



The NCTCUG Journal

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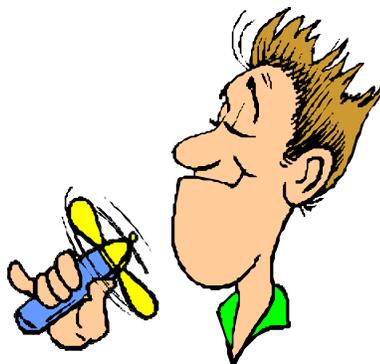
Keeping Up

By Paul Howard, NCTCUG

So, have you run out of tech toys to install in your computer? I've always been interested in the possibility of installing a TV tuner card in one of my computers, and a recent sale at CompUSA seemed like an ideal opportunity. I bought an ATI TV Wonder Pro Card with an RF remote control that plugs in to a USB port, for \$70 after rebate.

For years, I've had to turn my head 120 degrees to see the 10 inch TV in my computer room, if I'm trying to do something at the computer. Yup, it's inconvenient and leads to a very stiff neck. My goal was to be able to have a window on the screen with a TV program (usually news), so I could work on my computer project, while keeping up with news events, and switching attention as needed.

Installation was easy — install software from a CD, then turn off the computer, open it up, and install the card in a spare PCI slot. The card does require an amplified TV signal, so you need to have cable, satellite dish service, or an amplified antenna. I'm an "over the air" guy, so the toughest part of the project

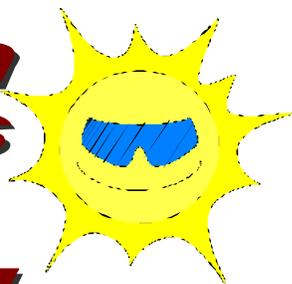


was getting my TV coax wiring network extended to where I needed it at my computer desk. And, of course, no readily made up 30 foot cables were available, so I had to resort to a splicing connector to get the necessary length to run from the amplifier location to my desk.

The only glitch was getting sound — a connection between the TV card (Sound Out) and motherboard sound connection (Line In) is the recommended approach. I made the connection but couldn't seem to get any sound output, whether I tried the Line In, or Microphone connector. I fiddled with various options for the TV card, and on the various volume control popup windows, but didn't seem to find the answer. Finally, I found an obscure program for the

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PC Help Is—Sometimes—Just A Mouseclick Away

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor, Region 2
Columnist For AARP's Computer And Technology Web Site

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

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

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

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

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

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

For example, I recently installed the Mozilla browser. Its Help provides four tabs: Contents shows main topics and subtopics, Search explores Help information, Index lists all topics alphabetically, and Glossary provides definitions of terms used. Many applications use Microsoft Help standards tabs:

Contents, Index, and Answer Wizard. This wizard replaces searching, allowing entry of questions needing answers.

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

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

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

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

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

Other information nuggets are available.

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

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

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

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

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Help! My Computer Is Down And I Can't Get It Up

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG BOD And Columnist For The Examiner, Beaumont, TX

I am embarrassed to say this, but I had a major problem with my computer recently. It would only boot to a blue screen that said that it had a problem, and Windows XP stopped to prevent any damage, and gave an error code. It said to uninstall any recent programs or hardware, and recommended starting in safe mode. This can happen to anyone at any time, and has happened to me before. Most of the time, a simple power-off then reboot will resolve the problem, as these blue screens are often itinerant, and may not recur, and a simple reboot may rectify the problem. I turned the power off, waited a few seconds, powered on, and attempted to reboot, and that discouraging blue screen reappeared, instead of my desktop. I rebooted again, and selected safe mode, allowing the computer to fully boot in that manner. As designed, since many drivers and programs do not load when booted into safe mode, it loaded normally. Usually, when I had this problem in the past, exiting from safe mode, and rebooting generally rebooted the computer properly, and I could do my work. Not this time, the computer was being stubborn; now I could better sympathize with some of the callers on my show who express frustrations, and even state that their computer hates them.

I went into safe mode again, and uninstalled the Microsoft Critical Update I had downloaded and installed the previous evening. Confident that this was the problem, as there are often such complaints posted online after every critical update, I was sure that this would resolve itself, and my computer would then reboot normally. Feeling twangs of anger, my computer rebooted into the now familiar blue screen of boot failure.

While approaching despair, I knew that all was not lost because the previous evening I had performed an incremental backup (only new or changed files since the previous backup are saved) to my external hard drive, so I was certain

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that all of my critical data could easily be restored if that option became necessary. Still the frustration of being unable to boot the computer was mounting. Fortunately, in addition to a very current backup which could be restored as a last resort, there are other less stressful and viable options to overcome whatever was creating my problem.

Windows XP and ME have a not very well known feature “System Restore” as an integral function. Ideally, the system restore function should take a snapshot of critical system files and settings at each successful boot, and prior to any major changes. I have been certain to make sure that my system restore is always functioning, and also manually create another restore point prior to making any changes in software, registry, or other critical items. It is important to note that those people who leave their computers on 24 hours, may not have new restore points periodically created automatically by the system, making it quite possible that a restore may not use the most up to date information. System restore can be located in XP at Start – Programs – Accessories – System Tools – System Restore.

When opened, two choices will be presented: create a restore point, or restore the computer to an earlier date. By default, unless intentionally changed, XP will save restore information until 12% of the hard drive is used for that purpose. Once the limit is reached, older restore points are deleted using “FIFO” (first in, first out). Other than a few minutes of time, it almost never hurts to create a restore point, unless the hard drive is approaching capacity. Many users are not aware if there has been a recent restore point created, and it

is easy to find out by opening the system restore function, and clicking on “Restore the Computer to an Earlier Time”. A calendar will appear, and dates that contain restore points will be in bold. Clicking on a date will show



the restore points created on that date. To restore the computer to that time, click on the date and time desired, and the automated process will run, rebooting the computer upon completion, and making the computer as it was at that date.

Once created, restore points cannot easily be modified, which may create problems if an unknown virus or Trojan is infecting the computer. When this happens, the virus or Trojan is saved along with the requisite necessary data. If such a restore point is selected, then the malware is restored along with the desired data, re-infecting the computer. This is a surprisingly common way of re-infecting a computer after antivirus software deletes active threats.

A system restore function is not included with Windows 95, 98, NT, or 2000, but there is an excellent alternative, that also works well with ME and XP. WinRescue, available at www.superwin.com, creates a separate registry backup each time the computer is booted. With WinRescue, the system registry can be easily restored if problems occur.

Now I have to get back to work, and restore my computer.

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serious family research, I came across enough information to confirm the story, almost word for word the way the “lore” had passed it down to me. Both my mother and my aunt had been dead for many years before I began the search for my grandmother’s family, and had I not finally written it down, it would have ended with me. No one else has ever been remotely interested in my grandmother except my mother, my aunt and me. Now I am hoping my son and my daughter and their children will keep the information and expand it someday, along with the other branches of their family tree.

Do It Now

By Elizabeth B. Wright, Member Of The Computer Club Of Oklahoma City
October 2004 eMonitor

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

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

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

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

Then comes the reason for this article. Nearly all of the current programs have choices to output the data into reports of various types. There are always the tree charts which have become so familiar to all of us. Usually there are other types of reports which sort the information in ways other than a typical family tree. Using reports, it is possible to download the essential data into hard printed copy to share with children, grandchildren and other interested relatives. Many programs have very good options for printing books. Most also have the ability to include photographs in the output. And photographs don't always have to be of people. Most serious genealo-

gists include photos of important documents, as well as maps, places, buildings, and objects of interest such as clothing, trophies, jewelry, grave markers, etc. Photographs can greatly enhance the value of the information as well as making it more enjoyable to read.

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

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

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

My favorite example from my own case is typing the family "lore" of how my grandmother grew up. She was left motherless as a toddler, put in an orphanage and foster homes before finally being taken from her native Iowa to Kansas by her older (by just a couple of years) brother and possibly her father. The story was always murky, but consistent, told to me by both my mother and my aunt. When I finally began doing

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Simple But Powerful Tools Find Misplaced PC Files

By Gabe Goldberg <gabe@gabegold.com>

As PCs have gotten more powerful in every dimension – faster processors, larger memories, and (especially) giant hard drives—software developers have kept pace by bloating their applications. Where PCs once ran happily with 10 megabyte (not gigabyte!) disk drives, now most applications are many times that size, containing hundreds or thousands of files. As applications proliferate and users create their own blizzards of data files (documents, pictures, sound and video files, etc.) PC files become needles in a haystack.

Or, more annoyingly accurate, PCs are like gigantic haystacks hiding needles, since a PC's pile of files is always much more visible than the one file that's missing. Windows versions include a built-in tool for locating files. It's sometimes called Search and sometimes called Find; I guess that Finding sounds more optimistic than Searching. But they share problems: they don't search inside all filetypes (files' types are the second part of their names, what follows the dot, such as "doc" for Microsoft Word files), they don't always find all copies of files, they may completely skip files, and they run slowly.

Picking a file search tool is like choosing a Web browser or your favorite ice cream flavor: a matter of very personal taste. The search tool (or browser or ice cream) you favor matters less than your knowing about choices.

Sometimes it's hard to escape an already-made choice, to try the unfamiliar—though the pleasure of discovering a new favorite flavor helps the process along. This article describes two powerful utilities that can be your PC's lost-and-found. But remember that many other choices are available on software download sites such as www.tucows.com/.

Agent Ransack (a free download) and FileLocator Pro (\$25), near-twin-brother file-find utilities, greatly surpass Windows' native tools: they're faster, friendlier, more flexible, and more accurate. Both programs are easy downloads (less than two megabytes) and install by simply executing the downloaded .exe file. They offer many tasty features. For example...

- 1) They display file lines containing your search string with their filenames: an overdue facility, and much more useful than displaying only filenames!
- 2) They can search multiple unrelated (non-nested) folders: what a concept, and so much better than having to repeat searches!
- 3) They can save and reuse search criteria. So if you ever repeat file searches—for example, to find all files containing your family name—you'll save time.
- 4) They allow saving and printing lists of files found: very helpful if a file search is the first step in a larger process which manipulates found files.
- 5) Both programs provide basic and expert interfaces. This choice allows using only simple search functions or enabling more detailed search criteria.
- 6) The programmer's tool "regular expressions" provide a more powerful wildcard notation than "*" for specifying matching search strings and filenames. Nearly everyone gets along just fine without using these, but people who like them **really** like them.

You'll be encouraged to register Agent Ransack. This is optional but a friendly gesture towards the developer who makes the program available.

Big brother FileLocator Pro—whose registration cost includes a year of updates—adds several features: it searches additional filetypes (PDF, ZIP, etc.); it displays found file lines as they appear in the file, with customizable numbers of lines above and below each one; it allows immediate inspection of found files with a built-in viewer or tailorable external editor; it provides a detailed status line with found-file statistics; and it's programmable via scripting and plug-ins.

While it's perhaps a little unfashionable, I appreciate the 24-page FileLocator Pro manual. Full of screenshots illustrating basic and advanced facilities, it's a quick read revealing tips and nuggets that might otherwise be missed.

After paying for and downloading FileLocator Pro, you'll be given a registration key that enables using the program past the free evaluation period. You'll apply the key by executing a small registry update file or by copying a string from an e-mail into a dialogue box. Note that while you're safe executing the registry update file from a trusted vendor, caution is required with such files and they should **not** be accepted and executed from strangers.

A minor oddity is that invoking either product via right-clicking a folder in Windows Explorer—a handy facility—starts a new copy of the search tool rather than making an open copy the active window.

Until PCs can read our minds and do what we want without detailed instructions, tools like Agent Ransack and FileLocator Pro are great productivity enhancers. And don't neglect options available in Windows built-in search tools: they can tailor and refine searches to be more effective.

Specifications

Company: Mythic Software
Programs: Agent Ransack, FileLocator Pro
URL: www.mythicsoft.com
Price: Free (Agent Ransack); \$25 (FileLocator Pro)
OS: Windows 95 or newer

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Windows Media Player 10

By Chuck Guion, Editor, Rockport Computer Users' Group, Inc. www.rcug.net

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

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

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

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

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Election Notice

The NCTCUG Annual Meeting will be on October 5, 2004, at 7 pm at Carlin Hall. Elections will also be held then. Elections for the Board of Directors will also be held then. A combined election announcement and ballot will also be emailed to members.

All officers and four member-at-large positions are up for election. Anyone interested in running for any position, please contact any officer or board member.
Thank you!

Current Hoaxes and Urban Legends

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director and Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX
iwilsker@apcug.net

Websites:

<http://www.snopes.com>

<http://urbanlegends.about.com>

Some of us find them cute, entertaining, exciting, and fun, while others of us find them embarrassing, irritating, and a waste of time. Many forward them believing that they are doing good, or warning of harm, or forward them because they came from an allegedly reliable source. A few are so convinced of their truth that I am explicitly requested to put them in this column, or announce them on my radio and TV show. What I am referring to are the hoaxes and urban legends currently circulating on the internet that many of us seem to love to forward to everyone in our email address books. Many of these hoaxes and urban legends have a grain of truth or logic in them, while many others are totally lacking any basis in fact, yet many of us still enjoy forwarding them without a second thought.

In order to avoid embarrassment I strongly recommend that everyone tempted to forward such emails should check out their validity prior to another mass send to all we know. There are several excellent websites that compile information on these emails, and a quick check can save us from the embarrassment of sending out a hoax, and preserve our personal credibility. If we find that the interesting email is indeed true, we should still consider not forwarding them to everyone, as many of our intended recipients may not find our interests to their likings, and may even be offended that we consumed their valuable bandwidth and time. Typically, when I receive one of these from an acquaintance, if I am not already familiar with it, I check it out; if it is true (a minority of the time), I may choose to selectively forward it only to those that I think may be interested in the topic, but I never send it to everyone in my address book. If it is false, I usually reply back to the sender that it is indeed false, and include a link documenting the falsehood. Some emailers are so humiliated that I caught them in an inaccuracy that they reply in anger back to me, despite the incontrovertible fact that it was they who had sent the bogus email.

To verify the authenticity or falsehoods of these oft forwarded emails, I use two primary, and several secondary resources. Primarily I use the excellent and comprehensive urban legends resource of Snopes, at www.snopes.com. Well organized in an easy to navigate menu format, along with a competent search engine makes Snopes an excellent choice to check out the validity of questionable emails.

My other primary resource for checking the legitimacy of potential hoax emails is www.urbanlegends.about.com. This site is frequently updated with the latest hoaxes in circulation, and can reliably document their validity.

A common topic of these questionable emails is virus warnings. For this reason, most of the major antivirus software publishers also compile lists of hoaxes, mostly virus related, on their websites. I utilize these sites as secondary resources. It is also notable that old hoaxes and virus warnings never seem to die out, and periodically reappear. One that has been documented to be in circulation for over six years, but is again currently making the rounds in mass emailings is the "It takes guts to say Jesus" virus hoax. This email, in several iterations, warns that according to CNN, AOL, McAfee, and other reputable resources, that there is an email circulating with a virus that can not be detected by contemporary antivirus software and that if you open the email, your computer will be effectively destroyed. Every one of the hoax and antivirus websites list this as a hoax, yet countless copies are being forwarded by well intentioned people trying to warn their acquaintances. Some of the variations even go on to state that while it may be false, it is so important that it is being forwarded anyway. Another similar email warning that does have some validity is the one that says "I've Got Your E-mail on My Account". It goes on to warn that someone is using "your" email account to spread a virus, and I have received 10 copies of it, all with your email address and ISP in the header. The email then says, "I have copied all the mail text in the windows text-editor for you & zipped then. Make sure, that this mails (sic) don't come in

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The New, The Best, And The Worst (Excerpts)

Collected by Pim Borman, Editor and APCUG Representative,
Southwest Indiana PC Users Group, Inc. www.swipcug.org

Picasa (Mar 2005)

Google is rapidly adding additional features, including the recently added Google Desktop that lets you search your system drives for files. The latest free addition is Picasa 2 (<http://picasa.google.com/index.html>), an add-in that searches your hard drives for images and arranges them in easy-to-scan folders arranged by date, name, or size. The pictures can be rearranged, combined in albums, made into slide shows, sent via email, make collages, and other manipulations to sort through your collections. What especially caught my eye were the intuitive image editing tools. Most photo editors I have used are either too limited, or they offer so many features that they become hard to use. Picasa offers effective automatic contrast and color corrections, and even an "I'm Feeling Lucky" button. A "Fill Light" button serves the highly useful but poorly understood exposure-correction function usually called "gamma." If these buttons don't give the desired effect, there are Tuning and Effects buttons to further optimize your pictures.

Picasa leaves your stored images unchanged. Edited images must be "saved as a copy" or by "exporting" them to another location. I finally found out about that after spending quite some time looking in vain for the usual "save as..." menu item.

Some day Google may be the Wal-Mart of desktop programs, offering one-stop universal functionality. Microsoft, Yahoo, and the other software moguls are warily watching its progress.

(First found in USA Today 1/18/2005, thanks to Duane Morrow)

In Brief (May 2005)

Several months ago Google announced a new, free desktop search program. It is still under development and does not (yet) index Acrobat .pdf files. Other search programs immediately came up with competing versions. According to PC Magazine (3/22/05) the best of the free desktop search programs at

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my mail-box again." Attached to this dire warning is a file, commonly named "your_text.zip". If opened, the file will infest your computer with the Sober.N worm. If it infects your computer, Sober.N will terminate the antivirus and firewall software on your computer, rendering it vulnerable to further attack, and then forwarding itself to everyone in your address book! This Sober.N warning is the exception to the rule that most warnings of this type are bogus.

Another dire warning, which I am receiving multiple copies of, is the warning that a directory of cell phone numbers is being compiled to enable telemarketers to call us on our cell phones, consuming our valuable supply of limited minutes. This hoax, which is now circulating for the second time, is listed by several

sites as one of the top hoaxes in circulation. The grain of truth in this is that most cell phone carriers are instituting a "411" directory service of cell phone numbers, this list will emphatically not be for sale to telemarketers.

To see the latest hoaxes in circulation, as well as the ones in widest distribution, check out the hoax and urban legend websites, or the website of your favorite antivirus software. You may find some of the hoaxes actually quite entertaining, and wonder how intelligent people could fall for such silly emails.

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Tech News

(April–June 2005 — Excerpts)

**By Sue Crane, Vice President, Big Bear Computer Club, California;
Editor, Bearly Bytes, Newsletter of the Big Bear Computer Club**

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Your Cell Phone Could Infect Your Car!

A report by IBM Security Intelligence Services predicts that viruses spreading to mobile phones, PDAs and wireless networks could infect the embedded computers that increasingly are used to run basic automobile functions. The average new car runs 20 computer processors and about 60 megabytes of software code, raising more opportunities for malfunctions.

New Technology Could Bring Sight To The Blind

A small camera mounted on spectacles and connected to the optical nerve could restore the sight of thousands of people suffering from deterioration of the retina, European scientists said Monday. The technology could also help people with the retinal disease macular degeneration, which can lead to loss of fine-detail sight and which is one of the leading causes of visual impairment in the United States. A camera mounted on glasses sends images to an electronic device implanted behind the eye and stimulates the optic nerve, which passes the information to the brain.

Edible Origami By Canon?

The Canon i560 inkjet printer doesn't just print menus for Moto restaurant in Chicago; it prints menus you can eat. Homaru Cantu, the executive chef, prints menus and many other items onto edible starch-based paper. Instead of using the typical CMYK inks—cyan, magenta, yellow, and black—Cantu has filled the cartridges with edible solutions. Think SSSB: sweet, sour, bitter, and salty. Cantu uses combinations of these four liquids on the edible paper to create dishes unlikely to be found anywhere else, such as “baked map of Alaska” and a type of maki sushi that he wraps in flavored paper bearing images of sushi, instead of seaweed.

Antispam Tools Initiate New HIV Vaccines

At the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Boston, workers for Microsoft Research said they have been using database and antispam software to identify previously unseen patterns in genetic mutations of HIV. The researchers said their work illustrates how medical experts can use machine-learning, data-mining and other software methods to sort through millions of strains of HIV and improve vaccines. By seeking out genetic patterns that could be used to train a person's immune system to fight the virus, they are already making headway, the researchers said. The group reported that the first of its proposed vaccine designs is already undergoing laboratory testing.

Databases Charged As Lax With Personal Information

After the huge security breach by ChoicePoint, releasing personal information of 145,000 individuals earlier this month, Senators Charles Schumer and Patrick Leahy have requested hearings, declaring. “It's time to turn some sunshine on these developments so the public can understand how and why their personal information is being used,” A Schumer spokesman claimed that a researcher at a major corporation not involved in investigations was able to get the complete social security numbers from Westlaw's information database using the “People-Find” feature. Other companies have recently acknowledged that they may have inadvertently left consumer information unprotected. The payroll records of at least a dozen companies were exposed to the Internet by a flaw in the online W-2 service of PayMaxx. A flaw in the PayMaxx Web site exposed the financial information of customers' workers, the payroll-services firm acknowledges. In addition, cell-phone service provider T-Mobile has dealt with ongoing security problems that have led to the publication of celebrity Paris Hilton's personal information and the phone numbers of many Hollywood stars.

Microsoft Authentication Changes Again

Customers who find themselves reinstalling Windows XP should be ready for a headache: Microsoft will no longer support activation over the Internet for PCs with Windows pre-installed. Intended to curb stealing and selling of Certificates of Authenticity, the new security measure will initially be limited to the Windows XP software preinstalled on systems shipped by the top 20 PC sellers.

Traditional 911 Services Not Available From VOIPs (May)

The Texas attorney general filed a lawsuit against Internet telephone service Vonage, saying the company fails to clearly tell consumers about the limits of 911 emergency calling over its service. The suit stems from a incident last month in Houston where a husband and wife were shot by burglars while their daughter tried to call 911 on a Vonage line and reached a recording. Independent VOIP providers typically do not have access to the traditional 911 system which carries calls to emergency dispatchers and transmits data about the caller's location. As a work-around, Vonage tells customers they need to activate a 911 service, but that service directs calls to administrative telephone lines that in some cases are unanswered.

VoIPs To Get 911 Access (June)

VoIP companies still can't successfully route a 911 call to the right emergency calling center or provide emergency operators with the caller's phone number and location, but Verizon Communications, the largest of the Baby Bells, said it plans to open its 911 emergency calling infrastructure to providers of Net-based phoning and Qwest Communications International struck a deal with Vonage for access to Qwest's 911 infrastructure. The developments are major for all Net-phone operators, including cable operators, AT&T CallVantage and Net2Phone, which are facing mounting pressure to 911 services.

Mouse Adaptor For Shaky Hands

IBM has developed an adjustable mouse adaptor that compensates for the shakes of patients with hand tumors and other causes of uncontrollable

shaking. According to the International Essential Tremor Foundation, in the US alone nearly 10 million people are affected by essential tremor, the most common form of hand tremors. This adaptor will plug in between the mouse and computer and is compatible with existing mice.

Now You CAN Return Unwrapped Software

In the settlement of a California lawsuit Microsoft, Symantec, Adobe and others have agreed to publish EULA agreements on their websites for their respective products, while CompUSA, Best Buy, and Staples agreed to allow consumers to return unwrapped software for full monetary refunds, even if the shrink-wrap has been opened. Details of the settlement can be found at: <http://www.techfirm.com/AmendedComplaint-Filed.pdf>

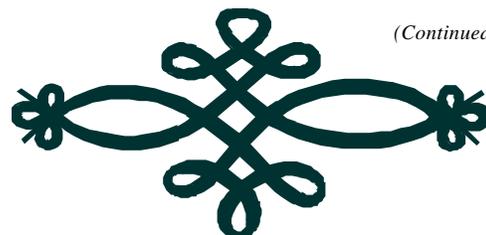
Odd-Shaped Robots Do More Than Housework.

Engineers at IRobot certainly see house cleaning as a legitimate use of robots, although the company's popular Roomba Intelligent Floorvac vacuum-cleaning robot is disc shaped, not human shaped. Although the company has collaborated with toy-maker Hasbro on a life-like doll, military robots have long been their focus. Military robots don't have a lot in common with the walking, talking robots of science fiction movies. They're shaped more like mini tanks or golf carts than like humans. PackBots, for instance, have tracked wheels to navigate rough terrain and weigh about 40 pounds.

Get Your LCD Monitor Or TV Now!

Material makers are limiting production as a reaction to 2004 trends, and this could lead to a shortage later in 2005. Glass substrates used to manufacture large-size thin film transistor LCD panels are likely to be 8 percent to 10 percent short of demand and the shortage of color filters used in fifth- and sixth-generation LCD plants is projected to be between 7 percent to 12 percent toward the end of 2005.

(Continued on page 15)



Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

My wife and I attended the FACUG spring conference and it was again a total success. There were 173 attendees from 41 user groups. They have done a great job of keeping vendor support and someone really excelled at obtaining door prizes. Our raffle tickets were not drawn until almost the end of the first round (doorprize drawing); typical for me, but we still drew pretty good prizes. We had to go to work that day and I was ready to leave, but my wife reminded me that Dave Whittle would be doing the raffle for an Intel motherboard and P4 chip so I decided to stay for that. Good thing because the first paper Dave pulled had my name on it. I was astounded and excitedly stepped up to receive my great prize. What really surprised me were all the congratulations from people that I know would have loved winning it. Now all I have to do is get the new machine built.

Some of the roundtables were very popular tech session. It gave attendees a chance to see some other products in action. It was a great conference and I congratulate all the planners for a job well done. APCUG was well represented by some of its officers who mingled with the attendees, and Peggy Ireland chaired a round table on the benefits of AP-

CUG. A few derogatory remarks by attendees during the vendor panel bothered me. You will find my article in APCUG reports, and Dave Whittle also wrote one. One person said the vendor support was poor and "unacceptable". Another complained about their bad experience with a "free" service offered by a vendor who does it just to be helpful, and those were only two of the complaints. I feel the vendor support we still have is very good and we are lucky to have it. However, I still do not agree with asking vendors to provide meals for the event. Officers of both APCUG and FACUG always tell me that people won't attend if they have to buy their own meals. Are we that greedy and cheap? I hope not because the camaraderie and learning experience at these events is always great.

Surprise Fella, You're Out Of Luck! (Purchase Dates For Hard Drives)

I read an article by Lynn Kauer, editor of the Blue Chip News, newsletter of the Saginaw Valley Computer Association, that might interest you about hard drive warranties. When purchasing an Iomega drive he was urged by the clerk to purchase a store warranty because hard drive warranties begin on the day of manufacture. At home, he checked the Iomega Web site, entered the serial number of his unit just purchased, and found that the warranty had indeed already expired. He still had 14 days from his date of purchase to buy a store warranty.

When attending the Comp USA show, I talked to the guys from Western Digital about that and they confirmed it was standard policy. They said the problem is how long a drive sits on shelves at distributors and stores, and that almost nobody keeps their purchase receipt. But if a purchaser still has their store receipt should the drive fail within the stated warranty, they will honor the warranty from the date of your receipt. I can't speak for all vendors, but keep your store receipts just in case that is their policy also.

I quickly heard from readers expressing their displeasure about the HD warranties I didn't like the



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WAC Meetings will be held on August 20 & September 17, 2005, 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/>

fact that a HD warranty starts on the build date either and I don't know where the purchase receipt is for a new drive I bought (shame on me). I may be able to find it, but this HD has been lying around here for a while. Your purchase receipt for a Western Digital drive means you're covered, but I don't know other manufacturer's policies. When I opened the box for a new Western Digital 80 gig HD the other day, the warranty wording for it was inside its box, under the drive, printed on the bottom layer of the box. The warranty is "for one year from the date on my original purchase receipt." That works, but also included was a card to purchase a three-year extended warranty for \$14.95. Stores don't let you open the box to read the warranty but they might show you a copy or refer you to a URL.

Popular Deal Revived

Twice in the past few years I have featured a discount on products purchased from InkSell.com, and both times I featured it, the deal was quite popular. I am not familiar with prices on inkjet products so you should do your own research. Bryan Hawkins, marketing manager, has offered to repeat this deal for us and it is as follows: "We are going to do a promo code for your readers. The code is for 15% off all compatible "inkjet" products. OEM cartridges are excluded. The promotion starts today (5/16/05) and runs till a year from now. The code is "pcdeals2005".

Their Web site is [<http://www.inksell.com>] for product information. To order, go to checkout and put in the shipping information then click on the "continue" button. After putting in the billing info, there is a place to enter in the your e-mail address for e-mail confirmation. Below that is the coupon promotional code field for entering the code "pcdeals2005", then click "apply." Or; Mon- Fri. 9am - 6pm CST order by phone at 1-800-255-0483.

An Announcement I Received (Edited)

Company: WisePixel Multimedia

E-mail: [press@wisepixel.com]

HandySnap1.0: High-impact screenshots without complexity

"WisePixel Multimedia announces HandySnap 1.0, a screen capture utility for Windows platforms. With HandySnap, you can illustrate your multimedia presentation, manual, or marketing copy with screenshots

that will make it not only aesthetically pleasing and professional - you create an easy to understand presentation that will convey complex information in a manner anyone can grasp within seconds.

"HandySnap features a concise, Photoshop-style toolbox interface, familiar to millions of Photoshop users, which floats on top of other applications and takes minimum space on the desktop. The interface consists of three main areas with a set of icons - capture tools area, built-in editor, and screenshot operations area. Any screenshot action can be performed in one click on an icon without walking through complex drop-down menus.

"Capture any portion of the screen by using a resizable trimming frame, take a snapshot of an active window or the whole desktop. After a screenshot is taken, the image displays in a separate window where it can be further edited. The user can add a multitude of markers, including textual comments, pixel art symbols, arrows, free-hand lines, rectangular frames, and ellipses. You can experiment with a semi-transparency effect and modify color and line size. All objects can be easily moved over the screenshot.

"Easily configure hotkeys to trigger capture actions. With the hotkey support, you can take snapshots of drop-down menus, splash-screens and other events, which, as a rule, can not be captured. You can get HandySnap to automatically generate file names for screenshots based on the specified pattern, send screenshots to the clipboard, or save them to files.

"HandySnap 1.0 runs under Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP and costs \$29.00 (USD) for a single-user license. User group members get 20% off the regular price using coupon code GRP01 through August. A 30-day fully functional evaluation version can be downloaded free at

[http://www.wisepixel.com/downloads/hsnap_setup.exe].

For more information, please visit [<http://www.wisepixel.com>].

E-mail: [press@wisepixel.com]"

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>].

(Continued from page 1)

motherboard-based sound circuitry, and managed to change an option which converted the Line and Microphone inputs into outputs for 5.1 channel sound, reversed this, and 'voila — TV sound came pouring through my speakers. I've spent 20 minutes while writing this, trying to locate that program again, but... no luck.

The TV card has myriad features, including digital VCR recording, frame capture, closed captioning display, zoom in and out, stereo audio, and can even make TV video the background of your screen — a "ghostly" feature that could scare the pants off you if you didn't know it was available. Software is included for the Guide Plus+ interactive program guide, allowing program schedules to be downloaded from the net, and used to set up recording times, as well as program selection for viewing.

Identity Theft

ID theft is a huge topic in the news these days, and a popular subject in many of the magazines around my house, with a major article in July's *Money* magazine. *Consumer Reports* for August has a feature on credit scoring, describing a system developed by Fair Isaac and Company to judge applicant credit worthiness. The system, commonly referred to as FICO, is used by the three primary consumer credit reporting bureaus, TransUnion, Experian, and Equifax. The two topics tie together, since a case of identity theft is likely to have a devastating effect on your credit score, if the bad guys open accounts in your name, run up big charges, and then leave merchants or credit card companies whistling for their money.

Consumer Reports (CR) recommends getting a credit report from each of the reporting agencies once a year, and checking FICO scores several months prior to applying for a loan. New Federal legislation passed in 2003 requires the credit bureaus to provide free annual reports, a process being phased in west to east across the country, reaching us on the east coast in September. The web site for providing these reports is run by the three bureaus, and is not winning prizes for ease of use. CR recommends requesting all three reports by clicking on all of them at once, so you don't have to fill out the extensive questionnaire three times. The site is: <http://www.annualcreditreport.com>.

CR pointed me to the <http://www.myfico.com> site run by Fair Isaacs, which allows you to purchase all three credit bureau reports, along with their individual FICO scores, for \$44.85, or individually for \$14.95.

Reviewing the credit reports I obtained was like a blast from the past, with one showing my employer as a job I last worked in June of 1972. It did have all our previous residences correct. One of the reports showed a previous residence as an apparent corruption of our street address coupled with the current proper post office; and with our current address having proper street address, and the old designation for the post office area we live in.

The credit account sections showed a gasoline credit card we've had since I got out of the Army, and the Sears account we've also maintained through the years. Some of the other accounts shown in the credit reports, long since dormant or dropped by us, were hard to figure out because of the many consolidations of the banking industry. It may have been the ABC bank when we used the account, but it's now XYZ — go figure !!

If you decide you need to monitor your credit accounts, CR warns careful shopping, as you might expect. One of the bureaus will sell you a \$144 offering that reports daily credit report activity. I saw a package at *myfico.com* that seemed to cover the bases pretty thoroughly for about \$50, and provides one full report from a bureau each quarter. Seems strange that caveat emptor applies to the credit bureau product line, too!

The Obligatory Warning

Jim Brueggeman reports, "Just wanted all to know how important it is to back up files! Thursday morning I walked up to my computer and I had the "blue screen of death" facing me. My C-drive had failed overnight. I was able to replace it and restore all of my programs. My last back-up was at 2 AM Tuesday morning and I had not changed anything on the C-drive since then. I keep my data on a different drive and it wasn't affected. All is well. I'm sure glad my laptop was available during this period. I don't believe I lost anything except money and time!"

(Continued from page 11)

Talk To Your TV!

Agile TV aims to ‘change the way people watch TV’ via the creation of its voice-controlled TV remote. The Promptu remote is designed to replace a conventional remote control and includes a “Talk” button and a built-in microphone, together with an infrared receiver used in conjunction with an existing cable box.

Electronic Pill Boxes

Two health companies have teamed up to distribute an electronic pill box that does much more than help patients organize their medicine. The Med-eMonitor reminds patients when to take medicine and makes patient-specific inquiries about health measures like blood glucose levels, side effects or just general well-being. The device sends this information to a secure Web server, where practitioners monitoring a patient’s care can see the information and intervene quickly if the patient stops taking medicine or re-

ports ill-effects. The Web server also updates the device with new alerts, like upcoming doctor visits or changes in dosages.

A Word To President Bush

After U.S. students earlier this month made their worst showing in the 29-year history of the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest, David Patterson, a computer science professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and president of ACM has a suggestion: “(Our presidents) meet the winners of the football championship (Super Bowl), right?” Patterson says. “Gee, wouldn’t it be wonderful if the presidents would meet the winners of the programming contest?”. The top U.S. school finished in a tie for 17th place, while students from China’s Shanghai Jiao Tong University took the top honors.

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NCTCUG Information

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All officer terms expire 2005

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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 1978 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 8 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.

Advertisement Policy

Members’ advertisements: Ads are accepted from members for non-commercial purposes at no charge. Copy should be sent to the Editor in the same format as article submissions. Commercial Advertisements: Ads are accepted from commercial advertisers at the rate of \$60 per full page, per appearance, with discounts for multiple insertions. Smaller ads are priced accordingly. Payment for ads must be made in advance of appearance. Advertisers must supply a permanent address and telephone number to the editor.

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the ‘compucenter’ mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/>

If you are moving

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

Thank You!

(Continued from page 9)

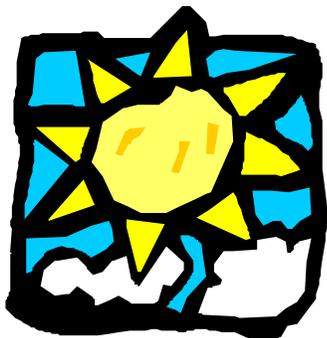
present is Yahoo's desktop search (desktop.yahoo.com), a lite version of the outstanding \$75 X1 that they rate best of show.

Those miserable spyware intruders continue to get more sophisticated and the anti-spyware producers are in a constant battle to provide the best protection and, if necessary, removal tools. Yesterday's champions, AdAware and Spybot Search & Destroy have been overtaken by newcomers Spy Sweeper 3.5 (\$30, www.webroot.com) according to PC Magazine (2/22/05) or CounterSpy 1.0 (\$20, www.sunbeltsoftware.com) according to PC World (April 2005) which rated the earlier version 3.2 of Spy Sweeper as a close second best. Take your pick.

Do you depend on Quicken to download your financial data from banks and brokers? Well, Quicken is ending online services and tech support for Quicken 2001 and 2002 so you'll need to upgrade to Quicken 2005. And that version will no longer support importing data via the .qif format and will only support the .ofx format in its WebConnect and DirectConnect features. Microsoft Money 2005 will also support online services for just two years. PC World (April 2005).

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NCTCUG, Inc.
P.O. Box 949
Arlington VA 22216



First Class

August/September 2005

1st Wed. (8/3, 9/7)

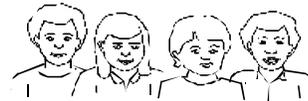
7 p.m. General Meeting

4th Wed (8/24, 9/28)

7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (9/19, none in August)

7 p.m. Board of Directors



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.

**Have a safe and happy
Labor Day Holiday.**

Please Drive Carefully!