A Slightly Different Kind of Shortcut

By Vinny La Bash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida www.spcug.org vlabash (at) Comcast.net

Whenever you select a menu item or activate an icon on your desktop, you are most likely opening a file called a shortcut. This is a great time saver for the average person who uses computers on a regular basis. A computer shortcut is a file similar to any other file that resides on your computer, with one big difference. It's only function is to direct the operating system to the location of another file so you don't have to go exploring through layers of folders to find it, assuming you even know its location. As mentioned above, it's a great time saver.

Wouldn't it be handy to have a desktop shortcut icon that would bring you to your favorite web site without having to go through all the intermediate steps to get there? First you need to open your browser. Then it's a matter of getting the URL into the address bar. There is more than one way to do this. You can use the mouse to select an item from the Favorites bar or Command bar. You can also type in the address manually, which is prone to error and can be cumbersome if the URL is long and complex. Suffice to say that Microsoft has

provided the ability to create many paths to the same destination. No matter which path you take, the first time you visit a web site is the most time consuming. Only once do you need to take the longest journey. Subsequent visits can be made via a desktop shortcut. Let's take the path of least resistance.
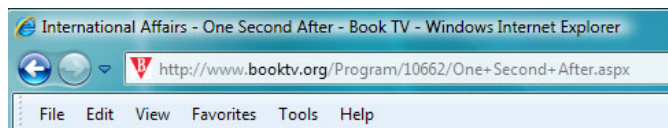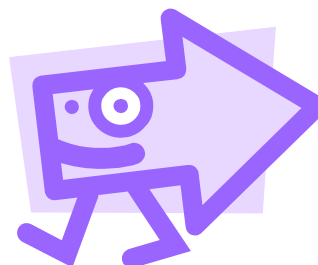
The illustration shows the web address (URL) of a web site we'll presume you visit frequently. The easiest way to create a desktop shortcut to this location is to:

1. Right click the icon immediately to the left of the web site address. In this example, it's the red down-pointing triangle with the white B inside.

2. Minimize any open windows blocking access to the desktop.

Inside

Finding Help In Windows & Windows Programs

**By Ron Hirsch, Member and Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida
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Help Is Everywhere

Windows and Windows programs actually have a tremendous amount of help and assistance built into the software. Unfortunately, most users don't know where to look, or don't know how access this help. A good analogy would be a man who drowned, even though six people threw him life jackets. You may ask "Why did he drown if he had all those life jackets?" The unfortunate fact is that he didn't know what a life jacket was, or how to use it.

How often have you needed help in a Windows programs and didn't know where to look? It just so happens that Windows has lots of places that provides you with help. In the distant past, most software programs came with lots of books, manuals and other printed material. However, in those days, the cost of the software was much higher and could easily absorb the cost of these manuals. In present times, the software industry has gotten extremely competitive, and cannot afford to print elaborate manuals and include them with the product. But, a tremendous amount of help is readily available to you, if you know where to look.

Actually, the subject of help should actually be broken up into two distinct categories. There is the type of help you need when you're working in a program and something specific comes up that you are not familiar with, and need assistance. The other type of help is when you need real beginners information on how to learn and use the basic program features.

Getting Help While Working In A Program

Listed below are 3 methods for obtaining help and information instantly.

1.   The universal key in Windows to obtain help is F1. In almost any situation, whether it is in a specific program or just on the plain Windows desktop, using this key will generally bring up a help screen in which you can navigate and probably get answers to the question at hand.

2.   The second most important way to get help is to use the help menu on the program in which you are working. While not every window program has a menu at the top of its operating window, the majority of Windows programs do have this listing. Clicking on "HELP" will generally bring up a list of various options. A very common option is an item which is labeled "index." Clicking on this will bring up a bunch of choices for you to select alphabetically or by topic. You can click the help area you are looking for, or generally type in the subject in the field which is presented, to have the program show you what is offered.

3.   A third, and largely overlooked methods of obtaining information, is by right-clicking on the item in question. The protocol of right-clicking to obtain information and other features is becoming more and more widespread in Windows and Windows programs.

The three methods presented above can provide you with a tremendous amount of assistance while working at your computer. While these methods do not replace the need to use manuals, they offer the user the opportunity to obtain help very rapidly via a few simple mouse clicks.

The best way to learn more about this, and understand the protocols, is just to try it. So, start clicking away and see what comes up.

Printed Documentation

Typically, programs come with a very short printed document which includes just about enough information to help you install the program. Today, most installation disks are CD's (or DVD's), and of course, optical disks have lots of space where other material in addition to the program itself can be stored. Sometimes, the complete manual for the program is on the CD and the installation process for the software actually sets up an icon where you can click and have the manual brought up. Some manu-

facturers however, just put the manual on the CD and never let you know that it's there. Of course, if you're conversant with exploring the contents of the CD by using Windows Explorer or another file manager, you can take a quick look at the listing of files and generally locating the manual is fairly easy.

Once you have the manual located, it will more than likely be in a PDF file, and you can read it on your machine, or print it out using your printer if you so desire. If you feel that you are going to have many reasons to continually use the manual, it probably pays to print it out.

One thing you should be aware of however is that manuals can often be several hundred pages, and can take a considerable amount of time, paper, and ink to print out. Also, the cost of printing the manual can be substantial if there is lots of color used on the pages. Printing out of a manual can run anywhere from five cents to 20 cents a page, using your own printer, depending upon the complexity and use of color on the pages. Very often, for major programs where there are third party books available, it makes more sense to purchase a ready-made 3rd party manual which will probably have even more information than the manual on disk. This is true mostly of those programs which are very widely used such as Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect, Photoshop, and similar programs.

Generally, when the manual is on the program's CD, it is often in a format called PDF, which stands for "portable document format." This format requires Adobe Acrobat reader to view it on your computer. Most computers these days have Adobe Acrobat reader already installed, as it is a very widely used program. And, if you double-click on a file that has a PDF extension, it will automatically launch Acrobat Reader and the document in question will be available for you to read, print, or whatever you would like to do. Adobe Acrobat reader is part of the Adobe program called "Acrobat". This program has become universally used for creating documents which can be distributed widely, and easily read on any computer. The reader portion of the program has been made available by Adobe as a free utility.

Third Party Manuals

If you decide to buy a manual, here again, you have a variety of choices. Very often the software manufacturer has manuals available which you can purchase directly there. Unfortunately, these manuals may not be as good as those which you can purchase directly from a book supplier. A typical case in point is the manual for WordPerfect. For many years, I have been using the original WordPerfect manuals in addition to the third party manuals produced by QUE Corp... These QUE WordPerfect manuals which are typically entitled "Special Edition -- using Corel WordPerfect X", have been vastly superior to those manuals which are available directly from Corel, or whatever company currently owned the WordPerfect product. The QUE manuals for WordPerfect are generally are over 1000 pages, very well-organized, and offer extremely good value. Anytime I'm looking for a manual for any program, QUE is my first choice.

With the Internet, and book stores like Barnes & Noble or Amazon, finding books has become a very simple task. Go to the Web site, and do a search on the program name in question. A listing will come up, with info on the book, pricing, etc... Then it's a simple matter to make one's choice. While a local book seller may be able to provide you with some of the choices, the Internet will have a far greater number of choices available.

I hope the material presented here will assist you in using your computer in more and better ways. To me, the secret to getting any job done was never that one had to know everything about everything associated with the task. But, knowing where to look for answers to the things that you aren't familiar with, is the real key to success.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.or. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose-leaf notebook for future reference.
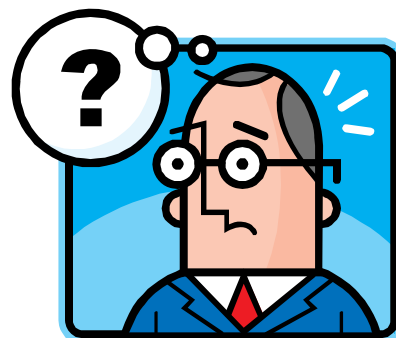
Another Useful Control Panel (System)

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups;

In an earlier edition of the Monitor, July 2009, we discussed what control panels are, and looked at the "Folder Options" control panel in detail. As we said in that article, "The Windows Control Panel is the component of the Windows User Interface that allows users to modify and personalize the way Windows (XP and Vista) operates. All of the User Interface settings and controls that are under user control can be manipulated by the small applications (called applets) that are part of the Windows Control Panel." The "System" control panel is another of these very useful applets. It provides basic information about the hardware, the software, the device drivers, and how the computer operates in a network. The information provided under XP and Vista is similar, but the displays are different.

There are a few basic things that every user should know about the computer they are using. Some of these are: what CPU (Central Processing Unit) is the computer built around; how much RAM (Random Access Memory) is installed; what OS (Operating System) is being used and what OS Service Pack is installed, if any; what is the computer's name; how many hard drives are installed; and how much space is available on each hard drive. The "System" control panel provides the answers to the first 4 of these questions.

(The hard drive information can be obtained by double-clicking My Computer, or Computer in Vista, and looking at the properties of the hard drive by right-clicking the hard drive of interest and selecting properties.)

To get to the System control panel on an XP machine, on the taskbar click start, then click on Control Panel, then double-click on the System icon. This will display the System Properties window.

The CPU, RAM, OS and Service Pack can be seen on the System Control Panel-General tab, as shown in the following:

In this XP example, the CPU is an Intel Pentium 4 (running at a clock speed of 3.2 GHz), there is 1 GB of RAM installed, and the OS is Microsoft Windows XP Professional with Service Pack 3 installed.

Computers that are part of a home network must have a name, a description, and be part of a Workgroup. The Computer Name is used to find data
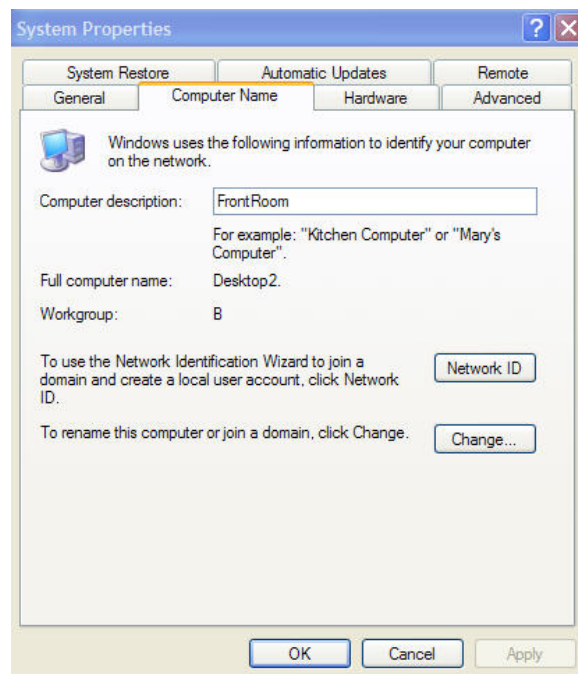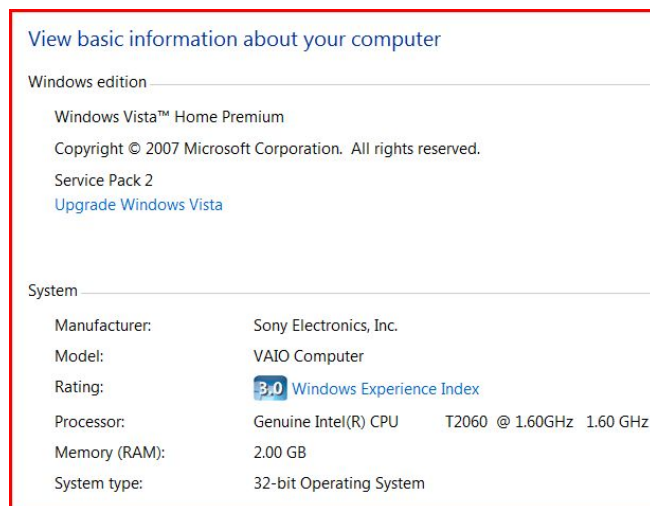
located on computers on a network. The workgroup indicates which other computers can potentially share data with this computer. In XP, this information is obtained from the System Control Panel-System Properties-Computer Name tab as shown in the following:

In this XP example, the Computer's (network) name is "Desktop2", its description is "FrontRoom" (which is also its location), and it is part of the "B" workgroup. Changes to the computer name and workgroup can be accomplished by clicking the "Change…" button.

The Vista System Control Panel also provides the same type of information. To get to the System control panel, on the taskbar click start, then click on Control Panel, then on the left click on "Classic View" (if it is not already in classic view), and finally double-click on the System icon. This will display a window for you to "View basic information about your computer". The System Properties window can be displayed by clicking on the "Advanced system settings" link in the list of Tasks, to the left side of the "View basic information about your computer" window. This window is as follows:
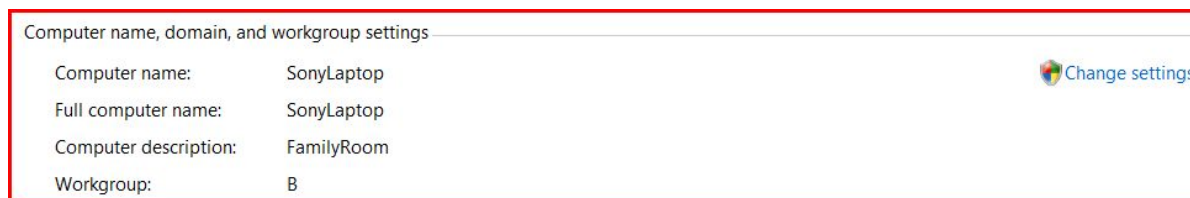
In this Vista example, the CPU is an Intel T2060 processor (running at a clock speed of 1.6 GHz), there are 2 GB of RAM installed, and the OS is Microsoft Windows Vista Home Premium with Service Pack 2 installed. In Vista, there are some additional pieces of information. The System type: shown here indicates that this machine is using a 32 bit OS (Operating Systems today are either 32 bit or 64 bit). The Rating: shows a "3.0 Windows Experience Index". The "Windows Experience Index" is a measure of the capability of your computer's hardware and software configuration and is expressed as a number between 1 and 5.9. A higher number generally means that your computer will perform better and faster than a computer with a lower number, especially when performing more resource intensive tasks.

And in this Vista example, the Computer's (network) name is "SonyLaptop", its description is "FamilyRoom" (which is also its location), and it is part of the "B" workgroup. Changes to the computer name and workgroup can be accomplished by clicking the "change settings" link.

The System Control Panel also provides access to the "Device Manager". This is where you can get detailed technical information about all of the hardware "devices" that are installed on your computer and allows you to install and update the software "drivers" that are associated with the hardware. (CAUTION-Be very careful in this area. Changes here can cause unintended consequences and possibly severely disable your computer.) This is an area that is probably best left to the technically inclined. However, if you are having problems with specific devices, the device status may be of help. Status Icons are shown for devices that are questionable (yellow), or not operating (red). The device properties may also be helpful and are displayed by a right-click on the specific device in the list and then selecting "properties". The System control panel provides a lot of information, most of which you do not regularly need, but when you do need that kind of technical information it is nice to know where it can be found.

View basic information about your computer

Windows edition

Windows Vista™ Home Premium

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Service Pack 2
Upgrade Windows Vista

System

Manufacturer:	Sony Electronics, Inc.
Model:	VAIO Computer
Rating:	**3.0** Windows Experience Index
Processor:	Genuine Intel(R) CPU T2060 @ 1.60GHz 1.60 GHz
Memory (RAM):	2.00 GB
System type:	32-bit Operating System

Computer name, domain, and workgroup settings

Computer name:	SonyLaptop	Change settings
Full computer name:	SonyLaptop	
Computer description:	FamilyRoom	
Workgroup:	B	

Making Windows More Legible

By Gary Bentley, Editor, *Throughput,* Southwest International Personal Computer Club, El Paso, TX www.swipcc.org g.bentley (at) att.net

Have you noticed that each time you purchase a new computer with a higher resolution screen you find everything on the screen looks smaller than it did on the lower resolution monitor screen (if the diagonal size of your monitor was increased you might offset this phenomenon somewhat, but still be surprised that things looked about the same size in that case)?

This is because the Windows operating system assumes that the actual number of pixels per actual inch lighting up on your monitor screen is 96, i.e., 96 DPI ("dots" per physical inch) is assumed by the operating system.

Why would this assumption make things (icons, pictures, text, etc.) look smaller on a monitor that had higher native resolution (native resolution meaning the actual number of pixels lighting up per actual physical inch on your screen)?

Let us look at a real-world example. My Dell Latitude D620 has a 14 inch diagonal LCD screen with 1440 (horizontal) by 900 (vertical) pixels (native resolution, i.e., actual LCD pixels). How many DPI, i.e., pixels per inch is my screen? Well, recalling the Scarecrow's recitation in the Wizard Of Oz when he received his "brain diploma" (or what he should have said, since he actually misstated the Pythagorean theorem — we can only assume that the Wizard did not want to damage Scarecrow's self-esteem by correcting him), we

know that the 14 inch diagonal on my screen is the hypotenuse of a right triangle, the sides of which are 1440 and 900 pixels. So we can take the square root of the sum of the squares of those two sides and that will give us the number of pixels along the 14 inch diagonal. The square root of 1440 squared plus 900 squared is, using Wolfram|Alpha (http://www.wolframalpha.com/examples/Math.htm, use the basic arithmetic box there), 1698. Note that Wolfram uses standard means of entering mathematical operators. You might have to look those up and make adjustments, e.g., I asked for the square root by telling Wolfram to take the parenthetical operations to the 0.5 power since I knew how to enter the exponentiation operator ("^"), but not a square root sign (a radical sign).

So we have 1698 pixels along my 14 inch screen diagonal, or 1698 pixels/14 inches = 121 pixels per inch (121 DPI). How wide is one pixel? 1 inch/121 pixels = 0.008264 inch per pixel. Why would this make things smaller on my Windows desktop? Well, Windows assumes 96 pixels make an inch, so an inch on my screen is now 96 x 0.008264 or 0.79 inch. So everything on my Windows desktop is only 80% of the size it would be if there were actually 96 pixels per inch on my screen. I can verify that my calculations are correct by setting Microsoft Word to display an 8.5 x 11 inch standard document at 100% size. When I measure the width of that document on my screen I obtain 6 13/16 inches or 6.8125 inches. 6.8125/8.5 = 0.80, i.e., the 8.5 inch wide document is displayed at 80% of its actual size as we calculated would occur.

This means that text fonts are 80% of their intended size on my screen also. Fonts are defined in terms of points. A point is defined as 1/72 inch, i.e., 72 points per inch. Window assumes there are 96 pixels per inch, so a Windows logical point is 96/72 = 1.333 device independent pixels. A 10 point font should be around 10 x 1.333 pixels or 13 pixels vertical (leaving aside details of leading, etc.). That

would be 13/96 = 0.13 inches high roughly on a 96 DPI monitor. On my 121 DPI monitor that 10 point font would only be $13/121 = 0.10$ inch high approximately, again about 80% smaller.

A Microsoft study indicates about 55% of people reduce the resolution of their monitors (configure Windows screen resolution in Display Properties for a lower value), presumably to make the text and other items on their computer screen larger. For example, if I changed my laptop screen resolution to 800 x 600 there would be fewer Windows pixels to cover the same area, so the "pixels" would be larger, making everything constructed with those fat pixels larger too. Fat pixels make fuzzy or pixilated images, though they are larger images. This is rather like purchasing a $474 Canon EOS Rebel with 10 Megapixel resolution and then setting it to take 640 x 480 photos (when you have paid for a camera that can take 3648 x 2736 pixel photos roughly).

A better way to increase the size of text and other items on your screen is to use Windows DPI scaling. You can tell the operating system that you want an inch on your screen to be made up of more than 96 dots/pixels (if you don't have a monitor with more than 96 actual dots per inch this would not work as well, since the operating system would have to "fake" the additional pixel density using mathematical algorithms). In Windows XP you can right click on the Desktop, select Properties, then Settings, then Advanced, then DPI setting. Choose more dots per inch, say 120 DPI. Go higher if needed. Evaluate the effect in normal use of your system.

In Windows Vista, Open Personalization by clicking the Start button, clicking Control Panel, clicking Appearance and Personalization, and then clicking Personalization. In the left pane, click Adjust font size (DPI). If you are prompted for an administrator password or confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation. In the DPI Scaling dialog box, increase the size of text and other items on the screen by clicking Larger scale (120 DPI)–make text more readable, and then click OK. You can use higher DPI settings to obtain still larger fonts and objects.

If we chose to scale up to 120 DPI on my laptop, then an inch would be 120 dots/pixels and a Windows inch on my screen would indeed be an inch, restoring the size of items on my screen to that of a typical 96 DPI

monitor. I should note that Internet Explorer 7 and 8 both have a zoom feature which will enlarge text and other items on a web page. This is a separate issue in some respects.

How big would that 10 point font be if you used a 64.5 inch diagonal HDTV with 1920 x 1080 native resolution with PC VGA input for your computer monitor? Calculate screen DPI: 34 DPI (calculate the number of pixels in the 64.5 inch diagonal for 1920 x 1080 pixel right triangle as we did above; divide that number of pixels by 64.5 inches). Simply looking at the ratio, the HDTV pixels would be 96/34 or 2.82 times larger than a 96 DPI monitor. So, a 10 point font might be around 0.13 inch x 2.82 = 0.36 inches high—-over a third of an inch. And if you scaled up your Windows DPI setting to 200 DPI, you might get that 10 point font up to 0.8 inches high (over three quarters of an inch high) on that 64.5 inch $4,000 dollar HDTV computer monitor.

I have barely scratched the surface on this topic, but I hope I have said enough to give you some ideas about making things more visible on your computer screen without throwing away the high resolution of your monitor.

Bio: Mr. Bentley studied electrical engineering at the University of Texas, began working in the electronics industry in 1978 with GTE Network Systems (Lenkurt), then software engineering with various startups in the 1980's, designing and implementing, among other things, pre-Internet email communications systems multi-tasking on Intel platforms and MSDOS PC's 1984 - 1986. Gary now provides Information Technology consulting services in the El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico areas. Gary has edited and contributed articles to the award-winning Southwest International Personal Computer Club monthly magazine, "Throughput", since December, 2003.

MP3 Tag - A Useful Utility

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
**www.spcug.org president (at) spcug.org**

As I have said in the past, "Utilities are usually small programs that are intended to do a specific task or a small range of tasks." And I have also directed you to the SPCUG Monitor Computer Buffet, where you can learn about various free utilities (and even find a website from where you can download the utility). However, keep in mind that when you download something from the internet, you could get something you were not expecting; so be very careful. With that said, I'd like to discuss a free utility that allows you to modify the MP3 Tag information that is used by MP3 players like Windows Media Player or iTunes.

The reason you might want to use an MP3 Tag utility is because these types of media players depend on the Tag information to organize the tunes they find in your music folders. If the Tag information is not what you expect, the tune will be put in a location that might make it difficult for you to find. It doesn't matter what the file name is, the tune will be put in a sequence depending on the Tag information, only. Is it "The Beatles", or "Beatles", "The Kingston Trio", or "Kingston Trio"? When I put all my tunes together, I found both versions of artist names. Also, sometimes the tune comes from a compilation of artists. In this case it probably goes into the "Various Artists" category, instead of the "artist's name" category.

MP3Tag is a free metadata editor that supports the MP3 audio format as well as many other formats such as AAC, FLAC, MPC, OGG, MP4, WMA, and others. It runs under Microsoft Windows XP and Vista (and probably Windows 7). MP3Tag allows the user to modify the ID3 tag data that is created along with the MP3 file when a tune is initially created, or ripped from a CD. It allows information such as the title, artist, album, track number, or other information about the audio portion of the file to be stored in the file itself. By the way, there are many MP3 Tagging utilities available, just Google MP3 Tag and you'll see all the possibilities.

This may be too much detail, but there are two unrelated versions of ID3: ID3v1 and ID3v2. (If this is too much detail, skip this paragraph entirely.) ID3v1 was the original attempt at capturing data about the tune. ID3v2 followed shortly after and is very different from the v1 version. ID3v2 is fairly complex, but suffice it to say that it includes all of the pertinent information, and then some, relating to the specific tune. ID3v2 has been modified and improved over the past few years and is currently at ID3v2.4.

For those of you who asked "What the heck is metadata?" here is a brief discussion that comes from
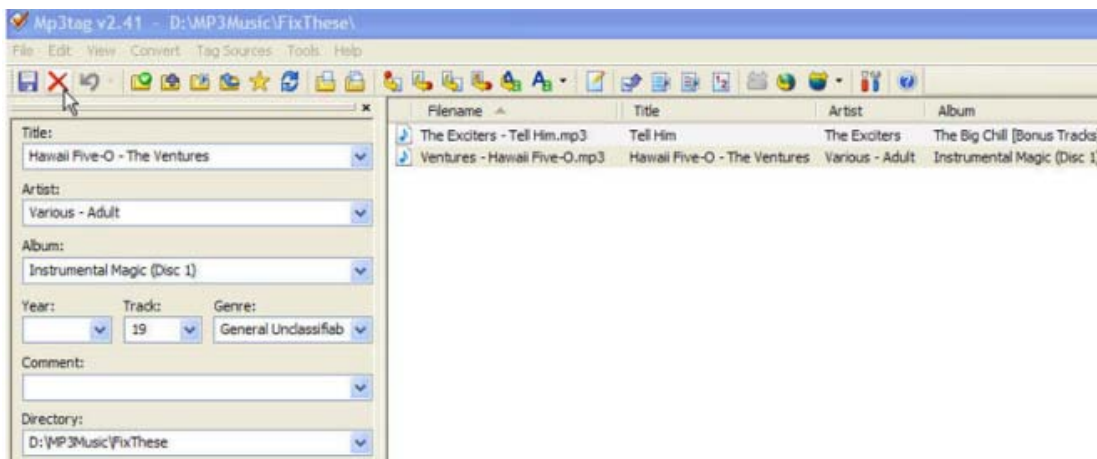
Wikipedia. Metadata (or sometimes metainformation) is "data about other data", of any sort in any media. An item of metadata may describe an individual datum, or content item, or a collection of data including multiple content items and hierarchical levels. In data processing, metadata provides information about, or documentation of, other data managed within an application or environment. This commonly defines the structure or schema of the primary data. For example, metadata would document data about data elements or attributes, (name, size, data type, etc.) and data about records or data structures (length, fields, columns, etc.) and data about data (where it is located, how it is associated, ownership, etc.). Metadata may include descriptive information about the context, quality and condition, or characteristics of the data. And there you have a description of metadata.

MP3Tag is very easy to use. First, I have created a folder called "FixThese" in my "MP3Music" folder, where I put any tunes that I think need to have their ID3 tags modified. Then I setup MP3Tag to use this folder. This way, I do my work in a specific folder so I don't upset anything in the folders that contain all my music. Also, it is easier to work with a folder that has a handful of files rather than thousands of tune files. (The folder to be used is setup by clicking "File" and then selecting "Change Directory", then navigating to the directory of your choice, "D:\MP3Music\FixThese" in this case.)

The MP3Tag window has two panes. The right-hand pane shows the files in the designated folder. The left-hand pane shows each of the specific ID3 data items that can be modified. (By the way, default values can be setup for each of these items, but I have left the default to "keep", so that I preserve the values when a tune is selected. These default values can be setup in the Tools-Options-Tag Panel window.) When you select a tune in the right-hand pane, the appropriate

values show up in the ID3 tag items on the left. Once the tune selection is made, the values on the left can be changed to your desired values.

In the example shown above, the tune "Ventures – Hawaii Five-O.mp3" has been selected. The Title is "Hawaii Five-O – The Ventures" which is the file name. The title of the tune should be only "Hawaii Five-O", so I would change the title to be such. The Artist: name is "Various – Adult" which I would want to change to "Ventures", or possibly "The Ventures" if that is how you are referring to this artist. Other information such as Album, Year, and Track may be correct as indicated and will probably be left alone.

Genre is an item that is not as well defined as the other tags and therefore I have found it to be less useful. Genre has some general meaning but the meanings may vary a lot from person to person. There are some fairly specific meanings for genre such as "Rock & Roll", "Country", "Classical", but many other meanings are in the grey areas such as "Popular" and "Easy Listening". If you want to employ this tag to any degree of usefulness, you'll have to make your own definitions and then categorize all your tunes according to these definitions. Otherwise, you'll get whatever the recording studio used for their definitions of genres.

After you are satisfied with the changes you have made, click "File" and then select "Save tag" or just click on the icon that looks like a floppy disk, to save the tag information with the tune.

MP3Tag is a useful utility if you are accumulating a large music collection and you have some specific ideas about how you would like the tunes to be organized. MP3Tag has a lot of additional features. I have described the ones that, I feel, are basic to organizing a music collection. Music collections have a way of growing in all directions and using an MP3 Tag utility is a way of controlling that growth.
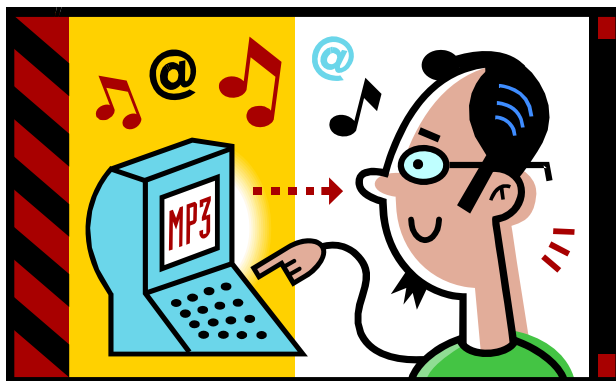
Work Smarter: Let Google Alerts Do Your Grunt Work.

By Tom Thiel, Programs Director, Lake-Sumter Computer Society, Florida
www.lscs.us tthiel5 (at) comcast.net

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The web is a treasure-trove of information. But maybe you are too busy doing other things to always remember to look, or maybe you just do not think of it.

Then let Google do it for you on a regularly-scheduled frequency and deliver it to your inbox.

I do. I have Google search all sorts of things for me— material for my *Taro Leaf* publication of the 24th Infantry Division Association, personal things, family obituaries for my family tree—all sorts of very helpful items.

It's with Google Alerts. Let me explain.

Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

➢ monitoring a developing news story

➢ keeping current on a competitor or industry

➢ getting the latest on a celebrity or event

➢ keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams

Interested? It's really quite simple. Here's how.

Open Google, i.e., www.google.com. Click on "more." And then on "even more."

Google Alerts is the first entry under the Search products listing. Click on it, and you will see the form shown below.

Place your search term in the first box, "Search terms." That can be, in my case: "Thiel +obituary" or "'24th infantry division" +obituary" or "Lake Sumter Computer Society" as examples.

Type offers you six choices: News, Blogs, Web, Comprehensive, Video and Groups. I use Comprehensive for all of mine.

For How often, you can select from: as-it-happens, once a day, or once a week. Most of mine are as-it-happens.

For the Your email block you may enter any valid email address, it does not have to be Gmail.

With my Gmail Google Alerts, it also gives an option of email or feed. I have never used feed.

Well, what might you expect when you send in your Google Alert? The two figures below are two examples of my Gmail inboxes.

The two "Orians +obituary" hits highlighted near the bottom of the above figure pointed me to the obituary of my third cousin, Rev. Father David M. Orians, 57, of Newark, OH, who died Monday, Oct. 26, 2009. I did not know David, but a quick Legacy Family Tree index search revealed that he was indeed in my list of Orians family members. So, I now have much new information to add to my genealogy family file, albeit, as a secondary source.

I also am editor of the *Taro Leaf* publication of the 24th Infantry Division Association, which is a quite nice glossy 48-page +/- that is sent to 2,200 members every quarter. As such, I am always looking for materials to publish, especially, TAPS notices of our members, historical or feature articles, and sometimes just filler materials.

The Google Alert near the middle of the above figure was the obituary of Association member, Norman Treadway. Clicking on it reveals the listing below, and clicking on that took me to the actual obituary, which I copied to the clipboard and used "paste special" to paste it either into a Word or Publisher file in the format of the receiving document. This latter is convenient and very time-saving. Treadway's obituary is below and it is followed by the actual TAPS notice.

The list below is a partial listing of all 24th-related Alerts I have operational. Actually, as I was doing this article, I thought of even a few more — "Task Force Smith" for one.

So, There You Have It!

The magic of Google Alerts. For the last issue I found a 10 or so page history of the 24th Infantry division that after a wee bit of reformatting and placing into columnar format nicely filled five published pages.

Alerts really work for me as I never would be able to remember to do each search once a day, and they work while I'm doing other things.

Bet it would work for you too. Try it.

Corel Painter™ 11

By Iris Yoffa, member of the Tucson Computer Society, AZ The Journal of the Tucson Computer Society, January 2010 www.aztcs.org irisonthego (at) gmail.com

I read a number of Painter 11 reviews online before asking to review this latest release of Corel Painter. Some say the application improvements and additions are numerous and notable. Others say that while there are not an abundance of new features and enhancements, the ones you'll find are quite significant and easily make the upgrade a good investment of time and money.

For myself, after taking a test ride, I go with the second opinion. The improved interaction between the Wacom Intuos III and this version of Painter brings digital media drawing and painting even closer to the natural media experience. What an amazing achievement!

The CD and brief documentation come in a small "eco-friendly" package. No large boxes, plastic, or unnecessary packing material to deal with. The new features are listed on page two of the 4 75" X 5 25" manual. This is followed by an abbreviated tour of the workspace, some basics about working with digital media, using the multitude of brushes and textures, and a few pages for Photoshop users making the transition. So what's new? The RealBristle category now has the addition of "DryMedia" brushes, which behave remarkably close to their real media counterparts. The Markers build color with each successive stroke. The Pen responds to stroke velocity with varying thickness of stroke. The Pencil & Chalk are sensitive to your stylus angle (point or side) when drawing on the page.

The support for Wacom's Cintinq and Intuos products has been enhanced. Support for native Photoshop files now includes color profiles and layers. The redo on the color management interface is intuitive and makes it much easier to navigate than its predecessor.

A Lasso has been added to the selection tools, and the responsiveness of the Marquee and Magic Wand tools has been improved. There is a new Transform tool that groups together the move, scale, rotate, skew, distort and perspective distortion functions.

And there have been enhancements to the brush controls, color and mixer palettes. But best of all, brush performance is noticeably more responsive than in previous versions.

I'd never previously used the auto-painting feature in the underpainting palette, but tried it out in this version. It's a great way to have the program create an initial sketch or base layer for your art. I played with it a bit. You can select to use any brush category and variant, manually adjusting brush properties such as size, opacity, or jitter.

If you'd rather, you can place a tic next to "Smart Stroke" and "Smart Settings," telling Painter to follow the perceived forms in the photo when selecting the brush options used for applying the auto-painting strokes. From here you can add a new layer for building up the image. Place a tic next to "Preserve Transparency" to protect empty areas (areas that don't contain brush strokes), in the underlying layer.

Place a tick next to "Pick Up Underlying Color" when using a brush variant that supports allowing the current layer to interact with the lower layer. In addition, the layer panel contains a drop down list of blend modes that can create some interesting results in how the two adjacent layers interact.

Painter can seem overwhelming with its wealth of features and options. Approaching this program as a newbie should be done in the same way that a new user might approach Photoshop.

Learn the interface basics and keep a reference handy as a reminder of where tools, panels and such things are located. Pick one brush and learn what you can do with it before considering what to learn next. Find a book that speaks to you and stick with it

This is the program that in version 1 brought us a tremendous number and variety of brushes, including cloners, as well as paper textures and surface textures (3D emulation) back in 1991.

When I was first introduced to Painter (in version 3), I was amazed by the Image Hose, a tool that generated patterns of images and that could be customized by the user in a variety of ways. Using the canned variants, I was fairly impressed with the logos I could spit out.

In Summary

So what's my take on this upgrade? All these new features and feature enhancements are wonderful. But for me it's all about the brushes, the emulation of actual artists' tools and the just-plain-fun features and plug-ins

To get the look and feel of using oils, watercolor, chalk, pen, liquid ink, distortion tools or pencils, just to name a few of the many brush categories, you really need a Wacom tablet. I was about to add "or equivalent," but I don't think that there is anything quite like working with a Wacom.

To get the most out of Painter, throw caution to the wind, there are no mistakes CTRL/CMD + A (select all) followed by Delete will remove any unwanted traces from your canvas. Painter 11 is the doorway into endless hours of exploring and discovering your creative nature. No toxic fumes, messy setup or tiring cleanup

Corel Painter™ 11
Vendor: Corel
www.corel.com
Price: $399.00 full version; $199 to upgrade

Requires: Windows®: Windows XP (32-bit or 64-bit Editions), or Windows Vista (32-bit or 64-bit Editions) with latest Service Pack, Pentium® IV, 700 MHz or greater, 1 GB of RAM, 500 MB of hard disk space for installation, 24-bit color display, 1024 x 768 screen resolution, CD-ROM, Internet Explorer® 6 or greater, Mouse or tablet.

Mac OS®: Mac OS X 10.4 or 10.5 (with latest revision), Power Mac® G5, 700 MHz or greater, 1 GB of RAM, 500 MB of hard disk space for installation, 24-bit color display, 1024 x 768 screen resolution, CD-ROM, Safari® Web browser, Mouse or tablet.
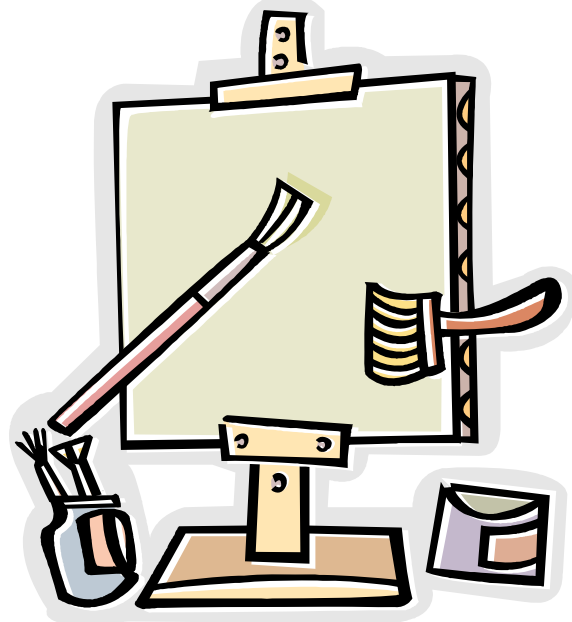
Happy Birthday US Navy!

Premiere Elements 8

By Louise Maye Huddelston, a HAL-PC family member and partner of a graphic outsource company www.hal-pc.org editor (at) hal-pc.org

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Premiere Elements 8 is the companion software to Photoshop Elements 8, and this is the video editor and "movie-maker" software. If you like to take videos or make slide shows with effects, music and more advanced direction, this is what you need. You can buy Premiere bundled with Elements or separately. This review is about Elements, so this part is brief.

Premiere 8 has serious problems that have been traced to conflicts with Realtek Audio drivers and Nvidia graphics driver installation software. Suggestion: download the free 30 day trial version to test compatibility with your PC.

I am having an issue with some of the rendering and converting to certain formats while I can render and upload to YouTube. The troubleshooting is a complex series of tests and definitely pushing my patience, as it will probably take me more than a few hours.

I found this software absolutely intuitive and even as a total novice to video production, I made several A/V productions and I was very happy. Not perfect, but I could to do some cool things with sound and transitions that were beyond my usual slideshows with Photoshop Elements. There is Instant Movies, to process a video clip for you with pre-packaged templates, based on one of several themes; this is a lifesaver.

Auto Analysis is a new feature that takes in image content (including face recognition) and allows you to do Smart Tagging of various aspects, including video quality, date, subject and much more.

Help: As far as help goes, the tutorials are somewhat limited unless you pay for the Plus Membership. There is excellent help online and I had occasion to use it.

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meetings will be held on Oct 16th from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. 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:

Fundamental Technologies, Presented by Gabe Goldberg
HP Home Server - Lorrin Garson

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/

Adobe Premiere 8 Sample

Washington Area User Group Partners

Working Together For Our Members
NCTCUG.ORG WACUG.ORG OPCUG.ORG

3. While holding the right mouse button, drag the icon to an empty portion of your desktop.

4. Release the right mouse button and a dialog box will appear prompting you to create a shortcut on the desktop.

5. Click on the Create Shortcuts Here option.
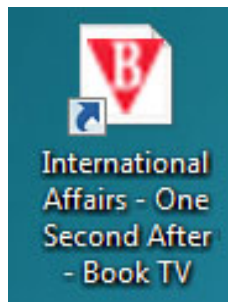
Your desktop icon will resemble the illustration on the left. Customizing the icon is easy. Right-click on the icon, and select Properties from the popup menu.

Activate the Web Document tab. From here you can change the icon by clicking on the Change Icon button and choosing from a large selection provided by Microsoft. If you don't care for any of these, you can browse through folders on your computer until you find one you prefer.

The Security tab allows you to grant or deny access to anyone who also shares your computer. Information on the Details tab will vary with the web site.

The General tab, (which should be the Details tab), is where you get the detailed information about the icon.

Change whatever you think needs changing or leave everything alone. The choice is yours.

As always, the devil is in the details. If the website you wish to access through the shortcut requires authorization, the shortcut may not work. If a user ID and password are needed you will most likely get a message telling you that you're not getting in until you provide proper identification.

Club Election Notice

The Club Annual Meeting and Election will be at the regular meeting on October 6, 2010. Anyone interested in running for office please contact a board member. Ballots will also be sent out & received by email, as has been the practice the last few years.
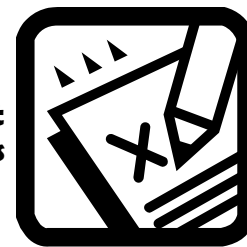
NCTCUG Information

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 2010

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

Directors — all terms expire 2011

Mel Mikosinski	703-978-9158
John Keys	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	703-759-3938
Sy Fishbein	703-536-5894
Roger Fujii	
Lorrin Garson	
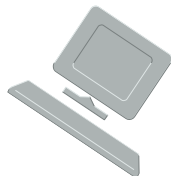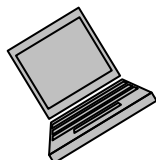
Article Submissions

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. 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

Membership Policy

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

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at http://groups.yahoo.com/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 14)

Remark: I have heard that some users have crashes, freezes, etc. I think this is not so much the program but the user's computer resources – mediocre operator, insufficient RAM and/or CPU speed.

I expected that I would be able burn a DVD in the AVCHD format and then play it on a Blu-Ray player. I discovered that Premier Elements 8 does not support burning AVCHD format DVDs! Most competitive software will burn AVCHD format DVDs. More successful results from Microsoft's Movie Maker Live, which is free.

Another cool technology from Adobe stable in Premiere 8 is "Object Tracking". You have to use it to believe it! You select a person/moving object in the video & drop a clip (rain, lightening, bird etc) on the object.

General: Contacting Adobe support is another exercise in patience. Send them an e-mail, wait 2-3 days for a response is canned, wait another 2-3 days for another response. If you're in any kind of hurry, forget it. Adobe support just isn't the quality it used to be. Bottom line, for the money Premiere is the best video editor I have tried.

The practical value of Premiere 8 is the incredibly rich feature set, the sophisticated, yet simple user interface, and the wealth of content, add-ons, and tutorials. Just put it in a sufficiently powerful engine!

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

October 2010

1st Wed. (10/6)
7 p.m. General Meeting
 Annual Meeting & Election

2nd Wed. (10/13)
Online-Only Webinar using Skype
See page 1 of August issue for information

4th Wed (10/27)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (10/18)
7 p.m. Board of Directors

Meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50. See website for directions to post-meeting pizza gathering.

First Class