

The NCTCUG Journal

www.nctcug.org

March/April 2009

Volume 32 Issue 2

Keeping Up

By Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

FiOS Foibles

Verizon’s fiber optic communications offering, FiOS, was connected at my home on March 7th of last year. I’m using the Internet offering with 15 Mbit download speed, 2 Mbit upload; and the FiOS Premier TV option, which provides seemingly hundreds of TV channels, including a wide assortment of music programming.

Since installation, I’ve had very few problems. Late one morning, returning from some errands, I found the Internet not functioning. A call to the repair number announced a general service failure, due to be repaired within four hours. By the time Linda and I returned from lunch, two hours later, everything was back to normal. I also had to call the repair number, and have the customer tech send the “reset” signal to the three digital adapters (low end set top boxes) I have serving three TVs, when Verizon eliminated analog RF service with an all-digital upgrade on the FiOS TV system in September. This enabled the adapters to receive the full

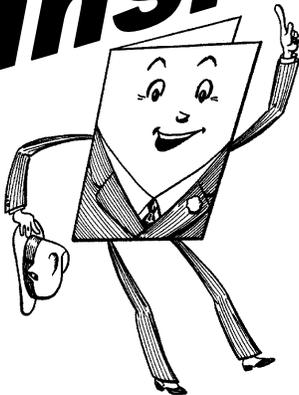


lineup of channels in the Premier TV service tier. Previously, only the local tier of TV service had been provided via digital adapters.

Several weeks ago, the digital adapter for the bedroom TV stopped displaying the channel number when changing channels. Amazing how hooked we’ve become on that piece of technology. So, after checking the other adapters, which were working fine, and looking in the FiOS manuals, and power cycling the adapter several times, I called the service number.

(Continued on page 11)

Inside



Moving On To Vista — Part 11	page 2
Email Etiquette	page 3
Traveling Then and Now — “Technically Speaking”	page 4
Using Vista’s Hidden Disk Cleanup Options.....	page 6
Why Security Precautions Are Necessary.....	page 7
Password Protection	page 9
Concepts and Tools	page 10
Pinnacle Studio 12.....	page 12
Saving Pictures That Show On Your Computer Screen	page 14

Moving On To Vista – Part 11

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One of Vista's disk management systems, that is new to me, is a dynamic disk and the ability to extend a volume. Suppose you have a volume or folder on your hard drive called Pictures for your photographs. If you run out of space on your hard drive, but you have space available on another hard drive installed on your PC, you can extend your Picture volume onto that drive to make it bigger. There are two limitations to this process. First, you cannot reverse the process. Second, once created you cannot remove the space you've used on the second disk to reduce the size of the volume. The only way you can do this is to create a new volume on one of your drives, copy all of the contents of the spanned volume to it and then delete the spanned volume. The other limitation is you cannot extend the Windows System volume.

I'm not really sure how I would use this feature. My inclination is to create new volumes and not try to span a volume across two hard drives. Perhaps when working with video files, which can consume enormous amounts of space, this might be a useful feature.

How often do you start an operation on your computer which opens a dialog box on the desktop that requires you to click on "OK"? So you move your mouse to put the pointer on the "OK" box and click on it. You probably do this many times in a day. Did you know that there is a setting to automatically move your mouse pointer to the OK button so that all you have to do is click on it? Here's how you can configure Windows Vista to do this.

First click on the "Start" button and then the "Control Panel". Under the "Hardware and Sound" entry in the "Control Panel" box, click on "Mouse". The "Mouse Properties" box will open. Click on "Pointer Options". Locate "Snap To" and click to create a check mark to activate "Automatically move pointer to the default button in a dialog box".

While you're looking at the "Pointer Options" box, consider the next option line, "Display pointer trails".

If you occasionally have trouble locating the mouse pointer on the desktop, consider this option. Experiment with the length of the pointer trail setting. If you don't like it, turn it off.

On a slightly different topic, let's talk about short-cuts. Many application programs create a shortcut on your desktop when you install the program. They're a convenient way to start a program without have to go to the Start menu. There are other ways to use short-cuts too. Suppose you have a spreadsheet or genealogy file that you frequently update. Locate the file with Windows Explorer, right-click on the file name, scroll down the pop-up menu to where it says "Create Shortcut" and click on it. Now, before you close the Windows Explorer window, locate the new shortcut and drag it to your desktop. Because Windows (XP as well as Vista) associates application programs with certain type of files (i.e. Windows Excel with spreadsheets), when you click on the file shortcut the application will start and open the file.

But suppose you can't see your desktop icons and short-cuts because they're hidden by something else? Maybe your Internet browser or e-mail program is running and completely cover your desktop. Let's go back and look at the shortcut on your desktop. Right-click on it. In the windows that opens, notice the four tabs at the top. Click on the tab marked "Shortcut". In the middle of the Shortcut menu you'll find something marked "Shortcut key". You'll probably see "None" entered in the box next to it. Click on the box and press and hold down your Ctrl key. In the box you'll now see "Ctrl + Alt + ". While still holding down the Ctrl key, press the the key you want to use to access the shortcut. Now click on the Apply button and then the OK button. Your shortcut key is now set. Just press the three key combination to instantly access your spreadsheet or genealogy file.

(Continued on page 3)

Email Etiquette

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Do you really know how to forward an e-mail? It is estimated that over fifty percent of email users do not know how to do it properly. Do you wonder why you get viruses or junk mail? Email messages get forwarded countless times without concern for the security of the previous sender's addresses.

Every time you forward an e-mail there is information left over from the people who got the message before



(Continued from page 2)

Before we leave the topic of Shortcuts I'll just mention that when you open a Shortcut's properties window, the first tab is marked "General". If you click on "General", one of the first entries is "Type of File" and "Open with". If you click on the adjacent "Change" button, you'll see a list of possible application programs to access the file. You can select from this list or click on "Browse" to locate another program.

I'm hearing more rumors about Windows 7 but, at this point, they are still rumors. One thing seems certain, Windows 7 will have more in common with Windows Vista than Windows XP. Whatever you learn about Windows Vista should help you when you upgrade to the next version of Windows.

you, namely their e-mail addresses and names. As the messages get forwarded along the list of addresses builds and builds creating a huge resource for spammers. All it takes is for someone to get a virus and the infected computer can send that virus to every e-mail address that has come across that computer. Even if the address collection doesn't result in a virus it surely will be harvested by spammers or someone looking to make a couple of cents for a listing of good email addresses. How do you stop or at least minimize the propagation of email addresses? There are several easy steps that we should all practice.

(1) Before you send out a forwarded e-mail, DELETE all of the other addresses that appear in the body of the message (at the top). That's right, DELETE them. Highlight them and delete them, backspace them, cut them, whatever it is you know how to do. It only takes a second You MUST click the 'Forward' button first and then you will have full editing capabilities against the body and headers of the message. If you don't click on 'Forward' first, you won't be able to edit the message at all.

(2) Whenever you send an e-mail to more than one person, do NOT use the To: or Cc: fields for adding e-mail addresses. Always use the BCC: (blind carbon copy) field for listing the e-mail addresses. This is the way the people you send to will only see their own e-mail address. If you don't see your BCC: option click on where it says To: and your address list will appear. Highlight the address and choose BCC: and that's it, it's that easy. When you send to BCC: your message will automatically say 'Undisclosed Recipients' in the 'TO:' field of the people who receive it.

(3) Remove any 'FW:' in the subject line. You can rename the subject if you wish or even fix spelling.

(4) ALWAYS hit your Forward button from the actual e-mail you are reading. Ever get those e-mails that you have to open 10 pages to read the one page with the information on it? By forwarding from the actual page

(Continued on page 4)

Traveling Then and Now — “Technically Speaking”

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(This article was originally published in Sarnia's "FIRST MONDAY" magazine, August 2008 issue)

In 1974 Richard Nixon was the first US President forced to resign, while gasoline pricing rose to a whopping 55 cents a gallon US (14.5 cents a liter). They claim the reason was that "gasoline shortages and price increases throughout the world help to cause problems in most of the western worlds' economies" (www.thepeoplehistory.com).

Sound familiar? What isn't familiar is the technology that accompanies us on vacations.

I remember in 1974 driving to Fort Wilderness Disney World, Florida in a Volkswagen van built into a homemade camper, all decked out with plywood beds and a Coleman cooler for a fridge with a never-

ending request for ice. CAA supplied the trip tik maps that marked out the route and the construction sections of the highway. We had the best of the best for navigating the trip. As well, we had a brand new Instamatic camera with 7 rolls of 126 film that cost us a small fortune. Our son, four years old, rode a small tricycle back and forth inside the van to while away the hours and hours of monotonous driving as seatbelt legislation was non-existent.

Today, we still face the gas increase excuses and we are well aware of the price of a liter of gasoline today. In that regard, nothing has really changed, only the numbers and the fact that we are all buckled into our seats. Although, one thing that has changed for travelers in 2008: "tech toys"; they have now become a "must have" for every family that does ground travel on vacations.

(Continued from page 3)

you wish someone to view, you stop them from having to open many e-mails just to see what you sent.

(5) Have you ever gotten an email that is a petition? It states a position and asks you to add your name and address and to forward it to 10 or 15 people or your entire address book. The email can be forwarded on and on and can collect thousands of names and email addresses. A FACT: The completed petition is actually worth a couple of bucks to a professional spammer because of the wealth of valid names and email addresses contained therein. If you want to support the petition, send it as your own personal letter to the intended recipient. Your position may carry more weight as a personal letter than a laundry list of names and email address on a petition. (Actually, if you think about it, who's supposed to send the petition in to whatever cause it supports? And don't believe the ones that say that the email is being traced, it just isn't so!)

(6) One of the main ones I hate is the ones that say that something like, 'Send this email to 10 people and you'll see something great run across your screen.' Or, sometimes they'll just tease you by saying something really cute will happen IT AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN!!!! (Trust me; I'm still seeing some of the same ones that I waited on 10 years ago!) I don't let the bad luck ones scare me either, they get trashed. (Could that be why I haven't won the lottery?)

(7) Before you forward an Amber Alert, or a Virus Alert, or some of the other ones floating around nowadays, check them out before you forward them. Most of them are junk mail that's been circling the net for Years! Just about everything you receive in an email that is in question can be checked out at Snopes. Just go to <http://www.snopes.com/>. It's really easy to find out if it's real or not. If it's not, please don't pass it on.

So please, in the future, let's stop or at least minimize the junk mail and the viruses by taking the steps outlined above.

Our kids have been replaced by grandkids and the Volkswagen homemade camper van is long gone. People today are now hauling RVs of all sorts that host most of the comforts of home.

The CAA maps and my son's tricycle have been replaced by the latest technical and computer gadgets. Let's have a peek at how technology has changed road travel, some 34 years later.

Kids today are buckled tightly into the back seats as airbag protection in the front restricts them to the back seats only. While in the back seat they have the option of viewing DVD movies run through a DVD player onto 2 separate monitors that attach to the head rests of both front seats. They listen to the movies via the vehicle stereo system or individual headphones. When they tire of the movies they can play video games by switching over to their PSP or a PS2 that plugs through the inverter. Of course there is always travel bingo if the tech stuff gets boring, but we won't hold our breath on that one.

For the driver and co-pilot there is a GPS display with voice directions, saving the hassle of trying to read the fine print on wrinkled and torn maps. Many travelers bring along laptops while traveling as their uses are many. For example, you can record your trip's information, download pictures and videos from digital cameras. The big thing these days with computers is reading digital books, or listening to audio books that have been previously downloaded from the Internet. Of course, when a live Internet connection becomes available (most RV parks have free Wi-Fi) you can check email, use Skype to call home, and research the places to see, all from your laptop.

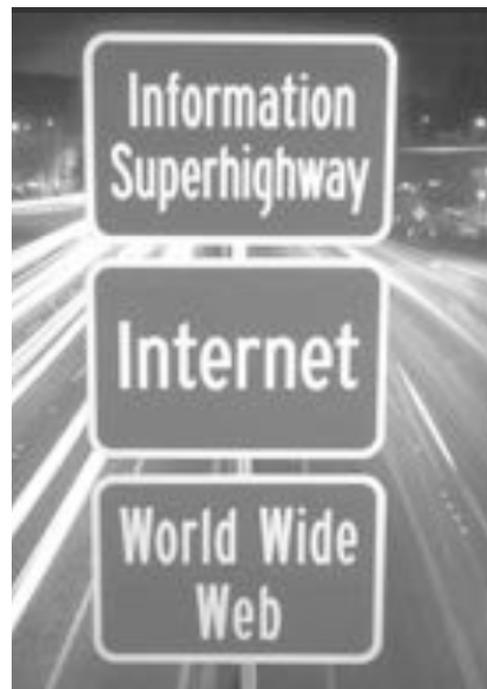
The days of praying that there will be a pay phone nearby if we break down are long gone as many people have both a Canadian and American cell phone. For instance, one can purchase a Motorola TracFone that works only in the USA for under \$10 and buy a "pay-as-you-go" card, making long distant calls back home cheaper and giving one more security on the highways in the USA.

Don't leave without your MP3 player. Podcasts of your favourite shows and lectures can be easily downloaded from the Internet. All MP3 players come with headphones that make for easy listening and do not disturb the other passengers or driver.

Walkie talkies are not a new item while on vacation, but the price certainly has come down and the range has expanded greatly. A quick stop in the grocery store for supplies will help you utilize your group to ensure precision targeted shopping whereby we all search out different items and meet at the same cashier, thus saving time. The walkie talkie is also used in many other scenarios for security and locating purposes. These units are a must have for anyone traveling with children. The Instamatic camera has been replaced by the digital camera, thus allowing people to take hundreds of pictures during a trip without any real cost. If some of the pictures are not that great they are easily deleted and forgotten without the worry of paying for more film.

An inverter will allow the truck battery to convert power from DC to AC so you can run the laptop while traveling to edit photos, read books, watch movies and connect to Wi-Fi hotspots. This also allows for the use of a PS2 plugged into the truck battery power as if you were at home plugging into a wall outlet. You can even plug in a refrigerated cooler with this inverter, making life just that much easier.

We can only imagine what traveling 34 years from now will be like and what 2042 will offer its road travelers.



Using Vista's Hidden Disk Cleanup Options

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There are many things to like about the disk cleanup utility in Windows Vista. It's built into the operating system, it works, and it's free. It's also a tool that removes many potential problems such as corrupt files that may be causing difficulties or could cause computer ills in the future. One of its minor shortcomings is that it doesn't detect and eliminate wasteful duplicate files. This is a very insignificant quibble as Microsoft never claimed it could do that in the first place. That ability is an item on my wish list for the next version. Overall it's a very useful tool that everyone should be familiar with.

There is more to Disk Cleanup than removing junk files and recovering gigabytes of disk space. It's amazing how 'temporary' files can hang around for months in the little used crannies of a disk drive. Poorly written install and uninstall routines are largely responsible, but software glitches and power hiccups leave their own share of digital detritus laying about.

Systems with more than a terabyte of storage are becoming common, and it's easy to lose track of even the largest files. Try locating a suitcase sized patch of land in an area with the dimensions of a football field and you'll have an idea of what I'm talking about. Aside from taking up space, these useless files can slow down searches, bloat your backups, and make Vista's slow defrag process even slower.

If you're not familiar with how Disk Cleanup works, you can access a good tutorial by clicking the Start icon, and then Help and Support. In the search box type Disk Cleanup, and you will get a list of items directly and indirectly related to the subject. You want the first three or four items in the list.

Let's access the normal version of Disk Cleanup by opening up the Computer icon on the Desktop, right-clicking the C: drive, and choosing Properties.

On the General tab locate the Disk Cleanup button just below and to the right of the disk graphic. You

might want to make a note of how much used and unused disk space you have for a before and after comparison. Left-click on the Disk Cleanup button and you will get a message that Windows is doing some calculations. Eventually, you get a dialog box which displays various categories of files you can remove. Windows will let you peek at many of these files, but it's largely a waste of time. I've never found anything worth examining. Make a note of how many types of files Windows can remove, and then close all the dialog boxes.

You've just seen the standard way to access Disk Cleanup. Let's now examine Disk Cleanup with its deep cleaning options exposed. Vista's official file name for the Disk Cleanup utility is `cleanmgr`. Open the Start globe again and type `cleanmgr` on the Start Search box at the bottom of the menu. Press Enter and The Drive Selection dialog box appears. This is a great way to eliminate mouse clicks if we want a fast way of getting to a specific drive. However, this method doesn't display the extra functions we're looking for so close the dialog box down.

To access the enhanced options we need to use something called the System Agent or `sage` in conjunction with `cleanmgr`. Click the Start globe again and in the Start Search box type `Cleanmgr /sageset:1`

Notice the space between `cleanmgr` and the forward slash. `Sageset` is a variation of the System Agent utility, and the number 1 allows you to select different cleaning options. You can use any number you want, even zero or negative numbers.

Disk Cleanup will now be running in a special setup mode that offers more cleaning options than the standard default. In addition, the System Agent will remember whatever cleanup options you select. When you run Cleanup again you don't have to make the same selections as long as you use the same number. That's what the System Agent set part does.

(Continued on page 7)

Why Security Precautions Are Necessary

By Bob de Violini, a member of the Channel Islands PCUG, California
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First off for the holidays, there's a story that illustrates just why you should always enable encryption on your wireless router (for those who use one) AND why you should be leery of any public computer for Web sites you need a password to access. A college student in Kentucky has been charged with identity theft, among other crimes, for planting malware on computers in his school's library. The malware was a keystroke logger that captured usernames and passwords for any pages fellow students logged into. He then used this information to access their e-mail accounts and send out e-mails attempting to extort these same fellow students. He also used an unsecured wireless router to access these accounts, making it look as if someone else were actually sending the e-mails. The attempted extortion took the form of a threat to divulge personal information the thief had stolen from the compromised e-mail accounts. That leads me to our next item, WPA encryption.



As of the beginning of November, a pair of computer security researchers in Europe disclosed a technique they'd developed to partially hack WPA encryption used by a great number of wireless routers today. Before anyone thinks the sky is falling, rest assured it

isn't. Their hack involves only the traffic being sent from the router to a computer and only a small number of data packets can be cracked before the router resets its encryption. However, it is enough to be able to send just enough rogue data to a computer to compromise it with any number of known vulnerabilities. Specifically, it involves the TKIP protocol that WPA and WPA2 are allowed to use. The specifics of just how this trick is accomplished have been made available to hackers in many areas of the Internet, so it's just a matter of time before it begins spreading. TKIP and AES encryption are selectable by the user in many wireless router configurations, and some have WPA with TKIP selected by default. I strongly recommend you check your

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 6)

Press Enter to run the utility and wait for the **Disk Cleanup Settings** dialog box to appear. Highlight the individual cleanup options and in some cases there is additional information that is missing from the default dialog box. You also have more cleanup options.

You can select any number of options from just one to all of them. For maximum cleaning, select everything. When you're satisfied with the options you've selected, click the OK button and run the utility. When the job is done, go back and see how much disk space you've recovered. You could be in for a pleasant surprise.

We used the `sageset` command to set the cleanup options. The system keeps track of what you've done, and it will run the utility according to your specification in the future, but you can't use the `sageset` command for that. You need to ignore `sageset` and run the `sagerun` command instead. From the desktop click the Start globe, and in the Search box type:
`Cleanmge /sagerun:1`

Press Enter and the system will automatically run in enhanced mode with the preference previously recorded. Run this command anytime you wish from now on. You can always change preferences by rerunning the `sageset` command with the `cleanmgr` utility.

(Continued from page 7)

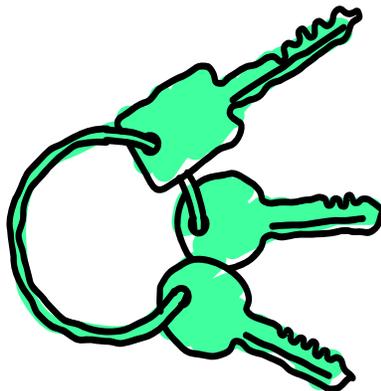
wireless router's encryption configuration, and if it's set to use WPA with TKIP, you switch to WPA2 with AES if at all possible. This is especially important if you use a wireless router to run a network for a business. I have my Linksys wireless router set to use WPA2 with AES encryption. AES is significantly harder to crack than the older TKIP protocol. One final note on this, however. For AES encryption to work, both the router and the network adapter in the computer must be able to use it. Some older hardware may not support AES encryption, so an upgrade may be needed. If you'd like some more information, please drop me a line at the email address at the top of this article, and I'll gladly send you a link or two.

Scare of the Month Department

Even though Halloween has already passed, we have the Scare of the Month Department chiming in with some news. There is a new phishing e-mail making the rounds disguised as a warning from the U.S. Federal Reserve. The message bears the usual dire warning of a scam and contains links for readers to follow to get more information. However, there are a few clues that give the message away as a hoax, the biggest one being poor grammar. The links in the e-mail lead unsuspecting readers to a fake site that will redirect them to a search page for porn, which will download a PDF file with malware to their computer. The malware comes in various forms, including one that attempts to make your computer a member of a botnet. A brief notice can be had here, courtesy of USCERT: <http://tinyurl.com/66lzv9>. The link does go to the US-CERT site; I just used TinyURL to shorten the URL's length.

Patches Galore Department

As I mentioned above, there have been some exploits on the loose for a bit for Adobe Acrobat, and the full program and the reader have been updated as a result. The latest versions are 8.1.3 and 9.0. Adobe has also updated its Flash player, standard fare in most browser installations, to version 10.0.12.36 to patch publicly reported vulnerabilities last month as well. Not to be outdone, Mozilla has also issued a patch for its Firefox browser and



Thunderbird e-mail client. These patches address several bugs that have been brought to light in the past month to month and a half. The latest iterations of Firefox are 2.0.0.18 and 3.0.0.4. The latest version of Thunderbird is 2.0.0.18. I have read reports of some problems with version 3.0.0.4 and 2.0.0.18 of Firefox, with most of the reports being about version 3.0.0.4. The solution for those having problems after upgrading to 3.0.0.4 has been to go back to 3.0.0.3. I have updated my version to 2.0.0.18 and have had no problems. Some patches take longer than others to develop and test, however. One of the patches issued by Microsoft on November's Patch Tuesday took them seven years to develop and test. The bug it patched was first reported by a security researcher in March 2001. Microsoft claims that it tried patching it when it was first reported but wound up killing off most networking applications with the patches when they underwent testing. However, they didn't give up and finally found a way to patch the vulnerability earlier this year.

While we're speaking of Microsoft, it has announced plans to abandon its One Care concept of computer protection service and develop free anti malware applications for release in 2009. The new concept is code named "Morro." As usual, folks are coming down on both sides of pro and con when it comes to this development. Microsoft hasn't given a firm release date for the new software, but has said that One Care will come to an end on June 30. Well, that's all for now. Here's wishing everyone a joyous Holiday season and a Happy New Year! Always practice safe computing by keeping your applications and your anti-malware applications fully up to date. Make sure to run your anti-malware scanner(s) once a week, even if they don't flag anything in between scans.

(Continued from page 9)

- Keep your operating system up-to-date.
- Use a good anti-virus and anti-spyware programs.
- Consider using an encrypted password manager program.

Check the Compu-KISS website at www.compukiss.com for more information on choosing good passwords.

Password Protection

By Sandy Berger, Compukiss.com www.compukiss.com [sandy \(at\) compukiss.com](mailto:sandy@compukiss.com)

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When technology is good, it is very, very good, but when it is bad it can be truly atrocious. So it is with the hacking of Sarah Palin's Yahoo email account. The bad guys are out there using technology for their own advantage. Whether they are serious hackers who want information for devious purposes or young students who just want to show their technological prowess, this theft shows that everyone is vulnerable.

The recent hijacking of Sarah Palin's email account is also a great example of how a hacker can gain access to an email account and how email accounts need to be better protected against such penetration.

We currently rely on passwords to protect most of our online activity. Professional hackers often use "password crackers" to guess passwords. Anyone can easily find these hacker tools on the Internet. They can even be purchased on CD. There are wordlists for common passwords and dictionary combinations of possible passwords in a variety of different languages. These tools are all aimed at giving a person all the technical tools that they need to guess passwords.

In Sarah Palin's case, however, the perpetrator didn't even have to use tools like this. A hacker identifying himself as "Rubico" claims to have been able to change the password on Sarah Palin's Yahoo Mail account quite easily. All he had to do was use her email name to log into the Yahoo Mail's interface and select the option to reset the password. Yahoo then asked him to provide her birth date and zip code, which have become public knowledge. He then had to answer her self-chosen security question which was where she met her husband. After several television interviews of Sarah and her husband, the answer to that question also became public knowledge.

Sarah Palin was thrown into the public arena quite quickly, but even those of us who are not public figures may find that their passwords and answers to security questions can be easily guessed. Do you use the name of your spouse, children, pet, favorite sport, birthday, or wedding date as your password? Have you entered security questions like place of birth or favorite color that are easy to guess?

Privacy as we knew it before the Internet is now a thing of the past. With the Internet, more of our lives are online than most of us realize. Many people use blogging as a past time and post information on MySpace, Facebook, and other social networking websites. Once posted, all of that information is publicly known. And the Internet is archived, so even when you remove current information, previously posted information can still be found in Internet archives. That information can be used to guess passwords and access personal information.

So here are a few ground rules that may help keep your private information a little safer online:

- Use passwords that are not easy to guess and cannot be easily cracked. (Look for more on how to choose good passwords in next week's column.)
- Choose a security question that others will not be able to guess the answer to. Or answer the security question with an answer that you create which is not necessarily the true answer.
- Use unique passwords, especially for important services and websites like banking sites and email.
- Keep your passwords private. Don't leave them on a sticky note on your computer screen or keep them in an unencrypted file on your computer.
- Change your passwords often.
- Do not change your password by clicking on a link in an email from someone claiming to be a system administrator, bank representative, or other seemingly reputable party. They may not be who they say they are. When you want to change your password, always type in the address yourself so you know you are at the real website rather than a bogus one.
- Use one credit card for all online purchases. This will limit your financial exposure.

(Continued on page 8)

Concepts and Tools

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One day in the near future there will be no computer "beginners" at the adult level. The children born into the world as it is today are exposed to computers from conception. After they are born, many have very sophisticated hands on use of the machines from the minute they can reach out from their parent's lap and touch the keyboard. There is no mystery to them.

But while there are still older adults who want computer knowledge, someone has to be available to instruct them. And adults do not learn the same way that babies and children learn. Sometimes, when leading a group or teaching a class, it is difficult to explain to students why they need to understand the difference between how a computer or a program works and how to make it actually do something. In my opinion, concepts are far more useful in the long run than specific techniques, especially when dealing with someone using a computer for the first time or who has gone just beyond the basics. But how do you teach a concept?

First, accept the fact that it will take more time in the beginning to teach concepts, but it will save time later on. The real trick is to make the process interesting and easy to understand



The simple fact that a computer is basically thousands of off and on switches, the same as a light switch, seems to be information that many people find irrelevant. But once a student gets some idea of the actual simplicity of the machine, much of the mystery is removed from the learning process.

Second, CONCEPTS, once understood, are usually far easier to remember than techniques. Anyone who "gets the idea" of a computer fundamental can usually find the tools later to accomplish the end result, even if the specific steps are not used often enough to remember them in sequence.

Many first session lesson plans skip computer functionality and plunge straight into using software. As an example, the concept of organizing files on a hard drive seems to be much harder for new users to comprehend than teaching them to open the file manager, aka Windows Explore or some similar program. So many teachers go through the cumbersome task of showing people how to open the file system, only to become bogged down in the steps needed to find a particular file, then later to continually have people complain they have lost a file and firmly believe it has disappeared from their machine. Most new users find it difficult to make the connection between finding a file on the computer and why understanding how to find it is important. It is the instructor's job to help them make the connection. The CONCEPT of hard drive storage is not easy to absorb, so the instructor must make it easy. Also many new users find it difficult to transfer keystrokes learned on a classroom computer to their own computers at home. The reason for this is that no two computers are exactly alike, so the steps learned on one machine may or may not work on another one. But if the student comprehends the idea behind digital file storage, the actual keystrokes will begin to make sense, regardless of what computer they are using. In my opinion, rote learning is not the best way to become even moderately proficient on a computer. Real understanding of basic computing processes is vital.

Since many new users have little idea of what hardware is on their own computers, talking about C:\ drives and other drives in relation to specific files means little to them. But a well developed discussion of what basic hardware CAN be on a computer and how it works is not a waste of time, answering questions along the way. Many new users won't see the value in a technical discussion, so it is important to present hardware demonstrations using common sense terms rather than obscure technical language. It is never necessary to impress new students with what you know, but rather to make the information as easy for them to understand as possible. With practice, a teacher or presenter can develop the dialog necessary to convey essential information and still keep the listeners engaged. Students appreciate being encouraged in the idea that they may not know much to begin with, but they will leave each session armed with useful information and techniques that will build a good basic foundation for them. Biblically we were taught not to build our houses on sand. Why are the pyramids in Egypt still standing? Because underneath all that sand there are foundations built on bedrock. Good computer skills begin the same way.

Nearly all programs are far too comprehensive to be taught in detail to beginners. But if the most basic use of the program (the program's CONCEPT) can be presented in a way that is useful to students, they will get their feet wet. From there they can then be encouraged to not only attend study groups and advanced classes, but to explore their favorite programs on their own. Again, the difference is between teaching new users the fundamental use of the program itself as opposed to teaching them to use specific program "tools". Obviously some techniques need to be taught in early sessions, but teaching the use of most tools is best done in intermediate and advanced classes. My experience has been that only when people have a need for or enjoy using any computer software will they continue to explore and expand their knowledge of the program.

How long did it take you to figure out that the "d" in d:\ stands for any non-specific "drive" when dealing with program instructions (often installation procedures) and not specifically for the "d" drive on your personal computer? Admit it, there was a time when you didn't know that. Just think how confusing the term is to new users. There is a concept here if you can find it.

(Continued from page 1)

I started down the calling tree for FiOS TV service, and identified the problem with a single adapter. The voice response system asked for the serial number of the digital adapter with the problem.

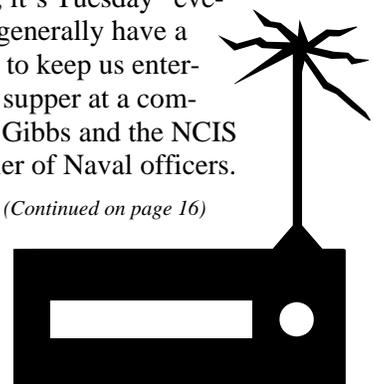
In juggling the tiny portable wireless phone handset, while looking for the tag with the serial number on the bottom of the unit, I managed to disconnect from the Verizon service number. When I called back, the system recognized that I'd called in recently, and passed me to a service tech before I'd gotten very far down the response tree. I gave him the 12 digit alphanumeric serial number for the digital adapter, he sent the reset signal, and the time and channel logo box re-appeared on the screen. Four minutes from "broke" to "fixed!"

Apparently, the same digital bug invaded the FiOS DVR, but with different symptoms. A couple of shows we'd recorded were nowhere to be found. I figured I fat-fingered something. Same result on some others — this was serious! About two nights a week, we watch two or three shows, and record two or three more. Missing episodes of "24" or "Lost" can seriously impair finding the next clue!

We sat down with the manual, and went through the suggested recording procedure. Nothing would get the DVR to indicate it was going to record the designated show, when looking at the recording schedule. Upsetting, but at least I had some vindication — I hadn't blown the recording setup for those shows — the box just didn't follow instructions! Call the service number, slide down the response tree to "problems with DVR." Voice response says, "Hold on while we send the reset signal." Badda Bing! Back in business in three minutes!

The most surreal FiOS foible occurred last week on "Don't call me, it's Tuesday" evening, when Linda and I generally have a full lineup of cop shows to keep us entertained. We got up from supper at a commercial break, as Jethro Gibbs and the NCIS team chased another killer of Naval officers.

(Continued on page 16)



Pinnacle Studio 12

A Review By Beth Pickering, Sonoma Valley Computer Group, California
www.vom.com/svcg bethpick (at) emailx.net

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I would love to compare video editing programs and declare Pinnacle Studio 12 the easiest one to use, but to be honest . . . this is the only video editing I have ever done. To be precise: I had a borrowed laptop I had never used before, a few unrelated video clips (not mine), a few pictures (not mine), less than 24 hours to make a demo movie for my presentation, and a history of attracting glitches.

Because Studio 12 is supposed to be easy for a beginner to use I decided to go out of my comfort zone and put this software to the ultimate test: Like many users, I skipped reading the instructions. I have to admit to a little help. I had seen a live demo at a convention and watched some very short informational clips on www.pinnaclesys.com.

The hardest thing I had to do was choose the options I wanted to use. The closest I got to a glitch was that the video card in my borrowed computer wouldn't support "Magic Bullet Looks".

Starting with a "Montage", I began my quest. I already knew image editing had to be done on the main time-

line and that any type of image could be (**Graphic 1**) used. The numbers showed what image went where. Moving the images around was as easy as drag and drop. "Undo" and "delete" were also handy. Mixing sections from different Montage themes didn't cause and problems. Leaving Montage boxes empty didn't either. The playback only showed an appropriately numbered space. With just a click of a button you can review your creation full screen. When you are editing that particular section of the orange bar turns green.

There are hundreds of transitions on hand. Picking a category brings up a screen with thumbnail "A/B" boxes. Clicking on one activates the A to B transition so you can see how it looks. After deciding which one to use, you simply drag and drop it into place on the timeline. The other features use thumbnails of the image you are editing (**Graphic 2**) to show what the final look will be. All you have to do is select the one you want. As you become more skilled you can alter the feature itself. Some (like "Magic Bullet Looks")

(Continued on page 13)



Graphic 1



Graphic 2

have visible boxes to adjust (see above) while others (see Boris Graffiti below) (**Graphic 3**) have an advanced mode to select. There are prompts where you can enter text and examples to see what it will look like. Any font that is on your computer can be used. Correcting red eye and removing the black bars so your images fill the movie frame can be done with the click of a button. It is possible to interweave up to 18 video tracks in minutes.



Graphic 3

Pinnacle Studio 12 has two dedicated sound tracks — one for special sounds and the other for background music. You can import songs to use as is, or you can add them to “Scorefitter” — your own original background music composer. It is as easy to use as the image editors. Several choices have been pre-loaded in the software. You simply pick a style, (**Graphic 4**) pick a song, pick a version and listen to the result. If you don’t like it, you just start over. The length can be changed by dragging the beginning or ending points. The “song” can be changed at anytime by using the “accept changes” button. also easy. You select the media, then the drop down box choices, and click the “Create” button. (**Graphic 5**)

I didn’t do it, but I understand that outputting is also easy. You select the media, then the drop down box choices, and click the “Create” button.

My experience with Pinnacle Studio 12 was effortless and fun. Users with no experience can easily make professional looking movies while knowledgeable editors can tweak their movies to an all time high.



Graphic 4



Graphic 5

Saving Pictures That Show On Your Computer Screen

Tips & Hints by Dick Carricato, member of the Tri County Computer User Group, Florida
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These days we are bombarded with beautiful pictures on our computers, and when I see a great picture I'm not happy until I have it stored away in my own computer where I can use it when I want to.

The usual technique used to extract and save pictures from the web, from e-mail, or from any other source that places a picture on the computer screen, is simply to right click on the picture and select "Save picture as..." This will often open the 'My Pictures' folder where the user can select a folder in which to save the picture.

This is a very straight forward, simple, and easy to remember technique for those situations where it works, and if it worked all the time this article would end right here. However, it often does not work. Sometimes web authors make it difficult for you to copy their pictures, and a right click on one of those pictures produces a grayed (not available) "Save picture as..." selection. Pictures in PDF documents in general cannot be copied, and for that matter, even highlighted text can't be copied from most PDF documents. Very often when an e-mail picture is right-clicked the "Save picture as..." selection is available, but when that option is selected

an error box appears saying, "The system cannot find the file specified."

The remainder of this article will be devoted to a single method that allows the user to copy and save any image that shows on his computer screen. This method involves the use of the Windows Print Screen function. Of course, everyone remembers how to use Print Screen (Prt Scn) because we have discussed it in the past. Just in case you have forgotten I'll review it here.

The Prt Scn key is located to the right of the function keys at the top of the keyboard. When Prt Scn is pressed it copies a picture of the entire display to the Clipboard. Pressing Alt-Prt Scn copies an image of the Active window to the Clipboard. Remember that the active window is the one with the bright title bar, and it got that way by clicking the mouse anywhere within the window. The Clipboard is just a section of memory that Windows uses for all Copy and Paste operations. Information is copied from any Windows program to the Clipboard by using the Copy command. Information is pasted to any Windows program from the Clipboard by using the Paste command.

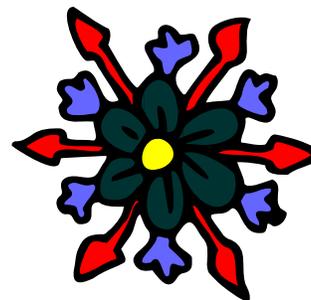
(Continued on page 15)

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meeting will be held on March 21 & April 18, 2009 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. Starting with the January 17th, 2009 meeting, WACUG will hold joint meetings with OPCUG [www.olligmu.org/~opcug/] It is anticipated that all meetings, except June, July, and August, will be held at the **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute** [www.olligmu.edu/] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

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/>



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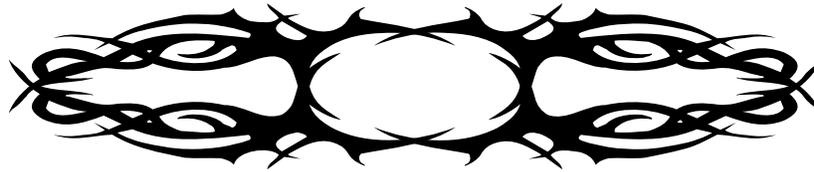
(Continued from page 14)

The next time a nice picture shows up on your screen, right-click on it and attempt to save it by using the "Save as..." command. If that fails, click once in the window where the picture is located; maximize the window to make the picture as large as possible, and then press **Prt Scn.** (In rare cases you might have to hold the **Shift** key while pressing **Prt Scn.**) This places the entire window, including the picture that you want, in the Clipboard. The rest of the procedure requires a graphics processor, and fortunately the Windows Paint program will do just fine. It can be found by clicking **Start, (all) Programs, Accessories, Paint (or mspaint).** To put a shortcut to Paint on your desktop, right click and drag it to your desktop, let go, and select copy here.

So far all we have done is to discover a picture, maximize the window that contains it, and press **Prt Scn.** Next, open Paint by double clicking the Paint icon on the desktop. In Paint, click **Edit** and select **Paste.** Now the entire window that you copied above is visible in the Paint window

Pick up the selection tool from the group of tools along the left side of the Paint window. To do this, click on the dotted line rectangle. Move the mouse pointer to the upper left corner of the Picture. Then press the left mouse button and drag to the bottom right corner of the picture. This selects the picture that you want to keep. Copy this to the Clipboard by right clicking within the selection and (left) clicking on **Copy.**

Now you have what you want in the Clipboard, and all that you don't want is visible in Paint. Click **File** and **New,** and answer the query to save the garbage with 'no'. Click **Edit** and **Paste** to get the picture alone into Paint. Click **File** and **Save as....** Be sure to select a file type of **JPEG** for your picture. If you don't, Paint will save the file as a **bitmap (.BMP)** which is quite large, ranging from 1 to 5 megabytes depending on the size of the picture. The **JPEG** file will be only about 5% of the size of the **bitmap** file.



NCTCUG Information

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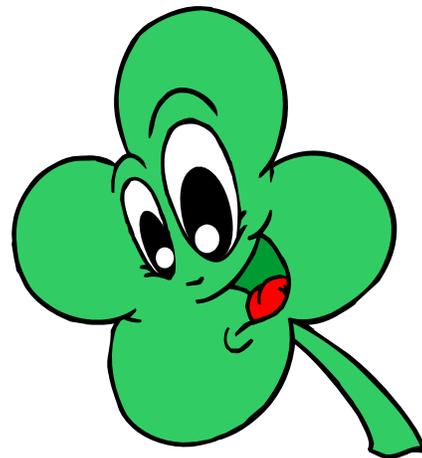
(Continued from page 11)

But the living room TV is showing "Entertainment Tonight" — What the hey?" Switch to the antenna input, and watch channel 9 the old fashioned way — over the air. With every commercial break, it's back to the FiOS input — it's running maybe 47 minutes behind. What gives? The family room TV's ok; also the computer with the TV tuner card behind the FiOS digital adapter's getting NCIS on channel 9 just fine.

At nine o'clock, the next show in our usual viewing lineup was a repeat, so I jumped on the phone, and dialed the FiOS service number. I only got one step down the voice response chain, and the channel 9 stream adjusted itself to the correct program in the proper time frame. With my fourth call to the service number in three weeks, did the system just sent the TV reset signal? More magic computer stuff, perhaps?

Full Disclosure: The author worked for Verizon and various Bell System predecessor companies for 31 years. As a retiree, he enjoys a modest employee discount on several Verizon services.

March/April 2009
1st Wed. (3/4, 4/1) 7 p.m. General Meeting
4th Wed (3/25, 4/22) 7 p.m. Internet SIG
3rd Monday (4/20; none in March) 7 p.m. Board of Directors
All meetings are at Carlin Hall , 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.



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