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Microsoft— The Company We Love to Hate

By Lorrin R. Garson (NCTCUG)

The following recently appeared in *Time* magazine (June 2, 2008, p. 18):

“Angry Hungarian student just misses hitting Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer with eggs. Student obviously running Vista”

Sound familiar? It seems whenever computer geeks flock together, Microsoft becomes the object of similarly barbed comments, many of which are humorous if not hilarious and some of which are well deserved. Why is Microsoft subjected to so much criticism?

Of course Microsoft’s products have their flaws, which are legitimate objects of complaints and perhaps some jibes. According to *Market Share* (<http://marketshare.hitslink.com/report.aspx?qprid=10>), as of May 2008, Microsoft has 91.13% of market share in operating systems, followed by Apple (Macintosh) at 7.83%, Linux at 0.68% and 14 others at 0.36% combined. If Microsoft, Apple and providers of Linux were equally bad (or good), Microsoft would

be expected to receive nearly 12 times more comments than Apple and 134 times more than Linux. So the large size of Microsoft’s installed base is a factor. And then there is the Burger King OS, which has never received a negative comment and therefore must have the very finest OS. Oh, Burger King doesn’t offer an operating system? *Reductio ad absurdum*.

Do quips we make, or items like the above published in *Time*, negatively impact our judgment and attitude toward Microsoft? Unfortunately, they do and such remarks are frequently emotional and not objective. It’s difficult to be objective when your disk drive is wiped clean! When in a group if one individual makes a negative or cynical comment, it is not uncommon to observe a level of “herd behavior” or “shark feeding frenzy”. Particularly if the quip is comical, individuals will tend not to object or disagree, after all who wants to be perceived as a “kill joy” or “sour puss”. Consequently, the group as a whole as well as individuals often accepts the comment along with its implied attitude... and attitudes do impact our decisions.

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Moving On To Vista

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Part 5

As most PC users know, after you've used your computer for a while the data on your hard drive starts to get fragmented. This affects your computer's performance and causes programs to run more slowly. With Windows XP, as well as all previous versions, you had three ways to defragment your hard drive. You could do it manually (click Start —> All Programs —> Accessories —> System Tools —> Disk Defragmenter). You could do it manually (click Start -> All Programs -> Accessories —> System Tools —> Disk Cleanup). Or you could create a scheduled task to do it for you automatically (click Start —> All Programs —> Accessories —> System Tools —> Scheduled Task and the click on "Add Scheduled Task" and follow the wizard instructions).

Windows Vista automatically defragments your hard disk for you. Not only does it defragment your hard disk, but it does it in background mode. This allows you to do other things on your computer while the defragmenting program is being run. The down side of this is that programs will run more slowly while the defragmenting process goes on. On the other hand, because automatic defragmenting runs fairly frequently it should not take too long to complete.

Of course you still have the ability to defragment manually. Right-click on the "Computer" icon on your desktop and select properties. In the window that appears, click on "Performance" (lower left corner), then "Advanced Tools" (upper left corner) and then "Open Disk Defragmenter". Notice that at this point you have the options of scheduling when the defragmenter runs or running it immediately. At this point Vista will defragment ALL hard drives that it finds on your computer. Previous versions of Windows allow you to select which hard drive to defragment. Windows Vista SP1 (when it is released) is supposed to add this capability to Windows Vista.

While we are on the topic of computer performance, lets go back to the "Performance Information and

Tools" screen (right click on the "Computer" icon, click on "Properties" and click on "Performance" in the lower left corner of the screen). Note that this screen provides you with some general information about the performance of your computer. It numerically scores processor, memory, graphics and hard disk performance. You'll find links on this screen that explain what the numbers mean and how to improve your computer's performance. Many of the suggestions do not require changes to you hardware but recommend changes to the programs that you run or do not run.

On the upper left side of the "Performance Information and Tools" screen you'll find a number of tasks which control how your computer performs. If your PC is a laptop, click on "Adjust power settings". On the new screen, examine the "Power Plan". The decision you make here effects the length of time that your laptop will run between battery charges and its speed. Most laptops come configured to balance performance against battery endurance. There are many options available. If you normally operate your laptop plugged into an external power source, you'll want to change the setting to maximize performance.

Before we leave the "Performance Information and Tools" screen, you should also look at "Adjust visual effects" (in the upper left corner under "Tasks"). When you click on this item you'll see three tabs. We are only going to address the "Visual effects" tab for now. The first button, "Let Windows choose what is best for my computer" is probably selected. This gives you the maximized "eye candy" on your computer but may have a negative effect on performance when resource intensive programs are running (i.e. Video editors). Notice that you have additional choices to "Adjust for best appearance" and "Adjust for best performance" as well as a "Custom" button that lets you choose what features to turn on and off. If your computer performance appears to be sluggish, try selecting "Best performance".

Part 6

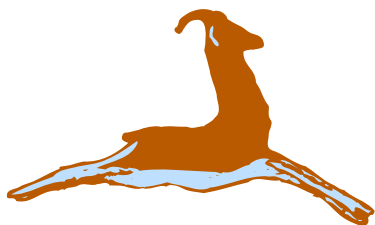
It's easy to lose track of time when you're playing computer games or cruising the Internet. As our computers have improved we tend to use higher screen resolutions to see more detail and, unfortunately, that can cause eye strain. The solution is not to reduce screen resolution but to increase the size of the text.

Windows Vista offers an easy way to do this. Click on "Start", then "Control Panel" and then type "adjust font size" in the search box in the upper right corner. A menu choice "Personalization" will appear and right under it you will see "Adjust font size (DPI)". Click on it and a window called "DPI scaling" will appear. You'll see three choices: "Default scale (96 DPI), Larger scale (120 DPI), and a button that says "Customize".

The first two choices are pretty clear. In the third choice, if you click "Customize DPI", the "Custom DPI Setting" window will open. Just follow the instruction to increase or decrease the DPI setting to find the setting that works best for you.

One question new Vista users ask me is "What happened to the search command?" People who have used Windows XP and previous versions of Windows are used to clicking on the "Start" button and then clicking on the "Search" label on the right side of the menu.

Search is still available but Microsoft apparently thought it was more intuitive for us to click on the "Windows" key plus the "F" key (think "Windows find" to remember this). Look at the upper right corner of the window that opens for the "Search Box" and enter the word or phrase that you are looking for. Notice in the line below you have a number of options to limit your search to "All", "E-mail", "Document", "Picture", "Music", and "Other". There is also an "Advanced" selection that allows you to select a range of file dates, locations, names and authors. To close the Search Window you have to click on the red "X" in the top right corner.



You might also notice that when you Click on "Computer" (used to be "My Computer") there a search box appears in the top right corner of the window. This feature is universal and appears whenever you open any folder window. It also appears when you click on the "Start" button (the "search line" appears in the menu directly above the Start button).

While I'm on the subject of the "Windows" key, the combination of "Windows key plus the "L" key locks your keyboard. Everything you are working on becomes hidden by the login screen and you need to enter your password to continue to use your computer. This feature may be convenient even if you're not trying to hide your work from anyone. My son's cat seems to be fascinated by computer screens and anything blinking or moving on the screen. She frequently jumps up on the desk next to an unattended computer and walks across the keyboard to touch the screen with a paw or her nose. It's cute but sometimes I return to find a program has been suspended or the computer placed in "sleep" mode. For me, "Windows Lock" is protection from pets.

Do you use the Vista Sidebar? Some people love it, some don't. There have been complaints of people using the Notes Gadget to store web addresses and they've lost them. Other people have set up their home city in the Weather Gadget only to discover that the program reverts back to Redmond Washington. Gadgets are individual programs that store their own preference files on your hard drive. Anytime you close a "gadget", you lose all the data that you typed into it; addresses, locations, etc. So... either find a better place to store your information or don't click on a gadget's "X" button unless you really want to cease using the gadget.

Windows Vista has been out for a year now and there are rumors that Microsoft will release the long-awaited Service Pack 1 for downloading in March. If they do, I'm sure we'll see enough changes in Vista for another newsletter article.

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Hasta la Vista — Customize Your Data Locations

By Lee Reynolds, a member of the Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida and regular contributor to Boca Bits, the BRCS monthly news magazine www.brsc.org [leetutor\(at\)earthlink.net](mailto:leetutor(at)earthlink.net)

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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.

If you take a look at the new Vista Start Menu, one change from Windows XP you will see is that there is a link at the top of it which is your account name. If you click on that, you will open up a Windows Explorer window, which shows all your user folders, such as:

- Documents
- Music
- Pictures
- Desktop
- Favorites
- Etc..

In Details view, this is handy since one column shows the Folder path for each of these.

Most of the folders will be on your boot drive (normally, C:) in this path:

C:\Users\<<AccountName>, where <AccountName>, of course, is your account name.

There are several entries in this list which have the little "shortcut" arrow in their icons, for example:

- Application Data
- Cookies
- Local Settings
- My Documents
- Recent
- Send To
- Start Menu
- Templates

If you click on any of these shortcuts, except Recent, you will immediately be presented with an error message: "<folder path> is not accessible Access is denied", then you have to click the OK button to dismiss the message.

All of those shortcuts are there for compatibility reasons, in order for the system to be able to access certain locations that were used in Windows XP. The actual path of each of those locations has changed in Windows Vista. For example, the folder that was accessed in this way in Windows XP C:\Documents and Settings\<<AccountName>\My Documents is now here in Vista:

C:\Users\<<AccountName>\Documents.

Backup and Partitioning

I like to backup my entire system periodically with a drive image program from Acronis called True Image.

However, I also like to try and keep most of my data separate from the program files and windows system files making up the boot drive.

I took advantage of the built-in drive partitioning software of Vista (more about this in another article), in order to create several other partitions on my C: drive, and one of these is reserved for storing the contents of such folders as Documents, Favorites, Music, and Pictures. (I did something similar for an old computer using Windows XP.)

This not only reduces the size of the backup image of my boot drive, it also makes it much easier to backup my rapidly changing data to CD-RWs or DVD-RWs.

In Windows XP, in order to move the data locations to another partition, I was forced, in some cases, to edit the registry. In Windows Vista, this is no longer necessary.

There is a Windows user interface to change folder locations of your user account profile. Just right click on your Documents folder, for example: Select Properties from the context menu, and then you will see a new tab in the folder properties windows called Location.

Weird Windows Behavior

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Have you ever been completely dismayed by your computer? Does it seem to do unusual things that you can't trace back to any of your actions? Well, you are not alone. This happens to all computer users. In the computer world, unusual things sometimes happen. Here is a list of some weird computer behavior and how to combat it.

Icons Disappear

Right-click on any open area of the computer desktop, then chose Arrange Icons By. If your icons have accidentally become hidden there will be no checkmark in front of Show Desktop Icons. Just click that option and your icons will reappear.

Unusual Windows Appear

Windows has a lot of keyboard shortcuts that can be accidentally accessed. For instance, when I started this column, I wanted to hit the Shift key and the letter "h" for the word Have. However, my finger slipped and I hit the Ctrl key and the letter "h" instead. A window popped up asking what I wanted to Find and Replace, which is not at all what I intended. If this ever hap-

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Click on that tab, and you will now see this message: You can change where files in this folder are stored to another place on this hard drive, another drive, or even another computer on your network.

All you have to do is type in the new location, and click OK. You will then be presented with a message, asking if you want to move all of the files from the old location to the new location, and recommending that you do so, or else you will see two of the designated folders in your profile.

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pens you to you can usually just close the pop up window, but occasionally you have to look a little further into what happened. For instance, when working in Microsoft Word, if you accidentally hit Ctrl+N, a new window will appear making it look like you just lost your entire document. If you look closely you will be able to figure out that all you have to do is close the new window and the document you were working on will reappear.

If you can't figure out what happened or you get caught in a loop, restarting your computer will usually bring you back to normal.

Lost Toolbars

As noted before, an errant key press can cause a problem. This time the culprit is one of the F keys. Accidentally pressing the F11 key can make the toolbars disappear. This is often used as a feature when you want to show something in what they call "full screen mode". If this happens to you, just press F11 again to make the toolbars return.

The Toolbar Moves

Have you ever had the toolbar that usually appears on the bottom of the screen show up on the side or top of the screen? There is an easy way to get it back where it belongs. Just place your cursor right next to, but not on, the Start button. Then hold the mouse button down and drag the toolbar back where it belongs.

Dramatic Slowdown

A dramatic slowdown can mean that your hard disk is filling up. The computer uses the hard disk as sort of a scratch pad when it computes, so when your hard drive starts to fill up, it can slow the computer down significantly. Click on My Computer and highlight the drive called Local Disk (C:). Look at the Details area to see how much space is free. You should have at least 10%

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Wireless Router Setup

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How to change the setup or configuration of your Wireless Router and PC.

First we need to get to your router after the original setup by bringing up Internet Explorer on your direct wired computer (Master) and typing in one of the code addresses below:

Type	Code	User	Password	Chnl
Belkin:	192.168.2.1	(No Name)	(Leave Blank)	6
D-Link:	192.168.0.1	admin	(Leave Blank)	6
Linksys:	192.168.1.1	(Leave Blank)	admin	11
Net-gear:	192.168.0.1	admin	password	10

A login screen will appear, if you used your own login name and password then use them. If you lost them and you wish to reconfigure your router you will have to push the reset button for at least 30 seconds. This sets the router back to its defaults and you can use the default values above.

During your setup you may have seen “Number of DHCP users allowed”, reduce this to the number of total computers in your network or that number plus one.

SSID is your wireless network name, for example, Linksys will broadcast “linksys”. First, we want to rename your SSID and then hide it later. After changing the name, we need to reconnect with each wireless computer. To reconnect, right click the icon in the System Tray (or task bar—right).

Windows XP SP2

Choose Available Wireless Networks / Change Advanced Settings. Click the Wireless Networks tab, click Add button in the Preferred Network section.

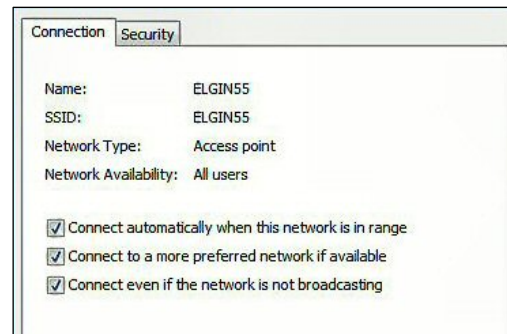
Type in the Network name you have chosen, then click OK twice.

Windows VISTA

Select Network and Sharing Center, then left click on View Status (located middle-right). Click on Wireless Properties button. Put check mark on “connect even if the Network is not broadcasting”.

(Or go to START / CONNECT TO / click on your SSID and click the CONNECT button below. Then you can right click on your SSID and select Properties. This will get you to your Wireless Properties window where you can put the “check mark” and enter your Security code.)

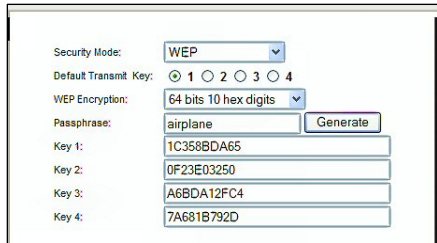
Complete this on all of your wireless computers and remember how you got there!



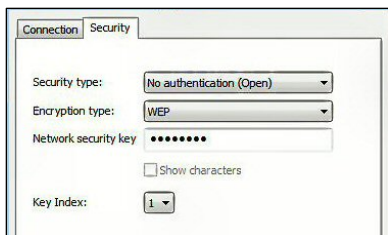
Second, now we can choose to stop your Router from broadcasting your SSID by selecting disable to “SSID Broadcasting” in your router setup. All your computers should be reading the wireless connection.

Next step is to select a **Security** type, let us try **WEP** first. This may be slightly different due to different manufactures. Usually you will find it under Security or Wireless tabs of your router setup. Select 64 or 128 bit encryption, then type in a word or phrase and let the router do the coding by clicking on Generate. Select #1 and write down this code for your wireless computers. Go to the Wireless Properties window and click on the SECURITY tab. Then set the ENCRYPTION type to WEP and enter the security code you wrote down, click OK and Close. Key Index should remain on one.

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Look at the Security Type by clicking the down arrow on the right. Note these are the other types of security allowed: WPA2-Personal, WPA-Personal, WPA2-Enterprise, and WPA-Enterprise. Most newer routers and computers can operate with this type of security and is considered better than WEP.



We completed a simple setup to supply a secured wireless connection. You can go further and use one of the WPAs if all of your computers will accept this. Just disable WEP and enable WPA and roughly go through the same process. You could also assign your MAC addresses, but how far do we have to go?

Following are definitions for MAC, DMZ, WPA, DHCP, and the router FIREWALL:

DHCP – Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol as a server assigns IP addresses to all computers on the network (in this case the router is the DHCP server).

DMZ – Dedicated Multi Zone exposes a computer directly to the internet with a IP address. Some games require this direct access. You could give a false address not used by your computers to send intruders to an address that goes no where!

FIREWALL – The router’s firewall gives protection on data coming in, but not going out. If you wish full bi-directional protection you will have to use software and replace your windows firewall which is incoming only.

MAC – Media Access Control is a number related to the network adapter in a small network. LAN-MAC address is for your internal network and WAN-MAC

address is used for router to modem connection. You can find your Client table (IP and MAC addresses) in your router’s configuration utility.

WEP – Wifi Encryption Protection is the old security standard that can be used with either 64 or 128 bit encryption.

WPA – Wifi Protected Access is the latest network security standard, but if your equipment is over two years old you may want to checkout www.wi-fi.org web site for information. For full instructions on activating WPA see PC Magazine’s step by step article at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,1819544,00.asp>

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to navigate around in any similar software. Microsoft required that look and feel, with common menu items, before it allowed a program to have the Windows logo. That was a giant advance from the haphazard layout and menu systems of early DOS programs. As a college professor and software teacher, the advantages for student learning and computer novices were quite obvious.

Now we have Office 2007. I suspect that if Corel (Word Perfect) had released that office suite, Microsoft would have denied them the right to use the Windows logo. The common Windows GUI was thrown out in Word and Excel. Traditional menu items were removed, unfamiliar icons and menus appeared, and familiar processes were moved to obscure places. The better you were at using earlier versions, the more you will have to first unlearn to use Office 2007. The brake pedal is on the left, first gear is on the right, and the altimeter is hidden behind the co-pilot. I am a power user of Microsoft Office. Actually, I used to be a power user. Now I must constantly go to the help menu (sorry, it is not a menu any more) to find the location of even the most basic procedures. I know how to do them; I just don’t know where they are. It is time consuming and frustrating. There are some really nice features in Office 2007. One of them, unfortunately, is not “make it like the earlier versions.”

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Bookmarks Page

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Wouldn't it be nice if you could view a searchable webpage of bookmarks for your favorite websites? You can, but why?

Find Bookmarks With Forgotten Names

One reason to view your bookmarks as a webpage (as an alternative to looking in a menu) is to be able to find sites when you can't remember the first word in the name.

Let's say you have a Firefox bookmark named Carbonite Online Backup, and you can't remember Carbonite but you know you are looking for the word Backup. On your Bookmarks page (you will soon learn how to view), you can easily search for Backup.

You are using Firefox, aren't you? If you haven't discovered Firefox, download it from Mozilla (<http://mozilla.com>). It's free, fast, and secure. Make Firefox your default browser.

View Bookmark Descriptions and Tags

Another reason for a bookmarks page is to give you plenty of room to view (and find) descriptions of your bookmarks. You will learn how to add tags to improve your searches.

Zoom In and Out

A third reason to display your bookmarks on a webpage is to allow you to zoom the text in and out so you can see it clearly. To zoom any webpage, press Ctrl+Plus or Ctrl+Minus, using the numeric keypad.

DIY For Fun and Learning

So, how do you display your bookmarks as a webpage? You could download a tool to do the work for you, or download a tool to search bookmarks. But it's easy enough to DIY (Do It Yourself). It's

interesting, fun, and educational. Are you just using your computer to perform certain tasks, or do you also enjoy learning by experimenting? If you like to learn, this tip is for you.

Find The Bookmarks File

You don't need to create a bookmarks webpage. It already exists on your own hard drive! The name of the file is simply bookmarks.html. Press Win+F to find it. (While holding down the Windows key (next to Alt), press F, for Find.) In the left window pane, click 'All Files and Folders'. In 'All or part of the file name', type 'bookmarks.html' (without quotes). Click Search.

If you get multiple results, it's easy to determine which bookmarks.html file to use. It's the newest one. In the View menu (of your Search Results window), click Details. In the right window pane, click the Date Modified column header (to sort the list). The file you are interested in has the newest date and time (for a file with the Type shown as Firefox Document).

Bookmark The Bookmarks File

Double-click that newest bookmarks.html Firefox Document to open it in Firefox. Press Ctrl+D to bookmark the bookmarks.html file. In the Name field, insert a hyphen (-) at the beginning (to name the bookmark '-Bookmarks'), so this new bookmark will appear at the top of the list.

Now, with your Bookmarks page displayed, press F5 to refresh the view. (F5 is a common shortcut key for Refresh.) Surprise? The new -Bookmarks bookmark is at the bottom - not the top. Let's address that. (This is Firefox 2.0.0.11. Future versions might vary.)

Create Another Top Bookmark

First, create another bookmark that will be displayed at the top. For example, open Google.com, press Ctrl+D, and name the bookmark -Google (starting with a hyphen).

Sort Your Bookmarks

Now, in the Bookmarks menu, right click any bookmark, and click Sort by Name. Look in the Bookmarks menu to confirm that the bookmarks are indeed sorted. Note the two bookmarks that begin with hyphen (-) at the top of the menu.

Look at your Bookmarks page again, and press F5 to Refresh. The new bookmarks are still at the bottom.

Rearrange Your Bookmarks

To force Firefox to rearrange your bookmarks page, move a bookmark in the menu. In the Bookmarks menu, drag, for example, either new bookmark that starts with a hyphen up or down to precede or follow the other bookmark that starts with a hyphen. (Having two hyphen-prefixed bookmarks lets you rearrange those two at the top without rearranging the other bookmarks.) Press Escape to close the menu.

Refresh your Bookmarks page with F5. The bookmarks on the webpage are now arranged as shown in the Bookmarks menu. (Do you need to refresh three times? No, we simply demonstrated that the bookmarks.html file is rearranged when you move a bookmark in the menu.)

Finding Bookmarks On The Page

When you are viewing your Bookmarks webpage, press Ctrl+F for Find. Type Backup, for example, and press Escape (to close the Find toolbar). To find the next occurrence of Backup, press F3. (F3 is a common shortcut key for Find Again.) When you find the desired bookmark (link), click it (or Ctrl+click to open the site in a new tab). (Or press Enter, or Ctrl+Enter to open the site in a new tab.)

Add Descriptions and Tags

To add or change descriptions of your bookmarks, in the Bookmarks menu, right-click the bookmark you want to edit, and click Properties. In the Description field, type anything (including your own tags) that might help you find your bookmark and remember what it is for. After clicking OK and pressing F5 (for Refresh), you will see your new Description in the Bookmarks page.

Make Changes Through The Menu

Now that you know where bookmarks.html is located, you might be tempted to edit it directly with a text editor. Mozilla warns that it is automatically generated, so do not edit it, as your changes would be lost. Make your changes through the Bookmarks menu.

Displaying your Bookmarks as a webpage is a start in discovering many more tips and tricks related to Firefox.

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Internet Security: iFrame Attacks

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I'm sure that most of you reading the title of this article are asking "What is an iFrame?". Well, sit back, get comfortable and I'll tell you about the latest method hackers are using to steal information from you.

First the definition of an iFrame, which is shorthand for inline frame. That clears it up doesn't it? I guess I'd better add some more to that. An inline frame is code within a web page that permits a second page to be imbedded inside the first page. For example, they can be used to imbed an ad that is located on a different web site. One example is the clickable scrolling ad you frequently find on web sites. iFrames generally load after the main page and may sometimes have their own scroll bar. The iFrame may contain Javascript programming code which can permit interactive content. Some iFrames may be invisible and may contain code which can redirect the user to another page or download trojans or viruses.

Whenever your Internet browser sees an "iFrame tag" in the web page code it sets aside the space requested in the tag. It also goes out to the web page specified in the code to download the requested information.

So is this something new? I thought it was until I read a report in a tech newsletter (Windows Secrets) about an attack on the AskWoody web site. It turns out that iFrame attacks have been recorded since 2004. The first exploit implanted a worm on thousands of computers. The only thing that stopped it was a patch that Microsoft had to apply to Internet Explorer 6. In June 2007 over 10,000 pages were infected in Italy. In November 2007 Monster.com had to shut down as a result of an iFrame attack. Then, this year the AskWoody site had iFrame code added to its main web page. His research indicated that the code originated on

a Russian web site, which subsequently disappeared. The code placed on the AskWoody web page linked to a web site in China and subsequently to the Russian web site. This was all done by a short length of code that setup a single, invisible pixel on the web page. The code was designed to load data from the Chinese web site. Anyone with an unpatched IE 6 that visited the AskWoody web site would probably have been infected. However, it was never determined just what was being delivered by the offshore web site.

The worst part of this scenario is that the owner of the AskWoody web site did not find out about the iFrame exploit until he started receiving messages from someone who advised him that their AVG Resident Shield said his site was infected. That was followed by Google advising him that his site was infected and down rating the site. Google also provided a warning to anyone attempting to link to AskWoody warning them that visiting the site might infect their computer.

The question becomes, how did the iFrame code become attached to the web page? The code pages on web sites are generally password protected. Access to these pages for the purpose of making changes is controlled by the web site host and the hosting software. However, there are several programs available which enable hackers to take advantage of holes in web site security. Some of these are described as "kiddie scripts", indicating their ease of use. Others, such as Mpack, require a more sophisticated knowledge of programming. The problem is that thousands of respectable sites have been infected. The following are only a few that were reported in March 2008 by Dancho Danev's blog (a security information web site):

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years; teaching, developing software and assembling systems. He can be reached at bwsail at yahoo.com.

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eHawaii Portal — ehawaii.gov — 992 pages
The World Clock — timeanddate.com — 944 pages
Boise State University — boisestate.edu — 471 pgs
The U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) — aoa.gov — 425 pages

Gustavus Adolphus College — gustavus.edu — 312 pages
 Internet Archive — archive.org — 261 pages
 Stanford Business School Alumni Association — gsbapps.stanford.edu — 157 pages
 BushTorrent — bushtorrent.com — 147 pages
 ChildCareExchange — ccie.com — 131 pages
 The University of Vermont — uvm.edu — 120 pages
 Hippodrome State Theatre — Gainesville, FL — thehipp.org — 112 pages
 Minnesota State University Mankato — mnsu.edu — 94 pages
 Medicare — medicare.gov — 12 pages

In many instances it appears that the hackers were able to “harvest” passwords which gave them access to these sites. Then, if the site did not have current input validation patches, the iFrame could be added to web pages. In some cases, home users may have been the source of the initial password theft. By use of a keylogger a hacker can obtain passwords to any protected site visited by the user. In other cases clicking on a banner ad that attracts you can result in the download of a bot, a trojan or other spyware. This is especially true if you are still running an unpatched Internet Explorer 6. It appears that Firefox is less vulnerable to these types of exploits. Also, clicking on an executable file in IE 6 generally results in running the file. In Firefox you are usually only given the option to download the file. Obviously you should never download or run any file that you don’t know or don’t recognize. This is especially true when the site tells you that you need some kind of add-on or special viewer to see the information you want. This is the type of social engineering being used to tempt users into downloading spyware.

There is also a danger related to the firewall you are using on your computer. A keylogger or other trojan needs to be able to report “home” without the user being aware that information is being sent out. This is done by opening a “back door” to the Internet; an outgoing port in one the thousands on every computer. If your firewall doesn’t check on all outgoing data and request permission for new unknown activity, then you will not be able to block the trojans back door connection. So it is very important that your firewall check both incoming and outgoing data. Then, anytime your firewall requests permission for a

program, one you don’t recognize, to connect to the Internet, just say NO.

There is one other recognized method for obtaining the information needed to get into web page code. Hackers can purchase web site administrator information on the black market. One software application used to hack web sites, Mpack, sells for about \$1,000 US. The person behind this software is known as \$ash in the Russian underground. The software exploits six flaws in Windows and Internet Explorer. Thus for not a lot of money, hackers can obtain everything they need to exploit weaknesses in web pages.

As you can see, the iFrame attack is a real danger for those who surf the Internet. If you want to read more about these attacks, a Google search will provide you with tons of information. If you want to protect yourself from these attacks, your ability is limited. It is really up to your ISP and the web hosts to provide the security needed to prevent the web page intrusion of an iFrame. So what can a home user do? The following will help, but are no guarantee of protection.

- ◆ Beware of pages that require software installation. Do not allow new software installation from your browser unless you absolutely trust both the Web page and the provider of the software.
- ◆ Scan with an updated antivirus and anti-spyware software any program downloaded through the Internet. This includes any downloads from P2P networks, through the Web and any FTP server regardless of the source.

(Continued on page 16)



Viewing The Bigger Picture — Screen Magnifiers

By Bonnie L. Snyder, P*PCompAS, Colorado Springs, CO
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At the risk of being the bearer of bad news, I have to say that none of us is getting any younger. User groups tend to be populated more by senior citizens than by any other age group. As we age, we find the need for more and more assistive aids, including those that will help us to use our computers more comfortably and efficiently.

Many of us will find, as time goes on, that our vision is not what it used to be. We may find that our eyes fatigue as we read information on the computer monitor, and we may find that some of the smaller fonts and graphics on the screen require us to squint and lean forward into the display.

In this article, I will discuss two screen enlargement programs that might help us minimize our visual difficulties as we use our computers.

The first program I want to talk about is called Magic Lens Max. I downloaded an older version of the program from Giveawayoftheday.com and was very impressed with what it could do. I e-mailed the program's author and told him what a terrific program it was and I have demonstrated it to various groups who provide services to the blind and visually impaired. Additionally, the cost of the program is only \$39.95. I went ahead

and purchased a copy of the most recent edition and was even more pleased with what the author had added since my downloaded version.

Magic Lens Max provides a variety of ways to magnify the computer screen, from resizable moveable lenses, which magnify directly over where your mouse or cursor is working, to a full screen magnification option, which slows down the screen refresh very minimally. You have some color contrast options to choose from with this program as well as an invert colors option for light text on dark background. The magnification levels can be selected from 50% (which is non-magnification) up to pretty much infinity. Anything above 350% starts to blur a bit, although there are options to sharpen. Below is the Magic Lens Max option screen:



Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meetings will be held on August 16 & September 13 [2nd Saturday], 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/>

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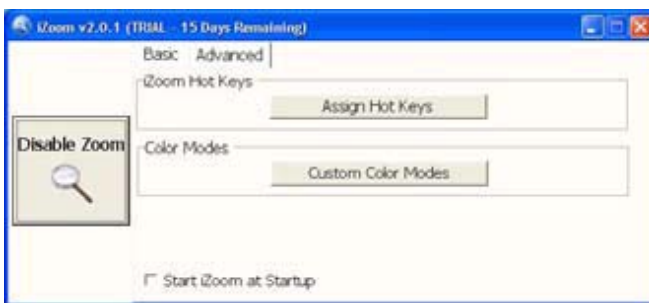
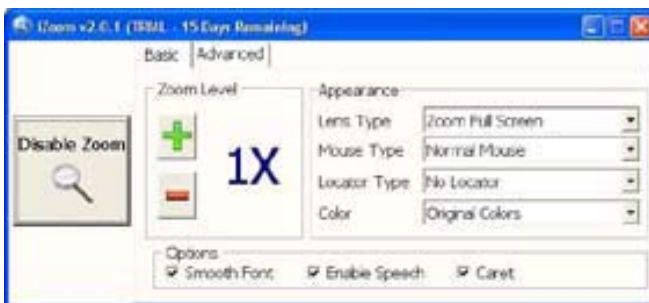
For more information see:

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

The Magic Lens Max icon that resides in the system tray can be single-clicked to turn on or turn off the magnification.

This is an excellent program that is both useful and affordable. If you are interested in testing it out, go to www.visionsuit.com. You can download a 30-day demo of the latest version. If you decide to purchase Magic Lens Max, once you have paid the \$39.95, you will be sent a registration code that can be entered into the demo, and it becomes fully functional.

The second program I evaluated for screen magnification allows for an additional option: speech along with the magnification. This program is called iZoom, and can be obtained from <http://www.issist.com/>. I really like the customizing options available in iZoom. These can be accessed from the initial menu when iZoom comes on, or once the menu is closed, you can reopen it quickly by clicking the mouse on the iZoom icon in the system tray. Here are the option screens:



iZoom allows for default or customizable hot keys, several sizes and colors of mouse pointers, color combinations supplied with the program, as well as custom color modes, several sizes and shapes of “locators” that help the user find the location of the mouse pointer, and a choice of several lens shapes, as well as full-screen magnification. iZoom magnifies from 1X to 32X.

The negatives I have found in iZoom are as follows: First, when using the lens mode, you have to place the lens first over what you want to interact with, and then move the mouse pointer within that lens. Second, from about the 3X magnification up, the display becomes more and more pixelated which can be a problem for some vision conditions, such as astigmatism, among others. Third, there is only one voice offered with the speech option and it is not a particularly pleasant one.

As you would expect, with additional options comes an additional cost. Again, you can download a 30-day demo of iZoom from the Website, and if you wish to purchase the program, the price is \$199.00. However, keep in mind that the two major commercial screen magnification programs, MAGic from Freedom Scientific and ZoomText Plus from AI Squared, both weigh in at from \$300.00 to \$550.00, depending on how many options you wish to have. So, if you feel the need to view the bigger picture, give the demos of the above programs a try, and see if they will be of use to you.

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Club Election Notice

The NCTCUG Annual Meeting and election of officers and board members will be at the October meeting — October 1, 2008, 7 p.m. at Carlin Hall.

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

(Microsoft...Continued from page 1)

Vista has not been a smashing success and has been the subject of considerable criticism. Eighteen months after its release, of the 91.13% market share, 72.12% is Windows XP and 15.26% is Vista. At this time, Vista users are faced with the decision as to whether to adopt Service Pack 1 and whether Vista with SP1 will win over the hearts and minds of XP users. Two articles were recently published on this topic in *CPU* magazine (Computer Power User; June 2008, Vol. 8, Issue 06, pp. 54-62). To quote from the second article, "The degree to which it does [win over hearts and minds] depends somewhat on your opinion of Vista to begin with, but there's no doubt that SP1 improves Vista enough to warrant installing it on pretty much every system you own. If you love Vista, it improves the OS' letter grade from an "A" to an "A+"; and if you don't, SP1 turns Vista from a "D" student into a "C" student." On the other hand, AskWoody.com (<http://askwoody.com/>) recommends "I advise that you wait on both Vista SP1 and WinXP SP3. The fact that Microsoft hasn't yet fixed the Dynamics RMS bug should give you pause." Not only are the recommendations of these two respected sources diametrically opposite, but their respective views of Microsoft are quite different. Are the recommendations a reflection of attitudes? The reader must be the judge.



With Apple hardware priced significantly higher than PC systems and Linux requiring far too much technical savvy for most users, Microsoft is likely to dominate the operating system market for the foreseeable future, with all that implies for behavior of both users and Microsoft. There is no substitute for thorough information gathering, objective evaluation, and dispassionate thinking in making decisions.

(Weird Windows...Continued from page 5)

of your hard drive free. If you don't, a hard drive cleanup is in order. Delete unnecessary programs and backup old files and photos to an external drive or CD so you can delete them from the hard disk. You can use the Disk Cleanup utility to empty the recycle bin and delete unnecessary temporary files. To access it, click on Start, choose All Programs, then click on System Tools where you will find Disk Cleanup listed. It will walk you through the cleanup. Once your hard disk has more free space, your computer will perk up considerably. You might also consider defragging your computer to speed it up. The Disk Defragmenter utility is in the System Tools area. Remember there are other things like viruses and spyware that can also slow down your computer.

No Sound

Sometimes the sound gets muted by mistake. Look at the taskbar at bottom of the screen. In the right hand side you will see a small icon that looks like a speaker. If it has a red X on it, the sound has been muted. Click on the icon, then click to remove the checkmark in front of the word Mute. If you don't see this icon, go to the Control Panel and choose Sounds or Sounds and Audio Devices where you will find a place to uncheck the Mute option. Many laptops and some desktops also have a volume button on the keyboard which you can use to mute and unmute the speaker.

Mouse Shutters

If your mouse is hard to control or acting erratic, it may need a cleaning. An optical mouse with a flat bottom just needs a cleaning with a damp cloth. If your mouse has a roller ball on the bottom, remove the ball and clean the rollers inside the mouse with a Q-tip soaked with isopropyl alcohol.

Hope this gets you through some of those weird Windows moments in your life.

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The QWERTY Keyboard and Microsoft Office 2007

By Bob Schneider, Editor, The PC Keyboard, Spring Hill Teaching Computer Club, FL
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Back in the mid 1800's, when the first practical typewriter was built, inventor C.L. Sholes arranged the keys in the QWERTY layout for a practical reason. He had to separate the most common letters to prevent the hammers from jamming. So many people knew that layout that although it was no longer necessary, it was maintained with the advent of electric typewriters. A much better (in terms of ease-of-learning and speed-of-typing) is the Dvorak keyboard layout developed in the 1920's. It puts the most commonly used keys under your eight "home" fingers. Once millions of people started with computers using the old QWERTY layout, better alternatives were doomed. Changing to a new keyboard layout involves the most difficult of human learning tasks. The technical term from memory researchers is "proactive interference." That means an old memory (such as an old cell phone number you used before) interferes with your ability to learn a new mem-

ory (your new cell number). In layman's terms the most difficult task is to unlearn something you know well in order to learn something new. That is why we standardize some procedures, such as operating a standard transmission in a car. You will never find a car with the brake on the left pedal and the clutch on the right pedal, and you already know the gear-shift sequence and location. Airplane pilots will always find the altimeter in the middle of their visual field.

I've been a fan of and using Microsoft Windows for some time, starting with Windows 2.0 in 1989. There are surely many people who have been using it longer than I have, although I have not yet met one. For most of those years, Microsoft advertised the strength and beauty of following the Windows format. Using its standard Graphical User Interface (GUI), all programs would have the same look and feel. Learn one program and you could quickly learn

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NCTCUG Information

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All officer terms expire 2008

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Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with C/R only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3½ 720k or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] organization founded in 1978 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are \$25.00 (U.S. Funds) per year, with a \$5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 8 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing \$1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

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COMPUCENTER BBS

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

If you are moving

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

Thank You!

(Continued from page 11)

- Use only a firewall that checks both incoming and outgoing data.
- Beware of unexpected strange-looking emails, regardless of their sender.
- Never open attachments or click on links contained in these email messages
- Enable the “Automatic Update” feature in your Windows operating system and apply new updates as soon as they are available
- Always have an antivirus real-time scan service. Monitor regularly that it is being updated and that the service is running.

OR another option would be to verify that the address is safe before going to it. You can do this by checking it at: <http://linkscanner.explabs.com/linkscanner/default.asp>

As you can see, for Windows users, the Internet is becoming more of a hazard to navigation. You, as a user, must always be cautious about clicking on links or accepting downloads. If in doubt, don't do it! If everyone practiced safe-surfing, it would be harder for the hackers to succeed.

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First Class



August/September 2008

1st Wed. (8/6, 9/3)
7 p.m. General Meeting

4th Wed (8/27, 9/24)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (8/18; none in August)
7 p.m. Board of Directors

All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.

