

## Posh Tech

by Sheri Zorzi  
*APCUG Advisor*

Do you remember when owning a home computer or a cell phone was a luxury? Those days are gone and now such technology is considered a standard necessity families rather than a luxury in most. There is still room for luxury in technology, though, as I saw at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas last month.

Perhaps the biggest-selling luxury tech item these days is plasma TV. You can have your big picture without filling the living room with a huge piece of ugly equipment. These babies are only inches thick! Samsung showed an 80-inch plasma that is guaranteed to impress, with a price tag rumored to be \$45,000. A status symbol if I ever saw one.

Such large, thin screens make the idea of a true home theater experience ever more enticing. You can build a home theater with a wide screen, surround-sound, and tiered theater-style chairs with cup holders. I sat in one such chair equipped with (no kidding!) ButtKicker® technology, a “silent subwoofer” that allows you to feel powerful bass without excessive volume. Home automation technology can even be programmed to have the house light slowly dim out as the movie starts and then slowly come back up as the movie ends.

For much more affordable luxury entertainment, there are MP3 players. Apple’s iPod is the best-known but there are literally hundreds of brands of these tiny personal digital music players. You can add fancy cases, docking stations with speakers, or car adaptors that allow you to play through the car’s stereo speakers and switch playlists using your CD changer’s controls.

Satellite radio is not new, but it’s going portable now. XM Satellite Radio has several models of its XM2GO coming out this spring at about \$350. It’s only a matter of time, I think, before someone combines the portable satellite radio receiver with an MP3 player, putting all 200 channels of streaming radio plus every song you’ve ripped from every CD you own right in your hand or pocket.

Even the kitchen has gone high-tech. Tonight’s Menu Intelligent Oven by TMIO, Inc. is a refrigerator-oven combination that can be controlled over the Internet or any web-enabled device such as a handheld PDA or cell phone. You can put the casserole or roast in the oven on the refrigerator setting when you leave for work and have the conventional or convection oven preheat itself at a preset time, cook the meal, and then keep it warm until you are ready to serve. If you are delayed you can adjust the refrigerator-oven settings from any web connection. It comes in double-oven model only and costs \$7,500.

Do you strain to hear the Weather Channel’s forecast from the bathroom every morning while you brush your teeth? You might enjoy a Mirror TV from Phillips. It’s a two-way mirror with an LCD screen behind it. When the

LCD is activated you see the TV picture; when it’s turned off you see your reflection. One model has the TV part in the lower half while the upper half remains mirror. Phillips estimates the price for a 17-inch Mirror TV will be around \$2,500.

Making all this technology stylish is another new luxury niche for technology manufacturers. Textra and Inclosia both showed molded accessories and cases for cell phones, PDAs, MP3 players and notebook computers that include leather, wood and other luxury materials molded right into the device. Today a laptop computer can look like a dreamy designer handbag.

Whoever imagined that someday geeks could be trendy, stylish, and posh?!

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## Review

### DVD and CD Burning Software

by Ira Wilsker  
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At present, virtually all new desktop computers, and most new notebook computers come with a DVD burner. Almost all DVD burners also burn CDs, and with the price of DVD burners plunging, CD-only burners are approaching obsolescence. As I type this, one of the local office supply stores has a decent 16x dual-format (both “+” and “-“ formats) DVD burner (also burns CDs at 48x speed) for \$59.95 without a rebate. The price of blank DVD media is also approaching that of blank CD discs, despite DVD discs having about seven times the capacity, confirming that DVD will be the dominate media well into the future.

Most new computers and DVD burners come with a version of software typically referred to as “LE” Limited Edition, “LT” Light Edition, “SE” Special Edition, or some other often less than full featured software bundle. The software included with the burners is adequate for most basic tasks, but often lacks the power and full features available on the complete versions of the software. Concerns about burning hardware – software compatibility are virtually moot, as burners and software have become substantially compatible, meaning that almost all new burning software will work with almost all new DVD and CD drives.

If a user wants to edit DVD video, edit audio, backup a hard drive to DVD, or perform additional sophisticated tasks, the typical software bundled with the drives is

often lacking those advanced features. A quick review of local stores shows that there are several titles of burning software available from such companies as NTI, Roxio, Nero, Sonic, InterVideo, and others. Software can be purchased a' la' carte, where separate burning, editing, and backup titles can be purchased individually, or the software can be purchased in a suite containing multiple functions, often at a significant savings to the user.

I have tried several of the suites available, and all did an adequate job as advertised on their boxes. All performed the basic burning functions on CDs and both formats of DVD very well, and all offered some form of video editing. Most contained some form of backup utility to enable the user to make backups of his hard drive to CD, DVD, external drive, or other media. Some offered audio editing and dubbing, CD ripping, slideshows, and other features. For most users, any of the suites would be adequate.

In the trials I conducted, one particular suite stood out above the rest, NTI's "CD & DVD Maker 7 Titanium" ([www.ntius.com](http://www.ntius.com)). This suite, which retails for about \$80 (street price around \$60), was one of the easiest to use, most compatible with a variety of drives, and most comprehensive suite available at any price. It can perform almost all of the tasks that DVD and CD burners are capable of doing. Using a USB2 external TV tuner connected to my TV cable, I was able to use this software to view and record shows. While trying to burn more MP3 music files to a CD than the single CD would hold, the Titanium's disk spanning feature offered to organize the music, and burn it to multiple CDs.

In the years I have been writing this column, I have been a strong proponent of frequently backing up hard drives. One of the cliché's used to explain this concept is referred to as "Murphy's First Law of Computing – A properly backed up hard drive will never fail, but a hard drive not backed up will always fail at the most inopportune time." Titanium contains a full version of NTI's renowned "Backup Now" software. I have used Backup Now for a few years, and have been very happy with it. It is capable of backing up hard drives to almost any media, from CDs, to DVDs, to an external hard drive (my personal choice). Backup Now can perform full backups, selective backups, or incremental backups. My recommendation is to do a full backup periodically, and frequent incremental backups. This process is fast and efficient, because incremental backups only backup files that are new or modified since the last backup. If a restore is needed, files can be selected individually, or entire directories can be restored. In the event of a catastrophic hard drive failure, a full restore will write all of the files to the new hard drive.

Some of us take too much video with our digital camcorders. In order to make the video reasonably viewable, it must be edited, and Titanium has a fully functional video editing utility, which uses a story board format to edit videos. With a little practice, a user can produce professional appearing DVDs complete with

titles, special effects, and other details to improve the viewing pleasure.

Sometimes the audio on a CD or video is not as we want it. This software has a wave editor, which uses an oscilloscope type image to easily enable cutting, inserting, fading, echoing, and other audio editing to provide the audio desired.

For the professional appearance, Titanium also has a jewel case and label maker which can produce professional appearing inserts for standard jewel cases, and print labels directly to the disc or appropriate label paper.

For under \$80, NTI CD & DVD MAKER 7 TITANIUM is a very worthwhile addition for any user of a DVD or CD burner.



## From The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click  
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**M**y wife and I worked some great trade shows lately and they just keep coming. We worked some real estate shows that didn't have spectacular exhibits, but they did have great speakers. Since we worked security for the production crew putting together the great entertainment for attendees, we met all the celebrities when they came in back stage. My wife got a nice greeting from Dr. Phil McGraw and we met Tony Robins (famous motivational speaker), Brooks Robinson (Ball player), James Brolin (Marcus Welby, MD. and Hotel) and Katie Curic. The most interesting thing in the exhibit hall was, two guys sculpting a giant sandcastle, which was impressive. They worked the entire show doing it.

Among others, we worked the PMA (Photo Marketing Assn. show). [<http://www.pmai.org>] It was a great show with over 29,000 attendees. All the great names in photography, hardware, cameras and software were there with fantastic booths. Plenty of very large printers were being demonstrated also. Unfortunately I had personal business and ended up with little time to browse that show. The Panasonic booth had a wonderful scale model village as a simulated winter snow scene. It had all the usual old time village buildings and vehicles, some small rotating carnival rides, moving ice skaters on a simulated ice rink, moving snow skiers, a working train and other working models. It was very impressive in about a 12-foot square area. Lights came on in buildings and streetlights when nighttime was simulated. The person setting it up told us he could put one in our living room if we liked, but we told him we didn't have room. (money either)

One day I was entering the show floor and Jerry Stephens from Toronto Users Group yelled at me. You probably remember him from the days when he was active in APCUG. We had little time to talk, but it was sure nice to see him.

The Nikon booth had eight young people dressed in bright yellow jump suits and riding yellow electric scooters all around outside the building greeting people. They were giving out yellow candies on a card inviting folks to visit the Nikon booth and get in on the daily drawings for fabulous prizes. Another booth was giving away USB flash drives, which is getting more common all the time.

Best of all, we worked the Home Electronics Expo [<http://www.ehxweb.com>], one of my favorites. Talk about a candy store venue; that was it for me. I saw many cabling, switching and speaker booths along with companies for planning your digitally controlled house. There were speakers in all kinds of configurations that could blend into the decor of your house or garden and patio; for example, some looked like a rock [<http://www.stereostone.com>].

In one booth they had a luxury easy chair with a controller that was precoded for over 680 movies (1-888-442-3269). Just pop in your favorite movie on a DVD and the console recognizes the movie and creates the sensations quite realistically for what you are seeing on screen while in that easy chair. It even simulates a bumpy road and only six grand for it all. I often sleep through a movie so that wouldn't work well for me. My proofreader wondered how the chair handled the bullets in a shooting scene, or a steamy sex scene.

I saw door locks controlled by a sensor that could recognize your thumbprint to open the lock, then the same sensor could recognize another fingerprint to open or close your garage door [<http://www.ekeyUSA.com>]. I may have a deal on them. Another company had technology to track all use of locks in your company and who used them, putting the data on a Web site that could be easily tracked from anywhere by the proper person.

I loved the Panasonic doorbell that had a camera in the button panel. When a presence is sensed, it turns itself on along with a light, if needed, and you could see who was there on a small LCD monitor inside. The entire person was visible, even at close range. That will be out in July and I want one [<http://www.panasonic.com/CSD>]. I didn't see them on the Web site, but maybe soon.

There was a booth with weather stations that were elaborate and looked very sturdy. It looked to be more of a commercial unit and they used a computer monitor for the stats [<http://www.weatherhawk.com>]. They had an attachment that would verbally tell you what you wanted to know, including "please shut your windows as rain is imminent." I saw dozens of big screen plasma and LCD monitors, and TVs. The one that impressed me most was the NEC 61" plasma screen. It was so sharp and crystal clear that it almost looked three-dimensional.

There was just too much to write about in this article, but you can take a look at the show's Web site to see the exhibitor list. It was not a large show, but certainly a good one with about 9,000 attendees. I had notified several editors who asked me to e-mail them it was coming again after I wrote about it last year, but didn't

run into them. The NCSA (National Systems Contractors Assn.) show [<http://www.nasca.org>]. will be here March 10 and I hope to at least explore it. I'm told it's a similar type of show, except mostly for contractors and installers.

#### **Another Deal From Gene and Linda Barlow:**

User Group Relations has another interesting and helpful product for you. These days our computer life is chuck full of ID and passwords and we are urged to change them frequently. So how do you remember them all? You could write them all down and hide the list under your mouse pad <G>, or you could get smart and use MyPasswordVault by WhiteCanyon Software to store all those IDs and passwords and keep them at your disposal. Linda sent me the product just before deadline so I haven't tried it yet, but I will soon because it has some great features. Make life easier with this unique product and use the discount offered to users group members to buy it for just \$15.00 (MSRP \$25.00). Go to [<http://www.usergroupstore.com>] and use the special code UGDEALS to order.

#### **Attention Gamers!**

NevoSoft announces a new space shooter /puzzler game below: (edited so check their Web site) "SAINT PETERSBURG, Russia. - January 27, 2005: NevoSoft is proud to announce the release of Zzed, the latest version of an electrifying space shooter mixed with lots of action, adventure and puzzle. Zzed will put the player into the spaceship and take on a tough galactic mission with over 60 levels to win. With superb cartoon graphics, exhilarating gameplay and original music, Zzed will be the ultimate source of enjoyment for kids and parents alike.

"The game comes to life as Zzed, a young and ambitious alien, has been sent on a special mission by his corrupted boss, Mr. Zzapone. There, in the backwoods of the galaxy Zzed will have to protect the space foundries of his boss from vast space garbage fields. However, the real reason of the mission is Zzapone's fear that Zzed will throw him down the corporate throne. Zzed leaves home with a heavy heart as the assignment separates him from his beloved alien sweetheart. To win the ticket back home, Zzed has to remove all space garbage from around the galaxy."

"Zzed is not all about shooting. The game will also challenge your reaction and thinking, said Alexey Serebrov, CEO of NevoSoft. "As you go from level to level, the speed of garbage fields increases. Therefore, you will have to act fast and smart.

"Availability: Zzed runs under Windows 98/Me /2000/XP and costs \$19.95 (USD). Registered customers are entitled to the unlocked gameplay, free updates and lifetime technical support. An evaluation version of the game limited to the 40-minute gameplay is available for free at: [[http://www.nevosoft.com/zzed/zzed\\_demo.exe](http://www.nevosoft.com/zzed/zzed_demo.exe)]. For more information, visit us at [<http://www.nevosoft.com>]. Use a 10% discount for purchasing the game for user group members. Just use coupon - ZZED-3B51 - during ordering process and you get the game only for \$17.95 (instead of \$19.95). Or you may simply order

discounted Zzed through this link: [[https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?&ss\\_coupon=ZZED-3B51&item=8323-15](https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?&ss_coupon=ZZED-3B51&item=8323-15)] We didn't see the discount coupon working yet, so you may have to e-mail them as I had no time to contact them at this point. Sorry!

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](mailto:bobclick@mindspring.com)]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>].

## O'Reilly Wants Our Help Again

**I**t's the Mother of all Annoyances: Windows. Specifically, Windows XP. So naturally, we're doing a book called "Windows XP Annoyances" and we'd like your help!

We're looking for your gripes, complaints, hassles, and other frustrations with Microsoft's favorite OS. Billions of people use Windows, and we want to help them...and your help would be much appreciated. We'll be covering XP in all its flavors (including XP with Service Packs 1 and 2, Windows Media Center Edition), and in all its settings, (from standalone PCs to running on a WiFi network).

If any members of your group have annoyances they'd like to see solved, have them email [marsee@oreilly.com](mailto:marsee@oreilly.com) with "Windows XP Annoyances" in the subject line. Just have them note which version of XP they're using (with SP1? SP2! Windows Media Center Edition?)

As thanks for sharing, we'll make sure to get copies of "Windows XP Annoyances" sent to your group shortly after publication.

### An example of an Annoyance:

Lock Numbers Out, Arrow Keys In

**The Annoyance:** I use the keys on the number keypad for navigation, never for numbers. I'm tired of clicking NumLock to turn the function off.

**The Fix:** You can turn it off in your PC's CMOS Setup program, but there are two quicker, easier ways to do it:

\*For a permanent fix, edit the Registry (once you've backed it up). From the Start menu, click Run, type `regedit`, press Enter, and navigate your way to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ControlPanel\Keyboard`. Double-click InitialKeyboard Indicators in the right pane, and change the value to 2. Close RegEdit.

\*If you don't want to fiddle with the Registry – or if you want a handy way to toggle NumLock on and off – use the `numlock.vbs` script. You can drag and drop a copy of the file into your Start Menu's Startup Group (hold down the Ctrl key while you drag it) to turn NumLock off when your system boots, and drag a copy to your desktop so you can toggle NumLock back on. Grab a copy from <http://www.oreilly.com/pcannoyances>.

## FTC Names Its Dirty Dozen: 12 Scams Most Likely to Arrive Via Bulk Email

**E**mail boxes are filling up with more offers for business opportunities than any other kind of unsolicited commercial email. That's a problem, according to the Federal Trade Commission, because many of these offers are scams.

In response to requests from consumers, the FTC asked email users to forward their unsolicited commercial email to the agency for an inside look at the bulk email business. FTC staff found that more often than not, bulk email offers appeared to be fraudulent, and if pursued, could have ripped-off unsuspecting consumers to the tune of billions of dollars.

The FTC has identified the 12 scams that are most likely to arrive in consumers' email boxes. The "dirty dozen" are:

### 1. Business opportunities

These business opportunities make it sound easy to start a business that will bring lots of income without much work or cash outlay. The solicitations trumpet unbelievable earnings claims of \$140 a day, \$1,000 a day, or more, and claim that the business doesn't involve selling, meetings, or personal contact with others, or that someone else will do all the work. Many business opportunity solicitations claim to offer a way to make money in an Internet-related business. Short on details but long on promises, these messages usually offer a telephone number to call for more information. In many cases, you'll be told to leave your name and telephone number so that a salesperson can call you back with the sales pitch.

The scam: Many of these are illegal pyramid schemes masquerading as legitimate opportunities to earn money.

### 2. Bulk email

Bulk email solicitations offer to sell you lists of email addresses, by the millions, to which you can send your own bulk solicitations. Some offer software that automates the sending of email messages to thousands or millions of recipients. Others offer the service of sending bulk email solicitations on your behalf. Some of these offers say, or imply, that you can make a lot of money using this marketing method.

The problem: Sending bulk email violates the terms of service of most Internet service providers. If you use one of the automated email programs, your ISP may shut you down. In addition, inserting a false return address into your solicitations, as some of the automated programs allow you to do, may land you in legal hot water with the owner of the address's domain name. Several states have laws regulating the sending of unsolicited commercial email, which you may unwittingly violate by sending bulk email. Few legitimate businesses, if any, engage in bulk email marketing for fear of offending potential customers.

### 3. Chain letters

You're asked to send a small amount of money (\$5 to \$20) to each of four or five names on a list, replace one of the names on the list with your own, and then forward the revised message via bulk email. The letter may claim that the scheme is legal, that it's been reviewed or approved by the government; or it may refer to sections of U.S. law that legitimize the scheme. Don't believe it.

The scam: Chain letters-traditional or high-tech are almost always illegal, and nearly all of the people who participate in them lose their money. The fact that a "product" such as a report on how to make money fast, a mailing list, or a recipe may be changing hands in the transaction does not change the legality of these schemes.

### 4. Work-at-home schemes

Envelope-stuffing solicitations promise steady income for minimal labor-for example, you'll earn \$2 each time you fold a brochure and seal it in an envelope. Craft assembly work schemes often require an investment of hundreds of dollars in equipment or supplies, and many hours of your time producing goods for a company that has promised to buy them.

The scam: You'll pay a small fee to get started in the envelope-stuffing business. Then, you'll learn that the email sender never had real employment to offer. Instead, you'll get instructions on how to send the same envelope-stuffing ad in your own bulk emailings. If you earn any money, it will be from others who fall for the scheme you're perpetuating. And after spending the money and putting in the time on the craft assembly work, you are likely to find promoters who refuse to pay you, claiming that your work isn't up to their "quality standards."

### 5. Health and diet scams

Pills that let you lose weight without exercising or changing your diet, herbal formulas that liquefy your fat cells so that they are absorbed by your body, and cures for impotence and hair loss are among the scams flooding email boxes.

The scam: These gimmicks don't work. The fact is that successful weight loss requires a reduction in calories and an increase in physical activity. Beware of case histories from "cured" consumers claiming amazing results; testimonials from "famous" medical experts you've never heard of; claims that the product is available from only one source or for a limited time; and ads that use phrases like "scientific breakthrough," "miraculous cure," "exclusive product," "secret formula," and "ancient ingredient."

### 6. Effortless income

The trendiest get-rich-quick schemes offer unlimited profits exchanging money on world currency markets; newsletters describing a variety of easy-money opportunities; the perfect sales letter; and the secret to making \$4,000 in one day.

The scam: If these systems worked, wouldn't everyone be using them? The thought of easy money may be appealing, but success generally requires hard work.

### 7. Free goods

Some email messages offer valuable goods-for example, computers, other electronic items, and long-distance phone cards-for free. You're asked to pay a fee to join a club, then told that to earn the offered goods, you have to bring in a certain number of participants. You're paying for the right to earn income by recruiting other participants, but your payoff is in goods, not money.

The scam: Most of these messages are covering up pyramid schemes, operations that inevitably collapse. Almost all of the payoff goes to the promoters and little or none to consumers who pay to participate.

### 8. Investment opportunities

Investment schemes promise outrageously high rates of return with no risk. One version seeks investors to help form an offshore bank. Others are vague about the nature of the investment, stressing the rates of return. Many are Ponzi schemes, in which early investors are paid off with money contributed by later investors. This makes the early investors believe that the system actually works, and encourages them to invest even more.

Promoters of fraudulent investments often operate a particular scam for a short time, quickly spend the money they take in, then close down before they can be detected. Often, they reopen under another name, selling another investment scam. In their sales pitch, they'll say that they have high-level financial connections; that they're privy to inside information; that they'll guarantee the investment; or that they'll buy back the investment after a certain time. To close the deal, they often serve up phony statistics, misrepresent the significance of a current event, or stress the unique quality of their offering-anything to deter you from verifying their story.

The scam: Ponzi schemes eventually collapse because there isn't enough money coming in to continue simulating earnings. Other schemes are a good investment for the promoters, but no for participants.

### 9. Cable descrambler kits

For a small sum of money, you can buy a kit to assemble a cable descrambler that supposedly allows you to receive cable television transmissions without paying any subscription fee.

The scam: The device that you build probably won't work. Most of the cable TV systems in the U.S. use technology that these devices can't crack. What's more, even if it worked, stealing service from a cable television company is illegal.

### 10. Guaranteed loans or credit, on easy terms

Some email messages offer home-equity loans that don't require equity in your home, as well as solicitations for guaranteed, unsecured credit cards, regardless of your credit history. Usually, these are said to be offered by offshore banks. Sometimes they are combined with pyramid schemes, which offer you an opportunity to

make money by attracting new participants to the scheme.

The scams: The home equity loans turn out to be useless lists of lenders who will turn you down if you don't meet their qualifications. The promised credit cards never come through, and the pyramid money-making schemes always collapse.

#### 11. Credit repair

Credit repair scams offer to erase accurate negative information from your credit file so you can qualify for a credit card, auto loan, home mortgage, or a job.

The scam: The scam artists who promote these services can't deliver. Only time, a deliberate effort, and a personal debt repayment plan will improve your credit. The companies that advertise credit repair services appeal to consumers with poor credit histories. Not only can't they provide you with a clean credit record, but they also may be encouraging you to violate federal law. If you follow their advice by lying on a loan or credit application, misrepresenting your Social Security number, or getting an Employer Identification Number from the Internal Revenue Service under false pretenses, you will be committing fraud.

#### 12. Vacation prize promotions

Electronic certificates congratulating you on "winning" a fabulous vacation for a very attractive price are among the scams arriving in your email. Some say you have been "specially selected" for this opportunity.

The scam: Most unsolicited commercial email goes to thousands or millions of recipients at a time. Often, the cruise ship you're booked on may look more like a tug boat. The hotel accommodations likely are shabby, and you may be required to pay more for an upgrade. Scheduling the vacation at the time you want it also may require an additional fee.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them.

To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

## The Wonder of the Current Computer Hardware Transitions

by Timothy Everingham  
TUGNET, [www.tugnet.org](http://www.tugnet.org)

**W**hen we have been changing computer hardware standards frequently, it has been one thing at a time. At other times those in authority say that

if we are going to change one thing let's get some other changes done too. We are going through much more of the latter right now.

The thing that is more in the forefront of change currently is the move from PCI and AGP motherboard card slots to PCI Express (PCIe). PCI Express also changes the way data is transferred (serial rather than parallel) and has more intelligent data traffic management. This puts you in the position of having to decide whether to migrate to the AGP and PCI cards when upgrading to a new processor and motherboard or buying a new computer, something that is more of a problem if you recently paid a lot of money for a high end AGP graphics card or have a specialized PCI card where there is no equivalent PCIe card available. However, there are motherboards currently available that have both old and new type slots.

On the other hand you could go to the other extreme by buying a computer with the new NVIDIA SLI system. That is a motherboard with two PCIe graphics slots where you can run two NVIDIA graphics cards in parallel to get a 3D graphics performance boost similar to what was done to the old 3dfx Voodoo 2. We also started a shift last spring from Sockets 940 and 754 to Socket 939 for AMD 64 bit processors (Socket A remains for 32 Bit AMD processors) and from Socket 478 to 775 for Intel Pentium 4 processors, which also limits your upgrade options. Dual core processors, which have two CPUs on one chip, will be coming out for workstations, servers, and desktops in the second half of this year. Support for dual core processors will come from more of a BIOS change than socket change; however, some motherboards will be able to support dual core processors by upgrading your flash BIOS, but others will not. We also are making the transition from DDR to DDR2 system RAM, and some motherboards only support DDR2.

Now you think you have had enough. I am nowhere near finished. We now have a new power supply standard too. ATX Power Supply 2.01 is in process of replacing ATX Power Supply 1.3. Newer motherboards have different power connectors now. The new connector has 24 pins rather than the old one with 20. There have been adapters for the 1.3 power connectors to fit 2.01 compliant motherboards, but now we are going to move to adapters for 2.01 power supplies to fit into 1.3 compliant motherboards. Some motherboards and power supplies had AUX connectors, but the new standard does away with that. One thing that is nice with the new standard is that having SATA drive power connectors is now mandatory rather than optional. Also power supplies under the new standard are supposed to be more efficient. Nevertheless be aware that some power supply manufacturers have been exaggerating the capacity of their power supplies.

However, this new power supply standard is just a step in another transition, the move from the ATX motherboard and case design standards to BTX design standards. I say standards because there are three

different BTX motherboard design formats: BTX, Micro-BTX, and Pico BTX. BTX replaces the standard ATX motherboards, with MicroBTX going against the Mini-ATX motherboards and PicoBTX goes against the ITX motherboards. Part of the reasons for the change is to redesign the airflows in the case to get rid of all heat generated by the latest processors.

The airflow of BTX designs is from the front of the computer straight through to the back of the computer rather than typical lower front intake with exhaust in the upper back. The CPU has been repositioned towards the front of the computer so it gets the cool air first. That means a redesign of the power supply to a new BTX standard. Also a thermal module has replaced the standard CPU heat sink and fan. It takes a more global approach in covering the highest heat producing components sitting on the motherboard, including the CPU. Intel is the one who is pushing this because their Pentium 4s have higher clock speeds than an equivalent AMD Athlon 64 chip, which means they produce higher heat. There is so much heat that Intel had to abandon their goal of producing a 4 GHz Pentium 4 chip. As such AMD is not in such pressure to move to BTX, so BTX motherboards supporting AMD processors will be a few months behind those supporting Intel processors. The first BTX motherboards just recently came out, and should become dominate in 2006.

What does all this mean? By the second half of 2005 if you have a computer that is more than one year old it will probably be better to get an entire new computer rather than upgrade. This puts into motion another round of the old computer becoming the backup computer and the old backup computer becoming a boat anchor, flowerpot, or for the more adventurous: Christmas or Chanukah display control system for the whole house and yard. However, because there are so many changes with these transitions that many people will get a new computer sooner than normal, resulting in some of the retiring old backup computers being new enough to where nonprofit organizations and schools may want them. As such the probability is that not just those selling computers and computer components benefit from the chaos caused by this round of the wonder of computer hardware transitions.

*Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. He is a member of TUGNET. Further information can be found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>.*

## PDF Tip

by Kim Komando

**Q.** I need to enter information into a large group of Adobe Acrobat PDF files. I cannot buy a major program to do so. So right now, I am writing the information on the documents that I print by hand. This takes time I do not

have. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

**A.** I bet it is taking a bunch of time! Let me try to help you out.

The latest release of Adobe's free Acrobat Reader, version 7.0, will let you to fill out forms and make some changes to PDF files. It will even allow you to attach voice notes to the PDF file!

Before you too excited, there is a catch. The PDF file must be created in the full version of Acrobat 7.0 Professional, and the option to make changes to it via Reader must be enabled.

Since Acrobat 7.0 has only been available a short time, it is a long shot to assume you will be able to complete your forms with the free Acrobat Reader. However, if someone sends you PDF forms frequently, suggest they use version 7.0 of the software.

Alternatively, you can try a program that fits your budget. The widely available Adobe Acrobat Professional works well, but it is \$450. Cha-ching! Further, it has many features that you will not need.

When you are looking at programs that work with PDF files, you need to know some terms. If a program claims that it will "create" documents, this means it can save a Word document or another type of file as a PDF file.

This is not the same as "editing," which you need. Unless a program says that it can edit a PDF file or allow you to type on it, it more than likely does not have that capability.

There are many different editing programs available. Fortunately, you can try before you buy. Here are three to check out.

PDFfill Form Filler with Writer and Tools, \$9.95 <http://www.pdfill.com/>

ScanSoft PDF Converter, \$49 <http://www.scansoft.com/pdfconverter/standard/>

CutePDF offer Form Filler, \$29.95 <http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/Filler.asp>

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## Does Your UPS Really Work?

by Dennis Schulman

Tampa Bay Computer Society

**F**or all of you concerned and wise purchasers of a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Source), please don't rest on your laurels too long. Most purchasers are not really certain how effective the UPS is and probably have never tested it except to notice that when the house lights blinked or went off, the computer stayed on.

The question you should be asking yourself is: How long will the UPS continue to provide stable power? If you have the UPS on all the time (even when you have turned the computer and monitor off) it should be fully charged. If you turned off the UPS like you turn off the

computer and monitor, the UPS would start discharging over time. Assuming you have a fully charged UPS, set your timer, pull the plug on the UPS and start using the computer – playing a game or something that will not require saving something important.

The amount of time the UPS will last is based on the approximate specification of the UPS as it relates to the load it is supporting. Technically, the load should only be for the computer, monitor, and the powered speakers. Everything else should be on surge protector connections only (not to exceed the limit as specified by the UPS manufacturer).

Think about it. Replacement UPS batteries are cheap and easy to replace. If you bought the UPS, you must be concerned about your work. Doesn't it make sense to make sure there are no surprises?

*Known as the "PC Miracle Man," Dennis has been a practicing field consultant in Largo, Florida, for over 23 years. He has been a member of the Tampa Bay Computer Society for over 15 years and was editor of the then-printed newsletter for 5 years. He can be contacted at dschulman@myrapidsys.com*

## In search of "VCR for Radio"

by Frank Bollinger  
*ORCOPUG*

I recently began recording radio programs on my computer. Here's how it happened. This story began more than 40 years ago when I became addicted to talk radio. Over the ensuing years, I've enjoyed many hours of entertaining and informative programs. Topic oriented shows about personal finance, law, cars, and (of course) computers filled the weekends. Hog heaven until the radio stations rearranged their schedules. When the dust settled, three of my favorites were on simultaneously. On top of that, I'm also a baseball fan, so Dodger and Angel games sometimes presented five alternatives at the same time. Bummer. Why couldn't there be a VCR for radio?

### First Solution

I heard about a special radio and tape recorder from C Crane & Co. The tape recorder runs at 1/4 speed, so you can get a 3-4 hour program on one side of an audio cassette. Two problems are that the recorder is a bit bulky to lug around and the tapes won't play in typical tape players. So, I also acquired a portable player capable of recognizing the slow speed.

Now I could listen to one program and record another. But, there are three programs. One night, I heard about something called Radio YourWay. This is a radio with a built-in timer that saves programs on a memory card. It also has built-in memory. Radio YourWay turns out to be one of those neat ideas that works, but is so aggravating to use that you wonder if it is worth it. For example, programming it is clumsier than any VCR you can imagine (I've had many, and mastered them all fairly easily). A couple other quirks added to my frustration. Fast forwarding is exceedingly slow. It takes several minutes to get to the second or third hour of a 3-hour

program. Even worse, if you pause playback more than a couple minutes, it resets to the beginning and you have to wait even longer to get to your new starting point.

It was quite a shock to discover how much harder it is to "time shift" radio than TV. But, even with these challenges, at least I could now record two and listen to the third live. Not perfect, but manageable, until the timer broke on the C Crane recorder. Now, I had to choose which program to miss. Not acceptable after being used to hearing all three.

### The Next Solution

My next idea was to find a device like Radio Your Way, but easier to use. An Internet search led to something called "Replay Radio." Since I have Tivo for recording TV, and Replay TV is a competing product, this name was quite intriguing. It turned out to be PC software that claims to work like "Tivo for Internet Radio." I love my Tivo so I explored further, discovering that it could record programs and had an impressive list (several hundred) of radio shows to choose from. The only apparent drawback was that it recorded MP3 files. Remember, I'm a talk show junkie, not a music aficionado. So, selecting this approach would mean I'd need something to play back the recordings or be chained to my computer. (At this point, I wasn't sure, but it sounded like I'd need an MP3 player).

Alas, Replay Radio has a serious flaw – it can only record one program at a time (As noted above, I want to do three). An exchange of emails confirmed this shortcoming and led me to another program, called WM Recorder. Fortunately, its on-line documentation explicitly stated it can do up to eight concurrent recordings. One potential glitch – it doesn't create MP3 files. The same documentation did recommend a program to convert the recordings.

So, I downloaded the software and ordered an Apple iPod (MP3 player) from Amazon.com. Since I don't like using earphones, I also ordered a speaker apparatus that the iPod can plug into for playback.

Mission accomplished, right? Not quite. I successfully recorded several radio programs. All played well on my PC. The next step was to convert them to MP3 files. Guess what? The "recommended" conversion program didn't recognize the .asf files created by the recording software. Being the audio "expert" I am, my first question was "What the @#\$\$% is an asf file?" Back to the Internet, where I researched audio file formats and found alternative software. Two allowed trial downloads that were able to handle the asf files. Curiously, after another email exchange, I found out that I could simply change the asf file extensions to wma and the recommended program would make the conversions. Apparently, asf and wma are two different Microsoft audio formats. Still, it's easier to use a conversion program, since it can batch many at once.

With that problem solved, I'm now able to record several programs on a predetermined schedule. I can use the iPod with earphones when out walking and with my



speaker apparatus around my home. I've even used the speaker gadget in my car.

This trip was a roller coaster containing numerous ups and downs with continuing challenges. For example, I found out where one of the originating radio stations is located when Bob Brinker's *Money Talk* turned out to be a Kansas City Chiefs football game. Sometimes the recordings don't work, and one of the programs I want doesn't have an Internet broadcast.

Despite all that, it was a grand adventure, I had a lot of fun doing it, and am enjoying listening to programs I was missing before. The time from the cassette recorder failure to having all the components assembled and functioning successfully was about two weeks. Oh, yes. What about music? Can't say. I may be the only person who bought an MP3 player NOT to play music.

The Final Hardware and Software Configuration:

1. WM Recorder (Records the programs) (\$29.95 from [www.wmrecorder.com](http://www.wmrecorder.com))
2. WM VCR (Schedules the recordings) (\$9.95 from [www.wmrecorder.com](http://www.wmrecorder.com))
3. River Past Audio Converter (Converts the asf files to MP3) (\$29.95 from [www.riverpast.com](http://www.riverpast.com))
4. Apple iPod (MP3 Player) (Approximately \$230 and up, depending on source and model)
5. Altec Lansing InMotion Portable Audio (Speaker gadget for the iPod) (Approximately \$110, from various sources)

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## Tech News

by Sue Crane

*The Big Bear Computer Club*

The search engine wars get more interesting by the week. Google is partnering with some of the world's most prestigious universities to make it easier for Web users to scan the schools' vast library holdings. The collaboration of Google and research institutions that include Harvard, the University of Michigan, Stanford and the New York Public Library is a major stride in an ambitious Internet effort. The goal is to expand the Web beyond its current valuable body of material and create a digital card catalog and searchable library for the world's books, scholarly papers and special collections. Meanwhile, Yahoo is adding local traffic information to its maps service, including roadwork and accident reports as well as the approximate speed at which traffic is proceeding along specific roads. The service, part of Yahoo Maps, will offer accident reports and road construction information for about 70 U.S. metropolitan areas. The service will also provide driving speed information for about 22 of those areas. The traffic informa-

tion is layered on top of a map at the user's request. Icons are used to indicate accidents or construction, while color codes are used for the speed information. And America Online is testing a Web-based e-mail service that will compete with Yahoo Mail, Microsoft's Hotmail and Google's Gmail. the beta service for America Online's free Web-based e-mail is available to AOL subscribers only. But it will eventually be offered to the public for free.

With a floating screen, Mitsubishi's Scopo due next year will truly be a portable computer!. This headset with an eye-sized, eye-level LCD creates the illusion that a 10-inch display is in front of the viewer. The Scopo comes with a belt-carried unit with a CPU to process images and video. It can be attached to a cell phone, video player, or other device

Two Japanese companies, Toshiba and Memory-Tech, say they've developed the world's first DVD that can be played on both standard and high-definition DVD players, using the HD-DVD format. HD-DVD has the backing of the DVD Forum.

You can get anything on eBay – except justice. That's what one disgruntled litigant found when she snarkily offered a New York City judge for sale on the popular auction site. Even though the highest bidder offered more than \$100, she found out the hard way that crime just doesn't pay. And the judge was not amused

Residents of 13 western states can check all three of their credit reports for free at [AnnualCreditReport.com](http://AnnualCreditReport.com). The Midwest will come on stream on March 1, the South on June 1, and the East on Sept. 1. Previously, you had to buy this information from the three credit reporting companies: Trans-Union, Experian, and Equifax. The three reports can vary. That's why all three, and not just one, are available. Check your credit report online at: <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp>

The California Energy Commission unanimously approved standards to be phased in beginning in 2006 that would require household appliances including televisions, VCRs, DVD players and cell phone chargers, to run on one to three watts. Even when idle, such appliances now typically gobble up two to 10 watts. Commissioners estimate that compliance with the new guidelines will save commercial and residential power customers more than \$3 billion over 15 years.

[iBrattleboro.com](http://iBrattleboro.com) is at the forefront of Web publishers delivering local news. What's is that they are relying on local residents. The idea is that citizen-generated content lowers costs and creates more loyal audiences. One intriguing experiment started in May when the Bakersfield Californian launched a community Web site called the Northwest Voice ([www.northwestvoice.com](http://www.northwestvoice.com)). The site has no paid writers except for a lone editor. It employs only four people full-time, gets most of its content from readers. Last month, the J-Lab Institute for Interactive Journalism at the University of Maryland announced a \$1 million grant program to fund what it calls "micro-local" Web news experiments around the country. Funded by the Knight Foundation, each initial grant will

amount to \$12,000 and go to nonprofit groups creating community news sites.

Microsoft is setting an example for customers as they introduce a second security measure for their internal networks: smart cards for every employee. By the end of 2005, tens of thousands of telecommuting Microsoft employees will be issued the cards, which will be required to log on to the company's networks.

President Bush signed a new four-year ban on state and federal taxation of Internet connections. The latest version of The Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act expands the original dial-up definition of access to include DSL, cable modems and wireless Internet connections. The bill blocks states from differentiating for tax purposes between dial-up and broadband hookups.

Intel's products for the digital home and digital office in 2005 will give consumers and IT managers more capabilities than just raw performance, and the company plans to highlight those products. Earlier this year, Intel canceled two single-core desktop and server designs and announced plans to accelerate the development of dual-core processors. Intel is planning to design and market its desktop processors in platforms, similar to the way the company brought the Pentium M processor, a new mobile chipset and new wireless capabilities to customers as part of the Centrino platform. Intel expects to bring 64-bit capabilities to its desktop processors in the first half of 2005 (Microsoft's 64-bit Windows XP operating system is scheduled to ship in the first quarter of next year). In 2006, Intel will bring out the Bridge Creek and Averill platforms for the digital home and digital office. These platforms will feature Intel's security and virtualization technologies that it highlighted at recent Intel Developer Forum conferences. Microsoft's next update to the Windows operating system, code-named Longhorn, will be required to take advantage of the hardware-based security and virtualization technologies that Intel plans for 2006.

A report from U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP), a nonprofit group that sets standards for the drug industry, says that as more hospitals have implemented automated systems for administering drugs the number of errors associated with them has risen. Kenneth Kizer of the National Quality Forum says: "Technology offers great opportunity to reduce errors, but it's not a panacea. You can't just throw a computerized system in and expect that everything's fixed. It has to be done right. The technology is only as good as the people who use it."

Microsoft next year plans to host its first developers conference dedicated to the Microsoft Office System, underscoring the company's strategy to make Office a foundation for customized business applications. The conference will take place Feb. 2 through 4 in Microsoft's home town of Redmond, Wash., and will feature Microsoft chair Bill Gates as its keynote speaker. The company said Monday that it expects about 800 developers from independent software vendors, consulting partners and corporate customers to participate.

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## Screen Capture Tools Put Windows Data At Your Beck and Call

by Gabe Goldberg

When you have a problem with your car, you bring it to the repair shop. When you're sick, you visit the doctor. But computer problems sometimes show up as nasty messages plopped in the middle of the screen. So it's hard to capture information needed to research and fix the problem. And someone trying to help you via email or phone may ask questions about system settings or application options which may be tedious to record and communicate. A previous article describes information that's useful for solving problems. [<http://www.aarp.org/computers-howto/Articles/a2004-07-12-getanswers>] But sometimes the best information is a picture of what happens or what's wrong.

The good news is that all Windows versions provide basic tools to capture the entire screen or just the active application window.

You may have tried to use the PrintScreen (or PrtScr on some keyboards) key and not seen anything happen. This is because that key doesn't really *print* anything, it simply copies the entire screen (or just the active window if you press Alt-then-PrintScreen keys) to the Windows clipboard (an invisible Windows area for storing temporary data). Here's a tip: if you're capturing the entire screen and you'd like to date stamp the image, move the mouse cursor over the time shown at the right side of the Windows taskbar. That will pop up the date, which will be included in the captured image.

While you can't see the clipboard, you can paste the captured image from it into a word processing or graphics program from which you can print or save it. Open an application you like – Microsoft Paint or its equivalent (included with Windows), Microsoft Word, or any graphics program. Position the cursor where you want to place the image and press Ctrl-V (Ctrl and V keys simultaneously). The image will appear. If you like, you can add descriptive information such as the date, the nature of your problem, your Windows version, applications which were running, etc.

You can now print the image from the application (click File and Print); you're also close to being able to save or email the captured image! To save it, within the application click File and Save As. Specify a location (hard drive, floppy disk, USB key, etc.). Programs may offer different choices of filetype for saving. Common choices are JPG (good for photographs, can be compressed), PNG (new/free standard format, good for non-photos), GIF (commonly used, produces relatively small

files, limited to 256 colors), and BMP (produces large files, Windows-only format, usable if files won't be transmitted). Once the file is saved you can attach it to an e-mail.

But Windows' built-in screen capture is primitive and inflexible. That's led many people and companies to develop tools providing more functions. Searching Google for "screen capture" produced about 227,000 choices! Many of these are free, available for download. You can find good choices at Web sites such as Tucows Downloads [www.tucows.com]. Some are shareware – free to try, priced to continue using. A modestly priced choice that is powerful and easy to use is CaptureWizPro from Pixel-Metrics [www.pixelmetrics.com].

Costing \$30 and requiring a one-megabyte download, it provides a small toolbar that allows capturing any part of the screen, not just the full screen or the active window. The toolbar can be docked anywhere on the screen edge. It will hide until you mouse near it, then several selection tools (area, frame, scroll, etc.) allow precisely selecting what to copy.

Area selection allows simple selection of a rectangular section to copy. Frame selection displays rulers that show the selected area's size in pixels and inches; the frame border opens fast, remembers its position, and lets you interactively prepare applications below it. Scrolling selection tools solve a nasty problem: how to capture an image that doesn't fit on the screen. You can select a scrollable area, energize Full AutoScroll, and the image will scroll before your eyes as CaptureWizPro collects it.

Once an image is captured, you can copy it to the clipboard for saving as described above, or you can do many more fun things with it: save it directly to a disk file, print it directly, make an on-screen PostIt-style note out of it (to keep visible something needed for reference), e-mail it directly, manipulate it with a built-in editor, etc.

CaptureWizPro installation offers a friendly list of tips for use. It also does something I wish more applications did: allows printing a one-page guide including capture basics, Q&A, and suggested uses. The tool is handy for recording configuration changes, comparing results of testing applications, sending information to people who don't have the same applications as you, creating paper checklists from screen lists, etc. A little imagination will suggest many more uses for the friendly fly-out capture tool bar.

No matter how you capture information– with Windows' built-in PrintScreen handling or any of the many add-in tools – you'll never have to describe what you saw on the screen; you'll be able to show it. You'll never laboriously transcribe option settings to report to a help desk; you'll send a picture. You'll wonder how you did without this powerful and simple tool.

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## A Fatal Blow to Shrinkwrap Licensing?

by Ed Foster

Having so often been the bearer of bad news from the legal front, I am thrilled to have some good news for a change. The old-fashioned shrinkwrap license appears to have suffered from what may well be a mortal wound. Microsoft, Symantec, Adobe, CompUSA, Best Buy, and Staples have agreed in the settlement of a California lawsuit to change their ways, and you can already see the first results at the software retailer nearest you.

In January 2003, California resident Cathy Baker walked into her local CompUSA store to return copies of Windows XP and Norton AntiVirus she'd purchased there. When trying to install the programs, she had been confronted by all the obnoxious terms in the Windows and NAV End User License Agreements. Instead of clicking OK, she took the products back to the store for a refund, as the EULAs said she was supposed to do if she refused to accept the terms.

At CompUSA, however, Baker was told the store's policy was that it could not give refunds for software once the customer has opened the package. Even though Baker had no way of seeing the EULAs until after she purchased the products, took them home, opened the package, and tried to install the software on her computer, she was now told she could not get her money back, even when she rejected the terms. (In a somewhat bizarre twist, after she protested enough, one CompUSA employee told her that they had "secret instructions" from Symantec to provide refunds in such circumstances.) So, like many others before her, Baker was confronted with the classic shrinkwrap license conundrum: She could only see the terms by opening the box, and opening the box meant she was stuck with it. But Baker did something most others before her had not – she got a lawyer.

"When Miss Baker came to us, we felt it was an important case to bring for the benefit of the general public," says Baker's attorney, high tech litigation specialist Ira Rothken. "In our research, we found that it hadn't been discussed before – there was no guidance on it in the literature. Here you have a multibillion-dollar industry that is using improper business practices as a consistent policy, in violation of federal and California consumer warranty statutes. As a practical matter, the consumer couldn't review the terms and conditions prior to the sale and couldn't reject them with any certainty they could get all their money back."

After Rothken first filed the lawsuit in February of 2003, ensuing news coverage brought more consumers

forward with similar stories of their own. An amended complaint to the case Rothken filed in May of that year added a second plaintiff along with Baker and also included Adobe, Staples, and Best Buy as defendants with Microsoft, Symantec, and CompUSA.

Ultimately the parties entered a mediation process, and in April they reached a settlement under which the six defendants had up to 120 days to make the agreed-upon changes to their procedures. The entire settlement along with the amended complaint and exhibits can be read in a PDF file – <http://www.techfirm.com/bakeragreement.pdf> – on Rothken’s Web site, but it reads in part: “The Settlement Agreement provides to the General Public of California, amongst other things, the right of consumers to return applicable Symantec, Adobe, and Microsoft software for full monetary refunds, even if the shrink-wrap has been opened ... In addition, Symantec, Adobe, and Microsoft agreed to provide EULAs for the applicable software products on their Web site and notices on their respective software packaging of the web addresses to such EULAs so consumers can review such EULAs prior to purchase of the software.” CompUSA, Best Buy, and Staples “agreed to provide such EULAs to consumers upon request prior to sale of the above software at their retail stores in California and to provide notices to consumers in such stores to effectuate the above.”

There’s a lot in this settlement. There have already been changes because of it, and I think there are going to be more.

When Baker walked into that CompUSA almost two years ago, there was basically no way for her to see the Windows XP or Norton AntiVirus EULA before she put her money down. Last week, as part of the General Public of California myself, I strolled into my local Staples to see if anything has changed now that these wayward defendants have had their 120 days to shape up. Sure enough, the new packages for Windows XP Home Edition and NAV 2005 direct you to Microsoft and Symantec Web pages where those EULAs are posted. In fact, newer packages for Microsoft Office applications also have a URL for those EULAs, even though Office was not formally part of the settlement.

And that’s why I think we can expect more changes to come. This settlement isn’t going to be just applied in California; it’s not going to only be honored by these three software companies, and it’s not only going to force brick-and-mortar software retailers to help their customers see terms before they buy. Think about it. If you were a legal advisor for Amazon, Autodesk, Borland, CDW, Circuit City, Intuit, Macromedia, McAfee, Sears, or any number of other companies involved in selling software to consumers, wouldn’t you be suggesting they treat this settlement as if it were binding on them as well?

Of course, the right to return opened software and the right to see terms before you buy aren’t going to rid us of all the nasty sneakwrap terms overnight. But the

first step has been taken. Baker took it two years ago when she walked into a store to demand the rights that we all should have.

*Ed Foster runs a radio and internet GripeLine WebLog. Contact him at [Foster@gripe2ed.com](mailto:Foster@gripe2ed.com).*

## Society News

### Program Meeting

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

### Helps’ Half Hour

Led by: Jack Bailey

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

**S**tarted with a comment: Recently downloaded Thunderbird and Firefox. Able to install it just fine. Also downloaded the spyware software from Microsoft.

**Q:** Using Thunderbird (email) would like to open up email and then a second copy for internet to browse. Anyone successful?

**A:** No one tried it so far. Should work. You may need to check the preferences or options to make sure that there may be a setting.

**Q:** I have run an analytical program and it found a corrupted file. Using win98. A file missing message is displayed: Setup.dll in the message.

**A:** If you have the original win98 program disk, run the repair option, not a full reinstall.

**Q:** QuickTime player keeps asking me to install it. Does it take a lot of space to load?

**A:** This is a common player. Should not hurt anything to install it.

**Q:** One member keeps having to run Adaware but bad items keep showing up.

**A:** This is the reason that you must keep updating and running. IE is still the worse choice when it comes to allowing things through while browsing. You may want to try Firefox instead.

**Q:** One member has tried to download and install Java but it does not seem to install properly.

**A:** Try downloading it directly to the desktop or the Java location and install it from there. There may be some suggestions on the Java site - FAQ. You may also need to check whether SP 2 has disabled Java. This is especially possible if a recent upgrade in Microsoft has caused the default to be reset.

**Q:** I bought a new Norton antivirus program. But does not always allow update downloads.

**A:** Sounds like you have a virus that is hiding. Norton can sometimes have a problem with their update files, too. Go into the Norton site with the error message and the fix is there. If you have a bootable CD you may want to try to run the antivirus program from there. **NOTE:** When you go into the updates, try downloading only one at a time, starting with the smaller one first.

**Q:** Soundbytes talked about temp files review using ‘%temp’ and found he had lots. Can I get rid of all temporary files that it finds?

**A:** Yes, all files can be deleted. You will get a message if there are any files that you cannot remove. You may want to also use the IE cleanup of temp files and cookies.

**Q:** Are there any free ISPs left?

**A:** There may be some that give you free email services but there is a \$9.99 fee covering the internet.

**Q:** A member is using Norton Antivirus as updated in August. Since February, the updating now fails – even though he is on DSL. Manual update says he needs new files but does not seem to add them.

**A:** Sounds like a worm or virus. Must run Stinger to check your machine. It will display messages as it finds worms, etc. The same suggestions as before start with the smallest files and download them one at a time. Make sure that it is not expecting a dial-up connection and not you're DSL.

One comment was made about the GPS software that we heard about last month's meeting. He is looking into DeLorme mappings. It will reroute you if you miss your turn. Another good thing is to have the voice recognition tool. It will also announce your directions ahead of time.

**Note:** Much of their mapping data comes from the government.

## Better Business Bureau Online

by Ira Wilsker  
*Golden Triangle PC Club*

Recently, one of my daughters was considering joining a health club. I inquired what she knew about it, other than her preliminary visit, when of course the recruiter (sales person) was glowing in praise about the facility. I suggested that she check the Better Business Bureau website at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) and look up the health club, which she did. She called me back and told me that according to the BBB website there had been nine complaints filed with the BBB in the past 3 years, of which four were in the past year. All nine complaints had been satisfactorily resolved, according to the website. This gave her insight on her decision whether or not to join.

This anecdotal exercise demonstrates an extremely valuable and useful tool available to all of us when dealing with a merchant or charity that is either new to us, or that we have dealt with in the past. The BBB has an easy to use website that provides a wealth of information on companies, charities, and consumer issues. It should be noted that the BBB website has some excellent consumer news resources, as well as information on identity theft, and other consumer issues.

On the top-left corner of the site in the section "Check it Out" are links which connect to the BBB search engines for either company reports, or a dedicated site at [www.give.org](http://www.give.org) where charities can be checked for reliability and honesty. Clicking on the link "Business" opens the "Business Information System" (BIS) where a company can be checked out based on either its name and city, phone number, or web address. Once the information is entered, if a record is found, the user is redirected

to the website of the local bureau that has the record on file. I tried referencing companies by each of the three methods, and the system was quick and efficient. Information listed about a company includes its name, address, and phone number, typically followed by the history of the business, its owners, website address (if any), and then a section on "Customer Experience." If the company operates under more than one name, the aliases are listed, as well as the names of the company's managers. It is the "Customer Experience" section that is the most telling, because this is the section that notes if there had been complaints, the number, and how they were resolved. It is also telling about a company's reputation if the report says that, "...this company has an unsatisfactory record with the Bureau due to unanswered complaint(s)." Personally, I typically choose to avoid doing business with any company that has this notation on its BBB record. There are also links at [bbb.org](http://bbb.org) where complaints can be filed, as well as a link to locate local BBB offices.

Charities can be checked from the link, or directly at [www.give.org](http://www.give.org). Give.org is a project of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. As I type this, there is a warning at the top of the web page about some of the alleged charities raising funds for tsunami relief. On the left side of the [give.org](http://give.org) page is a link for "Charity Reports," which connects to the alliance's "National Charity reports Index" where hundreds of national and regional charities are listed in alphabetical order. Charities that are strictly local in operation are generally not listed here, but on the website of the local BBB chapter.

Clicking on the name of a charity opens up the BBB report on that charity. The report lists the date, name, and aliases for the charity. I found it most interesting that several of the charities, including some of the widely advertised religious charities, operate as a single charity, but under a variety of different names.

The listing will state whether or not the charity meets the BBB standards (links to the standards are listed on the main [give.org](http://give.org) page), fails to meet standards (the standards that it fails to meet are listed), or "Despite written BBB Wise Giving Alliance requests in the past year, this organization has not provided current information about its finances, programs, and governance," which would make me very reluctant to contribute to that charity. If a full report is available, the site lists the budget of the charity. When the full report is listed, I personally find the salaries of the executives and the fund raising expenses very interesting. There are a handful of charities listed where almost all of the funds collected go to the salaries of the executives, and fund raising expenses, with little or no money going to the stated cause. In a few other cases, the executives own the fundraising service, for which they receive commissions in addition to their administrative salaries! These charities can provoke some interesting ethical considerations, so it is wise for a donor to check out a charity at [give.org](http://give.org) or his local BBB website before donating.

A fine example of a local BBB website would be the Southeast Texas chapter at [www.bbbsetexas.org](http://www.bbbsetexas.org). Local BBB websites typically offer a tool to check out local companies and charities, as well as to file complaints.

Be both a wise shopper and a wise donor, and check the BBB websites frequently.

### Program

by Jim Murdock, Secretary

**A**rpad Kovacs gave a presentation on "What are Kids Using the Internet for?"

At the outset Arpad emphasized that our young people are using the Internet in ways not possible even a year or two ago. While these are usually(!) healthy, wholesome, and legal activities, sometimes they may be on the edge of, or even outside the law. Just one reason adults should be aware of how their children are using the Internet.

There are several ways the Internet is used by young people.

There are several methods of sharing files, and in each the questions of what is legal, what is illegal, and what is "fair use" come into play.

File sharing methods:

HTTP: FTP - central server distributing files to multiple clients

- Standard network protocols
- No special client software needed
- Servers are dedicated and high bandwidth
- Transfer speeds slow as requests build up
- Mirror servers are often used to spread load
- Peer to Peer (P2P) - decentralized network of clients distributing files among themselves
- Proprietary network protocols
- Requires special client software
- Unmanaged and unregulated
- Insecure
- Transfers files from multiple servers to increase download speeds

In Peer-to-Peer file sharing there are dangers.

### Planning Meeting Notes

March 15, 2005

by Jim Murdock

**S**ally Springett hosted the planning meeting that began at 1900. Arpad Kovacs, Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, Ron Matteson, Dan Rothfuss, Sally Springett, Steve Staub, Dave Thompson, Tom Thompson, and Jim Murdock attended.

Arpad continued the discussion from the planning meeting last month when he presented a detailed analysis of a new Monitor printing process he developed. After considerable discussion of the details of the proposal, the board voted unanimously to accept Arpad's proposal and to acquire and assemble the needed equipment. The equipment to be acquired includes three LaserJet 5 printers, one color ink jet printer and one computer, as

well as the necessary stand, cables and other accessories. The new printing method will print the body of the Monitor in black and white and the cover in color.

It was agreed that after the printing equipment is in place a test run will be conducted one or two weeks prior to the print date for the May issue of the Monitor. If the test is successful the May Monitor will be printed using the new process.

Arpad's presentation at the March meeting was next discussed. Everyone thought Arpad gave a good presentation but it was noted that perhaps the subject did not interest everyone. Bob, and others, suggested that a future similar presentation targeted more to parents and grandparents would be more universally of interest.

The RCSi Picnic will be held in August. The location has yet to be selected

Ron next talked about the upcoming presentation schedule. The schedule may need to be adjusted due to speakers' scheduling conflicts.

### Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 2/17/05	\$1,560.30
Income	
Dues and donations	\$161.00
Expenses	
St. Stephen's	60.00
Staples (paper)	<u>51.90</u>
Total Expenses	\$111.98
Balance as of 3/15/05	\$1,609.32

### The Lighter Side

Found on the internet:

### Error 403.141592

The page you are looking for has been randomly shifted into a parallel universe of missing objects. If you feel you've reached this page in error ... well tough, get used to it, the world wide web doesn't always work the way you expect, why should it be different than anything else.

You could try to contact the webmaster but frankly you'd be better off opening your window and shouting your outrage at the trees and squirrels. As a last resort, grab a quarter and call someone who cares.

[Click here to continue on your merry way.](#)

