The Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

MONITOR

Next Meeting
Tuesday, April 13
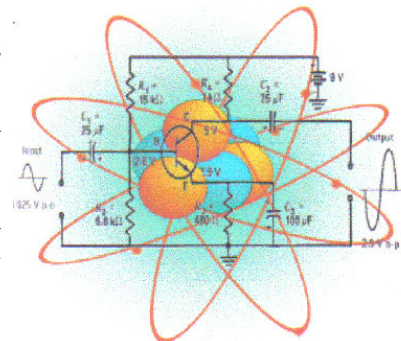Bill Statt on Photographic Composition

Contents

Is There a Quantum Computer in Your Future?

by Bob Rankin

Quantum Computing

The overriding imperative of computing is "go faster, get smaller." The number of transistors that can be manufactured on a standard silicon wafer has doubled roughly every two years, as Moore's Law predicts. That means transistors keep growing smaller. The smaller the distance between transistors, the faster computations happen. If Moore's Law continues to be an accurate predictor, then around 2020 or 2030 we should see transistors the size of individual atoms. That's when quantum computing will come to fruition.

Quantum computing is based upon physics completely different from that observed in the electronic devices of today. In today's computing paradigm, a transistor can be in only one of two states called bits - 0 or 1, on or off. But in the realm of quantum computing a transistor can be in a state of 0, 1, or a "superposition" of 0 or 1. And there can be many superpositions. These quantum bits are called "qubits." Physically, qubits are encoded in atoms, photons, ions, or electrons.

Whereas a standard transistor can perform only one operation at a time, a qubit can perform many simultaneously. Therefore a quantum computer containing the same number of transistors as an ordinary computer of today can be a million times faster. A 30-qubit quantum computer could perform as many as 10 teraflops – 10 trillion floating-point operations per second! Today's desktop computers perform gigaflops – billions of operations per second.

So obviously, that's where the interest in quantum computing comes from - speed. A personal computer a million times faster than the one currently on your desk boggles the mind. After all, how fast can you type? But there are applications that would benefit from that type of speed, such as image recognition, cryptography, and other problems that require enormous computing power. Personally, I'd be happy with a computer that's ready to go as soon as you turn it on. I don't anticipate being able to type a million times faster than I already do.

One problem with quantum computing is that if you observe the quantum state of a qubit, it changes. So scientists must devise an indirect method of determining the state of a qubit. To do this, they are trying to take advantage of another quantum property called "entanglement." At the quantum level, if you apply a force to two particles they become "entangled;" a change in the state of one particle is instantly reflected in the other particle's change to the opposite state. So by observing the state of the second particle, physicists hope to determine the state of the first.

Yes, quantum mechanics is rather confusing. But from a layman's perspective, it's enough to know that quantum computing is based on a new type of transistor that is represented by the changing states of atomic particles. And the promise of quantum computing is a HUGE breakthrough in speed.

Are Quantum Computers Available Today?

There is at least one firm that claims to have created a rudimentary, working quantum computer. Canada-based D-Wave Systems has demonstrated a 16-qubit quantum computer that solved sudoku puzzles and other pattern-matching problems. Some in the scientific community are skeptical about D-Wave's claims, but there is definite progress on the quantum computing front every day.

Quantum computers need at least a few dozen qubits in order to solve real-world problems usefully. It may be several years, even a couple of decades, before a practical quantum computer is put into production. But just as world records fell more rapidly after the first sub-four-minute mile was run, the breakthrough of the first commercial quantum computer will undoubtedly be followed by very rapid increases in quantum computing capabilities; reductions in costs; and shrinkage in size. In a decade or so, we can expect to find old-school transistors and simple on-off bit technology joining analog video tape in the dustbin

of technology history.

A Dual Monitor Setup –– on the Cheap

by Moe Norris

Topeka PC Users Club, KS

Have you dreamed of having two monitors sitting on your computer desk with all the added screen real estate which that would provide? But that would entail buying a second monitor, then replacing your computer's video card with a dual head model (and if you are using a laptop, forget about it) … all in all, an expensive project that your wallet (or your spouse) may not tolerate. But don't give up hope—there may be another solution.

Do you have two computers in the house? You need two – any two: desktop, notebook, or netbook. You can mix or match in any combination, and turn the second computer into a dual monitor for your primary machine. How? Through the magic of software.

What you need:

- Two computers running any 32-bit or 64-bit version of Windows from 2000 through 7 (you can mix or match).
- The two computers must be connected through a network which supports the TCP/IP protocol. (If you don't already have an ethernet or wireless LAN setup, you can connect the two computers directly using a crossover ethernet cable, Firewire cable, or a special USB-to-USB cable.)
- Forty dollars you can shake out of your piggy bank for a copy of MaxiVista, the magic software that makes the whole thing happen. (There are more expensive versions of MaxiVista with additional features, but you only need the $40 version to enable the screen stretching.)

So how does it work? When you install MaxiVista on the primary computer, it creates a virtual video driver on that machine. This causes Windows to think that an additional monitor is installed. The contents of this virtual video card are compressed and transmitted to the secondary PC via any standard network connection and displayed by a separate MaxiVista viewer program on the second computer. Now you can spread the screen content across two monitors!

The picture below shows a dual monitor setup with a Photoshop image open for editing in the primary monitor, a 24" model running at a resolution of 1920 x 1200 pixels. The secondary monitor is a 15" laptop screen with a resolution of 1024x768 pixels.

To see videos showing MaxiVista in action, go to:

http://www.maxivista.com/demo.htm.

If you would like to try out this program, a 14-day free trial can be downloaded from:

http://www.maxivista.com/download.htm

The free trial will allow you to make certain that it works well with your equipment — and decide whether you really want the program — before investing any cash. Have a second computer? Then give MaxiVista a try — it won't cost you a cent to find out if a dual monitor setup is for you!

"Disk Failure" Scare

by Phil Sorrentino

Sarasota PCUG, FL

T his morning, it happened again. I started the computer in the morning, as I do every morning, and staring me in the face was the dreaded "system disk failure" message. A chill went down my spine. It seemed like this happened only about a year or two years ago. When I thought further, it was 2005 when it happened, almost 5 years ago, so maybe that's not too bad. As I ate breakfast, I rapidly thought about the hardware in that computer. (I currently have 3 desktops that I am using for various activities in the home, but this was my main computer, the one other family members use.) Panic started to set-in. Were the disk drives 160GB, or 250GB? When were they installed? Were they Seagate or Western Digital? What interface is used in that computer? Are they formatted in NTFS or FAT32? Well, if it was the C: drive then it must be NTFS. I'll have to open the chassis and look at the drives.

Fortunately, this story has a very happy ending. After breakfast, as I knelt down to look at the desktop chassis, to see what was the best approach to removing the cables and other things around the chassis, I spied a floppy disk in the floppy disk drive. Eureka! XP was trying to boot from the floppy: an impossible task, so it reported a disk failure, obviously. Most desktop computers today don't have a floppy disk drive, so this will probably not happen to most people. However, it got me thinking that the answers to all of the questions I had during breakfast, should be in one place, probably along with a lot of other information that defines the current computer hardware setup. So it's probably not a bad idea to gather all of this information, while the computer is operating, and put a hard copy printout in a safe place.

The disk drive information is probably the most important for this kind of failure, but it is a good idea to have all the basic hardware information in one easily accessed place. Here is a list of the things that you might want to have. You may not need all of these so use only those that are pertinent to your hardware setup. (If there's anything that I've forgotten, just add it to the list, and let me know by e-mail.) I'll start with the disk drive information because that is what you'll need if the drive goes down, or you may need if you have to re-install the entire system. (By the way, you can accomplish all of this by using the free program, Belarc Advisor (http://www.belarc.com/free_download .html).

Choosing a Portable Hard Drive

by Bob Rankin

A portable drive can be used to back up data and transport it to a secure, off-site location. It can be walked around the office to back up everyone's data, or to install new software, or even create identical clones of a standardized system setup so that tech support is more efficient. But portable hard drives can vary widely when it comes to four factors: capacity, speed, ruggedness, and physical security.

First, consider storage capacity. The price of a hard drive is directly proportional to the amount of data it can store. If you don't have too much data to back up, you may be better off with a smaller, less expensive USB flash drive that fits on a keychain comfortably. But if your

storage requirements are very large, then a portable hard drive makes sense. You can buy a monster 2TB (terabyte) portable hard drive for under $200 now. I found a Fantom GF2000EU G-Force drive for $159 at Tiger Direct!

Next, think about speed. How fast do you need to transfer data from the computer(s) to the portable hard drive and vice versa? Just like internal drives, portable hard drives have internal components that affect how fast data can be read or written. Look for the RPM rating on your drive. 5400 RPM is common, but 7200 and even 10,000 RPM drives are available.

You also need to consider the interface, which is used to transfer data to and from the device. Less expensive portable hard drives may use slower communications interfaces, making the transfer of a computer's entire data inventory a long, tedious process. Some older computers and portable drives have only USB 1.0, while new ones come with the much faster USB 2.0, USB 3.0, Firewire or eSATA options. Buffalo Technology recently announced the MiniStation Cobalt USB 3.0 portable hard drive, which can transfer data at up to 5 gigabits per second. That's smokin' fast.

Another important consideration is ruggedness. This is essential in a portable hard drive that will be carried around the office, driven around town in the back seat of a car, or carried in a briefcase. Sooner or later, a portable hard drive will get dropped. You want a portable hard drive case that is very sturdy - made of lightweight metal, ideally. LaCie sells a Rugged Hard Disk line that has an aluminum shell and shock-resistant rubber bumpers. But you also want to ask the seller how fast the read/write heads are parked; whether the parking timer can be set by the user; and what sort of shock-absorbing technologies are used in the interface between the case and the actual hard drive. Check the specs to see if your drive has a drop sensor, sometimes called a free-fall or sudden motion sensor.

And don't forget about security. The physical security of a portable hard drive is its greatest vulnerability, even greater than the danger of losing data through damage. Every month, we read news reports of portable hard drives containing the sensitive personal information of several thousand people being lost or stolen. A portable hard drive should be password protected, at the least. Easy, on-the-fly encryption and decryption should be built into hardware, for fastest performance. The Western Digital My Passport Essential Drive comes with password protection capability and beefy 256-bit encryption.

The drive case may include a lock or even a chain and handcuff to attach it to the person carrying it. A two-part proximity alarm is a good investment. Basically, it's a pair of radio transmitter/receivers. One transceiver is worn by the person carrying the portable hard drive and the other is built into or mounted on the drive's case. When activated, both transceivers sound loud alarms and flash lights if they become separated by more than a few feet or yards.

The best portable hard drive is fast; rugged; physically secure; and holds all the data that you need to move from one place to another. But each of those features carries a price tag. You'll decide which are most important, then shop around online to find the best price.

From the Internet Tourbus Vol 15, Number 57, 12 Apr 2010. To subscribe go to http://internettourbus.com

Temp Files: To Delete or Not to Delete?

Q. Is it safe to delete everything in my Temporary files folder? I notice that some of the files are several years old, while others are only a couple of days old. Can I delete everything and wipe the slate clean?

A. C:\WINDOWS\TEMP is a folder set aside for files that a program creates while it is running. If you open a document in Microsoft Word, for example, the program creates a number of temporary files to keep track of editing changes so you can undo them later, if necessary.

It's safe to delete everything in your C:\WINDOWS\TEMP folder, except files that display the current date, because those might be in use or needed while a program is being used. Anything older than the current date is fair game. To delete your temporary files, using Windows Explorer (Windows Key + E), navigate to your C:\WINDOWS \TEMP folder and click View Details. Click the "Modified" or "Date Modified" column headings to sort the files by date.

Select files that are dated before the current date by clicking the first file you want to delete, holding down the SHIFT key and clicking the last file. All files between your first and last selections will be highlighted. If you need to delete non-contiguous files, meaning files incapable of spreading disease—no, wait, that would be non-contagious files. Sorry. If you want to delete files that aren't next to each other, hold down the CTRL key, instead of the SHIFT key, and click only the files you want to delete. Once your selected files are highlighted, press the DELete key.

Q. I bought an external drive that requires a USB 2.0 port. I'm not sure what my computer has? How can I tell?

A. A quick visit to your Device Manager will let you know if you have USB 2.0 or USB 1. x, so right-click My Computer Properties Hardware tab Device Manager button.

Scroll down and click the little plus (+) sign in front of "Universal Serial Bus Controllers." Look for "Standard Enhanced PCI to USB Host Controller." The wording may vary, but the key word is "Enhanced." If it's "Enhanced," it's USB 2.0; If it's not, then it's USB 1. x. As a low-tech alternative, plug in your device and see what happens. At best, it will work; at worst, it won't.

Q. I bought a new printer so I need to uninstall my old one. Can you explain how to do that? I'm using Windows XP, if that matters.

A. To remove your old printer, click Start Printers and Faxes, then right-click your old printer icon and select Delete. You'll be asked to confirm the deletion.

Removing your old printer may not remove extra drivers and/or support software, so you may need to remove those items manually. To do that, go to your Control Panel, Add/Remove

Programs, and look through the list for anything that relates to your old printer by name. If you find something, click to select it, then click Remove. If anything fails to budge, use the free Revo Uninstaller (www.revouninstaller. com).

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

Online Einstein

No, this isn't my new Web site, but thanks for thinking of me. Those who are interested in learning more about the man behind the Theory of Relativity and E = MC Hammer, will enjoy this informative site. Be sure to visit "The Gallery," a virtual tour of Einstein's personal papers, notebooks, diaries, and other documents that reveal major influences in his life and work.

www.alberteinstein.info

Palabea

An online educational Web site and social community that provides the opportunity to learn and practice foreign languages. Palabea users can access video lessons, podcasts, and multimedia educational material, plus information about language schools. Users can also engage in online conversations in a foreign language and either play teacher or assist others. The three "official" languages of Palabea are English, German, and Spanish, but you can connect with individuals speaking everything from Afrikaans to Vietnamese, but sadly, not my native tongue, Tagalog.

www.palabea.net

Whichbook

If you have ever had a hankering to curl up with a good book that aligns with your mood, here's an unusual and innovative way to locate just the right match. The process begins with a few questions to help narrow down what it is you're looking for in a main character or setting; are you looking for a story that is both unpredictable and a little sad, or perhaps a challenging book that's inspirational — but not so inspirational that you'll be inspired to get off the couch? Recommendations are accompanied by each respective book's availability in libraries throughout the U.K. Non-U.K. readers need not despair, however. The recommendations are excellent, regardless of your location.

www.whichbook. net

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 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

We attended the 2010 FACUG Spring Conference cruise and it was well attended with about 250 registrants and a total of 350 attendees (considering the non-member spouses). I was not enthused about the ship and its food, but most liked it. This conference had the most sessions I've ever seen, and with very talented presenters. There were also some APCUG people doing breakout sessions. You made a tough decision almost every hour with four great sessions to choose from, especially when we wanted to spend time

shopping at Nassau, Bahamas. There was a photo-shoot session done ashore by Bill Campbell, a professional photographer who has traveled worldwide and written books. Bill did other photo-related sessions. We didn't stop at Great Stirrup Cay (Norwegian's private island) because of windy conditions; they just made a very slow trip continuing on back to Miami.

Shopping in Nassau I found a polo shirt with a pocket (hard to find these days) that had "Nassau" on it, and we bought a few other souvenir items. We also visited the Gucci store for the experience. A beautiful women's purse was on sale for "only" $3,500, marked down from $5,000, but darn, I had accidentally left my plastic in our cabin safe. <G> I was disappointed not to get it for her! Maybe it will still be on sale if we visit Nassau again (and we win the lottery).

I was surprised that Microsoft was not a sponsor. Only Corel joined us on the cruise, but Smart Computing sent lots of magazines. There were 33 breakout sessions during the Saturday and Sunday conference hours. The presentation "Technology of the Space Program" by Jeff Fishkin (works for NASA) was extremely interesting and informative. Carey Holzman's keynote talk about computer security was outstanding and informative. Carey hosts a radio show about computers.

The ship's navigator gave a great talk and we learned about an unexpected weather problem the night before that most were not aware of. It seems a sudden storm came up and the ship quickly listed about six degrees before they could correct it, which is not a serious danger, but some bottles slid off the shelves in the liquor store. Good thing we were unaware or some of us might have been there with straws helping clean up the liquor store floor. He said they quickly used pumps to move water or fuel to the proper ballast tanks to correct the listing situation. Ten lucky people got a tour of the navigation room. Everyone enjoyed a Welcome Cocktail Party on Friday evening and a Farewell Cocktail Party Sunday evening, with door prizes. I had great conversations with people that I only see at that event. Some pictures are posted at <http://www.facug.org>.

I heard varying opinions about this event, but most sounded positive, even when they were originally against it. The pluses were no traveling from a hotel for events, vendors didn't need to buy attendees meals, and everything that went on was only a few steps away from your room. No sessions after 7 pm meant you could take in shows, live music in the lounges, late night buffet parties, or other ship events. I saw the best musical show I have ever seen on any ship we've been on. I enjoyed the comedian the next night. The Cruise Director announced at the musical show that 51 different countries were represented on that cruise, the most that ship ever had. Whenever my wife and I went to the buffet for a snack, we saw a few people with FACUG badges having snacks together and often meeting for the first time. All of us wearing badges were often asked what it was about, so we got a chance to promote user groups.

Next year's conference is already planned, but is in jeopardy because of very slow registrations, in spite of a positive survey taken after our return. I think it's too early in the year to start the registration, but maybe the cruise line will relent and give us more time to get the 100 registrations needed. It's a day longer and on a better ship. There will be no sessions next year during certain hours in Cozumel, Mexico.

Another users group gives up

I received a message from Dick Hiatt recently telling me that their San Diego Personal Computer User Group was disbanding. They have published the DealsGuy column for years and Dick has been the editor for years. Their membership was at an all time low and so was their meeting attendance. I didn't ask when I called him, but I assume that, like most groups, the officers have all held their jobs for years. Their final meeting will be sort of a party without smiles, but most of the active members are likely to affiliate with other computer related groups in the area. In their good times, they had about 200 members. With all of the help for computer users, and the great camaraderie, it's hard to think that user groups are becoming an endangered species.

Diskeeper Introduces an Update

Most of you are familiar with the Diskeeper and Undelete products <http://www.diskeeper .com> and their great performance capability. Diskeeper Corporation has introduced an update. Diskeeper features a breakthrough technology called IntelliWrite that prevents the vast majority (up to 95%) of fragmentation from ever occurring. Invisi-Tasking technology is an important breakthrough that allows processes running in the background to run invisibly with zero conflicts. They say the Titan Defragging technology is about the strongest ever built, and the Terabyte Volume Engine technology rapidly defrags multi-terabyte volumes. (DealsGuy comment; check <http://www.diskeeper.com/diskeeper /home/comparison-chart.aspx> to better understand that statement.)

They say that Boot-Time defragmentation defrags and consolidates directories to improve application speed, eliminating slows, hangs, and crashes. Defragmentation during boot-time handles those files that cannot be moved while the system is active. All Diskeeper 2010 editions are fully compatible with Windows 7 (Home Edition is not compatible with Windows 7 Enterprise). Registered users receive full 90-day telephone tech support and special upgrade pricing. I found that Diskeeper works fast and efficiently. There's more, but I don't have room for every feature here.

Undelete 2009 is not updated, but is a fascinating product. It protects files that the Windows recycle bin and backup systems miss: The following is from their Web site, but I'm not sure if it all pertains to the Home version as well.

Undelete 2009 with InvisiTasking to the Rescue

Undelete replaces the Windows recycle bin with a catch-all Recovery Bin™ that intercepts all deleted files, no matter how they were deleted. Lost file? No problem! Use the Recovery Bin's Windows Explorer-like interface to navigate to the file, or take advantage of Undelete's powerful search capabilities. Right-click the file, select Recover, and the file is back. The Microsoft Office Version Protection functionality can even restore your earlier, saved over versions of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) files.

Undelete includes Emergency Undelete, which can recover files deleted before Undelete was installed; provided they haven't been overwritten on your hard drive, and SecureDelete 2.0, an electronic shredder to completely erase confidential files.

Innovative Set It and Forget It™ features and technology (InvisiTasking) guarantee that new Undelete 2009 will safeguard your computer silently and automatically." There's more,

but I don't have room. Here are some special offers for a limited time:

Diskeeper 2010 Home 2-pack $49.95 (Save $30) <https://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout/addtocart.aspx?item=49115&qty=1&srchash=_ioxswm_p>

Diskeeper 2010 Professional 2-pack $99.95 (Save $20) <https://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout /addtocart.aspx?item= 49365&qty=1&srchash=_ioxswm_p>

Diskeeper 2010 Pro Premier 2-pack $169.95 (Save $30) <https://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout/addtocart.aspx?item=49366&qty=1&srchash =_ioxswm_p>

Undelete 2009 Home and Diskeeper 2010 Home bundle $49.95 (Save $20) <http://www.diskeeper.com/store/checkout/addtocart.aspx?item=50519&qty=1&srchash=_ioxswm_p>

How about a Smart Uninstaller!

A guy was telling me about his favorite uninstall software called Zsoft Uninstaller. I don't think it's an exclusive feature, but it has a way to keep track of any changes on your hard drive when you install a new program. If you don't like the new program, Zsoft can completely remove it even if there is no uninstall tool included. Prior to installing a new program, Zsoft will make some type of hard drive image to use as a reference if it has to uninstall that software. I have not tried Zsoft, but it sounds like it has a good concept and it's free; however, as with most freeware, they accept donations if you like it. Check it out at <http://www.zsoft.dk /index /software>.

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>.

BluePack S3

by George Harding
Tucson Computer Society, AZ

W e have so many portable devices these days that it's hard to keep track of which charging cord goes with which device. We certainly don't want to carry all the cords along wherever we go. Often, we forget to check if a given device needs charging. All these problems! BluePack S3 to the rescue!

If you have an iPhone, iPod or a Blackberry, you'll want to have a BluePack S3. It's a small external battery for charging these three devices and more. In the box is the BluePack S3, a cord with a 3 5 mm plug (for charging the BluePack S3), a USB plug and a wall socket plug. There are three similar cords, one for Blackberry, one for iPhone and iPod, and a third for any device using a micro-USB plug. The Blackberry cord can actually be used on any device with a mini-USB socket for charging, which many MP3 players do.

The box also has three booklets: a Quick Guide, a Warranty Card and a Usage Manual (3

and a half pages of English, same for 10 other languages). There is also a very nice fabric carrying case with a drawstring for the device and cables.

Charging is with the three-ended cable. It takes a couple of hours to fully charge the device. There is a 3-light indicator and a button on the edge of the device; a press of the button shows all three lights if fully charged, two or one if not.

A built in flashlight is accessed by pressing and holding the button. Once charged, you attach one of the three charging cables to your Blackberry, iPhone, iPod, MP3 player or other device. This will both charge your device and also allow it to play if discharged.

The BluePack S3 is very small, about the size of a deck of cards but half as thick. It's very convenient to put in a shirt pocket or purse. I found the BluePack S3 very easy to use. I recommend it to anyone with any of the devices it can power.

About: BluePack S3

Vendor: Dexim, www.dexim.net

Price: about $66

MP3 Tag - A Useful Utility

by Phil Sorrentino

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL

As I have said in the past, "Utilities are usually small programs that are intended to do a specific task or a small range of tasks." And I have also directed you to the SPCUG Monitor Computer Buffet, where you can learn about various free utilities (and even find a website from where you can download the utility). However, keep in mind that when you download something from the internet, you could get something you were not expecting; so be very careful. With that said, I'd like to discuss a free utility that allows you to modify the MP3 Tag information that is used by MP3 players like Windows Media Player or iTunes.

The reason you might want to use an MP3 Tag utility is because these types of media players depend on the Tag information to organize the tunes they find in your music folders. If the Tag information is not what you expect, the tune will be put in a location that might make it difficult for you to find. It doesn't matter what the file name is, the tune will be put in a sequence depending on the Tag information, only. Is it "The Beatles," or "Beatles," "The Kingston Trio," or "Kingston Trio"? When I put all my tunes together, I found both versions of artist names. Also, sometimes the tune comes from a compilation of artists. In this case it probably goes into the "Various Artists" category, instead of the "artist's name" category.

MP3Tag is a free metadata editor that supports the MP3 audio format as well as many other formats such as AAC, FLAC, MPC, OGG, MP4, WMA, and others. It runs under Microsoft Windows XP and Vista (and probably Windows 7). MP3Tag allows the user to modify the ID3 tag data that is created along with the MP3 file when a tune is initially created, or ripped from a CD. It allows information such as the title, artist, album, track number, or other information about the audio portion of the file to be stored in the file itself. By the way, there are many MP3 Tagging utilities available, just Google MP3 Tag and you'll see all the possibilities.

This may be too much detail, but there are two unrelated versions of ID3: ID3v1 and

11

ID3v2. (If this is too much detail, skip this paragraph entirely.) ID3v1 was the original attempt at capturing data about the tune. ID3v2 followed shortly after and is very different from the v1 version. ID3v2 is fairly complex, but suffice it to say that it includes all of the pertinent information, and then some, relating to the specific tune. ID3v2 has been modified and improved over the past few years and is currently at ID3v2.4. For those of you who asked "What the heck is metadata?, here is a brief discussion that comes from Wikipedia. Metadata (or sometimes metainformation) is "data about other data." of any sort in any media. An item of metadata may describe an individual datum, or content item, or a collection of data including multiple content items and hierarchical levels. In data processing, metadata provides information about, or documentation of, other data managed within an application or environment. This commonly defines the structure or schema of the primary data. For example, metadata would document data about data elements or attributes, (name, size, data type, etc.) and data about records or data structures (length, fields, columns, etc.) and data about data (where it is located, how it is associated, ownership, etc.). Metadata may include descriptive information about the context, quality and condition, or characteristics of the data. And there you have a description of metadata.

MP3Tag is very easy to use. First, I have created a folder called "FixThese" in my "MP3Music" folder, where I put any tunes that I think need to have their ID3 tags modified. Then I setup MP3Tag to use this folder. This way, I do my work in a specific folder so I don't upset anything in the folders that contain all my music. Also, it is easier to work with a folder that has a handful of files rather than thousands of tune files. (The folder to be used is setup by clicking "File" and then selecting "Change Directory." then navigating to the directory of your choice, "D:\MP3Music\FixThese" in this case.)

The MP3Tag window has two panes. The right-hand pane shows the files in the designated folder. The left-hand pane shows each of the specific ID3 data items that can be modified. (By the way, default values can be setup for each of these items, but I have left the default to "keep." so that I preserve the values when a tune is selected. These default values can be setup in the Tools-Options-Tag Panel window.) When you select a tune in the right-hand pane, the appropriate values show up in the ID3 tag items on the left. Once the tune selection is made, the values on the left can be changed to your desired values. In the example shown above, the tune "Ventures – Hawaii Five-O.mp3" has been selected. The Title is "Hawaii Five-O – The Ventures" which is the file name. The title of the tune should be only "Hawaii Five-O." so I would change the title to be such. The Artist: name is "Various – Adult" which I would want to change to "Ventures." or possibly "The Ventures" if that is how you are referring to this artist. Other information such as Album, Year, and Track may be correct as indicated and will probably be left alone. Genre is an item that is not as well defined as the other tags and therefore I have found it to be less useful. Genre has some general meaning but the meanings may vary a lot from person to person. There are some fairly specific meanings for genre such as "Rock & Roll," "Country," "Classical," but many other meanings are in the grey areas such as "Popular" and "Easy Listening." If you want to employ this tag to any degree of usefulness, you'll have to make your own definitions and then categorize all your tunes according to these definitions. Otherwise, you'll get whatever the recording studio used for their definitions of genres. After you are satisfied with the changes you have made, click "File" and then select

"Save tag" or just click on the icon that looks like a floppy disk, to save the tag information with the tune.

MP3Tag is a useful utility if you are accumulating a large music collection and you have some specific ideas about how you would like the tunes to be organized. MP3Tag has a lot of additional features. I have described the ones that, I feel, are basic to organizing a music collection. Music collections have a way of growing in all directions and using an MP3 Tag utility is a way of controlling that growth.

This article was obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Microsoft Fix it Center

by Dave Gerber

Fix it Center is a new Microsoft service currently in public beta that provides a set of online and offline tools for diagnosing and fixing common PC and device problems. It may be a beta but it's already a useful and highly usable product that offers a support lifeline to many average Windows users with PC problems.

Fix it Center consolidates into a single product a whole range of trouble shooters, wizards and other support resources currently scattered throughout the Microsoft site and Windows itself.

It Works with Any Windows Version from Xp Through to Window 7

The program will not only solve known problems but will also scan your PC for potential problems and suggest fixes.

The nice thing about this product is that it requires little technical input from the user. All the user needs to do is indicate the broad kind of category describing the problem and then the program will launch a diagnostic program for that category. So if the user is having an internet connection problems he/she just needs to select that category and from that point on diagnosis and correction is largely automatic.

Anyone who has used Microsoft troubleshooters will be familiar with this approach though Fix it Center is more advanced in its implementation than most MS Wizards and troubleshooters: it's easier and less intrusive to use and has broader diagnostic capacity. But it is still far from perfect and users need to be realistic in their expectations what this program can achieve.

How it Works

To set up Fix it Center you need to go though a three stage setup procedure:

Go to http://fixitcenter.support.microsoft.com/Portal/ and click the "Try It" button. This will download a small 437KB program.

Run the downloaded program and accept the licensing agreement. This will then initiate a download and installations of the full Fix it Center product. No download file size is given but it appears to be around 10MB.

Fix it Center will install a number of troubleshooters based on your PC configuration but to tap into the full power of the product you need to setup an online account. There you will not only have access to a full range of troubleshooters but access to other support resources as well such as the Microsoft knowledge database. Additionally you can store the support history of your PCs on line.

Using Fix it Center is a snap. Just click the Fix it Center icon installed on your desktop, select the broad area where you are having problems and the appropriate troubleshooter will be launched which will step you through the problem detection and correction procedure.

If the troubleshooter can't resolve the problem automatically Fix it Center at least gives you easy access to a variety of online support resources.

As I said, this is a useful service but you need to be realistic what it can achieve. That said it's a "must have" product for average users.

To subscribe to DaveBytes go to davebytes-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

iPad Shoppers Beware!

by Gregory West
Computers Operators of Marysville and Port Huron (C.O.M.P.), MI

If you are bent on getting an iPad don't read any further. However, if you are trying to decide between buying a laptop and an iPad this article is for you.

I like my laptop because I can load any software, connect any device such as a digital camera, memory stick, backup drives, by USB connections. I like the idea of being able to load free software from any company or source and not be restricted to one company such as Apple.

"Your computer should be yours to control," said Peter Brown, the Free Software Foundation's executive director. "By imposing such restrictions on users, Steve Jobs (APPLE CEO) is building a legacy that endangers our freedom for his profits (The Microsoft Blog)."

For me, choosing a laptop is simple: Macbook. I run Windows XP and Windows 7 on my Mac laptop without a glitch. Of course there are many other laptops, notebooks and net books that work great too and all of them avail you the opportunity to install third party applications, many at no cost.

The iPad has landed in North America and is creating huge hype. Rightfully so! It is a wonderful device allowing for various functions. According to Wikipedia the iPad "is part of a device category between a smartphone and a laptop computer." This may be true but it is not close to my Macbook laptop, not by a long shot.

For starters the hard drive is only 16 to 64 gigabytes (GB) of flash memory (a technology that is primarily used in camera memory cards). My laptop is 250 GBs and with a terabyte hard drive connected by USB. I now have a grand total of 1274 GBs of hard drive space. Very different from 16 to 64 GBs of the iPad.

The iPad's 9.7-inch (25 cm) screen has a low end resolution of 1024 X 768. What this tech talk means is that the iPad will not support HDMI video which many have come to love. With high definition the rave … why go back to a lesser screen resolution? This does not make sense.

Other features lacking in the iPad are: no camera, no webcam, no multitasking, no drag and drop file management, no USB port, no SD slot, no Flash, no HDMI out, no 1080p playback, and no native widescreen. Are we going backwards here? In 2005 it was "the Year of High Definition Video," according to cnet.com. How come the iPad lacks these features?

Many are saying the iPad has its neat functions and is esthetically appealing. Just make sure you are getting the exact features you require in any tech device. Do your homework on this one.?

Gregory West is a Mac Instructor for Lambton College in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. He is also Webmaster at

From Netted on the Web

Picture This

An Easy-to-Use Photo Editor That Lives in the Cloud

If Google buys a web-based photo editing service, chances are good that it's one you should consider using.

Such is the case with the newly-acquired Picnik, a free photo editor that lives in the cloud. This means you never have to leave your web browser to alter or access your photos.

Create an account—it's free and simple—and upload your photos to your library. The site pulls from all the various sites where you're likely to store them (Flickr, Facebook, Picasa, Photobucket, etc.)

Once you've stocked your collection, you can begin to edit.

The site offers all the tools you'd expect to find in full-service editing software, allowing you to adjust exposure and contrast, retouch blemishes, get rid of red-eye and crop your photos.

You can even set it to Furball to apply the tools to the family pet.

When you finish a photo, use Save & Share to preserve the photo and send it around. Picnik can post the photo on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr or a personal website.

For $2 a month, you can upgrade to a Premium account, which gives you access to their full range of options, including complex layers and fullscreen editing.

Consider it Photoshop for people who like things free (or nearly free) and easy.

http://www.picnik.com/

The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web

by Tamar Weinberg

reviewed by Tammy Barbee

I spent a lot of time reading this book on social media as I was intrigued to find out more about it. I am familiar with some of the social media network but how to target a community is a different story. Social media is being used more than just traditional marketing to connect with your friends and family but, in turn, to connect with your clients and customers to engage them in the business or community that is being promoted.

The book has 12 great social media marketing points which are:

An introduction to Social Media Marketing.

Set goals by using the SMART method (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely).

- Achieve social media mastery by building relationships and listening to consumers.
- Play an active role within the community by participating and listening to build a strong reputation in the community.
- Communicate, influence, and learn by using blogs within the community.
- Use micro blogging(Twitter) as part of community and using other Twitter tools(Tweet-Deck) to engage consumers.
- Use Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn to create profiles to connect with friends, family,

and consumers. Beyond the three above are others that are used in other countries such as Friendster, Orkut, Bebo, and hi5.

- Find answers to questions using Wikipedia, Yahoo! Answers, and many more.
- Use social bookmarking such as Stumble Upon , delicious.com, and Digg
- Promote content and bring visitors by using social news site such as Sphinn and Reddit.
- Share photos on Flickr, share videos on YouTube, and use podcasting.

Gather from the eleven points above how to implement social media marketing into your marketing plan. The book is useful for those who are starting out and want to know what social media marketing is, how it can help with their business, and how to implement these ideas, techniques, and tactics into their business. It also points out various examples of how several companies use a form of popular and non-popular social media to stay involved with their consumers. Therefore, I recommend this book for those who have an interest in knowing more about social media because social media is not a one-sided conversation; it is about staying engaged with the community.

Pages: 346

Cost: $24.99

Publisher: O'Reilly Media

ISBN: 978-0-596-15681-7

Convert a PDF File to a Text File

by Sr. Dorothy Robinson

Olympia Microcomputer User Group, WA

Have you been wishing you had a piece of software that would convert PDF files to text files that you can edit? And maybe also didn't cost an arm and a leg?

BCL Technologies has such software called easyConverter Desktop that costs about $20. That sounds like a good buy to me. But it only works with Windows (2000, XP, Vista and Win 7). So that leaves a lot of people, namely Linux users, out in the cold.

The good news is that BCL also has a free, online utility that does the same thing. And your operating system doesn't come into it. Open your browser and go to http://pdfonline.com/pdf2word/index .asp and take a look.

On the left side, under a header that says "Convert PDF to Word for Free" you'll see a place to browse your computer and select a file. Note that there is no need to provide your email address, since you'll just download the file directly.

Find your file and double click it (or click once then click Open), then click the Upload and Convert button. Press it *only* once, and wait; larger files may take a while to upload. The conversion is pretty fast, under a minute for the one or two page files I tried. There is a 2 MB limit on uploads, so really big files won't work.

This part is where, if you wanted to do a lot of files, or large ones, it would be great to have an application on your computer to do it—thus eliminating the time to upload.

The next step is downloading the text file. I'm not sure why the instructions say to Right Click on the link to download the file, because for me at least it didn't work. I Left Clicked instead and the download dialog opened.

You'll see that the file is a rich text file (.RTF or .rtf) which can easily be opened by Word, OpenOffice Writer, Abiword, or other word processors or text editors and be available for

editing. When you save it you can save it as a .doc if you like.

The dialog asks, What should (your browser) do with this file? The first choice is to open the file with the default application (mine showed OpenOffice) or you can choose another from a drop-down list. The second choice is to save the file, and if you choose Save the file, your download manager will save it to the default location—or you might get a Save as dialog and choose where to save it. One caution: opening the file directly rather than downloading it got me a Read Only file, which of course I couldn't edit. So for editing purposes, save the file before opening.

Make your choice by clicking a radio button, then click OK. You now have a text file you can edit. And the quality is very nice, too—for mostly text documents. I tried a PDF file that I had originally created in OpenOffice Writer which contained a calendar in a table. The results were not pretty! And for a postal PDF which was a requisition form using tables, the results were somewhat better but still unusable since the tables overlapped, hiding some of the text.

On the other hand, I made a list of data (several rows and columns) in an OpenOffice spreadsheet, exported it to PDF, then uploaded it and converted it. When I downloaded this file, it was perfect—and perfectly editable.

For me, using Ubuntu Linux, this free, online version is a good thing. Windows users have a choice of the web version or the computer application. And pdf2word gives the best results I've seen for this kind of web application.

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 (srdorothy(at)gmail.com).

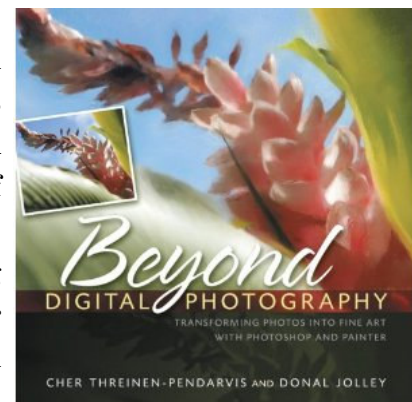# Beyond Digital Photography: Transforming Photos into Fine Art with Photoshop and Painter

by Cher Threinen-Pendarvis, Donal Jolley
Reviewed by Iris Yoffa
Tucson Computer Society, AZ

When I first heard of this latest book, I was very eager to work through the pages and try out all the recipes. I use both Photoshop and Painter and am always looking for new and interesting approaches to transforming photographs into art. Beyond Digital Photography is not a beginner's tutorial on the basics of each program. However, the authors' directions are broken down into clear steps that can be understood by any level of user.

Chapter 1 does cover some introductory basics of working with pixels and resolution, the Photoshop and Painter workspaces, a selection of palettes from both, cloning and painting, Photoshop Camera RAW, and using the Wacom Tablet. Photoshop and Painter are much the same on both Windows and Mac, and the recipes include the keystrokes used on both OS's. The companion web site, www.beyonddigitalbook

.com, contains updates and many of the project images

Most of the projects begin in Photoshop or Photoshop Camera RAW with preparing the photo for image manipulation. And, in addition to the tips for working in the applications, there are suggested camera settings, and photo shoot and production tips for improving the quality of your pictures. The first exercise is a straight forward method for creating pop-art from a photo. The recommendation is to use an image with good contrast and large, simple shapes. Filters are applied to layers and then blending modes are used to create an interaction between one layer and the one below it.

Chapter 2, titled "Painterly Techniques for Non-Painters," is filled with wonderful methods for turning your photo into a hand-rendered painting or woodcut without having to pick up a painting brush.

Chapter 3 puts the focus on creating a focus. In the first project you use a mask to protect the object in the image that should draw in the eye and remain in focus. Then a lens blur and brushwork is applied and lastly a painted border finishes up the exercise. The next two projects use the approach of blurring and brushing away most of the image background detail and then painting back areas of focus using Painter. In the last three brief exercises you create a focus using layers and Photoshop's dodge and burn tools, adjust the saturation of a selection to create focus and use a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to create a Sepia-tone background.

Chapter 4 begins with a project to illustrate some of the power of working with a RAW file in Photoshop Camera RAW. Continuing on, Photoshop's Art History Brush is employed to create a textured and painterly effect for your image.

Working with clones and pastels in Painter follows. You get to build a textured manila paper and custom cloners, use blender brushes, create a border and paint detail back into an image, resulting in a lovely pastel. (We hope.)

The last project in this chapter recreates a textured charcoal study in black and white. Once again, the focus is Painter and how to use the program for retouching, cloning, painting and blending.

Chapter 5 contains two projects to step you through the process of simulating the look of water color. In the first you recreate a landscape and then the second is working on a close-up of a young child. This is the point at which we finally get to really paint!

Painting with Painter's Digital Watercolor and Watercolor Blenders brushes, you are actually taken through the process of building up watercolor washes. The Dry Digital Watercolor option in the Layers menu is used to set the imagery, simulating waiting for the washes to dry in the world of actual watercolor.

Chapter 6 includes four projects to guide you through achieving acrylic or oil painted results. These projects include recommendations of Master Artists to study for inspiration and the training of your artist's eye.

Painter's Real Bristle Brushes are used for the first project. The second is an investigation of Chiaroscuro lighting. Painter's Cloning and Artists' Oils brushes are used to achieve results inspired by the lighting and tones found in the art of the old masters.

Using Noise in Photoshop to transform an image into digital oil is next. This lesson includes using Photoshop's Lens Correction filter to address barreling and chromatic aberration in the image due to normal camera lens distortion. Oil techniques are accomplished

using Photoshop's blending layers and a variety of noise filters. The last project of the chapter presents the Painter approach to re-creating an old masters style of oil painting.

Chapter 7 is quite brief and shows two approaches for transforming your photo into abstract art. The first project is accomplished entirely with Photoshop and the second is done in Painter. The last chapter introduces methods and ideas for consideration when collaging together multiple images. In the first exercise Photoshop layers, masks, and filters are used to build a rather complex composite image.

The second and final exercise of the book works with both Photoshop and Painter to create a composition from multiple photos. The elements of whitespace, size relationships between elements, consistency of shadows, texture and color, and drawing the viewer around the page, are the focus of this last project.

In Summary

Working through the pages of this book was a wonderful adventure in exploring new ways to use Photoshop and Painter to transform photos into art. I give it a definite "thumbs up" recommendation for anyone interested in furthering their artist's eye and skill set with the Photoshop and Painter digital toolboxes.

Publisher: Peachpit Press, www.peachpit.com

ISBN-: 0321410211

ISBN-: 978-0321410214

Price: $44 99, $26.69 @ Amazon

From The Journal of the Tucson Computer Society, *January 2010 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 (irisonthego (at) gmail.com).*

Gizmo's Best Ever Freeware

Create a Live Web Page from Scratch in Seconds, via Email

If you want to get something online easily and quickly then try this free web service that lets you create publicly accessible web pages just by sending an email. You don't even need to register to use the service.

http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/posterous.htm

Society News

Program Meeting

Tuesday, April 13, 2010

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Bill Statt

recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Q: When in Word 2003 has a find/replace option. He wants to un-split words.

A: You may be able to turn on the non-printing characters and use the replace. There is also a function to turn off the hyphenation.

Q: When downloading a file, there was nothing sited. If you have a Trojan does your system know that it is there?

A: Some Trojans are not really active right away. There may also be a scan setting for AVG that will detect it.

Q: Today a member heard that Office 2010 is out as a beta. Any confirmation?

A: Yes, you can download the beta if you are on their list of developers.

Q: Is Open Office hard to learn?

A: It is fairly straight forward. There are a couple of differences in the menuing but it is fairly intuitive. Best of all, it is free. It includes spreadsheets, documents and presentation software. You can also save files to other formats like .doc.

Q: A member is having trouble setting up a default printer.

A: It is found under printers. By right clicking, you can assign the default.

Q: What do you do to migrate your Palm data into another program?

A: After deciding what to use for your receiving program, you can export the file using a converter.

Q: Did anyone buy an iPad?

A: No one so far. Wait for a future version that will have more power.

Q: A member asked about buying laptops for some new college students.

A: It was suggested that they visit the school. They will provide a list of the software that is needed. Weight is a consideration for the kids. Asus is a good small model.

Q: Does anyone know what HDR is? HDR – High Dynamic Range

A: Exposure values are adjusted so that three photos taken at three points will then be merged into one good photo.

Q: What is Natural Reader 9?

A: This program is free. It will allow you to open a page, highlight some text and then read it aloud.

Business Meeting

Led by Steve Staub

If your membership is due, please see Steve. Membership cards are available. There will be a fee if you are a member but do not wear your name tag. The next planning meeting is set for the first Tuesday in May at Sally's house. Let us know when you are out of town as we are billed for any newsletters that are returned undeliverable.

 Photographic Composition Part II, presented by Bill Statt. We need volunteers to bring munchies to our meetings.

We need to form a nominating committee. Officers will be elected in two months. We currently have an opening for a program chair – you can work from home. We also need a secretary. Charlotte Baker is heading up our newest standing committee – Publicity. Watch your local Wolfe publication to see our meeting notices. Our annual picnic has been scheduled for the second Tuesday in August at the Brighton Town Park. Starts at 5:00 p.m. with eating at 6:00 p.m. Last name letters A – I: bring munchies (early); J – R: bring a salad; S – Z: bring desserts. It will include a silent auction.

Program

Photographic Composition – Part I by Bill Statt

What is composition but a unified, harmonious whole? You need to pay attention to the art

and the science. A good photo needs no explanation. Try to capture feelings and emotions.

Images are all around you! Your favorite camera might be the one that you can carry with you and can quickly capture an instant that appears. He then walked us through a series of photos taken at different times of the same item. The first step is to decide what you want to say. A goal is to guide the viewer's vision. Bill had samples of viewer's tracking the path that the eyes take as they take in the photo.

The next section of the presentation covered the distractions and attractions of photos. It is important to watch the background of your shot. Sometimes the trick is simply to take a portrait rather than a landscape photo. Be sure to review your photo as it was just taken, looking for distracting light patches in the background. Don't be afraid to take another shot. If you are indoors, a nice fill flash can help.

You may be able to use contrast as a way to focus on your subject. Small objects will stand out better against a contrasting surrounding. Colors can also be used as a source of contrast. Color harmony can also be used (reds and yellows or green and blues).

Area of sharpness can be used to focus the viewer on a certain area. A narrow band of focus will force the viewer to spend more time where you want them to look. When taking animals or people photos, the eyes will be an automatic focus of the scene. Try to keep the eyes sharp, capturing the emotion of the subject.

Using colors in a monochromatic scene will assist the viewer. Try to center the focal point but move it to the side or the top/bottom.

Next Bill walked us through a session on the elements of composition. These include lines, including horizontal, vertical and diagonal. Horizontal lines have a calming mood while vertical lines are stoic, final. Diagonal lines include an implied motion and momentum. Curved lines can be created by firm objects or trails of color. Try moving your feet to get a different perspective.

Texture can give you great effects but don't overdo it. You may want to create a resting spot, an area that is a different texture, that allows your eyes to rest. By including contrasting images, you can create a different mood. You can use the composition to create an urgency in the picture.

Movement can be captured by changing your shutter speed. $1/30^{th}$ to $1/40^{th}$ shutter speed will capture the image as your eye sees it. By panning your camera, you will cause the background to blur. Positive and negative space can be used to form a bridge between two subjects. Grass is a negative space as flowers would be positive.

Great job, Bill

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."

Tech Support: "What program did you use to make this document?"

Customer: "Microsoft."

After informing our users that we had new mouse pads available, one user came and collected one for herself and one for a co-worker.

Twenty minutes later....

Her: "There is something wrong with the mouse pads I picked up. Neither of us can get them working! They won't lie still. We need new ones!"

Me: "Uhm, have you tried flipping them over so the sticky side is down?"

Her: "Oh, okay, it works now."