



Hendersonville Area Computer Society Newsletter

<http://hacs.org>

Volume 2 No. 1

January 2008



Meetings are held twice a month, January through November. We meet at the Opportunity House on the third Monday of the month with an educational meeting at 6:30 pm followed by a featured speaker presentation at 7:30 pm. Our SIG group normally meets the second Thursday of each month from 1-3 PM at the Henderson County Library.



GENEALOGY SIG Meeting
Thursday January 10th
1 to 3 PM at the Hendersonville Library
in the Kaplan Auditorium

DNA and your Genealogy by Maurice Sarles



Monday January 21st
Opportunity House

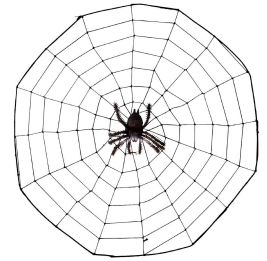
Start the New Year with a great set of programs!!

6:30 PM Education Program with Brian

7:30 PM Open up your Digital World – Windows Vista and Windows Live, a Microsoft “Mindshare Presentation” to be given by Lamar Miller



Web sites of the Month



Speech Recognition via BrightHub

<http://www.brighthub.com/review/Microsoft/GlenSalzman/article/232.html>

Frequently asked questions blog

<http://itfaqs.blogspot.com/2007/10/what-is-new-in-windows-live-mail-beta.html>



The New, The Best, and The Worst - November 2007

Collected by Pim Borman, Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc

<http://swipcug.apcug.org/>
Swipcug(at)gmail.com



*You WILL Be
Disrupted...
Resistance Is
Futile!*

Disruptive Open Source Programs.

The prestigious British weekly news magazine, *The Economist*, carries a 14-page special report on Innovation in its October 13th, 2007 issue. As you might expect it is about innovation in entrepreneurship, not the kind associated with the name Edison and symbolized by a light bulb. Besides, Edison did not invent light bulbs but only improved them to make them practical and marketable.

Of the different kinds of entrepreneurial innovation the articles discuss, a particular one caught my attention. Referring to Clayton Christensen, author of *The Innovator's Dilemma - When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*, *The Economist* writes: "... even successful firms can get into trouble by trying to please their best customers. Because there may be only a handful of highly profitable, high-end buyers who want and can afford more features and better performance, firms can invest heavily in trying to deliver what this elite group wants, even though the resulting products may end up being beyond the reach of the majority of customers." That opens the door to producers of "inferior" but perfectly adequate, lower priced products to compete successfully and to delegate the incumbents to market niches. Christensen calls this "disruptive" innovation, as opposed to innovation due to product improvements or novel marketing techniques. As examples he mentions how personal computers took over most of the tasks of IBM's mainframes and Digital Equipment's mini-computers and how Nucor's highly efficient mini-mills outdid US Steel's blast furnaces.

Another such disruptive innovation that comes to mind is the development of Open Source software in competition with expensive, overly elaborate programs currently in use by the majority of computers in the Western world. Most users of MS Word never use, or even know or care about, its many arcane features and could save themselves a lot of money by using the free OpenOffice.org's Writer that has most of the same features. Even simpler, but perfectly adequate text processors are available for free, such as Abiword. The OpenOffice suite also includes perfectly adequate offsets for most users of MS Excel spreadsheet, PowerPoint presentation manager, Database, and Drawing programs. Recently IBM announced that it would open up its Corel Office suite, and in particular the powerful Lotus spreadsheet program, to the Open Source community and participate in Open Source program developments. Firefox already has taken over a large corner of Microsoft Internet Explorer's browser market, based on its simplicity, ease-of-use, and the perception that it is less susceptible to virus attacks. The Thunderbird email program is giving MS Outlook Express a run for its money with easy plug-in access to spell checkers in multiple languages and the expectation of greater safety in everyday use.

Most of the powerful image manipulation features provided by the expensive Adobe Photoshop program are available for free in The Gimp, another Open Source program free for the downloading. Many free programs are available to convert documents back and forth to PDF format, long the carefully preserved domain of the expensive Adobe Acrobat program. There are long lists of other Open Source programs capable of performing just about any function required by users, including an excellent simple checkbook and bookkeeping program, GNUCash and a good genealogy program, GRAMPS. Interestingly, almost all Open Source programs run just as well in Linux, without the need to invest in the performance-hogging, malware-susceptible, expensive MS Windows operating systems, Vista in particular.

Open Source programs, including the Linux operating system, are making only slow inroads in the Western world, especially the USA, due to the overwhelmingly strong marketing legacy exerted by Microsoft. The rest of the world, in which the USA seems to occupy an ever-diminishing niche, is less overwhelmed by Microsoft and mostly can't afford its expensive, excessively complex products. Open Source programs are widely used in Asian countries like India and China, and stand to gain further in features and reliability due to inputs from highly capable local programmers. Those countries are only now entering the computer age with literally billions of potential computer users about to acquire their own systems. There is no question what software those new computers will use. Meanwhile, in the Western world Open Source programs have found early adaptors amongst government offices at several levels with limited financial resources for software, that have growing needs for use in computers that are already available at low cost.

It may take some time, but the advance of Open Source software is unstoppable because it makes perfect sense. Smart major computer companies, such as IBM and Sun Microsystems, recognize this and have decided to switch, rather than fight. Microsoft, mostly dependent on software sales, may well end up being disrupted like the lamplighters of long ago. Tux, the Linux mascot, might paraphrase the Borg, the StarTrek cyborgs that "assimilated" whole planet populations: "You WILL Be Disrupted... Resistance is Futile." (*Thanks to Louis Ritz for The Economist*)

Thermal Color Printing

Thermal printers, still used in cash registers, have been around for about 50 years. They print in black-and-white on special paper using rows of heaters to activate the ink. They are sturdy, small and inexpensive since the only moving parts are there to advance the paper.

Scientists at Zink Imaging have developed heat-activated inks in the three complementary colors, cyan, magenta, and yellow, needed to generate full-color images. The dyes used are expected to be stable over time and are still being improved. A hand-held printer will be available by year-end. 2x3 inch sheets of paper will sell for about \$2.00 per 10-pack.

Expensive still, but a promising development. Over time the prices are certain to come down (*Chem.&Eng. News, 9/10/2007*)

© 2007 Willem F.H. Borman. This article may be reproduced in its entirety only, including this statement, by non-profit organizations in their member publications, with mention of the author's name and the Southwestern Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).


Tweak Your PC to Keep It Running Fast, Feeling Good and Looking Young!
By Lou Torraca, President MOAA Computer User Group, HI
www.the-tug.org
[Af06hi\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:Af06hi(at)gmail.com)

Last week, I was explaining to a friend that I am a quick launch toolbar aficionado {:-)

What the heck is that he asked. I said I was just referring to the fact I use it instead of the desktop to keep all my shortcuts, actually, lots of shortcuts, at least on my main PC. As we continued to talk about this I found myself explaining a lot of stuff I have done with my PCs and notebook in the past 6 or 8 years! An obvious question came up: "where do you come up with these things?" At that point I explained I call these "things...tweaks" and they come from dozens and dozens of places including many newsletters, also some regular blogs, newspapers, radio shows, other PC users I talk with and of course, the real biggie, MICROSOFT! Yup, their knowledge base contains millions of tips, solutions and you guessed it...TWEAKS! Our conversation ended with a suggestion that I put some "tweaks" in my column, so what follows are some that I like. But first, a reminder, whenever you decide to play, experiment, alter, or as I say, "tweak" an otherwise functioning computer, either do a backup first, or at least, set a restore point you can return to if what you do doesn't work out for you. If you don't know how to do that, click on start and then help and support and then choose index and type in system restore.

At the end of this list, I have a couple speed tweaks which I advise should only be used by advanced users, and you will also see I advise again to backup or set a restore point. With that in mind, here is my list.



The area that sits between the start button and the tray (with the clock), on the bottom of your screen, is called the Taskbar.

I think one of the best additions you can make to your Taskbar is the Quick Launch Toolbar. Quick Launch gives you fast access to Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, and it includes a Show Desktop icon. It's really easy to open your Quick Launch Toolbar.

Right-click the Taskbar, click on Toolbars, and choose Quick Launch. The Quick Launch Toolbar now appears on your Taskbar right next to your Start button. You'll find the Quick Launch Toolbar very useful and to move all the icons you have on your desktop, just drag and drop them on the QL taskbar. You can play around with it and also expand it if need be. After you drag an icon there, you can delete it off your desktop so you have a neat looking space where I put different pictures every week or so. To be really neat, I hide the whole thing so it automatically disappears until I Point at it with my mouse. Right click on start, properties, taskbar and check auto hide.

If you can copy or move things to a folder, keeping information on your computer more organized is easier. Here is how to add copy or move to a folder to Windows Explorer. Open Windows Explorer (not Internet Explorer) by clicking on Start and then on My Documents. Next, click on an empty area of the standard button bar, the one that starts with the Back button. Last, click on customize. In the available toolbar buttons: list, click on copy to and then click on add to add it to the current toolbar buttons list. Click on Close to complete the customization work. Now the next time you click on a file or folder, the Move to and Copy to folder buttons will appear

If you ever have the need to copy both files and folders to a CD, as in backing up your important information, here's an easy way to do it. Click on Start, and then click on My Computer. Now right-click on your hard drive (usually drive c:) and click on Explore. Now you have a complete list of the files and folders on that drive. Click on any file or folder, and then, while holding down the Ctrl key, click on any other file or folder you wish to copy to a CD/DVD. When you have finished, click on edit, copy to folder. From the list provided click on the CD/DVD R/W

(Read/Write) drive you want to send your selection to, and then click Copy at the bottom of that small window. This will result in a folder with those items waiting to be copied. Put in a CD/DVD and click on write these files to CD to the left.

Windows XP has several utilities programs that manage various aspects of XP. You can run any of these utilities by using them as "run" commands. Click on Start, and then click on Run. In the Open: box, type one of these shortcuts and press the Enter key or click OK. control Opens Control Panel clipbrd Opens Clipboard Viewer notepad Opens simple text editor wordpad Opens Word-like text editor compmgmt.msc Computer management devmgmt.msc Device manager diskmgmt.msc Disk management dfg.msc Disk defrag eventvwr.msc Event viewer fsmgmt.msc Shared folders gpedit.msc Group policies lusrmgr.msc Local users and group perfmon.msc Performance monitor rsop.msc Resultant set of policies secpol.msc Local security settings services.msc Services. (Run shows up when you have classic menu selected.)

MY COMPUTER EX GRAPHIC

I use My Computer, which shows me all of the drives on my computer, like the floppy drive (A:), the Hard Drive (C:), and others that include DVD and CD drives and removable drives, all the time. Having My Computer show a menu of it's items as your mouse pointer touches the My Computer link on the start menu is a quick way to get to what you want. To set this up, right-click on the start button, and then click on properties. Click on the customize button and then open the advanced tab. In the start menu items window, scroll down to my computer, and click next to display as a menu. Now click on OK, and again on OK. (This one is the opposite of the one above in that you need to select start menu instead of classic.)



TRAY GRAPHIC



That little area to the right at the bottom of your desktop can get pretty crowded. One way to get more space is to do away with the clock. You can eliminate the clock by right clicking on any blank section of the Task bar, and then clicking on Properties. On the Taskbar tab, click on the checkmark next to "Show the clock" and finally click OK. You can also check the hide inactive icons box to gain a bit more space.

When you click on Start and open My Computer, you have to right-click on a drive and then click Explore to get the "Explore" view of that drive. If you simply double-click on that drive, you get the drive's contents. The Explore view is better because you can work with folders in the left pane and folder contents in the right pane.

To have My Computer open the contents of a drive in the Explore view, from within My Computer click on Tools and then on Folder Options. Open the File Types tab and then click on (NONE) Folder, to highlight it. Now click on the Advanced button, make sure Explore is highlighted, and then click the Set Default button. Click OK, and then click Close.

Now when you open a drive in My Computer it will display in the Explore mode.

Your my documents folder in windows XP holds, by default, your documents, the My Pictures folder and the My Music folder. For most of us, the My Documents folder holds everything you use most.

To make the contents of that folder invisible to nosy folks, do this: Click on Start and right-click on My Documents. Now click on Properties, and then open the General tab. Click in the box next to Hidden in the attributes section and click ok. Now click on Apply, Select "Apply changes to this folder, subfolders and files," and click ok.

This is not encryption, it just makes it harder for a casual user to open your private folders. When you want to view all files again, just reverse the process.

Speeding up your PC is always something most of us think about and the following tweaks are intended to do just that for your XP Pro operating system, but beware, these are intended for advanced users and involve using the registry...not recommended for the faint at heart! Before even considering them, do a registry backup- Here's how:

Modification of Windows Registry files, which contain settings and other information Windows needs to operate with is risky if you don't take care. Make a mistake here can cause your PC to stop working. So it makes perfect sense to make a back-up copy of your registry files before you attempt any modifications. Create a batch file to back up your Registry, and then automate the process with an icon on your Desktop.

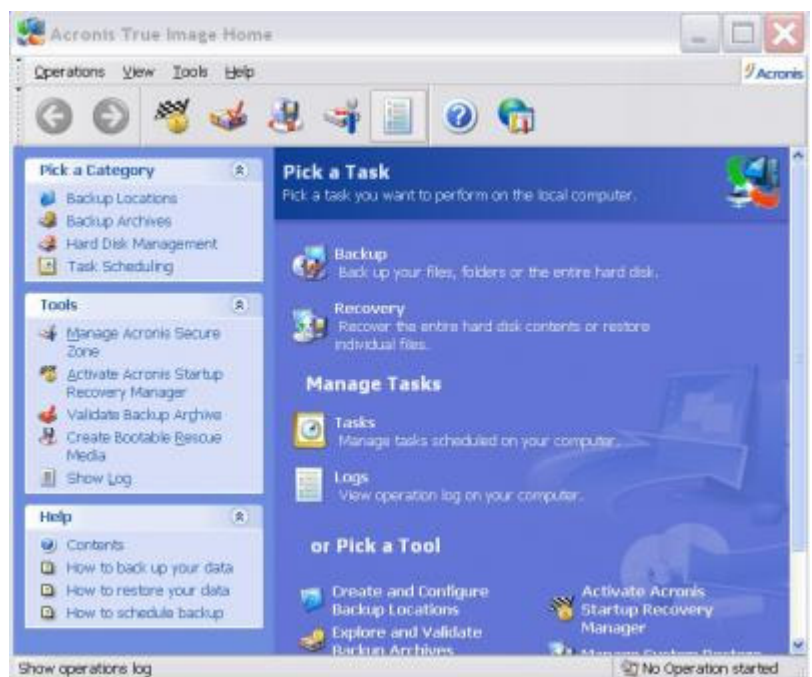
Click on Start, Run, and then type NOTEPAD. Click OK or press the Enter key. Now you have Notepad open to a blank page. Type "Regedit /E C:\AAAA" (without the quotes) and press the Enter key. Now click on File on the menu bar at the top of the Notepad window, and then click on Save As. In the Save As window, click in the box next to File Name: and type c:\windows\system32\REGBACKUP.BAT. Now click on the down arrow to the right of the Save as type: box and select All Files. Click on the Save button, and close Notepad. To create a shortcut to the registry backup, right-click on the Desktop, click on New and then on Shortcut. At the cursor type c:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\REGBACKUP.BAT and click on Next. Now type: Registry Backup and click on Finish.

If you want to change the icon for your new shortcut, right- click on it and click Preferences. Click on the Change Icon button, click Ok when the Change Icon window opens, and then double-click on the icon you want to use. Click OK

Another way to be sure you are safe is to backup your complete computer using either True Image (my favorite) or Ghost...both of which completely copy an image of your entire computer. Also, do a system restore point (see the help menu for how to) this may be the quickest way to go back to where you were if you have problems, but if not, the True Image or Ghost backup will do the trick.

HELP GRAPHIC

Here's a way to make XP even faster, by making sure that Operating System functions stay in memory (RAM), because memory is much faster than your hard disk. Try this: Click on Start, on Run, and then type REGEDIT and click OK or press the



Enter. The word REGEDIT is not case-sensitive. Now double-click on HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE. Drill down by opening System\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager\Memory Management. Right-click on the DisablePagingExecutive entry located in the right pane (side) of your screen and select Modify. In the Edit DWORD Value dialog box, type the number "1" (without the quotes) in the Value data field. Click OK and then close the Registry Editor. Finally, make sure you don't have any open programs, and restart your computer so that the change you made can take effect.

Lastly, it seems that our Windows XP computers just get bogged down with stuff we don't want or use. One way to get more performance out of your computer is to disable the "last access/update" feature. The NTFS file system in Windows XP maintains last access/update details for each file and directory on your computer's hard drive. This information is useful sometimes but for most of us, this may not be of much use most of the time. This process takes a lot of resources from your computer, so it may make sense to disable it. Once you have done that, you'll still have access to last modified information for files and folders. Here's what you need to do. Click on Start, Run, and at the prompt type REGEDIT and press the Enter key. Now click to open HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE, and then drill down by clicking on SYSTEM and then on CurrentControlSet, Control and finally on FileSystem. On the right side of the Regedit screen, look for the data key "NtfsDisableLastAccessUpdate."

Double-click on that key and then just set its value to 1. Click OK to save the change and then close the Registry Windows. The next time you boot-up, this change will take place and give you a bit more performance from your Windows XP computer. That's it so...

SAFE GRAPHIC

Not really, but after all that it is probably time to relax and forget the PC for awhile, so be careful out there while you enjoy all the fun things to do with your new toys and on the 'net.

Aloha, Lou



This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).



Weird Windows Behavior

By Sandy Berger, compukiss.com

Sandy(at)compukiss.com

www.compukiss.com

Have you ever been completely dismayed by your computer? Does it seem to do unusual things that you can't trace back to any of your actions? Well, you are not alone. This happens to all computer users. In the computer world, unusual things sometimes happen. Here is a list of some weird computer behavior and how to combat it.

Icons disappear

Right-click on any open area of the computer desktop, then chose Arrange Icons By. If your icons have accidently become hidden there will be no checkmark in front of Show Desktop Icons. Just click that option and your icons will reappear.

Unusual windows appear

Windows has a lot of keyboard shortcuts that can be accidently accessed. For instance, when I started this column, I wanted to hit the Shift key and the letter "h" for the word Have. However, my finger slipped and I hit the Ctrl key and the letter "h" instead. A window popped up asking what I wanted to Find and Replace, which is not at all what I intended. If this ever happens you to you

can usually just close the pop up window, but occasionally you have to look a little further into what happened. For instance, when working in Microsoft Word, if you accidentally hit Ctrl+N, a new window will appear making it look like you just lost your entire document. If you look closely you will be able to figure out that all you have to do is close the new window and the document you were working on will reappear.

If you can't figure out what happened or you get caught in a loop, restarting your computer will usually bring you back to normal.

Lost toolbars

As noted before, an errant key press can cause a problem. This time the culprit is one of the F keys. Accidentally pressing the F11 key can make the toolbars disappear. This is often used as a feature when you want to show something in what they call "full screen mode". If this happens to you, just press F11 again to make the toolbars return.

The toolbar moves

Have you ever had the toolbar that usually appears on the bottom of the screen show up on the side or top of the screen? There is an easy way to get it back where it belongs. Just place your cursor right next to, but not on, the Start button. Then hold the mouse button down and drag the toolbar back where it belongs.

Dramatic slowdown

A dramatic slowdown can mean that your hard disk is filling up. The computer uses the hard disk as sort of a scratch pad when it computes, so when your hard drive starts to fill up, it can slow the computer down significantly. Click on My Computer and highlight the drive called Local Disk (C:). Look at the Details area to see how much space is free. You should have at least 10% of your hard drive free. If you don't, a hard drive cleanup is in order. Delete unnecessary programs and backup old files and photos to an external drive or CD so you can delete them from the hard disk. You can use the Disk Cleanup utility to empty the recycle bin and delete unnecessary temporary files. To access it, click on Start, choose All Programs, then click on System Tools where you will find Disk Cleanup listed. It will walk you through the cleanup. Once your hard disk has more free space, your computer will perk up considerably. You might also consider defragging your computer to speed it up. The Disk Defragmenter utility is in the System Tools area. Remember there are other things like viruses and spyware that can also slow down your computer.

No sound

Sometimes the sound gets muted by mistake. Look at the taskbar at bottom of the screen. In the right hand side you will see a small icon that looks like a speaker. If it has a red X on it, the sound has been muted. Click on the icon, then click to remove the checkmark in front of the word Mute. If you don't see this icon, go to the Control Panel and choose Sounds or Sounds and Audio Devices where you will find a place to uncheck the Mute option. Many laptops and some desktops also have a volume button on the keyboard which you can use to mute and unmute the speaker.

Mouse shutters

If your mouse is hard to control or acting erratic, it may need a cleaning. An optical mouse with a flat bottom just needs a cleaning with a damp cloth. If your mouse has a roller ball on the bottom, remove the ball and clean the rollers inside the mouse with a Q-tip soaked with isopropyl alcohol.

Hope this gets you through some of those weird Windows moments in your life.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).



A Laptop for the Holidays?

By Vinny La Bash, a regular columnist and member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
vlabash(at)comcast.net
www.spcug.org

In June of 2005, monthly laptop sales exceeded desktop sales for the first time. Since then, the popularity of laptops has continued to gain. Improved battery life, manufacturing quality, larger disk drives, and enhanced video have all contributed to make laptops more attractive. Laptops are replacing desktops in homes and corporate offices.

Competitive pressures have lowered consumer prices. Unfortunately, these pressures have not always seen a corresponding increase in quality. Low prices are all too often directly related to cost cutting, and that means you stand a good chance of ending up with a dud if you buy a laptop off-the-shelf. Laptops should be manufactured for real world usage and applications. Here's what to look for if and when you decide that a laptop is for you.

The chances are good that your new laptop will have some version of Vista installed. Unless you are a business professional with high security needs, Vista Home Premium will be your best choice. There are other operating systems such as Linux, but these generally require more expertise than Vista, and Vista handles more applications than all the others combined.

Some vendors proudly proclaim that their laptops come with one full gigabyte of RAM. That's about as desirable as a one bedroom apartment for a family of six. You can do it, but why bother when RAM is so cheap? Two gigabytes will suffice for most people who don't need video editing or other memory intense applications. If you think you need more memory, you probably do. Why not simply order their laptop with four gigabytes of RAM? You will never have to wonder if you have enough, and it won't bust your budget.

A low priced laptop won't come with a high powered CPU. Don't settle for a portable that takes ten minutes to boot up, and doesn't have the muscle for your applications. Look for Intel's Core 2 Duo CPU. Not only does it have excellent performance, it generates less heat, and uses less energy. You will have all the power you need to run multiple applications simultaneously, and you'll get longer battery life as a bonus.

Video has been a weak spot with laptops because most portables use video graphics integrated with the mother board. Integrated video robs main memory from the CPU, degrading performance. Insist on a laptop with at least 128 MB of onboard RAM. If your video requirements are high, 256 MB is even better.

If you use your portable for extensive travel, you may not want a 17" screen. Think about how you will cope with crowded and cramped airplanes. How often will you have to remove it from its protective case for baggage and customs inspectors? If you travel often, a 12" display may be best. If not, go for the big screen.

You want at least four USB 2.x ports. These are probably the most useful ports you can have on a machine, and you can't have too many of them. With them you can plug and unplug devices without having to turn your computer off and reboot. They reliably support "plug and play" which means that after you connect a new device to your system through a USB port, Vista automatically detects and installs the device making it instantly available.

Apple developed Firewire to be a broadband connection for streaming data devices like camcorders, DVD players, and digital audio equipment. It became especially popular after it was standardized as IEEE-1394. Lower priced laptops usually are missing this port.

With broadband everywhere, a standard RJ-45 NIC 8 pin female connector should be standard equipment. It is used to connect LAN (local area network), broadband cable modems, DSL modems or routers. Standard RJ-11 jacks are still available for dialup modems, but if you have broadband, there is no need for this obsolete option.

Get at least 1 PCMCIA card slot. Once there is a newer and faster wireless standard, you can upgrade easily if you need the additional speed.

An IrDA port can be very useful for transmitting data between your laptop and various devices such as PDA phones. They are fast, convenient, and wireless. Their only drawback is that they are line-of-sight devices. Infrared doesn't transmit around corners or through walls. The devices have to see each other to work.

If you plan to hook up your laptop to a wide screen digital monitor projector you need a DVI (Digital Video Interface)port. Digital monitors are far superior to their analog counterparts. The DVI port allows a pure digital signal to flow from the laptop to the monitor. A superior image is displayed because there is no signal degradation due to digital to analog conversion.

Some laptops may have parallel, serial or standard VGA ports. Before buying your laptop examine the technical specifications to ensure it has the ports you consider essential.

802.11g capability should be required in every laptop. Since there is no such requirement you need to consult the technical specifications.

Don't make battery life a deal killer. It is undoubtedly important, but if the laptop you're considering has everything else you want and need, consider buying a spare battery. Carrying multiple batteries can be a real hassle considering the extra weight involved. Ask if you can upgrade to a 12-cell battery. Most standard laptop batteries are either 6 cells or 9 cells. Larger batteries almost always last longer. If it makes sense, go for the big one.

Laptops are cheaper than ever, but that doesn't mean that the cheapest laptop is the one that's best for you. Examine the specifications, test drive it if you can, then make your choice.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).



FBI Asks "How Aware Are You of the Dangers of the 'Net?'"

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Radio and TV Show Host
lwilsker(at)apcug.net

WEBSITES:

<http://www.fbi.gov/page2/nov07/cyberspeech110607.html>

<http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/speeches/mueller110607.htm>

<http://www.debka.com/headline.php?hid=4723>

<http://housecall.antivirus.com>

<http://safety.live.com>

http://www.gcn.com/online/vol1_no1/45386-1.html

This is not the column that I had originally prepared for publication this week. As regular readers may know, I frequently lecture on computer security topics, and have written numerous columns on security topics over the years. While many of us surf the net oblivious to the online threats that face us, many others are aware of the threats, and sadly, many have learned of the threats the hard way. The online threats that we face on a regular basis have not been lost on our federal government leadership.

FBI Director Mueller recently gave a speech at Penn State University where he warned about the cyber threats that we all face. He started his speech talking about the recent World Series, where the tickets for the Rockies' home games were initially unavailable online because some hacker had made the website inaccessible. He referenced the cyber attack against the

country of Estonia last spring, where a coordinated attack from computers around the world, "... shut down banks and emergency phone lines, gas stations and grocery stores, newspapers and television stations, even the prime minister's office." Director Mueller went on to explain the effect of a similar attack here in the United States, "If we lose the Internet, we do not simply lose the ability to e-mail or to surf the web. We lose access to our data. We lose our connectivity. We lose our intellectual property. We lose our security. What happens when the so-called 'Invisible Man' locks us out of our own homes, our offices, and our information?" This brings up the question, "...given the growing presence of the web in our personal and professional lives, how aware are you of the risks of attack via the Internet?"

In his speech, Director Mueller was poignant in describing the situation that is facing us online. There were several key points in his speech that require some additional discussion. One point he made was, "The growing intersection of terror and the web." He described the case of Younis Tsouli, who went by the screen name "Terrorist 007", who was an al Qaeda webmaster. Taking advantage of most of the contemporary online threats that we all face, Tsouli broke into servers to get the data bandwidth he needed to carry out his nefarious schemes, and used "phishing" (authentic appearing but counterfeit websites to steal personal information), to steal credit card and personal information. With these purloined credit card numbers and personal information, he managed to purchase over \$3 million worth of deadly supplies and equipment for terrorists. Tsouli also created a website "You bomb it" patterned after the popular "YouTube", which he hoped would become a centralized website for terrorists to exchange information. Director Mueller explained that local internet service providers could unknowingly run a server that is helping terrorists, and that we, as the innocent victims of identity theft, could end up financing terrorist activities.

Another threat facing us, according to Director Mueller, is "The rise of bots", where networks of computers are unknowingly taken over for nefarious purposes. One of the most common ways of taking over a computer is to plant a type of Trojan on the computer referred to as a "zombie", which effectively makes the infected computer a zombie under the control of persons unknown. According to recent security statements, some "bots" consist of over a million infected computers. It is well known in cyber security circles that the many variants of the Storm Worm, which is still spreading to infect countless computers, mostly through email attachments, has created millions of zombies. While many of these bots are currently being used to spread spam email, generating riches for the "bot masters" or "bot herders" who sell their purloined capacity, there are more dangerous uses of bots. It is important to note that owners of zombie infected computers are unaware that their computers are infected, and are a component of an illicit bot spreading spam and chaos to other computers. Director Mueller stated, "Once under their thumbs, these networks can wreak all kinds of havoc, from shutting down a power grid to flooding an emergency call center with millions of spam messages."

"Hackers are using sophisticated techniques to steal sensitive intelligence, scientific research, and communications data." This is what the Director is calling "the invisible man" where an unknown cyber intruder oversees everything on a network, including what people are typing, and reading any files stored on a computer or on a network. Since most cyber intruders will never leave any indication that they have viewed your files, stolen your passwords, and copied your critical and confidential data, you will never even know that you have been victimized and your data has been compromised. Once victimized in this manner, you will never know how much damage has been done, maybe until it is too late.

The federal government is actively fighting international cyber terrorists, and contemporary news accounts are rife with stories about criminal and espionage cyber attacks from China, Russia, Iran, Iraq, and other unfriendly countries. Despite governmental attempts to secure our computer infrastructure, much of the responsibility falls upon us individually. We must accept responsibility for the safety and security of our own computers. As has been appealed many

times in this column before, we absolutely must have updated defenses in play on our personal computers. Antivirus, anti-spyware, and firewall software are imperative on our computers; after all, it is the personal computer that is the target of the zombie Trojan, and it is millions of personal computers like your and mine that make up these huge bots that can wreak such havoc.

For those who would be interested in seeing what a cyber attack warning might look like, an unofficial Israeli website that disseminates anti-terrorism information, the "DEBKAFfile", has recently posted such a warning about a massive upcoming cyber attack on the US (www.debka.com/headline.php?hid=4723). I am typing this prior to the date of this next alleged "cyber jihad" attack on the United States (November 11, Veterans' Day) and you will certainly be reading this column after that date. I hope that this warning, as have many other such warnings, turned out to be false. In fact, several security authorities such as McAfee, and Computerworld magazine, have argued that the DEBKAFfile warning is a hoax, and that the information presented is unreliable. Another publication, Government Computer News, also belittled the warning, but the column that said that had the subtitle, "Don't cancel your day off yet" (www.gcn.com/online/vol1_no1/45386-1.html). This cyber attack warning is but one example of what Director Mueller is warning about.

Since the antivirus and anti-spyware on our computers can be compromised or neutralized by a zombie that slips through our defenses, it is a good idea to perform a free online security scan from one of the many available. My two personal favorites are Trend Micro's Housecall (housecall.antivirus.com), and Microsoft's online OneCare at safety.live.com (click on the shield in the middle of the window). A successful scan by either or both of these services will likely indicate that your computer is clean of viruses, worms, Trojans, spyware, and zombies. Make sure your firewall is installed and updated. As I complete most of my security presentations, I close with the expression, "Practice safe HEX."

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).



Computer Humor



Abort, Retry, Ignore

Once upon a midnight dreary, fingers cramped and vision bleary,
System manuals piled high and wasted paper on the floor,
Longing for the warmth of bedsheets,
Still I sat there, doing spreadsheets:
Having reached the bottom line,
I took a floppy from the drawer.
Typing with a steady hand, I then invoked the SAVE command
But got instead a reprimand: it read "Abort, Retry, Ignore".
Was this some occult illusion? Some maniacal intrusion?
These were choices Solomon himself had never faced before.
Carefully, I weighed my options.
These three seemed to be the top ones.
Clearly, I must now adopt one -
Choose: "Abort, Retry, Ignore".
With my fingers pale and trembling,
Slowly toward the keyboard bending,

Longing for a happy ending, hoping all would be restored,
 Praying for some guarantee
 Finally I pressed a key --
 But on the screen what did I see?
 Again: "Abort, Retry, Ignore".
 I tried to catch the chips off guard --
 I pressed again, but twice as hard.
 Luck was just not in the cards,
 I saw what I had seen before.
 Now I typed in desperation,
 Trying random combinations.
 Still there came the incantation -
 Choose: "Abort, Retry, Ignore".
 There I sat, distraught, exhausted, by my own machine accosted;
 Getting up, I turned away and paced across the office floor.
 And then I saw an awful sight,
 A bold and blinding flash of light,
 A lightning bolt that cut the night and shook me to my very core.
 The PC screen collapsed and died,
 "Oh no -- my database", I cried.
 I thought I heard a voice reply,
 "You'll see your data-- Nevermore!"
 To this day I do not know
 The place to which our data goes
 Perhaps it goes to Heaven where the angels have it stored.
 But as for productivity - well,
 I fear it has gone straight to Hell.
 And that's the tale I have to tell -
 Your choice: "Abort, Retry, Ignore".



Program	Version	Name	E-mail	Phone
WORD	Ver. 2002 SP-1	Maurice Sarles	maurices1931@bigfoot.com	685-7263
	2000	Carl Christiansen	arlchristiansen@bellsouth.net	692-7273
Excel	Ver. 2002 SP-1	Maurice Sarles	maurices1931@bigfoot.com	685-7263
	2000	Carl Christiansen	arlchristiansen@bellsouth.net	692-7273
Front Page		Ray Pierce	repierce@brinet.com	697-7732
Dreamweaver		Jerry Liedl	jerry@liedl.org	692-4855
Quicken		Jim Bailes	j.bailes@mchsi.com	693-6990
Photoshop		Chris Ring	eykonic@yahoo.com	685-9031
Imaging in general		Chris Ring	eykonic@yahoo.com	685-9031

Family Tree Maker	v-10	Maurice Sarles	maurices1931@bigfoot.com	685-7263
	2005	Bill Muller	muller1938@yahoo.com	684-6899
Roots III		Maurice Sarles	maurices1931@bigfoot.com	685-7263
Personal Ancestry File		Maurice Sarles	maurices1931@bigfoot.com	685-7263
Installing/setup Windows XP		Chris Ring	eykonic@yahoo.com	685-9031
Installing/setup Windows 2000		Chris Ring	eykonic@yahoo.com	685-9031
Installing/setup LINUX		Chris Ring	eykonic@yahoo.com	685-9031
Building Computers		Chris Ring	eykonic@yahoo.com	685-9031



HACS News

We ended last year with a balanced operating budget. Our major expense was for our new laptop that was paid from our reserve as planned. Our budget for 2008 based upon a membership of 83 is::

	No.	Rate	2008 Budget
Income			
Regular Members	76	\$30.00	\$2,280.00
Family Members	7	\$35.00	\$245.00
Total			\$2,525.00
Expenses			
Advertizing			\$100.00
Bank Charge			\$20.00
Box Rent			\$76.00
Dues-APCUG			\$50.00
Misc			\$4.00
Postage			\$5.00
Printing			\$50.00
Prizes	11	\$40.00	\$440.00
Rent	11	\$145.00	\$1,595.00
Supplies			\$50.00
Web expense			\$75.00
Total			\$2,465.00
Net			\$60.00

Note that our major expenses are the rent at Opportunity House and our prizes. The other expense lines are “bare bones” to keep us going as an organization. We anticipate an increase in rent for 2009 and to cover that we will need an either an increase in membership or an increase in our dues. Our reserve provides us with the ability to buy needed capital equipment and to cover unforeseen expenses.

SIGs for 2008??? We want to try having the SIG group topics change every few months. What do you want to see addressed and who should lead the sessions? Some ideas have been to run Turbo Tax/ Tax

Cut SIG for the first part of the year and perhaps go to Vista for a few months or Image Processing software. Get your input into the cue and jump in to lead a SIG group.

We are still looking for volunteers to offer help on specific software applications (when we published the "A:Prompt" there were people listed for a variety of programs and one could contact them via phone and/or e-mail) We would like to have such a list on the member's only part of the web site and published it in the newsletter. This is a way to share our collective knowledge. **Send the information of what software you would be willing to be a resource person. Send it to jerry@liedl.org**

Member Profiles (NEXT?)

Still looking for someone to fill this void!

HACS Officers/Executive Committee

President - Joy Capps - joycapps@tds.net
Vice-president – Lamar Miller - lamarm@aol.com
Past-president – Jerry Liedl - jerry@liedl.org
Secretary – Maurice Sarles - maurices1931@bigfoot.com
Treasurer – Jim Bailes - jimbailes@highstream.net
Public Relations – Fred Haddad - f.haddad@mchsi.com
Program Committee – VP is chair
Membership – Interim chair is the Treasurer
Door Prizes – Bill Muller - muller1938@yahoo.com



THE

 END