



April 7, 2005 DVPC Meeting Announcement

Board of Directors Election, Pixifun, Intel “Build Your Own Computer” and More

April brings those showers of song lyric fame, and it also brings DVPC’s annual Board of Directors election. We’re always looking for members who would like to add their names to the list of candidates. How about *you*? We’re going to ask for volunteers (maybe, even, conscripts!) at the beginning of the April meeting to bring some new blood and new ideas to our Board! The current slate of candidates is listed on page 8.

Following the election we’re going to have a very full schedule.

- ✓ First, we’ll see the Pixifun presentation. Pixifun is a collection of neat programs and accessories for making items that include pictures that you create from your digital photos. We’ll see a demo using the Pixifun Photo Key Ring Kit. Other kits include Photo Magnets, Photo ID Badges, Photo Stickers, and CD/DVD labels. See the complete Pixifun review article starting on page 8 of this issue of *Diablo Blue*.
- ✓ Next, we’ll see some of the favorite websites of Board of Directors. Technical, educational, fun, informative, and even some very strange web sites will be included. Other web sites will be shown at the next few DVPC meetings.
- ✓ Next DVPC president Alan Mildwurm will show us some of the interesting goodies he picked up at the January CES (Consumer Electronic Show) in Las Vegas.
- ✓ Finally, we’ll have Part 1 of the Intel *Build Your Own Computer project*. This will tell about the project, how you can get your own high-end PC, and what will be shown during Part 2 of the project which we’ll have at our May meeting. See the complete information about the *Build Your Own Computer project* in the story on page 10.

DVPC meetings are held at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill; see the map and directions on pages 4 and 5 and on the DVPC web site at www.dvpc.org/about.html. Our meetings are now held in room MA101 in the Mathematics building. Our former meeting room (H109) has been preempted for use by evening classes. Room MA101 is on the south side of the campus, and is easier to find.

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. And there’ll be a grab bag of free software this month!

Also, as usual, we’ll have those great DVPC mugs (version 2) for sale, SIG news, and some of our usual great door prizes and extra raffle tickets for sale.

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President’s Message

by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

This month we have a plethora of events at our meeting. Of course our yearly elections will be the first order of business. As always, we encourage new faces on the board and would welcome new some recruits! Volunteer!

After getting the business out of the way, we move on to the main events! Ron will do a demo of PIXIFUN which is a great program for making photo keepsakes. Ron will also show a few of the interesting websites that our Board members have found on their travels around the net. I will demo a few of the treasures I brought back from CES (it seems so long ago I am already gearing up for next year’s show!). We will also present Part 1 of the Intel *Build Your Own Computer project*. Check the article on Page 10 for the specs of this terrific machine you can buy through our group. As always, Random Access, raffle prizes and more will fill the evening.

DON’T FORGET WE ARE NOW IN THE MATH BUILDING, room MA-101! There’s a picture of the room on page 3. And don’t forget your homework – there may be a quiz!

DVPC April 2005 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
See SIG News starting on page 7 of Diablo Blue for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations	Windows SIG 7:30 pm			DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm New Users SIG 6:30 pm		PC101, Computer Renaissance, 4 pm to 6 pm
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
				DVPC Board Meeting 7:00 pm		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Genealogy eSIG (See SIG News on page 5 of Diablo Blue)		Internet SIG 6:00 pm	Advanced Users SIG 7:30 pm	Diablo Blue Deadline. Email articles and ads to the Editor: rogg@value.net	
24	25	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	<input type="checkbox"/>	New Users SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Genealogy eSIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	PC 101/PC 201 Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Windows SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>

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, email newsletter editor Ronald Ogg at rogg@value.net. 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
- Charlie Crothers, At Large 829-2237 (home), ccrothers@attbi.com
- Dick Curry, At Large 376-5541 (home), racorinda@pacbell.net
- Peggy Johnson, Membership Secretary 676-7522 (home), pegszone@aol.com
- Tom Krauss, Secretary 689-9960 (home), tkrauss@astound.net
- Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer 829-5858 (home), jess@mildwurm.com
- 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 an award winning Web site – 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, or by email to bod@value.net.

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

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Get Involved! Learn! Join a SIG today!

A view of our meeting room, MA101

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 Mathematics Building MA, shown on the map below near Viking Drive. We meet in room MA101.

Driving Directions (see the map on page 5):

680 Northbound:

Exit at the Concord Ave./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:

Continue south on Contra Costa Blvd. to the signal at Viking Drive (opposite the main entrance into Sun Valley Mall) and turn right. At the first entrance into the campus turn right. Drive into parking lot 1 or immediately turn left and continue to parking lot 3. Note that parking lot 2 is reserved for faculty and staff only. Purchase a parking permit (see *Parking Fees* below) and put it on your dashboard. See the aerial view of the DVC campus on the next page.

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 map below. Follow the map to Mathematics building MA, enter the building, and go to room MA101 at the north end of the building. This is where the DVPC monthly meetings are held.

Parking Fees:

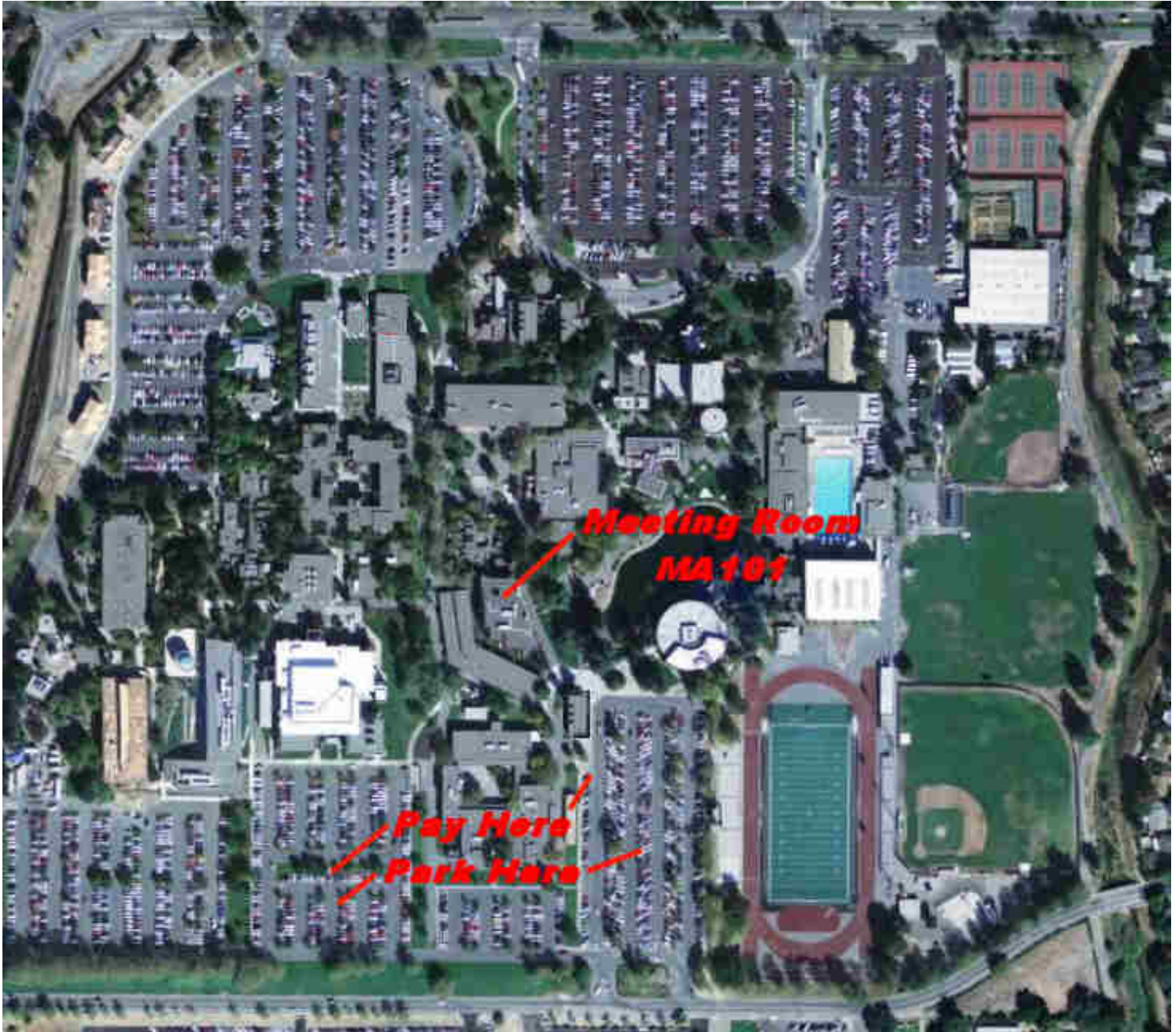
On the Pleasant Hill campus parking permits are \$2.00 per day for short-term parking. You need to purchase a parking permit and place it face up on your dashboard so it is clearly visible through the windshield. You can purchase permits at the parking permit machines marked with a red star on the map at the right. Parking permit machines only take quarters. Be sure to bring sufficient change! 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.

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.



Aerial View of the Diablo Valley College Campus

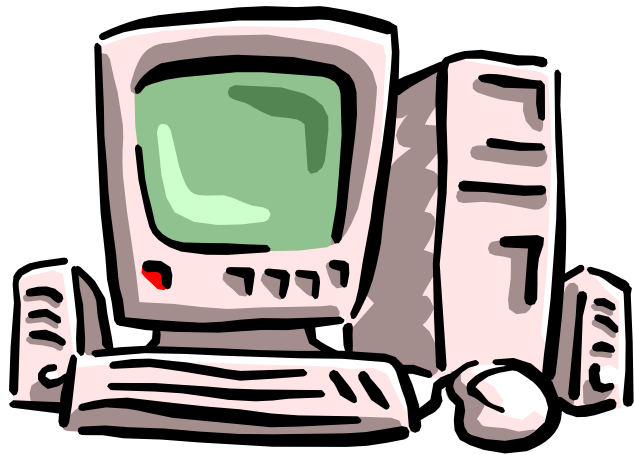


DVPC Wins APCUG 2004 Awards for Web Site and Diablo Blue by Ron Ogg, DVPC

DVPC is a member of APCUG, the Association of PC User Groups. Each year the APCUG holds two contests, one for the best PC user group web sites, and one for the best PC user group newsletters, at their annual meeting at CES, the Computer Electronics Show. In January, 2005 DVPC won two 2004 Recognition of Excellence awards for medium-size user groups from APCUG. We won first place for our web site, www.dvpc.org, and also won honorable mention for our Diablo Blue newsletter. It's always nice to get recognition!

You can see the award logos we received at the right.





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.

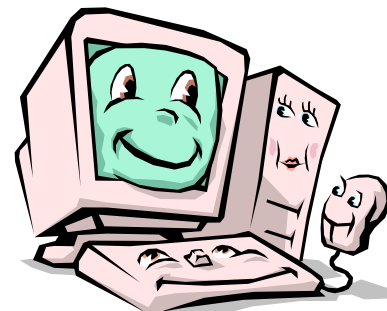
Like every other tool, users need to learn how to use it. Many of us learn what we can on our own or try to find a teacher who can show us how to use it the right way. Some of us have the time and money to take a class, but are not even sure what classes to take.

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)

April 9, 2005
PC 101 CLASS
SUBJECT: SOFTWARE

This month we will continue looking into **SOFTWARE**. Yes, we will be asking questions such as "Why doesn't this computer understand English?", "What do you mean I don't have enough memory?" and "Why is the printer making 194 copies of that letter I wanted to get rid of?" Join us March 12th from 4 to 6 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.

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 class is 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*.

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.

Start a New SIG Nick Chase, SIG Coordinator, DVPC, 680-4211

What SIG are you looking for? A Digital Photo SIG, a Palm/PDA SIG, a Microsoft Office SIG, a Home Networking SIG, or some other topic? If there's a SIG (Special Interest Group) that you would like to start, or join, contact SIG Coordinator Nick Chase by email (see the email addresses on page 3), or see him at the next DVPC monthly meeting. Nick will help you with all of the details about how to set up your new SIG and let the DVPC membership know about it. So, decide on what SIG you would like to start, and contact Nick.

Give a *DVPC* Membership Gift Certificate!

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

DVPC Board of Directors Election by Ron Ogg, DVPC

The DVPC Board of Directors election will kick off our April 7 meeting. You still have time to help out DVPC by seriously considering a run for office. You'll find fun, excitement, entertainment, the opportunity to do good works, the ability to shape DVPC over the next year, a bit of local fame, new friends, and good food (well, at least pizza at the monthly Board meetings). No fortune – sorry about that! The amount of time required is not excessive, and the duties are not oppressive. Join us! It's always great for someone new join the board. Your ideas will be appreciated and listened to, and you can make a real contribution to making DVPC an even better user group. Take a look at the list of Directors and Officers positions on page 3, and the titles. Surely, there's some position that you could fill. You won't hurt the feelings of any of the existing Board members who will be running again – competition is good! Or run "at large" – you don't have to pick a specific position. Talk to any of the current Board members before the April DVPC meeting, and toss your hat into the ring!

OK, which of the current Board of Directors members are running for office? So far (as of publication date), they are:

Alan Mildwurm, President	Dick Curry, Director At Large	Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor and Webmaster
Nick Chase, SIG Coordinator	Peggy Johnson, Membership Secretary	
Tom Krauss, Secretary	Charlie Crothers, Director At Large	Craig Peterson, Librarian
Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer	Stan Umlauf, Director At Large	

You can join this illustrious crew! All you have to do is decide you're going to run – do it at the April meeting.

Pixifun Software Review by Dale Farris, Golden Triangle PC Club

Pixifun products are just the coolest things going!

These 5 neat digital creations kits come from Pexagon Technology, Inc., and support fun stuff you can do with your digital photos. Truly, Pexagon Technology, Inc. makes cool and fun products to use with your digital pictures. Pixifun products allow creativity with any type of digital image. Tapping in to the popularity of photo scrap-booking, Pixifun kits allow you to create unique photo novelty items, including photo magnets and photo key rings to be created from digital photos at home using any inkjet printer.

The easy-to-use Aniprint software that comes with each product kit guides you through simple steps to import photos, add backgrounds, clip art, and text, and print on the included photo sticker paper. Once the photo stickers are printed they are placed in the special various holders, so your favorite photos can now be displayed wherever you go.

These Pixifun products should be showing up in just about all retailers selling digital products, especially those selling digital cameras and printers.

The Pixifun Product Line – 5 Kits To Choose From

There are 5 super Pixifun product kits from which you can choose. These include:

Photo Key Ring Kit, \$12.99 list

The Photo Key Ring Kit includes the Aniprint software CD ROM, 6 acrylic snap-together key rings, 18 pre-sized, pre-cut photo sticker inlays, and alignment guide with test sheets.

Photo Magnet Kit, \$12.99 list

The Photo Magnet Kit includes the Aniprint software CD ROM, 5 acrylic magnets, 24 pre-sized, pre-cut photo inlays, and alignment guide with test sheets.

Photo Sticker Album, \$12.99 list

The Photo Sticker Album Kit includes Aniprint software CD ROM, 60 photo stickers, 1 photo sticker album, and alignment guide with test sheets.

Photo ID Badge Maker, \$12.99 list

The Photo ID Badge Maker Kit includes Aniprint software CD ROM, 10 pin-on badges, 18 photo sticker album, and alignment guide with test sheets.

Photo CD/DVD Label Kit, \$14.99 list

The Photo CD/DVD Label Kit includes Aniprint software CD ROM, easy to use slim line label applicator, 20 CD labels, and alignment guide with test sheets.

Ease of Operation

All these neat Pixifun digital creations kits provide an easy, affordable, and fun way to display and share your digital photos. All it takes is 3 easy steps.

Step 1 - Import your photos

(Continued on page 9)

Pixifun Software Review...

(Continued from page 8)

Step 2 - Print your photos

Step 3 - Complete your project

To accomplish step 1, you can import your files from your digital camera, camera phone, picture CD, or scanner. These sources may use a USB connection, a media card and card reader, a web messaging service, or a file downloaded from the Internet. Any picture you can put on your computer will work with any of these Pixifun project kits.

Step 2 involves printing your photo on the special pre-cut, pre-sized paper that is included in your kit. Certain kits have sticker paper, while others have photo paper. The type of included paper depends on the type of project kit you want to use.

Step 3 is the completion of your photo project. To make a photo magnet, all you have to do is insert the photo inlay and snap in the cover. Your project is now ready for display or to give to family and friends.

Refill Supplies

All the Pixifun product kits have refill kits available for each product, so your creativity never has to end. Each refill kit is color coded to match their complimentary Pixifun kit. Wherever you can buy any Pixifun kit, you will likely also find readily available refill kits. Refill kits list for \$9.99 each.

Uses of the Kits

These neat Pixifun kits have many uses, including advertising a business, labeling picture CDs, creating unique party invitations, or to just show off vacation photos. You can use the key ring kit for identifying different sets of keys, for party favors, or for "If Found" tags on backpacks. The photo stickers kit can be used to create return address labels, ID tags on books, DVDs, or CDs, or to mark dates on calendars with personal photos. The mini photo sticker album can be used as a mini-scrapbook, a brag book for photos of new babies, or to display your business services. The photo magnets kit can be used to create mini birth announcements, family post-its for cell phone numbers, doctor's office numbers, babysitter numbers, or business advertising. The ID badge kit can be used for family reunions, tradeshow, birthday parties, as well as the obvious creation of official personal ID badges for businesses. The CD/DVD label kit can be used to label picture CDs, homemade movies, or homemade music CDs.

Availability

At the time of this writing, these marvelous Pixifun kits can be found at Staples, CompUSA, Fry's Electronics, Reed's Camera, and ? amazon.com, with more and more retailers lining up to stock these neat kits that are very affordable, easy to use, and sure to sell well.

Importance of Pixifun Kits

Digital cameras are now everywhere, with many now priced below \$50. In 2004, nearly 70 million digital cameras shipped worldwide and nearly 150 million digital camera phones were sold. All this digital technology is expected to result in over 8 billion digital photo prints in 2005. The need for a creative use of digital pictures is here, and Pixifun provides an answer. Pixifun completes the digital experience by providing projects that create professional keepsake items using your digital photos.

Targeted Customers

Pixifun kits will appeal to anyone with a digital camera, and especially those with small to medium sized businesses. Also, any photography business, especially those supporting digital equipment, will want to give serious attention to this neat product line that represents quite an opportunity for generating additional profits.

Install and Setup

Each digital creation kit contains the company's Aniprint software that comes with the kit, and should present no problems when installing. You will want to be sure and follow the step-by-step instructions that come with each kit, and I also suggest trying to use these kits with as good an inkjet printer as you can afford. Once you start working with these neat kits, I suspect you will find yourself wanting all the kits and wanting to use them all the time for all sorts of projects.

About Pexagon Technology, Inc.

Established in September of 2002 as a spin-off of SCM Microsystems, Inc., Pexagon is focused on the sales and marketing of Microdrives, Digital Media, and Digital Media Readers and accessories to the Photo dealer and Computer reseller channels. Pexagon continues to provide High-Performance digital media under the Microtech brand and distributes other quality brand name products, such as Hitachi, Dazzle, and SCM.

Contact Information

Kerri Hoyt, Marketing Support Specialist, khoyt@pexagontech.com

Pexagon Technology, Inc.

20 Carter Drive, Guilford, Connecticut 06437

Phone: 203-453-7300, Fax: 203-453-7301

www.pixifun.com, www.pexagontech.com

DVPC Board Meeting Minutes by Tom Krauss, DVPC

The major business discussed this evening was the design of our brochure and how to deal with the possibility of another change in our location for the general meeting. It seems we were just getting comfortable in room H109 in the Humanities Building H, when DVC preempted that room and moved us to room MA101 in the Mathematics building. No further change is planned, but we want to be prepared. In other words, we don't want to print 500 brochures with directions to the current room only to have to throw them out if and when we get moved again.

And so we spent the first half hour discussing what maps and what directions to use in the brochure. This of course led to total redesigning of the brochure, cutting it down from four panels on legal size paper to three panels on standard paper, moving sections back and forth, resizing and reformatting.

It is a wonderful thing to watch the collective creativity of the Board Members as they gear up to resolve a problem like this. Such enthusiasm! Such originality! Such self-confidence! Such lapses of common sense! In the end we came up with a design solution that I believe pleased everyone. We left it to Ron to distill our suggestions into a workable synthesis. I mean, we may not always have the best ideas, but we do know that the best solution is let Ron do his thing. After all, he single-handedly won for us first place for our web site and honorable mention for our newsletter in the APCUG's 2005 contest.

The low point of the meeting was a discussion of anti-virus software with the emphasis on Norton Antivirus. I have been using it for two years and just upgrading to the 2005 edition last month. So of course everyone started talking about how Norton was no longer the leader in the field, how it hosed up their computer, etc. I was already a little disillusioned with the new product, and this is just what I did not want to hear. Oh well. If I can get my PC working again (I think it was the mother board that died last weekend), I may delete Norton. But then Ron told of not being able to delete it from a machine of his. Sometimes I just don't like computers...

Ron, Charlie and Alan, the real old-timers of DVPC, tried unsuccessfully to recall when the Club was founded. It is amazing to think of the origins of a computer club as being lost in time, but apparently that is the case. The Founders are not even legends: they are lost.

It was pointed out that elections for the Board of Directors will be held at the April meeting. Room can be found on the Board for any member with an interest and who meets the two requirements: 1) they must be able to on occasion expound on at least one computer related topic until their listeners are bored to tears, and 2) they must like pizza.

Intel "Build-Your-Own" Computer Seminar by Intel Corporation

Q: What is the Intel® Build-Your-Own Computer Seminar?

A: It's a two-part presentation specially developed by Intel for computer user groups. Everything you need to hold a seminar (except the presenter) is included so you can educate your members and help those who would like to build their state-of-the-art personal computer.

Part I (the BYO Seminar) has been designed to be presented by a user group officer or member in a 45 minute time period at a general meeting or Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting, and consists of a PowerPoint slide show with an accompanying script as well as various audience handouts and materials, including a Thank-You gift. The content addresses "Why Build Your Own Computer?", "Where to Buy Parts?", and the various considerations involved with technologies and components. At the end of the BYO Seminar, audience members will be introduced to the state-of-the-art, high-performance, high-value configuration specially designed for the workshop. Attendees will be given the opportunity to purchase all of the parts necessary to participate in the BYO workshop, which will be held at a later time designated by your group.

Part II (the BYO Workshop) will provide participants the opportunity to build their own computer from the parts they've ordered under the direction of a workshop leader - preferably but not necessarily the same person who presented the BYO Seminar. There is also a script and a PowerPoint slide show that simplifies the task for both workshop leader and participants alike by taking them through the process of building a computer step by step with tested, on-screen, projected instructions and pictures of the exact parts and system they're building.

Q: How long is the BYO Seminar (Part I)?

A: It is designed to take 45 minutes, although the presenter can take more or less time to present the material.

Q: How long is the BYO Workshop (Part II)?

A: The workshop should take between two and three hours (110 to 180 minutes), depending on the experience level of the class.

Q: How much will it cost user group members to purchase the parts necessary to build their own computer at the BYO Work-

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Support DVPC – Get a friend to join!

Intel "Build-Your-Own" Computer Seminar...

(Continued from page 10)

shop?

A: \$999 plus taxes where applicable. Shipping and handling is free. This is a specially negotiated, discounted price for all of the parts, including Windows XP Home Edition. This is a specially negotiated, discounted price available exclusively for user group members who participate in the BYO Workshop.

Q: Who is providing the system parts? Will they help us publicize the meetings?

A: PC Club has been selected to fulfill all orders for systems to be built under this program. Approximately six weeks before you are scheduled for Part I: the BYO Seminar, PC Club will contact you with ordering details and any co-promotional opportunities they may offer. One of the benefits of holding this seminar, for many groups at least, will be the opportunity to increase membership by generating interest in the community – so be sure to arrange publicity well in advance.

Q: What are the system specifications, i.e. what do participants get for the \$999?

A: Those who order the system will receive the following parts, which, if purchased separately from local retailers or integrators, could cost twice as much as the participant price. Please note that the system includes the very latest high-performance technologies, including an Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor w/Hyper-Threading Technology, DDR2 RAM, Serial ATA (SATA), RAID, PCI Express, Intel® High-Definition (HD) 7.1 audio, 10/100/Gb Ethernet, Hi-Speed USB 2.0, and IEEE-1394. Don't make the mistake of trying to compare this system based only on GHz and GB to systems without HT Technology, RAID, IEEE-1394 support and with support only for older technologies such as DDR RAM or SDRAM, IDE, PCI, 10/100 Ethernet, and USB 1.1.

System Specifications

- ◆ Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 540 with Hyper-Threading (HT) Technology (3.2GHz, 90nm technology, 800MHz FSB, 1MB L2 cache)
- ◆ FoxConn 915M03-G-8EKRS2 motherboard with Intel 915G Express chip set providing support for:
 - ⇒ Intel GMA 900 128MB DirectX 9.0c compatible graphics onboard
 - ⇒ Intel High Definition (HD) 7.1 Audio onboard
 - ⇒ Intel 10/100/Gb Ethernet LAN onboard
 - ⇒ 533/800 Mhz Front Side Bus (FSB) support
 - ⇒ DDR2 RAM support (4 DIMM sockets)
 - ⇒ 1 PCI Express (PCIe) x16 slot for future graphics expansion
 - ⇒ 2 PCIe x1 slots for future expansion
 - ⇒ 1 PCI (v2.3) slot for future expansion
 - ⇒ Intel ICH6R chip set
- ◆ Hardware support for RAID 0, RAID 1, and RAID 0+1
- ◆ Serial ATA (SATA) support for up to 4 drives
 - ⇒ LGA 775 CPU socket w/HT support
 - ⇒ Hi-Speed USB 2.0 ports (4 rear / 4 front headers onboard)
 - ⇒ IEEE-1394 (Firewire™) ports (1 rear / 1 front header onboard)
 - ⇒ Floppy channel
 - ⇒ IDE channel
- ◆ 512MB/533 DDR2 Random Access Memory (RAM)
- ◆ Two 80GB Western Digital SATA drives (in a striped array (RAID) yielding one 160GB C: drive)
- ◆ Lite-On 16X DVD-ROM drive
- ◆ Lite-On Dual Layer DVD+/-RW drive (DVD burner) - 16X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD-RW
- ◆ Mitsumi floppy disk drive (combined w/multi-card reader optional)
- ◆ Athena CA-413BA Black/silver ATX/micro-ATX case (\$89), including:

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We fix the problems your manufacturer won't.

Computer Problems? We Can Help.

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.



FREE

128M upgrade!

With any system purchase
of \$299 or more

Limit one per household.

Expires: 4/30/05

1/2 OFF

1st hour of service

Limit one per household.

Expires: 4/30/05

10% Off

Any Product (in Store) or
Service

Please show your DVPCUG
Membership Card
at the time of purchase

Computer
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1936 Linda Drive.
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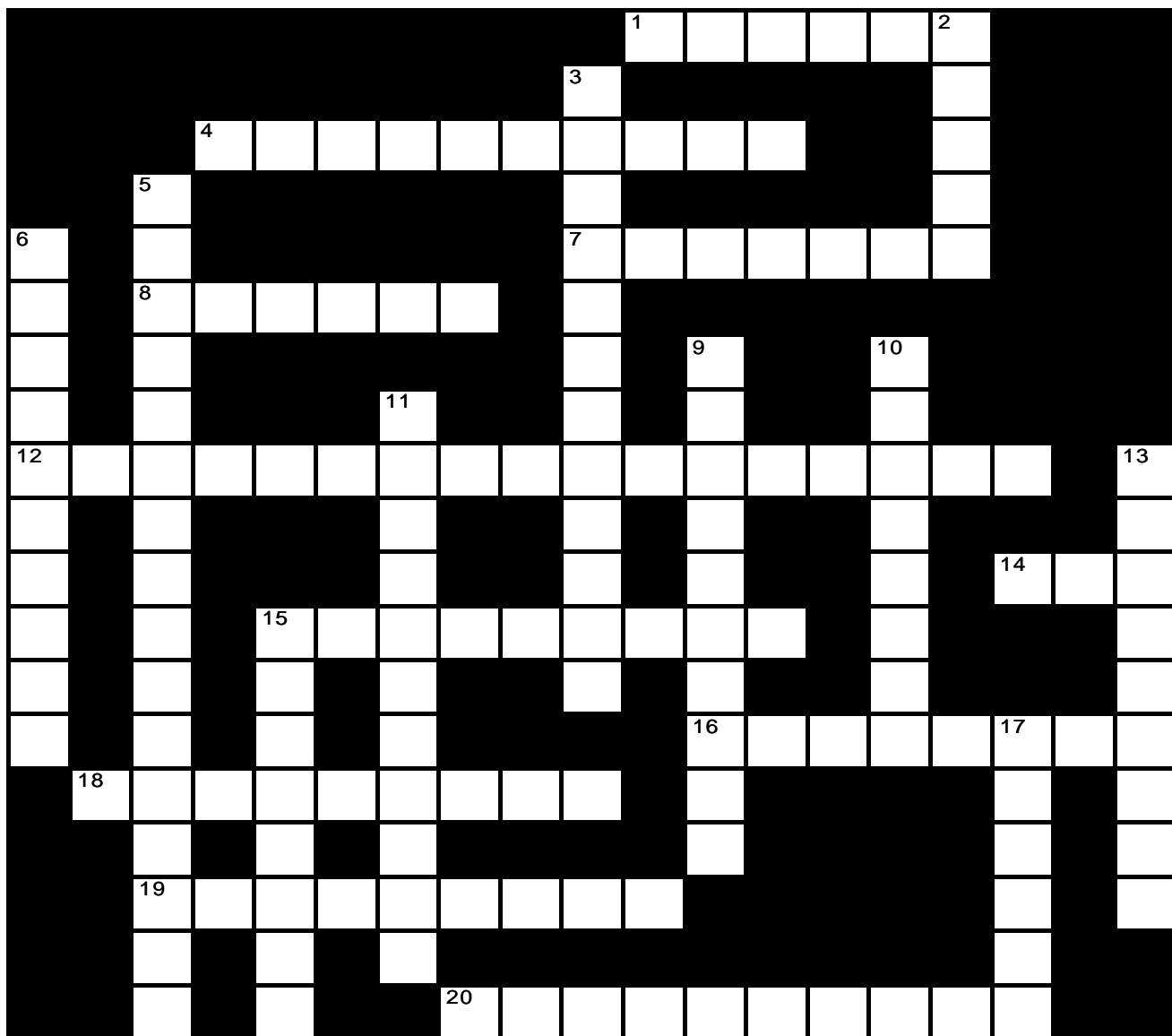
M-F 10:00am—07:00pm

SAT 10:00am—06:00pm

SUN 12:00pm—05:00pm

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
"April is a Taxing Time of Year"



April is supposed to bring showers, but that isn't the most taxing part of our April experiences. April also brings the Taxman (no "supposed"), with his forms and rules and wonderful, not-so-easy-to-understand complexities. We have to gather our receipts and other paperwork, fill out the forms, and pay our due or, if we're lucky, expect a return by sending in our returns! This month we're asking you to recall some of the words associated with April 15th. If you need help, go to www.dvpc.org/solution.html.

Across

- 1. What you make
- 4. You can take these off
- 7. Take deductions
- 8. This is the good stuff
- 12. Pay them your California taxes (3 words)
- 14. Need this to file electronically
- 15. Forms and ...
- 16. Charge for the use of borrowed money
- 18. Someone you can claim
- 19. What you do when you need more time
- 20. These reduce your income

Down

- 2. Fast way to file a return
- 3. You married or single? (2 words)
- 5. Most peoples largest deduction (2 words)
- 6. They collect tax, too
- 9. Take these off income (2 words)
- 10. When your tax return is due
- 11. Out of each paycheck
- 13. What you pay when you pay too little
- 15. You normally can't deduct this (2 words)
- 17. Not subject to tax withholding

Intel "Build-Your-Own" Computer Seminar...

(Continued from page 11)

- ⇒ 500W 24-pin power supply
- ⇒ 4 5.25" bays (exposed)
- ⇒ 2 3.5" bays (exposed)
- ⇒ 4 3.5" bays (hidden)
- ⇒ 2 Front-panel USB ports
- ⇒ Front-panel headphone / microphone mini-jacks
- ◆ Logitech Cordless Optical Desktop Combo Keyboard and Mouse
- ◆ Windows XP Home Edition w/CD (OEM)

Q: What does all that mean to users in plain English?

A: What do you gain from this alphabet soup of new technologies that is worth the extra cost over a more moderate system? Plenty, with a faster system than is generally available in retail channels being at the top of the list. It's ahead of the technology curve too, which means the system will have a longer useful life than almost any comparable retail system you'll find out there. The 12+ members of the Cincinnati PC User Group who purchased a similar system as part of the pilot program in October are universally delighted, according to Dave Grosheim, President of Cincinnati PCUG. This system provides you with the power and performance to:

- ◆ Dramatically reduce the amount of time you spend waiting for your computer or looking at the Windows hourglass
- ◆ Transfer pictures from your digital camera or camcorder to your computer quickly and easily through the Hi-speed USB port or optional multi-card reader
- ◆ Minimize the time spent copying or moving files
- ◆ Handle even the most demanding e-mail and online applications with ease
- ◆ Plug a headset with a microphone into the front for use with optional voice recognition software
- ◆ Cordless, optical keyboard and mouse for maximum convenience
- ◆ Install new application programs from CD in a fraction of the time it took you previously
- ◆ Run all kinds of personal productivity applications with outstanding performance
- ◆ Run high-intensity graphical and video applications, including the latest games (even grandchildren will be impressed)
- ◆ Enjoy outstanding audio with stereo speakers, a 5.1 speaker system, or a 7.1 speaker setup. You can even plug things into the wrong port and it will auto-sense your mistake and adjust the inputs for you.
- ◆ Edit your home movies and capture video from your camcorder to your computer
- ◆ Burn DVDs with your own video or photos, including the ability to create high-capacity, dual-layer (8.5GB) DVDs with 4 hours of DVD-quality video or 16 hours of VHS-quality video
- ◆ Do more than one thing at a time without causing your computer stall or jerk through smooth multi-tasking (hyper-threading) support – for example, download files while also burning a CD
- ◆ Connect up to 6 hi-speed USB devices without needing a USB hub
- ◆ Connect 1 or 2 Hi-speed USB devices, such as a digital music player, camera, camcorder, or game adapter into the front of the computer for extra convenience
- ◆ Copy unprotected DVDs and music CDs without swapping media
- ◆ Achieve superior performance when running multi-threaded applications optimized for HT Technology, including popular consumer and professional applications from Adobe® and other leading software companies
- ◆ Connect directly to even the fastest (GB) Ethernet networks, or to cable or DSL modems
- ◆ Enjoy all of the many benefits of Windows XP,
- ◆ and much more, depending on the application software you run.

Q: Wow! That's an amazing system. Can I or any user group members order a system in advance of the seminar for my own use in preparing to present the seminar and hold the workshop?

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Intel "Build-Your-Own" Computer Seminar...

(Continued from page 14)

A: Yes. One or two systems per user group may be ordered prior to the date of your seminar for each user group. The parts for this system or these systems will be mailed directly to the presenter. The parts for those who order after you hold Part I: The Intel® Build-Your-Own Seminar in order to participate in Part II: The Intel® Build-Your Own Workshop will be shipped all-at-once to the address you will designate to PC Club, to arrive on the date you designate. PC Club will be sending you an email with additional details.

Q: How can I or user group members order a system?

A: Call (800)340-1948 (M-F, 8am-6pm) or go online at www.pcclub.com/promo/byo. Provide the following information:

- ◆ Your name
- ◆ The name of your User Group
- ◆ The date of your workshop
- ◆ The billing address
- ◆ The shipping address
- ◆ Your phone #
- ◆ Your preferred e-mail address
- ◆ The credit card #
- ◆ The expiration date
- ◆ The credit card verification # (the CCV is usually the last 3 digits on the signature stripe on the back of the card)
- ◆ Only two systems per group when ordered in advance by the presenter or user group officer responsible for scheduling the monthly meetings; these systems may be sent directly to an individual – all other systems will be delivered to the group in time for the workshop.

Q: Is Windows included in the system?

A: Yes, Windows XP Home is included in the system purchase price. Windows XP Professional may be purchased as an upgrade.

Q: Can I or user group members order more than one system?

A: Yes, however, BYO Workshop participants will only be able to build one system at the workshop. They can either take the unassembled parts for the second system home following the workshop, or have someone else accompany them to the workshop in order to build the second system without slowing the pace for the rest of the workshop participants.

Q: Are the specifications subject to change?

A: Only in your favor. Like all technology-based products, today's state-of-the-art system won't stay at the high-end of the technology curve for more than a few months; therefore, we reserve the right to make improvements to the specifications list at any time in order to ensure that each group is building a system that is fresh and highly competitive. We are working hard to ensure that your members who research the available alternatives are happy with their choice to participate in the BYO Workshop. In most cases the specifications list above will be exactly what your members will receive.

Q: Can group members customize the system they purchase?

A: To a large degree, yes. Workshop participants will have the opportunity to upgrade certain components at the time they order their parts. In order to keep the workshop instructions and pictures consistent with the actual systems built, certain components (motherboard, system case, power supply, and drive technologies - SATA RAID) are required to be the same for all systems built at the workshop. Other components (processor speed, drive size, operating system, display adapter, and optional accessories) can be upgraded without affecting the participant's ability to build their system in harmony with the rest of the group during the workshop.

Q: Is there a handout that explains the system and how to order that we can give to attendees at the Seminar?

A: Yes. PC Club will customize a handout with your group's name, and should be in contact with you soon with this information. If you don't hear from them soon, please feel free to contact them at usergroups@pcclub.com or call (800)340-1948 (M-F, 8am-6pm).

Q: Is a monitor required for the workshop? Is it included?

A: Workshop participants should be invited to bring their own monitor to the workshop, or otherwise make arrangements to have a monitor available to them, for the last few steps in the build process. Alternatively, the group can make sure a few monitors are available for participants to share, taking turns to accomplish the final steps. Optionally, the group may wish to have experienced members on hand to assist participants who may have questions or concerns during the build process.

Q: The system specifications state that RAID and two Serial ATA drives are included. What is RAID, and are instructions

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Intel “Build-Your-Own” Computer Seminar...

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included on how to take advantage of RAID?

A: RAID stands for “Redundant Array of Inexpensive Disks” and is an elegant chip set technology that brings to personal computers the benefits of high-priced, high-end technology previously found only in servers or high-performance desktops. Workshop participants will be provided simple, clear instructions on how to create, in only a few minutes, their own striped SATA RAID volume — one high-performance C: drive comprised of two separate disk drives. When one of the two drives is latent, the other is often working, so a striped RAID volume delivers enhanced disk utilization for improved performance over the typical system with only a single hard disk. Once each system is completed and working, participants may then take their pre-paid computer home with them where they can easily install Windows using the instructions provided with Windows. An addendum is also provided as part of the Workshop materials on how to load the RAID drivers as part of the Windows installation.

Curmudgeon’s Corner *by Walt Parsons, DVPC’s Official Curmudgeon – Accept No Substitute!*

SPYWARE

This month I am nominating TV Channel 4 (KRON) as the SPYWARE villain of the month.

Background: Up until the 1st of the year, you could subscribe to a Personal weather report through TV Channel 2 (KTVU) that gave the weather forecast for your particular sub-climate. Every day I’d get a message giving a link to check on for the latest weather update. It was reasonably accurate. As of the 1st, KTVU stopped offering the service and I got a message from KRON saying that I could subscribe through them. It turned out to be the same provider that KTVU had been using.

So far so good.

Right after I subscribed to the weather reports through KRON I noticed that I was regularly getting reports of two “data miner” cookies being found on my machine. They were Z1.adserver.txt (Fastclick) & Zedo.txt.

In order to detect the source I ran Adaware & Spybot every morning when I turned on the computer and removed the SPYWARE. Then I kept a log of which web sites I accessed and re-ran Adaware and Spybot. By process of elimination I positively pinpointed the KRON weather report as the source.

Next I contacted KRON and, as might be expected, they denied that they were the source. “There is no SPYWARE associated with our service. Our systems are closed to outside interaction and continuously scanned for viruses. You are receiving this from some other service or website you have recently visited.” Obviously the writer didn’t understand the difference between a virus and SPYWARE and ignored the fact that I had positively pinpointed them as the source.

So I wrote another e-mail pointing out the difference between viruses and SPYWARE and the what I had done to pinpoint them as the source. This time the KRON replier admitted that there were cookies but from the weather service OR their advertisers and that it was out of their control. *BS*. Nobody forces KRON to take an advertiser. Or they could have told the advertiser that SPYWARE cookies were not acceptable.

If you want to do your part of eliminating SPYWARE I’d recommend that you also get on KRON’s case and let them know that SPYWARE from their site is NOT acceptable.

HALL OF SHAME

This month I’m nominating several major companies for the “HALL OF SHAME!” Their crime is ignoring customer’s e-mail requests for support. Here are the stories — you be the judge.

Kenwood USA

Kenwood USA is a consumer electronics program selling, among other things, car radios.

I needed to download the manual for my Kenwood car radio. Since the web page for Kenwood USA showed a link for support I clicked on it. The resulting dialog box asked me to provide some product information. I then submitted the message and shortly thereafter I received an automated response saying that somebody would be in contact with me in 3-4 days. (Sure they will!!) Two weeks later having heard nothing further I resent the message and got the same automated response and nothing else. My standard procedure in cases like this is to find the name and address of the company’s CEO and snail mailed a message describing the lack of response from their support group and described my problem. In this case this procedure paid off because I was contacted by phone by one of the CEO’s gophers and the lady made sure that I got a PDF copy of the car radio manual.

Memorex

Memorex is also a consumer electronics company. A month ago I purchased one of their digital recorders and was real pleased with the item. That is I was pleased until it stopped working. So I went to the Memorex web page and there was information about the warranty but no information about where to send the recorder for either repair or exchange. So I sent the e-mail to the support e-mail address. No response at all. Repeat a week later and still no response, not even an automated response. Back to the web page

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Curmudgeon's Corner...

(Continued from page 16)

where I did find a support phone number to call. (At my cost by the way.) The person I talked to after the 5-10 minute wait took my information and claimed that an e-mail had been sent to me. NOT. So he gave me the information to send in a fax along and gave me a return number. He said that after they received the fax they would send me information on how to send in my recorder. The fax was sent with all the required information and a copy of the receipt. NO RESPONSE. Two weeks later I again sent the fax and to date no response.

Provtek (Screenprint32)

This one is even worse than the rest. Provtek is apparently a UK company. There are two e-mail addresses given for inquiries and neither one has drawn even an automated response. I tried to find a company address or other information about the company and drew a blank. Incidentally, since I use QURB which is a white list spam filter, I always put the domain name of a company I'm trying to contact on the approved list so any response from any of these companies would have ended up in my Inbox. In each case above I went to the QURB quarantine folder and did a search on each and every message in the guarantee folder and there were no messages from any of the above companies.

Guilty or Not Guilty?

What has happened now days that causes companies to have such a "customer be damned" attitude? It seems that all they are interested is taking your money and then ignoring you. In the case of Memorex, what good is their guarantee?

OK – what is *your* vote? Guilty or not guilty?

Minor gripe

The challenge/response email outfits require you to identify yourself before the recipient can see the message you've sent. I have no problem with challenge/response but in the case of "ChoiceMail" they didn't give a clue as to the e-mail address they were challenging. In this particular case I was sending an e-mail to everybody in our Windows SIG so I haven't the slightest idea who it was that didn't receive the message. At this writing I have no idea who it was that was using the ChoiceMail challenge/response system. Now I feel better.

As always these are just my humble opinions and not necessarily those of DVPC.

Traveling With an iPAQ by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

This past month I had some family business that took me to Europe. I was able to take Ruth and schedule it so that we spent Valentine's Day and her birthday in Paris. Careful planning like this is a sure way to get your spouse to overlook some of the new things that mysteriously arrive.

Since this was to be a short trip and we didn't want to carry a lot of stuff, I decided to forgo bringing the laptop and opted for just bringing my iPAQ 5555. Since the iPAQ has internet capability both Wi-Fi and through a compact flash Ethernet card I felt I was covered for connectivity purposes. (As it turned out, our hotel in Paris and London had internet over the TV and an Ethernet port in the room – even better using my "sniffer" I was able to find free Wi-Fi access points right from our room- thank you someone!).

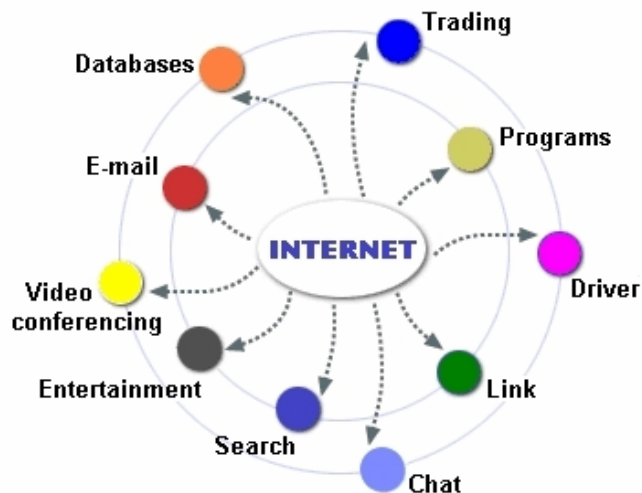
I have been using Microsoft Reader for a long time to bring my books with me and decided it would useful to try and bring some guidebooks, etc on my iPAQ to avoid carrying tons of written materials. Having been to London and Paris several times, I knew that I wanted to use public transportation to get around. Having a map of the city and the metro systems would be of great use. As it turns out, the iPAQ was an incredible device and perfectly suited my needs.

I found a program called iVia (<http://iviaguides.mainstreet-tech.com/products/viewer.htm>) which specializes in guidebooks for the iPAQ.



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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 March 16, 2005 as we explore the "wild, wild world of the web".

Please join us at Computer Renaissance, 1936 Linda Drive, Pleasant Hill Wednesday, April 20th at 6 p. m. For more information about the Internet SIG, email Craig Peterson at compmail@pacbell.net or call him at 671-7025.

Cyber Criminals by John Brewer, Oklahoma City Computer Club

Why do some individuals have the need to engage in cyber crime? I refer specifically to those people who write code that damages networks and the computers connected to those networks. According to a recent article in Internet News: "Tracking virus writers – and more importantly, gathering evidence against them – is a thorny problem for law enforcement agencies worldwide. While the number of arrests made and sentences handed down make 2004 the best year yet for catching cyber criminals, it won't have a noticeable effect on eliminating virus writers, according to the Finnish security firm F-Secure."

F-Secure states there were three "primary security-related trends in 2004: a massive increase in phishing attacks; the introduction of open-source botnets and for-profit virus writing."

Phishing is the term used for fraudulent emails that seek to obtain information from the recipient. This information is used for nefarious purposes including identity theft. An article on MSNBC.com states that consumers are susceptible to phishing. The anti-spam firm MailFrontier Inc. showed 1,000 consumers examples of so-called "phishing" e-mail as well as legitimate e-mail from companies such as eBay and PayPal. About 28 percent of the time, the consumers incorrectly identified the phishing messages as legitimate. Now that is a frightening statistic, as 28% is a high rate.

A botnet is generally a trojan that has penetrated security safeguards and is resident on a computer. When that computer connects to the Internet, the botnet will connect to an IRC channel. Then other infected computers connect to the channel and a botnet is formed. The person who created the botnet, often called a "botmaster" or "botherder," can then control the computers that are

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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

Traveling With an IPAQ...

(Continued from page 17)

Rick Steves is a well known author and with Mona Winks we were well set for London and Paris. With our guide books on hand, we now needed a mapping program!

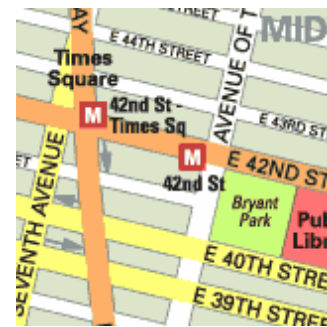
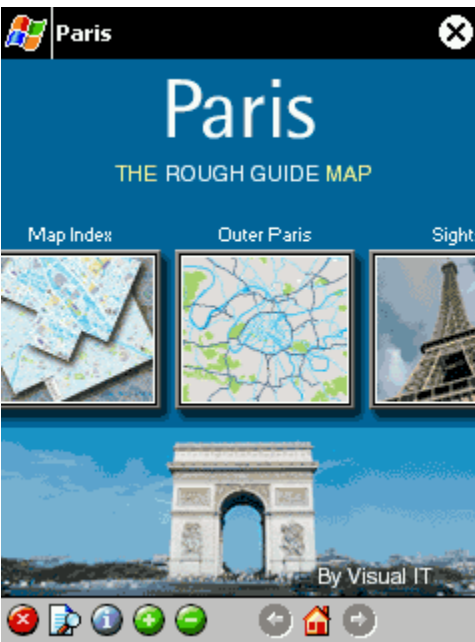


With Tubes Pro (<http://www.visualit.co.uk/>) we were able to utilize interactive maps of the city which literally told us how to get from point A to point B. Enter your location, enter your destination and the program tells you exactly which metro lines to take. The Tubes program is fully animated!

Street maps are also included showing where the tube stations are located. Enter the name of a museum, monument, etc and the program will show you where it is AND how to get there from your present location. What could be easier!

Traveling could not be easier or more fun! Bottom line: traveling without a laptop is very doable. The IPAQ along with these various traveling programs made it a joy to get around. In fact, we were constantly asked for directions! In a small package we had all the maps and guides you would ever need. I even downloaded a French phrase program which "spoke" in case we got stuck- as it turned out, we didn't need it.

I'm ready to go back! Bon Voyage!



Special Raffle Promotion

Bring a guest to a *DVPC* meeting, you get 10 Raffle tickets!

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

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

Cyber Criminals...

(Continued from page 18)

connected to the botnet. For example, the botnet could be used to launch a denial of service attack on an innocent Website or computer.

The major viruses in 2004 consisted of Bagle, MyDoom, Netsky, Sasser, Korgo and Sober. Three of these were designed for specific crimes according to F-Secure.

The intent of MyDoom and Bagle and its many variants was to create spam proxies. These viruses caused damages in the millions of dollars and created denial-of-service attacks on Microsoft.com and SCO.com.

According to F-Secure, at one point MyDoom.A was responsible for 10 percent of all e-mail traffic. Both viruses used the Mitglieder proxy trojan. Officials at F-Secure suspect the two viruses may have been written by one group of writers. Bagle.A downloaded the Trojan from a Web site, and it was installed through a backdoor in MyDoom.A-infected machines.

The Korgo virus was designed to grab credit card and banking information, according to F-Secure. Similar to the Sasser worm, the virus targeted Windows 2000 and XP machines, scanning random IP addresses for PCs with a vulnerable, unpatched Local Security Authority Subsystem Service (LSASS).

Internet News reports it is difficult to trace and apprehend the cyber criminals. "If there's an increase [in arrests and indictments], it's very, very slight," said Paul Bresson, a spokesperson for the FBI, about his agency's efforts to combat virus writers. "We tend to devote our resources depending on the volume and scope of what's out there, and if there's a lot out there, we devote more resources." The international nature of the Internet means many criminals can leave a long, convoluted trail that crosses national boundaries with ease, even if law enforcement agencies cannot. Despite actions by the Federal Trade Commission to promote cross-border communications and aid, there are still blind spots where virus writers can flourish.

Mikko Hypponen of F-Secure says that whenever he speaks with law enforcement contacts about tracking spammers or virus writers and it leads to places like Romania or Belarussia or Lithuania, "you hear this sigh from the investigators, because they know it became that much harder to gain local cooperation."

"The bad guys know how to re-route their spam and their viruses and their hacking through six, seven, eight different countries and go through places like China and South Korea and some obscure island in the South Pacific just to make it hard for the authorities to track them," Hypponen says.

As an example, he points to a recent case where a Russian factory was hit with a virus by a hacker group operating out of Kuwait. The virus, after gaining access to the machines, started downloading more code from a Web site registered in a small island off the coast of Africa. The actual Web server, however, wasn't there; it was registered through Sweden to Jordan. From Jordan, the infected machines in Russia downloaded code that connected them with an IRC chat system operated in chat.cnn.com — CNN's chat server in the U.S.

Hypponen said it was a relatively easy matter for his company to call CNN and the ISPs in charge of the Web server to blunt the effects of the outbreak, but it's something police would have had a tougher time accomplishing.

"If the Russian factory would have called the cops," he said, "how likely would it have been for the Russian police to first of all successfully track the virus around the globe and how likely is it that they would have been able to prosecute the Kuwaiti offenders?"

Sarah Gordon, a security expert at Symantec, has engaged in extensive investigation of the personalities of cyber criminals. "All those years of research and contact have revealed that many myths about virus writers are just that. The stereotype that virus writers are all young teenage boys with no social life, hiding in their basement is not accurate," she said. In contrast, she said, most virus creators are typical for their age, are on good terms with friends and family and are often contributors to their local community.

"Whatever the reason for writing a virus, all these groups share a common blind spot, says Ms. Gordon, which is that they have no conception that what they are doing can affect the wider world. "They do not connect the impact of what they do on the computer with the impact on another person," she says.

"But, once they realize that it can have an impact on other people, they age out of it and stop."

Her research has shown Ms. Gordon that there is a real difference between virus writers and hackers. While virus writers are usually socially adept, many hackers are not. "When you see a complex virus," she says, "it's come out of the hacking community." In her experience many malicious hackers have a borderline criminal view of the world and do not share mainstream ethical norms. Their judgment processes might be different," she says, "as well as their perception of risk and reward."

In my humble opinion, I find it difficult to excuse this sort of behavior, regardless of the reason.

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. Comments and questions are welcome and can be emailed to

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Current Computer Hardware Transitions by Timothy Everingham, TUGNET,

When we have been changing computer hardware standards frequently, it has been one thing at a time. At other times those in authority say that if we are going to change one thing lets get some other changes done too. We are going through much more of the latter right now.

The thing that is more in the forefront of change currently is the move from PCI and AGP motherboard card slots to PCI Express (PCIe). PCI Express also changes the way data is transferred (serial rather than parallel) and has more intelligent data traffic management. This puts you in the position of having to decide whether to migrate to the AGP and PCI cards when upgrading to a new processor and motherboard or buying a new computer, something that is more of a problem if you recently paid a lot of money for a high end AGP graphics card or have a specialized PCI card where there is no equivalent PCIe card available. However, there are motherboards currently available that have both old and new type slots.

On the other hand you could go to the other extreme by buying a computer with the new NVIDIA SLI system. That is a motherboard with two PCIe graphics slots where you can run two NVIDIA graphics cards in parallel to get a 3D graphics performance boost similar to what was done to the old 3dfx Voodoo 2. We also started a shift last spring from Sockets 940 and 754 to Socket 939 for AMD 64 bit processors (Socket A remains for 32 Bit AMD processors) and from Socket 478 to 775 for Intel Pentium 4 processors, which also limits your upgrade options. Dual core processors, which have two CPUs on one chip, will be coming out for workstations, servers, and desktops in the second half of this year. Support for dual core processors will come from more of a BIOS change than socket change; however, some motherboards will be able to support dual core processors by upgrading your flash BIOS, but others will not. We also are making the transition from DDR to DDR2 system RAM, and some motherboards only support DDR2.

Now you think you have had enough. I am nowhere near finished. We now have a new power supply standard too. ATX Power Supply 2.01 is in process of replacing ATX Power Supply 1.3. Newer motherboards have different power connectors now. The new connector has 24 pins rather than the old one with 20. There have been adapters for the 1.3 power connectors to fit 2.01 compliant motherboards, but now we are going to move to adapters for 2.01 power supplies to fit into 1.3 compliant motherboards. Some motherboards and power supplies had AUX connectors, but the new standard does away with that. One thing that is nice with the new standard is that having SATA drive power connectors is now mandatory rather than optional. Also power supplies under the new standard are supposed to be more efficient. Nevertheless be aware that some power supply manufacturers have been exaggerating the capacity of their power supplies. However, this new power supply standard is just a step in another transition, the move from the ATX motherboard and case design standards to BTX design standards. I say standards because there are three different BTX motherboard design formats: BTX, MicroBTX, and Pico BTX. BTX replaces the standard ATX motherboards, with MicroBTX going against the Mini-ATX motherboards and PicoBTX goes against the ITX motherboards. Part of the reasons for the change is to redesign the airflow in the case to get rid of all heat generated by the latest processors.

The airflow of BTX designs is from the front of the computer straight through to the back of the computer rather than typical lower front intake with exhaust in the upper back. The CPU has been repositioned towards the front of the computer so it gets the cool air first. That means a redesign of the power supply to a new BTX standard. Also a thermal module has replaced the standard CPU heat sink and fan. It takes a more global approach in covering the highest heat producing components sitting on the motherboard, including the CPU. Intel is the one who is pushing this because their Pentium 4s have higher clock speeds than an equivalent AMD Athlon 64 chip, which means they produce higher heat. There is so much heat that Intel had to abandon their goal of producing a 4 GHz Pentium 4 chip. As such AMD is not in such pressure to move to BTX, so BTX motherboards supporting AMD processors will be a few months behind those supporting Intel processors. The first BTX motherboards just recently came out, and should become dominate in 2006.

What does all this mean? By the second half of 2005 if you have a computer that is more than one year old it will probably be better to get an entire new computer rather than upgrade. This puts into motion another round of the old computer becoming the backup computer and the old backup computer becoming a boat anchor, flowerpot, or for the more adventurous: Christmas or Chanukah display control system for the whole house and yard. However, because there are so many changes with these transitions that many people will get a new computer sooner than normal, resulting in some of the retiring old backup computers being new enough to where nonprofit organizations and schools may want them. As such the probability is that not just those selling computers and computer components benefit from the chaos caused by this round of the wonder of computer hardware transitions.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. 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 <http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>

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Tired of Spam?

Go to www.dvpc.org to download QURB!

Ask the Expert – Bluetooth by Joe Schmitt, Tampa Bay Computer Society,

What is this "Bluetooth" I keep hearing about and do I need it?

Whenever something like a mouse or keyboard is connected to your computer, there are protocols and standards in place so that the computer can talk to the keyboard and it operates properly. The same scenario also applies to anything that connects to a computer or other electronics around your home. Your TV needs to know how the cable signal is formatted so that you get the sound and video. Bluetooth is a wireless protocol that allows electronics to communicate. Bluetooth goes beyond your computer to integrate electronics across a wide spectrum. Bluetooth operates on two levels. The first is that all Bluetooth devices operate on the same radio frequency and speak the same language. Secondly they all share the same procedures in exchanging data and verifying the data is received. That is sort of like being able to speak the language and know the customs so no one misunderstands.

Bluetooth a standard developed and employed by close to 1,000 different companies. This protocol would allow you to take a cell phone, get into a car with a Bluetooth radio and transfer the call to the stereo so your hands are left free. Later you could take that same phone and possibly transfer contact information from the phone to a computer. This is just one example. Bluetooth can be found in phones, keyboards, PDA's, and even stereo headphones. It could potentially show up anywhere you have a wire to connect two devices now.

Is this something you need? Just like anything else with computers, the answer depends on whether or not it meets your needs. Do you need a Bluetooth keyboard or mouse? Not if the wires don't bother you. Could you use it to link your PDA or Pocket PC to the computer? Yes and that might be the most likely scenario that Bluetooth would aid you in. If you are the type of person that likes portable gadgets as much as your computer, Bluetooth may be something to take a serious look into. For more information on the standard itself and some of the products that use it, check out the following sites: www.bluetooth.com and www.bluetooth.org.

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Curmudgeon's Corner, Mini-Edition by Walt Parsons, DVPC's Official Curmudgeon – Accept No Substitute!

Discount computer stores and books

Just because a computer store has computers and software at discount prices DON'T assume that their books are discounted. I was looking for one of the "Dummy" books at both Office Max and Comp USA and much to my surprise they were selling the books at list price. In both stores I checked a few more titles and everyone I checked was being sold at list.

Be Aware!!!!!!

FREE Online Tax Preparation and Filing by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Board of Directors

IRS and "Free File Alliance" Again Offer FREE Online Tax Preparation and Filing

It's that time of year again. Our mailboxes are brimming with W-2's, 1099's, and other ubiquitous indications of our daily financial lives. Preparing our forms 1040, 1040A, and 1040EZ are typically not our favorite annual right of spring. This year, the fine folks at the IRS and their partners, the "Free File Alliance" are again offering their free online federal income tax preparation and electronic filing services. Unlike past years, where only selected groups of people, such as students or military, could utilize the free services, this year there are free services available for almost all federal tax filers.

The main IRS website at www.irs.gov has at the top: "Free File".

Ever missed a good thing and regretted it? Don't miss Free File. Millions of eligible taxpayers can use Free File — a free online service that let's you prepare and file your tax return electronically. It's smart, free and fast. Don't miss it!" According to the IRS, about 6.5 million people took advantage of the opportunity last year.

The process is relatively easy. The first step is to enter the IRS Free File website at "www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp" where the various filing services offered by the Alliance can be viewed, and eligibility for each can be determined. Eligibility determination for each service is the second step listed. Some of the 15 resources listed have a maximum "AGI" (adjusted gross income) ceiling. Others will only prepare forms 1040A or 1040EZ online, while some others will prepare taxes for residents of specific states. Other members of the Alliance will prepare and e-file taxes for free based on age, often under 25 or over 60, while others (such as H&R Block, TaxAct.com, and TurboTax for the Web) have no restrictions on who can use the free services, and are available to all. After the free preparer is selected, the user will be directed to a non-IRS website to complete the online preparation. The taxes are calculated, and proper forms are electronically filed with the IRS using a secured link. An acknowledgement is automatically generated via email notifying the filer that the return has been accepted or rejected.

The IRS notes that several of these companies also offer a fee-based online preparation service, and the only way to be assured to get these services for free is to link to them directly from the IRS Free File website, and not directly to the company websites. It

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FREE Online Tax Preparation and Filing...

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should also be noted that these companies do not generally prepare state income taxes for free, and that there may be a charge for preparing state income taxes, but users referred from the IRS site are under no obligation to incur any tax preparation expenses for the preparation and filing of federal income taxes, provided they were originally eligible for the services.

Electronic filing by these free resources, or other similar commercial resources, has several advantages, according to the IRS. Some of these benefits are that it takes less time to prepare online than on paper, refunds can be processed much faster, returns are more accurate (provided accurate information is entered), and acknowledgement of receipt is generated so you know the return has been filed, and other tangible and intangible benefits. The IRS also has a statement that the software used by the providers for the free service is "comparable" to the software used by these preparers for their commercial (paid) clients.

The IRS is well aware that not all taxpayers have internet access, so it is arranging for such groups as churches and community associations to provide the internet access so as to promote the widest possible use of the free service. The IRS is also supporting such volunteer groups as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE).

Some individuals will justifiably question their personal privacy when entering this data onto a private company's website. The IRS has approved the security and privacy policies of the participating companies, and all of the providers must also have a recognized third-party privacy and security certification. Information provided to these companies can only be used for the preparation of income tax forms, and no other purposes not explicitly authorized by the user. The IRS will monitor all of the providers for compliance, and the companies are required to promptly alert the IRS if any privacy or security problems are encountered. The IRS has set up an email address with the Free File Alliance at helpdesk@speedymail.com, where anyone can get technical assistance about the Free File website, or resolve issues with any of the listed providers. Any user who is not satisfied with the selected free provider is free to try another provider that he may qualify for.

The Free File Alliance is a result of the IRS' Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, which in part has a goal that 80% of all returns are to be filed electronically (e-filed) by 2007, and requires the IRS to make available to taxpayers free online filing options.

Last year (2004) saw 6.5 million e-filed returns, and the IRS hopes to triple the number this year. That still leaves many millions more that will have to e-file in order to reach the 2007 goal. The 15 companies listed that are providing free filing services are a good step on the path of meeting the IRS' goals.

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Computer AntiVirus Research Applied to Medicine *by Microsoft*

BOSTON, Feb. 23 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ — Microsoft Research has pioneered promising new ways to combat one of humankind's most deadly viruses with advanced software typically used to analyze large computer databases and complex digital images, or to separate spam from legitimate e-mail.

Today at the 12th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI), Microsoft Research will show how medical researchers can use machine-learning, data-mining and other software techniques to comb through millions of strains of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) to find the genetic patterns necessary to train a patient's immune system to fight the virus. The first of these vaccine designs are currently undergoing laboratory testing.

Microsoft Corp. (Nasdaq:MSFT) researchers David Heckerman and Nebojsa Jojic are the first to use algorithms similar to those in Microsoft Corp.'s database and anti-spam software to uncover hidden patterns within the genetic mutations of the virus and the immune system of the patient. The researchers, in collaboration with doctors and scientists from the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle and Australia's Royal Perth Hospital, plan to exploit these patterns to create improved vaccine designs that pack more HIV-fighting genetic markers into vaccines. Microsoft researchers Christopher Meek and Carl Kadie and Jojic's brother (and former Microsoft Research intern), Vladimir, also contributed to the project.

"Microsoft has helped us make a tremendous leap forward in our efforts to halt a virus that has already killed nearly 30 million people worldwide," said Simon Mallal, professor and executive director of the Centre for Clinical Immunology and Biomedical Statistics at Royal Perth Hospital and Murdoch University. "Microsoft Research's contributions enabled us to filter patient data 10 times faster than any previous research technique we've used and produced vital clues about the building blocks of a vaccine — clues that were all but impossible to find in our growing stockpile of medical data."

"The potential for these vaccines is a powerful example of how computer science is transforming medical research and other areas of science," said Dr. James Mullins, professor in the UW Department of Microbiology. "These Microsoft Research technologies were-

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Computer AntiVirus Research Applied to Medical Applications...

(Continued from page 23)

n't initially conceived as medical research tools, but they may prove to be critical to the ongoing battle to slow down or halt HIV and other deadly viruses."

Laboratory Testing Is Under Way on Prototype Vaccine Models

The Microsoft Research-aided vaccine designs are currently undergoing laboratory testing at the University of Washington. The tests are being conducted on samples of immune cells taken from HIV-infected patients to determine how effectively the models uncover the appropriate genetic patterns. Similar tests are planned at the Royal Perth Hospital in Australia. Initial results should be available later this year.

Researchers plan to use the same techniques to analyze HIV strains from different parts of the world to gain a global understanding of vaccine components in a fraction of the time it would otherwise take. The new vaccine models may also help in the development of treatments for hepatitis C and other mutating viruses.

"Science is changing rapidly with the explosion of new data, and we've only scratched the surface of what computers can do to help advance this kind of research," said David Heckerman, senior researcher and manager of the Research Machine Learning and Applied Statistics Group at Microsoft. "Our goal is to accelerate scientific insight and radical breakthroughs by advancing the state of the art in machine learning and statistics. I'm inspired by the idea that new algorithms and software we have developed could potentially benefit so many people some day."

Computing Transforms the Sciences

Technology offers unprecedented potential to transform science through advanced software and computer science techniques. In addition to their work on HIV vaccine design, Microsoft researchers are working with colleagues in other fields of science to apply their know-how and resources to the toughest problems outside traditional computer science. Other collaborative efforts include the following:

- ◆ **Bioinformatics.** Microsoft Research is working with scientists to apply advanced technology in areas of biology other than HIV-vaccine development. The work includes unraveling gene-splicing mechanisms in higher-level organisms, creating an improved model of evolution, and analyzing associations between diseases and genetic variations in humans.
- ◆ **Computational systems biology.** Microsoft researchers are working with leading scientists to develop languages for describing – and possibly programming – biological systems.
- ◆ **SkyServer.** Microsoft Research teamed with Sloan Digital Sky Survey to create an educational Web site that offers professional and amateur astronomers free* access to pictures of more than 80 million stars and galaxies. — Microsoft European Science Initiative. This is a new strategic research initiative to accelerate fundamental innovation in new kinds of science and computing, through collaborations with key scientists, research groups and governments in Europe.
- ◆ **TerraServer.** In alliance with the U.S. Geological Survey, Microsoft Research created one of the world's largest online databases, providing free* public access to a vast store of maps and aerial photographs of the United States.
- ◆ **University Relations.** This year, Microsoft Research awarded \$500,000 in Request for Proposal (RFP) funding to several universities to stimulate innovative research and to foster the use of advanced technologies (e.g., databases, Web services and managed code) in solving scientific or engineering problems.

* Internet connect-time charges may apply.

About Microsoft Research

Founded in 1991, Microsoft Research is dedicated to conducting both basic and applied research in computer science and software engineering. Its goals are to enhance the user experience on computing devices, reduce the cost of writing and maintaining software, and invent novel computing technologies. Researchers focus on more than 55 areas of computing and collaborate with leading academic, government and industry researchers to advance the state of the art in such areas as graphics, speech recognition, user-interface research, natural language processing, programming tools and methodologies, operating systems and networking, and the mathematical sciences. Microsoft Research employs more than 700 people in six labs located in Redmond, Washington; San Francisco; Silicon Valley, California; Cambridge, England; Beijing, China; and Bangalore, India. More information can be found at www.research.microsoft.com.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

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SOURCE: Microsoft Corp. 2/23/2005

When Good Software Goes Bad by Ron Ogg, DVPC

I have a home network. There's a file server running Windows NT Server (yes, it's an old version, but I believe in the axiom "If it ain't broke don't fix it!"). There are four desktop PCs attached to my network, and occasionally my laptop computer. The computer I use most of the time is a VPR Matrix desktop with a Pentium 4 2.2 GHz processor and 512 MB of RAM.

I have been a very long time user of Symantec's Norton AntiVirus, and when it became available Norton SystemWorks. I have generally been satisfied with the AntiVirus component, and its ability to trap known viruses. I have renewed my virus definition subscriptions each year, and had recently upgraded to the latest version, SystemWorks 2005.

Recently I had noticed that program response on my PC had become sluggish. This slow response started happening most of the time. Shutting down and restarting didn't solve the problem. I use Windows XP Professional with Service Pack 2 and have it set to install all Windows updates automatically. Could the problem be Service Pack 2? I was convinced that it wasn't a virus because I run Trend Anti-Virus on my server and Norton AntiVirus 2005 on the PC. I was convinced that it wasn't spyware because I run a daily automatic scan using Microsoft Windows AntiSpyware, have the monitoring components of Windows AntiSpyware, Pest Patrol, and Spybot always running in the background, and do manual scans using Ad Aware and Spybot a couple of times each month, and none of these programs find anything more than a few tracking cookies.

I planned on finding out what program was being loaded that was causing the problem, but just didn't have the time to do an in-depth analysis. It would have involved using msconfig to temporarily disable the programs that are opened when Windows starts, test to see if the slow response was resolved, and if so restore each of the programs one by one until the slow response reoccurred — that would identify the program causing the problems. But if the slow response was not resolved by disabling startup programs, I'd be back at square one and figuring out what was going on would take more time than I had available.

So, I continued to live, grudgingly, with the slow response.

Then a new problem cropped up. It seemed to start after I did a Live Update for Norton SystemWorks. Every time I would start a Microsoft Office 2003 program — Word, Excel, Publisher, Outlook, whatever — a series of dialog boxes would be displayed: "This program does not support the repair feature. Please uninstall and reinstall." No program name was displayed, and the only choice was an OK button. This dialog box would be displayed three times in a row, each requiring that the OK button be clicked. Finally, after the third time, the program would open. I began to investigate the cause of this problem, and a Google search linked to the Symantec web site and that this was a Norton AntiVirus problem. Three solutions were offered:

Solution 1 was to restore the Windows Start menu entry for Norton AntiVirus.

Solution 2 was to disable the Office plug-in.

Solution 3 was to remove and reinstall Norton AntiVirus.

I tried all three solutions and none of them solved the problem. This was not good!

However, I noticed that after applying the first half of Solution 3 (remove Norton AntiVirus, or, in my case, Norton SystemWorks), my PC loaded much faster. The slow response had been greatly reduced, if not totally eliminated! Reinstalling Norton SystemWorks returned the system to its slow response state.

I recalled that I had seen a special offer for Trend Micro's PC-cillin Internet Security 2005 package on Amazon.com that, after a discount and a \$25.00 mail-in rebate my net cost would be \$9.99. The recent reviews of this package in PC Magazine, PC World, and Smart Computing have been very positive. We use Trend Micro's enterprise-level Anti-Virus package on the Windows 2000 and 2003 servers at work, and it's bundled with the WinProxy firewall that I use on my Windows NT server at home. Since I've never had a virus on any of my home PCs, it seems like the server anti-virus program has been working great. So I decided to give the Trend Micro PC-cillin package a try.

"Wait a minute," you may ask. "If you have Trend Micro's Anti-Virus program running on your Windows NT server, and you've never had a virus on any of the PCs connected to your home network, why do you even need an anti-virus program on the PC that you use most of the time?"

Good question. The answer is: "What if I install a program from a CD that's infected with a virus? (It could happen!) The anti-virus program on my server isn't going to be able to detect, much less block, a virus that was installed from a CD on a PC attached to the network."

So, I placed my order with Amazon.com, and downloaded the 30-day fully functional free trial of PC-cillin from Trend Micro's web site (www.trendmicro.com) to use while I waited for the package to be shipped to me. I uninstalled Norton SystemWorks 2005 and cleaned out the tendrils it left in the registry by doing a registry cleaning using RegSupreme Pro. Then I installed the anti-virus component of PC-cillin, and only that component since I already have alternative programs for the other components (anti-spyware, anti-spam, firewall, etc.) in the suite.

So far, so good. The best thing is that my PC is not the slugabed that it had been with Norton AntiVirus installed. And I assume that the anti-virus is doing its job. Further, I get regular automatic virus definition updates, sometimes two or three times in one day. PC-cillin hasn't found any viruses, but I wouldn't have expected it to. What it is doing is giving me an extra measure of security, and in these days where new viruses are being distributed every day that's a good thing.

It also points out that I had been successfully using a good software package for many years, Norton AntiVirus, that suddenly went bad. The recommended solutions didn't work. So I switched to something that seems to be better. Sometimes it *is* better to switch than to fight!

In Search of a "VCR for Radio" by Frank Bolinger, ORCOPUG

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

Background

This story began more than 40 years ago when I became addicted to talk radio. Over the ensuing years, I've enjoyed many hours of entertaining and informative programs. Topic oriented shows about personal finance, law, cars, and (of course) computers filled the weekends. Hog heaven until the radio stations rearranged their schedules. When the dust settled, three of my favorites were on simultaneously. On top of that, I'm also a baseball fan, so Dodger and Angel games sometimes presented five alternatives at the same time. Bummer. Why couldn't there be a VCR for radio?

First Solution

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

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

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

The next solution

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

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

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

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

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

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

Despite all that, it was a grand adventure, I had a lot of fun doing it, and am enjoying listening to programs I was missing before. The time from the cassette recorder failure to having all the components assembled and functioning successfully was about two weeks. Oh, yes. What about music? Can't say. I may be the only person who bought an MP3 player NOT to play music.

Here's the final hardware and software configuration:

1. WM Recorder (Records the programs) (\$29.95 from www.wmrecorder.com)
2. WM VCR (Schedules the recordings) (\$9.95 from www.wmrecorder.com)

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In Search of a "VCR for Radio"...

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3. River Past Audio Converter (Converts the asf files to MP3) (\$29.95 from www.riverpast.com)
4. Apple iPod (MP3 Player) (Approximately \$230 and up, depending on source and model)
5. Altec Lansing InMotion Portable Audio (Speaker gadget for the iPod) (Approximately \$110, from various sources)

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Flu and Virus Season by Joe Shipley, Phoenix PC Users Group

Protecting Your Computer During the "Flu and Virus" Season

With all the viruses and other malware around, I have accumulated a group of software that I consider to be necessary 'protection' for any computer that connects to the Internet. The software I recommend consists of:

Ad-Aware	www.lavasoft.com
Spybot Search & Destroy	www.safer-networking.org/en/mirrors/index.html
CWShredder	www.intermute.com/spysubtract/cwshredder_download.html
Zone Alarm	www.zonelabs.com/store/content/catalog/products/sku_list_zs.jsp
AVG Antivirus	free.grisoft.com/freeweb.php/doc/2/lng/us/tpl/v5
Pop-Up Stopper	www.panicware.com/product_psfree_download.html

All of these programs are FREE. Millions of people are using them. For Ad-aware alone, there have been more than 90 million downloads just from Download.com.

Once these programs are on your system, you need to make sure they are updated. AVG and Zone Alarm have automatic updating; the others need to be updated by clicking a button.

Ad-Aware and Spybot specialize in removing spies and malware from your system. They each will remove some bad things the other does not, so I use them both.

When running Ad-Aware, first do an update to check for the newest definition files. After updating, run the program. If the program finds items which need to be removed, you'll see a display of the items suggested for removal. If there are no check marks in the boxes to the left of the item name, right-click in the frame and choose the "Select All" option. This will check all the items for you. Click on "Next" to move the items to a quarantine area. Once quarantined, the items are removed and will refrain from causing you any problems. If you remove something you really need, you can go to the quarantine area and recover the item to have it restored.

Upon installation of Spybot, the program will search for updates and give you the opportunity to download them. Do so. Updates are good. After updating, run the Immunizer to make sure you block about 2,000+ bad sites. Once updated, go to "Search & Destroy" to begin searching for more than 24,000 (as of this writing) spies, malware, Trojans and other bad things, which if found, will be removed from your system.

One of the features included with Spybot that I recommend is called "Tea Timer." This feature advises you every time a change is proposed for your startup files. Viruses, worms and Trojans will often insert instructions into the startup files. By utilizing Tea Timer, you can determine if a change to these files should be permitted or not. The logic of whether or not to allow a change is simple: if you just installed some software and you're prompted for a change, it's probably ok. But if you're prompted for a change and you did not just install new software, just click NO. When in doubt, keep it out. You can always add it in later.

CWShredder can be used to remove a specific group of web search files that can hijack your browser to take you to certain web-sites and use specific search engines, whether you want to or not. The shredder removes those web search hijackers.

Zone Alarm is a terrific firewall that advises you of every attempt made by your computer to access the Internet, and of each attempt by the Internet to access your computer. At first it may seem like an annoyance, but once you catch on to the rhythm of how it works, it will greatly reduce the number of unauthorized Internet accesses without your consent. The program runs in the background, and gives you the chance to let it learn which Internet sites are acceptable and which aren't. For example, the first time you go to do online banking, you may see a message asking you if you want to go to a specific site. If you say "NO," you won't be able to reach your bank's web site. Don't be alarmed. Try your bank again, and when you're prompted to see if you really want to go to the bank's site, then check the box "Remember this site" and click on the "Allow" button. The next time you want to go to the bank's site you'll get right in.

AVG Antivirus is a good antivirus program, self-updating, and will scan email as well as perform a regular antivirus scan. You can

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Flu and Virus Season...

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even setup automatic virus checking to have your system scanned when it's convenient for you. With AVG you can, as Ron Popeil says, "Set it and Forget it!"

The last component of my protection package is Panicware's Popup Stopper. This handy Popup blocker actually works. And if your bank's web site uses popups which are being stopped, you can hold down the control key to temporarily disable the stopper to let you receive popups you actually want. You can also open the control center and disable the stopper at any time if the handy control key feature doesn't do the job for you.

So this flu season you can get added protection by using the software described above, and minimize your downtime.

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Tech News by Sue Crane, Big Bear Computer Club

The search engine wars get more interesting by the week. Google is partnering with some of the world's most prestigious universities to make it easier for Web users to scan the schools' vast library holdings. The collaboration of Google and research institutions that include Harvard, the University of Michigan, Stanford and the New York Public Library is a major stride in an ambitious Internet effort. The goal is to expand the Web beyond its current valuable body of material and create a digital card catalog and searchable library for the world's books, scholarly papers and special collections. Meanwhile, Yahoo is adding local traffic information to its maps service, including roadwork and accident reports as well as the approximate speed at which traffic is proceeding along specific roads. The service, part of Yahoo Maps, will offer accident reports and road construction information for about 70 U.S. metropolitan areas. The service will also provide driving speed information for about 22 of those areas. The traffic information is layered on top of a map at the user's request. Icons are used to indicate accidents or construction, while color codes are used for the speed information. And America Online is testing a Web-based e-mail service that will compete with Yahoo Mail, Microsoft's Hotmail and Google's Gmail. the beta service for America Online's free Web-based e-mail is available to AOL subscribers only. But it will eventually be offered to the public for free.

With a floating screen, Mitsubishi's Scopo due next year will truly be a portable computer!. This headset with an eye-sized, eye-level LCD creates the illusion that a 10-inch display is in front of the viewer. The Scopo comes with a belt-carried unit with a CPU to process images and video. It can be attached to a cell phone, video player, or other device

Two Japanese companies, Toshiba and Memory-Tech, say they've developed the world's first DVD that can be played on both standard and high-definition DVD players, using the HD-DVD format. HD-DVD has the backing of the DVD Forum.

You can get anything on eBay -- except justice. That's what one disgruntled litigant found when she snarkily offered a New York City judge for sale on the popular auction site. Even though the highest bidder offered more than \$100, she found out the hard way that crime just doesn't pay. And the judge was not amused

Residents of 13 western states can check all three of their credit reports for free at AnnualCreditReport.com. The Midwest will come on stream on March 1, the South on June 1, and the East on Sept. 1. Previously, you had to buy this information from the three credit reporting companies: TransUnion, Experian and Equifax. The three reports can vary. That's why all three, and not just one, are available. Check your credit report online at: <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp>

The California Energy Commission unanimously approved standards to be phased in beginning in 2006 that would require household appliances including televisions, VCRs, DVD players and cell phone chargers, to run on one to three watts. Even when idle, such appliances now typically gobble up two to 10 watts. Commissioners estimate that compliance with the new guidelines will save commercial and residential power customers more than \$3 billion over 15 years.

iBrattleboro.com is at the forefront of Web publishers delivering local news. What's is that they are relying on local residents. The idea is that citizen-generated content lowers costs and creates more loyal audiences. One intriguing experiment started in May when the Bakersfield Californian launched a community Web site called the Northwest Voice (www.northwestvoice.com). The site has no paid writers except for a lone editor. It employs only four people full-time, gets most of its content from readers. Last month, the J-Lab Institute for Interactive Journalism at the University of Maryland announced a \$1 million grant program to fund what it calls "micro-local" Web news experiments around the country. Funded by the Knight Foundation, each initial grant will amount to \$12,000 and go to nonprofit groups creating community news sites.

Microsoft is setting an example for customers as they introduce a second security measure for their internal networks: smart cards for every employee. By the end of 2005, tens of thousands of telecommuting Microsoft employees will be issued the cards, which will be required to log on to the company's networks.

President Bush signed a new four-year ban on state and federal taxation of Internet connections. The latest version of The Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act expands the original dial-up definition of access to include DSL, cable modems and wireless Internet connections. The bill blocks states from differentiating for tax purposes between dial-up and broadband hookups.

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Tech News...

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Intel's products for the digital home and digital office in 2005 will give consumers and IT managers more capabilities than just raw performance, and the company plans to highlight those products. Earlier this year, Intel canceled two single-core desktop and server designs and announced plans to accelerate the development of dual-core processors. Intel is planning to design and market its desktop processors in platforms, similar to the way the company brought the Pentium M processor, a new mobile chipset and new wireless capabilities to customers as part of the Centrino platform. Intel expects to bring 64-bit capabilities to its desktop processors in the first half of 2005 (Microsoft's 64-bit Windows XP operating system is scheduled to ship in the first quarter of next year). In 2006, Intel will bring out the Bridge Creek and Averill platforms for the digital home and digital office. These platforms will feature Intel's security and virtualization technologies that it highlighted at recent Intel Developer Forum conferences. Microsoft's next update to the Windows operating system, code-named Longhorn, will be required to take advantage of the hardware-based security and virtualization technologies that Intel plans for 2006.

A report from U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP), a nonprofit group that sets standards for the drug industry, says that as more hospitals have implemented automated systems for administering drugs the number of errors associated with them has risen. Kenneth Kizer of the National Quality Forum says: "Technology offers great opportunity to reduce errors, but it's not a panacea. You can't just throw a computerized system in and expect that everything's fixed. It has to be done right. The technology is only as good as the people who use it."

Microsoft next year plans to host its first developers conference dedicated to the Microsoft Office System, underscoring the company's strategy to make Office a foundation for customized business applications. The conference will take place Feb. 2 through 4 in Microsoft's home town of Redmond, Wash., and will feature Microsoft chair Bill Gates as its keynote speaker. The company said Monday that it expects about 800 developers from independent software vendors, consulting partners and corporate customers to participate.

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Windows Media Player 10 by Chuck Guion, Rockport Computer Users' Group

Microsoft has a new Windows Media Player 10 (WMP10) available now. Go to www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia to download it. It was designed for Windows XP. It does not have any help files, but there is an article: Using Windows Media Player 10 on the web and you can download it at: www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/mp10/usingplayer.aspx.

You can use WMP 10 to listen to music on CDs, MP3s, MIDI, Wave, etc. You can play CD's and DVD's (if you have a DVD drive on your computer) with the program. You can also use it to watch your home movies, film clips, etc. You can also use the Internet to find more information about a CD or DVD; i.e. the Album and the Artist. You can quickly Rip from a CD to your computer as well as use different Formats for doing this.

You can also burn your own CD's. Most of the music CD's that you buy have only one or two songs you really like. With WMP10 you can pick and choose your favorite songs from several CD's and put them on one Master CD. Isn't that great & it's free!

You can also organize your digital media collection. The program will even tell you where you can buy your favorite albums! All in all, I think it is a great program and it is free! About the only disadvantage is not having any help file.

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ZLH Mystery by Walt Parsons, DVPC

This may not be a mystery to some of you but it sure was to me and perhaps other members of DVPC.

I frequently exchange Microsoft Access data base files with a person. The file extension is MDB. Unfortunately Access data bases sent as attachments are considered dangerous by Outlook and Outlook Express but fortunately there is a work around.

In Outlook Express option section under security there is a place to have Outlook Express "not allow attachments to be saved or opened that could potentially be a virus." This option can be unchecked to allow an executable attachment to be received. To modify Outlook to receive MDB files requires a registry modification that I won't go into here.

Having made sure that Outlook wouldn't block my friends Access data base files I was very surprised to find out that the attachment had been renamed with an file extension of ZLH. Access could not read this file until I renamed the file changing the file extension to MDB. It now worked OK. I then found out that when I sent an Access data base file as an attachment to my friend he

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ZLH Mystery...

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received it with a ZLH file extension. WHY???????

The solution was found by doing a Google search on ZLH and one of the first choices was The File Extension Source at www.filext.com. Select the file extension you are interested in, in my case ZLH, and it brings up a page that told me that ZLH is a file extension used by Zone Alarm's MailSafe program when it finds an Access data base file (mdb).

From here I went to the Zone Alarm program and looked for MailSafe. Under the heading for E-Mail protection I found two option windows which turned on or off protection for incoming and outgoing e-mails.

Upon further investigation I find that Zone Alarm's MailSafe uses a whole family of ZL? file extensions. ZL9 is used by Mailsafe uses for renaming any EXE files, ZL6 for renaming COM files, and ZLH for renaming MDB files and a lot more.

So the long and short of it is if you get an attachment with a mysterious ZL? file extension and you are using Zone Alarm then Zone Alarm is your culprit. Disable the e-mail protection if you are expecting to receive an executable file.

Search WUGNET Shareware Hall of Fame *by Bettie Cummings Cook, SW Indiana PC Users Group*

www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/wugnet.mspx is the web site of WUGNET. On this site are the Microsoft picks that demonstrate the highest standards available today in shareware for Windows XP. Just for the record, freeware is free and shareware is generally free to try but you are on your honor to send the compiler a fee or a contribution. Yes, you can use them as long as you please without sending a nickel for them but I encourage you to support the persons who unselfishly provide good shareware programs. A number of the programs will develop into large, well-known products or become incorporated into new system programs. To cite a few old examples that did so: PKZip, Brother's Keeper, Checkit, XTree, and TweakUI. I purchased these as shareware programs a number of years ago for five dollar each. To the credit of the shareware compilers, their programs have continued to operate from Windows 3.1 thru Windows XP. So, for the most part, they are good investments.

Twenty-five of the best picks for Win XP are featured with links to downloadable sites. Everything from utilities to games. I was intrigued by one called Ink-Saver. It adjusts the amount of ink flow from cartridge to printer and causes those expensive ink cartridges to last a little longer. Check it out for dependable sources that have MS approval.

Bettie Cummings Cook is Newsletter Editor of the SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc. (SWIPCUG). The above article appeared in the January 2005 issue of the P-See Urgent, SWIPCUG newsletter. Permission is granted to other non-profit computer user groups to use this article in their publications with credit to the author and the SW Indiana PC Users Group.

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Firefox *by Linda Gonse, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group*

The latest version of Firefox, an open source program, formerly Mozilla, and before that, Netscape Navigator, was released to popular acclaim near the end of 2004 from www.mozilla.com. Many people, tired of security problems and perpetual patching of Internet Explorer, have begun to make the switch to Firefox. I was one of them. It was an easy transition to import my bookmarks, favorites, and other items, and set up housekeeping in it.

But, it was a real surprise to find free "themes," a change of appearance for Firefox. Feeling the exhilaration of discovery, I downloaded Nautipolis, Red Cats, Gray Modern, and Littlefox, and others; finally settling on Littlefox. Then, I discovered "extensions." Extensions are little programs, originally called applets, that run from within Firefox. Their specialized capabilities add to the functionality of Firefox and quickly become features you just can't live without. There are about a dozen I use, including: Weatherfox, QuickNote, Titlebar Tweaks, SpoofStick, CopyPlainText, and Tabbrowser Extensions.

One extension that makes my online life simpler is called QuickNote. It allows me to copy and paste from browser pages into a tabbed notepad available right in the browser. It saves me from opening Word or Notepad and working back and forth from one of them to the browser window. Fascinated with the free extensions, I tracked down QuickNote's creator, Jed Brown, to ask him to tell me how he got started and why he wrote the program. Also, QuickNote had earned five stars as a popular Firefox item, I wondered if Jed thought it might end up being incorporated into Internet Explorer. He said, "I became involved with Mozilla back in the 90s. I was a frequent user of what was then the Mosaic browser when the World Wide Web had just begun. Netscape was born from Mosaic and I was instantly a user of Netscape Navigator.

"Once the "browser wars" began, I was a devoted Netscape user who really loathed how Microsoft used their OS dominance to spread use of their browser. Unfortunately, after Netscape released its 4.0 browser, MS was right on their tail and produced an even better and more standards-compliant browser.

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Firefox...

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"Despite the better browser, I was loyal and stayed on NS as long as I could. Around the time when Netscape 5 was going to be released (1998 I believe), they decided to open-source their browser. That sparked my interest and I got my hands on the code as quickly as I could. Once the open source community realized that the NS code was a huge hack and badly organized, they decided to start from scratch and create what was to be the fastest most compliant browser ever. This was too good to be true.

Unfortunately this was no easy endeavor and would take over three years to get even close to a final product. In the meantime, Internet Explorer was the superior product (over NS 4.x) and was becoming the browser of choice for many — including myself.

"I wasn't hacking on any of the code, but I did start testing the releases from the first public beta release. Since that day, I used this new engine and code base as much as I could, but always had IE there for sites that did not work in the new, young and untested engine.

Once Mozilla had matured (version 0.8) and became usable on a daily basis, I switched over and said goodbye to IE for good.

"The folks at Netscape had a brilliant idea called XUL that would allow them to write the interface to the browser once, and allow it to run on any platform possible. This meant Mozilla looked the same on Windows, Mac, Linux/ OS 2, etc. This same technology allowed authors like myself to start creating programs that would live on top of the Mozilla platform and extend its functionality (now called "Extensions").

"As a high school student back then, I started a project called 'QuickNote' that would allow easy access to a notepad-like sidebar for easy note taking.

"While my extension was popular and used amongst many Mozilla users, Mozilla was plagued with bad interface design decisions from Netscape and AOL who later bought Netscape, so it really never hit it well with anyone but "geek" users. A few talented programmers at Netscape (Hyatt, Blake, Goodger, etc.) realized this and in their free time started a new project based on Mozilla, but much more simple, that was meant to be only a browser instead of a full suite like Mozilla was. This eventually turned into what Firefox is today.

"Thanks to Firefox (formerly Phoenix and Firebird) much more attention was brought to it and a much larger user base. More interest in Mozilla, XUL, and extension development arose. This has led to over 200 extensions made for Mozilla applications, and has brought together programmers from around the world, like myself, to join in and help make Firefox/Mozilla better.

"For example, QuickNote was a project I was doing by myself in my free time. But now many different users contribute code and translation. A Russian programmer, Nickolay Ponomarev, has joined with me and contributes to QuickNote on a regular basis. The whole idea of multi-platform and open source software is amazing as it has brought thousands of people together under one cause, despite language and cultural barriers. This in part, is thanks to Mozilla and its example that open source software can be just as good — and in this case — better, than priority software."

We asked Jed what he sees for Firefox in the next couple of years?

He said, "I think we will see a continuous trend in the growth of Firefox users. Once Microsoft won the browser wars, it dismantled its IE team, and left users high and dry. Firefox is filling this void, bringing a new and fresh idea to the World Wide Web and making it the place it should have been (virus/popup/spyware free) years ago.

"I also can see more and more companies embracing Firefox in their internal networks and products they offer to their users. Google, Amazon and many others are already starting."

We also wondered if Mozilla/Firefox will survive and grow through the efforts of the open source community. Or will Microsoft will gobble up talented program writers such as Jed, and IE will remain dominant?

"Mozilla/Firefox will definitely survive, and be vital for the years to come," Jed said. "Microsoft is far behind with Longhorn and even when it ships it will take years to get users to migrate over. In the meantime Firefox will continue to see growth in users on multiple platforms, and be extremely important to the survival of Linux as a desktop alternative. Sure MS will copy features and do its best to find exploits in Firefox. No software is perfect, but I believe the very nature of Mozilla and Firefox appeals to users and gives the Web freedom from control from one sole company. As time goes by, I think the average user will begin to understand this and realize the importance of alternative products and that they are superior in many aspects.

"The other huge benefit that Firefox has as a browser and Mozilla, in general, as a platform, is their multiplatform nature. As a programmer, I can create any application or extension based on Mozilla and easily make it work on every platform that Mozilla/Firefox runs on. This allows users to use any system they like, perhaps Unix/Linux at work, Mac OS on their laptop and Windows XP at home, and yet feel no difference when it comes to surfing the web and using the applications/extensions built on Mozilla. Microsoft has no real answer to this (although .Net tries) and it is a huge selling point to both users and corporations."

(You can email Jed at contact_me@jedbrown.net, and look for programs he has written for Firefox at www.mozilla.com.)

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