The NCTCUG Journal

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Build a 'Green' PC on a Budget

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We're constantly bombarded by the subject of energy conservation—'green' this and 'green' that. I think that much of our problem is our 'disposable society'. On top of that it seems that most people tend to be 'green' only if it fits into their budget and lifestyle. It is a little difficult to rationalize spending $25,000 on a solar array for a house that will take a decade to 'pay for itself'.

But, if you happen to be looking for another computer and you're willing to spend some spare time and effort, you can rescue good parts from a premature demise and save money at the same time. How? Read on!

Timing Is Everything

Around here we have 'transfer stations' to which local residents take their refuse and recyclables if they don't have curbside pickup or another service. The transfer station is somewhat of a presorting point before everything goes to a larger dump site.

What amazes me is that people seem to be willing to pay a few bucks to throw away things that could be recycled or disposed of for no cost—just a bit more effort. No matter. That works out well for me—I can shop!

I need more computer equipment like I need another hole in my head. What I always seem to lack are good motherboards to match up with the spare DVD drive here and spare hard drive there. On a recent trip to the dump I hit pay dirt! Someone had dropped off a bunch of computer equipment and I got there early enough in the day to have relatively fresh dibs!

Weeding Out Junk

Knowing that 'garbage' tends to be at dumps, I look for specific traits when considering a rescue of any would-be junk. Last thing I want to do is throw it away when I get home and you can't exactly test things at

Inside

File Management – Part Two

By Ron Hirsch, Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida www.brcs.org ronhirsch1439 (at) comcast.com

This month's lesson picks up where we left off last month. We're now going to do some file operations on the special file we created for the exercise.

1) First, we're going to set up a new folder, and prepare to move testfile.txt into that folder. In the left hand listing, click once on the My Documents folder. Go to the menu at the top of the Explorer window, and click on FILE>NEW>FOLDER. Now you will see a new folder named "New Folder" directly below My Documents. It should be highlighted. If not, click once on it, and then click on the F2 key. This puts you in "edit" mode, and you can change the name of the folder. Change it to "Files for your name" (type in your name, without the quotes). After typing that in, hit the enter key. Now you have a new folder which is a personalized place for you to store your documents.

2) Next we're going to move the testfile.txt document to the new folder. One simple way to do this is to drag it from its present folder to its new home. Get the listing of all the folders on C: in the left hand window. Then double click on My Documents. The new folder we just created should be showing in the listing on the left, and also in the right hand section listing the contents of My Documents. Click on "testfile.txt" to select it, and then drag it onto the new folder which you just personalized with your name. The file has now been moved. To confirm that, double click on your new folder, and it should open and list the contents.

   Depending upon what Windows version you are using, and what file manager you are using the dragging protocol may be slightly different. Generally in Windows, dragging moves the file, if you're dragging to any folder on the same drive. Dragging to a different drive, copies the file. And holding the CTRL key down while dragging, always copies the file, and using the Shift key al-ways moves the files, irrespective of the target location. To be sure that you move or copy as you want to do, hold the SHIFT key down and drag to move, and the CTRL key down and drag to copy. This will work under any circumstance. Windows does give you a "hint" about this. If you drag and see a small + sign in next to the moving mouse cursor, the process you are doing is copying. If there's no + sign, then you are moving.

3) Next, we're going to copy this file to a floppy disk. Insert a floppy into the drive A. Left click on testfile.txt in the new folder to select it. Now, hold down the CTRL key while dragging the file to drive A. To confirm that you have copied to file, double click on drive A on the left hand listing of Explorer. It should show the file listed there. Then go back to the original folder for your documents, to see that it is still there also. If it is — you've succeeded. If your system does not have a floppy disk drive, or another hard drive, copy to a flash drive. If you have none, just skip this step

4) Since this isn't a file that you want to keep, let's delete it. Click on it once to select it on, wherever it was copied to. Then hit the delete key and OK. Repeat the process for the other location also.

NOTE: During these activities, you probably have noticed small "+" and "-" signs on certain of the listings in Windows Explorer (or any file manager). The "+" sign indicates that there are subfolders within the folder listed. To expand the listing to show them, click on the "+" sign. The "-" sign indicates that the folder has subfolders, and they are already shown. To collapse that listing, click on the "-"sign. Clicking toggles the situation back and forth. NOTE: Windows Explorer is not "Internet Explorer", so don't get confused here.

This is the end of the exercise on the beginning basics of file management. Obviously you can modify any of the procedures given to suit your specific needs. And, if you are now adept at all the steps, you've got a good start on things. As with most things in Windows, there are generally several ways to so things. Rather than confuse things, I'm keeping things as simple as I can.

If you had difficulty following the previous steps, it might be a good idea for you to consider one of the introductory Windows courses given by various organizations in our area. When someone asks me "what do you mean by 'click'?", I pass for the moment. It's like the person who called Compaq tech support. He couldn't find the "any key", when the instructions said "click on any key", he said his keyboard didn't have an "any key."

Now that you can handle file management basics, you should consider getting a better file manager. There are two good choices out there. As with all things, if you plan on using a file manager often now, you should use a more capable program. It's like a car. If you plan on driving a lot, a new 2008 Lexus is generally more fun than a stripped down old 1965 Chevy.

I was disappointed when I saw that Microsoft has done very little with Windows Explorer. Of all the good programs MS may have provided, Windows Explorer was not one. Not to worry though — all the things you've learned so far will carry over into any file manager. There are a variety of good and one GREAT file managers out there. Do a general Google search for "Windows file managers", and a bunch of hits will display. Some are add-ons to Windows Explorer, and others are standalone programs. If you want the finest file manager ever created for Widows, look at Opus 9 at http://nudel.dopus.com/opus9 . Be warned however, that this is not a cheap program. It costs about $57 (US), but it is without peer. If you are an advanced user, this is the one to get. For others, there are lots of freeware and shareware programs. Review the Google search results to see what will fit you best, assuming you would like to work with something superior to Windows Explorer.

Another good (and free) choice is PowerDesk . You can get a free copy of version 7 of the program by downloading it from http://www.snapfiles.com/get/powerdeskfree.h http://www.snapfiles.com/reviews/powerdesk/powerdeskfree.htm . ZDNet should also

have it available. If you like the program, you can purchase a registered version, with a few more features, and no nag screens.

With any of these file managers, or Windows Explorer, the best way to learn is to "browse around", and play with things. Click on various menu items, practice copying and moving files, and be inquisitive. And, REMEMBER, all the things you learn in these exercises apply to all the programs you'll be using on your Windows computer.

Computer learning can be likened to taking piano lessons — you can't learn to play if you don't practice. Maybe someday we'll be able to get a "chip" that we can plug into our brains to acquire all sorts of capabilities without the time consuming old-fashioned learning process. But for now, we have to rely on present techniques which take time and effort. But, in the long run, the effort is well worth it.

Learning to manage your files is a very important activity for all computer users to learn. So, how about getting started on that right now. Remember, you don't always have to be doing a formal lesson. Start exploring and investigate all the areas where you haven't been before. Instead of surfing the Internet, surf you own computer. You'll find lots of exciting things. And remember, any time you want to get help on something, just press the F1 key, and a help window should pop up.

This concludes the brief learning experience of file management. Remember, you've only scratched the surface here. This is similar to learning chess. Many people think that when they have learned to move the pieces, that they know how to play chess – but they are a long way from being a "chess player." The name of the game is practice. This lesson is just a start towards a better understanding of that marvelous machine you have at your fingertips.

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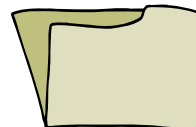
Moving On To Vista – Part 14

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One of the features that I liked about previous versions of Windows was the *Search" feature. Just click on the "Start" button", Click on "Search" and enter the file name that you want to find. If you have multiple hard drives, you can specify which ones to search. Its easy and simple.

Vista is different. Vista has a totally new search feature that is in some ways easier to use, fast and very sophisticated.   It doesn't just try to match file names. It looks inside files and reads and searches the contents of text files, your Windows Contacts and Calendar as well as any Microsoft Office files (documents, spreadsheets and PowerPoint files). To do this Vista automatically maintains an index file which contains all this information for the file linked to your personal user folder. To keep the index file from becoming too large and to speed up the search process, it does not maintain a list of files located in your Windows system folder, contents of application file folders or on a local computer network (information usually only useful to computer programmers).   When you start searching for a file or word, it only has to check this index file to find what you want. The results are displayed almost as fast as you can type the search name.

To use the most basic features of Vista's search engine, click on the "Start" button. When the "Start Menu" appears, a "Start Search" box appears directly above the "Start Button". As you start to type a folder or file name, a list of folders and files appears above the box. As you type more letters, the list of names becomes more specific. If you don't see what you are looking for, at the bottom of the list is an option to search for the file name on the Internet (assuming that you have an Internet connection of course).   When you do this, the Internet search uses your default Internet search engine whether it be Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, etc.

The Search Results window does not show the name of every file match found. Using some form of artificial intelligence Vista limits itself to to the 20 most

likely matches. It shows them under file group headings such as "Programs", "Files" and "Communications".

An interesting aspect of this feature is that you can point and click on a program listed in the Search Results window and actually run it. Document or spreadsheet files can also be accessed this way. Printing at the file name activates the default file program, such as Microsoft Word.

Using this feature of Vista's search function moves it beyond just a way to locate files and folders. It becomes a way to quickly locate files and then take action to use them. To prepare this column I simply went to my desktop, clicked on the Start Button, entered "vista.rtf" in the Search Box and then clicked on the file name to open it with my word processing program. How simple is that! No need to open a series of folders to burrow down to my Vista column files.

In most cases, doing the above steps will locate the information you are looking for. But suppose it doesn't. Windows will tell you that the information can't be located and suggest that you use some of the advanced search features. We'll address advanced search features next month.

Exploring Microsoft Windows 7 Beta 1, Part 1 —
A Little Background on My Early (Mis)-Adventures With Windows 7

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Lee gives an overview of what the new operating system might look like, as well as what it is likely to have for features.

Probably most of you know Windows 7 is Microsoft's latest and greatest offering in terms of operating systems. A public beta download was made available on January 9th, intended for testing purposes. This beta version will stop working on August 1st.

The official final version is planned for introduction late this year or early next year (depending upon who is making the prediction; nobody knows for sure.) You may still be able to download the beta from: http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/betadownload.aspx

Beta Download

A couple of days before Microsoft made available its public download of the next version of Windows, I downloaded a version available through MSDN (the Microsoft Developers Network), intending to install it as a virtual machine on my Windows Vista desktop computer. With my slo-o-o-ow DSL connection, I had to wait over 5 hours to get it loaded onto my hard drive. (It is about a 2.5 gigabyte file.)

Virtual PC Installation

Then I installed it as a virtual OS, using a copy of Microsoft's free program Virtual Pc 2007, that I have been using for the past two years to get access to and test other operating systems.

The installation process itself for Windows 7 took over two and half hours! Next, when I tried it out, the load was extremely unstable. I kept getting a popup message saying that Windows Search Indexer had stopped working; this message would appear just about every couple of minutes.

When trying out the new beta Internet Explorer 8 built into the operating system, it seems just about every web page I looked at would crash, and Internet Explorer would restart, and try to recover the web page. In addition, I couldn't download an anti-virus program so as to get rid of the security message popup from the taskbar complaining about no anti-virus program being present.

Stability Problem

What was wrong? I had previously read a number of articles about Windows 7 that raved about the unparalleled stability of the Windows 7 beta.

This didn't seem to be true in my case! I recalled that the computer had lost power during my 5 hour download about halfway through, when Florida Plunder and Loot (sorry, I mean Florida Power and Light, of course) had one of its all-too-frequent blackouts.

The download had appeared to resume okay when I restarted the computer, but maybe there was something wrong with the file when it completed. So I downloaded the public beta (another 5 hours of twiddling my thumbs and cursing) and then tried again.

Before I started installing the new load in Virtual PC 2007, I researched the problem I had with the previous load; by googling the net, I found the answer, on this web page: http://msdnrss.thecoderblogs.com/2009/01/11/installingthe-windows-7-beta-with-virtual-pc-2007-sp1/

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The problem was that I had used the initial version of Virtual PC 2007 (which worked perfectly well with all my other virtual OSes, including XP Home, XP Pro, and Vista Home Premium), but the above article said installing Windows 7 as a guest OS required the version with its Service Pack 1 built in. I was gratified to see that after I upgraded my version of VPC 2007, the installation of Windows 7 Beta went very smoothly and only took half an hour. All the crashes of Windows 7 disappeared, too.

About Microsoft Virtual PC 2007

Microsoft Virtual PC 2007 is a free download available from Microsoft; it is the first version of this program that is compatible with Windows Vista as well as Windows XP. An overview of its features is presented here: http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/virtualpc/overview.mspx

Microsoft Virtual PC 2007
Product Information

MS Virtual PC 2007 is available in both 32-bit and 64-bit versions, and works with Windows Vista Business, Enterprise, and Ultimate editions, as well as Windows Server 2003, Windows XP Professional, and Windows XP Tablet Edition.

(When you try to install VPC 2007 on a Vista Home Premium pc, it will give you a warning about not being compatible, but I have seen web pages on the internet from people who have said it works perfectly well with that version of Vista, and I also have a friend in our computer club who has done it successfully.)

With Virtual PC 2007, you have the program installed in your main OS (Operating System), called the "host OS", and as many virtual machines (each with possibly a different OS) as you can comfortably handle with your amount of memory and disk storage.

Each virtual machine is called a "guest OS." You can pause any guest OS virtual machine so that it doesn't use CPU cycles, and you can save and restore the configuration file at any time.

With the Virtual Machine Additions installed, you can copy and paste, and drag and drop between the host and guest OS.

Each guest OS will be able to handle any CD or DVD drive on the computer, and you can set it up to be able to access other hard drive partitions. The guest OS can also access the internet through a web browser. With the current version of VPC, the guest unfortunately cannot access any USB devices like printers, flash drives, or external USB drives. (It does handle keyboards and mice connected by USB, however.)

I decided two years ago I would download MS Virtual PC 2007 and try using it to choose between Vista and XP Pro. This is much more convenient than dual booting the two Windows versions, because they are run simultaneously on my computer, and only need to click on an icon in the Notification Area (formerly called the System Tray) of Vista, to switch to XP.

This allows instantaneous switching, rather than what multi-booting requires, which is to restart the computer and wait for the several minutes necessary to boot to another operating system.

The current version of Virtual PC 2007, with SP1, can be downloaded for free from here: http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=28C97D22-6EB8-4A09-A7F7-F6C7A1F000B5&displaylang=en

Sound Problem

My next problem was that the sound didn't work in the Windows 7 guest OS. I turned to my old friend Google and found this page: http://blogs.msdn.com/virtual_pc_guy/archive/2009/01/13/windows-7-on-virtual-pc-nwindows-7.aspx

A person calling himself Hermes had encountered my problem and found a solution which he detailed in a comment he posted in the Virtual PC Guy's weblog January 17.

I tried his solution, and it worked.

Graphics Problem

I was happily exploring the new features of Windows 7 for several days. Then...A new problem developed from the fact that Microsoft hasn't upgraded its graphics driver for Virtual PC 2007 since introduction of the program two years ago. Of course, the guest operating system actually uses your host machine's real CRT, or LCD screen for display, but it emulates a driver for a graphics card described as S3 Trio 32/64 PCI with 8 MB Video RAM.

This is a very old graphics adaptor. It barely supports some of the "Aero" effects of Vista and Windows 7, and it doesn't support the requirements of Windows Media Center or Windows Media Player.

Virtual PC 2007 To Dual Boot

I really wanted to explore those aspects of the new OS. So I decided I would quit using Windows 7 as a virtual machine and instead install it as a real operating system on another partition of my hard drive.

Since I had all my virtual machines stored already on a separate partition, and had previously backed them up to an external USB hard drive, I wiped this out and used my Windows 7 Beta installation DVD to install it there.

Then I could dual boot with Vista and Windows 7, which was nowhere near as convenient as running them simultaneously, but apparently was necessary in order to continue my investigations of the new OS.

Future articles regarding the Windows 7 Beta, will contain explanations of what I have discovered about Windows 7, including some screenshot illustrations.
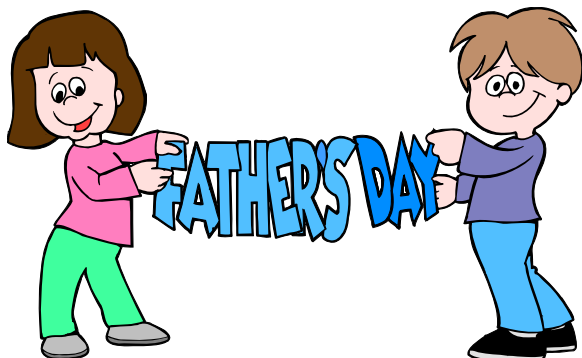
Security and Deleting Files: A Common Misconception

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You have just deleted a file from your hard drive. It's gone, isn't it? Sorry! It is still there.

You want to clean up your hard drive, so you format it. It is now clean. Nothing is on it anymore, right? Nope! Everything is still there, except for the file directory.

How can this be? Doesn't Delete mean remove? Doesn't Format clean the disk?

Each file system has a file directory which records the file name and it's location.

To delete a file, the disk system only alters the file's name in the file directory, usually by changing the first letter of the name. Formatting goes one step further, it just empties the file directory. Neither does anything to the files on the disk! They remain.

To clean a drive, either overwrite the whole drive or the unused space. The most common way to clean drives, especially older drives, is to write fixed or random data obliterate the old files.

Fortunately, all ATA drives over 15-20 GB produced since 2001 have an internal drive command that will clean the drive sufficiently that it will meet DOD requirements. At the University of California at San Diego's Center for Magnetic Recording Research (CMRR) you can download their free program for Secure Erase, entitled "HDDerase.exe". Its use meets U.S. Government requirements for disk erasure. Secure Erase should provide the greatest peace of mind. Internet Commentary suggests it is even better than mechanically shredding the disks.

If you have a good machine with good software that you would like to pass on to some else, and you don't have all the original disks — remove personal information. I suggest this approach:

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1) "Delete" the contents of: all the "My" folders — My Documents, My Pictures, My Music; Recent; Temp or Temporary folders; Recycle Bin; Cookies; Downloads; and the entire folders for Quicken and Tax preparation software.

2) Clean your Registry of all personal data. For XP, go to Start/Run, type regedit and press Enter. Go to edit and click on find. Enter your last name, click on find next. When the first entry is found, go to edit and select modify. Delete your name (it should be in color). Depressing the space bar may clear it. Go back to edit and click on find next, etc. Keep on until you get a message that you have reached the end. Then repeat the above with your first name, then your street, your phone number, bank name, broker name, and anything else of a personal nature that you used.

3) Find and download a registry cleaner. Use it to remove unnecessary items from the registry. Ccleaner is an example.

4) Defragment the drive. This condenses the files and moves them toward the beginning of the drive.

5) Locate and download a wipe application such as bcwipe. Use it to wipe (overwrite) all unused space.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Before editing your "registry", back it up first, *please*.

This should effectively sanitize your disk, leaving it clean, safe and usable.

Loss of personal information and the risk of identity theft is a risk for you. For a business, the loss of personal, financial, or medical data may subject it to risk from recent laws, both federal and state.

I have been repairing or rehabilitating older machines as a hobby to give them a second life. There are many good machines and plenty of worthy recipients. If there is good software worth keeping, remove all personal data. If the software is not worth keeping, then wipe the disk clean to install an operating system and applications.

Removing the hard drive before you dispose of an old machine is not a solution, unless you plan to use it in your new machine, or store it permanently — you still ultimately have to sanitize it.

Programs available, free or fee, include: Secure Erase (mentioned above), Secure Delete, Wipe Drive, Acronis Privacy Expert, East-Tec Eraser, East-Tec Dispose Secure, Eraser, SysInternals SDelete, Darik's Boot and Nuke (dban), OverWrite, Wipe, Kill Disk, BCWipe, and Autoclave. This list is *NOT* exhaustive. And, you have to determine which is suitable:

> (1) wipe the entire drive or
> (2) wipe only the unused space.

Bottom line is, when you give away or dispose of a used computer, either clean the hard drive yourself or give the machine to someone you can trust who will do it for you. The comments and opinions here are wholly mine. I welcome alternative perspectives.

Bob Schwartz is a HAL-PC member, retired EE, 14 patents, technical writer, active in civic affairs: President, Brays Bayou Association; Vice President, Marilyn Estates Civic Association; Correspondence Secretary with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

The Kindle2 May Make Newspapers Obsolete

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

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Every now and then a revolutionary new product comes along at a time when it is most needed. So it is with the just released Kindle2 wireless reading device, fondly called an e-book reader.

Up to now, electronic book readers have been very slow in taking off. Sony has had a book reading device for several years. Last year Amazon came out with the first version of the Kindle, which was impressive and fairly popular, but had a few drawbacks.

Now, however, the time for these devices may have finally come. At 8" x 5.3" the Kindle2 is about the size of a paperback. At about 1/3" thick, it thin but strong. In this second iteration, Amazon has corrected the design flaws of the original Kindle. It is now easy to use. The e-ink technology allows you to read the words on the Kindle just as you would read a book, with no eye strain or glare. You can adjust the size of the text to your liking. To turn the page you simply press a button. The reader even lets you read several books at once, always returning you to just where you left off. You can look up any word with the built-in dictionary. You can underline words and add your

own notes to the pages. This Kindle will even read the text of most books to you. So if you are engrossed in a book on the Kindle and need to pick up the kids, you can take the Kindle along and have it read to you in the car.

The best part of the Kindle, however, is the reading material and how it is delivered. The Kindle2 can hold more than 1,500 books. You can choose from over 240,000 books in the Kindle's Amazon store. Most of the books are priced at $9.99. You can also subscribe to newspapers and magazines on the Kindle. The books, newspapers, and magazines are downloaded directly to the device over a free cellular network. I drove down a rural highway in North Carolina and downloaded a book and was reading it in less than five minutes. Better yet would be sitting on a beach and downloading a romance novel. In any case, the Kindle is ultimately useable. The biggest drawback for the Kindle right now is the price. At $359, the Kindle is pretty expensive.

But if you are you ready to watch the ebook market explode, stick around for awhile. The Kindle2 has appeared on the horizon just as the economy is slumping. There are many hard-hit business sectors, but the newspaper and magazine industry is already showing signs of cracking. CNN reports that many major newspapers are struggling including the San Francisco Chronicle, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Minneapolis Star Tribune, and the Miami Herald. Certainly online versions of newspapers and magazines are an alternative, but up to this point very few newspapers or magazines have been able to support themselves with online subscriptions and/or advertising.

See the (17MB) pdf file of a club member presentation on the Kindle at a recent meeting:
http://www.nctcug.org/recmtgs.html

(Kindle 2 is now available at Amazon.com)

QuickMonth Calendar

By Ken Peters, Product Review, Hilton Head Island Computer Club, South Carolina
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If you're tired of double clicking the clock to get the calendar up, then this program is for you. http://www.codedawn.com/qmc/quickmonth-calendar-download/

QuickMonth Calendar is a freeware program which displays a small popup calendar on your Windows desktop whenever your mouse hovers over the clock in the system tray. The calendar display may also be toggled on and off by using the Windows+Q keyboard shortcut. The program works with XP and Windows 2000. Click the clock once to make it appear. Vista already has a popup calendar.

You can get QuickMonth Calendar by visiting the download page. QuickMonth Calendar is free and does not include any adware or spyware.

NOTE: Some antivirus programs have incorrectly detected QuickMonth Calendar as a Trojan horse. Do not be alarmed — this type of erroneous detection is called a false positive. If you receive a virus warning message regarding QuickMonth Calendar (qmc.exe),

please report the false positive to your antivirus software manufacturer so they can update their definitions. Here are a few of QuickMonth Calendar's features:

To quickly jump to today's date, right-click on the calendar or left-click the bottom of the calendar where it says "Today." Use the buttons at the top of the calendar to change the month. You can also left-click on the name of the month to see a popup menu of all the months (see Example 1).

Left-click on the year to quickly change the year (see Example 2).

The calendar automatically detects the location of your Windows taskbar, so if you move the taskbar to the top, left, or right side of the screen, the calendar will still display next to your system tray clock (you may have to restart Windows once for the change to take effect).
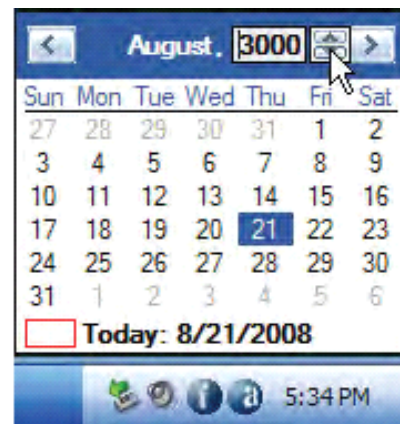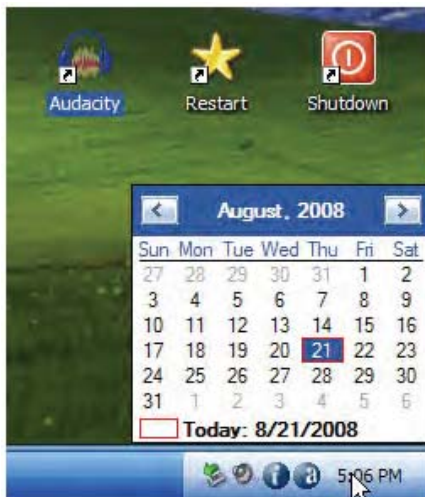
Example 2: Quickly change the year

The look of the calendar changes according to what your system colors are (as determined by your current Windows theme or visual style). The calendar will appear in any program when you put the pointer over the clock. I have found this program very handy when trying to find a date when writing an email or other document. When I need to look up a date, it's very nice to have the calendar popup just by hovering the pointer over the clock. It's also helpful when on the telephone and trying to settle on a date.

Vista already has a popup calendar.
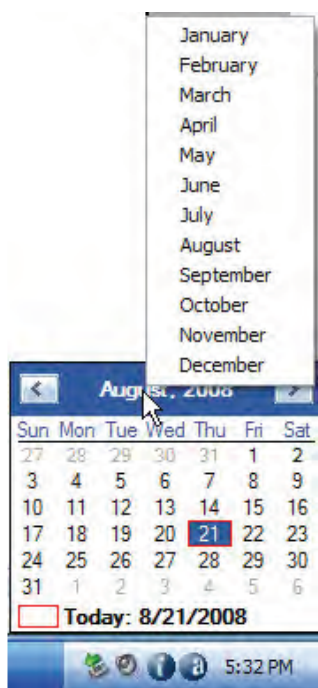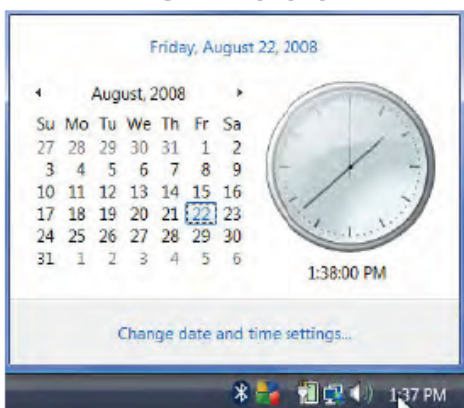
Example 1: Month popup menu

Cloud Computing

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When did you first hear or see the term "cloud computing"? I'm usually the last to know anything, it seems, so I've only recently started noticing this term on the Internet. I did some research, and some say it's the greatest thing since sliced bread—but others think it isn't such a hot idea.

In very simple terms, cloud computing is this: rather than having programs and files on your computer, you would store files online and also access applications (programs) online (think Google Docs or MS Office Live; think Flickr or Buzzword). Your computer really wouldn't need to have much on it, and you'd have to have an Internet connection in order to run applications or access your files. Not only individuals, but also companies would be doing this (and in fact, are doing it now). One of the major benefits is that a company (or an individual, for that matter) has the use of combined server resources they might not otherwise be able to afford "in house."

The ever-vigilant Richard Stallman warns against the use of cloud computing: "Somebody is saying this is inevitable—and whenever you hear somebody saying that, it's very likely to be a set of businesses campaigning to make it true… One reason you should not use web applications to do your computing is that you lose control," he said. "It's just as bad as using a proprietary program. Do your own computing on your own computer with your copy of a freedom-respecting program. If you use a proprietary program or somebody else's web server, you're defenseless. You're putty in the hands of whoever developed that software."

Food for thought.

Broadsides – February 2009

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Dear Friends,

These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites, and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various "tips, "tricks", & "hints" in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

Ron Broadhurst

How To Have Windows Remind You About Pending Updates

Click Remind Me Later in the Automatic Updates dialog box before you download or install the update.

In the Reminder dialog box, you can specify the amount of time Windows should wait before reminding you.

If the reminder is for downloading, Windows reminds you only when you are connected to the Internet.

If the reminder is for installing, Windows reminds you according to the schedule that you specify.

How To Download Available Updates

If you configured automatic updating to notify you before downloading any updates, an icon is displayed in the notification area each time new updates are found.

Double-click the icon in the notification area.

Do either of the following steps:

If you want Windows to download an update, make sure that the check box beside it is selected.

-or-

If you do not want Windows to download an update, click to clear the check box beside it. Your selected updates are downloaded in the background; this behavior allows you to continue working uninterrupted. Downloading does not interfere with or slow down other network activity, such as Internet browsing.

When downloading is finished, the icon is displayed in the notification area to notify you that updates are ready to be installed.

Customize The Start Menu

The Start menu gets more real estate in XP than in previous versions, and it's more customizable. To make the Start menu display only the applications you want, rather than the default determined by Microsoft:

Right-click in an empty section of the Start menu's left column.

Select Properties > Start Menu > Customize. Here you'll find a list of your most frequently used programs. (XP keeps track of what you use and what you don't, then updates this list dynamically).

Don't want your boss to know that Pinball, Solitaire and Quake all make your list?

Go to the General tab, click Clear List, and set the counter to zero.

How To Perform Disk Error Checking In Windows XP

This describes how to check the integrity of the hard disk drive in Windows XP. After you install Windows XP, the Scandisk command is not available.

- Double-click My Computer and then right-click the hard disk drive that you want to check.
- Click Properties and then click Tools.
- Under Error-checking click Check Now.
- Click Start.

Add Familiar Icons Back To Your Desktop

It's the case of the missing icons. Many of you may be wondering where all the icons from your desktop are in Windows XP? You can place at least My Computer, My Network Places and My Documents on the desktop.

Right-click on the desktop and then click Properties.

Click the Desktop tab and then click on Customize Desktop.

Put a check mark in the box next to My Document, My Computer, My Network Places or Internet Explorer, to add those familiar icons to your desktop.

How To Find Your IP Address In Windows XP

- Start and click Run
- Type "cmd" (without quotes) and hit enter
- Once the box opens type "ipconfig /all" (without quotes) and hit enter.

Copying Information From Your Screen

By Richard Kennon, Amador Computer Users Group, Jackson, California
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Dick Carricato, member of the Tri County Computer User Group in Florida wrote a good article about copying pictures from your computer screen. Sometimes there are other things you may want to copy from your screen that may not lend themselves to the PrtScr method. This is especially true of lists in drop down boxes that require a scroll bar down the right side. PrtScr will only show the portion of the list that shows. For instance, I write a (almost) monthly newsletter on the web and usually include a bunch of pictures. I like to have a hard copy of the picture thumbnails at hand to remind me of things to say. This is always a scrolling window. Often I want a hardcopy of a menu, too.

I have found FastStone Capture to be a perfect answer to my needs. You can try it free by going to http://www.faststone.org. Then, if you like it, as I do, you can purchase a lifetime license for $19.95.

You can capture and annotate anything on the screen including windows, objects, menus, full screen, rectangular/freehand regions and scrolling windows/web pages. Editing tools include annotating, resizing, cropping, sharpening, watermarking, edge effects and many more. Of course, you can transfer the image to any editor of choice. You can either print the copy or save it in one of eight different formats. I choose JPEG. Further, you can choose the resolution of the saved image. I don't know if it actually improves the resolution or just resizes to more pixels.

Of course, it features a bunch of hot key combinations but, with my memory, this is not useful. Instead I rely on the small box of choices at the bottom right of my screen. I find it extremely useful and use it almost every day.

a transfer station. This is a good exercise in knowing your hardware as you can just take home the good stuff and leave everything else there. As luck would have it, I found a gutted case with a motherboard stripped of everything but the CPU and heat sink. Even the BIOS battery was gone! They did leave the power supply, though.

Back to the Bench

So far my out-of-pocket expense is $0.00 and I'd like to keep it that way! I take the guts home and blow them out with an air-compressor. The minimum needed to successfully power on a motherboard are a power supply, motherboard, CPU, fan, and memory. Unfortunately I didn't have any memory on hand for this motherboard, so now it's time to do some leg work and see if I should consider spending the money when I don't even know if the board works.

The motherboard, in this case, can be identified by a silkscreen of "PTGD1-LA" between the PCI slots. This cross-references to a board used in HP Pavilion Ax00 systems. This gives me access to motherboard details so I know what the connecting pins are, memory requirements, and other details necessary to do troubleshooting. Yippee, memory for this board is on sale right now—1GB for $27!

Good, Bad, or Ugly?

In this situation I presume the components are good until proven faulty. Having all the dust blown off, I sniff around the motherboard. That's right… using my nose, I sniff around the motherboard. The power supply, too. Fried components have a burnt smell. All smells good.

Powering on a working system with the memory removed should get yield 'memory error' beep codes from the motherboard. I power everything on and get beep codes indicating bad memory. During this time I listen for fan noise out of the power supply and the CPU fan. Nothing that sounds like skateboard wheels on pavement. Things are looking good!

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meeting will be held June 20 & July 18 12:30 to 3:30 pm at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA.

Starting with the January 17th, 2009 meeting, WACUG will hold joint meetings with OPCUG [www.olligmu.org/~opcug/]

It is anticipated that all meetings, except June, July, and August, will be held at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute [www.olli.gmu.edu/] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

Topics: Jun 20 — Nintendo Wii; Playstation 3
July 18 — Gene Barlow Webinar - Acronis True Image Home 2009

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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Many motherboards take CR2023 batteries for memory, including this one. I picked up a two-pack along with a 1GB stick of PC-3200 memory. So far I'm out about $30 and still don't know if this will fire up completely—but odds are in my favor. Besides, if I needed PC-3200 and PC batteries today, I'd need them in the future for another find later.

Hot Dog!

With the memory seated and a battery added, I fired up the machine and the screen came up! Woo-Hoo! Looking really good now! And it's a P4!

I gathered up a spare SATA hard drive and DVD drive and connected them to the system. BIOS reported the devices. Turns out this is an Intel P4 3.0GHz CPU with Hyper-threading.

Wrapping It Up

Sure this isn't a screaming-fast brand new machine, but it has much potential and is still quite useful. Someday, the parts will wind up being recycled through the transfer station for good—but not today.

For now, it has a new life. This board has integrated video, audio, and four SATA ports. It has IDE, USB, PCI Express, and legacy connections. It is also very quiet. This is not bad find at all! I will probably use this as the start of my network storage system.

Now if only I could get my hands on some DVD-RW drives that don't work...

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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. Articles may be submitted in MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) or plain unformatted text (C/R only at end of paragraphs, no indents preferred) via email to the editor nctcugbj@verizon.net

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

Thank You!

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As the print industry is looking for ways to cut costs, ebook readers may be an answer. If there were no print costs, perhaps large newspapers would be able to provide e-book readers to subscribers as part of the subscription costs or at least at a highly reduced rate. If the electronic device were done well enough, it could mimic the printed version and be filled with ads just like the print newspapers and magazines. Normally I would expect that this type of transition would take a few years, but the economic woes may put a rush on this type of move. The Hearst Corp., one of the largest publishers, is already planning to launch its own wireless e-book reader. Most are speculating that this would be a device with a larger screen that would more closely imitate the newspaper and magazine reading experience. Hearst, who is a mega-publisher, would be in a great position to create the liaisons needed to make this type of device and its content work. Fortune reports that the Hearst device will be available sometime this year.

There is no doubt that we live in a world that is changing because of technology and this type of technology may be in your hands sooner than you think.

June/July 2009

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

4th Wed (6/24, 7/22)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (7/20, none in June)
7 p.m. Board of Directors

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

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