



# The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the  
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:  
Fairfax County  
Government Center



Next Meeting:  
March 25, 2006



## Presidential Bits

### March 2006 Meeting

By Paul Howard

Seems like we have at least one meeting every year impacted by the weather. I hope that we managed to reach most of our members last month, as the signals were changed in the course of a few minutes, and Fairfax County closed the Government Center minutes after we checked their hot line. Strangely, the telephone hotline never changed its "All OK" message. Your hardworking board of directors held their meeting, despite the main meeting place cancellation.

For March, our meeting will be on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month. We'll be continuing one of the most popular meeting topics of recent years, with a "Discussion and Demonstration of a Digital Image Editor."

Adobe recently released the latest version of Adobe Photoshop Elements, V.4. Chuck Roberts will discuss this latest upgrade to this increasingly popular image / photo editing program. With every edition, Adobe makes changes - are they enhancements, or just more challenges for scampering up the learning curve? Don't miss another

great presentation from WACUG's popular image (and print) editor!

Patrick Kolla's SpyBot Search and Destroy has a new version, 1.4 available. I discovered this by accident. Version 1.3 continues to update the nastyware definitions, and I don't recall seeing a notice in the update process of the new version. The latest version scans and blocks more bad guys than the previous version. The total after 3/10 upgrades was 9239 items blocked. Version 1.3's total was only 2896 blocked products after the latest update was installed.

We hope to have a gift for every attendee at this meeting, and special door prizes related to another common topic of our meetings - computer security. Hope to see you there !!



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Fellow WAC members, please join me in welcoming Lloyd Johnson as a regular contributor to *The Cursor*

While no one can replace Lu, Lloyd has yielded to our requests and has agreed to carry-on in Lu's tradition by sharing a list of interesting and news-worthy websites for us to explore and enjoy.

Welcome Lloyd, and Thank You!

— editor, Chuck Roberts

## Lloyd's Web Sites for March, 2006

by Lloyd Johnson, WAC member  
<http://wacug.org/>— is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past issues of Web Sites w/hyperlinks.

1. [http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/image/0011/earthlights\\_dmsp\\_big.jpg](http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/image/0011/earthlights_dmsp_big.jpg) — This is a site to behold with a panoramic view of the world. It is a night photo with the lights clearly indicating the populated areas. Note Canada's population is mostly along the U.S. border. It is easy to spot London, Paris, Stockholm, Vienna, the Mediterranean Coast and Israel. After the Nile River, the lights don't come on again until Johannesburg

Note: There is an underscore between earthlights and dmsp. Also an underscore between dmsp and big

2. [www.poets.org/](http://www.poets.org/) — Any healthy man can go without food for two days- but not poetry. Search for favorite poems and poets.
3. [www.driverguide.com/](http://www.driverguide.com/) — We don't know why we lose drivers — hard drive reformat are one common way. Over 58,000 invaluable drivers are available at

this site.

4. [www.avo.alaska.edu/](http://www.avo.alaska.edu/) — Track the active volcano "Augustine" at this site
5. [www.ase.org/](http://www.ase.org/) — Home and Office Energy Efficiency Tips. This site gives a take on things you can do that result in IRS Tax benefits.
6. [www.eere.energy.gov/consumerinfo/](http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumerinfo/) — More energy tips.
7. <http://framboise781.free.fr/Paris/> — Click on Paris by Night. After the picture loads pan right to see a great view of Paris at night. Makes one want to go back to Paris.
8. [www.learn2.com/](http://www.learn2.com/) — Visit this site for free "2torials" on everything under the sun
9. [www.whatis.com/](http://www.whatis.com/) — Don't know your ADSL from a hole in the ground. This site defines every baffling Internet term in a way that mere mortals can understand, ...ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line).
10. Do you need a Lawyer, check out the next URL's — [www.findlaw.com/](http://www.findlaw.com/) and [www.legalengine.com/](http://www.legalengine.com/)



To all friends, family, and colleagues: I'm looking to expand my opportunities. If anyone knows of any position that would be suitable, please contact me @ 703-727-0311 or [scott.hanak@cox.net](mailto:scott.hanak@cox.net)

Thanks in advance,

**Scott Hanak**

A+, Network+, i-Net+, and  
CCNA certified  
BS in Biochemistry

## New Federal Website Provides Users with Internet Safety and Security Information

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director;  
Columnist, The Examiner,  
Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show  
host

The media has recently been rife with stories about internet scams, frauds, identity theft, pedophiles, and other malevolent occurrences that have happened on the internet. While there are many online resources providing informational websites to help prevent us from falling prey to internet victimization, a consortium of federal agencies has created "OnGuard Online" at [www.onguardonline.gov](http://www.onguardonline.gov). This consortium consists of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Postal Inspection Service, the Department of Commerce (DOC), and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). *{Links available on page 9}*

Materials are provided on this website to inform and educate the computer user about several of the most nefarious threats that commonly assail us as we enjoy the abundance of the internet. Topics currently covered are spyware, identity theft, phishing, spam scams, online shopping, P2P (Peer-to-Peer) file sharing, and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol – internet telephony). There are also a series of online quizzes ([www.onguardonline.gov/quiz](http://www.onguardonline.gov/quiz)) where the user can test his knowledge on the security risks associated with these topics. A series of videos and tutorials on

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## GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

### News from Red Hat

I received an e-mail from Greg DeKoenigsberg of Red Hat, Inc. that contained a number of news items for Linux User Groups (LUGs).

The first item is an update that the community-supported Fedora Core 5 GNU/Linux distribution will be released in the next month or two (the scheduled release date is March 20). Noted features of this release include:

- Modular X, anaconda changes, more Xen code and some XGL-ish stuff;
- New GNOME, new OpenOffice, new Firefox and more, pulling all the latest from upstream projects;
- New Mono-based applications, including Beagle, Tomboy and F-Spot.

Greg also listed the following Fedora community initiatives:

**Fedora Extras.** The community-led Extras project, which launched officially last February, is now maintaining over 3000 software packages in yum repositories mirrored worldwide. The number of available packages continues to grow – as does

the number of contributors. Learn more at <http://fedoraproject.org/wiki/Extras>.

**Fedora Documentation.** The Docs project is producing release notes, HOWTOs and other crucial documentation to help Fedora users make the most out of Fedora. All of the documentation is available under the OPL with no restrictions. Learn more at <http://fedoraproject.org/wiki/DocsProject>.

**Fedora Ambassadors.** As the open source story continues to grow stronger, we're looking for more and more people to tell that story. The Ambassadors project provides people with the information and tools to spread the story far and wide, from presentation decks to T-shirts to Fedora DVDs. Learn more at <http://fedoraproject.org/wiki/Ambassadors>.

**Fedora Mentors.** It can be difficult to “get started” in the world of open source development, and sometimes the most important thing is just to know that someone will answer your stupid questions without giving you a lot of heat. The Mentors project seeks knowledgeable developers who can give a couple of hours a week on IRC to help the newbies along. Learn more at <http://fedoraproject.org/wiki/Mentors>.

With more projects coming online all the time, there's never been a better chance to be involved in the future of Fedora. For general information about how to get involved, spend some time at <http://fedoraproject.org>.

Greg also provided the following information about the Red Hat Summit:

This is basically a straight-up sales

pitch: come join us in Nashville from May 30 – June 2, 2006. Specifically for LUG members, the cost of attendance is \$699, which includes a hotel room for four nights, meals, and attendance at the Red Hat sessions and evening entertainment events. It's a unique opportunity to meet some of the real luminaries of the open source world firsthand, and to talk with them about their areas of deep knowledge. For those of you who are accustomed to attending these sorts of events, you will realize that this price is a **very** good deal. Lots of technical sessions, lots of fun. You can find the full track list at <http://www.redhat.com/promo/summit/tracks>.

So why is the LUG deal so good? The deal for regular business types is basically \$500 more. The deep price break is because we want to see community people there. Despite the fact that we're making a little money now, we can't afford to bring people to Nashville and put them up for nothing – but we can at least give some deep discounts to our friends.

That's you.

You are important, and if you can figure out how to make it there, we definitely want you there. Feel free to contact me for more information, or go to the Summit site at <http://www.redhat.com/promo/summit>.

Lastly, Greg also mentioned the possibility of a Red Hat Roadshow, visiting LUGs sometime in the April-May timeframe. If this develops into a local event or WACUG visit, I'll notify members through a WACUG e-mail announcement.

### Job Opportunity

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Innovar Group has an urgent need for a Software Engineer (RAID Expert) for a valued client in Westminster (Denver, CO). My client will pay a re-location to Denver and will pay a competitive salary/benefits.

I will pay a \$500 referral bonus to the person that provides me with a name of a candidate that gets hired at my client.

**MUST HAVE:** Distributed/Clustered systems software dealing with concurrency and data integrity/cache coherency issues AND development of RAID systems and especially data structures and algorithms of RAID and **MUST HAVE** low level Linux Kernel development experience.

**Job Duties/Responsibilities:** Your job responsibilities including designing and implementing technology for new storage products. As a senior technical member of a larger team, you must be able to deliver high quality code on time as well as create and maintain design documentation for both internal and external engineering specifications. You will be responsible for working with the CTO in understanding current requirements and strategy for future direction of the product. You will be expected to actively participate in improving engineering processes, productivity, and technical strength.

**Requirements/Preferred Experience:** The ideal candidate will have the following skills and experience:

- A minimum of 10 years experience developing commercial software, particularly in the storage networking industry.

- The ability to architect and design and implement complex solutions is required.
- Must have deep technical knowledge and direct implementation experience in at least one of the following areas:
  - \* UNIX/Linux filesystems
  - \* UNIX/Linux kernel
  - \* UNIX/Linux device drivers (especially TCP/IP, iSCSI, FibreChannel)
  - \* NAS devices
  - \* SAN technology
  - \* Development of RAID systems (especially data structures and algorithms)
  - \* Distributed/Clustered systems software (especially dealing with concurrency and data integrity/cache coherency issues).
- Must be very detailed and technically oriented, with the ability to drive problems down to their root-causes and recommend and/or implement solutions.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills and the ability to disseminate complex technical information to other team members.
- Must work well in a team environment including working with groups outside of engineering such as test and support.

Andy Poland  
Recruiting Manager  
Innovar Group  
Direct ~303.339.4022 Fax  
~303.484.2992  
[www.innovargroup.com](http://www.innovargroup.com)

### Linux CD of the Month

In addition to the CD-R discs described below, WACUG can provide any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribu-

tion (e.g. Fedora Core, Mandriva, Debian, Knoppix) on CD-R. Note: download versions of commercial distributions do not include official technical support or printed documentation.

Discs are available only by pre-order. Contact me by phone (703-370-7649) or e-mail ([ggoodrum@bigfoot.com](mailto:ggoodrum@bigfoot.com)) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information. Single discs are available with a \$3 donation; GNU/Linux distributions on two or three discs are available for a \$6 donation per set. All executable programs are for Intel x86 compatible Linux distributions unless stated otherwise. Your requests and suggestions are always welcome!

### March 2006

**FreeMind** – v0.8.0. Free GNU General Public License Java code and packages for Debian and SUSE by Jörg Müller, Daniel Polansky and Christian Foltin. FreeMind is mind-mapper software that can be used to create a personal knowledge base or organize ideas for projects. FreeMind requires Java Runtime Environment 1.4.2 or above.

**KMyMoney** – v0.8.3. Free GNU General Public License source code and executables for Debian and SUSE by Felix Rodriguez, Thomas Baumgart, Michael Edwardes and others. KMyMoney intends to provide all important features found in the commercially-available, personal finance managers. KMyMoney strives to be the easiest open source personal finance manager to use, especially for the non-technical user. Using time-tested double-entry accounting principles KMyMoney can help ensure that your finances are kept in correct order. KMy-

Money requires the KDE 3.2 or above desktop environment.

**Xpilot NG** – v4.7.2. Free GNU General Public License source code by Erik Andersson, K. Siegmund, and others. XPilot NG is a multi-player 2D spacewar game. It is an extended version of XPilot, a true Internet classic. Like in XPilot, the aim of the game is to have fun and to beat your fellow pilots. In a team game, you can humiliate your enemies, blow up your their ships and steal their treasure. There are also other game modes: individual game

and a race mode. XPilot NG is compatible with XPilot and shares a lot of features, but also has a lot of new features and bug fixes. Requires SDL and zlib development libraries.

**GNU/Linux Distribution Updates** - Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 4.

**Kernel Source** - The latest versions of 2.4 and 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms.



## 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

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Also make sure to check the links from anything you click on; I have found numerous fake Paypal sites that try to steal your login and password.

***Remember... it is up to you!***

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.



## The Mouse from Hell, A Hardware Review...or Sort of

By Ann Moore,  
Topeka PC Users Club

[www.topekapcusersclub.org](http://www.topekapcusersclub.org)

Several months ago, I sent the following e-mail to “Answerperson” concerning a tragedy in my life:

“Dear Answerperson,

When I started my computer this morning, my mouse showed no sign of life. Its heart (red light) did not flicker nor did it feel warm to my touch. It was stone cold dead. I tried to revive it by performing an uninstall-reinstall, to no avail. A check of outlets and wiring found them intact. How do I determine the cause of death? There were no early signs of malfunction. If it were an animal, I could have a necropsy performed. Must I disassemble it to determine the cause of death? I cringe at the thought of disemboweling my friend. My mouse was not extraordinary in any way – it was not wireless nor was it ergonomic, just a simple mouse that I loved and cherished. Every day for four years, I held this inanimate object in my hand, caressed it, and knew every curve and indentation intimately. We were as one.

I have accepted the fact that I must now lay it to rest, but where? Is there a cemetery for computer mice? Should I have it cremated or do I put it in a box and bury it in my backyard under the lilac bush? What will become of my dear friend? Is there a computer mouse heaven? This has never happened to me before and I am devastated. Please no cards or

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flowers. There will be a memorial fund set up in the name of “Ann’s Mouse” and donations may be sent to [commuter\(at\)cox.net](mailto:commuter(at)cox.net)”

Answerperson offered his deepest sympathy and suggested that I put my sorrow behind me, go on with my computing and find a new mouse. I visited Best buy in search of a replacement and found no sympathy there. Their only concern was to sell me a very expensive replacement. In my vulnerable state, if the clerk had shown a little compassion, I might have purchased a more expensive model but because his attitude was cold and unfeeling, I left the store with one of their cheapest models. There is an old adage: “You get what you pay for,” and that is exactly what I got – in spades.

I doted on my new mouse, showering it with an abundance of TLC. I never mistreated it by applying any unnecessary pressure, jerking or pulling. In spite of all my efforts to maintain a close personal relationship, it soon became apparent that we were not compatible. The erratic behavior of the mouse became noticeable following surgery on my right shoulder. I was forced to change the mouse settings to accommodate my left hand and the mouse began to balk at every command. Although I moved it around very slowly, it would take off and race around the screen leaving me breathless in my attempt to keep up with it.

In October, I purchased a new LDS 19-inch monitor and the mouse went ballistic. It refused to leave the confines of its colorful, soft pad. Trying to reach the far corners of my monitor with my cursor became

almost impossible. The mouse resisted my every effort to control its actions. Every day was a tug-of-war and I was losing my patience. I had serious work to do and no time to play games. I needed a good reliable mouse. I decided that this obnoxious, malevolent, detestable little rodent had to be eradicated. It was time to go cordless.

Completing a jubilant trip to Best Buy, I came home with a Logitech cordless mouse. I could hardly wait to start using it. What a different a cord makes! This Logitech moves like a dream and is a pleasure to work with. It takes me everywhere I went to go. Truly, a match made in heaven. I am certain that I have found a new reliable friend.

What do I do with this evil, malicious, wicked little devil that made my life a living hell? No sad songs or mourning for this monster. I had visions of snipping off its tail to make it impotent, then dropping it on the floor and stomping it to death. I even considered calling “The Terminator.” What I will do is wrap it up in colorful paper and donate it to the club for a prize at the next Christmas party. I am hoping it will fall into a strong masculine hand that will teach this contemptible, spiteful, despicable creature how to behave in the presence of a lady.

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## Multi-core Processors

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., member,  
[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org)

When I first started researching central processing units (CPUs) my idea was to try to make some sense out of the naming/numbering schemes currently being used by Intel and AMD. This turned out to be an almost impossible task. Did you realize that Intel has more than 50 different Pentium 4 CPU models? That in each speed range there can be a dozen different models. They vary by cache size, socket size, hyper-threading or not, 64 bit or not, voltage and other parameters. As just one example, Intel’s 3.2 GHz processor has 12 different models. AMD is just about as bad when you try to analyze their nomenclature. So, for the moment, I have given up on trying to find a simple way to categorize the currently available CPUs. Maybe next month.

Since the upper end of the CPU production now seems to be aimed at producing processors with more than one central core, I decided to look at that topic. So what does it mean that a CPU has more than one core? You can think of it as a single chip containing two or more central processors. It is like having two (or more) computers in one box. That said, I have to admit that it doesn’t double your processing speed. At least, not yet.

Servers and workstations used in business have had multiple processors for a number of years. Mainframe computers with multiple processors have also been around for

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years. In order to take advantage of multiple processing your operating system must be capable of recognizing and using multiple processors. Windows has had that capability since Windows NT/2000 and it is included in Windows XP. Intel introduced Hyper-threading technology in 2002. That allowed two different “threads” to be processed almost simultaneously. Going the next step and putting multiple processors on one single chip is the idea behind multi-core processors. The AMD64 chip was originally designed to have a second core added at a later date. This became the current Athlon 64 X2 dual-core processor. Intel’s Pentium D is also a dual-core processor. In any multi-core processor each core is seen by the operating system as being a discrete processor as if the motherboard had two or more separate CPUs. Ideally this allows the computer to process more work within a given clock cycle.

The question is why would Intel and AMD want to complicate CPU design by putting these processors onto a single chip? The design is more expensive to produce. The primary answer to the questions is heat. In the fall of 2002 Intel indicated that it had a 4.0 GHz processor in production. That processor never reached the market. There was also talk about processors reaching 10 GHz. That has all changed and primarily due to the difficulty of reducing the heat output of these processors. When you have 125 million transistors in a very small space, as in Intel’s Prescott processor series, there is a lot of heat produced. In fact, it takes special cooling to keep the processor from overheating and

essentially burning itself up. I have a 3.0 GHz Intel “Prescott” processor in my computer and it runs at a consistent 40° Celsius (104° F). That’s only because I have an oversized copper heat sink and very large CPU fan. Ideally it should be running in the low 30’s which would be about 50% of the maximum temperature.

Another problem is current or electron leakage. As the processor die size decreases and the number of transistors increases, there is a greater problem with leakage. Electron leakage from one pathway to another can result in data corruption. Die sizes are currently 90 nm and are anticipated to drop to 65 nm this year. Finally the power requirements increase with the increase in transistors. The increase in power is another component in the increasing amount of heat produced by the CPU.

Dual core processors are designed to run at lower clock speeds than the fastest of the single core processors. This reduces the heat output even though the dual core processors currently have 230 million transistors in a smaller space. Intel has also announced another dual core processor to be on the market this summer that will have 1.7 billion transistors! Their literature says they anticipate that by the end of 2006, 70% of their desktop and mobile processors will be dual-core. By the end of 2007 fully 90% of Intel’s processors will be at least dual-core. AMD is moving just as fast in producing dual core processors. As the number of cores increase on a single die there will definitely be increases in heat output. Cooling requirements for these CPUs will definitely increase. The future of CPU cooling would seem to be water-cooled

systems even for the home desktop market. Unless there is some technological break-through that will reduce the heat problem.

There are other bottlenecks that will become more important in multi-core systems. One is the bus that transmits information from the core to other components. With two or more cores sending information over the bus, both speed and bandwidth will have to increase to handle the increased load. The CPU depends on the computer RAM for the source of its data and instructions. Therefore memory speed is also important and will need to be increased. Finally, information is read from and written to the hard disk. Even with the increased speed and bandwidth associated with SATA drives, this can be the largest bottleneck in the system. So these problems can prevent the user from gaining the maximum advantage provided by a multi-core system. All that said, I have to admit that there will be some definite gains in processing speed with the multi-core systems. This has already been demonstrated by a number of third-party testers. However, it will be some time before a dual-core system will function at twice the speed of a single core system.

I keep talking about “threads” without really giving you any explanation of them. I don’t think you really want to go into the programming background for this, so I will try to give you the simple explanation. A thread is a series of sequential programming steps or operations. In some instances, programming steps can be executed simultaneously. However, the program must be designed to allow this to happen.

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There are also problems associated with multi-threading that can slow down the overall operation. One problem is called “deadlock”. This is when two threads are each waiting for the other to complete its operations. This can result in neither thread reaching completion. For software developers, multi-threaded applications have much higher development costs than the current single-threaded applications. Although Intel’s Hyper-threading CPU’s have been around for several years, very little software has been written to take advantage of the dual-thread processing. Both Intel and AMD are working with software developers to produce more multi-threaded software applications. But it may be some time before the majority of software applications can take advantage of multi-core processors.

Intel has another technology it has developed for use in its multi-core chips. This is called “Foxton”. This allows a processor to adjust its speed and power requirements based on its processing load. Each process will have a base or minimum clock speed and a maximum speed. When the load is low, the processor can raise its clock speed up to a maximum level. This gives the processor more power for faster computing. If the load or the power requirement rises too high, the processor slows. All of this is more technology to simply reduce the system heat to manageable levels.

As I was writing this, Steve Jobs, at MAC World in San Francisco, announced the introduction of Intel based Macintosh computers using the Intel Core Duo processor. This processor was developed for the mo-

bile computer market. It uses clock speeds from 1.6 GHz to 2.1 GHz. Although it has a lower clock speed, the dual processor will provide some performance gain. There will also be a lower drain on the battery. Several other companies have produced Windows based laptops using this same processor.

So how will multi-core computers affect the individual computer user? It should improve the efficiency of your computer by improving its multi-tasking ability. Since each core is essentially a separate processor, at least two applications can be run simultaneously. If the dual core also supports hyper-threading, as some of the Intel Pentium D CPUs do, then it could handle four applications or four threads in multi-threaded applications. Now you may think you really don’t do any multi-tasking. However, if you are running an anti-virus program, a firewall, or any other application in the background while you also do word processing or emailing, then you are multi-tasking. A dual core CPU would permit this to happen more efficiently, if not more quickly. Frequently, I am writing, checking a spreadsheet and pulling data off the web. This is also multi-tasking.

I suspect that if you plan to replace your computer within the next year (or two), you will have a dual-core 64-bit processor in your system. With a couple of Gigabytes of RAM, you’ll be all set to run Windows Vista as a 64-bit operating system.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at [bwsail@yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com).



related topics, such as “Viruses and Worms”, and “Protect Your Privacy, Family, and PC” are also available at this site ([onguardonline.gov/tutorials](http://onguardonline.gov/tutorials)). For those who have been victimized by internet miscreants, a resource is available to show the user where and how to file complaints with the appropriate federal and other agencies at [onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html](http://onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html).

Spyware is defined at this site as “... software installed on your computer without your consent to monitor or control your computer use.” Spyware can be used to steal your identity or capture your usernames, passwords, and account numbers (keyloggers); compile personal surfing profiles for directed advertising or other purpose (some forms of tracking cookies); display unwanted pop-up ads, which may be pornographic (ad-ware), redirect the browser to other sites (browser hijacking); install unwanted links on the desktop or in the “favorites” or bookmarks; and a variety of other unwanted and possibly dangerous web related items. OnGuard Online provides links and information on removing spyware, and protecting your computer from spyware.

Identity theft is a scourge that may impact as many as 10 million Americans each year, according to some sources. The incidence of identity theft through internet tricks, such as “Phishing” (typically emails directing the user to an authentic looking but counterfeit website soliciting credit card information, PIN numbers, etc.); “Pharming” (changing data files or “hosts” on

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the computer to redirect intentional visits to financial or commercial sites to counterfeit sites where valuable personal information is illicitly obtained) accounts for an increasingly significant portion of identity theft. OnGuard Online provides information on how to protect yourself from Phishing scams, and how to protect your identity while online, as well as instructions on dealing with identity theft if victimized.

Some internet security companies report that the amount of spam, or unsolicited commercial email, can easily amount to 60 to 80 percent of all emails sent. According to this website, details are provided on the major spam scams currently in circulation. The top 10 spam scams are: The "Nigerian" Email Scam (may also appear to be from Russia, Columbia, England, or other sources); Phishing; Work-at-Home Scams; Weight Loss Claims; Foreign Lotteries (Congratulations, you are a winner in the Spanish / British / Canadian Lottery!); Cure-All Products; Check Overpayment Scams (I have a large cashier's check – cash it, keep some, and wire me the difference); Pay-in-Advance Credit Offers; Debt Relief; and Investment Schemes (buy this penny stock – it will quintuple in a few days). Sadly, many gullible internet users still fall for these scams enriching the crooks, and typically receiving nothing worthwhile in return.

Millions of internet users shopped online during the holiday season, and still continue to do so at online retailers, or popular auction sites such as Ebay. While most online shoppers have been successful, and had few problems, there are also

thousands who have been victimized to some degree by internet crooks. This site explains a series of safe shopping tips, including "Know who you're dealing with; Know exactly what you're buying; Know what it will cost (including shipping, taxes, and other charges); Pay by credit or charge card; Check out the terms of the deal; and Print and save records of your online transactions."

"Peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing allows users to share files online through an informal network of computers running the same software." People, especially children and college students, use these P2P networks to exchange software, music, videos, and other files. While there is much material that can legitimately be exchanged, P2P is also often a source of spyware, viruses, and illicit and illegal copies of pirated software, music, and other intellectual property. This site lists many of the risks common with these P2P services, and how to safely utilize such services.

You have likely seen the ads on TV, as well as displays at the electronics and mass merchandising stores for "VoIP", services that allow the broadband internet user to make local and long distance phone calls over the internet for a flat monthly fee. While expanding on popularity, the path has been bumpy, as some subscribers have been dissatisfied with the service. Issues and service such as "911" calls, while addressed in regulations, are still not universally implemented on many VoIP systems. The OnGuard Online website also explains what many local VoIP users painfully found out during the recent spate of hurricanes and other storms, that if there is no power, or internet service

is otherwise inaccessible, the VoIP services generally do not function, leaving the user without phone service.

The OnGuard Online site "Stop – Think – Click: 7 Practices for Safer Computing" ([onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html](http://onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html)) reiterates the oft stated common sense warnings that all computer users should be aware of, and implement:

1. Protect your personal information. It's valuable.
2. Know who you're dealing with.
3. Use anti-virus software and a firewall, and update both regularly.
4. Make sure your operating system and Web browser are set up properly and:
  - a. Update them regularly.
  - b. Protect your passwords.
  - c. Back up important files.
  - d. Learn who to contact if something goes wrong online.

If the information on the OnGuard Online websites is utilized, we will all have a safer and more enjoyable internet experience.

#### WEBSITES:

<http://www.onguardonline.gov>  
<http://www.onguardonline.gov/quiz>  
<http://www.onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html>  
<http://onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html>  
<http://onguardonline.gov/tutorials>

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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# Is the Internet Insecure Because of You?

By Dave Gerber, APCUG Advisor

Long gone are the days that we could feel secure and know for certain that we had privacy. With the digital age upon us we can no longer be so sure that our privacy is secure. Recently Google has admitted their organization holds user data indefinitely. This causes concerns as now we know Google has information on us that we do not want anyone to know about.

We can simply blame this all on the big corporate companies; they seem to be a very good escape goat however, this is not the case; your privacy is totally up to you. Certificates ensure that all the data that is transferred between you and the internet is secure and encrypted. Recently in New Zealand there was a short certificate outage on a banks website. During this outage only one out of 300 users took this security warning seriously.

This is a rather large concern, as many users on the internet have the same belief that their data is safe and secure. By the end of 2005 it is estimated identity fraud will cause up to 5 trillion dollars world wide. We, the users of the internet must keep ourselves safe, secure and pay attention to those security warnings. I have compiled some good tools and tricks that will help keep you much more anonymous and secure.

## 1) Get rid of the internet explorer:

First and foremost Microsoft Internet Explorer is the highest risk to your internet experience. Not only is the most popular internet browser, but is also the most popular for attacks from Viruses and Spyware. Internet explorer is also too integrated with the windows operating system. Have you ever wondered how a dialer or online casino got onto your desktop?

I personally recommend Opera; they have a nice clean browser. The usability is easy and best of all, it uses tabbed browsing.

## 2) Protect your Connection.

Make sure you have an active firewall operating; Firewalls stop intruders from entering your connection and causing havoc. Hackers can easily gain access to an unprotected network and steal private information.

With the release of SP2 for Windows XP, Microsoft has incorporated a free personal Firewall. If you have broadband your router should have an inbuilt Firewall, and make sure this is enabled, Zone Alarm also offer a free Firewall. You must always do what you can to protect yourself.

## 3) Don't share those files:

One of the most common security flaws besides running Windows XP, is having File sharing enabled. To disable File Sharing please do the following:

Click Start Menu, select settings.

Click on Network Connections.

Right-click on the Local Area Connection icon and on the menu that appears, choose Properties.

In the General tab under "This connection uses the following items", highlight "File and Printer Sharing for Microsoft Networks". (If File and Printer Sharing is not listed, then file sharing has not been setup). You may skip the rest of these instructions.

Click Uninstall.

When you are asked if you are sure you want to Uninstall File and Printer Sharing Click Yes.

You may now close the Local Area Connection Properties window.

You must restart for your computer for the effects to work.

## 4) Hide your IP address:

Your IP address is just like your phone number, it links directly back

to you. There are many reasons you may wish to hide your IP address. Preferable you do not want to be tracked around the web, it's just as bad as having a GPS in your mobile phone.

## 5) Check those certificates:

Your internet connection is not secure, the data that travels between you and the site you may be browsing may pass through over 25 other computers. If you are sending very confidential information such as credit card payments, make sure the address starts with an https. Also check that the padlock on your browser is locked, and is valid for the specific site. This will ensure that you have a 128 bit encrypted connection with the website.

If you want secure email you may also have your emails encrypted too. A good free vendor is Hushmail. Your email security is more at risk than your web browsing; you must ensure your emails are safe.

## 6) Kill the spyware

Spyware are little programs that can easily be picked up by surfing any website or downloading files. Spyware can pickup information from where you surf to your credit card details, this information then can be sold.

Microsoft has released a beta version of their upcoming anti spyware removal tool. This too works well, and I highly recommend this tool. Zone Alarm also offer a free online spyware detector.

The information I have passed to you should be seriously considered. The internet is a very insecure environment; you must ensure your data is safe from outside prying eyes. Make sure you are careful with any transaction you make. Never fool for any kind of email promotion, anyone who tries to sell to you through spam advertising is not trustworthy.

See *Insecure Internet* page 5

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**2006 WAC Membership/Renewal Application**

2006 Dues are for the Calendar Year and include Disk Library Discounts, and WAC's monthly newsletter, *The Cursor*, by 1<sup>st</sup> Class mail to your home.

Individual/Corporate/Family Dues: \$25.00

Remit payment in person at the WAC Membership table on meeting day, or by mail to:

**Washington Area Computer User Group**  
**30 Fendall Ave.**  
**Alexandria, VA 22304-6300**

Make checks payable to WAC. Please do not send cash by mail. *Thank you for joining WAC!*

Complete if you name and address do not appear on the reverse side. Include E-mail Address

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 Phone: ( ) - \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Membership Survey:** Help us to help you by completing this survey.  
 List the computer systems you own / use (in order of preference)

\_\_\_\_\_

Operating System(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Modem(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Printer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Connection: (circle one)      Dial-up    or    Broadband

**Circle Your Interests:**    Photo Printing    Investing    Games  
 Digital Photography    Internet Access    Education    Music  
 Graphics/Animation    Genealogy      Video      Finance  
 Programming Language(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
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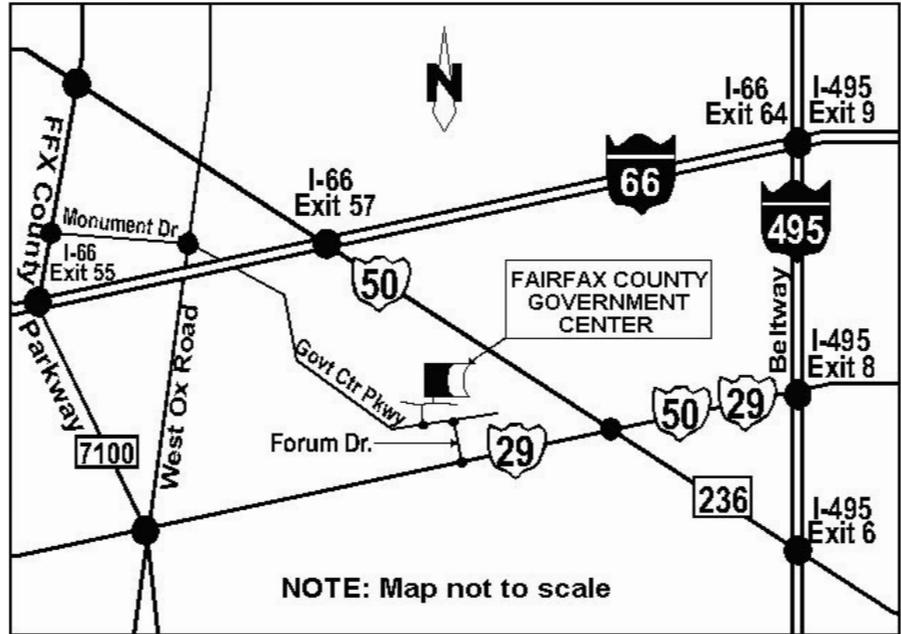
Next WAC Meetings: • Mar 25 • Apr 15 • May 20 • June 17 • July 15

Call (703) 370-7649 for the latest meeting information or Visit our Web Site at:  
<http://www.wacug.org>

March Meeting will be held  
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Government Center

Through Front Entrance to  
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Elevators to:  
Conference Room 2/3

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