COMPUTER NEWS

Volume 24, No. 8   **August 2007**

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group has served novice and experienced computer users since 1983. Through its monthly meetings, newsletters, online forum, special interest groups, mentor program and community involvement, it has helped educate people of all ages. The NVPCUG provides opportunities for people to find friends who share common interests and experiences. Through its Computers-to-Schools program, members refurbish used computer equipment for donation to local schools. Since January 2003 the NVPCUG has donated 666 computers and 139 printers. Additional equipment has been given to charitable non-profit organizations and to disadvantaged individuals.

At Aug. 15 Meeting, Verizon Returns for an Encore!

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, Aug. 15, 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 submit before the meeting by e-mailing them to Random Access moderator **Jerry Brown** at **Questions@nvpcug.org**.

Do you collect coins, DVD movies, wines, stamps, dolls, plates, music, books, military medals, fabric, antiques or something else unique? During the Computer Tutor session which will follow, **Jeff Solomon** will be demonstrating various software programs for keeping track of and organizing your collections.

No longer is the cell phone just a cell phone. Many people use it to access the surfing the Web, giving a Powerpoint demonstration and even storing important searchable documents in addition to using it as large phone book. (We've probably all seen the commercials on TV). Personally, I have over 750 contacts in mine and I not only keep phone numbers, but all the information, such as, multiple address information, e-mails, and notes about contacts and I can even synchronize it with Microsoft Outlook on my desktop computer. Our main presentation will be given by **Daryl Michael,** a manager from the Jefferson Street Verizon in Napa. He will be joined by Maria Salinas, a ssenior sales associate. Daryl presented to the NVPCUG in March and is returning to cover additional material regarding cell phone and wireless communication. So bring your questions for Daryl and Maria and find out more about cell phones and their usage.

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

NVPCUG Special Interest Groups

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

Investors SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Monday
5:30 to 7:30 p.m
Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa

Leader: Jerry Brown
(707) 254-9607
bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net

Digital Photography SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Wednesday
7:00 to 8:30 p.m
Piner's Nursing Home,
Conference Room
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa

Leader: Susy Ball
(707) 337-3998
susyball@aol.com

Macintosh SIG

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

Leader: Jim Gillespie
(707) 252-1665
napanerd@pacbell.net

President's Message

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

Time is just racing by, August is already upon us and the NVPCUG Annual Members Picnic is going to be here in just a few days. The Annual Members Picnic is scheduled for **Saturday August 18th from 1 to 6PM**. Location is the **Peterson's Christmas Tree Farm** 1120 Darms Lane, Napa. Remember if you are a member and you haven't signed up for the picnic yet, you better hurry up and do so. **Dianne Prior** has once again agreed to coordinate this event so if you are going, you need to let her know who, how many, and what you are bringing for the potluck cache. We'll bring the meat, chicken, and soft drinks. You can reach Dianne at **Membership@nvpcug.org**. If you aren't planning to go, you should be. The picnic is a lot of fun and the food is great.

We have finally received our letter from the IRS confirming us as a 501(c)(3) Public Charity. Now all we have to do maintain that status and continue the good work being done by this group.

On Tuesday July 24, 2007 **Orion E. Hill** along with **Marcia Waddell** and **Susy Ball** presented **Dey L.P**. with a plaque thanking them for their generous contributions to the Computers to Schools program.

Do you have a friend who lives in the area that is always asking you computer related questions? If you do, then encourage them to join the NVPCUG. Hey, if you have a friend who doesn't ask you those questions we want them as members too. There are several educational projects that would be advantageous to the community but each would require volunteers. The more people we have as members the easier it is to get volunteers and the less time and energy each volunteer has to commit to. One of the possible projects is a basic computer lab for those that need to start at the beginning like some seniors who have access to a computer but no idea how to work with one. I will talk more on these ideas in future columns.

You guys asked for more and we are delivering. By popular demand **Daryl Michael** of **Verizonwireless** will be our August 15th presenter. Daryl will be showing us the latest in wireless communications and answering the rest of those questions he didn't get to the last time he was there. I hope to see you at the meeting and until then,

Take care,
Ron

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

Wednesdays	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Computers-to-Schools work parties. To volunteer, contact Orion Hill, (707) 252-0637
Aug 15	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa
Sept 5	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Sept 10	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting, Jerry Brown's home, 23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
Sept 12	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Sept 13	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Macintosh SIG meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa
Sept 19	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group
Officers for 2007

Board of Directors

President	Ron Dack		President@nvpcug.org
Vice President	Jerry Brown	254-9607	VicePresident@nvpcug.org
Secretary	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Secretary@nvpcug.org
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	Treasurer@nvpcug.org

Other Directors: Susy Ball, Jim Gillespie, Bernhard Krevet, Ken Manfree, Dick Peterson, Dianne Prior, Bob Simmerman, Kathy Slavens, Jeff Solomon, Dean Unruh

Appointed Officers

Computer Recycling Coordinator
Ken Manfree 224-3722 Recycler@nvpcug.org

Computer Tutor Coordinator
Jeff Solomon Tutor@nvpcug.org

Computers-to-Schools Program Coordinator
Orion E. Hill 252-0637 CTS@nvpcug.org

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

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

Librarian
Dean Unruh 226-9164 Librarian@nvpcug.org

Membership Director
Dianne Prior 252-1506 Membership@nvpcug.org

Mentor Program Coordinator
Dick Peterson 259-1712 Mentors@nvpcug.org

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

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

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

Publicity Director
Ron Dack Publicity@nvpcug.org

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

Special Projects Director
Jeff Solomon Projects@nvpcug.org

Webmaster
Ron Dack Webmaster@nvpcug.org

• All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

Microsoft Office 2007 Publisher

By Don Robertson, member of NVPCUG, Napa CA, `jdrobertson@att.net`,

`www.nvpcug.org`

Given the opportunity to evaluate the latest Microsoft Office 2007 Publisher, I am using the Pub 2007 to create the August edition of the Napa Valley Dixieland Jazz Society Newsletter of which I am editor.

Since I inherited the NVDJS newsletter, about a year ago, I have used the prior editions as a template and just changed the articles, thus I have not had any experience in starting a publication from scratch. Our publication consists of two 8.5 by 14 sheets, printed on both sides and folded to provide an 8.5 by 7 booklet with 8 pages. We have sponsors, who have provided advertising artwork in the form of JPEG images about the size of business cards. These are moved about on the 8 pages so no one gets the same location every month. Otherwise it is a matter of changing dates and bands for several other local jazz societies and commercial venues, along with regular columns by our officers and other contributors. The previous editor used Adobe Pagemaker and converted it to MS Publisher so I wouldn't have to buy Pagemaker. I have been using Publisher from MS Office 2000 which came bundled with one of my computers.

Of the MS Publisher features, I have only used the text flow, which allows lengthy text articles to be divided among test boxes placed within 16 pre-existing columns on the 8 pages.

When I loaded Publisher 2007, I noticed a much more colorful interface. The opening screen gives a variety of choices of publication types, and on the right are small representations of recent publications. Thus I only need to double click on my prior month's newsletter and update the content after juggling the sponsors' advertisements.

The biggest improvement for me was that there is now a mail merge tool within Publisher 2007, with an easy interface to place the names and addresses wherever I wished in the publication. Previously we had to use a MS WORD document and run the first page through a second printing operation after creating a mail merged document from our EXCEL membership list. I found there WAS a mail merge menu item in Publisher 2000, but it wasn't available in my edition.

However, after using the mail merge wizard and getting the names and addresses where I wanted, I attempted to create a merged document to send through the printer once. First I realized that the merged document would consist of four times the number of pages as the names on our list. In our case it is about 130 (x 4 =520 pages) 8.5 x 14 with pictures and color graphics. Deciding this was too much of a strain on the memory, I created a copy of the newsletter, but only the front page where the addresses go. So far so good BUT, when I clicked on the place in the mail merge wizard to create the 130 page document, MS Publisher, hesitated then CRASHED (You know, the "I'm sorry but this program must close" message.). This happened every time I tried to run mail merge. I even created a smaller (25 names) list (an MS EXCEL file), and rebooted my computer. Then I noticed another option, instead of creating a new publication, I could select "append to existing publication" So I created a copy of my original front page and gave it a slightly different name, and directed the merge to append to this document. This time it worked gave me a 131 page document all front pages but with a different recipient's name and address. I still don't know why the "merge to new publication" option caused a crash, but I have a workaround.

In addition, I thought the 2007 version was a little too rigid. I could find no options or customization process to get rid of the "getting started with Publisher 2007" opening screen. Also, there were annoying "nanny" warnings about what file I was going to open, and the mail merge command always launched a wizard, instead of running mail merge from the toolbar as is done in WORD (2000).

I explored some of the other applications in the "Getting Started" opening wizard, such as calendars, signs and business cards. All have extensive libraries of templates and artwork. The use of these is not terribly intuitive, but there is an extensive help document. Much of Publisher 2007 is directed to easily producing documents for business applications. Since much of my document was created by someone else in a different program, I'm not sure how easy it would be to create it from scratch. It is a series of text boxes interspersed with JPEG graphics. I started with a blank legal sized page in landscape, then added a big text block. There was a toolbar icon that opened a column dialog where I was able to select 4 columns across the 14 inch dimension which results in 2 columns per page when folded. This is as far as I went in simulating reproducing my publication from scratch. ∎

A Router can Help Protect Your Computer

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

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A few years ago, you had probably not heard the term "router", unless you used one in your wood-working class in high school. Today, you hear much more about the word "router" when it is used in conjunction with computers and the Internet. In the computer world, a router is an important piece of equipment and one that is making its way into everyday terminology. So I would like to tell you a little about what a router is and what it can do for you.

A router is a hardware device that connects networks of two or more computers and forwards data across a network of computers. Devices like network printers can also be hooked up to a router. Routers that you might see in home and small business use are generally small rectangular or square devices about 63 to 83 in size. This type of router will have ports on the back where you can hook in computers, broadband modems, and other devices. A router has lights that indicate its status and the status of the connected devices. Wireless modems often have small antennas. Routers can usually sit on a desktop or the floor, but they can also be hung on a wall.

You can think of a router as a kind of traffic cop that stands on the corner and routes the traffic to their final destination. Just as a traffic cop knows which direction a car is coming from and which way it wants to go, a router knows what data comes from each of the computers, what data each computer has requested, and what data to return to each computer. Routers are the workhorses of the Internet. They make sure that your email gets to your intended recipient rather than one of the millions of other computers. Within a smaller network router make sure that the data or the webpage that you request is returned to your computer and not the computer of your co-worker or other family member.

While routers have been used for years in the Internet and by businesses, the proliferation of home networks has brought the router into the home and into the realm of the average computer user. In a home, a router typically is used to share an Internet connection. It connects a home network of two or more computers with the network of your Internet Service Provider (ISP), giving each of your computers Internet connectivity. Your ISP issues you one address on the Internet, called an IP or Internet Protocol address. If you have multiple machines at home, a router lets you share that single IP address.

The router watches the traffic going out and waits for the response to the outgoing traffic. It then routes the incoming traffic to the proper computer within your home network. Since the router is watching all the traffic, it knows what information you have requested and only allows incoming traffic that is expected. So if your computer has requested a Web page, it will allow that Web page to come into your computer. Other traffic that has not been requested is tossed aside and not allowed to come in.

This ignoring of unexpected incoming traffic has an interesting side effect. It actually protects your computer from many malicious attacks from the outside. So the router, since it protects all the computers on your network, is considered a hardware firewall.

In fact, a router plus the firewall that is built-into Windows will, in my opinion, give the average user all the protection that they need. That is, provided that they follow safe computing procedures, like not opening unexpected email attachments and running a good antivirus program.

For heavy duty computer users who want to make sure that their computers are completely protected, third party software firewalls, like those offered by Symantec, McAfee, and Zone Alarm, do offer the added safeguard of watching the traffic flowing in and out of each software program on your computer. However, these firewalls can slow down your computer. They often ask the computer user to permit or deny permission for programs that request Internet access. If you are just an average Joe, it can often be very difficult to determine if you should grant or deny that permission since the names of the files are often nebulous. I can't tell you how many times I have been called to repair someone's Internet connectivity only to find out that they had inadvertently told the firewall to deny Internet access to a program that can't function without it.

So having a router not only lets you share an Internet connection, it also protects your computer without slowing it down. As a matter of fact, even if you only have one computer, you can still use a router between your broadband Internet connection and your computer to help protect your perimeter. With the price of small routers falling to under $50, a router can be a wise investment for today's computer user, even if they have to pay someone to come in and set it up for them. ∎

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2007 APCUG Digital Photo Contest

Following up on the success of our 2006 Digital Photo Contest, the APCUG is pleased to announce our 2007 Digital Photo Contest. Again, it will showcase the talents of our member group photographers! Somewhere inside all of us is a creative genius just waiting for the chance to grab the spotlight … and we want to give you that chance. There will be multiple chances to win … including … professional judging and our own "People's Choice Award" chosen from our Convention attendees! So, grab those cameras and start shooting!

Contest Rules

1. The photo contest event will begin on September 1, 2007.
2. Final submittal of entries will be October 15, 2007. Entries not postmarked on or before that date will be disqualified.
3. The contest is open to all individuals who are members of APCUG affiliated User Groups. Photos may be submitted in each of four categories:
    a. People
    b. Animals
    c. Landscape
    d. Still life

    Note: Landscape can be mountains, sky, sea, flowers, desert, trees, etc. Still life is any object not shown in motion; architecture, automobiles, boats, sculpture, historical objects, etc. Let your imagination look through your viewfinder!
4. Entries must be taken with a digital camera
5. All photos are to be printed no larger than 8 ½ x 11. Panoramic prints are accepted but should not exceed the same area as 8 ½ x 11 (93 square inches). Prints must be made on glossy photo paper.
6. Prints are to be without borders. Entries received with borders will be trimmed before presentation for judging.
7. Entries can be color or black and white.
8. The entry label is to be pasted or taped to the back of each print.
9. Entrants will submit one photograph (with 4 prints of it) per category and a CD or floppy disk with the image in .jpg format. Entrants can enter all 4 categories if desired.
10. Entrants will be judged for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place under the following criteria but will not be applied to the People's Choice Award:
    a. Composition (5 points)
    b. Technical Skill (5 points)
    c. Visual Impact (10 points)
11. All Entries must be postmarked no later than October 15, 2007 and mailed to:

    APCUG Photo Contest
    C/O Roger Tesch
    1918 Greenway Cross, Apt 3
    Fitchburg, WI 53713-3037

    APCUG will not be responsible for any lost photos in the mail. Entrants should retain copies of the photos. Entries that are not postmarked by October 15, 2007 are disqualified.
12. There will be 3 judges reviewing all entries. Each category will have 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards. The People's Choice award will be selected from all entries, and that selection will be chosen by the attendees at the APCUG Convention in January, 2008. First Place winners and the Peoples Choice winner will be published in the APCUG Reports. Awards and certificates will be presented at the APCUG Convention in January, 2008.

See **http://reports.apcug.org/2007q3/12.htm** for Entry Form for the APCUG 2007 Photo Contest and go to **http://www.apcug.net** for further information. ∎

Why Dogs Shouldn't Use Computers

1. He's distracted by cats chasing his mouse.
2. SIT and STAY were hard enough; CUT and PASTE are out of the question.
3. Saliva-coated floppy disks refuse to work.
4. Three words: carpal paw syndrome.
5. Involuntary tail wagging is a dead give-away that he's browsing www.purina.com instead of working.
6. The fire hydrant icon is simply too frustrating.
7. He can't help attacking the screen when he hears, "You've Got Mail."
8. It's too messy to "mark" every Web site he visits.
9. The FETCH command isn't available on all platforms.
10. He can't stick his head out of Windows XP.

How I Find My "Deleted" Emails

By Tom Thiel, President, Lake-Sumter Computer Society, www.lscs.us, tthiel5@Comcast.net

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

Old Emails are one of my most frequent retrievals from my backed-up files.

My current rate of email accumulation is about 20-30 a day. I've forced myself to maintain my accumulated emails in my Inbox and Sent Emails folders to a maximum of not more than 1,000 each. So periodically I just arbitrarily "lope off" the oldest one-half to one month or so of emails. to manage some of these by placing them into other folders but that isn't very effective for me.

What this procedure means is that frequently I find myself wishing I still had that old "deleted" email. (The latest one was the Acoustica email sending us Spin it Again software.)

How do I retrieve that email after I've "deleted" it from my Inbox or Sent Items? Here is how I do it with Internet Explorer 6.

Sometime ago I found out where IE stores my emails. What I did then was to move the place where my emails are stored by default to a folder named "Toms emails" in my "My Documents" folder. (How to do this is briefly outlined in the addendum at the end of this article.)

My basic backup procedure is to frequently, at least once a week but usually more frequently, and usually daily with very active folders, copy the contents of my My Documents folder to an external USB connected 300 GB Maxtor drive and to other similar portable USB drives (a 100 GB SimpleTec, and a 40 GB Pocketec hard drive) that are stored away from my computer.

When I do this of course I am backing up the current contents of all my emails at the moment the My Documents backup is performed. (Actually, any true backup procedure will work.)

So, when I want one of those old emails that had been arbitrarily "loped" off the tail end, I do the following:

1. Open Outlook Express and set it to Work Offline so that new emails are not loaded in with old ones (only needed if you are continuously on-line). You may set IE to Work Offline as follows: With IE open select File, and then check Work Offline. No new emails can come in under this mode.

2. Now close OE.

3. With Windows Explorer I find the folder "Toms emails" in My Documents and rename it to "Toms emails Today"

4. Then I try to guess what backup might have the particular email I'm looking for from among the various backups I have on the external USB drives.

5. With Windows Explorer I find the folder "Toms emails" on that external backup copy.

6. Then I Copy that folder and Paste it into my current My Documents folder.

7. I now see two email folders in My Documents; "Toms emails" which just was Pasted from the backup copy and the folder "Toms emails Today" which had been renamed earlier.

8. Next I open IE again.

9. It asks me "Do you want to work online?"

10. Be sure to say NO!

11. I then try to locate the desired email; sometimes I use IE's Find capability to do this. Hopefully, I have guessed correctly and I find the desired email the first guess.

12. I open it and then copy it to my Desktop by choosing File and then Save As and Save To Desktop.

13. Now I close IE and with Windows Explorer find the folder "Toms emails", the one I just loaded from the backup, and from which I retrieved the desired email, and I delete it.

14. Next I rename "Toms emails Today" back to "Toms emails"

15. Then I open IE and say Yes I want to Work Online.

16. I find the email that I had copied to my desktop and double-click on it to open in IE. I can then save it back into my current emails and do whatever I wanted to do with it.

And that what I do to find that old "deleted" email! Of course it only works for so long as you maintain those backup copies – in my case about six months.

Addendum: How you may change the default location where your e-mails are stored in Outlook Express.

In OE, first select the **Tools** menu, and then **Options** tab. On the pop-up screen, click the **Maintenance** tab, then click the **Store Folder** button.

Outlook Express will show you where it is currently keeping your e-mail files.

You may then select **Change** and a **Browse** window will appear where you may chose to indicate the new place you wish to store your emails. ∎

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Dumb Things to Avoid While Using Your Computer

By Vinny La Bash, a member and regular columnist of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida, vlabash@comcast.net, www.spcug.org

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

To paraphrase a recent TV commercial, we all do dumb things, but doing them with your computer doesn't have to be one of them.

Most of us know that our computers work better when they are plugged into an active electrical outlet, but ask any service technician how many times he or she has encountered that situation, and you may be surprised at the answer. Every one of us, no matter how experienced, has done at least one dumb thing with our computers. Maybe you pressed a wrong combination of keys and changed a setting you didn't mean to disturb. Maybe nothing much happened or you ended up crashing your system.

Whatever does or doesn't happen, paying attention to what you're doing combined with a dash of forethought can prevent most dumb mistakes.

David Letterman has his top ten lists. I offer my top six. My list will do little to entertain you, but it will help you to be smarter about using your system.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 6:
Failing to install or keep your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs up-to-date.

Some people think that keeping these programs current is too much trouble. Others quibble because sometimes they have to disable their anti-virus program to install another application.

Don't be misguided. Viruses and spyware can gum up your system to a point where your machine can be rendered useless and inoperable. You could be a victim of fraud or risk turning your machine into a "zombie" where a third party can use your computer for criminal activities. Innocent people have been arrested and charged with downloading child pornography. They had no idea that their machines were compromised for illegal purposes, yet they found themselves in deep trouble.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 5:
Indiscriminately installing freeware and shareware you find on the internet.

If you are guilty of this it's only a matter of time before you get infected with a piece of sloppily written software that will cause your system to behave erratically or crash. If you follow dumb with dumber by installing pirated software, don't ask me for help.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 4:
Share your files and peripherals with the immediate world.

Turn off file and printer sharing. Unless you do this you could open your computer to access by using a public wireless hotspot with your laptop. Even if you don't use a laptop be aware that Windows, by default, has administrative sharing for the root of each drive. You can turn this feature off in the Systems Administration portion of the Control Panel.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 3:
Browse through the internet without a firewall.

People new to computers are most likely to make this mistake. They tend to be entirely unaware that they need a firewall because nobody told them what a firewall is or why they need one. This lack of knowledge exposes them to every virus, worm or malicious hacker in the computer universe. Fortunately, this exposure can be easily corrected. Many modems and routers have built-in firewall protection. Personal firewalls can easily be downloaded from the web. Go to www.avast.com and download one of the best all around network security programs in existence. The best part is that this excellent program is free to the general public.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 2:
Picking weak passwords.

Every hacker in the known universe understands that many people use their children's or grandchildren's name as a password. Cracking that kind of security is as easy as breathing. Don't use a family member's birthday or social security number as a password either. It's the kind of information that is all too easy to obtain. Don't create passwords from a dictionary. Hackers have programs which automatically compare passwords against dictionary entries.

Passwords should be at least 8 characters long, and be a combination of upper and lower case characters and numbers. The common objection is that they are hard to remember. That also makes them hard to ➔

crack. Create a phrase that you can easily remember and use the first letter of each word along with logical numbers. For example, "Our vacation in Jamaica begins on the fifth day of August" becomes OviJbot5do8. A password like that is impossible to guess and is not found in any dictionary.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 1: Never backing up your data or system files.

Even if you never do any other dumb thing while computing, failure to back up your data can negate everything else if you lose important information. There are too many things that can go wrong for you not to be backing up your data. Hard disk crashes, fire or water damage, tornados, hurricanes, magnetic interference, and theft are just a few of the many things that can damage or destroy data.

Backing up data can be time consuming and inconvenient, but losing your data could be catastrophic. There are many strategies you can use to protect your data, but any strategy is better than none. Don't think that merely copying your

data files to an external disk constitutes backing up. Make copies of your essential data to three CDs or three sets of CDs. Keep one set at home, but in a different room than where the computer is housed. Keep another set at the office if you work for a living. If you're retired ask a friend to keep a set for you. Do the same for your friend. The third set of disks should be kept in a secure place like a safe deposit box.

Data is the only irreplaceable thing on your computer. You can replace hardware, operating systems and application software, but you can't go to a store and buy a replacement copy of your data.

The dumbest thing I can remember doing is backing up my data files to a RAM disk.   ∎

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Improve Computing Pleasure with Free Widgets for Windows and Mac

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; radio and TV show host, Iwilsker@apcug.net

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WEBSITES

http://widgets.yahoo.com
http://widgets.yahoo.com/gallery

Many of us are extremely busy, and often lack the time to search the internet for items of frequent interest. Many of us have dull and boring desktops displayed on our monitors, often using the default images of our computer or software maker. Fortunately for us, there is a free service offered by Yahoo!, called "widgets".

Widgets, also known as "gadgets" by some web services, are small programs that display a wide variety of information on the otherwise wasted space on our desktops. This information is automatically updated on a frequent basis, providing the user with current data without loading another program or browsing to a website, as widgets are displayed on the desktop on a full time basis.

Widgets is the name for the products distributed by Yahoo!, and gadgets are distributed by other web service providers. While similar in appearance and function, widgets and gadgets are generally not interchangeable, and in order to conserve system resources, users should choose gadgets or widgets, but not both.

Yahoo!'s widgets can be found at widgets. yahoo.com. Upon opening that page, the user is greeted with a button to download the widget engine, which includes about a dozen popular widgets, including a picture frame (displays digital photos on desktop), weather display, notepad, daily planner, maps, stock ticker, and others. The opacity of widgets can be controlled to make them nearly opaque, hiding the desktop behind the widget, to almost totally transparent, fully displaying the desktop. Widgets can be dragged and dropped anywhere on the screen. I have a lot of icons on my desktop, and my widgets cover several of the icons, but this is not a problem as I drag the widget out of the way whenever I want to access those previously covered icons.

The widget engine works on Windows XP with service pack 2, Windows 2000 with service pack 4, Vista, or Macs with OS X 10.3.9 or higher. An internet connection is necessary in order to update the widgets, and 512 megabytes (minimum) ram is recommended for improved performance.

Among the default widgets included with the widget engine, I personally have the stock ticker and weather widgets loaded and running, and also have a TV widget which displays the shows for the next few hours on the

channels of my choice.

The stock ticker widget is very easy to use, and is automatically updated every few minutes. The default listings are for popular quotes, such as the Dow Jones Industrial Averages, NASDAQ, Yahoo!, and similar issues. It is very simple to modify the listing to show any desired quotes and indices, and the number of issues displayed is only limited by the space available on the desktop.

The weather widget is customizable for any city or zip code, and graphically displays the weather for five days, current conditions, temperature, and moon phases. By moving the cursor over the weather widget (sometimes it also requires a mouse click), a balloon opens which displays the humidity, barometric pressure, wind chill or heat index, wind direction and speed, and the time of most recent update.

The widget I seem to refer to the most is the TV widget called "TV Tracker", which can be downloaded from the Widget Gallery. Once downloaded and installed, a city and zip code is selected, which displays the on-air, cable, and satellite options and carriers locally available. Selecting the appropriate carrier displays a two hour grid of what is on television. Different genres, such as sports and movies are highlighted in different colors for easy viewing. Clicking on a highlighted title will "fetch" the description and details of the movie or sports event,

displaying it in a sub-widget adjacent to the primary widget. I will be honest and say that there are several cable channels available to me that I simply never watch, and TV Tracker easily allows for the display of only selected channels, making the display that much easier to follow.

The widget gallery, `widgets.yahoo.com/gallery`, currently lists 4242 Windows widgets available for download, and 3977 widgets for Mac, in a variety of categories. As I type this, Yahoo! is featuring Motor Trend Magazine's "Gas Alert Savings" widget which displays a localized list of the lowest priced gas stations in the area, and is available for both Windows and Mac. Widgets can be searched by name, type, or date. The widget categories listed in the gallery are latest (4242 widgets), updates (2158 widgets), fun & games (575 widgets), date & time (470), news feeds (952), system utilities (354), sight and sound (554), geek stuff (120), cam viewers (273), widget tools (63), app (application) enhancers (109), search tools (352), and various (miscellaneous, 416). Each category may contain hundreds of different widgets, all of which are available for free download.

I have downloaded several other widgets, and selectively load them when I want, and stop them when no longer

wanted. In Windows, widgets as a group can be controlled by clicking on the widget icon in the system tray, near the clock. The widget icon is a black background, with two diagonal and interlocked gears. Right clicking on the widget icon displays a comprehensive menu of options which allows the user to control the appearance and function of widgets, load and unload widgets, and otherwise control their behavior.

Some widgets that I selectively use are news feeds which display real time news headlines from hundreds of sources, live weather radar, streaming audio from dozens of radio stations from all over the globe, and many others. Although I have never used it, there is even a pregnancy calculator widget!

Widgets can be a fun adjunct to improve the satisfaction and use of our computers. ∎

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Secure Your Flash Drive Cap

By Fran Damratowski. Refurbishing SIG Leader, Chesapeake PC Users Group, MD,
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Have you ever misplaced your flash drive cap? No need to ever do that again. Secure it with a button. You will need a shirt button, some heavy thread such as carpet thread, double sided self-sticking adhesive mounting foam, double sided sticky tape, and some colorless nail polish.

1. Run the thread diagonally through two of the buttonholes and secure with a square knot.
2. Place the knot on the top of the button not on the flat bottom of the button.
3. Cut the thread long enough to secure it with enough play to remove the cap.
4. Cut a small piece of the double-sided self-sticking adhesive mounting foam about the size of the button.
5. Remove the backing from one side of the double-sided self-sticking adhesive mounting foam and place a small piece of the double-sided sticky tape on the sticky side of the double-sided self-sticking adhesive mounting foam. (The double-sided self-sticking adhesive mounting foam does not hold well without the sticky tape. The tape alone does not hold well either.)
6. Securely attach the flat side of the button to the sticky tape.
7. Trim the excess tape and foam using an x-acto knife.
8. Remove the backing from the other side of the double-sided self-sticking adhesive mounting foam and place another piece of double sided sticky tape on the foam.
9. Securely attach the button foam and tape to the flash drive cap.
10. Secure the other end of the thread to the flash drive or lanyard.
11. Leave enough play to easily remove the cap, but not get tangled.
12. Use the colorless nail polish to secure the knots so they don't become undone.
13. After the nail polish dries trim the thread.

OR

You could go to your local photo shop and buy a $2+ button size lens cap keeper (or cap retainer) and modify it as needed. Most of them appear to come with elastic bands that are placed around the lens barrel as opposed to a leash that can be attached to another part of the camera. ∎

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NVPCUG Mentor Program

By Dick Peterson, winemaker@aol.com, www.nvpcug.org

Most of our members may not remember that we've had a membership Computer Mentor program for several years now. From time to time, the NVPCUG newsletter listed members who had sufficient qualifications and experience to be able to help other members learn each of more than twenty different software programs. In recent months, maybe years, virtually no one has bothered to use it, and I think I know why.

Learning to use any software is increasingly easy because of available Jr. College and H.S. classes. Only two months ago, I took an NVCC course in Quick Books online and it was outstanding. The Video Professor and other sets of learning CDs are excellent, as well as easy to use, and what you learn is easy to understand and remember. Any of these teaches much more than you could get out of the half hour or so of mentoring that would be normal to ask for.

But NVPCUG members have a kicker: It has become quite easy for users with a computer problem to simply send out an E-Mail plea to the other members, explaining his/her problem and asking what others would suggest to handle the problem. Usable answers are immediate, to the point and mostly helpful. Our "membership only" mailing list works well for that and the beauty of it is that nobody has dominated, mismanaged or otherwise abused the privilege of sending e-mail to our whole list. That's a great positive, and "that's what e-mail is for" comes close to summing it up. Bravo! ∎

Going 100% Digital with Genealogy – or Any – Records

By Tom J. Thiel, President, Lake-Sumter Computer Society, Florida,

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In April 2007, I offered a presentation with the same title as above our the Lake-Sumter Computer Society's Genealogy Special Interest Group. For a handout see:

http://www.lscs.us/presentations/ 070412%20Thiel%20Going%20 100%20Percent%20Digital%20Handout.pdf

In my presentation — which was based on an excellent article with a similar title by Dick Eastman in his outstanding Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter Plus Edition — I extensively described the Xerox DocuMate 152 scanner that costs about $500 with bundled software. This, of course, was the one Mr. Eastman had obtained and on which he based his fine article.

Well, for me at least and for many the roughly $500 for the DocuMate 152 was a little bit on the pricey side and also it is more of a work group scanner with office document scanning as its primary design criteria.

One of the alternative scanners I found in my research for the presentation and also mentioned in my presentation was the Xerox DocuMate 510, flatbed scanner with an Automatic Document Feeder (ADF) rated at 10 pages per minute.

About a month ago I decided to obtain the DocuMate 510!

PC World has a very nice review of the Xerox 510 at the following web site; http://www.pcworld.com/ article/id,114941-page,1/article.html — two paragraphs were extracted in the text below.

"If you need to turn a stack of paper documents into editable electronic text, using a scanner with optical character recognition software and an automatic document feeder attachment — like Xerox's new $350 DocuMate 510 — is a speedy alternative to typing."

"While the DocuMate 510 is a flatbed model — and therefore takes up more desk space than slimmer sheet-fed scanners—its removable lid allows you to scan pages from books or other bound volumes, including oversize originals. For any business or workgroup that needs an affordable document scanner, the DocuMate 510 is a solid choice." End Quote

I was able to find the 510 on the internet from a low of $298 to a high of $359. I paid $312 from Buy.com; however, I found that the local Office Depot (Mount Dora, FL) has the DocuMate 510 for $299, complete with bundled software.

And of special note, through June 30, 2007, Xerox is offering a $50 mail in rebate.

So far I am totally pleased with my DocuMate 510!

Scanner assembly went effortlessly with the aid of a very well illustrated assembly schematic manual. Installation requires that the software be installed before connecting the 510 to your computer via the USB port.

The 510 came with ScanSoft PaperPort 9.0 which controls the scanner, TextBridge Pro 9.0 for Optical Character Recognition, and ArcSoft Photo Impressions editing software all on one CD-ROM. It also came with a 58-page installation and scanning manual done quite nicely in slick paper, and a12-month warranty.

After the software was installed, the scanner components were connected to power and then I connected it to the computer with the USB cable. When I attempted to scan a document, however, I received an error message. By entering the error code into Google I was quickly able to determine that I had failed to adequately unlock the shipping lock slider switch.

After sliding the switch, the scanner worked perfectly. The sheet feeder works very well and even handles quite thin papers although hearing those go through the feeder may give one cause to worry a bit.

The ADF handles variable length paper from about 6 inches to up to 14-inch legal length papers — all in the same stack in the ADF. And the fact that the scanner's cover may be easily removed to copy from books is also a plus for genealogists and for general home applications.

Mr. Eastman, and others, speaks at length on what these scanners and their software, collectively known as a Document Management System, will mean — reducing the number of filing cabinets, safer storage and more rapid and complete retrieval.

All of these are, of course, quite true, but you should be aware that to convert all of your existing file cabinet's contents to digital information is not something you will be able to achieve quickly! Scanning all of your existing documents, whether your genealogy documentation or your credit card, banking or utility records, will take an appreciable amount of time and effort regardless of the scanner you employ.

At present I am scanning my bank statements, utility bills, medical Medicare and supplemental insurance statements, medical reports and lab analyses, credit cards and the like.

➔

I have not yet begun to scan my Genealogy documents, but intend to — this will be a daunting task; not the scanning but the organizing and assembling of the documents that I have to get them ready for scanning.

When you convert records to a document management system as I am doing with the 510, you need to decide what conversion scenario you will follow: scan all the documents that exist in your files or scan from the day you begin scanning forward.

I have decided to convert most of my documents starting from today forward (except of course for genealogy records). This is simply because it is easier to do this than to "empty the file cabinet first."

Unlike the DocuMate 152, which is a duplex scanner meaning that both the front and rear of a page are scanned simultaneously with the same pass of the paper through the scanner, the 510 is a simplex meaning that only one side is scanned at a time.

However, the PaperPort Deluxe 9 scanning software packaged with the scanner handles this situation very well. Simply load the stack of papers and scan the front side of all pages. PaperPort will then ask "scan the other side?" and if you wish to you simply turn the stack over and scan the reverse side. The software handles the pagination automatically.

The 510 is very simple to use; one of the more difficult aspects of using it is to remember to load the paper with the face up!

The PaperPort 9.0 software, originally offered by ScanSoft and now by Nuance, works very effectively. One item I would like improved is the default file name, which is "Day of week, Month, Day and Year.pdf." Other options are available but it appears that all use the current date in one form or another.

So far I have not extensively used the OCR capability as that is a slower scanning process.

Another very useful feature of the PaperPort software is that it is a printer and may be used to print any document directly to a pdf, including documents from the web.

Managing the scanned documents effectively can also be challenging. I created a file folder structure similar to my physical filing cabinet and that seems to work very well so far.

I scan a document or set of documents and then merely drag these and drop them in the appropriate folder. I then rename the file to usually "YYMMDD Plus a Few Descriptive Words" in front of the default file name.pdf. A medical record, for example, would contain the year, month and day of the medical service, the physician's name and procedure, followed by the default scan date. I find that using YYMMDD format for my records allows me to sort or otherwise keep a logical file and folder order sequence by date; to use the standard MMDDYY format will not sort logically.

If you are going to scan older records then you should spend some time in document preparation before beginning scanning. Ensuring that documents are in proper order, staples removed, corners straightened, etc., will speed up the scanning process.

And you must verify your copy before discarding the paper document! I am discarding most of the documents I have scanned so far.

All of my scanning to date has been black and white and at 300 dots per inch resolution, which in most cases has been adequate. This will result in a pdf file of perhaps 35KB per page.

If you decide to convert your paper files to 100% digital records, then you simply must practice excellent and very frequent backup procedures. Otherwise you will lose everything! I make a copy on an external drive after every session.

The choice is yours of course, but my advise is: "Go 100% Digital, and do it now!"   ∎

MS Word - Keyboard Shortcut

Quickly move the cursor to the location it was at when the document was last saved by pressing SHIFT + F5.

Potluck Picnic set for Saturday, August 18th, 2007

By Coordinator Dianne Prior,
prior@napanet.net,
www.nvpcug.org

Dick and Sandy Peterson have again graciously offered to host our August Members Potluck Picnic. The location is the redwood grove and pond at **Peterson's Family Christmas Tree Farm**, 1120 Darms Lane, Napa. The date is Saturday, August 18th, 2007 from 1:30 PM. Signups will be available until the General Meeting on Wednesday August 15th, but you may e-mail me before then at **prior@napanet.net.** I need to know your name, the names of any guest you are bringing, what food you are bringing for the potluck, and if you can help with setup or cleanup. Extra chairs are needed also.

Napa Valley P.C. Users Group will barbeque chicken and beefsteaks. The group will also provide nonalcoholic beverages and ice, paper plates, cups, plastic ware, and napkins. Alcoholic beverages are BYOB. There will be games including balloon darts, horseshoes, washer toss and floppy (CD) throw with prizes awarded to the winners. You're welcome to bring cards or board games as well. **Mel Cohen** will entertain us on his midi accordion. This is a time to visit with old friends and make new ones. We hope to see you all there. The potluck picnic is always a lot of fun and the food is great and plentiful. ■

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group
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❑ New   ❑ Renewal   ❑ Information Update

Please Print

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Do you want to be added to the following NVPCUG e-mail lists?

News and announcements: ❑ Yes ❑ No

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):

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

Exploring Windows Explorer

By Jim Sanders, Editor, The Orange Bytes, North Orange County Computer Club, California, www.noccc.org, editor@noccc.org

the time. Some use it in what I consider the true form. Some, because you use it under the title of My Computer. And all of us when we are using Internet Explorer, because Windows Explorer is an integral part of Internet Explorer. I continue to be surprised at how many people do not know that you can right click on the start button and go directly to Windows Explorer. I prefer that to the My Computer path because it brings up Windows Explorer with the left hand pane of the window displaying the tree structure of the files. It surprises me that many people who use the My Computer path don't know that they can bring up the tree pane by clicking on the folder button in the taskbar.

Something that is almost sad, is how many people live with the default settings of Windows Explorer. One of the first things that I do with a new installation of Windows XP, is to open Windows Explorer, go to the view menu and click on details. The next step is to open the tools menu, and click on folder options. When the folder options window opens, but what had a slump and wrong that a mile and the click on the view tab. Then click on display the full path in the title bar to place a checkmark in the box, click on show hidden files and folders to put the bullet on that line, click on a hide extensions for known file types to remove the checkmark. Personally, I think Microsoft did new users in particular, a major disservice by having the last item set to by default. The resulting confusion of having two or more files with the same name, and not differentiated by the file extension, causes a fair amount of distress in users that are not sure which file to choose. I like to see the protected operating system files but you may be more comfortable leaving them hidden. The last item is to check is show control panel in my computer. Then click on apply, wait for it to finish, then click on apply to all holders, then click on OK and you're done.

As a result of the above actions the right hand window pane will now have four columns, name, size, height, and date modified. The sort will be set to alphabetical by name, numbers and special characters first, then A to Z. If you

want the sort to be Z to A, click on name at the top of the name column. If you want the sort to be by size, click on size at the top of the size column and Windows Explorer will sort the folder by file size, smallest file first. To reverse the order, and place the largest file at the top of the list, click on size again. The same procedure works with the type column and the date modified column. There is a faint divider bar between each of the columns located in the horizontal bar where the names of the columns are located. One of the easiest ones to find is one space to the right of the column heading Size. If you move the mouse cursor to that area you should see a double headed arrow appear. If you then click and hold the left mouse button, you can adjust the width of the edge of the columns. The width of the name column is often too narrow to show the complete file name. Having the complete path displayed in the address bar, is often useful when you need to copy and paste that path into other applications.
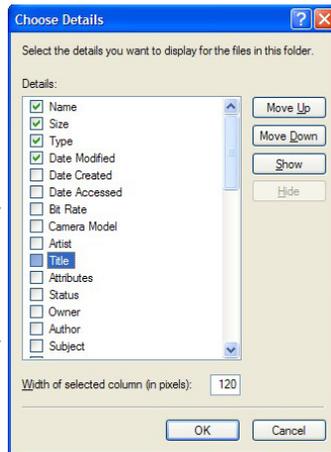
When you have a lot of files in a folder, there is a navigation shortcut in the name column that too few people seem to know about. When you first open a folder, the display will show any other folders (or what should really be called subdirectories) within that folder followed by files, starting with the letter A. If you need to get to a file that starts with a letter T, you might have to scroll through several hundred files to get there. There is a faster way. Click on the first file in the folder to highlight it, then type the first letter of the file that you wish to find. In this example the display would immediately jump to the first file that starts with the letter T. If you know what you are searching for, and can type quickly, you can follow the first letter with the second letter of the name and it will take you to that point instead.

I think initially setting all folders on a hard disk to the detail view is the best starting point and is best suited for the majority of folders. Windows XP allows you to customize the view of each and every folder and will remember what settings you assigned to a given folder. For instance, for folders that contain photos it is often

more useful if the thumbnail view, or the film strip view, is chosen so that you can see what each picture actually is. The advantage of the thumbnail view is that you can find images quicker than in the filmstrip view. The advantage of the filmstrip view is that you get a line of thumbnails across the bottom of the pane and a larger view of which ever thumbnail is highlighted. There are also mouse click arrow's that allow you to view the next or previous image. Don't forget that you can right click on any of the thumbnails and bring up a whole new menu of things that you can do with the image.

Everybody should learn how to do file housekeeping on their computer disk. Being able to move files from one folder to another, to copy files from one folder to another, to create new folders, and several other functions along those lines can help you keep your data organized. It should be noted that most of these functions can be accomplished in more than one fashion. For instance, if you wished to copy a file from folder A to folder B, you would first select the file by left clicking on it which will cause it to be highlighted. You could then open the edit menu by clicking on edit, then click on copy, then click on the destination folder, then click on paste in the edit menu, a copy of the file will appear in that folder. Alternately, you could use some of the keyboard shortcuts. You could highlight the file, press and hold down the Ctrl key and then tap the C. key. This will copy the file to the temporary holding bin called clipboard. You would then highlight the destination folder, press and hold down the control key, then tap the V. key which will paste the file from the clipboard to the folder you highlighted. Another method is called drag and drop. In this method you move the mouse cursor over the file you wish to copy, left click and hold the mouse button, move the mouse to drag a ghost image of the file over the top of the destination folder and then release the left mouse button. There are many more features to cover but this is all the room I have for now. We will do more later. ∎

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