

Napa Valley
Personal Computer
Users Group

<http://www.nvpcug.org>

P.O. Box 2866
Napa, California 94558

COMPUTER NEWS



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The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group has served novice and experienced computer users since 1983. Through its monthly meetings, newsletters, online forum, special interest groups, mentor program and community involvement, it has helped educate people of all ages. The NVPCUG provides opportunities for people to find friends who share common interests and experiences. From January 2003 to October 2007 the NVPCUG provided 783 computers and 140 printers to local schools. Additional equipment has been given to charitable nonprofit organizations and to disadvantaged individuals.

The October 15th
General Meeting Of The
Napa Valley Computer
Users Group
Has Been
CANCELED
Due to Repairs At The
Napa Senior Activity
Center!
See You In November
On The 19th.

Could you use some practical information that would help you make better use of your computer? Come to this meeting! Guests are always welcome. Admission is always free.

Interested in becoming a member? See page 14 for application information.

NVPCUG

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS & MAC GROUP

In SIG meetings you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so for current meeting information, see our Web site, www.nvpcug.org, or contact the SIG leaders.

Investors SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Monday
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
Leader: Jerry Brown
(707) 254-9607
bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net

Digital Photography SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Wednesday
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Piner's Nursing Home,
Conference Room
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Leader: Susy Ball
(707) 337-3998
susyball@aol.com

Napa Valley Mac User Group

Meets: Monthly, second Thursday
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Napa Senior Activity Center
1500 Jefferson St., Napa
Leader: Ron Rogers
(707) 226-5352
ronrogersnapamug@gmail.com

President's Message

By Ron Dack, president, <http://www.nvpcug.org/>,
President@nvpcug.org

October 2008

Because the City of Napa has decided to replace the roof of the building we meet in there will be no October general meeting. I really don't know why this should affect our night meeting time?



I personally was looking forward to this meeting. Earlier this year I asked **Susy Ball** to try and arrange a presentation about online banking. There are many people that believe it is less safe than other methods when in fact it is actually a safer way to bank. Thousands more identity thefts result from "dumpster diving" and paperwork theft than result from any online transactions with your bank. In fact I am not aware of any online transaction between a customer and their bank that resulted in a fraudulent loss. I have asked Susy to reschedule this presentation for early next year.

Normally the NVPCUG Board of Directors would get the majority of board nominations at the October general meeting. The board will vote for the 2009 Board of Directors at the November 5, 2008 Board of directors meeting so we will not have a chance to hear from the general meeting attendees. Because of that I am asking any dues paying member who wants to nominate a member to serve on the 2009 Board of Directors e-mail that nomination to Secretary@nvpcug.org before November 4th.

I have also suffered a back injury that is affecting my sciatic nerve. I apologize if I have missed any e-mail you sent and have not been active in responding to member's questions or concerns. I cannot sit at my computer and weed through the thousands of e-mails I receive weekly and pick out the valid from the spam. I presided at the October Board of Directors meeting by standing up. This message has taken me several days to write sitting and writing for only a few seconds at a time. I hope this issue is resolved quickly.

Have a fun Halloween and I will see you at the November 19th general meeting.

Take care,
Ron

NVPCUG General Meetings
Held the third Wednesday of each month, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa

NVPCUG Calendar

<p>Oct 15 7:00-9:00 p.m. Nov 5 7:00-9:00 p.m. Nov 10 5:30-7:30 p.m. Nov 12 7:00-8:30 p.m. Nov 13 6:30-8:30 p.m. Nov 19 7:00-9:00 p.m. Dec 3 7:00-9:00 p.m. Dec 8 5:30-7:30 p.m. Dec 10 7:00-8:30 p.m. Dec 18 6:30-8:30 p.m. Dec 17 7:00-9:00 p.m.</p>	<p>MEETING CANCELLED Board of Directors meeting + B Investors SIG meeting + C Digital Photography SIG meeting + B Napa Valley Mac User Group + A NVPCUG General Meeting + A Board of Directors meeting + B Investors SIG meeting + C Digital Photography SIG meeting + B Napa Valley Mac User Group + A NVPCUG Holiday Members Only Party + D</p>
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Meeting Locations

A - Napa Senior Activity Center,
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa

B - Piner's Nursing Home,
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa

C - Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa

D - Peterson's Family Christmas
Tree Farm, 1120 Darms
Lane, Napa.

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group Contact Information

Officers for 2008

Board of Directors

President	Ron Dack	unlisted	President@nvpcug.org
Vice President	Dick Peterson	738-1812	VicePresident@nvpcug.org
Secretary	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Secretary@nvpcug.org
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	Treasurer@nvpcug.org
Other Directors:	Susy Ball, Ron Dack, Jim Gray, Dick Peterson, Bob Simmerman, Kathy Slavens, Dean Unruh, Marcia Waddell, and Roy Wagner.		
Director	Jim Gray	unlisted	Director_Gray@nvpcug.org

Appointed Officers

Computer Tutor Coordinator	Jeff Solomon	553-2114	Tutor@nvpcug.org
Facility Arrangements Coordinator	Dianne Prior	252-1506	Facility@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Kathy Slavens	251-9193	Greeter@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Greeter2@nvpcug.org
Librarian	Dean Unruh	226-9164	Librarian@nvpcug.org
Membership Director	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Membership@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Circulator	Jim Hearn	224-2540	Circulation@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Editor	Susy Ball	337-3998	Editor@nvpcug.org
Product Review CoCoordinator	Susy Ball	337-3998	Reviews@nvpcug.org
Product Review CoCoordinator	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Reviews2@nvpcug.org
Programs Director	Susy Ball	337-3998	Programs@nvpcug.org
Publicity Director	Ron Dack	unlisted	Publicity@nvpcug.org
Random Access Moderator	Jerry Brown	254-9607	Questions@nvpcug.org
Special Projects Director	VOLUNTEER NEEDED		Projects@nvpcug.org
Webmaster	Ron Dack	unlisted	Webmaster@nvpcug.org
Sales Coordinator	VOLUNTEER NEEDED		sales@nvpcug.org

• All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

NVPCUG Computer News

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Content Overview

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According to the data from the International Communications Union, the world now has more than 2 billion cell phone or mobile phone subscribers. While the 20- and 30-somethings are flocking to the iPhone as the latest status symbol, the 40-, 50- and 60-somethings are acquiring iPhones because there are no tiny buttons and no complex menu systems.

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Concepts and Tools by Elizabeth B. Wright, Computer Club of OK. One day in the near future, there will be no computer “beginners” at the adult level. The children born into the world as it is today are exposed to computers from conception. But while there are still older adults who want computer knowledge, someone has to be available to instruct them.

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Review – System Mechanic 8 – A PC “Swiss Army Knife,” Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director. Simply put, System Mechanic 8 is arguably the most comprehensive PC maintenance utility available, with over 40 distinct performance and security tools included, giving it “Swiss Army Knife,” features.

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Cloud Computing - the Future of Personal Computing?, Brian K. Lewis, PhD, Sarasota PCUG, Florida. You may not have heard of it, but “Cloud Computing” is the latest buzz-word in computing circles.

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The Global University, Use Google to Locate Free Online Textbooks, Mike Moore, Bowling Green Computer User Group. With new textbooks costing upwards of \$100, and some publishers devising web-based content requiring the use of new texts every year, student advocates and concerned administrators have been considering ways of moderating this cost. Mike shows how some of these valuable multimedia materials are just lying around out there on the Internet.

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The New, the Best AND the Worst (appeared in the newsletter for July – August 2008), Pim

Borman, SW Indiana PCUG. Pim takes a look at Picasa’s web album and cloud computing.

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Moving on to Vista – Part 9, Neil Stahfest, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA. Another installment in Neil’s Vista saga.

Editor’s Note: *This is the second month that “Contents Overview” has appeared in the newsletter. I would like your feedback, in that I would like to know whether or not you think that this column is a useful addition to the newsletter. Please email susyball@aol.com with your comments.*



Excel Shortcut

If Excel doesn’t load when you double-click its shortcut, don’t worry. Sometimes Desktop shortcuts (or even those in the Start menu) become corrupted and no longer point to their associated EXE (executable) file. To see if that is the source of your trouble, click an empty area of your Desktop and press F3 to launch Windows’ search feature. Type Excel.exe into the file name field and press ENTER and then double-click the file’s icon when it appears in the results pane. If doing so launches Excel, you know that your shortcut is corrupted and causing the problem. Simply delete the bad shortcut (right-click it and click Delete) and right-click and drag the Excel.exe file icon that you found to where you’d like a new shortcut. When you drop the icon, a context menu will appear; click Create Shortcuts Here, and your new shortcut will appear.

Clean Your DVDs

DVDs are best cleaned with a lint-free, nonabrasive cloth. Dampen the cloth in clean, lukewarm water. (If your water is especially hard or contains excess minerals, use bottled water.) Starting at the center of the disc, wipe in a straight line to the outside rim; don’t use a circular motion. Repeat until you’ve cleaned the entire disk. For very stubborn messes, try water with a mild, nonabrasive soap or isopropyl alcohol. Commercial DVD cleaning solutions are also available.

Never use compressed air to blow a DVD clean. Compressed air can be very cold and may thermally shock the disc, causing separation or cracks, either immediately or down the road.

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iPhone for Boomers

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, www.compukiss.com, sandy@compukiss.com

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According to the data from the International Communications Union, the world now has more than 2 billion cell phone or mobile phone subscribers. While some business and high tech users are using their phones for email and the Internet, I venture to say that most of those 2 billion users are only using their cell phones to make calls and to text message. In fact, I am sure that many users don't know how to do much more than that, even though their phones are capable of much more.

The reason is that up until now, cell phones with their tiny buttons and complex menu systems have frustrated many average users. The recent introduction of a fast, stable, and more affordable iPhone is poised to change all of that.

While the twenty- and thirty-something's are flocking to the iPhone as the latest status symbol, the forty-, fifty-, and sixty-something's are acquiring iPhones because there are no tiny buttons and no complex menu systems. In fact, the large bright touch screen, big icons, and the

on-screen keyboard make the iPhone extremely easy to use.

One button brings up the Home screen of icons. The screen is clear and uncluttered. The icons are all easily identifiable by their picture, so the iPhone

experience is very visual. The four most used icons are placed on the bottom of the screen. By default, they are Phone, Mail, Safari (the Internet browser), and iPod. You can put whatever you use the most on the bottom row. You can also rearrange all the icons to suit your taste.

The way you rearrange the icons is indicative of the ease of use of the entire gadget. To rearrange the icons on the Home screen, you simply press any icon and hold your finger down until all the icons start to wiggle. Then you drag the icons from place to place. To put an icon on the second page of the Home screen, you simply drag it off the screen to the right. The second page will appear with the icon on it. To return to the first screen of the Home page, just drag your finger across the screen in a leftward motion. To stop the wiggling and confirm that you are done moving the icons around, you simply touch the Home button. You can't miss it because while other cell phones seem to have a million buttons, the Home button is the only button on the surface of the iPhone.

As you can tell by this explanation, the iPhone is also very tactile. You can move things around the screen with your

finger. To make a web page larger, you simply flick your two fingers apart on the screen. Bring your fingers together and the webpage gets smaller. Double-tap the screen and the page fits the screen. To take a picture, you press the camera icon, aim the camera on the back of the iPhone and press the icon on the bottom of the screen. It is so intuitive that it is actually fun!

On top of that Apple has added a Apps store to its iTunes Online Store. They have over 500 applications that you can add to your iPhone. Many are free. Others cost \$1. Most of those which you have to pay for are under \$10. Some of these applications are just for fun, some are for productivity. For instance, if you download an application called Recorder, you can turn your iPhone into a voice recorder. But you can also choose an application that turns it into an a light saber or one that lets you pop bubbles on the screen.

At \$199 for the 8GB model, the iPhone has a lot to like. To use it you must subscribe to AT&T for two years. That is not unusual for a cell phone service contract. You also have to have an additional data plan that costs \$30 a month. While this might seem costly, you get a lot for your money.

Not only is the iPhone intuitive, visual, and tactile, but it has access to the Internet and lets you send and receive email. It is like having a mini-computer in your hand. For many it will replace the laptop they drag along when traveling.

The iPhone is also a full-blown iPod that plays both music and video. Since it has its own speaker, you don't even need earbuds or headphones as you do with most other music players. Oh, and did I mention, it has the best audio quality of any cell phone I've ever used.

Am I hooked? You bet I am..... And the same thing will happen to many others who try the iPhone. It is poised to change the way we use cell phones. ■

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(c) www.informationarchitects.jp

iPhone iPhone Nano iPhone Shuffle



Concepts and Tools

By Elizabeth B. Wright, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City, www.ccokc.org,
wright599new@sbcglobal.net

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One day in the near future there will be no computer “beginners” at the adult level. The children born into the world as it is today are exposed to computers from conception. After they are born, many have very sophisticated hands on use of the machines from the minute they can reach out from their parent’s lap and touch the keyboard. There is no mystery to them.

But while there are still older adults who want computer knowledge, someone has to be available to instruct them. And adults do not learn the same way that babies and children learn. Sometimes, when leading a group or teaching a class, it is difficult to explain to students why they need to understand the difference between how a computer or a program works and how to make it actually do something. In my opinion, concepts are far more useful in the long run than specific techniques, especially when dealing with someone using a computer for the first time or who has gone just beyond the basics. But how do you teach a concept?

First, accept the fact that it will take more time in the beginning to teach concepts, but it will save time later on. The real trick is to make the process interesting and easy to understand

The simple fact that a computer is basically thousands of off and on switches, the same as a light switch, seems to be information that many people find irrelevant. But once a student gets some idea of the actual simplicity of the machine, much of the mystery is removed from the learning process.

Second, CONCEPTS, once understood, are usually far easier to remember than techniques. Anyone who “gets the idea” of a computer fundamental can usually find the tools later to accomplish the end result, even if the specific steps are not used often enough to remember them in sequence.

Many first session lesson plans skip computer functionality and plunge straight into using software. As an example, the concept of organizing files on a hard drive seems to be much harder for new users to comprehend than teaching them to open the file manager, aka Windows Explore or some similar program. So many teachers go through the cumbersome task of showing people how to open the file system, only to become bogged down in the steps needed to find a particular file, then later to continually have people complain they have lost a file and firmly believe it has disappeared from their machine. Most new users find it difficult to make the connection between finding a file on the computer and why understanding how to find it is important. It is the instructors job to help them

make the connection. The CONCEPT of hard drive storage is not easy to absorb, so the instructor must make it easy. Also many new users find it difficult to transfer keystrokes learned on a classroom computer to their own computers at home. The reason for this is that no two computers are exactly alike, so the steps learned on one machine may or may not work on another one. But if the student comprehends the idea behind digital file storage, the actual keystrokes will begin to make sense, regardless of what computer they are using. In my opinion, rote learning is not the best way to become even moderately proficient on a computer. Real understanding of basic computing processes is vital.

Since many new users have little idea of what hardware is on their own computers, talking about C:\ drives and other drives in relation to specific files means little to them. But a well developed discussion of what basic hardware CAN be on a computer and how it works is not a waste of time, answering questions along the way. Many new users won’t see the value in a technical discussion, so it is important to present hardware demonstrations using common sense terms rather than obscure technical language. It is never necessary to impress new students with what you know, but rather to make the information as easy for them to understand as possible. With practice, a teacher or presenter can develop the dialog necessary to convey essential information and still keep the listeners engaged. Students appreciate being encouraged in the idea that they may not know much to begin with, but they will leave each session armed with useful information and techniques that will build a good basic foundation for them. Biblically we were taught not to build our houses on sand. Why are the pyramids in Egypt still standing? Because underneath all that sand there are foundations built on bedrock. Good computer skills begin the same way.

Nearly all programs are far too comprehensive to be taught in detail to beginners. But if the most basic use of the program (the program’s CONCEPT) can be presented in a way that is useful to students, they will get their feet wet. From there they can then be encouraged to not only attend study groups and advanced classes, but to explore their favorite programs on their own. Again, the difference is between teaching new users the fundamental use of the program itself as opposed to teaching them to use specific program “tools”. Obviously some techniques need to be taught in early sessions, but teaching the use of most tools is best done in intermediate and advanced classes. My experience has been that only when people have a need for or enjoy using any computer software will they continue to explore and expand their knowledge of the program.

How long did it take you to figure out that the “D” in D:\ stands for any non-specific “drive” when dealing with program instructions (often installation procedures) and not specifically for the “D” drive on your personal computer? Admit it, there was a time when you didn’t know that. Just think how confusing

the term is to new users. There is a concept here if you can find it. ■

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System Mechanic 8 – A PC “Swiss Army Knife”

By Ira Wilsker; APCUG Director, Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX,
Radio and TV Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net

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WEBSITE:

<http://www.iolo.com>

<http://www.iolo.com/downloads.aspx> - FREE TRIAL SOFTWARE

Frequent readers of this column will be well aware that there are many computer utilities in cyberspace that can improve the performance of our PCs. As we use our computers, the registry becomes cluttered and inefficient; useless files consume valuable real estate on our hard drives; and other maladies caused by the software on our computers deprive us of the performance we paid for and deserve. While I admittedly use several different utilities to maintain peak operating efficiency of my computers, if I had to choose only a single utility for computer maintenance, it would be Iolo’s System Mechanic (www.iolo.com). I have used System Mechanic for many years in its earlier versions, but now Iolo has released the latest iteration, System Mechanic version 8.

Simply, System Mechanic 8 is arguably the most comprehensive PC maintenance utility available, with over 40 distinct performance and security tools included, giving it “Swiss Army Knife” features. According to published sales figures, System Mechanic is the #1 best selling PC tune-up software on the market, and has won awards for excellence from dozens of computer publications, including Cnet’s Editors’ Choice, Windows

Magazine, PC Computing, ZDNet Editors’ Pick, Computer Shopper’s Top 100, Computerworld, and many others.

Rhetorically, why would I choose System Mechanic 8 over all of its competitors? Because of what it does, its power, versatility, and features; that is why. Compared to its major competitors, none of them offer the feature rich set of functions that System Mechanic offers. According to Iolo, “Over 98% of PC problems are caused by clutter and faulty settings that are the result of everyday PC use.” System Mechanic 8 can repair or otherwise remedy virtually

Free Evaluation Downloads

	FEATURED PRODUCT System Mechanic Professional® 8 NEW Protect and tune your computer — automatically. Combining 5 award-winning iolo PC Tune-up and data security products, System Mechanic Professional is everything you need to keep your PC safe, fast, and error-free. More...	Download now OS: Windows 2000/XP/Vista (32-bit) License: 30 days fully-functional File size: 42.16 MB
	System Mechanic® 8 NEW Boost your computer’s performance and stability with advanced PC tune-up. System Mechanic gives you over 40 automatic tools to clean hard drive clutter, repair your registry, defragment drives and memory, optimize settings, and optimize system and internet settings. More...	Download now OS: Windows 2000/XP/Vista (32-bit) License: 30 days fully-functional File size: 15.99 MB
	Search and Recover™ 5 Recover lost data from your PC or digital device. Get back accidentally deleted documents, music, photos, email, videos, system files, and even entire folders. Search and Recover restores missing data from hard drives, CDs-DVDs, cameras, MP3 players, flash drives, and more. More...	Download now OS: Windows 2000/XP/Vista (32-bit) License: 3 uses fully functional File size: 7.4 MB
	Drive Scrubber® 3 Secure your personal information when you sell, donate, or recycle your computer. DriveScrubber permanently erases your hard drive data, exceeding Department of Defense security standards and ensuring that your private files will never be recovered. More...	Download now OS: Windows 2000/XP/Vista (32-bit) License: 3 uses fully functional File size: 5.86 MB

[System Mechanic 8 Review cont. on page 8](#)

Got PC problems? System Mechanic is your solution!

Problem	Solution
Random errors, crashes and restarts	Fixes Registry problems, clears clutter, and repairs security vulnerabilities
Sluggish programs, downloads and startup	Defragments memory and hard drives, optimizes settings, boosting performance up to 300%
PC won't start, system or drive is down	Drive Medic™ emergency rescue CD revives downed systems and drives
Costly professional help required to repair and maintain your PC	Automatic maintenance keeps your PC fast and reliable

all of these problems. Many of a PC's problems can be traced to problems and errors in the registry, a large data file that contains information on the hardware and software installed on the computer. The registry is almost constantly written to, and read, often leaving obsolete data in the registry. This obsolete, and eventually erroneous data left in the registry consumes some system resources, and can promote errors and other problems as faulty data is read and processed. The registry must be periodically purged of useless data, defragmented and compacted in order to contribute to better PC performance, a function at which System Mechanic 8 excels.

Our computers are constantly reading from and writing to the hard drive, and that drive often becomes cluttered, fragmented, and may also have some errors in the data stored on it. While almost all flavors of Windows have some type of "defrag" and "chkdsk" software to defragment the hard drive, and check it for errors, the Windows integral versions of those utilities are very basic and lack the power to do a truly thorough job, as System Mechanic will do. Clutter and useless files consume a lot of the storage space on our hard drives; System Mechanic 8 can identify and remove that clutter, freeing up that hard drive space, making for a more efficient hard drive.

Sometimes, and it will likely happen eventually to each PC user, the computer will not properly boot. For that particular eventuality, System Mechanic 8 will allow the user to create a bootable emergency CD that may be able to revive "crashed" systems. Another irritant that many of us suffer through on a regular basis is the boringly slow boot process itself, where we wait and wait for our computer to become usable. System Mechanic 8 claims to have 19 different ways that it can speed the boot process by making it more logical and efficient. Another way that we are losing performance that we are paying for is by having improper internet settings. Many of these settings are mundane and not readily accessible to the typical user. By modifying these settings to their ideal point, internet throughput can be improved, in some cases tripled. System Mechanic 8 will analyze our internet connection, and make any changes necessary to maximize performance.

PC security is a major issue that all of us must deal with on a constant basis. System Mechanic 8 contributes to system security by fixing settings that would otherwise allow an intruder to access the computer, making cyber

attacks that more difficult. Sometimes we have files that we want to securely delete, being well aware that normally deleted files are easy to recover, which may create another security problem. This utility offers the user a military grade wiping function that can securely delete unwanted data.

System Mechanic 8 retails for \$49⁹⁵ for a one-year license, and can be used on up to three computers; discounts are available online (www.iolo.com) for longer licenses.

For those who want an even more feature rich product, Iolo offers System Mechanic Professional, version 8 (\$69⁹⁵ for 3 computers). This Professional version is an integrated bundle which includes most of Iolo's other popular products. The bundle includes Iolo's antivirus software, renowned for its hourly updates; and its Personal Firewall to protect from intruders and malicious software. Another program included with the Professional bundle is another personal favorite of mine, Iolo's Search and Recover. This program can recover files that were deleted, including photos, videos, documents, email, music, and other data that may have otherwise been lost. Search and Recover can undelete files from hard drives, digital cameras, memory cards, and almost all other digital media.

Professional also includes DriveScrubber, a utility that can securely erase data from hard drives. This is necessary when donating a computer, selling it, or recycling it. Without securely deleting our personal data, others can access it and use it for a variety of purposes, including identity theft. DriveScrubber overwrites the data using methods that meet strict government and military standards, ensuring the destruction of that data, without harm to the drive itself.

iolo has a winner in System Mechanic 8. For those who like to try software before they purchase it, Iolo offers a free, 30 day, fully functional trial version of each of its products at www.iolo.com/downloads.aspx. If you try the software, you will probably like it as much as I do, and find it indispensable.

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Cloud Computing – The Future of Personal Computing?

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member and Contributing Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida,
www.spcug.org, bwsail@yahoo.com

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You may not have heard of it, but “Cloud Computing” is the latest buzz-word in computing circles. The question is, just what does it mean? The problem is that at this point, there is no really solid definition for this term. You can search for it and you’ll find a number of interpretations. So, from all that I have encountered, I’ll try to synthesize one for you.

Cloud computing is being able to access files, data, programs and services all via the Internet. You would have little or nothing stored on your computer, in fact, your computer might simply be a device, desktop or handheld, that can access the web and all of its services. In addition, cloud computing offers the services of enormous computer networks that function as if they were components of a supercomputer. These networks can process tens of trillions of operations per second compared to three billion operations per second for the most powerful desktop computer. This kind of computing power can be used for analysis of risk in financial portfolios, delivering personalized medical information, and powering immersive computer games. These networks use hundreds or thousands of network servers using PC related technology.

I think the excerpt from Business Week article aptly describes the computer cloud.

Although some of these services may appear to be only of interest for corporations and their IT departments, services are also being made available for home and small business users. As you might expect, the availability of this Internet computer access depends on fast broadband access. An area where the U.S. lags behind many other

countries. In this country we think that having 10-15 megabits/sec on our broadband is really fast. However, in Japan, 50 megabits/sec is closer to the norm, even for home users.

So who would be providing these cloud computing services? Actually, they already exist in the form of Google Apps, Amazon Elastic Compute (EC2), Sapotek’s Desktop2 (www.desktoptwo.com), Zim Desk (www.zimdesk.com) and Zoho Office

(www.zoho.com).

(There are also a number of companies providing these services and more to large corporations only.) Sapotek claims to have 175,000 users of their Desktop2 and their servers can handle 8 – 10,000 of them at the same time. They have a partnership with Sun that will provide the equipment to handle as many as 350,000 users. Every time I look for more information on Cloud Computing I find new companies listed that are offering these services. It is a very rapidly growing industry.

So, if you wanted to take advantage of the services in the cloud, what could you expect to find? Let’s take a look at Desktop2. This is a free service that provides normal office applications:

writer, spreadsheets, presentations, notepad, and a calendar. It also provides hard drive storage, e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, MP3 player, RSS service and a web site editor. The free version does come with ads as you would expect.

Zimdesks is very similar to Desktop2. Its web applications includes pop3email, file manager, sidebar, RSS, browser, word processor, spreadsheet, calendar, tasks manager, accessories/widgets, web messenger, video conference,

“What is Google’s cloud? It’s a network made of hundreds of thousands, or by some estimates 1 million, cheap servers, each not much more powerful than the PCs we have in our homes. It stores staggering amounts of data, including numerous copies of the World Wide Web. This makes search faster, helping ferret out answers to billions of queries in a fraction of a second. Unlike many traditional supercomputers, Google’s system never ages. When its individual pieces die, usually after about three years, engineers pluck them out and replace them with new, faster boxes. This means the cloud regenerates as it grows, almost like a living thing.” (Quotation is taken from a BusinessWeek article dated 12-13-2007 by Stephen Baker.)

media player, Internet radio, web TV, games, zimcommunity, zimblog, and much more. It is also a free service that incorporates advertising. Like everyone else they have to support themselves somehow.

The third of these services is Zoho Office. On their home page you not only find a list of the services they provide, they are all available for trial simply by clicking on a icon. As with the previous services, the list of applications is quite extensive.

Google Apps is very similar in its offerings to the preceding services. However, it is more oriented towards business users. It does have a free version which might be useful for the individual user.

Zoho uses Java to run its applications on the web. Other services may use Flash or Java. Either of these allow the applications to run in your browser and to operate at reasonable speeds. I have tried out the word processing and found it to be no different than using a word processor on my computer. This is true even though the speed of my Internet connection is usually only 500 – 750 kilobits/sec. When you are using a wireless card modem it is only on very rare occasions that you can match fast DSL speeds. I'm sure that those of you on cable or fast DSL would have no problem using a web-based application, at least with regard to the speed of the applications response. However, if you are preparing a graphic loaded presentation, then you might experience some slow down depending on the speed of your connection.

The idea of relying on Web-based applications and storing data in the “cloud” of the Internet has long been pushed as a way to do business on the road. Now software companies are making entire Web-based operating systems. They present themselves as a complete computer in the cloud and are aimed at a wider audience. These browser-based services could help those who can't afford their own computer.

There are also those who are convinced that this is the future of computing. However, some security concerns should be considered. Unless you know how secure your data is when you use a cloud system, you should be cautious about what you share with the on-line servers. You need to know how your data is protected from other users of the “cloud”. As a service provider they should be willing to undergo external audits and/or security certifications. Also you need to know what kind of data protection and data recovery procedures are provided. As has been demonstrated many times, computers do fail. Finally, you need to know what happens to your data in case the company fails or is sold to another entity. This is also not uncommon in the high tech industry. As is always the case, before allowing sensitive information to be used or stored on the web, remember “caveat emptor”.

Lastly, consider what computing might be like should the “cloud” become the method of choice. Certainly there would be no need for computers to have all the bells and whistles we now associate with them. Just think about the possible design of a system destined for use solely with cloud computing. It would only need a minimal operating system that would allow the computer to boot, then start the web browser which would connect to the Internet. Your cloud page would be your home page and display your chosen desktop. As for a hard drive, a 10-20 gigabyte solid state drive would probably be adequate. USB ports for printers, scanners, possibly other I/O ports would be included. The one thing you would want to be high end would be the graphics system. This would allow display of high resolution graphics used in online games and for viewing videos. It is possible that the graphics processing unit (GPU) would be more powerful than the CPU (central processing unit) or it might even incorporate the CPU. This could all be contained in a 1-2 pound laptop or compressed further into a handheld computer/cell phone. Although some of these characteristics are found now in smart phones, the spread of cloud computing would enhance the features of these phones. For most of us, the available screen size on these smart phones is not large enough, leaving a market opening for inexpensive laptops such as the ASUS Eee PC or the OLPC (One laptop per child). In neither case would we need an operating system as massive as Microsoft Windows.

One thing is certain, anytime you try to predict the future you usually miss the mark by a mile. So it will be interesting to see what reality brings about over the next few years. ■

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over 35 years, developing software and assembling systems.

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Here's an idea for labelling packages

Photo IDs

Get the little ones in on the action of gift giving. Instead of using a traditional To/From tag, get creative. Print out a few of your favorite digital photos and ask the kids to cut out pictures of the recipient and your family. Then, paste the cutouts onto the package to display the giver and receiver. This is especially great if you have a niece or nephew graduating and want to involve your kids. Even if your little princess is still learning her ABCs, she'll know who the gift is for by “reading” the picture tag.

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Using Google to Locate Free Online Textbooks



The Global University

By Mike Moore, BGAMUG, www.bgamug.org, ml.moore@insightbb.com

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With new textbooks costing upwards of \$100, and some publishers devising web-based content requiring the use of new texts every year, student advocates and concerned administrators have been considering ways of moderating this cost, while at the same time making textbooks available online or on electronic books such as the Amazon Kindle, and providing incentives for publishers to use creative licensing for their intellectual property.

The open source mantra that we have written about so often in these pages is now being applied to textbooks and other intellectual property in an effort to support students, control wasteful revisions and stop killing so many trees.

For the purposes of this article, we will refer to any electronic format for a textbook as an "E-text."

Some of what I'm about to show you may surprise you, and you may wonder how it can be that these valuable multimedia materials are just lying around out there on the internet. Trust me, we are not going to be hacking any university computers, and if anything about a Google search can be said to be illegal, well, then I guess we're all in a bit of trouble. Either that, or Google is!

For those E-texts that have gone open-source (that is, are in one way or another unencumbered by copyright), the university will usually put them on a public web site, and for those of you familiar with search engines, that makes them fair game for you and I!

I am fond of saying that Google indexes only the WorldWide Web, but in this case, the WWW is exactly where we want to go. By way of caution though, I will say that just because we find something lying around on the internet, does not mean it's free for any use at all. The user/reader is at least partly responsible for respecting copyrights, particularly if you intend to redistribute or use that material in any other way beside your own personal enjoyment. For an excellent copyright primer that is targeted toward teens, see <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/copyrightmystery/>.

Even a relatively small university such as our own WKU has a truly massive web presence, and in order to filter out everything but E-texts, we need a flexible search engine that has the power to filter results based on file types.

Google more than fills the bill.

Some of you may remember a while back we hosted a presentation featuring Google's keyword filters. For

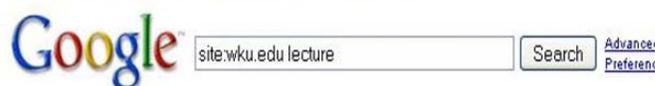
example, adding the filter **filetype:pdf** to your Google search will return only results in the form of Adobe's Public Document Format, which is often the format of choice for E-texts. Conversely, if you want to look at all results *except* for PDF files, you can add the negative sign in front, like this:

-filetype:pdf.

Since we did that presentation, Google has allowed additional file types that they never previously filtered for, such as **filetype:mp3** or **filetype:avi**, which find, respectively, compressed music or speech and video files. These file types, along with **mp4**, are often what you might find on a professor's web site containing interesting lectures or other course material.

It might seem logical to restrict your search for E-texts to scholarly sites, such as colleges and universities. We can do exactly that by using the **site:.edu** filter. You can even expand this to include only one particular college site by issuing, for example, **site:wku.edu** along with any additional keywords we want to search for. This would search the Western Kentucky University website for articles matching our keywords. The Google search returned using **site:wku.edu lecture** gives the following:

[Global University cont. on page 12](#)



[Web](#) [Video](#) [Images](#)

[PDF](#) [Syllabus of the Biochemistry I Lecture Spring 2008](#)

File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat - [View as HTML](#)

Course Description: The **lecture** explores the chemical nature of living organisms. ... The **lecture** also introduces to metabolism and discusses some of the ...

https://asaweb.wku.edu/adlib/syllabusOUT/200810_prod_BIOL446001_200810_01177.pdf - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

[Introduction to Molecular & Cell Biology, 220, \(c\) 1998, Western ...](#)

Lecture 1 Cells Evolution Exp Systems. **Lecture 2** Composition Covalent H-Bonds Water Ionic Bonds Hydrophobic Disulfide vanderWaals Ring Stackn'. **Lecture 3** ...

bioweb.wku.edu/courses/Biol220CAR/ - 10k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

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www.wku.edu/library/podcast/ - 84k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

There is one additional search filter in Google's bag of tricks that will help you find more E-texts and multimedia lectures than using the **filetype** filter alone, and that is the **intitle:"index.of"** filter. Intitle looks for the specified keyword after the colon, in a web page title. Looking for the keyword "index.of" allows you to hunt down information-rich index pages, which can be thought of as the best place to go for E-texts and recorded lectures on university web sites because, as the name implies, they are like a table of contents.

As an example, let's Google using these keywords:

site:.edu intitle:"index.of" (mp3|mp4|avi) lecture

The vertical bar symbol between those file types is called the pipe symbol—it is over your backslash key, which is itself located just north of your Enter key. The pipe symbol, in this context, means to search for "index.of" entries that have either mp3, mp4, or avi in their text. This search yields the following—the first of only 48 links (see image at the end of article).

It's not really that surprising that using the MP3|MP4|AVI filter only finds 48 links—after all, there is considerably more concern about copyright issues when looking at file types that might be used to contain music, movies and the like. Just for the heck of it, though, I tried this search:

Intitle:"index.of" mp3 beatles

The resulting search was impressive at finding mp3 files of the Fab Four's recordings, but the webmasters behind the pages it found were equally impressive at not letting you play the files without paying for the privilege, and since most of this music is copyrighted, that is only as it should be.

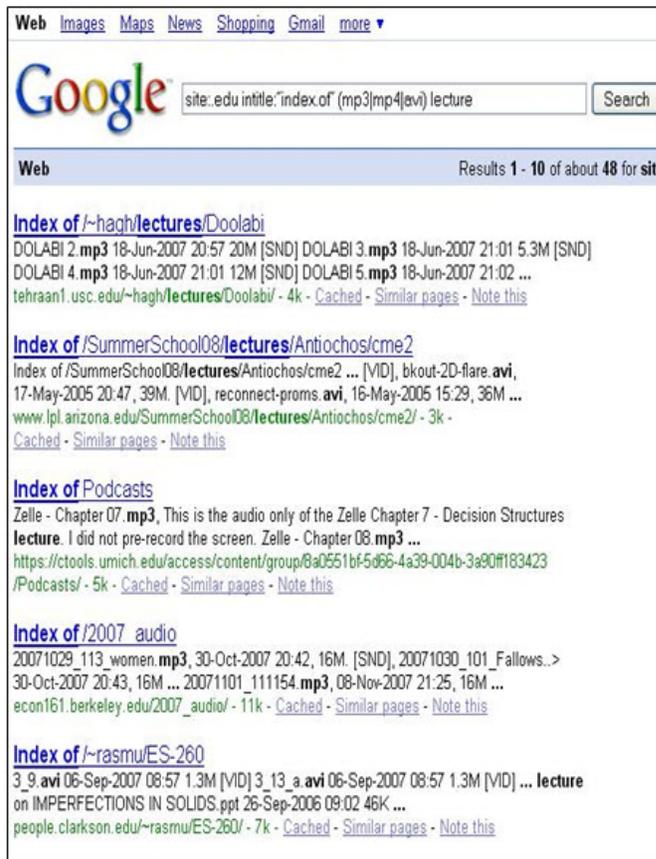
Even so, using the **intitle:"index.of"** filter is extremely effective at locating E-texts, particularly when combined with the **site:.edu** filter to only search university and college sites.

So your best bet on Google to find general E-texts is:

intitle:"index.of" _____

And just fill in the blank with whatever subject you're interested in. I used **intitle:"index.of" caves** and got 315,000 hits, the very first of which was a really cool teaching site (<http://erg.usgs.gov/isb/pubs/teachers-packets/exploringcaves/pdfindex.html>) about caves from the US Geological Survey.

I wish I could give you an idea of what **intitle:"index.of"** is actually filtering for. If you can imagine the internet functionally layered, like a Broadway production; got that picture? Okay, searching the WWW with Google using plain old normal keywords with none of the fancy filters we've talked about here—will lead you to find hits on what's going on about the stage and the actor's names and so forth. Now Intitle:"index.of" comes looking, and isn't interested in the play, the credentials of the performers,



the lighting—nothing on the stage. That little but critical filter ignores all of that stuff, but instead searches behind the scenes, finding hits at the level of the executive producer, the writer of the screen play, and where they all went to school. That analogy is reaching a bit, but suffice it to say that specialized filters yield specialized results.

Please share your E-text searching successes! ■

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Editor's Note: *The Google screen's that you open may not look exactly like the one's pictured, because as you know, because you are looking at material that may vary with time and depending on how many people have looked at a particular site.*

Dead Or Lit Pixels

Most manufacturers carry pixel-defect policies on new LCDs, whereby if a certain number of pixels are dead (show no color at all) or lit (stuck in the "on" position so that they constantly appear red, blue, or green), they will replace the LCD. If the manufacturer won't provide a replacement, however, perhaps the retailer will. Other than that, there's very little you can do to fix this type of irritation.

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The New, the Best, AND the Worst

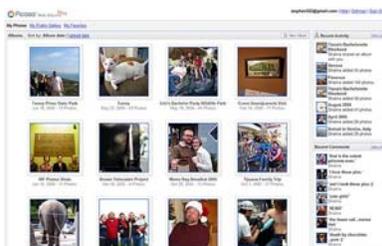
July - August 2008

Collected BY Pim Borman, Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, <http://swipcug.apcug.org>, swipcug@gmail.com

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Picasa web album

In June I took a brief vacation with son, Mike and cocker spaniel, Bonnie, touring scenic central West Virginia. We visited the stark rock outcropping known as Seneca rocks, admired the amazing 110-meter steerable radio telescope at the green bank national radio astronomy observatory, and found carnivorous plants in their natural habitat in the cranberry glades botanic area. Together we took over 400 pictures along the way that we culled down to 60-some upon our return. It is often said that the secret of great photographers is that they take hundreds of pictures but save only the one or two best ones. Nobody ever mentions how hard it is to pick out those few winners!



I decided to try and upload the best pictures to one of the online free photo albums. I was already somewhat familiar with Flick'r, but I decided to try the Google-Picasa web album instead. Picasa is an excellent simple photo editor and it gives direct access to the online web album. The album allows 1gb of storage, enough for some 4000 pictures, and you can get even more than that for a small fee.



Since I already had a Google email account, setting up the web album was easy, using the same user name and password. On the web site you can set up separate albums (folders, really) to store pictures in separate categories. I created a new album for my vacation pictures and prepared to upload them. After some trial and error I found it easiest to first assemble the captioned pictures in a Picasa album on my pc and then to upload them all at once to the web album. Once the pictures are uploaded you can add more or delete mistakes, move them around into the desired order, and add or change captions. By default, the photos are automatically converted to the optimum

size for display on a computer screen, but there are options for larger (up to 20mb) or smaller file sizes.

Once the album has been installed it is ready to be shared with the rest of the world. You may choose to make your photos public, available to anyone, or keep them private, only accessible to those you share the URL with. The view album page shows large thumbnails of the photos. They can be viewed individually or as a slide show. The view map button brings up Google maps where you can indicate where you took your pictures. The Organize and Edit captions buttons are self-explanatory. A new features link at the top of the page leads to the latest features added. It is now also possible to upload videos from Picasa to your web album. That might be preferable to using YouTube, unless you want the whole world to admire your movie.

The web album displays the URL of your album site either as the address itself or as a short paragraph of html code that you can insert on your web site. Either way, it is best to copy and paste the information since the URL tends to be lengthy and confusing. My vacation pictures are located at <http://picasaweb.google.com/swipcug/westvirginiavacationjune2008?Authkey=kovcoyrboay>.

To do your correspondents a favor you should convert the URL with SNIPURL (<http://snipurl.com>) or TINYURL (<http://tinyurl.com>) to a simpler address, such as <http://snipurl.com/pimspix>. If you have never done that before, you'll find it easy to do. Just go to <http://snipurl.com> (or the TINYURL site) and paste the URL of your album in the box. Specify an easy-to-remember nickname (such as "Pimspix," but only available in SNIPURL) and "snip it!" the shortened URL (<http://snipurl.com/pimspix>) will be shown and also copied to your clipboard, ready to be pasted in your message.

Gathering CLOUDS

My experience with setting up a photo album "somewhere up there" is a typical example of the current trend towards "cloud" computing. Almost since the beginning of the world wide web we have been using online search engines that access indexed information stored "somewhere up there." many of us have changed from our pc-based email programs to online programs, such as Yahoo or Google Mail, that store our email correspondence on computers "somewhere up there." somewhere up there in the clouds, as it were.

The New, Best AND Worst cont. on page 15



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Nominations for NVPCUG board are now open. They will remain open until Nov. 3. Questions should be directed to Bob Simmerman at Membership@nvpcug.org

For more information about the NVPCUG, visit our Web site: <http://www.nvpcug.org>

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

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Revised 4-23-07

The push is now to extend cloud computing to office suites. Instead of using expensive ms office we can choose to use Google docs and conduct all our administrative activities online, with the option of sharing our work with colleagues far away if necessary. Microsoft, always ready to recognize good ideas after others first thought of them, is moving versions of its office suite online under the “live” banner. Others are jostling to join the crowd.

If this trend continues and spreads to other computer activities, our operating systems, whether windows, Mac, or Linux, will become less and less important. The functions of the operating system will be taken over by browsers. To those of us using multiple operating systems, such as windows and Linux, we already find that it makes no difference if we use Firefox in windows or Linux. Similarly, Picasa is Picasa and my new web album is the same no matter how I access it.

So far, that all sounds good. But gathering clouds threaten to bring rain. If everybody is going to use the Internet almost all the time, the current Internet infrastructure will not be able to keep up. There will be a need for millions of additional servers and drastically increased connection speeds.

The computer industry is aware of that. According to the Economist (May 24, 2008) Microsoft is building a new \$500 million data center near Chicago. It will require 3 electrical substations with a total capacity of almost 200 megawatts. Google is said to have 3 dozen data centers with an estimated million individual servers. More and more these extensive data centers are being built in out-of-the-way places near sources of low-cost power, even in Iceland with cheap geothermal power. With all this power consumption computers are becoming a major source of global warming.

To increase transmission speeds the industry is eyeing the airwave bands that will be freed up in February 2009 when analog TV will be phased out. There are so-called white spaces between the frequency bands assigned to TV broadcasts, and tech companies want to use those buffer zones for lightning-fast data transmissions. Initial tests show that it might wipe out nearby HDTV broadcasts, but they keep working at it. (Scientific American, June 2008)

The computer revolution has just begun! ■

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Cell Phone Battery

If your cell phone battery doesn't seem to hold its charge long enough, you may be able to adjust your phone's settings to conserve energy. BlackBerry users, for instance, can program their devices to turn off automatically during certain times of day. To do this, click the Menu key, choose Options, then select Auto On/Off. From there you'll be able to set the times at which it will automatically turn on and off. There is one setting for weekdays and another for weekends. Another way to extend your battery life is to turn Bluetooth off when you're not using it. Keep in mind that for optimal battery life, you should let your battery run almost all the way down before recharging. If your phone won't charge up at all, try cleaning the contacts of your phone and battery. If that doesn't help, try a new battery and/or charger. If a new battery and charger don't solve the problem, the issue is with your phone and you should contact the manufacturer.

Headphones

A runner sometimes doesn't fare well with earbuds when using an MP3 player. They fall out due to the constant jostle of running, and this can become a burden for anyone hoping to get in a good workout. It's essential to match your earphones to your needs, or your experience will be diminished. A runner should opt for a headphone that's secure, and in this case, an in-the-ear earbud would be the ideal choice. Headphone styles are numerous and include wired/wireless earbuds, which are perfect for people on the go (students, mass transit users), and earcups, which can satisfy any audiophile's need to hear minute musical details.

Don't Supersize

We've all run into the problem of not being able to view an emailed image because it took up more than the entire screen. To make emailing pictures easier on you and your recipients, use the resizing tools in your photo-editing software. To resize images in Jasc Paint Shop Pro 9, for instance, click Image and Resize, change the Pixel Dimension values, and click OK. Not only will resizing your photos make it easier to email them, but also it'll make archiving and printing them more simple. Look for a resize option in your editing program's tools or check to see if you're given advanced options when saving photos. Keep in mind that the format you choose when saving photos will affect the quality of your photograph. Naturally, the higher the quality you select, the larger the picture file will be.

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Moving on to Vista – Part 9

By Neil Stahfest, Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA, www.tapcug.org ,
ncstahfest@msn.com



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

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

Speaking of security (see paragraph 1), Windows Vista, like Windows XP, comes with a firewall program pre-installed. As all you computer gurus know, a computer firewall is a hardware or software tool that examines all Internet traffic letting only "safe" traffic into your computer. The firewall for Vista was supposed to scan Internet traffic both entering and leaving your computer. I can hear some

of you saying, "If I scan incoming traffic to be safe, why do I care about outbound traffic?". Well, incoming traffic is the bigger threat to you. Using pre-defined rules it determines which programs are allowed to use your network connection or which ports can be used for communications. If some spyware, Trojans or malicious "phone home" software slip past your firewall they may allow someone to take remote control of your computer to attack it other computers through your Internet connection (that's why Microsoft is always sending you those security updates). So a firewall that scans outbound traffic attempts to stop this. To make a longer story short, contrary to plans, the ability to check outbound traffic has not been provided with Vista's firewall.

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

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