# Keeping Up
By Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

FiOS Follies (Continued)

Back in May, Verizon sent a letter to its FiOS TV customers that system changes adding more than a hundred new hi-def channels would result in the analog RF and QAM signals on the system going away. The letter was in "dumb customer"-speak, but that's what was going to happen, scheduled for July 21st. So, no more hooking TV's up to the FiOS coax cable without a box — it wouldn't work.

But, how enlightened — Verizon was offering free digital adapters to its customers for those sets not hooked up with another flavor of set top box or DVR/set top box combo unit. The digital adapters can't do hi-def, video on demand, or the really nifty super program guide, but were supposed to get all the standard def TV content. I immediately called up, and, being a greedy little bugger, asked for five adapters — hey, I've got lots of TVs, not to mention TV tuner cards in two computers. Only three per customer, said the rep. Oh, well — still a deal. They cost three or four bucks a
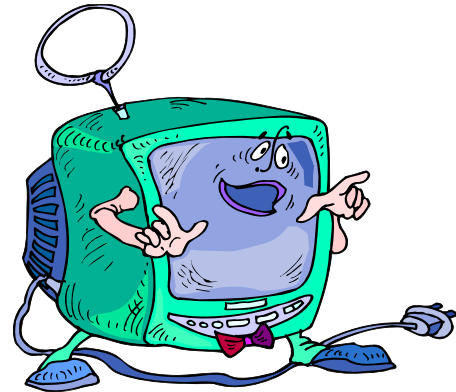
month — apiece, when I got service in March. I received three units two days after my call.

Well, the analog / QAM TV signal didn't go away until early September. Trying the digital adapter on all the other channels yielded…a light blue screen, with a notice about technical difficulties. The local tier channels worked fine, along with the expanded local channels — the extra standard def channels being broadcast by the local stations' digital channels, and some of the local government channels.

Then, about September 23rd, the great channel realignment occurred. That's the TV signal supplier's equivalent of the old parlor trick where the guy in the tux yanks on the table cloth, leaving all the dishes,

# Moving On To Vista – Part 9

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As I mentioned last month, Vista's Service Pack 3 is out. I didn't see any real changes in my computer after I installed it, most of modifications are supposed to deal with computer security. I have since encountered a problem with my printer.

I don't print too often from my "Vista computer" so the problem wasn't immediately obvious. When I did try to print some documents they "disappeared" without printing. My first thought was that I had changed the firewall on my print server and locked out connections from other computers on my home network (I've done that before). No that wasn't it. After checking and finding that I could transfer files between my computers, I went to the printer section of my control panel. That's where I discovered that Vista wanted a new printer driver installed. I don't remember any problems with the printer when I started using this computer. As I recall, Vista recognized my printer (a fairly new HP ink jet printer) and it just worked. Anyway, a search of Hewlett Packard's web site didn't reveal a new printer driver. In fact it told me to use the one built into Vista. I turned to the installation CD that came with the printer and reinstalled the printer driver from the CD. It worked and I can print over my home network using a wireless connection again. I have no idea why this happened but at least one other TAPCUG member also discovered a printer driver problem after installing Vista SP1.

Speaking of security (see paragraph 1), Windows Vista, like Windows XP, comes with a firewall program pre-installed. As all you computer gurus know, a computer firewall is a hardware or software tool that examines all Internet traffic letting only "safe"
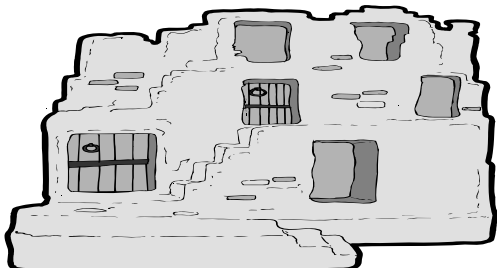
traffic into your computer. The firewall for Vista was supposed to scan Internet traffic both entering and leaving your computer. I can hear some of you saying, "If I scan incoming traffic to be safe, why do I care about outbound traffic?". Well, incoming traffic is the bigger threat to you. Using pre-defined rules it determines which programs are allowed to use your network connection or which p o r t s c a n b e u s e d f o r communications. If some spyware, Trojans or or malicious "phone home" software slip past your firewall they may allow someone to take remote control of your computer to attack it other computers through your Internet connection (that's why Microsoft is always sending you those security updates). So a firewall that scans outbound traffic attempts to stop this. To make a longer story short, contrary to plans, the ability to check outbound traffic has not been provided with Vista's firewall.

Another shortcoming of Vista's firewall is that it does not create a log of all attempts to contact your computer from a local network or the Internet. This kind of record can be useful if you suspect a hacker has been visiting your computer in the middle of the night. Actually, there is a way that you can modify Vista's firewall to create a log and examine outbound traffic. The process to set this up is probably more complicated than most of us would like to deal with so I offer a much easier solution. Turn off Vista's firewall and install a third party firewall program. Do not try to use two or more firewall programs at the same time. They do not play well together. There are a number of firewall programs that you can purchase as well as some that are free. I've been using the free version of Zone Alarm for many years and I'm satisfied with its protection. It also creates a log that I can use to examine attempts to connect to my computer. You can find it on the Internet at www.zonealarm.com .

From My Vista

By Rob Limbaugh, President, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT
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Just about every year I make some sort of 'major' effort to move forward with technology in some way on my primary home workstation. I periodically wipe out the machine and start a fresh OS install from scratch. I reasoned that as laborious a reinstall is, I may as well bite the bullet and this time make the move to Vista. What made the timing right was that Microsoft gave Windows Vista Ultimate 32-bit w/SP2 for those who attended the APCUG 2008 LDC. Here's my experience.

Check Compatibility

When loading an OS it is important to make note of your hardware and key software. Vista Update Advisor will highlight any hardware or software compatibility issues of which to be aware. In my case, the only issues to address were applications that would be replaced with new Vista versions—no big deal. In terms of hardware, my machine checked out OK. Last I had heard, my ATI All-In-Wonder 2006 video card was not yet supported in Vista, so I double checked the AMD (they now own ATI) website and confirmed there are now Vista drivers and software. It's a Go!

Backup Data

Next, I made backups of all my important data. This time around I used an external USB hard drive and just dragged and dropped the data to a 'backup' folder. I wanted to start fresh and clean, so I didn't bother making a backup of my Windows or Office user settings. There aren't any new BIOS updates for my motherboard, so I was all set to go.

Time for Install

I started the install process around 8 p.m., electing to wipe all partitions on the hard drive. My first boot to the desktop post install was shortly after 10 p.m. So far, so good. And, considering this is a P4 2.4GHz machine, I was rather impressed. Vista's graphics worked from the get-go because the ATI All-In-Wonder 2006 uses an ATI Radeon 9600 compatible chipset for which Vista loaded drivers. Sound worked.

Networking worked. I expected SOMETHING to be wrong, due to all the horror stories I had heard! My machine even received a 3.2 on the "Vista Experience Index". That means I can use Aero! Now we're cooking!

Post-Install Issues

A notice appeared that Windows detected hardware and needed to install drivers. My system's motherboard has an integrated Realtek AC'97 sound card. Unfortunately there isn't a Vista driver for the MIDI interface. If I want to hook up MIDI devices in the future, I will probably need to disable the built-in sound card and install a properly supported one to gain MIDI interface functionality.

Watching TV is one of the things for which I built this machine, and I expected to use Vista Media Center. This is where my second issue came up. While AMD (they bought ATI) has released updated Vista drivers and software for the ATI AIW 2006 video card, they didn't actually 'fix' the issue with how the ATI Hydravision software accesses the TV Tuner. I searched around for a solution and came across a Home Theater application called "Beyond TV" by SnapStream. So far that seems to solve my issue. Beyond TV has a ton of cool features (worth looking at even if you aren't going to Vista).

Reality Check

In my consumer opinion, lack of proper drivers for an OS is the fault of the hardware integrator and not the OS maker. AMD is blaming Microsoft's changes in DirectX 10 D3D (which happen to address performance and security) as why the ATI TV Tuner software doesn't work. Well, AMD, how come SnapStream could figure it out? AOpen has not released any new drivers for their implementation of the AC'97 chip on my motherboard. I can live with AOpen's choice because most people don't use the MIDI interface feature of sound cards. AMD has no excuse for not supporting

(Continued from page 3)

an expensive video card that is bought for the very feature they aren't supporting. My buying habits will be adjusted accordingly in the future.

Supporting Apps

Along with Beyond TV, I installed what I consider 'Base Supporting Apps'. These included Avast! Antivirus, Notepad++, Pidgin, Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash Player, Adobe Shockwave Player, TrueCrypt, PrimoPDF, and WinSCP. Office Ultimate 2007 is going to round out the Office Suite. Everything installed smoothly. No issues, arguments, or contentions between apps.

Where I Stand

My machine has paid its dues many times over and the driver issues didn't affect my ability to use what I needed, so I was OK with that. Others with more particular needs should be aware that integrated soundcards, atypical hardware, old devices, and fancy graphics capture cards may require special attention. Replacements may need to be considered. I'm not suggesting everyone run out and install Vista. This is now the fourth time I've installed Vista on a machine—first time on one I plan to use regularly. All said and done, the experience has been pleasant and not anything like the horror stories I've heard. At the time of this writing it's been about two weeks and all continues to work well. This article was typed on that system using Word 2007 and sent to the editors with Outlook 2007.

From my vista, Vista works just fine.

Vista Upgrade Advisor

http:/www.microsoft.com/windows/products/ windowsvista/buyorupgrade/upgradeadvisor.mspx/

Compare Vista Editions

http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/ windowsvista/editions/choose.mspx

SnapStream Beyond TV

http://www.snapstream.com/products/beyondtv/

(Continued from page 5)

no bigger than a deck of cards and with a "Key Board" consisting of 12 keys? At a minimum **IM (Instant Messaging)** requires tiny fingers, superb eye hand coordination and a new language consisting of thousands of newly created letter combinations to represent real words. And another thing: since this device is a Phone, why not just TALK to the person? LOL

The ultimate "Personal" communication for the 21st century must be in **Second Life**. In this enormous virtual world millions of people interact with millions of other people, one on one. The whole range of human activity can now take place in a virtual environment. You can be anyone you want and "talk" to a dragon or a real priest, free of the most basic limitation of our human form. In a sense this is probably personal communication on a level never seen before.

Twitter is the newest "form" of communication. It answers the pressing question, "What are you doing NOW?" As you go through your day, you constantly update your "Twitter" page with mini blog entries no more than 140 characters long. Now anyone who is logged o to your page can tell what you are doing, what you are feeling, who you are with and any moment in the day. Why didn't I think of that? It's obvious that I would want to know all the mundane details of all my friends' daily lives.

Face time means actual face to face talk. The words, the eyes, the body language, the context, all convey meaning. Let me know when we can do that online. Until then, don't look for my Twitter page.
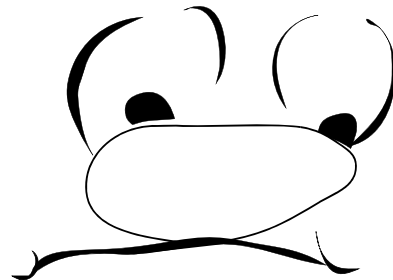
Face Time In The 21ˢᵗ Century

Lou's Views by Lou Vitale, President, Macon County Users Group, North Carolina
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Person to person communication was pretty simple last century. There was the letter, or as we call it today, "snail mail" and the telephone. Our address book contained the physical address of our friends and their phone numbers. It is amazing to me how much we actually got done, we won wars and went to the moon and created the greatest county on earth, and all without a single bit of digitized information.

To someone who grew up in the last 20 or so years that must seem quaint. They probably can't imagine life without a cell phone, email, IM and a dozen other ways of communicating with their fellow human beings. I am beginning to wonder myself. Someone asked me the other day if I "Twittered", I thought it was a neurological disorder. No, it was a form of micro-blogging, another way to stay in touch in the 21ˢᵗ century.

So just how many ways can you keep up to the minute with your "friends" today, let me count the ways. And this is by no means a complete list.

Email has been around since the beginning of the internet. By the late 80's everyone with a computer had an email account. Now we could send a message to anyone with a computer and they could reply. This was a momentous social change. It significantly accelerated the communication between people. Plus we could "attach" stuff, like pictures of the grandkids, or an excel spread sheet to our email.

In its simplest form, a **blog** (web log) is an online diary or journal. Prior to the mid 90's online forums and BBS (bulletin board systems) allowed people to

have running conversations on a web site with a moderator to keep order. Then some high profile personalities started to keep online diaries which allowed comments from anyone to be posted, and the blog was born.

Today blogging is a serious force to be reckoned with. Anyone can start a blog and thousands do every day. Currently there are an estimated 12 million blogs and about 57 million blog readers. These numbers are deceiving, since it appears that only about 20% of blogs are active and 60% to 80% of blogs are abandoned after one month. As one commentator put it "the average blog has the life span of a fruit fly".

Yet this kind of personal communication has again changed the social landscape. Anyone can comment on anything from personal hygiene to politics and anyone can respond with their take on the subject. Some bloggers have aspired to become journalists and others are just looking for some virtual recognition, either way we are more in touch.

Personal communication has taken another leap with the creation of **social networking sites** like Face Book and My Space. These sites and many others like them allow virtual conversation to take place between friends on an almost instant basis. I will confess, I don't know much about them, which only proves my age. But without a doubt, and from now on a person's identity will forever be linked to their Face Book page and their list of friends.

Will someone please explain to me why someone would attempt to communicate by text using a device
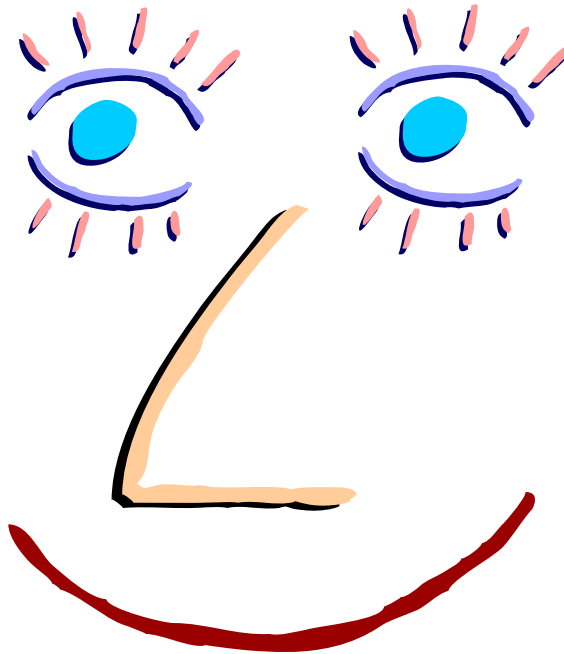
The Art of Keeping Cool—Part 2: Non-fan Computer Cooling

By Jerry Goldstein, Vice President & Newsletter Editor, The PC Users Group of Connecticut
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Last month we went into how to cool off your desktop PC with fans. In Part 2 we look at alternative and leading edge ways to cool your computer. We also discuss how to keep your laptop from frying.

To reduce computer noise pollution computer designers have come up with many solutions to reduce the heat. Strangely, liquids have proven successful in cooling computers. Liquids provide two benefits over air cooling your computer. Liquid computers run quieter than fan cooled ones and water is better than drawing out heat than air. For complete submersion of computer parts manufacturers have immersed the computer in a variety of oil, synthetic motor oil works well but cooking oil is also used. The oil is low conducive so the electrical parts are not damaged. Complete submersion is typically only used on extreme density computers made for business purposes. One problem with oil is that it evaporates so proper maintenance of topping off the oil must be done.

You may say water and electronics don't mix (go ahead and say it, no ones around) but computer designers have worked out a way. The water flows inside tubes through the computer passively pulling the heat off the components of the computer. It works the same as your cooling system in your car. A number of computers hit the market last year using water cooling systems. The obvious problem is leaks but since water cooling has proven successful with gamers, due to waters increased heat absorbing ability over air cooling, you'll probably see more computers next year cooled by water. Just make sure you don't change a water cooled computers parts in excess of the manufacturer's parameters or you may overheat the computer and cause a pipe to leak or burst.

To assist in reducing CPU heat sinks are used. Heat sinks are the fins you see rising above the CPU. Often the CPU fan rests on top of the fins as well. The heat sink works by giving additional square footage for the heat to dissipate. Kind of like when you spread out to cool off in a summer breeze. The extra space lets the air get to the heat.

Laptops pose a unique cooling problem as they are tightly packed and sit flat and horizontally and compared to the desktop's vertical tower. Heat likes to rise but, with the laptops configuration the heat gets trapped and needs to be blown out the bottom or sides. Laptops are more to user error as people tend to forget the laptop sides need to be kept free of anything that could block the exhausts. No exhaust equals a fried computer.

When this happens it may be cheaper to buy new laptop than to try to fix the parts. Than again it may be better for you to avoid laptops if you can not remember to keep them clear of blockage.

A common mistake laptop users make is to use them in bed. The laptop sits ensconced in the bedding getting all nice, warm, and cozy. That is until they fry. If you want to use your laptop in bed buy a laptop writing pillow. These are pillows with a hard surface on one side to keep the laptop free to breathe. Than you only have to make sure you don't fall asleep with your finger on the delete key erasing your "great American novel".

To assist the cooling of laptops you can buy a laptop external fan. These are powered off the laptop's usb and some even come with additional usb ports so you don't lose the port. These fans blow cool air on the bottom of the laptop helping to drop the temperature. You can also try to save some money by buying a notebook stand that will raise your laptop a bit off the desk to give the laptop a bit more air space below it to cool off. I find that the stands are being penny wise and pound foolish though. The money you invest in the laptop fan will save you more in the long run giving your laptop added longevity

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Windows XP Expires

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS www.compukiss.com sandy(at)compukiss.com

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On June 30th, 2008, Microsoft started the death march for Windows XP. As of that date, Microsoft stopped shipments of Windows XP as a stand-alone shrink-wrapped product. So after supplies are exhausted, you won't be able to go into a store and purchase Windows XP. Microsoft also stopped most sales to PC manufacturers. So Dell, Lenovo, HP and others will not get any new copies of Windows XP to install on their mainstream computers. However, Windows XP, Microsoft's longest-lived and best-loved operating system, isn't going to vanish overnight. You will still see copies of the XP software and/or computers with Windows XP in stores until inventories and depleted.

Microsoft has made four important concessions that will also keep XP alive:

1) Microsoft will support Windows XP until April 2014. They will offer updates, security patches, and technical support until that time.

2) Smaller local PC makers can continue to sell PCs with Windows XP until January 2009.

3) Computers with limited hardware capabilities which are sometimes called ultra-low cost PCs (ULCPC) can sell with Windows XP Home until June 2010.

4) With the purchase of Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate, the two most expensive versions of Vista, a customer will be able to move back to Windows XP Professional via what Microsoft is calling "downgrade rights." Details on how this will be handled have not been clearly defined to the public at this time. It is even possible that different manufacturers will handle this in different ways.

To the home users, this all means very little, unless you need a new computer and are violently opposed to Windows Vista. To business users, these new policies and extensions mean that they will be able to keep their fleets of Windows XP computers running for several more years. Microsoft has announced that Windows 7, the next version of Windows, will be available in 2010 so many businesses will be able to skip Vista entirely instead to Windows 7. Intel has already announced that they will do just that.

What this means for everyone is that Microsoft, while not writing off Vista, has made it an "interim" operating system. Microsoft is still pushing Windows Vista. They recently announced that Vista now supports 77,000 printers, cameras, speakers and other devices and components. They also brag that more than 140 million copies of Windows Vista have already been sold, making it the fastest selling operating system in Microsoft history. So Windows Vista is not a flash-in-the-pan like Windows ME which was quickly replaced by Windows XP.

In my opinion, Vista is both better and safer than Windows XP and if you are already using Vista or plan to make the move, it is not a bad choice. Yet Vista has become a lame duck. Microsoft definitely has a dilemma on their hands. The only way they will come out of this is if they can get Windows 7 out quickly while making it faster, safer, and easier to use. They also need to give it a good name and get the members of the press behind it. I'm not sure if the lumbering giant can pull that off — especially if Apple and/or Linux find a way to take advantage of this Microsoft predicament!
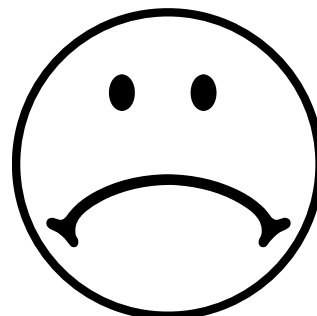
Review: Painter 4 Essentials — A First Impression

By Dave Chalmers, Editor, Kern Independent PCUG, CA www.kipug.org newsletter(at)kipug.org

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Corel's demonstration of their products at the recent Southwest Computer Conference showed one new product that really interested me. Corel Painter 4 Essentials is a real painting program, not a photo editing program. It has the features of being able to paint or draw with a computer. If you have a shred of drawing talent, you might really like this program.

Now I have no talents this way unfortunately. Why I would buy a program like this, being a photographer, might surprise you. Painter has a great feature that will auto paint or draw from a photo. In this mode you pick a style from many artistic techniques and stand back.

Will this look great for all photos? The simple answer is no. If you have a lousy picture you will probably end up with a lousy painting. Photos that are dependent on a lot of fine detail to work will also not be a good candidate for this product. Simple landscapes or portraits or more abstract photos will probably work the best. Now having said that, there are always exceptions that will work, trying the process only takes some time.

You start with a photo that has been corrected and cropped using a photo editing program. Jpeg's, tiff, and PhotoShop psd files will work. Just open them in Painter and start selecting the artistic medium you want. Once the program commences you will see a very blobby and abstract image in the beginning. As the process continues, details emerge; you can stop the drawing at any time or let it go to completion. Once done you can go into using your own painting efforts to add or subtract details to enhance the painting. A good example of this would be a portrait. Increasing the details around the eyes usually helps the overall composition. If some of the background contrasts too much with the person, you can blur and tone down the background.

A graphic tablet is a real plus with Painter, as it uses the stylus for changing the brush characteristics, as you go. A mouse works fine, but it doesn't have as much flexibility as the tablet. Wacom makes some tablets that are fairly inexpensive. Please note, a tablet is not required to get this program to work.

Printing with this program is quite simple. It doesn't have a dedicated color management system as more expensive programs, but if you can print a good photo, then printing with Painter is no problem.

Painter comes with some excellent video tutorials that really clue you in on the features and give a great how-to aspect to it. They are logically arranged and each segment is not too long. Painter even comes with a nice printed manual, with illustrations. The manual generally follows along with the tutorials.

Retail price is $99 and the member price is $79. It installs on both PC's and MAC's. As a supplement to a photo editing program, I certainly recommend it.

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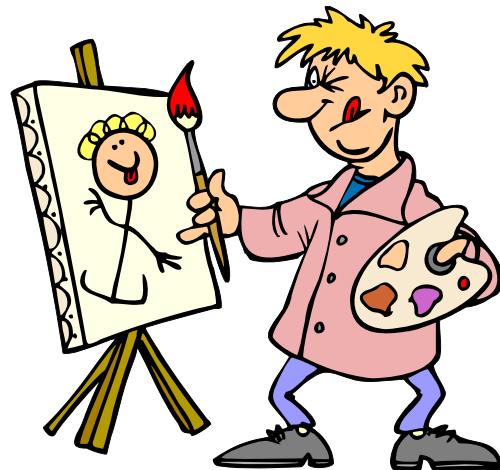
Anti-Virus Virus

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS www.compukiss.com sandy (at) compukiss.com

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I hate writing about computer viruses. It always reminds me of how many unscrupulous, money-hungry people there are in the world. Yet, there are times when I feel that I must write about a certain virus because it is causing so much havoc for everyday computer users. Unfortunately, that time has come again. In the past two weeks, my company has removed a very bad group of viruses from six different computers. So I feel it is time to send out a warning.

There are many different variations of this virus and its cousins. They have many different names, including Antivirus 2008, Antivirus 2009, SpywareScanner 2008, and AntiVirXP08. Some experts are calling them viruses. Some are calling them malware. Symantec calls them misleading applications. McAfee lists them as a PUPs (potentially unwanted programs). Whatever you call them, they are terribly invasive.

By most accounts, these awful applications piggy-back on programs that are downloaded from the Internet. However, some experts are warning that your computer may become infected by simply visiting certain websites, especially if your operating system and/or antivirus software is not up-to-date.

The gist of the matter is that once your computer is infected, you will begin to see pop-up windows that give an exaggerated report of the number of threats that your computer is infected with. The window may say something like "Your computer has become infected with 231 computer viruses and spyware." These pop-ups try to scare you into purchasing their antivirus or antispyware software. If you purchase it, they send you a registry key, but it doesn't work because the program they sell you doesn't exist. These viruses are also being spread by malicious websites that sell fake antispyware software.

On top of that, there are many other viruses or pieces of malware that can piggyback on the main virus. So this malware can dramatically slow

down or even stop your computer. The infections being caused by these viruses and malware programs are extremely harmful and can be very difficult to remove. They often require a cleanup by a professional or a complete reformatting of the hard drive and reinstallation of the software.

As an everyday computer user, you need to be very careful about the software that you download from the Internet. Make sure that it is from a source that you know to be reputable or a website that has been recommended by a trustworthy source. You can also use a program like the McAfee Site Advisor to help you assess the validity of the website before you download the program. McAfee's Site Advisor is a small program that is used by your Internet browser to indicate the safety of websites. It is a free download available at www.siteadvisor.com and it is a valuable tool.

Also, as usual, be sure that you update your operating system and antivirus software regularly. Don't fall for any program that pops up on your computer trying to scare you into purchasing antivirus or antispyware software.

Yes, the bad guys are out there and they have a lot of computer savvy. So we all need to be smart about the software we download and the websites we visit.
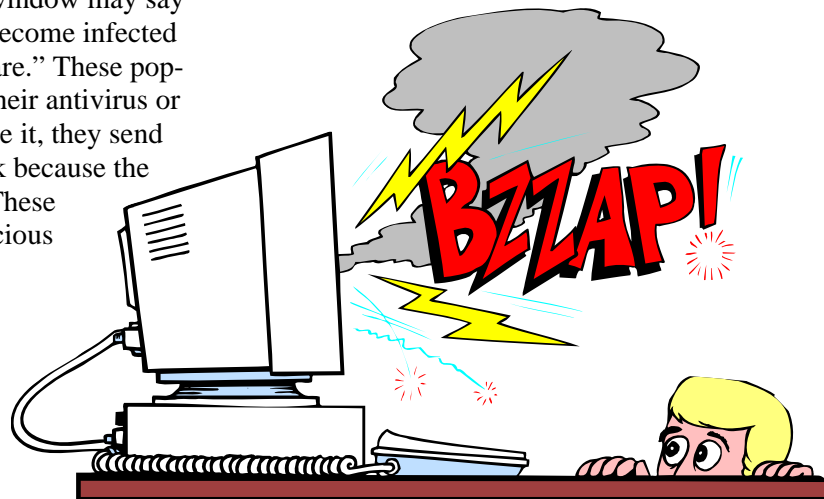
"Computune-up"

By Berry F. Phillips, member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City
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Do you want your computer to run faster and increase your productivity? Of course; if you have major problems, you will need to contact your manufacturer and/or professional technical support. Many of those costly major problems can be prevented by doing "computune-ups" yourself. Yes, you can do it even without being a computer geek! My thanks to Microsoft for some of the information in this article.

"Computune-up" (Software)

1. Clean up your desktop! If you have not used a program for a year or one that you never use that came bundled with your system why not delete it. You will get more space on your hard drive in return.

2. Clean up your system tray to the left of time on your Taskbar! When you remove icons from your system tray that you rarely use, it will speed up your system since your computer has to locate those programs whenever you boot up. I love a little freeware program called Code Stuff Starter that shows you what is running and lets you easily turn those programs on or off.

3. Defragment your computer and your registry which will make your system run faster by consolidating fragments on your hard drive and registry. I use freeware programs like SmartDefrag and Aus Logics Registry Defrag and there are others available on the Internet.

4. Check your memory. The more programs you have running the more demand on your system memory (RAM). Adding more memory to your system will increase speed and is very easy to do without paying for expensive technical support. You can do it with minimal instruction or have a technically-oriented friend or club member do it since it only takes a few minutes to replace.

5. Keep your operating system updated and run utilities weekly! I strongly suggest you download needed freeware software for your system from "46 best ever freeware programs" thoroughly tested and rated with commentary.

"Computune-up" (Hardware)

1. Make sure your computer is unplugged before cleaning and not plugged in until your system is dry after cleaning!

2. Make sure you have the following tools available: a screwdriver, can of compressed air (available from a computer store), cotton swabs (not balls), rubbing alcohol, paper towels or anti-static cloths (available from a computer store), and water.

3. Clean the inside of your computer case! Using a screwdriver remove the side of the case opposite your motherboard. Touch as little as possible inside the computer, keeping fingers away from cards and cords due to static electricity. Blow air around all the components and along the bottom of the case, keeping the nozzle four inches away from your machine. Blow air into the power supply and into the fan from the back of your computer case. Blow air into the floppy disk and CD drives. Wipe the inside cover with a lightly moistened cloth before replacing it using your screwdriver. Clean every three months if your computer is on the floor or an especially dirty environment. Clean approximately every six to eight months in a normal environment.

4. Clean the outside of the case! Run a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol around all the openings on the back of your case giving them one swipe with a dampened swab and one with a dry swab. Clean the remaining outside of your system. Do this whenever you clean the inside of your system.

5. Clean the mouse by taking out the screws and going inside with an alcohol swab. If there is a rubber ball, clean it with water, and let it dry. Then clean the outside of the mouse. Many mouse problems are simply caused by a dirty mouse.

6. Clean the keyboard! Turn it upside down and gently shake it and most of the crumbs and dust will fall

Protect Yourself Against Identity Theft

By Marjie Tucker, Editor, Mountain Computer User Group
www.mcug.org   mcug(at)dnet.net

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups

We've had several programs and articles that mentioned Identity Theft, but I thought it might help us all to have one document with a checklist of symptoms and solutions for this horrific problem. Make certain that you're not a victim.

What is Identity Theft?

Identity theft is an act of impersonation. Someone gains the ability to use your personally identifying information to commit fraud or some other crime. The item stolen may be as simple as your name, address, phone number, or date of birth. Or, it can be an actual number or document such as your social security number, mother's maiden name, bank account

information, credit card number, driver's license number, signature or passwords. The thieves may rent an apartment, open a new credit card, or open a cell phone account in your name. You may not even know about the theft until you review your credit report or are contacted by a debt collector. Some victims spend hundreds of dollars and many, many hours repairing damage to their good names and credit records. People have been denied mortgages and car loans, lost out on job opportunities, and even been arrested for crimes they didn't commit because of identity theft.

How Do Thieves Steal An Identity?

Basically identity thieves are looking for an opportunity to steal your social security number, credit card number, or other financial account information. They may use a variety of methods to get hold of your information including the following:

➢ Dumpster Diving — They actually go through trash bins and dumpsters looking for discarded credit card bills, bank statements, and items containing your social security number. Your best defense is to shred any trash that contains sensitive information.

➢ Skimming — Store clerks and restaurant workers can use a special device that records your credit card number while it is being processed. Always peruse your credit card bills carefully to look for unauthorized charges. If any are found, notify your credit card company immediately.

➢ Phishing — These attacks are sent to you as email messages, supposedly from your bank, the IRS, PayPal, or another company that might have your information on file. They usually send you to a web page that looks legitimate, but actually sends your username and password to a server owned by the thieves. Never respond to a website that has been emailed to you. If you think the email is legitimate, go directly to the company's website before you login.

out. Blow air in and around the keys. Take an alcohol dampened cotton swab and clean the top and sides of the keys. Do this monthly; your keyboard gets very dirty and can even spread germs. If you have a laptop, follow the same procedure but take extra care with your machine.

7. Clean the monitor with a moistened paper towel or a soft lint-free cloth. (You can purchase monitor cleaning products from a computer store). Don't spray liquid directly on the screen but spray on the cloth. Wipe the screen gently to remove dust and fingerprints. (Never touch the back of the monitor). I suggest you purchase a special cleaning solution from a computer store for laptop computers.

If you have finished your "computune-up," you are on your way to being transformed into a computer geek! Do not be alarmed for the "geeks shall inherit the earth"! Bill Gates, chief geek and founder of Microsoft Corporation, has already made it; he is the role model for the rest of us!

➢ Changing your Address — Identity thieves can obtain your credit card and bank information by completing a change of address form at the post office. This way they are personally delivered your bank and credit card statements. If you stop receiving your mail go to the post office and make an inquiry.

How Can You Protect Yourself?

➢ Always carefully review your credit card and bank statements for discrepancies. Immediate report any suspicious activity.

➢ Order reports from the credit reporting bureaus at least once a year. Review them carefully for any entries that are not legitimate.

➢ Shred credit card statements, bank statements, credit card offers, and any other papers that contain your personal information.

➢ Never throw away credit card receipts in a public place. Watch out for credit card receipts that may print out (particularly at gas stations) and be left for someone else to pick up.

➢ Do not respond to credit card or mortgage offers from unknown sources.

➢ Do not respond to emails asking you to go to a website address that is embedded into the email. Do not give your personal information over the phone unless you initiated the phone call.

➢ Do not carry your social security card with you.

➢ Do not post your personal information on a website.

➢ Change your passwords frequently and use a secure password.

What Should You Do If Your Identity Is Stolen?

First file an Identity Theft police report. This will give you specific legal rights and automatic notification to the three major credit reporting agencies. These legal rights permanently block fraudulent information from being added to your credit report and prevent companies from collecting debts that resulted from identity theft.

You should also file a report to the FTC ID Theft Division. You can find an online form at http:// www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft To ensure that the problem has been solved you should monitor your financial records for at least three months after you discover the crime and order credit reports on a quarterly basis for at least one year. The best way to fight ID Theft is to remain alert. Monitor your personal information and alert your family members of the importance of security.

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meeting will be held on December 13, 2008 [Note: 2nd Saturday] from 12:30 to 3:30 pm . at the Fairfax County Government Center, 2000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA Topic: PC Clinic; Windows Live OneCare. January 2009: Date TBA; topic: Amazon's Kindle ebook reader

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

http://www.wacug.org/

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

For more information see:

Prepare For Hard Drive Recovery

By Bob Hudak, Greater South Bay User Group Hardware SIG Leader (California)
http://gsbug.apcug.org uags(at)aol.com

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When you lose control of your computer due to a virus or some sort of malware, or your O.S. becomes corrupted for one reason or another, be ready to fix the problem.

1. Start by setting up your hard drive with 2 partitions at least. Put all programs on 'C:' & all Data on 'D:'

2. When hard drive is clean and all programs are loaded, it is time to make an image file of 'C:.' Use Acronis *True Image* to do this or whatever program you like. Put it on 'D:' drive in the root. Name it using date. Remember you do not have a backup till you have two copies in two different places. So now copy this image file to an external USB drive. The reason is if ''C:' goes bad you can reformat it and start over without losing any data. If your computer will not boot and you did not put all your data on another drive or partition, you will want to save your data before reinstalling your operating system. What can you do?

   A. Open computer case and remove drive. Install drive as a slave drive in another computer. Now you can copy and paste your data or burn to a CD. This means opening two computers and moving the drive in and out and resetting the jumpers.

   B. Hook up the drive you removed from your computer to a second computer using a USB adapter, like the one we have at the Hardware SIG, to another computer and copy and paste or burn the data you want to keep.

   C. Here is my first choice in a case like this. Use a Live Linux CD to boot up. Plug in a USB drive before booting. After booting, mount your 'C:' drive and your USB drive. Copy your data from 'C:' drive to the USB drive. With this option there is no case to open and drive to remove.

3. Backup your data as necessary to a CD or another drive. Use a USB drive. This drive can also fail so putting backup on a CD or DVD is better way to go. Also, there is an on-line service at Carbinite.com that

will automatically back up your data. This service costs $50.00 a year for unlimited backups. How important is your data?

Here are a few key folders to have on 'D:'' drive:

Data — In this folder make sub folders for each application you use. Include one called Pictures. Under this folder have another sub folders for different events. Like: Christmas07, Vacation08, Dog, etc.

D/L — Use this folder for all your downloads. Then you will always know where your down-loads are. Set it up so the last thing you downloaded is on top.

E-Mail. If possible. You wanted your e-mail off the 'C' drive

My Stuff. Cut and paste from 'My Documents' on 'C' items that were sent there without asking you where to send. Documents that you want to keep.
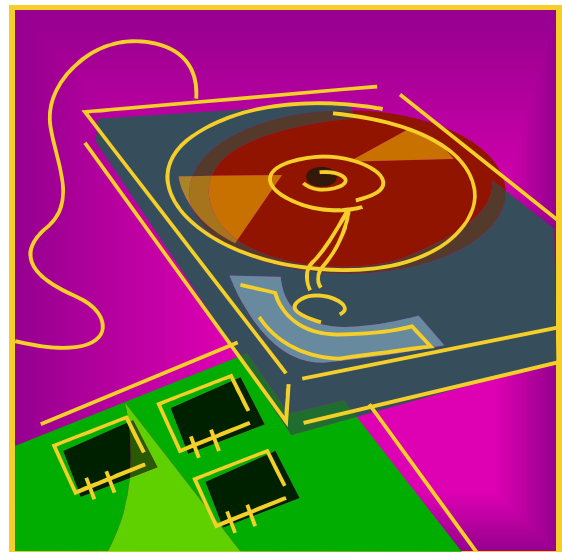
NCTCUG Annual Financial Report — Fiscal Year 2008

By Paul Howard, Treasurer

NCTCUG's fiscal year concluded on September 30th in excellent financial condition. Our cash flow was positive - $1162.52. This kind of financial perform-ance allows the installation of DSL – based Internet service in Carlin Hall for use during our meetings, starting in October.

We currently have 49 members. A "rainy day fund" established years ago has grown to four CD accounts for future needs. Even though our membership has shrunk by about two-thirds since 1993, sound planning, and continued fiscal restraint has kept NCTCUG finan-cially sound.

Member generosity accounts for forty-four percent of our income. Donations, either directly as contributions made with dues payments, or through the Pizza SIG are vital to the group. Blair Jones donated a virtually new laptop computer, complete with Vista, Office 2007 and other software tools in September.

Member donations were received this year from: Bow-man, Dakin, Fishbein, Garson, Housley, Howard, Johnson, Keys, Leggett, Mikosinski, Muller, Pafford, Schmidt, Treadway, Throne-burg, Wenri, and Wol-gamuth.

Pizza SIGs were sponsored by Paul Howard and Blair Jones. Other Pizza SIG donors include Brueggeman, Dakin, Fujii, Garson, Housley, Mikosinski, Schmidt, Walsh and Wenri.

In October, 2007, $600 was transferred from checking to the CD accounts, allowing the group to harvest more interest from our cash assets.

A restricted reserve fund is established within one of our CD accounts for the eventual replacement of the jointly owned computer projector, shared with our partner, WACUG.

Our account balances at the close of the fiscal year (September 30th) were: Checking Account $3307.17 CD accounts: Restricted - $801.36; Unrestricted - $4169.66. NCTCUG maintains a checking balance of at least $1000.00 to avoid bank service charges.

This Annual Treasurer's Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2008 has been approved by the Board of Direc-tors of NCTCUG. The account balances noted above are based on telephone and in-person queries of our

bank – statements for all accounts have not yet been received. On that basis, the balances and the Cash Flow Report below are hereby certified as correct.

> Paul Howard, Treasurer
>
> James Rhodes, President

The "organizational documents" area of our web site contains addi-tional information about the user group's financial operations, includ-ing last year's Financial Report for comparison purposes.

Cash Flow Report FY '08: 10/1/07 - 9/30/08	
Revenues	
Pizza SIG	625.00
Donations	555.00
Total Donations	**1180.00**
Dues	1,250.00
Interest Income	119.99
Insurance Reimbursement from WACUG	22.45
Reimbursement for closed PO Box	121.00
Total Revenues	**$2693.44**
Expenses	
Insurance - Liability & Personal Prop.	300.00
Legal - VA Corporation fees	25.00
APCUG Membership dues	50.00
Administrative Postage	16.40
Total Administrative	**391.40**
Meetings & Other Svcs – DSL costs	**89.97**
Anniversary Party - Hospitality	**71.10**
Newsletter Assembly Supplies	28.59
Newsletter Postage	232.00
Newsletter Printing	690.29
Total Newsletter	**950.88**
Web Site Domain Registration	**27.57**
Total Expenses	**$1530.92**
Results from Operations	**$1162.52**

Using Acronis *True Image*

Use Acronis *True Image* to backup to your USB drive. Make a full backup the first time.

This is going to be pretty easy because all your data is in one folder on 'D:' called **DATA.** If you want to backup your downloaded items, back up the 'D/L'' folder. E-Mail is not something I backup but you may want to. Once again it should all be in the 'E-MAIL' folder.

You already loaded the Acronis program and made a rescue CD that is bootable. Right?

Now open your CD drive and insert the CD. Do not close the drive. Shut down your computer. Close the CD drive. Wait a minute and then reboot.

If you have your BIOS set to boot from a CD first, you are good to go. If not you will need to enter into your setup screen at boot-up and change the boot order.

After booting up with Acronis, follow the prompts to select what you want backed up. Practice this before you need to use it.

Make notes on how to select each step. Acronis will not do anything until you give it the final OK.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).
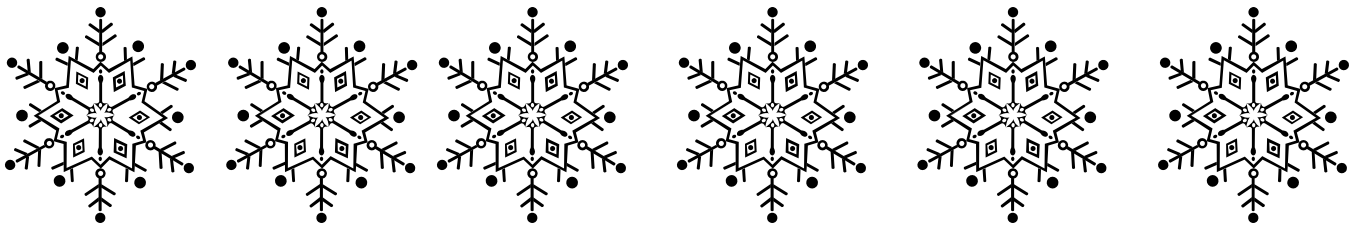
NCTCUG Information

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

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

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2009

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
1st VP	Ron Schmidt	301-577-7899
2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-426-5917
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Bill Walsh	703-241-8141

Director:	term expires	
Mel Mikosinski	2010	703-978-9158
John Keys	2010	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2010	703-759-3938
Lorrin Garson	2009	703-938-7907
Sy Fishbein	2009	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2009	301-931-2400

Article Submissions

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

Membership Policy

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

Advertisement Policy

Members' advertisements: Ads are accepted from members for non-commercial purposes at no charge. Copy should be sent to the Editor in the same format as article submissions. Commercial Advertisements: Ads are accepted from commercial advertisers at the rate of $40 per full page, per appearance, with discounts for multiple insertions. Smaller ads are priced accordingly. Payment for ads must be made in advance of appearance. Advertisers must supply a permanent address and telephone number to the editor.

Reprint Policy

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

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at http://groups.yahoo.com/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 1)

silverware, and water goblets standing on the bare table. Only, in TV land, all the stations whose channel number you'd finally memorized have changed. Some have moved up by twenty numbers. Other channels, well, hey, I can rent you a GPS and the prison's tracking hounds from "Cool Hand Luke!"

I was still getting the "light blue screen" for all the standard def channels I'd hoped were going to be added to the digital adapter's channel lineup. Went to the Verizon Experience store at Fair Oaks Mall, to get five copies of the new channel lineup brochure, and the reps confirmed that I should get all the standard def channels. All I could find new were the ninety seven channels of music up in the quad digit range. So I broke down, and called the FiOS service number. I broke out of the voice response system too soon, and wound thru the maze — but within four minutes I was talking to Ed in Virginia Beach. He sent the magic reset signal, and voilà — CNN was appearing on channel 100. Had I stayed in the voice response system, I could have gotten the reset signal sent automatically if I indicated my problem was with FiOS TV. But now, life is good — "all Badonka Donk, all the time!" <grin>

December 2008/January 2009

1st Wed. (12/3, 1/7)
7 p.m. General Meeting

4th Wed (1/28/09; *12/24/08 Christmas Eve Check web site for latest information!*)
     7 p.m. Internet SIG
          Happy Holidays!

3rd Monday (1/19/09; none in Dec.)
7 p.m. Board of Directors

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

NCTCUG, Inc.
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