



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location
Fairfax County
Government Center



Next Meeting:
May 10, 2008



Presidential Bits

May 2008 Meeting

By Paul Howard

Within the other pages of this newsletter, you'll find information about a program that allows WACUG members to sign up for a variety of telecommunications services from Verizon, including FiOS. Using a special phone number and a numeric code identifying WAC, your order will result in Verizon's sending a contribution to the group. An order for a full range of FiOS services - TV, internet and telephone - will result in a \$65 donation to WAC, for example. The fine print notes that some other promotional offers may not be available through the donation program - but we hope you'll try this approach if you require telecom services.

Chuck Roberts wowed the crowd once again, during the April meeting, with some of the features of the latest version of Photoshop Elements. Chuck demonstrated a feature that allows a subject's head to be easily moved from one photo to another - a common requirement for group photos, where one subject is looking away from the camera, or has a terminal case of "frown face" in the best of several shots. Also mentioned was a technique that allows images to be increased in size with little or no obvious loss of quality,

in one step. Chuck recommended books authored by Scott Kelby for learning practical techniques with PhotoShop Elements, as well as improving your picture taking skills. Scott's latest applicable book is "The Photoshop Elements 6 Book For Digital Photographers." See: <http://www.kelbytraining.com/?page=product&id=113>

Our next meeting will be on the second Saturday of May - the tenth of the month, and feature a program on Mozilla's Firefox Internet browser, and add-on programs that can expand its functionality.

At the May meeting, Geof Goodrum will demonstrate how the free Firefox web browser can be extended through add-ons to identify good deals online, track the weather, protect you from online malware, fill in online forms, and perform other useful tasks. Geof will also preview the latest Firefox 3 browser, which is faster, more memory efficient, has more security features, and supports the latest web standards.

We're always looking for presentations for our meetings - what software or computer accessory have you found indispensable? Tell us about it at a meeting soon! Contact a group officer with your ideas - we thrive as an organization when presenting what you're interested

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Lloyd's Web Sites for May, 2008

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. NASA GRIN — <http://grin.hq.nasa.gov/> is a collection of over a thousand images of significant historical interest scanned at high-resolution in several sizes. This collection is intended for the media, publishers, and the general public looking for high-quality photographs
2. The New 7 Wonders — www.panoramas.dk/7-wonders/ View them all in 360 degree interactive panoramas from internationally known panorama photographers.
3. American Currency Exhibit — www.frbsf.org/currency/index.html Money hasn't always looked like it does today. Learn how our country's rich history is closely tied with our currency. Discover the role the Federal Reserve has played--and continues to play--in that history
4. Countries of the World — www.infoplease.com/countries.html This site by InfoPlease presents facts on world and country flags, maps, geography, history, statistics, disasters, current events, and international relations. Profiles of every country include geography, maps, history, current ruler, area, population, capital, largest city, and more
5. Gapminder — <http://tools.google.com/gapminder> Gapminder is a non-profit venture developing information technology for provision of free statistics in new visual and animated ways. Goal: enable you to make sense of the world by having fun with statistics. Method: turn boring data into enjoyable interactive animations using Flash technology.
6. Smithsonian Photography Initiative — <http://photography.si.edu/> Welcome to the Smithsonian Photography Initiative
7. The U.S. Economy at a Glance — www.bls.gov/eag/eag.us.htm This Department of Labor site presents key economic statistics including: Unemployment Rate, Average Hourly Earnings, Consumer Price Index and much more.
8. FBI: Most Wanted — www.fbi.gov/mostwant.htm Each year millions of Americans are victimized by the scams and schemes perpetrated by white collar crime predators. Corporate fraud, health care fraud, telemarketing fraud, and bank fraud are just a few of the criminals' weapons of choice. Billions of dollars are estimated to be lost annually as a result of these fraudulent activities which are carried out by individuals, companies, or groups of individuals. You can help protect American citizens from these criminals who often target the elderly.
9. Alzheimer's Disease — www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/alzheimersdisease.html Comprehensive information from the National Institutes on Health on Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia among older people. Dementia is a brain disorder that

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in, and when members volunteer to bring new meaning to the group credo - "Users Helping Users!"



**Washington Area User
Group Partners
Working Together For
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NCTCUG
WACUG**

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 4th Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

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



GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum, WAC

GNU/Linux Distribution Releases

GNU/Linux distributions are complete GNU/Linux operating system and application software collections. Many are freely downloadable or can be ordered on CDs or DVD at low cost. DistroWatch.com lists the following distribution release announcements for the period April 3 - 25, 2008.

Distribution
Damn Small Linux 4.3
Draco GNU/Linux 0.3.0
EnGarde Secure Linux 3.0.19
GoboLinux 014.01
Kubuntu 8.04
Linux XP 2008
Mandriva Linux 2008.1
Musix GNU+Linux 1.0R3
Mythbuntu 8.04
Nonux 4.4
sidux 2008-01
SymphonyOne 2008.1
Ubuntu 8.04
Vyatta 4.0
Xubuntu 8.04

Linux Software of the Month

The software described below is downloadable at the links provided, may be requested on CD, or copied to USB flash drive at the WAC General Meeting. In addition, WAC can provide CD-R and

DVD±R media for any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora, Mandriva, Ubuntu, Debian, Knoppix). Please note that download versions of commercial distributions do not include official technical support nor printed documentation.

Discs are available only by pre-order. Contact Geof Goodrum by e-mail g (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.

May 2008

Amaya – v10.0. <http://www.w3.org/Amaya/>. Free World Wide Web Consortium (W3C[®]) Software License (GPL compatible) source code and executable developed by the W3C and INRIA. Amaya is an application to view, edit, and upload web pages (via HTTP 1.1 PUT). The major changes in this release are a contextual menu, a customizable user interface, Amaya themes, and a new panel to style documents. It supports HTML 4.01, XHTML 1.0, XHTML Basic, XHTML 1.1, HTTP 1.1, MathML 2.0, many Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) 2 features, and includes Scalable Vector Graphic (SVG) support (transformation, transparency, and SMIL animation). You can display and partially edit XML documents. Amaya includes a collaborative annotation application based on the Resource Description Framework (RDF), XLink, and Xpointer. (See *screenshots of Amaya on page 10*)

Figaro's Password Manager 2 – v0.70 (beta). <http://als.regnet.cz/fpm2/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and Fedora

8 executable RPM by Aleš Koval. FPM2 is a GTK2 port of Figaro's Password Manager, originally developed by John Conneely. It allows you to securely store your passwords, which are encrypted with the blowfish algorithm. It allows you to copy passwords or usernames to the clipboard or primary selection. If a password is for a Web site, FPM can keep track of the URLs of your login screens and can automatically launch your browser. You can also teach FPM to launch other applications. FPM can sort your passwords into categories. Finally, it has a password generator that can help you choose good passwords.

Firefox Add-ons – <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/>. Various useful add-ons for the Firefox web browser as demonstrated at the May 2008 WAC meeting.

TA Spring – v0.76b1. <http://spring.clan-sy.com/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable by The Spring Project. Spring is a 3D realtime combat game compatible with modules from Cavedog Entertainment's commercial game Total Annihilation. However, there are two GPL license game modules and numerous other modules available. Features include:

- Single player and network multiplayer game options.
- Large battles limited only by the power of your computer; support for up to 5000 units.
- Large, highly detailed maps in which to wage those battles, fully 3D with deformable terrain, forest fires, dynamic and reflective water, and custom skyboxes.
- Several camera modes, allowing

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for anything to be viewed from almost any angle.

- Fully 3D combat in land, sea, and air, with realistic weapon trajectories.
- Many different mods, some of them originally from Total Annihilation, and some made just for Spring.
- Compatible with unit files from Total Annihilation, allowing 3rd party units to easily be moved into Spring.
- Complex 3rd party AIs, some of which are quite good.
- An extremely powerful GUI, designed to minimize unnecessary micromanagement.
- Frequent additions and bugfixes.

Spring requires X-Window System, accelerated 3D graphics card (nVidia GeForce4 MX or better). Faster CPUs and more memory support more units and higher graphic detail; 1 GHz CPU and 256MB RAM recommended minimums.

Kernel Source – <http://www.kernel.org/>. 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms (stable 2.6.25).



HD Enthusiasts Crying Foul Over Cabel TV's Crunched Signals

By Chris Williams
Associated Press Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - In Brent Swanson's basement home theater, there should be nothing drab about "Battlestar Galactica." He's got a high-end projector that beams the picture onto a wall painted like a silver screen, and speakers loom in the corners, flanking two big subwoofers.

Yet when he tuned in Sci Fi HD for a recent episode filmed in high definition, the image was soft and the darkest parts broke up into large blocks with no definition. Explosions, he said, were just dull.

"It kind of looked like they took the standard definition and just blew it up," said Swanson, a 33-year-old graphic designer and videographer who subscribes to Comcast Corp.'s TV service. "I couldn't really tell if what I was seeing was really better than what I saw on regular television."

As cable TV companies pack ever more HD channels into limited bandwidth, some owners of pricey plasma, projector and LCD TVs are complaining that they're not getting the high-def quality they paid for. They blame the increased signal compression being used to squeeze three digital HD signals into the bandwidth of one analog station.

The problem is viewers want more HD channels at a time when many cable and satellite providers are at the limits of their capacity, said Jim Willcox, a technology editor for Consumer Reports magazine.

"They have to figure out a way to

deliver more HD content through their distribution networks," he said.

Compressing the signal is cheaper than costly infrastructure upgrades to increase capacity. Satellite TV providers – including DirecTV Group Inc. and Dish Network Corp. – also have the option of launching satellites to boost the number of HD channels on their systems.

While information is nearly always lost when signals are compressed and then uncompressed, the process can theoretically be made unnoticeable to eyes and ears – and Comcast says it should be.

But some viewers say they can see it. Willcox said complaints about compression have been showing up on Web forums, including the AV Science Forum, a site for serious audio visual enthusiasts.

"It's not exclusively Comcast, although Comcast, being the largest cable provider, is probably the largest target," he said.

Derek Harrar, a Comcast senior vice president in charge of video, said the company recently began using new technology on some channels to compress three HD channels into the bandwidth of one analog station. Other channels continue to get the previous 2-to-1 compression.

In a posting on the AV Science Forum, Ken Fowler of Arlington, Va., compared Comcast signals with those on Verizon Communications Inc.'s all-fiber-optic network, which doesn't have the same capacity limitations. Fowler found the higher-compressed HD stations, including Sci Fi, Animal Planet, the Discovery Channel, the Food Network and A&E, fared particularly poorly.

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He analyzed the signals by recording them on a digital recorder, then transferring them to a personal computer for analysis. He found there was much less data, measured in bit rates, flowing to some channels than others.

For example, Discovery's bit rate was 14.16 megabits per second on Verizon's FiOS system but only 10.43 Mbps on Comcast; A&E HD was 18.66 Mbps on FiOS compared with 14.48 Mbps on Comcast. The FiOS system didn't offer Sci Fi HD, which Fowler's testing showed at 12.59 Mbps on Comcast.

He found the signals from the major networks and ESPN weren't getting the increased compression.

In an interview, Fowler said he reran his analysis about two weeks ago and found "basically the same thing."

Philadelphia-based Comcast Cable wouldn't identify specific signals that are 3-to-1 compressed, and a Sci Fi channel spokeswoman referred questions back to Comcast.

Harrar said the company works to make sure any new compression technology is invisible to consumers, but Comcast is "constantly monitoring our network and making adjustments" for best picture quality. The company has been rolling out the new compression technology at different times around the country.

In fact, postings on the AV Science Forum from early April suggest the Comcast network has improved in some places.

And there are other reasons a high-definition picture can appear subpar: The source image might not have been recorded in HD, or the television's settings, the viewing

angle and even the ambient lighting in the room could be the cause.

New York-based Time Warner Cable Inc. has avoided many of the criticisms aimed at Comcast, although the companies are technologically similar and face the same capacity limits.

Time Warner spokesman Alex Dudley attributed it to his company's testing procedures. He said that before Time Warner rolls out new technology that may affect image quality, it sets up two identical televisions in a lab, one with the old signal and one with the new. Technicians make adjustments until the pictures can't be told apart.

"The testers are our engineers who we call 'golden eyes,' who have a proven track record of picking up subtle differences in picture quality," he said.

Verizon's FiOS doesn't compress the signal once it receives it, and Willcox said it's considered the picture quality "benchmark." However, Verizon said the system is growing but is now available only in parts of 17 states and has just over a million subscribers — compared with more than 24 million for Comcast.

He said two possible solutions are on the horizon, an improved version of compression, called MPEG-4, and something called "switched digital video."

Comcast and Time Warner Cable have introduced switched video on a trial basis across their networks. In concept, it's like on-demand videos. The company sends only the channels the viewer is watching, instead of all the channels at once.

But switched video has its own issues, including possible slower channel switching times and compatibility problems with digital vid-

eo recorders.

Willcox said cable providers can't afford to ignore quality complaints. Many customers are already picky about quality after paying \$800 to \$3,500 for an average-size, HD-ready LCD television.

Swanson, the "Battlestar Galactica" fan, is sticking with Comcast for now.

"It hasn't gotten bad enough for me to consider changing," he said.



Digital Shift Affects Cable

By JOHN DUNBAR
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - For months, TV viewers have been told by government, by industry and by the media that if they already subscribe to cable, there's no need to worry about the coming transition to digital broadcasting.

So cable customer Doris Spurk was surprised to learn that thanks to the transition, she would have to rent a converter box for \$5.95 per month, per television set, plus pay for a \$60 service call to install it. With five televisions in her home, the conversion would increase her bill by 75 percent.

"It really ticks us off," the 63-year-old central Florida resident said. "If they are in the right and can do this — charge these prices — then the educational effort that the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) is doing is really misleading everybody."

Thus far, government and the broadcast industry have focused their con-

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sumer-education efforts regarding the transition on viewers of over-the-air television programming. But information about how the transition will affect cable subscribers has been scant.

The congressionally mandated transition requires all full-power television stations to broadcast only in a digital format starting in mid-February. Anyone with a non-digital television who uses an antenna will need a converter box. The government is giving out two \$40 coupons per household to subsidize the cost of the boxes, and about 10 million coupons have been requested so far.

What hasn't been widely publicized is that the transition also will affect some cable subscribers.

There are about 65 million basic cable subscribers in the United States, according to the National Cable and Telecommunications Association. About 37 million of them are digital subscribers, meaning they most likely have a set-top box. Those customers will not be affected by the broadcast transition, regardless of the age of their television.

But the 28 million customers who receive analog service — meaning they probably plug their cable wire straight into the back of their set and do not have a set-top box — may have reason to worry.

(Satellite customers, except in rare instances, aren't affected. Subscribers to Verizon's Fios TV system aren't affected unless they have secondary televisions that are not digitally equipped.)

Cable companies have two options for dealing with their analog customers when broadcasters turn off their non-digital signals.

They can either convert the digital broadcast signal to analog at the

transmission source, referred to as the "head end"; or they can make their systems all-digital and supply customers with a set-top box that will convert the signal back to analog for viewing on older TVs.

The government-subsidized converter boxes, meant for use on televisions that get signals through an antenna, will be of no help in this situation.

Big cable companies like Comcast Corp., the nation's largest, are expected to take the first option and pump both digital and analog signals through their systems.

"There won't be changes in prices because the broadcast channels are going digital," said Comcast spokeswoman Sena Fitzmaurice. "But there may be changes in prices and services for other reasons."

Cable companies may move some programming from the analog tier to digital, as they have been doing increasingly; but FCC rules require that local broadcast channels remain viewable to analog customers.

Over time, a complete migration from analog to digital service is inevitable. An analog signal takes up more space on the network than a digital signal and subscribers pay less for it. With digital, cable companies also are able to offer additional services, like telephone and Internet.

Smaller cable systems are expected to have a more difficult time with the transition.

Jess King is president of Cablevision of Marion County LLC, which is about 40 miles south of Gainesville, Fla. King recently spoke to a gathering of residents of an "over-55" retirement community, including Spurk

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seriously affects a person's ability to carry out daily activities.

10. Money Math You Need to Know — <http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/SavingandDebt/Advice/MoneyMathYouNeedToKnow.aspx> These six simple calculations will help you put your finances in perspective, whether the question is your real buying power or the amount you need to quit your job forever. Site is produced by MSN Money.



Verizon Velocity

SUPPORT WASHINGTON AREA COMPUTER USER GROUP

Mission:

WACUG.ORG is membership organization, devoted to helping mature adults learn about computer hardware, software, and the Internet. We have been following the precept of "Users helping users." since 1985.

Here's what you need to do:

- **Order a new Verizon** product from the list below to help us earn donations.
For example:
 - **Order new** Verizon FiOS® Triple Freedom with TV, Internet, Phone and Long Distance, we earn \$65.
 - If you are an existing Verizon FiOS Internet customer and you **order new** FiOS TV service, we earn \$20.
- You must place your **new Verizon order** by calling **1.888.695.5299**, the special Velocity sales number. (Call Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. EST.)
- You must provide our 5-digit tracking code at the time you order: **12426**.

Place a **new order*** for one or more of these qualifying Verizon products:

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- Verizon Freedom Calling Plans - \$10.00
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For more information or to enroll a group in the Velocity program, visit verizon.com/velocity.

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Products available in select areas only. Speed and uninterrupted service not guaranteed. Calling plan includes residential direct-dialed domestic calls only. © 2008 Verizon.

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Keeping Up

Paul Howard - WACUG

I have seen the light <grin>! As I write this, I've been a Verizon FiOS subscriber for about a month. The big attraction for my household of this FTTP or "fiber optic cable to the premises" was FiOS TV service. I've been an "off the air" TV person for the 25 years I've lived in VA. About 85% of US households have cable or satellite TV services. Until I retired in late 2003, I never had the time to watch that much TV. Now the choices seem endless, and that's without any of the premium movie packages, or sports premium services.

I am constantly in awe of the FiOS picture quality - granted, it's standard def, since I haven't sprung for a high definition TV yet. As the local television stations upgraded their antenna systems to broadcast hi-def, digital signals, I lost the ability to count on a reliable signal from several local non-commercial broadcasters. With FiOS, everything is sharp and static free, and Verizon includes the multiple broadcasts that many stations now offer, as the new digital transmissions offer the ability to get three or four programs in the same 6 MHz RF bandwidth used by the old analog TV approach.

Set-top boxes (read - monthly fees per each) are required to get the full range of features, such as video on demand (VOD), and fancy program guide. The standard def set-top boxes offer limited video output choices - S-VHS being the highest quality. The standard def DVR (digital video recorder) doesn't offer an RF (coax cable) output. There is a "digital adapter" box available at \$3.95 a month that doesn't give access to VOD and super program guide, vs. the standard def set-top

box at \$5.99 a month.

TV sets can be hooked up to FiOS coax cable without a "box" to receive Verizon's local tier of service, which carries the local broadcast channels and lots of government and college / university broadcasts in 50 channels. In the month I've had the service, two channels of content from local broadcaster MHz Networks (Channel 56) have disappeared from the local tier. Those "missing" channels appear, with about twenty others, in a tier called "Local Plus" but I can't figure why they've been eliminated from the base local tier.

The "no box" connection works fine with TVs with totally electronic tuners, but only the channels Verizon has included in the VHF portion of the spectrum work on a 30 year old GE 10" color set with electro-mechanical tuners. You know the ones - round tuner knobs, that go ka-chunk, ka-chunk for VHF channel changes, and click, click, click for UHF channels as you turn the knobs. I suspect there aren't many TVs of that vintage still in active service. That TV works fine with an off-the-air, digital TV converter box I plan to write about in my next column.

FiOS offers a variety of Internet service plans, depending on the connection speed you want to pay for. I chose the 15 mbs down, 2mbs up. My speed tests are fairly consistent at 14192 kbs down, 2133 kbps up. Note that we're talking megabits and kilobits here - the common denominators for transmission speed. You've gotta divide by 8 - eight bits in a byte - to start getting close to figuring how long it should take to download big files - and then you have to factor in the handshaking and error checking. But - it's really fast, when compared to the days of

dialup, which is only a bit more than two years ago for me. (I didn't get DSL until January 2006). FiOS is now offering symmetrical speed - 15 mbs up and down is offered at \$65 in some areas, soon to be rolled out in most FiOS territories.

For more on my installation and how FiOS works, see the "Recent Meetings" page of the web site: <http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>



Make Vista Work Better

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No matter how good an operating system may be, someone will complain that it could have been better. Vista is a very good operating system that some people find wanting. Some people are never satisfied, but that is not the issue here. Of course Vista should have been better, but Microsoft has only so much time and resources to develop a system, and Vista was late to market in addition to being less than perfect.

In this article we'll show how to make Vista work better for you, and that's all we can reasonably ask of any operating system. Let's take care of the power users first. Power users are too impatient for menus. They think menus are for wimps. After encountering Vista User Account Control they may have a point.

Left-click the orb at the bottom left side of the screen.

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In the Search box type cmd.exe. Right-click on cmd.exe and choose Properties from the popup menu.

Select Pin to the Start Menu.

The Command Prompt is now always available from the Start menu. If you would like to make additional tweaks to the prompt, right-click the shortcut from the Start menu and choose Properties.

The blinking cursor, otherwise known as the insertion point, tells you where you can type or insert text. The cursor can be difficult to locate because it's so thin, but Vista has a way to fatten it up.

Open Control Panel.

A dialog box appears. In the upper right corner, type "Optimize visual display."

The Ease of Access Center icon will appear. Select the link below the icon.

Locate the Make the focus rectangle thicker box and put a checkmark in it.

Set the thickness to whatever you like. Don't get carried away with some ridiculous number. Bumping up the thickness by one or two points should be sufficient.

When you install a large high resolution monitor, you quickly become aware of the relationship between high resolution and eyestrain. Vista provides a way to make text easier to read without having to sacrifice resolution.

From the Start Menu open Control Panel.

In the Search box at the upper right corner of the dialog box, type adjust font size.

The resulting list will probably consist of one item, Adjust font size.

Select it and you can choose to accept the larger text option or click on the Custom DPL button and experiment.

Vista comes equipped with an excellent Snipping Tool that was originally designed for a different version of Windows. In its generosity, Microsoft chose to include the tool in every version of Vista except Vista Home Basic, which is fine because nobody should buy Vista Home Basic. Snippy lets you capture any portion of a screen, either rectangular or free form. You can then paste it into a document, email or save it as a graphic. Don't use it to copy and paste text for editing because a graphic image can't be edited like text. Here's how to get it:

From the Start Menu type snip in the search box.

The Snipping Tool should be at the top of the list. Right-click on it and select Pin to the Start Menu. You can also add it to the Quick Launch Bar if you like.

Vista has added several new wrinkles to the Quick Launch bar. It's been around since Windows 95, but it's never been more useful. If you hold the shift key down while right-clicking on a shortcut, you will see an expanded popup window with additional options. One option is to put the shortcut icon on the Quick Launch bar. You can still use the traditional drag and drop method, but having another alternative when the desktop isn't visible is always helpful.

When the Quick Launch bar is active, that means you can see it on the Task bar. If you need to activate Quick Launch right-click on a clean area of the Task bar. Drag your mouse to the Toolbars option,

and select Quick Launch.

Each of the first ten shortcuts on the Quick Launch bar has its own custom keyboard shortcut. If the Calculator is the third icon from the left, press the Windows key and the number 3 and you activate the calculator. Limiting the number of built-in keyboard shortcuts may be Microsoft's way of telling you that more than ten items on the Quick Launch bar is too many.

Vista keyboard shortcuts are a great way of performing little tasks more easily. Instead of having to reach for your mouse, you can press two or three keystrokes. There are those keyboard shortcuts that are common to all versions of Windows and now there are some new ones. Among the new features introduced in Windows Vista, is a new set of shortcut keys that are used to launch various programs or perform different tasks. These new keyboard shortcuts are listed below.

Windows Key + G (cycles through the Gadgets)

Windows Key + L (locks the computer)

Windows Key + U (activates the Ease Of Use Center)

Windows Key + X (cycles through the Mobility Center)

Windows Key + Spacebar (moves the focus to the Sidebar)

Windows Key + Pause (opens the System Properties portion of Control Panel)

CTRL + + Tab (opens persistent Flip 3D) :

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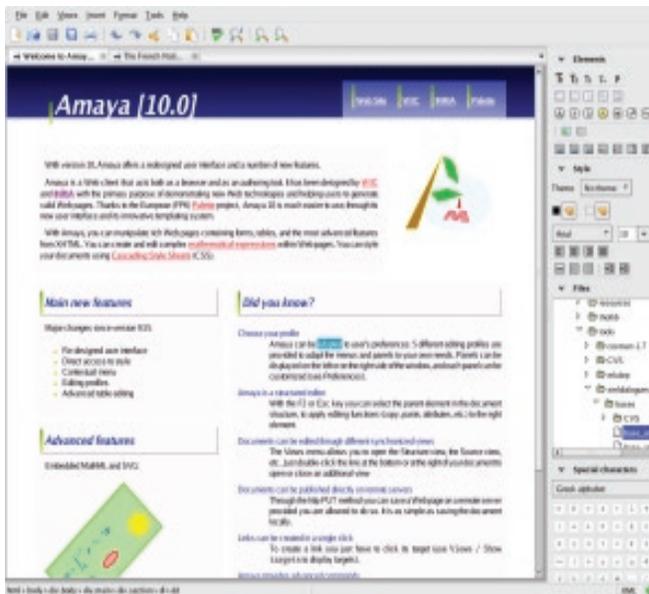
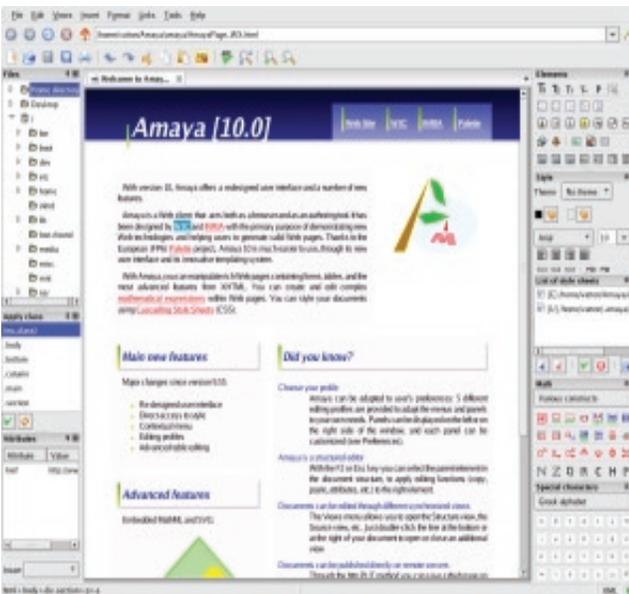
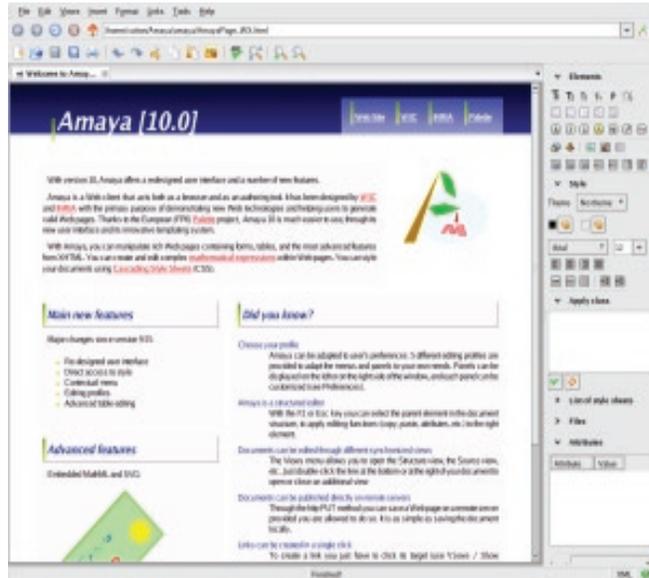
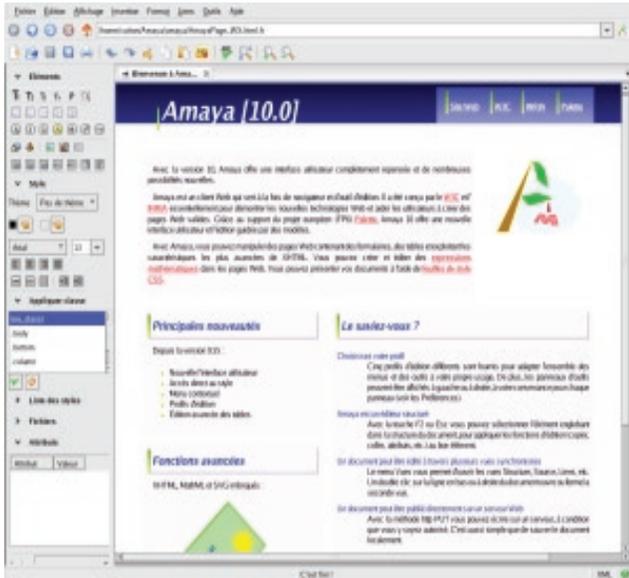
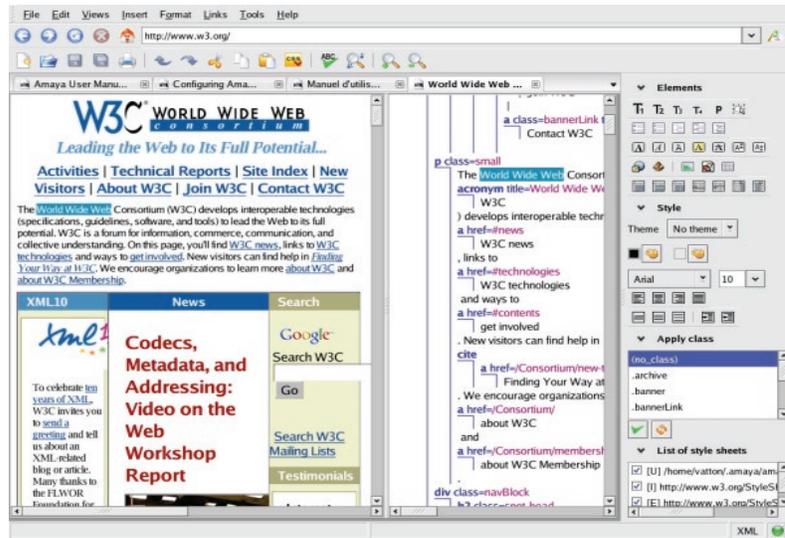
Amaya Screenshots

mail address above).

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From Geof's article on page 3, here are the screenshots of Amaya



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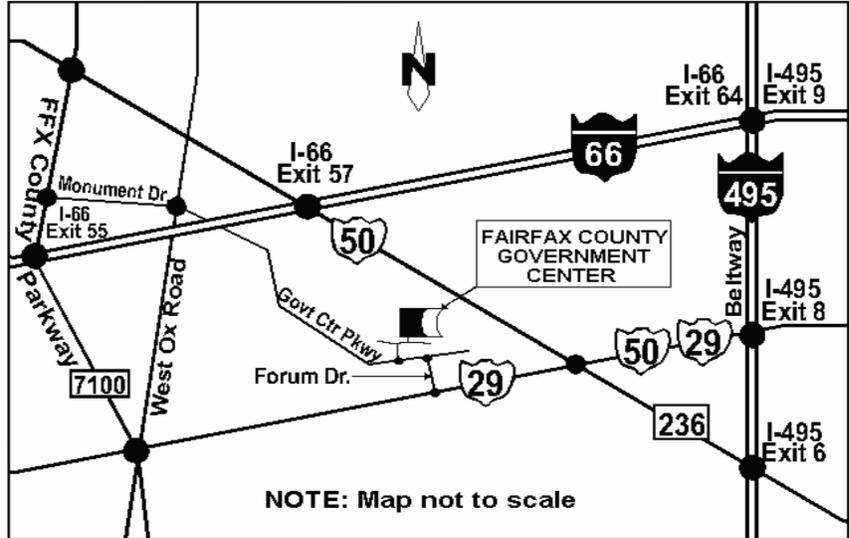
Next WAC Meetings: • May 10 • June 13 • July 17 • Aug 15 • Sept 12

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It's Not Just Entertainment Any More

By Gene Komaromi, a member of the Computer Club of Green Valley, Arizona
[http://gvcc.apcug.org/genek6\(at\)gmail.com](http://gvcc.apcug.org/genek6(at)gmail.com)

In the past, we've commonly thought of computer games, especially those played on game machine platforms, as pure entertainment. Times have changed and many games have become educational as well as physical training devices.

Learning has become fun for both kids and adults. Here's some information that will keep you ahead of the digital gaming curve.



DS - Handheld Games for Senior Citizens Nintendo has a hot selling hand held video game machine called the "DS" for "Double Screen." The device opens with two visible screens, one is a display screen and the other is a "Touch Screen" which serves as the controller interface. The DS has a series of games designed with "older" users in mind. They are Brain Age, Big Brain Academy and Flash Focus.

All three have been recommended by AARP, and Brain Age has been shown to improve mental performance in independent tests. Brain Age and Big Brain Academy have a series of games,

practice exercises and tests that are designed to improve and evaluate cognitive skills, and best of all "they're fun." They chart and graph improvement and will keep records for several individuals.

Have you ever had a problem with that vision test on your driver's license exam? Then Flash Focus was made for you. It too has games and exercises, but instead of improving your brain they improve your eyes.

Wii Want to Play

The hottest new gaming console is the Wii, another product from Nintendo that has games designed for the older kids, real older kids. The game controller is a little motion sensitive device that straps on the user's wrist.

Participants interact with the game by moving their arms.

In the Detroit area, aerobic classes and movies have been replaced by Wii in many senior citizen centers. "Bowling" seems to be one of the most popular games. I've played it,

and yes, it's exactly like the real thing. The motion of your arm, as you approach a virtual bowling alley, allows you to curve the ball and add some spin. Wii bowling leagues are springing up all over the country. Nintendo is about to release an exercise program for the Wii that uses a floor pad as a controller.

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New Technology Terms

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Words, words, words....In the fast-moving world of technology, new words and phrases are constantly introduced. In order to keep up with the times, you need to learn about the current terminology. This need not be a drudgery. In fact, it can be fun to see what new words and abbreviations are popular. Check these out and you can wow your friends next time computers and technology become the subject at the 19th hole or the neighborhood cocktail party.

SSD (Solid-State Drive)

This is a type of memory that you will be hearing more and more about in the future. It is a type of flash memory that has no moving parts. Some small laptop computers are appearing using SSDs for storing data instead of hard drives. Because SSDs have no spinning disks like the ordinary hard drives, they offer improved battery life for laptop computers. They also have better data access speeds than hard disks.

404

You may recognize this as a common message on the Internet. It indicates that the requested page could not be found. This may mean that the page has temporarily or permanently moved and is not currently available. However, recently the term 404 has come to have another meaning. It refers to someone who is totally clueless. From the error message "404 not found", this

See *New Tech Terms* Bonus page 2

has become a slang term meaning that the person's brain could not be located. If you decide to call your spouse a 404, make sure that he or she has not read this column or you'll be in big trouble.

Crowdsourcing

Using the skills of a wide variety of people to do a job or perform a task is called crowdsourcing. The people who perform such a function are often found on the Internet. Although these people can be paid, often they are often volunteers.

Geotagging

This is technology built into a digital camera or part of a camera add-on device that is able to tag each photo with the exact location that the picture was taken. Photos can then be sorted based on where they were taken. They can also be plotted on maps.

HDMI (High-definition Multimedia Interface)

This is a newer audio and video interface that is often found on televisions, DVD players, video game consoles, video cameras, and other video equipment. This type of connector replaces older standard connectors like composite video, S-Video, component video, and DVI. HDMI carries both audio and video in one cable. It supports digital rights management systems. HDMI cables can be very expensive in comparison to older audio and video cables.

One Laptop per Child (OLPC)

Led by Nicholas Negroponte, this is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to design, manufacture, and distribute affordable laptop computers to children around the world. The laptops were initially

called the "\$100 laptop", but the final build cost almost \$200 each. In 2007, the One Laptop per Child organization started distributing these laptop computers to children in developing countries. The laptops are bright green and white portable computers with special features like a sealed keyboard. They are called XO computers.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Search Engine Optimization is the process of tweaking a website to improve the volume of traffic that is produced by search engines. The idea is to give the website a higher ranking in the search engines thereby producing more traffic to the site. SEO includes using keywords and website design to get higher rankings with search engines.

Skype

This is an online service that allows users to make telephone calls over the Internet. The software is free and there is no charge to call the computers of other Skype users. Your computer must have a microphone in order to use Skype. With the addition of a webcam, Skype callers from computer to computer can also place video calls where they can both see and talk to each other. Skype also allows you to call landlines and cell phones for a fee. Skype has other services such as instant messaging and file transfer.

FTW

This stands for "For The Win". You may remember it being a part of the game show "Hollywood Squares" where a certain square would be selected "For the Win." It is also used in some online games like World of Warcraft. It is now a popular term that usually projects a boast, as in "I did it FTW." It is often used ironi-

cally and sarcastically.

Bot

A bot computer is one that has been infected with some type of malware that allows the computer to be controlled by an outside entity. Millions of computers are bots that are now under the influence of malware distributors who use these computers to send out spam, attack other computers and websites, and carry out scams and identity theft. The computer owner is usually unaware that their computer has been compromised since this activity is performed in the background.

BotNet

A series of bot computers, sometimes as large as millions of computers is called a BotNet. The BotNet does the bidding of some entity that has compromised the computers and taken control of them by installing some type of malware.

Zombie

This term that means the same thing as a Bot. It is a personal computer that has been infected with a virus that allows an outside force to control it. Such a computer can be used to send out spam or attack other computers without the owner's knowledge. Millions of computers today are zombie computers. They are part of a Zombie Network of computers that are controlled by hackers.

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Photoshop Lightroom: a Review

by Tom Ekvall, newsletter editor
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Tekval\(at\)new.rr.com](http://webpages.charter.net/newpcug/Tekval(at)new.rr.com)

Do you like to shoot plenty of pictures with your digital camera?

If you are like me, storing and organizing them is always a chore so that you can find the right picture when you need it.

Enter Adobe Photoshop Lightroom – the new kid on the block for handling your digital workflow. Designed specifically for professional photographers, Lightroom is equally fantastic and impressive for any photo enthusiast.

Lightroom is not designed to replace Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements. However, It is the perfect complement to the programs, and for some who do not care for doing layers, may become the only product they need for digital imaging tasks.

While Photoshop is designed as a general-purposed tool to handle a variety of creative digital imaging tasks, Lightroom has only one focus—providing photographers with an effective, streamlined way to manage their photos, process them, and deliver a final product whether a print or web gallery.

The product incorporates many features I enjoy in Photoshop CS3, such as the state of the art black and white adjustment techniques and being able to edit JPEG and TIFF files in a non-destructive manner.

In fact, everything you do in Lightroom is handled in a non-destructive manner, so that .jpg images do not diminish in quality over time as

editing changes are made. I like the way Lightroom lays out the photo editing tools on the workspace so that everything is at hand. Edits can be undone in the future and new changes made without having to create separate files for each change. Information is stored in a separate file associated with the image. The information is there in a Managed Photos folder whether you import the images into Lightroom’s library or leave them in the original location.

Lightroom in fact is a cataloger of your photos, with the user having the choice where to store the images. It will even recognize pictures on removable drives or external hard drives as part of the catalog, something most browsers will not do. I chose to store my pictures in their original location for now.

When you start up Lightroom, you will notice a sleek, black interface with photos in the workspace depicted as slides.

The concept behind Lightroom is to provide a simplified workflow setup from shoot to finish with five modules identified on the top right hand section of the screen: Library, Develop, Slideshow, Print, and Web. Each module has a set of panels with pre-set information on the right hand side, task information on the left hand side, photo displays in the center and a filmstrip on the bottom of photos being reviewed. The filmstrip shows all in a particular folder, not just those opened up.

The Library is where photos are imported and cataloged with the ability to add keyword information, rate the photo on importance, and even mark it for rejection before a final deletion. It also includes Quick Develop controls that let you make simple edits with push button con-

trols rather than sliders. Photos can be viewed in tandem to facilitate selecting, comparing, and ranking (stars and colors) photos for later processing.

The Develop module is where you do the non-destructive processing of photos including those in the .raw format. Whether you are in the library looking at a set of photos or in the Develop module, a histogram of the picture selected is always visible. This helps in evaluating which picture to keep or edit for printing.

The Slideshow provides a way to review photos or show them to someone else in an interesting format with the film strip of all the photos still showing on the bottom part of the screen.

The Print module provides all the choices for printing while the Web provides a tool for enabling the pictures to be viewed on the web either in html or in flash formats.

I love the way Lightroom is laid out on the screen as you can see from the accompanying image. Everything is so simple to use and user-friendly.

I also love the Color Adjustment sliders that adjust both the primary and secondary color ranges (all eight colors) with regard to the hue, saturation and luminance (HSL) characteristics of the image as well as the tonal controls including a new Tone Curve feature. Both allow you to make adjustments directly in the targeted photo.

Lightroom can probably handle most of my image-editing needs. However, there is still definitely a place for Photoshop CS3 for those things which Lightroom cannot do.

See *PS Lightroom* next page

PS Lightroom from previous page

What Lightroom cannot do is apply layers, masks, and selective editing to a photo nor will it allow you to do compositing and montages. It is not a “fix it” program when extensive retouching is necessary, nor does it have filters and brushes to create artistic effects, something I love to do. Lightroom also does not work with video, which is no big deal to me.

Lightroom does provide for exporting the photo to Photoshop, Photoshop Elements or other image editing programs so that further work can be done to the photo.

Lightroom sells through Adobe (www.adobe.com) for \$299. A 30-day fully functional tryout version is available for downloading from their web site.

Final thought. This is definitely a must-have program for those who want to manage their photos and process them in a non-destructive manner. To me what sets this apart from other organizers/digital asset management programs is the quality and depth of the photo-editing tools. It is obvious the program draws upon the experience of Adobe staff in developing image-editing products such as Photoshop, Bridge, and Camera Raw.

The system requirements include Microsoft Vista or Windows XP, 768 MB of RAM (1 GB recommended) and a Pentium 4 processor. I installed the software on an Acer laptop running Vista with Pentium 4 dual-core processors (1.60 GHz speed), and 2 GB of RAM. No installation problems. There are a number of books out on the market to help you learn more about the software. The one I use is Photoshop Lightroom for Digital

Photographers Only by Ron Shepard. I like it for its simplicity in presenting information in an easy-to-understand format. There are a number of other great books out there.

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