



Brevard Users Group



October 2006

Prez Sez

By Larry French

The September BUG meeting was led off by a slide presentation by Bob Schmidt showing damage to his home and the Tinkers SIG site from hurricane ?? last year. Bob says the SIG should be up and running again by the time you read this. He would like people interested in tinkering under the hood of their machines to contact him at; hardware@bugclub.org.

The featured speaker for the evening was Serre Murphy, the President of Net Fulfillment Technologies, a company that produces and markets WebBuild Express, a software package which enables one to create Web pages without any previous knowledge of HTML and a web site password building program. Serre provided a 30 day trial CD to everyone to take home and experiment with. His talk was informative and entertaining as he showed some examples of horrible Web sites he has come across. A number of members seemed interested in trying their hand at it.

October's meeting will feature Smart Computing with Jen Clausen. Be sure to attend and let your friends know as they always put on a great presentation.

Take care of each other,
Larry French, President

Happy Birthday, HD

September was the 50th birthday of the Hard Drive.

According to John C Dvorak of PC Magazine:

“Over the the past 50 years, areal density-the measurement of how much data can be crammed on an inch of disk space - has increased by a factor of 50 million”

For a look at the development of this device go to:
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,2003186,00.asp>



Change in Monthly Meeting

**The Monthly Meeting will be held at:
The Eau Gallie Library on Thursday,
October 19th, at 7:00 pm**

**The speaker will be:
Smart Computer Magazine**

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Secretary's Report

By: Erich Dalton, Secretary

BUG MEETING
Sept 21, 2006



The meeting was opened at 6:57 pm by club president Larry French with a short slide show of Bob Schmidt's home damage from hurricane Wilma last year. The repairs are complete and the Tinkers SIG he hosted there will resume in the next couple of weeks.

Visitors were invited to introduce themselves and announcements were made. Our guests were David Vines and Lou Terry. We also have two new members! They are Beth Allen and Clifford Manthey.

We had a swap table again and were reminded to keep Larry updated on e-mail addresses changes and about the ink cartridge return program for recycling and benefit to the door prize fund. The door prizes were then given to 4 lucky raffle-ticket holders. The winners and their prizes were:

Eileen Cameron - Attaché 512mb thumb drive
Jim Halley - Computer Bag with WebBuild.net logo
Edgar Dalton - Cartridge World coffee mug
Bob Staples - Zyxtel wireless router

Our speaker was Serre Murphy, President of Net Fulfillment Technologies. They develop software for Web applications.

His talk was about their WebBuild Express and WebBuild Password Security programs. WebBuild Express is an easy to use web page creation tool that he demonstrated for us and WebBuild Password Security allows passwords to be built into Web pages. He gave a lively and informative lecture that we gladly listened to past the usual one hour time frame. For those of you missed this talk he gave us the web page where we can review it! **It is <http://www.webbuild.net/FunandProfit>.** Simply click down the list to view the PowerPoint images. Links within them take you to web pages discussed. He also distributed a 30 day trial CD of the programs to the group.

The meeting was then adjourned at 8:43 pm.



Treasurer's Report

By Tom Butler

September 2006

EXPENSES

Door Prize Fund	\$ 8.46
Nltr Mailing	\$67.74
Nltr Printing	\$63.63
Total	\$139.83

INCOME

Dues	\$200.00
Ink Cartridge Check	\$ 20.00
Total	\$220.00

ASSETS

Checking*	\$ 592.60
Savings	\$2,208.99
Total	\$2,801.59

New Members:

Ledman, J #1272
Flowers, R #1271

Renewals:

Hertzberg, C #1218
Price, F. L #1075
Truman, E #1249
Stedman, D #1202
Slaney, E #1204
Adams, D #1078



Good News

Bob Schimdt is about finished with the hurricane repairs to his house.

So ... the Tinkers SIG will be starting up in a couple of weeks.

Check the calendar at <http://bugclub.org>

Managing Device Drivers

By Vinny La Bash,
Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
www.spcug.org

Windows is the most widely used operating system (OS) in the personal computer world.

For each piece of hardware that's connected to a Windows based computer, somebody somewhere has written a piece of software to make the device work with a computer. This piece of software is called a "Device Driver." One of the most useful features of a well-written device driver is making itself all but invisible to whoever is using the computer. You create a document, send it to your printer, and somehow the document prints. Your device driver takes care of all the little details necessary for the printing operation to occur.

Drivers are one of the three most important broad categories of software in computers. The first is the operating system, the second is whatever applications are installed, including communications, and the third is device drivers. Drivers are important for two reasons. First, your peripherals won't work without them, and second, corrupted or out-of-date device drivers are responsible for most system crashes.

There are other reasons why it's important to keep your device drivers up-to-date. Sometimes a manufacturer will become aware of some kind of defect or glitch in the driver software and issue a fix. You will need it. A different manufacturer may have a driver for its own device that will cause a conflict with an out-of-date driver on your device. Over time, updates for Windows may eventually cause problems with an out-of-date driver.

Proper device driver management is essential to keeping your computer crash proof. If device driver management is unfamiliar territory, please pay attention. You'll be glad you did. Microsoft introduced the concept of Signed Drivers with Windows 2000 and continued with Windows XP. If a device driver is "signed" by Microsoft, it means that the driver has been subjected to meticulous, painstaking, extensive testing to ensure compatibility with your Windows operating system.

Anytime you install a signed driver, Windows checks it by default and also guarantees it has not been altered or changed in any way. If the driver is not signed, Windows alerts you with a strong message that the driver has not passed Microsoft's rigorous certification tests.

Windows will also ask if you want to install the driver anyway, and will do so if you give it permission. Keeping your computer safe from unstable software is always a good idea. Fortunately, changing the Windows default is relatively easy, but you need Administrator privileges.

Right-click the My Computer icon on the desktop, then select Properties. Click the Hardware tab and then the Driver Signing button. Choose Block to let this be the new default, and you're done. Windows will now block any device drivers that it does not recognize as signed.

Not all manufacturers send their drivers to Microsoft for testing. For small firms this can be an expensive proposition. Does this mean you should never install an unsigned driver? No, but you should do some checking of your own to ensure that the company has a good reputation in the industry. Sometimes a new device driver will prove unstable for various reasons. Windows XP has the ability to delete the driver and install a previous version. Open the Device Manager, and double click the drive that's causing problems. Switch to the Driver tab and Roll Back the driver to the previous version.

What we've discussed so far is fine if you're using relatively new equipment, but suppose you're having trouble with something that's old and the manufacturer has gone out of business. Chances are good that the original installation disk is lost or deteriorated to a point where it is no longer useful. There are many other reasons why you could have difficulty finding a device driver, but these are the most common.

In the past, finding the right device driver or firmware was often a tedious, time consuming, and frequently impossible task. Nowadays, we have web sites such as www.driverguide.com to help us. The site has ***Continued on Page 5***

Device Drivers ... Continued from Page 4

been around since 1997, and has seen many improvements. It has a unique membership base of thousands who collectively compiled a massive database of drivers, firmware, and support documents that is the largest and most comprehensive on the Web.

Recognizing that most people who use computers are not experts, they have devised an easy step-by-step process that will help you find and install drivers. There is an archive of hundreds of thousands of files containing not only drivers, but voluminous information on manufacturers including links to other sites with driver information. Also useful are the discussion boards where you can chat with others who have the same hardware, and learn from their experience.

After you search for a driver and find it, help doesn't stop. The Driver Summary provides you with a rundown of all the information you're likely to need to make the decision about whether or not to download and install the driver. This information is put together from the original manufacturer, plus ratings and comments from those who have previously downloaded and installed the file. It's nice to have everything in one place.

There are many web sites where you can find information about device drivers, but this is one of the best places to use as your starting point. Managing device drivers does not have to be a search in the dark. Use the tools available to you, and your system will be stable and a lot less prone to crash.

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Day Meeting

A daytime meeting is held on the first Monday of the month at 2pm, in One Senior Place, 8085 Spyglass Hill Rd in Viera.

<http://oneseniorplace.com>

Web 2.0 and The Evolution of the Small Office/Home Office (soho)

*By John Abbott, member of the Bentsen Grove Resort Computer Club, Mission Texas
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Will the evolution of Web 2.0 have any lasting effect on the proprietary software vendors? I believe so to a limited extent. There are a myriad of new Web 2.0 companies springing up hourly. Each offering something unique to attract users. For some, this will prove satisfactory enough that they will no longer purchase proprietary mail programs or word processors, and possibly even spread sheets.

The advent of Open Office has most certainly put a dent in the profit margins of Microsoft's Office Suite. There is a new look coming from Microsoft Office that adds a lot of eye candy to their existing Suite, but not a lot of additional function. I believe that between Open Source and the Web 2.0 companies the bottom line at Microsoft will feel their presence.

Even though Microsoft is reacting to the popular features of Mozilla's Firefox browser by copying most of them into Internet Explorer 7. IE7 still doesn't have several of the most advanced features of Firefox like ad blocking and several extensions made available for free download. And the folks at Mozilla aren't sitting around waiting for Microsoft to catch up, they are already beta testing Flock, a Web 2.0 oriented browser with blogging and social tagging built into its rich function package. However, if you don't consider yourself a true Web 2.0 Juggernaut then you may not enjoy it as much. It is designed to accommodate the blog grabbing and social bookmarking of web sites.

Google is clearly among the leaders in Web 2.0 features. They offer on line mail, on line calendar, financial portfolio tracking, the best search engine on the planet, news aggregated to your personal interests, image search, even a Linux search engine or a couple of other specialized search engines. And Google was the

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Web 2 ... Continued from Page 5

company that forced the email providers into offering 2 Gigabytes of storage for their mail.

[<http://www.google.com/intl/en/options/>]

But there are other companies close on the heels of Google. My current favorite is inbox.com inbox offers personalized email, with spell checker, rich text (font control) manageable folders and the absolutely best spam system on the Internet. You can set your Spam to capture any mail not from someone in your address book. Or you can set it to challenge anyone not in your book and then hold that challenged mail in an "Unverified" folder where you can accept or permanently reject it. Along with the email, you are offered 2 Gb of storage with folders containing your various upload/download type .: music, documents, pictures or files. And if that weren't enough, inbox also offers a calendar that emails you up to 3 reminders on calendared events. [<http://www.inbox.com>]

Another great company is Zoho. Zoho derives its name from SOHO (small office/home office) and it has laid in virtually everything one would need. The Zoho stable contains email, spread sheets, planners, collaborative white boards etc. Their banner program is Zoho Virtual Office and it is complete with reminder calendars, email, a virtual drive (only with XP) Instant Messaging, task management, and all of it can be collaborative for up to 10 users. Not all of the features are available on the free packages, but small version is available for you to try before you buy. [<http://www.zoho.com>]

The only thing missing from a small office/home office would be a telephone. Ah, but you can have that on-line too. From full service phone systems like Packet8 to totally free Gizmo and Skype. The packet8 system will give you an adapter to plug your phone into, or you can buy a Uniden phone system with a base phone and up to 10 wireless handsets for \$79. Or you can use your current phone connected into their free adapter and your up - both systems carry a \$20 a month fee for caller ID, three way calling, and your choice of area code and depending on where you live you can keep your phone number. If you want to get exotic if you buy their VideoPhone and then the same \$20 a month. [<http://www.packet8.net/>]

But for the true Web 2.0 user, Skype or Gizmo reign supreme. Each is totally free, and has adapters for a web camera. Of course, if you are not calling another SIP subscriber you will have to buy an outgoing AND an incoming outside line. I prefer using Gizmo because it has superior audio setup and a test point to call to check for echo suppression or the lack thereof. [<http://www.gizmoproject.com>] [<http://www.skype.com>]

And finally for setting up those conference calls you an always use the services of Gizmo which offers a free conference system. For those using Gizmo, it is entirely free. For those checking into the conference from their cell phones or land line phone they will pay the standard rate to their provider. There is a great company called Live Office that gives you much better control (mute, mute group, roll call etc) and it too is absolutely free and the quality of the connection much improved over Gizmo. And should you need to step up to a toll free call in system, Live Office offers them for a variety of rates. [<http://freeconferencing.liveoffice.com/>]

And now you are equipped to take your entire home office with you in a USB thumb drive. And depending on the version you use, it can all be automatically encrypted. SOHO has become portable and secure.

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Computers — From the Very Beginning for New Users

*By Charlie Paschal Editor/Publisher, Palmetto Personal Computer Club, Columbia, SC
Reprint from: The Computer Club of Ocean County*

One of the biggest “panes” about Windows is that just about anything can break it — such as installing a new program or getting rid of an old one. There’s a right way and a wrong way to do both — but even if you do things the right way, you still can have problems. Windows 2000 and XP have better ways to do this.

Here are the steps:

- * Right click on My Computer, then left click on Properties.
- * Click on the Advanced tab at the top of the next dialog box
- * Click on Settings in the startup and recovery section of the next dialog box.
- * Uncheck the box next to Automatically restart under the System failure section.
- * Click OK twice.

What does this do? Let me set up a scenero for you.

You install an application that corrupts (or changes) a file the system needs to run correctly. If the box above is checked, the system will automatically restart, showing a brief “blue screen” that doesn’t give you (or anyone else) a chance to see what the error is before Windows restarts again. It’s a vicious circle.

With the above box unchecked, although Windows still might not run, at least it will stop on the above blue screen, meaning you might be able to trace down the problem, perhaps replacing the needed file or get help from a more experienced technical support person who can identify the problem and talk you through fixing it.

This is not a total solution but it gives you a fighting chance. With the above box checked, you don’t have a chance at all since you have no way of identifying the problem. If you’re using Windows XP or 2000, before you go to bed tonight, uncheck that box. By the way, Windows 2000 will make you restart your computer after hitting OK twice — XP won’t.

The other keystroke might get you out of an install mess. Sometimes with this one you have to be really quick because you have to hit it while Windows is starting up. With computers getting faster and faster, you don’t have much time to hit this key because once Windows starts loading the desktop, hitting this key won’t help.

One of the ways to make sure you have time to hit

the keys is to turn the computer off completely, then get poised to hit the F8 key. It’s along the top row of keys of your keyboard and you MUST strike it before Windows starts loading the desktop.

(With some computers this is made even harder by a flashy screen they display while in the background, Windows is busy trying to load everything. Even if you get this type of screen once you hit the power button, hit F8 anyway.)

Sometimes you’ll get a message that you have a keyboard error and be asked to hit F1 to continue, if that happens, press F1 then F8 again. You should then get a menu in a DOS-like black screen.

Let’s say that you install a program in Windows (any of the above three versions) and then you start getting error messages or, even worse, Windows won’t run at all. The one you want to choose is “Safe Mode.” This is Windows with all the good stuff removed. The operating system uses a minimum set of drivers and, to tell you the truth, it looks grimy because the display is using only 16 colors. I remember the days of 16 colors on monitors and they looked pretty good back then; now I’m spoiled with millions of colors.

Once Windows loads, Windows 2000 and 98 will look pretty much the same, except for the few colors. This is the time to go to the Control Panel, click on Add/Remove Programs and remove the program that started giving you the trouble in the first place.

You also can go into Device Manager (right click on My Computer, then left click on Properties) to disable drives of devices you suspect are creating the problem. By clicking on the + sign next to a category, you can see the all the devices listed. Right clicking on the device will give you a context menu. On that menu is a “disable” device. That’s what you might want to do if that’s the one with the problem.

While in this cocoon of safety, you can do such stuff as change video drivers, adjust video drivers or uninstall a program that is creating problems.

How to uninstall a program:

- * Open the Control Panel.
- * Double click on Add/Remove Programs.
- * Select the program you want to uninstall and follow the directions from the Wizard.

In many cases, this will fix your computer. If it doesn’t, at least you have a fighting chance by unchecking the automatic boot and learning how to use the startup menu that contains a goody that can help you rescue your system.



Essential Processes, How You Can Tell

By Vinny La Bash,

Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida

Every other computer article these days seems to be about Windows Vista, a long promised operating system that won't make its appearance for almost another year. Why all the fuss about something that doesn't even exist yet? It's as far advanced over Windows XP as Windows 95 was over 3.1, that's why. That's nice, but we don't have Vista to take us to Nirvana today. We common folk have XP. That's not bad, but we don't have Vista as promised. Maybe this time next year I'll be writing about a Vista tip to make life easier while we're all anticipating the release of Vienna, the follow on to Vista. While we're waiting, here's something to make the wait easier.

If you press Ctrl+Alt+Delete to bring up the Windows Task Manager and then activate the Processes tab, you see a long list of computer services that run in the background while you're working with your system. You've undoubtedly received recommendations that you should shut down or disable the unessential processes to improve system performance. This is sound advice, but how can you tell what's essential from what could be shut down without clobbering your operation? Try the following to get a fighting start in that direction.

Restart your system and when it begins to reboot press F8 repeatedly until the Start Up menu appears. Select the Safe Mode option from the menu. If you get another screen asking you to select the operating system, choose the one which applies to you. In most cases, you will see one choice and it will be Windows XP Home Edition, Windows XP Professional Edition or Windows XP Media Center Edition. A bunch of programming gibberish may fill up your screen next and your system may appear to be 'frozen' for a minute or two. Relax, but don't touch anything, especially the keyboard or the mouse.

Eventually something like the normal Windows Welcome Screen will appear and you will be asked to sign in. If you are the only one using your system and

your user profile has full Administrator privileges, you can safely log on to Windows Safe Mode. If you're not certain, use the Administrator Profile.

You will now be confronted with a formidable looking dialog box containing an ambiguous explanation of Safe Mode. Click the Yes button. When the desktop appears, don't panic. The icons may look very different, but nothing is wrong. One of the characteristics of Safe Mode is to load only the minimum number of video drivers that will support the lowest resolution your monitor can handle. This guarantees you will have a visible screen in Safe Mode. Everything will be back to normal when you restart, but you will probably have to rearrange your icons.

Press Ctrl+Alt+Delete. This time the Windows Task Manager displays a considerably shorter list in the Processes section. This list represents what's really essential to keep Windows running. Don't shut down or disable anything in this short list when you are running in Windows normal mode. You run the risk of not only crashing your system, but you may not be able to boot up again without doing a repair reinstall of your operating system. The idea here is to improve the performance of your system, not put yourself out of business.

You can make a handwritten list of the processes that are running in Safe Mode and use that as a reference, but here is another method.

1. Click on a blank area of the Windows Task Manager to make sure it is active. Click the Processes tab.
2. Press Alt+PrtScrn to capture the image of the dialog box and store it in the clipboard area.
3. Close the Windows Task Manager Dialog box.
4. Click on the Start button.
5. From the Start Menu, open the All Programs section.
6. Open the Accessories Menu.
7. Start the Paint program.
8. From the Edit menu select Paste to put the stored image in the canvas area.
9. Save the image on the Desktop, the My Documents folder or in any folder where you can retrieve it easily.

Continued on Page 9

Laptop vs. Desktop

Reprint from:

Space Coast PC Users Group

Q: OK, last year's closeouts are here and I'm going to treat myself to a new computer. However, I am trying to decide between a laptop and a desktop computer. Do you have any guidelines to help me choose?

A: I've used both and overall I'd have to recommend going with a desktop model unless you know for sure that you absolutely positively just have to have a portable computer.

If you need to take a computer (stress need - not want) then you'll be stuck with a laptop. Why am I so hard on laptops? Easy - for the same money, you can find a desktop computer that will run circles around the laptop.

Laptops tend to be slower, have smaller HDs, and you're stuck with the factory screen (OK, you can usually attach another external monitor if you like). From a performance viewpoint, there's no competition - you get WAY more power and performance with a desktop for the same money.

In addition, desktops tend to be more upgradeable too. Try sticking a new \$20.00 network card in your laptop. You can't - you gotta buy a PCMCIA card. Need more memory? It's a lot cheaper for a desktop. Want to add a second hard drive? You can only use an expensive external drive on a laptop. Need to upgrade your video card? Forget it. Want a better sound card? Have fun trying that upgrade on a laptop. Yeah, yeah, I know. It can be argued that there are a lot of USB accessories that do the jobs described above for your laptop, but you still have more choices with a desktop (and you're not stuck with a dozen little gadgets lying around).

Oh, and if you have visions of sitting on a beach or even working outside, forget it. Sunlight makes it next to impossible to read most laptop screens and the stupid things are too hot to have sitting on your lap for any amount of time. Besides, you have any idea what a spilled tropical drink will do to the innards of your laptop? YIKES!

All that said, if there is a need for portability, a laptop is the must-have computer. If you are always wishing you had a computer with you on out-of-town trips, then you gotta go laptop - it's the best choice. If you need to be able to use your computer wirelessly throughout your house due to space constraints, then a laptop makes more sense. However, if you simply think it would be "nice" or "cool" to have a laptop, then do yourself a huge favor and jump on a screamin' desktop computer for the same money. Just my ever-so-humble opinion of course :-)

I'll watch my step as I come down from my soap-box...

Steve... with permission . . .
worldstart.com



Essential Processes ... Continued from Page 8

10. Close Paint.
11. Restart Windows.
12. Rearrange your icons if necessary when the desktop appears in normal mode.
13. Open Paint as you did in Safe Mode.
14. Retrieve and print the Task Manager Dialog box image.

You can copy and paste the image in your word processor or another application if you prefer. When you shut down or disable any process not on your short list, you can be confident that you won't inadvertently clobber your system while trying to improve its performance. What about all those other programs running in the background? That's a subject for another article.

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CAPTCHA

(Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart)

By Sandy Berger. Compu-KISS
www.compukiss.com
sandy(at)compukiss.com

Have you ever tried to sign up for a message board or Web service and been presented with an image with letters and numbers which you are asked to read and type into the Web form? While the shape, size, and background of the image varies it always has contains a series of letters and numbers, usually on a graphic background.

Often the letters and numbers are distorted and you have to struggle to recognize them, making you wonder why the website is making you go through this extra step. Don't blame the website. This image-recognition routine is something caused by cousins of the nasty spammers who have permeated our email.

The mechanism that makes you type in this information is called a CAPTCHA. If you know what those letters stand for, you will have a pretty good idea of why this mechanism is being employed. CAPTCHA stands for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.

Here's the story. Spammers have completely infiltrated the world of the Internet. In email they try to get you to buy their wares. On message boards they list links to their Viagra and pornographic websites so that they get better positioning in the search engines. They overload online opinion polls and they sign up for free email accounts which they use to send out more spam.

For the most part, all of this spam activity is done automatically. The spammers send out what we call "bots". These are actually software programs that search the Internet and imitate the behavior of a human. These bots are smart enough to fill out registration forms and so they can automatically register at a variety of websites.

We recently had an attack of these automated bots on our Compu-KISS message boards. After years of being unaffected, we suddenly had hundreds of postings that told off-color jokes and lead to pornographic and drug-selling websites. We moved the website to a new area (www.happycomputing.com), but were still inundated by

these automated posting. So we installed a CAPTCHA. Now when a new person registers for the message board they must type in the five letters and numbers that they see on the screen to prove that they are human. Since the CAPTCHA is a graphic image, most of the bots cannot read the text like humans can.

The CAPTCHA that we use has letters and numbers that are undistorted, so it is easy to use. If, however, we are attacked by some of the smarter bots that are out there, we will have to distort the letters and numbers slightly to make it even harder for the bots to register.

Although a slight inconvenience to the average user, the CAPTCHA is a real roadblock to vision impaired Internet users who use screen readers which, like the bots, are unable to read the text on the CAPTCHA.

It is extremely unfortunate that we all have to be inconvenienced because of the activities of Internet spammers. I really hated to have to install this software, but I had no other choice. The same is true of many other websites and Web services. So when you encounter a CAPTCHA, don't blame the website, blame the spammers!

The Compu-KISS Message Boards can be accessed at www.compukiss.com or directly at www.happycomputing.com

Sandy Berger, The Compu-KISS® Lady... nationally respected computer authority, journalist, media guest, speaker, and author is a seasoned 30-year computer expert. Sandy is a consumer advocate promoting simplicity, ease-of-use, and stability in consumer technology products. She works with hardware and software developers to help them make their products more user-friendly.

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Quality Freeware

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
<http://www.spcug.org>

I found the article in the July Monitor on “Cost Efficient” software by Joseph Moran to be quite interesting, but noticed that much of the software had a price associated with it. So I thought I’d let you in on the absolutely free software I have been using for the past 2-5 years. In every case I have used it as my standard application for the purpose and, in many cases, totally removed any commercial software that carried out the same function. I have also upgraded the free software when the upgrades became available. All of the software in this article can be obtained without charge by downloading from the various Internet sites I have listed. In every case there is no “trial” period involved.

The foremost item on my list is OpenOffice. I am currently using version 2.0. This version includes word processing, spreadsheet, drawing, database, and presentation software. All of these applications produce documents that are interchangeable with their equivalents in Microsoft Office. OpenOffice will also export documents in either PDF or HTML format. You don’t need any PDF software to produce documents that are readable by Adobe Reader (formerly known as Acrobat Reader). Unfortunately it can not open or edit PDF documents. It can open and edit documents in over 25 different formats including HTML, Word Perfect, Word, Adobe PhotoShop, etc. You can obtain your free copy of this software from <http://www.openoffice.org/www.openoffice.org>.

I also recommend Firefox and Thunderbird as free replacements for Internet Explorer and Microsoft’s Outlook Express. With the latest versions of Firefox I have not run across any web sites that it can not render correctly. That’s not to say that some may exist, I just haven’t found them. Firefox will transfer your favorites (bookmarks) from Internet Explorer. As for Thunderbird, it is similar in many ways to Outlook Express, but it includes an RSS Reader that I have found useful. It also filters junk mail and places it in a special folder where you can review it if needed. Otherwise it will be automatically deleted at an interval that you can set. It doesn’t remove 100% of the spam, but it does detect about 99% of what comes into my computer. One of the latest additions to Thunderbird is anti-phishing protection. Thunderbird warns you if it suspects that the message might be a

scam. Thunderbird can import your address book from Outlook Express. Both Firefox and Thunderbird can be downloaded from www.download.com or if you prefer, from www.mozilla.com/firefox/ and www.mozill.com/thunderbird.

As for anti-virus software, you can’t beat Avast for ease of use and automatic updating. After downloading and installing the software it asks you to register. That simply includes giving up your e-mail address, name and postal address. You receive a license to use the software for a year for personal use. At the end of the year you re-register and get another year’s free use. Avast is free for personal use, not for businesses or other organizations. However, non-profit organizations can buy Avast at a greatly reduced price. I have used Avast for several years and have installed it on more than 100 other personal computers. In no case have the users had any problems with this software. In addition, Avast does not sell your e-mail or postal address so you get no spam from this registration. Avast quietly updates itself frequently in the background while you continue to work. Then it simply reports that an update has taken place. I have seen days when I have had 3-4 updates in the same day. If you use a dial-up connection instead of cable/DSL, Avast will attempt to update whenever you go on-line. Since the downloads are usually less than 100 KB, they occur rapidly, even on a dial-up connection. The Home edition of Avast can be downloaded from www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html. I recommend using this site instead of download.com as your anti-virus database will be more current.

For a good, reliable firewall I recommend ZoneAlarm. It is also free for personal use. I admit they will try to sell the Pro version when you install it, but the free version is really all you need. That is, assuming you have anti-virus and anti-parasite software installed on your computer. It used to be that dial-up users didn’t really have much need for a firewall. However, in today’s Internet world, I wouldn’t want to connect to the Internet without a good software firewall. While traveling with my laptop, I kept both my anti-virus and firewall updated and running for every connection. ZoneAlarm can be downloaded from www.zonealarm.com. Click on the download link and then the ZoneAlarm tab.

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Quality Freeware ... Continued from Page 11

As for anti-parasite software, I have to agree with Mr. Moran. Ad-Aware SE and Spybot S&D are two that I keep on both my computers. But that isn't enough. You have to run them regularly to insure you are not infected. I run mine a minimum of once each week. Both of these can be downloaded from download.com. Spybot also has an immunization function that can prevent some parasites from installing themselves on your system. Another immunization application that I use is Spyware Blaster. It makes changes to your registry that prevents parasites from installing. At the present their database lists more than 5,000 items. Using these three anti-parasite/anti-trojan products will certainly upgrade your security and they are all free. Spyware Blaster can be downloaded from download.com or www.javacoolsoftware.com.

For general photo editing I use Google's Picasa. It is not just a photo organizer. I use it to download photos from my camera and organize them into folders. It can also be used to edit photos, print photos and e-mail them. You can make CDs, add captions or post photos on web sites. The advantage of Picasa over other photo software is that it is free. It can be downloaded from download.com or <http://picasa.google.com>. It does not have all the bells and whistles of applications like Photoshop or ULEAD's PhotoImpact, but it is more than adequate for most nonprofessional purposes.

You may not need screen capture software very often, but when you do, you really need it. I use MWSnap. It allows you to capture an entire screen or part of it. What you capture can be saved to a file, printed, or edited. It may take you a little time to get accustomed to the interface. But you can't damage anything by playing with it. Once you are familiar with all the controls, it really does copy any part of your screen. Again, this is freeware and can be downloaded from www.mirekw.com/winfreeware/index.html.

Have you ever considered that you might need an inventory of the items in your home for the purposes of making an insurance claim? Considering that we live in Florida where there are many electrical storms, to say nothing of hurricanes, damage to your home could occur at any time. Can you list the contents of every room and the value of each item? Well, the Insurance Information

Institute provides free software to assist you in making an inventory and a photographic record of the contents of your house. This software is very easy to use and very important to any homeowner. The software also includes typical lists of things in each type of room. You don't have to use these as you can enter anything you have. You can include place of purchase, date and price, if you have that info. Pictures of items or general pictures of a room can also be added. This software can be downloaded from www.knowyourstuff.org.

There is one more significant software package that I use that is freeware. That is NVu, web-authoring software. Linspire, the company that produces the Linspire Linux software, publishes it. It has a WYSIWYG editor (What You See Is What You Get) as well as direct editing of the HTML language. It includes the tools for publishing the pages to a web site. You can test the pages against a browser on your computer to insure that everything works properly. It also allows you to add Javascript either directly or in a separate file to your pages. There is a complete tutorial for NVu included on the web that can be downloaded and printed. There is also an NVu users forum which can be quite helpful. If you have never created a web page before, I think you would find NVu to be just what you need. If you want to see a web site created with NVu, check out www.sandpiperchorus.org. NVu can be downloaded from download.com.

There is one other specialized software package that I have used that some may be interested in trying. This is the Personal Ancestral File (PAF). This is free genealogy recording software provided by the LDS Church (Church of Latter-day Saints). Their website also allows users to search on-line files from the family history archives in Salt Lake City. Although I am not currently using PAF I did use it for a few years before switching to a commercial package. PAF is certainly quite useful for beginning family historians and it can be expanded by purchasing the PAF Companion. If you are interested in trying PAF, download it from www.familysearch.org.

Now that you have all this downloaded freeware, you should make backup copies on either a CD or DVD. Well, for that we have another freeware package, CDBurnerXP Pro. This software will burn CD-R, CD-
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Quality Freeware ... Continued from Page 12

RW, DVD+R/RW and DVD-R/RW. It will burn and create ISO files. It will burn audio discs from mp3, wav, ogg and wma files. It will convert (rip) files on audio discs to wav, mp3, ogg or wma files. It also works with most IDE, USB, Firewire and SCSI burners. It can be downloaded from download.com or www.cdburnerxp.se/download.php. This software does not have a trial period. It is yours for however long you wish to use it. I have been using mine for over two years and have obtained several updates, one of which added the DVD burner capability.

As you can see from this there is a lot of quality freeware available. If you are interested in finding more, check out the listings at download.com. Just be cautious because many of their listings are trial packages only. You are expected to purchase the total package before the end of your trial period. But there are many “nuggets” on their very extensive web site. So if you are interested in saving money, try some of these quality freeware items.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail: [bwsail at yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com).

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



Change in Monthly Meeting

**The Monthly Meeting will be held at:
The Eau Gallie Library on Thursday,
October 19th at 7:00 pm**

The Analog/Digital Divide

from Circuit Rider Version 3.8

By Jim Scheef, Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc.

Reprint From: Space Coast PC User Group

The Analog Hole

Do you like to record television shows and watch them later? Whether you use an old VCR tape machine or a new disk-based digital video recorder, these ‘older’ devices will become obsolete soon as digital TV takes over, so you will need new equipment. A bill (*H.R. 4569, the Digital Transition Content Security Act of 2005*) was recently introduced in Congress by Representatives Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Conyers (D-MI) to make sure your new recording and viewing devices all function the way the movie industry wants them to function.

Eventually you will need to replace your old analog devices, which will close this loophole. Why call this a loophole? Because according to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), this is what allows those vicious hacker devices (home recording machines) to function. The bill would mandate that all recording and playback devices honor proprietary security information (aka: the broadcast flag) embedded in cable as well as over-the-air broadcasts in the form of a digital watermark developed by VEIL Interactive Technologies, of St. Louis, MO. This would allow the following scenarios: you’re going away on vacation, so you set your DVR to record *Desperate Housewives*. When you return a few days later and start to watch the show, a message shows on the screen that the recording must be viewed within two days and will be erased.

Or you just recorded the Super Bowl on your computer and now you want to transfer it to your new Video iPod. The system message says that this program can only be viewed on devices from a certain manufacturer.

Or you set your machine to record a new first-run movie so your family can enjoy it the next nite, only to be told that the program is for broadcast viewing only and cannot be recorded at all.

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Analog/Digital Divide ... Continued from Page 13

So what, you say? You'll just keep using your old VCR. Well, that my friends, is the analog hole. It is based on the principle that if you can see or hear it, you can record it, and it drives the big movie studios crazy.

It may be the last vestige of fair use you have to broadcast programming and any digital content. The studios realize that the transition to digital broadcasting and high-definition television is their big chance to take total control over broadcast content, and they are lobbying hard to get this control. They may not have Jack Abramoff anymore to spread their money around, but that will not slow them down. The only thing that might slow them down is you communicating your wishes to your Congress-people by phone, email and letter. You can find resources on this on the **Electronic Freedom Foundation's web site** (www.eff.org). Given the entertainment industry's recent history with digital rights management (DRM) software, you can bet that their solution will be safe, bug-free, and will not pose any security risk to your computer or other digital devices. Sure!

The technology mandated in this bill is, as noted earlier, a proprietary system that has not been opened to expert review. Naturally, the bill makes it a crime to reverse engineer the DRM software for any purpose, including security research. They do allow access to the source code, but only after paying \$10,000 for a 'license' and signing a non-disclosure agreement that prevents you from saying anything if you do find a problem.

The Washington lobbying scandal and your digital rights

Here is how the scandal in Washington affects you personally. Believe it or not, Jack Abramoff had clients beyond Native American nations and others surrounding the gaming industry. Back in the late 90's he also represented several information technology companies.

Would it surprise you to learn that Microsoft was a client? According to an article in eWeek magazine (Jan. 16, 2006), Abramoff lobbied Congress, the White House, and various federal agencies for Microsoft in 1998 on issues including encryption, online commerce and network security. From 1998-2000 Abramoff lobbied for the Business Software Alliance (BSA) 'on issues including encryption, copyright protection, export

controls and trade.' So here we have an example of how laws such as H.R. 4569 above get passed. Given Abramoff's methods on behalf of the Indian tribes (and sometimes, concurrently those working against the same tribes), one can assume that he did 'an effective job to ensure that someone other than you controls how you use digital content.

What you can do

Please do not sit on your hands. There are two things that politicians listen to: money and their constituents. They need both to get reelected. If you don't want your next TV to be a brain-damaged device run by the movie studios, then you need to call your Congress people now. Tell them you want them to protect your right to fair use of the digital content that you purchase on DVD or record from broadcast. It is most important that you call your representative. Tell them that you are against H.R. 4569 and that you want them to oppose the bill. You can also send them email from their Congressional web sites (www.house.gov/writerep). Don't sit on your hands, we need to stop this now - we are fighting big money.

I'm from the government and I'm here to help you

In another news item from that same issue of eWeek, there is a note that the Department of Homeland Security plans to spend \$1.24 million of our tax money to audit the source code of several widely used opensource products. The project, called the 'Vulnerability Discovery and Remediation, Open Source Hardening Project', is part of a larger federal goal to audit the security of products such as Linux, Apache, MySQL, FreeBSD, Mozilla and SendMail. Using automated code analysis techniques from Coventry, Inc. a San Francisco-based company, Stanford University engineers will scan source code for vulnerabilities and report their findings on a publicly accessible database.

I don't know about you, but I feel safer already.

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Special Interest Groups

Afternoon Meeting

A daytime meeting is held on the first Monday of the month at 2pm, in One Senior Place, 8085 Spyglass Hill Rd in Viera.

<http://oneseniorplace.com>

WINDOWS SIG

Meets 7:00 PM Thursdays

1st & 3rd Thursday at Eau Gallie Library.

All Other Thursdays at Melbourne Library on Fee Avenue.

BEGINNERS SIG

Meets at 6:30 pm. The 2nd and 4th Thursdays, in the Fee Ave Library, before the Windows SIG

IMAGING SIG

Meets at 7:30 PM the second and fourth Thursdays, after the Windows SIG, at the Fee Ave Library in Melbourne.

NEWSLETTER SIG

Meets twice a month on the Saturdays before and after the BUG monthly meeting.

Place is Jim Townsend's home
call 728-5979 for directions.

TINKERS SIG

Meets on most Sundays at Bob Schmidt's house.

Call 952-0199 to verify meeting and directions.

BUG Club Information

BUG E-MAIL LIST

To be included in the BUG E-Mail roster, send an E-Mail to Larry French at:
president@bugclub.org.

We will need your full name, E-Mail address and your BUG membership number. You will then receive notices and updates on BUG activities, special events, changes to schedules, etc.

BUG Officers

Meets the second Wednesday of the month at the Fee Ave. Library, in Study room 1

Time 7:00 pm to 8:00pm

Sponsorship Rates

	4 Months	8 Months	12 Months
Full Page	\$160.00	\$ 305.00	\$ 440.00
Half Page	\$ 85.00	\$ 162.00	\$ 232.00
Qtr Page	\$ 45.00	\$ 86.00	\$ 123.00
Bus Card	\$ 25.00	\$ 48.00	\$ 68.00

Moving ?

Don't miss out on any issues of the BUG Newsletter
Send your new address to:

Brevard Users Group Att: Treasurer

PO Box 2456

Melbourne, FL 32902-2456

And e-mail to the Newsletter and Treasurer at:

newsletter@bugclub.org

treasurer@bugclub.org

Brevard Users Group Membership Application

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Home Phone _____

State _____ Zip + 4 _____

Family Membership \$25.00

E-mail Address _____

**Brevard Users' Group
Incorporated
P. O. Box 2456
Melbourne, FL 32902-2456**

Meetings:

Are held at the Melbourne Library on Fee Ave. the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM.

Membership:

Is by application and payment of \$25.00 annual dues. Membership is for 12 months from receipt of dues and includes a year's subscription to the newsletter.

Your membership expires on the date indicated in the upper left of your address label (YYYY\MM). Please allow six weeks for processing the renewal.

BUG Officers

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Member at Large:

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Win 9x/XP SIG:

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Bob Staples 255-2623

Imaging SIG:

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