# COMPUTER NEWS

**Volume 25, No. 6** **June 2008**

## Inside This Issue

*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.*

## At the June Meeting, Bernhard Krevet will present SKYPE

**The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, June 18, 7:00-9:00 P.M., at the Napa Senior Activity Center, 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.**

During the June Computer Tutor session, Jeff Solomon will demonstrate and discuss the Linux based operating -system UBUNTU. It is an alternative for the Windows XP/Vista operating systems. UBUNTU contains all the applications you need - a web browser, word processing document, spreadsheet and presentation software, instant messaging and much more. Please send your ideas to the Computer Tutor, **Jeff Solomon** at **tutor@nvpcug.org**.

Our very own Bernhard Krevet will be the main speaker. He will talk about SKYPE and its features and let us know how it has improved his quality of life.

P.S. SKPYE will work with UBUNTU also. An article about UBUNTU appears on page 4.

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

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

# NVPCUG Special Interest Groups & Mac Group

In SIG meetings you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so for current meeting information, see our Web site, **www.nvpcug.org**, or contact the SIG leaders.

## Investors SIG
Meets:  Monthly, second Monday
        5:30 to 7:30 p.m
        Jerry Brown's home,
        23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
Leader: Jerry Brown
        (707) 254-9607
        **bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net**

## Digital Photography SIG
Meets:  Monthly, second Wednesday
        7:00 to 8:30 p.m
        Piner's Nursing Home,
        Conference Room
        1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Leader: Susy Ball
        (707) 337-3998
        **susyball@aol.com**

## Napa Valley Mac User Group
Meets:  Monthly, second Thursday
        6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
        Napa Senior Activity Center
        1500 Jefferson St., Napa
Leader: Ron Rogers
        (707) 226-5352
        **ronrogersnapamug
        @gmail.com**

## President's Message

By Ron Dack, president, **http://www.nvpcug.org/**,
**President@nvpcug.org**

Summer begins in June so it is time to start looking at and planning for the Annual **NVPCUG** Member's Picnic. **Dianne Prior** will again be coordinating this event (Thanks Dianne). **Mike Ball** has again volunteered to be our barbecue chef. (Thanks Mike) I have heard nothing but praise for the meat and chicken prepared by Mike last year. I know that the marinade had something to do with that great flavor so I am looking forward to helping **Susy Ball** apply her "secret" marinade to the meat and chicken again this year. Gee this is making me wish the picnic was in June, but of course it will be in August on Saturday the 23rd from 1PM to 6PM. Even so it isn't too early to start thinking about it.

### What the Board and I have been up to:

The **Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group (NVPCUG)** Board of Directors is continuing to talk with the **Napa Valley Mac Users Group** (**NVMUG**) Board of Directors about our continuing support for their group and the possibility of **NVMUG** affiliating with **NVPCUG**. By affiliating they would benefit from all the advantages our group has to offer and they in turn could help defray some of the costs of support and benefits to both groups. As the PC and Mac platforms are moving closer to one another it is my belief that a personal computer is a personal computer whether you prefer a Mac or a PC. Personally I have both, as do many others.

For instance the June presentation of **SKYPE** by **Bernhard Krevet** will be done using a **Mac Book Intel** chipset laptop and **SKYPE** can be run on either platform. **UBUNTU Linux** that Computer Tutor **Jeff Solomon** will be demonstrating can also be run on either type machine.

### Subject change:

Over the years we have considered arranging some sort of discount for members with local stores like **Office Depot**, **Staples**, and **Radio Shack**. Possibly even discounts with computer repair specialists like **Able Computers**, **Computer Connections**, and others.

One problem we have had is providing merchants with identification of members. We need to develop an ID card, with or without a photo of the member. That same card could be used for member drawings at the meeting. Instead of the nametag board holding all the nametags we could have clips to hand out and collect at each meeting. The clips would fit a slot on the ID card so the member could display their ID at the meetings and still have the ID for shopping the discounted stores. Well that's just a thought so if you have any comments or ideas let me know. In fact if you have any comments or ideas about improving the group in anyway let me know. You can e-mail me at **President@nvpcug.org**. I hope to see each of you at the general meeting on Wednesday June 18th 7PM at the Senior Activity Center.

Take care,
*Ron*

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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**

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# NVPCUG Calendar

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| June 18 | 7:00-9:00 p.m. | NVPCUG General Meeting + | A |
| July 2 | 7:00-9:00 p.m. | Board of Directors meeting + | B |
| July 9 | 7:00-8:30 p.m. | Digital Photography SIG meeting + | B |
| July 10 | 6:30-8:30 p.m. | Napa Valley Mac User Group + | A |
| July 14 | 5:30-7:30 p.m. | Investors SIG meeting + | **C** |
| July 16 | 7:00-9:00 p.m. | NVPCUG General Meeting + | A |
| Aug 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

# Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group Contact Information

## Officers for 2008

### Board of Directors

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **President** | Ron Dack | unlisted | President@nvpcug.org |
| **Vice President** | Dick Peterson | 738-1812 | VicePresident@nvpcug.org |
| **Secretary** | Marcia Waddell | 252-2060 | Secretary@nvpcug.org |
| **Treasurer** | Roy Wagner | 253-2721 | Treasurer@nvpcug.org |

**Other Directors:** Susy Ball, Ron Dack, Jim Gray, Dick Peterson, Bob Simmerman, Kathy Slavens, Dean Unruh, Marcia Waddell, and Roy Wagner.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Director** | Jim Gray | unlisted | Director_Gray@nvpcug.org |

### Appointed Officers

**Computer Tutor Coordinator**
Jeff Solomon 553-2114 Tutor@nvpcug.org

**Facility Arrangements Coordinator**
Dianne Prior 252-1506 Facility@nvpcug.org

**Greeter Coordinator**
Kathy Slavens 251-9193 Greeter@nvpcug.org

**Greeter Coordinator**
Bob Simmerman 259-6113 Greeter2@nvpcug.org

**Librarian**
Dean Unruh 226-9164 Librarian@nvpcug.org

**Membership Director**
Bob Simmerman 259-6113 Membership@nvpcug.org

**Newsletter Circulator**
Jim Hearn 224-2540 Circulation@nvpcug.org

**Newsletter Editor**
Susy Ball 337-3998 Editor@nvpcug.org

**Product Review CoCoordinator**
Susy Ball 337-3998 Reviews@nvpcug.org

**Product Review CoCoordinator**
Marcia Waddell 252-2060 Reviews2@nvpcug.org

**Programs Director**
Susy Ball 337-3998 Programs@nvpcug.org

**Publicity Director**
Ron Dack unlisted Publicity@nvpcug.org

**Random Access Moderator**
Jerry Brown 254-9607 Questions@nvpcug.org

**Special Projects Director**
VOLUNTEER NEEDED Projects@nvpcug.org

**Webmaster**
Ron Dack unlisted Webmaster@nvpcug.org

**Sales Coordinator**
VOLUNTEER NEEDED sales@nvpcug.org

• All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

# Why I like the Ubuntu Operating System

**By Phil Vogel, Director at Large, The Olympia Microcomputer User Group, Washington,**

www.olymug.org, director3@olymug.org

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My interest in alternative operating systems started 20 years ago when I worked for the State of Maryland during a year of computer chaos. We had a good office system using WordPerfect but some high State official(s) made a decision to go with Microsoft Word. At our facility WordPerfect was no longer funded and we were no longer able to use it. Yet our mental facility didn't have the budget to buy all the copies for all of our computer, only a few.

Thus my co-workers and I became interested in alternative sources of software. One of the writing programs that we used was the predecessor of OpenOffice and not very good. And because of the high prices charged for an inferior product (Word compared to WordPerfect) at the time, we looked to finding an alternative Operating System to Microsoft products. I remember investigating Red Hat distribution of Red Hat Linux at the time. But at the time it was not up to par with Microsoft's Windows 95.

When I joined OMUG, I was delighted to find that there was a Linux SIG. "Linux" is a term for many operating systems (OS) using the Linux "kernel" or "heart" or "engine." The kernel "drives" the system like a car engine powers a car. Conrad Schuler, one of the leaders of the Linux SIG was promoting SUSE, a "distribution" of Linux which originally came from Germany. Paul Braget, another leader, liked Ubuntu. When joined, I found I was totally lost. However, I stuck it out and some of the understanding and data is beginning to stick to the walls of my mind.

I listened, worked on the Linux programs on the computers in the Senior Center and became convinced that I wanted to try it out for myself. I like laptops. I can grab a computer and move it to a room or across the country easily. In this country all computers are Microsoft friendly but only some brands and some models of the other brands such as Dell are Linux-compatible.

I decided after some research to take a chance on a new Toshiba Qosmio. We had difficulty installing SUSE and because of inexperience it became corrupted. However, it was easier to install Ubuntu.

"Ubuntu" is a South African word which means, "I am because you are." I am writing this article because you are here, OMUG. I am using Ubuntu because a lot of people around the world contribute to its innovation, maintenance, and security. By the way, the Toshiba came with Windows Vista Home Edition. I only use it for QuickBooks; that is, I can boot into Vista when I need to, but use Ubuntu most of the time

I use Ubuntu to surf the web because it has a very secure hard kernel. It is almost impossible to attack a Linux based machine because all the software programs are attached to the outside of the kernel. At most a particular program will become dysfunctional but not the operating system. For this reason about 90 percent of the servers around the world use Linux based software. Some servers are so reliable that service is minimal.

The Linux kernel is simple, clean and fast, allowing me to turn it on and be on the web in a fraction of the time required by my Windows machine. My web browser is FireFox, an excellent free program.

I am writing this article with OpenOffice because it is another excellent writing program that is on a par with Microsoft Office. And it is a free program also. I must admit that Microsoft's "Access" program is superior to OpenOffice's "Data."

All the above programs are "open source" which means that you can obtain them for free by a download, or on DVD or CD for a nominal charge. However, there are also companies that will supply a person with disks, manuals and service contract just like Microsoft. But everyone is bound by the EULA of the "open source" contract, including companies and also users like me. For instance anyone who comes up with a change or improvement must make it available to any one else for free.

So this is why I like Ubuntu, FireFox and OpenOffice. I also use other features such as watching movies, burning DVD's, and WiFi—and they work well. Now I want to edit and burn a home made movie. Plus Ubuntu has an extensive Internet support system. New programs and updates are coming out all the time. It is an example of a technology rising up from the grassroots rather than from the top down. ∎

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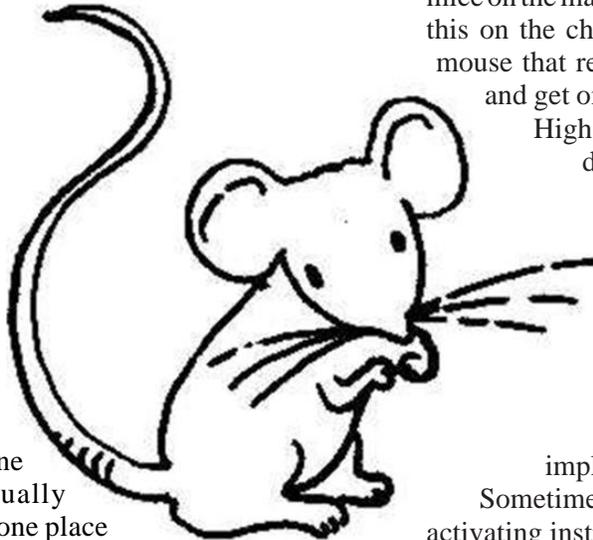
# Buying a Mouse –

## More Important than You Might Think

**By Vinny La Bash, Member and Contributing Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida,**

www.spcug.org, vlabash@spcug.org

The average computer user recognizes how important the mouse is to getting things done. Mice have been part of the computer scene for over twenty years and with rare exceptions are simple devices to operate and control. That doesn't mean that people who use them are necessarily familiar with all their features and functions. That's not as bad as it may sound. Most automobile drivers don't have a clue how the internal combustion engine inside their auto engine works. Yet they usually manage to drive from one place to another without incident.

Selecting a mouse is much simpler than choosing an automobile, but there are things you should know before laying out money for a device that if not properly designed, may result not only in poor computer performance, but may cause you injury.

The mouse may be the most common of the tracking technologies used in modern computers, but it is not the only one. There are trackballs, touch pads, and for ThinkPad users, track points. They all have their advantages and drawbacks. We will focus on the mouse.

Mechanical mice, those with the rolling balls on the underside, are obsolete. They have a tendency to gather debris on the underside, and require cleaning. Moving parts are their most serious weak spot because they will break down sooner than devices that rely on other technologies. Newer optical mice suffer no such defects. They generate a beam of light that combines with an optical sensor providing a screen pointer that is well suited for meticulous graphics or serious game playing. No moving parts mean less maintenance and lighter weight. Optical mice will work on any smooth surface; a mouse pad is unnecessary.

Look for a mouse with a USB connection. It will probably be difficult to buy a mouse that does not have this type of connection today. Make sure it is compatible with USB 2. The mouse is not considered a high speed device so this caution may be unnecessary.

You may want a wireless mouse for no other reason than to reduce desktop clutter. There are many generic wireless mice on the market that will perform adequately, but doing this on the cheap comes with a price. You will have a mouse that requires AAA batteries. Save your pennies and get one with an integrated rechargeable battery. High end wireless mice include receivers that double as battery chargers, so your mouse will never suddenly expire in the middle of an important project.

Most rodents on the market today feature at least two buttons and a scroll wheel. The right button is used mainly for bringing up menus or lists of options. The left hand button activates functions or commands. The scroll wheel, as its name implies, is used to scroll up and down screens. Sometimes the wheel can function as a third button activating instructions. Advanced scroll wheel functions allow left to right scrolling which can be very useful in wide spreadsheets or large graphics. Used in conjunction with the keyboard, the scroll wheel can zoom in and out of some applications, and can be used to make text appear larger.

Mice do not come in a one-size-fits-all product. Enlightened companies such as Logitec manufacture mice that are specifically contoured to fit a wide variety of hand sizes. Logitec was among the very first companies to recognize that different sized people have different sized hands. Choose a mouse that is ergonomically designed to fit your individual hand size. This will go a long way to reduce the probability of developing carpel tunnel syndrome or some other crippling ailment.

A mouse is a simple device by computer standards, yet it seldom gets the attention it deserves. Take the time to find a good ergonomically designed mouse that suits the physical characteristics of your hand along with suitable options for your personal computing preferences. Productivity and good health are not mutually exclusive. ∎

# Bookmarks Page

By Hank Pearson, Treasurer and Webmaster, ASCIi (Arizona Association for Computer Information, inc.), **www.asciigroup.org, hank.pearson@asciigroup.org**

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Wouldn't it be nice if you could view a searchable webpage of bookmarks for your favorite websites? You can, but why?

## Find Bookmarks with Forgotten Names

One reason to view your bookmarks as a webpage (as an alternative to looking in a menu) is to be able to find sites when you can't remember the first word in the name.

Let's say you have a Firefox bookmark named Carbonite Online Backup, and you can't remember Carbonite but you know you are looking for the word Backup. On your Bookmarks page (you will soon learn how to view), you can easily search for Backup.

You are using Firefox, aren't you? If you haven't discovered Firefox, download it from Mozilla (**http://mozilla.com**). It's free, fast, and secure. Make Firefox your default browser.

**Bookmarks as presented in Foxfire's Bookmark Manager**

## View Bookmark Descriptions and Tags

Another reason for a bookmarks page is to give you plenty of room to view (and find) descriptions of your bookmarks. You will learn how to add tags to improve your searches.

## Zoom In and Out

A third reason to display your bookmarks on a webpage is to allow you to zoom the text in and out so you can see it clearly. To zoom any webpage, press Ctrl+Plus or Ctrl+Minus, using the numeric keypad.
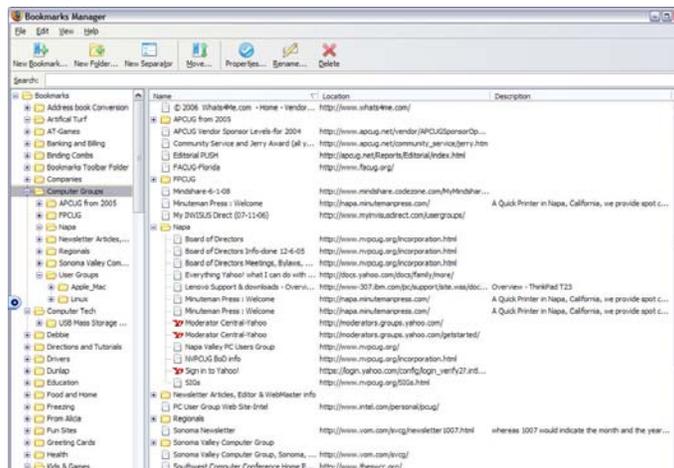
## DIY for Fun and Learning

So, how do you display your bookmarks as a webpage? You could download a tool to do the work for you, or download a tool to search bookmarks. But it's easy enough to DIY (Do It Yourself). It's interesting, fun, and educational. Are you just using your computer to perform certain tasks, or do you also enjoy learning by experimenting? If you like to learn, this tip is for you.

## Find the Bookmarks File

You don't need to create a bookmarks webpage. It already exists on your own hard drive! The name of the file is simply bookmarks.html. Press Win+F to find it. (While holding down the Windows key (next to Alt), press F, for Find.) In the left window pane, click 'All Files and Folders'. In 'All or part of the file name', type 'bookmarks.html' (without quotes). Click Search.

If you get multiple results, it's easy to determine which bookmarks.html file to use. It's the newest one. In the View menu (of your Search Results window), click Details. In the right window pane, click the Date Modified column header (to sort the list). The file you are interested in has the newest date and time (for a file with the Type shown as Firefox Document).

## Bookmark the Bookmarks File

Double-click that newest bookmarks.html Firefox Document to open it in Firefox. Press Ctrl+D to bookmark the bookmarks.html file. In the Name field, insert a hyphen (-) at the beginning (to name the bookmark '-Bookmarks'), so this new bookmark will appear at the top of the list.

Now, with your Bookmarks page displayed, press F5 to refresh the view. (F5 is a common shortcut key for Refresh.) Surprise? The new -Bookmarks bookmark is at the bottom - not the top. Let's address that. (This is Firefox 2.0.0.11. Future versions might vary.)

## Create Another Top Bookmark

First, create another bookmark that will be displayed at the top. For example, open Google.com, press Ctrl+D, and name the bookmark -Google (starting with a hyphen).

## Sort Your Bookmarks

Now, in the Bookmarks menu, right click any bookmark, and click Sort by Name. Look in the Bookmarks menu to confirm that the bookmarks are indeed sorted. Note the two bookmarks that begin with hyphen (-) at the top of the menu.

Look at your Bookmarks page again, and press F5 to Refresh. The new bookmarks are still at the bottom.

## Rearrange Your Bookmarks

To force Firefox to rearrange your bookmarks page, move a bookmark in the menu. In the Bookmarks menu, drag, for example, either new bookmark that starts with a hyphen up or down to precede or follow the other bookmark that starts with a hyphen. (Having two hyphen-prefixed bookmarks lets you rearrange those two at the top without rearranging the other bookmarks.) Press Escape to close the menu.

Refresh your Bookmarks page with F5. The bookmarks on the webpage are now arranged as shown in the Bookmarks menu. (Do you need to refresh three times? No, we simply demonstrated that the bookmarks.html file is rearranged when you move a bookmark in the menu.)

## Finding Bookmarks on the Page

When you are viewing your Bookmarks webpage, press Ctrl+F for Find. Type Backup, for example, and press Escape (to close the Find toolbar). To find the next occurrence of Backup, press F3. (F3 is a common shortcut key for Find Again.) When you find the desired bookmark (link), click it (or Ctrl+click to open the site in a new tab). (Or press Enter, or Ctrl+Enter to open the site in a new tab.)

## Add Descriptions and Tags

To add or change descriptions of your bookmarks, in the



**Bookmarks EXPORTED and saved as an HTML page**

Bookmarks menu, right-click the bookmark you want to edit, and click Properties. In the Description field, type anything (including your own tags) that might help you find your bookmark and remember what it is for. After clicking OK and pressing F5 (for Refresh), you will see your new Description in the Bookmarks page.

## Make Changes through the Menu

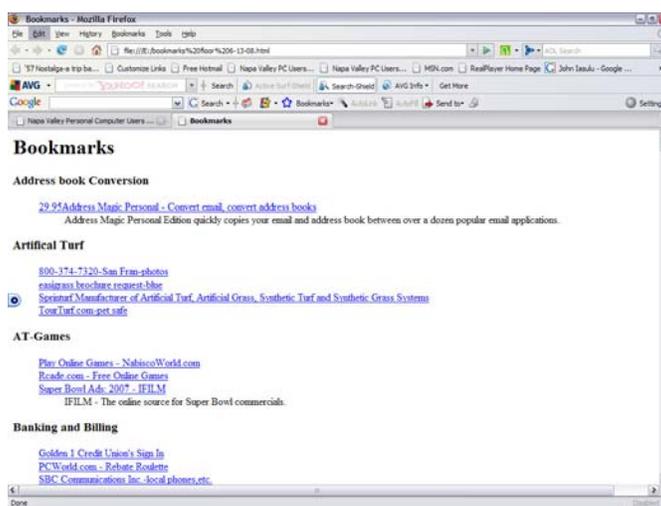Now that you know where bookmarks.html is located, you might be tempted to edit it directly with a text editor. Mozilla warns that it is automatically generated, so do not edit it, as your changes would be lost. Make your changes through the Bookmarks menu.

Displaying your Bookmarks as a webpage is a start in discovering many more tips and tricks related to Firefox. ■

*Hank Pearson (`hank.pearson@asciigroup.org`) is the Treasurer and Webmaster for ASCIi (`www.asciigroup.org`). He is a long-time member who frequently writes articles for the group's newsletter, and has served as President, Secretary, Newsletter Editor, and Presentations Coordinator.*

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### Overheating: What To Watch For

Any component inside your computer can overheat under the right circumstances, but due to their nature, there are several pieces of hardware that are at high risk for heat damage. At the top of the list is the computer's CPU. Whenever you launch a program on your computer or use an application that's already running, the CPU must work a little harder to keep up. Eventually, the CPU is forced to operate at the peak of its abilities, and that's when it consumes the most electricity and generates the most heat. When the CPU overheats, programs that typically run fine may generate error messages, or the entire computer may crash. Some CPUs are designed to reduce their speed when they overheat, so if you experience severe slowdowns in programs after a certain amount of time has passed, heat is the likely culprit. Video cards are the second most likely type of hardware to overheat, especially if you use the computer to play graphics-intensive 3D games. Most video cards contain their own memory and CPU, and when the memory overheats, it tends to cause white "sparkles" to appear randomly on-screen, where-as heat problems resulting from the card's CPU generally cause the game to slow down or crash.

### Adjust Icon Size In Vista

If you want to change the appearance of icons that represent your files or folders in Vista, open a folder, expand View, and click the icon size you want to use. You can also change the size of Desktop icons by right-clicking an empty portion of your Desktop, expanding View, and clicking a different size setting.

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# Careful What You Ask For!

By Richard Kennon, Newsletter Editor, Amador Computer Users Group, California,
www.acug.net/, editor@acug.org

*Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.*

This last Christmas I asked Santa for a nineteen inch wide-screen, thin, flat display for my computer. Santa, being busy and not knowing a thing about computers, asked our son to make the purchase. He decided that nineteen inch was for wimps so he picked up a twenty-two inch wide-screen. It is a beauty with 1680x1050, 96ppi resolution. That is super good… except. Wouldn't you know, my old Dell has a video card that does not go that high. So, buy a new video card, right? They are not so expensive. It turns out my old Dell does not have a slot to unplug the card and plug in a new one. I am not sure of the technicalities, but one tech suggested a new mother board as well. They are not too expensive either. Then his partner says, "If you are going to spend that much, why not let us build you a new computer for just a little more?" Golly, what a great idea. The old Dell is getting so slow, I am frustrated every time I use it. So, why not get a new supercharged dual processor and two gigs of RAM so I can really sail? We discussed specifications for a while and came to agreement. Then I said I would want the Vista Home Premium operating system. One of the partners said, "Why don't you stick with XP?"

What follows is not what he said but I figured out later that this is what he was thinking. "*This old geezer is probably not going to outlast XP so why burden him with a new operating system that just eats up processor power and RAM without offering any benefit? He is going to continue to do the same things he has always done on the computer so why not let him enjoy the benefits of all this new horsepower without the burden of having to learn about a new operating system?*"

Out loud he said, "This will allow you to use all the software you now have and won't require you to download all new drivers, etc." I had already decided I could not afford a new version of MS Office and would convert to Open Office, instead. There is no Publisher in Open Office so I would have to do something, I hadn't figured out yet, to continue publishing this newsletter. This idea gave me a great sense of relief - I could reap the benefits of the newer, faster hardware without having to give up software I have grown used to. A little extra icing on the cake is that they will transfer all my Outlook Express folders and address book to the new box so I won't have to figure that out.

Also, I have an 80 GB second hard drive in the old box that they will mount in the new. I use it for backup. The new main hard drive will be a 250 GB SATA drive and the second drive can remain an IDE drive. I haven't the slightest idea what that means except that SATA is supposed to be faster and they can mix the two types on one machine.

I am anxiously awaiting delivery of the new computer and will report next month on how it all works out. So, I have spent our Federal rebate already. You can't say I am not patriotic! ∎

# Careful What You Wish For, Part II

By Richard Kennon, Newsletter Editor, Amador Computer Users Group, California, www.acug.net/, editor@acug.org

**I got it!** Wow, it looks just like every other computer. Perhaps you will remember last month I reported I had received a new Samsung 22-inch wide screen display that my old computer would not feed. One thing led to another and I commissioned a local computer store to build a new computer for me. It has a 250 Gbyte SATA hard drive, 2 Gbyte RAM and an AMD 64x2 dual processor. Also, it is loaded with XP Home operating system. I went into the 'why' last month. I was so proud of my smarts when I copied all "My Documents" to an 80 Gbyte backup hard drive and then had the store transfer this drive to the new box. But, when I went to access it, the latest copy had not taken. Bummer! Then I started to copy the files onto a flash drive to transfer them. About that time the old computer went bonkers - out of spite, I suppose. After many tries I got most of what I wanted transferred. I won't bore you with sordid details.

The first priority was to load the McAfee firewall and virus protection. I went to the McAfee site and mucked around for a while and finally got into a chat with someone called, Anish, on the other side of the globe, probably. He offered to help and led me through the most complicated procedure I have ever followed including typing Windows-R and typing in "%temp%." Then he said to delete all the files that popped up. There were about 250 files and perhaps 10 or 20 did not wish to be deleted. Every time I got to one that would not be deleted, I clicked 'OK' and had to start over again. After we finally got through that, he gave me a web site to access and everything went smoothly from there.

The next anguish was trying to load the HP printer drivers for my two printers. That appeared to go well at first but later something went very wrong and Microsoft volunteered that the problem was caused by Hewlett Packard and that HP had a fix on a site I could click to. That is really nice service! So, I did everything the HP site said to do but it kept failing with a message outlining three possible causes – none of which seemed to apply from the best I could determine. At that juncture, I decided to drop back to square-one and try to reload the driver in question from the disk. First, it was necessary to uninstall the driver and then re-install it. I did this but failed to read the fine print. It is clear now that one cannot install the driver if the printer is plugged into the computer. So, uninstall and re-install again but do it right this time, dummy. What do you know? It worked!

I reloaded MS Office 2003 Professional that I had been using for some time. That went quite well. Then I downloaded Service Pack 2 (or, is it 3?) and the Compatibility Pack I wrote about last month. That went well, also. It is interesting how even old people can learn, isn't it?
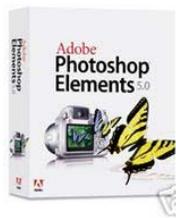
Next came Photoshop Elements 5.0 and after that will come TOPO!, which is a map program I like and several other smaller programs, including my Nikon camera software.

All in all, it has been not as bad an experience as it might have been and not as good as wished for. The backup hard disk is/was a great idea but somehow I fumbled the execution. My only advice is that if you want to get a new computer, plan, plan, plan and then consult as many others, who might have gone through it, as possible.
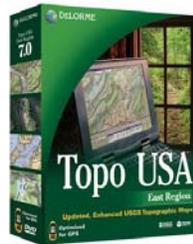
How about that? Twenty five and a half columns!

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## Eliminate Shaky Video

You can reduce shaky video by purchasing a digital camcorder with optical image stabilization or by placing the camera on a tripod. Optical image stabilization uses gyroscopic technology to compensate for high-frequency vibration, and it is especially useful to steady your video in situations where a tripod would either be too cumbersome or take up too much space. Digital image stabilization also helps you shoot smooth video, but it can degrade your recording quality because it shifts the pixels in an image to compensate for shaky video.

## External Drives

Generally speaking, you shouldn't have to turn off an external USB drive-?it will almost certainly enter an idle mode when communication is lost with the host PC. However, if you intend to leave the system off for an extended period, you can easily turn the external drive off, as well. Even if you reboot the PC with the external drive turned off, the system will see and accept the drive once you turn it on again. Of course, it's always best to follow the guidelines provided in the drive's documentation or check with the drive's manufacturer for its specific recommendations.

## Fix A Monitor That Turns Itself Off

Check power and connectivity. Make sure the monitor's power indicator light is on and that the power cable did not come loose from the monitor or the power source. Windows has a power management feature that allows you to place the monitor in a sleep mode (to save power) after a certain period of inactivity. You can disable this in the Windows Control Panel under Power Options or Power Management. In the appropriate Properties window, select the Power Scheme tab, then select Never from the Turn Off Monitor drop-down menu.

## Google Toolbar

Google's toolbar has several useful options for digging deep into your information search. One of them is the Page Info button, which you can activate by checking the Page Info menu box in the toolbar's Options menu. You can then select to translate the page to English, view pages that link to the page, or find similar pages. The option to view a cached version of the page is useful for seeing how the site has changed since Google last crawled the page.

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Press Any Key

# Binary Floodgates on the Internet Backwaters

**By Mike Moore, Newsletter Editor, Bowling Green Area Microcomputer Users Group, Kentucky,**
**www.bgamug.org, ml.moore(@insightbb.com**
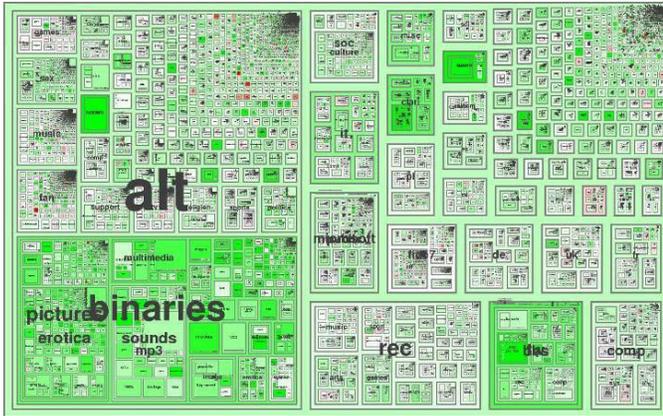
Back in the days before the World Wide Web, when computers connected directly to each other over telephone lines, we had a piece of software called a Bulletin Board System or BBS. BGAMUG operated a BBS from about 1989 through 2001 and aside from being responsible for the marriage of at least one member we know about, we amassed a collection of files that totaled, at last count, some 45 gigabytes in size, which was pretty impressive when you consider that there was not one among them that was copyrighted and marked as non-distributable material. Unlike many "boards" of the day, BGAMUG took special pains to make sure that the material we funneled through our member's modems was all above board and free of distribution issues.

So-called pirate BBSs, where copyrighted software was swapped like recipes at a county fair, were not illegal to visit, but there were a few high profile cases with big fines involved and even jail time for the pirate system operators. For the most part, though, our legal system didn't seem to be effective in prosecuting even the most flagrant cases, and the most that a copyright holder could hope for seemed to be a civil remedy by bringing suit.

Now the stakes have certainly been raised in terms of the volume of material swapped, and the material that is swapped today seems to be music more often than the latest PC game, but the copyright system in this country is still not very clear on the issue of sharing binary information. What is evident is that it's the user's responsibility to determine whether or not a given body of information has a copyright assigned to another individual, and also to figure out how much of it can be used (viewed, listened to, stored, forwarded, sold, whatever) and still fall under the "fair use" doctrine.

Instead of this turning into a dissertation on copyright law, I will instead offer the foregoing as simply a caution. Please do not download copyright material and don't use it unless you have clear permission or fair use rights. And please don't take any of the following as a cookbook for copyright subversion because it's not meant that way.

Having got that *caveat* out of the way, let's go somewhere where the World Wide Web doesn't go – USENET! [Pronounced YOOZ net].

Usenet is the bulletin board of the internet, and like a real bulletin board, its information is emblazoned on the internet like a ten foot high plasma billboard on Times Square in New York City. Usenet was conceived by a pair of graduate students, John Ellis and Tom Truscott at Duke University in 1979. Now lurid and lawless, Usenet has been given the unseemly reputation of being the Las Vegas of the internet because of the terabytes of binary pictures posted minute by minute in an unending stream of first-amendment fodder.

And we can find some dandy files on Usenet. Clip art, genealogical records, MIDI music and classical music, sound libraries, electronic books, recipes, quilting patterns, maps, GPS info, high quality desktop wallpaper, icons, and almost anything you can think of. This material is not usually found on the World Wide Web for several reasons, but primarily because people that put up web sites generally want to sell you something, and you can't very well sell what is found on Usenet because it is sometimes difficult to find out if it's under copyright or not. You can usually find someone to charge you for a collection of postage stamp images (for example) on the web, when in fact the sellers of the collection most likely just downloaded it from Usenet in the first place (probably in violation of a copyright or two!)

Usenet is and always was just text messages posted on internet machines known as news servers. Old timers still refer to Usenet as "net news" even though most of the posts have nothing to do with news. News servers use a protocol known as NNTP to transmit new messages on to other news servers down the pipe. The effect is that a new message posted to an NNTP server gets copied again and again over the course of hours or days until all of the news servers of the world have the message or file in their database. This copying occurs a little like e-mail, except that there is no way to make a post private. In fact, there is no way to address a Usenet posting to anyone but "ALL." Usenet bears another resemblance to e-mail, and that is there is a LOT of spam (or pointless messages, ads and porn). But if you know where to look, or just exercise some very patient trial and error, you can find some great repositories of information. If you are looking for *one specific file* though, you had better be really lucky! Trolling for files on Usenet is a bit like fishing on a commercial fishing boat: you're going to pull up just about everything that gets caught in your net!

Even though it's text based, binary files (images or

programs, for example) can be uploaded and downloaded to Usenet with ease, thanks to some very clever programming that allows seamless conversion from text to binary and back again. The difference between text and binary is not that important – just think of text as messages you can read, and binary as graphics, video, audio or program files.

**Messages are organized by topic into a system with the following "top level" names:**

- Comp [computers]
- Misc [miscellany]
- News [internet news, such as new groups or new policies about usenet]
- Rec [recreation]
- Sci [science]
- Soc [social and behavior, religion, philosophy]
- Talk [just that, talk, mostly of the flapping jaw variety!]

Subgroups are separated by periods – for example, rec.sports.tennis, and this fully formed topic name is called a **newsgroup.** Unfortunately, the process for creating new newsgroups is not overseen very well, and over the years the list of newsgroups available has become truly massive and quite often inane, vulgar or pointless. There is also not a good standard convention for naming newsgroups, and thus we have many more "top level" domains that I'd really rather not see.

The top-level newsgroups can be considered the backbone of Usenet and, with the exception of the advertisements and some dramatic grandstanding in some of these groups, they can be fairly informative. In particular, Usenet news is a good place to obtain an anecdotal history for just about any given industry, profession, product or technology.

But now comes the red-headed stepchild of Usenet: **alt.**

ALT is a top level newsgroup hierarchy that was created to dump whatever didn't fit in the other, more official newsgroups.

The alt groups carry most of the message traffic on Usenet, and as the tag implies, this is where the alternative thinking comes out in the Usenet crowd! The alt.binaries newsgroups collectively carry thousands of gigabytes of information across the internet daily. And where do you complain if someone posts something objectionable? You don't. There's no help desk and no complaint center. Usenet runs itself, as there is no news server that has any special authority over any other server. US courts have consistently held that the ISP that houses this information Is no more responsible for its content than the owner of your local news stand would be responsible for the content of the magazines he or she sells.

Most of the files on Usenet are found in the alt.binaries section of newsgroups, and it is from these newsgroups that your news reader software (see below) will automatically process the messages into finished files that are ready to view, listen to or execute on your computer.

This seems like a good time to point out that executing any file obtained from an untrusted source really has to be scanned by a good, up-to-date viral scanner **before you execute it.** The safest policy is to just not run these files unless you do so on a computer on which you won't lose any sleep over, should it become infected. However, it is difficult to obtain an infection from a document or audiovisual file, so these are probably safe to read or listen to.

You will find some groups on Usenet that end with '.d ,' which stands for "discussion." So for example, we have the alt.binaries.sounds.midi newsgroup, which contains actual MIDI files (Musical Instrument Digital Interface files), whereas alt.binaries.sounds.midi.d would be a group devoted to the text based *discussion* of the material found in the former newsgroup. In this context, the word *discussion* means posting information about a given topic, as opposed to real-time chat in a split-screen "chat room" environment. There is nothing real-time about Usenet because each client computer can be expected to update its Usenet database at different times, quite at random. There *are* some groups that are **moderated**, where a real person is charged with the task of vetting everything that's posted before you actually see it. This person or group, naturally, is known as a moderator, and they are really the only thing close to an authority on Usenet. As you might expect, some moderated groups have a better track record than others in keeping out the riff-raff and spam.

There is an interesting history of Usenet and how newsgroups came to be named at this link: **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usenet**

You can receive and post Usenet articles (or binary files) by employing a *news reader* which is also sometimes referred to as an *NNTP* reader (nntp is the Network News Transfer Protocol).

If you would prefer not to have to download and install a news reader, you can skip the hassle of learning the ins and outs of a new program. Try going to **http://groups.google.com** in your browser, and clicking on some of the links. Google Groups is a "front end" or interface to Usenet without the news reader. However, unless things have changed since I last took a look at Google Groups, they don't support the alt.binaries newsgroups, therefore you won't find any files on Google Groups.

My favorite news reader is called **XNEWS,** created by a fellow named Luu Tran. There is a user manual posted on the internet at this link: **http://xnews.newsguy.com/manual.html**

Xnews is a free download and there is no expectation for you to pay anything to the author of this utility. You can get the program at this link: **http://xnews.newsguy.com/release/xnews.zip**

The program does not need to be installed, you can just unzip it to a directory somewhere on your computer and run "xnews.exe." Setting up "Xnews" is probably more easily accomplished in a workshop setting than a newsletter. ∎

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# Make Your Wireless Network Safe

**By Marjie Tucker, Editor, Mountain Computer User Group, www.mcug.org, mcug@dnet.net**

Wireless networks are becoming more and more popular, but they do add some additional security risks. You need to spend a little extra time to ensure that your data and your identity are secure.

## What are the Risks?

Because wireless networks don't require a cable between the computer and your Internet connection, it's relatively easy for someone else to use your Internet connection for free, to hijack your messages, or to sneak into your computer and view or steal your data.

## So What Should I Do?

There are several important steps that you should follow to protect yourself and your computer:

1.  Don't use a default password on your wireless equipment. Most networking devices are pre-configured by the manufacturer with a simple password to simplify the setup process. This is the password that allows you to access the router configuration. These "default" passwords are well known by anyone who has used a similar device and they are available online, eroding any protection they might have provided. Check the instructions that came with your device and immediately change the password.

    Remember that the best passwords contain both upper and lowercase letters as well as numbers. And, always shy away from passwords that can be easily guessed by your friends - such as the names of your children or your dog.

    Experts suggest using a poem to derive a "pass phrase." You merely take a line from a poem or poem title and use the first letter of each word. For example, using the poem "Mary had a little lamb" you would use the letters from the first line - Mary had a little lamb; its fleece was white as snow - mhallifwwas. Add at least one uppercase letter by capitalizing the M for Mary - Mhallifwwas. Next add at least one number by changing some of the letters to numbers, such as making the first letters for little and lamb into 1s. Now we have a phrase (Mha11ifwwas) that is reasonably secure and very easy to remember.

2.  Restrict your network to only your computers. Every computer device has an embedded address on it called a media access control (MAC) address. Wireless access points and routers can be configured to exclude all other MAC addresses.

3.  Encrypt the data on your network. Encryption prevents outsiders from viewing your transmissions. There are two methods of ensuring that your information is adequately protected, Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP) and Wi-Fi Protected Access (WPA). Because WEP has several security issues associated with it, WPA is considered the more effective method, if it is supported by your equipment. However, since this is another area where a secure password is important, you should use a passphrase like I described in item #1.

4.  Choose a unique SSID. You equipment may have a default name that identifies your network, called an SSID. Be sure to setup a unique name and, if possible, avoid broadcasting that name. That will make it harder for outsiders to find your network.

5.  Install a firewall for your network. Microsoft Vista and XP both provide a firewall that is designed to protect your computer, but your network itself will be safer with its own firewall. A host based firewall is easy to obtain (some of them are free over the Internet) and can be installed directly onto your wireless device.

6.  Install and regularly update both anti-virus and anti-spyware software. You can keep attackers at bay with these protective programs. However, remember to update both of them on a regular basis. New viruses and spyware attacks are being developed daily; so your software must be updated to be effective. ∎

# "Computune-up"

**By Berry F. Phillips, member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City,**
**www.ccokc.org, bfdata@1access.net**

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Do you want your computer to run faster and increase your productivity? Of course; if you have major problems, you will need to contact your manufacturer and/or professional technical support. Many of those costly major problems can be prevented by doing "computune-ups" yourself. Yes, you can do it even without being a computer geek! My thanks to Microsoft for some of the information in this article.

## "Computune-up" (Software)

1. Clean up your desktop! If you have not used a program for a year or one that you never use that came bundled with your system why not delete it. You will get more space on your hard drive in return.

2. Clean up your system tray to the left of time on your Taskbar! When you remove icons from your system tray that you rarely use, it will speed up your system since your computer has to locate those programs whenever you boot up. I love a little freeware program called Code Stuff Starter that shows you what is running and lets you easily turn those programs on or off.

3. Defragment your computer and your registry which will make your system run faster by consolidating fragments on your hard drive and registry. I use freeware programs like SmartDefrag and Aus Logics Registry Defrag and there are others available on the Internet.

4. Check your memory. The more programs you have running the more demand on your system memory (RAM). Adding more memory to your system will increase speed and is very easy to do without paying for expensive technical support. You can do it with minimal instruction or have a technically-oriented friend or club member do it since it only takes a few minutes to replace.

5. Keep your operating system updated and run utilities weekly! I strongly suggest you download needed freeware software for your system from "46 best ever freeware programs" thoroughly tested and rated with commentary.

## "Computune-up" (Hardware)

1. Make sure your computer is unplugged before cleaning and not plugged in until your system is dry after cleaning!

2. Make sure you have the following tools available: a screwdriver, can of compressed air (available from a computer store), cotton swabs (not balls), rubbing alcohol, paper towels or anti-static cloths (available from a computer store), and water.

3. Clean the inside of your computer case! Using a screwdriver remove the side of the case opposite your motherboard. Touch as little as possible inside the computer, keeping fingers away from cards and cords due to static electricity. Blow air around all the components and along the bottom of the case, keeping the nozzle four inches away from your machine. Blow air into the power supply and into the fan from the back of your computer case. Blow air into the floppy disk and CD drives. Wipe the inside cover with a lightly moistened cloth before replacing it using your screwdriver. Clean every three months if your computer is on the floor or an especially dirty environment. Clean approximately every six to eight months in a normal environment.

4. Clean the outside of the case! Run a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol around all the openings on the back of your case giving them one swipe with a dampened swab and one with a dry swab. Clean the remaining outside of your system. Do this whenever you clean the inside of your system.

5. Clean the mouse by taking out the screws and going inside with an alcohol swab. If there is a rubber ball, clean it with water, and let it dry. Then clean the outside of the mouse. Many mouse problems are simply caused by a dirty mouse.

6. Clean the keyboard! Turn it upside down and gently shake it and most of the crumbs and dust will fall out. Blow air in and around the keys. Take an alcohol dampened cotton swab and clean the top and sides of the keys. Do this monthly; your keyboard gets very dirty and can even spread germs. If you have a laptop, follow the same procedure but take extra care with your machine.

7. Clean the monitor with a moistened paper towel or a soft lint-free cloth. (You can purchase monitor cleaning products from a computer store). Don't spray liquid directly on the screen but spray on the cloth. Wipe the screen gently to remove dust and fingerprints. (Never touch the back of the monitor). I suggest you purchase a special cleaning solution from a computer store for laptop computers.

If you have finished your "computune-up," you are on your way to being transformed into a computer geek! Do not be alarmed for the "geeks shall inherit the earth"! Bill Gates, chief geek and founder of Microsoft Corporation, has already made it; he is the role model for the rest of us! ■

*Thank You !*

**The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group is grateful for the support provided by the afore mentioned companies**

**The winner of the DSL for one year from NAPANET that was given as a door prize at the May general meeting was won by Kathy Slavens.**

**Kathy donated her prize to Dianne Prior. Her email will remain the same. prior@napanet.net. This will make it easier for her to get email from those wishing to contact her about their newsletter or the picnic.**

**Thanks again to Kathy Slavens.**

For more information about the NVPCUG, visit our Web site:
**http://www.nvpcug.org**

# Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

## Membership Application/Renewal  *

☐ New      ☐ Renewal      ☐ Information Update

*Please Print*

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                                        ☐ Work: _____

Ocupation/Profession _____Retired? _____

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General discussion of computer-related topics: ☐ Yes    ☐        No

If you do not want your preferred phone number and/or e-mail address published in the *NVPCUG Directory*, which is for the exclusive use of NVPCUG members, check the appropriate box(es):

☐  Do not list phone number    ☐  Do not list e-mail address

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(Associate Members have the same membership rights as their sponsors, except for receiving newsletters)

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_____        _____

_____        _____

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# The Art of Keeping Cool
## Part 2: Non-fan Computer Cooling

**By Jerry Goldstein, Vice President & Newsletter Editor, The PC Users Group of Connecticut,**
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Last month we went into how to cool off your desktop PC with fans. In Part 2 we look at alternative and leading edge ways to cool your computer. We also discuss how to keep your laptop from frying.

To reduce computer noise pollution computer designers have come up with many solutions to reduce the heat. Strangely, liquids have proven successful in cooling computers. Liquids provide two benefits over air cooling your computer. Liquid computers run quieter than fan cooled ones and water is better than drawing out heat than air. For complete submersion of computer parts manufacturers have immersed the computer in a variety of oil, synthetic motor oil works well but cooking oil is also used. The oil is low conducive so the electrical parts are not damaged. Complete submersion is typically only used on extreme density computers made for business purposes. One problem with oil is that it evaporates so proper maintenance of topping off the oil must be done.

You may say water and electronics don't mix (go ahead and say it, no ones around) but computer designers have worked out a way. The water flows inside tubes through the computer passively pulling the heat off the components of the computer. It works the same as your cooling system in your car. A number of computers hit the market last year using water cooling systems. The obvious problem is leaks but since water cooling has proven successful with gamers, due to waters increased heat absorbing ability over air cooling, you'll probably see more computers next year cooled by water. Just make sure you don't change a water cooled computers parts in excess of the manufacturer's parameters or you may overheat the computer and cause a pipe to leak or burst.

To assist in reducing CPU heat sinks are used. Heat sinks are the fins you see rising above the CPU. Often the CPU fan rests on top of the fins as well. The heat sink works by giving additional square footage for the heat to dissipate. Kind of like when you spread out to cool off in a summer breeze. The extra space lets the air get to the heat.

Laptops pose a unique cooling problem as they are tightly packed and sit flat and horizontally and compared to the desktop's vertical tower. Heat likes to rise but, with the laptops configuration the heat gets trapped and needs to be blown out the bottom or sides. Laptops are more to user error as people tend to forget the laptop sides need to be kept free of anything that could block the exhausts. No exhaust equals a fried computer.

When this happens it may be cheaper to buy new laptop than to try to fix the parts. Than again it may be better for you to avoid laptops if you can not remember to keep them clear of blockage.

A common mistake laptop users make is to use them in bed. The laptop sits ensconced in the bedding getting all nice, warm, and cozy. That is until they fry. If you want to use your laptop in bed buy a laptop writing pillow. These are pillows with a hard surface on one side to keep the laptop free to breathe. Than you only have to make sure you don't fall asleep with your finger on the delete key erasing your "great American novel".

To assist the cooling of laptops you can buy a laptop external fan. These are powered off the laptop's USB and some even come with additional USB ports so you don't lose the port. These fans blow cool air on the bottom of the laptop helping to drop the temperature. You can also try to save some money by buying a notebook stand that will raise your laptop a bit off the desk to give the laptop a bit more air space below it to cool off. I find that the stands are being penny wise and pound foolish though. The money you invest in the laptop fan will save you more in the long run giving your laptop added longevity. ∎

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## Clean Your DVDs

DVDs are best cleaned with a lint-free, nonabrasive cloth. Dampen the cloth in clean, lukewarm water. (If your water is especially hard or contains excess minerals, use bottled water.) Starting at the center of the disc, wipe in a straight line to the outside rim; don't use a circular motion. Repeat until you've cleaned the entire disk. For very stubborn messes, try water with a mild, nonabrasive soap or isopropyl alcohol. Commercial DVD cleaning solutions are also available.

Never use compressed air to blow a DVD clean. Compressed air can be very cold and may thermally shock the disc, causing separation or cracks, either immediately or down the road.

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# The World's First Computer

By Charlene Brown, Newsletter Editor, Big Blue and Cousins, Canada, www.bbc.org, newsletter@bbc.org

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Using Google Alerts is a good way to keep up to date on media coverage of on-going developments in scientific research. I have requested these alerts with various combinations of search words - archaeology + computer + maps or GPS or 3D models or mtDNA etc.—to obtain updates on the topics I write about in the area of computer applications in archaeology.

The alerts, which I receive several times a week, provide links to news stories and thus tend to emphasize surprising research findings or announcements of odd theories:

The discovery could accelerate efforts to clone woolly mammoths and other extinct beasts

**"The mechanism has over 30 gears, the most amazing feature of which is the incorporation of a sophisticated system of differentials. Gearing of this complexity was not known to exist until 1575!"**

Device made for contractors helps archaeologists create first-ever digital blueprints

Topographical or historical details in Gospel of John may be accurate

Some weeks ago, I received an alert about the Antikythera Mechanism, which caught my eye because it referred to two of the places I was planning to visit in October.

## The Archaeological Site of Kamiros

The Antikythera Mechanism is the world's first known 'computer.' It was developed at an academy founded by Posidonius at Kamiros on the Greek island of Rhodes. In the first century BCE, the mechanism was on board a ship, part of the treasure transported to Rome to support a triumphal parade staged by Julius Caesar. Unfortunately, the ship sank in a storm off the island of Antikythera. Since the device was found in the wreck in the early 20th century, it has been the subject of much debate - some scholarly, some not.

Various models of the mechanism have been constructed, based on fragments, now on display at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (two of the fragments shown). CT scans of the pieces have revealed much about the interior workings, and computer-enhanced, optical-imaging techniques were used to examine explanatory inscriptions on the many surfaces.

The mechanism has over 30 gears, the most amazing feature of which is the incorporation of a sophisticated system of differentials. Gearing of this complexity was not known to exist until 1575! The device determined the position of the sun and moon, and calculated other astronomical information such as the location of planets and the timing of eclipses. The possibility has even been raised that it was based on the concept of heliocentricity, rather than the then-dominant view espoused by Aristotle, that the Earth was the centre of the universe.

This ancient, and apparently lost, 'computer' technology is mentioned on various paranormal blogs to support the theory that alien beings (usually arriving from space in chariots of fire) passed on advanced technology - but departed without providing follow-up support, another concept years ahead of its time.

Or perhaps failure to form a user group caused the technology to be lost until the twentieth century.

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