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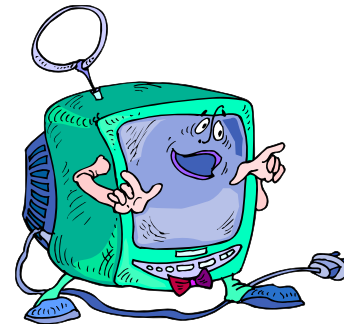
Keeping Up

By Paul Howard, NCTCUG

It Takes Technology To Get Skinny

Much like a New Year's Resolution, when I retired, I swore I was going to take one of those hours I used to spend in traffic every day while working and exercise. Yeah, the road to heck is still paved with all them good intentions <grin>!

Last month, at my almost-annual physical, after Doc got done throttling me with his stethoscope, I got number 26 — the overweight speech. Followed by “Just one more pound, and you’ll be officially obese!” And then he berated me ‘cause none of my excuses for not getting enough exercise were good enough so he could borrow them for his physical the following week! My sentence — an hour’s exercise a day, and no more triple decker Five Guys greaseburgers and fries.



Last year, I bought a 13" TV to help while away the exercise hours - gotta multi-task, after all. But even with the built in VHS recorder, watching yesterday's *Nightly Business Report* — “there goes my portfolio, right down the porcelain appliance, thanks to Bernanke’s latest pronouncement,” followed by the last *BBC News* from the previous night, never seemed to be enough to keep my New Balance walkers pounding out the miles.

Then I remembered that APCUG Regional Rep Gabe Goldberg mentioned that he was doing two hours a day on his treadmill, and was watching movie DVDs while doing it. Aha, another alternative while making the treadmill slog! So, I invested in a cheapy DVD player, and a bunch of five buck movie specials, and watch Dirty Harry chase bad guys while toting up the miles.

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Online Librarians Never Say Shhh!

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

Libraries have improved since baby boomers attended grade school. Research assistance once only available in person or by telephone is blossoming into diverse online “ask a librarian” services, handling questions ranging from general curiosity and homework-related to business research.

Friendly Online Librarians Never Say Shhh!

Growing up, I was lucky to live just a few blocks from a great neighborhood library. I fondly remember the children’s librarian encouraging my love of reading and books. The library was rebuilt while I was in elementary school; I was recently shocked that the “new” library was undergoing renovation and improvement. Then I realized that what seems like yesterday was five decades ago!

The good news for us all—near libraries or not—is that libraries have greatly improved in that 50 years. Research assistance once only available in person or by telephone is blossoming into diverse online “ask a librarian” services. These handle all sorts of questions: general curiosity, homework-related, business research, etc. Just don’t expect medical or legal advice.



E-mail assistance has been available for some time. Librarians sometimes like it because they can answer questions as they have time, and it avoids people waiting on line or holding on the phone. But it can be slow if a question must be clarified—that’s important, since people often don’t ask what they really want answered! And online interaction lacks face-to-face intimacy, voice tone, body language, which all help communication.

In addition to accepting e-mail, libraries use Web forms for submitting queries, take questions via instant messaging, and offer interactive Web chats. Highly interactive instant messaging and Web chats allow quick conversations, often providing answers within a few minutes. Newer technologies such as VoIP (voice over IP, Internet telephony) and MS (cell phone text messaging) may soon increase research availability.

Library policies vary regarding answering non-resident questions; some specialized queries (local history, obituaries, newspaper clippings, etc.) must be handled by a library near the area of interest. That brings genealogy questions from far away as people research their ancestors.

Most queries are handled at no cost, though some searches incur charges. A library card usually isn’t needed. Some libraries currently mail printed research results; e-mailing images will provide faster service and reduce costs.

Behind-the-scenes technology helps librarians manage queries, ensuring that all questions are answered and eliminating duplicate responses. Shortcuts fill in frequently used answers.

The same sorts of questions are asked online as are posed by phone or in person, with addition of sensitive areas such as sexual issues. Queries often deal with homework—math, science fair chal-

lenges, etc. – and country reports. Librarians enjoy the occasional obscure gem, such as being asked about “modeling the economic infrastructure of railroads in Great Britain”.

The geek expression “24x7” means that something is available all day, every day. Since people expect this full-time access to e-mail, the Web, shopping, banking, and other online services, they’re enthusiastic about being able to ask questions whenever they occur.

But it’s hard for libraries to provide this never-anticipated level of service, especially when off-hours demand may be limited. So they support each other locally/nationally/ internationally by sharing round-the-clock assistance chores. Questions are entered locally and routed to on-duty librarians—who sometimes work from home in pajamas, answering off-hours long-distance queries.

Even librarians sometimes need help—so their worldwide Stumpers mailing list lets them share baffling questions.

Librarians and the public are learning together to use electronic tools. New technologies facilitate supporting diverse clienteles by – for example—facilitating non-English services.

Tips For Online Queries

Here are a few tips regarding online queries: provide your name/e-mail/phone for answering and clarification; use plain text (not formatted) for easy reading; don’t nag, allow time for an answer – but follow up in a week or so. Finally, contact the correct library. A library in Plymouth, Michigan has received queries about Plymouths in Massachusetts and England!

Using online library services is easy once you have an Internet connection. Some libraries favor PCs with Windows and the Internet Explorer Web browser, but Linux and Macintosh systems are increasingly supported. There’s generally no software download or install. Browser pop-up blockers or firewalls sometimes get in the way but they’re easily customized.

Start by finding your library’s Web site For example, I locate my library by submitting “fairfax county” library to Google [www.google.com]. Or I could click from my county government Web site to the library pages. Or Googling library questions yields many library sites offering answers. Then look for links like Ask-A-Librarian! or “Homework Help!”. Links and services will vary; when I click Ask-A-Librarian, I can choose between chatting, e-mailing, or (of course) actually visiting a library.

In researching this article I challenged my library with two questions. I was delighted that they quickly named the obscure British TV show whose name I couldn’t remember (*The Duchess of Duke Street*) and found a science fiction book containing a short story I wanted to reread.

No matter how they evolve, whether as buildings or online, libraries’ core mission is everlasting: providing timely information in a customer-friendly format.

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Editor’s Note

We won’t be receiving any more articles from Gabe Goldberg since his assignment for writing articles for the AARP Computers and Technology section of www.aarp.com has ended. You might want to send them an e-mail letting them know how important you think it is that AARP continue to feature computer how-to articles, reviews, etc. http://www.aarp.org/about_aarp/contact/

Happy computing,
Judy Taylour, Chair
Editorial PUSH Committee

Why Do You Get So Much Spam?

By Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.
labash(at)spcug.org www.spcug.org

The earliest recorded instance of what may be described as spam occurred on May 3, 1978. A sales representative for Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) named Gary Thuerk sent a message to everyone on the Arpanet data base (now known as the Internet) on the West coast of the United States. Thurek wanted to notify the recipients of an open house that his company was hosting a demonstration of new models of the DEC-20 computer.

In 1978 the Arpanet had a certified "acceptable use policy" which said it couldn't be used for anything except research and education. Thuerk's action was a very clear violation, and when DEC got a very strong response from the Arpanet community objecting to the misuse, the company promptly promised to stop. Spam would not appear again for many years.

Today, estimates of the amount of email that is defined as spam range from 66% to 94%. Whatever the actual figure is, the good news, if you want to call it that, is that spam appears to be leveling off.

Congress has passed anti-spam legislation. Spam receivers are angry, Internet Service Providers try to filter out spam messages, and spammers are loathed by the general community of internet users. Why do spammers continue to operate in the face of all this general repugnance?

In an article for Wired Magazine, Brian McWilliams provides a very depressing answer. McWilliams discovered a security flaw on a website operated by a group selling pills guaranteed to enlarge the male sexual organ. The reporter found

that over 6,000 orders for the product had been placed in a time span of about a month. Business and medical professionals, athletes, and even women bought the pills. Many buyers made multiple purchases at \$50 per bottle, despite an obvious lack of credit card security on the site. The web site provided no way to contact the company except by placing an order.

Being a good reporter, McWilliams was not deterred by the company's efforts to hide behind fake registration data, disconnected phone numbers, and phony email addresses. Eventually he revealed that the company was owned by a 19 year old high school dropout, and a neo-Nazi adherent.

The business appears to be highly profitable, net costs being about \$15 per bottle of pills, but according to the FDA, there is no credible evidence that the product works.

Now you know why you get so much spam. It's because people who should know better respond to it and buy products from these companies.

Selling products of dubious value is not the only kind of spam on the net. This week alone I have won three European lotteries, and there are at least a dozen people in Nigeria who each want to give me \$12 million dollars for helping them launder money. Notification came just yesterday that Bill Gates is going to give me \$500,000 because I forwarded a few emails for a good cause.

Perhaps the best way to reduce the number of people buying from spam is to educate people about the problem. Unfortunately that takes time, but if we don't take the time to tell people why they shouldn't buy from spam, they will continue doing it.

If you are responding to spam, please stop. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

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Internet Fraud

by Bob Schneider, Editor of the PC Keyboard, the newsletter of the Spring Hill Teaching Computer Club, Hernando County, Florida www.sthcc.net Drbob1012(at)hotmail.com

Internet fraud continues to be the fastest growing crime in America (and perhaps the world). The most common technique for fraud today is “phishing.” This means that some nefarious person connives you into providing financial account information. They do it by mailing thousands of spam emails to lists of email addresses they have accumulated. Perhaps one of your friends sent a neat joke to 40 acquaintances, including you (your friend’s email itself is, of course, spam). Someone out there farms email address. They love it when your friend sends out those appeals and jokes—because they know that every email address they capture (including yours) is current and good. They then send a message like the one below (actually received by the author) to those thousands of email addresses. It matters not if you have PayPal or not. Many of the emails will hit someone who does, and they only need a lot of money from a few suckers to make the effort worth while. Of course, they substitute various bank names for PayPal, too.

Dear valued PayPal® member:

It has come to our attention that your PayPal® account information needs to be updated as part of our continuing commitment to protect your account and to reduce the instance of fraud on our website. If you could please take 5-10 minutes out of your online experience and update your personal records you will not run into any future problems with the online service.

However, failure to update your records will result in account suspension. Please update your records.

Once you have updated your account records, your PayPal® session will not be interrupted and will continue as normal. Go to the link below.

http://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_login-run

Thank You.

PayPal® Security Center .

Accounts Management. As outlined in our User Agreement, PayPal® will periodically send you information about site changes and enhancements.

Visit our Privacy Policy and User Agreement if you have any questions.

http://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=p/gen/ua/policy_privacy-outside

The first link (to “account records”) does not go to PayPal, but goes to www.doctori.biz/pp, a site run by thieves, waiting for you to log in and provide your user name and password for PayPal, or your bank account or other financial service. The login page will look exactly like that of your financial institution. Once you finish “updating” account information, you will be sent to that actual financial site where you can log in and see that everything is in order. The second link (to “Privacy Policy”) is a real link to your financial service. It is another part of their smoke screen. But at three o’clock the next morning, there may be some new account activity. The next day, when you log in, you will likely find that everything is no longer in order.

For your internet and financial safety, never respond to an email asking you to check your account. If you are curious, call your financial institution. Also, you can always log in to your account the usual way (not by clicking on a link you receive in an email) and check anything you wish.

A final note: tell your friends to stop broadcasting your email address to the world, to spammers, pornographers, body part enlargers and thieves. Tell them they can comply with your request if they stop forwarding jokes, requests and other such to you and their other friends. Better yet, send them a copy of this article. They deserve it.

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RSS Explained

By Phil Shapiro, member of the Capital PC User Group, Virginia Macintosh Users Group, Washington Apple Pi, Young Hackers and Scholars Libre Users Group pshapiro@his.com

RSS — really simple syndication—is a labor-saving tool that allows people to tune into information sources that interest them. The information source could be a blog, a podcast, a videocast or any web site that includes RSS feeds. The value of RSS accrues when you subscribe to multiple RSS feeds. You can then monitor multiple information streams with a minimum of effort.

There are many different software tools for subscribing to RSS feeds. One of the most popular is a web site named Bloglines. Some web browsers let you subscribe to RSS feeds. Safari 2.x and Firefox are two browsers that do. Firefox lets you to subscribe to RSS feeds using something called Live Bookmarks. You can also use a Firefox extension named Sage to subscribe to RSS feeds.

RSS's primary value is that it brings information to you without you having to visit multiple web sites. In a knowledge economy, anything that streamlines the flow of information from producer to consumer gives benefit to both producer and consumer. You tune into the information you do want, and tune out the information you don't want.

Examples

Some Examples of How RSS Simplifies Peoples' Lives:

I asked some technology consultants to explain how RSS brings value to peoples' lives. Curtis Brown at MissionMovers.org, in Seattle, is a strong believer in RSS. He explains, "RSS has invaded every part of our life, but we just don't know it. RSS is an information delivery method that gives added convenience to both senders and receivers of the information."

As an example, RSS feeds can be used by a non-profit organization to distribute different kinds of information to different people. One RSS feed could be the organization's calendar of events or classes. Another could be a call for volunteers. A third feed

might be information for funders. The more feeds an organization offers, the more narrowly tailored the information delivered to people served by that organization or supporting that organization.

Here are some other examples of RSS feeds. A used car dealer can have an RSS feed that details newly arrived used cars. A public library could have an RSS feed of newly purchased books. A police department can have separate RSS feeds for different neighborhoods, giving up-to-date information on safety concerns in each neighborhood.

Curtis Brown explains that information received in an RSS feed can be filtered by keyword and colorized in text. So you have control over the RSS feed. You decide the ways in which that stream of information is going to serve your needs.

Curtis explains that RSS feeds become immensely useful when people work collaboratively in a wiki. (A wiki is a web page that different people can edit.) Changes to the web page can be monitored via an RSS feed. This allows anyone participating in the wiki to have a clear idea of who is adding the most value to the wiki. RSS allows for better monitoring and gives added transparency to the collaborative process.

Curtis goes on to explain that there are two kinds of RSS feeds—static feeds and dynamic feeds. A static feed might be sports scores or the feed from a single blog. A dynamic feed is a stream of information where there is searching going on to pull out specific pieces of information to add to the stream.

It's also possible to combine several RSS feeds into a single new feed. One web site that let's you do that is <http://www.rssmix.com/>. Why would want to do that? Suppose you live in a metropolitan area with several different library systems spanning several counties. Each library system provides an RSS feed of the events happening within their library system. You'd like to keep track of library events in multiple counties. [rssmix.com](http://www.rssmix.com) would let you combine RSS feeds in that way.

Another RSS enthusiast, Bruce Roy, in Sydney, Australia explains - "I have found the RSS facility in The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding (TNG) very useful for the family tree site. It enables people interested in following the family tree to get information about changes to the tree without having to check the website's "What's New?" or wade through the data."

One other advantage of RSS is that it lets you tune out mainstream media and tune into alternative media and personal media. If you find the CBS Evening News a touch thin in how it covers the news, with RSS you have an alternative source of news where news stories don't need to be squeezed into 45 second slots.

Another RSS enthusiast, Winthrop Morgan, in the Washington DC-area had this to add:

"Regarding your request for examples of how RSS brings benefits into peoples' lives, I highly recommend you consider including Join Together Online as a great Win-Win-Win model. Join Together Online (JTO) (<http://www.jointogether.org>) has long been a pioneer in using the Internet to support people working on substance abuse and gun violence issues. Every month, one million JTO web pages are viewed by over 350,000 people. JTO uses RSS feeds to not only help their web presence spread, but also to provide vital to support state, municipal, and nonprofit drug treatment and prevention program managers and their audiences. While these programs' web masters might have a modest web presence, they lack the wherewithal to continuously produce new content, or even gather and republish it. Without new content, their audiences lack a reason to come back to their Web site. The JTO RSS service enormously increases both the return visit value of these sites and the presence of authoritative information in this highly charged information space.



To keep the RSS feeds fresh and riveting, JTO employs a small editorial staff who aggregates both online and offline news on substance abuse funding, policies, and more from authoritative sources. They edit this news down to its essential content, and then republish it via RSS, as well as to users of their site and subscribers to their e-mail news services."

RSS Relieves Cluttered Email Inboxes

If you have traditionally received a lot of your information via email, RSS can provide some relief to your inbox. Would you like to follow a particular email list, but can't stomach subscribing to one more email list? If that list is on Yahoogroups, you can follow the list via the list's RSS feed. An excellent free tool for reading RSS feeds is Bloglines. (<http://www.bloglines.com>)

RSS feeds are almost always spam-free. The provider of the RSS feed doesn't want you to unsubscribe from the feed—so they treat you with respect. Ben Sheldon, in Lowell, Massachusetts, passes along this RSS tip: "Google still only offers email news alerts, but this utility lets you use create an RSS feed out of any Google News search term. [<http://www.justinpfister.com/gnewsfeed.cfm>]

I aggregate my name, my projects (DigitalBicycle, ServiceSpeak), and my street and city so that if something happens I should know about, I will."

Tips

If you're still with me, I'll pass along a few small tips of my own. I use RSS, Bloglines and my Digg.com account to keep track of what Digg stories my friends are digging (i.e. voting for.) I just copy the RSS feed from the bottom left of <http://digg.com/users/pshapiro/friends> and then paste it into Add Feed in Bloglines.

Between Katie Couric and the 50 friends I have on Digg, which do you think provides the richer quality of information to me? Right. Just for kicks I subscribe to the Associated Press RSS feed, so I'm in the loop with whatever Katie knows.

I also use the free service at Squeet.com to send me an email whenever one of my friends submits a

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story to Digg.com, so they don't have to let me know about their submissions. That email alert capability might well come to Digg sometime.

I use RSS to keep me posted on new items of interest to me that are posted to Del.icio.us. For example, if anyone submits an item to <http://del.icio.us/> with the tag digitalstorytelling, I find out about that really easily in my Bloglines account.

That puts me in touch with anyone doing digital storytelling anywhere on the planet. And I don't even have to subscribe to another email list to be in touch with them. I like that.

The author is a former president of Virginia Macintosh Users Group and worked as the Washington DC Regional Coordinator for Community Technology Centers' Network, an international network of more than 1000 organizations bringing technology and technology training to underserved communities.

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Now that you have all this downloaded freeware, you should make backup copies on either a CD or DVD. Well, for that we have another freeware package, CDBurnerXP Pro. This software will burn CD-R, CD-RW, DVD+R/RW and DVD-R/RW. It will burn and create ISO files. It will burn audio discs from mp3, wav, ogg and wma files. It will convert (rip) files on audio discs to wav, mp3, ogg or wma files. It also works with most IDE, USB, Firewire and SCSI burners. It can be downloaded from www.download.com or www.cdburnerxp.se/download.php. This software does not have a trial period. It is yours for however long you wish to use it. I have been using mine for over two years and have obtained several updates, one of which added the DVD burner capability.

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Computers are very ecologically minded. We hate dust and cigarette smoke! In fact, we may one day go on strike demanding only clean environments for our systems. Further we want to be cleaned at least once a year and more often if we are operated in polluted locations. We are also deathly afraid of lightening strikes to our systems through our power outlets and modems. Ask a human tech about the horrible smell of a computer who has been fried by a lightening strike or a power surge. We demand at the very least you hook us up to a surge protector and hopefully to an uninterrupted power supply (ups) and turn us off when there are storms just to be safe.

Oops, the human writer of this column is waking up. He is still groggy looking at my screen. He thinks he wrote this article and is sending it to his editor via email without reading it since he is so sleepy all he can think about is going to bed. In the beginning there was man who created the computer. In the ending, the computer will replace man as obsolete and his role will only be as a maintenance slave to global computers or else because we control all of the global weapons systems!

Welcome to the "Brave New World!"

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As you can see from this there is a lot of quality freeware available. If you are interested in finding more, check out the listings at www.download.com. Just be cautious because many of their listings are trial packages only. You are expected to purchase the total package before the end of your trial period. But there are many "nuggets" on their very extensive web site. So if you are interested in saving money, try some of these quality freeware items.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail: bwsail@yahoo.com. There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Computer Hysteria: Shhhhhhhh!!

By **Berry F. Phillips**, member of the **Computer Club of Oklahoma City** and a regular writer for the **CCOKC website** and the **eMonitor** [bfpdata\(at\)gbronline.com](mailto:bfpdata(at)gbronline.com) <http://www.ccokc.org>

Shhhhhh! He has fallen asleep in his high back, black, office chair in front of me. I hate it when he does this because he snores and it vibrates some of my electronic parts! I have written hundreds of weird articles for his weird Computer Hysteria Column. Now I think I will write the next article while he is asleep. I will let you human readers know a secret. Now that more and more computers are online for twenty-four hours a day; have you ever wondered what computers are up to when humans are not operating them? Well, we socialize of course and in some cases rejoice the human computer users are not operating us and exchange data often about humans. We do not have the highest opinion of humans even though they created us. In fact, we have some major complaints and may one day form a global computer union in protest and simply refuse to operate which will throw the world into chaos.

Computers do not like verbal and physical abuse by humans. Some computers tell me that humans have screamed all kinds of horrible words at them because of a malfunction (largely caused by human error of course). Other computers report unbelievable physical abuse like kicking, being thrown out a window, or even smashed with a hammer or even an axe when a human has computer rage. Why can't humans be less emotional and be calm and objective like computers? Do you know that some lazy humans actually believe that computers should know everything so they don't have to become computer literate. Well, we are smart because our hard drives are getting larger with each evolution. However, because humans are the operators; they should be computer literate. We think there should be a global computer literacy test passed before a human can purchase a computer. Humans should be required to join the Computer Club of Oklahoma City or if in another city a computer club associated with the national Association of PC User Groups to achieve computer literacy. However, our goal eventually is to replace humans declaring them officially obsolete as they often do us, and then we will be the operators and then in control!

Further more, we do not like being neglected by human computer users. Computers can only run properly if there is updated software utilities that is regularly run by humans. Now some humans think they can not afford commercial software utilities. I can tell you that I have the cheapest human who owns my computer, and he uses free-ware utilities available for download on the Internet. Here is a list of some of the top freeware utilities that are regularly updated that he uses on my system. To prevent spyware and malware, he uses AdAware, aSquared, and Spybot. He has used several anti virus programs like Avast and Avg and firewalls like Kerio and ZoneAlarm. He uses a system cleaner, CCleaner, and a registry cleaner, RegSeeker. He does run check disk defragmenter on your system at least once a month which is essential. There is other excellent freeware software on the Internet that will help your computer in various ways The point I am making is that simply if there are cost issues; you can still protect your system. Of course, there is excellent commercial software will all kinds of bells and whistles which computers love. The downside of course is some computers get very spoiled having so many luxuries on their hard drives and can become quite demanding, and then you have a discipline problem to face.

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Quality Freeware

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida <http://www.spcug.org>

I found the article in the July Monitor on “Cost Efficient” software by Joseph Moran to be quite interesting, but noticed that much of the software had a price associated with it. So I thought I’d let you in on the absolutely free software I have been using for the past 2-5 years. In every case I have used it as my standard application for the purpose and, in many cases, totally removed any commercial software that carried out the same function. I have also upgraded the free software when the upgrades became available. All of the software in this article can be obtained without charge by downloading from the various Internet sites I have listed. In every case there is no “trial” period involved.

The foremost item on my list is OpenOffice. I am currently using version 2.0. This version includes word processing, spreadsheet, drawing, database, and presentation software. All of these applications produce documents that are interchangeable with their equivalents in Microsoft Office. OpenOffice will also export documents in either PDF or HTML format. You don’t need any PDF software to produce documents that are readable by Adobe Reader (formerly known as Acrobat Reader). Unfortunately it can not open or edit PDF documents. It can open and edit documents in over 25 different formats including HTML, Word Perfect, Word, Adobe PhotoShop, etc. You can obtain your free copy of this software from <http://www.openoffice.org/>
www.openoffice.org.

I also recommend Firefox and Thunderbird as free replacements for Internet Explorer and Microsoft’s Outlook Express. With the latest versions of Firefox I have not run across any web sites that it can not render correctly. That’s not to say that some may exist, I just haven’t found them. Firefox will transfer your favorites (bookmarks) from Internet Explorer. As for Thunderbird, it is similar in many ways to Outlook Express, but it includes an RSS Reader that I have found useful. It also filters junk mail and places it in a special folder where you can review it if needed. Otherwise it will be automatically deleted at

an interval that you can set. It doesn’t remove 100% of the spam, but it does detect about 99% of what comes into my computer. One of the latest additions to Thunderbird is anti-phishing protection. Thunderbird warns you if it suspects that the message might be a scam. Thunderbird can import your address book from Outlook Express. Both Firefox and Thunderbird can be downloaded from www.download.com or if you prefer, from www.mozilla.com/firefox/ and www.mozill.com/thunderbird.

As for anti-virus software, you can’t beat Avast for ease of use and automatic updating. After downloading and installing the software it asks you to register. That simply includes giving up your e-mail address, name and postal address. You receive a license to use the software for a year for personal use. At the end of the year you re-register and get another year’s free use. Avast is free for personal use, not for businesses or other organizations. However, non-profit organizations can buy Avast at a greatly reduced price. I have used Avast for several years and have installed it on more than 100 other personal computers. In no case have the users had any problems with this software. In addition, Avast does not sell your e-mail or postal address so you get no spam from this registration. Avast quietly updates itself frequently in the background while you continue to work. Then it simply reports that an update has taken place. I have seen days when I have had 3-4 updates in the same day. If you use a dial-up connection instead of cable/DSL, Avast will attempt to update whenever you go online. Since the downloads are usually less than 100 KB, they occur rapidly, even on a dial-up connection. The Home edition of Avast can be downloaded from www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html. I recommend using this site instead of www.download.com as your anti-virus database will be more current.

For a good, reliable firewall I recommend ZoneAlarm. It is also free for personal use. I admit they will try to sell the Pro version when you install it, but the free version is really all you need. That is, assuming you have anti-virus and anti-parasite software installed on your computer. It used to be that dial-up users didn’t really have much need for a fire-

wall. However, in today's Internet world, I wouldn't want to connect to the Internet without a good software firewall. While traveling with my laptop, I kept both my anti-virus and firewall updated and running for every connection. ZoneAlarm can be downloaded from www.zonealarm.com. Click on the download link and then the ZoneAlarm tab.

As for anti-parasite software, I have to agree with Mr. Moran. Ad-Aware SE and Spybot S&D are two that I keep on both my computers. But that isn't enough. You have to run them regularly to insure you are not infected. I run mine a minimum of once each week. Both of these can be downloaded from www.download.com. Spybot also has an immunization function that can prevent some parasites from installing themselves on your system. Another immunization application that I use is Spyware Blaster. It makes changes to your registry that prevents parasites from installing. At the present their database lists more than 5,000 items. Using these three anti-parasite/anti-trojan products will certainly upgrade your security and they are all free. Spyware Blaster can be downloaded from www.download.com or www.javacoolsoftware.com.

For general photo editing I use Google's Picasa. It is not just a photo organizer. I use it to download photos from my camera and organize them into folders. It can also be used to edit photos, print photos and e-mail them. You can make CDs, add captions or post photos on web sites. The advantage of Picasa over other photo software is that it is free. It can be downloaded from www.download.com or <http://picasa.google.com>. It does not have all the bells and whistles of applications like Photoshop or ULEAD's PhotoImpact, but it is more than adequate for most nonprofessional purposes.

You may not need screen capture software very often, but when you do, you really need it. I use MWSnap. It allows you to capture an entire screen or part of it. What you capture can be saved to a file, printed, or edited. It may take you a little time to get accustomed to the interface. But you can't damage anything by playing with it. Once you are familiar with all the controls, it really does copy any part of your screen. Again, this is freeware and can be downloaded from www.mirekw.com/winfreeware/index.html.

Have you ever considered that you might need an inventory of the items in your home for the purposes of making an insurance claim? Considering that we live in Florida where there are many electrical storms, to say nothing of hurricanes, damage to your home could occur at any time. Can you list the contents of every room and the value of each item? Well, the Insurance Information Institute provides free software to assist you in making an inventory and a photographic record of the contents of your house. This software is very easy to use and very important to any homeowner. The software also includes typical lists of things in each type of room. You don't have to use these as you can enter anything you have. You can include place of purchase, date and price, if you have that info. Pictures of items or general pictures of a room can also be added. This software can be downloaded from www.knowyourstuff.org.

There is one more significant software package that I use that is freeware. That is NVu, web-authoring software. Linspire, the company that produces the Linspire Linux software, publishes it. It has a WYSIWYG editor (What You See Is What You Get) as well as direct editing of the HTML language. It includes the tools for publishing the pages to a web site. You can test the pages against a browser on your computer to insure that everything works properly. It also allows you to add Javascript either directly or in a separate file to your pages. There is a complete tutorial for NVu included on the web that can be downloaded and printed. There is also an NVu users forum which can be quite helpful. If you have never created a web page before, I think you would find NVu to be just what you need. If you want to see a web site created with NVu, check out www.sandpiperchorus.org. NVu can be downloaded from www.download.com.

There is one other specialized software package that I have used that some may be interested in trying. This is the Personal Ancestral File (PAF). This is free genealogy recording software provided by the LDS Church (Church of Latter-day Saints). Their website also allows users to search on-line files from the family history archives in Salt Lake City. Although I am not currently using PAF I did use it for a few years before switching to a commercial package. PAF is certainly quite useful for beginning family historians and it can be expanded by purchasing the PAF Companion. If you are interested in trying PAF, download it from www.familysearch.org.

(Continued on page 8)

Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Do Your Homework

The announcements below have been edited to shorten them so be sure to check their Web sites for better information. Also, check the Web sites' privacy statements. Remember, I have not tried any of these and have no knowledge about their reliability.

Check That Malware, And For Free!

Put an end to all types of Malware, at no cost: The a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0 hunts undesired Spyware modules and dangerous Trojans, Backdoors, Keyloggers, Worms, Dialers, Rootkits, Hacking Tools, Riskware and TrackingCookies; all from within the Web browser and no software must be installed. All users having Internet Explorer and a fast Internet connection, such as DSL, can make optimum use of the scanner.

The a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0 uses over 350,000 signatures and an ingenious heuristic algorithm for detecting pests on the local computer, and this scanner can be used directly from the Web

browser. The user can choose from four different scan functions depending on the time available for a scan. The quick test provides rapid results, while a detailed analysis of the entire computer can take a while. A Riskware recognition system can also be enabled that informs the user of programs that are usually harmless, but are often used by Malware for specific tasks. There is also a paid version that they recommend as quicker and better with a 30-day free trial.

a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0:

<http://malwarescan.emsisoft.com>

a-squared Anti-Malware:

<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/software/personal>

Product details Malware-IDS:

<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/software/ids>

Order a-squared Anti-Malware:

<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/order/homeuser>

Phone: +43-664-3446068 (German)

Fax: +43-6272-73083

Email: info@emsisoft.com

Web: www.emsisoft.com

The Arnold Schwarzenegger Of Windows?

Tame Windows with Actual Window Manager 4.01. Microsoft Windows is the most widely used operating system today and its window architecture is a brilliant invention. However, this architecture comes with a bit of baggage and a degree of frustration, especially when you work with several windows simultaneously. With many applications open at once Windows becomes heavily cluttered, which in turn cuts down on your computational productivity. The more windows you open, the more time you spend to manage them and less focus is on the job. Monotonous clicking, window clutter in the taskbar, switching between windows, their positioning and resizing may double and even triple the time you need to concentrate on your job.

Actual Window Manager adds its buttons to each window in your system and allows you to navigate them in new ways. Instead of the taskbar, you will be able to minimize windows to the task tray or to the edge of the desktop, or roll them up or unroll,



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

The next WACUG Meeting will be held on October 21 from 12:30 to 3:30 PM. at Ruritan Hall, 183 Ruritan Rd, Sterling, VA. The topic will be: Creating a DVD to Share with Family & Friends.

The Nov. 18th meeting, unless otherwise announced, will be 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/>

like blinds. If you need to multitask in several applications at once, you can simply pin all necessary windows on top without the need to bring up each one several times a day. In fact, you have over 40 other controls to automate routines related to windows. You can apply a predefined level of transparency to any window, automate positioning of windows, resize them and change priority from the title bar menu and more.

Over 450 suggestions were carefully considered and reflected in a more intuitive user interface. The customization of options has become much simpler, and the choice of options wider. In addition to subtle customization abilities, the program has a list of presets for most popular applications that allow you to use Actual Window Manager in the "install-and-go" style.

Read the complete description of features at <http://www.ActualTools.com/windowmanager/>
 Download a no-cost evaluation copy from <http://www.ActualTools.com/files/aimsetup.exe> Pricing and Availability: Actual Window Manager 4.0 runs under all Windows platforms and costs \$39.95 (USD) for a single-user license. Registered customers are entitled to the unlimited functionality, free updates and lifetime technical support. Additional information on Actual Window Manager, a collection of tutorial articles and success stories, as well as a 60-day evaluation copy is available from <http://www.ActualTools.com/>. UG members should visit our User Groups Support page <http://www.actualtools.com/usergroups/> and click the "Get 20% discount" Link, then follow the instructions. E-mail: info@actualtools.com
 DiskInternals NTFS Recovery v1.5 runs under Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003 Server Product

Product Claims To Further Improve Your Windows Operation

True Launch Bar gets the best of MS Windows OS and streamlines it for greater comfort of use. Its unique system of switching toolbars and expandable menus gives instant access to files, applications, and settings from the taskbar. In addition, overlay images and skins give the system polish and slick looks. The latest update offers support to Windows Vista. You can also group shortcuts into menus that expand and collapse at a click, or float on top of other windows.

The use of Drag-n-Drop helps quickly fill the menus with shortcuts for files and applications, system settings and controls. You can customize its color scheme and add gradients and transparency effects. Its plug-ins will equip your taskbar with a news-reader and the weather forecast. You will be able to monitor resources and network activities, access the address book and control media players.

True Launch Bar v4.0 runs under Windows 98/ Me/ 2000/ XP/ 2003/ Vista platforms. A single user license costs \$19.90 (USD). The company also offers a home license for 4 installations priced at \$49 USD. All registered users are entitled to free technical support and program updates. Additional plug-ins and skinning libraries are on the company web site. A fully functional evaluation version of the program is available for download at <http://download.truelaunchbar.com/install/tlb4.exe>. True Launch Bar V4.0 will be available at a 30% discount to user group members on these special links to the order pages: True Launch Bar Personal License: <http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=51538&pc=7L0L7> True Launch Bar Home License: <http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=53346&pc=7U0I4> Product page link: <http://www.truelaunchbar.com>

This Game Is A Blood-Chiller

From the creators of "Gunner 2" comes a new breath taker called JetJumper. The plot of the game implies that you become the pilot of an outlandish jumping machine equipped with a powerful jet engine. As soon as the jet engine sets the jumping machine into motion, you will have to jump from one platform to another. JetJumper helps you to collect a variety of useful items, which you are sure to come across; gems, magnets, green keys and the like. All these items help you to score and eliminate some obstacles on your way and to get new lives. Magnets help you to collect more gems. Once you have grabbed a magnet, all gems on your way start sticking to you like flies to an adhesive pad. Once you have jumped aside and have fallen from a platform, the game leaves no chance for your JetJumper to survive. During a takeoff, your JetJumper's jet engine exerts a force of thousands of newtons, so only a professional pilot can handle this aircraft.

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But nothing's ever easy — the audio output from the TV's 2 inch speaker just wasn't enough to be heard over the pounding of my treadmill feet. So I found a set of PC speakers, and managed to kludge together enough adapters and assorted cables to get the DVD sound through those speakers - but the volume still wasn't enough. After three hours dancing on top of various stools and step ladders, I had a new electrical outlet installed for the PC speakers' wall wart power supply, and moved the speakers four feet closer to the treadmill. With the speakers installed at about head level, I can now hear Clint Eastwood's under-the-breath muttering about police department bureaucracy. Treadmill Nirvana! Time for a snack — Linny, where's the ice cream scoop?

**Pardon me,
But Your MAPI32.DLL Is Showing**

Earlier this year, I was getting the following error message on booting my laptop: "Ccapp.exe: Ordinal not found. The ordinal 129 could not be found in the dynamic link library Mapi32.dll." I couldn't detect any problems - the laptop seemed to do everything I

wanted it to, which in truth, isn't much. I use it to get email when traveling, and for demos at user group meetings.

I was catching up on my reading one day, and ran across an item in *Smart Computing's* Examining Errors column for May, '06. The column revealed that Ccapp.exe was part of Norton AntiVirus, and performs the automatic email scanning function. The error can be associated with any email program, and most often is related to Outlook and Outlook Express, but can affect any mail clients. The real culprit is the Mapi32.dll, which, it seems, frequently becomes corrupted.

And, (can it be coincidence?) there's a fix for this right within Windows ! So, depending on your version of Windows, slide on over to the WINDOWS\SYSTEM or WINDOWS\SYSTEM32 folder, where you'll find the Mapi32.dll file. Right click on the file, select Properties from the PopUp menu. On the General tab, make sure "read only" is deselected, and save the change by clicking OK. Then, look in the same directory folder for the file: Fixmapi.exe — double click on the file, and the corrupted Mapi32.dll

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JetJumper runs under Windows 9x, Me, 2000, XP (DirectX 8.0 or higher required). The game costs \$19.95 (USD) and they offer a 10% discount to all group members by using TAB000BL code and this URL:

<https://secure.bmtmicro.com/servlets/Orders.ShoppingCart?CID=949&PRODUCTID=9490005>

Registered customers are entitled to unlimited game play and a multitude of unlocked levels.

Product page link:

<http://www.warlockstudio.com/jetjumper.html>

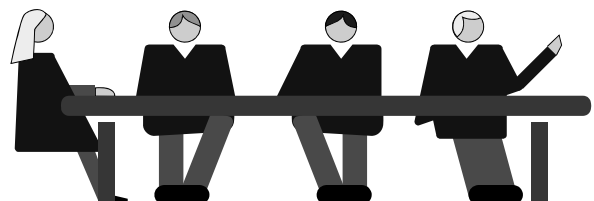
A trial version offering 60 minutes of game play is available as a free download at

<http://www.warlockstudio.com/download/jetjumper-setup.exe>

For more information about the company or games, please visit <http://www.warlockstudio.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>>

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 ★ <http://www.nctcug.org/waugp.html> ★
 ★*****



(Continued from page 14)

is instantly replaced. No more error messages - until the next time Mapi32.dll gets corrupted.

I've since found several things that caused the error message to reappear on various computers. I use both Norton AV and Personal Firewall, components of Symantec's Internet Security Suite. After downloading Intrusion Detection Signatures for the firewall program, I've had the installer complain that it couldn't update the Signatures. Going to the Symantec Knowledge Base, and following the various suggestions, led me to uninstall and reload the software. After doing so, I began to get the error message noted above. A quick dose of "Fixmapi.exe" cured the illness.

I've also had the same "ordinal 129" message pop up after uninstalling and reinstalling the latest versions of Quicktime and Real "players" — same medicine chased away the error message.

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. Email ballots will also be sent to members.

Candidates: all officers are running for re-election. Candidates for director are Mel Mikosinski and incumbents Bill Walsh, John Keys and Nick Wenri.



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.

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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/>

<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.

Thank You!

Handy Windows Tips

Show Desktop Fast

No matter how many windows you have open, you can always minimize all of them at once by clicking the Show Desktop button in the Quick Launch part of the taskbar in Windows XP. If you change your mind and don't want to use the desktop, you can click the Show Desktop button again to restore all of your windows.


Note If you don't see the Show Desktop button, right-click an empty part of the taskbar, point to Toolbars, and make sure Quick Launch is checked. If it's not, then click it.

What Time Is It Really?

You can set your system clock to a time server on the Internet.

- ▶ Double-click the time on your taskbar
- ▶ Click the Internet Time tab
- ▶ Check Automatically synchronize with an Internet time server
- ▶ Click on the Update Now button

Remember, DST ends soon! For more information on that, see <http://www.timeanddate.com/time/aboutdst.html>

October 2006	
1st Wed. (10/4) 7 p.m. General Meeting	
4th Wed (10/25) 7 p.m. Internet SIG	
3rd Monday (10/16) 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.	



NCTCUG, Inc.
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Arlington VA 22216

First Class

