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SEMCO OFFICERS

President	Gary DeNise	(248) 634-7514
Vice President	Richard Jackson	(248) 546-3694
Secretary	Carol Sanzi	(586) 739-7256
Treasurer	Chester Blechinger	(248) 338-2653
Members at Large of the Board of Directors		
	Bob Clyne	(810) 387-3101
	Chuck Moery	keypounder2@aol.com

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Publications Committee Chair	Bill Agnew	(586) 752-2227
Editor	Bill Agnew	(586) 752-2227
Associate Editor	Bob Clyne	(810) 387-3101

SIG (SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP) CHAIRPERSONS

SIG-IBM: CoChairman	Tom Callow	(248) 642-1920 (9-5)
CoChairman	Warner Mach	(313) 326-0733
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SIG-ADVANCED	Franz Breidenich	(248) 398-3359

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All SEMCO correspondence should be addressed to

SEMCO - P.O. Box 707 - Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0707

Website: <http://www.semco.org>

E-mail: semco@semco.org

General information: (voice) answering device in Royal Oak **(248) 398-7560**

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SEMCO MEETINGS

Sunday, October 9, 2005

Board Meeting	12:00pm
General Meeting	1:30pm
SIG-IBM Meeting	1:45pm
Social Period	3:15pm
IBM Novice Group	3:45pm
SIG-IBM Intermediate	3:45pm



DEALS COLUMN

from the DealsGuy
Greater Orlando Computer UG
by Bob "The Cheap skate" Click

There isn't much trade show work in the summer, so we always go north in July to visit our families. This year it was a challenge paying for the gas. Not only that, but at two stations (in different states) we felt we got short gallons. Our car calculates its gas mileage and tells us how much gas we have used, so we know about how much gas the tank should hold when filling it up. It's pretty accurate, and when you get near that number of gallons, the pump nozzle usually shuts off. When it continues to fill the tank for a gallon or more, it seems possible we are getting short gallons there. Yes we could try to report it to the state, but when we are on a trip with a destination and a time frame, it's easier to chalk it up to experience and not stop there again. Gas prices are bad enough without a gas station clipping us at the same time.

Construction doesn't help either, since signs are often scarce or hard to spot at construction areas. In all the years I have traveled I-75, there has always been plenty of construction, especially in some states. It's just as bad,

if not worse, here in central Florida with ongoing construction all over for years, especially on I-4 where we often travel. That road is always a mess with ongoing stop-and-go conditions. I'm sure all of my readers can relate to construction and traffic problem in their own areas.

How About Designing or Remodeling Your Home

If you plan to build or remodel a home, how tough is the job of getting the design just like you want it? You could browse through a ton of architectural designs, or read a lot of magazines and become completely confused. You might even have a conference with an architectural firm or builder and discuss the entire project; or you could purchase Super Home Suite by Punch! Software and experiment all you like right on your own computer. This package has everything you need to design or remodel your own home, as well as the landscaping, and you can use your own creative contribution to get what you like. In fact, you can move walls around and even adjust the studs to get the type of structure that suits your fancy, not to mention even the landscaping design around the home.

This package contains seven powerful programs that work as one to help you in the design or remodeling plan. They are 3D Home Design, 3D Landscape, Home Estimator, AutoFraming, Floorplan Trace, Real Model, and 3D Furniture Workshop. Beside that, you also get Ultimate Deck as a bonus. Comparing it with a competitive product shows many features in Super Home Suite not included in the other product. When I worked with it, I was impressed with the versatility of this product, and the many features that I found during my

experience checking it out. I always need instructions, so it also took some reading and experimenting from their 120-page manual, and checking the help section. I sure didn't get to be expert in a day. Even the packaging was unique when I opened it.

A good example of the complete coverage and interaction in this product is the Home Estimator that automatically tallies your expenses and calculates total material costs as you design. You can add local costs and view information in an exportable spreadsheet format (which I did not do). It recognizes 2"x4", 2"x6," and custom studs; and keeps separate counts; also door and window schedules. You can list quantities of trees and other plantings, and square footage calculations are included. This product has so many features that I suggest you check their Web site <<http://www.punchsoftware.com>> for complete information.

I loved working with this product, even though I don't need a house right now. After a few days, I designed a new home with my favorite desires near my present income, but I'm working on a million dollar home to build after my wife's lottery ticket wins the thirty-five million this week. Of course there is just a slight chance she might not win! I love this new toy.

Punch! Software tells me there is a \$10 manufacturer's rebate available on the Super Home Suite, ESP (Estimated Street Price \$49.99), making it just \$39.99. Sounds like a bargain to me. There should be a rebate sticker on the box and a form inside to send in for all their rebated products.

Punch! Software also offers several other products, some of which are more specialized for particular tasks. I will

describe two others below and more products with a rebate next month.

Punch! Master Landscape and Home Design Professional.

ESP for this product is \$79.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it only \$59.99.

This product is new, but here is partial information from a similar product on their Web site: "This package contains nine powerful garden and landscape design software tools, patent-pending PhotoView™ and their sortable PlantFinder™ database, with over 2,000 landscape plants, and in one easy-to-use interface! In addition, you will receive Ultimate Deck, a Punch! deck design software completely integrated. PhotoView™ technology lets you combine real-world photos with your own landscape and garden designs to create a realistic image of your future outdoor living space. You can import a photo of your own home, add landscaping or a deck, then view it from any angle, with realistic 3D photo-quality perspective. Place a scanned photo of doors, windows, pets, even add your children into the backyard!"

I didn't see the new Pro version described on their Web site, but the basic version is there with plenty of description. It appears to be very powerful.

Punch! Professional Home Design Suite Platinum.

This ESP is \$99.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it just \$79.99.

This home design software package lets you design all of the critical components for your home. The powerful home design capability includes foundations, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, custom windows, custom roofs, and much, much more. You can

turn layered drawings on and off for uncluttered viewing of your home design, and you can combine as few, or as many, layers as you wish, and spot potentially costly design conflicts. Ordinary blueprints could never give you that level of insight into your home designs!

Their Web site showed fourteen major features in this package, but I didn't see the new Platinum version posted there. However, check the Web site for more info. They say they have offered the #1 selling products in this field for the last five years, so take a look.

Design Website Buttons With Style

An announcement I received back in June and edited for publishing:

Our company, XP-Web-Buttons, would like to announce the release of XP Web Buttons 3.15 for Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003. We'd like to offer your members and subscribers a 25% discount off the regular price.

A large part of a Web site's appeal and navigability comes from the clever design of menus and buttons. XP Web Buttons is a nifty tool for creating stylish Web buttons, navigation bars, and menus with fully customizable features in a few clicks of the mouse. Web page designers have a complete palette of XP themes, font faces, and styles, shadows, icons, targets, and more, to choose from. XP Web Buttons generates all images, JavaScript, and HTML code automatically. These custom buttons react to mouse activity like rollover and clicking, and each button parameter, including size, color, alignment, word wrap, and many more, can be easily adjusted and then previewed to test how the button will respond to mouse events. The latest release of XP Web Buttons sports a new interface, support for .ico

files and clear-type fonts, revised help and tutorial functions, and more icon selections in .gif and .ico formats. A host of sample projects for inspiration has been included.

Free demo version and product information is available at <<http://xp-web-buttons.com/>>. A personal license for XP Web Buttons costs USD \$29.95. A Windows™ 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003 operating system is required. To get the UG discount, order the tool at <<http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=62316&pc=GS198>>.

Contact information: Stephan Boas; XP-Web-Buttons <www.xp-web-buttons.com>; E-mail: <support@xp-web-buttons.com>.

Free trial version: <<http://xp-web-buttons.com/xpwebbuttons.exe>>

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month, if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

Windows Security

By Bob Clyne
Associate Editor

I am alarmed by the number of times, when I am talking to someone about their computer security, and I ask them if they have installed all the Microsoft critical security patches on their Windows XP, and they tell me, "Oh, yes,

I have installed Service Pack 2 (SP2).” Service Pack 2 is a good start to installing the Windows security patches, but it is just a start. By the time SP2 was available, there were already several more security patches on the Windows Update site, and there have been a great many since then.

As part of your computer security, you really need to keep your computer updated with the very latest Microsoft critical security patches. Most of the viruses, worms, etc. that appear on the Internet rely on vulnerabilities that have already had patches issued. Frequently, when a patch is issued, there is some malware that exploits it within days, so you should keep your computer up-to-date to safeguard both yourself and others who may be affected by malware on your machine.

Microsoft releases any available new security updates on the second Tuesday of each month, but any especially urgent and critical updates are released as soon as they are completed regardless of the date. If your computer is not set for automatic updates, I suggest that you go to either the Windows Update site or the new Microsoft Update site every week to check for critical updates, but do it at least on the second Tuesday of the month or the next day. If your computer is set for automatic updates you should be OK, as long as you are connected to the Internet long enough for it to do its job. Automatic update notification should let you know via a little balloon from the task tray when there is a critical update, but if your computer is set for notification only, you still have to notice the notification and act on it. I suggest that you go to the Microsoft update site at least every month and check anyway, just in case “Automatic” isn’t working.

Also, by visiting the site, you get to see the optional, non-critical, updates that are available.

I strongly resent Microsoft poking around in my computer with their validation, but the Microsoft updates sites won’t seem to let you check for updates without doing the validation. Supposedly, critical updates are available without it, but I haven’t seen how it is done. If any of you have the answer, how about writing about it for a future issue of the DATA BUS?

The Windows Update site just has updates for Windows and some of its included applications, such as IE and Windows Media Player. You can reach it by, among other ways, clicking on the IE menu bar Tools entry and then selecting “Windows Update.” The Microsoft Update site, which is only available for Windows 2000 and Windows XP, will find updates for both Windows and Microsoft Office and a few other Microsoft products. There is a link from the Windows Update page to opt for Microsoft Update. Once you enroll in Microsoft Update, the links from IE and other places in Windows will take you to the Microsoft update page instead of the Windows Update page.

On either of the update sites you should have a choice of “Express,” or “Custom” installation. The Express option will install all of the critical updates. The Custom option will show you a list of critical updates with all of them checked but give you a chance to uncheck any you don’t want. I usually choose the Custom option to see just what they propose to install, though I usually install all the critical updates. Take your pick. At the left side of the screen you will probably also see at least

two other categories. One is “Software, Optional,” and the other is “Hardware, Optional.” These are non-security items, but I suggest that you click on them to see what is available. If you want any of them, check them, and they will be downloaded and installed on your computer. Some of them have to be downloaded separately rather than as part of a group of items.

The following Windows versions are supported with current updates on both the Windows and Microsoft update sites: Windows XP, SP 1 or later, Windows 2000, SP 4.

These are only supported on the Windows update site and only for Critical & Security updates: Windows 98, 98SE, & ME.

You still need anti-virus software, a firewall, and anti-spyware software, but you should patch the vulnerabilities in Windows and Office also.

In Search Of “VCR For Radio”

By Frank Bollinger

I recently began recording radio programs on my computer. Here’s how it happened.

Background

This story began more than 40 years ago when I became addicted to talk radio. Over the ensuing years, I’ve enjoyed many hours of entertaining and informative programs. Topic oriented shows about personal finance, law, cars, and (of course) computers filled the weekends. Hog heaven until the radio stations rearranged their schedules. When the dust settled, three of my favorites were on simultaneously. On top of that, I’m also a baseball fan, so Dodger and Angel games sometimes

presented five alternatives at the same time. Bummer. Why couldn’t there be a VCR for radio?

First Solution

I heard about a special radio and tape recorder from C Crane & Co. The tape recorder runs at 1/4 speed, so you can get a 3-4 hour program on one side of an audio cassette. Two problems are that the recorder is a bit bulky to lug around, and the tapes won’t play in typical tape players. So, I also acquired a portable player capable of recognizing the slow speed.

Now I could listen to one program and record another. But, there are three programs. One night, I heard about something called Radio YourWay. This is a radio with a built-in timer that saves programs on a memory card. It also has built-in memory. Radio YourWay turns out to be one of those neat ideas that works, but is so aggravating to use that you wonder if it is worth it. For example, programming it is clumsier than any VCR you can imagine (I’ve had many, and mastered them all fairly easily). A couple of other quirks added to my frustration. Fast forwarding is exceedingly slow. It takes several minutes to get to the second or third hour of a 3-hour program. Even worse, if you pause playback more than a couple of minutes, it resets to the beginning, and then you have to wait even longer to get to your new starting point.

It was quite a shock to discover how much harder it is to “time shift” radio than TV. But, even with these challenges, at least I could now record two, and listen to the third live. Not perfect, but manageable, until the timer broke on the C Crane recorder. Now, I had to choose which program to miss.

That's not acceptable after being used to hearing all three.

The Next Solution

My next idea was to find a device like Radio YourWay, but easier to use. An Internet search led to something called "Replay Radio." Since I have Tivo for recording TV, and Replay TV is a competing product, this name was quite intriguing. It turned out to be PC software that claims to work like "Tivo for Internet Radio." I love my Tivo, so I explored further, discovering that it could record programs and had an impressive list (several hundred) of radio shows to choose from. The only apparent drawback was that it recorded MP3 files. Remember, I'm a talk show junkie, not a music aficionado. So, selecting this approach would mean I'd need something to play back the recordings or be chained to my computer. (At this point it sounded like I'd need an MP3 player).

Alas, Replay Radio has a serious flaw—it can only record one program at a time (As noted above, I want to do three). An exchange of e-mails confirmed this shortcoming and led me to another program, called WM Recorder. Fortunately, its on-line documentation explicitly stated it can do up to eight concurrent recordings. One potential glitch—it doesn't create MP3 files. The same documentation did recommend a program to convert the recordings.

So, I downloaded the software and ordered an Apple iPod (MP3 player) from Amazon.com. Since I don't like using earphones, I also ordered a speaker apparatus that the iPod can plug into for playback.

Mission accomplished, right? Not quite. I successfully recorded several

radio programs. All played well on my PC. The next step was to convert them to MP3 files. Guess what? The "recommended" conversion program didn't recognize the .asf files created by the recording software. Being the audio "expert" I am, my first question was "What the @\$% is an asf file?" Back to the Internet, where I researched audio file formats and found alternative software. Two allowed trial downloads that were able to handle the asf files. Curiously, after another e-mail exchange, I found out that I could simply change the asf file extensions to wma, and the recommended program would make the conversions. Apparently, asf and wma are two different Microsoft audio formats. Still, it's easier to use a conversion program, since it can batch many at once.

With that problem solved, I'm now able to record several programs on a predetermined schedule. I can use the iPod with earphones when out walking and with my speaker apparatus around my home. I've even used the speaker gadget in my car.

This trip was a roller coaster containing numerous ups and downs with continuing challenges. For example, I found out where one of the originating radio stations is located when Bob Brinker's Money Talk turned out to be a Kansas City Chief's football game. Sometimes the recordings don't work, and one of the programs I want doesn't have an Internet broadcast.

Despite all that, it was a grand adventure, I had a lot of fun doing it, and am enjoying listening to programs I was missing before. The time from the cassette recorder failure to having all the components assembled and functioning successfully was about two

weeks. Oh, yes. What about music? Can't say. I may be the only person who bought an MP3 player NOT to play music.

Here's the final hardware and software configuration:

1. WM Recorder (Records the programs) (\$29.95 from www.wmrecorder.com).

2. WM VCR (Schedules the recordings) (\$9.95 from www.wmrecorder.com).

3. River Past Audio Converter (Converts the asf files to MP3) (\$29.95 from www.riverpast.com).

4. Apple iPod (MP3 Player) (Approximately \$230 and up, depending on source and model).

5. Altec Lansing InMotion Portable Audio (Speaker gadget for the iPod) (Approximately \$110, from various sources).

Frank Bollinger is a member of Orange County, California, PC Users Group www.orcopug.org.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Network Your Home Or Office Internet

By Ira Wilsker

I am frequently asked questions about connecting an internet source to a home network, such that several computers can simultaneously share the Internet connection. This type of home

networking is typically only practical if there is a broadband source, and generally impractical if the source is dialup, and a voice phone line is to be shared for Internet access.

Basically, there are three good options available, and each has its relative advantages and disadvantages, and differs in terms of cost effectiveness based on individual circumstances. The three basic methods or technologies available for home or small office networking are wired, wireless, and "homeplug."

Wired networking is a viable choice if it is practical to run a network cable between computers. The cable, which can be relatively inexpensive, if purchased in bulk from electronics or home/hardware stores, but somewhat pricey if purchased in pre-cut sections at retail stores. Cable can be run through an attic, suspended from cup hooks along a ceiling, run along baseboards, or other methods that comply with appropriate safety and electrical codes. Other than running the cable, the installation of the network is fairly simple, and requires readily available and generally inexpensive hardware, manufactured by countless companies. A device called a router is connected to the broadband input, and the computers are connected via network cable to the router. Most wired routers come with a floppy or CD with simple configuration utilities that allow the network to be set up and functioning within minutes of connection. Wired routers can be purchased from discount stores, electronics stores, office supply stores, and a variety of other sources. Since almost all contemporary computers, both desktop and notebook, come with an integral network connector, generally

no other hardware is required other than the router and cable. In terms of security, wired is generally the most secure method of networking. Many of the inexpensive wired routers include some type of hardware firewall to protect the network from intrusion, but it is still generally a good idea to have a software firewall on each computer.

One of the most popular methods of home or small office networking is wireless, often referred to with its industry standard designation, 802.11, with a letter suffix, such as an “a,” “b,” or “g.” The suffix indicates which version of the standard it complies with in terms of frequency and bandwidth. Generally, the least expensive and most widely used type is the 802.11b, which shares the same 2.4 GHz digital frequencies as many cordless phones and other household electronics, which may possibly cause some interference with the wireless connection. Under ideal conditions, 802.11b can transfer data at a rate of up to 11 megabytes per second (Mbps). The newer 802.11a and 802.11g standards offer higher transmission speeds, and will likely encounter less interference from household appliances, but some interference is always a risk.

To connect computers to a wireless network requires a wireless router, and a device called an “access point” for each computer. The main advantage to a wireless network is the ease of installation, and the flexibility of not being connected to a wire while surfing the net. The wireless router is connected to the broadband input, and an antenna on the router broadcasts the signal to the access points. Range is a function of building construction and interference, but at typical household

and small office distances and construction, a single router is typically adequate. Users should be sure to follow the instructions included with the router in terms of placement in order to maximize the signal. “Access Points” are generally small devices that attach to a computer either through a USB port, or to the network input on the computer. As they are radio transceivers, placement will affect performance. It is imperative to note that unless the integral encryption and other security options offered by the router and access points are implemented, there can be some serious security issues with wireless connections, in that it is easy for unauthorized persons to access the network.

Wireless routers and access points are readily available wherever electronics are sold, including discount stores, warehouse clubs, office supply stores, and other retailers. As the technology has been improving, prices have been plunging. Some provisos are in order at this point; first, whatever wireless hardware is purchased, be sure that it is compatible, in that the suffixes “a,” “b,” or “g” match, although much of the hardware available today will work with any standard, often listed as “a/b/g.” A second proviso is the “weakest link” factor, in that a wireless (or any other network) connection is only as fast as the slowest segment. If a broadband connection is running at 2Mbps, a faster wireless connection may be wasted unless files or hardware (such as printers or video) are being shared in the network. It should also be noted that many of the new home theater devices now coming on the market utilize the same wireless interconnectivity and hardware as

computers, and may require the newer and faster standards of connectivity.

There is a third technology available for home and small office networking that is still in its infancy, but holds a promising future, and most of the major networking hardware manufacturers such as Belkin, Linksys, GigaFast, IOGear, Netgear, and others are producing compatible hardware. This technology is called “Homeplug” <www.homeplug.org> and can safely utilize the existing household electrical wiring as an already wired network. Homeplug compatible hardware is priced about the same as wireless, but is not yet as readily available as traditional wired or wireless hardware, but it may be worth the effort to shop for it. The standard, which meets UL and other safety requirements, is possibly the easiest to configure, has a 14Mbps bandwidth, and is more secure than wireless. To connect broadband to Homeplug, the broadband input is plugged into a Homeplug input device (similar to a router), and that device is then simply plugged into a standard wall electrical outlet. Any computer in the home, as well as many of the newer entertainment devices, are then connected to any other electrical outlet in the house via an adapter that connects to the computer with a traditional USB or network plug. In terms of security, the broadband signal does not typically pass through the household junction box, making it extremely difficult for neighbors and others to access the connection or network. As with all other forms of networking, a software firewall is still necessary on each computer.

If a user is bearing the cost of broadband, and has more than one

computer in the home or office, then one of these networking technologies may be a useful method to connect those computers to the internet.

Ira Wilsker is the APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for the Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He can be reached at <iwilsker@ih2000.net>.

Why Can't I Just Copy My Programs To My New Computer?

By Brian K. Lewis

Let's start this with a discussion of imaging software. Something that many of us use to backup our hard drives. Imaging software makes a very complete “bit-mapped” copy of your hard drive. Bit-mapping means that everything contained on the hard drive is being copied, usually to a compressed file. Generally, imaging software also backs up open files, those that are currently in use on your computer. Most, but not all, regular backup software can only make copies of files that are not in use at the time of the backup. Thus it is very easy for a standard backup to miss some files or to produce a backup of your hard drive that is incomplete, especially with regard to files currently in use by your Operating System (OS). Imaging software overcomes this problem.

So when you buy, build or upgrade to a new computer, why can't you simply use your image file to transfer all of your programs and data from one computer to another? The basic answer is related to the difference in hardware

between the two computers. If you are just replacing a hard drive in your computer, you can use the image file to move everything to the new drive. Some imaging software allows you to “clone” the old hard drive to a new drive. That is, providing both drives are connected to the same computer. However, when you change to a new computer with a new motherboard, CPU, chipset, USB ports, sound and/or integrated video are different and require new drivers.

The image file contains a complete copy of the Registry that has all the settings needed to connect to your hardware. It also has all the settings for the software installed on your hard drive. These settings are references to the files on your hard drive that are absolutely essential for the proper operation of both hardware and software. On Windows versions prior to WinXP/Win2K, the registry was contained in two files: system.dat and user.dat. In Windows XP this has changed greatly. The registry is now found in files in hidden folders within the System32 folder and the Documents & Settings Folder. Presumably this is to prevent users from deleting vital files. You can examine the Registry by running “regedit.” However, it is not advisable to make changes to the Registry unless you are a very experienced user. It is quite easy to corrupt the Registry and find that your computer will not run.

The Registry has five main branches in WinXP/Win2K. In earlier versions there were six. These are identified as keys. The most important are HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT, which has all the file types used by your software; HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE, which contains all the information on the

hardware and software in your computer.

So if you used the image file to transfer everything from your old computer to your new computer you would overwrite the Registry settings for the hardware and pre-installed software on your new computer. This would very likely prevent it from completing a boot-up. It is really not practical to try to selectively transfer items from the Registry on the old computer. This would introduce other problems. I did a search in the registry for items related to one application. The search found 128 entries. This may not have been all of them. Considering the number of programs you might have on your hard drive, the total number of entries to be transferred is mind-boggling.

Another example, the Windows folder contains many Dynamic Link Library (DLL) files that are associated with the particular version of Windows you have been running. There are also many shared DLL's used by Windows and your application software. How do you know which ones should be transferred and which ones will create problems with your new OS or your new software. Finally, the motherboard, chipset, and CPU in your new computer require driver files that are specific to them and very likely are quite different from the drivers used on your old computer.

Faced with this problem, what do you do? The most commonly used solution is to dig out all the original disks for your application software. Find the serial numbers and/or other information needed to do a new installation on your new computer. Once you have the programs installed you

can transfer the data files for each application. This gives you a clean install for your software, and, if the programs are compatible with the new OS, you will have no problem running your applications.

This, however, can be a long and tedious process. Also, what happens when you can't find the original program disc? Maybe it was downloaded, and you didn't keep the install file or make a copy of it. Or maybe you can't find the serial numbers you need to install some of your programs. Then you have to ask the software manufacturer for help, providing you registered the software when you first installed it. There is another option.

I got into all this because I have just built a new computer and needed to transfer all, or most all, of my software to a new computer. I had used two different transfer programs in past upgrades and found them to be somewhat lacking in both accuracy and speed. Since my new computer is running Window XP Pro, I also looked at the "Transfer Files & Setting" Wizard. This transfers the Internet browser and e-mail settings between the two computers, providing you are using Internet Explorer and Outlook or Outlook Express. It will also transfer the contents of your "My Documents" folder. It will not transfer any applications. For me this was useless, since I don't use IE or OE.

In my searching for possible solutions I found a program called "Move-Me" from Spearit Software. It is the first transfer program I've found that uses network connections to move programs, data files, settings, etc. between your old and new computers.

It can also use the USB ports or the parallel ports. These are much slower than a LAN connection. Move-Me also works with removable media that can be read by both computers. Now before you get too excited, this is not a free program. It will cost you \$39.95 for the Internet download version. You can download a trial version that has all the information and help files. It just will not do any transfer until you enter the serial number. That you get only after paying for it. The only thing that makes me nervous about the whole process is that you have to turn off your software firewall and virus checker during the serial number validation process. This validation requires that you be connected to the Internet. In my case I still had a hardware firewall in my router, but that's not always sufficient protection. But I went ahead and ran the software. (You know the saying "Fools rush in.....")

Yes, it did work, but with some glitches. First let me say it transferred over 12 gigabytes of programs and data from the old to the new in just over 1.5 hours. Now that is a definite time saving. I had estimated it would take me more than a day to reinstall all my software and move the data files. Only a couple of applications and my external devices needed to be reinstalled after the move. By that I mean printers, scanner, and external drive. The big exception was the Bookmarks for Firefox and the e-mail address book and mail settings for Thunderbird. Those I had to transfer manually. Once I found the instructions on the Mozilla websites, the setup went quickly.

The point of all this is, if you buy a new computer, try to get the dealer to transfer your old software as part of the

deal. If you do it yourself, a file copy won't work. You need special transfer software like Move-me or Aloha Bob's PC Relocator. However, if you don't have an LAN connection between your computers, expect to spend 1 hour per gigabyte for a USB 2.0 transfer and much, much more time with a parallel port transfer.

Dr. Lewis is a member of the Sarasota PC Users Group in Florida, <www.spcug.org> and a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at <bwsail@yahoo.com>.

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Windows: Better Safe (Mode) Than Sorry

By Gabe Goldberg

Though the Windows operating system isn't usually dangerous, it includes a special "Safe Mode." This is a handy way to boot a PC to investigate and fix problems. You may have read advice about when to use this, and even how to run it. But scarce and fragmented Safe Mode information can make it sound more exotic than it is.

Indexes in Windows XP books provided surprisingly few entries for "Safe Mode." I found the best coverage in two of the O'Reilly books

<www.oreilly.com>, "Windows XP Pro: The Missing Manual" and "Windows XP Home Edition: The Missing Manual." Naturally, Google found a gazillion hits. But they're mostly "just the facts" writeups targeting people who already know "what" and "why" and just need "how" information. So this article provides background for this built-in Windows facility.

Over the years, as it became more powerful and reliable, Windows grew significantly from its slender 1992-era Version 3.1 self. There's no free lunch; learning new tricks required more software. But that complexity gets in the way when problems occur. Just as doctors rarely diagnose patients through heavy winter coats, Windows needs to shed layers to expose problems' causes.

Safe Mode slims Windows down, only loading and running specific pieces needed for basic operation. So your video display looks strange in Safe Mode because Windows doesn't load the monitor's specific driver program. This lets you recover from problems caused by buggy drivers you may have just installed. There are other restrictions: you likely can't get online and may not be able to print. But Safe Mode lets you perform tests, fix problems, and install/uninstall programs.

If you think your PC may have a virus or spyware, it's worth installing the antidote in Safe Mode, since some malware prevents installing anti-virus software. If installed anti-virus software can't remove a virus, Safe Mode may let it succeed. (Some experts recommend always running virus/spyware scans under Windows in Safe Mode.) If you are defragmenting your hard drive (learn about this at

www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/howto/Articles/a2004-06-16-defrag.html>), and the program never finishes, Safe Mode may remove programs that keep interrupting it. And it lets you erase files that Windows normally says are in use (though only do this when you're sure you know what you're doing).

Windows XP defines two kinds of user accounts: "administrator" and "limited." An administrator can install/remove software, change settings, etc., while a limited user can only run programs and use facilities. Even if only one account is defined, a secret companion called Administrator is available. Booting in Safe Mode lets you access this account, handy when normal accounts won't work—for example, uninstalling software that doesn't want to leave.

Enter Safe Mode by repeatedly pressing F8 as your PC boots, just after BIOS information displays; then select Safe Mode from the options list. Leaving Safe Mode is simple—just reboot via the Start button and your usual procedure; Windows will return looking normal again, not holding a grudge for being run in diagnostic Mode.

Here's an important point: It's worth practicing booting into Safe Mode when you're relaxed, and your PC is working properly. Consider running a PC in Safe Mode to be like starting your car's engine with the hood up at a service station. It's routine; there's nothing alarming about it. But just as you wouldn't want to open the hood for the first time (Where is that latch release?) when something is wrong with your car, you shouldn't first use Safe Mode when you're already worried about a PC problem.

And a P.S.: It's sometimes hard picking between a dozen competing books on a topic. A helpful technique for evaluating choices is searching for a few topics—like Safe Mode—in the books' indexes and judging them on coverage.

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How Spammers Get E-Mail Addresses

By Dave Gerber

Spammers employ a variety of methods to acquire e-mail addresses. Some methods take advantage of the e-mail addresses readily available on the Internet, whereas others employ different levels of trickery, from harvesting to outright stealing. Here are some of the ways.

Harvesting From The Internet:

Spammers (and their assistants) utilize a technique called harvesting to acquire e-mail addresses. While harvesting requires a lot of bandwidth, it is ingeniously simple: Simply download the right pages from select Web sites and extract the e-mail addresses that are there for the picking. Some of the tools and sources employed in harvesting e-mail addresses from the Web include the following:

Web Spiders: Spammers employ Web crawlers and spiders that harvest e-mail addresses from Web sites. It's common for Web sites to include mailto: URLs as well as unlinked user@domain addresses. Put your e-mail address on a Web site, and you're spam bait. These spiders are not unlike the spiders and Web crawlers used by Yahoo, Google, and others that scan the Internet's Web sites in order to keep Web search indexes fresh. Except that e-mail address harvesting spiders are up to no good. And where do these spiders get domain names? With over 90 million .com domains in existence, it's easy enough to just guess domain names in order to come up with quite a few.

Newsgroups: It's a straightforward task to harvest e-mail addresses from Usenet newsgroups: Just pull in a big news feed and extract the e-mail addresses with a simple shell or Perl script. Newsgroup volumes are still increasing exponentially—at a rate of at least several gigabytes per day. This means lots of e-mail addresses are there for the taking. Any spammer with enough bandwidth can slurp up all those bits and just sift out the e-mail addresses.

Groups, blogs, and discussion boards: Yahoo! and Google have their groups and mailing lists, many of which

make their members' e-mail addresses available. There are thousands of blogs and discussion boards out there too that contain easily acquired e-mail addresses.

Test Messages: In this method, spammers send test e-mails to recipients whose addresses they simply guess—so-called test e-mail messages sent to addresses like service@, info@, test@, marketing@, security@. Spammers at one time could reliably conclude that, if they receive no “bounce-o-gram” back from the domain, that the e-mail address must be legit.

This is because e-mail servers used to routinely send nondelivery receipts (NDRs) back to the sender of a message sent to a nonexistent address. But that ain't necessarily so any more: More servers are opting to stop sending NDRs.

Malware: Spammers sometimes use Trojan horses, viruses, and worms to extract e-mail addresses from individual users' computers. If mass-mailing worms can extract the contents of a user's e-mail address book for the purpose of propagating spam, then it's going to be easy to perform the same extraction and simply send the list back to the hacker's lair. This would probably be easier, in fact, because this activity is far less likely to be detected than a mass-mailing worm.

Unsubscribe Requests: A good number of spam messages contain “unsubscribe me” links that a user clicks to opt out. However, many spam operators actually continue to send spam to e-mail addresses submitted to “unsubscribe me” links. When a user submits such a request, the spammer knows that the address being sent to is a valid e-mail address. Do you think

they'll actually stop sending spam to a known valid address? Not on your life!

Buying And Stealing Addresses:

Among spammers and e-mail address brokers, e-mail addresses are a traded and sold commodity. If you know where to look, you can purchase CDs and downloads containing e-mail addresses by the hundreds of thousands or millions.

And of course, everyone has heard the stories of Web sites that collect your e-mail address and promise not to sell it (ha!). But they sell, trade, or give away e-mail addresses anyway, even when their privacy policy says they won't. A few high-profile companies have been prosecuted and/or fined for this practice.

Business and service provider e-mail lists are also stolen and sold to spammers. In mid-2004, a former AOL employee was charged with stealing 90 million screen names and 30 million e-mail addresses from AOL and selling them to a spammer for \$100,000. This is not an isolated case, but it is a noteworthy one because of the size of the heist. So much for privacy, eh?

Dave Gerber is Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida <www.spcug.org>. You can contact him at <dave_bytes@comcast.net>.

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Strange Conversions

Eight nickels: Two paradigms.
Igloo's circumference divided by its diameter: Igloo pi.
2000 lbs of Chinese soup: Won ton.

Adventures In Linux-Land By Siles Bazerman

As many of you know I became bored with Windows XP a while ago. Bored with both writing about it and actually using it. Windows went from "Gee, look what I found!" in Windows 3 to using an appliance in Windows XP with the release of SP2. Very usable but not much fun to play with.

I decided to give Linux another try. The first time was with Red Hat 3 back in 1998-1999. At that time it was not ready for Prime Time, and there was still a lot to discover in Windows 98 and 98SE. Also, there were only one or two other distros (distributions) available and little in the way of a GUI, so you used mostly command line.

Now there are many, many distros out there, some commercial and some free. Red Hat went commercial, but is available as Fedora for free download. One of the more popular free distros is Debian (Debra and Ian Murdock, authors). It too is available in several varieties. The two most useful for beginners to Linux are Knoppix and SimplyMepis. I use the latter. Both of these are downloadable, fit on one CD with a number of useable programs, and can run from the CD without installing on your hard drive. You can also install them if you so desire.

After downloading Mepis, using it, and finally installing it, I decided I needed more information than was available on line. I found a book, Point and Click Linux, by Robin Miller that was written to exactly parallel the CD. For less than \$22 from Barnes and Nobel on line I received the book, a CD

(exactly the same as the download), and an instructional DVD. The distro uses the KDE (K Desktop Environment) and includes several editors, Open Office Suite (similar to Microsoft Office, but free), a CD/DVD writing program, GIMP graphics program (GNU Image Manipulation Program), and Mozilla web browser. There are numerous other programs included, but I have listed the main ones. Also you can download and install many other programs free to enhance or replace the ones on the CD.

If all you want to do is send and receive e-mail, browse the web, do some word processing, or similar things, then you can use Mepis as installed. Web browsing is relatively virus free and almost totally popup free. Both Mozilla and its successor, Firefox, are also available for Windows, but windows update will not work in any other browser but IE. Linux is relatively free of viruses for two reasons: First, it represents only a very small percent of desktop installations, and virus writers want the biggest “bang for the buck,” so they don’t bother. Second, you work in Linux as a user, but all changes to the system must be done as either an administrator or “super user,” which are not accessible from outside and are password protected. Also, the browser does not allow popups. This would be labeled EASY.

If you wish to do customization or add established Debian packages, then it can be easy or difficult depending on the need for the command line interface. Many of the commands are arcane and rather like in a foreign language, although they are really in English. I believe much is written in C, Perl, and Python. I am sure some other

programming languages are involved also. Many of the free backup programs are written for Tape Backup Units, although they might be configurable for other media, such as HD or CD/DVD. These things would rate DIFFICULT.

I have one MUST HAVE, no substitutes allowed, program. It will run only in Windows, not in Linux or on a MAC, or any other operating system. I have tried to port it to Linux using four different Windows Emulators. The commercial three all have free trials available that are time-limited but otherwise full. The free qemu (Q EMULATOR) requires an installation of Windows 98 from a full install, and does not seem to ever access the CD drive or, for that matter, any drive outside the virtual machine. This prohibits the addition of other programs. Of the commercial ones, Crossover Office allows installation of Microsoft Office and a number of other programs whose hooks are built in. It will also allow the installation of some others, but it is hit or miss. Paint Shop Pro 7 will install and work, but will not print, as an example. Newer versions of PSP will not even install. Photoshop 6 or 7 will work, but not later versions. Crossover Office does NOT require a copy of Windows to work. All the others do.

VMWare never did load on my system, as I could not find one compatible with the kernel version I am using, and I do not have sufficient knowledge to recompile one myself; besides who wants to bother? That leaves the two versions of Win4Lin, regular and Professional. The regular version works with all the DOS-based Windows up and including Windows

ME. The Pro version works with Windows 2000 and XP. I did find that loading WINDOWS XP in the pro version was about like loading Windows 3.1 on my old 286. S-l-o-w. It loaded Windows 2000 at about the speed it loaded on my P3; I am running an Athlon T-bird 2600+ with 1G of memory. Under Windows XP, when I tried to load my program I received the message "Catastrophic Failure." What the Hey? Under 2000 it installed, but when run, would fail, saying "ActiveX could not create a database module." I spoke to one of the programmers of my program, and he never heard of the first and could not suggest how to fix the second. As a matter of fact, he asked me to call him if I had any success in porting it over. He knows of no one else even trying. (Figures) I could devote several pages to just this area, but not now. This whole area is very FRUSTRATING.

Siles Bazerman is APCUG Representative, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, California, and can be reached at <siles.bazerman@gte.net>.

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Scrapbooking Hobby/Craft By Gabe Goldberg

If you've collected a box of unorganized pictures; if you're falling behind in preserving your and your family's memories; if your photos suffer from

being folded, fading, cracking, and being badly mounted—the hobby and craft of "scrapbooking" can get you organized and preserve/share your memorabilia.

As a baby boomer, I'm hardly unusual in having a large box of photographs in my closet. Also likely common is my photos' diversity: fading Polaroid baby pictures, travel shots, family gathering commemorations, images of people and places I can't identify, some professional photography, and quite a lot of etc. In addition, I have a few photo albums—created when my parents thought I was cute and when I worked to record and remember vacations.

But the years have generated a lot of unorganized pictures, and I'm falling further behind in making sense of them. Worse, the photographs suffer from improper storage: being folded, fading, cracking, sticking together. Even the ones supposedly preserved in albums are being damaged by invisible hazards.

An antidote to my generation's mistreating photographs and neglecting family histories may be "scrapbooking." This inclusive term can mean anything from arranging pictures in scrapbooks (what albums are often called when they contain more than pictures) to using computers. Whether high- or low-tech, it includes rescuing pictures from hostile environments. Old-style photo albums with adhesive corners or sticky pages can damage pictures. Scrapbookers use acid-free archival-quality paper and supplies (photo-safe adhesives and pens), aiming to produce material that lasts for generations.

Some people come to scrapbooking with organized materials, with pictures already sorted and documented. Others

are in my camp, with a chaotic and ever-growing stash of family snapshots. Either way—and especially if starting from scratch—there’s a fleeting opportunity for this, as memories and generations are lost.

I’m told that most scrapbookers are women, many of whom start as girls, assembling books about friends and activities, then continue as young mothers recording their children’s growth, and as grandmothers making scrapbooks about their extended and extending families. But technology also draws men into the hobby, especially with improving capabilities and lowering costs of digital equipment such as scanners, cameras, and printers. Pixifun’s <http://pexagontech.com/pixifun/> child-friendly and budget-friendly kits for creating keyrings/magnets/stickers/badges/CDs include software and parts for creating instant photo keepsakes.

Scrapbookers develop unique styles and personalities, matching goals and resources available. Some keep things simple, using pictures, decorations, and a little labeling to tell visual stories. These scrapbooks are great for documenting oral history and reminiscing. They can follow themes such as genealogy, school events, family milestones, travel, etc. Beyond pictures, scrapbooks can contain anything meaningful, such as mementos, postcards, clippings, cartoons, tickets, etc. This can be supplemented by decorations made with tools such as circle-cutout tools, edge scissors, and lettering stencil templates; accessories including colored and patterned pages, border trims, themed stick-ons; and stamped images. Some enjoy feeling connected to the past by producing final

works from physical memorabilia rather than working with images.

Scrapbookers call telling a narrative story “journaling,” finding this a way to create meaningful and long-lasting collections. Examples are: keeping chronological scrapbooks of and for family and children, and creating time-capsules for events such as the new millennium. Pages can combine photos, captions, and decorative material so that each tells a visually appealing story. Alternatively, some people build pages with single images surrounded by cutouts, stickers, decals, lace, etc.—less interested in telling a story than creating a picture. There’s no rulebook, no single right way to scrapbook!

Scrapbooks can be wonderful gifts, conveying connections and feelings beyond those of any store-bought gift. A dedicated scrapbooker that I know is happy with the thought that her children will be able to leave home with their own history books.

Higher-tech approaches include using a digital camera or scanning original images into computer files, using photo-editing software to improve their visual characteristics or create effects such as the antique look, creating photo-montages blending multiple scenes, and producing “scrapbooks” on printed pages, CDs, or the Web. This technique protects precious—and often fragile—records, while allowing viewing and handling easily recreated digital replicas. And we’ve all seen “mini-scrapbooks” produced by technology: photo collages used as family holiday cards. Digital technology lends itself to producing multiple scrapbook copies—for wedding guests, for example, or even as commercial ventures.

Techno-scrapbookers often use Adobe <www.adobe.com> Photoshop Elements and Photoshop software products; the vendor features kid-friendly and adult-friendly tutorials. Click the link and search for “scrapbook.” Other popular software you can use for scrapbooking includes: Corel photo products <www.corel.com>, Macromedia’s Dreamweaver <www.macromedia.com>, and Pinnacle Systems Studio 8 <www.pinnaclesys.com>.

As photo capture/editing/printing demands increase, so do hardware requirements. One 20-year veteran scrapbooker suggests a flatbed scanner with minimum 600 ppi (pixels per inch) without interpolation; a slide scanner for negatives and slides; 80 GB hard drive; 512 MB RAM or more; high-end graphics card with expandable non-shared memory; CD/DVD burner, and minimum P4 processor. She uses a multimedia PC, digital camera, and camcorder to go beyond photo basics, adding design touches like antique finish and repairing defects such as tears and scratches.

Useful resource sites are:
Scrapbooking Top50
<www.scrapbookingtop50.com>.
Stamping Top50
<www.stampingtop50.com>.
Digital Scrapbooking
<www.digitalscrapbookplace.com>.
Stores frequently mentioned are Michael’s and Craft Country.

People discover scrapbooking by accident or design—some take classes at community colleges or recreation departments; others discover commercial sites such as Creative Memories <www.creativememories.com> or see friends’ scrapbooks. Whether your taste runs to scissors or scanner, paper album

or CD, narrative or decorative scrapbooks—get out those picture boxes and preserve those memories!

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Acronis True Image 8.0

(Software Review)

By Bob Clyne
Associate Editor

True Image is backup software of the imaging variety. Backup software usually uses either a file-by-file backup technique or a disk image technique. If you only have a very few files that you want to backup, but you want to back them up frequently, then a file-by-file backup might be better. But, if you want to be able to backup most, or all, of the files on your drive and/or be able to easily restore your computer to its state at the time of your last backup, the disk imaging software is probably best for you. Or, you could use a combination of both.

True Image is a very able, flexible, and easy to use program. The installation is straightforward, with the usual option for installing it to a different path than the default. If you are installing True Image from a download or a CD

other than the boxed product CD, be sure to create a bootable diskette or CD and test it to be certain your computer can boot from it. If your system hard disk becomes unbootable, you will need bootable media in order to do a restore.

When you do your first backup of a partition, you will create a full image. For succeeding backups you can do either a full image or a differential image. A differential image only backs up those disk sectors that have changed since the last differential image, or if this is your first differential image, since the last full image. There are a few items to be aware of in this process though. The program will include in the differential image, all sectors that have changed, so if the contents of a disk sector have been moved, as they might in defragmenting your drive, they will be included in the differential image. This can make the differential image larger than you might expect. You will also have to have all of the differential image files as well as the full image that the differential images are based on in order to restore the latest image.

You can include one or many partitions in an image and create the image on almost any media, except tape, that the computer can access, including network drives. The image can even be created on the drive that is being imaged, provided there is room. However, both Acronis and I recommend that if you do that, you move or copy the file somewhere else immediately afterwards. A backup on the same drive it is backing up will not be very useful if anything happens to the drive. My preference is to only put one partition in a given backup file.

I recommend that you backup to an external hard drive, with a network drive as second choice. You should really use two external hard drives, so that you are never doing a full backup to the device containing your last full backup. If something goes horribly wrong during the backup, you don't want to lose your previous backup as well as the current one. Incremental backups should probably go on the same device as the full backup they are based on. Also, the external drive should not be one that is regularly attached to the computer. If a virus, or a power spike or some other event messes up the computer's drive, you don't want it to make your backup unusable too. Floppy disks and CDs are too small to be practical as backup media for most drives. DVDs may be practical, depending on how large your backups are. True Image will span the image across multiple media and do a full restore from the multiple media, but, at least for version 8, it requires that all the files be present in the same place in order to browse the backup and restore individual files. So, if your backup spans multiple media, you would have to copy all of the files associated with that backup to a folder somewhere before browsing them. Hopefully, this will be fixed in a future version.

If backing up to removable media, True Image will automatically size the files to fit the media. If you are backing up to a hard drive, you can leave it so that it only breaks up the file if it has to, or tell it to break the file up into smaller chunks to be put on CDs or DVDs or other media later. Of course, if the destination drive has a FAT or FAT32 file system, the backup file will be broken up if it exceeds the file system file size limit.

When you image directly to CD or DVD, True Image uses UDF packet writing rather than disc or track-at-once. In order to do this, you must have packet-writing software already on your computer. I have not found packet writing to be very reliable and recommend, if you want to use CDs or DVDs as your backup media, that you create the files on a hard disk and then use track-at-once or disc-at-once to write it to the CD or DVD. This approach also means that if there is a problem writing to, for instance, disc four of a four-disc set, you have only trashed one disc and not four discs.

True Image has provision to explore an image and restore individual files or groups of files from the image. You can explore and restore from any backup, including incremental backups. The explorer mounts the image as a virtual drive on your computer. The drive is Read Only, but other than that you can treat it like any other drive on the computer, including dragging files or folders from it to other drives, or even opening the files in an application that is installed on your computer. You won't be able to open a file in the image with an application that is only in the image though. I think the virtual drive approach is great.

One feature that Drive Image had that Acronis does not provide, is the ability to break an already created image up into chunks sized to fit on CDs or DVDs. With Acronis that decision must be made before the image is created. I hope, in a future revision they will add that feature, since it can be handy if you want to take an image that was made to a hard drive and archive it to other media.

True Image has a scheduler that lets you schedule imaging for a later time,

either on a one-time or a repetitive schedule. You can schedule your backups to be done when you start or shutdown your computer or for specific times. If you schedule the backup for a specific time, there is a check box to have it do the backup when you turn the computer on, if the computer is off at the scheduled time. However, if the destination drive is not present when you turn on the computer—perhaps a USB drive that wasn't turned on yet—then True Image will simply abort the operation without any warning, unless you open the log, or look to see that the files are not on the destination drive. The help says that the program marks the task icon in red if there is a problem during the backup, but it does not do that if the backup never really started due to the destination drive not being present. I would prefer to see a more in-your-face warning that the backup did not occur, but you should always be careful about what you take for granted.

True Image also has facilities for disk cloning, and to assist in adding an additional data disk to your computer. You can also create a hidden restore partition on your system drive. That could be handy, but it does take up space and will not help if the drive fails.

How often should you back up your computer? That depends on how much you use your computer and what you use it for. If you use your computer for important business records, you should probably back it up every day. If you only use your computer to browse the Web, it probably doesn't matter how often you back it up. Most people's computer use will fall between these extremes though. Think about how hard it would be to reconstruct the data on your computer, or whether you could

do it at all, and how much you would hate to lose the data. Also think about how much work it would be to reinstall everything and redo all your preferences in Windows and in your applications. Then make your decision about how often to backup. For a computer that receives moderate use, I would suggest a full image monthly, and incremental images weekly, but think carefully about your own situation before making your decision.

Earlier, I mentioned the effect of defragmenting your drive on the size of incremental images. I ran some tests on this. Not surprisingly, the effect depends on the degree of fragmentation. In my tests, I created a full image, then defragmented the drive, and immediately created an incremental image. The incremental images ranged from very small to almost 43% of the size of the original image. The latter, though, was for a fairly large drive with over 7,800 fragments. I usually defrag most of my drives daily. I suggest you defrag your drives when they begin to get fragmented without regard for the imaging issue, since it will improve drive performance, and reduce drive wear, but at least defragment after making an incremental image and before making a full image.

You will have to decide how much compression to use for your images. There will usually be a trade-off between disk space and time required for the operation. However, depending on the processor speed and the speed of the disk sub-system, and especially the destination device, this may not always hold true. If you are writing the data to a CD or DVD drive, a USB 1.1 drive, or over a slow network, you might even save time and space by using a higher

compression. The compressibility of the material on your drive(s) will also be a factor. I suggest you do a few experiments on your own system to see the amounts of time and space the various compression settings take; then make your own decision to suit your situation.

Another question you will have to answer is where to store the backup. The answer will, again, depend on your own situation and will depend, in part, on how important the data is to you. You should not keep it in a drive frequently attached to the computer. If it is attached to the computer, anything unfortunate that happens to the computer has a good probability of happening to your backup also. It's a little like keeping all your 401(k) funds invested in your employer's stock, very dangerous. Beyond that, your decision will depend on how important the data is to you and what hazards you want to guard against. If theft is an issue, a home safe or a safe-deposit box may be an answer, but most home safes will only stop a casual burglar, especially if the safe can be easily removed from the premises. To guard against fire, probably offsite storage is best. Most home safes, unless they are specifically designated as media safes, are only designed to keep paper from burning. Your hard disk or other media will probably be effectively destroyed at a much lower temperature. If floods, tornados, hurricanes and similar occurrences are a concern, then offsite storage, possibly far offsite, is probably worth considering.

Here are some other things to consider in storing your backups. Most identity theft is by relatives or acquaintances, so storing your backups

with a relative may be risky. I know, your relatives wouldn't do that. Neither would mine, but the statistics are still there, and the old rule is "trust everybody but cut the cards." If you store it on a commercial server somewhere, remember that they have been compromised from time to time. Backup media have been known to disappear in transit, even from some of the large corporations. I don't know how good the Acronis password security is, but if you password protect your backups and forget the password, you can probably also forget your backups. If your password is easy to guess, someone else will guess it.

True Image does not lock the drive being imaged during backup, so you can continue to use the computer while the backup is being done. I have no way to effectively test the effect of changing a file during the backup, but it strikes me that it might be risky, especially if the file is fragmented and the fragments are distant from each other on the disk. I suggest, that you refrain from using the computer during the backup. Better safe than sorry.

The question always arises about restoring data to different hardware than what it was originally on. In the case of extracting data files from an image and putting them somewhere else, there should be no problem. Restoring an image to a replacement hard disk in the same computer should not be a problem so long as the new drive is large enough. Restoring a data partition to almost anywhere should not cause problems. However restoring an operating system partition to a different computer is unlikely to work. There are too many settings and drivers that will not match the new hardware unless it is an exact

duplicate of the original. Acronis's help references a Microsoft sysprep program that may help on this, but I am not familiar with it, and it appears that it has to be run before the backup is done. I also recall reading about a commercial program that would allow an image to be restored to different hardware, but I don't recall any details about it.

Acronis True Image and other Acronis products are available from User Group Relations, Gene and Linda Barlow <gene@ugr.com> and <usergroupstore.com> (use Order Code: UGSEP05), as well as other vendors.

Acronis, Inc. 395 Oyster Point Blvd., Suite 213, South San Francisco, CA 94080.

Phone: 877-825-0953.

E-mail: <info@acronis.com>

Web: <<http://www.acronis.com>>

The Truth About Mail-In Rebates

By Roger A. Poverny

Mail-in rebates are a bonanza for retail computer stores: They can advertise a very low sales price (or even a free price, after mail-in rebates), and then charge buyers of these so-called bargains a higher-than-normal sales price. It brings in the customers who are looking for good deals, and who may purchase other items while they are in the store. It means higher sales figures for the retailer, since these mail-in rebates are underwritten by the manufacturers, and they cost the retailers nothing. It also creates a cadre of unhappy customers. Why? Consider this: according to the Wall Street journal, up to 95% of people forget to claim the rebate. They end up paying

more for the product than they would have without a rebate. For those who make the claim, there are a variety of reasons why the claims go unpaid.

Why Claims Are Unpaid

Let's start with this premise: manufacturers don't want to rebate money to you, so they put a number of obstacles in your way. Sometimes the rebate forms are hidden in the store, or you have to ask the cashier for a copy. The rebate form lists the submittal requirements in great complicated detail so that a simple non-compliance error on your part will void your claim. You must include a copy of your purchase receipt (sometimes with the purchased item circled or underlined) along with the original UPC code from the package. Be careful here, as some packages have multiple UPC codes with different numbers. Then you must mail the completed rebate form, with inclusions, to a specified address (usually a fulfillment house hired to handle the rebate). There is always a window of opportunity; i.e. an "offer expiration date" and a "postmark before" date. Most mail-in forms tell you to expect your rebate in eight to ten weeks.

Very seldom will a rebate check arrive by the promised waiting period; you are forced to call their 800 number (although some don't have a toll-free number) to find out what the holdup is. The manufacturer is counting on you to forget that a rebate promise date has passed. If you do remember to call them, this is generally when the excuses start. Typical excuses are: "We didn't receive your UPC code or register receipt," "We never received your letter," "You didn't complete your rebate form properly," "The offer has expired ... or is no longer funded by the manufacturer."

The fulfillment houses are experts at not paying, and as a matter of fact are hired by some manufacturers just because they are so tough. Many times you will get a postcard, not a letter, saying you were denied a rebate. Postcards are easy to lose or throw away in the trash, which is why many rebate checks are mailed in the form of a postcard. They don't even look like checks! Most people will stop trying once they have been rejected. The manufacturers count on this. At one store the other day, a customer relations representative pointed at two 4-drawer filing cabinets and said they were full of customer complaints about rebates. That's eight drawers of unhappy customers, and they represent only that five percent (according to The Wall Street Journal) who actually sent in their rebate forms. After all is said and done, probably 2% of the customers receive a rebate check.

Manufacturers and retailers make more money from us when the items they are selling have mail-in rebates, so it doesn't seem likely that the practice will end any time soon. The number of items using rebates appears to be rising exponentially, and the customer is the loser. It is just plain unfair. How can we fight back?

Fighting Back

There are two ways to fight back:

(1) Politically, through our legislatures, Better Business Bureaus, Federal Trade Commission, retail store managers, etc. We can write letters or call and complain.

(2) The second method is to make it so costly for the manufacturers to offer these rebates that they will abandon the practice. We can do this by making sure we get every one of the offered

rebates. If you follow the directions outlined below, you will get every one.

1. Make sure you have the rebate form before you leave the store. Check the form to be sure you fall within the offering's dates. Also ask the cashier for a second copy of the purchase receipt.

2. As soon as you get home, remove the UPC code from the container or wrapping before you throw the packaging away. If you intend to try out the product first to make sure you want to keep it, and don't want to remove the UPC code yet in case you want to return it, see #7 below.

3. Read the form carefully so that you will comply exactly with their requirements. Read it a second time before you fill it in. Don't forget to circle or underline the item on the receipt if required to do so.

4. Make copies of everything you send, including the UPC code. This is where most people falter, since they don't have copy machines. They set it aside to take to work or to a copy store and forget about it. But, most of us have scanners! Use them to make your copies. Even most fax machines will work too.

5. Staple together all the pieces: receipt, UPC code, rebate form. Then they can't say they were not with your submittal, or must have fallen out of the envelope.

6. Mark the mailing date on your copy. Also mark the date when the waiting period ends, 8 to ten weeks later.

7. This next step will help you to remember everything. Go to: www.memotome.com (memo to me) and sign up for their free e-mail reminder service. Have them to send you an e-mail when the rebate check was promised.

If you are trying out a product prior to sending in the rebate form, ask for a reminder in a couple of weeks.

8. If you haven't gotten your check after the promised time, call the telephone number listed on your copy of the rebate form. Try to talk to a live person. Tell them the waiting period has passed and insist that you be paid. Keep on insisting if you get the brush-off. Ask to speak to a supervisor. Mark the names of those you talked to, the dates, and excuses on your rebate copy. If necessary, send another copy of your submittal in case they deny receipt of all submitted items.

9. If all else fails, go to the retail store where you purchased the item. Bring your paperwork and insist that they do whatever is necessary to get you the rebate check.

Roger A. Poverny is on the Board of Directors of The Users' Group Network (TUGNET) in Granada Hills, California. You can reach him at <rogerp@socal.rr.com>.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), and international organization to which this user group belongs.

Building An External Hard Drive

By Gene Barlow

External hard drives have become widely available in the past couple of years and they answer all of the

requirements for an excellent backup media. I suggest that you watch the ads from your local computer store to find a good sale on these external hard drives. Unfortunately, these drives are still not sold in large enough quantities to be placed on sale very often. So, you may need to wait many weeks to find them on sale in your local stores.

While external hard drives seldom are placed on sale, you will find great bargains all of the time on internal hard drives. These are the hard drives that you normally mount inside your computer case. These drives are very much in demand, so your local computer store will run ads on internal hard drives at great prices to attract you into their store. So let me show you how to take advantage of these great prices on internal hard drives and still end up with an external hard drive.

The secret is to buy a large internal hard drive on sale and mount it inside an empty external hard drive case. Now before you try to convince me that you are not mechanical enough to do this, please read the rest of this article. Building an external hard drive is about one of the easiest things you can do with your computer.

The first thing you need to look for is an external hard drive case. You will find these at larger computer stores that offer not only fully assembled computers, but also computer parts. CompUSA carries a line of these empty cases for \$39.95. There are several brands of these cases, so look around, and you will find them for from \$25 to \$45. You can get them for either USB2 or Firewire connections, and some offer the option of both.

I recently bought a USB2 External Hard Drive case from ADS Tech at

[<www.adstech.com>](http://www.adstech.com), model number USBX-835 for \$25 on sale. It came with the empty case, a power cord, a USB2 cable, and a CD with drivers for Win98. I thought the quality of construction of this case was excellent, but I'm sure you will find other equally good cases available to you.

Here are a couple of things to watch out for when buying the case. You will pay more for a case that supports both USB2 and Firewire. So figure out ahead of time which connection you will use on your computer and get a case that only fits that connection. Also, if the case can be used for external hard drives, CD burners, and other devices, you will pay more. So, look for a case that will only handle standard 3.5 inch internal hard drives and not everything else.

Having found an external hard drive case, start looking for a great deal on a standard 3.5 inch ATA 100 internal hard drive. Get a 7200 RPM drive and not one of the older 5400 RPM drives. Also, don't waste your money on one of the new serial hard drives (SATA), as these will probably not be compatible with your case. Almost every store that sells computer products will have an internal hard drive on sale each week. Larger stores may have several models to choose from, all at great prices.

The larger the drive, the better, so look for at least an 80GB internal hard drive, but get a 120GB internal drive if you can afford it. I recently got a 200GB Seagate internal hard drive for \$59. I have it mounted inside my ADS case that I purchased for \$25. So, I ended up with a 200GB external USB2 hard drive for under \$85. Now that is a deal!

Mounting the internal hard drive inside the case was extremely simple to do and took me just a few minutes.

The first task was to make sure the internal hard drive was jumpered as a Master and not a Slave or Cable Select. The instruction booklet that comes with the internal hard drive will help you determine this. My drive already was set up as a Master, so I had nothing to do but check it out.

Next, I opened the empty case and connected the internal hard drive to two cables that were inside the empty case. One cable was the power cable, and it had a small inch wide white plastic connector with 3 or 4 wires holding it to the case. It would only fit in one slot on the internal hard drive and would only insert one way, so you can't go wrong with this cable. The other cable is a flat ribbon cable with a black plastic connector on it with 40 openings for pins on the hard drive. The connector is 2-3 inches wide and only fits in one place on the internal hard drive. It also can only be inserted one way, so you won't go wrong with this cable either.

Having connected the two cables to the hard drive, all that was left to do was to attach a few screws to hold the drive in the case and close the case. I placed the internal hard drive with the cables connected on a metal frame that was inside the case. The kit came with four screws to anchor the hard drive to this frame. The four holes on the frame should match up with four holes in the bottom of the hard drive. The two cables come from one end of the frame, so getting the hard drive installed in the right direction was a piece of cake.

The final task was to fit the hard drive attached to the metal frame inside the case and close up the case. The case I had fit well around the hard drive and frame. I did have to loosen the screws on the frame to move the hard drive a

bit closer to one end, but that just took me an extra minute to accomplish. I attached the remaining four screws to hold the two halves of the case together. So, the total assembly amounted to attaching two cables and then attaching 8 screws to hold the case shut. It couldn't be simpler. In ten minutes I was done.

Next, I simply connected the power to the external hard drive, connected the USB2 cable between the external hard drive and my computer, and powered on the external hard drive with its separate power switch. In 10 seconds my WinXP system recognized the drive and installed in on my system automatically. If I were still using Win98, I would need to follow the instructions to load the drivers from the CD that came with the case. I'm sure this was very straight forward and simple to do.

Finally, most internal hard drives do not come with partitions on the drive, so you will need to create one large partition on the external hard drive and format that drive so that it can be used. I used Acronis Disk Director Suite 9.0 to do this, but you can also do it with Windows. Here's how.

On WinXP I did the following:

1. Click on Start
2. Right Click on My Computer
3. Click on Manage
4. Click on Computer Management (local)
5. Click on Storage
6. Click on Disk Management

This will bring up a block representation of your hard drives, including the new external hard drive. Right click on the Unallocated block on your external hard drive and you will see an option to create a partition on the drive. I recommend that you create a

logical partition and not a primary partition on the drive. Once the partition is created, you will need to format this partition before it can be used.

Other Windows operating systems will have slightly different steps from the steps I have indicated here. If you will open up your Control Panel and then click on the Help menu item, it will take you to the Windows help screens. In the index enter the word Partition, and then look for Creating under that. This should tell you how to create partitions on your system. It's really much easier to do with Acronis Disk Director Suite, but you do not need to buy this product to only do this one function.

Now that you have your external hard drive built, you are ready to start backing up your system with Acronis True Image 8.0 utility. If you have questions about how to do any of the steps in this article, please send me an e-mail note to <gene@ugr.com>, and I will try to assist you with your situation.

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Speedup Your Computer—Clean Your “Startup”

By Ira Wilsker

I recently received several questions about computers that were slow to boot, and had obvious performance degradation. While there are many causes of this inadequate performance, such as a fragmented hard drive, and other problems, one of the most common causes of slow booting and poor performance is having too many

programs automatically load when the computer is booting.

Fortunately, there are several good solutions and resources that can speed the boot problem and improve performance. The manual solution, available on most but not all versions of Windows from Windows 98 to XP is to utilize the integrated command MSCONFIG. If available, MSCONFIG can be accessed by clicking on START—RUN and then typing “MSCONFIG” (no quotes, and it is not case sensitive) in the box, and then click on “OK.” A window will open showing several tabs, one of which will be labeled “Start” or “Startup.” This will typically be a white window with black print, showing checkboxes followed by a program name or path. Boxes that are checked indicate a program that will load when the computer is booted. Unfortunately, as the computer is used, and more software is installed, many programs like to have themselves unnecessarily load at boot time, and many viruses and Trojans also utilize this method to load each time the computer is turned on.

While there are countless thousands of legitimate and illicit Windows programs which want to load at boot, there are several resources, some of them free that can identify programs as necessary or unnecessary at boot. Once identified, unchecking the appropriate box on the MSCONFIG—STARTUP list may stop that program from loading. An excellent and fairly up-to-date Web site which lists most of the items that may show up in the startup box, is Paul Collins' (a.k.a. “Pacman”) startup list available at <www.sysinfo.org>. The user of this Web site can enter a program name from the startup list (without the

path; c:\directory\program.exe would only use “program.exe”). Once the item is found on the web list, it is clearly described, and labeled as: “Y”—Necessary, leave it alone; “N”—not required and could be started manually if needed; “U”—Users’ choice; “X”—Definitely not required, a resource hog, virus, spyware, or other item that should not be loaded at boot; “?”—Unknown, not listed. If the file listed adjacent to the checkbox is listed as a “Y,” leave it checked, and if listed as “X,” then uncheck the box. Items marked as “N” should be unchecked, unless they are frequently used shortly after the computer is booted.

Many users are not comfortable performing such tasks manually, but there are several utilities available that contain a startup manager to ease the process of deciding what to allow to run, and what to stop. One free utility that actually is intended for another function, but contains an easy to use startup manager is the popular anti-spyware product Spybot Search and Destroy <www.safer-networking.org>. Since many spyware products install themselves in the startup list, Spybot allows the user to control those malware programs as well as all other startup programs at boot. Download the Spybot, install and update it, and then open it. Click on “Mode” on the menu bar, and select “Advanced.” On the left side of the window will be a choice of utilities. Go to “Tools” and click on “System Startup.” This will load a list of programs loaded at boot, along with their corresponding checkboxes. The right edge of the window has a narrow gray bar with two triangular arrows, one right (close) and one left (open); click on this bar and the data from Paul

Collins’ startup list (mentioned above) will be shown as each listed item is clicked on. Necessary items are highlighted in green, and users’ choice items are highlighted yellow. Dangerous and unnecessary items are highlighted in red, and white items are unknown to “Pacman.” Unwanted items can have their corresponding “check” removed by clicking on the checkbox; this will stop the item from loading at boot. Items can also be deleted using the red “X” at the top of the window. When Spybot is exited, the changes to the startup will be saved and should not load at the next boot.

A reasonably priced (\$20) commercial program that offers greater power and flexibility to control what loads when the computer boots is a British program, “The Ultimate Trouble Shooter” that is available at <www.answerthatwork.com>. Open the program and click “Startups.” Initially, startup programs will be labeled in the traditional red (remove), yellow (personal choice), green (leave it alone), and white (not listed). Upon clicking on any startup item a detailed description is displayed on the bottom half of the window. Unchecking a box will stop the item from loading at boot.

There are several other utilities that contain startup managers, and most will do a satisfactory job. By cleaning the files that load at boot, the computer will boot faster, have fewer software conflicts, run faster, shutdown faster, and increase your computing satisfaction.

Ira Wilsker is a member of the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for the Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He can be reached at <iwilsker@ih2000.net>.

Internet Explorer Tips and Tricks

By Richard O. Johnson

Internet Explorer, despite inroads made by Firefox and other browsers, overwhelmingly remains users' browser of choice (perhaps because it comes bundled with all new Windows computers). The following pointers are designed to help you get the most out of your use of Internet Explorer. They're written with IE6 in mind, although most will apply to earlier versions, and some may apply to other browsers as well.

Use Keyboard Shortcuts

I strongly encourage the use of keyboard shortcuts in preference to the use of the mouse. Here are my favorite IE keyboard shortcuts:

- Use Alt+Home to bring up your home page.
- Use Ctrl+H to open or close your history pane.
- Use Ctrl+I to open or close the Favorites pane.
- Use Ctrl+B to organize your Favorites
- Use Ctrl+N to duplicate the active page in a new window.
- Use Ctrl+F to find a word, partial word, or phrase on the current webpage.
- Use Backspace (or Alt+Left) instead of the IE Back button, to navigate back.
- Use Alt+Right to navigate forward.
- Use F11 to toggle full-screen mode.
- Use Alt+D to move to the address bar. (Or use Ctrl+O, See "Other" Tip 3, below, for details.)
- Once in the address bar, use Enter to bring up the specified webpage, or Ctrl+Enter to first surround what you've typed with "www." before and ".com" after, and then bring it up.

- Use F5 or Ctrl+F5 to refresh a page.

It's a good idea when refreshing to routinely hold down Ctrl (whether you're using the keyboard or the mouse), to bypass the IE cache and give you a more effective refresh.

Optimize The Toolbar

Unless you maintain only a dozen or so Favorites, you'll want to take full advantage of the Links option for the IE toolbar, which you activate with the right-click toolbar menu. Drag the Favorites you'll want to have most prominent into the Links section of the toolbar. Using the right-click Properties menu of each "Link," you'll probably want to assign it a unique icon and, to save space, rename it to a shorter form.

Tip: You can save additional space by shortening the "Links" title on the toolbar. Unfortunately, simply renaming the "Links" folder won't work. You'll need to open the Registry Editor, by choosing Run from the Start menu and typing regedit. After pressing Enter, drill down to HKEY_CURRENT_USER>Software>Microsoft>Internet Explorer>Toolbar. On the right-hand side you'll see the words LinksFolderName="Links." Change the word within the quotation marks to a one-character name you'd like to use instead, perhaps "." or "+," and close the Editor. (Use extreme caution, as making a wrong entry in the Registry Editor can have dire consequences!)

You should unclutter the toolbar by instructing it to "Remove" nearly all the toolbar buttons. These not only occupy valuable space, but can actually interfere with efficient browsing (by discouraging use of the keyboard shortcuts described above). You get to the Remove command via "Customize," on the right-click menu. Of the built-in

IE toolbar buttons, the only ones I recommend displaying are those for Size and Back. All the other button functions can better be facilitated via the keyboard or by other means. (For a complete list of IE keyboard shortcuts, go to <http://snipurl.com/bskn>). The reason for keeping the Back button is its associated pull-down menu.)

Keep IE Secure

It goes without saying that you need to keep IE fully patched, perhaps with the use of Windows Update or Microsoft Update. But what of the Internet Explorer security settings (accessible via Tools>Internet Options>Security)?

In the “Internet Zone”—the default zone for a webpage—it’s prudent to be more rather than less restrictive. (Better safe than sorry!) The easiest way to go is simply to move the “Default Level” slider to High. Or you could use the “Custom Level” to make a determination for each setting. In that case you may want to consult a guide such as the one at www.techspot.com/tweaks/ie6/ie-5.shtml.

Remember that if your security restriction interferes with the proper viewing of a page, Windows will let you know—although most often you’ll be able to view the page just fine notwithstanding what Windows says. To remove the restriction for a given page, you can add that page to your “Trusted” sites, against which the restriction won’t ordinarily apply. (You may have to refresh the page after adding it.) To simplify moving webpages to your trusted list, a free program is available at www.geeksuperhero.com/zones.shtml.

An alternative method does not require you to move all such sites to the

Trusted zone. For this you’ll need the laudable Push the Freakin’ Button software, available at modest cost at www.tlhouse.co.uk/PTFB.shtml. With PTFB in place, use IE’s Custom Level to choose “Prompt” instead of “Disable” for every feature except any that you’re absolutely sure you’ll never want to use. Then instruct PTFB to push the “No” (disallow) button when the prompt appears. Should you decide to permit the feature in question, you can with a double click disable PTFB, and just as easily re-enable it when done.

A good (free) test to assess your IE vulnerability may be found at <http://snipurl.com/ietest>.

Other tips

1. To execute a link in a new window, hold down Shift.

2. Is IE acting strangely? You can often fix it by using the IE Repair utility accessible via Add/Remove Programs (in the Windows Control Panel), upon selecting “Microsoft Internet Explorer” and then “Add/Remove.”

3. You can dispense with the address bar, by using Ctrl-O to open a webpage or other location. You can then completely hide the address bar (using the IE toolbar’s right-click Customize function), or shrink it down to its title only (having first “unlocked” the toolbar, also with the right-click menu). Losing the address bar will eliminate the temptation to go there with the (less efficient) mouse, and can free up space that may be better put to other use. On the downside, you’ll also lose the functionality of the Ctrl-Enter address bar shortcut (see Keyboard Shortcuts, above).

4. You might be able to save considerable time if you bypass your home page (start page) when you don’t

need to see it. Here's how: Enter "about:blank" (without the quotes) in the IE address bar, to create a blank quasi-webpage. Then use Right Click + F to turn that page into a Favorite, and drag the new Favorite's icon into the Quick Launch section of your Windows task bar, before deleting the Favorite. You may want to assign a different icon to your new IE shortcut with the use of its right-click Properties menu. (You can use this same technique to set up a "secondary home page" instead of a blank page.)

Add-ons

Useful IE add-ons, free except as noted, include:

- Google Toolbar, available at <toolbar.google.com>, which enables too many useful features to even hint at here. Highly recommended.

- Favorites Search, which is at <www.dzsoft.com>, and lets you speedily locate a Favorite, no matter how many you've stored.

- Y!Q DemoBar, is at <yq.search.yahoo.com/splash/demobar.html>, and enables context-based searching. This can easily be squeezed onto the same line as the IE address bar.

- ieSpell, at <www.iespell.com>, which will quickly spellcheck all the text you've entered in any Web form.

- AddaButton, available at <www.harmonyhollow.net/aab.shtml>, which will let you fit more buttons onto the IE toolbar. These buttons can open documents and applications (not just websites) and don't require space-consuming displayed names. Shareware, \$11.95

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a

29-year-old membership organization <<http://theskillspool.org>>. He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. He welcomes your feedback, at <rj@theskillspool.org>.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Tech News By Sue Crane

Security

Free services are being used to install malicious code. Cybercriminals are increasingly using blog sites, photo album sites, fan and greeting card sites and other free online services to install and spread software designed to steal personal information or hijack a victim's PC. In the first two weeks of July, security company Websense saw more than 500 incidents of such attacks. The free services are an anonymous and affordable way for attackers to store and spread their malicious code. Be careful what you click on!

Insect "Extermination" Via Mini Robots.

Scientists in Lausanne, Switzerland, have successfully infiltrated a colony of roaches with a micro robot, according to a report published in the June issue of IEEE Robotics & Automation. Called InsBot, for "insect-like robot," the mechanical bug mimics the insects'

smell and movements so the roaches have accepted it as their own.

Vector Capital Purchases WinZip

WinZip is one of the most popular shareware programs on the Web. More than 140 million people have downloaded the program, and it's downloaded for free about 500,000 times a week. Turnaround investor Vector Capital will try to change that by reminding users a little more firmly that the software costs \$29 (after a free 30-day trial), as well as likely coming out with new features that only paying customers can download.

Better Eating Through Nanotech

Major food producers are using nanotechnology to improve the quality of their foods, although some warn that the technology may be misunderstood by consumers. At a Nano4food conference food scientists, material scientists, and nanotechnicians met to discuss how the technology is being used to improve the consistency of yogurt or cheese, packaging technologies, and even how to "wall off" the most nutritional components of food in favor of tastier alternatives. However, as nanotechnology moves forward, consumers will have to be informed and educated about the possible benefits and hazards of using it.

Microsoft Finalizes Genuine Advantage

Microsoft has gone live with the Windows Genuine Advantage program. The program, which has been available in an avoidable pilot version since late 2004, is now mandatory. Microsoft also noted that it has somewhat simplified the Windows Genuine Advantage validation process; for example, users are no longer required to enter a 25-character product key to validate their

software. Users who try to validate software and discover that they're unwittingly (or otherwise) running illegitimate copies of Windows have a few options. According to Microsoft, qualifying customers who fill out a piracy report, provide proof of purchase, and send in their counterfeit CD-ROMs can receive a genuine copy of Windows XP Home Edition or XP Professional Edition (depending on which version they're using) at no cost. Customers who submit a piracy report can get XP Home for \$99 or XP Pro for \$149.

There Is No "Superfetch"

Ed Bott, bestselling author and computer journalist advises: "The same yokels who insist on spreading the 'clean out your Prefetch folder' BS are now spreading the word that there's a super-double-secret registry setting in Windows XP called SuperFetch that will reduce boot times dramatically. No, there isn't. And if you see any Web site that tries to insist that there's any benefit to cleaning out your Prefetch folder or enabling this latest bogus tweak, you should assume that any other advice they give you is worthless as well."

End Of Analog TV?

Millions of American television sets that receive only analog over-the-air broadcasts could go dark if not upgraded by Jan. 1, 2009. That deadline was suggested by members of the U.S. Senate's Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. The committee is readying legislation, expected this year, that would require all American televisions to run on digital signals by the end of 2008. That would free up the analog, or 700 MHz, spectrum for other uses. Under current law, analog television would be cut off on Dec. 31, 2006, or when 85 percent

of households are capable of receiving digital signals, whichever comes sooner. Last month, the FCC proposed to move the date by which all televisions with screen sizes of 25 to 36 inches must contain digital tuners up to March 2006. All televisions, VCRs and DVD players would have to carry the technology by 2007.

New Media Center Device

Microsoft will soon ship a wireless Media Center keyboard and remote control that will help people who have Media Centers in their living rooms interact with the machines. The device features beveled edges for easy two-handed holding, an integrated pointing stick, full Media Center remote-control functionality, a full-sized keyboard with special Media Center buttons, and even power buttons for the PC and TV.

Sue Crane is Vice President and Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, California, <www.bigbearcc.org>. Contact her at <sue.crane@charter.net>.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



Zen Words of Wisdom

From The University of New South Wales, Sidney, Australia

<www.itassist.unsw.edu.au/internet/culture/humor/info-zen.htm>

A day without sunshine is like—night.
On the other hand, you have different fingers.

42.7 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot.

99 percent of lawyers give the rest a bad name.

Honk if you love peace and quiet.
He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
Depression is merely anger without enthusiasm.

The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese in the trap.

I drive way too fast to worry about cholesterol.

Support bacteria. They're the only culture some people have.

A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.

What happens if you get scared half to death twice?

If you think nobody cares, try missing a couple of payments.

How many of you believe in psychokinesis? Raise my hand...

How do you tell when you're out of invisible ink?

If everything seems to be going well, you obviously overlooked something.
When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

Hard work pays off in the future, but laziness pays off now.

Everyone has a photographic memory, but some just don't have film.

Eagles may soar, but weasels don't
get sucked into jet engines.

I used to have an open mind but my
brains kept falling out.

I couldn't repair your brakes, so I
made your horn louder.

Why do psychics have to ask you for
your name?

Inside every older person is a younger
person wondering what happened.

Just remember—if the world didn't
suck, we would all fall off.

Light travels faster than sound. That is
why some people appear bright
until you hear them speak.

How much deeper would the ocean be
without sponges?

I feel like I'm diagonally parked in a
parallel universe.

OK, so what is the speed of Dark.

Plan to be spontaneous tomorrow.

Screen Shots

By David Garcia

Have you ever wanted to print out what
you see on your monitor screen? This is
called a "Screenshot," and there are
several software packages on the market
that allow you to do just that with
various degrees of sophistication. If you
don't need that sophistication, you can
easily use Windows to get a screenshot.

1) Press the Print Screen Key (PrtScr)
on the keyboard.

2) Click Start, then click Run.

3) Type "mspaint" (without the quotes)
in the Run box and click OK.

4) In Paint, click Paste in the Edit menu

5) Click Print Preview in the File menu.

If the screenshot is cut off, you may
want to change the printer setting to
print in Landscape mode.



Letter From The Editor

Challenges for Computer Science

It seems to me that, with all the amazing things that computer science has provided us with so far, it ought to be able to help more on some problems that are already impacting U. S. society today and are going to become universally devastating as population increases and time goes on. These are urban planning and traffic congestion.

We need better choices for where people live, work, play, shop, and farm. The current arrangement of central cities, suburbs, exurbs, and rural land doesn't seem to please many people, and vast areas of land that could be used are unoccupied. Sprawl from central cities is poorly arranged. With stationary satellite imaging of whole metropolitan areas good to one meter resolution or better, can't we plan better use of our land? Admittedly, such images produce massive amounts of information, but isn't that what computers can handle, sorting and analysing? And if you can see every car on the roads dynamically, can't computers do something more to ease congestion?

And, incidentally, couldn't a satellite image with computer assistance have helped locate people needing aid in New Orleans, and identify developing problems; and couldn't it help organize the rebuilding of that city in a new, safer plan?

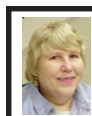
Bill

6)Click Print and close Paint. Done!

You can also save the file if you like:

- 1)Click "Save" in the File menu.
- 2)Browse to the folder you want to save the file in, so that the folder name is in the "Save In" box.
- 3)Type a file name for the screenshot; use JPG in the "Save as Type" box and click Save.

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BOARD MEETING
9/11/05
Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

President Gary DeNise, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Warner Mach representing SIG-IBM Intermediate, Publications Committee Chairman Bill Agnew, and Member at Large, Bob Clyne. Arriving late were Vice President Richard Jackson, and Member at Large Chuck Moery. The meeting was called to order at 12:08 p.m.

Old Business

Tom Callow gave the treasurer's report, stating that the balance on hand is \$6,411.86 The membership stands at 80. It is time for Anita E. MacSorley, Harry Meisner, and Wilbur S. Shaffmaster to renew their memberships.

Bill Agnew reported that he met with Oakland University's Associate Dean of Engineering. They were unable to meet yet with Mr. Preisinger, the Vice President for Information Technology, to discuss SEMCO's room rental, which was expected to increase to \$1,200 a year in 2006.

Gary DeNise and Tom Callow investigated an offer to use the facilities of Arvin Meritor at 15 Mile and Crooks. There would be no charge to SEMCO for room usage. The rooms have projectors, Internet access, and a refreshment area. Tom Callow and Gary DeNise will continue to negotiate for use of the rooms once a month on a long-term basis.

New Business

APCUG's 2006 Annual Conference will be in Las Vegas January 2nd through January 5th. It is suggested you register by October 17th at <<http://www.apcug.net/events/conference06>> in order to receive the lowest rate. The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) takes place, in Las Vegas, January 5th through January 8th. Registration for CES is at <<http://www.cesweb.org>>. Registration for the APCUG event, hotel reservations, and registration for CES must each be done separately.

Richard Jackson reported that Ray McLaughlin and Matt Enders will demonstrate Linux at SEMCO's October meeting. Richard Jackson stated that Terry White tentatively agreed to demonstrate Creative Suite II and Premiere Elements at the November meeting. Tentatively, in January there will be an Introduction to Visual Basic.

Warner Mach moved to adjourn. Richard Jackson seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Tom Callow
Interim Chairman

Oct. 9: Linux, Part 1: Raymond McLaughlin, Mat Enders, and Dr. Robert Meier of the Metro Detroit Linux Group will present an in-depth discussion of Linux, including an introduction to Linux, its history, system basics, and Linux options. The presentation will also include how to choose and configure a Linux distribution and desktop.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP **Rotating Volunteer Hosts**

Oct. 9: Help And Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience.



Oct. 9: Topic 1: Linux, Part 2: Continuation of the topics started in the SIG-IBM meeting. **Topic 2:** (If Time Permits): SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to update your Windows XP distribution CD by slipstreaming SP2.

New Chairman Sought
SIG IBM Intermediate is looking for a new Chairman to coordinate activities and secure speakers. If you can suggest candidates, please do.



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Nov. 7: (first Monday), 6:45 pm, at the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480.
Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.

September Meeting Attendance: 37

November 2005 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)

SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., Oct. 16, 11:59 p.m.

Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use [Editor address on Page 2](#); e-mail address: [<agnew@bignet.net>](mailto:agnew@bignet.net). PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.

Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact the [Editor \(address Page 2\)](#).

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)

Oct. 22–Saturday, 10am (4th Saturday); W. Bloomfield Twp. Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., 1 mile west of Orchard Lk Rd. Jack Lockman at <thunder@tir.com> or 313-341-8855.

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)

Oct. 5–Wednesday, 7pm (1st Wednesday); Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>. Topic: What is Linux All About; Reasons to Switch.

DCOM Computer Club

Oct. 14–Friday, 6:30–8:30pm (2nd Friday); Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602.

DPUG (Detroit Palm Users Group)

Oct. 13–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kelly Services Bldg, 999 West Big Beaver, corner Crooks & Big Beaver, Troy. <<http://www.dpug.org>>.

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)

Oct. 11–Tuesday, 6:30pm (2nd Tuesday); Kettering Univ. Academic Bldg. Rm I-817 (enter Security Door, back of building by parking lot). <<http://www.gfn/FACE/index.html>>.

MacGroup Detroit

Oct. 15–Saturday, 3pm–5pm; Birmingham Temple, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills. Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 313-571-9817. <<http://www.macgroup.org>>. Topic: Making DVDs with DVD Studio Pro.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Oct. 15–Saturday (3rd Saturday); 11:00 am main meeting (SIGs at 9:30); Ann Arbor Open School, 920 Miller Ave., Ann Arbor. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. Cassie at <cassiemacs@yahoo.com> or 313-971-8743. Topic: Switcher Saga.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Oct. 13–(2nd Thur) 7:30pm, General meeting; Frat. Order of Eagles Hall in Clawson, 174 Bowers St. (one block North of 14-Mile and one block East of Main). Avi Drissman 248-232-7865. Web: <<http://www.themichiganapple.com>>. Topic: Photography & Digital Cameras.

Oak Park Computer Club

Meets every Friday, 10:15am at Oak Park Recreation Bldg, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

Oct. 4–Tuesday 7:30pm, (1st Tuesday); Carpathia Club, 38000 Utica Rd, Sterling Heights. Pres. Don VanSyckel at <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232; Web: <<http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>>. Topic: Picks & Clicks—PDAs and Digital Cameras

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Oct. 8–Saturday, 12:30–2:30pm, (2nd Saturday); Roseville Theater, Utica Rd. at the corner of Gratiot; Web: <<http://www.mdlug.org>>. Info: Richard Jackson 248-546-3694. Topic: The GPL & How It Works Legally, Ray Ingles.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group

Oct. 8–Saturday, 10:00am–Noon (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Info: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny McLampy 248-477-0190.

SPECIAL MEMBER BENEFIT

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shows. See

www.a1-supercomputersales.com

or www.a1scs.com

for show schedule.

COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

This is a list of members willing to be resources for other members to call when they have hardware or software questions.

Are you willing to help members learn?

Which software programs are you familiar enough with?

It is not necessary to be an expert, but just have some familiarity with the program and be willing to help someone starting to learn it. Please give this some thought and volunteer at the next group meeting.

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier

AutoCAD: Comptois

Genealogy: Cook

IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz

Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz

MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz

MS Office for Windows: Callow

MS Word: Clyne

Networking: Callow

Novell Netware: Yuhasz

Quicken: Clyne

Geocaching: Cook

Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am–10pm	clyne@lodden.com
Callow, Tom—248-642-1920 9am–5pm	tcallow@vmddl.com
Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime	jerryandotoo@juno.com
Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves	scook48227@ameritech.net
Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pm	jvanders@myself.com
Yuhasz, Steve	Help@yuhasz.org



**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

**SEMCO CALENDAR—October/November
ELLIOTT HALL, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN**

October 9—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

SEMCO Board Meeting at 12:00 noon, **Room 235**. For Officers and SIG Chairpersons. Other members are invited to attend.

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 pm, **Room 235**.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 235**. **Program: Linux, Part 1:** Raymond McLaughlin, Mat Enders, and Dr. Robert Meier of the Metro Detroit Linux Group will present an in-depth discussion of Linux, including an introduction to Linux, its history, system basics, and Linux options. The presentation will also include how to choose and configure a Linux distribution and desktop.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm, **Room 209, Student Lounge**. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must maintain a neat environment.)

NOVICE-IBM GROUP 3:45 pm, **Room 214**. **Program: Help From An Expert With Discussion Directed By The Audience.**

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE 3:45 pm, **Room 235**. **Program: Topic 1: Linux, Part 2:** Continuation of the topics started in the SIG-IBM meeting. **Topic 2:** (If Time Permits): SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to update your Windows XP distribution CD by slipstreaming SP2.

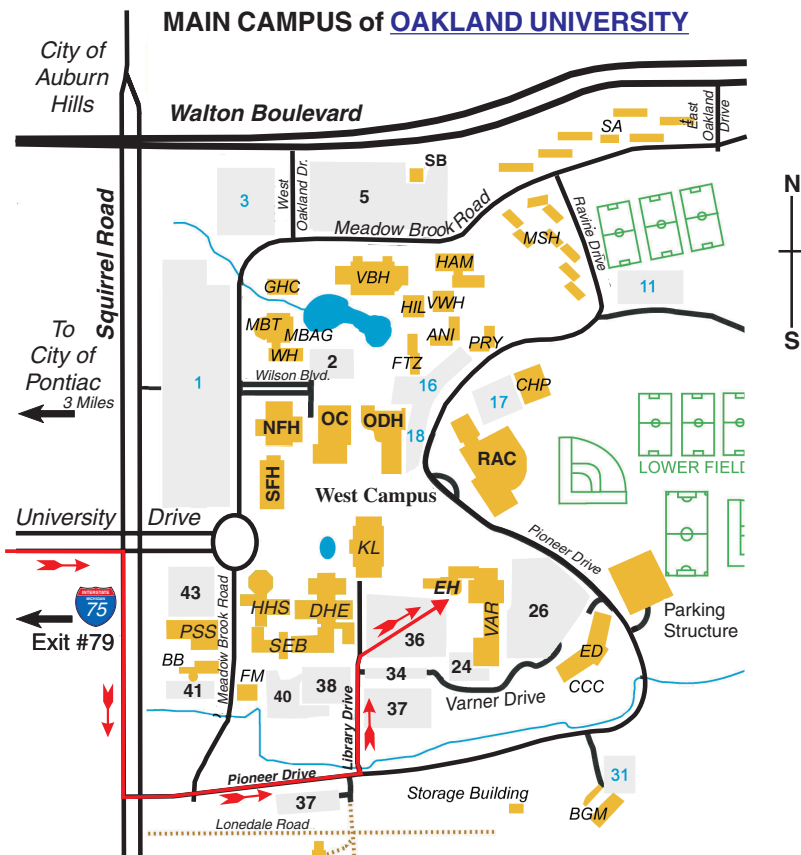
SIG-ADVANCED, November 7—MONDAY, 6:45 pm, Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway: take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd. and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.**

November 13—SUNDAY (2nd Sunday). **SEMCO**, 1:30 pm, Program: Terry White of Adobe Systems, Inc. will discuss Adobe's new products.

<http://www.semco.org>

PUBLIC INVITED

(Please copy this and the next page to post on your bulletin board)



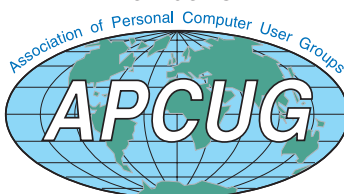
MAP LEGEND

- EH Elliott Hall
- VAR Varner Hall
- DHE Dodge Hall of Engineering
- KL Kresge Library

DIRECTIONS

Driving north on I-75 (from Detroit and suburbs), take Exit 79 (University Drive); stay to the right on University Drive to campus entrance. Turn right (south) on Squirrel Road (at traffic light that is just outside campus); turn left on Pioneer Drive (next street to left). Turn left off Pioneer Drive onto Library Drive (second left) toward Kresge Library. When you get to parking lot 36, proceed to the far (northeast) corner of the parking lot. After parking, go into the nearest entrance. Follow the "SEMCO" signs.

Member of



The meetings at [Oakland University](#) are sponsored by the University's Academic Computer Services (ACS). SEMCO thanks Oakland University and ACS for their assistance.

**SouthEastern Michigan
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P.O. Box 707
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SEMCO (future meetings)

October 9

November 13

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