

# MONITOR

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Next Meeting  
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## APCUG Programs in a Box

### Contents

|   |                 |    |
|---|-----------------|----|
| The Way of the Digital Photographer         | Harold Davis    | 1  |
| Two Clever Phishing Attempts                | Bob Rankin      | 3  |
| Ask Mr. Modem                               |                 | 4  |
| Top Secret Computer Battled Nazis           | Nat'l Museum    | 6  |
| The Jeopardy Answer is ... What?            |                 | 7  |
| Spspectr                                    | Ira Wilsker     | 8  |
| Using a Publisher Program or Word Processor | Jim Cerny       | 10 |
| What You Need to Know about QR Codes        | Greg Skalka     | 11 |
| Windows Media Center                        | Phil Sorrentino | 13 |
| Protect Your Computing Privacy              |                 | 14 |
| Society News                                |                 | 17 |
| The Lighter Side                            |                 | 17 |



## The Way of the Digital Photographer

by Harold Davis

Review by Mark Mattson

*Computer Users of Erie, PA*

Hot off the press comes the latest book from photographer and author Harold Davis dealing with the subject of post-production techniques in the digital photography world. At first glance, the title may seem to some to indicate that this volume deals with how to improve your digital photography skills. In a way, it might, because Harold keeps impressing on the reader that getting it as right in-camera is important to producing great

images. Rather, 'The Way' he presents to you is how to take your already good images and make them the best they can be ... or better.

As you travel along the journey this book takes you on, you discover many gems of wisdom Harold has learned over the years, and passes them on to you. For instance, one passage early in the book struck me as something I never thought of before when doing my photography. It starts on page 27 and continues onto 28. Basically what he is telling you is that you are not photographing an object, rather you are photographing the LIGHT that defines the object. The light falling on your subject can make it appear different, depending on the direction and quality the light has at any given moment. You may notice a subject and shoot an image right at that moment. But if you wait a minute or an hour or longer, the light will change and oftentimes make for an even better photo.

Reading this passage made me stop and really think about how I've been looking at photography all these years. It made me wonder if I had it wrong, and that was what holds me back from making even better images. It's now part of my thinking when I pick up the camera ... and something I need to explore further.

Study your subject...see how the light shapes and defines it. Move around, change positions and see how it changes the scene. Unless you're shooting fast-paced action such as sports, time is your friend to making great images. Be patient.

The book runs 192 pages. It is divided into three main sections, with chapters falling under those sections detailing further the subject at hand. The main sections are:

- Digital Photography is Painting
- Multi-RAW and Hand-HDR Processing
- Enhancement to Glory

Also present is a short Resources section, and a detailed Index to all topics covered in the book.

The volume is filled with both color and black and white photos taken by author Davis to illustrate the concepts he is presenting to you. Being a volume on Photoshop post-processing techniques, there are also many screen captures of his system illustrating how the concept being discussed is performed, so you may apply them to your own images.

Two of the chapters were of particular interest to me, the one dealing with Multi-RAW processing and that dealing with the LAB color space. MultiRAW processing is another way of making an image with a high contrast range, similar to HDR processing. However, it is accomplished using a single RAW file that is processed twice.

The LAB color space is a different mode in Photoshop used to adjust color in your image; some prefer it as it gives more precise results in certain circumstances than using the RGB adjustments.

There are many of what Harold calls 'Meditations' interspersed throughout the book, intended to make you think about and understand the topic being covered. They give you an exercise to make the topic clearer to you. Be sure to read through them as well when working through the volume

The Way of the Digital Photographer is published by Peachpit Press, and is available now. The ISBN number is 978-0321943071.

You may purchase the title direct from the publisher, and use your UG discount code for a discount. It is also available for purchase on Amazon for \$23.03 (list price is \$34.99).

Photography is an art form that can be frustrating, satisfying, creative, and any number of other forms and feelings, depending on how you view it. Experience comes with time, as well as with guidance from those that have gone before. It can be a long and winding path, but with

an author such as Harold Davis to show you the way, it can be satisfying and rewarding as well.

*From the October 2013 issue of Horizons, newsletter Computer Users of Erie, PA. Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Two Clever Phishing Attempts

by Bob Rankin  
*askbobrankin.com*

**A**mong the phishing techniques making the rounds, the ‘desperately needed user manual’ trick is a reliable favorite. If you’ve ever searched online for the user manual of an older computer, household appliance, stereo system, etc., you’ve probably encountered this one. Another recent reprobate is the Google Docs scam. Let’s see how both of them try to trick you....

### **Pssst ... We Got Yer User Manual Right Here!**

So you bought a used gizmo from a guy on eBay or Craigslist. The seller doesn’t have a user manual for it but you figure you can find one online in PDF format. You go to the manufacturer’s website but that model is no longer supported; the manual isn’t available. So your next step is to Google the model number and “user manual,” right? That’s when the fun starts.

The people who run these scams pay to be first in Google search results. Their search summaries are dynamically tailored to your search terms so they appear to be offering exactly what you need. “Download user manual for Bosch HES432U...” Heck yeah, you got lucky on your first try! So you click that link and a download starts instantly, instead of taking you to a Web page you could check out carefully.

But that’s OK because the file you’re receiving is just a PDF file; a document, not an executable program that can do things to your hard drive or gather up your email contacts, credit card numbers, bank account passwords, etc., and send them to some dark server in the Ukraine. It’s just a harmless user manual, right? RIGHT?

Probably not; PDF files can contain executable code. The download may actually be an EXE file disguised as a PDF. When you open such a file, it may attempt all of the nefarious actions mentioned above and more. Good anti-malware software will detect and block such auto-executing PDF files. Scammers depend in part on lazy people who don’t have anti-malware protection or don’t keep it up to date; they catch a lot of fish that way. But there are other hooks in the bait as well.

That file, `user_manual_for_HES432U.pdf`, may contain only an excerpt or abstract of the user manual you’re seeking. It whets your appetite for the full manual and makes you impatient because you just came THAT close to getting what you need. Impatient people make mistakes, like clicking on the link at the end of this sales pitch that says, “Install Conduit to get your user manual.”

### **Conduit: “A means of transmitting or distributing”**

“Conduit Search” is a widespread piece of malware that hijacks your browser. And it’s aptly named, because it transmits and distributes all kinds of nasty stuff. It resets your homepage to one the scammer selects; changes your default search engine to `search.conduit.com`; and transmits all of your search queries to a third-party who uses that data for “marketing” purposes. Some say that having Conduit installed may lead to “spear phish” emails that target victims with highly personalized and tempting email spam.

Once installed, Conduit will substitute ads from its paying customers into the search results you get from Google and other ad-supported search engines. When you click on one of those ads, Conduit and its underhanded customers make money.

Conduit will also invisibly manipulate search results so that its customers appear first instead of the firms that your preferred search engine would prioritize. This is so subtle that most users don't detect anything amiss. People pay Conduit well for biased, sometimes wildly inaccurate placement in search results. For you, the consequence is a lot of time wasted clicking on results that have little to do with your search, and possibly downloading more malware.

Conduit is nasty stuff, and many unscrupulous websites distribute it under the false guise of user manuals. And sadly, some well-known (and formerly trustworthy) download sites such as CNET and Tucows lace their downloads with Conduit. See my related article [Downloading? Watch Out for These Danger Signs](#).

Fortunately, Conduit is well-known malware that many top-tier free anti-malware programs know exactly how to handle. To get rid of a Conduit infection, you need to uninstall its standalone program and then uninstall the Conduit Toolbar and any other malware that Conduit may have added to your browser.

Uninstalling the "Search Protection by Conduit" malware is a routine task; just open Control Panel and use the "Uninstall a program" (Windows 7) or "Add/Remove program" (Windows XP) function to select and remove "Search Protection by Conduit." While you have that uninstall utility open, use it to remove any other unfamiliar or unwanted programs that you may find.

If neither your existing security software nor the Windows uninstall method cleans up the mess, there are tedious manual (pardon the pun) ways of removing the junk that Conduit adds to your browser, but I prefer to let our trusted friend MalwareBytes Anti-Malware do it automatically. I've written about MBAM previously, in *Is MBAM Enough Security?*

### The Google Docs Phish

I want to also mention a similar scam that's making the rounds, targeting Google account user names and passwords. But instead of getting you to download something you actually searched for, this one is proactive, and often comes to you from a known contact.

The Google Docs phishing attempt will arrive as an email asking you to "click here" to review an important document. It says the document is waiting for you on Google Docs, and all you need to do is sign in with your email address and password. From here, it's the classic "rogue website that looks just like the real one, but actually exists only to steal your username and password" scenario.

Submitting the form with your login credentials sends that information to the hackers, who now have the keys to your Google account. They can impersonate you online; raid your contacts; even send more spam or phishing emails that appear to be from you. Bottom line, don't click before engaging brain.



## SD Card vs Thumb Drive vs External HD

Q. I'm dithering between purchasing an SD card and a thumb drive for the storage of photos and documents. Is one better than the other or should I get an external hard drive?

A. SD cards and thumb drives basically use the same technology. A thumb or flash drive plugs into a USB port and it is quickly removed so you can take it with you. Its small size also makes

it easy to misplace so if your life is lacking drama and you enjoy a good adrenaline surge periodically, thumb drives are the way to go.

In your situation, you can't go wrong with either option. I have external drives, which have served me well, but in recent years I have gravitated more towards flash or thumb drives simply because of their size and convenience.

Q. How can I print a Web page when there is no printer icon or no "printed version" link for the item?

A. Your browser should have a print command on the Menu bar, so click File > Print and you should be able to print it. CTRL + P is also a fairly universal Print command, so give that a try.

Q. Is there a way to set a default font style and size in Gmail?

A. If you are not enamored with the font Gmail uses when you compose an email, you can change the default font. You can even change the color of the font, but before you go crazy with color creativity, have mercy on the eyes of your recipients.

To change the default font, log into Gmail then go to Settings (the little gear icon to the far right). Locate the Default Text Style section on the General tab. Choose your text style using the icons above, "This is what your body text will look like." Click Save Changes at the bottom of the page.

Q. Someone is using my email address to sign up for various mailing lists, seminars, meetings, and other things. Aren't there laws against this? What can I do to prevent it?

A. While there are federal and state laws against email "spoofing" and other forms of misleading or deceptive online practices, the problem is tracking down and prosecuting the perpetrators.

On its face it probably appears that a despicable human bean (don't email me) is the culprit; however, in most cases of this type, automated scripts harvest email addresses from legitimate sources such as Web sites, message boards, blogs, social media, and those dreadful "chain" emails so many people feel compelled to forward to others.

If you are receiving email from legitimate companies or Web sites that you recognize, it's usually safe to click an Unsubscribe link located at the bottom of those messages. Don't attempt to unsubscribe from messages that are not from legitimate senders. That type of Unsubscribe link is designed to trick you into verifying your address so it can then be sold to other spammers at a premium. (Of all the nerve!)

I recommend having a minimum of two email addresses, one being your primary address that you use to communicate with friends, family, and other trusted individuals, and another address that you use for all other purposes, including making online purchases and registrations. I prefer free Gmail accounts for this purpose, but Yahoo! Mail (<http://mail.yahoo.com>) is also an excellent choice.

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

#### An Optical Illusion

If you enjoy optical illusions, this site features modern interpretations of illusions. The site is presented blog style, so scroll down the page and prepare to be wowed. You can also use the Older Posts link at the bottom of the page to view previous entries. My suggestion is to just dive in, but take a break if your eyes start to hemorrhage or if you feel your head is about to explode.

[www.anopticalillusion.com](http://www.anopticalillusion.com)

## For the Love of Monet

I remember first becoming enamored with Monet's art while I was living in Paris, working on my doctoral dissertation, "The Influence of Renaissance Mimes on Baroque, Neoclassicism French Architecture." It was a magical time. If you're a Monet enthusiast, you won't want to miss this site. Once the site loads, you will have three paths from which to choose: Gallery, Journey and Practical Informations – yes, the non-traditional spelling with the silent "s." Select Journey to begin your digital excursion. If you prefer a more traditional tour or to skip directly to the art, check out the Gallery, organized by the year of each work.

[www.monet2010.com/en](http://www.monet2010.com/en)

## Web Crosswords

If you're a crossword puzzle enthusiast, here you can select easy puzzles or L.A. Times crosswords, as well as other word-related games. In the unlikely event you get stuck, stymied or flummoxed, click the Solve tab or button to reveal a letter, a word, or the solved puzzle. The daily, theme-oriented crossword puzzles are fun. A little timer in the upper right-hand corner is informative, yet humiliating.

[www.webcrosswords.com](http://www.webcrosswords.com)

*For more information about Mr. Modem's award-winning, weekly computer-help newsletter featuring personal answers to your questions by email, visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com)*

## Top Secret Computer Battled Nazis

From the National Museum of Computing at Bletchley Park, UK

### A Short History of Colossus

German teleprinter signals encrypted by Lorenz machines were first heard in Britain by police officers on the south coast listening for possible spy transmissions in 1940.

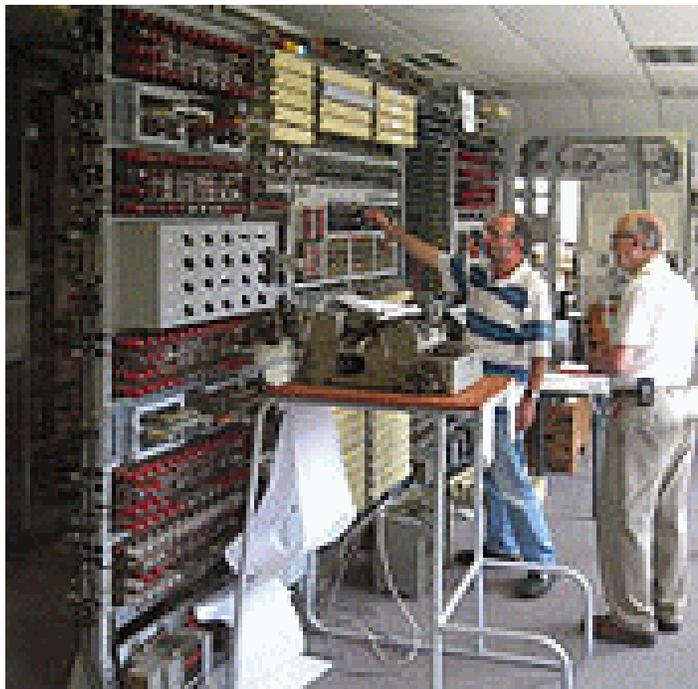
In August 1941, a procedural error by a German operator enabled Colonel John Tiltman, a top code-breaker at Bletchley Park, to decipher a message.

Brilliant mathematician Bill Tutte began working on the case and was able to deduce the complete logical structure of the cipher machine which we now know as Lorenz.

Code-breakers in the so-called Testery, under Colonel Tester, began breaking the codes by hand, but this was very time consuming.

The head of the so-called Newmanry, Max Newman, a mathematician at Bletchley Park, believed certain aspects of the decryption process could be automated. Initially, electro-mechanical Robinson machines (named after the cartoonist Heath Robinson) were used to find the start positions of the Lorenz wheels to speed up code-breaking. But the Robinson machines had shortcomings.

Tommy Flowers, an ingenious Post Office electronics engineer at Dollis Hill, was asked to improve upon the Robinsons, but instead designed Colossus, the world's first electronic



computer which enabled the Lorenz start-wheel positions to be found in a few hours, thereby greatly shortening the code-breaking process and enabling larger numbers of messages to be broken.

Colossus Mark I began operating on 5 February 1944, and was succeeded in June of that year by the Mark II. By the end of the war there were ten functioning Colossi working around the clock helping to decipher the messages of German High Command.

The deciphered messages provided the Allies with crucial intelligence on what enemy armed forces were plotting. The allies knew for example that Hitler had swallowed the bait that the D-Day landings in June 1944 would be at Calais rather than Normandy. This gave the Allies a decisive advantage.

As a direct result of Colossus, the war was shortened and countless lives saved.

By the end of the war, 63 million characters of high-grade German messages had been decrypted by the 550 people working on the Colossi at Bletchley Park.

### Rebuilding Colossus

In honour of the men and women who worked at Bletchley Park during World War II, Tony Sale, co-founder of The National Museum of Computing, led a team to rebuild Colossus in 1994. The idea of the rebuild came to him after snippets of information had emerged about the machines in the 1970s and 1980s.

With eight photographs of Colossus taken in 1945, the ambitious project was under way. A few circuit diagrams kept by engineers who worked on the original computer were also obtained.

On 15 November 2007, a rebuilt fully-functioning Colossus Mark II was unveiled to the public at The National Museum of Computing located on Bletchley Park. On 6 March 2012, the Colossus Rebuild was presented in a new extended Colossus Gallery and visitors were able to walk around the enormous machine for the first time.

Today the Colossus Rebuild provides a hugely popular working exhibit drawing visitors and media from across the globe. In TNMOC's educational programme for schools and colleges, it inspires young people to become the engineers and computer scientists of the future.

### Recreating Tunny

The rebuild of the Tunny machine was begun by Don Skeggs in the early 1990s in conjunction with the start of the rebuild of Colossus. Work on Tunny was suspended after a few years, but was restarted by a team led by John Pether and John Whetter in 2005.

As with the Colossus Rebuild, key components for the Tunny reconstruction were salvaged from decommissioned analogue telephone exchanges, kindly donated by BT.

Tunny was completed and presented in a new Tunny Gallery at The National Museum of Computing on 26 May 2011.

A TNMOC team is currently engaged in recreating one of the Robinson machines.

*Courtesy of APCUG.*

## The Jeopardy Answer Is ...What?

by Linda Gonse

*Orange County PC Users' Group, CA*

**T**he final question on Jeopardy on its September 26 episode was based on the category "Internet." The question was "The animal for which this computer program is named is actually a red panda."

Do you have any idea what that program is? When I tell you the answer, you will shake your head — as I did — and you will say "What? That's not right!" — just as I did.

Are you ready? The answer is “What is Firefox (the internet browser)?”

“Fire fox,” in Chinese, is another name for the red panda.

In fact, Mozilla launched a website called “Firefox Live” in November 2011 to educate and raise awareness of the endangered red panda species.

Live videos of three baby red pandas, Bernadette, Dolly, and Winston, that were sheltered at the Knoxville Zoo, were streamed on the Firefox Live website until March 2012. When the babies reached maturity they were sent to breed and become part of the animal families at the Virginia Zoo (Norfolk, Virginia) and the Zoo Boise (Boise, Idaho). Subsequently, the Firefox Live website was retired.

If you’d like to find a red panda in a zoo near you, go to [http://redpandanetwork.org/red\\_panda/find-a-red-panda-near-you/](http://redpandanetwork.org/red_panda/find-a-red-panda-near-you/)

*From the October 2013 issue of Nibbles & Bits, newsletter of the Orange County PC Users’ Group, CA. Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Monitor PCs and Servers for Performance and Security with O&O Syspectr

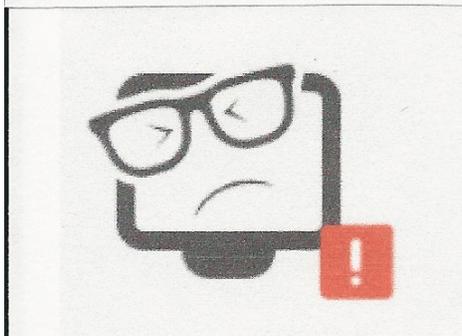
by Ira Wilsker

Many of us are not fully aware of the operating conditions of our personal computers. Some of us also run servers in addition to our PCs, as we may be connecting several devices or even hosting our own websites. One perennial issue that we commonly face is monitoring the physical condition of our machines, as well as the status of our protective security software and settings.

A feisty, 17 year old Berlin, Germany, based software company O&O Software GmbH now provides a series of cloud based hardware monitoring services for individuals, businesses, and organizations regardless of size. These comprehensive hardware monitoring services, available under the moniker “Syspectr” (presumably an acronym for “system inspector”) allow an individual user or an entire IT department to remotely keep an eye on the hardware, providing alerts if anything is not properly configured for security purposes, as well as notifying the user or administrator of any other operating issues with the computer. According to the O&O website, “O&O Syspectr (syspectr.com/en) gives you a complete overview of your

entire Windows infrastructure. With an easy to use web application, you can track all the events in real time. You will be notified immediately over your dashboard or by e-mail when something strange happens.” The basic service, which can be used to monitor up to 10 personal computers, is free (syspectr.com/en/pricing), while the more advanced version, which can monitor an unlimited number of computers, servers, and virtual machines, costs 1 Euro (about \$1.36) per PC monitored per month, and 5 Euros (about \$6.80) per server per month; while the prices listed are in Euros, payment can be made for the “Pro” version in most local currencies.

The continuous, cloud based system monitoring provided by Syspectr (syspectr.com/en/download), provides substantial monitoring of all aspects of the machines, including the hardware, operating system, major software components, hard drive status and condition, quality of network connections, and listings of internal and external IP addresses. The latest information available is always displayed on the web based dashboard on any internet browser, even if one or more of the machines is turned off. In addition to displaying information



on the monitored devices in a web browser, Syspectr can also instantly notify selected individuals of any important machine related events, these alerts also sent by email.

By viewing the dashboard, and being alerted by email, the private PC owner or an entire IT department may be made aware of potential problems before they become serious, providing valuable time to act and resolve or otherwise mitigate the impacts of the identified issues. Since these notifications are by internet display and email, the alerts may be monitored from anywhere, regardless of the distance to the troubled PC or server. Among the many items that can be remotely monitored is the installation of new software on the device being monitored. This can be as simple as a parent monitoring the new software being installed by a minor child on the family computer, to an IT manager observing the possible installation of unauthorized software on a company machine. Syspectr also monitors the security status of the computers and servers, alerting on failed updates, or turning off the firewall and other protective security measures. A person of authority, from a parent to a manager, often would like to be notified of the connection of a USB drive or media device that could be used to either steal data or introduce malware into the system; the person doing the monitoring has the ability to remotely stop the USB device, thus possibly preventing a data theft or the infection of the network from malware on the USB device.

Hard drives are often the “heart” of a computer, as they typically contain our precious data. The O&O Syspectr dashboard continuously senses and displays the load on the hard drives (which could potentially lead to failure), as well as the hard drives’ parameters, including the various S.M.A.R.T. values available on modern hard drives. The Syspectr dashboard and email alerts can give important notice and warning of a pending catastrophic hard drive failure or crash, possibly allowing the user the opportunity to backup any critical data prior to the failure.

Whether the computers in a family, or the networked computers and servers in a large organization, the remote desktop feature and an internet connection allows the parent or IT specialist to directly help users on an as needed basis. Unlike some other remote access utilities, the Syspectr remote access feature is strongly encrypted, and requires a two factor authentication, making it unlikely that an unauthorized person or hacker could access the system through this feature.

The O&O Syspectr dashboard can continuously monitor the online status of the connected devices, providing alerts of sudden shut downs and other connectivity issues. Another feature of Syspectr is the monitoring of the connected hardware itself, as if keeping inventory, including system memory, CPU, installed hard drives, and other major hardware components. It is also a simple process to determine and display the different operating systems of the observed machines, better enabling the update process for each of the computers and servers.

There are many ways that PCs can become vulnerable to a variety of software and hacker threats, such as the turning off of the firewall, disabling of the integral UAC (User Account Control), and not properly updating antivirus and other system security software. With the O&O Syspectr alert system, the responsible authority will be alerted to these security and safety lapses, and can remotely activate and update these features and security products, thus enhancing the security of the system and network, even if these features were disabled by the lower level user; this “authority” could also be a parent notified if a child is tricked into disabling or otherwise inadvertently stopping the security software or lowering its desired settings. If this were to happen, the parent could remotely restart and reset the appropriate security software and settings, thus protecting the child and the computer. Both a parent and a supervisor may be interested in what was done on a computer, and Syspectr obliges by monitoring all events, which can be displayed in a process log.

Whether an individual who would like to know precisely the comprehensive condition and status of his computer and receive timely reports of its condition, a parent who wishes to monitor one or more family computers for both condition and usage, or a manager or IT specialist who needs to monitor an entire network of servers and PCs, this O&O Syspectr may be a most worthwhile utility. Being free if used on 10 or fewer computers, and nominal in cost if used on a large network, O&O Syspectr is definitely worthy of consideration.

### Websites:

<https://www.syspectr.com/en>

<https://www.syspectr.com/en/features>

<https://www.syspectr.com/en/download>

<https://www.syspectr.com/en/pricing>

<https://www.syspectr.com/en/about>

## Using a Publisher Program or a Word Processor

by Jim Cerny

*Sarasota PCUG, FL*

If you use email or a word-processing application (like Microsoft Word or WordPad) you probably have no trouble entering and editing text. But when it comes to putting things exactly where you want on the page, well, word processing programs can become difficult. For example, if you delete a few lines toward the beginning of your document, the rest of the document “moves up” so that no empty space appears in the middle of your text. This is great for email and word processing programs but can be a pain if you wanted to place things on a page and have them stay where you put them. Most editions of Microsoft Office (a set of application programs) contain Word (for word processing) and Publisher (for creating all sorts of wonderful publications). If you do not have Microsoft Office or Microsoft Publisher, you can purchase a cheap publishing program such as “Printshop,” “Printmaster,” or “Page Plus” or other discount software. Just Google “cheap publisher software” to find these or others, some are even free. Most publisher-type programs work the same way. The following works for Microsoft Publisher (2003 edition) and is a good example of how such programs are used.

Basically a publisher program works with “objects,” not words. Oh, an object certainly CAN be words (I’ll use the term “text” if you don’t mind), but an object can be anything else as well – a photo for example. Let’s say you wanted to create and print some business cards. You would open the publisher program and first look to see what samples or “templates” the program already has to pick from. Select one that you like and it should open in the program ready for you to change anything you want. Click on the text that you want to replace with your name. A “box” will appear around the text – that is the object, in this case a box that contains text – and within this box you can change the text anyway you like. If you have a long name or if you pick a font that is too large, the result may not fit in the box. The easy solution to this is to drag the box to make it larger. You can change the size of a box (object) by dragging a “handle” at the corner or the middle edge of the box. You can also drag the whole box (not dragging on a handle point) to reposition the box anywhere you like. Whether things fit on the card or in the boxes is up to you. Remember you can make the boxes any size you want, but then you have to make sure the text size will fit in it.

Would you like to insert a photo? Click on “insert” (it will be on a tab or a menu somewhere) and select “photo from file” – this indicates that you have a photo on your computer that you want to insert. A small window should open to allow you to go to the folder you want to find the photo. Just click on the file name to highlight it and click “ok” or “insert.” Now the photo will appear on your business card as an “object” – it will probably be very large, so you need

to find the corner handle and drag it to reduce the size of the photo (you may have to use the scrollbars to get to find the handle). With resizing photos dragging a corner handle keeps the photo in the same proportion. Dragging a side handle will distort the photo. What you see on the screen will be exactly what is printed on the paper.

Once you catch on to creating and working with object boxes, everything is easy. Changing what is in once box does not affect the other boxes. But wait, there is more.

If boxes overlap, one box will be on top of the other and will block the one underneath from being seen. Boxes can be filled with any background color, or be “clear” so that what is behind them is visible. You can change the order of the objects to put the one you want on top of the others. Publisher programs also allow you to “draw” anything you want and keep it as an object (like a photo). Naturally different programs will have different options, but each should have a way to get “help” and find out how to use the tools and options you want. Whatever program you use, knowing how to use the “help” option or tab is always a good idea. Most programs do not come with printed manuals anymore.

Ok, once you have completed your fabulous design of your business cards, you will want to print them out. Because business cards are a standard size, they will print ten cards per 8.5 x 11 inch page. It is best to buy the business card stock from an office supply store – you may even find ones with backgrounds already on them. They will be already perforated for easy separation. I always print on plain paper first and then compare the sheet carefully to the cardstock to make sure all fits nicely before I print.

With a little practice you will be designing your own greeting cards, labels, tags, return address labels, invitations, banners, and much more. Along the way you will have learned how to use some graphics tools too, and that’s a good thing. Don’t be afraid to explore the program – see what other templates and options are available to try, you will discover some amazing things. Try designing and printing some creative business cards for your spouse or friend, it will make you look like a printing (and computer) wizard.

*From the November 2013 issue of PC Monitor, newsletter of the Sarasota PCUG, FL.*

## What You Need to Know about QR Codes

by Sandy Berger

*CompuKISS*

**I**f you’ve seen QR or Quick Response Codes, but don’t know what they mean, this article will explain it all for you. QR codes are becoming more and more prevalent and offer additional information on many of the things you read and see. QR codes can be found in many current magazines and newspapers.

QR codes: They are small squares filled with black square dots arranged in a grid pattern on a white background. If you look carefully at a QR code, you will see that each one is unique in the placement of the small black and white squares. While this doesn’t mean anything to the eye of the beholder, the placement of the dots defines the additional data that is embedded in the code. The QR code on the left will lead you to The website of The Pilot, a newspaper I write for. The one on the right will lead you to the home page on my CompuKISS website.



Although most QR codes are black and white, they can also contain stars, squares, and other color and/or black and white images.

QR codes are now linking paper content like newspapers and magazines to digital content. To understand QR codes, you can think of them as paper-based hyperlinks that work like bar codes. To access the digital content, you need a QR reader which you can easily download to your smart phone or tablet. Most of these are free. They use the camera in your phone to read the QR code and take you to the digital content.

You can find a QR code on a newspaper or magazine article, a business card, or a menu. Actually QR codes can be printed on just about anything. I've even seen them printed on T-shirts. Of course, they can also be used digitally. For example a QR code could be displayed on a web page to transfer information directly to a cell phone. A QR code can even be added to a Tweet.

To access the information in a QR code, after you download a free QR reader, you simply start the app and hold your mobile phone or tablet about 4" to 6" with the camera squarely above the QR code. When you get it positioned properly, your phone will take the picture and display the additional information on your device. You don't have to press any buttons or the screen, everything is done automatically.

QR codes can give you many different types of additional information. If you see one on an advertisement, it will probably lead you to more information about the product. A QR code on a business card can lead you to more information about that person or company. QR codes can lead you to things like coupons, movie trailers, phone numbers, or directions. I find them invaluable when on a recipe because they allow me to view the recipe on a tablet and use it immediately in the kitchen.

Several companies have developed further enhancements for QR codes allowing them to be hidden in a picture. They embed imperceptible digital information in pictures or behind text, creating an invisible hyperlink to online content. They can even embed a QR code in an audio file.

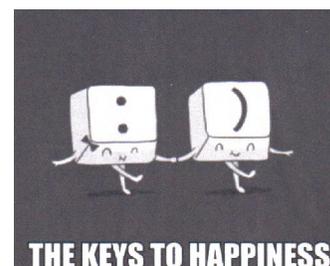
Digimarc is a company in the forefront of the QR world. I use the free Digimarc app because it works with their own "hidden" codes as well as regular QR codes and barcodes. It is available for both Android and Apple.

When a QR code is hidden, there will usually be a note to that effect or a small logo on or near the picture to indicate that it is, in fact, a QR code. Even though you don't see the code, you can hold your phone or tablet over the picture to activate the code.

QR codes are very popular in Japan and are becoming more and more popular here as people find new uses for them. I imagine that sometime soon, all smart phones and tablets will come with a QR code reader so you won't have to download one.

If you are interested in creating a QR code for your T-shirt, business card, or website, the easiest way to do it is to use a third-party QR code generator. I created the two QR codes shown in this article using a website called Kaywa at <http://qrcode.kaywa.com>. Of course, Kaywa has professional options that you have to pay for, but creating a few simple QR codes is completely free.

*Courtesy of APCUG.*



# Windows Media Center - Pictures, Videos, and TV, too

by Phil Sorrentino  
*Sarasota PCUG, FL*

Microsoft gave us a gift when they included Media Center in Windows. Windows Media Center (WMC) is a media player (organize and show pictures, slideshows and videos) and a digital video recorder (view and record live TV). Pictures and videos are really no big deal, Windows Media Player, WinAmp and VLC all do a fine job. The real gift is the ability to watch and record TV. It is possible to configure Media Center to handle up to 4 TV signals. Originally WMC was a separate version of Windows XP (Windows XP Media Center Edition), but it was later included in Vista (Home Premium and Ultimate), and finally all versions of Windows 7 (except Starter). Unfortunately, it is not included in Windows 8, but is available for Windows 8 Pro as an add-on for \$9.99. (It was free for Windows 8 Pro early adopters up until January 31, 2013.)

WMC uses TV tuners to record and play back TV from a standard antenna, cable or satellite signal. Digital tuners support TV broadcasts in High Definition or Standard Definition. A TV tuner is a device you use to connect an analog or digital TV signal to your computer. TV tuners come in two basic model types: external TV tuners, which usually plug into a USB port on your computer (the only choice if you are using a laptop), and internal TV tuner cards, which you must install inside your computer. In order to watch and/or record TV using Media Center, you'll need to physically connect a TV signal to the TV tuner on your computer. This typically involves connecting one end of a coaxial cable to your tuner and the other end to your TV signal source (e.g. over-the-air antenna, cable TV jack in the wall, cable TV set-top box, or satellite TV set-top box).

WMC can record TV programs manually, on a One-Touch-Record basis, or it can schedule recording shows using an included Program guide (that is customized to the local TV broadcaster). Recordings can then be put on to a DVD or portable media player (given that there are no copy restrictions). While watching live TV, WMC buffers the program so that the user can rewind, fast-forward or pause the live show, allowing users to review a spectacular touch-down pass or simply skip the commercials.

The User Interface is a little different than what Windows users are used to. The menus are very large, making them suitable for viewing on a big screen TV from your most comfortable chair. With the addition of a Media Center Remote, the user can control the operation from his/her easy chair without having to go to the computer keyboard (a wireless keyboard also gives the desired result). As expected, the "Close," "Restore Down," and "Minimize" buttons are in the upper right of the display, and note that a "Back" button is a left facing arrow in the upper left side of the display. These buttons appear when the mouse is moved.

You can record a live (currently airing) TV show (the show is recorded from the moment you press the "Record" button). Obviously, if you're halfway through watching a show before you start recording, the first half won't be recorded. (Microsoft has not yet conquered time travel.) To start recording a show, Click the "Start" button, click "All Programs," and then click Windows Media Center.

On the Windows Media Center start screen, scroll to TV, and then click "Live TV." Move the mouse so that the playback controls appear, and then click "Record." WMC provides a Guide that is customized to your own local provider and typically displays a schedule for the next 12 or 13 days. To schedule recordings using the Guide, scroll to TV and then right-click the program that you want to record, and then left-click "Record" to schedule the recording of that

program. You can also search to find a TV show or movie that you want to record. On the WMC start screen, scroll to TV, and then click Search. Click the category that you want to search by (such as Title), and then follow the instructions to start the search. On the search results page, click the TV show that you want to record, and then click “Record” to schedule a recording of that program. In order to record your favorite TV show every week, you can automate the process by scheduling the recording of an entire series. On the WMC start screen, scroll to TV, and then click Guide. Locate the TV series that you want to record, click it, and then click “Record Series.”

Once you have recorded shows, they can easily be watched. From the WMC start screen, click TV and then click Recorded TV. This will display all the shows that have been recorded in order of “date-recorded,” “title,” or “original air date.” This display is a horizontal scrolling list of thumbnails that represent each of the recorded shows. To move left or right, hover around the end of the list to illuminate the arrow for that direction, then click the arrow to move the list. Select a show to watch by clicking the thumbnail. This will display a summary of the show selected. To watch the show, click “Play,” (or click “Delete” to remove the recorded show, or “cancel series” if you’ve changed your mind about the future recording of this show). When you click “Play,” the show will start with playback controls in the lower right hand side of the show. These controls will disappear in time, but to get them back, just move the mouse. Click “Pause” to temporarily stop the program. Click “Play” to resume the show. Click “Rewind,” to watch something again, or click “Fast Forward,” to move ahead in the show. Click the “Volume Increase” button (the plus to the right of speaker) or the “Volume Decrease” button (the minus to the right of speaker) to increase or decrease the volume, or click the “Mute” button (the speaker) to turn the sound on or off. When you’ve finished watching the show, move the mouse, and then click “Stop.”

WMC provides many additional features, many of which allow you more specific control of the recording process. You can set up Media Center to automatically record a specific channel at a specific time. And, you can set up Media Center to automatically record TV shows and movies based on keywords that are associated with a program such as actor’s name, director’s name, or even a word that appears in the title. (Then in the future, when a TV show or movie airs that matches keywords you specified, the program will automatically record.) But even without these extra features, WMC turns your computer into a very capable Digital Video Recorder that you can use to time-shift TV shows.

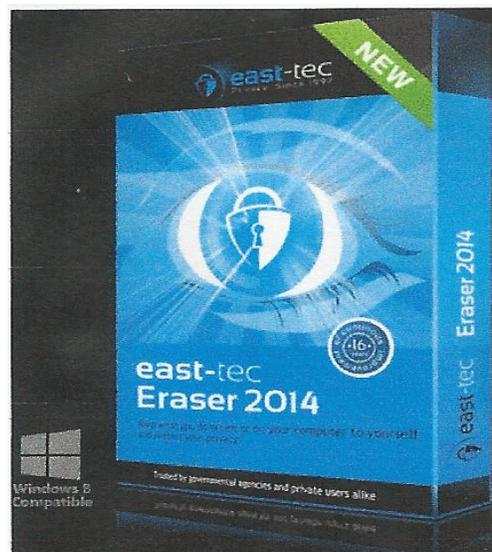
*From the October 2013 issue of PC Monitor, newsletter of Sarasota PCUG, FL. Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Protect Your Computing Privacy with East-Tec Utilities

by Ira Wilsker

I was recently given the opportunity to thoroughly test a product that I was unfamiliar with. This product is East-Tec Eraser 2014 ([east-tec.com/eraser](http://east-tec.com/eraser)). At first, I was skeptical about using a paid (\$29.95 for a one year license) commercial product to perform privacy related computer tasks that I had previously performed with a variety of free or other commercial software utilities that I already owned. My first impression, later proven inaccurate, was, “Oh great, another privacy protecting utility!” as there are already a plethora of other similar utilities on the market. After experimenting with East-Tec Eraser, my skeptical first impression proved to be unfounded, as this practical utility worked extremely well, combining the functions of several other utilities, both paid and free, into one convenient and coordinated package.

After downloading my copy of East-Tec Eraser 2014 directly from the publisher's website, a 11MB download, it installed smoothly with minimal intervention by the user. About the only item to select during the install was the default language (automatically defaulted to the PC's host language, which was "English" on my computer), with the total installation completing in under a minute. I entered my registration serial number by clicking on the "Support" button on the top-right of the Eraser window, and then selecting the "License Center" where the serial number could be entered; the online activation process, which verified my serial number, took only a few seconds. The basic license is for a one year period.



East-Tec Eraser 2014 opens a physically attractive and pleasant looking window, defaulting to the "Dashboard" menu. The Dashboard menu offers the user the choices of running "Privacy Guard", "Erase Deleted Data", check on the status of the license subscription, read news and announcements, and to update the program, if updates are available. The "Privacy Guard" module can be initiated by either selecting it from the Dashboard, or from the menu on the left side of the window. The Privacy Guard module is fully customizable, easy to understand, and can be run automatically or manually. The user may select any combination or all of the "internet tracks" for deletion that were left on the computer while on the internet, including web histories (websites visited), unwanted cookies, chat logs, deleted email messages, temporary and cache files, the Windows swap or paging files, the Recycle Bin, and other forms of internet tracks and debris. While East-Tec Eraser 2014 may remove a huge number of "internet tracks" that may pose a risk to privacy and security if these "tracks" are utilized by an unauthorized user, Eraser is explicitly designed not to delete any intentionally saved data or files, and will not harm any critical system files.

One especially intriguing feature available in each of the modules, including the Privacy Guard, is the "Security Level" which determines the fate of any deleted items. Many users are unaware that when items or files are simply deleted, they remain on the hard drive and are fairly easy to recover unless they are overwritten, either during normal read-write sequences, or intentionally overwritten with random data. Some of the better readily available file recovery utilities can often recover enough file fragments from simply deleted and overwritten files, that the deleted files can likely be recovered and read.

Several of the competing products do not securely delete files, making these files likely recoverable by a knowledgeable and skilled technician. There are many totally legitimate reasons why a computer user would want to render deleted files unrecoverable, such as deleting medical, legal, financial, or other sensitive files in a home or work environment. East-Tec Eraser 2014 offers the user a choice of any of 14 different "wiping algorithms" based on one or a combination of government or international security standards. Eraser is fully compliant with the data destruction standards required by many of the government agencies.

By default, Eraser utilizes the US Department of Defense DOD 5220.22-M standard for secure file deletion, which includes three high security passes which write randomly generated characters, compliments of the randomly generated characters, and a randomly generated data stream, all of which overwrite the tracks and sectors of the hard drive that contained the originally deleted data. Other user selectable data wiping standards include the Russian GOST

P50739-95, the German VSITR, the U.S. Navy NAVSO P-5329-56, U.S. Air Force Cryptologic Support Center AFSSI-5020, and commercial data destruction standards such as the Bruce Schneier Algorithm and the Peter Gutmann Method. Unless required by regulatory or contractual information security (INFOSEC) standards, the user can balance the need for security with the need for speed (time), as some of the most secure deletion methods can take substantial amounts of time, as they may overwrite the data in excess of 35 times.

The other modules, including the Erase Files and Folders (drag and drop unwanted files and folders to the Eraser window), Erase Deleted Data (deleted files and folders from the hard drive and other connected writable media), and Media Wiper offer the same secure file deletion options mentioned above, along with a noteworthy proviso; “Note: This process may take several hours, so please Fix at a time convenient to you.” I tried several of the secure deletion standard methods and algorithms, and found some very discernible time differences, based on the size of the files and folders deleted, and the type of data destruction selected. Small individual files chosen for secure deletion could be “wiped” fairly quickly, usually within a few seconds, regardless of the complexity of the method selected to overwrite the files. As I tried the different security wiping methods on several identical sacrificial folders that I created, each containing copies of the same large video file, the speed of the different secure deletion methods became quite apparent, ranging from only a few minutes for the lower level security methods (still adequate for most users), to 36 minutes for the highest security file scrubbing method available in Eraser.

One factor that I noted while conducting these several file destruction experiments; my “HD Sentinel” hard drive monitoring utility displayed a steadily increasing temperature of the hard drive utilized for this experiment, as the hard drive was working harder with each subsequently more complex file destruction process. It seems credible that an older hard drive, not in top condition and not properly cooled, could possibly suffer from problematic overheating if very large files were destroyed by the more complex selections.

In addition to deleting internet tracks, along with unwanted files and folders, East-Tec Eraser 2014 includes a “Media Wiper” module which is intended to securely wipe the data from removable media devices of up to 64GB capacity. As with the other modules, the level and degree of secure file destruction can be easily selected by the user. This module is not intended to wipe entire hard drives or hard drive partitions, but is only intended to be used on removable media, such as USB flash drives and other forms of flash memory cards and devices. It should be noted that securely wiping the data from a removable media device, such as a USB flash drive, or a memory stick such as those used in cameras, phones, and MP3 players, does not destroy the device, but only destroys the data on that device.

I experimented with the Media Wipe module on a few old USB flash drives as well as on memory cards from an old cell phone and an old digital camera, after verifying that any old data was securely backed up on another device. As before, based on the capacity of the media, and the level of security selected, the time to complete the wipe process varied considerably. One old 512MB USB flash drive did not open after a high level wipe, when inserted into the USB slot on my desktop, but a fast format, using another utility, restored the old flash drive to health in a matter of seconds.

If the user desires to securely wipe a hard drive, such as one that is being disposed, sold or donated, either just as a hard drive or as a component in a complete PC, East-Tec offers a \$15 utility, Dispose Secure 5 ([east-tec.com/disposesecure](http://east-tec.com/disposesecure)), which is explicitly designed for that purpose.

East-Tec offers some other interesting security utilities at reasonable prices. Also available, in addition to the Eraser 2014 and Dispose Secure 5 mentioned above, are a pair of

utilities that can encrypt file contents, documents and emails (Invisible Secrets 4, \$30), and another that can create encrypted virtual drives, effectively hiding entire directories and folders (SafeBit 2, \$30).

With all of the concerns about cyber privacy expressed among segments of the population, these East-Tec utilities may be beneficial to help prevent data snoops and identity thieves from accessing our sensitive files, folders, and devices.

### Websites:

<http://www.east-tec.com>

<http://www.east-tec.com/company>

<http://www.east-tec.com/eraser/>

<http://www.east-tec.com/disposesecure>

<http://www.east-tec.com/eraser/download/> Free Trial software

<http://www.east-tec.com/disposesecure/>

## Society News

### Help's Half Hour Notes

Led by An Assortment of Members

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Q: A member reported that she is no longer getting email.

A: It was suggested that her email inbox is full. She can check by going in to [webmail.rochester.rr](mailto:webmail.rochester.rr) and login. She might be able to find them and, if necessary, remove unneeded ones.

Q: If I switch to Linux Mint, can I just copy my files over?

A: Most standard documents should work. Some types, like photos, may not work as expected. It was suggested to run Live Distribution and test everything out before you migrate. Also a dual boot would allow you to switch as necessary.

