The NCTCUG Journal

Keeping Up
By Paul Howard, NCTCUG

I'm writing this on Tuesday in the last week in June, and wondering if we'll ever see the sun again, for more than 15 minutes at a time. For three days, the Weather Bug forecast has had a thunderstorm cloud in every day's panel for the next week. The *Post's* Metro section has a huge picture of the route I took to work for the last dozen years before retiring, with trucks and loaders trying to cope with the mud from the overflow of the Northwest Branch, and editorial content indicating it will take several days to repair the road.

Amazingly, I managed to get out and mow my back yard this morning before the first deluge of the day. I had visions of being out there in flippers, mask, and snorkel behind the mower — which could have been more than a little exciting, since I use an electric mower. I'm absolutely convinced we're going to turn into frogs or mossy-backed turtles. Does Lowe's sell plans for the Ark?
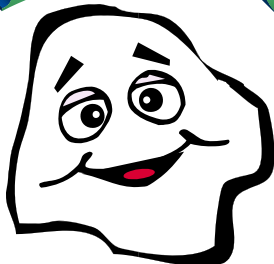
Gas For Your Gadgets

Everything seems to be battery — operated these days. When the gadget in question doesn't use disposable cells, nickel-cadmium (nicads) or another battery chemistry, such as nickel - metal hydride, which can be recharged, are often the power source of choice.

Back before the end of life as we knew it — 1999 — preparing for the Y2K bug, my wife and I stopped in a Sunny's Surplus / Sporting Goods store. Not wishing to usher in the New Year with cold beans, we bought a one-burner camp stove, and an emergency radio for Mozart. The AM-FM radio was a marvel, complete with power sources of a hand crank generator, photo-cells, and provisions for two disposable AA cells — which would, of course, be cheating.

Inside

Is The Internet Insecure Because Of You?

By Dave Gerber, APCUG Advisor; radio show host;
Vice President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida; dgerber(at)apcug.net

Long gone are the days that we could feel secure and know for certain that we had privacy. With the digital age upon us we can no longer be so sure that our privacy is secure. Recently Google has admitted their organization holds user data indefinitely. This causes concerns as now we know Google has information on us that we do not want anyone to know about.

We can simply blame this all on the big corporate companies; they seem to be a very good escape goat however, this is not the case; your privacy is totally up to you. Certificates ensure that all the data that is transferred between you and the internet is secure and encrypted. Recently in New Zealand there was a short certificate outage on a banks website. During this outage only one out of 300 users took this security warning seriously.

This is a rather large concern, as many users on the internet have the same belief that their data is safe and secure. By the end of 2005 it is estimated identity fraud will cause up to 5 trillion dollars world wide. We, the users of the internet must keep ourselves safe, secure and pay attention to those security warnings. I have compiled some good tools and tricks that will help keep you much more anonymous and secure.
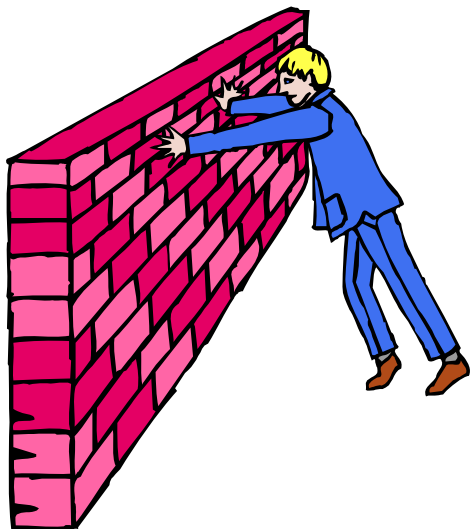
1) Get rid of the internet explorer:

First and foremost Microsoft Internet Explorer is the highest risk to your internet experience. Not only is the most popular internet browser, but is also the most popular for attacks from Viruses and Spyware. Internet explorer is also too integrated with the windows operating system. Have you ever wondered how a dialer or online casino got onto your desktop?

I personally recommend Opera; they have a nice clean browser. The usability is easy and best of all, it uses tabbed browsing.

2) Protect your Connection.

Make sure you have an active firewall operating; Firewalls stop intruders from entering your connection and causing havoc. Hackers can easily gain access to an unprotected network and steal private information.

With the release of SP2 for Windows XP, Microsoft has incorporated a free personal Firewall. If you have broadband your router should have an inbuilt Firewall, and make sure this is enabled, Zone Alarm also offer a free Firewall. You must always do what you can to protect yourself.

3) Don't share those files:

One of the most common security flaws besides running Windows XP, is having File sharing enabled. To disable File Sharing please do the following:

Click Start Menu, select settings.

Click on Network Connections.

Right-click on the Local Area Connection icon and on the menu that appears, choose Properties.

In the General tab under "This connection uses the following items", highlight "File and Printer Sharing for Microsoft Networks". (If File and Printer Sharing is not listed, then file sharing has not been setup). You may skip the rest of these instructions.

Click Uninstall.

When you are asked if you are sure you want to Uninstall File and Printer Sharing Click Yes.

You may now close the Local Area Connection Properties window.

You must restart for your computer for the effects to work.

3) Hide your IP address:

Your IP address is just like your phone number, it links directly back to you. There are many reasons you may wish to hide your IP address. Preferable you do not want to be tracked around the web, it's just as bad as having a GPS in your mobile phone.

4) Check those certificates:

Your internet connection is not secure, the data that travels between you and the site you may be browsing may pass through over 25 other computers. If you are sending very confidential information such as credit card payments, make sure the address starts with an https. Also check that the padlock on your browser is locked, and is valid for the specific site. This will ensure that you have a 128 bit encrypted connection with the website.

If you want secure email you may also have your emails encrypted too. A good free vendor is Hushmail. Your email security is more at risk than your web browsing; you must ensure your emails are safe.

5) Kill the spyware

Spyware are little programs that can easily be picked up by surfing any website or downloading files. Spyware can pickup information from where you surf to your credit card details, this information then can be sold.

Microsoft has released a beta version of their up-coming anti spyware removal tool. This too works well, and I highly recommend this tool. Zone Alarm also offer a free online spyware detector.

The information I have passed to you should be seriously considered. The internet is a very unsecure environment; you must ensure your data is safe from outside prying eyes. Make sure you are careful with any transaction you make. Never fool for any kind of email promotion, anyone who tries to sell to you through spam advertising is not trustworthy. Also make sure to check the links from anything you click on; I have found numerous fake Paypal sites that try to steal your login and password.

Remember... it is up to you

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For more information see:

http://www.nctcug.org/waugp.html

New Federal Website Provides Users With Internet Safety And Security Information

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX;
Radio & TV show host; Iwilsker(at)apcug.net

Websites

http://www.onguardonline.gov
http://www.onguardonline.gov/quiz
http://www.onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html
http://onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html
http://onguardonline.gov/tutorials

The media has recently been rife with stories about internet scams, frauds, identity theft, pedophiles, and other malevolent occurrences that have happened on the internet. While there are many online resources providing informational websites to help prevent us from falling prey to internet victimization, a consortium of federal agencies has created "OnGuard Online" at www.onguardonline.gov. This consortium consists of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Postal Inspection Service, the Department of Commerce (DOC), and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Materials are provided on this website to inform and educate the computer user about several of the most nefarious threats that commonly assail us as we enjoy the abundance of the internet. Topics currently covered are spyware, identity theft, phishing, spam scams, online shopping, P2P (Peer-to-Peer) file sharing, and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol – internet telephony). There are also a series of online quizzes (www.onguardonline.gov/quiz) where the user can test his knowledge on the security risks associated with these topics. A series of videos and tutorials on related topics, such as "Viruses and Worms", and "Protect Your Privacy, Family, and PC" are also available at this site (onguardonline.gov/tutorials). For those who have been victimized by internet miscreants, a resource is available to show the user where and how to file complaints with the appropriate federal and other agencies at onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html.

Spyware is defined at this site as "… software installed on your computer without your consent to monitor or control your computer use." Spyware can be used to steal your identity or capture your usernames, passwords, and account numbers (keyloggers); compile personal surfing profiles for directed advertising or other purpose (some forms of tracking cookies); display unwanted pop-up ads, which may be pornographic (ad-ware), redirect the browser to other sites (browser hijacking); install unwanted links on the desktop or in the "favorites" or bookmarks; and a variety of other unwanted and possibly dangerous web related items. OnGuard Online provides links and information on removing spyware, and protecting your computer from spyware.

Identity theft is a scourge that may impact as many as 10 million Americans each year, according to some sources. The incidence of identity theft through internet tricks, such as "Phishing" (typically emails directing the user to an authentic looking but counterfeit website soliciting credit card information, PIN numbers, etc.); "Pharming" (changing data files or "hosts" on the computer to redirect intentional visits to financial or commercial sites to counterfeit sites where valuable personal information is illicitly obtained) accounts for an increasingly significant portion of identity theft. OnGuard Online provides information on how to protect yourself from Phishing scams, and how to protect your identity while online, as well as instructions on dealing with identity theft if victimized.

Some internet security companies report that the amount of spam, or unsolicited commercial email, can easily amount to 60 to 80 percent of all emails sent. According to this website, details are provided on the major spam scams currently in circulation. The top 10 spam scams are: The "Nigerian" Email Scam (may also appear to be from Russia, Columbia, England, or other sources); Phishing; Work-at-

Home Scams; Weight Loss Claims; Foreign Lotteries (Congratulations, you are a winner in the Spanish / British / Canadian Lottery!); Cure-All Products; Check Overpayment Scams (I have a large cashier's check – cash it, keep some, and wire me the difference); Pay-in-Advance Credit Offers; Debt Relief; and Investment Schemes (buy this penny stock – it will quintuple in a few days). Sadly, many gullible internet users still fall for these scams enriching the crooks, and typically receiving nothing worthwhile in return.

Millions of internet users shopped online during the holiday season, and still continue to do so at online retailers, or popular auction sites such as Ebay. While most online shoppers have been successful, and had few problems, there are also thousands who have been victimized to some degree by internet crooks. This site explains a series of safe shopping tips, including "Know who you're dealing with; Know exactly what you're buying; Know what it will cost (including shipping, taxes, and other charges); Pay by credit or charge card; Check out the terms of the deal; and Print and save records of your online transactions."

"Peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing allows users to share files online through an informal network of computers running the same software." People, especially children and college students, use these P2P networks to exchange software, music, videos, and other files. While there is much material that can legitimately be exchanged, P2P is also often a source of spyware, viruses, and illicit and illegal copies of pirated software, music, and other intellectual property. This site lists many of the risks common with these P2P services, and how to safely utilize such services.

You have likely seen the ads on TV, as well as displays at the electronics and mass merchandising stores for "VoIP", services that allow the broadband internet user to make local and long distance phone calls over the internet for a flat monthly fee. While expanding on popularity, the path has been bumpy, as some subscribers have been dissatisfied with the service. Issues and service such as "911" calls, while addressed in regulations, are still not universally implemented on many VoIP systems. The OnGuard

Online website also explains what many local VoIP users painfully found out during the recent spate of hurricanes and other storms, that if there is no power, or internet service is otherwise inaccessible, the VoIP services generally do not function, leaving the user without phone service.

The OnGuard Online site "Stop – Think – Click: 7 Practices for Safer Computing" (onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html) reiterates the oft stated common sense warnings that all computer users should be aware of, and implement:

- ✩ Protect your personal information. It's valuable.
- ✩ Know who you're dealing with.
- ✩ Use anti-virus software and a firewall, and update both regularly.
- ✩ Make sure your operating system and Web browser are set up properly and
- ✩ update them regularly.
- ✩ Protect your passwords.
- ✩ Back up important files.
- ✩ Learn who to contact if something goes wrong online.

If the information on the OnGuard Online websites is utilized, we will all have a safer and more enjoyable internet experience.
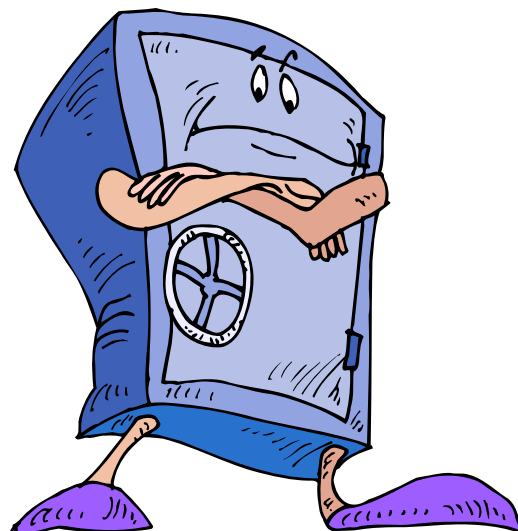
Backup Awareness Month

**By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX;
Radio & TV show host iwilsker(at)apcug.net**

Websites

http://www.backupawareness.com
http://www.ntius.com
http://www.symantec.com
http://www.backupawareness.com/
bestpractices.html

In case you had not heard, June is Backup Aware-ness Month. It is not a federally recognized holiday, nor is it one acknowledged by resolution from some governmental authority, but an awareness service of one of the largest manufacturers of hard drives, the newly merged Maxtor and Seagate.

Sure, Maxtor and Seagate will benefit if we all rush out and purchase a large capacity hard drive so we can backup our critical data in the event of a hard drive crash, or other tragedy that can damage or de-stroy our computers. This is really more of a win-win situation, as there is a very valid need for timely and comprehensive backups of our data. Lessons still unlearned from Rita, Katrina, and Wilma, as well as other countless disasters, fires, thefts, and other debacles should teach us that if we have a good backup of our files, we can easily survive a catastro-phic data loss, and be back in operation promptly.

Imagine in any business or other commercial envi-ronment how much information is stored on hard drives. Hard drives are electromechanical devices, and as such will indeed fail at some time. Murphy's Law dictates that a hard drive will always fail at the most inopportune time. Now imagine what would happen to that business or organization if suddenly all of its critical information was gone. No accounts receivable; no accounts payable; no client lists; no purchase orders; no employee or student data; no payroll and tax records; no correspondence; no re-cords of any kind; and a plethora of other potentially devastating losses. Next imagine the time and cost that a company would incur if it had to rebuild that amount of information from paper records, if the paper records indeed exist. Can you conceive the utter devastation that a company would suffer with a catastrophic data loss?

Data loss is not just a corporate or organizational threat, but a personal one too. On my home com-puter, for example, I have countless family photos, tax records, family financial information, archives of correspondence and other important documents, mu-sic, bookmarks, address books, email, and other in-formation that would probably be irretrievable in the event of a complete hard drive failure. I really do not think that the IRS would accept as an excuse the fact that my hard drive crashed, losing my financial records.

We can backup our data in many ways without any substantial expense, or we can utilize sophisticated backup solutions. Backing up can be as simple as copying critical files to CD, DVD, flash drive, or other storage media, using the integral copy function available on all computer operating systems. We can use software, such as NTI's Shadow or Backup NOW! to manage our backup functions to our cho-sen media, or we can use utilities such as Syman-tec's (Norton) Ghost, to make a bit by bit copy of our hard drive which can be copied to a new hard drive, making it a mirror image of the original, ready to go. Now that broadband internet connections are more of a rule than an exception, there are commer-cial services that will do online remote backup and storage at off-premise locations, secure and separate from the host or home location.

Seagate/Maxtor have published some "best practices" at

www.backupawareness.com/bestpractices.html

defining the tasks necessary to insure the ability to recover our precious data. These practices can be summarized by the following tips (details on the website):

Develop a backup schedule – Make it routine, and not a task that we have to remember to accomplish. Most modern backup software and utilities either backup in real-time (NTI Shadow), or can be sched-uled at predetermined times (NTI Backup NOW!).

Back up everything – it is not necessary to waste time sorting data, as the speed of backup utilities, hardware, and hard drives, as well as the large capacity of new hard drives, make it unnecessary to determine what to backup

Give yourself room to grow – The rule of thumb listed on the site recommends that the minimum size of backup drives (or other media or storage solutions) should be at least double the current size of the hard drives being backed up.

Back up automatically – Referred to in the industry as "Set it and Forget It", is a viable adjunct to backing up on schedule. Some real-time off-site backup services use a high speed internet connection to automatically back up all new data to an external location. Many software utilities are almost transparent, and perform backups automatically, and unattended.

Rotate backups – Use more than one drive or other system for backup. There are always risks that the backup itself can be damaged or otherwise flawed, and there is safety in redundancy. It is a good practice to store at least one current backup physically away from the location being backed up such that a catastrophe (fire, flood, etc.) at the host will not destroy the backup. It is also a good idea to be able to take a backup with you in the event of a crisis, such as when I took my external hard drive with a current backup of all of my files, when I evacuated from Hurricane Rita. With this external drive, I could also access critical files form another computer if needed, prior to returning home.

Don't procrastinate – Do not put off until tomorrow what you must be doing today. The complete Murphy's First Law of Computing is, "A properly backed up hard drive will never fail, but the first time that you do not have a current backup, your hard drive will always fail at the most inopportune time." Sadly, all too many of us learn the importance of a backup immediately after our hard drive fails, as we come to the realization that all is lost.

June should not really be backup awareness month; every month should be backup awareness month!

Why Settle, Do It Your Way

By Lee Alexander, Member of the Macon Users Group, Franklin, NC;
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Icons

You can make your PC more colorful and distinguish folders by using icons other then the ubiquitous manila folder. Right-click a folder and select properties; under the Customize tab, click the Change icon button and you will see more than 250 icons to choose from. Actually, the file, Shell32.dll, contains 1484 icons on my system. A good many of these are duplicates in different sizes and color depths. Sizes range from 16 x 16 pixels through 96 x 96 pixels; color depths can be 16, 256, or True colors (24-bit for a range of 16,777,216 hues).

Using one of my favorite free utilities, IrfanView, you can view and do minor editing such as changing size, color depth, and rotating the image.

TIP: Open an IrfanView window and Drag the file Shell32.dll into it. You can then see previews of the icons, one by one. If you want to do extensive editing of folder icons, create a shortcut to shell32.dll on your desktop. Then right-click on it and choose "Open With" — Irfanview.

I have created an Excel spreadsheet with a brief description of about 100 selected icons — Shell32Icons.xls.

Acrobat Reader

This free utility is much in demand of late as many program manuals are now written in the .PDF (Portable Document Format) format. A few handy keyboard shortcuts are:

Adobe uses <Ctrl> L (instead of F11 as in Microsoft products) to toggle full screen view.

Toggle the toolbars with F8.

Use the right/left arrow keys to advance/go back a page.

Adobe Photoshop, Etc.

You can hide the floating palettes in Adobe products (such as Elements), by hitting the <Tab> key. It is a toggle; hit it again to bring them back.

Word Toolbars

You can create a toolbar button for easily inserting a symbol into a document. Right-click a toolbar and select Customize and the Commands tab. In the categories pane scroll down and click on All Commands . In the right pane, Commands, click on Symbol: and drag it to a toolbar. This will open the Symbol dialog box. Click the symbol to be attached to the button and click OK.

The toolbar button now displays the font name (Symbol) followed by the symbol number. Since this is not very friendly information, we can change the button's appearance. With the Customize dialog box opened, right-click the button and choose Name: . To make the button resemble the symbol it's attached to, use the <Alt> key and the four digits on the number pad for that symbol. You can add a graphic to the button by clicking on Edit Button Image. You're then presented with a simple grid and color palette upon which you can draw simple shapes.

Tips On Digital Photography
And A PC Windows Picture And Fax Viewer

This versatile (for photos) utility is often overlooked in the availability of photo editors. As it is included with the Windows Operating System it is a "freebie" readily at hand. Typically, unless you have set file associations otherwise, double clicking on a photo will open it in the Viewer. The toolbar at the bottom has some handy features that are not immediately intuitive. The Previous and Next buttons allow you to view all the images in the folder of the first photo you selected. The Screen icon will start an automatic slide show; the Zoom, Rotation, and Delete are self

explanatory. However, the Print icon can surprise you – it opens the Photo Printing Wizard. As you step through the Wizard, the Layout Selection provides a variety of print configurations from 8.5 X 11 to a 35 print "contact sheet."

If you have set a file association to open your photos in an editor, you can create a shortcut to the Picture and Fax Viewer on your Desktop or in the Quick Launch Tray. Right-click in the area you want the shortcut and choose New | Shortcut. In the Shortcut wizard, enter C:\Windows\system32\shimgvw.dll (assuming your Operating System is on the C: drive). Name the shortcut and click Finish. On the first use you will have to choose the program, Picture and Fax Viewer, and check the box to "Always use selected program …"

Note that if you right-click and choose Edit, you will open the Paint program. The next-to-last button closes the viewer and opens the photo editing program associated with the file type.

Harry's Filters

Harry's Filters 3.0 is a Photoshop-compatible plug-in which can be used in dozens of different image editing applications e.g. Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, Corel Photo-Paint and many other. It includes 69 effect filters, an Animation feature, options for saving and opening presets and an instant preview feature.

Harry's Filters 3.0 is freeware. You can use them for whatever you like, but you aren't allowed to distribute them without the author's permission.

Be sure to read the instructions about extracting the zipped file to the folder containing your photo editor.

At this point, the website link I had entered is no longer valid. This brings up a salient point – rather than hold on to old links (the dynamic nature of the World Wide Web is in constant flux, always changing) it is better to Google the topic or subject to get the latest information. [*NCTCUG Ed. note July '06*: try http://thepluginsite.com/products/harrysfilters/ index.htm]
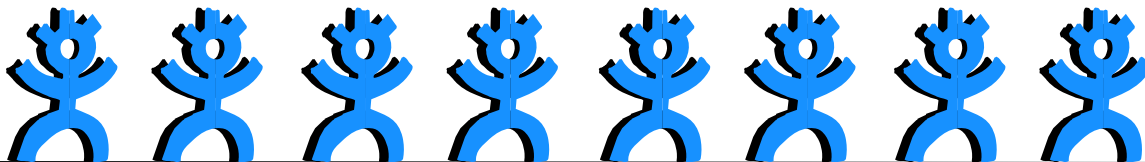
LCD Usage With A Digital Camera

The disadvantage of using the LCD, as opposed to the optical viewfinder, the camera is not braced against a body part (your head). It is difficult to avoid camera shake when the camera is held at arms length. Try tucking your elbows into your sides and exhale before pressing the shutter release—don't punch it.

Flash As A fill-in.

Using flash as a fill-in in outdoor shots, such as when the subject is backlit, can reduce the shutter speed. If your camera has the ability, check the shutter speed and aperture after such a shot. When flash is forced, digital cameras typically compensate by lowering the shutter speed and/or increasing the aperture.

White Balance.

If your photos have an overall cast of color it could be a function of the White Balance. In a photo editor, find a patch of near-neutral gray and check the RGB color levels. They should be nearly equal in value. A free utility, Pixie, can check this for you. You can download the program from www.nattyware.com.

Color Management Schemes

Color schemes can conflict, if you use more than one of them. Select the color profile of either the printer or the photo editing software, not both. With inkjets, a greenish tone could indicate that no color scheme has been applied; a reddish hue may indicate two color schemes have been applied.

See More Thumbnails In Win Explorer

Hold down the <Shift> key when selecting the Thumbnail view to eliminate file labels = more pics per screen.

Auto-Reduce Photo File Sizes

Windows XP has a neat feature to adjust the file size of photos for transmission over the internet. Select the photo(s) and right-click on one. From the pop-up menu, choose Send to and Mail Recipient. This will bring up a dialog box, Send Pictures via E-Mail. The radio button Make all my pictures smaller is selected by default. Click on Show more options to see 3 degrees of reduction.

Although it creates a message with the reduced file size photos as attachments, you do not have to send the message. You can right-click on an attachment and from the pop-up menu select Save as or Copy to put it on the Clipboard. You then simply delete the message without sending it.

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

Organizing the Favorites Menu

By Glenn Richards, Emeritus Member of the Lake-Sumter Computer Society, Leesburg, FL
grich32(at)yahoo.com

This is a follow-up on a tip from Worldstart. I have been using the method for years. When you collect shortcuts to web sites like I do the Favorites menu gets difficult to manage without some organizing.

It is easy to add sub-folders to the Favorites main folder, either via the Internet Explorer menu item Favorites, or using Windows Explorer.

The figure shows a main Favorites subfolder I named "Software." Under that folder I have a subfolder named "A to C," etc. down to "U to Z." The rightmost column shows some of the contents of the UtoZ subfolder.

I split the alphabetic range of the subfolders so that the height of the contents of any folder does not exceed the vertical space on the Desktop. The figure has squeezed the display horizontally to make more room for these words.

My Software folder is for web sites where I have found worthwhile programs for download. One of its subfolders is "Tudogs," a web site that has shortcuts to hundreds of free programs. I have acquired many of them for the group's CDs.

The method of creating the subfolders using Windows Explorer that I use is to have WE in a two-pane mode with the Favorites folder highlighted in the left pane. Right-click in the right pane, New, Folder, and give the folder a name of you're choosing. This method can be cascaded as far as you want to go.

The above method of organization can also be used to consolidate items in your Start, Programs menu. Use WE to open your Programs folder at C:\Documents and Settings\<your own menu>\Start Menu\Programs, create subfolders for categories of menu items, and move appropriate shortcuts to this new subfolder. This can reduce the height of the Programs menu so it will fit on the screen.

My Favorites folder has 1968 files (web addresses) in 136 subfolders occupying 403KB, with no web address more than two clicks away.

Being Online Brings Coincidences And Lasting Trails

By Gabriel Goldberg, APCUG Advisor;
Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, www.aarp.org

A song written by Peter Mayer, a great singer I've just discovered, is titled "Earth Town Square." Describing how technology and travel have shrunk the world, Peter lyrically observes "Now it's feeling like a small town, with six billion people downtown, at a little sidewalk fair, in Earth Town Square". Even though all six billion of us aren't (yet!) online, the Internet as a meeting place is certainly one of the engines making the Earth seem smaller. While it was once exotic — or alarming — to have a long distance telephone conversation, chatting electronically with people half a world away doesn't raise my pulse.

A decade ago, early in my use of the Internet, I was astonished by its ability to create coincidences. This is a true story. I was consulting for an online service that gave me an e-mail address used only for their work. I received a note at that address with the intriguing subject, "I am you" from another Gabriel Goldberg. Nowadays, that's the sort of spoofed e-mail I'd likely delete without reading. He had checked his entry in the service's directory and found my entry next to his. We exchanged pleasantries, described ourselves, shared wonder at having found each other, and he mentioned that he was a music student in Boston.

Later that week, I received another note at my regular e-mail address, from a woman who said that she'd known a Gabe Goldberg years earlier, the last she'd heard from him he was going to Boston to study music, and was I that person. I replied to her, copying the other Gabe, that either they were play-

ing a joke on me or we had a mighty powerful coincidence. Truth is stranger than joke — they were former high school sweethearts who had drifted apart. In the same week they both found my name and two different e-mail addresses, and for very different reasons, they contacted me. I later heard from her mother, who thanked me for reuniting them! Remarking on the coincidence of names, the other Gabe wondered "how do guys named Jim Smith handle all the coincidences."

Participating in mailing lists, newsgroups, and Web sites leaves online footprints and makes us visible. The bad news is that's one of the ways spammers find targets, but the good news is that being visible makes it easier for lost friends to track us down. Soon after 9/11 I heard a voice on the phone I hadn't heard for nearly 30 years: my college girlfriend. She'd searched Google (often called "Googling") for me, found me, and called. We've stayed in touch since, have gotten together several times, and shared news of our respective families. And just recently I used Google to contact an elementary school friend after hearing of her taking a new job in San Francisco.

Amidst the fun of unanticipated connections and reestablished friendships, there's a cautionary note: information online has a long memory. Web sites like Google cache (retain) Web pages even after they're deleted from their original Web locations. Postings to mailing lists, Web forums, newsgroups, and other online venues are usually retained indefinitely. It can be unnerving to discover that items posted in the heat of the moment or as youthful indiscretions can be retrieved years later by potential employers or new acquaintances, or just be someone snooping for unpleasant reasons.

Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

June 2006

I edited much of the wording out so I suggest you check for more product information on the Web sites. Remember I have not tried them and know nothing about these products but thought they were interesting. Be sure to check their privacy statements, if they have one.

Games Anyone?

TameStorm Games unveiled the newest version of 'Filler'. The inner structure of the game reveals features of puzzles and strategies combined, so they have a few games to put on the same list.

What you are to do here is to occupy half, or the majority of, the flowers on the field. The field is a meticulously crafted meadow picture, in which flowers are fresh and live and their petals still remember the touch of an artist's brush. You always start a game from the left side. The computer always starts from the right one. You always make the first move. The game field has flowers with coins, which you need to seize. The more coins you have, the more bonuses

you can buy. If you have gathered enough money, you can repaint flowers in the color of your zone, randomize unoccupied space, and make your opponent miss one turn and more. Two modes of the game are available: classic puzzle and advanced puzzle. In advanced puzzle mode you will see black flowers that you can't seize.

Filler Features at a Glance (Full Version):

- ☆ Unlimited game play time;
- ☆ 100 layouts of the field and 100 levels in dvanced game;
- ☆ 100 levels in classic game;
- ☆ 11 special bonuses;
- ☆ Interesting game for your children;
- ☆ Graphics designed by masters of Russian Khokhloma painting;
- ☆ Splendid relaxing game.

Pricing and Availability: Filler 1.2 runs under Windows98/ME/2000/XP and costs $14.95 (USD). TameStorm Games offers user group members 15% discount. Use the coupon code TAME-HQBL-FILL on the order page. Additional information on Filler, as well as its evaluation version with 30 minutes of the game play and several locked levels is available as a free download at: <http://www.tamestorm.com/games/filler_puzzle_game/filler_demo_setup.exe>.

Product page link: <http://www.tamestorm.com/games/filler_puzzle_game>
Web: <http://www.tamestorm.com>

Get Rid Of Those Duplicate Files

We are the producer of NoClone, a file utility which uncovers true duplicate files and recovers valuable disk space. Reasonable Software House is offering a 20% discount to user group members on No-Clone, a file utility which uncovers true duplicate files and recovers valuable disk space. To get the discount, follow this link: <http://noclone.net/mybuy.asp?promo=HF89AW>. Don't buy a new hard drive, buy NoClone. Uncover duplicate files; recover valuable disk space. Information at <http://noclone.net>

Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC)Meetings

WACUG Meetings will be held on August 19th [PowerPoint Tips and Techniques] and September 16, 2006, [Internet Security, Debunking Internet Myths]
from 12:30 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/

Captain Tray Pro: Turn System Tray Into Your PC Central Command Center

Captain Tray Pro is a tiny software application that makes a difference when it comes to organizing favorite programs, customizing the system tray and creating shortcuts for instantaneously minimizing windows, changing captions and doing a number of other tasks. Essentially, any user who invests an hour into investigating this tool is likely to completely abandon the traditional way of endless window browsing and using the Start menu to open documents and launch applications.

Many users need several applications running simultaneously. Some of those applications are used quite frequently, others only when they are needed. So the Windows taskbar can get fully packed and everything seems to be necessary, and you have no desire to close any programs. Some applications can be minimized to the system tray, but what shall we do about 'Notepad', 'Calculator', 'Microsoft Word', 'Microsoft Excel' and our other favorite programs? Captain Tray Pro is there to help you. Here are two other products with a discount.

Program: Captain Tray Pro
Website and Info: <http://www.captaintray.com/>
50% discount URL: < https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=13741-2&ss_coupon=ALME-XEHN>

July 2006

Please be advised that I have not tried any of these products, but I had a knowledgeable friend look the announcements over. Let me know if you don't like these so I will know whether to continue using them or hunt for other things.

Do Your Homework!

Below are some announced freebies and I am passing them on with reservations since I have not tried any of them. I asked my proofreader, Bob Clyne, to just take a look at the announcements and will include some of his comments. The first product might pique your interest, as it did his, but be sure to look it and the others over thoroughly before you make your decision to try them. I have edited out much of the announcement text so go to their Web sites listed for more complete information.

Protect Those Passwords, OK, And Free Too!

The program uses a strong encryption mechanism which prevents unauthorized access (256-bit AES — Advanced Encryption Standard). Every user can create a file of his/her own (the program is virtually an SQL database, featuring simultaneous work of several users). In this file, every user has a hierarchically structured list of folders (you can create the new ones, delete, rename, etc.). Each password record you add to one of these folders contains the following fields: subject, user name, password, URL, file path, comments. The user has an ability to create an unlimited number of extra fields to store data. In addition to this, you can set an expiration date for your password.

Aurora Password Manager has a built-in password generator, which chooses arbitrary combinations of symbols and generates passwords that are impossible to guess. Get the feature list from the Web site. Bob Clyne commented that, "I did not see a privacy statement on their Web site. They do have a bunch of awards listed on their Web site, but none of them were from places I had heard enough about to have confidence in. I did not find anything bad about the company or the product."

Availability: Aurora Password Manager runs under Windows 98/Me/2000/XP/2003. You can download it at <http://www.animabilis.com/password-manager/download/Password-Manager-Installer.exe> (2.13 Mb)
Product page link: <http://www.animabilis.com>
E-mail: <egorov@animabilis.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>

Club Election Notice

The NCTCUG Annual Meeting and election of officers and board members will be at the October meeting — October 4, 2006, 7 p.m. at Carlin Hall.

Anyone interested in running for office, please contact any board member. All officers and four board positions are to be voted on.

(Continued from page 1)

Linda used the radio in her office, keeping it on a window sill, where daylight provided enough charge from the photocells to keep the radio perking along. Just the ticket, until the internal nicad cells, charged by the photocells or generator crank, finally wouldn't take a charge — we wouldn't want to use disposable AAs, after all — not hard-nosed emergency enough, right? Taking the radio apart, I discovered two internal nicad cells, connected together as a battery, with welded on terminals to connect to the radio's circuitry and the generator and photocell charging systems.

In doing some research after a user group discussion of suppliers of UPS (uninterruptible power supply) batteries, I came across BatteriesPlus, a franchise chain with Washington area locations in Rockville, Springfield and Fairfax. http://www.batteriesplus.com I went to the Fairfax store, and they were able to make up a custom battery, complete with terminals welded on. My Y2K radio was back in service, with a little help from my soldering iron, at a cost of $7, vs. twenty bucks for a new radio. With that success, I starting going through my collection of battery powered gadgets at home, and salvaged a collection that been dead or dying.

My Norelco Maverick rechargeable beard trimmer had been running on AC for over a year, but the internal nicad had gotten to the point that it wouldn't hold any charge at all, so the mustache trimmer finally packed it in. This unit uses a single nicad cell with custom welded on terminals. With a few minutes for disassembly, desoldering, soldering, and reassembling, a renewed trimmer for $3.49 - about 10% of the cost of a replacement trimmer.

Next for refurbishment was a Dorcy rechargeable flashlight — a unit we've had for years. This unit plugs in an AC outlet, and includes a standard 4 watt nightlight, operated by a photocell switch, so it turns on at dusk. An option switch allows the flashlight to blink about once per second on AC power loss — so you can easily locate the flashlight in the dark. This unit includes two AA sized nicads for the flashlight feature, and they now failed to hold a charge. When I got thepurchase replacements home, I discovered the store tech had given me AAs with the configuration to accept welded terminals. The positive terminal wasn't protruding enough to contact the flashlight's terminals, so I had to go back and swap them for a more conventional AA configuration, where the positive terminal protrudes about $1/16^{th}$ of an inch above the top of the cell. $6.99 got this unit back in service, with replacement flashlights usually selling for $15 - $30, depending on features.

Another rechargeable flashlight candidate was a Black & Decker Spotlighter, which required a 3 cell nicad battery pack replacement, with welded terminals, for

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NCTCUG members and friends:

It is with sadness that we note the passing of former NCTCUG member Frederic W. Boots on May 8th. A death notice appeared in the Washington Post Metro section on Sunday, May 14th.

Fred was NCTCUG's treasurer in fiscal year 1992, and served as a director for ten years after that. Fred also ran the group's discount magazine subscription program for several years. We hadn't seen him at meetings since night vision problems kept him from driving — Don Gruenther was unable to convince Fred to ride with him to meetings after that.

Several pictures of Fred appear in the group of photos from our October '99 general meeting, on the web site. http://www.nctcug.org/photindx.html

Paul Howard

(Continued from page 14)

$11.99. With the proliferation of high light output LED (light emitting diode) flashlights, some of the advantages of conventional rechargeables are eliminated. However, in this case, I've still got a flashlight that works, and will probably hold up for another five years. With nicads, the trick is to remember to treat them right — discharge them completely once a month and then recharge them, to avoid memory effect.

In my eagerness to refurbish my gadget collection, I probably went too far with a Black and Decker Dustbuster Plus. I had BatteriesPlus replace the three cells in the battery pack, then scratched my head when the Dustbuster didn't even whimper — I thought the switch or motor was bad, then: pound fist into forehead! This unit required the standard three cell pack, common for the units in this series, a brown, roughly square assembly that fit between the handle and the dust nozzle — and a second two cell pack in the handle, for a total of

six volts. So, I expended $19.96 for replacement batteries, and a current model Dustbuster, using 7.2 volt batteries, goes for $18.99.

Overall, though, I'm a happy camper — old toys back in action, with a new "gas" supply!

The archive of ten years of illustrated "Keeping Up" columns is available on line at: http://www.nctcug.org/kpupind.html
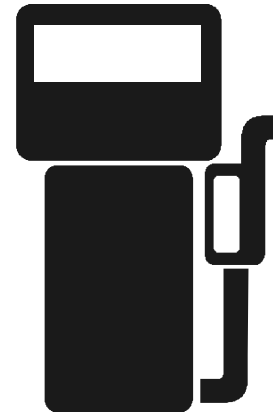
NCTCUG Information

NCTCUG, Post Office Box 949, Arlington VA 22216

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

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2006

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
1st VP	Ron Schmidt	301-577-7899
2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-426-5917
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Roger Arnold	301-946-7770

Director:	term expires	
Bill Walsh	2006	703-241-8141
Charles Throneburg	2006	703-476-6283
John Keys	2006	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2006	703-759-3938
Fred Cook	2007	703-815-1423
JJ Davies	2007	703-379-9222
Sy Fishbein	2007	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2007	301-931-2400

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.

Reprint Policy

Permission to reprint articles from the NCTCUG Journal is given to school, personal computer club, and nonprofit organization publications, provided that: (a) NCTCUG Inc. receives a copy of the publication; (b) credit is given to the NCTCUG Journal as the source; (c) the original author is given full credit; and (d) the article author has not expressly copyrighted the article. Recognition is one means of compensating our valued contributors

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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/

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/compucenter/

If you are moving

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

(Continued from page 11)

Just as it's worth checking your credit report periodically, it's a good idea to occasionally check out what online trails you've left. My current favorite surfing tool is Google, so I search for "Gabe Goldberg" and "Gabriel Goldberg." The quote marks bind the first and last names together so that only Web pages having the exact full name are found. I search on Gabe and Gabriel because I've used both names. If your name is closer to Jim Smith's — offering 56,000 hits rather than the more manageable 182 for my name — you can tighten the search by adding terms such as a middle initial, state of residence, hobby, employer, etc. But don't make the search too narrow or you may miss genuine references.
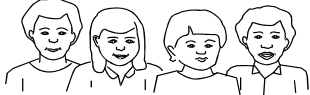
It's tedious to erase tracks from an online history. It requires contacting each site that hosts material you'd like to delete, perhaps following instructions and filling out forms. Some mailing list sites refuse as a matter of policy to delete list postings, reasoning that doing so would distort a list's historical record. The government has made serious efforts to sanitize the Web by removing content deemed dangerous, such as plans for water and power systems. Even when successful, scrubbing data off Web sites often doesn't really make it unavailable, it just slows people from finding it. It's much better to avoid saying anything online that might return to haunt you, than try to clear the record after the fact.
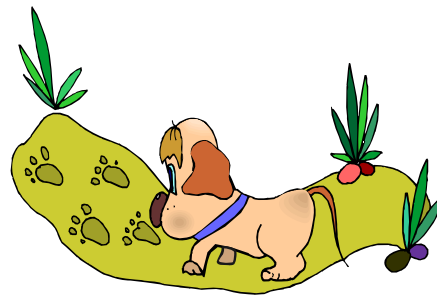
August/September 2006

1st Wed. (8/2, 9/6)
7 p.m. General Meeting

4th Wed (8/23, 9/27)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (9/18, 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.

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