The Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

MONITOR

Next Meeting
Tuesday, February 10
Help's Whole Hour

Contents

the Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

ZoomWare 1.0
by Wallace L. Pensgen
Rochester Computer Society, Inc., Rochester, NY

An Electronic Magnifying Glass

ZoomWare 1.0 is a new product by Ai Squared, a firm with 20 years experience in developing computer access solutions. This software will benefit anyone in need of some eyesight assistance when using a monitor. It will be especially useful on the small screen of a laptop or notebook computer.

It is available for purchase via download or on a CD, which I used. System requirements are XP with 1 GHz Pentium 4 equivalent or VISA with 1.5 GHz.

The usual minimum RAM, 512 MB and 1GB respectively, is needed.

The main capability is magnification of the screen. This is available in four .25 steps up to 2x original size. Enlargement ma"y include the full screen area, or a rectangle 1/4 1/16 of full size. This partial viewing area is movable over any portion of the screen. An-

other feature is the ability to invert the screen to white text on a black background.

Alternatively, the screen color may be chosen from a palette of 7 colors in 4 tints. Finally, pointer and cursor enhancement are available. You may vary the size and color of a pointer. I-beam cursor visibility may be enhanced by the addition of small triangles on top and below Installation is straightforward and places an icon on the desktop.

When called up, the User Interface appears with 7 convenient buttons for choosing options. These include selection of magnification (also full or partial screen), color and size of pointer as well as cursor modifications. Default enlargement is the maximum 2x but it and other parameters are selectable and may be locked.

The interface has a large on/off button and a useful Menu option. A nice feature for users is the popup description of the function when the cursor is placed on a button. The Menu choices include saving, and restoring settings, comprehensive help, product registration, updating and the ability to view the computer's system data.

A very useful feature is the Option selection on this Menu button. Among several choices, I found the Hotkeys, 8 "Standard" and 12 "Advanced," to be significant time savers. These could be user modified. I installed it on my desktop with the Windows XP Home operating system. Although unobtrusive it was readily available when needed.

It was useful for screens with small print as found with some e-mail and internet sites. I also found it an aid for viewing detail on photos from map sites. The product was well designed and included several opportunities to customize. The user needs some practice to take advantage of all the capabilities.

The price to download it is listed as $149 while the quoted CD cost is $175. I found this software to be a valuable addition to my computer's capabilities and expect to continue taking advantage of it.

Broadsides

by Ron Broadhurst
Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc., FL

These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites, and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various "tips," "tricks," & "hints" in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

Q: I accidentally deleted my recycle bin in Vista, how do I get it back?

Go to Control Panel and click on the Personalization options:

Click Change desktop icons and you'll get this handy little dialog box: Click the Recycle Bin checkbox as highlighted above, click OK, and your Recycle Bin should reappear on the desktop.

How to Get Rid of "Send Error Report to Microsoft"

Right click My Computer on the desktop or in the Start menu.

Click Properties.

Click the Advanced tab.

Click the Error Reporting button at the bottom.

Click Disable error reporting. You can select the checkbox under it if you still want to be notified when errors occur.

Click OK.

Note that you can disable error reporting for the operating system only, or for programs only, by unchecking the appropriate box under the Enable error reporting option.

You can also configure error reporting only for specific programs by clicking the Choose Programs button.

Alphabetize Start Menu Listings

When you install a new program on your system, it will often appear at the end of your Start menu. Reorganizing files alphabetically in the All Programs menu does not affect how they appear in your start menu. In order to alphabetize your start menu, you'll want to click Start and select All Programs. On any file or folder right-click and then select Sort By Name. Now all of your Start menu programs are in alphabetical Order. You Can Also Sort Subfolders in Your Start Menu the Same Way.

Make Your Quick Launch Icons Bigger

Unlock the Toolbar

Right click the QL toolbar

Select the View tab

Select large icons

Pin an Application to Start Menu

The Windows XP Start menu includes an area where two or more Microsoft applications, usually Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, are permanently positioned for easy access. You can add your favorite application to this same convenient location.

Open Windows Explorer and locate the executable file for the application. Right-click the file and select Pin To Start Menu. The application will now appear in the Start menu. To remove an application, locate it, right-click it, and select Unpin From Start Menu.

Alternatively, you can right-click the app in the Start menu and click Unpin From Start Menu.

Change System Sounds

Through the Control Panel you can change your system's program event sounds. Click Start and Control Panel. If you're using Category View, click Sounds, Speech, and Audio Devices; and Sounds and Audio Devices. If you are using the Classic View, click Sounds and Audio Devices. This loads the Sounds and Audio Devices Properties dialog box. Choose the Sounds tab. Select the sound you'd like to change in the Program events box, and then select a new sound from the Sounds drop-down menu. Or select a sound you've saved to the hard drive by using the Browse button to navigate to the sound file. Change as many sounds as you like. Save your changes as a sort of theme from the Sound Scheme drop-down menu above the Program events box. (Select the blank line and click Save As.) You can also choose to disable program event sounds. When you're finished click OK.

Saving E-mail Messages

To save e-mail messages highlight the message you want to save, then click on File -Save As. Select where you want to save the message and then save it as a txt file.

Printing e-mail addresses in outlook express

To print your e-mail addresses:

Print each name and address on one line:

Open Outlook Express click on File, Export, Address Book, Select Text File (Comma Separated Values) and click the Export button.

Name the file, click Browse button to save in Desktop. and at the bottom line, SAVE it in Text File (* .txt), click

Next, Deselect everything except NAME and E-mail Address then click Finish. Click on the Text File and Print it.

Outlook Express Address Book Back-up

From Outlook Express, click on Tools/ Address Book, then File / Export / Address Book

Choose a storage location and give it a file name. Click save E-mail Shortcut / right click on the Desktop and choose New then Shortcut.

In the Command line type mailto:yourfriend@ whatever.whatever. For example-mailto:yourfriend

@cfl.rr .com then click Finish and you have a short-cut to your e-mail friend. Double click and your e-mail opens up ready to go.

Control Panel Shortcuts

If you're tired of multiple clicks to get to your floppy drive, CD-rom drive, D-drive, E-drive or to the Control Panel, you can put a shortcut on your desktop for instant access.

Open MyComputer, right click on the icon for your floppy drive, CD-rom drive, E or D-drive or whatever you want and then select "Create Shortcut." This will place an icon on your desktop for instant access to what you chose.

You can use this technique for any Folder you access frequently by putting the shortcut on your desktop. Now, your desktop becomes your operations center with quick access to any application, folder, or file on your PC.

Shortcut for Shortcut

You can assign a Keyboard key combination to any Shortcut. If you right click on any shortcut icon and choose Properties, you can then type Ctrl+any letter to assign the key combination that will open your Program. It should be a unique key and something you will remember. e.g. S for solitaire. This would be of great help if you wanted to go to another program when you cannot see your Desktop.

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Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition FREEWARE

by Ira Wilsker

A lot can go wrong with the software and operating systems on our computer. Just like a car, if maintenance is ignored or infrequently performed on Windows, problems can occur that can impair the execution of software on our computers. To help us perform the software maintenance on our computers, a small software company IOBIT has released a freeware version of its Windows repair utility, Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition. For those concerned about the safety and security of free software, this product is free of any spyware or

adware.

Available for free download from the publisher's site, www.iobit.com. or the alternative popular mega sites including download .com, and tucows.com, Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is a comprehensive suite of utilities that can identify and repair many of the common system problems that plague Windows users. Advanced WindowsCare will run on Windows 2000, XP, and Vista. For those who may desire an even more powerful and sophisticated suite, IOBIT also has an upgrade available, Advanced WindowsCare Professional, which sells for $29.95 (15 day free trial available). The free Personal Edition has been very successful, with over four million downloads, including over two million from download.com alone. C-Net, the owner of download.com, calls this software, the "#1 most popular system utility in download.com", where it has received a five star rating. Tucows has given this software a "five cows" rating, while ZO Net has awarded it five stars, as well as given it its coveted "Editors' Pick" award. Softpedia, another well known resource, rates Advanced WindowsCare Personal "Very Good", and gives it a four star rating. Obviously, this appears to be some good software that can make a valuable addition to anyone's software collection.

Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is very easy to use, and offers a "1 click" option where all of the major utilities are automatically run, which subsequently gives a detailed report to the user, and offers the options to either automatically or selectively repair any problems found. Personal Edition is also very fast, with most scans being completed in about one minute.

One useful feature of this software is a spyware scan that searches the computer for spyware and adware, using periodically updated signature files. Any such malware that is found can be selectively deleted by the software. For users concerned with privacy, the software can also erase all history files on the hard drive.

The registry is a complex database containing information on all of the software and hardware installed in the computer. Often the registry becomes bloated with obsolete information, and corrupted data, which can create a serious performance drag on the computer. Good PC hygiene dictates that the registry should be periodically scanned for errors and cleaned, and this software does an excellent job of this. One nice feature is the ability to recover any changes made with an integral restore feature. As a demonstration of its capabilities, as a test, I purposely ran other registry cleaning and repair utilities prior to running this one. As an extra precaution, I used my Windows system restore feature to back up my critical files prior to the test. I ran three' of the other registry repair utilities, and dozens of registry defects were identified and repaired; I then ran Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition, and hundreds of additional registry errors were found and repaired, that the other programs missed. There was no need to restore my files, because the system ran very well after the serial repair. This software is capable by itself to repair the registry, and the other registry repair utilities are no longer needed; this software did it all.

Our hard drives become cluttered with a variety of junk files, such as obsolete cache and temporary files. These useless files may waste countless megabytes on our drives, and slow down the ability of the hard drive to find data. If useless data is deleted from the hard drives, computer performance can be enhanced. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition contains a very efficient junk file removing utility. As a matter of personal choice, I prefer to look over the list of files found and decide which to delete, but it is fairly safe to delete what the software finds. As a matter of practice, after useless files are deleted, it would be a good idea to run Windows integral defragmentation utility, or a third party disk defragmentation utility, to further improve hard drive performance.

Another feature built into the software gauges Windows and internet performance, and offers options to improve the speed of the system. This helps give us the performance that we paid for when we originally purchased our systems, and helps to maximize our internet throughput.

As our computers age, we are often plagued with slow startup and shutdown problems. This occurs because as we install software on our computers, many of the programs place items in the system startup by default, which forces the software to load when the computer is booted; more items in the startup means slower and longer boot times. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition contains a powerful but simple startup manager which displays the contents of our startup, and allows for the easy management and control of what loads when we boot. Fewer items loaded at boot means that our computer comes up faster, and runs faster because there is less demand on system resources. Because there are fewer items running, shut downs are also

faster.

I have used this software for about a month and found it very useful and reliable, and can recommend it to all PC users with Windows 2000, XP, or Vista.

One of the most frequent questions asked on my weekly radio show on KLVI is how to improve computer performance and speed. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is a valuable free tool that does much to improve performance, clean up the registry and startup, delete useless files, and otherwise provide benefits to the user.
Websites:

http://www.iobit.com

http://www.iobit.com/advancedwindowscareper.html

Media Notes

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group, VA

A new year, a new president, a new cabinet and the same old woes. Hopefully, we'll get this worked out soon. Intel's new processor series and motherboard chipsets are on the market and promise excellent performance for the dollar. Slowly, the board manufacturers are populating the shelves with their new offerings so I'll be starting the research and purchasing for my newest machine. Can't wait.

USB 3.0 Spec Finished: It's SuperSpeed USB

With USB 2.0 ports becoming a common as dirt—you'll find them in everything from mobile phones to DVD players these days—you know the time has come to move on to a new version. And that's just what the USB 3.0 Promoter Group announced recently.

USB 3.0 will support data rates as high as 5.0 Gb/sec—rendering the new standard 10 times faster than USB 2.0. Having already dubbed USB 2.0 as "Hi Speed USB," however, the group had to come up with a brand-new superlative for USB 3.0. After much discussion, they finally settled on "SuperSpeed USB" (perhaps holding "Ludicrous Speed" in reserve for USB 4.0).

"SuperSpeed USB is the next advancement in ubiquitous technology," said Jeff Ravencraft, USB-IF president and chairman. "Today's consumers are using rich media and large digital files that need to be easily and quickly transferred from PCs to devices and vice versa. SuperSpeed USB meets the needs of everyone from the tech-savvy executive to the average home user."

Although USB 3.0 will use a different cable, it will use the same types as connectors and will therefore be backward-compatible (good thing, considering that more than two billion USB devices were shipped in 2006 alone, according to the USB Implementers Forum). Six signals will be carried on a USB 3.0 cable (four for a SuperSpeed data path and two for a non-SuperSpeed data path). USB 2.0 cables carry just two signals for low-speed (1.5Mb/s) and full- and high-speed data paths (12- and 480Mb/s, respectively). The USB 3.0 bus will provide 50 percent more power for unconfigured or suspended devices, and 80 percent more power for configured devices.

The USB 3.0 Promoter Group anticipates that SuperSpeed USB discrete controllers will hit the market in the second half 2009, with the first consumer products appearing in 2010. The group expects that data storage devices such as flash drives, external hard drives, digital cameras and camcorders, and digital media players will be among the earliest USB 3.0 products.

First Camcorders, Now Webcams: HD Gets Cheap

High-definition is rapidly going mainstream. Samsung has announced a new image sensor for notebook webcams that supports 720p HD video at 30 frames per second.

It's too early to say how much HD-ready webcams will add to the cost of portable PCs, but given the sour economy and pricing pressures in the laptop market, it probably won't be a lot. Mass production of the S5K4AW CMOS image sensor is slated to begin in the first half of 2009.

The Samsung announcement is another indication of how fast HD technology is going mainstream. In fact, it's getting downright cheap. Bargain HD camcorders like the Flip MinoHD ($230) and the Kodak Ai6($180) are pocket-sized consumer gadgets that shoot 720p video. Trends indicate that most consumer video gadgets will soon be high-def. It won't be long before the terms HD and high- definition sound as quaint as stereophonic and high fidelity.

But are we really ready for an all-HD world? The Samsung sensor, for instance, can improve image quality in low-light conditions, such as those late-night webcam sessions. And HD camcorders will likely capture more pimples, wrinkles, and gray hairs than most of us would care to save for posterity.

Maybe there's something to be said for grainy, low-res video.

Vista SP2: Six Things You Need to Know

Windows Vista Service Pack was released as a public beta version Thursday, Nov. 27th, Microsoft confirmed. The program, which has been under limited testing since October, will become available on the Microsoft TechNet site. Here's what you need to know before making the upgrade.

Vista Service Pack 2 isn't for everyone.

SP2 beta is, as the name suggests, a product still under development. Microsoft is recommending only "technology enthusiasts, developers, and IT pros" willing to test the software take on the upgrade. General users are advised to wait until the final release, which is set for the first half of 2009. Unofficial reports indicate it is being targeted for an April completion.

SP2 is a fairly significant upgrade.

Windows Vista SP2 includes numerous changes to the Vista operating system. Here are some of the highlights of what it'll do for you:

· Let you record data onto Blu-ray discs

· Add into your system Vista Feature Pack For Wireless, which provides support for the latest Bluetooth technology—Bluetooth v2.1—as well as for the Windows Connect Now (WCN) Wi-Fi protocol

· Give you better Wi-Fi performance when you're exiting Vista's sleep mode

· Make your RSS feeds sidebar gadget work faster and better

· Give you the latest desktop search engine, Windows Search 4

· Cut down the resources it takes to run your various sidebar gadgets

It'll give your OS an overall tune-up, too.

Vista Service Pack 2 will also deliver some hidden improvements, which will:

· Give your computer support for VIA Technologies' new 64-bit CPU

· Let your system support exFAT, which can handle larger files and can also use UTC timestamps so you can synchronize files across different time zones

· Boost your power management efficiency by as much as 10 percent

Additionally, a slew of system bugs will be corrected in the update, including some slow shutdown problems and other crash-causing issues.

You have to have SP1 installed before you begin.

Like most Microsoft Service Packs, SP2 won't work on your system if you haven't already installed SP1. If you're thinking about trying the SP2 upgrade, you'll have to hit SP1 first.

Things may not be totally smooth at first.

Microsoft has had a sketchy history with glitches seemingly caused by its Windows Service Pack updates. It sometimes takes several hotfixes for these kinks to be worked out. That's precisely why it's often best to wait for the full release, at the very least, before jumping on the upgrade.

This Service Pack does offer some improvements over past ones.

Microsoft did take some steps to make this Service Pack function a bit better than past upgrades. It is the first Windows Service Pack to work for both the client (Vista) and server (Windows 2008) editions of the operating system in a single update.

SP2 also includes what Microsoft is calling a "Service Pack Clean-up Tool." This will permanently delete old versions of files SP2 is updating, helping you reduce clutter and get rid of outdated system files that'd otherwise just take up space.

Windows 7 Beta 1 to arrive January 13?

At the Professional Developers Conference in late October, Windows chief Steven Sinofsky announced that Windows 7 Beta 1 would be ready "early next year." A Microsoft insider has now confirmed the actual date, which is indeed very early next year. In a comment on his blog, Keith Combs has revealed that Windows 7 Beta 1 will be available on or around January 13, 2009.

Keith's post links to a promotional announcement for the MSDN Developer Conference series, where every registrant will receive a DVD. The first event in the MSDN series is in early December, in Houston. So does that mean the next Windows 7 beta will be ready for public distribution this month? According to Keith, not just then:

My understanding is that the DVD will not be ready for the first few show dates but will be mailed to each attendee.

Microsoft is targeting to have the DVD's in the materials from 1/13/2009 on.

So I would imagine the folks attending the Houston, Orlando and Atlanta shows this month will receive their DVD's around mid January as well. That's an assumption on my part. Could be earlier or later, but they will get them.

Reading between the lines, I'll predict publicly what I've been saying privately for the last month or so: Windows 7 Beta 1 will be publicly unveiled at CES. Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer is giving the pre-CES keynote address on January 7, 2009, the night before the show opens (Bill Gates has had this

time slot for the past few years). There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Ballmer will be showing off Windows 7 at CES. It's reasonable to assume that Microsoft will provide an early update to key media sources, including reviewers who attended the Microsoft-sponsored workshop at PDC in October.

Any public release would come only after that first demo, which makes the January 13 date a nearly perfect fit for public availability.

Hands-on with Netflix streaming on TiVo

At the end of October, Netflix and Tivo announced that Netflix's streaming service would be coming to TiVo DVRs by the end of 2008. The companies have made good on their promise, and the service has rolled out to the latest series of Tivo's. I had the chance to give it a full workout. The short story: this is an awesome added feature for TiVo HD owners.

The interface is significantly different than what I've seen on the Netflix viewer by Roku. Rather than offering up large box shots to scroll through, the TiVo's interface instead lists the names in text, with smaller box shots showing up on the right side. I preferred the TiVo's interface, as it allows me to see more titles at once, which is convenient if you have a large queue. On the other hand, I felt the TiVo interface was less responsive, which is a problem that affects almost all of the extra services on TiVo.

While the interface is an improvement over the Netflix Player, I still saw plenty of room for improvement. Now that Netflix has added a lot of content to the Instant Streaming service, my instant queue is getting pretty full. The current interface simply lists titles in the same order as your Instant Queue, which, if you're anything like me, is kind of haphazard. While the queue system makes sense for the traditional Netflix mailing service, I'd rather have more categorization options--s uch as by genre and star rating--for online streaming. I was also disappointed that there was no way to tell from the TiVo screen which movies were available in "HD" quality.

Like on the Netflix Roku Player, video quality is determined by the speed of your connection. While the Netflix Player uses a "four dot" graphic to indicate video quality, the TiVo HD has a more granular meter, with about 14 bars. I generally got all 14 bars filled up, using a wired Ethernet connection and a standard cable modem.

Although the term "near-DVD" is often abused with video-streaming services, it accurately describes the video quality offered by Netflix streaming on TiVo. I fired up a bunch of movies and I was never disappointed by how they looked. Pan's Labyrinth was available in "HD" and in most cases it looked as good as a well-mastered DVD-- occasionally I could see some blockiness to the image or the background would be soft, but nothing to take me out of the movie-watching experience. Next up was Ratatouille, which wasn't available in HD. This looked slightly softer than DVD-quality (and much softer than the excellent Blu-ray), but not by much. Only the pickiest videophiles would turn up their noses at the image quality. In short, there's room for improvement, but it's darn good already. (You can read more about the technical details behind Netflix's streaming service here: http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-10102284-1 .html.)

I did notice some artifacts on the audio side, although it was mostly subtle. I really only noticed it on one movie, but I could hear some soft pops, similar to what you might hear on streaming Web video when it's not fully buffered. And, like all Netflix Instant Streaming content, you're limited to stereo audio rather than surround. I'm really hoping Netflix adds surround soundtracks in the near future.

The most important takeaway for us is that I watched several movies without any hiccups and each movie started up in a few seconds. While many streaming services "feel" like you're streaming video over the Internet, this feels more like you're expanding the recorded content of your TiVo. And while you lose some of the benefits of watching the actual DVD (special features, surround sound), I couldn't help but notice that in some ways it's better than DVD; movies loaded right away and with no previews.

If you already have TiVo and Netflix, there's no reason not to take advantage of this feature. If you're choosing between a TiVo and a standard cable

/satellite box, this is definitely a feature to take into consideration, although also be aware that Netflix streaming is available on many other devices, such as the X-Box 360, Netflix Player, LG BD 300 and Samsung BD-P2550--and I expect it to be even more ubiquitous in 2009. While the hardest part about going with a TiVo over the standard options is the monthly fee, added features like Netflix, Rhapsody, and Amazon Video on Demand make it a lot easier to swallow.

From the January 2009 issue of The Umbrella Online*, The Monthly Journal of the Hampton Roads (VA) Computing Community.*

Ask Mr. Modem

Q. I replaced my old printer with a new one. Now, when I try to print, my computer still thinks the old printer is the one to use. My new printer was installed properly and I can see it listed, but how do I make sure that is the printer my computer uses?
A. You need to tell your computer which printer is your default, meaning the printer it should use whenever it receives a print command. To do this, click Start Settings Printers. You'll see your old and new printer icons displayed. Right-click the printer that you want to establish as your default printer, which in this case is your new printer.

On the menu that appears, click to place a check mark next to Set Printer as Default, then close the Printers window. Your new printer will spring to life the next time you have something to print.
Q. I bought a new keyboard that I'm not used to, so I keep hitting the Caps Lock key accidentally. I know there is a way to make the computer beep when I do that, but I can"t remember how that"s done. Can you help, Mr. M?
A. The ToggleKeys feature is what you"re looking for and you can find it by going to Control Panel Accessibility Options. On the Keyboard tab, place a check mark beside Use ToggleKeys. Windows will emit a high-pitched sound when the Caps Lock is enabled, which is not unlike the sound I make when I discover that I've BEEN TYPING IN ALL CAPS. It will emit a lower-pitched beep when it is turned off. The same holds true for the Num Lock and Scroll Lock keys, though nobody ever uses the Scroll Lock key.

If you're using Windows Vista, go to your Control Panel, then click Ease of Access Make the Keyboard Easier to Use. Place a check mark beside Turn on ToggleKeys.
Q. Sometimes when I'm trying to install software, I get a message that tells me to disable my anti-virus protection first. Following your recommendation, I'm using the free Moon Secure (Beta) (http://tinyurl .com/5n2fs7) anti-virus, but I can't figure out how to temporarily disable it. I love your newsletter. I always learn something new.
A. You can temporarily disable any anti-virus program by right-clicking its little icon in the System Tray, located in the lower right-hand corner of your screen. From the menu that appears, click Exit or Quit. Other programs may use the word Close or Stop or Disable, but the 'net effect is the same.

There may be an additional prompt that asks you to confirm your action. When the anti-virus icon disappears from the System Tray, your anti-virus program is disabled. You can start it again via Start Programs and launch it manually, or restart your computer to reactivate it.

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

Musicovery: Mood Radio

A novel, interactive site that plays music based on the mood of the user. Click the site's graphical iPod-like console that features two mood scales that range from "Energetic" to "Calm" vertically, and "Dark" to "Positive" horizontally. No "Surly" or "Hostile," so I was out of luck. Click to include or exclude specific genres of music, plot a point along the timeline from the 1950s to the 2000s, then sit back and listen. Hint: There is nothing like a snappy, toe-tapping Gregorian chant to brighten up one's day. www.musicovery.com

Vaudeville!

Vaudeville represents the true beginning of popular American entertainment, long before Britney came along and ruined everything. Don't believe the vicious rumors that vaudeville is dead; it can still entertain you on the virtual stage today, thanks to this tribute site. Here you can read about the amazing acts, savvy showmen, bold entrepreneurs, and the entire history of the vaudeville movement. If you prefer, sit back, relax, and listen to recordings of sketches and songs, or watch videos of vintage acts. Historical minutia: The word "vaudeville" comes from the French *Chanson du vau de Vire* or "Song of the Vale of Vire," a valley near Calvados, France, noted for satirical folk songs. (I' 'll bet you didn't know this was going to be so educational. I apologize. It won't happen again.)
http://tinyurl.com/3xd74y

Viral Video Chart

No need to search Google Video (http://video.google.com) and YouTube (www.youtube.com)

for the best videos, when you can view the cream of the video crop from one location. Think of this as a digital-age version of the "Top 20 Countdown," a daily listing of the top 20 Internet videos. www.viralvideochart .com

For plain-English answers to your questions by e-mail, plus great computing tips, subscribe to Mr. Modem's award-winning newsletter. Subscribe using Promo Code 1146 and receive one free month with your six-month subscription (28 issues!) To view a sample issue or sub-scribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

FOSS Flap

by Stew Bottorf
Tampa Bay Computer Society

I n this issue I'm outlining steps to build an online website for less than $25 a year. Put your group online or show-off family photos inexpensively. To do this we need to accomplish three tasks:

1. Get software to build the website;
2. register an online domain;
3. purchase a web hosting service.

Software:

Kompozer (kompozer.net/) is the successor to the handy NVU editor. NVU is no longer being updated, and the KompoZer folks have added some bells and whistles to the solid Mozilla / NVU HTML editor. Make a new folder on your computer desktop, name it My WebSite, and store all your pages there prior to upload (this makes a local backup of your online website). I also make an "images" subdirectory inside this folder to keep things neat. KompoZer is easy to navigate, but if you have questions, check out this helpful site: www.thesitewizard .com /get-ting started/kompozer-tutorial-1 .shtml. KompoZer is open source software, it's free, and versions exist for Windows, Mac, and Linux. Be sure your home page is saved as index.html or index.htm.

Domain Registration:

What will you name your site? It's hard finding names not already registered, but that is your task. Try your own name, but avoid hyphens in domain names, because they are hard to communicate to others. GoDaddy is a reliable domain registrar, where you can explore the possibilities (they even help you with suggestions). Remember, you are signing up to have a public name on the Internet for a period of one year. You pay $10 per year for dot-com and dot-net domains. Do not buy anything else at GoDaddy (they will tempt you at checkout with additional web services). Save all paperwork and write down all passwords—you'll need them later. Beware, there are unscrupulous web registrars/hosts. Use GoDaddy and be safe.

Web Host:

I've found 3ix.org (www .3ix.org/one_dollar_web _hosting.php) to be the best value in Web hosting. Their "Excite" service costs $12 per year (click the 3ix link at the right to see all the features included). You must know the domain name registered at GoDaddy when you order 3ix service. 3ix sends you important e-mail with default passwords and important IP and name-server information. Save this paperwork too. At 3ix, you host on highly reliable Apache servers, another open source product. Apache runs more Internet sites than any other webserver. This sits atop Red Hat Linux, the 'Cadillac' of Linux.

Configuration:

You must now go into your domain account at GoDaddy and set the nameserver ad-dresses to the information sent from 3ix. On GoDaddy you first unlock the domain, change the two nameserver addresses and then re lock the domain. Re-member it takes up to two days for your site information to fully propagate over the Internet.

Look over web hosting options using the 3ix C Panel. Feel free to read online help files and setup e-mail accounts. A very nice thing about 3ix is you can upload files using an IP address before your site has propagated across the Internet.

Create an images folder in the public_html directory using the C Panel or KompoZer. Your HTML files should be uploaded only into the public_ html directory. KompoZer has a handy built-in publish utility where you set this information. Practice with one file till you get the transfer config-ured correctly. Only then upload the whole site. You must use upper and lower case letters properly in file names (I find it easiest to use only lower case

letters for all upload files).

See the result on my friend's Palm Harbor Crystalaires website: crystalaires.com. This site used only KompoZer (with added JavaScript), the domain was registered at GoDaddy and is hosted by 3ix. Total yearly cost is $22.09

There is much more you may do with the 3ix site. You can run content management, SQL, PHP services, etc. They even have a free shopping cart so you can sell online, and you can give away 20 free e-mail addresses. The FOSS-SIG website foss.cypressweb .com uses the GoDaddy and 3ix setup explained here with content-managed open-source Joomla design.

Reprinted from the December 2008 issue of Bits and Bytes, *the newsletter of the Tampa Bay Computer Society, FL.*

Converting CD-based Music to Compressed Audio Files

by Mike Moore

Editor, Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, KY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Compressed audio files, though the wonder of a shared internet database called Gracenote (formerly CDDB), contain informational tidbits that can searched. On the other hand, ordinary music tracks on a Compact Disc have no information associated with them at all, not even the name of the song. By converting CD-ROM music to MP3 files, your data-base can pull up a play list for you using information encoded in the MP3 file. Most ripping software (such as C-Dex, available at http://cdexos.sourceforge .netJ) will query the CDDB so that you won't have to manually type in the names of the songs or the name of the CD.

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

Most of the MP3 player devices out there do not require a lot in the way of software—you generally plug them into a computer, they assign themselves a drive letter, and you can just copy your songs to the devices as if they were another hard drive. There are even self-contained wireless hard drives (see:

http://www.apple.comlairportexpress) that will broadcast your music wirelessly to any networked computer in the house!

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

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

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

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

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

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Tips from *Smart Computing*

✓ View Classic Start Menu in Vista: To get back to a more recognizable Start menu, right-click an open space on the Taskbar, select Properties, click the Start Menu tab, select the Classic Start Menu radio button, and then click Apply. For a little more control over what appears in the Start menu, click the Customize button to add or remove items. Click OK when you're finished.

✓ Affordable Smartphones: Even consumers with a limited budget can afford a smartphone, thanks in part to new low-cost smartphone offers from many carriers and manufacturers that offer a pleasant array of features. These smartphones often have the basic functions you'd expect, including phone, e-mail, Web, contacts, calendar, and task-management capabilities.

Sometimes you'll find an older, more full-featured smartphone offered at a tremendous discount. These phones can also be great options for consumers who don't want to pay for the latest and greatest phones but still want a decent amount of power and functionality.

✓ Go Beyond Point And Shoot: You don't have to have a high-powered camera to improve your photographs. At the very least, adjust White Balance settings according to lighting conditions. Even if you use a flash, ambient light will affect the background of your image, so set the white balance to tungsten when the scene is lit by regular light bulbs and Fluorescent for fluorescent bulbs, for example.

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Better Web Searching Tips

by Laura Leita
ICON PC User Group, on Long Island, NY

Find More, Faster, On The Internet

With so much information out there on the Web, it's often amazing to discover just how hard it is to find something you are looking for, and how easy it is to find things you have no interest in. I remember once when I was in school going to the school librarian to ask for books on Zimbabwe for a report. She came back to me and told me she did have some books on something called the Zamanian cockroach. Apparently it was close enough in the alphabet that she thought it was good enough but in fact it was way off. This same thing can happen on the web if you don't phrase

your search in the most efficient manner. The following tips work best with Google, which is my search engine of choice.

1. Commas–separate your search with commas. If you are trying to search for a particular doctor for example, in a certain city, town, or state, you would be best to separate the name from the location with commas. For Example: *Joe Smith Dr, Stony Brook NY.* Google actually has a directory service of sorts and if there is a direct match with a business it will come up with a miniature map, the business address, and phone number right at the top of your search findings. This is very handy.

2. Quotes–If you want to search for something exactly as written, put quotes around it. For example, if you search for song lyrics, *Love me tender* without quotes, you will see searches for *Love, Love me, Love me tender, tender love* and many more variations on those three words. Now if you put it in quotes, *"Love me tender",* it will only return searches with exactly that match and I am willing to bet you that Elvis Presley's famous song will be right up there near the top easy to find.

3. Don't spell everything out - Words like *street, drive, doctor, avenue, company etc…* can often be shortened or left out of the search. Try leaving them off or using the shortened abbreviation if you are not finding what you are searching for. The reason is that you do not know how a person or thing will be listed on the web. *The American Oil Company* is most likely listed as *Amoco* but could also be listed as *American Oil,* without the company added at the end. Just like an address could be listed as 123 *Maple St.* OR 123 *Maple Street* If you are searching for "123 *Maple Street*" in quotes and the address is listed as just 123 *Maple St.,* you might not find it because searches inside quotes are to be taken EXACTLY as written. Also a name like Joseph could be Joe or just J.

4. Hierarchy of search–Sometimes it is best to start with all the details you know and then slowly start pulling details out of the search step by step until you get a possible hit, getting vaguer and vaguer in your search criteria. Let's say you need to find the phone number for a Doctor Joseph Smith at 123 Maple Street in Stony Brook, New York. Below is the order I would recommend searching in until you end up with a positive match. Of course hopefully it will come up right

away but you never know.

a. Joseph Smith MD, 123 Maple St, Stony Brook NY

b. Joseph Smith, 123 Maple, Stony Brook, NY

c. Dr Smith, Maple St, Stony Brook

d. Dr J Smith, New York (Here you would get too many Doctor Smiths so I recommend putting in at least part of the name.)

e. Dr Smith, Stony Brook, NY

Ask a question–Sometimes you might need to find a how to, or an explanation. Don't be afraid to pose a question: *How do You Fly a Kite? What is a White Hole? How do Clocks work?* There are some great sites out there with lessons on just about anything. Eliminate words–If you know there is a word you do NOT want to come up in your search you can put a minus (-) sign before the word and it will not show any results that match your search and contain that word.

Some exercises you can do: Try these searches both ways and see the difference. Through trial and error you will soon be able to find anything that is out there.

Compare these two:

a. Dr Narula Stony Brook

b. Dr Harmeet Narula, Stony Brook NY (notice the mini-map and directory listing right on top!)

How do you tie those darn things anyway?

a. Neckties

b. How do you tie a tie? (tutorial there for you right on top!)

To use quotation marks or not?

a. I will follow you

b. "I will follow you"

There are many other techniques to learn as you go. The key is to search efficiently and to save as much time as possible. Keep an eye out for more Google tips!

Free Computer Help

The location for free online computer support and computer related information. Computer Hope has been designed to assist all types of computer users with any of their computer related questions as well as a great location to learn more about your computer and its hardware and software.

http://www.computerhope.com/oh.htm

.If Your Computer Gets Wet… What?

by Bob Schwartz
Houston Area League of PC Users, TX

What to do if something wet spills on your electronic device or it falls into wet whatever? The following is not guaranteed but represents years of experience.

Quick, unplug it! Unless there is a likely shock hazard. Look up the instructions (best to do this when you buy it). Find out if there is any prohibition against using ALCOHOL. Alcohol can dissolve some materials.

There are generally two items to have handy. One is distilled water to first wash off and dilute any spill, especially anything that might be conductive.

The second is alcohol, 90+% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol. Ethyl alcohol or ethanol – 90% – will work too. Alcohol has an affinity for water. Rinsing the item first with the distilled water and then with alcohol will dilute, pick up water, carry it away, and evaporate quickly. The higher percent alcohol 90% vs 50% have a greater affinity for water.

Time is important. You do not want water to soak into an otherwise insulating medium, especially water that contains something conductive like salt. It will leave a conductive residue that will short out portions of the device. That is why you want to rinse first with distilled water to carry away any conductive residue and then the alcohol to remove the water film. Most tap water has dissolved minerals that remain after the water evaporates, hence the distilled water to rinse these away.

After, and I repeat AFTER, the above cleaning, you can use very modest heat to help dry out the item. You can use a hair dryer at some distance. Make sure you don't heat the item any hotter than is comfortable to hold. Some plastic materials deform at relatively low temperatures.

Remember the order: (1) rinse with distilled water (2) rinse with alcohol (3) warm gently with hair dryer or warming oven.

For items immersed in flood waters, the above approach can be tried but the outlook is not promising. Generally the conductive flood waters have had time to soak into the various insulating materials and are almost impossible to remove. Still, it may be worth a try, especially if you have the time and possible success is worth the effort. Distilled water and alcohol are not very expensive. Most circuit boards are coated with varnish to resist moisture. In this case, wash repeatedly with distilled water. Use a soft brush to remove any remaining film such as mud. Then, the alcohol followed by the dryer. Using the dryer prematurely can "set" the offending material to the point that it may be almost unremovable. So save it for the very last step after you are sure things are clean. Your efforts may save part if not all of the equipment.

From the January 2009 issue of HAL-PC Magazine, *newsletter of the Houston Area League of PC Users. Bob Schwartz is a HAL-PC member, retired EE, 14 patents, technical writer, and active in civic affairs. Contact him at bobx@hal-pc.org.*

From The DealsGuy

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

They Said It Couldn't Be Done

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes when a company sheds one of its holdings? When the separation between Daimler's and Chrysler's financial systems needed to happen, many said that would not be achieved for years, but one guy decided the experts were wrong and accomplished wonders. Read this fascinating story at: <http://www.informationweek.com/news/show Article.jhtml?articleID=211200970>.

Here's an article about what some schools are doing to gather data that would help improve the students chances for getting the most out of school. It's lengthy, but is at: <http://www.informationweek.com/news/business _intelligence/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=2116002 06&pgno=1&queryText=&isPrev=>. Some letters to the editor printed later were also interesting from folks that said that teachers also should share the responsibility for a good education for students.

Just a reminder about the special offer for Diskeeper that is still good. <http://www.diskeeper .com/purchase/purchase.aspx> Also, I have not tried any of the products below except TeamViewer. Reminder:

I've been using TaxAct to do my income tax for a few years now and I'm happy with it, although I do use the pay version because it brings data forward from last year to edit and the free version doesn't; you must type in all the data again. The free version also does one free E-file for you, and if there's a refund, you'll get it back in ten days. Visit <http://www.taxact.com>.

DVD Converter At No Cost

DVDVideoSoft Ltd. has updated their Free Video to Flash Converter:

With Free Video to Flash Converter it is very easy to enrich a corporate web site or a personal blog with a good looking video. The program offers over 80 different themes for the flash player. Free Video to Flash Converter converts video files, one by one, or several files at once, to flash (SWF and FLV). Do the whole movie or just a portion in order to make a required video.

The updated Free Video to Flash Converter has a completely new player that meets all up-to-date standards and has all necessary features. Among them are:

- full screen mode;
- volume control;
- autoload enable/disable feature;
- autoplay enable/disable feature;
- loop playback;
- big play button on the video;
- play list;
- subtitles support;
- hot keys support.

Free Video to Flash Converter's design is somewhat strict, but the colors of all player elements are customizable. Now everyone can find the matching one for the particular site. The application runs under both XP and Vista; very convenient for the majority of users.

Free Video to Flash Converter is available at <http://www.dvdvideosoft.com/free-dvd-video-software.htm> for immediate free download. The program contains no spyware or adware and no activation or registration is required.

Now For A New Task Manager

AnVir Software has released AnVir Task Manager Pro 5.4, a complete application that lets you control everything that's going on while using your computer. AnVir Task Manager manages startup programs and active processes and removes spyware while offering a great variety of Windows enhancements. No need to install dozens of system utilities. You need only one program instead; AnVir Task Manager.

This Task Manager replacement analyzes everything that's currently active on your system and displays it on a tabbed interface.áIt displays programs that are scheduled to run upon Windows start, as well as all active processes, and services. It shows full information about each process including command line, its DLLs in use, inbound and out-bound traffic, disk load, tray icon, performance graph, and Internet connections.

AnVir Task Manager monitors the system's workload, dropping icons in the system tray that indicate CPU usage (including a breakdown by application), hard drive temperature, free space, disk activity (again with per-application info), laptop battery, memory, and network inbound and outbound traffic. You always know exactly what's loading your PC's processing power.

AnVir Task Manager automatically provides a security risk rating for each active process, service and startup program. The security risk rating indicates the likelihood of a program being potential spyware, malware or a Trojan. The rating is based on behavior, code analysis, and integrated database with information about 70,000+ startup programs, Internet Explorer toolbars and services. When any program tries to add itself to startup, AnVir Task Manager shows a notification and enables you to cancel each new startup program you consider useless or harmful. Right click on any suspicious process or file and check it on virustotal .com with 30 antivirus products.

AnVir Task Manager makes using XP or Vista much handier. With it you can minimize selected application windows to the system tray to save taskbar space. You can make windows semi- transparent, or pin them always on top by just right-clicking on the title of any running application. Also, you get the list of recently used folders in Open/Save dialogs. On Windows XP it shows the drive's free space with a colored horizontal bar in Windows My Computer.

AnVir Task Manager offers a very useful Tweaker that gives you direct access to many Windows settings, enabling you to make your operating system behave the way you want. Tweaker also includes many settings that cannot be accessed in Windows at all without directly editing the registry. AnVir Task Manager dramatically accelerates your PC or Windows boot process. The Startup tab shows all programs that run on Windows start. It includes name, file path, company, and description. You can disable or delete programs that you don't need and your PC will run much faster.

With its Delayed Startup feature, you can set up any startup program to load one or more minutes later after Windows startup. This allows you to begin using the computer without waiting for Windows to load all startup applications. Also, you can run startup programs as minimized to system tray,

or as floating icons.

AnVir Task Manager runs on Windows XP/Vista/2003/2008 and is available in Pro version for $59.95, standard version for $39.95 and a free version, which still has a lot of functions. Users Group members get 15% discount from the retail price using the coupon code user group. You won't see that on their Web site. 20-days evaluation trial is available free from <www.anvir.com>.

Take Control Remotely

Having someone talk you through fixing a problem on your computer doesn't always accomplish the task very well, besides taking a lot of time. Perhaps a better solution would be for the other person to take control of your machine and physically do the job before your very eyes, which sometimes happens when you call a company's tech support. This could also be a better system for a helper to teach you how to use your software to accomplish a special task.

<http://www.Teamviewer.com> might be the answer for this, and the product is free.

Hewie Poplock <http://www.hewie.net> of Central Florida Computer Society told me he tried this and it works well. Both parties need the product on their computer, but only one actually needs it installed for a session. The other can simply run it without actually installing it. Check their Web site for more information. In fact, he set up a session with my machine, although on the first try, I accidentally had control of his machine, so we had to start over, but the connection was easy. According to their Web site, we could have exchanged control, but we didn't realize that. He checked some settings on my machine and then I asked him to actually transfer a file from my floppy drive to his machine. While I could watch him moving the curser around to check my settings, I was surprised that I couldn't see it when he did the file transfer and he didn't know a way to make it show up for me, but he also transferred a jpeg of a document to my machine. If your file is too large for an e-mail, this method would do the file transfer quickly and easily.
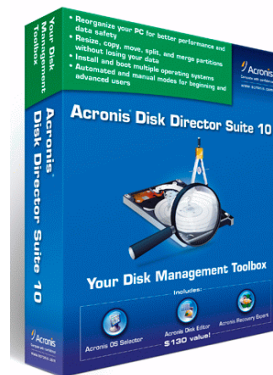
That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should 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>

Partition Change: Acronis Disk Director Suite 10

by George Walker
Houston Area League of PC Users, TX

A "Swiss Army Knife" for Hard Drives.

When it comes to "operating" on your hard drive you want a program that you can trust. In the case of hard drives you usually don't have time to get a second opinion. Acronis Disk Director is a program that you can trust to modify partitions and recover deleted or lost partitions.

Acronis Disk DirectorFirst this is not a program that you will use everyday or even every month. However, when you do need it you will be glad to have it in your toolbox. The suite contains programs that have been tested and proven to work. You can find various versions of these programs around that might work on your operating system and might not. It is generally not the time to become a Beta tester of software.

Disk Director operates under Windows NT4, 98, ME, 2000, XP and Vista. It will perform operations on Hard Drives also attached to the computer via USB and Firewire.

Some of the things that you can do with Disk Manager hard drive operations are:
* Changing the size of partitions on the drive.
* Creating new partitions so that another operating system or storage space can be added to the drive.
* Changing the Drives partition formats.
* Adding a Boot Manager so that the desired operating system is selected at start up. You can use this boot manager even if you already have one installed for Windows Systems. It's easy to add and remove.
* Editing using the Hex Editor. Every once in a while you may want to look at and sometimes change the information stored on the hard drive and you need a Hex editor. It's right here.
* Recovering lost Partitions and their data.

I have used this with success when it was packaged as a stand-alone program. For this test I wrote zeros to the location on the hard drive that contained the Master Boot Record and the Partition Table. The program displays the found partitions as it progresses. This may take a while, but there is a

progress bar to let you know that things are happening. The recovery was a 100% success.

The operations should be clear to all users regardless of experience. For example a partition can be resized with a few mouse clicks. Highlight the partition and select "resize" and select the desired results. The process will complete when you click on the Starter Flag in the menu bar. An extensive user manual is available on the Acronis web site in PDF format.

After you have purchased the software and installed it on your computer, create a bootable CD using "Bootable Media Builder" for the event of some type of hard drive failure. You will have access. More information on the software and updates as well as purchase at www.acronis.com/ or User Group Relations at www.ugr.com/ for less than $50.

From the January 2009 issue of HAL-PC Magazine*, newsletter of the Houston Area League of PC Users. George Walker is a HAL-PC member and volunteer, helping in both "Build or Buy a Computer" and "PC Upgrade & Troubleshooting" SIGs. After joining the PC revolution during the CP/M era, he continues to build, use and fix computers. Contact him at gwalk@hal-pc.org*

Is It Possible to Have Too Many Fonts?

by Don Edrington
The Senior Computer Tutor

Mary Hansen wrote that an MSWorks error message said she had too many fonts on her computer, and asked how to delete any unnecessary ones. Well, I agree that we could dispense with about 90% of of our fonts. To see what a particular font looks like go to Start>Control Panel, choose Fonts and then double-click a font.

Instead of actually deleting any fonts, I recommend moving them into a separate folder, thus making it possible to restore any that might someday be needed.

Right-click your Desktop, choose New Folder, and name it something like "Surplus Alphabets." Then drag unwanted fonts into this folder from the "Fonts" folder. Note that the dragged fonts are copied rather than moved, meaning they will need to be DELETED from the Fonts folder. Conversely, however, dragging a font from "Alphabets" back into the Fonts folder will physically move it.

When naming the surplus folder avoid the words "font" or "fonts" because doing so messes up some versions of Windows, since Fonts is a "reserved system folder" name.

Do NOT delete any fonts with a red "A" or anything else in their icons that is red. These are "sys-

tem" fonts. Their removal can play havoc with Windows.

You should definitely keep on hand the most popular fonts used on the Internet and by the average user, such as Arial (ABC abc 123), Verdana (ABC abc 123), Georgia (ABC abc 123), Comic Sans MS (ABC abc 123), Times New Roman (ABC abc 123), and Courier New (ABC abc 123).

Courier New is the PC equivalent of the monospaced alphabet used on typewriters for many decades. (Does anyone remember typewriters?) It comes in handy for arranging data in columns that are established by using your spacebar to go from one column to the next.

Times New Roman is the default font in most word processors and in many e-mail programs. My favorite for just plain legibility is Verdana.

Fancy Fonts in E-mail

Bear in mind that fancy fonts will NOT be properly displayed in outgoing e-mails unless recipients have the identical fonts on their computers. Otherwise, the fancy fonts will change to a recipient's default; usually Times New Roman.

Changing the Default Font in Certain Programs

You can choose a different default font in some programs. In Word-2007 under Home click Font, make your choice and then click the Default button. In other versions of Word click Format>Font, choose your favorite, click Default and click OK.
In Outlook Express and Windows Mail click Tools>Options>Compose and choose a font.
In Notepad click on Format>Font.

In Outlook-2003 go to Tools>Options>Mail Format>Stationery & Fonts>Font.

In Outlook-2007 go to Tools>Options>Signatures & Stationery>Font.

Most word processing programs will let you choose sizes beyond the standard choices. For instance you can choose 13 points by clicking on any standard size (say 12 points), mouse-selecting it, and then typing 13 over it. Some will even let you type in sizes such as 13.5.

A nifty "Font Explorer" program that lets you quickly display fonts in many sizes can be freely downloaded at www.karenware.com.
Information on downloading and e-mailing fonts can be found http://www.pcdon.com/052508Downloading E-mailingAndInstallingFonts.html.

PPS E-mail Attachment Won't Open

John Warner wrote to ask why he couldn't open an email attachment that had a file name with a

.pps extension. I hear this question often, since a lot of PowerPoint Shows (presentations) are being sent around.

A PowerPoint presentation is basically a collection of pictures that are displayed as a slide show—often complete with text, animations, and background music. Someone viewing the show usually changes slides with a mouse click, but a presentation can be programmed to change automatically every so-many seconds. Here's one of my favorites: VanGogh.pps Here's another: NaturalArt.pps

The program normally used to create such slide shows is PowerPoint, which comes with most versions of Microsoft Office. However, Power Point-compatible programs are freely available from OpenOffice.org and Google Docs Presentations. For simply watching presentations a free Power-Point Viewer can be downloaded from Microsoft.com. With any of the above programs in place, a .pps file should automatically start playing by double-clicking the file name.

If the file doesn't open with a double-click do this: launch PowerPoint (or a PP-compatible program) and click FileOpen. Then browse to the target .pps file and double-click it.

If the presentation doesn't begin playing automatically, click on Slide ShowView Show. To exit a show right-click the screen and choose End Show.

Creating and/or Editing PowerPoint Presentations

A PPS file can be made editable by changing its extension to PPT. When done editing, change it back to PPS. You can NOT edit a presentation with Microsoft's PowerPoint Viewer, but can with the other programs mentioned. Beyond editing, creating your own slide shows is relatively easy and can be lots of fun. More information can be found here: PowerPoint for Beginners

Reminder

Everyone needs to be aware of a deadly virus that has recently invaded the Internet. "AntiVirus 2009" is NOT an anti-virus program; it is a vicious trojan that is so destructive most of its victims have to reformat their hard drives.

People are tricked into downloading it when a popup claims it to be a free anti-virus program. It is so insidious that one's legitimate anti-virus program cannot protect against it once a download has begun.

Beyond avoiding this particular threat, make it a point NOT to download anything from the Internet

of which you are not 100% sure. Anything downloaded from a popup is likely, at its most benign, to contain adware or spyware. At its worst, it can be a destructive virus.

Beware of "Free Scan" Ads

Be aware of ads offering a "free scan" of your PC's system registry (or any other part of your computer). You will be told the scan found problems in your registry that can be fixed for $40 to $50. If you decline, you'll be assaulted by "nag" ads that can only be removed by—guess what—paying $40 to $50.

Another scam is an alleged "Consumer Reports" type of site that purports to review all the various "registry cleaner" programs found online. However, the site has been secretly created by the authors of one of those programs—the one with the highest rating, not surprisingly.

Information on a legitimate free registry scan and repair by Microsoft can be found here: http://onecare.live.com/site/en-us/default.htm?redir =true.

Don's home page can be found at http://www.pcdon .com/index.html. His newsletter is free.

Society News

President's Column
by Steve Staub

This is the toughest column I have written so far. In December the club lost two members. In separate ways they contributed a lot to the club. The first member is David Hassett. Dave was a quiet man. He always had questions for Help's Half Hour. When he could he also had suggestions for solving someone else's problems.

Our second member who passed away is Tom Thompson. Tom was our software procurement specialist. He would contact software manu-fac-turers and try to get them to give us software to evaluate. He also brought to our attention several excellent ideas. His best idea was at our yearly picnic have a silent auction instead of a flea market. This was a huge success thanks to the effort he put into it.

Tom's family requested donations to the Boy Scouts of America in lieu of flowers. At the January business meeting I asked the board of director's to send a check to the Boy Scouts in Tom's memory and they agreed. Boy Scouts of America, 474 East Avenue, Rochester NY 14607.

To the David Hassett and Tom Thompson families our deepest sympathy.

December Planning Meeting

by Sharah Blankenship, Secretary

Steve Staub led the Planning meeting held at Sally Springett's house, January 4th. Others in attendance were Bob Avery, Tony Dellelo, Mike Lavelle, Sharah Blankenship, and Dan Rothfuss. The December meeting was discussed and it was generally agreed that while it went well, it would be prudent to do "Double Jeopardy" in the future so that the meeting will be full length. The questions for December's Jeopardy were good, but there were some technical difficulties that created problems. Hopefully some of these kinks can be worked out for next years event.

The February meeting will take place at the Brighton Library, but please be advised that it may begin late. We hope to start the meeting at 6:30, but the group using the room before us may go until 7. The March and April meetings will both begin at 6:30 and be held at the Brighton Library. Any one who wishes to is encouraged to bring goodies. Programs ideas and presenters are needed for both the March and April meetings. If anyone has a suggestion or is willing to present, please contact Mike Lavelle.

The Rochester Computer Society is in need of a new Software Chairman. Anyone interested in this position should talk to Steve Staub.

Also, to prevent some of the worry of last year's picnic meeting, the lodge is being reserved very early this year. It is our hope that this action will help make the picnic more fun for all. We are attempting to gain a lodge in the Brighton Park. Details to follow closer to the event.

Sadly, there have been a few deaths in the club since the December meeting. Tom Thompson, the Software chairman and board member, passed away on December 22, 2008. In honor of his memory and his service to RCSi, the club has decided to donate to the charity of his family's choice, The Boys Scouts of America. We also grieve the loss of our member, Dave Hassett, who passed away December 18th 2008.

The mailing software issue for the club has been resolved. A new program was chosen for the mailing software, and it seems to be less expensive, less of a hassle, and better serviced.

Please bring goodies to the February meeting if you would like to! Happy Valentines Day!

Help's Half Hour

Tuesday, January 13, 2009
Led by: Arpad Kovacs
Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Q: A member is receiving e-mails correctly. One particular newsletter is coming through as gibberish. He would like to try other styles. No success.

A: Try going into preferences, view settings and select plain text rather than html.

Q: He has an XP machine that has had a root directory failure.

A: It might be the boot.ini file. Try entering the short commands to reestablish. There may be a bad sector on the hard drive. Another option may be to download the hard drive's vendor software. It will attempt to read each sector and tell you if the drive has any problems. Gibson Research site may have a program, too.

Q: Has anyone tried Windows 7?

A: Yes, it looks like KDE (a Linux desktop). The file system is FTFS. It does crash a lot but this is a beta version. It is supposed to be faster than Vista. If you buy a new machine now, it will include a free upgrade when it is available. All drivers are supposed to be there. It is quite a bit leaner so that less overhead is loaded.

Q: One member bought a Vista Home Premiun machine. Is there a good fax program to add?

A: WinFax will not work. Try going to FreeWare Files.com and search for the Vista OS. MajorGeeks .com and SnapFiles.com may be other possibilities.

Q: One has a DVD-RW that no longer allows further adds.

A: Perhaps there is now a scratch. If the second burn fails, you will lose the first items, too. There may be a data recovery tool in the freeware sites listed above.

Q: Does anyone have a suggestion for an audio recording software?

A: Audacity is a free product that should help there.

Q: One member has a couple of photo programs that have come with his cameras. He has tried to delete the Cannon software. When he tries to remove the Cannon and use Kodak EasyShare, he gets a message that neither program is available.

A: Windows has a feature to view/copy photos using the card reader. SyncToy is recommended for cutting and pasting files. It has better recovery and will continue the process rather than fail and prompt you to start again.

Q: What is the equivalent of MS Config for XP?

A: Go to a command box and type in MS Config.

Home Premium and Home Basic Vista have it as well. If XP fails, there may be a virus. Do a search for the file.

Q: A member has AVG that has not been updated recently. He gets an error message.

A: He may have to start up the safe mode. Be sure that it is coming from your virus program. There is a virus that displays a similar message. They can even simulate a crash. It was also suggested that you change your theme color from blue. That way you could see whether the message box is real.

Q: Has anyone used Nero Wave editor?

A: No one as of yet.

The Lighter Side

Help Desk: "How can I help you?"
Employee: "I need my left-handed mouse."
Help Desk: "I'm sorry, we don't have special mice for left or right hands."
Employee: "The mouse at the old building was left-handed, and I need one of those."
After much discussion, a technician was sent out to the employee's cubicle. Upon his return....
Help Desk: "Did you fix her issue?"
Technician: "Yeah."
Help Desk: "What was it?"
Technician: "I took out the mouseball, rotated it 180 degrees, and put it back in. It made her happy."

While working telephone technical support at an ISP, I took a call from a woman who said her mouse was acting "strange." I had her do a few things and determined that her right and left mouse buttons appeared to be swapped. But when I had her check the settings, they were normal.

Her husband, who had previously owned a computer store, checked it out and couldn't figure out what was wrong, either. So they brought it in for service.

When I tried it out, everything worked fine, so I had her come in and demonstrate the problem. When I asked her to right-click, she left- clicked. When I asked her to left-click, she right-clicked.

It took several more minutes to convince her to use her "other left." She protested that she had a college degree and knew left from right.

On two occasions I have been asked [by members of Parliament!], 'Pray, Mr. Babbage, if you put into the machine wrong figures, will the right answers come out?' I am not able to rightly apprehend the kind of confusion of ideas that could provoke such a question.

–*Charles Babbage*, 1792-1871

Computers can now keep a man's every transgression recorded in a permanent memory bank, duplicating with complex programming and intricate wiring a feat his wife handles quite well without fuss or fanfare.

–*Lane Olinghouse*

As the trials of life continue to take their toll, remember that there is always a future in Computer Maintenance.

–*National Lampoon*, from "Deteriorata"

Part of the inhumanity of the computer is that, once it is competently programmed and working smoothly, it is completely honest.

–*Isaac Asimov*, 1920-1992

The computer is the most extraordinary of man's technological clothing; it's an extension of our central nervous system. Beside it, the wheel is a mere hula-hoop.

–*Marshall McLuhan*, 1911-1980