

MONITOR

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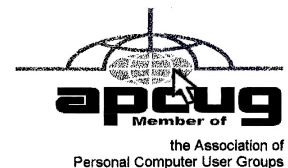
August 2010

Next Meeting
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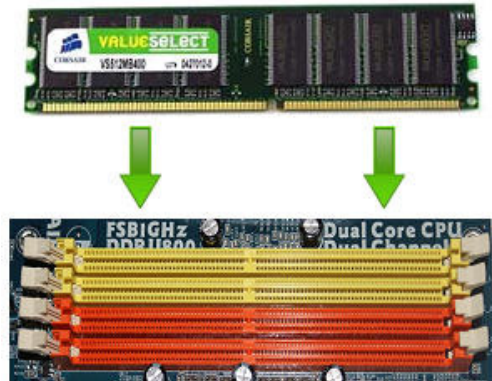
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How to Upgrade Your Memory

by Bob Rankin

Upgrade RAM Upgrading memory gives your system a bigger “desktop” on which it can process current work as fast as possible. Every bit of data and software that you are currently using is stored in RAM. The rest is stored on your hard drive or removable media, where it takes longer to read and write data. If there is not enough RAM to hold everything you need, your operating system constantly swaps part of its working load in and out of RAM to disk. That slows down processing and wears out your



disk drive faster. So more RAM is generally going to improve performance; but not always.

Older operating systems like Windows 98 can only address up to 4 GB of RAM; adding more than that will not increase performance. Also, if you rarely use more than 4 GB of RAM then adding 8 GB is a bit of a waste. Most home and small business users don't need more than 4 GB of memory. Gamers and video editing professionals, or people who work with very large databases or spreadsheets, may benefit from 4 to 8 GB of memory.

Memory consists of millions of tiny transistors mounted on circuit chips. The chips plug into memory sockets on your computer's motherboard. In laptop computers, a small cover conveniently provides access to the memory sockets on the bottom of the laptop's case. Accessing the memory sockets in a desktop computer usually requires one to unscrew and remove the case cover.

Memory technology and the hardware form it takes have changed many times over the years. So there are many different kinds of memory chips and sockets on the market. Do you need PC-133, SDRAM, DDR3? Are they DIMMs, SIMMs, or RIMMs? It is vital to match the memory type and the clock speed of memory that you buy to that which is supported by your specific make and model of computer. The type of memory that your computer supports and the maximum amount of memory that it will hold are documented in your computer's user manual. But what if you've lost the manual?

Memory Configurators, Finders and Scanners

Memory sellers don't want that to stop you from buying. So many of them provide handy online memory "configurators" or memory "finders." These are online programs that walk you, step by step, through the process of specifying the kind of computer that you have. Some memory finders will even scan your system, determine what kind of RAM memory you currently have, and show you recommended upgrades. The configurator/finder then lists all the available memory chips that are compatible with your computer and their prices. Then you can select the right chips with the right amount of memory on each chip, add them to your shopping cart, pay, and wait for them to arrive.

Of course, you can use a memory configurator to find exactly what you need, and then make your purchase elsewhere. Here are a few useful memory finders and memory configurators you can try:

- * Crucial Memory Advisor
- * Kingston Memory Search
- * Corsair Memory Configurator

Once your new memory chips arrive, it's easy to install them in your computer. After opening the system unit, you'll see that memory sockets have swiveling, locking tabs on each end to keep the memory chips firmly seated. Just flip back those tabs; pull the old memory chip(s) straight out without bending or wiggling them; insert the new memory chips (which are notched so you cannot insert them the wrong way), and re-fasten the tabs.

Cheap memory upgrades are available, but you have to be careful of unknown foreign sellers. Sometimes memory chips are labeled with higher capacities than they actually have. Quality control is uncertain with very low-priced memory chips. If the deal sounds too good to be true, it might be better to spend a bit more for a known quantity.

Cheap RAM is often available from computer liquidators who pull parts out of obsolete business computers and want to sell them fast. Memory chips have no moving parts so they rarely wear out; they just become obsolete as newer, faster RAM comes on the market. Check on eBay or search online for "used RAM" to find sellers. If you have an older computer, used RAM is often your best bet.

From the Internet Tourbus of June 21, 2010. To subscribe go to <http://internettourbus.com/tickets.html>



My E-mail Account Was Stolen by Hackers

by Lorene Romero
NCMUG president

Yep, it happened to me (and how painful it was to be in the midst of it all). One of my email addresses was hacked! What that meant is that someone changed my login and pass code and all (1000 plus) contacts in my database were spammed a message asking for HELP! This spam message is pretty common and easily seen through if you look at the message. It said I was in London (oh, and Gayle would never let me go there alone), had been robbed and could you please wire me money.

Granted, being a Mac person gives me a greater level of protection against getting a virus, but we are all vulnerable to getting “hacked” from the web. It was my Sharp Tongued Consulting email address that was hit and I know it was from my MobileMe account, not on my computer. I had not synced that address book, and the only place they could have gotten it from was the web mobileme.com site. It could have happened if it was a Gmail, Yahoo, or MSN account; anything that is from the web.

Thankfully, a friend started calling me at 7 a.m. (normally our phone ringer is turned off), but we kept hearing a weird sound in the kitchen. She kept calling and calling until we picked up the phone. She let me know that she had gotten the e-mail message and people had also e-mailed her asking if I was okay. I do travel a lot, so people, especially my East Coast friends, were concerned (but the people on the West Coast were not up just yet).

If this happens to you on your MobileMe account, the first thing you have to do is go to: <http://www.apple.com/support/mobileme/> When I arrived at this site there was support immediately. As far as I know there is NO phone tech support for MM users.

For FOUR hours I was on iChat with Jake; he was wonderful. Apparently the hackers had not only changed my password but changed all my security questions too. For example, while my birthday is in March, it now said it was in October. They even had my email forwarded to a fake hotmail.com account. It took forever for me to prove it was really me.

During that entire time, anyone who responded to that email message had their responses sent to the hackers. Most people knew not to reply and instead sent a message to my real mac.com account to make sure that I really was okay.

So what is the lesson in all this for me to pass on to you?

- Create a strong password. Make it something with lower and uppercase letters, some numbers and symbols. An example would be C2F\$wqu
- Whenever possible, blind copy people. Even if you are e-mailing a group of friends, protect their email addresses and bcc people. You never know where your message could end up.
- Get a piece of software in which to store all these new pass codes (don't forget to strengthen your bank account and credit card codes too). One I recommend is Agile Web Solutions, makers of IPassword: <http://agilewebsolutions.com/onepassword>.
- Never forward forwarded messages. If you just can't resist forwarding a joke that has been forwarded to you, please, oh please, first delete all the email addresses in it. Keep in mind that most jokes have been circulating for years and we have already seen them, but also remember that people make a living out of stealing email addresses and then selling them.

Hopefully someone can learn from what happened to me. My password was 6 or more characters, but it had been a while since I had changed it. This really was a good lesson for me to just make all my passwords stronger.

I really do believe all things happen for a reason. Although it was a painfully long day (all other things in my life got put on hold for about 36 hours so I could deal with this hacking issue), I had so many people contact me to make sure I really was okay or to let me know that I was hacked. My home and cell phones were ringing all day and I spoke with dozens of friends and really felt loved. So see, not all that happened was bad.

Keep Your Password Private and Handy

An online airing of tens of thousands of stolen Webmail passwords suggests it's time to find extra protection.

This fall, more than 20,000 stolen usernames and passwords for such Webmail providers as AOL, Gmail, Hotmail, and Yahoo appeared on Pastebin.com, a programmer's Website.

The Webmaster, Paul Dixon, wrote that "for reasons unknown," some "miscreants" posted the data on his site. Dixon removed the stolen info, which Microsoft and some security researchers theorize was gathered through phishing attacks (find.pcworld.com/64036).

A researcher at Scan Safe argues that the data may have come from password-stealing malware, not phishing. (find.pcworld.com/64037).

Either way, crooks clearly want access to your Webmail. But why? A friend of mine was recently hit by a scam, and her experience helps answer that question. After her Hotmail account was hacked, every message she sent included an unwelcome advertisement.

Crooks have also begun using stolen Webmail and Facebook accounts to send pleas supposedly from a victim to friends or contacts. Some bogus messages claim the sender is stranded overseas and needs an urgent wire transfer of funds.

Don't pass the Password

To guard against password thieves, I use LastPass (find.pcworld.com/64108). The tool offers a free password-managing add-on for Firefox on Windows, Linux, or Mac OS X; Internet Explorer on Windows; and Safari on Mac OS X. An add-on for Google Chrome is under development. LastPass fills in your username and password for verified sites that match a real URL; phishing scams that use similar but fake Web addresses won't deceive it. And because you don't type in your password, keylogger malware can't capture your keystrokes and nab your password.

Other apps, like Password Hash (find.pcworld.com/64015), offer similarly worth-while protection, but LastPass stores all of your data on its servers (using 256-bit AES encryption) as well as on your PC. Since the company never has the software decryption key or your password, nobody at LastPass can get to your info. Because your data is stored centrally, you can use the add-on with any browser, log in with your LastPass master account info, and access all of your passwords. Even without the add-on, you can log in to LastPass's site to get to your information. That means you should create a fairly complex master password for the LastPass site, but it also means you have a de facto backup if your PC goes kaput.

Instant Entry

The handy add-on can automatically log you in to sites and can fill in forms, but for better security you should change some of its default settings. For instance, to prevent someone from sitting at your desk and accessing your accounts, click **Preferences** and check **Automatically logoff after idle**. I set mine to log off my LastPass account after an hour.

It's also smart to require a password re-prompt for sensitive accounts; the app will ask for your master password before filling in the username and password, even if you're already logged in. LastPass offers applications for the iPhone, BlackBerry and other mobile devices, too, but those will cost you \$12.00 per year.

Windows 7 Tech Tips

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, FL

Have you ever wanted or needed information about the hardware in your computer? Did you know that Windows 7 contains a command that can provide you with a list of your hardware components including memory information? It does and it is very easy to explore and to save to a file. There are other helpful little bits of information hidden in the

recesses of Win7, so let's take some time to explore a few of them.

First let's check out the system information command. Go to Start and type "cmd" in the Search box (without the quotes), then press Enter. This will open a command window in which you can type "systeminfo," also without the quote marks. Press Enter again and you will get a detailed profile of your computer. This list will include the processor, BIOS version, operating system and updates, both installed and available memory and much more. In all, there are thirty-two categories of information provided by this command. You can scroll up and down through this information. Then, if you want to save this info to a disc file, type the command "systeminfo /FO CSV > systeminfo.csv." Again, without the quotes. This file will be saved in the directory shown at the beginning of the command line. So be sure you remember this location when you go to look for the file. A CSV file can be opened in a spreadsheet or a database program. Now you will have a ready reference for the components which make up your computer. It's not a bad idea to create this file and keep it for reference purposes.

Of course, if you are a frequent reader of Dr Herb's "Computer Buffet" you would have seen references to "Belarc Advisor." This free program gives you a profile of all the hardware and software on your machine. It also highlights problem areas such as non-working applications. The software information can be quite extensive. The last time I ran this application on a Windows machine I had more than eight pages of information. Far more than I really wanted. The systeminfo command gives you a summary which is printable in one page.

There is another use for system information. If you type this "system information" command into the Start-Search box, it will bring up a list of applications before you finish typing. Select "System Information" from the list and click on it. You now have a double pane window with a tree of topics on the left and an information window on the right. The first item is a general summary of system information similar to the information we obtained in the command window. But there are other more detailed topics under the headings in the tree list. For example, hardware resources, components and software environment. Under components you will find a very important topic – problem devices. Hopefully, at this point there will be nothing listed when you highlight this topic. But if there are, it can lead you to solutions for some of your hardware problems. Under software environment you will find a topic called Startups. This lists the applications that are loaded into memory when your computer starts. Always something worth knowing.

Another interesting item under Software Environment is Windows Error Reporting. This gives you a detailed list of applications that have "misfired" or produced system hang-ups. This can be useful when you have problems with either Windows or third-party applications. All of the errors I found on my system were related to missing drivers that I had to install after installing Win7. Once that was completed the errors disappeared. Yes, I said that with crossed fingers – no use asking for bad luck, right?

If you haven't backed up your computer recently, then you should try the backup built into Win7. In previous versions of Windows the backup application provided by Microsoft was very slow and some versions were very limited in the media to which they would write the backup file. It was also useless when you changed your Windows version as the file formats in the backup file were not compatible with the newer version. In the Win7 help files there is information on how to restore a backup made with Vista to Win7. So at least the latest versions should be compatible.

These latest versions of the backup applications are much faster than previous versions. To try the backup applications, open the Control Panel and select System Security, then backup and restore. Here you have several options. You can do a complete image of your hard drive, just backup your data, or make a system repair disc. If you did not get a Windows installation disc when you purchased your computer, then the first thing you should do is make a system repair disc. All you need for this is a blank CD and then just follow the on-screen instructions. The next step would be to make a complete image file, preferably on an external drive. It's really not a good idea to put it on the same drive you are imaging even

if it is a separate partition. Why? Because when the drive fails you won't be able to access the image file to restore anything to a new hard drive. Even if you do have a Windows installation disc the repair disc plus the image file are a better solution for restoring Windows and your files after a drive failure. The image file you create will be more current than the original installation disc when it comes to Windows updates. It will also include the installation of all the applications you added after you purchased the system or upgraded to Win7.

Once you have the repair disc and the image backup you can start doing data backups, or you can create new image files periodically. There is no need to make image files unless you have added applications or made substantial changes to your system. Windows file backup can be set to run automatically to save your data files. It will also add new folders and files to the backup list when you create them. I would also recommend that this be saved to an external drive.

Do you have a need for a system to remember user names and passwords? Win7 has a credential manager which can be used for storing user names and passwords in an encrypted file. This application can be found in the Control Panel under User Accounts. If you can't find it, try searching within the Control Panel.

I frequently have a need to write down short notes or references to information I found on the Internet or in other sources. This is where Sticky Notes comes in quite handy. You can run this application by typing "stikynot" in the Start - Search box and clicking on the program that shows in the popdown menu. Alternatively, you can go to All Programs - Accessories and click on Sticky Notes. These can be placed anywhere on your desktop. You can also pin the application to the taskbar so it will be readily available. Just right click on the menu item or one of the sticky notes and select "pin to taskbar."

If you want to see the minute by minute performance of your computer, try typing "resource monitor" in the Start - Search box. The complete term will show up before you have completed typing and you can then click on the item. This brings up a window in which you can view the memory utilization, cpu utilization and other resources as you use your computer. It's a great way to see which applications are using the most memory.

By playing around with the Control Panel and other aspects of Windows 7, you can find many helpful built-in functions. You can also query the Help files. On my system the Help response is much quicker than it was in Vista and XP. I also found that many subjects are better explained and more detailed. So if you are stuck on something, try the Help application that's on the Start menu. The more you play with Win7, the more you will find that may be useful.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems. 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 (bwsail at yahoo.com).

Microsoft Security Essentials

Free Anti-Malware Protection

by Ira Wilsker

I recently encountered a situation where one of my computers was unable to load a new beta (pre-release) version of one of the popular security software suites that I was beta testing. The purpose of beta testing is to find serious bugs and other problems before the software is officially released. I have been a beta tester for dozens of titles over the years, and am fully cognizant of the problems and risks of beta testing. While the software publisher's beta support team has not yet resolved my issue, which was repeatable, this particular computer was now lacking any security software, and was at risk while performing normal online and offline tasks. I could have reinstalled my previous security suite, which has proven itself as reliable and effective, but I decided that this would be a good opportunity to try something new. There are a lot of security utilities available, both commercial and free, so I decided to

try one of the few free products that I had not tried on one of my personal computers. I decided to try Microsoft's Security Essentials.

Microsoft had sold online and through retail channels its previous security product, Windows Live OneCare, which was met with mixed reviews regarding its level of protection and performance. In late 2008 Microsoft announced that it would discontinue Windows Live OneCare on June 30, 2009, and replace it with a new offering code named "Morro." "Morro" was released in its final version in 2009 for free distribution and download as Microsoft Security Essentials. This product is available for download directly from Microsoft at www.microsoft.com/Security_Essentials. As is common with almost all other Microsoft services, Microsoft will digitally determine the validity of the Windows installed on the computer before allowing the download; this process only takes a few seconds. Security Essentials will run on almost any Windows computer with a genuine copy of XP (Service Pack 2 or SP3), Vista (Service Pack 1 of SP2), or Windows 7. Versions are available for either 32 bit or 64 bit operating systems.

Since Security Essentials is an integrated anti-malware product that protects from both viruses and spyware, it will disable Windows Defender (Microsoft's dedicated anti-spyware utility) if Defender is already installed on the computer. Unlike other competitive security suites, Security Essentials does not include a firewall, but instead activates Windows' integral firewall, and works with it. Also, since this is an "Essentials" utility that only provides malware protection, it does not include most of the other enhancements incorporated into the commercial products, such as anti-spam, website protection, and other tools. Security Essentials is ICSA Labs certified, and has been awarded the VB 100 Virus label, meaning that it detected 100% of the threats in a standardized testing environment. This is important as it indicates that Security Essentials does an acceptable job in protecting systems from malware.

Downloading Security Essentials directly from Microsoft was very fast, the 64 bit version only being about 7mb in size. Installing it was simple, but it did recognize that I had some other security software on the computer, and directed me to uninstall the other software before installing it. Once I uninstalled the other security software that it identified, Security Essentials installed very quickly, and did not present any complicated configuration questions. After installing the program, it asked to perform an update, and then completed a quick scan of my hard drive. The scan was very fast, among the quickest that I have experienced, a plus for Security Essentials.

The interface for Security Essentials is clean, with few options available. The "Home" screen shows if the real-time protection is on, and if the signature files are up to date. Also on the Home screen are buttons for a quick, full or custom scan. The "Update" screen shows the date and time that the definitions were created, as well as virus definition and spyware definition version numbers. The "History" screen shows threats that were detected, quarantined, or allowed. Under the "Settings" tab, the screen shows the scheduled scans, file exclusions, some simple "Advanced" settings, and an ominous selection "Microsoft SpyNet." Microsoft SpyNet is an online community that helps the user respond to threats. By default, Security Essentials sends basic information to Microsoft about any possible malware that was detected. One interesting statement on the SpyNet setting says, "In some instances, personal information might unintentionally be sent to Microsoft. Microsoft will not use this information to identify you or to contact you." The "Advanced membership" is basically the same, but sends additional software information to Microsoft.

One setting that is missing in Security Essentials that is on almost all other security products, is some type of setting to determine how often the software should "phone home" to check for updates. Microsoft says that it automatically updates, but does not indicate any standardized frequency of updates. My former security suite by default checked for updates every hour, and another product that I have used "pushes" almost continuous updates to the user, keeping them reasonable up to date. By contrast, Security Essentials has an apparently

unpredictable update pattern, such that today I received a warning on the task bar icon, which flashed red; clicking on the icon told me that my definition files (virus signature files) may be out of date. Looking at the “Update” tab on the program showed that my files were two days out of date, so I manually updated the software by clicking on the “update” button. The update was quickly downloaded and installed, but it was interesting to note that the time stamp on the latest update was about six hours old. As I type this, the “Update” screen shows that my definitions are over 10 hours old, so I just clicked on the update button again; Security essentials duly checked for an update, and reported that my software is up to date, but still shows the 10 hour old definitions as being the latest. Several years ago, daily updates were the industry norm, but today, with thousands of new threats appearing daily, infrequent updates may indicate a potential weakness in system defenses, as competitive software would have already been updated several times today.

One very pleasant surprise with Security Essentials is how fast it loads at boot, and how little it degrades system performance. I use a software utility called Solutio to monitor and control my boot process; using my prior security suite, boot time was about 100 seconds, but with Security Essentials, my computer is booting in about 50 seconds, or twice as fast! Likewise, programs seem to load much faster with Security Essentials than my previous product, and browser performance is greatly improved as well, with web pages loading much faster. This may be explained by the fact that since Security Essentials is precisely what its name implies, only the basic essentials load; other overhead is not loading and running like the more comprehensive competitive security suites.

It is up to the user to decide if the minimal but adequate protection provided by the free Microsoft Security Essentials is worth the significant improvements in performance that it allows. Since my personal choice is to have increased protection, even at the cost of some performance degradation, I will go back to my favorite comprehensive commercial suite as soon as the beta issues are resolved, or the final version is released. Still, in the meantime, I will stay with Microsoft Security Essentials until that time.

WEBSITE:

http://www.microsoft.com/Security_Essentials



Touchy Typing

Q. I find that when I'm using my laptop, the cursor jumps all over the place without any apparent provocation. I am not aware of touching anything when that happens. Is there a setting to prevent this from occurring?

A. The problem you describe is usually caused by accidentally contacting the laptop's touchpad when typing. Most laptops have a small switch or other method of disabling the touchpad. If you can't locate a switch, there will be a setting you can change to disable it, which is what I do. I prefer using an external mouse, so I disable my laptop's touchpad right off the bat. Typically, it's a BIOS setting that is accessed during the startup process, but contact your computer manufacturer's Tech Support to determine how to disable it, as it varies by computer.

If you don't want to disable the touchpad, you'll just have to watch where your hands and wrists are positioned to keep them away from the touchpad. Some people place "insulation," like a little pad or a few yellow stickies on the touchpad to make it less sensitive, so some experimentation may be in order, as well.

Q. Is there a simple way to determine the number of files within a folder without having to

make a manual count?

A. You sure can. Right-click any folder, select Properties, and in the Contains: field it will show how many files are in the folder. In addition to the Contains: field, the Size: field, not surprisingly, displays the size of the folder which can be useful in determining if the contents of a given file or folder will fit on a CD, thumb drive, or other storage device.

Q. I have a good friend who believes her teenage daughter is involved in some questionable online activities. Is there a way that she can keep an eye on what sites her daughter is visiting and what she's doing online?

A. For absolute monitoring of every keystroke and every bit of activity that occurs, Spector for Windows (<http://tinyurl.com/3rrv6b>) works like a surveillance camera. It takes a snapshot of whatever appears on the computer screen, saving it all in a tamper-proof, hidden location on your computer's hard drive. Spector (\$69) can automatically take a picture as frequently as once every second or at longer intervals, if you prefer.

Your daughter's -- oops, your good friend's daughter (wink-wink) won't even know Spector is installed, but even if the young perv did know, she could not prevent it from memorializing her every antisocial, disgusting, and/or criminal online activity.

Q. I am using Microsoft Office 2007. When I click the Office button in the upper left-hand corner to access recent documents, none are ever listed. How do I get it to show documents I recently accessed? Thanks for being there, Mr. M. I love your weekly newsletter.

A. Thank you. (For information about subscribing, please visit www.MrModem.com). It sounds like the value for Recent Documents is set to zero, but you can easily check and adjust that: Click the Office button, then click Word Options (in Word 2007) or Excel Options, or PowerPoint Options at the bottom of the Office Menu. Go to the Advanced tab and scroll down to the "Display" section.

Set the value for "Show this number of Recent Documents:" to 12 or 15, or something other than what currently appears, then click the OK button. That should do it.

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

altMD.com

A wonderful online destination that provides detailed information on more than 200 wellness specialties and 400 health conditions. The site includes thousands of expert articles, videos, blogs, travel destinations and other resources, plus access to 300,000+ health and wellness-care providers throughout the U.S.

www.altmd.com

Travel Chums

Would you prefer to travel with another person rather than going it alone? Register for free and search to find others with a desire to venture to the same destinations you do. Paid memberships are also available and provide a few additional benefits. You can narrow your search by a number of factors, including age, gender, and religion, and you can specify whether you're looking for friendship, perhaps a little romance, or somebody to simply share expenses.

www.travelchums.com

Twinkies Facts

The Twinkie, long recognized as the cornerstone of any well-balanced diet, was created in 1930 by James Dewar, a plant manager at the Continental Baking Company. From its humble beginning as "Twinkie Fingers," today more than 500 million Twinkies are produced every year. Despite urban legends that suggest the shelf life of a Twinkie is measured in decades, according to Hostess, the actual shelf life is 25 days per Twink. Before he departed for the Big Cupcake in the Sky at age 88, Mr. Dewar (this is true) said that the secret to his long life was to "eat Twinkies every day and smoke a pack of cigarettes." What, no bourbon?

<http://tinyurl.com/2g6ub3k>

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receive TWO free months (eight weekly issues!) with your 12-month subscription. To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

From The DealsGuy

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

Computer Repair Feedback

Last month I mentioned that one of my computer problems was caused by “Online Armor.” I found I wasn’t the only one who had problems with that firewall. In my feedback, two people said it interfered with the installation of certain MS updates to their OS. I also remembered having that problem, but at that time, I thought I had accidentally created a firewall rule that caused the problem when installing the MS updates. Some repeatedly failed to install, no matter what I did.

The answer was suggested at our Tech SIG. I eventually got into the habit of shutting down my firewall, and also Spybot (which sometimes caused update installations to fail), so the updates would install correctly, but a few Office updates still failed to install so it was still a problem at times. Thanks for the feedback.

Minor Problem, Though

I’ve found that since using the Reimage Repair, two of my Office programs need to be reinstalled. I’m not sure what happened, but when I try to start them, they say “installing,” but nothing happens. I’ll work on that when I get time.

Not Much Work Lately

We worked the Hearth, Patio, and Barbeque show <<http://www.bvents.com/event/194492-hpbexpo-hearth-patio-and-barbecue-expo>> that had plenty of home barbeque products, but also plenty of fireplace displays that looked fascinating. The electric ones looked like they had beautiful flames and fooled many who thought they used gas. Some of the cooking products were filled with specially treated glass beads that held the heat very well. I didn’t see any of those cooking food near my post, but there was food being cooked all over the show and I didn’t get away from my post much.

Due to health problems, we have not been working any shows lately, and we are missing some good ones. We missed the diabetes show, which is usually an interesting one. Right now, both my wife and I have a serious bacterial infection that the doctor said was highly contagious so we have quarantined ourselves for now. It’s a problem getting old for some of us, but the alternative to getting old really sucks.

Even Some Large User Groups are Feeling the Pinch

I heard from the editor of a user group that used to consistently have many members, and had a very impressive newsletter with its articles written mostly by their members. He asked about my health, and during our messages, he indicated that in spite of being the many-member group it had been for several years, and offering a monthly newsletter that looked like a magazine on a newsstand, their membership is at an all time low, but they are still holding together. They also went to a PDF newsletter several years ago and they still have great authors within their own group. I just can’t understand people giving up the kind of help and camaraderie a user group offers.

No Luck With Vendor Announcements

I received three vendor product announcements for new products with user group member discounts, but none of the contacts replied to my e-mails asking for ordering instructions for my readers. Why bother announcing the products if we can’t order them? That problem is quite common any more. I had another item that I’ve had around for a while and I asked if I could get a special offer for my readers these days. The guy said he would set things up in a

couple of days, but so far, I'm still waiting. However, I have not given up on him yet and I liked the product, which is learning courses for software.

Under the circumstances, I looked up some items that I've been saving for future use and hopefully you'll find them interesting. Most of them were found in user group newsletters.

Worried About Your Laptop Getting Stolen?

You always stand the chance of your laptop getting stolen when you're carrying it with you, because the worst can always happen. Of course, all your personal information goes with it if that happens, but if you have the data encrypted, that part won't matter, so you simply purchase a new laptop and use your backup to bring it up to date. However, Prey Project can be a big help if you prepared yourself with it ahead of time <<http://www.preyproject.com>>. If you decided to get set up with Prey Project to protect yourself in the event a theft, simply go to their Web site and report the theft. Prey will start attempting to connect your computer to a network so it can start sending back silent reports; and maybe even pictures if your laptop also has a camera. It will also immediately start sending back reports, and the current IP address along with reports on what the user is doing. It's a small program so it won't take much to install it.

The product is free, but they do accept donations. I read about this item in the Jan. 2010 *Monitor*, an outstanding newsletter of The Rochester Computer Society, put together by the dedicated Editor, Sally Springett <<http://www.rcsi.org>>. No author was listed for this item. I never fail to read her newsletter from cover to cover.

Another Daily Deal

"GoingToday" has the same "one daily item for sale for 24-hours" policy as other daily sale sites I've given you and you never know what it might be until they offer it, but this site <<http://www.goingtoday.com>> is said to cater more to musicians and music lovers. I only browse it occasionally and the deals I have mostly seen are for quality sound equipment, although the prices were not bad. In my younger days, I was also a musician, but those days are long gone so it won't work for me when they offer musical instruments, but its fun to check it occasionally.

Help Troubleshooting Your Computer Problem

This resource has good recommendations and seems to be a good one. If you prefer to troubleshoot your own computer when a problem arises, sometimes the fix is elusive and you still need help. I'm told this site has helped many with their problems, but it is by e-mail only so you will need to send a good description of your problem. Your help may come from anyplace in the world, but the more help, the better when a solution is needed. <<http://www.protonic.com/>> is the URL for your help and a little research will tell you that it is well rated by some respected services.

Martin Kessler sent this to me some time ago, but I lost it and ran across it recently, however, the e-mail address I have for Martin is no longer good. I hope he is still active in his user group.

Help With Updates

Many who subscribe to the *Windows Secrets* newsletter by Brian Livingston may already know about Secunia, because he recommended it some time ago, but it is a good service so I am including it here. I also found this in MUG Monitor (Jan 2010), newsletter of Macon Users Group. Liz Russel writes an excellent monthly article called tech talk <<http://www.maconusersgroup.org>> and included Secunia in that column.

They have a free program you can use to scan your computer for needed updates. It is called Secunia Software Inspector <http://www.secunia.com/vulnerability_scanning/>. Actually, if you are a home user, you can have your computer scanned online or you can scan your entire network with the Corporate Software Inspector. If something on your computer needs an update, Secunia will go out and get it for you on its own. Not everyone favors Secunia though, so look it over carefully before you try it.

How Do You Replace Your Favorite Utilities?

Ninite will help you do that by letting you choose from all your favorites and will also install them for you. If there are items you'd rather not have, Ninite will leave them out. Get it at <<http://ninite.com>>. I read about it in *Bits of Bytes*, the newsletter of Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, <<http://ppcompas.apcug.org>> and no author was listed. You can find out more by visiting the Ninite Web site. *Bits of Bytes* is a very interesting newsletter. It's not lengthy, but every page is fascinating and I'm lucky to receive it.

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>>.

Free Utilities from CPUID Describe System Details

by Ira Wilsker

As regular readers of this column know, I am a fan of utilities, especially if they are free! Frequently, situations arise where it is necessary to know the details of a computer, including specifics about its software, hardware, drivers, and other components in order to diagnose a problem and make recommendations. There are several fine utilities that can perform these functions, but several that I have been using recently come from the historical city of Dunkerque, France, courtesy of their publisher CPUID Software.

CPUID software is best known for its namesake product, CPUID, which is as it says, a utility to identify the details of the CPU chip installed in a computer. This is often necessary to know if the computer is being benchmarked (performance measured), upgraded, or undergoing major repairs. The latest CPUID software is named CPU-Z, version 1.55. This small utility displays the processor brand and model number, the type of socket it uses (necessary to know for replacement or upgrades), speeds, and other details about the CPU chip, which is the central "brains" of the computer.

Sometimes it is desirable or necessary to replace a motherboard, or determine the BIOS on the motherboard. The motherboard is the central platform on which most of the other internal components are either directly attached to, or otherwise connected to, and provides much of the internal communication between the components. While generally very reliable and long lived, sometimes it is necessary to replace a motherboard. The BIOS, an acronym for "Basic Input - Output System" is typically attached to the motherboard, and contains the first code run by a PC when it is initially powered on. The BIOS identifies and initializes the video card, keyboard, mouse, hard drive, CD/DVD drive, and other key components. The BIOS contains software in a non-volatile ROM chip, and is typically firmly attached to the motherboard. Most BIOS chips can be updated and upgraded with software provided either by the BIOS manufacturer, motherboard maker, or computer manufacturer.

CPU-Z identifies the brand of BIOS, the version of its software, and the date of the software stored in it; with this information, it is somewhat easy to determine if the BIOS contains the latest software. Keeping the BIOS updated is not a critical task if everything appears to be working OK, but for those of us always trying to tweak our computers and capitalize in the latest offerings, this is good information to have. One warning is appropriate here; if the user is considering updating the BIOS, be absolutely sure to explicitly follow the manufacturer's directions to the letter! In a worst case scenario, failure to do so will result in an expensive paperweight, but in many cases, there is a procedure to "roll back" or restore the BIOS to its earlier status.

When I ask people how much memory they have in their computer, they are often clueless, or erroneously confuse the memory with the storage capacity of their hard drives. Clicking on the “Memory” tab of CPU-Z displays the type of memory, the amount of memory, speed, and other characteristics. The “SPD” tap allows the user to cycle through the memory stick installed in his computer, displaying the capacity of each stick, the type, manufacturer, part number, and other information. This information may be necessary if the user wants to add or replace memory in the computer.

The “Graphics” tab displays information about the display device, including the brand, model number, chipset, speed, and memory. Since the video card makers often release updates, enhancements, and new features, this information could be very useful.

CPUID also publishes several other utilities, and another one that I found useful is PC Wizard 2010. PC Wizard was first published in 1996, and is considered one of the most comprehensive system information utilities available. Since the hardware industry is very dynamic, with new hardware being introduced on a daily basis, PC Wizard is frequently updated, typically monthly. In addition to identifying and displaying the details of the hardware and software on the computer, PC Wizard can also benchmark the performance of the individual computer components, as well as the entire computer. By noting which components and software are the performance laggards, the user can then determine what, if any, practical solutions may improve performance. PC Wizard utilizes a series of icons representing each of the components or software titles installed on the computer, and can determine the hardware, configuration, system files, and resources used by the computer. The benchmark selection can test and display the performance of the entire computer, the CPU (processor chip), memory, video, hard drive, external storage devices (like CD/DVD and USB drives), and other hardware components. In addition to displaying the performance of the hardware itself, a “Compare Results” shows how the user’s computer compares to others. The results are also displayed and announced (audio) using the wizard avatar and voice synthesis similar to the “Vox Proxy” PowerPoint accessory. PC Wizard provides the user with a wealth of information.

While CPUID has several utilities available for free download, one of those that I also found very useful is HWMonitor, which is a shortened “Hardware Monitor”. This utility is also available in an enhanced commercial version, HWMonitor Pro, which adds additional features and functionality. HWMonitor (the free version) can identify the power supply in the computer, and display the real-time voltages, temperatures, and fans in the power supply. This is important to monitor the health of the power supply, and consider a replacement or upgrade if necessary. Many users are unaware that their computers report the temperatures of various components in the computer, which is important in that heat is one of the big killers of components. Being somewhat colonial, I selected to display the temperatures in Fahrenheit (F) rather than Celsius (C). Usually there are some fans in each computer which are critical in exhausting the heat from the components, and bring in cool outside air. HWMonitor tracks and reports the performance of the fans, which can enable the user to easily and quickly see if a fan is failing; a dead fan can lead to overheating and damage or destruction of the computer’s components. This utility can also track and report on the temperatures of the motherboard, CPU chip, video card, and hard drive.

Most of these utilities are available for 32 and 64 bit Windows PCs using recent versions of Windows such as XP, Vista, and Windows 7, although some of the utilities also have builds that are explicitly for Windows 98. The files are relatively small and fast to download, and consume minimal system resources, such that they do not noticeably degrade system performance. These utilities could be a useful asset to anyone who wants to keep up with the performance, condition, and health of his system.

WEBSITES:

<http://www.cpubid.com>

<http://www.cpubid.com/software.html>

Power to the Pixels!

by Dave Christenson

The digital photo guru and member of the Fox Valley PC Association, IL

I suspect that everyone reading this has at least one digital camera. What criteria did you use when buying it? Size, features, cuteness, need, impulse? Some or all of these? Maybe. But I'll bet that two you definitely considered are price and pixel count. All other things being equal, low price and high mega-pixel count is good! Right? Not always. I'll certainly go along with the low price bit, but let's think about the pixels a bit. Why do we want more pixels? Obviously, because the picture, or image, is made out of the more detail the image can enlarge it, or more cropping we capabilities of the count, we get more informally, stair-stepping, Also called, for obvious reason, necessarily want the most pixels



possible for the price? Well, everything in this us. We all make unnecessary from the lens hits a pixel it proportional to the amount of also a residual signal in a pixel, whether or not light is hitting

top of the wanted signal, and the lower the brightness of the image, the greater the noise appears. Thus, it shows up more in photos taken in dim light. But it's always there, and in all cameras. It appears more obvious in areas of smoothness, such as sky, or human skin, and causes the image to look somewhat rough or granulated. (To those who are used to film, it's more or less the equivalent of grain.) Altogether, noise is something really undesirable.

What's the easiest way to reduce the amount of noise in a pixel? Easy, make it bigger! Now, do you see the conflict? **If** we make the pixels bigger to reduce noise, then we have to have fewer of them on a given size sensor. Or, we can have bigger sensors. This method definitely works, but at a price. A bigger sensor means a bigger camera, and a higher price. Large sensors are expensive, huge sensors ridiculously so. (A giant sensor or a new car, your choice!) There is software in cameras designed to analyze the noise and reduce it. It works, but it has limitations distinguishing between noise and signal. Software packages can be purchased at varying price levels to reduce noise, they help but don't cure the noise problem, if you want to get into that.

You would think that camera manufacturers, being aware of the problem, would design their cameras to have a reasonable compromise between sensor size and number of pixels. The designers could, but specifications are given by the marketing group, who are well aware that "Pixels sell!" So, what should you do?

Well, consider how you are going to use your photos. Are you going to print 16" x 20" photos on high resolution glossy paper? Are you going to crop out an itsy-bitsy portion of the center of the picture and enlarge it? **If** so, I'm afraid you will have to bite the bullet and get a larger sensor camera. But if you are taking photos of birthday parties, vacations, and get-togethers, and want to print them as 4x5's or email them, then I wouldn't be too concerned about pixel counts. Maybe cuteness is more important.

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 (deanholste@sbcglobal.net).

This and That or Things That May Interest You

by Lynn Page
Crystal River Users Group, FL

Windows7

Shake

Minimize all windows but one with shake, click and hold down on the title bar and shake to maximize that window and minimize all others. Shake again to restore all.

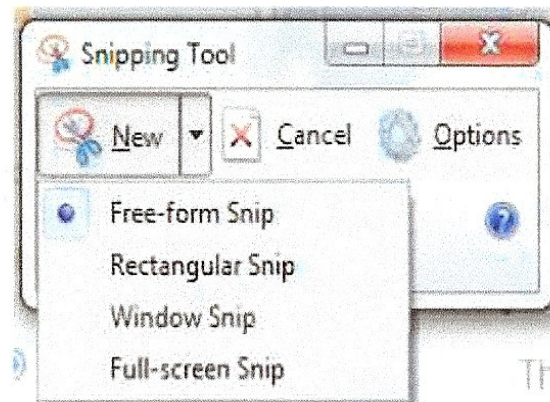
Snap

Snap can display two windows side by side with each filling half of the screen. With one window active press and hold the Windows key while hitting the left or right arrow key. The window snaps to that side. Do the same with the other window but press the other arrow key while holding the Windows key down.

To maximize a window with press and hold down the Windows key while hitting the up arrow key. To restore the window hold the Windows key and hit the down arrow button.

Snipping Tool

The snipping tool has been improved in Windows 7. You can snip a whole window, a rectangular section of the screen, or draw a freehand outline with your mouse or tablet pen. You can save it as a graphic file or annotate with basic drawing tools. And you no longer have the red snipping border.



Windows Mail

Windows Mail can handle a variety of different accounts. So you can set up a single personal email account, or add a work or other personal accounts and even newsgroups. With multiple accounts I like to put each account in a separate folder.

Add a User Account

In Windows Mail click Accounts in the Tools drop down menu. Click the Add button select the type of account to add, click Next, and then follow the instructions inputting the logon and server information for the email account.

Delete a User Account

In Windows Mail click Accounts in the Tools drop down menu Select the account to remove and then click Remove.

Blocked Email Attachments

To protect your computer from file attachments that are commonly used to spread email viruses Windows Mail blocks certain types of files, like: .exe, .pif, and .scr files. When Windows Mail blocks an attachment, the Information bar displays a message notifying you and listing the attachment that was blocked.

To access blocked attachments close the message with the attachment. Then in the Tools drop down menu select Options. Click the Security tab and clear the Do not allow Attachments to be saved or opened that could potentially be a virus check box. Next reopen the message. Once you access the attachment it is better to repeat the process and block the attachments again.

Junk Mail Folder

Windows Mail's junk mail filter is designed to catch obvious spam and move them to the Junk email folder. helps manage your Inbox to keep it free of unwanted mail.

Change the Junk Email Protection Level

In the Tools drop down menu click Junk email Options and set the protection level you want.

Move a Message from the Junk Email Folder to the Inbox

Open the Junk email folder and select the message to move to the Inbox. In the tool bar point to Junk email and click Mark as Not Junk in the drop down menu. The message is moved to your Inbox ..

Add Sender to the Blocked Senders List

Select a message from the sender to add to the Blocked Senders list. On the toolbar point to Junk email and then click Add Sender to Blocked Senders List. This blocks all future messages from that specific sender.

Add Sender to the Safe Senders List

Select a message from the sender to add to the Safe Senders list. On the toolbar point to Junk email, and then click Add Sender to Safe Senders List. This allows all future messages from that specific sender.

Correct File Associations

If files are opening in the wrong application find one of the files and right click it. Then in Windows Vista, select Open With and then Choose Default Program. From the list of programs select the program to use. Or Browse to add a program to the list. Click to check the Always use the selected program to open this kind of file box and then click OK In Windows XP, after right clicking the file select Open With. Then find the program to use. or Browse to find another program. Again, check Always use the selected program to open this kind of file and click OK

Remove Your Phone Number from Searches

Google Search to find your listing in Google's PhoneBook. Then go to Google's online PhoneBook Name Removal form and enter the information as it appeared in the Google listing. WhitePages.com

Find your listing on WhitePages.com. and at the bottom of your listing click the small link that for "Is this you? Remove your listing." Confirm the remove request.

Yahoo

Find your listing using Yahoo!'s People Search. Then use the online Remove PhoneListing form and enteryourname as it appears in the listing.

Switchboard. com

Find your listing by searching Switchboard. Click the Remove this listing link beside the listing and provide your email address.

Office 2007

Format Painter

The Format Painter is an easy way to copy formatting you want to duplicate on other text. Select the text to copy the format from, click the Format Painter button and then-select the text to format. To apply the same formatting to more than one item, select the text with the formatting, double-click Format Painter, and then select each word, phrase, or paragraph you want to apply formatting to. When finished, click the Format Painter again or press ESC. Format Painter is available in most Office programs.

Create a Theme from a Document

Themes are a valuable asset in Word and other Office files. A theme is a combination of theme colors, theme fonts, and theme effects. When you have generated a document with just thy perfect formatting you may want to use it again. So save the formatting as a custom theme. With the document open on the Page Layout tab, in the Themes group, click Themes. At the bottom of the menu, click Save Current Theme. Provide a file name and click save.

Use a Theme from another Document

If you didn't create a theme from a document you can still use it as a theme for a new document. Open the document that you want to apply a different theme to and on the Page

Layout tab, in the Themes group, click Themes. At the bottom of the menu, click Browse for Themes. In the Choose Theme or Themed Document dialog box, select the 2007 Office document that contains the theme to apply, and click Open.

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Travel Planner

Find Your Next Extended Global Adventure (or Week-long Vacation)

It's a big world out there. But travelling alone can be difficult, and convincing your friends to take time off to join you can be hard.

For the adventurer in you, there's Globetrooper, a social network site that allows you to create or join a planned itinerary with other like-minded travelers.

Simply sign up and begin perusing the site. You can search by type of trip (backpacking, food and wine discovery or railway adventure, for example) or region of the world.

Trips come complete with projections on cost and duration, as well rankings for how much culture shock you'll experience or how risky they are. (The site offers everything from a weekend in Montreal to an attempt to climb Mount Everest)

Even if you're not looking to join up with others, the itineraries serve as great inspiration for booking your own trips.

Now you just need to arrange for that three-month sabbatical.

<http://globetrooper.com/>

Brought to you by Netted by the Webbys, netted@netted.net

Society News

Program Meeting – Brighton Library

Tuesday, July 13, 2010

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Carl Schmidtman

by Jan Rothfuss

Q: How to you get into Outlook Exchange server?

A: Go to about POD 5100nn. It must be enabled by the service.

Q: A member is having trouble with the screen moving – drifting. He did have a new drive installed recently.

A: It could be related to your monitor. If he is using HDMI you might need to check the connectors. Be sure to set the screen resolution as high as possible. Also check your refresh. You may want to check that the connectors and boards are solid inside.

Q: Is everyone off of XP Service Pak 2?

A: You need to upgrade to SP 3. Microsoft is no longer providing updates.

Q: Where do you go to download Linux?

A: It was recommended to go to Linux Mint site. It is also recommended to download to a live CD and then you do not have to install anything right away. After testing you can then install later. Site: <http://www.linuxmint.com/download.php>

Q: Vista is taking forever to load.

A: This is a known problem. Windows 7 will be better.

Q: His hard drive is starting to ‘sing’ so he is having it replaced. Any suggestions?

A: Another disk can be installed inside, next to the other. Clean out the original disk. You can also invest in a cable for \$20.00 that will allow you to transfer files. The original would then look like an external drive. It might be a good time to try a clean install.

Q: One member is getting messages about his power when leaving his machine on constantly. The power options have not been changed but the disk continues to run.

A: There may be something running on the machine in the background, causing the machine to seem active. Try bringing up the task manager = processes and see what is running.

NOTE: Windows XP support has been extended to 2014. This is needed for the netbooks that have been sold over the last couple of years. Virtual machines will keep XP alive for a while longer. Windows 7 Professional allows VM to be set up. Compatibility mode will allow both hardware and software VM. An XP license is integrated into Windows & Vista. If you use virtual box, you will need to supply a license code.

Business Meeting:

Led by Steve Staub

Steve asked all persons to see him to join or renew their membership. Cards are available for everyone. If you do not have a membership card holder, see Steve. Starting this meeting, all members are asked to wear their tags. Doing so makes you eligible for door prizes. If you do not wear your tag, you will be asked to make a contribution to our “Help the Club Box.” Steve also thanked the group for the sympathy card.

Our newsletter assembly is set for this coming Saturday, July 17th at St. Steven’s, starting at 9:30 a.m. Last month the run took about six hours. The Planning meeting is the first Tuesday of each month at Sally’s house, starting at 7:00 p.m. Our August meeting will be the annual picnic (see details below).

Does anyone have a lead for ads to include in our newsletter? We are also looking for a permanent home where we can meet every month. We are still looking for a Program Chair, noting that this person can work from home. Emails can be used to keep the Board advised of future programs.

September – Part III of our Photography program

October – Arpad’s annual Gifts and Gadgets Presentation

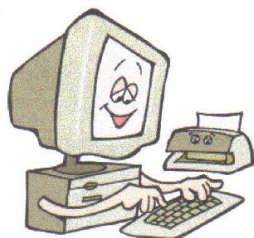
November – Microworks will be presenting

December – Club Christmas Party – Jeopardy competition with all bringing cookies

The Digital Photography SIG needs a leader. Dave Thompson is no longer acting as the chair. They do have a permanent place to meet at St. John’s Meadows. The Linux SIG meets with Carl. They meet at 1115 East Main Suite 42 at Goodman on second Saturdays. There is no meeting in August.

Plans are being made for our annual club picnic being held this year on the second Tuesday in August, 8/10. There will be a silent auction. It will be at the Brighton Town Park, 777 Westfall Road (cabin by the pond). Please arrive at 5 p.m. We will eat at 6 p.m. A-I names are to bring munchies. J-R names are asked to bring salads. S-Z names are to bring desserts. There is a \$5 charge. It covers the facility rental and the meats, plates, beverages, etc. Reservations must be made by August 1st. Feel free to bring along cards, board games, etc. and stay after supper until the park closes.

Steve also asked that you let us know when you are out of town (such as snow birds). This avoids postage fees for newsletters that are undeliverable.



The Lighter Side

The very first Apple computer was priced at \$666.66, not for any Satanic connotations, but rather for more practical reasons. Steve Wozniak’s explanation was that the retail price ran around \$667, and it was easier to type one repeating digit—\$666.66.