

Report On Red Hat Linux System on Hewlett Packard Computer

by Harvey M. Nusbaum
Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

After I recovered from my surprise at winning the Linux Computer at the May 11th meeting, I had to make arrangements to get it home. Fortunately, Bev and Dick offered to drive me and my new baggage there.

Since I did not have room for another set up in my computer room, the equipment had to wait until I moved everything around. A month later I got it up and running.

The next problem was that I had no experience with UNIX or Linux and did not know what to expect. I called several book stores and they did not have many books on LINUX. I called Jeff's Books in Midtown Plaza and he had a couple of older ones, which he gave me a deal on. The book that was the most help is *Everyday LINUX* by Kathy Miles and Ethan Metsger. Even though it was a 2001 edition, it had all I needed to get started.

Next, I did not have the username or password to get into the system. I got the computer to boot up, but could not go beyond the first screen. I called Steve and he got the necessary items to me.

The opening screen is very impressive. It has a box where you first enter the username, hit the return, then enter the password. At the bottom of the screen, you have four choices: language, Reboot, Session and Shut Down. At this point, it occurred to me that the computer is set up as a server. I should have noticed this in the book.

When I proceeded to the "session," I was greeted by a screen very much like the Windows desk top, but with only three icons: Fedora's Home, Trash, and Start Here. The last one led to another desk top with Applications, Preferences and System Set up. There were eight icons along the bottom: Main Menu (Red Fedora), Mozilla web Browser (globe), Evolution Email (box with cover), Openoffice.Org writer (paper and pen), Openoffice.org Impress (graph and tablet), Openoffice.org Calc (graph paper and pie chart), Print Manager (printer) and a Square with four small squares. The last item keeps track of where you are. I have prepared the report on Openoffice Writer, but could not print it from there because I have not yet installed my printer. I also worked on a spreadsheet in Calc to see how it works.

To shut down, you point the mouse to the hat, and click on Logoff. Then it returns to the opening screen, click on Shutdown. The screen then goes dark.

To summarize, I am quite impressed with the package. I feel confident that I will be comfortable with it as I use it more. I still have a lot to learn about how it differs from Windows and DOS. I look forward to further progress.

Review

Scanning for the SOHO

Small Office and Home Office

By Ron Matteson

2004 by Virtualbookworm.com
Publishing Inc.

ISBN 1-58939-554-9 \$14.95

Reviewed by Charles Grover

Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

Immediately after purchasing *Scanning for the SOHO* I skimmed through the volume, read a brief section or two and knew my money was well spent. Dr. Matteson's teaching skills show. The book has the structure of a 13 week syllabus. Each chapter presents its ideas in clearly organized sections, and includes a summary. Good use is made of illustrations, charts, and tables. At several places "quick and dirty" approaches for applying theory and practice appear.

Theory and practice are sufficiently discussed to provide a grasp of how things work and an understanding of why certain settings give better results in scanning, editing, and printing. Considerations for commercial printing, faxing, and display on a monitor are included. Ron helps us get both better results and smaller computer files.

"Scanning" in the title may be misleading. In addition to scanning, Ron introduces us to graphic editing, faxing, printing, and digital photography. At last I feel I have a sense of how to make use of a histogram. There is always more to learn, but *Scanning for the SOHO* prepares us to jump in or to continue from where we are without having to fear that we don't know what we are doing. This book is very useful, both as a text to be read cover-to-cover, and as a reference volume to find and use Ron's well organized material with ease.

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

What's on tonight?

Most people watch several hours of television each day. Some long-running shows become a part of our lives. How many times have you altered plans because you had to catch *The Sopranos* or needed to find out who killed J.R.?

TV Tome lists just about every show ever created. Along with introductory information, you'll find an episode guide and cast list. The fun part is the goofs guide — a collection of mistakes and contradictory statements made by characters. To visit this site, go here: <http://www.tvtome.com/>

Get to the Bottom of Windows'

Error Messages

Back in the bad old days, Windows crashed a lot. Anybody remember General Protection Faults? Shudder! Windows is much steadier these days. But when it crashes, you can bet the accompanying error message will be as confusing as ever. That's why I like a couple free programs: Error

Messages for Windows and WinErrs 1.0. They throw a little light into an obscure corner. These programs are available for download on the Internet. Get them at:

<http://camtech2000.net/Pages/WinErrs.html> and
<http://www.gregorybraun.com/>

Cheap software for a student

Q. I am a high school sophomore. I bought a new computer for my birthday. I need Micro soft Office Professional for school, but it costs anywhere from \$300 to \$500. I can't afford that. What can I do?

A. Software manufacturers have long recognized this conundrum. They want kids like you to use their software. If you learn on Office, for instance, you're less likely to use something else when you move into the work world.

Therefore, nearly all programs are sold with academic pricing. That means that students such as yourself, and educators, can get these programs at cut-rate prices.

For instance, Microsoft sells the Office Student and Teacher Edition 2003 at almost 70% off the regular price. It's available in select retail stores for approximately \$149. Learn more below:

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/editions/howtobuy/student.msp>

That package does not include Access and some other programs included in Office Professional. I found that program on the Internet for about \$200.

Other publishers, in addition to Microsoft, sell software cheap to students and teachers. For instance, Adobe lists its products at: <http://www.adobe.com/education/purchasing/qualify.html>. Academic-priced programs are complete. I have never run across an abridged program with academic pricing.

Most universities sell a wide selection of programs for their students. There are also Web sites that sell the software. Here are two: <http://www.journeyed.com>, and <http://www.academicssuperstore.com>

Wireless

For those of us who already have or are planning on installing a wireless network, the following web site offers an interesting and easy to use way to expand your hard drive capacity: <http://www.linksys.com/HDD/>

From the July 2004 issue of The Umbrella Online, newsletter of the Hampton Roads Virginia Computing Community.

Scanning for the SOHO

Small Office and Home Office

286 pages – \$14.95

For sale by RCSi member, author, and engineer Ron Matteson. Send an e-mail for ordering instructions to:

author@sohotechnology.info

From *The Washington Post*

found by Jim McGrath

Windows Security Note

Heads-up of the week: Those of you who use Windows computers that didn't come with backup system CD-ROMs, instead relying on a hidden system-restore partition, may want to read this report about how some viruses are now programmed to copy themselves to that partition – which can leave the computer almost permanently infected.

Privacy in the Digital Age

Court Limits Privacy of E-Mail Messages: A company that provides e-mail service has the right to copy and read any message bound for its customers, a federal appeals court panel has ruled in a decision that could expand e-mail monitoring by businesses and the government.

From The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click

Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



The American Water Works Assn. show we worked in June was interesting, [<http://www.awwa.org>], although most products were of an industrial/municipal nature. I spoke to an exhibitor about their automated meters that could be read while driving by. He said the meter was battery operated and it continuously emitted bursts every six seconds with all the latest data digitally contained. The meter's expected battery life is "ten years"! Another company with automated meters said theirs transmitted the data in short blasts similarly, but they are picked up by sophisticated antennas and receivers on high buildings, or towers in the area, saving a drive-by meter-reader. Looks like more people will be out of work and probably applying at Burger King since I see very few new jobs available. I'll tell you about the "Tapping Contest" event in this show next month since I already have a lengthy column for this month.

There is an announcement from Binary Research posted on my Web site that I will also publish in the column next month.

Quick Reply For Your E-mail

Since three editors forwarded this announcement to me, (thanks for bringing that to my attention), I decided there was sufficient interest for the DealsGuy column to include it. Unlike most announcements, this one also offers a discount for user group members. Here is the announcement, but edited: "Our company, ErstenWare, would like to announce the release of Quick Reply 2.07, a god-sent gift to any e-mail user for Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP. We'd like to offer your members a 15% discount off the regular price of \$19.95. The discount coupon code is – "975409871341" and is redeemable at [http://www.erstenware.com/quick_reply/discount.html].

"With this application, any person can free him /herself from having to explain over and over again what the refund policy is, where to get certain information, how to pay for a product or service or who should be contacted in the event of emergency. Even regular 'non-commercial' users with

heavy e-mail volume can save up to 50% of time previously spent answering e-mails by creating mini-templates ; a set of phrases regularly used. Quick Reply is very good at maintaining an orderly database of snippets, replies, sentences or text fragments that can be inserted into the body of an e-mail or even a regular letter within a second. Any typical reply can be customized and personalized on the fly and inserted via dragging and dropping. The program supports hotkeys and macro commands. The content may be reformatted and copied to clipboard as well."

Get Panda Free

Panda Software feels IT Professionals have a lot of influence in the industry. I imagine that's why they are offering IT professionals their AV software free. Panda Antivirus, an excellent AV product, is again offering its AV software FREE to IT professionals. Check the details at: [http://www.pandasecurity.com/VIPIT]. Thanks to Ira Wilsker, an APCUG director, for making us all aware of that one. I use Panda, although I can't seem to get my latest version to work right, so far. Their tech support has not been much help either. Last year's ran just great, but I wonder if there are bits and pieces left that interfere causing it to lock up, even though I removed the previous version per their instructions.

News From Aladdin

Aladdin has a new user group coordinator. If you didn't see this posted on my Web site, Ernest Breaux is the new kid on the Aladdin block and will take care of your UG requests. He announced new products and here are his descriptions:

"Four essential Computing solutions from Aladdin Systems; Internet Cleanup 4.0, StuffIt Deluxe 8.5, Spring Cleaning and SpamCatcher For windows are now available.

"Introducing New Internet Cleanup 4.0. This offers the most powerful protection yet for users who want to protect their privacy and guard against spyware. Spyware slows down your computer, invades your privacy and can reveal sensitive information. These new tools eradicate spyware and prevent sensitive information from leaving your computer. IC4 includes a Personal Information Blocker that safeguards names, phone numbers, addresses, credit card information and bank account numbers. IC4 prevents these and other specified pieces of information from being transmitted over the Internet without users' permission. In addition, IC4 includes file and folder locking as well as application locking features. Only IC4 provides the user all of the tools necessary to protect their privacy, security and PC, all in one complete and integrated package.

"Special offer! \$19.99 for Internet Cleanup 4.0, regularly \$29.99, offer valid through the end of Sept. [http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/cleanup]

"ZIP, ACCESS, BACKUP, AND SEND! StuffIt Deluxe makes using the Internet fast, safe, and secure! Whether you store data securely in space-saving archives or safely send it to friends and co-workers, StuffIt makes it easier than ever to backup, upload files, and more, automatically! Reclaim wasted space on your hard disk! Store data in archives up to 98% smaller than their original size! Quickly

and easily backup your data! Schedule backups to happen while you are away! StuffIt will take care of it all and send you a message when the backup is completed! Super search your data! Get instant access to any file whether it's on the network, in a local hard drive, or even burned onto a CD in the office next door, StuffIt will find it for you! Integrated with Windows and Microsoft Office! 100% integration with MS Word, Excel and Outlook eliminates 90% of your keystrokes. Compress, save, and send in a single click!

"Special offer! \$29.99 for StuffIt Deluxe 8.5, regularly \$39.99, offer valid through the end of Sept. [http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/stuffit]

"One-click cleanup. Easy for you. Good for your PC. Programs and pictures, folders and files, it's amazing how quickly a hard disk fills up! When the time comes to clean up, let Spring Cleaning carry the load. From deleting duplicates to archiving programs, Spring Cleaning puts a suite of easy-to-use tools and one-click solutions at your fingertips. Fix Registry problems caused by old files nothing makes your computer more unstable than a Registry full of junk. Bad data builds up over time, causing error messages and a host of other problems. Spring Cleaning sweeps out the clutter to keep your system running smoothly.

"Special offer! \$19.99 for Spring Cleaning, regularly \$29.99, offer valid through the end of Sept. [http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/spring]

"Special offer! \$19.99 for SpamCatcher, regularly \$29.99, offer valid through the end of Sept. [http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/spam] I featured SpamCatcher three months ago so I know you are already familiar with it.

Special offer! \$49.99 for The Big Mix, regularly \$59.99, offer is valid through the end of Sept, but try anyway if you miss that deadline. [http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=152708&SID=1839&SP=10007&PN=5&PID=624494]

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 Website at [http://www.dealsguy.com] for interesting articles from user group newsletters. I also posted some interesting NEW Web site pages for your viewing. They contain new product announcements that I received over a period of time. More will be forthcoming when I get the ambition.

Internet Annoyances

by Sherry Zorzi

Cajun Clickers Computer Club
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Don't post your address on publicly-accessible websites (newsgroups, chat rooms, directories). Web "crawlers" harvest these addresses for spammers' mailing lists. You can obtain free, "throwaway" e-mail addresses at sites like Yahoo (www.yahoo.com) or Hotmail (www.hotmail.com) to use in these situations.

When you register for a legitimate web site (Microsoft, Amazon, Delta Airlines, etc.), opt-out of any newsletters or mailings they offer to send you. If opting out is not offered, don't register for the site unless you want advertising email!

Use "filters" in your email program to automatically route suspected spam to a special folder, which you can check periodically and delete. Or use special (free!) software, like MailWasher (www.mailwasher.net) or K9 Spam Killer (www.keir.net/k9.html) to automatically check incoming mail and handle suspected spam for you.

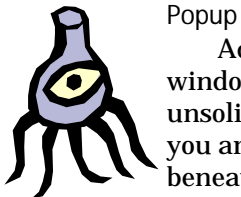
Don't ever follow directions to "unsubscribe" or stop receiving mail, unless you know you are dealing with a reputable source. Replying to the message or clicking a link to supposedly unsubscribe is often just a ruse by the spammer to verify that your email address is valid and that you are naïve enough to open spam. You will get more, not less, spam!



Use SpamCop (www.spamcop.net) to report spam. The service is free. They will automatically report, in your name, the true source of the spam to the appropriate ISPs.

Send a copy of the spam, with full headers, to the Federal Trade Commission at uce@ftc.gov. They keep a database of fraudulent spammers.

Support strong legislation at the state and federal level to stop the scourge of spam!!! Write, call or email your Senators and Representatives and urge them to support strong legislation.



Popup

Advertising that "pops up" in a small window of its own. Some websites pop up an unsolicited ad in a window on top of the page you are trying to view. Others hide the popups beneath the site you're visiting, so that you see it when you finally close your main window.

Some sites pop up several, or even dozens of popup ads – sometimes "freezing" the computer. The new popup scourge is controlled by one or more programs hiding on your computer, causing popups even when you are not online! They are all bad, bad, bad!

The best way to squash popups is with free software like Popup Stopper (www.panicware.com). Works perfectly and the price can't be beat!

Never, ever forward anything to everyone in your address book, no matter how "true" it sounds. Even if it is supposedly from IBM, Microsoft, or the government.

Type a few keywords from the email into a search engine like Google (www.google.com) and follow several of the links that come up. You should quickly discover that the mail is a hoax.

Before you hit "forward", check out the "story" on one of the websites that specialize in de-bunking urban legends and hoaxes:

Snopes (www.snopes.com)

Urban Legends (www.urbanlegends.com)

HoaxBusters (www.hoaxbusters.com)

Spyware

Technology that aids in gathering information about a person or organization without their knowledge. Spyware usually comes "hidden" within software you voluntarily install. Along with what you wanted, you also get a small piece of software that installs itself behind the scene and sends back information on your surfing habits to an advertiser or marketing company.

- Ad-aware (www.lavasoftusa.com)
- SpyBot Search and Destroy (<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/index.html>)

Cookie

A small text file placed on your computer by a website you visit. Cookies can be innocent, but some operate as spyware. Spyware-controlling software like Ad-aware will control spyware cookies, too. You can also exercise some control over cookies in Internet Explorer by clicking Tools, then Internet Options. Click the "Privacy" tab to allow or disallow various kinds of cookies on your system. Be aware that some features of some sites won't work properly unless you allow cookies.

Virus, worm

A piece of programming code that causes some unexpected and usually undesirable event, such as spreading itself (in your name !) to everyone in your address book, locking up your computer, or deleting important files. They can be transmitted as attachments to an e-mail, as downloads, or be present on a diskette or CD.



Install antivirus software and keep it up-to-date. Popular brands include McAfee Virus Scan, Norton Antivirus, and TrendMicro PC-cillin. Free antivirus software, which works well, is available at www.grisoft.com. House Call, a free online virus scanner, is available from TrendMicro at http://housecall.antivirus.com/housecall/start_corp.asp.

Don't allow "autopreview" features on your email programs. When an email message is previewed, it is really "opened," which can trigger a virus.

Don't open emails or attachments from unknown sources. Even when mail is from a trusted source (such as your mother), don't open any attachments unless you are expecting them without checking with the source first to be sure they intended to send the attachment and are sure it's virus-free.

Trojan horse

Similar to viruses and worms, Trojan horses are particularly nasty as they can open up ports on your computer, making it possible for an intruder to control your computer remotely.

If you use the available tools, your Internet experience will be more pleasant for you, your computer, and for all your email correspondents. Don't forget the most important tool of all – Your Brain! Use it.

Anti-virus software is not great at catching Trojan horses. You should install



and periodically run a Trojan scanner, such as the free SwatIt (www.swatit.org).

Weather and Tropical Information on the Net

by Ira Wilsker
APCUG

NOAA logo-Select to go to the NOAA homepage We are now a few weeks into the official hurricane season, and many of us can take positive advantage of the Internet resources that can help keep us informed about severe weather, as well as provide a margin of safety for our families. The Internet is but one excellent storm information tool, and can be used as a valuable adjunct to the instant notification available on NOAA weather alert radios.



Select to go to the NWS homepage. The primary source of public weather information is the National Weather Service. Visitors to this website will find the front end of very comprehensive and current information. Immediately visible on the center of the page is an interactive national map showing current watches, warnings, statements, and advisories. Tabs at the top of the map will open additional interactive maps showing current graphical forecasts, national maps, Doppler radar, river and flood information, and a color enhanced national satellite image. Clicking on any part of the map will open a regional and detailed map giving explicit information on the area selected. From this local map a new (2003) feature allows for a Pin-Point Forecast which will give a highly localized current conditions and forecast, often from within a two mile radius of the selected point. This is helpful because all of us have seen circumstances where it is cold and rainy on one side of town, and clear and warm on the other; this pin-point feature takes the local differences into consideration. Highly detailed pin-point reports can be generated for almost any location, including printable forecasts, hourly graphs and tables, marine information (when appropriate), aviation weather, fire conditions, maps, a glossary, and other information. On this and almost all other weather.gov pages is a box with the notation Enter Your City, ST or zip code where the similar information for any other location can be immediately and easily shown.



NHC logo
National Hurricane Center
For those of us living in Hurricane Alley, the National Hurricane Center site should be a priority bookmark or shortcut. From this main page any current tropical events from tropical depressions to hurricanes will be prominently displayed. If such a storm is in progress, clicking on the name of the storm will bring up all of the latest official warnings, statements, predictions, and maps. The listing and links Tropical Weather Outlooks and Full-Basin Maps will open to the latest tropical outlooks for

all tropical events in the Atlantic or eastern Pacific, as well as a map which will graphically show any potential tropical threats. For those who prefer to still do their own storm tracking, detailed hurricane tracking charts are available for free download at the bottom of the page. Self-tracking of storms may be becoming obsolete, as long as Internet access is available, because this site also provides detailed maps showing the location, strength, and projected path of any current storms.



weather.com

There are many decent commercial weather sites available, one of the most popular being the Weather Channel. This page is easily customizable to present the viewer with local, rather than national forecasts and information. Also on this page are airport and golf weather forecasts, which many users will find helpful. An excellent topical update page is available from the weather channel, using the same graphics as shown on the Weather Channel TV Tropical Update at 10 minutes before every hour. Several specialized pages are also available for the several weather related topics such as health (air quality, allergens, UV risks, and more), travel (vacation planning), driving (highway conditions), special events (sports and other local events), recreation (golf, boating, skiing), home and garden, international weather, and other specialized topics.



WeatherBug – Your Weather Just Got Better The Weather Channel, as well as a very popular third party utility Weather Bug, and some other utilities, can deliver real-time local weather to your computer. These programs show current local temperature and weather conditions on your desktop. Available in both free (advertising supported) and commercial versions, these utilities can also show detailed local conditions, and notify the user of severe weather conditions. One warning — some versions of Weather Bug offer to install a free utility Attune which will help keep the software and drivers on the computer updated, but many of the anti-spyware companies list Attune as spyware. Personally, I like Weather Bug, but choose not to install the optional Attune that may come with it. Weather Bug is affiliated WeatherNet.



Weather Net, which offers highly detailed hyper-local weather information from over 6000 automated and net connected local weather stations in schools, libraries, and other local facilities. It is common for local TV stations, and some newspapers, to also sponsor a local weather page complete with the stations live local radar image. These can be an excellent resource for highly detailed and accurate local information.

In March, 1994, when the Internet was in its infancy, and there was almost no local weather information available on the net, I started the Golden Triangle Weather Page, hosted locally by Eonet, at www.beaumontweather.com. This is a non-commercial site with very comprehensive local (Beaumont, TX) weather resources, satellite images, radar,

local weather, and links. When a tropical storm or hurricane threatens, it also typically includes real-time information and maps from a variety of resources, including the national Hurricane Center, the U. S Navy (arguably the best of the hurricane tracking and prediction maps), and the Tropical Prediction Center at the University of Hawaii.

Information is power, and with this information we can help protect our homes and our families.

From the July 2004 issue of Bits & Bytes, Official Newsletter of the Tampa Bay Computer Society.

Internet News Services

Explode Online

by Jim Edwards

via www.articlecity.com

It seems no matter how much information comes available online, people thirst for more.

To illustrate this point, just take a look at all the online news services sprouting up on the web like garden weeds.

With the click of a mouse you can instantly search thousands of news sources for specific and timely information on virtually any topic you choose.

Heck, if you're a real news junky, you can even get up-to-the-minute news emailed straight to your desktop!

Now, I'm the first one to say that nothing beats a good old-fashioned newspaper you hold in your hands.

Few things rate as relaxing as a cup of coffee, a quiet morning, and today's newspaper ready for my inspection. In fact, my day doesn't officially start until I walk to the end of my driveway to retrieve the paper (occasionally from under a bush).

But as much as I love the paper, it rarely contains stories on highly-specialized subjects such as the latest email marketing laws, html parsing, and search engine promotion.

Of course, it doesn't make sense for virtually any local newspaper to carry news about email marketing laws (other than how they affect consumers) because the market demand simply doesn't exist on that level.

However, around the world, thousands of people just like me want to know the instant a news story breaks on the latest "Can Spam" legislation, and that's where online news services come into play.

Log on to <http://news.google.com>, <http://news.yahoo.com> and www.news.com to search thousands of different news sources from around the world.

On these sites you can dig up information on anything from current world events and your favorite Spanish soccer team, to cattle tagging regulations in Argentina (no kidding) and the exploding online auction markets in mainland China.



News from around the world on virtually any subject waits literally just a few keystrokes and a mouse-click away.

An incredibly useful feature offered by many of these sites includes email notification based on your keyword search criteria.

So instead of paying a "clipping" service to find articles and send them to you, these websites will do it free.

Now how could you use this type of news notification service?

Well, imagine you own stock in a specific company. You could subscribe to a number of different news services and have them send you breaking stories about the company, CEO, affiliated companies and anything else you choose.

Or, let's say you deal in a very specific industry, such as real estate investment publishing.

You could sign up to get notified any time a news story gets published about changing regulations, interest rates or other factors affecting your business.

All this online news certainly does not rate a substitute for morning coffee, local and national news, and an important ritual to start the day, but it has a place, especially for extremely specialized areas of interest, hobbies, or business news.

Watch for many new services, software, and opportunities to arise from this growing and dynamic area of online publishing.

About The Author: (c) Jim Edwards - All Rights reserved. Jim Edwards is a syndicated newspaper columnist and the co-author of an amazing new ebook that will teach you how to use free articles to quickly drive thousands of targeted visitors to your website or affiliate links. Need MORE TRAFFIC to your website or affiliate links? "Turn Words Into Traffic" reveals the secrets for driving Thousands of NEW visitors to your website or affiliate links... without spending a dime on advertising! <http://www.turnwordsintotraffic.com>

Computer Problems

by Don Singleton

Tulsa Computer Society

The week of June 13-19 was NOT one of my best weeks. I had recovered from the 28 hours my power was off a couple of weeks earlier (due to a major storm that hit Tulsa), but when I entered my office Tuesday morning (June 15) I could not access any files on my D: drive (which held all of my data).

I thought the hard drive had crashed, but that was not the case, because the 80 gig drive was split into two 40 gig partitions: D and E, and I could access the files on drive E just fine. Drive D was totally unaccessable. I could not read anything from it, I could not save anything to it, Partition Magic showed the drive was completely full, yet I could not get Scan Disk to touch it. One of the times when I tried to save a file on it I got an indication it was not formatted, so lacking any other alternatives I told Windows to format it, but it timed out and said Windows could not format it.

Because my setup made it difficult to do a backup of it my most recent backup was from the end of February, but I restored that backup on a spare drive I had, and installed it, and I was able now to access files on Drive D, but I could

not connect to the Internet. When I opened a command window and did a IPCONFIG /RELEASE and IPCONFIG /RENEW it hung for a long time and then came back with DHCP NOT ACCESSABLE. DHCP is what assigns dynamic IP addresses, which is what Cox uses for residential customers. When I did a IPCONFIG it showed I did not have an IP address, but if I would wait a few minutes and check again I did have an IP address. I could access a web site if I knew it's IP address, but when I tried going for it by name (like tcs.org) I got a DNS error. I called Cox Technical Support, and spent a long time on the phone, first with the Tier 1 technician, and then with a Tier 2 technician, and they had me check a number of things, and determined my problem was clearly hardware, and in all probability it was the modem, so they scheduled a service technician to come out. Unfortunately the earliest he could be scheduled was 12-3 the next day, and he had a really bad day, and it was after 3 pm before he got here. He was very knowledgeable (as almost all Cox technicians I have ever met have been) and he tried many things, both with his laptop and my computer, using both his modem and mine on both machines, and he tried using my DLink USB Converter, using his Linksys USB Converter, and connecting the modems directly to a NIC I had in my computer, and nothing would work. After several hours he did an exhaustive test with his laptop, using both my modem and his modem, and decided that my modem was working just fine, and the problem must be on my computer, but he was not allowed to work on my computer.

Wednesday and Thursday were spent trying to get my computer working again. Lee Pang stopped by CompUSA and bought me a new 80 gig drive, and we removed the old 80 gig drive and inserted another 80 gig drive onto which I restored my most recent backup (from the end of February), then we spent most of Wednesday trying to get my computer to access the Internet. I could not find my Windows 2000 CD but Don Greer brought over one for me to try, but both that CD and another one someone else loaned me could not install Windows on top of the old Windows (I wanted to avoid having to reload all of my programs). Finally I tried hooking up the modem to one of the Win98SE computers from our computer refurbishing inventory, and it was able to connect to the Internet, but the computer was too old to recognize my 80 gig data drive, and with my disability I find it difficult to move a computer from one room to another, but my neighbor, Darline McGinnis, was kind enough to bring my Image Machine into my office from the other room, so that I could get back online with that computer. Jim Erwin showed up with his Win2K CD, so we tried it, but it gave the same result, although for some reason it did offer me the alternative of repairing Windows 2000, so we gave that a try. The repair worked, in that Windows 2000 was now able to connect to the Internet, but each time I booted the system up it kept bringing up several copies of Windows Installer saying I needed to reinstall some program, but with one exception (EZ Creator) it did not tell me what program I needed to reinstall, so I gave up and decided to start with a blank HD and installed Windows 2000 from scratch.

Since the reason for the reinstall was to be sure I could browse the internet and get my mail, those are the first things I did, but once I was certain both worked the first two programs I installed were Norton Anti Virus and Zone Alarm Pro (my AV program and my firewall). Before they were installed I only read email from people I know (although when I first started reading email Outlook Express was showing the Preview Pane) and therefore some messages I did not intend to read were opened (in the Preview Pane). That is why one should normally disable the Preview Pane. I definitely *did not click on any attachments* until I got Norton and ZoneAlarmPro installed, and I don't know whether it was because some undesired messages were opened in the Preview Pane, or whether it was my short term lack of a firewall, but I was infected by the W32 .Spybot.Worm. This just goes to demonstrate that one should always have a good AntiVirus program (with recently updated virus definitions) and a good firewall active anytime one goes online.

I still have a lot of programs that need to be reinstalled, but I was able to get caught up on my email by Friday morning, and now (Saturday afternoon) I have most of the programs I use frequently reinstalled.

One Good Thing

There was one good thing: I took the bad 80 gig HD into the Imaging Room (a bedroom I have converted into a workroom for refurbishing computers for HelpingTulsa) and put it into my Image Machine, planning on reformatting it, when I took one last look at it, and found I could see files on Drive D!!!!. I took the disk back to my Dell, and again I could not see anything on drive D, so I took it back to the Image Machine and tried copying the files off to another HD. I could not get them all at one time, because there were still errors on the HD which aborted a copy, but I did the copy several directories at a time, resuming from the point right after the file which could not be copied, and I got 98% of my files back. A lot of the filenames were converted to upper case (I wish I knew some way to reverse that), but at least I got most of them back.

I want to thank Lee Pang, Don Greer, Darline McGinnis, and Jim Erwin for their help in getting me online again, and I also want to thank Paula Sanders for being willing to go down to her Safe Deposit Box to get her Windows 2000 CD, before I found others who could loan me theirs (I also finally found my CD, after trying CDs from others). I am very fortunate to have so many good friends.

From the July 2004 issue of I/O Port newsletter of the Tulsa Computer Society.

Getting to Know Google

by Billy Mabray

Oklahoma City PC Users Group

These days, whether you consciously choose it or not, your Web search engine is probably Google (<http://www.google.com>). That's because most search sites, whether they admit it or not, are powered by Google. And, why not? Google rose to the top of the search engines because its formula provided more relevant search results

than any other. Also, its deceptively simple page makes it fast and easy to use.

I say deceptively simple because, underneath that friendly, colorful logo is a powerful search system that can accept queries as complex as you want to make them. Many people don't realize that if they do not find what they want on the first try, there are techniques they can use to improve their results. There are also ways to search Google that are more appropriate for certain specialty queries. And, Google is hiding a few extras that take it beyond a search engine into an amazing reference tool.

Let's start with an example, We're cooking dinner tonight, and we need a recipe for spaghetti sauce that does not use sugar. We might go to Google and type in this:
no sugar spaghetti sauce recipe

Google tells us we have about 56,000 results to wade through. A daunting task, considering the first page doesn't seem to contain anything relevant. The first thing we will try is grouping our search terms into phrases, using double-quotes. This tells Google that certain words should be searched for together. So, we try this:

"no sugar" "spaghetti sauce" recipe

Your search contains a lot of common words that could appear together in different contexts than what you are looking for. Unfortunately in this case, our first page of results is still not as relevant as we would like. The next thing we will try is searching for pages that do not contain a certain term:

-sugar "spaghetti sauce" recipe

This tells Google that we want pages that are about "spaghetti sauce" recipe, but specifically do not contain the term sugar. That seems to have done it — our first page of results is chock full of spaghetti sauce recipes that don't use sugar. "Subtracting" a term can also be useful when what you are searching for has multiple meanings. For example, if you are researching the "Holy Grail," you might want to add "-Python" to your search to eliminate all the references to the movie Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Now, maybe spaghetti sauce is too specific — we might want to also consider marinara sauce. In that case, we use Google's or syntax.

-sugar "(spaghetti | marinara) sauce" recipe.

When there are multiple words that will satisfy our search, we can group them with parentheses and separate them with the "pipe" character | a vertical line that is most likely on the right-hand side of your keyboard usually on a key with the \ (backslash) character, Google will then search for references to "spaghetti sauce" or "marinara sauce."

At this point, we've become so intrigued by what we can find with Google, we've completely forgotten about dinner. Now we are interested in just how many different chicken casserole recipes we can find. Here's one way:

"chicken * casserole" recipe

Notice the asterisk. This is called a wildcard. It tells Google that we don't care what word comes between chicken and casserole, but there should be something there. This can be particularly useful when you know most of a title of

something, but are unsure of all the words. This particular search brings back all kinds of chicken casserole recipes. Something tells me we better just eat out tonight.

Besides its standard Web search, Google has many specialty searches that are triggered either by a keyword or simply by what you are searching for. For example:

site:microsoft.com "Internet Explorer" patches

This searches for references to "Internet Explorer" patches on microsoft.com only. If your favorite Web site does not offer a search function, this is a pretty good substitute.

Maybe we want to know which sites on the Web link to the OKC PC User's Group Web site:

link:okcpcug.org

We can also tell Google that what we are looking for is in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file:

filetype:pdf refrigerator manual

Google pays attention to what you are searching for, and offers helpful services based on what it thinks you want. For example, have you ever noticed Google shows your search words in the blue bar above your results? The search terms that are underlined link to a definition of that word at dictionary.com. If you spell a word wrong, Google will prompt you with the correct spelling and ask if you would like to search for that instead.

Google has many tricks like this up its sleeves. Search for a phone number, and Google will do a reverse lookup on the number. Search for a name with a city and state and/or zip code, and Google will look up their phone number. Search for an address and you will get links to maps of that location. Include a zip code with your search terms, and Google will offer you local results — Web sites for locations near the zip code, ordered by distance. You can even type in a shipment tracking number, and Google will figure out who the shipping company is and give you a link to the tracking information.

Google offers some services that have nothing to do with searching. Try this:

68.12 + (68.12* .2)

The Google calculator will return the result of this computation. Fun, although, admittedly, not particularly useful. The Google calculator can be useful though, for things like conversions:

68mm = ? inches

You can do all kinds of conversions using Google — a handy tool whenever you get around to making that spaghetti sauce.

Google is much more useful than most people realize — we've only scratched the surface of what Google can do. If you are interested in more, check out O'Reilly's *Hacking Google* by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest. It includes many more search tips, and information for programmers who want to include Google search results in their applications [you can buy it at a users group discount.] As you explore what Google can do, you will probably discover that Google feels like more than just a Web site.

In fact, Google is your friend.

Online and I n Person

by Billy Mabray

Oklahoma City PC Users Group

In the early days of the Internet, a common fear was that people would spend too much time online, creating a world of isolated loners. Computer users would stop spending time in the real world, preferring to type instead of talk. While this may be true for some people, many others are finding the Web has enhanced their social life, not hurt it. The proliferation of e-mail, instant messaging, and chat rooms are evidence that people are connecting more now than ever before.

What about real life social interaction? People still like to meet in person, and there are many Web-based services to help people do just that. These services are blurring the lines between virtual and real communities. People are finding friends online and getting together in real life. Others are using the Internet to keep in touch with their real-life acquaintances. Internet users are finding they can connect with other people better than they ever have before.

A common example of virtual communities creating real-life friendships is PC user groups. People typically learn about their local group through that group's Web site. Much of the group's communication is done online. For these groups, though, the real point of using the Internet is to facilitate real-world get-togethers. Meetings, presentations, and study groups bring people together who have similar interests, but would otherwise have not found each other. Web sites and mailing lists allow for efficient communication, while group activities create opportunities for learning new things and meeting new people.

Meetup.com offers a similar service, but for a broader range of topics. Meetup.com arranges monthly get-togethers in cities around the world on a vast array of topics. For example, the third Tuesday of every month is International Poker Meetup Day. If you are interested in meeting poker players in your area, visit the Web site, type in your zip code, and join the poker meetup nearest you. Members vote on where to meet each month, and they RSVP through the Web site. If enough people RSVP, the get-together will take place. Meetup.com offers many features for communicating with other members, planning agendas, and more. There are literally thousands of topics, with new ones being added all the time, so you are bound to find something you are interested in.

For those who are interested in communicating and spending time with friends they already have, there are online services to help with that too. Yahoo Groups, for example, lets you set up your own personal portal. A Yahoo Group includes a mailing list, photo gallery, polls, online chat, and more. You can set up a group for your family and invite all your relatives to join. Then the whole family can upload photos, plan the next reunion, or talk about what's been going on in their lives. Similarly, sites like Classmates.com or Reunion.com allow old classmates and military personnel to reconnect with each other. These services are a great way for people who don't get to see each other very often to stay in touch.

Along the same lines is a wave of new services known as social networking applications. There has been an explosion of these sites in the past year: Friendster, LinkedIn, Orkut. The idea here is to map relationships - someone invites you to join, and you in turn invite all your other friends to join. The Web site shows you people who are directly connected to you (friends), as well as those who are connected to you through other people (friends of friends). You can then use the service to keep in touch with your friends, and to meet new people through friends you already have.

So, are these virtual or real communities? The line is blurring, and the distinction between the two will most likely disappear in a few years. Technology continues to improve the way we interact. Rather than turning us into loners, the Internet is helping us to make new friends, and to keep in touch with old ones.

Billy Mabray and his wife, Angela, own Smart Goat, a software development and Web design business. They are members of the OKCPCUG. Comments or questions on the article are welcome and can be addressed to: billy@smartgoat.com.

From the June 2004 issue of Diablo Blue, newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users Group, CA.

Comdex is History

Comdex was inflated, owners were arrogant, and since 1998, it was clear the show was destined to fall into the bit bucket.

by Steve Bass, *PC World*

Author, *PC Annoyances*

In a downward spiral for the last five years, Comdex is finally kaput. The show owners declared it dead when they cancelled the November, 2004 event. Many of you have been attending Comdex since close to forever, and most of you knew the show was destined to fall into the bit bucket.

Good riddance. In the last few years, the show's become an empty shell of its previous life. So much so that room prices on the Strip were as low as \$50 a night during Comdex week in 2003.

The problem was I couldn't not attend. Even though I didn't enjoy myself and couldn't find lots of really nifty products to write about, I still drove in from Pasadena and stayed for two nights. Call it nostalgia. Or maybe I was just hoping there would be one more chance that Comdex would get back on its feet.

But nope, it's really over.

Dig I nto the Files

I dug around and found some of Comdex the missives I sent in the last few years.

December, 1998: Comdex is toast. It's fading rapidly and while it'll always be with us, it's never going to be "bigger than ever."

I polled lots of people and all agreed. The attendance was dismally low. Softbank's claim of 250K attendees was a lie. It was based on registrations — not attendees — something made lots easier because the normal \$100 "Exhibits

Only" fee was waived when you registered on Softbank's Internet site.

My best sources are the cabbies, and all emphatically said 60- to 90K tops. And it was easy to see. I never had to wait more than five minutes for a cab. Ever. Even at 5:00pm. Parties weren't well attended. In fact, for the first time ever, there was actually walking-around room at the exclusive Spencer party.

Iomega was back promoting their Klik gizmo. But wait, weren't they doing that last year? And Castlewood was pushing their 2.2GB ultra SCSI removable storage disk that wouldn't ship until next summer.

The quality of the show was also disappointing. The Sands was filled mostly with OEM stuff-lots of system boards, drives, memory checking devices, and other boring equipment. Joe Bohannon nailed the entire Sands Convention Center in five hours, something that ordinarily takes a day and a half.

I couldn't even find anything very inspirational.

For instance, Creative Labs had a second generation Live sound card. Wow. Sure, there were some booths with interesting things — wireless networking was cool, as was HP's Jornada, their oddly named sub-notebook — and I found a few products to write about. But overall, I could've done just as well surfing the web.

Why has Comdex slowed down? Simple: Games went to E3, anything about the Web went to Internet World, and e-commerce apps also needed their own specialized trade shows.

Worse, it appears Softbank's jacked up the price on everything. That's happened before, but my hunch is vendors aren't going to take it much longer. (That happened to the Food Show when Pepsi and Coke pulled out, literally destroying the event. And Deere, the largest exhibitor of the Machinery Show, left the show high and dry when told they'd be charged double — the new policy put them into both agriculture and machinery.)

At Comdex, the newly remodeled Las Vegas Convention center was missing Intel, IBM, and other big vendors. The Lotus exhibit consisted of a bus in the parking lot with a box of Winchell's donuts on the table. One of the Lotus reps said this is their last Comdex.

On the exhibit floor, the Japanese companies were slugging it out, with Sony and Samsung making lots of noise, each trying to impress the other. Phillips created a small, loud city, and Microsoft was in their corner with more vendors than spectators.

Me? At \$329 a day for the hotel room and the five days lost...I dunno. It may also be my last Comdex.

October, 2000: Comdex is struggling. That's because most other trade shows specialize while Comdex tried to cater to everyone. Funny, in the past Comdex charged an outrageous \$100 for admission just to the exhibit floor. This year they're offering a free exhibits pass. (Too bad the hotels haven't caught on to this trick...) This is my last Comdex, for sure.

December, 2001: The Comdex mood this year was all business, with somber overtones. Journalists clustered

around in small groups, talking about layoffs, and concerned with the dozens of freelancers gone missing. Lots of PR people didn't make it to Comdex; many of those who did were kvetching about having to share sleeping rooms with colleagues.

I don't know that I'll be back next year. While the exhibit floor didn't have the sizzling array of products I saw at previous Comdexes, like last year, the place to be was the evening press events: Showstoppers, Digital/mobile Focus, and Silicon Northwest.

December, 2003: Sleeping rooms are under \$60. The show floor at the Convention center has lots of curtains and barriers to make it look as if there are lots of vendors. The aisles are narrow so it feels crowded. There are practically no big vendors, except for Microsoft, and even their exhibit is small.

I've said it every year, but this time I really mean it. This is definitely the last Comdex I'm going to attend. (And I'll see some of you at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, 2005!)

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World, a 23 year veteran of PIBMUG, and a founding member of APCUG. He's also the author of *PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer*, O'Reilly Press. It's available on Amazon for \$7.98 at <<http://snurl.com/annoyances>>.

Retrieving "Permanently" Deleted Files

by Don Edrington

PC Chat

A question I'm often asked is: "If I delete a file and then empty the Recycle Bin, is there any way to recover the file?" Well, emptying the Recycle Bin does not instantly destroy the files it contains; their names are altered slightly and will remain out of view on your hard drive for a while. The sooner you try to recover a purged file, the better your chances for success.

There are data recovery companies that specialize in restoring these files; but Jack Konen wrote to tell about doing it himself. Jack went searching for software on the Internet and found a number of programs at different prices. However, he also found a free one.

Jack downloaded it onto an external hard drive, and has used it to successfully recover a number of files. The program is called "Restoration v2.5.14" and can be found at: http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_download.asp?fid=23108&fileidx=1. The magazine also has some helpful free newsletters at <http://www.pcworld.com/>.

One of the main things to be careful about, when trying to recover a deleted file, is not to give another file the same name. Windows folders can only hold one file with a given name — adding another with the same name will replace the first one. Yes, you can have identically named files in different folders, but giving each its own distinctive name is much safer.

Doing Arithmetic with MSWord

Since MSWord is the word processing program used by most businesses, it's helpful to know that it has some built-in "calculating" commands. If, for instance, you prepare an invoice which lists the name of an item, a quantity, a unit price, and a blank space for the total, you can have Word calculate and insert the correct amount. You can also have the grand total of multiple calculations appear at the bottom of the invoice, along with tax and/or shipping costs, as needed.

This is done with Word Tables, and here is a simple example: Let's say you are billing a customer for 24 Widgets at \$89.99 each. Go to Table > Insert Table and choose, say, 10 Rows by 4 Columns. Click OK and your Table will appear.

In the upper left cell type Widgets. In the next cell type 24. In the third type 89.99. Finally click in the fourth cell and go to Table > Formula, whereupon =SUM(LEFT) will appear. This is Word's way of saying it sees some numbers in the leftward preceding cells and assumes you want them added up. However, if you overtype SUM with PRODUCT and click OK, the correct answer of 2159.76 will appear.

Repeat the above steps as needed for additional items. Then click in the cell below your column of totals and go to Table > Formula, whereupon =SUM(ABOVE) will appear. Click OK for the correct grand total. Tax and shipping can be added accordingly, meaning Word can be used as a mini-spreadsheet program when needed.

Colorizing Artwork

by Paul Vaughn

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Previously, I talked about different methods to colorize photographs. This is not something that people have to do frequently, but it is a fun way to make a cool effect. A more common task that folks require is the ability to add color to black and white artwork. It can be easy to find the almost perfect piece of clip art, perfect except for the lack of color. This month we take a look at how to add color to otherwise lifeless line art.

The artwork that you start with can be from a variety of sources. You can find illustrations from a clip art CD, scan an image from a public domain book or simply draw your own image and then scan it. For my first example, I drew a paint can in Adobe Illustrator using a Wacom digitizing tablet and then copied the artwork into Adobe Photoshop CS. The Photoshop file should be in one of the color modes (usually RGB).

Since I pasted the art into Photoshop, the artwork is automatically on a new layer. If you scanned the art (like I did for my second example), create a new layer for it by dragging the 'Background' layer to the New Layer icon in the Layers palette. This will make a new layer called

'Background Copy', rename it something descriptive like 'Line Art' (Fig. 1). Now click on the 'Background' layer in the Layers palette and fill it with white by selecting Fill from the Edit menu.

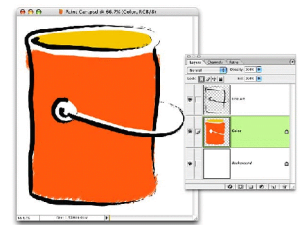


Figure 2

The method we will look at for coloring your art is what your grade school teacher always wanted: coloring inside the lines. In order to do this, you will need to set the 'Line Art' layer's Blending Mode to 'Multiply' in the pop-up menu at the top of the Layer's palette. When you use Multiply mode, the black artwork remains black, but the white areas will show the underlying layers. Shades of grey will darken the layers underneath.

Now create a new layer, title it 'Color' and position it between the 'Background' and 'Line Art' layers. I like to paint the color on a

layer separate from the background, but you can also paint directly on the background layer if you wish. Pick your favorite painting tool and go to town (Fig. 2). Don't worry if you make a mistake, simply use the

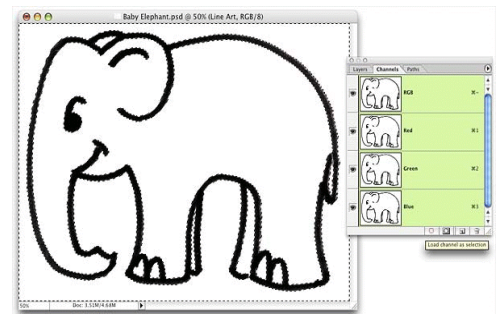


Figure 3

Eraser tool to touch up any stray color areas. Having the color on a separate layer lets you use any of the adjustment tools (Curves, Hue /Saturation, Levels, Color Balance, etc.) to fine-tune your colors without affecting the art or the background. You can also use any of the filters and effects to enhance your picture.

Occasionally, you may want to colorize the linework of your art instead of the areas inside. Photoshop gives you great tools to do this as well. Set up the image the same way as described above, but leave the 'Line Art' layer in Normal mode. Next we are going to use the Channels palette

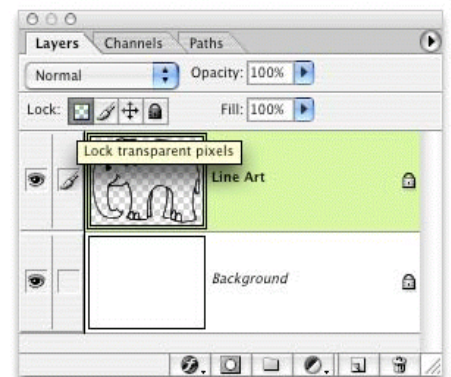


Figure 4

(usually found docked with the Layers palette or by choosing Channels from the Window menu) to separate the artwork from its white background. Select the composite RGB channel (they should all be the same in a black and white RGB image, but use the composite just in case) and click the Load Channel as Selection button at the bottom of the

palette (Fig. 3). When you do this, all of the white areas will be selected and all of the black will not.

With the selection still active, click back on the RGB Channel and then switch to the Layers palette and select the 'Line Art' layer. Choose Inverse from the Select menu and fill the selection with black. Inverse the selection again and delete the selection by hitting the Delete key or choosing Edit > Clear. Click the Lock Transparent Pixels button

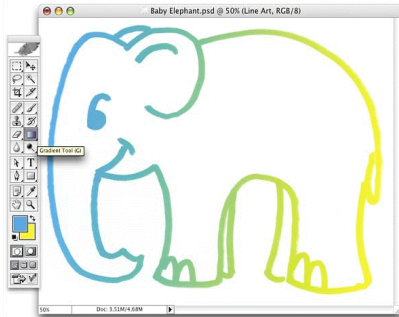


Figure 5

to prevent painting outside the lines (Fig. 4) and now you can use any of the painting tools, including the Brush, Gradient, Paint Bucket and Pencil, to color your artwork. Using the Gradient tool can add an element of dynamism to an otherwise static image (Fig. 5).

When you are finished, save a copy of the image in a flattened format, like TIFF or JPEG, whichever format suits your needs best.

A little color can add a lot to ordinary illustrations and clip art. Using the tools in Adobe Photoshop or any of your other favorite paint programs you can customize your artwork to give it your own personalized touch.

Paul Vaughn is a freelance graphic artist, writer and web designer. More color equals more impact. If you would like to see the Graphics Guy address a specific topic email Paul Vaughn at paulv@mac.com. From the August 2004 issue of PC Alamode.

Tech News

by Sue Crane

Editor, Bearly Bytes

Newsletter of the Big Bear Computer Club, CA

Windows XP Service Pack 2, scheduled for release next month, will be available as a "critical" download on the Windows Update site and will ship with new PCs. The update will introduce technologies for network protection, memory protection, secure e-mail handling, secure browsing and PC maintenance. A new Windows Security Center allows firewall monitoring, Automatic Update and third-party anti-virus software and warns customers when they need to apply patches. Microsoft will probably ship free CDs, but consumers will probably pay for shipping and handling.

Chipmaker, Intel, and PC makers are shifting the PC to multimedia hub for the home. Intel predicts two new categories

Entertainment PCs will imitate stereo and video components, like a VCR, and will play music and DVDs, record TV programs and even show picture slide shows.

Entertainment PCs will use your TV for display and be operated by remote control.

Lifestyle PCs, designed to inhabit bedrooms and kitchens, will look like desktop computers and will be operable via

remote control or keyboard, allowing users to write an e-mail and later play a video or music. Lifestyle PCs will also come with multimedia software such as Windows XP Media Center.

The new PCs will be pricey. An entertainment PC might start at \$700-\$900 and sell for \$1,400. Lifestyle PCs could start at \$600, but with a large flat panel display could sell for as much as \$2,000. PC makers have also announced plans to offer special media adapters called the Windows Media Center Extender, which will let consumers view Media Center files on TVs. SnapStream Media has also figured out a way to get your PC in touch with TV. Firefly is a remote control that lets people manage media and entertainment on their PCs — TV tuning, DVD playback, streaming video, digital music players and photos. Firefly is compatible only with Windows XP and Windows 2000 PCs equipped with a 500MHz processor, 128MB of memory, 100MB of free hard disk space, and a CD or DVD drive. Firefly will cost \$49.99.

HP's Media Center PC of the future has a remote control with a built-in LCD screen for programming recordings. The PC, known as the Windows Home Concept, also supports Internet telephony, dual high-definition TV tuners, biometric security, and a built-in cable modem. For a web-based slideshow and more information about these new concept PCs, see: <<http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1759,1586428,00.asp%20>>

Internet2, the high-speed network designed to facilitate scholarly collaboration among university researchers, has spawned a new turbo-charged file-trading network dubbed i2hub. University network administrators are concerned that copyright violations are occurring and a computer support specialist at Florida State University says: "The fact is, (the network) cost a lot of money and downloading games and music should be the last priority on any campus network."

Yury Gitman, a self-described "wireless and emerging-media artist" in New York, has outfitted his bicycle with an iBook laptop and Wi-Fi antennas so that everywhere he goes, a cloud of free, high-speed wireless Internet access follows. Demand for wireless Internet access in automobiles has been picking up, and plans are to offer it in airplanes soon.

Memory designer Rambus, has begun to license designs for interfaces for DDR DRAM, or double data rate DRAM, the most common type of memory found in PCs and a technology that's often used in consumer electronics devices. The interfaces let another component retrieve data out of DDR DRAM chips. A new version, called DDR 2, will be released soon that runs at 533MHz. It will soon speed up to 800MHz.

Last year, Congress increased the amount small businesses can write off on new equipment purchases from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Known as the Section 179 deduction or the SUV tax, the increase is serving as motivation for sport utility vehicle purchases, but also is an incentive to purchase technology-related equipment. It's available only

through 2005, so businesses should decide quickly whether or not to spend while the spending's good.

IBM plans Web-based desktop software. Lotus Workplace strategy, is a bundle that includes e-mail, word-processing, spreadsheet and database applications aimed at business users. The new software is designed to be distributed and accessed through a Web server, and accessible from systems running Windows, MAC, Linux, Unix and handheld devices. IBM hopes to sway customers to Lotus Workplace with ease of management, mobility and price. The new software is designed to be used offline, so mobile users on laptops or handheld devices can connect, quickly access applications and disconnect to work offline. IBM plans to charge \$2 per user per month for access to the software, plus the cost of server software to make the system work.

The History Channel's 13-episode series on "Decisive Battles" that debuts July 17 makes use of a not-yet-released PC game to re-create the epic battles that mark ancient Rome's colorful history. "Rome: Total War" will be published by Activision this fall.

Society News

Treasurers Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 5/18/04	\$1,130.49
Deposits	
Dues and picnic	\$111.65
Expenses	
Labels	\$24.84
Postmaster (mailing permit)	150.00
St. Stephen's (2 months)	150.00
Paper (3 months)	98.24
Total	\$111.65
Balance as of 7/20/05	\$819.06

The Lighter Side

Mama Was the Best

Computer Teacher I Ever Had

People often ask me how I was able to learn so much about computers. They never forget to remind me that my parent's generation didn't have the same access to computers that we enjoy today.

But the truth is this: Mama was the best computer teacher that I ever had!

For years I badgered my mother with questions about whether Santa Claus is a real person or not. Her answer was always "Well, you asked for the presents and they came, didn't they?"

I finally understood the full meaning of her reply when I heard the definition of a virtual device: "A software or hardware entity which responds to commands in a manner indistinguishable from the real device."

Mother was telling me that Santa Claus is a virtual person (simulated by loving parents) who responds to

requests from children in a manner indistinguishable from a real saint.

Mother also taught the IF ... THEN ... ELSE structure: "If it's snowing, then put your boots on before you go to school; otherwise just wear your shoes."

Mother explained the difference between batch and transaction processing: "We'll wash the white clothes when we get enough of them to make a load, but we'll wash these socks out right now by hand because you'll need them this afternoon."

Mother taught me about linked lists. Once, for a birthday party, she laid out a treasure hunt of ten hidden clues, with each clue telling where to find the next one, and the last one leading to the treasure. She then gave us the first clue.

Mother understood about parity errors. When she counted socks after doing the laundry, she expected to find an even number and groaned when only one sock of a pair emerged from the washing machine. Later she applied the principles of redundancy engineering to this problem by buying our socks three identical pairs at a time. This greatly increased the odds of being able to come up with at least one matching pair.

Mother had all of us children write our Christmas thank you notes to Grandmother, one after another, on a single large sheet of paper which was then mailed in a single envelope with a single stamp. This was obviously an instance of blocking records in order to save money by reducing the number of physical I/O operations.

Mother used flags to help her manage the housework. Whenever she turned on the stove, she put a potholder on top of her purse to remind herself to turn it off again before leaving the house.

Mother knew about devices which raise an interrupt signal to be serviced when they have completed any operation. She had a whistling teakettle.

Mother understood about LIFO ordering. In my lunch bag she put the dessert on the bottom, the sandwich in the middle, and the napkin on top so that things would come out in the right order at lunchtime.

There is an old story that God knew He couldn't be physically present everywhere at once, to show His love for His people, and so He created mothers. That is the difference between centralized and distributed processing. As any kid who's ever misbehaved at a neighbor's house finds out, all the mothers in the neighborhood talk to each other. That's a local area network of distributed processors that can't be beat.

Mom, you were the best computer teacher I ever had.

Some Interesting Sites

Golf

<http://web.mit.edu/wnellie/www/miniputt.swf>

Daily Jigsaws

<http://www.shockwave.com/sw/mindgames/jigsaws/>

Daily Geography Quiz

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee/ax/newquizstart.html>

Daily Charitable Donation

<http://www.thehungersite.com/> will lead you to similar sites for breast cancer, rain forests, child health, and animal welfare.

Bumper Stickers

Wrinkled was not one of the things I wanted to be when I grew up.

Failure is not an option. It comes bundled with the software.

How long is this Beta guy going to keep testing our stuff?

He who dies with the most toys is nonetheless dead.

A picture is worth a thousand words – but it uses up a thousand times the memory.

