

# COMPUTER NEWS



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

## The March 18<sup>th</sup> NVPCUG General Meeting will attempt to answer your questions about cell phone and coverage

The group will meet at the  
Napa Senior Activity Center,  
Wednesday, Mar 18, 7:00-9:00 P.M.,  
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California



The meeting begins with Random Access, 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. Questions may be submitted before the meeting by e-mailing them to Random Access moderator **Jerry Brown** at [Questions@nvpcug.org](mailto:Questions@nvpcug.org).

For the Computer Tutor Coordinator presentation in March Jeff Solomon will show how to use the Napa-Solano Local Library system's on-line tools to search for and reserve books, video tapes, DVD's, audio cassettes and CD's; view your library transactions; search magazines, encyclopedias, business, government and environmental issues; read on-line books, get literary and biographical information and more. If you have an idea or question that the Computer Tutor can demonstrate, please email your ideas to the Computer Tutor, **Jeff Solomon** at [tutor@nvpcug.org](mailto:tutor@nvpcug.org).



The main presenter in March will be Mike Silva from the Verizon store on Jefferson Street in Napa. He will update us some of the new developments with Verizon and tells us about some of the changes with the ins and out of the wireless world. ■

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

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

# NVPCUG SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS & MAC GROUP

In SIG meetings you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so for current meeting information, see our Web site, [www.nvpcug.org](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:susyball@aol.com)

## Napa Valley Mac User Group

Meets: Monthly, second Thursday  
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.  
Napa Senior Activity Center  
1500 Jefferson St., Napa

Leader: Ron Rogers  
(707) 226-5352

[ronrogersnapamug@gmail.com](mailto:ronrogersnapamug@gmail.com)

# Mix Your Own Music Ringtone Media Studio 3

By Jennifer Farwell, Smart Computing,  
[www.smartcomputing.com](http://www.smartcomputing.com), from "Reviews", November 2008 •  
Vol.19 Issue 11, Page(s) 22-23 in print issue

\$29.95

Avanquest

(800) 325-0834

[www.avanquest.com](http://www.avanquest.com)

Windows 2000, XP, Vista

Ringtone Media Studio 3 is a mobile ringtone, screen saver, and wallpaper maker and over-the-air transfer station for video, digital images, and other mobile files. Use or customize any of the 10,000 sample files it provides or grab something from your own library, including audio CDs, MP3s, and digital pictures and videos. Installation of the program is easy, and although the program asks which mobile phone you want to work with right after installation, you can adjust the setting at any time.



Works with all major carriers and over 950 devices; offers editing interfaces for an array of multimedia types.

The interface that appears when you first open the program, Melody Studio, resembles many basic digital editors, with the analog wave form of the audio displayed for editing. Users who have done some digital mixing will be right at home, but the process is simple enough for everyone. Open one or more songs, drag some sliders to capture the portion(s) you want, preview the ringtone through your speakers, and then save it. Other features, including DJ Ringtone (a digital sound lab), Image Studio and Video Studio (edit images and edit/create video for use on your phone) are both also reasonably easy to master. A Transfer To Phone option lets you convert files and send them to your phone via Infrared, Bluetooth, or over the air (requires Internet access and registration with the My Locker site). Overall, it's a nice little program. ■

## NVPCUG General Meetings

Held the third Wednesday of each month, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa

## NVPCUG Calendar

Mar 18	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + D
Apr 1	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting + B
Apr 8	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting (canceled)
Apr 9	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Apr 13	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Apr 15	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + A
May 6	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting + B
May 11	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
May 13	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting + B
May 14	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
May 20	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + A

## Meeting Locations

- A - Napa Senior Activity Center,  
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa
- B - Piner's Nursing Home,  
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
- C - Jerry Brown's home,  
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
- D - Peterson's Family Christmas  
Tree Farm, 1120 Darms  
Lane, Napa.

# Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group Contact Information

## Officers for 2009

### Board of Directors

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

### Appointed Officers

<b>Computer Tutor Coordinator</b>	Jeff Solomon	553-2114	<a href="mailto:Tutor@nvpcug.org">Tutor@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Facility Arrangements Coordinator</b>	Dianne Prior	252-1506	<a href="mailto:Facility@nvpcug.org">Facility@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Greeter Coordinator</b>	Kathy Slavens	251-9193	<a href="mailto:Greeter@nvpcug.org">Greeter@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Greeter Coordinator</b>	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	<a href="mailto:Greeter2@nvpcug.org">Greeter2@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Librarian</b>	Dean Unruh	226-9164	<a href="mailto:Librarian@nvpcug.org">Librarian@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Membership Director</b>	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	<a href="mailto:Membership@nvpcug.org">Membership@nvpcug.org</a>
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<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Susy Ball	337-3998	<a href="mailto:Editor@nvpcug.org">Editor@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Product Review CoCoordinator</b>	Susy Ball	337-3998	<a href="mailto:Reviews@nvpcug.org">Reviews@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Product Review CoCoordinator</b>	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	<a href="mailto:Reviews2@nvpcug.org">Reviews2@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Programs Director</b>	Susy Ball	337-3998	<a href="mailto:Programs@nvpcug.org">Programs@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Publicity Director</b>	Ron Dack	unlisted	<a href="mailto:Publicity@nvpcug.org">Publicity@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Random Access Moderator</b>	Jerry Brown	254-9607	<a href="mailto:Questions@nvpcug.org">Questions@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Special Projects Director</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER NEEDED</b>		<a href="mailto:Projects@nvpcug.org">Projects@nvpcug.org</a>
<b>Webmaster</b>	Ron Dack	unlisted	<a href="mailto:Webmaster@nvpcug.org">Webmaster@nvpcug.org</a>

• All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

## NVPCUG Computer News

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# How To Send An Email Message To Any Cell Phone

By Ken Peters, Product Review / Special Interests, Hilton Head Island Computer Club, SC,  
[www.hhicc.org](http://www.hhicc.org), [product.review@hhicc.org](mailto:product.review@hhicc.org)

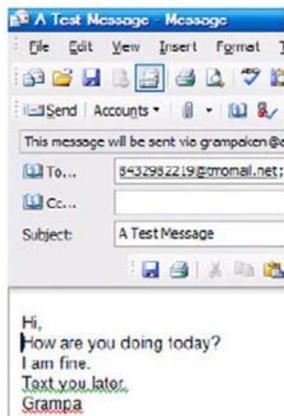
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Impress your kids, grandkids and friends with your ability to text. Send a text message to their cell phone by email from your computer.

Most cell phones have the ability to send and receive short text messages. This is called short message service (SMS) or text paging. This service can take email sent over the internet and deliver them to a cell phone as a text message. Each carrier has its own email address extension i.e. @tmomail.net for T Mobile carrier.

The two things you need to know to send a message are the person's cell phone number and their carrier's email extension. So to send to a T Mobile phone, enter the phone number and add the extension - **8433216549@tmomail.net**

## The message will look similar to this.



The email message



Appears on cell phone

## Some of the common cell phone emails are:

- **Alltel AT&T** (formerly Cingular)  
10-digit phone number@message.alltel.com 10-digit phone number@txt.att.net  
Example: 2125551212@message.alltel.com  
Example: **2125551212@txt.att.net**
- **Boost Mobile Nextel** (now part of Sprint Nextel)  
10-digit phone number@myboostmobile.com 10-digit telephone number@messag  
Example: 2125551212@myboostmobile.com  
ing.nextel.com  
Example: 7035551234@messaging.nextel.com

- **T-Mobile Verizon**  
10-digit phone number@tmomail.net 10-digit phone number@vtext.com  
Example: 4251234567@tmomail.net Example: 5552223333@vtext.com
- **Virgin Mobile USA US Cellular**  
10-digit phone number@vmobl.com  
10digitphonenumber@email.uscc.net  
Example: 2622341256r@vmobl.com Example: 2125551212@email.uscc.net
- **Sprint PCS** (now Sprint Nextel)  
10-digit phone number@messaging.sprintpcs.com  
Example: 2125551234@messaging.sprintpcs.com

If you can't find the email address for the carrier, check the carrier's website (Links above) or call their customer service.

The one receiving the message may be charged 10 to 15 cents per message unless they have a plan that includes text messaging. Your kids and grandkids most probably do have a text plan. There is a 160 character limit per message including the email address and the subject line. Some carriers will split the message into two messages if it is longer.

The person receiving the email text message can reply to you from their phone and sometime later you'll receive their reply in your email inbox. If you don't like texting from a cell phone or hate trying to type a message with those small phone keys, give this a try. It's fun. ■

## Hotmail Via Outlook

More recent versions of Outlook allow you to set up accounts for your Web-based email. This gives you the convenience of accessing your email anywhere you have Internet access, while still using a standard tool such as Outlook to organize and manage your mail (provided you have your computer with you or follow these instructions on a friend's computer). With Outlook 2002 running, click Tools and E-mail Accounts. Select Add A New E-mail Account and click Next. Choose HTTP and click Next. Enter your Web-based account information (including logon credentials) and click Next. Now click Finish to set up the new account, which appears in the Folder List.

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# Improving Vista Performance

Written by Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc., FL., [www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org), [vlabash@comcast.net](mailto:vlabash@comcast.net)

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Microsoft has added security features in Vista which didn't exist in XP. There are new functions and while the graphics are really neat, they can give your system a big performance hit if you don't have enough memory. Thanks to up-to-the-minute technology, and great manufacturing improvements, RAM is cheap. There is no good excuse for not loading up with as much memory as possible.

Vista is the most RAM hungry modern operating system in existence. One gig is about the lowest amount of memory you can have without feeling that you're slogging through a lake of molasses. Two gigs should give you acceptable response time, and four gigs will put wings on your PC with some afterburner boost thrown in. Don't be a cheapskate. It's false economy to starve your system of RAM.

If you are already loaded with Ram, you can use Vista's built-in ReadyBoost feature in conjunction with a flash memory card or USB key to give an added kick to system memory. You need a high performance flash card or USB drive. Insert the device and Vista will politely ask you if you wish to use the device to speed up system performance. Answer yes, and then tell Vista exactly how much of the device to devote to speeding up the system. ReadyBoost will be active as long as the device is plugged into the system.

Once you have enough memory, examine your video card. If you want to experience the full graphic capabilities that Vista offers, buy a video card that's Vista Premium Certified.

To see how your video card checks out, open up Control Panel, switch to Classic View, and then activate the Performance Information and Tools utility. Look at your base score. This number represents the overall graphic capability of your system. Notice that your base score is not some combination of all the subscores. Your base score is the lowest performing member of all your subscores. That doesn't seem fair, but that's reality. You can try updating your score, but it probably won't change.

If you get between 1 and 3, general operations which include word processing and spreadsheet tasks will work fine. Email and web browsing should be OK, but web sites with large amounts of embedded graphics will take a long time to load. Video applications will be problematical.

A base score between 3 and 4 can run Aero and the majority of the new Vista features, but Vista's more advanced capabilities may bog down your system. For example, your monitor will be satisfactory even at its highest resolution, but multiple monitors may slow down your system severely. You will be able to watch most TV

shows, but a high definition broadcast could be a slow motion disaster.

A base score higher than 4 should handle anything that Vista throws at it, including HDTV and 3D gaming. If what you want or need from Vista requires a higher base score than your system can provide, you need to replace one or more of your components. Use the subscores to determine what stays or goes. A low score may require you to either turn off the Aero interface or upgrade your video card.

Go back to the Control Panel. From the Classic View activate the System icon and then select Advanced system settings. When the System Properties dialog box comes up, click the Settings button in the Performance section. You're about to make some tough choices.

If you can't make decisions, you can Let Windows choose the best settings for my computer and be done with it. Adjust for best performance disables all the great visual effects that make Vista a terrific graphical interface. Adjust for best appearance makes your system look spiffy, but you'll take a hit on speed.

Choosing Custom allows you to make some reasonable compromises while keeping full control of your PC. Some features like sliding menus are pure eye candy and do nothing useful. Turning them off gives performance improvement with no loss of function.

There are options in the Advanced tab where you can control how the CPU processes work. What's more important to you, adjusting for visible performance or making sure that the housekeeping services Vista performs are performed efficiently? Make your choice and monitor your system. You can always change it back later.

Unless you know what you are doing, leave the Virtual memory section alone. Virtual memory is a portion of a disk drive that's configured to masquerade as memory. Because it's part of a disk and not physical memory, it can't work as fast as real memory. When the system runs out of physical RAM it can use a disk drive to keep going instead of stopping dead in its tracks.

You can change the location of the file to a different disk, resize it, or do both. Each choice has consequences of its own. Making the wrong choice won't destroy your system, but it could noticeably slow down performance. The default choice is to let Vista manage the file. That's the best choice for most people.

There are many other things that you can do to get the best possible performance from Vista such as modifying the Index Options, but that's a subject for another article. ■

# How can I keep my PC clean and tidy?

Written by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc., [tippet@gabegold.com](mailto:tippet@gabegold.com)

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Like changing your car's oil or replacing your home's air conditioner filter, a little PC cleaning pays off with a faster, more reliable, and longer-lasting computer.

Although nothing suggested here is either rocket science or inherently dangerous, always follow the medical adage, "First, do no harm". So don't do anything that makes you uncomfortable (perhaps have a more experienced person clean up while you watch and learn), and back up your system and data. Then reboot, to get a clean start, and don't open any programs,

Before starting, to measure what your cleanup deletes, determine how full your hard drive is. Open My Computer, Right Click your hard drive (usually labeled "Local Disk (C:)"), and click Properties. Note how much space is used and free, then close the dialogue box.

Next, use Windows' built-in disk cleaning tool. Click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Disk Cleanup, and the drive to clean, likely C. Choose what to clean; default selections are usually what you need. To be extra thorough, if your system has been running problem free, click the More Options tab and then Clean Up System Restore. Confirm your choice and click OK.

Delete Web browser temporary files. Using Internet Explorer, click Tools on the Menu Bar, Internet Options, and Delete Files under the General tab. Other browsers provide similar functions, sometimes using "cache" to refer to the collection of temporary files.

Delete unneeded personal files, items outdated and no longer used. While most Microsoft Office programs (Word, Excel, etc.) store their files in the My Documents folder, you may have changed this default location. And other apps likely have their own favorite places to stash files. Look around, since cluttered files make Windows work harder to get things done and waste time and resources when they're backed up. If you collect photos, music and such, delete those you no longer want or need, perhaps saving them on CD/DVD or ISB drive. Sorting files by size or date helps find deletion candidates.

If you run PC-based email software, it's worth periodically purging Sent and Trash folders, perhaps pitching material older than a certain date. Then look for a Compact Folders option, sometimes on the File pulldown menu, which squeezes out unused space from email folders.

Weed out software no longer used or useful by uninstalling applications with Window's Control Panel Add/Remove Software tool.

The Recycle Bin, which preserves erased files for recovery until it's emptied, has likely grown during this cleanup process. To empty it, Right Click its

Windows desktop icon and click Empty Recycle Bin. Note that programs such as Norton Utilities may offer other cleanup options for the Recycle Bin and other Windows components.

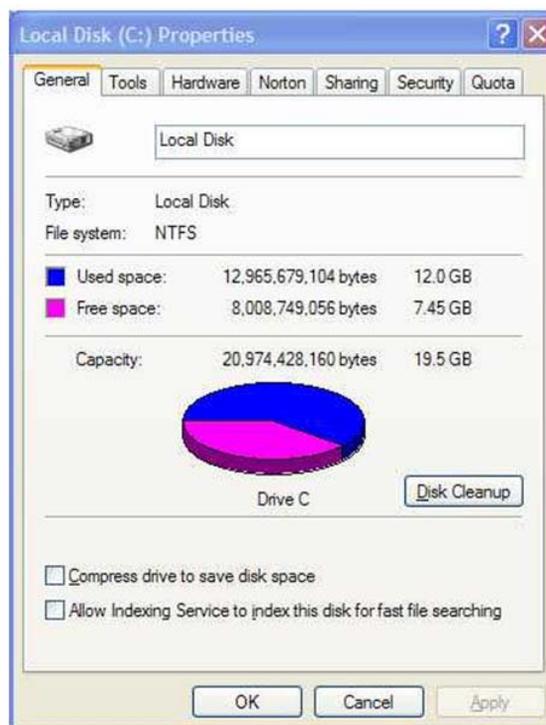
Finally, remember that when writing to your hard drive, Windows places bits of each file in the next available open space on the hard drive.

While Windows can reassemble them, having many files fragmented slows access to them. So, to store all files as single entities, periodically defragment the hard drive. To do this, click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Disk Defragmenter, select a drive, and click Defragment.

When finished, compare the amount of hard drive space used and free to what you saw initially. If this is the first cleanup you've done in a while, the amount of space recovered may surprise you.

Many books give much more detailed instructions for PC cleanups. Search Amazon.com for "degunking windows" and "cleaning windows" to see choices (but don't be distracted by instructions for cleaning house, office, and car windows!).

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# Diagnosing RAM Errors in Vista

By Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL,  
[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org), [vlabash@Comcast.net](mailto:vlabash@Comcast.net)

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There is nothing useful that can happen in your PC without RAM. That's why it's essential to have high quality, reliable memory chips installed on your equipment. Defective RAM shows up as application errors, messages that your operating system is not quite right, and stop errors which bring your system down hard and unexpectedly.

Testing you machine's RAM with Vista's Windows Memory Diagnostic will either find your problem or assure you that your RAM is in tip-top condition.

With your system up and running, close all applications before launching the diagnostic tool to prevent data loss. Click on the Start orb, select Control Panel, and click the System and Maintenance icon. Select Administrative Tools, and from the right pane click on the Memory Diagnostics Tool icon. An alternate way of starting the tool is to click on the Start orb, type Memory in the Start Search text box, and then click the Memory Diagnostics Tool icon.

When the dialog box appears left click on the portion that starts with Restart now. The dialog box will close and your computer will restart. Eventually the Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool's dialog box will appear and the test will begin automatically.

Watch the white progress bar as the test advances through its various stages. You will be able to track progress as the tool repeatedly writes information to memory and then reads the data to verify that nothing changes from the write to the read.

The default is a standard memory test, but there are two other types of memory tests available to you depending on how much time you want to devote to testing, and how thorough you wish to be. Pressing the F1 key will bring up the Options screen.

Locate the Test Mix section and choose either the Basic or Extended mix. The Basic mix runs a decent basic test, but is superficial in comparison to the Extended mix. Up to eight hours can be required for the Extended mix, so

don't run it unless you have exhausted all other options.

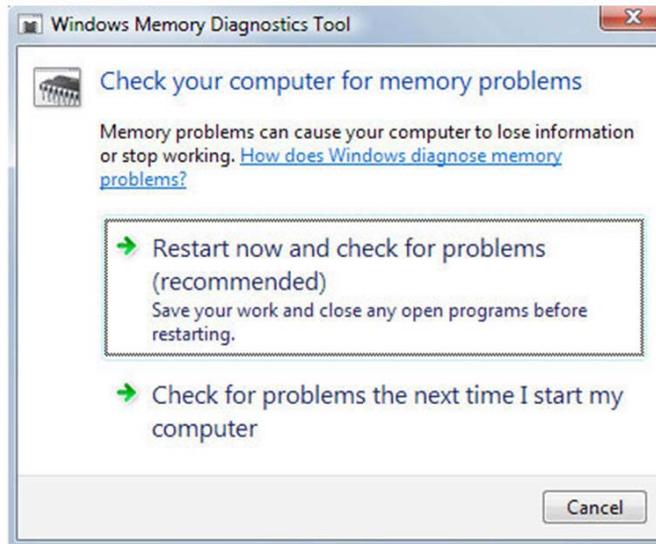
Each test mix was designed with certain default cache settings which are optimized for that particular test mix. You can change the defaults and create a custom mix of your own, but unless you have an advanced level understanding of how memory works and is tested, you are probably better off leaving the default settings alone.

Some analyses use the cache on the microprocessor to see if the microprocessor is retrieving data properly from the memory modules. Other tests disable this cache to force the microprocessor to access all its data directly from the memory modules.

The tests are run twice, but by pressing the Tab key you can access the Pass Count section and specify how many times you want to repeat the tests. Make your changes

and save them by pressing F10.

Messages will appear on the Status area if problems are found. If you wish to do other things while the tests are running, you can because if problems are found the Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool will reroute data around the trouble areas and allow Vista to restart without crashing. When you return, look in the notification area to access the test results. The System Event Log also



stores the test results. Look under MemoryDiagnosticResults.

What if Vista won't boot? Start the system and continually press the F8 key until the Windows Boot Manager appears. The Windows Memory Diagnostic option is at the bottom of the screen and you can select it with the arrow keys.

If it's impossible to get to the Boot Manager, run the tool from the Vista installation disk. Follow instructions until the Install Now prompt appears. Look for and select the Repair Your Computer option. You will find the Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool on the System Recovery Options menu.

The Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool is an excellent utility, but it sometimes delivers a false positive. In addition, many knowledgeable people believe that hardware based testers are superior. Regardless, the utility is an excellent diagnostic instrument provided it is used with those limitations in mind. ■

# File Management – Part One

By Ron Hirsch, Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida, [www.brccs.org](http://www.brccs.org),  
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What exactly do I mean when I say file management? And, I can hear you saying “Who needs to fool around with that stuff. I have too many real things to concern myself with. My computer takes care of all those things anyway, doesn't it?” Well, the answer is yes and no. If you went into a restaurant to dine, would you rather select your own choices from the menu, or just have the waiter bring you what he feels like bringing? Very few of you will answer with the latter. But, most people don't bother to establish/customize their file preferences on the computer. It's easier to just take what the computer has been set to do. And, they don't have to learn anything (they think) if they just accept all the defaults.

Please note that I'm making the assumption that you know how to use a mouse, and right or left click on things. And, when I say “scroll down” or drag, you know what to do. If you haven't reached this point yet, I think it's time to take a very basic beginner's course before proceeding.

The simplest way to understand the way your computer stores things is to consider the following. Suppose you saw a line of text as follows - **USA\Florida\Boca Raton\123 Broadway\2nd floor\room 24\gray file cabinet\top drawer\3rd folder\2nd document.**

I'm sure that everyone would understand exactly where to look for the document in question. **The line above is actually a descriptive path to get you there.** Well, computer hard drives store things in a very similar way. A path to get to a document in your computer might be - **c:\My Documents\Letters\Personal\Aunt Emma's Birthday.doc**

This path states that the filename is “Aunt Emma's Birthday.doc”, and it is in a folder named “Personal”. That folder is a subfolder of “Letters”, which is a subfolder of “My Documents”, which is a folder on the hard drive C. To define paths in computer language a “\” is used to separate the various elements of the path. Note that this information is not case sensitive. That is, upper or lower case makes no difference. Just having learned this already puts you well on the road to understanding file management.

File management includes things such as establishing certain folders which will be the storage areas for your documents, and other files. You direct where files will be stored in various of your programs by saving your files in folders you establish or define. This makes things easier when you want to do backups also. Many programs allow you to specify what those folders are. So, when you go to save a file, that folder comes up as the default. A common

cry from beginners is “I saved the file, but I don't know where it is.”

Within a folder you can have sub-folders. For example, if you had a folder c:\letters, you could put in subfolders for business, personal, club, etc.. This way, you have an organized filing system. If you have a file drawer that you use for filing things, most people will have separate folders or hangers for different categories. Throwing everything in the same area make it much more difficult to find things, just as putting all your different socks into the same drawer, unpaired, and mixed up, makes life tougher also.

Most people are intimidated by their computers. Remember, it's only a machine, and you should be the boss, not the computer. The more you understand, the more in control you will feel. But, that doesn't just happen. Like all things in this world, you must make it happen.

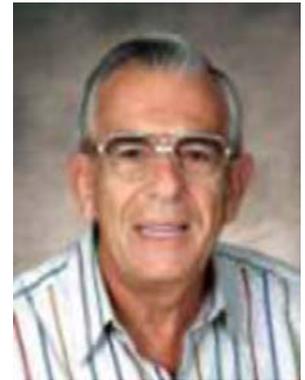
Reading these articles, and doing the practice can help you along the road to that end.

Once you become reasonably proficient in the subjects to be presented, you will be prepared to move files around, copy them to a floppy or ZIP disk to back them up, or delete them. The exercise below should help you in this area.

Please note that the protocols used here are applicable not only to PC's, but also to Mac's. These protocols are very logical once you understand them. The term “Windows” will be used throughout the article. This means that all versions of Windows, 95, 98, ME, or Windows 2000 will follow the same procedures

## EXERCISE NUMBER 1

1. Open up Notepad - if you don't know where it is, click on the START BUTTON on the bottom left of your screen START>PROGRAMS>ACCESSORIES. Double click on Notepad, and the standard Windows text editor will open. Notepad is simply a small program in which you can generate and edit text documents. It offers almost nothing in the way of formatting, but is a bare bones text editor, as opposed to WordPerfect or Word which are capable of elaborate activities.
2. Type “This is a test.” in the Notepad window.
3. Save the document by clicking on FILE>SAVE. A window will open. At the top of the window is an area with the notation “Save in”. It will probably



show your C: drive. If not, use the scroll arrow to select the c: drive. Once you have done this and double-clicked on it, there should be a listing below of all the folders on the C: drive. Scroll to the one named "My Documents", and double click on it. (My Documents folder is a standard folder that Windows installs.) The focus is now on that folder. Next, go down to the bottom of that window and in the field at the bottom, select "all files(\*.\*)". Just to see what else is in that folder. There is a field with "File name" alongside of it. In that field, type testfile.txt. Then click on the save button. You have now saved that file in the "My Documents" directory. Now, exit Notepad.

4. Open Windows Explorer. If you don't know how to do this, it's time you learned. Click on START>PROGRAMS>EXPLORER. Or, click on the Windows key and the "e" key on your keyboard at the same time. Navigate around to display the list

of folders on the C: drive. If that's not what showing, find C: on the left and double click on it. This should bring up the list of all the folders on the C: drive. Find the My Documents folder, and double click on it. There should be at least one file there, the one we just saved called "testfile.txt".

5. Before continuing, I suggest that you configure Explorer to show all file extensions. This makes working with Explorer easier. At the top of the Explorer Window, click on VIEW>OPTIONS, and then uncheck the line which reads "Hide file extensions for the types that are registered."

*This is the end of part 1 of Learning Basic Windows skills. Next month, the second part of this will cover moving and copying files, along with setting up new folders. If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site [www.brcs.org](http://www.brcs.org). This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a looseleaf notebook for future reference.* ■



## Turn Off CD AutoPlay

Like an overeager puppy, WinXP has a tendency to try to anticipate what will please you and then barrel ahead. This can get annoying, especially if you're dealing with a bunch of picture CDs and Windows keeps asking you what program you want to open the picture files with. If you're sick of Windows trying to second-guess what you want to do with your CDs and DVDs, you can disable the CD AutoPlay function. Go to My Computer, right-click the icon for your CD drive, and choose Properties. Click the AutoPlay tab. Using the drop-down menu marked Music CD, you can change what Windows does when it encounters a range of different CD types. To disable AutoPlay for music CDs, click the Select An Action To Perform button and then click the big, red Take No Action icon. To disable AutoPlay for other types of CDs, pop down the Music CD menu, change the type of CD on the menu, and click the Take No Action icon again. Finally, click OK. AutoPlay is now dead.

## Optical Drives

When you can access some discs but not others, the problem usually lies with the discs themselves, but when you can't access any discs, hardware is almost always the culprit. First, shut down and unplug your PC, open the PC case, and ground yourself by wearing an antistatic wristband or by touching a metal part of the case (make sure you don't touch anything outside of the case, or you'll need to reground yourself). Check that the IDE cable running between the rewriteable drive and the motherboard is firmly connected on both ends; if you're not sure, remove

each end and reinsert them. If you have two optical drives connected to a single IDE port, make sure all cable ends are firmly connected. If one of those drives is a DVD drive, check the jumper settings on both drives to make sure that the DVD drive is set as the master and the other drive is set as the slave. Also, check the drive manufacturer's Web site for any available firmware updates. If there's an update available for your drive, download and install it, carefully following the manufacturer's directions.

## Blocking Email

Spam filters that automatically dump unsolicited emails into the trash continue to improve, but they aren't perfect. To truly take control of your inbox, set up filters that help sort the wheat from the chaff. For example, in Yahoo! Mail, click Mail Options, Filters, and the Add button. You can enter any number of rules in this window (typing the sender's email address in the From Header field is a good place to start) and select Trash from the Move The Message To drop-down menu. To completely block specific email addresses, click Mail Options, click Block Addresses, type the email address in the Add Block field, and click the Add Block button. Filters also are available in all of the popular standalone email clients. For example, in Microsoft Outlook 2003, you can right-click a message, click Create Rule, and then choose the conditions you want to apply to all emails of that type before clicking OK.

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# Consumer Electronics Show 2009

By Joe Nuvolini, President, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, CO, <http://ppcompas.apcug.org>, [Nuvo@nuvolini.com](mailto:Nuvo@nuvolini.com)

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The trip to Las Vegas was uneventful. The line to get a cab was about 20–25 minutes long as many were arriving for the show. The Somerset House Motel was surprisingly pleasant. The room had two beds, lots of closet space, a nice bathroom, and a kitchenette with a frig, sink, and stove. The walk from the motel to the press room in South Hall was about 15 minutes.

Wednesday evening, I attended the Sony press conference at the LVCC. The presentation lasted about 30 minutes and was about all the “new toys” they would be showing at CES. One was the Sony Vaio P series. It is an Ultra Mobile PC (UMPC) weighing 1.4 lbs with wireless WAN/LAN, an 8" hi res screen and built in GPS. It runs about \$900. They showed some of their Bravia LDC HDTV's in the 26" to 56" range. Other Sony items were their 10–12 Mp digital cameras and digital picture frames. It was a nice affair with wine, beer, cheese and crackers, and fruit.

The press room featured sweet rolls and Starbucks coffee for breakfast. Chatted with member Frank Fraser on my ASUS using Skype. It worked fine. While checking out Skype, I found my daughter, Marie, in Portland online so I got to see her and my granddaughter, Sara.

The South Hall opened early the first day so I hit the floor at the opening gun. Stopped at the SDCA (that's an FLA for SD Card Association). They reported that the next generation of SD cards (SDXC) will hold up to two terabytes of data and will

have read/write speeds of 104 Mb per second with a road map to 300 Mb per second. Hopefully we will see them later this year. At that rate you could buy a camera for a newborn with one of these cards and take photos his/her whole life and never erase any. Imagine, one's whole life on an SD card. UMPCs were everywhere at this show. I had no idea how popular they had become. I spent some time in the morning of the first day in the South Hall, Central Hall, and North Hall (automotive area). I was working my way over to Piero's for Lunch@Piero's sponsored by Pat Meier Johnson. I missed this event last year and wanted to make sure to get there first thing this year. Pat was as lovely and gracious as ever. They did not serve lunch this year, but I had planned to have lunch at the Press Room.

I attended the Sandisk press briefing. They announced several new items. The first was their line of SSDs (Solid State Drives). They now have them in sizes up to 240 GB. Prices range from \$149 for a 60 GB to \$499 for a 240 GB; still a bit pricey. Next was Slot Music. These are devices that play pre-loaded micro SD cards. We all were given a slot player. It will have to wait until I get home to report on it. They also have a slot radio that plays the micro SDs and is also an FM radio. It will sell for about \$99<sup>99</sup>. Slot radio cards will run about \$39<sup>99</sup> but will be loaded with music. A couple of other items of news: iTunes will change their

pricing structure with songs going from \$0<sup>69</sup> to \$1<sup>39</sup>, depending on the popularity of the song. They will also no longer be protected.

While at CES, I watched the BCS football championship; first half at the Riviera and the second half in my room. Was glad to see Florida win and also to see that Utah was rated #2! At lunch on Thursday, I sat next to a gentleman from Rome whose family had relatives in Civita di Bagnoregio, one of my favorite spots in Italy. I saw him again at the Victorinox press conference. More on that later.



The Central Hall was loaded with big screen LCD panels from an assortment of vendors with spectacular high definition displays. I spent some time wandering around there. As mentioned earlier, Victorinox, makers of Swiss Army knives, held an affair for the press at the end of the third day. Their big news item was the announcement of Presentation Pro. Many of you have seen their knives. Well, Presentation Pro lets you load a presentation on their flash drive which is part of a Swiss Army knife. The presentation data is encrypted when loaded on the drive using an algorithm based on your finger print so it is totally secure. The unit also has an LED pointer for use during the presentation. The button to advance the slides is also on the unit, using bluetooth technology. Victorinox has been in the business of making Swiss Army knives for close to 125 years and has always tried to stay on the cutting edge of technology. It was quite an impressive presentation which, by the way, was made using their new device. The attendees received a device which looks like a pocket knife but, in fact, contains a flash drive, pen and flashlight. The flash drive contained their press kit.

On Saturday I went over to the Sands/Venetian area to see what all was in that venue. It was home for many gadget devices as well as the home for the Asian vendors' displays. One really neat device I saw was by Pogoplug. This unit is about the size of the electrical conversion transformer I take to Italy with me each year. It plugs into an AC wall outlet. There are two jacks on the other side. Into one you plug your external USB hard drive. Into the second, you plug an RG45 CAT5 cable from your router. You log into the vendor's Web site and register the units registration number, your e-mail address, and password. Once registered, you can access the drive from anywhere in the world. It then appears as a local drive on the computer you are using until you log off. Pretty neat. It runs about \$79.

Speaking of remote access, I have been writing daily reports from my home desktop computer using logmein.com, which I wrote about a few months ago. It works great. I even downloaded Windows 7 beta onto my home desktop when it was released that

weekend. It was about 2.5 GB so it took a while. However, the ISO file was sitting there for me when I got home. I plan to borrow an unused computer from the office to run it on. I'm sure I will have to add a bit of RAM.

By Sunday, the last day, many of the attendees had departed so there was not a lot of activity. The effects of the recession were

obvious at this year's show. There were fewer vendors. Attendance was down 23% from last year (110,000 versus 140,000). Hopefully, if the economy improves a bit this year, next year the show will return to its old robust size. That's it for CES 2009. I look forward to CES 2010! ■



## Juice Your Broadband Speed

By Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL,  
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People prefer broadband internet connections because of the obvious speed advantages over dial-up and satellite links. Then why is it that broadband never seems to be fast enough? Are you getting the speed promised by your ISP? Broadband can cost \$100 a month or more, but does the provider really provide the advertised speed? Is the connection reliable or does the modem need a reboot several times a day? Fortunately, there are ways to achieve high, reliable throughput without having to have an engineering degree. Here are some suggestions to get every bit per second possible from your modem without any technical hiccups or interruptions in service.

Start with your computer and TV equipment. A common source of line noise can be traced to improper grounding of anything that plugs into household electrical circuits. This can seriously degrade performance of cable equipment. Every electrical device, especially those in the same room as the cable modem, should be plugged into properly grounded outlets. The best connections are with polarized plugs oriented in the correct direction, and please don't use any three prong to two prong adapters. Get up-to-date gear. Electric outlet testers are cheap. Buy one and use it to test for excess voltage on your cable wiring. Any problem could indicate a serious safety hazard. Engage a licensed electrician to fix it.

Almost anything manufactured today in the consumer electronics world is light years ahead of its predecessors manufactured only two or three years ago. Cable modems are no exception, so if yours is more than three years old get a new one from your provider. Most providers will make a free exchange, but some will require an extension of your contract. You want to do this because the latest modems conform to the DOCSIS 2.0 standard. This offers higher upload and download capabilities and supports other advanced broadband applications, including online gaming and peer-to-peer computing.

Ask your ISP if they automatically update firmware for the modem. If they don't, have them supply the website address of your modem's manufacturer so you can download the most recent firmware. Check the website about twice a year for new updates.

Next, go to a test site such as PC Pitstop, and check your upload and download speeds to see if they match the terms of your service contract. If they don't, give your ISP a call and have them reset the modem's settings. While you're at it, have them check the signal-to-noise ratio. Too much noise can cause interference, and your modem will then have to resend information cutting down on your throughput.

It's possible that your cable wiring may contain too many splices or simply be too long. That can be fixed by a visit from your ISP technician. Have the technician check the line quality leading to your house. If the signal is good and you're having problems, the house wiring may be the culprit. The definitive answer for cable modems is to create a split directly after the junction box and then run a new cable directly to your modem. The other side of the split will take care of your television sets which aren't nearly as sensitive to line noise.

After you've done everything from a hardware and firmware standpoint, and your cable connection is as clean as possible, you're ready to fine tune the system for best performance. Vista users don't have to do much of anything to optimize the operating system since Vista does TCP stack tuning dynamically. Any internet performance adjustments can be made through the browser. Firefox users may want to try Firetune or Fasterfox. They are both free utilities and allow adjustment to cache memory, capacity and other settings such as pipelining.

If you do a lot of downloading, you can save time by installing a download manager like Flashget. This widely used utility claims the highest number of users on the internet. It uses MHT (Multi-server Hyper-threading Transportation) technique. It's very easy to use and comes with exceptional document management features. Best of all, it's free.

After all this work, it would be a tragedy if you didn't keep in mind that sometimes the simplest solutions are the best ones. Most cable modems and routers have reset features. Many a mysterious internet ailment has been corrected simply by resetting the equipment. Turn off the computer and the modem. Un-plug the modem for a few minutes and then power everything back on. You may be pleasantly surprised. ■

# Sandbox Computing

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I spend a lot of my time surfing the web looking for research material; computer tech sources, genealogy data, vocal music and other information. This means that I am downloading many web pages, clicking on many links and generally opening up my computer to all types of malware. I always have to be aware that there are many traps on web pages that are just waiting for the unwary surfer. It used to be that having an up-to-date virus checker, a working firewall and parasite scanners, you could adequately protect your computer. That changed to some degree when the "drive by" downloads appeared. Now with the constant appearance of "holes" in the Windows operating system (XP & Vista) and the various web browsers, it is less obvious that you can protect your computer from unwanted visitors. Microsoft recently (October 22, 2008) released an out-of-cycle patch (patch 958644) for Windows for what has been described as a very serious opening that could be exploited regardless of the browser you are using. There have also been recent articles on "clickjacking". In this situation "buttons" or links are floated behind the link you think you are clicking. The only option to prevent this is to disable JavaScript. That creates more problems as JavaScript is a very important part of the whole web experience and is used on almost every page. So when you do know that you can run a script and when you can't? Well, the "Sandbox" may be a way to surf safely and avoid the installation of malware on your computer without having to disable JavaScript.

My Sandbox experience is based on using the software application "Sandboxie" ([www.sandboxie.com](http://www.sandboxie.com)) with Windows XP and Firefox 3.0. As with everything related to computing, your results might be different. Sandboxie is a very small program, approximately 450 KB. So it is quick to download and doesn't require a lot of memory to run.

Next, let's take a look at what is meant when I talk about a computer sandbox. The sandbox is a complete "virtual computer" running in your computer's memory. This virtual computer is isolated from the real operating system files and creates any files it needs for use within the sandbox. When the sandbox closes, everything in it disappears unless you chose to keep it. It's like having a bank vault within a building where everything can be locked within the vault and nothing is removed without special permission. The neat thing is that nothing that happens within the sandbox can have any effect on your computer. This means that Trojans, rootkits and other malware have no chance to affect the operation of your computer outside of the sandbox. If a problem occurs

when you are running in the sandbox, all you need to do is shut it down, you are returned to your normal computer operations and the malware is erased.

When Sandboxie is started it creates a sandboxed folder which contains a drive folder, user folder, and Registry "hives". The "hive" is Microsoft's term for collections of related Registry keys stored together. The parts of the Registry needed for sandboxed operations are stored in a hive which is then integrated into the Registry. There are also instances of Windows services stored within the sandboxed folder that can be accessed by applications running within the sandbox. These are referred to as "process objects" and are needed for normal operations. When the sandbox is running there may be instances of these objects running both sandboxed and non-sandboxed. Also, you can run an application within the sandbox at the same you are running it outside the sandbox. The complete operating system is not loaded into the sandbox. This reduces the memory required for the sandbox operations.

Applications running in the sandbox can not hijack non-sandboxed programs. Therefore they can not operate outside the sandbox. New files or other created objects have a path assigned by Sandboxie which directs them into the sandboxed folders. Sandboxie prevents any programs running inside the sandbox from loading drivers directly. It also prevents programs from asking a central system component, known as the Service Control Manager, to load drivers on their behalf. In this way, drivers, and more importantly, rootkits, cannot be installed by a sandboxed program. This is one of the features that prevents rootkits from being installed outside the sandbox.

In actual operation, using Sandboxie is very simple. To make it even simpler, there is a short tutorial available on the Sandboxie web site. This can be accessed from within the program the first time you run it or directly from the Sandboxie home page by clicking on the "FAQ & Help" link.

After installation it can be set to load whenever the computer is started. This puts an icon in the system tray. Clicking on this icon brings up the Sandboxie Control Center. This window lists all sandboxed applications and object. When I started it, the window indicated nothing was sandboxed. So, using the menu I selected run an application and then selected Firefox. This changed the list in the window to show Firefox as well as the two RegHive files. With Firefox up, I did my usual web surfing. Along the way I received a message from Sandboxie that a new version was available that I could download. At this point, I really couldn't tell that anything was different from my previous surfing experience with Firefox. So I went to the Sandboxie page and downloaded the new

version. After finishing I closed the Sandboxie Control Center. Then I went looking for the download so I could install it. Well, it didn't exist anywhere on the hard drive! I had closed Sandboxie without marking the update to be saved! As a result the download was deleted, along with all the other sandboxed files when I closed the Control Center. So I opened the Control Center, restarted Firefox and downloaded the update. This time I selected it to be saved before I closed the Control Center. Then I was able to install the update.

I should also point out that now I have an icon on the desktop which automatically runs Firefox sandboxed. Sandboxie can be set up to isolate your browser automatically whenever you open it. To do so, add the name of your browser's executable file, such as firefox.exe or iexplore.exe, to the list of programs Sandboxie always opens in a sandbox. If you don't do this, Sandboxie will not set your browser to open automatically in the sandbox.

As you can tell from these comments, Sandboxie does not require a reboot to start the sandbox process. Sandboxie

does sandbox access to files, but not to the complete hard drive. It does sandbox access to registry keys. It also sandboxes access to many other classes of system components, in order to trick the sandboxed program into believing that it isn't being tricked. So you can open and close Sandboxie repeatedly while you are using your computer without having to do any rebooting.

If this discussion has interested you and you would like to take Sandboxie for a test run, the free version can be downloaded from: [www.sandboxie.com](http://www.sandboxie.com). This application is free for personal use. However, there is a Pro version available for \$30<sup>00</sup>. If you like the program and can afford it, buy the Pro version. This software is the work of one person, Ronen Tzur, and this payment is his means of support to continue working and improving this software. After some experience in running Sandboxie, I can highly recommend it as an excellent method of protecting your computer from malware. ■

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



# Magic Word Brings Email to the Offline World

A review by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc., [Tiplet@gabegold.com](mailto:Tiplet@gabegold.com)

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If you've ever wondered how to bring email to the techno-phobe in your life, the answer isn't Abracadabra, it's Presto.

If you're reading this online, you own or have access to a computer. But you likely have friends or relatives — perhaps elderly, budget-restricted, technophobic — who don't. So they're not in close touch and can't share online family or community activities.

Presto <<http://www.presto.com>> is a combination color inkjet printer and paid Web-based service which allows people without computers to receive email, including attachments.

Setting it up is simple: after purchasing the device, someone with just a bit of tech savvy creates the account, picks an email address (such as [gabeg99@presto.com](mailto:gabeg99@presto.com)), and lists people allowed to send email to the address. At specified times of day, the printer dials a toll-free telephone number, downloads accumulated email, and prints it.

With only two controls — Volume and Stop — it's easy to operate. It plugs directly into a telephone jack and doesn't need a separate phone line or jack or even a splitter, since an existing telephone or accessory (answering machine or Caller ID device) can plug into it, daisy-chain style.

Presto is ideal for letting seniors receive email from children, grandchildren, friends, former colleagues, military buddies, etc. And it's useful when businesses request customer email addresses to conduct or simplify transactions. It handles pictures and many

attachment formats nicely, printing them as if it was a FAX machine. So it allows sharing any online or computer content as PDF files such as maps and directions, travel itineraries, Web pages, spreadsheets with financial or family contact information.



Simple steps authorize new people to send email, and when ink runs low, the printer is smart enough to either alert the person who set up the account or automatically order new cartridges.

After failing for a dozen years to excite my in-laws about email — they steadfastly resisted being online — my retired Navy father-in-law fell in love with a Presto I loaned him, discovering that it let him hear from his old Navy buddies around the world. And receiving color pictures of the grandchildren sealed the deal.

The printer costs \$150 or less (always comparison shop online!) and the service costs \$12<sup>50</sup>/month with yearly subscription. The only thing missing is the printer downloading paper and ink through the phone line — but that would need real magic! ■

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# Circuit Writer Version 6.6

By Jim Scheef, Director, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT,  
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## Is the cloud really DRM in disguise?

You remember Richard Stallman, right? He's the founder of the Free Software Foundation ([fsf.org](http://fsf.org)), creator of the GNU operating system ([gnu.org](http://gnu.org)), and has been called "the last true hacker" for at least 20 years (see separate sidebar in this issue).

His take on cloud computing could not differ more from John Patrick. Stallman would tell you that you give up your freedom when you give your data to a remote site rather than keeping it on your machine with free software. There are many, many blogs discussing the comments Stallman made in an interview and I referenced one of them last month – InformationWeek, November 19, 2008 ([tinyurl.com/6zztcc](http://tinyurl.com/6zztcc) to save you from digging).

Another name for cloud computing is "software as a service". SaaS has been a hot ticket for the last few years for all sorts of enterprise level applications. Some say that cloud computing is just a new name for buying your software and having it hosted remotely. One of my sons just completed a successful SAP implementation for his company. With people using the system at distribution depots all over the country, it made more sense to have the system hosted than to invest in all the data center infrastructure needed to provide enough bandwidth for adequate response times – not to mention the people needed to manage that equipment. In this case, cloud computing is just business reality. By the way, their hosting service is in New Jersey.

When we look at the cloud services that we mere mortals might want to use like Zoho Applications ([zoho.com](http://zoho.com)) or Google Apps, some are free as in free beer but none are free as in free speech. When you sign up for such a service, no matter what the service agreement might say about your privacy, your data is at the mercy of that site and its security. And, unlike open source software, you cannot modify the software used by the service to make it suit your needs. The service agreement may even prohibit you from reverse engineering the software and the DMCA could make doing so a crime. Do you begin to see his point? On one hand we have John

Patrick telling us to embrace the cloud to free ourselves from worries about backup and data loss with easy access from wherever we might be; and on the other hand we have Richard Stallman. As always, the truth is likely to be found somewhere in the middle. We will explore this more next time.

In the meantime, where did cloud computing begin? How is cloud computing different from timesharing on a minicomputer or mainframe? Was CompuServe and similar services the original consumer cloud? You can comment on my blog at [circuitwriter.spaces.live.com](http://circuitwriter.spaces.live.com).

## The CAN-SPAM Act as a warning

One of my favorite columnists is Scott Bradner who writes in Network World. His column in the January 12 issue ([tinyurl.com/aytbvu](http://tinyurl.com/aytbvu)) is especially noteworthy. As news coverage of the inauguration reaches a crescendo, all the business press can talk about is all the new regulation

expected from the new Congress. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that regulation is needed in several areas. However, as Scott points out, the legislation intended to regulate spam isn't. He points out that the act was written by the spam industry and thus legitimized spam as a business model. Lesson number one, regulatory legislation must be written by and enforced by someone who wants it to be effective. In the case of the Internet, no regulation is often the better policy as the various attempts at suppressing porn have shown. However our recent experience with the financial industry as proven that no regulation is just not a viable option.

## Is your DSL router vulnerable?

Read this article (<http://tinyurl.com/8faqxt>) on Dark Reading to see if your DSL router might be vulnerable to attack. The affected routers are commonly used on AT&T DSL service. A quick web search shows a simple DSL gateway device, not the common "2-Wire" device. Apparently the Motorola/Netopia 2210 device does not require authentication to change configuration. Imagine that.



### Here is a quote from the interview:

"One reason you should not use Web applications to do your computing is that you lose control," he said. "It's just as bad as using a proprietary program. Do your own computing on your own computer with your copy of a freedom-respecting program? If you use a proprietary program or somebody else's Web server, you're defenseless (sic). You're putty in the hands of whoever developed that software."

## The Julie Amero ordeal is finally over.

Back in November, in a nearly total absence of press coverage, Julie Amero pled guilty to a misdemeanor, paid a \$100 fine and lost her teaching credentials. In my opinion, she should have been totally exonerated and reimbursed by the state. You can read a good synopsis of the case at reasononline ([tinyurl.com/6gq3yr](http://tinyurl.com/6gq3yr)) and [julieamer.blogspot.com](http://julieamer.blogspot.com).

## Events to remember?

An upcoming "I remember" moment may be the transition to digital television broadcasting. Any bets?



There is no doubt that the current financial crisis and the ensuing recession will be remembered for some time to come. So what are people doing about it? eWeek reports ([tinyurl.com/7g8b6w](http://tinyurl.com/7g8b6w)) that IBM CEO Sam Palmisano told the Obama transition team that government investment could lead to the creation of more than 900,000 jobs in areas such as broadband access, health care IT and upgrading the electrical grid. Wouldn't that be rewarding? In addition, Palmisano suggested that the government convert existing data centers to green ones. Gosh, I wonder where he got that idea. ■

# Magic Word Brings Email to the Offline World

A review by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc., [Tiplet@gabegold.com](mailto:Tiplet@gabegold.com)

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If you've ever wondered how to bring email to the techno-phobe in your life, the answer isn't Abracadabra, it's Presto.

If you're reading this online, you own or have access to a computer. But you likely have friends or relatives — perhaps elderly, budget-restricted, technophobic — who don't. So they're not in close touch and can't share online family or community activities.

Presto <<http://www.presto.com>> is a combination color inkjet printer and paid Web-based service which allows people without computers to receive email, including attachments.

Setting it up is simple: after purchasing the device, someone with just a bit of tech savvy creates the account, picks an email address (such as [gabeg99@presto.com](mailto:gabeg99@presto.com)), and lists people allowed to send email to the address. At specified times of day, the printer dials a toll-free telephone number, downloads accumulated email, and prints it.

With only two controls — Volume and Stop — it's easy to operate. It plugs directly into a telephone jack and doesn't need a separate phone line or jack or even a splitter, since an existing telephone or accessory (answering machine or Caller ID device) can plug into it, daisy-chain style.

Presto is ideal for letting seniors receive email from children, grandchildren, friends, former colleagues, military buddies, etc. And it's useful

when businesses request customer email addresses to conduct or simplify transactions. It handles pictures and many attachment formats nicely, printing them as if it was a FAX machine. So it allows sharing any online or computer content as PDF files such as maps and directions, travel itineraries, Web pages, spreadsheets with financial or family contact information.

Simple steps authorize new people to send email, and when ink runs low, the printer is smart enough to either alert the person who set up the account or automatically order new cartridges.

After failing for a dozen years to excite my in-laws about email — they steadfastly resisted being online — my retired Navy father-in-law fell in love with a Presto I loaned him, discovering that it let him hear from his old Navy buddies around the world. And receiving color pictures of the grandchildren sealed the deal.

The printer costs \$150 or less (always comparison shop online!) and the service costs \$12<sup>.50</sup>/month with yearly subscription. The only thing missing is the printer downloading paper and ink through the phone line — but that would need real magic! ■

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