

# The NCTCUG Journal

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## Keeping Up

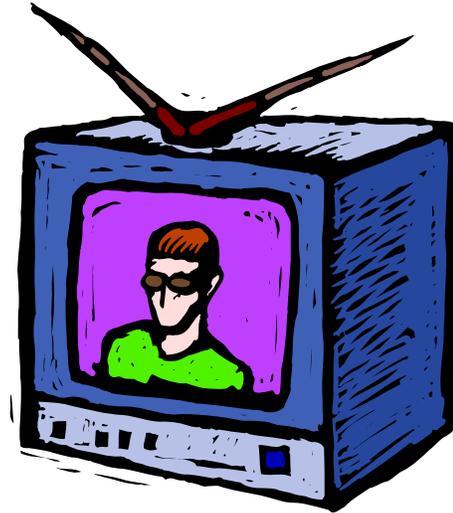
By Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

### Digital TV Converter Boxes

Confused by all the noise surrounding the coming of digital television and the shutdown of analog broadcasting on February 17th, 2009? Finding the answer for your situation runs a gauntlet between “greatest thing since sliced bread” and conspiracy theories surrounding the power of the media lobbyists swarming over Congress, scarfing up public broadcast spectrum space without paying for it. The truth’s in there somewhere ....

Though I run the risk of ostracism from the Royal Academy of Male Spouses and Sport Fans, you do not have to run out and buy a huge flat panel high definition TV — though it would be nice.<grin> And really nice for the people who manufacture and sell TVs. But you don’t have to buy a new set. If you are among the 85% of US households who get their TV signal via cable, satellite dish, or Verizon FiOS, 2/17/09 will pass without a blip, providing all your TV sets are hooked to these signal sources.

If, however, you have a TV set that’s hooked to “rabbit ears” or another type of roof or attic-mounted antenna, and your set wasn’t bought in the last 18 months and



specified as having an “ATSC tuner” i.e., digital tuner, then you’ll need to get a digital TV tuner converter box to continue to receive “free TV” — i.e. - digital television signals broadcast over the air, after the 2/17/09 date. The free digital signals are there now — and the picture quality, even with a “standard definition” — read “old tv” - is amazing.

Our ever-responsive Federal government offers two \$40 discount coupons for the purchase of the digital TV tuner converter boxes, in the form of “swipe cards” to every household that signs up — <https://www.dtv2009.gov/> Do it now - it took almost three months to get my coupons. While there are dozens of certified converter boxes, I found that a Zenith model

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## Moving On To Vista

By Neil Stahfest, Shareware Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA  
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### Part 3

Your PC's desktop is the largest, most user defined area on your PC's screen. It contains all your own shortcuts, folder icons and your personal desktop picture. The desktop is really just a personal file folder on drive C. That means that any work you do on the desktop is saved for you on Drive C and not lost when you turn the computer off. Of course any documents, pictures, etc. that are "saved" on your desktop can be moved or copied to other folders on your hard drive.

After a while some of, make that most of us, find our desktop becomes loaded with program icons and shortcut icons. Program shortcut icons are a convenient way to get to programs that you use a lot. Unfortunately, when you install new programs most of them add a desktop shortcut and soon you have a desktop full of shortcuts, making it hard to find a shortcut when you want it. Here are a couple of solutions to this clutter.

The left end of the taskbar contains a "Quick Launch Toolbar+." By default, Windows Vista places one or two program icons here (i.e. Internet Explorer). You can drag a limited number of additional shortcut icons for your favorite programs to this area and save space on your desktop. A "feature" of the Quick Launch Toolbar is that you only have to point at the program icons there and left-click once to start the program. This might seem a little confusing at first if you are used to double clicking on a program icon to start it, but you'll probably get used to it pretty fast.

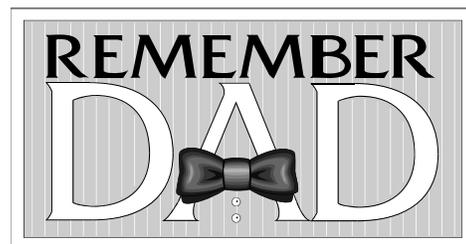
Program shortcuts on your desktop point to programs that are also listed in your Start menu. The most frequently used programs can be seen when you click on the Start button. On the Start menu, click on "All Programs" to see all the other programs installed on your computer. You may need to use the scroll bar to see all of them and you will probably find more programs than you have shortcuts on your desktop. So, once you confirm that a

program shortcut points to a program listed on the Start menu, you can safely delete infrequently used desktop shortcuts.

A third approach to reducing desktop clutter is to consolidate shortcuts. If you have multiple programs that do similar tasks (i.e. A photo catalog and picture manipulation program), create a desktop folder named "Photos". Then drag your shortcuts into the "Photos" folder and you're done.

Vista comes with a new set of desktop pictures. Access to alternative desktop pictures is similar, but slightly different, from what you may be used to with Windows XP. Right-click on a empty area of the desktop and click on "Personalize". On the "Personalization" menu select "Desktop Background". An array of available pictures will appear. Scroll through the pictures, select one. Make a selection from "How should the picture be positioned" and click OK.

That's fine if all you want to use are the pictures that came with Vista. What if you want to use something different? Just follow the steps list above but when you get to the "Desktop Background", instead of selecting one of the available pictures, next to where it says "Picture Location" click once on "Windows wallpapers". You'll see a list of other areas that contain pictures and colors. Want to use a photograph that you saved to your computer instead? Click the browse button. On the left side of the "Browse" screen, click on "Pictures". From the Picture folders on the right side of the Browse screen, make your selection, use the "How should the picture be positioned" if needed, and press the Open button to finish.



## Part 4

Windows Vista is a resource hog. A year ago, when I reviewed Vista for TAPCUG, my advice was to not upgrade an existing computer and buy Vista, wait and get it with a new computer. Today I stand by that advice. There are no new major programs that require Vista to run. If you're content with the way your existing computer(s) run with Windows XP there is no real reason to upgrade.

When you do buy a new computer there are several features you should look for for it to run Vista well. The first is RAM (random access memory). I don't think any manufacturer is selling a new computer with Vista with less than 1 megabyte of RAM but if you really want Vista to work well with large applications (Microsoft Office, video editing software, many games) try to get 2 gigabytes of RAM. You won't be sorry. There is no point in installing more than 4 gigabytes of RAM. Windows cannot access memory above 4 gigabytes.

The other issue is a video card. Vista wants at least 128 megabytes of memory for video. For best results, the memory should be installed on the video card. Some computers steal the video requirements from your computer's RAM. It works but the card will run slower. 256 megabytes of video card memory is even better.

Many people don't partition their hard disks, I do. I suppose it goes back to the days when larger hard drives started to appear and our computer operating system couldn't recognize and use the larger space. Of course all that has changed now, Windows can almost any hard drive size most of us will install. When I had to partition my hard drive, to fully utilize it, I discovered other benefits. It's easier to make a backup copy of a smaller hard drive. If I create a partition for just my photographs, and I only need to make a new backup of my pictures, I can just backup the partition containing the pictures and not everything else. A faster and easier process. I can also install another operating system Windows XP or maybe Linux) on my computer by creating a separate partition and run it using a simple process called dual booting.

So I wanted to partition the hard drive that came with my laptop to use some of the excess space to store a backup copy of drive C. I bought a new copy of Partition Magic. I've used this program many times to partition drives on other computers. Unfortunately I discovered that Vista doesn't like Partition Magic. A trip to Symantec's home page showed that they have no updates for Vista. As I was wondering how I would solve this dilemma, I discovered that Vista has a new built-in Disk Management utility and one of its functions will partition hard drives.

To use the you first have to get to the Disk Management window. From the start button, go to the control panel. Click on System and Maintenance and scroll down to "Create and format hard disk partitions", at the very bottom of the window. You will see what appears to be a table of every disk and partition installed on your computer. Among other things you'll see the capacity of each disk and the free space available. Select the hard drive that you want to partition and right-click on it. You need to free up empty space on the hard drive so on the drop down menu. Select "Shrink Volume" and specify the amount of space you want to free up in the Shrink Dialog box. The free space will appear in the Disk Management window as a black bar and labeled as "Unallocated".

Now you are ready to create your new partition. Right-click on the "unallocated space". From the menu select "New Partition". Then you just follow the wizard that appears to select the size and type of partition you want to create and format it. It may sound complicated but if you follow the steps listed above it's easy.

Windows assigns drives (hard drives, DVD drives, etc) in alphabetical sequence so if drive letters C, D and E were already used your new partition will be labeled drive F. Typically, when you buy a computer from a company such as Hewlett Packard, drive C will be your hard drive, drive D will be a partition labeled "Recovery Drive" (used to restore your computer to "factory condition" in the event of a catastrophic crash) and drive E will be a CD/DVD drive.

It's a cosmetic thing but I like to group all my hard drives and partitions together. You can use the Disk Management window to relabel your drives. Just select

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DTT900 was available locally at Circuit City and Radio Shack, and had received generally high marks from customers in the review section of these vendors' web sites.

Set-up is easy. First, tune the TV to channel 3. Your antenna connects to the converter box input, you connect a supplied coax cable to your TV, and push the menu button on the supplied remote control (after inserting the requisite battery) and go through the channel setup process. I'm receiving 34 channels of static free TV from the antennas in my attic. The beauty of digital TV (for most folks) is that you'll get a perfect picture — or nothing - the infamous blue screen. To view my received-channel list, go to the "Recent Meetings" page on our web site, and click on the link from the 4/23/08 meeting: <http://www.nctcug.org/recmtgs.html>

Why so many channels? Well, the secret of digital TV is that broadcasters can squeeze several additional standard definition (SD) broadcasts, as well as a high definition broadcast, into the same 6 MHz spectrum space occupied by analog broadcast channels. At this point, several of the local commercial stations are broadcasting weather or radar SD channels on this additional resource. Non-commercial stations are utilizing the new capacity in exciting ways. WETA is broadcasting four channels, and MHz Networks, with two stations, is transmitting a total of eight channels.

The techie stuff: What's really happening on 2/17/09? The VHF TV frequency spectrum, what we know as channels 2 – 13, is going away in most areas of the country — and TV spectrum is being reallocated for other uses, such as cell phones and public safety radio. All domestic TV broadcasting is being converted from analog to digital, and housed within the UHF TV spectrum. For best results at receiving "free" digital TV broadcasts over the air, your antenna, whether "rabbit ears" or roof or attic mount, needs to be designed for UHF reception. Older antennas were generally designed to perform best with VHF reception, so a recent UHF-only design may provide much better performance in receiving digital TV broadcasts. A source for antennas, converter boxes, and lots of other off-air TV related gear, is: <http://www.solidsignal.com/>

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That means that there could be some minor changes in the technology before it is completely standardized. So you will be purchasing a router that is what they call draft or interim model.

To the average user, this means that if the final standard is changed drastically it could possibly be incompatible with the "interim" "n" router you have purchased. That possibility is remote, and even if it happens, your system will still work. You might, however, not be compatible with other "n" systems. That is not likely to happen and, if the standard is changed when it is finalized, most router manufacturers will be able to send you a firmware update to make your router compatible.

I love my wireless "n" router, and while others have chided me for being on the "bleeding edge", I don't think I am taking much of a chance, and it provided a solution to my problem.

As more and more computer are being purchased for the home, wireless networking is becoming more and more popular. While we haven't yet actually freed ourselves from our piles of wires, sitting on the patio, in the kitchen, or in the bedroom surfing the Internet without any tethers can be a very freeing experience.

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one of the drives, right-click on it and select "Change drive letter and paths". When you left-click on "Change drive letter and paths" press the "Change" button and pick a new letter to label the drive. I usually start by re-labeling the Recovery Drive drive "R" to make the letter "D" available for a new hard drive or partition. Then I re-label the CD/DVD drive drive Z. When this is done, all the letters from D through Q are available for hard drives, hard drive partitions and flash drives.

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## Is There A Laptop In Your Future?

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Want to get a laptop so you can surf the Web from your lawn chair this summer? Or perhaps you just want to be able to share your Internet connection between your computer and your wife's computer?

In either case, a wireless network is essential, but sometimes interference makes wireless problematic. Let me shed some light on the subject.

The main component of a wireless network is a wireless router ( or a wired router and wireless access point). I talked about routers in my previous A Router Can Protect your Computer article, so I won't go into the details and routers except to say that a wireless router is simply a router that works on radio wave frequencies to connect computer and other equipment without hardwiring. A wireless access point works in the same manner.

If you are technically inclined, you might want to try to set the router up yourself. The setup is not too difficult, but adding the necessary security can be problematic for a technophobe. So if you are in that category, hire someone to set up the wireless network for you. If you try it yourself and can't get the security in place you will also want to consider hiring someone to secure your network. An unsecured wireless network leaves your computer vulnerable to infiltration by others and can cause numerous problems including identity theft. Once you add the security to your router, you are safe from having others jump on your network. The software for the security is included with your router.

For the most part, wireless networks work very well, but I have seen many cases where interference can cause problems. The most popular wireless networks right now are 802.11b and 802.11g. Both of these popular wireless connections work on the 2.4 GHz frequency that is already crowded with wireless tele-

phones, microwave ovens, garage door openers, wireless mice, remote controls, and baby monitors.

So if you are thrown off your wireless network when your garage door opens or the wireless telephone rings, you will want to assume that you have two or more gadgets interfering with each other. When troubleshooting wireless interference problems remember that the proximity of the items makes a big difference. If your wireless telephones work on the 2.4 GHz frequency and cause interference with your "b" or "g" router, you can, of course, go out and purchase phones that work on a different frequency to eliminate the interference. But you may not have to do that. Simply moving your telephone away from the router may do the trick.



While the 2.4GHz frequency is quite crowded, it does have 11 different channels to choose from. So look in the documentation that came with the phones and/or the documentation that came with the router to learn how to change the channel. Once you know how to do that you simply need to make

sure that the router and the other piece of equipment are on different frequencies so they don't interfere with each other. Choose channel 1, 6, or 11 for your router to give it the best chance at a frequency that does not overlap with any other frequencies.

If you still have interference problems, you can consider purchasing an 802.11 n router. These are the newest wireless routers. They work on the much less crowded 5.8 GHz frequency. The "n" routers have greater speed and range than the "b" or "g" routers. I put one in my home where other routers had trouble transmitting the signal far enough and it works like a charm. I can even put my 5.8 GHz wireless phone right by the router without any interference. There is currently one caveat in choosing an "n" router. The "n" specification has not yet been completely finalized.

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## Computer Corner — Spring Clean Your Computer

March, 2008

By Joe Shipley, Treasurer, Phoenix PCUG, Arizona [www.phoenixpcug.org](http://www.phoenixpcug.org) [joeship\(at\)cox.net](mailto:joeship(at)cox.net)

While you're cleaning everything else around your home and office at this time of year, don't forget to clean your computer. There is truth to the saying, "A clean computer is a happy computer."

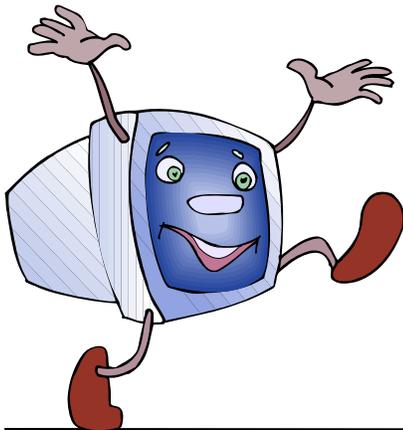
With the time we spend creating and working on our systems, we should do all we can to keep them running smoothly and give them long, healthy lives. So here are some things we can all do to prolong the lives of our systems. As a cautionary note: *backup* all your important items before doing any maintenance on your system. If you don't feel comfortable opening your system or editing the Registry, then don't do it! But what I intend to discuss here is not rocket science. These items are the same ones I perform when I clean my clients' systems.

### Blow the Dust Out!

Dust is your computer's enemy! So get rid of it. The electronic components in a system generate heat. Heat is bad for a system. The more dust in a machine, the hotter it will run. When motherboard components get overheated, they "take a powder" and just shut themselves off until they can cool down. By keeping the insides clean your system will run cooler, thus letting it run longer.

Most generic systems have 4 to 6 screws that hold the case cover on. If you have a Dell, HP, Compaq, Gateway or other major brand system, look in the owner's manual or online to find out how to open your case.

By removing the sides of the computer you'll gain access to its guts which is where the cleaning can be done. I use a small hand-held vacuum to suck up the dust balls. I use the crevice tool, that's not the one with the brush. You can also use canned



air or air from a compressor to blow the dirt out. Be careful not to bump or touch any components on the motherboard while cleaning. Keeping one hand on the metal case while you clean should discharge any static electricity that might have built up.

With the vacuum, don't forget to suck out the dust that has accumulated in the power supply. There are usually vents on the side opposite the circular fan. I vacuum out from both the fan-side and the vent side. Note: if you are blowing rather than vacuuming, don't blow air into the floppy drive or cdrom/dvd units. Unless they are filthy and already don't work, you don't want to risk getting dust on the optics inside. And remember, blowing air into a computer really just moves the dust from the computer to somewhere else! I suggest you do it outside, if possible.

If you have a mouse that has a ball, think about getting a mouse that uses laser light instead. But if you want to clean the mouse, open it up, wash the ball with warm, soapy water, and gently scrape the gunk off the three rollers inside. Your mouse will act like new after a good cleaning.

You can also vacuum your keyboard. You'd be amazed at how much junk you'll find if you just turn it over and shake it up a bit. I have even gone so far as to wash the keyboard to get rid of spilled soda. An hour or two in the Phoenix sun and the keyboard is ready to go!

### Cleaning the Software

Before running software cleaners such as Ad-aware, Spybot Search & Destroy and a good antivirus program (I like the free AVG), it makes sense to delete unneeded files and programs. Might as well not clean any more than you have to! This might be the time to use System Restore to create a Restore Point before you eliminate something you shouldn't. Better safe than sorry.

In the Documents and Settings area, look for the Local Settings folder for each user. If you can't find it, you may need to turn on the "Show Hidden Files and

Folders” option on your system. To do this, open up Explorer, from the menu bar at the top go to **Tools-Folder Options-View-Show Hidden Files and Folders**.

Under Local Settings, I delete everything in the Temp folder. I also delete everything in the Temporary Internet Files folder also. Once that’s done, I go to the Windows folder, and delete everything in the TEMP folder. Caution: some of you create your own Temp folders into which you may put things you might not want to delete. Check that out before doing a mass deletion.

### Open the Registry

Again, if you’re not comfortable editing the Registry, don’t. You can back up the Registry (entirely or just specific keys) before proceeding. I mention this item in order to delete the “Compress Old Files” key before proceeding to the next step. You can either search for this key using the Find feature, or go to:

**HKEY\_Local\_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\VolumeCaches .**

The second key down should be the CompressOldFiles key, if it hasn’t already been removed. If it’s there, RIGHT click on it and delete it. You don’t need it. Close the Registry and proceed.

### Clean Up Drive

To clean up your drive further, go to My Computer. For each hard drive, RIGHT click on the drive, left click on Properties, and then click on Disk Cleanup. If you didn’t remove the CompressOldFiles key earlier, it may take a long time before the system responds. If you did, shortly you’ll see files which may be deleted from your system so you can recover space. After cleaning these up you may see an increase in available disk space.

### Clean Up Internet Explorer and Firefox

One of the easiest things you can do to keep your computer clean is to get rid of Temporary Internet Files that are stored on your computer. Here’s how to do this for immediate relief:

☆ Internet Explorer —delete Temporary Internet Files

- 1) Open Internet Explorer.
- 2) Select the Tools menu.
- 3) Select Internet Options.
- 4) Select the General tab.
- 5) In the Temporary Internet Files section, click the Delete Files button.
- 6) Do not check the clear Offline Content box. Click Ok.
- 7) Click Ok to close the Tools window.

☆Firefox (Mozilla) — clear browser cache

- 8) Open FireFox (Mozilla).
- 9) Click the Tools menu.
- 10) Click Options.
- 11) Click Privacy.
- 12) Click the Clear button for Cache.

If you use Internet Explorer, go to **Tools-Internet Options-Advanced** and almost at the end, put a check mark in the box that says “Empty Temporary Internet Files folder when Browser is closed” and IE will automatically delete the files when you close the browser.

### Add/Remove Programs

In the Control Panel, you can add and remove programs you no longer need or use. If you are not sure, Google the program in question and then decide. You might want to opt to leave in any program you are not sure about. But if you still have games or programs you have not used in years, toolbars you don’t want or need, or

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other items of no significance to you, clear them out. As I've said before, Google first, then if you're still not sure, leave them in. Often programs will have their own Uninstall feature. If you decide to remove a program, first go to **Start-Programs** and find the menu item of the program you want to delete. If it is there, check to see if there is an Uninstall menu choice and if so, I'd start with that before using the Add/Remove programs feature.

### **Spybot Search & Destroy and Ad-Aware**

These are two FREE programs that do a great job cleaning up malware, spies, and other things that slow your system down. You can find them on the Internet at [www.download.com](http://www.download.com), or just Google them. After installing them, make sure you use the update feature before doing a scan. These programs are updated almost daily, so it pays to take advantage of the latest updates.

### **Get Rid Of The Language Bar**

**Control Panel, Regional Settings, Languages, Details, Languages**, Uncheck the "Show Language Bar" box to get rid of the Language Bar at the bottom of your screen. If you use the Language Bar, by all means don't get rid of it.

### **Keep Your Antivirus Updated!**

Whichever AV program you use, if it is not updated you're not getting full protection! *Security suites slow systems down!* I don't use them. Google "AVG Free" to get a free antivirus that does a good job, and then configure it to have it updated and run it daily.

### **Task Manager**

Quite often slow performance is directly related to the programs that are running. RIGHT click on the Taskbar to open and look at duplicate program entries under Processes – click on the title of the Processes tab to sort alphabetically. If you see multiple instances of

the same program running, for example, outlook.exe, odds are you're having some kind of problem. If you're not sure about what a process is, Google it to find out or leave it alone. If you click on the CPU tab twice, you'll see which programs are using the most memory. Find the memory hogs, check them at Google, and then begin to end processes you don't need. If a process is critical, Windows won't let you close it.

### **MSCONFIG**

Go to **Start – Run** and type in "msconfig" (don't type the quotes) and click on "OK" and look in the Startup and Services areas to check to see what programs might not need to start. If you know they are not needed, uncheck them. If you have a problem after restarting, then re-check them. If you're uncertain . . . Google the file names and learn about them.

### **Defrag Your System Regularly**

Go to <http://www.auslogics.com/en/software> to find free software to defrag your hard drives. I recommend defragging at least monthly to keep your system running smoothly. This is a nice program, FREE, and it's pleasant to watch. Keeping your hard drives defragmented will add life to your system and speed up performance when saving and retrieving files.

The suggestions above are based upon a system running Windows XP Pro. With Vista things may be in different places. The operation should be very similar, however, so doing a search in the Help & Support area may provide the answers you're looking for.

For a PowerPoint slide presentation with screen shots of locations referred to in this article, please visit <http://www.phoenixpcug.org/articles> and look for the link.

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## Why Update Your Computer?

By Kathy Jacobs, President, Phoenix PCUG, AZ  
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For Christmas this year, we gave my father a piece of software that requires Windows XP SP2. Imagine my surprise when he emailed back that he didn't have SP2.

Besides getting him a copy of SP2, I found out that I would need to explain to him why he needed it. I thought some of you might benefit from the information as well.

Like many computer users, my father views his computer as something that he should just be able to use. He doesn't think he should have to put any time into maintenance of the computer. I hear this quite frequently, but don't understand it. Would you buy a car and never put gas in it or never change the oil in it? Computer maintenance is just like the maintenance of your car.

The first line of maintenance for your computer should be Microsoft Update or Windows Update. Security holes are being patched every month. Those patches are made available to you for free from Microsoft for your benefit and for mine. Mine? Yes mine. If you don't keep the security holes on your machine patched, then you make it easier for someone to use your machine to attack my computer - even if I am patched. Also when I send you an email the programs can harvest my email address and add it to lists so that I get more spam.

The second line of defense is a good anti-virus program. Again, you can't just buy it and expect it to run forever. You need to update it regularly, and run it regularly. If you don't have your anti-virus up to date, you will only be catching the viruses that were out when you bought the program. That means that any virus that has come out since you bought the package can still sit on your computer and attack from there.

The third line of defense is anti-spyware software. This software will prevent someone from coming in and "owning" your computer. What do I mean by owning?

Spyware programs are frequently used to keep track of what you do on your computer. A common misconception is that anti-spyware is only needed when you are on the net. In reality, spyware can be installed in seconds while you are downloading your email and then it will run while you are off-line. When you get on-line again, the spyware will call home and send back everything it has learned about your machine.

The final line of defense is your firewall. If you have Windows XP SP2, you have a firewall installed. By installing and activating your firewall, you make yourself less visible to the bad guys out on the web. If they can't see you, they may not spend the time to come find you. Especially if your neighbor has an open, unpatched, unprotected system. Adding the protection of an outbound firewall to Windows can also help plug leaks and alert you to behavior by friendly programs that you may still want to control.

The way I look at these four lines of defense is the same way I would if a bear is after me. I can't outrun the bear. What I can do is make it less likely that the bear will come after me. That is the same attitude I want you to take: Make your computer less open to the bears coming after it.

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# So You Have A New Digital Camera

By Robert M. Mayo, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA  
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If you were lucky enough to get a new camera for Christmas, congratulations! However, along with this jewel, I'm sure you also got a complicated user's manual. I hate 'em! But cheer up; all the mystery will soon go out of that book.

When I bought my first digital camera, I felt lost. I had never worked from menus before, and they seemed so overly complicated. However, after a couple of dozen shots of my refrigerator, washing machine, and the cats, I began to feel comfortable with my new toy. And now, it seems intuitive; I can make changes in the settings without mental effort. In fact, I don't know how I ever got along without the wonderful features this camera has! So the point is: play with it; check out all of the menu options in the privacy of your home so you won't have technical problems later. Following directions in the manual, you're not going to hurt it!

## Caution

Between photo sessions, it's best not to leave your rechargeable batteries on the charger. Many chargers provide a trickle that's excessive over a period of time, and this will degrade the cells.

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*(Continued from page 11)*

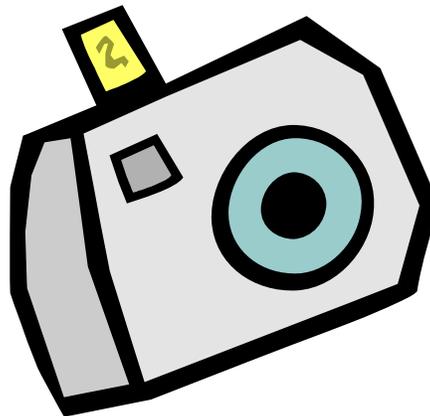
In that area of Control Panel, you can now click on a tab for Additional Clocks and configure up to 2 more different system clocks to be active, each with a different time zone and time of day perhaps. If you do that, then hovering your mouse over the system time in the Notification Area will modify the balloon tip to show all active clocks, whereas clicking on system time will now show all these different clocks side by side, together with the calendar of the current month.

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## Good Ol' Days?

In what we laughingly call "the good ol' days," we had a choice of films to use in our cameras. That was wonderful! There were so many films for color pictures available, as well as the still popular black-and-white shots. And within those two groups, there were fast (ISO 400) Kodak Tri-X films for B&W news (action and nighttime) pictures, as well as slower (ISO 25) Kodachrome film for beautiful, fine-grained slides. If you were happy with black-and-white prints, there was very fine grained Panatomic-X (ISO 32) that could produce great enlargements. There was a film for everything! But what if you had the Panatomic-X in your camera, and six frames hadn't been used yet; and you wanted to shoot a night baseball game under floodlights? You could remove the unfinished film from the camera, or you could bang away at the kids in order to finish the roll. Cheez! What a waste! Plus, you had to obtain a roll of the faster film, too. But with your digital camera, you have all of those "films" in the camera at the same time—color or B&W—with a choice of ISO values to be selected as you need them, regardless of the number of shots you've already made. If only they had done this years ago!

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## Hasta la Vista

By Lee Reynolds, a member of the Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida; regular contributor to Boca Bits, the BRCS monthly news magazine  
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I'm told the literal meaning of "hasta la vista" in Spanish is "until the seeing." Or maybe a more adequate translation is "see you later."

But in this column, I'm using that phrase to invite you to take a look at Microsoft's latest version of Windows: Vista.

### Configuring The Taskbar

The Taskbar works very much like previous versions of Windows, particularly XP.

You can configure some options on how it operates by right clicking an empty area on it and selecting from a popup context menu.

For example, you can decide:

- ◆ To have various toolbars such as the Quick Launch toolbar and a Desktop or Documents toolbar displayed
- ◆ Show all open windows "cascaded" like a row of dominoes one behind the other, or show them side by side, or one on top of another to cover the desktop
- ◆ Minimize all the windows to show the Desktop
- ◆ Start the Task Manager application; or lock the Taskbar so that its settings cannot be modified without unlocking it first.
- ◆ If you select Properties from the context menu, you are given further ways of customizing the Taskbar.

As in Windows XP, there are options:

- ◆ to auto-hide the Taskbar (it reduces to a very thin line which only becomes visible as a normal Taskbar when you put your mouse over that thin line)
- ◆ keep the Taskbar visible over other open windows,
- ◆ group similar Taskbar buttons for the same application in a stacked list.

### New Option

A new option available in the Taskbar properties page, is to determine whether or not hovering your mouse over a Taskbar button shows a live preview of the corresponding window (thumbnail.)

### Customize The Notification Area

Unlike XP, you now have a separate tab to customize the Notification Area, which is the part of the Taskbar on the right hand side, normally showing the system clock, a volume control for your speakers, a Network icon, a Safely Remove Hardware icon, a Power icon (if you are using a laptop on battery power), and others. You can put a check mark next to Hide Inactive Icons and then click the Customize button, in order to access a list of all icons that have shown up in the Notification Area.

This is broken down into two lists, those icons that are currently showing in the Notification Area, and those that have shown up in the past but are not currently there now. For each icon, you click to access a drop down list to choose Hide when inactive, Hide, or Show.

### System Time

One of the things that you can show on the Taskbar is the system time (and that was in previous versions of Windows also), but this now has some modifications.

Hover your mouse over the system time in the Notification Area, you get a balloon tip telling the system date and day of week, but if you click on the system time instead, up pops a nice looking circular clock and a calendar of the current month, with a link to the Control Panel area where you can change the date and time settings.

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## New Technology Terms

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS [www.compukiss.com](http://www.compukiss.com) [sandy\(at\)compukiss.com](mailto:sandy(at)compukiss.com)

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Words, words, words. . . . In the fast-moving world of technology, new words and phrases are constantly introduced. In order to keep up with the times, you need to learn about the current terminology. This need not be a drudgery. In fact, it can be fun to see what new words and abbreviations are popular. Check these out and you can wow your friends next time computers and technology become the subject at the 19<sup>th</sup> hole or the neighborhood cocktail party.

### SSD (Solid-State Drive)

This is a type of memory that you will be hearing more and more about in the future. It is a type of flash memory that has no moving parts. Some small laptop computers are appearing using SSDs for storing data instead of hard drives. Because SSDs have no spinning disks like the ordinary hard drives, they offer improved battery life for laptop computers. They also have better data access speeds than hard disks.

### 404

You may recognize this as a common message on the Internet. It indicates that the requested page could not be found. This may mean that the page has temporarily or permanently moved and is not currently available. However, recently the term 404 has come to have another meaning. It refers to someone who is totally clueless. From the error message "404 not found", this has become a slang term meaning that

the person's brain could not be located. If you decide to call your spouse a 404, make sure that he or she has not read this column or you'll be in big trouble.

### Crowdsourcing

Using the skills of a wide variety of people to do a job or perform a task is called crowdsourcing. The people who perform such a function are often found on the Internet. Although these people can be paid, often they are often volunteers.

### Geotagging

This is technology built into a digital camera or part of a camera add-on device that is able to tag each photo with the exact location that the picture was taken. Photos can then be sorted based on where they were taken. They can also be plotted on maps.

### HDMI (High-definition Multimedia Interface)

This is a newer audio and video interface that is often found on televisions, DVD players, video game consoles, video cameras, and other video equipment. This type of connector replaces older standard connectors like composite video, S-Video, component video, and DVI. HDMI carries both audio and video in one cable. It supports digital rights management systems. HDMI cables can be very expensive in comparison to older audio and video cables.

*(Continued on page 13)*

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### *Washington Area Computer User Group*

WACUG Meeting will be held on June 21 & July 19, 2008 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 2000 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/>

**Washington Area User Group Partners  
Working Together For Our Members  
NCTCUG.ORG WACUG.ORG  
CPCUG.ORG**

**For more information see:**

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

## One Laptop per Child (OLPC)

Led by Nicholas Negroponte, this is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to design, manufacture, and distribute affordable laptop computers to children around the world. The laptops were initially called the "\$100 laptop", but the final build cost almost \$200 each. In 2007, the One Laptop per Child organization started distributing these laptop computers to children in developing countries. The laptops are bright green and white portable computers with special features like a sealed keyboard. They are called XO computers.

## SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Search Engine Optimization is the process of tweaking a website to improve the volume of traffic that is produced by search engines. The idea is to give the website a higher ranking in the search engines thereby producing more traffic to the site. SEO includes using keywords and website design to get higher rankings with search engines.

## Skype

This is an online service that allows users to make telephone calls over the Internet. The software is free and there is no charge to call the computers of other Skype users. Your computer must have a microphone in order to use Skype. With the addition of a webcam, Skype callers from computer to computer can also place video calls where they can both see and talk to each other. Skype also allows you to call landlines and cell phones for a fee. Skype has other services such as instant messaging and file transfer.

## FTW

This stands for "For The Win". You may remember it being a part of the game show "Hollywood Squares" where a certain square would be selected "For the Win." It is also used in some online games like World of Warcraft. It is now a popular term that usually projects a boast, as in "I did it FTW." It is often used ironically and sarcastically.

## Bot

A bot computer is one that has been infected with some type of malware that allows the computer to be controlled by an outside entity. Millions of computers are bots that are now under the influence of malware distributors who use these computers to send out spam, attack other computers and websites, and carry out scams and identity theft. The computer owner is usually unaware that their computer has been compromised since this activity is performed in the background.

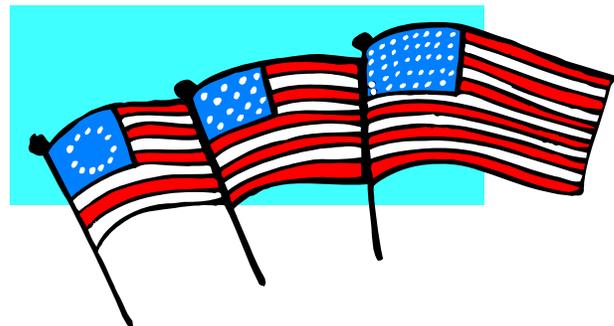
## BotNet

A series of bot computers, sometimes as large as millions of computers is called a BotNet. The BotNet does the bidding of some entity that has compromised the computers and taken control of them by installing some type of malware.

## Zombie

This term that means the same thing as a Bot. It is a personal computer that has been infected with a virus that allows an outside force to control it. Such a computer can be used to send out spam or attack other computers without the owner's knowledge. Millions of computers today are zombie computers. They are part of a Zombie Network of computers that are controlled by hackers.

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## How To Forward Email

By Vinny La Bash, Member Of The Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida  
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Let's examine a typical email scenario. After opening your email, you find a message that you simply must share with all your friends. You press the "Forward" button and one way or another get all their email addresses in the "To:" box. Feeling quite satisfied after pressing the "Send" button, you sit back and take satisfaction in the joy you are sending to others.

You should be ashamed of yourself. You have just exposed everyone on your mailing list plus any people who received the email ahead of you to unending streams of spam, spyware, viruses, and other assorted electronic junk and mischief that hackers are prone to these days. What you have done is prove conclusively that you don't have a clue about the proper way to forward email. Your license to compute should be revoked immediately.

As messages get forwarded in this way they move along the internet, and the list of email addresses embedded in the note gets longer and longer. All it takes is for just one of these folks to get a virus or some other kind of malware, and everyone who has their email address in that list can be infected.

Anyone can take those email addresses, sell them or send out their own junk mail. Assuming you are a mature responsible adult, you most likely would not want to harm anyone, even inadvertently. What does a conscientious person do to stop or better yet, prevent damage?

When you click the "Forward" button you enter the edit mode of your email client. Before you do anything else DELETE all the other email addresses appearing at the top of the message. Let me repeat. DELETE them by highlighting them and THEN pressing the Delete button on your keyboard. It doesn't take long. When you've finished, delete any other junk that isn't actually part of the message, such as information about the original sender. Delete anything that is not part of what you want to send.

If you're sending the message to more than one person, do not use the To: or Cc: fields for adding email addresses. Always, always use the BCC: (blind carbon copy) field for listing the email addresses. The people receiving the message will see only their own address.

Some email clients don't automatically show the blind carbon copy option. If that's the case, click on where it says To: and your address list will appear. Highlight the email address and choose the BCC: option. It's not much effort, and it eliminates the possibility of someone using the email addresses inappropriately. When you send using the blind carbon copy, everyone receiving the message will see "Undisclosed Recipients" in the heading information.



If your email client requires that something be in the To: field, send the message to yourself and use the BCC: field for everyone else.

Remove any FW in the subject line. Better yet, clean up the subject line completely by fixing any spelling or grammatical mistakes.

Why let someone else's errors appear as your own?

Sometimes you will receive an email that is a petition. It states a position and directs you to add your name, address, and sometimes other information. Then you're supposed to send it to as many people as possible. If enough people do this, an email can contain hundreds if not thousands of names and addresses.

The longer the list gets the more valuable it becomes to a spammer or hacker because the names and email addresses are valid. If you really want to support the idea behind the petition, a personal letter to the eventual recipient carries a lot more weight than a piece of paper with a long list of names. When you think about it, lists like these can be generated from telephone books. Do you really think that a member of congress is going to pay attention to something that could be so easily faked?

(Continued from page 14)

Sometimes these petitions come with statements or warnings that the emails are being traced. Don't believe it. While technology is constantly improving, there is still no way to trace emails through the internet.

One kind of really annoying email is the one that promises that something wonderful is going to happen, but only if I forward the message to at least ten people in the next ten minutes. However, if I fail to do so, some unspeakable evil will surely befall me. I always fail to do so, and nothing bad has happened yet, but I wonder if this could be the reason I haven't won the lottery.

Before forwarding some version of an Amber Alert, take a little time to check out the story behind the message. Most of these messages have been circulating around the internet for years. Some of them have been around for a decade. Almost all of them are much less than they seem.

**Some Sites That Will Help**

- www.hoaxbusters.com
- http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/internet/a/current\_netlore.htm
- http://ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/bulletins/h-05.shtml
- http://www.snopes.com/snopes.asp
- http://www.vmyths.com/

You may not be able to stop this stuff on your own, but you can stop contributing to it.

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# NCTCUG Information

**NCTCUG, Inc. 201 S. Kensington St. Arlington VA 22204-1141**

**Club Information call: 301-577-7899**

**Web Site: www.nctcug.org**

**Officers and Directors**

All officer terms expire 2008

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Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
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John Keys	2008	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2008	703-759-3938
Lorin Garson	2009	703-379-9222
Sy Fishbein	2009	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2009	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 3 1/2 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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**Please send your change of address to the club address as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.**

***Thank You!***

# The Big Three-Oh!!

## Help NCTCUG celebrate 30 years of "User Helping User"

Join us for our 30th Anniversary party at Carlin Hall on Wednesday May 28th, 2008. Reach out to old friends in the ranks of our former members, and ask them to join us!

If you'll be unable to attend, please participate by sending a greeting to your old friends and NCTCUG colleagues. We'd love to have pictures, or a video, of you to include as part of the festivities that evening if you can't participate in person. Please, don't put this off — send something this week, if you're unable to make this special event — it's been thirty years in the making !!!

Email Paul Howard at [plhoward@verizon.net](mailto:plhoward@verizon.net)



NCTCUG, Inc.  
201 S. Kensington St.  
Arlington VA 22204-1141

# First Class

# The Joy of Summer

### June/July 2008

1st Wed. (6/4, 7/2)  
7 p.m. General Meeting

4th Wed (6/25, 7/23)  
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (7/21; none in June)  
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.

