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Contents

Using CrossLoop to Troubleshoot and Control Remote Machines

by Vinny LaBash
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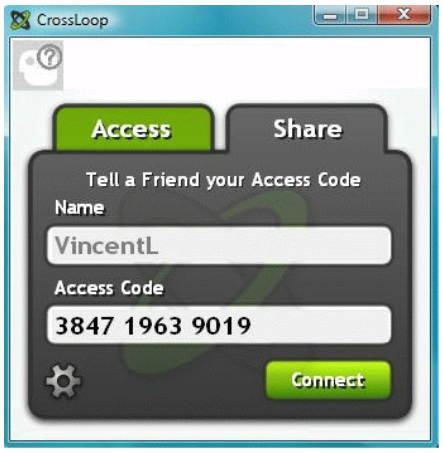
Third party Windows applications are rarely examined in this column, but CrossLoop is too good a utility to ignore. Trying to walk someone through a computer problem over the telephone is often an exercise in frustration. There is no substitute for seeing what is actually on a user's screen to find out the root cause of a problem.

Vista has a built-in support tool known as Remote Desktop, but far from making the process easy, it has a tendency to confuse those with no technical background. Remote Desktop makes it rough on those who don't know how to handle the added complications of firewalls and routers. CrossLoop, which is a free remote support utility, could be an excellent solution.

CrossLoop shields users from tricky situations involving communicating through routers, firewalls, and other potential obstacles. Setting up a communications session between two computers physically separated, but connected through the internet, is reduced to a process hardly more complex than turning on your TV. Those concerned about security

can relax. CrossLoop uses something called TightVNC which safeguards data with 128 bit encryption.

CrossLoop is useful for people who want to train or support others remotely. If you're an experienced web surfer, for example, and need to show someone how to access a disk drive or retrieve a lost document, CrossLoop allows you to take control of their computer screen, and show them exactly how to do it.



Hard core geeks may not be satisfied with CrossLoop. It's not complicated enough. It works better than most similar commercial utilities, and your technically challenged friends and relatives will find it aggravation free.

You can download the program without charge from http://www.CrossLoop .com. The site has a video that demonstrates how to install and use the program which is very helpful for technophobes.

Once you're up and running, the interface presenting itself is a model of simplicity which effectively masks the complexity behind the scenes. As mentioned earlier, security and remote control is handled by TightVNC. VNC stands for Virtual Network Computing, and is a very well designed software tool that easily allows remote access to Operating Systems with a graphical interface. The technical specifications say you need Windows 98 or higher. A broadband internet connection is also a requirement. Dialup connections won't work. Drive space, processor speed, and memory requirements are negligible given the general power of today's computers.

Another benefit of TightVNC is the built-in 128 bit encrypted security. When you begin a communications session, the program generates a new 12 digit access code. The access code then generates the encryption codes giving you an additional layer of security. Not bad for a free utility.

Running the program is so easy it's almost boring. As you can see from the illustration, the interface is simple and straightforward. Assuming you started the session, the next step is to communicate the access code to the person you are communicating with. You can do this by email, telephone, screaming into the next room, etc.

After starting the session, your friend types the access code into the box and clicks **Connect**. When the **Connect** button is clicked on both sides the two PCs are linked.

This method of troubleshooting a remote PC eliminates all the hassles of trying to interpret what an inexperienced user is attempting to explain. It's difficult to imagine anything less complex than a one button interface. With 128 bit encryption built in, it's tough to beat.

Other applications that make such connections possible have been available for years, but nothing I've seen makes it as simple as CrossLoop.

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Saving Pictures That Show on Your Computer Screen

Tips & Hints by Dick Carricato
Tri County Computer User Group, FL

These days we are bombarded with beautiful pictures on our computers, and when I see a great picture I'm not happy until I have it stored away in my own computer where I can use it when I want to.

The usual technique used to extract and save pictures from the web, from e-mail, or from any other source that places a picture on the computer screen, is simply to right click on the picture and select "Save picture as…" This will often open the 'My Pictures' folder where the user can select a folder in which to save the picture.

This is a very straight forward, simple, and easy to remember technique for those situations where it works, and if it worked all the time this article would end right here. However, it often does not work. Sometimes web authors make it difficult for you to copy their pictures, and a right click on one of those pictures produces a grayed (not available) "Save picture as…" selection. Pictures in PDF documents in general cannot be copied, and for that matter, even highlighted text can't be copied from most PDF documents. Very often when an e-mail picture is right-clicked the "Save picture as…" selection is available, but when that option is selected an error box appears saying, "The system cannot find the file specified."

The remainder of this article will be devoted to a single method that allows the user to copy and save any image that shows on his computer screen. This method involves the use of the Windows Print Screen function. Of course, everyone remembers how to use Print Screen (Prt Scn) because we have discussed it in the past. Just in case you have forgotten I'll review it here.

The Prt Scn key is located to the right of the function keys at the top of the keyboard. When Prt Scn is pressed it copies a picture of the entire display to the Clipboard. Pressing Alt-Prt Scn copies an image of the Active window to the Clipboard. Remember that the active window is the one with the bright title bar, and it got that way by clicking the mouse anywhere within the window. The Clipboard is just a section of memory that Windows uses for all Copy and Paste operations. Information is copied from any Windows program to the Clipboard by using the Copy command. Information is pasted to any Windows program from the Clipboard by using the Paste command.

The next time a nice picture shows up on your screen, right-click on it and attempt to save it by using the "Save as…" command. If that fails, click once in the window where the picture is located; maximize the window to make the picture as large as possible, and then press Prt Scn. (In rare cases you might have to hold the Shift key while pressing Prt Scn.) This places the entire window, including the picture that you want, in the Clipboard. The rest of the procedure requires a graphics processor, and fortunately the Windows Paint program will do just fine. It can be found by clicking Start, (all) Programs, Accessories, Paint (or mspaint). To put a shortcut to Paint on your desktop, right click and drag it to your desktop, let go, and select copy here.

So far all we have done is to discover a picture, maximize the window that contains it, and press Prt Scn. Next, open Paint by double clicking the Paint icon on the desktop. In Paint, click Edit and select Paste. Now the entire window that you copied above is visible in the Paint window

Pick up the selection tool from the group of tools along the left side of the Paint window. To do this, click on the dotted line rectangle. Move the mouse pointer to the upper left corner of the Picture. Then press the left mouse button and drag to the bottom right corner of the picture. This selects the picture that you want to keep. Copy this to the Clipboard by right clicking within the selection and (left) clicking on Copy.

Now you have what you want in the Clipboard, and all that you don't want is visible in Paint. Click File and New, and answer the query to save the garbage with 'no'. Click Edit and Paste to get the picture alone into Paint. Click File and Save as…. Be sure to select a file type of JPEG for your picture. If you don't, Paint will save the file as a bitmap (.BMP) which is quite large, ranging from 1 to 5 megabytes depending on the size of the picture. The JPEG file will be only about 5% of the size of the bitmap file.

Face Time in the 21st Century

Lou's Views by Lou Vitale
President, Macon County Users Group, NC

Person to person communication was pretty simple last century. There was the letter, or as we call it today "snail mail," and the telephone. Our address book contained the physical address of our friends and their phone numbers. It is amazing to me how much we actually got done, we won wars and went to the moon and created the greatest county on earth, and all without a single bit of digitized information.

To someone who grew up in the last 20 or so years that must seem quaint. They probably can't imagine life without a cell phone, email, IM and a dozen other ways of communicating with their fellow human beings. I am beginning to wonder myself. Someone asked me the other day if I "Twittered," I thought it was a neurological disorder. No, it was a form of micro-blogging, another way to stay in touch in the 21st century.

So just how many ways can you keep up to the minute with your "friends" today, let me count the ways. And this is by no means a complete list.

Email has been around since the beginning of the internet. By the late 80s' everyone with a computer had an email account. Now we could send a message to anyone with a computer and they could reply. This was a momentous social change. It significantly accelerated the communication between people. Plus we could "attach" stuff, like pictures of the grandkids, or an excel spread sheet to our email.

In it simplest form, a blog (web log) is an online diary or journal. Prior to the mid 90's online forums and BBS (bulletin board systems) allowed people to have running conversations on a web site with a moderator to keep order. Then some high profile personalities started to keep online diaries which

allowed comments from anyone to be posted, and the blog was born.

Today bogging is a serious force to be reckoned with. Anyone can start a blog and thousands do every day. Currently there are an estimated 12 million blogs and about 57 million blog readers. These numbers are deceiving, since it appears that only about 20% of blogs are active and 60% to 80% of blogs are abandoned after one month. As one commentator put it "the average blog has the life span of a fruit fly."

Yet this kind of personal communication has again changed the social landscape. Anyone can comment on anything from personal hygiene to politics and anyone can respond with their take on the subject. Some bloggers have aspired to become journalists and others are just looking for some virtual recognition, either way we are more in touch.

Personal communication has taken another leap with the creation of social networking sites like Face Book and My Space. These sites and many others like them allow virtual conversation to take place between friends on an almost instant basis. I will confess, I don't know much about them which only proves my age. But without a doubt, and from now on a person's identity will forever be linked to their Face Book page and their list of friends.

Will someone please explain to me why someone would attempt to communicate by text using a device no bigger than a deck of cards and with a "Key Board" consisting of 12 keys? At a minimum IM (Instant Messaging) requires tiny fingers, superb eye hand coordination and a new language consisting of thousands of newly created letter combinations to represent real words. And another thing since this device is a Phone, why not just TALK to the person? LOL

The ultimate "Personal" communication for the 21st century must be in Second Life. In this enormous virtual world millions of people interact with millions of other people, one on one. The whole range of human activity can now take place in a virtual environment. You can be anyone you want and "talk" to a dragon or a real priest, free of the most basic limitation of our human form. In a sense this is probably personal communication on a level never seen before.

Twitter is the newest "form" of communication. It answers the pressing question, "What are you doing NOW?" As you go through your day, you constantly update your "Twitter" page with mini blog entries no more than 140 characters long. Now anyone who is logged o to your page can tell what you are doing, what you are feeling, who you are with and any moment in the day. Why didn't I think of that? It's obvious that I would want to know all the mundane details of all my friends' daily lives.

Face time means actual face to face talk. The words, the eyes, the body language, the context, all convey meaning. Let me know when we can do that online. Until then, don't look for my Twitter page.

Concepts and Tools

by Elizabeth B. Wright
Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

One day in the near future there will be no computer "beginners" at the adult level. The children born into the world as it is today are exposed to computers from conception. After they are born, many have very sophisticated hands on use of the machines from the minute they can reach out from their parent's lap and touch the keyboard. There is no mystery to them.

But while there are still older adults who want computer knowledge, someone has to be available to instruct them. And adults do not learn the same way that babies and children learn. Sometimes, when leading a group or teaching a class, it is difficult to explain to students why they need to understand the difference between how a computer or a program works and how to make it actually do something. In my opinion, concepts are far more useful in the long run than specific techniques, especially when dealing with someone using a computer for the first time or who has gone just beyond the basics. But how do you teach a concept?

First, accept the fact that it will take more time in the beginning to teach concepts, but it will save time later on. The real trick is to make the process interesting and easy to understand

The simple fact that a computer is basically thousands of off and on switches, the same as a light switch, seems to be information that many people find irrelevant. But once a student gets some idea of the actual simplicity of the machine, much of the mystery is removed from the learning process.

Second, CONCEPTS, once understood, are usually far easier to remember than techniques. Anyone who "gets the idea" of a computer fundamental can usually find the tools later to accomplish the end result, even if the specific steps are not used

often enough to remember them in sequence.

Many first session lesson plans skip computer functionality and plunge straight into using software. As an example, the concept of organizing files on a hard drive seems to be much harder for new users to comprehend than teaching them to open the file manager, aka Windows Explore or some similar program. So many teachers go through the cumbersome task of showing people how to open the file system, only to become bogged down in the steps needed to find a particular file, then later to continually have people complain they have lost a file and firmly believe it has disappeared from their machine.

Most new users find it difficult to make the connection between finding a file on the computer and why understanding how to find it is important. It is the instructors job to help them make the connection. The CONCEPT of hard drive storage is not easy to absorb, so the instructor must make it easy. Also many new users find it difficult to transfer keystrokes learned on a classroom computer to their own computers at home. The reason for this is that no two computers are exactly alike, so the steps learned on one machine may or may not work on another one. But if the student comprehends the idea behind digital file storage, the actual keystrokes will begin to make sense, regardless of what computer they are using. In my opinion, rote learning is not the best way to become even moderately proficient on a computer. Real understanding of basic computing processes is vital.

Since many new users have little idea of what hardware is on their own computers, talking about C:\ drives and other drives in relation to specific files means little to them. But a well developed discussion of what basic hardware CAN be on a computer and how it works is not a waste of time, answering questions along the way. Many new users won't see the value in a technical discussion, so it is important to present hardware demonstrations using common sense terms rather than obscure technical language. It is never necessary to impress new students with what you know, but rather to make the information as easy for them to understand as possible. With practice, a teacher or presenter can develop the dialog necessary to convey essential information and still keep the listeners engaged. Students appreciate being encouraged in the idea that they may not know much to begin with, but they will leave each session armed with useful information and techniques that will build a good basic foundation for them. Biblically we were taught not to build our houses on sand. Why are the pyramids in Egypt still standing? Because underneath all that sand there are foundations built on bedrock. Good computer skills begin the same way.

Nearly all programs are far too comprehensive to be taught in detail to beginners. But if the most basic use of the program (the program's CONCEPT) can be presented in a way that is useful to students, they will get their feet wet. From there they can then be encouraged to not only attend study groups and advanced classes, but to explore their favorite programs on their own. Again, the difference is between teaching new users the fundamental use of the program itself as opposed to teaching them to use specific program "tools." Obviously some techniques need to be taught in early sessions, but teaching the use of most tools is best done in intermediate and advanced classes. My experience has been that only when people have a need for or enjoy using any computer software will they continue to explore and expand their knowledge of the program.

How long did it take you to figure out that the "d" in d:\ stands for any non-specific "drive" when dealing with program instructions (often installation procedures) and not specifically for the "d" drive on your personal computer? Admit it, there was a time when you didn't know that. Just think how confusing the term is to new users. There is a concept here if you can find it.

Cloud Computing– The Future of Personal Computing?

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.
Member and Contributing Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, FL

You may not have heard of it, but "Cloud Computing" is the latest buzz-word in computing circles. The question is, just what does it mean? The problem is that at this point, there is no really solid definition for this term. You can search for it and you'll find a number of interpretations. So, from all that I have encountered, I'll try to synthesize one for you.

Cloud computing is being able to access files, data, programs and services all via the Internet. You would have little or nothing stored on your computer, in fact, your computer might simply be a device, desktop or handheld, that can access the web and all of its services. In addition, cloud computing offers

the services of enormous computer networks that function as if they were components of a supercomputer. These networks can process tens of trillions of operations per second compared to three billion operations per second for the most powerful desktop computer. This kind of computing power can be used for analysis of risk in financial portfolios, delivering personalized medical information, and powering immersive computer games. These networks use hundreds or thousands of network servers using PC related technology.

I think this excerpt aptly describes the computer cloud. *"What is Google's cloud? It's a network made of hundreds of thousands, or by some estimates 1 million, cheap servers, each not much more powerful than the PCs we have in our homes. It stores staggering amounts of data, including numerous copies of the World Wide Web. This makes search faster, helping ferret out answers to billions of queries in a fraction of a second. Unlike many traditional supercomputers, Google's system never ages. When its individual pieces die, usually after about three years, engineers pluck them out and replace them with new, faster boxes. This means the cloud regenerates as it grows, almost like a living thing." (*Quotation is taken from a *Business Week* article dated 12-13-2007 by Stephen Baker.)

Although some of these services may appear to be only of interest for corporations and their IT departments, services are also being made available for home and small business users. As you might expect, the availability of this Internet computer access depends on fast broadband access. An area where the U.S. lags behind many other countries. In this country we think that having 10-15 megabits/sec on our broadband is really fast. However, in Japan, 50 megabits/sec is closer to the norm, even for home users.

So who would be providing these cloud computing services? Actually, they already exist in the form of Google Apps, Amazon Elastic Compute (EC2), Sapotek's Desktop2 (www.desktoptwo.com), Zim Desk (www.zimdesk.com) and Zoho Office (www .zoho .com). (There are also a number of companies providing these services and more to large corporations only.) Sapotek claims to have 175,000 users of their Desktop2 and their servers can handle 8-10,000 of them at the same time. They have a partnership with Sun that will provide the equipment to handle as many as 350,000 users. Every time I look for more information on Cloud Computing I find new companies listed that are offering these services. It is a very rapidly growing industry.

So, if you wanted to take advantage of the services in the cloud, what could you expect to find? Let's take a look at Desktop2. This is a free service that provides normal office applications: writer, spreadsheets, presentations, notepad, and a calendar. It also provides hard drive storage, e-mail, instant messaging, blogs. MP3 player, RSS service and a web site editor. The free version does come with ads as you would expect.

Zimdesks is very similar to Desktop2. Its web applications includes pop3email, file manager, sidebar, RSS, browser, word processor, spread-sheet, calendar, tasks manager, accessories/widgets, web messenger, video conference, media player, Internet radio, web TV, games, zimcommunity, zimblog, and much more. It is also a free service that incorporates advertising. Like everyone else they have to support them-selves somehow.

The third of these services is Zoho Office. On their home page you not only find a list of the services they provide, they are all available for trial simply by clicking on a icon. As with the previous services, the list of applications is quite extensive.

Google Apps is very similar in its offerings to the preceding services. However, it is more oriented towards business users. It does have a free version which might be useful for the individual user.

Zoho uses Java to run its applications on the web. Other services may use Flash or Java. Either of these allow the applications to run in your browser and to operate at reasonable speeds. I have tried out the word processing and found it to be no different than using a word processor on my computer. This is true even though the speed of my Internet connection is usually only 500-750 kilobits/sec. When you are using a wireless card modem it is only on very rare occasions that you can match fast DSL speeds. I'm sure that those of you on cable or fast DSL would have no problem using a web-based application, at least with regard to the speed of the applications response. However, if you are preparing a graphic loaded presentation, then you might experience some slow down depending on the speed of your connection.

The idea of relying on Web-based applications and storing data in the "cloud" of the Internet has long been pushed as a way to do business on the road. Now software companies are making entire Web-based operating systems. They present themselves as a complete computer in the cloud and are

aimed at a wider audience. These browser-based services could help those who can't afford their own computer.

There are also those who are convinced that this is the future of computing. However, some security concerns should be considered. Unless you know how secure your data is when you use a cloud system, you should be cautious about what you share with the on-line servers. You need to know how your data is protected from other users of the "cloud." As a service provider they should be willing to undergo external audits and/or security certifications. Also you need to know what kind of data protection and data recovery procedures are provided. As has been demonstrated many times, computers do fail. Finally, you need to know what happens to your data in case the company fails or is sold to another entity. This is also not uncommon in the high tech industry. As is
always the case, before allowing sensitive information to be used or stored on the web, remember "caveat emptor."

Lastly, consider what computing might be like should the "cloud" become the method of choice. Certainly there would be no need for computers to have all the bells and whistles we now associate with them. Just think about the possible design of a system destined for use solely with cloud computing. It would only need a minimal operating system that would allow the computer to boot, then start the web browser which would connect to the Internet. Your cloud page would be your home page and display your chosen desktop.

As for a hard drive, a 10-20 gigabyte solid state drive would probably be adequate. USB ports for printers, scanners, possibly other I/O ports would be included. The one thing you would want to be high end would be the graphics system. This would allow display of high resolution graphics used in online games and for viewing videos. It is possible that the graphics processing unit (GPU) would be more powerful that the CPU (central processing unit) or it might even incorporate the CPU. This could all be contained in a 1-2 pound laptop or compressed further into a handheld computer/cell phone. Although some of these characteristics are found now in smart phones, the spread of cloud computing would enhance the features of these phones. For most of us, the available screen size on these smart phones is not large enough, leaving a market opening for inexpensive laptops such as the ASUS Eee PC or the OLPC (One laptop per child). In neither case would we need an operating system as massive as Microsoft Windows.

One thing is certain, anytime you try to predict the future you usually miss the mark by a mile. So it will be interesting to see what reality brings about over the next few years.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over 35 years, developing software and assembling systems. This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (bwsail(at)yahoo.com).

The National Science Foundation has a video describing the birth of the Internet. Find it here: http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/nsf-net/

Create Fill-In Forms with MS Word

Q I do volunteer work and have to fill out lots of paper forms. Using Word, I tried to create a fill-in-the-blanks type of form, but when I try to type new data into my blank form, the lettering in each field moves to the right. How can I get the form to stay in place so I can just add my new data to each field?

A. With your Word document open, look at the bottom of your screen to the narrow status bar. This status bar tells you what page you are on, how many pages there are in the document, etc.

Near the middle of the status bar there is a small section with the letters REC TRK EXT OVR, which usually appear faint or "grayed out." "OVR" stands for "overwrite," which is a mode that will replace existing text, as you type, instead of having your new text shove existing text to the right. You want to be in OVR mode when entering your new data into the form you created. There are three ways to enable the Overwrite function: You can double-click the grayed out "OVR" box, which will cause the letters to become dark, indicating it is enabled. Double-click it again to disable it.

As an alternative, press the "INSert" key on your keyboard, usually located near the "DELete" key. Press the INSert key a second time to toggle the Overwrite function off.

Lastly, from the main Word toolbar, click Tools Options Edit tab. In the Editing Options section, click to clear the "Overtype mode" check box. Click OK to save your changes.

Q. I've read a lot about computer viruses, worms and Trojans. Are they all the same thing and if not, what differences are there between the three? Thanks, Mr. M.

A. Besides the spelling (insert rimshot here), a computer virus is a potentially damaging program that can destroy data or alter the way a computer performs. Once a virus takes up residence, it can spread throughout a system, infecting other files and potentially damaging the operating system itself.

A worm is a program that repeatedly copies itself and while similar to a virus, the primary difference is that a virus uses an executable file to spread. A worm is a self-replicating file and typically sends (via email) copies of itself to other computers and gobbles up a lot of bandwidth in the process, not to mention infecting many other systems.

A Trojan horse is a program that hides within another program. Though it looks like a legitimate program, its purpose is to trick a user into launching it, which will then infect the computer. A specific action usually triggers a Trojan horse, but unlike viruses and worms, Trojan horses do not replicate or copy themselves.

Q. Whenever I insert any sort of device (flash drive, back-up device, or CD) into my notebook computer, a box pops up stating, "Windows can perform the same action each time you insert a disk or connect a device of this kind." Is there a way to turn off this feature?

A. Go to My Computer, right-click the device's icon (flash drive, back-up device, etc.), select Properties AutoPlay tab. You'll see where you can select the default action to perform in whatever manner you prefer. For example, if it's a CD, you'll probably want to select "Play."

After making your selection, look at the bottom of the Properties window and you'll see a check box for "Prompt me each time to choose an action." Remove the check mark, then click Apply OK, restart your computer, and you'll be all set.

Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month

Cute Core

Unbelievably cute things, including lots of pictures of fuzzy animals, mostly rabbits, kittens and puppies. Awwwwww…. www.cutecore.com

TelePixie

A free service that provides wake-up calls, reminders, stock and weather alerts, and just about anything else you could possibly want, including a Joke-of-the-Day. Because the service is free, each call you receive will be accompanied by a "hort ad." If your idea of a perfect morning includes being awakened by a ringing phone and listening to an advertisement, then you won't want to miss this service. www.telepixie.com

Vector Ball

If you're seeking a three-dimensional cerebral exerciser—and who isn't—you won't want to miss Vector Ball, also known as CurveBall. Created by Cognitive Labs for Mind, Body, and Cognition, use your mouse pointer as a paddle and left-click to serve the ball. I got a nosebleed within the first 30 seconds, took a Dramamine after a minute, and paramedics were on scene shortly thereafter. Press "eplay" to play again, and again, and again.
http://tinyurl.com/y769rz

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 MODEM and receive one free month with your six-month subscription (28 issues!) To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

The DealsGuy

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

This Will Be Easy, I Thought!

About three months ago, I bought a basic new Toshiba Satellite A-205 laptop with a Celeron processor, one gig of RAM and Vista Home Basic. It was also Wi-Fi ready. I thought I would probably only use it when I go out of town, mostly for e-mail and MS Office 2003. I booted it up to look at Vista and decided to register it with Toshiba, but before I finished the registration, a message told me McAfee had finished installing, which frustrated me since it had not asked my permission. After taking a quick look at Vista, and

being hounded by more advertising, I set it in the closet until I had more time to work with it.

About three months later it was time to finish preparing it for a trip out of town, so I started by downloading the free PC Decrapifier <http://www.PCdecrapifier.com> to remove the trial products on the laptop. There were five columns of icons for all kinds of stuff that I would mostly not want. Decrapifier puts itself into a temporary folder and then searches your machine for all the items it has on it. I selected everything I wanted taken off and it proceeded to remove all except the MS Office trial; and when it finished, only two columns of icons remained. I found a bargain to add more memory, giving me noticeably better speed loading, and later upgraded to Vista Home Premium since I was repeatedly told that Vista Home Basic doesn't offer much.

On my trip north, I visited my friend Bob Clyne who I had previously spoken with on the phone and mentioned upgrading the laptop. I had not upgraded Vista yet when I got there and asked him to help install the Vista Home Premium upgrade. What followed sure didn't seem like routine for such an install. On the package, it stated that the upgrade included SP1 for Vista. After starting the upgrade installation, it suddenly stopped with a message stating that before the package could be installed over Vista Home Basic we would have to install Vista SP1. I finally left the machine with him to finish the job and he said it took several hours to get it done.

He said that even after installing all the updates from Microsoft Update and several updates from the Toshiba site, Microsoft Update would not make Vista SP1 available as an update. He finally called Toshiba who told him he should download the entire Service Pack from Microsoft and install it manually. After installing SP1 and the Vista Home Premium upgrade, there were about 18 additional updates showing in Microsoft Update. After installing them as a batch, the machine would not reboot. He repaired that using the Repair option from the Vista Home Premium Update disc. He then installed the updates one at a time, which took ages because several of the updates required a reboot after installation, but that did work better. We have no idea why Microsoft Update would not offer Vista SP1 and the Toshiba tech support person would not address the problem other than to refer us to Microsoft.

Originally, I wanted to reformat the HD and install XP Professional, but was warned that might be a major problem because the XP drivers might not be available for the new machine. I was told to check for and download the XP drivers before attempting to install Windows XP.

I had already installed AOL (my backup ISP) software, some of which Bob felt was rather obtrusive, but had rejected installing their free antivirus and anti-spyware software. Bob suspects that the AOL software might have been part of the problem with the updates after the Vista Home Premium upgrade, but that was merely conjecture. Maybe I should have let him remove the AOL software to find out, but I didn't know the correct settings to use for AOL without using all their software.

Help for People Who Can't Attend Meetings

I've previously mentioned Hewie Poplock and Mike Ungerman at Central Florida Computer Society trying different online meeting software to help members attend meetings, even when a member can't do it physically. At the Tech SIG this week, Hewie used <http:// www.Ustream.tv> to capture the video and sound during the meeting and put it in a file to post on the Internet. Attendees can also join the meeting from home and watch the proceedings, even typing in a question for the moderator to bring up at the meeting. This experiment still needs refinement, such as a dedicated camera operator and more microphones, but see it for yourself at: (Part 1) <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded /664934> and (Part 2) <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded /665065>.

The reason for two parts is that Denny's Wi-Fi connection dropped us in the middle of the meeting. Hopefully everyone that speaks will be included in the future. If you look closely, it could also be called the Pig SIG/Tech SIG since the SIG meets at a Denny's and they enjoy food as well <G>. Hewie and Mike will be demonstrating different methods at the Florida Association of Computer Users Groups (FACUG) one-day fall conference Oct. 25, 2008 in Clearwater, FL. A couple folks had minor complaints about the recordings, but I was very impressed. Contact Hewie at <Hewie@hewie.net> if you want more info.

iTurns, a Freebie That Could Be a Big Help

DVDneXtCOPY Inc. announces DVDneXtCOPY iTurns, a tool to make hardware linked music FREE. This brand new one-step tool breaks no laws because it uses procedures not restricted by DRM (Digital

Rights Management). DVDneXtCOPY iTurns is available in a completely free version. (DealsGuy Note: The free version has limitations compared to the Pro Version) iTurns software is a virtual program that emulates a CD recorder in your computer system. A built in encoder can transcode any burn job to a portable MP3 music file. Just burn your iTunes music and create a freely portable music library. iTurns will do automatic iD3 tagging on the fly, which allows information such as the title, artist, album, track number, or other information about the file to be stored in the file itself. Just create your portable library and import it to any new computer system, mobile audio device or music player.

Create your own "free library" and move it anywhere without the message "you are not allowed to play this audio file on this system." Read more information about the new DVDneXtCOPY iTurns at <http:// www.dvdnextcopyiturns.com>.

Clean Off Your Discarded Drive with Confidence

Are you replacing your old HD, but want to make sure your data is completely removed? Consider Active@KillDisk hard drive eraser <http://www killdisk.com>. I've seen this in a few UG newsletters so it must be pretty reliable. It is powerful software that will destroy all data on your hard drives, and even your floppy drives, completely. They claim this product will make restoration of your deleted data next to impossible. It can also erase a partition, according to their Web site, although I didn't use the product myself. It's free, but there are also pay versions. In fact, the pay version actually conforms to the US Department of Defense cleaning and sanitizing standard DoD 5220.22-M. Visit their Web site for better information.

Here's another popular product to wipe your drive that many people like. Check <http:// www.heidi.ie/node/6#Eraser_Features>. This freebie offers multiple types of drive wiping and one that also uses the US Department of Defense cleaning and sanitizing standard DoD 5220.22-M. Like any product, satisfactory results are all in the eye of the beholder.

Excuse Me, But What Time Is It?

How good is your PC's clock keeping time? Windows XP and Vista have a built-in code for setting your clock via the Internet, but that only happens once a week. If you have broadband Internet service, you could change the frequency that your Windows OS will update the clock. Check out <http://www.thinkman.com/dimension4/index.html> where you can get Dimension 4 at no cost and it will set your computer's time from servers on the Internet. There are lots of options including how often to update the time. Check out their Web site for further information on how it works and for the free download.

Another way to do this is to try installing the Internet Time Sync Utility from [http://www .dougknox.com/xp/utils/xp_inet_time.htm] that will also reset the computer's time at whatever interval you wish. Again, it is free and their Web site has further information and the free download.

As with the other items, I have not tried this product.

That's it for this month. I'll have some other 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 at bellsouth dot net>. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>.

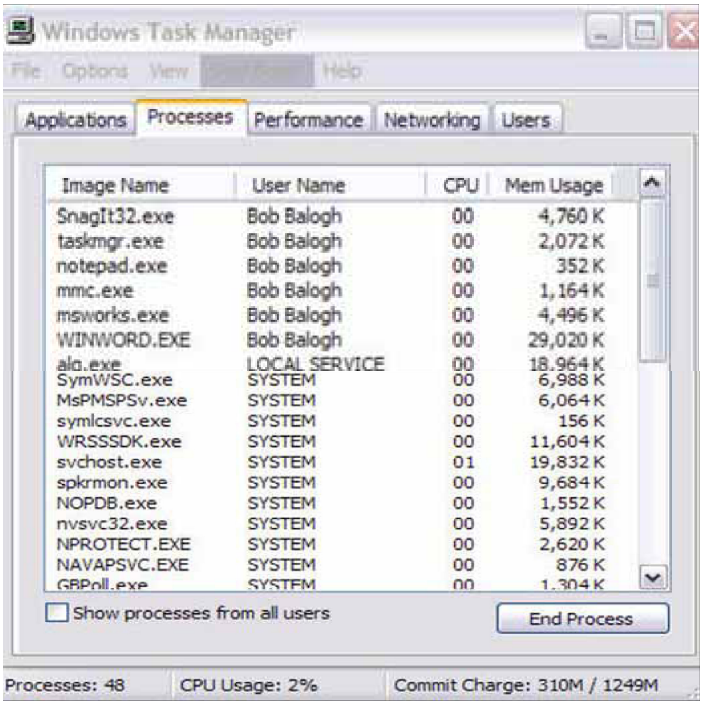
Window Pains

by Bob Balogh
President, Boca Raton Computer Society. FL

Task Manager is a helpful application that is part of the Windows Operating System (2000, XP & Vista). You can open it with the three fingered salute—Ctrl/Alt/ Delete, or more easily, my preferred way, by a right click on an open space on your Taskbar, and clicking on Task Manager. You may also open Task Manager by going to Start-Run and entering "taskmgr" (without the quotes).

Most of us have only experienced dealing with the Task Manager when a program no longer seems to be functioning. We then open the Task Manager and click on the Applications Tab, see the list of running programs, and highlight the program we are having difficulty with, then click on "End Task" at the bottom of the page. Voila, the program is shutdown and is no longer causing you a problem. Of course, you still will want to find out why the problem began or why the program froze in the first place. However, that is for another time.

Processes



You can also click on the "Processes" tab, to see exactly which programs are running in the background. Go on open yours up and see what is running. Here is part of mine:

Of course all these programs do not have to run. In fact while many of these programs are useful and are needed others are not needed and may at times cause problems. The problem is what determining what these programs do. Even if you are not inclined to stop any of these programs it is a step forward to know what these programs do so at least you have an idea as to what may be causing a particular problem when it arises.

To see a list of most of the possible programs that are running in the background just go to this web site http://www.answersthatwork.com/Tasklist_pages/tasklist. htm and peruse the programs from A-Z. Well, you don't have to look at all of them, just the ones you have listed in your Task Manager.

Remember, all the programs, that are listed in your Task Manager, may not be listed at "Answers that Work." Why you might ask? Well, just look at my list and you will see a program listed called SnagIt32. exe. That is a program that I added to my computer, and use often.

Actually, it is the program I used to create the picture of the Task Manager above. So it is listed, since it was still "running," when I made the screen capture. Could I turn it off? Sure, all I have to do is close the program.

If you want to turn off a program that is running in Task Manager, don't change, or disable it in the Windows Task Manager. Instead, go to the Control Panel Administrative Tools Services, and change them there.

Double click on the entry, and change it from the dropdown list where it says "Startup Type." Carefully read what it does, and what it is related to, before making a decision. Write down what you changed, in the event you wish to change it back.

If you have System Restore or Go Back operating, write down the date and time, in case you want to return to an earlier time, when all was well. Additionally, set a new restore point, prior to doing anything. If the service isn't listed in there, then more than likely it was added by an application you added after the install. You'll need to decide if it's necessary, or if you only want it running when you decide.

There also comes a time when a particular program "freezes" and is not functioning as we mentioned at the outset of the article. What should you do? Simply use Ctrl+Alt+Delete, open the Task Manager, and simply close down the program by selecting it and clicking on "End Task." The following figure demonstrates it for you:

The Performance tab displays an overview of your computer's performance, including graphs for CPU and memory usage as well as the total number of processes running. Google such other items displayed if you are interested in the purpose they serve. I do not wish to get too technical here.

The remaining tabs, Networking and Users are basically self explanatory. If you are running a home network it will show up under Networking and inform you of it function ability. As far as Users is concerned you will see a list of those using your computer.

Peruse the headings in the toolbar (top), just to get an idea of what they are and do. Of course the Help tab, as usual, is the most important in explaining the program at hand. Use it and you will learn much.

Simple File Management Enhancements Are at the Top of a Wish List for Windows 7

by Linda Gonse
Editor, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

Besides the obvious—a stable system that performs fast, without vulnerabilities—I have thought of a few things I'd like to see integrated into the Windows 7 OS which may be released in 2009/2010.

When it comes right down to it, I don't care if I can use 10 fingers to Paint with or other iPhone-like multi-touch features, or if Internet Explorer can recall a previous browsing session. Simple file management enhancements are at the top of my wish list.

I want to be able to print a list of my files and file information—a print directory feature. In the "old days" of DOS, you could do this. And now, you can use third party programs to accomplish this, but why isn't this already built-into Windows?

In Windows 3.11, there was a simple undelete feature. In later versions, the Recycle Bin gives you a chance to recover files you delete in haste or ignorance. But, what about files you deleted from the Recycle Bin? If you don't have a third party program installed, the files are really history.

Wouldn't it be great to have auto filtering in Windows Explorer? Clicking on the top tab in a folder allows you to sort by Size, Date Modified, Type, etc.—but you still have to scroll through all the files in a directory to get to the specific file you are looking for. If you could set an autofilter, such as Excel has, you could choose which extensions would be viewable, click on one, and only those files would be visible.

Windows 3.11 had the capability to only show certain types of files. This was closer to what I'd like, but it was a little involved to set it up and then be sure you reverted to the default file view afterward.

And, what about being able to flag a file and see the flag in Windows Explorer? Or, jot a post-it like note and attach it to a file?

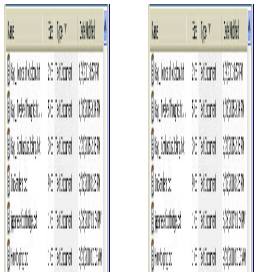
DOS also allowed you to rename extensions on an entire directory of files. That would be a handy tool now.

What happened to the "quick view" inside of a word processing file in a directory? I want it back again.

A constant aggravation is the Open and Save As boxes in Windows and applications. Sometimes there is a minuscule box to view an entire directory in bitesizes. Why can't all the boxes be large ones? And, why can't they be modified permanently so you can always view them the way you like them, such as you do in Folders?

Another drawback to these windows is that despite file names that are not very long, to the right of the file name I have to slide the first two columns—Size and Type—closer, scrunching them together, so I can see the Date Modified tab in the same window. Sometimes you can scroll to see the Date Modified tab, but that is still not handy.

I have rearranged the headings to suit my need for selecting files by the most current. But, after closing and reopening an application, I have to modify the list again. Why can't my modifications be permanent? Also, I'd like to see these types of windows open up larger or have a resizing option to drag a corner border to make them larger.



Why do directories sometimes get scrambled? They aren't alphabetized or in any other order. Before I can open a file (not every time), I first have to click on the Name bar to alphabetize the directory. (Yes. There is a trick to closing a window to retain the order when it's reopened. Hold the Shift button down as you click on the "X" in the corner. But, you shouldn't have to do this.)

I'd also like to be able to format file names and related information in a directory. Maybe make some bold and orange, or some a bit smaller. Or, add stars or a ranking notation to files. The logical next step would be to set-up a sort function to be able to look for all items in a certain color or in 8 point type, or the file ranking.

Do you see the usefulness of these changes in sorting files? Modifying directory listings can be very helpful. It would allow users to see at a glance which items are important, or used most often, etc.

This is my short list. Have I mentioned anything on yours?

IOGEAR Digital Scribe Review

by Rebecca Feinstein
WINNERS – WINDOWS usERS

I was thrilled when I first found out there was a digital scribe product at the last WINNERS meeting. As many of you recall, I was well, somewhat reluctant shall we say, to give up the raffle donation item. At the 35% discount I could not wait to get it.

The IO Mobile Digital Scribe took six days to get here from the Illinois. It comes with the pen, cable, mobile unit, two program CDs something that looks like a green tipped stylus (turned out to be the pen/refill), two small (hearing aid size) batteries and a Quick Start Guide.

Installation of the software was easy, Mobile Digital Scribe (Note Management) and My Script Notes Lite (handwriting recognition software); as was charging the mobile unit and installing the batteries into the pen. However, installing the pen was a bit puzzling as in the reference guide, IOGEAR never shows the actual size of the refill in the pictures. It also took a few e-mails to Customer Support and product management to find out where you can purchase the re-fills as well.

Okay, I got it up and working, I did a few test runs with it at home with the mobile unit attached to the computer. The note management software required a bit of a learning curve, but still was fairly easy to use. Included with the software is a .pdf users guide for the entire kit (58 pages). The handwriting recognition software was pretty impressive. With my handwriting I expected it to have a problem with my convoluted shorthand as well as my capital Is, js and my contractions. To my surprise, the software only had a problem with the Is. It even captured my signature scrawl quite well! As with a regular pen, the program doesn't erase; but recognizes crossed out information as crossed out.

With all this practice under my belt, I decided it was time to haul out the big guns,—WORK! As a technical writer, as with many other positions, I attend a lot of meetings. My expectations were high for my new tool. No more having to rewrite all my notes into electronic format for distribution. I was armed and I was ready for combat. After receiving permission to install the software on my office unit, I got set up and ready to rock. I attended three meetings that day.

On the big plus side, it was very nice to have my notes appear in e-form without having to transcribe them at all. This made putting them into agenda form a breeze.

On the problem side of using the scribe, a major drawback is the mobile unit clips are made to only grab a few pages of paper at a time. Unless you are intending to take one page's worth of notes, you have to remove the mobile unit to turn pages to take more notes. This proved to be distracting and inconvenient in one of my meetings. And I found it to be very unwieldy when I was standing to take note as the mobile unit added weight to the top of the paper pad.

The pen, which is thicker than I'm used to (standard stationary pens) felt unwieldy in my hand to begin with. The button that allows you to switch between pen mode and mouse mode is located in the lower part of the pen, towards where it writes on the paper and I kept inadvertently clicking it as I was writing. So some of my notes from the first meeting resembled a word game puzzle.

Another problem, though a lesser one, is the quick reference guide itself. The print is so small, I had to borrow a friend's magnifying glass to read some of it. Keith Renty was correct when he said at our meeting that the user information was not written well. Nowhere in the users guide, or quick reference material is a description of everything that was to come with the kit (the graphic that points to everything in the kit to make sure you know the stylus is actually the pen cartridge). There is no technical support information listed in the users guide, but contact information is listed in the back of quick start guide.

Overall, I'm pleased with the performance, and not so-pleased with the customer support.

All other uses require the permission of the author (editor(at)windowsusers.org).

Prepare for Hard Drive Recovery

by Bob Hudak

Greater South Bay User Group Hardware SIG Leader (CA)

When you lose control of your computer due to a virus or some sort of malware, or your O.S. becomes corrupted for one reason or another, be ready to fix the problem.

1. Start by setting up your hard drive with 2 partitions at least. Put all programs on 'C:' & all Data on 'D:'
2. When hard drive is clean and all programs are loaded, it is time to make an image file of 'C:.' Use Acronis *True Image* to do this or whatever program you like. Put it on 'D:' drive in the root. Name it using date. Remember you do not have a backup till you have two copies in two different places. So now copy this image file to an external USB drive. The reason is if "C:' goes bad you can reformat it and start over without losing any data. If your computer will not boot and you did not put all your data on another drive or partition, you will want to save your data before reinstalling your operating system. What can you do?
   A. Open computer case and remove drive. Install drive as a slave drive in another computer. Now you can copy and paste your data or burn to a CD. This means opening two computers and moving the drive in and out and resetting the jumpers.
   B. Hook up the drive you removed from your computer to a second computer using a USB adapter, like the one we have at the Hardware SIG, to another computer and copy and paste or burn the data you want to keep.
   C. Here is my first choice in a case like this. Use a Live Linux CD to boot up. Plug in a USB drive before booting. After booting, mount your 'C:' drive and your USB drive. Copy your data from 'C:' drive to the USB drive. With this option there is no case to open and drive to remove.
3. Backup your data as necessary to a CD or another drive. Use a USB drive. This drive can also fail so putting backup on a CD or DVD is better way to go. Also, there is an on-line service at Carbinite.com that will automatically back up your data. This service costs $50.00 a year for unlimited backups. How important is your data? Here are a few key folders to have on 'D:" drive:

Data — In this folder make sub folders for each application you use. Include one called Pictures. Under this folder have another sub folders for different events. Like: Christmas07, Vacation08, Dog, etc.

D/L — Use this folder for all your downloads. Then you will always know where your down-loads are. Set it up so the last thing you downloaded is on top.

E-Mail. If possible. You wanted your e-mail off the 'C' drive

My Stuff. Cut and paste from 'My Documents' on 'C' items that were sent there without asking you where to send. Documents that you want to keep.

Using Acronis *True Image*

Use Acronis *True Image* to backup to your USB drive. Make a full backup the first time.

This is going to be pretty easy because all your data is in one folder on 'D:' called **DATA.** If you want to backup your downloaded items, back up the 'D/L" folder. E-Mail is not something I backup but you may want to. Once again it should all be in the 'E-MAIL' folder.

You already loaded the Acronis program and made a rescue CD that is bootable. Right?

Now open your CD drive and insert the CD. Do not close the drive. Shut down your computer. Close the CD drive. Wait a minute and then reboot.

If you have your BIOS set to boot from a CD first, you are good to go. If not you will need to enter into your setup screen at boot-up and change the boot order.

After booting up with Acronis, follow the prompts to select what you want backed up. Practice this before you need to use it.

Make notes on how to select each step. Acronis will not do anything until you give it the final OK.

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Going Green

by Jerry Grommes

Past President, Sandwich Computer Users Group, IL

During our June program, there was quite a discussion about whether to leave your computer on verses shutting it off when not in use.

I, personally, like to leave my computers run so they are kept up-to-date with auto updates and backed up with scheduled backups. These tasks are done in the early am so my computers are fully functional when I sit down to use them.

However, others asked why not just leave them on the nights that the backup runs instead of 24/7. I didn't think it was using much energy by running 24/7 but decided to check it out and run some tests using my "Kill-AWatt" meter. (Measures watts, amps, hours, kilowatt hours, etc.)

I started with my newest computer (which is approx two years old and probably the most efficient). This machine is running Vista and I had the Power Options set to turn off the monitor after "20 minutes" and put computer to sleep to "never." With these settings the computer was drawing between 110 and 140 Watts of power with a total average of 2.63 kWh (kilowatt hours) per day. Cost per day was $.026 ($7.87 a month) based on my most recent bill.

I then changed the Power Options to turn off the monitor after "20 minutes" and put computer to sleep "after 2 hours."

The watts dropped from between 110 and 140 while I was using the computer to 6 while in the sleep mode and the total average of kWh dropped to 0.65 per day. Cost is now down to 6 cents a day ($1.94 a month).

With the current power options (turn off the monitor after "20 minutes" and sleep "after 2 hours") the computer will wake up and get updates as well as run the scheduled backups. So with a simple change to a power option, I was able to reduce power consumption by approx 76% and save $5.93 per month with out affecting my user experience.

I plan on testing my XP machine next to see what it is costing and to see if it can be reduced. Thanks go to Louise and the rest of the group for a great discussion on energy use.

To get more info and tips on energy savings try one of Louise Dieden's favorite links: http://www.energy.gov/forconsumers.htm

Louise is a SCUG Board Member at Large. This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (ggrommes(at) indianvalley.com).

Review

System Mechanic 8– A PC "Swiss Army Knife"

by Ira Wilsker

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

Frequent readers of this column will be well aware that there are many computer utilities in cyberspace that can improve the performance of our PCs. As we use our computers, the registry becomes cluttered and inefficient; useless files consume valuable real estate on our hard drives; and other maladies caused by the software on our computers deprive us of the performance we paid for and deserve. While I admittedly use several different utilities to maintain peak operating efficiency of my computers, if I had to choose only a single utility for computer maintenance, it would be Iolo's System Mechanic (www.iolo.com). I have used System Mechanic for many years in its earlier versions, but now Iolo has released the latest iteration, System Mechanic version 8.

Simply, System Mechanic 8 is arguably the most comprehensive PC maintenance utility available, with over 40 distinct performance and security tools included, giving it "Swiss Army Knife" features. According to published sales figures, System Mechanic is the #1 best selling PC tune-up software on the market, and has won awards for excellence from dozens of computer publications, including CNET's Editors' Choice, *Windows Magazine*, *PC Computing*, ZDNet Editors' Pick, *Computer Shopper*'s Top 100, *Computerworld*, and many others.

Rhetorically, why would I choose System Mechanic 8 over all of its competitors? Because of what it does, its power, versatility, and features; that is why. Compared to its major competitors, none of them offer the feature rich set of functions that System Mechanic offers. According to Iolo, "Over 98% of PC problems are caused by clutter and faulty settings that are the result of everyday PC use." System Mechanic 8 can repair or otherwise remedy virtually all of these problems. Many of a PC's problems can be traced to problems and errors in the registry, a large data file that contains information on the hardware and software installed on the computer. The registry is almost constantly written to, and read, often leaving obsolete data in the registry.

This obsolete, and eventually erroneous data left in the registry consumes some system resources, and can promote errors and other problems as faulty data is read and processed. The registry must be periodically purged of useless data, defragmented, and compacted in order to contribute to better PC performance, a function that System Mechanic 8 excels at.

Our computers are constantly reading from and writing to the hard drive, and that drive often becomes cluttered, fragmented, and may also have some errors in the data stored on it. While almost all

flavors of Windows have some type of "defrag" and "chkdsk" software to defragment the hard drive, and check it for errors, the Windows integral versions of those utilities are very basic and lack the power to do a truly thorough job, as System Mechanic will do. Clutter and useless files consume a lot of the storage space on our hard drives; System Mechanic 8 can identify and remove that clutter, freeing up that hard drive space, making for a more efficient hard drive.

Sometimes, and it will likely happen eventually to each PC user, the computer will not properly boot. For that particular eventuality, System Mechanic 8 will allow the user to create a bootable emergency CD that may be able to revive "crashed" systems.

Another irritant that many of us suffer through on a regular basis is the boringly slow boot process itself, where we wait and wait for our computer to become usable.

System Mechanic 8 claims to have 19 different ways that it can speed the boot process by making it more logical and efficient. Another way that we are losing performance that we are paying for is by having improper internet settings. Many of these settings are mundane and not readily accessible to the typical user. By modifying these settings to their ideal point, internet throughput can be improved, in some cases tripled. System Mechanic 8 will analyze our internet connection, and make any changes necessary to maximize performance.

PC security is a major issue that all of us must deal with on a constant basis. System Mechanic 8 contributes to system security by fixing settings that would otherwise allow an intruder to access the computer, making cyber attacks that more difficult. Sometimes we have files that we want to securely delete, being well aware that normally deleted files are easy to recover, which may create another security problem. This utility offers the user a military grade wiping function that can securely delete unwanted data.

System Mechanic 8 retails for $49.95 for a one-year license, and can be used on up to three computers; discounts are available online (www.iolo.com) for longer licenses.

For those who want an even more feature rich product, Iolo offers System Mechanic Professional, version 8 ($69.95 for three computers). This Professional version is an integrated bundle which includes most of Iolo's other popular products. The bundle includes Iolo's antivirus software, renowned for its hourly updates; and its Personal Firewall to protect from intruders and malicious software. Another program included with the Professional bundle is another personal favorite of mine, Iolo's Search and Recover.

This program can recover files that were deleted, including photos, videos, documents, email, music, and other data that may have otherwise been lost. Search and Recover can undelete files from hard drives, digital cameras, memory cards, and almost all other digital media.

Professional also includes DriveScrubber, a utility that can securely erase data from hard drives. This is necessary when donating a com-puter, selling it, or recycling it.

Without securely deleting our personal data, others can access it and use it for a variety of purposes, including identity theft. DriveScrubber overwrites the data using methods that meet strict government and military standards, ensuring the destruction of that data, without harm to the drive itself.

Iolo has a winner in System Mechanic 8. For those who like to try software before they purchase it, Iolo offers a free, 30 day, fully functional trial version of each of its products at www.iolo.com /downloads .aspx. If you try the software, you will probably like it as much as I do, and find it indispensable.

Website: http://www.iolo.com

http://www.iolo.com /downloads.aspx—*Free Trial Software*

The Global University

Use Google to Locate Free Online Textbooks

by Mike Moore
BGAMUG

With new textbooks costing upwards of $100, and some publishers devising web-based content requiring the use of new texts every year, student advocates and concerned administrators have been considering ways of moderating this cost, while at the same time making textbooks available online or on electronic books such as the Amazon Kindle, and providing incentives for publishers to use creative licensing for their intellectual property.

The open source mantra that we have written about so often in these pages is now being applied to

textbooks and other intellectual property in an effort to support students, control wasteful revisions and stop killing so many trees.

For the purposes of this article, we will refer to any electronic format for a textbook as an "E-text."

Some of what I'm about to show you may surprise you, and you may wonder how it can be that these valuable multimedia materials are just lying around out there on the internet. Trust me, we are not going to be hacking any university computers, and if anything about a Google search can be said to be illegal, well, then I guess we're all in a bit of trouble. Either that, or Google is!

For those E-texts that have gone open-source (that is, are in one way or another unencumbered by copyright), the university will usually put them on a public web site, and for those of you familiar with search engines, that makes them fair game for you and I!

I am fond of saying that Google indexes only the world wide web, but in this case, the www is exactly where we want to go. By way of caution though, I will say that just because we find something lying around on the internet, does not mean it's free for any use at all. The user/reader is at least partly responsible for respecting copyrights, particularly if you intend to redistribute or use that material in any other way beside your own personal enjoyment. For an excellent copyright primer that is targeted toward teens, see http://www.loc.gov /teachers/copyright mystery/.

Even a relatively small university such as our own WKU has a truly massive web presence, and in order to filter out everything but E-texts, we need a flexible search engine that has the power to filter results based on file types.

Google more than fills the bill.

Some of you may remember a while back we hosted a presentation featuring Google's keyword filters. For example, adding the filter filetype:pdf to your Google search will return only results in the form of Adobe's Public Document Format, which is often the format of choice for E-texts. Conversely, if you want to look at all results except for PDF files, you can add the negative sign in front, like this:

-filetype:pdf.

Since we did that presentation, Google has allowed additional file types that they never previously filtered for, such as filetype:mp3 or filetype:avi, which find, respectively, compressed music or speech and video files. These file types, along with mp4, are often what you might find on a professor's web site containing interesting lectures or other course material.

It might seem logical to restrict your search for E-texts to scholarly sites, such as colleges and universities. We can do exactly that by using the site:.edu filter. You can even expand this to include only one particular college site by issuing, for example, site:wku.edu along with any additional keywords we want to search for. This would search the Western Kentucky University website for articles matching our keywords.

There is one additional search filter in Google's bag of tricks that will help you find more Etexts and multimedia lectures than using the filetype filter alone, and that is the intitle:"index.of" filter. Intitle looks for the specified keyword after the colon, in a web page title. Looking for the keyword "index.of" allows you to hunt down information-rich index pages, which can be thought of as the best place to go for E-texts and recorded lectures on university web sites because, as the name implies, they are like a table of contents.

As an example, let's Google using these keywords: site:.edu intitle:"index.of" (mp3mp4avi) lecture

The vertical bar symbol between those file types is called the pipe symbol—it is over your backslash key, which is itself located just north of your Enter key. The pipe symbol, in this context, means to search for "index.of" entries that have either mp3, mp4, or avi in their text. This search yields the following—the first of only 48 links (image on next page).

It's not really that surprising that using the MP3MP4AVI filter only finds 48 links—after all, there is considerably more concern about copyright issues when looking at file types that might be used to contain music, movies and the like. Just for the heck of it, though, I tried this search:

Intitle:"index.of" mp3 beatles

The resulting search was impressive at finding mp3 files of the Fab Four's recordings, but the webmasters behind the pages it found were equally impressive at not letting you play the files without paying for the privilege, and since most of this music is copyrighted, that is only as it should be.

Even so, using the intitle:"index.of" filter is extremely effective at locating E-texts, particularly when combined with the site:. edu filter to only search university and college sites. So your best bet on Google to find general E-texts is: intitle:"index.of" _____ And just fill in the blank with whatever

subject you're interested in. I used intitle:"index.of" caves and got 315,000 hits, the very first of which was a really cool teaching site (http://erg.usgs.gov/isb/pubs/teacherspackets/exploringcaves/pdfindex.html) about caves from the US Geological Survey.

I wish I could give you an idea of what intitle:"index.of" is actually filtering for. If you can imagine the internet functionally layered, like a Broadway production; got that picture? Okay, searching the www with Google using plain old normal keywords with none of the fancy filters we've talked about here—will lead you to find hits on what's going on about the stage and the actor's names and so forth. Now Intitle:"index.of" comes looking, and isn't interested in the play, the credentials of the performers, the lighting—nothing on the stage. That little but critical filter ignores all of that stuff, but instead searches behind the scenes, finding hits at the level of the executive producer, the writer of the screen play, and where they all went to school. That analogy is reaching a bit, but suffice it to say that specialized filters yield specialized results. Please share your E-text searching successes!

Windows XP Expires

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS

On June 30th, 2008, Microsoft started the death march for Windows XP. As of that date, Microsoft stopped shipments of Windows XP as a stand-alone shrink-wrapped product. So after supplies are exhausted, you won't be able to go into a store and purchase Windows XP. Microsoft also stopped most sales to PC manufacturers. So Dell, Lenovo, HP and others will not get any new copies of Windows XP to install on their mainstream computers. However, Windows XP, Microsoft's longest-lived and best-loved operating system, isn't going to vanish overnight. You will still see copies of the XP software and/or computers with Windows XP in stores until inventories and depleted.

Microsoft has made four important concessions that will also keep XP alive:

1. Microsoft will support Windows XP until April 2014. They will offer updates, security patches, and technical support until that time.
2. Smaller local PC makers can continue to sell PCs with Windows XP until January 2009.
3. Computers with limited hardware capabilities which are sometimes called ultra-low cost PCs (ULCPC) can sell with Windows XP Home until June 2010.
4. With the purchase of Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate, the two most expensive versions of Vista, a customer will be able to move back to Windows XP Professional via what Microsoft is calling "downgrade rights." Details on how this will be handled have not be clearly defined to the public at this time. It is even possible that different manufacturers will handle this in different ways.

To the home users, this all means very little, unless you need a new computer and are violently opposed to Windows Vista. To business users, these new policies and extensions mean that they will be able to keep their fleets of Windows XP computers running for several more years. Microsoft has announced that Windows 7, the next version of Windows, will be available in 2010 so many businesses will be able to skip Vista entirely instead to Windows 7. Intel has already announced that they will do just that.

What this means for everyone is that Microsoft, while not writing off Vista, has made it an "interim" operating system. Microsoft is still pushing Windows Vista. They recently announced that Vista now supports 77,000 printers, cameras, speakers and other devices and components. They also brag that more than 140 million copies of Windows Vista have already been sold, making it the fastest selling operating system in Microsoft history. So Windows Vista is not a flash-in-the-pan like Windows ME which was quickly replaced by Windows XP.

In my opinion, Vista is both better and safer than Windows XP and if you are already using Vista or plan to make the move, it is not a bad choice. Yet Vista has become a lame duck. Microsoft definitely has a dilemma on their hands. The only way they will come out of this is if they can get Windows 7 out quickly while making it faster, safer, and easier to use. They also need to give it a good name and get the members of the press behind it. I'm not sure if the lumbering giant can pull that off – especially if Apple and/or Linux find a way to take advantage of this Microsoft predicament!

Society News
Used Book Sale

The inventory of printed material and disks, donated by a former member of RCSi, has been completed. Hard covered and paper backed books have been combined with some quick reference cards and various folders in the book category that represents about 65 % of the collection. 3.5 inch floppy disks comprise 35 % of the 1464 titles dating back to 1963. Though not on the cutting edge, some members may still be using older software or might have an interest in these materials.

A list of the materials as of Sept. 1, 2008 will be posted to the RCSi web site. The list includes the titles and a code to differentiate between books (A, or B) and disks (D) which also points to a storage location. They are available for a nominal donation to the Society. If you are interested in any of these titles, or have further questions, e-mail John McMillan at highlandlt@juno.com for more information.

Printed material with an A code may be sold as scrap paper or otherwise disposed of early in November. The remainder will be available until January 31, 2009.

Topics range from DOS and versions of Windows through NT, plus a variety of applications including: Corel Draw; Clean Sweep; C++; MS Access, Excel, and Word; Norton's Utilities; Paradox; Pascal; Quattro Pro; Turbo cad; Visual Basic; Visual D Base, and many more.

President's Column

Greetings: My name is Stephen Staub and I'm the newly elected President of the Rochester Computer Society. I first joined the club back in 1992 when it was called FROG Computer Society. Besides the president's duties I'm also membership chairperson and I work with the newsletter assembly team. I will be attempting to follow past president's example and submit a article every month for our newsletter, the *Monitor*.

I'm going to set just one goal at a time instead of trying to do a grocery list of thing I would like to do as president. By focusing on one topic, it may be easier to get that topic completed. The topic I have picked on is our club image. Our image within the club is excellent. I'm constantly hearing how members have helped members. This is great.

The area I want to work on is our image in the community. It is unfortunate that computer stores and computer owners do not know we exist. We been around over 25 years. In our mission statement we try to serve the community be being problem solvers and we try to inform computer users of what's new.

With help from the entire club we will get information about our club into computer stores. I have a feeling that this is going to take a couple months to get everything organized and get the information out into the community. Anyone reading this column can find out more about our club by going to our web page www.rcsi.org or come to our monthly meeting. The meeting is *free*. You will find membership has advantages. You can also get more information by e-mailing me srstaub1@rochester.rr.com

The Lighter Side

Caller: "Can you give me the telephone number for Jack?"
Operator: "I'm sorry, I don't understand who you are talking about."
Caller: "On page 1, section 5, of the user guide it clearly states that I need to unplug the fax machine from the AC wall socket and telephone jack before cleaning. Now, can you give me the number for Jack?"

Some actual answers to health and science exams from all over the world and all grade levels— primary to college.

1. H2O is hot water and CO2 is cold water.
2. To collect fumes of sulphur, hold a deacon over a flame in a test tube.
3. When you smell an odorless gas, it is probably carbon monoxide.
4. Water is composed of two gins - Oxygin and Hydrogin. Oxygin is pure gin and Hyrogin is water and gin.
5. A super saturated solution is one that holds more water than it can hold.
6. Litre: A nest of young puppies.
7. Magnet: Something you find crawling all over a dead cat.
8. Momentum: What you give a person when they are going away.
9. Vacuum: A large empty space where the Pope lives.
10. Artificial insemination is when the farmer does it to the cow instead of the bull.
11. The pistol of the flower is its only protection against insects.
12. A fossil is an extinct animal. The older it is, the more extinct it is.
13. To remove dust from the eye, pull the eye down

over the nose.
14. For a nosebleed, put the nose much lower than the heart until the heart stops.
15. For head colds, use an agonizer to spray the nose until it drops in your throat.
16. Germinate: To become a naturalized German.
17. The tides are a fight between the Earth and moon. All water tends towards the moon, because there is no water on the moon and nature abhors a vacuum. I forget where the sun joins in the fight.
18. Blood flows down one leg and up the other.
19. When you breath, you inspire. When you do not breath, you expire.
20.Nitrogen is not found in Ireland because it is not found in a free state.
21. three kinds of blood vessels are arteries, vanes and caterpillars.
22. Mushrooms always grow in damp places and so they look like umbrellas.
23. To keep milk from turning sour: Keep it in the cow.
24. A vibration is a motion that cannot make up its mind which way it wants to go.
25. Genetics explain why you look like your father and if you don't why you should.
26. Some people can tell what time it is by looking at the sun. But I have never been able to make out the numbers.
27. We say the cause of perfume disappearing is evaporation. Evaporation gets blamed for a lot of things people forget to put the top on.