

MONITOR

Next Meeting
Tuesday, September 9th
Open Source Software

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The New, The Best, and The Worst

Collected by Pim Borman
SW Indiana PC Users Group

Picasa Web Album

In June I took a brief vacation with son Mike and cocker spaniel Bonnie, touring scenic central West Virginia. We visited the stark rock outcropping known as Seneca Rocks, admired the amazing 110-meter steerable radio telescope at the Green Bank National Radio Astronomy Observatory, and found carnivorous plants in their natural habitat in the Cranberry Glades Botanic Area. Together we

took over 400 pictures along the way that we culled down to 60-some upon our return. It is often said that the secret of great photographers is that they take hundreds of pictures but save only the one or two best ones. Nobody ever mentions how hard it is to pick out those few winners!

I decided to try and upload the best pictures to one of the online free photo albums. I was already somewhat familiar with Flick'r, but I decided to try the Google-Picasa Web Album instead. Picasa is an excellent simple photo editor and it gives direct access to the online Web Album. The album allows 1GB of storage, enough for some 4000 pictures, and you can get even more than that for a small fee.

Since I already had a Google email account, setting up the Web album was easy, using the same user name and password. On the Web site you can set up separate albums (folders, really) to store pictures in separate categories. I created a new album for my vacation pictures and prepared to upload them. After some trial and error I found it



Gathering Clouds

easiest to first assemble the captioned pictures in a Picasa album on my PC and then to upload them all at once to the Web album. Once the pictures are uploaded you can add more or delete mistakes, move them around into the desired order, and add or change captions. By default, the photos are automatically converted to the optimum size for display on a computer screen, but there are options for larger (up to 20MB) or smaller file sizes.

Once the album has been installed it is ready to be shared with the rest of the world. You may choose to make your photos public, available to anyone, or keep them private, only accessible to those you share the URL with. The View Album page shows large thumbnails of the photos. They can be viewed individually or as a slide show. The View Map button brings up Google Maps where you can indicate where you took your pictures. The Organize and Edit Captions buttons are self-explanatory. A New Features 1 link at the top of the page leads to the latest features added. It is now also possible to upload videos from Picasa to your Web Album. That might be preferable to using YouTube, unless you want the whole world to admire your movie.

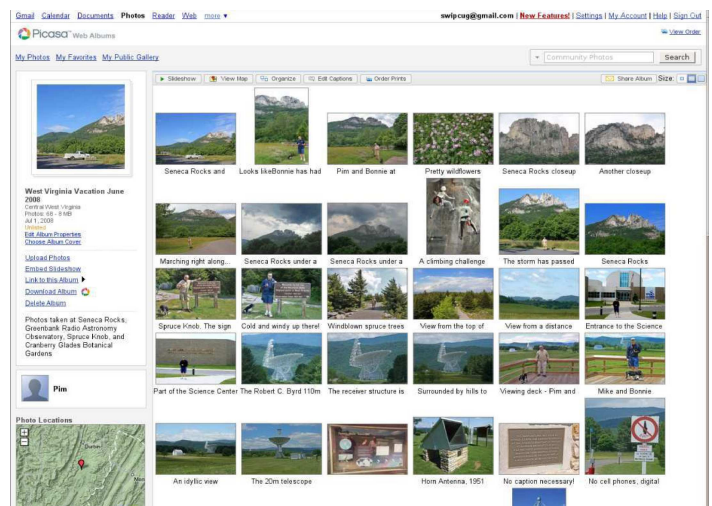
The Web Album displays the URL of your album site either as the address itself or as a short paragraph of html code that you can insert on your Web site. Either way, it is best to copy and paste the information since the URL tends to be lengthy and confusing. My vacation pictures are located at

<http://picasaweb-google.com/swipcug/WestVirginiaVacationJune2008?authkey=kovCoYRBoaY>.

To do your correspondents a favor you should convert the URL with snipurl (<http://snipurl.com>) or tinyurl (<http://tinyurl.com>) to a simpler address, such as <http://snipurl.com/pimspix>. If you have never done that before, you'll find it easy to do. Just go to <http://snipurl.com> (or the tinyurl site) and paste the URL of your album in the box. Specify an easy-to-remember nickname (such as "pimspix," but only available in snipurl) and "Snip it!" The shortened URL (<http://snipurl.com/pimspix>) will be shown and also copied to your clipboard, ready to be pasted in your message.

My experience with setting up a photo album "somewhere up there" is a typical example of the current trend towards "cloud" computing. Almost since the beginning of the World Wide Web we have been using online search engines that access indexed information stored "somewhere up there." Many of us have changed from our PC-based email programs to online programs, such as Yahoo or Google mail, that store our email correspondence on computers "somewhere up there." Somewhere up there in the clouds, as it were.

The push is now to extend cloud computing to Office suites. Instead of using expensive MS Office we can choose to use Google DOCS and conduct all our administrative activities online, with the option of sharing our work with colleagues far away if necessary. Microsoft, always ready to recognize good



ideas after others first thought of them, is moving versions of its Office suite online under the "LIVE" banner. Others are jostling to join the crowd.

If this trend continues and spreads to other computer activities, our operating systems, whether

Windows, Mac, or Linux, will become less and less important. The functions of the operating system will be taken over by browsers. To those of us using multiple operating systems, such as Windows and Linux, we already find that it makes no difference if we use Firefox in Windows or Linux. Similarly, Picasa is Picasa and my new Web album is the same no matter how I access it.

So far, that all sounds good. But gathering clouds threaten to bring rain. If everybody is going to use the Internet almost all the time the current Internet infrastructure will not be able to keep up. There will be a need for millions of additional servers and drastically increased connection speeds.

The computer industry is aware of that. According to *The Economist* (May 24, 2008) Microsoft is building a new \$500 million data center near Chicago. It will require 3 electrical substations with a total capacity of almost 200 megawatts. Google is said to have 3 dozen data centers with an estimated million individual servers. More and more these extensive data centers are being built in out-of-the-way places near sources of low-cost power, even in Iceland with cheap geothermal power. With all this power consumption computers are becoming a major source of global warming.

To increase transmission speeds the industry is eyeing the airwave bands that will be freed up in February 2009 when analog TV will be phased out. There are so-called white spaces between the frequency bands assigned to TV broadcasts, and tech companies want to use those buffer zones for lightning-fast data transmissions. Initial tests show that it might wipe out nearby HDTV broadcasts, but they keep working at it. (*Scientific American*, June 2008)

The computer revolution has just begun!

From the July-August 2008 issue of CYBER BYTES, Newsletter of the Southwestern Indiana PC Users Group.

Backup Data and Program Files Separately

by Gene Barlow
User Group Relations

Every computer user needs to do regular backups of their computer's hard drive. This is the most important service that needs to be done on your computer. If you are not doing regular backups, then you need to watch my tutorial on the *Perfect Backup Approach* (<http://www.ugr.com/tutorials.html>) and get started doing backups today. Users that are doing regular backups should consider ways to improve on how they do their backups.

This paper describes a better way to do backups that will give you flexibility in how often you do backups and how long you keep your backup files.

Separating Your Data Files from Your Program Files

Your computer's hard drive contains two general types of files. One type is computer programs that make your computer run, including your Windows operating system and your application programs. The other type is data files that you create in running your program files, including your spreadsheets, documents, email messages, digital photographs, etc. Both types of files are important to the proper running of your computer, but each type has different backup needs.

When you got your computer, it probably came with one hard drive and on this hard drive was one large C: partition. This is not the best way to organize your hard drive, but it was the easiest way for the manufacturer to set it up. This places all of your program files and data files together in a single partition making it difficult to back them up on a different schedule. So, you are forced to backup all of your files at the same time.

Most users do not know that they can change the way their hard drives are setup. This is easy to do using a partitioning utility, like Acronis Disk Director Suite 10. The best way to organize your main hard drive is to divide it into two partitions—one for your program files and one for your data files. This excellent program will let you reduce the size of your C: drive so that it does not take all of the space on your main hard drive. Then you can use this program to create a new data partition in the space freed up by resizing your C: drive. Once you commit these two steps to your hard drive, then you can start to find and move all of your data files from the C: partition to your new data partition. Finally, you can change the settings in each of your applications to point to the new data partition as the default location of your data files.

Look for an expanded version of this article at [W\Vw.ugr.com /n10608.html](http://www.ugr.com/n10608.html) that will cover all of the detailed steps on making these changes to your main hard drive.

Backup Frequency of Program and Data Partitions

Once you separate your data files from your program files into two different partitions, then you can backup each partition on a different frequency

that best suits the type of files in each partition.

Your data files are the most important type of files on your computer and need to be backed up more frequently than your program files. Fortunately, your data partition will typically be less than half the size of your program partition, so the backups will process quickly and take up less room on your backup hard drive. I recommend doing a full backup image of your data files in the data partition once a week.

This gives you an excellent backup of these important data files.

You do not need to backup your program files as often as you need to backup your data files. I recommend doing a full backup image of your program files in your program partition once a month. Then each week in the month you would do an incremental backup image of the changes to your program partition since the last backup. This will give you adequate protection of your program files, but not eat up space on your backup hard drive or take lots of time to backup.

Backup Retention of Program and Data Partitions

Next, you should consider how long to keep your backup images depending on what types of files are in the backups.

Your important data files should be kept for a much longer period of time than your program files. I would keep many months of data backup images before considering deleting any of the older backups. This will let you dig into your documents or email folders from months ago even if they are no longer on your main hard drive. It also gives you a historical archive of these important data files. Personally, when my data backup hard drive fills up, I buy a new one and save the old backup drive on the shelf.

Program files are less important to have many months worth of backups on them. Typically, three months worth of backups of your program files is enough to give you protection from corrupted programs. So, have a plan to delete any program partition backups after three months. Delete the oldest month first to make room for any new backups of your program partition.

Acronis Software Utilities to Use

Acronis Disk Director Suite 10 (list price \$50) is the program you need to create a separate data partition from your program partition (C: drive). Use this program to set up your separate data partition

on your computer. You can order this program from us at the user group discount price of just \$29 as a download or \$33 plus \$5 shipping on a CD. Go to www.ugr.com/DiskDirector.html to order this partitioning software so that you can create your new data partition.

Acronis True Image 11 Home (list price \$50) is the program that many of you use to backup your main hard drive to an external hard drive. This is what I recommend in the Perfect Backup Approach tutorial. You can order this excellent backup utility from us at the user group discount price of just \$29 as a download or \$33 plus \$5 shipping on a CD. Go to www.ugr.com/TrueImage.html to order this backup software and get started doing backups today.

Special offer of both Acronis True Image 11 Home plus Acronis Disk Director Suite 10 for just \$49 as a download or \$53 plus \$5 shipping on two CDs. Go to either www.ugr.com/TrueImage.html or www.ugr.com/DiskDirector.html to order this Acronis Bundle package of these two outstanding hard drive utilities. This is an outstanding price for two excellent hard drive utilities from Acronis.

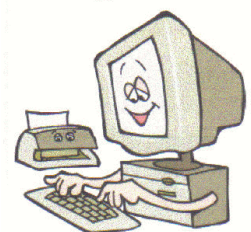
When ordering any of the products mentioned in this article, please use the special order code of UGNL0608 when submitting your order. This code will permit you to purchase at these special discount prices.

I hope this helps you discover a better way to do your backups of your computer system. If you have questions about this article or the products, send them to gene@ugr.com and I will try to assist you. I hope this article helps you improve how you backup your computer.

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This is one of a series of monthly technical articles that Gene distributes to those that have subscribed to his newsletter. You can subscribe at www.ugr.com/newsletters.html. Watch for them and learn more about your computer and its hard drive.

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Why Rebates Instead of Lower Prices?

Q. Why do hardware and software companies offer rebates instead of just selling a product at a lower price?

A. Companies have various reasons for offering rebates, but in general, there are three primary motivations: First, the time between the purchase and the rebate can be several weeks, a period in which your money is in the company's possession, earning interest or working in other ways to its advantage.

Second, what better way for a company to obtain your personal information for subsequent contact or to sell to others than by offering you money in the form of a rebate?

Third, companies know that most people are busy or lazy (or both) and won't go to the trouble of cutting out a bar code or providing the requisite paperwork to obtain a rebate. In this way the company gets to attract purchasers by advertising a low price, and in many instances selling an item for a higher price, because the purchaser never applies for the rebate. What a deal!

You can avoid any unpleasant surprises by reading rebate offers carefully before sending them in. Somewhere within the fine print, any restrictions or limitations will be noted, such as the rebate being paid in Drachmas or Rupiahs, or the rebate being a coupon that can only be used to purchase merchandise from the same retailer.

Q. What's the difference between 32-bit and 64-bit computing? When asked, should I get the 32-bit version of a software program or the 64-bit? I don't have a clue. I love your weekly newsletter, Mr. M. Keep up the good work.

A. Within your computer, there are many items that you won't (mercifully) need to concern yourself with, and one of those items is called the data bus. A bus provides transportation, but instead of transporting people, this type of bus transports data within your computer. Basically, it connects memory to the rest of the system, including the processor.

A bit, by definition, is the smallest unit of data that a computer can recognize. At the risk of causing your eyes to glaze over, there are eight bits to one

byte, and one byte equals one character, such as the letter "s" or the numeral "7." A typical data bus is 32-bits wide, like a 32-lane highway, kinda-sorta. A 64-bit bus is twice as wide, so the system can move twice as much data. Being able to process more data results in a faster system—but only for specific purposes. You won't notice any increased speed doing normal computing chores such as word processing, email, or viewing Web pages; noticeable speed increases primarily occur in the areas of graphics processing, math and scientific calculations, or what we in the biz refer to as "number crunching."

Manufacturers are currently working on 64-bit processors that are faster, but with cooler operating temperatures. 64-bit is an up and coming technology, but there still isn't a great deal of 64-bit software to choose from. For that reason, if you're shopping for a new computer, I'd steer clear of 64-bit and stick with 32-bit, at least for the foreseeable future. When it comes to software, if you're asked to select a 32- or 64-bit version, select the 32-bit.

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

Charity Navigator

Have you ever wondered where your money really goes when you donate it? Who hasn't? The Charity Navigator evaluates the financial health of America's largest charities. Be sure to visit their Top Ten Lists which include the "10 Best Charities," as well as "10 Charities Routinely in the Red," "10 Charities Stockpiling Your Money," and "10 Charities in Deep Financial Trouble." www.charitynavigator.org

One-Stop Instant Messaging

Launched less than two years ago, today Meebo is used to transmit more than 90 million instant messages each day. Using Meebo, you can IM from anywhere, using any computer, and it doesn't matter if your friends, children or grandchildren are using AIM, Yahoo!, MSN, Google Talk, ICQ, Jabber or just about any other instant messaging service. Meebo is entirely Web based, so there is nothing to download or install. Even better, it's free. www.meebo.com

The Why Files

The objective of this site is to explore the science, math and technology behind the daily news. Recent Why File stories include information about a molecule that cures alcoholism in rats (I had no idea they drank); a scientist who perpetrated the biggest

scientific fraud since my father built my 7th grade Science Fair project, and an analysis of the Bird Flu pandemic situation. <http://whyfiles.org>

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

Back-Ups Made Easy

A new solution for an old problem

by Carey Holzman

Co-host: www.computeramerica.com

www.carevholZ171an.com

By now you're probably well aware of the importance of making copies of your valuable data (referred to as 'backing-up'). You've probably read numerous articles about ways to back-up your data and prevent disaster. The problem is, most advice offered on this subject is not truly complete and many of the 'solutions' offered are expensive and time consuming.

There are numerous ways you can lose your data in spite of backing-up regularly. How you back-up, what you back-up, when you back-up and where you store your back-up are just a few important variables that come into play on that miserable day that you require it.

Still, that's better than eight out of ten customers that approach me for PC repairs who do not have any kind of backup. After all, any form of back-up is better than no back-up ... but just barely.

First it's important that you understand the existing problems with the back-ups most people create.

1) External hard drives:

There are many problems with backing up your important data to an external hard drive. Since most people keep their external hard drives next to, or in the same building, as their computer, any file or flood will render both the PC and backup useless. Also, if you are a victim of theft, the crook now has all of your data, and it's probably not encrypted or protected in any way on your PC or your back-up device. Since your back-up device is also a hard disk drive, there is a good possibility that it will fail and need to be replaced. Ironic since that it what you are protecting your data from. If you always leave your external hard drive hooked up to your PC for auto-

mated back-ups, then it is prone to viruses and other malware that may cause the loss of data that you are attempting to protect yourself from! Then there's the high cost of around \$150 for these devices.

2) Internal hard drives:

Some people have a secondary hard drive or partition in their computer and simply back-up from one disk to the other. Here again, viruses and malware will render both drives useless at the same time. Fires, floods and thefts also leave you with no back-up source. This back-up is only useful if your internal hard drive fails. But as you can already see, hard drive failure is not the sole cause of data loss. Also, a RAID MIRROR (where one drive constantly mirrors what the other drive is doing) will not help if you accidentally delete a file. The RAID MIRROR will simultaneously delete that file at the same time.

3) Drive images:

Some people believe an image or 'clone' of their entire hard drive onto an external drive or DVD is a good back-up, but it's not. If your computer has a serious component failure, such as a motherboard, or if your computer is stolen or lost in a fire or flood, you'll have to replace it. Once you restore your drive image, your new motherboard will most likely require different hardware drivers and Windows will most likely not start. All you'll get is the Blue Screen of Death. Sure, your data is theoretically file and well, it's just too bad you can't get to it. Because full images copy everything on your hard disk, they tend to be very time consuming and, as a result, are not done often enough to be current.

4) Flash Drives:

Flash drives are more reliable than CDs, DVDs or external/internal hard drives, but they are very slow and very limited. Flash drives are also prone to theft and being misplaced. Most people do not encrypt their data and, as a result, may have inadvertently just given some stranger all of their personal data simply because the flash drive fell out of their pocket somewhere or they can't remember where they left it.

5) Tape drives:

Seriously? Does any consumer still use tape? Next to the floppy drive, it's the most unreliable way to back-up data and tape drives require a special reader and software to restore the data. In case of data loss, just get your back-up tape, reinstall Windows, reinstall your tape back-up device, reinstall your tape backup software and then you can

start to restore your data. That is, the data not damaged on the tape.

What's Left?

Why will you need a back-up? What will happen? Will your hard drive fail? Will your PC be stolen or will your PC just stop working one day? Will you be involved in a theft? An earthquake? A fire? A hurricane? A flood?

We can't answer those questions without a time machine, but we do know that even in the best of circumstances, all hard drives eventually fail. It's not a question of "IF" but a question of "WHEN?"

If you only have one hard drive, then you only have one hard drive that can fail. Backing-up your data to another drive doubles your chances of experiencing a hard drive failure in addition to not guaranteeing your data will be there when you need it for the reasons listed above.

We also know that most data is irreplaceable. Whether it's a database of your customers, your personal finance, photos from your vacations or of family and friends, your music collection, your email, favorites and address book, once it's gone, it's gone.

Hard drive data extraction services can help recover data from a failed hard drive and even hard drives damaged by flood or fire. Expect to spend \$800-\$2500 and expect to wait from two to four weeks with no guarantee which or how much data can be recovered.

Say Hello To My Little Friend!

I wear a lot of hats as a computer talk show host, author, instructor, technician and business owner. I like to think that being a consumer advocate is a hat that firmly sits upon all the others. If you're familiar with any of my work, then you're well aware of my passion for free and helpful software and services. However, very rarely a product comes along that is not free, but is still such a bargain I am compelled to write about it.

Allow me to introduce you Carbonite.com. Carbonite is a small, downloadable application for Windows XP and Vista (Mac version coming soon) that uses your high-speed Internet connection to automatically upload your selected data securely, off-site and in background.

For \$49.95 a year, Carbonite offers UNLIMITED storage space. That's right, you can store as much data as you want. Installation is quick and easy. Carbonite's online backup service starts automatically and works quietly and continuously in the background while your computer is on and connected

to the Internet.. If you've accidentally erased something, don't worry; you can restore deleted files with just a few clicks on your PC. If your PC crashes, just visit their website to recover your lost files.

Your data is stored safely No one can see your data but you because your files are encrypted twice before they leave your computer using a combination of encryption techniques similar to those used by online banks and financial institutions.

Carbonite online back-up software is always looking for new or recently changed files on your PC. The moment you add or modify files, Carbonite swings into action. Whenever your PC is connected to the Internet (at home, the office, a hotel or airport, etc.). Carbonite automatically and continually backs-up all your files (but not system files or applications by default.). And it will never slow down your PC or Internet connection.

Once you install Carbonite, simply tell it what you want backed-up and you never have to think about it again. Set it and forget it. It's not loaded with tons of bells, whistles and features because it's designed to be simple and do just one very important thing: keep your data safe.

Carbonite offers a free IS-day trial and no credit card is required to take advantage of the free offer. As if that wasn't enough, I have a secret for you: Use the code word "AMERICA" and your IS-day free trial is extended to 30 days! If you choose to purchase a year of Carbonite service, the code word will also extend your subscription an additional two months at no additional charge!

Is This A Paid Advertisement?

Whenever I get passionate about a product that is free, no one asks me if I am being paid to promote it. I see customers everyday who lose data due to unforeseen circumstances and lack of a proper back-up. I Wee Carbonite.com and I use it myself. In fact, it's running and backing-up my data, securely and off-site, as I type this! I like this product so much, I've asked the folks at Carbonite to sponsor my radio show and to offer our listeners and readers a discount to help encourage proper, secure, automated, offsite back-ups.

Skeptical? Try it for yourself, free for 30days! Read more about how Carbonite works here at http://carbonite.com/how_it_works/

Most people with high-speed Internet connections barely use them. Since your Internet Service Provider is charging you the same, regardless of how much or how often you use it, why not take advan-

tage of that and utilize your unused bandwidth for backing-up your valuable data?

I welcome your comments and feedback concerning back-ups and this article.

Carey Holzman is the co-host of the nation's longest running, nationally syndicated radio talk show on computers, Computer America. Computer America airs Monday through Friday, 7 pm to 9 pm Pacific time, 10 pm to midnight Eastern. To find a station near you or listen online, visit <http://www.computeramerica.com> Carey is also the author of The Healthy PC, published by McGraw-Hill and is a freelance writer for numerous web-sites and computer-related publications. 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 (Carey(at)ComputerAmerica.com).

Security and Deleting Files:

A Common Misconception

by Bob Schwartz

Houston Area League of PC Users

You have just deleted a file from your hard drive. It's gone, isn't it? Sorry! It is still there. You want to clean up your hard drive, so you format it. It is now clean. Nothing is on it anymore, right? Nope! Everything is still there, except for the file directory.

How can this be? Doesn't Delete mean remove? Doesn't Format clean the disk?

Each file system has a file directory which records the file name and it's location.

To delete a file, the disk system only alters the file's name in the file directory, usually by changing the first letter of the name. Formatting goes one step further, it just empties the file directory. Neither does anything to the files on the disk! They remain.

To clean a drive, either overwrite the whole drive or the unused space. The most common way to clean drives, especially older drives, is to write fixed or random data obliterate the old files.

Fortunately, all ATA drives over 15-20 GB produced since 2001 have an internal drive command that will clean the drive sufficiently that it will meet DOD requirements. At the University of California at San Diego's Center for Magnetic Recording Research (CMRR) you can download their free program for Secure Erase, entitled "HDDerase.exe". Its use meets U.S. Government requirements for disk erasure. Secure Erase should provide the greatest peace of mind. Internet Commentary suggests it is even better than mechanically shredding the disks.

If you have a good machine with good software

that you would like to pass on to some else, and you don't have all the original disks - remove personal information. I suggest this approach:

1. "Delete" the contents of: all the "My" folders - My Documents, My Pictures, My Music; Recent; Temp or Temporary folders; Recycle Bin; Cookies; Downloads; and the entire folders for Quicken and Tax preparation software.
2. Clean your Registry of all personal data. For XP, go to Start/Run, type regedit and press Enter. Go to edit and click on find. Enter your last name, click on find next. When the first entry is found, go to edit and select modify. Delete your name (it should be in color). Depressing the space bar may clear it. Go back to edit and click on find next, etc. Keep on until you get a message that you have reached the end. Then repeat the above with your first name, then your street, your phone number, bank name, broker name, and anything else of a personal nature that you used.
3. Find and download a registry cleaner. Use it to remove unnecessary items from the registry. CCleaner is an example.
4. Defragment the drive. This condenses the files and moves them toward the beginning of the drive.
5. Locate and download a wipe application such as bcwipe. Use it to wipe (overwrite) all unused space.

Important Note: Before editing your "registry," back it up first, please.

This should effectively sanitize your disk, leaving it clean, safe and usable.

Loss of personal information and the risk of identity theft is a risk for you. For a business, the loss of personal, financial, or medical data may subject it to risk from recent laws, both federal and state.

I have been repairing or rehabilitating older machines as a hobby to give them a second life. There are many good machines and plenty of worthy recipients. If there is good software worth keeping, remove all personal data. If the software is not worth keeping, then wipe the disk clean to install an operating system and applications.

Removing the hard drive before you dispose of an old machine is not a solution, unless you plan to use it in your new machine, or store it permanently - you still ultimately have to sanitize it.

Programs available, free or fee and include: Secure Erase (mentioned above), Secure Delete, Wipe Drive, Acronis Privacy Expert, East-Tec

Eraser, East-Tec Dispose Secure, Eraser, SysInternals SDelete, Darik's Boot and Nuke (dban), OverWrite, Wipe, Kill Disk, BCWipe, and Autoclave. This list is NOT exhaustive. And, you have to determine which is suitable to (1) wipe the entire drive or (2) wipe only the unused space.

Bottom line is, when you give away or dispose of a used computer, either clean the hard drive yourself or give the machine to someone you can trust who will do it for you. The comments and opinions here are wholly mine. I welcome alternative perspectives.

Bob Schwartz is a HAL-PC member, retired EE, 14 patents, technical writer, active in civic affairs: President, Brays Bayou Association; Vice President, Marilyn Estates Civic Association; Correspondence Secretary with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy. Contact him at bobx@hal-pc.org.

The DealsGuy

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

We worked the Cisco show <<http://www.cisco-live.com/>> and they had over 700 computers setup. Classrooms were everywhere and, in spite of tight security, it was said that 26 laptops disappeared one night. Security certainly got tighter after that. There were attendees from many countries.

Last month I mentioned the Web site "Second Life" and its great popularity. I'm told that other companies have countered with similar products. Here is a quote from Mike Ungerman who helped Hewie Poplock with the presentation: "Following the review of virtual 'universes' like Second Life, I came across several other alternatives that offer much the same capabilities. Google has started Lively <<http://www.lively.com/popular>>, a 3-D, avatar based, chatting world. It's still pretty rough, but is billed to eventually offer much the same capability as Second Life.

"For those with gaming consoles, either the X-Box 360 or PS3, 3-D avatar based interaction is being offered in the next several months. X-Box Live is Microsoft's system <<http://tinyurl.com/5awgjx>> and Play-station Home is Sony's offering <<http://tinyurl.com/6xckoc>>"

How's Your Registry?

WiseCleaner has released Wise Registry Cleaner v. 3.6.2 and Wise Disk Cleaner V. 3.5.1, a pair of affordable Windows applications that stabilize your computer, and make it run more quickly. Wise Registry Cleaner speeds up the user's computer by

cleaning the Windows Registry. The Registry is at the heart of every Windows computer. Each time users install new software, information is added to the Registry. Few uninstall programs remove this information properly or completely. Therefore, over time, as users install and uninstall software, the Registry accumulates junk lines and pointers, and the computer's performance suffers.

Wise Registry Cleaner identifies and safely removes the useless information that has accumulated. In addition to scanning and cleaning the Windows Registry, the program optimizes the PC. If the user accidentally makes a mistake during a tune-up, they can undo all changes with a single click. The latest version of Wise Registry Cleaner includes a useful feature: "System Optimization Tool." Using this tool, users can easily tune up their PC in minutes without being a PC expert! [DealsGuy note: Optimize Your PC appears to only be in the Pro version.]

Wise Disk Cleaner is an intuitive, fast, and easy-to-use application that frees up disk space by deleting files no longer used by any software. In addition to the temporary files, log files, and backup files that accumulate over time, the program can identify more than 50 additional types of unnecessary files that users can safely remove. Instead of sending deleted files to the recycle bin, the program can compress these files and save them to a special directory, allowing users to restore files in the future if they find that they really need them. The latest version of Wise Disk Cleaner contains additional advanced customization options that let users fine-tune clean-up operations. [DealsGuy Note: Move To Location and Advanced Options appear to only be in the Pro version.]

Both applications are designed to be used in tandem, allowing users to streamline their Windows Registry and optimize their hard drive. Whether you are a business user who values a stable and brisk computer, a parent who needs to clean up after the software that their children install and uninstall on the family computer, or a computer consultant who needs applications that will keep their customers' PCs running optimally, Wise Registry Cleaner and Wise Disk Cleaner have the tools that you need.

Wise Registry Cleaner and Wise Disk Cleaner also offer support for more than twenty languages. It's easy to add additional language support into Wise Registry Cleaner and Wise Disk Cleaner. The User Interface messages are loaded from resource files for all supported languages.

This means that you can add a resource file that contains messages in your own language.

Please note that there are FREE versions of both Wise Registry Cleaner and Wise Disk Cleaner. You can choose to pay for the PRO version, or only use the free version if preferred. Wise Registry Cleaner V. 3.6.2 and Wise Disk Cleaner V. 3.5.1 run under Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/XP/XP-x64/2003/Vista/Vista-x64/2008 Server, and cost \$19.95 (US) each. As a bundle, users can buy both programs for \$32.95. Everybody can visit <<http://www.wisecleaner.com/>> to purchase the software securely online, or to download free trial versions. Users can also download free versions of each program without the advanced options and system optimization tool.

If You Don't Understand, Try This

LingvoSoft <<http://www.lingvosoft.com>> announced the release of an all-new language learning system for Pocket PC that makes speaking any language simple, fast, and enjoyable. Putting everything you need in the palm of your hand, LingvoSoft Language Teacher 2008 makes communicating in a new language easier than ever before. Providing every beginner with the tools necessary to start speaking another language immediately, your success is virtually guaranteed.

With intuitive and efficiently arranged sections that teach the alphabet, words, phrases, and dialogs you will soon have the skills you need to start speaking accurately and comprehensibly. With the advanced voice output and speech recognition built-into the Language Teacher you will always get the pronunciation right the first time, something new learners absolutely depend on. Loads of practice tests and evaluations provide the help new students need to start mastering any language immediately. The price is \$149.95, but a 25% discount is available on any LingvoSoft software title. Simply enter your personal gift certificate code "MY8UZPF7M4" in the 'Add Gift' field of the shopping cart and click the "Add Gift" button <<http://www.lingvosoft.com/info/software/Language-Teacher/>>.

This Should Help You Copy

[DealsGuy Note: Be sure to thoroughly read the FAQs on their Web site so you more fully understand the capability of the product.]

DVD neXt COPY released version V2.9.9.1 of DVD neXt COPY, a new and improved version that has the best quality of any DVD Copy software available. DVD neXt COPY triggers the quality king and jumps over the magical quality hurdle of the

legendary DVDSHrink. Until now the "old" DVDSHrink possessed the best quality of any DVD copy program available. It was impossible for any competitors to reach this high level of quality and speed. As of now, DVD neXt COPY has broken through this barrier, and provides better quality and faster burns than DVDSHrink (High Quality Mode).

DVD neXt COPY now provides the highest quality of any DVD copy software available. Our extensive quality check was performed on the majority of the latest DVD movies with excellent results. We have compiled test report on two special movies that are often used as quality reference movies, because they are very complicated to recompress. You can see our results in this test report: <http://www.dvdnextcopy.com/quality_measurement.pdf>.

During this special promotional period, everyone can receive 20% off DVD next *copy*Xpress, Standard and Pro. Just enter the word "SAVE20" in the coupon field during purchase, to receive your 20% discount. Prices are as follows: XPress \$49.99, Standard \$69.99, Pro \$89.99. The license is good for two computers but does require activation. Read more information about the new DVD neXt COPY at <<http://www.dvdnextcopy.com>> Watch the online DVD neXt COPY flash tutorials at <<http://www.dvdnextcopy.com/tutorials.aspx>>.

Release Date 6/24/08 V2.9.9.1

Improved Quality Engine, Improved Software Compatibility Mode, Added Pre-scan Preview Function, Updated Resources to V2.9.9.1, Product page link: <<http://www.dvdnextcopy.com/overview.aspx>>

What's That Key?

Everybody knows Windows has a product key used to install it. If you needed it for some reason, do you remember where you put it? It also ends up embedded in your registry so maybe you could edit your registry if necessary to retrieve it, but that's living dangerously. The Magical Jelly Bean Keyfinder V2.0.1 is a freeware utility that will go in and get it for you. It has options to copy the key to your clipboard, save it to a text file or print it for your records. It works on a wide family of Windows operating systems.

It also has support for multiple installations of Office, and the ability to change the Windows XP, 98 and ME installation key. It's at <<http://magicaljellybean.com/keyfinder/>>. Also offered is a neat popup dictionary that is freeware. I read about these long ago in Tim Hoke's freeware column in PC

Alamode, newsletter for Alamo PC Organization <<http://www.alamopc.org/index.shtml>>.

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@bellsouth.net>. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

Computer Quandaries

by DaLe aTchiSon

Tampa Bay Computer Society

Here are questions from some of my clients and TBCS members, along with the best answers I could give them; most of my answers were arrived at by searching the Internet using Google. In those cases where I say things nice or otherwise about a particular program, please note that I'm expressing only my opinion, and not necessarily those of TBCS. You'll also note that there are still a lot of Win 98 users out there, ten years after its release.

Q: I loaded a screen-saver on my old Win 98 computer, called America .exe. I subsequently tried to uninstall it, but whenever I double-click on a file in Windows Explorer, I get an error message saying "can't find America.exe...", which is needed to open this kind of file. What is going on, and what can I do about it?

A: This is standard virus behavior. The malware program has modified your initialization files so as to make sure it gets run several times during each computing session, so just taking it out of Startup won't keep it from running and doing its programmed mischief. Remove it thus: reboot in Safe Mode; before running any programs, click on START » RUN » type in System.ini, and click OK. Look for the line that starts shell=Explorer.exe. If there's anything after the Explorer.Exe part (like America.Exe), delete it—*leave the rest of the line alone!* Close the file, saving your changes.

Next, click on start » run » type in Win.Ini, and click OK. In the first section, look for a line that says load=America.Exe or Run=America.Exe. If either or both are there, delete the lines. Close the file, saving your changes. Next, click on start » Run » Regedit. Click on Edit » Find » type in America.Exe, click OK.

If the Search stops anywhere except at the message "Finished Searching the Registry," press the DEL key, followed by the ENTER key. Then press the Up arrow, followed by F3 to continue the search. This process will remove every instance of America.Exe that's called by the registry. Once you see "Finished Searching the Registry," exit Regedit (no need to save your changes—they're already saved by the program).

Note: it's very important that you not make any changes to the Registry other than the ones mentioned here; you can cause Windows to fail to start if you delete the wrong key(s).

Reboot and see if we've caused more trouble than we've prevented.

Q: I have 3 (three) user accounts in Windows 98 Standard Edition, and was wondering if each account could have its own media folder, so that each person who logs in has their own sounds played. I understand that each user has personal sound schemes along with their desktop settings; what about individual sound folders?

A: No, to the best of my understanding, the separate users must share a single C:\Windows\media folder. But, that's okay, because the individualized sound schemes do exactly what you were asking about—they cause each user to hear only the sounds they've chosen to hear. And those sounds don't have to consist *only* of files stored in the media folder; each user can browse to whatever folder stores their personal favorite sound files—their own media folder(s), if you will, not just C:\Windows\media.

Q: I'm having a TurboTax problem: While just about completing the work a message came up stating that "This program has performed an illegal operation and will be closed down." I Clicked on a button for details and it said that ITAX caused an invalid page fault in module kernel32.DLL at 0137:bff858cd. and lists many registers. What does all this gibberish mean to me, and what can I do about it?

A: As the computer boots, alternately press Ctrl and F8—one of these will bring up the boot menu. Choose Safe Mode (usually the third choice).

Once the computer has finished booting into Safe Mode, press [enter] to make the Safe Mode startup message go away. Click on start » settings » control panel » add/remove programs. Look down the list and double-click on microsoft internet explorer *.* And internet tools (the *.* represents your version number, which is irrelevant for this process). In the menu which pops up next, choose Repair » ok » and yes to start the repair of Internet Explorer.

When it's finished, restart the computer and try running TurboTax again. If it still has a problem, contact Intuit's tech support and tell you've already repaired Internet Explorer but still have this problem.

Q: While running Norton's System Checkup, I get an error warning on the Windows Registry Scan line as follows: Invalid ActiveX/Com entries -2 errors Norton repairs the problems, but they recur on a rather frequent basis. Can you tell me what I am doing to cause this problem? Thanks much!

A: The most likely cause of this is, Windows downloads the ActiveX control from the Internet as it's needed. You delete it when you run Disk CleanUp—it empties the Downloaded Program Files folder to reclaim the disk space. To keep the message from coming back, next time you run Dick CleanUp, un-check the Downloaded Program Files checkbox before you click on OK. It should stay un-checked for subsequent invocations of Disk CleanUp.

Q: You suggested that I remove "RealPlayer." In my uninstall window, I have RealPlayer 4.0 and RealPlayer Basic. Which do I remove?

Remove both of the RealPlayer programs from Add/Remove Programs, as well as any other programs like RealDownload that might be there. *All* RealNetworks software is obtrusive and slows down your computer.

From the August 2008 issue of Bits and Bytes, newsletter of the Tampa Bay Computer Society.

Windows XP: Free Utilities for Your OS

by Joseph Moran
Smart Computing

Overall, Windows XP is a pretty good operating system. After all, it's still going strong after more than seven years, and even after all this time, some still prefer it over Microsoft's newest offering, Windows Vista.

But WinXP isn't perfect, so there's certainly room for some improvement. That's why this month we've found several handy programs and utilities that can help make WinXP better. Many of them can be used as replacements for specific built-in WinXP applications or features, while others either provide a feature that WinXP doesn't offer or correct one of the operating system's foibles or idiosyncrasies.

All these utilities are available via a quick and easy download, and best of all, they're free. So what's the catch? Well, there are a few minor ones. We've used all these programs and found them to work, but

because most of them come from smaller, lesser-known developers, it's probably a good idea to back up your system or manually create a restore point (select Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, and System Restore) before installing or using them. Also, you shouldn't count on getting any technical support. (It's seldom, if ever, provided with free software.)

Application or Feature Replacements

Sometimes, the tools included with WinXP leave something to be desired. Here are some applications that provide extra features you might be looking for.

AbiWord

WinXP's integrated WordPad word processor might be OK for typing grocery lists, but it's not good for much more. If you want a good word processor that will leave WordPad in the dust but would rather not spend the bucks on Microsoft Word, try AbiWord (www.abiword.com/download). It has a familiar and easy-to-use interface, a spell checker, and lots of advanced document layout features, and unlike WordPad, AbiWord can save files in Word's ubiquitous DOC format.

Auslogics Disk Defrag

Your hard drive should be defragmented regularly for optimal performance, but WinXP's integrated defrag utility tends to be slow and clunky, especially on older systems. Auslogics Disk Defrag (www.auslogics.com) is a lot quicker, and it provides better feedback during the defrag process. You can also adjust its CPU usage depending on whether you'd prefer the defrag to finish as quickly as possible or want better system responsiveness while it's taking place. (One minor catch—when a defrag is finished, the summary window includes a mini-advertisement for one of Auslogics' commercial products.)

Comodo Firewall Pro

WinXP's integrated firewall is better than no firewall at all, but it's light on features and customization options. Comodo Firewall Pro (www.comodo.com) monitors not just the data coming into your system, but the data going out, as well. It also includes a database of trusted applications to help guard against unauthorized software being installed on your system without your knowledge.

AVG

Even though WinXP gives you a firewall, you're on your own when it comes to antivirus software.

You could shell out \$30 or \$40 for an AV utility, but you don't have to if you use AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition (free.grisoft.com). AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition doesn't include all the features of commercial antivirus utilities (including AVG's own), but it does provide basic virus protection at no cost.

CDBurnerXP

WinXP's built-in CD burning feature is convenient when you don't have third-party burning software installed, but its capabilities are limited. CDBurnerXP (www.cdburnerxp.se) lets you do things that you can't do with WinXP alone, such as burn DVDs, create bootable discs, and make backup copies of your discs by saving them as ISO image files (or burn discs from ISO files you already have). CDBurnerXP will even let you create and print custom covers for several varieties of disc cases.

Revo Uninstaller

It's probably happened to all of us at least once when trying to uninstall an unwanted program via Add Or Remove Programs. Something goes wrong, both the program and its entry in Add Or Remove Programs get left behind, and the uninstall process fails thereafter. Revo Uninstaller (www.revouninstaller.com) can succeed where Add Or Remove Programs fails. Aside from running a program's standard uninstall routine, Revo Uninstaller can also scan your hard drive to ferret out any leftover files and Registry settings. And if there are programs installed that you don't recognize, Revo Uninstaller will let you look them up via a Google search. If Add Or Remove Programs leaves you high and dry when you try to get rid of a program, Revo Uninstaller can usually hunt it down and remove it.

System Utilities

Personalize your operating system and accomplish some basic tasks more efficiently with the utilities in this section.

BootSkin

Wouldn't it be nice to look at something more attractive or interesting than the standard WinXP loading screen in the minutes your system spends booting up? WinXP won't let you change the default startup image, but BootSkin (www.stardock.com) will. The program includes a link to Stardock's Web site, where you can browse and download from among about 800 ready-made images created by BootSkin users. (Download them to a convenient place such as your Desktop and double-click to automatically extract and install them in the Boot-

Skin menu. Once installed, you can delete the downloaded files.)

DriverView

Information about WinXP's installed drivers is available, but it's not very easy to find because you have to hunt it down on the operating system. If you want a bird's-eye view of all your installed drivers, or just need information about a particular one, DriverView (www.nirsoft.net) is a handy tool. This tiny utility (which you don't even have to install) provides a comprehensive and sortable list of every driver on your system, and for each it reports the file name, location, version number, the company that wrote it, the device or software component it goes with, and more. It can be especially useful when you are reinstalling a piece of hardware and know the driver's already on your system but WinXP can't seem to find it. (NOTE: Because DriverView is an EXE [executable] file, you may get a security warning when you try to launch it.)

Purrint

Have you ever pushed Print Screen to take a snapshot of your screen, only to find that it doesn't seem to do anything? Purrint (www.bcheck.net) makes that key work as you might think it should. It captures your screen; shows you a preview of the capture; and can save it as an image file, save it to the Clipboard, or, yes, even send it to the printer.

Interface Enhancements

Navigating WinXP might be second nature for you, but there is always room for improvement. The utilities here enhance the WinXP features you likely use every day.

ClipDiary

We've all used the Windows Clipboard to copy and paste data, but its major limitation is that each time you put something new into the Clipboard, whatever was previously in there gets erased. It's kind of like having a closet that holds only one outfit. ClipDiary (clipdiary.com) improves upon the standard WinXP Clipboard by using a database that can store countless Clipboard entries. A quick CTRL-D keystroke lets you easily browse the contents of your newly voluminous clipboard, and perhaps best of all, the contents don't get erased when you restart your computer.

ActualDoc

Lots of people use the Start menu's My Recent Documents feature to get quick access to, well,

recently used documents. But it only displays the last 15 documents you used, which may not take you very far back in time. ActualDoc (www.flexigensoft.com) improves on My Recent Documents in a couple of ways. First, it can remember an unlimited number of files, so you can more easily find files even if you used them many days or weeks ago. Then, to help you home in on specific files types, ActualDoc lets you sort the list by category so you can display just documents, pictures, or media files.

Launchy

Vista users have it pretty easy as the Start menu's search feature lets them find and launch any application by typing its name or just part of it. WinXP's Start menu, by comparison, makes you navigate through layers of menus—that is, unless you have Launchy (www.launchy.net). This utility indexes every item on your Start menu and hides until you summon it by pressing ALT-Spacebar. From there it acts much like Vista's Start menu search feature, displaying one or more possible programs based on what you type. Because it can also be configured to monitor any folders you choose, Launchy can be used to find and launch document files, too.

These free utilities can make using your WinXP system more efficient, convenient, and secure. So who said you can't get something for nothing?

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Counterspy 2.5: Malware Detector and Eraser - An Update

by Harold G. Spangler
Houston Area League of PC Users

For “malware” protection, ask these questions: Does the anti-spyware include tools to enhance the ease of spyware detection and removal? Does the software offer descriptions of detected spyware so you can determine whether or not you want to keep detected item?

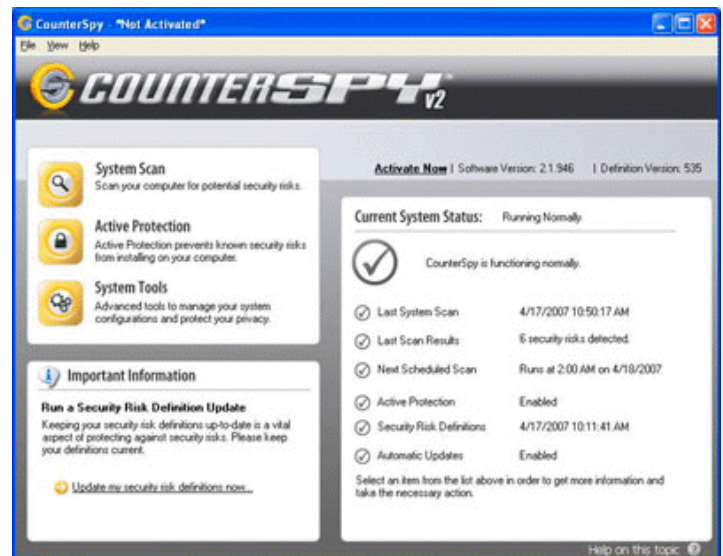
Does the product provide real-time protection from spyware—preventing its installation instead of just removing it afterward? Is the product effective at finding and removing the many different types of spyware and adware? (Sometimes referred to as “malware.”)

How easy is it to use? Can you quickly find the features you are looking for?

Is there a Help section installed with the product? Can you read the box or web page and basically understand the product? Am I asking too many ques-

tions?? Yes, so let's get on with the review.

Now, Counterspy 2.5 by Sunbelt Software: Installation is a snap and changing any options/



features is as simple as a few mouse clicks. The updated CounterSpy is even more agile. And it does the job I bought it for and without a lot of attention from me.

Counterspy is easy to use and requires little user intervention. It will automatically update itself (or not, if you have chosen the “Manual” option.) Note to Sunbelt: A more efficient and less intrusive update method would be the first login of the day – I think CounterSpy typically updates about once a day.

Support is pretty good, but e-mail is a bit slow. If you are really in a bind (I never have been), use the telephone. There's also support via the web, tech support number and the included Help function.

The auto-update feature allows you to keep your spyware protection up-to-date; while the scan scheduler allows you to set up automatic scans for anytime for any part of your hard drive. I don't use the automatic method.

Active Protection, which runs in the background, shields your system from spyware and adware continuously. This feature won't slow down the speed of your computer and is especially useful for people that are always connected to the Internet.

If you are a novice use features such as Active Protection and the program's default settings and you'll receive excellent protection. A more advanced user can select exactly what the program protects against and what it ignores, depending on preference.

CounterSpy incorporates a new technology that Sunbelt calls VIPRE (Virus Intrusion Protection

Remediation Engine), as well as boot-time scanning, active protection at the kernel level, and reduced usage of system memory. Version 2.5 is compatible with Windows Vista32, but does not support 64-bit Windows Vista.

Rootkits and other deeply entrenched malware are hard to remove because they subvert the operating system itself; Sunbelt's FirstScan technology scans for and removes this type of threat at boot up. Nice.

Specifically, it uses less system memory and creates less of a load on the CPU. Spyware definition updates now just include incremental changes (thanks Sunbelt) rather than a full download of all definitions, so updates download much faster.

In disinfection tests, CounterSpy cleaned up 91% percent of adware and spyware samples. This is impressive considering the average industry detection is less than 75%. Counterspy has system restore features and four privacy-centric utilities under a "Tools" heading: MyPC Explorer lets you view and modify Windows and browser system settings; My PC Checkup performs a check of your overall system security; History Cleaner purges Internet Explorer surfing trails; and Secure File Eraser makes sure that nobody can resurrect your deleted documents.

Counterspy has consistently protected my system from various spyware, etc. It has been and will continue to be an important part of my computer "tool kit." It is the most effective one I've seen. It sells for less than \$19.95 for one computer for one year and well worth it. For more info and updates go to www.sunbelt-software.com.

From the July 2008 issue of HAL-PC Magazine. Harold G. Spangler is a HAL-PC member and retired from NASA space flight operations consulting and a former university instructor. He can be contacted at hgsbu54@hal-pc.org.

Be Careful What You Ask For!

by Richard Kennon

Amador Computer Users Group (www.acug.net/)

This last Christmas I asked Santa for a nineteen inch wide-screen, thin, flat display for my computer. Santa, being busy and not knowing a thing about computers, asked our son to make the purchase. He decided that nineteen inch was for wimps so he picked up a twenty-two inch wide-screen. It is a beauty with 1680x1050, 96ppi resolution. That is super good ... except. Wouldn't you know, myoid Dell has a video card that does not go that high. So, buy a new video card, right? They are not so expensive. It turns out myoid Dell does not

have a slot to unplug the card and plug in a new one. I am not sure of the technicalities, but one tech suggested a new mother board as well. They are not too expensive either. Then his partner says, "If you are going to spend that much, why not let us build you a new computer for just a little more?" Golly, what a great idea. The old Dell is getting so slow, I am frustrated every time I use it. So, why not get a new supercharged dual processor and two gigs of RAM so I can really sail? We discussed specifications for a while and came to agreement. Then I said I would want the Vista Home Premium operating system. One of the partners said, "Why don't you stick with XP?"

What follows is not what he said but I figured out later that this is what he was thinking. *"This old geezer is probably not going to outlast XP so why burden him with a new operating system that just eats up processor power and RAM without offering any benefit? He is going to continue to do the same things he has always done on the computer so why not let him enjoy the benefits of all this new horsepower without the burden of having to learn about a new operating system?"*

Out loud he said, "This will allow you to use all the software you now have and won't require you to download all new drivers, etc." I had already decided I could not afford a new version of MS Office and would convert to Open Office, instead. There is no Publisher in Open Office so I would have to do something, I hadn't figured out yet, to continue publishing this newsletter. This idea gave me a great sense of relief—I could reap the benefits of the newer, faster hardware without having to give up software I have grown used to. A little extra icing on the cake is that they will transfer all my Outlook Express folders and address book to the new box so I won't have to figure that out. Also, I have an 80 GB second hard drive in the old box that they will mount in the new. I use it for backup. The new main hard drive will be a 250 GB SATA drive and the second drive can remain an IDE drive. I haven't the slightest idea what that means except that SATA is supposed to be faster and they can mix the two types on one machine.

So, I have spent our Federal rebate already. You can't say I am not patriotic!

Now, it looks just like every other computer. I was so proud of my smarts when I copied all "My Documents" to an 80 Gbyte backup hard drive and then had the store transfer this drive to the new box. But, when I went to access it, the latest copy had not

taken. Bummer! Then I started to copy the files onto a flash drive to transfer them. About that time the old computer went bonkers - out of spite, I suppose. After many tries I got most of what I wanted transferred. I won't bore you with sordid details.

The first priority was to load the McAfee firewall and virus protection. I went to the McAfee site and mucked around for a while and finally got into a chat with someone called, Anish, on the other side of the globe, probably. He offered to help and led me through the most complicated procedure I have ever followed including typing Windows-R and typing in "%temp%." Then he said to delete all the files that popped up. There were about 250 files and perhaps 10 or 20 did not wish to be deleted. Every time I got to one that would not be deleted, I clicked 'OK' and had to start over again. After we finally got through that, he gave me a web site to access and everything went smoothly from there.

The next anguish was trying to load the HP printer drivers for my two printers. That appeared to go well at first but later something went very wrong and Microsoft volunteered that the problem was caused by Hewlett Packard and that HP had a fix on a site I could click to. That is really nice service! So, I did everything the HP site said to do but it kept failing with a message outlining three possible causes - none of which seemed to apply from the best I could determine. At that juncture, I decided to drop back to square-one and try to reload the driver in question from the disk. First, it was necessary to uninstall the driver and then re-install it. I did this but failed to read the fine print. It is clear now that one cannot install the driver if the printer is plugged into the computer. So, uninstall and re-install again but do it right this time, dummy. What do you know? It worked!

I reloaded MS Office 2003 Professional that I had been using for some time. That went quite well. Then I downloaded Service Pack 2 (or, is it 3?) and the Compatibility Pack I wrote about last month. That went well, also. It is interesting how even old people can learn, isn't it?

Next came Photoshop Elements 5.0 and after that will come TOPO!, which is a map program I like and several other smaller programs, including my Nikon camera software.

All in all, it has been not as bad an experience as it might have been and not as good as wished for. The backup hard disk is/was a great idea but somehow I fumbled the execution. My only advice is that if you want to get a new computer, plan, plan, plan

and then consult as many others, who might have gone through it, as possible.

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IBM Shows Water-Cooled Chips Will Give Big Power Boost

by Richard Koman
newsfactor.com

Chip designers have been in a furious race against Moore's Law—the observation by Intel cofounder Gordon Moore that the number of transistors that can be placed on an integrated circuit doubles every two years—with some experts suspecting the industry will soon be unable to maintain that rate of growth.

But research announced Thursday suggests chip designers still have a few tricks up their sleeves that may substantially advance Moore's Law. IBM and the Berlin-based Fraunhofer Institute demonstrated a prototype design of a 3-D, water-cooled chipstack.

Rather than the traditional layout, in which chips and memory sit side-by-side on a piece of silicon, the 3-D design, stacks the components atop one another and cools the unit by piping water in between the layers.

Breakthrough' Development

In a statement, IBM called the design “one of the most promising approaches to enhancing chip performance beyond its predicted limits.” IBM has already applied the 3D design to the problem of increasing performance. The approach reduces the distance data needs to travel by 1,000 times and allows for 100 times more channels through which information can flow.

The problem with the approach has been overheating. The water-cooling approach may well take care of that issue, as well.

“As we package chips on top of each other to significantly speed a processor's capability to process data, we have found that conventional coolers attached to the back of a chip don't scale. In order to exploit the potential of high-performance 3-D chip stacking, we need interlayer cooling,” Thomas Brunschwiler, project leader at IBM's Zurich Research Laboratory, said in a statement.

As Complex as Human Brain

Brunschwiler's team piped water between the chip layers through structures as thin as a human hair to remove heat at its source. "With classic backside cooling, the stacking of two or more high-power density logic layers would be impossible," said Bruno Michel, manager of the chip cooling research efforts at the IBM Zurich Lab.

According to IBM, the water-cooling system is a technological breakthrough as complex as the human brain. The water in the system has to flow through the layers without causing electrical shorts. The result is like the way that nerves and neurons are intermixed with blood vessels all within the same volume.

In these experiments, scientists piped water through a 1 by 1 cm test vehicle, consisting of a cooling layer between two dies or heat sources. The cooling layer measures only about 100 microns in height and is packed with 10,000 vertical interconnects per cm².

The Future of Water Cooling

The team overcame key technical challenges in designing a system that maximizes the water flow through the layers, yet hermetically seals the interconnects to prevent water from causing electrical shorts. The complexity of such a system resembles that of a human brain, wherein millions of nerves and neurons for signal transmissions are intermixed but do not interfere with tens of thousands of blood vessels for cooling and energy supply, all within the same volume.

IBM worked with Fraunhofer to develop a sophisticated thin-film soldering technique to achieve the "quality, precision and robustness" need to ensure thermal and electrical contacts without shorts.

What's next for water-cooled chips? Brunschwiler and his team are now working to create cooling systems for smaller chip dimensions and more interconnects—and investigating additional sophisticated structures for hotspot cooling.

iPod Replacement

by Sandy Berger
compuKISS

Too many technology stories are sad tales of aggravation and obsolescence. So today I'm going to tell you a story about a digital device with a happy ending.

About 2 years ago, I decided to purchase an iPod.

After shopping around, I found that the iPod nano was selling for \$149 just about everywhere. However, the Sam's Club in Cary had it for \$138.77. So why pay more? When I made the Sam's Club purchase, the store clerk offered me a service policy, which I immediately rejected. When he asked why I wasn't interested, I told him that I had learned from past experience that most of these insurance policies were a waste of money because they were expensive and didn't cover the problems that I might actually have with the item. He assured me that this policy was different. For just \$14.88, I could get a 3-year policy that gave me a new iPod for most anything that went wrong with my iPod, including a battery that ran out of juice. My husband suggested that since I am a heavy-duty iPod user, I should go ahead and purchase the policy. Since I use my iPod in the car and at home in a dock every day, I was fairly sure that the iPod battery would give out before the 3-year deadline, so it seemed like a logical move. I purchased the policy. Yet all the time I was wondering if the clerk was just a good salesman or the policy was really that good.

Last month, I found an answer to that question. My iPod started acting weirdly. It was completely freezing up. No matter what button I pressed, it gave no response. Although I had encountered problems like this with computers, I was surprised to find my iPod acting just like a Windows computer. In computer world we call it the blue screen of death. I don't know if it has a name on the iPod, but it turned out to be a similar type of aggravation.

At first it didn't seem like much of a problem because Apple had a solution. Just turn the Hold button on and off a few times, then press and hold the Menu button and the center of the scroll wheel at the same time. Hold them down for about 10 seconds until the Apple icon appears on the screen. This worked great, restoring the iPod immediately, without losing any of my audio programs and music. Unfortunately, the freezes became more and more frequent. I was having to perform this reset 4 or 5 times a day so it became a real pain.

It was time to go back to Sam's Club, but how could I show them the problem since it happened only sporadically? My discomfort turned to glee when the Sam's Club clerk didn't even try to duplicate the problem. She asked me for the receipt and earbuds and charging cord that came with the iPod, and she promptly refunded the price of the iPod plus the price of the insurance policy. I could have kept the refund, but instead I headed over to the electronic

aisle to pick out a replacement.

My old model iPod was no longer available, but I was pleasantly surprised to find the new models were selling for exactly the same price I had paid for the older model. On top of that, the new iPod nanos had twice as much memory, larger screens, and the ability to play videos. This was turning out to be really good! For the same price, I was able to purchase a new, more capable iPod with a new 3-year insurance policy.

I am now enjoying watching video podcasts on my new iPod in addition to using it for audio podcasts and music. If anything happens to it in the next 3 years, I can get another replacement. I don't usually purchase insurance policies for digital equipment, but this one turned out to be a real winner.

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Power Supply Tips

by Dan Hanson

the Great Lakes Geek, Computers Assisting People, OH

We have all experienced the computer crashing seemingly for no reason. When it does, we blame Windows or a hardware problem or maybe a power surge or undervoltage. All are possible culprits but one overlooked possibility is the power supply.

The power supply is the metal box with a cooling fan next to it. Typically it's in a back corner of the case and you plug your power cord into it. When you plug the power cable into the wall, the power supply converts the AC (alternating current) that runs through your home or office into the DC (direct current) that the computer needs.

If you bought your computer from a superstore or discount retailer it may have low-cost, low-capacity power supply installed which may not be enough to handle all the things you do with your PC.

If you have upgraded your PC with newer or more components (like another CD or DVD player/burner, more RAM or another hard drive) then the power supply that came with your system may not be up to the task.

The physics of power supplies (ambient temperatures, 3.3V vs. 5V vs. 12V, etc) make it so that a power supply rated at certain wattage, say 300W, may not really provide that maximum wattage load. Some experts claim that power supplies are most efficient at 30-70% of their maximum capacity. So if

you are nearing that maximum, you can be in for trouble.

Because the power supply gets a rush of AC (alternating current) when the computer is turned on and it heats and cools each time it is used, it is more prone to failure than many other components in your PC. You may notice a slight burning smell before it shuts down. Sometimes the cooling fan stops working and the system overheats.

Newer systems let you monitor the status of the power supply from Windows. Servers and other mission critical computers often have more than one power supply so that when one dies, the other kicks in and the system stays operational.

So what can you do?

Next time you buy a PC, don't just get a cheapo system with a sub-standard power supply unless you never plan on adding memory, drives or other components to the machine.

Take care of your power supply by keeping the cooling fan away from the wall or anything else that might block the air flow and make the fan work harder (and die sooner).

Keep the PC off the carpet or other surfaces where it may suck in particles and clog the fan. Cooler is always better with electronic components.

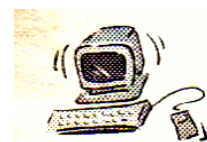
Periodically, blow out the fan and case with compressed air to get rid of dust and other particles that may clog up the fan and overheat the system components.

Add up the wattage of the components in your system to see if you are near the maximum of the power supply. E-mail us at dan@greatlakesgeek.com for a list of Estimated Power Requirements of common PC components.

If that is too difficult for you, look to see if most of the slots in the back of your PC are filled and if the drive bays in the front are being used. Those are indications that you may be close to maxing out your power capacity.

If you have a need, you can buy and install (or have someone else install) a new, heavy duty power supply. They come in several standard form factors to fit in most PCs. Warning this may not be a project for beginners though.

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Society News

August Planning Meeting

by John McMillan, Secretary

Arpad Kovaks led the Planning meeting held at Sally Springett's house August 5th. Others in attendance were Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, Mike Lavelle, John McMillan, Sarah Naas, Dan Rothfuss, Steve Staub, and Tom Thompson.

There was agreement that Russ Cooper did an excellent job discussing Genealogy at the July meeting. This subject appeared interesting to so many attendees that it might be considered as an annual topic with various speakers presenting different experiences and viewpoints.

Steve reported that there were 30 reservations for the picnic scheduled for August 12th at The Fairport Park. Directions to the park and a small map were printed on the back cover of the August Monitor. A few last minute details such as coffee and condiments suppliers were ironed out. Several members expect to arrive before the appointed hour of 5 pm to start the fire and other preliminary activities.

The September meeting at the Brighton Library is expected to feature a discussion of The Concepts of Open Source Software by Karlie Robinson. Mike Lavelle is exploring possible speakers and topics or future meetings.

Difficulties in printing the August *Monitor* required over 70 hours and several trips to St. Stephens. For unknown reasons, formatting did not work as anticipated. Arpad suggested creating a master copy that could be scanned as a possible solution. There were also problems with the most recent copy of software for printing mailing labels. As a result, some members may have noticed that the renewal date following their name is incorrect. Ink, paper, and toner inventories need replenishment.

Arpad purchased an OKI color laser printer for \$17 which included five toner cartridges (colors and black). He has tested it at home and expects to take it to Sally's house for a trial production of a master copy.

John reported the completion of preliminary lists of approximately 850 donated book titles and over 600 disks. Selected books that were intended to be sold on e-Bay are not currently included. Copies of the lists will be available at the picnic and will be posted to the Society web site. Members can scan the lists for items of interest which can be had for a

modest donation. Over the next few months, additional data will be gathered before the lists are finalized. At some point, titles will be sorted by publication date. Copies printed prior to an as yet to be established date will be sold as scrap paper. Eventually the remaining books will also be sold. All funds will go to the Society treasury.

August Picnic

by John McMillan, Secretary

August 12th was a pleasant, rain-free, summer afternoon at the pretty Perinton Park pavilion with its passing parade of people and canal boats; warm but not so hot that the buzzing flies were biting instead of just annoying the 31 RCSi members and guests, who; while engrossed in conversations, not all of which centered on computers, those modern marvels of efficiency that were the very reason for the group's existence; were not immune to the delicious smells of slowly cooking hots, hamburgs, Italian sausage, peppers and onions emanating from the grills to supplement the sumptuous spread of snacks, salads, and sweets awaiting their culinary pleasure at the club's annual picnic.

After appetites appeared appeased, Arpad announced an awesome assemblage these auction items.

- A Bottle of V O
- A Bottle of vodka
- A Casio label maker
- A Dell desktop computer with Ubuntu installed (minimum bid \$60)
- Japanese doll (approximately 12 inches high)
- A Lexmark photo scanner
- A portable radio CD player
- System Mechanic software
- 5 Bottles of wine
- 25 recordable CD's in thin jewel cases

Auction sales have increased the treasury by over \$250 and may become a replacement for the Flea Market of prior years. Our thanks to the donors and participants.

Join us at the Brighton Library Sept. 9th for a discussion of Open Source Software.

The Lighter Side

