

Napa Valley
Personal Computer
Users Group

<http://www.nvpcug.org>

P.O. Box 2866
Napa, California 94558

COMPUTER NEWS



Volume 25, No. 12

Dec 2008

Inside This Issue

- 2 NVPCUG Special Interest Groups
- 2 NVPCUG Calendar
- 2 President's Message
- 3 Officers List
- 4 Computhanksgiving
- 4 !Danger: Music Download!
- 5 Digital Imagery SIG Report
- 5 Chicago Computer Society
Makes History!
- 6 The New, The Best,
and The Worst
- 7 Laptop Battery Maintenance
Procedures
- 8 TV Converter Box Notes
- 10 Roxio Creator 2009 Review
- 12 Media Show 4 by Cyberlink
- 13 Anti-Virus Virus
- 15 Almost everyone needs a little
help with Word 2007

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 December 17th NVPCUG General Meeting will be Annual Holiday Potluck Party for Members

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users
Group will meet Wednesday,
Dec 17 at 6:30 P.M.,
at the Peterson's Family Tree Farm
(in the Christmas House),
1120 Darms Lane, Napa, California

THE COMPUTER USERS GROUP WILL PROVIDE NONALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, PAPER PLATES, CUPS, PLASTIC WARE, & NAPKINS. AT THIS EVENT WE WILL INTRODUCE THE NEW OFFICERS AND PRESENT THE MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD. THIS IS A TIME TO VISIT WITH OLD FRIENDS AND MAKE NEW ONES. WE HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL THERE. THE PARTY IS ALWAYS A LOT OF FUN AND THE FOOD IS GREAT AND PLENTIFUL.

BRING A POTLUCK DISH (PLUS BYOB)

(SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS)

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

December 2008

Well another year has passed and we are still here. This feat was accomplished because of many people who have been willing to give of themselves and do the things necessary to keep a group like ours going. Many of these people serve on the NVPCUG Board of Directors but several did not. I want to just say thank you to each and every one of them. Here is a list of all of them that my feeble mind can remember: **Susy Ball, Mike Ball, Jerry Brown, Mel Cohen, Jim Hearn, Jim Gray, Dick Peterson, Dianne Prior, Bob Simmerman, Kathy Slavens, Jeff Solomon, Dean Unruh, Marcia Waddell, and Roy Wagner.** I am not saying that these are the only people that served our group but they are the ones that I saw put in the most effort towards continuing our group. I also want to thank their respective families and significant others for giving them the time to help. **Thank you all!**



This year has been a year of making hard choices and the Board of Directors has been there to do just that. We, like so many other organizations before us, have found that the financial part of our group has just not kept up with the expenses of the group. Because we are already charging our members the same dues that most computer user groups our size charge we could not bring ourselves to raise the dues to a level that would cover expenses. Because of this we will have to, as almost every other computer group has already done, stop printing and mailing our monthly newsletter. Effectively the January Computer News and all following Computer News issues will be provided electronically only. So update your PDF reader and if you are a current member you will be getting a link to the current Computer News newsletter as soon as it is available each month. If you want a printed copy you will need to fire up your printer, load some paper and print out the downloaded PDF file.

This month's meeting is the **Annual Members Holiday Party** and is for dues paying members and their guests only. It is a potluck event and a BYOB party. You must sign up by e-mailing **Dianne Prior** at Prior@napanet.net or you can call her at 252-1506 and let her know how many are coming and what potluck dish you are bringing. The 2009 Board of Directors and Officers will be announced as well as the 2008 Member of the Year. It's a great party and everyone who attends has a wonderful time. We don't meet at the Senior Center instead we meet at Peterson's Family Christmas Tree Farm. For additional details see our website at <http://www.nvpcug.org>.

As always if you want to help or have any ideas how we can improve the group feel free to e-mail me at President@nvpcug.org. For now have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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

Take care,
Ron

NVPCUG Calendar

Dec 17	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + D
Jan 7	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting + B
Jan 12	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Jan 14	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting + B
Jan 15	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Jan 21	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + A
Feb 4	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting + B
Feb 9	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Feb 11	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting + B
Feb 12	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Feb 18	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + A

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

Computer News (ISSN 0897-5744) is published monthly by the Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group, Inc. (NVPCUG), P.O. Box 2866, Napa, CA 94558-0286.

Subscriptions: \$30 for one year (12 issues).

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Computhanksgiving

By Berry F. Phillips, a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City, www.ccokc.org,
bfpdata@laccess.net

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The Computer Club of Oklahoma City recently celebrated "Thanksgiving in August" at our monthly General Meeting when we celebrated all the members past and present who have given of their time and talents in the evolution of our computer club. As I was preparing for the General Meeting, I thought how far we have come from our humble beginnings in a small house where a few people attended to try to master DOS. Today, the Computer Club of Oklahoma City enjoys a high tech facility complete with a computer lab and is partnered with Senior Net.

The first computer club was the Homebrew Computer Club which had its humble beginnings in a garage in the Silicon Valley in California in March 1975. The club was an informal group of electronic enthusiasts and technically-minded hobbyists who gathered to trade parts, circuits, and information pertaining to computer devices. The club evolved rapidly to a large auditorium. The 1999 made-for-television movie "Pirates of the Silicon Valley" (and the book on which it was based, "Fire in the Valley: The making of the Personal Computer," describes the role of the Homebrew Computer Club in creating the personal computer. Engineers working on very expensive main frame computers in those days dreamed of developing a personal computer that would be so affordable that almost everyone could have one in their home. The rest of course is technological history.

SeniorNet was founded in 1986 by Doctor Mary Furlong in San Francisco, California and was later moved to Santa Clara, California. Dr. Furlong believed that telecommunications could enhance the lives of older adults.

She faced considerable opposition in getting the project funded. The Merkle Foundation realized the potential of the project and funded it based at the University of San Francisco. Five learning centers were opened with twenty seniors, and computers were furnished by Apple Computers. Today SeniorNet has won numerous national awards and has 200 learning centers both nationally and internationally with a membership of approximately 20,000. SeniorNet is the leading technological educator of older adults and has benefited millions of seniors since its inception.

The birth of the personal computer was due to the development of the microprocessor, a single chip with all the circuitry that formerly occupied large cabinets. The early personal computers were called microcomputers and were sold as electronic kits with programming done by toggle switches and output was provided by front panel indicators such as neon bulbs. One remembers the Altair which you couldn't do much with but was of interests to hobbyists and technicians. Today due to the considerable evolution of the personal computer in 2008, one billion were sold worldwide and a projected two billion by 2014.

I am reminded of the Virginia Slim commercial, "You have come a long way, baby!" I wonder how often do we think of the thousands of our fellow citizens who have been involved with the development as well as the teaching of how to use these amazing technological devices that have so transformed our lives and indeed become a necessity and our very windows to the world? Perhaps, it is time to celebrate together a well deserved "Computhanksgiving."

Happy Thanksgiving from the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. ■

!Danger: Music Download!

By Mike Morris, Editor-in-Charge, Front Range PC Users Group, Colorado,
<http://www.frpcug.org>, twriterext@gmail.com

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"On September 8, 2003, the recording industry sued 261 American music fans for sharing songs...."

That partial quote is from an Electronic Frontier

Foundation article (<http://www.eff.org/wp/riaa-v-people-years-later>) that provides an in-depth description of RIAA (Recording Industry

of America) activities, with many references. Lawsuits filed by the RIAA over the past five years have resulted in severe financial hardship to individuals that were targets of RIAA legal action — and some of those defendants claimed that they were not aware that they had violated the law.

Legal consequences for anyone caught in a violation of copyright infringement laws have now increased.

On October 13th, 2008, a new law, the Prioritizing Resources and Organization for Intellectual

!Danger: Music Download! cont. on page 5

Chicago Computer Society Makes History!

Digital Imagery SIG's Meeting for June, 2008

By Irene Ganas ,Chicago Computer Society , <http://www.ccs.org> , iganas@aol.com



History was made by the Chicago Computer Society, as its Digital Imagery SIG, hosted by Sanford Kolinek, gave its first Main Presentation at our local meeting by its presenter from two thousand miles away.

As one of the largest member turnouts this year assembled in their seats in Lisle, **Sanford** passed the popcorn for all to enjoy and **Jack Jackson**, a long-time member of the Chicago Computer Society who now lives in Utah, presented his slide-show of gorgeous photographs of Goblin Valley and Arches National Park with his live narrative from his home in Utah. Assisting **Jack** at the meeting were **Alvin Reisbeck** and **Jerry Sass**.

Here is how this unique program came about and was done. Jack had mailed me a DVD of his photographs that I took to the February Digital Imagery Meeting for Show-and-Tell. We had a beautiful show but no tell and our members discussed how nice it would have been had we been able to learn more about how to make such wonderful images by being able to ask Jack about his camera, the settings he chose and why, what post-processing he did, etc.

That led to the idea of using Skype at our meeting. **Jack** mailed several more DVDs to **Alvin** and **Jerry**. **Jack** downloaded the latest Skype from www.skype.com and then Sanford, **Jerry** and **Jack** worked out and practiced the details ahead of time which made the evening's presentation run perfectly.

The DVD was run from **Jerry's** notebook PC on site at

the meeting. A small "eyeball" video camera connecting to **Jerry's** notebook allowed "**Utah Jack**" to see **Jerry** and a video cam on **Utah Jack's** computer allowed **Jerry** to see **Jack**. When Jerry's notebook was connected to the projector and sound system at our meeting, all of us at the meeting could see and hear **Utah Jack**.

Here's the fun part: when the video cam "eyeball" was turned around and passed around, **Utah Jack** was able to see all the members at the meeting to "Howdy" us, each by name because he could see each of us.

The video cam eyeball was then positioned to "look at" the screen so that **Utah Jack** could look at the same show that all of us at the meeting were seeing. It was this setup that enabled Jack to present his live running commentary on the slide show. During the show, people asked **Jack** questions about everything from the technical aspects of his photographs, the music he chose for the show, commented on "his house" and laughed together about it because it was a photograph of an historic log cabin at a park in Utah.

This historic technical event and the hot popcorn compliments of **Sanford** made the evening one of the most enjoyable meetings of the year. We anticipate another great meeting next month at Brookfield Zoo, the site of this year's Digital Imagery SIG's Annual Summer Outdoor Event. Hope all will join us. See you there. ■

[!Danger: Music Download! cont. from page 4](#)

Property Act was signed that provides new federal enforcement powers and higher penalties for copyright infringement.

For details, see this CNET news story:

http://news.cnet.com/8301-13578_3-10064527-38.html.

Briefly, (from the CNET story[®] — used with permission from CBS Interactive, Inc., copyright 2008, all rights reserved) "...the law consolidates federal efforts to combat copyright infringement under a new White House cabinet position, the intellectual property enforcement coordinator, who will be appointed by the president. ... The law also steepens penalties for intellectual-property infringement, and increases resources for the Department of Justice to coordinate for federal and state efforts against counterfeiting and

piracy. The so-called Pro-IP Act passed unanimously in the Senate last month and received strong bipartisan support in the House."

We often forget that under our legal system, ignorance of the law is no defense. For those readers with family members, friends and acquaintances that are casual computer users, now may be the time for a reminder that, however tempting, free music downloads may result in serious legal problems. And, for any member of those same groups that use the internet as their primary source of music, that reminder may be an absolute necessity.

To paraphrase a different warning, "free music downloads may be injurious to your financial health." You, your family, friends and acquaintances all need to be informed consumers before downloading "free" music or sharing music files. ■

The New, The Best, and The Worst

September 2008

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

Could Cuil Cool Google?

Let me digress. I suspect that most of my readers, like myself, have reached that stage in life when our wisdom exceeds our wits. To make sense of our surroundings we must keep our glasses clean and a fresh battery in our hearing aid.

Recently my son, Mike, and I were watching a DVD from his vast collection (Batman Begins, in case you're wondering). Mike turns on the subtitles for me, so it wasn't until we took a break for some light refreshments that I noticed that my hearing aid battery had died. As I proceeded to insert a fresh battery, Mike marveled at the tiny disk that successfully powers a small in-ear hearing aid for several weeks. I told him that they are unlike watch batteries and that they are air-powered to the best of my recollection. Before the first use, they are activated by removing a small foil tab to admit air. Mike appeared to question my wisdom, if not my wits.

Just to be sure of the facts, back home I fired up Google and searched for "zinc air battery." That yielded 433,000 results, confirming that my recollection of the technology was correct. One of the results made me sit up and take notice:

Zinc Air Batteries.

With the removal of a sealing tab, oxygen from the air is introduced into the cell. A zinc-air battery usually reaches full operating voltage within 5 ...

I often have trouble getting a new battery to work right away and have been scratching the electrodes with a pen knife to assure good electrical contact. The incomplete reference snippet teasingly suggested that the battery simply needed 5 somethings (minutes maybe?) to activate.

Maybe the scratching had nothing to do with it? I tried to retrieve the full article, but the link was dead and the cache was empty. None of the other Google retrievals mentioned anything about activation time.

Zinc-Air batteries, as used in hearing aids, are great performers in comparison to other types of batteries. On an equal weight basis they carry 4-5 times as much charge as lead-acid, nickel-cadmium and nickel-hydride batteries, and 30% more than lithium ion batteries. They maintain a constant power output over better than 85% of the time to full discharge. Because of inexpensive ingredients: zinc, aqueous caustic, carbon and some plastic membranes, encased in a metal container, they are inexpensive to manufacture. The batteries are non-toxic and pose no danger to the environment on disposal. They are not a fire hazard, like lithium batteries.

They have two major shortcomings: a limited life time when air is admitted, and they are not rechargeable.

Zinc-Air batteries are fuel cells that consume zinc. In comparison to the much-ballyhooed hydrogen fuel cells, zinc is inexpensive, easily transported and stored, non-hazardous, and the spent fuel, zinc oxide, is easily regenerated electrically from renewable sources.

Large-scale experiments have demonstrated that the batteries can power city buses for a full day's use, using recyclable zinc-electrolyte cartridges for fuel. The US Army is a large-scale user of Zinc-Air batteries in battlefield operations. They provide 4 to 6 times the run time of conventional batteries, and are used with portable equipment, in locations where reliable electrical power is not available.

check the hearing aid by holding it in the closed fist and listening for its feedback squeal.

With a magnifying glass I detected 3 tiny air holes under the tab in the positive top of the battery. Certainly, it would take some time for sufficient air to diffuse through those little holes to activate the battery. I ran a quick experiment,

I recently read about a new search program, called Cuil (pronounced "cool"), meaning "wisdom" in Gaelic. Reportedly it improves on Google by scanning articles for organization of ideas, instead of number of links. It was mostly created by former Google employees and can be accessed at www.cuil.com.

Early reviews of Cuil have been mixed, so I thought this was a good time to give it a try.

As a result of my query about "zinc air battery," Cuil produced exactly 8 results, including 5 virtually identical ones from a single vendor site, www.batteriesplus.com/. Not very helpful. So much for Cuil, as it stands now.

The same query on Yahoo yielded 4,270,000 results, with the first page mostly from hearing aid battery sellers that probably paid to be listed first. The teasing reference found earlier with Google was listed by Yahoo at the bottom of the page, but it also ended in 5... (what?).

I went back to Google and narrowed the search to "zinc air battery activation." That yielded the mysterious reference right on top, adding that the activation time was 5 seconds.

Well, it takes longer than 5 seconds to insert the battery and

checking how fast the voltage builds up in the hearing aid battery after removing the seal tab, and found that it took about 1 1/2 minutes. With the battery under load in a hearing aid it may well take a little longer than that.

Next time my hearing aid needs a new battery I may only need to wait a few minutes for it to get up to speed.

Meanwhile I'll stick with Google for my searches until Cuil has added more wits to its wisdom.

Desktop Publishing With Scribus



Now that the format of this newsletter is no longer restrained to eight Xeroxed pages for mailing, I will add some color and variety to the layout. That requires switching from the OpenOffice Writer word processor I have been using to a desktop publishing program, preferably inexpensive and easy to use.

I considered my old copy of MS PictureIt! Publisher, but that uses a proprietary file format not easily converted to pdf.

I found an offer of a free desktop publishing program online, PagesPlus, list price \$129⁹⁹, with a special download offer for only \$10. Inexpensive enough to be worth a try. I paid my dues, downloaded and installed the program. The interface was not very intuitive, so I started with chapter 1 of the tutorial. That pointed me in the right direction and I eagerly went on to chapter 2. Surprise! The rest of the tutorial required downloading or ordering a CD at a cost of \$99⁹⁹! I quickly lost interest.

I am much in support of OpenSource (free) programs, many of which are quite sophisticated, such as OpenOffice Writer and The Gimp. At one time I had looked at Scribus, an Open Source, full-featured desktop publishing program, available in versions for Linux, the MAC and Windows. At the time I was scared away by its extensive set of icons and cascading menus since I could not find a helpful manual.

I decided to give Scribus another try and went looking for online help. Happily I found an excellent tutorial at http://wiki.scribus.net/index.php/Get_Started_with_Scribus. I am still learning as I am writing this, but if the newsletter looks different when you read this you'll know that I learned at least the basics of Scribus and desktop publishing. As usual, it all seems so simple when you follow the tutorial, but when you are on your own the feared unintended consequences rear up. Fortunately there is a lot of helpful information to fall back on in the aforementioned reference, so I'm getting there.

Of course, the desktop publishing program is only a tool, and it will require new skills to design attractive layouts. Suggestions are more than welcome! ■

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Apple Bytes

Laptop Battery Maintenance Procedures

By Norm Kronenberg, Macintosh Director, Hilton Head Island Computer Club, <http://hhicc.org>, nkron@roadrunner.com

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Standard Maintenance



For proper maintenance of a lithium-based battery, it's important to keep the electrons in it moving occasionally. Apple does not recommend leaving your portable plugged in all the time. An ideal use would be a commuter who

uses her MacBook Pro on the train, then plugs it in at the office to charge. This keeps the battery juices flowing. If on the other hand, you use a desktop computer at work, and save a notebook for infrequent travel, Apple recommends charging and discharging its battery at least once per month. Need a reminder? Add an event to your desktop's iCal



Calibrate battery

PowerBook G4 (15-inch Double-Layer SD), MacBook (all models), MacBook Pro (all models), and MacBook Pro (17-inch) (all models).

The battery calibration for the PowerBook G4 (15-inch Double-Layer SD) and any model of MacBook or MacBook Pro has been updated because of a new battery released with this computer. With these computers, follow these steps to calibrate your battery:



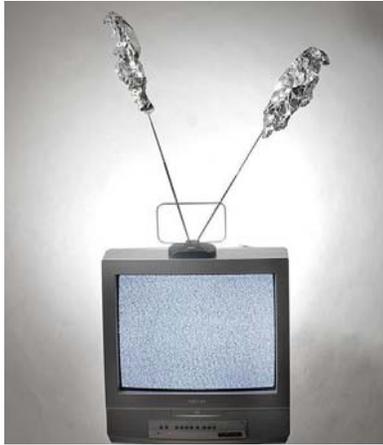
1. Plug in the power adapter and fully charge your PowerBook's battery until the light ring or LED on the power adapter plug changes to

[LaptopBattery cont. on page 9](#)

TV Converter Box Notes

By Mike Morris, a member of the Front Range PC Users Group, Colorado, www.frpcug.org,
twriterext@gmail.com

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Regarding video (and audio) hardware, I have to admit to being an Old Analog Guy (the acronym = OAG and is pronounced "ogre"). I have 2 old analog TV's. I don't intend to buy a new HDTV until they both quit working. I don't intend to sign up for satellite or cable TV. I don't, actually, watch very much TV (or movies), and I am not

interested in computer games. For the "Digital TV Transition" coming in February 2009, a TV converter box is the solution for me; especially now that I have my two \$40 coupons.

The question is, which converter to buy?

There are 52 DTV converter box models from 33 manufacturers listed on the enclosure that came with my converter box coupons (and many more listed on the website provided at the end of this article).



Not all converters are equal. It is still "Buyer Beware," so you need to decide what features and specs you want (and/or don't want), and then check the specs of each unit carefully.



Perhaps there are a few others like me, who are considering buying a converter box. For my fellow OAG's (male or female), I have collected links to information on 6 of the converters that I will share with you.

Do check prices, with reputable online sellers and with your local big box or electronics store (local or national). Prices vary widely. I have picked some prices in order to provide an approximation of the "MSRP (Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price)".



Channel Master CM-7000

A recent price: \$79⁹⁹ (less \$40 coupon)

Exact phrase Google search: 3860 hits

A few of those pages were investigated. One with information and specifications is Channel Master 1.

Channel Master is part of Andrew Corporation (known

for its antennas, among other things), which is now part of CommScope. The CommScope HQ are in North Carolina. For more information on these companies and their products, connect to CommScope.

Check out the discussion of this unit on AV Science Forum:

This is part of a message posted in March of 2008:

- "The specifications on page 2 of the information sheet:
- Demodulator input for 1080i, 720p, 480i, and 480.
- Video output is 480i ONLY.
- 480i is Standard Definition DTV only. The CM-7000's claim to "Get Free HDTV
- Without Monthly Fees" is inaccurate."

EchoStar TR-40

A recent price: Unofficially, \$40, which means, effectively, free with the coupon.

Exact phrase Google search: 10,100 hits

Lots of information on this unit on the AfterDawn website. This website also provides comparisons to other similar units.

Digital Stream D2A1D110/20

A recent price: \$69⁹⁹ (less \$40 coupon)

Exact phrase Google search: 2 hits, plus 2 ads. None of the links from the Google search provided information on the model number listed above.

There are four other Digital Stream model numbers listed in coupon enclosure, one of which is described at Solid Signal.com.

GE 22729

A recent price: \$79⁹⁹ (less \$40⁰⁰ coupon)

Exact phrase Google search: 39,200 hits

For (limited) specs connect to this After Dawn web page.

Insignia NS-DXA1

A recent price: \$59⁹⁹ (less \$40⁰⁰ coupon)

Exact phrase Google search: 44,700 hits

Check out the information on the World-Wide TV-FM DX Association website.

There is also a detailed CNET review.

From the spec sheet: "(This unit) ... displays digital TV at standard-definition (480i) screen resolution."

Magnavox TB-100MG9

A recent price: \$79⁹⁹ (less \$40⁰⁰ coupon)

Exact phrase Google search: 999 hits

You will find some information on this unit at Solid

Signal.com. There is also a discussion of this product on the AV Science Forum.



RCA DTA 800A

A recent price: \$49⁹⁹ (?) (less \$40⁰⁰ coupon)

Exact phrase Google search: 412 hits

There are two versions of this product: the 800A and the 800B. The difference is the tuner manufacturer. For more information on this, connect to the AV Science Forum and scroll down to posting #39.

Remember this acronym, courtesy of the late Robert Heinlein (Science Fiction author): TANSTAAFL.

That translates to "There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch." If you have decided to stay with your old analog TV, and you do not plan to sign up for satellite or cable TV, then you must do your homework in order to find the right product before spending your hard-earned money on a converter box.



Remember also that the word "converter" has real meaning in this context. The converter box is converting an HDTV signal into something an old analog

TV can display. That "something an old analog TV can display" is definitely NOT HDTV (no matter WHAT the advertisements say).

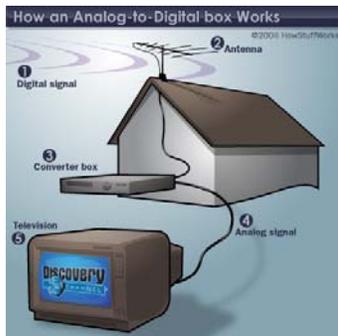
You will likely find one other obvious difference between using your old analog TV to receive analog broadcasts, and using your old analog TV with a converter box. If you tuned (or tried to tune) to a distant station with your old analog TV, you would get a terrible picture (lots of noise, etc.). With the converter box, you simply won't know a weak station is even there. You need a strong signal—the converter boxes have a "threshold" effect. With a strong signal, everything looks good. With a weak signal, you get a black screen. So, when you are setting up your converter box and TV, you may want to move your antenna (or Rabbit Ears) around to get the maximum strength signal possible.

For more information on digital TV, connect to this Wikipedia article.

For more information on the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, connect to:

<https://www.dtv2009.gov>.

For an up-to-date list of qualifying products, connect to: https://www.ntiadtv.gov/cecb_list.cfm



LaptopBattery cont. from page 7

green and the onscreen meter in the menu bar indicates that the battery is fully charged.



2. Allow the battery to rest in the fully charged state for at least two hours. You may use your computer during this time as long as the adapter is plugged in.
3. Disconnect the power adapter with the computer still on and start running the computer off battery power. You may use your computer during this time. When your battery gets low, you will see the low battery warning dialog on the screen.

4. Continue to keep your computer on until it goes to sleep. Save all your work and close all applications when the battery gets very low, before the computer goes to sleep.



5. Turn off the computer or allow it to sleep for five hours or more.
6. Connect the power adapter and leave it connected until the battery is fully charged again.

New iPod Touch A Computer in Your Pocket

The iPhone 3G has gotten all of the attention, but the new iPod Touch is a powerful touchscreen computer, with Wi-Fi access to the Internet, but without the cell phone feature or GPS. It is available in 8-, 16- or 32 MB capacities. Connect to the Internet wherever there's a wireless network. Surf the web and send email from any Wi-Fi hotspot. Get directions, check the weather, follow stocks, watch YouTube, and more.



The 3.5-inch touchscreen display is perfect for surfing the Web, watching movies and playing games.

Roxio Creator 2009 Review

By Susy Ball, member of the Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group, www.nvpcug.org, susyball@aol.com



I reviewed this product on a 1.60 GHz Toshiba laptop with 2 Gig of DDR2 RAM and a 160 GB drive. For those of you who did not see the presentation at the November

NVPCUG general meeting and for those who would like to see more about the program, here is a written review.

The program does not require all that space to operate. In fact the Add or Remove program list shows that it takes less than 1.5 GB. For a program that can handle most of your media needs from ripping and burning CDs and DVDs, handling audiobooks, editing music, video and photos, handling batch conversion and transfer to assembling panoramas and also for sharing media productions, whether it be on CD, DVD. Or the Internet, that is definitely not much space. Below are the minimum requirements for the program along with the recommended hardware and the optional device support



Minimum System Requirements

Roxio Creator 2009 Suite



- Microsoft® Windows Vista Home Basic, Windows XP SP2 or SP3 (32 or 64 bit) with 1 GHz processor and 512 MB RAM

- 1024x768 DirectX 9 compatible graphics card with at least 16 bit color setting; 24-bit or 32-bit true color recommended
- Windows compatible sound card
- DVD-ROM drive
- Hard drive with at least 3 GB free space
- Windows Media Player 10
- Internet Explorer 7

- Internet connection required for registration, product updates, and some features. Any Internet charges are the user's responsibility.

Recommended

- Intel or AMD dual-core processor
- 2 GB RAM
- DVD recordable drive
- Hard drive with at least 10 GB free space

Optional device support:

- DVD recordable drive
- iPod
- iPhone
- Windows Media Portable Device
- PSP
- 3GP Mobile Phone
- TiVo® requires a TiVo® Series2™, Series3™, TiVo® HD DVR or other TiVoToGo compatible DVR connected to your home network, and TiVo Desktop. Does not work with DirecTV-provided TiVo DVRs. See www.tivo.com for more information.
- For video playback: AMD graphics processor with Aviv support or nVidia graphics processor with PureVideo support
- For video capture: OHCI compliant IEEE 1394 FireWire card (for use with DV camera) or analog video capture device

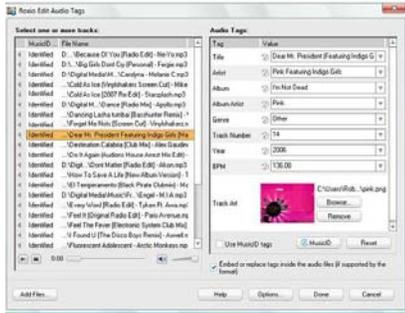
In addition to making normal CDs and DVDs this program can handle HD and blu-ray needs for when the DVD player is upgraded or if I should decide to burn a disk in blu-ray for someone who does have blu-ray capability.

Users will especially like the programs step-by-step approach to all the tasks it will do. All one has to do is follow the directions and then click NEXT and the program walks you through the process will still allowing for personalization of the step. Just by following the directions, I was able to create a 4 picture panorama in a matter of minutes and I liked the results better than the program I have on my computer that is dedicated to making panoramas.



Another nice feature is the ability to edit your music information. By spending a little time and filling in the blanks my music that is labeled “TRACK ...”

From LP to Computer MP3 file



In a manner of a short time, this program will even allow you to digitalize (computerize) your LP collection. Boy, putting all my music onto computer will save a lot of room. When copying you

LPs you should save in WAV format because WAV is better for editing because it contains more information, but remember that a WAV file will take up about 10 times more space than a MP3. In the interest of saving time, I had someone else put the LPs on CD, so I just had to import tracks from the CD. Each side of an album was saved as one track, so I had to each track into the five or six songs that was recorded as one. The program not only allowed me to clip the individual songs, but it also allowed me to add all the information you would normally find on a tagged CD like title, artist and even the year it was recorded. Then I just saved the resulting clip as an MP3. When all the songs had been separated from a track, I simply deleted the track from the computer.

In addition to ripping music, one can even make playlists and with the aid of the beat matching feature, the rhythm will automatically be synchronized from song to song.



Video to finished Production

With the video editor, I was able to edit and even combine movie files, then add music, narration and still photos; all held together with any one of a number of transitions provided with the program. I could create and overlay text, add music either that provided with the program or from my own music collection. After everything was to my liking I was able to export the production to CD or DVD depending on the size of the video and the quality I wanted it saved as. Or I could have decided to export my production with YouTube without even leaving Roxio Creator 2009.

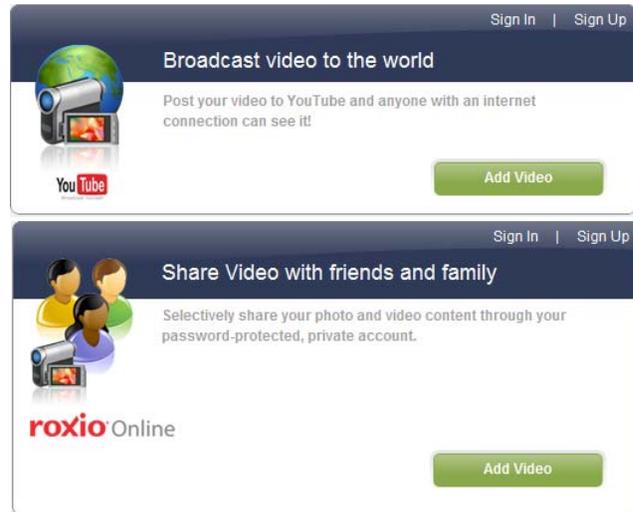
PhotoSuite

Most of us do not like to do complicated and time consuming edit to our photos. Roxio Creator 2009 contains a new version of PhotoSuite that will perform many edits from

cropping, red eye correction, scratch removal and you can even add a number of special effects. So whether you want to add special effects to your photos or you simply want to enhance your existing pictures.

Accessories

From the Roxio site (www.roxio.com) a Video Capture USB is available for \$49⁹⁹. This little device will VCR tapes, Hi8 and V8 tapes to a digital format that can be preserved much longer and transferred to digital media such as DVDs



As I mentioned earlier this program is capable of outputting to high definition and blu-ray disks. However it is necessary to get the High-Def/Blu-ray Disc Plug-In that is available for \$29⁹⁹

Help

If there are any questions about step-by-step process or one has any questions that cannot be find enough help in the HELP section that comes with this robust program, Online HELP both as PDF files and video are available if one has an internet connection. Don't forget that there might also be help in a GOOGLE search for your particular question.

Cost

You can buy the program from www.roxio.com and many other sources. The cost of the program through Roxio is a mere \$99⁹⁹. Shopping around, I found the program for as low as \$79⁹⁹.

Conclusion

What I liked most about this program was that is a one-stop shop for all your media needs, so that you do not have to have who knows how many media programs on your computer.

The main problem I had was figuring out where I wanted to begin. With a minimum amount of reading, I was able to use the program to generate almost any media creation I could imagine. I have a two suggestions, have fun with the program and do not misplace your original disk. ■

Media Show 4 by Cyberlink

A review by Terry Oden, President, Macon Computer User Group, Georgia, www.mcug.org, terry@brmemc.net

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There may be hundreds of ways to gather, store, view, edit and show off your pictures and videos. This is one of the best and easiest I have found so far. Your own operating system will do a fairly good job of getting your pictures and videos into your computer for you. On the net you also have programs that are free like Picassa, Flickr and You Tube which all do a very good job of storing and displaying your own work to family and friends.



One of the things that I liked best about Media Show was ease of operation. There are only 5 buttons to control the whole program. Below you'll find a screen shot of the second screen you'll see select the Pictures button.

Starting with the # 1 button, or the Home button here you can see all of your different folders and how many pictures or videos you have in each folder.

For the # 2 button you have Create. Here you can do things like make your own Screen Saver, compose a movie or DVD. You can print your own pictures or order prints on line.

Next you have the # 3 button or the Share button. Here you can share your pictures with friends and family or up-load them to Flickr. Also, you could upload them to U-tube with a single click of your mouse, if desired.



The next button # 4 is the View button, here you can adjust the size of your thumbnails or add any captions to your pictures. You can also change the color of the skin of the program (appearance).

The last button or # 5 is the Folder Tools button. Here you edit, sort, locate, delete or hide some pictures if you like.

This Media Show 4 is one of the top programs when it comes to ease of operation, not to mention what the finished product will look like. To create a movie or

slideshow with sound and motion, fading or cell you only have to make about three clicks of the mouse. First you have to decide if you want background music or not, next select what format you want to use, and where to save your work in your computer. Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!



Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!



To create a DVD it's very easy. First decide a name for your DVD. Then pick out a menu style for your DVD. Now comes the hard part. You must decide which videos you want to use and if you want any still

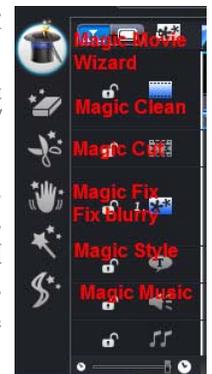
pictures in it or not. Yes, once again you have to tell the program which videos or pictures you want to use.

Next, click on the preview button to see what your work looks like. If you like it, click on the burn button and you're done.

System Requirements

1. Operating System- Windows Vista / XP (with Direct X 9 or above)
2. Screen Resolution- 800 x 600
3. Printers- All
4. CPU- Intel Pentium D 3.0 GHz, AMD Athlon 64 3500+ or above
5. Sound Card- PCI sound card or on-board audio
6. Memory- 512 MB RAM minimum, 1GB recommended
7. Hard Disk Space- 1 GB required, 20 GB recommended for DVD production
8. Graphics Card- Intel 945GM or above-64 MBVRAM or above
9. Optical Drive- A DVD burner (DVD+R/RW or DVD-R/RW) is required to burn content onto DVD's
10. Import Devices- Cameras via removable disk interface-Cameras support Windows Portable devices interface-Camcorder DV devices via IEEE 1394 (Firewire)
11. Internet Connection- An Internet connection is required for some upload/download features.

As for the overall way the program works, I've not found a program this large at this cost that operates so easily and simply. I have found no shortcomings with this program yet. This is the best program for the money that can be found, under \$50⁰⁰. ■



Anti-Virus Virus

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

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

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

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

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

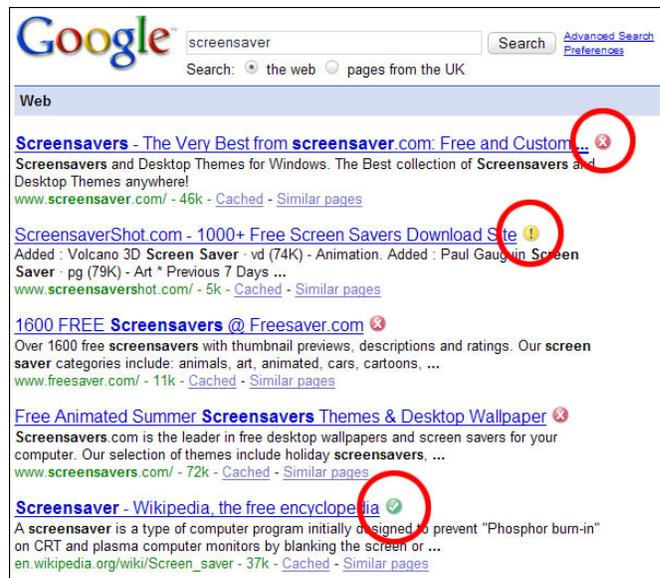
On top of that, there are many other viruses or pieces of malware that can piggyback on the main virus. So this malware can dramatically slow down or even stop your computer. The infections being caused by these viruses and malware programs are extremely harmful and can be very difficult to remove. They often require a cleanup by a professional or a complete reformatting of the hard drive and reinstallation of the software.

As an everyday computer user, you need to be very careful about the software that you download from the Internet. Make sure that it is from a source that you know to be reputable or a website that has been recommended by a trustworthy source. You can also use a program like the McAfee Site Advisor to help you assess the validity of the website before you download

the program. McAfee's Site Advisor is a small program that is used by your Internet browser to indicate the safety of websites. It is a free download available at <http://www.siteadvisor.com> and it is a valuable tool.

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

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



What's Behind The Battery Cover?

Digital camera's power comes from either a proprietary rechargeable battery or one or two pairs of AAs. There are advantages and disadvantages to each setup:

With the proprietary option, the battery and its charger are included with the camera and should last for years. On the downside, after the battery is depleted, the camera is out of commission until the battery recharges, unless you've bought a spare, which could run several dozen dollars.

With cameras that take AAs, you can buy batteries anywhere and always have inexpensive spares on hand. But for economy and convenience, you'll need to supply your own rechargeable batteries.

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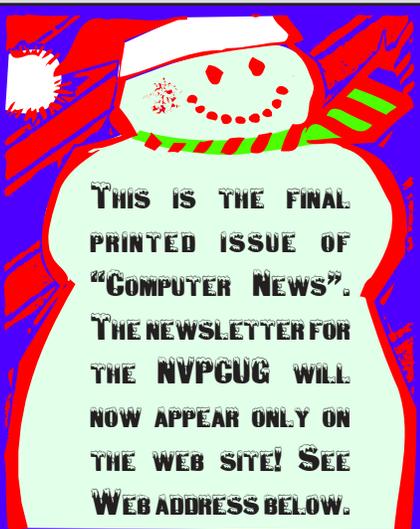
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Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

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Revised 4-23-07

Almost everyone needs a little help with Word 2007

By Linda Gonse, Editor and Webmaster, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, California,
www.orcopug.org, editor@orcopug.org

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Bear with me while I quote John Dvorak from his August 2008 PC Magazine column, then I will tell you what my point is.

Regarding Vista, he said: "Vista isn't completely unusable; It's simply hard to use. Menus have been reorganized for no apparent reason, features of XP appear to be missing or need to be turned on from some remote directory, and basic functions are now obfuscated.

"In a nutshell, Vista manages to be more complicated than XP, performs more poorly than XP, and is more expensive than XP."

Now, substitute Word 2007 for Vista and Word 2003 for XP and my point is made. Compared with Word 2003, Word 2007 is an involuntary learning experience for anyone already proficient in Word and productive with one or more of the features. To name a couple I use often, are: Mail Merge, tables, labels, and fields.

Tabs that open contextual "ribbons"



But, first users have to discover where basics like Help, Save As, Print and Close are.

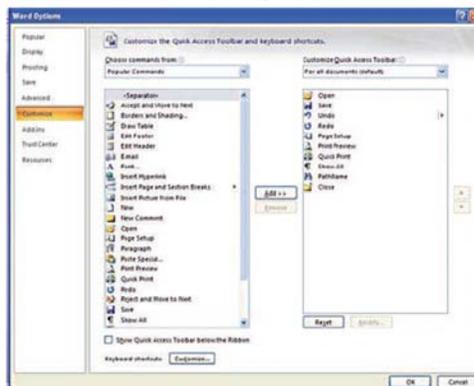
To say Word 2007 has a steep learning curve may not scare everyone. But, to say it has a steep learning curve for experienced Word users should scare everyone, as well as be a cause for serious concern.

Unfortunately, I didn't fully understand how an Office 2007 upgrade for Office 2003 functioned. If you haven't taken the step, yet, let me caution you. The upgrade

wipes out Office 2003 and you cannot downgrade. I believe this step was automatically taken by the installation. Perhaps with a full version, you would be given a choice to install the newer version into another directory, leaving the older version intact.

The first thing you notice when you open Word 2007 is the highly touted "ribbon." Nine tabs take the place of menu items across the top of the window. The tabs do not have the same names as the old menu items. In fact, a couple of the tab categories—Home, References and Add-Ins—are enigmatic. And as they say on "Dancing With The Stars," the tabs "are in no particular order."

Select commands here for the Quick Access Toolbar.



Clicking on a tab opens a segmented toolbar of options across the top of the window that relate to that tab's category. Although you may want to add to or rearrange the commands on the Ribbon or change or remove a command or group on the Ribbon—as you might have done with the menu and toolbar of earlier Word versions—you cannot.

And, you can forget about being able to revert to Word's old style toolbars and menus. But, Microsoft

helpfully advises that if you are fluent in XML programming code, you can add tabs to the Ribbon.

In Photoshop, the ribbon concept is intuitive and natural, and actually speeds up productivity. In Word, it can be chaotic and time-wasting.

Now, that you have this background in mind, you will better understand the images and steps that follow which is a short tutorial for simplifying Word 2007. My suggestion for anyone using the new Word version is to first set it up to make the features you need easy to locate.

With that in mind, I'll show you how to create a custom

toolbar for the tasks that you need to perform most often. It will help to take the aggravation and time-wasting practice of hunting around and calling on Help to figure out where things are and how to use them.

Incidentally, speaking of Help, here's a tip. When you need to turn to Help, don't look for a tab





The "Ribbon" options that correspond to the Home tab

or menu item. Just as in the old days of DOS, you must press the F1 key to make it appear!

In the upper left corner of the Word window is a round Windows logo, called the Microsoft Office Button. It will remind you of the Start button in Windows. Click on this button, it is a kind of command center temporarily until you get Word customized the way you want it. Or, it's possible, you may prefer to use it, rather than the Quick Access Toolbar. (Nah.)

The Quick Access Toolbar is just to the right of the Microsoft Office Button. It can be likened to the Quick Launch Toolbar in Windows. (Do you see a pattern here?)

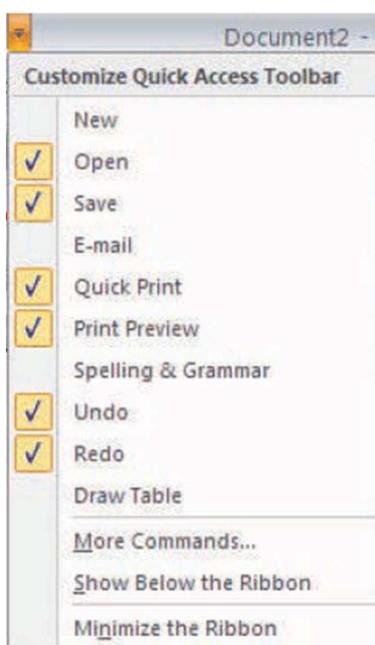
When you first open Word, the Quick Access Toolbar is empty. Click on the down arrow a slight distance away from the Microsoft Office Button. A dropdown list appears, similar to the ones you saw at the end of toolbars in Word 2003. It contains many of the general commands that you might use frequently.

Click on the commands that you want to be on the Quick Launch, er ... Quick Access

Toolbar. The icons will be added to the bar and available to you with one click.

It's almost too easy isn't it? Well, keep in mind that with this Word version, whatever effort you save in one area, you are going to earn by working harder somewhere else.

You may want to fill in the basic commands on the Quick Access Toolbar with different commands not on the dropdown list. In that case, right click on the down arrow for the dropdown menu and go to



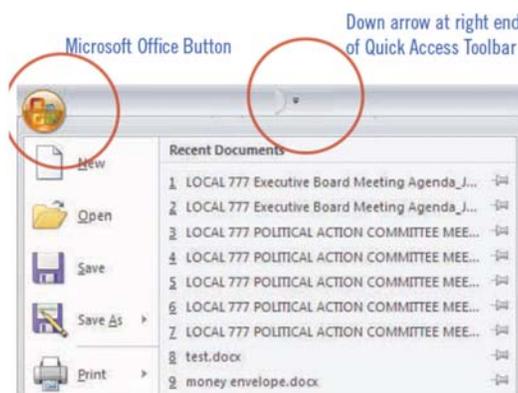
More Commands... at the bottom. There are five categories, so click through them to see what they offer. You'll be surprised. In each category, there are dozens of commands for just about any task and circumstance.

When you find a command you want to use, click to select it in the left window (see screenshot below) and click on the Add button with the arrows to move it to the right window.

Alternatively, you can click on the Microsoft Office Button. At the bottom of the dialog box click on Word Options. Then, in the list that appears on the left, click on Customize.

A familiar box with a double window will open. It is the same box that you can open from the down arrow next to the Quick Access Toolbar.

My Quick Access Toolbar has several preset command buttons and one macro that I recorded (to add the pathname to the bottom of documents). Without intentionally doing so, I nearly recreated the Standard Toolbar offered in earlier versions of Word.



The commands that I found useful to add were Open, Blank Page, Save, Undo, Redo, Page Setup, Print Preview, Print, Show/Hide, PathName (the macro), and Close.

Although a couple of the commands are available by clicking on the Microsoft Office Button, it is still faster and less distracting to have them at the top of the window and only one click away, rather two or more. ■

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