



September 2, 2004 DVPC Meeting Announcement Gene Barlow Presents!

Our September speaker will be Gene Barlow, an old friend of DVPC. Gene has conducted his business over the years mainly with user groups. He is an educator, writer, and a talented presenter, representing many vendors over the years with products that he finds valuable and effective for home and small business users. Gene now represents his own User Group Store (www.usergroupstore.com), offering our members and their guests considerable discounts on software. Gene will demonstrate three of the most exciting products in his line at the general meeting this month.

SecureClean: Recent studies have shown that hard drives on PCs contain hundreds of private files that most users thought they had removed from the drive months or years earlier. Simply deleting a file from the hard drive does not permanently remove it from the drive. The only effective way to permanently remove information from a hard drive is to write blanks or zeros over the top of the deleted information. Gene will demonstrate SecureClean and show you how easy it is to prevent personal and private information from building up on your hard drive.

MoveMe: This is a clever utility to help users easily transfer all of their application programs, settings and data files from an old computer to their newer computer. By using this utility, you can quickly stay current with technology and still use your familiar files on your new computer.

True Image: Gene's main topic will be Backing Up Your Hard Drive with True Image, a drive-imaging tool from Acronis. Steve Bass from PC World said "I've been using True Image for regular backups since the beginning of the year. So far, I haven't had a lick of trouble, either with creating the image, adding incrementals, or with the restoration function... I'm happy with True Image's simplicity". Backing up your hard drive is possibly the most important thing you should do with your computer. Gene will demonstrate True Image and show you how to use the incremental backup feature, backups that are relatively small and are completed very quickly. This is a topic every user should understand.

Gene and his wife Linda visit about 100 user groups each year. He is one of the most interesting presenters

(Continued on page 7)

What's Inside

DVPC Calendar	Page 2
Email Notification	Page 2
Information About DVPC	Page 3
Membership Application	Page 4
Directions and Map to DVPC Meetings	Page 4
PC101 Information <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Page 5
SIG News <i>Nick Chase</i>	Page 6
NBC Olympics Web Page Spyware <i>Walt Parsons</i>	Page 7
IconLover Software Review <i>Alan Mildwurm</i>	Page 7
California Copy Source Ad	Page 8
DVPC Board Meeting Minutes <i>Tom Krauss</i>	Page 9
New or Used? <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Page 10
How Does One Track the Origin of Spam? <i>John Brewer</i>	Page 10
Computers Expanding the Use of Robots <i>Jim Hinwood</i>	Page 12
Get Rid of Spyware and Popups <i>Ira Wilsker</i>	Page 12
Computer Crossword <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Page 13
Internet SIG Meeting <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Page 14
The Internet Defined <i>Aubrey Stewart</i>	Page 15
Tired of Spam? Go to www.dvpc.org and Buy Qurb	Page 16
GPS — Where Exactly Are You? <i>Joe Schmitt</i>	Page 18
Special Raffle Promotion	Page 18
The Perfect Backup Approach <i>Gene Barlow</i>	Page 19
eBay Publishes Spoofing/Phishing Tutorial <i>Ron Ogg</i>	Page 22
Clarion SIG <i>Bill Morris</i>	Page 22
Become a Tax-Aide Volunteer <i>Ron Ogg</i>	Page 22
Windows XP Service Pack 2 — Install Now or Later? <i>Ron Ogg</i>	Page 22

President's Message

by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

Vacation is over and that means back to work. Thanks to everyone for covering the August meeting, I understand it was a great meeting. We were out on a road trip which was a lot of fun. Never having been to Sedona, Arizona I can tell you it is really a beautiful part of the world. What I didn't know is that it is the home of the "New Age" culture. Apparently, according to the local "experts" the good harmonics of the world line up there in these spiritual vortices. I must admit we did not go on any of the vortex tours nor any of the UFO sighting tours. (These run over \$100 per outing and I guess I am cheap! — also they are not covered by Blue Shield!).

Happily, with all of the spiritual energy surrounding us, our GPS still worked perfectly. I used my DeLorme *Earthmate GPS* with Bluetooth connecting it to my Sony laptop AND my iPaq 5555. I used Microsoft's *Streets and Trips 2004* and was able to enter the hotel name and have the computer direct us to the door. I can't imagine traveling without GPS.

In September we welcome back our good friends Gene and Linda Barlow showing a number of interesting utilities. As always we look forward to an excellent presentation. May the force be with you!

DVPC September 2004 Calendar

DVPC Calendar						
September 2004						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
				DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm New Users SIG 6:30 pm		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
See SIG News starting on page 5 of Diablo Blue for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations	Labor Day Windows SIG -- No meeting this month because of Labor Day holiday -- we'll be back on October 4!		DVPC Board Meeting 7:00 pm			PC101 and PC201, Computer Renaissance, 4 pm to 6 pm
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			Internet SIG 6:00 pm	Advanced Users SIG 7:30 pm Clarion SIG 7:00 pm	Diablo Blue Deadline. Email articles and ads to the Editor: rogg@value.net	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	Genealogy eSIG (See SIG News on page 5 of Diablo Blue)					
26	27	28	29	30		

Email Notification

We provide an email notification service for the current month's *Diablo Blue* password, the DVPC monthly meeting, and information about SIG meetings as well. You have to be a current, paid-up member to receive this service. To read the current month's issue of *Diablo Blue* on-line you need to receive these monthly email messages, so print this page, fill out the form, and mail it to DVPC, PO Box 3244, San Ramon, CA 94583, or bring it to the sign-in desk at the monthly meeting. Or, if you prefer, you can send an email message to nopaper@dvpc.org with your name and email address and your favorite SIGs.

Send me email notification of each monthly *Diablo Blue* password, the DVPC meeting, and the following SIGs:

Name _____

Email Address: _____

Advanced Users SIG		New Users SIG	
Clarion SIG		PC 101/PC 201 Classes	
Genealogy eSIG		Windows SIG	
Internet SIG			

Diablo Blue Article and Ad Information

Diablo Blue needs articles from the members of DVPC. See your name in print! Achieve fame and fortune! (Well, maybe just some limited fame in Contra Costa County...) We are particularly interested in product and book reviews and stories about your PC experiences. Send your articles or member ad copy as email attachments to the Newsletter Editor (*see email address below*).

Commercial advertising is available in *Diablo Blue*. Prices are \$75 for a full page, \$40 for a half page, and \$25 for a quarter page for one insertion — or get three consecutive insertions for the price of two. For more information, call editor Ronald Ogg, at 415-281-0431 (days). Members of DVPC can submit personal classified ads that will be printed in *Diablo Blue* for three insertions at no charge. The rules are simple: up to 9 lines (as we format it), material must be suitable for publication (the editor is the sole judge of suitability), the member must be in good standing (current dues paid), and ad space is available on a first-come first-served space available basis only. If you want fewer than three insertions note that on your ad copy. If members want their business card reproduced, the rate is \$10 for one insertion, or \$25 for three insertions. The card must be horizontal and must be scannable. Send your ad copy as email attachments to the Newsletter Editor (*see email address below*). See the deadline information in the Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*.

DVPC Officers and Directors

Alan Mildwurm, President/Programs 510-770-5770 (work), awm@mildwurm.com

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Craig Peterson, Librarian 671-7025 (home), compmail@pacbell.net

Stan Umlauf, Web Site 458-5560 (home), stanu@honeybee.com

DVPC on the Internet

DVPC has a Web site on the Internet — thanks to our Web Team: Ron Ogg and Stan Umlauf. You can surf your way to our own domain and home page by starting your favorite Web browser and typing the following URL; be sure to save it in your browser's hotlist so you don't have to type it each time: www.dvpc.org.

The Board of Directors usually meets the week following the general meeting. Check the DVPC Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*, or the DVPC calendar page, for the meeting date, time, and location. You can reach any of the officers and directors by talking to them at the DVPC monthly meeting, by email to bod@value.net, or by leaving a message on the DVPC voice mail system.

DVPC Voice Mail System

DVPC has a computer-based voice mail system. The phone number for the DVPC VMS is 925-556-1449. Hear up-to-date information about monthly and SIG meetings, information about DVPC for potential new members, and a message center for Board of Directors members and SIG Leaders.

Diablo Blue is the monthly Web-based newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users' Group.

Editor: Ronald Ogg, Membership: Peggy Johnson

Please submit articles and columns to the Newsletter editor by email at rogg@value.net

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The Diablo Valley PC Users Group is a non-profit corporation.

DVPC is a member of APCUG, the Association of PC Users Groups, www.apcug.org

Get Involved! Learn! Join a SIG today!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Print this page, fill out this form, and enclose it with your check for \$30.00 for one year's dues with access to the Internet edition of *Diablo Blue* (\$20.00 for students who must enclose a copy of current Student ID), made payable to DVPC, and mail to: DVPC, PO Box 3244, San Ramon, CA 94583

Renewal _____ New Member _____ Referred by current member? Name _____

Name: _____

Company/School: _____ Email address: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

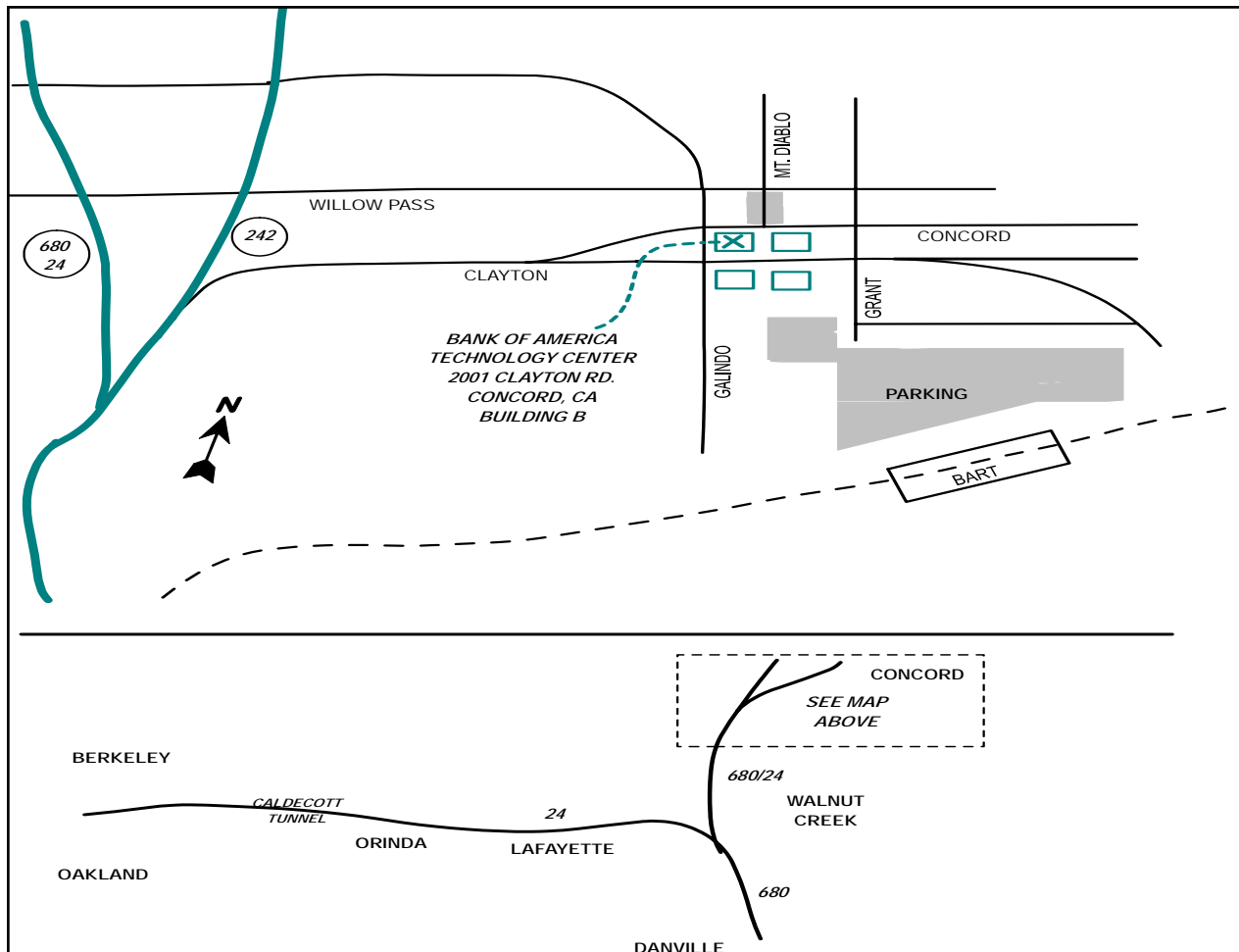
On occasion DVPC publishes a list of members for distribution to DVPC members only. Please check how you would like to be listed: No listing _____ List Name and Home _____ Work _____ phone number(s) _____

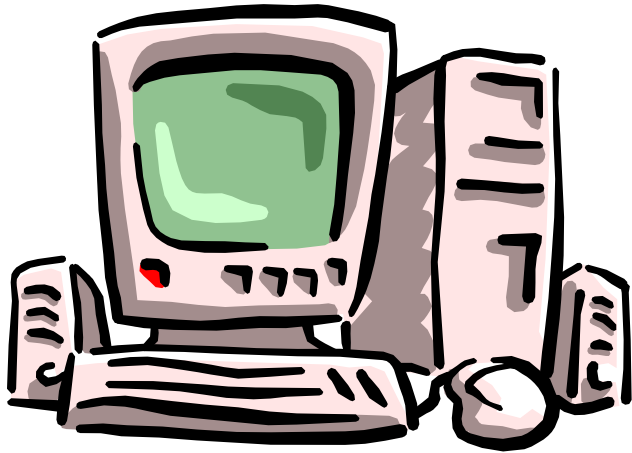
I'm also interested in these SIGs: _____

Directions to Bank of America Building B in Concord

Take the Clayton Road exit off of the 242 Freeway and go east on Clayton Road. After about 1½ miles you'll come to Galindo, and you'll see the Bank of America complex of four high-rise buildings. Parking: Turn left on Galindo then right onto Concord Avenue to find street parking. Or turn right on Grant Street (the first block past Galindo), then right into the BART parking lot at the back of the BofA complex. Building B is the building at the northeast corner of Clayton and Galindo. Enter the door on the south side of the building.

Be sure to observe parking regulations! Concord parking officers are very efficient!





DO YOU KNOW HOW TO USE YOUR COMPUTER? ARE YOU GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT?

NO ONE STARTS OUT KNOWING HOW TO USE COMPUTERS.

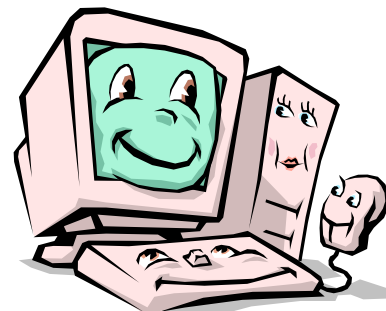
Like every other tool, users need to learn how to use it. Many of us learn what we can on our own or try to find a teacher who can show us how to use it the right way. Some of us have the time and money to take a class, but are not even sure what classes to take.

BEGIN YOUR EDUCATION WITH PC 101

This **FREE** class will help any student who needs basic information on computers. Diablo Valley PC User's Group and Computer Renaissance have joined together to offer all who would like to be introduced to computers, learn more about the basics, or just have a place to ask questions. Come to Computer Renaissance at 1936 Linda Dr. in Pleasant Hill from 4 to 6 PM the 2nd Saturday of every month. For more information, contact Craig Peterson (compmail@pacbell.net or 925-671-7025)

JOIN THE NEXT CLASS – HARDWARE (SEPTEMBER 11TH)

Ever wonder what a hard drive is? Just who is this "Mother Board"? and just where is the "ANY KEY"? For answers to these and many other hard questions, join us from 4 to 6 PM this Sept 11th.



SIG News Compiled by Nick Chase, SIG Coordinator, DVPC, 680-4211

Advanced Users SIG Jeff and Sharon Noyer, SIG Co-Leaders – 778-4348

The Advanced Users SIG meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at 4208 Amargosa Drive in Antioch. The Advanced Users SIG is for anyone interested in discussing advanced topics such as hardware and software issues, cutting-edge technologies, networking, servers, troubleshooting, etc. Please join us to participate in this very informative and educational forum. We hope to see you at the meeting!

Directions: Go east on Highway 4 through Antioch to the Hillcrest Avenue exit. At the light at the end of the exit ramp, go right onto Hillcrest Avenue, and then stay towards your left. At the 3rd light, Hillcrest Avenue turns to the left. Go left and stay on Hillcrest. (Landmark: "The Crossings" Shopping Center is at intersection). At the 4th light, go left onto Wildhorse Drive. (Landmark: 7-Eleven on corner at intersection). At the 2nd left turn, go left onto Meadow Lake Drive. At the 4th right turn, go right onto Amargosa Drive. 4208 Amargosa Drive is the 3rd house on your right, blue and white one-story.

Clarion SIG SIG Leader Bill Morris (wcm@soft-trak.com)

See the Clarion SIG page on the web at www.desine.com/svcug/sv_meet.htm for meeting location, dates, and time, or send an email to Bill Morris (bill@soft-trak.com) asking to be put on his email announcement list for the Clarion SIG.

Genealogy eSIG Peggy Johnson, SIG Leader – 676-7522

The DVPC Genealogy SIG is a group of computer genealogists who share helpful websites, databases and source information found on the internet. It's an opportunity for members seeking help to put forth a question or problem to the SIG and receive suggestions and advice. When you locate a useful website, database or visit a research facility, please email the group of the details so we also can take advantage of this information. If you wish to be included in the Genealogy eSIG, please email Peggy Johnson, pegszone@aol.com.

Internet SIG Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

The Internet SIG meets at Computer Renaissance in their new store location 1936 Linda Drive, Pleasant Hill. We meet the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. See the meeting details in each issue of *Diablo Blue* (you can find the article each month by checking the Table of Contents on [page 1](#)).

Hope to see all of you there. For more information, please call Craig Peterson at (925) 671-7025 or e-mail him at comp-mail@pacbell.net.

New Users SIG Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at Bank of America building B. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users – and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well – then join us at the New Users SIG meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to each DVPC monthly meeting.

PC101 Classes Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

The PC101/PC201 classes are usually held from 4 pm to 6 pm on the second Saturday of each month at Computer Renaissance, which is located at 1936 Linda Drive off Contra Costa Blvd. in Pleasant Hill. Look for information on these classes on the *DVPC* web site.

PC101 is a beginning class on computers. This class helps introduce computers to and empower the person not comfortable with the technology. For class meeting dates, times, and topics, [see page 5](#) in this issue of *Diablo Blue*.

PC201 is on an extended leave of absence. Check back regularly in *Diablo Blue* for information about when PC201 will restart.

Windows SIG Ron Ogg (415-281-0431) and Walt Parsons (934-0775), SIG Co-Leaders

The Windows SIG usually meets at the Community Room at the Concord Police Department building on the first Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. We discuss the latest version of Windows, demonstrate interesting shareware and freeware, and have random access sessions where we all try to answer SIG members' questions.

Everyone who uses, is interested in, or is curious about Windows on their PC is invited to attend.

Directions: The Concord Police Department is at 1350 Galindo Street in Concord. From the 242 Freeway take Clayton Road east to Galindo and turn right; the Police Department building is 3 blocks south on your left. From 680 Freeway take Monument Blvd. east and continue to where it changes to Galindo; the Police Department building will be on your right a short distance past the signal at Cowell Road.

*There will be no Windows SIG meeting in September because the first Monday is the Labor Day holiday.
Windows SIG meetings will resume on October 4.*

September Meeting Announcement...

(Continued from page 1)

you will hear. Don't miss the September DVPC meeting.

DVPC meetings are held in the lobby conference room in Building B at the Bank of America Technology Center office complex in Concord, located near the northeast corner of Clayton Road at Galindo (see the map on page 4). Please use the entrance that's on the south side of the building. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users — and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well — then join us at the New Users SIG meetings. We'll also have the Networking Table from 6:30 to 7:00; if you have something to sell or trade, need technical help, or just want to exchange views, visit the Networking Table. Also, as usual, we'll have library disks and those great DVPC mugs (version 2) for sale, SIG news, and some of our usual great door prizes.

NBC Olympics Web Page Spyware by Walt Parsons, DVPC's Official Curmudgeon – Accept No Substitute!

I imagine a lot of you have discovered the NBC Olympics web page, www.nbcolympics.com But be warned that it carries a load of "data miner" cookies. Every time I access the web site and then run Ad-aware, the spyware program I run, I come up with 3 to 5 cookies. As you can see, the last time Ad-Aware found `centrport.txt`, `doubleclick.txt`, and `questionmarket.txt`.

Obj.	Vendor	Type	Category	Object	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tracking Co...	File	Data Miner	c:\documents and settings\walt parsons\cookies\walt parsons@centrport[2].txt	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tracking Co...	File	Data Miner	c:\documents and settings\walt parsons\cookies\walt parsons@doubleclick[1].txt	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tracking Co...	File	Data Miner	c:\documents and settings\walt parsons\cookies\walt parsons@questionmarket[1].txt	

So, my advise is be careful when you're surfing the Web. And run your spyware program often!

IconLover Software Review by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

I love useful and clever utilities and programs. This month I have had the opportunity to look at *IconLover* by Aha-Soft (<http://www.aha-soft.com/>). Aha-soft is the maker of several interesting and fun little utilities dealing with the creation, manipulation and use of icons. *IconLover* is really a complete icon and cursor solution. With this program you can edit icons and cursors in color depths up to 32-bit True Color; create static and animated cursors and other tiny images. You can easily arrange icons and images into libraries. One of the most useful functions is the ability to convert icons and cursors to BMP, GIF, JPEG, PNG, PSD and WBMP formats, and vice versa. Conveniently you can process multiple icons at once. Customize icons for use with various folders to distinguish them at a glance.

The interface is simple and straight forward. In fact, the program is so intuitive, a manual is really not even necessary to perform the basic functions! The program is simple enough for the casual user who wants to tweak a couple of standard .ICO and .CUR files, yet powerful enough for the real artist or designer who needs to create original icon and cursor images and manage extensive icon libraries. I like the ability to import an image to use as a template.

(Continued on page 8)

Computer Crossword Clues continued...

(Continued from page 13)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 3. What you read | 11. These need to be new every year |
| 4. Compact Disk | 15. Either what you would give a teacher or what the computer lab is filled with |
| 5. Dance for upper classmen | 16. Dance and football game |
| 6. How you tell today's day and date | 17. Image that goes into the yearbook |
| 8. How you add 2 + 2 | 18. American game that grew out of the English game of rugby. |
| 9. How many kids get to class | 21. Lightweight, mobile computer |
| | 25. Class that makes you "go out and play" |

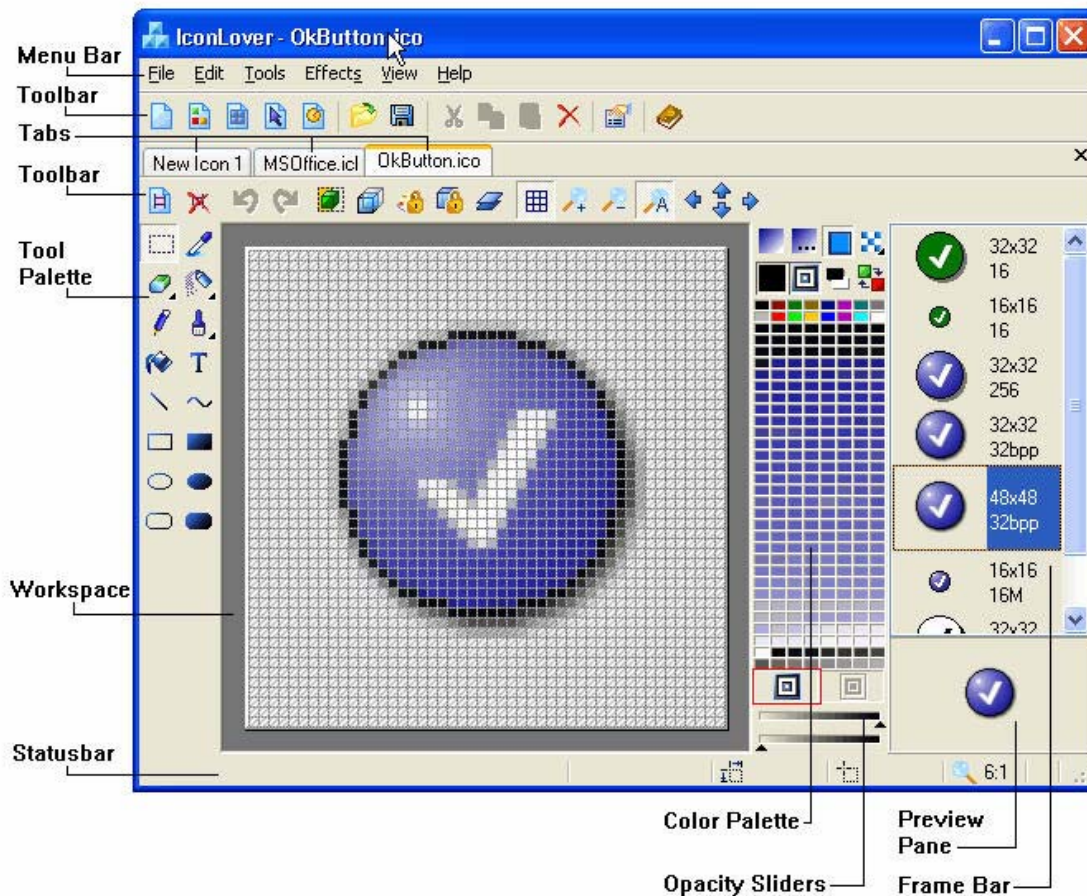
IconLover Software Review...

(Continued from page 7)

IconLover also supports the use of layers, just like in Paint Shop Pro or Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements! You can draw several different objects on individual layers and then change their properties and move them without affecting other objects. Each level has many properties including: name, opacity, visibility, and shading properties (opacity, distance, size, and angle).

Tour of the Program Interface

Below is a screen capture of IconLover with an icon loaded in the workspace. For information on a labeled feature click its name in the list underneath.



Creating an icon is very simple. All you need is a little artistic talent (which unfortunately for me did not come on the disk nor was it available to download from the Aha-soft web site! However, in literally a few minutes I drew and created a little icon:



This jewel of an icon can now be used to adorn any folder. With a little extra effort I can even animate this icon.

The IconLover program lists for \$49.95. There is a 30 day free trial of all Aha-soft products. Check out their website for a plethora of icon tools!

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DVPC Board Meeting Minutes by Tom Krauss, DVPC

Computer Blues

Since there was no Board of Directors meeting in August (due to Alan's vacation, his first in quite a few years we're told), we're reprinting a special Board Meeting Minutes column written our intrepid DVPC Secretary, Tom Krauss. This very interesting article about Tom's computer experiences originally appeared two years ago, in the September 2002 issue of Diablo Blue. [Editor]

My introduction to computers occurred in the mid 1960s. I was nearing the end of high school and beginning to think, albeit not very seriously, about careers and college. I had had the obligatory meeting with my faculty advisor (my second meeting in three years) to discuss college and careers. He briefly studied my school record and then half asked, half stated "So you're going to be an engineer, huh?"

Although I was astute enough to realize he did not mean the guy at the opposite end of the train from the conductor, I had no concept of what an engineer was or did. So I asked him. His reply was "Well, I see you've taken a lot of math and science, and that's what engineers do."

That was pretty much the end of my career counseling in high school. I never did figure out what engineers do until I got to college and actually met some engineering students. By then it was too late for me, and I was glad.

However, about this time my interest was piqued by a short article about computers which I read in Time magazine. The article probably discussed the potential impact of computers on our society. It may well have painted a picture of the potential impact of computers which at the time seemed like science fiction, but in retrospect was an understatement. I am embarrassed to admit that I can not recall a single key point of the article. But one sentence was inspirational to a high school student contemplating the future, and has remained with me for over thirty years: "Many computer programmers come to work wearing sweatshirts".

I have credited this statement with being the inspiration for my career in computers. I have repeated it to dozens if not hundreds of people over the years. But in all honesty, I'm not certain how much influence, if any, it really had in my becoming a computer programmer. I *do* know that although I have been a programmer for over thirty years, I have never worn a sweatshirt to work.

No, the real reason I write computer programs is because it's fun.

It's fun to push some buttons and then sit back while a device made of plastic, metal, electricity and with almost no moving parts does what I tell it to do. It's even fun when the computer *doesn't* do what I want, and I get to delve into the code to find out why, and then fix it.

But near the end of the 1980s, after almost twenty years of programming, the fun started to dissipate and I began to see computers for what they really are: a tremendous threat to that most sacred of icons, "Life As We Know It".

It's not really the computers themselves, of course. They just do what they are told without passing moral judgment or dwelling on the social consequences of their actions. What computers do is turn people into numbers. And the net result is a terrible thing to behold.

By the mid-1980s nearly every company of any size had at least one PC, and with the PC came a Numbers Guy. His job was to fill a spread sheet with monthly figures from the business and help the Boss spot trends. Everything was reduced to a number: retail item returns, cost of materials, production outages, sales, staff, customer calls, and so on. The computer printout became all you needed to know to manage the business.

Changes in these numbers identified business trends and demanded swift action to either augment or reverse the curve, whichever was desirable. If sales were heading down, the charts could be quickly fixed by changing a few numbers in the PC business model (lower prices, increase sales, cut expenses). Managing a business changed from a process of understanding your market and your objectives and planning accordingly to a process of spotting deviant trends in numbers on a spread sheet and changing those numbers quickly. And the number on that spread sheet that had the biggest impact was the head count.

In an office with twenty people, removing two of them reduces personnel costs by ten percent. If these two people have been with the company for a number of years, the cost reduction may be fifteen percent or even more. Do they have names? Families? Lives? It doesn't matter. Do they between them have more knowledge about the product and the business than the Numbers Guy, the Boss and the remaining eighteen people in the department combined? Who knows? Who cares? Even if they are replaced by two people with no experience, there is still a cost reduction since these two will be paid entry level salaries, receive only two weeks vacation, and won't be eligible for benefits for months. And if the replacements aren't hired for two months, that, too reduces expenses.

The computer can give you a pretty informative analysis of your business, but it falls far short of telling the full story. Intangible but critical data is missing. Data such as how to start that old computer in the storage room and then run the special program that creates mailing labels for selected customers, or where are the order files from nine years ago, or *why* do we do things this way?

Those same spread sheets also hide another danger. It is just as easy to change other numbers than headcount. If you are using your computer model to prove to the Boss that your brainchild new product line will be profitable, it is very easy to let your enthu-

(Continued on page 10)

Support DVPC — Get a friend to join!

DVPC Board Meeting Minutes...

(Continued from page 9)

siasm color "reality" as shown in your analysis. For example, let's say your model shows that the break even point for your new and enhanced Widget is to show a five percent increase in sales. Market research, however, indicates you will only get a four percent increase. You have many options with a computer on your side. Just change the percent increase to five or six or even ten percent. Throw in a factor for a new marketing campaign. Round down the production cost. Presto! You and your PC have created an alternative world!

The point is, with the PC it's easy to make the numbers come out the way you want them, and way too many people do just that. When decisions are made based on bad data, you may be making a good decision in that context, but the invalid data invalidates your decision.

New Or Used? by Craig Peterson, DVPC

Do You Need to Buy New Cartridges for Your Printer?

At every computer show, one of the booths that seem to get the most interest is the "Fill it yourself kits for printer cartridges". This is understandable when the price of printers and the price of the cartridges seem to make the printer a disposable item ("So if I buy this printer for \$100 I get one set of the \$200 cartridges free?").

While it is not yet to that point for most of the systems that are for sale, it is well known that the manufacturers of printers get most of their profits from the sales of supplies. It is also well known that these same manufacturers are making it harder to re-use or use remanufactured cartridges. They also make sure to make the warnings about how the warranty will be voided if damage is caused from the use of a cartridge that is not made by them is something you are sure to see if you open the instruction book on your new printer.

One thing they seem to leave out of those instructions is that if the printer is under warranty, and the replacement kit or cartridge was made for your computer, you are not violating the warranty. This is due to the Magnuson Moss Warranty Improvement Act. United States Code Annotated Title 15 Commerce And Trade Chapter 50 2302 Consumer Product Warranties, etc... The Act protects the consumer from having to use only the manufacturer's cartridges if other manufacturers produce cartridges or refill systems for your machine. So, you can use a refill kit or a compatible cartridge in your new, under warranty printer without fear of voiding the warranty as long as the kit or cartridge was designed to be used in your printer.

The Act is printed below so that you can refer to it the next time you need to talk to the help desk about why your printer is no longer working:

MAGNUSON MOSS WARRANTY IMPROVEMENT ACT

United States Code Annotated

Title 15 Commerce and Trade

Chapter 50 Consumer Product Warranties

15 Section 2302

No warrantor of a consumer product may condition his written or implied warranty of such product on the consumer's using, in connection with such product, any article or service (other than article or service provided without charge under the terms of the warranty) which is identified by brand, trade or corporate name; except that the prohibition of this subsection be waived by the commission if:

- 1. The warrantor satisfies the Commission that the warranted product will function properly only if the article or service so identified is used in connection with the warranted product, and*
 - 2. the Commission finds that such a waiver is in the public interest.*
-

How Does One Track the Origin of Spam? by John Brewer, Oklahoma City PC Users Group

Spammers are ingenious people. They hide the origin of the spam and are masters of obfuscation. Recently, litigation has been filed under federal law. It is interesting to investigate how the spammers were identified. A recent article in the New York Times turns on the light regarding this method of tracking.

"The government's first criminal case under a new law outlawing some types of spam e-mails was based on low-tech investigative methods: Authorities followed the money. Investigators said Thursday they tracked defendants by purchasing a weight-loss product for \$59.95 and waited to see who collected the money."

(Continued on page 11)

How Does One Track the Origin of Spam?...

(Continued from page 10)

"The cyber scam artists who exploit the Internet for commercial gain should take notice," said Jeffrey G. Collins, the U.S. attorney in Detroit. Federal law now makes it a felony to use falsehood and deception to hide the origin of the spam messages hawking your fraudulent wares."

Court papers described a nearly inscrutable puzzle of corporate identities, bank accounts and electronic storefronts used to send hundreds of thousands of e-mail sales pitches for fraudulent weight-loss products. The FTC said angry consumers forwarded more than 490,000 e-mails from the operation from January until April -- more than from any other spam outfit worldwide during the same period. Beales called it a dubious distinction."

CNet News reported that "according to court documents, the four men are accused of generating hundreds of thousands of different e-mails that hid their identities and advertised a weight loss patch. The e-mails were sent out under a variety of company names, including AIT Herbal, Avatar Nutrition and Phoenix Avatar, identified collectively as the Avatar Companies. The e-mails were allegedly sent to millions of e-mail accounts over the course of several years."

However, the CNet article also reported that the federal law has not eliminated spam and that the volume of spam has actually increased since the implementation of the law. "Despite the existence of Can-Spam, companies that monitor the volume of junk e-mail believe that the legislation has done little to discourage the distribution of spam. E-mail service company MessageLabs reported that more than 67 percent of all e-mail sent in April 2004 was considered spam, up from 59.9 percent in February and 52.8 percent in March, when volume temporarily dipped. The Feds bringing the heat against these spammers and their clients is a great victory for everyone who's been victimized by spam," said Mark Sunner, chief technology officer for New York-based MessageLabs. "At the same time, with spam volumes increasing 30 percent since the Can-Spam law went into effect, there is a whole new contingent of spammers in operation. These contemporary spammers are now dressing up their messages so they appear to be legitimate. In spite of effective lawsuits, complaints and arrests, spammers are still finding ways to beat the system."

The Federal Trade Commission announced in an April 29 news release that "that the deceptive claims violate the FTC Act and that the spoofing and failure to provide an opt-out capability violate provisions of the recently enacted CAN-SPAM Act. At the FTC's request, U.S. District Court Judge James F. Holderman entered a Temporary Restraining Order requiring an end to illegal spamming and deceptive product claims and freezing the defendants' assets.

In addition, the FTC announced a second action against an Australian company, Global Web Promotions Pty Ltd., an Australian company that the FTC alleges is responsible for massive amounts of spam in the United States." Global Web not only advertised a diet patch similar to the one in Phoenix Avatar, it also claimed its human growth hormone products "HGH" and "Natural HGH" could "maintain [a user's] appearance and current biological age for the next 10 to 20 years." Experts cited by the FTC dispute the claims, and the FTC alleged the claims are false. The products do not contain growth hormone of any sort, according to papers filed with the court. The products are shipped to consumers from within the United States. The diet patch was sold for \$ 80.90 and the HGH products cost \$74.95.

"In both cases, the FTC introduced as evidence thousands of examples of the defendants spoofing a wide array of victims, including AOL, Microsoft Network, and other companies and individuals. Spoofing involves forging headers on e-mail to make it appear that they came from an innocent third party. Undeliverable e-mail is returned to the innocent victim, often flooding their servers and interfering with normal operations. This process not only is prohibited by the CAN-SPAM Act, it also has worked real hardship on innocent businesses."

"The FTC charged Global Web Promotions Pty Ltd., Michael John Anthony Van Essen, and Lance Thomas Atkinson with violations of the FTC Act and the CAN-SPAM Act. The FTC has filed a motion requesting that the Court issue a Temporary Restraining Order barring further illegal spam and stopping illegal sales and shipment of products. The Global Web Promotions Pty case was brought with the assistance of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the New Zealand Commerce Commission."

Finally, it looks like some spammers may be headed for the slammer. No one will be disappointed and maybe prosecution of slammers will give future spammers pause to think about their activity ... or will they just become more clever in their pursuit of the dark side?

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace.

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.

Give a
DVPC Membership
Gift Certificate!

Computers Expanding the Use of Robots by Jim Hinwood, Monterey Bay Users Group – PC

So many articles I've seen lately have been about robotics – it's the newest hot topic. Last month's *Technology Review* and this month's *Wired* magazine have articles on robotics. When I see the Roomba vacuuming a house automatically on TV it reminds me of The Jetsons cartoon series where the home of the future is all automated and housework is a thing of the past. Many of the cartoons I remember as a kid were about automated houses that went crazy and started to attack the cat or the dog: its robots would come out and start sweeping or vacuuming at the slightest indication of dirt. As computers become more powerful, who knows what timesaving devices may be invented?

In the *Technology Review* article, the author makes a prediction that robotics will take off the way computers took off ten years ago. The more powerful computers we have today will be the brains for this new class of servants. These robots may not look like the anthropomorphic types we see in movies and TV. Many may just be simple-looking box-shaped machines (like the Roomba) with one specific job. But some will certainly be more complex with a multitude of functions and a human-like shape. Honda has recently been advertising a robot that is complex and can do many things.

Robots have been used in manufacturing for quite a while now. One of the reasons we Americans fell behind the Japanese in the auto industry is because they had the largest number of automobile plant robots in the world. Part of the future mechanization of our manufacturing plants will be heavily dependent on robots. The computing power of the latest CPU chips is in the trillions of operations per second. In ten years we will no doubt have plenty of chip-powered intelligence to drive robots to unprecedented capabilities.

Isaac Asimov wrote *I, Robot* in the 1950s and there is a current film with the same name starring Will Smith. With these stories always comes the fear of artificial intelligence and whether it may someday have the ability to take control from humans.

This is a recurrent theme in everything from *2001: A Space Odyssey* with the computer Hal, to the current *I, Robot*. This fear of our inventions taking over may not be as important as how we feel about the egos of those who use the technology.

I recently read about some robotic legs which could give the wearer the ability to carry a much larger load in battle, similar to a pair of bionic legs from *The Six-Million Dollar Man* TV show. How long will it be before robots fight it out as seen in the movie *The Terminator*? There are probably many battlefield applications for robots and many are probably already in the making.

The real problem is not the artificial intelligence but the human intelligence behind it, directing robots to do good or evil. I hope that like the computer, robots will become powerful tools for the benefit of all mankind.

My first thought after reading many of these articles is that this would be a great time to invest in this fledgling science. In the movie *Frequency*, Dennis Quaid plays a character that goes back in time to change his past. While he is there he mentions one word to his friend. When he gets back to the present he runs into this friend who remembered the word and is now rich and has the word, Yahoo, on the license plate of his Mercedes. How many of us would like to know what the next big investment is going to be?

Maybe in the future, one of us will be driving that Mercedes around with "robots" written on our license plate!

Jim Hinwood is a columnist and the Program Chair of the Monterey Bay Users Group – PC in Monterey, California.

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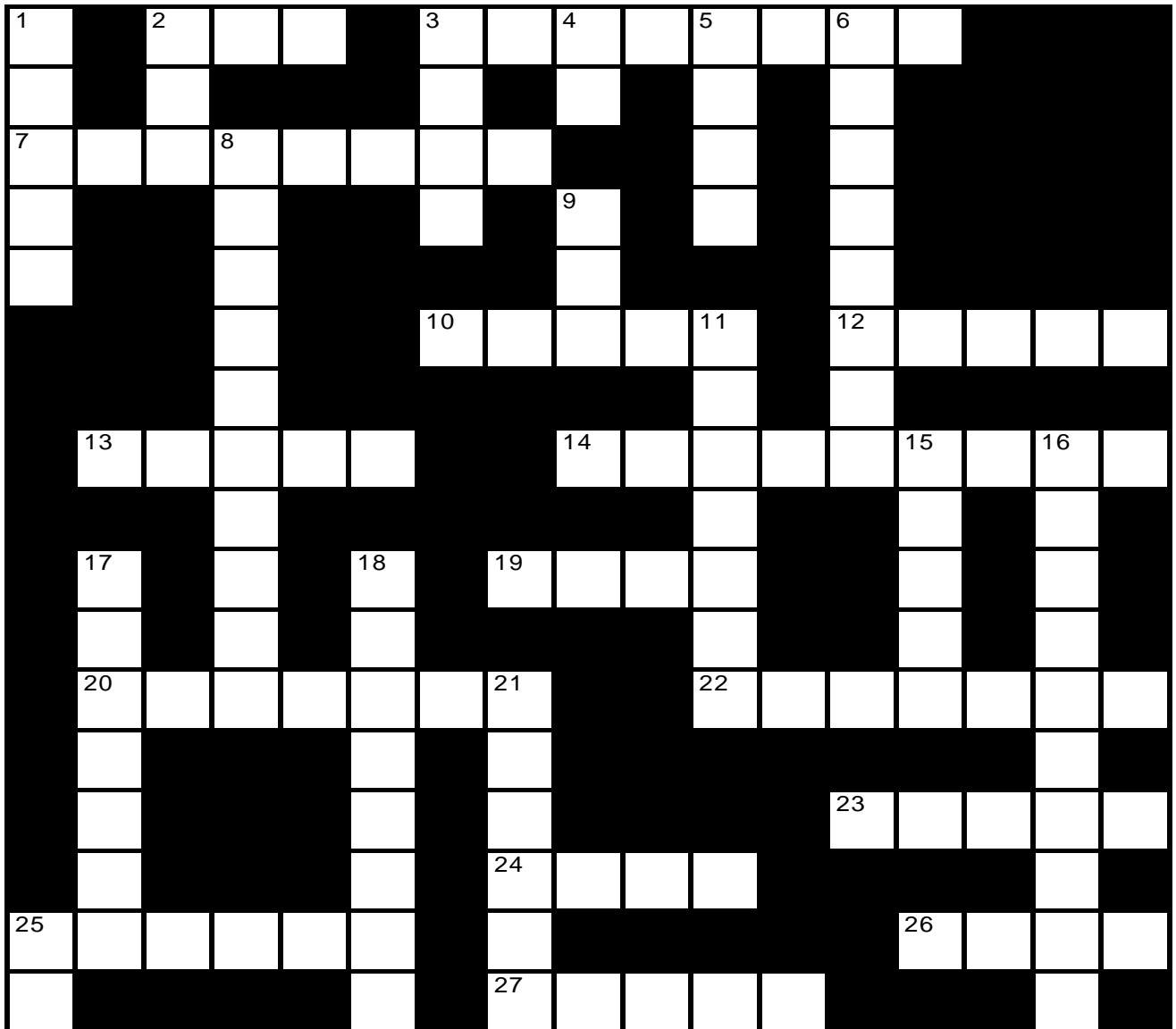
Get Rid of Spyware and Popups by Ira Wilsker, APCUG

Next to spam mail and viruses, one of the most irritating facets of web surfing is the annoying popup ads that so many of us receive. What many may not be aware of is that about 80% of the popups that we get while online, and many that may also appear if we are offline, are generated by spyware that is unknowingly installed on our computers. Spyware are software programs that typically install without our knowledge or informed consent, and may also be a part of a program that we purposely installed. Spyware, as its name connotes, is software that often gathers information on our surfing habits and may send that information to third parties. At its worst, spyware may also be used to gather personal information from our computers, including passwords, user names, and other information, and send it to persons unknown who may illicitly use that information to empty our bank accounts, charge goods in our name, and commit other various forms of identity theft. Spyware can get on our computers by visiting some unethical websites, or by installing some downloaded or commercial software. Several forms of spyware can infect our computers via viruses and Trojans. Among the most notorious sources of spyware are popular file sharing utilities such as Morpheus and Ka-ZaA. Some of the "cookies" or small text files placed on our computers by some websites can also be used to create personal profiles on us, and distribute that information to third parties. It should be noted that some software titles will no longer function if their attached spyware is deleted, as the spyware is intended to provide a continuing revenue stream for the software publisher.

Fortunately, it is generally easy to detect and kill spyware, or otherwise render it inert. It should be understood at this point that as a general rule, even the best antivirus programs, while effective at detecting and preventing virus and Trojan infestations, are

(Continued on page 14)

Computer Crossword
by Craig Peterson, DVPC
"Back to School"



The kids will act like they don't want to go, but we all know that once they get back to class they will forget all about summer and all the time they had to enjoy sun, beach, and friends. This month the puzzle is all about getting prepared and getting back.

If you need help, go to www.dvpc.org/solution.html.

Across

- 2. This portable device can be used to store homework assignments, phone numbers, and dates with that new kid in class
- 3. A way to carry 50 pounds of books from class to class
- 7. What you take you lunch to school in so that you can throw it away just before you buy it from the lunch room
- 10. Class where you learn to sing, play an instrument, or hide from the gym teacher
- 12. A social event where all the boys stay on one side of the gym, the girls stay on the other while music plays
- 13. A wood or metal strip used to measure
- 14. Class where you learn all about the countries that now have different names, borders, and governments then are in your book
- 19. Class where you are most likely to overhear someone say "This just doesn't

add up"

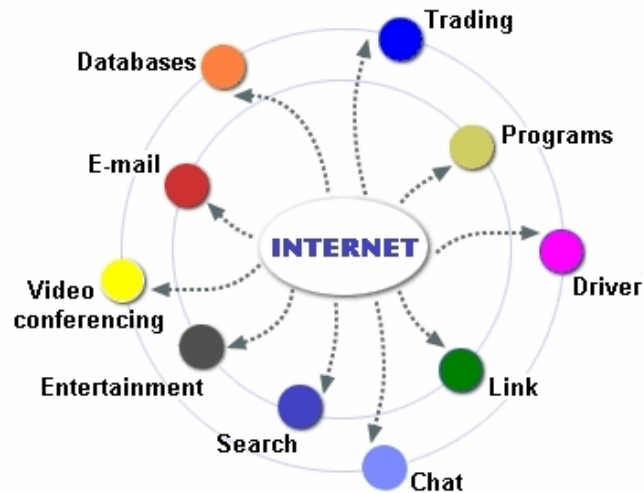
- 20. Where one parent gets to drive six kids two blocks to school each day
- 22. Class where you learn about Ohm, Darwin, and Franklin.
- 23. Class where you learn to put on make-up, dress up in funny clothes, and say things you know are not true.
- 24. A group of players of football or baseball
- 25. What you write with
- 26. A group that plays music
- 27. What you write on

Down

- 1. Best part of a peanut butter sandwich
- 2. What you write with

(Clues continued on page 7)

Internet SIG Meeting by Craig Peterson, DVPC



Internet SIG:
"Your Pit Stop on the Information Superhighway"

Maybe you think you've been missing the on-ramp to the Information Superhighway... or perhaps you are just curious about what the Internet is all about. If either of the above apply, then you should join the Internet SIG.

The Internet SIG meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at Computer Renaissance, 1936 Linda Dr. in Pleasant Hill. Please join us on September 15, 2004 as we explore the "wild, wild world of the web".

For more information, please call Craig Peterson at 671-7025 or email him at compmail@pacbell.net.

Get Rid of Spyware and Popups...

(Continued from page 12)

generally ineffective at dealing with spyware. Firewalls, if properly installed and configured, can prevent many spyware types from sending information from the computer, but many spyware programs utilize known security weaknesses, and other vulnerabilities in our operating systems. Contemporary thought is that we all need a good anti-spyware program properly installed, configured, and updated, every bit as much as we need updated antivirus software and a firewall on our computers.

One of the top rated anti-spyware programs is the recently updated "Spybot Search and Destroy", version 1.3, available for free (donations encouraged) at www.safer-networking.org and other major download sites. Spybot can detect and destroy over 13,000 spyware products, and immunize our computers from future infection by almost 1800 types of spyware. Spybot can also prevent some pesky websites from changing our "home" or browser startup pages, and make it difficult for spyware to write itself into our Windows registry. An integral utility makes it easy for Spybot to check for, and install the periodic updates necessary to detect and kill the latest types of spyware.

Another popular anti-spyware utility is "Ad-Aware", available for download at www.lavasoftusa.com. The free version of Ad-Aware, the "Standard Edition", is possibly the most widely used anti-spyware program, with over 42 million copies downloaded since July, 2003. Ad-Aware comes in several versions ranging from the "free for personal use" Standard Edition, the \$27 "Plus" edition, and the \$40 "Pro" version. Ad-Aware frequently releases updated "reference files" which contain lists of newly created or revised spyware information.

A popular commercial program, which is a "Swiss army knife" type of program comprising many different utilities, including an excellent spyware (parasite) detector and killer is the "SpyHunter" included with System Mechanic, version 4. System mechanic is available locally at retail (about \$49), and for download at www.iolo.com. A fully functional 30 day free trial version is available for download. As does its free standing competitors, System Mechanic's SpyHunter also checks for updated spyware listings, and installs them seamlessly. SpyHunter has been proven to be an effective spyware detector and killer, and the other utilities included in System mechanic make this a most useful program.

(Continued on page 15)

Changing Your E-mail Address?
Tell us so you will continue receiving **Diablo Blue!**
E-mail your name and new information to changes@dvpc.org

Get Rid of Spyware and Popups...

(Continued from page 14)

While not directly marketed as an anti-spyware product, "STOPzilla" is a very effective spyware remover that specializes in those spyware products that produce about 80% of the annoying popup ads that we may get while surfing the web. A recent update to STOPzilla also includes an integral utility that can detect and kill most other forms of spyware, including tracking cookies. With almost daily automated updates, and excellent 24/7 free tech support, including toll-free numbers, STOPzilla is available for \$30 at www.stopzilla.com.

One of the most comprehensive spyware detecting and killing programs on the market is PestPatrol (\$40), available at www.pestpatrol.com. This is an excellent program that can both detect spyware, and block many types of infection. PestPatrol has an integrated utility that enables all parts of PestPatrol to be updated on a regular basis in order to maximize the detection and removal functions. PestPatrol offers a free online scan that will detect, but not eliminate, almost all known forms of spyware.

While there are several other decent anti-spyware programs available, one caveat is appropriate here. There are some unethical purveyors of some anti-spyware programs that use spam emails, popup ads, and deceptive sales practices, including telling you that your computer is infested with spyware, and charging a fee to remove it.

Any of the titles referenced above will do a reasonable job of reducing popups, and securing your computer from spyware, provided they are frequently updated and run.

Ira Wilsker is a member of the APCUG Board of Directors, a columnist for the Examiner, Beaumont, Texas, a Radio Talk Show Host, and a Police Officer.

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The Internet Defined by Aubrey Stewart, Tri-City Computer Club

ISP's. Internet Service Providers

INTERNET ACCESS. Phone Line / DSL / Cable / Satellite / Wireless

INTERNET SECURITY. Firewalls / Back Door Trojan / Denial of Service Attacks / Personal Data/ Identity Theft

VIRUSES. Anti-Virus Protection/virus Real or Hoax / Free Online Virus Scanners / Update Virus pattern Subscription / Updating via Auto and Manual

COMPUTER CARE. Defragmentation / Hard Disk Drive Scan Disk / Safe-Mode

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS:

1. FREE. Juno, NetZero, HotMail, Yahoo, ZDNet Mail. WWW's: juno.com, pocketmail.com, zdnmail.com, email.com, yahoo.com
2. PAID. AOL, Compuserve, NC Times, NetHere, AT&T WorldNet, NetZero, Juno, Earthlink, A-1 Internet Service Provider, TNS, CWNet Hosting, SBCGlobal.

INTERNET ACCESS:

1. PHONE LINE. The theoretical maximum speed is 56,000 bits per second or 56 Kbps.
2. (small b is for bits and large B is for Bytes). Eight bits equal 1 Byte and 1 text character equals 1 byte. The practical speed attained is actually around 30 to 44 Kbps with a slow speed of around 20 to 24 Kbps during peak usage times (i.e. when the kids get home from school). A connection Icon shows up in your Task Bar area when the computer is online. Placing the cursor over this Icon opens a Box that shows the number of bytes sent and received plus the current speed. Costs can vary widely from \$6.95 a month to \$40.00+ a month.
3. DSL — Digital Subscriber Line. The uploading speed is usually 128 Kbps; downloading speed is usually 1500 Kbps (1.5 Mbps). Speeds will vary according to peak usage times. A DSL line allows the computer to use the phone line, but does not tie it up while the computer is online. CAUTION - You need to remember that your computer is ALWAYS connected online as soon as it is powered on. That is, of course, as long as the DSL modem is powered on. Turning it OFF will close the online connection. A Firewall is a MUST for DSL access. Typical cost for DSL can be around \$50 to \$65 a month. Currently SBC Yahoo DSL has a special offer for a one (1) year commitment for \$26.95 a month, when you do online signup.

(Continued on page 16)

Bring a Friend to a DVPC Meeting – Help Them Grow their PC Knowledge – Help Grow DVPC Membership

The Internet Defined...

(Continued from page 15)

Beware - they charge \$200.00 if you do an early cancellation. After the first year the monthly charge becomes \$49.95.

4. **CABLE.** The uploading speed is usually 256 Kbps and downloading speed is usually around 3000 Kbps (3.0 Mbps). Again, speeds will vary according to peak usage times. This service is provided by the local cable TV companies. Special pricing usually applies when you subscribe to more than just the Internet access and typical costs can be around \$29.95 a month up to around \$45 a month. SAVE yourself rental fees of usually \$10.00 a month on the cable modem and purchase one of your own. Check pricing at www.pricewatch.com or go to www.pricegrabber.com
5. **SATELLITE.** Dish TV Network, Direct TV. Usually uses phone line access for uploading and satellite downloading. Check your local telephone book for the number of local providers that also do installation and compare prices. Speed of downloading is usually very fast, but phone line uploading is quite slow. Pricing varies widely. This is also an ALWAYS on connection.
6. **WIRELESS.** There are many wireless Internet providers all around the U.S. You must be located within their Radio Signal Footprint for service. Uploading and downloading speeds at various rates are available with pricing determined by the speed. Usually the maximum will be around 1.5 Mbps. This is also an ALWAYS on connection. Check the local telephone pages for the number of a local provider.

WORLD WIDE WEB. The Internet consists of millions of computers inter-connected around the world. There are a number of Internet browser's available for viewing the Web. Popular ones include Internet Explorer, Netscape, Opera and Mozilla, for use with Windows PC operating systems. The purpose of a browser is to convert the HTML language of Web site programming into the graphical presentation you see on your monitor and interact with. Surfing the Web means you are going from one Web site location to another, or several others. The Homepage is the initial screen page you see at a Web site. Your computer has a History folder where a listing of ALL Web sites you ever visited will be stored (unless you set your History folder to delete the web site information after a certain number of days). There is also a Favorites (or Bookmarks) folder where you can store Web site addresses for future visits; it provides a quick return process. Every computer connected to the Internet has an IP address. Sometimes it will remain the same number and then there are ISPs that issue a different IP address number every time you get on the Internet. This is why a Firewall is an absolute MUST with ALWAYS on access.

COOKIES. are a tool used by some Web sites to store information on your hard drive without you knowing it. They are used to keep track of the Web pages that you visit on a particular Web site. With this information, the owners of the Web site can then target you for specific forms of marketing. Many people consider them an invasion of their privacy. You have the choice to set your Security Options to accept, disable, or require your approval before a cookie can be stored on your computer. Your Web Browser will usually offer this configuration control. Refusal to accept the cookies will, however, more than likely keep you from being able to view many of the Web site locations.

UTILITY PROGRAMS. There are several types of utility programs that are designed to clean out some of the folders in your computer when they become stuffed with various items of information from the Web sites you have visited. A Cookie removal program is a very popular utility program. There also is a folder called Temporary Internet Files on your computer. Many Web sites will put some form of data there as well, again, without your knowledge. Not to worry, there are utility programs that will clean out this area also.

WEB SITE ADDRESSES. There are two types of addresses for every Web site. One is called the URL (an acronym for Universal Resource Locator), such as www.sears.com, and the other is the associated IP address (Internet Protocol), such as 255.36.245.15. The address box of a Web browser will find the Web site using either of these addressing formats.

NETWORK SECURITY. Never (repeat) NEVER give out your Social Security Number over the Internet. It is just too risky to do this on a form at a Web site or in an email message you might send. Theft of your identity could very well result from this mistake. It has actually happened to many people. A Firewall program (software) will allow you to completely shut off access into your computer over the Internet. What access do I speak of? Did you know that your computer has exactly 65, 535 revolving doorways that are just waiting for someone to slip in without your awareness? This is how a computer Hacker can gain access into your computer and you will usually NEVER know that it is happening. These revolving doorways are referred to as PORTS. Anytime your computer is active on the Internet, it is sitting on the 'net with all of these pathways available to anyone who knows how to utilize the entry method. There are lists available that include all of these Ports and show their common (legal) usage and their abnormal (illegal) usage by Hackers. These "Back Door" entries will allow someone to gain full access to any and ALL data you have stored ANYWHERE on your hard drive. That includes EVERY folder and file you have on the drive. Ever order anything on the Web and type

(Continued on page 17)



Tired of Spam?

Go to www.dvpc.org to download QURB!

The Internet Defined...

(Continued from page 16)

out a credit card number for payment? That is something a Hacker can track down and view whenever they want to. Full REMOTE CONTROL of your computer is even a possibility for the smarter Hackers lurking on the Internet. They can also track your every keystroke, entry of passwords or anything else you type in. You should use extreme care when you put personal data into the PC, and then have that computer connected to the Internet.

Ever hear the old saying "Two Heads are Better Than One"? Well, with today's lowered costs of buying a very capable basic computers, it just might just well be a consideration to have two computers for your home computing experiences. Keep one for personal data and document preparations, etc, that is NEVER used to access the Internet.

FREE FIREWALL. Software is available on the Internet: www.zonelabs.com Stop the Crackers from invading your computer looking for personal information.

VIRUSES. A computer infestation is any unwanted program that is transmitted to a computer without the knowledge of the user or owner, and is designed to do varying degrees of damage to data and software. A virus is a program written to potentially do harm to someone's computer. They normally do not do physical damage to the computer. Usually the worst scenario is that the Boot Sector of the hard disk will be corrupted by the virus and the computer will be unable to be used at all, until a new hard drive is installed to replace the defective one.

THERE ARE FOUR MAIN FORMS OF INFESTATIONS that exist today: Viruses, Trojan Horses, Worms and Logic Bombs. Viruses are the most common of the four. SO...it is of UTMOST IMPORTANCE that all users of a computer install and maintain anti-virus software. These are designed to discover and remove a virus. There are several forms of viruses: Boot Sector, File, Multipartite, Polymorphic, Encrypting and Stealth. Anti-virus software attempts to detect a known virus by looking for their distinguishing pattern that is called the Virus Signature. Virtually EVERY DAY, more new viruses are uploaded to the Internet. The anti-virus companies find them and dissect them to discover their signature. Then they publish the UPDATE to their PATTERN FILE on their Web site and this is available for the owners of that anti-virus software to download into their anti-virus folder. Then the updated program can be on full alert to detect any of the newest viruses running around the Internet. So, EVERYDAY DO YOUR UPDATE! These anti-virus companies usually include one full year of updates with the initial sale. BE SURE AND DO A RENEWAL OF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION for Updates.

VIRUSES...THE MAIN ROUTE INTO A COMPUTER:

For a virus, it can be with an EMAIL ATTACHMENT. Another method is on a Floppy Disk someone gives you that you then open from the diskette drive onto your Hard Disk. ALWAYS do a virus scan of ALL disks you place into your floppy drive BEFORE installing or opening anything onto the Hard Drive.

Virus Scanning software takes a look at ALL of the email coming into and going out of your computer, to see if it detects a virus. The virus in an email will HIDE INSIDE AN ATTACHMENT. NEVER OPEN AN EMAIL ATTACHMENT... PERIOD! until the anti-virus program has inspected the email, and then it is still NOT a good idea to open any attachments. It could have a BRAND NEW virus attached that has NOT yet been included in the latest updated Pattern File you installed earlier in the day.

People can send out an email with a virus in their attachment and never know they sent it. It is very, very risky to open any email attachments.

SET A PATTERN for yourself where you do the update check for your anti-virus program FIRST THING EVERY MORNING. Then go ahead and DOWNLOAD your email.

To find out if A VIRUS NOTICE YOU JUST RECEIVED IS REAL OR A HOAX, there are Web sites you can check to become properly informed. Here are just a few:

www.hoaxbusters.ciac.org www.hoaxinfo.com

www.hoaxkill.com www.viruslist.com

www.vmyths.com

ONLINE FREE VIRUS SCANNERS. There are several anti-virus software companies that provide FREE online virus scanning. Here are just a few:

www.housecall.antivirus.com (Trend Micro)

www.ravantivirus.com.scan (RAV Antivirus)

www.grisoft.com (AVG Antivirus)

www.pandasoftware.com/activescan (Panda Software)

If you have any questions or inquiries, please contact me through my Web site:

www.ez4ucomputerclasses.com.

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GPS – Where Exactly Are You? by Joe Schmitt, Tampa Bay Computer Society

This is the first of a three article series on the Global Positioning System. The first discusses what the system is and how it works. The two subsequent articles will delve into receivers and uses for civilians.

For centuries, man has relied on the most rudimentary of tools to navigate. Things like a compass or sextant, and later a time-piece, were the best he had. In the past, the most difficult task of a ship's captain was to maintain the location and heading of a ship pounded by winds and currents. As time went on, those tools were perfected and improved. Though they worked well, they were not perfect. It was a time consuming process to mark position; early airplane pilots often navigated using existing landmarks and roads because the speed of their craft made traditional methods cumbersome.

A system called Loran (Long Range Navigation) was developed in the 1940's that utilized radio pulses which were projected on board a ship using a cathode ray tube, similar to your computer monitor. Though accurate to a degree, this system was expensive and offered only a limited area of use.

The global positioning system is a revolution in the way we navigate today. The global positioning system is a set of satellites that just like Loran that use radio signals to determine position. Popularly known as GPS, the system uses a "constellation" of 24 satellites in high orbit to determine position in latitude and longitude. In addition to position, the system also can determine altitude and speed.

GPS was first implemented in the early 1970s as a way for the military to improve its ability to navigate and position vehicles. This system eventually evolved to include civilian as well as military uses. In the early days of GPS the signal was intentionally diffused to deteriorate the accuracy of civilian receivers. This use of selective availability as the Department of Defense (DOD) calls it, rendered civilian receivers accurate only within a hundred yards or so. Imagine having the unit telling you make a turn on the next road after you've passed it. In 2000, President Clinton took a serious look at the system and its potential to the civilian population. Selective availability was disabled on May 2, 2000 making the system accurate to within thirty feet or so.

So how does all this work? Well, as mentioned previously, there are 24 satellites orbiting the earth that broadcast radio signals. To better understand the system, a simple idea of two-dimensional navigation must be explained. Suppose you are in a field with one of those sign posts that point to a bunch of different places with distances. The top arrow of the sign says Montgomery, Alabama - 139 miles. The next arrow down says Savannah, Georgia - 217 miles. The third arrow points to Nashville, Tennessee - 231 miles. Now sit down at your favorite map and draw a circle around Montgomery with a radius of 139 miles. Next draw a circle around Savannah and Nashville with the radius the distance on our imaginary sign post. Where those three circles all intersect is roughly Atlanta, Georgia. Easy enough to understand, huh?

GPS works with the same principal. The receiver determines its location by its distance from the satellites. Hold it one minute! But those aren't satellites stationary? Well the satellites move on a predictable path and within a consistent time frame. Inside each GPS receiver, is a programmed almanac of the position of each satellite based on time. Each satellite broadcasts a signal which moves at the speed of light. By measuring how long the signal takes to reach the receiver, distance from the satellite is determined. Using three or more satellites the receiver can then triangulate its position very much the same way we did with our imaginary signpost.

These kinds of accurate calculations with radio signals require precise timing, so on each satellite is an atomic clock which is monitored and corrected by ground stations. Using the accuracy of the atomic clock, a code pattern is broadcast from the satellite at a starting point. The receiver knows what time the signal left the satellite based on the portion of the code it is currently receiving. Measuring the time it took for the signal to reach the receiver by comparing the segment of code received with the time in the receiver, the distance to the satellite is determined. The distances from three or more satellites are compared and the position is formulated. That position is then displayed on your receiver as a set of coordinates, or graphically on an electronic map.

Using this pattern the receiver checks and adjusts its internal quartz clock to match that of the atomic clock. So, in addition to knowing where you are, you also know the precise time. Imagine having an atomic clock in your pocket! The receiver also can determine speed by measuring its change in position over time. This is a three dimensional arrangement and so altitude is also calculated.

(Continued on page 19)

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GPS – Where Exactly Are You?...

(Continued from page 18)

This is all great and wonderful, but there are some issues. Gravitational pulls from the sun and moon affect the orbits of the satellites. Changing atmospheric conditions also can affect how well the signal travels from the satellite to the receiver. To combat this, the DOD has several ground stations that constantly monitor the signals and make adjustments in the satellites as necessary. In addition, there are two geo-stationary satellites which are in a fixed position in the sky on both sides of the earth. These systems are called WAAS, or Wide Angle Augmentation System. This system's sole purpose is to correct for the issues that affect the accuracy of the broadcast code.

Now with a simple receiver, John Q Public can use a multibillion dollar DOD system. At this time it is estimated that there are approximately 200 civilian users for each military user of the system!

Next month, I'll discuss the different types of receivers available to you as a consumer and some neat things that can be done with them. In the mean time, check out these interesting sites:

Official page for GPS management:

Gps.losangeles.af.mil

NASA page on GPS:

Gpshome.scc.nasa.gov

U.S. Navy GPS Timing Operations:

Tycho.usno.navy.mil/gps.html

Block II specifications:

www.spaceandtech.com/spacedata/constellations/navstar-gps-block2_conspects.shtml

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The Perfect Backup Approach *by Gene Barlow, User Group Relations, Copyrighted August 2004*

Backing up your hard drive is the most important thing you should do to protect your computer system. Yet, I am constantly surprised to find that as few as 10% of my smart user group audiences have a good backup procedure in place. Hard drive crashes are quite common and it is very painful to rebuild a computer system after a hard drive crash. Anti-virus software may offer some protection, but fast moving viruses can get through this protection and crash your hard drive. It may take you days or weeks to recover from a hard drive failure and your important data files are gone forever. So, protect your computer by backing up your hard drive on a regular basis and avoid the pain of a hard drive failure.

For the past few years I have recommended a sophisticated backup process that would adequately backup all aspects of your computer system. Using a file backup utility, I suggested you backup your important data files at the end of each day. Then, to protect your full system, I suggested you should backup your entire hard drive using a full system backup utility each month.

I also suggested that you separate out your data files into a different partition on your hard drive to further protect these important files. This approach is outlined in an article that I wrote titled, "Backing Up your Hard Drive". You can read it on my web site at www.ugr.com/nl0102.html.

While many of you followed my suggestions on backing up your hard drive, many of you are still not doing anything to protect your hard drive from failure. Perhaps my backup approach was too complex to understand or too difficult to follow. Fortunately for you, technology has made some dramatic advances in the past couple of years and now there is a better and easier way of doing your backups. This article will show you the best way to backing up your hard drive and tell you what hardware and software products to use to follow this approach. It is so easy that everybody should start to backup their hard drive. All you have to know is the secret of how to do it, and your computer can be safe and secure.

Backup Hardware

The first step to having a successful backup procedure is choosing the right backup hardware to use to save your backups to. For years, users have been burning CDs for their backups. This approach was full of frustrations and problems. No wonder folks hated to do backups. First, it seems that creating a backup and then burning it to many CDs could overtax many computer systems. If anything went wrong, the entire backup process could cancel, leaving you with several burnt CDs, but not the complete backup you needed. Worst than that, the backup might appear to be complete, but the CDs were corrupt and would not restore properly.

(Continued on page 20)

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The Perfect Backup Approach...

(Continued from page 19)

Thank goodness, CDs have been replaced with a much more reliable backup media.

A couple of years ago, external hard drives entered the computer marketplace in large numbers. Today, an external hard drive is the ideal backup media to use. Instead of sitting by your computer for hours to feed it another blank CD, all you need to do is to attach your external hard drive and forget about it. Your backup will be taken automatically without your being involved. No more drudgery of making backups to CDs.

Why are external hard drives the ideal backup media? First, they are large enough to backup your main hard drive on one device. You do not need to backup to multiple CDs, so the whole process can be done without your involvement. Second, backing up to an external hard drive is many times faster than burning CDs. An external hard drive is almost as fast as the internal hard drives on your computer. Third, external hard drives are much more reliable at saving your important files. CDs can easily become scratched or flawed and not protect your important backups. Finally, external hard drives are relatively inexpensive to buy and use. You may actually save money over the cost of burning a lot of CDs.

What should you look for when buying an external hard drive for backup purposes? External hard drives come in two basic flavors - USB2 and Firewire. One is just as fast as the other and both will do an excellent job of backing up your main hard drive. You will need to attach the external hard drive to your computer using either a USB2 port or a Firewire port on your computer. Most computer today come with a USB port on them, so these are the more popular type of external hard drives. Just be sure your computer doesn't have one of the older USB1 ports on it instead of the faster USB2 ports. If you have an older USB1 port, you can still attach and run your USB2 external hard drive, but it will run at the slower USB1 speed.

In this situation, you can add a USB2 port to your computer for a small additional price.

The external hard drives come in a couple of sizes - miniature and standard drives. The miniature external hard drives have a 2.5 inch laptop computer hard drive inside a small case. These drives are small enough to fit in your pocket and are very light to carry. They do have a couple of disadvantages to them that you should be aware of. First, they only hold 20GB, 40GB, or 80GB of backup files. This may not be big enough to backup your 300GB main hard drive. Second, you will pay quite a bit for the small size of these miniature drives. The 20GB drives cost about \$160, the 40GB drives are about \$200 and the 80GB drives are over \$300. So, you end up paying a lot for the small size.

If you don't mind having a slightly larger external hard drive, you can get one with much more capacity and for less money. These larger external hard drives contain standard 3.5 inch hard drives inside the case and are available in capacities starting at about 80GB and go up to 300GB and larger. An 80GB or 120GB external hard drive is an excellent size for most backup needs. If you watch for sales on these drives, you may find an 80GB hard drive for under \$100. I have seen them as low as \$69. The 120GB external hard drives will be more expensive, but can be found for as low as \$99. So, check the ads in your local paper and you may find a great deal on external USB2 hard drives.

Backup Software

The second part of having the perfect backup approach is using the right backup software product. There are two basic types of backup software available - file backup utilities and full system image backup utilities. Older file backup utilities would backup individual files. These utilities were slow since they had to use the operating system to find and retrieve each file separately. We have hundreds of thousands of files on our hard drive and so working on individual files, one at a time, is very slow.

A better backup utility will backup your entire hard drive (a partition at a time) and does this at the hard drive sector level. These types of backup utilities create backup images of your hard drive that you can save to your external hard drive. To conserve space, these images are compressed to about half their normal size which permits you to keep many backup images on your external hard drive. So, the first think to look for in your backup software is the ability to create compressed images of your entire hard drive.

While an image backup utility is a major step in the right direction, it is not the ultimate solution. With full backup images, you still end up backing up your entire hard drive each time, even if only a small portion of the drive has changed since the last backup. So, the images contain a lot of unchanged files that do not need to be backed up again. So, the secret is to find an image backup utility that can do incremental backup images. With the incremental backup image approach, only the changed sectors on a hard drive are backed up and not those parts of the hard drive that have not changed since the last backup. Incremental backup images are much smaller in size and complete much quicker than a full backup image.

A little calculation at this point may help you understand another reason why the incremental backup image feature is so important. Let's say you have a 120GB main hard drive that is a third full. That means it has about 40GB of files on it. A full condensed image of this hard drive would be about 20GB in size (with a compression of about 50%). That means that you could store four separate full backup images on an 80GB external hard drive. Using the incremental backup image approach, you may be able to store 30 or 40 separate backups on the same 80GB external hard drive. Because you can keep more incremental images on your external hard drive, you can make your backups more frequently than if you were limited to only four full backups.

Hence, your backups would be more current with the incremental image approach versus the full backup approach. This means less lost files since the last backup. This is of major importance when considering a backup approach.

(Continued on page 21)

The Perfect Backup Approach...

(Continued from page 20)

So, the secret to choosing the best backup software is to look for a full system backup utility that can do incremental backup images. There have been a couple of expensive enterprise software products that offer the incremental backup image feature (for example, Symantec's V2i Protector Desktop Edition v2), but there is only one consumer backup utility that I am aware of that offers the incremental backup image feature and that is the *Acronis True Image 8.0* product. This excellent backup utility was awarded PC Magazine's Editors Choice award as the best backup imaging utility on the market. PC World calls True Image the leader in the field of incremental backup images. Using this excellent backup utility with an external hard drive will provide you with the most perfect backup approach available today.

How to Backup your Hard Drive

To complete this article, let me suggest how you would do your backups using an external hard drive and an incremental backup image utility. I would suggest that you set up a regular schedule to make your backup images. For the average user, I would make a full backup of your hard drive at the beginning of the month and then an incremental backup image at the end of each week that follows. So, you would have one full backup image and 3-4 much smaller incremental backup images each month. At the beginning of the next month, make another full backup image and follow this again with weekly incremental images. Save all of these images on your external hard drive and don't delete any of the older images until you start to run out of space on the drive. If you have a very active computer system, you could make a full backup at the beginning of the week and incremental backup images at the end of each day. Most users will not need to do the backups this frequently, but some may want the extra protection of more frequent backups. Either way, the approach is the same, just the frequency is changed. With True Image 8.0 you can set up the software to make these backups automatically. So, set it up and forget it. Your backups will occur as scheduled.

If at any time, you need to restore one or a few of your files, you can simply copy these files out of your compressed image files using a facility in True Image. If you need to restore your full hard drive, you can do this also, even if the main hard drive is empty and not bootable. True Image will boot from a special CD to permit you to quickly restore the entire hard drive from the image files. So, you can quickly restore a few files or your entire hard drive using Acronis True Image 8.0.

Finally, you may be wondering why I recommend keeping all of your full and incremental backup images on your external hard drive and not deleting them after you make a new image. You need to understand that the full image you make at the beginning of the month and the incremental images that follow it each week go together in a set. True Image needs all of them to restore your hard drive to the way it was when you made the last incremental image.

During the restore, it will combine the beginning full image with each of the incremental images to recreate the hard drive. It does this very quickly whether you are retrieving a few individual files from the image set or recreating the entire hard drive. Now, let's suppose that a stealth virus got on your hard drive and was captured in the last incremental image you made. You certainly do not want to restore your hard drive with this virus on it. So, instead, you indicate to True Image to restore your hard drive from the incremental image you made just before the image containing the stealth virus. That restores your system to a point in the past when it was still clean of the virus.

Over time, you will build up a collection of backup images on your external hard drive that will let you see what files were on the drive at any point of time in the past few months. If you deleted a file some months ago and now want to get it back, you can indicate to True Image to look in a backup image before you deleted the file and you can copy it back to your hard drive from the image files. Having a history of all of the files that have been on your hard drive is a very powerful and useful function. Only with an incremental backup image software product could you afford to keep all of this history on a modest external hard drive. Acronis True Image 8.0 with an external hard drive is the perfect way to backup your main hard drive.

How to Order Acronis True Image 8.0

Acronis is offering this excellent product to user group members and their friends at a special discount price of just \$34. To take advantage of this special price, you need to go to www.usergroupstore.com and click on any of the yellow "Buy Now" buttons. This will take you to the secure web order form where you can order your copy of Acronis True Image 8.0 at the user group discount. Complete the form including the special order code of UGNL0804 and submit the form. Your product will be processed in a few hours and will be delivered in 2-3 days.

If you have any questions about this article or how to backup your hard drive, please contact me at barlow@ugr.com. I will get back to you shortly with the answers to your questions. I would like to see everyone's computer protected with a good backup approach. The method outlined in this article should do exactly that for your computer. Don't be sorry. Backup your computer today.

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This is one of a series of monthly technical articles that I plan to distribute on a regular basis in the coming months. Watch for them and learn more about your computer and its hard drive. User group newsletter editors may print this article in their monthly newsletter as long as the article is printed in its entirety and not cut or edited. Please send me a copy of the newsletter containing the article so that I can see what groups are running the articles.

eBay Publishes Spoofing/Phishing Tutorial by Ron Ogg, DVPC

Would you like to learn how to protect yourself from email spoofing and phishing? eBay offers a free tutorial that, while oriented to eBay and PayPal members, is useful even for non-eBay members. To view the tutorial, go to:

<http://pages.ebay.com/education/spoofutorial/>.

Clarion SIG by Bill Morris, Silicon Valley CW Users

There will be no meeting of the Clarion SIG in August. We plan on having a meeting after the Clarion DevCon in late September.

Become a Tax-Aide Volunteer by Ron Ogg, DVPC

Have you heard of *Tax-Aide*? This is an innovative program sponsored by AARP that provides free income tax counseling services for moderate and low-income people, focusing on those 60 years of age and older. Tax-Aide is the nation's largest, free, volunteer-run tax counseling and preparation service. It is a charitable, non-profit that provides a quality service that helps taxpayers with a service that they could not otherwise afford.

Using computers at various locations, Volunteer Tax Counselors prepare basic state and federal income tax forms, including itemized deductions and income from interest, dividends, and sale of stock. Taxpayers with more complex returns are asked to seek other assistance.

During the 2004 tax season, Tax-Aide volunteers in Contra Costa County prepared over 10,000 state and federal income tax returns, helping more than 7,000 taxpayers.

How do you become a Tax-Aide Volunteer?

If you have prepared your own tax returns and have computer skills, you can be a Tax Counselor. You will need to be comfortable working with numbers, be familiar with federal and state income tax returns, and like to work with people. Tax returns are prepared on computers. Newly certified Tax-Aide Counselors work with experienced volunteers who provide support and help to new volunteers. You do not have to be a member of AARP to become a Tax-Aide Counselor.

To become a certified Tax Counselor, a volunteer must attend a free four- to five-day class and pass the computer software and tax law exams. After passing the certification exams, counselors use computers at convenient locations throughout Contra Costa County, including community centers, libraries, churches, and similar sites.

What's in it for You?

The reward of providing a real service that people cannot otherwise afford. The satisfaction that comes from helping people deal with the challenges of preparing their income taxes. The reward of providing a valuable service to others who really need it. The pleasure of working with wonderful colleagues on your tax preparation team. The opportunity to be a part of a dedicated non-profit group that nationally has helped over 34 million individuals since its start in 1968, and which enjoys a very high degree of client satisfaction and gratitude. And you will learn valuable skills about preparing federal and state tax returns!

How Do You Sign Up?

It couldn't be simpler: call 925-335-8749, or email tax_aide@email.com.

Where is Tax-Aide?

The Contra Costa County AARP Tax-Aide organization is headquartered at the Office of the Contra Costa County Aging and Adult Services, a Bureau of the Employment and Human Services Department in Martinez.

Windows XP Service Pack 2 – Install Now or Later? by Ron Ogg, DVPC

Windows XP Service Pack 2, a.k.a. SP2. Should you? Should you not? Alas, poor Yorick, that is the Million Dollar question!

You read horror stories about the problems of SP2. It will prevent much of your software from running. You won't be able to connect to the Internet. Your Wi-Fi connection will become Woe-Fi. Your printer won't print. Your scanner won't scan. Your computer may not even boot! Gadzooks! Danger, danger, Wil Robinson!!

Is this true? Other articles say "NO!" They tell us that the security improvements in SP2 are essential to our computing health. They will block viruses, Trojans, worms, spam, scam, phish, hackers, crackers, and even cookie crumbs (the electronic kind, not the chocolate chip kind).

What to do, what to do? I'd suggest waiting for the early adopters to report back with their experiences. We will hear about the pluses and minuses of SP2 at the October 4 Windows SIG meeting. Why not join us, and maybe you'll figure out what YOU should do with, or about, SP2. Or at least you will leave the meeting with a better understanding of those pluses and minuses!