

10 Commandments for Happy Windows Computer Owing

How to Reduce Your Computer Headaches

by Robert Spotswood
Houston Area League of PC Users

I work as a computer tech and I see lots of different computer problems. But I see certain problems again and again. While it means more business for me, lots of those problems could be easily avoided saving my customers money and aggravation. Here are ten commandments, which, if followed, will greatly reduce your computer headaches.

I. Use a Virus Scanner

Get one and keep it up to date. The brand doesn't make a big difference. Keeping it up to date does! A virus scanner that has not been updated recently (recently being about 1 or 2 days), is only slightly better than no virus scanner at all.

Keep the virus scanner active and do regular scans of your system. Trying to install a virus scanner after you already have a virus infection usually isn't going to do any good. If the viruses are active, most will attack any virus scanner and prevent it from working or installing properly. The only way to stop this is to have an up-to-date virus scanner active when the virus first tries to infect you.

II. Protect Yourself from Spyware

Viruses aren't your only threat. Spyware is another, and virus scanners do almost nothing about it, although that is just starting to change. Spyware, aside from invading your privacy, can crash your computer, make it run slow, hijack your browser (especially Internet Explorer), annoy you with pop-up ads, and download porn. These things have cost people jobs and ruined relationships (see www.wired.com/news/infostructure/0,1377,63391,00.html).

Spyware can come in with other "free" programs, or can be installed silently if you use Internet Explorer (termed drive-by-downloading). If a window pops up asking to install software, say no, unless you were expecting it.

While not all "free" programs are bad, avoid "free" programs without checking them out first. As a general rule, open source programs are unlikely to have spyware.

Don't use Internet Explorer (use Mozilla or Opera instead), and check for "little pests" regularly. Spybot and Ad-aware are two free and good programs for dealing with spyware. Spyware "experts" tend to prefer Spybot over Ad-aware, but both are good programs. Prevention is the best medicine however.

III. Don't Open Strange Emails

Never, ever open or respond to an email that in any way seems suspicious. Don't even preview it, especially in Outlook or Outlook Express. It doesn't matter who is appears to come from. That can be faked unless you use

digital signatures correctly, and most modern worms do fake the sender.

Don't rely on your virus scanner to protect you either. Email viruses can spread around the world in minutes. Your virus scanner will be at least a day behind the most current threat.

No legitimate company will want you to open an attachment or enter your user info in a form from an out-of-the-blue email. Companies also do not send patches (see commandment VIII) via email. Should you actually find a company that does these things, find somebody else to do business with. Your information is not safe with them.

If at all possible, do not use a Microsoft email client. Use a Mozilla or Opera based program (among others) instead. Microsoft's poor security record AND actively being targeted make for a lousy combination.

IV. Never Respond to Spam

Never respond to or buy something from an email that you even THINK is spam or unsolicited, even if it's something you are interested in. Spammers spam because it is profitable. It is profitable because enough people buy or respond. Buying anything from or responding to spam is just throwing gasoline on a fire. In addition, often, the spam involves something either fraudulent or illegal. If it's something you are still interested in, do a web search, and buy from there.

Always be careful of where you put your email address. Putting your email address in some form (paper or electronic) is one way the spammers get your address, especially contest promotions, i. e. fill out a form for a chance to win a prize and the form asks for an email address among other things. Posting your address on a website or Usenet are two other ways spammers get your address.

V. Perform Regular Backups

Sooner or later, it's going to happen. Something important gets deleted. It doesn't matter if it was a virus, equipment failure, or just not paying enough attention when hitting the delete key. This includes not just erasing files, but overwriting data. The recycle bin or undelete programs can't help you then. Doing proper backups are your best, and cheapest defense against these disasters.

Take care of your backup media. Don't leave CD's lying in the sun or tapes near magnets. Finally, don't forget to test the restore process once in a while! A backup you can't restore is worthless, and the practice you get in restoring will help you avoid mistakes and panic when the time comes to do it for real.

VI. Help the Tech

Having computer problems is normal. Sooner or later it happens to everyone. When it is time to seek help, don't lie. Chances are the tech will see through the lie very quickly, and even if he doesn't, it only makes it harder for him to help you. Be as specific as you can. Write down the exact error message. Tell him anything

you think might be important. He can't read minds and he wasn't there when you did ___ (fill in the blank).

Don't "clean up" your computer before you bring in (or take the computer to) the tech. This can, in rare cases, disguise the cause of the problem.

If getting phone support, be in front of your computer, have it turned on and booted up, and have the application(s) already open (if appropriate). Many phone support techs are rated (and promoted or fired) based on how many calls per hour they answer, not on whether they actually help you. Take too long and you may find your problem is "We do not support that. Goodbye." Be patient and describe everything you see. Phone support is one of the hardest types of support to do.

Finally, swearing like a sailor or threatening the tech will not get your system fixed any faster or cheaper. In fact, the reverse may happen.

VII. Get Some Computer Training

You don't have to be a mechanic to drive a car, but you still have to have training. No one is born knowing how to drive, and no one is born knowing how to use computers. Know the basic terminology, specs, and workings of your computer. This knowledge can reduce your need for professional help (aka the tech) and make working the tech more productive when you do need it.

Think of the training as an investment in yourself. Once you learn how to use your computer your [computer] life will become more productive and enjoyable.

VIII. Apply Patches Regularly

Programming is easy, but creating perfectly secure programs is very hard to impossible. Mistakes happen. When they do, fixes (often called patches) are issued. While some of these patches may cause problems, it is usually better to install the patch than not.

Free and open source software usually just issues new versions rather than patches, so don't forget to upgrade. There are mailing lists you can sign up for to tell you when new patches and new versions are issued.

Using Windows update regularly is a good way to stay current with your patches. Be warned, however, that Microsoft does not always issue patches in a timely manner, and neither do some other software companies. You can't patch without a patch.

Sometimes, a patch will not fix the problem it was intended to fix or may even open up other security holes. Do not make the mistake of thinking that just because you are current on all your patches that you are safe. You're not!

IX. Pay Attention to Your Computer's Security

The wrong types of people are interested in your computer, even if you are just a home user on dial-up. Even if you don't have any valuable data (unlikely; credit card info, banking info, perhaps work info are just a few examples), your machine could be used as a source of spam, used to host illegal materials, or even as a launch pad for attacks on other systems.

A dial-up user, or someone with a connected modem, could be disconnected from his ISP (Internet Service Provider) and silently reconnected to another overseas. The next phone bill will be quite shocking.

While there is no product that can make your computer secure, a firewall and virus scanner are a good start. Running more than one firewall and one virus scanner at the same time is usually a bad idea. It does little to increase your security, while greatly increasing problems you will have.

X. Give Your Computer Regular Maintenance

Computers, like all things, work better if they receive occasion maintenance. A scandisk and defrag every month will help keep your computer running smoothly. Dusting inside your computer every so often is also a good idea. Seek professional help if you are unsure how to do this. Smaller computer shops will often teach you how to do this yourself for free or a small fee or you could make a friend at HAL-PC. Finally, your computer case is not a refrigerator door. Don't stick magnets on it.

From the October 2004 issue of HAL-PC Magazine. Robert Spotswood, a HAL-PC member, is active in the Linux SIG and a freelance computer professional. He can be reached at robert@spotswood-computer.net

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

You Should Keep an Eye on Your Computer's Security

Your computer has a number of communication points, called ports. These are used to send data to the Internet from the computer. Intruders use sniffing programs to find computers with open ports. The ports can be used by backdoor programs to send information—for instance, your credit card numbers—to a computer on the Internet. Firewalls make these ports invisible.

HackerWatch offers you the opportunity to check your computer's ports to see if they are open. I checked ports on my computer that are commonly called by Trojans. All were hidden, as they should be, since my machine is behind a firewall. HackerWatch's primary job is collecting data from user machines to track "script kiddies." These are people—usually children—who probe networks, looking for vulnerable machines. HackerWatch is run by Network Associates, the makers of McAfee anti-virus products.

There are other sites that probe computers for weaknesses, too. One of my favorites is Shields Up!, at Gibson Research. Both HackerWatch and Shields Up! are free. They're at, respectively:

<http://www.hackerwatch.org/probe/>

<http://www.grc.com/x/ne.dll?rh1dkyd2>

Deciding what to block

When you use a firewall, how do you know which programs should access the Internet? Is there a master listing of such files?

This has been a chronic complaint of people who use firewalls. You receive a message from the firewall saying that a file is trying to access the Internet. The firewall asks if it should be permitted through. Who knows? The problem is that the file names often make no sense. And in the past, firewalls often offered no more information.

I'm talking about firewalls such as ZoneAlarm. These programs alert you when a file tries to access the Internet. This is not an issue with the firewall in Windows XP. It does not block outbound programs.

So let's get the easy stuff out of the way first. If you have a program that needs to access the Internet, it will pop up in a firewall alert. Anti-virus programs fall into this category, as do any other programs that have to be updated regularly. The same is true for e-mail programs and Internet browsers.

In those cases, the file names may be clear enough to let the file pass. If you want your e-mail, and Microsoft Outlook is asking for access to the Internet, what do you do? Let it through, of course!

How else can you download the e-mail? If you feel comfortable with the file name, check the box to always permit the file to pass. Files from companies such as Microsoft, Adobe, Panda, McAfee, Symantec and other well-known names are OK. But I'm telling you the obvious, aren't I? It's the files with clueless names that are the problem. They're a little harder, but you can get the information you need on them, too.

Sometimes firewalls themselves will fill you in. ZoneAlarm, for instance, offers information when it issues an alert. Often, it will explain the origin of the file and what it does. All you need to know is that it is from a reputable program. If it is, let it through.

Occasionally, there is no information available from the firewall. In that case, turn to the Internet. Enter the file name at a search site such as Google (<http://www.google.com/>). You'll probably get some information back. Again, you don't need to know what the file does. It's enough to know that it is part of a reputable program.

You also can check at LiUtilities.com. This site lists many, many processes. You may well find the file name you're seeking. LiUtilities will tell you if it is a virus or spyware. You'll find this information at: <http://www.liutilities.com/products/wintaskspro/processlibrary/>

Did you ever feel as though you've heard this before?

New Microsoft set-top box ready to roll - Microsoft plans to start shipping a new set-top box in early October, and it's not your grandmother's WebTV though - MSN TV2 is the successor to the original WebTV devices, the new box is a vast departure from its predecessors

On the outside, it's slick, with new video-playback and photo-viewing programs, and a custom version of Internet Explorer 6 designed to make Web browsing on

the television a far less painful process. On the inside, it's a Windows CE-based product with a 733MHz Celeron—slow by PC standards but downright zippy in the world of set-top boxes.

Microsoft will sell the \$199 device in two ways—as a dial-up product for technology newbies with \$21.95 monthly service; and as an additional way for broadband homes to view the Web for \$9.95 using the existing Internet connection. Newbies, who have historically been the bulk of MSN TV subscribers, are likely to be the majority of initial customers, said MSN TV General Manager Sam Klepper.

"We think over time, broadband (subscribers) will be half or more," Klepper said in an interview at Microsoft's Silicon Valley campus here.

Many of the new features are aimed at those customers, including the ability to play music or movies stored on a PC in another room. The device can connect via wired or 802.11b wireless networks, though Microsoft plans to add support for faster 802.11g wireless networking in mid-November. Customers will get 2GB of e-mail space for their primary account and 250MB for up to 11 additional accounts.

The new box, which is being made by Thomson and sold under the RCA brand, will be shipped to stores starting next week. The product has no hard drive, but it has enough flash memory to store some data, including 100 compressed photos that can be used as part of a slide show.

The release of MSN TV2 is part of the continuing transformation of the former WebTV operation into a unit that provides TV services to a variety of other Microsoft divisions, including the eHome unit, and Microsoft TV, which develops products for cable and other TV service providers.

Microsoft acquired WebTV in 1997 for several hundred million dollars. Microsoft eventually renamed the product MSN TV in 2001. In the past, Microsoft touted the fact that there were about 1 million subscribers for the service, but Klepper would not say how many there currently are.

Klepper did say the new service should be cheaper to operate than the old MSN TV, which used a proprietary browser, e-mail service and operating system.

One of the challenges for the unit, though, is that MSN TV finds itself as just one of many products Microsoft is aiming at the living room, including entertainment PCs, as well as two other set-top boxes: The Xbox game console and the Media Center Extender, a device that plays content stored on a Media Center PC in another room.

Microsoft: To secure IE, upgrade to XP

If you're one of about 200 million people using older versions of Windows and you want the latest security enhancements to Internet Explorer, get your credit card ready

Microsoft this week reiterated that it would keep the new version of Microsoft's IE Web browser available only

as part of the recently released Windows XP operating system, Service Pack 2. The upgrade to XP from any previous Windows versions is \$99 when ordered from Microsoft. Starting from scratch, the operating system costs \$199.

That, analysts say, is a steep price to pay to secure a browser that swept the market as a free, standalone product.

“It’s a problem that people should have to pay for a whole OS upgrade to get a safe browser,” said Michael Cherry, analyst with Directions on Microsoft in Redmond, Wash. “It does look like a certain amount of this is to encourage upgrade to XP.”

Microsoft affirmed that its recent security improvements to IE would be made available only to XP users.

“We do not have plans to deliver Windows XP SP2 enhancements for Windows 2000 or other older versions of Windows,” the company said in a statement. “The most secure version of Windows today is Windows XP with SP2. We recommend that customers upgrade to XP and SP2 as quickly as possible.”

The Internet’s security mess has proved profitable for many companies, particularly antivirus firms. Microsoft has declared security job No. 1.

By refusing to offer IE’s security upgrades to users of older operating systems except through paid upgrades to XP, Microsoft may be turning the lemons of its browser’s security reputation into the lemonade of a powerful upgrade selling point.

That lemonade comes in the midst of a painfully dry spell for the company’s operating system business.

Three years have passed since Microsoft introduced its last new operating system, and its upcoming release, code-named Longhorn, has been plagued by delays. Microsoft last month scaled back technical ambitions for Longhorn in order to meet a 2006 deadline.

While Wall Street anxiously awaits an operating system release that can produce revenues until Longhorn appears, Microsoft is eyeing the nearly half of the world’s 390 million Windows users who have opted to stick with operating systems older than XP, including Windows versions 2000, ME, 98 and 95.

“Ancient history”

Microsoft denied it was deliberately capitalizing on the Internet’s security woes to stimulate demand for XP.

“Microsoft is not using security issues or any security situation to try to drive upgrades,” said a company representative. “But it only makes sense that the latest products are the most secure.”

Microsoft has maintained that the browser is part of the operating system, a point of contention in its antitrust battle with the U. S. government. Last year, the company ruled out future releases of IE as a standalone product. This week, the company reiterated that stance.

“IE has been a part of the operating system since its release,” said the Microsoft representative. “IE is a feature of Windows.”

When asked about IE’s origin as a free, standalone product, the representative said, “You’re talking in software terms that might be considered ancient history.”

From the October 2004 issue of The Umbrella Online, newsletter of the Hampton Roads Virginia computing community.

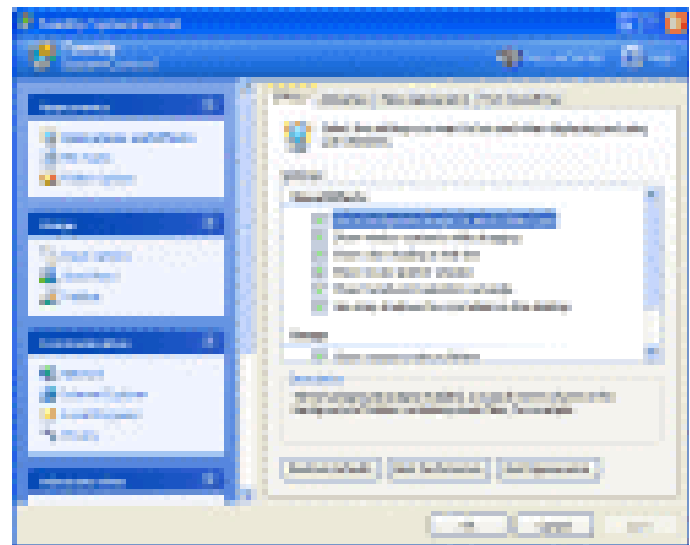
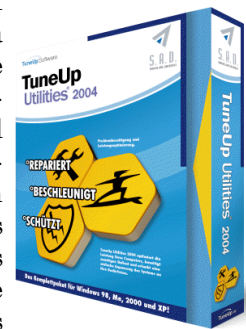
Another Helpful PC Utility

by Ira Wilsker

PC utilities are programs that can enhance your computing pleasure and efficiency by improving the operations of your computer. I am always on the lookout for interesting software that is both useful and reasonably priced, but above all is a great value that provides significant benefits to the user.

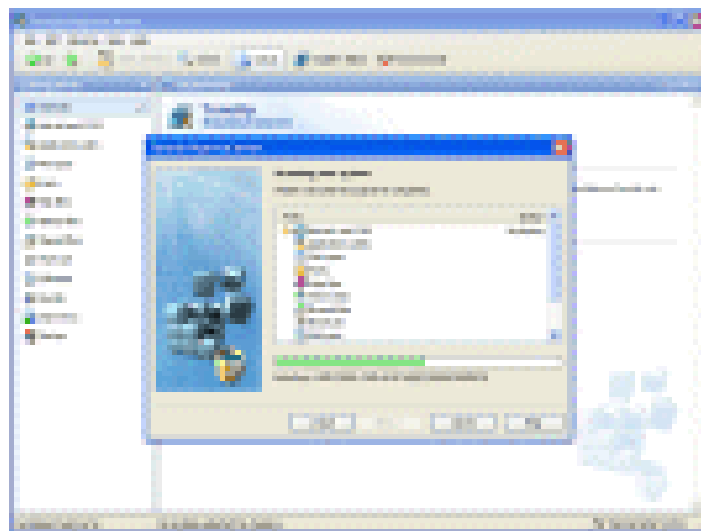
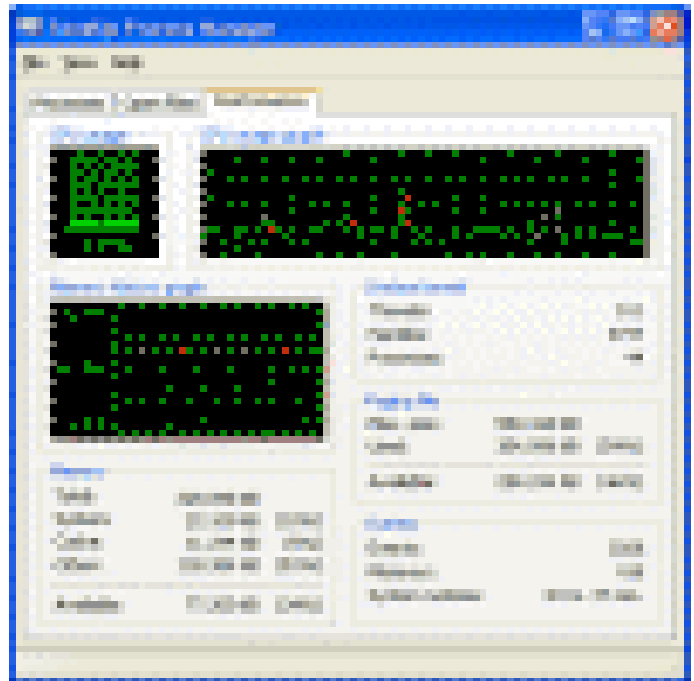
An excellent multifunction utility is “TuneUp Utilities 2004” (www.tune-up.com) published by Tune Up Software International, of Darmstadt, Germany. This is a feature-rich and comprehensive suite of utilities that can perform a variety of beneficial tasks. Upon opening the program the user is greeted with an attractive menu that lists and explains the available tasks that it can do. On the left side of the menu are the categories of tasks available, including “Customize & Analyze,” “Clean up & Repair,” “Optimize & Improve,” “Administer & Control,” and “File recovery & Destruction.” On the top right corner are three links for “Rescue Center,” “Update Wizard,” and an icon for help and other functions.

When “Customize & Analyze” is selected, a variety of choices is available, including system control, a startup manager, system information, and “WinStyler.”



System control lets the user change Windows to suit personal preferences by changing the look and feel of

Windows. The startup manager shows the programs that are loaded when the computer is booted, along with a brief description of those programs, and an intuitive checkbox that allows the user to exercise control over what loads. This is much easier to use than the integral “msconfig” utility included in some versions of Windows. If utilized along with the “PacMan” startup information at www.sysinfo.org, the computer will boot faster, run better, and have fewer software conflicts, making the startup manager a very useful utility. The “system information” icon shows in great detail the hardware, software, drivers, settings, and other technical information about the computer. This information is useful in identifying drivers for updating, repairing the computer, getting tech support, and other functions. “WinStyler” allows the user to manage and change the icons used, as well as to repair icons and the cache of icons used by Windows.



“Clean up & Repair” has two valuable utilities, a disk cleaner and a registry cleaner. The disk cleaner can identify junk and other useless files on the hard drive, giving the user the opportunity to delete them, and free up space on the hard drive. The registry cleaner can identify obsolete and invalid entries in the registry, and repair or delete them. By periodically cleaning up the registry the computer will boot and run faster with fewer software errors. This is a much more effective utility than the “scanreg” included in some versions of Windows.

“Optimize & Improve” includes three utilities, a memory optimizer, a registry “defragger,” and a system optimizer. The memory optimizer frees up memory which is intended to improve system performance by deleting obsolete data from memory. Registry “defragging” corrects physical errors and compresses the registry by reordering the data and removing empty spaces. A defragged registry takes less memory, and improves the boot and shutdown time of the computer. The system optimizer modifies internal settings in Windows to improve system performance. Some settings, if properly

set, can significantly improve performance when surfing the web. Other settings speed up the video and other functions in the computer. When properly configured, which may be an automated process, not just is performance improved, but the system becomes more stable with fewer lockups and other problems.

“Administer & Control” allows the user to monitor and control what is actually running on the computer, including programs and libraries that may not be apparent to the casual user. Sometimes some programs do not always totally close when exited, leaving some parts running, depleting system resources. Another function in this section is a registry editor, which allows the user to manually edit the registry. The user can do this with almost no risk, as the software automatically makes a backup prior to any changes that can easily be restored, if desired. We all have installed and then uninstalled software, and sometime have difficulties with the uninstall process. The uninstall manager is better at deleting unwanted programs than Windows “Add /Remove Programs” function.

Many of us periodically create files that may be considered sensitive or proprietary, and would not want others to be able to recover those files at a later date. The “File recovery & Destruction” section includes a digital shredder which ensures that sensitive files which are deleted can not be recovered, improving computer security. Many of us also have deleted files that we later wanted back; this software has an undelete function that recovers recoverable file which have been deleted, even after emptying the recycle bin or trashcan.

The rescue center icon, which appears on all menu items, allows almost any action taken to be undone if we change our mind. All of us have made changes and regretted it later, and this function can be a lifesaver in those circumstances.

Since this software is updated periodically, the update wizard automates that function allowing for the latest revisions to the software to be downloaded and installed.

A free trial version of the software can be downloaded at www.tune-up.com, and a registration key can be purchased online for \$40. I found this to be a very useful program, and recommend it highly.

From the October 2004 issue of Bits and Bytes, the newsletter of the Tampa Bay Computer Society.



From The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando
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I can hardly believe I've been writing this column for ten years now and have never missed a month. I never dreamed it would end up being so widely used. It all started when a group of us from Central Florida Computer Society traveled to attend the 1994 FACUG fall conference in Cocoa, FL. During our travel time, the president at that time (Miguel McCormick) told me the group was getting many special offers and he didn't have time to announce them at meetings. He asked if I would mind putting them together as an article for the newsletter if he channeled them all to me. Hesitantly, I agreed since Miguel has always worked hard for the group, but I knew nothing about writing articles.

I received much criticism for the first column from the desktop publishing SIG I attended in an effort to help me improve it. They said nobody would read it the way I was writing it. I was having no luck understanding techniques to improve it when e-mail arrived from two editors, because of newsletter exchanges, asking if they could reprint it. Since many offers were time sensitive, I offered to put those editors on a list. I originally sent the column to editors individually for some time because I knew nothing about BCC or CC, or even how to attach a file to e-mail. That first column had 22 special offers in it. I also started giving it to Space Coast PC UG since I was also a member there. Surprisingly, the third editor to ask for the column was from Portland, Oregon PC UG and I was then published from coast to coast, but in just three newsletters. After three months of trying to improve it, with no success, my friends in the DTP SIG finally remarked that since it seemed to be working, just forget improving it.

A few editors feel that this is the "deals" column and should only contain deals, nothing else. Two editors have always felt the column is over worded. They insist that all you need is the name of the product, the price and ordering procedure, thus reducing it to about three paragraphs. I've always felt that those editors were missing what seemed to make it work. I often get feedback from my personal comments. Most editors feel differently and often e-mail me that their readers enjoy the column however I write it, which is always good to hear.

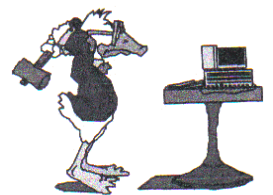
One problem lately is with myself. I don't devote the additional time required these days to dig up deals and I also get turned down more, along with just no response even though I had talked to them at a show. Items I find in UG newsletters, and suggestions sent by editors, help. I still have a few leads that I plan to follow up, but I'm writing the column from month to month, seeing where it leads. I also use occasional unknown products now that I receive announcements for, if they offer a discount. I still get a lot of support from many editors wanting me to continue. Many editors depend on the DealsGuy column, and for a very few, my column is the heart of their newsletters along with the group's member news. One thing seems certain though, and that is that the DealsGuy column is on borrowed time.

You need a tough skin to do this job because there is no way to please everybody. Complaints seldom come from the readers though, and those that do are usually because of a problem. However, editor's complaints sometimes lead to changes. Interesting that for the last few years though, the DealsGuy column has not been published in the original newsletter that started it all.

I'm presenting two great items that could be Christmas gifts, even for you. I'm excited about them both and you'll love them.

Lets Understand the Darn Weather Better

I love this item and was able to put together a deal just in time for Christmas (what a great gift). I can't adequately describe this full-featured weather station so check their Web site. [<http://www.peetbros.com>] I am just now learning everything about mine. It's certainly full featured and I'm having great fun. I installed it just hours before our latest hurricane, Jeanne, and spent more time checking the Ultimeter 100 data than checking the storm. It offers about any type of data and display you want and recorded my highest wind gust at 66 mph., 9/26/04, at 10:05 AM. I could have shown it in other units, as with all the data. Data can also be accessed by phone line. I'm now working on a better mount and location for my rain gauge.



Ultimeter 100 can be set to continuously scan wind speed, wind chill, temperature, today's rainfall, time and date, or just certain data. It also shows the wind direction. An alarm can be set for the danger of an impending flash flood if your area is prone, or for other possible situations. A 9V-battery backup retains your data in the event of a power failure. Pushing a button will give you highs or lows for any of the last seven days, or for long term.

This deal is a scoop since they are introducing a new feature, which is a "serial text" interface that works with your computer to view the weather station's accumulated data. Simply connect the serial cable, start Windows HyperTerminal on your computer, then by pushing

buttons on your weather station, quickly view data from the Ultimeter 100 system's memory for various time periods and format it as you like on your computer. The feed updates each minute.

For just \$199.00 you get the "Ultimeter 100" weather station (MSRP \$199.00) bundled with an indoor temperature sensor (MSRP \$12.95) and a 15' serial computer interface cable (MSRP \$20.00), both of which are normally optional. The unit does include the anemometer wind vane and other necessary cables. There are other peripherals such as a self-emptying rain gage and "The Weather Picture" (a large digital display that can be read across the room), extensions for the cables and more.

The Ultimeter 100 is the only product offered with the bundle, but obviously they have other models and accessories to offer. Please mention the code "DealsGuy" when ordering this special \$199.00 bundle. E-mail them at peetbros@peetbros.com, or call them at 1-866-446-1216 or 1-321-206-6214. Shipping varies according to the dollar amount, but orders between \$200 and \$299 will cost \$15.75 S&H. FL. residents should add 7% tax. If you're not convinced, call for their beautiful 10-page brochure that tells it all.

Your Badge Says It All

You may have seen digital badges at computer shows, as I have, and they took my eye. I bought one and have enjoyed mine. People comment when they see it since it really stands out. It scrolls your message, which can be up to 118 characters, in red LCD letters. You can vary the scrolling speed. Get more details at [<http://www.bannerbadge.com>] There's a video there of the Banner Badge scrolling a message, but in person, it looks much better than on that video according to my screen. You can order either a black or red one, and it comes with the programming kit. There is an optional USB-to-serial adapter, and the "Buddy" that will program it without your computer. The digital badge is a real eye-catcher and lots of fun.

Originally I purchased mine from another company and tried to make a deal with that company, but with no success. I consider them the losers. I later found this company, Banner Badge, in another show, and with much better prices. The Banner Badge guys were happy to give my readers a deal, which is 10% off the posted prices on the Web site. Unfortunately there's no way to enter a price code for the DealsGuy price when ordering so you'll need to e-mail them at info@bannerbadge.com or call them at 1-772-571-9944, and be sure to mention DealsGuy to get the 10% discount. What a great Christmas gift! Don't forget to order extra batteries at their low prices.

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 interesting articles from user group newsletters. I also posted some interesting Web site pages for your viewing. They contain new product announcements that I received over a period of time in 2003. More will be forthcoming when I get the ambition.

Computers Expanding the Use of Robots

by Jim Hinwood

Monterey Bay Users Group

So many articles I've seen lately have been about robotics — it's the newest hit topic. Last month's *Technology Review* and this month's *Wired* magazine have articles on robotics. When I see the Roomba vacuuming a house automatically on TV it reminds me of the Jetsons cartoon series where the home of the future is all automated and housework is a thing of the past. Many of the cartoons I remember as a kid were about automated houses that went crazy and started to attack the cat or the dog: its robots would come out and start sweeping or vacuuming at the slightest indication of dirt. As computers become more powerful, who knows what timesaving devices may be invented?

In the *Technology Review* article, the author makes a prediction that robotics will take off the way computers took off ten years ago. The more powerful computers we have today will be the brains for this new class of servants. These robots may not look like the anthropomorphic types we see in movies and TV. Many may just be simple-looking box-shaped machines (like the Roomba) with one specific job. But some will certainly be more complex with a multitude of functions and a human-like shape. Honda has recently been advertising a robot that is complex and can do many things.

Robots have been used in manufacturing for quite a while now. One of the reasons we Americans fell behind the Japanese in the auto industry is because they had the largest number of automobile plant robots in the world. Part of the future mechanization of our manufacturing plants will be heavily dependent on robots. The computer power of the latest CPU chips is in the trillions of operations per second. In ten years we will no doubt have plenty of chip-powered intelligence to drive robots to unprecedented capabilities.

Isaac Asimov wrote *I, Robot* in the 1950s and there is a current film with the same name starring Will Smith. With these stories always comes the fear of artificial intelligence and whether it may someday have the ability to take control from humans.

This is a recurrent theme in everything from *2001: A Space Odyssey* with the computer Hal, to the current *I, Robot*. This fear of our inventions taking over may not be as important as how we feel about the egos of those who use the technology.

I recently read about some robotic legs which could give the wearer the ability to carry a much larger load in

battle, similar to a pair of bionic legs from *The Six Million Dollar Man* TV show. How long will it be before robots fight it out as seen in the movie *The Terminator*? There are probably many battlefield applications for robots and many are probably already in the making.

The real problem is not the artificial intelligence but the human intelligence behind it, directing robots to do good or evil. I hope that like the computer, robots will become powerful tools for the benefit of all mankind.

My first thought after reading many of these articles is that this would be a great time to invest in this fledgling science. In the movie *Frequency*, Dennis Quaid plays a character who goes back in time to change his past. While he is there he mentions one word to his friend. When he gets back to the present he runs into this friend who remembered the word and is now rich and has the word, Yahoo, on the license plate of his Mercedes. How many of us would like to know what the next big investment is going to be?

Maybe in the future, one of us will be driving that Mercedes around with “robots” on our license plate.

Jim Hinwood is a columnist and the Program Chair of the Monterey Bay Users Group, PC in Monterey, California. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Online Footprints Bring Coincidences and Lasting Trails

by Gabe Goldberg
APCUG Advisor for Region 2 and
columnist for the AARP Computers
and Technology Website

A song written by Peter Mayer [www.blueboat.net], a great singer I’ve just discovered, is titled “Earth Town Square.” Describing how technology and travel have shrunk the world, Peter lyrically observes “Now it’s feeling like a small town, with six billion people downtown, at a little sidewalk fair, in Earth Town Square.” Even though all six billion of us aren’t (yet!) online, the internet as a meeting place is certainly one of the engines making the Earth seem smaller. While it was once exotic—or alarming—to have a long distance telephone conversation, chatting electronically with people half a world away doesn’t raise my pulse.

A decade ago, early in my use of the Internet, I was astonished by its ability to create coincidences—true story! I was consulting for an online service that gave me an email address used only for their work. I received a note at that address with the intriguing subject, “I am you,” from another Gabriel Goldberg. (Nowadays, that’s the sort of spoofed email I’d likely delete without reading.) He’d checked his entry in the service’s directory and found my entry next to his. We exchanged pleasantries, described ourselves, shared wonder at having found each other; he mentioned that he was a music student in Boston.

Later that week, I received another note at my regular email address, from a woman who said that she’d known a Gabe Goldberg years earlier, the last she’d heard from him he was going to Boston to study music, and was I that person. I replied to her, copying the other Gabe, that either they were playing a joke on me or we had a mighty powerful coincidence.

Truth is stranger than joke: they were former high school sweethearts who had drifted apart. In the same week they both found my name and two different email addresses, and for very different reasons, they contacted me. I later heard from her mother, who thanked me for reuniting them! And, remarking on the coincidence of names, the other Gabe wondered “how guys named Jim Smith handle all the coincidences.”

Participating in mailing lists, newsgroups, and Web sites leaves online footprints and makes us visible. The bad news is that’s one of the ways spammers find targets, but the good news is that being visible makes it easier for lost friends to track us down. Soon after 9/11 I heard a voice on the phone I hadn’t heard for nearly 30 years: my college girlfriend. She’d searched Google (often called “Googling”) for me, found me, and called. We’ve stayed in touch since, have gotten together several times, and have shared news of our respective families. And just recently I used Google to contact an elementary school friend after hearing of her taking a new job in San Francisco.

A friend, Ross Patterson, reports another name collision. Having been online since the 1970s, he never used an alias, has always used his own name for email and his Web site. Everything was fine for about four years, but in 2002, a comedic film called “The New Guy” [<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0241760>] came out. He notes that it was a critical success, if you count one to one and a half stars a success. A co-starring role was played by (a different) Ross Patterson (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0666388>). A few months later he started to receive emails from young women through his Web site email address. Most assumed he was “that Ross Patterson,” although some asked outright. Most said that he was “kewl” and “soooooo HOT!!!!”, and often asked for autographs. Being the father of a teenage girl, he wrote back politely to each young lady explaining that he wasn’t the fellow they were looking for, and deleted their correspondence. Several responded, all nicely, and he traded a few friendly notes with one girl.

Another coincidence earned me a colleague, client, and friend. After forwarding a meeting notice to a local professional mailing list, I received an earnest note from someone I didn’t know, saying that the topic of the meeting was outrageous and that I should attend representing her and protest what was proposed for discussion. I’d normally simply delete such out-of-the-blue notes, but this one was so well-crafted and so earnest that I couldn’t resist cautiously replying, asking whether she really meant to address me. Of course, she hadn’t—someone in her company had forwarded the

note internally, she'd responded to me by mistake instead of her colleague. But we continued chatting, became friends, and she became a client. If I hadn't forwarded the note, we'd never have met.

Sometimes the Internet simply facilitates synchronicity, related events happening at the same time. A few years ago, two friends independently mentioned online that they had made a New Year's resolution to start new relationships. So I introduced them and arranged a blind date!

Amidst the fun of unanticipated connections and reestablished friendships, there's a cautionary note: online has a long memory. Web sites like Google cache (retain) Web pages even after they're deleted from their original Web locations. Postings to mailing lists, Web forums, newsgroups, and other online venues are usually retained indefinitely. It can be unnerving to discover that items posted in the heat of the moment or as youthful indiscretions can be retrieved years later by potential employers or new acquaintances—or someone snooping for unpleasant reasons.

Just as it's worth checking your credit report periodically, it's a good idea to occasionally check what online trails you've left. My current favorite surfing tool is Google, so I search for "Gabe Goldberg" and "Gabriel Goldberg." (The quote marks bind the first and last names together so that only Web pages having the exact full name are found. I search on Gabe/Gabriel because I've used both names.) If your name is closer to Jim Smith's—offering 56,000 hits rather than the more manageable 182 for my name—you can tighten the search by adding terms such as a middle initial, state of residence, hobby, employer, etc. But don't make the search too narrow or you may miss genuine references.

It's tedious to erase tracks from an online history; it requires contacting each site that hosts material you'd like to delete, perhaps following instructions and filling out forms. Some mailing list sites refuse as a matter of policy to delete list postings, reasoning that doing so would distort a list's historical record. The government has made serious efforts to sanitize the Web by removing content deemed dangerous, such as plans for water/power system. But the Wayback Machine (<http://www.archive.org/index.html>) archives many years of Web data. For example, the first image shown of www.whitehouse.gov is from December 1996. Even when successful, scrubbing data off Web sites often doesn't really make it unavailable, it just slows people finding it.

It's much better to avoid saying anything online that might return to haunt you, than try to clear the record after the fact.

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Really Simple Syndication

by Ken Blake

Tucson Computer Society

How many of you use RSS feeds?

How many of you know what RSS feeds are?

My guess is that the answer to the second question may be a little higher than that of the first, but that both numbers are low. So let me address the second question and tell you what RSS feeds are.

RSS is an abbreviation (please don't call it an "acronym"; that's one of my pet peeves) for "Really Simple Syndication." An RSS file is a web-based document in XML format, but the technical details of that and what XML is isn't really important unless you want to create these yourself.

So let's leave aside the technical details of what RSS is, and talk about how you might use it and how it can be useful to you.

Here's a good definition from a Microsoft site: "RSS provides a convenient way to syndicate information from a variety of sources, including news stories, updates to a web site or important bulletins.

"Regardless of the purpose for which the RSS file is being used, by watching this XML file, you can quickly and easily see whenever an update has occurred.

"Of course, viewing the RSS feed in Internet Explorer and manually reloading the page every few minutes is not the most efficient use of your time, so most people take advantage of some form of client software to read and monitor RSS feeds."

So you need a piece of software called an RSS Reader or RSS Aggregator to effectively use RSS. What the reader does is monitor the sites for you and bring to your desktop new or changed content.

You choose the sites based on what kind of content they provide, and subscribe to them from within your RSS reader. The reader then delivers to you the information that you're interested in as it becomes available.

As a typical example of this, you could subscribe to your local newspaper and get all the latest news (normally in headline or brief summary form, with a link to click on for the full story) as it becomes available.

The number of available RSS feeds is enormous and is growing daily. If you get started on this, beware! Start out slowly and don't overwhelm yourself with too many feeds at first. It's easy to get hundreds or thousands of messages each day, decide that you don't have the time for all this, and give it up in disgust. That would be a pity, since you would be discarding a potentially very

valuable tool.

To get started, first choose an RSS reader. There are several choices, many of them freeware or shareware. Here are only some of what's available:

SharpReader
FeedReader
AmphetaDesk
Rss Bandit
NewsGator

Personally, I like and use NewsGator (\$29) because unlike the others, it's not standalone, but integrates with Microsoft Outlook, my E-mail client and Personal Information Manager, which is always running. I've set up a separate folder in Outlook for this; NewsGator checks periodically for new content and delivers it to that folder.

As a small idea of some of what's available by RSS feeds, here's a partial list of some of what I subscribe to:

Sections of the *Arizona Daily Star* and *New York Times*

CNN
Chess News
Digital Photography Review
Dilbert
Free After Rebate
Astronomy Picture of the Day
Microsoft Security Bulletins
New Urban Legends
PC Magazine New Product Reviews

To find available RSS feeds, begin with your RSS reader. It gives you choices; searching the web finds lots more. There's a long list. Chances are whatever your interests, RSS feeds exist for them. If not today, tomorrow.

Give it try. Download one of the free readers, subscribe to a few feeds (just a few at first) and start becoming more informed. If you like it, you can always go on from there.

Memory Info

from Jim McGrath

For every thing you need to know about computer memory, tutorials, glossary and histories check this site.

http://www.dewassoc.com/performance/memory/memory_main.html

For an updated review of memory types (oldest to newest) including visuals, check this site. http://www.dewassoc.com/performance/memory/how_to_ID_memory.htm

For an overview of the vast available info from DEW Associates Corp. check here. <http://www.dewassoc.com/globals/sitemap.html>

For that motherboard support you often need, try this site. <http://www.dewassoc.com/support/bios/mbsupport.html>

Scanning for the SOHO Small Office and Home Office

286 pages – \$14.95

By RCSi member, author, and engineer Ron Matteson. Send an e-mail for ordering instructions to:
author@sohotechnology.info

Society News

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Arpad Kovacs
Recorded by: Jan Rothfuss

Total present 22.

Q: What are the names of some repair shops in our area? Suspected virus-infected computer.

A: Microworks, Mavins and Just Solutions (Rt. 31 in Egypt). Computer Link has a list of reliable services. Be sure to tell them that you are a member of RCS.

Q: Uses Netscape. How can I backup my favorites, email contacts, etc.?

A: Folder found in the my documents and settings / local settings. Check through the Preferences tab.

Q: I am running XP and hesitate to download the new Service Pack 2. What have others found?

A: Arpad did install it on his machine with no issues so far. There is a new security service that runs in the background. He disabled that service because it eats a lot of resources. Also turns off the software firewall. Need to disable it if you want to use Zone Alarm. It is good that it adds a pop-up blocker for Explorer and it has a wireless connection wizard to assist in setup. Also re-enables remote access, allowing vendor sites to enter on their own: He turned that off as well

Q: Another member said that he gets an error every so often that it needs to rebuilds and it seems to disable printing for a while. He is using email Outlook Express.

A: Arpad said that there is a new utility to add on to the mix which will automatically verify the pieces of Windows programs such as Office Word, etc.

Q: Using Windows 98SE on a Toshiba laptop. When going to their site and attempting to update, he gets an error. "Cannot continue loading the page."

A: May be an issue that Internet Explorer needs to be more current. Go to Microsoft .com to download/install IE version 6 first. Then maybe the error for other updates may be fixed.

Q: Are there any low cost autocad applications? Freeware or shareware?

A: There may be some free CAD programs out there. Try a google search requesting "CAD freeware" and check out the list returned.

Q: Arpad asked: An old Pentium III board. If there is no CD ROM cable attached, it boots just fine. If cable is

attached, it fails. Discovered that the cable was turned around. It would not boot to post.

A: Has heard that a failure to boot happens with a floppy drive, too.

Q: Arpad recently found a news item about MAC – there is a new emulator for PC that runs at 80% utilization: Cherry OS. \$50 download that you then need OSX on top of it. Should then be able to run others – new or old programs. PairPC is an open source emulator but runs very slow 1/500th of the speed. His real goal is to emulate a MAC on a PC for gaming.

RCSi Business Meeting

October 12, 2004

by Jim Murdock

A rpad conducted the business portion of the meeting. Steve and several others contributed.

Annual dues were again discussed. Several members remain in arrears. There will be a Market Pro Computer Show on Saturday, November 20, 2004.

The November meeting will be at the Brighton Library. Arpad will give a presentation titled “Gifts and Gadgets.” Arpad’s similar presentation last year at this time was very well received. No doubt the information he provided on the latest technologies served members well as they sought ideas for the holiday gift-giving season.

Family Tree Maker 11 was presented by Stanley Lochocki. Mr. Lochocki is well qualified to discuss genealogy. He not only has had an intense personal interest in the subject for many years he teaches an eight-session “Introduction to Genealogy” at the Jewish Community Center in Brighton.

The presentation was specifically about Family Tree Maker 11 but Mr. Lochocki noted that many of his comments applied to earlier versions of the program as well as to the latest version titled “Family Tree Maker 2005.”

Mr. Lochocki offered several pointers about documenting your own family tree including the somewhat grim but most important point that as you begin to learn more and more about your family and its past, talk first to the eldest. Not only will they likely know more than the younger members but also they will probably die first. He also noted that you should always record women’s maiden names.

Family Tree Maker makes the process of recording your findings both relatively easy and extremely thorough. The program provides for entry of all names, dates of birth and death as you might expect. It even allows you to geographically display on a national map, for instance, the location and juxta-osition of selected family members. It also provides for entry of document images such as photos and birth and death certificates and other sources of your information. Mr. Lochocki emphasized that you must continually back up your work and make two or more copies of your backups.

There are many sources of genealogical information. The program itself gives you good direction in that

regard. The Internet is a vast source of genealogical information and can be very helpful. Ancestry.com was one site he mentioned as well as “Cindy’s List.” However, Mr. Lochocki noted that there are several local sources of good information such as libraries such as the Rundell in Rochester.

In closing, Mr. Lochocki noted that while there is much work involved in genealogy, it is an enjoyable and rewarding endeavor that will be very much appreciated by your family, as well as by generations to come.

New Users Notes

by John McMillan

While Bill Statt was setting up his laptop and the projector, I mentioned that the .Mid to .Wav format conversion problem had been resolved. After countless hours of investigation, Audacity was downloaded to a different computer and was able to make the conversion successfully.

The first question of the October meeting was about storing files to a floppy disk. From the File Menu, select Save As which opens a dialogue box of the same name. There is a box at the top of the dialogue box followed by some icons. If the box does not say My Computer, click the yellow folder with an upward pointing arrow until it does. All of the drives on the computer will be listed in the block below. Left click the floppy drive and verify that its name replaces My Computer in the upper box. At the bottom of the dialogue box type in the desired file name; select a file type from the choices in the next section; then click Save. Floppy disks have limited capacity so there will be a message to warn you if the file you are attempting to save exceeds the available space. If you want to verify your actions, open Windows Explorer; then open the floppy drive in the left pane and check for the file in the right pane. If you have used Explorers View Menu to select Details, you can see not only the File Name and Extension but it’s Size, File Type, Date Last Modified and Attributes in a list format.

A user attempted to burn a CD with a folder of pictures taken on his vacation but got a message that there was not enough space. Nero, like many burning processes, has parallel double paned windows with the target in the left pane and the source on the right. The source window, named File Browser, both looks and acts like Windows Explorer. When the source folder is too large, it should be opened so files can be selected in the right pane. After clicking the first choice, multiple files can be selected in one of two ways: scrolling down and holding down the Shift Key while clicking another file will select that file and all those in between; or, holding down the Control key while clicking other files will select all of the files clicked whether they are consecutive or not. The selected group can be dragged to the target as a unit. If the size shown in the target window is too large, start over selecting a smaller group from the source window.

A user tried to remove a program from his computer

using the associated uninstall. The .Exe file disappeared but help and other small files were left on the machine so he wondered if they should be deleted. Bill suggested going to add/remove programs to see if the program was listed and if so removing it. If it did not show up it would be safe to delete the help .Txt files but other file types such as .DLL should be left alone since they are small but could be shared with other programs. Deleting shared .DLL's would cause other programs to fail. An even safer method would be to reinstall the program and then use add/remove programs to remove it.

Another attendee asked if the help folder was empty as is sometimes the case. This could be checked in Windows Explorer. Bill opened Windows Explorer on his laptop to demonstrate several things. Folders in the left pane (labeled folders) with a plus sign in front of them have sub folders. Clicking the plus sign expands the left pane to show those sub folders and converts the sign to a minus without affecting the right pane. Clicking a minus sign will remove the sub folders from the view and convert the sign back to a plus without affecting the right pane. Clicking the Folder Name in the left pane will show it's sub folders, if any, and its files in the right pane. If Details was selected in Explorer's View Menu the File Name, Extension, Size, File Type, Date Last Modified and Attributes are shown in a list format. If nothing is shown in the right side the folder is empty and could be deleted either by dragging the selected folder to the Recycle Bin or by using the Delete command in the File Menu.

The next question was how to save a text document with an embedded picture without losing the picture while retaining the ability to modify the text. He did not want to save as an HTML file or as screen shot so he tried selecting the text and saving that; saving the picture as a .JPG and then pasting the .JPG into the text in a word processor but the picture converted to a .BMP file, significantly larger than the .JPG version. Bill mentioned a program called Screen Print Platinum that had some desirable features for saving a user defined portion of multi paged documents. However they were saved as .JPG's and the text could not be modified in a word processor. Bill opened a word processor on his laptop and typed in some gibberish before saving the file. Then he opened a .JPG file and used an Insert – Picture from File command which appeared to work properly. The user would try that process at home.

A Free Cell player, running Windows 98, asked if there was any way to slow down the computers actions while playing the game. Bill mentioned that when Free Cell is played on a computer running the Linux operating system the card movements are much more detailed but the player did not want that level of detail. Bill showed Windows XP's taskmgr that can display graphs of CPU usage plus other information. For Windows 98, he suggested going to Start Programs Accessories System Tools and Monitor Meter, System Information or System Monitor to look for Information about the resources in use. Another user asked if simultaneously running

several applications in the background would reduce the machine cycles available to Free Cell, thereby slowing it down.

Bill was then asked to bring up Stinger that only looks for code that attacks anti virus software. The user said his version listed 42 viruses, Trojan horses or other problems and asked how to delete them because his virus checker did not find any of them. He had mistaken the list that Stinger checks for as an indication of things found. Bill pointed out where the list of viruses Stinger's checked for, and where the indication of viruses found would appear as well as the way to remove any it finds. The user said that area was always blank which is the way you want it. Bill also mentioned that Norton's subscribers can go to the Norton web site and have them scan your computer to see that the Anti Virus software is working properly.

Bill went on to cite a case where security did not get meticulous attention resulting in the computer taking up to 4 minutes for actions to execute. It took forever to load Ad Aware, Spybot, AVG anti virus, and Stinger from a CD that he had burned. Ad Aware found 2,671 pieces of spyware on the machine which he eliminated before Spybot found another 158 problems that required the machine to be restarted in Safe Mode. The entire clean up process took over three hours. Bill cautioned internet browsers to be sure to use these tools frequently and to also use the Zone Alarm firewall. Zone Alarm logs have shown him as many as 6 attacks in an hour of internet browsing, and has alerted him to the presence of SVCHOST, a part of Windows Explorer, that wanted to go to the internet. Investigation showed that a program collecting keystrokes was being prevented from exporting the data to China. Since the keystrokes were used, they would by pass encryption processes used in transmitting data to "safe" internet sites, possibly giving away credit card and bank account numbers plus passwords. Bill asked if any users in the group had downloaded the Road Runner's newly available free Firewall and Antivirus. He found that the firewall was Zone Alarm Pro and the anti virus software (named EZsecure) was also from Zone Alarm and everything has worked well. A user asked if the Road Runner Anti Virus would interfere with McAfee and Bill responded that running any two Anti Virus programs does not work because each sees the other definitions as viruses.

During the discussion, Bill indicated that worms and Trojans are a bigger problem these days than viruses. They have often been attached to internet sites so if you find and eliminate one on your machine, revisiting the website reinfects your computer. A Hotmail user had found that some E-mailed Newsletters include links that result in a message "Your E-mail address has been idle and this link has become inactive. To access the link, close the window, return to your message. Then click the browser's Refresh button or close your message and reopen it." Following the instructions did not open a virus but reopening the newsletter resulted in the same

message. This was thought to be a Hotmail problem since it healed itself after several days. While trying to resolve this problem, the user danced Nick's tango. Since he is running Windows XP, he turned off System Restore and ran Stinger, Adaware and Spy Bot all of which came up clean. He updated his Norton's Antivirus program and definitions several times until there was a note "No further updates". When he ran the scan, there was a message, "Norton's Anti Virus has found 1 infected file and zero at risk files. Norton's Anti Virus fixed zero infections." There was a file name for the virus found which he screen printed. It was described as a Trojan horse but the repair failed so he quarantine the file. He typed in the file name and checked out the site given but the file could not be found. Bill thought that the original E-mail site had been replicated and a virus added. By running Norton's the virus was eliminated before it could do any damage. He mentioned getting a number of Microsoft security alerts but he was sure that Microsoft does not send out such messages. He also receives returned mail notices which, Road Runner identifies as a virus when they are opened in Linux. As a result he does not open any unsolicited mail from companies or return mail messages.

Another user asked about backup procedures when some files changed frequently and others infrequently. Photographs comprise a large portion of the storage which does not change so they could be burned to CD's by year. He was considering burning other files to a rewritable disk. Bill mentioned that continually rewriting disks tends to wear them down and that writing a changed file to a disk does not overwrite the previous version. He suggested not closing the session and pointed out that up to 30 megabytes of files could be transferred to a new folder once a month to provide a unique file path. In that way a years worth of backups would fit on a single disk. The discussion turned to external storage sources like jump drives and self powered hard drives. Large size hard drives that connect through a USB2 or Firewire port, are coming down in price and provide a reliable back up. Gene Barlow's article on backups in the October *Monitor* was mentioned as another source of ideas.

An Open Office user was trying to download a 10 page document from the web but got a message that Open Office cannot communicate with the web. One of the download choices was Adobe, that results in a document he can see on the screen but could not print. He did not say whether he tried to use the Acrobat's File Menu, Print command. It was suggested that while in Adobe Reader, he click the Edit Menu Select All Copy to put the document on the clipboard. Then use the Edit Menu, Paste command in Open Office or some other word processor so it could be printed. In tests at home using Acrobat Reader 3.0, both the Edit Menu Select All command and trying to scroll while holding the mouse down would only put one page at a time on the clipboard. Bill thought downloading version 6.0 of Adobe Reader would solve the problem.

Bill Statt will chair the next meeting at 6:30 pm, November 2nd in the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road.

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 9/21/04	\$777.06
Income	
Dues and donations	\$232.00
Expenses	
Postmaster	\$50.00
St. Stephens	<u>75.00</u>
	\$125.00
Balance as of 10/19/04	\$884.06

Renewing this month: Bob Best, David Hassett, Sharon Jones, Floyd Matteson, Roger Deltony, and Tom Thompson.

Planning Meeting Minutes

by Steve Staub

The Program meeting was good and had excellent attendance. We have programs and the Brighton Library booked through January. The copier at St. Stephens is still working but we are looking for a replacement for when it goes.

The *Monitor* is available free each month at the following computer shops. Visit one of them for your computer needs.

Computer Renaissance

376 Jefferson Rd. Rochester 14623
585-424-2050
www.RochesterCR.com

EDI Tech

231 Ridge Rd. W. Rochester 14615
585-254-8580
service@edi-tech.com

Just Solutions

7300 Pittsford-Palmyra Rd. Fairport 14450
585-425-3420
info@justinc.com

Maven Technologies, LLC (2 locations)

the Mall at Greece Ridge Center and
1144 Lexington Ave. Rochester NY 14606
585-458-2460
www.maventech.com

Microworx (2 locations)

793 S. Goodman St. Rochester 14620
585-271-0050
www.microworx.com
3259 Winton Rd. S. Rochester 14623
585-427-0880
www.microworx.com

Mom's Computers

Rolling Hills Country Mall Bethany Center
Rd. Bethany NY
585-237-5641

scoutdr@aol.com

Rochester Computer Recycling & Recovery (RCR&R)

395 Central Ave. Rochester 14605

585-546-6620

www.rochestercomputer .com

Tab Systems

121 Park Ave. Rochester 14607

585-244-5040

www.tabsystems.com

The Lighter Side

Helpdesk: What kind of computer do you have?

Customer: A white one....

Hi, this is Celine. I can't get my diskette out.

Helpdesk: Have you tried pushing the button?

Customer: Yes, sure, it's really stuck.

Helpdesk: That doesn't sound good; I'll make a note ..."

Customer: No ... wait a minute... I hadn't inserted it yet...
it's still on my desk... sorry.

Helpdesk: Click on the 'my computer' icon on to the left of
the screen.

Customer: Your left or my left?

Helpdesk: Good day. How may I help you?

Male customer: Hello... I can't print.

Helpdesk: Would you click on start for me and ...

Customer: Listen pal; don't start getting technical on me!
I'm not Bill Gates damn it!

Hi good afternoon, this is Martha, I can't print. Every
time I try it says 'Can't find printer'. I've even lifted the
printer and placed it in front of the monitor, but the
computer still says he can't find it.

Customer: I have problems printing in red.

Helpdesk: Do you have a color printer?

Customer: Aaaah . . . thank you.

Helpdesk: What's on your monitor now ma'am?

Customer: A teddy bear my boyfriend bought for me in
the supermarket.

Helpdesk: And now hit F8.

Customer: It's not working.

Helpdesk: What did you do, exactly?

Customer: I hit the F-key 8-times as you told me, but
nothing's happening...

Customer: My keyboard is not working.

Helpdesk: Are you sure it's plugged into the computer?

Customer: No. I can't get behind the computer.

Helpdesk: Pick up your keyboard and walk 10 paces back.

Customer: OK

Helpdesk: Did the keyboard come with you?

Customer: Yes

Helpdesk: That means the keyboard is not plugged in. Is
there another keyboard?

Customer: Yes, there's another one here. Ah... that one
does work!

Helpdesk: Your password is the small letter a as in
apple, a capital letter V as in Victor, the number 7.

Customer: Is that 7 in capital letters?

A customer couldn't get on the internet.

Helpdesk: Are you sure you used the right password?

Customer: Yes I'm sure. I saw my colleague do it.

Helpdesk: Can you tell me what the password was?

Customer: Five stars.