

Diablo Blue

January, 2005



January 6, 2005 DVPC Meeting Announcement Happy New Year!

An Exploration of Some of DVPC's Board Member's Favorite Web Sites

Happy New Year! For January we'll have an exploration of many of the favorite web sites of some of the members of DVPC's Board of Directors. We'll hear about the web site, and see it in action, live. That's the advantage of having Internet access at our new meeting room at Diablo Valley College!

You will probably see search sites, language translation sites, research sites, shopping sites, software support sites, shareware and freeware sites, magazine sites, government sites, community sites, sites for kids, sites for young adults, sites for not-so-young adults, medical sites, auction sites, political sites, finance sites, on-line banking sites, free sites, you-gotta-pay sites, anonymous web surfing sites, hacker sites, Bay Area sites, California sites, domestic sites, foreign sites, serious sites, funny sites, blog sites, education sites, weather sites, music sites, movie sites, TV sites, personal sites, well-designed sites, very not-well designed sites, photography sites, popular sites, little-known sites, and you-couldn't-describe-them-if-you-tried sites. So, come to the January meeting to learn about dozens of interesting web sites. Bring along some of your favorites, too, and we'll take a look at them as well! And we're going to post the best of these sites on the Links page on the DVPC web site.

Our meetings are being held at Diablo Valley College; see the map and directions on pages 4 and 5 and on the DVPC web site at www.dvpc.org/about.html.

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.

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President's Message

by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

Happy Holidays! As I write this, I assume you all have your Festivus poles up and are looking forward to the traditional Feats of Strength and Airing of Grievances. (For those of you who have no idea what I am writing about, check out *Festivus* in Google — or watch an old Seinfeld re-run.)

I had hoped our January meeting would be Comcast but I was unable to get it set up in time so I expect we will move that to March. Instead we will show a list of favorite web-sites, free software and other goodies. I will be at CES during our meeting and will try to phone in a report. If the technology works, I may be able to set up a video report but no promises,

In February we have confirmed Microsoft. We will be treated to a presentation of the new Windows XP Media Center 2005. This latest iteration of Windows is very solid and it will be fun to see how well the computer can manage your TV, music and other entertainment.

Have a great, safe holiday and a healthy, prosperous new year. Sorry I won't see you at the January meeting, but mostly I'm sorry I won't get to see the web site presentation! Enjoy!!

DVPC January 2005 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 New Year's Day
2 See SIG News starting on page 5 of Diablo Blue for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations	3 Windows SIG 7:30 pm	4	5	6 DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm New Users SIG 6:30 pm	7	8 PC101 and PC201, Computer Renaissance, 4 pm to 6 pm
9	10	11	12 DVPC Board Meeting 7:00 pm	13	14	15
16	17 Genealogy eSIG (See SIG News on page 5 of Diablo Blue) Martin Luther King Day	18	19 Internet SIG 6:00 pm	20 Advanced Users SIG 7:30 pm	21 Diablo Blue Deadline. Email articles and ads to the Editor: rogg@value.net	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Created by [Calendarscope™](#)

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
Genealogy eSIG		PC 101/PC 201 Classes
Internet SIG		Windows 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

Nicholas Chase, SIG Coordinator 680-4211 (home), nachase@yahoo.com

Will Crites, Publicity 938-1291 (home), bugkiller@aol.com

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Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor and Web Site 415-281-0431 (work), rogg@value.net

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: _____
I'm also interested in these SIGs: _____

Directions to our Diablo Valley College meeting location

Our monthly meetings are held at Diablo Valley College In Pleasant Hill, California. The Main Campus is located at 321 Golf Club Road. Our meetings are held in Humanities Building H, shown on the map below. We meet in room H109.

Driving Directions (see the map on page 5):

680 Northbound:

Exit at the Concord Blvd./Burnett Ave. Exit. Turn left on Diamond Blvd. Turn left on Concord Ave. Turn left on Contra Costa Blvd.

680 Southbound:

Exit at the Concord Ave. Exit. Turn left on Contra Costa Blvd.

Direction into the Campus:

From Contra Costa Blvd. turn right on Golf Club Road. At the signal turn left into the campus. Immediately turn right and continue to parking lot 7. Turn left down one of the rows and park close to the buildings. Purchase a parking permit and put it on your dashboard

Finding Your Way:

Notice that there's a lot of construction going on at DVC. To prevent confusion, for parking and to get to our meeting room follow the instructions that are in boxes with red borders on the map below, and take the path from Parking Lot 7 to room H109 that's marked in blue. Press the large handicapped button to open the unmarked outside door to room H109.

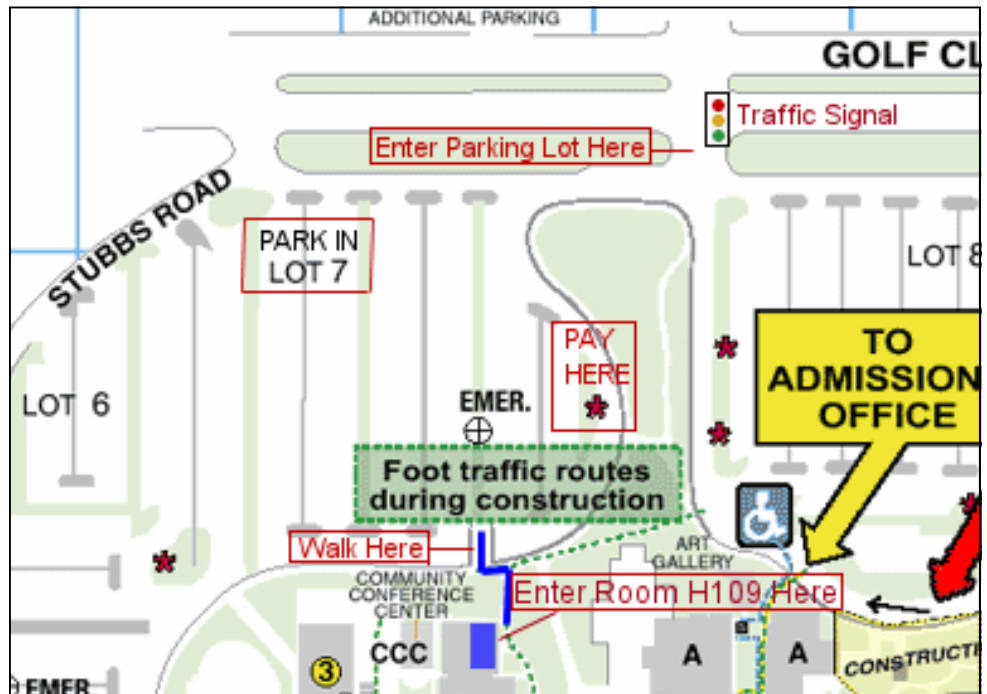
Parking fees:

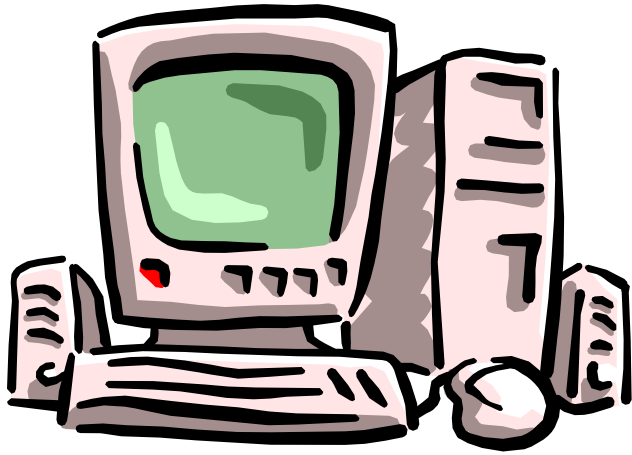
On the Pleasant Hill campus parking permits are \$2.00 per day for short-term parking. You can purchase permits at the parking permit machines marked with a red star on the maps above and below. Be sure to bring sufficient change! Parking permit machines only take quarters. DVC permits are required Monday through Friday at all times that classes are in session. That includes the times that DVPC meetings are held! Do not park in metered or faculty spaces.

You need to purchase a parking permit and place it face up on your dashboard so it is clearly visible through the windshield. If you attend classes at DVC and have a campus parking permit, you can use it when you attend DVPC meetings. You might want to carpool to save parking fees.

Be sure to purchase a parking permit! Fines range from \$35 for parking in a regular space without a permit, to over \$275 for parking in a space reserved for the handicapped.

A full size campus map is on the DVPC web site at www.dvpc.org/about.html.





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.

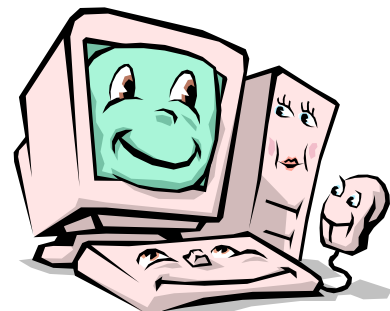
Like every other tool, users need to learn how to use it. Many of us learn what we can on our own or try to find a teacher who can show us how to use it the right way. Some of us have the time and money to take a class, but are not even sure what classes to take.

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 1 to 3 PM the 2nd Saturday of every month. For more information, contact Craig Peterson (compmail@pacbell.net or 925-671-7025)

JANUARY 8, 2005
PC 101 CLASS
SUBJECT: TO BE ANNOUNCED

This month we will have that most famous of subjects, "To Be Announced"! Check the *SIG Meetings* page on www.dvpc.org for an announcement about the topic for this month's meeting, and please join us at Computer Renaissance, 1936 Linda Drive, in Pleasant Hill on Saturday, January 8th from 1 to 3 p.m.



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! For more information phone Jeff and Sharon at 925-778-4348.

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

The Clarion SIG has decided to suspend meetings because of low attendance at their new meeting location. Send an email to Bill Morris at bill@soft-trak.com if you have any ideas about restarting this SIG.

Genealogy eSIG Peggy Johnson, SIG Leader – 676-7522

The DVPC Genealogy eSIG 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 store at 1936 Linda Drive in 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 *Internet SIG Meeting* 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 compmail@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. Since we no longer meet at Bank of America, check your email or the DVPC web site for the new meeting location. The New Users SIG 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 1 pm to 3 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 6 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.

Give a *DVPC* Membership Gift Certificate!

See Peggy at the membership table at the *DVPC* monthly meeting.

Linksys Wireless B Music System Review by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC



In my seemingly unending quest to find new and interesting toys, I have come across a really cool gizmo – the Linksys Wireless B Music System; go to:

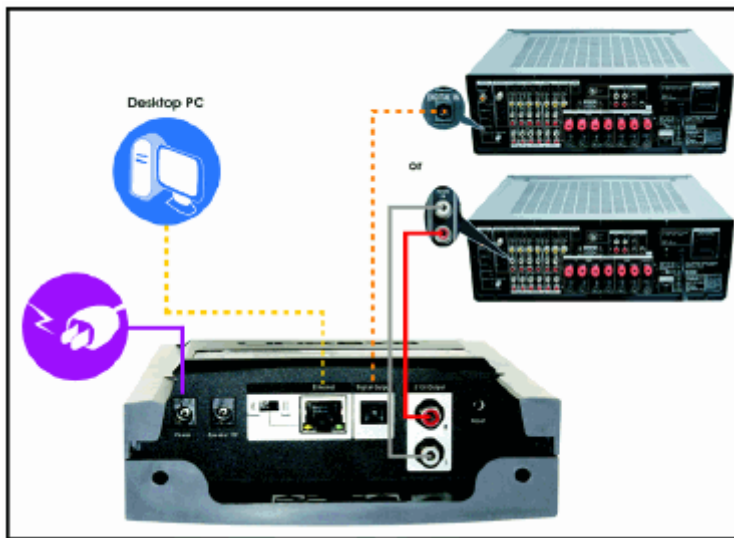
www.linksys.com/products/product.asp?grid=33&scid=38&prid=631

Using your wireless connection you can reach anywhere in your house without running cables from your computer to the stereo.

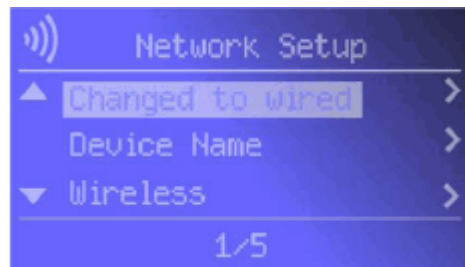
The wireless music system allows you to play the digital music stored on your computer on your home stereo system or on the included speakers. It plays mp3, CD, wav and wma formats, and you can choose your selections by title, artist, album, genre, or playlist. Also included is access to the Rhapsody Digital Music service (free trial included) to listen to over 450,000 songs on demand, create custom playlists and radio stations, and burn mixed CDs on your PC. You can also tune into thousands of Internet radio stations from over 100 different countries.

The Media Link also has a set of detachable speakers in the event you wish to listen to your music away from your stereo. While the included speakers can't compare to those on your stereo, they have a pleasant sound. (Netgear's competing product does not come with its own speakers; go to:

www.netgear.com/products/consumer/prod_multimedia_wireless_hm.php



The Linksys unit has both RCA and optical (5.1 surround sound) inputs to connect to your stereo. There is a 10/100 Ethernet port to plug the unit into your network for setup or if you don't want to use the wireless. The unit supports WEP security and UPnP. Setting up the networking is very easy.



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Computer Crossword Clues, continued...

(Continued from page 13)

16 Take care of your taxing problems here

20 These guys want to replace your Windows

22 They don't brew their coffee

Linksys Wireless B Music System...

(Continued from page 8)

Setup is pretty straight forward but I admit I had to refer to the manual to get everything running. There is an included remote which is also used in the setup. I easily flashed the ROM to get the latest revision.

The unit has a multi-line display which is very readable. As shown, the display not only assists in the setup but also displays your music choices. The Internet Radio is accessible even without your computer being turned on. A built-in equalizer gives you 6 settings to define your musical preferences.



We set the unit upstairs and cabled it into the upstairs stereo system. It had no problem connecting wirelessly to the downstairs router and playing the music contained on the family room computer.

We are really having a lot of fun with this. The MSRP is \$129 but it is often on sale for around \$99. A whole new type of boom box!

Computer Repair Made Difficult by Tom Krauss, DVPC

My computer at home and my wife's are connected via cable to my Linksys wireless router, because the wireless has never worked well at distances greater than four feet. For additional protection we run Zone Alarm and Norton Antivirus. These three combine to ensure that we do not get viruses, nor are criminals in Uzbekistan or Brazil able to violate our PCs. So about two months ago when my wife's computer began doing some strange things with the internet, I was pretty sure that the source of the problem was not the internet.

She actually had two similar problems occurring. The first occurred when she tried to log onto a favorite website with her ID and password. Clicking "Enter" had the same effect as clicking back: the data she entered was zapped with no clue as to why her access was being denied.

The second problem occurred at a couple of other favorite websites. In each case the website offered a search feature with several optional parameters which you could set to narrow the search. However, when she entered values in these filtering parameters and clicked "Enter", the new page took about 5 minutes to load, then failed, zapping all the parameters she had entered and starting her all over, again with no error messages.

Both of these problems did not occur on my machine: she could log onto the first website with no problem, and the searches with filters worked instantly and perfectly.

The first thing I did was check to see whether her machine and mine had the same settings for Linksys, Zone Alarm and Norton Antivirus. They did. Then I ran Ad-Aware and Spybot on her machine as well as the system utilities to clean up all temporary files. Finally I ran defrag. I tested the results and found the problems were still there.

I had reached the limits of my technical expertise, so I did what any member of DVPC would do in this situation: I told Ron Ogg my dismal story and begged for assistance.

Ron gave me several suggestions of things to try, which did not help, and included in his reply an article from the Microsoft website with the wonderful title "You Cannot Open A New Internet Explorer Window Or Nothing Occurs After You Click A Link". It was

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DVPC Board Meeting Minutes by Tom Krauss, DVPC

The December 9th DVPC Board of Directors meeting began the meeting with Alan reminding us that he will be at CES (the Consumer Electronics Show) in Las Vegas on January 6, and as a result he will not be able to chair the January DVPC general meeting on that date. He is working on getting a speaker, but just in case, contingencies were discussed. One suggestion was to surf to various interesting and/or useful websites. This drew such an enthusiastic response that it may become a regular feature of the meeting, along with Random Access.

Wait a minute. Did I just say Alan will be at CES in Las Vegas? It's déjà vu all over again. With COMDEX struggling to get back on track (2004 COMDEX was "postponed" till November 2005) Alan was struggling for an excuse to get to Las Vegas, and CES is it. Last you get the wrong impression, Alan goes to Las Vegas strictly for the electronic goodies. The CES "newsletters" he is getting in the mail filled with articles like "How to Photograph Models in Bikinis" have had absolutely no influence on him.

Next item of business: twelve months ago, at the December 2003 DVPC meeting, we raffled off a number of software packages from Microsoft. Not all packages were there, so the winners' names were taken down and when the software finally arrived they were notified. Except for one fellow, a non-member, who had won a copy of Microsoft Publisher. All we had to go on was his name. We solicited his response on the website for months to no avail. We even phoned everyone listed in the Contra Costa telephone directory with the same or similar name, but could not locate him. We debated what to do and finally decided at the March Board meeting to start a three month countdown on our website, at the end of which the prize goes back in to the hopper for some other lucky person to win.

I would like to say that one of us (any one of us) on the Board was finally clever enough to notice that it is three months after March and time to act. However, we all forgot about this three month deadline. Only because I researched the old minutes in writing these minutes today do I know this for a fact. It must be a fact because I wrote it in the March 2004 minutes, which appeared in the April 2004 issue of Diablo Blue. You can look it up at www.dvpc.org/blue/2004apr/dvpc2004apr.pdf. But I digress.

As I was saying, I would like to say that one of us was clever enough to notice that it is three months after March and time to act. However, what really happened is that Alan stumbled across the software stored in his garage. This time there was no debate: the software will be "recycled" at the next meeting and become a raffle prize. If you're interested, be sure to attend the January DVPC meeting!

As a final item of business, we discussed the etiquette of what to do when a member (or a guest, for that matter) starts snoring so loudly at the meeting that the speaker can't be heard, as happened with two members at the last meeting. (I am talking about the general meeting, of course: if a Board member started to snore at a Board meeting the rest of us would jump at the opportunity to pour ice water on him or her.) We decided that it is the responsibility of the person sitting closest to the snorer to gently nudge the snorer awake. Ice water will be provided in case gently nudging fails.

Computer Repair Made Difficult...

(Continued from page 9)

close. A carefully reading convinced me that quite possibly it was addressing my problem. With nothing to lose, I followed the instructions and from the command line replaced eight files.

Or tried to. Seven of them worked, but the eight resulted in this message: "LoadLibrary("msjava.dll") failed - specific module could not be found". The problem still existed, so I wrote Ron, telling him I thought that the Java library on the machine was messed up, or at least missing one module.

I wrote Ron again, sharing my latest disappointment. I said I was going to find the file on my machine and copy it to my wife's. Ron replied that just copying the dll may not solve my problem. If it didn't, I would have to re-install the Microsoft Java Engine. And, of course, the installer is no longer available from the MS web site because of the Sun lawsuit.

I checked my PC and discovered Windows Explorer could find neither the msjava.dll file, nor the LoadLibrary it was supposed to be in. Plus, I discovered another problem. On some sites, when browsing their catalogs, clicking on a picture to zoom did nothing. On other sites zoom worked.

Oh boy. Was I having fun.

Fortunately, Ron was able to send me an exe that would install the MS Java Virtual Machine version 3810 for WinXP. It was a mere 5,136,592 bytes. I promptly ran it and got the message "This setup will only upgrade over an existing version of the Microsoft VM". Then it said "The installation is complete". The whole process took less than 10 seconds. I don't think it actually did anything, and I still had the problems. Back to Ron.

There is something discouraging when you tell Ron a computer problem and his reply starts "That's bizarre! ". But he was not out

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Support DVPC — Get a friend to join!

Computer Repair Made Difficult...

(Continued from page 10)

of ideas. Now he sent me two files. One was the elusive msjava.dll file (523 KB zipped) and the other a patch for this version of MS Java (4 MB zipped).

I applied them as directed and... no luck. The problems were still with me.

I decided to take matters into my own hands. Convinced the problem was Internet Explorer-related, I went to Microsoft's website to learn how to reload IE. Much to my surprise, I quickly found relatively simple instructions. The bad news was that I would have to edit the Registry. But the instructions were clear (sort of), so I began. Four or five steps into it and as many layers deep in the registry, just as my confidence was growing, I hit a wall. The article said "You will see these four choices: select the third" in words much more technical, but you get the drift. Unfortunately, I did not see those four choices. Major O-O-O-P-S. I carefully backed out of the Registry, leaving things as I had found them.

At this point I lost interest in whether or not my wife could access successfully a few websites. I mean, there are tens of thousands of interesting websites out there — why not try some new ones? They may even work! I put the problems out of my mind for a week or so until one night she told me "I can't turn my computer on or off".

I was curious to see this third state, so I followed her to her PC. The light on the PC was on, the monitor was dark, and it was disturbingly silent. I held the on/off button in for five seconds (don't you hate that? What a stupid idea!) and heard it click off. After a few seconds I hit the switch and the machine booted flawlessly. Feeling pretty cocky, I told her not to do whatever she had done again, and ran from the room.

The next night the same thing happened, but this time even I could not start the machine. I opened it up, put my hand on the hard drives and tried to start it again. The CD drives came to life but not the hard drives. Stan once cured a problem I was having with my memory (computer memory, that is) by suggesting that I unplug it and then plug it back in. So I tried that with the power cables. No luck. Then I tried one of the spare power plugs and like magic, the drive booted! Further experimenting showed that one strand of power cable was dead, but the others worked fine. Now it was my turn to say "That's bizarre!".

So the next day I replaced the power supply on the PC. It booted up just fine. Just for the heck of it I went to one of the problem websites and tried to search with filters and IT WORKED!!! All the earlier problems were resolved!

So now we come, after a long, torturous, and rather boring journey, to the moral of the story. This is where you can learn from my mistakes. And the moral is:

Whenever something is wrong with your PC, no matter what,
REPLACE THE POWER SUPPLY!

Can You Email Your Doctor? Should You? *by Gabe Goldberg, APCUG*

We rarely think about how the Internet and email have changed society and our lives in just ten years. For finding information, conducting personal and professional affairs, and simply doing business, it's hard to remember or imagine doing without them. No other technology achieved such wide use so fast.

But email acceptance and use isn't universal, and some areas are slower to adopt it. While I routinely exchange email with my stock broker, accountant, car dealer, veterinarian, realtor, and nearly all my service providers, my healthcare professionals are much less uniformly available electronically. In fact, there's no uniformity of opinion among patients, doctors, ethicists, insurance companies, the medical establishment, and government about how this new-fangled technology should be handled and regulated.

My primary care doc, an internist emphasizing cardiac health, gave me the idea for this article by being available via email starting about two years ago. He finds it — as I do! — great for direct, simple communications, and reports that email decreases phone calls and phone tag, achieving office efficiency and economy. I've asked simple questions such as how often it's advisable to give blood and what kind of blood pressure monitor to purchase. He makes email contact available to all his patients with the understanding that if specific therapies are required after email contact, an office visit is needed. Before any emailing, he ensures that a patient is using a private home computer, rather than a workplace system. And he considers email conversations to be informal, not necessarily entering patient records, with any recommendations requiring specific therapeutic intervention warranting a carefully documented office visit.

It's clear that there aren't yet standards for high-tech medical communications, and healthcare providers are individually exploring and defining opportunities. Some doctors use email for administrative matters only, such as booking appointments and handling prescription refills. Some respond to email with telephone calls. Still others won't accept or send any patient email, citing concerns about privacy and security, or email's cold ("low touch") nature as inappropriate for something as important and personal as healthcare.

There are valid technical concerns: email is not private nor secure, nor even completely reliable: email can be forged, sender and receiver are usually not authenticated, email containing a warning or diagnosis can be delayed in transit, etc. And risks such as

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We fix the problems your manufacturer won't.

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Unlike computer manufacturers, our A+ Certified in-store technicians will happily remove viruses, spyware and adware from your system. Plus, we can retrieve data you've lost due to these frustrating intruders. Just bring your computer in, and we'll do our best to have you up and running within 48 hours.



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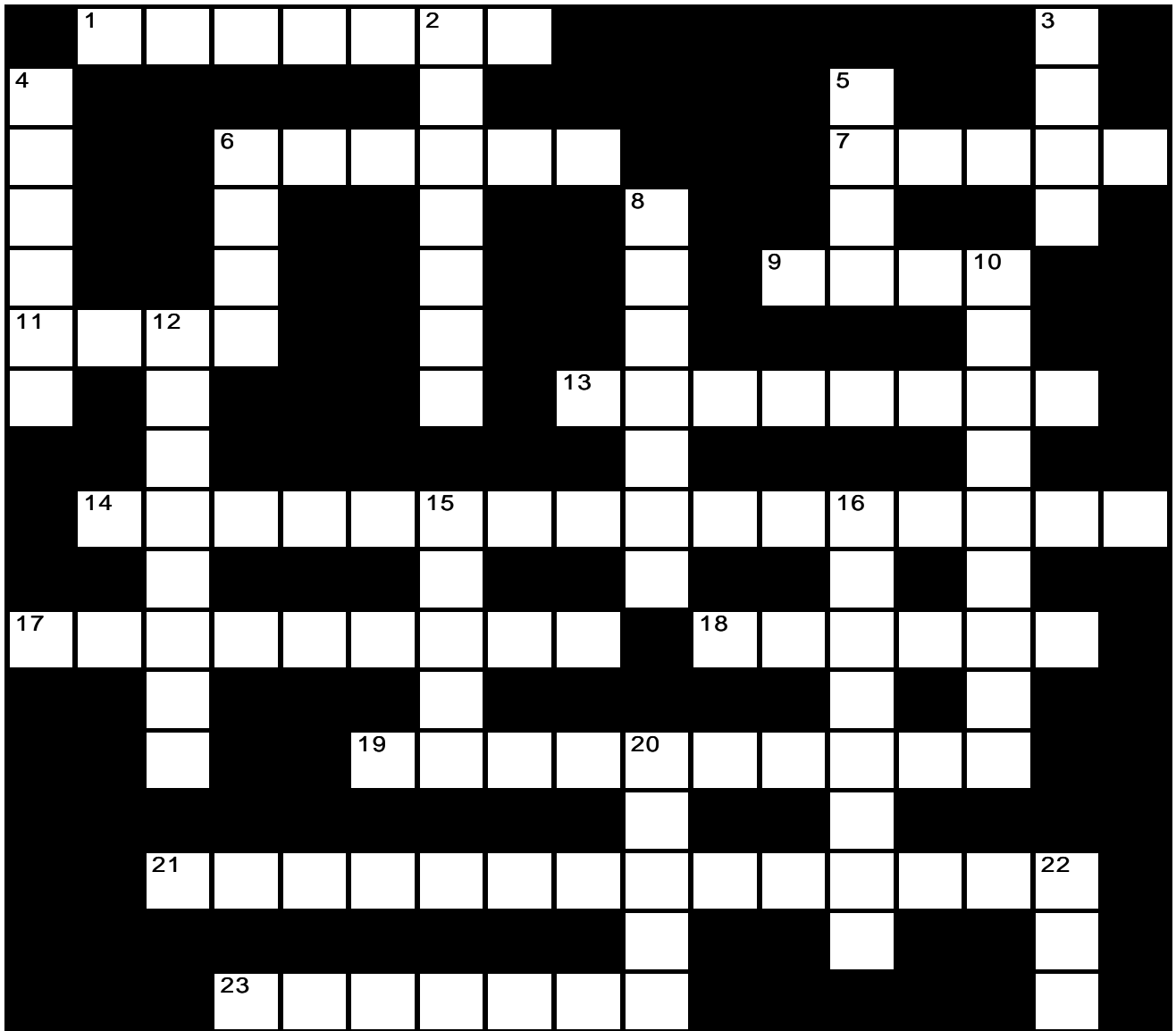
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Visa, MC and Discover Cards accepted. All prices subject to change without notice. Franchise listed
is independently owned and operated. Products may not be available in all areas.

Computer Crossword by Craig Peterson, DVPC
"Computer Companies, Products, and et cetera"



There has been a lot of activity in the computer hardware and software industries during 2004. Let's reflect on some of the companies and products that have been in the news, and a few of our old favorites just to make things interesting. So put down the remote, and during bowl game intermissions try to solve this month's puzzle. If you need help, go to www.dvpc.org/solution.html.

Across

- 1 Best known for their cow box
- 6 This device lets you connect computers together
- 7 These guys are outperforming Napster
- 9 They have been the PDA leader
- 11 This outfit started out as "AuctionWeb"
- 13 Their new mouse includes a laser
- 14 What's a "LAN"? (3 words)
- 17 He was a founder of Pixar
- 18 This guy wants to keep your computer from getting sick
- 19 Software company that was just taken over
- 21 Just signed an exclusive deal with the NFL (2 words)

- 23 Internet Explorer's new competitor

Down

- 2 The #1 drafting software
- 3 They are the new PDA leader
- 4 This lets you connect a network to the Internet
- 5 Coffee? Software?
- 6 First company to make a dual-layer DVD drive
- 8 Best known as a reader
- 10 Who just bought an anti-spyware software company
- 12 They publish the #1 drafting software
- 15 These guys figured out how to sell elements

(Clues continued on page 8)

Can You Email Your Doctor? Should You?...

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incomplete recordkeeping, misunderstandings and miscommunications — even a patient denying that a note was received -- add to the already sadly high risk of litigation.

An ethics expert draws a sharp line, commenting that he's "been around this issue in several professional settings". He continued, "The legal profession has OKed email for confidential communications IF the client requests/approves it and if the system is secure. Work computers are often monitored, so it is not reasonable to regard them as secure. I'd say the same standards apply to doctors." And he identifies an additional risk; "Unlike with lawyers, simply communicating with an oncologist (for example) gives information with confidential overtones." He suggests that doctors avoid email communications with patients, patients avoid communication with doctors from work, and patients avoid research from work on medical Web sites.

The American Medical Association (AMA) offers resources describing advantages and risks of healthcare-related email. Guidelines for Physician-Patient Electronic Communications www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/2386.html notes that "Email has taken on increased significance as a mode of communication that is readily available to patients and health care professionals" and strongly recommends that email must never replace crucial interpersonal contacts. And it provides a number of clear/specific and mutual guidelines for patient/doctor email. The Ethical Guidelines for Use of Electronic Mail Between Patients and Physicians, www.bioethics.net/journal/infocus.php?vol=3&issue=3&articleID=120, includes a longer discussion of email issues, including a brief history of doctor/patient communications from the 17th century. Perhaps its most crucial recommendation is that email "should not be used to establish a patient-physician relationship, but rather to supplement personal encounters".

The government endorses use of email; William Pierce, Deputy Assistant Secretary of HHS, said that the HHS Secretary encourages use of information technology for efficiency and to improve health. He notes that under HIPAA's new healthcare privacy rules, use of email is permitted, with informed patient consent and control, and responsible patient usage.

Another issue may be more challenging than deciding whether and how to email: working out a way for doctors to be paid for added value services such as access-by-email. In the era of managed care, my doc notes, many patients feel entitled to administrative services — FAXing referrals and prescription refills, copying records, filling out forms for handicapped parking and travel insurance, etc. — because they have health insurance. Since insurers don't presently reimburse those services, some medical practices have tried to establish fee structures to cover their costs. Of course, new fees aren't popular with patients or insurance companies. So a new administrative services package may emerge, including emailing, FAXing, form completion, etc. for a modest annual fee. And the AMA has defined temporary codes "for identifying emerging technology, services and procedures", such as online medical evaluations.

A middle ground is outlined by Jim Harper, editor of Privacilla.org, a Web-based project that seeks to capture "privacy" as a public policy issue: "A physician should strike the balance carefully between the security risks involved in emailing and the importance of quick, effective communication. Email is fine for ordinary treatment information about conditions that carry no stigma. More sensitive conditions or diagnoses and so on, probably deserve better than e-mail." He notes that the relatively new HIPAA law may have lawyers advising doctors to avoid using email with patients. If this happens, he feels that this "probably needlessly degrades communication with patients who would benefit from getting written information quickly".

And a bit of practical reality comes from my doc, who notes that "This is the 21st century. If patients want my time (which unfortunately is finite) they have to get it any way that works for me". So taking appropriate cautions and precautions, requiring informed patient consent regarding email's tradeoffs and limitations, and recognizing the potential need to pay for the enhanced service, email complements other technologies — telegraph, telephone, and FAX. These, after all, were new in their time and not accepted without reservations by both patients and physicians, but are now routine rather than threatening.

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Genealogy: Do It Now by Elizabeth B. Wright, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

That is not new advice. In fact, it borders on being trite. However, I am talking about getting things down on paper (electronically) before it is too late.

Many of the over-50 group have begun to delve seriously into genealogy. And that is a good idea. However, we are in danger of doing a lot of hard work and then having it completely lost because our children are not yet interested in "roots" things. They give a little lip service to our efforts, but mostly they don't seem to think any more about it than we did when we were younger. And they mostly do not have the programs we use on their own computers.

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Genealogy: Do It Now...

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There is a good range of programs for genealogical research and most of them can be used by beginners rather easily. That is not to say that all of the available features will magically become useful to first-timers, but most of the essential information can be entered by just about any level of user competence.

That information, however, is going to stay right where it is, on the computer, until something happens to it. That something could even be a computer crash or virus which might wipe out all the hard work put into developing family history. There are options, usually, to save the files to an external disk, CD, or other backup-type media. This should be the very first step after inputting important data into a program.

Then comes the reason for this article. Nearly all of the current programs have choices to output the data into reports of various types. There are always the tree charts which have become so familiar to all of us. Usually there are other types of reports which sort the information in ways other than a typical family tree. Using reports, it is possible to download the essential data into hard printed copy to share with children, grandchildren and other interested relatives. Many programs have very good options for printing books. Most also have the ability to include photographs in the output. And photographs don't always have to be of people. Most serious genealogists include photos of important documents, as well as maps, places, buildings, and objects of interest such as clothing, trophies, jewelry, grave markers, etc. Photographs can greatly enhance the value of the information as well as making it more enjoyable to read.

Our family members who are not yet interested in genealogy have a tendency to treat our efforts with some humor, thinking perhaps it is a rather quaint way for "seniors" to spend time on an amusing hobby. Of course, the day usually comes when they wish they had the same information. And the efforts we make now can provide them with a great start. There really is practically no limit to how much research can be done on any family line.

But what if you don't want to get into deep family research? We have such a golden opportunity to use our computers to just put in print our own memories of family. As we age, and we all seem to, some of those memories begin to be hazy. We need to DO IT NOW, while we have the ability and the means to accomplish it. And when we finish writing a particular memory, we need to transfer it to the same external medium, and also print hard copies of it. With a little luck, younger family members will at least put it somewhere for future reference. Worst case scenario is going to the trouble to give someone your hard work only to have it be given a cursory glance and possibly be thrown away.

Using your word processor, simply typing out a story and by including any available photographs in the document, you can begin to build a family history starting with YOU.

My favorite example from my own case is typing the family "lore" of how my grandmother grew up. She was left motherless as a toddler, put in an orphanage and foster homes before finally being taken from her native Iowa to Kansas by her older (by just a couple of years) brother and possibly her father. The story was always murky, but consistent, told to me by both my mother and my aunt. When I finally began doing serious family research, I came across enough information to confirm the story, almost word for word the way the "lore" had passed it down to me. Both my mother and my aunt had been dead for many years before I began the search for my grandmother's family, and had I not finally written it down, it would have ended with me. No one else has ever been remotely interested in my grandmother except my mother, my aunt and me. Now I am hoping my son and my daughter and their children will keep the information and expand it someday, along with the other branches of their family tree.

PC Help Is – Sometimes – Just a Mouse Click Away by Gabe Goldberg, APCUG

Who'd have thought that a Beatles song highlights a great PC resource for solving problems and answering questions? No, it's not "Ask Me Why" or "Do You Want to Know a Secret". It's "Help!".

All Windows versions (Windows 95, 98, ME, XP, etc.) and most applications have built-in Help facilities. Knowing how to fetch Help information leads to happy PC use, saves having to wait for others to answer questions, and can even make you an expert resource for other people!

But there's no free lunch; Help can't read your mind and answer questions before you ask them. And to get information you need, you have to look in the right places.

Help info is stored in special files and retrieved through Help software. The info and software is similar but not identical throughout Windows versions and applications, so general rules apply. The good news is that it's easy to explore Help information; since it's most useful to read about topics in which you're interested, feel free to replace my examples with your own questions or areas of interest.

Most applications respond to several cues for help: pressing the F1 key, clicking the word Help on the menu bar, and pressing alt-H (hold Alt key and press H key).

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PC Help Is – Sometimes – Just a Mouse Click Away...

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Pressing F1 opens the Help system, while pressing the alt-H key or clicking menu bar Help provide a short pulldown of Help options. However you enter Help, you'll see buttons or tabs such as Contents and Search. You may also see buttons such as Getting Started, Basic Features, Errors, and Frequently Asked Questions.

For example, I recently installed the Mozilla browser. Its Help provides four tabs: Contents shows main topics and subtopics, Search explores Help information, Index lists all topics alphabetically, and Glossary provides definitions of terms used. Many applications use Microsoft Help standards tabs: Contents, Index, and Answer Wizard. This wizard replaces searching, allowing entry of questions needing answers.

Clicking Contents reveals a list of topics aimed at getting specific things done. Mozilla's tasks include Browsing the Web, Using Mail, and Bookmarks. Many tasks have a "+" next to them; clicking the + reveals lists of subtasks. Most helpful in learning to use Mozilla Help is Using the Help Window, whose subtasks include Finding the Topic You Want and Search Tips.

When you have a question that isn't task related, consult the Help information index for an alphabetical list of entries. Mozilla Help entries range from Account Settings, Address Books, and Bookmarks, to Toolbar, Uploading Pages, and Working Offline.

When you aren't sure what task or major topic includes info you need, try searching. Searching Mozilla Help for "bookmarks" found many places the topic is mentioned which are not listed in the index. Unfortunately, computers still only do what we tell them to do, rather than what we mean. So words you search for must match how Help information is labeled. If a search fails, search again for other words that describe the information you're seeking.

You can open Windows Help by clicking Start and then Help or pressing F1 when viewing the desktop; retrieve tips on using Help by entering (in the Index or Search boxes) a term such as "getting help". Similarly, valuable productivity tips are available by searching on "keyboard shortcuts".

As you explore Help and navigate through its information, remember that you're leaving a trail, as you do when you surf the Web. You can always click the Back button to return to a previous display, and click Forward to repeat your path.

Other information nuggets are available.

Many dialogue boxes -- often requiring making baffling choices -- include a Help button. It's easy to miss this valuable button; dialogue box Help buttons have the special advantage of providing "context help" -- that is, taking you directly to info describing the open dialogue box without requiring searching or clicking.

Another tool, even easier to miss, is the "What's this?" symbol on many dialogue boxes, a "?" in the upper right corner. Clicking this turns the mouse cursor into a traveling question mark. Move the ? over a term or menu and click; this will display a brief explanation of the item you clicked. Beware, though: usefulness of this tool varies. It requires developers to spend thought/time/effort supplying suitable information for each box and button. Some do this, others cut corners.

Finally, the most automatic information is displayed when you place the mouse cursor over a toolbar button. Called hints or tooltips, this information usually displays by default. If it doesn't, application-specific options can be changed to enable it.

It's easy to forget that Help info is available. A colleague reported that after wondering for quite some time how to add multiple rows to an Excel spreadsheet, he finally consulted Help. He was rewarded by the simple answer: "To insert multiple rows, select rows immediately below where you want the new rows. Select the same number of rows as you want to insert". Lesson learned: Help is your friend.

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Online Footprints by Gabe Goldberg, APCUG

A song written by Peter Mayer [www.blueboat.net], a great singer I've just discovered, is titled "Earth Town Square". Describing how technology and travel have shrunk the world, Peter lyrically observes "Now it's feeling like a small town, with six billion people downtown, at a little sidewalk fair, in Earth Town Square". Even though all six billion of us aren't (yet!) online, the Internet as a meeting place is certainly one of the engines making the Earth seem smaller. While it was once exotic -- or alarming -- to have a long distance telephone conversation, chatting electronically with people half a world away doesn't raise my pulse.

A decade ago, early in my use of the Internet, I was astonished by its ability to create coincidences -- true story! I was consulting for an online service that gave me an email address used only for their work. I received a note at that address with the intriguing subject, "I am you", from another Gabriel Goldberg. (Nowadays, that's the sort of spoofed email I'd likely delete without reading.)

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Online Footprints...

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He'd checked his entry in the service's directory and found my entry next to his. We exchanged pleasantries, described ourselves, shared wonder at having found each other; he mentioned that he was a music student in Boston.

Later that week, I received another note at my regular email address, from a woman who said that she'd known a Gabe Goldberg years earlier, the last she'd heard from him he was going to Boston to study music, and was I that person. I replied to her, copying the other Gabe, that either they were playing a joke on me or we had a mighty powerful coincidence.

Truth is stranger than joke: they were former high school sweethearts who had drifted apart. In the same week they both found my name and two different email addresses, and for very different reasons, they contacted me. I later heard from her mother, who thanked me for reuniting them! And, remarking on the coincidence of names, the other Gabe wondered "how guys named Jim Smith handle all the coincidences".

Participating in mailing lists, newsgroups, and Web sites leaves online footprints and makes us visible. The bad news is that's one of the ways spammers find targets, but the good news is that being visible makes it easier for lost friends to track us down. Soon after 9/11 I heard a voice on the phone I hadn't heard for nearly 30 years: my college girlfriend. She'd searched Google (often called "Googling") for me, found me, and called. We've stayed in touch since, have gotten together several times, and have shared news of our respective families. And just recently I used Google to contact an elementary school friend after hearing of her taking a new job in San Francisco.

A friend, Ross Patterson, reports another name collision. Having been online since the 1970s, he never used an alias, has always used his own name for email and his Web site. Everything was fine for about four years, but in 2002, a comedic film called "The New Guy" [<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0241760>] came out. He notes that it was a critical success, if you count one to one and a half stars a success. A co-starring role was played by (a different) Ross Patterson (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0666388>). A few months later he started to receive emails from young women through his Web site email address. Most assumed he was "that Ross Patterson", although some asked outright. Most said that he was "kewl" and "soooooo HOT!!!!", and often asked for autographs. Being the father of a teenage girl, he wrote back politely to each young lady explaining that he wasn't the fellow they were looking for, and deleted their correspondence. Several responded, all nicely, and he traded a few friendly notes with one girl.

Another coincidence earned me a colleague, client, and friend. After forwarding a meeting notice to a local professional mailing list, I received an earnest note from someone I didn't know, saying that the topic of the meeting was outrageous and that I should attend representing her and protest what was proposed for discussion. I'd normally simply delete such out-of-the-blue notes, but this one was so well-crafted and so earnest that I couldn't resist cautiously replying, asking whether she really meant to address me. Of course, she hadn't — someone in her company had forwarded the note internally, she'd responded to me by mistake instead of her colleague. But we continued chatting, became friends, and she became a client. If I hadn't forwarded the note, we'd never have met.

Sometimes the Internet simply facilitates synchronicity, related events happening at the same time. A few years ago, two friends independently mentioned online that they had made a New Year's resolution to start new relationships. So I introduced them and arranged a blind date!

Amidst the fun of unanticipated connections and reestablished friendships, there's a cautionary note: online has a long memory. Web sites like Google cache (retain) Web pages even after they're deleted from their original Web locations. Postings to mailing lists, Web forums, newsgroups, and other online venues are usually retained indefinitely. It can be unnerving to discover that items posted in the heat of the moment or as youthful indiscretions can be retrieved years later by potential employers or new acquaintances — or someone snooping for unpleasant reasons.

Just as it's worth checking your credit report periodically, it's a good idea to occasionally check what online trails you've left. My current favorite surfing tool is Google, so I search for "Gabe Goldberg" and "Gabriel Goldberg". (The quote marks bind the first and last names together so that only Web pages having the exact full name are found. I search on Gabe/Gabriel because I've used both names.) If your name is closer to Jim Smith's — offering 56,000 hits rather than the more manageable 182 for my name — you can tighten the search by adding terms such as a middle initial, state of residence, hobby, employer, etc. But don't make the search too narrow or you may miss genuine references.

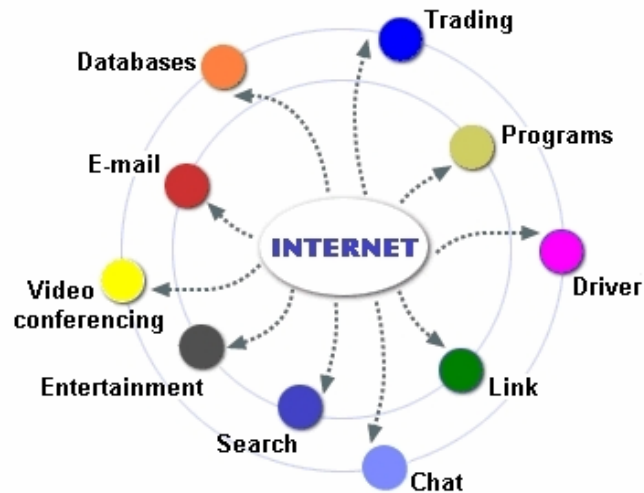
It's tedious to erase tracks from an online history; it requires contacting each site that hosts material you'd like to delete, perhaps following instructions and filling out forms. Some mailing list sites refuse as a matter of policy to delete list postings, reasoning that doing so would distort a list's historical record. The government has made serious efforts to sanitize the Web by removing content deemed dangerous, such as plans for water/power system. But the Wayback Machine (<http://www.archive.org/index.html>) archives many years' of Web data. For example, the first image shown of www.whitehouse.gov is from December 1996. Even when successful, scrubbing data off Web sites often doesn't really make it unavailable, it just slows people finding it.

It's much better to avoid saying anything online that might return to haunt you, than try to clear the record after the fact.

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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 November 17, 2004 as we explore the "wild, wild world of the web".

Also, for those of you who were not able to make last month's meeting, our annual "End of the Year" Party, you missed a lot of fun and camaraderie.

Also, because we were so busy partying, there are no "Sites of the Month". However, if you were so lucky to be given a cash gift during the holidays, you might want to check out Google's new shopping site with product reviews and prices:

www.froogle.com

For more information about the Internet SIG, email Craig Peterson at compmail@pacbell.net or call him at 671-7025.

Online Footprints...

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community.aarp.org/rp-computers/start for a free discussion forum covering diverse computers and technology topics.

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**If your guest joins at the meeting, you get 10 Raffle tickets –
and your new member guest *also* gets 10 Raffle tickets!!**

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

From Muppets to Mayhem by Timothy Everingham, TUGNET

From Muppets To Mayhem: The SIGGRAPH 2004 Conference

SIGGRAPH, the Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques hit the Los Angeles Convention Center in a wild and woolly way this year. You could see how the visual effects on The Lord of The Rings movies were done to the latest in virtual swim gear. Even Gonzo from the Muppets showed up. Some really great technology that has or will wind up in products for the professional and consumer were shown.

Technology has come to the point where it is now possible to get motion picture quality animation rendered in real time using dual processor computers with high end professional graphics cards; something that you can order from an online catalog from IBM, HP, or Boxx Technologies (\$8,000-\$20,000). However, a lot of the software to do it is propriety right now and sometimes uses specialized interface hardware.

Someone that is uniquely using this technology is the Jim Henson Company. They are most widely known for the Muppets; but increasingly going into other areas of film and television, including the science fiction series Farscape. They have come up with the Henson Digital Performance Studio. With it you can manipulate a feature movie quality 3D character as you would a theatrical quality puppet and composite it against a rendered 3D feature movie background and have it all rendered in real time, with the characters and backgrounds near photo-real.

Demonstrated at SIGGRAPH was the NVIDIA mermaid Nalu interacting with a live audience. The mermaid was controlled by two puppeteers in a connecting booth, one of them supplying the voice of the mermaid. At a special session on puppetry and computer graphics, where the Muppet Gonzo made a surprise appearance, this technology was shown how it has been used in film and television production. Many directors prefer this method because unlike having live actors interacting with 3D characters that will be added later, the puppeteers can be directed right on set to produce the character's actions just as you would with a live actor and showing up on the director's monitor screen in real time along with the live actors. That means the director has much more control and has a much better idea of what the results will be before even getting to post production. Henson developed this system with the assistance of NVIDIA.

Each SIGGRAPH Conference has an Emerging Technologies area. This is where bleeding-edge technology is shown as being applied in some interesting ways. It is one of the highlights of the show. They had a series of self propelled floor tiles that would anticipate your movement and as you walked. The one you were on would move in the opposite direction and the next tile would place itself where the old tile was, creating a situation where you would continue walking, but never go anywhere. This has its application in virtual reality applications where a person would in reality walk, but remain stationary in the simulator. This allows the simulator to remain relatively small, but be able to have the person feel as if they are moving through a large simulated environment. This so called CirculaFloor is from the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

Also there was Swimming Across the Pacific where a person is suspended by a hang-glider harness wears a head mounted display and eight tracking sensors. It is a virtual swimming simulator, where the person experiences swimming in virtual water. They plan to use it as an entertainment device, an exercise machine, for education, and to be part of a program to treat people who are afraid of the water. They call it Swimming Across The Pacific because they plan to install it in an airplane traveling across the Pacific Ocean and have people use it while in flight. The developers are from the University of British Columbia and the Nagoya Institute of Technology.

There was also the Tickle Salon which has a multiple wire suspended metal ball dressed in a skirt that provides gentle skin stimulation. As it goes over you the system maps your body and adjusts to provide a better stimulation experience as it learns. This was from a group in Holland.

There was an interactive art presentation where a pattern was displayed on a video floor. When you walk on the pattern it disappears like it has been wounded and then goes through the process of healing itself. It uses a natural growth algorithm that causes the pattern to change. It is there to represent how two different entities interaction can result in changing the entities and such change can be both destructive and cause growth. Sunnybrook Technologies and The University of British Columbia showed off very high dynamic range computer displays, which mean the displays will be able to show far better images in contrast, detail, and color than present displays.

The game developers were there showing how real time rendered game images can show such beautiful details while you are skiing down a mountain or slicing the head off of an Orc. It is only going to get better because of the increasing power of both graphics and general purpose processors. This will be exhibited in the next generation of game consoles that are supposed to be 10 times as powerful as the current generation. There is increasing talk about the blurring of traditional movie and television entertainment and game based entertainment. On the job front, traditionally games companies have been hiring people from other sectors, especially some that have some connection to technology, art, and entertainment. With the growing numbers of specialized education programs toward game development, it is expected more people will be hired from those programs and less from related sectors.

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

From Muppets to Mayhem...

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Usually when people think of the SIGGRAPH Conferences they are thinking more of entertainment, science, and research applications, not for those at the office. However, what appeared is OfficeFX from Instant Effects www.instanteffects.com. You may have seen fancy graphics in public presentations by corporate senior management. They cost a large amount of money. Now such 3D motion graphics and effects can be part of the presentation of the average user. It works with Microsoft PowerPoint. You can even import your 3D Studio Max art work into the package. Honda and Acura are currently using it. It costs \$149 and additional theme packs are available for \$99 each.

Yes, there was Muppets to Mayhem at this year's SIGGRAPH Conference. I only covered a small amount of what was there. In the next few years some of the innovations that were shown will make it into your local movie theater, home, or office.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH, the largest chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques and one of Southern California's significant professional organizations within the entertainment and media industries. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. He is a member of TUGNET. Further information can be found at home.earthlink.net/~teveringham.

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.

Lockergnome's Win XP Tips by Chris Perillo, Chief Lockergnome

Windows Update Transfer Details

Windows Update hasn't been faring too well lately; it's caused a few users some unnecessary headaches. It'll say something along the lines of: "Here, I think you need this patch." When, in fact, you don't. Mike Vigneau passed along an interesting tip for those of us who want to know what's happening when we're using this particular Microsoft tool.

This tweak has been confirmed with Windows XP and 2000 systems, although it may work in earlier versions of Windows as well. What we're going to do is set the transfer dialog to "debug" mode. This way, we can keep an eye on what's happening - at each stage in the process. Fire up the Registry editor and fly to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE \ SOFTWARE \ Microsoft \ Active Setup. Enter a new String Value and label it: "SteppingMode" (sans quotes).

Edit the String and give it a value of Y. The next time you use Windows Update, its actions should be a little more descriptive. If you ever wish to disable the verbosity, simply switch this value to N. If you want another way to grab these downloads, consider using the Corporate version of Windows Update (a quick search on Google will provide the appropriate URL).

Driver Queries and Wasted Space

What's the quickest way (in Windows XP) to get a list of the currently loaded drivers including module names and descriptions? Get out of the GUI; you're better off at the command line for this tip. Browse to your desktop folder for simplicity's sake usually found at C:\ Documents and Settings \ [Username] \ Desktop). Now, at the command line, enter: "driverquery /V > drivers.txt" (sans quotes). That /V provides a more "verbose" output. Other notable switches include /FO (which formats the output as a table, list, or comma separated values) and /SI (which provides details about any signed driver).

Open that freshly-created drivers.txt file and you'll be in business. On a more entertaining note, do you remember the music that played when you first started Windows XP? Ya know, the one that sounded like an Enigma tune? If you wanna hear it again, you can find it at C:\ WINDOWS \ system32 \ oobe images \ title.wma. Of course, if you want to free up 3 MB worth of space, you can delete it and the intro.wmv file sitting next to it.

Built-in Spell Checker

Quite honestly, there's no excuse for spelling errors anymore. Typos were frequent in the days of the typewriter; misspellings were common in the handwritten letter era. Though, there's virtually no quick way to spell check a word when you're in anything other than a "Microsoft Office Spell Checker" supported application.

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Tired of Spam?

Go to www.dvpc.org to download QURB!

Lockergnome's Win XP Tips...

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Lockergnomie Tom Maenner had issues with the feature in Outlook Express after he upgraded to Windows XP. "I had to locate 'csapi3t1.dl_' on the Windows XP CD and expand it as 'csapi3t1.dll' in this directory: C:\Program Files\Common Files\Microsoft Shared\Proof. Worked like a charm."

I'm not certain if this will work on every machine, but it's worth trying if the tool isn't operational for you. If you dork up words every other minute, consider turning on the "Spell Check before Sending" feature in your default e-mail client. It's and its, than and then, their and they're, or any other homophone may slip through the cracks. Butt at least you won't look like a total fool-- just a parshal one. Even online, credibility counts.

CompactFlash Formatting

Digital Media (the non-Lockergnome kind) is wonderful when it works. Most people use it in their digital camera or PDA (as do I). Transferring data from a portable device to the PC is relatively painless. Lockergnomie Glen Fabian pointed out something recently posted to COMPACTFLASH.ORG (the CompactFlash Association): "By default, Windows XP will format any CompactFlash card of 64MB or more with FAT32 format. Digital cameras and other devices use the FAT (FAT16) format and can not operate with a FAT32 formatted card. Either format your CompactFlash card in your camera or select FAT format to format your CompactFlash card in a Windows XP PC."

Even if you don't use CF media or Windows XP, this is something to keep in mind. And do you need another reason to own a laptop? My Pocket PC is a Walkman of sorts; I put new MP3s on it every day. However, transferring them via any USB (1.1) connection is slow as molasses.

I picked up a PCMCIA CF adapter for under five bucks a few weeks ago (they're inexpensive to begin with). Trust me, that will speed up the process. Visit PCMCIA.ORG for more information.

Media Access Control

It's no secret that 802.11b networks are not very secure; we've discussed this point at length in the past. When you enable wireless connectivity through your access point, you should filter out non-registered MAC (Media Access Control) addresses if your WAP supports this feature. A MAC address is unique to every network card on the market. Any Wi-Fi device may see your wireless access point, but it won't be able to use the WAP unless its MAC address matches the (manually entered) filter. Nice, huh?

Okay, so how do you determine a network card's MAC address? Either use WINIPCFG or IPCONFIG. You're looking for a hexadecimal string - twelve digits long (six sections of two hex characters each). This is easy to find when you're on your own machine, but what about those connected to your network?

As your home network expands, this information will become increasingly important. You could use your router's DHCP table to view the addresses, or you could use Windows XP's GETMAC command line utility (also available as a free Windows 2000 Resource Kit download).

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