*Napa Valley*
*Personal Computer*
*Users Group*

*P.O. Box 2866*
*Napa, California 94558*

# COMPUTER NEWS

Volume 24, No. 1 January, 2007

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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. Through its Computers-to-Schools program, members refurbish used computer equipment for donation to local schools. Since January 2003 the NVPCUG has donated 573 computers and 136 printers. Additional equipment has been given to charitable nonprofit organizations and disadvantaged individuals.*

## Network Neutrality to Be Discussed by Calvin Ross January 17

**The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users group will meet Wednesday, January 17, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at the Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California.**

The main presentation, by **Calvin Ross**, will feature recent developments in the area of network neutrality that affect the prices to be charged Internet users for DSL and other services.

Here's what just happened: While pursuing a merger with BellSouth to become the largest telecommunications company in America, the new AT&T was compelled to make major concessions in order to get FCC approval.

*Calvin Ross*

Of key interest to Internet proponents is AT&T's agreement to guarantee net neutrality. The leading Internet network providers, including AT&T, MCI, Sprint, Qwest and others had been lobbying Congress over the past year or so to allow a multi-tiered service system, enabling the telecoms to charge certain Web companies more for better, elite services. By implication, other, smaller entities on the Web would end up with inferior pipelines on the Net, leading to deteriorating service by comparison.

On the Web site *SaveTheInternet.com*, Tim Wu of Columbia University made it clear that the net neutrality concession was tight enough to carry real promise for the future, calling it a "milestone in the history of the Internet." Ross will explain the ramifications of the decision.

Ross is a columnist for the *Napa Valley Register* and a long-time computer instructor at the Napa Valley College.

Preceding the main presentation, **Jerry Brown** will lead the Random Access portion of the meeting with an open-floor question-and-answer period, during which attendees can ask questions about computers

Following this, there will be a **Computer Tutor** session at which **Jeff Solomon,** Computer Tutor coordinator, will demonstrate and discuss how to cut, copy and paste text, images and data into and from various applications. He will show how to share information between Word, Excel, PDF files, and internet browsers.

## President's Message --
# Happy New Year

It has been a few years since I wrote a President's Message for the *Computer News*.

As I started this message I found myself thinking about doom and gloom. I then realized that I should keep in mind how I have a cold I brought back from Virginia before sending it in for publication. So Happy New Year!

This year has already started differently from the past couple. For one thing, we have a full Board of Directors to run the organization. I want to welcome the new members of that group

Returning to the Board of Directors this year from extended absences are **Jerry Brown**, **Bernhard Krevet,** and **Ken Manfree,** and new to the board are **Bob Simmerman**, **Kathy Slavens**, **Jeff Solomon**, and **Marcia Waddell.**

I also want to thank those who stayed on for their dedication. They are **Susy Ball**, **Jim Gillespie**, **Dick Peterson**, **Dianne Prior**, **Jim Stirling**, **Dean Unruh**, and **Roy Wagner**. See our current list of officers in this newsletter and/or on our Web site, *www.nvpcug.org*.

While new leaders are stepping in, several valuable people are moving on to other endeavors. As Vice President for the 2006 board and President for the 2007 board I want to thank the outgoing board members and officers. **Orion E. Hill** is staying with Computers to Schools (CTS) but is not serving on the board. **Julie Jerome** is taking a year off. **John Moore** is going to concentrate on the CTS program. **Mike Moore** is going to enjoy some retirement time. **John Simcoe** was forced to leave due to a serious mishap. (My thoughts and prayers are still with John.) **Bill Wheadon** is going to do some flying he has been missing. I think I can speak for the entire 2006 and 2007 boards in saying thank you for your dedicated service and we hope you will enjoy time away from NVPCUG responsibilities.

For those new members of the board and officers I know that the job or jobs you have agreed to or will agree to do may seem to be overwhelming, but I want to point out that we are not a major corporation dependent on our stock price and/or profit for survival. We are just a small group of people with an interest in computers. It is true that if no one were willing to take on the responsibilities needed to keep our group going we would falter and go the way so many groups went when that happened

If you are assigned or volunteer to do a job, just do the best you can and remember that there are people who will help if you ask. I am looking forward to working with each of you this year. Many hands make the load lighter.

**Reminder to all**: If you haven't paid your 2007 dues and your membership expires in December 2006 or January 2007, now is the time to take care of them.

Susy is working on scheduling meaningful and useful presentations this year. With **Cal Ross** as our first presenter we are off to a good start. Cal's talks are always interesting and informative. If you have any friends that might benefit from our group, this is a perfect meeting to which you could invite them. If they join, that would be great; but the main thing is to let people know who we are and what we are doing.

## NVPCUG Special Interest Groups

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.

### 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*

### 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*

### Macintosh SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Thursday
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Napa Senior Activity Center
1500 Jefferson St., Napa
Leader: Jim Gillespie
(707) 252-1665
*napanerd@pacbell.net*

## NVPCUG Calendar

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Wednesdays | 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Computers-to-Schools work parties. To volunteer, contact Orion Hill, (707) 252-0637. |
| January 17 | 6:30-9:00 p.m. | NVPCUG General Meeting, Napa |
| February 7 | 7:00-9:00 p.m. | Board of Directors meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa |
| February 8 | 6:30-8:30 p.m. | Macintosh SIG meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa |
| February 12 | 5:30-7:30 p.m. | Investors SIG meeting, Jerry Brown's home, 23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa |
| February 14 | 7:00-8:30 p.m. | Digital Photography SIG meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa |

## Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

### Officers for 2006

Board of Directors

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| President | Ron Dack | | President@nvpcug.org |
| Vice President | Jerry Brown | 254-9607 | VicePresident@nvpcug.org |
| Secretary | Marcia Waddell | 252-2060 | Secretary@nvpcug.org |
| Treasurer | Roy Wagner | 253-2721 | Treasurer@nvpcug.org |
| Other Directors: | Susy Ball, Jim Gillespie, Bernhard Krevet, Ken Manfree, Dick Peterson, Dianne Prior, Bob Simmerman, Kathy Slavens, Jeff Solomon, James Stirling, Dean Unruh | | |

Appointed Officers

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Computer Recycling Coordinator | Ken Manfree | 224-3901 | Recycler@nvpcug.org |
| Computer Tutor Coordinator | Jeff Solomon | | Tutor@nvpcug.org |
| Computers-to-Schools Program Coordinator | Orion E. Hill | 252-0637 | CTS@nvpcug.org |
| Facility Arrangements Coordinator | Dianne Prior | 252-1506 | Facility@nvpcug.org |
| Greeter Coordinator | Bob Simmerman | 259-6113 | Greeter@nvpcug.org |
| Librarian | Dean Unruh | 226-9164 | Librarian@nvpcug.org |
| Membership Director | Dianne Prior | 252-1506 | Membership@nvpcug.org |
| Mentor Program Coordinator | Dick Peterson | 259-1712 | Mentors@nvpcug.org |
| Newsletter Circulator | Jim Hearn | 224-2540 | Circulation@nvpcug.org |
| Newsletter Editor | James Stirling | 944-1177 | Editor@nvpcug.org |
| Product Review Coord. | Susy Ball | 337-3998 | Reviews@nvpcug.org |
| Product Review Coord. | Marcia Waddell | 252-2060 | Reviews2@nvpcug.org |
| Programs Director | Susy Ball | 337-3998 | Programs@nvpcug.org |
| Publicity Director | Ron Dack | | Publicity@nvpcug.org |
| Random Access Moderator | Jerry Brown | 254-9607 | Questions@nvpcug.org |
| Special Projects Director | Jeff Solomon | | Projects@nvpcug.org |
| Webmaster | Ron Dack | | Webmaster@nvpcug.org |

*All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

## Come to the NVPCUG General Meetings

**Held the third Wednesday of each month**

**7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

**Napa Senior Activities Center**

**1500 Jefferson Street, Napa**

NVPCUG ***Computer News***

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# Pictures From the NVPCUG Holidays Party, December 20, 2006

On the evening of December 20, members of the NVPCUG held their annual Holidays Party at the home of **Dick and Sandy Peterson**, in their Christmas Tree Farm. During the party they enjoyed a pot-luck dinner, were introduced to the officer staff for 2007, and saw presentations of appreciation made to members. And they had much opportunity to socialize.

Dick Peterson and Dick Wolff (NVPCUG founding member). (*Photo by Susy Ball*)

Dianne Prior receives laptop from Susy Ball. *(Photo by Orion Hill)*

Orion Hill and Ami Bedi discuss the silent auction. (*Photo by Susy Ball)*

Kathy Slavens and snowman.
(*Photo by Susy Ball*)

Lou Schirm, Swede Olmstead and Linda Kemp.
(*Photo by Susy Ball*)

# NVPCUG Member of the Year Award, 2006

By Dianne Prior

At the NVPCUG Holidays Party held December 20, 2006**, Susy Ball** was recognized as Outstanding Member of the Year for 2006 and was given a certificate and gift basket by outgoing President Dianne Prior. Susy was selected by the 2006 Board of Directors at its final meeting December 6. President Prior pointed out that this award is not intended to honor the member who has given the most support to the group, but rather to recognize a member who, based on his/her service and other considerations, has provided significant support over the past year or several years.

*Susy Ball receives recognition gifts from Dianne Prior*

Susy moved to Napa from Fresno in March of 2005. She came into the NVPCUG at a time when they were in need of an energized volunteer, jumping right in and participating in every aspect of their activities, including being elected to the Board of Directors for both 2006 and 2007. She faithfully attended board and regular meetings.

Susy became Programs Coordinator, presenting several of the programs herself and lining up more vendors than the group had been able to get in previous years. She has personally donated some speaker gifts, raffle and door prizes and some supplies for potluck activities. She also donated a superseded laptop computer for use at NVPCUG meetings.

Susy took over as leader of the digital photography special interest group, helping members learn many aspects of capturing, saving, sharing and organizing their photos. She has provided many pictures for use in the newsletter and Web site. Along with Marcia Waddell, Susy acts as co-coordinator of Product Review. She has worked with the Computers-to-Schools program in refurbishing computers, and has helped twice with the June Recycling Event.

Before coming to Napa, Susy was an active member of the Fresno Personal Computer Users Group. She has also served as president and editor of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG). Currently she also volunteers

### Dianne and Susy on Radio Talk Show Dec. 4

On Monday, December 4, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. **Dianne Prior** and **Susy Ball** were guests on the *Computer Outlook Radio Talk Show*. They talked about the NVPCUG and some of the programs it is involved in. To listen to the broadcast go to: *http://www.computer outook.com/dailyshows.php* and choose the 12-4-06 show and click the Play button.

# Shopping for Free and Open-Source Software

by Bill Wayson, Member of the Channel Islands PC Users Group, California
*http://www.cipcug.org* *bwayson(at)gmail.com*

By the time you read this, the holiday shopping season will be over and many of you will be trying to figure out what to put on your new computer. It seems fitting, then, to make a few suggestions of programs you will find in your Web browser-based shopping center, the Mall of Free and Open Source Software, or the Mall of FOSS. All of the suggestions made here are suitable not only for users of Linux and BSD, but also for Windows diehards. In some cases, other operating systems, such as the Mac and Solaris, are supported. So fire up your computer and head on out to the Internet highway. You can leave your credit card at home, for the goods at the Mall of FOSS are priced most attractively: free.

**Screensavers**

The holidays are really meant for the child that resides in all of us, so spice up your PC with some fun items. Start by stopping at the *Really Slick Screensavers* Web site at *http://www.reallyslick.com*/. Here you will find out-of-this-world, mesmerizing screen savers that range from "psychedelic" to "nauseating." One includes great sound effects. They all perform best with hardware-based video acceleration, but that should not be a problem with recent hardware. Once you see these, you'll never go back to the flying Windows or pipes.

**Web browsers**

Is your gift recipient still using *Internet Explorer*? Head on over to *http://www.mozilla.com*/ to get *Firefox* for him or her. Firefox is a great Web browser with such features as tabbed browsing, configurable security, extensions that provide additional features, and themes that change the look and feel. *Firefox version 2.0* was released Oct. 24. Or you can shop for a newer browser, *Flock*, at *http://www.flock.com*/. *Flock* is based on the same page-rendering engine, *Gecko*, that the Mozilla family of browsers is built around. But *Flock* focuses on sharing and connecting with other people online, with enhanced support for blog posting, RSS feed integration, photo posting on *Yahoo Flickr*, and saving your bookmarks on the Internet for sharing among all the computers that you use..

**Instant messaging**

Maybe your giftee spends time in the world of instant messaging. If so, get *Gaim*, a multi-protocol instant messaging (IM) client, from *http://gaim.sourceforge.net/win32*/. *Gaim* will work with several different protocols, including AIM, MSN, Yahoo!, Jabber, ICQ and others, so it could become the only IM client anyone needs. If someone prefers the more traditional Internet Relay Chat (IRC), consider *Xchat (http://xchat.org/windows/)* or *Kvirc (http://www.kvirc.net/).*

***Juice Receiver***

Has someone on your holiday giving list complained about using *iTunes* on *Windows*? That person may enjoy receiving an open-source replacement, *Juice Receiver*, available at *http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net*/. It has access to many of the same podcast indexes that *iTunes* provides, as well as a number of indexes that it does not.

**Bittorrent for file swapping**

If you have diehard computer geeks on your list, they most likely share files with their friends. The standard file-swapping protocol is bittorrent, and you will find bittorrent clients for them at *http://www.bittorrent.com* and *http://www.getazureus.com*/. Perhaps they have always wanted to create their own dynamic Web site but have balked at the price of commercial Web server software for Windows or the Mac. If so, head over to the *XAMPP for Windows* store at *http://www.apachefriends.org/en/xampp-windows.html*. *XAMPP for Windows* will give them everything they need to build a robust, full-featured, dynamic Web site, and it is ready to go out of the box.

***CLAMAV***

Does anyone on your list want to try a different virus scanner? The shop at *http://www.clamwin.com*/ has the open-source scanner, *CLAMAV for Windows*, available for you to give. They'll be getting a GUI-based virus scanner, free and automatic signature updates, and scheduled virus scanning.

***Outlook* alternatives**

The shops at *http://www.mozilla.com/thunderbird*/ and *http://shellter.sourceforge.net/evolution*/ offer alternatives to the *Outlook* e-mail client. The former site has *Thunderbird*, an easy-to-use product of the Mozilla project, while the latter provides *Evolution*, which sports additional support for calendaring and Microsoft Exchange e-mail servers.

***GIMP***

Moving on to applications, if there is one on your gift list who does any sort of work with images, ranging from doctoring photographs to graphics for a Web site, you owe it to them to stop off at *http://www.gimp.org/windows*/ and pick up a copy of the *GIMP*. Somewhat mischaracterized as the "Poor Man's Photoshop," the *GIMP* provides a large range of image processing tools and plugins, as well as a framework for writing custom plugins. With the *GIMP*, they'll be able to do just about anything they'd ever want to do to their pictures.

***Audacity***

Or maybe you are looking for something for someone who is into sound recording, someone who perhaps was a Mr. or Miss A/V in high school? They undoubtedly would really enjoy receiving the *Audacity* sound recorder, editor, and writer. Look for it at *http://audacity.sourceforge.net*/. This powerful program literally will turn a PC into a full-featured sound recording and production studio. Pair it with a professional-quality sound card, and it is hard to beat.

**DVD-capable media players**

Many of those on your gift list also want to be entertained, and maybe they'd like to watch a DVD while working at their computers. A couple of DVD-capable media players they would like can be found at *http://www.mplayerhq.hu*/, which offers the *MPlayer* media player, and *http://www.videolan.org*/, which offers the *VideoLAN VLC* player.

**Office applications**

Chances are the computer users on your holiday gift list use traditional applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and the like. There are several gifts in this category that you cannot go wrong with. *OpenOffice.org* is possibly the most popular open-source office application suite available. The latest version, which can be found at *http://www.openoffice.org*/, is highly compatible with Microsoft's *Word*, *Excel*, and *Powerpoint* formats, and all but the most complex of documents can be shared in both directions. *OpenOffice.org* also supports out-of-the-box export to PDF and Flash formats.

*OpenOffice.org* is certainly not the only option in this arena. The *Abiword* word processor from *http://www.abisource.com*/ is a mature product offering a range of features. Since it is a lightweight user of computer resources, it runs well on older hardware that might bog down under *OpenOffice.org*, *Microsoft Office*, and *Vista.*

*GNUmeric*, from *http://www.gnome.org/projects/gnumeric*/, is a nice, mature spreadsheet program that has all the options and features your giftee wants for the spreadsheet work. If someone would like something to help create pretty, Visio-like organizational and flow charts, stop over at *http://dia-installer.sourceforge.net/* and pick them up a copy of *DIA*, a diagramming tool.

***PDFCreator, Scribus***

Do your giftees need to produce PDF documents? If so, they'll be grateful to receive *PDFCreator*, which is available at *http://www.pdfforge.org*/. PDFCreator works with any application that prints to the Windows printing system, making it easy to create not only PDF documents, but PNG, JPG, TIFF, BMP, PCX, PS, and EPS as well. Or maybe they want to create professional-looking documents like brochures, booklets, or newsletters. For them, take a trip to *http://www.scribus.net*/ and get them *Scribus*, a desktop publishing system with many of the same page-layout and formatting features you find in the more expensive commercial systems. *Scribus* also runs on Mac.

**Web page design**

Do you have a Web designer on your giving list? He or she might like to receive *Nvu* (pronounced n-view, and found *at http://www.nvu.com*/), a WYSIWYG Web page editor that will remind you of *Dreamweaver*. With its integrated FTP client, it may be all an e-designer would need. Perhaps they prefer to develop their Web pages from scratch (or someone on your list might like to get an advanced text editor). If so, stop off at *http://notepad-plus.sourceforge.net/uk/site.htm* and pick them up a copy of *Notepad++*, which is what *Windows' Notepad* might be if it consumed strong steroids. It will give your recipient syntax highlighting, auto-completion, WYSIWYG markup, bookmarking, zooming, multi-document viewing, and much more.

I hope this gives you some ideas about where look for your gift-giving needs. And do not forget the most important person on your holiday gift list: you! If anything here looks interesting, make sure to get yourself a copy. The great thing about all the stores offering FOSS software gifts is that they always have a great two-for-the-price-of-one sale going on, the perfect holiday sale.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article*.

# Tour the World With *World Wind*

Written by Rob Rice, a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City

*http://www.ccokc.org/* *articles(at)isp.com*

Lots of folks are familiar with *Google Earth*, the free downloadable virtual globe program. Yet, I am finding that many have never heard of NASA'S *World Wind*. *World W*ind is developed at the NASA Ames Research Center and is an open-source competitor to *Google Earth*. While it has been around for several years, it is a fascinating piece of software that can keep you glued to your monitor for hours on end.

Like *Google Earth*, this free program maps the earth by superimposing images obtained from satellite imagery and United States Geological Survey aerial photography over a 3D globe. Once the 60-megabyte program has been downloaded and installed, then opened, you are treated to a true-color image of the entire Earth from space. The globe can be manipulated with your mouse. Use the mouse wheel to zoom from satellite altitude down to any place on earth. Hold the left button and move the mouse to rotate the globe and the right button to tilt it.

The Landsat satellite imagery and Shuttle Radar Topography Mission data allows one to experience Earth terrain in 3D, just as if you were flying low over the landscape. Visit any place in the world.

But as they say on TV, "Wait! There's more!" *World Wind* also comes with virtual globes of the Moon, Venus, Jupiter, Mars and the Sloan Digital Sky Server, which allows you to explore outer space.

A variety of views are available. Below is a summary from the *World Wind* Web site:

**Blue Marble**

World Wind has a full copy of the Blue Marble, a spectacular true-color image of the entire Earth as seen on NASA's Earth Observatory: the Blue Marble.

Put together from data of a variety of satellites such as MODIS and Terra, the Blue Marble can be seen in all its glory at 1 km per pixel resolution.

**Land Sat 7**

Using *World Wind*, you can continue to zoom past Blue Marble and reveal the extremely detailed seamless mosaic of LandSat 7 data.

LandSat 7 is a collection of images from 1999-2003 at an impressive 15 m per pixel resolution. It includes other color bands such as the infrared spectrum. Users will be able browse these different sets as they become available. Any changes and updates are automatically inherited by *World Wind*.

LandSat 7's resolution makes it possible to see your own city, neighborhood, or landmarks in your vicinity. Seeing the whole globe like this puts the world in context with scientifically accurate data.

The complete LandSat 7 data set is too large to fit on a single machine, so *World Wind* only downloads what you see and stores a compressed copy on your computer for later viewing.

**SRTM**

Combining LandSat 7 imagery with Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) Data, World Wind can display a dramatic view of the Earth at eye level. Users will literally be able to fly across the world in any direction.

In addition, *World Wind* can exaggerate these views so a user can easily pick out the details.

**NASA SVS**

Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) has produced a set of visually intense animations that demonstrate a variety of subjects such as hurricane dynamics and seasonal changes across the globe.

*World Wind* can take these animations and play them directly on the world. Anyone can immediately grasp where the event is taking place as *World Wind* rotates automatically into view.

**MODIS**

Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer, or MODIS, produces a set of time-relevant data that's updated every day. MODIS catalogs fires, floods, dust, smoke, storms and even volcanic activity.

*World Wind* produces an easily customized view of this information and marks them directly on the globe. When one of these color-coded markers is

clicked, it downloads the full image and displays them.

MODIS images can download publication-quality material at a resolution of 250 m per pixel. A new fresh set of images can be downloaded every day.

*World Wind* also has a "tour mode" to automatically skim through any number of samples.

**GLOBE**

*World Wind* is capable of browsing through and displaying GLOBE data based on any time the user wants. For example, a user can download today's (or any previous day's) temperature across the world.

You can view rainfall, barometric pressure, cloud cover, or even the student GLOBE samples themselves. Each sample comes with a temperature scale .

**Country & (USA) State Borders**

*World Wind* has a complete set of borders that traces every country and state. As you zoom into the world, the boundaries become more precise.

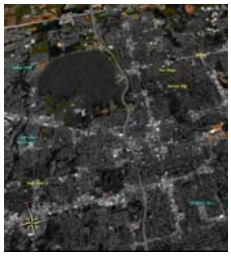
You can observe where mountain ridges and rivers have formed the political boundaries of today.

**Place names**

*World Wind* has a full catalog of countries, capitals, counties, cities, towns, and even historical references. The names update dynamically, by increasing in number as the user zooms in. This prevents too many names from cluttering up the screen.

It's likely that you'll find your own town, no matter how big or small it is, in *World Wind.*

**Oklahoma City**



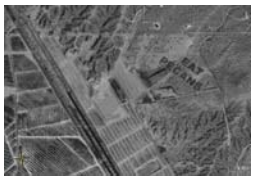
**Visual Tools**

*World Wind* comes with a variety of visual guides that help the user's experience, such as latitude and longitude lines, as well as extremely precise coordinate data.

These helpers can be toggled on or off any time and are viewable with any of *World Wind's* other features turned on.

**Landmark Set**

*World Wind* has the capability to display actual 3D models of landmarks on the Earth. This helps people to see the world in context to places they may have been to. Those landmarks that do not have 3D models for them yet have place markers similar to how MODIS displays places of interest.



**Las Cruces, NM**

Anyone with a high-speed Internet connection should not be without this incredible and highly addictive program. Give NASA'S *World Wind* a try and you won't be sorry you did!

Rob Rice is a computer specialist in Anchorage, Alaska.

**Minimum system requirements**:
Windows 2000, XP, or 2003
3D graphics card
Internet connection
Sorry, no support for Linux or Macintosh yet
Microsoft .NET 1.1
Microsoft DirectX 9.0c

With the minimum configuration, performance and functionality may be less than expected.
700 MHz or higher CPU
128 MB RAM
1 GB disk space (*World Wind's* cache size is 2 GB by default; you must reduce the size of your cache)

**Recommended configuration**
1.4 GHz or higher CPU
256 MB of RAM
DSL/cable connection or faster
3 GB of disk space

*World Wind* Home Page
*http://worldwind.arc.nasa.gov/index.html*

***World Wind* Wiki**, "A knowledge base about NASA's *World Wind* that anyone can edit". *http://www.worldwindcentral.com/wiki/Main_Page*

***World Wind* Forums**
*http://forum.worldwindcentral.com/*

Video Card Compatibility List
*http://www.worldwindcentral.com/wiki/Video Card Compatibility*

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

# The New, the Best, and the Worst

Collected by Pim Borman, Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

http://swipcug.apcug.org swipcug(at)sigecom.net

**Watch the Back Door!**

Many an afternoon I see a school bus stopping in the neighborhood to unload students toting enormous bags of expensive text books on their backs. It always irks me,because it seems so unnecessary. The heavy backpacks put an unhealthy strain on the students' spines, and the expensive books put a severe strain on family budgets, especially if there are several children of school age. (Public school students must pay for their textbooks in Indiana, in case you're not from around here.)

It would be so much easier if the students used inexpensive, functional notebook computers with the textbooks stored on CDs. Ideally, classrooms should be equipped with permanent, networked units for common use so that the students can leave their own computers at home to minimize damage and loss during transport. After all, most colleges already require that students have a computer, so why not start in high school, or even earlier?

Cost shouldn't be a problem. A fully functional computer running free *Linux* and *Open Source* software can cost less than a year's worth of textbooks. Acceptance will be harder to come by, with expected resistance from book publishers about to lose a highly profitable and captive market. Microsoft may not be happy either. Teachers may have to be retrained, and administrators, having been weaned on *MS Windows*, may oppose the use of what many still regard as a second-best operating environment.

Often necessity is the father of invention. Third World countries, only now entering the world of computing, are the most likely to introduce revolutionary progress in low-cost personal computer productivity. My own computer, equipped with all the latest bells and whistles, sits idle for more than 99 percent of the time. In a Third World classroom, or maybe a small office, it could easily support a dozen or more terminals and monitors if provided with the right, free software. History would repeat itself, since time sharing of computers was first introduced in the 1960s, when mainframe computers were also unaffordable for individuals. Students will only need inexpensive dumb terminals and bare-bones monitors. In England an organization calling itself Ndiyo (Swahili for "yes") is working on this approach. It makes full-fledged computing available to many at low cost.

An alternate approach called "One Laptop Per Child," initiated by academics at MIT, aims to provide specially designed laptop computers at a cost of less than $100 per unit to millions of children in poor countries. The computing experience is less advanced than with the time-sharing approach, but having your own computer, no matter how primitive, has a strong psychological advantage. I can testify to that. My first introduction to computers was via a Telex terminal connected to a time-sharing mainframe that I used for scientific modeling work. It was useful and interesting, but not nearly as captivating as running my own simple programs in *Sinclair Basic* on my own first ($100) Timex-Sinclair computer.

An essential part of introducing computers to Third Worlders (and not only schoolchildren) is the availability of free software in the form of *Linux* and the *Open Source* programs to do just about anything productive that computers are capable of. This in turn will grow and mature the *Linux/OpenSource* technology to the point where it may well return to the West through the back door as an attractive, low-cost alternative to expensive and bloated *Microsoft Windows* and *Office* programs.

A South African dotcom millionaire, Mark Shuttleworth, is financing the development of a totally free distribution of desktop *Linux* and all the necessary software. Called Ubuntu ("Humanity to Others"), it is already preferred by many *Linux* users. It is totally free. Even the CDs on which it is distributed are mailed to you free for the asking (*www.ubuntu.com*). Although possibly intended for use in Third World countries, *Ubuntu* is also rapidly gaining followers in the U.S. What did I just write about the back door?

**What Is Web2.0?**

Usually when major computer-related improvements are forthcoming, they are hyped long before they actually become available. Have you heard about *Vista*? I thought so.

Surprisingly, a major improvement in the Internet Web protocol, Web2.0, seems to have sneaked in

through the back door. And yet, Web2.0 is to the old Web what the telephone was to the telegraph. With the traditional Web, you send a message, such as a request for a street map, to a Web address ("*www.mapquest.com*") that gets translated into a numerical Internet Protocol address by a Domain Name Server. The addressed site responds to your message and the connection is broken. To send a follow-up message ("zoom in") the whole process must be repeated. Slow-slow-slow.

With Web2.0 the connection, once established, remains open until you close your browser window. This allows an immediate back-and-forth communication as if the distant Web site were located on your own computer. It allows you to go to *Google Earth* and seamlessly scroll and zoom the maps to your heart's content (provided your Internet connection is fast enough). It also makes it possible to provide application programs, such as an *Office Suite* similar to *Microsoft Office*, on a Web server to be made available via a Web2.0 connection. Several providers are moving in that direction, including Google and Microsoft. News sites can provide live hyperlinks whereby when your pointer hovers over a headline a summary of the news pops up on the screen. The possibilities are endless.

Happily, the user doesn't need to do anything to benefit from this new technology. The Internet servers provide all the programming that any major Web browser can understand. Enjoy!

**How Broad Is Your Broadband Connection?**

Not nearly as fast as you would like it to be, right? If you have a cable connection and the kid next door is online playing Doom, or Bully, or whatever, you're sharing online access and your connection probably crawls. Not much you can do about that. But you can minimize some other delays.

One of these is the time it takes your browser to connect to the site you want to address. If you type an Internet address such as *swipcug.apcug.org/index.htm*, a **Domain Name Server (DNS)** provided by your **Internet Service Provider (ISP)** translates it to the corresponding numerical **Internet Protocol (IP)** address. Unless the entry has been cached after having been used before, the lookup procedure may take some time.

**OpenDNS** is a new, independent, and free Domain Name Server that claims to be faster than many ISP servers, mostly by using a very large cache. In addition it keeps track of known phishing sites and blocks them with a warning message. It will also try to correct misspellings and still provide the intended Web site, or suggest possible sites you might be looking for. When I intentionally typed *swipcug.apcug.NET* (instead of the correct *.ORG* domain) I got a choice of four possible sites, with the correct one first on the list. Simple instructions for replacing the default DNS addresses of your ISP with the OpenDNS addresses can be found at *http://welcome.opendns.com/* (read Steve Bass in *PCWorld*, November 2006).

If you want to check the download and upload speeds of your broadband connection you can use *SpeakEasy* at *http://www.speakeasy.net/speedtest/* As I am writing this, on Friday at 10:45 pm, my connection speed with Sigecom to Chicago is: Download Speed: **3866** kbps (483.3 KB/sec transfer rate), Upload Speed: **347** kbps (43.4 KB/sec transfer rate), about as good as it gets in my experience. Speeds to Seattle are similar.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

## Daily Tips From *Smart Computing*

**_Word_ Auto-Recovery**

*Microsoft Word* can be configured to automatically save an emergency copy of your current documents every few minutes. If your PC crashes (or you lose power), *Word* can automatically recover the last saved file. This can be a real lifesaver if you're not too diligent about regularly saving work. Enable AutoRecover in *Word 2002* by clicking Tools and Options, selecting the Save tab, checking the Save AutoRecover Info Every box, and entering the number of minutes between saves. The default is every 10 minutes, but you can opt for any time between one and 120 minutes. If you're in the habit of making fast, sweeping changes to your documents, select a shorter time.

**Editing in *Word 2003***

Tools such as *Microsoft Word 2003* keep a short running log of changed items and let you select an entire set of items to undo. While editing your document, just left-click the down arrow next to the Undo Typing icon in the Standard toolbar. A list of recent actions will appear. Simply scroll down the list to select the items that need to be undone and click once. If you make a mistake, you can still use the Edit and Redo feature to restore your deletions and try again. If you're making sweeping changes, it's a good idea to save your document before making changes and then resave it once you're sure the changes are correct.

# Finally! Essential Tech Books for Non-Dummies

Written by Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, *www.compukiss.com*
*http://www.compukiss.com* *gabe(at)gabegold.com*

With holidays just past, many people reading this article from AARP's Web site will need techno-wisdom for dealing with gifts received by family, friends, and themselves. But with conflicting suggestions from mailing lists, Web sites, stores, and manufacturers all around us, a trusted guidebook is valuable.

The books are "Sandy Berger's Great Age Guide to Better Living Through Technology", "... to the Internet", and "... to Gadgets & Gizmos". Their common design is open and uncluttered; accessible language is clear but not dumbed down; there's no mention of dummies or idiots.

Good personal-style writing engages the reader, calming and building confidence. Sandy shares her sense of excitement and discovery and offers clear opinions on technology and how it affects us. That's pleasantly different from most technology books. And agree or disagree on individual items, you'll certainly know where she stands.

Ideas and technology are amply illustrated by easy-to-read screen images and clear photos. I'd have liked a "lay-flat" binding for easy reference at the computer.

The "Great Age" title credits Pablo Picasso with saying, "Age only matters when one is aging. Now that I have arrived at a great age, I might as well be twenty". Chapters begin with other thought-provoking quotations. My favorite, highlighting the empowering nature of the books' subject matter, comes from marketing guru Greg Arnold: "All greatness is achieved while performing outside your comfort zone." Fear often comes from lack of understanding; don't worry, the books aren't uncomfortable reading -- but they may challenge you to try new things.

The books open onto Contents at a Glance -- a list of chapter titles and page numbers. That's handy, giving a quick focus without requiring flipping past usual book-front boilerplate. Each book includes a brief "What's Inside" write-up, noting that there are no special instructions for reading, and highlighting unique design elements. The Technology and Internet books include valuable sidebars calling out Sandy's Tips,

Blooper Alerts, Lingo, and Trivia. Selected items in Gadgets and Gizmos are designated Sandy's Favorites.

*Sandy Berger's Great Age Guide to Better Living Through Technology* reminds us how pervasive technology is, how much things have changed in our lifetimes, and how change is accelerating and never-ending. It covers topics such as how families can use the digital world, how technology has affected shopping, travel, health, finances, and even meeting people. Throughout, it encourages continued learning at any age-- after all, we know HOW to learn. This book shows much that's worth learning. It's not preachy or prescriptive. For example, it lists diverse search engines, giving attributes and advantages for each. Many are specialized, less known than Google/Yahoo/etc., and yet may be best for fulfilling certain quests. I'm happy that it highlights the wonderful Library of Congress. This treasure, local to me, is available to all online.

*Sandy Berger's Great Age Guide to the Internet* focuses on getting online, learning the language of the Internet, having fun and communicating, and avoiding problems and staying safe. It reports scientists believing that humans use about 10 percent of their brainpower, and speculates that most people use about 10 percent of their PC's power – and aims to help raise both numbers. The book starts gently, introducing Internet concepts and terms, and assembles them into tips and tricks for Web searching, e-mailing, understanding Web advertising, and even building our own Web pages. It gives tips for picking an ISP (Internet service provider), demystifies browser windows components, and offers netiquette advice for instant messaging. I take issue, though, with its use of the term "hacker" as bad guy; I grew up hearing it as a term of praise *[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hacker*].

*Sandy Berger's Great Age Guide to Gadgets & Gizmos* is a different sort of book, a bit hard to categorize. It's a catalog, shopping guide, and a tour through current and future technology. It offers gift ideas for oneself or Santa; if you observe someone reading it with widened eyes, you'll guess what they'd like gift-wrapped for them. It's not Consumer Reports, since it doesn't compare choices head-to-head. But its interesting and opinionated narrative gives products' good and bad news; general advice and principles are interleaved so it won't become outdated as fast as a simple products list would. If Santa had watched me, he'd have seen me reading carefully

about phones and clocks - two of my interests.

As you've seen, the books are complementary -- it's worth collecting them all. They're easy cover-to-cover reads, or you can refer to them for specific ideas, services, and products. Good indexes locate topics quickly; because the books' topics are interrelated, a consolidated index of the three books' topics would be useful. Perhaps the publisher will provide one online. There's some necessary overlap, but they provide different information with varying orientation and emphasis. Overall, the books fulfill their "Better Living Through ..." titles' promise, delivering usable information about evolving technology areas.

**Specifications**

Book Title: *Sandy Berger's Great Age Guide to Better Living Through Technology*
Author: Sandy Berger
Paperback: 272 pages
Publisher: Que
ISBN: 0-7897-3440-0
Price: $20
URL: *www.quepublishing.com*

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Author: Sandy Berger
Paperback: 242 pages
Publisher: Que
ISBN: 0-7897-3441-9
Price: $20
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Note: Sandy and Dave Berger have set up a special link on *compukiss.com* so APCUG members can purchase the books at a 35% discount. http://www.greatagebooks.com/bookstore.php

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*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

## Take Windows XP to the Next Level With the Free Vista Transformation Pack

by Dave Gerber, Program Chair, Sarasota PCUG, Florida; member of the Dave's Bytes radio team

*dave_gerberat)comcast.net* *http://www.davebytes.com*

If you don't want to shell out the cash for a copy of *Windows Vista*, *Windows Vista Transformation Pack (VTP)* is an easy and free way to emulate *Vista's* look and feel. I've been playing around with it for a couple of hours now, and it makes for a nice change after looking at the same old *XP* icons and UI.

*VTP* bundles together many different applications that mimic *Vista's* UI in different ways to give you transparent windows, a new Start Menu, a *Vista* Sidebar, and a new *Explore*r. Overall, your computer should look revitalized after installing *VTP*. Everything has a bit of Web 2.0 glossy sheen.

Install a *Vista* wallpaper, and you're basically there. There might be some stability issues if you install *VTP*, so you'll want to be sure before you install it. The good part is that uninstallation is easy: just go to Add or Remove Programs. Some files are overwritten during the process, so keep your setup CD handy if you want to undo all the changes.

If you decide to install *VTP*, you'll have a lot of control over the installation. Check off the things you want changed like boot screen, process manager, or sounds, and leave unchecked what you want to stay the same.

Visit Dave's Web site at *http://www.davebytes.com* and click on the January 1 link and scroll down to *Dave's Cool Downloads*.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

# XP Disk Maintenance Tools

By Dick Maybach, Member of the Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey

Windows disk operations have improved greatly over the years to the extent that we seldom have problems with *XP*. However, *XP* does include tools to inform you about your disks, to improve their operation, and, if needed, to repair the data on them.

For general information on your drives, use the *Disk Management* tool – right-click on *My Computer*; select *Manage*; and select *Disk Management* (under Storage). You will see a table showing the properties of all your partitions as well as a graphical summary. Select a volume in the table or on the graphic, click on the *Action* menu item, and then click on *All Tasks* to see a list of the actions you can perform. Be careful, as some of these are drastic and irreversible, e.g., format and delete the volume.

If you suspect that a hard disk is corrupted, double-click on *My Computer*, right-click on the desired drive, select *Properties*, select the *Tools* tab, click the *Check Now…* button in the Error-checking section, and click the *Start* button. This will run an updated version of the old *chkdsk*. Don't select either of the options. If you do find problems, run the program again, but before you click Start, select *Automatically fix file system errors*. You may have to reboot for the operation to complete. Also, be aware that this may result in the loss of some files. If there still errors, run the program again, but select both options. (You can also run this program from the command line; type "chkdsk /?" in a Command Prompt window to see the options. I prefer the command-line version, because it's more informative.)

With time, Windows collects many unneeded temporary files. To clean these up, double-click on *My Computer*, right click on the desired disk, select *Properties*, and click the *Disk Cleanup* button under the *General* tab. Windows will take a few minutes to analyze your disk, and then will display a list of actions and how much space each will recover. You can single-click on each name to see its description. I select everything except the last two (*Compress old files* and *Catalog files for the Content Indexer*). Clicking the *More Options* tab shows other ways to recover space by removing Windows components, removing installed programs, or deleting old system restore points. Under the General tab, you will see two check boxes, *Compress drive to save space* and *Allow Indexing Service to index this drive for fast file searching*. By default, the first is not checked and the second is; don't change these. Large disks are very cheap, and if you are running low on space, a much better solution is to install a second disk and keep you user data on it. Compression adds complexity, and I've seen it cause serious problems.

With use, a disk gradually becomes fragmented. That is; long files are broken into parts and scattered over the disk. You can correct much (but usually not all) of this with XP's disk defragmenter. Double-click on *My Computer*; right-click on the desired drive; select *Properties*; select the *Tools* tab; click on the *Defragment now…* button in the *Defragmentation* area; and click the *Analyze* button. Usually, you will be told that there is no need to defragment the volume. If so, take the advice. If you do decide to defragment the disk, bear in mind that there is a small risk of destroying its contents, since many files will be deleted and rewritten – a power failure could be catastrophic. Before you defrag a disk, run chkdsk or, even better, back it up.

A little-known command-line utility is *fsutil*. To run this first open a *Command Prompt* window (found in the *Accessories* group), then type "fsutil" to produce a list of fsutil commands. Usually, you will have to stack up several fsutil commands to do anything useful. For example, typing "fsutil dirty query c:" will show you whether you need to run chkdsk on C:. It can be worthwhile to explore the other features this command, being careful of course that you don't make any changes to your file system.

The *recover* command will make undamaged portions of a damaged file readable. For example, to recover the damaged file c:\n2nd\junk, open a Command Prompt window and type "recover c:\n2nd\junk". Like most command-line programs, you should be careful when using recover.

A very powerful command-line program is *debug*, but you can do a lot of damage with it if you are not an expert; I recommend that you avoid it. If you are curious, type "debug /?" in a Command Prompt window to find out more about what it can do.

The NTFS file system is superior to the older FAT32 one. If you are still using FAT32, seriously consider converting it to the NTFS format. For example, to convert your C: drive to NTFS, open a Command Prompt window and type "convert c: /fs:ntfs". There are two caveats: (1) the conversion is not reversible unless you buy third-party software, and (2) if you dual-boot both XP and an earlier version Windows on the same PC, the old version can't read NTFS volumes.

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# Skype – The Most Popular Internet Calling Service

by Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS
*www.compukiss.com* *sandy(at)compukiss.com*

If you have an Internet-connected computer and are still paying the telephone company for long-distance calls, it may be time for you to try free calling over the Internet.

Other than the Internet connection you already have, there is very little initial cost and no ongoing costs. Right now you can call anyone for free. This is an offer you really should investigate.

Although there are several online services that you can use for Internet calling, the most popular one is called *Skype*. In order to use *Skype* you need an Internet-connected computer running *Windows XP* or *Windows 2000* or an Apple computer running *Mac OS X v10.3.9 Panther* or newer. Your computer must also have built-in or external speakers and a microphone. That is where your small initial cost may come in. While most computers, even laptops, have speakers, many do not have microphones. So you may have to purchase a microphone, possibly from a local electronic store. You can get them as cheap as $10 or $15.

Then all you have to do is download the free software at the *Skype* Web site at *www.skype.com*, and you are ready to make your calls. If you want to call someone who also owns an Internet-connected computer you can have them add a microphone and download the software. Then you will be able to call computer-to-computer. It is just like talking on the telephone, except that you click on their name in the *Skype* software to call them, they hear their computer "ring," and they click on the "answer" button that pops up on their screen when you call.

Until the end of the year 2006 you can also call regular telephone and cell phone numbers in the United States and Canada for free. You simply enter the phone number you want to call, click on the green telephone icon and your computer will call your friend's telephone number. They answer the phone as usual and you can talk for as long as you like with no long distance charges.

Previous to their special promotion, *Skype* charged a small fee for calls to landlines and cell phones. Their promotion for free calls is scheduled to last until the end of the year, but many of us are hopeful that they will continue it into the next year.

In any case, calls from computer-to-computer are always free. While sometimes there are small glitches and skips in the calls from computer-to-telephone, my experience has been really great with computer-to-computer calls. Some International calls have a slight echo, but I can live with that for the price.

I save a ton on long-distance calls to my daughter in Sweden, and my mom in Missouri. I also save on intrastate charges to my son in Eastern Carolina. You will need a broadband Internet connection to get really good *Skype* calls. If you are still on dial-up, free *Skype* calling may be just the financial incentive you need to make the move to broadband.

The *Skype* software is an easy download, and it is easy to use. *Skype* is constantly improving their service. Last year they added video calling. If both you and the person you are calling add a Web cam to your computer you can both see and hear them. (An added benefit is that most Web cams also have built-in microphones.) *Skype* also has conference calling, so the whole family can get in on the same conversation. For those of you who like talking into a handset, now you can even purchase telephones to connect to your computer for *Skype* calling.

With *Skype's* current offer for free computer-to-telephone calling, there's never been a better time to try Internet calling. After all, the price is right!

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