

# COMPUTER NEWS



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## Inside This Issue

- 2 NVPCUG Special Interest Groups
- 2 NVPCUG Calendar
- 2 President's Message
- 3 Officers List
- 4 How To Switch Internet Browsers
- 5 BroadSides
- 6 There Is More to Music than the iPod®
- 8 Moving on to Vista – Part 13
- 9 Tech News That Affects Everybody
- 10 SIGNIFICANT BITS, February 2009
- 12 Photoshop CS4 Has Arrived
- 14 Moving to a New Mac
- 16 Membership Application Renewal

*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 Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00-9:00 P.M.,

**At the Napa Senior Activity Center,  
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California**



In addition to April 15th being the deadline for filing your income taxes (which I am sure you have done already), it is the night of the General Meeting of the NVPCUG. So indulge yourself and join us.

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 emailing them to Random Access moderator **Jerry Brown** at [Questions@nvpcug.org](mailto:Questions@nvpcug.org).

During the April Computer Tutor session and the main presentation session our own Jeff Solomon will continue his demonstration of the use of the library on-line. 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).



May we will have a real treat. Members are being asked to send their favorite web sites to **Jeff Solomon** at [tutor@nvpcug.org](mailto:tutor@nvpcug.org). An explanation of why your site is a favorite would be extremely helpful. You might even be lucky enough to sit with Jeff and be a temporary copresenter.

*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)

## Change Your Monitor's Refresh Rate In Vista

The refresh rate is the number of times per second the monitor updates itself, and high refresh rates lead to smoother video (and less flickering if you have a CRT [cathode-ray tube] display). Look in your monitor's manual to find the maximum refresh rate it supports at the resolution you use, right-click an empty portion of the Desktop, and click Personalize. Next, select Display Settings, click the Advanced Settings button, and click the Monitor tab. Use the Screen Refresh Rate drop-down menu to select the appropriate refresh rate and click Apply. Keep in mind that you never want to set a refresh rate that is higher than the one the monitor officially supports at a given resolution.

## Clean It Up

When editing video you shot with your camcorder, cut out or edit any segments that are too bright or too dark or out-of-focus. The same thing goes for any glitches or "snow" in the recording. If there's a patch of bad video during a scene you want to keep, such as newlyweds cutting their cake, try covering it with some "B-roll" footage. B-roll means other scenes from the video, such as a shot of the bride's parents beaming as they watch the couple's first dance. Edit a few seconds of B-roll video (not including the B-roll's audio) over the bad spot of the original cake-cutting scene but leave the original scene's audio undisturbed. When you play back the scene, you'll hear the cake-cutting laughter and cheers continue as the camera momentarily "cuts away" to the reactions of the proud parents. No one will ever know there was a glitch.

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## 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

Apr 15	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + D
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
Jun 3	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting + B
Jun 8	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Jun 10	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting + B
Jun 11	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Jun 17	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>
<b>Newsletter Circulator</b>	Jim Hearn	224-2540	<a href="mailto:Circulation@nvpcug.org">Circulation@nvpcug.org</a>
<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 Switch Internet Browsers

Written by Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, [www.compukiss.com](http://www.compukiss.com), [sandy@compukiss.com](mailto:sandy@compukiss.com)

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Microsoft's Internet Explorer is a software program that comes on all computers that use the Windows Operating System. Internet Explorer is called an Internet browser since it is the software that allows you to view Web pages and surf the Internet. In fact, at least 80% of you reading this Web page right now are using Internet Explorer. You don't, however, have to use Internet Explorer. There are several other Internet browsers available.

Due to recent critical security glitches in Internet Explorer, other browsers are looking more attractive. Also, while Internet Explorer has stagnated over the past several years, several other Internet browsers have overtaken it with useful new features and advanced functionality. Features like a tabbed interface that lets you quickly move from page to page and voice-activated menu systems have put alternative browsers like Firefox and Opera ahead of Internet Explorer.

Using an alternative browser is easy. You simply download the browser from the Web site of the manufacturer and install it on your computer. Firefox, Opera, and Chrome are all alternative browsers that are free downloads. Just follow the Web site instructions to download and install the new browser. During installation the program will see Internet Explorer and will ask you if you want to transfer your Favorites and other information from Internet Explorer to the new program. Most alternative browsers will help you make the switch from Internet Explorer to their browser program. When you install Opera, Netscape, or Firefox you will be given the option importing your Internet information. Opera can import bookmarks and favorites. Firefox allows you to import options, bookmarks, history, passwords, cookies, and other data from Internet Explorer. This works for many different browsers. For example, if you switch from Internet Explorer to Netscape and decide that you would then like to switch to Opera, you can move your information from Internet Explorer to Netscape and then to Opera by simply following the instructions given during installation.

To use a different Internet browser, you don't have to uninstall Internet Explorer. In fact, it is best to leave Internet Explorer on your hard drive. Not only is Internet Explorer difficult to uninstall: you may need to use it in the future. Internet Explorer is the only browser that you can use to access the Windows Update Web site. Also, since it is the most popular Web browser, many Web sites are

optimized for Internet Explorer. If you use an alternative Web browser, in your surfing you may find an occasional Web site that does not work properly in the browser that you have chosen. If that is the case, you can simply switch to Internet Explorer to access that Web site and switch back to your alternative browser for your main surfing. You see, there is no problem with using several different browsers. In fact, you can actually use two or three different browsers at the same time with no interference.

When you start using your new browser you will be asked if you want to set the new software as your default Web browser. Whatever browser is set as your default browser will be the browser that will appear when you click on a link in an e-mail or other document. If you want to use your new browser all the time, you will want to set it as the default. If you say no to setting the new program as your default, the program will continue to ask you this question every time you start it. Look for a notice with a check box in front of it to tell the program that you don't want to see that question again. For instance in Opera you will click to put a checkmark into the box in front of "Do not show this dialog again." In Firefox click to remove the checkmark in the box that says "Always perform this check when starting Firefox." Then the program will not ask that question again.

If you decide that you don't want to continue to use the new browser, you can switch back to Internet Explorer at any time. Any new favorites or cookies that you have added to the new browser can be transferred back to Internet Explorer by using the export and import settings in the two browsers. You simply export the information from the program you are using and import it into the program you want to use. Click on File, and choose Import/Export to use these functions. Most browsers have Wizards that will help you through the entire process. Some programs like Firefox make it easy to import information, but make it more difficult to export information. If a Wizard is not available you can use the programs Help menu for detailed instructions.

If you are used to using Internet Explorer, downloading and using a different Web browser is a big step. Although most alternative browsers are similar to Internet Explorer, you will need to invest some time into learning the new interface. Some features may not be obvious. For instance the tabbed browsing in Firefox is not instantly noticeable. So be sure to read the help files and information on the product's Web site to get the full gist of what features are available. ■



# Broadsides

By Ron Broadhurst, Space Coast PC Users Group, FL, [www.scpcug.com](http://www.scpcug.com),  
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Dear friends,

These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites, and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various "tips", "tricks", & "hints" in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

*Ron Broadhurst*

## How To Have Windows Remind You About Pending Updates

- Click Remind Me Later in the Automatic Updates dialog box before you download or install the update.
- In the Reminder dialog box, you can specify the amount of time Windows should wait before reminding you.
- If the reminder is for downloading, Windows reminds you only when you are connected to the Internet.

If the reminder is for installing, Windows reminds you according to the schedule that you specify.

## And How To Download Available Updates

If you configured automatic updating to notify you before downloading any updates, an icon is displayed in the notification area each time new updates are found.

- Double-click the icon in the notification area.
- Do either of the following steps:

If you want Windows to download an update, make sure that the check box beside it is selected.

-or-

If you do not want Windows to download an update, click to clear the check box beside it. Your selected updates are downloaded in the background; this behavior allows you to continue working uninterrupted. Downloading does not interfere with or slow down other network activity, such as Internet browsing.

When downloading is finished, the icon is displayed in the notification area to notify you that updates are ready to be installed.

## Customize The Start Menu

The Start menu gets more real estate in XP than in previous versions, and it's more customizable. To make the Start menu display only the applications you want, rather than the default determined by Microsoft:

- Right-click in an empty section of the Start menu's left column.
- Select Properties > Start Menu > Customize. Here you'll find a list of your most frequently used programs. (XP keeps track of what you use and what you don't, then updates this list dynamically).

Don't want your boss to know that Pinball, Solitaire and Quake all make your list?

Go to the General tab, click Clear List, and set the counter to zero.

## How To Perform Disk Error Checking In Windows XP

This describes how to check the integrity of the hard disk drive in Windows XP. After you install Windows XP, the Scandisk command is not available.

- Double-click My Computer and then right-click the hard disk drive that you want to check.
- Click Properties and then click Tools.
- Under Error-checking click Check Now.
- Click Start.

## Add Familiar Icons Back To Your Desktop

It's the case of the missing icons. Many of you may be wondering where all the icons from your desktop are in Windows XP? You can place at least My Computer, My Network Places and My Documents on the desktop.

- Right-click on the desktop and then click Properties.
- Click the Desktop tab and then click on Customize Desktop.

Put a check mark in the box next to My Document, My Computer, My Network Places or Internet Explorer, to add those familiar icons to your desktop.

## How To Find Your IP Address in Windows XP

- Start and click Run
- Type "cmd" (without quotes) and hit enter
- Once the box opens type "ipconfig /all" (without quotes) and hit enter. ■

# There Is More to Music than the iPod®

By Mike Morris, Editor, Front Range PC Users Group, CO, <http://www.frpcug.org>,  
[twriterext@gmail.com](mailto:twriterext@gmail.com)

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There is more to music — and more to life — than the iPod. I think I can prove that statement with the words that follow. Please don't misunderstand me. I admire the iPod as a successful product — a success technically and financially — even though I don't have one. However ....

I need to start my "proof" by saying that in previous articles that I have written for this newsletter, I made a claim to being an Old Analog Guy (as a reminder, the acronym = OAG and is pronounced "ogre"). It is with that persona that I bring this subject to your attention.

I just completed a catalog of nearly 300 old LP's that belonged to a family member who died last year. And when I say old, I mean some of those LP's have release dates more than 50 years old. Some of the recordings are much older than that. There are many memorable, and even historic, performances recorded on those albums.

A small part of that music has been re-released on CDs. But there is much of that music—almost all Jazz—that you will not currently find in any digital format. So put down your iPod (or one of its imitators) and please listen to what I have to say.

I decided to create a database for this catalog using Microsoft Access®. One significant issue, as you might expect, is just how much information to include in the database. This database is for family use—not for radio station or other broadcast use. I did, however, want to make a record (no pun intended) of whatever information was necessary to properly document the collection. The most significant decision was related to the track (song) names, sequence and times on each side of each LP. Clearly, if I needed to document that information, both the data entry task and complexity of the database were going to be much higher. If the average number of tracks per side is 4 (it is probably higher), and I wanted to include all that information, then I was faced with a data entry task of  $4 \times 2 \times 300 = 2400$  entries (plus all the other information I wanted to include).

"No big deal" you say—there are many much much larger databases in the world.



You are correct. But remember, I am an OAG (please correctly pronounce that acronym). Therefore I was looking for an "easy" way to complete this task. Credit is due to Ken Campbell of radio station KRFC (more on that in a moment), a local public radio station, for a solution. Ken told me about an online music database called allmusic.com (<http://www.allmusic.com>) (yes, it is spelled with all lower

case letters). It turns out there are many online music databases (a Google® search turned up more than 68,000, using the phrase "online music database"). The allmusic.com database was the best for my catalog project for the following reasons:

1. A successful search for an artist will provide an Overview, a Biography, a Discography (a list of all albums by the artist known to the database, with title, date and label), Songs, Credits, and Charts and Awards.
2. From the discography, one can click on an album and get information (usually) on the album tracks (including times), composer(s), recording date(s), release date, label, format (LP or CD), the label's catalog number, and, for some albums, a review of the album.
3. The search options include artist/group, album, song, classical work.
4. There is substantially more information about the Jazz genre that just a list of names and dates. For example, on the Jazz "home page," there are a number of "Related Essays" on Jazz, including "A Brief History of Jazz. (<http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=19:T691>)"

For a project such as the cataloging of an existing music collection, with LP's that are up to 50 years old, this database is the best choice by far of all of the databases examined or considered. It is the equivalent of an encyclopedia, and the functionality makes searching easy, with related data presented on a single page. The ability to link from a list of albums (discography) to a single album (or CD reissue) provides very efficient searching for a project of this type. That is not to say that it is error free. There are albums not included in the database—the web site makes no claim that it contains every album ever released. There are also tracks missing from some albums (or the track order in the database doesn't match the order on the disk). An album may be in the database, but not in the artist's discography. And, there are numerous problems with release and recording dates. Still, the "pros" far outweigh the "cons."

There is a feature offered by this web site that is unique. Each page (any of the choices listed in item 1 above) has a "Corrections to this entry?" option, allowing the user to submit corrections. Those corrections are then researched for confirmation (if the web site statement is correct) before they are added to the database. That feature was used extensively during the research for this music cataloging project—although not every error or missing item was submitted.

For my project, the search by artist was the most effective. If an album was not listed in the artist's discography, a

search by album was the alternate choice. Although the database has many very early jazz albums, there were a few albums in the collection, both old and new—or at least “newer”—by well-known artists that were missing from the allmusic database. So, although not perfect, the allmusic database is an excellent research tool, and you don’t need the iTunes media player (or any other media player) to use it.

The database is not limited to research, however. You can listen to short sound bytes from some tracks, and there are links that allow you to buy selected tracks or albums (correction – CDs).

OK, so your iPod and the iTunes media player are great for listening to (and buying) current and even “relatively” old music. But the iTunes media player is not going to help you—to same extent as the allmusic database will — find classic old Jazz performances (and perhaps classic performances from other genres). And, you must have the iTunes media player installed on your computer before you can do any searching with it.

You may be wondering why I am talking about online databases and why I consider a good online database important to my “proof. “Yes, there is a relationship. But before I offer the conclusion, I have several comments on other databases.

Another online database used rarely was Gracenote®, a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony Corporation of America. Gracenote is used “...for digital media recognition of CDs, digital music files, and streaming audio. With the most comprehensive database of music information in the world, the Gracenote Media Database contains information for more than 80 million tracks and 6 million CDs.... “This database is normally linked to media players, such as Winamp®, to automatically identify music on a CD or from a download. It provides album title (and, in some cases, an image of the album cover), and track names—if you connect through a media player (or other audio/video equipment with the enabling software installed that is connected to the internet).



If you connect to Gracenote directly from a browser (<http://www.gracenote.com/>), the search options are

artists, albums, tracks. A successful search on an artist returns a list of albums (a lot less than the allmusic database) released by that artist that are known to the database. It is important to note that the quantity information in the Gracenote advertisement makes an explicit reference to CDs. The album information is similar to that in the allmusic database, except that there are no track times. There are, however, links to the lyrics of some tracks—for those songs that have them. Also the “Buy” buttons are

much more prevalent, and much more obvious in the Gracenote database, compared to the allmusic database.



Another online database examined briefly was Rhapsody®, <http://www.rhapsody.com/home.html>, a service

provided by RealNetworks.com, better known for its Real® media player. The company claims to provide “Technology and services that help people enjoy digital entertainment whenever and wherever they want. “

Connect to the Rhapsody website and the first thing you will notice are the annoying animated ads. Get beyond that and the search options are artist, keyword, track, album, composer, video, lyrics, and playlist. If a search for an album is successful, you can, for most albums, get track information by clicking on the album image — but that track information (no times) is very probably going to be from a more current CD release, not from the original LP, depending on how old that original LP is and how popular the album was. However, there is nowhere near the same level of information available from this database, compared to the allmusic database. The Rhapsody database is organized for listening to (or buying) music that is already known to the user, either by song name or by artist (in my opinion). It is not an effective research tool for finding information on old LP’s.

It is not necessary to have the Real player installed in order to search the Rhapsody database.

Now listen up everyone! Here is my reason for talking about music databases:

There is some great old music out there! In all genres. Please don’t get so comfortable with your iPod that you ignore that music. Especially when you have a resource such as the allmusic online database to help you identify it, catalog it, find reviews on it and find some history of it.

I suspect that many of you reading this article (I hope there are many readers) have some of that “great old music” sitting on your shelves or in your cabinets. Or perhaps stored away somewhere. If so, “unstore” it. You will, I am certain, enjoy that music, especially with the added information available from the allmusic database.

And that is what I mean when I say “There Is More to Music than the iPod. “

Here is the additional information I promised on radio station KRFC:

Front Range PC Users Group (FRPCUG) has a partnership with KRFC, 88.9 FM in Fort Collins, CO. KRFC provides “Community powered music, news and entertainment. “For more information, connect to <http://krfcfm.org/>. FRPCUG provides computer maintenance help to KRFC, and, in return, KRFC helps expand the knowledge of FRPCUG activities within the local community. An internet audio stream is available from the KRFC web site. ■

# Moving on to Vista – Part 13



By Neil Stahfest, Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA, [www.tapcug.org](http://www.tapcug.org),  
[ncstahfest@msn.com](mailto:ncstahfest@msn.com)

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The chances are the first peripheral device you purchased for your computer was a printer. You may have even received a “free” printer when you purchased your computer. Vista makes it easier than ever to connect a new printer to your computer than ever before. The Plug-and-Play feature really works (unless, like me, you have an old laser printer that Windows Vista does not support. :-).

So you connect your printer, follow the Printer Wizard's directions, it works and you're happy. But wait. Have you examined your printer to discover all of its functions? Did you know that many modern printers, even the inexpensive models, can print on both sides of the paper, print sideways on the paper (called landscape mode), print in gray scale as well as in color and allows you to control print quality (to save ink when you don't need high quality print). Here's how to find out what you can do and manage it.

Create or open a document using your favorite word processing program or WordPad. At the top of your screen, click on “File” and then scroll down to “Printer Settings” and click again. When the “Printer Setup” window opens, click on the “Properties” button. At this point what you see depends largely on your individual printer.

In the case of my HP printer, I see a window with tab labeled “Paper/Quality”, “Finishing”, “Effects”, “Basics”, “Color” and “Services”. Selecting the appropriate tab allows me to select print quality (Normal, Draft, Enhanced, etc.), Portrait or Landscape mode, page order, color, single or two sided paper printing and many other options. In the case of my HP printer, when I select two sided paper printer, the printer prints on one side of the paper and then an on-screen message shows me how to reinsert the printed sheet in the paper tray to print of the other side. These print options are actually determined by the printer, not Windows. Windows just provides the means to control the printers features.

Windows frequently provides more than one way to do the same thing. Desktop icons provide a shortcut to run programs listed in the Start Menu. You can easily create new desktop icons my opening the Programs section of the Start Menu, Selecting a program, right clicking on it and drag it to a blank area on your desktop. When you release the right mouse button a short menu appears with the option to “Create Shortcuts Here”. Select it, and left-click once to create the icon. You can rename this icon to anything you wish.

If you right-click on a desktop icon, one of the menu option is “Properties”. Select Properties and left-click once. Under the “Shortcut” tab notice the entry line

labeled “Shortcut key”. It probably contains the entry “None”. By selecting a suitable key (letter or number), you can create a key combination shortcut to your program. It's a convenient way to access frequently used programs, spreadsheets and documents.

Before we leave this menu, notice the button labeled “Change Icon”. When you left-click on this button you'll see an array of icons that you can use to substitute for your default icon. Pick an icon, click on the “Okay” button and then click on “Okay” again. Your new icon will appear on the desktop. ■

## iTunes' Playlists

Apple's iTunes software contains a neat feature called Smart Playlists. In essence, it turns iTunes into a disc jockey, drawing its material from your downloaded music files. Choose the New Smart Playlist feature from the file menu and select the criteria by which you want iTunes to make its selections. You can have the program search for songs by specific artists, genres, number of times played (you might want it to find some songs you haven't listened to very much, for instance), or even sound quality. You can further set the number of songs, minutes, or megabytes to keep your playlists manageable. Finally, click the Live Updating box to have iTunes continually change the Playlist as you add new songs to your folders.

## Stay Away From The Light

Avoid putting your TV right next to, or directly across from, an exterior window or bright light source. Lots of light makes a room more pleasing, but it can create glare, reduce contrast, and wash out the color on your flat-panel picture. Plasma and LCD technologies frequently fail to display deep blacks to begin with; too much ambient light exacerbates the problem. Choose a TV viewing room with less external light, if possible, and consider curtains or blinds on your windows instead of a valance or scarf, so you can control the amount of light that comes from outside.

## Wireless Speakers

If you're an audiophile, listen to wireless speakers before adding them to your entertainment setup to make sure you're comfortable with the sound quality. Some listeners prefer wired audio because it consistently delivers audio to the speakers. Keep in mind that although you can buy wireless speakers at any point, you can't easily wire your home for whole-house audio after construction completes.

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# Tech News That Affects Everybody

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, [www.compukiss.com](http://www.compukiss.com), [sandy@compukiss.com](mailto:sandy@compukiss.com)

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Some of us scour the technology and business sections of the newspaper and the Web to get the latest news. Some of us head for the lifestyle and community sections, without much of a care about technology. Yet, today's technology news is often news that will affect everyone's life in one way or another.

Let me give you a few examples. The Pope recently announced opening of the Vatican YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/vaticanit](http://www.youtube.com/vaticanit)) which will feature short video clips of Pope Benedict XVI's activities and links to news and information about the Catholic Church. The Pope is posting two or three videos each day. Most are short clips showing the Pope's speeches, activities, and participation in important events. In a recent speech, the Pope praised the Internet as offering rich opportunities for dialogue, friendship and spreading the Christian message.

There is a lot of irreverent stuff on YouTube, but the Pope's participation shows how mainstream this popular video website has become. YouTube, FaceBook, MySpace, and other social networking websites have become more and more popular. If you haven't yet visited any of these, YouTube is a great place to start. ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))

Another recent news announcement was the Palm Pre, which is a smartphone that will be available in a few months through Sprint. You might think that this is just another phone, and you would be right. But the implications for cell phones are quite dramatic. Palm has developed a totally new version of the operating system for this phone. Google now has their own cell phone operating system as do Microsoft, BlackBerry, and Apple. These are some pretty big name and you will notice that the software that runs these phones is called an operating system. That's because these phone are really mini-computers that can do email, surf the web, and perform many other functions. Cell phones are changing dramatically. They are turning into handheld computers that will change the lives of those who use them.

We also should not overlook Apple's recent announcement that they will be dropping the DRM (digital rights management) for all songs in their iTunes store. The DRM crippled the songs so they had limited use. For instance, they could only be played on a certain number of devices or be copied a certain number of times. So music lovers the world over will be rejoicing to see that by April of this year, all of iTunes 10 million songs will be DRM-free. There is one caveat. Those who have previously purchased music and/or videos on iTunes that included Apple's DRM will now have to pay to get

the DRM removed. Apple will be charging 30 cents a song. iTunes has sold six billion songs since going online in 2003. They did not offer any DRM-free music until recently. So most of those six billion songs had DRM. If every purchaser pays Apple 30 cents for taking away the DRM, Apple would make \$180,000,000. A boon to Apple, a pain-in-the-rear for honest music lovers who previously used the iTunes store.

Microsoft was also in the news recently with their announcement that the beta testing version Windows 7, their next operating system could be downloaded and tried for free. Their website was inundated by curious Windows users. So many came, that they had to add more servers and download services. They originally said that they would limit the downloads to 2.5 million, but recently removed that restriction and will continue to offer the beta trial until February. Don't think that you will be getting something for nothing, though. The beta of Windows 7 will stop being functional on August 1, 2009. At that time you will either have to reinstall your previous operating system or pay for Windows 7.

Last but not least in the technology news is the announcement that Western Digital has created a 2 terabyte hard disk drive. Believe it or not, this may have one of the biggest effects on individual users. As we can store more and more digital data at reasonable prices, more and more data will be digitized. We are already living in a digital world, but that world gets more reliant on technology every day. ■

## Fine-tune Color

There's more to brilliant, sharp pictures than screen resolution; color reproduction and calibration make a big difference, too. When you're browsing HDTVs at a retailer, be sure the colors are consistently true to life. Blacks shouldn't appear gray, bright areas shouldn't wash detail away, and high-paced action scenes shouldn't have jagged edges. Calibration is another important factor to keep in mind; this will ensure your HDTV's settings will be far better than the showroom settings many televisions ship with. Most retailers offer professional calibration (such as Best Buy's Magnolia Home Theater Optimization package) that uses special equipment otherwise unavailable to consumers; in most cases, such calibration is your best bet. However, there are calibration DVDs that can walk you through the process yourself.

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# SIGNIFICANT BITS, February 2009

By Sean N. Henderson, VP, Marketing & Public Relations, Danbury Area Computer Society,  
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## On Software Installations

I received as a Christmas gift Ahead's Nero 9 – a CD/DVD burning suite with some authoring and backup tools as well. I have a combination of software pieces already on my laptop that in some way do some or all of what Nero 9 claims it can do. However, the promise of having all these tasks integrated into a single package seemed appealing, so I decided I'd give it try. I had also recently reinstalled my copy of Nero 6 on my downstairs PC and was pleasantly reminded how much better I liked Nero 6's interface, so this was another push to try Nero 9.

The Nero 9 installation took 45 minutes on my laptop. One colleague mentioned that maybe I should have tried the install with my antivirus software turned off to speed up the process. Except for operating systems, I'm curious why a software package would take 45 minutes to install in this day-and-age of high-speed processors and drives.

Nero 9 is much more involved than Nero 6 and similar versions, where Nero 9 includes media players, some authoring tools, and looks like it will replace the need for other software items. In my case, my laptop had separate programs already for viewing DVDs and authoring DVDs/VCDs.

Remember when installing any software, and especially anything that's a "suite" to make a restore point first and backup your system. I'd also recommend if the install left some installation related files, to keep those around, since some software titles need the leftover installation files to uninstall themselves.

First impressions of Nero 9 are that it will extensively "hook" into the Desktop environment, changing file extension associations, and adding context-menu options. For myself, I'm more fond of applications that do not touch the registry and or are "portable" in nature, so Nero 9 has already a bad score in my book before I've even done anything with it yet. While the installer gives options for which components and templates to install, there is no expert mode to prevent Nero 9 from messing with the file extensions. Also, Nero 9 claims some file extensions that are common or else used by another application.

## Opera Mini and Palm TX Part II

You'll recall I had mentioned previously about using Opera Mini on my Palm TX. After a month or so of usage, I'm finding that it works okay most of the time, but it is not really optimized for different networks. In one instance I

had to delete all the scanned entries for other Wi-Fi hotspots so that it would stop trying to logon to my distant and not present work network. So currently, I only use Opera Mini on my TX for home use, and the Blazer otherwise. Be forewarned, having installed the particular Java layer and Opera Mini, my Palm TX has tended to crash more when using Opera Mini or Blazer.

## Editing Just About Anything

Something I find somewhat irritating when trying to help another computer user with a problem or task is when the person really has not taken the time to learn their software or operating system from a navigational perspective. I can tell they do not know the software well if they do not use the keyboard and/or keyboard shortcuts. (These keyboard shortcuts are also referred to as "hot keys" or "key combinations", and so on.) This is where the person helping, such as myself, says, "Please get out of your chair and let me drive." If you use a computer and do not know your hot keys, read on.

The mouse and graphic desktop are great at giving people quick access to files and a shorter learning curve for applications. However, if someone's primary way to interact with a computer is by way of the mouse, then they may likely take longer to do a task, especially spreadsheet work. The reality is that people are capable of typing (keyboarding?) faster than they can point-and-click (or speak), menu diving or clicking around the screen at teeny-tiny hieroglyphs that may-or-may-not be a link.

A quick way to learn all the key combinations for your desktop and applications is to go cold-turkey and simply to take the mouse off of the computer, have a list of shortcuts and go from there. Here are some hot keys in Windows XP that are pretty common to help get you going. (Check your manuals and or on-line for your particular desktop, application and operating system if different.)

- Ctrl-Esc** Start Menu
- Alt+F4** Close window, application, or Windows itself
- F6** Select or highlight whatever is in the location field, if present (browsers, directories)
- F1** Show help
- Ctrl-F1** Hide help
- F2** Rename a file (Windows and many applications using the standard open file dialog)

- Ctrl-c** Copy selected area into the 'Clipboard' aka the buffer
- Ctrl-v** Paste from the Clipboard (buffer)
- Ctrl-z** Undo last action

One of the reasons I think laptop manufacturers get away with their unique (and thus horrid) keyboard layouts is that most people never take the time to learn how to use the control key in combination with the page keys, arrow keys, and home keys. If people used the navigational keys and hot keys more, I'm guessing the random placement of these keys on laptops would not occur. (Pet peeve: Control keys not being the outermost key on the spacebar row.)



## Set Your Home Page

To set a Web page as your home page, first go to the Web page that you'd like to use. Internet Explorer users, click Tools in the Menu bar followed by Internet Options. Click the Use Current button in the Home Page section. Netscape users, click Edit, then Preferences, then Navigator. You'll see a Home Page section in the middle of the dialog box. Click the Use Current Page button to set your home page.

## Multiple Zones

Many new home models have single-zone home-audio setups that wow visitors who are surprised to hear the music as clearly in the basement as in the living room. If you catch yourself thinking that the people upstairs may not have the same music tastes as the people below their feet, check out multiple zone systems. Installers offer equipment that can break your audio setup into many zones, each of which may include single (or multiple) rooms.

## Dead Or Lit Pixels

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

## Get The Most From Your Phone

Although camera phone technology is making vast improvements, camera phones aren't digital cameras when it comes to image quality. However, there are ways to get the most from your camera phone. Make sure your camera is set at its highest possible resolution. The more pixels you can devote to produce an image, the sharper that image will be. Because you're devoting

The other thing to consider is that the availability of hot keys are what make local applications so much easier to use than Web applications. Below are some links that list more Windows XP keyboard shortcuts. ■

## LINKS

- Keyboard Shortcuts for XP  
<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/301583>
- Excel 2003 Keyboard Shortcuts  
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel/HP052037811033.aspx>

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more pixels to every picture, they'll take up more space on your phone. Also, because of the larger file sizes, it'll take a little longer to send your pictures to others.

## Put The Hurt On Dirt

DVDs have much larger capacities than archaic VHS tapes, but DVDs are also much more vulnerable to careless handling and the dusty detritus that floats through our homes. So when you have a DVD that won't play properly, hold your disc up to a bright light and tilt it from side to side so that you can examine it for fingerprints, sticky smudges, and scratches. If you detect any potential problems, gently use a lint-free cloth to wipe dirt out of the way. Avoid using a circular motion. Instead, wipe straight from the hub to the outer edge of the disc. You can use a gentle, liquid hand or dish soap, as well as some warm water to loosen stubborn grime, but gently and thoroughly dry the disc before playing it.

## Screen Flicker

One of the causes of screen flicker, especially on CRT (cathode-ray tube) monitors, is a screen refresh rate that is set too low. In general, it's best to set the refresh rate to the highest possible setting. In WinXP right-click the Desktop, click Properties, choose the Settings tab, click the Advanced button, and choose the Monitor tab. If you see a Hide Modes That This Monitor Cannot Display checkbox, select it. In the Screen Refresh Rate drop-down menu, select the highest possible rate available. Click Apply, and if prompted, click Yes to keep the new settings. Click OK to close the dialog boxes and save your settings. In Win98 right-click the Desktop, click Properties, choose the Settings tab, click the Advanced button, and choose the Adapter tab. Select the highest refresh rate from the drop-down menu, click Apply and OK.

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# Photoshop CS4 Has Arrived

A review by Ron Hirsch, Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL,

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Actually this is Photoshop version 11, since Adobe still does keep a number ID for Photoshop. Adobe has been releasing new version about every 18 months, and they are right on track for this newest version. I've been reviewing Photoshop since version 2.5, and it really has come a long way. With each new version, I ask myself what they can possibly add in to warrant a new version. Adobe has always surprised and delighted me with the new features.

Most of my activities in Photoshop are related to image retouching and restoration. I closed my custom darkroom and switched to all digital about 5 years ago. Color processing in the complete dark, along with the smell of chemicals can't hold a candle to processing in Photoshop. It's like comparing the stone age to today's hi-tech world. And with all the digital tools in Photoshop, pure magic can be accomplished when compared to what could be done in the darkroom era.

**I consider Photoshop to be the finest program ever written for the PC.**

## Some of the New Great Features

Adobe has been refining and improving the program's ability to work better, faster, and more smoothly, using new approaches for many of the tools and processes that Photoshop incorporates. There are a number of new capabilities that build upon existing tools to make using them better, and more flexible. And, there are a number of totally new features which allow users to improve their work flow. Many of these are described below.

## Adjustments Panel

Up to CS3, the various tools such as curves, etc., were individually selected from a dropdown menu. Using them in an adjustment layer required that the user click on a different menu path to create a specific adjustment layer. Adjustment layers are the best route to take, as one can go back to that layer at any time, and change the adjustments made. Each adjustment layer had to be called up from the dropdown menu lists.

In CS4, there is a new Adjustment Panel with a choice of 15 icons, all representing the various adjustments that are possible, such as Levels, Hue/Saturation, Exposure, Channel Mixer, Color Balance, a revised version of Curves, and also a brand new Vibrance adjustment tool. All these adjustment layer capabilities can now be created from a central panel. With each choice, there are also a number of preset adjustments, along with the ability to create a custom "adjustment", and save it for future use. The user can readily turn off/on any adjustment, delete it, or reset that adjustment to the starting no change default.



There is enormous flexibility in the adjustments panel. You can resize it to take up more or less space than the default size. When any of the various buttons on it are selected, the display in that panel changes to what one would normally see for that adjustment. Having the ability to use the default presets, and custom user saved presets, make it all the more powerful

## The Masks Panel

Masks are an indispensable feature of Photoshop. They allow the user to block/pass material from one layer as needed. Painting with white on a layer mask will allow the painted material in that layer to become visible. Black will block it. Gray will partially pass it. A mask is actually a selection that is created. The selection can be "adjusted" via the usual selection modifiers, to soften expand, contract, etc., the selection boundaries. And it can also use other selection tools to modify the actual selection mask. The Mask panel has a collection of all these tools in one place to make working with masks much more efficient. And this panel can handle both pixel and vector based masks.

An update color range feature is included in the Mask panel. "Density" and "Feather" sliders are also included. In the Mask panel, you can select the color range to apply the changes to, use a brush to change the mask, and adjust the mask edge to suit your needs. All in all, this panel makes using masks much easier, and more powerful.

## Adobe Configurator

This is something totally new to Photoshop. Configurator is a utility that enables the user to create custom "panels" within Photoshop CS4. Running this utility brings up a window where you can create (drag to size) an empty panel. Then you can drag just about anything that Photoshop has in the way of commands, tools, actions, et al, to build a custom set of Photoshop activities, with all of them at your fingertips. Configurator provides you with a good-sized window on the left of the Configurator program window, where all the tools, menu items, et al are displayed. And, for those tools where there are multiple tools for a given tool choice, all the choices are displayed for one to choose from. The same goes for all the dropdown menu items in CS4. Every one is displayed.

Now, just drag the things you want to be available into the custom panel. You can position them where you like, and in any order you want. If you need more room in the new panel, just drag an edge to adjust the size. When you want to call up that custom panel, click on Window>Extensions, and select it from the menu. Then drag the panel to the desired location on your screen, and you can now click on any of the buttons in the panel

to make things happen. Configurator does not give you any added activities that were not in CS4 to begin with. But it makes accessing them much quicker, much as the Adjustments and Mask panels do.

## Bridge CS4

Bridge has been the “file manager” for Photoshop and other program in the “CS” suites since the suites started. Bridge is more than just a file manager however. It has a wide range of features and customization capabilities that make it the tool to use when browsing, selecting, rating, and editing the EXIF information in images.

Users can customize the display, set the thumbnail sizes, and the size of the individual right side image display for the image selected in the left side thumbnail area. It can mark images via a user set rating value, and of course sort images via the many choices of parameters. Any custom settings can be saved and recalled for specific tasks. Files can be renamed in batches, via a comprehensive set of rules which the user can customize. And contact sheets can be designed in Bridge, and saved as PDF files for printing and other uses.

CS4 does not appear to have any significant changes from CS3. But it is a powerful tool to use in viewing, ranking, selecting, evaluating, and ranking your images prior to opening them in Photoshop.

## Adobe Camera Raw 5.0

Adobe Camera Raw is the intermediate step for users to open RAW files from their digital cameras et al, and do some preliminary “processing” before then moving them to Photoshop for the final retouching. All the activities in Camera Raw are non destructive, that is the file in question is not permanently changed. And Camera Raw has the equivalent of a “Panel” of very comprehensive image adjustment features, some of which are not in Photoshop, such as color temperature.

Prior to version 5.0, adjustments made in Camera Raw covered the entire image. Now, however, the user has the ability to restrict the areas where adjustments are made, essentially functioning like a layer mask does. The “Adjustment brush” is the tool that does this job. One can paint onto and limit the affected areas. There is also a Graduated Filter that applies a selected effect using a gradient, which tapers the effect from full to none. This filter was previously only available in Lightroom, but has now been included in Photoshop CS4.

When CS3 was introduced, it included the ability to open a JPG file in camera raw, which was not possible earlier. So, that gave the user the ability to work with the “Panel” of adjustments that camera raw offers, even if the file is not a RAW file. This became a usual route for me when working on JPEG images, as the clustering of tools in Camera Raw moved most retouching tasks along much faster.

## Dodge & Burn Improvement

The dodge and burn capability in CS4 has been improved considerably. In earlier version, when dodging and burning,

the tone of the are being worked on suffered a shift in the actual color/tone. Now an option to “Protect Tones” has been added to the options for these tools. When dodging in CS3, without the “Protect Tones”, the area being dodged looks as if a whitish color is overlaying the dodged material. When “Protect Tones” is checked, this whitening is greatly reduced, and the tone/color seems more vibrant after being dodged. The same saving of the tonal quality is preserved when burning.

## The Vibrance Tool

This was a tool only available in Camera Raw in CS3, but it is now available in Photoshop CS4. It appears to similar to the older Hue/Saturation tool. But Adobe has improved the results here, similarly to the way they improved the old Brightness/Contrast tool. Vibrance does add saturation to a color, but the more saturated it is, the less it gets changed. Avoiding the garish results when using the older Saturation tool.

## Spring Loaded Keys

Photoshop has always had several keys that can switch to different tool functions while the key is held down. This feature allows you to access a tool temporarily by holding down the key for that tool, similar to using the spacebar for the hand tool - only for many more tools now. After learning the letter for the tools you use often, you can quickly invoke that tool temporarily, by holding down that letter key. This can be a great time saver.

## Improved Graphics Performance

Photoshop CS4 makes use of the power of good graphics card to improve your screen display. Users with a graphics card with 256 Mb (or more) of card memory and a GPU can now do smoother scrolling, zooming, and panning. The capabilities of the “better” card in your system will now be recognized by CS4.

## In Conclusion

The new features in CS4 that I’ve presented are only a partial listing. I’ve concentrated mainly on those which I feel are most important to me, in my tasks of retouching and restoring images. Photoshop can of course do much more than that. It has creative capabilities far beyond what most people realize. The more I use it, the more things I discover. It is a bottomless pit of wonderful tools and capabilities.

To discover more of its wonders, sometimes I just open Photoshop and start browsing around in the many menus and command listings, and just “play”. And every time I do this I come away with more knowledge of it what it can achieve. It’s hard to imagine what CS5 will bring, but I can be sure that it will be more and greater tools and capabilities.

Here’s a number that I find amazing. I did a search for “Photoshop” on Barnes & Noble, probably the largest book vendor on the Internet. There were 1080 items found. That is a testament to the widespread popularity of Photoshop. ■

# Moving to a New Mac

By Richard Corzo, Director, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT, [www.dacs.org](http://www.dacs.org),  
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After work one evening, I tried hopping on to my iMac G5. It was unresponsive, and several attempts to reboot it got it to various stages. Sometimes no further than the familiar Mac boot chime to a black screen, sometimes all the way to a full desktop before the machine froze. It was past the three-year AppleCare period, and I'd long since grown tired of the fan noise it had developed over time. I had figured on keeping the iMac until next fall, by which time I expected Snow Leopard to be out. But, this behavior seemed to press the issue and accelerate my intended schedule. The Apple Store was just a few minutes away, and I'd already thought about what I wanted for my next Mac.

I couldn't resist the temptation for immediate gratification, so I headed over to the Apple Store. Although I didn't really need mobility within my own household, I thought it would be convenient if I could have a laptop this time that I could take with me to the Macintosh SIG. I'd read about the sleek and solid aluminum unibody construction of the new MacBooks and MacBook Pros. The one thing that was holding me back a little was the smaller hard drive size of the laptop compared to my iMac. The 320 GB of the higher model 15.4" MacBook Pro is probably generous for most people, but I had ordered my iMac with a 400 GB drive, and used more than 300 GB in the Leopard partition. After a few questions and some hands-on time, I decided to go ahead with the MacBook Pro and brought it home.

The Apple Specialist had mentioned that when I first booted up, the Setup Assistant would offer me the option of transferring data and settings from a Time Machine backup. Fortunately, I had one on an external drive, since my iMac wouldn't stay up long enough to expect a reliable direct transfer through the network or FireWire. I plugged in the external drive and the Setup Assistant recognized the available Time Machine backups. It took about 2 hours and I had just 8 GB left of my 320 GB. I had chosen to transfer the machine settings as well as the data and settings from my two home folders. (I find it useful to have an additional "admin" user in addition to my own normal logon.)

The next evening I started to settle in to the new machine. One of the first things I tried was starting iPhoto. It asked me if I wanted to automatically start iPhoto the

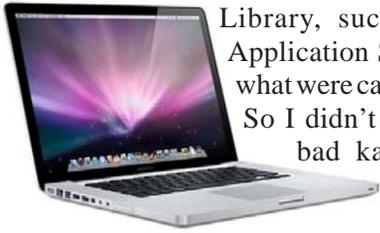
next time I plugged in my digital camera. I said Yes, and continued on to verify that my photos were all showing up. The next time I started iPhoto I got the same question, and it started to become apparent that something was amiss. Talking to our Mac guy at work the next day gave me the idea that I needed to check the permissions on the Preferences folder, which is located inside the Library folder of my home folder.

Indeed, that folder showed a small no access symbol superimposed over the folder icon, as did several other folders within my home folder Library. Doing a Get Info on the folder revealed that there was No Access to Everyone, which explained why preferences were not sticking. In the Get Info window I changed permissions to give myself read/write permission on the folders in question, and requested that the permission change be applied to any enclosed items. If I haven't lost you yet, I'll mention one more thing that may have been a factor in the wrong permissions. On my iMac I had recently changed the numeric user ID to 501, which is the default for the first account created, so I could access my own home folder when booted from the Mac installation on my external drive. If you understand UNIX, this might make some sense to you. Otherwise just ignore the last few sentences and enjoy the rest of the article.

That seemed to do the trick. iPhoto now remembered my answer, and I was on to iTunes to verify that my music was all there. Things seemed to go well until I started setting up MobileMe syncing on my new machine, going into the Sync tab of MobileMe preferences to initiate my first sync. It seemed to start but then stopped immediately with the status still saying Never Synchronized. Checking the Console available in the Application:Utilities folder, I found no messages between the sync start and stop that would give me a hint as to what was wrong. I expected to have to visit a Mac Genius at the Apple store, but a conversation with the Mac guy at work made me realize that I was going to have to start with a fresh account and home folder. I canceled my Genius appointment.



When I got home I backed up my home folder to my external drive. (If you don't already have one, have I convinced you yet that you need an external drive for your Mac or PC?) Then logging into my other admin account I deleted my main account and home folder, and recreated a fresh account. I brought back my data one major folder at a time, Music, Pictures, Movies, etc. I did not however copy back my Library folder, except for the Mail and Mail Downloads folders. Folders inside the



Library, such as Preferences and Application Support are presumably what were causing my sync problems. So I didn't want to bring back the bad karma. This means that preferences will have to be reestablished for all

your applications, although you could try copying back some individual preference files on a case-by-case basis. My new home folder was a success, because I could now sync with MobileMe. This allowed me to bring down my Mail account definitions, and then successfully start Mail.

I'd like to make a small plug here for the Mac OS design over Windows. The Windows equivalent to the individual Mac preference files is the monolithic Windows registry. If you've ever had to pick through the registry to try to eliminate traces of a failed application on Windows, you'll appreciate the ability to just delete a Mac preference file without fearing that you'll mess up some other application or part of the OS.

One issue that you may run into by starting with a clean home folder is that licensed software may require you to reenter the license key. If you installed from physical media, you'll need to go find the sleeve it came in. Much of my software was downloaded and a key was sent in an e-mail. I have a mail folder called Software Licenses to keep those important e-mails. I recommend that you use an IMAP e-mail account such as that which MobileMe offers. IMAP accounts keep mail on a server, so it doesn't matter if your hard drive crashes. You'll still have a copy of that e-mail. If you don't want to pay for MobileMe, then of course go for a free IMAP account such as AOL or AIM Mail (<http://mail.aim.com>), or second best, a Web mail account.

One other thing I wanted to mention is that I migrated from a PowerPC-based Mac to an Intel Mac, and one might wonder if any issues might arise. Many of my applications were already Universal, meaning they were compiled to run on either PowerPC or Intel architecture. On the other hand two PowerPC-only applications got two different results. Happily my Macromedia Dreamweaver (before they were bought by Adobe) runs without a hitch. Yet Adobe Reader 8, a PowerPC application from my old machine, gets an error message: You can't open the application because it is not supported on this architecture. I'm sure downloading the Intel Mac version of this will easily resolve this.

I'm still working through some issues with Spotlight and getting my first complete Time Machine backup, but so far I really like this new MacBook Pro. It's a beautiful machine. I may have an advantage over those used to a trackpad with a separate button, but this being my first Mac laptop, I'm having little trouble getting used to the trackpad. ■

## Earbuds

If you're looking for a new set of earbuds consider a pair with sound-isolating capabilities. Sound-isolating earbuds steer audio directly into the ear canal to isolate audio from ambient noise rather than cancel it out. Sound-isolating earbuds rely on creating a tight seal in the ear canal with the earbuds. Sound-isolating earbuds don't require a battery. They rely on using tips, sleeves, cushions, and flanges to create a seal in the ear canal, thus isolating audio and preventing ambient noise from entering the ear canal.

## Digital Camera Tip

If you're in the market for a new camera, get hands-on time with it. Check the LCD to see how it performs in bright and low light and whether the menu's text and icons are easy to see and understand. If you take pictures outside, where even the best LCD is difficult to see, look for a camera with an optical viewfinder so you can bypass the LCD. Make sure the camera is comfortable to hold, carry, and operate. Can you reach all of the buttons and dials?

## Alter The View

If on-screen items are too large or too small, you can alter your display resolution. From the dialog box you just accessed for the previous tip, you also can adjust the Screen Resolution, Screen Area, or Desktop Area slider to change the resolution (higher numbers make things smaller and fit more on-screen). Depending on the option you select, Windows may reduce the number of available colors. (Don't forget to click OK to save your changes.)

## Find Compatible Memory

Many memory manufacturers have an online database where you can look for memory that's compatible with your system. Crucial Technology ([www.crucial.com](http://www.crucial.com)) has an excellent database that can provide you with all of the specifications you need to find compatible memory. The interactive guide asks you for your PC manufacturer and model and supplies a list of compatible Crucial memory modules. Although Crucial no doubt hopes you'll buy its memory, you can use the specifications next to each module to locate compatible modules elsewhere.

## Look For A Frame

Frames don't just belong around your photo; they may belong within it, too. Keep an eye out for something in the environment you can use as an impromptu frame for your subject: windows, doorways, branches, overhanging rocks, or any other objects in the foreground or background that will make for a more intriguing arrangement.

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