

Beware of SCUMWARE Pretending to be Anti-Spyware

by Ira Wilsker

APCUG Board of Directors

One of the most frequent topics in this column in the past has been about the spyware which threatens our computers and the safety and security of our personal information. We should all be aware that spyware is rampant, existing on as many as 80% of our computers, according to media reports. While it has been written here in the past that there are several excellent, reliable, and sometimes free, anti-spyware products on the market, there are also some less reputable products pretending to be anti-spyware software. More than coincidentally, many of these same disreputable products are marketed using methods that users may consider unethical.

On my office computer, which lacks the popup blocker on my home computer, I recently received a popup which gave the dire statement, "WARNING! This computer is infected with dangerous SPYWARE which is stealing your personal information. CLICK HERE to run a free spyware scan." I am not so naïve as to believe a popup ad, but I was intrigued, as minutes earlier I had scanned my computer with two just updated major anti-spyware products, and my machine was free of spyware. Checking to make sure that my antivirus software was updated and running properly, and violating my own premise that I would never click on a popup, I decided to see what this popup would do, so I clicked on it. A rapidly advancing progress meter, too fast to be really scanning my computer, appeared. Moments later, another popup window appeared. "WARNING! This computer is infected with SPYWARE! See the attached list of SPYWARE on this computer." Below, in a small font, was a lengthy list of spyware titles, allegedly on my computer. "CLICK HERE TO REMOVE THIS SPYWARE" appeared in large bold print below the disturbing list of threats. Clicking on the link opened a webpage advertising an anti-spyware product that I knew from experience had a terrible reputation that was also the subject of complaints of legitimate spyware publishers who alleged that this product was a knock-off using pirated code from the legitimate products. The large headline on the page said that I must purchase this product for \$39.95, download it, and run it, or I would likely be the victim of identity theft, and my bank accounts would be vanquished by predators. To the uninformed, this frightening scenario may result in enough uncertainty to encourage them to become still another victim of near useless software, and imposing a false sense of security, further opening the victim to attack.

In order to detect and prove that their legitimate software is being pirated or otherwise stolen by purveyors of scumware, most of the legitimate companies include some inert dummy entries in their program code

and database of spyware signatures. If these unique but inert dummy entries are found in other programs, then there is good evidence of piracy. Regrettably, this is more common than many users realize, and sometimes these users end up paying top dollar for inferior pirated anti-spyware software, that may provide little or no protection. One of the many documented cases involves the very popular Spybot Search and Destroy (published in Germany), and the New York based "1ClickSpyClean." Spybot included some inert dummy entries in its database, and these dummy entries showed up in the 1ClickSpyClean database, according to a news article posted on the Spybot website. Some legal demands and threats crossed the Atlantic, and Spybot recently reported that it appears that 1ClickSpyClean has complied, and purged its database of the allegedly purloined content, reducing its detection capacity by about 60%. Spybot is free software, and 1ClickSpyClean sells on its own website for \$29.95.

Unfortunately, there are many such questionable anti-spyware products being marketed, often by dubious means such as the popup mentioned above, spam mail, multi-level network marketing, and other such means. A comprehensive list of these questionable products is online at "Rogue/Suspect Anti-Spyware Products & Web Sites", www.spywarewarrior.com/rogue_anti-spyware.htm. According to this site, there are nearly 150 such rogue products being marketed and promoted, as well as several dozen websites containing allegedly helpful anti-spyware information, but are instead promoting rogue products. Several of the rogue products are in reality the same software, but marketed under different titles. If you are using an anti-spyware program, check this list to see if it is legitimate or not.

The rogue anti-spyware software may be worse than useless, because some titles in-tall their own spyware, or pretend to clean the machine but in reality do a poor job or nothing. This could be dangerous because the user may get a false sense of security, and believe that he is protected, when in reality he is quite vulnerable and likely being victimized.

Anti-spyware programs that were once considered reliable, such as the Aluria Spyware Eliminator previously reviewed here, may possibly lose some reliability as they start to deal with companies considered by many to be purveyors of spyware. According to such media sources as Ziff Davis, the Boston Globe, eWeek, and others, it has been reported that Aluria has recently reached a deal with an ad-ware vendor (ad-ware is generally considered as a type of spyware). Aluria will not block its ad-ware, but will also be included in the ad-ware vendor's web page tool bar that is supposed to remove unwanted spyware, but may itself be a type of spyware.

For safety sake, as well as peace of mind, be absolutely sure of the spyware solutions utilized, and never purchase such software from popups, spam mail, or other questionable means.

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GPS and Mapping Software

by Joe Schmitt

Tampa Bay Computer Society

This is the last in a three article series on the Global Positioning System. The first explained what the system is and how it work, the second dealt with GPS units, and the third discusses the various software available to interface with the units.

While out on the road or trail, the GPS can be indispensable for navigating. It tells you where you are, where you're heading, and can track distance and speed. When you arrive at an interesting locale, you can mark it with a waypoint. Now all that is great, but one of the more interesting aspects of GPS ownership is the ability to link it with your computer for additional functionality.

In a unit that displays maps, only the most major roads and surface features are pre-loaded. This is known as the base map. The base map cannot be erased and is particular to the region that the unit is purchased in. For example, my Garmin receiver is loaded with a North American road map that contains US highways and interstates. This is great for a long trip, but doesn't really help you around town. Luckily, additional specialized maps are available.

Each of the manufacturers have street level mapping available for purchase; unfortunately, the maps available are almost strictly proprietary. For my Garmin unit, there are instructions on the web to make your own maps, but is a long complex process involving multiple pieces of software. I could dedicate an entire article to that process alone. Another limitation with the mapping software comes with the opening of new roads. None of the software can be updated with the latest roads, so you must purchase the newer version at full price. Be careful though, sometimes it takes a few versions for the newer roads to be displayed at all. If you can live with data that is a couple of years old, places like EBay can be great for getting a deal on some older version.

Even if you do not have a GPS with mapping capability, quite often that receiver can be tied to a computer to process the data it receives. Most units utilize a serial cable to connect to a computer. Although a serial connection is much slower than USB it has been a standard with receivers for a long time and manufacturers are slowly coming out with USB capable units.

In addition to the proprietary software you can purchase from the manufacturer, there are pieces of software that can transfer waypoints and tracks from a GPS. A great waypoint manager, EasyGPS (www.easygps.com), is a free utility that allows you create, edit, and transfer waypoints from your computer. It works with Garmin, Lowrance, and Magellan receivers.

Creating a waypoint with the receiver itself can be a long process since the unit does not have a keypad, and you will have to scroll through menus and numbers to set the coordinates. EasyGPS allows you to do this on your desktop computer with the keyboard.

Its bigger cousin, ExpertGPS (www.expertgps.com), displays your waypoints and routes on topographic maps and aerial photos. This software is not free, but you can download a demo. ExpertGPS uses an internet connection to retrieve maps as you scroll around.

There are several places you can get maps for free on the internet. You may already be familiar with some internet mapping websites for street cartography. Arguably one of the most popular is MapQuest (www.mapquest.com), but also popular is Microsoft MapPoint (mappoint.msn.com) and Maptech Mapserver (mapserver.maptech.com). In addition to these street map websites, many others offer topographic and aerial photos. Maptech offers topographic, nautical, aeronautical, and aerial photos, though they'll want you to register.

For topographic maps, TopoZone (www.topozone.com), is a great site that displays maps in various resolutions and datum. TopoZone allows you also to search by geographic features such as mountain peak names as well as city names, states, zip codes, and coordinates. Another excellent site that combines topographic and aerial photos is TerraServer USA (terraserver.microsoft.com). At this site you can flip between maps and photos.

Although these sites are helpful for viewing and printing maps, they do not offer any sort of data transfer with the GPS receiver. For that kind of functionality you must install some software. A great free application available for download is USAPhotoMaps (jdmcox.com). This program installs on your machine and then uses an Internet connection to download topographic and aerial photos. It can be linked with a GPS to transfer waypoints, tracks, and routes. The maps are compiled from free sites on the web. Be aware, though, that maps are quite large in file size and a slow connection will make getting the maps a long process. Once downloaded, the maps are stored locally on your computer so be sure that you have enough hard drive space.

The next realm in mapping software is independent mapping programs. Two of the most popular stand-alone street mapping programs is Microsoft's Streets & Trips (www.microsoft.com/streets/default.asp) and Delorme's Street Atlas (www.delorme.com/streetatlasusa/default.asp). Both programs offer detailed street mapping in the US and have the ability to link in various ways to the GPS receiver.

Streets and Trips allows you to link to your GPS and display your position on a map. It does not complete data transfer such as waypoints and routes. It has the ability to import data from Excel and text files, but an intermediate program will be needed to get the data from the GPS unit to the file for import. A bonus with Streets and

Trips is that also comes with Pocket Maps that allow you to save maps to a Pocket PC.

Street Atlas allows you the same position display with a GPS. In addition to that function, it also allows you to plan a route and provides turn by turn instructions as you navigate. Of course, to be of any use it needs to be installed on a laptop. Unlike Streets and Trips, you must purchase the pocket mapping software separately. Streets and Trips runs about \$40 and Street Atlas about \$50. I have a copy of Streets and Trips that I got for \$20 after a mail in rebate. Both programs are excellent and selection boils down to personal preference more than anything else.

Delorme also makes a topographic program, Topo USA (www.delorme.com/topousa/default.asp). This program runs about \$99 and includes streets as well topographic contour maps. The topographic maps are at a 1:100,000 resolution. More detailed 1:24,000 maps, more suitable for hiking, are available on a state by state basis. Your GPS will interact in the same manner as Street Atlas.

A more cost effective way to go for a topographic program is National Geographic's Backroads Explorer (maps.nationalgeographic.com/topo/backroads.cfm) that costs around \$40. Although it lacks some of the features of Delorme's software, it does include street maps as well as topographic information. Backroads Explorer also allows direct connection with a GPS for transfer of waypoints, routes, and tracks. It lacks the 3D topographic mapping the Delorme product offers, but it does have shaded relief to better define contours on the maps displayed.

For those that are into creating their own maps there is a program, called 3DEM (www.visualizationsoftware.com/3dem.html), that allows you load elevation data and generate a 3D terrain image. The terrain image can be overlaid with maps to form a 3D map. The primary data used to generate the terrain models are from radar topography. NASA scanned about 95% of the earth's surface during shuttle missions and there is a wealth of sources available where you can download the data. These models can also accept data from your receiver so that you can see a track of where you've been in a 3D representation.

There is lots of additional software available on the market, too many to discuss them all here. A lot of programs offer various ways of linking with a GPS directly or are a great way to search and print maps before you leave on that next trip. There are also a number of utilities which can format data so that it can work with a number of programs.

GPS receivers are innovative and fun gadgets that can really be a powerful tool for navigation. Every day people come up with more interesting uses for the receiver. From handheld to vehicle mounted receivers, these devices are changing the way the man moves through the world. Have fun and I'll see you on the road!

From the November, 2004 issue of the I/O Port Newsletter. There is no restriction against any non-profit

group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. 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.

Fun with your GPA

Degree Confluence Project <http://www.confluence.org>

"The goal of the project is to visit each of the latitude and longitude integer degree intersections in the world, and to take pictures at each location." Here's your opportunity to get an 'organized sampling of the world.' Interestingly enough, "there is a confluence within 49 miles (79 km) of you if you're on the surface of Earth; discounting confluences in the oceans and some near the poles, . . . there are still 12,618 to be found."

Come find the confluence nearest you; you might even want to help document your confluence by submitting your own photographs. Revisits are definitely in order to track the changes that take place; this is indeed a 'changing world!'

Secrets of Firefox 1.0

by Brian Livingston

It's not so long ago that we learned to master the Windows Registry, a buzzing hive of little-known configuration settings. Now we find that Firefox 1.0, the hot new browser released on Nov. 9 by the Mozilla Foundation, has its own hidden playground for us to tweak.

In case you haven't heard, Firefox is rapidly gaining steam as a free replacement for Microsoft's own Internet Explorer browser. OneStat.com, which measures Web behavior in 100 countries around the world, reported on Nov. 22 that IE had lost 5 percentage points of market share in the past six months, dropping to 89% of browser users. Firefox and its predecessor, Mozilla, are up to 7.35% of users. The foundation says 7.5 million people downloaded Firefox 1.0 in the month of November.

That doesn't tell the whole story, though. Experienced Windows admins, who often set the tone for other users, seem to be adopting Firefox at a much higher rate. More than 25% of the visitors to my specialized Web sites—WindowsSecrets.com, BriansBuzz.com, BrianLivingston.com, and the like—are now using some version of Firefox or Mozilla, according to my server logs. That's up from only 10.9% as recently as January 2004.

With all this momentum, it's fascinating to discover that many powerful capabilities of Firefox 1.0 are still difficult to find and little known. For example, typing the following strings into Firefox's Address Bar (which the new browser calls the Location Bar) and pressing Enter brings up a wide variety of novel applets:

- **about:** shows info on Firefox's version number, copyright, etc.;
- **about:config** reveals the Configuration Console, a repository brimming over with scores of customizable settings;

- **about:cache** displays a summary of both your memory and file cache, with a link to full file listings;
- **about:buildconfig** lists the compiler options that were used to create your version of Firefox (and, since it's open source, anyone can compile a customized version);
- **about:plugins** enumerates your installed add-ons, which can be quite numerous since Firefox is designed to be modular and extensible; and
- **about:credits** is an "Easter egg" that includes the names of hundreds of developers and testers who worked on the product.

This article focuses on **about:config**, the beating heart of Firefox, which controls almost every aspect of tuning and tweaking the browser.

What about:config is and isn't good for

Typing **about:config** into the Address Bar reveals an enormous list of settings and options (see image, below). This includes everything from the "browser" section, which controls user-interface preferences, to the "network" section, which establishes parameters for connecting to the Internet and other resources.

The organization of **about:config** — let's face it — is a mess. There are settings in here that are left over from the old Mozilla browser suite, which do nothing in Firefox but haven't been removed. Other settings are easily changed through Firefox's visible menus, so there's no good reason to tweak them in the unforgiving **about:config** environment.

That leaves a number of settings that can really make a big difference in your enjoyment of Firefox as a browser. With a few simple precautions, explained below, you can try different configurations with little risk.

The care and feeding of

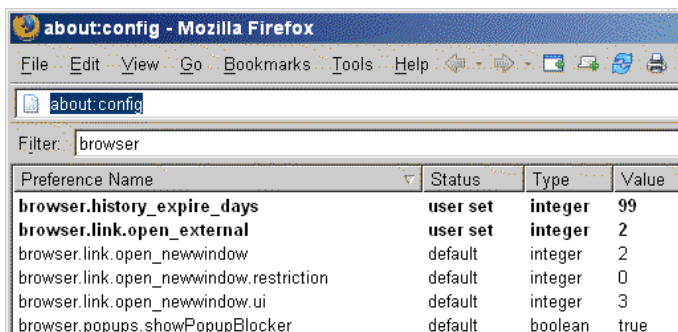
about:config

There are three ways to edit the settings in Firefox's Configuration Console:

1. Direct editing. In the Firefox window, you simply right-click any row, which brings up a context menu. On that menu, you click Modify to change a value, New to create a new value, or Reset to restore a value to its default. A setting looks like this:

```
browser.history_expire_days user set integer 99
```

2. Editing User.js. You can also insert lines into a file named User.js. Firefox reads this file and adopts any



settings it finds there. The file does not exist by default and must be created, if desired.

The file uses a different format to specify preferences. The "history expire days" setting shown above would look as follows in User.js:

```
user_pref("browser.history_expire_days", 99);
```

Because direct editing in the Configuration Console is so easy, it usually isn't necessary to write lines of code into User.js. Creating such a file, however, can be useful if you wish to override Firefox's defaults on several PCs. (In that case, simply copy the file to the correct location on those machines.)

3. Editing Prefs.js. This file is automatically generated by Firefox when you make changes through its menus or the Configuration Console. It's unwise to edit this file directly, and Prefs.js is mentioned here only for completeness and to advise you against editing it manually.

The files mentioned above—as well as two other customization files, userChrome.css and userContent.css—are located in different folders in Windows 2000/XP and Windows 95/98/Me. This is explained in articles at Mozilla.org, the site of the Mozilla Foundation, and The Edmeister, a private Firefox info site.

You can edit these files without having to find their specific location by using a free, third-party utility called ChromEdit.xpi. After you install this extension and restart Firefox, a new Edit User Files item shows up on the Tools menu.

An excellent tutorial on editing within the Configuration Console is provided by Mozillazine.org, a tips site.

How to backup and restore these crucial files

When editing configuration files, you can make mistakes that would prevent Firefox from working properly or even starting at all. For this reason, you should always back up these files before making changes. Everyone will tell you that, but I'm also going to show you *how to do it* and, more importantly, *how to recover* in case you make a serious error.

1. Backup your config files. Your customization files are stored in a folder named Profiles on your hard drive underneath *username* \ Application Data \ Mozilla \ Firefox. To find the different locations for this folder on Windows NT, 2000, XP, 9x, and Me, check the convenient chart at Mozilla.org. Before making edits, copy the Profiles folder to a backup disk or another safe location.

2. How to recover from errors. If your changes make Firefox unstable, close all instances of Firefox and then copy your preferences files from your backup location to the default location and restart Firefox. In extreme cases, when Firefox won't even start, you can rename the User.js file and/or the Prefs.js file to a temporary name and then start Firefox. The browser will revert to a default configuration, allowing you to transfer your "safe" preferences into a new file.

The tweaks you'll want to make right now

Now that you have the basics, we get to the good part: making changes to improve Firefox's performance and capabilities.

Fix a memory leak in Firefox 1.0

Firefox is supposed to dynamically release memory from its RAM cache to other Windows applications as needed. Unfortunately, Firefox 1.0 seems to consume more memory than it should, which hurts performance, when set to the default of 51200 KB (51 MB).

To solve this, Firefox power users recommend limiting the memory cache using the Configuration Console. This frees up memory for other apps, speeding up everything to a greater or a lesser extent, depending on your machine and the applications you run. Here's how the trick works:

Step 1. Type **about:config** into Firefox's Address Bar and press Enter.

Step 2. Right-click any row, then click New, Integer. Type or paste the following preference name into the dialog box that appears (this is a hidden preference that doesn't exist in the Configuration Console until you create it):

```
browser.cache.memory.capacity
```

Step 3. Click OK, then enter the following integer number into the next dialog box, representing 16 MB of RAM for the cache:

```
16000
```

Step 4. Click OK to close the dialog box, then close all instances of Firefox and restart it.

For a lengthy discussion of this option, see Mozillazine's forum topic 172041.

Move the disk cache to a faster or larger location

Many Windows users like to locate their disk cache files on a separate hard drive from Windows. This can improve the performance of Windows or whatever program is using the cache, or it can free up space on a primary partition. (The disk cache should not be confused with the RAM cache described above.)

To move Firefox's disk cache, use **about:config** to create a new preference. (This is another hidden preference that doesn't appear until you create it.)

Type **browser.cache.disk.parent_directory** into the dialog box that appears, then click OK. In the Value dialog box, enter *c:\folder*, providing the foldername in which you wish the file to be located.

This and other networking and cache settings are sparsely documented by a Firefox developer called Ben C. on his NetPrefs page.

Force frames to be resizable on Web pages

If you visit Web sites that divide their pages into rectangular frames, but some of the frames aren't wide enough for you to see all of the words, you can tell Firefox to put borders around all frames so they're resizable.

To do this, use **about:config** to change **layout.frames.force_resizability** from "false" to "true."

Other preference settings

There are literally hundreds of possible preference settings that are accessible via **about:config**. Unfortunately, there's nothing about these settings in the help text that comes with Firefox 1.0. A variety of user sites have sprung up to expound on these preferences, but their coverage is spotty and not completely trustworthy.

The best all-around explanation of most Firefox settings has been posted by a developer called GuruJ on his Documented Preferences page. This page also links to a Firefox extension named Preferential, currently in version 0.6.1a. This utility adds an Advanced Preferences item to Firefox's Edit menu, giving you a user interface to a vast array of settings that otherwise would require hand-editing.

Even the "Documented Preferences" page has many holes, which I hope the Mozilla Foundation will quickly and publicly fill in. For example, GuruJ's page describes many settings with a question mark, indicating that the true meaning of an item is unclear. This includes the "frames force resizability" setting I described above. (I had to determine the official stand on this option by contacting Ben Goodger, the foundation's lead Firefox engineer.)

Tweaks for the ultimate in performance

There are several settings and options that can make Firefox run as a much faster browser. You should test these techniques before you roll them out to, say, a thousand workstations in your company.

Speeding up the maximizing of Firefox

By default, when you minimize Firefox, it gives back to Windows most of the RAM the browser was using. It sometimes can take several seconds for the browser window to become fully loaded when you restore the window to its original size. This is one of those "version 1.0" things, in my opinion, that will become more streamlined in future bump revs of the program.

Fortunately, there's a hidden setting that can accomplish the restoration of Firefox windows much more quickly:

Step 1. Use **about:config** to create a new, Boolean value. Type or paste the following string into the dialog box that appears:

```
config.trim_on_minimize
```

Step 2. Click OK to close the dialog box. Change the value from "true" to "false" and restart Firefox.

This doesn't piggishly retain all of the RAM that Firefox has claimed. If Windows needs more RAM to devote to another application, Windows can take it. What the setting does is prevent Firefox from giving up most of its RAM until the memory is actually required elsewhere.

Setting this item to "false" may noticeably slow down other applications while Firefox is minimized, if your PC has less than 256 MB of RAM. If so, change the setting back to "true."

There's an extremely long discussion about the development of this trick, going back to March 2004 (and continuing up through today), in Bugzilla bug report #76831. If you're determined to delve into this, I'd recommend starting with comment 329.

Speeding up Firefox on Windows XP

You can speed up the loading of Firefox on Windows XP by adding it to the programs that XP "prefetches."

To do this, right-click the Start Menu item for Firefox, or any icon you use to start Firefox, and open the Properties dialog box. Add a space plus **/Prefetch:1** to the command line and click OK. The resulting line might look as follows:

```
"C:\Program Files\Mozilla Firefox\firefox .exe"  
/Prefetch:1
```

A detailed explanation of XP's prefetch feature is provided by TechRepublic.

Use a "Moox" build that's customized for your CPU

A developer who goes by the name of Moox has compiled the Firefox code into separate executables, optimized for the instruction sets of different CPUs. This provides the biggest performance boost that I've seen (and also consider to be reliable). The developer's PDF white paper on the topic shows reductions of as much as 30% in the time required for Firefox to perform various tasks.

At this writing, there are three separate builds: one for Pentium 4 and AMD Opteron (and other CPUs), one for Pentium 3 and AMD Athlon MP, and one for Pentium 2 and AMD Athlon. The builds are free, of course.

To download the builds, see Moox's Mozilla page.

The big kahuna: fast rendering of Web pages

The most sought-after performance improvements in any browser will always involve how quickly it downloads and renders Web pages. The good news is that Firefox (which is already pretty fast in its default configuration) includes numerous **about:config** settings that can improve the downloading and display of content. The bad news is that the optimum settings will differ from machine to machine, and there's no consensus on what they should be.

After extensive research, I haven't found a utility or even a well-tested explanation that can guarantee the optimum settings for any particular Windows scenario (Windows 2000 vs. XP, DSL vs. T1, etc.).

There are scores of Web sites that speculate on configuration settings that are said to speed up the browsing experience in Firefox. But these sites largely don't show that they've done adequate testing of the alternatives, much less explain how such tests might have been conducted.

One long discussion post, by a German power user who goes by the name of Laszlo, lists in Mozillazine numerous settings in the **content**, **network**, and **nglayout** sections of the Configuration Console. His post is followed by literally hundreds of comments on various tweaks. I don't feel there's a solid answer here yet.

Another stab at this issue has been undertaken by a poster who goes by the name of Achilles. He proposes four different configuration suites in his Firefox Tweak Guide, depending upon whether you have a slower or faster PC and a slower or faster Internet connection. Again, no testing details or benchmark figures are provided.

At this point, the optimum settings for Web browsing under various configurations must be considered a subject for further study. Firefox is plenty speedy as it is. My recommendation? Download Firefox and enjoy it with the improvements I've described above. I'll give you an update when something truly definitive comes out about this.

Other resources

I haven't even touched in this article on several free, third-party extensions to Firefox that I believe are great enhancements. For a description, see my Nov. 23 *Datamation* column on Getting the Most Out of Firefox.

Finally, an excellent resource on Firefox annoyances and fixes is Michael Horowitz's always-entertaining Web site, ComputerGripes .com. His site features several pages on Firefox behaviors, good and bad, many of which have been fixed with the release of version 1.0 gold. He also criticizes several other Web sites that need programming improvements to work well with Firefox. (His comments on advanced ad-blocking in Firefox appear in the Hot Tips section, below.)

To send us more information about Firefox configuration settings, or to send us a tip on any other subject, visit WindowsSecrets .com /contact. You'll receive a gift certificate for a book, CD, or DVD of your choice if you send us a comment that we print.

From Windows Secrets Newsletter (formerly Woody's Windows Watch and Brian's Buzz on Windows) Issue 43 — 2004.12.02. The permanent web address of this column can be found at <http://windowssecrets.com/041202/>. Anyone may subscribe to this newsletter by visiting <http://WindowsSecrets.com/signup>.

Computer Essentials

by Pim Borman

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What can be done to make computers true household appliances, intuitive and simple to use even by technophobes? Computers capable of email and word processing, Internet browsing, audio and video editing and storage, simple data processing such as checkbook and genealogy tree maintenance, and entertainment in the form of games and puzzles. After all, modern cars have highly complex, powerful engines under the hood, but turn on with a simple ignition switch and only need a steering wheel, accelerator and brakes for operation. Computers should be just as simple to use. Here are some suggestions.

- A simple on/off switch for instant-on computing, with a reset button for the rare occasions the system goes haywire and needs to reboot. The hibernate feature in Windows XP is the nearest thing to it, but for shutting your system down you must first click on Start (!), then hold the shift key down to change the Standby option to Hibernate, and click on Hibernate. Stupidly unobvious, and it should be easy to replace the whole rigmarole by reprogramming the current on/off switch.
- Security and privacy, built-in virus and spyware protection, automatically updated. Upgraded Internet/email protocols to thwart sender address spoofing. Fortunately, the need for improved security is now widely recognized, and the search for solutions is on.
- Application programs. As my former boss used to say, "Be reasonable, do it my way." That should go double for computer applications that satisfy the users' needs without extraneous bells and whistles and with simple menus to access special features and built-in security provisions. Most common menu items should be available by using clearly labeled, standard, special purpose keyboard keys; read on.
- Special purpose keys on the keyboard to perform common operations in most programs. There already are Insert, Delete, Backspace, Home, End, Page Up and Down, and Arrow keys; why not have more of that kind? To start with, the function keys (F1 – F12) could be reassigned, standardized, and clearly labeled to make them more useful. F1 might always provide context-sensitive help and be relabeled as such. F2 could Save current work while shift-F2 would Save as... F3 might do Find and Find / Replace operations, and so on. Many current programs, such as Microsoft Office, already make extensive use of the F-keys, but usage is non-standard and few users are familiar with them for lack of labeling. The same holds for the Windows and Menu keys on most keyboards; they provide handy shortcuts but are mostly underused.
- Wireless Connections, high-speed, self-configuring, to peripherals such as a mouse, printer, scanner, sound system, and router for connections to Internet and a local computer network. That rat's nest of wires under and behind our computers has to go!
- Broadband connection to the Internet, essential for regular updates of security programs and desirable for other Internet activities.

You may be able to think of more simplifications. Let me know about them.

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The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

When working the Handicap show I was impressed with the technology I saw. There are computers with sensors capable of detecting even eyebrow or eye movement that can be used to control certain things. There is too much to go into detail, but it was sure interesting to see all the technology available for the handicapped. One product was a special computer in the \$8,000 range that has tremendous capabilities. Legislation exists concerning the provision of whatever technology would help a student if certain tests suggest that a technology is necessary to help them. To find out more about how this legislation works, try a search for "IDEA", better known as "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act." If you know anyone severely handicapped, a test and that legislation could help him or her.

I also noticed the Christopher Reeves Foundation booth there and hoped he and Dana might attend, but was told his health prevented it at that time. Sadly, news of his death came shortly after that show.

Another show I worked was the Rockwell International Automation Fair and you would have surely "loved" that one. [<http://www.automationfair.com>] There were automation displays all over the place and I was totally impressed checking them all out. The exhibit area was 94,000-sq. ft. and packed with big name vendors demonstrating elaborate operational robots and conveyers with robotic arms moving packages around. Since then I found out that Charlie Semple of Los Angeles Computer Society was in attendance as a consultant and we were probably only a few feet apart at times without knowing it. Two magazines I picked up there were *Automation World* [<http://www.automationworld.com>] and *Instrumentation & Automation News* [<http://www.ianmag.com>].

Disappearing Rebates

I discovered a new problem concerning rebates. I've had good luck with OfficeMax rebates in the past, but the last two I sent in ended up with a follow-up phone call later by me only to be told that the check was sent on a certain date and cashed on a certain date; end of conversation. I gave them the benefit of the doubt for the first one, but when I got the same answer for the second one, I know I keep better records than that and we have no problem with mailboxes in our neighborhood. A \$10 rebate wasn't worth any further efforts, but that's making me more gun-shy of rebates.

Reminders

I talked to Rich Henf at Banner Badge [<http://www.bannerbadge.com>] and if you have not ordered one of these fun gadgets yet they will still honor the DealsGuy offer. Call 1-772-571-9944. If you had problems contacting them during Florida's vicious storms, they apologize and urge you to try again. Peet

Bros. (weather station) may have had similar problems. I'm not sure but you may still be able to get that special on the Ultimeter Weather Station [<http://www.peetbros.com>] by calling 1-321-206-6214. When I ordered a Big Weather Picture for my weather station I found it was backordered, but I now have it. Just a glance provides all the weather information. What a nice present for my wife and I, (mostly me).

How About Helping Microsoft!

My thanks to Joe Barth of Alamo PC Organization for sending this information. Joe says; "They are seeking people to participate in Microsoft product evaluations and get free software. Ever wanted to talk to Microsoft about that one feature you wished the company would change in a product, or on a Web site? The Usability Research Group at Microsoft is interested in talking to you! All participants will receive a software gift for participating in a study." Check [<http://www.microsoft.com/usability/jump1.htm>].

Time Is Of The Essence

Here is a sophisticated time and data management software, C-Organizer Professional, which offers PC users a digital Planner, Event Scheduler, Calendar, Notebook, Address Book, Password and Bookmark managers, all packed up into one powerful and easy-to-use application. C-Organizer can bring out and help to cultivate time architect skills even in the most hopeless time prisoner. For further information, go to [<http://www.csoftlab.com>].

User Group people can get it for \$25.00 rather than the usual \$35.00 price by downloading (4.15 MB) at [<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=167248&language=English&COUPON1=248QHM>] for the discounted price. I doubt there is any help for me and my scarcity of time. I'm supposed to be retired, but so far, I have only managed that part time, (mini-part-time).

How About A Great Relational Database!

I called Alpha Software to order the new version of Alpha 5 on special, and while talking to the order-taker, he remembered me so we created a deal for my readers. Alpha Software has been offering their database for years and has continued to improve it. They have introduced Alpha 5 ver. 6 and user group members can get a deal on it. Remember that Alpha 5 is a relational database that has some exciting new features. Check their Web site at [<http://www.alphasoftware.com>] for full information. You can build Web-accessible database applications without any programming. You can access and work with your data no matter where it resides if you have an Internet Web Browser. Alpha 5 uses Genies, which are similar to Wizards, but they say Genies are better.

It offers action scripting with hundreds of predefined actions that can be used for building applications without writing one character of code. Alpha's Visual Report Writer will also impress you with its ease of use, and lets you accomplish custom layouts and many other tasks. As suggested above, it also works with HTML and supports

Active X. Read more about it on their Web site and you will see that Alpha 5, ver. 6 is even more outstanding than ever. I've used Alpha Software's database for my own purposes for years and I'm no expert.

The retail price for Alpha 5 ver. 6 is \$349.00, but during January and February of 2005 you get a tremendous discount, just \$179.00 if you download it (24 megs). To do that, e-mail Brett Johnston at [brett@alphasoftware.com] with the code "dealsguy" in the subject line to make arrangements for downloading. If you prefer to have it shipped, e-mail Brett with "dealsguy" in the subject line. You can also call Brett at 800-451-1018 Ext. 11. Shipping is \$12.00 in the US, \$30.00 to Canada.

Working On Your Icons?

I received this announcement from Roman Rudnik, Marketing Communications Mgr. of ArcticLine Software, which produces Bee Icons. He states: "Bee Icons is an icon customization tool that allows you to change over 250 system icons in Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP, individually or using icon themes. I think you will find our software interesting. Designed for Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP, the application allows changing over 250 standard icons separately, one after another, or all together using one of the many Bee Icons Themes. Along with Desktop, Drive and Folder icons, the program can successfully change icons on the Windows XP Start Panel. (DealsGuy note: Check the product page: <http://www.beeicons.com/features.php>.)

"We offer 15% discount for user group members. If you are interested, please e-mail me at [roman@beeicons.com] and I will send you a Discount coupon code. This code should be entered during registration process to get the discount."

Talk All Over The World

I was browsing a recent issue of Hewie's Favorites (his newsletter) and noticed something that might interest you. Information on their Web site is a bit vague so beware. Sounds like both parties must be on-line. Called "Free World Dialup (FWD)," it is located at [<http://www.pulver.com/fwd/>] and they claim you can make free phone calls over the Internet using your regular telephone and a computer program. I didn't try it. Maybe you could call your own phone with the computer and give your spouse hell, then hang up before they find out who is calling. Just a thought!

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>]. I have posted new Web pages with announcements I received in 2004. Sorry they are not well organized, but what is there was a lot of work, as they all have to be edited.

The Internet Gets Local

The 'www' in web addresses refers to the World Wide Web, however the hottest market on the Internet today isn't worldwide, it's all about being local. The initial appeal of the Internet was how it enabled anyone with a webserver to establish an instant worldwide presence. Yahoo, Google, Hotmail and a number of other companies took advantage of this, creating worldwide audiences. Now some of the largest Internet companies, and some hot start-ups, are taking a decidedly local focus.

Think Globally, Act Locally

Usually that phrase is applied to environmental issues, yet it also applies to the Internet. If you are looking for information, a worldwide Internet is great. For example, if you need to find the lyrics to that new song that is stuck in your head, a worldwide Internet is great. But if you want to take action, like finding a job, selling your car, finding someone to rideshare with, or even finding that someone special...you want to act locally. In fact, while the vast majority of Internet searches are purely informational, a study by The Kelsey Group and BizRate found that 45% of all *local* searches are performed by people looking to *buy* something.

The market for local Internet advertising is currently valued at \$1 Billion and it is expected to grow to \$5 Billion by 2008. At the same time, newspapers earned \$15.8 Billion last year selling local classified ads; and yellow pages vendors earned \$14.9 Billion selling local directory ads. Yet classified ads and directories are far more efficient online. This has combined to create a new Internet gold rush to address the burgeoning local markets.

Search Engines Look for Local Gold

Search engine companies such as Google, Yahoo and AskJeeves have begun building geographical awareness into local versions of their search engines. If you're looking for a local business like a bicycle shop in Davis, CA, these local search engines can help. But if you're looking to sell a used bike, or you want to find someone to bicycle with in Davis, you're out of luck.

The search engine companies have taken an outside-in approach. They reside outside of the local communities looking inward to find local information. The search engines hope to sell ads to local vendors that are displayed alongside the search results, just as they have done on a national basis—a process known as search engine marketing.

In their quest to extend their Internet dominance locally, search engine companies face two very significant challenges. First, the small to medium sized businesses that comprise the bulk of these local companies generally have no online presence. Since search engine marketing is built upon redirecting Internet users to the advertiser's website, it simply doesn't work without a web presence; there's no website for the user to click to.

Secondly, these small to medium sized businesses typically don't have the in-house expertise necessary to master the technical and marketing issues behind search engine marketing. As a result, the search engine companies need to establish local representation to sell the concept of paid search and then to help the companies implement these solutions.

Local Communities Complement Search Engine Marketing

While the search engines take an outside-in approach of finding local information, local community websites, like Craigslist, complement this with an inside-out model. These web communities provide local residents with the tools to interact with one another. In the process, these residents create a tremendous amount of valuable information. This is the type of information that the users of localized search engines want. Search engines and local community websites are very complimentary, like peanut butter and chocolate, in addressing local markets.

Craigslist, a popular early implementation of the local community, is now straining under the weight of its popularity. While the largest Internet companies were busy establishing their global dominance, Craigslist evolved into a quirky local free classified ad website in the San Francisco area. It has since grown into a collection of free classified ad websites covering 58 U.S. cities. This local Internet solution, which began as a hobby, has now become a big business. If you need proof of this, consider that eBay recently bought 25% of Craigslist.

Craigslist relies upon a simple posting model. You select a category and post your free classified ad. While this is very simple, it doesn't provide the context necessary to search effectively. For example, searching the cars & trucks section of Craigslist for "1988 Acura Integra" yielded results that included a Mercedes Benz, some used Honda parts and all kinds of things that didn't fit my search criteria.

Without an efficient search mechanism, users are forced to read all of the newest ads to find what they want. This can be very time-consuming. It is also problematic from the advertiser's perspective. There are so many new ads posted each day, that in order to keep your ad fresh and keep it in front of readers, you need to post the same ad every day or two until you sell the item. Craigslist is a simple local community website, but it can be very time-consuming to use.

A new company called ZiXXo has recently launched a similar service in over 100 U.S. cities. The Rochester site is <<http://rochester.zixxo.com/>>. ZiXXo provides free classified ads that use best-of-breed forms for most of its categories. These forms guide the user in creating their ad, ensuring that it includes all of the relevant information. The buyer can then search by field. To search for a 1988 Acura Integra, simply open the search form for used cars and enter "1988" in the year field, "Acura" in the make field and "Integra" in the model field. This search finds only exact matches.

Unlike other supposedly free classified ad sites, ZiXXo doesn't charge users to make their headlines bold, to ad pictures, or anything like that. There are simply no charges at all. In fact, the company raffles off digital cameras or Apple iPods every week to users of the site. ZiXXo makes money by selling printable coupons to local vendors. Users of the site can find, print and redeem these coupons locally. ZiXXo relies upon local individuals to sell these coupons, paying them a commission for each sale.

The Local Internet Market is Still Young

While the Internet upstarts attempt to redefine local advertising, the demise of the current leaders in local advertising—newspapers and publishers of yellow pages—has been greatly exaggerated. With about \$33 Billion in revenue between them, they are developing, buying and partnering to defend their local turf as it moves online. For example, newspapers are offering online classified ads to complement their print editions. Some are also offering local auctions to fend off eBay's encroachment. The yellow pages are also active moving their directories online, so that they too can offer businesses a package that includes both online and offline advertising. In fact, BellSouth, owner of yellow pages publisher RealPages, partnered with Google to combine search engine marketing with online and offline yellow pages advertising.

It will be very interesting to see how the local Internet evolves over the coming years. It's hard to tell now which companies will come out as the big winners, but if the analysts projections hold true and local Internet advertising grows from \$1 Billion this year to \$5 billion in 2008, there will no doubt be some big winners.

Craigslist: www.craigslist.org

<<http://www.craigslist.org>>

ZiXXo: www.zixxo.com

<<http://www.zixxo.com>>

Yahoo Local: <<http://local.yahoo.com/>>

Google Local Beta:

<<http://local.google.com/>>

AskJeeves Local Search:

<<http://local.ask.com/local>>

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

Slimmer tube TVs to challenge flat panels

New television-tube technology promises to shed several inches from the bulky displays and challenge rival flat panels at their own game — being thin.

Executives at a display conference here said Thursday that significantly thinner CRT (cathode ray tube) displays will be available next year and are expected to be less expensive than trendy flat panels that use newer

technologies such as LCD — liquid crystal display — and plasma displays.

"These superslim CRTs offer the best of both worlds — superior picture quality with a slim size," said Siegfried Trinker, director of corporate strategy at LG.Philips Displays International.

Despite offering a better picture quality and lower prices, and despite making up a large majority of the market, tube-based televisions have lost their luster compared with flat-panel sets using emerging technologies such as LCDs and plasma.



LG. Philips Displays is already making the tubes for the thin models in limited quantities and expects thin CRT televisions to be available in the United States starting in late 2005. The sets will initially be slightly more expensive than current CRT models, but prices should come down quickly.

The first of the manufacturers to offer the sets in the United States will be the joint venture's parents, LG Electronics and Royal Philips Electronics. The two electronics giants also teamed to form LG.Philips LCD, the second biggest manufacturer in the LCD market.

A 30-inch-tube television from Samsung Electronics will be about 16 inches thick, deeper than a flat panel set but about the same size as the typical stand on a flat-panel television, a Samsung executive said.

CRTs make up about 90 percent of the worldwide television market, but growth rates have been stable for some time. In fact, many companies that built their successes on CRT televisions are pulling back from the market and dedicating themselves to flat-screen sets. Shipments for flat televisions are up modestly, making

up 5 percent of the market. But their hefty profits margins are driving interest.

Executives acknowledged that the CRT business is out of its growth phase but there are still opportunities as the market consolidates.

LG.Philips supplies the CRTs for tube sets and executives there said slimmer is better for the market.

New flat-panel televisions have captured the attention of consumers because of their thin profiles and large screen sizes. However, television manufacturing executives at the Flat Information Displays Conference 2004 said that starting next year, superslim tube models will hit the market at significantly lower prices than flat panels.

The move to thinner CRTs is meant to attract consumers who want a thin television but find current flat panels too expensive.

Samsung Electronics will also offer super-slim CRT sets next year, according to Jim Sanduski, vice president of Samsung Electronics America's marketing visual display product group. During the first quarter of next year, the company will begin selling a 30-inch television in Korea. Sets will come to the United States by the middle of next year.

"These sets will prolong the appeal of tube-based televisions," said Sanduski.

Despite the growth of flat-panel televisions based on new technologies such as LCD and plasma, CRT is still expected to dominate the market in the years to come.

"CRTs are not going away anytime soon," said Riddhi Patel, an analyst with researcher iSuppli. "They will account for 70 percent of the market in 2008."

CRTs makers also benefit from lower prices. Flat panels tend to carry a heavier premium than CRTs for a number of reasons. They come in larger sizes — television maker Syntax, a second-tier maker, said at the conference that it will begin selling a 55-inch LCD-based television by May of next year. Flat panels are a relatively young market compared to the mature CRT industry, but prices are already dropping.

A build-up of LCD panel inventory is leading to excess supply and price cuts. Manufacturers are already driving prices down, leading some analysts to think this holiday season could be a good one for flat-panel buyers and a tough one for manufacturers.

However, it will be some time before enough price cuts for flat-panel sets have been made to match CRTs.

Average prices for CRTs are expected to fall as the market consolidates and survivors are forced to be profitable at low price points, according to Trinker. Many major players in the CRT business, including Sony, Toshiba, Matsushita and Sharp, have pulled back their efforts.

Trinker added that televisions are headed for prices less than \$500, with average tags in the \$250 range. To offset low prices, volumes will have to be high, and that might be difficult as flat panels evolve into a larger part of the overall television market.

The share of worldwide TV shipments that are LCD models will grow from 5 percent this year to 18 percent in 2008, according to iSuppli. The total TV market is expected to jump from about 168 million units to roughly 203 million units during that period.

Flat-panel televisions are becoming a larger part of the LCD market as well. This year, revenue from flat-panel desktop monitors will account for 41 percent of the overall market, and notebooks will account for 22 percent, according to DisplaySearch. LCD-based televisions will account for 11 percent. By 2008, revenue from desktop monitors will make up only 31 percent and notebooks, 16 percent. LCD televisions will provide 33 percent of the market, DisplaySearch forecasts.

Also helping the flat-panel television market will be the transition from analog to digital television. The transition is being pushed by a confluence of forces, including a long-standing federal mandate to shift over-the-air TV broadcasts from analog to digital signals; improvements and lower prices in display and digital storage technologies; heated competition between satellite and cable TV providers; and Hollywood's growing acceptance of the digital evolution.

How To Print Out Your Address Book

Your OE address book is great for looking up details of your contacts at the click of a button.

But it can be time consuming copying them by hand in to your 'old fashioned' diary.

Here's how to print it out ...

Open your Address book (This is similar for MS Outlook too).

Click File.

Print.

A screen opens up with a variety of options and selections. You can choose to print your whole address book, or just selected parts of it. Just experiment to see the results.

Business card; Prints out the info you would normally find on a business card such as name, company, phone number, email address.

Memo; All of the stored information will be printed.

Phone list; Home, business, fax numbers etc will be printed.

Google Offers Tool for Scholars

Google has released a tool that will search scholarly papers. Google Scholar will pore through peer-reviewed papers, abstracts and theses. In some cases, the papers may not be online. Therefore, libraries expect that Google Scholar will drive more business to them. That would be ironic, as the public is turning more and more to Web search sites to find information.

Scholarly papers often are invisible to the public. So Google Scholar is likely to add a new dimension to the mass of information that is available. You can find Google Scholar at: <http://scholar.google.com/>

Get the Picture with Photo Printers

Want to print your digital images at home? Photo printers can produce quality pictures that look as good as, and last as long as, store-printed ones. Before you take the do-it-yourself plunge, know that you won't be doing it to save money.

Using a photo printer, it costs anywhere from 29 to 79 cents per 4 x 6 inch snapshot. Alternatively, take your camera's memory card to a local drugstore or superstore and those prints run around 20 cents each. Online photo sites charge a little more. So if it's convenience you're after, here's a photo printer primer.

1) Different technologies. Most photo printers use either inkjet or thermal dye technology. Chances are, if you have a printer for your home computer, it's an inkjet. These printers use cartridges that produce drops of ink to form a picture or text.

Thermal dye-technology, also called dye sublimation, transfers colors from a ribbon to a plastic coating on paper. Both are equally good.

Forget color lasers. They're capable of producing good-quality pictures, but the paper doesn't produce a glossy finish. Plus, laser printers are much more expensive, starting at \$500.

2) All-around and dedicated printers. If you already own a printer, consider a dedicated photo printer. Dedicated photo printers are often small and portable and can be powered by batteries. For example, you could take the printer to a party and print photos as they happen. But there is a downside. Most produce only 4 x 6-inch prints or smaller.

All-around photo printers can accommodate larger sizes of paper. So printing an 8- x 10-inch photo of your kids and hanging it on the wall is not a problem. These printers can also handle text on regular paper and some will print labels directly onto CDs and DVDs.

3) More equals better. A true inkjet photo printer uses more than four colors. Most use cyan, light cyan, yellow, magenta and light magenta. Some models use eight colors. These can produce a wider range of color and subtler shades.

Choose a model that allows you to replace individual color cartridges. This way, if you end up printing numerous pictures of the ocean, you can just replace the cyan cartridge.

If you do a lot of black-and-white photography, look for a model that uses more than one variation of black ink. Most inkjets print grey-scale photos using a combination of color ink, sometimes leaving black-and-white photos with color tinting.

4) Forget the computer. Many models allow you to print pictures without using a computer. Some have built-in memory card slots. Another method is through PictBridge. This is a feature found in newer digital cameras. It allows you to connect your digital camera directly to the printer with a USB cable.

If bypassing your computer is appealing, make sure that the printer has an LCD viewer. It should also let you

do some basic editing, such as cropping and red-eye reduction. Even the best shots need a little fine tuning.

5) Prices span the gamut. Photo printers start at \$50 and generally top out around \$400. Higher-priced models tend to have more features and faster print speeds. But when it comes to quality, the results are often the same.

Before buying a photo printer, determine the cost of replacement ink cartridges. Printer manufacturers make their money on replacement inkjet cartridges. You may find the cost to replace the cartridges is more than the cost of the printer.

It'd be nice if one feature or technology created a clear-cut winner, but that's not the case. To walk away satisfied with your purchase, test several printers in the store. Take a memory card with you and ask if you can print a picture.

At the very least, you should be able to print a test page. Your eyes, not the specs or price, should tell you what to buy. You want to see realistic tones, good contrast, and sharp detail.

Society News

Program Meeting

Tuesday, December 14, 2004

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Arpad Kovacs

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Total present: 28

We have a set of CDs for folks who would like to try Linux. One CD is 'live', allowing you to test out Linux without installing any software. The second one will require an installation. They were placed on the refreshment table.

Q: One member has a training DVD that contains training PowerPoints. He gets video but not sound. Is there another kind of Kodak audio? The introduction works just fine.

A: Perhaps it is a different format as it moves to the screenshots. Try downloading Matroska which seems to play almost anything!

Q: Now a Frontiernet customer. During first use he attempted to move items into the 'My Favorites' folder, he gets an IBM homepage. How can he change this?

A: Good into 'Manage Bookmarks' where you can add or remove favorites. Can also right click on the entry in the dropdown list. Can also set the default page to start as a new internet session is started under the Tools> Internet Options and then set the Home Page.

Q: Will there be a problem if a member installs Service Pack 2 when he wants to keep Zone Alarm?

A: By default, SP2's firewall will be automatically turned on, along with the popup blocker. Go into the Control Panel and you can deactivate any items that you do not want, as long as you have another product that provides that service.

Q: I have a Toshiba laptop from eBay that does not have a CD ROM drive. The specs call for a Toshiba model but there are at least four different ones on eBay.

A: Perform a Google search, putting in the make, model and even serial number followed by "CD ROM" and the information should show up on the first page. It may point to a Linux page as they do many specification checks against lots of different hardware sets.

Q: One member reported that, when he boots up, he gets a window that prompts for the choice of cancel or ok. He wants to get rid of this bothersome step. He is running XP.

A: We need to know the exact message. Depending upon the message, we can then talk about this question next month.

Q: How can you get a screen shot of the item showing?

A: Google search will find a freeware download. Your Printscreen button will add the contents of the screen to the clipboard. A 'paste' will then be possible into a word processor page, email, etc.

Q: When running Win XP, he wants to remove Windows Messenger.

A: Control Panel > add/remove programs> remove windows components.

Q: I thought I had a virus because some programs would not stay open. Regedit automatically closes, Task Editor, too. He changed the Regedit to a .com file and it now works. No luck for the other ones.

A: Suggested that you run Stinger. There is also an internet-based scan (HouseCall) that you could try. Could try repair from the CD but has not tried that. If you can access the services.smi, look for anything that is suspicious. All modules should have a description so, if missing, try to disable or put on a manual start setup.

Q: One member is trying to put in some old files and would like to convert into the newer XP. Some Word some MS Works.

A: Try to open them in any text tool and then save or cut and paste the text into a new XP Word file. Try bringing up in another word processor such as Word Perfect or Open Office and then save as a .doc file.

Business Meeting

by Jim Murdock, Secretary

Arpad Kovacs and Steve Staub conducted the business meeting. Several RCSi members owe dues. Members are asked to keep their dues current.

Please get in touch with Arpod or Steve if you are interested in conducting Helps Half Hour. If no one is interested then the process will revert to a volunteer basis.

The Digital Photography and Scanners SIG is looking for a new leader and a new location. There is considerable interest in this SIG so don't hesitate to help and volunteer.

The New Users Group—John McMillan leader—also is seeking a new meeting location. Please let Arpad or Steve know if you have any suggestions.

There is a vacancy on the Executive Board. The remainder of a term expiring in 2006 needs to be filled.

The next monthly RCSi meeting will take place at the Brighton Library. Ron Matteson will give a presentation on Intel Centrino technology.

Steve reminded everyone that during the break at each monthly meeting 50/50 tickets are on sale. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

Program

by Jim Murdock, Secretary

Jack Baly, a Rochester Computer Society member, and, as soon became evident to the audience, an expert Quicken user, gave his presentation on Quicken 2005 Premier. He discussed each version of Quicken in detail giving comparisons of both features and prices. In addition, he discussed the degree of difficulty and the gradient of the learning curve you might encounter when you upgrade to the latest Quicken versions from earlier versions.

Jack began with general remarks applicable to all versions of Quicken. He likes the help menu and setup process. He finds the interview process within the setup process especially worthwhile. Although the interview process is necessary for Quicken to get you stated it serves also at the outset as a good education tool for you about your own financial situation. Quicken comes with an extensive predefined list of categories to get you started. After you complete the interview you already have a better idea of where you stand financially.

Jack then went on to discuss the attributes of each version of Quicken.

In addition to the Basic Quicken there is Quicken 2005 Deluxe, Quicken 2005 Premier, Quicken 2005 Premier Home and Business as well as Quicken 2005 for Mac. The prices range from almost free to around \$70.00. Buyers are advised to shop around and especially at tax time look at combination rebate offers with TurboTax.

You can use Quicken to track your finances, manage and save your money as well as to manage your investments.

All versions allow you to balance your checkbook, create reports and graphs, print checks, pay you bills online, download bank and credit card statements, and transfer your data to TurboTax. All versions also enable you to find ways to reduce your debt, monitor your net worth, predict your cash flow and savings and document tax deductions. Jack pointed out that keeping track of credit card charges with Quicken makes it easy to spot a wrong charge. In addition it documents the error to help you work to have the error corrected.

The Premier version of Quicken also allows you to analyze your portfolio, prepare investment reports, compare your investments to market indexes including the Morningstar Rating on mutual funds. With this version you can also generate Schedule A, B and D tax

reports. Features of this version help you find ways to reduce your capital gains taxes. Here Jack noted that while many brokerages have good sites, only in Quicken can you see them all together in the same format. This is especially helpful when making comparisons of you holdings between say Fidelity and Schwab.

The Quicken 2005 Premier Home and Business version, in addition to the features above, helps you manage your small business. With it you can create estimates and invoices, generate business reports and graphs, create a business plan, automatically track Schedule C taxes as well as track vehicle mileage for tax purposes. You can also monitor unpaid invoices and receivables and track accounts payable and reimbursables. This version can also be synchronized with several PDAs.

Throughout his presentation Jack, using real data, showed example after example of how Quicken can help you manage you money whether it's taxes, medical expenses, business losses and gains or investments or any other financial category or sub-category. He also showed he was an accomplished user of Quicken well able to answer the many questions and requests for further elaboration he received.

New Users

by John MacMillan

Our group met December 7th but lack of a recorder meant that there are no minutes. However there were some grave developments that were discussed briefly. After about 8 years of operation, the New Users Special Interest Group of the Rochester Computer Society will be suspended pending further notice.

I would like to thank Bill Statt, our resident guru, for his unstinting demonstrations and discussions that were of such great help to the many attendees. He gave generously of his time, both at the first Tuesday sessions, and in meeting one on one with group members (at their homes or his) to resolve particularly knotty problems.

In addition I would like to thank the management of the Monroe Developmental Center at 620 Westfall Rd. They provided the quiet, class like environment that was so conducive to discussing the many hardware and software questions posed by the meeting attendees.

Until the present situation changes, I recommend that users with computer related questions consider a course of action that Bill introduced me to several years ago:

1. Log on to Google and go to sound bytes login.
2. Click on Register in the choices at the top of the page. This opens a window stating the Registration Agreement Terms, followed by a statement of acceptance. There is no cost involved in utilizing this bountiful source of information but if you agree, you must answer a few questions to allow the process to function. You are not obligated to use your real name (many of the members use aliases) but must provide your e-mail address for two way communications, plus a password to validate your identity when

submitting questions or responses. There are some additional questions for which answers are optional, plus some preferences about the mode of operation.

3. Once you have registered, you can log on, and click on a category such as Windows, Linux, Hardware, Networks, Viruses etc. Within each category, Topics (questions) are listed from latest to earliest. When a Topic, (question) is submitted, answers can come from any of the over 2000 members including Nick Francesco, Dave Enright and Steve Rea.

4. Clicking on a Topic opens a window containing details of the question, often followed by multiple responses. Some of the existing Topics may be of interest but it is possible to open a new Topic stating your own question more precisely.

5. It is possible to establish a dialogue with one or more of the responders by tracking the history of your question and refining the details of the problem based upon the responses. In over 2 years of membership I have submitted 3 questions under my own name, and have received very helpful clues for resolving the problems without being spammed or hassled in any way.

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Treasurer

Balance as of 11/6/2004	\$756.23
Income	
Dues and donations	\$670.15
Expenses	
St. Stephens	\$75.00
Avanquest USA CD for 2005	<u>297.45</u>
	\$372.45
Balance as of 12/4/2004	\$1,043.83

The Lighter Side

No doubt about it, the new temp didn't have a clue about computers. Since part of her job was directing calls to our technical support department, I gave her simple instructions: "When people call with computer problems, always ask which operating system they're using — Windows, Mac-intosh, or UNIX."

Later, she handed a technician this phone message. "Call immediately. Customer has problem with eunuchs."

*

I helped someone set up his email account a while back. I realized how big a task it would be when I walked him through sending email, and he didn't understand why "all psychiatric patients in North America" wouldn't work as an email address.

*

I work for an ad agency. A customer of ours sells peripheral hardware for computers. They asked me to

post all the latest drivers on the web site we made for them.

Before I could say another word, my genius co-worker arranged for a professional photographer and two days of studio time for photographing the drivers.