

MONITOR

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How to Forward Email

by Vinny La Bash

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL

Let's examine a typical email scenario. After opening your email, you find a message that you simply must share with all your friends. You press the "Forward" button and one way or another get all their email addresses in the "To:" box. Feeling quite satisfied after pressing the "Send" button, you sit back and take satisfaction in the joy you are sending to others.

You should be ashamed of yourself. You have just exposed everyone on your mailing list plus any people who received the email ahead of you to unending streams of spam, spyware, viruses, and other assorted electronic junk and mischief that hackers are prone to these days. What you have done is prove conclusively that you don't have a clue about the proper way to forward email. Your license to com-

pute should be revoked immediately.

As messages get forwarded in this way they move along the internet, and the list of email addresses embedded in the note gets longer and longer. All it takes is for just one of these folks to get a virus or some other kind of malware, and everyone who has their email address in that list can be infected.

Anyone can take those email addresses, sell them or send out their own junk mail. Assuming you are a mature responsible adult, you most likely would not want to harm anyone, even inadvertently. What does a conscientious person do to stop or better yet, prevent damage?

When you click the "Forward" button you enter the edit mode of your email client. Before you do anything else DELETE all the other email addresses appearing at the top of the message. Let me repeat. DELETE them by highlighting them and THEN pressing the Delete button on your keyboard. It doesn't take long. When you've finished, delete any

other junk that isn't actually part of the message, such as information about the original sender. Delete anything that is not part of what you want to send.

If you're sending the message to more than one person, do not use the To: or Cc: fields for adding email addresses. Always, always use the BCC: (blind carbon copy) field for listing the email addresses. The people receiving the message will see only their own address.

Some email clients don't automatically show the blind carbon copy option. If that's the case, click on where it says To: and your address list will appear. Highlight the email address and choose the BCC: option. It's not much effort, and it eliminates the possibility of someone using the email addresses inappropriately. When you send using the blind carbon copy, everyone receiving the message will see "Undisclosed Recipients" in the heading information.

If your email client requires that something be in the To: field, send the message to yourself and use the BCC: field for everyone else.

Remove any FW in the subject line. Better yet, clean up the subject line completely by fixing any spelling or grammatical mistakes. Why let someone else's errors appear as your own?

Sometimes you will receive an email that is a petition. It states a position and directs you to add your name, address, and sometimes other information. Then you're supposed to send it to as many people as possible. If enough people do this, an email can contain hundreds if not thousands of names and addresses.

The longer the list gets the more valuable it becomes to a spammer or hacker because the names and email addresses are valid. If you really want to support the idea behind the petition, a personal letter to the eventual recipient carries a lot more weight than a piece of paper with a long list of names. When you think about it, lists like these can be generated from telephone books. Do you really think that a member of congress is going to pay attention to something that could be so easily faked?

Sometimes these petitions come with statements or warnings that the emails are being traced. Don't believe it. While technology is constantly improving, there is still no way to trace emails through the internet.

One kind of really annoying email is the one that promises that something wonderful is going to happen, but only if I forward the message to at least ten people in the next ten minutes. However, if I fail to do so, some unspeakable evil will surely befall me. I always fail to do so, and nothing bad has happened yet, but I wonder if this could be the reason I haven't won the lottery.

Before forwarding some version of an Amber Alert, take a little time to check out the story behind the message. Most of these messages have been circulating around the internet for years. Some of them have been around for a decade. Almost all of them are much less than they seem.

Some sites that will help:

www.hoaxbusters.com

<<http://www.hoaxbusters.com>>

<http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/internet/a/current_netlore.htm>

<<http://ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/bulletins/h-05.shtml>>

<<http://www.snopes.com/snopes.asp>>

<<http://www.vmyths.com/>>

You may not be able to stop this stuff on your own, but you can stop contributing to it.

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Let's Clean "Start-Up"

by Bob Elgines

Colorado River Computer Club

Does your computer boot-up or run slow? Maybe there are too many programs running in the background. Let us do the following check first.

Hold your CTRL & AL T buttons and press the DELETE button.

Click on the PERFORMANCE tab, is your CPU Usage running more than 10% or is your Physical Memory in total use?

Go to **START** then RUN, type in "**msconfig**" which stands for Microsoft System Configuration. In Windows VISTA you can find RUN in the ACCESSORY folder under PROGRAMS.

The System Configuration Utility windows will come up.

First go to the upper right tab labeled

STARTUP, here you will see the list of items that load during startup. Of course some you want, some you don't. In the first column labeled **STARTUP ITEM** gives a very rough idea to what it is referenced, but the second column labeled **COMMAND**, is much more useful. To read it better, widen the column out by holding your mouse symbol over the vertical line located before the next column label. A double arrow will appear, then hold down left mouse button and move it to the right. This information tells you where it is located and in some cases which program is using it. Uncheck those in question, you can put them back in later if you need to. Do not uncheck your Antivirus or Spyware programs.

Next go to the tab on top labeled **SERVICES**, this shows all of the programs running now. You do not want to uncheck those labeled Microsoft under the **MANUFACTURER** column, so to start off, lets put a check mark in the box below labeled "Hide all Microsoft Services."

Now, while you are reviewing the other programs running in the background, note the fourth column labeled **STATUS**. If it says **STOPPED**, then don't worry about it. We just want to stop the strange ones that are **RUNNING** You can uncheck those that you are not familiar with, here again you may bring them back in later.

After un-checking all those items under tabs **STARTUP & SERVICES**, then click on **APPLY** and **CLOSE**.

The System Configuration Utility will now ask you to **RESTART** (or **Boot**) your computer.

After restarting, a window will come up stating "System Configuration Utility" has been changed, be sure to put a check mark in the bottom left (labeled "Don't show this message or launch") before clicking **OK**.

If you improved your operation of your computer, you can put back in the items one at a time until you find the program that was slowing you down.

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Create Your Own Newspaper

Q. I'm a news junkie and though many sites permit me to customize the type of news I want, I was wondering if there is any way to pull together news from various sources so I can just go to one place and see my favorite news items?

A. One of the oldest news sites on the Web is one that does permit you to do that in a clever way, and for free. The site is called **CRAYON** (www.crayon.net). The name is an acronym derived from **CR**EAtE **Y**our **O**wn **N**ewspaper. After registering on the site, go to Your Paper's Settings where you can name your publication, give it a motto, select the page layout, graphics, and then select your news sources from a vast array of publications, news media, by topic or other criteria. Once you've made and saved all your selections, log-in and click "Read My Paper." It will be assembled and presented to you faster than you can holler, "Extry! Extry! Read all about it!" If you're a news junkie, be sure to check out www.newser.com, also.

Q. When I click View Details in a folder, is there any way I can keep that view so I don't have to re-select the Details view again with the next folder?

A. Theoretically, Windows will remember the View selected for each folder and will display it the same way each time the folder is opened. The operative word in the previous sentence is "theoretically." Sometimes Windows remembers, sometimes Windows doesn't. I can relate.

You can encourage Windows to remember your View settings by first configuring a folder the way you want it to appear. Then, go to the Control Panel Folder Options View tab. For versions of Windows prior to XP, look at the list of options in the Advanced Settings section and locate "Remember each folder's view Settings." Click to place a check mark in front of this option, then click Apply OK to save and exit. XP users, click the "Apply to All Folders" button, followed by Apply OK.

Vista users, go to the Control Panel Appearance

and Personalization Folder Options View tab and click the "Apply to Folders" button. A less click-intensive method with Vista is to click the Start button and in the "Start Search" field, type "folder options." Click Folder Options when it appears as a search result and you'll be transported to the Folder Options dialog box.

Q. I'm divorced, but my married name appears in the From: field of email that I send using Outlook. I can't figure out how to change the name people see when I send messages. Can you help, Mr. M?

A. You can easily change the name that identifies you as the sender. The process is the same for both Outlook and Outlook Express: Click Tools Accounts Mail tab. If you have more than one email address, you will see them displayed in a list. If you only have one, it will be the only one displayed. (When it comes to stating the obvious, you can count on Mr. Modem.)

Click to select the account you want to change, then click the Properties button. The current name displayed on your email will appear in the Name: field, which you can edit to reflect your new name -- or old name, as the case may be. When you're finished, click Apply OK to save your changes.

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

Sites of the Month

The American Roadside

This site is bumper-to-bumper full of entertaining roadside attractions, interesting destinations along scenic routes, and wonderful old "meat-loaf-and-taters" diners. Read articles, view the photo gallery, or buy books, t-shirts, and other American Roadside paraphernalia, all destined to end up in your junk drawer.

www.theamericanroadside.com

About Big Numbers

Have you ever wondered how big an octovigintillion is? How about a tredecillion, or a quattuordecillion, or a million-jillion, or perhaps a penicillin? There are so many big numbers here that you'll have a splitting headache in no time.

<http://tinyurl.com/yyslq65>

Brain Training

BrainMetrix advises us that when it comes to our neurons, "use 'em or lose 'em." To help keep the ol'

brain cells stimulated, BrainMetrix provides an assortment of cerebral games and exercises that will keep our minds sharp for... for... well, perhaps it's too late for me, but hopefully it won't be for you. Give your gray matter a vigorous workout by participating in any of a number of these mind-training exercises.

<http://brainmetrix.com>

Mr. Modem's weekly newsletter delivers helpful computer tips, great Web sites and his personal answers to your questions! Trial offer: Subscribe online using Promo Code 1146 and receive one free month with your 6-month subscription (28 issues!) To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

Spring Clean Your Computer

by Joe Shipley

Treasurer, Phoenix PCUG, AZ

While you're cleaning everything else around your home and office at this time of year, don't forget to clean your computer. There is truth to the saying, "A clean computer is a happy computer."

With the time we spend creating and working on our systems, we should do all we can to keep them running smoothly and give them long, healthy lives. So here are some things we can all do to prolong the lives of our systems. As a cautionary note: *backup* all your important items before doing any maintenance on your system. If you don't feel comfortable opening your system or editing the Registry, then don't do it! But what I intend to discuss here is not rocket science. These items are the same ones I perform when I clean my clients' systems.

Blow the Dust Out!

Dust is your computer's enemy! So get rid of it. The electronic components in a system generate heat. Heat is bad for a system. The more dust in a machine, the hotter it will run. When motherboard components get overheated, they "take a powder" and just shut themselves off until they can cool down. By keeping the insides clean your system will run cooler, thus letting it run longer.

Most generic systems have 4 to 6 screws that hold the case cover on. If you have a Dell, HP, Compaq, Gateway or other major brand system, look in the owner's manual or online to find out how to open your case. By removing the sides of the com-

puter you'll gain access to its guts which is where the cleaning can be done. I use a small hand-held vacuum to suck up the dust balls. I use the crevice tool, that's not the one with the brush. You can also use canned air or air from a compressor to blow the dirt out. Be careful not to bump or touch any components on the motherboard while cleaning. Keeping one hand on the metal case while you clean should discharge any static electricity that might have built up.

With the vacuum, don't forget to suck out the dust that has accumulated in the power supply. There are usually vents on the side opposite the circular fan. I vacuum out from both the fan-side and the vent side. Note: if you are blowing rather than vacuuming, don't blow air into the floppy drive or cdrom/dvd units. Unless they are filthy and already don't work, you don't want to risk getting dust on the optics inside. And remember, blowing air into a computer really just moves the dust from the computer to somewhere else! I suggest you do it outside, if possible.

If you have a mouse that has a ball, think about getting a mouse that uses laser light instead. But if you want to clean the mouse, open it up, wash the ball with warm, soapy water, and gently scrape the gunk off the three rollers inside. Your mouse will act like new after a good cleaning.

You can also vacuum your keyboard. You'd be amazed at how much junk you'll find if you just turn it over and shake it up a bit. I have even gone so far as to wash the keyboard to get rid of spilled soda. An hour or two in the Phoenix sun and the keyboard is ready to go!

Cleaning the Software

Before running software cleaners such as Ad-aware, Spybot Search & Destroy and a good anti-virus program (I like the free AVG), it makes sense to delete unneeded files and programs. Might as well not clean any more than you have to! This might be the time to use System Restore to create a Restore Point before you eliminate something you shouldn't. Better safe than sorry.

In the Documents and Settings area, look for the Local Settings folder for each user. If you can't find it, you may need to turn on the "Show Hidden Files and Folders" option on your system. To do this, open

up Explorer, from the menu bar at the top go to Tools-Folder Options-View-Show Hidden Files and Folders.

Under Local Settings, I delete everything in the Temp folder. I also delete everything in the Temporary Internet Files folder also. Once that's done, I go to the Windows folder, and delete everything in the TEMP folder. Caution: some of you create your own Temp folders into which you may put things you might not want to delete. Check that out before doing a mass deletion.

Open the Registry

Again, if you're not comfortable editing the Registry, don't. You can back up the Registry (entirely or just specific keys) before proceeding. I mention this item in order to delete the "Compress Old Files" key before proceeding to the next step. You can either search for this key using the Find feature, or go to: HKEY_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\VolumeCaches. The second key down should be the Compress OldFiles key, if it hasn't already been removed. If it's there, RIGHT click on it and delete it. You don't need it. Close the Registry and proceed.

Clean Up Drive

To clean up your drive further, go to My Computer. For each hard drive, RIGHT click on the drive, left click on Properties, and then click on Disk Cleanup. If you didn't remove the CompressOldFiles key earlier, it may take a long time before the system responds. If you did, shortly you'll see files which may be deleted from your system so you can recover space. After cleaning these up you may see an increase in available disk space.

Clean Up Internet Explorer and Firefox

One of the easiest things you can do to keep your computer clean is to get rid of Temporary Internet Files that are stored on your computer. Here's how to do this for immediate relief:

- **Internet Explorer**—delete Temporary Internet Files:
 1. Open Internet Explorer.
 2. Select the Tools menu.
 3. Select Internet Options.
 4. Select the General tab.
 5. In the Temporary Internet Files section, click

the Delete Files button.

6. Do not check the clear Offline Content box. Click Ok.

7. Click Ok to close the Tools window.

• **Firefox (Mozilla)**—clear browser cache

1. Open Firefox (Mozilla).

2. Click the Tools menu.

3. Click Options.

4. Click Privacy.

5. Click the Clear button for Cache.

If you use Internet Explorer, go to **Tools-Internet Options-Advanced** and almost at the end, put a check mark in the box that says “Empty Temporary Internet Files folder when Browser is closed” and IE will automatically delete the files when you close the browser.

Add/Remove Programs

In the Control Panel, you can add and remove programs you no longer need or use. If you are not sure, Google the program in question and then decide. You might want to opt to leave in any program you are not sure about. But if you still have games or programs you have not used in years, toolbars you don't want or need, or other items of no significance to you, clear them out. As I've said before, Google first, then if you're still not sure, leave them in. Often programs will have their own Uninstall feature. If you decide to remove a program, first go to **Start-Programs** and find the menu item of the program you want to delete. If it is there, check to see if there is an Uninstall menu choice and if so, I'd start with that before using the Add/Remove programs feature.

Spybot Search & Destroy and Ad-Aware

These are two FREE programs that do a great job cleaning up malware, spies, and other things that slow your system down. You can find them on the Internet at www.download.com <<http://www.download.com>>, or just Google them. After installing them, make sure you use the update feature before doing a scan. These programs are updated almost daily, so it pays to take advantage of the latest updates.

Get Rid of the Language Bar

Control Panel, Regional Settings, Languages, Details, Languages, Uncheck the “Show Language

Bar” box to get rid of the Language Bar at the bottom of your screen. If you use the Language Bar, by all means don't get rid of it.

Keep Your Antivirus Updated!

Whichever AV program you use, if it is not updated you're not getting full protection! *Security suites slow systems down!* I don't use them. Google “AVG Free” to get a free antivirus that does a good job, and then configure it to have it updated and run it daily.

Task Manager

Quite often slow performance is directly related to the programs that are running. RIGHT click on the Taskbar to open and look at duplicate program entries under Processes—click on the title of the Processes tab to sort alphabetically. If you see multiple instances of the same program running, for example, outlook.exe, odds are you're having some kind of problem. If you're not sure about what a process is, Google it to find out or leave it alone. If you click on the CPU tab twice, you'll see which programs are using the most memory. Find the memory hogs, check them at Google, and then begin to end processes you don't need. If a process is critical, Windows won't let you close it.

MSCONFIG

Go to **Start - Run** and type in “msconfig” (don't type the quotes) and click on “OK” and look in the Startup and Services areas to check to see what programs might not need to start. If you know they are not needed, uncheck them. If you have a problem after restarting, then re-check them. If you're uncertain . . . Google the file names and learn about them.

Defrag Your System Regularly

Go to <<http://www.auslogics.com/en/software>> to find free software to defrag your hard drives. I recommend defragging at least monthly to keep your system running smoothly. This is a nice program, FREE, and it's pleasant to watch. Keeping your hard drives defragmented will add life to your system and speed up performance when saving and retrieving files.

The suggestions above are based upon a system running Windows XP Pro. With Vista things may be in different places. The operation should be very

similar, however, so doing a search in the Help & Support area may provide the answers you're looking for.

For a PowerPoint slide presentation with screen shots of locations referred to in this article, please visit <http://www.phoenixpcug.org/articles> and look for the link.

From The DealsGuy

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

I read an enlightening article about data center design; even the security was above and beyond what you and I would imagine. Read about new ideas for cheap cooling methods and an interesting concept for filling in the gap between the time the power goes out and your backup kicks in. Well into it, you will read about very tight security. A year ago, I gave you an article about a group of consultants hired to test the security of a company, and they made a joke of the entire building's security; and data security itself, in just a few minutes. I doubt their techniques would work in the facilities described in the article. Here is the *Information Week* URL: <http://www.informationweek.com/news/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=206900660>

Enjoyed The Show

I did manage to browse the Electronic House Expo for three hours of pure pleasure (I had to hurry). It was not a large show, but there was enough there to keep you fascinated. I saw mirrors that could change to a TV or monitor in an instant. That large mirror on the wall was hiding a TV screen that was able to shine right through it with a sharp picture. This one is interesting: <http://www.ad-notam.com>. Automation of your home was all over the show in many forms. There were many booths with distributors of automation components for all facets of the home or business, including Worthington, one of the most well known.

I was fascinated with some of the doorbell /intercom systems that include a wide-angle camera whose image could be displayed on a dedicated monitor, or appear on your TV to show who is there. Push a button on your remote to ask the nature of their visit and if it was a family member, or your beer-drinking buddy whose TV went out during a game; push a

button on the remote to unlock the door. If it was your mother-in-law, you could tell her you weren't home. However, I didn't see an "eject" button on the remote for salesmen; leaving room for further development. I stood where I could easily reach the doorbell button and my entire upper body showed plainly on the screen. I don't remember if that one was Nutone <http://www.nutone.com> or another company. eKey was there again with biometric locks. Here are some URLs of interest: <http://eholovision.com>; <http://www.eKeyusa.com>; <http://www.linearcorp.com>; and <http://www.litetouch.com>.

Several companies were showing universal remote controls and touch screen systems. Most people would probably think of remote controlled lighting and thermostats, but there are plenty of other items that should be included. Remote cameras around the property, a driveway gate, pool pump, alarms and maybe even devices to feed your pets; and that's only part of the list. I couldn't help notice that using a universal remote (similar to your TV remote) was not as easy as using a touch screen device because a touch screen icon often brought up a menu of other labeled icons for choices, but the button on the remote called for action, so you better get it right the first time. I read in *Electronic House* magazine <http://www.electronichouse.com> about an installation beyond "my" finances, but it was interesting what was done in this home: http://www.electronichouse.com/article/smart_controls_for_a_complicated_home/.

The EHX show included plenty of luxury audio products to enjoy from your easy chair, featuring great surround-sound. There was even a plush chair with the sound strategically located and controls at your fingertips. Solid Drive <http://www.soliddrive.com> was featuring a product that would make a speaker out of anything, and actually, the sound produced was great, (including good bass), from a large glass panel that also featured a large rectangular thin film fastened to it that allowed a projected TV picture to be shone through it clearly. There were also products that would hide your TV, when it was not turned on, by showing art from your choice of artists inside a beautiful wooden frame, or could automatically cover it with tapestry: <http://>

www.vutec.com> <<http://www.tapestriesltd.com>>
< <http://www.visionartgalleries.com>

Two companies with central vacuum systems were there with impressive products; here is one; <<http://www.airkinglimited.com>>. There was a great little digital camera/camcorder being sold there that could publish your pictures or movies to the Web. One booth had a favorite of mine, a motorized drapery rod that could be programmed, or operated with a remote. I loved the motorized drapery rod we had for about ten years, but it finally bit the dust. It would take a lengthy article to describe that show adequately.

At the same time, other computer oriented shows were going on in nearby hotels, another over in Tampa, a Microsoft Show nearby and the prestigious Winter Park Art Festival. There are many computer oriented trade shows these days. Microsoft will be back here in June with the large Tech Ed Developers show and the IBM show in early April.

I have not tried the products below.

How About An Add-on Toolbar!

ALToolbar <<http://www.altools.com/ALTools/ALToolbar.aspx>> offers their latest toolbar. ALToolbar is a new add-on that extends Internet Explorer with its suite of tools. It improves many common Internet tasks, making them faster and easier.

- Search popular web sites FASTER.
- Visit favorite sites INSTANTLY.
- SECURELY store logins and bookmarks online.
- AUTOMATICALLY login to web sites.
- Navigate easier with MOUSE GESTURES.
- Capture full web page SCREENSHOTS.

There are other tools in ALToolbar to make online life easier and faster. This one is more than other toolbars that all duplicate each other's limited functionality. It's a real suite of Internet tools designed for faster and easier Internet usage by real people. ALToolbar, like other ALTools, is completely free. We only ask that you enjoy it enough to tell a friend.

Ryan Smyth, Chief ALTools Evangelist, ESTsoft, <<http://www.altools.net>>

Need Some Tweaking?

YL Software announced the availability of WinUtilities 6.1, the newest version of its system-tweaking suite that offers over 20 computer produc-

tivity tools. WinUtilities provides everything a user needs to remove junk data, and improve PC performance. The WinUtilities update offers users additional features as well as improvements on the technologies. For more information or to download a free trial, please visit <<http://www.ylcomputing.com/content/view/9/27/>>.

Two modules, Duplicate Files Finder and Registry Cleaner, are now able to export reports. Other advancements include an improved File Undelete Module for NTFS and FAT32 volume; an improved Plug-ins Editor for the History Cleaner module; improved compatibility for Windows Vista 32 bit and 64 bit systems, plus an improved Registry Cleaner.

Computers accumulate a great deal of junk files. Applications can add things we may not be aware of and you should get rid of these things, but you may not have to if you install WinUtilities. It includes such tools as Junk File Cleaner, Registry Cleaner, Memory Optimizer, System Information, Registry Backup, File Encryption, Safe Uninstaller, Duplicate File Finder, File Shredder, Data Recovery & File Undelete tools, etc. WinUtilities also includes an Internet Tracks Eraser, with Cookie Manager and Secure Deletion. The software is \$39.99, but we get a 30% discount. The following URLs are too lengthy for Word to make them a link. Copy & paste them to your browser or they won't work. They take you to a PayPal page to buy the product with 30% discount. I'll comment on not using Tiny URL next month.

WinUtilities 6.1 Personal License:

<[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xcl ick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom &item_name=WinUtilities\(Personal License\) Special Offer&item_number=7019-8-1&amount=28&no_shipping=2&no_note=1¤cy_code=USD&lc=US&bn=PP-BuyNowBF&charset=UTF-8](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xcl ick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom &item_name=WinUtilities(Personal License) Special Offer&item_number=7019-8-1&amount=28&no_shipping=2&no_note=1¤cy_code=USD&lc=US&bn=PP-BuyNowBF&charset=UTF-8)>

WinUtilities 6.1 Family License:

<[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xcl ick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom &item_name=WinUtilities\(Family License\) Special Offer&item_number=7019-8-2&amount=49&no_shipping=2&no_note=1¤cy_code=USD&lc=US&bn=PP-BuyNowBF&charset=UTF-8](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xcl ick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom &item_name=WinUtilities(Family License) Special Offer&item_number=7019-8-2&amount=49&no_shipping=2&no_note=1¤cy_code=USD&lc=US&bn=PP-BuyNowBF&charset=UTF-8)>

WinUtilities 6.1 Corporate License:

<https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xcl ick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom&ite

m_name=WinUtilities(Corporate License) Special Offer&item_number=7019-8-3&amount=350 &no_shipping=2&no_note=1¤cy_code=USD &lc=US&bn=PP-Buy NowBF&charset=UTF-8>

WinUtilities Disk Cleaner helps get rid of temporary files and folders, cookies and browser history, duplicate files and links that are no longer valid. It locates zero-length files clogging up your file lists. The Registry Cleaner helps delete entries in the registry that no longer apply to your system. History Cleaner handles all those items you can delete from within the Internet Options dialog box in Control Panel, as well as your system's document history, log-on history, search history.

WinUtilities 6.1 runs under Windows Vista, XP, 2003 Server, 2000 and 98. Registered users get a fully functional product, a year of free upgrades and life-of-product technical support. Additional information, and a 30-day evaluation version is available from <<http://www.ylcomputing.com>>.

Postal address: 3831 Valley Center Dr. Suite 706-295 San Diego, CA

That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my Web site (most not offering a discount). 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 at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

Shortcuts

by Mike Moore

Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, KY

Why do some icons on your desktop have a little white arrow embedded in the picture? These are shortcuts (sometimes called links). They are small files that represent and "point to" the real thing. When you double-left-click on a shortcut icon, Windows reads the location of the file to open from within the shortcut file, then opens the target file. Shortcuts are, in the lingo of computer programmers, symbolic links to actual files. They don't contain any of the file's information-they just point to it. In real terms: if Peoria, Illinois was a file,

then its shortcut would be the map telling you how to get there.

Why do we use shortcuts? Why not just put the real, actual file on your desktop? There are several reasons. First, since a shortcut does not contain any of the target file's information, it can be deleted without damaging the file it points to. Therefore, placing shortcuts on the desktop (or in any directory) is safer. Accidental deletion of these links will not affect anything other than you may lose track of where your file was!

The other reason is that you can have many shortcuts and place them anywhere you might need quick access to your file. For example, when we give away computers, we organize the software links in various folders on the desktop. There's a folder for Educational software and Game software links, and for the software that is both Educational and Fun, we put links to the same program in both the Educational and Game folders. You can rename shortcuts to anything you want, and it won't affect the real name of the file they point to.

Shortcuts are also portable! If I know for sure that a program will be in a certain place on nearly every PC, I can e-mail a link to someone and tell them to place it on their desktop. Double-clicking on it should open that file on my recipient's PC! E-mailing

a link is much more of a sure bet than e-mailing an executable file-because most e-mail servers just won't allow executables (files ending in .EXE) to be sent!

How does one create a link? The best way is to find the file you want the link to refer to, then do a single right-click on it. This brings up a context menu where you can create the shortcut. Once the shortcut is created you can move it to any directory or to the desktop.

For creating desktop links, Windows provides a shortcut wizard that allows you to create a shortcut for any file type including a web page or another folder. From anywhere on the desktop, right click and select 'New' and then 'Shortcut' to activate this wizard.

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Hasta la Vista— Customize Your Data Locations

by Lee Reynolds

Broward Personal Computer Association, FL

I'm told the literal meaning of "hasta la vista" in Spanish is "until the seeing." Or maybe a more adequate translation is "see you later". But in this column, I'm using that phrase to invite you to take a look at Microsoft's latest version of Windows: Vista.

If you take a look at the new Vista Start Menu, one change from Windows XP you will see is that there is a link at the top of it which is your account name. If you click on that, you will open up a Windows Explorer window, which shows all your user folders, such as: Documents, Music, Pictures, Desktop, Favorites, etc.

In Details view, this is handy since one column shows the Folder path for each of these. Most of the folders will be on your boot drive (normally, C:) in this path:

C:\Users\<<AccountName>, where <Account Name>, of course, is your account name.

There are several entries in this list which have the little "shortcut" arrow in their icons, for example: Application Data, Cookies, Local Settings, My Documents, Recent, Send To, Start Menu, Templates

If you click on any of these shortcuts, except Recent, you will immediately be presented with an error message: "<folder path> is not accessible Access is denied", then you have to click the OK button to dismiss the message.

All of those shortcuts are there for compatibility reasons, in order for the system to be able to access certain locations that were used in Windows XP. The actual path of each of those locations has changed in Windows Vista. For example, the folder that was accessed in this way in Windows XP C:\Documents and Settings\<<AccountName>\My Documents is now here in Vista:

C:\Users\<<AccountName>\Documents.

Backup and Partitioning

I like to backup my entire system periodically with a drive image program from Acronis called True Image.

However, I also like to try and keep most of my

data separate from the program files and windows system files making up the boot drive.

I took advantage of the built-in drive partitioning software of Vista (more about this in another article), in order to create several other partitions on my C: drive, and one of these is reserved for storing the contents of such folders as Documents, Favorites, Music, and Pictures. (I did something similar for an old computer using Windows XP.)

This not only reduces the size of the backup image of my boot drive, it also makes it much easier to backup my rapidly changing data to CD-RWs or DVD-RWs.

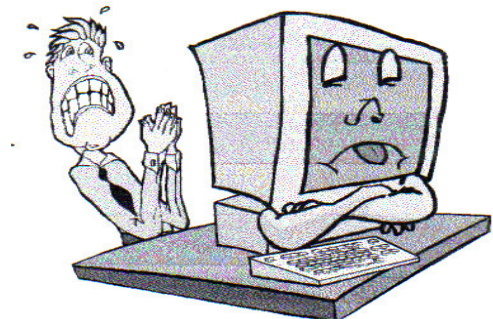
In Windows XP, in order to move the data locations to another partition, I was forced, in some cases, to edit the registry. In Windows Vista, this is no longer necessary.

There is a Windows user interface to change folder locations of your user account profile. Just right click on your Documents folder, for example: Select Properties from the context menu, and then you will see a new tab in the folder properties windows called Location.

Click on that tab, and you will now see this message: You can change where files in this folder are stored to another place on this hard drive, another drive, or even another computer on your network.

All you have to do is type in the new location, and click OK. You will then be presented with a message, asking if you want to move all of the files from the old location to the new location, and recommending that you do so, or else you will see two of the designated folders in your profile.

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The New, The Best, and The Worst

Collected by Pim Borman

Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc

Good, Bad, or Who-Needs-It?

Penryn

With the introduction of Intel's Penryn Core 2 Duo and Extreme CPUs Moore's Law stays right on track. Thanks to further miniaturization to 45-nanometer elements, the chips have significantly lower power consumption, a feature that will be even more desirable in the five new Penryn-based CPUs for laptops that have now been released. The new Penryn-based systems are not significantly faster than systems with Intel's previous-generation processors, but outstrip those with the currently fastest AMD chip, the 2.2 GHz 9500 quad core Phenom CPU. Intel has introduced a new instruction set for the Penryns, called SSE4, that can greatly speed up applications written to work with it. That may take a while yet. Adobe is updating its next version of Premiere Pro video editing with SSE4 support. (*PC World*, March 2008)

Only two years ago I bought a new desktop screamer using the then-tops AMD Athlon 64 X2 Dual-Core processor. My pride in the new system didn't last long, as usual, as the AMD CPU was left in the dust by new Intel processors. Nevertheless, I doubt that even now my run-of-the-mill programs make use of all the special capabilities of the dual-core CPU. Photo editing with Adobe Photoshop Elements or The Gimp happens instantly, faster than I can think of what to do next. So who needs any more power?

PC World's 25th anniversary issue (March 2008) quotes from the March 1991 issue:

"These five screamers are amongst the fastest - and the costliest - systems you can buy. We pick the best of the lot and answer the obvious question: Who needs this much power? - We reviewed four blazing 486 PCs in the March 1991 issue, starting at \$8300, and decided that they were simply too fast for most people."

Famous last words!

False Firefox Fix

Usually I don't pay attention to application software tips, such as keyboard shortcuts for common actions. The most important ones I already know, and the obscure ones are not worth the effort remembering. Therefore I would normally not have paid much attention to an article in the January issue of *PC World* by Lincoln Spector about undocumented Firefox tips. What caught my eye was that, according to the author, Firefox is optimized for dial-up connections, and one of the tips concerned changing its settings for broadband.

Firefox has dozens of hidden configuration settings that are not readily available to the ordinary user, for obvious good reasons. They are stored in HTML documents that can be accessed by typing *about:config* in the address bar of the browser. The article suggests that you back up the configuration file before you fiddle with it, and shows how to do that.

Following the instructions, I turned network pipelining and network proxy pipelining on (set their values to "true"), increased the network pipelining "maxrequests" to 15 (up from 4), and entered a value of 0 for a new integer *nglayout.initialpaint.delay*. After restarting Firefox I tried it out. It seemed to perform with alacrity, although I couldn't have sworn that it was faster than before.

Looking for background information on Firefox configuration, I found a June 2006 article on the *PC World* Web site by the ever knowledgeable Scott Spanbauer on the *about:command* to access hidden information. Specifically he mentions *about:cache* that gives access to an enormous file listing the URLs accessed in the past. Handy to find some old data or revisit a Web site without logging on.

Anyway, Spanbauer's article provided a link to Mozilla's *about:config* FAQ site (<http://find.pcworld.com/53066>). I took it from there and found out that the suggested settings to optimize Firefox for broadband were either irrelevant or actually retarding downloads. Turning pipelining on is not always supported by all servers and may therefore cause crashes. The value "maxrequests" has a maximum value of 8; higher values than that default to 8. Setting the delay value too low actually slows down the download; its preferred value is the default 250 milliseconds (about the blink of an eye). So much for

helpful tips. I reset the parameters to their original values and left it at that. Don't believe everything you read!

Fatalyzer

Wondering if your dieting and exercising is doing any good? Fret no more! Soon you'll be able to take a fatalyzer test to see how fast you are burning off fat. Based on technology developed by Dow Chemical, and under development by a start-up company Kemeta (<http://kemeta.com>), a hand-held breathalyzer detects acetone in your breath that results from metabolizing body fat. This is a more accurate measure of how effective your dieting and exercising efforts are, eliminating the influence of fluid and muscle fluctuations (*Chemical and Engineering News*, 1/28/2008, <http://snipurl.com/fatalyzer>). The results are shown in terms of pounds of body fat lost per week.

It might motivate the dieters stronger if the unit also indicated how much fat was added to their hips by that pizza they just ate. And with the run-away popularity at the recent Toy Expo of digital doggies that can sit up and beg or fart on command, maybe the next product ought to be a doggy robot with a nose capable of detecting drugs, explosives, lost children and misplaced car keys. That should be a bestseller for sure!

All a-Twitter?

"Twitter is a free networking blogging that allows users to send 'updates' (or 'tweets'; text-based posts, up to 140 characters long) to Twitter website, via short message service, instant messaging, a third-party application such as."

That's how Wikipedia describes the latest rage in digital jabbering (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>). presidential candidates use the service constantly, undoubtedly hoping to reach younger voters. Find out what Barack Obama (<http://twitter.com/BarackObama>) Hillary Clinton (<http://twitter.com/HillaryClinton>) up to. Ron Paul (<http://twitter.com/RonPaul2008>) is the only Republican who twitters. John McCain is noted by his absence.

As the Twitter site (<http://twitter.com>) puts it,

"Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected

through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?"

Indeed.

Thanks to *The Economist* (Feb. 2, 2008) for enlightening us about this service.

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Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

In-flight Internet cleared for take-off

I've been skeptical of plans for in-flight broadband access. Let's face it, the airlines don't have a great track record here. No one used those sad phones in the seatbacks. And Boeing's Connexion service—once offered by a few international carriers—is gone. But this time it may finally happen.

In the past few months several US airlines—Alaska Air, American Airlines, Continental, JetBlue, Southwest and Virgin America—have announced plans to offer Internet access on some routes. Why now? The equipment is cheaper and easier to install, business and leisure travelers are asking for it, and the Open Skies rules, which are about to go into effect, will suddenly give U.S. airlines more competition. Each airline is taking a different approach to the technology, features and pricing.

American Airlines and Virgin America will both offer Aircell's gogo service, a cellular system that uses a version of EV-DO Rev A to deliver broadband speeds of 2Mbps on flights over North America. Aircell says the basic pricing will be about \$12.95 for cross-country trips and \$9.95 for flights lasting three hours or less. Starting this spring, American will outfit 15 of its Boeing 767s for gogo. It plans to target business travelers with laptops on popular routes between New York and San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Miami. Virgin America is taking a different approach. It hopes to offer gogo on all flights and for all passengers via the entertainment system in the seatbacks. No laptop required.

JetBlue already offers free Internet access, but it is only a "BetaBlue" trial on a single Airbus A320. You can use Yahoo Mail or Yahoo Messenger, and

check corporate e-mail if you happen to use a BlackBerry with Wi-Fi such as the BlackBerry Curve 8820 or Curve 8320. But that's about it—at least for now. And it only works over the continental U.S. Provided by JetBlue's LiveTV subsidiary, the service is also a cellular system built on some of the same spectrum as those lonely Airfones. Continental will also use LiveTV to offer satellite TV and Internet access on domestic flights beginning in early 2009. Some LiveTV services are also available on WestJet, Frontier, Virgin Blue and AirTran.

Finally, there's Row 44. Like Boeing's Connexion, Row 44 is a satellite service that should also work over oceans and on international flights, though the company is focused first on North America. Alaska Airlines will start trials using Row 44-7's service on some flights as early as the second quarter of 2008. And in January Southwest said it would test Internet access with Row 44 on four Boeing 737s starting this summer.

Of course there are still a few hurdles. Because electronic devices can interfere with flight equipment, many regulatory agencies still prohibit voice or data communications while aloft. Technology can solve that problem.

Another big concern: Passengers can use VoIP clients such as Skype to make calls, disrupting their neighbors. American and Alaska Air recently told *The New York Times* that they will block VoIP calls, but Virgin America isn't ruling it out, and international carriers such as Air France are already experimenting with mobile phone use during flights. Some frequent fliers are adamantly opposed to this, but I'd gladly deal with the occasional voice call in exchange for decent broadband access at 30,000 feet.

Vista Service Pack 1 Coming with a Warning

Microsoft warns that 11 programs are incompatible with the Service Pack. Check the following web site if you are contemplating the update.
<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/935796>

Could a Hacker Kill You?

First, a brief discussion of the meaning of the word "hacker." Originally, it referred to anyone who was skilled at writing computer code, but today it has come to mean someone who breaks into computer systems or networks without permission. There are also distinctions between "black hat" and

"white hat" and "gray hat" hackers, depending on how they use their skills. In this discussion, I'm referring to the modern common meaning, or "black hat" hackers.

Once upon a time, hacking into a computer was regarded as a minor crime most often committed by mischievous youngsters with too much technical knowledge and too much time on their hands. Many people didn't think of it as "real" criminal activity at all and hackers enjoyed admiration and respect from many in the IT community.

That's changed over the years, as the growing ubiquity of Internet access has exposed more businesses and individuals to attacks that can cost them time and money. A system taken down by a hacker can result in loss of business or even cause trouble in personal relationships when emails or instant messages go unanswered. User-created data deleted by a hacker may be impossible to replicate exactly. Sensitive information accessed by a hacker can result in other crimes such as identity theft or can make businesses vulnerable to fines and other sanctions for violation of governmental or industry regulatory compliance requirements.

That's the reason hacking into other systems or networks is now a felony or high level misdemeanor in many states (usually referred to as "unauthorized access" or "breach of computer security"). In Texas, the offense classification depends on the amount of damage done (although it's still a crime if no damage at all is done). If enough damage is done, hacking can become a first degree felony - carrying the same penalty as murder.

Even though it's now recognized as a serious crime, hacking is still considered by most folks to pose primarily a financial risk. But we're beginning to see that it can be much more dangerous, actually putting people at risk for their lives.

An interesting AP article that I ran across last week illustrates another way in which hacking can put your life in danger. It seems some modern implanted defibrillators communicate with monitoring devices over unencrypted transmissions that could be intercepted. It's worrisome enough that those transmissions sometime contain the patient's birth date, social security number and other personal information. But the article goes on to suggest

that a particular talented - and particularly malevolent - hacker could reprogram the devices to prevent them from doing their job. And their job is to save the life of a person whose heartbeat becomes abnormal.

That's really not a big risk with the current devices, because you have to be physically very close to the patient to program them. However, newer technologies are expected to work at greater distances. Although makers of the devices say they will contain "stronger security," we all know that security measures don't always stop hackers.

This also gets you thinking about all the other ways in which medicine has become dependent on computers. In our recent article on robotics, we mentioned that some doctors are now performing "long distance" surgery (also known as telesurgery), using robotic arms at the surgical site that they control from hundreds or thousands of miles away. But how does the surgeon communicate with the robotic system? Over a high speed data link, of course.

According to Wikipedia, one surgeon in Canada performs many of these remote surgeries over a VPN connection using a "non-dedicated fiber optic connection that shares bandwidth with regular telecommunications data."; A VPN (virtual private network) is designed to provide a secure connection through a non-secure network, but many VPN products have been found to have vulnerabilities that can be remotely exploited. Could a hacker interfere with the surgical process in a situation where a small slip of the scalpel is enough to kill the patient?

But there are much less dramatic ways a hacked connection might cause harm or death. Drug prescriptions and orders for treatments are now often stored on computers and accessed via portable Tablet style

computers by nurses and doctors making rounds in the hospital. This means that information is transmitted over a wireless connection. It's conceivable that a hacker could intercept that data and make changes to it—increasing the drug dosage to a fatal amount, for example, or canceling a treatment that's essential to the patient's health.

And the possibilities for death by hacking extend far beyond the medical field. We've all seen the

movies where traffic lights are computer-controlled from a central location. If a hacker can change the lights to display green in both directions, fatal accidents could ensue. And an attack that shuts down the electrical grid would pose potentially life-threatening problems both for patients on life support in hospitals and those who depend on powered oxygen machines at home.

Computers have made our world better in a lot of ways, but they have definitely opened up new dangers, as well. Personally, I'm glad that not everything is computerized yet. The first barn swallows of the season arrived at our house yesterday, a week earlier than last year. While it might be more convenient if their migration were controlled by computers so we could know exactly when they're coming, it makes me feel good to watch them dipping and soaring, completely oblivious to all our fancy machines.

How about you? Do you ever worry about the physical dangers caused by the increasingly networked nature of our world? Would you avoid things like robotic surgery because of those dangers? Should those who hack into critical systems at hospitals or other systems that control life-essential processes be charged with attempted murder, even if no deaths result? Can you think of other ways hacking can result in physical harm?

Short Takes

Q. Okay, I admit it. I'm a dummy. I have a laptop with XP installed and I haven't used it in about six months. I think it has some Word documents on it that I now need, but when I went to log on, I couldn't remember the password for the user account so I can't get into Windows. If I reinstall the operating system I'll lose the documents because they're on the C: drive. Is there any hope?

A. This is one reason I always recommend that you store user data such as your documents on a separate drive from the operating system. That way, if you need to reinstall the OS for any reason, your data won't be affected. The good news is that you may be able to avoid reinstalling the OS by using one of a number of password recovery tools that are available. Here is one that has been checked out by several reputable sources: <http://www.wxpnews.com/1YMWKW/080318-LoginRecovery>

The best thing about this one is that it reveals your old password, rather than resetting the password as some of the others do. That means you'll still be able to access files that are encrypted with EFS. If that doesn't work, and if your documents aren't EFS-encrypted, there are dozens of password reset programs available. This one works with XP even though it says NT:

<http://www.wxpnnews.com1YMWKW080318-NTPasswd>

There is one other way that will work for most people. Restart your computer in Safe Mode by tapping the F8 key during the initial start up info that appears on your screen. When the menu appears, choose Safe Mode and press enter twice. After the computer is running, click Start/Control Panel and then User Accounts. Choose your account and then "Change Password." You can then type in a new password, confirm it and then restart your computer. Your user account will now accept the new password and off you go.

Let's face it: sometimes Internet Explorer just stops working properly and you don't know why. Often the problem is a damaged or missing file or registry information. If you're having trouble with IE (either version 6 or 7), you can follow the instructions in KB 318378 to repair or reinstall the browser.

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

Converting CD-based Music to Compressed Audio Files

by Mike Moore

Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, KY

I spent the equivalent of two or three days in January, working a few minutes at a time, converting all of our CDs to MP3 format. I had been dreading this project, thinking that it would take too much time, but it really was not that bad and the results are going to be worth it.

A few years ago I purchased a 400-CD jukebox type CD player. This device does have the capability of displaying a short line containing the album's title, using a standard PC keyboard, but the process is complicated with problems. It's easy to get CDs in the wrong slot and of course, you can only play them in the room where you've physically situated the jukebox unit.

In the past few years, we've been getting away from the album and becoming more focused on individual songs. This lamentable trend has been fueled by the 99 cent price point associated with downloading music by the song. Artists and producers alike have vilified this process, claiming that the artistic sum worth of songs on an album is greater than the tunes taken as individual songs.

I can buy into this sadness, to a point. I remember the smell of vinyl LPs, unwrapping the cellophane outer wrap, and the incredible detail the producers went into in packing artistic value into the finished product, right down to the order the songs appear on the album. These days, you just Google the album or artist title and download the Jpeg, that's about it. For a fee, a program called iTunes will do this for you automatically.

So why would a guy spend the time to rip (compress) the tracks of a CD or other ancient audio product to MP3 files? There are a few good reasons to do this.

For one thing, the devices that play music have become decentralized. What I mean by that is if you can imagine your computer as the "record player," then it's not much of a stretch to think of playing music anywhere in the house, car or workplace.

Doing this in the past meant locating the song you want (which may or may not be an easy task), finding the CD (or tape, or LP) it's recorded on, and hoping that it's not damaged.

Then once you've got it, you carry it to where ever you want to hear it. For me, this was often the car, and a car is a great place to scratch or otherwise ruin a CD, and I've also known friends whose entire CD collections have been stolen from vehicles. Physically moving music and other files from player to player is sometimes humorously referred to as "Sneaker Net"

But once you begin to think of your songs and other media in terms of compressed MP3 files, they become at once more searchable, more replaceable, and more portable.

Compressed audio files, though the wonder of a shared internet database called Gracenote (formerly Cddb), contain informational tidbits that can be searched. On the other hand, ordinary music tracks on a Compact Disc have no information associated

with them at all, not even the name of the song. By converting CD-ROM music to MP3 files, your database can pull up a playlist for you using information encoded in the MP3 file. Most ripping software (such as C-Dex, available at <http://cdexos.sourceforge.net/>) will query the CDDB so that you won't have to manually type in the names of the songs or the name of the CD.

Compressed audio files can be stored on any hard drive in the house and can be made available on inexpensive MP3 players, iPods, and Multimedia computers that attach directly to your sound system. There is usually no special hardware to buy - you can just feed the stereo output from your computer's sound card to the audio input on your TV or stereo amplifier.

Most of the MP3 player devices out there do not require a lot in the way of software - you generally plug them into a computer, they assign themselves a drive letter, and you can just copy your songs to the devices as if they were another hard drive. There are even self-contained wireless hard drives (see: <http://www.apple.com/airportexpress>) that will broadcast your music wirelessly to any networked computer in the house!

Compressed audio files cannot get scratched like CDs do, and if your iPod or MP3 player is stolen or accidentally formatted (happens all the time!), or even if your entire CD collection is stolen, it's no longer the end of the world. You just re-copy the files back to another device and you're good to go.

Though not exactly small, compressed audio files do lend themselves much better to e-mail. A typical MP3 music file is around 3 to 6 megabytes, which is just under the threshold of being too large to send to someone using dial-up internet. If both ends of the connection have high-speed, it's no problem at all, as this amount of data can be transmitted by most DSL and cable internet services in about 10 or 20 seconds. The MP3 compressed format is "lossy" in the sense that some of the music data is lost during compression, compared to the original recording, however I've never been able to tell the difference between a compressed song and a non-compressed track on a CD. The data you lose is not data that manifests as part of the music.

By the way, the songs as recorded on CDs you buy are very large - 50 to 80 megabytes would not be uncommon. For those of you audiophiles who need compression but don't want any data loss, consider using the FLAC mode of compression (See <http://flac.sourceforge.net> for information). FLAC stands for "Free Lossless Audio Codec"

So, there are a host of reasons why we would want to compress our audio collection, but what is the downside? The only problem I can think of is that most automotive and older CD players cannot recognize the MP3 or any computer generated music format. Some of the newer CD players can, but it's not something that people generally know. So, for example, when I transferred an audio book selection to CD for my wife, she found that the CD player in her car refused to play the media, even though her car is not that old. My car, a Chevy Monte Carlo, played the disk without a problem even though it's an older car than hers. So in this situation you may want to take advantage of software that does the reverse of ripping - it would take MP3 files and lay them down on the CD as if they were ordinary Audio CD tracks. iTunes and many CD-writing utilities such as Nero will do this for you.

Now does anyone wanna buy a used 400-CD jukebox player?

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Hulu Offers Free TV and Movies over the Net

by Ira Wilsker

APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio and TV Show Host

One of my readers recently emailed me about an offer he received via email (probably a spam email) about a \$50 program that will allow him to view what was described as satellite TV over the internet, without paying a monthly fee. According to the email, with this program, he could discontinue his cable or satellite service, and watch over 3,000 channels on his computer. I researched the product he referenced and found that it was a multilevel marketed program that was, in my opinion, deceptive in that it did not offer real satellite TV, but instead only offered a software utility

that could receive the thousands of streaming videos already available for anyone to view for free, and that often required no special software to view. I strongly recommended to the reader that he not purchase the product, and instead just search for streaming video, and to keep his current TV provider.

In researching this service I came upon a recently released and legitimate way to view thousands of TV programs and movies over the internet, for free, and only using any of the common internet browsers. This free service (registration required) is the Hulu service available online at www.hulu.com. Hulu was founded in March of 2007, and is a joint venture owned by NBC Universal, and News Corp, and financed by \$100 million of venture capital. As I type this, Hulu is offering advertising supported content from over 50 sources, such as Fox TV, NBC, MGM, Sony Pictures, Warner Brothers, Lionsgate, 20th Century Fox, and other providers. The content available for viewing includes TV shows, full length feature films, and clips. Several full length, prime time shows are available on Hulu the morning after they air, and include such popular shows as The Simpsons, and The Office. There are also dozens of classical TV shows, available as full length episodes, including such favorites as Miami Vice and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. If users are willing to put up with unobtrusive ads, often in the lower right corner of the image, or standard TV type commercials, they can watch for free such full length feature films as Ice Age, Three Amigos!, and many others. Hulu is headquartered in Los Angeles, with research and development being done in China.

Hulu will play on almost all current browsers as they are currently configured, and require no special software or add-ons to utilize the service, and requires a broadband connection to view the videos. Almost all computers already have Adobe's Flash Player installed, but if not, Flash Player is a free download from Adobe at www.adobe.com.

Once registered at hulu.com (free registration), a broad selection of videos becomes available for viewing at will. As I type this, there are about 11,200 full length TV episodes and feature clips available, with more being added daily. Currently available for viewing are almost all of the episodes of The

Simpsons, 30 Rock, The Office, Knight Rider, House, Medium, Bionic Woman, American Dad!, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 24, Prison Break, Heroes, about 160 full length children's cartoons (Woody Woodpecker, Spiderman, Astro Boy, and many others), and other TV shows of all genres. For those partial to Saturday Night Live skits, there are about nearly 500 available, including such contemporary issues as presidential politics. TV wrestling fans would appreciate the over 300 matches available for viewing, while NBA fans can view over 140 clips from professional basketball games.

A collection of recent (2008) full length college football games, including many of the bowl games are available for viewing, including the 2007 and 2008 Sugar Bowl, Cotton Bowl, Fiesta Bowl, and others, enough to satiate any college football fans, and keep them glued to the computer screen for days on end. Soap opera addicts will appreciate the well over 100 clips from Days of Our Lives. In total, Hulu lists 25 different TV genres for every taste, making something available for everyone. The large assortment of TV shows (and movies as well) can be displayed by clicking on "Type" (TV or Movie), and then "Genre"; this will display only those selections that meet both criteria. Simply clicking on the image of the selection will play that selection. All of the TV shows can be displayed in one window alphabetically at www.hulu.com/browse/alphabeticall/tv, and can be run by clicking on their titles. All of the TV shows can also be displayed in one window, sorted by genre at www.hulu.com/browse/genre/tv.

Hulu is not just about TV, but also full length feature films, clips, and trailers. As I type this, there are 760 movies available, of which 80 are full length feature films, the remainder being shorts, clips and trailers. According to Hulu, the most popular full length films viewed by members are Ice Age, Master and Commander: The far Side of the World, The Girl Next Door, The Jerk, Usual Suspects, Planet of the Apes, Weekend at Bernie's, Dragon—The Bruce Lee Story, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Three Amigos!, All Dogs Go to Heaven, and dozens more. Movies are divided into 10 genres, including action and adventure, animation, comedy, crime and mystery, documentary and biography, drama, family and kids, horror and thriller, music, and sci-fi and

fantasy. Movies can be selected by genre, or by studio. Opening www.hulu.com/browse/network/movies will display movies alphabetically by studio, with full length features being clearly indicated. Each of the movies shown is hyperlinked (click on the title) directly to the movie. Similarly, all of the movies can be sorted by genre, and displayed in one window at www.hulu.com/browse/genre/movies.

Hulu is about to roll out "HD" (High Definition) videos, and currently has 20 HD movie trailers available to demonstrate the service at www.hulu.com/hd. Since HD video carries more data than conventional video, the system requirements are higher to view HD. In order to view the HD videos, the computer must have a minimum of Flash Player 9.0.115.0 (a free download from Adobe, available for most operating systems), a 2.5Mbs or faster broadband connection (many of the basic broadband services are incapable of operating at this speed, and a premium or upgraded broadband may be required to view HD), a fast processor (3Ghz minimum for Windows or Linux, or a 1.83Ghz Intel Core Duo for Mac). Almost all modern computers of recent manufacturer meet the minimum RAM and video requirements to view HD videos.

While not a substitute for cable or satellite TV, Hulu can provide countless hours of entertainment for free. Since new content is frequently added, and additional providers are being solicited, Hulu has the potential for becoming a major entertainment resource.

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Society News

April Planning Meeting

by John McMillan, Secretary

Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, Arpad Kovacs, Mike Lavelle, John McMillan, Dan Rothfuss, Steve Staub and Tom Thompson gathered at Sally Springett's home for the April planning meeting. Steve announced that an unidentified benefactor has contributed \$2,500 dollars to the Society's treasury. Mike Lavelle mentioned that Bill Gates has graciously agreed to give a talk on his view of the Future of Computing. Arpad was able to obtain the

use of the Theater on the Ridge in view of the anticipated crowd.

That was not the end of the April foolishness. The meeting proceedings, normally used to generate these notes, had been overwritten with the sounds of our dog eating and other household breakfast noises so I was dependent upon memory which is even less useful than the recorder.

Bill Statt's presentation on Voice Power was well received. After setting the stage with a short discussion of the benefits of Dragon Speaking Naturally, Bill used a power point presentation (built using "Dragon" and Voice Power) before demonstrating how effective Voice Power can be. The only improvement could have been more time for discussion and questions.

Although the cataloging of the donated books is not yet complete, the accompanying 3.5 inch floppies are 99% done. After that, I dimly recall a discussion of the budget and the upcoming election of officers but the details and other topics are too foggy to report. Just another indication that it is time for a new Secretary.

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Arpad Kovacs

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

- Q: A member asked about CDs and a reference to music. What is it?
- A: There were music-only CDs made that were preformatted. There was no real difference.
- Q: One needs to know how to get into the bios. He is getting an error message that appears as he starts up the computer.
- A: He may not have to get into the bios. He might need to insert his Windows OS CD and then boot off of it. When he tried it earlier, he got a message about the fact that the license has already been used. He should call the 800 number and they will give him a new license key number. Since installing it the second time, it now will not update.
- Q: Another member has an HP flatbed scanner. It is no longer scanning the whole page. It leaves some space off of the end.
- A: The machine may be cropping too much of the image. It was also suggested to check the size

setting be checked – there may be a size of paper that can be reset.

Q: Why does Thunderbird run slower than Outlook Express? He likes it because he gets less problems/viruses.

A: Outlook has been built to run faster as a part of Windows.

Q: One member has an Epson printer that has quit. It seems like the jets are clogged. He has run the cleaning routine but it does not seem to help.

A: It was suggested that he use rubbing alcohol. He could load an empty cartridge with the rubbing alcohol and then see if it softens the residue in the inking system. This only works with Epson but using rubbing alcohol with any other one might damage the head.

Q: Microsoft is re-issuing XP for retail sales – XP Home is now extended for two more years. This is a lower end product. Full support has been extended.

A: Another member got an email that said that XP will no longer be installed on PCs after July. Microsoft can void licenses if applied to new machines.

News: Service Pack 1 is now available for Vista. It is almost 500 mg. XP Service Pack 3 is in its final beta. It may be release in June/August.

Q: A member is thinking about buying a Kodak photo printer. Can it be used without buying a Kodak camera?

A: The memory card from any camera can be placed into the card reader for the model with the small screen. He could also use it like a regular printer.

Note: There is an inexpensive laptop available where Arpad works, a ThinkPad 230 model with a 40g hard-drive is available for \$250. They would be good for Linux. Tell them Arpad sent you!

April Society Meeting Notes

by John McMillan

There was a short social break after Help's Half Hour before the business meeting started. Arpad Kovacs and Steve Staub opened the meeting with the usual announcements. Those whose dues are due should see Steve. The planning meeting will be held

the first Tuesday of May at Sally's house. If the toner cartridges that have been ordered do not arrive before Saturday, assembly will be postponed. The discussion turned to publishing costs and a straw vote indicated that about half of the members in attendance still prefer a printed copy. The loss of bulk mailing privileges would likely offset estimated paper and printing costs. Volunteers provide all of the printing labor so no savings can be made there.

The next regular meeting will be held May 13 at the Brighton Library. When asked why we meet in different places, Arpad said that the planning committee wrestles with this question monthly. Locations that make no charge are selected based upon attendance history but scheduling is determined by their rules. Reservations are frequently accepted on a first come, first served basis, with Library functions taking precedence over outside groups. Many have a maximum three month advance limit or other scheduling restrictions.

Someone is needed to run Help's Half Hour at next month's meeting when Bill Statt is expected to discuss Linux.

The balance of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of elections. It became obvious from questions from the floor that many members were unaware of the bylaws regarding elections. You can read the bylaws by going to the RCSi website and looking under Business.

Dan Rothfuss, Vice President, and Tony Dellelo, Board Member at Large, have agreed to rerun for their respective offices. Steve Staub declined to run as Treasurer, but threw his hat in the ring as a candidate for President. Arpad agreed to run as Treasurer. John McMillan declined to run as secretary and will not serve if nominated or elected. The balance of the meeting was spent unsuccessfully trying to elicit candidates for Secretary to meet the requirement for publication in the *Monitor* prior to the May meeting.

It would appear that in the absence of candidates for the vacant secretarial position with no success. If we don't have a volunteer at the May meeting, the society will not fulfill the rules that qualify it as a nonprofit organization under the laws of New York State and could therefore be disbanded, effective September 1.

Think about it. One hundred percent of the work of any organization is performed by ten percent of the membership. Be one of the good guys.

The Lighter Side

People generally attempt to turn the unfamiliar into the familiar. In illustration of this truism:

Customer: "I have a Kumquat Presario."

Recently, the head of the marketing department had a information session for programmers. During the course of the session, the orator started talking about MPEG 2. He described MPEG 2 as being a "compression allegory."

