

MONITOR

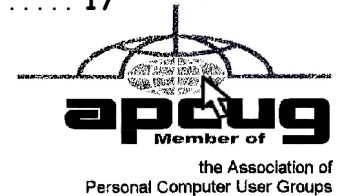
Vol. 23, No. 11

November 2006

Next Meeting
November 14 - St. Stephen's
What's New for Holiday Gifts

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Digital Resolution Made Confusing by Dave Chrestenson

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There seems to be a plethora of articles on the number of pixels required to create your photos to their full glory. Many of the articles disagree with each other and some are mystifying (to say the least); occasionally a few are wrong. So here I will approach it from a different point of view, I'll give you the knowledge and let you decide what you need. Ready? Here we go!

Let's start with some facts. (I'll reconsider these later, but we have to start somewhere.) First, the average eye, relaxed, focuses at a distance of

about fifteen inches. So that's about the distance people view their prints. Second, the angle of comfortable vision (not acute) is generally agreed to be about fifty to fifty-five degrees. Beyond that is peripheral vision. Now, fifty degrees at fifteen inches subtends a distance of about thirteen inches, just covering the diagonal of an 8x10. Is it any wonder that size is so popular? And third, the typical eye has a resolution of about one minute of angle. This works out, at fifteen inches, to about .004 inches, or approximately 229 dots in an inch. (For purposes of clarity I will use the term pixels when referring to the camera sensor and dots when referring to the print. But in this discussion they can be considered equivalent. (Don't compare this with the resolution (normally also referred to as dots) of printers. They

are completely different animals. (Subject for another article?)

For convenience and to assure a tolerance, for now let's round that up to 300 dpi. This means that we need 300 dpi (at 15 inches) on the paper to assure that we won't see individual dots. Now, it's easy enough to work backwards from there. Assume that we wish to print an 8x10. Ten inches across at 300 dpi is 3000 dots. Eight inches down at 300 dpi is 2400 dots. So we need a camera of 3000 x 2400 pixels, or 7.2 meg. (This is assuming a camera with square pixels, not all have that, the Fuji S3 for example has hexagonal pixels, two sizes, no less. (Subject for still another article?) Simple huh? Maybe.

But let's try another example first. Assume you just want to print a picture half that size, 4 x 5 is more common. Then 4 times 300 equals 1200 and 5 times 300 equals 1500, so our camera need only be 1.8 meg. That's not so bad, is it? But before you dash right out to buy a 2 meg camera on sale, let's take a look at some of those original figures.

I said that the average eye views an image at 15 inches. That's an "average" eye. It can vary from that... a lot. Depending on age, it can go from 3 inches (a youngster) to more than 6 feet. (An old timer.) And that's for an eye that's working well. Near-sighted? You'll hold the picture closer. (Assuming you don't wear correction lenses, of course.) Far-sighted? Further away. Have astigmatism? A mess! So, if you hold your picture at 7.5 inches, you will need twice the number of pixels, or 600, per inch. An 8x10 would require a 28.8 meg camera. Good grief! Thirty inches viewing distance is a lot easier, a 1.8 meg one will do the job. Also, some eyes can see significantly better than one minute of angle, some can reach a half minute. That's even worse, you need 600 dpi at 15 inches, which means we're back to a 28.8 meg camera for an 8x10, and a 7.2 meg one for a 4x5. But you can do the math. And do you really need to have the dots as small as theory suggests? Well, to make it more confusing, there are other considerations that affect that. Bright lighting needs higher resolution, dim lighting needs less. Glossy paper? Higher resolution. Matt paper, less. High contrast image, more, low contrast, less. Ad infinitum.

Finally, what if you have taken the definitive photo of Yosemite, the one to equal Ansel Adams, and you want to have it printed at, say, 16x20 and frame it. Do you still need 300 dpi? Probably not. After all, people don't normally hold a 16x20 in their hands and look at it from 15 inches.

Remember the 50 degree vision. So, you'll probably be hanging it on the wall, where they will view it from a distance. Experience shows that people will move backward or forward when viewing a picture until it subtends that 50 degree angle. So you might well get away with 150 dpi.

But, getting back to the more normal usage, handheld prints, do you need 300 dpi there? Again, maybe. In many cases you may get away with less. But if you go below 150 dpi you are almost certain to get obvious visual pixilation at that distance. Of course, Photoshop to the rescue, you can resample upwards and increase the number of pixels to what works. You're not adding detail, but at least you're getting rid of those annoying "jaggies."

Clear? I didn't think so. Remember, I said "Made Confusing." But at least you are now confused on a much higher plane! Good luck.

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.

Are You "Compuliterate?"

by Berry F. Phillips

Computer Club of Oklahoma City and a regular writer for the CCOCK website and the eMonitor

Computer literacy Test (author unknown).

1. Who invented the computer?
 - a. Mr. Chips
 - b. E.T.
 - c. Marquis de Sade.
2. What are microchips?
 - a. What a herd of micros leave on the prairie,
 - b. What you eat with a microdip,
 - c. The reason you had to take all those computer literacy courses.
3. What is a floppy disk?
 - a. A painful lower-back condition,
 - b. An album that didn't sell,
 - c. A great Frisbee.
4. What is the first thing you associate with computers?
 - a. Bill Cosby commercials,
 - b. Eyestrain and headaches,
 - c. Annoying beeps,
 - d. Three tons of printout where once there was a three-page report,
 - e. All of the above.
5. What is FORTRAN?

- a. Between 3 and 5 tran,
 - b. How to get computers excited before interface,
 - c. Ridiculous.
6. What is Pascal?
 - a. A leafy vegetable,
 - b. A foot fungus,
 - c. A city in southern France,
 - d. None of the above.
 7. When you need consulting help in deciding what to do with your computer, which organization do you think of?
 - a. IBM,
 - b. FBI,
 - c. PLO?
 8. What is the most important computer peripheral?
 - A. Bill Gates,
 - b. Someone to operate the computer for you,
 - c. Aspirin.

Some years ago, I was staring at a demo game computer with that blank stare of a computer illiterate in a large computer store. I felt a tug on my sleeve and there was a small lad who asked me rather impatiently, "Why don't you do something?" I confessed with great difficulty being an adult that I did not know what to do. This mini computer user said, "I will show you because I have this game at home." He began killing monsters right and left as I slunk out of the store in humiliation. I vowed from that day forward I would become computer literate because no eight year old was going to be more computer literate than I was!

I suspect you have some hands on computer experience since you are reading my column. Computer literacy is today a necessity when entering the job market. I remember when *Time Magazine* awarded the computer, their coveted Man of the Year which dramatically illustrated the incredible impact the personal computer has had on our contemporary society. Computer literacy does not mean you need to know everything about a computer but you should master the basics and understand how a computer works.

I remember thinking that just because a person used a computer in a business that they must be computer literate. I discovered that many computer users only knew how to do limited applications necessary for them to do their specific work. Further, I noticed that many computer users due to lack of computer literacy were very limited in their use of their computers. Limited computer literacy usually translates into limited use of the computer never experiencing the full potential of the

computer and maximizing their return on their computer investment.

What alternatives are available to accelerate one's level of computer literacy? Basic computer courses are offered by most continuing education programs. They are usually reasonably priced and conveniently scheduled. They can be found in your local school district, or community college on evenings and weekends. There are career retraining programs that often offer computer courses through your local Labor Department Office. There are also online courses and tutorials available and the public libraries have computers available to their patrons with Internet access.

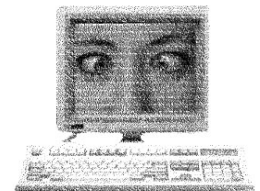
I have found that computer clubs are an excellent choice for developing computer literacy since they are economical, and less theoretical and are more focused on how to operate the computer using various applications. Computer users helping other computer users move to the next level of computer literacy is an incredible learning and motivating experience.

All of those who obtain computer literacy were once computer illiterates. As they were helped to reach computer literacy, they enjoy helping others as they were helped. You are never alone in your journey to reach computer literacy in a computer club; there is always another member to ask a question or to get hands on help.

The sole objective of computer clubs is to help each other to reach computer literacy. We often hear from our members who have achieved computer literacy how when they started they wondered how they would ever use a computer and now how they will ever get along without a computer! The transition from computer illiteracy to literacy is truly amazing. Our mission is to help each other reach computer literacy with a variety of proven classes that will get you up too speed as soon as possible. The Computer Club of Oklahoma City believes the only unintelligent question is the unasked question! Obtaining computer literacy is not a luxury but an absolute necessity in our rapidly evolving technological society.

I hope that I remain "compuliterate" be-cause those eight year olds are getting more and more "compuliterate" especially the older I get!

Courtesy of APCUG.



Downloading a File by Dave Gerber

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radio talk show host*

Step 1: Create a Download Folder

The first step in downloading from the Internet, is to create a folder where you will always save your downloaded files. This will help you to locate the file once it is downloaded into your computer. To create a new folder (directory) called C:\Download using Windows Explorer, highlight your C: drive, and then click on these menu items, one after the other: File | New > Folder. When a folder entitled New Folder is created, rename it "Download."

Note: A word about distinguishing between the Windows Explorer and Microsoft Internet Explorer. The Windows Explorer is the system tool that helps you examine and access your entire computer; files; directories; drives; desktop, etc. In contrast, Microsoft Internet Explorer is the browser you can use to surf the Web.

Step 2: Download a File Using Your Browser

Microsoft Internet Explorer (MSIE), Netscape Communicator, Opera, and other browsers work in similar ways. After you click the Download Now button, a small win-dow will open and ask you, "What would you like to do with this file?" or something similar. Simply click on the "Save it to disk" or "Save" choice, and then click OK. When the familiar "Save As" window appears, use it to navigate to your newly created C:\download folder and click "Save." Watch and wait until the file has finished downloading. Problems? Some older versions of MSIE may require that you right-click on "Download Now," and select "Save Target As" to be able to begin the process described above.

Step 3: Prepare Your File for Installation

Although some files end in .exe and automatically install or explode into many files, many of the files you will download end in .zip. Since programs almost always include more than one file, think of the trouble it would be to download many files just to get one program to install. A zip file, also referred to as an archive, is an individual file that has files stored within it. When multiple files are combined into one zip file, they are also compressed in size, which has the further benefit of saving hard drive space and shortening download time. To open a .zip file, you will need a program that will unzip the file for you. The most common

program for this is WinZip. If you do not already have WinZip, follow these instructions to install the proper version.

Step 4: Download and Install WinZip

Go to www.winzip.com and download the shareware version of WinZip. (Note from Dave: This version of WinZip is shareware; registration costs \$29.) Put it in your computer's C:\download folder. The WinZip file is in the form of an .exe that can be run and installed without any additional steps.

Congratulations! You've successfully downloaded a file, and a whole new world is available to you now! The Internet is a great source for finding software gems. By tapping into the Web's motherlode of software, you can try programs to see if you like them before laying out that hard-earned cash, and keep your favorite programs up to date by learning to download and install their latest versions.

Step 5: Install your file

Double-click on winzip81.exe to install WinZip, then follow the easy step-by-step installation instructions. We suggest you take all of the suggested default settings and scan all your drives for favorite folders. WinZip can then easily access your C:\download directory for the next step. STOP when you reach the "WinZip Wizard—Welcome" window, and proceed with the next instruction. WinZip has probably been set up to launch using wizards, which are interfaces designed to make it easier to use new programs. They present each step in a series of separate windows, with options and decisions for you to make before you click Next to proceed.

Step 6: How To Handle .exe Files

As we mentioned at the beginning of Step 3, you will find files ending in both .zip and .exe. You will find that .exe files are even easier to handle than .zip files! If you downloaded and installed WinZip earlier in this exercise, you know exactly what we mean.

The .exe files that you download are ready to be run—the only thing is, they can act in one of several different ways. Here are a few examples of what may happen when you double-click on an .exe file that you have downloaded.

An installation routine may begin immediately. In this case, all you need do is follow the instructions that are presented to you.

A small window may appear that explains that the file will extract to a particular folder. You may wish to change the folder, or at least make a note of

where the files are being placed. At the conclusion of the file extraction process, an installation process may begin. If it does not, use Windows Explorer to navigate to the folder where the files have been placed. Once there, you can look for a Readme.txt, File_id.diz, Vendinfo.diz, Productname.txt, or other file that may help you install the program. Typically, a Setup .exe or Productname.exe will be there for you to click upon.

All of the files within the .exe will be expanded into the current folder. Fortunately, this older method of packaging is not used very often

Courtesy of APCUG.



Q. How long will backed-up data last on my CD-ROM?

A. Excellent question, the answer to which is destined to result in a few anxious twinges for some readers. As it is with any backup medium (floppy disk, tape, CD-ROM, DVD, etc.) the shelf life of saved data is a vitally important consideration. Kodak has underwritten extensive accelerated aging tests and claims that its Infoguard CD-ROM should last 200 years, so be sure to save your receipt. TDK claims its disks will last “about 100 years.” Despite such claims, some users have been chagrined and/or appalled to discover that data saved to CD was not readable after a few months. Eek!

Erring on the side of data conservatism, if you store your CD backups properly and use name-brand, top-quality CDs, it would be prudent to think in terms of five-year increments. The question that should be asked, however, is not how long will data exist on a CD before it begins to deteriorate, but rather how long will a CD be accessible in light of rapidly changing technologies? In other words, today’s CDs are going to be as useful as my collection of 8-track tapes at some point in the future. A few years from now, try to find a CD player and you’ll be taunted and jeered as much as—well, as much as I am when I mention my 8-track tapes. For a more contemporary example, try to find a new computer with a 3.5" floppy drive today. You can still order one as an option or purchase an external drive, but they’re rapidly fading into history.

When it comes to CDs and DVDs lasting 100 or

200 years, while there may be a kernel of truth to those assertions, practically speaking, I wouldn’t place any great faith in having the ability to access data that may or may not be on those CDs years from now. The time will come when the CD-ROM will be ancient technology, probably replaced by the digital Chiclet, DigiPod, or some other type of semi-microscopic device capable of storing every piece of digitized data ever created.

As my newsletter subscribers know, I’ve had a few experiences that were less than confidence inspiring when I discovered that data successfully burned to CD was unreadable when I attempted to access it on a new system. All drives are not created equal, so creating a CD that functions perfectly in one drive, does not guarantee that same CD will work flawlessly in another drive. It may, but then again it may not. I wasn’t comfortable with that “iffy” factor, so I decided to forgo CDs as a viable backup medium.

For backups today, I use a SmartDisk Firelite USB drive (www.smartdisk.com). Available in sizes up to 100GB, this palm-size device plugs into a USB port, there is no software to install, and it works with any PC. Of course, once USB ports disappear, similar “ancient technology” challenges will present themselves. Long before that happens, I’ll transfer the data from the Firelite drive to whatever the next generation of storage media is. Either that or I’ll say, “Oh, the heck with it all,” and sweep out the garage instead.

Regardless what backup device you decide to use, it’s a good idea to review your backup strategy and the technology you’re using at least every five years. At periodic intervals, be sure to do some random sampling to check the integrity of your saved data, as well. If nothing else, you’ll sleep better knowing your data is intact.

Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites Get Human

We have all experienced the frustration of trying to get a “real person” on the phone when calling a bank, telephone company or technical support. Thanks to Paul English, a live body is now just a few key presses away. Mr. English, surely a candidate for a Nobel Prize if ever there was one, created the IVR (Interactive Voice Response) Cheat Sheet, recently re-launched as GetHuman.com. This alphabetical listing of hundreds of companies provides the steps required to reach a living, breathing, telephone-answer-ing organism. Bless you, Mr. English.

www.gethuman.com/us

Happy News

If today's news occasionally gets you down, visit this Web site for the brighter side of current events. All the stories are real, but unlike other media, this one presents news that delivers a positive message or a happy ending. www.happynews.com

The Bookcart

If you're an avid reader, but balk at the price of books today, you won't want to miss this paperback exchange site. Books cost just \$2.50, including shipping. If you have lots of old paperback books and you aren't sure what to do with them, you can become a member of The Bookcart and make a few dollars when others purchase your books. Complete information is available on the site.

www.thebookcart.com

Mr. Modem's weekly computer-help newsletter provides prompt, personal answers to subscribers' questions by email, plus unbelievably helpful computer tips. Mr. M.'s popular CD-ROM profiles more than 1400 of the best Web sites ever! Makes a great gift! To view an excerpt from the CD, visit www.MrModem.com.

My Spyware

by Sandy Berger
Compu-KISS

Everyone has computer woes...even me. Last week my office computer slowed to a crawl when accessing anything on the office network or on the Internet. It was so slow that I was anxious to begin troubleshooting.

Since we had recently moved to a new office, the first suspect was the network cabling. I replaced cables on both ends and used my laptop to confirm that the network was fine. It was obvious that something in my computer was the problem. So the first order of business was to scan for viruses. Since I always use an up-to-date antivirus program, keep my operating system patched, and don't open uninvited attachments, I felt my computer was probably virus-free. The virus scan confirmed that my problem was caused by something other than a virus.

My next thought was that I probably had some spyware in my computer. These unwanted programs infiltrate computers without the user's knowledge. They can wreck havoc with a computer. So I ran a spyware detection program named *Ad-Aware* (www.adaware.com). This is a free program that I have used for years with good results. This time, it didn't find anything. So I turned to another favorite...*Spybot Search and Destroy* (www.spybot.com). Another free program, *Spybot* has

turned up much spyware in the past. Yet, even though I updated both of these programs before I scanned my computer, neither found any spyware.

Now I had a dilemma. Since I could not find the problem, my next step might have to be reformatting my hard drive and reinstalling all the programs. In trying to avoid that time-consuming hassle, I decided to try one more spyware program. On my desktop I had two additional free spyware tools that I downloaded for review but had never used before: AOL's *Automatic Spyware Protection* (<http://daol.aol.com/safetycenter/spyware>) and Microsoft's *Window's Defender* (www.windowsdefender.com).

I decided to start with the AOL program. The scan was faster than either Ad-Aware or Spybot, and it unearthed several pieces of spyware that were not detected by the previous programs. I clicked the button that said "Eliminate Spyware" and my work was done. My computer was immediately back to normal.

It's unbelievable that I would have to use three programs to find the nasty spyware that was causing my problem, but this is the situation in today's spyware-infested computer world. The bad guys are always trying to stay one step ahead of the good guys and in some cases, they are obviously succeeding.

If you want to add the AOL software to your arsenal of anti-spyware tools, it is a simple download at the AOL Safety and Security Center at <http://daol.aol.com/safetycenter/spyware>. You will need to get a free AOL screen name before you download the software by entering your name, address, telephone, email, and date of birth. Be careful to download only what you need. AOL will offer you virus protection, a firewall, and an email program in addition to the spyware software. These may or may not be valuable to you. I checked out the free AOL *Active Virus Shield* software which you can download at www.activevirusshield.com. This program is powered by Kaspersky Lab, one of the largest anti-virus providers, and has garnered good reviews. It is an excellent choice if you are looking for a free anti-virus program. AOL's free email program, however, is probably not as good as the email program you are already using.

Since my spyware detection encounter, I have also tried the Microsoft *Window's Defender* anti-spyware program and I liked it as well. A year ago I would have scoffed at anyone using more than one or two anti-spyware programs, but perhaps in today's computer environment, it's not overkill to

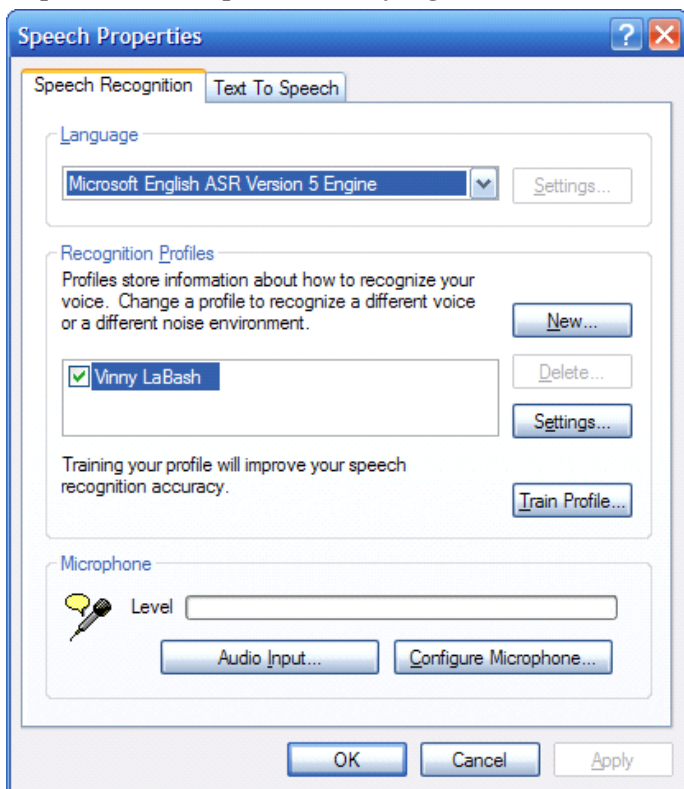
have four anti-spyware programs!

Sandy Berger, The Compu-KISS® Lady...nationally respected computer authority, journalist, media guest, speaker, and author is a seasoned 30-year computer expert. Sandy is a consumer advocate promoting simplicity, ease-of-use, and stability in consumer technology products. She works with hardware and software developers to help them make their products more user-friendly.

Windows XP and Speech Recognition

by Vinny La Bash
Sarasota PCUG, FL

I used to watch Star Trek in envy as the ship's computer "listened" to the crews' instructions and responded with perfect understanding. Speech recognition is not there yet, but why let lack of perfection stop us from trying?



Speech recognition has come a long way since it was first introduced to personal computers. On a basic level speech recognition is the process of converting an acoustic signal, captured by a microphone, and transforming it into words on a document. The procedure is highly technical, but you don't have to understand its inner mysteries to use it any more than you need to know how an automobile is designed in order to drive it.

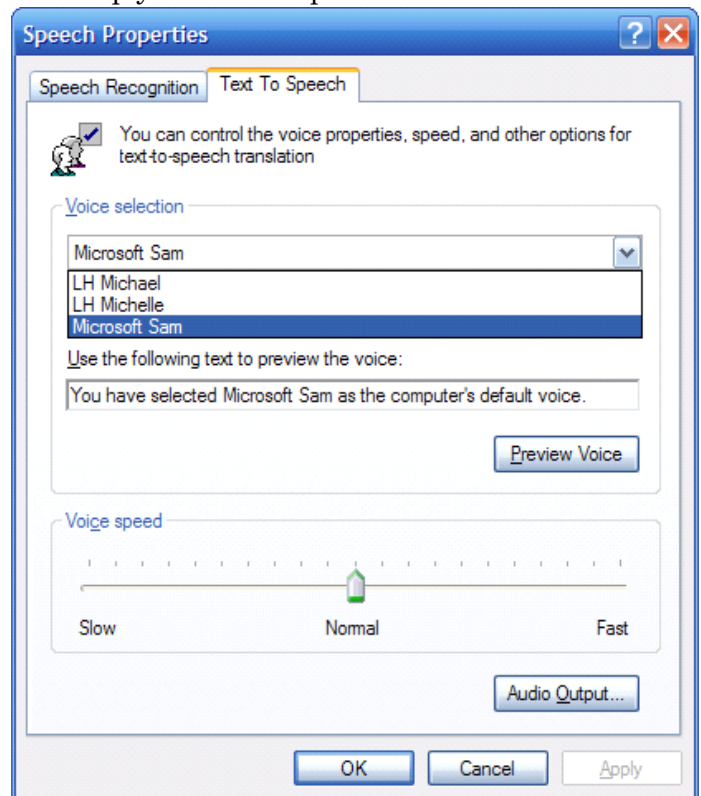
Many of those who have Windows XP installed believe that speech recognition is built into XP. That's because many PC vendors install Microsoft's speech recognition software along with XP as a

convenience to customers. Click on the Start button and go into Control Panel. Locate the Speech icon and open it with your mouse. A dialog box will appear. If it has a Speech Recognition tab, the program is already installed.

If speech recognition is not installed you have several options. You can buy Microsoft Plus! for Windows XP for about \$30. This is the least expensive option. You get some additional goodies with the package for your money, but they're not important to our discussion.

If you have Microsoft Word or Office installed, and you don't have the Speech Recognition tab in the above mentioned dialog box, the program was not installed by default. Fortunately, it's easy to install from Word. From the Tools menu open the Speech option. Choose Yes when you're asked if you want to install the program. You will probably need the installation disk.

You didn't think you were finished, did you? The program needs to be trained like a puppy dog. It won't mess your carpet, and you don't need to take it for a walk, but you do have to show it how to speak appropriately.. The program will assist you with the proper position of your microphone, and it will help you create a profile.



The profile stores your unique speech patterns and any pronunciation quirks you may have. You can use one of three different voices as your default, Michelle, Michael, or Microsoft Sam. They could all

stand some improvement, but I prefer Sam.

All that's left is for you to "train" the program to convert your speech into words on the document. Start the training from the Speech option in the Tools menu. You will be offered a selection of different texts to read, ranging from Bill Gates' book *The Road Ahead* to Edgar Allen Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*. The more text you read, the more accurately the program will convert your speech to text. In time, you can experience an accuracy rate better than 98%.

Get a high quality microphone. A noise-canceling headset can be purchased for less than \$50. Speak naturally, the same way you would speak to another person in a normal conversation. Don't try training the program as if it were a child or an obstinate pet. That produces very poor results and needless frustration.

Even with all the progress in the last decade, speech recognition is still far from perfect. So why bother using it? It's an excellent tool for creating the first draft of a manuscript of any length. Dictation is a lot easier than using the keyboard and mouse to make text entries. If you take the time to learn how to correct errors through the program's editing utility, you will save time, especially if you fall into the camp of lousy typists as most of us do.

Speech control allows many people access to computers who could otherwise not use them through the conventional keyboard and mouse interface. Those who suffer from visual impairments, repetitive strain injuries or other physical limitations have found new opportunities through speech recognition. You may be amazed at what you can accomplish when you unleash the power of your voice.

There is no reason why speech recognition has to be confined to computers. This technology is slowly finding its way into homes, automobiles, factories, and wherever the marketplace dictates.

Speech recognition, like video editing, requires a lot of computer power. Have at least one gigabyte of memory and a 2.0 MHz processor as a bare minimum.

Courtesy of APCUG.



Basics Software with New Computers by Hilton Kaufman

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When a typical consumer buys a computer, some software or programs normally comes with it. Just what is included will vary with price and brand, but usually includes an operating system as a minimum. It is possible to get a custom built machine without any software if this is actually wanted.

I recently bought an HP Media Computer, that I consider an overkill machine, for home use. A lot of software comes with it. There are several separate programs for working with audio-visual files and DVDs, two money management programs, several games, two internet browsers, two office suites plus an extra word processor, a security program, and probably a few other small programs.

In the vast majority of computers delivered today, the operating system that is included is some version of Windows XP. This includes a number of possibly useful programs in a folder or directory called Accessories. For many people, this will be all that is needed to get good use out of a computer.

The manufacturer of the machine very likely included some additional programs. Maybe this brings you up to your required level of software. If you do need more, the included programs may provide deals or better prices on the others that you need. Check out what you have before rushing out to buy more.

Microsoft Windows Media Player should be adequate for playing most music and video files and comes with the operating system. The major competing program, RealPlayer, also seems to have come with the operating system. (I believe there is some sort of legal requirement that it be included.) In addition to playing music, you can also do things like listen to the hourly online BBC news headlines.

I personally do not use either of the money management programs, Microsoft Money and Quicken. I may be a bit paranoid but I do not put personal financial data on a computer that is regularly connected to the Internet. Spyware gets on computers too easily, even with good defenses.

I find several of the games to be fun to play, as well as good to kill time when I don't want to do anything serious. The virtual pinball machine comes complete with arcade noises and has the

same motif as the last real one that I had a chance to play some years ago. Free Cell is a thinker's card game with most deals possible to win. There is also a straight solitaire game that is quite popular among long-time computer users.

Both Internet Explorer and Netscape are included. My Internet service provider seems to prefer to work with Internet Explorer. The default setting that came with my machine was Netscape. Other browsers can be downloaded if wanted.

There is a minimal level word processor, called WordPad, that comes with Windows operating systems. For many computer users, it is perfectly adequate. It will do letters and small plain text documents, such as an article for publication in a computer club newsletter, quite well. There is a choice of font styles and colors. A common starting document, such as a letterhead, can be saved and renamed when used for another document.



Microsoft Works and Office are collections of related software or suites of programs for office purposes, with Office being the one for professional users and large offices. Both have word processors that are more powerful than WordPad. Most home and small business users have no reason to use anything more powerful than Works.

Without getting into a lot of details, I can say that Microsoft Office is a very powerful and versatile office suite. There are increasingly expensive versions available with programs of interest to limited numbers of users. I received a 60-day free demo of the bottom of the line version of Office with my computer. If I upgrade during the trial period, I need only to pay the upgrade price for even the most expensive version.

Some sort of security program came with the program that would be good for a limited time unless I paid a subscription fee. Windows XP also has an adequate firewall for most users. I removed the security program since I am subscribing to an excellent one through my Internet service provider.

While the included programs you get can vary greatly with the brand and price of the machine,

those that come with Windows XP remain constant. You can have a machine built to order with hardly anything in it or fully loaded. The default word processing suite from Dell seems to be a Corel WordPerfect one, but you can order a Microsoft suite for a slightly higher price. An off-the-shelf Media Center machine will routinely come with a lot of stuff.

While each machine is different, you should learn what you already have before adding more programs. You may already have something that will do what you want or will enable you to get a discount on what you want to add.

Hilton Kaufman serves as the technical support person in the procedures writing unit of the Illinois Department of Employment Security. As such, he uses the software provided to him to create forms, convert documents into PDFs, advise members of his unit as to how to use the available software, and similar tasks. For his home computer, he can go all out and get a powerful machine that allows him to do things like playing games and surf the web without getting in trouble. He has prepared a number of articles aimed at novice users on the basics of standard computer programs. 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. Courtesy of APCUG.



From The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando

Computer Users Group

I read about a Florida company (CellAnten-na) that makes some interesting products. One of them is called the CJAM 100 Portable Personal Cellular Jammer that is capable of blocking cellular communications in a relatively small area. I understand it's against the law to jam cellular signals, but this product is only sold to government agencies. Wouldn't it be nice to have such a device activated when you are sitting in a restaurant with people around you talking on their cell phones as though the other party can't hear well? You've probably been there, but maybe I am more unlucky than most in that regard. I can think of a few other situations where that product might be handy. Embedded in the highways might be nice so drivers could concentrate more on their driving than talking with their friends. On the other hand, it wouldn't keep drivers from all the other bad habits we've all seen such as eating, drinking, applying

makeup, reading (I've seen that) and many other things while driving down the road. Check the article in *Information Week* magazine. <<http://www.informationweek.com/showArticle.jhtml;jsessionid=RL5XSD3YKDHTKQSNLRSKHSCJUNN2JVN?articleID=191901845&queryText=IT+Confidential>>

Something else I read about is LifeShirt which was created by VivoMetrics a few years ago and has been tested and researched by various companies for different purposes. It is capable of measuring some 30 biometric readings for people who might be severely ill. It keeps the data on a flash card for whatever use is needed so that vital data for a patient can be tracked. However, I didn't see anything about measuring hormones, but I guess if you were critically ill, that might not register. I think my wife should get me one for our anniversary so she will know my moods. However, at this point in my life, it is doubtful much of anything will affect my heart rate unless the doctor says I will probably stick around for another three months. (until my next appointment) <<http://www.vivometrics.com/>>

Out With The Old, In With The New (And Better)

You all know Dave Whittle. He has presented products at your meetings and entertained you in the process. He has a new and different deal for us and is offering me the first opportunity to spread the word about the special offer on new laptops. I have noticed a trend for some people to even use them for their desktop so perhaps that way you only have to invest in one computer, but a versatile one. Since you all know him, I asked him to tell it in his own words below:

Good news for those of you in the market for laptops. I've arranged for DealsGuy readers and user group members everywhere to get a 6% discount on genuine Thinkpads! Most of us remember them as IBM Think-pads but IBM sold that division to Lenova so now they're called Lenovo Thinkpads, but the engineering, quality and service are still the same. People prefer Thinkpads because they have great human factors (such as elegant design, lightweight, battery life, and durability) and offer such nice features as spill-resistant keyboards, a built-in keyboard light, choice of a Track-point or Touchpad for controlling a mouse, the Active Protection System (which prevents hard disk damage from shock or dropping), dual antenna for better wireless reception, and a variety of great

system software to make life easier, which IBM calls Think Vantage Technologies.

Also, be sure to get the integrated fingerprint reader as well if you care about keeping your laptop data secure. Thinkpads are more reasonable than you might think for the quality you get (prices start at under \$680), especially considering you can get 6% off the web site prices (see below). What's more, the Gartner Group estimates that Thinkpads save you 20% to 30% compared to other brands on the total cost of ownership over the life of the laptop, due to factors such as better testing and easier maintenance, durability, and usability. Here's how to get this special 6% discount on the Thinkpad configuration of your choice. Simply call Lenovo's user group inside sales rep, Isaac Williams, directly for help in configuring your system, or to get answers to your questions. Call 1-877-338-4465, Option 1, Extension 6322. Just tell him the name of your user group and give him the discount code for user groups, which is 42390. Alternatively, for fastest response, you can just go to <www.lenovo.com/products/us/en> and click on Thinkpad notebooks, and then on the Series you'd like to configure. After you choose all of the options you want, click Add to Cart, and then click on e-mail this Page. E-mail it to <dave.whittle@usa.net> and he will quickly forward it on to Isaac, who will contact you to confirm the order, answer questions, and get your payment information. That's all you need to do to save between \$40 and \$210 on your new laptop while ensuring that you get the very best laptop available, customized just for you, and as quickly as possible.

I asked Dave about them being Vista compatible and they are except for perhaps the low priced ones. If you might upgrade to the Vista operating system in the future, ask when ordering. He gave no deadline for the deal, but I wouldn't wait too long for this great saving.

Are You Into Mapping?

ArmCode has released Arm Map Explorer, which recreates all the functionalities of Google Maps while adding new ones like viewing a map with a coordinate grid on it, getting precise coordinates of any location on a map, moving to a needed location based on specified coordinates, and more. This software brings Google Maps to your desktop and lets you find any location on the planet like cities, borders, roads and other cartographic objects and view them as dynamic interactive maps. You can drag such maps so you won't have to click and wait for graphics to reload each time you want

to view adjacent parts of a map. Basically, Arm Map Explorer 1.0 allows you to work with interactive maps in much the same way as you would with a regular street map.

However, Arm Map Explorer 1.0 goes beyond the feature set offered by Google Maps. You can move to a needed location on a map based on the coordinates you specify. Using the object tree, you can easily locate and view capitals of states, large cities, world's landmarks, monuments, international airports and other interesting buildings and locations. You can also save a map as a file or print a map to take it with you on a trip, and use it as a regular paper map. It can, for example, help you study geography, both physical and economic. The program will display a satellite view for any locations such as hydroelectric stations, cities and other large objects. You can zoom the view in and out and pan in any direction.

Arm Map Explorer 1.0 runs under Windows 98/NT/XP/2000/2003 and you can get it without any payment or registration. Additional information on Map Explorer, as well as its installation distributive is available from <http://www.armcode.com>. ArmCode is a software developer that specializes in cartographic software. Along with XMAP, the company is the author of Alien IP and ZIP Pointer. Alien IP locates a computer on a map based on a specified IP address. ZIP Pointer locates a city in North America on a map based on a specified ZIP or postal code. For more information, visit the ArmCode Web site.

Product page: <http://www.armcode.com/map-explorer/index.htm>

Direct download link: <http://www.armcode.com/downloads/map-explorer.exe>

Postal address:

Pacific Business Centre,
Att: ArmCode, #101-1001 W. Broadway,
Suite 381, Vancouver, BC V6H 4E4,
Canada Tel: +1 (206) 338-6423

That's it for this month. Be aware that I have recently posted some new announcements, recently received, on the New Product Announcements Page on my Web site. 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>

Distinguishing Forests from Trees in Search Engine Results

by Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and HCIL Media Fellow
[gabe\(at\)gabegold.com](mailto:gabe(at)gabegold.com)

Some people cherish details without grasping the big picture. They can't see the forest for the trees, always miss the landscape's glory. Searching the Web can feel like this. Search engines cheerfully deliver millions of search result hits without revealing patterns or gaps in the data. Even worse, hardly anyone looks beyond the first screen of search results. Researchers are investigating how organizing search results provides contextual and visual cues that make searches more powerful.

We all know people who cherish tiny details but never quite grasp the big picture. They're figuratively unable to see the forest for the trees, missing the landscape's glory while obsessing over whatever grows in front of their nose.

Sometimes searching the Web feels like this. Google or any favorite search engine can cheerfully deliver a thousand—or two million—search result hits yet not reveal patterns, groupings, or gaps in what it quickly but mindlessly displays. Making things worse, hardly anyone looks at search results beyond the first screen or two; we either settle for one of the first few links, or add search words to prune our results. But this runs two risks.

First, we may miss a key Web site that for some reason isn't highly ranked by our search engine. Not everyone knows that search engines rank results using proprietary criteria; even worse, ranking methods often change without notice, so identical searches days or weeks apart may yield very different results. Second, there's no clue or cue about search result patterns. And the human mind can't grasp a thousand—let alone two million—links to see what they might collectively reveal.

Enter Bill Kules and Ben Shneiderman, respectively Graduate Research Assistant and Computer Science Professor at the University of Maryland. They're investigating how organizing the display of search results provides contextual and visual cues that make searches more powerful.

Their technology, partially supported by an AOL Fellowship in Human-Computer Interaction, is ideal when searchers are unsure of the target or goal. This is a variation on the famous Supreme Court quote: searchers may not know what they're looking for, but they recognize it when they see it.

Results, arranged in meaningful and stable

categories using structures created by Kules' SERVICE program (as opposed to the ad hoc clustering used by some commercial search engines), are shown in a compact listing in the left side navigation bar. Important text (title, snippet, URL) is arranged for efficient scanning and skimming. SERVICE retains benefits of the traditional ranked results list, while adding an overview.

The list allows efficiently scanning and skimming title/snippet/URL—which remains a critical task. The categorized overview adds another perspective on results, showing their distribution across categories. The overview also lets users explore results, narrowing them to a single category or subcategory.

Categorizing results is proving to change peoples' search style. For some searchers, the categorized overview simplified formulating queries. They issued a somewhat broad query and then browsed the appropriate category. Others used the overview to organize exploration of results, first perusing results in the Business category, then Science, Health, etc. Other users only used categories when frustrated by normal searching.

An interesting surprise is that empty categories—which might have been expected to include results—are in fact meaningful in some searches. For more information visit <http://www.cs.umd.edu/hcil/categorized> search.

This article originated on the University of Maryland's Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory Web site, www.cs.umd.edu/hcil/, and is copyrighted by the university. All rights are reserved; it may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use, or by nonprofit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to the university. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail Gabe Goldberg at gabe@gabegold.com when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense. Courtesy of APCUG.

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

It looks like Microsoft has accidentally leaked some details of the price of its next-generation operating system. At least for customers who live in the Great Frozen North.

The Retail Pricing page at Microsoft Canada lets you choose a product name from a dropdown list and see the current pricing. Surprise! It includes a slew of SKUs for Windows Vista. (Update 28-Aug 8 AM PDT: Well, that was fast! The Canadian price list I viewed earlier this morning appears to have been taken down, probably to remove the Vista

SKUs. That makes the information even more interesting. Oh, and be sure to see my note at the end of this post on the pitfalls of using currency conversions to compare prices in different markets.) The following prices are all in Canadian dollars, and for comparison's sake I've included the retail prices of current versions of Windows XP:

FULL versions (all prices Canadian)

Windows Vista Ultimate \$499

Windows XP Professional w/SP2 \$429

Windows Vista Business \$379

Windows Vista Home Premium \$299

Windows Vista Home Basic \$259

Windows XP Home w/SP2 \$259

UPGRADE versions (all prices Canadian)

Windows Vista Ultimate Upgrade \$299

Windows XP Professional w/SP2 Upgrade \$259

Windows Vista Business Upgrade \$249

Windows Vista Home Premium Upgrade \$199

Windows Vista Home Basic Upgrade \$129

Windows XP Home w/SP2 Upgrade \$129

In Canada, at least, the rumors of a "modest" price increase were true, based on this list. Will these same relative prices hold true in the U.S.? Who knows? But if they do, then it's mostly good news for Windows customers. There's no price increase for Home Basic. Home Premium, the Vista version that maps most closely to the OEM-only Windows XP Media Center Edition, will finally be available as a retail product for a slight bump over the Home Basic product, similar to the \$39 premium typically charged by large OEMs for Media Center upgrades. And Vista Business buyers will get a break with a small discount relative to XP Professional.

Based on current U.S. prices, I would expect Windows Vista to sell in the U.S. for the following prices (full/upgrade):

Windows Vista Ultimate \$349/\$199

Windows Vista Business \$269/179

Windows Vista Home Premium \$239/\$139

Windows Vista Home Basic \$199/\$99

Of course, these are guesses only. Some discounts will probably be available in the retail channel. OEM prices will, of course, be significantly lower. And I expect Microsoft to offer some enticing promotions when Windows Vista ships to encourage early adoption.

I notice some folks discussing this issue elsewhere are making a common mistake and simply converting the Canadian prices into U.S. dollars at current exchange rates. The two markets don't work that way. You'll get a much more

accurate picture by doing what I've done here, which is to compare the relative prices of the new Vista versions to current XP versions and then make similar adjustments to the U.S. price list. You can do the same with other countries as well.

Hey, Gizmodo! You really, really, really need to read all the way to the end of the post. The prices you quote are just flat wrong. If converting those prices from CAD to USD is really a valid technique, why doesn't it work for Windows XP? Hmm? I mean, Windows XP Home costs \$259CAD, so us folks down south of the Canadian border must be paying \$232 per copy, right? Oh, wait. The actual retail price is \$199? Like I said, the two markets don't work that way.

Fellow ZDNet blogger Adrian Kingsley-Hughes got this official non-denial denial from a Microsoft spokesperson: "Microsoft inadvertently posted Windows Vista Canadian retail prices on their Web site, and the information has since been removed. There is no new pricing information to share currently but we plan to announce Windows Vista U.S. pricing when we ship Windows Vista RC1, later this quarter." All righty, then.

Joe Wilcox at *Microsoft Monitor* stumbled across Amazon's Windows Vista pre-order prices today. They've been up for nearly two weeks and no one has noticed. But he missed this detail:

eb_vista_price.png

For months, Microsoft has been saying Windows Vista will be ready in January. More recently, a Microsoft product planner let slip that it would be "late January." And January 30 fits that bill.

Here's the price list, as charged by Amazon (full/upgrade):

- Windows Vista Home Basic, \$199/\$99.95
- Windows Vista Home Premium, \$239/\$159
- Windows Vista Business, \$299/\$199
- Windows Vista Ultimate, \$399/\$259

All in all, close to what I wrote above. The Ultimate prices are \$50-60 more than I predicted, and the Business edition is \$20 higher than I thought—exactly the same price as XP Professional. And for some reason the Home Premium version will set you back \$20 more than I thought.

Joe also notes that Amazon has dozens of separate SKUs for Vista "additional licenses." At prices that are ridiculously high, I might add. Microsoft has always had an additional license program, but it's been practically invisible to consumers. I've defended Microsoft's decision to slice and dice Vista into multiple editions, but this is ridiculous. Go ahead, look at Amazon's list and tell

me the average person won't be hopelessly confused. Hell, even people like me who study this stuff every day are confused.

Cheaper, simpler. That's what Microsoft should be doing with Windows. Instead, we get 16 different Vista SKUs at Amazon. Sigh.

USB device can sweep for spyware

Those little things called USB drives that you plug into your computer slots are really becoming useful. Flash memory drives with universal serial bus (USB) connectors have typically served as replacements for floppy drives. But now the small drives are exploiting U3 capability to offer programs as well.

One of them is the XOFTspy Portable anti-spyware product from ParetoLogic. This \$15.95 device can sweep any computer for spyware as soon as you plug it in. The U3-based application is stored on the drive; the user can take it to any computer and plug it into the USB port. The device is aimed at roaming users who work on the go in libraries, Internet cafes or on the machines of friends or family.

The XOFTspy product checks to see if the machine has any spyware, Trojans, devices for stealing passwords, or adware. The product is available at <http://www.software.u3.com>.

Secure your wireless network

If you just set up a wireless network in your home without securing it, you're just asking for trouble. Neighbors or passersby can connect in seconds. Worse, Wi-Fi freeloaders may use your connection for illegal activities.

When the police come knocking, it'll be on your door. Your connection could also be used to send spam. If so, your Internet service provider will likely cut you off.

Then there's the data you transmit over the Internet. It's easy to intercept data on an unsecured network. Free tools let anyone hopping on your network capture every keystroke that you make.

Or, how about the man-in-the-middle attack? This is a complex undertaking. A hacker configures his computer to act as the router. Your computer connects to the hacker's, which connects to the Internet. All your data passes through the hacker's computer.

These are scary scenarios. But you can avoid them by securing your network. Your wireless router probably came with security disabled. So you must set it up. Consult your router's manual to learn how to access its settings.

Most importantly, enable wireless encryption. You must also enable encryption on all computers that connect wirelessly.

There are three flavors of encryption. First, there's WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy), WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access) and WPA2, the second generation of WPA. It is also referred to as 802.11i. Don't confuse that with networking protocols like 802.11a/b/g.

WEP is an early encryption method. It is worthless; an expert can break it in minutes. Countless people still use it, thinking they are secure. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Several years ago, wireless experts recognized WEP's fatal flaws. They started work on a new standard that eventually became WPA2 (802.11i). In the meantime, equipment manufacturers used WPA, a transitional standard. This is similar to WPA2, but uses a less secure form of encryption.

According to the Wi-Fi Alliance, an industry body, WPA has never been broken. However, some security pros say it can be broken. They say the trick is a password of less than 21 characters. So, if you have WPA, err on the side of caution and use a really long password.

WPA2 is the way to go. It uses Advanced Encryption Standard, or AES. This standard is used by the federal government. Given the power of today's computers, it is unbreakable.

That is, assuming you use a good password. Your password should have upper- and lower-case letters, and numbers. Also include symbols, if possible. Do not use a word, your dog's name or other obvious choices. And do not use the default password. Every crook in town knows it.

What do you do with old equipment? You may be able to upgrade WEP products to WPA2. Check the manufacturer's Web site.

If you cannot upgrade, buy new gear. WEP equipment is dangerous. A wireless router should run \$50 or less. Wireless cards are about \$30.

Before you buy equipment, ensure it is certified by the Wi-Fi Alliance. Pay close attention to certification details. They should say specifically that a product has WPA2.

Traditionally, security-conscious people have taken other actions to protect their systems. For instance, they would disable SSID broadcasting. The SSID identifies your network to other computers. So, turning off broadcasting was intended to hide the system. However, this won't work. A knowledgeable intruder will find your network.

Observations about Office 2007

I've been using Word 2007 for about 5 months, now. I use Office all day, and I have a few opinions about the new features that are coming. And in this release, Office has a lot to offer. It has by far more useful changes than previous versions of Office. It helps me get things done faster and create more compelling documents. If you want, try Office 2007 and Word 2007 yourself. Here are some of the pros and cons of what I've found about Word 2007 so far.

Pros

The new user interface: The UI—organized by task—really helps me get work done. The new UI is organized around ribbons—which replace all of the old menus and toolbars. The ribbons include the most commonly-needed commands in task-orientated categories. For example, when you open Word you get commands related to fonts, paragraphs, styles, and editing, because those are the tools people use most often when they start writing. Once you're used to the ribbons (it took me about a day to adjust to them) they make Word and the other Office applications much easier to use. By far, the new UI is the biggest improvement in Word and make the upgrade worth the effort.

Image of Word 2007 user interface

Chart and table tools: The new tools to create and design charts can help you design a professional-looking chart in less than 5 minutes. Gone are the days when it takes a power user to present a well-formatted, easy-to-read table or chart. The image below shows the tools to help design a table, but designing charts is just as easy. The second image is a table I made in about two minutes. What's really great is that the design tools and options are consistent with those in PowerPoint 2007 and Excel 2007. You can paste charts or tables between these programs and use the same tools to update them.

Blogging: That's right—you can blog right from Word 2007. You can use the same Word features that make writing easier and faster, such as spell checker, and then publish to your blog. You can learn more at [Blogging from Word 2007](#).

Ongoing word count: This simple feature really shouldn't excite me that much, but as an editor word count is important to me. In Word 2007, the document's word count shows in the status bar next the page count. This feature can also be helpful for writer and students.

Styles preview: In Word 2007—and throughout other Office 2007 applications—you can preview

styles before making changes to the text. In previous versions, you would have to make the change numerous times if you didn't like the result.

Cons

New file formats: Word 2007 saves documents in the new XML-based .docx format, which isn't compatible with the .doc format used in earlier versions. While you can save your documents so that they will be compatible with earlier versions of Office, I forget to all the time. As a result, my colleagues send back my documents asking me to save them so that it's compatible with their versions. Once more people are running Office 2007, compatibility won't be a problem.

Styles changes: The default styles for things like Heading 1, Heading 2, and Heading 3 have changed from previous versions of Office. It's not a huge thing, but a bit rattling. I'm sure I can adjust. In addition, I couldn't get Word 2007 to use my old styles.

Simply said, a lot of people are going to be happy with Word 2007. (The same can be said about the other Office applications, but I'm more comfortable commenting on Word since I use it more.) Give Office 2007 a try and let me know what you think.

Microsoft wants more Vista testers— Microsoft said on Sept. 14th that it is looking for more people to give Windows Vista a try.

The software maker said that the Release Candidate 1 version offered up earlier this month is now being opened up to consumers who were not already testing the new operating system.

Microsoft is looking for more testers, as it works to iron out the bugs in Vista. After several delays, the company hopes to release Vista to large business customers in November and start selling it broadly in January.

"RC1 represents a significant industry milestone on the road to delivering Windows Vista, and customer participation and feedback are integral parts of the development process," Microsoft said in a statement. "The feedback received thus far from testers has been extremely valuable, and Microsoft expects that by expanding the (customer preview program) with RC1, the Windows Vista team will gather even more worthwhile input."

In all, Microsoft expects to make the latest test version available to about 5 million people.

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

Society News

Planning Meeting Notes

by John McMillan

October 3, 2006

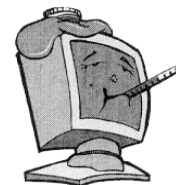
Sally Springett hosted the October planning meeting attended by Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, Mike Lavelle, John McMillan, Dan Rothfuss, Steve Staub, and Tom Thompson.

There was a lengthy discussion of possible meeting places for the regular Society meetings. We have not been as successful getting Library rooms as in other years. The room at Brighton has been scheduled for Library functions through January, and Penfield has election commitments for September and November plus a previously scheduled obligation for October. Webster has a nice room with Internet access but in the past, we have had lower attendance there. The Gates Library room is a little small and the Chili Library is quite a way out while Henrietta has some confining restrictions.

Most Libraries require that the rooms be reserved by a community member so Greece and Irondequoit have not been approached. They may also limit the number of reservations that can be made or the advance notice needed. Other town buildings and City Libraries often require a fee, something our limited treasury could not support. Members of the club are invited to share any thoughts they have with any committee member.

The committee thought that the September meeting site, the Spiegel Center in Pittsford, was adequate though not as spacious as either of the two Libraries. Van King, the September speaker, was good to excellent depending upon individual interests. The October Society meeting has been scheduled for that venue where Emily Carpenter will talk about the Creative aspect of Website Design. Arpad Kovacs will discuss Gifts and Gadgets at the November meeting in time for your Christmas shopping consideration.

The November Monitor is expected to be put together October 14th at St. Stephens Church. The balky stapler continues to be the biggest bottleneck in the assembly process. Steve mentioned that our source of refilled cartridges may be going out of business which will also reduce advertising income.



Program Meeting
Pittsford - Spiegel Center
Tuesday, October 10, 2006
Help's Half Hour

Led by: Emily Carpenter
Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Q: One member is reloading his Windows XP. The Trouble Shooter system is now available. Should I bother?

A: Trouble Shooter is not too beneficial. Try a Google search with the error message.

Q: One member was not able to complete a downloaded install. One message always appears and then the installation stops.

A: The solution was to Google the problem and, sure enough, there was a Microsoft download that cleaned up the programs that were hung, allowing the installation to complete.

A: Another member spoke of his success using the SoundBytes site. A contact helped him through an issue he was having.

Q: Is there a voice recognition program that comes with XP?

A: The regular install should have included it. Check through the control panel or under accessories.

Q: Can I install XP over XP again?

A: Theoretically, yes. Be sure to back up your system first. It should then only overwrite files that are needed. Insert the disk and follow the prompts. You may want to run a system verification, too. It will prompt you to install the disk if it finds a contaminated file.

Q: Lightroom is an Adobe beta program for photo work. It allows a raw conversion and you can also manipulate the colors. It has an interface that is quite different. It can work in 16 bit. It is free and it will be good until the program is finally sold.

A: Should we download beta programs? Avoid it if you do not know the vendor. There could be problems with a company that you do not know and trust.

Q: I was using Elements 4. Is there a formula that is stored so that you can tell what you just did that you like?

A: Yes, go into palettes and go into history. It will tell you what you did.

Q: Has anyone successfully set up a remote connection between the desktop and their laptop? XP Pro is supposed to allow this to happen. He is unable to pass control.

A: PC Anywhere may allow that. Try Google again

and perhaps there is a clue there. Perhaps it is the firewall. You may want to try the SoundBytes site. SmartComputing also has an 800 number.

Q: One member has been trying Opera as a web browser. It is a good little browser. Firefox has good web designer tools. Opera allows you to pre-view. You can also restore something from the trash.

Q: Is there a way to open all of your attached photos so that you do not have to open each one individually?

A: File => Save attachments will allow you to then save them to your drive. You can then view the set using a slide show.

Q: One member opened a DVD that was supposed to be usable on a TV or a computer. It would not run, stating that it needed a decoder that cost \$15.

A: It was suggested that he go to TwoCows. There may be others that will come up with a Google search. A brief demonstration of the Elements undo history function was shown.

Q: When I turn on my desktop, I get a clanking sound. Is this a fan problem?

A: Sometimes hard drives get in a vibration mode. It is best to be sure to back up all of your files. The fan may go, as it is about five years old. You could take the case off and listen as it boots.

Program Meeting Notes

by John McMillan

Emily Carpenter, our speaker for the evening, stepped forward when Steve asked for someone to act as Half Hour Leader. In the short business meeting, Steve mentioned that the planning group is wrestling with the problem of meeting locations. The Brighton Library is not available until after January and many of the libraries are committed as election spots in November. We do not yet have a meeting site for November so watch for an e-mail as we get closer to that date. If you know of a cost free site, either permanent or short term, please pass the information to an officer or a member of the committee. Steve again stressed the need for keeping your home and e-mail addresses current to be sure of receiving the Monitor and special notices to members.

Bob Avery introduced Emily Carpenter who operates her own business as a Website /Logo designer. Emily distributed a CD containing Blink.zip, bluevoda.exe, colorpix.exe, cutef~22.exe, fastf24~.exe, formst~8.exe, photo~10.exe, readme.htm, setup~26.exe, style~14.exe, zipge~16.exe, zooms~28.exe.

These are samples of the types of the software that she uses in her business. Descriptions of many of them plus several others are contained in the readme. htm file that also contains cost data and free to try indicators. Even though her job involves a broad technical side, that was not emphasized in her topic The Creative Aspect of Website design.

Her work begins with an initial interview to gather information about the clients desires, intent, and ideas. This is a non technical interview searching for things that are unique or that set the business apart, while assessing the character of the client. She probes color preferences, logo existence and an overview of the anticipated content. Possible pictures that may be needed are listed including those the client must supply.

Away from the interview she maps out a site considering a general format; how many pages are likely to be needed; and the degree of complexity or design time. Then a proposal and cost estimate are prepared based on the number of hours of labor involved to complete the project. Emily mentioned that effective sites contain pictures or clip art but care must be exercised to control the size because slow loading turns surfers off. Although she uses flash components (small movies, animations or sound bytes), complete flash sites may be counter productive for small companies.

She has been able to find ways to do over 95% of the work involved in site design with the remainder of the technical work subcontracted. Fast Fonts can display sample text in over a 1000 fonts that are on her computer. Scrolling the display will show ones that emphasize points, however too many variations can be distracting. Similarly images can be over or under used. They should be optimized to the site and its purposes. Clipart.com is a service that costs \$169 a year for unrestricted downloads of a wide variety of clip art, photos, and photo objects. Yodo Photo and Flickr are other photo sites. Manipulation tools for resizing, cropping or otherwise modifying pictures are available in Irfanview (free) and many other image editors that can be found by Googling.

Actual layout design usually starts after the images have been collected. Using templates saves much hard coding and some free templates from OSWD. org are better than purchased ones. Templates can be saved for reuse in another project where switching the content creates a different appearance. Style sheets are another way of reducing the time required for development and changes by incorporating a single coding that

applies to many elements. Thus if a change is necessary it only needs to be made in the master element and all pages will be updated. Emily said that if the client has no suggestions, site colors should complement the Logo.

She mentioned some of the psychology of colors without dwelling on the subject. She then discussed forms for connecting to the clients customers. There are programs that help you build pages with contact information and tables to collect names, addresses or e-mail locations, phone numbers etc. to facilitate bidirectional communication while limiting accessibility to spammers. They provide for verification that essential data is included and that it follows general forms for that type of data. It can also trigger automated responses to let the potential customer know that his input was received. They may also sort the responses by several destinations so it is not necessary to have someone read the response and forward it to the correct department or individual. This is much faster than the hard coding required to get the same effect.

Emily mentioned some of the factors that improve a sites search engine rating, for example repeated content in titles, headers and body; the use of key words; using bold, italics or underlined text for emphasis; and bulleted lists. Cross links are also beneficial but she mentioned that some links are phoney, particularly in e-mails.

Hovering the cursor over an embedded web address will pop up the actual address for verification purposes. Some of the problems she has run into are getting customers to realize the value of well designed web pages and getting prompt payment for services rendered. She has had to institute a policy of 50% up front with the balance due 30 days from final delivery. This is intended to minimize foot dragging on the submission of essential data by the client. In addition to the supporting slides, Emily often reverted to websites to display actual examples of code that accomplished a particular objective or to show the final effect of some creative design effects. All in all a thorough presentation that was well received.

The Lighter Side

The first use of e-mail was in 1971. It had been developed by Ray Tomlinson (b 1941). The first e-mail message was "qwertyuiop" (the letters on the top line of a keyboard), and Tomlinson chose the @ symbol to denote which user was "at" which computer. Asked why he had invented e-mail when there was no known demand for it, Tomlinson

replied, "Because it seemed like a neat idea."



Customer: "What does the 48x mean on this cdrom drive?"

Salesman: "Well, ma'am, you know how you read the page of a book one time, and if you really want to understand it deeply, you may read it twice? Well, the cdrom drive reads the CD over and over however many times the the number is before the X. In this case it's 48."

Customer: "Sir? Why would a computer have to read something 48 times to understand it? I certainly don't think I'd want a PC that dumb."



Hate rewinding DVDs manually after watching them? This DVD re-winder will relieve your tired hands. Just snap the disc on top, press the button and watch in wonder as your disc spins up thanks to the "Centriptal Velocity Spindle." Show this to your less-technical friends and sit back and enjoy the show. Batteries not included. It's online for \$16.99.

