



September 1, 2005 DVPC Meeting Announcement **How to Create Music on Your PC**

The September 1 DVPC monthly meeting will feature our own Nicholas Chase who will be talking about creating music on your PC using either just your internal Soundcard, and inexpensive PC software alone, or in combination with an external music synthesizer keyboard.

A sincere effort will be made to avoid 'geek-speak' so that all may understand and enjoy the presentation.

Sound sampling will be discussed, as well as how musicians can collaborate on song/album creation over great distances using the Internet.

Nicholas will also demonstrate the technique of loop creation to quickly construct a song using simple drag and drop techniques.

Hands-on time will be provided for any of our resident keyboard professionals to record a short piece of music if they desire.

The September DVPC meeting will, as usual, have an interesting selection of raffle prizes as well!

DVPC meetings are held at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill; see the maps and directions on pages 4 through 6 in this issue of Diablo Blue, and on the DVPC web site at www.dvpc.org/about.html. Our meetings are once again being held in room H109 in the Humanities building, on the north side of the campus adjacent to parking lot 7.

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. 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. And, Alan will probably dig into the goodie bag and have some neat free stuff. First come, first served, so be sure to get to the meeting early to get the goodies!

What's Inside

DVPC Calendar	Page 2
Email Notification	Page 2
Information About DVPC	Page 3
Membership Application	Page 4
Directions, DVC Campus Map, and Maps to DVPC Meetings	Page 4, 5, 6
DVPC Wins APCUG Awards for Web Site and Diablo Blue	Page 5
Special Raffle Promotion	Page 6
PC101 Information <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Page 7
SIG News <i>Nick Chase</i>	Page 8
29 Useful Bookmarks/Favorites <i>Richard Johnson</i>	Page 9
DVPC Board Meeting Minutes <i>Tom Krauss</i>	Page 11
Add a New Dimension to Your Browsing <i>Curt Frye</i>	Page 12
Beware of File Sharing <i>Ira Wilsker</i>	Page 12
Computer Renaissance Ad	Page 13
Computer Puzzle <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Page 14
Figuring Out How Spammers Get e-Mail Addresses <i>Dave Gerber</i>	Page 15
Google Earth Review <i>Chuck Graham</i>	Page 16
Internet SIG Meeting <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Page 17
How to Thank Your Computer User Group Leaders <i>Phil Shapiro</i>	Page 18
Maintaining Your Downloads <i>David Garcia</i>	Page 19

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message

by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

The *President's Message* column is MIA this month. Some of us are afraid that Alan may have finally succumbed to that most horrible of diseases that he recently contracted, kitchenremodelitis for which he recently suffered the indignity and embarrassment of a kitchenremodelectomy. The results were not pretty, I can tell you, based on a recent visit to see how Alan was doing!

And, if you think this disease has been hard on Alan, just think of his poor family! They have been subjected to the indignity of the nowheretocookism syndrome, and have contracted the often accompanying mealdeliverycystic disease.

As you may know, since it has been published at various times in local and national newspapers, treatment of kitchenremodelitis requires the application of buildingpermitace, for which there is no less-expensive generic currently available. Alan and his family must, as they have been told, at all costs avoid environmental contamination by wallboarddustafrenia, or be forced to endure the taunts of neighbors, and even friends and relatives, due to insufficienthygenitis.

We can only hope and pray that Alan will soon be cured of his kitchenremodelitis!

DVPC September 2005 Calendar

DVPC Calendar

September 2005 ▾

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

Created by [Calendarscope™](#)

Email Notification

We provide an email notification service for the current month's *Diablo Blue* password, the DVPC monthly meeting, and information about SIG meetings as well. You have to be a current, paid-up member to receive this service. To read the current month's issue of *Diablo Blue* on-line you need to receive these monthly email messages, so print this page, fill out the form, check your favorite SIGS, 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 list 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		PC 101 Classes
Genealogy eSIG		Photoshop Elements SIG — New SIG!
Internet SIG		Windows SIG
New Users SIG		<i>Start a new SIG — See Nick Chase, DVPC SIG Coordinator</i>

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/Program Chair, 510-770-5770 (work), awm@mildwurm.com
 Nicholas Chase, SIG Coordinator, 680-4211 (home), nchase@astound.net
 Charlie Crothers, At Large, 829-2237 (home), ccrothers@sbcglobal.net
 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
 James Lundgren, Publicity, 355-0646 (home), philador@comcast.net
 Melody Lundgren, Publicity, 355-0646 (home), philador@comcast.net
 Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer, 829-5858 (home), jess@mildwurm.com
 Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor and Webmaster, 952-4987 (office), rogg@xemaps.com
 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

Entire contents © 1996-2005 by Diablo Valley PC Users Group. All commercial rights reserved.

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

What's Inside*(continued from page 1)*

Why Can't I Just Copy Programs to My New PC? <i>Brian K. Lewis</i>	Page 19
WiFi Internet and Network Availability <i>Ira Wilsker</i>	Page 21
Tired of Spam? Go to www.dvpc.org and Buy Qurb	Page 21
SanDisk SD Card is Also a USB Flash Drive <i>SanDisk Corporation</i>	Page 22
Sharing Your World <i>Vinny Labash</i>	Page 23
This and That <i>Ron Ogg</i>	Page 23
Monthly Meeting Room Has Changed... Again! <i>Ron Ogg</i>	Page 23
Wireless Instant Messaging <i>Gabe Goldberg</i>	Page 24



A view of our meeting room, H109

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 H109.

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:

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

Finding Your Way:

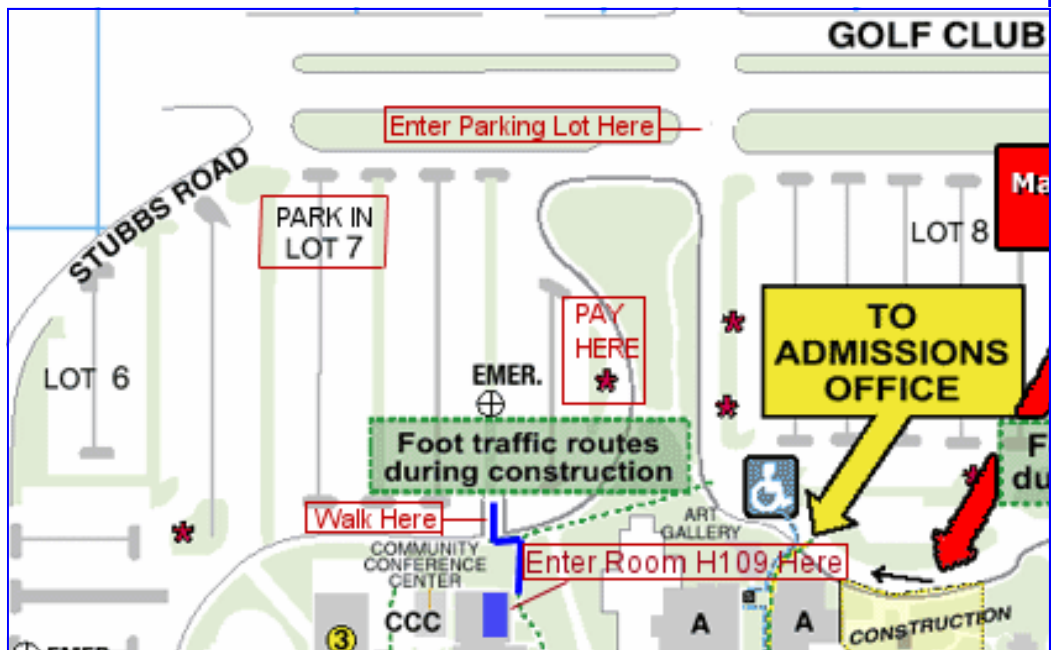
Notice that there's still a lot of construction going on at DVC. To prevent confusion, for parking and to get to our meeting room follow the instructions that are in boxes with red borders on the map below, and take the path from Parking Lot 7 to room H109 that's marked in blue. Press the large handicapped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

Parking Fees:

On the Pleasant Hill campus parking permits are \$2.00 per day for short-term parking. You 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.

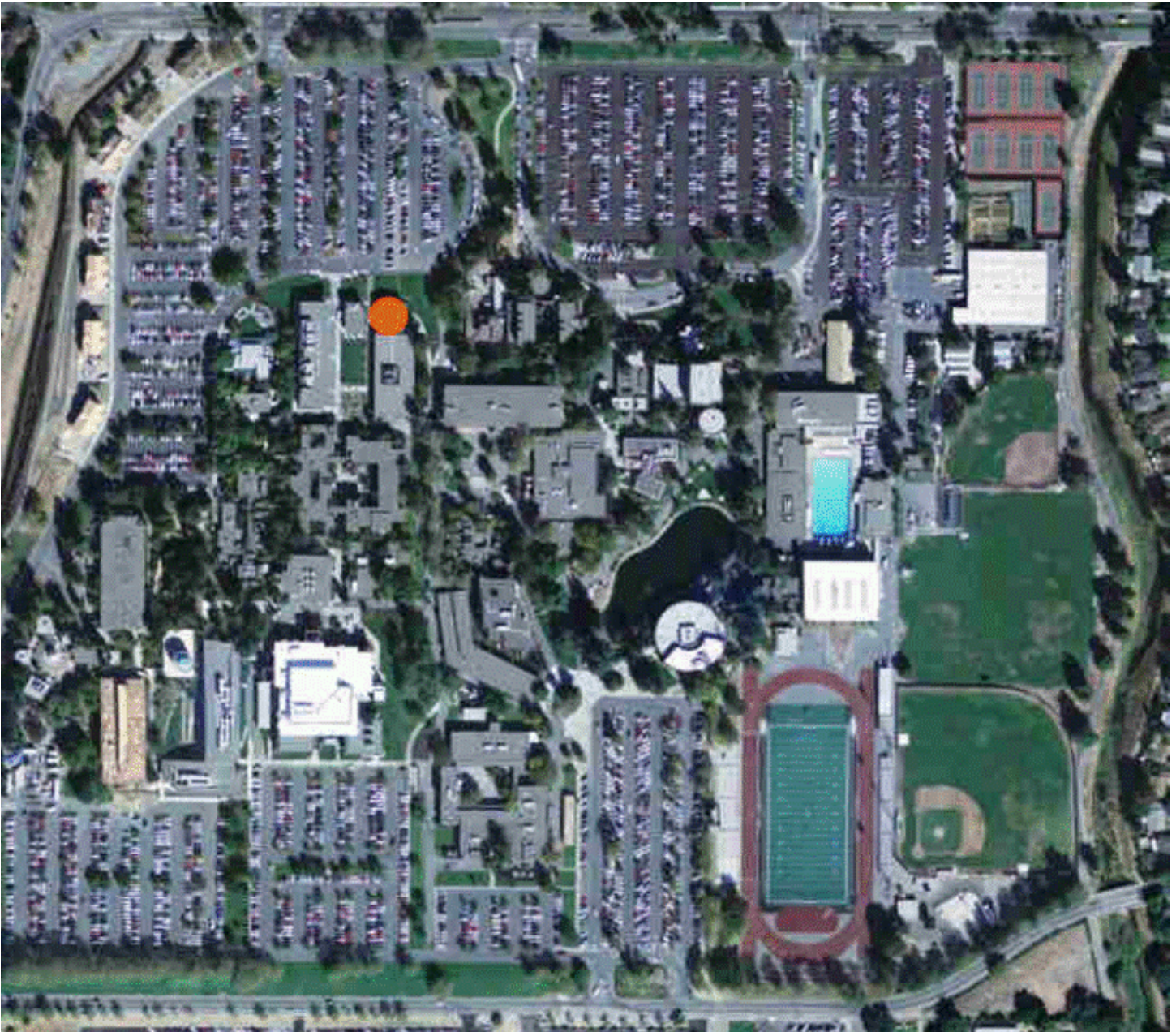
If you attend classes at DVC and have a campus parking permit, you can use it when you attend DVPC meetings. You might want to carpool to save parking fees.

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 monthly meetings are held in room H-109 in the building marked with the red circle)



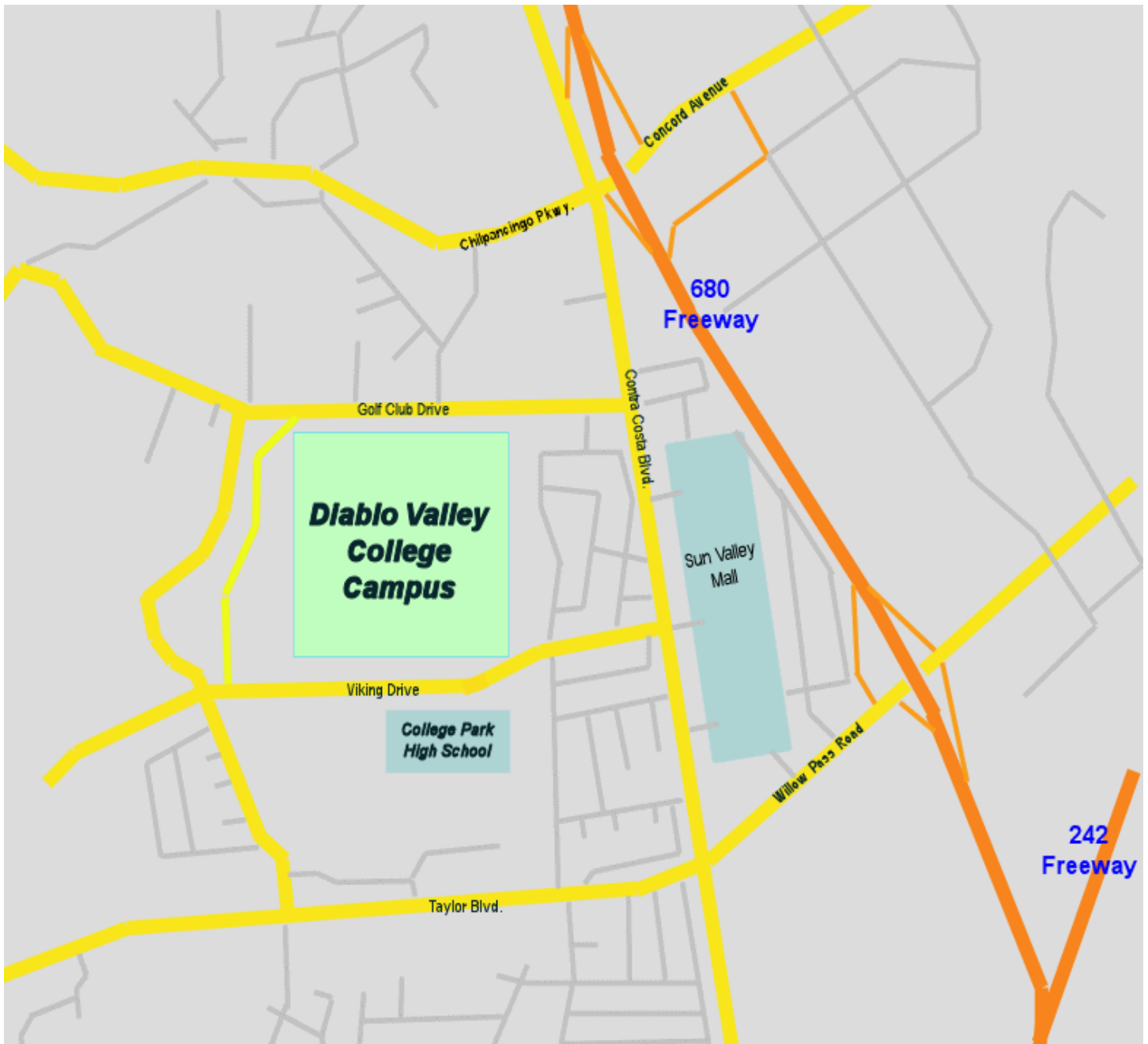
DVPC Winner of APCUG 2004 Awards for Web Site and Diablo Blue by Ron Ogg, DVPC

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.



Map for Driving to the Diablo Valley College Campus

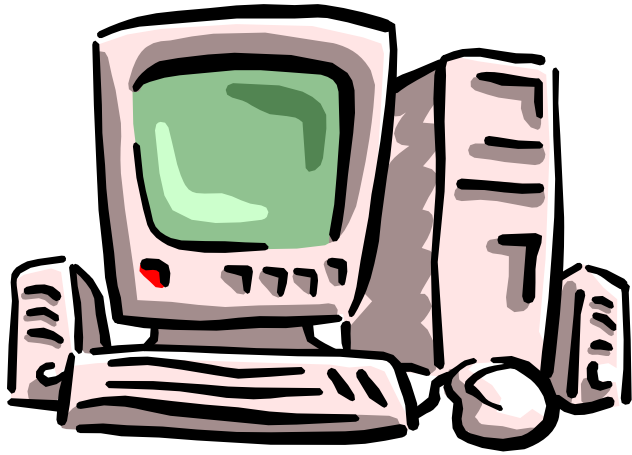


Special Raffle Promotion

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



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

NO ONE STARTS OUT KNOWING HOW TO USE COMPUTERS.

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

BEGIN YOUR EDUCATION WITH PC 101

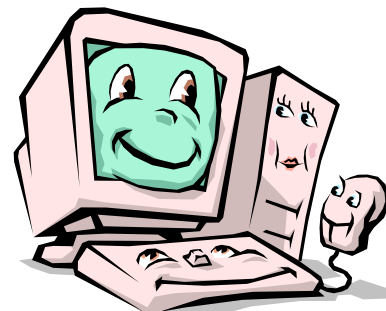
This **FREE** class will help any student who needs basic information on computers. Diablo Valley PC User's Group and Computer Renaissance have joined together to offer all who would like to be introduced to computers, learn more about the basics, or just have a place to ask questions. Come to Computer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

September 10, 2005

PC 101 CLASS: *COMMUNICATION*

This month we will continue the class with "LESSON #4: COMMUNICATION". Ever want to know just how one computer can talk to another? How the Internet works? Or how to access your computer when away?

Join us September 10th from 4 to 6 p. m. as we look at how computers talk to each other and to us.



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 a research facility, please email the group with the details so all 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. **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 7](#) in this issue of *Diablo Blue*.

Photoshop Elements SIG Peggy Johnson (676-7522) and Mel Lundgren (355-0646), SIG Co-Leaders

The newest DVPC SIG is the Photoshop Elements SIG. It's just getting organized, so if you're interested see Peggy or Mel at the next DVPC meeting, or email Peggy at pegszone@aol.com. Everyone interested in digital photography and Photoshop Elements is welcome and encouraged to join the new Photoshop Elements SIG!

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 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 Cowell Road. **There will be no Windows SIG meeting in September because of the Labor Day holiday. See you on October 3!**

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.

29 Useful Bookmarks/Favorites by Richard Johnson, TIGNET

The Web is a marvelous resource, and most of us come nowhere near tapping its full potential. I've attempted here to list 29 web-sites that without any necessary downloading provide exceedingly useful free non-specialized services and tools, that require no particular knowledge except how to navigate the World Wide Web.

1. Time Cave www.timecave.com

2. Memo to Me www.memotome.com

Using these two email reminder services you'll never forget another upcoming activity or event. Time Cave allows you to schedule incoming messages by interval (so many hours, days, weeks, months, or even years away) as well as by date and time. Memo to Me allows editing of content and date. With Time Cave you can choose your own subject line and send reminders to others, but Memo to Me will charge you for those features. On the other hand, Time Cave charges for the ability to repeat messages (monthly, weekly, etc.), standard with Memo to Me.

3. Way Back Machine www.archive.org/web/web.php

Is a website you're seeking no longer around? If it was active as late as 1996, you'll probably find it easily in this huge archive.

4. Centerwatch Clinical Trials www.centerwatch.com

Gives information on more than 41,000 active clinical trials in which you could participate. (Some compensate you handsomely for helping, along with free medical monitoring.) Includes a notification service, for trials in areas of your interest. Also describes the newest drug therapies.

5. Objectgraph Dictionary www.objectgraph.com/dictionary

A combination standard dictionary, technical dictionary, and thesaurus. (There's also a dictionary of chemical elements, of rather limited interest). A unique feature is the site's ability to "read your mind" if you're not sure of the word you're thinking of — or its spelling — or if you just want to save typing.

6. Myway email www.myway.com

An excellent Web-based email provider with an exceptionally clean interface (no banner ads or pop-ups). Unlike the case with competitors like Yahoo mail, Myway will respond to support inquiries. (It also has a terrific weather page — see link #7 following.) [If you prefer Gmail, equally clean-appearing, I can get you an invitation — see my article in the March Keywords.]

7. Myway weather weather.myway.com

The best weather page on the Web. Even though its weather information is from weather.com, you'll see when you use it that the interface is much cleaner (and loading therefore faster) than if you were to bring up either weather.com or one of its competitors. You can personalize the weather according to your home town or zip code; the page you'll want to bookmark is that personalized page

8. Past Weather www.weather.com/activities/other/other/weather/yesterday.html

Use this site to compare today's forecast with yesterday's weather. There's also interesting historical data and a graph showing the weather for the past seven days. The past weather information can easily be compared with the forecast from Myway weather (link #7), which derives its data from the same source.

9. Furl www.furl.net

Bookmarking is useful, but what do you do when you find that a bookmarked page has disappeared (left the Web)? Or maybe it's still there, but — as with many newspaper sites — you can't read it without going to a paid archive. This won't be an issue if you've Furl'd the page. Furl allows you to create a set of special bookmarks that can be easily searched or browsed — or shared with others — but whose contents are permanently stored on your hard drive. (If you feel the need to save parts of a page, try Net Snippets Free at www.netsnippets.com/basic. This does require a download.)

10. Gold Star Events <http://snipurl.com/bl9o>

Gold Star enables admissions to a large variety of live California productions at 50% off or better. After your (free) registration, you'll receive regular email notices of well-described shows in the zip code areas of your preference. There's a small per-ticket service fee, usually between \$3 and \$7.

11. Password Generator <http://mistupid.com/computers/passwordgen.htm>

Random characters compose the safest passwords. This tool will create a password with random characters according to your specifications. On your instructions, will even avoid ambiguous characters [o and 0, 1 and l].

12. Zap2it www.zap2it.com

With Zap2it you can check out both TV and movie schedules. Various options let you permanently personalize each set of listings, to give you just the information you need, in the format you prefer.

13. Acronym Finder www.acronymfinder.com

(Continued on page 10)

29 Useful Bookmarks/Favorites...

(Continued from page 9)

Don't be baffled by acronyms and abbreviations you encounter on the Web and elsewhere. This site offers definitions for over 398,000 such terms. Optional downloading of any of a number of search tools (for various browsers) will allow you to view a definition almost instantly.

14. Restaurant health ratings (LA County) <http://lapublichealth.org/rating>

Avoid traveling to an appealing restaurant only to find that its health rating is below the level with which you're comfortable.

15. Translation Wizard www.faganfinder.com/translate

The Translation Wizard uses other sites' services to ease the process of finding a translation — that otherwise might require visiting ten or more sites to find the language of interest! It also has a neat button to identify a mystery language.

16. Anybirthday <http://anybirthday.com>

A fun site that can divulge your friend's birthday or even tell you where to mail the card.

17. TrackEngine www.trackengine.com

Notifies you via email of changes in Web pages that you select. You can preview the changes or view the whole page via email, with changes highlighted. Choose the Web address of a neighborhood theater, to see what plays are coming up. Or see every new installment of a favorite newspaper column, without having to buy the paper.

18. GovBenefits.gov <http://govbenefits.gov>

A source of information on over 400 government-funded programs that extend benefits for which you may qualify, including compensated volunteering. Features a confidential questionnaire designed to point you to the most likely matches.

19. AddALL www.addall.com

Use this site to find the very best price for a book you want to buy. Unlike most other comparison sites, it figures in shipping costs for your location. Links will take you to pages for magazine subs, music CDs, and videos.

20. Jux2 www.jux2.com

Jux2 lets you receive and compare search results from two or three different search engines, or see what you're missing from your regular search results. (According to the site, competing search engines typically share fewer than 4 out their 10 top results.) Still in development, it's currently limited to Google, Yahoo, and Ask Jeeves.

21. Medem Medical Library www.medem.com/medlb/medlib_entry.cfm

Searchable and browsable medical library, organizing contributions from 45 medical societies. Features a complexity indicator for each article, from "introductory" to "professional."

22. Metacritic www.metacritic.com/film

23. Kids-in-mind www.kids-in-mind.com Metacritic is an excellent source for movie critiques. For each film, it arranges its large variety of reviews from most to least favorable, and then tabulates the opinions, for an overall "metascore." (Additional Metacritic pages cover videos, music, and games.) For evaluating movies for children, or if you have a concern about violence, sex, or profanity, Kids-in-mind will rate and describe each film's content in those three areas.

24. CardRatings <http://cardratings.com>

This site maintains information on over 700 credit cards, and will suggest the best cards in a variety of categories —low or no credit, no annual fee, low interest, rewards/rebates, etc.

25. The California Patient's Guide www.calpatientguide.org

A well-organized extensive guide to Californians' health care rights, and what you can do if they're compromised. Assembled by medical, legal, and consumer experts, and published by the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights.

26 CheckFree www.checkfree.com

There are a host of good reasons for paying your bills online. It saves time, saves the cost of stamps, reduces the chance of late payment, extends the time in which you can use your money, cuts down clutter, eliminates the danger of checks lost in the mail, and facilitates tracking. With CheckFree you'll be able to pay many or most of your bills online, and the service is free to the payers.

27. Bug Me Not www.bugmenot.com

(Continued on page 11)

Give a DVPC Membership Gift Certificate!

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

DVPC Board Meeting Minutes by Tom Krauss, DVPC

When Alan's email appeared August 5 stating that the Board meeting on the 11th would again be at Charlie's house, I was relieved. I have problems remembering what night the meeting is going to be, and having this email meant I would not screw up and arrive on the wrong day, which I do about once every 4-5 months. But panic set in again when Ron sent an email on the 10th asking if, when and where the Board meeting would be. I quickly checked my old email and saw that I had the date right. But in his email Alan suggested we "confirm with him [Charlie] if and when, and I had seen no confirmation. So I sent a note to Ron and copied Charlie, warning him that confirmation or not, I would be there the following night and I expected pizza.

Charlie graciously rose to the occasion and the pizza was great. As a bonus, since half the Board did not show up, we few, the proud, the faithful, were able to pig out.

What we were not able to do was concentrate on Club business, but then we never can do that. Actually, to give ourselves (Ron, Charlie, Dick, Nick and me) the credit we deserve, I believe we spent more time on Club business than the full Board usually does, I think we came darn close to spending 40% of our time talking about the infamous Build-a-Computer project and potential speakers.

I confessed to being vague on the details of the Build-a-Computer project since I was not planning on participating directly, so I asked for a refresher. At the last general meeting a new member indicated some frustration in that perhaps the main reason he joined the club was to participate in this program and purchase/build himself a computer. That was 4-5 months ago and he still did not have a computer, or even a date at which he might have one.

He had a right to be peeved. By now he could have built a computer even if he had to wire the circuit boards himself. It was pointed out that the delays had been because the components of the "kit" were constantly changing, and every change made the package faster, more robust, and frankly more whiz-bang cool. However, if one held off buying a computer until the last improvement were made available, one would never buy a computer. Forget kits. If you buy and fully constructed and operational computer today, there will be a cooler, cheaper one available by the time you get yours home.

Anyway, a tentative schedule was developed for this project, and Dick documented this for us after the meeting. So wake up! The Build-a-Computer project is about to take off! Probably. In a couple of months.

Other items covered include moon.google.com, home construction, how to convert a 386 PC into a high quality audio device and the legendary Crothers family history.

29 Useful Bookmarks/Favorites...

(Continued from page 10)

This site and the one following save you time and trouble while helping you cut down on spam. Bug Me Not keeps on hand log-in data (passwords with user names) for a huge number of sites that require registration. If you want access to such a site (like latimes.com), but don't want to bother registering, just visit the Bug Me Not site and log in easily.

28. Spam Bob <http://evil-wire.luvfeed.org/cache/1269>

Spam Bob offers a choice of three email addresses that you create, to protect your privacy. Anything@spambob.org is a phantom address, messages to which disappear into the ether. Use anything@spambob.com if you'll want to check on a reply message. (This is handy for registrations that require confirmation.) And you may want to use anything@spambob.net for all your correspondents. Mail from each such "net" address can be forwarded to you, and if it starts generating spam, just cancel the forwarding order!

29. Google Maps <http://maps.google.com>

Head and shoulders above the competition, these maps are much larger and far easier to configure. Zooming in and out is quick as a bunny, and re-centering is instantaneous. You can locate by category businesses in the map area, along with their phone numbers. Note that (at least as of this writing) these maps are not implemented in the regular Google search results, which will still point you only to Yahoo and MapQuest maps.

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization (<http://theskillspool.org>). He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. You may reach him at rj@theskillspool.org.

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

Support DVPC — Get a friend to join!

Add a New Dimension To Your Browsing by Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist

It's hard to imagine a different world. A great early science fiction book Flatland [www.eldritchpress.org/ea/FL.HTM] describes life in a two-dimensional world, with creatures unable to imagine the third dimension we take for granted. And modern physics' "string theory" [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant/] speculates that our world really has eleven dimensions.

While I can't imagine those extra dimensions, we spend time in a two-dimensional world every day — it's how most people browse the Web. But even that has changed, as browsers have evolved from displaying one site per window to more flexible tabbed browsing, displaying many Web pages in a single window.

So now it's interesting and fun to take three-dimensional browsing out for a cruise, surfing the Internet, courtesy of Browse3D. This visual-browsing style lets you see forward and backward, where you've been and where you're going. It's great for browsing that involves a lot of forward-and-backward navigation, or that requires following many Web links.

When first started, Browse3D offers abundant helpful tips for use. These can be scrolled all at once or browsed each time the program runs. And built-in Help provides a comprehensive tutorial highlighting features and capabilities.

This tool wraps around Internet Explorer — the vendor calls it a "reverse plug-in" — to display Web pages on multiple walls, shown three dimensionally on our two-dimensional monitors. The main straight-ahead wall is the home view, a browser window controlled by a tool bar. It can be zoomed to occupy the full screen, momentarily hiding the side walls. The left wall shows your browsing history, pages you've visited. It's much easier navigating to these pages visually vs. the usual cryptic

browser back button: simply right click a page to bring it back to the home view.

The right wall is a multi-talented workhorse. It can be automatically filled with pages linked from the current home view, avoiding interrupting current attention while allowing instant jumps to linked pages. A handy use for this is pre-loading top entries in search engine results lists. The right wall can also be used like a corkboard, loaded with pages to be kept handy for quick reference; this is called making it "sticky". And it can be put in "4-live" mode which displays four active browser windows with clickable pages. This allows quick site viewing and comparing, or monitoring multiple auto-updating pages

simultaneously, such as saving/tracking multiple auction items through the sale process. Right-wall pages can be rearranged, scrolled, flipped between Auto Crawl and sticky. And right-wall and sticky contents are separately cleared.

Pop-up window behavior — normally an annoyance — is customizable: ignore, open in new window, open on right wall, open in current browser, or ask for instructions.

An elegant "rooms" feature extends browser bookmarks/favorites, allowing saving and sharing collections of Web pages as single files. Any selected pages can be grouped; you might gather family, recipe, financial, or technical pages. Rooms can hold static pages (content when pages were collected) or dynamic pages (links to pages as they are when the room is viewed). Opening a room displays pages as they were positioned when the room was saved.

Browse3D is easily purchased online and downloaded/installed/registered; a free version lacking a few features is also available. The software requires a relatively powerful PC; it checks operation when installing. But most relatively current PCs should be adequate. Because of how it uses screen space, Browse3D is most impressive on larger monitors.

Company: Browse3D Corporation, Product: Browse3D, Price: Free or \$29.95, URL: www.browse3d.com, Telephone: (888) 444-3200

This article originated on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, www.aarp.org/computers, and is copyrighted by AARP. All rights are reserved; it may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use, or by nonprofit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to AARP. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail Gabe Goldberg at Gabe@gabegold.com when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

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

Beware of File Sharing by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director and Columnist

Most of us have heard about the popular "Peer to Peer" or "P2P" file sharing networks. Countless millions of computer users around the world routinely download copyrighted music, software, videos, and games on these computer networks, as well as from "alt.binaries" newsgroups where users upload complete commercial computer programs, and other intellectual property. Ethicists have long bemoaned such behavior, and representatives of intellectual property right owners have long tried to shut down such activities with lawsuits and other forms of pressure. Such pirates are alleged to have deprived the rightful owners of billions of dollars of revenue. Legal challenges to such practices have met with some success, but the recent US Supreme Court ruling of MGM vs. Grockster has now opened up another avenue. In a statement by US Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, "... that those who actively induce or encourage the theft of copyrighted works may be held liable for their actions. ... Our objective in this operation was to find and dismantle large-scale criminal enterprises that illegally obtain, copy, distribute, and trade in copyrighted software, music, movies, and video games."

(Continued on page 14)

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: 9/30/05

1/2 OFF

1st hour of service

Limit one per household.

Expires: 9/30/05

10% Off

Any Product (in Store) or
Service

Please show your DVPCUG
Membership Card
at the time of purchase

Computer
RENAISSANCE

1936 Linda Drive.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
(925) 827-1200

Hours:

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 Puzzle
by Craig Peterson, DVPC
"Measurement"

OOKSB	
LINEPC	
ERERAS	
ACBCAPKK	
EHSSO	
ULRER	
CSAOMPS	
LAOCURCTLA	
GULE	
PPRAE	
PNE	
BOEOTKN	
NXHUOBCL	
HOTLESC	
TOROPTRRAC	
RACSOYN	
SSIRSSCO	
HILTGIEHHRG	

This month's puzzle, a word jumble, is a list of those things we need to have in order to go to school. For each scrambled word in the left hand column, figure out what the unscrambled word should be and write it in the right-hand column.

If you need help, or want to see the answers, go to www.dvpc.org/solution.html.

Beware of File Sharing...

(Continued from page 12)

Recently, Attorney General Gonzales announced "Operation Site Down", a coordinated international legal and criminal attack on cyber pirates, with law enforcement agencies from the US (the FBI), Canada, France, Belgium, Israel, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, and Germany participating in raids on computer file sharing networks, and arresting individuals allegedly engaging in such intellectual property theft. It is noteworthy that two countries, reportedly the major centers of piracy, Russia and China, were not participating in the crackdown.

Operation Site Down, in its first series of internationally coordinated raids, shutdown or crippled several of the popular file sharing networks, and websites offering pirated materials referred to in cyber circles as "warez" (pronounced "wares"). Among the networks and sites raided were RiSCISO, Myth, TDA, LND, Goodfellaz, Hoodlum, Vengeance, Centropy, Wasted Time, Paranoid, Corrupt, Gamerz, AdmitONE, Hellbound, KGS, BBX, KHG, NOX, NFR, CDZ, TUN, and BHP. Over 70 search warrants were executed in the US, with several arrests reported, while additional raids and arrests were reported in the other cooperating nations. These services were alleged to have been "first providers" who posted the first copies of pirated works, often cracking any copy protec-

(Continued on page 15)

Beware of File Sharing...

(Continued from page 14)

tion or registration schemes integral with such products. Once these services made material available, it tended to show up on warez sites around the world, where millions could then download the material using P2P networks, websites, FTP sites, and other online resources. It is hoped that by raiding these primary sources of illicit intellectual property, that much of the supply of pirated content will be reduced. Attorney General Gonzales stated, "By dismantling these networks, the Department is striking at the top of the copyright piracy supply chain - a distribution chain that provides the vast majority of the illegal digital content now available online."

A variety of online resources have stated that the principles of many of the sites raided were directly behind the cracking and distribution of popular and expensive software such as products from Adobe, AutoCAD, Microsoft and other software publishers, as well as the distribution of recent movies, including "Mr. and Mrs. Smith", and "Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith".

"And by penetrating this illegal world of high-technology and intellectual property theft, we have shown that law enforcement can and will find — and we will prosecute — those who try to use the Internet to create piracy networks beyond the reach of law enforcement.", so said Attorney General Gonzales.

There is more to file sharing than just the legal, moral, and ethical considerations; P2P file sharing has also been a major source of computer problems, as they also often install spyware, viruses, and Trojans on unsuspecting computers. KaZaA, Morpheus, and Grockster, three of the major P2P file sharing networks (there are actually thousands of such pirate networks), have frequently been cited as the vector utilized to infect computers, both with their requisite software, and by the content downloaded from third party participants. Warez sites are also notorious for installing spyware that includes pop-ups with pornographic content, key loggers that can steal identities, dialers that connect to outrageously expensive international locations, and other forms of threatening malware. Websites offering such content are often loaded with active-x based, Java enabled, or other content capable of installing unwanted software on the victim computer, hijacking browsers, redirecting searches and purchases, and other nasty processes.

Operation Site Down, and the MGM vs. Grockster case should put all of us on notice that behaviors that may have been common place in the past should now be halted, lest "we" become civilly and criminally liable for our online actions. I know that many computer users rationalize such actions with excuses such as "(big name software publisher) is rich and won't miss it", or "(big name software publisher) has been ripping us off for so long that it is time for some payback." Just because a file is available in a newsgroup or a website to download does not mean that it is a legitimate "shareware" or "freeware" copy. Most downloaders of such software, music, games, and videos are all too aware that the content is pirated, yet they participate in great numbers.

To the pirates reading this column, or to the parents of children illicitly downloading copyrighted music and other intellectual property, you have been warned. The feds may be looking over your shoulder, and may not like what they can see. All internet users leave an electronic trail that is easy to track; please, do not become a target of a federal investigation and prosecution.

WEBSITE: www.usdoj.gov/ag/speeches/2005/063005operationsitedown.htm

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

Figuring Out How Spammers Get e-Mail Addresses by Dave Gerber, Sarasota PC Users Group

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

Harvesting from the Internet

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

Web spiders: Spammers employ Web crawlers and spiders that harvest e-mail addresses from Web sites. It's common for Web sites to include mailto: URLs

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

Newsgroups: It's a straightforward task to harvest e-mail addresses from Usenet newsgroups: Just pull in a big news feed and ex-

(Continued on page 16)

Figuring Out How Spammers Get e-Mail Addresses...

(Continued from page 15)

tract the e-mail addresses with a simple shell or Perl script. Newsgroup volumes are still increasing exponentially — at a rate of at least several gigabytes per day. This means lots of e-mail addresses are there for the taking. Any spammer with enough bandwidth can slurp up all those bits and just sift out the e-mail addresses.

Groups, blogs, and discussion boards: Yahoo! and Google have their groups and mailing lists, many of which make their members' e-mail addresses available. There are thousands of blogs and discussion boards out there, too, that contain easily acquired e-mail addresses.

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

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

Unsubscribe links: Many spam messages include an opt-out or unsubscribe link so that the recipient can request not to receive more spam. However, often the real purpose of unsubscribe links is to confirm a valid, active e-mail address.

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

Unsubscribe requests: A good number of spam messages contain "unsubscribe me" links that a user clicks to opt out. However, many spam operators actually continue to send spam to e-mail addresses submitted to "unsubscribe me" links. When a user submits such a request, the spammer knows that the address being sent is a valid e-mail address. Do you think they'll actually stop sending spam to a known valid address? Not on your life!

Buying and stealing addresses

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

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

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

Listen to Dave's Bits & Bytes radio show archives at www.davebytes.com; subscribe to his newsletter by sending an e-mail to dave_bytes@comcast.net.

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

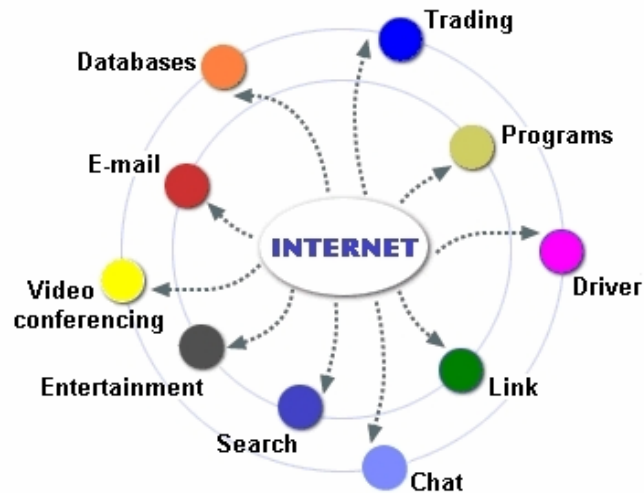
Google Earth Review by Chuck Graham, DVPC

If you have a moderately powerful PC and a broadband connection, you need to know about Google's latest venture. It is called "Google Earth" and it is a stand alone application which you can download at <http://earth.google.com>. After downloading the file GoogleEarth.exe (10MB) double click on it and wait for it to install itself. This will place an icon on your desktop to start the application. Google Earth presents you with an image of the world filling a large part of the screen, menus down the left hand edge and a tool bar along the bottom. At the centre of the tool bar are buttons to move the view point and rotate it left or right. To the left of these is an up/down slider. Click on this and move it up (to the + end). Immediately the world will zoom up towards you and in the bottom right hand corner of the picture you will see your height as you fall towards the earth.

As you drop down to a height of around 10 miles the view blurs and sharpens up as new data is downloaded. Your location may vary but I come out over Lawrence, Kansas - not in the global top ten of places to visit. Check the top left of the screen where you should see the 'Fly to' button highlighted in gold and then find the 'Places' window in the left hand menu. This shows lots of places you might want to visit, so double click one of the places listed such as the "Imperial Palace, Tokyo" and stand back!

(Continued on page 17)

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 as we explore the "wild, wild world of the web".

Please join us at Computer Renaissance, 1936 Linda Drive in Pleasant Hill on Wednesday, September 21st at 6 p. m. This month we will be sharing our best ways to find travel information on the Internet.

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

Google Earth Review...

(Continued from page 16)

The screen flies you across the Pacific and drops you 8500 ft above the palace. Use the slider control on the tool bar to drop down to around a 1000 ft. You can move around by clicking the arrow buttons on the tool bar or simply grab the world and move it (when the cursor is a hand you can hold the mouse button down and move the world!).

Now try moving the slider control on the right of the buttons on the tool bar. Gently move it down and the satellite picture falls back to present a three dimensional view of Tokyo that you can move around and explore. Tokyo is pretty flat so lets go where there are mountains.

Back to the 'Places' window and double click on the Grand Canyon. Drop down to a comfortable height and bring up the 3D view. Wow — you can really lose yourself in those side canyons!

There's far more to this application than can be covered in this article, but the key to how Google will make money are the 'layers'.

These allow you to display directory information such as accommodation, restaurants, coffee houses, bars etc. In addition there are geographical boundaries, 3D buildings (fly through Manhattan), and information supplied by the public (such as the location of Rotary clubs). Google Earth is a platform which will develop over the coming years but there is enough on view right now to amaze and entertain.

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

How to Thank Your Computer User Group Leaders by Phil Shapiro, Capital PC Users Group

If you have found benefit in belonging to a computer user group, there are many ways of thanking the leaders of the group. Sure, you can always walk up to them after a meeting and shake their hand. But there are more meaningful things you can do, too.

You can thank them by moving the club forward in countless small ways. You can drop off membership flyers at the local computer stores and public libraries. You can offer a smile and encouraging word to people who show up to meetings.

You can answer questions on the club's email list. You can ask questions on the club's email list. (Questions are as valuable as answers.) You can exhibit patience with computer beginners -- answering their questions in ways that benefit them the most.

You can offer some computer item you're no longer using to another member of the club. (If you're giving away commercial software, make sure you delete the copy on your own computer.)

You can also spread the word about the club around town. Be careful not to oversell, though. When I explain about the benefits of the local user group, I spell out honestly what the club can offer and can't offer. You would be doing no-one any favors if you raise false expectations in the minds of prospective club members.

You can write an article for the club's newsletter. Articles can be on almost any topic you think would bring value to club members. You don't need to be a computer expert to write an excellent article. Computer beginners have lots of important and interesting things to say. "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few."

You can talk to your local public librarians about the benefits you've encountered in your user group. Librarians are the intellectual hub of any community. You want them to be able to pass on information to anyone who inquires about computer user groups. You might even give them a video showing one of your user group meetings in action -- so they can better visualize and describe the meetings to other community members.

And now here's some unexpected ways you can thank the leaders of the club. You can show up to the club meeting with an unexpected door prize. Perhaps buy a pair of new computer speakers. Some headphones. A computer microphone. (Note Macs use different microphones than Windows computers. Mac users usually use a USB microphone.)

Stop by a bookstore and buy a copy of a new how-to computer book. Or purchase a modest Amazon.com gift certificate as a door prize.

Offer to be a "club driver" -- so if someone calls the club and says there is a sick child or adult who could use a computer at home, you'll be there to deliver that donated computer on behalf of the club. Bring homemade cookies to club meetings (being careful not to leave crumbs for the next people using that meeting space.)

Offer to be a "computer mover," so that if someone in the club isn't able to move their computer from one room of their house to another, you'll be there to help them do that. Or be the modem rescue person, so if someone's modem got zapped by lightning, you be there the next day and connect a replacement modem for them. If they ask you why you did that, tell them that you value them being connected.

You can start a scholarship program for five families/year in your community. Interested families could apply to the club to get a donated computer and 1/2 off the annual dues of the club. (For the first year.) By doing so you're building a ramp to club membership, you're helping the community and you're creating new ways for club members to engage in outreach and publicity.

Get creative in how you thank the leaders of your computer club. Behind the scene many hours of work go into making computer clubs work. Club leaders are not paid a dime. They do it because they get a thrill from seeing people help each other, from people increasing in their learning and computer confidence. Surprise them in the ways you say thanks. You may even want to say: "I'm ready to work. I'd like to offer my time to help." A grateful handshake is a good starting point. A grateful action is an appropriate follow-up. Actions speak louder than words.

Find a need. And then fill it.

The author has benefited from the generosity of people in computer user groups for the past 20 years. He is reachable at www.digitaldivide.net/profile/pshapiro and pshapiro@his.com.

This article was inspired by the actions of the Macintosh Business Users Society of Greater Philadelphia in starting an award program for students at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia -- where this user group meets. Somebody in that club is thinking outside of the box in excellent ways. There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Buy extra raffle tickets and increase your chance of winning -- as you support *DVPC!*

Maintaining Your Downloads by David Garcia, Little Blue PC Club

Having trouble keeping track of your downloaded files? Here's a couple of easy procedures to help you maintain, identify, and document your downloads.

1. Create a "Downloads" Folder & Sub-folders

When downloading files, (for example, you buy some software online, and download it instead of having it mailed) it is a good idea to place all your downloads into a specific folder so that you can always find them when you need them. If you don't already have a folder called "Downloads," or "My Downloads," then you should create one on your hard drive (normally the "C:" drive).

To create a folder on the "C:" drive right-click the Start button on the desktop, then click "Explore" in the popup menu. This will open the Windows Explorer. Left-click the "Local Disk (C:)" icon to highlight it. Then click "File" on the Menu Bar and point to "New." When the fly-out menu opens, click "Folder." A "New Folder" is created on the C: drive. Rename it to "Downloads" or "My Downloads" as you prefer. To rename it just right-click it and select Rename from the popup menu.

Prior to downloading a given file it would also be good, for identification and documentation purposes, to create a sub-folder within the "Downloads" folder that identifies the origin of the download. Give the sub-folder a short name that identifies its origin. For example, if you download some anti-virus software from Symantec, you might name the sub-folder "Symantec." Then when you download the file place it into the Symantec sub-folder within the "Downloads" folder. Any subsequent downloads from Symantec should also be placed into this folder.

Creating the sub-folder is similar to creating the "Downloads" folder. To create the sub-folder you left-click the Downloads folder, click "File" on the Menu Bar, point to "New," click "Folder," and rename it. You should now have a sub-folder within the Downloads folder. The hierarchy should look like this:

Local Disc (C:)

 Downloads (or My Downloads)

 Sub-folder (Whatever you name it)

2. Documenting the Download

When a file is downloaded it usually has a cryptic name like "Abc4205.exe" To further document my downloads, I create a text file within the sub-folder that identifies the download. Within the text file I give a description of what the download is, when I downloaded it, and when I installed it. I give the text file the same name as the downloaded file except for the extension. For example, if I downloaded a file called "Abc4205.exe" from Symantec using the procedure #1 above, it would be in the "Downloads" folder in the "Symantec" sub-folder. I would then create a text file called "Abc4205.txt," and also place it in the "Symantec" sub-folder. In this example, I would have two files within my "Symantec" sub-folder: Abc4205.exe which is the downloaded file and Abc4205.txt which is my description of the downloaded file.

To create the text file left-click the sub-folder name (e.g. "Symantec") once. Click "File" on the Menu Bar and then point to "New." When the fly-out menu opens, click "Text File." A "New Text Document.txt" file will be placed into the subfolder. Rename the file to the download file name (without the "exe" extension). Now double-click the renamed text file to open it with Notepad. Type in your description of the download and save it.

Using the above two procedures gives you an orderly method of maintaining, identifying, and documenting your downloads.

Article rights are reserved. This article may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use by nonprofit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to David Garcia. Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn CO. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail David Garcia at littlebluepcclub@comcast.net when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

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

Why Can't I Just Copy Programs to My New PC? by Brian K. Lewis, PHD, Sarasota PC User Group

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

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

(Continued on page 20)

Why Can't I Just Copy Programs to My New PC?...

(Continued from page 19)

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

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

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

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

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

Faced with this problem, what do you do? The most commonly used solution is to dig out all the original disks for your application software. Find the serial numbers and/or other information needed to do a new installation on your new computer. Once you have the programs installed you can transfer the data files for each application. This gives you a clean install for your software and, if the programs are compatible with the new OS, you will have no problem running your applications.

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

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

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

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

The point of all this is, if you buy a new computer, try to get the dealer to transfer your old software as part of the deal. If you do it yourself, a file copy won't work. You need special transfer software like Move-me or Aloha Bob's PC Relocator. However, if you

(Continued on page 21)

Why Can't I Just Copy Programs to My New PC?...

(Continued from page 20)

don't have a LAN connection between your computers, expect to spend 1 hour per gigabyte for a USB 2.0 transfer and much, much more time with a parallel port transfer.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail: [bwsail at yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com).

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

WiFi Internet and Network Availability by Ira Wilsker, APCUB Director and Columnist

Recently, one of my daughters called me from a major city, and asked me where she could find some free "hotspots" or wireless "Wi-Fi" locations where she could get free broadband wireless internet access. She gave me her street address, and within moments I found several nearby locations where she could access the internet for free using the wireless "802.11b" PCMCIA card she had with her notebook computer. She told me which hotspot she selected, and I gave her the "SSID", or "Service Set Identifier", a simple code, usually a name, that identifies a local hotspot.

I recently purchased a new notebook computer for another daughter, and this computer came with an Intel Centrino chipset, which provided integral wireless internet access, where ever available, whether at home or on the road. As she travels around town, at school, or away from home, she can likely access the internet at high speeds.

I travel extensively, and always take my notebook computer with me, as I often find it necessary to check my email, find restaurants, or locate other information on the internet. Through experience, I have found that many hotels, restaurants, airports, and other locations offer wireless broadband internet access either for a fee, or for free. Now before I leave home, I check a website www.jwire.com, or its twin sister site supported by Intel, intel.jwire.com, to determine what wireless access is available enroute, or at my destination.

Jwire.com is one of the leading interactive directories of publicly available wireless internet locations, typically using one of the industry standard 802.11 protocols. Standardization, as well as substantial downward compatibility, has ensured that almost all computers equipped with 802.11 type wireless internet hardware can effectively communicate at broadband speeds. As I type this, Jwire is listing almost 70,000 public access wireless hotspots around the world. The Intel companion site lists almost

30,000 wireless hotspots in the U.S., and about 40,000 international wireless hotspots. According to the Intel site, the top U.S. cities for public wireless are New York City with over 550 public access locations, followed by Chicago (434 public wireless locations), San Francisco (412), and Seattle (320). Texas is well represented in the top 10 most "unwired" cities with 309 public hotspots in Houston, 250 in Austin, and 192 in Dallas. California is listed by Intel as the state with the most public access with over 5000 locations, followed by Texas with almost 2000 hotspots, Florida with about 1800, and New York with over 1600 public hotspots. It should be emphasized that these numbers are only the wireless sites that allow public access, either for free (sometimes with some strings attached) or for a fee, and does not include the millions of sites that are private wireless networks. The listing also does not include many of the hotel chains that offer free wireless access to registered guests.

Many of the free sites listed are local restaurants, some hotels, many airport terminals, RV parks, and other locations. All it takes to access these totally free and public sites is the SSID of the wireless host and appropriate hardware; the Jwire sites list the SSID's of the public sites. When the wireless access on the notebook computer is activated, the wireless networks within range can be identified, and if accessible, the SSID can be entered, and connections established. It is important that from a personal security standpoint, these public connections are not often encrypted, and can be "sniffed" or picked up by anyone with suitable equipment; sensitive information, passwords, banking, and other critical information should never be sent on an insecure public network.

In addition to the free sites, there are many thousands of publicly accessible but commercial (fee based) hotspots, often in coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, bookstores, some airport terminal areas, and other locations. These hotspots either require a subscription to a service, such as a cellular phone company or other third party, or a daily or hourly fee for access. Generally, since these pay services require some type of access code, they are slightly more secure than the free public sites, but are still usually accessible to a hacker with commonly available but illicit software. Again, it is a good practice not to type any sensitive personal information while on a publicly accessible wireless network. Some of the commercial hotspots offer "WEP", or wireless encryption protocol, which makes it more difficult for unwelcome third parties to listen in on internet communications, but the methods for

(Continued on page 22)



Tired of Spam?

Go to www.dvpc.org to download QURB!

WiFi Internet and Network Availability...

(Continued from page 21)

cracking WEP have been widely published, and are now only considered to provide marginal security.

One warning about wireless internet access; it is illegal to access a wireless network without the consent of the owner, despite the fact that studies have indicated that about 80% of all private wireless networks, both workplace and home based, are not adequately protected, and can easily be picked up and accessed by anyone who wants access. A popular hacker method of gaining "free" broadband internet access is driving around town with a notebook computer with 802.11 hardware, and logging the wireless networks found, with those same networks often broadcasting the SSID necessary for

access. This practice is called "wardriving". In major cities, marks are drawn on sidewalks and the outside walls of buildings in a similar escapade, "warchalking" where SSID's and other relevant information is written for all to see, and access. Locally, in a security demonstration, a security consultant drove around the business district of town, and logged hundreds of wireless networks, 80% of which were easily accessible, as they were not properly secured. These included such sensitive locations as banks, law offices, retail stores, medical facilities, and other choice locations for hackers to penetrate.

Use the Jwire sites to find wireless access, as I do, but be totally aware of the risk and security implications of broadcasting critical information. There are a variety of hardware and software utilities that can be utilized to harden wireless access, and some of those will be discussed in a future column.

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

SanDisk SD Card is Also a USB Flash Drive from SanDisk Corporation

SanDisk® Corporation (NASDAQ:SNDK) has introduced the SanDisk Ultra™ II SD™ PLUS, an innovative SD flash memory card with built-in USB connectivity. The new card, which works seamlessly in any SD card slot, also can be used as a high-speed USB 2.0 flash drive. The new dual-functionality device has been added to the SanDisk Ultra II product line, a family of high-performance flash memory cards with write speeds of 9 megabytes (MB) per second and read speeds of 10MB/sec.



Tanya Chuang, SanDisk retail product marketing manager, said, "The new Ultra II SD PLUS, which can be used in a wide variety of SD-based products — including digital cameras, PDAs, camcorders and camera phones — means greater convenience and cost savings for consumers. Now, to transfer data, images, audio or video between computers, digital cameras and other electronic devices, you don't need a card reader, cables or card adapters. Just flip the card to engage the USB connector and

simply plug the Ultra II SD PLUS into any USB port. And the card also features an LED that blinks when data transfer is taking place to indicate that the card is being used as a USB flash drive. Our advanced mechanical design eliminates the need for a removable cap, which can be lost, and gives consumers a dual functionality card that is fully SD compliant. We believe that the Ultra II SD PLUS will be a much more popular product than any similar device on the market because it is an SD card and SD has become the dominant standard for flash memory cards."

The Ultra II SD PLUS, which is in stores, initially will be available in two capacities—512MB and one gigabyte. The 512MB card will have a suggested retail price of \$109.99 and the 1GB version will carry a suggested price of \$149.99. The Ultra II SD PLUS is targeted primarily at the professional digital camera and prosumer market where 4 mega-pixel or higher resolution digital cameras are requiring significantly faster flash memory film cards. The Ultra II product line allows photographers to quickly capture high-resolution images and take advantage of the advanced features available today in high mega-pixel digital cameras.

SanDisk is the original inventor of flash storage cards and is the world's largest supplier of flash data storage card products using its patented, high-density flash memory and controller technology. SanDisk is headquartered in Sunnyvale, CA and has operations worldwide, with more than half its sales outside the U.S.

Sharing Your World by Vinny Labash, Sarasota PC Users Group

If the thought of overcoming technical hurdles has deterred you from creating your own web-based journal, stop fretting. Modern web tools make creating your own blog easier than it's ever been. The term blog is nothing more than a shortened version of weblog. The term "weblog" was created by Jorn Barger in December 1997, and Peter Merholz introduced the short version "blog" in 1999. Blog came to be interpreted also as a verb, to blog, meaning "to edit or post to one's weblog."

Electronic communities existed long before people discovered the internet. The AP wire was similar to a large chat room where there were electronic discussions. Another pre-web electronic community, ham radio, allowed individuals who set up their own broadcast equipment to communicate with others directly. Ham radio also had logs called "glogs" that were personal diaries. The concept is hardly new.

Most individuals who use the internet have been like audiences watching TV, passive consumers of content, not active creators. Those who wanted to become content authors either hired someone to do it for them or went the professional design route, involving applications such as Dreamweaver and FrontPage. Those with little technical background also had to cope with the complexities of File Transfer Protocol. These proved to be formidable barriers. Not only did this remove web publishing from most of the people, it created a high priesthood of webmasters and web designers. Even those with strong technical abilities were faced with content management headaches as their sites grew larger.

The only tool an ordinary person had to communicate with others on the web was email. Since web browsers are totally unsuitable for content creation, alternate tools such as Outlook and Eudora were fashioned. Email was the force that made the web the playground of the common folk. Its very success may be the cause of its undoing because email is in danger of being strangled by spam.

The world's most gigantic digital conversation was born six years ago when blogger.com was started. At first, hardly anyone noticed. Thousands of web sites come and go all the time, but blogger.com offered something unique. Anyone who wanted one could have a free blog. There was no charge to access the blog creation tools, and the site provided free space to anyone who wanted to host a blog. Once discovered, millions logged on and created their own web logs.

Blogs have changed the way educational institutions do research. Traditional journalists have been blasted out of their comfort zones, being continually challenged to defend their printed statements. They are now being held to the same standards of accountability they have long demanded from others. Families are using blogs to keep in touch in ways that were never before possible. Politicians and political organizations are using blog sites to raise funds.

Corporate entities are using blogs to find out what excites customers, and to track what they really think about the company and why. Wisely used, blogs could become the ultimate marketing tool, free of all the negativity associated with spam.

Starting your own blog is no longer a formidable task. If you are simply curious and want to see what it's like to have your own blog, the only investment you need to make is your time. If you have an irrepressible urge to share your ideas, philosophy, comments or conclusions with everyone else on the planet, you are merely a few short easy steps away.

(Continued on page 24)

This and That compiled by Ron Ogg, DVPC

Here's a couple of web sites for you to check out from Lynne Hansen of DVPC:

This is good reading and can help you keep some of the nasties out of your computer:

<http://research.microsoft.com/rootkit/#Introduction>

If you haven't downloading Google Earth, by all means check it out:

<http://earth.google.com/>

Ron Ogg has found an interesting site for space buffs:

You can read about Google Earth elsewhere in this issue of *Diablo Blue*, but you should also take a look at <http://moon.google.com>. The locations of the Apollo moon landings have markers. Double click on one of the markers which will center that landing site in the window, then zoom in step-by-step to see fantastic details of the moon's surface. You won't see any equipment left at a landing site when you zoom in to the maximum, but you've never seen a view of the moon's surface that is as detailed as this is. Highly recommended!

Please note: We are once again meeting in room H109 in the Humanities Building. This change (from MA101 in the Mathematics building) was required to accommodate summer session classes. In the Fall semester we'll probably move back to MA101 – or maybe some other room! Until then, please check the maps on pages 4 through 6 of each issue of Diablo Blue!

Sharing Your World...

(Continued from page 23)

Pay homage to the original by visiting www.blogger.com and follow directions. Another direction is to go to Google and search on "starting a blog". Your only difficulty will be deciding when, not how, to start.

Wireless Instant Messaging by Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist

I love technology competition. Having multiple ways to meet a need gives consumers choices; it also encourages vendors to innovate, rather than offering take-it-or-leave-it products.

Being accustomed to PC-based instant messaging (IM), and not enjoying queuing up for Internet access, I was intrigued by wireless IM letting people communicate and have IM-fun without occupying prime family "real estate" — the PC. Zipit and IMfree, taking different approaches to do this, may eliminate your family traffic jams. There's no monthly fee with either device.

Both handheld devices have almost-normal keyboard layouts but are too small for touch typing. They're good for thumbing or index-fingering and will be quickly comfortable for anyone used to cell phone text messaging. Multi-line displays, scrollable one line-at-a-time, are mostly very readable, except for the way that IMfree displays screen names with messages: hard-to-read white-on-black text with sender/receiver distinguished by upper and lower case letters.

On both devices, slightly odd shift keys allow entering capital letters and numbers/symbols (which don't appear on usual keys); it's all easy to get used to. IMfree sends twelve specific smileys (emoticons like ;-) for winking) with button combinations; Zipit allocates three buttons to specific smileys and allows setting three others to your choice of symbols — though they're hard to distinguish. Or you can just enter characters to form smileys!

My wife called both devices "cute", liking Zipit because it has a lid protecting screen/keyboard and IMfree because it has a modern look.

More significant is how the units communicate. IMfree includes software and a base station which plugs into a PC USB port; handheld range is about 150 feet. Zipit uses a WiFi network with a range of about 300 feet. (If you don't know what WiFi is, you probably don't have it. It adds to Internet connectivity, typically cable or DSL. It's also

available in "hot spots" like coffee shops.)

IMfree base stations can talk to seven handhelds at once and handhelds can move among base stations, and many Zipits can access a WiFi network at once, so they're both great for at-home IMfests or using IM when visiting or traveling. Unfortunately, IMfree handhelds aren't sold without base stations.

Both devices can carry on multiple conversations. You select IMfree conversations with instant button pushes; Zipit conversations are selected from a pop-up scrollable buddy list, slightly less convenient. If you're switching among conversations, be careful to send messages to the person you intend!

IMfree supports only AOL Instant Messenger (AIM); Zipit supports AIM, MSN, and Yahoo. IMfree supports chat rooms and has flexible/powerful parental controls; Zipit only supports instant messaging and lacks such controls. IMfree conversations are private, not shared with the base PC, unless the IM account is also logged on there. A screen name can't be logged on to Zipit and a PC at the same time so Zipit dialogues are private.

Both devices were impressively simple to install. Each has a clear manual, worth reading for learning features and many customization options (alert sounds, display settings, etc.). Neither screen is backlit; they're both reasonably easy to read in normal lighting. Zipit's lid-mounted screen is easy to angle for best viewing.

Both powerful units share and can modify buddy lists (but Zipit can't create a screen name; you must have or visit a PC for that). On both, idle buddies are flagged and you're notified by tone and visual indicator if a message arrives from a conversation not currently displayed. Zipit comes in many tasty colors and promises automatic updates adding features such as streaming music.

There's a great bottom line to this story: I liked both these low-cost devices and they're different enough to fit a variety of needs. So have fun with your IM, wherever your keyboard and handheld may take you.

Company: Motorola, Product: Motorola Personal Instant Messenger Mx240 (IMfree), Price: \$50 or less online — shop around! URL: broadband.motorola.com/consumers/products/imfree/

Company: Aeronix Consumer Media Systems, Product: Zipit Wireless Messenger, Price: \$100, URL: www.zipitwireless.com

This article originated on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, www.aarp.org/computers, and is copyrighted by AARP. All rights are reserved; it may be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, for single use, or by nonprofit organizations for educational purposes, with attribution to AARP. It should be unchanged and this paragraph included. Please e-mail Gabe Goldberg at gabe@gabegold.com when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

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