

MONITOR

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Next Meeting
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Chris Reich on Audio Editing

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Circuit Writer, Ver. 6.4

by Jim Scheef

Director, Danbury Computer Society, CT

It's Over - And So It Begins

As we all get used to the prospect of President Obama, some with trepidation, others with jubilation, the one thing we can be sure of is that change is coming. Trite as that sounds now, his

presidency will be historic in more ways than we can possibly know right now. But how will it affect us, the computer-using public, is more important – well to us anyway. For instance, the White House will have its first CTO (chief technology officer) recognizing the role of technology and information systems in everything we do. Hopefully, the White House will no longer need to worry about losing emails as it

seemed to be such a problem for the outgoing administration.

A Future in Chrome

Will Chrome steal the plating off Microsoft's shine? This topic could be more complex than why the Republicans lost the elections. Fortunately, there are far fewer pundits talking about it so I will point you to two eWeek articles that get into some depth. *Google Chrome Could Nuke Microsoft From the Internet Market* (tinyurl.com/6pkkue) (for web: <http://www.eweek.com/c/a/Application-Development/Google-Chrome-Could-Nuke-Microsoft-From-the-Internet-Market/>) and *Google Chrome Keeps Pace with Web App Advances* (tinyurl.com/64xjz4). [for web: <http://www.eweek.com/c/a/Search-Engines/A-Technical-Overview-of-Google-Chrome/>] The second is more technical and shows Flash crashing in a Yahoo webpage rendered in Chrome. With the 800-pound gorilla of Google pushing Chrome, it will become a player in how we interact with the web. Whether it will become Google's "web operating system," only time can tell.

Two Lists of Ten

Before we leave Chrome, here are *10 things to love (and hate) about Google Chrome* from TechRepublic (<http://tinyurl.com/4z97lu>). (for web: <http://blogs.techrepublic.com.com/10things/?p=422>) Read thru this article and perhaps you'll see why I think Chrome will be important – or at least a good browser.

The second list is *10 ways you might be breaking the law with your computer* (<http://tinyurl.com/5f8r89>) from the same blog. (<http://blogs.techrepublic.com.com/10things/?p=356>) This one shows how insidious the intellectual property laws have become with the inference that these laws need to become more rational and reflect the needs of consumers as well as owners.

Does Search Really Work?

Why is it that when I search for 'man bites mosquito,' I get 400,000 hits for exactly the opposite? But, if I search for 'man bites grasshopper,' the third and fifth items are articles about a man biting a dog? If first generation search was either simple word indexes built by web crawlers like Alta Vista or indexes built by hand like the initial Yahoo. Google brought in the second generation where search ranking is based on other criteria – like other links to the site or consistency of information within a site, etc.

Some people, like those who design new search engines or who write articles about it (tinyurl

.com/5qkyql), (for web: <http://www.eweek.com/c/a/Search-Engines/The-Only-Problem-With-Google-Yahoo-Microsoft-Search-is-That-Theyre-Awful/>) think the coming generation of search will be based on semantics and the "social graph." Semantics, of course, involved the meanings of words and thus their order becomes significant. Current search treats your search arguments as keywords and the order you give them has little significance, hence the results to man bites dog are really for dog bites man (unless you search for the string in quotes which is still a different search). I started to use this as my example but there is a movie out called "Man Bites Dog" so that search found many references to the movie but none to what I really meant. So semantics sounds great, right?

Social graph refers to the Google Social Graph API (code.google.com/apis/socialgraph/). This application programming interface allows developers of web sites that rely on users to build content, to use links that people have already made public to create links between social sites like Facebook and Classmates, to pick a couple that you have probably heard of. At least that is what the article implies.

I had to do some searching to find this as the article doesn't really explain it. Searching for the string "social graphic" returned forty results out of 135,000. Using my eyeballs on these results I found a reference to a gawker.com article (gawker.com/tag/social-graphic/) about "Six Degrees Of Separation Between George W. Bush and Parker Posey." We know who the first guy is and Parker Posey is some kind of musician or something (I don't really care but apparently everyone agrees that the relationship strains credibility). According to the diagram in the article, these two people are linked by two chains of six or less "degrees." A diagram of social relationships is what does this and social web sites like LinkedIn and Facebook could be a source for such information – maybe. In the immortal words of the excellent motivational speaker Dr. Richard Byrne, "It will if it does, and it won't if it doesn't." (Don't bother searching for Dr. Byrne as he passed away before the advent of the search engine.)

So why isn't search better? There is actually an incentive for current search engines to not get any better. If it takes you four or five tries to find what you want, Google or Yahoo get three or four additional opportunities to show you advertising. Remember, that's what pays for all this.

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Performing Better Searches

by Sharon Housley

VP, NotePage managing Marketing for FeedForAll

Performing and perfecting search engine results can save web surfers lots of time and energy. Understanding the nuances of searching allows researchers to immediately drill down and locate the information they are seeking, without having to wade through a myriad of irrelevant search results in the process. The increasing complexity of search engines has made understanding search engines a necessity for those who spend any amount of time online. The following search tips are standards that will work in most of the major search engines.

How to Find What You Are Looking For?

As the popularity of the Internet grows, more and more results are returned for even the most obscure search phrases. In order to save time, web surfers need to increase their search relevancy. It is advisable to use multiple search terms to produce better search results. Searchers should use specific words and phrases to find what they're are looking for, while filtering out irrelevant and unwanted results.

In searching, more usually means less. Using more keywords in a search will help qualify the search and make it more specific to what you are looking for. It is all about striking a balance; more search terms will reduce the number of search results, but those results will be more accurate. Remember that you can always refine the search further if there are too many results returned in the initial search.

Capitalization Is Irrelevant

The major search engines ignore capitalization. Upper case and lower case search phrases will deliver the same results.

Order Matters

Keep in mind that the order in which the terms are entered into the search box will affect the search results. The most important terms should appear first in the list of search words.

Word Stemming

Major search engines will provide results that use word stemming. Word stemming includes variants of the terms that were searched for. For example, searching on the term fish in a major search engine will generate organic search results that also contain the terms fishing, fishes, and fisher.

Exact

Using quotations around a search phrase will generate search results that contain only that specific search phrase, exactly as it was entered. For example, searching on the exact phrase "rocking horse" in a major search engine will only generate search results that contain the phrase rocking horse. The results will not include any results that contain "horse rocking" – even though both terms appear, they do not appear in the proper order for an exact match.

Do Not Include

Adding a (-) negative/minus sign before a search term will filter the results so that they contain the first term but not the negated word. For example, entering the search phrase horses -rocking into a major search engine will return search results about horses but not about rocking horses.

Must Include

If you want search results that only include a specific word, just type a (+) plus sign in front of a search term. The results produced will always contain that term. For example, conducting a search horse + carousel will result in all search results that contain carousel, and may include horse as well.

Similar Words

Adding a (~) tilde character in front of a search word will generate search results that not only include the specified search term, but will also include all words considered to be related to the original search term. For example, using the search term ~soda will result in organic search engine results that not only include soda, but also include pepsi, pop, cola, coke, bottle, and soft drink.

Either Or

Adding an OR parameter between two search terms will result in search listings that include either the first or the second word in the search results. For example, searching on the terms soda OR bottle will generate search results that may contain both terms soda bottle or it will produce results that contain either soda or bottle but not both in the same search listings.

Advanced Searches And Segmented Searches

Many search engines allow you to specify the type of content you wish to search in. For example, you can often search just news articles, just blogs, or just images. If you are looking for a specific type of media, segmenting your search can be helpful. Searches can be conducted to locate webpages that contain a specific language, or a specific file type (ie.

pdf, rss, etc). Simply use the search engine's advanced search option and select the content, language, file type, etc to filter your search results.

Search Meta Words

Meta keyword searches give search engines special instructions. When the meta search words are used, a specific type of search is conducted. Here are some of the most common meta search terms...

define: When define: is used at the beginning of a search word or phrase, the search engine results will be a definition of the word or phrase.

site: When site: is entered in the search box, followed by a domain, the search engine locates all documents within a specific domain and all of its subdomains. This is an easy way to get a rough idea of the number of pages indexed on a domain.

link: When link: is used and followed by a URL, the search results will include all the web pages that are indexed by the search engine which contain links to the specified URL.

inurl: When inurl: is used, followed by a keyword or phrase, the search results will include links to web pages that contain the specific keyword or phrase in the urls themselves.

intitle: When intitle: is searched on in conjunction with a keyword or phrase, the search engine locates search results that contain the specified keyword or phrase in the web page title.

Web surfers can save large amounts of time and energy by optimizing their search techniques with these helpful tips.

Sharon Housley manages marketing for FeedForAll <http://www.feedforall.com> software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts. In addition Sharon manages marketing for RecordForAll <http://www.recordforall.com> audio recording and editing software.

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Copying Information from Your Screen

by Richard Kennon

Amador Computer Users Group, Jackson, CA

Dick Carricato, member of the Tri County Computer User Group in Florida wrote a good article about copying pictures from your computer screen [<http://swipcug.apcug.org/psug2008.htm>, Sept. 2008 issue]. Sometimes there are other things you may want to copy from your screen that may not lend themselves to the PrtScr

method. This is especially true of lists in drop down boxes that require a scroll bar down the right side. PrtScr will only show the portion of the list that shows. For instance, I write a (almost) monthly newsletter on the web and usually include a bunch of pictures. I like to have a hard copy of the picture thumbnails at hand to remind me of things to say. This is always a scrolling window. Often I want a hardcopy of a menu, too.

I have found FastStone Capture to be a perfect answer to my needs. You can try it free by going to <http://www.faststone.org/>. Then, if you like it, as I do, you can purchase a lifetime license for \$19.95.

You can capture and annotate anything on the screen including windows, objects, menus, full screen, rectangular/freehand regions and scrolling windows/web pages. Editing tools include annotating, resizing, cropping, sharpening, watermarking, edge effects, and many more. Of course, you can transfer the image to any editor of choice. You can either print the copy or save it in one of eight different formats. I choose JPEG. Further, you can choose the resolution of the saved image. I don't know if it actually improves the resolution or just resizes to more pixels.

Of course, it features a bunch of hot key combinations but, with my memory, this is not useful. Instead I rely on the small box of choices at the bottom right of my screen. I find it extremely useful and use it almost every day.

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Freebies!

by Dave Bilcik

Southern Tier Personal Computing Club, NY

You have technology at your fingertips so think about what is important to the special people in your life and give something meaningful to them. The best part; it doesn't have to cost much to be meaningful. CD-Rs cost less than a first-class stamp, the most expensive 8½ x 11 photo-paper you can get is under \$1 per sheet while regular paper is under a penny. Put something on that paper or CD that interests the people you are interested in.

Pictures, sound, movies and even free software are all good candidates if it means something to your special person. Picasa (<http://picasa.google.com/>) will help you with your pictures and slide shows. Print up a nice 8 x 10 of that "creative" place where you hung the mistletoe for your significant other.

If you have a crafter on your list, print up a collection of cross-stitch or quilting patterns; one spot to try is <http://www.alitadesigns.com/index.php> another is <http://www.freepatterns.com/>. Grandma might be happy to get your custom x-stitch collection but don't send her your mistletoe picture by mistake. However, be ready for some "cute" overload when prospecting for freebies on the crafting sites.

If music or video is your passion then [cdburnerxp](http://cdburnerxp.se/) (<http://cdburnerxp.se/>) will help you with either one. It is a full featured burner that will let you make a custom CD or DVD any time you wish. Like classical music? A site that will point you to lots of free music is <http://www.classicat.net/index.htm>. Don't violate any copy-rights and fire up your CD/DVD drive. That custom-mix lute CD is right at your fingertips.

Don't forget your web-cam or digital camera with movie mode. Give a CD or DVD with a video message telling that special family member what they really mean to you. If you are lucky, they will avoid you completely at the next family reunion.

The fact that you are reading this shows you have exquisite taste and a level of computer literacy way above the average. Help those friends who are less fortunate by cleaning up their sluggish computers. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition (<http://www.iobit.com/advancedwindowscareper.html>) when installed and run on their machine, will give them back the performance that they have been missing. The software is free, it helps a friend, costs only a little of your time, and proves your computer kung fu is much stronger than theirs. Everybody wins! Now that you have saved so much cash on creative, meaningful gifts for your friends and family, you can now reward yourself for all your efforts. Try <http://www.thinkgeek.com/> for loads of intriguing stuff. Check out the Ion USB Turntable that will help your turn your vinyl music collection into digital goodness... the turntable outputs files in either mp3 or WAV format.

If the good will, optimism and hope of the season gets to be too much, try <http://despair.com/> for a big steaming cup of cynicism. It will help you to get back to work after the holidays.

My personal email address is dlbilk@yahoo.com if you want to send me comments, questions or cash. Please put "Freebies" somewhere on the subject line so I will have some idea about its contents. Tell me about your best free software experience or your best cookie (... ever!) and I will pass it on.

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The Answer to an Ancient Mystery

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eUibFQKJqI>

In 1900, a group of Greek sponge divers found an ancient shipwreck. The ship was filled with amazing treasures, jewelry, glassware, marble statues, and a lump of corroded rock.

Nobody paid much attention to the lump rock until it broke open. Inside were miniature gears, meticulously marked scales, and inscriptions in Greek.

It was dubbed the Antikythera mechanism and it has been dated to 150-100 BC. It's clockwork gears wouldn't be seen again for centuries. But what is it? What is it for? Michael Wright has created a working model of this 2000-year-old computer to demonstrate its use. You can see it in action in the video.

Thanks to Kim Komando who can be heard locally on WHAM.

Why Security Precautions Are Necessary

by Bob de Violini
Channel Islands PCUG, CA

First off for the holidays, there's a story that illustrates just why you should always enable encryption on your wireless router (for those who use one) AND why you should be leery of any public computer for Web sites you need a password to access. A college student in Kentucky has been charged with identity theft, among other crimes, for planting malware on computers in his school's library. The malware was a keystroke logger that captured usernames and passwords for any pages fellow students logged into. He then used this information to access their e-mail accounts and send out e-mails attempting to extort these same fellow students. He also used an unsecured wireless router to access these accounts, making it look as if someone else were actually sending the e-mails. The attempted extortion took the form of a threat to divulge personal information the thief had stolen from the compromised e-mail accounts. That leads me to our next item, WPA encryption.

As of the beginning of November, a pair of computer security researchers in Europe disclosed a technique they'd developed to partially hack WPA

encryption used by a great number of wireless routers today. Before anyone thinks the sky is falling, rest assured it isn't. Their hack involves only the traffic being sent from the router to a computer and only a small number of data packets can be cracked before the router resets its encryption. However, it is enough to be able to send just enough rogue data to a computer to compromise it with any number of known vulnerabilities. Specifically, it involves the TKIP protocol that WPA and WPA2 are allowed to use. The specifics of just how this trick is accomplished have been made available to hackers in many areas of the Internet, so it's just a matter of time before it begins spreading. TKIP and AES encryption are selectable by the user in many wireless router configurations, and some have WPA with TKIP selected by default. I strongly recommend you check your wireless router's encryption configuration, and if it's set to use WPA with TKIP, you switch to WPA2 with AES if at all possible. This is especially important if you use a wireless router to run a network for a business. I have my Linksys wireless router set to use WPA2 with AES encryption. AES is significantly harder to crack than the older TKIP protocol. One final note on this, however. For AES encryption to work, both the router and the network adapter in the computer must be able to use it. Some older hardware may not support AES encryption, so an upgrade may be needed. If you'd like some more information, please drop me a line at the email address at the top of this article, and I'll gladly send you a link or two.

Scare of the month department Even though Halloween has already passed, we have the Scare of the Month Department chiming in with some news. There is a new phishing e-mail making the rounds disguised as a warning from the U. S. Federal Reserve. The message bears the usual dire warning of a scam and contains links for readers to follow to get more information. However, there are a few clues that give the message away as a hoax, the biggest one being poor grammar. The links in the e-mail lead unsuspecting readers to a fake site that will redirect them to a search page for porn, which will download a PDF file with malware to their computer. The malware comes in various forms, including one that attempts to make your computer a member of a botnet. A brief notice can be had here, courtesy of USCERT: <http://tinyurl.com/66lzv9>. The link does go to the US-CERT site; I just used TinyURL to shorten the URL's length.

Patches Galore Department As I mentioned above, there have been some exploits on the loose for

a bit for Adobe Acrobat, and the full program and the reader have been updated as a result. The latest versions are 8.1.3 and 9.0. Adobe has also updated its Flash player, standard fare in most browser installations, to version 10.0.12.36 to patch publicly reported vulnerabilities last month as well. Not to be outdone, Mozilla has also issued a patch for its Firefox browser and Thunderbird e-mail client. These patches address several bugs that have been brought to light in the past month to month and a half. The latest iterations of Firefox are 2.0.0.18 and 3.0.0.4. The latest version of Thunderbird is 2.0.0.18. I have read reports of some problems with version 3.0.0.4 and 2.0.0.18 of Firefox, with most of the reports being about version 3.0.0.4. The solution for those having problems after upgrading to 3.0.0.4 has been to go back to 3.0.0.3. I have updated my version to 2.0.0.18 and have had no problems. Some patches take longer than others to develop and test, however. One of the patches issued by Microsoft on November's Patch Tuesday took them seven years to develop and test. The bug it patched was first reported by a security researcher in March 2001. Microsoft claims that it tried patching it when it was first reported but wound up killing off most networking applications with the patches when they underwent testing. However, they didn't give up and finally found a way to patch the vulnerability earlier this year.

While we're speaking of Microsoft, it has announced plans to abandon its One Care concept of computer protection service and develop free anti malware applications for release in 2009. The new concept is code named "Morro." As usual, folks are coming down on both sides of pro and con when it comes to this development. Microsoft hasn't given a firm release date for the new software, but has said that One Care will come to an end on June 30. Well, that's all for now. Here's wishing everyone a joyous Holiday season and a Happy New Year! Always practice safe computing by keeping your applications and your anti-malware applications fully up to date. Make sure to run your anti-malware scanner(s) once a week, even if they don't flag anything in between scans.

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Check Email with IE 7

Q. I upgraded to Internet Explorer 7, but now I can't find the button I used in IE 6 to get my email. Can you help?

A. When you start Internet Explorer 7, the Mail toolbar button is absent by default. Why Microsoft elected to configure it in this manner is anybody's guess, but it's easy enough to add. On the right side of the IE7 menu bar, click Tools > Toolbars and if Lock the Toolbars is checked, remove the check mark.

If that window rudely closes on you, as it is inclined to do, click Tools > Toolbars > Customize. Under Available Toolbar Buttons, click to select Read Mail, press the Add -> button, then Close.

On the Menu bar, drag the vertical separator to the left so you can see all the toolbar items. While still on the Menu bar, again at the far right, click Tools > Toolbars and place a check mark beside Lock the Toolbars.

Q. In a previous issue of your weekly newsletter—which I love, by the way—you said that it's okay to run two anti-spyware programs. Is it better to run two anti-spyware programs or is one adequate? Keep up the good work.

A. I only run one anti-spyware program, that being PC Tools' Spyware Doctor (<http://www.pctools.com/spyware-doctor>). I haven't found it necessary to deploy two anti-spyware programs, but I also make it a point to use programs that are less susceptible to spyware. For example, I don't use Internet Explorer, I use Firefox (www.mozilla.com/firefox) for my browser.

As long as you're using a mainstream anti-spyware program such as Spyware Doctor, Ad Aware, Spybot (and there are many others), and you're keeping it updated, you should be fine.

On a related note, while it's fine to have two anti-spyware programs, it is never a good idea to install two anti-virus programs. Because embedded virus code is used to identify viruses, two anti-virus programs may detect each other and the result can be false negatives or false positives, thus negating the effectiveness of both programs.

Because I'm so frequently asked what programs I use, I maintain a list of my favorite programs at <http://tinyurl.com/6m5v9>, which you are welcome to review at any time. I keep the list updated and include a brief profile of each program, as well as a link to its site should you be interested in obtaining additional information or downloading it.

Q. This is probably the dumbest question you ever answered, but what does it mean when an item is not configured? How do I configure something?

A. There are never any dumb questions here in Mr. Modemville, so you've come to the right place. To configure an item, within the context of computing, means to customize, personalize, or get it ready for use. The specific definition depends on the item being discussed.

For example, if you install an email program such as Eudora or Thunderbird, what you download isn't automatically set up to work with your Internet Service Provider (ISP). You have to go into the software's settings and enter information such as your ISP's mail server addresses, which will instruct the program where to look for your email and how to retrieve it, plus your username and password. Once the software is configured in that manner, you can then use it to send and receive email.

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

Sites of the Month

100 Words You Should Know

The editors of The American Heritage College Dictionary have compiled a list of 100 words every high school graduate should know. Yeah, right. Everything from abjure to ziggurat are on the "must know" list.

<http://tinyurl.com/f4z5>

Internet Archive

Best known as "The Way Back Machine," this is an archive of Web sites that dates back to 1996. It also serves as an enormous repository (85 billion pages, give or take a few) for more than 175,000 books, 2900 recorded concerts, and 1100 full-length movies. The entire archive consists of more than 2PB (petabytes) of data. (A petabyte equals one million gigabytes).

www.archive.org

World Rulers

Pop quiz! Who is running Turkmenistan these days? No, silly, it's not Kaikhaziz Sardarovich Atabayev. Where have you been? It's Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov. Okay, I'll give you a chance to redeem yourself: Who was King of Burundi during

the swinging '60s? That's right, it was Mwambutsa Bangilicenge. Good job! This site is a terrific online resource that lists the heads of state and government, de facto leaders, presidents, and dictators of all the countries and territories of the world, dating back to 1700.

<http://rulers.org>

Mr. Modem's weekly newsletter delivers helpful computer tips, great Web sites and his personal answers to your questions! Subscribe using Promo Code 4022 and receive TWO free months with your 12-month subscription (58 issues!) To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

Count Your Blessings

In the spirit of the New Year here are 10 technologies for which I am most thankful, presented in alphabetical order:

1. Cell phones. I'm thankful for the obvious convenience and safety they provide, but also for helping me maintain my image as a trendsetting fashion plate. Who among us wouldn't look great with a pulsating, radiation-spewing device clipped to one's belt? GQ, eat your heart out.
2. Email. How empty and meaningless life would be with no spam; no opportunities to earn millions of dollars helping deposed Nigerian royalty; and no discount vitamins, mortgages, or lifestyle-enhancement products. What would be the point of living? Pesky annoyances notwithstanding, email is a blessing at both business and personal levels.
3. Flat-panel LCD monitors. It wasn't that long ago that even attempting to move a monitor meant hiring several burly men or purchasing a truss. Today's LCD monitors are nothing short of spectacular, whether widescreen 30-inchers or popular 17-inch and 19-inch models. Crystal clear images, small desktop footprint, easy on the eyes. What could be better? (See No. 8.)
4. Global positioning systems. I'd be lost without my GPS. Remember driving into a service station where the friendly uniformed attendant would fill 'er up; clean your windows; check the air, water, and oil; and provide free maps? Those days are gone forever, but looking on the bright side, thanks to GPS, we don't have to struggle with those impossible-to-fold maps anymore.
5. iPod and iTunes. iKnow there are many less-expensive devices and that free music is available elsewhere online, but the iPod and iTunes are fun. Thanks to Pod 'n' Tunes, I replicated most of my priceless Milli Vanilli collection, all digitally remastered to audio perfection and all contained
- in one easy-to-lose device capable of inflicting permanent hearing loss with an accidental swipe of the volume control.
6. Linux Ubuntu. I've been using Windows since the first hand-cranked version was released in the late '50s, so we pretty much reached the age of senility together: I can't remember where I left my keys; Microsoft can't remember why it thought Vista was a good idea. I'm grateful for a wonderful alternative to Windows in the form of the Linux Ubuntu operating system. As an open-source product, it's free, it's virtually impervious to viruses and spyware, and there are thousands of free applications, as well.
7. Mini PCs. Awww, they're so cute! I have an Asus "ultra-mobile" EeePC, and it's a hoot. You wouldn't want one of these little critters as your only computer, but for approximately \$400, weighing in at a scant 2 pounds, and utilizing flash memory, it's small, fast, and perfect for checking email and visiting Web sites. To read my complete review of this mighty mini, visit tinyurl.com/67k9fp.
8. Multiple monitors. A flat-panel monitor is about the greatest technological breakthrough since the tapioca face mask, but multiple monitors take computing to an entirely different level. I use a three-monitor setup, with one screen dedicated to email, one screen I use exclusively for my Web-based research—that's right, I'm calling it research—and one screen for writing insightful, informational, inspirational columns. (Be nice!) I can't help but wonder, though, if a three-monitor setup is this good, how much better would it be to have four? Oddly enough, Mrs. Modem doesn't share my level of curiosity.
9. Roku Netflix Player (\$99.99; www.roku.com/netflixplayer). I'm thankful for the convenience of Netflix, but even more appreciative of the Roku set-top box for on-demand streaming of full-length movies to television. More than 12,000 movies and TV episodes are currently available, which I find invaluable when I just cannot endure another minute without seeing "Leave it to Beaver." Since purchasing mine several months ago, I haven't left the house, so it's going to be the "must-have" gift for agoraphobics.
10. The Internet. When it comes to counting one's technological blessings, how can I not include The Internet? When I first went online back in 1988, at a blistering 300bps, I wept openly. When the Web came along a few years later, I was obsessed and repeatedly harassed everybody I knew to get

online. Thus began two decades of solitude from which I am only beginning to emerge, thanks to the ability to purchase my meds online.

From Mrs. Modem, myself, and our four furry children, we wish you a happy, safe, and peaceful New Year.

Reprinted with permission from the November 2008 issue of Smart Computing. Mr. Modem (Richard Sherman) is an author, syndicated columnist, radio host, and publisher. "Mr. Modem's Weekly Newsletter" provides personal responses to subscribers' computer and Internet questions, plus weekly computing tips, Web site recommendations, virus alerts, hoax warnings, and more.

Windows 7 Is Coming Soon

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS

If you ask 100 people their impressions of the Microsoft Vista operating system, 95 of them will tell you that Vista is no good, even if they have never seen or used it.

It is obvious that public opinion of Vista is in the mud. Microsoft made some major blunders when they introduced Vista. There were not enough drivers ready, so many printers, scanners, and other peripherals were incompatible. There was no noticeable speed increase over Windows XP. Vista requires much additional memory and more hardware, so it was often impossible to upgrade current Windows XP computers. Also, Microsoft did not woo the press as they did when they introduced Windows XP, so Vista got a lot of awful publicity. Vista is not a bad operating system, but Vista has gotten a bad name. Microsoft has lost the battle and they know it. So they are working on a new Windows operating system.

Microsoft hopes to make a clean break with previous Windows operating systems with this new version of Windows. They are especially distancing the new operating system from the "wicked" Vista operating system. This is obvious in the name they have chosen for the new OS. They are not using year names like Windows 2000. They are not using what they refer to as inspirational names, like XP or Vista. Instead, they will go back to their original numerical naming convention. There was a Windows 1, Windows 2, and Windows 3. Now there is to be a new operating system called "Windows 7".

It you have been following the versions of Windows as they have been introduced, you will find it difficult to comprehend that this next version is actually the seventh version of Windows, but Microsoft says that it is, so that is that. It's Windows 7.

More important than the name, however, is the fact that Microsoft cannot afford another misstep. They must make this operating system faster and better than Vista. Microsoft has already showed off Windows 7 at some developer's conferences and has made some announcements and promises.

Windows 7 will be built on the Vista base, so peripherals that work with Vista, which now includes most printers, scanners, and other devices, will also work with Windows 7.

Windows 7 will have a smaller storage footprint and will use less memory. This will allow it to run on the new small Netbooks that are now running Windows XP or Unix because Windows Vista cannot run on their small solid state drives.

Windows 7 will boot up and shut down faster. It will have improved battery life on laptops. It is also promised to have an easier-to-use interface and to be easier to network in a home environment.

Although Microsoft is officially targeting January 2010 for the launch of Windows 7, logic indicates that they will have Windows 7 ready for next year's holiday selling season.

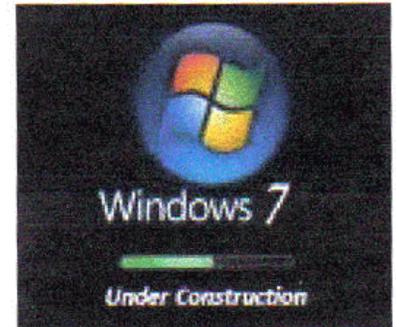
This holiday season you'll find some great prices on computers running Microsoft Vista. If all goes well, when the holiday season rolls around in 2009, the stores will be filled with computers running the next version of Windows, Windows 7. Microsoft has made mistakes before, but I think they will do everything they possibly can to make Windows 7 a winner. So if you are looking to buy a new PC, this year will be a good time to buy, but, if you can wait, next year may be even better.

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (sandy (at) compukiss.com).

Smart Computing Tips & Fun Facts

Future Proof:

Any time you buy an addition to your home theater, think about how well it will work with future upgrades. For instance, it's worth buying an upconverting DVD player over a standard one, even if you don't plan to get an HDTV (high-definition TV)



for a while. For that matter, a typical BD (Blu-ray Disc) player can serve you today by upconverting your DVDs, even if you have no urge to buy Blu-ray movies just yet.

HD Source:

Your HDTV (high-definition TV) won't give you a high-def picture unless the signal going into your set is HD, too. Not all digital channels are really HD, so check with your provider to make sure you're receiving high-definition channels. You'll get the best image quality from true HD sources.

Shopping for a Blu-ray or DVD Player:

Note that some video game consoles, such as the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, also play movie discs. The PS3 supports BD (Blu-ray Disc) and DVD, and the Xbox 360 plays DVDs. Both systems are sold at a loss and act as media extenders, too, so they're worth your attention as more than just game machines.

Instant Pictures

No Shaking Necessary

Many of my baby pictures were taken with a Polaroid instant camera, so the announcement earlier this year that Polaroid would stop manufacturing instant film left me a bit nostalgic. There's just something about watching the muted tones of the picture emerge in my hand that reminds me of simpler times.

Admittedly, few things are simpler or more instant than digital photography today. Snap a photo and you can see the image on the camera's LCD. The journey from the camera to full-fledged print isn't much further. You can have prints in minutes with the many photo printers on the market today. In honor of the original instant camera, I took a look at two new compact printers: the Polaroid PoGo and the Canon Selphy CP760.

PoGo

The PoGo is an ultra-compact photo printer that's easy to tote around and equally easy to use. At 4.7 x 2.8 x 0.9 inches (HxWxD), the device will easily fit in a coat pocket, and the built-in rechargeable battery makes it even more portable. The small size also means it prints small 2- x 3-inch pictures (one size only). It's a cinch to attach a Pict Bridge-capable camera or sync a Bluetooth-enabled cell phone and select and print an image from the source device. Photos from my

PoGo
\$149
Polaroid
(800) 343-5000
www.polaroid.com

phone and camera consistently printed in just under a minute.

Besides its size, the feature that sets this printer apart is the fact that it doesn't use ink, which is reminiscent of the original Polaroid camera. Instead of self-developing film, though, it uses special ZINK (Zero Ink) paper that changes color when heated. The sheets are sturdy and have an adhesive backing. A pack of 30 sheets costs about \$10.

I was disappointed to find that pictures printed on this paper were slightly grainy, and the color was a bit off. Black-and-white photos had a tinge of blue-green, and colors weren't as vibrant as I'd like to see. Imperfect prints might not matter to someone who wants to print at this size.

Though in some ways this seems to be Polaroid's modern-day take on the classic, it won't have nearly as much mass appeal as the original. Slap a camera on that thing, and you might have something. To be fair, I fall outside Polaroid's target demographic for this product in that I don't do a lot of scrapbooking or have a locker whose blank walls are begging me to stick miniature pictures of my friends on them. Preteens and teens might find this a pretty cool gift.

Selphy CP760

While still compact (3.3 x 7.9 x 5.6 inches) and mobile (though there's not a rechargeable battery; you must use the included power adapter), the Canon Selphy

Selphy CP760
\$99.99
Canon
(800) 652-2666
www.usa.canon.com

offers more of what you might expect from a photo printer. This easy-to-use printer produces 4- x 6-inch photos in just over a minute. You can print photos through a PictBridge connection, a USB connection, an optional Bluetooth adapter (\$50), or the handy memory card slot. (Supported memory cards include SD [Secure Digital], miniSD, MMC [MultimediaCard], MS [Memory Stick], and MS Duo.) The 2.5-inch LCD lets you choose a picture, but you can only scroll through them one or five at a time—a slow pace if you have hundreds of photos on your card. The LCD also lets you make basic selections such as red-eye fix or black-and-white prints. Most of the time, I opted to connect via my PictBridge cable to sort through pictures and make color selections on my Canon camera, which made the process much faster.

This printer employs a dye-sublimation printing method, which requires a ribbon rather than ink. You'll need to purchase a ribbon/paper combo that costs about \$12 for 36 prints. While the subdued

colors of old Polaroid prints might leave me a bit nostalgic, I want the pictures I print today to be true-to-life, and here, the CP760 didn't disappoint. Photos I printed were clear and vibrant. The only problem I saw was that skin tones were sometimes a bit light.

The CP760 let me easily print quality photos almost anywhere I went, which is exactly what I need in a photo printer.

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From the DealsGuy

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

My wife drives a 2003 GMC Sonoma pickup and while I could write a book about its shortcomings, she loves it. We bought an extended warranty on it, but for only five years or 50,000 miles because we didn't think we would own it more than five years. We noticed oil leaks on the garage floor and took it to the dealer for diagnosis. The five-year warranty recently ended, but the truck only has 60,000 easy miles on it. The service advisor told us it had three leaks and explained that one was an oil pan leak, another is oil leaking from the timing chain cover and the other was the rear transmission seal leaking.

I was surprised about so many leaks, but asked the price of repairs. He said that the oil pan could not be removed because of the front end cross member being too close so they must pull the engine for those repairs. The total bill for all the leaks would be a bit over \$1,700. I was astounded because I felt that 60,000 miles was premature for so many oil leaks.

I called GMC Customer Service, who has not been much help in the past with another ongoing problem, and explained the situation and disappointment with the reliability of the vehicle. The customer rep said he would take it up with the Zone Manager and get back with me. The dealership advisor said not to expect much these days. A few days later, the zone manager said they would be happy to help me and said they would pay for the gaskets and give me a 10% discount on the repair cost. I was stunned and told them where they could shove that help and that they had insulted my intelligence. After all, the gaskets would probably cost \$20 and most dealerships give senior citizens a 10% discount, so there was no help there and they said OK, sorry, goodbye.

I would have been happy with 50% or something like that. No wonder GM is going bankrupt with that kind of product reliability and customer relations attitude.

My son used my GM discount to purchase a GMC Sierra pickup and has had his share of warranty problems with it. First was a problem with the brake rotors, which the dealer would not replace when they became warped at 2,500 miles. They resurfaced them and the problem came back. Later, when the vehicle was just out of warranty, the diesel engine's injector pump went out. Customer Service said they would repair it at no cost, but it took two weeks to get the parts and they would not pay for the rental vehicle (interestingly, a Toyota pickup) which had always been customary. There were other problems. The first GMC pickup before he purchased his present one had transmission problems that they couldn't seem to repair and he had an attorney force GM to refund his money under the Lemon Law. This will be his last GMC, just like us, or probably even a GM product, for that matter, and that's where my pension comes from.

New Product from Diskeeper

Ms. Teal Thompson, Director of Public Relations, sent me the specifications and pricing (below) for Diskeeper 2009 (just released). Diskeeper has always been a superb product.

New Features List:

Improved Trialware: Trialware will now take an analysis of the volume(s) before and after initial installation. A comparison report is then generated, demonstrating improve conditions.

Improved InvisiTasking: The new, more assertive InvisiTasking can now operate in competitive environments, in conjunction with other always-on /idle-time tasks that run at lowest priority while still guaranteeing completely invisible, zero- overhead, operations.

IPv6 (Internet Protocol version 6): Diskeeper 2009 now fully supports communication, such as remote management on native IPv6 networks.

Improved Free Space Consolidation: About 90% of the available free space will now be grouped into less than a dozen free space segments. This will increase file write performance.

About InvisiTasking

Instead of the operating system scheduler allocating the entire computer system to each process, one at a time, InvisiTasking empowers the system to allocate resources (CPU, memory, disk, and network) allowing overlapping usage of separate resources,

not just reducing system overhead, but eliminating it altogether.

InvisiTasking is what makes Diskeeper defrag in real time with zero overhead. Systems simply run fast, operate at peak and are reliable, constantly. The drives are always optimally maintained.

Diskeeper 2009 includes the new InvisiTasking 2.0! New functionality in InvisiTasking will allow it to be more assertive, while still guaranteeing completely invisible, zero-overhead, operations. (Check their Web site for further information.)

Diskeeper 2009 with HyperFast SSD optimization:

The new Diskeeper 2009 is now available as a bundle with the new HyperFast SSD optimization product.

HyperFast: Solid State drives (SSDs) promise users a faster and better experience than conventional hard disk drives (HDD). However, Microsoft« Windows» is not optimized for NAND Flash as a principal storage device, such as with SSDs. The result is that, over time, customers of systems with SSDs will experience a very noticeable and dramatic deterioration (up to 80%), to the degree that their computers operate much slower than they would with a hard disk. The new HyperFast feature bundled with Diskeeper 2009 is specifically designed to eliminate performance degradation, and restore performance to like-new conditions.

Special pricing only applies on multiple purchases. Diskeeper 2009 Home: ESD \$29.95, 2-pack \$44.95, 3-pack \$54.95, 5-pack \$89.95

Diskeeper 2009 Professional: ESD \$59.95, 2-pack \$89.95, 3-pack \$149.95, 5-pack \$269.75 Order through their online store at <<http://www.diskeeper.com/purchase/purchase.aspx>>.

Want a DVD Creator?

DealsGuy Note: I have not actually tried this product.

ZC Software has released ZC DVD Creator Platinum V. 6.2.2, a new version of ZC DVD creator software that converts almost any video source to burn on a DVD directly without having to store it on a hard drive. ZC DVD Creator Platinum lets users customize their menu templates to match the user's style, giving the movie a polished look. The software will edit, author and burn all DVD formats ever known. With ZC DVD Creator Platinum, it is possible to easily create personal DVDs.

ZC DVD Creator Platinum supports all known video source formats, such as AVI, DIVX, XVID, RM, RMVB, MPEG, MPG, VCD, SVCD, WMV, ASF, ASX,

SWF, MOV/DAT, FLV (Flash Video), 3GP (3gpp, 3gp, 3gp2), MP4 (mp4, mpeg4), Nullsoft Video (NSV), AVS, Decrypted DVD File (VOB), MKV, DV video, mts, and m2ts. Also, the user has new menu template themes that can easily customize the new Hollywood-style DVD menus. It's possible to trim and split-cut the videos, specify the DVD background Music and Images, edit the DVD Menu short description and playback preview the video file.

The video encoder guarantees the best DVD picture quality within one hour. If Nero is installed, the software automatically selects Nero as the default burning engine. ZC DVD Creator Platinum supports wide screens (16:9) as well as the usual TV screens (4:3). It also supports both NTSC and PAL TV systems. The advanced Dolby Digital audio will strengthen the movie with theater quality sound. The software includes automatic matching of a broad range of DVD-R/RW and DVD+R/RW burners. The user can burn a DVD Movie image file placed on a hard disc to a DVD Disk directly without storing them on a hard disc.

ZC DVD Creator Platinum has a friendly and easy to use interface that allows the user to create a DVD movie just by one click. The new version of ZC DVD Creator Platinum has an upgraded video clip edit feature.

Pricing and Availability

ZC DVD Creator Platinum is compatible with all versions of Windows. Ordering the software on a CD-ROM is \$15 USD extra for shipping.

Special offers are: - ZC DVD Creator Platinum and ZC Video Converter at \$60 USD; - ZC DVD Creator Platinum and QR Photo DVD Slideshow at \$60 USD; - ZC DVD Ripper and ZC Video Converter at \$65 USD; By purchasing ZC DVD Creator Platinum the user gets lifetime FREE Technical Support and FREE upgrades. For firsthand appraisal, a free trial version is available. The user has a 30-day money back guarantee.

Product page:

<<http://www.videoxdvd.com/product.htm>>

Download link:

<<http://www.videoxdvd.com/download.htm>>

Company web-site: <<http://www.videoxdvd.com>>

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>>

Review:

Wacom Intuos.3 Writing Tablet

by Jerry Goldstein
The PCUG of Connecticut

Tabula rasa (blank slate) has new meaning when you hold a pen to a writing tablet. Your creativity expands. After the stilted motions of a mouse you get free flowing precision to transfer your thoughts to the screen when you use a writing tablet and pen. For graphic work and photo editing the writing tablet is as invaluable as the palette is to an artist.

Writing tablets, aka digitizing, drawing, or graphic tablet have been around since 1888 when the Telautograph was patented. They have come a long way since then with one manufacturer carving out its own market niche. That manufacturer is



Wacom. Wacom created and patented passive tablets that use electromagnetic induction technology. This technology uses horizontal and vertical wires that transmit and receive electromagnetic signals between the tablet and a pen or mouse. For the non-scientists amongst us that means the wires let the tablet know where the pen is on or above the tablet and translates that to the screen. The pens are equipped with pressure sensitive technology as well. This allows you to adjust what you do on the screen just by how hard and the angle by which you use the pen. Electromagnetic power also eliminates the need for a battery for the pen.

Wacom patents prevent competitors from using its technology. That has kept Wacom the premier tablet company for artists, graphic designers, architects, and, well...anyone wanting to use a graphic tablet. Other technology for tablets include Active Tablets, that use a battery energized battery to transmit a stylus's signal to the tablet, Optical Tablets, that use a small digital camera in a pen that matches patterns on paper, (watch future newsletters for an article on this emerging technol-

ogy for note-takers), and Capacitive Signal Tablets, that use electrostatic signals. Touch screens are also similar to graphic tablets but you don't get the high level of precision a touch screen gives you. None of these other technologies are as popular as the electromagnetic tablets that Wacom offers.

When buying a writing tablet you have choices depending on your budget and needs. Budget considerations may over ride your actual needs but this is not a time to save. Wacom's basic or amateur level tablets used to be Graphire technology but Wacom has since introduced a new basic tablet and called it Bamboo. The Graphire line is only available now as a reworked Bluetooth wireless tablet. Between my own research and what I have discussed with others who use graphic tablets you don't want to buy the entry level Bamboo unless you want to quickly be frustrated by its restrictions. Intuos is much more sensitive allowing precision detail in your work that is sorely missing in the Bamboo level tablet. I'm not saying that the Bamboo is a bad product for the money. It just isn't enough for most user's needs. You will pay almost double for the Intuos over the Bamboo. It is worth it.

Part of the value in buying a writing tablet is the bundled software that usually comes with your purchase. Wacom offers Adobe Photoshop Elements, Corel Painter Essential, Nik Color Efex. and Wacom Brushes with the Intuos tablet. Separately these softwares would cost you some \$200.00. They come free with your Wacom tablet. Adobe Photoshop Elements is the basic level version of the well-known digital photo editing software.

Corel Painter is used to turn your photos into paintings and Nik Color Efex applies lighting filters to your photos. Wacom Brushes customizes the brushes used with Photoshop. When I researched purchasing a tablet I found a wide difference in what was being bundled with the offered tablet depending on the seller. Be careful what you are buying as what seems like a good deal could be a reseller offering older product with outdated software.

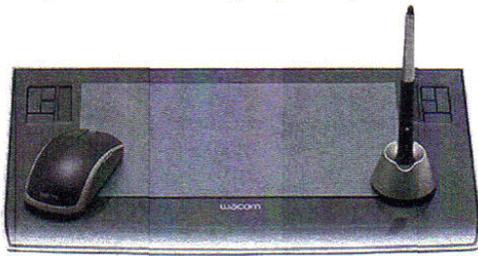
As you can see in the table at right the Wacom tablet comes in a variety of sizes. Wacom provided me with the 6"x11" size tablet (about \$370.00) to review based on my working with dual monitors. When buying a tablet you want to buy the largest one that fits your budget. Stretching your budget for a bigger size will benefit you greatly later. The tablet space translates to the work you are doing. Precision is made easier when you are working on a larger tablet that understands minute motions. You can adapt a smaller tablet to work in tighter areas but

that requires extra work which gets tedious. If you are working with only one monitor the 6x8 tablet is your best buy.

The tablet itself defaults as matching your monitor screen for size. When you reach the edge of the tablet surface you are also at the edge of the monitor. For dual monitors the tablet moves smoothly across the monitors as if they are one. The tablet divides itself in half so you work on both monitors like one big surface. The only problem I had with this was that my main monitor sits directly in front of me with the second monitor off to my left and up against the main monitor. This meant the tablet area that I mostly worked on was furthest from me when I worked with the tablet to the side of the keyboard. I found it easier to switch the tablet to work with just one monitor when I was doing quick photo fixes. The tablet comes with two sets of programmable hot keys to make the switch from one monitor to two relatively easy. When I wanted to work in depth with the tablet I found the extra sized tablet came in handy and made editing easier. The tablet is also light and sturdy enough to sit comfortably in your lap for those long editing sessions.

The tablet's installation is mostly plug and play, easy and quick. I say mostly because of the learning curve on the bundled software. The tablet itself is almost instantly understandable and useable. The software bundle is where the learning curve comes in. You'll have to do a lot of experimenting and manual reading to get the most out of the tablet software.

You will also want to experiment with the 1024 levels of tip and erasure pressure sensitivity that you get in the Intuos Grip Pen. As mentioned before the Intuos pen is battery free. That lightens the pen and avoids problems with using a pen with weak batteries. I found the pen easy to hold and maneuver around the tablet. The pen comes with a holder that allows you to keep track of where you put it between uses. It also includes a handy electronic eraser for easy fixes. I have not used the pen long enough to notice but other reviews I read indicate that the nibs on the pen do wear down with use. The pen nibs are replaceable. The pen is so sensitive that it has tilt sensitivity like a real pen or brush.

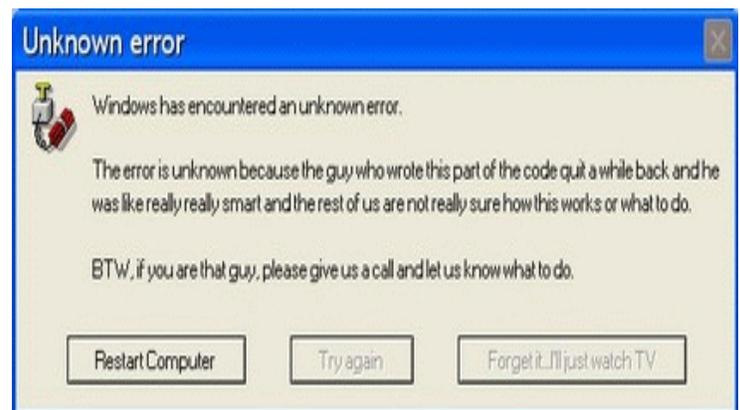


A nice touch to the tablet are the 2 touch strips placed strategically on the tablets. They made it easy to scroll and zoom the work for easier editing. The tablet also comes with a five button scrolling mouse that is ball and optics free. It works off the tablet's surface so no additional USB plugs are used for the mouse base. I did find it somewhat annoying using the tablet mouse as my sole mouse. You are restricted to the active tablet surface with the tablet mouse. I often found myself with a mouse that was not reacting to my motions when I went outside the tablet sensitivity surface. The tablet surface has a large non sensitive area that provides a great hand rest when working but no mouse control. It was distracting when doing general computer work, like writing this article, and using the tablet's mouse. For this reason I keep my old mouse handy for non-tablet work.

When buying an Intuos level writing tablet you may find it necessary to go to the stores website to find your tablet. Retailers can not afford to stock a wide variety of tablets in each of its stores. You probably won't even find a store display tablet for you to try out before you buy. Your research is going to mostly be based on the reviews you find of which there are many.

All in all I found the Wacom Intuos3 tablet to be a great addition to my computer repertoire. As regular readers know I love making home videos and mixing up photos with my PowerPoint presentations. The tablet makes my prep work easier and more comfortable. I definitely recommend the Wacom Intuos tablet as part of your photo editing or graphic work solution.

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Computer Mouse Celebrates 40th Birthday

After 40 years the computer mouse
may be facing redundancy

by Claudine Beaumont

It was only meant to be a prototype. But 40 years after the computer mouse first scrolled its way into the public consciousness, new touch-screen technology could be about to consign the mouse to the annals of history.

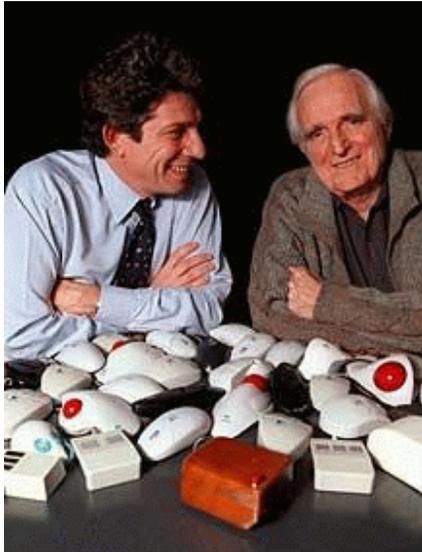
The computer mouse was the creation of Doug Engelbart and his team at the Stanford Research Institute in California, who needed a simple way of controlling their computers. The result was a carved wooden block mounted on wheels, with a long cable trailing out the back. One researcher nicknamed it a mouse, and the moniker stuck.

“We thought that when it had escaped out to the world it would have a more dignified name,” said Mr Engelbart. “But it didn't.”

The mouse made its debut at a presentation in San Francisco in 1968 to show off a working network computer system. Before the invention of the mouse, people working on computers used a light pen, similar to those wielded by radar operators during the war, to navigate around on screen. The research team at the Institute set about finding an alternative, and went through a range of designs before finally settling on the mouse.

“We set up our experiments and the mouse won in every category, even though it had never been used before,” said Mr Engelbart. “It was faster, and with it people made fewer mistakes. Five or six of us were involved in these tests, but no one can remember who started calling it a mouse. I'm surprised the name stuck.”

The mouse was developed by Xerox during the 1970s, and the first commercial product was released in 1981 with the launch of the Xerox Star computer system. But it wasn't until Apple acquired the license for the mouse for \$40,000 from the Stanford Institute that the technology really took off. The Apple Macintosh, launched in 1984, used the mouse to good effect, and is the machine widely credited with kick-starting the home computer revolution.



Douglas Engelbart (right) with the many versions of his invention, the mouse. His wooden prototype is in the foreground. Photo: AP

The mouse became the default input method on most computers for the next two decades.

However, it faces stiff competition from new technology such as gesture control and touch-screen interfaces. Apple's iPhone mobile phone has shown people the power and potential of touch-screens, and the Nintendo Wii demonstrates the simplicity of natural gestures. Companies such as HP have already started building computers that rely on touch-sensitive monitors rather than a mouse, and Microsoft, too, is experimenting with new user interfaces. Its Surface computer is a touch-screen tablet which responds to natural hand gestures, touch and physical objects.

“I very much doubt we'll be using a mouse in 40 years' time,” Steve Prentice, an analyst at Gartner Research, told the *Observer*.

Mr Engelbart, 83, did not make a fortune from his creation, however. The patent he had on the device ran out shortly before Apple launched it to a wider audience, meaning he received no royalties for his invention. However, in 1998 he finally received recognition for his innovative design when the then president, Bill Clinton, awarded him the National Medal of Technology for creating the foundations of modern computing.

I have been unable to discover the origin of this. No Claudine Beaumont writes for the London Observer or the New York Observer. I'm sure there must be other Observers but there's a limit to my time and energy. —Ed.

Society News

To the Editor:

You asked me to send a message about the horrible article in November's newsletter. Unfortunately, I don't have a copy of the article in front of me so I have to work from memory.

The article [*Hacking 101* by Marjie Tucker in the November 2008 *Monitor*] said that as soon as the bad guys know the IP address of your computer they can immediately install malware on it. This is wrong and the worst kind of scaremongering. Your IP address is just a number assigned to your computer when it connects to the Internet. It changes each time your connection is reset and is used every time you request a web page or check your email.

Since the addresses are assigned from a pool of addresses that is known to anyone caring to look, the

bad guys simply scan all IP addresses looking for computers that can be exploited. This is the equivalent of walking through the neighborhood checking every house to see if the doors are locked. The warning should be: "If you are connected to the Internet you need to make sure your doors are locked."

Talking about IP addresses is confusing, irrelevant, and mostly wrong. If you are connected to the Internet make sure you have your machine patched and protected by a firewall and anti-virus software. The real threat nowadays isn't even the attacks from the network directly. It is from email, IM, and malicious web sites and there are two main approaches used for these attacks. One is to exploit a bug in the email/web/IM client to install malware on your computer. The other is to use social engineering to install malware on your computer.

So you need to keep your email/web/IM clients patched as well as your operating system. To prevent social engineering attacks you need think before you click. Never open a web page via a link in an email or IM message. Be very wary of any message from a stranger.

The best way to protect your computer against any kind of attack is to have good backups. You can lock your doors and windows to protect your house but you can't guarantee that you won't be burgled so you buy insurance. You can practice good security but your computer might still be compromised so you need backups as insurance. And backups have the added advantage of protecting from more mundane threats such as hardware failure or simple operator error.

That was quite a side trip from discussing problems with the article. The list of utilities at the end of the article was the most valuable part of the article. Unfortunately it was coupled with the first part of the article where the author showed a total lack of knowledge about security threats to computers. That makes it hard to take the rest of the article seriously. I am very surprised that this article wasn't better vetted before sending it out to the national list of user groups.

Carl Schmidtman
*Member of the Rochester Computer Society and
leader of our Linux SIG.*

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Mike Lavelle

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Q: A new member has a tray app message appearing when he boots up. He has found the error. This is common with XP.

A: It was suggested that the HP printer disc into the drive and tell the response box it is there.

Q: Does anyone have experience with the backup system Carbonite?

A: He has had to reload the software twice because he did not request the backup in the given week. He sent an email to there help department and they offered a response in days. It's been months. You may need to turn off the firewall when doing the backup. It will run faster and more reliably. The backup should run overnight as it takes all kinds of resources.

Q: Has anyone converted 8 mm to a CD or DVD?

A: There are services that will do that for you. There may be a free software on the web.

Q: Another member is playing platters and passing the output to his computer.

A: It takes a while and is not very automated.

Q: When bringing down some files, it seems that the system assumes USB 2 while he has USB1. Is this the new standard?

A: It appears that USB2 is now the standard.

Q: Is there any use for a floppy drive?

A: There are some software packages/OS that require that the input source for drivers be the floppy drive. It will not read the CD.

Q: One member has found a computer that will not allow a boot from the CD drive. He wants to use it for repair. This is the first time. It is a bootable XP disk.

A: Does the bios say it is a bootable location? Yes. Did you try assigning a different drive mapping? Yes. There may be something 'old' that it does not like.

Q: Does anyone know how to start up a second PowerPoint show?

A: Toolbar Slideshow =>Setup => select single /double.

The Jeopardy program was a great success. Tony Delello found questions on several school websites (even one in England) so we had *Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader* as well as *Jeopardy*. A good time was had by all and everyone went home feeling much smarter.

Planning Meeting Minutes

by Sarah Blankenship

On Tuesday December 2nd, 2008, the officers of the Rochester Computer Society meet at Sally's house to conduct the planning meeting. Bob Avery, Mike Lavelle, Steve Staub, Sally Springett, Arpad Kovacs, Dan Rothfuss, Tony Dellelo, and Sarah Blankenship were there.

The meeting opened at 7:00pm, with a discussion of the November meeting, which was Arpad's annual Tech Gadgets and Gifts presentation. The feedback was generally good, and Bob mentioned that he would like to make the PowerPoint available on the RSCi website for anyone that is interested. Arpad agreed, and will be sending Bob the file. Arpad also pointed out that all of his Black Friday predictions came true. The average Black Friday participant spent \$367 according to somebody.

The agenda for the December meeting was discussed, as were prizes for winning Jeopardy. The December, January, February, and March meetings will all be held at the Brighton Library, with the February meeting starting a few minutes late while the previous group leaves.

There are several possibilities for the January meeting, including Ken Corpus, Todd Robinson, and Bill Statt. Hopefully by the December meeting date, a presenter will have accepted an invitation to speak in January. Some discussion was held about turning the February meeting into an extended Helps Half hour due to the late start of the February meeting.

Steve mentioned that a club member had been interested in starting an RSCi blog. Is anyone interested in doing so? It would be a great way to get the word out about what RSCi does and is.

The next newsletter printing will be held on Saturday the 20th of December to accommodate some member's needs. Please feel free to join the printing team anytime. Newsletter printing is normally done on the second Saturday of the month.

The labeling program used to send out the newsletters may be changed after December. Steve has downloaded a free trial version of a new piece of software, and if he is happy with the results, RSCi may switch permanently to this new provider. If this program is acceptable, it will also save the club money.

Please be sure to join us in January at the Brighton Memorial Library at 6:30! Happy New Year!

President's Column

by Steve Staub

The last few issues of the RSCi Monitor I praised several members for helping make our club a user friendly group. I do have a few more members who I will single out in the next few months. In this column I want to wish everyone who gets a copy a Happy New Year. I hope you find time to drop in to one of our monthly meetings. We are fortunate to have reserved the Brighton Library for January, February, and March. Our program is as follows: Help's Half Hour (Q & A), a brief business report, intermission (food and drink), the remaining time is set aside for our program which runs about 1 to 1-1/2 hrs. Everyone is welcome (no guest fees). I think a good New Year's resolution would be come visit us, join in on the fun, and maybe even join us.

The Lighter Side

At the company where I worked some years ago, the director had been walking around the floor and noticed a computer with "16x" on the cdrom drive. He immediately demanded that a 16 speed cdrom drive be ordered to replace the 4 speed drive in his own computer, because he just needed it to do his work. When the new drive arrived, the tech people swapped the drives and kept the old one for use somewhere else. But when they opened it, they found bits of polystyrene packing in it. The director had never even used his cdrom drive.

