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Password, O Password!

Wherefore art thou so long and so inscrutable

by Frank Howden

Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

Article Summary

Passwords in a “password file” are ONLY as secure as the password to that file. Even multi-digit passwords with as many as 12 digits are NOT very secure against a ‘brute force’ attack.

Any passwords complicated enough to have to be written down are inherently insecure for the very reason they are written somewhere. What is needed is an easily remembered procedure [algorithm] to generate a complex password. This article gives SOME examples of how to do this.

The Problem

We all have a multiplicity of passwords that allow us access to our ISP, e-mail, and even our bank accounts. It is probably safe enough to use that same password for e-mail and a host of other things *as long as that does not include financial transactions*. In any event, passwords for bank accounts tend to be long random numbers assigned by the bank's computer. [The reason for the length in the next paragraph.] My password for my bank account is a ten digit ID number and a fourteen digit password. Just how is one suppose to remember numbers like these? If one writes them down, they are immediately compromised. Some folk, like me, use a program like Password Manager to store our passwords encrypted on our hard drive. This means all your passwords are only as secure as your password for Password Manager. The more secure that password is the more difficult it is to remember. The reason is as follows.

Each digital digit can be any of 10 symbols 0,1,2,3,4,...,7,8,9, Therefore, since any digit can be any of ten symbols, any two digits could be any figure of 10×10 or 100 different numbers.

Similarly, three digits have $10 \times 10 \times 10$ or 10^3 possibilities, four digits have 10^4 possibilities, and so on. Therefore, my ten digit ID number for my bank has 10^{10} or ten billion possibilities That sounds like a huge number, and for most purposes it is. However, a 2GHz processor that does 1 flop [arithmetical operation] per cycle will check 10^{10} numbers in less than 1 second. Out putting these numbers to the net, give current computer buss and DSL restrictions will probably take a whole, whopping 15 seconds. While there are various methods to keep someone from running all possible numbers past the access portal for my account, the mere 15 seconds to do so drastically cuts into my expectations of security.

However, if I am permitted any of 36 characters per digit [26 letters and ten numerals,] each digit multiplies the possibility by 36. Thus two digits has 1296 combinations while three digits has 46,656 or somewhat less than 5×10^4 . This is significantly better, but would produce pass words like 3WZP98G5. If you can remember something like 3WZP 98G5, *stop here*. You do not need the rest of this article.

The trick is to construct a very difficult password that does NOT have to be memorized or written down. How to do this turns out to be really simple.

The Solution

What we need to do is to invent an easily remembered procedure [an "algorithm"] that will generate our password. The easiest method is to pick a mathematical constant that has been calculated to millions of places and easily downloaded from the web. The constants Pi, Phi, and "e" all fit this condition. The first is, of course, the ratio of the diameter to the circumference of a circle. The second is the "golden ratio" ($(1 + \text{square root of } 5) / 2$) The third is the base of natural logarithms. All have been calculated to millions of places and are easily found on the web. Obviously one does not want to start with the first few digits for anyone with experience in mathematics or the physical sciences would recognize the string at once from the first few digits.

The solution to this is to start somewhere down the string of numbers, but where? Pick some number, your birth date, your parent's house number or phone number when you were a kid, etc.

Construct a "check sum" by adding each of the individual digit like this: Birth date 10/28/42 becomes $1+0+2+8+4+2=17$ and $1+7=8$. So we start at the eighth digit of our constant and take the next eight numbers. The result is essentially a random number, but it is still less than 10^8 or 100 million. This is easily subject to a "brute force" attack as described above; so the next step is to change some of the digits into letters. The easiest, but NOT the only way, to do this is to use the telephone dial. Each numeral 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 correspond to three letters with 7 and 9 having four letters. Lets suppose our number is 5422 93718. Let's suppose we decide to change, say, every third digit. We then get 54A29D71T. This is a very difficult password to crack and almost impossible to guess. Yet it is easily recoverable no matter where you happen to be by simply applying the process [algorithm] by which it was created.

Some Further Considerations

In constructing algorithms, the byword is "KISS" [Keep It Simple Stupid,] or at least as

simple as possible. For example, it would be possible to pick the first of three letters for the first change, the second for the second change, and so on; but we are now beginning to enter the area where the algorithm may cease to be transparent to you. If things get so complicated that you have to write them down to remember them, the original purpose has been defeated.

I would advise against using you mother's maiden name, your birth date, an old phone or street number direct without the type of modification suggested here. Such information is probably available for your name on the web. Second, when you replace numerals, do NOT replace only even or odd numerals. Any sequence with ONLY odd or even numerals suggests a systematic replacement and you will have lost half the battle. Even replacing every second, or third, or fourth is dicey. The first, second, third, fifth, and seventh digits would be a better sequence [NB: 1,2, 3,5,7 is a sequence of prime numbers.] But remember the KISS principle. Mathematical constants are to be preferred over physical constants [e.g.— the speed of light, etc.] because subsequent experiments tend to change the last few digits. Furthermore, experiments seldom produce measurements with more than eight or nine digits, and most times much less than that.

You might be able to get away with something relatively obscure like the ionization constant of some compound [say, aspirin,] but such information might be a struggle to recover from the web in a straightforward way. Carrying around the Chemical, Rubber Handbook of Chemistry and Physics defeats the purpose, besides weighing over 5 pounds. In any event, when counting digits, *begin with* the “mantissa” [digits to the right of the decimal point.]

There are many alternatives to a long mathematical constant. They seem relatively secure, but I have *not* done the math to check. One such alternative is ten (10) place trig tables available on the net. A friend who must change his password at work every six months uses this method. You will remember from high school math that every acute angle of a triangle has three functions [and their reciprocals] associated with it: a sine, a cosine, and a tangent. Each of these [except the tangent] has a UNIQUE value for each and every

angle in this range. [NB: the “tangent” is infinite at ninety degrees.]

What my friend does is to take his age (marriage date, employment date, etc., other) and subtract a constant (like “10,” the number of his children, etc) and use the resulting number in the sine or cosine tables for the result. An alternative would be to use his current age as the measure of an angle and derive the value of a trig function thus: Say my friend is 41 years old. He looks up the sine, say, of 41 degrees = 0.6165.... On the six month anniversary of his birth day, he changes the angle to 41 degrees 30 minutes = 0.6626.... In each case, he applies some version of the alphabetic substitution noted above.

Screen Shots

by David Garcia

President, Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn, CO

Have you ever wanted to print out what you see on your monitor screen? This is called a “Screenshot,” and there are several software packages on the market that allow you to do just that with various degrees of sophistication. If you don't need that sophistication, you can easily use Windows to get a screenshot. Just follow these instructions:

1. Press the Print Screen Key (PrtScr) on the keyboard.
2. Click Start, then click Run.
3. Type “mspaint” (without the quotes) in the Run box and click OK.
4. In Paint, click Paste in the Edit menu
5. Click Print Preview in the File menu. If the screenshot is cut off, you may want to change the printer setting to print in Landscape mode.
6. Click Print and close Paint. You're done!

You can also save the file if you like:

1. Click “Save” in the File menu
2. Browse to the folder you want to save the file in so that the folder name is in the “Save In” box.
3. Type a file name for the screenshot; use JPG in the “Save as Type” box and click Save.

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Five Common Sense Security Tips

by Kim Komando

Hopefully, you have security software installed on your computer. These days, a firewall, anti-virus software and anti-spyware programs are essential. But that might not be enough to protect you from the bad guys. Here are five things you can do for a little added security:

1. Leave your computer on I used to recommend that you turn your computer off when it's not in use. There wasn't a valid reason to waste energy by leaving it on. But things have changed. Today, you have security programs to defend against viruses, worms, spyware and other attacks. These programs are always playing catch-up. Hackers are constantly probing for weaknesses, and seemingly every day there's a new threat. Security software and your computer's operating system are regularly updated to stem these threats. If your computer is off at night, you'll have to update during the day, when you're working. Or worse, the new threat hits your system before you have a chance to download updates. So leave your computer on. Turn off the printer, monitor and other extras, and find other ways to save energy.

2. Use a Limited account Everybody likes to be king of the castle. But you can prevent others from taking control of your computer by giving up some privileges. Too many people use a Windows Administrator account on a regular basis. In fact, you may not even know different types of user accounts exist. Administrators can install software and change system settings. Limited accounts don't have these privileges. So, if you use the Internet with a Limited account, and you click on the wrong thing, malware cannot install itself. To create a Limited account, click StartControl Panel User Accounts. Click "Create a new account." Enter a name and click Next. Select Limited and then click Create Account.

3. Watch out for crush sites Spammers are always looking for more e-mail addresses. Now they're enlisting the help of unsuspecting teens

and adults. Spammers send out messages with subject lines like "Someone has a crush on you." A link directs you to a site that resembles a dating service. To find out who has the crush, you must guess by entering the correct e-mail address. These days, most adults are fairly cautious about disclosing e-mail addresses. Teens may be more naïve, particularly when an e-mail preys on their insecurities.

4. Watch the status bar The status bar is a frequently overlooked tool at the bottom of your browser. You can use it to check links on a Web page. Hold your mouse over a link, and the address of the link appears in the status bar. It may not help if the address is spoofed, but it is still handy. To do this, you may need to activate the status bar. For Internet Explorer, close all windows. Open Windows Explorer and click ViewStatus Bar. Then click ToolsFolder Options. On the View tab, click Apply to All Folders. Click OK. In Firefox, click ViewStatus Bar.

5. Protect your Windows Clipboard Malicious Web sites may attempt to copy information from your Windows Clipboard. That is the utility that temporarily stores information from cut and copy operations. You can prevent sites from downloading information from the Clipboard. In Internet Explorer, click ToolsInternet Options. Click Custom Level on the Security tab. Scroll to the Scripting section. Select pr5 Common Sense Security Tips Hopefully, you have security software installed on your computer. These days, a firewall, anti-virus software and anti-spyware programs are essential. But that might not be enough to protect you from the bad guys. Here are five things you can do for a little added security:

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your system before you have a chance to download updates. So leave your computer on. Turn off the printer, monitor and other extras, and find other ways to save energy.

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Click Custom Level on the Security tab. Scroll to the Scripting section. Select prompt for "Active scripting," "Allow paste operations via script" and "Scripting of Java applets." Click OK OK.

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From The DealsGuy

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

How About Designing or Remodeling Your Home

If you plan to build or remodel a home, how tough is the job of getting the design just like you want it? You could browse through a ton of architectural designs, or read a lot of magazines and become completely confused. You might even have a conference with an architectural firm or builder and discuss the entire project; or you could purchase Super Home Suite by Punch! Software and experiment all you like right on your own computer to prepare. This package has everything you need to design or remodel your own home, as well as the landscaping, and you can use your own creative contribution to get what you like. In fact, you can move walls around and even adjust the studs to get the type structure that suits your fancy, not to mention even the landscaping design around the home.

This package contains seven powerful programs that work as one to help you in the design or remodeling plan. They are 3D Home Design, 3D Landscape, Home Estimator, AutoFraming, Floorplan Trace, Real Model, and 3D Furniture Workshop. Besides that, you also get Ultimate Deck as a bonus. Comparing it with a competitive product shows many features in Super Home Suite not included in the other product. When I worked with it, I was impressed with the versatility of this product, and the many features that I found during my experience checking it out. I always need instructions so it also took some reading and experimenting from their 120-page manual, and checking the help section. I sure didn't get prolific in a day. Even the packaging was unique when I opened it.

A good example of the complete coverage and interaction in this product is the Home Estimator that automatically tallies your expenses and calculates total material costs as you design. You can add local costs and view information in an exportable spreadsheet format (which I did not do). It recognizes 2"x4", 2"x6" and custom studs; and keeps separate counts; also door and window schedules. You can list quantities of trees and other plantings, and square footage calculations are included. This product has so many features that I suggest you check their Web site [<http://www.punchsoftware.com>] for complete information. I loved working with this product even though I don't need a house right now. After a few days, I designed a new home with my favorite desires near my present income, but I'm working on a million dollar home to build after my wife's lottery ticket wins the thirty-five million this week. Of course there is just a slight chance she might not win! I love this new toy.

Punch! Software tells me there is a \$10 Manufacturer's rebate available on the Super Home Suite, ESP (Estimated Street Price \$49.99) making it just \$39.99. Sounds like a bargain to me. There should be a rebate sticker on the box and a form inside to send in on all their rebated products.

Punch! Software also offers several other products, some of which are more specialized for particular tasks. I will describe two others below and more products with a rebate next month:

Punch! Master Landscape and Home Design Professional. ESP is \$79.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it only \$59.99.

This product is new, but here is partial information from a similar product on their Web site: "This package contains nine powerful garden and landscape design software tools, patent-pending PhotoView™ and their sortable PlantFinder™ database with over 2,000 landscape plants, and in one easy-to-use interface! In addition, you will receive Ultimate Deck, a Punch! deck design software completely integrated. PhotoView™ technology lets you combine real-world photos with your own landscape and garden designs to create a realistic image of your future outdoor living space. You can import a photo of your own home, add landscaping or a deck, then view it from any angle, with realistic 3D photo-quality

perspective. Place a scanned photo of doors, windows, pets, even add your children into the backyard!"

I didn't see the new Pro version described on their Web site, but the basic version is there with plenty of description. It appears to be very powerful.

Punch! Professional Home Design Suite Platinum. ESP is \$99.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it just \$79.99.

This home design software package lets you design all of the critical components for your home. The powerful home design capability includes foundations, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, custom windows, custom roofs, and much, much more. You can turn layered drawings on and off for uncluttered viewing of your home design and you can combine as few, or as many, layers as you wish, and spot potentially costly design conflicts. Ordinary blueprints could never give you that level of insight into your home designs!

Their Web site showed fourteen major features in this package, but I didn't see the new Platinum version posted there. However, check the Web site for more info. They say they have offered the #1 selling products in this field for the last five years, so take a look.

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>].

First Phishing, Now Pharming

by John Pearce

Pikes Peak Computer Application Society

First, there was phishing trying to collect personal information. A newer attack called pharming is trying to do the same thing in a more technologically sophisticated way. You need to be on guard but neither phishing nor pharming should keep you away from the Internet. Let's take a quick overview of both.

Phishing starts with an e-mail, typically from a financial institution, with a message that some dire consequences will happen if you don't immediately verify your account information. A Website link is conveniently provided for you in the e-mail. The provided link is to a Web page that looks like the real Website but is actually a Website controlled by the bad guys. The fraudulent Web page asks you to enter credit card and billing information or possibly user name and password information. You can imagine what the bad guys are going to do with the information



they collect.

Pharming is a way for the bad guys to redirect your Web browsing to a site that they control. Pharming is also known as DNS (Domain Name System) cache poisoning. DNS is what converts human friendly names like webboard.apcug.org to numerical addresses like 192.160.122.122. The bad guys want to impact the largest number of Internet users possible so ISP's and large corporations are the most likely targets of pharming attacks. One goal is to download spyware or adware to your PC.

Protecting yourself from phishing attacks is as simple as ignoring the e-mail. All but one of the dozen or so phishing e-mails I have received have been from banks where I don't have an account. In that case, delete the e-mail and go on with your life. If you have an account with the financial institution and are concerned, use the telephone and ask to speak with their Internet security department. If you go to the Website to login, type

the Website URL into the browser—do not use the link provided in the e-mail.

Protecting yourself from pharming attacks takes a little effort. Start by keeping your browser updated with all the security patches. Next, you should be sure the padlock icon is displayed on any page where you enter personal information such as username, account number, or password. The padlock icon indicates you are connected to the legitimate owner of the URL and the data you enter is protected by SSL encryption during transmission. The bad guys would have to know the private key of the site in order to make the padlock appear. You can view the security information by double clicking the padlock icon on your browser. You can also use a tool like SpooFStick to confirm the URL of the Web page you're viewing.

Two other exploits are worth a quick mention. The first is an instant messaging worm that changes the content of the hosts file on your PC. This is effectively the same as DNS cache poisoning. The other exploit is domain hijacking which is done by manipulating the domain name registrars. Domain hijacking is what happened to Panix, a New York ISP, in January.

Being aware of phishing and pharming along with a little care and caution will keep your Web browsing safe from the bad guys.

*From the July 2005 issue of Bits Of Bytes the newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society (P*PCompAS).*

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

There will be two general categories of Windows Vista editions, which map closely to the two that exist today for XP ("Home," which comprises Starter, Home, and Media Center Editions, Pro, which includes Professional, Professional x64, and Tablet PC Editions). In Windows Vista, the two categories are Home and Business.

In the Home category, Microsoft will create four product editions: Windows Vista Starter Edition, Windows Vista Home Basic Edition, Windows Vista Home Premium Edition, and Windows Vista Ultimate Edition (previously known as "Uber" Edition).

In the Business category, there will be three editions: Windows Vista Small Business Edition, Windows Vista Professional Edition (previously known as Professional Standard Edition), and Windows Vista Enterprise Edition (previously known as Professional Premium Edition).

In all, there are seven product editions planned for Windows Vista (or nine, if you count the N Editions as being different). Note that all of these product names are placeholders for now: They could change before the final product is released.

Windows Vista Starter Edition

Aimed at beginner computer users in emerging markets who can only afford a low cost PC. As with the XP version, Windows Vista Starter Edition is a subset of Home Edition, and will ship in a 32-bit version only (no 64-bit x64 version). Starter Edition will allow only three applications (and/or three windows) to run simultaneously, will provide Internet connectivity but not incoming network communications, and will not provide for logon passwords or Fast User Switching (FUS). Windows Vista Starter Edition is analogous to XP Starter Edition. This version will only be sold in emerging markets.

Windows Vista Starter Edition is lacking a number of unique features found in most of the other Vista product editions. There is no Aero user interface, for example, and no support for Castle-based networking. Other missing features include DVD Authoring, gaming common controller support, and image editing with enhanced touchup.

The marketing message: For beginner computer users in emerging markets who can only afford a low cost PC, Windows Vista Starter Edition provides a more affordable and easy introduction to personal computing because it is lower priced, tailored to the needs of beginner personal computer users, compatible with a wide range of Windows-based applications and devices, and tailored to each market.

Windows Vista Home Basic Edition

A simple version of Windows Vista that is aimed at single PC homes. Windows Vista Home Basic is the baseline version of Windows Vista, and the version that all other product editions will build from. It will include features such as Win-

dows Firewall, Windows Security Center, secure wireless networking, parental controls, anti-spam/anti-virus/anti-spyware functionality, network map, Windows Search, Movie Maker, Photo Library, Windows Media Player, Outlook Express with RSS support, P2P Messenger, and more. Windows Vista Home Basic Edition is roughly analogous to Windows XP Home Edition. This version is aimed at general consumers, Windows 9x/XP Starter Edition upgraders, and price sensitive/first-time buyers. Like Starter Edition, Home Basic Edition will not support the new Aero user interface.

The marketing message: For mainstream Windows customers, Home Basic is where it all begins. Here, Microsoft will be pushing “peace of mind” and “performance,” and will promise consumers a faster, more secure and reliable productivity experience. Home Basic Edition is secure by default and easy to keep secure. You can trust Windows with your most important tasks and data and complete everyday tasks faster.

Windows Vista Home Premium Edition

Whole home entertainment and personal productivity throughout the home and on the go. As a true superset of Home Basic, Windows Vista Home Premium Edition will include everything from Home Basic, as well as Media Center and Media Center Extender functionality (including Cable Card support), DVD video authoring and HDTV support, DVD ripping support (yes, you read that right), Tablet PC functionality, Mobility Center and other mobility and presentation features, auxiliary display support, P2P ad-hoc meeting capabilities, Wi-Fi auto-config and roaming, unified parental controls that work over multiple PCs, backup to network functionality, Internet File Sharing, Offline Folders, PC-to-PC sync, Sync Manager, and support for Quattro Home Server. Windows Vista Premium Edition is similar to XP Media Center Edition, except that it adds numerous other features and functionality, including Tablet PC support. My guess is that this will be the volume consumer offering in the Windows Vista timeframe (today, XP Pro is the dominant seller). This version is aimed at PC enthusiasts, multiple-PC homes, homes with kids, and notebook users.

The marketing message: Home Premium Edition turns it up a notch. In addition to the baseline functionality offered in Home Basic, this version focuses on such things as integrated entertainment (movies, memories, and more), mobility (media and productivity on the go), and connected living (connect with family, friends, and home). Home Premium Edition supplies whole-home entertainment and personal productivity throughout the home and on the go.

Windows Vista Professional Edition

A powerful, reliable and secure OS for businesses of all sizes. Windows Vista Pro Edition will include domain join and management functionality, compatibility with non-Microsoft networking protocols (Netware, SNMP, etc.), Remote Desktop, Microsoft Windows Web Server, and Encrypted File System (EFS). Additionally, Pro Standard will include Tablet PC functionality. Windows Vista Pro is roughly analogous to XP Pro today. This version is aimed at business decision makers and IT managers and generalists.

The marketing message: Vista Pro is a powerful, reliable, and secure operating system. It helps PC users be more effective at work and offers improved connectivity and access to information, so that companies can realize better return on their IT investment.

Windows Vista Small Business Edition

Designed for small businesses without IT staff. Small Business Edition is a superset of Vista Pro Standard Edition, and includes the following unique features: Backup and Shadow Copy support, Castle and server-join networking, and PC fax and scanning utility. Additionally, Microsoft is looking at including a number of other features, many of which might be cut: These include Small Business Edition guided tour, pre-paid access to the Windows Live! Small Business or Microsoft Office Live! subscription services, Multi-PC Health (a managed version of Microsoft One Care Live), and membership in the Microsoft Small Business Club online service. Microsoft will offer a Step-Up program for Small Business Edition that will allow customers to upgrade to Windows Vista Enterprise Edition (see below) or Windows Vista Ultimate Edition (see below) at a reduced cost. This SKU is new to Windows Vista; there is

no XP Small Business Edition. This version is aimed at small business owners and managers.

The marketing message: Small Business Edition provides smooth operation even for those businesses without an IT staff. It is the operating system designed to help small businesses start, grow and thrive.

Windows Vista Enterprise Edition

Optimized for the enterprise, this version will be a true superset of Windows Vista Pro Edition. It will also include unique features such as Virtual PC, the multi-language user interface (MUI), and the Secure Startup/full volume encryption security technologies ("Cornerstone"). There is no analogous XP version for this product. This version is aimed at business decision makers, IT managers and decision makers, and information workers/general business users. Enterprise Edition will be offered exclusively through Software Assurance.

The marketing message: Enterprise Edition provides an advanced application compatibility solution that will be crucial to many large business users, can be deployed to multiple language locales using a single image, and provides Secure Startup functionality for the ultimate in security on the go. It is the client OS that is optimized for the enterprise. Enterprise Edition reduces IT cost and complexity by providing tools that protect company data, reduce the number of required disk images, and ensure the compatibility of legacy applications.

Windows Vista Ultimate Edition

The best operating system ever offered for a personal PC, optimized for the individual. Windows Vista Ultimate Edition is a superset of both Vista Home Premium and Vista Pro Edition, so it includes all of the features of both of those product versions, plus adds Game Performance Tweaker with integrated gaming experiences, a Podcast creation utility (under consideration, may be cut from product), and online "Club" services (exclusive access to music, movies, services and preferred customer care) and other offerings (also under consideration, may be cut from product).

Microsoft is still investigating how to position its most impressive Windows release yet, and is looking into offering Ultimate Edition owners such services as extended A1 subscriptions, free music

downloads, free movie downloads, Online Spotlight and entertainment software, preferred product support, and custom themes. There is nothing like Vista Ultimate Edition today. This version is aimed at high-end PC users and technology influencers, gamers, digital media enthusiasts, and students.

The marketing message: Ultimate Edition is the “no compromises” version of Windows Vista. It provides the best performance, most secure and complete connection to the office, and is optimized for the individual. Everything you need for work or fun is included. It is the best operating system ever offered for the personal PC.

N Editions

Finally, I should note that Microsoft is planning to offer so-called N Editions of Windows Vista for the European market, in order to meet the requirements of an antitrust ruling there. Windows Vista N Editions—Home Edition N and Professional Edition N—will mirror the Home Basic and Professional Editions of Windows Vista, respectively, but will not include Windows Media Player and other media-related functionality.

Well, doesn't that make your mouth water? Now we will wait and see if all this comes to pass. After all, it is not due out until Christmas of 2006!

From the October 2005 issue of The Umbrella Online, monthly newsletter of the Hampton Roads Virginia Computing Community.

The Implications of Changing Technology Perceptions for Computer Related Associations and User Groups

by Timothy Everingham

The Users' Group Network (TUGNET)

Linare has been selling notebook computers running the Linux operating system at Wal-Mart since December. They are about to start selling an improved model with an AMD Athlon 1800+ for under \$500.

They have been selling a \$200 PC desktop running Linux at Wal-Mart for some time. Wal-Mart targets the mass market of customers. They are into selling large quantities of goods at low prices, which means they are not geared toward selling things that are intended for only

those with high technical expertise. If Wal-Mart is selling Linux computers, is what has traditionally been high-tech really high-tech? If so, what are the implications for computer related associations and user groups?

Many of us go back to the days before personal computers. The personal computer started to come into the public eye in the late 1970s with such offerings as the Apple II, Atari 400 and 800 and Tandy Radio Shack TRS -80 Model I. These were really high-tech devices from the consumer point of view. However by 1990 it was almost required to have a computer if you were going to college. During the 1990s it became necessary for most working adults or those with children to have a computer in the home. During this decade most people assume that the people they associate with have a computer. This has also changed how computers have been marketed. First they were sold through specialty retailers or as kits. Then additionally they were sold as business, luxury, or high-tech products through more mainstream channels. In the mid-80s we started the transition to computers becoming mainstream consumer items and they started showing up in consumer sections of the mass marketing retailers.

Consumers now know much more about computers than they did in the early 1980s. This is because most of the population has been using them at work or school for years. Also starting in the mid-1980s computers got much easier to use and maintain. Since the late 1990s most consumers don't experience serious problems and if they do they ask knowledgeable people who can help them. As such consumers don't consider computers high-tech anymore. This has happened to other products such as cell phones and satellite television. What they would consider high-tech would be a supercomputer cluster at Disney Feature Animation that is being used to render its upcoming animated feature film Chicken Little. A desktop or notebook computer does not rate being high-tech anymore.

This has affected associations founded around computers. This includes professional and enthusiast associations and user groups. In the 1970s such groups were centered on programming and hardware. They were much more generalist groups.

During the early 1980s and early 1990s there were at least two major shifts toward more specialization and to find ways to effectively use the more readily available packaged software from software companies.

Some clubs broke up into specialized groups, while others formed special interest groups. One of the telltale signs of this was in computer user groups' issues of tinkering with hardware and building their own computer as a part of normal presentations at main meetings; but those presentations shifted to hardware special interest groups within those user groups. The hardware presentations were mostly replaced at the main meetings by presentations on software packages you could go out to a store and buy.

Since the late 1990s those in the US, Canada, and many other parts of the industrialized world have been living in an environment where the average person does not consider computers to be that high-tech. As with the previous transition in the 1980s, some computer related associations have successfully adapted to the new environment and others have not. Remember the Home Brew Computer Club and the Boston Computer Society? These premier computer related organizations during the 1970s and 1980s, died.

There are a lot of computer related associations that are sticking to their old roots back in the late 1970s or early 1980s and are failing at least in part due to not adapting to the new environment they find themselves in. Of course you want to have good programs. However are they programs that would not just interest your current members but be attractive to those outside your membership? Would they want to check you out and consider becoming members? You need to find topics and speakers who will interest people outside your organization that might consider joining it. Also consider whether your meeting venue gives a positive or negative impression to first timers and is it easy to get to and find? The place you hold your meetings gives off part of the impression of the meetings, an impression that can determine whether a person will come back. With some groups the demographics of the area they meet has changed and their potential membership has moved away, but they don't move their meeting place and then they wonder why their group is shrinking.

Many computer related groups don't understand, as the retailers and computers companies have, that the demographics of the average computer user has changed; resulting in how you reach the computer user has needed to change also. This lack of understanding has resulted in computer related associations and user groups many times misdirecting their own efforts to market their own groups.

You may not be in a position like the chapter of the computer related association I lead in getting the visual effects leads from *The Lord of the Rings* movies to talk about and show how they put art, mechanical, and computer technology together to produce the visual effects for those movies; and also getting a major computer hardware and software manufacturer to pay for an extremely nice 600 seat theater to hold the meeting in, but you may be able to do something on a smaller scale. You might want to have a special venue for topic or speakers that have a high attendance drawing potential.

To pay for this special venue you may need to get sponsorship. Depending on your situation this may be small local companies or stores. However, you may be able to get the local office/store of a regional, national, or international company as a sponsor if the subject and potential audience, both in size and demographics, is good enough. The sponsor may also have ways to publicize this special meeting in ways that are not available to you. This also gets into having special events with companies/stores that is mutually beneficial to the company/store and your group. The user group days that CompUSA has been having in their stores is an example of this, something that was developed with CompUSA and user groups working together.

Because technical knowledge about computers is more widespread, just making computer technical knowledge and advice available is no longer sufficient to bring in significant numbers of new members. It is more important now for computer user groups to address other issues, including the need to consider basic human factors. They need to not just consider members or potential members as techies or computer users, but first as human beings.

To attract people you have to look at what the human needs are in your area, especially the

psychological needs, of the average person who would consider becoming part of your group or association. This starts out with having your group friendly to outsiders and making newcomers feel welcome. But one of the big failures out there is not to consider the social aspects and needs of a group. I belong to a computer user group called TUGNET in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. Where many computer user groups in Los Angeles and surrounding counties have been fading, it still is going strong.

Probably the biggest thing that differentiates it from the groups that are fading is that it is a very social group. They purposely put places in their meeting's time schedule, before the formal meeting starts and a mid-meeting break, to have people interact with one another. They also layout the venue to help facilitate this, including chair and table placement, where people enter the meeting room, and where they have spaces to facilitate people standing around talking with one another. In addition they plan field trips to companies, museums, and governmental agencies that want to show off their technology (I got to see the Disney Feature Animation Supercomputer Cluster via a tour arranged by another user group). You may not want to start out as far as they have gone, but you should ask if your meetings facilitate social interaction, make new people feel welcome, and make people feel that attending your meetings helps them fill a psychological or social need. If you find some areas lacking make appropriate changes.

Both the way the public and consumers have viewed computers and computer technology has changed a lot since the 1970s. Computers are no longer considered that high-tech anymore. This has lead to changes in the way the public and consumers interact with computer products and computer related things and organizations.

It has also dramatically changed the way computers and related products are marketed. Most computer related associations and user groups that have been successful for more than a decade have had to change to adapt to the changing environment they have found themselves in. Those who have changed have not faded over time. As such computer related associations and user groups need to change with their environ-

ments, including putting more consideration into basic human factors.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH, the largest chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques and one of Southern California's significant professional organizations within the entertainment and media industries. Further information can be found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>

Chasing the Internet

by Gabe Goldberg
*APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP
Computers and Technology Website*

A long-ago famous and favorite I Love Lucy episode [www.tvtome.com/tvtome/servlet/GuidePageServlet/showid-1038/epid-15119/] showed Lucille Ball and sidekick Ethel facing an ever-faster conveyor belt delivering chocolates for them to wrap: they couldn't keep up. The Internet sometimes makes me feel as though I'm at the wrong end of that conveyor belt.

I confess that I don't always reduce online interruptions and information coming at me. I'm not yet a recovering info-junkie, so this article is definitely "do what I say, not what I do" advice.

The Internet is like the accelerating candy conveyor belt. There's more content (online newspapers, portals, Web rings, etc.) and more forms of content (e-mail initially, then Web sites, mailing lists, blogs, streaming audio video, downloadable music, Web cameras, etc.)

But even with today's pace of change, whether we do it deliberately or just let it happen, we create our own online experiences. So we can make it fit our needs and change it when necessary. I've sometimes resisted dropping e-mail lists because I once liked them. That's silly: my and your most precious resource is time.

So I'll share time savers:

Tell people what you're interested in; if they scan online and offline resources for you, you don't have to.

Tell people what you don't want! If you don't want jokes, motivational sayings, political news, etc., cancel your subscriptions by asking people to stop sending it. I like jokes, I like technology, I'm

interested in politics. But some people just aren't on my wavelength.

When you send e-mail or reply, don't send unnecessary copies. Encourage people to not copy you unless you need to know or do something about the topic.

When replying, trim what you quote to essential matter and (especially) encourage others to do the same for you. Bloated and repetitive reply-reply-reply notes waste time while you look for what's new!

If you send common replies or send periodic e-mail such as club meeting notices, use templates (stored copies of pre-formatted e-mail) so you can just fill in details but needn't enter text repeatedly.

Use e-mail and spam filtering. Most e-mail software can automatically route spam to a special folder (and, of course, I'd like to route spammers to a special place). Some spam filters learn what's spam based on what you flag, so their accuracy improves over time. My spam is increasingly filtered, and no real e-mail is filtered. You can also set rules for routing e-mail into folders for easier reading and management. Based on rules I've defined (special keywords in e-mail subject and sender fields), my e-mail is put in folders such as AARP, Lists, To-Read, and Travel. This lets me organize e-mail time, prioritize my reading and answering, and sometimes catch up by deleting an e-mail category I don't really need to read. And the best part is that I avoid interruptions of each note arriving, since routing takes place silently and invisibly.

Set discussion mailing list subscriptions to "digest mode." This groups list e-mail into fewer/larger notes, sent occasionally, sometimes once/daily. This has two benefits: it eliminates many interruptions, and it greatly reduces the temptation to answer list notes, since by the time you see something someone else has likely already answered it.

Pick times during the day to handle e-mail, read favorite Web sites, use instant messaging, etc.; ignore it all at other times. This allows focusing on tasks at hand, reduces frenzied multi-tasking (trying to do many things at once), and lets you actually finish things you start!

Don't be trapped by time-wasting habits. Use technology that matches your needs; change it for

yourself, not because people urge you to (there's peer pressure at all ages!); adopt changes such as broadband Internet that save you time but be selective in what it brings you.

Recognize that the conveyor belt always wins the race and focus on what really matters —most of which, after all, isn't even online.

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Complete CD and DVD Burning Utility in One Box

by Ira Wilsker
Golden Triangle PC Club

I burn a lot of CDs and DVDs, typically purchasing media by the spindle of 50 or 100. I have tried a lot of the software from the major publishers, as well as the software integral in Windows XP, and have now settled on my favorite product, NTI's "CD and DVD Maker 7 Titanium Suite." I have found it feature rich, with all of the utilities in a single box, and easy to use.

As many of you may know, if you simply want to burn files to a CD, and you have Windows XP, no third party software is required, as Microsoft has licensed a limited functionality version of CD burning software from Roxio, and built it into Windows Explorer. The key term here is "limited function," as all the integral XP software will generally only copy files to CD, but offers no editing, labeling, or other often used functions. To use the limited built-in XP CD burning software, simply select the files from Windows Explorer, right click the mouse, and choose "Send To" and then select the CD drive. After all of the files have been selected, again using Windows Explorer, select the CD drive, and then click on "Files" and then "Write these files to CD." If a blank disc is in the CD drive, Windows will write the files to the disc. This narrow utility may be fine for simply copying files, but utterly lacks any additional functionality that many of us would like to use.

Most new computers or after market CD and DVD drives typically come with a limited functionality “light,” “limited,” or “SE—Special Edition” CD and DVD burning software that adds some useful additional features, but generally does not offer much more than copying and creating discs, and possibly the chance to make labels.

For those who really want power, control, and selection over what can be done with CD and DVD media, NTI (Newtech Infosystems) recently released its CD and DVD Maker 7 Titanium Suite, which is possibly the most comprehensive suite of CD and DVD utilities on the market. With a retail price of \$79.99 (I found it locally for \$59.99), the number of functions available for the price is remarkable. In addition to the typical copy, create, and label functions common in almost all full versions of competitive software, this bundle has much more. Since many of us now have some form of video capture device connected to our computers, the “Home Video-Maker” allows for video capture from any video source attached to the computer (such as a camcorder or TV tuner). Once captured, the video can be edited and special effects and transitions can be added to create professional appearing DVDs or CD. A wave editor allows any sounds to be edited, removing pops and hisses. Audio editing also allows for the effects of filtering, trimming, fading, echoing, and amplifying any audio, improving the sound.

As has been repeated several times in this column, one of the most critical tasks that computer users must periodically perform is backing up critical files, or an entire hard drive; included in this suite is NTI’s award winning backup software, “Backup Now!” With it, I routinely back up my hard drive to an external drive, doing a full backup monthly, and an incremental (only new or changed files) weekly. Backup Now! supports virtually all media formats, including CD discs, DVD discs, external drives, and other formats. With a good current backup, hard drive crashes and other maladies are far less exasperating because our critical data and programs can be easily recovered.

I enjoy playing commercial DVDs on my computer, because it has better sound and sharper video than my free standing DVD player and TV. This suite comes with excellent DVD

Playback software that can play almost all of the major video formats, including AVI, MPEG-1, and MPEG-2.

A fun feature in the suite is “Cinematic Video” and “Cinematic Slideshow” where home videos and still image slideshows can be easily created with transitions and special effects synchronized with background music. The resulting Cinematic production appears very professional, but is especially easy to create, as the program intelligently and automatically can add the transitions and effects, while synchronizing with the background audio.

Many free standing DVD players can show a photo slideshow on a TV, and this suite includes Photo Slideshow software. With it, customized photo slideshows can be created with attractive transitions and special effects, with the output burned to CD or DVD in a format that can be played on almost all household DVD players. This is an excellent way to share photos with others.

In a recent column, I wrote about the new Lightscribe standard, where using compatible CD and DVD discs, professional appearing labels can be burned directly on the top of the media with “Burn—Flip—Burn” simplicity. This feature is being included on all newly produced Titanium Suite software, or is available as a free upgrade via download from the NTI website at www.ntius.com. For those who still prefer to make paper stick-on labels and jewel case inserts, JewelCase Maker is included in the suite which allows the user to create, design, and print labels and inserts using traditional methods.

Audio aficionados will find the ability to rip music CDs and convert them to MP3 format a useful utility. An added feature allows users to convert old records, cassettes, and 8-tracks, (remember those?) to digital format which can then be burned to CD, providing an appropriate input is available.

Personally, I have found NTI’s CD and DVD Maker Titanium Suite an extremely valuable component of my software collection, and I use it on a frequent basis.

Ask the Expert - Split Links

Q: Some links in email are split on two lines so I can't click on them. Is there a way to make them clickable?

A: Seems like Outlook email has a bad habit of splitting a long URL into two or more lines, but only making the first line as a live Hyperlink. I used to cut and paste each piece into the browser address box in turn until I had it all. I could then hit the "GO" button to travel to the site. This worked for the most part, but was time consuming and depended upon my accuracy in selecting the information.

I've since found an easier way. I open the email as if I were going to reply or forward it. The body text becomes editable so now all you need do is put the cursor at the end of the first line of the split URL, then hit delete. The second line will jump up and connect to the end of the first part. Repeat if there are more than two lines. The complete URL will now be live and you can double click it to travel to the web page.

Gary English, Past President of PCUG Jacksonville, FL

Reading Product Manuals Online

by Gabe Goldberg

APCUG Advisor; Columnist,

AARP Computers and Technology Website

I'm reasonably well-organized; my wife thinks I'm a packrat (she keeps trying to sneak my '70s shirts to the thrift shop). You'd think this would mean that I can find product manuals for every appliance, gadget, PC component and software, etc., I've ever bought. That's mostly true.

But sometimes my filing system fails me. Or I've forgotten to whom I loaned something. Or someone else in the house (but I'm not naming names) has moved it. What then?

Fortunately, manufacturers are increasingly making product literature and documentation available online. While this isn't entirely out of generosity—it reduces their customer-support workload—it's great for consumers who can find and read the material.

A good starting place is the manufacturer's Web site. For example, I'm writing this article using a Samsung SyncMaster 912n LCD video

monitor. Suppose I need to know what its control buttons do but can't find its manual. Samsung's home page [www.samsung.com] offers a button, "Download Center: Download Drivers, Manuals, Software, and Firmware." I can either enter a product model number or name, or search via product group (audio/video, computers, etc.), then product type, then product subtype, and model name.

Computers are very precise; searching took three tries, since it wanted only "912n," not "SyncMaster 912n." The manual was then available in any of 28 languages, from Bulgarian to Chinese. A PDF file (see below for explanation), it's just under three megabytes, dated about a month ago, complete, 83 pages including clickable Table of Contents. So a minute after deciding to look for it, I'm looking *at* it.

Another way to search is via Google [www.google.com] entering terms like 912n manual site:samsung.com which only searches the samsung.com Web site. This took me to the right neighborhood on the Web site but left me needing a few more clicks to hit the manual. Sometimes search engine results are better than navigating within a site, so consider both techniques.

Manufacturers often update online material as mistakes or shortcomings are found in printed versions, so for important products it's worth checking Web sites occasionally. Sadly, they also sometimes package only abbreviated versions with products, suggesting or expecting consumers to download full versions.

Either way, online manuals are also useful when considering purchases or comparing choices, since they give—or should give!—more complete and useful information than is printed on the box. If you're evaluating something pre-purchase, evaluate the manual's organization and quality—Will you be able to find information you need? Will you understand it? If you're buying something used, online availability of a missing manual can make the acquisition much more pleasant.

Online manuals can be in many formats—HTML (normal Web pages), Microsoft Word documents, PDF (Portable Document Format), and others. Each format has advantages and disadvantages. HTML is nearly universal; if you can view Web pages you can read HTML docu-

mentation. But it may be harder to download and save/organize all pieces of a large document. You'll need Microsoft Word software (or free reader) to read MS Word files. Flexible PDF is becoming the most popular online document format, but it too requires software, Adobe's Acrobat Reader, for viewing. Fortunately, this is free and easy to download/install; visit Adobe [<http://www.adobe.com/>] and click Get Adobe Reader.

Some manufacturers take a different approach, offering search tools and links within their Web sites for different material, such as overviews, tutorials, problem solving tips, even video clips illustrating usage.

Finally, LiveManuals [www.livemanuals.com] takes an interesting/interactive approach, providing interactive product demonstrations. Though it doesn't include every product—office equipment and appliances aren't presently well-represented—the Wish List page accepts nominations for items to add.

This article originated on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, www.aarp.org/computers, and is copyrighted by AARP.

Identity Theft and Fraud: How to Keep Your PC Safe

by Kraig Lane

Group Product Manger, Symantec Corp.

The number of people using the Internet has grown steadily since the mid-90s, and the Internet's capabilities have grown as well. Almost anything can be done online—buying a pair of shoes, renewing a car's registration, booking a flight, rental car and hotel to Tokyo, etc. Sometimes the possibilities seem unlimited. As computer use has increased, however, users have become more aware of the need for online safety. Computer-related security incidents are in the news on a daily basis, and users want to know how to protect themselves from the ever-growing number of hackers and Internet scams. PC users must educate themselves about the various types of threats on the Internet today and follow best practices to protect their home systems and their confidential information.

Big Phish

Hackers used to launch malicious code in order to gain notoriety among other hackers. Now,

things are different—most hacker activity is focused on making money. According to the recent Internet Security Threat Report from Symantec, the financial sector received the highest ratio of severe Internet attacks of any industry, including high tech, healthcare, power and energy, and manufacturing. And consumer-focused attacks have also increased.

One of the most widespread new threats targeting unsuspecting consumers is "phi-shing." Phishing is an effort by a third party to solicit confidential information from an individual for illicit financial gain. Phishers use spoofed email addresses and Web sites, or Trojan horses downloaded through the user's Web browser, to trick users into disclosing sensitive information such as credit card numbers and online banking information.

Phishing is a big problem, and keeps getting bigger. The number of phishing attacks increased steadily during the last six months of 2004, from 193 new attacks during the first week to an average of 400 per week by the end of the year. And because spoofed email and Internet sites are becoming more and more sophisticated, phishing attacks are harder than ever to identify and defend against.

To keep from becoming victims of phishers, security experts recommend that users should follow general best practices for computing, and visit sites such as www.antiphishing.org to learn about the latest phishing scams. They should never disclose any confidential personal or financial information if they are unsure about the authenticity of an email or Web site.

Nowhere to Hide

Information exposure threats can be present in almost any type of malicious code, including Trojan horses, worms, and viruses. Over the last half of 2004, malicious code that exposed confidential information represented 54 percent of the top 50 malicious code samples received by Symantec—up from 44 percent in the first half of 2004 and 36 percent in the second half of 2003.

This increase is partially due to the proliferation of "bots," which expose all information on a compromised computer because of their remote access capabilities. Bots—short for "robots"—are programs that are installed on a user's computer

without his/her knowledge in order to allow the program's author to control that computer remotely. Spammers often use bots to relay their messages via compromised home computers.

To keep their computers from being compromised by bots, users should use strong passwords consisting of a mix of letters and numbers on shared network drives; avoid using questionable peer-to-peer services; and make sure updated security patches are installed on their operating systems and applications.

Web browser vulnerabilities are often implicated in information exposure breaches; after all, a compromised browser could mean a compromise in the security of all Web-based transactions. In these cases, hackers target the web browsers of individual users rather than servers of an organization. Browser vulnerabilities are taking on a new twist as hackers are not only looking to exploit vulnerabilities in Internet Explorer but also in alternative browsers such as Mozilla, Firefox, and Opera. In the last half of 2004, Symantec documented 21 vulnerabilities affecting Mozilla and Firefox, 13 vulnerabilities impacting Internet Explorer, and six reported in Opera.

Consumers should carefully research browser alternatives and evaluate their level of security before deploying them on the desktop. Downloading the latest patches and security updates helps users reduce the likelihood that their browser will be compromised.

Spy Hunter

Spyware is perhaps one of the most worrisome Internet threats that consumers face today. Spyware refers to standalone programs that can secretly monitor system activity and relay the information back to another computer. Spyware can have legitimate uses; corporations and parents use it to monitor Internet usage in the workplace or the home. But malicious spyware represents a security risk to PC users, as it is often used for identity theft and fraud.

Spyware can be installed on a system in a number of ways. Some spyware programs are made available as freeware—that is, as software that can be downloaded at no charge. Spyware programs are also often bundled with legitimate programs. This bundling is done by the spyware author, who wants access to confidential data that

is exposed during use of the legitimate program. The software package is placed on a public download site or sent to a newsgroup for maximum exposure and is executed when the user downloads and runs the legitimate program. Users should be wary of downloading software from sites other than reputable distributors or manufacturers.

When removing spyware, consumers are advised to be extremely cautious. Programs should be removed as carefully as possible in order to minimize any problems that might result from the removal of the program. It may be necessary to ignore some non-critical aspects of these programs, because removing all traces of some spyware programs can cause instability in users' computers.

What You Can Do...

PC users can significantly reduce their exposure to today's Internet threats by following a number of general best practices:

- Avoid viewing, opening, or executing any email (or attachment) unless the purpose and sender are known, and keep the preview pane in email inboxes closed.
- Use strong passwords—they should be a mix of letters and numbers, not dictionary words—and change them often.
- Use an Internet security solution that combines antivirus, firewall, intrusion detection, and vulnerability management for maximum protection against complex threats.
- Ensure that security patches and virus definitions are up-to-date; deploying the latest virus definitions and patches protects against the latest viruses and vulnerabilities.
- Check routinely to see if PCs are vulnerable to threats by using an online vulnerability scanning service from a reputable information security provider.
- Learn to recognize computer hoaxes and phishing scams, and never divulge confidential information over the Internet.

As group product manager at Symantec (www.symantec.com), Kraig Lane is responsible for the overall management of Symantec's consumer Internet security solutions.

Links from Steve Bass

Uses for Dead CDs

Some of you have probably collected hundreds of AOL promotional CD-ROMs. What to do with them? Well, you could create a lovely chandelier (sorry, no step-by-step instructions available):

<http://www.bassfiles.net/CD.jpg>

But if I were you, I'd create a CD lamp, a gem of an idea from the fertile mind of Jim Watters, who's already finished version 2. See below for both versions, plus instructions.

CD Lamp 1:

http://photocreations.ca/cd_lamp/

CD Lamp 2:

http://photocreations.ca/cd_lamp2/index.html

Font Essentials

A few weeks ago I mentioned a site with some nifty free fonts you can download and install on your PC; see "Reading (and Writing) Blogs": <http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,121986,tk,sbx,00.asp>

Once you've installed the fonts, you can use them in any application that lets you choose fonts, like Microsoft Word or your desktop publishing program. I took it for granted that everyone would know how to install the fonts without having to hire a \$70-an-hour consultant, but apparently I shouldn't have.

Here's the scoop: Installation is straightforward. Download the fonts you want from DaFont.com: <http://www.dafont.com/en/top.php?text=Forward+my+Newsletter>

Then unzip the font files in Windows Explorer. If you don't know how to unzip a file, read our F A Q : <http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/article/0,aid,54343,pg,4,tk,sbx,00.asp>

Now, open the Control Panel, open Fonts (the applet icons are in alphabetical order), and drag the unzipped font files from their folder onto the open Font window. Easy, eh?

If for some odd reason that doesn't work, try this: Open the Font window again from Control Panel, then select File and choose Install New Font. Navigate to the folder where you unzipped the font files and click the file you want to install (the font files have the .ttf extension).

Society News

Program Meeting

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Helps Half Hour Extended Session

Led by: Ron Matteson

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Total present: 29

Q: A member's friend has Outlook Express and he has Eudora. Any forwarded message has a series of messages to it. If he deletes one piece, all of the messages disappear.

A: When highlighted, use the File>Cut option and this might work. You probably need to open the first piece in Outlook and then you can delete the pieces.

Q: A member has XP and used Nero for system backup. However, the CD cannot be opened. Even after a successful message, the disk is considered blank.

A: Those present said that the backup function seems to work for them. Be sure that you are selecting the option of to the CD burner.

Q: What if I want to backup a file that is larger than what will fit on one CD?

A: You have to use a version that will span across more than one disk. Be sure this option is checked.

Q: Is there a way to see how much more space is on a CD? Sometimes it seems like there should be room but it will not let me add on.

A: If you have finalized the CD it is closed and will say that there is no more room for additional files. Watch what option you are requesting—multiple sessions will allow re-writing if you use the same machine.

Q: Has anyone had trouble downloading additions to SpyBot lately?

A: A member noted that he did get a beta version one time. That was not good. If you see that the download object list has !!! on its name, try again or go to another of the website locations.

Q: What about Stinger?

A: Be sure to update the whole program including the newest version and the updates. Be aware that sometimes software will prompt you about deleting the original version.

Q: My Outlook Express will not allow you to modify a message that has been sent to you.

A: If you forward the message, the content maybe able to change. Reply To may allow you to modify the item

Q: Is there a possible way to eliminate certain servers by number? I found out that a Holland server is the main source of my SPAM.

A: On Frontier you can block out the whole domain but not complete servers. If you have their IP Address and you are behind a router, you can blacklist the IP. Generally you access it through 192.168.1.1 or .0.1. After entering your id and password you can then find address filtering/blocking. Type in the server numbers and they will be blocked. You may be able to add a range of numbers or one at a time.

Q: A member had trouble when installing XP SP2.

A: It has been published that 3% of persons will have trouble with this update. Try turning off the automatic update so that the prompt disappears. It may require a reload. Try using Microsoft Security Download Analyzer. It will check that your downloads are complete.

Business meeting; Planning Board meeting next Tuesday. Newsletter printing is September 24. We need to try to obtain more advertisers. We can do the job with fewer people. Still a problem with the program not being recognized by the printer. So far, it still takes 40-52 hours to generate the newsletter. Any other ideas for efficiency/less costs?

Need a new meeting location and chairman for the New User's Group/SIG

Kudos to Ron for great meeting programs
Next meeting is the end of his tour of duty. We are looking for a replacement. We may try to get a team/co-chair.

Next meeting is October 11th at the Penfield library

Ron directed thanks to the Monitor Newsletter Team.

Next digital SIG meeting is October 4th at the Penfield Library at 6:30 pm.

Anyone wanting an email announcement, sign up tonight.

Tonight's Raffle includes copies of Ubuntu—Linux; also copies of Norton Security Suite, two mugs from Cartridge World; still have key chains with lights.

Planning Meeting Notes

September 20, 2005

by John McMillan

Sally Springett hosted the planning meeting that began at 7pm. Nathan King, a guest, was joined by president Arpad Kovacs, and attendees Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, John McMillan, Dan Rothfuss, Sally Springett, Steve Staub, and Tom Thompson.

Arpad opened the meeting stating that the September 13th meeting went pretty well. Ron Matteson put together a good program on short notice and the audience, of about average size, seemed quite interested. It was pointed out that though sometimes Help's Half Hour is finished in 15 minutes, at other times this segment could go for much longer. The importance of this service to members is recognized as demonstrated by the occasional programs done by the Sound Bytes Team. It was pointed out that we did pick up 2 new members.

The speaker at the October Meeting, to be held at the Penfield Library, will be Jeremy Sarachan. He will discuss aspects of digital video editing. Arpad will talk about gifts and gadgets for Christmas at the November 8th Meeting in the Brighton Library. Possible topics for the December meeting are Linux or perhaps a Jeopardy like game with computer oriented categories. Another thought was to have a cabin party for January, February or March when outside speakers might experience difficulties traveling. Details need to be worked out before a final decision can be reached on any of these suggestions. Members are encouraged to suggest speakers topics to officers of the club who are still seeking volunteers for Program Chairman and Helps Half Hour Leader.

The next topic was the Monitor. Production of the Monitor takes place in three phases: editing the material; printing and assembling the booklets; and distributing the booklets. Editing and distribution are both working well but there are still glitches in the assembly process. A plastic bracket on one of the printers is broken but is thought to be easily repaired. Translation of edited files to printer input still consumes much more time than it should but several ways to smooth the operation are being investigated to

reduce assembly time. These will be closely Monitored (pardon the pun). It is hoped that with adjustments in place, the assembly process will only require 3 or 4 people for about 4 hours.

Steve mentioned that two new stores have requested give away copies of the Monitor. This is one method of getting the Societies activities and benefits in front of the public and may encourage both new membership plus additional advertising revenue. Steve also reported that the treasury stands at \$699.31.

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 8/16/05	\$880.31
Income	
Dues and donations	\$215.00
Expenses	
Web page	\$120.00
Re-inking	156.00
St. Stephens (2 months)	<u>120.00</u>
Total	\$396.00
Balance as of 9/20/05	\$699.31

New Members:

Jim Rizzo
Ronald Thomas

The Lighter Side

Understanding Computer Jargon

When I went to college in the 1980's, I heard a lot of words like "data input" and "beta version." They confused me. I wanted desperately to know what people were talking about, what Big Secret resided in the computer industry.

Now that I've worked in a computer company for the last few years, I've gained an insider's perspective. I decided to share my knowledge with the uninitiated by creating the following brief, handy glossary:

Alpha. Software undergoes alpha testing as a first step in getting user feedback. Alpha is Latin for "doesn't work."

Beta. Software undergoes beta testing shortly before it's released. Beta is Latin for "still doesn't work."

Computer. Instrument of torture. The first computer was invented by Roger "Duffy" Billingsly, a British scientist. In a plot to overthrow Adolf Hitler, Duffy disguised himself as a German ally and offered his invention as a gift to the surly dictator. The plot worked. On April 8, 1945, Adolf became so enraged at the "Incompatible File Format" error message that he shot himself. The war ended soon after Hitler's death. Duffy began working for IBM.

CPU. Central propulsion unit. The CPU is the computer's engine. It consists of a hard drive, an interface card, and a tiny spinning wheel that's powered by a running rodent—gerbil if the machine is old, a ferret if it's a Pentium, and a ferret on speed if it's a Pentium II.

Default Directory. Black hole. Default directory is where all files that you need disappear to.

Error message. Terse, baffling remark used by programmers to place blame on users for the program's shortcomings.

File. A document that has been saved with an unidentifiable name. It helps to think of a file as something stored in a file cabinet – except when you try to remove the file the cabinet gives you an electric shock and tells you the file format is unknown.

Hardware. Collective term for any computer-related object that can be kicked or battered.

Help. What we all need. Actually, it is the feature that assists in generating more questions. When the help feature is used correctly, users are able to navigate through a series of Help screens and end up back where they started without learning anything.

Input/Output. Information is input from the keyboard as intelligible data and output to the printer as unrecognizable junk.

Interim Release. A programmer's feeble attempt at repentance.

Memory. Of computer components, the most generous in terms of variety and the skimpiest in terms of quantity.

Printer. A joke in poor taste. A printer consists of three main parts: the case, the jammed paper tray, and the blinking red light.

Programmers. Computer avengers. Once members of that group of high school nerds who wore tape on their glasses, played Dungeons and Dragons, and memorized Star Trek episodes; now millionaires who create "user-friendly" software to get revenge on whoever gave them noogies.

Reference Manual. Object that raises the monitor to eye level. Also used to compensate for that short table leg.

Scheduled Release Date. A carefully calculated date determined by estimating the actual shipping date and subtracting six months from it.

User-Friendly. Of or pertaining to any feature, device, or concept that makes perfect sense to a programmer.

Users. Collective term for those who stare vacantly at a monitor. Users are divided into three types: novice, intermediate and expert.

Novice users are people who are afraid that simply pressing a key might break their computer.

Intermediate users are people who don't know how to fix their computer after they've pressed the key that broke it.

Expert users are people who break *other* people's computers.