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Say No Thank You to New Toolbar; Opt Out During the Installation Process

by Leo Notenboom

Ask Leo

Have you ever had a new toolbar suddenly “appear” in your browser? Although it might not seem like you agreed to install it, the likelihood is that you did.

One of the most frustrating strategies companies use to deploy more toolbars relies on your not paying close attention when installing software or other programs on your computer.

For example, let’s say you’re installing an update to the popular Java runtime, which is software used by some websites to provide rich functionality beyond just displaying static pages.

The update consists of the normal installation program, and then proceeds to ask you the normal installation things, including agreeing to the software license.

Then another screen comes up and without reading it you’re about to click Next.

Wait!

In doing so you would have been asking to have the Yahoo! toolbar installed.

Nothing against Yahoo, Java, or Sun here, but this can be very annoying. It’s not that the Yahoo toolbar is bad. It’s actually a fine toolbar. The annoying part is this:

- The offer appears during an update – you’d already made your selection when you initially installed the program, there’s no need to ask again.

- It defaults to “Yes.” Anything optional, particularly anything totally unrelated to what is being installed, should default to off.

- They’re “sneaking it in.” OK, this is really subjective, but you can’t help but feel like this might be an attempt to sneak the installation in, during a process where people are usually just hitting Next repeatedly to get the install over with.

This installation is not the only case. During installation of many software packages – both initial installs and updates – the option to install a toolbar will often be selected by default. You have to click a box to opt out. This choice typically comes during the middle of the process when you’re conditioned to hitting “next” just get it over with. If you’re not paying attention once you’re done suddenly a new toolbar will “appear.” A toolbar you didn’t realize you had actually agreed to.

Typically, installers include this option to earn profit. It’s a way for those offering free software to recoup some of the cost. But this habit certainly shows up in paid for software as well.

This tactic is a perfect example of why it is important to pay attention during installations and updates. Read each step before clicking next or you might find you’re about to “ask” for something you didn’t really want at all.

Get more free tech help and advice from Leo Notenboom by visiting <http://ask-leo.com> With over 30 years of industry experience, including an 18 year career as a software engineer with Microsoft, Leo gives real answers to real questions from ordinary computer users at Ask Leo! Subscribe to Leo's weekly newsletter now and receive a free ebook: "Internet Safety – Keeping Your Computer Safe on the Internet," a collection of steps, tools and concepts you need to know to keep your computer and your information safe. Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Leo_Notenboom

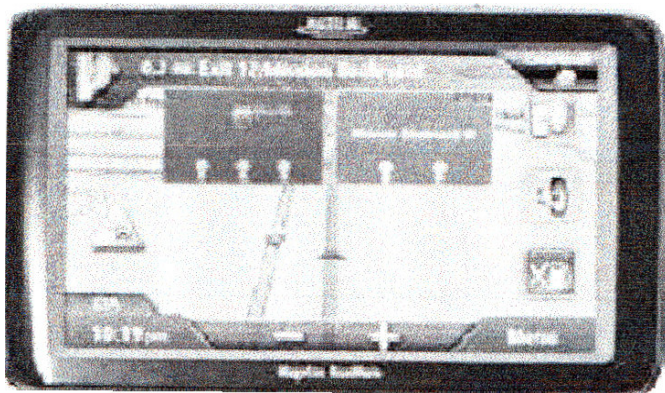
Review

Roadmate 9055-LM

by George Harding

Tucson Computer Society, AZ

There are many manufacturers of GPS driving devices. One of the best is Magellan. I was provided with the 9055-LM to review. What a pleasure! First of all, the box contents: Roadmate receiver, mount for windshield, car power adapter, USB cable, and handbook (English, French, and Spanish). You need to charge the device



first, or operate it in your car, connected to the power outlet (used to be called cigarette lighter). The first screen you see is a list of Do Nots: don't program the unit while driving, remain attentive, obey traffic laws, and more. It is wise to obey these, since the temptation is to play with the unit while you're driving, which may result in an accident.

The main screen is large (a 7" touch screen) and shows where you are and, if you've entered a destination, the beginning of your route. To enter a destination you are asked for city, street and number, if you know these. If you just want to go to

the nearest McDonald's you choose a different method.

As you travel your route, you are given spoken directions, although these can be turned off or the volume turned up or down. I found some of the spoken instructions a bit hard to understand. If you stray from the route provided, a revised routing is almost immediately put into place. There is no "recalculating" message, just how to proceed from where you are currently.

The main window has several parts: a One Touch button, distance to next move, how to turn at the next move, traffic icon if there are warnings en route, ETA, zoom out/in, Main Menu, POIs and volume. The One Touch button takes you to a screen where you can save and access searches. For example, to go home, set up a search to your home address, save it in one of the buttons and name it. Other destinations you access frequently can be stored this way for convenient access.

“Distance to next move” shows miles to that spot, which may be a turn to a new street, the way to veer at a Y or simply to go straight on through. The “How to turn” indication is an arrow that is straight, angled left or right or half-right or left. It tells you which way you’ll be turning so you can get into the correct lane.

The “Traffic” icon will warn you of traffic delays or routing if they exist. This function only works when the device is plugged into the car adapter. The unit comes with lifetime service for traffic warnings. “ETA” shows when you are expected to arrive at your destination. You can tap that portion of the screen to get distance, speed and time remaining. Zoom in and out change your view of the display. “Main menu” moves you to a screen with several options for tools: create a route to an address or a point of interest, access address book and user settings. Creating a route may involve inputting an address. You are given an entry panel in which you enter the city, then street, then number. If you don’t know the address, you can enter an intersection instead.

Or you might want to go to a specific business, such as Wendy’s, Costco, or Walgreen’s. The result of any of these destination requests is a 3-D map showing where you are and the beginning of the route you need to take. Or you can access the driving directions list, which shows which street for how many miles, how to turn and so on.

The unit comes with lifetime map updates, which is a valuable feature. Street names change over time and new streets come into being about every day.

Two other features differentiate this unit from others, Bluetooth and AAA. The unit can pair with your cell phone so that you can receive calls “hands-free” and have a better speaker for that use than the one in your cell phone. The AAA Tour Book feature makes available locations and ratings for hotels, motels, attractions, events and more, as well as addresses and phone numbers. You can set up any of these as a destination on your map.

An interesting add-on to this unit is the Back-up camera. It fits on your license plate holder and shows the view behind you, replacing the normal map view. The \$150 cost may be worthwhile.

There are many more features available to you, but these will be the most frequently used. Magellan provides a one-year limited warranty to the original owner that the unit is free of defects in workmanship and materials, and it will perform according to specifications.

About: Roadmate 9055-LM

Vendor: Magellan

www.magellangps.com

Price: \$280 from Magellan

From the November 2011 issue, eJournal, newsletter of the Tucson Computer Society, AZ. Courtesy of APCUG.

This and That

by Elizabeth B. Wright

Computer Club of Oklahoma City

As the birds gather to plan their trip South for the winter, so do some of us. But what to take with us? Lighter weight clothing for that hoped for sunny climate, although experience tells us we can't really get far enough South in the continental USA to guarantee that. Maybe the mountains for skiing. But along with our necessities, some of us now take along our link to the world, our laptop computers. Are you driving or flying? Either way, I have found that the smaller Netbook type computers are easier to carry. Even with accessories, they usually weigh less than laptops. And with the right add-ons, they can be every bit as useful as their larger cousins.

My accessory kit contains a USB connected 750G hard drive, very compact and light, a reduced size USB keyboard (easier to use than the netbook keyboard) and a small mouse. Of course you can tailor your kit to suit yourself.

When flying, in addition to the USB hard drive, I pack several USB flash drives, the higher capacity the better. Because part of traveling is the opportunity to take pictures, with digital cameras it is possible to download them to the external hard drive or to the flash drives in order to have backup copies of them. Many netbooks have rather smallish internal hard drives, so having extra storage capability is great.

Another advantage to the Netbook computers is the small size makes it easier to put them in a hotel room lockbox along with the USB flash drives and/or the USB external drive. The mouse will also fit, but the smaller size keyboard may not. But since the external keyboard is not essential to using your computer, you can better risk leaving it in your suitcase when out of the room. Nothing left in a hotel room is 100% safe, so keep that in mind.

The other great advantage to traveling with your computer is access to the internet. However there are some security risks involved with connecting to free Wi-Fi networks like those available in many restaurants, airports, hotels, etc. Take time to search the internet (from home) for information on how to best insulate your laptop from the bad guys.

Each computer is different and you will have to determine what will work best for you. Most netbooks and laptops now are built with Wi-Fi capability. This can be programmed to only connect when you tell it to. The default is usually to connect whenever it detects an open network. This can be risky.

Some networks are secured and require a password to connect, but others are open to the world. Before leaving home, check with whomever you know to be knowledgeable about securing your netbook/laptop while surfing the internet from free Wi-Fi locations.

Most of what I keep on my netbook is not particularly valuable to anyone but me, but there are some passwords which I would prefer to keep private. One bit of advice is to avoid transacting banking business or other financial

business online from public Wi-Fi sites. The same source for this information, which was quoting the FBI, also said not to go onto the internet.

But mostly that is what we want to do when using our computers away from home. It does leave us in a bit of a pickle. Thousands of people at any given time are using these networks. Just go into any national bookstore chain that boasts a coffee shop and most of the tables will be filled with people working diligently on their computers.

As for passwords, the old advice to change them often is as valid today as in the past. Especially those used for accessing your email and other personal websites. A paper list of the email addresses you plan to contact while away from home or office is preferable to keeping the same list on your computer. I keep mine in the safest place I can manage, either the hotel room lockbox or as close to my body as possible. Keeping it in a purse or billfold is risky, but if all else fails it beats leaving it lying around the hotel room. The main reason for making sure it is safeguarded is to keep it from prying eyes (including anyone who might just photograph your list and leave it where they found it). This step is a courtesy to your friends, relatives and business contacts that are on your list.

Happy Traveling....

From the November 2011 issue, CCOKC eMonitor, newsletter of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. Courtesy of APCUG.

The Tip Corner

by Bill Sheff

Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA

Fixing USB hard drives

Regardless of what kind of repair work you do, a good idea is start with the easiest and cheapest. So if you run into trouble with devices plugged into your computer via a USB cable ... let's start with the cable.

Make sure there is a good connect ion. Remove and reinsert the cable into a different USB slot on the computer. Swap the cable for another USB cable.

Still not working? Double click My Computer in Windows XP or Computer in Windows Vista. The plugged USB hard drive is the removable disk on the list. Right click Properties and see if there is something wrong. If the drive is not listed turn the computer off. If the USB device is not recognized a message appears and unplug all other USB devices on the PC. These may not be compatible with the USB hard drive. Reboot the computer once all the other USB devices are disconnected.

Finally, if you are utilizing a USB hub, unplug the device and connect it directly to the USB port. If still not recognized or working the device unfortunately is that the hard drive is very likely defective.

Burning DVD discs in Windows 7

First let's review the two different DVD formats there are. They are DVD- and DVD+. DVD- (dash) was developed by Pioneer in the late 1990's, while DVD+ was developed by the DVD+RW alliance which includes Sony, HP, Ricoh, Yamaha, and others. Just note that all DVD burners now produced support both formats, which makes it easy for the consumer.

However, it should be noted that all things being equal the DVD dash burns slightly faster.

Whenever I mention a CD or DVD below it means either a dash or plus format. DVD-R formats are for a one time burn, while DVD-RW discs are used for both reading and writing data and can be formatted over and over again.

Today there are many types of multi-media files, including data, audio, and video, and each could require different ways to burn it to a DVD disc correctly.

We will discuss common file types, the disc format they should be created in, and the type of blank disc to use for best results.

For Home Videos (from a camcorder or downloaded video) they should be created with an Authoring software such as Windows DVD Maker in a DVD-Video project and it's recommended to use DVD-R media.

Digital Photo files can either be backed up using a standard DVD burning software as a data project or be created as a digital photo slideshow by using a compatible software using DVD-R media.

Most Recorded TV shows from Windows Media Center should be Authored with windows DVD Maker in a DVD-Video project and burned to DVD-R media.

Music or audio files can be burned to blank CD-R discs using Windows Media Player. However there are two ways to go about this: First you can create a standard Audio CD which usually holds 74 minutes of music by creating an audio project or you can burn mp3 files as a data project to get more music on a disc. (Just make sure you have a mp3 disc player for proper playback).

A recent burn I did holds 182 music files on one CD+ disc, and it plays in my car.

Disc Image Files or ISO files require Windows, Roxio or Nero Disc Image Burner to burn the format correctly on either a blank CD-R or DVD-R disc (it just depends on the file size).

Recording Home Videos to DVD

By utilizing the free Windows DVD Maker already included in Windows 7 installs you can simply and easily create home movie discs from your videos. The software will not make a Hollywood type film but will get you creating a DVD movie that you and your family can enjoy on your TV sets in the living room.

You simply start the software, load in some video that you captured off of your camcorder, create a custom DVD menu and burn away. You now have a DVD movie disc that you can watch on any standard DVD player.

Recording TV Shows to DVD Disc

In the old days, if your Windows PC came with a TV capture card you can hook up your cable line or satellite TV box and watch TV on your computer screen, but today with digital signals being encrypted you now need at least a separate cable box or DVR. If you use Windows Media Center you also have a built in DVR where you can record the shows you want. The best part is that you can also now burn them to a DVD disc and watch them on your TV set just like it was intended. To do this in Media Center all you do is insert a blank DVD, then click Burn CD/DVD and choose the Video DVD option. Then select a title name for the project and select the video clips or TV shows you want to burn from your media library and click the burn button. Media Center will handle the rest and give you a DVD disc that is properly formatted.

Sharing Digital Photos the Easy Way

One of the easiest ways to preserve, backup, and share your digital photos is to back them up to a blank CD-R or DVD. You can easily accomplish this by using Windows Explorer and choosing the Mastered format. All you do is insert a blank CD or DVD and on the AutoPlay box choose the “Burn files to disc using Windows Explorer” option. When the burn a disc dialog box opens choose a Disc Title and tick the With a CD/DVD player and click Next. Then simply browse to the digital photo folder you want to backup/burn and drag it into the empty disc folder. When ready to burn click the Burn to Disc box and you are good to go.

Burn a DVD From an Image File

If you come across an image file such as .iso you can watch it using Magic ISO or burn that image to a CD or DVD to see the contents in the file. Since .iso is a container for a file structure you need to extract it and by burning it to a disc will accomplish this. In Windows 7 you can use Windows Disc Image Burner. This is as easy as right clicking on the .iso file and choosing Burn Disc Image...yes it's that easy now in Windows 7. (For some additional data take a look at BurnWorld.com and the article about burning music starting on page 9 in this issue of the newsletter.)

One Column Excel Tip

If you ever prepared a spreadsheet that consisted of hundreds of lines and only one or two columns and then decided to print it out, can you do it without running through a ream of paper for just the one or two columns? Well, yeah! But don't look for a simple solution.

Actually, the simplest way is to copy your entire data table (all 100s of rows) to the Clipboard and paste it into Word. You can then format the information in Word to use columns and print as desired. (You can also place headers and footers on your data more easily within Word than you can in Excel.)

But if you are a purest and want to do it in Excel here are a couple of ways to print the data in columns on a single sheet of paper.

Let's assume you have data that is only one column wide by 100 rows deep.)

1. In cell B2, enter the formula "=A26"
2. In cell C2, enter the formula "=A51"
3. In cell D2, enter the formula "=A76"
4. Copy cells B2:D2 down to row 25.

Your data is now in four columns, without the original data being disturbed. Format your columns to the necessary width, place a page break just before row 26, and print just the first page of your data. You can also save the file as a template for future single column files.

Another approach is to copy the row and column(s) to a different worksheet. This is quick and easy to do using the keyboard (Ctrl+C to copy and Ctrl+V to paste), but there is a drawback. If the row or column you are copying contains formulas that rely on other areas of the worksheet, the copied data may not show the proper results. Thus, the best "cut and paste" approach would be to use the Paste Values command rather than just Paste.

From the November 2011 issue of the LVCG Journal, newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA. Courtesy of APCUG.

Is Your Flash Drive Infected?

by Bob Rankin

Security research firm Sophos found malware on two-thirds of fifty USB flash drives that had been lost aboard Australian trains. That might suggest that you should avoid computing on Australian trains, but the broader lesson is that USB flash drives are highly vulnerable to malware infections. Here's what you need to know, and how to protect your computer from viruses that may lurk on flash drives.

Flash Drives, Viruses, and AutoRun

Malware authors find it easy and profitable to write malware designed to be spread via flash drives. There are a couple of reasons why flash drives make good vectors for malware. First, flash drives are "promiscuous" (in a metaphorical sense) because a given flash drive is inserted into a number of different devices on a routine basis. The lost Australian flash drives were sold after being



unclaimed, and made the rounds as the unsuspecting purchasers began using them. Second, the AutoRun feature in Windows is ideal for spreading malware via flash drives.

Here is how AutoRun works: when a removable storage device, such as a flash drive, is connected to a Windows computer, Windows checks it for the presence of a configuration file named AUTORUN.INF. If that file is found, the instructions in it are executed. AUTORUN.INF tells Windows to run a program automatically when the storage device is connected to the computer. AutoRun is a convenience; it enables movies, music, games, or setup programs to start up as soon as you insert a CD or flash drive. But AutoRun can also enable malware to execute without your knowledge.

Infected Flash Drive

A malware program can be designed to detect the connection of a removable storage device, copy itself to that device, and create or modify an AUTORUN.INF file that runs the malware whenever the device is connected to a new computer. So even if you practice safe computing, your flash drive could be infected with a virus simply by inserting it in a friend's computer. And unlike movies that start playing or setup utilities that display a startup screen, AutoRun malware does not give the user any sign that it is present or running. A lot of malware is written to take advantage of AutoRun. Just plug the flash drive into your USB port, and you're infected, unless you've taken precautionary measures.

Protection From Infected Flash Drives

Many people fail to scan flash drives for viruses, which is another reason why malware authors love flash drives. Check the settings of your anti-malware program to make sure that it scans removable media automatically, every time such media is connected to your computer.

You can disable AutoRun to help prevent execution of malware from flash drives. The Microsoft method is somewhat complex and involves tinkering with the Windows registry. Anti-malware developer Panda Security offers an easy to use, free tool that will "vaccinate" your computer (and optionally your USB drives) against AutoRun malware. The Panda Research USB Vaccine can provide two forms of protection. Vaccinating your computer will disable AutoRun for all removable media. No program on a flash drive, CD, DVD, Blu-Ray disc, etc., will be able to auto-execute.

That's the most comprehensive protection, but it makes life a bit inconvenient, because movies, music, and software installers will not automatically open when you pop in a disc. As an alternative, you can vaccinate only USB flash drives. The Panda "Computer Vaccination" feature doesn't change anything on the discs or flash drives that are currently mounted. It only changes the Windows AutoRun setting. Be aware that if you have a Magic Jack, and use the "USB Vaccination" feature, you should unplug your Magic Jack first, or it could be damaged.

It should be noted that malware can still be copied to and from a vaccinated flash drive. But it will not auto-execute. The best protection is to make sure your anti-virus protection will automatically scan all removable media (flash drives, CDs, DVDs) when they are inserted. If you don't have a good anti-virus program, or you're considering a switch, see my article on [Free Anti-Virus Programs](#) for some advice.

Choosing a Smartphone

by Sandy Berger

CompuKISS

There are so many different smartphones available today that choosing between them can be difficult. Each phone and each operating system has many different pluses and minuses. So today, I'll give you a brief rundown of what you can expect in a smartphone.

Windows Mobile cell phones are just coming of age and they may well be a good choice in the future. However, right now the choice will probably come down to choosing between the Apple iPhone and one of the many Android phones that are now available.

The Android operating system is upgraded several times a year and new Android phones are released all the time. Apple, however only releases a new iPhone and a big update to their iOS operating system once a year. The new iPhone and iOS updates were released in October. The new Android phones running Gingerbread, the most current Android operating system, will be on the market this month (November 2011). So today we will talk about Apple and Android, and do a quick comparison of the current phones and operating systems for each.

Since it is so new, I haven't yet been able to review the new iPhone 4S. However, I have reviewed previous iPhones. I have also installed Apple's new iOS 5 operating system on my iPad, so I have been able to take an in-depth look at most of the new features that will be on the new iPhone. Now I am ready to make my list of the benefits of each.

There is no doubt that that the camera on the new iPhone is superior to almost all the Android phone cameras. The retinoid screen on the iPhone is superior to most Android phones. The exception is the Samsung line of phones with AMOLED screens that rival the clarity and crispness of the iPhone screen.

Apple's new iCloud service will automatically backup your iPhone to Apple's servers and let you sync your iPhone, iPad, and Mac computer. While using iCloud is easier than some of the Android syncing and backup solutions, there were things that I didn't like about iCloud. For instance, you can't actually see your data in the Cloud as you can with solutions like Amazon's or Google's online storage.

One of Apple's biggest features is iTunes and the iTunes store. iTunes makes getting music and video on your iPhone easier than any Android application that I've seen. At this time, both the Android Marketplace and the iTunes App Store have hundreds of thousands of apps. The iTunes App Store, however, makes it easier to find the

apps that you want. Also because of Apple's stricter app reviews, Apple's apps are more secure. However, the Android Marketplace has a higher percentage of free apps.

Some of the new features on Apple new iPhone are already available on Android phones. The most prominent of these is the Notification Center that Apple just added. This is a feature of Android that has been around for a long time and that I love. Now in either operating system, you can just swipe your finger down from the top of the phone to see all of your alerts, notifications, incoming messages, and incoming email.

The most unique feature of the new iPhone is Siri, a personal assistant who will answer verbal questions that you ask. This would, no doubt, be very useful, entertaining, and truly state-of-the-art.

Android phones also have voice capabilities. They use Google's Voice Search. Most screens that popup a keypad for text entry, also have a small microphone. Just press the microphone and speak. It is amazingly accurate and you can use it for everything from entering email text to searching to navigating to a point on the map. Probably not as sophisticated as Apple's Siri, but it works well.

My biggest disappointment with the new iPhone is that it is a 3G phone. It does not take advantage of the faster 4G network. Right now the fastest phone for data will be the Android 4G phones that run on a 4G LTE network. If Verizon currently has a 4G LTE network in your area, you may want to consider a 4G Android phone rather than the iPhone 4S.

Android phones also have some things that I love that are not available on iPhones. The first of these is the fact that you can get a larger screen size on an Android. All iPhones currently have a 3.5-inch screen. Several good Android phones have 4.3-inch screens. My aging eyes really like the larger screens.

I also like the four buttons on the bottom of the Android screen. These are very, very useful. There is a Back Key, a Menu Key, a Home Key, and a Search Key. They are always available. They do not change when the screen changes. The iPhone has just one button. Some will argue that this makes the phone easier to use. Yet, this is not always the case. In some applications it is impossible to go back a screen. In others there is an on-screen back button but the location of this button varies with each application. With Android, you can always go back to the previous screen with just one press.

The Android operating system also is more customizable. With Apple, you are restricted to small square apps. With Android you can use many different resizable widgets as well as the standard apps. All of this gives you many different customization options, but also adds to the complexity of the phone. With the iPhone you don't get so many choices. This makes it a bit more restrictive, but also makes it easier to use.

One other difference is that most Android phones have user-replaceable batteries, while an iPhone battery must be replaced by Apple at a greater cost. While this might not be important to the average user it may make a difference to a heavy-duty user.

Well, there are just a few of the pluses and minuses you will have to assess when you buy a new smartphone. Don't worry though; it is hard to make a bad decision as almost all the smartphones on the market today are both capable and useful.

Courtesy of APCUG.

Free Basic Computer Training for Seniors (and others)

by Ira Wilsker

As many of you already know, I occasionally volunteer to teach some computer classes at the Best Years Center. I am well aware that seniors probably make up the largest group of new computer users, as many had lived their entire lives without utilizing many of the current technologies. I was pleasantly surprised when I saw an article recently published on the “I Love Free Software” website, “5 Free Websites for Seniors on How to Use Computer and Internet” (ilovefreesoftware.com/02/webware/5-free-websites-how-to-use-computer.html). As its title describes, it listed and reviewed five websites that offered free training for seniors (and anyone else) who could use some basic training on computing, popular software, and the internet.

The first website listed that I visited was “The Senior’s Guide to Computers” at seniorsguidetocomputers.com. At first glance, I was very impressed by the wealth and quality of information available. This one website, by itself, is totally capable of providing anyone, novice to geek, with a broad variety of information, ranging from the basics (common computer terms illustrated and explained), email, the internet, PC safety and security, the necessity of backing up (“Probably the single most important task you’ll perform”), hardware, and software.

By starting at the beginning, the basics, and progressing through the short illustrated lessons, the user will be able to understand and master the functions of a computer and its operating system, and how to make maximum utilization of the internet. Everything is covered including what to look for in a computer, the components and parts of a computer, the differences between the types of internet service providers (ISPs), methods of backing up critical data, proper security precautions and software, different types of software (including freeware), email use and safety, and just about any other practical computer topic.

While clearly directed at seniors, the content and lessons on this website would be appropriate for anyone of any age to learn about personal computing. For this purpose, “The Senior’s Guide to Computers” is one of the best websites that I have ever seen.

Another basic computer training website, with professionally organized free lessons, is Meganga’s “Free Basic Computer Training” available online at meganga.com/lessons. Consisting of 94 lessons, the user is free to choose whatever topics he finds necessary or interesting. At the most basic level are 28 “Free Beginner Lessons” which include an orientation to the computer; exercises on how to use a mouse, a cursor, and the keyboard; guide to the desktop and icons; creating desktop icons and gadgets; how to use the start menu, applications, and Windows; how

to create documents, files and folders; internet web browser basics, homepages, address bar, toolbars, search engines, and hyperlinks; how to complete online forms; and detailed instructions on how to create, send, and read email.

A dozen lessons instruct the user on the basics of popular software, including Word, WordPad, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Excel, and Hotmail. Meganga's "Free Basic Computer Training" is also an excellent resource to teach anyone the basics of computing, and how to use the internet and popular software programs.

For anyone needing some intermediate or advanced training in computer topics, Internet4Classrooms (I4C) at internet4classrooms.com/on-line.htm offers over a dozen free online groups of tutorials on popular software packages and operating systems. Each group of tutorials consists of an orderly series of lessons which are easy to comprehend and master. For users of Microsoft Office (and its clones and competitors such as OpenOffice and LibreOffice), lessons are provided in Excel (spreadsheet), PowerPoint (presentation program), and Word (word processor). As an example, the "Basic Word Tutorial" consists of nine distinct lessons starting with a basic overview of Word, and ending with the user creating a newsletter.

The "Advanced Word Topics" includes such tasks as mail merge, converting Word to PowerPoint, using hyperlinks in Word, writing equations, special fonts, how to use the thesaurus, and how to determine the reading level of a passage. I4C also includes lessons on software applications including Internet Explorer (web browser) and Dreamweaver (sophisticated web design software used to create professional web pages). Detailed tutorials are available that cover both the Windows and Macintosh operating systems, as well as lessons on how to troubleshoot both Windows and Mac operating systems. These I4C lessons are a great tool for learning how to use the products covered, and are suitable for those who have already mastered the basics of computing but want to advance their skills.

Several of the seniors that I teach are interested primarily in using the internet, mostly to be able to surf the web, and send and receive emails. The "Internet 101" website at internet101.org provides instructions on these tasks, as well as the other online activities that more advanced users would like to do. Internet 101 consists of several dozen internet topics ranging from the most basic descriptions of the internet and its history, to advanced uses of the internet.

Covered are basic instructions on how to use the internet; selecting an internet provider; using email; online shopping; blogs; online safety and security; web searches (including how to find street addresses and internet road maps); selecting a browser; online chat; using Skype, VoIP and other online phone services; how to view streaming movies (such as Netflix and YouTube); social networking; building websites and registering domain names; and several other interesting internet related topics. Internet 101 is an excellent way for anyone to learn about the basic and advanced features of the internet.

Some of the seniors that I work with have told me that they do not want anything fancy, and want the most simple software available to surf the web, do email, and other related basic online tasks. An Italian company, “Eldy Seniors’ Computer Software” (www.eldy.eu) is offering a free software utility that creates a desktop with just a few large buttons, each of which automates basic internet tasks. According the Eldy website, “Eldy is a software that turns any standard PC into an easy-to-use computer for people that have never used a computer before. (Eldy) Provides an easy six buttons interface email, internet, chat, videoconferencing, documents, pictures, Skype and more.”

The group that created and distributes the Eldy software describes its purpose as, “Eldy Association is a group reaching out to the elderly and disabled community offering a combination of technological tools and human support with the purpose of reducing their isolation, and loneliness. Eldy encourages people to stay active and social.” The Eldy software is available for Windows, Mac, and Linux operating systems, and is available in 22 languages. It is a large download (the Windows version of Eldy is a 40.6mb download), but it includes a browser, email client, online TV viewer, and other utilities. The heart of Eldy is “The Square” which is a desktop with six large buttons, one each for sending and receiving email, surfing the web, participating in online chats, viewing “Eldy TV,” managing the user’s personal profile, and a tools button with additional utilities.

For the user who wants a functional but minimalist web experience, this “Square” can provide it. When the email button is clicked, a simple email menu opens where the user can simply create emails, and add attachments or embed images. Eldy can create and maintain email address books, and handle other email functions, all with a single click. To open and read an email also takes a single click, with Eldy automatically handling any attachments or embedded images. The large “Surf the Web” button opens a simple browser, where favorites and bookmarks are displayed as large buttons that display a miniature of the webpage. The chat button allows the user to join a chat room, start a chat, or otherwise communicate with anyone using a compatible chat client.

The Eldy TV button opens a language specific assortment of streaming TV and video, including CNN, BBC, Hulu, YouTube, TED, VIMEO, and other streaming media; simply clicking on the appropriate button starts the streaming video and TV. The Tools button includes a notepad utility, a documents viewer (displays images, video, and several document formats), and allows the user to make free telephone calls over the internet using a basic form of the popular Skype service. For the senior who is averse to modern technology, but still wants to have the benefits of the internet, Eldy would be a good choice.

By utilizing as appropriate any of these five services, from the simplicity of Eldy to the sophistication of Meganga and Internet4 Classrooms, seniors, and anyone else interested in learning about computers and the internet may freely do so.

WEBSITES:

<http://www.ilovefreesoftware.com/02/webware/5-free-websites-how-to-use-computer.html>
<http://www.internet4classrooms.com/on-line.htm>
<http://www.seniorsguidetocomputers.com>
<http://www.internet101.org>
<http://www.eldy.eu>
<http://www.meganga.com/lessons/>

USB 3.0—The Super-Speed Bus

by Andrew Petrovic

Ottawa PC Users' Group, Inc., Canada

I thought that it would be a good idea to introduce to you a new and upcoming development - the USB (Universal Serial Bus) version 3.0, as this technology will become mainstream in a fairly short time.

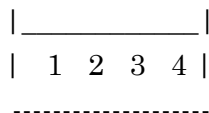
USB version 1.0 was created in 1996, but was more widely available in 1998 as version 1.1, superseded by version 2.0 in 2000. Over the next few years this will be replaced by version 3.0, already released and now being used by some consumers.

A quick overview of USB

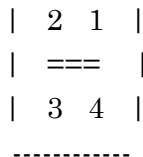
The reason that USB was created all those years ago was in order to provide an interface for computers and peripheral devices that was easy to set up and use, as well as being low-priced. Actually, the USB data protocols used are very complex, but fortunately the USB controller chips take care of these details, so users don't have to be concerned. USB is designed to be 'Plug and Play' without the user having to set up parameters such as interrupt requests, addressing, etc. as well as not having to reboot the computer after adding a peripheral.

In USB versions up to 2.0 there are only four wires that are connected: power; ground; data - and data +.

This is the 'A'-type connector usually found on a computer interface or hub:



This is the 'B'-type connector often found on the USB peripheral:



There are various other 'mini' and 'micro' connector types as well.

When we talk about USB components, we call a peripheral that plugs in to a computer port a 'device' and the port and controller associated with the port on the computer is called the 'host'.

Each device has a 'descriptor'. When a device is connected to a computer, the descriptor tells the host what kind of peripheral it is. From the product IDs it provides, the computer then knows what type of driver to load for that device. A driver is a small piece of software that interfaces between a hardware device and the operating system.

Other information passed to the computer includes the device's power requirements; protocol settings; etc. When a USB device is unplugged, the host instructs the operating system to unload the driver for that device.

As far as the user is concerned, the most important element of the upgrades to the USB technology is the increasing speed of data transfer. The following table shows the differences in data transfer speed between the versions. The theoretical speed quoted by manufacturers would, in reality, not be possible to achieve and is based upon operations that include extra packet transfer overheads, as well as a few other things. The real life actual maximum speed is likely to be between 30% and 60% of the quoted theoretical speed.

Version 1.1 had two speeds, 'Low' and 'Full'. Version 2.0 just bettered the 1.1 version 'Full' speed.

Note the difference between Mbps (Megabits per second) and MBps (Megabytes per second). There are 8 bits in one byte, so when comparing speeds take note of which terminology you are using.

Limitations of USB 2.0

So if USB 3.0 is appearing on the market, it must be because previous versions are not able to do the job. Well, this is partly true. Version 2.0 will be able to be used for quite a lot of devices for a while, but as peripherals get

USB Version	Designation	Theoretical maximum speed
1.0	"Low speed"	1.5 Mbps = 190 KBps
1.1	"Full speed"	12 Mbps = 1.5 MBps
2.0	"High speed"	480 Mbps = 60 MBps
3.0	"Super speed"	4.8 Gbps = 600 MBps

faster and require faster interfaces, so USB 3.0 will become more desirable to end users. The sort of devices that are likely to require the faster data transfer speeds are external USB disk drives and components that deal with video.

It's not just speed that is a limit. Each USB 2.0 host port can provide up to 1/2 Amp (500 mA) of current to power a device that does not have its own additional power supply. Often this is simply

not enough. Some external disk drives may require up to 900 mA of startup current and that is why they are often supplied with a 'Y' cable that plugs into two USB ports in order to feed enough power (for those portable drives that don't use an external power supply).

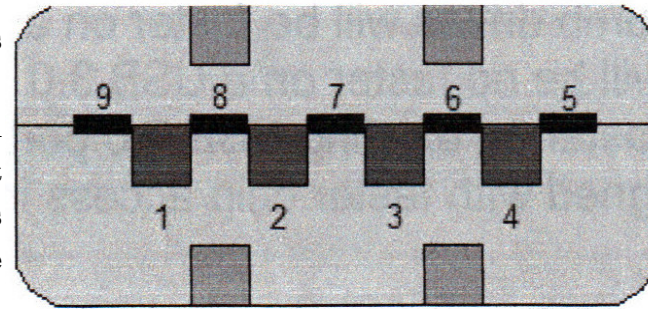
USB 2.0 data only moves unidirectionally. In other words, data can be sent to a device or from a device but not both at the same time. This cuts down the overall speed attainable.

Introducing USB 3.0

Whereas the upgrade from USB 1.1 to USB 2.0 used the same connectors with the same four wires, the upgrade from USB 2.0 to 3.0 is very much different.

Take the USB 2.0 configuration and add another entire set of connectors to it and call it 'Super speed'. This is how USB 3.0 has been created. The original USB 2.0 wires are still in place and the USB 3.0 adds five more wires (two pairs of data wires and a signal ground cable).

This is how the 'A'-type looks (Female - Receptacle), with pins 1 to 4 being identical to the original USB 2.0 specification: Cables and connectors are backwards compatible as well, so you can plug in a USB 2.0 device to a USB 3.0 port - you just won't get any extra speed advantages because only the USB 2.0 connectors will be used, though the power pins are the same so more available current should be available for USB 2.0 devices.



How is USB 3.0 better?

Apart from being fully compatible with previous USB versions, the faster data transfer is quite a dramatic improvement for USB 3.0 compatible devices because of a faster clock control speed; the use of asynchronous signaling for simultaneous sending and receiving; and an interrupt mechanism that does not use the time-consuming polling that USB 2.0 used.

One area where USB 3.0 may fall down is with the length of the cable that can be used. It could be limited to 3 meters if high throughput devices are used, as compared to the 5 meter cables possible with USB 2.0.

The limitation could be overcome using USB hubs or extenders and perhaps fiber-optic cabling might be possible in the future.

Is it worth upgrading?

USB 2.0 will likely be around for the next few years anyway, but in time newer computer motherboards will provide USB 3.0 ports as standard.

If you want to try out the technology now, there are add-on adapters available that plug in to a spare PCI-Express slot on your PC and provide two or more USB ports. There are also a few USB 3.0 external disk drives available, as well as hard drive enclosures with USB 3.0 interfaces where you can put in your own internal drive.

If you only have slow devices on your USB connections, it's no great advantage to upgrade. For example, keyboards and mice only require the slowest USB version and will not work any better on faster USB ports.

Note the traditional tree-and-branch menu system arising from the bottom panel. This reminds me of the older KDE 3.x family. There are no extra “widgets” or desktop panels now common in current KDE 4.x releases. Also, there are no side panels of “tiles” and pop-out icons present in the newer Unity or Gnome 3.x desktops. LXDE has a simple, clean interface which should be comfortable for traditional users, such as those familiar with Windows XP.

Here is a screenshot on my system using the PCManFM file manager:

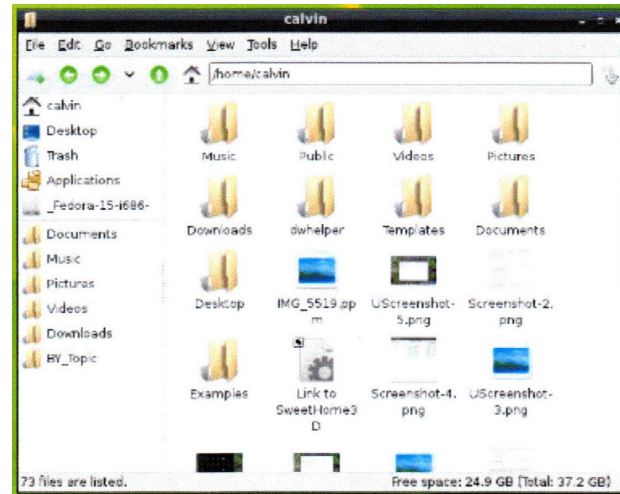
Since I also have Gnome 3.x and KDE 4.X programs on my system, I have access to all of them through LXDE. If you want to have a less sophisticated system that runs on older equipment with minimum software overhead, do a fresh install of a dedicated LXDE distro.

For example, a Pentium II processor with 256 MB of ram that was used for Windows 98 could work, or a later 600 MHz Pentium III with 512 MB of ram should run well. Several major distro’s provide a wide choice for your selection. For instance, the software provided by Lubuntu includes (among many others):

- GPicView (photo viewer)
- Leafpad (text editor)
- LXTerminal (command line access)
- OpenBox (window manager)
- PCManFM (file manager)

Most distro’s also have versions to work with their latest versions. For example, Lubuntu 11.10 will be offered as one of the versions released this October. Check all this out at the LXDE.org website.

From the November 2011 issue of Cajun Clickers Computer News, newsletter of the Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA.



Society News

December 13, 2011

by Jan Rothfuss

Help's Half Hour

Q: Has been using AOL forever and has now upgraded to version 9.0. Now his contact list does not respond – typing in the first letters does not bring up the members.

A: They must have changed something. He sometimes goes back to the old version. He may be able to Google the question and see if others have the same problem. He may also need to check the default settings to see if something turns it off/on.

Q: Are there any places to go to for computers/service other than the big box stores?

A: We do not have a Frey's but we do have Microworks on Monroe Avenue and RCRNR. Soyata is still around but specialize in business solutions.

Q: Email question: can the emails be transferred to another computer?

A: Output the file of names and addresses and then export them to his Outlook Express. You can use a flash drive to transfer the files.

Q: One member has a desktop that has died. He had gotten some signs of life but now all he gets is the black screen of death. He has tried a different monitor.

A: It was suggested that he try to run in safe mode but he does not see any lights. Might be a RIP or could be a virus.

Arpad looked at this month's *Computer Link* and reminded the group that it there is a Windows 8 out in beta review. The start up menu has been replaced by a touch screen block.

The Lighter Side

How To Hunt Elephants

COMPUTER SCIENTISTS hunt elephants by exercising Algorithm A:

1. Go to Africa.
2. Start at the Cape of Good Hope.
3. Work northward in an orderly manner, traversing the continent alternately east and west.
4. During each traverse pass:
 - a. Catch each animal seen.
 - b. Compare each animal caught to a known elephant.
 - c. Stop when a match is found.

ENGINEERS hunt elephants by going to Africa, catching gray animals at random, and stopping when any one of them weighs within plus or minus 15 percent of any previously observed elephant.

ECONOMISTS don't hunt elephants, but they believe that if elephants are paid enough, they will hunt themselves.

STATISTICIANS hunt the 1st animal they see N times and call it an elephant.

LAWYERS don't hunt elephants, but they do follow the herds around arguing about who owns the droppings.

SOFTWARE LAWYERS will claim that they own an entire herd based on the look and feel of one dropping.
SENIOR MANAGERS set broad elephant-hunting policy based on the assumption that elephants are just like field mice, but with deeper voices.

