CD-ROMs handy, or know where the installation files (.cab files) reside on the hard drive (Win XP and 2000 users, don't worry about this). All users must know where the driver files are located on the hardware's installation CD-ROM.

I can't get online. This may be a problem with a gateway/router setting. If so, you should be able to fix it via the device's Web-based firmware. Check your manual for the device's default IP address (it will be in the format 192.168.x.x). Launch a browser and then point it to that address.

Setup routines vary from vendor to vendor, but at some point you should be asked whether you have a dynamic IP address (as most residential users do) or a static IP address. If your broadband ISP uses PPPOE software to log you in automatically via a user ID and password, you should be asked to enter those as well.

Some ISPs check to see whether a connection is coming from the device you first used for access; they do this by checking its MAC identifier (a string of numbers and letters unique to a device). If you buy a router after getting broadband, the router will have a different MAC identifier than the ethernet card you probably used to connect from one PC. To bypass this problem, newer routers include a MAC cloning feature that copies the MAC address from the adapter to the router; otherwise, you may have to call your ISP and inform it of your router's MAC identifier

(check with the vendor to determine what it is).

You can also try releasing and renewing your PC's IP address. In Windows 98 and Me, click Start, Run, type winipcfg, and click OK. You'll see a window with IP addressing information and a drop-down list of available adapters. Select your adapter, click Release, and then click Renew. At this point, your PC will seek a new IP number from your ISP. In Windows XP, open Network Connections, right-click the adapter that you're using, and then select Status, Support, Repair. In Windows 2000, select Start, Run, type cmd, select OK, type ipconfig /release_all, press Enter, type ipconfig /renew_all, and press Enter.

Keep It Simple: Call In a Professional

If you're too nervous or too busy to take on setting up a home network, you'll be glad to know that it's now easier to find someone who'll do the job for you.

For example, if you buy your networking gear at one of its stores, CompUSA will send a rep to your home (for \$99 to \$199) to set up either a wireless network or a network with wires that have already been installed. The \$99 service will network two PCs for file and printer sharing; the \$149 option adds shared broadband access, and the \$199 plan lets you connect another PC.

Last fall, Gateway began offering to include wireless-network installation with the necessary hardware for two PCs to share broadband Net access: a base station and a wireless client adapter (the second PC uses a wired connection to the base station's ethernet port). Prices range from \$249 for users who also buy broadband access and a laptop with a Wi-Fi adapter to \$499 for those who buy just the base station, the adapter, and installation. Since you can get a base station for under \$150 and a Wi-Fi adapter for \$70 to \$80, the \$499 package is costly. But if you're buying a Wi-Fi laptop anyway, the \$249 package is a good deal. If your networking needs are more complex—if you want to add devices such as a networkable ReplayTV or

an MP3 server, for example— you might want to hire a consultant.

HomeNetHelp.com's Chris Kaminski recently founded the FutureHome Guild, a national organization of networking professionals who for \$60 to \$120 an hour will discuss your home networking plans with you and install the equipment. For basic networking, this service is probably too costly; but it could make sense for upscale users who want to prepare for the coming wave of IP-addressable appliances.

Hard-drive makers weaken warranties

Three of the major hard-drive makers will cut down the length of warranties on some of their drives, starting Oct. 1, to streamline costs in the low-margin desktop disk storage business.

PC makers have been pulling back the warranties on their computers in an effort to reduce costs, and hard-drive makers Maxtor, Seagate and Western Digital followed suit. The three drive companies, which combined have about 85 percent of the drive market, have altered their warranties from three years to one year. The changes will only be for drives sold for desktop PCs and some consumer-electronics products, which traditionally have one-year warranties or less, according to representatives from all three companies.

"We're following the trend in desktop PCs, where they've all switched to one-year warranties," said Stephen DiFranco, vice president of marketing at Maxtor. "This should have no effect on consumers because we hardly ever get returns in the second or third year and it frees up cash that we have to reserve to cover the warranties." The companies will maintain three- to five-year warranties for drives used in large businesses such as banks and companies that keep track of financial transactions.

Western Digital will offer extended warranties directly to customers, while Maxtor and Seagate expect retailers to have extended warranty programs for consumers.

The move should have little effect on consumers, according to Dave Reinsel, an analyst

with research firm IDC. However, the move emphasizes how hard drives are becoming more and more of a commodity as margins become smaller and smaller. "Back when ASPs (average selling prices) were around \$175 and margins were around 15 (percent) to 20 percent, those warranties were justified," said Richard Rutledge, vice president of marketing at Western Digital. "But now, with ASPs around \$65 to \$75 and margins around 12 (percent) to 15 percent, we're no longer able to afford to provide that as a standard feature."

It may not even matter to consumers that warranties are shorter; it would simply make more of component warranties on par with one another, Reinsel said. "More than 50 percent of failures occur in the first 90 days of a product's use and even then that rate is less than 0.8 percent," Reinsel said.

"This move is yet another lever (for manufacturers) to improve their bottom line...there is no degradation in quality; if anything, reliability keeps going up as the manufacturing process matures."

The only consumers who may be affected are those who buy drives in retail or after they buy a PC. Those consumers will have a shorter warranty period, but Reinsel estimates that market is comparatively small to drives sold with PCs. More than 37.5 million desktop drives were sold in the second quarter and about 1 million were in the retail category. The warranty changes come as hard drives are finding their way into a broader range of devices, such as digital video recorders and game consoles. However, consumer-electronics devices are expected to account for less than 10 percent of worldwide hard drive shipments in 2002, according to market researcher IDC.

Changing the warranty was something all the manufacturers wanted to do, but no one wanted to be first, Rutledge said. "We were all basically playing chicken to see who went first," Rutledge said. "Maxtor took a leadership position...and we're supporting it."

The desktop hard-drive business is one where profits are lean, if present at all, and

some, such as Fujitsu, have jumped out of the space opting to concentrate on server or notebook hard drives, where margins are better. Seagate went back to being a private company after it was bought by Veritas Software and an investment group for a \$20 billion deal in 2000. At the time, slim margins and intense competition had decimated profits for Seagate. The highly competitive desktop hard drive industry has not changed much. "Prices continue to go down and this change in warranties is a response to the competitive nature of the market," Maxtor's DiFranco said. "We were giving customers something we couldn't afford," Rutledge said.

New E-Mail Virus Targets Windows

IE—Virus is attached to e-mail messages with a wide variety of subject lines, making it harder for antivirus apps to detect.

A new e-mail-borne virus—variously known as Tanatos and W32/Bugbear is being circulated as an e-mail attachment and appears to target machines running Microsoft operating systems, according to alerts issued by a number of computer security companies.

The virus file is attached to e-mail messages with a wide variety of subject lines such as "bad news," "Membership Confirmation," "Market Update Report," and "Your Gift," and appears to use randomly generated names to avoid detection by antivirus software, as well as multiple file extensions to disguise the fact that it is an executable file, according to Vincent Gullotto, vice president of the McAfee Anti-Virus Emergency Response Team at Network Associates. Once activated, the virus shuts down scores of vital processes used by Windows and by antivirus software; records user keystrokes; opens a backdoor to the infected machine for use by attackers; and attempts to mail copies of itself out to other users, randomly generating new subject lines and virus executable names as it does, according to Gullotto.

Flawed Performance

Despite receiving numerous copies of the virus from customers and partners, however, antivirus researchers at AVERT have been

unable to get the mail function of the virus to work, says Gullotto.

"All samples we've seen may not be the result of a mass mailing produced by someone launching the virus. We could just be witnessing the seeding of the virus, by the author, rather than evidence that it's working on other systems," says Gullotto.

The new virus takes advantage of a known vulnerability in Microsoft's Internet Explorer versions 5.01 and 5.5 that allows attackers to embed malicious code in the header of an improperly formatted HTML message that could cause e-mail clients such as Outlook to automatically launch attached executable files. Microsoft addressed the issue in Service Bulletin MS01-020 and issued a patch for the vulnerability in March 2001.

The fact that the virus targets a known and patched vulnerability, coupled with its apparent inability to mail itself, makes security experts such as Gullotto doubt that this new threat will spread too widely. "At this point [AVERT] is rating this a medium risk. We don't expect it to be a big issue."

Protection From Patches

Still, Gullotto advises users of Internet Explorer to make sure that they have applied any available security patches. Users of Internet Explorer 5 are particularly vulnerable to infection by Tanatos, he says—especially if they are not blocking e-mail attachments.

And, as with all new viruses, the appearance of Tanatos points to the need for IT managers to take a hard look at vulnerabilities in their network infrastructure. "People need to revisit their security policies and practices," says Gullotto. "I know that it's a lot of work to stay on top of these patches—Microsoft released 50 of them this year alone. But you have to weigh your risks— are you going to do nothing and wait for something to happen, or are you going to find a way to incorporate patching into your processes?"

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Google is Great

by John Lenihan

Pikes Peak Computer Application Society

Listen to any of the technology talk shows or read articles that discuss “search engines” and you’ll see that Google has been rated high for a long time. I find it accurately displays whatever I’m looking for, so much so, that it’s like having an encyclopedia of knowledge at my finger tips. Newer engines are coming out, but I still Google to find my answers. But have you dug deeper down into what’s available with this search engine? Well read on, because there’s a lot more to it.

Let’s start by using the basic search window found on www.google.com. When my computer runs into a problem and can give me enough of an understandable error message, I’ve found that typing the message into a Google search window usually gives me enough hits to help me narrow the problem. My son called me a few months ago and said he thought he had sent me a virus, and wanted me to delete the file called `sulfnbk.exe`. It sounded a little fishy, and since he was close to his computer, I asked him to type the file name into Google. He saw the words HOAX come up in big block letters. Google saved me the hassle of trying to resurrect that file later. If you want to narrow your searches to just Microsoft-related pages, you can click on “Advanced Search” and go to the bottom of the displayed page and click on “Microsoft”. Thus, if you have an operating system or Microsoft application question, this narrows the boundaries of the search. You can also get there directly by going to www.google.com/microsoft.html.

Notice from the “Advanced Search” page that other narrow searches can be done for Apple, BSD Unix, Linux, and Government - related sites.

Try doing a “vanity search” by typing your name in the search box. Or even try it with friends you’ve lost contact with. I’ve found some long-lost souls just by doing this. Enter

a name, city, state, or zip code for a business or a person and see if you get a hit.

You may be surprised at how easy it can be to find information about yourself. Enter a phone number and see if you get a name back. If Google recognizes what you entered as an address, you’ll get a street map back.

Google is so good at finding things that there was even a game called “google-whacking” where people would try typing in a combination of words that just returned one search reply. It’s fairly hard to do unless you use some really obscure word variations.

Looking at the basic search screen on the opening Google page, you’ll notice four tabs on top. The default is the Web tab, which we were just using. The next one is the Images tab, taking you to images.google.com. This will allow you access to millions of images on the Web. Suppose your child is doing a school report on oak trees. Type “oak trees” into the images search engine and you’ll find plenty of pictures for the report. Of course, I need to pass along the disclaimer that lots of stuff on the Web is copyrighted, so you need to be careful how you use what you find. But I doubt you’ll get into too much trouble using a picture in your school report. But I did hear that teachers could use Google to search for text phrases in reports to check for plagiarism.

There are thousands of newsgroups in cyberspace, covering thousands of topics, and only so much time in a day. The third tab over is the “Groups” tab and it will let you find out what is (or was) being discussed out there that you would be interested in. For example, if you’re thinking of buying a new digital camera, type the model number in the Groups search window. You’ll see messages from people in various newsgroups that discussed that item. You can use this method to monitor almost any topic you have an interest in.

The last tab over at the top is the “Directory” tab. Click here and you’ll see Web pages organized into directories by topic, much like you’d see at Yahoo. For example, click on “Computers” and you’ll see almost 50 com-

puter topics arranged by categories, any one of which takes you to many other Websites. They advertise they have over 1.5 million pages indexed in this directory.

Want to keep up with current news stories? Go to news.google.com and enter in a news topic. Say you wanted to stay abreast of the Hayman Fire that burned close to those of us in Colorado a few months back. Entering those words into the search window resulted in stories from newspapers all across the country. Google would even tell you how old the stories were, with many only hours old.

For the Linguists out there that need help translating short pieces of text from one Language to another, there's www.google.com/language_tools. Need help translating "yo quiero" from Spanish to English, then give it a try.

Want to see additional tools being worked on by the Google development team? Look at Labs.google.com. Four tools are listed, the most interesting to me being the glossary. If you come across an unfamiliar word or phrase and go here, you'll get a link or pointer to pages that offer a definition. Another tool at this site is Google Sets, where you can type in a few related words, and it give you a list of more related items. There's also a voice recognition tool to help you search Google by phone, and a keyboard shortcuts tool that lets you search Google without a mouse.

I hope I've convinced you why Google is great, not only as a search engine for the Web, but also for its many other capabilities for specialized searches. Do you ever wonder how history would look if recorded by the types of searches being done on the Web? Then look at the year 2001 laid out at www.google.com/press/timeline.html. You can see what was on the minds of many people that year by the searches that were requested. So search wisely—historians may learn about us, while we learn about what interests us.

Be a Maestro at the PC with Microsoft's Multimedia Keyboard

by Brian Lund

Danbury Area Computer Society

I've been going to meetings for quite a while. I have probably won something from our various vendors, on average of, maybe, once every 13-14 months. Some things I've been impressed with, and some not. Microsoft, despite their somewhat deserved reputation, are nonetheless one of the most generous vendors DACS has seen. When they've been in town, I've won a backpack, Microsoft Money (I'll stick with my Quicken, though!), and at our most recent meeting, I was fortunate to have been the recipient of a Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard.

I would like to tell you I had no trouble in the installation of the keyboard, but I cannot. First, you have to install the software before plugging in the keyboard. I tried to install the included Intellitype Pro software, but I kept getting an error. I tried the install several times, to no success. After searching Microsoft's Knowledgebase with the error message, and trying a myriad of other search criteria, after about an hour and a half, I finally found the answer. The installer file on the CD was conflicting with the one in the machine. I had to delete the installer file, in MS-DOS mode, and try the install again. SUCCESS!! I could shut down, and switch keyboards!

When the computer booted, the software setup asked for the type of keyboard, at which time the setup ran and ended. You are greeted by a "Getting Started" dialog, which went systematically, through what the keyboard can do, and how to change it to your own liking. The keyboard has dedicated buttons (along the top) for: My Documents, My Pictures, and My Music. You can change the directories they point to, which I certainly did.

There are buttons for controlling your MP3/multimedia player, such as Mute, Play/Pause, Stop, Volume Up, Volume Down, Next Track, Previous Track, and Media (which is where you point to your player, such

as my choice, Winamp). There's also buttons for Mail (your email program), Web/Home (connect to the Web or home page), and Messenger (Instant Messenger, if you use one). Even the Function keys pull double duty.

They can act as normal F1-F12 function keys, or you can toggle the F-Lock key and they become: Help, Undo, Redo, New, Open, Close, Reply (to email), Forward (email), Send (email), Spell, Save (File), Print, corresponding to the function keys F1-F12. Along to the right of these, there are three other buttons: Calculator, Log Off, and — pretty self-explanatory. Otherwise, the keyboard is a normal keyboard. I have to say that at first I was not sure if I would be using the keyboard's extra functions. I have come to appreciate the one button access to my A/V folders, my music player, and Web and e-mail. When I first saw this functionality come out on some of the commercially available systems on the market, I thought all this one-button stuff was a waste of time, and for lazy people. I must admit that I'm hooked, and I've changed my mind. This is one heck of a keyboard. I've seen it selling for \$20-25 in some places, and this is one piece of hardware you'd get the bang for your buck, and then some! Thanks to Alan Chitlick, and Microsoft's Mindshare Program.

From the November issue of DACS, the newsletter of the Danbury (CT) Area Computer Society. Brian Lund is an old hand at computers, having been bit by the bug back in high school, in BOCES (technical school) class. He was supposed to look at Small Engine Repair, but never found the classroom.

Review

PartitionMagic 8

by Alan Mildwurm

DVPC

I first saw PartitionMagic several years ago at Comdex. I think it was version 2. A small table was set up at an APCUG event and there was a sign exclaiming the virtues of this newly revised program. Neither Steve nor I had heard of PartitionMagic and neither of us truly believed the claims that this program could work with disk partitions without destroying data. We all knew about

FDISK, so we knew this program's claims couldn't be done. We decided to attend the demo to see what the story was. Of course the program ran in DOS and not Windows, which was to be expected since many utilities in those early days of Windows dropped back to DOS. (This was so long ago; I think Gene Barlow was still with IBM but I'm not completely sure about that!). Amazingly, the program worked.

Jump ahead to Partition Magic 8 PowerQuest's latest iteration of this MUST HAVE utility. Of course PartitionMagic still allows you to manage your hard drive's partitions but it does so much more and is so easy to install, configure and use. Included with Partition Magic is BootMagic, which allows you to safely install and run several operating systems on the same system. Additionally, PQBoot enables you to select which OS will start the next time you reboot windows. Also included with PartitionMagic is the PowerQuest Datakeeper. PowerQuest Data-Keeper monitors your file activity in the background and automatically backs up and protects your data, including multiple versions of the same file. As in previous versions, PartitionMagic allows you to fine tune your system performance by converting to a more efficient file system, changing



clusters, etc. I used the Cluster Analyzer to improve my drive's efficiency. Additionally there is now support for larger partition sizes up to 160 GB! And the ability to enlarge an NTFS partition without rebooting. I tried this and it works! The new File Browser lets you browse, move, copy folders or files from one partition to another—even hidden partitions!

So, how hard is it to create a partition? Let's see:

1. Select a block of unallocated space on your hard drive.
2. In the Partition Operations pane, click "Create."
3. From the "Create As" drop-down list, select the desired type for the partition (Logical or Primary). It is suggested that for data you use "logical" and "primary" for an OS.
4. From the "Partition Type" drop-down list, select the desired file system type. Enter a name if you want.
5. In the "Size" field, enter the desired size for the partition. (You can select by percentage of space). PartitionMagic will make a recommendation, which you can accept.
6. Review (or change in NT, 2000, XP) the Drive Letter assignment.
7. You can specify the position (begin or end of space) of the partition if the new partition is smaller than the available space.
8. Select cluster size for the new partition or let PartitionMagic do it for you.
9. Click OK to apply your changes.

We're done!

Step by step wizards are available to accomplish several of the tasks.

I am very impressed at how comprehensive and user friendly this program is. I was amazed back in the days of version 2 and I am not disappointed with version 8! Often new versions will shovel in unneeded stuff which just bloats the program. That isn't the case here. The new features are all useful and expand upon an already excellent piece of software.

PartitionMagic supports Windows95B and up including NT. It also supports Linux Ext3 partitions, USB2 and FireWire.

This is a must utility!

You can download a trial version from the PowerQuest website (www.powerquest.com) OR buy it at a special user group price for \$35.00 (the manufacturers suggested retail price is \$69.95).

From the DealsGuy

by Bob Click

Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



My wife and I attended Fall Comdex and the APCUG activities. It was nice seeing friends I seldom see otherwise. In spite of losing still more sponsors, APCUG did find a few new ones, which is hard to do these days. It was sad to hear about Casady & Greene scaling their operations to bare bones. Luckily Bonnie Michell was able to remain and our user group prices are still on the Web site. I feel that APCUG is asking too much of the vendors, causing us to lose them. I don't agree that you folks would not attend the APCUG functions without the FREE meals.

I asked a couple of APCUG officers about the stats for APCUG attendees and was told to count them in the book in our package. Someone later announced 350 attendees and I counted over 124 user groups represented, "according to the book." Guess I shouldn't bother asking next time.

Not much in the way of deals this month with only three days between my return from Comdex and the column deadline. I'll fill in with Comdex comments, which is another sad story. You probably knew that there were 1000 less booths at last year's Comdex and this year was no exception with yet another 600 fewer booths. Everything including registration was inside the LV Convention Center (old part) with plenty of space left over. Many booths were smaller than last year and there were numerous booths with names, but no occupants. Key3Media, owner of the Comdex shows, is severely stressed financially, and for sale. On the other hand, they have already announced that Comdex will be back in Las Vegas next year Nov. 15 - 20, 2003 (to dispel rumors), and I believe it will still exist there, but we'll see.

I noticed that the trend started by Microsoft of having a Partner's Pavilion with many of their associated vendors parked in a six foot booth within several small islands of booths has spread to many other large ven-

dors, too numerous to mention. That way those vendors can get exposure to the show floor's attendees, but at a greatly reduced cost. Comdex officials also complained bitterly about the many companies showing their wares at private suites in nearby hotels without bearing the cost of Comdex. Those officials certainly have a point, but they seem to miss the point of making the show affordable. I work in trade shows all the time and am aware of the tremendous costs for an exhibitor, some of which are ridiculously high, such as freight.

PDA's and accessories were in abundance as well as wireless networking. I saw a small keyboard for the Palm that was interesting (just slightly larger than the Palm itself), but the guy wouldn't work out an offer except to sell them to me in quantity so I could do it myself. No thanks. The Wrist PDA caught my eye and it was a PDA in the form of a wrist-watch, using the Palm OS. Take a look at [<http://www.abacuswatches.com>]. Looks like the ultimate in data portability.

Mercedes had their lineup of cars on display again this year since they are one of the sponsors for the Tech Fair. The one with the retractable steel roof, which quickly folds together and into the trunk, was pretty impressive while still leaving adequate trunk space, priced at only \$86,000, but I forgot my Visa. You could test drive them outside in the parking lot on an obstacle course laid out with pylons, and I'm told you could run the heck out of them.

The Tablet PC was also in high profile at Comdex, but was not very popular among attendees. I was impressed by the dual screen laptop I saw. You heard correctly, two screens for your laptop and the keyboard was lying there separate with the laptop sitting on its side folded open. [<http://www.dualscreen.com>] Mitsumi is introducing a floppy drive that also contains three other slots for plugging in your memory cards and it will read them direct, to be introduced soon. Mitsumi also displayed their Parrot shaped PDA that retrieves e-mail, alerts users to new messages, reads messages aloud and reminds

users of appointments. Don't know if it needs crackers or not. [<http://www.pc-mascot.com>] The USB (solid state) drives about the size of the cigarette lighter were all over the place, and some media people even got one in their press kit. I never struck gold there but one company promised me a deal on them. We'll see. I heard that one last year.

Toshiba was showing their new 63" digital flat screen display, which was very impressive, to be introduced in a month or so. Others had their own new large screens and some were just as bright while not being gas plasma. Many people, including myself, do not like the new aspect ratio (width versus height, 16 x 9) of the new high definition displays, but it looks like they will cram it down our throat anyway. How about CyberLock's line of cylinder locks that can be programmed and can keep track of their usage without the user's knowledge. Great product. [<http://www.videx.com>].

A booth was selling Nisis digital cameras (Pocket DV2) [<http://www.nisis.com>] that would take both stills and AVIs. It was small and stills could be 1280 x 1024 or 640 x 480 pixels while an AVI would be 320 x 240 pixels. It could also be used for a PC cam and there were other features. I decided that for \$120 I'd take a chance. He was selling them as fast as he could get them out of the case and write them up. Later, I saw that Jerry Stevens also had them in his booth with his ink jet refill products. Wish I had known that. Actually, I had even talked with Jerry before without noticing the two different cameras he was selling.

DVD was everywhere in all forms, both hardware and software, too numerous to mention, even replicators. However, there are still two major camps, each saying theirs is the best. There was almost no Linux there (I only saw United [<http://www.unitedlinux.com>], but there was a small open source two-day show called ApacheCon at Alexis Park Resort. I didn't find out soon enough to go.

For people with pets was the iSeePet by AlphaOmega Soft. It makes it possible to

provide for your pet when you are away from home. In other words, at the office you just stop your work briefly and connect to the Internet. Then you can take a look at your pet and push the button to give the pet a small or large dinner. I'm sure that little break would pick up many people's day. [<http://www.iseepet.com>]

I'm out of space, but I've tried to mention items that others probably would not write about. I also have one of the order forms for Comdex CDs and videos. There was much more, but enough of this dribble, let's look into the two deals.

Still Good

The Gear Software deal is still good for January. To find this DealsGuy special, go to [<http://www.gearsoftware.com>] and look for the DealsGuy link on their Home Page. The coupon code is "Click." The keyboard offer from Man and Machine for free shipping is only good until January 15, 2003. Visit [<http://www.man-machine.com>] and use the code "Click."

How About a Backup for Your AntiVirus Protection!

That's right, many still accidentally trigger a virus, and quicker than the wink of an eye, it goes into your address book and merrily e-mails itself to all your friends. That is if you are using Outlook or Outlook Express and have not installed the patches, and perhaps even then. What's that, you've been meaning too do just that "when you have time!" The same with updating your AntiVirus? Sure!! Viralock is used in conjunction with whatever antivirus software you are using. Its job is to allow the virus NO escape from an infected computer. To reiterate: while traditional antivirus products work mainly to PREVENT a virus intrusion, Viralock works seamlessly beside your normal AV to prevent all viruses, known or unknown, from getting out of your computer to infect your friends, which would be very embarrassing.

It does this by encrypting the e-mail addresses found in popular e-mail programs such as MS Outlook and Outlook Express.

You may say that your present AV will do the job of preventing you from ever getting an infected computer. Haven't you read that viruses such as some Klez variants can go in and turn off your AV while it does its dirty work? With Viralock, this won't matter since the e-mail addresses in your program will be encrypted to prevent this. Feel better now? Take a look at [<http://www.viralock.com>] for a better explanation.

The normal selling price is \$19.95, but until February 28, 2003, you can buy it for just \$14.95 by getting it from their Web site and using the coupon code "DealsGuy" to order. You can also download a free version for trial if you prefer. Remember that Viralock is NOT an AV, but is used in addition to your AV protection. Designed mainly for MS Outlook and Outlook Express right now with a Eudora version in the works.

An Interesting Spam Tool

I saw SpamNet at Comdex and you can try the beta version free right now until it is finished with the development. We are all sick of spam (except Hormel, of course) and SpamNet is a Microsoft Outlook add-in that stops spam immediately. SpamNet does not delete spam, but only moves it to your Spam folder with just a click of your mouse. Every time a consumer uses the one-click "block" feature to remove spam from their in-box, they also notify the SpamNet community at large. This automatically blocks spam for all other SpamNet consumers. On the other hand, if they think a certain message is NOT spam, they can click an "unblock" button to share their knowledge with the network. It's sort of like a "community" fighting spam together.

I haven't studied it to see how all this works, but you can download the beta version from [<http://www.cloudmark.com>] as well as read up on what it is all about. I did read just recently, in a UG newsletter, a short write-up by a member who was pretty happy with the service. Check it out. You'll be surprised at who the cofounder is.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of 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. Also, I keep adding interesting articles (taken from user group newsletters) to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

PC Chat

by Don Edrington

"Office" Programs—Prices vs Features

I continue to get questions about the differences between Microsoft Word and Microsoft Works.

Well, the former is the world's most-used word processing program, while the latter is a "suite" that contains a *word processor*, a *spreadsheet*, and a *database* program. Although MSWord can be purchased separately, it's usually obtained as part of the Microsoft Office suite, which also contains Excel, the world's most-used spreadsheet. MSWorks, on the other hand, is an "integrated" suite whose various components *cannot* be purchased separately.

Beyond all this, MSOffice is available in different versions, some of which include "Access, a super-heavy-duty database program.

In terms of usability, MSOffice programs are way more powerful than their MSWorks counterparts and, not surprisingly, way more expensive. Having said that, I must confess to preferring the MSWorks spreadsheet and database utilities simply because they are easier to learn and use. But MSWord is still my word processor of choice.

For those who insist that Corel's WordPerfect is a better program, I won't argue the point, but I stick with Word simply because it's what most people use nowadays—particularly in business.

Word & Excel Features for FREE!

So, what if you like the functionality of Word and Excel, but don't feel like paying \$300 to \$450 for an MSOffice suite? Okay, if you know the ropes you might be able to qualify for an "educational" discount. But how about a totally *free* suite that contains most of the high-end features of Word and Excel?

I've run across one called 602Pro PC Suite that's available from www.download.com. While at Download.com, I'd suggest reading the *user reviews* of the product. I was impressed by the 85%-pro vs. 15%-con approval ratio and, from what I've seen so far, everything works just fine. The applications even use the familiar .doc and .xls extensions associated with Word and Excel.

OpenOffice has the same word processing and spreadsheet abilities of 602Pro PC but also has a very cool drawing utility and a presentation graphics program similar to MSPowerPoint and its authors are very supportive.

Why would someone who already has MSOffice or WordPerfect Office be interested in a free office suite such as these two? Well, the programs tend to be less bloated and make the Office-like tools we use most often easier to work with.

There is another free text program, called EditPadLite, which is available at www.editpadlite.com. This program improves on the features of Notepad, the no-frills text editor that comes with Windows, and which is often used as a basic HTML-editing program.

More FREE Software

Another place to find useful free software is at www.karenware.com. Software author Karen Kenworthy has created a selection of Power Tools that are definitely worth checking out. I particularly like her Font Explorer, Registry Pruner, and Directory Printer.

Other favorite free programs of mine are Yellow Stickies and E-mail Cleaner, which are available at www.pcdon.com.

Speaking of free software, the program I use for creating Web pages is, sadly, no longer available. In fact, it's not even being offered for a price. I've been using 1stPage 2000 from www.evrsoft.com for several years and would

hate to be without it. And I don't know about the legalities of letting others have a copy of my 1stPage 2000 installation program. However, since it has always been a free program, I'm going to put a copy of it on my website that anyone can download (unless I'm asked not to by the proper authority).

StarOffice *used* to be a free office suite from *Sun Microsystems*, but it's now being sold at a price. Well, I think the 602Pro PC Suite (mentioned above) is better and easier to use and, best of all, totally free.

Need a Cardfile Program?

Tim says: for years and years and years I've used Microsoft's cardfile.exe program, which originally came free with Windows 2.0 and soon thereafter disappeared. For those who are not familiar with the program, Cardfile is an electronic address book. The original Cardfile allows you to easily create a text-only "index card" for anything you want, all stored in a single file.

With my acceptance of Cardfile years ago, my flip open A-Z telephone pad address gadget was permanently retired.

In the past, when I noticed the trusty Cardfile program mysteriously missing from newer versions of Windows, I dutifully retrieved the necessary files from older systems and installed them on whatever new machine I was using at the time. I've been doing this for, yes—years and years and years. Until last week.

I visited <http://www.azzcardfile.com> and purchased (for \$12) a greatly enhanced product called, appropriately, azz cardfile. Although the software is a free shareware download, I went ahead and bought it anyhow. I knew I'd end up using it and besides, I tend to be a little old fashioned: if I download free shareware that says something like, "If you like me and use me please *buy* me." I do just that. I was a programmer once, and I take off my hat to anyone giving away their sweat for nothing on the wings of a prayer that, if found useful, someone with a conscience will pay for it. It's the least I can do.

At any rate, I've now used azz cardfile for a week or so, and have fallen in love with it. Unlike the old cardfile, single azz "cards" can be huge and incorporate graphics along with the text. So if you want to include a picture of Sally along with her address, you can. Azz has lots of other features too numerous to mention. The best part is you can create an unlimited number of different azz master files. For instance, a separate one for addresses, one for recipes, one for, uh-Tips. You get the idea.

Visit the site, read the hype, make up your own minds.

Tim writes a column for the e-zine Recipes du Jour and has his own e-zine Tips du Jour.

Society News

President's Message

by Ron Matteson

Happy New Year to everyone! During 2003 We're planning speakers on lots of interesting topics: DeskTop Publishing and Typography, software utilities such as PartitionMagic and Ghost, Home Finances and Investing, Language Translation, etc. Wish us luck in lining up good speakers in these areas.

Our speaker on December 10, Tony Placilla of Sun Microsystems, gave a discussion of the use of Linux for common applications. It was a very illuminating discussion, and lots of interest was expressed by the members, judging from the questions that were asked.

In January at our Program meeting, Chris Muller of Frontier Corporation will give a talk on DSL, for faster Internet connections over our telephone line.

We also are hoping to have a Build Your Own PC Workshop, tentatively set for February 28, from 9 am to 3 pm at B&S. Custom kit from MWX \$30 plus the cost of WinXP. Leader: Jeff Leist; assistants: Ron Matteson, Warren Ganter, Jim McGrath, and Frank Howden.

Fees: Cost of kits plus \$30 (non-members are also asked to join RCSi). Jeff Leist of Microworx Serviceland writes:

Here are three different configurations that should meet everyone's price point and performance capabilities. I'm basing these on our current configurations, and they will change somewhat by the time February rolls around, but I believe the price point will stay about the same. We can vary CPU, Hard Drive, and RAM amounts fairly easily.

\$399.00 system: Mini-Tower Case, 300W power supply, Gigabyte 7KVML motherboard, with integrated audio, video and LAN adapter, AMD processor support, AMD Athlon 1700+ CPU, 128MB DDR SDRAM, 32X12X40 CD-RW with Software, 1.44MB Floppy Drive, 20GB Western Digital Hard Drive (7200rpm, 2MB Cache), Keyboard, Mouse, Speakers

\$499.00 System: Mini-Tower Case, 300W Power Supply, Gigabyte SIMLH motherboard with integrated audio, video and LAN adapter, Intel Celeron and P-4 support, Intel Celeron 2GHz CPU, 256MB DDR SDRAM, 32X12X40 CD-RW with software, 1.44MB Floppy Drive, 40GB Hard Drive (7200rpm, 2MB Cache), Keyboard, Mouse and Speakers

\$899 System: Mid-Tower Case, 400W Power Supply, Gigabyte PE667 motherboard, integrated sound, LAN, Intel Pentium 4 2GHz CPU, GeForce4 MX 440 video adapter with 64MB, 16X/40X DVD Drive, 48X24X48 CD-RW with software, 1.44MB Floppy Drive, 80GB Hard Drive (7200RPM, 8MB Cache), Keyboard, Mouse and Speakers - 3-piece Speakers with Subwoofer

Add-ons: Operating Systems: Windows 2000 Pro - \$160.00, Windows XP Home - \$100.00, Windows XP Pro - \$160.00, 56K V.92 Fax Modem - \$19.00, 16X/40X DVD Drive - \$50.00, 4X DVD Burner - \$299.00, 17" Monitor - \$149.00, 15" LCD - \$329.00, 17" LCD - \$499.00

Let me know if you are interested in the Workshop (see the box ad in this issue).

Keep posted at our web site at <<http://www.rcsi.org/>>, to learn about our coming events.

New Users

by John McMillan

Dec. 3, 2002

The meeting opened with Gregg Sayre describing his recent hardware upgrade and the experiences he had with Windows XP. Daily crashes, which continued after he installed XP, were thought to be related to a flaw in the original Pentium III chip or the Intel DC820 motherboard. He made a significant hardware upgrade and is happy with the final result.

There was a lengthy discussion of the Sound Bytes Forum that Bill Statt's described at our last meeting. With Bill's coaching, I had signed up for this free service and described inconsistent playback problems I was experiencing with video editing. The profile, established at sign up time, lets you request an e-mail whenever there is an answer to your topic which is very handy. After logging in, you can browse any of the topics and see the answers people have received. Bill used his laptop to bring the Forum up and display the many answers I had received, including one from Nick Francesco suggesting that I go immediately to Windows XP to gain a more robust platform.

When Staples advertised the upgrade version at 15 percent off, I picked one up and had spent about 10 hours backing up the contents of the hard drive so Gregg's comments were rather discouraging. Gregg said that a clean install of XP went better than trying to upgrade, a process that failed 3 times for him. It was pointed out that a clean install would require all of the other programs to be reinstalled rather than copied to the hard drive. If ME was upgraded to XP and the programs worked, the backup was unnecessary and if they did not work they would need to be reinstalled rendering the backups useless.

Bill Statt used his laptop to demonstrate a search engine called KARTOO that had been mentioned in the Sound Bytes web page. It has a unique way of displaying answers in a circle with the most hits in the center and

expanding the circle in rings as relevance diminishes. It also included parental filter capabilities. At a users request, Bill searched for Pogo, a site that includes on line games. There he found Word Watch which had been cutting off the user during play with a message about Java Script errors. The user said several of the settings suggested at the Internet site were verified. He was not sure about firewall security levels and asked how they could be checked. The three finger salute (simultaneously pressing Ctrl, Alt and Delete) will display the active programs though it might be necessary to use a vertical scroll bar to see them all. Be careful not to simultaneously press the 3 keys, twice in succession or the computer will restart. Once the firewall and virus checkers are identified and opened, their security levels can be examined.

Internet site <http://www.3feetunder.com/krick/startup/list.html> identifies many program names and suffixes that might be found in the start up list and provides a brief description of the function and whether it is necessary to have in the start up list. Bill suggested that if you can't find it there, open a Google search with that name to see if they have any information. I tried it for aptezbp and learned something new. He also pointed out that programs can not be deleted from the start up list, only closed. Gregg pointed out that each program listed in the startup menu occupies some system space and slows down the start up process. There is a trade off between convenience of often used shortcuts and system performance. When asked why pressing Ctrl-Alt-Delete did not consistently display an end task window, Gregg indicated that depending upon the processes used, normal shut down might take a half a minute or more tempting people to retry ending the task prematurely.

A Eudora user asked why the sound announcing that he had new mail started and stopped so quickly. One possibility was that Eudora was using a higher priority to store the mail at the same time the sound files was being played. Other users were concerned with variable speed when playing music that

Gregg also felt was a question of processing priorities and suggested that if it was persistent and annoying, other programs could be shut down or in Windows XP the particular application could be assigned an ultra high priority. One of the users thought the slow-down might be caused by his virus detector or firewall. It was recommended that he turn them off and see if the problem continued. If that did not solve the problem, he should use Ctrl-Alt-Del and turn off other programs (except explore and systray) one at a time until the offending program was identified. The December issue of Smart Computing has a 15 page article on freezes and slowdowns.

There is a print screen key on most keyboards that does not always work as expected. It often puts an image of the screen on the clip board. It is possible to paste the image from the clip board into a graphics processing program such as Picture Publisher. There the pictures can be edited, possibly eliminating unnecessary parts or even combining parts of several saved screens. Bill demonstrated a program called Print Screen that is free for 30 days before some of the functionality is crippled. The program allows an x to be drawn around web pages and then captures that portion of the screen complete with the sound of a camera shutter. Captured images can be printed, saved or both. If the page scrolls off of the screen, super scroll will capture all of the pages for future use. Downloads.com and *PC World.com* were potential sources of this and many other programs.

There was an extensive discussion of software life cycles. It was pointed out that when Microsoft introduced Windows 98/2nd edition, they stopped supporting 3.1 and when ME was announced, they stopped supporting 95. As long as your existing system works, it is not necessary to upgrade to a new version unless it contains new features that you want or need. Many people, whose needs have not changed, are still using 3.1 and 95. If you are concerned about continued support for older systems be sure you have a complete copy of the current files so the system can be rebuilt

if needed. Having said that, it is also desirable to be aware that some technology changes eliminate upward file compatibility.

Our next meeting will be held Jan. 7th at the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road. Everyone is welcome. Will we see you there?

AVG 6.0

by Joe Pia

I'm responding to a note in John McMillan's "New Users" piece in the December 2002 issue of the *Monitor*.

John quotes Bill as having tried AVG 6.0, a virus protection program, on his laptop. Bill got the impression, apparently from "the interface screen," that the program works only with Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express. This doesn't match with my experience. I use Eudora and AVG. It does a fine job of identifying virus laden mail that comes in on Eudora via RoadRunner.

When I punched up Gzisoft.com just now, I saw nothing on the screen to indicate that the program works only with Outlook or Outlook Express. I can't figure out where Bill got that impression.

The paragraph seems to be missing a sentence or a portion of one; so, maybe I'm not getting the whole story.

Another criticism mentioned is that AVG's virus definitions are updated only once a month rather than weekly. I don't know what other people's experience has been, but I've never had a virus protection program, either paid-up Norton or paid-up McAfee, provide updates. Ever. Period.

That's one of the attractions of AVG. It does provide updates. And you don't have to call the manufacturers and argue with the people on the help desk. They tell the caller to pay the fee. When told that I had, one young woman asked how old I was. When I told her, she allowed as how someone my age should know better than to lie. That generated a slow bum.

It seems to me that AVG is much the better system for individual users. It works.

It's free. And, no arguments from the children manning the help desk. Hard to beat that combo.

Treasurers Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 11/19/02	\$811.85
Income	
Dues	\$330.00
Expenses	
Lease	\$86.72
St. Stephens	75.00
Paper	<u>7.29</u>
Total expense	\$169.01
Balance as of 12/15/02	\$972.34

The Lighter Side

Working as a computer instructor for an adult-education program at a community college, I am keenly aware of the gap in knowledge between my younger and older students.

My observations were confirmed the day a new student walked into our area and glanced at the encyclopedia volumes stacked on a bookshelf.

"What are all these books?" he asked.

Somewhat surprised, I replied that they were encyclopedias.

"Really?" he said. "Someone printed out the whole thing?"

You Know You're Taking Computers Too Seriously When...

You pay for software to be delivered "next day air" when you really don't need it that quickly.

You are on the Internet so much your ISP wants you to buy a corporate account.

You ask potential mates for their e-mail addresses rather than their signs.

You can't bring yourself to delete programs you haven't used in two years even when you can't remember what they are.

You can't carry on a conversation without mentioning computers.

You drop whatever you're doing to download a new program you just read about.

You start figuring "must have" computer upgrades into the family budget.

You tell all your friends and relatives they really *need* a computer.

You have at least one more computer than people who live in the house.

You upgrade a software package as soon as you hear there's an upgrade even if you suspect you won't use the new features.

You name your computer something else because "my computer" is too cutesy for *your* computer.

You become the one everyone at work comes to with their computer problems.

You take your computer on vacation even when you go camping.