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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 594 computers and 136 printers.

At March 21 Meeting, See a Demonstration of How in the Future Your Cell Phone Can Be More than a Phone

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, March 21, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at the Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California

Ever think of using your cell phone to give a demonstration? Today, we are no longer limited to giving Powerpoint demonstrations on our laptops, or listening to music on our iPods. Cell phones have come a long way and are capable of more than just acting as our mobile phones.



We never stop working for you.

Who better to give a demo on some of our mobile computer age products than representatives from Verizon, one of the industries top mobile wireless companies. The Main presentation will be given by **Daryl Michael**, Napa Verizon store sales supervisor and **Von Gabriel**, one of the senior sales representatives. They will cover use of PDAs and Air Cards and talk to us about how we as consumers can use our phones to communicate via the airwaves and the internet. They are also interested in hearing from us, so bring your questions.

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 and computer-related problems and receive helpful information from other meeting attendees. (Don't forget that you can also e-mail your questions to Jerry Brown before coming to the meeting: Questions@nvpcug.org).

Following this, there will be a Computer Tutor session at which **Jeff Solomon**, Computer Tutor coordinator, will discuss online encyclopedias like *Encarta*, *Wikipedia*, and the *Britannica* and how to get the most out of them.

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

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.

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

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

President's Message

By **Ron Dack**, president,
President@nvpcug.org



This month has a couple sad things for me to talk about. The first is the passing of **Harold Walker** a long time NVPCUG member and a good man. Harold will be missed and my thoughts and prayers are with Harold's family.

The second is **Jim Stirling** is moving out of the area. Jim has been a member of the Board of Directors and the Editor of our Computer News for the last several years. We hope Jim will enjoy his new home in Santa Rosa and that he will come and visit us when he can. Thanks Jim and good luck in your new assignment.

Now on to brighter issues, **Susy Ball** has stepped up to take over as the new Editor adding even more to her NVPCUG responsibilities. Thank you Susy and Mike.

Back at the December Holiday Meeting **Susy Ball** donated a laptop computer to the group. This laptop now has an OS and software so it has been turned over to our Secretary **Marcia Waddell** to keep NVPCUG official records and minutes. Thank you Susy for the donation and for getting the laptop up and running.

At our February meeting I was unable to get to some things I consider important. One of which is welcoming our guests to the meeting. Before the meeting starts and during the break I would appreciate any help in making our guests feel welcome and comfortable. If you see a person wearing a guest badge please try to talk with them and make them feel at ease. By doing this it will help us to gain new members and increase the amount of knowledge and experience in the group. I remember the first meeting I attended and how it feels to be the outsider and newcomer. Had it not been for the greeter that night being so nice and friendly I am not sure I would have come back. Even though Bob and Kathy do a great job it can't be just one or two people it should be the entire group that makes guests feel welcome. Don't be afraid to step up and say, "Hi, welcome to the meeting."

Dave Whittle asked that he leadoff the meeting and due to the number of issues he was talking about and the audience questions he ran a little long. We will try to have an extended Random Access and Computer Tutor sessions in an upcoming meeting.

I have several other things to say but they will have to wait because I have probably gone over my allotted space. See you at the March 21st meeting.

Take care,
Ron

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 Calendar

Wednesdays	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Computers-to-Schools work parties. To volunteer, contact Orion Hill, (707) 252-0637
March 21	6:30-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa
April 4	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
April 9	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting, Jerry Brown's home, 23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
April 11	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
April 12	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Macintosh SIG meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

Officers for 2007

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	
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		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.

NVPCUG Computer News

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Adobe Photoshop Elements 5

By Nancy Dennis, Membership Chair, Sarasota PCUG, Florida,

www.spcug.org, membership@spcug.org

Adobe Photoshop Elements 5 is a photo editing and organizing program that also includes easy to use features to backup your photos, and really fun creative ways to show off your photos to family and friends.

Adobe Photoshop is the top of the line photo program for the professionals and costs hundreds of dollars. Elements (under \$100) has many of the same features as the professional version with a lot of fun and easy features added in, making it the software choice for the non-professional user like you and me.

The software installs the Adobe Photo Downloader in your system tray and is ready instantly whenever you plug in your camera or memory card. Your photos are downloaded into the Organizer where you have easy access to them for viewing, tagging, creating collections, printing, emailing, creating all the fun projects, or switching to the Edit mode for a Quick Fix or Full Edit. Your photos are identified by Elements in Catalogs. You can have multiple catalogs for different users of your computer in the family, or say for photos that you may use for work which you want to keep separate from home photos. You can even use the Organizer to select photos to order prints online or size and send through your email client. Your photos are managed by date with a timeline across the top of the screen that is very easy to navigate when you are looking for a photo at a specific time on the calendar. The Tags and Collections feature takes a few extra minutes when you first download the photos, but sure makes it easier to select certain photos when you are ready to create a project. Tags can be given for photos of specific family, friends or places and events. Collections work in a similar fashion but could include several different people, say in a vacation.

Since software packages come with little or no manuals, I find that one of my first places to explore is the Help feature. The Adobe Help Center, which is on the Help menu, includes a very extensive index of help on the program as well as hyperlinks to video tutorials on the Adobe web site. The Help Center includes a very good Search tool with easy navigation and even a Bookmark feature where you can bookmark a topic that you may want to return to again quickly. I was also offered free online tutorials from Adobe after I registered the software. Be sure to take advantage of this offer. There are eleven video tutorials that give a very good overview of everything from getting your photos into Elements to creating fun creative projects.

Another quick way to get to help on any of the tools on the screen is to hover your mouse over the tool and a link appears that takes you directly to the Help Center on that tool. You will find that you don't miss the manual with this complete Adobe Help Center.

When the Elements program starts there is a Welcome Screen where you can choose to open the Organizer, Quickly Fix Photos, Edit and Enhance Photos, or Make Photo Creations. Once you decide which mode you want to begin with you can set the Welcome Screen to always open in that mode or stay with the Welcome Screen. Since you need to open a photo in order to edit it or select several photos for projects it made sense to me to always open in the Organizer mode.

With a right click of a photo in the Organizer you can select the Go to Quick Fix feature as a truly "quick fix". With this feature you are able to fix the most common problems with your photos without having to know any of the more advanced features. Now mind you the advanced features are in Elements, but you may find that you seldom need to go into that mode to get the results that you want. With Quick Fix mode you have auto buttons for lighting, color, sharpen and red eye. Then if the auto button doesn't quite get the photo like you want there are fine tuning levers to adjust to finish the job. If you just can't get the look you want you can click the Full Edit tab from this window and go into the more fully featured mode of Elements to complete the task.

Some of the new features for editing in Elements include correct lens distortion, sharpen blurred edges, fine-tuning with curves, creating dramatic black and whites and support for raw files. One of my very favorite features of Elements in the Full Edit mode is the Artwork and Effects Palette. From this palette you can pick from dozens of backgrounds, frames, graphics and shapes. Then select a style for that object from a dozen more selections and just drag and drop onto your photo. This palette includes different themes for effects, filters for effects and text styles, all applied with a double click. There is even a Favorites area where you can drag an effect that you especially liked and want to get back to quickly. A couple other favorites of mine in the Full Edit mode are the Adjust Color for Skin Tone and the Spot Healing Brush. If you have a photo where the skin color just doesn't look right you can use the Adjust Color for Skin Tone

feature to quickly change the skin tone by using the eyedropper over the skin. If you want the result a little more tan or bluish there are easy adjustments in that same dialog box. The Spot Healing Brush works wonders for those marks and blemishes just by clicking over the area. There is also a new feature called Magic Extractor that provides an easy wizard to extract an object (or person) from your photo. Again there are fine tuning options in this wizard if the extraction is not quite what you want. I found that this features works very well. The red eye fix in Elements 5 is by far the best red eye fix that I have used in a photo editing program. There is even an option to have red eye corrected as your photos are being downloaded from the card reader.

Elements 5 has added a Back-Up and Restore feature that allows you to back up your photo catalogs to a server online (you have to sign up for this service). The online back up service through Adobe Photoshop Services gives you a 30 day free trial. There is also a Back-Up feature that will do Full and Incremental back ups of your catalogs to a CD or DVD, another drive, or another folder on the hard drive. This feature is Wizard driven and makes this very important task quick and easy, without leaving the Elements software. This feature is right there on the tool bar along with all the other online services.

Once you have your photos downloaded, edited and backed up it is time for the really fun part of Elements 5 – creating projects like photo book pages, photo layouts, album pages, greeting cards, CD and DVD jackets and labels, slide shows, VCD's with menus, photo galleries and flipbooks for the web, photo calendars, and PhotoStamps. Most of the print projects can be printed on your own printer or ordered through an online service that can be set up with a wizard right in Elements. I didn't register for the online service but was very tempted by some of the neat projects that can

be created and then sent off for printing and delivery. For instance the photo calendar can be created with 12 of your photos and then step through the wizard to choose the cover, page layout, and title, etc. Then through the wizard the calendars will be printed, bound and mailed – what a great idea for Christmas gifts!

I decided to create a slide show with photos taken at Disney World. After selecting the photos from the Organizer and then selecting Slideshow from the Create menu the wizard started with slide show preferences and then the main Slideshow Editor opens with very full featured options that are available in most of the stand alone slide show programs. This feature is like a program within a program – I am really impressed with the scope of the Slideshow Editor. There are transition options, panning and zooming, audio and narration, and adding blank sides and graphics and text.

Once you have the show the way you like it the Output feature opens another wizard for options to save the show as a file, burn to disc, e-mail the show or send to a TV. The wizard works great burning to a Video CD format. (The only option that I would like to see added would be to burn to DVD.) If you have several slide shows that you would like to burn to one CD you can select the Create a VCD with menu and the wizard will allow you to add multiple slideshows and then create a menu before burning.

The next project I tried was to create a Photo Gallery. With the same Disney photos selected the Photo Gallery opens a wizard with three types of galleries; Web Galleries, Animated or Interactive. With Web Galleries chosen the wizard asks for arrangement of the photos on the page and a style with both options showing thumbnails of how your choice will look. Next the wizard opens a dialog window with more options to customize, such as Gallery Title and Slideshow duration and effects. You then can select where to Share the gallery; either choose Do Not Share (which saves to your hard drive), Photoshop Showcase (more about this later), My FTP Site, or CD. I also tried the Animated and Interactive galleries with the same photos. The wizard makes creating these very complex shows a breeze. If you don't know how to publish to your web space a dialog box offers simple steps to help with that task, or you can register and sign on to the [free Adobe Photoshop Elements Showcase](#) feature. This is an online community for users of Elements to upload and share their photos and galleries.

Each project that you create and save is added to the Organizer at the top. If you want to edit a project you just double-click the project file and the wizard that was used to create it opens. All of the print projects like the Photo Book Pages, Photo Layouts and Album Pages, are saved (with multiple pages when applicable) with a



Pandora – a Free Music Resource

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

The Internet is filled with free resources, but some are better than others. Here is one of the best free music resources on the Web.

Pandora is one of my favorite music websites. Just surf over to www.pandora.com and type in a song or an artist that you like. Pandora analyses your choice and creates a music station with similar-sounding music. It will then play comparable songs that it thinks you will like. You can add more music and/or artists to the station to refine your choices. You can also tell Pandora whether or not you like the song that is playing. It uses your likes and dislikes to refine the songs it chooses.

You can create up to 100 different stations with different types of music.

Pandora was created by the Music Genome Project, a group of musicians and music-loving technologists who have broken music into hundreds of music attributes or “genes” such as melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumentation, orchestration, arrangement, lyrics, and harmony. They then use high-tech methodology to analyze the musical qualities of each song and rendition.

The results are uncanny. I created several music stations with different genres that I like and in almost every case I was presented with similar music that I found very pleasing. You can experiment with different combinations. For instance, putting James Taylor and Willie Nelson together gave me an interesting, but

likable mix of music.

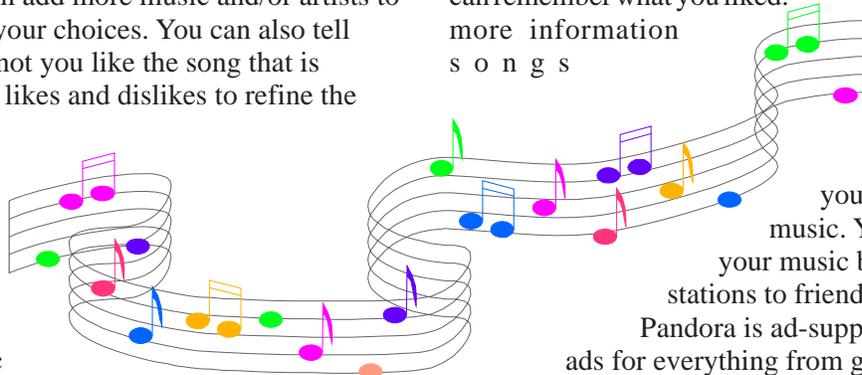
Pandora is pretty smart. Typing in The Christmas Song and choosing Diana Krall as the artist gave me a whole station of mellow Christmas music which is just what I was looking for. Typing in The Nylons and Take 6 gave me a nice selection of acappella and harmonistic music.

Pandora also lets you bookmark songs or artists so you can remember what you liked. You can look up more information about artists and right on the site. Two clicks will lead you to iTunes or Amazon where you can purchase the music. You can also share your music by emailing your stations to friends.

Pandora is ad-supported so you will see ads for everything from gym shoes to cell service. I found the ads to be unobtrusive, but if you want to get rid of them, you can pay to eliminate them. For \$36, you get 12 months of unlimited use with services exactly the same as the free version, but without the ads.

Since the ads don't bother me, I'll continue to use the free version of Pandora. It's an entertaining website that provides much listening pleasure to keep me company when I am working on the computer.

If you are into music, you may also want to check out two other music resources. MusicIP Mixer and Goombah. Like Pandora, both of these sites provide intriguing music adventures. ■



YouTube Revolutionizes the Internet!

By Linda Gonse, Editor & Webmaster, Orange Country IBM PC Users' Group, California, Editor@orcopug.org, www.ocropug.org

Just when I thought creative ideas were running out for ways to use the Internet, along comes YouTube, www.youtube.com. Its content includes movie and TV clips, music videos, and amateur works — such as video-blogging. The innovative site's popularity is staggering. Almost 20 million visitors browse YouTube each month, according to Nielsen/NetRatings. And, in confirmation of YouTube's originality, Time magazine named it the “Invention of the Year” in 2006.

Although I only discovered YouTube in December

2006, it was founded in February 2005. In about a year and a half, YouTube has been so successful Google sealed the deal to buy it in November 2006 for \$1.65-billion! Not bad for a site that was launched with a video of a co-founder's cat playing with a dangling string!

Now, “Users upload 6500 new videos to the site every day,” according to a January 2007 Time magazine article. Many of the videos are taken with



[YouTube cont. on Page 13](#)

Review of Spin It Again

Convert vinyl records and cassette tapes to MP3's and CD's

By Rod Rakes, APCUG Advisor; President & Editor, Gwinnett SeniorNet PC Users Group, Georgia, <http://www.gsnpcug.com/>; Editor & Webmaster, Huntsville PC User Group, Alabama, <http://www.hpcug.com/>



What is it? Spin It Again by Acoustica is a software program that will make it easy to convert your collection of cassettes, 33's, 45's and even 78's to MP3/WMA/WAV files or directly to CDs. Some folks have even used the program to

rip 8-Tracks. Remember those?

Cost? \$34.95 retail, but \$27.96 for User Group members. This 20% discount is available online from the link above. You must use the code "CLUB2007." You will receive a registration code via email. But, you can try it free for three times. (3 albums).

Where do I get it and/or read more?

<http://www.Acoustica.com> The program is an 8+ MB download.

System Requirements: If you have a Windows computer with a soundcard you're ready to use the software!

Recommended? YES!

How good is it? REALLY

GOOD! First off, I was impressed by the voice instructions when the program starts. There is a Hookup Wizard with photos of how to connect to your amplifier, cassette player or turntable. Songs are automatically divided into files based on the lull between songs. A Level Wizard sets the volume level automatically based on playing a portion of your loudest song in an album.

You can save the files as MP3, OGG, WMA or WAV files. A variety of choices are available to clean up the recordings, e.g., Damaged Record, Damaged Tape, Tape clean with Equalizer, Tape Noise Begone, Warped record, even a No-preamp blues setting, etc. Someone referred to this as a Mikey cereal eater that eats Snap, Crackle and Pop. Accept the defaults and it's very easy work.

I recorded three record albums and two cassette tapes of music using a stereo amplifier, cassette player and turntable. The result was free of any clicks, pops and hiss of the original recordings, at least to my ears. The

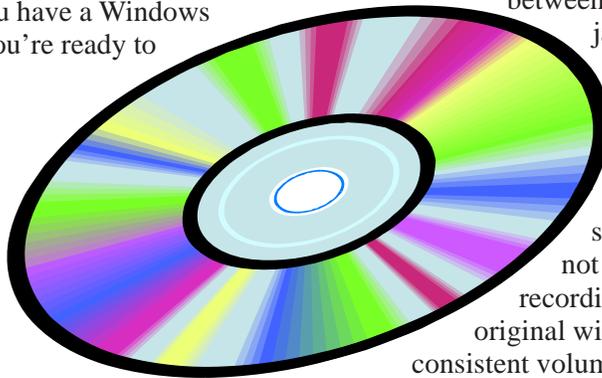
only "problem" I had was a song by Judy Collins that had long silent passages which fooled the software into thinking there were several songs. But, it was easily fixed with the Merge options. (Be sure to read the tutorial.) I chose to save the songs in MP3 format and gave each a name in the chart before actually hitting the Save/Convert button. You can embed in the files the Artist, Title, Genre, Year and add comments. On the last test I chose to record an album directly to CD using the Spin It Again software. It worked like a charm with no need to make a later recording from the MP3's using Nero, Roxio, etc.

I had a priceless cassette tape of family nonsense that had been re-recorded from reel to reel tapes from long ago when my children were small. The volume varied greatly. I placed the cassette tape in a small inexpensive hand held player (Walkman type) and connected a cable between the speaker jack and the Line In jack in the back of my computer.

This meant I could adjust the sound during the low and high volume sections of the tape by using the player's volume control. That worked satisfactorily since the tape was not perfection in the first place. The recording was even better than the original with little or no hiss and a more consistent volume level! There is an option for auto-leveling the volume for a given song to eliminate distortion on high peaks.

An MP3 file of LaPaloma had a loud click at the 51-second mark that could not be cleaned properly even with the special peak click filtering after manually isolating the click. I was finally able to eliminate the click but each side of the original click had a warble that was worse than the click. The Help file said if this happens, try to make a better recording somehow. Since it was only one click, I would guess there was a spot of something on the vinyl surface or a pin point gouge. You can't make a purse out of a sow's ear, huh?

One of the fun and useful features is the ability to adjust the speed of a recording. I recorded several old 78



Spin it again cont. on Page 13

The Changing World

A Review of Vista

By David Steward, APCUG Advisor, Region 8 and Program Chair, Alamo PC Organization, Texas, www.alamopc.org, dsteward@apcug.net

The title of this article explains a lot. With the release of Microsoft's newest iteration of Operating Systems, Vista, we are going to be making a lot of changes in how we perform day-to-day tasks on our computers. For once, I think they actually got it right. With a more intuitive interface, a lot less cluttered desktop, easier networking and a much more robust security system, Vista will indeed go a long way in making the lives of us who spend a great deal of time staring at a computer screen easier and more exciting.

Getting Started

The first thing that you will notice when opening the box is that Vista is shipped on a DVD instead of a CD, as all of the previous operating systems from Microsoft have been. There are a couple of reasons for this. The first is that Vista is packed with much more content than has been available in the past. Things like Windows Defender, Sidebar, Snipit (a screen capture utility and more), built-in Fax and Scan, and Windows Live Meeting all of which are designed to make life easier.

The second is that regardless of which version (see below) you purchase, all of the versions are included on the DVD. The version that loads depends on the installation key that you receive with the purchase. What does this mean to us, as consumers? It means that you can upgrade the OS version any time you want, and the media is already on the disc. All you need to do is the purchase the upgraded "key" and the system will do the rest.

As mentioned above, Vista is being offered in many different versions. Each version is, of course, designed around a specific type of user. At the time of this article's writing, the following versions are being offered:

Vista Home Basic – Basic package. Contains all the usual things that you would expect to be included in an operating system plus many new enhancements.

Vista Home Premium – Adds support for the Media Center PC, the Tablet PC, automated backups, Windows Aero and Glass, built in DVD authoring, and much more.

Vista Business – Version scaled for business use

Vista Ultimate – The whole enchilada. Contains

everything including support for multiple processors.

For a detailed description of each version, and to help decide which is right for you, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/editions/default.aspx>.

On a little side note here, I want to caution the readers to not think only in today's terms when deciding which version of Vista to choose. With the advent of the multiple core processors and initiatives to put more processors on the motherboard, each with multiple cores, you might want to consider the Ultimate edition, as it directly supports multiple processors, up to 128 gigs of memory (on 64 bit machines) and makes use of the higher buss speeds associated with multiple cores. Plus, as you will see later, it grows with your system.

Entertainment

As I said previously, Vista is designed to make your life easier. Plus, a lot of the OS has been wound around the entertainment capabilities of today's PC. With built in DVD, CD and TV (with tuner card installed) support, any PC can be turned into the main entertainment center of your house.

Most of us have grown up using a PC for normal things like word processing, spreadsheets, digital photography, listening to music, email, and surfing the web. Basically, everything that we can do while sitting about 2 feet from the computer screen. Well, a new "buzz" word in the industry is the "10 foot" experience. It encompasses things that we can do away from the computer. This includes experiences like storing all of your DVD's and videos on your computer's hard disk, and viewing them from anywhere in your house. Being able to show slideshows of your photos on your TV in the den, listening to your music files in the bedroom including changing the playlists a you desire. Vista makes this possible. And, Vista's Media Center capabilities will couple with your Xbox360 and use it as a media extender.

If you want to see if your computer is Vista capable, visit the "Vista Upgrade Advisor" at <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/upgradeadvisor/default.aspx>. The Upgrade Advisor will perform a very thorough search of your system's hardware and installed software

and let you know what needs to be changed before upgrading to Vista.

The Meat

Let's get to the actual operation of the software. Before I installed Vista, I ran the included Upgrade Advisor, which informed me that I needed to remove the "Nero Burning Rom" software before I could install Vista. In addition, it cautioned me that although Vista would run on my system, I would not achieve the full performance of the graphics engine due to the installed drivers for my video card. Specifically, I would not be able to run the Aero or Glass enhancements. At the time, I did not consider that a good enough reason to rush out and purchase a new high end graphics card, so I went ahead and installed Vista, after removing Nero. I chose to upgrade my existing system, as I have a ton of programs installed, and did not want to have to re-install all of them. So, after entering a few basic pieces of information, including the "key", Vista took off and performed all of the upgrade functions without any further input from me. This is good as it took almost 2 hours to completely install and upgrade the system. At one point, I thought that it was stuck and that I would have to start over, but it wasn't. It just took that long to load the features and enhancements, and upgrade the existing programs.

This might be a good time to point out that I am performing this review on a 2 year old Sony Vaio Media Center PC, which has a Pentium 4 running at 3.4 Ghz, 1 GB of RAM, a 320 GB drive, and a 64 MB on board graphics card. I have partitioned the drive into 2 partitions, a 80 GB program partition, and a 240 GB data partition.

Finally, the upgrade finished and the system rebooted into Vista. The first thing that you see is a screen titled the "Welcome Center". From this screen, you setup all of the basic things like security, users and internet settings. This is all accomplished by wizards that lead you through the process step-by-step. You can also view some very informative videos that introduce you to the features of Vista. It also gives you the opportunity to register and go online with Windows Live, a place where you can setup your own personalized start page with Live Mail access, news, weather, RSS feeds, etc ... however you want it to look.

After you finish setting up all the necessary features, it is time to explore and have fun. I am not going to write about every feature and function, as I would have to write an entire book to cover it all, but I am going to highlight a couple of things that I think will be of interest to us all.

First, Vista has a ton of informational type of screens that tell you a lot about your particular system and hardware. One of these is called "Performance and

Information Tools" which is accessible from the "System and Maintenance" button on the Control Panel. This is where you can find out what your system experience rating is. This will let you know how Vista will perform under different conditions, and whether or not you can take advantage of some of the enhancements like Aero or Glass on your desktop. My particular system rating was 2.8. The reason for the mediocre rating was because of the graphics chip that was on the motherboard. Everything else had a rating of 4.2 or above. I really wanted to use the Aero on my desktop, so I rummaged around in my computer room, and found an nVidia 6600 graphics card. After installing it, I re-ran the performance rating test, and my system rating increased to 4.1, which allowed all of the included enhancements. It was well worth the time.

Another feature that is accessible from the Control Panel is the "Problem Reports and Solutions". This area keep track of every time a program stops running for any reason, or has a problem installing, and logs it into a database. From time to time, you should check this area and see if a fix for a particular problem has been released. Vista will automatically download the fix, apply it, and test it on your system. Why is this important? It means that you do not have to wait for a service pack to repair individual problems.

There are many more features on the Control Panel that you will want to explore and play with, including the ability to change the partitioning of your drive, schedule tasks and view event logs. Believe me, Vista is an information geeks dream.

Another new addition is Windows Mail, which replaces Outlook Express. I used to prefer Outlook Express over Outlook because of it's ease of operation and Windows Mail has not changed my mind. Windows Mail operationally looks like Outlook Express with one major enhancement. It has an automatic spam and phishing filter integrated in the program, and it works. It is so nice to look at my messages and not have to wade through 200+ messages wanting to sell me stock or change my anatomy.

Getting back to the desktop, one of the features that I really wanted to see was the new Aero feature. Aero is the high performance desktop experience that has been introduced in Vista. Basically, it allows a much more robust and dynamic view of the desktop and the components running on it. For example the Glass feature turns the individual windows translucent so you can see what is going on in windows under it. The Flip 3D function allows you to quickly "flip" through all of the open windows until you find the one that you want. In addition, when a window is minimized, you can hover your mouse over the button on the taskbar, and see exactly what that window looks like. Plus, Aero

Vista Review cont. from page 9

gives everything a much smoother appearance making it easier on the eyes. It is hard to describe Aero in words, but trust me, you will like it.

Another new feature is Gadgets. Simply put, they are little gadgets or programs that you can place on your desktop to help you. Things like a clock, news feeds, stock tickers, RSS feeds, or even games. Now, this is what Active Desktop really means. <G> You can adjust the transparency of each of them so that they do not distract from the workspace.

Ultimate Extras

For those of you that take the plunge and opt for the full blown Ultimate version, there is a bonus. Microsoft has announced the Vista Ultimate Extras program. This entails new additions to the Ultimate package that will be added as time goes on. Things like new gaming experiences with Windows Hold'em Poker, added security with the bit-locker encryption system, and my favorite, Dreamscape, which turns your desktop background into a true "active" desktop by allowing motion video to be run on the desktop. It is truly an unbelievable sight. And, more will be added in the future, allowing your system to grow as time goes on.

For the gamers reading this, Vista is going to change the way that you play games on the PC. Microsoft has included DirectX 10 with the shipping versions of Vista. DirectX 10 is a much more robust API that allows a more realistic appearance in games. In

addition, you can use your Xbox360 controller on your PC now, and it will take advantage of all of the controller features like vibrate and positive feedback.

Having said all of this, I do want to note that I did have some problems while running Vista. I have had a couple of programs that flat refuse to run in Vista, specifically shareware video editing and video conversion programs. I am presently working with the support engineers to rectify this. I also found that although Microsoft says that Vista will run well with 1 GB of memory, and it does, Vista really wants as much memory as it can get. I noted a significant improvement when I install another gig of memory. Same thing is true about the graphics adapter in the system. I recommend at least a 128 MB card, and preferably a 256 MB card if you want to run Aero and Dreamscape. This will ensure that there is no noticeable loss of system performance.

I know that this is supposed to be a review of Vista, and it has ended up sounding like an advertising blurb about the product, but I am very excited about the new Operating System. I truly believe that Microsoft has finally listened to the user community, and has made a concentrated effort to include the enhancements that we have been waiting for. I am actually enjoying sitting in front of the screen again.

Next time I will review Vista on a laptop, and I promise that it will be shorter <G> Until then, ya'll have fun. ■

Moving to Vista – What Not to Do

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, <http://www.compuKISS.com>,
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Microsoft's long-anticipated new operating system, Windows Vista, is finally here. After months of testing I can say that it is a stable program and is more secure than any previous version of Windows. It also has a great new look and some wonderful new features. Just remember that there are always gotchas with a new operating system. Here are a few of the "don'ts" when moving to Vista.

First, five different flavors of Vista are available in the US: Home Basic, Home Premium, Ultimate, Business, and Enterprise. Don't bother with Home Basic. It doesn't have "Aero", the rich new visual interface. It doesn't have the advanced multi-media features for photos, movies, and television. It doesn't even have the cool new chess or mahjong games. All of this is missing, but Microsoft is still selling the Home Basic upgrade for \$99. The full version of Home Basic is \$199. If you buy a new computer with Vista, make sure that you get at least the Home Premium version.

You can get a comparison of the different versions of Vista and what they offer at the Microsoft website.

Another don't...don't try to upgrade without a large hard drive and at least one gigabyte of memory. You can use the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor to determine if your computer is ready for Vista. Most older computers will come up lacking. So, you may not want to upgrade at all. Although Vista's better security is enticing, if you are happy with your Windows XP machine you may want to keep using it a bit longer because it may be not be economically beneficial to upgrade. The Vista product upgrade can cost several hundred dollars. That plus the cost of extra memory and/or other hardware upgrades may make it wiser to just purchase a new computer with Vista preinstalled.

Don't expect every software program to work with Windows Vista. Intuit, the makers of the popular Quickbooks program have notified their users that no older versions of Quickbooks will run on Vista. Only an

upgrade to Quickbooks 2007 will let Quickbooks users run the program on a Vista computer.

Because of the major security changes in Vista, most antivirus programs will also need an update to be able to run on Windows Vista. If you purchase a new computer it may come with a trial subscription to Symantec or McAfee that will get you started but you will have to purchase a new version in the future or move to a free antivirus program. Again upgrading an old computer may be problematic because the old antivirus software will need to be removed before the new version is installed. Experience has taught me that it is often difficult to remove all the various pieces of an existing antivirus program. This is one experience you may want to avoid.

Some programs will also have trouble with Windows Vista new user controls which make it more difficult to make changes to your computer. This bolsters the operating system against hackers, but can confuse some existing programs. Simple changes or work arounds for these types of problems can easily be found on the Web. For instance, I couldn't run Adobe Photoshop CS2 upon installation on my Vista machine, but a few simple changes which I found documented on the Web, solved the problem quite easily.

Also any specially written or high-end software programs may not work with Vista. This will not affect the average user, but if you have any unusual or specialty programs you will want to check out compatibility.

Much of today's current hardware will work with Windows Vista. Of course, you may want to check the manufacturer's website to be sure before you make that assumption. You may need to update a hardware driver or two. If you have older hardware, some may not work with Vista. So check it out before you move to Vista.

Of all the hardware problems, you can expect the most problems with audio equipment. Windows Vista has a new audio stack which means that it handles the audio data structure differently than older versions of Windows. Also this audio change was made quite late in the Vista development process, so audio manufacturers may not have caught up yet. While this will probably not impact the average computer user, if you have any high-end audio equipment, make sure you check our compatibility before you migrate to Vista.

One last don't ... don't worry about the 64-bit version of Vista. If you have a 64-bit processor on your new computer like the Intel Core2 Duo or AMD 64-bit processors you may be thinking about trying out the 64-bit version of Vista. Don't do it unless you want to be on the "bleeding" edge of technology. Most hardware does not currently have 64-bit drivers and the 64-bit version of Vista does not support the widely used 32-bit drivers. Also there is currently very little software that

actually takes advantage of the 64-bit system. So leave the 64-bit version as something to dream about. It will be more secure and faster, but it is not yet ready for prime time.

However the 32-bit version of Vista is ready for immediate use. The best way to move to Vista is to buy a new computer with Vista preloaded. Just be sure you check out these gotchas before you put your money on the counter. ■

Web Tips

From Smart Computing, Plugged In,
April 2007 • Vol.18 Issue 4

Shop Like A Star

Problem: I saw a celebrity wearing a cool accessory. How can I track down a similar item?

Solution: Search engines are good for searching, but they're not really the best when all you want to do is browse. Any window shopper will tell you that online shopping, while convenient, is not nearly as fun as strolling through the mall. But check out the new visual shopping technology from the folks at Like.com (www.like.com). Still in alpha (that's prebeta) as of this writing, the Like.com site looks fairly usable and fun. Browse through images of celebs and click their shoes, earrings, sunglasses, or shirt. The site will then take you to a page with the actual accessory to purchase, along with a list of similar—and often cheaper—choices.

A Handmade Treasure Trove

Problem: I'm a bit of a flea market hound. I used to love eBay, but now it's harder to find the gems.

Solution: If by gems you mean inexpensive, artsy, handmade items, then work your way over to Etsy (www.etsy.com). Furniture, candles, knitting, jewelry, and screen-printed paper products are all on sale. And if you have some gems crafted by your own hand, you can sell them on Etsy (for a 20-cent listing fee and 3.5% sales fee).

The Funny (Web) Pages

Problem: I love to read the funny pages in the daily newspaper, but my city's edition doesn't carry all of my favorite strips. Where can I find them on the Web?

Solution: You can customize your MyYahoo! or Google home page to display a small selection of syndicated comics, but for a much broader selection, visit these two must-bookmark sites for comic strip lovers: Comics.c.... ■

The Big Red X

By Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida,
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Email, along with the spreadsheet, is one of the greatest computer applications ever developed. Along with its usefulness are a few minor, but irritating inconveniences. The one we'll address in this article is the frustration with observing a red X where an image should appear.

There are several possible causes for pictures failing to materialize. They are not particularly difficult to correct, but the method is far from obvious. Start by right-clicking the red X and from the popup menu select "**Show Picture**". If this works, consider yourself blessed. More likely is that either your email setup is not allowing the picture to be viewed or the sender's options are not allowing the picture to be sent. Let's make sure that your setup isn't causing the problem, and then we'll figure out what to do with the sender.

If the problem is at your end, it could be caused by having Internet Explorer's email settings too restrictive. To reset the default settings for Internet Explorer 6.0 open Internet Explorer, click Tools from the top menu bar, and select Internet Options.

1. Click on the General tab to make sure it's active.
2. Click Delete Files.
3. Check Delete All Offline Content, and click OK.
4. Click the Delete Cookies button, and click OK.
5. Click the Settings button.
6. Set cache to 25 MB or less, and select Every Visit to Page, then click OK.

Next, make the Security tab active by clicking on it. There are four zones listed on the security tab: Internet, Local Intranet, Trusted Sites, and Restricted Sites.

1. Click Internet.
2. Click the Default Level button.
3. Repeat the steps for each of the remaining zones.

Third, click on the Privacy tab, and click the Default button. If the Default button is grayed out, ignore this step. Now click the Connections tab.

1. Click the LAN Settings button.
2. Make sure nothing is checked, and click OK.

Last, click on the Advanced tab.

1. Click Restore Defaults.
2. Click Apply and OK.

Internet Explorer 7 is similar, but there are enough differences to warrant its own set of instructions. Open Internet Explorer, click Tools, and select Internet Options.

First, look at the General tab.

1. Click the Delete button.
2. The Delete Browsing History dialog box appears. Click the Delete Files button.
3. Select Yes in the confirmation box.
4. Repeat step 2 for the Delete cookies, and Delete history buttons.
5. Click Close.
6. Click the Settings button in the Browsing history section.
7. Select "Every time I visit the webpage," then set the "Disk space to use" value to 50 Megabytes or less.
8. Click OK.



Next, click the Security tab. There are four zones listed on the security tab: Internet, Local Intranet, Trusted Sites, and Restricted Sites.

1. If the **Set all zones to default level button** is not grayed, out click it and you're done with this section. Otherwise continue with step 2.
2. Click Internet.
3. Click the Default level button (if it is not grayed out).
4. Repeat the steps for the remaining zones.

Click on the Privacy tab, and click the Default button unless it's grayed out. Then click the Connections tab.

1. Click the LAN settings button to activate another dialog box.
2. Make sure nothing is checked, and click OK.

Finally, click on the Advanced tab.

1. Click the Restore advanced settings button. **Don't**, repeat **don't** click the Reset button as that will delete any forms and passwords saved through auto-complete.
2. Click Apply and OK.

That takes care of your browser. If you're using Outlook or Outlook Express, you need to check several more options that control how images are received or sent. There are two ways to send pictures in Emails. You can imbed the picture in the email or you can send the picture as an attachment. Whichever way you choose, you need to set your email client so it can handle pictures, and you do that by setting your email to work in HTML format. We'll start with Outlook Express and finish up with Outlook.

We'll make a big assumption that all of your

recipients are set up to receive their Email in HTML format. You need to make sure that you have Outlook Express set up to send Email in HTML. Service Pack 2 should be installed on your system. Because of its extra security features, you need to avoid blocking attachments when you send or receive email.

1. Open Outlook Express, go to the Tools/menu, and click “Options”.
2. Click the “Send” tab, and then select “HTML” as the format to send mail.
3. Click the Button to the right that’s named “HTML Settings”, and put a check in the box that says “Send Pictures with Messages”. Be sure that “Quoted Printable” is the selected in the “Encode text using” box.
4. Click OK.
5. Click the Read tab.
6. Confirm that the “Read all messages in plain text” is not checked.

Your machine is now setup to correctly send and receive images. If people who are receiving your email complain about red Xs, send them these instructions. If you want to check out your system, try sending some emails to yourself.

If you’re using Outlook, perform the following check.

1. Open Outlook and select Options from the Tools menu.
2. Select the Mail Format tab.
3. In the “Message format” section select HTML from the drop down menu.
4. Click the Internet Format button
5. In the HTML options section, confirm there is no checkmark in any of the boxes in the dialog box.
6. In the Outlook Rich Text options section, select “Convert to HTML format” from the drop down menu.
7. Click OK to save the settings.
8. Click OK to exit.

Other possibilities that could prevent pictures being displayed in your email are your anti-virus and firewall settings. You may need to relax the security settings on these programs. We can’t provide instructions for this because we don’t know whose software you’re using. You may need to contact the producer of the software for information.

If you create and send an email with a photo image or forward an email with a photo in it and the recipient gets a red X instead of the picture, you can be fairly confident that their email, firewall or anti-virus setup is preventing the picture from being seen. Send these instructions to them. ■

[Software Review, Elements cont. from page 5](#)

.pse extension. The print projects are wizard driven and offer step by step selections for size, layout, theme and then additional options depending on the project chosen. I decided to make a print project of a CD cover and label for the Disney slide show that I created earlier. The wizard walked me through the entire process opening Elements in the Full Edit mode with my selected photo and all the layers in the layer palette created – it truly seemed like magic. Since you are left in this mode you can then adjust or fine tune the project before saving and printing it.

One feature that I was not able to try but may be of interest to some reading this review is the ability to download and upload photos from a mobile phone.

I highly recommend Adobe Photoshop Elements 5. There is an upgrade rebate in the box of \$20, so if you are using an older version you can take advantage of that. The price today at Amazon.com is \$69.99 with free shipping and your \$20 rebate makes the total price \$49.99. There are other special offers at local stores and online. Visit Adobe’s web page www.adobe.com for system requirements. ■

[YouTube cont. from page 6](#)

home camcorders and cell phones. In fact, videos that showed L.A. police repeatedly punching a suspect on the ground, a college student being tasered, and an outraged comedian yelling disparaging ethnic descriptions, were shown on television news after first being uploaded to YouTube. These homemade videos, which were a sensation on the news, initially prompted me to check out the site.

Incredibly, YouTube viewers watch 100 million videos each day — up from 10 million last year. The most-watched clip, with over 36+ million views is a compilation of head-butt animations inspired by the one Zinedine Zidane administered in the 2006 World Cup soccer game.

YouTube is free. You only need to sign up if you want to leave comments about the videos, rate them, or upload your own.

Choose videos from categories like Recent Videos below, which include viewer ratings, video length, and description ■

[Spin it again cont. from page 5](#)

RPM records using the 45 RPM speed of my turntable and increased the speed accordingly using the drop-down menu until it sounded normal. I’m trying to find my 78 RPM copy of Roy Acuff’s “Sixteen Chickens in a Frying Pan.” Everybody needs to hear that.

For the tinkering types out there, many tweaks are available including a change in sampling rates, sensitivity of track detection, recording levels, etc.

Highly recommended. *Rod Rakes* ■

THINGS, THINGLETS & THINGASSOS

Written by S. Jack Lewtschuk, Monterey Bay Users' Group-PC Columnist,

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WORDS OF WISDOM

If builders built houses the way programmers build computer programs, the first woodpecker to come along would destroy civilization!

KEEPING TRACK OF MULTIPLE PASSWORDS

Passwords are a part of our everyday life: we use them for e-mail, online banking, stock trading, shopping, blogging, etc. For good security, you should have a different password for each website you enter. But how can you remember so many passwords?

A password manager is a great way to consolidate all your passwords without compromising security. Generally, a password manager is a program that stores all of your passwords for you. All of your passwords are kept secure with—you guessed it—a password.

The key advantage to using a password manager is that you only have to remember one password. That's not too bad. Then you can retain unique passwords for each of your various accounts without taxing your memory.

There are several pay programs that work this way. Before buying one, try KeePass (<http://keepass.sourceforge.net/>), a simple, free password manager. It can help you organize your passwords and also enter them into log-in forms.

How does KeePass work? After you download and install it, there are several easy steps to setting it up. The first time you open it, you have to create the file that will store your passwords. Click the "New" button at the top left of the window which will prompt you for a "Master Key." Make it one that you can easily remember, but which someone else can't easily guess (e.g., your birth date, your spouse/child's/pet's name), because it's the password you'll use from now on to unlock all your other passwords.

KeePass includes categories for online functions such as e-mail, home banking and others. To put a password into KeePass, select a category and then click the "Add Entry" button. You'll be able to enter a title for the password, which will help you easily identify where the password is used.

Let's take Hotmail as an example—an effective title for a Hotmail password could be simply "Hotmail." You could also enter the web address where the password is required. KeePass automatically fills the password box with a random password. Chances are that it's stronger than the password you already use for Hotmail, but to make it work, you have to log into your account and change it to match KeePass.

If you want to keep things simple, erase the pre-filled box and put in the password that you already use and click "OK". Do the same steps for all of your everyday passwords and take a load off your memory. You can drag and drop passwords directly from KeePass. Click the password you need from KeePass and move it to the blank form on a Web page. The password will appear in the blank.

KeePass keeps your entire password file encrypted. The only way to open or read it is with your master password, so don't lose it!

In addition to Windows, "switch-hitters" can download versions of KeePass for Macintosh, PocketPC, Palm and Linux. You can also take KeePass with you on a thumb drive by copying two files onto your thumb drive. One is the KeePass program (KeePass.exe), and the other is the file containing your passwords (the default is called Database.kdb).

BACKING UP OUTLOOK CONTACTS

Outlook stores all data in a single file called a ".PST file". This file contains your contacts, e-mail, calendar items and tasks. It's easy to back up your entire Outlook .PST file—just locate it and copy it as you would any other file. Backing up individual folders within Outlook is also easy, so you can export your entire "Contacts" list. Simply highlight "Contacts" in your Outlook folders list. Then click "File," and "Import and Export" to open the "Import and Export Wizard." Select "Export to a file" and click "Next," to choose from a list of options (I recommend Microsoft Excel as the best one to choose in order to export all your contacts into a nicely ordered spreadsheet). After making your selection, click "Next." You'll be given the option again to select the folder you want to export. Highlight it, click "Next," and specify the name and location where you would like to save your file (use the "Browse" button if needed), click "Next" and then click "Finish."

You can use the same procedure with other items in the Outlook folder list. This is handy if you only want to export certain parts of your Outlook data file. You can use the files with other programs such as a "Database." You can also use it to share information with other people. Say you want to share your contacts with friends or coworkers: just export them, and others can import your list into their Outlook program.

To import a file, click "File," and "Import and Export." Select "Import from another program or file," click "Next," and select the type of file from which you're importing. In this case, select "Microsoft Excel" and click "Next." Click "Browse" to locate the file you wish to import, and then select your import options. You may want to allow duplicates, or you may wish to replace duplicates with imported items. You can also specify that duplicates not be imported. Click "Next," select the destination folder, click "Next" again, and finally, click "Finish."

NOVICE CORNER

Starting Your Computer in "Safe Mode"

At some point in time you may need to start your computer in "safe mode." You should print these instructions before continuing as they will not be available after you shut your computer down in step two.

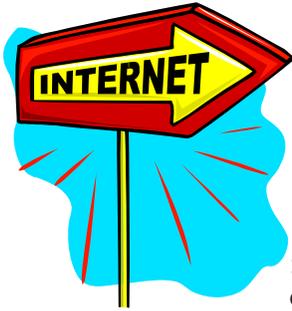
Click "Start," click "Shut Down," and then in the drop-down list click "Shut down." In the shut down window dialog box, click "Restart," and then click "OK." When you see the message "Please select the operating system to start" or "Windows" appears on the screen, press the "F8" key several times. Use your arrow keys to highlight the appropriate "safe mode" option, and then press "ENTER." If you have a dual-boot or multiple-boot system, choose the installation that you need to access using the arrow keys, and then press "ENTER."?

The Internet, What Is It?

By Hilton Kaufman, a member of the Chicago Computer Society, Illinois,

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(This is the first of a short series of articles explaining what the Internet is.)



The Internet is one of those things that is a bit tricky to define and explain. It is a network of computer networks that provides various services, such as e-mail and the World Wide Web, with a hierarchy of naming conventions to consider. No one can tell

exactly how many computers are part of the Internet at any moment as individuals are constantly signing on and off.

There is also the historical aberration that the intended structure of the Internet is not how it works today. It was supposed to be a bunch of independent connections and multiple possible routings so that if one part went down, say the area in lower Manhattan about five years ago, messages could go through on another route. Now everything goes across country on a backbone consisting of maybe five or six parallel main trunk lines.

It also was once for government and educational use only. Many government functions now use newer networks with connections totally separate from what we know as The Internet. They may or may not permit connection to the Internet for routine matters, but severely limit who can get into the secure internal networks. Schools seem to find that the Internet works fine for them. Much of the Internet involves commercial entities today.

While the Internet was originally designed for use within the United States of America, it is quite international in scope. How it works in various countries may or may not be subject to various controls. However someone with the right equipment might be able to tap into a satellite that carries Internet signals. Yet a very great portion of Internet traffic is in or at least involves the United States

It is the services on the Internet that make it

interesting to the ordinary user. Historically it was used for short messages and moving files from one location to another. The messages might be nothing more than a notice that a file was ready to be transferred or that it had been successfully received. It grew into something in which anyone could bring useful files to their local computers and send complex messages with files often attached.

The technology for providing and receiving many services has changed and made more complex, yet more user friendly. Internet capable technology is often used in local networks called Intranets, which may or may not be connect to the overall Internet. Different individuals work with the Internet in ways that may be unique to them. The ordinary person does not know or care how it works, just that he or she can use it for the desired services, such as sending e-mail messages.

The Internet can be something mysterious and quite technical. It can also be something that appears easy to use. This may depend on what one wants and what is loaded on a particular computer. Very often a company that one uses to connect and receive services tries to make things look as simple as possible to the end user. ■

(Future articles in this series will explain how the Internet is hooked together, the addressing system that sends things to the right place, and some of the services available over the Internet.)

Hilton Kaufman serves as the technical support person for the procedures writing unit of an Illinois state agency, where higher level technical support personnel are concerned with the details of Internet connections and services. As such, he uses the software provided to him to create forms, convert documents into PDFs, advise members of his unit as to how to use the available software, and similar tasks. For his home computer, he can go all out and get a powerful machine that allows him to do things like playing games and surf the web without getting in trouble. He has prepared a number of articles aimed at novice users on the basics of standard computer programs.

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