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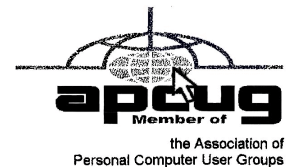Tuesday, December 14

Holiday Party with Jeopardy

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IObit Toolbox - Free System Utilities

by Ira Wilsker

Ihave just added another system utility to my growing collection of software. While there have been some controversies in the past about some IObit security products, I have generally been very satisfied with IObit products, and use some of them on a regular basis. I recently downloaded one of the latest additions from IObit, and found that it can fill a niche as a system utility. This newly released free system utility is IObit Toolbox, a comprehensive, integrated collection of 22 utilities that allows the user "...to display/diagnose PC information, enhance PC security, optimize PC performance and repair PC problems." While IObit says that Toolbox is a "Must-have System Utilities for Administrators and Computer Geeks," there are utilities available that most users would find very helpful.

The latest version of Toolbox, version 1.1, was released in late September, and is a 15.2 MB zip file download (iobit_toolbox.zip), and will run on both 32 and 64 bit versions of Windows 7, Vista, XP, and 2000. Other then extracting the files and instructing Windows Explorer where to copy them (I chose to create a directory named "IObitToolbox"), there is no installation to perform. What is interesting is that Toolbox can be used on a desktop or laptop computer as a comprehensive system utility, or it can be copied to a flash drive and used as a fully portable system utility. I copied the directory I created on my desktop computer, "IObitToolbox," to the flash drive on my key chain where it now happily resides alongside my portable security software and LiberKey portable utilities. Now, I can run IObit Toolbox on my desktop computer as well as any other computer that I need to work on.

When opening Toolbox, either by clicking on toolbox.exe or its icon (a blue circle with a wrench in the center), the user is greeted with a pleasing and easy to read graphical user interface. On the left is the primary menu, consisting of utility functions, including "Clean," "Optimize," "Repair," "Security," and "Control"; if Toolbox has been previously used, a menu item "Recently" will also appear, displaying the most recently used system utilities. When clicking on the main menu on the left of the window, a selection of utilities will appear on the right that includes a descriptive icon, utility name, and a brief description of the functions of that specific utility. While only four utilities are displayed at a time, a slider on the right edge will display any additional utilities under that category.

Under the "Clean" category is a registry cleaner, privacy sweeper, program uninstaller, disk cleaner, and file shredder. Clicking on any item loads that specific program from the hard drive or flash drive, where it runs on top of the interface.

Listed under "Optimize" are six utilities designed to improve system performance, including a memory manager, internet connection booster, startup manager, registry defragmenter, hard drive defragmenter, and a game booster. I tried the "Internet

Booster" and it measured my internet connection speed using a third-party bandwidth service (speedtest.net), indicating that I am only getting about two-thirds of the speed that I am paying for, and that my speed is below average for my ISP. Based on these findings, I will repeat the test using other services, such as the free speed tests available from broadband.gov, and if I continue to get below standard speeds, I will place a service call with my ISP. I would not likely have known that my speed has degraded had it not been for the Internet Booster in IObit Toolbox! Other Internet Booster function optimized my browser settings for Firefox and Chrome, but does not modify the Internet Explorer settings on Windows 7 or Vista. The Game Booster function connects to another IObit webpage (www.iobit.com/gamebooster.html) where a free copy of Game Booster can be downloaded. Game Booster will, "...optimize your PC for smoother, more responsive game play in the latest PC games with the touch of a button..." It works by defragmenting game directories, temporarily shutting down background processes, cleaning RAM, and intensifying processor performance. That means you can keep all the features of operating systems ready for when you need them, but turn them off when you are ready to get down to serious business – gaming."

The "Repair" category includes a selection of utilities that can recover deleted files, repair or delete broken shortcuts, check the hard drive for errors, analyze Windows for any problems and attempt to repair them, and an IE Helper that can manage Internet Explorer settings, and repair any hijacked settings.

Even though I already carry several security utilities on my flash drive, Toolbox also includes an assortment of useful security utilities aptly under the heading "Security." Toolbox offers a "Security Holes Scanner" that scans Windows for any unpatched security holes, and downloads the necessary patches directly from Microsoft, helping to make Windows a more secure operating system. The Process Manager manages running programs and processes, and displays system performance information. The Driver Manager allows the user to backup any installed drivers, and searches for any updated drivers that may be available. The "IObit Security 360" button connects to the internet, and downloads the latest free version of IObit Security 360 Free, a very popular and highly rated security scanner (five stars from Cnet, ZDnet, and Download.com). According to IObit, "Security 360 Free is an advanced malware & spyware removal utility that detects, removes the deepest infections, and protects your PC from various potential spyware, adware, trojans, keyloggers, bots, worms, and hijackers."

The final category in Toolbox is "Control," where a cloned file scanner can detect and remove useless duplicate files, a disk explorer that displays hard drive information, a system information utility that displays detailed information about the computer and its hardware, and empty folder scanner to delete empty folders, and a system control to enable the user to modify Windows settings.

While IObit Toolbox is clearly intended for serious use, it does make a sacrifice in

the name of personal vanity. Clicking on the "Settings" link at the top of the Toolbox window opens a window that allows the user to choose his own image for Toolbox to display (48x48 pixels suggested, in .png format), and also allows the user to change the title of the program from the generic Toolbox title to whatever the user wants, as long as it fits in the space (a maximum of 15 characters is recommended). The language may also be selected, with English, Chinese, German, French, and Czech being available.

Despite the heading on the IObit Toolbox webpage that states that it is "System Utilities for Administrators and Computer Geeks," I found that Toolbox would be appropriate for most users with a modicum of computer knowledge. As always, use the Windows System Restore function to create a restore point before making any system changes, even though most Toolbox utilities contain their own restore function. As a totally free and comprehensive utility, IObit Toolbox should be in every users' own toolbox of utilities.

WEBSITES:

http://iobit.com/toolbox.html

http://iobit.com/toolbox.html#toollist

Dozens of Free Utilities from NirSoft

by Ira Wilsker

It is no secret to regular readers of my column that I am somewhat of a software junkie, often very willing and eager to download and install interesting software. I am especially fond of free software (freeware), and recognize the great contributions that the freeware authors have made to the computing public. One of my favorite sources of freeware is a one-man software operation aptly named NirSoft, a combination of the developer's name, Nir Sofer, and the word "software." While this is a part time one-man operation, Nir Sofer has developed over one hundred excellent programs and utilities that are well written, enormously popular, lack any form of advertising pop-up or adware, and are totally free of charge.

I have been using several of the NirSoft utilities since my Windows 98 days, and always found them efficient and useful. I have used some of the password recovery utilities, USB utilities, and several others. According to the website, nirsoft.net, the most popular utilities are IPNetInfo, Volumouse, MessenPass, and Protected Storage PassView.

IPNetInfo, available for download from nirsoft.net/utils/ipnetinfo .html, is designed to retrieve information about IP addresses, those numerical sequences that identify a particular computer or server. Typically in the format of 123.45.678.90, these IP (Internet Protocol) addresses point to a specific computer or server location, and can be used to determine the likely source of an email, website, server, or other internet

connected appliance. The program is small and written in tight code, and requires no additional installation or utilities in order to run it. According to Nir, "IPNetInfo is a standalone program, so it doesn't require any installation process or additional DLLs. In order to start using it, simply copy the executable file (ipnetinfo.exe) to any folder you like, and run it." I copied the file to my desktop, and use it mostly to determine the (mostly) true location of the sender of an email, or the (likely) real location of a website or server; while this is not typically necessary for the casual user, I use it as a quick tool to forensically locate the probable source of spam email and scam websites.

Many of us routinely watch TV or videos over the internet, and listen to a variety of audio. Sometimes we need to adjust the volume in order to better hear the audio, and the standard Windows volume controls are often inconvenient or located on an external speaker. Not all computers have a volume control in the keyboard, so NirSoft provides a small utility that can control the volume by simply using the wheel on the mouse. Most computer mice today are wheel mice, and not many people use the wheel as a scroll tool as intended. By installing Volumouse (nirsoft.net/utils/volumouse .html), the user has complete control over all of the audio volume of the system, utilizing only the wheel on the mouse along with a function key, usually the "Alt" key. If the "Alt" key is pressed, the mouse wheel is a comprehensive volume control, otherwise it functions normally as a scroll device. This has proven to be a very handy utility to improve my enjoyment of computer audio and video.

Many of us use one or more instant messenger programs, such as Yahoo Instant Messenger, AIM (AOL), MSN Messenger, Windows Live Messenger, and others. While I have a secure password manager on my home desktop computer, and I use difficult to guess alphanumeric passwords, sometimes I get confused or forget some of the many passwords I use while instant messaging. NirSoft has a utility to help find instant messaging passwords, MessenPass. Available for download from nirsoft.net/utils /mspass.html, MessenPass can find the passwords for all popular instant messaging programs, including MSN Messenger, Windows Messenger, Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, Google Talk, ICQ, AOL Instant Messenger, AIM, AIM Pro, Trillian, Trillian Astra, Miranda, GAIM/Pidgin, MySpace IM, PaltalkScene, and Digsby. It should be noted that this is not a hacker or cracker utility, as it can only be used to "...recover the passwords for the current logged-on user on your local computer, and it only works if you chose the remember your password in one of the above programs. You cannot use this utility for grabbing the passwords of other users." One warning is necessary for users of MessenPass is that sometimes antivirus and other security programs occasionally report it as a virus of some type. This is a false positive, as MessenPass is not a virus or Trojan, and this false positive is documented at nirsoft.net/false_positive_report.html.

Protected Storage PassView is another small password utility that can display "...the passwords stored on your computer by Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and

MSN Explorer. The passwords are revealed by reading the information from the Protected Storage." Available for download at nirsoft.net/utils/pspv.html, Protected Storage PassView can display the users' registered passwords for password protected websites accessed in Internet Explorer, Outlook and Outlook Express passwords, auto-complete passwords in Internet Explorer, and MSN Explorer passwords. As with the other password utilities, this is not a hacker program, as it can only display passwords of the current logged in user, and cannot display the passwords of other users. Also as with the other password utilities, some security software displays a false positive warning when the utility is opened; using a reputable third party utility, virustotal .com, I have personally verified that these original utilities downloaded directly from the NirSoft website were indeed clean of any malware, and that any such reports were indeed false positives.

Password utilities are not the only utilities available from NirSoft, as many of the one hundred plus utilities serve other functions. Some that I periodically use are the network utilities, some of which can be used to determine the actual download speed of my internet connection, view computers attached to the network, display details of wireless and Bluetooth networks in the area, and other network functions. There are about a dozen free internet related utilities available, including cookie managers, cache viewers, screen capture utilities, HTML converters, DNS utilities, and several other internet related utilities. Some of the free desktop utilities include a file search utility, uninstaller, and file type manager. NirSoft has about 10 free system tools, including a USB device manager (USBDeview, nirsoft.net/utils/usb_devices_view .html, one of my most frequently used tools), a hardware device manager, driver manager, registry scanner, and several other helpful tools. One of the system tools that I used a great deal with Windows XP was BlueScreenView, which displayed the details of Windows crashes, making them easier to resolve. NirSoft also has a selection of free tools to improve the functioning of the Outlook email program.

Other than the occasional false positive warnings from some security software, I have always found that NirSoft's free utilities can efficiently carry out their intended tasks with a minimum of effort. Nir Sofer personally writes all of his software, and frequently posts updates and bug fixes, helping to insure that the software is up to date. While NirSoft is only a part-time operation, and Nir Sofer does not directly charge for any of his software, there is a link on the site for voluntary donations. For users that may need some small, free, well written, specialized utilities, NirSoft would be a worthwhile source for that software.   WEBSITES;
http://www.nirsoft.net
http://www.nirsoft.net/about_nirsoft_freeware.html
http://www.nirsoft.net/false_positive_report.html

Avoid Unsecure Wireless Access

www.MrModem.net
Ask Mr. Modem

Q. We are renting a vacation home for a month that has wireless, but it is not secured by a password. The people we rent from are good people and the house is in a nice area. I had planned to access our brokerage account online to check balances while we are gone. How vulnerable is my computer and my information, if I use this wireless access?

A. In a word, vulnerable. That doesn't mean your data or identity will be stolen or your system hacked or victimized by any of a number of evils that can result from using an unsecured wireless network, but could it happen? Absolutely. Unfortunately, the security of the network has nothing to do with how nice the owners of the house are or the lovely neighborhood.

When you use an unsecured wireless network in the manner you describe, you're effectively saying, "I know it's not secure and I know there's a amall chance that my data may be stolen, but I'm willing to take that chance." The only person you have to answer to is yourself, so if you're comfortable with that decision, have at it.

When all is said and done, you'll probably be fine, but could there be a problem? Yes, there certainly could. Personally, I would suggest focusing on your vacation and not spending time online, if you can possibly avoid it. If you must check your balances, most banks and brokerage firms provide toll-free numbers for that purpose.

Q. I understand that software programs load into memory (RAM) when being used. But when a program is closed, is it removed from memory and returned to the hard drive?

A. In theory, yes; in reality, not quite. Memory works like a blackboard that is constantly overwritten with new data. The data stored in memory is temporary, which is why you must save data before turning off your computer.

When software programs are shut down, they are supposed to tidy up after themselves and remove everything loaded into RAM. Unfortunately, most programs leave a trail behind and don't completely remove themselves from memory. Over time, this unsightly data build-up can cause your computer to become sluggish. To purge RAM completely, simply reboot your computer. If you normally leave your computer on 24/7, as I do, restarting the computer once a week should be sufficient.

Q. How can I change a color photo into a black and white picture?

A. Irfanview (www.irfanview.com) is a free program that can convert your photo to an artsy black and white image. To transform your photo, open Irfanview, display your image by clicking File > Open, navigate to your photo, click to select it, then click the Open button.

With your image displayed, click Image in the Menu Bar, then click Convert to

Greyscale. Your image will then, not surprisingly, appear in greyscale. Grayscale images are distinct from black-and-white images which, within the context of digital photography, are images with only two colors, black and white; grayscale images have many shades of gray in between.

If you want true black and white, click Image in the Menu Bar again, then click Decrease Color Depth. In the window that appears, click to select "Two Colors," then click the OK button to save your changes.

If you are satisfied with your new colorless picture, click File > Save As. Be sure to give your black-and-white photo a new name or you will overwrite the original color photo. Click OK to save the new image.

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

TypeRacer

Test your typing skills against other players for the chance to win money, fame, fabulous prizes -- well, maybe not, but it's a nice thought. Play as a Guest or create your own account. Once your account is created, when the countdown to the green light tells you to start, type like the wind -- but don't blow any words by making any tpyos.
http://play.typeracer.com

VideoMD

A library of physician-created, educational videos. Whether a physician wants to introduce patients to his or her practice, or discuss complex procedures, VideoMD provides a platform for that purpose. The site demonstrates that with modern, online video capabilities, combined with an array of searchable content features, video is an excellent way to deliver useful patient-oriented information in an easy and understandable format. When it comes to the healing arts, I am a practitioner of bowlistic healing, which is based on the premise that there is nothing that can't be cured with a nice bowl of chicken soup.
www.videomd.com

WhatTheFont?

Have you ever wanted to find a font like the one used by a certain publication, business, or ad campaign? Me neither, but it is possible using the WhatTheFont's patented FRS (Font Recognition System). Upload a scanned image of a font and instantly find the closest matches. If WhatTheFont can't figure it out, you can submit your image to its forum where cloak-draped, shadowy characters will help you out.
http://new.myfonts.com/WhatTheFont/

For plain-English answers to your questions by email, plus great computing tips, subscribe to Mr. Modem's award-winning WEEKLY newsletter. Subscribe using Promo Code 1640 and receive TWO free months (eight weekly issues!) with your 12-month subscription. To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click

Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

Miscellaneous Comments

I'm catching up on reading the newsletters I receive. I print them out on my Ricoh color laser so it's easier for me to read, and I noticed that the colored pictures I printed before the cartridges ran out were fine, but when I replaced the printer cartridges, the new pictures I printed had the lines. Since then, it seems to have improved and some small pictures printed OK. Several readers advised me it was probably dirt on the drum after last month's comment. Perhaps something ended up on the drum on the bottom of the cartridge when I changed it, and is working its way off, I really don't know. I haven't found anything in the manual about cleaning it.

I haven't heard how the FACUG cruise in January of 2011 is shaping up. We're still considering it, but it looks like we won't make it. Last year's FACUG cruise was a highlight for me. Some are leaving this cruise out because it's one day longer and costs more. Actually, I don't mind the extra day, in spite of the extra cost, because shopping at Cozumel is great and there will be no sessions that afternoon. The ship is better and Royal Caribbean is one of my favorite cruise lines. If you're favorite SIG is the PIG SIG, Royal Caribbean's food selection is exceptional.

One of the most interesting things about reading many user group newsletters is that some have regular articles, written by a member, that are always outstanding, but that's the only place it's published, unless an editor has seen it and uses it in their own newsletter. I once told Judy Taylor that I would like to recommend a few outstanding authors that I see each month so the entire nation could read their material, but it never came to pass because she already had plenty of items for her PUSH collections. There is certainly a wealth of great articles available to editors now.

Loss Of Another User Group

I received a message from Lou Vitale, President of Macon Users Group in Macon, GA, telling the members that the BOD had decided it was no longer logical to keep the group alive. It must have taken him a while to put that final letter together, but I disagree that they no longer have anything to offer the members. As usual, only a few people were willing to do the work and they probably got tired of working while others simply enjoyed the benefits. Yes, they do have almost nothing new to present that they haven't already done, but nothing can replace a member coming in with his machine in hand that has a problem, or stating his problem during the Q & A, and after a short discussion, his problem is most likely diagnosed. The Internet might have the answers, but who is going to explain it to you, except, perhaps, your grand kids. In the meantime, some malware or keyloggers might stop by, and God help you if that happens. The Internet can only help if you understand what you're reading and know

what you're doing, and that's where a users group comes in. The members that weren't active in the group's work will be the real losers.

Lou Vitale was one of my favorite authors and I'll surely miss his writings. I have to think that if I looked at that message closely, I would see a few tearstains (confirmed by Lou). Lizzz Russell also wrote interesting articles, and I have sometimes quoted from both authors. If you would like to read Lou's closing letter sent to the members, check my Web site where you'll find a link to read it <http://www.dealsguy .com>. Their Web site is already shut down.

As for their running out of presentations, I sometimes read about what was likely an interesting presentation from a source you might not consider. Most user group officers feel that everything should be computer related, but I don't necessarily agree with that. One group said they were having a local TV weather caster come in to demonstrate the use of computers in weather forecasting. Recently, another User Group had two guys come in from an HH Gregg store who did a presentation on 3D TVs. They answered many questions, and wowed the attendees with the live demonstration of 3D TV. They passed around the two pair of glasses they had so everyone got a chance to see this impressive demonstration with their own eyes. I know I was impressed. It was a job bringing the large screen TV and other equipment to do it. One slip and that large screen could have been shattered. Since I wear glasses, it's awkward for me to put the 3D glasses over my own pair.

The Post Office also has some unique operations that are, sort of, computer related. Other utilities might also have presentations. I'd like to see a presentation by the city or county explaining the computer that controls the traffic lights around town. The one installed locally cost over a million for the installation and cables were strung all over the area. However, in my opinion, they still don't work right. I've stopped many times for no one and it makes no sense that the traffic light can't "see" in this age of technology.

Still Good

Don't forget that the special discount on the KeyStone Learning Systems' learning courses is still good for December so it's not too late to order if you haven't gotten around to getting a learning course you need. Robert Hodges has set up a 20% discount for my readers, and that's off ANY single user course until 12/31/10. When purchasing, use the coupon code "DealsGuy" when placing your order. You are also welcome to use your credit card.

Will The Real Security Stand Up?

Trying to secure our computers is an ongoing challenge, but I didn't realize how tough it is becoming for everyone until I read this article in Information Week. In some ways, this article leaves you wondering if it's even possible to properly protect your computers any more. This article is lengthy and written for professionals, but quite

informative. <http://www.informationweek.com/news/security/antivirus/showArticle .jhtml?articleID=227700363 &queryText=Greg%20Shipley>. Perhaps a secure machine is impossible, but it also boils down to an alert computer operator.

More On Safe Web Surfing

Finjan SecureBrowsing <http://securebrowsing.finjan.com/> is a browser extension that checks links in search results and Web sites. Each link is marked as safe (green) or potentially dangerous (red). SecureBrowsing warns users about potential threats before they click on search results, or other links on web pages, allowing them to explore the Web safely. This service helps the user make intelligent choices when surfing the Web, with few security worries.

Finjan SecureBrowsing performs real-time code analysis of the current content on each of the rated Web pages, and potentially malicious and undesirable behavior is automatically detected, even if they have never been categorized.

According to their Web site, while browsing the Web, you come across numerous Web sites that use Active Content to enhance your Web experience and capabilities. Active Content supports capabilities such as changing images when the mouse moves over them, popping up windows, displaying advertisements, and supporting advance design elements. These capabilities are also used by hackers to change your system settings, or even install spyware applications. Finjan SecureBrowsing alerts you, before you visit these pages, to any potential malicious Active Content, allowing you to enjoy a wealth of Web capabilities without jeopardizing your PC and private information.

Finjan SecureBrowsing also identifies potentially malicious code such as spyware, hacking code, viruses, and code that tampers with your PC system settings. Such malicious code can even try to steal your private user name and passwords when you visit your online banking Web site. Finjan SecureBrowsing identifies all of these threats in real time by analyzing the behavior of certain active content that could be used maliciously (such as JavaScript, VB Script, ActiveX and Java applets). Download this browser add-on at <http://securebrowsing.finnan .com/>. I read about this in Charlotte Bytes, newsletter for Charlotte County Computer Group Corporation <http://www.cccgc.net>. Their newsletter always has great content and one of the members told the editor about this one.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site soon 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>.

by Stew Bottorf
Tampa Bay Computer Society

I'm doing the unthinkable! This FOSS-Flap column turns away from free and open source software to something very proprietary: Microsoft Windows Home Server. Hopefully this idea might also work for you.

My winter project has been to automatically backup a group of four aging WindowsXP computers at my church. Non-profits typically never have money to own a real server with backup capability and keep their fingers crossed that irreplaceable data can always be recovered when problems occur. This is not smart, and Windows Home Server was the best inexpensive hardware/software solution I could find.

I bought the Asus TS Mini with 500GB storage for $300 including shipping at NewEgg (now lists at $350).

Here is the ASUS announcement blurb:

"Asus takes aim at the top of the home server market and hits it spot with the TS Mini SOHO series. This compact box is more than just a drive controller and some connectors. It's powered by an extremely energy efficient Intel Atom 1.66GHz processor with 1GB of DDR2 memory. Windows Home Server operating system helps you to easily store, access, share and protect your digital files.

It already includes a large 500GB SATA drive for great storage, and you can add additional hard drives without tools. If that isn't enough, there are 6 external USB 2.0 ports for external storage devices, printers and wireless networking. Or, if you want to go wired, there's a Gigabit Ethernet port. Two e-SATA ports are provided for high-speed external drives. This gives you redundancy or the ability to attach networked devices.

Automatically manage files, back up multiple computers and deliver security protection. You can even set up a personal web address to be used for remote access and for visitors. Enjoy the functionality home server system with ASUS TS Mini SOHO Home Server!"

Windows Home Server software comes pre-installed. The small case device consists of a motherboard/ processor, ram, power supply, hard drive, one Ethernet jack and lots of USB and SATA connections. The efficient 90 watt power supply is external like a laptop; the unit typically draws about 30 watts. There is room to install a second hard drive but no keyboard, mouse, CD-ROM or VGA output. The Asus manual is complete and they do supply discs to reinstall server software or restore workgroup computers if necessary.

After unpacking the TS Mini, I attached it to the network with the Ethernet cable. On one workgroup computer I installed the Home Server Connector software from the CD. As part of the installation, you name your server and give it a strong

administrator password. (A strong password is seven characters long and contains at least three of these sets: uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols.) At this time, I also ran Windows Update to get the latest changes. An administrative user at other Windows workgroup computers can install Home Server Connector software from the CD or the server itself by opening a browser to http://servername :55000.

I was now able to log into the server from workgroup computers, first using a wizard where I set a wake time on each computer for automatic backup daily between midnight and 6:00AM.

Another nice Home Server feature is shared server folders and files, that may be accessed at any workgroup computer. Users added to the server with strong passwords may have full, read-only, or no privileges. This is perfect for media files, data, and folders.

I ran preliminary manual backups from each computer, to be sure there were no issues, and then waited till next morning to see backups had successfully run overnight. I'm currently using the default backup setting that runs daily backups and retains data in weekly data sets for three months. Here are graphics of my network dashboard with four computers connected (the top computer is sleeping). The second graphic shows the Home Server Settings. This is the only place where the server may be properly shut down, and this is only accessed on a workgroup computer.

Asus includes software to add a second hard drive, Xtor Manager to synchronize data to external USB/eSATA drives, ASUS WebStorage (a one year account to store 500GB online), and ASWM (a browser-based server administration utility). Some additional Home Server add-ins are available to download at Microsoft.

So far I haven't set up remote access to the Home Server. It's impossible to set the Home Server at a fixed or static IP and DHCP and my aging router does not communicate via UPnP. This is a small hindrance and the entire network is much more secure. I have VNC connectivity into one workstation, so I presently control and check the Home Server installation via my Linux box at home.

So, I really did the unthinkable... I never dreamed my Winter project would be proprietary (or headless). The server is technically headless since it uses no input or output devices. Backups work well, and while not open source, Windows Home Server meets the need at the right cost, is extremely quiet, occupies little physical space, and Windows users seem to easily accept it running in the background.

From Bits&Bytes, *the newsletter of the Tampa Bay Computer Society.*

Three Monitors on a PC

by Jim Sanders
North Orange County Computer Club, CA

I purchased my first Samsung 24" LCD monitor with 1920 x 1200 resolution over two years ago. The driving force behind the purchase was that I wanted enough screen real estate to be able to display two documents side by side or get all of the selection menus of Adobe InDesign off of the working window. It didn't hurt that high-resolution pictures looked gorgeous on the screen. About six months ago, I stumbled into a deal that allowed me to upgrade to the Samsung T240, which is not only the same great 24-in. screen, but an HD television set as well for very little money. I watched my brother playing the lasu version of Oblivion using his Xbox 360 on a large screen but standard TV display. The game generates some beautiful scenery and I was curious as to what it would look like in highresolution on my 24-in. monitor. I discovered that the PC version of the game was only $20, so I bought it. The pictures were lovely, but the gameplay video was terrible when you started moving. I had what I thought was a fairly decent video card that was only two years old. For most things it worked well, but when it came to generating high-resolution images with a reasonable frame rate, it was like an old man with two broken legs on crutches.

The old video card had to go. Not being a hard-core gamer, I couldn't justify the really high-end video cards. Trying to balance desire, performance, and my bank account, I settled on a Diamond ATI 5770. Still an ouch at $175, but pretty impressive performance and way less money than the $500 high-end cards. A number of the reviews highlighted the fact that the 5770 card had two DVI outputs, one HDMI output, one DisplayPort output, and could drive three separate displays at the same time. So I purchased the card, installed the hardware, downloaded the latest software from ATI, and I was impressed with how well it worked on a single screen.

So when I was asked to do a presentation on how to hook up and use three monitors on a PC, I figured that I had just about everything needed in the stock, and that it would be easy to do. I would just borrow a third 24-in. display from a friend of mine so that I can run all three at 1920 x 1080, use Friday or Saturday before the meeting for

preparation, hook everything up, record several oooooh and aaaaah 3-screen display setups, and I would be ready. Boy was I wrong!

I hooked up the Samsung 24-in. and a ViewSonic 23-in. using both DVI ports and both displays came up with no problem. I shut down, plugged in a HDMI cable to the Samsung 24-in. in the center. Using the DVI ports, I plugged the ViewSonic 23-in. on the left and the Envision 19-in. with a max 1440 x 900 resolution on the right. Both DVI connected monitors worked fine but there was no image on the HDMI-connected 24-in. Samsung. I did some Googling, removed the 19-in., rebooted with the 24-in. Samsung on the HDMI and just the ViewSonic on the DVI. I got a good display on the ViewSonic and nothing on the Samsung. More Googling, follow the instructions to use the ATI Catalyst Control center to pickthe HDMI monitor and tell it to "clone" the primary monitor. The HDMI monitor then came on and looked good. It was still there when I rebooted with the envision 19-in. hooked up to the second DVI port on the 5770, but only the ViewSonic had an image. The Envision 19-in. had a blank screen.

I did some more Googling, found a page that said for the threemonitor ATI set up, one of the monitors had to be run off of the DisplayPort port. That was a problem as I don't have a monitor that has a DisplayPort input. More Googling, found suggestions to purchase adapters that convert the DisplayPort output to either DVI, HDM I, or VGA. There were also caveats that a passive DisplayPort to DVI might not work right and that one should buy an active (read that as powered) DisplayPort to DVI adapter. I found that the active converter that was recommended cost $110 and that was just too much for my pocketbook. Did some more Googling, found an ACCELL brand of adapter at MucroCenter that was only $40 and approved by ATI. I called MICro Center and they said that they had three of them in stock and that they were located in the computer peripherals section. So I drove to Micro Center and asked a salesperson in the computer peripherals section which shelf they were on, he asked another salesperson who said he thought they were located in location A, which of course they weren't. To shorten a long story, three salespersons and half-an-hour later, they finally found one of the units in a different section of the store.

I drove back home, hooked up the ACCELL "DisplayPort to DVI" adapter to the 5770, hooked up the 19-in. display to the adapter, had the ViewSonic 23" on one of the native DVI ports and the Samsung 24-in. attached to the HDMI port. Another long story short, using any combination of the four ports, I could only get two monitors at a time to work. By this time it was late Friday night, and I gave it up and went to bed. The next morning I went to the ATI Eyefinity website to try and figure out what I was doing wrong. There, not in fine print, and not in large print, but in plain sight, was the caveat that this software only works with Vista and Windows 7. So much for trying to use my XP Pro Intel ES500-based machine.

I installed a second hard disk in the computer, installed Windows 7 Ultimate on that drive using the BIOS boot priority settings so that I could still have the XP Pro

disc available, and downloaded a bunch of updates and drivers and other programs for the new as installation. Under Windows 7, the Eyefmity software worked as advertised. It was relatively easy at that point to have the ACCELL adapter driving the 19-in. display, the ViewSonic 23-in. on one of the native DVI ports, and the Samsung 24-in. attached to the HDMI port and get everything working pretty much as advertised. Transporting all of that hardware to the meeting, hooking everything up and getting it working again was almost another story unto itself, but it got done.

With the above arrangement, you have one giant desktop spread across three monitors. You can have one or more separate windows open on each of the monitors and you can spread any given window across two or more monitors. For instance, you could have an Excel spreadsheet with enough columns to take up the space on all three monitors.

There are a lot of work-related scenarios where having the three-screen setup would be most useful. For instance, if you are trading stocks you could have your main trading screen in the middle with two real-time displays going on each side of the center screen that let you know what the stocks were doing. Multiple screens are useful! The Intuit Quicken or Quick Books programs, Photoshop, AutoCAD, InDesign, and many other programs work much better when you have lots of screen real estate to play with. And, when it comes to games, WOW, the added realism that comes from having the two side screens angled toward you at 30-45 degrees to provide peripheral vision realism has to be experienced in order to be appreciated.

With the above outlined hardware configuration there is one additional function that is really quite nice. Because the Samsung 24-in. monitor is also a High Definition television, by placing it on say the left side, you can switch back and forth between using it as a computer monitor and a television screen. With the various inputs that it has, it can be hooked up to an over the air antenna, cable, or DVR input. It comes with its own remote control unit that allows you to choose which input is active and to change channels as you desire. The built-in speakers have their own amplifier.

The above display setup is going to run you a little over $1000, but hey, you're worth it right? There are several other ways of getting multiple monitors attached to your PC. Installing multiple video cards is one, and using one of the USB two video adapters is another. Whichever way you go, I think you'll find having at least two monitors is very nice and once you try it, you'll want it. Now if I can just successfully figure out a way to forget to return that third monitor that I borrowed. ☺

Connect External Monitors to Your PC

http://h71036.www7.hp.com/hho/us/en/pele/articles/connect-externaI-monitors
.html?hhosnI=hpn_1937|1760605|BD56592B8C DA47E2|FD5EDC92670F6A6A
This article on HP's web site tells you step-by-step how to connect your PC to multiple monitors.

Two Monitors? Heck, Make it Three!

http://www.aweber.com/archive/techbite/1qZIa/h/Two_Monitors_Heck_Make_it_Three_.htm Steve Bass also tells you how to connect multiple monitors to your PC. With humor no less.

Where Was I When I Took That?

by Alan Mildwurm

Diablo Valley PC Users Group, CA

Ever happen to you? It is really more common than you think. What I am referring to is not being certain what your picture is of. In fairness I am speaking specifically about taking pictures while traveling and not remembering exactly which landmark is which. This last summer we went to Beijing. Trust me, the palaces all look alike. (If you have this problem in small family gatherings, your home, hometown or familiar circumstances (or what should be familiar circumstances), this review is not for you! — you need other help!)

THE GISTEQ PHOTOTRACKR BT PRO
www.gisteq.com

The GiSTEQ™ PhotoTrackr™ will tell you exactly where you took each picture on your trip. Utilizing the included mapping software and latest Geo-Mapping technology, the GiSTEQ™ PhotoTrackr™ allows you to record and review your trip knowing exactly where you have traveled. Furthermore, if you took pictures on your trip, it will even show you the exact location and time of your pictures.

Using the Gisteq is incredibly simple. There are 4 steps to follow.

1: Use the provided software to synchronize your Digital Camera clock with GISTEQ™ PhotoTrackr™ unit. (One time only)
2: Take the GISTEQ™ PhotoTrackr™ unit along with you when taking digital photos.
3: Import photos and GPS log data into the provided software.
    Clicking on an image brings this pop-up:
    The selected image is pinpointed on the map with all EXIF data included.
4: Share your photos on the included mapping software, Locr or Flickr™ online. (For free!)

GPS Datalogger: My model has a built in Bluetooth transmitter /receiver which allows it to double up as a GPS receiver for a PDA or laptop (non BT model can be used via USB.) My Ipaq running Streets and Trips recognized the unit immediately and plotted my location. What makes this logger unique is that it has a built-in sensor that wakes it up when it senses a movement and turns it off when it doesn't (the delay is

user programmable). This is ideal for data logging as you don't use up memory or battery life to capture portions where you're not moving.

Another unique feature is that it "talks", actually voice messages or sounds can be associated to certain actions. When it wakes it up it will say "searching for satellite signal," "found GPS signal," etc. It can be muted if need be. This can be a bit disconcerting when voices are heard coming from your pocket!

The memory capacity is rated at 250,000 points it can log with fast data transfers to the PC. Haven't tested the full capacity — yet!

The battery life is rated at 22 hours of continuous usage and 2,000 hours of standby time. I have not had the unit long enough to test these claims — but battery life does not appear to be a problem.

The PhotoTrackr software: This is a full blown software suite that will handle everything from the GPS data downloading for multiple users to the GPS geocoding, Picture downloading, EXIF information display, the reverse geocoding to determine the address, geo-slideshow, picture sharing on flicker, logger settings, trip stats, etc.

Fast downloading: Connect the datalogger, hit the "download log" button, choose the users and the data transfers quickly with instant display on Google Maps.

Reverse address geocoding: Concurrent with the embedding of the GPS information (standard so it can be read with tools like www.locr .com), the software also does some reverse geocoding to show the address where the picture was taken.

Slideshow mode: This is probably the coolest feature since it lets you relive your trip by displaying the picture, top left, the reverse coded address, any comments you have added below and on the right a map showing where the picture was taken. Logs can be downloaded and converted into other formats.

MSRP: About $90 without Bluetooth and $110 for the Blue Tooth model. For $20 you can upgrade to Phototrackr Pro.

The GiSTEQ™ PhotoTrackr™ Pro version has enhanced support for RAW images. The pro version also works seamlessly with Adobe PhotoShop, Adobe Lightroom, and Adobe Bridge, which can be integrated into the RAW photo processing flow (GPS info will be written in XMP sidecar file). The PhotoTrackr Pro version is available as an upgrade to any version of PhotoTrackr™.

This is a very cool device that needs to be in every traveler's camera bag.
The specifications are:
GPS Features Datum
Chipset NEMERIX low power chipset WGS-84
Frequency L1, 1575.42MHz
Dynamic Conditions
C/A Code 1.023MHz chip rate Altitude <18,000m (60,000feet)
Channels Supports 16 channels Velocity <515m/s (1000 knots)
Antenna (Internal) Built-in low noise patch antenna Acceleration <4G

Motional Jerk 20m/sec3 max.
Sensitivity Interface
To – 152dBm Tracking, Superior Urban Canyon Performance
GPS Protocol: Default: NMEA-0183 - RMC
Time to First Fix (TTFF) Data bit: 8, stop bit: 1 (Default)
Cold Start 45 sec, average
Environmental Characteristics
Warm Start 38 sec, average Operating Temperature - 10°C to + 60°C
Hot Start 6 sec, average Storage Temperature - 20°C to + 85°C
Reacquisition 1 sec
Device Size and Weight
Update Rate 1 Hz (max.) 77.4 (L) X 46.3 (W) X 22.5 (H) mm
Accuracy 3.05 (L) X 1.82 (W) X 0.89 (H) inch
Position 5m CEP (50%); 9m (90%) 68g (battery included)
Velocity 0.1m/sec, without SA 43g (without battery)
Time ±100ns synchronized to GPS time
Data Logger Power Store up to 250,000 records in flash memory (4MB)
Single Li-ion 1100mAh Rechargeable Battery, 5V
Log Data: NMEA format (Longitude, Latitude, Speed, UTC, Tag)
Operation Time Up to 25hrs, in continuous mode
Output Data Format: WGS84 2-degree transverse Mercator.
Standby Mode 2000 hrs
Log Interval: Time (1 sec ~ 30 mins) or Distance (2~65535 meters)
Charge Time 3 hrs Auto Power On in 3 Sec upon detecting vibration
Bluetooth Technology
Included in CD110BT Model

Installing Microsoft Office 2010 — A Problem

by Walt Parsons

A while back I finally bought a copy of MS Office 2010 — Office Home and Business Edition. As soon as I started to install the program I ran into trouble. An error message which read:

"Setup is unable to proceed because of the following problem:
Microsoft Office 2010 does not support upgrading from a prerelease version of Microsoft Office 2010."

In other words, they are saying that if you installed a beta version of Office 2010 you can't install the release version.

I thought this was easy. I'd just uninstall the beta version. After running the Windows uninstall program I tried installing the release version again but I still got

the same error message.

After discussing the problem with DVPC's guru, he reported that some of the beta versions had bad uninstall programs which did not uninstall all of the parts of the Office 2010 beta. He suggested getting and running Revo's Uninstall program as well as cleaning up the registry using the JV16 software. Good Advice BUT it didn't cure the problem.

So as a last resort I went to Microsoft's Knowledge base and searched on "Office 2010 install problems." Fortunately for me I discovered that this is a common problem and that MS had a program that could be downloaded called Cleanc2R. So after downloading the file I ran the magic bullet. This is one of those programs that gets out of Windows to run. After it chugged away for a while it told me to reboot my computer and then re-run the Cleanc2R program. OK, I can live with that so after Windows came up again I re-ran the Cleanc2R program and it finished its work and allowed Windows to come up.

It is important at this point to hold your breath and start to install the release version of Office 2010. So while I held my breath the install disk chugged away and lo and behold started to install Office. Resume breathing.

So I guess the moral to the story is don't be afraid to go to Microsoft's Knowledge base if all appears lost. It just might bail you out.

The Curmudgeon's Corner
by Walt Parsons, Official DVPC Curmudgeon
(Don't accept any substitute)
Diablo Valley PC Users Group, CA

The villain this issue is Microsoft for two disturbing failures all involving the installation of MS Office Home and Business 2010..
1. Above is an article describing a problem installing a new version of MS Office 2010, Home and Business which balked because it found vestiges of a beta version of Office 2010. The cure was found in the MS Knowledge base article which provided a program to download to my computer which successfully removed all vestiges of the beta version of Office 2010 and allowed me to install the new release version of Office 2010.

Microsoft should have recognized that this problem could occur and included the necessary program in their installation program to remove the beta version left overs automatically.
2. The 2nd gripe is also about the installation of MS Office 2010 Home and Business package. This version of Office does NOT include the Access data base program. In order to get the new version of Access you must buy the Office Professional 2010 version for considerably more cost or buy an expensive free standing DVD with MS Access 2010.

It so happens that I had a legally installed version of Access 2007. The installation program for Office 2010 Home and Business without asking deleted the Access 2007 and replaced it with a trial version of Access 2010 leaving me with a short term trial version and without my 2007 software. At the very least Microsoft should have asked me if I wanted to leave the Access 2007 on my computer.

Fortunately I still had the free standing installation disc for Access 2007 which I successfully used to reload Access 2007 and I once again had full use of my extended family of Access data bases.

This is just my humble opinion.

From the October 2010 issue of Diablo Blue*, the newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users Group.*

Make Yourself Invisible to Wi-Fi Hackers

by Steve Bass

You're at Starbucks, busy working on your Facebook page. Bad news: The guy at the next table is a hacker, and he's *also* working on your Facebook page. Sit tight, I have a few ways for you to make yourself invisible to hackers.

One Very Serious Threat

There's a pervasive, serious Facebook and Twitter exploit that leaves you wide open to any and every hacker who can download a simple-to-use, free tool called Firesheep. It's a threat if you're using an unsecured, public Wi-Fi network, typically available at an Internet cafe, airport, hotel, or RV campground.

Last week TechBite paid subscribers got the first dispatch about this in the Extra newsletter; here's a more detailed version.

The Hacking Tool

Firesheep is an HTTP session hijacker that runs as a Firefox extension and sniffs around for cookies on any unsecured Wi-Fi connection.

When you log onto Facebook, Twitter, or any of over 26 other social networking sites, your computer sets a session cookie. A person running Firesheep can read the cookie and log onto your Facebook page. Then he (okay, or *she)* can do anything from your Facebook account, such as send e-mail or write on a wall.

Every browser is vulnerable to the exploit.

The one saving grace is that Firesheep doesn't have access to your password – that's encrypted and safe. If the hacker tries to change it from within Facebook, you'll get an e-mailed alert. But everything else on Facebook is fair game.

Download and try Firesheep if you don't believe me. There's nothing as shocking as reading a stranger's Facebook or Twitter account without their knowledge or consent. It might actually motivate you to do something to protect yourself.

Who's Behind Firesheep?

Firesheep's author has an open agenda: to force social networking sites to make the

entire online session secure, just as the online banking sites do. (When you're on PayPal or your bank's site, you'll see an icon of a lock somewhere on your browser, and the link will start with "https" rather than just "http.")

I think it's a dang stupid way of getting people to see the problem, but what do I know?

Are You at Risk?

Sure, but you always were: HTTP and packet sniffers are nothing new. The first one I tried was in 1999. The problem now is that any knucklehead with a modicum of computing skills can sit at Starbucks, latte in hand, and poke around your Facebook account. (*I* know how boring your page is, and stay away from it, but hackers aren't always so bright.)

Is it wiretapping? Kinda. Illegal? Yep. Has that stopped anyone from using Firesheep? Probably not.

Three Sure-Fire Solutions

It was difficult to find a product to defeat Firesheep that I liked and trusted. Most of the tools I tried –VPNs with proxy features –were either difficult to use or half-baked. I'll get to those in a minute. But first, three recommendations for safer Wi-Fi journeys:

Hide My Ass! Pro VPN (known in polite circles as HMA) creates an encrypted Internet connection, so Web browsing, using Skype, sending e-mail, chatting – whatever – is protected. HMA can change your IP address so you can browse anonymously (test it with WhatsMyIP Adress). The site has freebies, too – a file upload hosting service, Web proxies, anonymous e-mail, and search and link anonymizers.

Hide My Ass VPN Pro Protecting me.

Tech Note: There's no bandwidth limitation; connection slowdown is minimal; and HMA's servers are mostly in the U.S., with some in Europe, Canada, and elsewhere.

It met my criterion: It's easy to use. After you download and install it, one click is all you need to start it cooking. And it provides all-inclusive, non-intrusive online protection.

Of course, it's not free – but I think it's a reasonable pay-as-you-go deal at $11.50 a month. If you don't travel much, the month-to-month is appealing. If you're out and about often, it makes sense to pop for the yearly payment of $79, just a little over $6 per month.

If you have a PC at home and are on the road with your notebook, use LogMeIn Free. It's a VPN, a program that lets you securely connect to your home computer. Once you log in, you're using your home PC. Every application – including the browser – is on an encrypted connection. And with a fast connection at both ends, there's minimal slowdown.

Most important, if you travel often, don't use public Wi-Fi. Bite the bullet and invest in a

portable – and secure – Sprint or Verizon hotspot card. To date, there are a gazillion plans and providers, but they generally run about $40 to $60 per month with a set amount of bandwidth use. An neat alternative is Boingo, with 125,000 hotspots around the world, for about $10 per month.

Protection That Won't Cost a Dime

I tried dozens of free tools, but rejected them because they were difficult to use or didn't offer enough protection. (Well, except for LogMeIn Free.) The apps below – two are Firefox add-ons – offer protection, but have limitations.

- ForceTLS, a Firefox add-on, changes regular links to secure links (including Firefox and Twitter). The problem is convenience: You have to add each link you want changed to its database. It's hit or miss because not all links can be made secure.
- HTTPS Everywhere forces about 30 sites into a secure https condition. For me, that's half-baked, because to add a site you need to learn Bulgarian (well, okay, Rulesets).
- Hotspot Shield (an ad-supported freebie) failed the Bass International Sniff Test. It protected me, sure, but the intrusive toolbar was littered with ads.

Even if I didn't use the toolbar, the product tried to change my home page and attempted to switch my search engine. And I wasn't keen on the product's cozy relationship with advertisers. (Privacy Notice: "third-party ad servers or ad networks use technology to send, directly to your browser, the advertisements and links that appear on the Hotspot Shield ... [including the use of] cookies, JavaScript, or web beacons.") No thanks.

Steve Bass is the publisher and self-appointed Chief Content Officer at TechBite; he continues to experience the cool feeling of having his own newsletter. Send him your feedback at TechBite. To sign up for TechBite's free Steve Bass Technology newsletter, head for our signup page. http://www.techbite.com/

Netted by the Webbys

A Travel Search Engine for Spontaneous Wayfarers

For such moments there's Adioso, a budget-friendly search engine for spontaneous and adventurous travelers.

When you visit the site it shows you the cheapest domestic and international flights available from your city by auto-searching low-cost airlines for the best possible fares. If your schedule permits you can book the trip.

Of course, you can also search a specific destination and time frame with the site's natural language interface (e.g. "Rochester to anywhere under $200 next week" or "NYC to Seattle early March").

Search results are presented in a graph that shows fluctuations in price over time, so you can rest assured that you're flying on the cheapest date.   www.adioso.com

Free Yourself from the Pain of Lost Luggage and Baggage Claim

A ir travel these days is bad enough without having to spend three figures for the privilege of taking luggage, only to have the airlines lose it for you.

Enter Luggage Free, a service that ships luggage to anywhere in the world, saving you the, uh, baggage that often accompanies your baggage.

Simply fill out the online form and arrange for a Luggage Free representative to pick up your items from your home, office, hotel or cruise ship. (You don't even have to be present when they arrive).

When you arrive at your destination, bypass baggage claim (and, for international travel, customs) and go straight to your hotel or home, where your bags will be waiting for you.

The service is priced based on a per-pound rate instead of a weight range, with priority overnight options available for most major cities. (Fifty pounds of luggage will cost you $50, which is reasonable these days).

A handy on-site feature estimates the cost of common items like bikes, skis and golf bags based on origin and destination points.

In terms of logistics, an in-house team tracks your bags along their route, alerting you by e-mail when your belongings arrive. When your trip is over, simply schedule a return pick up (if you haven't done so already) and the entire process is reversed.

All shipments are insured for up to $1000, with additional coverage available up to any amount.   http://www.luggagefree.com/

Google Says It Will Offer Free In-flight Internet on Three U.S. Airlines During the Holiday Season

T he deal will allow passengers on AirTran, Delta, and Virgin America to access Gogo Wi-Fi Internet service for free between Nov 20 and Jan. 2, 2011.

Gogo, which normally costs $12.95 a day for flights over three hours, operates only on domestic flights. But the three airlines have outfitted their entire domestic fleet with in-flight Wi-Fi equipment. And the promotion will be available on more than 700 planes and to about 15 million expected passengers during the holiday season, Google says.

Last year, Google provided free Wi-Fi to travelers for about two months over the holiday season at 32 airports that normally charge for the service.

Society News
November 9, 2010
Brighton Library

Arpad Kovacs Led Help's Half Hour

Q: His desktop is running XP and is wireless. He gets a tone when he uses it. Bong, bong.

A: Something is running in the background. Perhaps he can try taking out the internet. Perhaps a different set of speakers? Check your cables? Is there a new driver for the sound card?

Q: His laptop is running Windows 7. When using version 7 of Photoshop Elements and he tries to go to full screen, the information shifts off to the right.

A: You may want to check the driver. There may be a compatibility issue with Windows 7. A Google search brought up the fact that there is a compatibility issue with Windows 7 and Elements 7. It suggested that version 8 of Photoshop Elements works much better, using either 32 or 64 bit.

NOTE: There are great deals on netbooks this season.

Q: In Windows XP there is a way to view all commands. Is this feature available in Windows 7?

A: No one was aware of it.

Q: Has anyone tried AVG 2011?

A: One member likes it much better. The scanning is faster. However the registry cleaner has been added but it keeps nagging you because it is not free. You can set up the ignore request after the first scan.

Q: The current Computer Link talks about a direct competition with the iPAD.

A: The new one will use the Android OS and will cost much less. Samsung is supposed to come out first – maybe spring or summer.

The Lighter Side

As a hobby, I run old computer viruses on a standalone PC and record the effects, which I then put on YouTube. One user, who decided that I needed some help, offered me the following foolproof advice for removing viruses without expensive antivirus software:

Step 1: Open the registry.
Step 2: Delete anything that looks "strange."

From a questionnaire:
Question: "Mac address?"
Answer: "It's not a Mac; it's an HP."

Customer: "I turned on my computer, and it just sits there. What do I do?"
Tech Support: "Is the computer plugged in?"
Customer: "Yes, of course."
Through the course of our conversation, I discovered she was calling the monitor the

computer and the computer the disk drive, so I clarified.

Tech Support: "Is the little gray tower with the slots in it plugged in?"

Customer: "No, but it doesn't need to be."

I helped her get the system working, but she returned it anyway. She said, quote, "I couldn't get no hard drives programmed into the CPU." The return was accepted without hesitation.

Customer: (rather irate) "Your install CDROM doesn't work!"

Tech Support: "What error message are you receiving?"

Customer: "It says, 'File not found'."

I verified that he is typing the correct command to run the install program. He is.

Tech Support: "Double click on the 'My Computer' icon."

Customer: "Ok, got it."

Tech Support: "Now double click on your CDROM drive icon."

Customer: "Ok. It says, 'File not found or device not ready'. Maybe I should just cancel my service since it's not working and go with another company!"

Tech Support: "Sir...did you put the CDROM in the CDROM drive?"

Customer: "Um, no. Do I have to do that?"