Keeping Up
By Paul Howard, NCTCUG

It was a hard-fought election, but the results are in. The group's slate of candidates for the Board of Directors, both officers and members at large, were elected unanimously. Personally, I ran out of money to run TV spots in the battleground states, but triumphed after all.
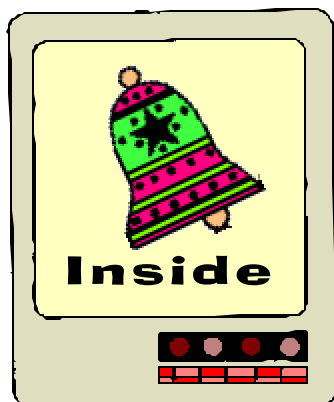
The group's name change, to National Capital Technology and Computer User's Group, was approved, along with the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws. Thanks for your suggestions on changes to our organizational documents. I believe the revisions helped bring our governing documents in line with the reality of today's operation of the group, and clarified some issues that were subject to confusion.

You'd think with more than 15 years' practice, I could get it right. Unfortunately, I was unable to readily convert the Word Perfect document I pre-pared for the fiscal year 2004 Treasurer's report to Microsoft Word, which imports best to the MS Publisher program Blair uses to produce the Journal. As a result, about half a dozen words were dropped from the second paragraph of the article. Also, Blair had to wrestle with the table of the cash flow report, which I'd hoped would save her production time. The full report is on the web, along with the latest versions of the Constitution and Bylaws, at: http://www.nctcug.org/orgdocs.html

Inside

Digital Photography And Printing

by Charlotte Semple, President & Editor, Los Angeles Computer Society, California
Charles Mahan, Wi-Fi SIG Leader, Los Angeles Computer Society, California

Lee Otsubo is best known as The Digital Photo Guy. He has become a familiar figure to many user groups as he shares his knowledge and experiences in digital photography. He emphasizes two basic topics in his presentation:

1) How to get the most out of a digital camera (or how to buy one) and,

2) How to share and display great digital Photos.

Megapixels

Mega comes from Greek, meaning, great. In technological terms, it's a prefix for millions. A 3.5-inch floppy holds 1.44 mega bytes, which is 1.4 million bytes of data. A megapixel is 1 million pixels.

So, "What the heck is a pixel?" A pixel is a made up tech term for "picture element." Pixels are square.

If you look closely at a newspaper photo, using a magnifying glass, you will see hundreds of tiny dots, some dark, some light and some in between. As you move the photo away from yourself, setting aside the glass, you will not be able to discern the dots any more, instead you will see the whole photo. Digital cameras work the same way. They use millions of pixels, (mega pixels, or MP), to make a photo. i.e. a 2 MP camera uses 2 million pixels. A mega pixel is a measure of the camera's capability to capture detail, which is resolution.

You need to be aware of what kind of photography you are interesting in doing and what you are going to do with the photos in order to make the best use of the finite number of pixels you have.

CCD

The CCD (Charge Coupled Device) is the central processing unit of the digital camera. It is somewhat like the CPU in a computer, but unlike the CPU, the CCD has only one function. It takes images and munches and crunches them. The CCD of a 2 mega pixel camera contains 2 million light sensors. Each light sensor produces 1 pixel. Each pixel represents 1 of 16.7 million different colors. Each pixel has a red, green and blue component of color. Each component is a byte (of data). Each pixel has three bytes of data. A 2 MP camera produces 6 million bytes of data. Enough data to fill five 3.5-inch floppies!

Cycle Time

The time needed for the CCD to munch and crunch data and get it out of the way in time for the camera to be ready to take another photo.

Lag Time

The time a digital camera needs to look at a subject and fire enough electrical charge to be ready so that when the shutter button is pressed, the camera will capture the image of the subject.

Munching and Crunching

After the CCD captures the image it has to compress it. A 2 MP camera uses (munches) 6 million bytes of data for each picture at high resolution. This has to be compressed (crunched) down to 1 mega byte of data. Many cameras have different settings for resolution. Lee recommended that you keeps your cam-

era on the highest setting and leave it there. If you change it for a lower resolution shot and forget to re-set it to the higher level, and you use the camera again, thinking you are taking high-resolution shots, you will be disappointed in the results. You can always throw away extraneous detail, but you cannot put it in if you didn't capture it in the first place.

Input — The Lens

This is the first and last place where there is any real resemblance between the digital and film camera. The usual focal length of a 35mm point and shoot camera is anywhere from 35mm to 105mm zoom. Most digital cameras have 3X zoom, which goes down to the equivalent of 35mm, for a moderate wide-angle shot, out to the equivalent of 105mm for a telephoto shot.

There are two types of Zoom: Optical, which is "real" zoom, and Digital, which is electronic trick-ery. When you activate the zoom function on a 35mm point and shoot film camera, you can hear the lens moving in and out, increasing or decreasing the size of the image to be captured. This is "real" zoom. When the electronic zoom on a digital cam-era is activated, the zoom plays a trick on the image. The lens captures the center section of the image and stretches the pixels out to fill the frame. But one loses some resolution and the photo will not be as clear.

Using a photo imaging tool on your PC, and enlarg-ing a photo large enough so that straight edges are no longer straight, you can see the points of individ-ual pixels. In tech terms, this is called "Jaggies." Under the same conditions when looking at a photo of a person, you can see individual square pixels. In tech terms, this is called "Pixelation".

When buying a camera be aware of what component of the camera is optical zoom and what is digital zoom. Some "smart" marketers might advertise their camera as having 6X zoom capability, where they have multiplied the 3X Optical by the 2Xdigi-tal. A 3X Optical camera is a 3X Optical camera. Another way marketers might advertise a 6X Optical camera is where they have taken a cheap 2X optical zoom and bumped up the digital zoom to 3X, calling their product 6X Zoom. You must be really careful

to read the fine print. Don't always go by the adver-tising printed on the box.

About Zoom

If you are taking photos at a back yard BBQ, and you are able to fill the camera frame with subjects, you probably will not need a zoom. If you are going to be taking outdoor photos with subjects 20 to 30 feet away, a 3X Optical zoom camera is probably all you would need. If you are in the "nose bleed" sec-tion of a sports arena, and your subjects seem to be 6-inches tall, you will probably need anywhere from a 6, 8, 10 to 12X zoom. You should be aware of the kind of photography you want to do so that the right type of zoom lens can be obtained.

Output — USB

Most modern digital cameras will have a USB (universal serial bus) port connection. If a camera does not have this don't even consider it. A slow serial connection will drive you crazy. Simply plug the USB cord that comes with the camera into the computer and leave the camera end in a convenient place for ready use. A card reader makes an easy job of uploading the data from your camera into the computer. A universal Card Reader accommodates up to 6 different memory cards. Simply insert the memory card into the reader and it will look to a Windows machine, almost like a disk drive, and you can drag and drop photo files from the memory card.

Memory Cards

These are compact flash memory cards. The particu-lar type of memory card that came with your camera is the type you should use. Not all memory cards are universal. The real advantage of memory cards is that they are removable and are fairly robust. Not like ordinary film. Lee recommends that you should carry at least two memory cards of a moderate range. These are all electronic devices and sooner or later you will corrupt data on a memory card. If you were gullible enough to buy only one very large range memory card, and go on vacation, and the card be-comes corrupted, you are up the proverbial tree.

(Continued from page 3)

You have two choices. Erase all the accumulated data from the card and reformat the card, losing all your photos, or not take any more photos. Neither choice is desirable. If you had two memory cards, the corrupted card can be removed and stored away safely and the second card can be inserted into the camera and you can continue taking photos. When you get home, the corrupted card can be inserted into the card reader, and a rescue software (Photo Rescue, http://www.photorescue.com) can be fired up and most of the photos can be saved.

LCD

Instant gratification! You can see in an instant the photo just shot (but wait for the Cycle Time). It is not recommended that you waste time trying to decide which shots to keep and which shots to discard while taking the shots. Wait until the photos are transferred to your PC, and then make these decisions. Each time you turn on the LCD the power consumption increases by 2–3 fold, and precious battery life is wasted. Also, when you buy a digital camera, make sure it has an optical viewfinder, and use it for much better shots.

Power

Most digital cameras use standard rechargeable batteries. If you use regular alkaline batteries a digital camera will just eat them up in no time. The most popular batteries are Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMH). Some people might use Proprietary Lithium Ion batteries, proprietary meaning expensive. The lithium ion batteries are very powerful and

long lasting, lasting 3-4 times longer than the nickel metal hydride batteries. A warning about these batteries — be very careful how and where you store them. Don't carry them loose in a pocket with anything

containing metal. You could start a fire. These batteries should be stored safely in some sort of plastic containers.

Now, what do you do with all these great photos? Print them! In order to get the best quality prints, there are 4 components that impact the quality of the prints:

1. The printer

Use a good quality photo ink-jet printer. Epson, Hewlett Packard, and Canon are the most well known and written up in most photo magazines. They also do have a range of good quality inexpensive printers.

2. Paper

Use good quality paper. This might be somewhat of a surprise, but Epson produces the best quality prints on expensive Epson paper (about $1.00 per an 8.5 X 11 sheet). The same goes for Hewlett Packard and Cannon. Keep in mind that there are certain combinations of paper and printer that will never work. It is not advisable to use Epson paper with a Hewlett Packard printer, or HP paper with a Canon printer. etc. . If you only print about 20 to 30 photos per month, live a little and buy the expensive paper. If you print hundreds of photos per month, look around for deals, but try a few sheets of the paper first before buying a ream or you might be stuck with a ream of unusable cheap paper.

3. Image

As Lee mentioned before, keep your cameras set at the highest resolution and you will get high quality prints. There are two exceptions: a) the use of "raw" or "tiff" mode is mostly for when one needs the highest quality possible. e. g., taking wedding photos where everything is set up, people are standing quietly, the lighting is just right, and the camera is on a tripod. Raw, or Tiff, captures every single pixel and does not compress, creating huge files. b) Taking photos for the Internet, such as for eBay. Use a low resolution that does not require compression and reduces the time between taking the shots

and uploading them to eBay. If you keep your cameras at the highest resolution you will have the least compression.

4. Software

The software is the most critically important component in producing good prints. Remember when Lee talked about those square pixels where just 1 pixel represented 1 of 16.7 million different colors in a RGB color scheme? Well, printers print round dots, each with a color spectrum of between 5 to 10 thousand different colors in a CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black) color scheme. For a printer to make the transition from square pixels to round dots, it needs the support of good high quality software that is specifically written to do that job. (Someone actually figured out how to insert a square peg into a round hole!)

CDs

The most important reason for copying digital photos onto CDs is, digital photos have no negatives. If you transfer you photo to your computer, and if you computer fails (and it will by Murphy's Law) and you have not copied them to CDs, you are out there up the proverbial creek. Your photos are history. The CD is your "negative".

The format used by digital cameras for compression is JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group), a powerful technology and an excellent compression log rhythm. There is, however, an insidious idiosyncrasy you must be aware of with JPEG images. After you have downloaded your photos into your PC. and you pick out a photo to examine and admire, do something with it and save it, it is re-compressed. If you open it again and save it, it is re-compressed again. Each time you open a photo and save it after viewing it, it is re-compressed. Each time it loses a little more detail, eventually becoming one ugly photo. When this happens, and you have a pristine copy of the photo on a CD, re-copy it to the PC and you will have a fresh photo to work on. The best advice is not to save it each time you look at it. You can work with a photo, changing its composition and print it without saving the changes. CDs, when used regularly, also degrade. So make 2 CDs of your photos, keeping one in a safe place.

**Products marked with phrases that do not describe the transaction, including:

"For distribution with a new PC only"

"Special CD for licensed customers only"

"Not for retail or OEM distribution" or
"Academic price – not for use in a commercial environment"

Note that counterfeiters often use these types of phrases to fool consumers into believing that they are getting genuine product that was over-stocked or otherwise deserves to be discounted.

Consumers dealing with software vendors over the Internet should also beware of:

**Companies or individuals unwilling to verify their identity or full business name or provide a physical street address and telephone number for follow-up after the transaction has occurred.

**Online distributors unwilling or unable to provide adequate or satisfactory descriptions of their return, service or warranty policies.

**Online distributors that offer unusual inventory explanations (e.g., special deals with the software publisher, liquidated inventories or acquisition through bankruptcy sales).

**Vendors offering software products at prices and in packaging inconsistent with offerings through legitimate retail channels.

TECH NEWS (July 2004)

By Sue Crane, Editor, Bearly Bytes, Newsletter of the Big Bear Computer Club

Get your DDR SDRAM now! With back-to-school demand for more PCs due to pick up during the month of July, computer memory prices are expected to rise again. After an unexpected spike in April, prices have fallen about 24% to around $4.80 for 256 megabytes of DDR SDRAM from a peak of $6.30.

Hewlett-Packard Co. will replace memory modules in up to 900,000 HP notebooks with an "industry-wide" design flaw that can cause system lockups. The problem is tied to the interaction of DRAM and Intel chipsets. HP's replacement program will send the customer a kit containing a screwdriver and instructions for replacing the faulty modules. The customer can then ship the DRAM to HP and receive a new module free. HP appears to be the only computer manufacturer taking action. A representative from Dell Computer Corp. said the company is "looking into it."

Computer trade show Comdex, once the biggest event on the tech calendar, has been canceled this year, making room for the growing interest in shows emphasizing consumer electronics and specialist IT gear.

Personal computer makers have been eager to revolutionize the way people watch movies, listen to music and record their favorite TV shows. Last month Intel launched new core logic and motherboards, along with a new socket format for the Pentium IV, targeting the high-performance desktop PC market. The new technology gives PCs more powerful sound and graphics, a speedier link for peripherals and memory, and an ability to run a wireless data network, turning the PCs into home entertainment devices. The inclusion of Wi-Fi access point technology allows new PCs with the chipset to become wireless gateways for other mobile devices. Intel was unable to ramp up the Wi-Fi technology in time for the launch, but Intel spokesman Dan Snyder said Intel will announce the technology now and provide availability later throughout the year.

Sun Microsystems has designed 3-D interface software to compete with the PC desktop and file folders. Sun's "Project Looking Glass", is a 3D interface allowing documents or images to be turned sideways and spun around so that notations can be made on the back. Sun is initially planning to use the technology on desktop machines running Linux or Sun's Solaris operating system. Sun president and COO Jonathan Schwartz says Project Looking Glass reflects a swing in software development back toward desktop machines instead of running programs on centralized servers.

Meanwhile the digital home has become a reality! At the Samsung Tower Palace in Seoul, $1 million-plus apartments are outfitted with Internet-enabled ovens, security cameras and wall-mounted flat-panel displays. The company has tests under way in Canada, Australia and Europe, and it recently struck deals with two U.S.-based home builders to conduct digital home trials in the U.S. Wiring homes in the U.S. will cost from $2,000 to $10,000.

The Virtual Doctor Will See You Now. Some health care providers are offering e-mail medical advice and "e-visits". So how do you get doctors who don't want to use e-mail because they are too busy, worried about privacy, and not being paid for it to buy into the program? Pay them, of course! In August, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Massachusetts will start paying primary care physicians for 'Web visits' with their patients. Blue Cross will be expanding a pilot program that pays doctors to respond to patient e-mails. Watch for the program in your area…

From truckers in the U.S. and Canada to Yak farmers in the mountains of Nepal, more people are jumping in with wireless technology. Yak farmers are taking advantage of a wi-fi network set up in a remote region to keep in touch with their families where there are no phones or other communication. And at networked farms of the future, farmers sit in their pickups with a laptop, drive robot tractors and even feed the hogs remotely. Two Georgia farmers

are already using the technology: One uses wireless video to monitor vegetable packing; another uses a wireless network equipped with GPS to monitor irrigation systems. Robotic tractor technology has also proven useful in insect control. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) hopes to reduce fatigue-related accidents by enticing drivers with free Wi-Fi hotspots so they'll stop more often and check their e-mail. Meanwhile, the whole city of Chaska, Minnesota will soon be blanketed by a Wi-Fi hotspot and city officials plan to offer wireless Internet access as a municipal service for about $16/month for home users, creating a "connected community." The manager of arena operations for the Charlotte Bobcats is including Wi-Fi wireless in the design of a new $265 million arena. He says, "Some people will think this is the geeky thing, the nerdy thing. But they were probably saying that 10 years ago when other people were going to Web sites and using e-mail." Other sports teams are following suit; Giants CIO Bill Schlough says: "It's like walking into Starbucks—except our Wi-Fi is free!"

Game developer Respond sign has created a first-of-its-kind game geared toward helping the player lose weight through exercise and diet. The game, titled "Yourself! Fitness", is designed for the Xbox and features a virtual personal trainer who guides the player through a customized set of exercises and diets; players advance to the next level when certain fitness goals are met. Next year the Xbox Live version will allow players to use a wireless headset to chat with each other during their workouts

"The Effect of File Sharing on Record Sales," released by Harvard Business School professor Felix Oberholzer-Gee and his co-author Koleman Strumpf, of the University of North Carolina caused a ruckus in the music industry. The team concluded Internet music piracy not only doesn't hurt legitimate CD sales, it may even boost sales. The researchers contend that most downloading is done over peer-to-peer networks by teens and college kids, groups that are "money-poor but time-rich," and wouldn't have bought the songs they downloaded, anyway. The team also claims illegal downloading may actually help the industry with an older crowd who download a song or two and then, if they like what they hear, go out and buy the music.

"Toxic dust" found on computer processors and monitors contains chemicals called PBDEs which have been linked to reproductive and neurological disorders. "The levels in the dust are enough to raise a red flag, but not enough to create a crisis," said Dr. Gina Solomon, senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council and assistant professor of medicine at University of California, San Francisco. "I have an old computer monitor in front of me now, and I'm not about to throw it away. But when I get a new one, it darn well will be free of these chemicals." Dell, along with Apple Computer Inc. and others, stopped using PBDEs in 2002.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a federal law designed to restrict Internet pornography violated Americans' rights to freedom of speech and upheld an injunction excluding prosecutors from filing criminal cases under the Child Online Protection Act, or COPA, until a full trial takes place. COPA restricts the use of sexually explicit material deemed "harmful to minors" on commercial Web sites. But the law isn't dead: COPA now goes back to a Philadelphia appeals court for a full trial.
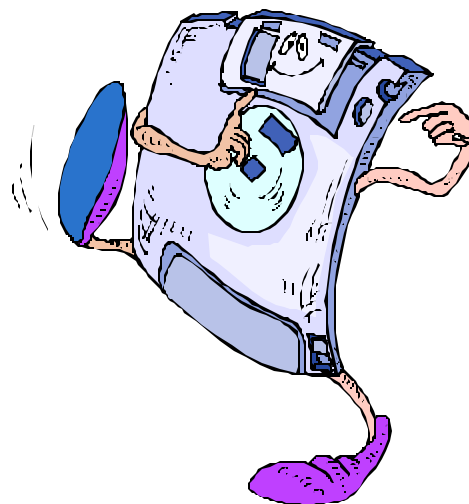
Whither The Yellow Box?

By Moe Norris, Topeka PC Users Club, Kansas

Eastman Kodak Company, an icon in the photographic industry for more than 100 years, dropped a bombshell last September when it announced that the company would shift its focus from film and film-based products to *digital* equipment and processes! And it has resolutely continued down that path. In January 2004 the company announced that by the end of this year it would no longer be selling re-loadable film based 35mm cameras, including APS models, in the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe. The "throw away" (i.e., one-time use) cameras will be the only Kodak film camera available in the west. The number of different films provided to retailers will be reduced, concentrating on just the most popular lines. Production of its Carousel film projectors was scheduled to cease the end of 2003.

Kodak said that it plans to continue providing 35mm cameras in emerging markets, such as China, India, Eastern Europe and Latin America, and will introduce six new film cameras in those markets this year. It predicts rapidly growing markets for cameras and film in those countries, in contrast to what is being seen in the west where the demand for film-related products is shrinking much more rapidly than anticipated, while purchases of digital cameras continue to grow dramatically. Kodak's array of digital cameras now extends from point and shoot consumer models to high-end professional (read very expensive) digital cameras and camera backs. It will increase its production of inkjet printing papers, and plans to introduce a new line of consumer ink jet printer models to go head-to-head with the well-established offerings from HP, Epson, Lexmark, etc.

Kodak's landmark shift in focus represents a profound change for the world's largest filmmaker, and a huge gamble. The success of the move remains uncertain. Just when Kodak needs increasing film revenues to underwrite the costs (in the billions) of this transition, film sales are dropping substantially. Since 1997 Kodak has reduced its workforce by more than 30,000 jobs. Another 15,000 jobs will be eliminated in the next two years in a further effort to reduce costs. Success is not a given. If fortune does not smile on Kodak, then not only may the Yellow Box disappear, but the company itself may go down the same path — and it won't be a Yellow Brick Road!
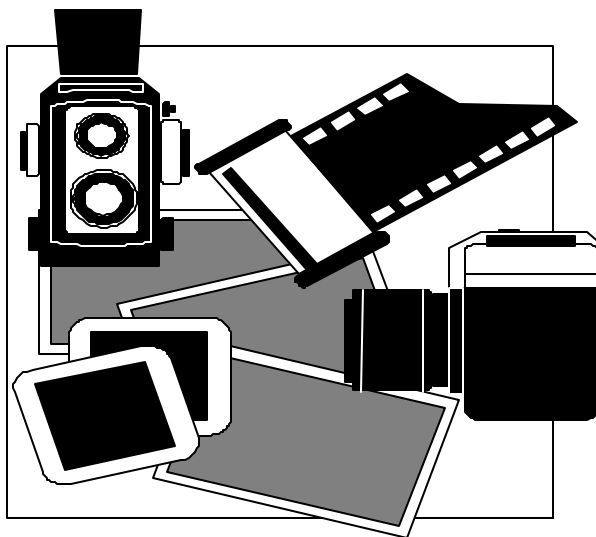
Can You Really Buy Popular "Software At Rock Bottom Prices" Online?

by Linda Gonse, Editor of Nibbles & Bits, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, California

Probably you, and millions of others, have received e-mail offers with subject lines similar to these:

Unbeatable software deals

Amazing prices on software

Take 95% discounts on Adobe, Microsoft, Corel products from Putnam's Stuff Store

Receive discount ticket on Corel, Adobe, Microsoft software from Koenig's Stuff Store

Get software at rock bottom prices

What's more you may have seriously considered purchasing the programs described in the e-mails at prices that you've only seen in your dreams. Here's an example in one message:

Looking for inexpensive high-quality software?

We might have just what you need.

Windows XP Professional 2002	$50
Adobe Photoshop 7.9	$60
Microsoft Office XP Professional 2002	$60
Corel Draw Graphics Suite 11	$60

These amazing prices are not legitimate. They represent the work of software pirates who are trolling for customers, or illegal sales. Do not take the offers at face value. Stop and ask yourself how it is possible for programs that sell for hundreds of dollars to be discounted for a fraction of their usual retail cost. Certainly, these products are not even selling at wholesale, much less for these unbelievable prices. And, if the companies did offer programs at these prices, you would be reading about it in your newspaper, or hearing about it on television or radio, or in your user group.

A Washington Post article said, "The U.S. software industry loses at least $13 billion a year to piracy, according to the Business Software Alliance (BSA) estimates. The group, which represents some of the world's largest software companies, including Microsoft, Adobe and Autodesk, does not know how much money the industry has lot to online piracy."

Still, user confusion about piracy prevails. Microsoft, attempting to educate software buyers, has posted a document that points out warning signs of counterfeit or illegal software. (Unfortunately, most of the warning signs apply to software already purchased.)

Microsoft's warning signs of counterfeit or illegal software:

Prices that are "too good to be true."

Products that are missing key elements such as user manuals, Certificates of Authenticity, or end-user license agreements. Pirates often sell only the CD-ROM and jewel case without retail packaging. Look for the Certificate of Authenticity on the retail box.

On all new machines, with the release of Windows 2000, the COA label is found on the tower of the computer. If you acquire a new computer and it doesn't have the COA label on the tower, you should question whether the software loaded on the machine is genuine.

Software or components that appear to be of poor quality including:

**Back-up disks or CD-ROMs with handwritten labels.

**Poor imitations of security features such as edge-to-edge hologram etched into Windows 2000 and Office 2000 (first service release) CDs, or poor imitations of the hologram found on the hub of the Windows 98 CD that shows the word "genuine" when tilted in the light

**Low quality print, letters that aren't evenly spaced, etc.

Browser Power

by Vinny Labash Sarasota PC Monitor, Sarasota FL PC Users Group www.spcug.org

Imagine a gigantic library, thousands of times larger than any other library in existence. Imagine enormous shelves filling this library in every direction as far as the eye can see, so high you have difficulty seeing the tops of the shelves. The shelves are filled with books of various sizes. Some books are as small as one page. Others are hundreds of thousands of pages thick. The books are randomly distributed throughout the library.

Patrons of the library enter and leave at the rate of thousands every second. They examine books, sometimes copying portions or all of their contents. On the floor of the library are dozens of independent groups of workers cataloging, indexing, and classifying the library's contents.

The library building is the structure of the internet. All of the hardware, connectors, switches, routers, cabling, and other assorted apparatus and paraphernalia that make up the internet are found in this cyberspace library. The shelves represent the World Wide Web. They are the containers that house information stored on web sites. The books stand for the websites. Some are small, like most personal web sites. Many are huge corporate web sites which can run into hundreds of thousands of pages. Millions of other web sites fall between these extremes.

Patrons of the library are people like you and me using it for data, entertainment, doing research, and many other things, traditional and unorthodox. The independent groups of workers are developing search engines and further methods to help us find what we want.

If you can imagine this scenario, you have a good grasp of how the internet actually works. It is the most magnificent assortment of information that has ever existed, with a really lousy card catalog.

Where does your browser fit? It's the tool that allows you to access information stored on web sites. Information can be text which you can read. Information can be in the form of photographs, drawings, and other kinds of graphic images. Your browser's

versatility lets you listen to sound files and view video clips. In most cases you can transfer any of this information from a web site to your PC for your personal use without having to learn any sophisticated computer "tricks". All that is necessary is for you to understand a few essentials about how your browser works.

Begin by opening your browser after starting your PC. You can do this from a menu option or click an icon on your desktop, but you probably already know that.

You are undoubtedly familiar with the Explorer's standard tool bar and the basic browser internet navigation functions. Let's look at some tasks not covered by the toolbar.

To do more than the basics with the internet, you need access to the latest internet news, software updates, tips, and tricks for using your browser. Microsoft devotes a portion of its website to this function and they call it "Microsoft at Home". While some of the content is advertising for its products, the site does contain a lot of useful information. Here's how to add it to your Favorites list.

1. On the File menu of your browser's Menu bar, click Open.

2. Type http://www.microsoft.com/athome/ default.mspx.

3. Click OK.

4. From the Favorites menu, click Add to Favorites.

5. Select a folder if you like, and then click OK.

Before you leave the "Microsoft at Home" page, select Print Preview from the File menu. Notice that the material selected for printing is "truncated", cut off at the edge of the right margin. Microsoft didn't program that portion of its site with printing in mind. There isn't a lot you can do about it because you can't change Microsoft's code. We bring it to your

attention because you shouldn't drive yourself crazy trying to fit the information on the page. This is not unique to Microsoft. Most internet pages are not concerned with printing material, but with displaying it properly while accommodating the eccentricities of different browsers.

Open the File menu again and move your mouse pointer over the Send option. The submenu allows you to email the whole page or email only the URL (recommended), which saves a lot of space on your email note. You can also create a shortcut to the site on your desktop.

If you see a picture you like on a website, move your mouse pointer over the image. If the pointer changes into a hand icon, right-click on the image. The popup menu will show that you can email the image, copy it to your PC, set it as background on your desktop or print it. Imagine that!

After performing a search, the browser brings you to a web site, and the word or phrase you searched on is nowhere in sight. Rather than scrolling through the site searching manually, hold down the Ctrl key and tap the F key. (Ctrl+F) This brings up a Find dialog box where you can type in the search phrase in the text area and your browser will find it for you. You can also access this handy tool from the Edit menu.

The View menu has a lot to offer. This is where you turn your toolbars on and off. If you are missing a toolbar, look here first.

Open the **Privacy Report** on the View menu and check if Explorer is restricting or blocking any cookies from the site. The Privacy Report dialog box also allows you to override cookie handling from any individual web site. Click on the Settings button and then the Edit button. You can specify which web sites are always or never allowed to use cookies, regardless of the site's stated privacy policy.

Open **the Tools menu** and select **Internet Options**. On the **General tab,** look at the Home

Page section. Select the web site you wish to have as your home page. Change it as often as you like. The **History section** lets you decide how long you want your wanderings on the internet to be stored on your computer. Select the number of days you feel comfortable about or delete the history altogether. The choice is yours.

Click on the **Accessibility button**. In the Accessibility dialog box, check the box that says Ignore font sizes specified on web pages. This allows you to adjust text size on web sites. You can do this from the View menu or hold down the Ctrl button and rotate the wheel on your mouse button.

There's a lot more you can do with your browser than you might suspect, and this article hardly covers it all. However, you should now have a good idea of the power residing in your browser and be encouraged to explore its capabilities on your own.
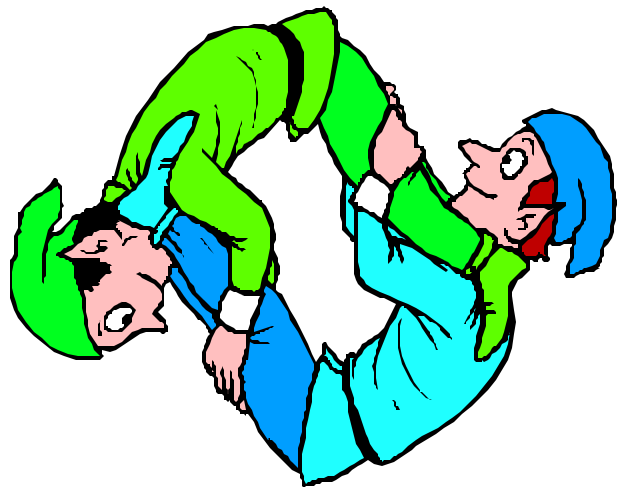
Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Interesting Shows

I worked the PASS (Professional Association of SQL Servers) show [http://www.sqlpass.org] and I was never more lost since I know little about SQL servers. The exhibit area was 10,000 square feet and they expected about 1200 attendees. In their Internet Café, the computers were on top of the table, rather than hidden. They had a clear plastic side and green florescent lighting inside that made them an eye-catcher. It was a busy spot and also had high-speed hookups for attendees' laptops. Sorry I'm not smart enough to give you more info. I can tell you though that the tasty cookies and refreshments served during the show were great.

I also worked a day for the setup of the Electronic Boutique Gaming show, but didn't work the actual show day. It was a one-day show open for eleven hours. All the big names in the game industry had booths and there were stacks of free expensive game cartridges and disks all over the place. I didn't capitalize on them since I am not a game person. Friends sure criticized me for that. It was 10,000 square feet

of exhibit area and they expected about 1200 managers and other VIPs. Microsoft's X Box booth was the largest there with large boxes of goodies for their attendees. This show and the one above were held at the beautiful Gaylord Palms Resort in Kissimmee, FL. It's hard to get used to computer geeks sitting and laying all over the floor when chairs are handy.

Explosive Information

This has nothing to do with gas stations, but in EE (Electronic Engineering) Times [http://www.eet.com] there was a story about exploding batteries in cell phones and laptop computers. I'll quote one of their statements: "Rising reports of incidents in which counterfeit batteries have overheated, caught fire or blown up are dogging a portable systems industry caught between the slow pace of battery technology and the quick step of new features at even lower costs." Companies are very worried about consumer confidence when such news reaches them and they say the problem

Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WAC Meetings will be held on December 18, 2004 and January 22, 2005 (NOTE: 4th Saturday!), 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

http://www.wacug.org/

batteries are counterfeit. Here are some URLs for more information in the event you might have a counterfeit battery. [http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PREREL/prhtml04/04559.html] concerning recalls, [http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PREREL/prhtml04/04068.html] other recalls, and [http://www.nokia.com/nokia/0,,49192,00.html] on how to spot a counterfeit battery. It was an interesting article about the problem and possible technology and safeguards.

Don't Lose Track Of Time

This item is an announcement I received and these people are offering UG members a 20% discount. Here is their statement edited. "Our company, Maximus Software Ltd, would like to announce the release of Time Meter for MS Outlook 2.4, a simple but very beneficial software application capable of tracking expenses and time spent working on certain project(s) for Microsoft Office 2000/XP/2003. The program can be used by individual consultants and freelancers for billing their clients, or by corporate managers to track expenses, performance and contributions of each employee. Most importantly, the program acts as a plug-in for MS Outlook, thus eliminating the need to spend time learning how to use a new application and getting familiar with interface.

The price of a single copy is $74.95 US Dollars. Product Page - [http://www.timemeter.com] The discount coupon code is '3481051341' and is redeemable at http://www.timemeter.com/coupon.shtml."

Bring It Back – Please

Here is another announcement with a discount. "Have you ever accidentally deleted a slew of pictures from a memory card before you transferred them to the PC? Or formatted a card in the camera, only to realize that your vacation pictures were still on board? That's the stuff that nightmares are made of. Fortunately, Flash File Recovery is on hand to save you from yourself. We offer 15% discount making the price $42.08. Just use this direct order

link to get a discount: [https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=3560-15&ss_coupon=AGPR-0RAO] Product Page: [http://www.panterasoft.com/file-recovery/index.html]

"Flash File Recovery is a nifty application that every photographer should be aware of. Essentially, it can recover any previously deleted image file. Plus, it is capable of salvaging pictures from damaged or corrupted flash drives (including camera's built-in memory) and memory sticks. The list of supported storage media includes but is not limited to Smart-Media, CompactFlash, Memory Stick, MicroDrive, xD Picture Card Flash Card, PC Card, Multimedia Card, Secure Digital Card, and many others. Flash File Recovery "resurrects" images from formatted, damaged, corrupted (unreadable), or defective storage media."

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [http://www.dealsguy.com]. I'm working on new pages for 2004 announcements I received, but slowly.

USB Port Struggles

I mentioned in an earlier article installing add-in cards for USB 2.0 ports, on machines with Windows XP as the operating system. Ron Schmidt bought the same card I purchased from CompUSA, and had challenges with the installation under Windows 98SE. Ron brought his machine to the October SIG meeting, and the gang proceeded to help with the installation.

All were puzzled by the insistence of the program on loading additional components from Win98. However, the USB 2.0 ports seemed to work, and data could be accessed and written to a USB hard drive and thumb drive. Ron reported back that he had downloaded a special driver for the Sandisk Cruzer thumb drive, and that it now worked properly.

As the NCTCUG crew was working on Ron's system, Jim Rhodes mentioned he frequently had trouble with USB devices not being recognized. Roger Fujii pointed out that USB devices often work better when plugged in after boot up. When left plugged in through system shut down and reboot, they may not be recognized as the system restarts.

Gadgets

This meeting was also used as a showcase for a variety of tech toys. One of the exhibits was a Sears "Endurable" flashlight, about the diameter of a standard double D cell light, but only half as long.

With substantial rubber end caps, this light uses 4 AA cells, with illumination provided by 5 super bright LEDs. Several members own this unit, and while pleased with the apparent ruggedness and features of the light, all agreed that the pushbutton switch, which cycles through "Spot" "Flood" and "Both" settings, requires excessive force to operate.

Micro Center's latest flyer offers a three and a half digit multi-meter (DVM850BL) by Velleman Components for $10. When first introduced, these hand held meters, a replacement for the typical VOM (volt ohm meter) would cost approximately $250. I built my first such instrument from a Heathkit about twenty years ago, and it cost about $100. The Velleman meter, about 2 3/4 inches wide and 5 ½ inches high, includes a "touch and hold" function, and back light. Ranges: 5 - DC volts from 200mv to 600V; 2 - AC volts 600 & 200; 5 - DC amps from 200ma to 10A; 5 ohms from 200 to 2 megohms; plus audible continuity; diode polarity / forward voltage drop; Transistor hFE (gain) for PNP and NPN transistors. Includes yellow rubber "shock / drop" shell with stand.

Several years ago I bought a similar digital meter from Sears (Craftsman 82140) in a special package (34-82146) that included a "fat pen" sized Voltage Detector (92174) for $19.95 in a sale I've seen several times since. The Sears meter doesn't have the transistor gain range, including instead 1.5 and 9 volt battery ranges, which tests with a load on the cell / battery in question. A set of alligator clip adapters, which plug on to test lead tips (Radio Shack 270-354A, $2) make a handy addition to any meter.

Happy Holidays

(Continued from page 14)

The "fat pen" voltage detector is a great safety device if working on household electrical wiring, to make sure that the circuit being worked is off, or when troubleshooting switch legs in multi-switch circuits, looking for unmarked hot wires. This detector works on a proximity basis, without requiring a direct connection to a hot wire. A warning buzzer sounds, and a light illuminates in the presence of 100-240 Volts AC. Radio Shack carries a less sophisticated device (22-106) for $6.95.

Another useful gadget for household electrical projects is a Circuit Breaker Identifier (Radio Shack 22-113, $30). This is comprised of two parts, a signal transmitter that plugs into a receptacle (or lamp socket with an adapter) and a receiver that has a LED lamp and piezo buzzer that will indicate which breaker the transmitter is plugged into.

Having arrived at the computer hobby via life-long interest in electronics and TV repair, I still have

Akro-Mills cabinets full of discrete electronic parts. Last week, I found a "close out" item at Radio Shack for $5 - an Electronic Components Tester, which will identify transistor types and leads, diode anode leads, SCR gate and anode leads. Catalog 22-330, if you can find it. Not surprisingly, it's referred to in Radio Shack's automated documents library as a "junk box tester."

For those trying to identify or troubleshoot telephone wiring, a TP100 Tone and Probe Kit by Test-Um, Inc. was displayed. This consists of a tone set that injects a warble tone signal or "talk battery" on a pair of wires. The companion tracer probe is used to identify the correct conductors by picking up and amplifying the test tone when the probe tip is near the desired wire pair. About $90, available at Micro Center, along with a variety of LAN and telecommunications test equipment.

Bring your latest technology gadgets to a meeting soon!

NCTCUG Information

NCTCUG, Post Office Box 949, Arlington VA 22216

Club Information call: 301-577-7899   Web Site: www.nctcug.org

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All officer terms expire 2003

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Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with C/R only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3½ 720k or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501-c(3)] organization founded in 1977 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are $25.00 (U.S.Funds) per year, with a $5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 10 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing $1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

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Please send your change of address to the club PO box as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

(Continued from page 5)

**For Microsoft software, software components being sold solely as a CD housed in a jewel case or as a loose or individual end-user license agreement, because these items are not distributed in this form through legitimate channels.

Save your money and your time when you receive "rock bottom" software offers. There are no unbelievable "deals" out there on name-brand software.

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> *just walk away and say no,*
> *you can't buy!*

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December 2004/January 2005

1st Wed. (12/1, 1/5) **7 p.m.**
Virginia General Meeting

4th Wed (12/22, 1/26) **7 p.m.** Internet SIG

3rd Monday (1/17; none in December)
7 p.m. Board of Directors

Happy Holidays!

All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.

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