

A Better "Office" than "Office"?

by Ira Wilsker
Golden Triangle PC Club

I just returned from my annual pilgrimage to an international technology trade show. For many years this pilgrimage was to COMDEX, the quintessential queen of computer trade shows, which unfortunately met its demise last year, only to be replaced by the already extant, decades old, CES (Consumer Electronics Show) as the premier event for cyber techies. In coming weeks I will be writing about some of the more interesting products and services that I saw at some pre-CES events, as well as the annual meeting of APCUG (Association of Personal Computer User Groups).

Like the mythical Phoenix, Corel has risen from its ashes and has entered the office suite market with a vengeance, in a clear attempt to topple the ubiquitous Microsoft Office Suite from its dominance of the market by introducing version 12 of its suite of office products. WordPerfect Office 12 is now in the retail channels in three flavors, a standard edition, a deeply discounted student and teacher (academic) edition, and a home edition. Each of these three editions is priced at retail significantly below that of comparable Microsoft products, and is commonly available at "street prices" considerably below retail.

Long time word processor users may well remember the dominance that WordPerfect had in the past, once dominating the field, only to lose its position to Microsoft's marketing power. The new version 12 is a sincere attempt to regain that dominance by offering a product with features, such as the Word Perfect classic "reveal codes" that enabled users to better format documents. Additionally, this product offers compatibility with Microsoft data formats, and a front end that can be in the familiar WordPerfect format, or emulate the Microsoft menu and command set allowing for a zero learning curve for Microsoft Office users. These as well as other features may threaten Microsoft Office's near monopoly on the office market. This office suite can seamlessly read and write Microsoft data formats, such that documents created in Word can be read, edited, and saved by WordPerfect, or other suite components, back to Microsoft's native formats, easing any transition between products.

The WordPerfect 12 Home Edition (\$89 retail) is the basic version with additional features useful to home (and small business) users. The Home Edition contains the word processor, and the Quattro Pro spreadsheet, which many experts claim is far superior to Microsoft's Excel. Other interesting features of the Home version include the "Home Financial Solutions Pack" to ease personal financial transactions and record keeping; Encyclopedia Britannica Ready Reference 2005, which includes an encyclopedia, thesaurus, atlas, and dictionary; Photobook and Photo Album to edit and store

digital photos, Pinnacle Instant CD/DVD version 8LE to create and burn CDs and DVDs; and can create and publish any of its data files in the now universal PDF format, without using an external PDF writer. As an added feature, with cyber security being such a hot issue today, the WordPerfect Home Edition 12 also includes Norton Internet Security Suite 2005, to protect against viruses, worms, hackers, and other cyber threats. The Home version does not contain the Presentations 12 multimedia presentation utility, or Paradox, one of the finest database utilities on the market.

The Student and Teacher version (\$99 retail), and the full "Standard" edition (\$299 full edition, \$149 upgrade edition) are nearly identical in content, and include the Presentations 12 and Paradox programs, in addition to the WordPerfect word processor, and Quattro Pro spreadsheet. These editions do not include some of the Home add-ons such as the encyclopedia, photo utilities, and Norton Internet Security. Both of these additions can open, read, edit, and write Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files. Both versions also include a "Legal Tools" module, including a legal toolbar, pleadings wizard, concordance tool, and EDGAR. The Standard version also includes Microsoft Visual Basic for Applications version 6.3.

A free trial version and details on all three versions is available at www.wordperfect.com.

It is nice to see healthy competition in the market, as well as different versions priced appropriately for home, academic, and office use. It is also nice to see that Corel has recovered from its doldrums with fresh financing, and is back producing world class products intended to rival the market leader. Personally, I have used Quattro Pro, Corel's spreadsheet, for many years, and prefer it over Microsoft's Excel because of its intuitive ease of use, superior graphics, and outstanding data handling capabilities. The Home edition, bundled with its many utilities including those from Norton, Pinnacle, and Corel is actually quite a bargain compared to the individual prices if purchased separately. The Home edition would be a great addition for any PC user, and ideal for a new computer or user. Dell has recognized these facts, and has chosen to bundle Corel's WordPerfect 12 suite with its new computers, displacing Microsoft Word and Office as its chosen suite.

If you are looking for your first office suite, or a replacement, supplement, or upgrade to your present word processor and spreadsheet, WordPerfect 12 is a very compelling alternative.

When a Zombie Isn't

by Kim Komando

Q. Help Kim! I'm a zombie! I know, because I occasionally get returned e-mail from people to whom I've never written. Sometimes the rejections are because of attached viruses. My computer is updated. I have Norton AntiVirus and anti-spyware programs. Nothing can find this problem. Can you help me out?

A. Sure. Your scanning programs don't find anything because there is nothing to find. Your computer is not a zombie.

I covered the returned e-mail situation recently. A listener thought she might have a stalker. Your problem is similar, even though you think your computer is a zombie.

Let me explain zombies first. Big-time spammers do not send spam from their own machines. They place programs on unprotected machines owned by others. They use networks of these compromised machines to send bursts of e-mail.

Such machines are called zombies. Using zombies makes the spammers much harder to catch.

Were your machine compromised, you would not be getting the returned e-mails. The bad guys would not want to tip you off. The e-mail sent from zombies has fraudulent return addresses. If it cannot be delivered, it simply dies.

So why are you getting returned spam? It's the same situation as the listener who thought she had a stalker. A worm infected someone's computer. It harvested all the e-mail addresses and made them available to a spammer. Yours was included. This is an automated program, so it simply picked one address for returns. You're the lucky guy.

What can you do about this? The spam is probably going out to lots of people with your return address. So you may get angry e-mails. If so, send them this explanation. And you might also want to change your e-mail address.

When you set up that new e-mail address, pick one that is longer than eight characters and include some symbols. Research has shown that spammers' automated programs which generate e-mail addresses are less likely to come up with those rather than, say, something like john@isp.com.

Finally, if you wanted to and had the time, you could notify the ISP of the computer that is sending out the spam. While you cannot find the person, you can locate the ISP. That information is contained in the e-mail headers. I have steps on how to do this on my Web site. So, rather than hogging up your inbox with that here, click the link below to read it all on my Web site: http://www.komando.com/tips_show.asp?showID=4483

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Ergonomics for the Elderly

by Dr. Herbert A. Goldstein, Editor

Sarasota PC Monitor, Sarasota FL PC Users Group

As baby boomers reach retirement age the ratio of employees to retirees will equalize over the next twenty years. Considering that the foundation of Social Security benefits is generated from the workers it

is evident that benefits will be inadequate for future retirees. In order to endure, the elderly will be forced to keep working beyond the current retirement age.

As our increasing knowledge of the aging process brings about breakthroughs in life extension technologies, the elderly will come to play a greater role in the productivity of our economy. Upcoming ergonomic developments will be critical in order to accommodate the elderly as viable and productive members of the workforce.

With the physical restrictions that naturally come with age we can expect that many elderly would be regarded as having disabilities and the ones who are not technically disabled could be considered physically and mentally compromised to some degree. Therefore, any workplace modifications that serve to overcome limitations in strength, coordination, endurance, sight, hearing and shift adaptability will accommodate the elderly into the workplace.

Visual restrictions can be overcome with a greater dependence on verbal communication with regard to instructions and assistive technology such as audio recorders. Labels should be in large, clear print with large, high-resolution computer monitors. Voice recognition software is also helpful. Other modifications include paper holders and book stands that allow for optimal positioning of written materials, voice mail systems for messages and raised edges along the sides of work surfaces to prevent objects from falling off.

In personnel with hearing limitations any audible information should be supplemented with some form of visual presentation. Whole body vibration transmitted to chairs should be minimized by utilizing anti-vibration seating surface. Ambient noise should be minimized through workstation design, isolating noisy printers, sound dampening etc. Workers should have vibrating pagers, visual call indicators and sound amplifiers on telephones.

The elderly should have their work environment arranged in such a way as to avoid unnecessary reaching, lifting and carrying. Storage systems with pull out shelves and workstation carousels help to keep frequently used materials within 18 inches of the body. Containers should be provided to break loads into manageable units and the employee should have the means to slide any materials over 2 pounds. Mechanical reaching devices should be available for accessing supplies beyond the reach of the worker.

With the preservation of their mental faculties and the advent of ergonomic innovations for staff, the elderly will find themselves continuing to play a dynamic and productive role in society into the later years.

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.

Help

O'Reilly is pulling together a new book called "Excel Annoyances" and they'd like your help! As you might guess from the title, this book aims to identify the problems, snarls, quirks, bugs, and just dumb things about Excel that drive users nuts. Oh yeah—it also aims to solve these annoyances, too.

If any of you use Excel—newbie or master—and you've had annoyances you'd like to see solved, email me (marsee@oreilly.com) with "Excel Annoyance" in the subject line. Just note what versions of Excel and Windows (or Mac OS) you're using.

Computer Repair Made Difficult

by Tom Krauss

Diablo Valley PC Users Group

My computer at home and my wife's are connected via cable to my Linksys wireless router, because the wireless has never worked well at distances greater than four feet. For additional protection we run Zone Alarm and Norton Antivirus. These three combine to ensure that we do not get viruses, nor are criminals in Uzbekistan or Brazil able to violate our PCs. So about two months ago when my wife's computer began doing some strange things with the internet, I was pretty sure that the source of the problem was not the internet.

She actually had two similar problems occurring. The first occurred when she tried to log onto a favorite website with her ID and password. Clicking "Enter" had the same effect as clicking back: the data she entered was zapped with no clue as to why her access was being denied.

The second problem occurred at a couple of other favorite websites. In each case the website offered a search feature with several optional parameters which you could set to narrow the search. However, when she entered values in these filtering parameters and clicked "Enter", the new page took about 5 minutes to load, then failed, zapping all the parameters she had entered and starting her all over, again with no error messages.

Both of these problems did not occur on my machine: she could log onto the first website with no problem, and the searches with filters worked instantly and perfectly. The first thing I did was check to see whether her machine and mine had the same settings for Linksys, Zone Alarm and Norton Antivirus. They did. Then I ran Ad-Aware and Spybot on her machine as well as the system utilities to clean up all temporary files. Finally I ran defrag. I tested the results and found the problems were still there.

I had reached the limits of my technical expertise, so I did what any member of DVPC would do in this situation: I told Ron Ogg my dismal story and begged for assistance.

Ron gave me several suggestions of things to try, which did not help, and included in his reply an article from the Microsoft website with the wonderful title "You Cannot Open A New Internet Explorer Window Or Nothing Occurs After You Click A Link." It was close. A carefully reading convinced me that quite possibly it was addressing my problem. With nothing to lose, I followed the instructions and from the command line replaced eight files.

Or tried to. Seven of them worked, but the eight resulted in this message: "Load Libraryfmsjava.dll" failed – specific module could not be found." The problem still existed, so I wrote Ron, telling him I thought that the Java library on the machine was messed up, or at least missing one module.

I wrote Ron again, sharing my latest disappointment. I said I was going to find the file on my machine and copy it to my wife's. Ron replied that just copying the dll may not solve my problem. If it didn't, I would have to re-install the Microsoft Java Engine. And, of course, the installer is no longer available from the MS web site because of the Sun lawsuit.

I checked my PC and discovered Windows Explorer could find neither the msjavadll file, nor the LoadLibrary it was supposed to be in. Plus, I discovered another problem. On some sites, when browsing their catalogs, clicking on a picture to zoom did nothing. On other sites zoom worked. Oh boy. Was I having fun.

Fortunately, Ron was able to send me an exe that would install the MS Java Virtual Machine version 3810 for WinXP. It was a mere 5.136.592 bytes. I promptly ran it and got the message "This setup will only up-grade over an existing version of the Microsoft VM." Then it said "The installation is complete." The whole process took less than 10 seconds. I don't think it actually did anything, and I still had the problems. Back to Ron. There is something discouraging when you tell Ron a computer problem and his reply starts "That's bizarre!" but he was not out of ideas. Now he sent me two files. One was the elusive msjava.dll file (523 KB zipped) and the other a patch for this version of MS Java (4 MB zipped).

I applied them as directed and . . . no luck. The problems were still with me.

I decided to take matters into my own hands. Convinced the problem was Internet Explorer-related, I went to Microsoft's website to learn how to reload IE. Much to my surprise, I quickly found relatively simple instructions. The bad news was that I would have to edit the Registry. But the instructions were clear (sort of), so I began. Four or five steps into it and as many layers deep in the registry, just as my confidence was growing, I hit a wall. The article said "You will see these four choices: select the third" in words much more technical, but you get the drift. Unfortunately, I did not see those four choices. Major 0-0-0-P-S. I carefully backed out of the Registry, leaving things as I had found them.

At this point / lost interest in whether or not my wife could access successfully a few websites. I mean, there are tens of thousands of interesting websites out there – why not try some new ones? They may even work! I put the problems out of my mind for a week or so until one night she told me “I can’t turn my computer on or off.”

I was curious to see this third state, so I followed her to her PC. The light on the PC was on, the monitor was dark, and it was disturbingly silent. I held the on/off button in for five seconds (don’t you hate that? What a stupid idea!) and heard it click off. After a few seconds I hit the switch and the machine booted flawlessly. Feeling pretty cocky, I told her not to do whatever she had done again, and ran from the room.

The next night the same thing happened, but this time even I could not start the machine, I opened it up, put my hand on the hard drives and tried to start it again. The CD drives came to life but not the hard drives. Stan once cured a problem I was having with my memory (computer memory, that is) by suggesting that I unplug it and then plug it back in. So I tried that with the power cables. No luck. Then I tried one of the spare power plugs and like magic, the drive booted! Further experimenting showed that one strand of power cable was dead, but the others worked fine. Now it was my turn to say “That’s bizarre!”

So the next day I replaced the power supply on the PC. It booted up just fine. Just for the heck of it I went to one of the problem websites and tried to search with filters and IT WORKED!!! All the earlier problems were resolved!

So now we come, after a long, torturous, and rather boring journey, to the moral of the story. This is where you can learn from my mistakes. And the moral is: Whenever something is wrong with your PC, no matter what, REPLACE THE POWER SUPPLY!

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Moving to a New Computer System

by Gene Barlow
User Group Relations

Many users buy a new computer during the holiday season when sales are everywhere and prices are low. Perhaps you got a new computer recently, too. By now, you have your new computer all set up and you are busy learning all the new things you can do with it. But, you find that you miss having a familiar program or some files from your old computer on your new computer. How can you move your programs and data files from your old computer to your new computer is a question I hear often.

Done a step at a time, this can be a long and hard process to complete. Finding all of your programs and files on your old computer and then installing them and getting them to work on your new computer is not the

easiest thing to do. There is a software utility called Move Me by Spearit software in New Jersey that can make this process a quick and easy thing to accomplish. Let me share with you this month a bit of information about this amazing software utility.

First, you place your old computer and your new computer next to each other on a work table or counter. Then you connect the two computers together with one of three different communication cables that will let your two computers talk to each other and move files between them. The fastest of these communication cables in a standard local area network (LAN) connection. If both your old and new computers have ethernet ports on them, you can connect the two with either an inexpensive CAT-5e UTP Crossover cable (under \$5 typically) or a couple of standard LAN patch cables connected to a LAN Hub. If you don’t have ethernet ports on both computers, but have USB ports on both of them, you can use a special USB1.1 or USB2 File Transfer Cable (\$30-40 from www.spearit.com) to connect your old and new computer. The third option is to use a special parallel transfer cable (\$12) between the two parallel (printer) ports on the two computers. While this is slower than the other two connection options, you can always count on your computers having parallel ports.

When you have your old and new computer connected together with one of the three cable options above, you run Move Me on both computers. Before you begin to transfer your files between the two computers, Move Me needs to validate your serial number with Spearit software. You will need an internet connection on one of your two computers or even a third nearby computer to do this. The Move Me screen on your old computer will tell you where to connect to and what information to submit in your Validation internet run.

Move Me is licensed for moving files from a single computer and cannot be used to move files from another computer later on. The validation takes only a minute or two to complete and then you are ready to start moving all of your files from your old computer to your new computer.

Here’s what happens as the move progresses. Move Me gets a file from your old computer and looks to see if it is already on your new computer. If not, it copies the file across the cable and installs it on your new computer. Then it goes back and gets the next file on your old computer. It continues this process until all files have been copied from your old computer to your new computer. The entire process may take an hour or more to complete, depending on the number of files on your old computer needing to be copied and the transfer cable speed.

Move Me copies all of your data and setting files between the two computers. It also copies all of your application programs between the two computers. It even copies the registry entries from your old computer and merges these into the registry of your new computer so that your application programs can run on your new

computer. The only things that are not copied to the new computer are your operating system and any files that were already installed on the new computer.

Your old computer is not changed in the Move Me process. So, it will continue to run exactly as it did before the move. Your new computer should now have all of your applications, data files, and setting on it from your old computer as well as anything that was on it before the move began. At this point, you should test all of your programs to make sure they run on your new computer. Some older DOS and Windows applications may not run on Windows XP whether they were transferred with Move Me or installed directly on the new computer. You will need to get a new version of these older applications from the software developer. Other low level utilities, like PartitionMagic, will need to be reinstalled on your new computer in order to get the WinXP version of the program on your new computer. In general, you will find that most of your application programs will work just fine on WinXP.

Move Me is an amazing utility that can save you hours of work migrating all of your files from one computer to another. If you have an older computer that you want to retire as soon as you can get all of your files off it, Move Me is exactly what you need to use. Move Me on a CD lists for \$50, but you can purchase the same product at the user group discount price of just \$30. Look for it in our User Group Store at www.usergroupstore.com and click on any of the yellow "Buy Now" buttons to get to our secure web order form. Complete the form including the special user group code of UGNL0105 and submit it. You may share this discount offer with your immediate family and close friends. These prices are not available to others not involved with a user group.

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Next Generation DVD: The New Format War

by Timothy Everingham
North Orange County Computer Club

Many of you already have a DVD burner in your computer. Yet at 4.7 GB it still seems small when trying to backup hard drives of 100 GB or larger. Even with the new dual layer DVD burners this is still a problem. Now, Sony and JVC have video cameras in the new HDV format. Corporate, governmental, educational, even high-level amateur videographers will be able to produce high definition videos. Some predict that in less than five years HDV cameras will replace standard definition DV cameras at the consumer level. Yet current standard DVD formats can only have half an hour of high definition video put on them. The upcoming blue laser DVD formats may be the answer to these issues. However, there are forces that are expected to provide some chaos and confusion in their introduction, which will include another format war.

There are some blue laser DVD type of recording devices already on the market, but like DVD-RAM that came early in the DVD product life cycle, they are targeted toward a narrow market and wide use is not to be expected. There are three different viable blue laser DVD formats proposed, but all will use disks that are the same diameter as standard DVDs. The first is HD-DVD. This is from the DVD Forum, the same people that brought you the DVD. The storage space on this is up to 20 GB single layer and 40 GB dual layer (15 GB and 30 GB for ROM and recordable, 20 GB and 40 GB for re-writable). Some companies were not satisfied with what was going on within the DVD Forum in regards to HD-DVD. This group was lead by Sony, which came up with the Blu-ray Disc. The storage space on it is up to 25 GB single layer and 50 GB dual layer, with the possibility of increasing the number of layers to as many as eight later. Both HD-DVD and Blu-ray Disc players will be able to play standard DVDs and CDs. Both formats will at least use the video codecs MPEG-2 Hi-Def/Standard-Def, MPEG-4 AVC High Profile, and Windows Media 9. They will also have native multitrack surround sound to be used in 5.1 sound systems or higher. There is also a standard being used in mainland China called EVD. It was developed as an alternative to DVD so the Chinese would not have to pay the DVD licensing fees and to keep local control of the technology. It is currently used in China and has made its way to some surrounding countries. The plan is to extend the standard to incorporate blue laser and other more up to date technologies making it comparable to the other two viable competing high definition DVD formats. The winner should be either HD-DVD or Blu-ray Disc. The blue laser EVD is only expected to be a widely used format in Asia. Blu-ray has more hardware manufacturers' backing (Sony, Dell, Hewlett Packard, LG, Panasonic, Pioneer, Philips, Sharp, Samsung, and others) than HD-DVD (Toshiba, NEC, Sanyo, and others). Both have lined up Hollywood studios amounting to about half of the current DVD movie sales (HD-DVD: Universal, Paramount, Warner Brothers, and New Line Cinema. Blue-ray: Sony, Twentieth Century Fox, and Disney). Right now Blu-ray Disc is considered to have a slight competitive edge over HD-DVD, but it could go either way in the expected long drawn out fight like there was between VHS and Betamax videotape formats.

For the price to come down on high definition DVD players and writable /rewritable drives to the consumer and general office use levels there first needs to be a perception by the manufacturers that there will be a high demand for these products (mass production begets low costs). Last time it was the release of major Hollywood movies on the DVD format that caused this demand, so the manufacturers are thinking it will be the same this time. This allows the Hollywood studios to have great influence over the next generation DVD formats. The movie standards for both HD-DVD and Blue Ray Disc are finalized. However, the standards for interactivity on the

disk and Internet/Web are not expected to be finalized until early 2006, which means they won't be included in players until late 2006. Some of the Hollywood studios have expressed that they do not want players out there that will not have the full functionality that they would wish. This is a problem of them not wanting to make decisions on a mixed installed base and requiring first adopters to within 2 years have to replace their player to get full functionality of the format. This also allows them more time to work on their new 128 bit encrypted disk copying protection/ digital rights management system called Advanced Access Control System (AACs). However, many of both the HD-DVD and Blu-ray manufacturers have announced they plan to release players by late 2005. Hewlett Packard says they want start including Blu-ray writable drives in their desktop computers also starting in late 2005 and notebooks in 2006. Also Sony's Playstation 3 to come out in 2006 will be able to use Blu-ray discs. However, there is a question about how many movies will be released in the formats when the players come out, the lack of which could delay the launch of the players. Yet it is likely the competition between ID-1 DVD and Blue-ray will mean the players will launch on schedule anyway.

The proposed next generation DVDs will have 4-5 times the storage capacity of current standard DVDs. However it is expected that there will be another face off between standards, this time between HD-DVD and Blue Ray Disc. There could be a delay in the wide scale distribution of players and recorders because of Hollywood's influence and the delay in interactivity standards for the formats, but competitive forces will probably mean the late 2005 launch will go ahead as scheduled. It is too early to tell which format will win.

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From The DealsGuy

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

I was going to take an old computer to our beach condo because even though it was old and slow, it would be plenty good enough for just checking my email and miscellaneous tasks. Then around Thanksgiving prices started dropping on new computers and I saw a Dell ad with a 2.2 gig Celeron processor, 256 megs RAM, CD-ROM burner, 17" monitor etc. for \$399 and a \$50 rebate, making it just \$349. That sounded great, so I went to the local mall with a Dell kiosk so I could ask questions, and ordered one. It also included free two-day shipping. It wasn't the latest and greatest, but actually

a computer much more modern than my old one, and cheap.

A week later I saw a Dell ad with the same configuration, but also including a printer, for \$349 and no rebate. I still hadn't received the computer I ordered so I called Dell to cancel the original order and get the new deal. They said the original order was already shipped and I should have received it by now. After some conversation about what happened to the two-day shipping, they gave me a \$35 Dell store credit for the inconvenience of not having received it yet. Then I hit them up for the printer at no extra cost because of the new ad. After a little argument, and a five-minute wait for a consultation, they finally conceded and promised to send the printer free of charge.

Five days later I finally received the original computer package I had ordered and was pleased with it. I promptly sent for my rebate and three weeks later was amazed to receive \$60 instead of \$50. However, I still had not received the free printer promised. I called Dell again, gave the tracking number, and found the order had been canceled, but was offered the option to talk to a human. I laid a guilt complex on Dell for the whole thing and after a pause, they again promised to send a free printer. Two days later a Dell printer arrived and when I opened the box, it was an all-in-1 machine, better than I had expected. Prices in ads have been higher since and I feel I got a great deal.

The two announcements below look like interesting products, but I have not tried either one.

Tax Time

I forgot to remind you previously about the free version of Tax Act for doing your Federal income tax as well as state tax. Visit [<http://www.taxactsoftware.com>]. You can download a program FREE to calculate your Federal Income tax. This is the third year I have played with it and while there are a few things I would like to see improved, you can't beat the price. There is also a pay-version, which I use, for \$12.95 that is well worth the price since it gives you one free E-tax filing. The pay version will import last year's data into the new version, which saves a lot of time. You can also do your tax right on the Tax Act Web site if you prefer. All in all, Tax Act is a good deal.

You can also do your tax right on the IRS's own official Web site. I have not tried it, but Ira Wilsker wrote an excellent article on that and if it is not in your newsletter, check the APCUG Web site. I've seen other free options for doing your own income tax calculation, but I don't have that info handy.

Don't forget that AARP has hard working volunteers who will do your tax FREE if its not too complicated, such as if you have rental homes or apartments. Check with your local AARP chapter for the times and places. If you are unsure about whether they will do yours, take it to them and ask. The worst they can do is say "sorry."

Media Catalog Studio

This was sent to me in November of 2004. They offer a 15% user group discount. Check their Web site for more information.

“For Immediate Release

Catalog and classify your media collection easy!
November 10, 2004 ManiacTools Releases Media Catalog Studio 1.7

“Media Catalog Studio is a handy software application that classifies and tracks media files on hard-drives, floppies, external drives, CDs, DVDs and other storage media. Importantly, the information about the media files does not need to be entered manually. The program automatically detects MP3, WMA, APE, OGG, WAV, AVI, WMV, MPEG, Video and Audio CD files and inputs this information inside a database. Moreover, the software comes with CDDb support, an online database that exports information about songs (Title, Artist, Album, Year) directly from Internet.

“All data entries can be sorted by artist, album, year, bitrate, frequency, genre, category, rating, or any field/category. The search in the database can be conducted using multiple parameters, like file properties (name, size, etc), tag information or lyrics. Media file lists can be customized to display information in any way or order. As an added perk, the program features an internal tag reader and editor for audio and video files, duplicates finder, and supports an option for storing pictures. In addition, the application creates Winamp and Windows Media Player playlists with a few mouse-clicks. The other great features are MS Excel export options and Media Tracker; a feature that shows the user where a necessary media file is located.

“Media Catalog Studio has received over a dozen awards for its usability, including the prestigious Five Cows rating at Tucows.Com, and Editor’s Pick at MyMusicTools.com. The program is translated in all major European languages. A free version of Media Catalog Studio Lite 1.7 is available now; [<http://www.maniactools.com>]. The freeware Lite version supports up to 5 disks in database. An upgrade to a Pro version costs \$24.95 US Dollars/Euros for individuals and \$34.95 US Dollars/Euros for businesses and organizations. We offer a 15% discount to members of your user group. The discount coupon code is 4567841341 and is redeemable at [[http://www.ManiacTools.com/soft/media _catalog_studio/discount.shtml](http://www.ManiacTools.com/soft/media_catalog_studio/discount.shtml)]. If you have any questions, please contact Alex Pavlenko at [press@maniactools.com].

“Company Website [<http://www.maniactools.com>]
Product Page: [[http://www.maniactools.com/soft/media _catalog_studio/](http://www.maniactools.com/soft/media_catalog_studio/)]
Download: [http://www.maniactools.com/media_catalog_studio.exe]”

Fontonizer

I received this announcement in November of 2004 and they offer a 15% discount to user group members.

“Our company, Fast Reports Inc., would like to announce the release of Fontonizer for Windows

95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP. To get 15% discount for Fontonizer use Coupon Code ‘UserGroupPR-FO’ on register here: [<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=168090>].

“Fontonizer is making big waves in web-design and publishing industries. While an average PC has about one hundred different fonts installed—marketers, designers, publishers, editors and print professionals often have collections with 5000 different fonts or more. With so many fonts, only very experienced professionals can match font name with its appearance. But Fontonizer is not merely a font viewer, though it comes with this function built-in. Fontonizer is a font organizer.

“With Fontonizer, any professional can easily classify fonts. First, one creates categories like “Business Letter Body,” “Groovy and Hip,” “Classy,” “Headlines,” “Attention Grabbers,” “Exotic,” “Fine print,” “Comments and footnotes,” “Hand written,” “Miscellaneous.” Then, fonts are “placed” in these categories, so they can be easily located when necessary. The best thing about Fontonizer is that it works with fonts that aren’t currently installed on a PC. In fact, it works with fonts that are stored not only on hard-drive, but CDs, DVDs, flash-drives and External Drives.

“Even though the fonts may not be installed, you can write a word or sentence to see how it looks. If necessary, Fontonizer will automatically show a list of the same word or phrase visualized with different fonts. This way one can easily compare and find the font that is most appropriate for a certain occasion.

“Finally, Fontonizer comes with even more functions font professionals need. For example, the program performs installation /deletion /restoration of the deleted fonts. Plus, Fontonizer is capable of displaying “symbol table” of any font, even if it was deleted. With Fontonizer, professionals can experiment not only with fonts and sizes, but backgrounds as well. Fontonizer is distributed electronically over the Internet; a free demo version is available at [<http://www.fontonizer.com/>] for evaluation.

The price of a single license is \$29 US Dollars for a single copy.

Company Website: [<http://www.fontutilities.com>]

Product Page: [<http://www.fontonizer.com/>]

Download: [<http://www.fontutilities.com/download/fo100.zip>]

Buy Link: [<http://fontutilities.com/order.htm>]”

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 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. I have received some since then and will also post them one of these days.

The Lazy Webmaster

Getting a Domain Name

by Susan Ives
past-president and past-
webmaster of Alamo PC

To have a home page on the Internet you need at least two things: a Web address and a computer to host your site. I covered the host computer back in June, so let's talk about your domain name.

A domain name is a Web address. Mine is susanives.com. How do you get a domain name? You buy it. More about that later.

The Internet actually uses IP addresses to route information. An IP might look like 123.45.678.9. Most people can't remember a random string of numbers, so they give it a nickname that is easier to recall. You don't go to the supermarket and buy *Lycopersicon esculentum*: you buy tomatoes. Same principle. This is called the DNS (Domain Name System).

The last two or three characters are called the TLD (Top Level Domain). The original TLD are .com (commercial), .org (an organization) and .net (having to do with the network.) These three domains are available to everyone: I'm a .com, even though I am just a person.

Others are reserved for specific types of organizations: .mil for the military, .edu for educational institutions and .gov for government. I can't be a .mil.

A few years ago seven new TLDs were added: .biz (small business); .name (a personal site, which uses the format susan.ives.name); .pro (professional, such as doctor and lawyer) and .info (an information resource) are unsponsored domains. Three others, .coop (co-ops), .aero (aerospace) and .museum, are sponsored by interest groups and closely monitored by governing councils. More are in the works.

Every country also has a two-character TLD. The United States is .us, Canada is .ca and Mexico is .mx. You can get a full list at checkdomain.com. These are sometimes called ccTLDs, for country code. I could be susanives.us if I wanted to.

Some countries, like the United States, restrict registration to people and organizations that actually live in that country. Others have opened theirs up to anyone. Moldova, which has the TLD .md, has developed a tidy little business selling domain names to doctors—get it?

Generally, domain names must be between 3 and 63 characters in length. Some TLDs allow you to have two character domain names but most require at least three. Some are more restrictive (.cc domains can have no more than 45, for example) and some browsers and e-mail programs can only recognize 26 characters, even if your domain is longer. The character count does not include the TLD extension (.com, .net, etc.)

They can only contain letters (aAzZ etc.), numbers (0123 etc.) and a dash (-). No spaces are allowed and you cannot start or end a domain with a dash.

It doesn't make any difference whether the letters are upper or lower case, although the convention is to make domains all lower case. It's less confusing.

Every domain name has to be unique: I have susanives.com and you can't have it. You could have susanives.net, if it's available, though.

The bit you are working on here is called the second level domain. The beginning part—www—reflects the protocol. WWW means World Wide Web, or a Web site. When you register a domain you are registering all of the protocols – e-mail, ftp, etc.

Although some people complain that all the good domain names are taken, there are still plenty out there. If your creativity needs a spark, check out Name Boy. Enter in a word or two and it will come up with a few hundred possible available domain names. Another way to check if your preferred domain is available, use the search engine like the one at Network Solutions.

The main criteria for a domain name are that it's meaningful, memorable and easy to communicate, both in print and by word of mouth. Run it by some friends and colleagues to see what they think. Especially for a business, your domain name is as important as your company name, so spend some time developing a good one.

The .com TLD is well known—.net and .org are also in the public conscious. In other countries, their own domains, such as .au for Australia or .uk for United Kingdom—are top-of-mind. In the United States, .us is less well known but still useable. I'd think twice before using one of the new domains. If you have a business, try to come up with a good .com name before you slide down the comfort scale to a .biz.

Domain names have been deregulated, so they are now cheap. I often use a site called GoDaddy which sells domains for \$8.95 a year. The suggested retail price is \$35 a year, but you can get them as cheaply as \$4.95.

It is easier, if you are new at this, to have your domain registered and set up your Web hosting at the same time through the same company. However, you can register your domain now through any of the registrars and then have it transferred to your host site when you are ready. Make sure to keep all the information you need to accomplish this when you originally set up the domain. Print out a copy and put it in a folder.

You can do all your ordering online, using a credit card or PayPal. You can register the domain for periods of 1 to 10 years. I recommend registering for at least two years. You will get a reminder two months before your domain expires that it is time to reregister.

Some people recommend registering several different variants of your domain while you are at it, to make sure no one else gets a free ride on your good name. If you are registering susanives.com, grab .net, .org and .us while you are at it, and maybe even get [susan-ives](http://susan-ives.com) in all its

variations. This is more important for a business than for an individual. You can have all of the variants flip over to the main site. This is called domain forwarding; most registrars offer it for free.

If you want to learn more about domain names a good source is *Domains Magazine*. It's geared to people who buy domain names for resale but has a lot of good advice for the Lazy Webmaster as well.

From the December 2004 issue of PC Alamode, newsletter of the Alamo Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Firefox: a Program Popularized by Open Source Programmers

by Linda Gonse



Editor, *Nibbles & Bits*

Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

The latest version of Firefox, an open source program, formerly Mozilla, and before that, Netscape Navigator, was released to popular acclaim near the end of 2004 from www.mozilla.com. Many people, tired of security problems and perpetual patching of Internet Explorer, have begun to make the switch to Firefox. I was one of them. It was an easy transition to import my bookmarks, favorites, and other items, and set up housekeeping in it.

But, it was a real surprise to find free “themes,” a change of appearance for Firefox. Feeling the exhilaration of discovery, I downloaded Nautipolis, Red Cats, Gray Modern, and Littlefox, and others; finally settling on Littlefox. Then, I discovered “extensions.” Extensions are little programs, originally called applets, that run from within Firefox. Their specialized capabilities add to the functionality of Firefox and quickly become features you just can't live without. There are about a dozen I use, including: Weatherfox, QuickNote, Titlebar Tweaks, SpoofStick, CopyPlainText, and Tabbrowser Extensions.

One extension that makes my online life simpler is called QuickNote. It allows me to copy and paste from browser pages into a tabbed notepad available right in the browser. It saves me from opening Word or Notepad and working back and forth from one of them to the browser window.

Fascinated with the free extensions, I tracked down QuickNote's creator, Jed Brown, to ask him to tell me how he got started and why he wrote the program. Also, QuickNote had earned five stars as a popular Firefox item, I wondered if Jed thought it might end up being incorporated into Internet Explorer.

He said, “I became involved with Mozilla back in the 90s. I was a frequent user of what was then the Mosaic browser when the World Wide Web had just begun. Netscape was born from Mosaic and I was instantly a user of Netscape Navigator.

“Once the “browser wars” began, I was a devoted Netscape user who really loathed how Microsoft used their OS dominance to spread use of their browser. Unfortunately, after Netscape released its 4.0 browser, MS was right on their tail and produced an even better and more standards-compliant browser.

“Despite the better browser, I was loyal and stayed on NS as long as I could. Around the time when Netscape 5 was going to be released (1998 I believe), they decided to open-source their browser. That sparked my interest and I got my hands on the code as quickly as I could. Once the open source community realized that the NS code was a huge hack and badly organized, they decided to start from scratch and create what was to be the fastest most compliant browser ever. This was too good to be true.

Got a scanner? Then you **need this book**- *Scanning for the SOHO Small Office and Home Office*, by local author and engineer Ron Matteson. ISBN 1-58939-554-9, \$14.95, Virtual Bookworm Publishing (2004); 286 pages, 121 figures, 21 tables. Visit the book's web site at <http://www.sohotechnology.info> for FREE tu-torials, FREE chapters, instructions for ordering the entire book, etc.

Unfortunately this was no easy endeavor and would take over three years to get even close to a final product. In the meantime, Internet Explorer was the superior product (over NS 4.x) and was becoming the browser of choice for many—including myself.

“I wasn't hacking on any of the code, but I did start testing the releases from the first public beta release. Since that day, I used this new engine and code base as much as I could, but always had IE there for sites that did not work in the new, young and untested engine.

Once Mozilla had matured (version 0.8) and became usable on a daily basis, I switched over and said goodbye to IE for good.

“The folks at Netscape had a brilliant idea called XUL that would allow them to write the interface to the browser once, and allow it to run on any platform possible. This meant Mozilla looked the same on Windows, Mac, Linux/ OS 2, etc. This same technology allowed authors like myself to start creating programs that would live on top of the Mozilla platform and extend its functionality (now called “Extensions”).

“As a high school student back then, I started a project called “QuickNote” that would allow easy access to a notepad-like sidebar for easy note taking.

“While my extension was popular and used amongst many Mozilla users, Mozilla was plagued with bad interface design decisions from Netscape and AOL who later bought Netscape, so it really never hit it well with anyone but “geek” users. A few talented programmers at Netscape (Hyatt, Blake, Goodger, etc.) realized this and in their free time started a new project based on Mozilla,

but much more simple, that was meant to be only a browser instead of a full suite like Mozilla was. This eventually turned into what Firefox is today.

“Thanks to Firefox (formerly Phoenix and Firebird) much more attention was brought to it and a much larger user base. More interest in Mozilla, XUL, and extension development arose. This has led to over 200 extensions made for Mozilla applications, and has brought together programmers from around the world, like myself, to join in and help make Firefox/Mozilla better.

“For example, QuickNote was a project I was doing by myself in my free time. But now many different users contribute code and translation. A Russian programmer, Nikolay Ponomarev, has joined with me and contributes to QuickNote on a regular basis.

The whole idea of multi-platform and open source software is amazing as it has brought thousands of people together under one cause, despite language and cultural barriers. This in part, is thanks to Mozilla and its example that open source software can be just as good -- and in this case -- better, than priority software.”

We asked Jed what he sees for Firefox in the next couple of years?

He said, “I think we will see a continuous trend in the growth of Firefox users. Once Microsoft won the browser wars, it dismantled its IE team, and left users high and dry. Firefox is filling this void, bringing a new and fresh idea to the World Wide Web and making it the place it should have been (virus/popup/spyware free) years ago.

“I also can see more and more companies embracing Firefox in their internal networks and products they offer to their users. Google, Amazon and many others are already starting.”

We also wondered if Mozilla/Firefox will survive and grow through the efforts of the open source community. Or will Microsoft will gobble up talented program writers such as Jed, and IE will remain dominant?

“Mozilla/Firefox will definitely survive, and be vital for the years to come,” Jed said. “Microsoft is far behind with Longhorn and even when it ships it will take years to get users to migrate over. In the meantime Firefox will continue to see growth in users on multiple platforms, and be extremely important to the survival of Linux as a desktop alternative. Sure MS will copy features and do its best to find exploits in Firefox. No software is perfect, but I believe the very nature of Mozilla and Firefox appeals to users and gives the Web freedom from control from one sole company. As time goes by, I think the average user will begin to understand this and realize the importance of alternative products and that they are superior in many aspects.

“The other huge benefit that Firefox has as a browser and Mozilla, in general, as a platform, is their mutiplatform nature. As a programmer, I can create any application or extension based on Mozilla and easily make it work on every platform that Mozilla /Firefox runs on. This allows users to use any system they like,

perhaps Unix/Linux at work, Mac OS on their laptop and Windows XP at home, and yet feel no difference when it comes to surfing the web and using the applications /extensions built on Mozilla. Microsoft has no real answer to this (although .Net tries) and it is a huge selling point to both users and corporations.”

(You can email Jed at contact_me@jedbrown.net, and look for programs he has written for Firefox at Mozilla.com.)

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.

Ask The Expert

Screen Saver and Saving Pictures

by Dave “Doc” Dockery

Q: An acquaintance of mine has a Windows XP machine. Her screen saver displays photos of her grandchildren as a series of slides. Can I do this on my computer?

A: I know the following works on Windows XP computers, but I don’t know about the other versions of Windows.

1. Copy pictures to your “My Pictures” folder
2. Right-click your desktop and select “Properties.”
3. Click on the “Screen Saver” tab.
4. In the drop-down box select “My Pictures Slideshow”
5. Click the “Settings” tab if you’d like to make some changes in the default options.

Note: This screensaver defaults to the “My Pictures” folder, but you can change this to *any* folder you prefer from the “Settings” tab. This means that you could have several different folders with photos in them, and you could readily switch between them.

Q: When I want to save a jpeg from the Internet, the only option I get in the drop down box is to save it as a “bitmap.” Why can I no longer save it as a jpeg?

A: You did nothing wrong. This is a common problem. Fortunately, the cure is quick, easy, and painless:

1. In Internet Explorer click on “Tools,” then “Internet Options.”
2. Under “Temporary Internet Files” click on the “Delete Files” button.
3. Wait... Patiently
4. Close all browser windows. Open IE and try snagging another JPG.
5. If it has STILL not fixed your problem, then Reboot.
6. It’ll work now—I guarantee it!

From the February 2005 Issue of Bits & Bytes, the newsletter of the Tampa Bay Computer Society.

Windows Media Player 10

by Chuck Guion

Rockport Computer Users' Group, Inc.

Microsoft has a new Windows Media Player 10 (WMP10) available now. Go to www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia to download it. It was designed for Windows XP. It does not have any help files, but there is an article: Using Windows Media Player 10 on the web and you can download it at: www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/mp10/usingplayer.aspx.

You can use WMP 10 to listen to music on CDs, MP3s, MIDI, Wave, etc. You can play CD's and DVD's (if you have a DVD drive on your computer) with the program. You can also use it to watch your home movies, film clips, etc. You can also use the Internet to find more information about a CD or DVD; i.e. the Album and the Artist. You can quickly Rip from a CD to your computer as well as use different Formats for doing this.

You can also burn your own CD's. Most of the music CD's that you buy have only one or two songs you really like. With WMP10 you can pick and choose your favorite songs from several CD's and put them on one Master CD. Isn't that great and it's free!

You can also organize your digital media collection. The program will even tell you where you can buy your favorite albums! All in all, I think it is a great program and it is free! About the only disadvantage is not having any help file.

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Society News

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Arpad Kovacs

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

February 8, 2005

Total present: 38

Arpad demonstrated how to get to the SnapFiles website where almost all of the available programs are freeware. www.slashdot.org is also a great information site (news for nerds). He recommended adding SpywareBlaster to your PC found at <http://www.javacool.com>. It actually will block cookies that have spyware in them before they are added during your surfing. <http://www.majorgeeks.com> is also a great source of software that is free.

<http://www.mozilla.org> is the site to add Mozilla and Firefox – both great programs. He recommended obtaining version 1.4. <http://www.desktop.google.com> allows you to search your own desktop. <http://www.adobe.com> is the location of the Photoshop album program – freeware. May also come with the Adobe Reader software



Listen at 11:00 every Sunday on WHAM 1180 AM.
Call 222-1180 to ask a question.

version 7.0 but you have to have XP to use 7.0 reader.

Q: One member downloaded Firefox. How can you set it up as your default browser?

A: MSN makes you use IE first. Go into start, control panel, add/remove programs and then set your default.

Q: Will Windows updates run under Firefox?

A: Yes, there is an add-on that will allow the updates to run.

Q: Picasa is a free photo manager program. How do I get it?

A: Go to google.com, then more, then scroll down and select the Picasa icon.

Q: What is this RAR extension that has been identified as a possible source of viruses?

A: RAR files are highly compressed files - higher than zip files. But the security programs do not watch them as closely. The decompression software is freeware but you will not be able to create RAR files. Winrar .exe will read them without nagging popup messages about registration.

Q: Has anyone tried GMail Google's email service?

A: It is free with no ads. Can then search your 1 gig of storage of your history of emails. For now you need a referral from an existing user. There is a 10 mg attachment limit. The software is currently in a beta release but it works very well. Arpod showed his account in GMail. You can also enable filters.

Q: One member found an Outlook Express Spam filter from Denmark and it works fairly well. Is there another way to stop spam? <http://www.Spamfighter.com> has a freeware.

A: It was recommended that you set up multiple mail accounts – one for general use and a second for personal communications. This personal account address should be given out to only a few selected persons.

Business Meeting

February 8, 2005

all minutes by Jim Murdock, Secretary

Arpad and Steve conducted the business meeting. All members are asked to check their *Monitor* mailing label that shows the membership expiration date. Several members are behind in their dues.

Please get in touch with Arpad 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 New Users Group, John McMillan leader, is seeking a new meeting location. Please let Arpad, Steve, or John know if you have any suggested locations.

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

Ron announced that the March 8, 2005 RCSi meeting will take place at the Brighton Library. The program will be a presentation by Arpad Kovacs about downloading, especially downloading your children might be doing that you might not be aware of, as well as discuss ways to helpfully monitor these activities. In April the stars of "Soundbytes" will give a presentation as well as hold a "Q and A" on computers and related technologies.

Dave Thompson, the new "Digital Photo-graphy and Scanners SIG" leader, announced that the next SIG meeting would be at the Penfield Library on March 10, 2005 from 18:30 to 20:30.

Steve said that since fundraising is a continuing need any new ideas on how to raise funds for RCSi are always welcome.

Program

Larry Lavery of the Rochester Genealogy Society gave a presentation on the Global Positioning System (GPS), how it operates and its many uses.

He began with an overview of what he was going to discuss including the basics of mapping, GPS - what it is and what are its uses, to be followed by demonstrations of GPS, Geographic Names Information Systems (GNIS), relevant Websites, street map software and the EasyGPS utility followed by questions and answers.

GPS places your position on a flat map. To show the complexities underlying that statement Larry next discussed several map projections, each having one or more "built-in" inabilities to accurately depict the surface of the earth on a flat plane. An understanding of these limitations is needed to fully appreciate how accurate GPS really is and how this greater accuracy affects maps and your use of maps.

The Mercator projection map, for example, becomes increasingly inaccurate as you near the north and south poles. In fact, near the poles it is so inaccurate as to be useless. Other map projections have accuracy deficiencies as well. Coordinate systems such as Latitude/Longitude (Lat/Long), Universal Transverse Mercator and many others are nearly accurate at the equator but distortion is greater as you get nearer the north and south poles.

Map Datums are mathematical models of the earth's shape and surface. WGS-84 is the "default" model. NAD - 27 is the model used for most USGS maps. There are many others. The further these datums are extended from their design locale their accuracy degrades. A datum designed for use in Japan may show distortions of over 500 meters if used in the United States.

The GPS system was developed and is maintained by the United States government for both military and civilian uses. It is comprised of 24 satellites orbiting the earth at approximately 11,000 miles above the earth's surface. Twelve satellites are visible at one time at any point on the earth's surface. Each satellite emits a continuous distinct radio wave signal that, traveling at the speed of light, when picked up by a GPS receiver on or relatively near the earth's surface, locates that receiver on a precise sphere of possible locations. A second satellite's signal received by the same receiver locates the receiver in a different but equally precise sphere of possible locations. These two spheres will intersect at two points, one of which, thousands of miles out in space will be disregarded by the GPS receiver. A third satellite creates yet another sphere of location that too will intersect with the previous two spheres. The reasonable location of where these three satellite signals intersect is the location of the receiver. Initially a fourth satellite signal is needed to "lock in" the location. Thereafter, only three satellite signals are needed to show the receivers location; in three dimensions.

The accuracy of GPS is improved for use in the commercial sector by what is called the Wide Angle Augmentation System (WAAS) that consists of 25 ground stations and two geostationary satellites. These two satellites are in addition to the 24 GPS satellites making a total of 26 satellites in use for the complete US system. The WAAS yields accuracy to within a circle of ten-foot radius. A further enhancement called NWAAS gives accuracy to within a three-foot radius circle.

Professional and military GPS equipment are continually increasing the accuracy of GPS with some such receivers now in use yielding accuracies to within a few inches - in three dimensions! Even better accuracy is expected.

GPS has many uses now with more anticipated in the near future. It can be used to document locations. In the science of Genealogy it is used to locate gravesites and homestead locations. It can be used to find compass bearing and distance to any marked location. With a computer, often a laptop, it can be used to create detailed driving instructions. It is an extremely accurate clock. In conjunction with a road map it can be used to easily reach your destination. Used as a "speedometer" it can tell you how fast you are traveling at the moment or to give you an average speed over a distance. GPS can be used to predict your estimated time of arrival and it can enable you to retrace your track; to backtrack.

Another popular use of GPs is in the sport of "Geocaching" where items are placed in a public but

hidden location. The location is publicized only by GPS location. The object is to find the site where the object is located using GPS. Many Geocaches are put in remote and difficult to reach locations not easy to find even with GPS. In fact some are put in locations where the GPS signal may be marginal.

The handheld GPS units have limitations the user should be aware of. The unit must be able to “see” the satellites to fix a location. Indoors or in a vehicle this is not always possible. Some units do not have a compass so you will need a compass. Maps are not as accurate as GPS so if the map shows you are off track but the GPS shows you on track you are most likely on track and the map is wrong. Some units are slow to process the location calculations. This may cause you to overshoot your mark, perhaps more than once. Doing “The Bees Dance” they call it! Finally, you should always carry a paper map and compass in addition to the GPS. A necessary safety precaution. In fact teams of GPS equipped searchers have rescued hikers who neglected that safety mandate.

If you are shopping for a GPS receiver there are features you’ll want to watch for. Twelve channels are needed but all have units have them. WAAS capability is needed for better accuracy. EGNOS, the European version of WAAS may be something you’ll want. Base-maps of 2- 16 Megs are necessary. Most units come with 500- waypoint capacity. That’s enough. Routes, i.e. the ability to collect waypoints are needed, as is the ability to show tracks. Both black and white and color displays are available. Color may be helpful to you but usually uses up batteries quicker. Mapping programs such as DeLorme can be used with some GPS units. This may be a feature you’d like. Secure Digital memory (SD memory or flash cards of 32 to 512 Megs are available. Rechargeable batteries are useful. Most will operate a GPS unit for about 12 hours.

You can find much GPS information on the web. Garmin and Magellan, two prominent GPS manufacturers, have good sites. [Http://gpsinformation.net](http://gpsinformation.net) has a collection of links you will find helpful, as do the relevant Yahoo groups. A freeware utility called EasyGps will help you get started learning about all of uses of GPS.

Larry managed to cover the features, merits and uses of GPS in a very short time. His presentation was well received and much appreciated.

Planning Meeting

February 15, 2005

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

Arpad began the discussion with a review of the January monthly meeting and program.

All agreed that Larry Lavery gave a good presentation on GPS. He managed to cover many of the important features and uses of GPS in a relatively short

time. That time did not permit for further questions and answers after his presentation was a disappointment. Tom suggested that, when presentation topics allow, a list of relevant URLs would be helpful, perhaps as a handout.

Arpad next discussed the upcoming presentations. He will give the March presentation on “The Internet: What Kids are Doing and What You Should Know” that will cover downloading, blogging, RSS, instant messaging and, among other related topics, ways to monitor and guide your child’s computer activities. In April the stars of SoundBytes will give the presentation. Ron will discuss Centrino technology in May and in June Dave Thompson will give a presentation on Open Office.

The RCSi Picnic will be held in August. Steve and others have already begun making arrangements for the location. They’re working, as well, on the myriad details needed to ensure a successful picnic. Everyone said last year’s picnic was a great success so the bar for this year is especially high.

Arpad presented a detailed analysis of a new Monitor printing process he developed. Each board member received a copy of his work. His proposal follows up on work he and Tony did earlier. He proposes that the monitor be printed using three networked, computer driven, LaserJet 5 printers. Covers would be produced with an in jet printer that would allow the use of color. . It was agreed that this process would produce better print quality and eliminate much of the need for manual collating. Arpad, with Steve, will refine and further develop Arpad’s proposal and present their findings to the board.

Tom next discussed several points about the door prizes. Several reviews are owed. Since vendors are promised reviews, reviews are required. Obviously, our credibility suffers when the promised reviews are not produced.

Steve said that several members are behind in their dues. Bob suggested that he, via e-mail, remind individual members when they forget to pay. The board agreed to his suggestion. Bob also suggested that RCSi establish a PayPal account to make it easier for members to pay dues. There followed discussion on Bob’s suggestion.

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 01/18/05	\$1,386.66
Income	
Donations	\$21.15
Dues	<u>310.00</u>
Total Income	\$331.15
Expenses	
St. Stephens (2 months)	\$120.00
Staples (paper	<u>50.90</u>
Total Expenses	\$170.90
Balance as of 02/17/05	\$1,560.30

Members Renewing This Month

Joe Pia, Ralph Squire, Roger Hart, Dave Osofsky, Edgar Seymour, James McBride, Tim McBride, Renee Holt, William Forsberg and John Kiley.

The Lighter Side

Since I have been working as a computer instructor for an adult-education program at a community college, I am keenly aware of the gap in knowledge between my younger and older students.

My observations were confirmed the day a new student walked into our library area and glanced at the encyclopedia volumes stacked on a bookshelf.

"What are all these books?" he asked.

Somewhat surprised, I replied that they were encyclopedias.

"Really?" he said. "You mean someone actually printed out the *whole thing*?"

Customer: "I have a message on my screen that says: 'Disk Full'. What can that be?"

Tech Support: "Maybe your disk is full."

Customer: "Hmmm. OK."

While in the cafeteria one day with some friends, I had a classmate stop by to ask me a computer question.

Her: "I'd like to save my work onto a floppy disk so I can take it with me."

Me: "Ok, after you are done typing your work, on the top you will see a blue bar. Below it is a gray bar with words on it. This is called the menu bar. On the menu bar, click the word 'File.' From there, you will see a gray box appear. On this gray box, click 'Save As'. On the top of the next gray box, click on the white box with 'Save In' next to it. From this next white box, click on '3 1/2 Floppy'."

Her: (writing all this down) "Ok, thanks, one more question."

Me: "Sure."

Her: "Does the floppy disk need to be in the computer when I save my work?"

I'm a tech support engineer for a software company. I had a guy call up rather annoyed that the disks we'd sent him containing the latest version of our software didn't work.

Customer: "The install fails half way through. I tried several times, and it always fails at the same point."

Tech Support: "Did you see any kind of error message?"

Customer: "Yes."

Tech Support: "What did the error message say?"

Customer: "It said, 'Please insert Disk 2.'"

Tech Support: "Have you got another disk there?"

Customer: "Yes."

Tech Support: "Is it labelled 'Disk 2'?"

Customer: "Yes, it is."

Tech Support: "Insert that disk into the drive, and click 'OK'."

Customer: "Wow, thanks! That's fixed it. It's installing now. What was it, a faulty disk or something?"

I went to the post office to ship a package of software to a customer. Since the software was expensive, I decided to insure it. As the postal employee was filling out the insurance form, he asked me what I was shipping.

Me: "Software."

Him: "You mean, like, pajamas?"

A call to the technical support line for a cell phone company:

Customer: "The numbers on my caller ID are going blurry!"

Tech Support: "Sir, I think you might just need a new battery."

Customer: "Well, can you tell me how to change it?"

Tech Support: "Excuse me?"

Customer: "How am I supposed to change this battery?"

Tech Support: "Sir, all you need to do is put in a new battery. It's not that hard."

Customer: "Can you send out a repair-man to do it for me?"

What? He had to be kidding.

Tech Support: "We normally don't send out repairmen to change batteries."

Customer: "What? I can't change this battery by myself!"

After a few more minutes of angry yelling on his part that we would not be sending a repairman to change the battery for him, he got on the phone with supervisor and demanded I be fired.

Needless to say, I wasn't.

The lady was using a power strip to plug her computer and other devices into. Windows was completely frozen, and she was unable to shut down the machine by using the power button. She mentioned the power strip, so I told her to flip it off. She said, "Ok, I gave it the finger. I feel better."

Tech Support: "Ok, ma'am, do you see the button on the right hand side of your mouse?"

Customer: "No, there's a printer and a phone on the right hand side of my mouse."

Me: Hmmm.... Let's try a different approach.

