

MONITOR

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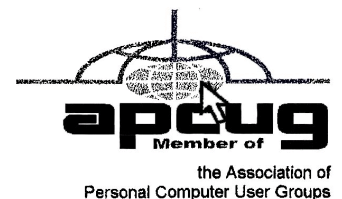
Next Meeting

May 2007

May 8—1 Johnsarbor Dr West
Bill Statt on Dragon Naturally Speaking

CONTENTS

The Garage Berry F. Phillips	1
Doing the Right Thing David D. Uffer	2
Diskeeper 2007 Pro Premier Verne Perry	4
Build Your Own Search Engine Alan Phelps	5
Review: Real Digital Forensics Jones, Bejtlich, and Rose.	7
Soft Hardware from Otterbox! Judy Lococo	9
Online Retirement Planning Resources Ira Wilsker	10
Ask Mr. Modem	12
Upgrading Your Monitor Vinny La Bash	13
Windows Vista Pains 'n' Gains Jan Fagerholm	14
From the Dealsguy Bob Click	16
Free Software Maurice Hamoy	18
Online Education	20



The Garage

by Berry F. Phillips
Computer Club of Oklahoma City

IT was born in a garage! If you had driven by the garage located in a residential neighborhood, you would not have noticed there was anything strange about the garage since it looked like all the other garages attached to residences. However, if you were a neighbor you would be aware of certain unusual activity. You would have at times noticed

the cars lining the street, and people going into the garage carrying various equipment usually in the evening. If a neighbor was blessed or cursed as the case may be, with an active imagination several fantasy explanations could come to mind. Perhaps it was a band practicing in the garage but there was no sound of music. Perhaps it was some kind of a terrorist group but no smoke or explosions or sounds of automatic rifles being fired. Perhaps they had a still operating in that garage however there were no police

raiding the garage. Well, the garage could be used for all kinds of purposes but one thing is certain; it was not being used as a garage!

The garage was located in Menlo Park, San Mateo County, California and was a maternity ward for the birthing in March 1975 of the Homebrew Computer Club. The 1999 made for television movie. "Pirates of the Silicon Valley (and the book on which it was based, "Fire In the Valley: The Making of the Personal Computer") describes the role the Homebrew Computer Club played in creating the first personal computer.

Hackers were attracted to the garage like steel to a magnet since in those days it was just another name for a computer enthusiast like nerd or geek. In the old days a hacker is one who "hacks" through a computer problem and who writes his own code to fix it. In modern times a hacker has unfortunately a negative connotation which should be correctly called a cracker, a combination of the word, criminal and hacker. The hackers wanted to "homebrew" their own machines using parts from the Altair computer kit, computer chips such as Intel 8080, or any other computer equipment. While the members of the Homebrew Computer Club were hobbyists, most of them had electronic engineering or programming backgrounds. I am reminded of Bill Gates' Open Letter to Hobbyists which lambasted the early hackers of the time for modifying and pirating commercial software programs. Several founders of microcomputer companies including Bob Marsh, Adam Osborne, Lee Filsenstein, and Apple founders, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniack were founding members of the Homebrew Computer Club. Thirty years later in 2005, a reunion celebration was held as part of the Vintage Computer Festival sponsored by the Computer Museum. Upon the completion of the activities in the exhibit hall, there was an autograph signing as well as vintage computer equipment for sale that took many a hacker back to those early days they "homebrewed" their computer.

The Homebrew Computer Club's newsletter was one of the major forces that influenced the formation of the Silicon Valley created and edited by the members. The first issue was published in 1975 and continued in several designs ending after 21 issues in December 1977. There have been other Homebrew Computer Clubs that have emerged like the one in the Netherlands that started with a dozen members and operates today with 180 thousand members which is the largest association in the world. Their

small newsletter grew into the magazine, "Computer Total."

Today, many of the original members of the Homebrew Computer Club meet today as the 6800 Club named after the Motorola (now Freescale) 6800 microprocessor. Who would have ever thought that a garage would be a maternity ward for the IT (Information Technology) Industry? I have decided to elevate the status of the lowly garage in my mind especially since I found out many of our largest corporations were also born in a garage! Why I am thinking now that a garage should not be for cars or junk but a shrine dedicated to American ingenuity and innovation!

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Diskeeper 2007 Pro Premier

Enhancing File System
Performance—Automatically

By Verne Perry
PCC, Hayward, CA

First off, I'm not very impressed by the recent release of Windows Vista, primarily because I vainly hoped that with this Windows version, Microsoft would finally solve its file system problems. It didn't. So on my Windows machines I'll continue to have to worry about the eventual sluggishness that results from the file fragmentation that occurs just with use of the machine. Between home and the office I maintain 8 XP machines, and one Windows 98 machine, that acts as a server, and to keep all of these machines running smoothly I spend a lot of time routinely defragging them. I found long ago that using Windows Defrager was an extremely slow process, and over the years developed a maintenance routine which involved using windows checkdisk to check the disks on boot-up along with using a free-ware program called SpeeDefrag 4.1, which would then defrag the disks prior to any drivers or startup programs being loaded. But the process is not automatic, and often my procrastination in actually starting the process resulted in the machine getting so defragged that there was a noticeable performance drag. So I was happy to receive a copy of Diskeeper 2007 Pro Premiere to evaluate.

The Diskeeper promotional materials said that this version introduced a major new feature called "InvisiTasking", a proprietary feature that transpar-

ently runs in the background and that this “on the fly” defragmentation used “very close to zero” resources and was invisible. Indeed, InvisiTasking was described as being the “essence” of the product. Moreover, Diskeeper’s older “I-FAAST” (Intelligent File Access Acceleration Sequencing Technology) file system performance technology which is designed to benchmark hard disk volumes for their performance characteristics and continually monitor them to determine which files are requested most often, was integrated with the operation of the “InvisiTasking” product. For safety, Diskeeper 2007 moves a file only when it is absolutely certain that no data will be lost using a “Movefile” application programming interface (API) jointly developed with Microsoft. Although manual defragmentation with Diskeeper is still possible, it is not the way the product is now intended to be used.

I decided to test Diskeeper on my home XP machine, because it’s the one that has the highest rate of defragmentation, due to my frequent installation and uninstallation of various test programs. That machine also has a Linux partition which I wanted to use as a “curve ball” thrown into my testing. Other than the “curve ball” Linux partition, the machine’s other hard disk partitions were formatted in NTFS, for which “InvisiTasking” and “I-FAAST” technologies were optimally designed.

The first thing that Diskeeper did when I installed it was to analyze all of the Windows hard disk volumes. I was pleased that it skipped the “curve ball” Linux volume, since I wouldn’t want Diskeeper dealing with that volume anyway. It also reported that my C:\ drive was heavily fragmented, which I expected. However, I was surprised that the analysis included a report generated by the Fragshield feature of the program, advising that the drive’s Master File Table (MFT) was using 86% of the total MFT size and was likely to become fragmented. Despite having previously tested a fair number of defragmentation programs (both commercial and freeware) I had never before seen such a test or option to optimize the MFT. Windows XP initially establishes the size of the MFT, but as more files are placed on the disk the MFT may fill up, and when XP increases the size of the MFT to accommodate the needed additional indexing, the increase usually results in a fragmented MFT. Because the MFT is an index of all the files on the disks (working in much the same way that phone book stores phone numbers), a fragmented MFT will cause a disproportionate amount of file performance degradation. So

I decided to follow Diskeeper’s recommendation to increase size of the MFT to correct this problem, as well as to do a boot-time defrag of the increased MFT and the windows pagefile. I also decided to thoroughly test the “on the fly” “essence” of the new version by setting all my drive volumes for automatic defragmentation.

Despite my initial skepticism about an “on the fly” defragger, my experience with Diskeeper was very positive. Immediately after completing the initial setup I decided to put the “on the fly” features to an immediate test. In my experience, playing a fast paced first person shooter game is an excellent way to test the drag imposed by a program running in the background, so after the initial setup I immediately fired up Unreal Tournament 2004 for a two hour test session. I noticed a drag for nearly the whole session, but in the three weeks since that initial test, I have played the same game and also done other things, trying to detect a drag from Diskeeper’s “on the fly” defragmentation. Since that initial session, I have detected no drag whatsoever. On the other hand, I have noticed that my machine is running much smoother, faster, and otherwise free from any symptoms of fragmentation. Finally, I ran the Analyze feature on all my hard disk partitions, and found that in the three week period there was essentially no new fragmentation.

I also tested Diskeeper on an external USB drive formatted with NTFS. Diskeeper was able to analyze and defrag the drive. Although the analysis indicated that the external drive’s MFT needed to be increased, I knew that would be impossible because there is no practical way to perform a boot time defrag on such an external drive.

I’d say that as long as Windows continues to use the NTFS file system, which requires periodic defragmentation, I would highly recommend Diskeeper 2007 Pro Premiere, which is priced at \$99.99. You can do your own test by downloading a free 30-day full trial version from the Diskeeper.com web site. Installation requires an XP or 2000 operating system and at least 11 MB of disk space. There is also a Pro version for \$49.99 (which does not have the integrated I-FAAST feature, but does have the Fragshield) and the Home version which does not have either the I-FAAST or the Fragshield feature). As for Vista, existing Diskeeper 2007 customers can go to the web site to receive a free link to download a Vista-only version, and new customers can purchase the Vista-only version.

Of course another solution is for the business world to go to an Operating System that doesn't have these archaic file system problems. How about something called Linux?

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Build Your Own Search Engine

by Alan Phelps

Google's Custom Search Engine site puts you in charge of the world's best-known search engine. Best of all, it doesn't cost a dime.

With Google's straightforward customization tool, you can dedicate a custom search engine to any Web site or any topic. It can be limited to finding results at one specific site or a set of sites, or it can search through the entire Internet but favor results that otherwise wouldn't make it anywhere near the top of the list.

Start Your Engine

To begin, point your browser to www.google.com/coop/cse. (To use this Google feature, you'll need to create an account or sign in with an existing Google account.) You can take a look at some examples created by other would-be search engine builders by clicking the Featured Examples link on the left side of the page. When you're ready to try your own hand at it, click Create A Search Engine. The settings you'll use to make your own version of Google are all found on one page, and they're pretty easy to figure out. First, you'll need to enter a name for your search engine and a short description.

Next, enter one or more keywords that will fine-tune your search. At least one keyword is required. You should choose a word or two that describes the general topic focus of the search engine you're building. Try to think of something that you would expect to see in just about every result from this custom search. For example, a customized search about a particular city might include the city name as a keyword. Choose a search engine language and then scroll down to the next section.

Site Selection

Although keywords are important, the Sites To Search field is the meat and potatoes of building a custom search engine. Enter the addresses of the sites you want the search to include, with one site per line. You can skip the "http://" part of the address. If you don't know every site you want to

include in this search, you will be able to edit the list later.

Now, choose whether you want your search to be limited to text on the sites you've specified, or whether these sites should merely be favored in an otherwise standard Google search of the entire Web. If you know exactly what you want, and you know which sites have it, the site-specific option is the way to go.

If there's no need to limit the search so strictly, designate the sites as emphasized but not exclusive. This is better for custom search engines with a more general focus. Prioritizing sites makes certain that the top results will be relevant to the topic of your search engine, but it won't rule out similar results from other Web pages.

Test Search

Now, try out your creation. From the main Custom Search Engine page, click My Search Engines. Any search engines you've already created will be listed at the top of the page. Click the Homepage link to use a particular search engine. If you use a Personalized Google Homepage, you can also click the Add To Google icon to put your search engine on your personal home page.

To edit an existing search engine, click the Control Panel link on the My Search Engines page. Here you can change any of the details you previously entered, as well as tweak additional settings. The Code link in the Control Panel provides HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) you can use to add your new search engine to your own Web site. You can also change the appearance of your search engine to a limited extent under the Look And Feel option.

Search engine designers who want to continually refine their search should click the Google Marker link on the My Search Engines page. There you'll find a bookmark to quickly include new sites to your search engines.

Dig through the Google Marker and Control Panel links, and you'll find additional options for customizing your search engine even further. You might begin to feel like a real Google employee yourself. Unfortunately, the customized search engines don't come with company stock options.

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Real Digital Forensics

by Keith L. Jones, Richard Bejtlich
and Curtis W. Rose

Review by Jim DuWaldt

North Orange County Computer Club, CA

About the authors: Keith L. Jones leads the computer forensics and electronic evidence discovery practices at Red Cliff Consulting. Richard Bejtlich is the founder of TaoSecurity, a network security monitoring consultancy. Curtis W. Rose provides support to criminal investigations and civil litigation as an executive vice president at Red Cliff Consulting.

This book (with included DVD) intends to teach Computer Forensics for both Windows and Linux systems, that is, gathering evidence from infected machines and the network they operate in so that the intended victim can effectively react to a successful penetration.

Or, to quote the book: "...give new forensic investigators more than words to learn new skills." "We use the same tools attackers use... the same methods rouge employees make... [collect] the same media we typically collect...this book takes a practical, hands-on approach to solving problems...[with] techniques you can employ immediately."

The clear implication is that the book is aimed at the inexperienced practitioner. As usual, TCP/IP knowledge is a good idea. There is one glaring oddity: to use one of the tools you need to alter your kernel! From pg 208: "Please download and install the NASA-enhanced kernel..." This takes more than just a beginner's skill!

The context for the procedures is provided by five scenarios which are a mix of internal and external threats as seen from the point of view of admins or law enforcement. As the techniques are presented, it is explained how they might be applied to these scenarios, as opposed to stepping through the scenarios and describing the methods.

Richard Bejtlich's books usually focus on evidence gathered by network monitoring. Instead, Part I ("Live Incidence Response") begins with host-focused procedures for both Windows and Linux (one chapter for each). Live Response techniques invoke a series of programs on the suspect machine in order to gather "volatile data," that is, system state that will not survive a reboot or shutdown. This explanation is entirely suitable for creating your own Live Response software and procedures.

Networks return to the center of attention in Part II ("Network-Based Forensics"). There is a brief but well-done review of the types of data (Full Context, Session, Statistical, and Alert Data) that should be collected and the software to collect them (Tepdump, Snort, and many others) as well as the five steps of intrusion (recon, exploitation, reinforcement, consolidation, and "pillage"). A Cop/Drug Ring analogy is employed to describe these four data types which, given the popularity of CSI, might be good for rank beginners but will be less useful to anyone with more experience. This section also has separate chapters on analysis of the information for Windows and *NIX machines.

Part III ("Acquiring a Forensic Duplication") presents open and closed tools for the forensic cloning of a suspect disk, regardless of the operating system. Its chapter on legal paperwork is very efficient but it would be great if the authors had photos or illustrations of what they use, if only as an example. The material on disk duplication, on the other hand, had lots of excellent photos and screen shots for both the commercial (EnCase and FTK) and open source products (DD, DD_resume, DCFLDD, and NED).

Part IV (Forensic Analysis Techniques) shows you what to do with your new disk image. Methods for disk analysis begin with looking for and recovering deleted files, what to do when that is not possible, discerning strings of interest from NBE (Network-Based Evidence) and Live Response findings (like the name of an executable) and searching the disk for them.

This is followed by techniques for reconstructing emails (even Outlook and Outlook Express proprietary formats can be analyzed by open source tools), pages visited while web browsing including reconstructing emails sent with web clients, and the examination of the Windows Registry (good for finding recently-accessed documents or evidence of programs subsequently deleted).

(Currently only commercial applications are available for analyzing the Registry which is odd, considering that scripting languages, like Python for example, have Registry access libraries.)

Multiple chapters focus on examining unknown files to determine their use, with an emphasis on Microsoft-formatted documents and on the examination of unknown Windows and *NIX executables. This includes static analysis with tools like strings.exe and hexWorkshop and disassemblers like IDA to discover system calls or modify a binary file in

order to, for example, bypass password security. Missing are instructions on using a product like VMware to set up a virtual machine environment for protecting the rest of the system from the foreign executable; they only mention that you *should* use something like VMware when in fact it is vitally important to do so or you could wind up with yet another infected computer!

Part V (“Creating a Complete Forensic Toolkit”) succinctly describes creating CDs for a Live Response toolkit. (But, why not do this in the first part of the book?) It also describes the use of a Knoppix disk which allows you to examine a suspect system without having to boot it from its (possibly) contaminated disk or be concerned about your ‘clean’ OS being cleverly contaminated by a suspect hard drive.

Part VI (“Mobile Device Forensics”) describes gleaming and examining data from PDAs like Palms and iPaks (with additional information about how they manage memory and how to access internal debugging consoles), USB and CF drives. Forensic examination of USB/CF devices using a loopback is well illustrated and an example of recovering a deleted file is shown. The chapters also illustrate that, while some PDAs have good forensic tools available (like later Palms and iPaks), the earlier ones do not: sifting through evidence on a Palm III, for example, is limited to hex and string searches.

Part VII (“Online-Based Forensics”) presents methods for determining where an email originated from via header examination, and how determined users could cover their tracks. Finally, they leverage searching for DNS records into a lesson on manipulating the entire VeriSign TLD (Top Level Domain) file in a large (100GB+) Postgres database, allowing them to find all DNS names owned by, in their example, the company Foundstone.

My only complaints about the book are the sudden request to change the kernel and a failure to put front and center the necessity of using a virtual machine environment before executing potentially hazardous code.

Otherwise it was a typical Bejtlich security book (no offense to the other authors), containing the basis for immediately creating Standard Operating Procedures, in particular for Live Response, proper forensic documentation, and creating forensic-compliant duplicate drives. It definitely has a place on my security bookshelf, alongside *The Tao of Network Security* and *Extrusion Detection*.

The book is published by Addison-Wesley (<http://www.awprofessional.com/bookstore/product>

<http://www.awprofessional.com/bookstore/product.asp?isbn=0321240693&rl=1>), ISBN 0-321-24069-3, and lists for \$55. User group members can get a 30% discount if their group belongs to the UG program.; it sells for \$34.64 at Amazon.com (new).

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Soft Hardware from Otterbox!

by Judy Lococo

Program Director, Kentucky-Indiana PCUG, KY

Fort Collins, CO is a charming college town. I know, I’ve been there, done that and have the t-shirt. You would not expect to find a lot of businesses prospering in this relatively quiet town that wasn’t geared towards students and faculty. However, I have discovered one that is worth further investigation, as they have some products that seem to be extremely useful in today’s global mentality.

After having been awarded a new 8700 Blackberry by Ziff Davis for participating in a webinar, I finally found the time to switch the cell phone to this device, and synchronize it with all the contacts, calendar appointments, tasks, etc. that has glommed onto me from years of Outlook usage. But the holster that came with it seemed to always dial home, whether I needed to or not. It seems that unless the keypad was locked when inserted into the holster, some of the keys along the side of the keypad were depressed, thus ET was phoning home without realizing.

Enter Otterbox, from Fort Collins (<http://www.otterbox.com>)! They have cases for a lot of different toys we now consider indispensable. They have products for the Blackberry, for the Treo, for the iPod Nano, for laptops, etc., so it would behoove all y’all (I had to do that at least once...) to see what is available for your gadget du jour. Not only do these cases stop the phone home syndrome (poetic, isn’t it?), but they are also shock-resistant, water-resistant, dust-resistant, scratch-resistant, and offer protection against extreme elements. The most significant discovery I have found is that you can use all the Blackberry features while it’s fully encased in the Otterbox, such as the track wheel, the keypad,



the escape key, etc! And when you need to recharge the unit itself, a small plug removes from the side of the case to allow access, so you don't even have to remove the case for this veritably essential chore.

The company is very user-friendly, and seems to be perfectly accommodating, to ensure that you are satisfied with their products. The black and gray color isn't the most flamboyant scheme, but it will go with almost any wardrobe choices you have, and doesn't call attention to what you are doing. The molded rubber and o-ring seals are a bit on the bulky side, but really do provide an unbelievable amount of protection, and transform a fairly delicate instrument into something a lot more usable and carefree. The Blackberry itself is not skinny, so just a little more girth doesn't deter me from believing this is an extremely essential accessory, especially for less than \$130 US.

I am one of those people who think hardware is boring, as all it does is just sit there & blindly obey. But these superb soft hardware enhancements, that actually do what they purport to, without a lot of glitz and hype, aren't at all boring. They are practically a necessity.

Now, if they could only find a way to protect you from leaving it on the seat in the taxi!

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Online Retirement Planning Resources

by Ira Wilsker

APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; radio and TV show host

Websites:

<http://finance.yahoo.com/retirement>

<http://finance.yahoo.com/calculator/retirement/ret-02>
Retirement Calculator

<http://money.cnn.com/pf/retirement/>

<http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/money101/lesson13>

Money Magazine-CNN retirement planning lessons

<http://www.fidelity.com/myPlan>

Fidelity Investments online interactive retirement calculator

Let's face it; many of us are working hard and may or may not be planning for retirement. All too many of us are present oriented, and do not adequately plan for our financial future. What-

ever your political persuasion or beliefs, social security retirement income is only intended as a minimal safety net, and not a comprehensive retirement plan. Many of my college students have expressed concerns that either social security will not be around for them to collect when eligible, or that benefits will be cut back as the ratio of workers to social security recipients declines.

Many of us are lucky enough to have 401(k) or 403(b) tax sheltered retirement plans, while others among us may have IRAs, either traditional or the newer Roth plans. Many of us blindly accept that our employer will take care of us. Most of us are not independently wealthy, and will have to depend on ourselves to provide for our own retirement, either in part or in full. Very few of us have a reliable prediction of how well off we will be financially at retirement.

There is an old cliché that "information is power," and by having good information and acting on it in a timely fashion, we may have a financially comfortable retirement. Fortunately, the internet has many reliable resources that can help us with our retirement planning, regardless of our current age or fiscal situation. Some retirement planning resources are available from the financial media websites, while others are available online from brokerages, insurance companies, and mutual fund sponsors.

The online service Yahoo has extensive financial information freely available, including a comprehensive personal finance section. One such section is its retirement information at finance.yahoo.com/retirement. This page, which is continually updated, is rich in retirement information. Included on this page, as I type this, are topics including a variety of "how to" guides, "questions and answers" on retirement topics, and a variety of financial calculators.

One calculator available for free from Yahoo is its online retirement calculator at finance.yahoo.com/calculator/retirement/ret-02. This online calculator is easy to use and confidential, and does not require any type of registration, but it does ask some very personal questions necessary to provide a retirement solution. The Yahoo retirement calculator asks for current age, income, spouse's income, predicted rate of inflation, desired retirement age, and other pertinent information.

While not totally comprehensive, the results provided by this calculator are a graph showing retirement balance and retirement income and an annualized table displaying age, salary, beginning retirement balance, additional savings required,

inflation adjusted desired retirement income, projected social security income, withdrawals from retirement account, and ending retirement account balances. While no online retirement calculator should be counted on to be absolutely accurate in predicting the future, this calculator will at least give the user a ballpark concept of what to expect at retirement under different scenarios.

Money Magazine and CNN have online retirement resources at money.cnn.com/pf/retirement. As I type this, the page is displaying information on 401(k) plans and possible hidden fees which can eat away at returns, how to draw upon a 401(k) at retirement, information on accepting a pension or lump sum distribution, "The last 401(k) guide you'll ever need," and strategies for a comfortable retirement. On this page are also links to a variety of calculators to calculate savings nest eggs, debt reduction, a "millionaire" calculator to predict when the user will accumulate a cool million, and other calculators.

Many brokerage houses, insurance companies, and mutual funds have online retirement information. One of my personal favorites is the "My Plan" available online from Fidelity Investments at www.fidelity.com/myPlan. No registration is required to use this comprehensive calculator. This calculator has a friendly and helpful audio voice accompanying the simple questions asked. The use of a slider to enter information, as well as to demonstrate the impact of any changes is commendable. With only five simple questions, the calculator will demonstrate potential retirement scenarios. Small grey question marks are displayed adjacent to each term used and will open a window explaining each of the terms. The first question asks your age, followed by (second question) your current income. The third question asks how much you have already saved for retirement, followed by (fourth question) an inquiry about how much you are putting aside each month for retirement, including employer contributions. The final question asks about your investment style, with the slider ranging from "Short Term" (no stocks, no bonds, 100% cash instruments) to "Most Aggressive" (100% stocks, no bonds, no short term investments).

As a solution, the calculator returns a pair of bar charts showing projected results at retirement if the market does poorly, or if the market performs about average. The calculated retirement goal shown is for 85% of pre-retirement income, poor market conditions, estimated social security income, and no other

retirement income. Clicking on the link "Our assumptions and methodology" will give the details on how the projections are determined, based on statistical information.

On the myPlan "Snapshot" projections page are sliders for "Time" (retirement age), "Money" (contributions), and "Investment" (style and risk categories of investments). By adjusting these sliders right and left, the scenario will interactively change demonstrating in real-time the effects of the changes. Clicking on the boxes at the top of the "Snapshot" allows the user to vary age, income, and amount of savings, all of which will effect the graph shown.

The best time to have started to plan for retirement was "yesterday." Since "yesterday" is past, we should all plan now for tomorrow. These and other reputable resources may be a big help in our retirement planning.

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Q. I read somewhere that I can enlarge my scroll bars, but I can't remember how to do it. They're so skinny, I keep missing them with my mouse pointer. I'm using Windows XP, if that makes any difference.

A. It's easy to expand the size of your scroll bars, which makes them an easier target for your cursor. Right-click a blank area of your Windows Desktop, then click Properties > Appearance tab > Advanced button.

Using the drop-down list under "Item," select "Scrollbar," then increase the value to the right to increase the size of the Scroll Bars. Your changes will be reflected in the little preview area at the top of the window. When finished, click OK twice, and your changes will take effect.

Q. I have a new computer, but it doesn't have a floppy disk drive. How do I use a USB flash drive to transfer data from my old Windows 98 computer, which has a floppy drive, to my new computer? Thank you for being there, Mr. M. I look forward to your newsletter (www.MrModem.com) every Friday.

A. If your old computer has a USB port and uses Windows 98, 2nd Edition, you can go to the Web site of your USB flash drive and download Windows 98

drivers. You'll find instructions on the site. With the drivers installed, plug in the USB drive and it should automatically be detected and installed. Once the drive appears in "My Computer," you can then drag files to it just like you would with a floppy disk, but obviously it has a much greater capacity than a floppy.

If your old computer does not have a USB port, you can purchase a USB floppy drive to use with the new computer. This is simply an external floppy drive that attaches to your computer by a USB cable. External floppy drives are inexpensive and are available at most computer and office supply stores. As soon as you plug in the drive, Windows will recognize it and you'll be ready to go.

For easy data transfer between two computers that have USB ports, you can't beat the ease and convenience of The Tornado device at www.the.tornado.com.

Q. Can you help me change the size of my mouse pointer? I've looked everywhere I can think of, but I can't seem to find how to do it.

A. Depending on the version of Windows you're using, click Start > Settings > Control Panel or Start > Control Panel. Double-click the Mouse icon, followed by the Pointers tab. In the Pointer Scheme section, click the dropdown list and select the scheme named Windows Standard Large, then Apply > OK.

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

Sites of the Month

Airline On-Time Statistics

Who among us hasn't had the experience of racing to the airport to catch a flight, only to get there and wait, and wait, and wait? If you're flying into or out of any airport in North America, you now have access to statistics that may help you resolve that problem. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics provides detailed information regarding airline punctuality, or lack thereof.

<http://tinyurl.com/dlzlz>

Polar Inertia

A self-described journal of nomadic and popular culture. This unusual online magazine is updated bimonthly with visuals and articles that record the ever-changing landscape of modern urbanism. The January- February issue featured Soviet bus shelters, Hong Kong mansions, street graphics, India's reclaimed construction, and more. My only criticism is that the site's default font is bifocal hostile. If you experience the same problem, click View > Text Size

(or your browser's equivalent wording) and increase the size of the display font. www.polarinertia.com

Trivia Library

Jeopardy fans and other trivia buffs will want to bookmark this library of interesting and eclectic facts. Categories of random facts include History, Religion, Words, Love, Psychics, Film, Sports, and many other topics. Be sure to check out the Lists section which contains obscure lists, facts and figures such as the "Nine Breeds of Dog That Bite the Most," or "11 Missing People Who Disappeared."

www.trivia-library.com

Mr. Modem's weekly computer-help newsletter provides prompt, personal answers to your computer questions by email. Use Promotional Code 25810 and receive two additional free months (8 issues!) with your 12-month subscription. For more information, to view a sample issue or to subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

Upgrading Your Monitor

by Vinny La Bash

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

Many more folks than I thought are getting the urge to watch high definition video on their personal computers. If high definition has you captivated, pay attention to the technologies known as HDMI and HDCP.

HDMI or High Definition Media Interface is a technology that connects video receivers and DVD players to devices such as a television. It makes no difference to HDMI if your set is high definition or not. The technology handles both standard and high definition resolutions.

HDPC or High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection is a completely different animal. Intel developed the technology specifically to prevent distortion or any kind of electronic interference between source and receiver. For example, HDPC encrypts the digital content of anything that a device such as a DVD player might send through a Digital Visual Interface (DVI) to a television set, a projector or a computer monitor. The encryption used is not a form of copy protection, but a process designed to protect the integrity of the data. In other words, HDMI makes sure that what is sent is what's received.

It's important to understand that HDCP is content protection, not copy protection. It won't prevent you from pausing live programming or recording a program to view at a later time. Any content provider that did this would soon be at war with its customers.

As long as features such as "time-shifting" keep appearing, protecting copyright material becomes

increasingly difficult. Copyrights are important because without them there is no protection for the artists, authors, and performers who create material or those who use them.

Your home equipment can implement any kind of copy protection, but a content provider might allow no copies whatsoever. Another provider might let you make a limited number of copies. Still another provider might put limitations on how the material is used. Many factors come into play. The mechanism for distribution, source, equipment design, and equipment configuration all have their unique effect. A content provider will usually insist on enforcing its own brand of copy protection.

HDCP makes its appearance at the DVI connection, the last link in the video chain. HDCP makes no decisions on any type of copy protection strategy, it merely protects the choice.

It may be a let down to find out that HDCP isn't an issue yet. However, it will become more important when high definition takes over. Expect all high definition DVD players to eventually use HDCP.

If you own a DVD player that isn't HDCP compliant, you will still be able to use it even if your TV isn't HDCP compliant. You just won't experience high definition quality images. HDCP will restrict playback to standard quality. This prevents pirates from getting perfect copies of movies or other digital content. Upgrades are definitely in most people's future.

Windows Vista will certainly support HDCP, as will upcoming versions of the Mac OS. What it comes down to is if you want to watch high definition content on your computer monitor, the monitor must be HDCP-compliant.

Almost any television set you buy today will use HDCP, but very few computer monitors are HDCP compliant. Do your research carefully. If you want to watch high definition on your monitor, it must be HDCP compliant.

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.

Scanning Published Photos

by Irving Elliott

Twin Cities PC User Group, MN

If you scan a photo from a newspaper or magazine, then examine the results on your computer screen,

you may see a criss-cross pattern of fuzzy lines over the entire print. If you print the scanned photo, you may also see such a pattern. This happens because pictures in newspapers and magazines are printed in a "halftone" mode.

The halftone process was invented when it was desired to print black-gray-white photographs using a printing press that used only single-color black ink. In this process, the photo is divided into a pattern of small squares, then each square is replaced with a black "blob" of a size proportional to the average shade of black in the square. For example: a white square remains white; a light gray square becomes a small black blob; a dark gray square becomes a larger black blob; a black square remains black. The gray shades were called "half-tones," which explains the name of the process. Originally, the conversion was done by re-photographing the picture with a camera that contained a wire screen. then developing the picture in a high-contrast mode. Nowadays, the process can be accomplished on a computer.

If the density (squares per inch) of the scanned picture is not an exact multiple of the pixel density of the scanner, computer screen, or printer, an interference pattern occurs. They may also appear if the original photo is slightly rotated after scanning.



Colored pictures from publications may also give you interference patterns. For these, the halftone process uses filters to split the image into more than one black-gray-white photo, with each photo representing the intensities for each color. In each resulting halftone, the blob pattern is slightly offset from that of the other halftones. The picture is reproduced by printing the same paper once for each halftone, in the corresponding color. The printing press does not print one color on top of another because of the slight offset of the halftones.

You can get rid of the interference pattern by processing the picture with any photo software package that has a “blur” or “soften” selection. For example, in Paint Shop Pro, the IMAGE/SOFTEN menu selection spreads the black blobs so that the fuzzy bars magically disappear.

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The Windows Vista Pains'n'Gains Page

by Jan Fagerholm
*Assistant Editor, PC Community
Hayward CA*

Applications compatibility is still slow coming in Vista. Since Vista came out, Microsoft has released one update aimed at improving applications compatibility (KB929427). While it is not unreasonable to expect vendors to update their applications, Microsoft has not been forthcoming with information that vendors need. Both Symantec and McAfee (70% of the anti-virus market) are at open war with Microsoft over the lack of kernel information on Vista. Microsoft says this is for “security reasons.” This reasoning seems specious in view of That Other Operating System (Linux), which is Open Source. Anyone can download the kernel source code and study how it works, and Linux has far better security than Windows for just that reason. Everybody knows how it works; they also know just how to prevent intrusion.

So, compatibility for lots of applications has been slow coming. The Big Kahuna application vendor, Adobe, is an example. While CS2 installs and runs on Vista, they have released about 300 MB worth of patches to address “compatibility issues” in Vista. These range from visual anomalies to outright crashes. If reliability is foremost, you may be stuck in Windows XP for several months. Don’t give up that dual-boot configuration just yet. . . .

ReadyBoost is a new feature of Vista that lets you use a USB flash drive as part of system memory, improving what Microsoft characterizes as “system responsiveness.” It serves as storage for the system cache that gets paged to the hard drive in a low RAM machine. Computers with less than 1 GB of RAM benefit most from ReadyBoost; Vista moves a lot of the system cache to the flash drive, where it is accessed much faster than if it were paged to the hard drive.

I tested ReadyBoost by reducing the RAM on my Vista machine to 512 MB and running Vista over several sessions to get a feel of the system’s responsiveness, then adding a San Disk Cruzer 2 GB ReadyBoost-capable flash drive to see the difference. Leaving the flash drive in the computer during startup actually lengthened boot times. (Same thing happens if you add RAM: Windows simply spends more time filling the added RAM with more system components.) The speed difference shows up while you are running applications. Vista caches system and application pieces in memory, but lacking memory, it will simply page these off to the hard drive, which is the slowest component in the computer. When it can page these pieces to the flash drive instead, system response improves markedly. If you do something like load Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, and CorelDRAW, and switch between the applications, there is a definite improvement in system response. Crude stopwatch testing on my part suggest 25%-50% improvements whenever Vista works the cache. Even Flight Simulator X was faster, with less delay between scenery changes while in flight. Noted from other sources, performance improvements are best in machines with the RAM configured single-channel and barely noticeable in machines that have paired modules running in dual-channel mode.

Note that the flash drive must be ReadyBoost capable. It must meet minimum speed tests before Vista will use it. Every other flash drive I own fails this test. When you go to the store, make sure the package says the flash drive is ReadyBoost capable. A side benefit of ReadyBoost is that if you don’t want the flash drive for ReadyBoost, you can get an ordinary 2 GB drive for as low as \$14.

So, this month, I found out how much faster I can’t run my incompatible applications using ReadyBoost in Vista; the Microsoft version of Catch-22. Stay tuned for more misadventures.

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From The DealsGuy

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

Remote Desktop Monitoring is Here, But Think of it as a Spy!

You can monitor the activity of all the PCs in your classroom remotely. Plus, you can share your screen with your students' PCs, making demos and presentations much easier. Classroom Spy Professional from EduIQ.com <<http://www.EduIQ.com>> enables remote interaction between the user on the administrator's computer and users of individual computers, even over LAN, WLAN, VPN and the Internet. Once installed and configured, the program lets you see what's taking place on the screens of remote machines and, if needed, take full control over the mouse and keyboard of any machine. There is also an ability to show your own screen to remote users and execute some administrative operations. The program encrypts screen data as well as mouse and keyboard input.

Because the program can run as a service on Vista, the login page and User Account Control (UAC) prompt are accessible. There is a live picture of the remote computer screens. Due to some optimization, the live screen doesn't use a high bandwidth, but even when the lower network bandwidth is required, the refresh interval can be extended using one mouse click. The activities of any student can be recorded for further analysis and assessment. The teacher can use the existing computer infrastructure to deliver a presentation directly to the screens of remote users.

It's also possible to execute various administrative commands, for example, log off users, turn off, restart, hibernate, or suspend one or all remote computers at once with a single mouse click. There is also an ability to schedule recording of remote computers desktops, and record remote activities, even when there is nobody monitoring the administrator's computer. The capabilities of Classroom Spy Professional can effectively be used not only in a classroom but also in offices.

Classroom Spy Professional 2.4.2 runs under Windows 98, Me, NT4, 2000, XP, 2003 and Vista, and costs \$49.95 (US) for a three-computer license. User Group members are offered a 15% discount at

<<http://www.ClassroomSpy.com>> using the coupon code PRUG788243. For other types of licenses, please refer to <http://www.ClassroomSpy.com/classroomspy_pro.htm>. Licensed customers are entitled to free technical support by e-mail. Additional information on the product, as well as a free 30-day evaluation copy is available from the Web site.

Direct download link: <<http://www.ClassroomSpy.com/dwn/classroomspypro.exe>> (3.6 Mb)

A Bonanza of Goodies

Paul Witheridge from the Sarnia Computer Users Group in Sarnia, Ontario, sent me some items that my readers might be interested in. I'll list them, but be aware that some may already be expired by the looks of the coupon codes. I'm sorry that I didn't have room last month. I'm making them short so I can fit them all in. It's always good to have a friend with a sharp eye.

Acrobat is an expensive product and now they have their product activation which many resent. Here is a deal on another PDF product. How about a \$20 discount on Nuance PDF Converter Professional 4! Coupon code

PDF\$20OFF; <http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=0&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=19198&PID=855990&ClickID=dwkrzzowcsmxhoybzkkkt2wmmk0mksc2txw&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=0>

DealsGuy note: I read a negative review of PDF Converter in the December issue of SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization's DATA BUS. <<http://www.semco.org>>

10% off any purchase at the CA store. Coupon code DecAFFOFF10; <http://store.digitalriver.com/servlet/ControllerServlet?Action=DisplayHomePage&SiteID=caconsum&Locale=en_US&Env=BASE&ClickID=bdesuukdflyvqkgnueezmdyye1yelfmzne>

\$10 discount on CA Internet Security Suite 2007. Coupon code DecAFF10ISS; <<http://www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/iss.html>>

\$10 discount on CA Anti-Spam 2007. Coupon code AFFAS07; <<http://www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/anti-spam.html>>

\$20 discount on CA PC MacLAN. Coupon code AFFML07; <<http://go.lockergnome.com/649>>. <http://shop.ca.com/file_sharing/pc_mac_network.aspx>

\$10 discount on CA Personal Firewall 2007. Coupon code AFFFW2007; <<http://www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/firewall.html>>

\$10 discount on Allume Anonymous Surfing Platinum. Coupon code 285678; <http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?

CID=280604&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=1839&PID=873873&ClickID=cqai77lqpxskzln7aaa4vqssawsaxpv4ei&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=280604>

\$5 discount on Allume Bass Screen Saver. Coupon code 266358; <http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=0&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=1839&PID=840116&ClickID=cqai77lqpxskzln7aaa4vqssawsaxpv4ei&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=280604>

\$10 discount on Allume Morpheus Photo Animation Suite; <http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_Main.Entry17c?SID=1839&SP=10023&CID=279570&PID=863664&PN=1&V1=863664&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=2795700000280604>

20% off Laughingbird Web Graphics Creator. Coupon code Holiday20%off; <<http://www.webgraphicscreator.com/>>

20% off Laughingbird Logo Creator. Coupon code Holiday20%off; <http://www.thelogocreator.com/Corporate_logos.htm>

10% off Roxio Easy Media Creator 9 Suite. Coupon code SAVE10C9; <<http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/creator/suite/overview.html>>

\$10 discount Roxio Popcorn 2 (DVD copier). Coupon code P2SAVE10; <<http://go.lockergnome.com/657>>. <<http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/popcorn/standard/overview.html>>

20% off ACDsee 9. Coupon code AFFACD9; <<http://www.acdsee.com/products/acdsee/index>>

20% off ACDsee Photo Editor. Coupon code AFFPHOTO; <<http://www.acdsee.com/products/photoeditor/index>>

25% off ACDSee Pro Photo Manager. Coupon code AFFPRO25; <<http://www.acdoffers.com/en/na/acdseepro/index.htm>>

\$400 discount TurboCAD Deluxe v12.2 Upgrade; <<http://www.turbocad.com/prodinfo.asp?t=1&mcid=382>>

(DealsGuy note: There is a problem with the stated discount, which doesn't make sense, so you should check on where the mistake is.)

20% off Net Nanny products. Coupon code 270355; <<http://www.netnanny.com/>>

\$5 savings on Big Hammer Patio Designer; <<http://www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/patio.aspx>>

\$5 savings on Big Hammer Deck Designer; <<http://www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/deck.aspx>>

\$10 savings on Big Hammer Garage and Shed Designer bundle; <http://www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/garage_shed_bundle.aspx>

10% off on Rising Antivirus. Coupon code ONDISCOUNT10; <<http://go.lockergnome.com/666>>. <<http://www.rising-global.com/CategoryDetail.aspx?MenuId=1&CategoryId=3>>

10% off on Markzware (Tools for Printing). Coupon code PILOT10; <http://www.markzware.com/store_usa/>

20% off RadarSync System Checkup. Coupon code RadarSync2in1-11; <<http://go.lockergnome.com/668>>. <<http://www.radar-sync.com/>>

That's it for this month. I'll soon have some new product announcements 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>>

Free Software

by Maurice Hamoy
President, Noromis

I have authorized our order department to make *completely free* copies of Noromis PhotoLab available to any user group member in the US or Canada. See the easy instructions for all your members to get completely free copies of what *imagingresource.com* called "(Noromis PhotoLab) is simply the simplest camera-to-print process we've seen, with things like red-eye reduction taken care of during image import. These guys spent as much time on the user interface as they did on image analysis—and it shows. Some companies would just outsource that, but what's that say about them?"

Simply tell your members to either email me or call me, giving me their name and email address, and ask them to mention the Noromis PhotoLab UserGroup Special Offer.

I will arrange for them to immediately receive their *free copy* of Noromis PhotoLab. All I ask from your members is this: if you like our software, please tell some people about it. We know how valuable word-of-mouth is for a new product from a new company so all I ask is that your members (if they like Noromis PhotoLab), spread the word to another about it. That's all. No "proof" is required that they

have spread the word. All I ask is that your members honestly share their reactions to our software with their friends.

For your *free copy*, either email me at: mhamoy@noromis.com or call me at: 973-342- 7533.

Get Organized Now!

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS

With today's complex world and multi-tasking, it is not surprising that we all seem to have too much to remember. The time-honored "to-do list" is still a suitable way to keep all of your tasks remembered and organized. Now the to-do list has gone high tech with Gubb an online list-maker.

Gubb is simple, effective, and free. Just surf over to www.gubb.net and click on the large Start Here button. Enter your email address and the username and password that you want to use. Gubb will present you with preformatted lists or you can create your own from scratch. Each list can have a different background color or you can make them all the same.

Gubb made *PC Magazine's* list of the 10 worst application names, but don't let the name throw you. Gubb is a winner despite its name. Gubb's clean and simple interface makes it easy to create lists and to add, edit, or delete items. Important items can have one, two, or three stars. You can sort items by priority, date due, completed items, or alphabetically. Especially useful is the ability to rearrange items in a list by dragging and dropping them. You can also drag and drop the lists themselves to position them on your screen. If your lists get too long, you can collapse them so you see only the title, opening them to full length as you need them.

If crossing items off your list as you complete them gives you a sense of satisfaction, Gubb will let you perform that task quite easily. Just click in the check box next to each item and Gubb puts a line through the item and marks it as completed. Gubb can also move the item to a completed list automatically or you can set it up so that you can archive your completed items at the end of the day, or any time of your choosing. If at anytime you need to see if, or when, you completed a task, you simply click on the name of the list to look at all the completed items and the time and date that you marked them complete.

These features alone make this Web service worthwhile, but there is more. You can share your lists with others. You can email or text message items right into your lists. You can have any of your lists emailed to yourself or to others. If you have an Internet-connected cell phone, lists can also be sent to your phone. So if you were in a grocery store and needed your shopping list, with the right equipment, you could access it from Gubb on your cell phone. All this may sound a bit complicated, but Gubb has done an exemplary job of keeping all these tasks easy to do.

My husband and I have each created multiple lists. We also have several lists that we share. Since we work together, this has really helped keep us organized both at home and at work. He can add items to my office or home lists and I can add anything I like to his office or home "honey-do" list. Gubb is helping us keep synchronized as well as organized.

Gubb is not perfect, but it is close. My complaints are pretty minor. I would love the ability to create several categories within each list. I would also like to be able to easily see if my husband added something to my list or vice versa. The program offers 3 shades of each of the following colors: blue, red, yellow, green, orange, pink, and gray. That's 21 colors to choose from so I am really being picky when I say I would like to be able to use purple, turquoise blue, and lime green for my lists. Okay, I know I am being hard to please, but maybe the Gubb creators will accommodate my wishes.

A recent survey showed that 25% of New Year resolutions are completely forgotten, but now you can use Gubb to resurrect your "I am going to be more organized" resolution. Sometimes getting organized means buying shelves, bins, baskets, and folders, but if you have an Internet-connected computer, Gubb will help you get organized without any expense. Go ahead. Do it. It will feel great to get all those scraps of paper and to-do notes off your desk and to get all those to do items off your mind. I know, because Gubb has helped me do just that!

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Online Education

MIT, USC, Kyoto University, UNESCO these are only a handful of the many outstanding institutions from around the world making teaching and learning with technology easier through Open Educational Resources. By researching, devel-

oping and distributing the very best in cost and commercial free educational content, OWL commits to bringing the message and opportunity of open education to everyone.

To schools and home schools, teachers and students, instructors, professors, college and returning adult students, OWL brings the content, tools, teaching technology, elearning programs, Internet home schooling, and high-speed Internet access to make the digital revolution work for everyone. OWL is a Minnesota non-profit that has been serving the Minnesota home schooling and Wisconsin home schooling communities with on the ground and online support for educational excellence. Now, OWL joins others in helping to bring the open education message of high quality learning and teaching to all—the world is open!

Learning is For Everyone, Inc. is a nonprofit 501 C(3) organization whose goal is to provide information resources on and off the web, and assistance through its activities in all aspects of education at all stages of life.

<<http://www.Learningis4everyone.org>>

Society News

Planning Meeting Notes

April 3, 2007

by John McMillan

Sally Springett hosted the April planning meeting attended by Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, Arpad Kovacs, Mike Lavelle, John McMillan, and Dan Rothfuss.

The meeting opened with a discussion of Arpad's topic, Free Hidden Programs from Microsoft. This was our first meeting at the Greece Senior Center at 3 Vince Toffany Blvd. The meeting room was large and comfortable but did not have a projector or large screen capabilities. Arpad used his personal projector to present lists the sources and some examples of the what he considered the more useful programs. Approximately 25 people liked what they saw and there were many questions from the floor.

The May meeting at St. John's Meadows, 1423 Elmwood Ave., is expected to feature Bill Statt. Dave Thompson has offered to do an introductory talk about the Photography Special Interest Group in June. We are negotiating with a speaker to discuss Vista in July. We have a reservation for Brighton's Buckland Park for the August picnic and flea market. There was an extensive discussion of possibilities for revamping the Monitor but no

decisions have been reached. Points being considered are formatting and printing labor contributions by volunteers, restrictions of printing equipment, printing speed and cost, plus bulk mailing restrictions and cost. Any potential changes would be thoroughly investigated and tested before implementation.

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Arpad Kovacs

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Q: One member is using an optical mouse. It seems to freeze for a few moments during random operations. He is using XP. No error messages are displayed when it comes back on its own.

A: It could be static coming from your rug. It should be a driver problem. It can also be caused by something under the mouse. A pat-terned mouse pad can cause it problems.

Q: About 1/3 of the time when booting up the computer he gets an error message.

A: This could be pointing to a resource error. It may also be that your hard drive is failing. Check using scandisk into safe mode (F).

Q: One member has a tv coaxial cable coming into his PC. It contains a music station that he would like to capture and play in his car.

A: Total Recorder can capture the music being inputted. Ambrosia.sw.com Software performs a similar function.

Q: Another has a question about the DMR working in Vista. Can an incoming signal be recorded?

A: You can take the audio out jack, loop it back to audio in. Also would work with s-video out to s-video in. Either one does not have the best of qualities. There are also converter boxes that can be used to convert the VGA signal to HDMI to keep a high definition.

Q: One has Win98 running AVG. When booting he always get a message from AVG. Once a second message is displayed, the booting continues. He will finally get a last message about a missing DLL.

A: For the DLL message, go to the website windowsdll.com, looking for the dll and find out where the DLL is supposed to be. You can download it, too. Some of the messages may be coming from the Registry as uninstalled programs are being called for.

Q: What about RoadRunner's problem that IE7 is not compatible with Win XP? They recommend using IE 6.

A: You may want to set up your IE browser so that all of the cache and temporary files are removed when closing the session. This will help to clean up after IE 7 is used. IE captures websites so that the apparent speed is improved.

Q: One has two computers. He is using a dial-up service. How can he share one internet between both machines?

A: Use the XP machine to enable connection sharing. The two have to be networked together by a standard crossover Ethernet cable. If he were using DSL, he could set up a router and share.

Q: Nick Francesco was asked "What do you think of Vista?"

A: If you have a very, very high end machine, Vista can be fun. For the standard user, there is no real benefit other than the eye-candy. It is completely different. It is Windows in name only. Most software that you have now will not run under Vista. They are slowly being updated and will then cost you again to upgrade their pieces, too.

April Meeting Minutes

by John McMillan, Secretary

Arpad Kovacs welcomed about 80 people who gathered in the Pittsford Library for the April meeting of the Rochester Computer Society. He opened the business meeting by mentioning that people whose dues are in arrears should see Steve Staub who stated that effective April first, dues rose to \$35 per year for regular members and to \$25 for others. Nick Francesco, our featured speaker and an avid reader of the Monitor (the club newsletter), compared the dues to the hourly fees of professional hardware and software experts. He considered twelve monthly meetings with Help's Half Hour; social mingling with other users and speakers addressing topics of interest; to be a fantastic bargain.

The Monitor will be assembled by volunteers at St. Stephens, Saturday, Apr. 14th at 9:30 am and mailed to paid up members. The planning group will meet at Sally's house at 7 pm May 1st. The next regular meeting will be held at the St. John's Meadows retirement complex, 1 Johnsarbor Drive West, 1423 Elmwood Ave on May 8th. Dave Thompson stated that the Photography SIG would meet from 6:30-8:30 May 3rd at the same location.

Arpad requested volunteers for the Nominating committee that should not include current office holders. Candidates are being sought for President,

Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer plus one Board Member at Large. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor before paid up members vote at the May Meeting.

After a short social break, Arpad introduced Nick and announced that his topic was Linux. Once again, recorder malfunctions prevent me from accurately reconstructing what was said in great detail. Nick has used several Linux distributions, but recommended Ubuntu for the normal user. It is an operating system with a Graphics User Interface similar to Windows but requires less storage and memory. He emphasized that it is *free*, easy to load, includes many applications, *free*, and has the ability to run many Windows only programs. Ubuntu can be installed as the sole operating system; or as a dual boot process, either in a different partition or a second hard drive. Nick did say that installing Linux on a hard drive wipes the drive and that Linux is not yet compatible with NTFS formatted files. Ubuntu can also be run directly from the CD although that is much slower. As I recall, he said something to the effect that Ubuntu was a translation of "We don't do windows"; yet Linux is able to produce much of the "eye candy" that is now included in Vista for an even higher price than Windows XP.

He verbally compared his personal machine with just 256 Mb of RAM and a clock speed around 1.0 Gb to an office laptop with dual core 64 bit technology and 4 Gb of RAM. Using the slower machine, he was able to demonstrate many of the processes average users would run. Open office for example offers a suite for document or word processing, spreadsheets, drawing and graphics processing, and building Power Point like presentations. There were also a wide range of other applications included in the free distribution, prompting him to say that the number of choices available to Linux users is staggering and sometimes confusing.

Nick answered questions as he went along and his sense of humor was evident throughout the presentation.

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 03/17/07	\$485.49
Income	
Dues	\$410.00
Donations	<u>56.84</u>
Total Income	\$466.84
Expenses	
St. Stephens	\$60.00

APCUG 50.00
 Postmaster 50.00
 Total Exp \$160.00
 Balance as of 04/12/07 \$792.33

Renewals

Tony Dellelo, John Baly, Steven Murphy, Dennis MacMahon, Don Nichols, Phil Mendola, Marlys Whitcome, James Murdock

New Members

Will Herzog, Bob Sheahen, Fredric Gary

The Lighter Side

When you go to bed at night and forget to shut down your computer, I think you ought to know what actually goes on. It's 2 am, do you know where your icons are and what they are doing? Click on this site and you will see what happens when you aren't looking.

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~jvdkuyp/flash/see.htm>



I caught the end of one of those cable TV Internet programs. In the last five minutes, the host said, "Every week we get thousands of pieces of email asking 'How do I get online?'" Neat trick.



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

Me: "Software."

Him: "You mean, like, pajamas?"

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

Customer: "The install fails half way through. I tried several times, and it always fails at the same point."
 Tech Support: "Did you see any kind of error message?"

Customer: "Yes."

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

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

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

Customer: "Yes."

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

Customer: "Yes, it is."

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

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



Co-Worker: "This other guy came to me for help with his workstation, and I was wondering if you knew what was up." (describes symptoms)

Me: "I've seen that before. Try typing in this command and see if that helps." Later....

Co-Worker: "I typed in that command, and it didn't do any good."

Me: "Now, did you type this on *your* machine or the machine of the person who was having the problem?"

Co-Worker: (pause) "Oh."

