

# MONITOR

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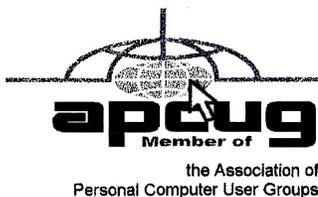
## Next Meeting

February 2007

February 13 Brighton Library  
Video Editing

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## Crash! Windows Will Not Come Up!

This could be *you*

by Irene Ganas

*Chicago Computer Society*

**M**y HP desktop Pavilion 770c from 2002 suddenly crashed. The screen came up black with the following white text: “Windows could not start because the following file is missing or corrupt: “Windows root>\system32\hal.dll Please re-install a copy of the above file.”

My computer with its two 120GB internally-installed hard drives is still dead or, more descriptively, a vegetable on life support.

We continually discuss “How to Backup Your Computer” at our meetings, in *Hard-Copy* and on Yahoo! eGroups. It always looks so easy to do a “One Touch Backup.” But, I have always wondered, and I have heard many others of you similarly wonder, whether the backup that we made is good and will work.

I religiously make backups and use Drive Image v2i Protector from PowerQuest, now Symantec. My Drive Image backup looked like it was good and I know it worked because I could read the data on the DVDs on another computer.

Using my Sony notebook to access the Internet, I looked up that missing file and a solution to the problem.

All the directions I received told me to “Insert and boot from your Windows XP CD.” I need that Windows XP CD. I do not want to restore the computer to its as purchased condition that the HP recovery set accomplishes. I want to replace that one file. I need to boot from the Windows XP CD to install another copy of the hal.dll file to fix the problem.

HP refuses to supply the Windows XP Home Edition CD and Microsoft, for all its “authentication” and “genuine Windows” gibberish, backs them up. Microsoft lets them get away with not giving us the “genuine Windows XP CD” it advertises that we should be sure we are getting when we buy a computer with the operating system installed.

I have only a set of HP Recovery CDs that begins by reformatting the drive wiping out all the added drivers, updates, authentications, and authorizations for programs from Microsoft, Adobe *Photoshop CS2*, Intuit, etc., that took forever to obtain via dialup Internet. I just want to replace one teeny file not wipe out my whole drive and start anew with a fresh computer as it was purchased.

My *Drive Image v2i Protector* 120 GB C:drive backup totaling 76GB used was made and copied by the Drive Image backup program to the second internal 120GB drive in 3900 MB blocks so that I could burn them to DVD disks. I have 19 DVDs Drive Image backup and the Power Quest Recovery Environment CD from which to boot.

All would have been well and the computer fixed in 15 minutes if the second hard drive had been large enough to accommodate at least one more 76 GB backup. But, alas, that second backup would require 152 GB and the backup drive is only 120 GB.

(*Important.* my first mistake was buying a backup drive the same size as the C drive) I spent 4 days copying the backup images to DVDs so that I could remove the 76 GB backup from the internal second backup hard drive to make a current backup. After checking the DVDs, I deleted the image to make room for the new backup. With Murphy at work, that is when the computer crashed.

So, I have *all my data* and it is readable from those DVDs on my Sony notebook. I just need to get Windows XP going again on the HP desktop by getting the missing hal.dll file into the system 32 folder of Windows.

Here is how I tried to solve the problem.

Since Windows is set by default to boot first from the Floppy A drive and then the C:drive, I had to change the boot order to be able to boot from the boot CD in the DVD drive. I needed to boot from the DVD drive because the backups were on DVDs.

After booting the HP desktop and pressing F11 to get into the SETUP, I changed the boot order (by using up and down arrows to highlight the drive and moving it up by clicking + and - buttons) to reorder the drives from the original:

1. floppy A;
2. C drive;
3. CD-ROM drive; and,
4. Int Network

To:

5. Int Network (which I used to get the DVD drive to boot by inserting the PQRE boot disk in this drive instead of the CD-ROM drive as the backups are on DVDs;
6. C drive;
7. CD-ROM drive; and,
8. Floppy A.

Booting from the DVD drive (the computer now calls it the G drive) worked and I selected the System Recovery option from the PQRE. It asked me to locate the Image folder and file name.

I had to take the PQRE CD out of the DVD drive to insert the first of the 19 backup DVDs. Look in: My Computer, CD Drive (G:) where the backup DVD was inserted. That was confusing because the computer called it a “CD Drive (G)” even though it is a DVD drive. I needed that drive instead of the CD-ROM drive (D) because the backups are on DVDs.

I got the error message:

“Disk is not formatted “

Windows cannot read from this disk. The disk might be corrupted, or it could be using a format that is not compatible with Windows.

The disk is definitely not corrupted and it is compatible with Windows in my Sony notebook. I can read it well.

That attempt at fixing the problem did not work!

Must take another tack and try new ideas. Next three ideas to try are:

1. Again change boot order to CD-ROM to run the PQRE boot CD, then DVD drive to feed in the backup image on the 19 DVDs, then C drive so Windows will start next, then Floppy A drive and *hope that it works!* Or,
2. Buy a Windows XP CD for \$95 + tax to run to get the missing or corrupted file, hal.dll, replaced in the <Windows root>\system32\ folder so that Windows will work again and I can run the backup DVDs and *hope that it works!* Or,
3. Buy a removable USB hard drive enclosure for \$39 + tax + \$8 shipping. Remove all the wires from the desktop, unscrew the computer case, open the case, disconnect the cable and remove the second 120 GB hard drive and plug it into the removable USB enclosure. Attach that enclosure as a removable USB hard drive to the Sony notebook, feed in the 19 Drive Image backup DVDs and copy them to the 120 GB removable USB drive. Safely remove the USB hard drive from the notebook, open the enclosure and unplug the hard drive (because without the hal.dll you can't use USB on the desktop), reinstall the 120GB backup hard drive into the HP desktop in its former place as backup drive, reassemble the desktop case and replace the screws, plug in the monitor, keyboard, mouse and all the other wires again. Turn on the computer with the PQRE CD in the drive and boot. Run the System Recovery and locate the Drive Image backup that has now been copied back to the second drive where it had been originally. Now that you have played the game, “plug-n-pray,” you can now *hope that it works!*

Of course, even if it works, solution #2 would require a change to a larger backup hard drive or you are right back in the same situation of having too small a backup drive to be able to put the recommended child, father and grandfather set of three backups to rotate saved backups in the future.

Fixing that problem requires all that rigmarole *again!* Remove all the wires from the desktop, unscrew the computer case, open the case, disconnect the cable, remove the second 120 GB hard drive, and plug it into the removable USB enclosure. Buy a 120GB x 3 = 360 GB or larger hard drive for about \$300 including tax. Put that drive into the desktop for the second backup drive. While you have the case open, you may as well install that USB 2.0 plug (this four year old desktop has the slow USB 1.0) so that the USB 2.0 peripherals will run at the speed for which they were designed. Reassemble the desktop case and replace the screws, plug in the monitor, keyboard, mouse and all the other wires again.

May I remind you, I am still *hoping* that it will *run* when it is turned back on again? God bless its little heart!

A review of all that work gave me a fourth idea that would solve all my problems, be less work and would stand me in good stead for future recovery after a crash that will probably never come again.

Idea #4 is: Get a new computer with a second hard drive installed that is at least three times the size of the C: drive! *That should work!*

Why spend all that time and money and on a four year old computer? (Because I was hoping to hold out until Vista arrives in 2007, that's why.) Run the HP recovery set on the old desktop and relegate it to making labels and printing cards. Maybe it would work for a main computer to attach to a wireless router if cable Internet ever becomes available in my out-in-the-country, forested neighborhood. The cable company is getting closer and may, at last, be here. Ah, the possibilities never end!

### The Moral of the Story

Get that second internal hard drive at least three times larger than your main C: drive, back up an image of your drive every few months until you have three backup images. *Have more than one backup image and don't erase more than one at a time!*

*Courtesy APCUG.*

# Many Things You Think Are Safe Really Aren't

by Bob de Violini

*Channel Islands PC Users Group, CA*

It's not too often I come across something that's a really good read, but I just have. It's an article on the Dark Reading Web site, a site that deals with computer security and is mostly aimed at those who deal with computer security and computer network security for a living. It's quite lengthy by many standards, but it's worth it. The article deals with "myth busting" or spelling out behaviors that many computer end users at work believe is still "safe" (meaning that they don't think they'll hurt the computer network at work) or that they won't get caught at. Point is, someone is still watching, you just will never know when. The title of the article is "The Ten Most Dangerous Things Users Do Online," and can be had at the following URL: [http://www.darkreading.com/document.asp?doc\\_id=107771&print=true](http://www.darkreading.com/document.asp?doc_id=107771&print=true).

The link will take you to a page with no ads or anything else on the page. It just has the text of the whole article, so you don't have to look at any potentially annoying ads or anything else on the page. You can even print it out and it will probably look pretty good. Some of the terms can be somewhat technical, but that's what we're here for is to answer any questions you may have and to help you have a more enjoyable computing experience, be it online or offline while working on a file or document. If you do have any questions, feel free to send me a note at the email address that appears at the beginning of this article. Bear in mind that the article spells out what users are doing mostly at work or at home with a laptop from their employer, and not from home on their own computers. How many habits that you have right now or may have had in the past are on that list?

To quote Monty Python, "And now, for something completely different..." and I do mean different. There's a Trojan horse type of malware circulating out there that takes the strange step of scanning your system for other malware by installing an anti virus engine. Then, once your system's been cleaned, it then infects your machine with its own code! The Trojan uses an illegal copy of an antivirus application from Kasperky Labs to the scrubbing before it infects your system. The illegal scanner checks your system and deletes anything found after you reboot your system. That's when you get infected with this new Trojan, which goes by the name of SpamThru Trojan. Although there have been other pieces of malware that have blocked the execution of certain competing pieces of malware, this new procedure changes the whole picture. While I'd normally think of a free scan of my system to remove malware or viruses, this is the kind of favor that nobody needs. By now, most of the anti-malware scanners have had their signatures updated to catch this little bug, of go out and update your anti-malware product's definitions, or signatures, if you haven't done so in the last week. This Trojan also uses more sophisticated ways of keeping itself updated and running than others have, but the techniques are beyond the scope of this column.

Now, from the "What's New is Old" department, we have reports of Internet Explorer 7, which was just released on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, having a new vulnerability that's actually a holdover from the first early days of IE6. There has been banter back and forth within the computer security community about whether or not it's new and whether or not Microsoft will even fix it. Apparently, Microsoft's been saying that the flaw isn't with the browser, but with it's companion piece of software, Outlook Express. The vulnerability remains unpatched to this day. There's also another bug with IE7 that was also present in IE6 when it was first released in June 2004. At that time, Microsoft said to disable the "Navigate sub frames across different domains" setting in the browser, which would avoid the vulnerability. However IE7 comes with that setting disabled and it is still vulnerable to the bug. At this writing, IE7 is available on the Windows Update site as a High Priority download, and will also be available via the Automatic Updates feature in Windows XP and Windows 2000. Because of the uproar over this vulnerability, I'd suggest avoiding the new browser for a while until Microsoft patches the vulnerability or they release a workaround that actually works. You can set the Automatic Updates feature to just notify you of the updates that are available but not download them, or you can set it to tell you about the downloads and download them for you but not install them. Either of these options will work for avoiding the installation of IE7 for now.

Now for some news from the SANS Institute about some scams and other bugs that have been making the rounds, especially one that infected iPods in Japan. If they were infected in Japan, there's no telling

when it will happen on this side of the Pacific. Apple has taken steps to eradicate the bug, but it's still worth noting. Ok, here we go:

QQpass spyware (Trojan variant)

As many as 100,000 Flash MP3 players, given away as prizes by McDonald's in Japan, were found to be infected with a variant of the QQpass spyware Trojan horse program. The players were preloaded with ten songs and the malware. McDonald's Japan has apologized, established a helpline to facilitate the recall of the infected MP3 players, and posted directions for cleaning infected PCs. More information can be had at the following link:

[http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/10/16/mcd\\_spyware\\_mp3\\_recall/print.html](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/10/16/mcd_spyware_mp3_recall/print.html)

Here is a scam that can potentially snag a lot of folks out of the "fear factor" it implements:

### FBI Imprimatur Added to Phishing Scams

Fraudulent phishing e-mails claiming to be from Richard Mueller III, FBI Director, and Donna M. Uzzell, FBI Compact Council Chairman, offer recipients big bucks and threaten big penalties if you don't cooperate.

More information: [http://www.emergency\\_email.org/newsemergency/anmviewer.asp?a=155&z=1](http://www.emergency_email.org/newsemergency/anmviewer.asp?a=155&z=1)

This next bit was just too good to not pass along in the *The Outer Edge* (CIPCUG award-winning newsletter). It explains a term that's being used more and more these days with regards to computer security and the vulnerabilities that are being discovered:

### Security Question of the Month:

#### What is a Zero-Day Exploit?

A zero-day exploit (attack) is one that takes advantage of a security vulnerability before or on the day that the existence of the vulnerability becomes widely known. Three or four years ago, hackers needed 7-14 days to figure out how to use a newly discovered vulnerability in order to launch an exploit. That lead time allowed hardware manufacturers and software developers to notify their customers, recommend ways to cope with it, and distribute software patches and anti-virus updates.

But there are more hackers, and they're getting better at what they do. So, how do you defend your computer when you have 0 days to prepare? You can. But if you keep your computer security software up-to-date, you'll help decrease your overall risk and increase the chances that a patch or update will reach your computer ahead of an exploit.

The above pieces were taken from the November issue of *OUCH!* a computer end user newsletter put out by the SANS Institute via email. More information and previous editions, as well as this month's can be had at the following link:

<https://www.sans.org/newsletters/#ouch>

Well, that's all for this month. Stay safe out on the Web, and remember to keep your anti virus and anti malware programs fully updated at all times to help prevent future infections from affecting you.

*Courtesy APCUG).*

## Dufferdom

### Kingdom of the Ordinary User by David D. Uffer

*Chicago Computer Society*

**H**ello folks. I'm Dave Uffer, retired in good order from the world of education, where I was a cog in a wheel that barely notices losing cogs. Now I can do more of what I like to do. One of those things is messing about with a PC. I use it for learning, getting and passing information, for communication, and just a bit for entertainment. I make no claims as any kind of expert. I'm an ordinary user with some experiences and views that may be of interest to others. I try to share them from time to time.

#### Word Processors

Over the years I have used plain text and PROFS for messaging, then for more word-age, composition, and records *Word Perfect*, *WordStar*, *DisplayWrite*, *MultiMate*, *MS Word*, and *Ami Pro*. They are not for the simple minded, but some are easier than others. Some are more challenging and useful. Some walk alongside you as you learn and grow along with you in subsequent versions. That's the way I feel about *WordPerfect*, a friend and companion of many years, capable and patient with many features I've yet to explore. It is now in its 13<sup>th</sup> major (numbered) version. All versions are compatible, just one of the ways in

which it has served me better than has been my experience with its major competitor, without “Perfect” in its name.

### **Of Mice, People, and Paranoia**

The “mouse” pointing device was an early convenience, a means to change the point of attention more easily than by tedious scrolling with the underline cursor. It came into its own with the graphical user interface and gained more adherents. People were tickled by its usability and found it to be fun. The basic design was ingenious and stable, needing only occasional cleaning of little specks of crust from the clever rollers. It has been so for about 10 years, or into the last century as we old-timers might say. Some variants were developed with more or different button configurations, differing means of locomotion or connection. I can recall a pleasant 3-button Logitech mouse of great convenience for a CAD program of the era.

Then, less than a year ago, there seemed to me to be some strange movements. I joked that it was mousey wanderlust, hoping it would subside before the allusion grew stale. Nope. My mouse and its inexpensive replacements worked initially but were similarly afflicted with abrupt sideways movements much greater than the occasional prior small ones. Ultimately, I bought a \$15 new mouse. A Microsoft mouse prominently described on the box as their Basic Mouse, all I’d need or want. Wrong, it worked fine on basic ops. But I learned there or nearby of their fancier mice. Smoother movement, optical not mechanical drive, sideways scrolling, easily invoked magnification. Interesting; why should I continue to deprive myself?

So I got a new and better one with the soothing, elevating name of Optical Comfort Mouse 3000 for \$30. Worked fine and still does. What had developed was that I had a need, tried other cheaper mice, then bought first one then two Microsoft mice. Clever marketing. Then the steadfast and reliable mouse on our other PC began worsening in a different, recent reluctant movement behavior, unheard of heretofore. Not fixable by any means known to me, it dragged and stalled. Of course I knew one likely solution, a new MS mouse. Fortunately, I got the last of the same model as above. They were being replaced by new and still fancier series from MS, cordless, laser connected.

Wait a minute. What’s happening here and why? And how? Faithful devices developing two kinds of corrupting condition in two time periods following a series of free Windows upgrades. How could that be? Super clever marketing? Sneaky sci fi? Evil enterprise? Hard to believe. Still, I wonder and suggest you be aware of this experience. You might let me know if it happens to you. <daviduffer (at) sbcglobal.net>

### **A Touch of Terminology**

It turns out that what most of us like to call simply “computer programs” have a useful division into “applications” and “utilities.” Applications are what we use to do specific things. Utilities are a sort of set of servants to enable the applications to do their things. They work together smoothly. Usually.

### **License Agreements**

One of the entertainments in loading a new program into your computer is the license agreement. I know, or know of, a few users who still read them. Reading them is an optional chore, like reading the small print on a product with big print claims you’ve decided to trust. A similar pleasure is half-listening on radio or TV to the rapid but required counter-claim cautions following the opening proclamations of better health now available to the user. Marketers of more general new conveniences or higher glories seem less bound by law or conscience and low ball or ignore the cautions.

Not so the makers of software. License agreements are a signal that the producer of the product is sincere. And worried. Worried enough to hire lawyers to make up and repair fences to protect them from other lawyers looking for holes. Reminds one of why there are so many lawyer jokes abroad in the land. But fewer than there are lawyers.

Some of them work for the makers of software, composing their proofs of sincerity, walling off their anxiety. One of the best agreement statements I’ve seen was while installing a pretty good application. At least 3, maybe 4 steady screens of legalese. [Mild compared to Buy.com’s 13 screens.] You’ve gotta laugh out loud at that. Another one had a 4-line-deep viewing slit for the agreement. The user was expected to scroll through all the conditions and speculations. Or maybe not. Maybe that was just a candid admission that the makers knew they needn’t use up screen space with trivia.

Of course that's essential trivia, since it's a required hurdle. You can pay the money but not use your purchase if you object to their narratives of what might possibly go wrong—for them. You can buy their software but you can't use it until you lie a little, let them off the hook in case anything goes wrong in any way that alerts a legal mind to potential loss or profit (depending which side in a dispute). Correction above, *rent* their software, since as I understand it, the maker retains ownership. The user buys access and may use it any way he wants unless he can't be cool and somehow displeases the maker.

*Dave Uffer, originating in Colorado, has been an Illinois resident most of his adult life, so far, preferring to live in or near Chicago. He is a member of some standing and longevity and has at-tended meetings scattered around North Shore, West Suburban, and Downtown. Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Common Computer Problems and How to Fix Them

by Bob Rankin  
editor, *Toolbus*

### Slow Computer?

I have a theory that sludge builds up inside a computer over time, much like an automobile engine. After a while, it doesn't start up like when it was new, it stalls unexpectedly, and performance is sluggish. Here's my special recipe to clean that icky goo out of your computer's pipes, so Windows will start quicker, run more reliably, and go faster on the information superhighway... [http://askbobrankin.com/make\\_windows\\_xp\\_run\\_faster.html](http://askbobrankin.com/make_windows_xp_run_faster.html)

### Which Anti-virus or Anti-Spyware?

I hear from some readers who run 2 or 3 anti-virus programs, and half a dozen anti-spyware tools. Personally, I think that's overkill. Feuding "anti's" can cause system lockups, and slow down your computer. Here's my personal arsenal of free software to fight viruses, spyware and popups... [http://askbobrankin.com/antivirus\\_antispyware.html](http://askbobrankin.com/antivirus_antispyware.html)

### System Restore

Wouldn't it be nice if you could go back to a point in time when your computer was working? Think of System Restore as the Undo command for Windows. Learn how to turn back the clock on your blunder or computer emergency... [http://askbobrankin.com/system\\_restore.html](http://askbobrankin.com/system_restore.html)

### Recovery Console

Sometimes viruses, spyware or random cosmic rays will attack your computer, leaving you unable to even start Windows. In many cases, the Windows XP Recovery Console can help you fix the problem. [http://askbobrankin.com/recovery\\_console.html](http://askbobrankin.com/recovery_console.html)

### Remote Assistance

This free tool built into Windows lets your geeky friends interact with your computer just like they were sitting in front of it, even if they're half a world away. You see everything they're doing, so you can learn how to fix the problem yourself next time. [http://askbobrankin.com/remote\\_assistance.html](http://askbobrankin.com/remote_assistance.html)

### Sharing a Printer

If you have two PC's but only one printer, you can share the printer so both can print to it. And you don't have to be a computer guru to make it happen. Here's how... [http://askbobrankin.com/sharing\\_a\\_printer.html](http://askbobrankin.com/sharing_a_printer.html)

### Low Virtual Memory

If you get a message saying 'Your system is low on virtual memory' you probably need to install more RAM. But there are some other things you should check first... [http://askbobrankin.com/low\\_virtual\\_memory.html](http://askbobrankin.com/low_virtual_memory.html)

### Fix Master Boot Record

"I was trying to fix a spyware problem and it seems I messed up my computer. Now when I start Windows XP I get the 'MBR Corrupt' and 'Error loading operating system' messages." Here's how to fix a computer that won't boot up... [http://askbobrankin.com/fix\\_mbr.html](http://askbobrankin.com/fix_mbr.html)

### Do You Need a Registry Cleaner?

If your computer keeps getting slower and slower, you might need to clean your registry. Here's the scoop on the Windows Registry and how to keep it tidy: [http://askbobrankin.com/do\\_i\\_need\\_a\\_registry\\_cleaner.html](http://askbobrankin.com/do_i_need_a_registry_cleaner.html)

### **Do You Need a Firewall?**

Perhaps you've heard conflicting reports on whether or not you should be using a firewall. Some people say you **MUST** have a firewall if you have a highspeed DSL or cable connection. Here's the scoop on WHO needs a firewall, WHAT they do, and WHY you might be wasting your money on firewall software. [http://askbobrankin.com/do\\_i\\_need\\_a\\_firewall.html](http://askbobrankin.com/do_i_need_a_firewall.html)

### **Wireless Security**

Since wireless networks are easy to set up, some people don't realize they are offering free Internet to anyone driving by with a laptop. Most people wouldn't want to allow their home network to be shared by strangers or used for illegal activity. Here's how to keep it from happening... [http://askbobrankin.com/wireless\\_security.html](http://askbobrankin.com/wireless_security.html)

### **Computer Restarts Itself**

Does your Windows XP computer often re-start itself for no apparent reason? It could be overheating, bad RAM, a software glitch, or spyware. Here's how to identify and solve the automatic restart problem... [http://askbobrankin.com/computer\\_restarts\\_itself.html](http://askbobrankin.com/computer_restarts_itself.html)

### **Installing a New Hard Drive**

If you're running low on hard drive space, a new drive at today's low storage prices is a good idea. But should you a SATA, IDE, external or portable drive? And how big is big enough? Here are some tips on selecting & installing a drive, and help copying the files from your old drive. [http://askbobrankin.com/add\\_a\\_second\\_hard\\_drive.html](http://askbobrankin.com/add_a_second_hard_drive.html)

### **Cdrom or Dvd Icons Are Gone**

If your CDROM and/or DVD icons are suddenly missing, it's possible that evil gnomes have snuck into your computer and stolen the drive. But more likely, it's a software problem that's pretty easy to fix... [http://askbobrankin.com/cdrom\\_icon\\_missing.html](http://askbobrankin.com/cdrom_icon_missing.html)

## *Computer Privacy Annoyances*

### *How to Avoid the Most Annoying Invasions of Your Personal and Online Privacy*

by Dan Tynan

Reviewed by Bayle Emlein, Secretary and APCUG Representative, PC Community, CA

**D**an Tynan starts off with a couple of personal revelations, such as how he got to be writing this book and how much of himself he'll share. He also notes his discovery that "...privacy is, well, personal. Everyone has an individual definition of what's an acceptable level of privacy and when that limit has been exceeded." For example, his wife loves receiving the catalog offers that he loathes. As a result, he reports a variety of ways to address most privacy annoyances and potential problems.

Though just this side of full-blown paranoia most of the time, Tynan does distinguish levels of vulnerability and sensible precaution. Is it clear that your online banking needs better password protection and encryption than your records of your kids' Little League schedules? He didn't say it out loud, but his cautions frequently reminded me that way back when a computer took up a good-sized storeroom and needed a dedicated air conditioning system, we had a saying: "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you." But now the ageist cry has turned around to "Never trust anyone under 30."

*Annoyances* has explanations replete with screen shots. Unfortunately, a lot of the screen shots are too small to be completely readable. This might be OK for a graphic whose purpose is to give a general idea of the configuration of the desktop at a given point. However it's a major annoyance when an essential detail is obscured in the screen shot. Exactly which one is the radio button I'm supposed to pick in order to make my life safe and secure without limiting my freedom or spending all my waking hours covering my tracks? And what are you hiding in that black-on-gray fine print? Something else I'd like to see in the next edition are page references when another section is discussed. In this edition, Tynan rarely tells me where to look

when he refers to a Table, Chart, Figure, Tip, or Sidebar. Is it coming right up? Is it two pages back, or in the last chapter?

Given the publishing cycle, a book on any technology topic has to be out of date by the time Amazon gets it. However, this nearly-three-year-old edition of *Annoyances* agrees surprisingly well with the October 2006 issue of *Consumer Reports* (pp. 41-45).

Of course, Tynan goes into much greater detail. He includes phone numbers and internet addresses for following up, checking for various potential problems and security leaks and for plugging them where possible. He subdivides privacy concerns into the areas of life where they occur: at home, at work, on the Net, in public, with governments mostly Federal, though he has some discussion of interesting state variability in managing citizen privacy and security. Moving the data in all these areas to computer databases has enabled access by almost anyone; the ease with which databases can be combined means that information that formerly sat in isolated dusty drawers and files can now be linked and massaged to easily relieve the typical citizen of her rights, reputation, and/or cash. The "Privacy in the Future" section discusses implications of current trends, precautions that could be taken to prevent further erosion of privacy and to limit unauthorized access and potentially harmful use of one's data.

This could be an intense, dense technical tome. Instead, varying from straight exposition to sidebar to tip and including many tables and charts helps make it comprehensible. Tynan's conversational style adds to the readability, though a couple of times, his vernacular sent me scrambling for the dictionary. There have been some changes in focus since Tynan wrote: renewal of the Homeland Security Act was just gearing up as he wrote and college campuses were trying to figure out how to cope with the original Napster. On the other hand, RFIDs (Radio Frequency ID chips) were just moving into the public consciousness beyond a way of identifying a lost pet and potential abuses of medical and genetic records were becoming apparent. His information is still surprisingly current, given the annoying speed of change in areas computer-related. I had intended to read *Computer Privacy Annoyances* and then pass it on. Given the amount of useful information and the number of useful web addresses and telephone numbers, I'm going to hang on to it for a while.

While details change, and specific companies and scams come and go, computer safety has to be added to crossing the street in the instructions for growing up in the 21st Century. *Computer Privacy Annoyances* provides a sound set of guidelines for protecting your identity (or rescuing it if stolen); fighting back against aggressive marketers; stopping (or at least slowing) spam, viruses, adware, spyware and other invasions; avoiding cyber-stalking; shopping safely; protecting your home network; coping with work-place monitoring of surfing and information and the number of useful web addresses and telephone numbers, I'm going to hang on to it for a while.

In summary, computers being a powerful tool, they can be used for good or ill. Just as truck drivers need more training than the drivers of passenger cars, we as users need training in how to manage computer email or our own benefit. While details change, and specific companies and scams come and go, computer safety has to be added to crossing the street in the instructions for growing up in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *Computer Privacy Annoyances* provides a sound set of guidelines for protecting your identify (or rescuing it if stolen); fighting back against aggressive marketers; stopping (or at least slowing) spam, viruses, adware, spyware and other invasions; avoiding cyber-stalking; shopping safely; protecting your home network; coping with work-place monitoring of surfing and email; and telling those folks who are profiting from use of your personal data to cease and desists. Just gathering all the resources to address these issues is (was for Dan Tynan) a major project. Make use of his work: go forth and protect yourself without hiding from all public contact and unplugging totally.

Product Information:

*Computer Privacy Annoyances*

*How to Avoid the Most Annoying Invasions of Your Personal and Online Privacy*

Dan Tynan, Author

O'Reilly Media, Inc., Distributor

800-998-9938

www.oreilly.com

List Price: O'Reilly Media: \$19.95 (UG Discount Price \$13.96 Check the inside front cover of this newsletter for the code for this discount.)

*Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Fun with Freeware

by Cary Quinn

*Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, CO*

Here are a couple of utilities I have been using lately to correct a couple of bumps in the road to a positive Win-dows experience.

### OverDisk (v0.11 beta) (freeware)

<http://users.forthnet.gr/pat/efotinis /programs /overdisk.html>

Elias Fotinis, a programmer from Greece, is one of those programmers you often find on the net who in their spare time writes little apps and utilities to solve some personal issue they might have getting the operating system, or some other program, to work the way they want it to.

One of the programs he has written is a disk space monitor called Overdisk. It basically scans a drive or folders of your choice and tells you how much space is being taken up by the files therein. One special difference with Overdisk though, is the way it graphs that data to your screen.

Instead of representing the files as a pie chart, or bar graph, Overdisk shows a breakdown of folders and files as a series of concentric rings, as if you were looking down onto the disk itself and seeing the files laid out below. But it's even better than that.

When you mouse-over a particular section of the chart, a tooltip window will appear to give you more information about that parti-cular folder (size, number of sub-directories, and the number of files); and if you click on a specific point of the chart you can drill down to get the same information for individual files. Clicking on the center of the chart takes you back up the directory path, or you can click on the tree view on the side of the screen to better select a particular folder to view.

I find this utility most useful when trying to identify what parts of a drive need to have a cleanup, or which folders I need to prioritize for backups.

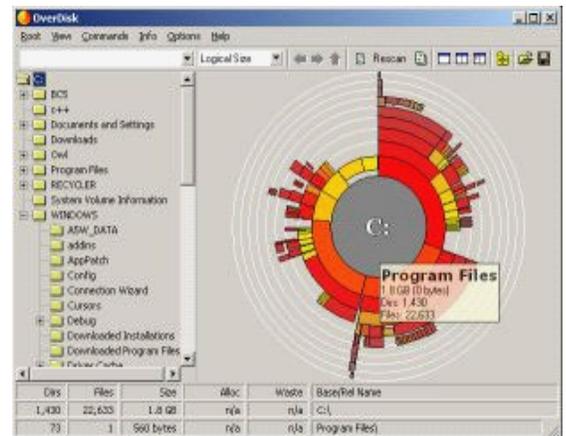
### Taskbar Shuffle

(free, but accepting donations)

<http://www.freewebs.com/nerdcave/taskbar shuffle.htm>

From the home of the nerd cave, comes a pretty nifty little tool that answers a minor nit I have had with the Windows Taskbar for a while—why you cannot drag and drop the programs listed on the taskbar to better arrange your programs to your preference. With Taskbar Shuffle, you can. That seems pretty simple, and it appears to work quite seamlessly within the OS.

The utility leaves an icon running on your system tray that you can use to turn it on or off, or close it down completely. I've been using it for a few months, and haven't noticed any conflicts with other windows or programs that have caused me to want to shut it off.



## Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

*Southeast Virginia Computer Group*

If you have upgraded to Internet Explorer version 7 recently, and encounter an issue where the program immediately exits when first loaded, it's probably an issue with the IEProxy.dll file and WindowsXP.

The fix is quite simple; go to "Start" -> "Run" then type "cmd" then press the "OK" button, that will open up a command prompt. From there navigate via the command prompt to the Internet Explorer directory (usually C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer) and type "regsvr32 /s IEProxy.dll" (without the

quotes) and press the enter key. That should fix the problem, to close the Command Prompt simply type "exit" and press the enter key.

Here's another fix that you might need someday.

## How to fix an AWOL Shell.dll

A customer asks, “I have a problem that may be common and yet the cure eludes me. When I attempt to install software in my XP Pro SP2 machine, I get the dialog box ‘Missing SHELL.DLL.’ How do I find and reinstall the SHELL.DLL with minimum disruption to my system?”

The fix is easy, but first — it’d be best if you could find out why Shell.dll disappeared.

For example, there’s a fairly common browser hijacker that can cause this problem. You didn’t mention any other symptoms, but the hijacker usually adds “Home Search Assistant,” “Shopping Wizard,” and “Search Extender” to your system, and may also reset your browser’s home page so that a popup appears at every start.

If malware such as this is working on your system, then it will do no good to repair Shell.dll because the malware will simply corrupt the new copy.

I suggest you begin by using your favorite spyware tools to make sure your system is squeaky clean and free of all malware. Major test labs currently rate Webroot’s Spy Sweeper and PC Tools’ Spyware Doctor as the best antispware products.

If “Home Search Assistance” and its related friends are, in fact, causing your problem, the free AboutBuster utility can remove them.

Once you’re sure your system is clean, you can download a fresh copy of Shell.dll from any number of online sources. DLL-files.com, for example. Copy the DLL file into your DLLcache folder (usually found at C:\Windows\System32\DLLcache). Then re-register the DLL this way:

Step 1. Click Start, Run.

Step 2. In the Run dialog box, enter (change C:\Windows to the correct location on your system): regsvr32 C:\Windows\System32\DLLcache\Shell.dll

Step 3. Click OK.

Step 4. Reboot, and your Shell.dll problems should be fixed!

By the way, the above steps can resolve a huge number of problems with other missing/corrupted DLLs. Just use the example above as a template, downloading whatever DLL you need and substituting its name in the regsvr32 command.

## Jitterbug Makes Cell Phones Easy

For many seniors, using a cell phone can be a challenging and intimidating experience. Thus, they opt to not carry a cell phone; or if they do, refrain from using it much. A company called Jitterbug aims to change that.

Every part of the Jitterbug phone—built by Samsung—is designed to take into account the needs of this group. From the design of the handset to the simplified user interface, and even features that attempt to make it as much like a regular phone as possible, the learning curve is much less steep than a traditional cellular handset.

But does this phone measure up with the consumer? I shared the Jitterbug with several people within that targeted group and what I found was a near universal positive response to the device.

### The Hardware

At first look, the phone looks quite bulky, much bigger than your typical cell phone. However, this is all by design. The phone fits nicely in the hand, and many seniors find it easier to grasp than many of today’s smaller models.

The earpiece is lined with a rubberized material. While at first I was at a loss for the purpose of this, my focus group put it into better perspective, which only makes sense.

First, it allows the phone to sit more comfortably on the side of the face, some said. Others said the material worked well because on colder days, cold plastic would not touch the face. Still another advantage here would be the face not touching the screen, keeping it less oily.

The interface is very simple and straightforward: a clearly marked on/off switch, “yes” and “no” input keys, a scroll pad, and large numbers. All of these keys are backlit, allowing for easy nighttime use.

To charge, the user plugs in the cord at the bottom of the phone. Here was where we found one of the few issues with the Jitterbug. The plug is quite small, and the hole to plug into is not clearly marked. Some in my focus group had trouble at first finding this.

However, that was where most of the complaints stopped. Users applauded the large keys and the overall feel of the phone. While some had problems with the charging process, everyone was able to figure out right away how to place a call.

Some found the screen on the front of the device to be a bit too small, and this is something that Jitterbug may want to address in later versions.

### **The User Interface**

The user interface on the Jitterbug is about as simple as it gets, and was universally applauded by my group. By using the 'yes' and 'no' keys, the user can step through the various features, including voice dial, the phone list, call history, voicemail, and phone information.

Each feature worked well for us. The voice dial was adequately able to understand the numbers that we asked it to call when saying names in the phone list.

Features like the phone list and call history were easy to understand and navigate. One feature we did not like was the need to cycle all the way through the phone list to enter a new number. However, we discovered by pressing the up key we were able to skip right to that spot.

Voicemail seemed to be self-explanatory, and not much different from that of regular cell phone service. However the feature we liked the most was the phone information screen.

Instead of the technical gobbledygook that many phones have here, with Jitterbug it was pretty straightforward. The battery level is given as a percentage, the signal as a de-scriptive term, such as "strong" or "weak," and the screen also gives the user an idea of the minutes used.

Even the addition of a fake "dial tone" was a nice little extra. When you open the phone and hear the dial tone, the Jitterbug is able to place a call. When there is no service, there is no dialtone.

My group applauded the large text used, saying it was easy to read and the terminology was equally easy to understand. Many of our participants actually inquired about how they could replace their current phone with the Jitterbug.

It may not be the most feature-filled phone, but that's not the point of Jitterbug. The point is to make the cell phone as easily accessible as possible, especially to a group that manufacturers have largely ignored.

### **The Service**

Jitterbug roams on Sprint's CDMA network. Our experience with coverage was fairly decent, although in our region the carrier is known to have several dead spots. The decision to use Sprint may be seen as a negative here; it may have been better to lease network space from Verizon.

Otherwise, Jitterbug offers some unique extras that go above and beyond that of your normal cellular provider. Much like the telephone systems of yesteryear, an operator is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist customers.

The operators are able to place calls to those on the user's phone list, as well as connect the user to any United States or Canadian phone number.

In addition, these operators can also add new numbers to the phone list of the phone, as well as perform standard residential, business, or government listing lookup services. We found the operators to be pleasurable and patient, and it's definitely an asset to the overall service.

Changes can also be made to a user's account through [myjitterbug.com](http://myjitterbug.com). Like the device itself, the Web site is easy to use and understand, which we feel is crucial when dealing with the senior demographic the company hopes to target.

Call quality was never an issue for us, and in some cases members of my group claimed the calls sounded better through the Jitterbug. We feel that this was more due to that rubberized material helping to block outside noise better than other phone models.

Jitterbug offers several plans, depending on required usage. For light usage, an SOS service is offered for \$10 per month where minutes are paid for as they are used, charged at 35 cents per minute. A \$15 per month plan includes 30 free anytime minutes.

For heavier users, a monthly minute plan is recommended. The Simple 60 includes 60 minutes per month for \$20, the Simple 150 includes 150 minutes for \$30, and the Simple 300 includes 300 minutes for \$40.

Included on all three plans is free 911 access. What is not included is disappointing: users must pay \$3 per month for voicemail service (unless they prepay for a year), and no night or weekend minutes. This puts the company at a disadvantage in that respect.

I'd really like to see the inclusion of night and weekend minutes at the minimum, as such a feature has almost become a de facto standard in cell phone plans today. My participants seemed to agree.

Issues with the plans notwithstanding, everything from the design of the phone to the user interface, and the innovative services that Jitterbug provides is positive. I can say nothing but good things about it. What I do worry about, though, is its availability through a single carrier.

So will the Jitterbug have seniors dancing to a different tune when it comes to cellular service?

The Good: The device itself. There's really not much wrong with it at all. It's the first cell phone to actually consider the concerns of a consumer group that so far has been fairly reluctant to buy or use a cell phone. The very positive response from my bunch indicates Jitterbug got it right.

The Bad: It's CDMA only, and uses Sprint's sometimes fickle network. It would be really nice if Jitterbug produced a version compatible with GSM, and sold the phone more broadly. The front screen should be a lot bigger as well. We found it to be a bit small and would likely be difficult to read for those with poorer vision. Plans are also a little slim on minutes.

The Bottom Line: I highly recommend this device to those wanting an easy to use cellular phone for either emergencies or everyday use. There are a few things that could be improved, but it's a very good debut for the company. The price is fairly decent as well. Jitterbug has definitely produced a top-notch product.

The bottom line is that I bought one for my wife at her request.

### Why You Don't Need Vista Now

Windows Vista will have a major impact on the personal computing experience of millions of users worldwide during the coming years, but that doesn't mean Microsoft's latest operating system is a killer product, nor something you necessarily need or want.

My copy of the final RTM, or Release to Manufacturing, build of Windows Vista Ultimate was delivered in early November by Microsoft. This edition of the operating system is the most powerful and advanced of the four editions Microsoft will make widely available Jan. 30, 2007.

Other editions of Windows Vista are made for home users (Windows Vista Home Basic, \$200, \$100 upgrade), users who want a better entertainment experience (Windows Vista Home Premium, \$240, \$160 upgrade) and business users (Windows Vista Business \$300, \$200 upgrade). Windows Vista Ultimate (\$400, \$260 upgrade) is made for the hard-core gamer, the media collector and anyone wishing to squeeze the best performance out of drool-worthy high-end machines.

Visual splendor is Vista Ultimate's greatest selling point—the new operating system does offer a graphically intensive interface that differs greatly from that of Windows XP. Also, Vista dumbs everything down for you, streamlining the Wild West of complex OS software into a useful product. This makes tasks ranging from networking to setting parental controls a lot easier.

However, I encountered several bumps in the road during testing that show Vista is not ready for everyday use by millions of people just yet — no matter how pretty it looks.

### Installing Vista

Vista developers managed to adhere to Microsoft's tradition of making the operating system much easier to set up than the previous generation of Windows. Two decades ago, installing DOS was a delicate and risky process that often required professional help.

Incremental improvements were made over the years, and Windows XP was about as easy to install as a video game. I found that Vista coddles you even more than Windows XP did during installation.

For our tests, I used two different machines: an HP DV9000t laptop and an dual core AMD Athlon 64 PC I had built. I installed 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Vista Ultimate on two separate hard drive partitions on the Athlon desktop, and the 64-bit version on the laptop. Every installation took less than an hour to complete.

## System Performance Rating Tool

Vista scans your computer when you install it and applies a performance rating to your hardware. Microsoft calls this rating the Windows Experience Index. The software then adjusts its settings to best match your hardware's score.

I was somewhat taken aback to learn that my AMD Athlon 64 4000+ PC with an Nvidia 6800 Ultra graphics card—albeit with the 1 Gig of DRAM—merited only a 4 rating out of a possible 5.9. Why Microsoft chose 5.9 for the high end we may never know, but the index will be adjusted to include higher numbers (6, 7 and upward) as newer and faster hardware becomes available.

As you may read in other sources, a stand-alone graphics card is required to load what Microsoft calls the “Windows Aero” visual experience, replete with Vista's enhanced translucent folders and 3-D images. Assessed by itself, the Nvidia 6800 Ultra graphics card, which can sufficiently run high-powered games like Oblivion, rated a 5.3.

The system performance rating is designed to give you a high-level indication of how well Vista will perform on your current hardware. This may explain in part why vendors are so excited about the new operating system. Users who want to have what Microsoft calls the “ultimate Vista experience” will have to spend a lot of money upgrading to high-end hardware components.

At the same time, whether or not you have the most beautiful graphics interface does not have much bearing on your applications. Whether your Windows Experience is rated at 3.1 or 5.1, you will probably notice little if any difference in performance while drafting a spreadsheet, using a word processor, browsing the web, or even watching a DVD.

### How Different Is It?

The first thing you notice about Vista when you load it up is its pretty graphics, which are still not any more beautiful than those of my equally robust (and less expensive) XP operating system.

However, other than the new graphics, Vista's overall look and feel are not drastically different compared to XP. Vista has media, networking and other features that standard versions of XP does not. The e-mail software, called Windows Mail, is fundamentally the same compared to Outlook Express. Navigating the “Start” and “All Programs” menus is essentially the same, although visually different.

### Adding Peripherals

When I tried to plug in my peripherals, my troubles with Vista began.

Vista didn't recognize either of my Epson printers when it ran the initial peripheral-compatibility check. I went to Epson's web site and downloaded Vista drivers for both versions and when I tried to load the printer driver software, they installed, albeit with a warning that they had not been certified.

While the Vista version I tested is exactly what consumers will receive in January 2007, compatible drivers for peripherals might become more plentiful as the launch date approaches. So, be prepared for a slow march towards full compatibility.

### Watching a DVD

Windows Vista Ultimate comes bundled with Windows Media Center, a package that allows you to watch and record TV (provided you have the required TV tuner hardware), burn and watch DVDs, and play video or music files. Nevertheless, many commercial software packages—as well as freeware—that do the same have long been available for Windows XP.

I was able to immediately watch DVDs on the Athlon and the laptop machines using Vista's preloaded Windows Media Center.

### Security and Privileges

Security has been one of Microsoft's key talking points when hyping Vista. Given the vulnerabilities that constantly emerge within Windows XP, who can blame the company? However, Vista does make some simple security features available that you would previously have had to install separately under Windows XP.

After setting up a user with administrator privileges, you can configure Vista to require the administrator to key in a password when new software is installed. This comes in handy when someone is logged in as another user and is not permitted to download potentially damaging software without your

permission (such as the smiley faces that my daughter once installed to pop up in every outgoing e-mail message in Windows XP's Outlook Express).

Having to key in your admin password to install software might represent an aggravation for some, but given how quickly a Windows XP machine can amass 50 or more programs—often mixed with malware that constantly runs in the background while you are caught unaware—I welcomed this feature.

### Parental Controls

One flaw I found is that the website-blocking feature is not worth much in a multilingual home or office setting. Good ol' American porn sites were blocked, but I had carte blanche access to the raunchiest of raunchy French and Spanish sites. I was also able to use Google to search for vulgarities in those languages.

Admin privileges also allow you to track the websites your kids visit and e-mails they send, among other user activities. Whether you choose to do this or not is up to you.

### File Sharing

Enabling file sharing between PCs under Vista is a lot easier when compared to the often painstaking process under XP. Still, file sharing remains quirky in Vista.

For example, Vista blocks you from accessing the “Set Up File Sharing” option in the “Network and Sharing Center” menu unless you are first connected to a LAN. Only after connecting the two Vista test PCs to my LAN's router was I able to enable what Microsoft calls “Sharing and Discovery.” Next, I was prompted to toggle File Sharing, Public Folder sharing and other choices on or off.

Sharing folders and files between a PC running Windows Vista and one running Windows XP was too difficult or envolved. After finagling with the shared folder settings I managed to allow a Windows XP computer to access the Vista PC's shared file folders.

### Power Consumption

At least in theory, more computing power requires more energy, which in turn eats up a notebook's battery life. Surprisingly, the DV9000t laptop's battery lasted longer with Vista running than it did with XP running. And that was without tweaking Vista's power settings to extend the battery life.

During my test, I ran the laptop at full load—complete with a sample picture menu, 10 Internet Explorer windows open, wireless internet connection and a DVD of Midway playing. The battery lasted 3 hours and 5 minutes with Vista, compared to just 2 hours and 35 minutes with Windows XP.

### The Verdict

Vista's power consumption superlatives aside, I would not recommend going out and buying Vista off the shelf. Users will likely suffer many headaches with missing peripheral drivers and a lack of backward compatibility with legacy software, and those headaches will not make Vista worth its hefty price tag.

If possible, wait a bit or more after Vista's launch to invest in the operating system. At least by then, numerous updates, hardware drivers and service packs will likely have been released.

*From the January 2007 issue of The Umbrella Online, the Monthly Newsletter of the Hampton Roads Virginia Computing Community.*



[www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com)

**Q.** I've been told that no matter who sends me an email attachment, I should save it, close my email program, then go to the file, right-click and scan it with my anti-virus program. Would one way to avoid that be to have my family members put a little code, like their initials, in the Subject line which would confirm the email was really from them? One of my friends suggested that and I thought it was a pretty good idea.

**A.** Your friend's suggestion is well-intentioned, but it contains a fatal flaw in that the person placing initials on the Subject line might not know if his or her computer is infected. If you then observed the initials, you might incorrectly conclude that the message was safe, open it, and presto, infecto! The suggested “secret

code” would only let you know that the message is from the designated sender. So will looking at the From: field.

Any good anti-virus program is going to check all incoming email, which is the best way to protect yourself. My favorite anti-virus program is AVG Anti-Virus. It’s available in both free and paid versions, and most people do just fine with the free version, at <http://tinyurl.com/kco2f>.

**Q.** I’ve got several hundred photo slides that I took through the years and lots of old family vacation photos. I don’t have a slide projector anymore, but was curious if I could transfer my slides to a CD? Thanks for being there, Mr. M. My subscription to your weekly newsletter is the best five bucks I spend each month.

**A.** Thanks very much. Yes, you can definitely put those old slides and photographs on a CD. The two devices you’ll need to accomplish that are a scanner, to convert the slides into digital images, and a CD burner. Some scanners can handle slides and even photo negatives. The Epson Perfection 2480 Photo Scanner (<http://tinyurl.com/y5lfqk>) is one such device, and its \$99 price is excellent considering that just a few years ago this same type of scanner was in the \$500 range. After you scan your slides and save them to your computer’s hard drive, burn them to CD using your CD-burning software, and you’re done.

There are also professional services that will convert your slides and photos to digital format and place them on CD for you. DigMyPics.com, for example, will digitize photos, slides, film negatives, film cartridges, and large-format film. You will be notified by email when your project is completed and you can then view the results on the Web.

**Q.** I’m using Outlook Express, but it seems to automatically add names to my address book, which includes many names that I don’t want to include. Do you know what’s going on or how can I stop it?

**A.** One of the options in Outlook Express—some call it a feature—automatically adds the names and email addresses of people you reply to by email. If you prefer a more discriminating approach, you can disable that option by clicking Tools > Options > Send tab. Under the “Sending” section, remove the check mark beside “Automatically put people I reply to in my Address Book.” Click Apply > OK to save and exit.

### **Mr. Modem’s DME (Don’t Miss ‘Em) Sites of the Month**

#### **Disturbing Auctions**

When it comes to bizarre auction items, this is the place to be. This site doesn’t waste time with fake auction merchandise like the infamous human kidney auction hoax, but instead the focus here is world-class tacky stuff that people really, honestly, believe that someone will buy. So if you’re looking for a Clark Gable candle, a chicken hat, or a Saddam Hussein hand puppet, your search has ended. [www.disturbingauctions.com/](http://www.disturbingauctions.com/)

#### **Energy Drink Reviews**

Drinks such as Red Bull and Zoom are extraordinarily popular, particularly with young people today. This informative site reviews more than 100 energy-boosting beverages based on taste, cost, and “pump upedness.” (Make mine decaf, please.) [www.bandddesigns.com/energy/](http://www.bandddesigns.com/energy/)

#### **Movie Origins**

Features the fascinating real-life stories behind many films. Read about the actual people whose lives inspired block-buster movies such as Erin Brockovich, A League of Their Own, Goodfellas, Men of Honor, The Mr. Modem Story, Boys Don’t Cry, Schindler’s List, and many more. [www.movieorigins.com/](http://www.movieorigins.com/)

*Mr. Modem’s weekly computer-help newsletter provides prompt, personal answers to your computer and Internet questions by email, plus easy-to-use computer tips, including Windows Vista! For more information, to view a sample issue, or to subscribe, visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com).*

#### **Society News**

### **Planning Meeting Notes**

January 2, 2007

by John McMillan

Arpad joined Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, John McMillan, Dan Rothfuss, Steve Staub, Sally Springett, and Tom Thompson for the January planning meeting, Tuesday the 2nd.

Attendance at the December Society meeting was below average and Help’s Half Hour was finished in fifteen minutes. The planning committee felt that the second presentation of Jeopardy was fun though some of the questions were quite technical and perhaps less educational to the non contestants. This might

discourage future contestants if we were to repeat it another time. Prepublishing the rules might have reduced some of the confusion that occurred.

We hope location was not a major contributor to the low attendance because the facilities at the Pittsford Library are excellent. Society meetings have been scheduled for Pittsford in January and Brighton in February for a two part presentation on Video Editing.

You are probably aware that several libraries offer *free* use of different sized rooms with varying benefits such as slide projectors, screens blackboards, etc. The down side is that they also have rules that prevent us from establishing a fixed meeting location. One of the committees functions is to schedule meetings at centralized locations within our extremely limited budget and of course to notify members of changing venues.

Sally agreed to see if we could reserve one of the Brighton Town Park Pavilions for a picnic on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in August. More on this later when we get closer to the date.

The February copy of the monitor will be assembled January 13<sup>th</sup> at St. Stephens.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussing how we could further reduce the costs of printing and distributing the Monitor. While the new printer, installed last year, has brought down ink costs, the Monitor is the biggest single expense that the Society has. Changing the page dimensions and or reducing the number of pages could bring paper and ink costs down further. Straw votes of the members have indicated a preference for printed copies rather than electronic distributions. We are reluctant to eliminate copies given to computer stores and libraries because they have been a source of new members in recent years. The Planning Committee will continue to examine elements of the total cost to seek further reductions but an increase in annual dues may still be required to resolve the constant drain on the treasury.

### Help's Half Hour

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Led by: Arpad Kovacs

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

**Q:** One member is getting email and his senders are getting a failed delivery notice. It seems to have started when he upgraded to IE version 7. He is using Outlook Express.

**A:** Microsoft admitted that there may be a problem with this interface. The SMTP error indicates that the message has a problem, even though he gets the message. It seems to be pointing to a condition on the Internet. It may also be a leftover from a spam filter that is not working very well. Try adding the address to the safe senders list in both Outlook and Frontier. Another member suggested sending the message to Frontier.

**Q:** Another member said that he is getting messages about errors from messages that are not sending.

**A:** The Frontier postmaster should be advised of the problem. Perhaps forward the messages to them, until they stop coming. It was also suggested that you set up your own junk folder to sort out these message as they arrive. Another member spoke about 20—30 spam messages per day. He suggested setting up a new address that does not contain your name. This gives you a clean slate—at least for a while. Bob also said that if you report these spam mail addresses as spam, your provider will appreciate it as they can then dump it before it even gets through. It is also recommended that you add your own list of search words into your filter. They will then be deleted automatically. One free filter uses a server in Denmark to sort out and delete the spam.

**Q:** One member has an MP3 recorder/player and is having trouble copying items from the device to his hard drive. He may only get the last one. The MP3 player just shuts off.

**A:** There may be a Samsung copy protect setting. They may have their own software to accomplish the transfer. It was suggested that it might be a power issue, too. Try installing the software again. Then try plugging the MP3 device directly into the mother board or one of the 1.1 USB drives. Buying a self-powered hub might be necessary.

### January Meeting

More than 30 people attended the January meeting at the Pittsford Library on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Arpad led Help's Half Hour responding to more questions than asked in the December meeting.

Steve Staub made several announcements to start the business portion of the meeting..

1. See him if your dues are due. He mentioned the number of members in arrears and the critical state of the treasury.
2. The planning committee is wrestling with ways to further reduce the cost of producing and distributing the Monitor, the Society's largest expenditure. Although electronic distributions would be less expensive, a majority of the members have previously expressed preferences for a hard copy. It was also noted that many of the new members became aware of the Society through copies of the Monitor that are available at libraries and some computer outlets. Increased sales of advertising space would certainly help so if you have any suggestions for possible advertisers please call Steve. An increase in dues that has been championed by former vice president and long-time member Frank Howden may not be far off.
3. The planning group will meet at Sally's house at 7:00 PM February 6<sup>th</sup>. Members are welcome to attend.
4. The newsletter will be assembled at St. Stephens Saturday, Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM.
5. The February meeting will be at the Brighton Library on Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> with Video Editing—Part 1 as the topic.
6. We will need someone to run Help's Half Hour next month.
7. Dave Thompson announced the time and location of the next Photography SIG meeting.
8. Any one with ideas for future programs should pass them to Mike Lavelle.
9. 50/50 tickets would be sold during the social break.

The evening's presentation was Video Editing, Part 1. John McMillan, the speaker, finished the business meeting by projecting a theater like short, touting the lobby snack bar. After the social break, he reconvened the group with a humorous warning about video copying before tackling the main subject.

During the introduction he set some boundaries, stating that the talk would concentrate upon gathering material for a video. Clips of data consisting of sound, video, titles and still photos were likened to pieces of a puzzle. He described in some detail how to use various Adobe Premier screens to assemble things and get them organized without getting into the actual editing and construction of a video. It was like getting the puzzle out of the box, putting the pieces face up and sorting them by shape or color but without trying to connect them.

After some background on what kindled his interest, he used slides based upon screen shots that focused on Adobe Premier's Project screen. Before getting to the nitty gritty of the Project Work Area there was a brief description of some factors that control a project. The Project Work Area is where references to all of the projects clips and how they are used is stored. It is a dual pane window like Windows Explorer but instead of folders, the left pane lists Bins. For better organization, multiple Bins and even Sub Bins can be used. Separate Bins for sounds, stills, titles and videos were suggested.

John detailed how to import files to sound and still bins and how to build Titles, thereby making them available for future editing actions. Techniques for each of these differs and numerous slides were used to describe their use. He went on to discuss "capturing," the term for downloading video from a camera to the computer. Once again multiple screens were used to cover the topic completely. Webmaster Bob Avery will put copies of the slides on the Society's web site.

Helpful hints and humor were liberally sprinkled into, the talk, hopefully making the massive number of facts a little more palatable. To reinforce some of the material covered, John also used the Adobe Premier program to demonstrate situations such as

1. Opening an existing project.
2. Establishing multiple bins for better organization of project contents.
3. Importing files previously stored on the computer into bins.
4. Building titles, both fixed and moving.
5. Rough cuts while capturing raw footage from the camera

If you liked what you saw and would like to learn more, join us at the Brighton Library February 13<sup>th</sup> for Part 2, Putting It All Together.

### The Lighter Side

A friend and I visited a computer store in a mall. They had aisles of software and cabinets of hardware in the back. I was curious to know how much they charged for RAM, so we headed for the rear of the store.

Salesman: "May I help you, ladies?"

Me: "Sure. We'd like to see how much your RAM is."

Salesman: (looking around uncertainly) "Let's look over here. Is this for a Mac or PC?"

Me: "PC. I have an HP."

Suddenly the salesman turns down a software aisle.

Salesman: "That sounds like a war game. It should be along in here if we have it."

Me: "Uhhhhh ... we're looking for RAM. You know, computer memory. Not software."

Salesman: "Oh! Memory! That would be over in the children's section."



I recently purchased a new PC from one of the major computer manufacturers. I placed my order via the web but asked for them to call me for my credit card information. So, after a couple days of phone tag, I got in touch with the salesperson handling my account. I was thinking I'd just give my credit card number and be on my way. Almost.

Salesperson: "Do you realize that the modem you've chosen doesn't have sound support?"

Customer: "What exactly does a 'modem with no sound support' mean?"

Salesperson: "It means that if you go to a web page that has a movie or sound file, you won't be able to hear it."

Customer: "What does the modem have to do with that?"

Salesperson: "Well, sir, the modem is what connects your computer to the Internet."

Customer: "So, you're telling me that this particular modem scans the TCP/IP packets passing through it for those belonging to any sound application and filters them out?"

Salesperson: "Yes."

Customer: "How does it accomplish this feat?"

Salesperson: "I'm not technical enough to answer that. Please hold."

I stayed on hold for five minutes before I hung up.



Tech Support: "What happens when you turn the computer on?"

Customer: "The screen just stays black."

Tech Support: "Is the computer plugged in?"

Customer: "I took it to a repair shop last week, and they apparently fixed it so it doesn't need a power cord anymore."

Tech Support: "Is the computer a laptop computer?"

Customer: "No, but they never gave me back the power cord so they must have fixed it so it didn't need it."

Tech Support: "Go back to the repair store and get your power cord back. They just forgot to give it to you."

