The Only Constant is Change

by Dale Swafford

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

The only constant in the burner world is change. New stuff, to tantalize and separate the early adopters from their coins, constantly flows from our tech journals and magazines. That also means a steady flow of new acronyms to delight the X and Y generations, and now, the Millenniums, while making technophobes of us more mature nerds. Concepts like SATA (Serial ATA), WiFi, Centrino, 64-bit computing (X86-64), Blu-ray, and AOD (Advanced Optical Disk) are invading the mainstream. Meanwhile, the labrats are putting the finishing touches on OLED (Organic Light-Emitting Diode) displays and PCI-X 2.0. Microsoft is feverishly polishing Longhorn and Blackcomb, and the ACI (Autonomic Computing Initiative) for servers. Europe is testing the DVB-X (Digital Video Broadcast) for handheld phones, while Scotland is experimenting with broadband Internet delivery over existing power lines. And Sony, the only true innovator, broke the DVD format logjam with the DRU-500A (that supports 4 0f the 5 DVD formats), and had to hook-up with LiteOn to try to meet the overwhelming demand. Hitachi/LG has decided to play me-too by offering a red laser DVD recorder (GSA-4040B) that supports all five formats. Some drive makers are actually using Cirrus Logic chips that includes DivX compatibility.

Plasmon is readying a 30 GB blue laser drive for commercial digital storage. Sanyo, always a hotbed of useful ideas, has developed new, more powerful blue lasers and chipsets that will allow dual layer DVD recording in home market recorders (that means 56 GB on one single side, dual layer blue-Ray disc). NEC, LiteOn, Waitec, and BenQ are busy with their new multi-format (AKA dual) drives. Finally, more drive makers are expanding their DVD-ROM drives to read 4 or 5 DVD formats. Most home DVD players have a problem with DVD+RW and DVD-RAM. Keeping your drives firmware up-to-date has become a necessity. Looks like the Christmas 2003 buying season is going to be great for the well-to-do early adopter, with maybe, a few crumbs left over for the rest of us. I just bought an ASUS 52X24X52X burner, on sale at BestBuy, for $20. after rebate. We certainly know where my gimme- reflex is. Somewhere between $20 and $25. Have you noticed, it is now cheaper to buy a CD burner than it is to buy a CD-ROM. Go figure! Is this a great country or what?

Meanderings

While visiting some of my old-standby Internet sites, I ran across a real gem. At Ars Technica! they have a new "Guide to Video Capture" that you can copy. This is only part 1 of a promised 3 part'r. Clean-up and compression parts to follow. It has great details on capturing video into your computer, and gives some real insight for those of us who haven't made a lot of mistakes (yet!).

CD Freaks is reporting that Elaborate Bytes, the creator of CloneCD, is planning to release their new CloneDVD in mid May. The specs look great and if CloneDVD is as good as CloneCD, they will have a must-have program.

Chalk up another win for the entertainment industry lawyer-storm-troopers. Sonic-Blue says it has to file for bankruptcy due to all the lawsuits over their PVR ReplayTV. It all started years ago when the music industry sued them over Rio, a small portable MP3 player. Their current crime? Why, selling a TV hard disk recorder that will zap commercials. Forget that commercials on TV have gotten longer, louder and more obnoxious, and the FCC has gotten in bed with the networks so they can finance the change-over to HDTV. The TV industry will not tolerate anyone bypassing their irritating, loud commercials, and are seriously considering incorporating the commercials into the program material. Where does that leave the local station commercials?

According to Brian's Buzz Newsletter, all it takes to get into a Windows XP system with administrator privileges without a password, is to boot it with a Windows 2000 program disc using recovery console. So much for the most secure version ever. Brian has some funky stuff. Check it out at Brian's Buzz . He also has a free newsletter.

If you have an interest in following the Windows party line, might want to visit Paul Thurrott's Windows Information site at WinInfo. It's a good site with lot's of explanations, hints and tricks about the latest Windows stuff.

Addonics has really outdone themselves. Their new Pocket DVD-R/W super combo external drive comes in three interfaces (PCMCIA, USB2, or FireWire), but is only 5.6 X 5.3 X 0.87 inches and weighs only 14 ounces. It can be powered by the USB, FireWire cable or PCMCIA card from the computer or a110/240V AC/DC power adapter. Sounds like just the burner for road warriors with just under $500 to spend for lots of portable storage.

Looking for an interesting article to read? Edward C. Baig writes the CyberSpeak column for *USA Today*. He reached down deep and crafted "May the DVD Xcopy lead me not into temptation." This is an adventure in using DVD Xcopy to copy DVD movies and manages a light hearted exploration of the legal and moral implications involved. Check it out! His other articles are also worth.

Adobe Systems is introducing "Encore DVD", a high end ($549.) DVD editor software. It is supposed to be a

companion to Photoshop and Premiere. Its primary strength lies in the ability to edit DVD menus.

If you install SP1 to WindowsXP, some folks are experiencing very slow start-up of installed applications. If you are effected, you can read about it at Microsoft's knowledge base #815411 for the fix, or wait for SP2 which just might be the second edition a lot of us are waiting for. A bootleg copy (150 MB) of SP2 is supposed to be at TechConnect . Wouldn't you think in the land of thousands of millionaires, MS would be able to put out a version of Windows that wasn't full of bugs and frustration before the third try? Learning WinXP is a major investment in time and effort (not to mention coins). Well, there's always hope for the future, just don't bet any money on it.

Macrovision, a leading purveyor of anti-copy technology, says over 100 million CDs have been released in Europe and Japan "shielded against unauthorized computer copying." We can expect this wonderful innovation in the U.S. market this year. And they wonder why music CD sales are going in the toilet. It doesn't take a genius to figure it out — high prices for maybe one good song, and a slow economy equals slower sales. Get it? Even teeny boppers eventually figure that out, but the damage to the music industry reputation may have soured a whole generation. Wouldn't it be something if the Millennium generation all decided it was time for a change and set the music exec's (as these purveyors of trash masquerading as musiclike to be called) on their keister. It could happen!

SunnComm Technologies (a rival of Macrovision) is reported to be releasing protected music CDs in the U.S. from Arista Records in May or June. Let the good times roll!

Burning tip of the month

The question I keep waiting for, but never comes, is " What skills and software are needed to burn most CDs?" I think most folks assume that one burner software package that is plug & play, will do it all. Not in this lifetime, coaster burners! Let me share some of my old favorites. Remember, this is my toolbox and it is constantly changing and growing. You need to gather the ones that meet your needs. First, evaluate your computer and operating system. If you are using Windows 95 on a 5 year old machine with 128 MB of slow memory and an old hard disk drive, don't expect a new fast burner to improve your frustration index.

I use a multi-boot system because I love Windows 98SE. It's stable, easy to use and I need it for the Alternate CD File System to copy wav files to my huge hard disk drive (ultra ATA 133, 7200 RPM). You have to know how to work with files. That is about all we do in burning CDs, working with files. You need an Internet service provider, a familiar internet browser, good search engine like Google — and know how to use them. Yes, Alamo PC has free classes to teach you how to use them. You need WinZip to unzip downloaded stuff, and sometimes WinRAR. You need to know about file associations in Windows. You need more than the OEM burner software that was bundled with your drive.

Nero (full version) is excellent and constantly updated. It will burn every kind of CD and now, some kinds of DVDs and doesn't stumble too badly on copy protection. Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum does some things better than Nero but, because it loves to punish you for trying to create your legal Fair Use copy, is basically limited use. You need to decide what packet software you will use, because the different systems are not compatible. I use DirectCD because it was bundled with my first burner. Now my 4 year old DirectCD formatted RW discs are not readable on the new updated DirectCD. Nero uses InCD, but I haven't had any experience with that. The premier copy CD software is CloneCD, but it only works if your burner does raw burning. Nero has a free utility called Info Tool that will show you all your burner capabilities, including if it will do a raw burn. It also will show the real maker of the blank CDs you bought. Check on updates on your burner firmware at least every 3 months, and know how to flash the bios. They are constantly correcting problems and making your burner work better.

Use circular CD labels on all your CDs and keep them dry and out of the sun. For audio CDs, I use Feurio the most. The wav editor is excellent, and it really burns CDs fast. It also has some helpful tools. I use Dart4 for analog copy and because it makes your music CD sound better. I like to use ECDC5 Platinum MP3 to burn MP3 CDs. I like to use Razor Lame MP3 codec because it does dependable variable rate encoding and has a Windows like front end. Did I mention it's free? Before you compile a group of MP3 files to burn an MP3 CD, check them with EncSpot to make sure they are all good. Music converter is a handy tool also. You need a jukebox program to handle all those files. If you use WinXP, start with Windows Media Player 9 if you can set it up right. I just dumped MusicMatch 7.5. It wanted to control everything. Fine if it is your only program, but when you have several, it wouldn't play well with others. Well, I've run out of space on this effort, so I'll revisit it to cover the many more programs you need.

Reprinted from the May 2003 issue of PC Alamode*, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization, Inc.*

From The DealsGuy

by Bob Click
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

I believe an ongoing technical problem with my computer has finally come to a head. For some time I've had a problem turning on my computer at times. It was plugged into my UPS and by changing the power cord to another plug on it the computer would start. At one point I changed plugs and finally tried plugging it directly into the wall plug with no luck. A new power cord brought it to life again so I thought that was the problem I had been blaming on the UPS. The problem still persisted from time to time and finally when a power outage occurred I unplugged it until after the power was restored. When I plugged the computer back in, my power supply sounded like firecrackers and became badly toasted. Looks like it was the power supply acting up all the time because it starts fine now. New technology sure has deceptive symptoms.

I saw an ad the other day in the Office Depot flyer for a HP LaserJet printer for $99 and mine has been acting up. It's 8 years old so perhaps it's time for a new one. It so happens that I had a coupon from an Office Depot competitor for $30 off on a $100 purchase "on line." I asked the cashier if they honored coupons from competitors and they took it after I bought another $2 of merchandise, even though it said "order on line" in large letters. I've always had good luck dealing with the Office Depot people, in fact that's where my last laser-jet came from via a deal matching process. This new HP LaserJet works so well that I'm sorry I didn't make this purchase sooner. It has a very peculiar printer cable with a USB plug on one end and their own "Pod" plug on the other end that I need to take good care of. The main thing is, it works very well and the price was right, but I guess a cheap price means no power switch to turn off.

I assume Dave Whittle's special offers are still good so check last month's column again and if you have not ordered yet, get it done. "You can e-mail your order to [orders @webworkingservices.com] or mail it with a check to Webworking Services Corporation, 653 N 600 E, Springville, UT 84663, or fax it to (801) 489-0609."

Let Freedom Ring, On My Computer, That Is!
(Should have used this in July)

I don't have to tell you that patriotism has become first and foremost in most people's eyes since the 911 disaster. How many now fly the flag at your home or have one on your car? What would you think about having your nation's flag on your computer? I'm referring to a screensaver flag. A year ago Tim Hoke of Alamo PC Users Group wrote about several great screensavers and the American Flag screensavers caught my eye in the August, 02 edition of PC Alamode. I checked [http://www .zdnet.com] at that time and found plenty. Unfortunately I kept this item until I had room and things have now changed on ZDNet. When I first considered this, searches on the ZDNet site found 22 items for American Flag Screensavers. A few were for historical landmarks and I also found a screensaver commemorating the Twin Towers. Most were free and some were shareware. It was interesting that some had uninstallers and others didn't. At this point I'm leaving for a cruise so I can only include what my proofreader said; "A search for 'flag screensaver' (without the quotes) and then clicking the 'More Freeware' link, produced 25 hits of which a several appeared to be US flag screensavers." Since this item was merely a suggestion, I'll leave the searching to my readers, but I would think there are some good flag screensavers kicking around someplace.

A search for Canadian Flag screensavers on ZDNet didn't find any, but a simple search (that's the only kind I know) on Google found them along with some other interesting Canadian items for you folks to the north. Paul Witheridge of Sarnia (Ontario) PC Users Group told me he likes Flag3D found at [http://www.improbable .ukgateway.net/flag3d/flag3d.htm] and it comes with at least a dozen 3 dimensional Canadian flags. You can adjust size, movement, spin and wind speed. Choose a flag or let them appear randomly. The 3D effects are spectacular! Oh, and it's FREE.

I'm not into screensavers and don't use one, but I just thought I'd throw this topic out for my readers to think about. Some friends had major problems using screensavers in the past, so I leave them alone.

Free Software That Is Also Popular

Many people use Serif products. In fact, they are very affordable and I have been getting some incredible special offers (as a customer) from Serif lately. I read in the Macon Users Group newsletter about being able to download some absolutely free fully functional older versions of their software right from their Web site. Check out [http:// www.freeserifsoftware.com] where you will find PagePlus 5, DrawPlus 4, PhotoPlus 5.5, 3Dplus 2 (on linked pages) and WebPlus 6 almost beckoning for you to download them to try. If you prefer, you can get the free software sent to you on a CD for just $2.95 shipping.

But how about this; Serif sent out flyers recently saying they would send you Page-Plus 5, DrawPlus 3, GraphicsPlus, Photo-Plus5, 3Dplus (a $250 value) and also a free wheel mouse for nothing more than $3.95 shipping and handling. Is that a deal, or not? Simply call 1-800-55-SERIF to order. They asked me for some codes when I ordered so I hope I have them right. Customer reference number is X00486045. The Quote Code is FFF512.

I called for permission to print this offer and they said to use the same codes. I feel this is an incredible deal. They will offer you manuals for three of the programs for $27 if you wish. Since I am a person who needs a manual, I bought them. Wouldn't hurt to mention you read this in the DealsGuy column if you call.

The thinking is that if you like the free products, you'll want to upgrade to their latest versions with more capabilities, and of course, will tell your friends. Makes sense to me! At a recent FACUG DTP roundtable, the attendees were asked what desktop publishing software they used and some editors said they used Serif PagePlus.

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 or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick @mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [http://www.dealsguy.com] for past columns. I have also been busy putting up some interesting new articles on my Web site, so take a look. My thanks to the authors I was able to reach. However, they don't all answer their e-mail so I often must give up on many good articles for lack of response.

> ### Tip from Jim McGrath
> Here is a nice site to evaluate your computer equipment's value for tax purposes when donating it to a non-profit like Micrecycle. Http://servlets.edeal.com /servlets/PcEval

How to Complain
to the Spammer's Provider
from the RoadRunner website
http://spam.abuse.net/userhelp/howtocomplain.shtml

The first step is finding out whom to complain to. This can be a little bit complicated. There is often little point in complaining to the guilty party themselves in most cases (in fact it just confirms to them that they found a live one); so complain to whoever is providing them with Internet access. However, if you aren't sure, and think there is a significant chance that the sender is really ignorant, rather than disobedient, of email norms, you might try complaining to the sender.

Finding out who to complain to can be broken down into several steps. The first one is determining the domain name the spammers are using. One good place is

if the body of the message includes an email address to reply to or a web page to look at. This will often be via a different provider than the one used to send the spam, but many providers forbid either use of their services by spammers.

To find out where the spam originates, tell your mail reader to display all the headers and look at the "Received" lines. Then read the Received lines from top to bottom. For example:

To: you@legit.com

Received: from relay.yoyolink.net (ns2.yoyo .com [127.10.58.3]) by legit.com with SMTP id WAA12684 for <you@legit.com>; Thu, 21 Nov 1996 22:28:08 -0800

Received: from forged.example.com (slime .spammer.com [10.71.84.44]) by relay .yoyolink.net (8.8.3/8.8.3) with SMTP id GAA02044 for <you@legit.com>; Fri, 22 Nov 1996 01:23:46 -0500

Explanation: Your own site (legit.com) got this message from ns2.yoyo.com, which in turn got it from slime.spammer.com. Intermediate sites, such as yoyo.com in this example, may simply be sites which allow anyone to forward mail using their mailer. Don't assume they are connected with the spammer or the spammer's provider, but you might want to let them know their system is being used for this purpose. You can ignore all the stuff about with and id and so on.

With experience, and/or by consulting various sources, you will learn more about Received lines, and the ways that they can vary. But the basic principle is still to read them from top to bottom, and to understand that each computer that handled the message added one or more Received lines. Thus each Received line may originate from your site, the spammer's site, or somewhere in between.

Once you have a suspect domain name, try to find out what kind of organization has that name. One way is to look on the various anti-spam web sites, newsgroups, and other resources. If the site has a reputation as a site that does a good job of fighting spam, you complain to them. If it is a site that is known to not respond to complaints, despite persistent and repeated attempts, you complain to their upstream provider (see section on traceroute below).

You can see if an entity has a web page by taking the domain name and add "www." to the start (use of "www." is just a convention, but it is a widely followed one). If you see a page with content similar to the email spam you received, you've probably identified the bad guys (however most, but not all, spammers are too lazy to write a web page). If you see a page telling you about internet access services and other types of legitimate business, you've probably identified the proper party to complain to.

If you have identified the offending site and you want to find who their upstream provider is, use the "traceroute" tool. You need to give it the machine name to trace to, for example slime.spammer.com in the above example. If traceroute is accessible to you on your local system, simply invoke "traceroute slime.spammer.com". If not, there are many web->traceroute gateways; searching for "traceroute" in one of the internet search engines should find one. Either way, the output from traceroute will look something like this:

traceroute to slime.spammer.com (127.126 .32.23), 30 hops max, 40 byte packets
 1 siamese.legit.com (127.39.1.134) 206 ms 177 ms 198 ms
 2 persian.legit.com (127.39.1.129) 203 ms 191 ms 188 ms
 4 SR1.gotham-city.major.net (127.39.100 .73) 174 ms 190 ms 208 ms
 5 core4.gomorrah.major.net (127.39.33.133) 180 ms 182 ms 159 ms
 6 retrolink-gw.gomorrah.major.net (127 .157.77.25) 169 ms 185 ms 189 ms
 7 router1.retrolink.net (127.70.1.122) 469 ms 365 ms 239 ms
 8 spammer-gw.retrolink.net (127.70.1.122) 429 ms 242 ms 239 ms
 9 slime.spammer.com (127.70.3.98) 519 ms 275 ms 309 ms

This means that to get from your site (or the site hosting the web->traceroute gateway) to slime.spammer .com, data first passes through legit.com, then major.net, then retrolink.net, and finally to spammer.com. So if spammer.com is the guilty party then normally you would complain to retrolink.net. If you have reason to believe that retrolink.net is uncooperative then you could escalate by complaining to major.net. This should be done only after repeated attempts to persuade retrolink have been unsuccessful. Even sites with good spam control policies will occasionally have a spammer get through, so the mere fact that you have received one spam, or a handful of unrelated spams, is not by itself sufficient reason to escalate.

If you are unsure about whether you are complaining to the right party, it is good to say this in your complaint, and ask the complainee to forward the message to the appropriate party if need be. In general, especially if you are unsure, you should err on the side of complaining to only one site, and not involving sites with a distant relationship to the spammer. Help give spam- fighting a good name among providers.

You can find the email address to complain to by first seeing if the organization in question has a web page with a contact address. Generally you want the network abuse address if there is one, or if not try to figure out what the closest choice is. An alternative is the complaint forwarding service at abuse.net. If none of these seem feasible, you can always try postmaster @<the provider's site>. According to the Internet standard RFC822 (STD 11), all sites are supposed to have such a mailbox.

Be polite. This is very important--you catch more flies with honey than vinegar. A good generic wording is "This is unsolicited, undesired email. Please take appropriate actions to stop it, or see http://spam .abuse.net/ for how/why you should" or take a look at a sample complaint letter. You might want to tailor your message if you have more knowledge of the provider's position on spam. Keep in mind that the people who read the abuse alias are not there to be abused, they're there to stop the abuse.

Include the full headers of the message you are complaining about, if possible. In most mail readers there is a special command to display all the headers. Make especially sure you include the Received headers — the provider can take no action without them.

After you send your complaint you probably won't get any response. But this doesn't necessarily mean that the provider has taken no action; often when there is a spammer at their site they are overwhelmed with complaints and find it difficult to acknowledge each one.

If you do get a response (such as "this would appear to violate our terms of service and we're looking into it" or "we have terminated the account of the spammer"), either send back a thank you or not, at your option. There is something to be said for letting the providers know that we appreciate their actions, but on the other hand these people get a lot of e-mail about spam complaints and might preferable you not to not increase the volume.

The Lazy Webmaster

Obsessing about Type

by Susan Ives
Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Although I am lazy in most things, I sometimes obsess about typesetting. I know, I know, we're not really setting type on the Web and because of the fluidity of the medium we will never get the precision that we get with printed text. However, there are things we can do that take a little more time but make our pages look better. More professional. More trustworthy.

We live in a town where many names and words use — or should use — the Spanish alphabet. Jalapeño.

César Chávez. ¿Qué pasó? Including diacritical marks is important. It shows respect for the language and makes the words easier to pronounce. Mañana does not rhyme with banana and it's the tilde over the n that clues us onto this.

If you type your documents in MS Word, you can easily add the special characters and symbols from within the program. Go to the insert menu and select symbol. Highlight the symbol or special character that you want to use, then press the insert button, then OK. If you cut-and-paste a Word document into your HTML file (or save the Word file as HTML) the formatting should trot along with it.

	ASCII		HTML
á	á	or	á
Á	Á	or	Á
É	É	or	É
é	é	or	é
Í	Í	or	Í
í	í	or	í
Ñ	Ñ	or	Ñ
ñ	ñ	or	ñ
Ó	Ó	or	Ó
ó	ó	or	ó
ú	ú	or	ú
Ú	&#218	or	ú
¿	¿	or	¿
¡	¡	or	¡

Another way to get the special characters is to use the character map. The character map is hidden under Program Files – Accessories – System Tools – Character Map. Select the character you want to use, click on copy, then go into your word processing or HTML document and paste it in (Ctrl-V will paste.)

An alternative is to use ASCII codes or HTML formatting. Just type one or the other of these codes instead of the letter or symbol in your HTML document. Mañana would be typed: mañana or ma&#209ana. If you need a grave accent rather than an acute, just substitute grave where it says acute in the chart:

Now, being lazy, I don't actually type these codes. The HTML editor I use, HomeSite, has a special character tab that creates the code for me. If you are too cheap to spring for HomeSite, Ace HTML is available free from acehtml .com. It has a similar feature.

Now here is my next bugbear. Punctuation. It is more elegant to use opening and closing quotes. The quote key on the keyboard produces, by default, closing quotes. They look funky when used to open a quotation, don't they? MS Word senses whether you need opening or closing quotes and produces the correct one automatically. HTML doesn't.

Another punctuation refinement is dashes. They come in two flavors — en dashes and em dashes. En is the small dash that you would use as word divider. For example: cut-and-paste. 9 a.m.-noon. The em dash is bigger and is used to set off a parenthetical expression — like this one. If you want to get technical, an en dash is half the point width of the font size and the em dash is the full width. I am typing this in 12 point; the en dash is 6 points and the em dash is 12 points. Here are the HTML codes:

I'm sure that you have deduced two things. First, these rules apply as much — if not more — to the printed page as they do to Web writing. Second, there are many more symbols than I have described here. Do you ever have a need for any of these? ¢£©®±¼½¾÷

Opening single quote	'	‘
Closing single quote		
and apostrophe	'	’
Opening double quote	"	“
Closing double quote	"	”
En dash	–	–
Em dash	—	—

That's just a sampling of what's available. Not all symbols are available with all fonts. Many free display true type fonts won't even contain punctuation. But a full font set will have all this, and more.

For printed work, use the MS Word insert-symbol feature or the character map. For HTML there is a good guide.

Two final notes. HTML uses the greater-than and lesser-than signs as tags. If you use them straight from the keyboard they will not display on the screen and will mess up your code. Instead, use < for lesser than < and > for greater than >.

If you need superscript or subscripts, you use a tag. The tag for superscript is which will render like this: 104. Subscript is which will render like this: ABC3. The code puts it in the right place and makes it smaller. In MS Word, the super- and subscript are controlled from the Format-Font menu. The Word formatting, in this case will not transfer to HTML.

Reprinted from the September 2003 issue of PC Alamode*, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization, Inc. of San Antonio, TX. Susan Ives is a past-president and past- webmaster of Alamo PC.*

The Good, the Bad, and the Newsworthy

by Beverly Rosenbaum

Houston Area League of PC Users, Inc.

The original and continuing criticism of all digital photography was that even the very best did not approach the quality level of film. Kodak has now, although at a considerable price, destroyed that substantial disadvantage. And, as we all know, in the field of electronics every significant breakthrough eventually floats all boats. Therefore, we can now expect major increases in megapixels for the buck at all price levels below the new Kodak benchmark.

Kodak produced the first professional digital camera more than a decade ago, and Popular Photography magazine described this latest offering as the first digital SLR to outperform ISO 400 color film. The DCS Pro 14n is also the industry's first SLR digital camera that can shoot variable-resolution RAW files at 3, 6, or 14 megapixels.

The unique sensor of the new Kodak Pro14n covers the same area as a 35mm film frame (36 x 24 mm), and produces a maximum 4,500 x 3,000-pixel resolution image without interpolation. This model sets a new record for 35mm-format portable digital SLR cameras. There's no lens magnification factor or focal length multiplier, so you get the same image with this lens as you would with film. This optimizes wide-angle shots. It also has a Nikon "F" lens mount that accommodates most Nikkor F-series lenses, good news to anyone who already owns a Nikon 35mm camera setup.

Increasing the size of the image sensor increases image quality. Thus far, only three digital SLR cameras provide imagers as large as a frame of 35mm film. None of them, the $5,000 Kodak Pro14n, the $8,000 Canon EOS-1D, or the $7,000 Contax N, have reached consumer-friendly price levels yet. Canon was the first manufacturer to use a CMOS sensor, and their newest model Canon EOS-1Ds (www.canoneos.com/) can simultaneously save up to 11.1-megapixel images in both RAW and JPG format. The Contax N (made by Kyocera Optics, Inc., www.contaxcameras.com/body .html) still uses a CCD sensor, and produces good quality 6.2 megapixel images. All three cameras support Compact Flash Type I and II and IBM Microdrive storage media, and have firewire transfer cables.

CCD vs. CMOS

Traditional CCD (Charge Coupled Device) sensors are used in the vast majority of consumer digital cameras. These sensors use an array of photodiodes arranged in a grid pattern. CCDs have been used as imaging devices since the 1970s, when the first solid-state video cameras appeared on the market. The first sensors produced tiny images by today's standards (only 320 by 240 pixels) but pixel density has steadily increased over the years. By the early 90's significant improvements were made in CMOS (complementary metal oxide semiconductor) technology to produce the simpler, cheaper and more energy-efficient sensors in common use today. CMOS sensors have built-in converters on every pixel that immediately change electrical charges to the signals used for composing an image. The result is faster reading speed than CCD sensors, and very low electrical noise.

While the most significant differences between the two sensor types relate to how electrons are transferred from the sensor and the fact that CMOS can incorporate more functions right on the chip, their beginnings are quite similar. Neither one initially had anything to do with digital photography — both CMOS and CCDs were invented as solid-state memory storage devices. Kodak actually manufactures both CCD and CMOS image sensors. There are strengths and weaknesses in both, and together they will define the future of imaging.

Bigger Storage Media Needed

Quite obviously the larger image sizes produced by the newest digital cameras would require more storage, and Lexar Media (www.digitalfilm.com) has announced a new larger Compact Flash card line, their Professional Series, in 256MG, 512MB, 1GB, 2GB and 4GB capacities. The 2GB is still a Type I card and is already available, while the 4GB card will be Type II and is expected to ship later this year. In addition to large capacities, these cards are capable of a minimum sustained read and write speed of 4.8MB per second and are equipped with Write Acceleration technology (WA), which further increases the write speed performance in enabled cameras like the Kodak 14n.

The Microdrive will get a significant capacity increase later this year. Hitachi Global Storage Technologies, which assumed control of IBM's storage division on January 1, has announced a 4GB version of the Microdrive CompactFlash Type II card. It's expected to be available in the fall of 2003.

Printing Digital Images

InfoTrends Research Group's latest study of digital camera users confirms that the rising digital camera penetration is bringing waves of change for the photo

industry, including changes for preferred digital photo print locations and services. Currently, 82% of digital camera users print digital photos at home and 81% of those who plan to purchase a digital camera in the future expect to print their digital photos primarily at home.

After lagging behind the market HP (www.hp.com) has finally seen the light regarding photo quality prints, and released a new Photosmart 7550 inkjet printer for under $300 that promises crisp detail and color up to 4800 X 1200 dpi on photo paper. Based on accelerated light exposure and dark aging tests by Wilhelm Imaging Research (www.wilhelm-research.com), the Photosmart 7550 has the best fade resistance in its category — up to 73 years or more, which is longer than that of most traditionally processed photos.

This model is HP's first to use up to seven-ink printing, and is compatible with both PC and Mac using a USB connection. It prints up to 17 pages per minute in black and up to 13 pages in color, and can print directly from CompactFlash Type I and II (including Micro-drives), Memory Stick, SmartMedia and Secure Digital cards. While the HP traditional ink printers use a CMYK cartridge scheme, this printer takes an interesting approach. It comes with three distinct cartridges: Black, Regular Tri-Color, and Photo Tri-Color, that are all inserted into the printer at the same time. The photo cartridge has nozzles designed for much finer firing. It remains inactive for text printing, and can be engaged from the computer through the Print dialog box to print high-resolution images.
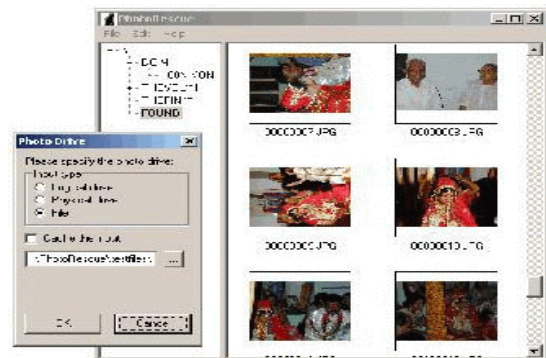
Epson and Canon inkjet printers have used 6-color ink printing for quite some time. The additional photo color inks produce better color with skin tones and an expanded color range. Printing at the same resolution with a four-color printer will produce a more visible dithering pattern than the 6-color models. With fewer ink colors, higher resolution is necessary because inkjet printers build up color through lots of discrete ink dots.

The digital camera revolution is remarkable in the level of acceptance by the public, as well as any measurable timeframe that can be documented. The rapidity of this acceptance not only confounds casual observers, but it has come to light that significant segments of the photographic industry were completely unaware of the direction the market would go. In the field of instant photography, even in commercial applications such as passport photos and identification badges, Polaroid Corporation has been so devastated as to now be in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The esteemed leader in traditional film, Kodak Corporation, has announced significant personnel layoffs reflecting the decline in demand for their film-based products. On the local front, off-site custom developing labs for major retail outlets such as drug stores and discount stores are suffering consolida-

tion so extreme that they will only exist on a regional basis in centralized state locations, which has already been the pattern for some time for slide film developing. Thus far, the on-site one-hour-or-less film developing remains viable.

Postscript: Lost Image Recovery

Have you ever accidentally erased all your images before you could transfer them to your computer? Or lost them when your card crashed while removing it from a camera that was still powered on? In the past 12 months, the data recovery needs for users of storage cards have increased ten–fold compared to last year. A digital image and data recovery program called PhotoRescue can undelete, unerase and recover pictures, images and files that are lost on corrupted, erased or damaged Compact Flash, Smartmedia, memory sticks, mmd, XD, multimedia or secure digital memory cards when other solutions

fail. The company even guarantees data recovery performance. Once the demo previews your pictures, they will be recovered or you get your money back. PhotoRescue supports the recovery of all file types but its algorithms are optimized for JPG or JPEG files, TIFF files, GIFs and BMPs. There is constantly updated support for CRW, NEF, ORW, MRW and many types of movie files. PhotoRescue even deals with cases where the media is no longer visible as a drive letter. The company suggests trying the demo first to see if the software will recover the files before purchasing the $29 program. Download the Windows or Mac OS X demo from www.datarescue.com /photorescue/download.htm and if it previews your lost files, then order a copy to complete the recovery. Go to www.datarescue.com/photorescue /purchase.htm to purchase it online or by fax, phone, or mail with a credit card. I can tell you first-hand that it really works.

Reprinted from the August issue of HAL PC*, the newsletter of the Houston Area League of PC Users. Beverly Rosenbaum, a HAL-PC member, is a 1999 and 2000 Houston Press Club "Excellence in Journalism" award winner. She can be reached at brosen@hal-pc.org.*

GuruNet

by Larry Anders
Tampa PC Users Group

If you use the Internet as much as I do for searches, definitions, pictures, and just all around reference, then I think I have found a utility program you may be interested in trying. It's called GuruNet and is billed as the ultimate reference tool (http://www .gurunet .com). It has over 100 encyclopedias and dictionaries and works in any Windows program. It's like having a search engine on steroids, but when you perform a search you don't just get a bunch of links to look through, you get a more clear and succinct answer to your search. Click on any word in any program and you'll get an instant explanation of the word.

There is a free version for the download and with it you get the Basic Reference that gives you a…

- Dictionary of general word definitions, with audible pronunciations, a
- Thesaurus of synonyms, including related and contrasting words and
- Translations of words from English into 14 languages: Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Hebrew
- Spell checker
- Just 1-click on any word anywhere — not only in browsers

The free version also gives you a seven day trial to the full GuruNet, which gives you the above plus:

- Encyclopedia
- Business, finance, investment, company info, etc.
- Advanced reference: history, literature, idioms, acronyms, etc.
- Science/tech: computer encyclopedia, math, genetics, etc.
- Legal dictionary and cases
- Medical and health topics
- Government: U.S. Presidents, Cabinet, Congress, documents
- People: biographies, celebrities, authors, royalty, etc.
- Places: countries, states, cities, stats, flags, weather, etc.
- Religious references: Bible, Old and New Testaments, Islam, etc.
- Leisure: food, recipes, music, movies, TV, etc.
- Automatic translation of GuruNet topics into 11 languages
- Sports
- Shopping

… and much, much more

There really is too much to try and cover in this article. If you will go here: http://www.gurunet.com /page.pl?p=products_examples

and take a look you will see all of the reference material available.

When GuruNet performs a search, it brings up a page with a several tabs on it that breaks down the search into what I call categories. For example, I did a search for the word "computer," and a window popped up with three main tabs. The first, "Did you mean" kinda asks me to further clarify the context of the word. The second tab, "GuruNet Public Library," has a host of sub-tabs, such as Encyclopedia to give you a detailed explanation of your search and Sign Language, if you want to learn how to sign the word. Other sub-tabs include Products, Quotes About, WordNet, Translations, Images and News.

There is a third tab that is "Search Web", which is just what it says, your search found on the Internet. Except GuruNet brings back responses from Google, Vivisimo, Teoma and All The Web, all at one time, each on a separate tab with your searched item just a click away.

GuruNet installs a small, unobtrusive Topic Bar just above the clock in the right hand bottom corner on the Status Bar. With one click it slides out and you enter your search criteria and then it slides back into hiding when not in use. And, don't forget you can just put your cursor on any word in any application, hold the ALT key down and click the mouse for an automatic and instant explanation and definition of the word. It can't get too much easier than that!

Some of the good features of GuruNet are free to keep, whether you get the full version or not. But I think after trying the full version for seven days you just may be enticed to want to have all this power at your fingertips. I was and it has become a permanent feature. Give it a try. It's worth the time for the download.

Reprinted from the October 2003 issue of Bits of Blue*, publication of the Tampa PC Users Group.*

The Computer Buffet

by Herb Goldstein
Sarasota Computer Users Group

How much is it worth? Most people are familiar with the Kelley Blue Book. It tells you how much cars are worth. Wouldn't it be nice if there were a Kelley Blue Book for computers, toys, watches and just about anything else you buy? Kim Komando (Komando.com) says that now there is! Enter the name of a product and find the "fair market price." This number is based on millions of online transactions. You can search by product or browse by category. You'll find it at www.strongnumbers.com/. Something for everyone is what you will find at http://freewarearena.org /PHPNuke/index.php. In addition to a huge, ever-changing collection of freeware, you will find an

assortment of useful utilities, drivers, and loads more. Don't fail to browse this site!

Shop at Uncle Sam's! Here's a site for sore eyes. It's the US Government direct sales to you of surplus, seized, new, used, auction and a plethora of other merchandise, information, T Bills, bonds, taxes and you-name-it. It's the US government's super site with links to everywhere and everything from or to Uncle Sam. Don't miss it! http://firstgov.gov/shopping/shopping.shtml

Add movies offers movie reviews an ratings (1-5 stars) in 20 words or less. Avoid the bombs by going to www.addmovies.com/ Save the price of admission to clunkers or video rental bombs.

CDCheck. Make sure the CD you burned is readable! CD Check is a free utility for prevention, detection and recovery of damaged files with emphasis on error detection. It can check each of your CDs and DVDs and indicate which files are corrupted. CDCheck reporting features tell you exactly where the problems are. CDs can get damaged in a number of ways, so the program helps you determine whether your data is safe before it's too late. The program also provides a comparison option that lets you select a reference directory on your hard drive (or some other device). CDCheck ensures that the contents on a disc match those in the directory, and effectively alerts you of differences. Besides that CDCheck supports creation of CRC files which provide extra safety insuring that files on your CDs are still exactly the same as they were. In addition to CD-ROMs, the program can be used with all other local or removable media (disk drives, floppy disks, ZIP drives…) visible by the operating system (Windows Explorer). www.elpros .si/CDCheck/helplink.php?helpfn=overviewkeynote keynote. Keynote is a multi-featured tabbed notebook accessible with a single key press. It has many text formatting functions to organize numerous separate notes within a single file. Download free at http://www .mywebattack.com/gnomeapp.php?id=106440.

Onelook.com is a compilation of hundreds of dictionaries in which you can look up or translate words to or from most any language. It offers both strict translation as well as common usage.

From sublime to ridiculous. A new HP Deskjet 3520 inkjet printer costs only $40, ink included. A replacement set of ink cartridges also costs $40. Here's some good advice: When you run out of ink, throw the printer away and buy a new one.

Reprinted from the October 2003 issue of the Sarasota PC Monitor*, the official monthly publication of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.*

Attack of the WORMS

Did We Learn Anything?

by Ira Wilsker
Golden Triangle PC Club

Recent weeks have seen the most prolific spread of computer viruses and worms in history. While computer viruses and worms have been around for years, the recent attacks of Blaster and Sobig-F, broke all records for the speed of dissemination and the numbers of computers infected. Fortunately, the payloads carried by these programs was quickly identified and neutralized before they could wreak more havoc on our cyber infrastructure.

While annoying and troublesome, they apparently did not carry a very dangerous payload.

My first indication of the Blaster attack was a cryptic call I received asking about some bizarre error statement that appeared in a window that popped up; she had opened no suspicious e-mails, and had updated antivirus software installed. A quick search turned up a warning from Microsoft dated mid-July that there was an identified vulnerability in Windows NT, 2000, and XP, and that Microsoft had released a "Critical Update" patch. Users were advised to download and install this patch immediately. Other references, also from mid-July, were news stories on computer security that there was this vulnerability in some version of Windows, and that Microsoft had released a patch to eliminate the threat. Some pundits also speculated that it was only a matter of time until someone took illicit advantage of the vulnerability. I told her to download and install the patch, to see if that resolved the problem. Minutes later my daughter called from Miami and said that she just had this weird window open on her computer, and a cryptic statement appeared, identical to the other caller's. Likewise, she had opened no e-mail attachments, and had updated antivirus software installed.

Two strange but identical symptoms within a matter of minutes, on two XP computers, hundreds of miles apart, seemed to be more than a coincidence, but was likely some type of new virus. I posted a request on the restricted "High Tech Cybercrime Consortium" mail list to see if anyone else had encountered such a strange occurrence. Within minutes I received several replies indicating that others had similar inquiries, but other than a suspicion that it was some type of new virus, no one had any other information. A search of the major antivirus sites turned up no new alerts. Within the next hour, I had received several more phone calls and e-mails appealing for help. By that time the first security alerts traversed the net that a new computer worm, named "Blaster" or "LoveSan" had been identified. Blaster was transmitted directly from computer to computer over the

Internet or networks without the traditional vector of e-mail, by using a sophisticated utility that searched for other vulnerable computers to infect, and then infected them. The victim had no warning other than to find that his computer was compromised. Carrying a denial-of-service payload, Blaster would have all infected computers attack the Microsoft Windows Update server at predetermined times, in a coordinated attack. Most of the antivirus software publishers promptly updated their detection files, and provided a free downloadable utility to detect and remove Blaster from infected computers. Microsoft launched a media blitz encouraging users to download and install the security patch which had been released a month earlier, and published instructions on removing the worm. Microsoft took down the server that was the target of the attack. While there are many computers still infected with Blaster, it can no longer shut down Microsoft.

Before we had a chance to catch our breath following the Blaster attack, inboxes were flooded with a variety of e-mails with the topics "Details", "Thank You", "Your Application", "Approved", "That Movie", "Wicked Screensaver", or some variation, possibly using "Re:" as a prefix. That first morning of the Sobig-F assault, I turned on my computer, updated my antivirus software, and was greeted with an over-filled e-mail box containing over 700 e-mails with suspicious topics. I use a free program, Mailwasher (www.mailwasher.net), to screen my email, and allow me to delete spam and viruses before they can get on my computer. Even though I was then not aware of Sobig-F, I knew better than to open suspicious e-mails, and to delete them. As with the Blaster attack, a similar sequence of notifications, antivirus updates, patches, and other fixes were made available in the hours following the onslaught. By that evening, I had received over 1,200 copies of Sobig-F; the following day, I turned on my computer and found over 2,000 infected e-mails, with additional e-mails arriving at the rate of several per minute; by the time I shutdown that evening, I deleted several thousand more e-mails. Sobig-F hijacks the address books of infected computers and repeatedly sends out e-mails with randomly selected "From:" lines concealing the source. Many servers automatically bounced infected e-mails, contributing to the avalanche.

Containing a payload that could launch a denial of service attack on multiple servers, as well as connect to a porn site, Sobig-F is scheduled to self-destruct on September 10.

So, what have we learned from this double-barreled attack? First, no matter how good it is, antivirus software may not protect us from rapidly spreading viruses and worms that become endemic before the publishers can respond; still, there is no excuse for not having frequently updated antivirus software installed. While Blaster spread through stealth, Sobig-F was a suspicious email attachment that often came from an acquaintance.

Practicing "safe hex" would prevent Sobig-F infections. Also, we had better pay attention when Microsoft announces critical security updates, and install them. We must frequently check for these patches at windowsupdate.microsoft.com, and install them.

It was bad enough to become a victim of the insidious attacks. It will be even worse if we do not learn from them, and act appropriately. More such attacks will inevitably follow.

Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner *in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors. This review is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.*

Product Review

AIPTEK DV2

by Bob Lafave
Tampa PC Users Group

The AIPTEK DV2 is a multi-functional camera and voice recorder that does four tasks: Digital still camera mode (takes 1280 X 1024 X 24Bit jpeg), PC camera mode (Web Cam), AV recording mode (avi digital files), and Voice annotation mode (voice recorder in wav format). Sounds like a lot for this little gadget, but it does do them all. The web site at http://www.aiptek.com/index2 .php has all the specifications for any surfers to plus shipping, I received not only the DV2 but also a digital watch that they are currently selling for view. First, the price was great. For $89.99 $19.99; still the DV2 is worth much more. The still mode jpeg's are really nice. I can place them as wallpaper, and they look great. They are of equal quality to many other pictures that I have found over the years on web sites. The pictures are true 1.3 mega pixel resolution. With 16MB of memory built in, you get only 15+ pictures, but the DV2 can take an optional 512 MB Compact Flash card to increase that number to over 600 before changing cards. The flash card is also useful if you are going to take digital movies. The 16MB of built in memory gives you only about 2-3 minutes of video with sound. Add the card and you can get almost 100 minutes of digital avi with sound. If used for a voice recorder only,

you get about 30 minutes with the 16MB of memory and almost unlimited with a memory card. The sounds are not recording quality by any means, but, if used for reminders or note taking, the quality is fine and, when taking videos, is acceptable. During a rainstorm, I recorded the rain, wind, and thunder, and it can be heard along with my commentary of what was taking place. Lastly the DV2 is a web cam that is better in quality than the Logitech web cam that I have. There is separate software called Mega DV Manager.

You can take still pictures or AV recording from this application directly to the computer.

When the DV2 is used as a web cam, you are connected by USB; this is really convenient at home, especially if you get a USB extension for added range. This is the only software that needs to be installed for the use of the DV2, but six more programs are included. The programs are:

- Microsoft NetMeeting, for Internet communication.
- CyberLink PowerDirector Pro, to edit and create movies on CD's.
- CyberLink Media Show SE, for making animated slide shows.
- CyberLink VideoMail, to create and send video emails.
- Ulead Photo Express, to edit and create illustrations and photos.
- Ulead Photo Explorer, for visual file management.

I could write individually about each of these programs, but I think it would be easier and provide more information for those who are interested to visit:

http://www.gocyberlink.com/english /index.jsp for descriptions of CyberLink programs and http://www.ulead.com for Ulead programs information. What I will say is that there is very little that you will not be able to do with the still images or digital AV that you take using the included software. If priced separately, the software itself is worth far more than the cost. Some programs are older versions or OEM versions.

Overall, for the price you get a great multi-functional camera with a LCD display with easy to follow instructions that allows you to record most any choice you can make. Yes, you do have to purchase a Compact Flash card to extend the features, and this will cost as much if not more than the DV2, but I think it is a well thought-out product. Between the DV2 and its included software, what more could you ask for.

The AIPTEK DV 2 is sold at Best Buy where I found it when browsing the shelves. Their cost is $99.99 including tax. AIPTEK products are sold at Circuit City also.

From the September 2003 issue of Bits of Blue, *publication of the Tampa PC Users Group. Bob wouldn't allow us to reprint this article unless we told you he graduated from Penfield High School in 1969 — so now you know.*

Society News

Meeting Notes for the New User's Group

7 October, 2003
Bill Statt reporting

We started talking about a free Registry Cleaner called JV Power tools. This used to be a free download from Downloads.com. Now, it is Shareware. You can use it for free for 30 days and then you have to pay and register it. This program edits your Registry. It looks for broken links and allows you to manually remove them. One of the members had a problem with security patch that he had installed from Microsoft. He found over 400 broken links in his Registry and removed them. Unfortunately, it did not fix the problem. He had Windows ME and after downloading a security patch from Microsoft, he lost the Windows Explore feature found by R clicking the mouse button. Our resident expert, Greg, tried to fix the problem for the member, but he was unsuccessful. Later, Greg investigated on the Internet and found that there was a known problem with that security download. It did disable the Explore function and Microsoft provided a Registry hack to put it back. Unfortunately, our member went home and upgraded to Windows XP. He wishes he never did that. He lost his CD burning software, his music editing software, his Anti-virus software and his complete Address Book in Netscape Mail. He did not lose the Address Book in Outlook Express. Thank you Microsoft.

The next question was about putting a link to the Internet Explorer Favorites folder on the Start Button. He wanted to be able to R click the mouse on the Start Button, and then have one of the options be the Favorites folder for Internet Explorer. Greg showed us how to do this by R clicking on the Task Bar, then clicking on Properties and then click on the Advanced Tab. One of the options that came up was to "Display Favorites." By clicking this, it put "Favorites" on the Start button. So now the member could Right click the Start button, and then L click on Favorites and his Favorites folder came up. He could L click the Favorites folder, click on an entry and Internet Explorer would open and go the page selected.

Our next question came from a member who had difficulties with his Window's 98 Second Edition machine. It would only run for a few minutes and then would crash. We mentioned that he could try to re-install the operating system. He said that he did that and now it was worse. There is a way to re-install Windows 98, but you have to use the second option that comes up to re-install, not the first. If you do the first re-install, it will wipe out the old system. The second option, just re-installs over the old version without losing the data. He said he used an old copy. When asked what he meant by an old copy, he said he could not find the Window's SE disc, so he put in a Windows 95 disc. At this point we asked if he had his data, mostly financial records backed up. Of course, he did not. The group opinion was that he should now take the machine to a shop for repair. He should not try to put in another operating system, because he could do more problems.

We then had a discussion about printing a screen. One member had downloaded a program from Borderbund to print the screen. He wanted to capture a Web page that scrolled off the page. His program did not do that. We suggested Screen Print, again from Downloads.com. When you download it you get Screen Print Platinum for 39 days and then it converts to Screen Print Gold. You lose the editor and a couple of other features. But if you have an image editing program, you can use that to edit any J-peg files that you download. It has a superscroll feature that will capture a full Web page. The trick is that you have to click in the area where the script is written for scrolling. When going to Downloads. com, use the "advanced" feature. This is in small print in blue in the upper Right. Click on the Advanced Search. Then put in a description of what you want, set it for your operating system, and most important, under license, pick free. When you get a program, click on the program name. This will bring up a description of the program and will tell you if the program has any spyware or adware. I also like to click on the part where you can read user's comments. I go to the read negative comment section. But, beware, I have read that competing software will salt the negative section to get you to go to their program. But the big thing is to make sure there is not spyware or adware.

Another question came up about backup. This member tried to use a backup feature and it said he would need 30 CD's to back up his system. This is a common misconception. You really don't need to back up your complete system, just the Data files. Back up your documents, financial files, pictures, songs, etc. You should have your discs for your operating system and all the discs for your software. If you downloaded software from the net, you could burn the exe. file on a CD. In the full membership meeting this month, we had a presentation on backing up your hard drive. Drive Image was presented. It was suggested to back up your system on a separate, external hard drive. This would back up the entire system and compress it about 50%. One member figured it would take about 18 CD's. So the hard drive is a better option.

Another member had a problem that when he burned picture CD's on his computer, it could not be read on his computer. He thought his CD was corrupted. He had his CD with him and we put in the lap top and read the files just fine. He could have a problem that his son's computer had an older CD-rom drive and would not read his CD. We suggested that his son get a newer CD-rom drive. Today you can pick up a CD-rom drive that is also a burner for as little as $20.00 on sale. The prices have really come down.

We had a problem where a member had a virus or a Trojan on his computer and does not know where he received it. We traced it to him opening an e-mail that he thought was from Microsoft. It said he had to install a security patch. This is a variant of the Swerm worm. It mails itself to you and says it is from Microsoft. Microsoft does not send out information in e-mails about patches. You have to go to their update page. Fortunately, there is a relatively easy fix for this. Go to Soundbytes.org. Scroll down to the bottom right and click on the link that says, "heard a web page on your show." Then scroll down and download the link to Stinger. If you have Windows ME or XP, you have to disable System Restore. Click on My Computer and then the Help menu to find out how to disable System Restore. This keeps a copy of your registry and if the virus or worm is in there, it will get re-installed the next time you start your computer. Virus checkers do not run through System Restore. Don't forget to start it up after you are finished. Stinger is updated each day and will remove 18 of the most frequent problem viruses, Trojans, and worms.

We had a question about firewalls. This member had two software firewalls and two anti-virus programs running at the same time. Then he was getting problems on his computer. You should not run two virus programs or software firewalls at the same time. People get over worried about safety. But don't run two virus programs or software firewalls. Also, Windows XP have its own software firewall. It is not installed by default, but it wouldn't hurt to check to see. You can have two anti-virus programs installed, but only run one at a time.

Finally, another member had a problem that he could not write over a document. We suggested that he check the properties to see if it was Read-Only. He found that if he renamed the file, he could write over it, but then he had two copies of the file.

Treasurer's Report
by Steve Staub

Balance 9/16/03	$330.00
Income	
Dues	$216.00
Expenses	
St. Stephen's	$75.00
Postmaster	50.00
Total	$125.00
Balance 10/21/03	$421.42

The Lighter Side

FROM: laocoon @ doomgloom.edu
SUBJECT: Greeks bearing gifts
WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

IF YOU RECEIVE A GIFT IN THE SHAPE OF A LARGE WOODEN HORSE DO NOT DOWNLOAD IT!!!! It is EXTREMELY DESTRUCTIVE and will overwrite your ENTIRE CITY!

The "gift" is disguised as a large wooden horse about two stories tall. It tends to show up outside the city gates and appears to be abandoned. DO NOT let it through the gates! It contains hardware that is incompatible with Trojan programming, including a crowd of heavily armed Greek warriors that will destroy your army, sack your town, and kill your women and children. If you have already received such a gift, DO NOT OPEN IT! Take it back out of the city unopened and set fire to it by the beach.

FORWARD THIS MESSAGE TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW!
Poseidon

FROM: hector @ studmuffin.com
RE: Greeks bearing gifts
Laocoon,

I hate to break it to you, but this is one of the oldest hoaxes there is.

I've seen variants on this warning come through on other listservs, one involving some kind of fruit that was supposed to kill the people who ate it and one having to do with something called the "Midas Touch." Here are a few tipoffs that this is a hoax:

1) This "Forward this message to everyone you know" crap. If it were really meant as a warning about the Greek army, why tell anyone to post it to the Phonecians, Sumerians, and Cretans?

2) Use of exclamation points. Always a giveaway.

3) It's signed "from Poseidon." Granted he's had his problems with Odysseus but he's one of their guys, isn't he? Besides, the lack of a real header with a detailed address makes me suspicious.

4) Technically speaking, there is no way for a horse to overwrite your entire city. A horse is just an animal, after all.

Next time you get a message like this, just delete it. I appreciate your concern, but once you've been around the block a couple times you'll realize how annoying this kind of stuff is.
Bye now,
Hector

Q: What is the difference between a used-car salesman and a computer salesman?
A: The used-car salesman knows when he's lying.

Q: What's the difference between a car salesman and a computer salesman?
A: The car salesman can probably drive!

License plate for a VW Bug: FEATURE