



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer Users Group

Meeting Location:
Fairfax County
Government Center



Next Meeting:
August 20, 2005

Presidential Bits

by Paul Howard



If you missed our July program about voice over IP internet telephony, you can check out Geof Goodrum's presentation slides on the web site at: <http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>

August Meeting

At our Saturday, August 20th meeting, through our membership in APCUG, we'll "Learn How to Bring the Digital Home Experience into Our Homes." Bill Walsh will utilize the presentation resources of an Intel "presentation in a box" program to bring us up to speed on emerging technologies.

The convergence of digital media, PC technology and consumer electronics is opening up a whole new world of home entertainment. Find out how high-performance PCs, new devices, wireless LAN and broadband Internet access are changing the way you and your family can enjoy digital music, photography and video throughout your home.

The presentation will cover what's possible in today's digital home and the building blocks you need to get started. Attend this seminar to see what the digital home buzz is about—and receive a thank you gift from Intel.

Financial Review / Audit

At the request of WACUG treasurer Bob Rott, a committee chaired by member Bill Bailes has conducted a review / audit of the group's financial records for 2004. The committee's findings and recommendations were presented to the board of directors at their July meeting. The board has made some changes to the group's Bylaws as a result of the review, which are available for member review on the web site at: <http://www.wacug.org/org-docs.html>

Anyone submitting invoices for payment by the group must utilize the form available on the web site on the "organizational documents" page, and include appropriate documentation of the expense. Approval for the expenditure must be obtained from the vice president before the treasurer will process reimbursement requests.

The board is working on new procedures for the group to follow to enhance financial reporting and practices. A more detailed report to the membership will appear in a future edition of the Cursor.



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Lu Spriggs Web Sites for August 2005

<http://wacug.org/> – is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past versions of Sprigg's Web Sites with hyperlinks.

1. <http://www.thenewheroes.org/> – Do you want to learn about the new “social entrepreneurs”? Visit this site to obtain a free DVD with illustrative examples, and how you can support the current efforts.
2. <http://thefreedictionary.com/> – Here is another advertising supported reference site with a vast coverage of entries.
3. <http://www.answers.com/> – Look Here are for fast facts about numerous subjects.
4. <http://www.wikipedia.org/> – Here is an open source encyclopedia with over 613,000 entries. Nine languages are available.
5. <http://www.policeusa.com/> – Your Gateway to Public Safety. An internet site for your whole family. Learn more about the safety services provided by our Police.
6. <http://earth.google.com/> – View the earth in 3-d if you have wide band internet access 128 KBps. Needs WIN XP with 3-d graphics. Download google.earth.exe.
7. <http://www.legion.org/> – Visit the American Legion web site for information about our American Flag. This includes the “flag code” describing how the Flag shall be displayed and carried. Versions available in PDF and DOC. Also includes the Pledge of Allegiance in Sign Language.
8. <http://www.Monster.com/> – Use this site to post your skills resume online. Whether looking for a new job, or taking the next step in your career, visit the Monster site. Find Career advice or jobs basic information.
9. <http://www.epicurious.com/> – Here is the world's greatest collection of recipes, plus free sample newsletters.
10. <http://www.uhftips.org/> – Health Care Smarts from the United Health Foundation. Tips about OTC (Over the Counter) medications, including side effects.
11. <http://talkingtoyourdoctor.com/> – Learn more about health issues during menopause. Sponsored by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals. Free e-cards are available for you to send to a loved one, age 30-45.



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 begin at 7:00 PM



GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

Processor Shifts

IBM has been in the center of several important announcements since May. At the Worldwide Developer Conference on June 6, Steve Jobs announced that Macintosh computers would be based upon Intel microprocessors beginning in mid-2006, not the IBM PowerPC microprocessors used today (<http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2005/jun/06intel.html>). The apparent reason is lower cost, better power savings for laptops and cheaper commodity hardware such as motherboards. This led to a new moniker, Mactel, similar to the old 'wintel' reference for the long-standing Microsoft Windows OS-Intel processor relationship. While this might be seen as a significant loss to IBM's microprocessor business, the other announcements made it clear why IBM did not seem terribly concerned.

The next generation Microsoft Xbox 360 multimedia/game console, expected to reach market in late 2005, will contain a custom IBM 3.2 GHz PowerPC 64-bit Central Processing Unit (CPU) with three processor cores. Microsoft is marketing the Xbox 360 as an entertainment cen-

ter and equipped it accordingly. The system features a high-performance 500 MHz ATI Graphics Processor Unit (GPU), 512MB of memory (shared by the CPU and GPU), a read-only dual-layer DVD drive and a removable 20GB hard drive, as well as an RJ45 ethernet port, three USB 2.0 ports, four controller ports, two memory card slots and an optional 802.11a/b/g wireless adapter. Besides playing Xbox 360 games, Microsoft is working on backwards compatibility for hundreds of original Xbox games (no small feat, since the original uses an Intel Celeron processor). It will also play DVD movies, audio CDs (including MP3 and WMA compressed digital formats), DVD +/- R and RW and CD-ROMs. Rumors put the retail price at \$299.99.

As Linux enthusiasts are wont to do when challenged by a new computing system, they figured out how to install a GNU/Linux operating system on the original Xbox (<http://www.xbox-linux.org/>). Undoubtedly, Linux hackers will be looking to do the same with the Xbox 360.



The Sony Playstation 3 (PS3), expected by Spring 2006, will use the new Cell processor, developed by Sony, Toshiba and IBM (a.k.a. The STI Group). This processor is also expected to run at 3.2GHz. Touted (somewhat excessively) as a 'super-computer on a chip', the Cell is designed for heavy-duty multimedia applications. The processor includes a 64-bit PowerPC processor core

and eight 'Synergistic Processing Elements' (SPEs). Each SPE is an independent processing unit designed to perform multiple floating point math operations simultaneously (i.e., parallel processing). Such features are useful for repetitive, intensive processing tasks like compressing/decompressing audio and video signals. Although the prototype PS3 used the SPEs to generate high-resolution animated graphics, the retail unit will offload that task to a custom 550MHz Nvidia GPU. The system will also contain 256MB of graphic memory and 256MB of system memory, a Blu-ray drive, Compact Flash, Secure Digital and



Memory Stick Duo memory slots, an SP/DIF optical audio output (Dolby 5.1 and DTS), two inde-

pendent HDMI (HDTV digital video) outputs and an analog audio/video output. The system also has Bluetooth 2.0 and 802.11b/g wireless built-in (up to seven Bluetooth controllers are supported), six USB 2.0 ports and three Gigabit ethernet ports. The PS3 was supposed to function as a router, but this plan was reportedly dropped to cut costs (the extra GigE ports may disappear as a consequence). The unit also supports an optional removable 2.5 inch hard drive. The new Blu-ray format reads 54 GB Blu-ray discs as well as audio/video/data DVDs and CDs. The PS3 is also supposed to be compatible with Playstation and Playstation 2 games. Price has been estimated at \$350 to \$500.

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While the Cell is very flexible for programmers, the designers left out some features of high-performance x86 processors that automatically optimize software as it runs (e.g. out of order processing) and used different instruction sets for the core and SPEs. This means that software developers have to make an extra effort to optimize code themselves or rely on the compiler to do it. IBM and Sony have been extremely supportive of the Open Source community (http://www.theregister.co.uk/2005/05/25/ibm_opens_cell/) and are working to add optimization support to the GNU C Compiler and software libraries to simplify the programmer's task (Porting the GNU Tool Chain to the Cell Architecture, <http://www.gccsummit.org/2005/2005-GCC-Summit-Proceedings.pdf>).

The Playstation's creator and Sony Computer Entertainment President Ken Kutaragi reported that the optional hard drive kit will include a GNU/Linux OS to highlight the computing capabilities of the PS3. IBM's team has already submitted Cell processor patches for the Linux kernel, so GNU/Linux OS support should be well-established in time for the Cell's debut.

Other interesting tidbits about the Cell:

- IBM has a prototype Cell-based blade server (probably aimed for use in digital video rendering farms used by the motion picture industry, an established Linux market).
- Mercury Computer Systems, which specializes in image and signal processing workstations,

is developing a Cell-based workstation.

- The Cell can organically distribute processing tasks with other Cell processors in a network (potentially making the millions of PS3's on the Internet into the world's most powerful super-computer).
- The Cell will also be used in High Definition Digital TVs and other appliances (again, potentially sharing processor capacity within a home network).

Sony Computer Entertainment published a presentation on the technical aspects of the Cell processor online at <http://www.research.scea.com/research/html/CellGDC05/index.html>. An independent third-party forum was created for those interested in discussing Cell processor news and development at <http://www.cell-processor.net/>.

Given the certainty that IBM will be manufacturing and selling these processors in the millions, it is likely that the unit price will be even lower than x86 processors. This raises the question whether Apple picked a bad time to abandon the PowerPC processor.



Dual-Core Processors Are Coming!

By Timothy Everingham, Member of TUGNET, California
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www.tugnet.org

Both Intel and Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) are screaming, "Dual-Core Processors are Coming." They say they are the future of microprocessors for computers. With both companies planning to introduce these processors in the next few months it is important to understand the significance of this development.

So what is a dual-core processor? Basically it is two microprocessors on the same integrated circuit or chip. Having more than one processor in a computer has been around for a long time. It is normal for servers to have them. Multiprocessor workstations (high end desktops) are used mostly for scientific, engineering and digital content creation for TV and movies. Dual-core is not Intel's hyperthreading that is on its Pentium 4s, which lets the operating system think it has two processors rather than one. In a dual-core processor there are two actual processors, each one having its own L1 & L2 caches.

Why are we going to dual-core processors? One of the main reasons is heat. The higher a processor's clock speed, the more heat it produces. The 3.6 GHz Pentium 4 did have heat problems. Of course what we have been doing is just put more than one processor on a motherboard to increase performance beyond what you can get with a single processor (The general rule has been that adding a second processor improves computer speed by 60% over a single processor of the same speed). However, to make this more cost effective, similar, use less space, and reduce power requirements putting two processors together on one chip is better. This is especially true

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Must-Have Freeware

by Richard O. Johnson, TUGNET
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The freeware recommended here is suitable for all users. These are general-purpose programs. If you're looking for an add-on to a specialized application (or even one not so specialized, like Microsoft Word), you won't find it here. These tools are all absolutely free, for individuals. No trialware or demoware is included. With the possible exception of the *bookmarklets*, described Part 2, knowledge required to use them is essentially nil. Download time is minimal.

If you should have any question on using these programs, feel free to phone me at (818) 240-7283.

Part 1: A Perfect Ten

Well, maybe these ten are not quite perfect. I've had to omit two of my favorite freeware programs, that, it turns out, are no longer freeware. (See the Addendum for details.)

1. Favorites Search

If your Internet Explorer Favorites tend to proliferate, you'll want this program. When invoked, it'll occupy the left-hand frame of your browser—replacing the Favorites themselves or the History list—pointing you in very short order to the particular Favorite you're seeking. Eliminates the need to organize your Favorites in a hierarchy of sub-folders. <http://www.dzsoft.com>

2. Google Toolbar

Makes the Web's best search engine even more useful. Facilitates quick location of search keywords in found documents. Enables easy navigation to parent Web pages,

similar pages, or related images. Many other features. <http://toolbar.google.com> The Google Toolbar is suitable for Internet Explorer version 5 or later. For other browsers, an alternate Google-based search tool is at: www.frysianfools.com/ggsearch

3. Y!Q DemoBar

Unlike the Google Toolbar, this is small enough to fit easily on the same line as your Internet Explorer address bar. (To squeeze it onto that line you may want to "unlock" the IE toolbar, using the right-click menu, and shrink the address bar. You can adjust Y!Q's size, using its options menu.) The DemoBar's sole function is to enable *context-based searching*. Clicking it will yield results related to page text you've highlighted, optionally modified by text you've typed in its search box. <http://yq.search.yahoo.com/splash/demobar.html>

4. BigFix

BigFix will continually scan your system for necessary security patches and other fixes applicable to any software you have installed. Easier to use and more encompassing than Windows Update, it notifies you of each recommended fix and directs you to the documentation (if you want to read it). You can apply the fix with one click. A painless way to bolster security and keep your machine up-to-date. www.bigfix.com

5. WinPatrol

It monitors your system for spyware, adware, worms, Trojan horses, and unwanted cookies. Alerts you to any new program that may be added without your permission, allowing you to permit or disable it. If you don't run a firewall, you'll definitely want to use WinPatrol. <http://www.winpatrol.com>

winpatrol.com

6 and 7. Two spellcheckers

These are for users (respectively) of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. The first program will quickly check the spelling of any text you enter on a Web form. The second will automatically check the spelling in your outgoing messages (without the need to have Microsoft paid programs like Word or Office installed on your computer). <http://www.iespell.com> and <http://www.geocities.com/vampirefo>

8. Natural Voice Reader

Spellchecking programs are great, but they go only so far. If your misspelling is a standard English word (say if you typed *moose* when you meant to type *mouse*), you're out of luck. Nor will your spellchecker tell you if you've omitted a word. It's well known that the best way to proofread is for a person other than the author to read the selection aloud—just what "Microsoft Sam" (the robot reader employed by the free version of Natural Voice Reader) will do. By following the printed text while listening to Sam, and then using your spellchecker, you can be sure of catching virtually all typos. http://www.naturalreaders.com/Standard_version.htm

9. WordWeb

If while writing you just can't think of the right word, you'll appreciate this little gem that will instantly bring up a definition and lists of synonyms. If you're reading a Web page and don't know the meaning of a word you encounter, just click on the word and then on the WordWeb icon in your system tray, and you'll have your answer. (You don't have to be using the Web or even

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online to use the program.) <http://www.wordweb.co.uk/free>

10. Pure Text

Do you ever paste text from one application to another (say, from your Web browser to an email), only to find that the text appears in a font and size that you don't want? That's because the copied text retained its formatting. This little program will on demand strip the formatting from copied text before it's pasted. To invoke it, just click on its Sys-Tray icon, or (even better) use the built-in hotkey. <http://stevemiller.net/puretext>

Part 2: Bookmarklets

Bookmarklets are tiny JavaScript applications that perform a wealth of helpful tasks and (unlike ordinary programs) require *no* downloading. Just drag them to where you store your bookmarks, Favorites, or links. The two sites listed here each offer myriad bookmarklets from which to choose. Both distinguish between bookmarklets that work with Internet Explorer, Netscape/Mozilla/Firefox, or both. The *squarefree* bookmarklets are somewhat better designed and more reliable. *Caveats*: Some of the bookmarklets will work with version 5 but not version 6 of Internet Explorer. You may have to disable some pop-up blockers before using bookmarklets.

<http://www.bookmarklets.com> and <http://www.squarefree.com/bookmarklets>

You should see many bookmarklets that you'll want to keep handy. Below is the source code of three that I find especially useful. (You may not find these three at the above sites. I've had to do a little tweaking to create them.) These

three all work in Internet Explorer v. 6, and may or may not work in Mozilla/Firefox.

To reproduce these bookmarklets, just create or copy any bookmark or Favorite, and right-click on it to bring up its Properties. Then replace the Properties with the appropriate code, and rename the Favorite.

1. Make a Web page more readable. This bookmarklet fixes problems caused by insufficiently contrasting text and backgrounds, and removes distracting background patterns.

```
javascript:(function()
{var newSS, styles='*
{ background: white !
important; color: black
!important } :link, :
link * { color: #0000EE
!important } :visited,
:visited * { color:
#551A8B !important
}'; if(document.
createStyleSheet) {
document.createStyle
Sheet("javascript:"
+styles+"""); } else
{ newSS=document.
createElement('link');
newSS.rel='stylesheet';
newSS.href='data:text/
css,'+escape(styles);
document.getElements
ByTagName("head")[0].
appendChild(newSS); }
})();
```

2. Zoom a Web page. Every now and then you'll run across a Web page whose type is just too small. Sometimes you can fix it with your browser's text size adjustment--but other times that won't work. Even if it does work, you'll have the bother of re-adjusting the text size when you go on to another page. This bookmarklet will expand the text

(and everything else) by 30%, and will affect only the current page.

```
javascript:
void(document.body.style.
zoom='130%')
```

3. Create an instant scratch pad. This will bring up a new window in the corner of your screen for temporary recording of anything you like. I find it particularly handy to expand the utility of the Windows clipboard by allowing me to save multiple text strings in one easily accessible place.

```
javascript:
r4NSy=document.
selection.createRange().
text;dST7Mt=new%20Dat
e();wSv6=open('', 'w'+dS
T7Mt.getTime(), 'width=
400,height=300');wSv6.
focus();with(wSv6.docume
nt){write('<center><form>
<textarea%20rows=15%20co
ls=40%20wrap>'+r4NSy+'</t
extarea>');void(close())}
```

Addendum

As indicated above, these two additional programs are no longer freeware. I've listed them anyway because they're so very useful, and they're not costly. Each of them will give you a free trial.

Push the Freakin' Button

If you're driven to distraction by the need to stop your work to click on an *okay* or other button in a pop-up dialog box, this is for you! It magically will push the button for you, according to your previous instructions. It now costs \$29.99 (well worth it, IMHO). <http://www.tl-house.co.uk/PTFBPro>

AddaButton

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With AddaButton, you can add launch buttons to Internet Explorer's links toolbar. Each button will open a document, Web site, or application of your choice, and unlike the regular IE links, will not require a displayed name--so you can fit more buttons in the same space. Now \$14.95. <http://www.harmony-hollow.net/aab.shtml>

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization (<http://theskillspool.org>). He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. You may reach him at rj@theskillspool.org.



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in the desktop and notebook markets. As we move to high-definition TV resolution video on computers the need for the average computer to have very high processing speed will appear, leading to dual-core processor computers being dominant a few years from now. But can you upgrade your current system to a dual-core processor? If you have an AMD socket 939 motherboard you can upgrade to an AMD Athlon 64 dual-core processor with only a BIOS upgrade. The same is true for AMD Opteron socket 940 motherboards for Opteron dual-core processors. Intel said last fall that some Intel LGA 775 motherboards would be able to use their dual-core processors, called "Pentium D", but they now say the first generation of them will have to use a modified LGA 775 socket. This of course means getting a new motherboard.

For an application program to take

advantage of multiprocessor systems both the operating system and the particular application you are running have to have the ability to use more than one processor (multi-threaded program). If the operating system is able to take advantage of more than one processor, but the applications you are running are not; you may get different applications running on different processors, but each will only use one processor. Windows 98 & ME are designed for only one processor, so they can only use one processor even though there are two processors on one chip, real or virtual. Windows XP Home can use only one processor chip, but up to two processors on that chip. Windows XP Professional is designed to use up to 2 processor chips and up to 2 processors on each chip. Novell's SUSE Linux is already ready for dual core processors, and Red Hat Linux soon will be. Both are multithreaded and multiprocessor chip operating systems.

Most current multithreaded application programs are mid-high end scientific, engineering, CAD/CAM and digital content creation programs. This includes video editing and 2D and 3D animation and image creation/editing programs. However there are some home applications that already have this multi-treading capability, such as the Adobe Premiere Elements video-editing program. The first programs for the home user to go multithreading should be content creation/editing, multimedia, and games. There seems to be an expectation by Intel that the transition over to most programs being multithreaded will be three years from now. However, some software companies base the licensing fees of some or all of their programs by the

number of processors using the program. The question then becomes will software companies start charging licensing fees per processor core on the current per processor chip? Right now it looks like the trend says no. Microsoft has already said for its programs that are licensed on a per processor basis it will continue doing so and not go to a per processor core basis. Also to consider in upgrading both Intel and AMD systems you may have software you have to activate that logs the system components. Upgrading processors and motherboards can cause these programs to say that this is now a new computer you are running the program on, which you are not authorized to do, and refuse to run. This could include your operating system. Check with your program's publisher/manufacturer to see what their policy on this is. Home and office use policies effectively have been known to be different.

So when will these marvelous dual-core processors appear? For Intel it will be the second quarter of 2005. For AMD it will be mid-2005 for the high level Opterons and second half of 2005 for the desktop Athlon 64s. As normal the price should originally be high, but then drop significantly over time.

We are moving this year to dual core processors. They will improve the speed of computers, and reduce the related heat and power requirement issues. They will be originally for those high-end power users, but over the next few years they could easily become the norm. They will be in a computer store near you later this year.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting

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Scrapbooking Hobby/Craft Rescues Baby Boomer Memories

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG
Advisor and Columnist, AARP
Computers & Technology Website

As a baby boomer, I'm hardly unusual in having a large box of photographs in my closet. Also likely common is my photos' diversity: fading Polaroid baby pictures, travel shots, family gathering commemorations, images of people and places I can't identify, some professional photography, and quite a lot of etc. In addition, I have a few photo albums – created when my parents thought I was cute and when I worked to record and remember vacations.

But the years have generated a lot of unorganized pictures, and I'm falling further behind in making sense of them. Worse, the photographs suffer from improper storage: being folded, fading, cracking, sticking together. Even the ones supposedly preserved in albums are being damaged by invisible hazards.

An antidote to my generation's mistreating photographs and neglecting family histories may be "scrapbooking". This inclusive term can mean anything from arranging pictures in scrapbooks (what albums are called when they contain pictures) to using computers. Whether high- or low-tech, it includes rescuing pictures from hostile environments. Old-style photo albums with ad-

hesive corners or sticky pages can damage pictures. Scrapbookers use acid-free archival-quality paper and supplies (photo-safe adhesives and pens), aiming to produce material that lasts for generations.

Some people come to scrapbooking with organized materials, with pictures already sorted and documented. Others are in my camp, with a chaotic and ever-growing stash of family snapshots. Either way – and especially if starting from scratch – there's a fleeting opportunity for this, as memories and generations are lost.

If you've collected a box of unorganized pictures; if you're falling behind in preserving your and your family's memories; if your photos suffer from being folded, fading, cracking, and being badly mounted – the hobby and craft of "scrapbooking" can get you organized and preserve/share your memorabilia.

I'm told that most scrapbookers are women, many of whom start as girls, assembling books about friends and activities, then continue as young mothers recording their children's growth, and as grandmothers making scrapbooks about their extended and extending families. But technology also draws men into the hobby, especially with improving capabilities and lowering costs of digital equipment such as scanners, cameras, and printers. Pixifun's (<http://pexagontech.com/pixifun/>) child- and budget-friendly kits for creating keyrings/magnets/stickers/badges/CDs include software and parts for creating instant photo keepsakes.

Scrapbookers develop unique styles and personalities, matching goals and resources available. Some keep things simple, using pictures, decorations, and a little labeling to tell

visual stories. These scrapbooks are great for documenting oral history and reminiscing. They can follow themes such as genealogy, school events, family milestones, travel, etc. Beyond pictures, scrapbooks can contain anything meaningful, such as mementos, postcards, clippings, cartoons, tickets, etc. This can be supplemented by decorations made with tools such as circle-cut-out tools, edge scissors, and lettering stencil templates; accessories including colored and patterned pages, border trims, themed stick-ons; and stamped images. Some enjoy feeling

connected to the past by producing final works from physical memorabilia rather than working with images.

Scrapbookers call telling a narrative story "journal-

ing", finding this a way to create meaningful and long-lasting collections. Examples are keeping chronological scrapbooks of and for family and children, and creating time-capsules for events such as the new millennium. Pages can combine photos, captions, and decorative material so that each tells a visually appealing story. Alternatively, some people build pages with single images surrounded by cutouts, stickers, decals, lace, etc. – less interested in telling a story than creating a picture. There's no rulebook, no single right way to scrapbook!

Scrapbooks can be wonderful gifts, conveying connections and feelings beyond those of any store bought gift. A dedicated scrapbooker I know is happy that her children will be able to leave home with their

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own history books.

Higher-tech approaches include using a digital camera or scanning original images into computer files, using photo-editing software to improve their visual characteristics or create effects such as the antique look, creating photo-montages blending multiple scenes, and producing “scrapbooks” on printed pages, CDs, or the Web. This technique protects precious – and often fragile -- records, while allowing viewing and handling easily recreated digital replicas. And we’ve all seen “mini-scrapbooks” produced by technology: photo collages used as family holiday cards. Digital technology lends itself to producing multiple scrapbook copies – for wedding guests, for example, or even as commercial ventures.

Techno-scrapbookers often use Adobe (www.adobe.com) Photoshop Elements and Photoshop software products; the vendor features kid- and adult-friendly tutorials. Click the link and search for “scrapbook”. Other popular software includes Corel photo products (www.corel.com), Macromedia Dreamweaver (www.macromedia.com), and Pinnacle Systems Studio 8 (www.pinnaclesys.com). As photo capture/editing/printing demands increase, so do hardware requirements. One 20-year veteran scrapbooker suggests a flatbed scanner with minimum 600 ppi (pixels per inch) without interpolation; a slide scanner for negatives and slides; 80 GB hard drive; 512 MB RAM or more; high-end graphics card with expandable non-shared memory; CD/DVD burner and minimum P4 processor. She uses a multimedia PC, digital camera, and camcorder to go beyond photo basics, adding

design touches like antique finish and repairing defects such as tears and scratches.

Useful resource sites are Scrapbooking Top50 (www.scrapbookingtop50.com), Stamping Top50 (www.stampingtop50.com), and Digital Scrapbooking (www.digitalscrapbookplace.com). Stores frequently mentioned are Michael’s and Craft Country.

People discover scrapbooking by accident or design – some take classes at community colleges or recreation departments, others discover commercial sites such as Creative Memories (www.creativememories.com) or see friends’ scrapbooks. Whether your taste runs to scissors or scanner, paper album or CD, narrative or decorative scrapbooks – get out those picture boxes and preserve those memories!

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How to Search the Web

By Chuck Roberts, WACUG

With a bazillion web pages on the web (actually about two billion), how do those of us that cannot find a bill that needs payment on our desk, find a specific answer to any question using the web?

The problem is not that search engines don’t find enough, but the real problem is that they find way too much which makes it difficult to glean that needle out of 40,000 hits in the haystack!

In a nutshell, to get the right answer, one must ask the right question. Back when Al Gore first invented the Internet, the problem was how to find anything. There were some search guides and a few books on the topic of doing research on the web. I even purchased a book on “... How to conduct research on the Internet using Netscape Navigator...” back in 1997 while I was employed in Silicon Valley.

Back then, there were fewer sites and many of those were carryovers from DARPA_Net meaning, they primarily consisted of leftover unclassified pages from universities research documents. And then, the search engine wars came along.

These wars waged for a couple of years. Remember Yahoo, Lycos, and Excite? There was a new favorite search engine almost each week. Then finally Google came along and remains the “King of the Hill” through today.

Google is by far my favorite search engine – in fact, Google is preferred by most of us. But the search

See *Searching the Web* on page 10

engine war is far from over. New techniques are developed each day which include new ways to rank the results so that the highest rated hits show up at the top of the hit list.

“There’s gold in them thar hills,” if you can make your site one of the top or first listings on the results page of a search. The problem is that most simple queriers deliver hundreds, no thousands of results. How do you make your site the top or first result?

There are more tutorials on understanding search engine technology for web site developers than there are for us search engine users. That’s right! There are several tutorials on how to make your site appear higher on the search results list than your competitor! But what about us seekers of information? Well Pandia.com has a solution which contains a tutorial.

But back to our topic of how to search the Internet. Using Google, what seems to work best for me is to be very specific with the search criteria. Now that doesn’t mean I begin my initial search using a paragraph of qualifications in my criteria. So I begin fairly simplistic but quickly add additional criteria if the results seem to be generally correct, but so general that I get way too many hits! Simply begin adding conditions or criteria until the results become manageable.

One of the best tutorials for searching the web is available online at <http://www.pandia.com/> then select “Search Tutorial.”

In about an hour you will have learned (and experienced) the essentials of searching the web. I highly recommend this tutorial for web searching.

In closing, I would like to mention that using the tools in the Pandia tutorial, you may submit your search to multiple

search engines simultaneously using a hybrid search engine that passes your search criteria to multiple search engines at the same time. For more information, visit dogpile.

<http://www.dogpile.com/>

While the name “dogpile” is kind of unsavory, I assure you that this site uses a hybrid search engine that submits your search criteria to multiple engines at the same time. It is kind of like “one stop shopping” for information on the web.

Be sure and use the Pandia.com tutorial to understand the best way(s) to search the web using search engines to retrieve the information you want and need without the frustration of winnowing through thousands and thousands of results.

Part 2 of Search Engine Tips and Tricks will appear in the September edition of *The Cursor*.



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Next month Geof discusses repairing his laser printer and the sites he uses for replacement parts.

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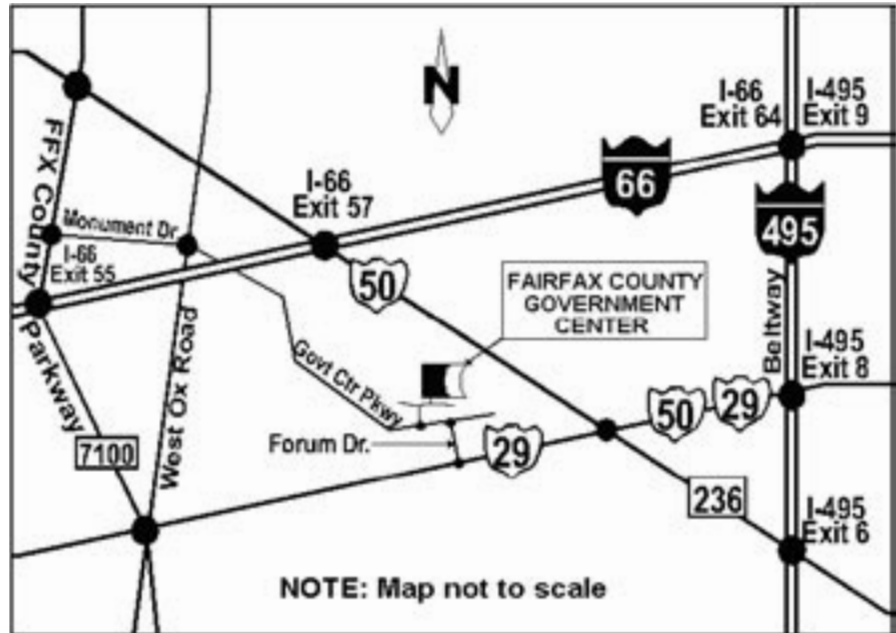
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