



# The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the  
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:  
King's Park Library  
9000 Burke Lake Rd



Next Meeting:  
February 17, 2007



## Presidential Bits

### February 2007 Meeting

By Paul Howard

Bob Mason gave us a look at Windows Vista at our January meeting, utilizing his new, high end desktop system. His conclusion for upgraders - wait for Service Pack 2. We'll be looking for Vista reports from members who buy new computers or upgrade their systems to the new operating system. In April, Bob will be demonstrating and discussing the changes to the Microsoft Office suite with a presentation at our meeting.

Also at January's meeting, in a stunning upset, the incumbent officers were returned to their positions for another year. But seriously ... the Board of Directors appreciates the participation of our members in our election process. We're always looking for more members to volunteer their time for our group by joining the board - please talk with me if you'd like to help serve our members!

WAC is initiating a special campaign for contributions to our equipment replacement fund. We've been setting aside money for this purpose since the purchase of the video projector. We'd like to purchase a Certificate of Deposit for the replace-

ment fund, so the money can draw interest until needed two years from now. Fifty dollars has been pledged, and we need a total of two hundred so that, coupled with the accumulated money already reserved for this fund, we can acquire a \$1000 CD. We hope you'll consider donating to this worthwhile user group project.

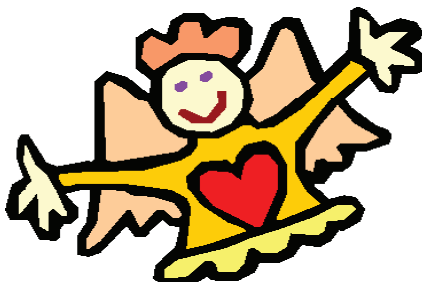
**Our February meeting will be held at a special location**, because of the unavailability of space at the Government Center for a mid-month meeting. This meeting will be located at the Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Rd., Burke, VA. We'll be meeting at our usual time, 12:30 - 3:30 PM, on Saturday, February 17<sup>th</sup>. Details on this library branch, with links to directions and maps, are available here: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/kp/>

Several members have requested details on our meeting agenda lately - follow the link on our home page to: <http://www.wacug.org/pdf/agenda.pdf>

### Adobe Photoshop Elements, V5

Chuck Roberts has delighted WAC members with his lively presentations about the Adobe Photoshop Elements image editing product yearly since the introduction of version 2. The latest edition, Version 5,

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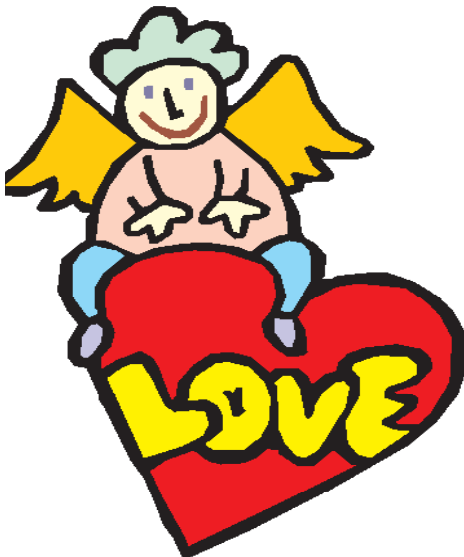
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# Lloyd's Web Sites for January, 2007

by Lloyd Johnson, WACUG Member

<http://www.wacug.org/> is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past issues of Web Sites with hyperlinks

1. It's affordable enough for anyone to buy, small enough to fit in your pocket and it holds all the data to get you through your day.  
<http://www.pocketmod.com>
2. A health question-and-answer site run by Columbia University Health Promotion Program — <http://www.goaskalice.com>
3. Expert Village is a repository of all sorts of useful (or useless) info.  
<http://www.expertvillage.com>
4. Want to shorten your commute? Try "slugging"  
<http://www.Slug-Lines.com>
5. Family fun. Brainteasers, riddles, magic tricks, etc. — <http://www.funology.com>  
Also mental workouts at <http://www.happyneuron.com>
6. More mental games go to <http://www.aarpmagazine.org/games>
7. Check out a fun demonstration of Java at <http://www.sodaplay.com/constructor>
8. Buying a used Automobile? Find out if a auto was in 2005 Hurricanes  
<http://www.nicb.org>  
Click on Flood Vehicle Database
9. Find the birthday of a person <http://www.birthdatabase.com>
10. Compare today's costs for everyday items with prices 60 years ago.  
<http://www.kiplinger.com/links/fortyplus>
11. Festivals: Music, culinary and other celebrations around the world  
<http://www.festivals.com>



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has added features to improve organization of photos, and for sharing them with others. Incorporation of Flash technology allows animation effects to be added to your photo shows. Enhancements allow for the creation of powerful black and white photo images.

Geof Goodrum will also narrate video footage from the APCUG annual meeting and Consumer Electronics Show that Geof and Bob Rott attended in January.



## NCTCUG

Visit our "sister" user group. The National Capital Technology and Computer User's Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

<http://www.nctcug.org/>  
Meetings start at 7:00 PM

**Washington Area User Group Partners  
Working Together For Our Members**

**CPCUG   NCTCUG   WACUG**



## GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

### Notes from the 2007 APCUG Annual Meeting

Bob Rott and I paid our own way to attend the 2007 Annual Conference of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) in Las Vegas along with 219 other registered attendees from 91 computer user groups. The conference was a success thanks to the sponsors, APCUG conference committee, volunteers and Riviera Hotel and Casino staff.

The conference, which ran January 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup>, included social events, education sessions, contests and sponsored meals with vendor presentations. It's worth noting that each meal cost its sponsor over \$10,000, and their financial support kept registration costs affordable. Microsoft provided a lounge where attendees could use desktop PCs equipped with the new Windows Vista operating system and access the Internet. Microsoft also provided wireless Internet access to attendees and presenters during the conference. Corel sponsored a Photo Gallery and contest with many excellent entries (<http://www.apcug.net/events/conference07/winners/apcug2006photowinners.html>).

Grisoft, Inc. (<http://www.grisoft.com/>),

a Czech company founded in 1991 and publisher of AVG Internet Security software, sponsored breakfast on January 5<sup>th</sup>. Jim Gildea, Vice President for the North American Market, gave a sobering presentation on the growth of Internet crime as a lucrative underground profession. Mr. Gildea said that Microsoft Windows Vista is a security improvement, but still needs additional protection. Grisoft will have Vista versions of its products available by the end of January. The free home edition of AVG antivirus is limited to one daily update and online forum support only. Professional editions have two full years of support for under \$40, include spyware and firewall protection, and take advantage of 64-bit processors.

Cheryl Wester, Program Chair for the Temecula Valley Computer User Group, hosted an education session "When Things Go Wrong." Cheryl shared tips on how to prepare for the unexpected (presenters failing to show, equipment failures, etc.) at user group meetings.

Ira Wilsker, member of Golden Triangle PC Club, host of radio and TV shows and author of a newspaper column on personal technology, presented an education session on "User Groups and the News Media." The topic addressed how to get greater visibility for user groups by developing and maintaining contacts within the local news media.

Panda Software (<http://www.pandasoftware.com/>), publisher of computer security software, sponsored lunch. Product Technology Officer Ryan Sherstobitoff gave a presentation on crimeware trends from 2000 to 2007, again hitting on the theme that "Crimeware" has become a silent epidemic and a profitable business for criminals.

Although I was aware of the practice, a new term for me was "Spear Phishing," targeted attacks against a specific person or organization. Panda has developed "TruPrevent" technology that incorporates artificial intelligence to detect malware, as they find the traditional approach of antivirus signatures are useless against new attacks.

The Vendor Forum is a regular event that gives the group of vendor representatives a chance to exchange ideas with the user group attendees. Vendors want to see user group members review their products and distribute the reviews as widely as possible. The vendors want to hear honest opinions about their products so they can improve them. User groups like to have vendors visit and demonstrate their products at meetings, but this is not always possible given limited budgets. However, several vendors are willing to give live presentations over the telephone or Internet video.

CompUSA's National Sales Manager Michael Johnson provided a business assessment. Although 2005 was the best year in ten, 2006 missed expectations. CompUSA is launching a new customer loyalty program and TechPro on-site support services. Store personnel are also being trained in the latest technologies to better assist customers.

CompUSA (<http://www.compusera.com/>) also sponsored that evening's Vendor Fair, where all vendors have tables to meet and greet the user group members and discuss their products and services. This is also an opportunity to request products to review, win door prizes and socialize over a casual buffet dinner.

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, Corel (<http://www.corel.com/>)

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[corel.com/](http://corel.com/)) treated attendees to a breakfast presentation about current user group support and new products. Corel is in the top 10 global packaged software companies with 21 years in the industry. With the acquisition of WinZip (version 11 just released), InterVideo, and Ulead, Corel has the largest portfolio of digital editing and DVD authoring software in the world. Paint Shop Pro Photo XI includes most features in Adobe PhotoShop for under \$100, and includes a 2 hour video tutorial in the box. Corel supports high definition video and Blu-ray Disc playback and recording in their current products.

Former APCUG President Larry Shaw led an education session "User Groups are Needed More than Ever," summarized the changing role of User Groups, and dispelled the premise that User Groups are obsolete. There are new technical support issues, and many users need hands-on help and appreciate the socialization that user groups provide.

Steve Peyrot, APCUG Treasurer and East Tennessee Computer Society member, hosted an education session "Finding & Retaining Volunteers" that produced many excellent ideas on how User Groups can get help on essential tasks and recognize those who give it.

APCUG sponsored a lunch during which user group members from designated regions (WAC is Region 2; DC, DE, MD, NJ, VA) sat together and conferred with their APCUG Regional Advisor (Gabe Goldberg, in our case).

Bob Rott and I both attended Jay Ferron's presentation on securing wireless networks (a late education

session addition). I was pleased that Jay's advice was consistent with a similar presentation I gave in September 2004 (<http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>), though Jay is a more dynamic speaker.

I was recruited to videotape the "30 Years of User Groups: Memories and Lessons" session for APCUG's use (I am supposed to receive a DVD). This session included a slide show that covered the earliest years of APCUG and allowed the "old timers" to reminisce about conferences and hair styles of the past. It was particularly interesting to see founders of Microsoft, Lotus Development Corporation and Intel at APCUG meetings. Some of these photos may show up on the APCUG web site and attendees were asked to submit their own digital photos from this conference and those past.

Microsoft (<http://www.microsoft.com/>) hosted dinner and a surprisingly brief discussion of Windows Vista features, such as SideShow (a mini-display for applications built into some laptops and peripherals), ReadyBoost and SuperFetch for convenience and performance enhancements. The main thrust of the evening's presentation was how Microsoft made a commitment to support games on the Windows Vista platform through a branded "Games for Windows" quality control process, built-in support for parental access controls based upon schedule and a game's ESRB rating (<http://www.esrb.org/>), and an easier system for rating a game's system requirements. A demo of LucasArts Lego Star Wars II was impressive, but the game crashed using the beta graphics drivers. Microsoft cited driver immaturity as a reason for delaying the release of the per-

sonal versions of Windows Vista. Windows Vista also supports Xbox 360 controllers and accessories, but Vista games won't run on Xbox 360 and vice versa.

AMD (<http://www.amd.com/>) provided breakfast on January 7<sup>th</sup> and provided a peek into their business strategy and technological developments. AMD seeks to eliminate Front Side Bus performance bottlenecks with their Direct Connect Architecture (DCA), which connects processors, memory controller and I/O directly to the CPU at CPU speed. AMD also mentioned "4x4" motherboards for computer enthusiasts that combines two high performance dual-core AMD processors with twin graphics processing pipes. AMD claimed 34-40% performance increases over generic Intel solutions and noted Intel failed to run several 3D benchmarks. Although AMD recently acquired graphics processor unit (GPU) company ATI, AMD will keep an open platform and work with ATI competitor nVidia. However, AMD also mentioned "Fusion," a plan to merge CPU and GPU on a single piece of silicon.

The conference closed with the APCUG Annual Meeting, but due to absences of the Board members due to illness or schedule conflicts, could not reach quorum. Secretary Jim Evans reported that 311 User Groups were members of APCUG in 2006. Advisor Vice Chair David Steward repeated a request for User Groups to provide feedback to APCUG through their advisors.

I am pleased to report that my name was the second drawn for a door prize after the Annual Meeting, and

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I was able to select a new D-Link DWA-645 RangeBooster N 650 Notebook wireless network adapter for use with WAC's Dell Inspiron 1100 laptop PC (itself a donation from WAC VP Jim Brueggeman). I will submit a review of this PC Card network adapter in an upcoming issue of The Cursor.

Internet security and the growth of CrimeWare was the dominant theme for education sessions and vendor presentations this year. This reinforced my computer security training and experience that there is no such thing as paranoia in computer security – they really are out to get you. Keep your antivirus and anti-spyware software updated (daily, if possible) and be diligent about applying software patches to your operating system and applications, regardless of whether you use dial-up or high-speed Internet access.

In total, I attended five of the twenty-four scheduled education sessions and wish I could have attended more (four sessions were held in parallel over six scheduled periods). However, I divided up the schedule with Bob Rott and other friends so we could share notes later. I will



also share useful websites and management practices with the WAC membership and Board at future meetings. The conference proceedings and presentations used at some of the sessions are posted online at <http://www.apcug.net/events/conference07/conf07files.htm>. Jay Ferron's presentation on securing wireless networks is on his website at <http://www.mir.net/>.

Other sponsors of the conference not previously mentioned include: Acoustica, Inc. (<http://www.acoustica.com/>); Answers.com (<http://www.answers.com/>); Applian Technologies (<http://www.applian.com/>); The Association of Shareware Professionals (<http://www.asp-shareware.org/>); D-Link (<http://www.dlink.com/>); Firetrust Limited (<http://www.firetrust.com/>); GEAR Software, Inc (<http://www.gearsoftware.com/>); Laplink (<http://www.laplink.com/>); Migo Software (<http://www.migosoftware.com/>); O'Reilly Media (<http://ug.oreilly.com/>); Pearson Education (<http://www.pearsoned.com/>); Smart Computing (<http://www.smartcomputing.com/>); TechSmith (<http://www.techsmith.com/>); Trend Micro (<http://www.trendmicro.com/>); User Group Relations (<http://www.ugr.com/>); and Verbatim (<http://www.verbatim.com/>). These sponsors not only helped fund the conference activities, but provided door prizes, product samples and other support to the attendees. Please visit their websites and review their products for this newsletter!

I encourage you to attend the APCUG 2008 Conference, which will be held in early January in Las Vegas. Watch for announcements this summer in The Cursor and on the APCUG web page (<http://www.apcug.net/>).

[www.apcug.net/](http://www.apcug.net/)).

## Firefox 2.0 Security Issue Unresolved

As of version 2.0.0.1, the Mozilla Firefox web browser still contains a critical security flaw in the Password Manager. In mid-November, a user reported that Firefox 2.0 automatically filled in his MySpace.com username and password on a MySpace form hosted on another website. This technique can be used in what is called a cross-site phishing attack to fool people into divulging their web site accounts to identity thieves. A small reprieve is allowed in that Firefox requires the user to click their mouse button to submit the auto-filled account information to the web site.

The Firefox development community has been debating the proper method to fix this flaw since it was reported. In the meantime, users of Firefox 2.x should disable the Password Manager feature or enable the master password to force a password prompt before auto-filling web form account information. In Firefox v2.0.0.1 for Linux, if "Remember passwords for sites" is checked under Edit | Preferences | Security, uncheck it and check "Use a Master Password". If Firefox prompts for a Master Password when you browse a password protected web site, I suggest canceling the Firefox prompt, verifying the web site address in the address bar, and entering your account information manually. When a fix for this bug is issued, you can return to using the Password Manager normally.

The bug report and the lengthy discussion on characteristics and how to fix it are online at [https://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show\\_bug.cgi?id=38144](https://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show_bug.cgi?id=38144).

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[cgi?id=360493](http://cgi?id=360493).

## Job Opportunity

Linux System Administrators

Location: Alexandria, VA and Bethesda, MD

**Job Description:** Build and maintain enterprise Linux / UNIX infrastructure, including operating system build, utility depot setup, patch auto delivery, and security monitoring. Deploy and maintain elements of CSB IT infrastructure and services such as storage systems, file systems, authentication servers, database servers and Web servers. Conduct daily system administration and support tasks for CSB research and development projects such as the NLM Gateway and other CSB projects. Tasks include system installation, configuration, upgrading, documentation, and maintenance. Evaluate, test, and validate software and hardware and optimize system performance by establishing systematic procedures for troubleshooting and monitoring. Assist CSB research and development staff in coordinating and resolving technical and operational issues.

**Education Required:** B.S. (or higher) in Computer Science or related technical disciplines

**Certifications Required:** Sun System Administrator and MCSE a plus

**Years of Experience Required:** Minimum of 5 years

**Skills and Abilities Required:**

- Extensive system administration skill in Red Hat Linux and Intel based platforms, including comprehensive shell script or Perl programming.

- Demonstrated system administration ability using the SUN Solaris operating system and SUN hardware.
- Demonstrated experience in enterprise storage systems including automated backups, archival tape libraries, and DAS, NAS, and SAN subsystems.
- Proficiency in DNS, NFS, NIS, LDAP, and system security for both Linux / UNIX and Windows systems.
- Thorough knowledge of TCP/IP, SMTP, POP/IMAP protocols.
- Intimate understanding of overall Internet technology and architecture.
- Good understanding of effective computer security policies and operational procedures and practices.
- Demonstrated self-initiated ability for analyzing, debugging, tracking issues, and problem solving.
- Excellent organization and time management skills, including flexibility to shift priorities as needed to accomplish a variety of tasks.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills and ability to work with colleagues at every level.

Contact:

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**Linux CD of the Month**

In addition to the monthly CD described below, WAC can provide CD-R and DVD±R media for any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora Core, Mandriva, Ubuntu, Debian, Knoppix). Please note that download versions of commercial distributions do not include official technical support or printed documentation.

Discs are available only by pre-order. Contact Geof Goodrum by phone (703-370-7649) or e-mail ([linux@wacug.org](mailto:linux@wacug.org)) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information. Single CD-R discs are available with a \$3 donation; GNU/Linux distributions on multiple CD-Rs or single DVD±R are available with a \$6 donation.

## February 2007

**Greg's Practical Envelope Printer** – v1.0.1. Freely distributable GNU General Public License Perl script by Gregory K. Spath. Gpеп is a pretty full-featured envelope printer that takes its input from simple text files and creates PostScript output based on the program's configuration file and tags within the text files. It supports multiple addresses and the ability to change fonts within the address files. The default configuration allows for "first line" and "other line" font settings for each address block, and PostNet bar codes are supported without the need to install any additional fonts on your system.

**Haxima** - v0.5.6. Free GNU General Public License source code and Fedora Core 6 executable. Haxima is an old-school, 2D, turn-based Role Playing Game modeled after Ultima V, so if you've played that game then this should be familiar.

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Haxima features: a complete, playable game; U5-like game play; multiple characters in the player party; clone of U5 magic system with some extras; a sizable wilderness; several towns; several dungeons; a main quest; several side quests; talking non-player-characters; scripted game world; and Open-source engine code (Nazghul). Requires SDL 1.2 (included with major GNU/Linux distributions).

**Super Grub Disk** – v0.9575. Free GNU General Public License bootable disk image by the Super Grub Disk Team. Super Grub Disk is a bootable floppy or CD-ROM that is oriented towards system rescue, specifically for repairing the booting process. Super Grub Disk is simply a Grub Disk with a lot of useful menus. It can activate partitions, boot partitions, boot Master Boot Records (MBRs), boot your former OS (Linux or another one) by loading menu.lst from your hard disk, automatically restore Grub on your MBR, swap hard disks in the BIOS, and boot from any available disk device including thumb drives. It has multi-language support, and allows you to change the keyboard layout of your shell.

**GNU/Linux Distribution Updates** – Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 6.

**Kernel Source** – The latest versions of 2.4 and 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms. GNU/Linux SIG



## Shopping for Free and Open Source Software

by Bill Wayson, Member of the Channel Islands PC Users Group, California  
<http://www.cipcug.org>  
[bwayson\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:bwayson(at)gmail.com)

By the time you read this, the holiday shopping season will be over and many of you will be trying to figure out what to put on your new computer. It seems fitting, then, to make a few suggestions of programs you will find in your Web browser-based shopping center, the Mall of Free and Open Source Software, or the Mall of FOSS. All of the suggestions made here are suitable not only for users of Linux and BSD, but also for Windows diehards. In some cases, other operating systems, such as the Mac and Solaris are supported. So fire up your computer and head on out to the Internet highway. Oh, and you can leave your credit card at home, for the goods at the Mall of FOSS are priced most attractively: free.

### Screensavers

The holidays are really meant for the child that resides in all of us, and all children want to have fun. So spice up your PC with some fun items. Start by stopping at the Really Slick Screensavers Web site at <http://www.reallyslick.com/>. Here you will find out-of-this-world, mesmerizing screen savers that range from “psychedelic” to “nauseating.” One includes great sound effects. They all perform best with hardware-based video acceleration, but that should not be a problem with recent hardware. Once you see these, you’ll never go back to the flying Windows or pipes again.

### Web browsers

Is your gift recipient still using Internet Explorer? Head on over to <http://www.mozilla.com/> to get Firefox for him or her. Firefox is a great Web browser with such features as tabbed browsing, configurable security, extensions that provide additional features, and themes that change the look and feel. Firefox version 2.0 was released Oct. 24. Or you can shop for a newer browser, Flock, at <http://www.flock.com/>. Flock is based on the same page rendering engine, Gecko, that the Mozilla family of browsers is built around. But Flock focuses on sharing and connecting with other people online, with enhanced support for blog posting, RSS feed integration, photo posting on Yahoo Flickr, and saving your bookmarks on the Internet for sharing between all the computers you use.

### Instant messaging

Maybe your giftee spends time in the world of instant messaging. If so, get Gaim, a multi-protocol instant messaging (IM) client, from <http://gaim.sourceforge.net/win32/>. Gaim will work with several different protocols, including AIM, MSN, Yahoo!, Jabber, ICQ and others, so it could become the only IM client anyone needs. If someone prefers the more traditional Internet Relay Chat (IRC), consider getting Xchat (<http://xchat.org/windows/>) or Kirc (<http://www.kvirc.net/>) for them.

### Juice Receiver

Has someone on your holiday giving list complained about using iTunes on Windows? That person may enjoy receiving an open source replacement, Juice Receiver, available at <http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net>.

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[net/](#). It has access to many of the same podcast indexes that iTunes provides, as well as a number of indexes that it does not.

### **Bittorrent for file swapping**

If you have diehard computer geeks on your list, they most likely share files with their friends. The standard file-swapping protocol is bittorrent, and you will find bittorrent clients for them at <http://www.bittorrent.com> and <http://www.getazureus.com/>. Perhaps they have always wanted to create their own dynamic Web site but have balked at the price of commercial Web server software for Windows or the Mac. If so, head over to the XAMPP for Windows store at <http://www.apachefriends.org/en/xampp-windows.html>. XAMPP for Windows will give them everything they need to build a robust, full-featured, dynamic Web site, and it is ready to go out of the box.

### **CLAMAV**

Does anyone on your list need or want to try a different virus scanner? The shop at <http://www.clamwin.com/> has the open source scanner, CLAMAV for Windows, available for you to give. They'll be getting a GUI-based virus scanner, free and automatic signature updates, and scheduled virus scanning.

### **Outlook alternatives**

The shops at <http://www.mozilla.com/thunderbird/> and <http://shell-ter.sourceforge.net/evolution/> offer alternatives to the Outlook e-mail client. The former site has Thunderbird, an easy-to-use product of the Mozilla project, while the latter provides Evolution, which sports additional support for calendaring and Microsoft Exchange e-mail servers.

### **GIMP**

Moving on to applications, if there is one on your gift list who does any sort of work with images, ranging from doctoring photographs to graphics for a Web site, you owe it to them to stop off at <http://www.gimp.org/windows/> and pick up a copy of the GIMP. Somewhat mischaracterized as the "Poor Man's Photoshop," the GIMP provides a large range of image processing tools and plugins, as well as a framework for writing custom plugins. With the GIMP, they'll be able to do just about anything they'd ever want to do to their pictures.

### **Audacity**

Or maybe you are looking for something for someone who is into sound recording, someone who perhaps was a Mr. or Miss A/V in high school? They undoubtedly would really enjoy receiving the Audacity sound recorder, editor, and writer. Look for it at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>. This powerful program literally will turn a PC into a full-featured sound recording and production studio. Pair it with a professional-quality sound card, and it is hard to beat at any price.

### **DVD-capable media players**

Many of those on your gift list also want to be entertained, and maybe they'd like to watch a DVD while working at their computers. A couple of DVD-capable media players they would like can be found at <http://www.mplayerhq.hu/> — which offers the MPlayer media player — and <http://www.videolan.org/> — which offers the VideoLAN VLC player.

### **Office applications**

Chances are the computer users on your holiday gift list use traditional applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations,

and the like. There are several gifts in this category that you cannot go wrong with. OpenOffice.org is possibly the most popular open source office application suite available. The latest version, which can be found at <http://www.openoffice.org/>, is highly compatible with Microsoft's Word, Excel, and Powerpoint formats, and all but the most complex of documents can be shared in both directions. OpenOffice.org also supports out-of-the-box export to PDF and Flash formats.

OpenOffice.org is certainly not the only option in this arena. The Abiword word processor from <http://www.abisource.com/> is a mature product offering a range of features. Since it is a lightweight user of computer resources, it runs well on older hardware that might bog down under OpenOffice.org, Microsoft Office, and Vista.

GNUmeric, from <http://www.gnome.org/projects/gnumeric/>, is a nice, mature spreadsheet program that has all the options and features your giftee wants for the spreadsheet work. If someone would like something to help create pretty, Visio-like organizational and flow charts, stop over at <http://dia-installer.sourceforge.net/> and pick them up a copy of DIA, a diagramming tool.

### **PDFCreator, Scribus**

Do your giftees need to produce PDF documents? If so, they'll be grateful to receive PDFCreator, which is available at <http://www.pdfforge.org/>. PDFCreator works with any application that prints to the Windows printing system, making it easy to create not only PDF documents, but PNG, JPG, TIFF, BMP, PCX, PS, and EPS as well.

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Or maybe they want to create professional-looking documents like brochures, booklets, or newsletters. For them, take a trip to <http://www.scribus.net/> and get them Scribus, a desktop publishing system with many of the same page layout and formatting features you expect to find in the more expensive commercial systems. Scribus also runs on the Mac.

### Web page design

Do you have a Web designer on your giving list? He or she might like to receive Nvu (pronounced n-view, and found at <http://www.nvu.com/>), a WYSIWYG Web page editor that will remind you of Dreamweaver. With its integrated FTP client, it may be all an e-designer would need. Perhaps they prefer to develop their Web pages from scratch (or someone on your list might like to get an advanced text editor). If so, stop off at <http://notepad-plus.sourceforge.net/uk/site.htm> and pick them up a copy of Notepad++, which is what Windows' Notepad might be if it consumed strong steroids. It will give your recipient syntax highlighting, auto-completion, WYSIWYG markup, bookmarking, zooming, multi-document viewing, and much more.

I hope this gives you some ideas about which stores to look at for your holiday gift-giving needs. And do not forget the most important person on your holiday gift list: you! If anything here looks interesting as you read about it, make sure to get yourself a copy. The great thing about all the stores offering FOSS software gifts is that they always have a great two-for-the-price-of-one sale going on, the perfect holiday sale.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



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## XP Disk Maintenance Tools

By Dick Maybach, Member of the Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey

[http://www.bcug.com/N2nd\(at\)att.net](http://www.bcug.com/N2nd(at)att.net)

Windows disk operations have improved greatly over the years to the extent that we seldom have problems with XP. However, XP does include tools to inform you about your disks, to improve their operation, and, if needed, to repair the data on them.

For general information on your drives, use the *Disk Management* tool – right-click on *My Computer*; select *Manage*; and select *Disk Management* (under Storage). You will see a table showing the properties of all your partitions as well as a graphical summary. Select a volume in the table or on the graphic, click on the *Action* menu item, and then click on *All Tasks* to see a list of the actions you can perform. Be careful, as some of these are drastic and irreversible, e.g., format and delete the volume.

If you suspect that a hard disk is corrupted, double-click on *My Computer*, right-click on the desired drive, select *Properties*, select the *Tools* tab, click the *Check Now...* button in the Error-checking section, and click the *Start* button. This will run an updated version of the old *chkdsk*. Don't select either of the

options. If you do find problems, run the program again, but before you click Start, select *Automatically fix file system errors*. You may have to reboot for the operation to complete. Also, be aware that this may result in the loss of some files. If there still errors, run the program again, but select both options. (You can also run this program from the command line; type "*chkdsk /?*" in a Command Prompt window to see the options. I prefer the command-line version, because it's more informative.)

With time, Windows collects many unneeded temporary files. To clean these up, double-click on *My Computer*, right click on the desired disk, select *Properties*, and click the *Disk Cleanup* button under the *General* tab. Windows will take a few minutes to analyze your disk, and then will display a list of actions and how much space each will recover. You can single-click on each name to see its description. I select everything except the last two (*Compress old files* and *Catalog files for the Content Indexer*). Clicking the *More Options* tab shows other ways to recover space by removing Windows components, removing installed programs, or deleting old system restore points. Under the *General* tab, you will see two check boxes, *Compress drive to save space* and *Allow Indexing Service to index this drive for fast file searching*. By default, the first is not checked and the second is; don't change these. Large disks are very cheap, and if you are running low on space, a much better solution is to install a second disk and keep your user data on it. Compression adds complexity, and I've seen it cause serious problems.

See *XP Disk Maintenance Tools* page 10

With use, a disk gradually becomes fragmented. That is; long files are broken into parts and scattered over the disk. You can correct much (but usually not all) of this with XP's disk defragmenter. Double-click on *My Computer*; right-click on the desired drive; select *Properties*; select the *Tools* tab; click on the *Defragment now...* button in the *Defragmentation* area; and click the *Analyze* button. Usually, you will be told that there is no need to defragment the volume. If so, take the advice. If you do decide to defragment the disk, bear in mind that there is a small risk of destroying its contents, since many files will be deleted and rewritten – a power failure could be catastrophic. Before you defrag a disk, run `chkdsk` or, even better, back it up.

A little-known command-line utility is *fsutil*. To run this first open a *Command Prompt* window (found in the *Accessories* group), then type "`fsutil`" to produce a list of *fsutil* commands. Usually, you will have to stack up several *fsutil* commands to do anything useful. For example, typing "`fsutil dirty query c:`" will show you whether you need to run `chkdsk` on C:. It can be worthwhile to explore the other features this command, being careful of course that you don't make any changes to your file system.

The *recover* command will make undamaged portions of a damaged file readable. For example, to recover the damaged file `c:\n2nd\junk`, open a *Command Prompt* window and type "`recover c:\n2nd\junk`". Like most command-line programs, you should be careful when using *recover*.

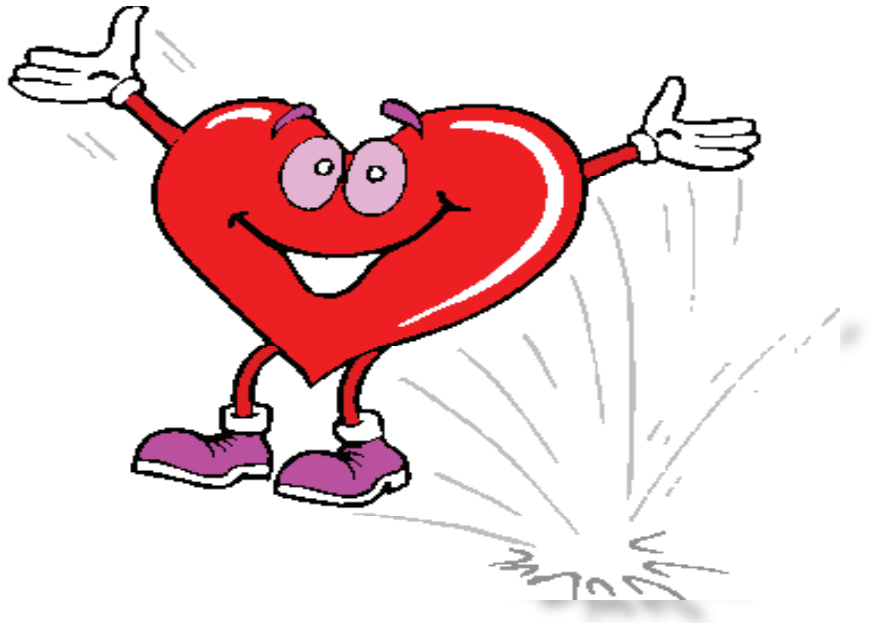
A very powerful command-line pro-

gram is *debug*, but you can do a lot of damage with it if you are not an expert; I recommend that you avoid it. If you are curious, type "`debug /?`" in a *Command Prompt* window to find out more about what it can do.

The NTFS file system is superior to the older FAT32 one. If you are still using FAT32, seriously consider converting it to the NTFS format. For example, to convert your C: drive to NTFS, open a *Command Prompt* window and type "`convert c:/fs:ntfs`". There are two caveats: (1)

the conversion is not reversible unless you buy third-party software, and (2) if you dual-boot both XP and an earlier version Windows on the same PC, the old version can't read NTFS volumes.

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Other Hardware: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Software: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Circle Your Interests:** Photo Printing Investing Games

Digital Photography Internet Access Education Music

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## Accessories for that New Christmas Computer

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director;  
columnist, The Examiner,  
Beaumont, TX; TV and radio show  
how  
Iwilsker(at)apcug.net

### WEBSITES:

<http://free.grisoft.com> - AVG Free  
Antivirus Software

<http://www.zonelabs.com> - Zone  
Alarm Free (and commercial)  
Firewall

<http://www.safer-networking.org>  
- Spybot Search & Destroy

<http://www.openoffice.org>  
OpenOffice Free Office Suite

This Christmas season Santa delivered countless new desktop and notebook computers to good boys and good girls of all ages. Many also received gift cards as welcomed presents, which will allow the recipient to purchase whatever he/she wishes.

While almost all new computers will run out of the box, these same new computers are often the epitome of vulnerability as they often lack appropriate protective security software. While many new computers come with some software and utilities, there are still several items which would make good last minute Christmas gifts, or an appropriate utilization of a gift card.

New computers are generally very vulnerable to a variety of attacks from hackers, crackers, viruses, spyware, and other virtual threats. I would strongly suggest that the new computer be accompanied by any one of the many readily available security suites. Under the premise that something is better than nothing, any of the commonly available

comprehensive software security suites will do a reasonable job of protecting the computer. Brands of security suites from such well-known companies as Trend Micro, Symantec (Norton), McAfee, Kaspersky, Panda, CA (Computer Associates), and Zone Alarm, will all do a satisfactory job protecting the computer from attack. All of these brands, as well as most others, recently released the 2007 dated suites which include the latest in features, including antivirus, firewall, anti-spyware, and other utilities.

Those who will be using the computer with broadband access may decide to forgo the gift card and utilize the free security software offered by the broadband companies. Alternatively, free protective software from such companies as Grisoft's AVG Free Antivirus software, ([free.grisoft.com](http://free.grisoft.com)) if used along with a free firewall such as the free version of Zone Alarm ([www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com) - under the "Quick Links" heading on the bottom left of the page) will provide reasonably effective security. Since spyware of various types is now considered by many as a greater threat than viruses, anti-spyware software is a necessity. The above suites all include anti-spyware software, but those who want free anti-spyware can get the free and excellent Spybot Search and Destroy from [www.safer-networking.org](http://www.safer-networking.org).

Regardless if a commercial or free product is selected, it must be immediately installed on that new computer, updated and configured (the default configurations are good enough for the common user), as computers are subject to immediate attack the instant they go online, and new computers lacking appropriate protective software are prime

and juicy targets for miscreants and purveyors of malware.

Another very useful device that can be utilized with that new computer is one or more USB flash drives (also called thumb or pen drives). Since very few new computers come with floppy disc drives anymore, the user will need some easy and efficient way to move data between computers. USB flash drives are ideal for this purpose. The prices of these small drives have plunged in recent months, and capacities have soared. For reasonable prices these drives can be purchased at any computer store, electronics store, discount store, or warehouse club.

Many of us do much more with our computers than surf the net. We will likely need some productivity software that has a word processor, spreadsheet, and other utilities. Microsoft's Office Suites (the MS Office 2007 Suite is just coming on the market) are arguably the most popular productivity suites on the market, but they are quite pricey, even if purchased as a student edition. Alternatively, there is an excellent suite published by Corel which continues the WordPerfect tradition with its Corel WordPerfect Office X3. Since many of us find that our finances may be a little tight following the holiday season, a free office suite may meet our needs. OpenOffice is an outstanding and comprehensive office suite consisting of a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation program, database, and other office utilities, and is available for free download from [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org).

A new computer is often accompanied by a new monitor, printer, and other peripherals, most of which have demands for clean electrical

See *Christmas Computers* next page

power. A good surge suppressor type of power strip is a necessary but somewhat inexpensive adjunct to the new computer, in order to protect it from power surges and spikes that could “fry” sensitive electrical components. Surge suppressors should have a UL label showing that it meets the standards of UL1449. The ability to resist power spikes and surges is measured in joules, and generally the more joules listed on the label the better. It should also be noted that most surge suppressors can and do wear out, so it would be a good practice to include a new one with that new computer, or as soon as practical after Christmas. If the budget or capacity of the gift card will allow it, a good “UPS” (Uninterruptible Power Supply) may be better than a surge suppressor. As a caution read the package label carefully to verify that the selected UPS has the battery capacity to power the computer and monitor (other peripherals need not be connected to the battery side of the UPS) in the event of a power flicker or failure. If the power fails and an appropriate UPS has been installed, the user will have time to safely shut the computer down. If A UPS is selected look for features like “AVR” (Automatic Voltage Regulation) which will provide clean power to the computer in the event of surges or brownouts.

There are a lot of other useful peripherals and software which should be considered, such as media (blank CDs and DVDs), web cameras, digital cameras, backup software and hardware, and other helpful and necessary items.

Whatever you do with that new Christmas computer, be sure that

it is always properly and adequately protected from a variety of threats.

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## The Windows XP Services Manager

Written by Dick Maybach,  
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Windows, like any multi-tasking operating system, is complex, with dozens of processes running, even when your PC appears to be idle. Some of these are independent, but many rely on other processes. In simpler times, our computers did only one thing at a time, but few of us want to return to the days when, for example, everything stopped during printing. Fortunately, XP provides some tools to help you understand what is going on behind your back, and one of the more helpful of these is its Services Manager. First, a caveat – this will help you figure out what only the benign processes are doing; it is not effective in identifying viruses and spyware, which often hide from you.

To start the manager, right-click on My Computer and then left-click on Manage. When the Computer Management Window opens, click on Services and Applications, double-click on Services, and click on the Extended tab at the bottom of the window. (You will want to en-

large the Window to see all the information.) You can now see a list of all the services available on your machine. My laptop has about 100 services, about 60 of which are running as I write this article. If you single-click on a service, you can see its status and description. For example, on my laptop the ClipBook service has the following description, “Enables ClipBook Viewer to store information and share it with remote computers. If the service is stopped, ClipBook Viewer will not be able to share information with remote computers. If this service is disabled, any services that explicitly depend on it will fail to start.” The Manager also shows that this service is disabled on my laptop. You can learn more by double-clicking on the item. Again for ClipBook, the executable file is C:\Windows\system32\clipsrv.exe. Clicking on the Dependencies tab shows that this service depends on the Network DDE and Network DDE DSDM services and that no other service depends on it. You can learn more about these dependent services by clicking on their names in the window.

The companies that provide the software supply the descriptions. Microsoft’s descriptions are helpful, but others can be less so. For example, Symantec SPBBCSvc is described as, “Symantec SPBBC.” In such cases, you can try a Web search for the name, although I ran out of patience before I found out what SPBBC does.

As is common for Windows programs, you can sort the services list by clicking on a column heading. For example, clicking on Status, lists the started service last; clicking on it a second time shows them

See *Services Manager* next page



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*Services Manager* from previous page

first.

If you suspect that a service is causing problems, you can turn it off by double-clicking on its name and then clicking on the Stop button. This stops the service only for the current session; it will start again when you restart Windows. Thus, this is a safe way to trouble-shoot process problems. You permanently stop a process by double-clicking on its name and changing the Startup type from Automatic to Manual or Disabled. A disabled service never runs; and a manual one can be started by clicking the Start button. If you do this, keep a record so you can reverse anything that causes problem.

While you have the Computer Management window open, look at its left pane. In particular, click on Disk Management (under Storage) to see a text and a graphical description of all the hard and removable disks on your system. This shows the partition sizes and types, what file system they contain, how full they are, and their health. If you right-click on a partition in the graphical display, you can explore it, change its drive letter, or (be careful) format or delete it.

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## Protecting Your Outlook Express Email

Written by Ron Farren, a member of the Keowee Computer Club of Oconee County, SC  
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<http://kkeyword.tripod.com/>

**T**here are, as usual, several ways to protect yourself from a drive failure and loss of your email. This tip is for users of OE only.

Your email is all stored in a single folder and, if you can find that folder, you will find that it contains a large number of files. Most of these files will have the extension of “.dbx” if you are configured to show the extension. Microsoft uses a proprietary format, which makes these files quite difficult to view except with OE. In addition, the individual files are not useful without the index, which is stored in a separate file within this folder. If you want to backup your email, it is possible to save the entire folder someplace. It is relatively easy to copy the entire folder to an external drive or to a second drive. Should you experience a problem that causes the loss of your email, you can merely copy the folder back to its original location. Sounds simple enough.

First, you have to find the folder. That is done via Tools/Options/Maintenance. There you can click on “Store Folder” and it will have the address of the folder you are looking for. You may notice that it is really buried deep into the system. Now that you know where it is, you can copy that address for future reference and periodically save the folder as backup. If you are not satisfied with trying to remember the default location of the messag-

es, it is simple enough to move the folder somewhere else. For example, you could place the folder directly on the C: drive which would make it easier to find next time. That can be done by clicking “Change” and following the instructions. An even better solution is to place the email folder on a separate partition, which prevents it from being destroyed if you're C: drive should be corrupted by some foreign invader.

Changing the location of the email folder will automatically move all your email to the new location.

So now you know how to save and restore your email. However, there is another step you may wish to take. Suppose you decide to backup you email once a week or every seven days. Should you have to restore the backup, you will only lose seven days worth of emails. Would you like to know how to recapture them, also? The answer lies within the options available in OE. The following will work with most ISPs although there may be some that do not allow this feature.

Open Tools/Accounts, select the account you are concerned with and select Properties/Advanced. Place a checkmark by “Leave a copy of messages on server”. Now place a checkmark by “Remove the messages after” and set it to 8 or 9 days. Now place a checkmark by “Remove from server when deleted from Deleted Items”. Now your email server will retain messages for 8 or 9 days. You don't have to worry about OE retrieving the messages each time you connect to the Internet since OE maintains an index of downloaded messages and will not download the same message a second time. However, if you have to

See *Outlook Express* next page

restore from a backup, that index will not be up-to-date and the messages will be downloaded again. By telling the server to delete messages when you have deleted them, that should reduce the number of messages saved on the server - only the ones you intended to keep anyway.

One additional thought. If you decide to move the email folder, why not move it into My Documents? If you have already made sure you keep all of your critical information in My Documents, wouldn't it make sense to put your email there also? Now you can merely copy My Documents to that external drive once a week and you should be pretty well protected from major disasters.

It really pays to learn how to maintain and protect yourself. Once you have set up a procedure like this, it becomes something you can easily do once a week and feel more secure.

Computing should be FUN!!!

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## Take Windows XP to the Next Level with the Free Vista Transformation Pack

Written by Dave Gerber, Program Chair, Sarasota PCUG, Florida; member of the Daves Bytes radio team  
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If you don't want to shell out the cash for a copy of Windows Vista, Windows Vista Transformation Pack (VTP) is an easy and free way to emulate Vista's look and feel. I've been playing around with it for a couple of hours now, and it makes for a nice change after looking at the same old XP icons and UI.

VTP bundles together many different applications that mimic Vista's UI in different ways to give you transparent windows, a new Start Menu, a Vista Sidebar, and a new Explorer. Overall, your computer should look revitalized after installing VTP. Everything has a bit of Web 2.0 glossy sheen.

Install a Vista wallpaper, and you're basically there. There might be some stability issues if you install VTP, so you'll want to be sure before you install it. The good part is that un-installation is easy: just go to Add or Remove Programs. Some files are overwritten during the process so keep your setup CD handy if you want to undo all the changes.

If you decide to install VTP, you'll have a lot of control over the installation. Check off the things you want changed like boot screen, process manager, or sounds and leave what you want to stay the same unchecked.

Visit Dave's website at <http://www.davebytes.com>

[davebytes.com](http://davebytes.com) and click on the January 1 link and scroll down to Dave's Cool Downloads.

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